

Justinian (d. 565)

This famous ruler held his power for just about 40 years and accomplished much in many different areas of endeavor. He is a justly famed theologian, militarist and is often called the greatest of the "caesaropapists"...political leaders who also lead the church.

He was thoroughly Nicene and Chalcedonian and held to the views of Cyril in the dispute with the Nestorians of past years. Under his aegis the fifth ecumenical council was called and renewed the Chalcedonian decision while correcting some of the issues that that body had not covered well. He extended his political authority over Rome after the Ostrogoths no longer had the ability to protect Rome from other barbarians and as ruler politically of Rome, Justinian governed the Roman bishops rather well also. The government exercised great authority over the church and in the east the church rather welcomed it.

Heraclitus (d. 642)

He had the fortune to see the coming of Islam. He succeeded in maintaining the military might of the eastern empire and overcame strong thrusts from Persia. But Islam soon overran Persia and began to press the eastern empire with vigor. From this time on the eastern empire would be under continual threat from Islam although there would be long times of peace as well.

Leo the Isaurian (d. 740)

Caught with the full force of the Islamic threats, Leo concluded that the anti-idolatrous thrust of Islam was directed against the Christian pictures, statues, images, stained windows, (icons), etc. In order to soften the Islamic stance, as he conceived it, he ordered the removal of all "images" from the churches. An image title is that of "icon" and the removal of icons is known as "iconoclasm" while the use of same is called "iconism". This was enormously upsetting to the church and created ecclesiastical havoc. It is known as the "iconoclastic controversy" and will be settled in 787 at the second council of Nicaea.