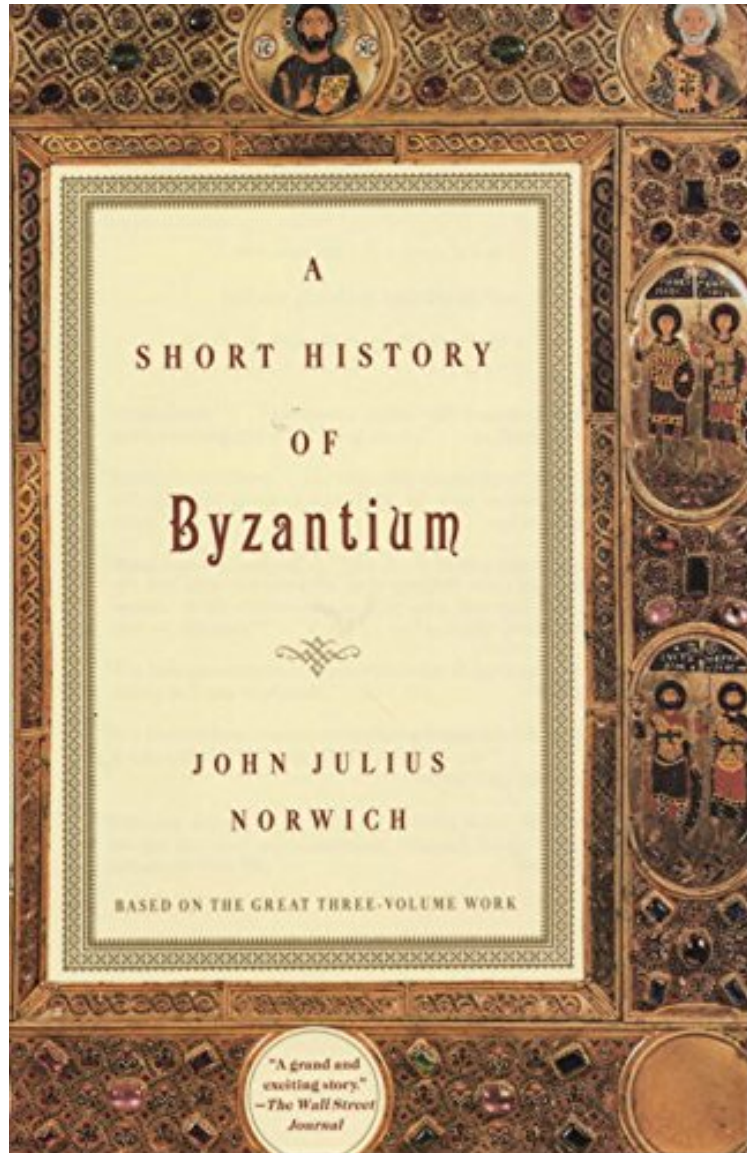


(Pdf free) A Short History of Byzantium

A Short History of Byzantium

John Julius Norwich

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John Julius Norwich : A Short History of Byzantium before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Short History of Byzantium:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Byzantium soup, condensed but not dehydrated By Michael Sandman It's not easy for an author to put 1,000 years of history into 1,000 pages of text and still provide enough detail so that the reader comes away with more than a simple chronology. This book manages the task well. It is a

condensation of Norwich's three volume history of Byzantium, and he gives us a good overview of Byzantine history and culture. By necessity, it's a top-down view that focuses mostly on the history of the rulers rather than on the history of the ruled. The strong points: Norwich manages to present the high points of what could have been a mind-numbing pageant. He has a wry sense of humor. He brings in some of the cultural and architectural elements and does well at explaining arcane religious quarrels that roiled society. He evaluates the intelligence and competence of the many players and rather than giving us just the dry facts he speculates that this or that sudden and unexplained fatal illness was probably parricide or fratricide or plain old homicide. And the useful maps and family trees at the beginning of the book help the reader find his or her way through the maze of places and emperors. The weak points: What's missing here is a better job of proving context. Norwich does well enough at linking the history Byzantium with major events in the West, but he does a less effective job of linking it to the contemporaneous history of the Arabs. And he links it in only the sketchiest way to events in the Persian empire. The lack of context is particularly noticeable if you compare the book to Jason Goodwin's "Lords of the Horizon" on the Ottoman empire, or Bernard Lewis' "The Middle East", both of which provide excellent historical context. So he gets four stars and not five -- but the book is enjoyable and very well written. 46 of 46 people found the following review helpful. Read the long one! By Alice Johnson I began reading the Short History of Byzantium but soon became both frustrated and tantalized by the skipping-along-in-history that was necessary in order to condense a three-volume work into one. I have just purchased Volume I and am really enjoying it. I compared some passages between the two versions and found that, as I suspected, a lot of the material that made this history interesting and coherent had been left out in the condensation. It shouldn't take too much longer to read the whole thing, and you'll understand and remember a lot more. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Skillfully abridged version! By DRI thoroughly enjoyed Norwich's abridged version of his massive three volume series. Norwich clearly has complete command of his subject and draws the reader into the very scenes and intrigue he masterfully describes for us. If the thought of the longer series is a bit daunting, you will absolutely appreciate this fine entry.

"Norwich is always on the lookout for the small but revealing details. . . . All of this he recounts in a style that consistently entertains." --The New York Times Book Review In this magisterial adaptation of his epic three-volume history of Byzantium, John Julius Norwich chronicles the world's longest-lived Christian empire. Beginning with Constantine the Great, who in a.d. 330 made Christianity the religion of his realm and then transferred its capital to the city that would bear his name, Norwich follows the course of eleven centuries of Byzantine statecraft and warfare, politics and theology, manners and art. In the pages of *A Short History of Byzantium* we encounter mystics and philosophers, eunuchs and barbarians, and rulers of fantastic erudition, piety, and degeneracy. We enter the life of an empire that could create some of the world's most transcendent religious art and then destroy it in the convulsions of fanaticism. Stylishly written and overflowing with drama, pathos, and wit, here is a matchless account of a lost civilization and its magnificent cultural legacy. "Strange and fascinating . . . filled with drollery and horror." --Boston Globe

.com The Byzantine Empire, one of its most eminent students reminds us, lasted "for a total of 1,123 years and 18 days," which is an astonishing duration matched by only a few others. Condensing Norwich's three-volume history, this overview captures the splendor and strangeness of Byzantine rule, marked by family intrigues, constant warfare, political and religious strife, and personal ambition--a "somewhat lurid background," as Norwich modestly declares in passing. Norwich is a master of the telling vignette. In one, he writes of imperial guards made up of "Anglo-Saxons who had left their country in disgust after Hastings and had taken service with Byzantium." Facing a Norman enemy in southern Italy, these Anglo-Saxons exacted terrible vengeance until the Normans rallied under the leadership of a fearless woman, one Sichelgaita, and massacred their enemy. Norwich's book abounds in similarly surprising and absorbing episodes. From School Library Journal YA? A condensation of Norwich's three-volume study of the Byzantine Empire. It is the story of a civilization that flourished economically, militarily, and, most importantly, as a center for culture and the arts while the rest of Europe struggled through the Dark and Middle Ages. Despite the empire being the most powerful nation in Europe for over 1000 years, its history reads like a soap opera? with grand intrigue, despotic rulers, madmen, conquests, betrayals, religious schism, crusades, and eventual decline. The book is massive in scope and although every other ruler seems to be named either Constantine, Constantius, or Constans, the book is surprisingly easy to read. Detailed maps; charts showing the lineage of the major personalities; and lists of emperors, sultans, and popes help readers keep track of who was who and where the major events took place. An extensive index makes this book useful as a reference tool. ? Robert Burnham, R. E. Lee High School, Springfield, VA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Seeking to reach a broader audience, Norwich has abridged his acclaimed three-volume history, *Byzantium* (LJ 3/1/89 and LJ 1/92), into one volume that has been published to coincide with a major exhibition on Byzantine art and culture at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art this spring. Byzantium was disparaged if not ignored by English-speaking historians until Robert Byron's influential *The Byzantine Achievement* (1929), which did much to rehabilitate its reputation. For over 1000

years, Byzantium shielded a developing European culture from invasions from the east. The Byzantines not only helped to preserve and disseminate the heritage of Greece and Rome to a Europe seeking its classical roots but also developed a sublime artistic tradition that flourishes to this day. This work provides a marvelous introduction for students and the general reader. Libraries that have not acquired the three-volume work should consider adding this one. Highly recommended. Robert J. Andrews, Duluth P.L., Minn. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.