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**“THE VOICES ABOUT THE COUNCIL”
THE PROCESS OF THE RECEPTION OF THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-
FLORENCE IN THE 15TH CENTURY AND ITS IMAGE IN CONTEMPORARY
ECUMENICAL DISCOURSE**

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Clifford AYESGWALO

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DEDICATED

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ABSTRAKT AUF DEUTSCH

Das Konzil von Basel-Ferrara-Florenz 1431-1449 ist wohl eines der umstrittensten ökumenischen Konzile des Mittelalters. Nach Jahrhunderten der Spaltung wurde ein Konzil, das Ost und West zu vereinen versuchte, zu einer Arena theologischer Debatten mit politischen Untertönen. Während die Väter in den Verhandlungen für die Konzilssitzung erfolgreich waren und eine rigorose intellektuelle Debatte führten, die zum Dekret der Union *Laetentur Coeli* vom 6. Juli 1439 führte, gelang dem Konzil alles außer seinem Ziel der Einheit zwischen Ost und West. Dieses Versagen zeigt sich an der Rezeption des Konzils, insbesondere in Konstantinopel. Das Konzil, das ursprünglich für Einheit und Frieden in Konstantinopel gedacht war, wurde zur Quelle der Spaltung zwischen Klerus und Volk. Während einige die Union mit guten theologischen Argumenten offen für gültig erklärten, erklärten andere die Union mit theologischen und politischen Argumenten und Verhaltensweisen für ungültig. So litt die Rezeption des Unionsdekrets in Ferrara-Florenz innerlich und äußerlich, was nach dem Fall Konstantinopels im Jahr 1484 zu seiner vollständigen Aufhebung führte.

Diese Arbeit versucht daher eine historische Analyse der Ereignisse rund um dieses Konzil, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Rezeption des Unionsbeschlusses. Die Rezeption des Konzils nach mehr als 580 Jahren ist immer noch ein Problem, daher beschränkt sich diese Studie auf die Rezeption des Konzilsdekrets über die Vereinigung im 15. Jahrhundert bis zum Fall Konstantinopels im Jahr 1453. Die Studie wird eine unvoreingenommene historische Analyse der Ereignisse und „Voices“, die für oder gegen die Gewerkschaft arbeiteten. Diese zu untersuchenden „Stimmen“ sind einige ausgewählte Persönlichkeiten, deren Einfluss eine entscheidende Rolle für das Schicksal der Union spielte.

Kritisch an dieser Studie ist auch ein kritischer Diskurs zur aktuellen Haltung von Kirchenhistorikern und Ökumenikern zum Konzil von Ferrara-Florenz. In dieser Hinsicht wird diese Arbeit argumentieren, dass eine bewusste Verleugnung der beim Konzil von Florenz erzielten Fortschritte nicht in Richtung der angestrebten Vereinigung von Ost und West führt. Ost und West müssen zusammenkommen und eine neue Hermeneutik anwenden, um das Konzil von Ferrara-Florenz neu zu bewerten, damit dieses einzigartige Konzil der Vereinigung bei der Suche nach der Einheit zwischen den orthodoxen und lateinischen Christen Früchte tragen kann.

ABSTRACT

The Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence 1431-1449 is arguably one of the most controversial ecumenical councils in the middle ages. After centuries of division, a Council that attempted to unite the East and West became an arena of theological debate with political undertones. While the Fathers succeeded in the negotiation for the Council meeting and engaged in rigorous intellectual debate that resulted in the Decree of Union *Laetentur coeli* 6th of July, 1439, the Council succeeded in everything but its goal of unity between the East and West. This failure is evident from the reception of the Council, especially in Constantinople. The Council, which was initially intended for unity and peace in Constantinople became, the source of division between the clergy and the people. While some openly declared the union valid with good theological arguments, others declared the union invalid with theological and political arguments and behaviours. Thus, the reception of the decree of union in Ferrara-Florence suffered internally and externally, leading to its total abrogation after the fall of Constantinople in 1484.

This thesis, therefore, attempts a historical analysis of the events surrounding this council, especially as they are related to the reception of the decree of union. The reception of the council after more than 580 years is still a problem, so this study is limited to the 15th-century reception of the conciliar decree of union till the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The study will have an unbiased historical analysis of the events and “voices” that worked for or against the union. These “voices” to be studied are few selected figures whose influence played a crucial role in the fate of the Union.

Critical to this study is also a critical discourse on the current attitude of church historians and ecumenists towards the Council of Ferrara-Florence. In this regard, this thesis will argue that a deliberate denial of the progress achieved at the Council of Florence is not progressing towards the desired union between East and West. There is a need for the East and West to come together and adopt new hermeneutics to re-evaluate the Council of Ferrara-Florence so that this unique council of union can bear fruit in the search for unity between the Orthodox and Latin Christians.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Council of Ferrara-Florence has gone down in history as one of the major attempts made towards the healing of the rifts between the Eastern Greek Church and the Western Latin Church. Often referred to as the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence, it took place between 1431 and 1449. Although its convocation occurred primarily within two major contexts: the Hussite uprisings that took place in Bohemia and the reform, the Council eventually became a landmark event to achieve conciliation between the East and the West. The Council initially raised the hope of a new beginning for both parties. Regrettably, that hope was quick to evaporate because of intransigence mounted by some figures on both sides of the divide. Even though both parties desired some form of Union, their conception of that Union remained largely unclear since their conceptions were coloured by the political events in their different provenance. While the representatives of the Eastern and Western Church signed a reunification document on the 6th of July, 1439 in the Magnificent Florentine Cathedral it remained, however, unclear what each side understood by the terms of that decree of reunification.¹ For a brief while, the conciliar document *Laetentur Caeli* appeared to have achieved the long-awaited Union between the East and the West, but subsequent events would prove that "Union" to be short-lived at best and illusory at worst.

1.2 STATUS QUAESTIONIS

The supposed "union" in Florence was repudiated in the East by the clergy and the people who considered it as having no binding force. Their rejection of it led some of its original signatories to regret their actions which they construed as a betrayal of the trust of their people. For its part, the West never officially rejected the Decree of Union. The acceptance and rejection of the Florentine "reunification" seemed to have prolonged the division between the East and the West. That prolongation was reinforced by the residue of some historical events that were painfully entrenched in the collective memory of the Eastern people. Against this background, studies on the reception of the Council have tended more towards a negative reappraisal, especially given the turn of events in the East. This can be gleaned from the documents and writings by scholars that categorized supporters and opponents of the Council as "pro-unionists" and "anti-unionists", respectively.

¹ For a detailed description of the ceremony that accompanied the signing of the Decree of Union, Cf Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 293-296.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The basic aim of this research is to highlight the bumpy road travelled by both supporters and opponents of the Council, particularly in terms of acceptance and rejection of the conciliar Decree of Union of Florence. It is important to underline this aspect since it is often overlooked or sidelined in the historical studies of the Council of Florence. A council remains incomplete until it is received and appropriated by the ecclesial community. It equally happens that a council may provoke hostility and outright rejection in some ecclesial quarters. The Council of Florence, in this regard, was not an exception, especially if squared within the larger context of the history of ecumenical councils of the Church. Hence, this research will seek to locate its reception within the history and tradition of the ecumenical councils.

In the light of the above, it will bring to the fore the efforts of some outstanding personalities like Isidore of Kyiv and Bessarion of Nicae that worked very hard in their bid to see that promises and hopes of reunification did not die. Such personalities constituted the unrelenting voices that must be accounted for as far as the history of the Council of Florence. It will equally consider the place and role of the larger populace as well as the positions of the pro-unionists and the anti-unionists. The divergent positions of both groups will help to better understand the Council and the key issues in question, especially in terms of reception or rejection, as the case may be.

The work is essentially a historical enquiry and not a theological examination. On this note, the research will largely be library-based. The limitation or challenge of every historian is distinguishing historical truth from propaganda. To some reasonable extent, the Council of Florence appears to have received a somewhat one-sided interpretation in history. This research will strive to engage objectively with available relevant materials that are within reach. This will be done with the purpose of attaining historical truth on the Council as far as this may be possible within the limited scope of this research.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Regarding relevance and scope, it is pertinent to note that a good understanding of the voices about the Council of Florence holds the key to unlock the historical importance of that Council and the events surrounding it. Herein lies the relevance of this research since it will help to shed some light on the place and the impact of the diverging voices of the pro-unionist and anti-unionist on the unity and division between the East and the West.

An unbiased historical enquiry into the process of the reception of the Council of Florence would reveal that the Council, with its efforts towards conciliation, was not a total failure.

There were a couple of good things that came with the reception that are worth acknowledging and highlighting. Of equal importance is to understand the reasons for the failure of the Council that led to its repudiation, especially in the East. Such candid understanding may be helpful for future engagement between the East and West in search of common grounds for collaboration.

1.5 DIVISION OF THE RESEARCH

This research work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter will focus on a general introduction and overview. It will look at the research questions, the significance and scope of the research, and the method and limitation of the research.

Chapter two will be dealing with the literature reviews. In this literature review, the focus would be limited to the last 32 years of study of this Council. The 550 anniversaries of "*Laetentur coeli*", which took place in 1989, reawaken new debate about the Council through conferences. In light of the present evaluation of the Council, this chapter will discuss this latest research, from 1989 to the present day.

Chapter Three dwells properly on the Council of Ferrara-Florence. It will showcase the appearance of Pope Eugenius IV at the Council as well as the presence of a good number of the Catholic Cardinals alongside the attendance by Emperor John VIII, Joseph the Patriarch of Constantinople. It will also take note of the representatives of the three other Eastern Patriarchs (Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). Given the many issues at stake, the Council from the outset was fraught with misrepresentations and discords. This third chapter will seek to account for those labyrinths of disagreement and trace the tortuous paths trodden by the conciliar Fathers to arrive at the Decree of Union, *Laetentur Caeli* of July 6, 1439. It will equally underscore the importance of the refusal of Mark of Ephesus to append his signature to the decree, which implicitly at the time already signalled doom for the fate of the supposed reunion. This chapter will also examine the theological methodology used by the Fathers in their debate. The Union achieved in Florence became a model that would be used in reconciling other sister Churches to the Roman Church, who were also in negotiation with Rome.

The process of the reception of the Council, particularly the Decree of the Union, will be the main focus of Chapter Four. It will explore some historical issues that coloured the vision of the East about the West. The reception of the decree suffered under some external and internal factors in Constantinople. Chief among the external factors was the threat from the Ottoman empire that was determined to overrun Constantinople, and the internal division caused by this threat would demonstrate that a house divided against itself cannot stand even with the best of military help. Accounting for all the "Voices" about the Council is a daunting

task beyond the scope of this work. This internal crisis that would be evaluated as the "Voices" about the Council would be limited to few important Personalities in the 15th century after the Council till the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It would be demonstrated how these "voices", divided into two groups, the Unionists and anti-unionists, would not relent in their propaganda for and against the Union till the Ottoman empire finally overruns Constantinople. These "Voices" would be carefully examined together with the political, theological and the intellectual movements of the period. This is important because all the agitations outside being political issues were given theological garb and exerted considerable influence during and after the Council. This chapter would also highlight the reasons for the failure of the Union in the East.

Chapter Five takes a broad overview in terms of a general conclusion. In bringing the research to its *terminus ad quem*, the chapter would engage with the contemporary ecumenical movement-image of the Council of Florence. It would raise questions about the supposed negative disposition of ecumenists towards the Council and explore the possibility of re-visiting the Florentine Decree of Union for the quest for unity between East and West. Since history does not just examine the past, this chapter would highlight salient points that can be learned from the history of the reception of the Council of Ferrara-Florence by proposing some recommendations that are vital for the contemporary engagement of the East and West in progressing forward notwithstanding misconceptions and aggressions on the sides of both parties.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Council of Ferrara-Florence, often depicted as one of the most controversial ecumenical councils in the Church, has always remained central in the history of attempted Union between the Eastern and Western Churches. Ecumenical discourse between the East and West, in most cases, begins from this Council. The uniqueness of this Council and its nebulous implementation remain a mystery to Church historians who have dedicated much time to studying the Council. The non-acceptance of the Council, especially in the East, remains a puzzle to historians. This explains why scholars have attempted, over the centuries, to offer different reasons for the non-acceptance of the conciliar Union. Some notable attempts have been made by some twentieth-century Christian scholars towards a new re-evaluation of the Council. This new re-evaluation was visible in the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Council in 1949. It led the Pontifical Oriental Institute to carry out the project of gathering available materials on the Council.² They were later edited and published by the Jesuit scholar Joseph Gill in 1959 with the title, *The Council of Florence*. Gill also accompanied the book with another synthesis in 1964 entitled *Personalities of the Council of Florence*. Gill's works which were the first comprehensive works on the Council became a point of departure for the ecumenical dialogue on the Council.

Nevertheless, the puzzle over what happened at the Council and how the Council missed a chance at the Union has remained largely unresolved. A second major effort to understand the uniqueness and historical relevance of the Council was made at the 550th Anniversary of the Council in 1989. This gathering of Eastern and Western scholars in the estimation of Alberigo was captured in his following opening statement, "We neither mean to exalt the ambiguous and ephemeral union between the Greek and the Latin Churches, produced by the council with the *Laetentur Coeli* decree (4th July 1439), nor to complain about the precious chance of union at that time wasted."³ Rather the gathering was motivated by the

² Joseph Gill did a detailed synthesis of the scarcely available materials like the *Latin Acts* and the *Greek Acts*, which are more historically honest. The *Memoire* of Spyropoulos, a strong anti-unionist, was also used by Gill but with critical notes. It is noteworthy that both Western and Eastern historians take some Spyropoulos data with the grain of salt. After all, Syropoulos wrote his *Memoirs* to justify why he had signed *Laetentur Caeli* and then retracted. However, Eastern scholars have written a lot about this Council relying on Spyropoulos evidence, thereby making a study of the events at the Council of Florence another source of arguments between Church Historians. Cf Gill, *The Council*, xi-xiii. A detailed analysis of the sources can also be seen in Deno J. Geanakoplos, "A New Reading of the Acta" in G. Alberigo, (ed.), *Christian Unity: Council of Ferrara-Florence 1438/39-1989* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium XCVII), (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1991), 325-351.

³ Giuseppe Alberigo, "The Unity of Christians: 550 Years after the Council of Ferrara-Florence Tensions, Disappointments and Perspectives" in Alberigo (ed.), *Christian Unity*, 1.

desire to witness to the truth and a sincere search for unity between the East and West. The publications as mentioned above can, therefore, be understood within a broader context. They recognize previous efforts at unity that culminated in the Vatican II in the Western Church and the goodwill of the Greeks towards the straightening of a relation with the West. This chapter has its primary goal to review some of the materials produced at the 550th Anniversary and some subsequent works written on the Council after 1989.

2.1 GIUSEPPE ALBERIGO

Alberigo was a famous Roman Catholic Church historian whose thoughts on the Council of Ferrara-Florence continues to be relevant. Alberigo's view on the Council of Ferrara-Florence can be found mainly in his editorial note on the collection of articles for the celebrations of the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1989 titled: *Christian Unity: Council of Ferrara-Florence 1438/39-1989*. Arguing about the Council as a Catholic, he acknowledged the validity of the Union. However, Alberigo posited that the non-reception of the Council of Florence is to be situated in the conciliar Fathers inability to embrace discussion on all facets of the Churches life. They instead limited themselves to doctrinal differences. He is convinced that the division in the Church is more than theological: "The premise according to which theological dissent has split the Churches and only the theological assent can reunite them is less convincing."⁴ The doctrinal division is only one aspect of the division. It is possible to assert that fixation on doctrinal division, which can be categorized as theological opinions, made the Union of Florence unsuccessful. The false understanding that Christian division is solely a doctrinal problem prevented the Council of Florence from reflecting on mutual cultural misunderstanding and mistrust that foreclosed the possibility of any concession from both parties. Alberigo described the debate with the following words: "in the debate topics and resentments mixed, preventing, apart from rare moments, a common search. This way of proceeding fomented above all the craving for having one's viewpoint, "one's own" truth, prevailed."⁵ This explains why the Council was exhausted on the theological debate.⁶ It is impossible to expect the restoration of unity between the two Churches within a few months through spiteful comparison of limited doctrinal positions, hardened by centuries of controversy.⁷ As can be seen through the conciliar arguments, the council fathers ignored the

⁴ Alberigo, "The Unity of Christians, 3.

⁵ Alberigo, "The Unity of Christians, 6.

⁶ Alberigo, "The Unity of Christians, 7.

⁷ Alberigo, "The Unity of Christians, 7.

reality and the possibility of pluralism that is homogenous within the two Churches' cultural and ecclesiastical polycentrism. Instead of searching for unity in diversity, the conciliar fathers in Florence searched for uniformity which can be seen in their search for formulas acceptable to the two parts. The quest for uniformity in theology was emphasized over the burning issues like Church reform which was most needed, particularly in the West. It is pertinent also to note that the effort of the Council in search of unity was not a total failure since some progress was made in that regard.

2.2 JOHN MEYENDORFF

Another modern scholar whose thoughts about the Council are worth looking at is the Orthodox scholar, John Meyendorff. Meyendorff, one of the leading 20th century Orthodox theologians, attempted to balance the objective use of historical data and the usual Orthodox negative sentiments about the Council. Meyendorff laid down his thoughts on the council in his insightful contribution to Alberigo's *Christian Unity*. In his article, "Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence", Meyendorff argues that the Florentine Council was short of a real encounter between the East and West. He demonstrated with detailed historical analysis the events that led up to the Council, its deliberations and conclusion that brought about negotiations for the Union. One of the shortcomings of the Council in the opinion of Meyendorff lies in the fact that it "debated some issues without solving them and solved others without debating them."⁸ Although the Eastern representative had a good numerical and geographical representation at the Council, that numerical strength did not translate into an actual theological advantage in their favour. The estrangement between the East and the West had grown so much that the Latin theology had no corresponding Greek translation. The same was also true of the Westerners who lacked knowledge of Eastern theology. In the words of Meyendorff: "the Greeks themselves were not asking for serious dialogue."⁹ This was occasioned by the reality that the Greeks could not understand what was happening in the West, which means that they were not desirous of unity to the same degree as the West. The burning issue of papal reform central to the Western conciliarist movement was not apparent to the Easterners. Consequentially, their understanding of the papacy at the Council was too vague to warrant a real union. There were also political considerations at play at the Council. As Meyendorff explicates, those political undertones leading to the Council should not be

⁸ John Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter Between East and West" in Alberigo, (ed.), *Christian Unity*, 162.

⁹ Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter, 164

neglected when examining the outcome of the Council. For instance, the group of Eastern elites at the Council of Florence feared the danger of the Ottoman occupation of Constantinople. It is possible that their disposition for a union that could avert the danger of foreign occupation was quite different from the ordinary people who had accepted their fate under Muslim rule.¹⁰ The mutual ignorance of one another and the accompanying political interests underlining the desire for Union on both sides, to some extent, prevented any meaningful dialogue between East and West.

2.3 GIALLIAN R. EVANS

Gillian R. Evans also contributed to the debate, which can be found in Alberigo's *Christian Unity*. In her article titled: "The Council of Florence and the problem of Ecclesial Identity", she sustains the view that the failure of the council to attain the desired Union was due to the different ecclesiological understanding in the dealings between the East and the West.

Evans posited, that the lack of understanding of their separate ecclesiological structures that had grown over time was quite obvious. Western ecclesiology developed to revolve around the papacy that approved conciliar decisions. Eastern ecclesiology, on its part, held on to the view that the final say remained the exclusive reserve of ecumenical Council. The attempted Union at Florence was bound to fail since both sides did not recognize each other's unique ecclesial identity in relation to a council.¹¹

2.4 HENRY CHADWICK

The renowned Church historian Henry Chadwick from Anglican tradition had a different opinion concerning the failure of the Council. His thoughts are also on Alberigo's volume. Chadwick is of the viewpoint that the failure of the Union between East and West resulted from deep-seated tension that bordered on "moments of anger and almost total despair."¹² This kind of approach to dialogue bears no fruit since the parties involved were adamant in defending their cherished traditions. The resultant effect is that the East assented to the Union but later changed their minds. In the assertion of Chadwick, "the East feared that the mutual acknowledgement of the validity of both Eastern and Western traditions, central to the Florentine Decree, was to become an engine for imposing western ways on the eastern

¹⁰ Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter, 169

¹¹ Giallian R. Evans, "The Council of Florence and the problem of Ecclesial Identity" in Alberigo, (ed.), *Christian Unity*, 183

¹² Henry Chadwick, "The Theological Ethos of the Council of Florence" in Alberigo (ed.), *Christian Unity*, 229

Churches."¹³ Chadwick argues against the notion that ignorance on the sides of the representative affected the Union. He instead posited that the will to protect one's heritage made the Council's ethos tense even though some real compromise was reached while the significant issues around the division were left unresolved. Chadwick's Anglican tradition was not directly involved in the struggle for Union at this stage. However, one can not underestimate the influence of a common agenda between the Orthodox Churches and the Anglicans that have continued to perceive the Western ecclesiology as the significant source of division in the body of Christ. Their trepidation about western ecclesiology is not disconnected from the centuries of fear of the possibility of papal triumphalism and the possible loss of their tradition.

2.5 ANASTASIOS KALLIS

Anastasios Kallis was a theologian of ecumenism and a renowned Orthodox theologian in the 20th century. His thoughts concerning the reasons for the failure of the Council of Ferrara-Florence as found in Alberigo's *Christian Unity* are not devoid of the popular Orthodox sentiments that gave the power to accept and reject a conciliar decree to the people. For his part, therefore, Kallis focuses his attention on the failure of the Union. Kallis was keen to outline some historical factors laden with strong biases. He argues that it was for such biases that frustrated the conciliar attempts at Union. He is somewhat critical of Joseph Gill and his analysis of the supposed causes of the failure even though he acknowledges the historical relevance of Gill's thoughts. He considers them as "a number of historically verifiable facts" that are important in illuminating a major misunderstanding of Orthodoxy. The strong point of Kallis's position is found in his analysis of "the psychological-theological situation in Constantinople and the orthodox church consciousness." He underscores the point that such a situation was "not so much shaped by rational considerations and constructions of thought, but by the lived reality of truth in the Church as a whole."¹⁴

His critical evaluation of the historical events situates the problem at the doorstep of the papal primacy of jurisdiction as the real obstacle to unity. Bringing a new insight into the discourse, Kallis argues that the acceptance of the Union required the people's consent equally and that of the Pope and the Bishops at the Council. It meant that the people in rejecting the Union "stood true to the faith of their fathers, whom they saw betrayed by the prelates in Italy."¹⁵ The argument seems plausible considering the level of "inculturation" of the Church

¹³ Chadwick, "The Theological Ethos, 229.

¹⁴ Kallis "Rezeption, 581-582

¹⁵ Kallis "Rezeption, 583.

that has taken place in the East. This "inculturation" gave a voice to the lay people within the structure of the Eastern Church, where theology and politics often operated side-by-side. However, the place and role of the lay people remain fussy since the eastern canon does not address such questions, and that can make his historical analysis anachronistic. Kallis himself did not make any clarification of their role in his article.

2.6 ARISTEIDES PAPADAKIS

Aristeides Papadakis is a famous Orthodox scholar with specialization in Byzantine Medieval history. He has written a lot on the medieval controversies between East and West. One of his intriguing books, written in collaboration with John Meyendorff after the re-evaluation of the council in 1989 by different scholars is titled: *The Christian East and the Rise of Papacy*. In this insightful book, Papadakis considers the Council of Florence the most memorable Medieval Council whose sole intent was to end the fraternal rivalry between the East and the West. Papadakis is affirmative that no other formal attempt can be compared to the attempt made at the Council of Florence to heal the wounds of division between East and West.¹⁶ He confirmed the thoughts of Meyendorff, his colleague, that the Greeks at the Council of Florence were not theologically prepared to dialogue with the Latin. According to Papadakis, "although there were a great many delegates from Byzantium at Ferrara-Florence, the fact remains that very few of them were theologically well-prepared."¹⁷ The consequence of that insufficient qualifications and preparation meant that the Greeks could not withstand the advancement of Latin scholars in the scholastic syllogism. It could also be true to assert that the Greeks were not so much bothered about theological Union since their primary concern was the problem of disunity. Someone like Mark of Ephesus demonstrated a robust Palamists theology, although he was not prepared to bend it for Western scholasticism, unlike Bessarion and Isidor, who harboured some affection for western scholastic thoughts.¹⁸ On the question of the failure of the Union, Papadakis exemplifies many Greeks thinking on the subject matter. For him, the non-reception of the Council of Florence Decree of Union goes beyond the unpreparedness of the Greeks because the western Church displayed an unwillingness to compromise on some issues. For these reasons, Padadakis surmises that "To put it otherwise, the decree was often not even a compromise but an evasive and ambiguous definition that failed

¹⁶ Aristeides Padadakis *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church AD 1071-1453* (The Church in History Vol. IV) in collaboration with John Meyendorff (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 379

¹⁷ Padadakis, *The Christian East*, 392.

¹⁸ Padadakis, *The Christian East*, 394.

in the final analysis to resolve the genuine differences."¹⁹ He argued that it is odd to observe that all the controversial issues at stake received definitions favourable of the West, which was difficult for the Easterners to accept. They were suspicious of western domination. The Council was a historical tragedy whose only success was the papal defeat of the conciliarist.²⁰

2.7 CHARALAMBOS DENDRINO

Charalambos Dendrino, is a professor of Church history with a particular focus in Byzantine Church History. In his article titled: "Reflections on the failure of the Union of Florence", Dendrino gave an insightful re-evaluation of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. His unique historical approach can be appreciated, especially in his ability to draw a parallel between the Council of Ferrara-Florence and Lyons II, 1274. Just as Lyons failed because of its political motivation, Dendrino opines that the Council of Florence equally took place within a complicated political situation. It was within that background that the "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."²¹ This may explain why the Union appeared to the Easterners like a decree asking them to submit to the Pope before getting military help. Would things have been better if the two parties explored the critical theological questions profoundly debated at the Council? Perhaps, this would have helped them understand each other's tradition without necessarily being fixated on drawing the formula of Union.

2.8 LINA MURR NEHME

Lina Murr Nehme, with her Maronite background and a teacher of Arts History, explores in her research the subject matter against the background of the fall of Constantinople. In her book entitled: *1453 Fall of Constantinople: Muhammad II imposes the Orthodox Schism*, Lina Nehme, who prided herself as being historically objective, approaches the Council of Florence within the optics of the tradition of other ecumenical councils. She posits that the Council remains valid even though the Byzantine elites of the anti-unionists got involved in some shameful collaboration with Mohammed II for selfish reasons. She laid the blame at the feet of anti-unionists whom she believes to be responsible for an illegal and invalid

¹⁹ Padadakis, *The Christian East*, 407

²⁰ Padadakis, *The Christian East*, 408.

²¹ Charalambos Dendrino, "Reflection of the failure of the Union of Florence," in *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, 2007; Vol. 39, 137, <http://ahc.usc.urbe.it/default.html>. Accessed 15 December 2020

Schism.²² Lina Nehme was quite optimistic about the Council, especially as it afforded the parties the opportunity for theological dialogue and exchange through which an agreement was reached on the *Filioque*. Even the liturgy of St Basil was not modified. By way of compromise, unleavened bread was allowed for the West while the East could continue using leavened bread for Eucharistic celebrations. In ecclesiastical governance, the Patriarch of Constantinople retained his honour. There was no demand for the reduction of the Greeks or a dogmatic renunciation. The acceptance of the Papal primacy was freely accented to without any pressure.²³ She contests that the non-acceptance of the Florentine Union could not be politically explained away by blaming the preparation and the actual Council as being responsible for its failure. The failure should be situated in some Orthodox leaders who, instead of representing the people, collaborated with the Ottoman enemy to work against the implementation of the conciliar decree of Union.

There is also the critical role of some dissenting voices as with the end of every Council. The failure of the Council of Florence should be studied with particular attention on the dissenting voices since they were influential people who played the role of traitors and surrendered their tradition to Islam. As Lina Nehme clarifies, some of these traitors used their positions of authority to suppress freedom of speech and continued for generations to promote a false narrative. They were willing to throw in the towel in support of Mohammed II, a cruel ruler, who destroyed Constantinople and rebuilt it as an Islamic city. There are no records of the ordinary people testifying that life under Mohammed was better for them because their voices were surpassed. It is rather unfortunate that only the traitors' version of events was written because the views of the ordinary people were not transmitted to subsequent generations. To ensure the perpetuation of the false narratives, only anti-unionist Patriarchs were chosen and accepted by the Ottomans who monetized the patriarchate and repressed all forms of freedom of expression. The account of eyewitnesses died with them. Lina Nehme explicates further, that the Orthodox folk, being ignorant of these events over the centuries, have continued repeating over the centuries the exact version that the Sultans wished them to tell the world. Those false narratives include the following: "The believe that Catholic West was an apostate; the Council of Florence cannot be a legitimate council because the Byzantine

²² Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople: Muhammad II imposes the Orthodox Schism*, Translated by Alfred Murr and Michael Nehme (Paris: Francois-Xavier de Guibert, 2003), 7.

²³ Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 8.

participants went to Italy and betrayed the Orthodox dogma; Emperor John VIII acted under pressure, and therefore, the Scholarios' annulment of the Union decree was legal.”²⁴

2.9 AIDAN NICHOLS

Aidan Nicols is the foremost Western theologian and Church Historian who is interested in the historical question of division between East and West. In one of his numerous books, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, Nicols explores the ecclesiological model employed in the council deliberation that paved the way for a Latin answer to a Greek question.²⁵ While other theological issues debated at the Council have a future of being resolved as recent ecumenical movements have demonstrated, ecclesiastical governance as presented by the Council of Florence seemed too Latin and problematic for the Orthodox Christians to understand. The medieval scholastic theology on the papacy appeared somewhat beyond the understanding of Easterners who continued to see the Pope as having only the primacy of honour. On this note, Nicols adduced reasons for the failure of the Union, such as the failing of the military crusade in 1444 to rescue Constantinople in Varna. The most likely factor was also the overwhelming majority of the population who decidedly opposed the Union. The same is equally true of the refusal of Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus to sign the decree. Mark was a very influential man among the ordinary people who admired his spirituality and brilliance.²⁶

2.10 ERNST C. SUTTNER

Ernst C. Suttner, a Roman Catholic and retired Professor of Eastern Orthodox theology at the University of Vienna, also contributed to the debate about the failure of the decree of Union. Suttner's studies on the lack of success of the Council dwells on the inability of the conciliar fathers to notice some obvious historical developments that separated their Churches. As far as Suttner is concerned:

An important reason for the unsuccessfulness of the conciliar union resolution was that the Council Fathers regrettably did not consider the great change that had taken place since the 7th Ecumenical Council: There was no longer a Christian emperor who ruled over the churches of the Latin and Greek tradition together would have.²⁷

²⁴ Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 9.

²⁵ Aidan Nichols, O.P *Rome and the Eastern Churches* (Second Edition) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 315.

²⁶ Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern*, 319

²⁷ Ernst Christoph Suttner, “Akzeptanz und Ablehnung der Lehrmeinungen des Konzils von Ferrara/Florenz” (1438/39), <https://www.oki-regensburg.de/suttner5.htm>. Accessed 14 December 2020

In the submission of Suttner, there was no emperor to make the conciliar decree binding. The absence of a unifying emperor with a solid political authority could have been remedied by the Bishops through their pastoral engagement with the people. The outcome might have been different if the bishops had made efforts to consider filling the vacuum created by the absence of a powerful Emperor who has the role of unifying all in an ecumenical council.²⁸ Instead, most of the bishops were not prepared to let go of the different aversions they harboured against one another. Their obduracy cost them the Union they laboured so hard to achieve. The same thing can be said of their mutual suspicion and acrimony, which unfortunately led to the rejection of the Council in its entirety by the Greeks while some Latin leader became sceptical towards some of the theological teachings of the Council of Florence.

2.11 SEBASTIAN KOLDITZ

Sebastian Kolditz is an outstanding contemporary Byzantine historian who has provided a greater insight into a better understanding of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. He demonstrated an objective handling of historical data to portray the unique encounter that took place between the Eastern and Western Christians that led to a union in 1439. In his book titled: *John VIII, Palaiologos and the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439)*, Kolditz devoted his research to the role of the Eastern monarch in the union negotiation between the East and the West. Kolditz determination to focus on the politico-historical understanding of the Council is intriguing because there has not been such a comprehensive analysis of the role of the political elites and their influence on the Council.

Although political motives and interests are often used to interpret the Church Union of Florence, there is no established research approach associated with this horizon. Neither the role of the emperor in the narrower nor the political context in the broader sense has been dealt with systematically so that only individual, mostly very brief studies can be dealt with, which is hardly ever discussed.²⁹

In this regard, Kolditz laboured to be faithful to history, which can be seen in his use of sources to describe the landscapes, the system of government in Byzantines and the Eastern region in the Late Medieval and the role of an emperor in the Ecclesiastical affairs of Byzantine in the 15th century. He established the unique role of a Byzantine emperor and argued that the position occupied by John VIII had significant influence in the deliberations at the Council of

²⁸ Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung.

²⁹ Sebastian Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos und das Konzil von Ferrara-Florence (1438-39)* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters) 1. Handband (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2014), 15

Ferrara-Florence. The emperor became the chief negotiator by occupying the role of the moderator of the Greeks. As moderator "in a comprehensive multilateral dialogue", the emperor decided for the Easterners what topic to be discussed, and the final decisions rest on his influence.³⁰ Contrary to the popular scholarly submission, Kolditz argued that Byzantines did not come to the West solely to obtain military assistance to conquer the Turks. Instead, the emperor quest for Union is characteristics of the Paleologa dynasty romance with the West, and in this case, the intention is to reconcile the Westerners to the true Orthodox faith and tradition.³¹

On the Union itself, Kolditz gave a detailed analysis and argued that the *Laetentur Coeli* decree exemplified a great deal of compromise between the East and West. While the Greek, through deliberations, agreed that the *Filioque* was not contrary to the Orthodox faith, they were not mandated to use it during their liturgy, explaining why a common liturgy was impossible during and after the Council. For Kolditz, the Union of Florence is a reflection on the possibility of "a new understanding of equal co-existence of two unmixed rites in a Church community."³² On the reception of the Union, Kolditz argued that while the emperor adhered to the Union, his non-insistence on an exemplary implementation of the Union contributed to the failure of the Union.

2.12 KLAUS SCHATZ

Klaus Schatz, one of the finest German Church historian, argued that the Council of Ferrara-Florence needs to be situated within the general history of ecumenical councils, especially the union councils of the late medieval period. With his background as a Catholic and Jesuit, Schatz posited that while the Union was arrived at under political considerations on both sides of the divide, the Decree of Union was a valid one. The Byzantines needed the Union to enable them to get military aid from the West against the threat of the Ottomans; the Pope in the West needed the Union to triumph over the conciliarists in Basel.³³ For Schatz, the decree of Union, *Laetentur Coeli*, "although not fully developed in every respect and inadequate from today's ecumenical point of view, at that time was not a bad effort, theologically and even in ecumenism."³⁴ There was a compromise in the Union. However, such medieval compromise

³⁰ Kolditz, *Johannes VIII*, 166

³¹ Kolditz, *Johannes VIII*, 436

³² Kolditz, *Johannes VIII*, 568.

³³ Klaus Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien: Brennpunkt der Kirchengeschichte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997), 153

³⁴ Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien*, 156

may have some imperfections, which have the future of being developed as their relationship continues. A union developed under this kind of political considerations on both sides can certainly not expect perfection. However, their ability to find common ground in this turbulent medieval period needs to be ecumenically appreciated. Schatz opined that the Union failed because, during the debate in Florence, the fathers focused on theological issues, making the Union a work of theologians, which "had no psychological root in the clergy, monasticism and the people of the East."³⁵ Because of this inability of the Union to speak to the Byzantines, the delegates who spoke freely at the Council joined the strong anti-unionists to reject the Union vehemently, and with the fall of Constantinople, the Union was silenced. Schatz believes that the Union needs to be appreciated for bringing the following elements in the relationship between East and West: 1) "The Union was the model and the basis for the later Uniate Churches that testifies till date that Catholic and Latin Church are not the same." 2) The union handling of the controversial question of *Filioque* gives the "precedent for the possibility of the plurality of different forms of beliefs without losing the orthodoxy."³⁶

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, it is correct to liken the historical understanding of the Council to the six blind men of Hindustan. Each scholar only tells a small part of what is believed to have gone wrong. The above works of literature did not just emphasise the importance of theological issues for the council's failure but also underscores the relevance of the non-theological factors in determining the actual cause of the failure of the union. In this regard, one can deduce among others the following factors responsible for the failure of the union: misunderstanding on both sides of the divide on theological and non-theological issues. The lack of dialogue, inability to understand the happenings on the other side and distrust affected the union. Also, cultural differences, linguistic and political problems, and some delegates intransigence make the union succeed in failure. Understanding the materials presented herein can be situated in the quest for lessons learned for contemporary ecumenism. This does not foreclose the importance and necessity of agreement in theology and doctrine in the nearest future.

³⁵ Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien*, 156

³⁶ Schatz, *Allgemeine Konzilien*, 157

CHAPTER THREE: THE COUNCIL OF BASEL-FERRARA-FLORENCE 1438-1439

INTRODUCTION

A review of the different materials mostly available from the 550th Anniversary of the Council of Florence and other recent studies makes explicit the uniqueness and imprecise nature of that Council in history. While it is true that the Council of Florence was not a complete failure, there is no unanimous voice on why the reception of the Council was unsuccessful. Historians of Eastern and Western Catholics have proffered different reasons for its failure. They range from inadequate preparations to lack of dialogue and the inability to understand political undertones. This chapter aims to look at the labyrinths taken by the council fathers to arrive at the controversial Union on 6th July 1439. It will approach the question by first looking at the preparation for the Council, the conciliar deliberations and the methodological and immediate reaction to the conciliar Union.

3.1 THE PREPARATION

Many Church historians are of the opinion that the schism of 1054 was the culmination of centuries of estrangement between the East and West. Their estrangement was made worse by the Fourth Crusade of 1204 that captured Constantinople. The two sister Churches afterwards became progressively hostile to each other. The estrangement that resulted in schism was caused by many factors, although theological differences were particularly determinant. Some other secondary factors only accelerated the split between the East and West so that both sides of the divide began to see each other as strangers.³⁷ The overall consequence was a development of mutual resentment. It remains, however, fascinating that the hope and inner yearning to be united never died between the two Churches.

³⁷ Aidan Nichols did one of the most detailed analyses of this estrangement. The estrangements have general cultural and linguistic misunderstanding trends that affected theological, liturgical and Church general organization. Also was the role of the Emperor and the growth of papal claims. All these led to the schism of 1054. He argued further that the historical development of the schism was, above all, a sundering of the West from the Chalcedonian East, of which the see and court of Constantinople formed the energizing centre. It can be said to be a quarrel between Latin and Greeks, even though other Churches of the Orthodox world followed suit played by Constantinople. It was more of a "domino effect" of a historically explicable kind. See, Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern* 143-225. Cf also Henry Chadwick, *East and West the Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence*, Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (New York: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 1996). Padadakis, *The Christian East*. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Suffolk: Richard Clay & Company Ltd, 1963). Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West: A Study in the Christian Tradition* (Limni Evia: Denise Harvey, 1959).

Over the time between the great schism of 1054 and the encounter between the East and West at the Council of Florence, the Byzantine government and the Papacy engaged in strenuous diplomatic negotiations to heal the rift. Those negotiations were designed to create an understanding that would bring about a reconciliation between the two Churches, with Union being proclaimed on two occasions.³⁸ First was establishing the Latin bishoprics in the East which was necessitated by Latin presence in the Empire in 1204.³⁹ The second union agreement was the Union of the Council of Lyons II that took place in 1274.⁴⁰ The desired Union in both cases was short-lived to the extent that the division between the East and West even worsened in a few instances.

The Western Church found itself in a difficult situation between the 14th and 15th centuries. This was due to the Hundred Years of war, regular upheavals and constant power struggles between secular western princes. As evident in the war against the Hussite uprisings in Bohemia and Western Schism (1378-1417) and the conciliarist movement, political and religious affairs seemed entangled. The Council of Constance (1414-18) unlocked the demands for continued reform as the conciliarists sought to assert their position and power over the Pope.⁴¹ On the eastern side, the orientals had their worse experience from the threat of the Turks, who had conquered all the neighbouring cities around and were unwavering in their desire to invade Constantinople. Nicol avers that the capturing of Thessalonica, which the Byzantine empire considered its second capital between 1422-1430 and other nearby cities, had a significant impact on the Empire. The Byzantines were left with two alternatives. They were either to submit to the Turks or endure under a weight of lifelong debt of gratitude to the Latin.⁴² Given the precarious state of his Empire, "Now that Venice and Hungary were more directly affected than ever before the Emperor John VIII concluded that an appeal to the western world to save Constantinople from extinction might really be answered."⁴³

³⁸ Dendrino, "Reflection, 134.

³⁹ According to Dendrino, "In the former case (in 1204) the union was a result of the attempts by the Latin Church to impose obedience to Rome...." Byzantines did not accept this type of Union; they hated the approach so much to the extent that 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)." Cf Dendrino, "Reflection, 134.

⁴⁰ This particular Union was used by Michael VIII Palaeologus as an astute political negotiator to consolidate his authority following the restoration of the Empire and get favour from the West to secure his Empire under threat from Charles Anjou, who was determined to capture Constantinople. Cf Donald M. Nicol, *The last centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (Second Edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63.

⁴¹ Dendrino, "Reflection 135.

⁴² Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 350-351.

⁴³ Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 351.

The two decades preceding the opening of Basel-Ferrara-Florence in 1431 saw intense multilateral discussions between the Greeks and the Latins. The events plaguing East and West made "Union became what Byzantine most needed and Rome most desired."⁴⁴ Their negotiations became more focused from early 1430. The Greeks were insistent on the tradition of the convocation of an ecumenical council against the Western desire for *Reductio*.⁴⁵ Considering the historical setting in which Pope Martin found himself, he could not advocate for *reductio* as the best approach to a union with the Greeks. Papadakis affirmed this when he posited that "Florence was also in a very real sense a major Papal concension to Orthodox ecclesiology and, more specifically, the Byzantine demands for a joint union council. He argued further that Florence, as such, constitutes a major sudden shift in Papal strategy...."⁴⁶ This much was evident in the correspondences between Pope Martin V and Emperor John VIII.⁴⁷ In one of those correspondences, Emperor John VIII wrote to the Pope to indicate the readiness of the Greeks to attend a Council that would bring union between Greeks and the Latins. He proposed what the Greeks desire before attending a council in any Western territory. For the Greeks, the venue of the Council should be near the sea if it was to take place in a territory controlled by the Latins. The proximity to the sea would ensure a quick and safe passage home for the Greeks if the negotiations were unsuccessful. The financial costs for the convocation of the Council and the transportation of the Greeks were to be shouldered by the Pope.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, Pope Martin V died on 20th February 1431 before implementing the wishes of the Greeks. His death also took place before the conclusion of the agreements on the Council.

⁴⁴ Gill, *The Council*, 13.

⁴⁵ The Papacy had always wanted a Union resulting from submission (*reductio*) of the Greek Churches to Rome as a precondition to any military aid that was desperately needed to defend the Byzantine Empire against the threat of the Ottomans. This is seen in Pope Benedict XII (1285-1342) rejection of Barlaam Calabria (1290-1348) proposal for the convocation of an ecumenical Council whose goal would be to resolve the difference in the 14th century. Emperor John Cantankuzanus (1292-1383) negotiation with Pope Clement VI (1291-1352), Innocent VI (1282-1362), and Urban V (1310-1370) were also unsuccessful because of the Western desire for *reductio*. Cf, Papadakis, *The Christian East*, 381-382. Also worth reading for this discussion is the article by Ihor Sevcenko, "Intellectual Repercussions of the Council of Florence," *Church History*, Dec. 1955, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec. 1955), 291 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3162002>, accessed on 12. 12. 2020.

⁴⁶ Papadakis, *The Christian East*, 380.

⁴⁷ Pope Martin, who is often described as genuinely interested in the Union with the Easterners, had mutual correspondence with the Byzantine Emperor. On some of these correspondences, he indicated his strong willingness to send a representative to the Council proposed by the Greeks to be heard in Constantinople in 1422 for the Union. However, the Council was not held due to threat from the Turks. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 36.

⁴⁸ Gill, *The Council*, 43.

The next Pope was the Venetian, Eugene IV, elected in March 1431. It was Pope Eugene who opened the Council of Basel, which began its proceedings in June 1431. The Council of Basel, which was already announced at the Council of Siena, was called by Pope Martin V in adherence to the decree of *Frequens* promulgated by the Council of Constance.⁴⁹ Cesarini, a great defender of the Church, was immediately appointed Cardinal by Eugene IV to preside over the Council. The Council proceeded with its strong conciliarist advocacy that left its leaders in an open and bitter fight with Eugene IV. The Pope made efforts to have the Council dissolved in December of that year but without success. The Pope cited reasons beyond political reasons in calling for the dissolution of the Council. They included the hostility of Basel that might impede the possibility of fulfilling the wish of Pope Martin to have a union council with the Greeks. Pope Eugene claimed that it was given such difficulties that he sought for the quick dissolution of the Council.⁵⁰ The participants at Basel opposed the idea to dissolve the Council on the conviction that their authority at the Council came directly from Christ. In this bitter battle of supremacy, the Pope was the first to lose. In allowing the Council to continue, it seems the Pope gave a tacit acknowledgement of the supremacy and authority of the Council above the Pope.⁵¹ This supremacy battle and wit continued, as can be found in the negotiation between the Pope, The Conciliarists and the Greeks.

At this juncture, a look in this negotiation process would be undertaken to better understand why the East and West had a union council with the Pope and not with the Fathers in Basel.

In his insightful article, Thomas Prügl attempted to navigate this complex negotiation between the Greeks, the Pope, and conciliarist Fathers. Prügl posited, that the Greeks envoys Demetrios Metochilis, Abbot Isidore of Kyiv, and John Dishypates arrived at the Council of Basel for the first time in July 1434.⁵² The envoys came in response to the correspondence between the Council fathers and the Greeks. The message brought by these messengers was captured by Prügl thus: "in addition to the fervent desire for Church unity at best the Greeks

⁴⁹ Pope Martin V died at the high point of the Conciliarists movement. He died and left many problems unsolved. The conciliarists were still waxing strong and enjoying the victory they won at the Council of Constance. Among their other successful decree was the decree of *Frequent* requiring the frequent convening of general councils. After Constance, conciliarists ideas began circulating in the West. In obedience to this decree, Martin V called the first of such councils and was held at Pavia in 1423. It was moved to Siena because of the plague outbreak and then dissolved in March 1424 due to low attendance. Pope Martin announced the date of another Council in Basel 1431 before the dissolution of the Council. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 45-46.

⁵⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 47.

⁵¹ Gill, *The Council*, 48.

⁵² Thomas Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil oder Sacrasancta Synodus? Zur Diskussion um die Ökumenizität des Basler Konzil, in Johannes Grohe, ed., *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, Vol. 40 (2008), 147

named only one condition for such realization- Ragusa called it the *fundamentum* of the Greeks: the Union must come about through an ecumenical council, and this should be carried out in Constantinople at the best."⁵³ For the Greeks, an ecumenical council must be participatory, with both heads of the two Churches and this participation is needed to avoid the failure experience at the second Council of Lyon, whose participant was not a true representation of the Eastern Churches. The presence of the two Churches, represented by their leaders, can make conciliar decrees binding.⁵⁴ The fathers of Basel wasted no time deliberating on the Greeks proposal, especially as it has to do with location. The Emperor proposed to fund the Council if it would hold in Constantinople, but "if the Council was to take place in the West, however, the Greeks only considered a few places: most likely a town in Calabria or one other Italian town like Ancona, Bologna, or Milan. Outside Italy, the Greek could only imagine Buda, Vienna and if necessary, a city in Savoy."⁵⁵ Prügl noted that "the result of these first agreement was solemnly laid down in the 19th session on September 7th 1434 in the decree *Sicut Pia Mater*".⁵⁶ This decree would be the source of problems in the negotiations between the conciliar fathers in Basel and the Byzantines. In the decree, the fathers had the disposition to host a general ecumenical council and finance the Emperor's movement, Eastern religious leaders, and delegates to the tune of 700 people. They also expressed willingness and promised to pay for the protection of Constantinople when the Emperor and his delegates are away. Moving the Council to a new location in the Spirit of the provision of *Frequens* was not a problem.⁵⁷

The primary source of misunderstanding between the conciliarists and the Greeks came from their different ecclesiological understanding. The Greek believes that the Latin Church is still part of the old division of the Church into Pentarchy, of which the Pope is the leader of the Western Patriarchate. So, the Pope is the leader of the western delegates and must ratify every decree from the West, including the bull *Sicut Pia Mater*. On the other hand, the conciliarists had a different ecclesiological understanding, which elevated the Council over and above the Pope. For them, their gathering is in the name of Christ, and their decisions are sacrosanct, needing no papal approval. With this kind of understanding, one can understand why the *Sicut Pia Mater* began on a very controversial note. In the introduction to this document, the conciliarists likened the Greeks to the Bohemians and expressed the Council's disposition to

⁵³ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 147.

⁵⁴ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 147

⁵⁵ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 148

⁵⁶ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 148

⁵⁷ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 149

bring both backs to the fold.⁵⁸ For the Greeks, this disposition is disrespectful and a scandalous prejudice for the Greek Church.⁵⁹ The Greeks did not sufficiently understand this conciliarist disposition as the Mother Church, which was gradually becoming characteristic of the Church in the West. On the Latin as a particular Church in Rome headed by the Pope, the Greeks would not compromise. The Conciliarists, with their insistence on the supremacy of the Council over the Pope, resolved not to submit the *Sicut Pia Mater* for the Pope to ratify.

Also, the terms of participation were very important for the Greeks and this was again conceived by the Basel fathers differently. For the Greeks, it is a council that the leaders of the different Patriarchates would be present or represented. "The fathers in Basel, on the other hand, were not interested in giving the synod a predominantly episcopal character, but rather in retaining the right of participation of the middle clergy...."⁶⁰ Prügl would argue that this Greek idea of a council which is like the early Church model of councils was oblivious of the many reforms that have taken place in the Western Church. Naturally, such ideas had difficulties finding a home among the conciliarists.⁶¹ "How much the Greek conception of a council differs from that of the Conciliarists idea can also be seen from the different idea of representation."⁶²

The negotiations would continue with hopes, but the game-changer would be the realization that the Pope was also in another parallel negotiation with the Greeks through his diplomat Cristoforo Garatoni.⁶³ In April 1435, the Pope sent Garatoni and the two Greek brothers George and Emmanuel Disypatos to meet Basel's fathers. The two brothers were sent from Constantinople to negotiate a union council with the Pope. Their mandate of going to Basel was to lure the conciliarists into the council negotiation going on between the Pope and Constantinople. The Basel fathers adjusted and listen to the delegates.⁶⁴ In discussion with the delegates, it became clear that the desires of the Pope were contradictory to the conciliarists idea of a council. Garatoni, having been given a free hand by the Pope to negotiate with the Greeks, seems to have gone ahead of the conciliarists by agreeing to almost everything demanded by the Greeks without consideration of the conciliarists. Garatoni, in his presentation of his negotiation with the Greeks, confused the fathers in Basel by presenting an idea of a

⁵⁸ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 150

⁵⁹ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 150

⁶⁰ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 151

⁶¹ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 151

⁶² Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 152

⁶³ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 154

⁶⁴ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 154

Greek synod and then a general synod with the Greek notion of participation. Prügl put it aptly "An ecumenical council on the one hand and a synod limited to the Eastern Churches on the other seemed to be mutually exclusive. How did this fit in with the conviction of the Greeks that a union could only come about at an ecumenical council at which Eastern and Western churches are equally represented."⁶⁵ This Proposition did not accommodate the conciliarists ecclesiology since it undermines the very principles of the conciliarists. So, the fathers questioned Guaratoni on how the Pope hopes to achieve all that considering the changes that have taken place in the Western ecclesiology. Garatoni appeared to be ready to answer all the questions that further plunges him into inconsistencies, making fathers like John Ragusa, to be convinced that "he was convicted of a liar and a schemer who actually deserved a hefty punishment for having faked the Greek emperor into false facts."⁶⁶ After Garatoni and the envoys departed, the conciliarists, in trying to analyze the thoughts of Garatoni, became divided among themselves. One group accepting Garatoni's proposal, the second group rejected it outrightly, and the third advocated for a middle ground to avoid scandal. This middle way was to allow the Pope to hold a synod with the Greeks while the Basel Fathers continued their Council in Basel but with the condition that whatever is discussed should be reported to the conciliarists who still believed that they have the power to rectified whatever decree that would come from the Council. However, some influential fathers represented by Cardinal Cesarini were sceptical about the so-called middle ground, which may be difficult to achieve considering the Greek's understanding of an ecumenical council. Prügl avers that "Cesarini understood a *synodus universalis* to be a real ecumenical council that brings together representatives of the Eastern and Western Churches. In addition, Cesarini cited the rights of the Apostolic See at such councils: since the Council of Nicea, it had been the custom that a *concilium generale* could not be held without the Pope."⁶⁷

The Council decided to send Ragusa and other envoys to Constantinople to ascertain first-hand what the Greeks desired and persuade them to accept the *Sicut Pia Mater* and come to Basel for the union council. This group had a tough time convincing the Greeks. First, the Greeks conceived the introduction in the *Sicut Pia Mater* as an insult and should be removed from the decree. Second, the envoys should answer specific questions on the financing and venue of the Council, which were only suggestions in the decree but not concretized.⁶⁸ Ragusa,

⁶⁵ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 155

⁶⁶ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 158

⁶⁷ Prügl, "Ökumenisches Konzil, 159

⁶⁸ Gill, *The Council*, 63-65.

in his diplomacy, resolved some of the issues. However, in his absence from Basel, the members have become increasingly polarised, no thanks to the Pope, whose influence has infiltrated the Council extensively. With this division among the fathers, one group against the Pope and the other group sympathetic with the Pope, arriving at a definite location for the Union was a challenge. Garantoni and the Papal envoys capitalized on this vacuum and convince the Greeks that the Pope and the Council have agreed on a place suggested in the decree *Sicut Pia Mater*. "Determined to remain in being as the supreme authority in the Church and afraid, therefore, to leave their seat of Basel for a city nearer to Papal influence, the Fathers in defiance of the agreement to force the Greeks to come to them."⁶⁹

All these prompted Cesarini and some others who voted in favour of any city suggested in the *Sicut Pia Mater* or any location chosen by the Pope for the union Council. These Fathers also decided that the best option would be to join the Pope in a Council with the Greeks. This crack experienced by the fathers in Basel which led to some influential figures declaring support for the Pope, gave the Pope the courage to seize the moment immediately.⁷⁰ While convoking a union council to be held at Ferrara, Pope Eugene IV declared the Council of Basel dissolved and immediately ratified and implemented the convention *Sicut Pia Mater*.⁷¹ His decree for its dissolution was accompanied with the threat of excommunications in case of any rival gathering under the guise of a council that might take place outside Ferrara.

3.2 THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-FLORENCE: THE MEETING BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

The Eastern delegation started their journey to Italy on 27th November 1437 and sailed westward with the papal fleet.⁷² The Greeks had around 700 representatives led by their Emperor John Palaeologus VIII and Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II. Over 30 metropolitans accompanied the Patriarch. They included those who represented – as legates – the patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. There were also delegations from Georgia, Wallachia, the newly installed Metropolitan of Kyiv, and All Rus' Isidore was present with his delegation. The bishop of Ephesus Mark Eugenicus, the metropolitan of Nicaea Bessarion, the Great Chartophylas Michael Balsamon, the Great Skevophylax Theodore

⁶⁹ Gill, *The Council*, 83-84.

⁷⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 84

⁷¹ Gill, *The Council*, 83

⁷² In the end, the Pope and the Council provided ships for the Greeks movement, which was a precondition for the Greeks to come for the Council. The Greeks have decided to go with the Pope, choose the papal fleet. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 89.

Xanthopoulos, and philosopher, theologian, and scholar George Scholarios. Leading members of the delegation (Isidore, Mark Eugenikos, and Bessarion) were ordained during preparations for the Council so that the East would have reliable intellectual representation.⁷³ Nicol has this to say on the quality of the Eastern representation:

It was a remarkable delegation, more numerous and more distinguished than any previously gone to the West. There were precedents for the visit of an emperor to Italy, but no patriarch of Constantinople had ever accompanied his emperor there. The Patriarch Joseph II was a kindly old man but in poor health and not equal to the rigours theological debate.... The most intelligent and outstanding clerical delegates were not of a patriarchal status. But, they included some who were already intellectually predisposed towards a liking for Western culture and even for Latin theology.⁷⁴

The Western princes, except for Rene of Anjou and Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, failed to send official embassies, but most sent observers, including Venice, England, and France.⁷⁵ The death of Emperor Sigismund of Hungary and that imperial vacancy raised doubt in the minds of the Greeks minds about the likely western military aid.⁷⁶ The Greeks arrived in Venice on 8th February 1438.⁷⁷ Emperor John was unsure about where to pitch his allegiance: Basel, where most of the Council was gathered or Italy, where the Pope had convoked a Council. The Emperor and the Patriarch sought the advice of the Doge of Venice on where to proceed: Ferrara or Basel. It was the Doge who indicated Ferrara to the Greek delegation. Acting upon that advice, Emperor John, on 25th February, wrote to the Fathers in Basel to intimate about his decision to participate in the Council called by the Pope in Ferrara and exhorted them to come join him at this council in Ferrara.⁷⁸ They arrived in Ferrara on 4th March 1438.

The first war over supremacy between the Patriarch Joseph II and the Pope started not long in ensuing as Patriarch Joseph refused to observe the custom of kissing the Pope's foot as demanded by Pope Eugene.⁷⁹ This was appalling to the Patriarch, who was unwilling to be

⁷³ Nicol, *The Last Century*, 353.

⁷⁴ Nicol, *The Last Century*, 353.

⁷⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 142.

⁷⁶ Gill, *The Council*, 90

⁷⁷ Venice welcomed the Greeks with an impressive display of pomp and ceremony. Venice has become a home to many Greeks fleeing from the Islamic persecution and being a flourishing commercial city; the Greek delegation had a tremendous one-month stopover. The Byzantines marvelled at the city's beauty, and their heart bled at the treasures stolen by the Venetians from Constantinople. See, Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 102.

⁷⁸ Gill, *The Council*, 104.

⁷⁹ Gill, *The Council*, 105.

humiliated by the Pope.⁸⁰ According to Gill, "Great was the Patriarch's dismay, for he had looked for a more generous welcome between equals."⁸¹ Pope Eugene decided to receive Patriarch Joseph in his papal quarters in Ferrara privately to avoid the pending diplomatic disaster. Accompanied by six metropolitans, Joseph approached Eugene, who rose and offered a fraternal kiss.⁸²

Emperor John and the Patriarch used the fatigue of their journey as a ploy to buy time.⁸³ It was a delay tactic for the Emperor on the assumption that the western princes were on their way to Ferrara. He was not very anxious to discuss theological matters that might be disruptive. His primary concern was a Union in order to receive military assistance from western princes to defeat the Ottoman Turk threatening Constantinople.⁸⁴ Things did not turn out the way the Emperor had anticipated. The western princes were divided and wavered in their loyalty to Fathers in Basel and the Pope. As a result, they either did not come or send representatives to Ferrara.

The struggle for supremacy between the Pope and the Greeks popped up once again over the sitting arrangements in the Cathedral of St. George, the venue of the Council. Pope Eugene was enthroned in the centre of the cathedral and surrounded by the Latins, while the Greeks were meant to sit on the sides. Emperor John VIII strongly objected to the arrangement. His objection was anchored on the Eastern idea of *Caesaropism*. This idea regarded the Emperor as the one who defends of the Orthodox faith and the protector of the Church. He demanded a more prominent presence in the sitting arrangement. His demand was complicated due to the absence of a Holy Roman Emperor who could measure equal to the Byzantine Emperor. Considered from the perspectives of an Eastern Patriarch, the Emperor or *basileus* was thought to occupy more important place than the Pope. The thorny issue was resolved by making the Easterners and Westerners sit face to face on opposite sides. The papal throne in the new arrangement was put slightly in front of an empty one representing the Western Emperor. The throne for the Eastern Emperor was made to correspond to that of the

⁸⁰ To avoid incidences of an embarrassment of this nature on both sides, matters of protocol had already been discussed by some Eastern and Western delegates in Venice. Each side zealously defended its honour and prestige but with readiness for diplomatic compromise for the sake of the Union council. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 105.

⁸¹ Gill, *The Council*, 105.

⁸² Gill, *The Council*, 106.

⁸³ Gill, *The Council*, 106.

⁸⁴ It is worth noting that the waiting for the western princes did not just take months but that the expense for this wait was tremendous, and since the Council itself was being paid for by the Pope, it should see this as an indication of his own genuine desire to establish unity with the Greeks. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 106-108.

western Emperor in position and size. The patriarchal throne was placed behind that of the Emperor, although Patriarch Joseph was displeased both with the arrangement and the appearance of his throne.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the Council, now moved to Ferrara, had already had its first session on 9th January 1438 as the Greeks were still on their way.

It is worthy of note that the Council of Ferrara-Florence was not just a gathering of intelligent eastern minds around the Emperor struggling to secure a union for military aid for the Empire. It was also not about papalists struggling to save the Pope from humiliation by the conciliarists through the reduction of the Greeks. While these political ideas can be found in the various delegates, the Council was a meeting point for Greek theologians who wanted to correct Latin theological innovations. They found recourse in the Scripture and patristic writings. Latin theologians instead defended their faithfulness to Orthodoxy using Scripture, Patristics and scholasticism. Since the gathering was made of people aware of the controversial issues, there was an agreement to focus on the four main theological issues that caused the division.⁸⁶ Debates on the *Filioque* doctrine and the question of its addition to the Creed was on the top list. The Western teaching about Purgatory, and then the use of Unleavened bread for Mass and the primacy question were to be debated and resolved.

Due to the cost of keeping the 700 Greeks delegates and to speed up the business of the Council, it became necessary to proceed with informal theological debates.⁸⁷ The Eastern leaders chosen to represent the Greeks are: Dositheus of Monemvasia, Sophronius of Anchialus, Chartophlyax Michael Balsamon, Syropoulos the Ecclesiarch, Mark of Mt. Athos and two monastic superiors from Constantinople. Because they were the two most critical Eastern theologians, Mark Eugenicus, the Metropolitan of Ephesus and Bessarion Metropolitan of Nicaea became the mouthpiece of the Greeks. John VIII ordered them not to discuss the *Filioque* yet and to inform him as the events proceeded. On the other hand, the Roman Pontiff appointed Cardinal Julius Caesarini, Archbishop Andrew of Rhodes, and John of Torquemada to debate the Easterners on behalf of the Western Church.⁸⁸

The Informal debate on Purgatory started on 4th June 1438 with Caesarini introducing the Western stand on Purgatory. The keystone of Purgatory was hinged upon the following: “The Purgatory for the Latin Church is a place of purification from sins. Since all saints must receive their reward after death, those who died in mortal sins go directly to hell. Righteous

⁸⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 107.

⁸⁶ Gill, *The Council*, 116

⁸⁷ Gill, *The Council*, 114

⁸⁸ Ivan N. Ostroumoff, *The History of the Council of Florence*, translated by Basil Popoff and edited by J.M Neale (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1971), 46

souls who died fully remorseful for their sins and truly loved God but have not yet satisfied their repentance must be purified through purification so that they can gain entrance into heaven.”⁸⁹ The fires will purify these souls in Purgatory.⁹⁰ Cesarini grounded his argument in scriptures, patristic authors and also scholasticism and philosophy. Mark and Bessarion responded to Cesarini's submission. Bessarion rejected the Latin position without offering a better argument for the Greek rejection. In referring to the Patristic authors used by Cesarini, he acknowledged that the fathers advocated for prayers to be said for the dead, but this did not prove that a literal fire purified their souls. Bessarion posited that even though Augustine and Ambrose in the West taught that a literal fire purified such souls, those teachings were rather private opinions about the afterlife. He maintained that they should not be conceived as dogmatically binding teaching.⁹¹ He continued and accused the Latin position of Origenism. Against the accusation of Origenism, John Torquemada, in reply, insisted that the West, like the East, also rejected certain teachings of Origen. He argued that Western theology could not be rejected as mere theological opinions since the Holy Spirit inspired them. Mark of Ephesus averred that reliance on the fathers did not make an argument valid since the fathers could also err. He used the example of Gregory of Nyssa to demonstrate how one could be prone to Origenism.⁹² The debate remains at this level of back and forth for six weeks without any side ready for compromise.⁹³

The public debate on the *Filioque* controversy took a good deal of time that lasted about seven months. First, how to proceed: should the addition of *Filioque* to the Creed be discussed, or should the dogmatic soundness be addressed?⁹⁴ It was agreed that the addition to the Creed should first be addressed. Discussions began on the 8th of October, 1438. Bessarion opened the public debate by imploring all to strive towards truth to heal the breach. In the estimation of Gill, Bessarion hinged his address one following: "the aim is, however, to seek

⁸⁹ Ostroumoff, *The History*, 47.

⁹⁰ Ostroumoff, *The History*, 47

⁹¹ Gill, *The Council*, 121

⁹² For a detailed analysis of the debate at this preliminary stage, Cf Gill, *The Council*, 121-125

⁹³ Gill, *The Council*, 125

⁹⁴ Meanwhile, that year's summer was terrible following the outbreak of plague that affected the mood of all present in Ferrara. Many Latin clerics left the city, and all conciliar business became suspended until the situation became improved. Many of the Greeks delegates wanted to leave, but the Emperor refused to succumb to such an idea and insisted that they remain and finalized procedural discussion with the remaining Latin delegates. At the forefront of the question of procedure was how the voting would be done at the Council. Is it going to be merely a matter of votes counting? The Easterners were afraid of this method because the West had a significant advantage in this regard. In the end, an agreement was made. It was agreed that the Latins would debate amongst themselves, vote amongst themselves, same with the Byzantines. Whatever each side agreed on would be used the opinion of that group. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 126-130.

the truth, and the natural tendency of man to wish to prevail, even at the cost of truth, must be sternly suppressed."⁹⁵ Andrew of Rhodes expressed the Latin sentiment of hope for a happy ending in healing the division through theological debate.

Mark of Ephesus contended that there was no substantial reason for the Western addition of the *Filioque* to the Nicene Creed. He pointed out that the declaration of the Council of Ephesus forbade any tampering with the Creed and the creation of any new creeds.⁹⁶ The thrust of his argument was contained in the excerpts of the Council of Ephesus, which he read out: "In no way do we allow the defined faith to be upset by anyone, that is the Creed of our holy Fathers who once on time assembled in Nicae. Nor indeed do we permit either ourselves or others to change a word of what is laid down there or to transgress even one syllable..."⁹⁷ He went as far as reading aloud the decrees of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and demonstrated the consistencies inherent in all of them. Cardinal Cesarini provided an old copy of the decree in Latin, which agreed with the Greeks in all thing but contained the words *et ex Filio*.⁹⁸ However, as far as the Greeks were concerned, those only showed that the original text wording in question must have been tampered with.⁹⁹

Andrew of Rhodes cautioned that *Filioque* should not be seen as a literal addition to the Creed but an explanation for what was already contained within it.¹⁰⁰ He agreed that the Council of Ephesus had rejected creating a new symbol of faith but never forbade its translation. The alteration to the text was tolerable to render it intelligible in the new tongue. He opined that the Creeds of Nicaea and Ephesus did not add to the New Testament creed but developed it for better understanding. For a similar reason, *Filioque* could not be construed as an addition to the Creed but its clarification or further development.¹⁰¹ The explanation of *Filioque* was historically fundamental to the Latins since it originated against the background of a particular heresy in the West, which had long ceased to a problem in the East. The fundamentals of *Filioque* retained the teachings of the same Creed and did not go against the injunction of the Council of Ephesus.¹⁰² Given its controversial nature and without

⁹⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 144.

⁹⁶ Ostroumoff, *The History*, 67.

⁹⁷ Gill, *The Council*, 147.

⁹⁸ Gill, *The Council*, 148

⁹⁹ For a detailed analysis of the problem of materials and the lack of translated materials at the Council, see Gill, *The Council*, 163, also Alexander Alexakis, "Patristic Texts and the Council of Ferrara-Florence", in *Contra Latinos et adversus Graecos: The Separation Between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Alessandra Bucossi and Anna Calia (Bibliothèque Byzantion 22) (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 430-447

¹⁰⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 151

¹⁰¹ Gill, *The Council*, 151

¹⁰² Ostroumoff, *The History* 76

compromise in sight, it was agreed that the theological merits of *Filioque* could be addressed at a later date since there were many other problems to be resolved.

With the prolongation of the conciliar proceedings, the Greeks feared that the Muslims might capture Constantinople in their absence.¹⁰³ Another preoccupation was the plague that had not been fully put under control in Ferrara. This necessitated the movement of the Council from Ferrara to Florence.¹⁰⁴ The Medici were disposed to bail the Pope out in their readiness to cater for the movement of the Council and the accommodation of the Greek delegates since the Pope was gradually becoming bankrupt.¹⁰⁵ The debate in Florence began in March 1439. Both the Emperor and the Patriarch became sick at this period. Patriarch Joseph II died on 10th June 1439 before the completion of the union agreement.

The fathers hastened up and began the debate on the theological validity of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which has become very complicated in Medieval theology. John Montenero, the Dominican provincial of Lombardy, began the debate on behalf of the Latins. Montenero was a very versed scholar in his insightful understanding of the scriptures and teachings of the Patristic Fathers. As a Dominican, he was well-grounded in scholastic theology; all these made him a hard nut for the Greeks to crack during the debate on the doctrinal validity of the *Filioque*. The Latin position represented by Montenero can be summarised thus: "The Father and the Son are identical except that the one is generator and the other generated, then since the Father is also spirator of the Spirit, so is the Son."¹⁰⁶ Using scholastic syllogism, "Montenero, who understood *Processio/Procedere* more generically, equated the idea of procession with the notion of "receiving existence."¹⁰⁷ He will argue thus:

We say that essence and person are one in themselves but differ according to our way of thinking, so that person consists of the essence and the properties. As these are distinguished in our thinking, the essence is communicated between the Persons of the Trinity, the properties are not; for, if the Persons are to remain distinct, the properties must remain uncommunicated, that is, the relationships of origin. So the Father and the Son are distinct from

¹⁰³ Gill, *The Council*, 170.

¹⁰⁴ The city of Florence turned out to be a memorable experience for the Greeks, for they received a similar reception they had received in Venice, and the renaissance spirit of Florence contributed to entertaining them and keeping the Spirit going for the business of the Council. Florence's city was an excellent commercial opening with the best European humanistic scholars whose literature had its origin in Greek language and culture. All these realities contributed in no small ways to enhance the Easterners experience in the city of Florence. So, the Florentine became interested in classical Greek antiquity gave more honour to the Greeks in Florence. Cf Gill, *The Council*, 184-186.

¹⁰⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 173.

¹⁰⁶ Gill, *The Council*, 194.

¹⁰⁷ A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 155.

one another only because the Father is he from whom another is and the Son he who is from another, that is the Father is the principle, the Son is from the principle; all else they possess in common and so have a common being.¹⁰⁸

Using Patristic sources, Montenero argued that the Greek fathers supported such teachings.

Mark Eugenikos, who spoke on behalf of the Greeks, underscored that the Patristic Fathers had taught about the Monarchical existence of the Trinity, which must not be distorted, and as such, the teaching of the Fathers must be maintained. Mark, who refused to be overwhelmed by John's use of Scholastic syllogism, argued that the Holy Spirit must be conceived as proceeding only from one origin for its existence, and this origin must come from the Father.¹⁰⁹ Mark disputed all the materials presented by Montenero and argued that the Latins teaching was different from the Greek fathers. For him, the failure of the Latins to clearly distinguished the eternal from the temporal mission is the origin of the errors that led them to misread the fathers. Mark summarised the Byzantine teachings on the Procession of the Holy Spirit thus: "On the one hand, the Spirit proceeds from the Father, that is, has existence [from him] but on the other hand he is given from the Son and is received by those who believe in him."¹¹⁰ The fathers would continue the debate for a while, comparing Patristic texts since the Latins continued to hinged their argument that both Eastern and Western Fathers taught the *Filioque*.

The Greeks, after discovering that some of the Patristic fathers like St Maximus the Confessor in his writings taught about the *Filioque*, softened their hard-line position. They conceded that the *Filioque* part of the Creed should be better worded to accommodate the two traditions.¹¹¹ This gave the impression that the Western and Eastern understanding of the *Filioque* was the same thing. Some of the Union supporters tended to uphold this pattern of thought even though Mark of Ephesus rejected the teaching because the texts used by the Latin fathers were unverifiable. He insinuated that the texts of the Greek fathers used by the Latins were corrupted. Bessarion was more conciliatory in recognizing that there were no clear-cut fundamental disagreements between both sides. He judged their differences as not real to warrant a conflict since their separate understandings contained the same dogmatic truth.¹¹² His conciliatory exhortation paved the way for the Greeks acceptance of the Latin version of *Filioque*.

¹⁰⁸ Gill, *The Council*, 196.

¹⁰⁹ Siecenski, *The Filioque*, 156

¹¹⁰ Joseph Gill, *Acta graeca*, 271 as quoted by Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 156

¹¹¹ Ivan N. Oostroumoff, *The History*, 126.

¹¹² Gill, *The Council*, 241

Next on the conciliar agenda was the particular type of bread used for the Eucharistic celebration. The matter was resolved without much delay on the agreement that "...provided the minister was ordained and the place consecrated, whether the bread was fermented or unfermented, so long as it was wheaten, it did not matter."¹¹³

One of the most unfortunate events of the Council in Florence was that ecclesiastical governance that was the major source of tension between East and West was given the least attention. The question at stake on the papal primacy was to determine the function of the Pope concerning the governance of Church in relationship of this function to the other Patriarchs. The Papacy has grown in the West and has been fully established and its theology was grounded on the recognition of Peter as the successor and vicar of Christ on earth. His primacy seems absolute, for he is not just to be the leader of the people of God spiritually; he also prides himself above the earthly kings, entrusted to govern the temporal goods of the earth. The Byzantine recognized the Pope as having primacy, but this primacy is not extended to the primacy of jurisdiction; it is only a primacy of honour. Having been separated from the West for a long time, the Byzantines lacked the knowledge of the changes that have taken place in the West. So, they held on to their idea of the Pentarchy. The Pentarchy system is based on the ancient ecclesiological organization that allocated the power of the highest authority and power of the Church to the gathering of the five Patriarchs.¹¹⁴ The Fathers, after few deliberations, reached a compromise that made the Pope to retain all the old privileges that he enjoyed before the schism.¹¹⁵ So, the Union described the Pope with the title of the vicar of Christ. The Patriarch of Constantinople is second in rank to the Pope with all its ancient privileges untouched, and other Patriarchate followed Constantinople according to the Pentarchy order.

This marked the end of the participation of the Greeks at the Council in Florence. It was concluded on 6th July 1439 with a union document entitled: *Laetentur Caeli*. The Pope and the Emperor signed the document. They were followed by the Greek and Latin representatives, except Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus, who objected to the Union and refused to append his signature.

¹¹³ Gill, *The Council*, 266

¹¹⁴ August Leidl, *Die Einheit der Kirche Auf den Spätmittelalterlichen Konzilien* (Paderborn: Verlag Bonifacius-Druckerei, 1966), 168.

¹¹⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 266

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE IN THE DEBATE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AND THE IMMEDIATE OUTCOME AFTER THE COUNCIL

Apart from the Greek and Latin underlying cultural and political differences, the theological deliberation during the Council of Florence were symptomatic of the views of Eastern and Western scholars of the medieval period. From the theological submissions on both sides of the divides, it became evident that the main challenge consisted of the methodological differences between the Greeks and the Latins. Some scholars like Archbishop Job Getcha argued that "methodology is perhaps what caused the most difficulties for the Council and led to its failure."¹¹⁶ The long years of estrangement between the East and West witnessed the development of different theological methods in approach to theology, whose understanding and reconciliation would have helped the Fathers in their debate.

For a proper understanding of the council's Dialogue, the following theological principles of Dialogue can be drawn.

3.3.1 Dialogue with the scripture

The inspired word of God in the scripture was a standard tool for the fathers in their debate. Citations from the Old and New Testament were accurately quoted by both parties without disputes about the correctness and exact use of the bible.¹¹⁷ However, there was disagreement on the interpretations of some texts, and this was a reflection of allegiance to some Patristic interpretation over others.¹¹⁸ So, the bible was the first source of authority for the fathers in their debate.

3.3.2 Dialogue with the Patristic Fathers

The second and most reliable source for the fathers in their debate was the Patristic fathers. The writings of the fathers, also called Saints, Doctors, were judged to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and used extensively for the debate. The Patristics were described as "those who won their fame in the disputes of the seven first Ecumenical Councils, and others were known for their famous writings and for their holy life."¹¹⁹ Due to the constant flow of teachers and manuscripts, Western theologians became well-versed in Eastern and Western patristic

¹¹⁶ Archbishop Job (Getcha), "Revisiting the Council of Ferrara-Florence", in Antoine Arjakovsky/ Barbara Hellensleben, (eds.), *The Council of Florence (1438/1439)- an Ecumenical Rereading* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2021), 21.

¹¹⁷ Leonard Tony Farauanu, "Theological Principles of Dialogue at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439),1.https://www.academia.edu/3527378/THEOLOGICAL_PRINCIPLES_OF_DIALOGUE_AT_THE_COUNCIL_OF_FERRARA_FLORENCE_1438_39_#. Accessed 12.04.2021

¹¹⁸ Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 2

¹¹⁹ Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 3.

teachings. This versed knowledge of both Eastern and western Fathers was well demonstrated by the Latins during the debate. They extensively quoted Basil the Great and other Cappadocian fathers, Epiphanius, St Athanasius and many others.

The Greeks, on the other hand, had minimal knowledge of the Western Fathers. Apart from Augustine and Ambrose, the Greeks, except for Scholarios, who had a good knowledge of Western Patristics, the other Greek delegates were generally ignorant of Western Fathers. According to Gill, "Till now declared the Greeks, 'we never knew the Latin Saints nor read them: now however we have come to know them, have read them and approve them.'"¹²⁰ This insufficient knowledge of the Latin Fathers left the Greeks, who primarily relied on their patristic heritage, at a severe disadvantage. They were not helped because the Byzantine Empire was already being precipitated into extinction, owing to incessant Islamic threats of incursion. They vehemently disputed the writings of the Latin Fathers and referred to them as private opinion that cannot be used to adjudicate in theological controversies.

There was also the problem of trustworthiness of the Patristic texts used during the debate. The Orthodox Fathers accused the Latins of using corrupted materials. The truth claim of the interpolated materials could not be ascertained at the council according to Job, "But at these times, the historical-critical method did not exist and critical editions were not found to prove that some manuscripts could have been corrupted or received interpolations."¹²¹ However, modern scholarship has demonstrated that the Greeks interpolated many of the text used by the Latin.¹²² Thus, the council Fathers relied extensively on the fathers as a source of authority, but the text of the fathers to use and who is qualified as authoritative father was a source of dispute.

3.3.3. Principles of Dialogue with the Ecumenical Councils

The highest sources of authority in the Orthodox is the ecumenical council of the Church. On these points, the Westerners conceded to the Greeks on the council's authority above papal decrees and reached the agreement on the authority of only the seven ecumenical councils accepted by the Greeks. These councils decrees were also not in dispute, but as usual, their interpretation was intensely debated. This can be noticed in the dispute on how to interpret the decrees of the Council of Ephesus. The Greeks took all the conciliar decrees of the first seven ecumenical council *ad litteram* and argued that the literal words of the council should be

¹²⁰Gill *The Council*, 256

¹²¹ Job (Getcha), "Revisiting the Council, 21

¹²² Alexakis, "Patristic Texts, 430-447

respected. On the other hand, the Latins were more skilful and discerning in the interpretation as they attempted to look at the wholeness and logicity of the decrees.¹²³

3.3.4 The use of faith and reason in the Debate

Fundamental to the debate also was the Fathers use of philosophy in their attempt to reconcile the teachings of the Patristic fathers. This is necessary since the Patristics cannot be interpreted without understanding their belief that "reason is the handmaid of faith."¹²⁴ The Greeks relied solely on Platonic philosophy and had distrust for Aristotelian philosophy and Western scholasticism. Gill reported how Scholarios mocked the Greeks distrust for Aristotelian and Scholastic thinking as a weakness when he said: "I know that you, O Greeks, in matters of this sort you have no confidence in proofs from reason but consider them suspect and misleading; much more then will you both keep clear of syllogising *per impossibile* and be on your guard against others who do that."¹²⁵

The Latins, on their part, went beyond Platonic philosophy and used Latin medieval scholastic style very well. The implication was that they evaluated every question or issue through a thorough philosophical and dialectic prism. This understanding and use of syllogism was a significant advantage for the Westerners in their debate. Their clarity of thoughts at the council was unparalleled. Even the Greeks would admit the sophistication and the superiority of the Latins when Scholarios said this about the Latins, they are "true masters of every human skill in dialectic and in every science, and of all in the most distinguished theology most trained. ...It would truly provoke in him a great surprise if men otherwise so learned were mistaken in these things."¹²⁶ Also suitable for the Latins was the resolution to present their thoughts in one unified manner, whereas the Greek counterparts had splits and hostile factions even among themselves.¹²⁷

Nevertheless, the theological advantage of the Westerners did not necessarily mean that the Easterners never had good arguments for their positions. Many of the signatories to the conciliar Union, outside the usual propaganda of being worn out by arguments and homesickness, signed the document due to theological conviction. A few takeaways can be

¹²³ Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 12.

¹²⁴ Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 13.

¹²⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 227

¹²⁶ *Adhoratio ad synodum* (On the need of Aiding Constantinople), PG 160, 388 B. Cf, Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 14.

¹²⁷ The Greeks noticing their unpreparedness in facing their Latin counterparts in theological and philosophical deliberations, went as far as arguing with themselves and accusing one another of no great capacity in comprehending the Latin's argument. Cf Gill, *Council*, 227-228

made from the dialogue of theological exchange between the East and the West: (1) agreement on the *Filioque*; (2) St Basil liturgy was not modified; (3) the unleavened bread was allowed for the West, and the East was allowed to continue using the leavened bread for Eucharistic celebrations. Even in ecclesiastical governance, the Patriarch of Constantinople retained his honour. There was no demand for the reduction of the Greeks or a dogmatic renunciation. The acceptance of the Papal primacy was of free accord without pressure.¹²⁸ The signatories appended their signatures out of the conviction that the Council satisfied basic principles of an ecumenical council. The refusal of Mark of Ephesus to sign the documents was not unconnected to his zeal in defence of the Patristic tradition of the Greek Church, which he saw as having been betrayed for Western scholasticism.

The declaration of the Union, *Laetentur Caeli*, was done in Eucharistic celebration even though the Greeks who attended the Mass chose not to participate fully. They preferred to have a separate celebration of their Mass afterwards with its peculiar rites. It was during this period that both sides discovered their ignorance about their different liturgical rites.¹²⁹ What to be done about Mark's refusal was a big question. The Pope had expressed some reservations concerning his refusal to sign the document. Records have it that Pope Eugene was troubled when shown the Act of Union signed by all the Greek delegates except Mark. The Pontiff was said to have stated quite openly: "If Mark did not sign, we have accomplished nothing."¹³⁰ There were different unofficial discussions on both sides, briefly concerning the following action to be taken about Mark Eugenikos' refusal to sign the decree. John VIII postponed any decision until the delegation reached Constantinople. The Emperor hoped that he would succeed in persuading Mark or silence him. He promised not to use his imperial powers to force anyone to sign the Union. Pope Eugene wasted no time sending copies of the Council's decree to all Western states and regions. The news of the Union was warmly welcomed and celebrated throughout the continent.¹³¹

Alongside the Greeks seeking Union with the West were also the Armenians, Copts, Chaldeans, and Maronites. Rome attempted to mend fences with them using the Union. Pope

¹²⁸ Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 8.

¹²⁹ Gill states that "Philanthropinus carried the water and towel for the washing of the Pope's hands at the beginning, one of the Russian priests in Isidore's suit did the same after the Offertory, and George Dishypatus was the bearer at the end," Gill, *The Council*, 293-294.

¹³⁰ There are opinions that the Pope summoned Mark and even threatened him with excommunication, though the Papal threat did not move Mark. Cf Marios Benisis, "St. Mark of Ephesus: His significant presence in the Council of Florence and the new perspectives in the interreligious dialogues" A Presentation at *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*, Greece Oxford Patristic Conference 2007.

¹³¹ Gill, *The Council*, 299.

Eugene IV and his predecessors had a more comprehensive agenda which included the prospect of healing the schism with Oriental Greek Churches that recognized only the first three ecumenical councils. They had stayed in informal separation from both ecclesiastical Rome and Constantinople after the Council of Chalcedon.¹³² The Armenians made their arrival in Florence before the departure of the Greek delegation from the city. Negotiations with them were carried out through the Genoese colony at Caffa in 1434. Although much detail is not known about the negotiations that led to Union, the Armenians showed more disposition and enthusiasm about their rapprochement with Rome. The echo of their joy and willing reception of the Union were expressed in this manner by one of the visiting delegates address to the Pope Thus:

You hold the See of Christ. You are Vicar of Christ in the See of the Apostles. We have come to you, our head. We have come to our shepherd. You are the foundation of the Church. Every member that has left you is sick, and wild beasts have devoured the flock that has separated itself from you. Churches that have not followed you or been upheld by you have been utterly overthrown. You, the head, be compassionate to the members. You, the shepherd, gather the flock. You, the foundation, confirm the Churches. You, who have the power of the heavenly keys, open to us the gates of eternal life.¹³³

Gill reported that the Armenian had several meetings daily with the Roman Pontiff that prepared the way for the solemn proclamation of the *Decretum Pro-Armenis* on 22nd November 1439 in the Church of Santa Maria Novella. That decree that was well detailed due to the complicated relationship between the Armenia Church and other Chalcedonian Churches supposedly cemented the relationship between the Armenians and Rome.¹³⁴

It must not be forgotten that majority of the conciliarists remained at Basel. Their efforts to truncate the plans of Pope Eugene were thwarted by the success of his negotiations with the Greeks. Some Western monarchs were impressed by the outcome of the papal Council in Ferrara and Florence. They were discouraged by the excessive democratic character of the conciliarists. The participants in Basel purportedly excommunicated Pope Eugenius when the Union with the Greeks was signed. Their loss of goodwill from the western Princes and the people of Basel forced them to relocate to Lausanne, where the Council continued till 1449 but without achieving much.

¹³² For a short overview of the history of this schism in the Union's context with the see of Rome, see Nichols, *Rome*, 84-103.

¹³³ Hofmann, *Orientalium Orientalium Documenta Minora* 35 as quoted in Gill, *The Council*, 306.

¹³⁴ Gill *The Council*, 307

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the tortuous road travelled by the East and West to encounter at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. That meeting became possible due to the blend of hard work, careful and sincere planning, tolerance, willingness to endure one another, and diplomacy. Pope Eugenius IV, Emperor John VIII Paleologos and Patriarch Joseph II played decisive roles in making that encounter a historical reality. It was realized through the representatives' extraordinary sacrifices and intellectual engagement on both sides of the divide. Their relentless resolves guided the council fathers to achieve a union that no other union council after the schism achieved.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RECEPTION OF THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-FLORENCE

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter focused on the encounter between the Eastern and Western Church which took place in a theological debate that led to the decree of union, *Laetentur Coeli*. The decree raised the hope of ending the estrangement between the East and West. For a brief while, it appeared to have achieved the long-awaited union. However, subsequent events, especially as they unfolded in the East, proved the "union" to be a short-lived reality at best and an illusion at worst. The unforeseen effect was the deepening of the estrangement. This chapter aims to examine how and why the union was rejected in the East. It will highlight some historical circumstances that led to its rejection in Constantinople and environs.

It must be noted that accounting for the all voices about the Council of Florence is a daunting task that is bigger than the scope of this thesis. More than 581 years after the council, views about that council remain diverse. "Voices" in this thesis are therefore limited to a few significant personalities in Byzantine empire that worked for or against the union before the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Those "voices" are technically referred to as pro-unionists or unionists and anti-unionists. They did not just speak but also acted. Their words and actions will be considered so as to ascertain how they influenced the reception of the decree of union.

4.1 HISTORICAL SETTING FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE UNION

The reception of the decree of union, especially in the East, suffered under some internal and external historical realities. The Greeks wasted no time to depart Italy after the proclamation of decree, *Laetentur Coeli* on July 6 1439. This desire to return home as early as possible was good news for the Pope, who shouldered the considerable financial burden of maintaining 700 Greek delegates. After a bit of delay in their movement due to the storm, the Greeks finally arrived home on February 1, 1440. Thinking along with Gill, it can be said that the Council of Florence "after being accepted by the Greeks in Italy, it was almost immediately rejected by the same Greeks in Constantinople."¹³⁵

George E. Demacopoulos described the first reception of the union by the populace by quoting the Greek chronicler Doukas:

As soon as the hierarchs came ashore, the Constantinopolitans, as was customary, embraced them and asked, "How are you? What news do you bring from the synod? Have we gained the victory?" They replied, "No, we have betrayed our faith. We have exchanged

¹³⁵Gill, *The Council*, 349.

piety for impiety. We have renounced the pure sacrifice and have become azymites. These and other statement, more abominable and foul, were heard¹³⁶

This report of the first reaction to the decree of union is very controversial. Contrary to what was reported by Doukas and Syropoulos, Garatoni and Cardinal Isidore reported the controversial first reception of the union to the Pope. They explained the joyous reception of the decree by the people.¹³⁷ The role of the people, even in this early stage of the reception, remains obscure. It was in this period that the propaganda for and against the union officially began. The emperor, on his part, returned and received the sad news of the death of his wife. This brought about a vacuum in the implementation of the conciliar union. The union which was intended to bring peace to Constantinople, became a source of internal division among the Byzantines. The division splintered into pro-unionists/unionists and anti-unionists. The unionists supported the decree of union. They argued that the rift should end since debate at the council had demonstrated that Eastern and Western saints taught the same doctrine. They posited that the Latins should be accepted as one with their Orthodox brothers on the validity of the union achieved in Florence. On the other hand, the anti-unionists argued that the union was invalid because their fathers' faith had been tampered with in Florence by the heretical Latins. The propaganda for and against the union spread in the empire so fast that the people started boycotting liturgy presided over by the unionists, calling them, Azymites or Latinized priests. It discouraged some initial support because "As early as 1441 some of those who had signed the decree of union publicly repudiated their action in a manifesto."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina of Doukas*, crit. ed. Vasile Grecu (Bucharest: 1958), XXXI.9. Cf, George E. Demacopoulos, "The Popular Reception of the Council of Florence 1438-1439", in *St Vladimir's Theologica Quarterly*, No 43 (1999), 43. It is to be noted that this first popular hostile reception is not to be taken in isolation. Some anti-unionists like John Eugenicus, Mark's brother and Demetrios Palaeologus have left Italy in June before approving the decree of union. It is important not to downplay the level of propaganda and rumours these men and their supporters would have used in poisoning the people mind against the union: Cf Gill, *The Council*, 350.

¹³⁷ Bishop Garatoni, in correspondence with Pope Eugene IV about the reception of the Union, said accordingly, "After your departure with our dearest son in Christ, John Palaiologos, the known emperor of the Romans, and other Greeks, we have been told when you have approached Methone, Coron, Nigroponte and the Peloponnese, and we have been told about the glorious union of the Greeks with the Western Church and it is from the peoples of the respective places were accepted with great joy." In 1451, Isidore, in a speech *De Unione Florentina*, would confirm these words of Garatoni "However, there are large masses the Greeks of the Union and the Unity inclined. And I can assure Your Holiness that there are probably more than 20,000 souls: first the whole island of Rhodes, but also Cyprus and very many in Constantinople and on the other smaller islands, which one cannot easily count. You could find that other cities are also completely connected to us: Methone, Coron with their provinces and many other people in different places." Cf Eugenius IV, papa, *Epistola ad Christophorum episcopum Coronensem, Florentia* 25, Aug, 1440 (EPCF 3, Nr. 243, 17-21), 17.

¹³⁸ Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 360.

In 1442, Demetrios Palaeologus, a brother to emperor John, rode on the wings of anti-unionists' sentiments and Turks' assistance. He attempted to take the throne from his brother by causing an uprising. This event distracted the emperor for a while as he struggled to end his brother's violent attempt to take the throne from him.

Another factor in the success or failure of the union was the replacement of Patriarch Joseph II. Each of the two factions was hopeful that whoever became the new Patriarch would be sympathetic to their positions. Following Byzantine tradition, three candidates were presented to the emperor. The union-friendly Metrophanes II got elected as the new Patriarch. His election and subsequent appointment became another source of tension because the anti-unionists argued that the will of the people was not respected in his election.¹³⁹ They vowed not to attend his liturgy and that of other unionists. Metrophanes was chosen because he believed in the union and mentioned the Pope at his liturgy. His warming rapprochement towards Rome met the disapproval of anti-unionists. Being a Patriarch in such an environment was not easy for Metrophanes. He was determined to see the decree of union proclaimed. As the new patriarch, he wrote to the Pope and to some cardinals to announce his election. He used the customary title of Oecumenical Patriarch and referred to the Pope and cardinals as his fellow ministers.¹⁴⁰ The Pope in his reply through Garatoni, expressed his dissatisfaction with the pretentious title and the Patriarch's idea of equality.¹⁴¹ The pontiff was willing to help the Patriarch financially, "provided, however, that he contented himself with the title of Patriarch of Constantinople."¹⁴² Pope Eugene IV also used the letter to decry the poor handling of the decree of the union by the emperor whom he accused of being too slow in firmly establishing the union throughout the empire.¹⁴³ Metrophanes also became fed up with the emperor's indecisive disposition to bring the anti-unionists' rascality to a fitting end by proclaiming the union. The Patriarch, in his frustration, withdrew to his monastery and refused to celebrate the Lenten liturgy in St Sophia. He was persuaded to return and continue celebrating the liturgy after the emperor promised to make the required proclamation. However, family matters,

¹³⁹ Here again, the controversial argument of the peoples' rejection of Metrophanes was used by the anti-unionists. For them, the Priest Theophilacht was the candidate of the people. But the question to what extent the people were involved in the chosen of a Patriarch at this time remains unanswered. On the issue of Emperor and election of Patriarch, Cf Kallis, Rezeption, 585-586, Charalambos Dendrino, "Reflection of the failure, 135

¹⁴⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 352.

¹⁴¹ Gill, *The Council*, 352.

¹⁴² Gill, *The Council*, 352.

¹⁴³ Gill, *The Council*, 352

especially the struggle with his brother, Demetrios, prevented the emperor from acting on his promise to bring sanity to the Church.¹⁴⁴

1442-1443 witnessed more antagonism and exchange of different forms of propaganda between pro and anti-unionists. Mark of Ephesus who had returned from his exile around this period, he wasted no time in dishing out his treatises on the union. He argued that the union was a fraud. The emperor in order to get ahead of the matter, summoned the two opposing parties for a meeting. It was in the course of the meeting that a decision was reached to convene a synod of local bishops to address the contending issues.¹⁴⁵ Regrettably, the synod was not held because of the death of Patriarch Metrophanes. His demise created an ecclesiastical vacancy which alongside the lukewarm attitude of the emperor, left the space open for the uncompromising stance of the anti-unionists. Mark was unrelenting in his anti-unionist diatribes until his death in June 1444. The seat of the Patriarch remained vacant for two years.

In the meantime, the Turks marched towards Constantinople while the military aid promised by the Pope never materialized. The lack of military aid from the West further made the union unpopular. The lukewarm attitude of the pope towards Constantinople was born of the fact that he was not impressed by the emperor's vacillation towards the union. The pope also had other preoccupations such as the fight against the conciliarists and his undertakings to bring peace to the Western princes. He equally did not have the support of western powers for his planned crusade to the East. In addition, Pope Eugene IV had no desire to hasten up his plans particularly due to some unfavourable reports that reached him about the Byzantine emperor. And certainly too, as Lina Nehme has somewhat observed, the Pope "was busy convincing the separate Churches of the East to submit to him as Constantinople had done. He did not realise that if Constantinople were to fail, she would be forced to become schismatic again and that the Treatises concluded with the other Churches would collapse."¹⁴⁶ The view of Nehme is not altogether correct. As subsequent events demonstrated, it may be right to assume that no army could have saved a divided Byzantine empire. It was heavily embroiled with many factions at the time of its invasion by the Turks. The success of the Ottoman empire in the whole region did not just reflect a weak kingdom. It displayed Byzantine internal divisions and betrayals. Various people in the empire supported or tolerated the Ottoman

¹⁴⁴Though the Emperor defeated Demetrios and placed him on house arrest, he still did not proclaim the union after the incidence. Cf Jadran Ferluga, *Demetrios Palaiologos*, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 3 (1999), 689-690.

¹⁴⁵Gill, *The Council*, 357.

¹⁴⁶Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople* 133.

invasion for various reasons. It is possible that efforts to unite the Eastern Churches with themselves was actually meant to help them face an uncommon foreign enemy as one people.

The delay of the arrival of the promised papal crusade was used by the anti-unionists in the propaganda. They slammed the unionists for believing the deceptive promise of the west to send military aid to Byzantium after the purported union. In fairness, the pope could not do much, since the Western princes were divided in their allegiance to the Pope and the conciliarists. Pope Eugene was presented with a window of opportunity when the Hungarian king Hunyadi and the Polish king Ladislas III formed a coalition to fight the Turks' constant threat.¹⁴⁷ The pope seized the opportunity and appealed to the three leaders that included King George Brankovic of Serbia, to fight for their kingdoms and the Christian East that was threatened by the Ottomans. He supported their efforts by delegating Cardinal Cesarini to make the necessary preparations for the crusade.¹⁴⁸ The Wallacia prince Vlad Dracul joined the Hungarian and Serbian, and Venice pledged its support by sending ten galleys.¹⁴⁹ The Pope also sent an embassy to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. He was the lone voice that defended the pope against the conciliarists and sent representation to the union council of Ferrara-Florence. The crusade was designed to follow earlier crusade patterns. It was launched around the summer of 1443, launched with about 25,000 armies.¹⁵⁰ The sultan Muhrad attempted a truce with the princes which they accepted and he made promises of returning back their territories but Cesarini turned down the offer. Brankovic backed out from the military alliance after his territory was returned to him by the sultan.¹⁵¹ In the summer of 1444, the crusade re-launched its campaign against the Turks. Its number was smaller since George Brankovic had pulled out. One of the greatest fears of the sultan was a united Christendom. He was willing to let go of anything to avoid this unity. According to Lina Nehme, upon hearing of the crusaders' advancement, he "came out of his retreat, crossed the Bosphorus with Asiatic troops, marched on to Varna. The battle was waged around November 10, 1444."¹⁵² The Sultan marched against the crusaders. "The crusaders, outnumbered three to one, barely had a chance of victory. But they fought heroically until first Ladilas and then Cesarini were killed."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 361

¹⁴⁸Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 361

¹⁴⁹Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople* 133

¹⁵⁰Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 362. Cf, also Octavian Bârlea, *Die Konzile des 13-15. Jahrhunderts und die ökumenische Frage* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 113

¹⁵¹Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 363.

¹⁵²Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 134. Bârlea, *Die Konzile*, 113.

¹⁵³Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 363

With the failure of the crusade in Varna, all hope seemed lost for the Byzantines. Nicholson posited that:

... many of the city's inhabitants were not sorry that it had failed. For its failure seemed to point the moral that no good could come to them from those who had forced them to tamper with the faith of their fathers. They would rather hope for a miracle of divine intervention than expect a material reward for perpetuating a union which was so displeasing in the sight of God.¹⁵⁴

The unionists who had placed their hopes on the success of the crusade became silent about the union. The failure brought home this fact: "the higher the hope, the keener was the disappointment."¹⁵⁵ The unionists, seeing no hope in propaganda and counter-propaganda, sought a solution through dialogue with the anti-unionists. They held about fifteen meetings with anti-unionists between 1444-1445 at the Xylala palace. Discussions and debates took place with the emperor present along with his senate and the papal legate.¹⁵⁶ The unionists were represented by the Dominican bishop of Cortona, Bartholomeo Lapacci (1402-1466). Known for his excellent grasp of the issue at stake, Lapacci was unparalleled in his use of scholastic argument to defend the validity of the union, urging for peace and mutual understanding. The anti-unionists were represented by George Scholarios who was also very intelligent. The meetings ended without any compromise between the two groups. Each side of the divide boasted of having won the argument and for shinning the light of orthodoxy for the others that were still in darkness. George Scholarios as the new leader of the anti-unionists, did not relent in his polemical writings. There was no significant improvement in the ecclesiastical and political situations of the empire. Instead of bridging the gap, "The Union of Florence had served in the end to isolate the Byzantines still further from the western world both spiritually and physically."¹⁵⁷

A flicker of hope was enkindled in 1445 with the election of Gregory III Mammas to the patriarchal throne in Constantinople. He worked very hard for the implantation of the decree of the union but with little success. The emperor John VIII Palaeologus died in 1448 without restoring peace in the empire and the Church.¹⁵⁸ He was succeeded by his younger brother, Constantine XI who was a strong unionist. He was confronted with an empire-wide political instability and a chaotic situation. Constantine XI worked hard with the Patriarch to unite the

¹⁵⁴Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 363

¹⁵⁵Gill, *The Council*, 365

¹⁵⁶Gill, *The Council*, 35

¹⁵⁷Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 368

¹⁵⁸Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 368

empire but the anti-unionists' remained intransigent.¹⁵⁹ Against the backdrop of their continued opposition and the unresolved conflicts within ecclesiastical circles, "The tension in ecclesiastical circles was so intolerable that the Patriarch Gregory abandoned his charge in disgust or despair and went to Rome in August 1451."¹⁶⁰ The emperor exerted efforts to improve the situation but not much was achieved. For instance, Constantine XI wanted to see the decree of the union proclaimed. He sent series of embassy to Rome. He even pledged allegiance to the Pope and called for support to defeat the danger of the Turks.¹⁶¹ It seems that Pope Nicholas V did not fully grasp the level of tension in the Byzantine empire. Another possibility is that having learned of John VIII's reluctance to proclaim the union, the pope was not prepared to entertain any further delay in the proclamation of the union in Byzantine. In his letter of September 1451 to the emperor, the pope underscored the importance of the empire to Christendom. He misconstrued the emperor's reluctance as schism, and which according to him, had worsened the politico-military situation in Byzantine.¹⁶² He declared the willingness of Rome to help Constantinople on three conditions: (a) the formal adoption of the union; (b) commemoration of the pope at the liturgy and (3) reinstatement of Patriarch Gregory. The letter did not go down well even with the unionists. It fed into the fear of the Byzantines about Western desire for domination and forced allegiance.¹⁶³ Its tone emboldened the anti-unionists who insisted that they were forced to sign the union in Italy for the sake of military help to the empire. For his part, the emperor continued to sue for peace between the unionist and anti-unionist factions. Isidore was sent by the pope in 1452 to Constantinople to convince the emperor to proclaim the union in Constantinople. Isidore also brought 200 troops from the Pope as support in preparation for the war with the Turks.¹⁶⁴ The decree of the union was formally proclaimed in St Sophia on December 12, 1452.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹The spread of propaganda by Scholarios and John Eugenicos, Mark's brother was simply unsurpassable. While some patriotic countrymen could occasionally set aside their religious difference to work with the emperor and the Patriarch to secure themselves against the Turks, the anti-unionists' leaders desire no empire with Latin supremacy. Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 371

¹⁶⁰Nicol described the situation further with the following words, "For the last two years of its independent existence, the See of Constantinople was widowed. There was a church but no Patriarch. There was an Emperor but no Empire." Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 371-372.

¹⁶¹Pope Eugene IV died in 1447, and Pope Nicholas V was elected the same year to succeed him.

¹⁶²Matteijet Ulrich, "Konstantin XI. Palaiologos", in: *LMA* 5 (1999), 1378-1379. Cf also, *The Last Centuries*, 372.

¹⁶³Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 144

¹⁶⁴Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 145

¹⁶⁵Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 145

The game changer in the affairs of Constantinople and its doomed fate was the death of Sultan Murad in February 1451. He was succeeded by his ambitious son Mehmet II.¹⁶⁶ At only 23 years of age, Mehmet was determined to realise the desire of his ancestors to capture Constantinople and to make it the Ottoman capital. He wasted no time in starting his preparation to invade Constantinople. He proposed to Constantine to move to another city but Constantine preferred to die defending his kingdom than run away. Even with the worse threat from Mehmet, he refused to give up his belief in the empire and the union. He sought more help from other leaders but none came to his assistance. Having learned of the brutality of Mehmet, all the neighbouring states made a truce with him and pledged neutrality in the coming war with the Byzantine empire.¹⁶⁷ Venice promised to help the emperor with troops but did not match their words with action on account of their understanding with the Turks.

As the days passed by, many, including the bishops lost their hopes and gradually deserted the emperor. The emperor resigned himself to fate: "if the city fell that would be by God's will."¹⁶⁸ On May 28 1453, it dawned on everyone in Constantinople that the time had come. According to Nicol, "Orthodox bishops, priests and monks, who had loudly declared that they would never again set foot in their cathedral until it had been purged of the Roman abomination, now approached the altar to join their Catholic brethren in celebrating the holy liturgy."¹⁶⁹ The imminent danger and the fear of losing their kingdom brought the people together which theological debate could not do. Cardinal Isidore participated at the liturgy. He barely escaped the sultan's campaign even though he became a war prisoner and later got his freedom. The Turks began their attacks on May 29 1453 and plundered the city as they catered away many valuables, raped women, and took many people as prisoners of war.¹⁷⁰

The Ottoman invasion of Constantinople and its conquest ended the independence of the Greek Church in the medieval era. The Church would languish in captivity in the coming centuries under Turkish rule which took charge and moderated ecclesiastical issues. Thereafter, the sultan and not the emperor controlled the narrative. Tom Papademetriou holds the view that the Symphonia between the state and the Church became distorted with the Ottoman rule: "The

¹⁶⁶Mehmet II was a well-trained man in almost all facet of life and had a peculiar love for a renaissance. Mehmet described to be gifted, was intellectually good and very strategic in planning. He was initially taken for granted, but it was discovered later, that he was more ambitious and brutal than his father. Cf Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 372.

¹⁶⁷ Many of the neighbouring states, having become vassal to Sultan, assisted him in strategizing the taking of Constantinople. Cf, Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 381.

¹⁶⁸Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 382.

¹⁶⁹Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 386.

¹⁷⁰Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 390-391

Church undergoes a transformation from religious and cultural institution sponsored by the Byzantine state to an institution exploited by the Ottoman state primarily for financial gain."¹⁷¹ The introduction of the *millet* system into Constantinople may be traceable to the period of the fall of the city. It is a system that permitted the Church to govern “as a state within a state, with the Patriarch serving as the communal leader.”¹⁷² Papademetriou believes that the *millet* is an anachronistic way of interpreting Byzantine experience in the hands of the Ottomans. He sees it as a systematic exploitation that turned religious leaders into tax collectors for the Muslim rulers. It rubbed the Orthodox Church of all her glory and reduced its faithful to the status of primary tax payers to the Ottomans. It led to corruption and the monetization of holy offices like the Patriarchate. Naturally, the Christian beneficiaries of the Ottoman *millet* system did not favour any association or union with the West. In 1484, a council in Constantinople definitively repudiated the decree of union that had been earlier proclaimed in the same city.¹⁷³

4.2 VOICES ABOUT THE COUNCIL

As has been shown, that the history of the reception of the decree of union was influenced by historical happenings during the period. Some influential personalities with strong voices equally played important roles either for or against any possible reception and success of the union. The second part of this chapter sets out to highlight some of those personalities and their roles. This will be done by placing the voices into two categories: the unionist and anti-unionist voices.

4.3 THE VOICES OF THE UNIONISTS

4.3.1 EMPEROR JOHN PALAEOLOGOS (1392-1448)

Emperor John VIII Palaeologus was one of the most unfortunate rulers of the Palaeologus dynasty. He inherited an almost dead empire that needed maintenance and protection. Manuel II Palaeologus, his father, advised him that all the empire needed was a

¹⁷¹ Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church, in The Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

¹⁷² Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 10.

¹⁷³ This Council was presided over by Symeon the Patriarch of Constantinople and attended by all the three Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem focused basically on the reception of the council of Florence. They univocally rejected the council and issued a *Horos* to that effect. The primary synodal document from synod the was the Acolouthy (service), a document specially designed to receive Latin Catholics to Orthodox. The text mandates the convert to reject the synod of Florence as an evil and shameful Latin dogma of filioque and azymes. Cf, George Dion Dragas, “The Manner of Reception of Roman Catholic Converts into the Orthodox Church with Special Reference to the Decisions of the Synods 1484 (Constantinople), and 1755 (Moscow)” in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 44, Nos. 1-4, 1999, 237-238.

good manager and not a strong man.¹⁷⁴ He was also admonished to tread carefully, and to be diplomatically astute in handling the Eastern and Western schism. The Greek chronicler, George Sphrantzes, who was with Emperor Manuel II and his Son John VIII at his dying hour, has preserved for posterity the advice of Manuel to his son: "Propose a council: open negotiations, but protract them interminably.... The pride of the Latins and the obstinacy of the Greeks will never agree."¹⁷⁵ John VIII followed the admonition of his father but also wanted to surpass his father in his diplomatic relation with the West. He is remembered in history as the emperor who went to seek union from the Western Church as a bargain for military aid against the Ottomans. He believed that aligning with the western princes to fight the Turks was better than diplomatic dealings with the Turks. His hope was dashed when he came to the West and found out that no prince was interested in the union. He made frantic efforts and delayed the opening of the council with the hope that western princes were on their way to the council. He also needed to contend his supremacy with a western Pope and a region that did not have much regard for him.¹⁷⁶ He was learned and had a good understanding of the theological issues as well as the temperament of the Greeks towards those issues. He displayed great abilities in controlling the Greeks as he curtailed their excesses throughout the conciliar debate. The emperor had a quiet disposition during the proceedings. Depending on the setting, a passive, yes, from him was enough.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, he strategically directed and controlled the council's fortune, to the extent that he was so active as "maintaining equal power relations in the course of the discussion."¹⁷⁸ According to Kolditz he achieved all these by assuming the role of the council's moderator through the Greek delegates, for everything said by the Greeks was reported to him and this ultimately turned out to be the indispensable support of the Greeks in the dialogue situation towards the eloquent Latins.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 368.

¹⁷⁵ Gill, *The Council*, 12-13 quoting George Sphrantzes, *Chronicon Minus*, XXIII, 5-6, in: R. Maisano (ed.), Giorgio Sfranze, Cronaca, Rome 1990 (= CFHB 29), 82.1-15, Cf also Deno Geanakoplos, "Byzantium and the Crusade 1354-1453" in Harry W. Hazard ed., *A History of the Crusades: The Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Centuries*, Vol. 3 (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1975), 89. See also Dendrino, "Reflection of the failure, 131.

¹⁷⁶ Kolditz argued that the general procedure of the council ignored the presence of the emperor. Even at the solemn proclamation session in Florence, the emperor remained passive. An imperial declaration was not read, and the Council Fathers did not address the monarch. Cf Sebastian Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos*, 320

¹⁷⁷ Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos*, 321.

¹⁷⁸ Kolditz rewrites the function of the emperor with that of a dramatic, i.e., specifically preserving unity, specifying processes and rules, but not determining the content. Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos*, 328

¹⁷⁹ Kolditz, *Johannes VIII.* 328

Given the slow progress of events, John VIII lost interest in the union and displayed neutrality in dealing with the opposing parties towards the union. He refused to sanction Mark of Ephesus and protected him from prosecution by the Latins. With regard to Mark of Ephesus, the emperor remained stuck to his position in the conviction: “that if persuasion failed to make him amend after his return home, suitable measures would be taken.”¹⁸⁰ There are no records of him persuading or taking any action against Mark or any of the anti-unionists. His ambiguous disposition towards the council may have also been dictated by the death of his wife which weakened him emotionally. He mourned while his empire was being torn apart by ecclesiastical conflicts and the irreconcilable differences between the unionists and the anti-unionists. His imperial authority was weakened by his brothers, especially Demetrios who coveted the throne. The failure of the crusade in Varna in 1444 was a heavy blow for John VIII. In spite of all his travails, he attempted to bring the unionists and anti-unionists together on August 1, 1443. He was not able to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table because of the death of Patriarch Metrophanes.¹⁸¹ His mediating efforts were frustrated by religious intransigence of the anti-unionists. During the deliberation and voting on the controversial question of *Filioque*, the emperor as a layman abstained from making a pronouncement about dogmatic questions.

Nonetheless, the ambiguity of the Emperor about the union becomes apparent since no statement for or against the union can be attributed to him upon returning to Constantinople from Italy. In his dilemma, John VIII opted for a diplomatic approach and watched the development of events in the empire. He could not say anything negative about the union, which would question his responsibility since he signed the union freely. Negative comments from the Emperor about the union would also make the empire unsettled from internal crisis and send a wrong signal to the Pope, who has pledged to send military aid to the empire. On the other hand, the Emperor resisted the temptation to stand for the union he signed with conviction because of fear of the Turks. Bârlea opined that: "Without a doubt, John VIII did not want to alarm the Turks with open pro-Florentine demonstrations in Byzantium, because immediately after the council, he sent messengers to Sultan Murad II to assure him that the Florentine Union was not of great importance."¹⁸²

The emperor's middle-ground and inaction impacted negatively on the union and its eventual failure. The anti-unionists construed his silence as support for their cause. To some

¹⁸⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 297.

¹⁸¹ Gill, *The Council*, 357

¹⁸² Bârlea, *Die Konzile*, 125.

extent, it can be affirmed that the failure of the union may be attributed to Emperor John VIII. His putting the council in the broader conciliar history and tradition failed to appreciate the peculiar context of the Florentine council and its many intricacies. The weakness of the emperor in executing his imperial responsibility in relation to the council created a vacuum and a situation that were exploited by the unionists and anti-unionists.

4.3.2. EMPEROR CONSTANTINE XI (1405-1453)

Emperor Constantine was a unionist. He supported his brother John VIII to go for the union council with the Westerners. He was a nobleman unlike his brothers, John and Demetrios.¹⁸³ He ruled a kingdom that was divided against itself in the face of a formidable external danger. The anti-unionists loathed him and did not consider him as a legitimate emperor.¹⁸⁴ His adherence to the decree of union between the East and West made Sultan Murad reject his peace treaty. The sultan had hoped that Demetrios, who was anti-Latin, would succeed John VIII.¹⁸⁵ Constantine wrote several letters to the Pope to pledge his allegiance and willingness to proclaim the union in his determination to save the empire. He also made several peace treaties with neighbouring states but many were not disposed to help for fear of reprisal from the Ottomans. The emperor invited the unionists and anti-unionists severally to discuss their differences and arrived at peace. His olive branch came too late to reverse the precarious situation of the empire. He honoured his words about the union, and in the face of great propaganda from the anti-unionists, he ensured the proclamation of the union in 1452 before the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

¹⁸³Nicol noted that he was such a balanced personality. He was the least troublesome and the most trustworthy among the Palaeologus. He was the favourite son of the Mother, Helena, the widow of Manuel II. Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The life and legend of Constantine Palaiologos, last Emperor of the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 29. Cf also Lina Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 239

¹⁸⁴The Question of Constantine's coronation is very controversial. Because of the political situation at that time, to avoid provoking a revolt from the anti-unionists who preferred Demetrios's candidacy who was anti-Latin and openly rejected Constantine, there was no way he could be crown in Constantinople. His mother, Helena, who took the throne's regency, sent some delegate to proclaimed and invest Constantine in Mistra. But he was never crowned because there was no Patriarch in Mistra to crown him, and the local Bishops crown an emperor. When he finally came to Constantinople, there was no way he could be crowned because the people, through their anti-union agitations, rejected the Unionists Patriarch Gregory Mammas. Nicol argued that such investiture was not new, so already it was with Manuel I and John Cantacuzene VI. Still, the difference was that each of these past emperors arranged for a proper coronation later, which emperor Constantine XI could not do. On this ground, some historians continue to argue that John VIII was the last Roman emperor of Constantinople. Cf Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor*, 47, and also *The Last Centuries*, 370.

¹⁸⁵Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 370

Having exhausted all the means at his disposal to save the empire, he was left with the option of running away to avoid humiliation from the Turks. His advisers encouraged him to take this option but he refused it.¹⁸⁶ Even Sultan Mehmet proposed to him the option of moving into another city with his countrymen, which he also rejected in his insistence that “if his city fell, that would be by God's grace.”¹⁸⁷ In the final days before the fall of the city, he gathered the people and prayed with them and addressed them as follows:

Most noble leader, illustrious tribunes, generals, most courageous fellow soldiers, and all loyal, honest citizens! You know well that the hour has come: the enemy of our faith wishes to oppress us even more closely by sea and land with all his engines and skill to attack us with the entire strength of this siege force, as a snake about to spew its venom; he is in a hurry to devour us, like a savage lion. For this reason I am imploring you to fight like men with brave souls, as you have done from the beginning up to this day, against the enemy of our faith. I hand over to you my glorious, famous, respected, noble city, the shining Queen of Cities, our homeland. You know well, my brothers, that we have four obligations in common, which force us to prefer death over survival: first, our faith and piety; second, our homeland; third, the emperor anointed by the Lord; and fourth, our relatives and friends. Well, my brothers, if we must fight for one of these obligations, we will be even more liable under the command strength of all four, as you can clearly understand.¹⁸⁸

Constantine stood for the union and for the unity of the Church. He was a statesman with patriotic advisers chosen from among the unionists and anti-unionists, respectively. He died while fighting to defend his city.

4.3.3 THE PATRIARCHS

All the patriarchs that served Constantinople in the last years of the empire before it fell in 1453 were all unionists. They worked tirelessly to see that the union succeeded.

4.3.4 PATRIARCH JOSEPH II (1360-1439)

Patriarch Joseph led the delegation along together with the Byzantine Emperor John VIII to the council of Ferrara-Florence. He was already an old man above 80 years with poor health. Joseph was a kind and saintly old man full of wisdom that accompanied his simple spirituality. He did possess an exceptional intellectual prowess. His wisdom in directing the ecclesiastical affairs of Constantinople was not in doubt, especially his input during negotiations on the

¹⁸⁶Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 385

¹⁸⁷Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 385

¹⁸⁸George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes 1401-1477*, translated by Marios Philippides (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 120-121.

possible venues of the council. This personality and character of the Patriarch were surmised by Gill with the following words:

He was a man of character, perhaps without extensive education, but gifted with a sound judgment and profound piety; so he had been a powerful factor of unity in the bosom of his own very divided Church and an advocate of unity and peace with the West. But since he was a genuine Greek, his inclination towards the Union had never in any way compromised his conviction of the orthodox character of the faith of his Church and of the inviolability of its customs.¹⁸⁹

He advocated for the council of Union with the Pope surrounded by his bishops known as church leader of the West, and not with a group of bishops gathered as conciliarists without a leader. He had a genuine disposition that would bring unity to the Church. His simple spirituality won the hearts of some notable Latins like Ragusa and Traversari. Both believed that the Patriarch was disposed for a union with the West even before arriving in Italy.¹⁹⁰ The Patriarch suffered some setback in the struggle for supremacy between him and Pope Eugene IV. The latter wanted that the Patriarch to honour the western custom of kissing papal ring. Even after his relegation in the seating arrangement, he kept his hopes alive and struggled to follow the theological debate as things progressed.

He demonstrated his willingness for the Union by signing the *cedula* on the procession of the Holy Spirit and pledged his loyalty to the Church's final decision before he died on 10th June 1439. On his dying bed on June 9, the Patriarch had the following letter sent to the Council Fathers. In this testimony of his last will, the Patriarch agreed to a union with the Latins without any further conditions:

Because I have reached the end of my life, as the one I am about to release from general duty, I write and sign for God's sake my testimony open to my sons. So, everything that the Catholic and Apostolic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ruler of Rome, thinks and believes, I also believe and surrender myself to them. I also confess to the most blessed father of the fathers and to the highest priest and representative of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Pope of ancient Rome, to the certain faith of all, and to the purification of souls.¹⁹¹

While the Patriarch was not a particular friend of the Latins in their arrogance and pride, he saw no basis for the division, which he conceived as artificial. He desired a unity that would

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Gill, *Konstanz und Basel-Florenz*. (Übers. aus dem Französischen von Karlhermann Bergner) (GÖK 9). Mainz 1967, 306

¹⁹⁰ Gill, *The Council*, 269

¹⁹¹ George Hofmann, *Die Konzilsarbeit in Florenz*, in: OCP4(1938),

result not from aid alone but a unity that reflected the injunction of Christ to his followers. Could the situation of the reception of the Union in Constantinople have been better if Patriarch Joseph II were alive? Could his wisdom and the respect he commanded among the clergy and people, have been enough to calm the storm caused by the anti-unionists in Constantinople?

4.3.5 METROPHANES II (1443 d.)

Metrophanes was the Bishop of Cyzicus before he was proposed by Emperor John VIII to the eastern Bishops who elected him. He was invested on the 4th May 1440 to replace Joseph II.¹⁹² Metrophanes was one of the delegates Italy for the Council of Florence and was appointed as one of the seven delegates that represented the Greeks during the *Filioque* debate.¹⁹³ The election of Metrophanes was contested because of his disposition towards the Union. His adversaries accused him of being against the wish of the people. Metrophanes believed that the Union achieved in Florence was valid because the theological debate in Ferrara-Florence demonstrated that the East and West taught one and the same faith.¹⁹⁴ He recognised the Pope according to the teachings of the Council of Florence and commemorated him at liturgy. Immediately after his election, he wrote an encyclical to bishops and the people of his region. He announced his ascension to the office of a patriarch and urged them to include his name and the name of the Pope in the Diptychs. According to him,

Therefore, we embraced the union with them and by the grace of God we are one flock under a single shepherd, the saviour. Also, we commemorate the name of the most blessed Pope Eugene in the diptychs according to ecclesiastical use. Therefore, you also ought to embrace this holy union and give thanks to God for the peace and concord of the Christians. Thus, you ought to commemorate the most blessed Pope as it use, as we do, and to acknowledge all the above written things and to accept them as good and holy done and concluded.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Gill, *The Council*, 350.

¹⁹³Gill, *The Council*, 245

¹⁹⁴Gill, *The Council*, 351

¹⁹⁵ “*Propter quod unionem amplexi sumus cum eis et sumus gratia dei unum ovile sub unico pastore, salvatore Christo. Etiam nomen beatissimi papae domini Eugenii in diptychis commemoramus iuxta consuetudinem ecclesiasticam. Ideo etiam vos hanc sanctam unionem amplecti debetis et deo gratias referre pro pace christianorum et concordia et commemorare beatissimum papam secundum consuetudinem, sicut etiam nos facimus, et omnia suprascripta agnosceret acceptare tamquam bene et sancte peracta et conclusa.*” (Translation done by me). Cf, Metrophanes II, patriarcha Constantinopolitanus, Epistola ad Methonenses, Constantinopolis 10 iun. 1440 in, (*Orientalium documenta*, ed. Hofmann, Nr. 36, 45-47, hier 47).

Patriarch Metrophanes used this encyclical not just to discuss the validity of the Union of Florence but to also urge the people to embrace the oneness achieved at the council. He made effort to allay the fears of the people about the sanctity of their liturgy:

You should, however, know that we retain as before, without any change, all our ecclesiastical customs in the Holy celebration of the sacred Body of Christ and the other services and the recitation of the Holy creed.¹⁹⁶

Metrophanes also wrote to the pope and announced his election as the new Patriarch. The reign of Metrophanes as the Patriarch of Constantinople had many challenges. He was rejected by the anti-unionists whose propaganda isolated the unionists. The neutrality of the emperor and his refusal to proclaim the Union or call the unruly anti-unionists to order, complicated matters for the patriarch. He became frustrated by the emperor's lack of political will and inaction. The patriarch in protest, abandoned St Sophia during lent in 1441 and refused to celebrate the liturgy. Metrophanes was resolute in his belief in the Union and refused to be bullied or forced to change his stance. He adopted the policy of appointing and consecrating unionists as bishops.¹⁹⁷ He hoped that the unionist Bishops who could preach the unions in order to neutralise the opposition of the anti-unionists. The lack of imperial support and cooperation led him to resign for the second time. It was his resignation that prompted the emperor to call for a dialogue between the unionists and anti-unionists. He did not live to attend the meeting between the unionists and anti-unionists because of his death which occurred on 1st August 1443.

4.3.6 PATRIARCH GREGORY III MAMMAS (1459 d.)

Gregory was elected the second Patriarch after the council of Ferrara-Florence in 1443. He was also a delegate at Florence and a supporter of the Union. He sought to disprove the accusation from the anti-unionists of diluting the orthodox faith by the concession to a union with outsiders. Mammas defended the vision of a unified Western civilisation, of which Byzantine remained a member. Mammas took his unionists agenda beyond the confines of a few zealots. He countered the anti-unionist propaganda at the intellectual level. The *Latinophron*¹⁹⁸ was a primary intellectual tool used by the anti-unionists in the spread of their propaganda. He

¹⁹⁶*Orientalium documenta*, ed. Hofmann, Nr. 36, 45-47, hier 47. Cf also, Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 35.

¹⁹⁷Gill, *The Council*, 353

¹⁹⁸ *Latinophron* is a technical term used to refer to some Greeks who were sympathetic to the Latin and constantly reference the relationship between the Greeks and Latins.

directed Scholarios, then a brilliant unionist, to write an *Apologia* and respond to the arguments of Mark of Ephesus. Mammas also wrote an *Apologia* against Mark. In his *Apologia* and other writings, he defended the oneness of the Greeks and the Latins. He argued that they belonged to one household of God (oikonomia). As far as he was concerned, the East and the West were related not only theologically as demonstrated during the theological debate at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in their use of Patristic fathers, also they shared cultural ties which their present acrimony should not destroy.

Patriarch Mammas argued in the affirmation that there is Western identity found in the Easterners, which was a source of ridicule from the anti-unionists. Responding to Mark's ridicule of their Greco-Latin identity, Mammas posited the following:

Mark ridicules us by calling us 'Greco-Latins' and finds this neologism to be suitable, as he surmises. But this we consider, however not as an insult, but we confess to be true. For Constantine the Great came from [Elder Rome], and taking the noblest of the Roman from Rome, he made them dwell in the city erected in his name and called 'New Rome'. While those who descended from them used the tongue of the Greeks... they drew their lineage from [Elder Rome], and suitably we ought to be called 'Greco-Latin' since the Latins called the Hellens' Greeks'.... We now permit him to say that even the Romans who ruled us derived their lineage from [the West].¹⁹⁹

Mammas' acknowledgement of their common heritage in Roman culture weakened the xenophobic disposition of the anti-unionists that prided ethnicity as Orthodoxy. Mammas contended that real Orthodoxy was reflected in its Catholicism, its ability to accommodate others and openness to plurality in doctrinal understanding. Reacting to Mark's concept of unity, Mammas argued that, Orthodoxy was not limited to one culture or an idea, and it ruled out uniformity in search of unity. Orthodoxy could accommodate all men: Greeks, Latins, and Barbarians. Where men came from, should not be an issue but their willingness to accept the truth of God's teaching through the scriptures, the teachings of the fathers as well as the teachings of the ecumenical councils. All these constituted orthodoxy and not on the basis of cultural inheritance. Mammas like his predecessor Metrophanes adopted some strong unionist policies against anti-unionists. He was a good friend of many of the anti-unionists before the council. They struggled to convince him to change his view on the Union. He also ordained a

¹⁹⁹ Gregory Mammas, "Against the Ephesine", in *Patrologia Graecia*, 160:116A-117B translation and annotations by Charles Yost. Cf, Charles Yost, "Byzantium's Orphans, Rome's Foundlings: The Legacy of the Greek Unionists." In *The Imaginative Conservative*, 2020 URL: <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2020/03/byzantium-orphans-rome-foundlings-greek-unionists-charles-yost.html>. Accessed 23.04.2021

lot of unionist bishops. His tenure as Patriarch was a nightmare for the anti-unionists because he knew all their moves. He was thorough in his intellectual repudiation of their false claims. The death of Emperor John VIII energised the anti-unionists in their antagonism towards the Patriarch and the new emperor, Constantine XI. Constantine struggled to gain the acceptance of the people who were under the influence of the anti-unionists. It made the position of Mammas to become very untenable as he was the constant target of the anti-unionists. They considered the patriarch as a strong obstacle to their cause. He was eventually forced to leave the empire and escaped to Rome in 1451 where he died in 1459.

4.3.7 ISIDORE OF KIEV (1385-1463)

Isidore can be described as one of the outstanding personalities in their commitment for the Union of the Church. Isidore was one of the Mistra scholars along with intellectuals like Bessarion of Nicaea, Mark of Ephesus, Scholarios. The famed philosopher of their time, George Gemistos Plethon was their teacher.²⁰⁰ Isidore was the abbot at the monastery of St Demetrios located in Constantinople. Isidore was consecrated as the bishop of Kiev in 1436 in preparation of the Council of Florence.²⁰¹ He had a theological disposition towards Western theology. He was optimistic about the Union from the beginning. He signed the decree of union with the following words: “With love, I willingly approve and sign.”²⁰² His signature was “the expression of his committed and enthusiastic compliance.”²⁰³ Isidore was commissioned by the pope on 17th August 1439 “to propagate the council of Florence decree union among the Greek Orthodox and Eastern Slaves.”²⁰⁴ He did not doubt the equality of Eastern and Western Rites which he saw as implicit in the decision of the council.²⁰⁵ His view on the matter was ecumenical and respectful of the uniqueness of each rite:

²⁰⁰These scholars are the intellectuals of Byzantine late medieval struggle to blend western scholasticism that was domination western Europe and the Orthodox Palamis theology of hesychasm that has taken deep root in Greek thought. The foundation of these scholars was Platonism, though many of them were very predisposed to Western scholasticism, except Mark of Ephesus who denounced Western scholasticism in all its form. Mark had great admiration for his teacher Gemistos who was a radical Platonists, and Mark blended this Platonism with Palamite theology. Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 353

²⁰¹Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 353.

²⁰²V. Borovoy, “The Destiny of the Union of Florence in Poland and the Great Lithuanian Principality (Byellorussia and the Ukraine), in Alberigo, (ed.), *Christian Unity*, 556.

²⁰³V. Borovoy, “The Destiny of the Union, 556.

²⁰⁴W. Hryniewicz, “The Florentine Union Reception and Rejection: Some Reflections on Unionist Tendencies among Ruthenians, in Alberigo ed., *Christian Unity*, 521.

²⁰⁵Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivian Metropolitanate, The Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Massachusetts: Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1999), 44.

To all people bearing the name of Christ; both Latins and Greeks, and all others who are subject to the ecumenical Church of Constantinople, namely the Rus', Serbian, Romanians, and other nations... 'receive the most holy union with great spiritual rejoicing and veneration' and respect each other's sacrament.²⁰⁶

It is worthy of note that Isidore was not preoccupied with the controversial dogmatic teachings of the council. Conscious of the particular pastoral situation of his region, the struggle for supremacy between Eastern and Western Christians, he emphasised the unity brought by the decree. Isidore urged the people to embrace this oneness of the Church. To the Greeks, he said:

And if the Greeks are in a Latin country or if there is a Latin church somewhere in their country, then they should all go to worship and look at the body of Jesus Christ, give him honour with contrition of their hearts, as they do in do their churches; and let them go to confession to the Latin priests, and receive the body of God from them.²⁰⁷

The itinerary of Isidore as papal emissary took him to Buda, Cracow, Galicia, Vilna, the capital of Lithuania and to Kiev. He proclaimed the union in Kiev in the Cathedral of St. Sophia on 5th February 1441.²⁰⁸ His first opposition came from the Latin Grand Duchy who did not accept the equality of Eastern and Western rites. The Archbishop of Vilna was also not ready "to recognise the validity of the Eastern sacraments guaranteed by the union of Florence and prevented the Metropolitan from promulgating the union in that city."²⁰⁹ Although the council did not say anything about rebaptism, Isidore decided to use the council's teachings on the oneness of the Churches to address the long pastoral problem of rebaptism between the two Churches. In this pastoral letter, he addressed the Latin thus:

You Latin peoples, trust all those who are of the Greek faith truly and without suspicion; they are all baptised, and their baptism is holy and tested by the Roman Church, their baptism is valid and equal to the baptism of this Church; and May there be no more evil suspicions among you about these things, but like the Latins, the Greeks already mentioned may have the same concern about the one Church, for it is truly one.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 44

²⁰⁷ Isidorus, archiepiscopus Kioviensis, *Litterae encyclicae*, Buda 5 mart. 1440 (ASlav CF, Documenta, Nr. 4, 140-142 / Die Orthodoxe Kirche, Hg. Hauptmann/Stricker, Nr. 61, 218f.)

²⁰⁸Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 44. Cf also Thomas Faguson, "The Council of Ferrara-Florence and Its Continued Historical Significance", in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, No 43 (1999), 72

²⁰⁹Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 44

²¹⁰ Albert M Ammann, "Zur Geschichte der Geltung der Florentiner Konzilsentscheidungen in Polen-Litauen: Der Streit über die Gültigkeit der „Griechentaufe“, in: *OCP8* (1942), 289.

There was a struggle of supremacy in the Slavic world among the Eastern and Western Catholics which Isidore and the pope had hoped the Union would settle.²¹¹ Isidore had little success, especially in Kiev, which was a strategic city from the point of view of ecclesiastical politics in the Slavic world.

The arrival of Isidore in Moscow in March 1441 was resented by the great prince Vasili. He celebrated the liturgy and commemorated the Pope, and read the union at the pulpit of the Ascension Church of Kremlin. Vasili arrested him, interrogated him, and accused him of committing heresy by bringing a foreign union to the empire.²¹² Isidore went to Ruthenia after his escape from Moscow, where he was also met with hostility. He was rewarded by the pope with the red cap on his return to Rome in 1443.²¹³

In 1444, Isidore left again and went through the region of Greece and Russia for another four years to spread and proclaim the union.²¹⁴ Isidore within these four years, wrote series of letters to Pope Nicholas V, explaining the progress of the Union and suggested ways to proclaim the Union. The core of his suggestion was the dispatching of “trained preachers to explain simply, and as far as possible only from Greek sources, what the decree of union taught and to send a legate first to the Peloponnesus and then to Constantinople”²¹⁵ The Pope later sent Isidore to Constantinople in 1452 to explain the Union. He was also authorized as papal legate to proclaim the Union in the name of the pope which he accomplished on 12th December 1452 at the solemn liturgy in the Church of St. Sophia.²¹⁶ After his escape from Constantinople, Isidore remained in Rome until his death on 27th April 1463.

The anti-unionist Greeks saw him as an enemy of the empire. They vilified him with many names and depicted him as a traitor.²¹⁷ He had the confidence of the pope and the emperor at the council of Florence. During the council, he acted as the light that guided those who

²¹¹ For lack of space, the scope of this research would not be able to cover the division and superiority struggle among the different Slavic state during this period. A detail research of the struggle can be found in following works, See, Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*. Hryniewicz, “The Florentine Union, 521-556. Borovoy, “The Destiny of the Union, 556-571.

²¹² The great prince of Moscow, Vasili, never entirely accepted Isidore as his candidate for the Metropolitan See of Kiev and all Russians because his candidate Jonas was sent late to Constantinople after Isidore was chosen. Concerning the union, he had a different idea of union. He desired the unity of all Christians in his territory under his sovereignty. Before departing for the council in Ferrara-Florence, he had warned Isidore not to bring new faith to his empire. But the Cardinal never thought the union he was carrying was a new faith. Cf, Joseph Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 68.

²¹³ Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 45

²¹⁴ Gill, *Personalities*, 74

²¹⁵ Gill, *Personalities*, 74, Cf also Bârlea, *Die Konzile*, 113

²¹⁶ Gill, *Personalities*, 75

²¹⁷ Gill noted that how he was called a traitor and that he bribed his ways to become a cardinal, though there are no historical evidence to substantiate these claims. Gill, *Personalities*, 76-77.

negotiated with the Basel fathers. After the council, he became the mouthpiece and the trusted messenger between pope and emperor because of his fluency in both Latin and Greek. Even his greatest enemies after the union acknowledged his greatness before the Union. Syropoulos described Isidore's mission to Basel as "that most worthy of Abbots."²¹⁸ Mark of Ephesus was generous in his description of Isidore on his election to the Metropolitan See of Kiev:

... 'A man who really is a reflection of Christ, gracious in character and angelic in form; a happy and outstanding blend of simplicity and sagacity with a gift of speech that surpasses the flow of rivers; generous and liberal to such a degree as not to grudge even his own coverings, if occasion demands'.²¹⁹

4.3.8 BESSARION OF NICAIA (1403-1472)

Bessarion was one of the brilliant scholars at the council of Ferrara-Florence. Trained under George Gemistus Plethon in Mistra, he refused to get fixated like Plethon and his students on Platonism. He studied the philosophy of Aristotle and blended it with his knowledge of Plato. The result of that combination was evident in the uniqueness of his thought pattern. His intellectual background was an asset that helped him to harmonise the Hesychast of the East and Western scholasticism with its roots in Aristotelian philosophy. Bessarion saw the possibility of pluralism in theology which meant that theological thinking was not limited to one way of thinking or to a single school of thought. Bessarion was made the Bishop of Nicaea in 1437 in view of the anticipated union at Ferrara-Florence. He priced the defence of Orthodoxy beyond any patriotic considerations. His disposition for the truth is to be located in his writings, as also in his polished and urban approach to issues and arguments. Those qualities positioned him as the spokesman for the Greeks. His views carried considerable weight in the discussions on purgatory and *Filioque*.²²⁰ About the necessity of its addition to the creed, For Bessarion, "...the Greeks were having the better of the debate, but Cesarini's many and forceful arguments began to make him doubtful of the strength of the Greek position and then convinced him that the council of Ephesus could not have tied nor have meant to tie the hands of the Church Forever."²²¹ He was persuaded alongside Isidore by "the able arguments and wide Patristic learning of John of Montenegro."²²² It was during the debate on *Filioque* that

²¹⁸ Gill, *Personalities*, 78

²¹⁹ Gill, *Personalities*, 78

²²⁰ According to Gill, Bessarion opened the session by acknowledging that the need to be focus during the debate and strive towards attaining truth and unity Cf. Gill, *The Council*, 144.

²²¹ Gill, *Personalities*, 47

²²² Gill, *Personalities*, 48

Bessarion delivered his historic address at the council that was instrumental to the drafting of the decree of Union. He couched his thoughts in this manner:

...as all saints are inspired by the same Holy Spirit, their teaching, even if expressed differently, must be fundamentally the same. Latin saints declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; Greek saints that He proceeds through the Son. These two assertions must therefore be of identical meaning, so both Churches are Orthodox; 'from' and 'through' in respect of the Holy Spirit having the same signification.²²³

Bessarion succeeded in using this speech to convince most of the Greeks to accept the Union. He worked with the Latin delegates to draw up the final decree of Union and to ensure that the Greek compromise was reflected. He read the Union out in Greek on 6th July 1439. Bessarion was an apostle of the Union. And in recognition of his effort, the pope made him a cardinal in December 1439 and gave him an annual pension of 300 florins.²²⁴ He returned to Italy in 1440 when the hostility against the union in Constantinople was intolerable. After returning to Italy, Bessarion developed his views at the council further and published them in his famous works: *De Oratio Dogmatica*. His major preoccupation in this work was to demonstrate that the teachings of the Eastern and Western fathers are not incompatible since they were all inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Bessarion, in defending himself against the anti-unionist propaganda, argued that he supported the decree of union because he realized that the fathers could not contradict themselves. According to him:

It was not the syllogisms nor the cogency of proofs nor the force of arguments that led me to believe this, but the plain words of the Doctors. For when I saw and heard them, at once I put aside all contention and controversy and yielded to the authority of those whose words, they were even though until then I had been not a little active in opposition. For I judged that the holy Fathers speaking as they did in the Holy Spirit could not have departed from the truth. And I was grieved that I had not heard their words before.²²⁵

The fathers' teachings are to be venerated just like the scriptures since they have already given answers to all the problematic theological controversies. So, what seems contradictory in the Father is our fault, our false interpretation and not the fathers.²²⁶ Also, as we read the Bible,

²²³ Gill, *Personalities*, 48

²²⁴ Gill, *Personalities*, 50

²²⁵ Bessarion, *De Spiritus Sancti Processione ad Alexium Lascarin Philanthropinum*, 40-41, edited by E. Candal See also, Gill, "Was Bessarion a Conciliarist." 210-211

²²⁶ Bessarion, *Oratio Dogmatica Problemium* III. 15. Edited by E. Candal

there seem to be contradictions; however, these contradictions do not mean that God can contradict himself. The theological controversies that have given birth to schism for him have no basis to continue. It should be resolved by being patient with one another in the interpretation of the deposit of faith. Since the fathers mutually complement each other, the clearer Latin fathers can help interpret the obscure Greek fathers in the *Filioque* doctrine.²²⁷ Bessarion argued further that we could not express divine things in human language and expect to be perfect. He also used the *Oratio* to defend the *Filioque*. For him:

the Eastern fathers used "through" (*dia*) to indicate a mediating cause, which regarding the Holy Spirit is an efficient cause, not imperfect as an instrument in time and space, but always referring back to the Father and since there is in the Father and in the son one sole and identical Productive power, one could say that the Holy Spirit Proceeds from both of them.²²⁸

In this way, Bessarion built a theology of *Filioque* in which the Eastern and Western traditional understanding becomes complementary and not mutually exclusive. The over-emphasis on any part of the trinity would always make the Fathers look contradictory and create division, but understanding the different theological traditions as part of a whole helps the East and West complement each other.

Bessarion spent the rest of his life in Italy until his death in 1472. He defended himself against the accusation of betrayal and insincerity by the anti-unionists in Constantinople:

But if we had discerned error in the doctrine of the Latins or distortion in their faith, not even I would have counselled you to embrace union and agreement with them in that case, that for fear of bodily ills you should prefer the values of the present world to spiritual values, the freedom of the body to the betterment of soul, but I myself would have undergone all that is worst and I would have exposed you to it before I would have urged you to union with them and have recommended such action.²²⁹

Bessarion never altogether abandoned Constantinople. He rallied all western princes to see the need to send military support to Constantinople to ward off threats from the Ottomans. He leveraged his good relationship with the popes and particularly Pope Paul II, to request that a crusade be launched against the Turks. Pope Paul and Bessarion tried to convince western princes to support the call for a crusade. Their efforts came practically to nothing because

²²⁷ Bessarion, *Oratio Dogmatica* IV. 18, 17-18, edited by E. Candal, Rome, 1962

²²⁸ *Oratio* V20-3, 19-22; *Beccus, Epigraphai* II PG 141, 163-7 edited by E. Candal, Rome, 1962

²²⁹ Joseph Gill, "The Sincerity of Bessarion the Unionist," *Journal of Theological Studies*, No 26 (1975). As quoted by Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 162

western secular powers had other concerns.²³⁰ Bessarion contributed to the revival of Greek humanistic culture in the West. His library of Greek manuscripts which Bessarion had brought with him to Italy, became one of the media through which Greek humanistic culture and heritage became widely known in the west.²³¹ Below is a tribute to Bessarion by Eleftherios Despotakis:

Cardinal Bessarion was well-known by his contemporaries as the living symbol of the union between the Eastern and the Western Churches in the fifteenth century... Until his death, Bessarion was active at all levels, cultural, political, and theological in advocating the benefits of union to the Eastern Church, intending to promote an Osmosis' of the divided ancient Roman empire and its re-union against the incumbent threat of the Ottoman expansion.²³²

4.4 ANTI-UNIONISTS

4.4.1 MARK OF EPHEBUS (1392-1444)

Mark Eugenikos, the metropolitan of Ephesus, was the only Greek delegate who refused to sign the decree of Union at the Council of Florence. His refusal to sign the decree made him a defender of Orthodoxy in Byzantine where he was later canonised the confessor.²³³ Mark had the intellectual capacity which placed him in the category of Bessarion and Isidore in the opposite of the divide. However, his unwillingness for dialogue and compromise marked him out as a bigot. It must also be acknowledged that his commitment to Orthodoxy and his monastic ascetic life should not be confused with fanaticism with regard to the union. He had a deep anti-Latin sentiment and little respect for Western scholasticism. As a strong Hesychast monk, he was enmeshed “in the other-worldly transition of apophatic Byzantine theology.”²³⁴ Philosophically he was a strong Platonists, with a great admiration for his Master Gemistos Plethon. The combination of his intellectual life and his intense spirituality made him popular among the people. He was made the bishop of Ephesus to be able to participate at the council.

His participation was marked by his unwillingness to dialogue. He thought it necessary to correct the Western heresy of *Filioque* and its addition to the creed. At the urging of Cardinal

²³⁰ Gill, *Personalities*, 51

²³¹ Donald M. Nicol, *Church and society in the last centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 112.

²³² Eleftherios Despotakis, "A Letter in Praise of Cardinal Bassarion in the context of the Fifteenth Century Venetian flexibility towards the Union of the Church," in Alessandra Bucossi and Anna Calia (eds) *Contra Latinos Et Adversus Graecos* (OLA, 286, Bibliothèque de Byzantion 22), Leuven-Paris-Bristol, CT 2020, 478.

²³³ Nicol, *Church and Society*, 110.

²³⁴ Nicol, *Church and Society*, 110.

Cesarini, Mark was supposed to write a letter to the pope for his benevolence. He rather used the occasion to lash out at the west for their purported watering down of the faith. He demanded that “the addition to the creed, devices for the sake of conciliation, should for the sake of conciliation be removed.” He described the Latin rite as a “dead sacrifice” which according to him, and as contained “in the unleavened bread should be abolished to avoid giving scandal to brethren.” He insisted on a “return to the ancient harmony which shows that you, we, and our fathers are at one.”²³⁵ His position only got hardened in the course of the conciliar deliberations. His deep-seated anti-Latin sentiments made him a natural leader of the anti-union after the council. This anti-unionist disposition to defend the Orthodox tradition was captured by Tsipanlis, who reported Mark with the following words, "Let no one lord it over our faith, neither emperor, nor false council, not anyone else, but only One God, whom himself handed it down to us through his Disciples".²³⁶

Mark seemed to have objected to almost everything during and after the council. He accused the west of interpolations by means of which the west in their Latin misrepresented the Greek fathers. He assumed that he alone was in the possession of the truth: "I receive as authentic only those texts that are in accord with the letters of the divine Maximus and the writings of St Cyril. All those that are contrary I reject as false."²³⁷ About his reason for refusing to sign the Union, he said:

I express my own opinions, I introduce nothing new into the Church, neither do I defend any errors. Nevertheless, steadfastly preserve the Church's doctrine, having received from Christ, the saviour has kept and keeps. This doctrine was also adhered to by the Church of Rome unanimously with that of the East until the beginning of the division.²³⁸

One major obstacle for Mark was his inability to admit gray areas in the evolution of theology and its understanding of the received deposit of the faith. His obstinacy was turned into defence of Orthodoxy which among his followers in Constantinople considered him a hero and a confessor for the faith.²³⁹ He leveraged on that perception to launch his anti-union campaign

²³⁵ This letter was not delivered to the Pope because of the intervention of the Emperor John VIII who got hold of the letter and ensure it was not delivered to avoid tension. Cf Joseph Gill, ed., *Quae supersunt actorum graecorum Concilii Florentini*, Rome, 1952), 28-34, Cf Gill, *The Council*, 114

²³⁶ Constantine Tsipanlis, *Mark Eugenicus and the Council of Florence* (New York: Kentron Vyzantinon Erevnon, 1986), 60.

²³⁷ Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 168

²³⁸ Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 170

²³⁹ Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 359

with the motto: "there can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox faith."²⁴⁰ He succeeded in isolating the unionists and painted them the betrayers of the faith of their Father. He produced many anti-unionist materials, many illogical, invective, and sometimes resorted to ridicule and *ad hominem*.²⁴¹ An example is his letter to Scholarios:

But of all your acts, an exact account will be asked of you, in the same way as an account will be asked of your so-called council for the blood of the souls which it will have lost, for all those who will have scandalised in the mystery of faith, and who have intolerably and unforgivably, blasphemed against the Holy spirit, who dares attribute his existence to two principles, who have allowed themselves to be led to accept the illegitimate customs of the Latins, for those who brought on their own heads the malediction and the anathema for having changed dogma.²⁴²

This text reflects Mark's fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose and the result of the union. Mark was obsessed with the *Filioque* and pride himself as the only orthodox theologian that understands the *Filioque*. Justifying his Orthodoxy blinded him and prevented him from understanding the union's decree. The resultant effect was his false accusation against the council. On July 1440, Mark wrote an encyclical to all Christians on the mainland and nearby island. In this encyclical letter, he accused the council of attributing the existence of the Holy Spirit to two principles. He says thus:

In agreement with the Fathers, we affirm that the will and energy of the uncreated and divine nature are uncreated. At the same time, they, together with the Latins and Thomas, say that will is identical with nature, but that the divine energy is created, whether it be called divinity, or the divine and immaterial light, or the Holy Spirit, or something else of this nature—and in some fashion, these poor creatures worship the created 'divinity' and the created 'divine light' and the created 'Holy Spirit'.²⁴³

This is, however, contrary to the decree of union, which "says clearly that the Holy Spirit Proceeds from one single cause and one single Principle."²⁴⁴ The union says, "The Holy Spirit proceed (from the Father and the Son) eternally as from one principle and one single Spiration.

²⁴⁰ Tsipanolis, *Mark*, 60

²⁴¹ Gill, *The Council*, 355

²⁴² Quoted according to Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople* 240

²⁴³ St. Mark, P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a. Translated by Vladimir Moss. Cf. Vladimir Moss, "St Mark of Ephesus and the Council of Florence" in *Orthodox Christian Authors* URL: <https://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/articles/864/st.-mark-ephesus-council-florence>. Accessed 24.05.2021

²⁴⁴ Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople* 240

Mark was unable to separate theological understanding from his hatred for the Latin whom he depicted as proud people. He insisted that preserving his Father's faith was non-negotiable. An acceptance of the Latin "innovations" was judged by him as a capitulation to Latinism and its pride to dominate Eastern Christians and rub them of their Orthodoxy. Going further in the encyclical, he argued:

To those who have ensnared us in an evil captivity—desiring to lead us away into the Babylon of Latin rites and dogmas—could not, of course, completely accomplish this, seeing immediately that there was little chance of it. In fact, that it was simply impossible. For having quit Jerusalem, a firm and unwavering faith—and yet being in no condition and not wishing to become and to be called Babylonians—they thus called themselves, as if by right, 'Greco-Latins,' and among the people are called 'Latinizers.'²⁴⁵

He had the advantage of not having an outstanding rival in Constantinople in the likes of Bessarion and Isidore. Mark also used this encyclical to limit the horizons of the common people and made them believe that their differences with the West was simply theological.

The pious canons speak thus: 'He is a heretic and subject to the canons against heretics who even slightly departs from the Orthodox Faith/ If, then, the Latins do not at all depart from the correct Faith, we have evidently cut them off unjustly. But, if they have thoroughly departed [from the Faith]—and that in connection with the theology of the Holy Spirit, blasphemy against Whom is the greatest of all perils—then it is clear that they are heretics, and we have cut them off as heretics.'²⁴⁶

He mixed cultural differences with political problems and gave them a theological colouration. Theological plurality made no sense to Mark because for him, unity meant one doctrinal, liturgical and one theological understanding. Mark was a radical Platonist who taught that reality is one and other things that seems like reality are but illusions. So, unity for him is equal to sameness. He argued thus:

If the Latin dogma is true that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son, then ours is false that states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father—and this is precisely why we separated from them. If ours is true, then without a doubt, theirs is false. What kind of middle ground can there be between two such judgments? There can be none, unless it were some kind of judgment suitable to both the one and the other, like a boot that fits both feet. And will this unite us?²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ St. Mark, *P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a*. Translated and Annotations by Vladimir Moss, St Mark of Ephesus

²⁴⁶ St. Mark, *P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a*. Translated and Annotations by Vladimir Moss, St Mark of Ephesus

²⁴⁷ St. Mark, *P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a*. Translated and Annotations by Vladimir Moss, St Mark of Ephesus

He ridiculed the union because he could not imagine unity that allowed for diversity in practices and theological teachings. The above quote has demonstrated the truth that for Mark there was a compromise at the council. However, for him, a compromise was unnecessary in doctrinal dispute. It is pertinent to note that such acknowledgement crumbles the arguments of modern historians that have continued to deny that the decree of union was reached after a compromise on both sides of the divide.

He was prepared to sacrifice the empire as long as his idea of orthodoxy was left untouched. Indeed, in his eyes, “even the complete political extinction of Byzantine state was not as important as the preservation of integrity or orthodoxy.”²⁴⁸

While the concept of plurality in theology may have been foreign to the epoch, some of Mark’s contemporaries undoubtedly already possessed it. That was why a compromise became possible with the decree of union. Mark was self-opinionated which means that his intransigence may be interpreted as bordering on pride.

4.4.2 GEORGE SCHOLARIOS (1400-1473)

George Scholarios took the leadership of the anti-unionists from Mark after his death. He was well schooled on Plato by Gemisto Plethon and Mark of Ephesus even though most of his future intellectual development and great understanding were self-made. He was a cunning politician who used the Union as bait for political purposes particularly in his capacity as the emperor’s secretary and judge of the court. Scholarios viewed the council mainly from its political relevance. He considered it as opportunity to promote himself and his ideas to the west. According to Siecenski during the conciliar debate, “Scholarios’s presentation, unlike Bessarion’s, was not an elaborate theological treatise (which he certainly would have been capable of undertaking) but a heartfelt appeal to his listeners’ emotions.”²⁴⁹ He was pragmatic in searching for the medium of commonality between the East and West instead of a theological submission. The position of Scholarios was also dictated by his official role which required an alignment with the policy defined by the emperor.²⁵⁰ Scholarios would later argue that his intervention was an application of the Orthodox “principle of the economy” to avoid prolonging endless arguments. Scholarios was a unionist at the council for a political reason. Upon their return from the council, Patriarch Gregory III Mammalas mandated him to respond

²⁴⁸ Tsipanolis, *Mark*, 60.

²⁴⁹ Siecenski, *The Filioque*, 164.

²⁵⁰ Marie Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios*, 281

to Mark's syllogism. Scholarios was not among those who changed their views immediately after returning from the council. He waited for a while and considered the political implications of the disagreement. He only changed his mind around 1444 after the failure of the crusade in Varna. It became clear to him that there was no future of the union in Constantinople. He moved closer to Mark and gradually began his campaign on the side of the anti-unionists.²⁵¹ He disapproved of the new emperor Constantine after the death of John VIII. Scholarios withdrew into monastic life and later re-emerged as monk Gennadios.

Scholarios's change from a unionist to an anti-unionist is explainable by the fact that he did not get recognition from the west which he so much coveted. He had hoped in vain for an appointment from the pope but which instead went to Bessarion when he was made a cardinal. The bitterness and disappointment of Scholarios were expressed in one of his writings:

But now he adds brilliance to Italy, but we pass our days among citizens worthy indeed but, with very few exceptions, uneducated and with no love for letters, with no possibility of displaying any of our talents to such as them and attaining thereby some glory and favour.²⁵²

Scholarios berated everything about the Union after coming out of the monastery in 1450 as an anti-unionist. He dismissed the union as fanciful and deceptive. He described it as "fancy ways to make peace and the way in which Byzantine was misled, so as to arrive at the signing of the Decree of Florence." In the same missive to Demetrios Palaeologus, he made it seem as if the Greeks had been under a spell at Florence: "but we had all, certainly, drunk a sleeping pill, so we closed the eyes of the soul to all healthy reasoning and signs from God, and soon after fell of our own volition in Latin disagreement."²⁵³

Scholarios, as an anti-unionist, rejected the council not solely on anti-Latin sentiments but also grounded his disaffection on theology. Scholarios, during his service to the emperor, was under pressure to support the council since it was the emperor's desire. "...Once this pressure was removed, he would be able to review the evidence adduced at the Council and have more dispassionate second thoughts."²⁵⁴ Turner noted that Scholarios theological

²⁵¹ Gill, *Personalities*, 85

²⁵² George Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, translated and edited L. Petit, M. Jugie, and X. Siderides, Vol. 3, 115 was quoted by Gill, *Personalities*, 93

²⁵³ Scholarios, *Antilatin Polemic-Letter to Demetrios Palailogos against the Union of Florence* (1450), vol. 3, 117.

²⁵⁴ C. J. G. Turner, "George Scholarios and The Union of Florence", in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol 18 No 1, (1967), 96.

arguments cannot be followed in uniform order but can be grouped into two categories: 1) Genuine theological Discourse, 2) Emotional arguments.²⁵⁵ For the genuine theological discourse, he raises three theological concerns against the *Filioque* doctrine.

First, Scholarios taught that the Latins added *Filioque* to the creed, which was contrary to the teachings of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. He followed the traditional Greek teachings and argued that the addition to the creed by the Latins was erroneous.²⁵⁶

Second, the addition was done without the approval of the Eastern Church. On this point, Scholarios raises an argument on who is the seat of authority for the dogma. Is it the Pope or the ecumenical council? For Scholarios, only ecumenical councils can decide dogmas and add to the creed and not the Pope or the Western Church.²⁵⁷

Third, Scholarios also addressed the question of the soundness of the doctrine of *Filioque*. Turner noted that "Yet one of his own main arguments is more or less rational, seeking to show how Greek concepts of the Trinity are disturbed if the principle of causality within the Godhead is extended to the son."²⁵⁸ Displaying his knowledge of the Western fathers, Scholarios posited that St. Augustine, who is thought to be the originator of *Filioque* doctrine, could not have propagated such teaching.²⁵⁹

Turner noted that, "The emotional arguments used by Scholarios in his campaign against the Union was simply an appeal to the Greeks to remain loyal to the traditional doctrines of their forbearers."²⁶⁰ The Latin seems more advanced intellectually, but the Greek fathers have always been better than the Latin fathers. Just like the Latins would never abandon the Latin fathers and cling to the Greek Fathers, the Greek should not abandon the Greek fathers and replace them with Latin fathers. Scholarios continued his anti-unionist campaign until Constantinople was finally captured in 1453.

After the fall of Constantinople, he was taken prisoner of war but later got his freedom. Mehmet II, the new ruler of Constantinople, exerted control over the empire. He separated religion from the affairs of the state. He needed a Christian collaborator to help him control the Christian population. The choice fell on Scholarios, who rejected the position at first but later accepted it and worked as the sultan's Patriarch.²⁶¹ He was more of a servant of the Turks than

²⁵⁵ Turner, "George Scholarius, 97

²⁵⁶ Turner, "George Scholarius, 97

²⁵⁷ Turner, "George Scholarius, 98.

²⁵⁸ Turner, "George Scholarius, 98

²⁵⁹ Turner, "George Scholarius, 99.

²⁶⁰ Turner, "George Scholarius, 99.

²⁶¹ Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 392.

the Patriarch of the people. Scholarios was elevated and became Patriarch Gennadios II as the next Patriarch of Constantinople in January 1454. His enthronement did not take place in the Church of Hagia Sophia, since the Church was already turned to a Mosque at the time, so, the Church of the Holy Apostles was used for the celebration.²⁶² He received his official status from Sultan Mehmet II and worked to repudiate the council in order to win the trust of the sultan. From this time that the narratives about the council and the union underwent a significant change in tone with distortion and misrepresentation. The anti-unionists controlled the narratives as they "...consciously or unconsciously, wished to contrast the sultan's generous attitude towards Orthodoxy with Roman Catholic condescension."²⁶³

4.4.3 DEMETRIOS PALAEOLOGOS (1407-1470)

Demetrios Palaeologos was the younger brother of emperor John VIII Palaeologus. He was the political leader of the anti-unionists. He desired the throne of his brother. Emperor John, aware of this, took him along to Ferrara-Florence for the council so that he could keep his eyes on him. Demetrios left Italy in the company of Scholarios and John Eugenikos (the brother of Mark) before the proclamation of the union. All three harboured an anti-unionist sentiment. They succeeded in poisoning the people's minds against the Latin by whipping up old sentiments against the Latin. In his desire to take control of the empire, Demetrios colluded with the Turkish troops to attack Constantinople. He besieged the city and its suburbs with Turkish support from April to July 1442.²⁶⁴

While the radical ecclesiastical anti-unionists were to distract the clergy with philosophical and theological propaganda, Demetrios was to distract the political establishment with insurrection so as to prevent the emperor from proclaiming the union. According to Nevra Necipoglu, Demetrios was ideologically pro-Ottomans. They were always ready to lend him a hand in order to disrupt Constantinople.²⁶⁵ Demetrios constant dealings with the Ottomans exposed the security of the Constantinople to their enemy and made the city vulnerable for invasion. He contested with his brother Thomas over the Morea after the death of John VIII. He never failed to use the might of the Ottomans to oppress his brother. Necipoglu holds the

²⁶²Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 359

²⁶³Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "The Great Church in Captivity 1453-1586" in Michael Angold (ed), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity*, Vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171

²⁶⁴Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 234.

²⁶⁵Nvera Necipoglu, *Byzantium Between the Ottoman and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 278.

view that much of the emperor's plans were leaked out of the palace through Demetrios and his in-laws, the Asane family.²⁶⁶ It is also believed that "Demetrios efforts against the Church union, combined with Paul Asane's desertion of the union, played a crucial role in the general resistance to the union of Florence."²⁶⁷ There is no record of his public statements about the union. He was more of a political agitator, using the anti-unionist to achieve his desired aim. After the fall of Constantinople to the Muslims, Demetrios solidified his relationship with the sultan by giving his daughter in marriage to the sultan. He occasionally used Ottoman's army against his brother Thomas who was pro-Latin but got no help from the West.

4.4.4 LOUKAS NOTARA (1402-1453)

Loukas Notara was a businessman. He financed the anti-unionist group that positioned him as a notorious enemy of the Union. Notara was a diplomatic man whose views about the union are very ambivalent. As far as he was concerned, it was "better to see the Turban of the Turks reigning in the centre of the city than the mitre."²⁶⁸ This Notara's statement has generated some controversies in modern historical studies since it was only reported by Doukas the Byzantine chronicler.²⁶⁹ Apart from a couple of lost letters, he exchanged with the anti-unionists, he is not recorded to have said much about the union. Since he was not interested in the theological debate between the East and West, no theological statement or treatises came from him. He was known more for his actions than words. He was determined to help Emperor Constantine XI to secure aids from the West. However, his excessive fraternization with the anti-unionist cannot justify this determination as sincere.²⁷⁰

His wealth made him an influential person in Constantinople at that time.²⁷¹ Like Scholarios, he enjoyed siding with the winning team. Notara in his double standing, was sympathetic to the union for political expediency. This was because of his many business interests in the West, especially in Venice, and some of his family lived in Italy. On the other

²⁶⁶ Demetrios married one of the Asane daughters. The Asane family was one of the most influential and trusted family. Asane would become the governor and together with Constantine XI would watch the court when John VIII away in Italy during the council. This family constantly give information about the court to Demetrios who then used them for his dealings with the Ottomans. Cf, Nvera Necipoglu, *Byzantium*, 278

²⁶⁷ Nvera Necipoglu, *Byzantium*, 279.

²⁶⁸ Ducae *Historia, turcobyzantina*, Trans. By Harry J. Magoulis, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks by Doukas* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1975), 210. Cf also, Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 235

²⁶⁹ Modern Byzantine historians believe that Doukas was radically pro-unionist and his history seems coloured by his beliefs. He had a penchant for castigating all those who were against the union. Since the statement is only found in his work, it has to be taken with a pinch of salt. Cf, Nvera Necipoglu, "Constantinopolitan Merchants and the Question of their Attitudes towards Italians and Ottomans in the late Palaiologan Period", (Nevra 258)

²⁷⁰ Necipoglu, "Constantinopolitan, 258.

²⁷¹ Gill, *The Council*, 375

hand, he was afraid of the people's revolt since many have become anti-Latin through the anti-union propaganda. So, he was always struggling to be in the middle of all things.²⁷² His financial support to the anti-unionists was not out of conviction but because of his desire to be in the good books of the anti-unionists in their propaganda. As a cunning politician, he was a grassroots-based man who had access to the people. He had enough money to buy his way with others.

He had hoped that he would be given the governorship of a city after helping the Ottoman through the anti-unionists in conquering Constantinople. The Chronicler George Sphratzes reported how Notara came to the emperor's court after the Sultan's victory to congratulate him and present him some gifts. Notara, prostrated before the Sultan, presented precious gifts of pearls, precious stones, and gems worthy of royalty and said to the Sultan, "I have guarded this treasure for the beginning of your reign. Accept it, I beg you, as my personal gift. I am now your liege man."²⁷³ The Sultan with his displeasure for Notara's deceptive behaviour said:

Inhuman halfbreed dog, skilled in flattery and deceit! You possessed all this wealth and denied it to your lord the emperor and to the City, your homeland? And now, with all your intrigues and immense treachery, which you have been weaving since youth, you are trying to deceive me and avoid that fate you deserve. Tell me, impious man, who has granted possession of this City and your treasure to me? Notaras answered that God was responsible. "Since God saw fit to enslave you and all the others to me, what are you trying to accomplish here with your chattering, criminal? Why did you not offer this treasure to me before this war started or before my victory? You could have been my ally and I would have honoured you in return. As things stand, God, not you, has granted me your treasure."²⁷⁴

Sultan Mehemet II fear of influential Greeks led him to execute Notara and his sons' months after the Turban started reigning in the City centre. It is not an overstatement to describe Notara as an opportunist. He also sought benefit from the feud between Demetrios and Thomas Palaiologus over the governorship of Morea. He was a friend of the two brothers but always used them against one another.

4.4.5 OTHER BYZANTINE PATRIARCHS AND BISHOPS

Philotheus was the Byzantine Bishop of Alexandrian who accepted the Union. There were even overtures at a point about the possibility of the Coptic Church reaching some form

²⁷² Necipoglu, "Constantinopolitan, 259.

²⁷³ Marios Philippides, (Transl.) *The Fall*, 132.

²⁷⁴ Marios Philippides, (Transl.) *The Fall*, 132.

of union with Rome. It occurred against the background that, of the five Patriarchs, those of Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria (the Coptic one as well as the Byzantine) adhered to the union in various degrees.²⁷⁵ The Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem that were already suffering under Islamic rule, disowned their representative and rejected the union. For instance, Philotheus of Alexandria was accused of heresy for subscribing to the union. He changed his mind because of pressure. He withdrew his signature and ended up becoming an anti-unionist.²⁷⁶ Of the old ecclesiastical circumscriptions in five ecumenical Patriarchates, only the Roman and Constantinopolitan Patriarchs accepted the union before the fall of Constantinople. The Patriarchs under Islamic rule had hoped for a union that would save Constantinople from the Ottomans. They became disappointed when that never happened. And as a result, they lost faith in the west and jettisoned the union. They considered it safer or political expediency to make peace with their enemy than to predicate their hope in the West which would have angered their Muslim oppressors.

4.4.6 THE RECEPTION OF THE UNION BY THE MONKS AND THE PEOPLE

The monks and the ordinary people played some pivotal role in the rejection of the council of Florence in Byzantine. Monasticism was an important institution in Byzantine Christianity. It owed its influence in part to donations and exception from taxes. As a wealthy and powerful institution, it also degenerated to some extent to become a source of wealth for some individuals who wanted economic security. Monasteries in Mount Athos are good examples of those that benefited from wealthy donations. It transformed them into a strong force in the Byzantine empire.²⁷⁷ Their blossoming began around the time of the 4th crusade in 1204. Monasteries offered solace to people during Latin domination of Byzantine. That domination appeared to have given room for Byzantine monastic anti-Latin literature and also impacted on their way of life. The Ottomans took advantage of the anti-Latin sentiments of the monks for their own political survivals as the new overlords. They clothed their political exploitation with the koranic principle of religious tolerance.²⁷⁸

As shrewd politicians, the Ottoman rulers gave the monks a place of honour in their conquered territories of the empire. The Ottoman policy of toleration meant that the monks

²⁷⁵Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 237

²⁷⁶Lina Murr Nehme, *1453 Fall of Constantinople*, 237

²⁷⁷Zachariadou noted that the "decline of monasteries of Asia Minor due to Seljuq Sultan Alp Arslan's victory over the Byzantines at the battle of Mantzikert 1071" favoured Mount Athos monasteries to flourish. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Mount Athos*, 155

²⁷⁸ Zachariadou, *Mount Athos*, 155

were left unmolested. As reciprocal gesture, the monks deemed natural to look out for the interests of the Ottomans against the West. The monks capitalized on their influence among the common people to pacify and render them governable for the Ottomans. Byzantine monks generally abhorred the prospects of papal interference in their monastic affairs. The quest to protect their independence led them to prefer Ottoman rule instead of the Latin hegemony which they viewed as personified by the pope.²⁷⁹ For that reason, the monks presented themselves as the voice of the people and manipulated them to reject the union, and to support the Turks. In actual fact, the ordinary people did not harbour much natural hatred for their western fellows because there were intermarriages and business transactions among them. The people's reception of the union as well as their rejection of it, depended largely on their ecclesiastical leaders and the monks who shaped their views with anti-Latin propaganda.

4.5 EVALUATIONS

Church historians have proffered several reasons for the failure of the decree of the union of Florence in Byzantine. While relying upon previous studies on the question, this research, as demonstrated in this chapter, identifies the following reasons for the failure of the union.

4.5.1 THE RELUTANCE OF EMPEROR JOHN VIII

The failure of the decree of the union in Constantinople is attributable in large part to the indecision of Emperor John VIII. The council of Florence squared within the history of ecumenical councils, placed so much responsibility on the Byzantine emperor. As Dendrino notes:

According to the Byzantine political ideology, reflected in Justinian's *Novel* and later on in the *Eisagōgē*, while the secular and ecclesiastical authorities are 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, representative of God on earth, the *incarnate law*, maintained the right duty to defend the Church and its doctrines. Similarly, canon law, including the decrees of ecumenical councils, assumed the authority of secular laws.²⁸⁰

This understanding clearly shows that the fate of the union in Constantinople depended largely on the Emperor. He had the power to proclaim the union and ensure that it was adhered

²⁷⁹Demacopoulos identified the Monks as one of the major reasons why the people rejected the union. They were the first group to declare their support for Mark of Ephesus, and being the spiritual guide of the people, it is logical that the population joined them in rejecting the union. Demacopoulos, *Popular Reception*, 52

²⁸⁰Charalambos Dendrino, *Reflection of the failure*, 135.

to by all his subjects. It remains a historic fact that some form of dissidence usually follows after any council or synod. In some cases, a residue of such dissidence takes a long time to die down. Therefore, the anti-unionist movement that emerged after the council of Ferrara-Florence was to be expected as a natural consequence. The movement must be connected to dissenting voices in conciliar history. Although, the proclamation of the decree of the union and the use of force to ensure compliance might have silenced some of those voices, it remains doubtful if such measures would have been able to eliminate die-hard dissenters. Without any doubt, the vacillation of Emperor John emboldened the anti-unionists who took his irresoluteness for his affirmation of their cause.

4.5.2 POOR TIMING AND THE LACK OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Objectively, the characteristics of the decree of union reflected a great deal of compromise on the sides of the East and the West. The union failed because the timing was wrong, particularly as its timing was strongly motivated by political considerations. It meant that socio-political realities clouded theological issues.²⁸¹ Expecting Churches separated for more than four hundred years due to theological and non-theological differences to be reconciled after a few months of theological debate was unrealistic. As Erin M. Brigham rightly asserts, "events that precipitated the council of Florence reveals a painful past of misunderstandings as well as blatant wrongdoings that needed to be reconciled."²⁸² Pope Eugene IV desired a united Church but he needed the union urgently to prove his worth to the conciliarists. As for the Greeks, the Emperor reduced the desires for a union to military aid from the Pope and the western princes. He even discouraged his delegates from discussing controversial issues that could delay the response to a request for a military assistance. This coming up on the council when the Western Princes refused to come, was not altogether surprising. The two divergent expectations became entangled since, "the wishes of those who promised to save the empire through a union met with the hopes of those who saw a unification with Rome as the beginning of the rebirth of the Church."²⁸³ In this regard, one cannot agree less with August Leidl, who put succinctly thus:

The union negotiations that ultimately led to reunification was not based on the exclusive motive of pure love for Christ and his Church, but were also determined by considerations that stood outside. It goes without saying that this fact could not remain without influence on the deliberations of the council. Above all, the talks in Florence lacked

²⁸¹Erin M. Brigham, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Postmodern World* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), 66.

²⁸²Erin M. Brigham, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity*, 69.

²⁸³ Leidl, *Die Einheit*, 209.

the atmosphere of calm and serenity that would have corresponded to the lofty aim of church unification.²⁸⁴

This difference in intentions of both parties as well as the Greeks' poor knowledge of western ecclesiological structure militated against any possibility of a union. Any union achieved under such desperate condition was bound to falter against strong waves of opposition. The instinct for survival and political self-preservation of the Byzantines, probably convinced them that "the theological agenda of the council was not as pressing as the political and economic hardships that the participants were facing."²⁸⁵

The issues would have been resolved in the following ways: the Emperor was supposed to seek military aid from the Pope and the Western princes and not use the union as bait. Knowing the danger posed by the Turks to Christianity in the East, teaming up with the conciliarists to convince the western princes to help the Byzantine empire would have helped the pope to bridge the gap of distrust between the Byzantines and the West. If the Byzantines could abandon their differences on the eve of the fall of the city, it means that whoever saved them from the Turks would have been trusted. Eastern and Western ecclesiastical leaders could have attempted to build mutual trust before starting off with their theological discourse. Their deepened knowledge of one another could have solidified this trust before any possible union could realistically take place.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this chapter has been able to present some of the challenges in the proclamation and implementation of the decree of union in the Byzantine empire. Those challenges bordered on a range of historical realities: threats from the Ottomans; political instability; ecclesiastical and civil disunity within the Byzantine empire; and the intransigence of strong personalities. While focusing on a few "voices" that reacted to the union, grouped as unionists and anti-unionists, it is clear that each person or group had reasons for accepting or rejecting the union. For the unionists, the Eastern and Western teachings were basically the same, especially in reference to *Filioque*. They believed that Eastern and Western saints were united in transmitting those teachings since they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They equally acknowledged that the division between the two Churches was artificial and unwarranted.

²⁸⁴ August Leidl, *Die Einheit der Kirche*, 210.

²⁸⁵ Erin M. Brigham, *Sustaining the Hope for Unity*, 74.

The anti-unionists on the other were in two categories. The first category was represented by Mark Eugenicus. He was seen as the defender of Orthodoxy because of his belief that the union was invalid and contrary to the teachings of the fathers. He argued that the Latins used interpolated materials and misquoted the Church fathers at the council to arrive at the union. The other anti-unionists appeared to have rejected the union on political grounds. They reignited the old anti-Latin biases among the ordinary people for their political interests. There is certainly the indecisiveness of Emperor John VIII who did not rise to the challenge of his time. His failure to catch the foxes while they were still young, provided occasions for dissidence and disruption that led to the failure of the union decree in his empire.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMAGE OF THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-FLORENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL DISCOURSE

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter showed that the reception of the decree of the Union was obstructed by internal and external crises within the Byzantine Empire. Its relative success was overshadowed by the continued mutual miscomprehension between the East and West. It was a miscomprehension that bordered around a mutual suspicion that has remained to a very significant extent in the contemporary epoch.

Globalisation and the advancement of new historical hermeneutics in the 20th century have smoothened some of the rough edges of the long historical misunderstandings between East and West. As a result, Christian ecumenism is unarguably one of the positive products of the twentieth century. Ecumenical spirit has motivated the East and West to engage in several dialogues. Although a few milestones have been reached in those regards, a lot still needs to be done to attain Christian unity. A historical evaluation of the relevance of the reception of the Council of Ferrara-Florence within contemporary Ecumenism is pertinent. Hence, this chapter is set to critically examine the current ecumenical movement's view of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. It appraises the usefulness of the Council of Florence as a working document towards the search for Union between East and West. This chapter is proposing the use of suitable hermeneutics in interpreting the Council of Florence to search for unity between the two sister churches of the East and West. This would lead to a General conclusion.

5.1 THE CONTEMPORARY IMAGE OF THE COUNCIL OF FERRARA-FLORENCE

From the study so far, it has been established how the Council of Ferrara-Florence has occupied a unique place in the history of the relationship between East and West. Since the Council of Florence is "memorable for being the last joint effort made in the late Middle Ages to end the fraternal rivalry and long-standing schism of Churches,"²⁸⁶ its relevance for contemporary Ecumenism cannot be wished away. The uniqueness of the Council of Florence in Ecumenism can be situated in the understanding that none of the medieval union council before it, or subsequent attempted Union after it, confronted the issues dividing the Churches and arrived at a theological solution documented in a Decree of Union. In the estimation of

²⁸⁶ Padadakis and Meyendorff, *The Christian East*, 378.

Roland Minnerath, "the Florence method was that of reconciled diversity. It exposed the points which were subjects of division - the Filioque, the unleavened bread, the purgatory, the Roman primacy - to recognise that there was no divergence in the faith."²⁸⁷ Because of this unique importance of Florence, whose mode of engagement and decree can be described as a bridge between the old and new since it confronted the past and projected a wholistic future for the relationship between the East and West, the Council of Ferrara-Florence for centuries had become a model of Union with all separated sister Churches.²⁸⁸

However, it has become problematic in the contemporary ecumenical movement to ascertain why the Council of Florence and its Union have been confined only to the bitter relationship between East and West that should not be discussed; instead, it should always be condemned. Such a condemnatory approach in studying the Council of Ferrara-Florence is not just ahistorical; it also challenges the sincerity of the contemporary ecumenical movement and its ability to go beyond the 15th-century sentiments to search for a solution to the perennial question of division between the East and West. Although the Eastern Churches have consistently rejected the Council of Florence, subsequent events after the Council negatively coloured so many views about the Council that has endured until contemporary time. Barbara Hallensleben summarised some of these events in the following way:

The attitude towards the Council of Florence changed abruptly after the end of the Council, not only on the eastern side. Political factors certainly played a large role in these developments. The West was occupied with its own challenges of reformatio in capite et membris. Financial support for the defense of the Eastern brothers and sisters against the Ottomans lapsed. The disappointment and mistrust of a "betrayed union" was probably deeper than the various theological debates. As in the 15th century there was no longer a common emperor for the Greeks and the Latins who could have ensured the adoption of the decisions of the Council everywhere, as the emperors did for the old ecumenical councils.²⁸⁹

A brief overview of these events would help to better understand why the Council of Florence seems forgotten in the dialogue between East and West.

In the 16th century, a significant attempt was made in implementing the fruits of the Council of Florence so that, building on what was achieved with the decree of Union, the Church can gradually get united. It was a period that was difficult to relate with the Eastern

²⁸⁷ Roland Minnerath, "Florence dans le dialogue œcuménique actuel", in in Arjakovsky/Hallensleben, (eds.), *The Council*, 293.

²⁸⁸ Farauanu, "Theological Principles, 2.

²⁸⁹ Barbara Hallensleben, "Les avancées et les limites de l'ecclésiologie du concile de Florence", in Arjakovsky/Hallensleben, (eds.), *The Council*, 310

Churches since the Greek Church in Constantinople and its environs were under the Ottomans captivity that moderated all their activities and forbade ecclesiastical relationship with the West. Suttner reported that Pope Gregory XIII, determined to complete the implementation of the Union of Florence,

in 1576 founded the Greek college in Rome to train young Greeks in their language and culture free of charge. ...in accordance with the Florentinum, the Pope expressly wished that the alumni of the college, if they become priests, should not be ordained in Rome for better anchoring in their home Church.²⁹⁰

This rapport towards the Florentine union continued, though the Council has officially been revoked in Constantinople 1484. However, the relationship between the "Ruthenians"²⁹¹ with Rome continued with sensitivity to the Florentinum. Many of these Orthodox Churches outside of Constantinople were comfortable being treated in this way; even though they were not in communion with Rome, the West respected their traditions and accorded them necessary respect. These Ruthenian Orthodox Churches, in their struggle for survival in the 16th-17th century, became victims of the Calvinistic onslaught. These theological tendencies spread by Calvin's theology threatened the continued existence of these Churches and their traditions. This threat, coupled with the vigorous missionary activities of the Jesuits, convinced these different isolated Churches to come together, and they attempted a union with the West.²⁹² It is pertinent to note that there was no unifying force for the Eastern churches; the existence of the Church in Constantinople as a true Church was in doubt since it became the Sultan's tax house, so they certainly cannot participate or encourage such Union. This lack of a central leader did not help the demands of this Churches to have one voice. They coordinated themselves and requested a union that is solely based on the Florentinum. According to Hallensleben, "The request for admission to ecclesiastical communion or its renewal on the basis of the Florence union was linked to a list of 33 points, imbued with the "spirit of Florence.""²⁹³ However, in his Bull "*Magnus Dominus*", Pope Clement VIII isolated the Florentine Union and requested the Orthodox asking for a union to submit to Rome and

²⁹⁰ Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung

²⁹¹ The Ruthenians are, the "Greeks" with Slavonic as the language of worship in the Church of Poland-Lithuania, Cf, Hallensleben, "Les avancées", 311

²⁹² Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung

²⁹³ These 33 points revolved around dogmatic, liturgical and issues of ecclesiastical governance. The Churches requested that they should be allowed to continue their creed without the *Filioque* and retain their liturgy and independent governance. There were also issues talking about married clergy, which these Churches wanted to retain. Cf, Hallensleben, "Les avancées", 312.

renounce all errors so that they can be given the privilege to be Catholics again with special customs and liturgy to be designed for them by Rome.²⁹⁴ Ignoring all the regulations made by the Florentine Union on the independence of the Eastern Churches' Ecclesiastical governance, the Pope insisted on Roman supervision of all the activities of these Churches. This model is similar to Trent and contrary to Florence.²⁹⁵ Pope Clement interpreted Florence to mean a *reductio*, a return to the Church. The resultant effect is that these scattered Churches attempting to be united under Rome became split again through the Papal mishandling of the Union of Florence. Some of the individual Churches signed the agreement drawn by the Pope, and others pulled out of the agreement and perceived the Pope's intention as a plot to strip them of their traditions.

Thus, at the Union in Brest 1590, four Eastern Churches entered a union with the West with a modified union of Florence by Pope Clement VIII. In their resolution to remain consistent in casting aspersions on anything connected to the Council of Florence, which they have repudiated and called a heretical council, the Eastern Church in captivity of the Ottomans found sympathy in the other Easterners that refused the Union of Brest. The Churches that got united with Rome were disparaged and derogatorily called "Uniate". This event, which created a bitter relationship among the Eastern Churches for centuries, placed the Council of Florence once again on a dark cloud of ambiguity and negativity that has continued till contemporary ecumenical movement. The struggle of these Churches and the constant propaganda about the Florentine Union led to the almost total negligence of the Council of Florence in Ecumenism. Part of the conditions given by the Greek Orthodox to participate in the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church was the exclusion of "Uniate" Churches which, for them, now represent all that is negative, with the Council of Florence.²⁹⁶ The implication is the exclusion of the Council of Florence in ecumenical dialogue.

Also contributing to the current negative perception of the Council of Florence was the historical problem of enlightenment and its subsequent problem of Gallicanism and its opposite Ultramontanist movements that elevated the papacy to a high monarchical state that excludes all other non-Catholics. The Western Church in this period departed from the pluralism

²⁹⁴ Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung

²⁹⁵ Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung

²⁹⁶ Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion". Issued in Balamand, June 23rd, 1991, No 1. <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-di-tradizione-bizantina/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-lingua-inglese.html>. accessed 05.06.2021.

established by the Council of Florence and got fixated on exclusivist theology that proclaimed salvation only in the Catholic Church, thereby declaring all other ecclesiastical institutions not in communion with Rome illegal.²⁹⁷ The Orthodox, on their part, also continued in the exclusivist propaganda that denied salvation outside the Orthodox fold and urged re-baptism of all non-Orthodox, including the Catholics. There was also the rise of the Russian Orthodox anti-Western Theology, which Florovsky and Schmemman called the "decolonisation" of Orthodox Theology from "Western Captivity."²⁹⁸ These decolonisation theologians had as their casualty the Council of Florence since they are organised as the 15th-century anti-unionists, and Mark Ephesus became their model.²⁹⁹

An unbiased historical reflection on all these happenings reveals that no honest implementation of the Union of Florence is faulting. Instead, the negative disposition towards the Union and the inability of the East and West to separate politics from theology has continued to shift the focus from the actual teachings of the Council of Florence. Since there has not been a failure in the actual application of the Council of Florence in the relationship between the East and West, how tenable is the theology and Ecumenism that confined such a council to the negative side of history that cannot be discussed except to be condemned?

The Second Vatican II recognised this contradiction in the treatment of the Union of Florence in his deliberations and in its preparatory stage for the document on Ecumenism which deals with the Union between East and West. According to Saretta Marotta and Peter de May, "After the announcement of Vatican II, as already said, Florence was inevitably evoked as a term of comparison for the ecumenical aim prefigured by pope John XXIII, in particular concerning the matter about the presence of non-Catholics at the Council."³⁰⁰ This desire of the Fathers to model the Second Vatican Council after Florence correspond with the fact that the Union of Florence portends great hope for a reunion between the Churches. The Fathers in seeking unity with the Eastern Churches went back to history, which identified the Union of

²⁹⁷ Suttner, Akzeptanz und Ablehnung

²⁹⁸ Andrey Shishkov, "The Orthodox Reception of the Council of Ferrara-Florence: A Post-Colonial Approach", Arjakovsky/Hallensleben, (eds.), *The Council*, 215. These Orthodox decolonisation theologians were notorious for anti-Latin Theology. For example, Scholars like Lossky limits the whole of western theology to Neo-Scholasticism. As far as he is concerned, Western theology has a tradition of "subjecting the truth of dogma to external, philosophical criteria of justification." Although not representative of the complexity of contemporary Orthodox thought, such a view of identifying errors in western thinking appears to be present in other Orthodox scholars such as Sergius Bulgakov, Georges Florovsky, Dumistru Staniloae, Kallistos Ware, and John Zizioulas. Cf George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, Ed., *Orthodox Construction of the West* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 14-15.

²⁹⁹ Andrey Shishkov, "The Orthodox Reception, 220

³⁰⁰ Saretta Marotta and Peter de May, "The References to the Council of Florence at Vatican II", Arjakovsky/Hallensleben, (eds.), *The Council*, 273.

Florence as a valid union that can be modernised for the unity of the Church. It was not long before the usual pessimist attitude towards the Council of Florence and the question of the "Uniate" Churches, which has become a sensitive issue to the Orthodox Churches, grip the Fathers. The resultant effect was a division among the Fathers, between those perceived to be conservatives and the progressives. The conservatives argued that Florence had resolved the division between the Churches, it should be referred to and its resolutions used in the desired Union with the East.³⁰¹ The progressives, on the other hand, argued against the use of the Council of Florence as a model because it is too ambiguous, and the decree of Union is outdated, it would be better for it to be put aside and start new discussions taking into cognisance the signs of time. They posited that this would enable the Fathers to draft a document appealing and accommodating to all Greeks. For these progressives, asking the Easterners to accept a council like Florence is like asking them to come for *Reductio*, which they perceived in 1439 in the Union of Florence. Should Florence be used, some doctrinal teachings in the decree must be revised.³⁰²

The centrality of the Council of Florence to the Fathers' deliberations is evident in some part of the draft of *De Oecumenismo*, which explicitly indicated that the Florentine Union had resolved the divisions between East and West when it says:

The wall separating the Eastern and the Western Churches, which the Council of Florence declared was entirely removed, is again set up between the two; and today, with all our heart and soul, and with the help of God's grace, we intend to remove that wall, so that there may be but one dwelling place, whose cornerstone is Christ Jesus, who will make both one.³⁰³

This draft is consistent with the spirit of Vatican II since it "...wanted to reassure the Council fathers that the ecumenical efforts of the Council were in great continuity with the previous efforts of the Council of Florence."³⁰⁴ After much debates, the explicit reference to the Council of Florence, in the end, was removed, and the Decree of Union was mentioned only in the endnote.³⁰⁵ Vatican II, however, retained the spirit of Florence by enacting the *Unitatis*

³⁰¹ Marotta and de May, "The References to the Council, 276-277.

³⁰² Marotta and de May, "The References to the Council, 278.

³⁰³ *Analyticus conspectus Consiliorum et Votorum quae ab episcopis et praelatis data sunt*, AS II/5, 427. Cf. Marotta and de May, "The References to the Council, 279

³⁰⁴ Marotta and De May, "The References 280

³⁰⁵ See endnote 38 of the *Decree on Ecumenism: Unitatis Redintegratio*. Here is the reference, Cf. CONC. FLORENTINUM, Sess. VI (1439), Definitio Laetentur caeli: Mansi 31 1026 E.

Redintegratio which is rooted in the history of the Church and recognised the diversity and dignity of Orthodox Churches in their ecclesiastical governance, theology and worship.³⁰⁶

However, Ecumenism's present attitude in its quest for unity has adopted the theological mindset that has placed everything about the Council of Florence in the negative spotlight. The different ecumenical gathering has developed the attitude of continually flogging a dead horse by constantly raising isolated issues concluded in Florence without reference to Florence thereby finding no solution. This approach to Ecumenism is different from the goal set out for it when in 1975, the dialogue of doctrine began between the Catholic and Orthodox Church. Nicols reported that the foundation of this dialogue was grounded on:

the Restoration of full communion between the two Churches, but, in an important formula, this prospective full communion was described as founded on unity of the faith that would follow the line of (suivant) the common experience and the tradition of the ancient Church. In other words, Church history was to offer a model for the future relations sought....³⁰⁷

Fundamental to Ecumenism in contemporary time is the question of how to proceed? What suitable hermeneutical tools are needed to evaluate the previous Councils, especially the Council of Florence, so that relying on history, a new roadmap can be designed to achieve the dream union between the East and West. Hallensleben put it succinctly in the following words, "If the failure of ecclesiastical unions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries has to a large extent its origin in a deficit hermeneutics of the Council of Florence following a lack of perception of the ecclesiological and deep ecclesial changes, a new reception of the council does well to seek an appreciation."³⁰⁸ This new appreciation of the Council of Florence becomes necessary since the Decree of the Council has not lost its relevance. Its rejection cannot be theologically justified except for the intransigence of some delegates and the mixing of religion and politics. Keeping in mind the role of these elements that led to the union failure in the East, would it not be ecumenically profitable to pay attention to these divisive elements that have prevented the Union of Florence from bearing fruits instead of condemning the Union? Going further, Hallensleben asserts beautifully, "If we manage to write together the history of the Council of Florence, the chance of continuing the path towards a true "union" without denying discontinuities increases."³⁰⁹ This approach would save Ecumenism the danger of throwing away the baby with dirty water. Furthermore, recent experiences with

³⁰⁶ Hallensleben, "Les avancées, 315

³⁰⁷ Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 358

³⁰⁸ Hallensleben, "Les avancées, 314

³⁰⁹ Hallensleben, "Les avancées, 314.

ecumenical documents have demonstrated the urgent need for this new approach to studying the Council of Florence. Documents issued by different commissions entrusted to search for unity between East and West have never been unanimously received and implemented by the ecclesial communities they were intended for without creating further problems and, in worse cases, more divisions.³¹⁰

This new approach to reading the Florentinum is a challenge that would propel the East and West to come together and search for unity in their shared history, a return to the sources. The challenge of re-reading and modifying the decree of the Union of Florence can save fruitless debates and facilitate the desire of both Church to return to the sources. Since returning to sources and a joint tradition of historical accounts is the best tool for Ecumenism to achieve its desired goals, the Council of Florence characterised by this idea remains crucial in this quest. The Apostles and Church fathers constitute the common Christian heritage of the two churches that were regrettably sacrificed in the past on the altars of personal ego and cultural differences. An appreciation of the common Christian roots will enhance Ecumenism and encourage respect for the various Christian traditions.

Likewise, ecumenical dialogue approached using *ad fontes*/common history can help to identify the cause of the division that is rooted in human weakness. To a large extent, underneath the division and refusal to understand one another's doctrinal/theological positions are traceable to human pride, vindictiveness, envy and political opportunism. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on Christian unity, advocates for Ecumenism that goes back to the source to acknowledge and heal all forms of division:

With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to *re-examine together their painful past* and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today. All together, they are invited by the ever-fresh power of the Gospel to acknowledge with sincere and total objectivity the mistakes made and the contingent factors at work at the origins of their deplorable divisions. *What is needed is a calm, clear-sighted and truthful vision of things*, a vision enlivened by divine mercy and capable of freeing people's minds and inspiring in everyone a renewed willingness,

³¹⁰ About 18 different documents have been issued by the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and the North American Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue. None of the statements issued is binding on the Church leaders of both Catholic and Orthodox. Apart from repeating the usual rhetorics, these documents and meetings have not provided any tangible solution better than the one provided by the Council of Florence. Even the famous Balamand statement of 1993 that tried to offer useful guidelines for the peaceful co-existence of Uniate Churches and other Eastern Churches was rejected by the two Churches it was drafted for. Cf Nicols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 366-367

precisely intending to proclaim the Gospel to the men and women of every people and nation.³¹¹

The examination of the painful past helps the Churches understand their history. Although the history of any sort is complex, it nonetheless has the potency to heal memories, create a present atmosphere of trust and project a future that may be devoid of disunity. According to Robert Taft, "this healing of memories will require us to put aside our myths and confront our common past with historical objectivity and truth, own up to our responsibilities, seek forgiveness, and turn the page to move on to a hopefully better future."³¹²

Also, in this better appreciation of the Council of Florence in Ecumenism, the principle of healthy pluralism, which searches for unity in diversity, should never be forgotten. Fundamental to Ecumenism is the principle of unity in diversity. The Council of Ferrara-Florence gave an example of plurality and unity. Through logical theological debates, the Council introduced a healthy pluralism into ecclesial organisations, liturgical practices and theological discourse. As a historical fact, diversity is no stranger to Christianity. For this reason, ecumenical dialogue acknowledges different interpretations of the Christian revelation as influenced by culture and language. Plurality is something willed by God which gives beauty to the discourse about God. The goal ought to revolve around the willingness to open theology to the horizon of diverse perspectives without losing sight of the faith in Jesus Christ. This approach to theological discourse has the potential of integrating the unique traditions of East and West as parts of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. It is a method that would make theology faithful to its true identity, which is faith seeking understanding. It is dangerous for a Christian tradition to boast of having exclusive and absolute truth. Every theological truth is shaped and limited by the data available to a theologian. Theology admits a healthy pluralism and perspectives. Pluralism fostered by perspective is not relativism. According to Bernard Lonergan, "where relativism has lost hope about the attainment of truth, perspectivism stresses the complexity of what the historian is writing about."³¹³ As expounded by Lonergan, perspective is necessary for theology in view of the following reasons, 1) the finitude of humans and the lack of intuitive knowledge. 2) Human knowing is shaped by experience, social

³¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint: On the Commitment to Ecumenism* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice 1995), n 2.

³¹² Robert F. Taft, "Perceptions and Realities in Orthodox-Catholic Relations Today: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the future", in George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, Ed., *Orthodox Construction of the West* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 30.

³¹³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method of Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 217

conditions and environment. 3) Humans are different, as displayed in diverse approaches to knowledge.³¹⁴

Claims to absolute truth about God is antithetical to theology which searches for an invisible God. According to Taft, "to recognise that, one must learn, first of all, to distinguish between dogma and theology, and . . . the failure of some theologians to do so, is at the root of any real or perceived theological dissonance between East and West..."³¹⁵ For instance, explaining the Trinitarian relationship is a theological exploration that requires perspectives that are shaped by the reality of existential conditions of theologians. This was an essential aspect of the Council of Ferrara-Florence that allowed the western Church to retain its traditional teachings on the *Filioque* without overlooking the Eastern Church's understanding. The dogma forms the basis of ecumenical discourse. Theology, as the interpretation of dogma, is influenced by different social conditions, as well as by cultural and linguistic realities. Patristic theology laid the foundation for pluralism in theology. Authentic ecumenical dialogue does not deny a specific tradition in order to please another tradition. It is the meeting of two different people who come together with conviction and understanding of their teachings. Compromise in ecumenical dialogue is not to be understood as giving up one's tradition for the sake of unity.

On the contrary, it is an attempt to understand the tradition of others and make others understand one's tradition. The *Filioque* has not been proven to be theological wrong. It must be remembered that the controversies surrounding it were resolved at the Council of Ferrara-Florence and validly proclaimed as a sound doctrine in the western Church. Ecumenical dialogue, as opposed to exclusivity, admits a plurality of theological discourse. It opens the door to all who profess the Christian faith in the triune God. It aims to accommodate the diversity of theological traditions that would facilitate the building of communion. Ecumenism recognises that pluralism and perspective are key components of Christian theological heritage that upholds unity in diversity. Since dialogue does not shy away from unpleasant history, the contemporary ecumenical movements need to re-evaluate its hermeneutics in assessing the Council of Florence and recognise the relevance of this Council in resolving the division between East and West. Thus, the intellectual disposition of some ecumenists, in which some theological points like *Filioque* and *Primacy* are isolated from the Council of Florence and discussed without their historical background, portends no hope for the Union since these

³¹⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 217.

³¹⁵ Taft, "Perceptions, 29.

issues have no solutions soon. The Florentine Union acknowledged the fundamentals of this theological point as grounded in the respective tradition of these sisters Churches and introduced a plurality that gives discretion to the Churches in continuing their practices without losing their tradition. It makes a caricature of history to advocate a return to history as the source without accepting a council that unified antiquity and medieval and projected a future of healthy pluralism.

5.2 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The attempted Union between the East and West and its subsequent fate have been studied in this research. It has demonstrated the Council of Ferrara-Florence to be one of the most controversial councils in the history of the relation between the East-West. The Council failed to achieve its set goals, prominent of which was unity. The outcome of the Council's reception is not entirely surprising since socio-political motivations beclouded it on two fronts. The Pope needed a union to prove his relevance to the Conciliarists. For his part, the Byzantine emperor needed a union that would facilitate military aid to save his empire from Ottoman threat.

From the literature reviews as analysed in this research, it is clear that the faith and tradition of writers somewhat colour assessments of the Council. The implication is that more than 580 years after the Council, there appears to be no consensus about the failure of the Council. A few reasons are advanced to explain the lack of success. They include the following: the political motivations of the leaders of the East and West, lack of dialogue at the Council, the lack of compromise, and the hesitation of the emperor to proclaim the Union in Constantinople.

The aforementioned factors militated against the Council and stood in the way of its success. It must never be forgotten that the Council took place after a long period of preparations and negotiations. Those painstaking pre-conciliar negotiations demonstrated the willingness of the estranged parties to mend their differences even if that was not achieved in the end. The Council focused on the supposed four areas of division: The Purgatory, the *Filioque*, Unleavened bread at Mass, and the Papal Primacy. The theological debates, which were quite extensive, especially on the *Filioque*, meant that the conciliar fathers were determined to understand one another, although they did not always do that with an open mind on account of preconceived assumptions.

Contrary to the opinion of some scholars, the decree of Union, *Laetentur Coeli* of July 1439, bore the imprints of theological compromise and diplomatic spirit. It also reflected the

medieval sense of compromise that did not just accommodate the uniqueness of the ecclesial traditions of both churches but equally created a form of plurality in theology and worship. This fact explains why the Union became a model of Union with other separated Churches. It remains one of the best models of Union in the perennial quest for Christian unity.

The Council of Ferrara-Florence continues to be relevant in the ecumenical dialogue between the East and the West. While a couple of mishandling of the Council between the 16th-18th century dampened the positive elements of the Council and placed the Council in the negative spotlight, the time has come for contemporary theologians of East and West to come together and interpret the Council of Florence. Ecumenical dialogue between East and West with such an approach would include an appreciation of the Council, especially in going back to the sources. The Council of Ferrara-Florence points to the relevance of healthy pluralism in theological and liturgical approaches in discourse about God.

The unity of all Christians, especially between East and West, is possible if true Ecumenism is the common desire of the churches involved. It will be a unity achieved through a better appreciation of ecclesial diversities where uniformity is kept at bay. This remains a great insight and the lasting legacy of the Council of Ferrara-Florence as display in its decree union, *Laetentur Coeli*.

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