When the moment of writing the preface has come and a book is about to be launched into the world of learning, the author usually reviews the past few years and realises how much he or she is indebted to all those who, in one way or another, have assisted with the task.

For this book the first stone was laid by Judith Herrin who suggested the subject of the book to Messrs Brill of Leiden. I am grateful to her and to the publishers for inviting me to write this book, a study of the relations between Western Europe and the Byzantine empire between 962 and 1204, which is meant to build a bridge enabling both Western medievalists and Byzantinists to take a look at the other half of medieval Europe.

In the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries people became more and more aware of the differences between the Western and Eastern halves of Europe. The subject has fascinated me since my days as an undergraduate. Since then there has been a growing interest among Western medievalists in the ‘other Middle Ages’, the Middle Ages of the Greek and Christian empire in the East.

Some chapters have been read by friends and specialists in their fields. I am extremely grateful to Vera von Falkenhausen for having read so carefully the chapter on Italy, and to Donald Nicol, Lennart Rydén and Reiner Stichel for having done the same for the chapters on Britain, Scandinavia and the German lands. They have saved me from a number of errors, those remaining are entirely my responsibility. I am also grateful to the anonymous ‘censor’ of this book, who made stimulating remarks and suggestions to improve the book.

A book like this needs to be richly illustrated, and I thank the libraries and museums, friends and relatives, and private institutions for their courtesy in sending photographs and for giving permission to publish them.

There are many others who need to be mentioned here for their help. The staff of the University Library, Leiden, has always been very friendly and helpful, and so were many colleagues and pupils who helped me with technical problems. Julian Deahl, my editor at Brill’s, did his best to turn the language into more beautiful English.
In a work which deals with East and West it is almost impossible to use a consistent and logical system for transliteration. I have tried more than once to avoid shocking Western readers by a ‘literal’ transliteration of Greek names and terms (as is becoming usual among modern Byzantinists) with which they are not yet familiar.

To all who helped me and supported me during the preparation of this work I dedicate this book which, I hope, will narrow the gap between the Western Middle Ages and the Byzantine empire, and will reveal how much the West owes to Byzantium, in many fields and in many ways.

Leiden, November 1995