
BOOK REVIEWS

GABRIEL-NICOLAE BLEAHU

Răsăriteni și Apuseeni la Conciliul de la Konstanz (1414–1418)

(Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance, 1414–1418)

Preface by Ioan-Vasile Leb

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GABRIEL-NICOLAE Bleahu is a young researcher and a graduate of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, where he completed his undergraduate degree in Pastoral Theology and two master's programs. He further advanced his academic training with a PhD in Theology, which he successfully defended at the same institution. His work, *Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance (1414–1418)*, is based on his doctoral thesis and was published under the auspices of the Center for Transylvanian Studies of the Romanian Academy.

Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance (1414–1418) analyzes the interactions between the Eastern and Western Churches within this pivotal assembly. While the subject has been extensively researched in Western historiography, Eastern scholarship has offered relatively few contributions. Therefore, approaching the topic from the perspective of Orthodox specialists in ecclesiastical history is essential to ensure a balanced interpretation of a subject that involves both Christian traditions.

Professor Ioan-Vasile Leb emphasizes this in the preface: “A fundamental work

by an Orthodox researcher was long overdue—a bold endeavor undertaken by the young doctoral candidate Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu. He has succeeded in producing the first doctoral thesis on this topic within the Orthodox milieu, adhering to all the historical-theological methodological principles required for research of this magnitude.” Consequently, the Orthodox perspective on the subject is the work's primary strength.

Structurally, the work comprises six main chapters of varying lengths, each subdivided into several sections. In the introduction, the author highlights the relevance and originality of his research, subsequently published in this volume. He also presents the primary sources and the current state of research on the Council of Constance, covering both international and Romanian historiography.

The second chapter, titled “Historical Context,” analyzes the primary causes of the Papal Schism. The author demonstrates that at the turn of the 15th century, the Western Christian world faced both spiritual and secular decline, culminating in the ecclesiastical rupture caused by the simultaneous election of two popes. The resulting tensions profoundly destabilized Christendom, prompting various efforts to resolve the crisis. In this regard, the councils of Pisa (1409), Como (1413), and Lodi (1413) set the stage for a major assembly intended to settle these disputes. The choice fell on Constance, a city under the control of Sigismund of Luxembourg, who sought to decisively influence the proceedings.

The third chapter, "The Council of Constance (1414–1418)," captures the pivotal moments and crises that marked the assembly's proceedings. The author provides details that illuminate the tense atmosphere, noting, for instance, that Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg "kept others waiting in unimaginable cold, as if playing the role of God's messenger," thereby assuming the symbolic mantle of "savior of the Church." This chapter also explores a wide range of issues, from the flight of Pope John XXIII to the political and procedural mechanisms, alongside doctrinal disputes and proposed reform directions.

The fourth chapter, "The Reception of the Council of Constance," focuses specifically on the ecclesiastical sphere, analyzing the Western world's reception of the assembly's decisions. It also examines the shifts in Pope Martin V's authority within Latin Christendom.

The fifth chapter, "Union with the Greeks?," addresses the question posed by its title. While the Council of Constance focused on resolving the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) and combating heresies, Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu emphasizes that it also addressed relations with Eastern Christendom. The author examines the attempts at unification, the theological dialogue, and the historical context of the schism between the two branches of Christianity.

The sixth chapter, titled "Future Research," though the shortest, provides a perspective on the author's intended research directions. Among these are the analysis of the correspondence between Sigismund of Luxembourg and Manuel II Palaiologos, the study of Ulrich von Richental's *Chronicle*, the Orthodox re-

sponse to the ecclesiology of Constance, the evolution of the conciliarist movement, and the exploration of specialized literature in the digital sphere.

The author concludes that no reconciliation between Greeks and Latins was achieved at the Council of Constance, as no official agreement was signed and the Byzantine delegations were composed predominantly of laypersons. Consequently, the assembly failed to bridge the divide between the two Churches and did not lead to the restoration of unity.

Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu's work stands out for its rigorous and well-structured approach to a topic at the intersection of ecclesiastical history and East–West relations. The study's primary merit lies in its Orthodox perspective on a subject predominantly treated in Western scholarship, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the event. Although the Council of Constance did not achieve a union between the Eastern and Western Churches, Bleahu's analysis underscores the crucial role of dialogue and historical context. This volume represents a valuable contribution to church history, while opening new avenues for research and inviting a critical reevaluation of the relations between the two Christian traditions.



MARIUS-ROBERT MIHALACHE