

Reflections on the failure of the Union of Florence¹

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My son, of course we know very well that the infidel [namely, the Ottomans] dread the day we come to an agreement and unite with the Franks; for, they believe that if this happens, because of us they would suffer much at the hands of the Christians of the West. Therefore, as far as this council is concerned continue and study, and bring it up, especially when you need to scare the infidel. But, do not attempt to bring it about, for I see that our own people are unable to find a way for union, peace and concordance, unless they were returned to our original state. And since this is almost impossible, I fear a worse schism may be brought about, and hence we shall be left defenceless before the infidel ...².

¹ This paper, originally delivered at the International Colloquium *Motivi e strutture di divisioni ecclesiali*, organised by the Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche at Corfù, 10-13 April 2007, is dedicated to the memory of my teacher and friend Julian Chrysostomides, who read it in its final form and made valuable comments before she passed away on 18 October 2008. On the Council of Ferrara-Florence see in general J. GILL, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge 1959; IDEM, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays*, Oxford 1964; G. ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity: the Council of Ferrara-Florence, 1438/39-1989*, Leuven 1991; A. PAPADAKIS - J. MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*, Crestwood (NY) 1994, 357-409; D. J. GEANAKOPOLOS, *The Council of Florence (1438-1439) and the Problem of the Union between the Greek and Latin Churches*, in: *ChH24* (1955) 324-46, in: IDEM, *Constantinople and the West: Essays in the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches*, Madison (Wisconsin) 1989, 224-254, fully revised under the title: *A New Reading of the Acta*, Especially Syropoulos, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as above), 325-51; P. VITTI (ed.), *Firenze e il Concilio del 1439*, 2 vols., Florence 1995.

² GEORGE SPHRANTZES, *Chronicon Minus*, XXIII, 5-6, in: R. MAISANO (ed.), *Giorgio Sfranze*, Cronaca, Rome 1990 (= CFHB 29), 82.1-15: εἶπεν ὁ αἰοίδιμος βασιλεὺς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν βασιλέα κύρ Ἰωάννην μόνος πρὸς μόνον, ἰσταμένου καὶ ἐμοῦ μόνου ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, ἐμπεσόντος λόγου περὶ τῆς συνόδου· νιέ μου, βεβαίως καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐπιστάμεθα ἐκ μέσης τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν δὴ τῶν ἀσεβῶν ὅτι πολλὰ τοὺς φοβεῖ, μὴ συμφωνήσωμεν καὶ ἐνωθῶμεν μετὰ τῶν τῆς Δύσεως Χριστιανῶν δι' ἡμᾶς. Λοιπὸν τὸ περὶ τῆς συνόδου, μελέτα μὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ἀνακátωνε, καὶ μάλισθ' ὅταν ἔχεις χρεῖαν φοβῆσαι τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς. τὸ δὲ νὰ ποιήσης αὐτήν, μηδὲ ἐπιχειρησθῆς αὐτο, διότι οὐδὲν βλέπω τοὺς ἡμετέρους ὅτι εἰσὶν ἀρμόδιοι πρὸς τὸ εὐρεῖν τινα τρόπον ἐνώσεως καὶ εἰρήνης καὶ ὁμονοίας, ἀλλ' ὅτι νὰ ἐσμεν ὡς ἀρχῆθεν.

This is the advice Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425) gave to his son and successor John VIII (1425-48) in private, after the old Emperor, partly paralysed by a stroke in October 1422, had entrusted him with the then ongoing negotiations with the envoy of Pope Martin V (1417-31), Antonio da Massa, concerning the prospects of an ecumenical council that would bring about the union of Eastern and Western Christendom.

According to the historian George Sphrantzes, who was present at this meeting, having listened to his father's advice for caution over Church union John left deep in thought without saying a word³. Apparently, his intentions were quite different. He was determined to proceed with his plans for union, convinced that this was the only way that would secure military help from the West for the survival of the Empire. As events subsequently proved, Manuel showed himself to have been of sounder judgement in so far as the assessment of the various compelling factors that lay behind the efforts for union was concerned. His long political experience together with his theological knowledge made him fully aware of the realities and complexities relating to the union, which continued to play a pivotal role in the last great, though unsuccessful, attempt to mend the breach between the Greek and Latin Churches at the Council of Ferrara-Florence between 1438 and 1439. It is these inextricable historical, political, ecclesiastical, theological and psychological dimensions summed up by Manuel that will be briefly revisited, in an attempt to re-examine the reasons why did the Union of the Churches proclaimed in Florence fail.

There is an old assumption, unfortunately still prominent among sections of the academic community and the wider educated public, that the date of the schism between the two Churches should be firmly placed in the year 1054, when Patriarch Michael Cerularios (1043-58) and Humbert of Silva Candida, the representative of Pope Leo IX (1049-54), exchanged mutual excommunications. This view has long been proven to be unfounded. For, the papal bull of excommunication was directed only against Cerularios and certain other churchmen who took part in the controversy during Humbert's visit to Constantinople, and not against the Orthodox Church as a whole. Similarly, the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople anathe-

τούτου δὲ ἀδύνατον ὄντος σχεδόν, φοβοῦμαι μὴ καὶ χειρὸν σχίσμα γένηται (Matthew 9:16, Mark 2:21), καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀπεσκεπάσθημεν εἰς τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς. Cf. S. SYROPOULOS, *Mémoires*, V. LAURENT (ed.), *Les Mémoires du grand Ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, Rome 1971 (= CFI ser. B, 9), Appendix III, Text and variants in Recension B, 14 (12), 606.17-29.

³ SPHRANTZES (as note 2), XXIII, 7, in: MAISANO (ed.), 82.16-26.

matized only Humbert as being responsible for the controversy, and not the Pope (who was by then dead) or the Latin Church⁴.

From the Byzantine point of view these events were not considered as the decisive point, a point of no return one might say, in so far as the relations of the two Churches were concerned. A close study of the Greek sources of the twelfth and thirteenth century has confirmed this view⁵, while a preliminary examination of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources, though mentioning these events, seem to point to the same conclusions⁶. The schism, as has been pointed out⁷, was rather a gradual process of estrangement, exacerbated by the political events that culminated with the capture of Constantinople by the army of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the partition of the Byzantine Empire that followed.

⁴ See A. MICHEL, *Humbert und Kerullarios*, 2 vols., Paderborn 1924-1930; S. RUNCIMAN, *The Eastern Schism*, (Oxford 1955) repr. 1997; P. LEMERLE, *L'Orthodoxie byzantine et l'oecuménisme médiéval: les origins du schisme des Églises*, in: BAGB 4^{ème} sér., 2 (1965) 228-246; M. H. SMITH III, *And Taking Bread ... Cerularius and the Azyme Controversy of 1054*, Paris 1978; P. BOUMIS, *Τὰ ἀναθέματα Ρώμης-Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ ἡ κανονικότης αὐτῶν*, Athens 1980; A. BAYER, *Spaltung der Christenheit. Das sogenannte Morgenländische Schisma von 1054*, Cologne, etc. 2002 (= BAKG 53). On a comprehensive survey of the sources and secondary studies, see now E. CHRYSOS, *1054: Schism?*, in: *Christianità d'Occidente e Christianità d'Oriente (secoli VI-XI)*, (Settimane di Studio dell Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo LI, 24-30 aprile 2003), Spoleto 2004, 547-71.

⁵ See T. KOLBABA, *The Legacy of Humbert and Cerularius: The Tradition of the Schism of 1054 in Byzantine Texts and Manuscripts of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, in: Ch. DENDRINOS - J. HARRIS - E. HARVALIA-CROOK - J. HERRIN (eds.), *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, Aldershot-Burlington 2003, 47-61.

⁶ Michael Psellos (1018-78 or 1096/7) mentions these events in his memorial oration for Cerularios, without referring to a schism, K. SATHAS (ed.), *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, Athens 1874, 348-49. It is the unionist Patriarch John XI Bekkos (1275-82) in his *Second Oration on his own Deposition* (= PG 141), col. 980, who refers to the *irreconcilable schism* that took place under Cerularios. On the other hand, Joseph Bryennios (ca.1350-ca.1431) the most prominent and influential theologian of his times, placed the schism in 1003: *Third Dialogue with the Latrophrones in Constantinople on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, E. VOULGARIS (ed.), *Τὰ Εὐρεθέντα*, 3 vols., (Leipzig 1768) repr. Thessalonike 1991, vol. 1, 379.14-24; on the date of this *Dialogue* (1422) see R.-J. LOENERTZ, *Pour la chronologie des oeuvres de Joseph Bryennios*, in: REByz 7 (1949) 30-32. Pope John XVIII (1004-9) was the last Pope whose name was mentioned in the Constantinopolitan diptychs, but the names of his predecessors, Gregory V (996-999) and Sylvester II (999-1003), were not recorded in the diptychs: see RUNCIMAN, *The Eastern Schism* (as note 4), 32ff.

⁷ See A. PAPADAKIS, *The Problem of Religious Union and its Literature*, in: AHC 38 (2006) 287-302. See also note 4.

Between the events of 1054 and the Council of Florence numerous negotiations were conducted between the papacy and the Byzantine government and Church in an attempt to bring about understanding and reconciliation between the two Churches⁸, while on two occasions union was actually proclaimed. First, after the establishment of the Roman Catholic bishoprics following the Latin occupation of the Empire in 1204, and secondly at the Council of Lyons in 1274, as part of Michael VIII Palaeologus' efforts to consolidate his authority following the restoration of the Empire. In the former case (in 1204) the union was a result of the attempts by the Latin Church to impose obedience to Rome⁹, to which the Byzantines responded by acts such as purifying their altars each time they were used by the Latin clergy and re-baptizing their children following their baptism in the Latin rite, as reflected in the fourth canon of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215)¹⁰. In the second case, the union proclaimed at the Council of Lyons followed the personal conversion of the Emperor, who committed himself to persuade the Orthodox clergy and people to accept Roman Catholicism though keeping certain rites according to the Orthodox custom¹¹. In both cases, however, the union was short lived with no lasting effect.

Similar reasons that proved an obstacle to true union then, seem to have prevented the success of the final major attempt to heal the rift in the period after the Council of Florence. This becomes evident when examining the political circumstances, attitudes and motivations of the parties concerned.

With Western Europe suffering from the Hundred Years War and the continuous upheaval and internal strife among secular powers and factions, the Latin Church was no less in crisis as a result of the constitutional controversy led by the conciliarist movement. Following the Council of Constance (1414-18), which with the help of Western potentates put an end to the Western Schism (1378-1417), the Council of Basel (1431-49) attempted to fulfil the demand for reform, re-affirming its position to impose the

⁸ See L. BRÉHIER, *Attempts at Reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches*, Cambridge 1936 (= CMH 4), 594 ff.; cf. GEANAKOPOLOS, *The Council of Florence* (as note 1), 324 with n. 2.

⁹ See J. M. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, (Oxford 1986) repr. 1990, 184-219; PAPANAKIS - MEYENDORFF, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy* (as note 1), 199-238.

¹⁰ J. ALBERIGO (ed.) et al., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, Bologna³ 1973, 235-236; cf. GEANAKOPOLOS, *The Council of Florence* (as note 1), 332-33 with n. 77.

¹¹ See D. M. NICOL, *The Byzantine Reaction to the Second Council of Lyons, 1274*, Cambridge 1971 (= SCH 7), 113-46, reprinted: in IDEM, *Byzantium: its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World*, London 1972, art. 6. See also HUSSEY (as note 9), 220-242.

principle of conciliar supremacy over the Pope¹². On his part Pope Eugenius IV (1331-47) was committed to defend papal authority, trying initially, though unsuccessfully, to dissolve the Council. In this conflict the union of the Christian Churches became an issue between the conciliarists and the papacy. For success over this most important question would strengthen their position over the whole Latin Church. It is not surprising, therefore, that both Pope Eugenius and the Council of Basel, divided by their shared objective, negotiated separately with the Byzantines.

No less divided were the Byzantine State, Church and society in this period. However, before examining more closely these divisions with regard to the negotiations for Church union, it is essential to clarify the role of the Byzantine Emperor in ecclesiastical matters, for this would explain to a large extent John VIII's attitude towards the Byzantine Church in general, and the Greek delegation in Ferrara-Florence in particular. According to the Byzantine political ideology, reflected in Justinian's *Novels*¹³ and later on in the *Eisagōgē*¹⁴, while the secular and ecclesiastical authorities are clearly separate – with the Emperor exercising political authority over the State, and the Patriarch over the Church in terms of spiritual, doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters – the divinely appointed Emperor, the representative of God on earth, the *incarnate law* (ἔμψυχος νόμος), maintained the right and duty to defend the Church and its doctrines. Similarly, canon law, including the decrees of the ecumenical councils, assumed the authority of secular law¹⁵. The imperial privilege of selecting the Patriarch to be appointed from a list of three candidates prepared by the Holy Synod, and the custom of the Patriarch offering the crown to the Emperor during the enthronement ceremony, symbolised the principle of συναλληλία, that is inter-dependence, in the sense of co-operation and concordance, between Church and State for the welfare of the people. Needless to say that this principle though largely observed not always proved inviolate¹⁶.

¹² See J. W. STIEBER, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire*, Leiden 1978 (= SHCT 13).

¹³ R. SCHOELL (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, vol. 3, (Berlin 1912) phot. repr. 1954, in: *Novella* 109, Epilogue, 519.35-520.7.

¹⁴ Cf. I. and P. ZEPOS (eds.), *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, vol. 2, (Athens 1931) repr. Darmstadt 1962, Εἰσαγωγή II. Περὶ Βασιλείας, δ', 241.4-7; ε', 241.8-16.

¹⁵ R. SCHOELL ed., (as note 13), *Novella* 131, κεφ. α', 654.24-655.8. See Sp. TROIANOS, 'Θεσπίζομεν τοίνυν, τάξιν νόμων ἐπέχειν τοὺς ἁγίους ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς κανόνας ...', in: *Δώρημα στον Ἰ. Καραγιαννόπουλο* (= *Βυζαντινά* 13 [1985]), 1191-1200.

¹⁶ See Ch. DENDRINOS, 'Ἡ ἐπιστολή τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Μανουὴλ Β' Παλαιολόγου πρὸς τὸν Ἀλέξιο Ἰαγούπ καὶ οἱ ἀντιλήψεις του περὶ τῆς σπουδῆς τῆς θεολογίας καὶ τῶν σχέσεων Ἐκ-

This was also the case after the restoration of the Empire in 1261, when the Byzantine Emperor found himself exercising his authority over a shadow of the former imperial territory, now limited to the well-fortified city of Constantinople, parts of the Morea and a few islands in the Aegean. In contrast, the Patriarch of Constantinople extended his spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction well beyond the boundaries of the Empire, including Russia and the Balkans. Yet, in the eyes of the Orthodox Church and people the Byzantine Emperor was the only legitimate ruler of the Roman Empire and direct successor of Constantine I (324-37)¹⁷. This is above all reflected in the well-known letter of Patriarch Anthony IV in 1393 to the Russian Grand Duke Basil I, in response to the latter's challenging the authority of the Emperor by omitting the commemoration of his name in Russian churches¹⁸.

This 'duality' occasionally created tension between the Emperor and the Patriarch, when the former challenged the independence of the Church in an attempt to use its spiritual and ecclesiastical authority as an extension of imperial authority and policy. Following the civil war and the abdication of John VI Cantacuzenus (1347-54), the Emperor John V Palaeologus (1341-91) in his effort to curb the reaction of the Church against his unionist attempts, compelled the Patriarch and the Synod to accept a series of imperial privileges over ecclesiastical affairs, which in effect placed the Church under imperial control¹⁹. These privileges were renewed by his son, Emperor Manuel II, who did not hesitate to exercise the right to appoint metropolitans without the prior consent of the Synod in vacant sees outside the Byzantine territory, for which he faced strong reaction from the Patri-

κλησίας καὶ Πολιτείας, in: Φιλοσοφίας Ἀνάλεκτα 1 (2001), 58-74, esp. 68-69 and notes 65-69 (with bibliography).

¹⁷ See S. RUNCIMAN, Manuel II and the See of Moldavia, in: J. CHRYSOSTOMIDES (ed.), Καθ' ἡγήτρια. Essays presented to Joan Hussey for her 80th birthday, Camberley 1988, 515-20.

¹⁸ Ed. F. MIKLOSICH - J. MÜLLER, Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani, vol. 2, (Vienna 1862) phot. repr. Darmstadt 1968, 188-92; cf. J. DARROUZÈS, Régestes des actes du Patriarchat de Constantinople, 1: Les Actes des patriarches, fasc.6, Paris 1979, no. 293, 210-12. Promoting the imperial policy, Patriarch Anthony IV in his letters of January 1397 addressed to Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland, and to Kyprianos, Metropolitan of Kiev, urged the formation of a crusade under Sigismund against the Turks: MIKLOSICH -MÜLLER (as note 18), nos. 515-516, 280-85; DARROUZÈS (as above), nos. 3039-3040, 302-305.

¹⁹ DARROUZÈS (as note 18), 7, no. 3299, 10; V. LAURENT, Les droits de l'empereur en matière ecclésiastique. L'accord de 1380-1382, in: REByz 13 (1955) 5-20; trans. D. J. GEANAKOPOLOS, Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes, Chicago-London 1984, no. 104, 141-42.

arch²⁰. It is not surprising, therefore, that Manuel's son and successor, John VIII, followed the same steps.

As far as the negotiations for Church union is concerned, it is clear that the Byzantine government used it as an instrument for securing the much hoped for Western military aid necessary for the survival of the Empire. Without undermining the political benefits that might have accrued from the union, it seems that the efforts for a re-united Church was not solely dictated by such aims and needs, but also emanated from a genuine desire to re-join the mystical limbs of Christ²¹. The increasing contacts among the highest intellectual circles, especially from the thirteenth century onwards, facilitated further by translations of Greek and Latin texts, paved the way for the exchange of ideas, including theological thought, thus creating a basis of mutual understanding and admiration²². Demetrios Cydones and Manuel Chrysoloras are good examples of Byzantine scholars and statesmen who promoted this approach.

This *rapprochement*, however, did not dissipate a general feeling of suspicion and resentment against the Latins by the majority of the Byzantine people, members of the clergy, especially the lower clergy, and the monastic community, virtually identified with the anti-unionist party. This feeling was further exacerbated by the activity of the Latinophile pro-unionists, usually led by members of the higher clergy and the imperial court, who driven by their desire for union, often linked with personal financial interests, as well as admiration for Latin scholastic thought, were seen by their compatriots as betraying their country and faith²³.

The Council of Ferrara-Florence, therefore, found both the Eastern and Western Churches in internal crisis, with centres of power struggling to maintain control and establish their authority. Let us now examine the po-

²⁰ See note above.

²¹ See MANUEL II PALAEOLOGUS, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*; Ch. DENDRINOS (ed.), An annotated critical edition (editio princeps) of Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus' treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London 1996), 30.12-31.7-13, 91.3-6, 316.3-8ff. Cf. Manuel's comments in *Letter to Iagoup*, ed. cit., 367.3-10.

²² See W. BERSCHIN, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter: von Hieronymus zu Nikolaus von Kues*, Berlin-Munich 1980; C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, Nicosia 1982; S. MERGIALI, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues (1261-1453)*, Athens 1996.

²³ See P. GOUNARIDES, Πολιτικές διαστάσεις της συνόδου Φερράρας-Φλωρεντίας, in: Θεσσαυρίσματα 31 (2001) 107-129; T. ΚΙΟΥΣΟΡΟΥΛΟΥ, Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση, Athens 2007.

sition held by the parties involved as far as the terms for Church union was concerned.

The Byzantines traditionally held the view that only an ecumenical council, convened preferably in Constantinople, where the two sides would discuss on equal terms the most important theological, ecclesiastical and liturgical points of divergence, would secure a true and lasting reconciliation²⁴. This tenet, strongly maintained by the Church and the people, was promoted especially by the theologian Emperors John VI Cantacuzenus and Manuel II²⁵. In this sense John VIII was following the same policy. This he explicitly stated during the Council of Florence, when he explained that it was his father that had laid the foundations for the union, which he simply carried on, though without mentioning his father's advice for caution²⁶.

The papacy traditionally demanded union and submission (*reductio*) of the Orthodox Church to Rome, as a pre-condition to any military help desperately needed for the defence of the Empire against the Ottoman threat.

²⁴ See J. BOOJAMRA, *The Byzantine Notion of the Ecumenical Council in the Fourteenth Century*, in: *ByZ* 80 (1987), 59-76; A. PAPADAKIS, *Byzantine Perceptions of the Latin West*, 1991 (= *GOTR* 36.3-4), 231-242, esp. 240-242; J. MEYENDORFF, *Was There an Encounter Between East and West at Florence?*, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 153-75.

²⁵ See MEYENDORFF, *Was There an Encounter* (as note 24), 159. Cf. Joseph Bryennios' views on the terms of a possible union: *Counsel on the Union of the Churches*, in: VOULGARIS, ed., (as note 6), *Τὰ Εὐρεθέντα*, I, 400-424, esp. 409 ff. Cf. also John VI Cantacuzenus' views on this: J. MEYENDORFF, *Projets de concile oecuménique en 1367. Un dialogue inédit entre Jean Cantacuzène et le légat Paul*, 1960 (= *DOP* 14), reprinted in: IDEM, *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological and Social Problems*, London 1974, art.11. Generally see BOOJAMRA, *Ecumenical Council* (as note 24), *passim*; D. BALFOUR, *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)*, Vienna 1979 (= *WBS* 13), 222; D. M. NICOL, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium (1261-1453)*, London 1972, 337 with note 37, quoting Edward Gibbon's remarks: "the Greeks insisted on three successive measures, a succour, a council, and a final reunion, while the Latins eluded the second, and only promised the first as a consequential and voluntary reward of the third", in: J. B. BURY (ed.), *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 7, London 1900, 97.

²⁶ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), IX, 15, 448.16-23: Τὸ θεῖον ἔργον τοῦτο τῆς ἐνώσεως οὐκ ἤρξατο γίνεσθαι ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ἀλλ' ἤρξατο κατασκευάζειν τοῦτο ὁ αὐθέντης μου ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ πατήρ μου. ... Ἐκεῖνος οὖν ὁ τοιοῦτος ἤρξατο πραγματεύεσθαι τὰ περὶ τῆς ἐνώσεως καὶ ἐφίετο τοῦ τελειῶσαι αὐτήν, ὡς καλὴν, ὡς θεάρεστον καὶ πολλαχόθεν λυσιτελοῦσαν ἡμῖν· οὐκ ἔφθασε δὲ ἰδεῖν ταύτην τετελεσμένην, διὸ καὶ ἐπαφῆκέ μοι ἵνα τελειώσω αὐτήν, καὶ ἔστι ἔργον ἐκείνου καὶ ὡς ἀπ' ἐκείνου πράττω τοῦτο καὶ αὐτός; cf. J. M. HUSSEY, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, (Oxford 1986) repr. 1990, 285: "This may have been wishful thinking on John's part: it does not accord with Manuel's advice to his son. Events seemed to prove that Manuel showed the sounder judgement in realizing that the Orthodox Church of his day could not be won over".

This intransigent stance, inevitably created resentment and aroused opposition on the part of the Byzantines²⁷. The conciliarist doctrine, however, which was proclaimed at the Councils of Constance and Basel, and was accepted by Pope Martin V and Eugenius IV, respectively, marked a reversal of the previous policy. For the Pope was now bound to sanction the decisions of a council in matters of faith, securing free and unconditional discussion between the parties involved. On their part the conciliarists welcomed the idea of restoration of union with the eastern Church through a general council²⁸. Both Eugenius and the conciliarists, however, whose main concern was the unity of the Western Church, seem to have viewed the council for union rather as a God-sent opportunity for the Eastern Church (and the Hussites) to realise and recognise its errors and return to the Latin faith, rather than a chance for mutual communion and an attempt for a deeper understanding of the different traditions in terms of doctrine, ecclesiology and liturgical life.

The rivalry between the two centres of power in the Western Church concerning the initiative for the convening of the council of union was inevitable. Thus, the Pope conducted separate negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor, while the Council of Basel on its own authority assumed the responsibility to conduct independent negotiations on behalf of the Latin Church, issuing a plenary indulgence in order to raise funds to organise a council of union, to which decision Pope Eugenius objected²⁹. Similarly, the Pope's proposal that the Council of Basel should be transferred to Italy on the grounds that this would facilitate the Byzantine delegates to participate, was rejected by the Council, as they felt that this would undermine their own independence and authority. After much deliberation the Council voted for the council of union to be held at Basel, or if it was preferable to the Byzantines either at Avignon or a city in Savoy, to which the Council of Basel would then be transferred. Once more, Pope Eugenius challenged this decision by transferring the Council on his own authority from Basel to Ferrara in the Papal States. By so doing he envisaged to limit the right to vote in the council to bishops, thus securing an Italian dominance, in order

²⁷ Cf. NILOS KABASILAS, *On the causes of dissension in the Church*, (= PG 149), col. 685C, (trans. G. DENZLER, Basic ecclesiological structures in the Byzantine Empire, in: *Concilium* 67 [1971] 68-89), and JOHN VI CANTACUZENUS, *Dialogue with the papal legate Paul*, Meyendorff (ed.), *Projets de concile* (as note 25), 172, both cited by PAPANAKIS, *Byzantine Perceptions* (as note 24), 235 with notes 30-31.

²⁸ J. W. STIEBER, *Christian Unity from the Perspective of the Council Fathers at Basel and that of Eugenius IV*, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 57-73, 70 with note 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

to proceed with a revision of the decrees of the Council of Constance concerning the supreme authority of general councils in the Church³⁰.

It is clear that Eugenius' aim to bring about the union between the Greek and Latin Churches, through an ecumenical council convened for this very purpose, apart from his genuine conviction on Church unity served above all his particular political aims. For, the very act of convening such a council re-affirmed papal supremacy over the Council of Basel, and by ordering its members to attend the council of union in a city of his choice in Italy put an end to the Council of Basel³¹.

The contest over the negotiations for the council of union reached its peak when envoys from both parties arrived in Constantinople in order to escort the Byzantine delegation to the West³². Under the circumstances, after months of internal debate John VIII finally opted to accept the invitation of the Pope, whom the Byzantines traditionally recognised as the ecclesiastical authority in the West, and who guaranteed the necessary funds to cover all expenses of the Byzantine delegation, including their travel to Italy and their return to Constantinople after the council. The fact that the Pope proposed an Italian coastal city for the council may have played a role in John's decision, as this would have facilitated the return of the Byzantine delegation to Constantinople should the council were to fail.

It was in this atmosphere of division, suspicion and rivalry that the preliminary discussions for the convening of the council of union and concordance were conducted.

To this should be added the unwillingness of the old ailing Patriarch Joseph II (1416-39) (who in fact died in Florence before the act of union was signed) and members of the Greek clergy to undergo the hardships of a long journey to Italy, coupled with their anxiety that the Latins might force them to accept the union by refusing to pay their subsistence or their passage home, should they decline to do so. This information is recorded by the Grand Ecclesiarch of the Church of St Sophia Sylvester Syropoulos who participated in the Byzantine delegation³³. His *Mémoires*, written four of five years after the Council of Ferrara-Florence, is an invaluable source,

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

³² GILL, *The Council of Florence* (as note 1), 79-82; STIEBER, *Christian Unity* (as note 28), 72-73.

³³ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), II, 19, 120; see GEANAKOPOLOS, *A New Reading of the Acta*, Especially Syropoulos, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 328 with n. 10.

in the sense that though fervently anti-unionist in his approach, Syropoulos offers a detailed and quite accurate account of the events (omitting however certain meetings and negotiations, in particular concerning the Latin side), giving an insight to the mentality, thoughts, aspirations, prejudices, disagreements, sensitivities and responses of the Byzantines, both pro- and anti-unionists, behind the scenes³⁴. In this respect it complements and surpasses the other two main sources: the *Acta graeca*, a record of the public meetings in diary form by a pro-unionist Greek bishop at the Council, possibly Dorotheos of Mitylene, who says little about the private meetings among the Byzantines or the Latins and their motives³⁵; and the *Acta latina*, an official lengthy record of the Latin documents and Council proceedings by the papal lawyer Andrea of Santacroce, which reflect the Latin view³⁶.

From the very beginning at Ferrara the Byzantines realized that despite the courtesy with which they were welcomed, in reality they were considered far from brothers enjoying equal status, treated rather as schismatics and even heretics. The difficulty the Byzantines faced to get permission to use a church for their liturgical needs when they arrived in Ferrara, and the circulation of a Latin document at one point in the proceedings accusing the Byzantines of more than fifty heresies³⁷, are some examples which illustrate the atmosphere. To these should be added problems of protocol, including the expectation that the Patriarch should kiss the Pope's feet according to the Latin custom (which the astonished Patriarch refused to do)³⁸, the arrangement of the thrones at the Council (with that of the Pope placed higher than those of the Emperor and the Patriarch)³⁹, and the appearance of the names of the Pope and the Emperor in the Decree of Union (in that order) as visible signs of precedence⁴⁰.

The humiliation and insecurity the Byzantines felt was intensified by the fact that they were entirely dependent on the papal treasury for their subsistence in Italy. For the anti-unionists the painful and long delays in their

³⁴ For an evaluation of Syropoulos as an historical source, see LAURENT (ed.), *Les Mémoires* (as note 2), 34-35; GEANAKOPOLOS (as note 33), 325-326, 332-333.

³⁵ J. GILL (ed.), *Quae supersunt actorum graecorum Concilii Florentini necnon descriptionis cuiusdam eiusdem*, Rome 1953 (= CFI Ser. B, Pars I), vol. 5, fasc. 1-2.

³⁶ G. HOFMANN (ed.), *Andreas de Santacroce advocatus consistorialis. Acta latina Concilii Florentini*, Rome 1955 (= CFI Ser. B), vol. 4.

³⁷ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), VI, 8, 300.4-18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31, 230-234.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39-40, 240-244; *Acta graeca* (as note 35), 11, 35; *Acta Latina* (as note 36), 28-29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, X, 4, 478.

payment⁴¹, for which in fact the Pope had to borrow the money⁴², were clear evidence of pressure to submit and sign the Decree of union. The fact that some bishops returned to Constantinople richer than when they left for the council, and the conferment to the pro-unionist leaders Bessarion and Isidore of the office of cardinal as a reward for their services to the union were taken as further evidence of corruption and bribery. The prolongation and confrontational tone of the discussions further aggravated the feeling of frustration and betrayal on the part of the Byzantines of the real purpose of the council.

The major issues that dominated the theological debates were the addition of the *filioque* clause to the Creed and the papal claims of ecclesiastical primacy over the Eastern Patriarchs. Other questions included the doctrine of purgatory (for which there was no formulated Orthodox view and remained inconclusive with the abrupt termination of the discussions in Ferrara), and liturgical practises, namely the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist and the sanctification of the sacramental gifts in the Eucharist with or without the invocation (*epiclesis*) of the Holy Spirit following the Words of Institution. These latter practices, which should not be considered of little importance, as they were deeply rooted in the liturgical life of the Churches, also remained unresolved at the Council, allowing in effect the two Churches to follow their own customs. What would prove not easy to reconcile were the divergent views over the *filioque* and the primacy of the bishop of Rome⁴³.

⁴¹ Ibid., IV, 42, 244-246; V, 5, 260; VII, 26, 378; VII, 28, 380; VIII, 16, 404.

⁴² See J. GILL, The Cost of the Council of Florence, in: IDEM, Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays (as note 1), 166-167, 194-203.

⁴³ On the views of contemporary Byzantine theologians on the major theological, ecclesiastical and liturgical points of dispute between the Greeks and the Latins, see JOSEPH BRYENNIS, *First Dialogue with the Latinophrones in Constantinople on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, in: VOULGARIS ed. (as note 6), Τὰ Εὐρεθέντα, I, 352-62, esp. 356 ff; JOSEPH BRYENNIS, *Third Dialogue with the Latinophrones in Constantinople on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, in: VOULGARIS (ed.), 1, 400-424; MACARIUS OF ANKYRA, *Against the Latins*, in: Dositheos Patriarch of Jerusalem (ed.), Τόμος Καταλλαγῆς, Jassy 1692-1694, 1-205 (a new critical edition is currently under preparation by Mr Christos Triantafyllopoulos for his doctoral thesis at The Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London); SYROPOULOS (as note 2), V, 15, 270.16-20; MARK EUGENIKOS, *Epistola Encyclica*, L. PETIT (ed.), Documents relatifs au Concile de Florence, vol. 2, Oeuvres anticonciliaires de Marc d' Ephèse, Paris 1923 (= PO 17), fasc. 2, 15, cols. [318]-[320], repr. in Marci Eugenici Metropolitae Ephesi Opera antiunionistica ab Ludovico Petit e codicibus graecis deprompta additis ab eodem versionibus Latinis, Rome 1977 (= CFI A) vol 10, fasc. 2, n. IX, 141-151. See also T. M. KOLBABA, The Byzantine Lists. Errors of the Latins, Urbana 2000.

The different teachings concerning the doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, from the Father alone according to the Greek theologians, or from the Father and the Son as from one source rather than two sources according to the Latin doctors, are not simply based on linguistic problems leading to different interpretations of Scriptural and Patristic sayings. For the Latins the addition of the *filioque* clause to the Creed is a clarification stressing the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, while for the Greeks it is primarily a violation of the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils which prohibit any change in the Symbol of the Faith.

What lies, however, at the heart of the *filioque* question is the fundamentally different perception of the life in the Trinity, related to the distinction among the divine hypostases, and between the common essence and energy of God⁴⁴. The latter issue, brought up by the Latin theologians at some point was censored by the Emperor, possibly fearing that this would be taken as another addition to the creed as the *filioque* clause⁴⁵.

Thus, the two sides limited themselves to defending their own position mainly by an arsenal of Patristic sayings. After prolonged fruitless discussions both sides agreed to tackle the question on the principle of 'the agreement of the Saints' by reconciling the various sayings, focusing on the supposedly interchangeable use of the prepositions 'from' and 'through' with reference to the procession of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the majority of the Byzantine delegation having been persuaded by the Latin interpretations of Greek patristic sayings voted for the addition, with the notable exception of a few members, including Mark Eugenikos.

Concerning the discussion on papal primacy, the Latins maintained their view that the Pope was the only visible sign of unity in the Church constituted by Christ Himself, to which the Greeks objected on the grounds that

⁴⁴ See J. MEYENDORFF, *La procession du Saint-Esprit chez les Pères orientaux*, in: *Russie et Chrétienté* 3-4 (1950), 158-78; IDEM, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York 1974; J. N. D. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, London 1958; 5th rev. edn. 1977; repr. 1993, chapters IV-V, X, esp. 260 ff; PH. SHEPARD, *The Greek East and the Latin West*, London 1959; V. LOSSKY, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, New York 1967; P. ΕΥΔΟΚΙΜΟΝ, *Τὸ ἅγιο Πνεῦμα στήν ὀρθόδοξη παράδοση*, trans. S. PLEVRAKE, Thessalonike 1973; I. ΒΥΛΟΝΙΪ, *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Τριάδι Διακρίσεως τῆς Θείας Οὐσίας καὶ Ἐνεργείας κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Μάρκον Ἐφέσου τὸν Εὐγενικόν*, Thessalonike 1983, esp. 242-44; A. ΠΑΠΑΔΑΚΙΣ, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289)*, New York, 1983, 63 ff; A. ΡΑΔΟΝΙΪ, *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Γρηγόριον Παλαμᾶν*, Thessalonike 1991, esp. 143-213.

⁴⁵ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), V, 38-39, 292.10-23; GEANAKOPOLOS, *A New Reading of the Acta*, Especially Syropoulos (as note 33), 345-46.

though the bishop of Rome is recognised as *primus inter pares* in terms of honour, any attempt to interpret this privilege beyond the spiritual domain goes contrary to the fundamental principle of Pentarchy decreed by the Ecumenical Councils. A compromise was reached by which the Roman primacy was affirmed, on the grounds of the decrees of the Ecumenical councils and canon law (and not on scriptural basis), while the rights and privileges of the eastern Patriarchs were safeguarded. In effect the Pope had secured his dominance in terms of both honour and jurisdiction.

Despite the fact that agreement was reached with the Latin side prevailing over the doctrinal and ecclesiological issues, though conceding to the maintenance of the sacramental rites and liturgical practices of the Orthodox Church, the two sides had failed to explore in a profound way these important questions. Should they have done so, a real understanding of the fundamental differences between the two traditions would have enriched the debates helping to bridge the gap in a spirit of joint effort and real communion⁴⁶. To this should be added different methodological approaches – scholastic and dialectic for the Latin theologians, biblical and patristic for the Byzantines –, and also the fact that a large number of the important discussions were conducted by small committees and not in plenary sessions. This meant that crucial issues were debated by experts who were the only ones who had precise knowledge of the progress and details of the discussions, while the agreement for the Decree of the Union was reached when all seemed to be lost as a result of intransigence and anger on both sides⁴⁷.

The question whether pressure was exercised by the Emperor⁴⁸ on the Byzantine delegation to accept the Latin views over doctrine has been raised. The Emperor's intentions were made clear. As Syropoulos recorded, in a private discussion among the Byzantine delegation John stated that *We have come here for the divine work of union in order that this achievement with God's aid will bring advantage for our country*⁴⁹. John's determination to bring about the union during the Council was backed by Patriarch Joseph despite his initial reservations⁵⁰. However, reading Syropoulos one cannot escape

⁴⁶ H. CHADWICK, *The Theological Ethos of the Council of Florence*, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 229-39, at 229-30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁴⁸ See GEANAKOPOLOS, *A New Reading of the Acta, Especially Syropoulos* (as note 33), 349.

⁴⁹ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), VIII, 26, 413.34-36; trans. GEANAKOPOLOS, *A New Reading of the Acta, Especially Syropoulos* (as note 33), 334.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28, 414.25-416.8.

from concluding that though the Emperor occasionally did exercise pressure on the Greek delegation to find ways of reconciling the Orthodox position with certain Latin doctrines, thus putting an end to the lengthy fruitless discussions, nevertheless the chief Byzantine spokesman and staunch anti-unionist Mark Eugenikos was on the whole left free to defend his views. His firm conviction that in matters of faith the principle of *oikonomia*, in the sense of compromise, was not applicable⁵¹, was respected by the Emperor⁵². Mark was not the only one in the delegation who opposed the union on theological grounds, but he was undoubtedly the leading figure⁵³. When the Decree of the Union was finalized Syropoulos reports that Eugenius asked whether Mark had signed, to which he received a negative reply. The Pope then famously stated, ‘Then we have achieved nothing’⁵⁴. Ultimately, the success of an agreement over the union depended on whether those who opposed it would be won over in both heart and mind⁵⁵. Finally, the Union was formally proclaimed in the cathedral of Florence on 6 July 1439⁵⁶.

The story of the immediate reception of the Union of Florence in the Orthodox world is well known⁵⁷. On their return to Constantinople the members of the Byzantine delegation who had signed the Act of Union met

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, IX, 11, 444-446.

⁵² See GEANAKOPOLOS, A New Reading of the Acta, Especially Syropoulos (as note 33), 334.

⁵³ For his anti-unionist works see L. PETIT (ed.), Documents relatifs au Concile de Florence, II, Oeuvres anticonciliaires de Marc d’Ephèse, Paris 1923 (= PO 17), fasc. 2, repr. in Marci Eugenici Metropolitanæ Ephesi Opera anti-unionistica (as note 43).

⁵⁴ SYROPOULOS (as note 2), X, 15, 496.16-20; cf. Acta graeca (as note 35), 469-470.

⁵⁵ CHADWICK (as note 38), 233-34.

⁵⁶ For an edition of the Act of Union with a list of the signatures from the original *Laurentianus Cassetta Cesarini* 1, see G. HOFMANN (ed.), *Epistolae pontificiae ad Concilium Florentinum spectantes*, vol. 1, pars 2, Rome 1953 (= CFI Ser. A), n. 176, 68-79. On the ceremony of the signing of the Decree and the original copies see SYROPOULOS (as note 2), X, 13 and 25. Cf. J. DARROUZÈS (as note 18), 7, Paris 1991, no. 3380, 47-48.

⁵⁷ I. ŠEVČENKO, Intellectual Repercussions of the Council of Florence, in: *ChH* 24 (1955) 291-323; A. HOUSIAU, Réception et rejet d’un consensus conciliaire: quels facteurs ont joué pour ou contre la réception de la déclaration d’union entre Latin et Grecs à Florence?, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 509-520; U. JAITNER-HAHNER, Da Firenze in Grecia: Appunti sul lavoro Postconciliare, in: VITTI (ed.), *Firenze e il Concilio del 1439* (as note 1), vol. 2, 901-919; M.-H. BLANCHET, L’Église byzantine à la suite de l’union de Florence (1439-1445): de la contestation à la scission, in: A. ARGYRIOU - C. OTTEN-FROUX - P. RACINE - G. SAINT-GUILLAIN (eds.), VIII^e Symposion Byzantinon. L’Église dans le monde byzantin de la IV^e croisade (1204) à la chute de Constantinople (1453). Strasburg 7, 8 et 9 novembre 2002 (= *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 [2007]), 79-123; P. RACINE, L’impossible union entre les Églises d’Orient et d’Occident, in: ed. cit., 371-390.

strong opposition. Most of them, suspicious of the sincerity of the Latins and of the union as a mechanism for the gradual assimilation of the Orthodox Churches to the Latin Church, gradually recanted⁵⁸. With the Patriarchal throne vacant for months and the Emperor ineffective to implement the union (he was in grief for the death of his wife) the unionists found themselves increasingly isolated, while the opposition came to the open and grew stronger under the leadership of Mark Eugenikos (later succeeded by George Scholarios who had left Florence with Pletho and Demetrius Palaeologus soon after the death of Patriarch Joseph, in order to avoid signing the Decree).

The condemnation of the union gradually prevailed in the Orthodox East. Sometime between 15 May 1440 and 1441 a repudiation of the act of union by members of the delegation who had signed was published⁵⁹, while Isidore, by then Cardinal of Russia, entrusted by the Pope with the propagation of the union among the Orthodox Eastern Slavs, was imprisoned by Basil Grand Prince of Moscow on the accusation of heresy, only to escape twice⁶⁰, before he returned to Lithuania and Poland a year later (1442) to find the Latin hierarchy more in communion with the Council of Basel than the papacy⁶¹. For the next decade he would work indefatigably promoting union in the East. In 1443 at a meeting of the three Eastern Patriarchs in Jerusalem the question of the legitimacy of the unionist Patriarch of Constantinople was raised, while at the same time the archpriests he had or-

⁵⁸ A list of those who signed and those who did not, and those who recanted and those who did not was compiled by George Scholarios at the order of John VIII: Σημείωμα περί τῶν παρόντων ἐν τῇ συνόδῳ τῆς Φλωρεντίας ὑπογραψάντων καὶ μὴ, μετανοησάντων καὶ μὴ, in: L. PETIT - X. SIDÉRIDÈS - M. JUGIE (eds.), Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὕρισκόμενα. Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios, 8 vols., Paris 1928-36, vol. 3, 194-195. Cf. SYROPOULOS (as note 2), XII, 1-18, 546-574. See also Chadwick (as note 38), 229-30.

⁵⁹ DARROUZÈS (as note 18), VII, no. 3384, 50-51; DOSITHEOS PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM (ed.), Τόμος Καταλλαγῆς, 422-431. In his autograph list of his own anti-unionist works Scholarios states that the Decree of the Union was denounced by signed declarations no less than four times: PETIT - SIDÉRIDÈS - JUGIE (eds.), Γενναδίου Σχολαρίου ἅπαντα τὰ εὕρισκόμενα (as note 58), 3, 179.27-180.5. See also Scholarios' other works against the Union of Florence (ed. cit., 3, esp. 77-110, 136-195). Cf. TH. N. ZESES, Γεννάδιος Β' Σχολάριος, Βίος-Συγγράμματα-Διδασκαλία, Thessalonike 1988 (= Ἀνάλεκτα Βλατάδων 30).

⁶⁰ I. PAVLOV, The Ferrara-Florentine Union: a View from Moscow. Historical Retrospective and Contemporary Appraisal, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), Christian Unity (as note 1), 493-507.

⁶¹ W. HRYNIEWICZ, The Florentine Union: Reception and Rejection. Some Reflections on Unionist Tendencies among Ruthenians, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), Christian Unity (as note 1), 521-54; V. BOROVY, The Destiny of the Union of Florence in Poland and the Great Lithuanian Principality (Byellorussia and the Ukraine), in: Alberigo (ed.), Christian Unity, 555-71.

dained were not recognised⁶². Sometime after Mark's death in 1444 and before 1449, the Decree was refuted point-by-point and word-for-word by his brother John Eugenikos (who was present at Ferrara until September 1438)⁶³. The utterly polemical tone in John's antirrhetic reflects the force of the anti-unionist sentiments.

The union proclaimed in Florence in fact widened the breach between pro- and anti-unionists in the Byzantine Church and society, as Emperor Manuel II had predicted almost two decades earlier. His final warning of the repercussions of a possible union with the Western Church on the unity of the Empire and ultimately its very survival in the face of the imminent threat of the Ottomans, who were well aware of the Council and its aftermath⁶⁴, was verified, though in retrospect this seems to have been inevitable. The disastrous defeat of the Crusading army against the Ottomans in Varna (1444), was followed by the defeat of the Hungarians at the battle of Kosovo four years later, while the promised assistance from the West arrived only too late. On 12 December 1452, when the final siege of Constantinople was about to begin, the Greek and Latin liturgies were concelebrated in the church of Hagia Sophia in the presence of John VIII's brother and successor Emperor Constantine XI (1449-53) and Cardinal Isidore. There the decrees of Union were read out in Greek and Latin, as recited in Florence, and union was finally officially proclaimed in the Empire, though it was never fulfilled.

For many Orthodox the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans on 29 May 1453 and the dissolution of the Empire that followed was directly linked with the apostasy of their Emperor and Church from true faith. In their eyes the union of Florence not only had failed to avert the Ottoman danger, but was the very reason for their loss of freedom⁶⁵. It is not surprising that even in those tragic moments there were Latins who saw the destruc-

⁶² Ed. G. HOFMANN with the cooperation of Th. O'SHAUGHNESSY - J. SIMON, *Orientalium documenta minora*, Rome 1953 (= CFI Ser. A), vol. 3, fasc. 3, no. 45, 68-72. It should be noted that three years earlier the Patriarch of Alexandria Philotheos had approved the Decree of Union through his letter to Pope Eugenius (*Ibid.*, no. 38, 51-53).

⁶³ New annotated critical edition by E. ROSSIDOU-KOUTSOU, *John Eugenikos' Antirrhetic of the Decree of the Council of Ferrara-Florence*, Nicosia 2006.

⁶⁴ ŠEVČENKO (as note 46), 300 with note 58, citing among others SPHRANTZES (as note 2), XXIII, 8-10, MAISANO (ed.), 84, and DUCAS, *Historia turco-byzantina*, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1834 (= CSHB), 236.20 ff. Cf. Syropoulos' report that when the Byzantine delegation was departing for Italy the Turks warned the Emperor that *the Emir's friendship* (ἡ φιλία τοῦ Ἀμηρᾶ) was *more profitable than that of the Latins*: SYROPOULOS (as note 2), III, 21, 182.11-17.

⁶⁵ See ŠEVČENKO (as note 46), 300 with notes 60-61.

tion of Byzantium as the result of the betrayal of the union by the heretic and double-faced Greeks⁶⁶. It is not the *unio facta* but the *unio ficta* which were to be blamed, according to the Latin prelate Leonard of Chios, an eyewitness to the final siege of Constantinople⁶⁷. In Rome, though never officially rejected, the Council was in essence disregarded by promoting the Uniate Church⁶⁸. It is clear, therefore, that the Florentine union had not won the minds, but especially the hearts of either side, and this was its true human failure⁶⁹.

Undoubtedly, each period in history, including our own times, faces new challenges, inheriting however old problems. In this sense there are always lessons to be learnt, in the hope that this knowledge of the past will help us to understand better, or even solve, questions of the present in view of our common future. This is also important for the success of the theological dialogue among the Christian Churches today. It is only through this spirit of communion, free exchange of ideas, and a joint effort for mutual deep understanding of the various issues and traditions within Christendom, that an attempt to understand why, so far, the efforts for union have not been successful, can bear fruit – and, more importantly, try to do something about it.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 300 with n. 62, citing among others the uniate Joseph bishop of Methone (John Plusiadenos), Dialogue on the difference between the Greeks and Latins, and on the holy Synod held in Florence, V, VIII, XIII, (= PG 159), cols. 1328C, 1337CD, 1368C, 1372A; and the Italian humanist and survivor of the sack of Constantinople Ubertino Puscuro from Brescia, *Constantinopoleos libri quatuor*, I, 381-384, 581-583, ed. A. ELLISSEN, Ἐπιτομὴ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Klage um Konstantinopel, Leipzig 1857 (= Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur 3, Anactota graecobarbara 1), 20, 24; see M. J. MCGANN, *Haeresis castigata, Troia vindicata: The Fall of Constantinople in Quattrocento Latin Poetry*, in: *Res publica litterarum* 7 (1984) 137-45. See also the letter of Vinzenz of Aggsbach (8.III.1456) to Johannes Schlitpacher, commenting on the fall of Constantinople to the Turks possibly as a punishment of the Greeks for their decision to deal with the Pope instead of fulfilling the agreement with the Council of Basel: STIEBER, Pope Eugenius IV (as note 12), 339 with note 10.

⁶⁷ LEONARD OF CHIOS, *Historia Constantinopolitanae urbis a Mahumete II captae*, (= PG 159), col. 927B, cf. cols. 925D, 926A-B; cf. ŠEVČENKO (as note 46), 300 with note 63.

⁶⁸ G. ALBERIGO, The Unity of Christians: 550 Years after the Council of Ferrara–Florence. Tensions, Disappointments and Perspectives, in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1), 1-19, at p. 10.

⁶⁹ As Professor Henry Chadwick has emphasized in his contribution, The Theological Ethos (as note 38), in: ALBERIGO (ed.), *Christian Unity* (as note 1).