

MANUEL II PALAEOLOGUS IMPERATOR, *OPERA THEOLOGICA. APOLOGIA DE PROCESSIONE SPIRITUS SANCTI. TRACTATUS DE ORDINE TRINITATE. EPISTULA AD DOMINUM ALEXIUM IAGOUPEM*, ED. CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS, BREPOLIS, TURHOUT 2022 (CORPUS CHRISTIANORUM. SERIES GRAECA, 71), CLII + 433 PP., ISBN: 9782503528076.

CARLOS MARTÍNEZ CARRASCO  
UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA



The study of the figure of Manuel II Palaeologus (b. 1350, emperor 1391–1425) is conditioned by his status as a tragic figure. Any approach to his intellectual or governmental work is influenced by the imminent end of the Eastern Roman Empire, now perhaps ‘Byzantine’ as it has been reduced to Constantinople and its *hinterland* – apart from a few enclaves in the Peloponnese. This view has made us lose sight of the central importance of this emperor for the development of what in Western Europe has been called Humanism and the Renaissance. He was, in part, responsible for the recovery of classical texts and their *translatio* to the West. The intellectuals who frequented the court at the beginning of the fifteenth century were key to this rediscovery.

But Manuel Palaeologus was not limited to his role as a patron of the arts; he also applied himself to creation. In the work that has come down to us, there is in him an intellectual will that links him to the « wise kings », perhaps because, by birth, he was not destined to exercise power and only the events of the civil wars at the end of the fourteenth century conferred on him the imperial dignity. The *Letters* he exchanged with various intellectual personalities of his time, edited and translated by George T. Dennis (Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Washington 1977), show his intellectual concerns, the state of culture in an Empire that was not at its best politically or economically, pending the Ottoman threat. But it is in the seven dialogues with the Persian *mudarris* (viz., *Dialog emit einer Perser*, ed. Erich Trapp, In Kommission bei G. Böhlau, Vienna 1966) that he presents himself as a theologian who is engaged in refuting the tenets of Islam.

The edition that is the subject of this review is linked to these theological works, affirming Greek Orthodox Christianity against those who question it, both from a religious and a political point of view. And in this respect, the Ottomans were as dangerous as the ‘Latins’ and their policy of uniting the Churches as a *conditio sine qua non* for providing military aid. It is in response to the latter’s

positions that Manuel Paleologus wrote the works rescued by Charalambos Dendrinis, professor at Royal Holloway, University of London. This volume also ties in with the work of ‘recovery’ of some unknown writings of the emperor carried out by this scholar, such as the ‘rescue’ of the letter addressed to David and Damianos, his spiritual fathers.<sup>1</sup>

As a historian specializing in Byzantium, I will not go into the editing of the text by Dendrinis, but the importance of making it available to specialists in the Palaeologian period and especially in the reign of Manuel II. In this sense, the Introduction of more than one hundred and fifty pages is fundamental to know the internal history of the text through the different manuscripts in which the text is preserved. I think it is essential to highlight the fact that most of the treatise on the Holy Spirit was written during his stay in Paris. This is because it shows that old controversies, such as the *filioque*, were still raging, and that they clouded relations between the two halves of late medieval Christianity. It also allows us to infer that the emperor’s stay in the French capital was not as peaceful as it should have been; that it was not free of tensions arising from the ‘religious question’.

The three codices in which the three works have been preserved: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. graec. 1107; Vat. Barb. graec. 219 (containing the treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* and the short discourse *On the Order in the Trinity*) and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. graec. 3041 (in which we can read the *Letter to Alexios Iagoupes*), allow us to establish the route in time and space of this part of the theological work of Emmanuel Palaeologus. For if these are the basic codices, Dendrinis reports that they are not the only ones. What unites them is their early character, around the first half of the fifteenth century, indicating the immediate circulation of the texts. The interest in what the emperor might have written on matters of importance is more than evident from their rapid dissemination.

No less important is the difficulty of the language used in their composition, which must have caused quite a few problems for the copyists and readers of these works. A comparison of the manuscripts reveals the corrections and additions that were made to the original text; paleographic analysis reveals the existence of several hands working on the codices. The marginal glosses, written in red ink or in the same ink used in the rest of the manuscript, as seen in the Ms. Vat. Barb. graec. 219, are also interesting because they allow us to trace the way in which these texts were read, through which hands they passed and what the interests of these people were. In short, the *marginalia* contribute to the (re)construction of the internal history of the document, offering a paratext to be read in parallel to

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. CHARALAMBOS DENDRINIS, « Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus’ Unpublished Letter to his Spiritual Fathers David and Damianos », in CHARALAMBOS DENDRINIS, ILIAS GIARENIS (eds.), *Bibliophilos: Books and Learning in the Byzantine World: Festschrift in Honour of Costas N. Constantinides*, de Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2021 (Byzantinisches Archiv, 39), p. 131–189.

the text. In this particular case, what they show us is the evolution of the Greek language, its adaptation to the passage of time with the intention of making some of the words used by Manuel Palaeologus more intelligible. Dendrinus is right to include these annotations in the margins within the critical apparatus of the edition, making possible that 'parallel reading' to which I referred.

It is in this critical apparatus that the editor's work can be appreciated most clearly, since it is not just a matter of offering a transcription of the text by cross-referencing the readings of the basic manuscripts. The real usefulness of the edition lies in the different levels of cross-checking that are offered. Firstly, Dendrinus points out those other works of Manuel II in which a certain expression is used, which denotes a profound knowledge of the Manueline corpus. Secondly, he traces the sources the emperor used for the composition of the passage, which implies a knowledge of theological literature. And finally, on a third level, he offers alternative readings for some words that are not entirely clear, and it is here that he includes the references to the *marginalia*.

The indexes that close the volume act as an ordered compendium of what is cited in the critical apparatus, greatly facilitating the work of specialists in this period of the History of Byzantium. I find particularly useful the « Index Verborum et Notionum Notabilium » which allows us to locate in the text the key terms in Greek, which constitutes a precise map to navigate through a complex and dense work both for the subject matter and for the language in which it is written. This « Index Verborum » is an essential tool to serve as a guide for a part of a future history of the Greek language.

With each new contribution of this kind, we advance and deepen our knowledge of late medieval Roman thought. With this type of work, it becomes clear that the Eastern Empire was not a catatonic or sclerotic state, but was capable of articulating a discourse of self-defense. Works such as those rescued here bound by Dendrinus show the intellectual vitality of an emperor who is no more than a reflection of the milieu in which they were conceived and created, but also of the Europe that welcomed them, fascinated by the culture that gave birth to them.