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It was a commonplace of historical scholarship until quite recently to maintain that the year 1054 marked the separation of Eastern and Western Christendom. The schism, it seems, had already commenced with Photius in the twilight of the ninth century, but it was not until the mutual excommunications of 1054 that it saw its final culmination. The events of 1054 were held to be, quite simply, the "final solution" or point of no return signaling the definitive rupture between Christian Byzantium and the Latin West. Such an interpretation, popular as it has been, is today unacceptable. As a matter of plain fact, the schism cannot be dated. That is to say, the finality of 1054 is largely a myth. It is now recognized that the parting of ways must be seen as a "process," the result of a steady disintegration of relations that paralleled the equally gradual growth of papal power and authority in the West. This process gained particular momentum with the Crusades and the sack of Constantinople in 1204, which more than anything rendered the breach final and definitive. "The schism," writes Paul Lemerle, "had not yet separated the two Christian worlds; it is, on the contrary, be-

*Paper delivered at the conference on Conciliarism and Conciliarity in the Late Middle Ages: Perspectives East and West, at the Center for Medieval Studies, Fordham University, March 26, 1983.


2 See especially the fine article by R. Maynes, "East and West in 1054,"
cause of 1204 and that which followed that the schism took on importance and significance. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates the breach more graphically than the establishment of a parallel Latin hierarchy on Byzantine soil and the enthronement of a Latin patriarch in the see of Constantinople, shortly after 1204.

The Latin occupation of Byzantium, as we should expect, was one of the most decisive chapters in the history of Eastern Christendom. It was a violent break in the long history of a Church with a proverbial reputation for continuity and traditionalism. In fact, only one other event in its history—iconoclasm—proved to be as disruptive and as confusing and challenging to its faith. Still, its lasting significance, it is generally agreed, lies in its effect on church unity. In the words of one recent scholar, the thirteenth century is "the crucial period for the evolution of Christianity"—the moment of division in the history of united Christendom. One of the major attempts to mend the schism, all the same, came in this same century, seventy years after the fall of Constantinople—at the Second Council of Lyons. After nearly two decades of intensive preparation, primarily between the papacy and Emperor Michael VIII, union was solemnly and formally declared at the council's fourth session (July 6, 1274). The erosion of church unity, evidently, had not stifled the desire for union; ecumenism had not yet spent its force. This is, in general, the interpretation traditionally imposed on Lyons—namely, that it was a "union council." Older historians, above all, choose to see it solely in its religious context, divorced from the determining influence of politics, the generally ambivalent context in which it was realized and the intricate diplomacy with which it was inextricably bound. One historian, typically, concludes that 1274 possessed


3"Byzance et la Croisade," X. Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche, Relazioni, 3 (Florence 1955) 617; Runciman, Eastern Schism, 145.
5The basic study is by B. Roberg, Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche auf dem II. Konzil von Lyon (1274) (Bonn 1964). See also the more general study of H. Wolter and H. Holstein, Lyon I et Lyon II, Histoire des conciles oecuméniques, 7 (Paris 1966).
6Alberigo, 366: "nombreux érudits insistent sur le caractère de 'concile d'union' du concile de Lyon, caractère que ne justifient ni les intentions qui ont présidé au concile, ni son déroulement réel, ni ses conséquences."
all the "characteristics of an ecumenical council."? Was it not, he asks rhetorically but seriously, convicted, presided over and approved by the pope? Besides, it was composed of a sizeable section of the western episcopate, as well as representatives of the Eastern Church.

Some aspects of this interpretation, it is true, are today widely regarded as archaic. But the view that it was a "union council" continues all the same, despite the fact that it was an official union in which the Byzantine Church played no part. This view perpetuates, in fact, Pope Gregory X's pious fabrication (expressed in his sermon delivered on the day of union) that the Byzantines had returned to Roman obedience voluntarily and without any temporal benefits: "Greci libere veniebant ad obedientiam Romane Ecclesie... nihilique temporale petendo"—an interpretation completely contrary to the actual events that transpired. Moreover, the underlying problem behind this interpretation of Lyons remains: the Byzantine evidence has never been examined as exhaustively or as comprehensively as the Latin material. 4 Apart from a factual overview of the diplomacy and the violent reaction in Michael's reign, little else has been studied. It is doubtful, indeed, if the Byzantine posture itself during this same period has been properly understood. The Byzantine effort to secure an open dialogue, by means of a common council, for example, has not been given the attention or the emphasis it deserves. At the recent formal conference on Lyons it was almost completely ignored. 5 Our understanding of it, in any event, is less than satisfactory. Moreover, the second phase of the Byzantine

7F. Vernet, "Ile Concile oecumenique de Lyon," Dictionnaire de théologie catholique 9:1, col. 1379.


6Cf, however, the exceptionally eloquent and sympathetic study of the same issue in the fourteenth century by D.M. Nicol, "Byzantine Requests for
response, which began with Michael’s death, has virtually gone unnoticed in the secondary literature, whereas it was then, in the patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289), that the settlement of 1274 was formally discussed and repudiated. Indeed, this theologically and authentically creative response may well be the most important contribution of the Byzantine Church to the *filioque* controversy.\(^1\)

I shall not discuss what everyone knows—namely, the details of the Byzantine reaction or the diplomatic negotiations of the 1260s and 1270s. All this has been handled generously and with authority by Runciman, Geanakoplos, Nicol and, more recently, by Gill.\(^2\) I would, however, like to focus briefly on the insistence of Byzantine churchmen on a common council, since this became the staple ingredient of subsequent Byzantine ecclesiastical diplomacy on the matter. Indeed, for the Byzantines, it is worth pointing out, Lyons’ failure only served to demonstrate that only a real confrontation of the issues, in a general assembly, could provide a clear practical solution to the problem of peace among the churches.

Two documents bearing on the Byzantine request for a joint council exist. Both were written in the year before Lyons, just as Michael was about to complete his negotiations and send a delegation to France. One is from the pen of Patriarch Joseph I.\(^3\) Although he may not have authored the text himself, it does bear his name and expresses his views. The other document is from his synod.\(^4\) Both are plainly official documents, coming as they do from the highest ecclesiastical authorities of the Byzantine Church. That they speak for the majority of the Byzantine episcopate, clergy and an Ecumenical Council in the Fourteenth Century,” *Annuarium historiae conciliorum* 1 (1969) 69-95.

\(^1\)See now A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus* (1283-1289) (New York 1982). Again, at the Lyons conference in 1974 (see note 9 above) this second phase was ignored by the speakers, who instead chose to focus on Beccus’ patriarchate (1274-1282) and theology.


\(^3\)Recently published, with a French translation, by Laurent and Darrouzès in *Dossier grec*, 302-5. This text is in reality a condensation of the patriarch’s longer *Apologia*, issued earlier in the year (see ibid., 133-301).

\(^4\)Ibid., 306-13.
monastic wing is also reasonably certain. More significant, perhaps, is that they share a particular Byzantine ecclesiological sensibility and perspective.

Joseph begins his 1273 memorandum to the emperor by noting that the peace and concord that the ancient and illustrious Church of Rome had requested was a project he could only praise and approve. Alluding to Romans 9:3, he announced that he himself was indeed willing to become anathema and be cut off from Christ for the sake of union. All the same, peace between the churches could never be achieved unless the theological issues that had caused the division (such as the controversial interpolation to the Creed) were first discussed in a fully representative assembly of the Church. Specifically, he could not be a party to a settlement, he adds, that did not first air out these difficulties in a free dialogue in the presence of all the churches. As such, union could not be limited to questions of protocol, the traditional prerogatives of the popes (such as the commemoration of the pope, the papal primacy and the right of appeal), on which Michael was basing his negotiations. On the contrary, even these canonical concessions could not be accepted without discussion. Besides, how could the bishop of Constantinople act alone, without the opinion of the other patriarchs—of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem—or without the views of those churches in communion with Constantinople? To do so would be to separate himself from those who are united with him, and who already form the majority, in order to rally to the one who has severed himself from that majority.

Equally eloquent was the synodal opinion that followed later that same year, and which was signed by the majority of the synod. The bishops, too, like the patriarch, were not impressed by the political negotiations Michael was then undertaking on behalf of the Church. The calling of an ecumenical council to discuss the dogmatic issues is again emphasized, as is the idea that such debate would be a necessary preliminary to acceptance of any of the protocol items. The council would be attended by the patriarchs and all the body of the hierarchy everywhere. They, like the patriarch, were zealous and approving of union. It was their conviction nevertheless that if their suggested council, which alone would be able to give a clear decision, did not come to pass, the "Church's scandal would remain without remedy."

\[15\] Ibid., 303.
\[16\] Ibid., 305.
\[17\] Ibid., 303.
\[18\] Ibid., 313.
It is, of course, possible to interpret this precondition as an immediate way of circumventing the unilateral “package deal” proposed by the emperor and the papal chancery. To suggest, however, that it was their way of frustrating or rejecting any union effort is entirely gratuitous and unsubstantiated by the facts. These churchmen also recognized all too clearly that Michael’s negotiations, in which the Byzantine Church did not officially participate, did not have the interests of Christian unity in mind—their only raison d’être was the possible political dividends to be gained at Lyons. However, whatDispose of the suggestion that these “manifestos of the opposition” did not have the peace of the churches at heart is that their request for guarantees of a genuine dialogue plays a prominent part in virtually all fourteenth- and fifteenth-century official documents on the subject. It was embraced as the conditio sina qua non by all Byzantine church circles, from the most conservative to the most liberal. The reason for this is not difficult to see: the texts reflect a specific ecclesiological perspective, solidly rooted in sound medieval Byzantine ecclesiology.

We have already noted that the separation of the churches was an accomplished fact by the thirteenth century. Be that as it may, the Byzantine position implicit in our texts was that the Western Church, though now in schism, would still be allowed to participate in a union assembly called for the healing of the schism. Differences, in short, could still be resolved by the conventional method—by means of a council. As the synodal encyclical put it, the council would be convened “according to the practice in force in the past”—in conformity with the traditional methods used by the Church during the first millennium of its existence. The Byzantine Church, then, was willing to put aside for the moment the Latin ecclesiastical

21Laurent and Darrouzès, Dossier grec 17 (introduction).
23Laurent and Darrouzès, Dossier grec, 313. For the Byzantine understanding of councils, see the basic survey of J. Meyendorff, “What is an Ecumenical Council?” STVTQ 17:4 (1973) 259-73.
aggression of the preceding decades, the criminal colonialism and behavior of the Crusaders, as well as the obvious fact of separation. The Church should not suppose the Latins enemies or detest them, notes Patriarch Joseph in another, longer memorandum, "although they are always raving at us. After all, they were formerly our brothers, reborn brothers of the same font of holy baptism; if they are sick, if they are eccentric, they nevertheless merit more pity than hate. We need to be merciful, to love them, to pray for them."\(^{23}\)

Put differently, and more theologically perhaps, the Byzantines, following the practice of the ecumenical councils of the past, understood such meetings as church events: only those delegates who confessed an identical faith and who were in eucharistic communion were qualified to participate. Councils, as such, were viewed solely in an ecclesiological context—a fact borne out by the etymology of both \(\text{oúvóðoς}^{24}\) and \(\text{concilium}\). All the same, despite the recent separation of the Latin patriarchy—the single dissenting voice in the pentarchy of patriarchs, as Joseph put it—and the fact that the Latins and the Byzantines no longer shared a common eucharist, the Latins would still be synodal participants in any assembly assigned to resolve their differences. If a council, in short, was the expression of episcopal and ecclesial consensus, then none of the patriarchates or bishops of the Church could be excluded, even if they had been the most disruptive. Significantly, even Rome’s presidency would still be recognized. Neilus Cabasilas, an articulate and reliable representative of the eastern attitude, persuasively argued in the mid-fourteenth century that “it is not, as the Roman Church insists, that we claim primacy; there is no question here about taking second place. We know the ancient practice of the Church and the decrees of the fathers, who called the Roman Church the oldest of all churches.”\(^{24}\)

Clearly, this insistence on the participation or representation of all five patriarchates was for the synod and the patriarch a tangible ecclesiological sign of a council’s catholicity. Still, there was something more fundamental underlying their request—namely, their conviction of the ontological identity of all churches, and the complement to this, the belief in the charismatic equality of the Christian episcopate. In the Byzantine patristic tradition the episcopal ministry was one. Strictly speaking, the succession of Peter was to be found in the person of the bishop of every local church, which in turn possessed the abundance of grace and catholicity in its totality. This being so, all the churches had to be present at a

\(^{23}\)Laurent and Darrouzès, Dossier grec, 299.  
\(^{24}\)PG 149:685a.
reunion council, since all of them together constituted the Church in its entirety. For Byzantine churchmen, therefore, the notion of an ecumenical council was directly related to the doctrinal basis of conciliarity and to their pluralistic perception of church structure—which is the reason why the authors of both of our documents were unable to understand how the see of Constantinople could act alone: to do so would be to break communion with the majority of the patriarchates and unite with only one of these. The doctrinal basis of conciliarity, quite simply, could not be abandoned. A joint council of all the episcopate, of all the churches, each of which realized in itself the mystery of the Church completely, was an essential precondition of authentic unity. Rome would indeed be considered the first, but as among sisters of the same dignity, as Patriarch John X Camaterus phrased it early in the thirteenth century: πρώτην ὡς ἐν αδελφoῖς τυγχάνειν ὁμοτιμίοις σοῦτην.

It is, perhaps, fitting to pause briefly at this point and examine the papal attitude. The Byzantines, as we have observed, were willing to overlook the fact that their proposed union council would not be an exact replica of the ecumenical councils of the past, for these, on the whole, had required as a logical antecedent both creedral unity and eucharistic communion between participants—elements that would obviously be lacking in the proposed council. A fully representative assembly of the Christian commonwealth, all the same, was the only possible solution for securing unanimity. The growth of papal power in the West since the Gregorian reform, along with the sustained canonical activity that accompanied it, however, could not allow the Latins to see it this way. Rome's ringing rejection of the concept was, indeed, both predictable and understandable. A letter of Pope Clement IV, which was nothing less than an ultimatum, addressed to Michael VIII (dated March 4, 1267) supplies us with a typical illustration of the Roman understanding.


22Meyendorff, "What is an Ecumenical Council?" 269.

To begin with, no council could be called to debate the faith that had already been firmly defined by so many Roman pontiffs. A council called to discuss the errors of the Byzantines was, in other words, unacceptable, for it would only serve to place that faith in question and would be itself a challenge to Rome’s ultimate authority. The only way to settle the differences, on the contrary, would be for the Byzantine Church to submit to the apostolic see. Reunion was to be a return without any reservations. There could be, in the final analysis, no discussion, no possibility of confrontation or negotiation. Any ontological identity or equality of the churches was unthinkable. Indeed, the professio fidei that the pope asked the Byzantine Church and the emperor to sign—and which was the same text as Michael’s personal profession at Lyons—goes so far as to consider the traditional privileges of the various patriarchates as being, in effect, honors given them by the Roman Church itself: “The fulness of power of the Roman Church consists in that she admits the other churches to a share in her solicitude; this same Roman Church has honored many, and particularly patriarchal, churches with various privileges.” So much for thirteenth-century Roman ecumenism and Latin comprehension of the Byzantine Church.

It was, of course, this very same formula that formed the basis of the Union of Lyons. The Latin account of the proceedings, known as the Ordinatio or Notitia brevis, makes this all too clear. No formal public debate or any sort of dialogue was permitted. Lyons’ only theological definition, concerning the filioque, was, in point of fact, agreed upon long before Michael’s delegation reached the council. The Byzantine Church, suffice it to say, refused to go to Lyons under these circumstances. The three Byzantine representatives were part of Michael’s personal delegation; they represented neither the patriarch, his synod nor his Church. The papacy, odd as it may seem, hoped that Michael’s caesaropapism would be sufficiently compelling to force the Byzantine Church to comply. For all that, Michael’s measures of cruelty and persecution proved fruitless and ineffectual. There is little wonder then that Lyons was

29Tautu, 67 (no. 23).
30Ibid., 117 (no. 41): “Ad hanc autem sic potestatis plenitudo consistit quod Ecclesias caeteras ad sollicitudinis partem admitit; quarum multas, et patriarchales praecipue, diversis privilegiis eadem romana Ecclesia honoravit.” See also Roberg’s edition of this profession in Die Union, 239-43.
32Edited by Franchi, see note 8 above.
proclaimed a failure, a “mockery and a fraud,” on the streets of Constantinople. As we should expect, subsequent Byzantine sources seldom, if ever, mention Lyons. As far as they were concerned the union of 1274 was nonexistent, and its fraudulent nature was taken for granted.

It has been suggested that Michael VIII's three-point plan for union was well conceived and that some sort of union—"une certaine union"—might have been achieved if both sides had made an effort to discuss matters. The three items, in the words of another equally eminent scholar, Fr Congar, had real value in terms of a possible rapprochement. But this ignores the express view of the documents we have briefly examined. Both the patriarch and his synod viewed such an approach as unrealistic. Union could not possibly be restricted to the protocol items—what was needed was a discussion of the substantive issues. I suspect, moreover, that the hostility and forced latinization of the thirteenth century created a religious landscape in which ecumenism could hardly prosper. More important, the two radically different ecclesiologies, spiritually and theologically so different, made union almost impossible. On the other hand, some sort of rapprochement might well have been possible if Rome had been willing to relax its unyielding and defensive posture. Granted that the Byzantines were more inflexible than Rome on the dogmatic issues, yet on the whole, their understanding of the schism, in contrast with the Latin mentality, was less extreme as well as more realistic, as I have tried to show. Typically, Byzantine authors never ceased to remind us that the root cause of the widening gulf after Lyons was the absence of any real dialogue; and that it was Rome’s insistence on orchestrating everything and treating the Byzantines like schoolchildren that prolonged the schism. In sum,

33George Pachymeres, De Michaelae et Andronico Palaeologis libri tredecim 1, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1835) 458, 456.
34See the comments of Darrouzès in the discussion section of Actes du Colloque, 206: “Dans ce sens-là, j’insiste sur ce point, le plan de Michel VIII était habile. Si les partenaires avaient fait un effort pour se voir, se parler, enfin pour discuter, une certaine union pouvait se réaliser.”
35Ibid., 206.
36It is notable that unionist efforts were equally unsuccessful. The “latinophron” patriarch John Beccus (1274-1282) attempted to go beyond Michael’s three points by justifying the filioque in terms of the Byzantine patristic tradition. (To do so, he had to condemn Photius, among others.) But this, however, was not a solution but an accommodation or capitulation to the Roman position. See Papadakis, Crisis in Byzantium, chapter 4. Affection for this patriarch in the secondary literature is considerable. Cf. the excellent articles by G. Dagron and J. Gouillard in Actes du Colloque, 179-202.
37Neilus Cabasilas, in PG 149:685b.
they lay the blame for the perpetuation of the schism squarely at the feet of Rome. One recent scholar agrees: "From the point of view of Christendom as a whole," writes Sir Richard Southern, "the papacy was the greatest divisive force throughout the Middle Ages."

But if we are bound to agree with Professor Southern's overall negative judgment, we need not conclude on the same somber note. At the seven-hundredth anniversary celebration of Lyons, Pope Paul VI, through his representative, Cardinal Willebrands, acknowledged the fact that the formulas and the texts with which the Byzantines were confronted in 1274 lacked a true appreciation of the genuine eastern tradition and "were conceived and expressed according to an ecclesiology that had matured in the West." He added, moreover, that the council of 1274 was "the sixth of the general synods held in the western world." He did not call it an ecumenical council, and neither did the cardinal, in his own sermon, characterize it as such. Patriarch Joseph, whose name was long ago entered into the catalogue of Byzantine saints, would have concurred.

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88 R.W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (London 1970) 90; and G. Denzler, "Basic Ecclesiological Structures in the Byzantine Empire," Concilium 13 (1971) 69: "instead of safeguarding the unity of Christianity, the office of Peter was the cause of disunity." Patriarch Joseph had said as much when he accused Rome of being the only dissentient in the Church. Cf the argument that the failure of conciliarism in the Western Church inevitably gave rise to Protestant individualism, in B. Tierney, "Collegiality in the Middle Ages," Concilium 7 (1965) 14.
89 See the French translation of the original Latin document in Istina 20 (1975) 300, followed by Cardinal Willebrands' own homily (302-6).
48 Ibid., 298.
49 His feastday falls on October 30.