

ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS

FROM THE FOURTH CRUSADE TO
THE HESYCHASTIC CONTROVERSY



Archbishop Chrysostomos

**CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES**

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by

Archbishop Chrysostomos

Senior Fulbright Lecturer
Department of History
University of Bucharest



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INTRODUCTION

I am at the present time a Senior Fulbright Scholar in Romania, lecturing in Byzantine history and historical theology both in Bucharest and Iași. The seven lectures that appear in this book were delivered last semester, in the autumn of 2000, in the faculty of history at the University of Bucharest. They are taken directly from my class presentations in a course entitled, "Orthodox and Roman Catholic Contacts and Theological Exchanges During the Middle Ages." The course content was, as the lectures themselves and the book title indicate, limited to the period between the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the Hesychastic Controversy, which sparked a dispute that raged from the 1330s well into that century, major texts pertinent to the debate having been written as late as the 1370s. These lectures—which I have left in their original form, except for the addition of some scholarly apparatus—were not delivered as a detailed history of this period; rather, my intention in each of them was to blend a general overview of historical events with an examination of the theological trends and thinking that affected these events and which these events, in turn, obviously influenced. My approach is more in the style of those who study the history of ideas, and I have therefore of necessity had to address some of the historiographical limitations that mark Byzantine historical studies, and especially those of Western provenance. At the same time, I have tried to provide some social psychological insight into Byzantine imperial and Roman Catholic feudal society and the cognitive paradigms in which the Byzantines and Western Christians of the time operated.

There is certainly a bias, and deliberately so, in the way that I have presented my material. In Romania, a predominantly Orthodox country, there exists a need for young students and scholars to see the history of the Church which formed their personal faith and confes-

sion through Orthodox eyes and under the scrutiny of someone sympathetic to the Orthodox East. If it seems presumptuous of me to say that many Byzantine historians, at least in the West, have not always been objective in their treatment of Eastern and Western Church relations in the Middle Ages, I hope that my lectures will demonstrate that my assertion is not wholly infelicitous. For the purpose of contrast, I have at times undoubtedly overstated my case; however, this does not invalidate my assertion. Rather, it serves the purpose of addressing with greater resonance and more vividly the particular audience to which these lectures were delivered. Let me also say that the lectures contain some redundancy, that they were not originally meant as chapters in a book, and thus do not always evidence a rigorous thematic development. I have nonetheless opted to leave them as they are, rather than to blend them into an interconnected series of essays such as one might normally anticipate in a book of this kind. Whatever deficits this fact may present, its singularly important asset is that, repetition being the powerful learning tool that it is, I am willing to risk redundancy in my presentation for the sake of emphatically stating something about my subject that perhaps should have been stated long ago.

There is nothing earth-shaking in my historical work here. I have dealt with secondary sources and, often following their lead and sometimes benefiting from my own research, have consulted and examined primary sources. In these efforts, I have not tried to find some new historical document to rock the foundations of accepted scholarship. Neither has it been my purpose to investigate some of the more complex and intriguing questions of Byzantine history or the history of the feudal West. There is a place for such scholarship, and I enjoy it. In this case, however, I have simply portrayed the historical picture in wide strokes, admittedly, at times, giving what some may consider unforgivably

short shrift to certain undoubtedly significant events and historical characters in favor of looking more critically at issues of a psychological or cultural kind, so as to understand, again, the larger picture. I can imagine that some readers, who do not fit into the mold of those for whom I have specifically written this book (and with explicit goals), will take offense at this fact. This is unfortunate but unavoidable. There will also be those, no doubt, who will find affronting my acknowledged bias and the fact that I am writing this history from an *Orthodox* point of view. It might, indeed, be fairly said that I am, thereby, answering distortion with distortion. I would hope that I have been somewhat more objective than to fall to such an accusation. If not, however, I can at least say that two slanted views, placed side-by-side, are indubitably more likely to produce a balanced view, over time, than the incessant presentation of only one view, and especially when this single view reflects the presuppositions, mind-set, and perhaps prejudices of a dominant culture and social force.

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS

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“It was in the period beginning with the Crusades and lasting down to the fall of the Byzantine Empire that the Eastern Orthodox and Western Churches became definitively estranged. This period is crucial to understanding the situation between the Orthodox Church and the Western Confessions. Archbishop Chrysostomos has given us a masterful account of the historical factors and theological issues that arose at the time. This book is one of only a small number of works on the topic written from a purely Orthodox point of view. It is highly recommended to anyone concerned with the issues that have divided Eastern and Western Christendom for almost a millennium.”

DR. JEREMIAS NORMAN
Professor *Emeritus*,
University of Washington,
Seattle