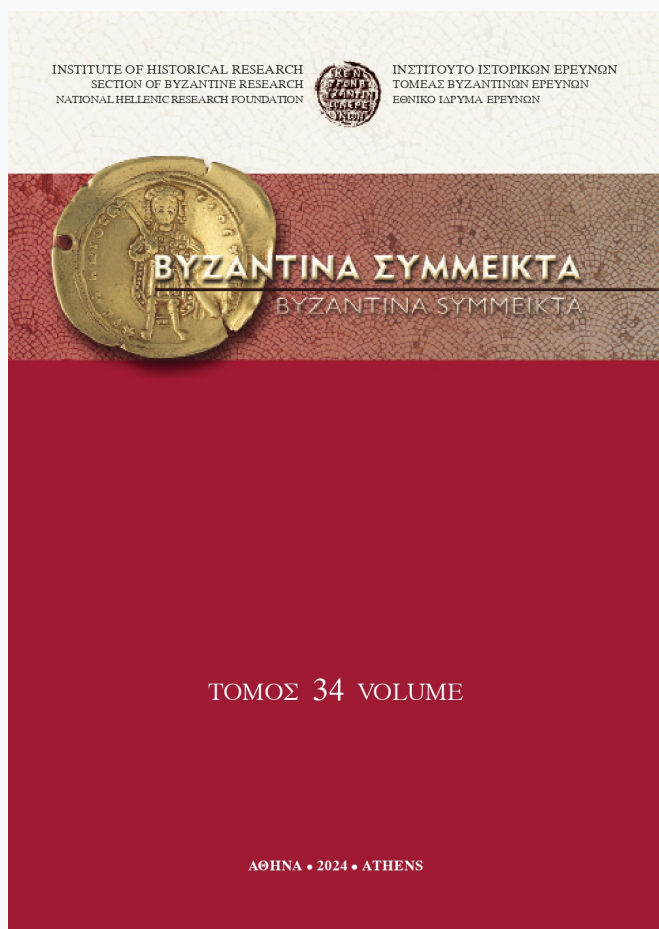


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### From Michael VIII to Andronikos II. The two first Palaiologoi's different approaches towards the church

Phoebe-Irene GEORGIADI

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ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ  
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ



# BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA

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PHOEBE-IRENE GEORGIADI

FROM MICHAEL VIII TO ANDRONIKOS II: THE TWO FIRST  
PALAIOLOGOI'S DIFFERENT APPROACHES TOWARDS THE CHURCH

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PHOEBE-IRENE GEORGIADI

FROM MICHAEL VIII TO ANDRONIKOS II: THE TWO FIRST PALAIOLOGOI'S  
DIFFERENT APPROACHES TOWARDS THE CHURCH\*

Michael VIII (r. 1261-1282) was the founder of the Palaiologoi, the last dynasty that reigned in Byzantium. His main objectives after 1261 were the repopulation of the newly conquered Constantinople and the strengthening of its defences, as well as contacts with the West that would prevent a crusade against the city. As part of this effort, he negotiated the union of the Byzantine and Roman churches and tried to impose it on his empire, which was then already torn due to the Arsenite schism that had occurred as a result of his usurpation of the throne. After his death, one of his son's, Andronikos II (r. 1282-1328), primary concerns were ecclesiastical affairs, which he tried to regulate by reversing his father's decisions: the new emperor formally rejected the Union and tried to appease Arsenios' supporters by choosing patriarchs that he thought would be accepted by them. As he followed a more compromising policy, a notable political interruption in the Byzantine empire's history was marked.

The two emperors' actions were taking place at a time when the church seemed to have adopted the role of the protector of the orthodox faith after the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, and the patriarch's power, especially under the reign of Andronikos, was on the increase, as opposed to that of the emperor<sup>1</sup>. Although, according to Byzantine

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1. R. MACRIDES, Emperor and Church in the Last Centuries of Byzantium, *Studies in Church History* 54 (2018), 123-143, here 142. On this, see in particular D. ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330*, Cambridge 2007.

political philosophy, the empire was a single polity composed of state and church<sup>2</sup>, and, according to Justinian's sixth Novel, *imperium* (kingship) and *sacerdotium* (priesthood) were complementary and cooperated with each other<sup>3</sup>, the patriarch and the emperor, the respective personifications of these two powers, often disagreed<sup>4</sup>; and in the late Byzantine period it was the latter's traditional control over ecclesiastical administration that was gradually reduced.

### *Michael and Arsenios*

After Constantinople's fall in 1204, many Latin and Greek states were established in the area that Byzantium used to cover. One of the most important was the Empire of Nicaea in Asia Minor, whose founder, Theodore I Laskaris (r. 1205-1221), soon claimed the succession of the Byzantine empire for his state<sup>5</sup>. In 1258 the eight-year-old John IV Laskaris (r. 1258-1261) became the emperor of Nicaea, and the palace official George Mouzalon was appointed as his regent. Soon though the latter was murdered and the aristocrat general Michael Palaiologos took his place and was crowned co-emperor as Michael VIII. Michael saw an increase in popularity following his victory in the battle of Pelagonia between the Empire of Nicaea and an anti-Nicaean alliance formed by the Kingdom of Sicily, the

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2. See A. KALDELLIS, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, Cambridge, MA 2015, 165-167; I. KARAYANNOPOULOS, Η Πολιτική Θεωρία των Βυζαντινών, *Βυζαντινά* 2 (1970), 37-61.

3. ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology*, 360-361; D. J. GEANAKOPOLOS, Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism, *ChHist* 34.4 (1965), 381-403, here 382; A. PAPANIKOLAOU, Byzantium, Orthodoxy, and Democracy, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71.1 (2003), 75-98, here 81-82.

4. See G. DAGRON, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2003.

5. A. PAPADAKIS, J. MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, New York 1994, 212. On the Empire of Nicaea, see in particular M. ANGOLD, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)*, Oxford 1975; I. GIARENIS, *Η συγκρότηση και η εδραίωση της αυτοκρατορίας της Νίκαιας. Ο αυτοκράτορας Θεόδωρος Α΄ Κομνηνός Λάσκαρις*, Athens 2008; A. STAYRIDOU-ZAFRAKA, *Νίκαια και Ήπειρος τον 13ο αιώνα. Ιδεολογική αντιπαράθεση στην προσπάθειά τους να ανακτήσουν την αυτοκρατορία*, Thessaloniki 1990.

Despotate of Epirus, and the Principality of Achaea in 1259 and, especially, after the recapture of Constantinople by his general Alexios Strategopoulos in July 1261<sup>6</sup>, and one month later he was crowned in Hagia Sophia<sup>7</sup>, while John IV was left at Nicaea despite the fact that he was still an emperor.

The patriarch Arsenios, a highly influential person at the time, was already in bad terms with Michael after he had realised his ambition to rule on his own, despite the fact that the two men initially seemed to be getting along, as in 1258 Michael had humbly welcomed Arsenios to Magnesia and sworn obedience to the church, while the latter favored his appointment as regent<sup>8</sup> and considered him capable to deal with the dangers Byzantium was faced with. His attitude however changed when it became obvious that Michael wanted to sideline John, whose rights Arsenios wanted to protect, following “a long standing tradition which made the Byzantine patriarch the defender of the rights of an imperial heir during his minority”<sup>9</sup>. When he was asked to perform the double coronation in Nicaea in 1260, Arsenios insisted that John should be crowned first as an indication of his right to the throne after his coming of age, but the bishops in favour of Michael prevailed and eventually the aristocrat was crowned first. Following this, the patriarch retired to a monastery without resigning, but, at the same time, refusing to perform his duties. Michael wanted an active patriarch before

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6. I. KARAYANNOPOULOS, *To Βυζαντινό Κράτος*, Thessaloniki 2001, 230, 234-239.

7. On Michael's coronation, see A. CHRISTOFILOPOULOU, *Ἐκλογή, Ἀναγόρευσις καὶ Στέψις τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Αυτοκράτορος*, Athens 1956; A. FAILLER, La proclamation impériale de Michel VIII et d' Andronic II, *REB* 44 (1986), 237-251.

8. George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, ed. A. FAILLER, *Relations historiques*, vol. 1 (CFHB 24/1), Paris 1984, 103, 131-133; I. SYKOUTRIS, Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν, *Ελληνικά* 2 (1929), 267-332, here 276-278. See also D. ANGELOV, The Donation of Constantine and the Church in Late Byzantium, in: *Church and Society in Late Byzantium*, ed. D. ANGELOV, Kalamazoo 2009, 91-157; I. A. TUDORIE, “Et tenentes frenum equi ipsius ...”. A new approach to the 13th-century relationship between the Byzantine emperor and patriarch”, in: *The Patriarchate of Constantinople in Context and Comparison. Proceedings of the International Conference Vienna, September 12th-15th 2012. In memoriam Konstantinos Pitsakis (1944-2012) and Andreas Schminck (1947-2015)*, ed. C. GASTGEBER – E. MITSIOU – J. PREISER-KAPPELLER – V. ZERVAN, Wien 2017, 31-46.

9. ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology*, 368; A. KONTOYANNOPOULOU, Το σχίσμα των Αρσενιατών (1265-1310). Συμβολή στην μελέτη της πορείας και της φύσης του κινήματος, *Βυζαντιακά* 18 (1998), 177-235, here 183, 185.

his attempt to reconquest Constantinople but, despite his efforts, he could not convince Arsenios to either return to the throne or resign. Therefore, he ordered the synod to dismiss him. After it complied, it also elected his successor, Nikephoros of Ephesos, who was however rather unpopular. As he soon died, Michael decided to accept Arsenios' reinstatement since he was aware of his influence. The latter was reluctant to return to the patriarchate, but eventually he agreed and crowned Michael once more, this time in the capital. However, he might have not stopped planning to ask or force the emperor to leave the throne<sup>10</sup>.

On Christmas 1261, following his coronation which made him feel more secure, Michael had John blinded, thus losing the ability to claim the Byzantine throne, and exiled in Bithynia, where he was imprisoned. Although in Byzantium there was no written constitution and succession to the throne was not hereditary, the majority of the people, especially in Asia Minor, believed that John, as the last Laskaris, was the rightful heir and should at least be a co-emperor alongside Michael<sup>11</sup>. The latter's action resulted in his excommunication by Arsenios, according to whom the blinding of John was a crime, and, subsequently, in the so-called Arsenite schism. Three years after his excommunication, the emperor managed to depose and exile Arsenios, who was not willing to forgive his actions, and in 1266 he enthroned Germanos III at the patriarchate. As a result, the former patriarch's supporters, the Arsenites, who considered his deposition uncanonical, did not recognise any of the following patriarchs or the bishops they elected, and broke away from the church, remaining loyal to Arsenios and the Laskarids. This is why their movement was more influential in Asia Minor, while we should also note its social character, as it mainly represented the lower social strata that had been favoured by Theodore II Laskaris, along with its political motives, since the Arsenites opposed Michael's usurpation of the throne, his indifference to the eastern provinces, and his ecclesiastical, economic and pro-aristocratic policy.

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10. ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology*, 374-375; ANGOLD, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 87-93; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Το σχίσμα*, 184-190; SYKOUTRIS, *Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα*, 278-289; F. TINNEFELD, *Das Schisma zwischen Anhängern und Gegnern des Patriarchen Arsenios in der orthodoxen Kirche von Byzanz (1265-1310)*, *BZ* 105/1 (2012), 143-166, here 143-147, 163.

11. D. M. NICOL, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium*, Cambridge 1979, 7; SYKOUTRIS, *Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα*, 293-295.



In addition, Gounaridis claims that the spread of the movement in Asia Minor contributed to the abandonment of the region, giving the emperor the ideological pretexts to neglect it<sup>12</sup>, while Angold argues that Michael's usurpation and the excommunication of Arsenios were the reasons behind the emergence of the Arsenite movement, which had its roots in the years of John III Vatatzis and the conflict between the state and the church caused by the emperor's intervention in the ecclesiastical administration<sup>13</sup>. During the reign of Andronikos, however, the political character of the movement was strengthened and it spread in Constantinople, where the people already had anti-Latin and anti-unionist feelings, while they were also faced with an economic crisis, heavy taxation, malfunctions of basic institutions, and state arbitrariness, something that facilitated their influence by the Arsenites who were leading the social struggles of the time. The Arsenite schism then deeply divided both church and society in the remaining years of the thirteenth century until it was officially resolved in 1310 under Andronikos, as it raised the question of the emperor's role in the patriarch's unction and, especially, the extent to which the former could interfere in ecclesiastical affairs<sup>14</sup>.

### *Michael and the Union of Lyons*

The second major debate that also divided church and society in these last centuries was the union of the Byzantine and Roman churches. Michael believed that certain Western leaders, and primarily Charles of Anjou, constituted an important and immediate threat to Byzantium, as they wished to restore the Latin empire of Constantinople and did not consider him a legitimate heir to the throne. Therefore, he tried to approach the

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12. P. GOUNARIDIS, *Το κίνημα των Αρσενιατών (1261-1310). Ιδεολογικές διαμάχες την εποχή των πρώτων Παλαιολόγων*, Athens 1999, 26.

13. ANGOLD, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 56-57.

14. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκή Ἱστορία*, ed. L. SCHOPEN, *Byzantina Historia*, vol. 1, Bonn 1829, 92-95; ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology*, 384-392; D. J. GEANAKOPILOS, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258-1282: A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations*, Cambridge, MA 1959, 272; J. GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy, 1198-1400*, New Brunswick 1979, 118; GOUNARIDIS, *Το κίνημα*, 35-44, 212, 226-27; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Το σχίσμα*, 179, 191-196, 225, 233-234; NICOL, *Church and Society*, 7-9; SYKOUTRIS, *Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα*, 298-301, 306; TINNEFELD, *Das Schisma*, 163.

pope, who could restrain them and would never approve a crusade against a Christian (Catholic) empire. Michael also decided to offer the union because he recognised that the pope was more interested in that and in the orthodox church's submission to him than in the complete destruction of the empire, which would give too much strength to Charles, an opponent of both the pope and Michael<sup>15</sup>. It should be noted though that, as Gill, and Papadakis and Meyendorff point out, the emperor's efforts had precedent in the Laskarids' policy towards the West, since before 1261 there was the will for negotiations for a union in Nicaea<sup>16</sup>. After a lengthy exchange of messages and embassies between Michael and the pope Urban IV and, after his death, Clement IV, during which the former exercised all his diplomacy to avoid giving anything but vague promises, in 1274 he eventually accepted the union that Gregory X offered him at the Council of Lyons. The emperor's representatives there presented three letters, written by Michael, his son and co-emperor Andronikos and the Byzantine clergy, according to which they all recognised the Roman Creed and primacy, and George Akropolites took a relevant oath in the name of the emperor in front of the Council. The most important terms (and at the same time the most difficult to bear, as Michael had hoped for more general ones) that the Byzantine envoys had to accept were the commemoration of the pope's name in the diptychs, the public prayers that were recited during the liturgy in Constantinople, as well as the recognition of his primacy and of his right of appellate jurisdiction<sup>17</sup>.

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15. C. ARAMPATZIS, Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες στην Κωνσταντινούπολη στον απόηχο της συνόδου της Λυών (1274-1280), *Βυζαντινά* 20 (1999), 199-251, here 199-200; W. NORDEN, *Das Papsttum und Byzanz: die Trennung der beiden Mächte und das Problem ihrer Wiedervereinigung bis zum Untergange des byzantinischen Reichs* (1453), Berlin 1903, 443. On Michael and the Union of Lyon, see also GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 106-141, 162-181; D. M. NICOL, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, Cambridge 1993, 48-57, 61-71.

16. GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 111, 128; PAPADAKIS, MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East*, 217-219.

17. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 125; George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 2, ed. A. Failler (CFHB 24/2), Paris 1984, 495; H. CHADWICK, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church. From Apostolic Times Until the Council of Florence*, New York 2003, 248-250; GEANAKOPOLOS, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 260-262; D. M. NICOL, The Byzantine reaction to the Second Council of Lyons, 1274, *Studies in Church History* 7 (1971), 113-146, here 116-118.



Subsequently Gregory's successor, the more intransigent pope Innocent V, asked Michael, Andronikos and the bishops in Byzantium to once again personally swear that they accepted the Roman faith and the papal primacy and to implement the Union. Eventually, due to internal controversies, the two emperors agreed three years after the Council, during the papacy of John XXI, and formally took an oath in front of his legates, the orthodox clergy and Byzantine officials during a ceremony at the Palace of Blachernai, which was followed by a relevant synodical letter written by the Patriarch Bekkos and signed by the clergy<sup>18</sup>. However, the papacy was still unhappy with the absence of a personal oral oath by the latter, and the next pope, Nicholas III, insisted on receiving this, as well as a more explicit profession of faith from Michael and Andronikos, which took place after a while. At the time, the emperor was faced with many problems, one of which was the patriarch's brief resignation due to the accusations of sympathy for anti-unionist exiles that were made against him. Despite the mutual dissatisfaction between them however, Michael succeeded in persuading Bekkos to receive the pope's envoys in the monastery he had retired, while soon after the latter returned to his throne and summoned a council, which again failed to satisfy the pope's demands<sup>19</sup>.

In 1281 Martin IV was crowned pope with the help of Charles of Anjou, and, in return, he supported him in his plans. Therefore, he excommunicated Michael, thus putting an end to the Union and opening the way for a crusade against Byzantium that would be led by Charles. However, the expedition's preparations collapsed one year later during the Sicilian Vespers, when the people in Sicily rebelled against Charles (an event in which Michael himself had played an important role). The emperor was understandably angry and disappointed with the pope's behaviour, but, being careful, he also did not hasten to denounce the Union. Instead, he forbade the mention of Martin's name in the diptychs, but he did not really have much time to react to these events as he died soon after, in December 1282<sup>20</sup>.

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18. GEANAKOPOS, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 306-308; J.M. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford 1990, 238-240. See also ARAMPATZIS, *Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες*.

19. ARAMPATZIS, *Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες*, 243-245; GEANAKOPOS, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 312-314, 317-321.

20. ARAMPATZIS, *Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες*, 249-250; NICOL,

As for the Union, it was resented from the beginning by the people of almost all classes and by the clergy in Constantinople, who initially were not fully aware of the content of the emperor's negotiations or were under the impression (which was given by Michael) that these were made for strictly political reasons, as Byzantium was in danger, and that any changes decided upon at the Council did not have to be implemented in the empire. Soon, however, they became upset due to the absence of any open formal debate with the active participation of representatives of all the patriarchates. At the same time, they became worried of possible alterations to the orthodox faith, because of the acceptance of Roman rituals and doctrines, and therefore, according to the Byzantine way of thinking, of losing God's protection as His people. The clergy was also annoyed because the imperial authority seemed to expand its influence in the ecclesiastical sphere<sup>21</sup>. Michael then, convinced of the Union's political advantages, tried to violently enforce it and prosecuted its opponents (mostly monks), confiscated their properties and imprisoned or exiled them, treating them as traitors, thus creating an anti-unionist schism. In addition, he tried to make sure that the pope was aware of his efforts to impose the Union, even on members of his own family who opposed it, and of the difficulty of this task; the latter, however, soon started thinking that Michael was purposefully delaying<sup>22</sup>. It is also important to note that one of the emperor's first actions was to depose yet another patriarch, the anti-unionist Joseph I, and replace him with John XI Bekkos who, although initially a dissident, by that time was officially supporting the Union<sup>23</sup> and in a synod in 1276 excommunicated anyone

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*The Last Centuries*, 88-89. On Michael in general, and his role in the Sicilian Vespers, see also GEANAKOPOLOS, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*; L. PIERALLI, *La corrispondenza diplomatica dell' imperatore bizantino con le potenze estere nel tredicesimo secolo, 1204-1282: studio storico-diplomatistico ed edizione critica*, Città del Vaticano 2006.

21. M. ANGOLD, Byzantium and the west 1204-1453, in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 5: Eastern Christianity*, ed. M. ANGOLD, Cambridge 2006, 53-78, here 56; M.-H. BLANCHET, The Patriarchs and the Union of the Churches, in: *A companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, ed. C. GASTGEBER – E. MITSIOU – J. PREISER-KAPPELLER – V. ZERVAN, Leiden, Boston 2021, 84-102, here 90-91; GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 128, 131; NICOL, *The Last Centuries*, 53-54, 76; PAPADAKIS, MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East*, 222-225.

22. ARAMPATZIS, *Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες*, 238-240; CHADWICK, *East and West*, 251; PAPADAKIS, MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East*, 226.

23. John Bekkos used to be the archivist of Hagia Sophia, and a prominent anti-unionist,

who opposed it. The former's supporters then, embittered, formed a party, the Josephites, refused to recognise Bekkos and considered the unionists heretics; and so did the Arsenites<sup>24</sup>. So despite the animosity between them, these two parties found a common enemy in the face of the emperor and his ecclesiastical policy. This schism within the Byzantine church and the anti-unionist feelings also haunted the largest part of Andronikos' reign.

### *Andronikos and the Union of Lyons*

At a young age Andronikos had agreed to the terms of the Union of Lyons and had sworn obedience to the pope. After his succession to the throne though, as one of the greatest Western threats of Michael's time, that of Charles of Anjou, had been thwarted, a rejection of the Union (and the subsequent break with Rome) was less dangerous. Therefore, his first official act was to end the Union and restore Orthodoxy by an imperial decree in 1282, thus reconciling the anti-unionists<sup>25</sup>. His only concern was that he would have to depose the unionist patriarch Bekkos and reinstate his predecessor Joseph, which he eventually did for the sake of internal peace in both his empire and the church. The next year a synod in Constantinople officially charged Bekkos with heresy and exiled him to Prousa, where Andronikos ensured he would be as comfortable as possible. The same synod decided that any documents related to the Union had to be burnt and that Michael would not receive a Christian funeral and would not be commemorated by any memorial even on his anniversary<sup>26</sup>. Its decisions were later confirmed by the emperor, who allowed them to take place so that, in the words of the contemporary historian Pachymeres, *ὥς ἂν γούν μόνον τὰ τῆς χθεςινῆς ἐκείνης καταιγίδος καταστορεσθεῖεν, ἥς χάριν*

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something that led to his imprisonment. However, when Michael was looking for a spokesman in favour of the Union, he decided to provide Bekkos with translated passages from the Latin fathers which would prove the similarities between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Bekkos was therefore persuaded that the Union could take place and, following his release, an official unionist party was formed around him. (NICOL, *The Last Centuries*, 55).

24. ARAMPATZIS, *Εκκλησιαστικο-πολιτικές και θεολογικές διεργασίες*, 203; KARAYANNOPOULOS, *Το Βυζαντινό Κράτος*, 240-245.

25. A. CAMERON, *The Byzantines*, Malden 2006, 54.

26. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκή Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 152-154. S. RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge 1977, 149-150.

δηλός ἦν τοῖς ἀμφ' ἐκεῖνον πιστοῖς καὶ πρότερον ὀδυνώμενος, τῷ πατρὶ συνάρχων τε καὶ συμπράττων, εἰ καὶ μὴδ' ὅλως ἀντιβαίνειν εἶχε, ταῖς τοῦ καιροῦ δυσκολίαις ἀγγόμενος (the storms of yesterday might be stilled and peace be restored, and that his own conscience, which had been sorely troubled by having to support his father's policy, might be set at rest)<sup>27</sup>. In addition, Andronikos released and restored all the prisoners that had been prosecuted by Michael, while short afterwards Hagia Sophia was cleansed as it had been after 1261. During the Second Council of Blachernai in 1285 the Union was once again formally rejected, this time by a synodal decree, Bekkos was condemned for heresy and later imprisoned, and the unionist bishops were removed from their sees<sup>28</sup>. This shift in Andronikos' imperial policy, which marked a notable political interruption in Byzantium's history, illustrated his decision to concern himself mainly with the domestic affairs of the empire, whose political and social life he wanted to restore by bringing peace to the church, unlike his father, who was more interested in relations with the West. This reorientation might have been due to his deeply religious character, but it was also caused by the influence of some members the clergy who fervently supported Byzantine Orthodoxy and affected him and, at the same time, it was a political priority throughout his reign which he placed before the benefits that the Union would offer, since he needed the clergy and society united.

However, during his reign he was often in touch with Western powers for diplomatic and economic reasons, and in the fourteenth century he adopted a policy of rapprochement. His diplomatic efforts included negotiations for an ecclesiastical union, as Andronikos was well aware of its value as a bargaining leverage, in order to get involved in Western affairs and to form closer relations with Latin leaders. It seems that at least twice, in 1311 and again in 1324-1327, he was willing to suggest a union. In the former case he offered it as a condition for the marriage of a Byzantine prince to Catherine

27. Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, ed. A. Failler (CFHB 24.3), Paris 1999, 31-33.

28. Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, 29-31; G. FINLAY, *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864. Volume III. The Byzantine and Greek Empires. Part II*, Oxford 1877, 376; GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 182-183; HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church*, 236, 243; A. E. LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II 1282-1328*, Cambridge, MA 1972, 32-33.

of Valois, but there was no interest from the other side, while in the latter he initiated more serious negotiations with pope John XXII<sup>29</sup>. According to Laiou, the reason for this shift in Andronikos' Western policy cannot have been his fear of a grave danger from the West, as during that period, despite some crusading plans, Latin leaders did not pose a serious threat to the empire. On the contrary, he decided to diplomatically approach the West in order to eliminate any threats from Asia Minor, which by then was almost completely lost. Moreover, she continues, it seems that the old emperor might have eventually come in terms with his father's foreign policy and thought it was the right time to imitate it<sup>30</sup>. Thus, on this occasion he once again prioritised the empire's interests and was willing to take an initiative that would be criticised by the church. In May 1327, however, he admitted that it would be difficult to impose a union on his people and ended the negotiations, probably because he believed that they could result in a revolt against him at a time when he had found himself amidst a civil war with his grandson<sup>31</sup>.

### *Andronikos and the Arsenite schism*

The second ecclesiastical problem Andronikos had to deal with, which also dated from Michael's time, was the Arsenite schism and the conflict between the Josephites and the Arsenites, who opposed the former because Joseph was the one that had lifted Michael's excommunication, and because they believed that his elevation to the patriarchal throne was invalid since he too had been excommunicated by Arsenios<sup>32</sup>. As already mentioned,

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29. GILL, *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 192-193; LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 241, 299-300, 307; A.-M. TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasius (1289-1293; 1303-1309) and the Church*, *DOP* 27 (1973), 11-28, here 20.

30. LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 315-329.

31. See T. KÄPPELI, *Deux Nouveaux Ouvrages de fr. Philippe Incontri de Pera*, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 23 (1953), 163-183, where Philip Incontri, a Dominican who lived in Pera, attributes Andronikos' ending the negotiations to the civil war. On the civil war between Andronikos II and Andronikos III, see, for example, K. KYRRIS, *Τὸ Βυζάντιον κατὰ τὸν ΙΔ' αἰῶνα: Ἡ πρώτη φάσις τοῦ ἐμφυλίου πολέμου καὶ ἡ πρώτη συνδιαλλαγή τῶν δύο Ἀνδρονίκων* (20. IV - Φθινόπωρον 1321), Nicosia 1982.

32. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church*, 244; SYKOUTRIS, *Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα*, 301-303, 307-310. On the case of Joseph's excommunication by Arsenios, see GOUNARIDIS, *Τὸ κίνημα*, 89-96;

after Michael's death Andronikos restored Joseph to the patriarchate, thus showing his support and giving control of the affairs of the church to the pro-Palaiologan party, the Josephites, keeping in mind that, although the Arsenites presented a greater threat, Joseph was the one who had crowned him co-emperor, and therefore questioning the legality of his election would be impossible. The newly appointed patriarch, however, was old and ill, and died in March 1283<sup>33</sup>.

Although the Arsenites expected that the new patriarch would be one of their members, Andronikos tried to compromise the two factions by choosing the scholar and layman Gregory II of Cyprus who he thought would be accepted by both of them, while he also selected bishops that were not in favour of any of the dissident parties and had not been involved in the Union. Unfortunately for him, Gregory turned out to be opposed by both sides, while the Arsenites were especially disappointed and felt that the emperor had deceived them<sup>34</sup>. During Gregory's time in the office, an effort was made to reconcile the two parties. In 1284 Andronikos ordered a church synod at Atramyttion in Asia Minor<sup>35</sup>, where he did not seem to take any initiative, as he did not want to embitter either party; it was rather decided that it was up to God to judge which one should rule the church. The emperor cast into a fire two volumes, each containing the opinions of the two factions, and the one that would not be burnt would be considered the worthiest. As both were immediately burnt, the two parties were briefly appeased and agreed to accept Gregory as patriarch. The following day though some of the most adamant Arsenites regretted this, and Gregory excommunicated everyone who did not recognise him; after all, the council proved to be a costly operation that led nowhere. In a further attempt to reunite them with the official church, Andronikos allowed them to bring the body of Arsenios

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V. LAURENT, L' excommunication du patriarche Joseph Ier par son prédécesseur Arsène, *BZ* 30/1 (1929), 489-496; SYKOUTRIS, Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα, 319-331.

33. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 159-164; PACHYMERES, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, 47-53; GOUNARIDIS, *Τὸ κίνημα*, 106, 111, 121; Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 34.

34. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church*, 244; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Τὸ σχίσμα*, 206; RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 149; TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasius*, 17.

35. According to Nicol, the choice of the meeting place was a concession to the Arsenites who had many followers in Asia Minor (NICOL, *The Last Centuries*, 97).



in Constantinople in order to rebury it with the honours appropriate for a patriarch, and later travelled to Asia Minor, visited the blind John Laskaris and ameliorated his living conditions. The Arsenites, however, were still not satisfied, and in 1289 they contributed to the patriarch's resignation, again hoping that one of their number would be elected<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, their demands, which included the election of a patriarch from their ranks, the removal of Joseph's name from the diptychs, the restoration of orthodoxy and the cancellation of previous excommunications<sup>37</sup>, were so extreme that Andronikos could not accept them, and finally chose the monk Athanasios to be the next patriarch<sup>38</sup>.

The emperor was again under the impression that the pious man would be accepted by both parties and by the people, as monks were generally close to popular sentiment. But once again the Arsenites felt discontent, while the patriarch was also intransigent in dealing with them and considered them to be enemies of the church and a political and ecclesiastical threat to the empire<sup>39</sup>. He soon became very unpopular with almost everyone in the Byzantine church, as he insisted that bishops should not stay in the capital but return to their sees or at least to one of the nearby vacant dioceses where they could protect their flock and guide it spiritually<sup>40</sup>, while certain monks

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36. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 166-167, 171-174; Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, 69-77, 93-99; FINLAY, *A History of Greece*, 377-378; GOUNARIDIS, *Τὸ κίνημα*, 154-156; LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 34-35; NICOL, *Church and Society*, 97-98; RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 150.

37. These demands are included in the "Γράμμα των Ζηλωτῶν το πρὸς βασιλέα" published in V. LAURENT, *Les grandes crises religieuses à Byzance. La fin du schisme arsenite*, *Bulletin de la section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine* 26/2 (1945), 225-313, here 286-287.

38. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 177-179; Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, 155-157; TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasius*, 17; A.-M. TALBOT, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters to the Emperor Andronicus II, Members of the Imperial Family, and Officials* (CFHB 7), Washington, D.C. 1975, xviii. I intend to elaborate on the figure of Athanasios and his interference in secular affairs in another article.

39. D. KALOMOIRAKIS, *Ο Οικουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης Ἅγιος Αθανάσιος Α΄ και η Διδασκαλία του πρὸς τοὺς Κατοίκους της Μικρᾶς Ασίας κατὰ το 1303*, *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικῶν Σπουδῶν* 8 (1990), 23-50, here 30. See Athanasios I, *Letter 69*, ed. Talbot, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I*.

40. J. L. BOOJAMRA, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Study for the*

that had gathered around him almost terrorised those who were not behaving according to their rules<sup>41</sup>. In addition, he was opposed by secular officials, whom he often criticised, and eventually he abdicated in 1293<sup>42</sup>. His successor the next year was another monk, the more compromising John XII Kosmas, who, however, was also received with opposition as he tried to continue Athanasios' work. He was critical of the emperor and came into conflict with him, especially regarding taxation (in 1301, for example, he threatened to stop performing his duties as patriarch and left the patriarchal residence and his throne) and some of Andronikos' diplomatic choices, such as his five-year-old daughter's, Simonis, marriage to the Serbian king Stefan II Milutin in exchange for peace. The decision of that marriage was considered uncanonical and opposite to the church's marital law by the patriarch, and led to his threatening to resign and eventually staying in his office only after the emperor had apologised and justified his actions to him<sup>43</sup>. Then in July 1302, angered and disappointed by the hostility against him, John XII sent Andronikos a letter of resignation, although he did not really wish to leave his office. But the emperor was probably feeling "that John was unreasonably exacting in some of his criticisms", and therefore accepted the resignation<sup>44</sup>. The latter, however, soon retracted and excommunicated

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*Patriarchate of Athanasios of Constantinople*, Thessaloniki 1982, 97-99, 104; TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasios*, 23-24. See Athanasios I, Letter 16, 25, 28, 30, 32.

41. J. L. BOOJAMRA, *Social Thought and Reforms of Athanasios of Constantinople* (1289-1293; 1303-1309), *Byz.* 55.1 (1985), 332-382, here 341; KALOMOIRAKIS, *Ο Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης*, 28; TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasios*, 26-27; TALBOT, *The Correspondence of Athanasios I*, xxviii.

42. Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία*, vol. 1, 180-182; BOOJAMRA, *Church Reform*, 18; E. FRYDE, *The Early Palaelogan Renaissance (1261-c. 1360)*, Leiden, Boston 2000, 98; KALOMOIRAKIS, *Ο Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης*, 30. See also M. S. PATEDAKIS, *Η διαμάχη του πατριάρχη Αθανασίου Α΄ (1289-1293, 1303-1309) με τον κλήρο της Αγίας Σοφίας (1306-1307) μέσα από ένδεκα ανέκδοτες επιστολές*, *Ελληνικά* 56.2 (2006), 279-319.

43. Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία*, vol. 1, 193; Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικά Ιστορικά*, vol. 3, 203-209, 233; vol. 4 (CFHB 24.4), Paris 1999, 307-313, 321-327; LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 97-100, 123-124. On Simonis and Stefan, see, for example, L. MAKSIMOVIC, *War Simonis Palaiologina die fünfte Gemahlin von König Milutin?*, in: *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit: Referate des Internationalen Symposions zu Ehren von Herbert Hunger (Wien, 30. November bis 3. Dezember 1994)*, ed. W. SEIBT, Wien 1996, 115-120.

44. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church*, 251.

anyone who wanted him replaced, thus causing Andronikos to have lengthy meetings with ecclesiastics in order to decide on the validity of the retraction. Finally he was persuaded to withdraw his excommunication, and resigned a year later<sup>45</sup>. Andronikos started negotiating with the Arsenites in order to appoint a patriarch they would approve, thus ending the schism. Meanwhile, he tried to keep the bishops that had served under John XII in their positions so as not to estrange the Josephites. Nevertheless, the pious and superstitious emperor later changed his mind and recalled Athanasios to the patriarchate because he was impressed by his prophetic abilities and because he wanted him to get his earlier implied anathema lifted, leaving the Arsenites feeling deceived once again<sup>46</sup>.

However, Athanasios' attitude towards the Arsenites had not changed, and therefore Andronikos' attempts to reunite them with the Byzantine church failed. In 1304 the emperor called their leaders to a synod where he blamed them for dividing both the church and the society despite all his efforts, sacrifices and good will since his elevation to the throne. He emphasised the concessions he had made to them, his complete devotion to internal peace in the church and to orthodoxy, and stated that since they did not question the doctrine, they had to obey the hierarchy. It should be mentioned that, although he might seem to exaggerate, the emperor's speech to some extent reflects reality, as his concern with religious matters did occupy much of his time and his attitude towards the Arsenites was rather conciliatory. Taking into account his purpose, which at the time was to appease them, it is nevertheless worth noting that these assurances give the impression of a sad apology on his part. At the same time, during this synod he also tried to coax them into returning to the official church by expressing his admiration for Arsenios, but later also warned them that otherwise the responsibility for the schism would fall solely on them<sup>47</sup>. His plan was to prevent them from causing more political trouble, as the party had gradually become one of simple opposition to the Palaiologan dynasty

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45. Georges Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 4, ed. A. Failler (CFHB 24/4), Paris 1999, 371-393, 409-411, 415-421; BOOJAMRA, *Church Reform*, 55, 58-59.

46. ANGELOV, *Imperial Ideology*, 400; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Το σχίσμα*, 219; TALBOT, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I*, xxi-xxii.

47. Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 4, 509-517, 521-527; BOOJAMRA, *Church Reform*, 141-143; GOUNARIDIS, *Το κίνημα*, 191.

and the official church, a religious, political and social movement that would often take part in riots and anti-government conspiracies<sup>48</sup>. We should note here that there were two factions in the Arsenite party: some monks that belonged to its leading group wanted its goals to be purely religious and not political, while it was the majority of its members that wanted to overthrow the Palaiologans<sup>49</sup>. However, none of the factions was convinced during the council, and it ended without an agreement. Eventually, the emperor decided that in order to end the controversy he had to replace Athanasios with a more compromising patriarch. In September 1309 the latter resigned and, after lengthy negotiations with the Arsenites, Andronikos replaced him with Niphon.

According to the contemporary historian Gregoras, the new patriarch might not have been completely qualified for his office, but he did want to heal the schism<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, he negotiated with the Arsenites, whose power by that time had diminished due to the loss of many territories, and therefore followers, in Asia Minor, and thus they wished to return to the official church as they had realised that their opposition to it was leading nowhere, and very soon an agreement was achieved. After forty-five years they finally came in terms with the official church and agreed to recognise both the patriarch and the hierarchy. The settlement took place in a formal ceremony at Hagia Sophia<sup>51</sup> in September 1310, where Arsenios' corpse was brought and set up, dressed in patriarchal clothes and holding a document, according to which his excommunications were being retracted. The Arsenites returned to the communion of the church with the minimum of inconvenience or embarrassment to either side, and the terms of their agreement were confirmed by an imperial chrysobull, as though a treaty were being signed at the end of a long war, as Nicol writes<sup>52</sup>, two imperial decrees

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48. BOOIAMRA, *Church Reform*, 16, 139-141; GOUNARIDIS, *To κίνημα*, 27, 232; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Το σχίσμα*, 223-224; LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 246; NICOL, *The Last Centuries*, 104-105.

49. GOUNARIDIS, *To κίνημα*, 228-234.

50. Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία*, vol. 1, 259.

51. In contrast, as Tinnefeld notes, to the ceremony during which Joseph had lifted the excommunication of Michael VIII, a move that had angered the Arsenites (FR. TINNEFELD, *Das Schisma*, 164).

52. NICOL, *The Last Centuries*, 105.

and an encyclical letter written by the patriarch. These terms included the repudiation of any other dogma, the removal of any members of the clergy that had practiced simony and of those that had been ordained by the former patriarch John Bekkos, the removal of Joseph's name from the list of patriarchs and the guarantee that neither John XII nor Athanasios would be allowed to become patriarchs again. Andronikos approved them for the sake of ecclesiastical peace, adding the canonical assurance that John and Athanasios had left the patriarchate of their own free will, thus precluding any possibility of their returning. In addition, the fact that the Arsenites did not insist on their demand for the election of one of their number to the patriarchate indicates that they finally recognised the Palaiologan dynasty. That was a great relief for the emperor who, until then, always had to take them into account every time he would make a political decision<sup>53</sup>.

Four years after the achievement of the settlement with the Arsenites, Niphon was accused of simony and was deposed in April 1314<sup>54</sup>. In 1315 a successor was found in the layman and scholar John XIII Glykys. At the time John was already weak and in 1319 he had to resign because of his deteriorating health. The next patriarch was the elderly monk Gerasimos I, whom Andronikos appointed so as to be able to govern the church without any opposition. Gerasimos soon died and in 1323 he was replaced by another monk, Isaiah. The emperor might have been under the impression that he could easily handle him, as he did with his predecessor, but Isaiah turned out to be less compromising and eventually sided with Andronikos III in his revolt against the emperor<sup>55</sup>. According to Runciman, the fact

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53. Gregoras, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 261-262; BOOJAMRA, *Church Reform*, 146-148; HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church*, 253; KONTOYANNOPOULOU, *Τὸ σχίσμα*, 225-234; LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 245-246; TALBOT, *The Patriarch Athanasius*, 18; TALBOT, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I*, xxvi; RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 151. For the texts of the agreement of 1310, see LAURENT, *Les grandes crises*, Appendix II, 288-313.

54. See D. AGORITSAS, *Ὁ Οἰκουμενικός Πατριάρχης Νίφων Α΄ (1310-1314)*, *ΕΕΒΣ* 53 (2007-2009), 233-264, here 247-259.

55. FINLAY, *A History of Greece*, 381. On Isaiah, see A. S. ANCA, *The Ecumenical Patriarch as Mediator. Patriarch and Emperor in the Palaiologan Period*, in: *Le patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople et Byzance hors frontières (1204-1586). Actes de la table ronde organisée dans le cadre du 22e Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Sofia, 22-27 août 2011*, ed. M.-H. BLANCHET – M.-H. CONGOURDEAU – D.I. MUREȘAN, Paris 2014, 69-79.

that the office of the patriarch was often left vacant during these last years of Andronikos' reign indicates that the absence of a patriarch was not disturbing to him, while it also gave him the opportunity to deal with the church and its reorganisation himself, especially after his experience with patriarchs such as John XII and Athanasios<sup>56</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

It seems then that Michael and Andronikos followed two distinct ecclesiastical policies that were related to the different circumstances under which they reigned, as they were trying to satisfy foreign policy needs and combine them with the need to maintain internal consensus in their empire. Before 1261 Michael wanted to rule on his own, and after the recapture of Constantinople his main objective was the prevention of a Latin attack against the city. Therefore, he did everything in his power to seize and then to preserve his throne, even if actions such as the usurpation and the Union of Lyons were going against the public and religious sentiment. On the other hand, Andronikos' religious policy aimed at restoring orthodoxy and reconciling both the Byzantine church and society, and so his first official act was to repudiate the Union and reinstate the patriarch Joseph. He also tried to heal the Arsenite schism, and as part of his effort he too intervened in ecclesiastical matters by deposing and enthroning patriarchs, even if his aim was solely to ameliorate elements within the church in a turbulent time for the empire. At the same time though, some of his actions in relation to the movement indicate his compliance with the church, unlike his father; it is worth mentioning that both contemporary historians, Pachymeres and Gregoras, underline that Andronikos did not want to embitter any side and that the Arsenites would often take advantage of his interest in peace within both the church and society, and further increase their demands every time the emperor would make a concession to them.<sup>57</sup> In the long term then, both emperors' actions regarding the church resulted in its emerging stronger and extending its influence on the political and social life of the empire, a factor that eventually played a part in its survival independently from it after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

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56. RUNCIMAN, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, 152.

57. Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκή Ἱστορία*, vol. 1, 162; Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι*, vol. 3, 67.



ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ Η΄ ΣΤΟΝ ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟ Β΄: ΟΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΕΤΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΟΣΕΓΙΤΣΕΙΣ  
ΤΩΝ ΔΥΟ ΠΡΩΤΩΝ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΣΕ ΣΧΕΣΗ ΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ

Ένας από τους βασικούς στόχους του Μιχαήλ Η΄ Παλαιολόγου μετά το 1261 ήταν η ενίσχυση των επαφών με τη Δύση που θα απέτρεπαν μία σταυροφορία εναντίον της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, διαπραγματεύτηκε την ένωση της βυζαντινής και της ρωμαϊκής εκκλησίας και προσπάθησε να την επιβάλει στην αυτοκρατορία, η οποία τότε ήταν ήδη διχασμένη λόγω του Αρσενιατικού σχίσματος που είχε προκύψει μετά τον σφετερισμό του θρόνου από τον ίδιο. Μετά τον θάνατό του, ο διάδοχός του Ανδρόνικος Β΄ είχε ως πρωταρχικό μέλημα τις εκκλησιαστικές υποθέσεις, τις οποίες προσπάθησε να ρυθμίσει ανατρέποντας τις αποφάσεις του πατέρα του: ο νέος αυτοκράτορας απέρριψε επίσημα την Ένωση και προσπάθησε να κατευνάσει τους Αρσενιάτες επιλέγοντας πατριάρχες που πίστευε ότι θα γίνονταν αποδεκτοί από αυτούς. Καθώς ακολούθησε μία πιο συμβιβαστική πολιτική, παρατηρήθηκε μία αξιοσημείωτη αλλαγή στην ιστορία της βυζαντινής αυτοκρατορίας.

