

The byzantine Writer Nikolaos Mesarites (13th Century) and its Work The Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople

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Abstract

The thirteenth century was one of the great changes in the Byzantine Empire. The fall of Constantinople and the violence of the Crusaders in 1204 left deep marks in the memory of the orthodox believers. In the attempts to unite, the discussions about Filioque, the use of the azyme, and especially the papal primacy, have not produced any results. The Byzantine Empire crumbled into smaller kingdoms, and the reconquest of Constantinople failed to restore its greatness and power. In this political and religious context, in Constantinople lived scholars and clergy who fought for the unity of Christianity.

One of these scholars is Nikolaos Mesarites. His work was later discovered in the nineteenth century, and his writings were not thoroughly studied. The most important writing that we have left of him, The Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles, is of particular importance because the church dedicated to the holy apostles no longer exists today. The work has a double purpose: to present the church, the paintings and all its outbuildings, and to highlight the dogmatic truths behind the scenes described. Scenes such as the Resurrection, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, or the Eucharist, are examples that the author uses to reveal the theological substrate of each.