

CHAPTER 2

*The Autobiographies of the Patriarch
Gennadios II Scholarios*

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There are many Byzantine texts that contain long autobiographical passages. Rather than worrying how far these constitute autobiography in any modern sense, we should allow Martin Hinterberger to be our guide. He has not only demonstrated the value of studying these texts for themselves, but has also devised a brilliantly simple solution to the problem of defining autobiography in a Byzantine context by including all first-person narratives, even if occasionally they are couched in the third person!¹ This means dealing with an assemblage of very different materials. They range from the detailed autobiographies of Nikephoros Blemmydes to incidental personal information. Hinterberger therefore divides these disparate texts into categories. These include apologetical works, which in the last days of Byzantium seem almost the preferred vehicle for autobiographical reflections.² The best known is Demetrios Kydones' apology written around 1363, in which he uses autobiography to explain and defend his Latin sympathies.³ Rather different, but still entirely autobiographical, is the defence that Paul Tagaris made in 1394 before the patriarchal court, in which he endeavoured to explain how he could be both Latin patriarch of Constantinople and Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem.⁴ It was before the same court, but ten years after the fall of Constantinople, that the *megas chartophylax* Theodore Agallianos delivered two speeches defending himself against charges of corruption and incompetence. His defence is largely autobiographical.⁵ Agallianos is

¹ M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* (Vienna, 1999), 97–116.

² *Ibid.*, 367–81.

³ F. Kianka, 'The Apology of Demetrius Cydones', *Études byzantines*, 7 (1980), 57–71.

⁴ D. M. Nicol, 'The Confessions of a Bogus Patriarch: Paul Tagaris Palaiologos, Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and Catholic Patriarch of Constantinople in the Fourteenth Century', *JEH*, 21 (1970), 289–99.

⁵ M. J. Angold, 'Theodore Agallianos: The Last Byzantine Autobiography' in E. Motos Guirao and M. Morhadakis Philaktos, eds., *Constantinople: 550 años de su caída* (Granada, 2006), 35–44.

important for our purposes, because he was a close friend and ally of the Patriarch Gennadios II. The charges brought against him were an indirect attack on Gennadios, who had by then resigned the patriarchate, but in retirement remained an influential voice.

At various stages in his life Gennadios produced apologies in order to defend himself against his detractors. Though by no means devoid of interest, his apologies, in the same way as other of his personal writings, provide little autobiographical detail. Gennadios prefers to defend himself by argument and assertion rather than by setting out the facts of his life. His reticence has created an enigma for future generations, so much so that the great Uniate scholar Leo Allatios posited the existence of three men with the name of George Scholarios, as a way of coming to terms with the apparent inconsistencies of Scholarios' career.⁶ How was it possible for a man who was an advocate of the union of the Orthodox and Latin churches, to become the leader of the anti-unionists? Joseph Gill, the historian of the Council of Florence, accepted that this was indeed the case, but remained distinctly uncomfortable about it.⁷ From an opposite perspective, the Orthodox historian Theodore Zeses had systematically to dismiss the majority of Scholarios' unionist writings as later fabrications, in a misplaced attempt to protect his subject's Orthodoxy.⁸

More recently, Franz Tinnefeld has argued on textual grounds for their authenticity,⁹ while C. J. G. Turner has been able to expose the artificiality of the contradiction between Scholarios' apparently pro-Latin views and his later anti-unionist stance.¹⁰ In doing so, they prepared the way for Marie-Hélène Blanchet's superb new biography of George-Gennadios Scholarios. She is able to provide a convincing account of the future patriarch's intellectual and spiritual evolution, which she sees, far from being inconsistent, as an attempt to protect and adapt his core beliefs to the momentous changes occurring in his lifetime. She pays especial attention to what she terms his 'écrits à contenu autobiographique', which are mostly in the form of apologies, and wonders why recent work on

⁶ M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400-vers 1472): un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 2008), 49–52. On Allatios, see K. Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks: Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy* (Leiden, 2004).

⁷ J. Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1964), 79–94.

⁸ Th. Zeses, *Γεννάδιος Β' Σχολάριος: Βίος, συγγράμματα, διδασκαλία* (Thessaloniki, 1980), 362–405.

⁹ F. Tinnefeld, 'Georgios Gennadios Scholarios' in G. Conticello and V. Conticello, eds., *La Théologie Byzantine et sa tradition* (Turnhout, 2002), vol. II, 477–541.

¹⁰ C. J. G. Turner, 'George-Gennadius Scholarios and the Union of Florence', *JThSt*, n.s. 18 (1967), 83–103; C. J. G. Turner, 'The Career of George-Gennadius Scholarios', *Byzantion*, 39 (1969), 420–55.

Byzantine autobiography has overlooked them.¹¹ The short answer is that where possible Scholarios avoided autobiographical reminiscence. Nevertheless, he could not help but reveal something of the inner man, which gives his apologies a particular interest.

George Scholarios' first apology was a defence of his Latin studies.¹² There is so little concrete detail that the dating is problematic. It survives in the author's autograph. It shows plenty of evidence of reworking, but it lacks any title, which may mean that it was never delivered. It has normally been dated to before the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1438–9) because of the lack of any reference or even allusion to the council. Recently M.-H. Blanchet has suggested that it was composed soon after Scholarios' return from Italy.¹³ She does so on the grounds of the similarities of its themes to those of a letter he wrote to his students after his return from the council, but this may only have been a matter of recycling the contents of his apology; for there are strong indications in an opinion Scholarios was asked to give on Bessarion's treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit – usually referred to as the *Oratio dogmatica* – that Scholarios' apology for his Latin studies dated from before the Council of Florence.¹⁴ Scholarios presented it as a response to criticism sparked off by youthful indiscretions before setting out for the council.¹⁵ An early date for the apology would help explain the declaration it contains that, should he quit his native land, it would not be out of a sense of disillusionment, but in order to obtain proper remuneration.¹⁶ M.-H. Blanchet has shown that in the early 1430s Scholarios was actively considering leaving Constantinople either for the Peloponnese or possibly Rome.¹⁷ By 1437 he had entered imperial service. The question of remuneration was thereafter less relevant.

Scholarios' Latin studies laid him open to the charge that he was a Latin sympathiser. His defence was in three stages. To study Latin did not make you any the less a Byzantine, but what was the purpose of learning Latin if you did not use it to converse with Latins and to acquaint yourself directly with Latin culture? If you consequently found Latins congenial, that did not mean that you were any the less an Orthodox Christian. But some

¹¹ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 27–31.

¹² L. Petit, K. A. Sideridès and M. Jugie, eds., *Oeuvres complètes de Georges Scholarios* (Paris, 1928–35), vol. 1, 376–89.

¹³ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 358–63, 490–3.

¹⁴ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. III, 100–16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.15–33.

¹⁶ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 387.33–5.

¹⁷ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 300–6.

might think that Scholarios' own words convict him, for however one reads his apology, it was a eulogy for Latin culture. He reminded his detractors of the many Latins who were studying Greek and the rewards and prestige that this brought them in their native countries. Enthusiasm for study appeared a Latin characteristic, so that 'their peasants seem more learned than students here, while the Hellenic [scholars] among us are such in name only. As for the rest, they can, with two or three exceptions, scarcely be called literate'.¹⁸ He admired those Latin scholars who studied Aristotle and Plato, in contrast to their Byzantine counterparts, who thought them a 'waste of time' (ἄχθος ἐτώσιον).¹⁹ Here he is echoing the opinion of Demetrios Kydones, who applauded the efforts of the Latins to master 'the labyrinths of Plato and Aristotle, for which [the Byzantines] had never ever shown any inclination'.²⁰ Before the Council of Florence there was only the thinnest of dividing lines separating George Scholarios and Demetrios Kydones in their respective attitudes towards union with the Roman Church. Scholarios was clear that the religious differences with the Latins were trivial (κοῦφα καὶ μέτρια).²¹ He makes the naive assertion that his enemies could not know what he believed and therefore were not in a position to accuse him of deviating from Orthodoxy. This sounds like special pleading. Elsewhere he admitted that at this time out of the devilment of youth he even defended the Latin position, because he was not convinced that the addition of the *filioque* to the creed was strictly speaking unorthodox. He had found support for it in some of the Greek Fathers. He hoped that the council would pronounce definitively on the matter.²² At the Council of Florence he worked very hard to find a formula that would reconcile Latin and Orthodox differences on the procession of the Holy Spirit.²³

How was it possible for a proponent of the union of churches, as George Scholarios was both before and during the Council of Florence, to become the leader of opposition to union? This has always been the fascination of George Scholarios. It may also help explain why he is so miserly with autobiographical detail. He was only too aware of his false position and was

¹⁸ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 386.31–4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 385.3–386.34.

²⁰ G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV* (Vatican City, 1931), 366.95–6.

²¹ Scholarios, [*Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 387.26.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. III, 115.37–8.

²³ J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959), 225–6, 241–4, 258–9; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 316–44.

careful not to supply personal information, which might then be used against him. It was quite otherwise for his friend and ally Theodore Agallianos, who had also originally been a member of the Byzantine delegation to the council, but providentially had been prevented from going by a psychosomatic illness.²⁴ Unlike those who participated in the council, he had nothing to apologise for in its aftermath. Perhaps this contributed to his greater willingness to lay open to scrutiny the facts of his career.²⁵

Scholarios' dilemma was, on the surface, little different from that of most members of the Byzantine delegation to the council. To a greater or lesser degree they anticipated that it would be possible to reach an agreement on the reunion of churches on terms acceptable to the Orthodox Church. George Scholarios did more than most towards achieving this end. This was at the behest of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, whose advisor he was. The emperor entrusted him with one of the most delicate tasks that arose in the course of the council: drafting a profession of faith in response to the one received from the Latins. He did so, carefully avoiding the most obvious compromise formula, which equated the procession of the Holy Spirit *through the Son*, which was acceptable to the Orthodox, with the Latin teaching of the procession of the Holy Spirit *from the Son*, which was not. When he presented this to the Byzantine delegation, it was approved by twenty-eight votes to twelve against. But the Latins rejected it on grounds of lack of clarity.²⁶ This was a humiliation, if only because of Scholarios' well-known disparagement of the intellectual standards of Byzantine scholars when compared to their Latin counterparts.²⁷ He obviously thought that his Latin expertise set him apart from the rest of the Byzantine delegation. It was a blow to discover that the Latins condemned his theology for its lack of clarity. Despite encouraging words from his friend Francesco Filelfo,²⁸ George Scholarios was beginning to realise that in these surroundings a grasp of Aristotelian thought mediated through Thomas Aquinas was not quite enough.²⁹ Latins at the council were far more interested in Plato and turned for enlightenment to

²⁴ C. Patrinelis, *Ὁ Θεόδωρος Ἀγαλλιανὸς ταυτιζόμενος πρὸς τὸν Θεοφάνη Μηδείας καὶ οἱ ἀνέκδοτοι λόγοι του* (Athens, 1966), 94–5.

²⁵ See C. J. G. Turner, 'Notes on the Works of Theodore Agallianos Contained in Codex Bodleianus Canonius Graecus 49', *BZ*, 61 (1968), 27–35.

²⁶ Gill, *Florence*, 250–2; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 328–30.

²⁷ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 299.20–9.

²⁸ E. Legrand, *Cent-dix lettres de François Filelfe* (Paris, 1892), 31–4, no. 12.

²⁹ S. Ebbesen and J. Pinborg, 'Gennadios and Western Scholasticism: Radulphus Brito's *Ars Vetus* in Greek Translation', *ClMed*, 33 (1981–2), 263–319.

Scholarios' colleague George Gemistos (Plethon). It must have dawned on Scholarios that there would be no great demand for his services in Italy. There was one more humiliation in store. Towards the end of the council the emperor forced him, along with the other lay members of the delegation, to accept in writing the compromise formula on the procession of the Holy Spirit, which would provide the basis for a reunion of the churches. It embraced exactly that equivalence of the Greek *through the Son* and the Latin *from the Son* which Scholarios had earlier been trying to avoid.³⁰

As a layman there was no need for Scholarios to sign the act of union. There may therefore be nothing out of the ordinary about his departure from Florence before the end of the council. On the other hand, he left in the company of the emperor's brother Demetrios Palaiologos, for whom departure from the council was an act of defiance directed against the imminent conclusion of a reunion of churches.³¹ It also suggests coolness towards Emperor John VIII, whom Scholarios had served faithfully during the council. For example, he can only have drafted his 'Appeal on behalf of Peace and Aid to the Fatherland' on instructions from the emperor. This tract has become notorious because it appears to advocate union of churches on Latin terms in order to obtain aid for Constantinople. It was addressed to the patriarchal synod. The Greek *Acta* of the council suggest that it was read out along with other of Scholarios' pro-unionist tracts on 13 and 14 April 1439 at a meeting of the synod, which was presided over by the emperor with cardinals in attendance.³² If this was indeed the case, it did not mean that these tracts were specially composed for the occasion. By April 1439 Constantinople was no longer in danger, but it had been in the autumn of 1438, when news reached the Greek delegation that the Turks were preparing to attack Constantinople. This seems the most likely occasion for the original composition of Scholarios' 'Appeal'. The emperor wanted the members of the delegation to the council to provide funds to help with the city's defence, but immediately came up against opposition from the bishops.³³ Scholarios' tract presented them with the alternative, which was to return home with a union concluded very much on Latin terms. This does not mean that it reflected either Scholarios' own point of view, or, for that matter, the emperor's, which was always that union

³⁰ V. Laurent, ed., *Syropoulos. Les 'Mémoires' du Grand Ecclésiastique de l'Église de Constantinople, Sylvestre Syropoulos, sur le concile de Florence (1438-1439)* (Paris, 1971), 426-9; Gill, *Florence*, 258-62; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 330-2.

³¹ Syropoulos, *Mémoires*, ed. Laurent, 460-1.

³² J. Gill, ed., *Quae supersunt actorum Graecorum Concilii Florentini* (Rome, 1953), 407-8.

³³ Syropoulos, *Mémoires*, ed. Laurent, 272-9.

should only be on the basis of an agreed resolution of the points of dogma separating the two Churches. Scholarios was simply carrying out the task allotted to him by his master. It was a way of bringing home to the bishops the serious implications of their refusal to provide for the defence of Constantinople. He had done much the same in the debates before the Greek delegation set off for Italy, when he had set out two opposing views of the union of churches.³⁴ There therefore seems to be no good reason to dismiss Scholarios' 'Appeal' as a later falsification; it should be seen, rather, as the product of a particular turn of events.³⁵

In his attitude both towards the Latins and Latin culture in general and towards the question of union George Scholarios was remarkably consistent. Down to the end of his life he remained an admirer of Latin culture and of Thomas Aquinas in particular. Thanks to recent work by Hugh Barbour and Christopher Livanos, Scholarios' ability to combine opposition to the union of churches with devotion to the thought of Thomas Aquinas no longer seems a contradiction in terms.³⁶ Scholarios was an Aristotelian, and like a previous generation of Byzantine scholars he found Thomas Aquinas a particularly illuminating guide to Aristotle's thought. He concentrated on those aspects of Aquinas' work that were in tune with the study of Aristotle at Byzantium. He simply disregarded areas of disagreement, such as dogma. He used Aquinas' philosophical and logical approach the better to understand and elucidate Orthodox positions. As far as he was concerned, it was the mastery of methodology that explained the intellectual superiority of the Latins, not their dogma. The teachings of Thomas Aquinas therefore had little or no relevance to Scholarios' position on the union of churches, which remained an issue to be resolved by an ecumenical council. But in its aftermath Scholarios had to decide whether the union concluded at Florence was legitimate; whether it had been forced or not.

Something of his thinking emerges from the opinion that he gave, after his return from the council, on Bessarion's *Oratio dogmatica*, which to a very large degree provided the reasoned basis on which the Orthodox agreed to the reunion of Church. Scholarios dismisses its argument as specious (κακομηχάνως)³⁷ and then launches into a bitter personal attack

³⁴ Ibid., 170–1. See Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 310–12.

³⁵ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 327–8, 334–41.

³⁶ H. C. Barbour, *The Byzantine Thomism of Gennadios Scholarios and his Translation of the Commentary of Armandus de Bellovisu on the De ente et essentia of Thomas Aquinas* (Vatican City, 1993); C. Livanos, *Greek Tradition and Latin Influence in the Work of George Scholarios* (Piscataway, NJ, 2006), 27–69.

³⁷ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. III, 110.9.

on Bessarion. The two men had been reasonably close in the run-up to the council. They were allies in the early stages of the council. Scholarios provided Bessarion with the materials and arguments for his address to the council on 1 November 1438, in which he refuted the Latin position over the addition of the *filioque*.³⁸ It was a major triumph for the Orthodox delegation. But Scholarios now accused Bessarion of having the arrogance to believe he was intellectually superior to other men. He reminded him that he was human after all and quite likely to fall into error, especially when he spurned good advice.³⁹ Scholarios accused Bessarion of preferring to rely on acolytes who did his dirty work. He compared them to a pack of hunting dogs. They fawned over their master and attacked his enemies and even his friends.⁴⁰ This accusation comes as a surprise, even as a shock. If true, it places Bessarion's activities at Florence in a new light. Evidence for his deliberate creation of a circle of scholars only comes after his final departure from Constantinople for Rome in 1441,⁴¹ but there is a distinct possibility that he had already begun to build up a following by the time he went to the council. One might think of a man, such as John Argyropoulos, who joined Bessarion later in Italy. The former's invective against Katablattas, which dates to around the time of the council, shows him at work, traducing an opponent.⁴²

Scholarios agreed that Bessarion could not have brought about the Orthodox adhesion to the act of union by himself. He knew the kind of people who had helped him: 'nasty, feather-headed little men of no standing, who were full of admiration for your achievements, whatever these may be, in the expectation that the union would bring them honours and bishoprics or, in some cases, large sums of money.'⁴³ Those more learned than Bessarion were not given a chance to challenge his propositions, because the emperor enjoined silence.⁴⁴ This is possibly the only hint of criticism of John VIII Palaiologos that Scholarios ever let drop. Having been instrumental in bringing about the union of churches, Bessarion then abandoned Constantinople for the honours and riches offered by Rome on the pretext of organising aid, but Scholarios could

³⁸ Syropoulos, *Mémoires*, ed. Laurent, 336–7; Gill, *Florence*, 153–5; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 324–5.

³⁹ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. III, 110.32–40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. III, 11.3–15.

⁴¹ L. Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsman*, (Paderborn, 1923), vol. 1, 283–5, 325–35.

⁴² P. Canivet and N. Oikonomidès, '(Jean Argyropoulos), *La Comédie de Katablattas: Invective Byzantine du xve siècle*', *Diptycha*, 3 (1982–3), 1–99.

⁴³ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. III, 111.31–5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. III, 113.1–4.

see no good coming of this. Bessarion's departure pained him because he had been a dear and wise friend. He claimed to have valued him 'above water, air and life itself'. Now he had departed to become an adornment of Italy, while Scholarios was left behind unappreciated by his fellow citizens.⁴⁵

Scholarios' opinion on Bessarion's *Oratio* may not be a piece of autobiography, but it illuminates a watershed in George Scholarios' career. His decision to oppose the union of Florence rested on his conviction that Bessarion had rigged the union by ensuring that his questionable views on the procession of the Holy Spirit were never subjected to proper scrutiny. But there were more personal considerations. At some point during the council the friendship of the two men came under strain. Scholarios' self-pitying remark about being left behind suggests that the fault may have been more on Bessarion's side than his own. The key moment is likely to have been the failure of the compromise formula presented by Scholarios to the council. Bessarion had initially given it his support, but after the cardinals had rejected it out of hand he realised he would have to work without Scholarios, who seems also to have lost the trust of the emperor. This underlines how humiliating an experience the council was for Scholarios. If he were still uncertain about his stance on the union, when he returned to Constantinople, Bessarion's decision to return to Rome would have decided him. This was the ultimate betrayal of their friendship.

All this nonetheless fails to explain why Scholarios should then have played so active a role in the anti-unionist agitation in Constantinople. At the council he had very largely worked behind the scenes. Only on the occasion of his presentation of his profession of faith had he had a leading role. The humiliation it brought him should have been a lesson. Returning from the council, Scholarios was able to resume his career at court. He may already have been a member of the senate and a *krites katholikos* before he set out for Italy. He certainly held those positions after his return. The high favour in which he now stood is apparent from his role as court preacher. Any coolness between Scholarios and John VIII Palaiologos was soon forgotten, while the emperor came to rely more and more heavily on Scholarios, as his doubts about the advisability of the union increased. At the close of the council, John VIII is supposed to have made the following remark: 'we thought that we were correcting many Latin errors. Now I see that those innovators who have fallen into so many errors are correcting us, even though we have changed nothing'.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. III, 115.1–10.

⁴⁶ Syropoulos, *Mémoires*, ed. Laurent, 502.21–4.

This was in response to the pope's refusal to allow a celebration of the Orthodox liturgy.

John VIII showed immense skill in keeping control of the Orthodox delegation during the council. It is often suggested that after his return to Constantinople he lapsed into apathy and allowed matters to take their course.⁴⁷ This judgement seems to go against the enormous respect he enjoyed. It also underestimates the difficulties produced by the hostility aroused at Constantinople by the union of Florence. Repression was self-defeating, while the emperor realised that he could use anti-unionist agitation as a way of reminding the papacy of its obligation to bring aid to Constantinople. The emperor's treatment of Mark Eugenikos, the leader of the anti-unionists, reveals his grip on the situation. After forcing him into exile, he allowed him to return, but under conditions of house arrest, which amounted to imperial protection.⁴⁸ After Mark's death in 1445, George Scholarios took up the leadership of opposition to the union. He could only have done so with the tacit support of the emperor, for he continued to frequent the court and to hold high office.⁴⁹ It was a way in which the emperor was able to exercise a restraining hand on anti-unionist agitation. Down to his death in 1448 John VIII Palaiologos very cleverly maintained a balance between the unionists and the anti-unionists. In this George Scholarios served his master's purpose. He remembered his time at the court of John VIII in his 'Lamentation' of June 1460 as the best days of his life. The height of felicity, as far as he was concerned, was to deliver sermons before the imperial court. There is something like affection in his estimate of John VIII. On occasion Scholarios' judicial duties meant reprimanding the emperor, who took this in good part. It was his belief that the emperor's death signalled the beginning of the terrible end of the Byzantine Empire.⁵⁰

Scholarios' good opinion of the emperor had therefore survived his summary dismissal from court in 1447. He was careful not to blame the emperor, but insisted that it was the work of the unionist patriarch Gregory III Melissenos (1443–50).⁵¹ Nevertheless, it was a decisive moment for Scholarios, because he was able to devote all his energies to the anti-unionist cause without being hobbled by his obligations to the

⁴⁷ Gill, *Personalities*, 122–3.

⁴⁸ M.-H. Blanchet, 'L'Église byzantine à la suite de l'union de Florence (1439–1445): De la contestation à la scission', *ByzF*, 29 (2007), 79–123.

⁴⁹ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 400–5.

⁵⁰ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 289.21–2.

⁵¹ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 414–15.

emperor. To counter the activities of the patriarch he provided the anti-unionists with a solid organisation, in the shape of *Hiera Synaxis*, which was a church within a church. It had its own seal and made its own ordinations.⁵² Effectively, it created a schism within the Church of Constantinople. It would have suited Scholarios if the throne had passed to John VIII's brother Demetrios Palaiologos, who had been a leading anti-unionist at the Council of Florence, but the latter waived his claims in the face of opposition led by his mother, Helena Dragaš, who supported the claims of his elder brother, Constantine.⁵³ The latter's arrival at Constantinople in March 1449 to take up the Byzantine throne was an embarrassment to George Scholarios, because of his close ties with Demetrios Palaiologos. He did his best to defend himself against charges of treasonable support for Demetrios and of dividing the Church, but he found it politic to become a monk. His influence, if anything, increased. He had the satisfaction of seeing the unionist patriarch Gregory III Melissenos – the schismatic patriarch, as Scholarios dubbed him – driven from office and forced to seek refuge in Rome.⁵⁴

The autobiographical pieces Scholarios wrote before the fall of Constantinople do shed light on the conundrum of how a devotee of Latin culture became the leader of anti-unionist opinion in the aftermath of the Council of Florence because they reveal something of the man. His defence of his Latin studies was from a time when he was still striving to make his mark at the Byzantine court. Like most young men in a similar position he was all too aware of rivals and quick to take offence. There is more than a hint of paranoia, but this was a function of a competitive society, where denigration of rivals was the currency of the day. Scholarios was also aware that, given the negotiations over a union of churches, his chances of success in the struggle for preferment lay in his mastery of Latin, which remained an unusual accomplishment for a Byzantine. He was only too willing to bask in the reflected glory of Latin intellectual superiority. But his Latin studies were also his weak spot, for they laid him open to the charge that he was neither a good Byzantine nor a good Orthodox. He realised that earlier conversions to Rome had given Latin studies a bad name at Byzantium.⁵⁵ This did not mean, he insisted, that Latin studies were to blame for these conversions, which were entirely a matter

⁵² Ibid., 427–37. ⁵³ R. Maisano, ed., *Giorgio Sfranze. Cronaca* (Rome, 1990), 100 (xxix.12–18).

⁵⁴ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. III, 151.1–2.

⁵⁵ C. Delacroix-Besnier, 'Conversions constantinopolitaines au xiv^e siècle', *MEFRM*, 105 (1993), 715–61.

of the gullibility of the converts. Scholarios was confident that his patriotism and his Orthodoxy would protect him against any such temptation.⁵⁶ His claim to be a good Byzantine was entirely genuine. It was reinforced by his experiences at the Council of Florence, which he interpreted in terms of his relationship with Bessarion. While the latter had connived with the Latins and had then abandoned Constantinople for the honours and riches on offer in Rome, Scholarios had done his best to defend the Orthodox position and had then remained in Constantinople, even though his fellow countrymen did not properly appreciate him. Scholarios makes his case with the absolute minimum of personal information. He says nothing about his Latin studies. He says nothing about his friendships with Latins, such as Francesco Filelfo and Cyriacus of Ancona.⁵⁷ There is nothing on his family background. His 'autobiographical' pieces from before 1453 offer insights into his personality and his habits of mind, but, on the loosest possible definition of autobiography, these are not autobiographies. That contemporaries or near contemporaries used their apologies for autobiographical purposes was no reason George Scholarios should do the same. His strength was reasoned argument seasoned with sarcasm. Autobiography would only have exposed his weaknesses. He came from a modest background. Any detailed presentation of his Latin studies – his main claim to distinction – was likely to reveal how close he was to Latins settled in Constantinople.⁵⁸ His participation at the Council of Florence ended in humiliation.

His reluctance to indulge in personal reminiscence reflects to a degree his sense of identity. Unlike many of his contemporaries he showed an almost complete indifference to those personal elements of family (*γένος*) and home (*οἶκος*) that were so important an element in the late Byzantine identity.⁵⁹ He almost never mentions his parents or his relatives. He ignores his childhood and schooling. He prefers to submerge his identity in the mystique of political orthodoxy, in other words in service to a

⁵⁶ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 383.5–24.

⁵⁷ Legrand, *Cent-dix lettres de François Filelfe*, 9–12, no. 5 (1 March 1430); 21–3, no. 9 (28 July 1431); 31–34, no. 12 (29 March 1439) and, for comments, T. Ganchou, 'Les *ultimate voluntates* de Manuel et Iôannès Chrysoloràs et le séjour de Francesco Filelfo à Constantinople', *Byzantinistica*, 7 (2005), 195–285; E. W. Bodnar and C. Foss, eds., *Cyriac of Ancona. Later Travels* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003), 94–7.

⁵⁸ M.-H. Blanchet and Th. Ganchou, 'Les fréquentations byzantines de Lodisio de Tabriz, dominicain de Péra (†1453): Géorgios Scholarios, Iôannes Chrysolôras et Théodore Kalékas', *Byzantion*, 75 (2005), 70–103.

⁵⁹ A. Bryer, 'The Late Byzantine Identity', in K. Fledelius and P. Schreiner, eds., *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence* (Copenhagen, 1996), 49–50; M. J. Angold, 'Autobiography and Identity: The Case of the Later Byzantine Empire', *BSL*, 60 (1999), 36–59.

greater good represented by the emperor and Orthodoxy and symbolised by the city of Constantinople. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 meant the end of this ideal order, which left the survivors in a state of stupefaction, none more so than George Scholarios. We can follow his attempts to make sense of the new order created by the Ottomans in the three 'autobiographical' pieces that he produced after 1453: his 'Pastoral Letter' of 1454,⁶⁰ his *Lament* for his life of 1460,⁶¹ and a personal apology, which was perhaps the last thing he ever wrote and dates to around 1467.⁶² The 'Pastoral Letter' contains two short autobiographical passages and the *Lament* one. Otherwise these pieces are as lacking in personal details as his other writings, but they do constitute a meditation on the disintegration of a sense of identity, which was a consequence of the fall of Constantinople. Since autobiography is more usually concerned with the discovery, rather than the destruction, of a sense of self, Gennadios seems to be offering an interesting variant on a major theme of autobiography.

Paradoxically, the destruction of the old order brought him new prominence. Led away into Turkish captivity, in the same way as the great majority of survivors, he was quickly redeemed by the conqueror and appointed patriarch of Constantinople. He was duly installed in office on 6 January 1454. His 'Pastoral Letter' relates these events in some detail. It is worth translating the passage in full, because it is as near as the Patriarch Gennadios, as he now was, comes to an autobiographical narrative.⁶³

Instead of these things [mistreatment by the barbarians], what was saved up for me? While many others were daily being set free, thanks to the work of skilled [negotiators] – not that they would have been called that previously – I remained a useless burden in the hands of the conquerors. I sought the intervention of friends, but they were then unwilling to help me, so I left everything to God. Forgotten as I was, I bewailed [our] common misfortunes along with my sins, [convinced that my friends] were refusing to ransom me over a trifling sum. [I did not know that] they were revealing where I was hidden to the ruler (*despotes*) and were clamouring that I should be given care of the souls of our [people]. They praised me to the skies, being well aware that the essential thing was to rescue me from those

⁶⁰ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. IV, 211–31; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 496–9.

⁶¹ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. I, 283–94; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 499–502.

⁶² Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. I, 264–74; Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 503–5.

⁶³ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. IV, 224.12–25.7.

labyrinths in which I was confined. And straightaway, escorted by the ruler, I was conveyed over a considerable distance so that I could make my entrance into the city, which I found in a far more miserable state than I could describe. I received orders to take charge of a monastery, which had been plundered and stripped bare. I was also expected without any money to ransom those monks, who were to be its future residents. These monks had previously been troublemakers. Now, using as a pretext the misfortunes of the Christians, they gave full rein to their greed and to the satisfaction of their appetites. They perverted a previously sacred order with their impieties, scandalising the souls of onlookers and flooding the whole world with every kind of evil. I had to deal with the crassest of barbarians over redeeming [captives] from slavery and over all kinds of favours and marks of honour they expected from us, while they pretended to [offer in return] the benefits [of their rule], by which they only meant subordination. In practice, their zeal to enslave human souls achieved the exact opposite. I was then compelled to rebuild ruined churches for the Christians gathered there, who – would that it were not so – made little effort either to live according to the ways of their fathers or to worship God according to the law, [a state of affairs] which ought to have been anticipated. Then a synod gathered together, composed of many bishops from both Asia and Europe. By its votes I became first deacon, then priest, and then bishop and patriarch. I shall leave to one side the details of the ceremonies, which were duly performed according to the laws. I shall also pass over my earlier objections, tears and the waste of time, neglecting too all that happened, I mean, after my ordination. I shall have nothing to say about the lack of proper resources to meet my different responsibilities; nor will I now raise the question of the force used to make me act against my better judgement.

At this point specific autobiographical detail peters out, as Gennadios listed the difficulties he faced once he had become patriarch. He closed with the problem of apostasy. Was it, he wondered, worth invoking the full rigour of the law and running the risk of apostasy that this entailed, for this was the path, ‘which laymen, monks, and even those dignified with the name of bishop have chosen in preference to traditional [spiritual] remedies, either by deserting to those of a different faith or by threatening to do so’?⁶⁴ With a few words Gennadios highlights not only the demoralisation of those who survived the fall of Constantinople, but also their resentment of those whom they held responsible for their plight. These included leaders of the opposition to Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos – men such as Gennadios. How else can one explain his insertion at this point – completely out of chronological sequence – of a defence of his

⁶⁴ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. iv, 225.32–6.

actions on the eve of the siege of Constantinople? Again, it is worthwhile giving the passage in full:⁶⁵

I cut myself off from everyday life and ceased to attend court, but I did not depart from the city, even though entanglement in its snares necessarily destroys the purpose of repentance. I did not think of quitting the monastery. Neither did I have anything to do with city life. The crowd, which each day flocked to my cell, did so on the perfectly respectable pretext of listening to my words. However, I was forced to ban them from my cell – not that they paid any attention – because I was finding their presence upsetting, whatever spiritual ambitions they may have nursed. I preferred to disappoint friends rather than a soul in thrall to God and to concentrate on communication with the divine. These became my reasons for cutting myself off from [worldly] distractions, though I had little opportunity to enjoy the long sought-after leisure. [This was] because, under equal pressure from all sides and failing to perceive that people make sport of things they should not, I involved myself in ecclesiastical affairs, when it would have been better to remain silent and hidden, like a pearl at the bottom [of the sea]. Once stumbled on (οὐ πατηθέντος), people kept urging those who had given [their support to the union] to mount attacks on us. Otherwise neither by inclination nor by temperament would I have then quarrelled over such matters nor would I have stood up to my opponents. I behaved as I did out of a sense of gratitude rather than expediency, because I hoped that my presence would be of some benefit to my country, while departure elsewhere would seem to those favourable to foreign interests to be a betrayal of the cause of which we were the unwilling leader. [It would mean not only] renouncing my comrades and colleagues, [but also] failing to stand firm in the face of the dangers overtaking my country. I was therefore anxious not to remove myself from harm's way, but [rather] to seek my own safety as best I could. Nevertheless, in a fit of rage the emperor placed me under house arrest, having despaired of winning me over through the good offices of his advisors. Urged so many times to depart, I became his unwilling prisoner.

It is easy to see why the Patriarch Gennadios singled out this brief period of his life for detailed treatment. It was the hinge on which his life turned. It raised him from relative obscurity to the leadership of his Church and people. It is difficult to put into words the enormity of what becoming patriarch meant in the wake of the fall of Constantinople, but Gennadios was fully aware of the weight of responsibility that he now shouldered, if at the same time taken aback by the opposition that he faced. He was confident that he had been specially chosen by God to guide

⁶⁵ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. iv, 226.9–35.

his people through *the valley of the shadow of death*. It was therefore necessary to counter criticism that his elevation to the patriarchate was a matter of personal ambition, and to quash suspicions about the nature of his relations with the conqueror.⁶⁶ Gennadios presented his actions as motivated by love of his country, and his opposition to Emperor Constantine XI as more the emperor's fault than his own. Enslaved, like so many others, after the fall of Constantinople, he claimed not to have enjoyed any special favours while in captivity. The sultan may have had a role in his liberation, but it was only to allow him to restore a monastery and then to repair churches in Constantinople. Gennadios deliberately covered up the fact that it was Mehmed II who appointed him patriarch. Instead, he emphasised the role of the synod and insisted that his installation as patriarch followed the traditional forms. Like many others, Gennadios was creating a face to suit a critical moment of his life, for the essential thing was to make sense of the catastrophe that had overtaken Byzantium, and to convince his audience that behind his words was divine inspiration.

He explained the fall of Constantinople as divine judgement. He remembered how nobody listened to those, like himself, who were versed in biblical prophecy and the ways of divine providence and predicted what was stored up for Constantinople.⁶⁷ So it was that few people anticipated the outcome, despite the overwhelming superiority of the Ottomans, that made their eventual victory more or less inevitable.⁶⁸ Gennadios claimed that God gave the Byzantines a whole year to repent, but they remained obdurate.⁶⁹ The way they blamed each other was a clear sign that God had removed his protection.⁷⁰ The parallels with the fall of Jerusalem were plain to see. After the destruction of Jerusalem, its sanctity passed to Constantinople, the New Jerusalem, which became the centre of a Christian Empire and a model of 'sacred and political virtue'. But God blamed the Byzantines far more than He did the Jews, for they had spurned His greatest gift: salvation offered through His Son. They were left with the hope that, just as God had released the Jews from exile, so He would rescue the Byzantines.⁷¹ A promising sign came in the shape of new martyrs, whose steadfastness was all the more remarkable because unlike

⁶⁶ See M.-H. Blanchet, 'L'ambiguïté du statut juridique de Gennadios Scholarios après la chute de Constantinople (1453)' in P. Odorico, ed., *Le Patriarcat oecuménique de Constantinople aux xiv^e-xv^e siècles: Rupture et continuité* (Paris, 2007), 195–211.

⁶⁷ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. IV, 214.4–215.16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 213.37–40. ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 216.4–15. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 216.33–8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 217.4–218.11.

the early martyrs they were living in an age of apostasy. Gennadios was convinced that their sacrifice brought some slight alleviation of their people's sufferings.⁷² Another sign was the restoration of the patriarchate, which many understood as a miracle.⁷³ Gennadios had then to explain why he wished to demit office. Here was another chance to provide some autobiographical detail, but one he refused to take, beyond complaining of the opposition he faced and the actions of the ruler who had given him his liberty so that he could become patriarch, but who had now withdrawn it by not allowing him to return to the monastic estate.⁷⁴

Apart from the two short self-serving passages translated above, there is very little that is autobiographical about the Patriarch Gennadios' 'Pastoral Letter', which more than anything else revealed his inadequacies as patriarch. He was not the Joseph or the Moses that his friend and ally Theodore Agallianos supposed him to be.⁷⁵ He preferred to resign his office rather than face its challenges. The parallel he drew with the Jews was not only commonplace; it also offered very little comfort or guidance. He was overwhelmed by the tragedy of the fall of Constantinople and by his responsibilities as patriarch. Two years after taking up office the sultan finally gave him permission to resign. He retired first to the monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, and then around three years later he found a more permanent refuge in the monastery of the Prodomos on Mount Menoikeion, outside Serres. There he composed his *Lament* of 21 June 1460. Although there is only a single autobiographical passage, it is in some ways the most personal of his writings. He starts by invoking his parents. Why did they bring him into the world at such an inauspicious hour? Why did they die and leave him behind to face so many tribulations?⁷⁶ He concludes his *Lament* by once again turning to his mother, calling her by her monastic name of Athanasia and begging her to intercede for him.⁷⁷ The sentiments seem to have been heart-felt, if sententious. At the very least, they show that Gennadios was not without filial feelings. He also invokes his friends and relatives and, in particular, his students, who had flocked to visit him, as if he were their father and guardian, after he had become a monk. Where were they now? If any had survived the destruction of their city, they would be eking out a miserable and humiliating existence, like so many other survivors. Gennadios stops

⁷² Ibid., vol. IV, 219.12–27.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. IV, 227.11–19.

⁷⁴ Ibid., vol. IV, 228.34–29.5.

⁷⁵ Patrinelis, *Ο Θεόδωρος Άγαλλιανός*, 98.257–9.

⁷⁶ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. I, 284.9–15.

⁷⁷ Ibid., vol. I, 293.19–26.

to wonder what had been the point of his teaching them; what had been the point of collecting books for them.⁷⁸ He tries to console himself with memories of his life before the fall of Constantinople at the court of John VIII Palaiologos. This is the one autobiographical passage in the *Lament*.⁷⁹

Alas! How can I remember without tears those audiences made up of the emperor, his brothers, grandees, bishops and clergy, monks, businessmen and citizens, and foreigners, who assembled in the banqueting hall to hear me preach? I was destined to be the last proclaimer of the truth in dogmatics and ethics [i.e. court preacher] appointed for that final generation. I was like some prophet of doom who, wishing to devise a different outcome, saw his words fulfilled in the worst way possible. I told my audience not to hearken to such words. That was the thrust of [my] last sermon, which was delivered in the sixth year before the terrible events that had their beginning at that time. Different people praised different sermons according to the profit that they derived from them, but all were agreed that my skill with words was a God-given gift, for leaving behind the tumult of the law courts and my other responsibilities – the lessons I gave at home, which we offered to assembled Hellenes and Italians, and other cares that protocol imposed – I was always ready to articulate whatever God deemed necessary. O those trials, where presiding [over a tribunal] I sought the truth of the matter, explaining the laws, allowing others room for their own interpretations, preparing the losing party for defeat with a show of clemency and forbearance, and sending all away happy from the trial thanks to the accuracy and precision of my cross-examination, something often judged the most difficult [of tasks]. I only treated harshly those who were violent and had no intention of submitting to due process of law, which frequently meant that my displeasure extended to the emperor himself. This he took in good part; he made no objections when reprimanded, or so it seemed. I am talking about the late John, whose death ushered in the painful demise of our polity. I was not making a show of my abilities, but demonstrating good practice to our successors, for our main concern, when giving judgement, was not so much its immediate application to the case in hand, as the guidance of the many who would come after us. [We wished] in this way to leave some memory of the effort we had made over a point of law, so that those benefiting from its value [would acknowledge that it came from us] and nobody else. It was for this reason that we put ourselves forward as a model for all, not only through the precision of our judgements, but also by reason of the clearness of our conscience, which came from our refusal to take gifts and personal favours or to tolerate any fiscal or

⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, 287.35–88.24.

⁷⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, 288.36–90.2. For the institution of the *theatron*, see Niels Gauls' chapter in the present volume.

property transaction that did not meet with canonical approval. Oh! [How well I remember] those daily discussions with or without the emperor present, in which various propositions would be put forward and, just as in a literary gathering (*theatron*), everybody would be impatient to hear the solution to the problems under discussion. Oh! What good will and marks of honour were we universally accorded! Oh! With what pleasure did people greet us, for they considered as lacklustre any day I was absent from the palace, and on my arrival next day they embraced me as though I were returning from a long journey. Should I put off any longer taking the path to their door, they rushed in the friendliest way imaginable to my house.

We may doubt whether Gennadios was ever quite that popular. He was idealising his own experience as a way of creating an impression of the felicitous existence enjoyed in Constantinople before its fall, which was in stark contrast to the situation thereafter. His sense of self-worth was tied to his life at the court of John VIII Palaiologos, of which by his own account he was a leading light. He understood his purpose in life was to hand on to future generations essential elements of Byzantine civilisation, whether in his teaching or in his judicial activities. It is easy to see why Gennadios could not come to terms with the demise of this civilisation, which the fall of the city entailed. He mourned the destruction of learning and education, and with them of the most beautiful of languages. People now knew as much about sacred dogma as Gennadios did about dancing and playing the cithern. They preferred to believe in the shades of their ancestors and in old wives' tales. Gennadios conjures up the strangest and most personal of images to illustrate the depths to which Constantinople had sunk. The city was like some highly respected matron who had kicked over the traces and was dancing in the streets to the deep shame of her son, who preferred to leave the scene.⁸⁰ It captures one of the deepest fears of the Byzantine – and not only Byzantine – male: the danger that female exuberance, generosity, naivety or moral weakness will be the undoing of family honour. Gennadios clearly looked on Constantinople as a mother, as many other Byzantines did. The implication is that it had failed him, for he had been forced to abandon the patriarchate, which with God's aid he had restored from nothing.⁸¹ He was prevented from offering his people the guidance they needed; from helping to fashion a new identity to replace the one they had lost. His resignation had left him without bearings. He resented the bonds that still linked him to 'the sorry remnants of his race (*genos*)'.⁸² He claimed he had a right to speak like that because

⁸⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, 290.30–4.

⁸¹ Ibid., vol. 1, 292.18–20.

⁸² Ibid., vol. 1, 293.7–8.

his birthplace had given him all his sorrows, just as formerly all his joys. He no longer had a homeland. This had to be sought elsewhere, 'which is where our city now is'.⁸³ The fall of Constantinople shattered Gennadios' sense of identity, which was embedded in the city. It left him with little sense of purpose. His *Lament* is not just about his loss of identity; it is also a reproach directed at Constantinople for failing him. Its fall produced a moral collapse among its people, who rejected Gennadios. Underlying this was the bitterness he felt over the opposition he had encountered to his patriarchate, which, in the end, forced his resignation.

If the autobiographical passages that Gennadios has left behind hardly amount to an autobiography in any modern sense, they do provide insights into his state of mind at crucial moments in his life. In chronological order, these were his role at the court of John VIII Palaiologos, his opposition to Constantine XI on the eve of the fall of Constantinople, and his elevation to the patriarchate. He used the first as a way of illustrating through his own experience exactly what had been lost with the fall of Constantinople. The second was a way of defending himself against the imputations of those who questioned his fitness to be patriarch; and the third explained the stages by which he had become patriarch. They reveal that Gennadios' sense of self, his sense of self-importance, if you like, came from his conviction that he was motivated by the good of his country and guided by his devotion to Orthodoxy. He liked to think that these qualities had recommended him to John VIII Palaiologos and had brought him a position of the highest responsibility. However, his high-mindedness went hand-in-hand with a failure to develop or at least to value personal relationships. It is only in passing that we discover that he had a sister, whose son helped him survive the sack of Constantinople.⁸⁴ He is content to do no more than drop hints of his attachment to John VIII Palaiologos and, still more tantalisingly, to Mehmed II.⁸⁵ The impression is that Gennadios was a man who functioned best when there was a ruler to defer to. His closest relationship was a symbolic one: with Constantinople, which, he claims, gave him his greatest joys and his greatest sorrows.⁸⁶ His devotion to his native city emerged from his passionate evocation of what it was before its fall. Despite a reduced state, when compared with its former glories, it remained free and a focal point of the Christian world.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 293.8–18. Although Gennadios knew some of St Augustine's works, there is no evidence that he knew *The City of God*. See Livanos, *Greek Tradition*, 33–9.

⁸⁴ Blanchet, *Scholarios*, 69–70.

⁸⁵ A. Papadakis, 'Gennadius II and Mehmet the Conqueror', *Byzantion*, 42 (1972), 88–106.

⁸⁶ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Sideridès, and Jugie, vol. 1, 293.8–11.

There was no other city, however flourishing, to vie with it. It ensured that its inhabitants continued to prosper, while its marvels continued to astound foreign visitors, who thought that 'they had been snatched up to another heaven'.⁸⁷ How was existence possible without it? 'Oh, best of native cities, how can we, your dearest children, survive your loss and how can you bear to be without us? Worse, how can we endure still to be alive, when you are beyond the reach of men? For though apparently still here, you are gone for ever'.⁸⁸ With these last words Gennadios was able to catch the irrevocable transition from one dispensation to another. No one else understood or expressed quite so well the meaning of the passing of a great civilisation. It meant a shattering of his identity. Almost always, in one way or another, autobiography is about the search for, the attainment or the affirmation of a sense of identity. Gennadios is dealing in the exact opposite: its destruction. He was never able to rebuild another, beyond being able to say, 'I am a Christian'.⁸⁹

Gennadios' final apology suggests that this was an affirmation, which, as Gennadios perhaps hoped, might serve as the core of a new identity. Support for such an idea may be adduced from his final apology written at the end of his life. Though a personal statement, it might serve as the core of a new identity. It comes in the shape of a letter to a friend, the monk Theodore Branas, in which he excuses himself for having failed to keep in touch. Though a personal statement, Gennadios intended it as a codicil to his last will and testament, which underlines its importance to him.⁹⁰ His starting point is an assertion that a completely false picture had emerged of events from the second year after the fall of Constantinople.⁹¹ He is, in other words, still distressed by the circumstances of his departure from office. But his tone then changes. He is now resigned to what has happened and takes comfort from two things in particular. The first is the pious fervour of Christians, which suggests that he was softening the harshness of his earlier judgement on the people of Constantinople.⁹² The second comes as a surprise: he hails the intelligence and humanity of the sultan, who not only kept bloodshed to a minimum after the storming of Constantinople, but also re-established the Church.⁹³ Gennadios' narrative of the restoration of the patriarchate has changed.

⁸⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, 287.6–31.

⁸⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, 287.31–4.

⁸⁹ A. D. Angelou, 'Who am I? Scholarios's Answers and the Hellenic Identity', in C. N. Constantinides, N. M. Panagiotakis, E. M. Jeffreys, and I. Martin eds., *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (Venice, 1996), 1–19.

⁹⁰ Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Petit, Siderides, and Jugie, vol. 1, 264.34–5.

⁹¹ Ibid., vol. 1, 265.28–9.

⁹² Ibid., vol. 1, 265.34–5.

⁹³ Ibid., vol. 1, 265.35–66.3.

The inspiration of course came from God, but the implementation was the work of the sultan, who appointed Gennadios patriarch and provided the Church with many gifts. It gave hope that the Church was not entirely undone. Gennadios even wondered whether it was God who had set the Turks over the Christians for their own good. He thought it unlikely, but was unable to reject this possibility out of hand.⁹⁴ After thirty years of endeavour for his people – a story, he was confident, that needed many volumes to do it justice⁹⁵ – it was time for him to return to monastic seclusion, for he realised, at last, that he could no longer be of any service to the common good.⁹⁶ He could only urge Christians to seek consolation in Christ through the Church, which he had helped restore.⁹⁷ Gennadios closes on a note of resignation, but he was becoming reconciled to the inevitability of the new order, which had replaced the old.

Further Reading

Important sources are: V. Laurent, ed., *Syropoulos. Les 'Mémoires' du Grand Ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople, Sylvestre Syropoulos, sur le concile de Florence (1438–1439)* (Paris, 1971); L. Petit, K.A. Sideridès, and M. Jugie, eds., *Oeuvres complètes de Georges Scholarios*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1928–35). Key studies include: M.- H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400-vers 1472): Un intellectuel Orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 2008); M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* (Vienna, 1999); and C. Livanos, *Greek Tradition and Latin Influence in the work of George Scholarios* (Piscataway, NJ 2006).

⁹⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, 266.10–17.

⁹⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, 266.36–67.1.

⁹⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, 272.25–8.

⁹⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, 273.8–14.

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