

tural, and economic ambitions did more than any theological dispute to divide East from West. Even after the crusade, the relationship of the Christian West and East was complicated. This historical account sug-

gests that further rapprochement between Catholics and Orthodox may yet be possible. George Demacopoulos deserves our gratitude for this brilliant experiment in interpreting church history. ✱

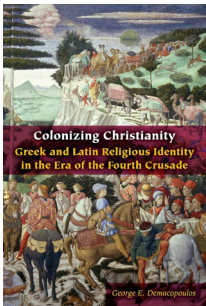


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READING ROOM

Greeks and Latins During the Crusades and the Question of Colonialism: Review of Demacopoulos, *Colonizing Christianity*

Sergei P. Brun



George E. Demacopoulos, *Colonizing Christianity: Greek and Latin Religious Identity in the Era of the Fourth Crusade*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.

One of the long-awaited releases in the field of religious and medieval studies is George E. Demacopoulos' *Colonizing Christianity: Greek and Latin Religious Identity in the Era of the Fourth Crusade*. The book analyzes two major Latin and two major Byzantine texts from the thirteenth century as well as the *Chronicle of Morea*, a product of the Byzantine-Latin admixture or "hybridization" on the Peloponnese, to offer an interpretation of the crusades as a form of Western colonialism.

The basic argument of the book is not new and has been elaborated even

by Marxist historians, but it is still in a way controversial. Perhaps if the term *colonialism* were replaced by *expansion* (cultural, economic, military), it would be more willingly accepted by medievalists weary of the imposition of contemporary terms and ideas onto their era. In fact, the crusader-era Latin expansion to the Levant brought as much Oriental influence to the Latin world as it did Western influence to the East, with identical processes taking place in Norman Sicily. The history of the Outremer—the Latin-ruled states of the Levant, to which Christian presence in the Middle East was inextric-

cably bound—in fact demonstrates how these crusader states could not survive what became the first proper manifestation of colonialism: the Italian republics with their fleets, autonomous trade colonies, and commercial interests that ignored even papal edicts, let alone the interests of a united Christian presence in the region. It is less clear that the Byzantine response to Latin expansion was that of a colonized people. The inhabitants of the Byzantine successor states of Nicaea, Epirus, and Trebizond saw themselves as citizens of an empire superior to the Latins. The framework of colonization seems more apt for the “admixed” Eastern Christian and Latin inhabitants of the crusader states, such as the author of the *Chronicle of Morea*, considered in the final chapter of *Colonizing Christianity*.

Whatever one thinks about the question of colonialism, the book’s textual studies are of unquestionable merit. It starts by examining two Latin texts, a history by Robert de Clari and the *Hystoria Constantinopolitana* by Gunther of Pairis. Demacopoulos offers an astute analysis of how the objectification, dehumanization, and—most importantly—de-Christianization of “the Greek” gradually took shape in Latin literature, paying attention to subtle differences between these two writers and showing the dominating traits of an increasingly hostile cultural attitude (in Demacopoulos’s words, “the construct of the Western Christian imagination”). Then follow the two Byzantine authors, Demetrios Chomatianos and George Akropolites. As with the Latin writers, Demacopoulos brings forth a captivating analysis of not only the common traits but also the differing methods adopted by two thirteenth-century Byzantine intellectuals with regards to Rome and Latin Christendom.

Through his selection of sources, Demacopoulos emphasizes the similarity of the Latin authors and the radical conflict between the Byzantine ones. While Robert de Clari and Gunther of Pairis, with all of their differences, fall into a rather homogeneous fold of Latin hostility, Akropolites and Chomatianos make a clear contrast. The two pairs of authors are separated thematically by a chapter dedicated to Pope Innocent III’s policies and the immediate consequences of the crusaders’ sack of Constantinople in 1204. In the book’s final chapter, on the *Chronical of Morea*, Demacopoulos gives an intriguing perspective on the hybrid culture that emerged on the Peloponnesus after the establishment of a Latin principality on the peninsula.

Colonizing Christianity is at its best in textual analysis, but its approach to (or omission of) several major events in the history of Greek-Latin relations that were either precursors to or results of the Fourth Crusade also deserves attention. To understand the history of Latin violence against the Greek-speaking Christian East, it would seem important to consider the two groundbreaking cases when Rome actually sanctioned campaigns against Byzantium: the first in 1081, when Pope Gregory VII blessed Robert Guiscard’s invasion to the Balkans, and the second from 1106 to 1108, when Pope Paschal II blessed Guiscard’s son, Bohemond I of Antioch, to launch a similar expedition. Neither precedent is named in Demacopoulos’s study.

The “Massacre of the Latins” of 1182 was another important forerunner to the massacres of 1185 and 1204. Instead of the Latins as the aggressors, however, it was the Orthodox who decimated the Latin community

in Constantinople. Although Demacopoulos gives the number of Latin victims as a remarkable eighty thousand (an estimate that is probably on the high side), he mentions the whole episode only once, rather fleetingly. He considers it in the context of Robert de Clari's silence on the matter, which is an intriguing point. Still, a more detailed discussion would have helped illuminate the significance of this major event for relations between Byzantium and the West.

Colonizing Christianity does not discuss the thirteenth-century patriarchs of Antioch, who played a pivotal role in both the Greek estrangement from and attempts at rapprochement with the Latins. It also does not consider the role of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Cyprus was the first territory where the crusader rulers acknowledged the equal co-existence of two ecclesiastical hierarchies, Greek Orthodox and Latin. This system of co-existence was suppressed during the reign of King Henry I by

Cardinal Pelagius of Albano, but the Orthodox Church of Cyprus was restored in 1247 by Pope Innocent IV and his legate Lorenzo del Orte, and entered communion with Rome. This tolerant policy and "uniate" chapter in the history of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus came to an end with the papacy of Alexander IV, who brought back the policies of Pelagius. The analogous "uniate" period in the history of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, under Patriarch David (1245–58) is similarly absent from the book.

Given such major omissions, the book cannot really serve as a comprehensive history of Greek-Latin interaction in this period. Still, *Colonizing Christianity* is highly recommended, especially for Demacopoulos's comparative analysis of thirteenth-century Latin and Byzantine sources. The book is of undisputable value, both as a textual study and as a major contribution to the ongoing academic discussion about intercultural dialogue and coexistence during the crusades. ✱



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