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Book Review: S. NEOCLEOUS, Heretics, Schismatics, or Catholics? Latin Attitudes to the Greeks in the Long Twelfth Century, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019

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S. NEOCLEOUS, *Heretics, Schismatics, or Catholics? Latin Attitudes to the Greeks in the Long Twelfth Century*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019, pp. xv+291. ISBN 978-0-88844-216-1

This monograph by Savvas Neocleous aims to trace the Latin attitudes to the Byzantines from the eve of the First Crusade to the aftermath of the Fourth, focusing on religious perceptions. The use of a wide variety of sources, from Latin to vernacular, undeniably constitutes its greatest merit.

For such an ambitious project, the Introduction (pp. 1-5) seems rather brief. It begins with a presentation of scholars, writing between the end of the 19th century and the second decade of the 20th, who have regarded the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 as the culmination of a long-established religious enmity, the roots of which are to be traced in the schism of 1054. It is a very brief and selective historiographical survey of the topic, since only isolated phrases from the mentioned works are cited, and so it becomes difficult to understand how these views were shaped in their historical context and historiographical tradition. In a similar vein, the author's aim to "revisit and challenge" the research opinion he has just mentioned (p. 5) is not contextualized in the framework of a relevant historiographical discussion, although the religious motives behind the events of 1204 have already been questioned from different perspectives. For instance, Jonathan Harris's work on the Crusades has provided an important insight into how the crusaders manipulated the religious differences in order to legitimize the diversion of their enterprise¹. Besides, modern research is gaining a deeper understanding of the encounters between Latins and Byzantines by using the analytical categories of identity and alterity. Thus, it has been pointed out that the construction of the Byzantine and

1. J. HARRIS, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London and New York: Hambledon and London Books, 2003; 2nd edition London: Bloomsbury Academic 2014).

Latin forms of otherness is a situational construct; accordingly, the labelling of the Other as “schismatic”, “heretic”, “pagan”, “coward”, “perjurer” and so on, occurs during conflicts in order to strengthen identities, to legitimize violence, and/or to achieve personal goals².

The author’s intention to examine his topic “in terms of religion” and to demonstrate that the Byzantines were perceived by the Latins as “fellow Christians and as an integral part of twelfth-century Christendom” (p. 5), is not fully understandable. Throughout the six chapters of the book it is constantly repeated, on the basis of the sources, that the Latins regarded the Byzantines as their Christian brethren, and that their labelling as “schismatics” or “heretics” were isolated events. This emphasis seems a little odd as any reader who is familiar with the permeability and malleability of medieval cultural frontiers, as well as with the Crusade sources, is aware of the fact that despite the dogmatic and ritual differences, the Latin West and the Byzantine East never ceased to communicate and to enjoy cordial relations. Besides, the popes appealed to the Byzantine emperors to sustain the Crusades on the grounds of their shared *christianitas*. On the other hand, the Holy See constantly called on the Byzantine emperors to work on the unity of the Churches, as many of the papal sources mentioned in Neocleous’ monograph explicitly state. The insistence on the unity, as well as on the Byzantine disobedience towards the Roman Church, implies the perception of a kind of separation, either jurisdictional or doctrinal/ritual, even if the labelling “schismatics” or “heretics” for the Byzantines is missing. An elaborated methodological approach that clarified the content of concepts like “schismatics” and “heretics” (are they perceived by the author as purely theological or cultural notions?), and that situated the research question in its historiographical context, explaining in detail its specific objectives, would have added value to the monograph.

The first chapter (pp. 6-50) focuses on the period from Gregory VII’s pontificate to the eve of the Second Crusade and deploys a variety of sources to support the main argument of the monograph. However, contradictions are not avoided, since the same sources reveal that the treatment of Byzantines as fellow Christians did not exclude perceptions of religious differences, and vice versa. The chapter concludes with the presentation of Latin theological views,

2. See, among others, C. HOLMES, ‘Shared Worlds’: Religious Identities – A Question of Evidence, in J. HARRIS, EADEM and E. RUSSEL, eds., *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31-59.

which oscillated between polemical and moderate stances towards the Byzantines (pp. 46-50). Apart from a coherent methodological framework, a more concrete contextualization of the sources would have been more helpful. The labelling of the Byzantines as “schismatics” by Bohemond of Antioch (p. 42) is a typical example of the construction of otherness through the manipulation of already existing religious differences, as the author himself implies. In this vein, the comparison of Bohemond with his uncle, the Great Count of Sicily Roger I, who protected Greek monasticism (p. 42) does not take into consideration the fluidity of medieval cultural borders, the long-established tradition of religious coexistence in Southern Italy, and the count’s political aims.

The second chapter (pp. 51-97) covers the period from the Second Crusade to the end of the reign of Manuel I Komnenos. In the French Kingdom, the author argues, religious differences had been increasingly noticeable after the conquest of Antioch by the Byzantines and had given shape to an anti-Byzantine party. According to the monk of Saint-Denis Odo of Deuil, the chronicler of Louis VII’s crusade, this party, during its participation in the crusade, regarded the Byzantines as “heretics” and did not hesitate to propose the conquest of Constantinople when Louis VII’s crusading army arrived in front of its walls. However, the king and the majority of the crusaders rejected the proposal on the grounds of Christian fraternity with the Byzantines (pp. 51-58). If one takes into consideration Odo of Deuil’s aim, namely, to absolve the king from any responsibility for the failure of his crusade, both the proposal and its refusal become integral parts of the narrative. Against this backdrop, which serves to relativize the construction of identities and alterities, the author could have also utilized Odo of Deuil’s account on the failure of the German king’s crusading army. The monk put the blame on the Byzantines, stressing that the Byzantine emperor *Christianorum fides stravit, paganismum stabilivit*³. On the other hand, German sources insist on the alliance between Manuel I and the German king Conrad III and their cordial relations. The well-known intermarriages between Byzantines and Latins following the Second Crusade, as well as Manuel I’s diplomatic relations with western forces in the 1160’s and 1170’s are also set forth to prove the Byzantine *christianitas* as perceived by the Latins (pp. 88-93).

3. Odo of Deuil, *De profectone Ludovici VII in orientem. The Journey of Louis VII to the East*, ed. and transl. Virginia Gingerick BERRY (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1948), 90.

The author also turns his attention to the theological work *Antikeimenon* by Anselm of Havelberg, commissioned by Pope Eugenius III and written in 1149/50 as a *disputatio* between Anselm and the Byzantine archbishop Niketas of Nikomedia (pp. 69-88). In this section, the author elaborately presents religious differences dividing the two Churches. Anselm's statement that, the dogmatic and ritual differences notwithstanding, Latins and Byzantines were united in one faith, undoubtedly reveal that both sides perceived each other as sharing the same religion. However, the author does not contextualize this important text. Thus, he leaves unexplored the fact that it was the Byzantine interlocutor who accepted, albeit creatively, the Latin position on the *filioque* and argued for the need to convoke a council, under the Holy See's authority, so that the "Christian East ... freely accept" the *filioque* and subsequently realize the unity of the Churches (p. 81). The chapter concludes by pointing to the Latin interest in Greek patristics (pp. 95-97), offering an argument from the Byzantine side. Archbishop Eustathios of Thessaloniki, in his famous account of the capture of the city by the Normans in 1185, records that the Latins were eager to discuss religious matters with him and accept the positions of the Eastern Church (pp. 96-97). This statement could have been a good opportunity for the author to show the situational character of identities and alterities, since the Byzantine archbishop's text is a good example of how otherness is constructed through religious and cultural categories with a view to promoting the archbishop's own personal goals⁴.

The third chapter (pp. 98-131) deals with the last two decades of the 12th century. The author begins by presenting the continuation of anti-Byzantine discourses in the work of William of Tyr and quite rightly attributes the relevant negative attitudes to the religious antagonisms between Byzantine and Latin prelates in the Latin East (pp. 98-106). Despite this effort to contextualize the sources, the analysis of the relations between the western emperor, Frederick I, and his Byzantine counterpart, Isaakios II, during the Third Crusade does not escape making internal contradictions (p. 116). The labelling of the Byzantines as "false Christians" that emanates from the political conflicts between the two emperors could not have come about if religious differences had not already existed. Therefore, "the issues dividing the Greek and Latin Church" were indeed used to legitimize Frederick's prerogatives and a possible aggression against Byzantium, and they were encapsulated in the

4. HOLMES, 'Shared Worlds': Religious Identities - A Question of Evidence, 34-35, 39-40, 42-43.

aforementioned label. At the end of the chapter, the author attempts an approach to Joachim of Fiore's theological views (pp. 122-131): the Latin theologian underlines the dogmatic and ritual difference between the two worlds without either adopting a polemical tone or using the words "schismatics" or "heretics", although he does argue on the separation of the Church, from the perspective of papal primacy.

In the fourth chapter (pp. 132-162), covering the period from the preaching of the Fourth Crusade to the conquest of Constantinople, the author deals with the event that had triggered his research. He gives an overview of well-debated issues, such as Innocent III's appeal to the Byzantines to provide military and financial assistance for the crusade, his effort to prevent an attack on the Byzantines, and the manipulation of religious differences by the Crusade's leadership to legitimize the conquest of Constantinople⁵. It is rightly stressed that the Crusade's leading clerics used an anti-Byzantine polemic focusing on dogmatic differences in order to raise the morale of the crusaders (pp. 158-159). It is worth noting that the author attempts to examine the influence of the Byzantine anti-Latin polemic on the preaching of the aforementioned clerics (pp. 159-160).

In the same vein, in the fifth chapter (pp. 163-195) the author examines the Roman Church's reaction to the conquest of Constantinople and its attitudes to the conquered Byzantines. He focuses on Innocent III and rightly argues that the pope had no intention of Latinizing the Eastern Church. He equally sets forth as an argument the fact that the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) welcomed the "return of the Greeks to the obedience of the Apostolic See" and acknowledged that both Latins and Byzantines had "different rites under one faith" (pp. 181-182). Innocent III's protection of Greek monasticism in Hungary, Southern Italy and Latin Greece, in terms of refraining from imposing doctrinal changes despite the monasteries' subjection to the Latin ecclesiastical authorities, is also utilized in order to support the monograph's basic idea. However, this protection, as the author says (p. 194), was offered on condition that the Eastern rites and customs "did not run counter to Latin canonical tradition", as had been decreed in the Fourth Lateran Council (canon 4).

The sixth chapter (pp. 196-238) studies a wide range of sources on the Fourth Crusade, written either by eyewitnesses of the events of 1204 or by people who had

5. See, among others, N. G. CHRISSIS, *Crusading in Frankish Greece. A Study of Byzantine - Western Relations and Attitudes, 1204-1282* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 1-56, with reference to previous literature.

never set foot in Constantinople. The author repeats that the crusaders manipulated religious differences to legitimize the conflict, and attempts to trace the continuation of narrative patterns in later texts. The section dealing with sources written by non-witnesses (pp. 205-224) is richly documented through a variety of texts originating in the kingdoms of France, Germany and England. Their examination proves that there was no “collective hate” against the Byzantines, whereas the anti-Byzantine religious polemic expressed by certain medieval authors had been influenced by eyewitnesses. The section begins with the *Hystoria Constantinopolitana* of Gunther of Pairis, the importance of which is stressed by the author (pp. 206-209). The author’s analysis could have been deepened if he had drawn a comparison with Gunther’s verse account on the First Crusade, *Solimarius*. Neither does western theological thought show an increased awareness of the dogmatic differences between the Latin and the Eastern Churches after the events of 1204.

In his Conclusions and Epilogue (pp. 239-248), the author reiterates his main argument and rightly argues that the multiplicity and variety of the western European communities did not allow the construction of a collective anti-Byzantine memory (p. 243). However, a few methodological *faux pas* should be stressed. In order to relativize the “hate” between Latins and Byzantines, the author argues for the long-established hate between French and Germans in the early 12th century that “persisted well beyond the Second World War” (p. 240). He therefore seems not only to deprive his research of the necessary historical and cultural context, but also to ascribe to identities and alterities the essentialist character that he was trying not to ascribe in the case of Latin-Byzantine relations. The phrase “Constantinople suffered no more than any other city in Latin Europe taken by assault” (p. 243), should have been avoided, since such a statement prevents contextualization and, from the perspective of micro-history, trivializes communities’ and individuals’ perception of violence. The very last phrases of the monograph (pp. 247-248) equally raise questions of contextualization. The author mentions the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), which defended the unity of faith between the two Churches, their differences notwithstanding, and regards as its precedent Anselm of Havelberg’s *Antikeimenon*. The monograph concludes with an Appendix (pp. 249-251) dealing with the perception of the Byzantines in *Chanson d’Antioche*, a bibliography of primary and secondary sources (pp. 252-278) and an index of places and persons (pp. 279-291).

The book examines a key issue of Latin-Byzantine relations through the extensive study of a wide range of available sources. However, its methodological

background could have been further elaborated by considering more aspects of the relevant ongoing historiographical debate. Thus, it could have devoted more attention to the situational character of medieval identities and alterities and the fluidity of that era's cultural borders.

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