

God (328). (c) Since the talks bore an "official" character for the Council, Eugenicus' views were not his private positions, for they were pronounced in name of the Byzantine delegation. (d) However, although they represented the most elaborate position in the East on the *eschatia* thus far, he was only answering the questions of the Latins, and not formulating an exhaustive declaration, maybe also in order to safeguard the character of mystery of life after death (328-329).

Chapter Eleven (331-345) discusses the decree *Laetentur caeli* and the failure of the Florentine Union (331-334). The Decree was signed by 117 Latin and 33 Greek prelates, with only Mark Eugenicus and Bishop Isaias of Stauropolis, on the Greek side, refusing to sign (331). It included the agreement on the fate of the departed, characterized as immediate (*nox*) for those purified of all stains of sin, as well for those in mortal sin (332-333). At the basis of the Decree on the fate of the departed is Michael VIII Palaeologus' profession of faith (333-334), but whereas in Greek it had "*poenit purgatoris*" both in the emperor's profession in 1274, and in its reproduction in *Laetentur caeli* in 1439, the Italian translation, for example, still uses "*le pene del purgatorio*" (DH 1304, in EDB, Bologna 2009; the German DH, Herder 2009, translates: "durch Reinigungsstrafen gereinigt"). Mark Eugenicus' suggestion, which spoke of the deferral of perfect retribution, was ignored (334). The only compromise, not found in the Palaeologus' Profession, is "to see God as He is (*sicut est*)", in order to side-track the Palamite controversy about essence and energies in God (335).

Benedict XVI summarized Florence on retribution thus: "The East does not recognize the purifying and expiatory suffering of souls in the afterlife, but it does acknowledge various levels of beatitude and of suffering in the intermediate state" (*Spe Salvi*, 48).

Rather than offering a new formulation, in terms less juridical but more consonant with the Eastern mentality, the Decree of Union offered a mere juxtaposition, as Giuseppe Albertigo has put it (336). Under these conditions the union was doomed from the start. Anyhow, John VIII had just lost his wife and daughter and was unable to undertake anything to promote union (336-337). Bessarion was named cardinal on 18 December 1439, but was recalled to Rome, thus weakening the Unionist party (337). The new patriarch, Metrophanes II, commemorated the pope's name in the mass of Pentecost, whereas Mark Eugenicus on his way to Ephesus (1440) was arrested and held prisoner for two years, whence he dispatched his famous encyclical Letter repeating his position on the fate of the departed, with insistence on the deferral of retribution (337-338). Gregory Mamme, who in 1443 had become patriarch of Constantinople in communion with Rome under the name of Gregory III (339), answered Eugenicus' paragraph for paragraph, but, unfortunately, he contradicted both the Roman doctrine expressed in *Benedictus Dei* (1336) as well as Eugenicus (340). In 1451, with the flight of Mamme, Constantinople remained without a patriarch (342). In 1442, Pope Eugenius IV sent Cesarini to organize a crusade, but the battle of Yarna (1444) turned out to be a disaster (342). In 1452, pope Nicholas V sent 200 archers, accompanied by Isidore of Kiev (342). Isidore had the union proclaimed in Hagia Sofia on 12

December 1452. Mark Eugenicus' brother, John, wrote a popular treatise against the union (343); apparently, he interpreted the Roman doctrine as saying that nobody can go to heaven without passing through purgatory (344). Months elapsed before Constantinople fell on 29 May 1453. With the first patriarch after the Fall of Constantinople, Gemadius II Scholarios, the union was abandoned. Later on, under Patriarch Symeon I in 1484, the Union of Florence was officially repudiated by all four Eastern patriarchs assembled in Constantinople (345).

In his Conclusion (347-350), the author recalls Benedict XVI's ecumenical proposal, in *Spe salvi*, not to impose the doctrine of purgatory, but to try to work out a compromise on the basis of *Laetentur caeli* (DH 1304-1306), and Mark Eugenicus' suggestions, blending all this in the light of the common declarations on the doctrine of sacraments, eschatology and ecclesial communion as emerged in the Joint Commission of Old Catholics and Orthodox (1985-1987). In end effect, Mark Eugenicus' suggestion of taking "fire" as an allegory (read: metaphor) remains as a *Nota Bene* for future ecumenical work.

There follows at the end an Appendix (350-371), the Abbreviations (373-386), the Bibliography (387-450), the Author Index (451-460) and the Table of Contents (461-465).

The author's attempt to revive the debate on the fire of purgatory in a more ecumenical key, supported by a sustained historical effort not to go beyond the texts, here brings its fruits ready for the time when the situation will be ripe. Analogous excellent studies on other controverted issues in the Catholic—Orthodox dialogue would greatly abet the current efforts to heal the wounds, purify the memories and turn over a new leaf in our mutual Catholic-Orthodox relations.

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PENN, Michael Philip, *Envisioning Islam. Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2015, pp. 249.

In this book, Michael Penn offers a supplementary commentary and study of his previously published anthology of early Syriac texts on Islam entitled "When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam" (Oakland, CA 2015). His study begins with an Introduction (pp. 1-13), followed by four chapters (15-186), a conclusion (183-186), notes (187-250), a bibliography (251-277), a rich index (279-292) and acknowledgments (293-294).

The author aims to highlight the importance of the view of Islam that Syriac texts offer us, a view that is quite different from the one presented by Greek and Latin sources, sources which inform the opinions of many modern scholars and historians (2). In fact, this comparison between the image provided by Syriac sources on the one hand, and Greek and Latin on the other, is repeated in the conclusion of each chapter the author considers. Additionally, in the general conclusion, he begins with the position on the "clash of civilizations" challenged by Samuel Huntington and the rapid diffusion of this theory following the attacks of