

## The First Political Printed Book in Europe: The *Epistolae et Orationes Contra Turcos* by Cardinal Bessarion

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### Abstract

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In this paper, we examine Greek cardinal Bessarion's (1403-1472) last work, *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos*, in 1470. Bessarion's book was printed for first time to the Press of Sorbonne's University under the auspices of the professor and humanist Guillaume Fichet, who made sure so as this work to arrive in the hands of all powerful European sovereigns. Regarding the present paper, it was used the third work's edition of Bessarion, which took place in Rome, in 1543. Our work, as it is obvious from its title, is consisted of two basic parts: a) the letters (*Epistolae*) and b) the speeches (*Orationes*). The first part counts four letters (the Fichet's letter to Edward the fourth and the three letters of Bessarion to Fichet, to the Italian sovereigns and to the abbot Bessarion respectively), while the second section is consisted of two admonitory speeches of Bessarion to the Italian rulers and the latin translation of Demosthenes' first Olynthiac speech, which was elaborated by the cardinal himself. In his swan song, Bessarion reveals his wisdom, as well as his deep grief and sore for his homeland which was captured. He also exhibits the attempts of the struggle against Turks, which were resultless.

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**Keywords:** Bessarion, Fichet, crusade against Ottomans, post-byzantine Latinitas, Greek scholars, Renaissance

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1470, Chalcis, which was then under Venetian rule, fell into the hands of Mehmed II, who had already conquered the largest part of the Peloponnese, Macedonia, Thrace and the kingdoms of Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The fall of Chalcis (Negro Ponte) shocked Christians everywhere. It was becoming apparent that the aim of the Turkish conquerors was to advance towards Western Europe. With their westward march (from Constantinople to Chalcis), the Ottomans were showing that they would not stop at Greece. Italy was in imminent danger.

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At least this was what cardinal Bessarion believed (see Calogeras, 1893, p. 10; Loenertz, 1948, p. 1492; Sathas, 1868, 25-35; Vast, 1878; Curou, 1947 and 1949; Mohler, 1967),<sup>2</sup> who had received word of the Venetian defeat on the 4th of August 1470. Overwhelmed he composes in Latin language, that very year, a body (corpus) of epistles and orations, which has come to be known as *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos*. His aim is to rally the Christian nations of Europe towards a holy crusade against the Ottomans. It should be noted that this was not the first attempt of the cardinal from Black Sea to awaken the European leaders but the last. Other fiery orations and visits to the powerful courts of Europe, which had come before, had proved futile.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Greek cardinal Bessarion was born in Trebizond (1402 or 1403 A.C.) and died in Ravenna at 19<sup>th</sup> November 1472. His cosmic name was Ioannis or Vasileios. He was ordained Orthodox Bishop of Nicaea in Asia Minor in 1437 and for that reason he was called until his death "Niceno". As member of Emperor's Ioannis 8<sup>th</sup> and Patriarch's embassy, he took part in Ferrara – Florence Conference (1438-1439), where he played a great role in supporting the Union of Orthodox and Catholic Churches. After the signature of the *Term of the Union*, which he composed for the Byzantine side in 1439, he returned in Constantinople, where he remained until 1440. During this trip, Pope Eugene 4<sup>th</sup> awarded him with the tilte of cardinal, as reward for his efforts for the ecclesiastic Union. Beeing now *persona non grata* in Constantinople, as supporter of the Union, in 1440 he abandoned Byzantium forever and settled in Italy, where, undistracted, he devoted himself in his two main and related purposes of his life: a) the ecclesiastic Union and b) the beginning of a holy crusade against the Ottomans with further intentions the liberation of Byzantium and the repulse of the tremendous ottoman danger which threatened entire Europe. His adherence in Cattolism was definitve. Pope honored him with many titles and axioms: abbot of Grottaferrate abbey, "patron" of Great Vasileios' monks in Italy, bishop of Sabine, archbishop of Tuscli and Latin Patriarch of Constantinople. He wrote many works (theologicals, philosophics, speeches pro the anti-Turkish crusade etc.) in Greek and Latin language. His legacy for the Marciana Library in Venice is famous (482 Greek and 264 Latin manuscripts). For this donation, see Labowsky (1966), pp. 159-162.

<sup>3</sup> For example, *cf.* the epistle at Venice's doge, Francisco Foscari in 13<sup>th</sup> July of 1453 (see Vast, 1878, 454-456, where Bessarion in deep emotion describes Constantinople's fall and ferocities of the Ottomans, his speech in conference of Europeans leaders in Mantua in 1459 (see Palmieri (1895), 49-65, Vast, *op. cit.*, 238-242, Mohler, 1967, 1<sup>st</sup> vol., 285-292 and Curou, 1949, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol., 44-65), where he spoke with passion for the necessity of the holy war against Ottomans, his embassies and his orations at Nuremberg, Worms (Vormatia), Vienna (see Mohler, *op. cit.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> vol., 376-403), his speeches at another Venice's doge, Christophoro Mauro, in July of 1463 (see Vast, *op. cit.*, 269-280, Mohler, *op. cit.*, 1<sup>st</sup> vol., 312-316 and Curou, *op. cit.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol., 109-134). We must point out that Bessarion was not the only Greek scholar of Renaissance which addressed his appeals towards the powerful leaders of Europe for undertaking a holy crusade against Ottomans. Others were Andronice Callisto with his work *Monody* for the miserable Constantinople (in Greek), Emmanuel Georgilas with his poem *The fall of Constantinople* (in Greek), Michael Apostolis with his *Address* (in Greek) towards the German Emperor Ferdinard 3<sup>rd</sup>, Michael Maroulo Tarchaniotes, which composes an encomiastic poem in Latin for Charles 8<sup>th</sup> of France, Marcos Mousouros with a poem in Greek language which he puts before his edition of Plato's works and addressed it to Pope Leo 10<sup>th</sup>, Ioannis Gemisto, perhaps Pletho Gemistos' grandson, with his poem *Protrepicon et Prognosticon* in Latin towards Pope Leo 10<sup>th</sup>, Janus Lascarses with his appeals at kings of France, Charles 8<sup>th</sup> and Ludovique 12<sup>th</sup> and towards the German Emperor Maximilian 1<sup>st</sup>, Arsenios Apostoles, Michael Apostoles's son, which approached with his pleas for an anti-Turkish crusade the Pope Clemens 7<sup>th</sup>. For an analytical description of Greek scholars' appeals (Bessarion's too) towards powerful European leaders and Popes, see Manousakas, 1965.

After many revisions of his work (see Pappas, 2005, 22-24), he sends it to his friend Guillaume Fichet, a French humanist and dean of the University of Sorbonne, along with a letter (dated in 13<sup>th</sup> December 1470) asking him to circulate the work to the powerful leaders of Europe.

Fichet added the letter addressed to himself and a letter of his own to the various powerful men in Europe (Edward IV of England, the Duke of Burgundy, Charles, King Luis 11th of France, the Duke of Savoy, Amadaeus 9th), acting as an introduction to the work of the cardinal.<sup>4</sup> He also published the work for the first time (*editio princeps*) in Paris in 1471, at the printing house of Marin Crantz, Ulrich Gering and Michael Friburger, which he himself had established (see Meserve, 2003, 521-588). Bessarion's call to arms against the Ottomans is, in other words, an *incunabulum* but also the first political text ever printed in Europe (Meserve, 2003, 525-526).<sup>5</sup> As seen from the title, it is made up of two main segments: a) the letters (*Epistolae*) and b) the speeches (*Orationes*). The first segment includes four letters: Fichet's letter to Edward IV of England, Bessarion's letter to Fichet (which are both additions to the work of the bishop) and letters from the bishop to the leaders of the Italian states and to his friend the abbot of the same name Bessarion (which were part of the corpus sent to Fichet). The second segment includes two orations urging the Italian leaders to act and a Latin translation of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Olythiacs* speech by Demosthenes, which was made by Bessarion and was accompanied by his introduction and epilogue addressed again, to the Italian leaders (see Pappas, 2012). Three more publications followed.

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<sup>4</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that depending on the reputation of each recipient, the material that is printed Bessarion's book is variable (for example, parchment for most glorious, but plain paper for less known persons). There was also variety in the way of writing these introductory letters: others were handwritten, but others were printed. Different copies which have survived appeal to different Christian rulers, thing that brings big variety in this part of *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos*. Fichet's introductory letters were necessary for two reasons: first, because they explain to the rulers of central and northern Europe, why should read Bessarion's speeches, which were not addressed to them, but to the Italian princes. Secondly, because there Fichet sets out the reasons why he and not Bessarion, sent the *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos* to them. Thanks to his writings, of course, Fichet's contribution to the dissemination of Bessarion's project was further emphasized.

<sup>5</sup> *Incunabulum* is the nomination for the first printed books. It should be noted that in 1471 *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos* translated in Italian language by Ludovico Carbone of Ferrara, a pupil of Theodore Gazis and classmate of Demetrius Chalkokondyles. This translation was printed in Carbone's homeland.

The second in 1537, in Rome, by Antonius Bladus Asulanus (see Legrand, 1962, 366-367), the third in 1543, again in Rome by Franciscus Priscianensis (Francesco Priscianese) from Florence and the fourth, in 1593, by I. Hofmann (The exact title of this edition is: *Orationes duae accuratissimae de Bessarionis Nicaeni Cardinalis olim ad principes Italiae habitae, quarum una de periculis imminentibus propter Turcicas irruptiones, altera de discordiis sedandis et bello in Turcam decernendo, ad eosdem, perdocte tractat*). Our research was based on the publication of 1543.<sup>6</sup> There is also one other edition, entitled *All the works found by wisest cardinal* (in Greek) which published in 1965 (Tumholti, Brepols).

The 1543 edition includes 36 non numbered pages,<sup>7</sup> the last of which is blank. Its dimensions are 22 x 15 cm and it has the following title: "*Bessarionis Niceni Cardinalis orationes de gravissimis periculis, quae Rei publicae Christianae a Turca iam tum impendere providebat*".<sup>8</sup> It is also decorated with a xylographic, printed border, designed, as stated, by Francesco de Nanto. It is noteworthy that this title does not inform us of all the book's contents. It only mentions the main body i.e. the two orations and not the segment of the Epistolae. Nor does it mention the Latin translation of the oration by Demosthenes. The title, therefore, provides little information about the publication: the name of the author, the type of the work (*orationes*), its content and the target audience (Italian princes). There is no information about the place, time and printing house of the publication. We are informed of these in the penultimate page of the book, where at the base of the page we read the following: "*Romae in aedibus Francisci Priscianensis Florentini M D X L I I*".<sup>9</sup> Thus, the book was published at Rome by Fr. Priscianensis from Florence, in 1543.

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<sup>6</sup> This particular copy on which this paper is based is located in Central Library of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (registration number 35, Tricoglou donation). Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos are contained in *Patrologia Graeca* also (vol. 161, pp. 641-767). This edition comes from the copy that Fichet sent to the Duke of Savoy, Amadaeus 9th, in 1471. The introductory letter, then, is different from that which was addressed to Edward IV and we study here. Also, Bessarion's comments which he noted in the marginal of each page of Demosthenes's translation they are missing from the text of *Patrologia Graeca*.

<sup>7</sup> From here and hereafter, when we quote to the pages of the book, we will use Arabic numbers in parentheses, because pages are not numbered. For example: p. (1), p. (2), pp. (15)-(16) etc.

<sup>8</sup> p. (1).

<sup>9</sup> p (70).

The first segment of the book includes Fichet's introductory letter to Edward the IV of England, in 1471, which begins with the following salutation: "*Magnanimis principibus ditionis ducibus, comitibus, marchionibus, ac omnibus viris praeclaris, Guilielmus Fichetus Parisiensis Theologus doctor, patria vero Sabaudus, secundos optat successus*".<sup>10</sup> We see then, that at the beginning of the letter Fichet addresses a general salutation. Being a faithful student of Cicero (See *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.4.7-3.5.9.), the Frenchman gives his speech the form of a proper oration: (*exordium, narratio, confirmatio, confutatio, conclusio*). In the first part of the letter (*exordium*), Fichet addresses the English king and his dignitaries and makes the first mention of Bessarion's work.<sup>11</sup> Then follows the *narratio*, where Fichet explains the reason for writing this letter and mentions that Bessarion has given him the task of making his work known, referring to the letter which cardinal had sent to him on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1470.<sup>12</sup> In the *confirmatio*, Fichet presents the main idea of Bessarion's work: the leaders must reconcile with each other, rule their peoples peacefully, and of course, declare war on the great enemy of Christianity. If they do this, they and their own will be given great glory.<sup>13</sup> Their achievements will be greater than those of their forefathers (*confutatio*).<sup>14</sup> In the conclusion of the letter the Frenchman urges the English rulers to hear the voice of the cardinal, to be moved by his plea and his "*gravissimam auctoritatem*", but also to think of the fame they will gain if they undertake the holly crusade.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> p. (3).

<sup>11</sup> p. (3): "Nunquam rex iclyte, vosque principes magnifici brevius quicquam vestrae severinitates legerunt, sed ne forte quidem audiverunt, quod aequae vobis ad rem, ac gloriam accederet, atque Bessarionis Niceni Cardinalis opus".

<sup>12</sup> p. (3): "Quod ad vestrum quenque non illius tantum nomine mitto, verum meis etiam hisce litteris (perinde ac coram eloquerer) vos ad concordiam, bellum que foris gerendum precario cohortor. Ille nanque peropportuno suo consilio (quod ad principes Italos primum perscripsit) vestras quoque severinitates (quarum est amantissimus) voluit esse participites. Et quod vestra pro gloria constituit, mihi superioribus mensibus exequendum imposuit. Quod litteris eius ad me paulo post ad verbum transcriptis, ipsi facile pernoscetis".

<sup>13</sup> pp. (3)-(4): "Quippe qui certissimam rationem excogitavit, qua mutuis affectibus, mutuisque beneficiis vestrum quisque quenque prosequi maxime potui. Omnes regere subditos sibi populos pacifice, que de crudelibus nostri creatoris hostibus agere triumphos. Alter ultra pacis, ac belli nobis omnibus (qui summopere vos colimus) optanda res est; nominis vestri, Christiani que perfidis hostibus apprime nocitura. Vobis, ac praeclaris quidem vestris familiis memoriam multo celeberrimam, multoque longissimam allatura".

<sup>14</sup> p. (4): "Neque vestri maiores (quos tot, ac tantos oculis vestris quotidie debetis una quidem in re, ac altera proponere) vos rerum a se gestarum gloria superabunt".

<sup>15</sup> p. (4): "Sed ne mihi quidem, quem is imposuit (vos id cohortandi reliquus est locus), si modo Bessarioni, dum vobis optime consulit, tantisper auscultatis, utque melliflue fane, quo fonte suo manat, vos intus, nedum in cute satis imbuet, mirum que in modum delectabit. Vos igitur a me non plurimum verbis, sed precibus tantum allecti, permoti gravissima Bessarionis auctoritate, vestra gloria, re que ipsa

Finally, he closes the letter with a salutation and wish: may things go favourably for the English rulers and even more favourably, if they follow Bessarion's advice that will lead them to the highest glory.<sup>16</sup> Then the date (written in full) and the place where the letter was written are mentioned.<sup>17</sup> At the end Fichet notes the name of the recipient and offers him a dedicative epigram.<sup>18</sup>

The second segment of the work, which is the letter from the bishop to Fichet, follows. It starts with the salutation: "*Reverendo, et doctissimo patri magistro Guilielmo Ficheto sacrae Theologiae professori in collegio Sorbonae Parisii amico nostro clarissimo Bessario episcopus Sabinensis Cardinalis Nicaenus Patriarcha Constantipolitanus*".<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of the letter Bessarion mentions that he had been informed that Fichet not only studies philosophy and theology but also the art of rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> He then states that the work, which follows (*Orationes*), belongs to the genre of orations and that its aim is to highlight the great danger facing Italy and all Christians at that point in time.<sup>21</sup> Following the motto of humility, Bessarion purposely underestimates himself, and writes to Fichet not to expect to find in his work the "clarity" or the power and the virtues of a rhetorical speech. What is most important is for Fichet to comprehend the great "tempest of misfortune" that threatens all of Christianity, so as to be able to present the situation to the king of France and to others and to convince them to act, which is something they can and indeed are obliged to do.<sup>22</sup>

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satis (ut arbitror) persuasi, quae monet ille, facietis. Quae vel maxime rogat, ne dum legetis saepius haec. Quibus profecto vobis secunda, hostibus adversa fata portenduntur".

<sup>16</sup> p. (4): "Valete. Vobis quae fausta sint omnia, sed multo quidem faustissima, si Bessarionem ad summam gloriam perducturum sequimini".

<sup>17</sup> p. (4): "Nonis sextilibus anno uno, ac septuagesimo, quadrigentesimo quae supra millesimum Parisii scriptum aedibus Sorbonae".

<sup>18</sup> p. (5): "Eduardo regi. Fausta future tibi rex accipe Bessarionis | Munera, quae prosint ac foris, atque domi".

<sup>19</sup> p. (5).

<sup>20</sup> p. (5): "Reverende, et doctissime Pater, amice noster clarissime, audimus non solum in philosophia et sacrarum litterarum cognitione vos elaborare, sed etiam in eloquentiae studiis dicendique ratione diu versatos, eaque mirifice delectatos".

<sup>21</sup> p. (5): "Quo in genere etsi nihil habemus quod magnopere cupere debeatis, tamen mittere statuimus orationes quasdam hoc tempore a nobis editas pro gravissimis periculis quae Italiae Christianisque omnibus imminet".

<sup>22</sup> pp. (5)-(6): "Non magis quidem ut vel sermonis puritatem vel orationis vim ac praestantiam desideretis, quam ut intelligatis quanta malorum procella in Christianae reipublicae capita et fortunas impendet, remque et apud serenissimum regem et apud alios qui opem ita maxime ferre debent, ut possunt, explicetis totam ac persuadeatis".

What is, of course, evident, is that the enemy will not only set Italy aflame but also the whole of Western Europe.<sup>23</sup> Something must be done because danger lurks: the European kingdoms will fall into the hands of the conquerors, the Christian religion will disappear and all Christians will be slaughtered.<sup>24</sup> The letter ends with the salutation and the inscription of the date and the place where it was written: "*Valete. Ex urbe die. XIII Decembris. MCCCCLXX*".<sup>25</sup>

The third letter of the work follows, in which the bishop from Black Sea addresses to the Italian rulers. It begins with the inscription: "*Bessario Cardinalis Nicenus inclytis, atque illustrissimis Italiae principibus*".<sup>26</sup> This part of the work functions as an "introductory note" of the author, since the reasons which moved him to compose the work are mentioned again as well as its contents. At the beginning he narrates a coincidence that happened to him: he had just been informed of the fall of Chalcis to the Ottomans and he was so distressed that he could hardly breathe. Coincidentally, he just then received a letter from his friend (the abbot) of the same name Bessarion, in which he informed him that the Duke of Naples had decided to move against the Ottomans.<sup>27</sup> The cardinal wrote back to the abbot and in fact asked him to show his letter to the Duke.<sup>28</sup> The Greek scholar mentions this event in order to justify the existence of his letter to the abbot Bessarion, which follows his own letter to the Italian rulers. He then presents some information about the two orations which can be found after the letter to the monk Bessarion.

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<sup>23</sup> p. (6): "Quod potius acerbum est, quam obscurum, non exarsuram Italiam tantis malorum incendiis, quin flammaram globos longius evomat".

<sup>24</sup> p. (6): "Id ne accidat, cum regnorum omnium causa optare debent, quorum salus in discrimen adducitur, tum propter immortalem Deum cuius religio sanctissima vexatur et trahitur ad interimum, magna Christianorum omnium clade".

<sup>25</sup> p. (6).

<sup>26</sup> p. (6).

<sup>27</sup> pp. (6)-(7): "Cum Nonis Sextilibus, illustrissimi principes, infelicissimum illud novum Euboicae eversionis ad nos primum allatum fuisset, essemque, supra quam dici potest, animo anxius atque sollicitus, ut vix respirandi causam viderer habiturus, accidit forte fortuna ut eo ipso die, dum essem ita affectus, abbatis cuiusdam viri optimi Bessarionis litteras a Neapoli, ubi nunc monasterio Sancti Severini, ex consortio beatae Justinae, praefectus, acceperim, quibus ad me scribebat maiestatem regiam miro quodam animi studio ad propugnationem Christianae fidei et immanissimi hostis nostril interitum ardentem atque inflammatum esse".

<sup>28</sup> p. (7): "Illis mox respondi, et ut litteras meas Celsitudini regiae ostenderet, monui".

In the first oration, he discusses the dangers facing the Christian community, while in the second he talks about the obligation that all Christian leaders have: to reconcile and declare war on the vicious enemy.<sup>29</sup> In addition, in order to convince everyone that the advice he gives in his two speeches is sound, Bessarion adds an oration which had been given in a similar situation in the past. The speech belongs to the Greek Demosthenes. The translation from Greek to Latin had been made by the cardinal himself, so that the words of this great man could be understood by all.<sup>30</sup> All this material is sent to the Italian rulers so that they can read it themselves, but also to offer it to others for them to consult. The Italian princes must listen to Bessarion and try to follow his advice, if they are to govern their kingdoms in prosperity, now and in the future.<sup>31</sup>

The letter to the abbot and monk Bessarion comprises the fourth segment of the *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos*. It is lengthier than the previous ones and takes up seven pages. It is a moving letter,<sup>32</sup> in which the cardinal lets all his bitterness show, about the pleas he had been making in vain to the European leaders all these years. Here he mentions two issues, which comprise the subjects of the two orations that follow: a) the Turkish danger that threatens Italy immediately (1<sup>st</sup> oration) and b) the compelling need for the Italian leaders to reconcile their differences and act in unity (2<sup>nd</sup> oration). Bessarion begins his letter addressing its recipient, the monk of the same name, whose letter had reached him at the same time he had learned the terrible news about the fall of Chalkis. When he read it, he was convinced by the assurances of his friend that the Duke of Naples Ferdinand was ready to declare war on the Ottomans, he was encouraged by it and decided to answer it.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> p. (7): "Duas praeterea orationes pro tantae rei magnitudine ac periculis Christianae reipublicae imminentibus edidi: altera demonstratum est fortunam periculaque ista ad omnes pertinere; altera vos, Italiae principes, ad concordiam bellumque in hostes decernendum adhortatus sum. Id enim meo convenire officio putavi".

<sup>30</sup> p. (7): "At cum facilius auditores persuaderi soleant quo gravior auctoritas et fides dicendi tribuitur, Demosthenis, philosophi nobilissimi summique oratoris, orationem quam in eius generis causa habuit e Graeca lingua in Latinam converti, plane ut omnes intelligent me neque inutilia, neque amplissimorum virorum opinionibus aliena consulere".

<sup>31</sup> p. (7): "Ea omnia vobis mittenda censui, ut aut ipsi legatis, cum per publica negotia, quae multa quidem et gravia sunt, licuerit, aut aliis legenda atque referenda tradatis. Sunt enim cunctis vobis principibus communia, qui, ut feliciter huic nobilissimae provinciae praeestis, ita in posterum felicius eam regatis, et nos optamus, et vos conari debetis".

<sup>32</sup> Cyrou, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 197 describes it as "one of his philological and political masterpieces".

<sup>33</sup> p. (8): "Deploranti nuper mihi Christianorum hominum calamitates et acerbissimam Chalcidis Euboicae eversionem, litterae abs te redditae sunt in quibus cum ea legissem quae de regiae maiestatis animo studioque non mediocri ad sedem Christi tutandam perscripsisti, collegi paululum mentem et respiravi, coepique optare vehementer ut re praestet quod verbis ipsum promississe affirmas".



Then the elderly proponent of the crusades criticizes the Christian nations for their selfish indifference, which has allowed the enemy to mark so many victories against them and has even allowed him to covet Italy itself. In fact, the bishop is certain that the Turks will conquer it, if the squabbles between the Italian nations do not cease immediately.<sup>34</sup> The fall of Constantinople was a heavy blow to Christianity. Bessarion is full of anger and sadness about the fall of his homeland and says distinctly that a mere fifty thousand ducats and a few thousand soldiers would have been enough to save Constantinople and with it the whole of Christian Europe. However, none of the Italian states sent reinforcements to Byzantium. The princes of Italy thought it was not their business. They did not realize that the Christian strongholds (Trebizond, Caria, Cilicia, Mysia, Epirus, a large part of Illyria and in the end, Chalcis) would fall one after the other and that the enemy would become stronger and stronger. Showing his scholarly abilities Bessarion likens the Italian leaders to Homer's Ulysses who, in the episode with Polyphemus, was happy because the Cyclops would devour him last.<sup>35</sup> The defeat of the Italians in Euboea was decisive. The Ottomans now rule the waves, pillage the islands and slaughter their inhabitants. However, the hatred among the Italian nations is so great that many Italians thought the defeat of the Venetians would benefit them. The once powerful kingdom had now weakened considerably and as a result they were not in danger from it anymore. Such was the irrational hatred and the foolish hostility that divided the Italians.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> pp. (8)-(9): "Sed, nos infelices! Vereor ne criminibus nostris ab immortalis Deo deserti, crudeliora praeterea et graviora patiamur; demum, percunctando, alter alterum exspectando, culpam in alios rejiciendo, ad ultimam labamur perniciem. O miseros Christianos! O caecos Italos! [...] Non exspectemus certe Turcum Italiam invadentem. Huc spectat, crede mihi, hoc agit, ad hoc se comparat, hoc conatu omni et studio contendit. Et dicam, dicam plane, pro dolor! Assequitur quod cupit, nisi a somno capitali, quo paulatim exstinguitur, expergiscatur, nisi concors atque uno consensus fortiter totisque viribus tanto furori resistat, nisi omissis sigmentis, causis quas iactare solet, ut iustae videantur, inani verborum fuco, re ipsa, opera, armis, crucis hostes adoriatur".

<sup>35</sup> pp. (9)-(10): "Versabatur olim in discrimine Byzantium. Nulla Italiae pars misit subsidia, rem alienam putabant omnes. Periculum ad se non pertinere falso credebant. Atqui postea senserunt quot mala experti sunt, quot Christianorum fortunae, opes, imperia in Turcorum dominationem redacta; Trapezuntiorum, Sinopensium, Mitylenorum, Peloponnesiorum, Cariae, Ciliciae, Mysiae, Pannoniae inferioris, Epirotarum, Illyricorum magna ex parte, postremo Euboicorum. Quid ita? Quia noluerunt quinquaginta millium aureorum sumptu in tempore opitulari Byzantio et ab ea communem hostem propulsare. [...] At non intelligis tuis viribus (tuae enim Christianorum vires sunt), tuis, inquam, exhaustis viribus tanto te imbecilliorum et inferiorem fore, quanto hostis tuus superior ac potentior evadet, cum quo tandem tibi dimicandum est. Satis enim videberis ab hoste impetrasse, si quod Polyphemus Ulyssi, ut in fabulis dederit, ut ultimus conficiare".

<sup>36</sup> p. (10): "Obsessa Chalcis in Euboea, urbs quondam florentissima, unde Cumas in Campania deducta est colonia, unde homines manarunt qui Neapolim incoluerunt, vi capta, eversa, ferro ignique

Then the cardinal expresses his bitterness and frustration, about the pleas he had been making in vain to the European leaders all these years to start the holy crusade. He addresses his friend and urges him to leave Italy with him, as it is certain that the all-powerful Turks will conquer it. And they will be hostile towards the cardinal because they know of his efforts to start a war against them. The abbot Bessarion will be in the same danger as a friend of the Greek clergyman. But the instigator of the idea of the crusade had never been able to harm them, try as he might. All his efforts had been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, we must, as he writes, "put anger aside!".<sup>37</sup> But when he was an emissary of the pope to Bologna and the tragic news of the fall of Constantinople arrived, he had foreseen the ills that would later come. However, everyone had said that the elderly Bessarion was ranting and raving. Then he was frivolous, quaint and insane but now all his fears had been confirmed.<sup>38</sup> If the Italian leaders were united, even he, an old clergyman would go into battle. The way things stand though, all is futile. The cardinal advises the abbot to leave the care of the country into the hands of the rulers and abandon them, as they had done them in the past. The best course of action for the two men of god would be to leave Italy asking god to forgive their sins.<sup>39</sup>

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consumpta. Classis Turcorum amplissima per totum Hellespontum vagatur; fugatus navalis Venetorum exercitus aufugit, cedit loco, latitat. Turci victoriae furorem superbissimum in omnes insulas illas debacchantur, avertunt omnem ordinem, aetatem, sexum in praedam; vastant agros, depopulantur. Quid ad nos? Venetis curae sit, recte cum iis actum, utile enim esset, si gravioribus incommodis conflictarentur: quietius caeteri et securius viveremus. Tantum otio nostro accedit, quantum illis imperii demitur; si quis qui malis istis ingemiscat, is Venetus, Venetorum partibus favet, non audiendus, contemnendus. O turpem hominum ignorantiam, o vaecordiam, o insanabile odium, o inimicitias stultas et inauditas quae in auctorum viscera saeviunt, quamvis in alios susceptae videantur!".

<sup>37</sup> pp. (10)-(11): "Veni Bessario, fugiamus simul. Proximus tu es periculo: ego proximus. Paulo enim post praesto erit Brundusii navalis Turcorum exercitus, praesto Neapoli, praesto Romae. Iam ita mari dominatur, Venetis cedentibus, quemadmodum terra. Ita istis consultantibus, traicient in Apuliam multa militum millia, quibus abundant; ab iis quotidie fient incursiones in agrum Neapolitanum, in Romanum. Cedamus, inquam, tanto turbini, ne nos pariter hic opprimat. Infensi illi quidem sunt nomini meo, et tibi propter me, tametsi nullo eos unquam affeci incommodo aut lacesivi, non sane quia noluerim, sed quod non potui. Locutus sum multa, cum alibi, tum in senatu. Nunquam destiti suadere, monere, praedicere, rogare. Non defuit voluntas, quae inimicissima illis; hanc acriter ulciscuntur. Veni, demus locum irae".

<sup>38</sup> pp. (11)-(12): "Delirat Bessario, insanity, senex, frigidus, timidus. Profecto, mi Bessario, non insanit Bessario. Tu es mihi testis, cum Boloniae essemus, et adhuc Paschalis nuncupareris, atque allatus esset infelicissimus ille de urbis Byzantinae excidio nuntius, ea omnia, quae postea consecuta sunt, me future praedixisse [...] Tum sibilis vulgi, honestorum moribus explodebar. Iudicabant dementem, somniis deditum. Risus de me non parvus, ut scis, excitatus est. Sed tamen, proh dolor! Evenerunt omnia, ut praedixi. Caveant, qui haec audiunt, ne idem accidat in posterum. Non timidus Bessario in subeundis periculis: timidus in prospiciendis".

<sup>39</sup> p. (12): "Posset adhuc inermis, monachus senex, maiorem animum et prae se ferre et praestare, quam isti persuasum habeant, modo Christiani principes vellent facere quod possunt, quod debent. Iret ipse in hostem cum militibus, cum cohortibus armatis, cum propugnatoribus crucis ita quidem instructis, ut

But Bessarion could never leave his second homeland at the mercy of the enemy. He does not stop urging the rulers to protect their kingdoms, making any effort necessary and without even considering a peace treaty with the barbaric enemies. No friendship could ever exist between Christians and people who commit sacrilege. The Ottomans want to conquer everything in their way, until they reach Rome. The nations of the North, the French, the British and the Germans will not come to their aid because they are far from danger and they do not think that the Italians will remain idle in the face of the Turkish threat. The Italians, on the other hand, believe that danger is still far away from them as well.<sup>40</sup> Bessarion, disappointed with the indecisiveness of the Italian rulers and with the hostility among them, closes the letter addressing its recipient. He urges him to abandon politics with him and return to monastic life. Anyway, the life left in both of them is little. Hopefully, some of their advice would later be useful to the Christian community. He has done his part in any way possible all these years but to no avail. The best thing for the two men now is to forsake worldly matters and devote themselves to god. He, who abundantly offers all creatures the means to survive, will surely do the same for these two "little men", who have little time left. At the end, he says goodbye to his friend.<sup>41</sup>

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vires et copiae, ut legiones hostiles postulant. Quid! Agitamus ne ista animo cunctis ad hoc dormientibus, dissidentibus inter sese, altero alterius perniciem optantibus et molientibus? Undene Bessario cum altero, senes ambo, incerta valetudine, viribus fracti, arcebunt tantum Turci impetum potentissimi, sanguinem Christianum anhelantis? Ineptum, stultum, inutile. Veni, migremus alio. Relinquamus principibus Italiae curam istam. Nam et illi nos reliquerunt, atque obaudiunt pericula. Optemus tamen adhuc ab immortalis Deo Salvatore nostro, ut criminibus nostris ignoscat. Et fidem, cuius et lator fuit et auctor, quam ad saeculorum finem nuquam occasuram pollicitus in tantis malis, quae nobis impendent, tum urgent, tueatur".

<sup>40</sup> pp. (12)-(14): "Non intermittamus hortari et rogare principes nostros, ut ad sacrorum, caeremoniarum, totius principatus ecclesiastici salutem, consilia omnia conferant, laborem, industriam, cogitationem, totum animum atque imperium. [...] Consulant rebus suis Tusci, Ligures, Insubres, Veneti: cogitent quo pacto ab hostilii saevitia tuti sunt. Nulla inter oves et lupos gratia. Nullum inter profanos homines et Christianos ius amicitiae. Non donis, non muneribus pacatur hostis immanis, barbarus. Nulla foederis religione tenetur perfidus, non movetur misericordia crudelissimus. Dominari, praeesse, imperare cupit. Cruore et flamma cuncta delere vult. Subiugare sibi cunctos studet. [...] Quis erit impedimento? [...] Galline, Britanni, Germani, exterae nationes? At procul sunt a periculo: non putant Italiam in medio periculo, magna rerum perturbatione versantem cessare, aut sopitam esse [...] Italine, quibus hostis imminet, quibus caedem, ferrum, servitatem, exilia denuntiat et ostendat? At nolunt, negligunt, non possunt adduci ut credant sese adeo propinquos esse periculo".

<sup>41</sup> p. (14): "Veni iam, Bessario; petamus solitudinem et deserta loca. Satis ex rerum civilium statu percepimus. Parum nobis vitae superest, et mihi qui senior sum, et tibi qui imbecillior. Si aliqua in re consiliorum nostrorum, vocis, corporis, reipublicae Christianae usus esset, manendum sane adhuc censerem, adhuc laborandum. Ego vero iam tot annis conatus quoad potui, nihil professione mea, nihil hac dignitate profeci. Tu, quamvis tui ordinis hominibus prosis, plus tamen proficies mecum in rebus contemplandis, ubi, si in desidia ista persistant Christiani, soli Deo vivamus, et nobis ipsis. Alat nos, qui

The four segments of the work which preceded (Fichet's letter to Edward IV of England, Bessarion's letter to Fichet and letters from the bishop to the leaders of the Italian states and to his friend the abbot Bessarion) comprise the first part of the work (*Epistolae contra Turcos*). From now on, comes the second part of the speeches (*Orationes contra Turcos*).

The first oration takes up seventeen pages and is entitled: "*Eiusdem Bessarionis Cardinalis ad Italos principes de periculis imminentibus oratio*".<sup>42</sup> It is counseling, and Bessarion has given it the form of a Demosthenes's *Philippic speech*.<sup>43</sup> It is divided into five sub-segments. The first comprises the introduction to the speech, and in it, Bessarion announces its subject. Here the cardinal shows a favourable attitude towards the Italian rulers, which is only logical, if we consider that this behavior is called for by the *captatio benevolentiae*. What he wants to achieve is for all to realize the danger facing Europe as a whole, and Italy first and foremost.<sup>44</sup> In the second segment the author discusses the genealogy of the Turks: this insignificant race of Ottomans is a weak remnant of the once powerful nation of the Seltzouks, unknown and forgotten in the depths of Cilicia, until they began their raids and appeared in Europe 130 years ago. Since then, their conquests have come one after the other and Christian nations and empires have collapsed, while other countries are in imminent danger with many provinces looted and destroyed. This obscure race has now become a powerful nation.<sup>45</sup>

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coeli volatilia et bestias agri sua clementia satiat. Neque grave aut difficile fore arbitror divinae liberalitani duos homunciones, perquam brevi tempore, quod nobis reliquum est, suis opibus sustentare. Vale!"

<sup>42</sup> p. (14).

<sup>43</sup> As Demosthenes, in this kind of his speeches, underlines the danger which will bring Philip B' and his army to his compatriots, in order to arouse them, but he simultaneously insists that it's not too late and that Philip is no means invincible, likewise Bessarion highlights the Ottoman danger, but without excluding any hope of salvation.

<sup>44</sup> pp. (14)-(15): "Multa sunt profecto, illustrissimi inclytique Italiae principes, quae ad rem, de qua consulimur cogitando, dicenda, ut facienda a nobis sunt. Ea omnia si persequi in praesentia velimus, nec nos servare modum in dicendo, nec vos in audiendo molestia carere poteritis [...] Id vero facile nos consecuturos arbitramur, si probabilibus documentis et rationibus ostendere poterimus maxima haec, quae impendere cernimus pericula, et gravissimos atque acerbissimos casus, non unius aut alterius, non trium esse, sed totius Christianae reipublicae, et in primis Italiae communia...".

<sup>45</sup> p. (16): "Juvat igitur primum omnia de origine et genere ac viribus Turcorum breviter aliquid commemorare, plane ut omnes intelligant. Haec Ottomanorum familia, minima Turcorum pars, a quam parvo humilique principio, quam brevi tempore, sollertia, diligentia ac vigilantia sua in tantum fastigium venerit, ut iam non modo reliquis nationibus, sed ipsi provinciarum nobilissimae potentissimaeque Italiae, et imperare assuetae, stupori ac formidini sit".

The third segment comprises the main part of the oration. Here Bessarion explains the main reason which compels the Sultan Mehmed II not to rest on his laurels and to continue ever forward with new military campaigns, which are necessary to his militaristic state. New conquests are necessary in order for him to suppress his rebellious allies in Asia and sustain fear in his enemies. He also has to keep the morale of his vast and costly army high. In short, all this is needed to ensure the existence of his empire. What is more, he knows that his big goal, to conquer Italy can now be achieved more easily than ever, due to the civil war that has broken out among the Italian kingdoms.<sup>46</sup>

In the fourth segment of the speech, Bessarion presents a list of the peoples who had attacked Italy, not only in ancient but also in more recent times. With this listing of past enemies (historical exempla), the writer aims to convince the Italian princes that the Turkish attack is unavoidable. His reasoning is as follows: their enemies so far have been much weaker than the Ottomans, but still they threatened the nation. How can the all powerful Sultan fail to do the same? The answer of course is that he cannot. The enemies mentioned are the Gauls, Goths, Pyrrhus of Epirus, Agesilaus's son, Archidamus, Hannibal, Attila, Totila, Saracens, Huns and Vandals. As he speaks of all these dangerous adversaries of the past, he intermittently compares them to the powerful Turks, who by far surpass them in financial and military might. At two points in the speech he mentions two of his sources: the Greek Plutarch and the Roman Livy.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> pp. (21)-(24): "Nihil certe est, quod eum possita ab hoc proposito remorari, praesertim dum Italos confidit nunquam uno consessu in se conspiraturos, nunquam adversus se arma sumpturos. Hic ille contentionibus spem suam confirmat, et quaecunque optat sibi facile pollicetur. [...] Habet enim in armis militem decretis perpetuisque stipendiis conductum, qui sive domi quiescat, sive foris bella gerat, idem accipit ab aerario militare stipendium, nullo principis sui sumptu, atque eo nomine singulis annis ad imperatorem suum accedere iure iurando adactus, et ei operam et laborem polliceri [...] Ne putaveris Turcum augendi imperii studiosum et cupidum; at certe est conservandi. Conservare vero non poterit, nisi augeat: siquidem regressurum est quod non progrediatur, lapsurum quod non surgat, ruiturum quod non maius efficiatur. Qua confirmatus opinione exercitum suum auget in dies, quem habet amplissimum. Aliena invadit, ne sua amittat. [...] Amittat ita cogitat, ut per hostium suorum dissensionem id se facile consecuturum speret".

<sup>47</sup> pp. (29)-(30): "Etenim dum antiqua memoria reputo, dum rerum gestarum seriem ad nostra usque tempora deduco, exteris gentes in Italiam prius arma intulisse, ingentesque invexisse calamitates quam ab Italia accepisse, plane comperio. Nam, ut Gallos omittam, qui vel eo tempore, quo ad Clusium pugnatum est, ut Plutarchus noster tradit, vel ducentis ante annis; ut Livio Romano placet, in Italiam duxerunt exercitum, parva manus Gothorum, ex Thracia Pannoniaque erumpens exercitu collectitio, in Italiam venit, vastatisque Italiae agris, incensis urbibus, haec ipsa moenia ceperunt, incendio, ferro, caede omnia complentes. [...] Quid, si antiqua consecrari libet, Pyrrhi luctuosum adventum commemorem? Quid Alexandri Molossi? Quid Archidami Agesilai filii? Quid Annibalis busta? Nimis

After these exempla, we reach at the epilogue (fifth segment of the oration). Bessarion, at this point, compares Italy (which is under threat) to a ship in danger of a massive storm at sea, which is an allegory beloved by ancient Greek and Latin poets (for example, see Alcaeus, *frag.* 326 (ed. Lobel-Page) and Horace, *Carm.* 1.14.). The cardinal fears that this flood of insatiable barbarians will sweep away all Christians in its path. The Italian leaders must not make peace with the infidel Sultan because he will break his word for sure. If they want peace, they must go to war against him, since it is certain that he has his eye on Italy, as the author has shown many times. Bessarion ends his speech urging the Italian princes to oppose the momentum of the enemy and repel him, so as to offer Italy freedom and to ensure the salvation of all Christians.<sup>48</sup> Here the first *oratio* reaches its end.

The second oration follows with the title: "*Eiusdem de discordiis sedandis, et bello in Turcum decernendo*".<sup>49</sup> This too is a counselling speech and is again addressed to the Italian princes in the form of a *Philippic speech* by Demosthenes. It takes up 21 pages and has a dual purpose, as can be understood from its title: to begin with, Bessarion tries to convince the Italian leaders that they have to reconcile with each other. Unity is a prerequisite if the Turkish threat is to be faced. In the second part of the oration he urges the rulers to start the crusade against the Ottomans, which is a just and holly cause. In the second oration we can find six segments. The first comprises the introduction where Bessarion addresses its recipients and announces the subject: it is imperative to begin the struggle against the Turks immediately. Of course the Italians must forge peace among them first.<sup>50</sup>

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magna, nimis vetera nomina repeto. Quid ab Attila, Totila, Saracenis illatas clades oratione mea refricem? At Pyrrhus, credo, potuit quod Turcus nequeat. Ille, salvis tot ducibus, tot exercitibus, quos secundum postea Punicum bellum absumpsit, ad Urbis prope moenia victore exercitu contendit; Turcus, qui Epirum, Macedoniam totamque Graeciam, tot imperia subegit, Italiam in tot principatus et studia dissipatam ac dissentientem timebit?"

<sup>48</sup> pp. (30)-(31): "Nam ut in tempestate cernimus procellas, cum in scopulum in quem ferebantur saevitiam illiserint, tanto motu referri, ut quam occupaverint, navem, non aliter obruant, quam cum integrae errant; ita nobis omnibus Barbarorum inundationem timendam censeo. Non enim hostis de una aut altera urbe certare vult; de rerum summa sibi ferro decernendum statuit. [...] O crudelitatem inusitatam, inauditam, feram, barbaram! Cum eo pax esse potest? Pace si frui volumus, bellum gerendum est: si bellum omittimus, pace nunquam fruemur. Quare cum a tam parvo initio in tantum creverit fastigii hostis noster, cum sciat, velit et possit adoriri Italiam, cum id saepenumero factum fuisse audieritis, ita ut ad omnes periculum attineat, propulsate ac propellite hostis impetum, ut incolumitatem nobis, libertatem Italiae, salutem omnibus conservetis".

<sup>49</sup> p. (32).

<sup>50</sup> p. (32): "[...] ut omni conatu communique consilio et ope ea propulsemus, atque in hostium nostrorum capita, dum licet, dum intergrum est, retorqueamus. Cum vero id recte fieri non possit, nisi omnibus sedatis discordiis, simultatibus, odiis, denique cunctis suspicionibus de medio sublatis".

For this reason he composes a small treatise about unity and its benefits in the second segment of the speech. Thanks to unity states, provinces and families prosper; in fact even nature itself is based on this principle. In contrast division has catastrophic consequences (civil wars). In order to convince the princes, the wise cardinal evokes Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Demosthenes and Xenophon and cites exempla from the history of ancient Greece. He also cites Christian texts.<sup>51</sup>

In the third segment of the oration Bessarion explains to the princes how just the war against the Ottomans is. This barbaric enemy has committed all manner of crime against the Christians: desecration of temples, murder, rape, torture and child abduction. No one can doubt the need for a crusade. In this segment also, the cardinal uses exempla, this time from Roman history.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> p. (33): "Quidquid in coelo atque inter mortales optimum est, id omne a concordia proficiscitur et pendet. Non provinciis duntaxat, urbibus, conventiculis, domui, sed privato homini maxime necessaria est. [...] Inde nimirum illud est, quod apud poetam sapientissimum Ulysses a Nausica, Alcinoi regis filia, maximis affectus beneficiis, nil habuit quod felicius optari posse arbitraretur, quam virum liberosque concordem, quo nihil suavius ait, nihil aut inimicis molestius, aut amicis iucundius accidere posse", p. (36): "Nihil aliud miseram extinxit Graeciam, nisi discordia: nihil aliud eam orbis partem delevit, nisi bella civilia, neque solum nostra memoria, sed et priscis temporibus. Nam Philippus, Amyntae filius, Alexandri Magni pater, per Atheniensium, Lacedaemoniorum, Thebanorum aliorumque mutua odia, Graeciam evertit", p. (39): "et, ut tragicus ille inquit: "amicis dominabere, si tantum non viceris quantum volueris"", p. (39): "Ac Demosthenes: "Tunc", inquit, "praeclara victoria, cum aut filii parentibus, aut cives civibus libenter cedunt", p. (40): "Quid est, quod cuncta contineat? Harmonia. Quid est, quod cuncta exornet? Concinnitas. Coelum hoc quodcunque cernimus, sphaerae stellarum, spatia siderum, rerum omnium elementia et initia, nulla alia re nisi concordia constant", p. (41): "Quam bonum et quam iucundum ets habitare fratres in unum", ut Propheta inquit, qui multarum rerum variique eventus peritissimus fuit, qui furore divino concitus, homines ad concordiam provocat. Quod ne temere praeceptum videretur, illic ait: "Mandavit Dominus benedictionem et vitam usque in saeculum", p. (41): "Cyrus, Persarum rex potentissimus, cum e vita excederet, filiis accersitis, et imperio eis diviso, longiore oratione apud Xenophontem, cunctos ad fidem mutuam, ad charitatem, ad concordiam hortatus est".

<sup>52</sup> pp. (42)-(43): "Hoc enim bello nullum unquam iustius, quod magis necessario gestum est, aut faciliorem apertioemque ostendit victoriam. Nam quid aequius, quidve magis pium, quam nostrorum sanguinem per infinitas lacrimas et tormenta effusum ulcisci? Quid nefandi homines in nomen nostrum praetermiserunt ignominiae, iniuriae, cruciatus, necis? Tempia sanctissima per summam impietatem polluerunt: sanctorum, beatae Virginis, ipsius nostri Dei statuas contemptu, risu, omni contumeliarum genere persecuti sunt. Quid sacras virgines violatas memorem? Parentum complexu ereptos impuberes? Omni dedecore foedatum Christianum nomen? Haec ne persequar, et rei magnitudine et dolore impediatur" and p. (44): "Romani, quod eorum legati paulo acerbius appellati essent, Corinthum, urbem pulcherrimam, everterunt. [...] Fabius Maximus, ut captivos redimeret, agrum vendidit, et nos tot sociorum corpora desiderata negligemus? Theodosius, quod Thessalonicenses, novi vectigalis impositione indignati, Placidiae statuas per urbem traxissent, frequentem in theatro populum caedi iussit".

The fourth segment of the oration follows, with a subject quite similar to the third. Here Bessarion deals with the necessity of this war. It is the only solution in order to safeguard peace. He urges Christians to abandon sloth and take up arms against the frenzied infidels. Almighty God will be their savior and an ally at their side.<sup>53</sup>

Then comes the fifth segment of the oration. The cardinal presents the military and financial situation of the Ottomans to the Italian princes. This segment is based on two main axes: underestimating the strength of the enemy (unorganised army, lack of discipline, lack of money and means to sustain it) and urging the Italian rulers to take the fight to the enemy's territory without waiting for the enemy to make the first move. It has to be noted that this dual tactic has been taken from Bessarion's rhetorical role model, Demosthenes, who in his *Philippic speeches* underestimates the military might of Philip, in order to convince his countrymen that he is not superior to them and that they can easily defeat him. He also urges the Athenians to equip their forces and attack Philip's country first. The cardinal repeats that almighty God will be the protector of the crusade and once more uses historical exempla from ancient Greek, Latin and also contemporary history.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> pp. (44)-(45): "Satis dixi de genere belli quam iustum sit: dicam statim quam sit necessarium. Neque enim ille liberum quietis rationem relinquet, ingens terra marique bellum molitus. Nam si id permetteret, nemo sane esset qui bellum paci anteponeret. [...] Nullum deliberationi locum relinquit: una nobis fortunarum salutisque spes proposita est, ut viribus nostris, Deo Optimo Maxime iuvante, libertatem nostram servemus. [...] Quid inermes expectamus Turcorum furorem? Arma armis propulsantur. Bellum gerendum est, ut in pace vivamus. Si bellum omittimus, pacem habemus nullam".

<sup>54</sup> p. (46): "Quo in loco illud plane profiteor me de hostium copiis et viribus nihil oratione mea detracturum, sed omnia expositurum magna cum fide. Atque inde exordior. Exercitus ille hostilis, illa hominum multitudo infinita, non tanti roboris est quanti vel nonnulli putant, vel a nobis superari facillime non possit", p. (47): "Quod si Christianus exercitus, illius fines populando, eum toto anno exercitum in armis habere coegerit, aut a suis destitutus cum exigua manu ad pugnam impelletur, ubi facillime superari queat, aut illis ipsis pecuniis quae in eius privatum aerarium conferuntur, totum exercitum alat necesse erit", p. 49 (where he cites God's words, as there are in Vulgata, see. Jeremiah, 1.8, Ezekiel, 2.6, Jeremiah, 1.19 and Josuus, 1.19. : " "Ne timeas", inquit, "a facie eorum, quia ego tecum sum ut eruum te. Ne timeas a facie eorum; nec enim te faciam timere vultum eorum. Bellabunt adversus te, et non praevallebunt, quia ego tecum sum, ait Dominus, ut liberem te. [...] Ecce, ego dedi in manus tuas Hiericho, et regem eius, omnesque fortes viros", pp. (49)-(50): "Quasi vero non plerique exercitus multitudine infiniti, parva admodum manu saepenumero fusi fugatique fuerint et deleti. Xerxis exercitus, Mardonio duce, cum ter centum hominum millibus ab octoginta Graecorum millibus direptus ac trucidatus est. Ducenta Cimbrorum millia Marius delevit octoginta millibus hominum. Rursus cum Catulo centum et quattuor millia necavit. In Thessalia Pompeius cum quadraginta millibus peditum, equitum sexaginta, cum totius Orientis auxiliis, cum omni nobilitate, a Caesare fugatus est, et exutus castris, qui triginta peditum millia, mille equites habebat. Quid infinitas Tigranis copias commemorem a Lucullo, parvo exercitu, superatas? Haec nimis vetera, et fabulae fortasse quam historiae propiora videntur" and pp. (50)-(51): "Ad recentiora nostra festinat oratio. Quid dicam de



Finally, it follows the sixth segment which is the epilogue of this oration. Here Bessarion summarises his points. Christians will fight the irregular, inexperienced and cowardly army of the Ottomans, which they have overcome time and time again, even with much smaller forces. This happens because he who fights for the preservation of his freedom fights with greater bravery than him who fights only for bounty. Of course the necessary prerequisite for a successful crusade is unity, which all rulers must embrace at all cost, in order to achieve salvation. This war is just and shall offer great glory to those who take part in it. They will gain the much desired peace, but they will also avenge the injustice the Turks have committed against our Lord. Finally, they will decorate Italy with this great victory over the enemy and the bounty taken from him, but most of all they will rid Christians of fear and of the Turkish threat, once and for all.<sup>55</sup>

The final chapter of the *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos* is comprised by the Latin translation of the 1st *Olynthiacs speech* by Demosthenes made by the cardinal himself. In the 1543 edition, which we are using, it takes up 13 pages.<sup>56</sup> It is supported by two small texts acting as “notes by the translator”. The first takes up two pages and is basically a dramatic *hypothesis*, where the cardinal provides the reader with information about the players of the piece, the protagonists, in other words of the demosthenic oration. At the same time, he draws parallels between these two similar situations (the threat by Philip the 2<sup>nd</sup> of which Demosthenes warns the Athenians – the threat by Mehmed II of which Bessarion warns the Italians leaders).<sup>57</sup>

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insigni triumpho illius Christianae multitudinis quae, nullo duce, crucis tantum signo armata. Turcorum exercitum omnem munitissimo Amderalba oppido potitum, intra moenia stricto ense discurrentem, magna caede victum eiecit, ipso isto imperatore graviter vulnerato, ac impedimentis omnibus in potestatem redactis? Id autem ne semel accidisse videretur, cum impius sceleratusque hostis Pannoniam omnem inferiorem occupasset, omniaque armis complisset, et, praesidiis inclytus, regique animi et excelsi, Pannoniae superioris rex, parva admodum manu expugnato Javicia oppido et natura et arte munitissimo, maximas Turcorum copias fudit, partemque provinciae suo adiecit imperio”.

<sup>55</sup> pp. (51)-(52): “Cum quo hoste nobis res sit, facile videtis, Italiae principes. Cum quo? Inquires. Qui multitudinem inconditam habet atque imbellem, qui hominum numero nos quidem non superat, virtute vero vincitur; de quo parvi nostrorum exercitus saepenumero triumpharunt. Id autem minime mirandum est. Longe enim fortius et constantius pugnant, qui pro morte servituteque propulsanda dimicant, quam qui praedam spoliaque sectantur. Nam illi parum amittunt, si victoria non potiuntur; his vero cuncta pereunt, si segnius rem gerant. [...] Bellum iustissimum, maxime gloriosum, atque utile ad pacis ornamenta retinenda, et ad Dei Optimi Maximi iniurias ulciscendas, pietatemque propugnandum, suscipiamus. Ornemus Italiam victoria amplissima, et hostium spoliis, quae in manibus sunt, ut nos nostra que omnia metu in perpetuum atque periculo liberemus”.

<sup>56</sup> pp. (55)-(67).

<sup>57</sup> pp. (53)-(54): “Venit autem in mentem Demoshenem, philosophum excellentissimum, et oratorem adeo omni laude cumulatum per tot saecula, ut quem cum eo conferas exstiterit nemo, in eadem

Then comes the Latin translation of the demosthenic oration entitled: "*Demosthenis oratio pro ferenda ope Olynthiis adversus Philippum regem Macedonum*".<sup>58</sup> The cardinal primarily aims to interpret (in unaffected Latin) the meaning of the text (*sensum e sensu*) and secondly the words themselves (*verbum e verbo*). His approach to the translation is faithful to the text, but also, scholarly and literary (see Pappas, 2012, 194-201). Of great interest are Bessarion's comments next to the text, located on the right hand side of the page, next to each passage he wants to comment on. With this tactic the cardinal emphasizes the similarities and the parallels between the two historical situations (the threat of Philip-Turkish threat) and offers an updated version of the ancient Greek text. He also proves the eternally repetitive nature of history over the ages.<sup>59</sup>

The epilogue of the translation is, at the same time, the epilogue of the work as a whole. At this point, he emphasizes the similarity between his time and the time of Demosthenes and the necessity of combating discord and promoting unity. Finally, he addresses all Christian rulers and peoples, begging them to make every possible effort in order to remove this terrible danger and achieve a glorious victory, with the help of God. He, from his part, will pray with all his might for them to do what he urges. Here the *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos* reach their end.<sup>60</sup>

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incidisse tempora, eandem perorasse causam, denique nihil habuisse, quod rei nostrae non conveniat, praeter nomina hominum sui temporis".

<sup>58</sup> p. (55).

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, (p. 55): "Audite, Christiani principes, Demosthenem philosophum, et oratorem iam tot saeculis mortuum, de statu hostis vestri nunc disserentem, eloquentissime monentem quid vos facere oporteat, ne in graviora dilabimini", pp. (57)-(58), where Bessarion parallels with his era the words which the Athenian orator addressed to his fellow citizens and criticized them because they have not took advantage Jerakas and Stratocles' appeals to them for conquering the besieged cities of Pydna, Potidaea, Methone and Pagases: "Si olim essemus Bizantio. Non egressus esset in Aegeum Turcus, non diruisset miseram Chalcidem, si cum Ciliciam, Misiyam, Pannoniam inferiorem obsideri renunciatum est, opem tulissemus", pp. (59)-(60), where he parallels again the Ottoman danger of his era with Demosthenes's words, who warns the Athenians, telling them that nothing will prevent Philip from being attacked everywhere in Greece, if conquered Olynthus: "Si pedem paulo alterius intulerit Turcus, quis, te obsecro, prohibebit, quo minus in Italiam perveniat?".

<sup>60</sup> pp. (67)-(69): "Hoc est, inclyti Italiae principes, summi illius ac sapientissimi viri Demosthenis consilium, non alienum a nostro; haec illius sententia sententia quam simillima nostrae. [...] omni similitate deposita, omnium viribus in unum collatis, Deo Optimo Maximo duce, Turcorum vires conteret atque infringet. [...] Quare ut gravissima declinemus *pericula*, atque *optamam victoriam consequamur*, vos omnes, principes, populique Christiani, ut omni ad id studio incumbatis, quantis maximis possum precibus, oro, atque obsecror".

At this point the presentation of the *Epistolae et Orationes contra Turcos* by cardinal Bessarion has reached its conclusion. Unfortunately, although this body of work was read by many powerful figures in Europe, it did not have the results the Greek scholar had hoped for (see Cyrou, 1949, 201-212). Alas, this moving but futile effort was once more in vain. A year after the first edition (1471), the proponent of the holy crusade dies.

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