

Book Review:

Marius Telea, *Istoria și spiritualitatea Imperiului Bizantin* (*The History and Spirituality of The Byzantine Empire*), vol. I: *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin* (*The History of The Byzantine Empire*), Alba Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2021, 884 p.

Associate Professor Marius Telea's work *The History and Spirituality of The Byzantine Empire* (*Istoria și spiritualitatea Imperiului Bizantine*), volume I: *The History of The Byzantine Empire* (*Istoria Imperial Imperiului Bizantine*), deals with the most critical aspects of the Byzantine Empire from its founding in 330 until its fall on May 29, 1453. This work, essential for knowing the history of the great Byzantine Empire, is structured in eighteen chapters, from page 29 to page 724, and each chapter has rich bibliography in foreign languages and Romanian. At the end of the book, the author presents six appendices, which allow the reader to quickly capture the most critical events in the history of the Byzantine Empire.



This paper is precious because it crowns decades of research work in the academic field and the many specialized studies that Associate Professor Marius Telea has published over the years.

The author presents the notion, object, importance and topicality of Byzantine history, culture, and spirituality in the introduction. Chapter I presents the basic notions of Byzantine terminology, the periodization of Byzantine history, culture and spirituality, and the stages of the history of Romanian-Byzantine relations. Chapter II comes in support of those passionate about the study of

Byzantinology. This chapter presents the history of Byzantine research, journals, and periodicals, in which the most valuable and essential studies in this field were published. In chapter three, the author presents the Romanian contributions to Byzantine history, culture, and spirituality, together with the directions and orientations of Byzantinology research in Romania. Chapter four presents the historical-geographical framework of the Byzantine Empire.

Chapter V, titled *Emperor Constantine the Great, founder of the Byzantine Empire*, presents the general characteristics of the time, the reign of Diocletian, the tetrarchic system and the reforms of this emperor, after which it continues with the detailed presentation of the Emperor Constantine the Great's reign, the founding of Constantinople, the emperor's reforms in administration, army, economy, finance, and the legislative field. Emperor Constantine the Great's religious policy, his activity on the Lower Danube, and his successors are also presented. The chapter mentions the failed attempt of Emperor Julian the Apostate to restore paganism, after which it continues with the reign of the emperors Jovian, Valentinian I and Valens.

Chapter VI presents the Christological struggles and crises caused by the massive barbarian migrations. Chapter VII, *Theodosius I: The Triumph of Christianity in the Empire. His descendants* present the general characteristics of the time, the usurpations of the Empire's Western part. It continues with a detailed description of the reign of Emperor Theodosius I, the Empire's division, and the successors Arcadius and Honorius. Chapter VIII is dedicated to Emperor Theodosius II, presenting the general characteristics of the time, the foreign and domestic policy, and the emperor's religious policy. In Chapter IX, the author presents the Byzantine Empire from the middle of the fifth century to the beginning of the sixth century, the emperors Marcian, Leo I, Zeno and Anastasius I, their religious policy, and the importance of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Chapter X is dedicated to the reign of Justinian. This chapter presents the rise of the Justinian dynasty and the domestic, foreign, and religious politics of Emperor Justinian and his successors. In Chapter XI, the author presents the Heraclid dynasty, the Arab danger, the religious problems caused by Ekthesis and Typos, and the Byzantine Empire's transformations in the 7th century. Chapter XII is entitled *The Isaurian and Amorite Emperors and the Iconoclastic Crisis 717-867*. The author captures in this chapter the general characteristics of the era, presenting the foreign and internal policy of the emperors of these two dynasties, after which he describes the two phases of the iconoclastic crisis of 728-780 and 802-843, which shook the Byzantine Empire. Also, this chapter presents the rebirth of education and culture and the religious issues that troubled the Byzantine Church in the second half of the ninth century.

The peak of the Byzantine Empire dates back to the Macedonian dynasty 867-1081, which is presented in Chapter XIII. Thus, the author presents the general characteristics of the time, the foreign policy of the Macedonian emperors, the Christian missions to the Slavic peoples in the IX-X centuries, and the missionary activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Also, this chapter has presented the organization of monasticism on Mount Athos. Unfortunately, during the Macedonian dynasty, although the Byzantine Empire reached its peak in 1054, the most painful event in the history of the Christian Church, the Great Schism, broke the unity of Christianity. After the death of Emperor Basil II, starting in 1025, the Byzantine Empire went through a period of crisis. In Chapter XIV, the author presents the regime of the military aristocracy and the Komnenos dynasty 1081-1185. Also, this chapter presents the Byzantine Empire's socio-economic situation and the external political context. It also mentions the religious policy of the Komnenians, the state organization and the crusading phenomenon.

Chapter XV presents the dynasty of angels 1185-1204, the revolt of the Asanists and the creation of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire 1186-1396. The author writes about the Fourth Crusade from 1202-1204, its diversion, the Byzantine Empire's division by creating the Latin states, and the Greek formations of Nicaea, Trebizond, and Epirus. The chapter continues with a description of the Lascarid dynasty 1205-1258, the Byzantine Church's situation during the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204-1261), and the reconquest of Constantinople by the Greeks in 1261.

Chapter XVI presented the Byzantine Empire from the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 15th century when it was ruled by the Palaeologus dynasty from 1258-1453. The author presents the internal and external situation of the Empire, the Council of Lyon in 1274 and its failed attempt to restore Christian unity. Furthermore, the chapter presents the period of the civil wars within the Byzantine Empire and the triumph of hesychasm, too. Chapter XVII describes Byzantium and the Balkan states in the face of the Ottoman offensive between 1355 and 1402. The last chapter is dedicated to the collapse of the great Byzantine Empire. The author presents the Ottoman crisis and the prolongation of the Byzantine agony between 1402-1421, after which he continues with the Unionist Synod of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439). The chapter also describes the last moments of Byzantine resistance to the Ottoman Turks and the last decade of the Byzantine Church's existence before the Empire's fall. Unfortunately, the existence of this great Byzantine Empire ended on May 29, 1453, when Constantinople fell to Muhammad II. The eighteenth chapter concludes with a description of the myth of the third Rome.

The seven appendices are remarkably consistent and are intended to make it easier for the reader to access the most critical events in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

With a rich bibliography, this paper is also a fundamental research tool for those who want to deepen one of the major topics that the author proposed for analysis and discussion, the great and fascinating Byzantine Empire. Studying bibliographic sources to restore the best possible image of the Byzantine Empire with all its institutions brings a new and essential contribution to the literature, paving the way for further research in the directions the author opens. All this proves the author's excellent capacity for effort, and the meticulousness in observing the nuances and details reflected by the available sources, confirms the importance and necessity of the appearance of this work.

Through this scientific paper, Associate Professor Marius Telea significantly contributes to the studies of Byzantinology in Romania, registering in the gallery of the most important Romanian Byzantinologists. Considering the contributions to the field of research and the logical and analytical nature of the approach, we warmly recommend the book *History and Spirituality of the Byzantine Empire, Volume I: The History of the Byzantine Empire*, and congratulate its author, Associate Professor Marius Telea.

Călin Ioan DUȘE

*Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, Oradea Department,
"Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca,
calin_duse@yahoo.com*