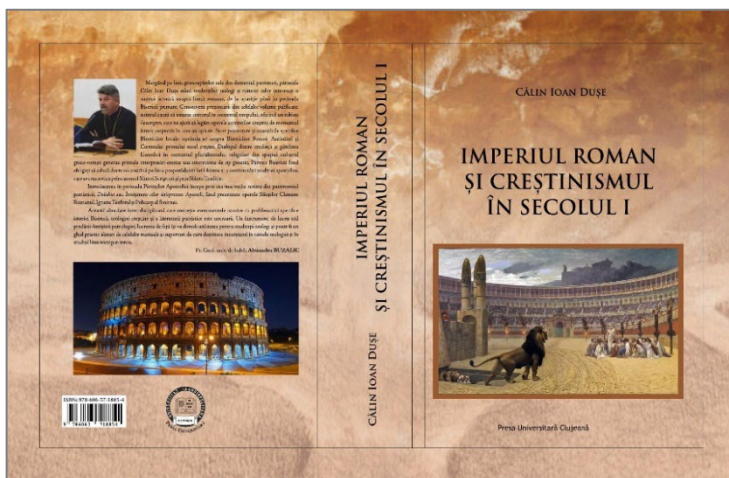


Marius TELEA¹

**Călin Ioan DUŞE, *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în secolul I*
[The Roman Empire and Christianity in the 1st Century],
Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press, 2023, 836 p.**

The work of Father University Lecturer, Dr. Călin Ioan Duşe, bearing the title *The Roman Empire and Christianity in the 1st Century*, is part of the author's concern to highlight the connection between the Roman Empire



and the establishment of Christianity in the world. Christianity spread mainly due to the conditions offered by the Roman Empire, and those who preached the new teaching in the first centuries of the Christian era benefited from the protection offered by the Roman administration, but also by the infrastructure of the Empire.

¹ Faculty of Orthodox Theology, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia; e-mail: marius_telea66@yahoo.com



It all started in the years of the first century of the Christian era, with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and their spread throughout the Roman Empire, which at that time stretched over three continents.

Initially, Christianity did not seem to stand a chance in the Roman world, considering that its followers were initially regarded as a strange sect, about which many prejudices arose. Christians were considered bizarre, even dangerous considering that they were unwilling to adopt the cult of the emperor and shied away from military service.

That is precisely why, on various occasions, violent persecutions were launched against them. Nevertheless, Christianity spread and even prevailed, managing to impose itself as the official religion of the Empire. It can be said that through its structure and facilities, the Roman Empire led to the spread of Christianity, even despite persecution.

In the first chapter entitled *The Short History of the Roman Empire*, the author elaborates a periodization of the history of ancient Rome, tracing the main eras of the history of the Roman state (the era of the Royalty, the era of the Roman Republic, the era of the Principality and the Dominion) and presenting short biographies of the members of the first dynasties.

Chapter II treats in a synthetic manner the most important institutions and magistracies of ancient Rome. They formed the basis of the amazing development and expansion of the Roman Empire, which dominated the world for many centuries. The magistrates were varied or, more precisely, ranked, each having its own, well-differentiated regime. The entire system was constituted in such a way as to prevent any excess of personal power. The magistrate, elected by the people, was only their representative to act on their behalf and often had to give an account when he was released from office. During the mandate, the magistrates benefited from some immunity, and all citizens owed them respect because they constituted the symbol of the sovereignty of the Roman people (*maiestas*).

Chapter III is dedicated to *Roman Culture, Philosophy and Religion*, which are the true pillars of the development of Roman society as a whole. Special attention was paid to education, which in the Roman Empire was oriented in a practical sense, with the aim of integrating young people into the life of the community and in the sense of knowing how to exercise their rights and duties.

Although the mental structure of the Romans rejected the speculations considered too abstract and devoid of any value, the author emphasizes that Stoicism was the only philosophical current that managed to somehow satisfy the valences of the Roman character.

As for religion, it never acquired a stable form. Starting from the 2nd century BC, some foreign philosophical and religious currents began to penetrate Rome, but neither these nor the official divinities were able to answer the problems faced by the vast majority of the inhabitants. As such, distrust has set in regarding these cults or currents, whether philosophical or religious.

Chapter IV presents the main moments of the emergence and spread of Christianity. The author presents the situation in which the world was at the time of the appearance of Christianity, and then he evokes the most representative personalities (Saint John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Saint Paul the Apostle) who marked its spread in the world.

Christianity in the First Century is the topic covered in the fifth chapter. The rise of Christianity in some of the most important cities of the Empire (Rome, Antioch, Corinth) is presented, but the first heresies of this period are also mentioned.

The final chapter, Chapter VI, is an evocation of the life and activity of the main *Fathers of the 1st Century*, the Apostolic Fathers, who, through their writings, laid the foundations of patristic literature, bringing at the same time the first contributions to the fixation of Christian faith teachings.

At the end, the author added some appendices and a glossary of Roman terms.

In conclusion, we appreciate the fact that the work of Father Lector Călin Ioan Dușe offers a synthesis and a pragmatic systematization of the ideas addressed and is elaborated taking into account the actuality of the specialized bibliography and the current methodological rigours. The scientific content of the paper is substantial. Also, the work is well structured. The author formulates ideas in a clear and concise manner. The conclusions of the paper agree with its objectives.

The work of compiling bibliographic sources in order to restore the image of early Christianity, the images and thematic maps bring a new contribution to specialized literature, making the way for more in-depth research in the directions opened by the author. No less important are the appendices presented at the end of the paper, which have the role of teaching and helping the reader to fit in time, and thus to have a better knowledge of the studied period. Meticulously prepared, just as the entire work, the

appendices at the end of the book on the Roman Empire and Christianity in the 1st century come to crown the work undertaken by the author, offering, as he has been accustomed to until now, throughout the work, attention and accuracy in presenting the smallest details regarding the subject under discussion.

The way of creating the appendices, the bibliography presented at the end of each chapter, the sources used, but also the way in which the author presents both the overall situation of Christianity and of the Roman Empire in the first century gives the reader, as well as the specialist, a thorough undertaking with a scientific character worthy of any appreciation. Taking into account the contributions made to the field of research, the logical thread of the cycle of works in the field of published patrology, which also reflects the author's *Weltanschauung* and interest in Christian history and literature, I warmly recommend to readers the book of Father University Lecturer Dr Călin Ioan Dușe, entitled *Roman Empire and Christianity in the First Century*, for reading.