

Orange, in nr. 56, Pope Francis concludes: “Only on the basis of God’s gift, freely accepted and humbly received, can we cooperate by our own efforts in our progressive transformation. We must first belong to God, offering ourselves to him who was there first, and entrusting to him our abilities, our efforts, our struggle against evil and our creativity, so that his free gift may grow and develop within us: “I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12, 1). For that matter, the Church has always taught that charity alone makes growth in the life of grace possible, for “if I do not have love, I am nothing” (I Corinthians 13, 2).

The purpose of the *Cahiers de Césaire d’Arles* is to provide students, researchers and the general public with copyright-free texts, as well as private communications and communication not yet published on the work of Bishop Caesarius of Arles.

Pr. Prof. dr. Constantin RUS

Anthony KALDELLIS, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Harvard University Press, 2019, 392 pp.

Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium is a critical book that shatters assumptions foundational to the field of Byzantine studies for centuries. For all its importance, however, the contents of this volume should not be a surprise to scholars of Byzantium. The author, Anthony Kaldellis¹, has been telegraphing his argument about the subject for years in an avalanche of articles and books. In *Romanland*, he sets out to argue that the Byzantine Empire “was a Roman polity populated overwhelmingly by identifiable ethnic Romans and a number of ethnic minorities” (p. 271).

This seemingly simple statement undercuts the standard explanation of the nature of Byzantium as a multiethnic empire, with serious implications

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for both specialists and instructors who briefly cover the empire in survey courses.

The plan and argument of this book are as follows.

Chapter 1 (“A History of Denial”, pp. 3 – 38) offers a critique of Roman denialism, from its origins in the late eighth century down to today.

Chapter 2 (“Roman Ethnicity”, pp. 38 – 81) and 3 (“Romanland”, pp. 81 – 121) argue that the Romans of Byzantium were, and knew that they were, an ethnic group. This opens the door, in the second part of the book, to analyze relations between Romans and non – Romans. The case made here for a Roman ethnicity in the middle Byzantine period of Roman rule over Greece and Asia Minor. Roman ethnogenesis in the late antique east must be examined separately, though the argument made here anchors such a study in its end result.

Chapter 4 (“Ethnic Assimilation”, pp. 123 – 155) tackles a strategy of imperial rule, namely the acculturation, assimilation and eventual absorption of foreign groups into the Roman people. This was a way of effectively eliminating foreign ethnicities in the politic body. How were ethnically foreign groups, such as Slavs, Muslims and Armenians, made into Romans?

Chapter 5 (“The Armenian Fallacy”, pp. 155 – 196) examines closely the case of the Armenians in Byzantium, rejecting outdated racial notions that flourish only because “Roman” has been effaced as a viable option.

Finally, chapters 6 (“Was Byzantium an Empire in the Tenth Century?”, pp. 196 – 233) and 7 (“The Apogee of Empire in the Eleventh Century”, pp. 233 – 269) provide an ethnic inventory of the empire at two moments in its history, the early tenth century and mid-eleventh century, respectively. These ascertain whether and to what degree Byzantium was multiethnic and what strategies of distinction shaped its rule over minority populations.

As we will see, Byzantium sometimes veered close to being a homogeneous national state, with a vast majority of Romans and small ethnic minorities in the provinces, whereas at other times, after a phase of conquests, it veered nearer to being a true empire, the hegemony of Romans over many non – Romans. Sometimes Byzantium was an empire and sometimes not. This requires detailed empirical study for each period using consistent definitions for ethnicity and empire. This book aims to provide both working definitions and empirical evidence.

Furthermore, Kaldellis frequently seems comfortable going beyond the many overt expressions of Roman patriotism and assuming fairly

pervasive affective states of identification and allegiance to Romanness on the part of those who were otherwise silent about such attachments. For instance, all Khurramites who were enrolled in military registers and incorporated under Roman law as part of their process of assimilation need not have internalized their identification as ethnic Romans, although Kaldellis claims such internalization was hard to resist. We should probably remain agnostic about the depth of feeling of such institutional or political identifications, especially when externally applied to individuals, unless there is sufficient expression of such feeling by those individuals themselves.

In spite of the resistance offered here, Kaldellis's book possesses obvious merits as a theoretically and historiographically aware investigation of Byzantium's self-ascribed Roman identity. This is a forceful and insightful indeed, seminal book that scholars of Late Antiquity and Byzantium will avoid at their peril.

Rev. Ph. D. Traian NOJEA

Gabriel BUNGE, *The Practice of Personal Prayer according to the Tradition of the Holy Fathers, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2021, 246 pp.*

Gabriel Bunge, the author of the work presented by us, is revealed through his entire work as a learned monk, connoisseur of the Eastern tradition and ostentatious in bringing to light as many valuable works as possible belonging to the Christianity of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Born in 1940, originally from Germany, subject to Western training, he joins the Benedictin order in France at 22 years old. In 1980 he retreated into the mountains of Switzerland in search of the most authentic monachism possible, and in 2010 he was converted to Orthodoxy. He studies with exactitude the Egyptian monachism of the fourth century and the work of Evagrius Ponticus, giving the public reader numerous processes of it, true guidance in the monastic life.