I. INTRODUCTION

Research on Byzantine Iconoclasm with emphasis on its exact ideological cornerstone has evoked strong scholarly interest worldwide. Until now, the subject seems to have been extremely attested by documentary sources along with “a crisis of over-explanation”, while a “multistranded series of cause” is too difficult to unpack in its entirety. In this case, there is hardly a commonly understood viewpoint on the root causes of the iconoclastic movement, launched by Isaurian emperors Leo III and his son and successor, Constantine V, both of whom as the primarily responsible persons scheduled and implemented all developments culminating in the Council of Hiereia, held in 754 AD. What was the main incentive of this ecclesiastical and political initiative, especially the locus of its origin in a multicultural Byzantine empire: the heir of the ancient Greco-Roman world, but to be under the influence of the ancient religious mysticism of the Middle East? Was it

2 The question on whether iconoclasm was an “imperial” movement or not is examined thoroughly in L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680-850: a history, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2011), 69-155. However, apart from the close religious or intellectual environment of Leo III and regardless of whether the Chalke incident is a myth and its relevant edict was not “against images”, all other historical evidence, such as the expulsion of Patriarch Germanos as well as the absence of the four Patriarchates (Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch) from the Council of Hiereia, proves the absolute Caesaropapism of the Isaurian emperors known from the imperial statement “I am king but also priest” ("βασιλεὺς εἰμὶ καὶ ἱερεὺς").
the society or the emperors, who pursued reforms to Church’s faith and liturgical rites, the great aniconic religions of Judaism and Islam, or a peculiar Christology, alive in the Early Church and opposing any pictorial representation of God in Christian temples, on the pretext of pagan superstitions? The only thing certain is that “the rhetoric in the beginning of the dispute did not have an overtly Christological character and did not touch on these matters” until after John of Damascus³.

Before seeking any specific motive for the iconoclast movement, we must primarily think of what type of human and society is under research. What are the differences in mindset between modern people and those living during the Iconoclast era? Was fear or respect for any divine reality dominant in the thought of the people during the Middle Byzantine and generally the Medieval times or not? If the answer to this question is positive, soteriological and hence theological reasons should be identified and investigated behind Iconoclasm.

At this point, we have to make clear that the term “theology” is used with its literal meaning deriving from its Greek etymology. In reference to the word “θεολογία” the real research object of (scientific) theology is “θεός”, that is God in the broad sense of the “absolute”. Similarly, the second crucial term “iconoclasm” is adopted mainly in its narrow sense, meaning mainly the destruction of icons due to a theologically indescribable God together with his also indescribable Saints.

As a consequence, the field of our theological research is not the Church only as a social institution in balance with or in opposition to the State, during the period of Iconoclasm or whenever and wherever

³ D. Pallis, ‘Communion with God and Theology of the Icon: A Study of the Christological Iconology of St. John of Damascus’, in M. Edwards and E. E. D-Vasilescu (eds), Visions of God and Ideas on Deification in Patristic Thought, Routledge (London and New York, 2017), 175. Also, see J. M. Hussey, The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire, Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2010), 34. “The opponents of icons in the pre-iconoclastic period usually derived support from the Mosaic prohibition against graven images (Exodus 20:4-5) and stressed the Christian emphasis on worship in spirit and in truth… the Christological argument for and against icons was not really developed until the eight century and then not in the opening stages of the conflict”.

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else. Here, a distinction between religion and theology itself is necessary. Moreover, the determining factor in the evolution of history is more religious faith rather than any political or economic competition, even if this faith changes consciously or unconsciously at times or from person to person, from a religious community to another etc. Since any divine reality is perceived as an exemplary model of life, it affects human reality directly and analogously. In addition, what someone believes about God’s nature and attributes reflects on and forms the type of religious cult he practise. Conversely, the way of life and religious worship indicates what kind of God is really believed in by humanity. If this were the field of theological research, that is to say, what kind of “God” is dominant in human thought, then theologians could offer to historians the identification of the essential reason of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Here the term “essential reason” implies that the iconoclast movement would have been created, even if all the other reasons in the area of politics, diplomacy, religion etc. hadn't existed⁴.

⁴ We certainly deny neither all the other political, religious, social or ideological reasons, making up the “big picture” of the Byzantine Iconoclasm, nor a diversity of corresponding viewpoints of modern research. On the general cultural, religious and social milieu and its crucial facts, see K. Π. Χρήστου, ‘Προσωπογραφικά γιά τόν αὐτοκράτορα Λέοντα Γ’ τόν Ἰσαυρο’, in Scientific Annals of the Faculty of Theology, School of Pastoral and Social Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 5 (Thessalon, 1998), 199-223. Π. Τσορμπατζόγλου, ‘Ἡ φύσι καὶ ἡ προοπτικὴ τῆς Εἰκονομαχίας’, Θεολογία 66/4 (1995), 681-738. Ead., ‘Εκκλησιαστικό δόγμα καὶ αὐτοκρατορικὴ πολιτική. Οἱ θεολογικὲς αντιπαραθέσεις τοῦ 7ον αἰ. ως αἰτία ἀλλαγῆν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς πολιτικῆς’, in Scientific Annals of the Faculty of Theology, School of Pastoral and Social Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki 12 (Thessaloniki, 2007), 171-236. Ead., ‘Ἡ πνευματικὴ κίνησις στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη παραμονὴ τῆς εἰκονομαχίας καὶ ἡ ἀρμενικὴ «ἐλληνόφιλη» μεταφραστικὴ σχολή’, Θεολογία 87/2 (2016), 183-210. The main question is if it was possible for an elite consisting of the emperor and some other political and Church leaders of the highest level to create and shape a political-theological programme deriving from their own religious beliefs and being imposed on the ordinary people. Actually, a group of bishops, mainly consisted of John of Synnada, Thomas of Claudiopolis and Constantine of Nakoleia, is witnessed to persuade the emperor Leo III for his iconoclastic policy. For this, see the three epistles of Germanus I of Constantinople in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, ACO II.3.2, 442-478. Mansi 13, 100B-128A, dated shortly before the outbreak of Iconoclasm movement. In particular, Germanus seems to blame Constantine of Nakoleia more than anyone else for
The initial and stable reference point of this reasoning is definitely the “key texts” of the Iconoclast era, especially all official statements and declarations of the Iconoclasts themselves, like those in the Definition of the Hieria Council.

The fundamental question is whether and how far (iconoclast) Hieria Council (754) officially adopted, in a rather subconscious and unwitting manner, a newfangled Christian faith, in contradiction to the Definitions of its previous Ecumenical Councils, especially that of Chalcedon (451) about the real incarnation of God the Word. More specifically, how likely is it for Iconoclasts to have refused the reality of the “flesh” (“σάρξ”) of the Word of God (“Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ”) and therefore the ability of his “figure” (“μορφή”) to be described (“περιγραπτὸν ἰδίωμα”? Eventually, could they be affected by a prevailing syncretism of their time affected mainly by Manichaeism, and what could be its essential characteristics?

If this is indeed the case, then we have found an autonomous Christological reason, which is perhaps the main cause or at least the theoretical basis of Iconoclasm as having been officially expressed for the first time by Hieria Council. If so, it is more or less true a holistic effect of religious diarchy from theology to ecclesiology and iconology, “the rigid distinction between the sensible and intelligible as well as the depreciation of matter, which has found its most extensive expression
in the religion of Manichaeism and the philosophy of radical Neoplatonism”⁵. But much more any iconographic theory referring to Christ itself depends directly to whatever is believed about his personality and nature since he is the content of the iconography. That’s why Christology more than any other parameter has a great and analogous impact on Iconology. As far as the Iconoclasts of Hieria are concerned, we cannot know to what extent and how generally they adopted diarchic theories, from philosophy to theology. What is evidenced below is their diarchy in Christology.

II. KEY SOURCE TEXTS
i) Modern interpretive approaches to the real background of Iconoclasm

Before examining any primary textual source, we need to make a brief description of the main interpretive approaches to a specific philosophical and theological background of Byzantine Iconoclasm, in order to unravel its ideological root causes. In this case, some scholars focus on the ancient Greek philosophy⁶, especially on the Platonism and

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⁶ For Iconoclasts the problem was not the figural art in general, but only if the figures of Christ, Angels and Saints were to be depicted and worshipped through paintings. During the Iconoclasms era, the legal restrictions for the sacred art did not apply to the secular one (especially for the art of that period see E. Dauterman-Maguire and H. Maguire, Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture, Princeton University Press (Princeton, 2006), 5), let alone that such distinctions between sacred and secular art are observed at later times, in D. Pallis, ‘Communion with God and Theology of the Icon’ (London and New York, 2017), 174. Consequently, at the forefront of the Iconoclastic controversy there is no philosophical dialogue with theories conflicting with each other. On the side of Church faith and tradition, “aesthetics exists as far as we are dealing with it and we ascribe it to the Fathers”, in G. Zografidis, ‘Is Patristic Aesthetics Possible? The Eastern Paradigm Re-examined’, in A. Cameron, M. Edwards and M. Vinzent (eds), Studia Patristica LIV, Vol. 7, Peeters (Leuven, 2013), 115. However, religious or Church art seems to be a field open to any form and style of aesthetics. In other words, there is no Church dogma establishing the Byzantine or any other style of Iconography, even though it is
perceived as a “language of dogma”. Things look so simple according to patristic sources such that of 7th Ecumenical Council’s explicit statement: «Ὅς ζωγράφων ἐφεύρεσις ἡ τῶν εἰκόνων ποίησις, ἀλλὰ τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐγκριτος θεσμοθεσία καὶ παράδοσις... αὐτῶν [τῶν πατέρων] ἡ ἐπίνοια καὶ ἡ παράδοσις καὶ οὐ τοῦ ζωγράφου. τοῦ γὰρ ζωγράφου ἡ τέχνη μόνον, ἡ δὲ διάταξις πρόδηλον τῶν δειμαμένων ἁγίων πατέρων» (= “the construction of the Icons is not an invention of painters, but an eminent ordinance and tradition of the catholic Church... this invention and tradition belongs to the Fathers and not to the painters. Moreover, only the art style owes to the painters, while for the art theme are responsible the Holy Fathers”), in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio III ACO II.III.3.3, 658-12. Mansi 13, 252BC. Fathers of 7th Ecumenical Council express their care only about the accurate depiction of Christ’s figure («μορφὴ») just as he appeared to the human history regardless of what artistic style is used. Otherwise, they would have previously been concerned about questions such that: to what style category belongs the most ancient and exemplary Holy Icons, that is the Acheiropoieta like the Cherubims of the Ark, the Holy Mandylion, the Veil of Veronica, etc.? On the contrary, Fathers are absolutely sure that their iconology is in a common line, which starts from the Old Testament and going on in the New one. Based on historical evidence and logical arguments, they prove that Decalogue itself, particularly its 2nd Commandment, does not prohibit the Icons but only the Idols (for this conceptual distinction and about the whole issue, see K. Georgiadis, ‘From a Christological controversy to an Iconoclastic one: Biblical dicta as interpreted by the Councils of Hieria (754) and of Nicaea II (787)’, Theology & Culture 1/1 (2020), 45-8). On consequence, the following key remarks are fully accepted: a) “Patristic aesthetics, unsystematic and functionalist as it is, cannot be an autonomous field, because for the Fathers aesthetics can only be considered contextualized in a wider theological, philosophical and artistic frame” and b) “one might say, we are not on a philosophical ground but a theological one. That is true, completely or partly, depending on the approach we adopt. And as it happens in many theoretical questions the crucial point is from what field the question is raised, for what purposes and what does it finally mean”, in G. Zografidis, ‘Is Patristic Aesthetics Possible?’, (Leuven, 2013), 113. Also, “for sure, no Father, no Byzantine – at least until the ninth century – intended to form an aesthetic theory or thought of himself as doing aesthetics”, in Ibid., 117. On the other hand, perhaps it is more or less true that “behind style differences” there were “different mentalities”, in H. Ch. Papoulias, ‘A philosophical revision of Iconoclasm’, in M. Suvakov, VI. Mako and VI. Stevanovic (eds), Revisions of Modern Aesthetics: International Scientific Conference, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture, (Belgrade, 2013), 560. However, this was certainly not the essential issue of the Iconoclastic controversy, but almost exclusively the figure of Christ and its ability to be depicted not at all in its divinity, but at least in its humanity. In this case, we agree that “Iconophiles did not claim that images are gods, but neither Iconoclast were against the Arts. The real issue is how an image, could capture something that has not an image at all. The “ἀπερίγραπτον” of God, His “incircumscribable nature”, was a
Neoplatonism strands with a supposed relative aesthetics\(^7\), taking no account of the overriding ancient mysticism of the Middle East, culminating in Manichaeism of the late Roman and medieval times\(^8\).

At this point, Matsoukas makes an accurate distinction between Greek Reason converted to Christianity (i.e. the inter-embracing and coexistence of Greek philosophy with Church life and faith) and the superstitious mysticism of Mesopotamia and Persia, which, after a great expansion of Manichaeism, was to be introduced in Byzantium of 8th century by the iconoclastic decrees of the Isaurians. In other words, the philosophical dualism of Greek philosophy is considered fundamentally different from the religious diarchy of any version of Gnosticism or Manichaeism. On this issue, Prof. Matsoukas remarks:

“Platonic diarchy in no way should be interpreted in the light of the dark diarchy of eastern concepts, according to which an

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\(^7\) The absolute absence of such tendencies in all Greek philosophic traditions is argued in G. Zografidis, ‘Παρατηρήσεις για την τεχνητή εἰκόνα και το υπερβατικό πρότυπο στην αρχαία ελληνική θεωρία της τέχνης’, Ελληνικά 47 (1997), 71-94. Ead., ‘Βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία τῆς εἰκόνας, Μια άναγνωστή τοῦ Ἱσότητος Δαμασκηνοῦ’, Ελληνικά Γράμματα (Αθήνα, 1997). Moreover, “Greeks themselves did not think that they were doing aesthetics. It is not that the Fathers’ concern was theology, that arts and beauty had long been theologically suspect and theoretically controversial or that a late antique Christian Aesthetics was inconceivable only as a Christian one. Aesthetic evaluations were far from being the focal point even in Iconoclasm, when the very existence of representational art was questioned. If we gather all Fathers’ statements concerning art, artcrafts or beauty it is in principio doubtful whether they can legitimately count as ingredients of an intended aesthetics; but we have to remember that the same goes for Plato himself!”’, in G. Zografidis, ‘Is Patristic Aesthetics Possible?’, (Leuven, 2013), 117.

unyielding and unceasing war between the dark and the bright world, the evil and the good spirit, prevails entirely”\textsuperscript{9}.

“In the Symposium, the sensible and insensible worlds are bridged by the ‘demonic’ and functional ministry of Eros, who becomes the intermediate deity between these two worlds”\textsuperscript{10}.

This is the reason why Matsoukas looks for the causes of Iconoclasm nowhere but within the specific cultural, religious and social milieu of Middle East from antiquity to Middle Ages\textsuperscript{11}. Indeed, the frequently repeated words “\textit{Manichaeism-Manicheans}” by Iconophiles referring to Iconoclasts, as well as their similar explanations, confirm Matsoukas’ view\textsuperscript{12}. The question is how could a

\textsuperscript{9} Ν. Ματσούκας, \textit{Ιστορία τής φιλοσοφίας}, (ΦΘ 6), Π. Πουρναρᾶ (Thessaloniki, 2002), 160. \textit{Ibid.}, 164, “In Plato, the sensible world is not a valley of lamentations and corruption. It is clad in and imbued with, structured and composed with insensible substance”.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.} \textit{Συμπόσιον} 202ε, “Καὶ γὰρ τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστι θεοῦ τε καί θνητοῦ... Ἐρμηνευόν καὶ διαπορθμεύον θεοῖς τὰ παρ᾽ ἀνθρώπων καί ἀνθρώπους τὰ παρὰ θεῶν”.

\textsuperscript{11} Ν. Ματσούκας, ‘Ιστορικὲς καὶ Θεολογικὲς προϋποθέσεις εἰκονοφίλων καί εἰκονομάχων’, in \textit{Αναφορὰ εἰς μνήμην Μητροπολίτου Σάρδεων Μαξίμου 1914-1986}, 3 (Geneva, 1989), 347-60. This perspective is absent from almost all scholars today, as long as they examine only the ancient Graeco-Roman World as well as the Jewish or Muslim East, but no other culture, as the source of any intellectual movement of the Middle Ages. For example, see L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680-850: a history} (2011), 18-22. However, Iconoclasm is obviously more than a theological or political movement of a Byzantium “closed to itself”. Besides, what was Manicheism, a Christian heresy within the Graeco-Roman Byzantium, if not another universal religion created by the ancient Zoroastrian-Persian dualism? The main question is whether a non Graeco-Roman way of thought in the mind of the Isaurian emperors was what impacted on their policy against Holy Icons.

\textsuperscript{12} Although both the \textit{Hellenes} and the \textit{Manicheans} are denounced as Iconoclasts in two official statements of the 7\textsuperscript{th} Ecumenical Council (see Erich Lamberz (ed.), \textit{Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio V}, ACO II.3.2, 556-8; 59013-16. Mansi 13, 157DE; 173C), by the term “\textit{Hellenes}” are rather meant the pagans of ancient Hellenism and certainly not Greek philosophical thought. For instance, the “\textit{Hellene}” of the \textit{Dialogue} between the “\textit{Christian}” and the “\textit{Hellene}” (see John of Thessaloniki, \textit{Κατὰ Ἑλλήνων}, in \textit{Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio V}, ACO II.3.2, 5421-54417. Mansi 13, 164C-165C = CPG 7923) does the opposite of defending a supposed philosophical theory about the ability of the divine to be
large number of great scholars observe ancient Greek philosophy in the background to Byzantine Iconoclasm, whereas all of patristic and conciliar sources after Hieriea are full of explicit and evidence-based depiction in art. While such a theory is not developed in ancient Greek philosophy (see G. Zografidis, Παραπτήρισις (1997), 72-3), even in the Platonic or Neoplatonic school, for the Hellenes the question of the Holy Icons relates only to the very identity of their prototype, that is Christ, both uncreated and created God the Word, and not their created material deities. For a clearer and more detailed view on the same subject, see Leontios of Neapolis, Ὑπὲρ τῆς Χριστιανῶν ἀπολογίας, Κατὰ Τουδαίον, in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio IV, ACO II.3.2, 36211-12. Mansi 13, 49D, “ἡμεῖς οἱ Χριστιανοί, οὔτε βωμόν, οὔτε θυσίαν πῶς ἢ τί ἔστιν, ἐπιστάμεθα”, together with: a) ACO II.3.2, 36217-18. Mansi 13, 49D, “ἐτα εἰκόνων Ελληνικῶν καὶ Χριστιανικῶν νοήσωμεν, ὅτι ἐκεῖνοι μὲν εἰς λατρείαν τοῦ διαβόλου, ἡμεῖς δὲ εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ καὶ ὑπόμνησιν», b) ACO II.3.2, 35011-3523. Mansi 13, 49D, “οὔτε παρ’ ἡμῖν ὧς θεοὶ προσκυνοῦντα ὧς θεοὶ προσκυνοῦντα ὧς θεοὶ προσκυνοῦντα καὶ τά λοιπά ξύλα προσκυνεῖν... ἐως μὲν ἐστι συμπεπεδημένα τὰ δύο ξύλα τοῦ σταυροῦ, προσκυνῶ τὸν τύπον διὰ Χριστὸν τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ σταυρωθέντα... ἕως δὲ διαιρεθῶσιν ἐξ ἀλλήλων, ῥίπτω αὐτὰ καὶ κατακαίω”, c) John of Damascus, Πρὸς τοὺς διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας, Λόγος α´, 24 PG 94, 1256D-1257A, in B. Kotter (ed.), Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos 3, Contra imaginum calumniators orations tres, PTS 17, (Berlin, 1975), 1156-29, “οὐ τῶν παρ᾽ ἡμῖν εἰκόνων βδελύσσονται τὴν προσκύνησιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν ταύτας θεοποιοῦντων Ἑλλήνων. Οὐ δεῖ τούν διὰ τὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄτοπον χρῆσιν, καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν εὐσεβῶς γινομένην, ἀναιρεῖν. Ἐφορκίζουσιν ἐπαοιδοί τε καὶ γόητες, ἐφορκίζει καὶ τοὺς κατηχουμένους ἡ Ἐκκλησία. ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἐπικαλοῦνται δαίμονας, αὕτη δὲ, Θεὸν κατὰ δαίμονας τὰς εἰκόνας ἀνατιθέασιν Ἑλλήνες, καὶ θεοὺς ταύτας προσαγορεύουσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀληθεῖ Θεῷ σαρκωθέντι, καὶ Θεοῦ δούλοις καὶ φίλοις, δαιμόνων ἀπελαύνουσι στίφη”; Ibid., 26 PG 94, 1257C, in Kotter (ed.), Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos 3, 11711-6, “Δέχοι τοίνυν τῶν Γραφικῶν καὶ πνευματικῶν χρήσεων τὸν ἐσμόν, ὅτι ἡ Γραφή ’Τὰ εἴδωλα τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον, ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων’ (Ps 113,12) οὐ τὸ μὴ προσκυνεῖν ἀψύχοις ή ἔργοις χειρῶν κωλύει, ἀλλὰ ταῖς δαιμόνων εἰκόσιν”.

references to Manichaeism. That’s why religion is set as the only field of research, in particular specific theories on Cosmos, God, Christ, etc. under the great influence of the ancient and irrational Eastern Mysticism, far from the classic Greek philosophy and aesthetics. Moreover, “the iconoclastic controversy is closely linked to the earlier disputes about Christ’s person. It was not merely a controversy about religious art, but about the Incarnation, about human salvation, about the salvation of the entire material cosmos.”\(^\text{14}\)

**ii) Collecting a series of crucial testimonia and creating a new florilegium**

Our reasoning aims to prove that the term “Manichean” was constantly used by Iconophiles against Iconoclasts not as meaningless verbiage. It reveals a real and specific cultural background having a great influence on all fields of Christian faith, from triadology and christology to ecclesiology and iconology. This influence is thoroughly re-examined in the following four stages:

a) First and foremost, a thorough examination of the very *Definition (Horos)* of Hiereia along with its Florilegium. Crucial excerpts from it are provided as a most clear evidence of an absolute diarchy in a way of perceiving any beings and the whole Universe, apparently under the influence of a Gnostic or Manichaeistic environment, no exception being made even for the Incarnate God.

b) The theological, christological and ecclesiological perspective of the Iconoclasts becomes obvious by the way they collect and interpret a series of patristic and biblical excerpts.

c) The exemplary theological reasoning of the Seventh Ecumenical Council according to the discussions and counter-arguments of its delegates in reply to those of Hiereia. Here, some florilegia of the Second Council of Nicaea, especially that of its fifth session are considered to be of utmost importance.

d) A further systematic and thorough analysis is made available in the texts of Post-Nicene Fathers.

In other words, a number of excerpts from icococlast and iconophile literature are reevaluated, collected and put under investigation, such as the citations of a new Florilegium. Among them, there is no textual source unpublished and hence inaccessible today. Modern research has definitive access to all sufficient data of the Iconoclastic era, except for manuscripts that possibly existed but are still unknown, having however secondary or irrelevant content. Nevertheless, the major question remains unanswered: what was the real essential reason for Byzantine Iconoclasm? Is there any interpretive approach, which could give convincing answers and finally a commonly accepted explanation in simple terms?

iii) “Confessions of faith” in the Definition and Florilegium of Hiereia

To reach answers based on evidence and logical reasoning, first we have to untangle the most burning issue, the Christology that was officially expressed by Hiereia. Significant points of this seem to be almost completely underestimated by modern research, though they lie in the very centre, the premise, of the Iconoclasts’ cosmology and iconology.

To start with, if we carefully read the Definition (Ὅρος) of Hiereia, we will be surprised by peculiar statements such as “καὶ μετὰ τὴν σάρκωσιν [τὸν Θεὸν Λόγον] ἀπερίγραφον ὀντα” (“[Divine Word]
indescribable even after his Incarnation”)\(^{15}\). Here the reference point is not the art itself, particularly the portrait as it is considered by aesthetics and the philosophy of art. The problem is rather the human figure or archetype of God the Word, who is to be painted.

In the Definition of Hieria, many more peculiar confessions also make their appearance. For instance, we could focus on the phrases “ὁ πάσης κακίας αὐτουργὸς” (“the Creator of all evil”)\(^{16}\) and “ὁ τῆς κακίας δημιουργὸς ἢ εὑρετής” (“the originator or inventor of evil”)\(^{17}\) together with the word “Ἐωσφόρος” (“Lucifer”) as their subject. At this point, the cosmological and theological belief expressed comes in contrast to that of the Church, as if the evil was not considered as “παρουσίασις” (“dependent existence”), but as a second world separate from the unique and single God’s Creation.

Attempting to examine more deeply the Iconoclasts’ thought, we focus on two well known texts: a) Letter to Constantia (Πρὸς Κωνσταντίαν Αὐγούσταν), in which the patristic Florilegium of Hieria culminates and b) Objection and Refutation of Eusebius’ and Epiphaniades’ suggestions (Ἀντίῤῥησις καὶ ἀνασκευὴ τῶν Ἐυσεβίου καὶ Ἐπιφανίδου λόγων), written by one of the most well-informed experts both on the historical situation and the iconology of the Church, Nikephoros I of Constantinople. The first of these texts, which was ascribed by Nicaea II to Eusebius of Caesarea, apparently expresses a Docetism deriving directly from Manichaeism and resulting in a kind

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\(^{15}\) For this statement of Hieria’s Definition, see Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 762-5. Mansi 13, 337C.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 612. Mansi 13, 212E.

\(^{17}\) For this citation of Hieria’s Definition attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Βασίλειον, see Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 624-9. Mansi 13, 221C. The crucial term “ὁ τῆς κακίας δημιουργὸς”, detected in the Florilegium of Hieria, is replaced directly by “ὁ τῆς κακίας εὑρετής” attributed also to Gregory of Nyssa, in the contradictory Florilegium of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, for which see ibid., ACO II.3.3, 626. Mansi 13, 224B = Gregory of Nyssa, In Basilium fratrem CPG 3185. PG 46, 796C; see also Basil of Caesarea, Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomaeos, I CPG 2869. PG 31, 600C-601A, to whom Gregory of Nyssa refers. Regardless of whether the “δημιουργὸς” was indeed written by Gregory or has been forged to “εὑρετής”, from both these two cases the Iconoclasts seem clearly to be under the influence of a religious dualism.
of Monophysitism. The second one, which was written as an interpretive text as well as a polemic discourse against the *Letter to Constantia* is considered one of the most significant iconophile sources, because it reveals and explains thoroughly what is hidden behind the reasoning of the Iconoclasts.

In particular, according to Πρὸς Κωνσταντίαν αὐγοῦσταν (Letter to Constantia)\(^{18}\), which fundamentally affects the formation and conceptual context of Hiereia’s Definition, the “*describable*” ("περιγραπτόν") property of the incarnated God the Word is repudiated, as if it were a component of a deceptive or “*illusive flesh*” ("ψευδόδος

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\(^{18}\) Sode and Speck dispute the authorship of the *Epistula ad Constantiam*. See C. Sode and P. Speck, ‘Ikonoklasmus vor der Zeit? Der Brief des Eusebios von Kaisareia an Kaiserin Konstantia’, *JÖByz* 54 (2004), 113-34, especially 130-4. Although they admit that this text had been composed before the council of Hiereia, they argue that it must not have been written in the 4th century, the age of Eusebius, since its main christological topic would have pertained absolutely to the dialogues of the Iconoclast period. However, this opinion clashes with the following arguments: a) Iconoclasts at Hiereia presented a main part of the *Epistula ad Constantiam* as authentic, written by Eusebius of Caesarea. b) None of the *Nicaea II* Fathers disputed either the authenticity or the authorship of this text. c) Even in the 4th century, not only does the Trinitarian issue exist, but it is the sole source of conflicts and Synods among Christians. A secondary reason, unclear to the majority of modern scholars, but clear and of great importance to Middle Byzantine Fathers, is the Christology of Arianism. However, even Gwynn, in his systematic research on the connection between Arianism and Iconoclasm through Eusebius (see D. M. Gwynn, *From Iconoclasm to Arianism: The Construction of Christian Tradition in the Iconoclast Controversy*, *GRBS* 47 (2007), 225-51), does not consider Eusebius’ Arian christology as the main common element between Arians and Iconoclasts, in order to find a reasonable answer to the question why Iconoclasts were called Arians by Iconophiles. Gwynn focuses only on superficial similarities between Arianism and Iconoclasm (*Ibid.*, pp. 248-50), despite his intimate knowledge of a common Christology regarding both of the two aforementioned heresies (*Ibid.*, pp. 230, 238). a) Modern scholars should trust the 7th Ecumenical Council’s erudition more. Synodal members followed not only a scientific methodology, as described in *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI*, ACO II.3.3, 604-12-16. Mansi 13, 205D, “γραφικός καὶ πατρικός, ἐρευνητικός τε καὶ συλλογιστικός ἐλθόντες εἰς ἑποίην τῶν φληγωθέντων..., καὶ ψευδήγορος δί’ ἀποδείξεως ἕναρχος τῶν γιόθος αὐτῶν πίσι γνωρίσειν” (for an analysis of this statement see K. Georgiadis, *Πηγὲς καὶ Θεολογία* (2011), 44-59), a locus classicus in all Ecumenical Councils, but they were fully and directly aware of people and facts from eras far separated from modern times.
σαρκός”) swallowed up and lost in divinity at the time of the Resurrection\(^{19}\). The same eschatology is suggested even for “departed” (“μεταστάντας”) saints, while their created nature is predestined to follow the “consubstantial” (“ὁμοούσιον”) or “of the same form” (“σύμμορφον”) (Phil 3,21)) ressurrected body of Christ\(^{20}\). In this case,

\(^{19}\) For the Iconoclasts, this is the logical conclusion of Eusebius’ confession about the “ἐξόλων ὅλῃ μεταβολή” (“overall alteration”) of Christ’s human nature at the time of the Ressurection, so that only his divinity lives eternally. See Eusebius of Caesarea, Πρὸς Κωνσταντίαν αὐγούσταν in Hiereia’s Definition, in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 730-732. Mansi 13, 313ABCD = CPG 3503. PG 20, 1545A-1549A. In particular, see Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 732-12. Mansi 13, 313C. PG 20, 1545C-1548A, “εἰ δ’ οὖν τῶν ἄνω ἐν αὐτῷ μορφῆς τοσαύτης ἔλαχεν δυνάμεως πρὸς τῆς ἐνοικούσης αὐτῇ θεότητος μεταβληθεῖσα, …τῆς τοῦ δούλου μορφῆς τὸ εἶδος εἰς τὴν τοῦ διστότος καὶ Θεοῦ δόξαν μετεσκευάσαντα μετὰ τὴν κατὰ τὸν θανάτον νίκην”. For the same remarks, see K. Georgiadis, Πηγὲς καὶ Θεολογία (2011), 100-1, 257-9; Κ. Γούλας, Ἡ χριστολογία καί ἡ περί Εἰκόνων διδασκαλία τοῦ πατριάρχου Ταρασίου (PhD Thesis), School of Theology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Athens, 2012), 109, 327. Cyril of Alexandria seems to be fully aware of this issue, as noted above, a century after Eusebius, as 7th Ecumenical Council also testifies. See Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 744-24. Mansi 13, 321E. That is why a series of his texts, written after the Formula of Reunion (433), was included in the florilegia and the dialogues of the 7th Ecumenical Council. In particular, see Cyril of Alexandria, Κατὰ Συνουσιαστῶν, in Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 742-27. Mansi 13, 321D, “εἰτα τι πρὸς τοῦτο φαίειν ὅν μεταβαλεῖν λέγοντες εἰς τὴν τοῦ λόγου φύσιν τὴν σάρκα αὐτοῦ; ἄρα καὶ τὰ τῶν ἁγίων σώματα μετειχέσονται κατὰ τροπὴν εἰς φύσιν θεότητος;”. Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 740-12. Mansi 13, 320CD, “μεταβολὴν δὲ τὴν εἰς τὸς θεότητος φύσιν οὐκ ἐνδέχεται παθεῖν σῶμα τὸ ἀπὸ γῆς ἀμήχανον γὰρ. ἐπεὶ κατηγοροῦμεν τῆς θεότητος ὡς γεννητῆς, καὶ ὡς προσλαβούσης τι ἐν εἰσαρκείᾳ, δὴ μὴ ἔστω τὰ φύσιν αὐτῆς ἱδιον. Ἰσος γὰρ ἔστω σὲ ἀτοπίας λόγον τὸ εἴπειν, ὅτι μετεβλήθη τὸ σῶμα εἰς θεότητος φύσιν καὶ μὴν κάκειν, ὅτι μετεβλήθη ὁ λόγος εἰς τῆς τοῦ σαρκὸς φύσιν. ὅπερ γὰρ τούτο ἀμήχανον. ἀτοπίας γάρ καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος ἔστων ὄντων καὶ τὸ ἐπερον. οὐ γάρ ἔστω τῶν ἐφικτῶν εἰς θεότητος οὐσίαν, ἤτοι φύσιν μεταχωρῆσαι τὸ δύνασθαι τῶν κτισμάτων κτίσμα δὲ καὶ ἢ σάρξ. οὐκόν θεῖον μὲν εἰναι φαμὲν τὸ σῶμα Χριστοῦ”.

\(^{20}\) According to Hieriea’s Definition, the Iconoclasts confess something strange to the Iconophile Fathers as well as to modern research: not only is the human nature (“σάρξ”) of Christ indescribable, but that of saints as well. In this way they interpret the widely-known patristic quotation “ἐνθένδε μετέστησαν” (“departed from here”) referring to saints, in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 686-31. Mansi 13, 276D. While Iconophiles wonder how this could happen or be justified, Iconoclasts invoke the following biblical passages in combination along the lines of Eusebius: 2Cor 5,16, “εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐν γνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστὸν, ἀλλὰ νῦν
nothing of the created nature either of Christ or of the Saints remains in existence, since deification is supposed to mean nothing else but absorption of human nature into divinity.

As a consequence, there is no material nature created and incorporated as the “very body” (“ιδιον σωμα”) of the incarnate God the Word, which could be in hypostatic union with the divine nature and therefore depicted in Holy Icons as the worshipful divine prototype. At the same time, the only existing divine nature is indescribable. The final stage in all this reasoning, prevailing obviously in the Iconoclasts’ thought, is the objection to Holy Icons, in the sense that they falsely reflect the divine reality.

Furthermore, for the Iconoclast Council of Hiereia, “icon” (“εἰκὼν”) and “idol” (“εἴδωλον”) are perceived as synonyms in the sense of parts of a discarded material world, which itself strives in vain to be transformed into an icon of God, but cannot because it is “handmade” (“χειροποίητον”)\(^\text{21}\). It is utterly incomprehensible that the

\[\text{οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν οὐδέ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἴδωλον, οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα} \]
\[\text{(Deut. 5,8)}. \]

\(\text{In this case, translations from ancient Greek to modern languages, where for example the term icon/image and not idol is used as an incorrect version of Greek term “εἴδωλον”, reinforce the noted misconception that prevails in the vast majority of modern biblical research and studies. According to John of Damascus, this Manichean interpretation involves also the following biblical citations: i) Exod 20,4, in John of Damascus, Πρὸς τοὺς διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας, 2, 7 PG 94, 1288D. 3, 4, PG 94, 1321A, in Kotter (ed.), Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos 3, p. 733-4 = Ibid. 1, 5 PG 94, 1236CD. 3, 7 PG 94, 1325BC, in Kotter (ed.), p. 785-8, “Οὐ ποιήσεις πάν ὁμοίωμα, δόσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ δόσα ἐν τῇ γῇ”. ii) Ps 96,7, in John of Damascus, Πρὸς τοὺς διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας, 2, 7 PG 94, 1288D. 3, 4 PG 94, 1321AB, in Kotter}\]
notion of “idol-idolatry” refers only to a delusion of the mind, to the evil that is supposed to exist only in the imagination (“κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν”) and not as objective reality (“τοῖς πράγμασι”)22. Also, in contradiction to the most significant theological distinction between the “uncreated” (“ἀκτιστον’) and “created” (“κτιστον’) world -which does not imply division, but interpersonal relationship among God and man. The material world is conceived not only as an absolute fundamental entity, but as “excommunicate” (“ἀκοινώνητον”) or opposed to the spiritual one.

Since the created material world is identified as an idol, it could not be assumed (“ἀπρόσληπτον”) by God the Word as his own “body” or “flesh” (“ιδίον σῶμα” or “σάρξ”) through His Incarnation. Therefore, on the one hand God the Word is believed to have only a divine nature, which is undoubtedly indescribable. On the other hand, this illusory

22 For a further analysis of this linguistic distinction, see K. Georgiadis, Πηγὲς και Θεολογία (2011), 106-7; K. Γούλας, Η χριστολογία και η περί Εικόνων διδασκαλία (2012), 201.
“flesh” of Christ, in other words an “indescribable” (”ἀπερίγραπτος”) incarnate God even “in flesh” (“σαρκί”), is rather the main reasonable cause of the iconoclast’s protest against the Holy Icons, eventually considered delusive depictions of God.

A radical dualism, like that of Manichaeism, seems to dominate the Iconoclasts’ thought. It is obvious not only in their aforementioned christology, but also in theological fields concerned mainly in iconology and eschatology. Manichean influence, typical examples of which we present in detail below, could be justified by a syncretistic environment in the iconoclast period, where Manichaeism as a heresy or rather as a separate religion with a global scope, is a dominant factor, even within the Byzantine Empire, particularly in the communities of the Paulicians. For Fathers of Iconoclast era, the Manichean origin of Iconoclasm is so obvious that in their writings the characterization “Manicheans” and its synonyms, attributed to Iconoclasts, are repeated over and over again. On the basis of this context, the Fathers do not re-use a meaningless characterisation, such as “Arians”, “Monophysites”, “Nestorians” and “Saracen”, which had equally been used by the Iconoclasts against them. It denotes the degree of the Manichean effect.

iv) The historical and philological evidence and reasoning of Nicaea II

The 5th Session of the Seventh Ecumenical Council provides extensive evidence of the influence of Apocrypha, where 19 texts were investigated as direct historical and theological sources for justifying the exact causes of Iconoclasm. Previously, the Hierarchs had focused on two extensive passages from the apocryphal *Acts of John*, although no part of these had been included officially in the Florilegium of Hiereia. Immediately after, Constantine of Constantia proclaimed:

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“αὕτη ἡ βίβλος ἐστὶν ἡ συνιστῶσα τὸν ψευδοσύλλογον ἐκείνων” (“This is the book, which created their (i.e. Iconoclasts’) pseudo-council”)24. At this point, we make the following reasonable hypothesis:

a) The Fathers of 7th Ecumenical Council act primarily as rational scientists, philologists and historians, without ceasing to be recognised as Church saints and theologians. Precisely, their theology, as proofs show, emerging from authentic patristic and conciliar sources and processed in the form of “testimonia” ("χρήσεις"), depends necessarily on philology and history, by applying the axiom “dogmatic correctness = philological accuracy”25.

b) The Fathers’ scientific credibility concerning the evaluation and use of every considerable manuscript of their era and earlier could be ascertained through typical examples of their methodology26.


26 This is revealed triumphantly, when the Fathers of 7th Ecumenical Council, in order to persuade the Iconoclasts about the authenticity of the 82nd Canon of the Quinisext Council, present its very autograph codex, together with the signatures of the council members. See Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio IV, ACO II.3.2, 344-346. Mansi 13, 40D-41D; see also Ibid., ACO II.3.2, 346-13-14. Mansi 13, 41BC, where the authenticity of the same text is reaffirmed after the presentation of another copy of the Quinisext Council’s Acts. Furthermore, the Fathers of Nicaea II accuse the Iconoclasts of counterfeiting some “books” (“Βίβλοι”), that as a series of manuscripts were placed in the official library of Patriarchate of Constantinople. Their supporting evidence is also adequate in the case of the scraping off the honorary comments on the ancient tradition of Holy Icons from an official manuscript of the Old Testament, placed at the Patriarchate, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio V, Mansi 13, 184DE. 188B-189D. That’s why the representative of the “patriarchates of the East” at Nicaea II, John, characterises the Iconoclasts both as iconoclasts and as arsonists of books (“βιβλιοκαῦστες”), for which see Ibid., Mansi 13, 189C. On any occasion of their attempt to be persuasive about the authenticity or authorship of their quotations and at other times to prove falsifications of some patristic sources, they take into account many more copies of their archetypes. This applies in many cases, like the restoration of the testimonium of Nilos of Anchrya, Πρὸς Ὁλυμπιόδωρον ἔπαρχον, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, Mansi 13, 36ABCD, Mansi 13, 36E-
Obviously, they are of the same caliber as modern textual scholars and their institutes.

c) However, they have an advantage in the effort to find out and affirm the truth: their opinion about the issues investigated could be more valid than that of modern scholars, provided their temporal proximity to the real times of the events and the abundance of extant manuscripts, either as direct copies or sometimes even as the very autographs of patristic, conciliar and heretical written sources. In general, the Fathers of 7th Ecumenical Council could be more able to accurately interpret the cultural environment of Early and Middle Byzantines times, since they lived during it.

d) The most significant issue is that patristic sources are provided to them mainly from official libraries of the Church, of indisputable validity. In this case, they have one more but crucial advantage over the Iconoclasts of Hieria: while they are used to displaying any quotation together with the whole original text and by means of authoritative copies, the Florilegium of Hieria consists of patristic fragments, adduced by means of dubious “plates” (“ψευδοπιττάκια”)28. Undoubtedly, the second way of citing authentic ecclesiastical sources is much more open to forgery.

Nevertheless, the question is how Manichean influence through Apocrypha could occur, as long as the Iconoclasts of Hieria regarded themselves as the exclusive true guardians of the Orthodox Christian tradition. Moreover, the Iconoclasts’ explicit confession of faith in all

37D, or the proof of the authenticity of Anastasius I of Antioch, Πρὸς τινα σχολαστικόν, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, Mansi 13, 56AB and Ibid., Πρὸς Σμυρνῶν Βόστρης, Mansi 13, 56E-57A, through the comparative investigation of any manuscript where they are recorded, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, Mansi 13, 53DE.

27 For the substantiation of this position, see K. Georgiadis, Πηγὲς καὶ Θεολογία (2011), 52-4.

28 Gregory of Neocesarea apologises before Tarasius of Constantinople and the other Hierarchs of the 7th Ecumenical Council, as one of the main participants in the council of Hieria, on the charge of having used “plates” (“πιττάκια”) or “pseudo-plates” (“ψευδοπιττάκια”) instead of the whole of each quoted patristic text. See Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio V, Mansi 13, 173E. For a similar statement, see Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, Mansi 13, 37ABCD.
their previous Ecumenical Councils, on the one hand, and their condemnation of all Heresies – mainly Gnosticism and its version, Manichaeism – on the other, raise the objection to the possibility of such an influence.

Two excerpts, the first attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis and the second to Theodotus of Ancyra, deriving probably from Apocrypha, but seemingly interpolated in authentic patristic sources through Hiereia’s Florilegium, are a strong indication that Manichean influence is intense, though rather subconscious. This influence is denounced explicitly by the Fathers of 7th Ecumenical Council on the occasion of the following statements alleged to have been uttered by Epiphanius of Salamis:

‘προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις, ὃς παρελάβετε μὴ ἐκκλίνητε δεξιά, μηδὲ ἀριστερά. οἶς ἐπιφέρει καὶ ἐν τούτῳ μνήμην ἔχετε τέκνα ἁγαπητά, τοῦ μὴ ἀναφέρειν εἰκόνας ἐπ’ ἐκκλησίας, μήτε ἐν τοῖς κοιμητηρίοις τῶν ἁγίων ἄλλ’ ἀεὶ διὰ μνήμης ἔχετε τὸν Θεόν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν ἄλλ’, οὐτε κατ’ ὀικον κοινόν. οὐκ ἔξεστι γὰρ Ἡρσιανὸ δι’ ὀφθαλμῶν μετεωρίζεσθαι καὶ ἐνκοιμηθῆναι τὸν νοός”.

(“be careful of yourself, and keep the traditions that you received; don’t swerve either to the right or the left... even this have in your mind, dear children, not to install icons in churches, nor in the cemeteries of saints, but forever remember God in your hearts. Neither [i.e. have icons] in a common home because no Christian is allowed to fantasize through the eyes or the reverie of mind”\(^\text{29}\).)

The extract, forged or not, is recognised as patristic as well as the most significant iconoclast citation by the majority of modern scholars, who, after critical editions of Epiphanius by Holl and Thümmel\(^\text{30}\), have supported the expression of both iconophile and iconophobic opinions

\(^\text{29}\) See the Hiereia Council’s Definition, in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 706\textsuperscript{12-16}. Mansi 13, 292DE = Epiphanius of Salamis, Epistula ad Theodosium Imperatorem CPG 3740. 3750. 3751.

within the Church, even by prominent Fathers\textsuperscript{31}. At this point, a philological conflict about the authorship of any iconoclast quotation attributed to Epiphanius, caused by Holl a century before and refuted a decade ago by Bugár, continues unabated\textsuperscript{32}. For each side, the only point of agreement is that the majority of interpolations mentioned appeared as part of the original text of Epiphanius entitled \textit{Epistula ad Theodosium Imperatorem}\textsuperscript{33}. However, according to Nikephoros' phrases “ἐν οἷς γράφει” (“to whom he writes”) and “ἐπιστολὴ δογματικὴ” (“dogmatic letter”), the above-mentioned citation of Hiereia’s Florilegium is possibly implied as part of a specific letter to Carpocratians, ascribed only by Iconoclasts to Epiphanius. Here, the

\textsuperscript{31} See E. Kitzinger, \textit{The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm}, in \textit{DOP} 8 (1954), p. 65, where the author claims that iconophiles and iconophobic tendencies co-existed inside the Church, even among the Fathers, and for centuries before the Iconoclast era, the outbreak of this reality as controversy. Kitzinger’s view has prevailed in almost all textbooks, encyclopedias and lexicons of history and theology until today. Louth, having an opposite view on the basis of historical and achaeological proofs, refers to a number of scholars who still uncritically repeat Kitzinger’s perspective. See A. Louth, \textit{St John Damascene. Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology}, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, 195-6. Suggestions such as “Numerous passages from the Old Testament affirmed that images were not part of the biblical tradition”, in L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680-850: a history}, 40, “[for early Christian writers,] images were inevitably material, and thus unsuitable to act as referents to the divine”, in \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41, and “the surviving theological literature written before the fifth century is generally opposed to religious imagery”, in \textit{Ibid.}, 42, are of exceptional interest. However, they could be regarded as arbitrary generalizations according to the following objections, provided mainly by Florilegia of the Iconophile Fathers of the 7\textsuperscript{th} Ecumenical Council: 1) Is this the accurate interpretation of the Old Testament or Early Christianity, given also the religious monuments? 2) Can Early or Apostolic Fathers and not in general all early Christian writers, living in their own era and preaching against idolatry, be compared with Iconoclasts? Are the historical issues the same?

\textsuperscript{32} I. M. Bugár, \textit{What did Epiphanius write to emperor Theodosius?}, \textit{Scrinium} 2 (2006), 72-91. For this discussion, see also L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680-850: a history}, pp. 45-47.

\textsuperscript{33} Besides, neither the Iconoclasts of Hiereia nor the Fathers of Nicea II integrate this quote into a specific text of Epiphanius. Therefore, Holl and other scholars, without having identified the mentioned quote at least as dubious, proceed with a second unproven assumption to accept it as a passage of the Epistle to Emperor Theodosius.
question is: would it be possible for a great Father during the Golden Age of Patristic Literature to consent with a Gnostic sect, particularly with the Carpocratians, on the basis of a diarchy resulting in iconophobia?

Apart from philological proofs, the Fathers invoke “common sense” (“ὀρθὸς λόγος”)
34, when they utter their conclusive and irrefutable arguments to demonstrate the falsification of Epiphanius’ writings. For them
35, if Epiphanius deviated to iconomachy or at least to iconophobia:

a) surely he would have accepted the veneration of Holy Icons as a paganistic or heretical practice in his thorough investigation and explanation of any kind of heresy recorded in his best-known books Ancoratus and Panarion,

b) during the four centuries from his era up to the beginning of Iconoclasm, some iconoclastic suggestion would have come to light,

c) as an Iconoclast, he would have had a corresponding impact on the whole Church, much more on his local community. On the contrary, at his time, honouring the Holy Icons had spread throughout the Roman Empire,

d) all other iconophile Fathers of his era, the Golden Age of Christianity, would have been informed about his theological discrepancy and therefore they would have turned against him,

e) his disciples wouldn’t have portrayed his figure in images after his death.

What is most significant is the certainty of the Fathers of Nicaea II that Epiphanius’ extract comes from Apocrypha. For this reason, it is compared with similar texts such as the Epistle to the Laodiceans ascribed to the apostle Paul and the Gospel of Thomas
36.

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35 See Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 70620-7128. Mansi 13, 293B-296A.
36 See Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 7086-11. Mansi 13, 293B.
In addition, the Iconoclasts make use of many more excerpts attributed to Epiphanius. Nikephoros of Constantinople records and interprets a series of these from various works by the same author. To this challenge, he gives resolute answers, especially through his comprehensive treatise entitled *Adversus Epiphanidem*\textsuperscript{37}. Foremost, he raises the question of how it would be possible for the great Father of Church not only to keep an iconoclastic attitude, but to support it on the basis of a theology and christology under a diarchy similar to Manichaeism. However, after the complaint of Manichaeism, he proceeds to the next step: to explain how this heresy was able to have a great impact on Iconoclasts.

With supporting evidence, Nikephoros insists on the existence of a general iconoclastic Florilegium behind the scenes, attributed by mistake to the Church Father Epiphanius of Salamis instead of its real author, Epiphanes the Gnostic. In this case, direct information by a contemporary bishop of Sida is of utmost importance. This anonymous bishop gives to the Fathers of Nicaea II an eyewitness account of a manuscript preserved in Nakoleia, which was full of testimonia similar to those of the Iconoclasts\textsuperscript{38}. He assures that its header with the name of its real author, Gnostic Epiphanes, was erased rather on purpose, but the same inscription was repeated in other parts of the book\textsuperscript{39}. Here, three points are of great importance: i) the existence of an Apocryphon, which has a number of features in common with Hiereia’s Florilegium, ii) the fraudulent falsification of its authorship, in order to be attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis, instead of Epiphanes the Gnostic, iii) that all these events occur in Nakoleia, the diocese of bishop Constantine, who was one of the main advisors of emperor Leo III in his iconoclastic policy\textsuperscript{40}.

\textsuperscript{37} See Nikephoros I of Constantinople, *Adversus Epiphanidem*, in J. B. Pitra (ed.), *Spicilegium Solesmense IV*, Paris, 1858; reprinted Graz, 1962, 295\textsuperscript{21}-299\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{38} See *Ibid.*, 300\textsuperscript{11-14}.

\textsuperscript{39} See *Ibid.*, 300\textsuperscript{24-35}.

\textsuperscript{40} This is the reason why Germanus I of Constantinople wrote his letter Πρὸς Κωνσταντῖνον Νακωλείας (in *Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV*, Mansi 13, 105BCDE = CPG 8002. PG 98, 161D-164D), shortly before the outbreak of Iconoclasm.
A second excerpt similar in content to that of Epiphanius, but ascribed to Theodotus of Ancyra, is adduced to Hiereia’s Florilegium written on a “pseudo-plate” (“ψευδοπιττάκιον”), without being integrated into the corpus of a specific text:

“τὰς τῶν ἁγίων ἰδέας οὐκ ἐν εἰκόσιν εξ υλικῶν χρωμάτων ἀναμορφοῦν παρειλήφαμεν, ἀλλὰ τὰς τούτων ἁρετὰς διὰ τῶν ἐν γραφαῖς περὶ αὐτῶν. οἶν τινας ἐμψύχους εἰκόνας εἰκόνας ἀναμόρφωσαν, ἀλλὰ τὰς τούτων ἁρετὰς διὰ τῶν ἐν γραφαῖς περὶ αὐτῶν. οἷόν τινας ἐμψύχους εἰκόνας ἀναμάττεσθαι δεδιδάγμεθα, ἐκ τούτων πρὸς τὸν ὅμοιον αὐτῶς διεγειρόμενοι ζῆλον. ἐπεὶ εἰπάτωσαν οἱ τὰς τοιάσδε ἀναστηλοῦντες μορφὰς, ποίας ἄρα καταπολαύοιεν ὑπερετίας, ἢ ἐν ποίᾳ ἀρετῇ τῶν τούτων ἁρετῶν ἀναμνήσεως ἀνάγονται πνευματικὴ θεωρία; ἀλλ᾽ εὔδηλον, ὡς ματαία ἡ τοιαύτη ἐπίνοια, καὶ διαβολικῆς μεθοδείας εὕρημα”.

(= “we haven’t received the saints’ memories from material colours, so that we could reconstruct the saints’ figures, but their virtues through the textual sources about them”)41.

That’s why it is easily proven spurious. No one could oppose the Fathers of the Second Council of Nicaea on their simple question: if this excerpt is original, why is not mentioned in Hiereia’s Acts to which text of Theodotus it belongs42? Nonetheless, the Fathers on their own initiative scrutinized, though in vain, all the books of Theodotus43.

These two aforementioned excerpts make sense because of a crucial issue they share: an incorporeal way of worshipping God, where a kind of “spiritual icons” (“ἐμψύχοι εἰκόνες”) allow no comparison with material ones due to their nature. Certainly, this iconology of Hiereia must have its roots somewhere. It must be taken as a primitive religious belief in analogous cosmological, theological and Christological ideas, which prevails more or less, wittingly or subconsciously, in the minds of Iconoclasts. Here, Gnostic and Manichean diarchy emerges by dividing reality into two opposed worlds, spiritual and material, as if the latter were not a creation of God, like the former.

42 See Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 7305-7. Mansi 13, 312C, "ei ως αὐτοῖ φασίν, ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὴν μαρτυρίαν παρήγαγον, ἐδει αὐτοῦς τρανός δηλόσα, ἐκ ποίου λόγου αὐτοῦ ἢ χρήσεις ἐλήφθε".
43 See Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 72828-30. Mansi 13, 312C.
Influence from Manichaeism is obvious not only through specific extracts from Apocrypha, which have been detected in Hiereia’s Florilegium. The thought process through which the Iconoclasts perceive and interpret the entire Church Tradition, from the Prophets and Apostles up to the Fathers, is obviously diarchic at each level of perception of the divine and cosmic reality. Their sense of abomination to any material entity is already evident from the way they view the “σάρξ” (“flesh”) of God the Word as something incompatible with Him or demonic, up to their well-known offensive attitude towards the Holy Icons. Diarchy, therefore, as an inheritance from the cultural background of the Middle East, occupies the minds of the Iconoclasts, from their theology and cosmology to eccesiology and soteriology.

This is the reason why a series of biblical quotations is misinterpreted. The following are typical examples:

a) In the second commandment of the Decalogue (Deut 5,8: “οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἴδωλον, οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα” (“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image”)), the word “ὁμοίωμα” (“likeness”) is considered by the Iconoclasts to refer to an “idol” as much as to an “icon”, both of which have previously been recognised as synonyms. The common reference point is an excommunicated materiality, in other words the non-spiritual nature, denoted by the word “handmade” ("χειροποίητον")

On the contrary, the Fathers of Nicaea II insist that what distinguishes “icon” from “idol” is the identity of the portrayed person or god, that is, the thematic content of the artwork. In the case of the “icon”, reference is made to the true uncreated Triune God. On the

45 See above footnote 15. A series of scriptural and patristics quotations, all of which contain the condemnation of idolatry and Arianism, are used fragmentarily by Iconoclasts in order to give the impression that their authors are against the holy icons. See: i) Rom 1,25, “ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα”, Mansi 13, 213A, ii) John 4,24, “πνεῦμα ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν”, Mansi 13, 216BC.280E, iii) Deut 5,8, “οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἴδωλον, οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα”, Mansi 13, 284C, iv) Gregory of Nyssa, Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Βασιλέιον PG 46, 796C, Mansi 13, 221CD, v) Athanasius of Alexandria, Κατὰ Εὐλήνων, 13 PG 25, 29A, Mansi 13, 300E.
contrary, “idol” means the false deities of ancient paganism. Fathers have primarily and foremost respected the accuracy of these two Greek words’ etymology, where “icon” means the depiction of true reality while “idol” of an imaginary one. Besides a few more differences between these two meanings in an ongoing evolution of the Greek language during the Christian Middle Ages, the patristic interpretation of “ὁμοίωμα” (“likeness”) in the second commandment of the Decalogue indicates that this word is absolutely related to representations of pagan deities, identified as “idols”, which finally is the sole subject of prohibition issued by God.

b) The biblical excerpt John 4,24 (“πνεῦμα ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν” (“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”)) occupies a dominant position in Hiereia’s Florilegium, as a benchmark for interpreting all the collected scriptural, conciliar and patristic excerpts. The Iconoclasts ignore that in the present gospel citation, the word “πνεῦμα” (“spirit”) in no way implies a supersensuous world, as opposed to a material one, to which Holy Icons belong because of their similar nature. It refers exclusively to the depicted prototype of the Holy Icons, the incarnate God the Word, who is the “πνεῦμα” as well as the “ἀληθεία” (“truth”).

Moreover, what would seem strange to modern scholars is the content of the comprehensive knowledge and perspective of the Fathers of Nicaea II about this misconception of Scripture. According to the Fathers’ evidence, the same Gnostic diarchy together with the objection to Holy Icons is identified centuries before Iconoclasm, in Philoxenus of Mabboug. Therefore, Philoxenus is considered Manichean rather than Monophysite, an example that reveals Gnosticism-Manichaeism

47 See Horos of Hiereia, Mansi 13, 216BC. 280E.
48 See Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἱστορία, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio VI, Mansi 13, 180CDE. CPG 7503. PG 86, 216CD.
as the background of various heresies such as Arianism, the Acephali and Iconoclasm as well as the fragile limits between all of these heresies 49.

c) In reference to 2Cor 5,16 (“εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν” (“even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer”)), where the Apostle Paul speaks about the New Creation, the Iconoclasts equate the biblical term “flesh” with the sensible human nature of Christ 50. So, they are bound to believe that this nature is eliminated after the Resurrection. On the contrary, the Fathers of the Second Council of Nicaea bring to the forefront the gospel commentary of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, in order to point out that the scriptural word mentioned means only the “passible” (“παθητόν”) property of the Incarnate Word of God 51. In other words, the reference is made absolutely to the weakness of human nature after the Fall of Adam, which God the Word assumes “willingly” (“ἐκουσίως”) and heals through his Incarnation 52. By the way, in other scriptural contexts the word mentioned is a synonym for “sinfulness” (“τοῦ μὴ ἐν ἁμαρτίαις εἶναι”) 53.

d) John 1,18 (“Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε” (“No one has seen God at any time”)), John 5,37 (“οὔτε φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκηκόατε ὥσπερ καὶ πιστεύσατε” (“You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form”)) and John 20,29 (“μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἤδεισαν καὶ πιστεύσαντες” (“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”)), centered on Phil. 3,21 (“δς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸ σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ” (“[God the Word] will transform our lowly body that it may be

51 See John Chrysostom, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν πρὸς Κορινθίους δευτέραν ἐπιστολήν, in Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 7029-10. Mansi 13, 288D-289C = CPG 4429. Ὁμιλία ΙΑ΄, 1-2 PG 61, 475. Also, see Cyril of Alexandria, Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Κορινθίους ἐπιστολήν, CPG 5209. PG 74, 942ABC.
52 See John Chrysostom, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν πρὸς Κορινθίους δευτέραν ἐπιστολήν, in ACO II.3.3, 70210-13. Mansi 13, 288E-289A.
53 See Ibid., ACO II.3.3, 70211. Mansi 13, 288E.
conformed to His glorious body”), are used by the Iconoclasts as evidence of their faith that after the Resurrection the created bodies of all saints undergo the same transformation as that of the consubstantial human body of Christ. Thus, the entire Creation is considered to be swallowed by its Creator, humanity by divinity.

The Florilegium of Hiereia concludes with the most representative testimonium, the extensive passage from the Letter to Constantia, probably written by Eusebius of Caesarea. Although this text is not attributed to this author by some scholars, no one during the Iconoclast era, either Iconoclast nor Iconophile, questioned its authorship let alone its authenticity. Undoubtedly, it should not be included among patristic sources because of its author. The Fathers of Nicaea II confirm the validity of Eusebius as one of the greatest historians, but they call him “ambiguous” (δίψυχος) regarding his theological teaching. Of major importance is that all the reasoning of the Iconoclasts against the Holy Icons, culminating in the faith about a human nature of Christ which is “entirely transformed” (ἐξόλων ὅλῃ μεταβολή) and “swallowed” (ἀπόθεσις) by divinity after the Resurrection, pre-exists in the Letter to Constantia, even though its author, Eusebius, was never opposed to the Church tradition of Holy Icons. He was rather cautious with their manner of being used as means of worship.

54 See Hiereia Council’s Definition, Mansi 13, 280E. 285BC.
56 See above footnote 11.
57 See Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI, ACO II.3.3, 734s. Mansi 13, 316B.
58 It is impossible for the main historian of the two earliest Acheiropoietai, that of the Image of Edessa or Mandylion and the Haemorrhoiissa, as well as of many more ancient Holy Icons, who was the main witness of the miracle of the Chief Apostles through their icon for the sake of the emperor Constantine the Great (see Germanus I of Constantinople, Πρὸς Θωμᾶν Κλαυδιουπόλεως, in Concilium Nicaenum II, Actio IV, ACO II.3.2, 476-47816. Mansi 13, 125E-128A), to be iconoclast. Despite his Christology, on which after four centuries the Iconoclasts depended, he could not ignore the ancient and universal ecclesiastical tradition of Holy Icons. Under these conditions, he most probably sent to Constantia the requested Christ Icon, even though

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It becomes clear from historical examples such as Eusebius that a Gnostic-Manichean docetism regarding Christ’s and the saints’ “flesh” after the Resurrection had already spread, before the 4th century, even among ecclesiastical writers. Cyril of Alexandria, temporarily putting aside the major issue of Nestorianism, deals thoroughly with the same issue in a chapter of his *First Memorandum to Succensus*59. There, he conducts a dialogue with the opposing side, which eventually confesses a christology similar to that of the Iconoclasts. The common reasoning, based on the same misinterpretation of the quotation 2 Cor 5,16, is detected in the opponents of Cyril as in the Iconoclasts as well. Obviously, this interconnection is due to writings such as the *Letter to Constantia*. Moreover, the Fathers of Nicaea II, especially Nikephoros of Constantinople (through his treatise *Contra Eusebium et Epiphanidem*, where the most extensive version of the *Letter to Constantia* is edited along with scriptural testimonia like those of Hiereia’s Florilegium), mentions that Cyril replies directly to Eusebius, when he writes the *Contra Synousiastas* or to *Succensus*60. The centerpiece is the docetism deriving apparently from a Gnostic/Manichean diarchy and being communicated to Arians, Apollinarians, Eutychians and Acephali up to the Iconoclasts. This is the reason why the Fathers of the Iconoclast age used to give the names of all these sects to the Iconoclasts.

III. CONCLUSIONS

According to Hiereia’s Definition and, especially, in reference to the accompanying Florilegium consisting of 8 patristic testimonia, and according to his Arian christology he was instructing her not to worship another icon.


60 See *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, Actio VI*, ACO II.3.3, 74231-32. Mansi 13, 321E, “πραγματά τα δὲ αὐτῆς ἀποτελέσματος ὡς πρὸς αὐτὸν Εὐσέβιον, οὕτω φησίν ὁ αὐτὸς θεοπάτης πατήρ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ”. 
Docetism seems to have had a great impact on Iconoclast theology, christology and iconology through some Apocrypha literature being interpolated into some genuine patristic texts. However, Iconoclasts’ explicit disavowal of every single Definition of all the Ecumenical Councils, on the one hand, and their condemnation of all Heresies, especially that of Gnosticism/Manicheism, on the other, raise the question of how such an impact could be real.

Regardless of a conscious or rather a subconscious influence, the connection between the Apocrypha and the Council in Hiereia in its Definition and Florilegium is proved on five levels: a) the identified interpolations in a few authentic patristic testimonia used by Hiereia, b) the way of interpreting the Holy Scripture and Church Fathers’ texts under the influence of a radical dualism, which is completely irrelevant even to Greek dualistic philosophy, c) through textual material like the Letter to Constantia, written by the semi-Arian Eusebius of Caesarea, but included in the Florilegium of Hiereia as an excerpt from a pre-eminent Father, d) the principles of Gnostic/Manichean theology, cosmology and anthropology, e) by docetic Christology considering the “flesh” of the Divine Word as a shadow or evil entity. As a consequence, Nicaea II’s scientific validity in its evidence and reasoning is profoundly confirmed by modern research; in addition, it concludes that the term “Manichean” was constantly being used by Iconophiles against Iconoclasts not as a meaningless verbal abuse such as those of “Arians”, “Monophysites”, “Nestorians” and “Saracens”. Moreover, it denotes a real and specific cultural background having a great influence on all fields of Christian faith, from triadology and christology to ecclesiology and iconology.

The principal evidence demonstrating Manichean influence through Apocrypha is the perception of evil as objective reality, not as “dependent existence” (“παρυπόστασις”). According to the Definition of Hiereia, Lucifer is the creator of evil while the material Holy Icons are a part of it, in the sense of a self-existent reality opposed to the Triune God. The problem is not the uncreated God, who is anyway indescribable, but the “flesh” (“σάρξ”) of the Incarnate Word of God. This “flesh”, altogether with its con-substantial human nature of the
Saints, is firstly considered to be absorbed into the divinity after the Holy Ressurection and secondly as indescribable through the means of Holy Icons. This refutation of the very creation of God shows that diarchy prevails in the Iconoclasts’ thought and shapes their irrational fury against the Holy Icons, mainly due to their material nature. The missing crucial link is Docetism, which is recorded with all its reasoning in Hiereia’s Definition. Its origin from Apocrypha is proved not only by the diarchic content conveyed, but even more definitely by the specific testimonia of Hiereia’s biblical and patristic Florilegium.