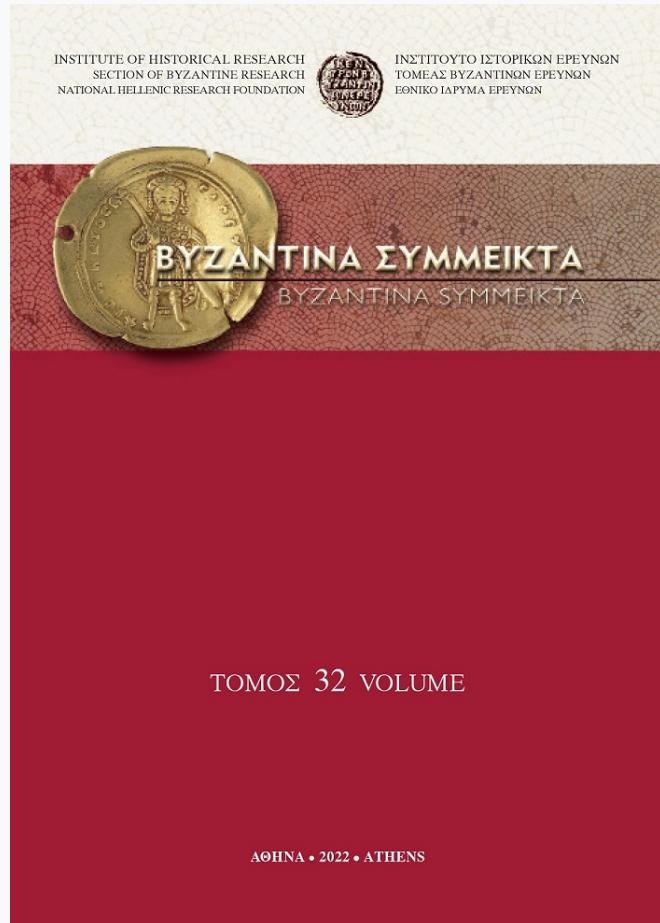


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Religious Hatred and Byzantine Ideology before the Crusades

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YOUVAL ROTMAN

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RELIGIOUS HATRED AND BYZANTINE IDEOLOGY BEFORE THE CRUSADES*

Religious hatred has a long and painful history. It was conceptualized, defined and employed in various ways and for various reasons throughout history. The present article focuses on the religious hatred and the roles that it played in Byzantium. It proposes a comparative approach to analyze expressions of religious hatred in Byzantine texts in a period of great changes and major political crises. The article does not address religious hatred as a sentiment that a believer may have in regard to a neighbour of a different faith, but the way it appears in texts as a literary and rhetorical construct. An analysis of what can be termed “Byzantine typology of religious hatred” as presented and constructed in different types of texts by different authors will reveal how a common Byzantine perspective was constructed to mark political enemies as religious adversaries and vice versa¹. The question is to what end. This article proposes to look more closely into the way religious hatred served as a tool to form Byzantine public opinion, a means for the Byzantines to perceive their polity and themselves as righteous, in a word: as ideology.

Antony Kaldellis has proposed an innovative approach to examine how Byzantines perceived their state/polity/πολιτεία as a public entity, a

* I would like to thank the members of the East Mediterranean Byzantine Seminar for the lively discussion on a draft version of this article. Their invaluable comments enriched and contributed to it greatly.

1. I am thankful for David Nirenberg for comments on this paper and his idea to look at this subject as a “typology of religious hatred”. And see D. STATHAKOPOULOS, Irrevocable Blood: Violence and Collective Identity Formation in the Late Twelfth Century, in: *Identities and Ideologies in the Medieval East Roman World*, ed. Y. STOURAITIS, Edinburgh, forthcoming, ch. 11.

res publica/κοινόν, a concept they inherited and continued to use as part of their political self-perception as “Romans”². Kaldellis’ study attempts to reveal the perceptions of public opinion about the allocation of power in Byzantium and argues that for its people the Byzantine polity was considered a public common entity. The question what people really thought and how they perceived their state, their emperor, their laws, is of course the million-dollar question that all historians would have liked to know the answer to. Kaldellis, no doubt, proposes a daring thesis, and not least a daring approach, in situating “the people” in the center. Yet, the term “the people” is both reductive and undefined. Who were these people? Were they members of the elite? What about other people, women, wage laborer, farmers, tradesmen, slaves, the poor, who constituted a part, even the largest part of society? Did they also perceive their state as their own *res publica*, their own “common thing”, a shard field of power game in which they can participate and act? How can we know, and what does it mean in regard to our understanding of pre-modern polities³? Today we refer to a collective attitude in the public sphere as “public opinion”. Is it possible to trace it in pre-modern societies and to reveal its functions⁴?

In modern time we refer to the media, the newspapers for example, as indicative of the dynamics of public opinion, and analyze the discourse on “ethnicity”, “identity”, “power”, “kingship”, “clashes of civilizations” – to take a few characteristic examples – as means of its formation⁵. Religion too, and more particularly religious rivalries, can serve as means to construct public opinion. To Kaldellis the perception of Byzantium as a common entity of the Roman people is incompatible with its religious perception as an Orthodox society. He opposes the definition of Byzantium as a theocracy, a position

2. A. KALDELLIS, *The Byzantine republic: People and power in New Rome*, Cambridge MA 2015; IDEM, Political freedom in Byzantium: the rhetoric of liberty and the periodization of Roman history, *History of European Ideas* 44/6 (2018), 795-811.

3. See S. REYNOLDS, Empires: A Problem of Comparative History, *Historical Research* 79/ 204 (2006), 151-165.

4. J. HALDON, Res publica Byzantina? State formation and issues of identity in medieval east Rome, *BMGS* 40 (2016), 4-16. I deliberately avoid the term “identity” here, which, like “ethnicity” is an undefined term.

5. The obvious reference is to B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London-New York 1983.

shared by the author of the present article. And yet, seeing Byzantium as either a theocracy or a republic, are not the only options. Moreover, they are not exclusive. In fact, religion and religious hatred can play a significant role also in non-theocratic states, as we can see for example, in the Eastern Mediterranean of our days. The present article proposes to investigate the role of religious hatred in the construction of Byzantine public opinion during the process of the formation of Byzantium as a medieval Empire and prior to the arrival of the Crusaders.

In what follows we shall see that a sense of political consciousness is not incompatible with religion, and that religious hatred can play a major role in constituting public opinion. It can be used politically as a tool to perceive and identify political rivals and enemies. It serves as a means to differentiate “we” from “them, our (common) enemies”, by providing the first with a sense of political righteousness. The perception of the state as righteous was a Byzantine construct that played a political role. Moreover, this role was much more central than in Roman society. It determined how the inhabitants of the Empire perceived themselves as a polity in opposition to those who were defined as being on “the wrong” side, i.e. as heretics. Public consciousness is thus tightly connected to ideology. Ideology, especially political and religious ideology, relies on cultural constructs used in the political sphere. This is exemplified by the way religious rivals in Byzantium were represented and perceived, starting with Judaism.

Although Judaism did not pose a political threat to Byzantium, Jews were nevertheless marked in literature, art and ritual as the enemy par excellence, the enemies of God, Church and State. Anti-Jewish sentiments were thus constructed as part of an ideology that formed public opinion by excluding Byzantine Jews as the hateful enemies. In fact, in its approach to Judaism the Byzantine Christianity was polemical from its inception. Similarly to its approach to pagans, its policy in the matter of Jews aimed at their total conversion⁶. This objective is partly what makes the Christian

6. *Justini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. M. MARCOVICH, Berlin 1997. G. DAGRON, Judaïser, *TM* 11 (1991), 359-380; G. DAGRON – V. DÉROCHE, Juifs et Chrétiens dans l’Orient du VIIe siècle, *TM* 11 (1991), 17-273. V. DÉROCHE, L’apologie contre les juifs de Léontios de Néapolis, *TM* 12 (1994), 45-104. É. PATLAGEAN, Les Juifs à Byzance (527-1453), in: *Les Juifs dans l’histoire: de la naissance du judaïsme au monde contemporain*, ed. B. LELLOUCH – E. PATLAGEAN – A. GERMA, *Les Juifs dans l’histoire*, Paris 2011, 189-197.

Byzantine perspective toward Judaism exceptional in view of anti-Jewish perspectives in antiquity⁷. Conversion to Christianity was not intended solely for Jews. This was an imperial Byzantine policy applied to pagans, anti-Chalcedonian Christians, and from the seventh-eighth centuries also in regard to Muslims⁸. Yet, the theme of conversion holds a special place in the Byzantine literature that deals with Christian-Jewish relations. This is manifested in imperial policy, in formulae of abjuration specially defined for Jews who convert to Christianity, as well as in stories about Jewish converts and Christian-Jewish polemics⁹. The forced conversions that Herakleios (610-641) imposed on the Jews in 630/631 are often explained as an act of internal consolidation¹⁰. When Herakleios seized the Byzantine throne in 610 he soon had to confront the Sassanid conquests of Palestine and Egypt. The Jews were perceived and were marked as collaborators of the Sassanids. Following Herakleios' victory over the Sassanid Empire in 627 an internal consolidation was needed both politically and religiously. Forced conversion of Jews thus appears as part of his imperial policy.

The Islamic conquests of the seventh century transformed the international map of the Mediterranean and deprived Byzantium of most of its provinces in the Near East. The Empire was reduced to approximately a third of its territory and probably to less than a third of its population. Most of the non-Chalcedonian communities were no longer a part of the Empire. Only a small part of the Jewish communities were left in Byzantium. Most of

7. B. ISAAC, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton 2004, 440-490. Z. YAVETZ, Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity: A Different Approach, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44/1 (1993), 1-22; IDEM, *Judenfeindschaft in der Antike: Die Münchener Vorträge*, Munich 1997. P. SCHÄFER, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*, Cambridge MA 1997. *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin concordance to the Portion missing in Greek*, ed. L. H. FELDMAN – J. R. LEVISON, Leiden 1996. T. RAJAK, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, Leiden 2002, ch. 11. A. CAMERON, Byzantines and Jews, *BMGS* 20 (1996), 249-274; EADEM, Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context, *TM* 14 (2002), 57-78.

8. P. ELEUTERI – A. RIGO, *Eretici, dissidenti, musulmani ed ebrei a Bisanzio: una raccolta eresiologica del xii secolo*, Venezia 1993.

9. *Infra*, pp. 216-218, 224-226.

10. G. DAGRON, Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le baptême des Juifs, *TM* 11 (1991), 313-357, 347. DAGRON – DÉROCHE, Juifs et Chrétiens, 25-26.

them passed under Muslim rule. Byzantine Jews maintained their position as a religious minority, and by the eighth century they had become the most important religious minority of the Byzantine state¹¹. Following the advent of Islam, the situation of the Christian inhabitants in Byzantium had also changed. Byzantium found itself on a defensive position vis-à-vis the Caliphate, not only politically, but also, and for the first time, religiously.

In the eighth century another political-religious crisis erupted in Byzantium, this time from within. The Iconoclastic crisis was a product of the religious politics of Byzantine emperors in the eighth and ninth centuries, who eradicated the cult of the icon of Christ from public life¹². Their measures were met by harsh opposition, mostly of monks, who would not subscribe to the imperial policy against icon veneration. The crisis in its two phases (726/730-787, 815-843) can be understood as a response to the religious challenge that posed the Muslim conquests, a need to fix what was wrong in Byzantine cult, namely God's idolatrous veneration¹³. Since the icon of Christ was replaced by the image of the emperor, the imperial politics against the cult of icons is also understood as measures taken to

11. For various aspects see: *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Majority and Minority Cultures*, ed. R. BONFIL – G. STROUMZA – O. IRSHAI – R. TALGAM, Leiden 2012. E. PATLAGEAN, *Les juifs à Byzance*.

12. M.-F. AUZÉPY, *État d'urgence c. 700 – c. 850*, in: EADEM, *L'histoire des iconoclasts*, Paris 2007, 1-34; *Iconoclasm: papers given at the ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. BRYER – J. HERRIN, Birmingham 1977. J. HERRIN, What Caused Iconoclasm?, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65/4 (2014), 857-866; L. BRUBAKER – J. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: the sources*, Farnham-Burlington VT 2001; L. BRUBAKER – J. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, C. 680-850: A history*, Cambridge UK 2011. But see L. BRUBAKER, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*, Bristol 2012, for an “iconoclastic” interpretation – P. SPECK, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen: Die Legenden vom Einfluss des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslems auf den Ikonoklasmus*, Bonn 2010.

13. This is the daring thesis of Marie-France Auzépy in M.-F. AUZÉPY, *L'histoire des iconoclasts*, namely in the articles: Les enjeux de l'iconoclasme (III, 1) and Constantin, Théodore et le Dragon (III, 4). Perceiving the Muslim conquests as a divine punishment for the erroneous religious politics was not a new perspective. See for example the monophysite approach: *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, trans. R. W. THOMSON, Liverpool 1999. For imperial measures taken already in the seventh century to amend Byzantine religious life as a response to the Islamic conquests see: M. T. HUMPHREYS, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850*, Oxford 2015, 37-80.

create a new religious unity focused on the image of the emperor¹⁴. It is thus not surprising that Leo III (717-741), who initiated the iconoclastic politics, is also known for his policy of forced conversion of Jews and Montanists¹⁵. Like Herakleios, his policy can be understood as a call for consolidation. Yet, the religious imperial politics had the opposite effect. It propelled an internal political crisis within Byzantine society that confronted the emperor's followers, the iconoclasts ("the icon breakers") with the iconodoules ("the icon's venerated", literally "the icon's slaves"). The second situated at the heart of this conflict the question of submission and service to Christ in opposition to the emperor. Iconoclasm, therefore, albeit its Muslim antecedent was an internal Byzantine religious conflict between two adversaries, and its magnitude can offer yet another type of comparison for the place of religious hatred in the Byzantine political culture and ideology¹⁶.

Conflicts with religious rivalries thus accompanied Byzantine history throughout the process of its formation as a medieval Empire and were an inseparable part of Byzantine foreign policy and internal policy. The present article examines the role of religious hatred in the formation of Byzantine public opinion by comparing the way Byzantine texts treated three distinct groups which they presented as religious enemies: Jews, Muslims (called also "Saracens", "Arabs", "Agarenes", "Muhammadans", "Ismaelites"¹⁷)

14. AV. CAMERON, Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium, *Past & Present* 84 (1979), 3-35; EADEM, The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation, in: *The Church and the Arts*, ed. D. WOOD, Oxford - Cambridge MA 1992. Both last articles reprinted in: EADEM, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, London 1981; HUMPHREYS, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology*.

15. For a view on Leo's iconoclast policy as a measure to attract Jews see: M.-F. AUZÉPY, *Les enjeux de l'iconoclasme*.

16. M.-F. AUZÉPY, *Les enjeux de l'iconoclasme*. P. CRONE, Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine iconoclasm, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 59-95. N. MAY, *Iconoclasm and text destruction in the ancient Near East and beyond*, Chicago 2012. The comparative approach to Christian and Muslim iconoclasm is undermined in BRUBAKER - HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 106-117. But see J. HERRIN, What Caused Iconoclasm? and *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons written in Arabic by Theodore Abū Qurrah, Bishop of Harrān (C.755-C.830 A.D.)*, trans. S. H. GRIFFITH, Leuven, 1997.

17. G. STROUMZA, Barbarians or Heretics? Jews and Arabs in the Mind of Byzantium

and iconoclasts. This situation of numerous religious rivalries offers an ideal context to examine the functions of religious hatred in Byzantium. We shall focus here on the long period from late antiquity up until the eleventh century. Such a chronological framework was chosen because of the two major political and religious crises that Byzantine societies underwent: the advent of Islam and Iconoclasm, and before the Crusaders –a religious rival of yet another kind– made their entrance into the Byzantine world¹⁸. This period saw great changes, conflicts and crises, both internally and externally, that demanded adaptations and redefinitions of political ideology and public opinion¹⁹.

To analyze the place of religious hatred in the Byzantine political culture we shall examine sources of three different genres that played a central role in forming public opinion: historiography, hagiography and liturgy²⁰. These gained great popularity although they were aimed at distinct publics. In fact, it is precisely because of their distinct publics that their parallel examination can shed new light on the way the creation of public opinion in Byzantium made use of religious hatred. While historiography was aimed at reflecting an official narrative by and for the political and ecclesiastical elites, hagiography was aimed at constructing religious authority around centers of religious cult, in particular monasteries, sometimes in opposition to other types of authority. It was thus aimed for another type of public. Liturgy presents a different type of media to form public opinion: it was

(Fourth to Eighth Centuries), in: *Jews in Byzantium*, 759-776. E. M. JEFFREYS, The Image of the Arabs in Byzantine Literature, in: *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major papers, Dumbarton Oaks/Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., August 3-8, 1986*, New Rochelle N.Y. 1986, 305-324. Y. ROTMAN, Converts in Byzantine Italy: local representation of Jewish-Christian rivalry, in: *Jews in Byzantium*, 893-922.

18. Much scholarship is dedicated to the Byzantines-Crusaders religious-political rivalries. See STATHAKOPOULOS, Irrevocable Blood. *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. A. E. LAIOU – R. PARVIZ MOTTAHEDEH, Washington, D.C. 2001.

19. This is the perspective of the scholarship of the period: *supra*, and particularly HUMPHREYS, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology*. BRUBAKER – HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*.

20. We leave here aside juridical sources which seldom referred to religious rivals. Their public use, as a general rule, did not have a rhetorical role. But see: HUMPHREYS, *Law, Power, and Imperial Ideology*.

used in Church in public and didn't require reading in order to follow its contents. Thanks to their importance in diffusing political and religious ideology the three genres shaped Byzantine public opinion on three different dimensions. The presence of Jews, Muslims and iconoclasts is prevalent in sources of all three genres, and their representation reveals the way in which Byzantine authors constructed their public image. An analysis of the attitude toward these three religious rivals will therefore reveal the role that religious hatred played in forming Byzantine political ideology. The main question is which ideology and in what ways it was portrayed. We begin with Byzantine historiography.

Historiography plays a central role in constructing political narratives. It represents official views and is used to form hegemonic ideas about the state and the ways in which its inhabitants relate to it. Byzantine historiography inherited and continued the historiography of the Roman world. Like their Roman predecessors Byzantine historians wrote and analyzed the events of their time. They were not the only ones. Starting from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, a new genre of Church historiography gave a meta-historical dimension to Byzantine history by framing it as part of a Christian biblical narrative²¹. Byzantine chroniclers who followed this trend contextualized the events of their time as part of a compilation of history in a global Christian perspective. As a combination of a biblical-Christian narrative and an imperial political narrative, Church historiography has shaped a Christian-religious perspective on the course of history from Creation to the present, and constructed an official and hegemonic views about the Byzantine state and its history. The religious enemy fills a particular central function in this construction. The enemies of Christianity are used as a *topos* by Church historians who present them in line with the biblical enemies of the people of Israel²². This *topos* reveals how a Christian Byzantine historiographical narrative was constructed,

21. *Eusebius of Caesarea, Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. and trans. G. BARDY, index by P. PÉRICHON, 4 vols. Paris 1952-1967. M. AMARISE, Eusebio fra storiografia e teologia politica: l'imperatore cristiano dalla Storia Ecclesiastica agli scritti costantiniani, *Adamantius* 16 (2010), 52-62.

22. O. IRSHAI, Jews and Judaism in early Church Historiography: The Case of Eusebius of Caesarea (preliminary Observations and Examples), in *Jews in Byzantium*, 799-828, 801-806.

and highlights the central role that it attributed to religious hatred. In this process the description of the Jews, designated in Greek as either “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) or “the Hebrews” (οἱ Ἐβραῖοι) reflects the historian’s ardent religious perspective vis-à-vis the enemies of Christendom²³. Such a perspective is apparent from historians who constructed Church history as a historiographic genre: Eusebius, Theodoret of Cyrus, Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus.

“It seemed very unworthy of this most sacred feast, that we should keep it following the custom of the Jews, a people who having imbrued their hands in a most heinous outrage, have thus polluted their souls, and are deservedly blind. Having then cast aside their usage, we are free to see to it that the celebration of their observance should occur in future in the more correct order which we have kept from the first day of the Passion until the present time. Therefore, have nothing in common with that most hostile people the Jews! let us, most honoured brethren, withdraw ourselves from that detestable association”²⁴.

In these words, the historian of the first half of the fifth century Socrates Scholasticus, cites Constantine’s epistle to the Churches in the matter of the separation of Pascha from Passover. A similar approach is expressed in his other descriptions of Jews who interfere with the social and political order of the Christian state wherever they are²⁵. Although Socrates uses similar negative descriptions for non-Orthodox Christian communities in mixed cities, the Jews are marked as unique due to their role in the crucifixion²⁶. The Jews disturb the social and political order in Syria, Egypt and Dio-

23. No clear distinction separates between the use of “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) or “the Hebrews” (οἱ Ἐβραῖοι). “Hebrews” may designate the biblical people, but not exclusively. In contrast, “Israelites” (οἱ Ἰσραηλῖτες) designated exclusively the biblical Israelites (in contrast to R. FISHMAN-DUKER, Images of Jews in Byzantine Chronicles: A General Survey, in: *Jews in Byzantium*, 777-798).

24. Socrates Scholasticus, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. and trans. P. PÉRICHON – P. MARAVAL, 4 v., Paris 2004-2007, i. 9.35-36 (v. 1, 126-129).

25. *Ibid.*, ii.33 (v. 1, 152); vii. 13 (v. 4, 48-55).

26. *Ibid.*, ii. 35 (v. 1, 156-159); vii. 5-6 (v. 4, 28-35); vii. 11 (v. 4, 44-47); vii. 16 (v. 4, 60-63). Cf. *Theophanes Confessor Chronographia*, ed. C. DE BOOR, v. 1, Leipzig 1883, 83.

Caesarea (Sepphoris) in Palestine. It is thus not surprising that Socrates places the Jews as auxiliaries to the hateful Julian who, in order to avenge the Christians, orders the Jews to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem out of the royal treasury²⁷. The fact that a fire consumes it in a single day, makes the Jews confess “unwillingly” to Christ. Three nights later a cross appears shining on their garments, although “they, in the words of the apostle remain blinded and do not accept the good”²⁸.

The same event is described by Sozomen, a contemporary of Socrates, who used the second as both a source and historiographic model²⁹. Sozomen associates the Jews with the political enemies of Christianity. Instead of Julian, it is Sapor II who is persuaded by the Jews to persecute the Christians in his empire and destroy their churches³⁰. Byzantine Church historians thus construct an association between the pagans, the Jews and the Persians. The Jews are presented here as a group who, in a Byzantine perspective, is allied with both the internal enemies (pagan Julian) and external enemies (Persians). They are thus marked as both the enemies of Christianity and of the Empire³¹. The description of the Jews in Church historiography seems to play an important role here in the construction of Christian Byzantine ideology. However, the descriptions are not always stereotyped, and are often fueled with local conflicts between Jews and Christians³².

In contrast to the Church historians of the fifth century, the non-ecclesiastical historians of the sixth century, who are not writing in a meta-historical Christian perspective, such as Zosimos, Johannes Malalas, Agathias and Procopius, give little mentions to Jews. Zosimos does not mention them at all. Johannes Malalas who presents a meta-historical chronicle from Creation to the sixth century has very little to say about the

27. Socrates Scholasticus, *Histoire ecclésiastique* iii.20 (v. 2, 322-327).

28. *Ibid.*

29. IRSHAI, Jews and Judaism, 802-804.

30. Sozomenos *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. and trans. B. GRILLET – G. SABAH, 4 v., Paris 1983-2008, ii. 9 (v. 1, 266-273); v. 22 (v. 3, 214-224).

31. Cf. Theodoret of Cyros, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, 2 v., ed. and trans. P. CANIVET, Paris 2006, 2009, iii. 20; v. 37 (v. 2, 156; 478).

32. O. IRSHAI, Christian Historiographers’ Reflections on Jewish-Christian Violence in Fifth-Century Alexandria, in: *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity*, ed. N. B. DOHRMANN – A. Y. REDD, Philadelphia 2013, 137-153.

Jews apart from his Biblical survey and the two revolts in Palestine: the Samaritan revolt of 529 in which both Christians and Jews are commonly attacked, and the revolt of 556 of the Samaritans and the Jews in Caesarea. In his description of the revolt of the Green faction in Antioch in 486, the Jews are portrayed as victims³³. When “the impious” actions of the Greens against the Jews are reported to Zeno, the emperor rages because the Jews were not burned alive³⁴. Malalas seems to be critical here toward the stereotypic hatred toward the Jews as it appeared in earlier historiography. Such consciousness about anti-Jewish stereotypes is also apparent in the writings of his contemporary Procopius. In the *Wars* he presents the Jews as supporters of the Goths and as persecuting Christians in the Himyarite kingdom³⁵. In his *'Avéκδοτα* (“The Secret History”) in contrast, this perspective is reversed: Justinian is naturally the villain, while the Jews are his victims who are unjustly forbidden from celebrating Passover³⁶. This contrast is revelatory. It reflects the awareness of Procopius in using an anti-Jewish *topos* for political reasons. He is therefore totally conscious about the function that the anti-Jewish *topos* fills in constructing imperial ideology and uses this in his *'Avéκδοτα* to undermine the official stand point.

The identification of the Jews with the enemies of the Christian State continues to the seventh century. Just as Socrates Scholasticus has associated the Jews of Jerusalem with Julian the apostate, and Sozomen with Sapor II, Sebeos, an Armenian Churchman, associates them with the Persian conquest of 614: “when the survivors of the race of Hebrews revolted against the Christians and embracing ancestral rancor, caused great harm”³⁷. The Jews (always with the definite article) are attributed with the initiative of

33. John Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. I. THURN, *Ioannes Malalae Chronographia* [CFHB 35], Berlin 2000, 316-317.

34. Cf. his use of “Jews” vs. “Hebrews”: (John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 247-251; 389-390; 443). See also R. FISHMAN-DUKER, *Images of Jews*.

35. Procopius, *De bello gothico*, ed. J. HAURY – G. WIRTH, *Procopius Opera omnia*, v. II, Leipzig 1963, i. 8 (p. 45); i. 10 (pp. 53-54). Procopius, *De bello persico*, ed. J. HAURY – G. WIRTH, *Procopius Opera omnia*, v. I, Leipzig 1962, i. 20 (p. 107).

36. Procopius, *Anecdota*, ed. J. HAURY – G. WIRTH, *Procopius, Opera omnia*, v. III. *Historia quae dicitur arcana*, Leipzig 1963, 174 (ch. 28). Note the reverse presentation of Socrates Scholasticus’ description of Constantine’s epistle in this matter.

37. *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, v. 1, 70 (ch. 34).

the Persian conquest and the persecutions of the Christian population that followed³⁸. The sole objective of “the slayers of the Lord”, write Sebeos, is to torment Jesus again³⁹. And here he constructs a new argument by associating the Jews with “their relatives, the sons of Ismael, whom they annexed in their fight against the Christian state”⁴⁰.

Sebeos, who was not a Byzantine historian, constructs a monophysite perspective to explain how the erroneous heretic Byzantine emperors are to blame for the success of the Muslims. His use of the same *topos* of the Jews who allied with the enemies of orthodoxy exemplifies the role the Jews played in constructing a religious-political perspective which opposes here the Byzantine imperial ideology. His descriptions of the “Ismaelites” are well known, as is his association of the Jews with the Muslims⁴¹. Although Muhammad is described as the one who united “the entire people of Israel” with the aim of establishing a large army and demanding the land of their father Abraham, the Muslims do not receive a derogatory attitude in Sebeos’ description albeit their religious menace⁴². Here lies a significant difference in the way the two adversaries are presented: The Muslims pose a threat to Christianity because of their conversion policy toward Christians⁴³. The Jews’ objective, on the other hand, is not conversion but a total destruction of the Christians. In the late eighth beginning of the ninth century Theophanes the Confessor builds on this link between Jews and Muslims: “First,” he writes, “the errant Hebrews thought that Muhammad was the Messiah they had expected. They abandoned Moses and joined him, and he taught the Muslims many things against the Christians. Only later, when the Jews saw him eating a camel, they realized he was not the Messiah, but then they did not deny him”⁴⁴. Moreover, he writes, the Jews (a term he uses alternatively with “the Hebrews”) persuaded Omar to take down the cross from the

38. CAMERON, Blaming the Jews.

39. *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, v. 1, 71 (ch. 35).

40. *Ibid.*, v. 1, 95 (ch. 42).

41. J. MOORHEAD, The Earliest Christian Theological Response to Islam, *Religion* 11 (1981), 265-274. Cf. CAMERON, Blaming the Jews. Cf. *Georgii monachi chronicon*, ed. C. DE BOOR, v. 2, Leipzig 1978, 699-702.

42. *The Armenian History*, v. 1, 97; 103 (chs. 42-43).

43. *Ibid.*, v. 1, 144-145 (ch. 50).

44. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, v. 1, p. 333.

Mount of Olives⁴⁵. Theophanes then develops this line of argumentation. He uses the early Byzantine *topos* of the Jews as supporters of the foreign ruler in persecuting Christians in order to build a case for a Jewish initiative in the iconoclastic policy of the Caliph Yazid II (687-724). A Jewish magician, he writes, promised the Caliph a forty-year rule if he destroys the Christian icons venerated in churches⁴⁶.

Yet, this argument that links Iconoclasm to Judaism, characteristic of the earlier Church historians, is abandoned, when Theophanes comes to describe Byzantine iconoclasm⁴⁷. The Jews are completely absent from the description of the reign of Emperor Leon III and the period that followed. In contrast to the role of the Jewish magician in the Muslim iconoclasm, we find a converted Byzantine prisoner who returned to Byzantium and joined the Byzantine emperor in his anti-Orthodox policy⁴⁸. The hated religious opponent is represented from now on by the iconoclastic emperors and their supporters⁴⁹. When Theophanes does refer to Jews of the period, he no longer uses the earlier stereotypic derogatory *topos*⁵⁰. The same is true also in regard to the descriptions of the Muslims, which are generally devoid of a poisonous language in contrast to the way he presents the Byzantine iconoclasts. A similar line characterizes the descriptions of George Monachos in the ninth century⁵¹. Theophanes and George were Church historians. Both adopted a meta-historical Christian perspective in their writings. They presented the iconoclasts as the new internal religious rivals who replaced the old ones,

45. *Ibid.*, v. 1, 342.

46. He may be relying here on George Syncellus (Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, v. 1, 402-403 (A.D. 722/723). Cf. *Georgii monachi chronicon*, [as in n. 51] v. 2, 735.

47. *Ibid.*, v. 1, 404 f. (A.M. 6217/A.D. 724/725f.). This change could be the result of the difference between Theophanes' own writings and what he adopted from George Syncellus who may have reflected an earlier attitude toward the Jews.

48. *Ibid.*, v. 1, 402-403 (A.M. 6215/A.D. 722/723) Cf. *Georgii monachi chronicon*, v. 2, 735.

49. See a characteristic example in Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, v. 1, 406.

50. This is for example the case in Theophanes' description of the Jews of Jerusalem who suffer from Muslim persecutions as much as the Christian population: Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, v. 1, 446, 452.

51. Yet, contrary to Theophanes, George the Monk narrates how the “hateful iconoclast emperor employed Jews/Hebrews” in his war against icons: *Georgii monachi chronicon*, ed. C. de BOOR – P. WIRTH, v. 2, 737-738. Cf. FISHMAN-DUKER, Images of Jews, 787-790.

the Jews. This was a rhetorical and ideological means to portray iconoclasm as a religious-political crisis.

By the middle of the tenth century the iconoclastic crisis was well over. We find very little references to Jews in general in the writings of Theophanes Continuatus. In the *Life of Basil* a stereotypic negative description of “the ethnos of the Jews” justifies the mission of their conversion led by the emperor Basil I⁵². This is in contrast to the author’s inoffensive descriptions of Arabs’ military attacks⁵³. Yet, the link between Jews and iconoclasts, or more correctly the passage between the two, is manifested in the pejorative stereotypic description of Michael II the Amorian (820-829). His presentation as an iconoclast emperor is constructed on his association with a mysterious sect from his native city Amorion, a mixture of Jews and Athinganoi, that seems imaginary⁵⁴. The cruelty of the iconoclast emperor toward icons worshippers and his iconoclast policy are here linked to his association with heretics and Jews among them. This is reminiscent to the way in which Socrates Scholasticus described Julian the apostate five centuries beforehand. The *topos* of religious hatred that was invented by Church historians, therefore, was adopted and used by others as means to construct the Byzantine religious political ideology. The advent of Islam did not change the way Jews were presented by Byzantine historians, whether Churchmen or not. A change occurred with the iconoclast crisis. Byzantine historians no longer referred to the Jews of their time in the same perspective as previously. The internal persecutors of Christianity in the eighth-ninth centuries, portrayed as the persecutors of Jesus, are the iconoclast emperors and their followers. This exemplifies very well how religious hatred was used to form public opinion in regard to political and religious crises. Moreover, in the writings of later historians of the eleventh-twelve centuries both Jews and iconoclasts are by and large absent. If they are present, their description

52. *Theophanis Continuati Liber V. Vita Basillii Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. I. ŠEVČENKO, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo vita Basillii imperatoris amplectitur* [CFHB 42], Berlin, 2011, 308-310.

53. *Ibid.*, 162; 190-218, 230-238.

54. *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, ed. and trans. M. FEATHERSTONE – J. SIGNES-CODOÑER [CFHB 53], Berlin 2015, 66. This was adopted by John Skylitzes (*Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, ed. H. THURN, Berlin 1973, ch. 3. Cf. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, v. 1, 402-403.

is not aimed to construct political ideology or to form public opinion⁵⁵. The replacement of “the hateful Jews” by “the hateful iconoclasts” was a rhetorical historiographic means which was needed to construct iconoclast ideology, and determine how this crisis needed to be remembered. We find a similar assimilation of Jews and iconoclasts in Byzantine hagiography.

While Byzantine historiography played a central role in constructing the official perspective on the course of Byzantine history, no less important role was attributed to hagiography in the construction and understanding of past and present events within the framework of a religious ideology. The literature that developed in late antiquity to document the suffering and death of the Christian martyrs soon became the most popular literary genre in Byzantium⁵⁶. In addition to their importance in creating narratives for the construction of the cult of the saints, and in the use they made of legendary elements, mainly for descriptions of miracles, the hagiographers also refer to current affairs, including political events. The hagiographer uses detailed descriptions of everyday life and common views and perceptions which are rather absent from contemporaneous historiographic narratives⁵⁷.

An analysis of Byzantine hagiography reveals a distinction between the ways in which Jews are portrayed in the hagiographic narratives before and after the Islamic conquests. Up to the seventh century the Jews are the stereotypic enemy. The repeated references in early Christian martyrologies

55. In the writings of Michael Attaleiates, Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnena.

56. F. HALKIN, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica graeca. Troisième édition*, Brussels, 1957.

E. CASTELLI, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, New York 2004. T. D. BARNES, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, Tübingen, 2010. F. LIFSHITZ, Beyond Positivism and Genre: ‘Hagiographical’ Text as Historical Narrative, *Viator* 25 (1994), 95-113. Writing ‘true stories’: historians and hagiographers in the late antique and medieval Near East, ed. A. PAPACONSTANTINOU – M. DEBIÉ – H. KENNEDY, Turnhout 2010. C. RAPP, The origins of hagiography and the literature of early monasticism: purpose and genre between tradition and innovation, in: *Unclassical Traditions: Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. CHR. KELLE – R. FLOWER – M. S. WILLIAMS, Cambridge U.K. 2010, 119-130. Y. ROTMAN, *Insanity and Sanctity in Byzantium. The Ambiguity of Religious Experience*, Cambridge MA 2016, ch. 3.

57. E. PATLAGEAN, Ancienne hagiographie byzantine et histoire sociale, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 23/1 (1968), 106-126 (trans. J. HODGKIN, Ancient Byzantine Hagiography and Social History, in: *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. S. WILSON, Cambridge U.K. 1983, 101-22).

to individual Jews, and especially to a Jewish collective entity, depict them as collaborators of the Roman persecutors. This is often in contrast to the pagan population which normally converts. Conversions of Jews occur, but only individually and sporadically. Most of the cases of conversion are not directed toward Jews but toward pagans. The Jews remain in these texts “the slayers of Jesus”. In the seventh and eighth century this changes.

Three Byzantine texts of hagiographical nature from this period narrate the rivalry between local Jewish and Christian communities in Byzantine Mediterranean context, which ends in the collective conversion of the Jewish community: the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* which recounts the conversion of the Jews of Carthage and dates to between 632 and 646/647, the account of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei in Egypt which has come down to us in an Arabic translation (from either a Greek or a Coptic original), and the conversion of the Jews of Lentini, both dated to the second half of the seventh century⁵⁸.

The text of the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* begins with the forced conversion of the Jewish community of Carthage, imposed by Herakleios⁵⁹. Jacob the Jew, the protagonist of the story, who has been converted against his will, becomes convinced that Jesus is the true Messiah. He then starts to preach the Christian doctrine to the other members of his community who, although baptized, still reject the Christian faith. The core of the text is dedicated to two theological debates. The first is between Jacob and the local baptized Jewish community, and the second is between Jacob and Ioustos, a non-baptized Jew who happens to pass through the city. In the end of the story the entire Jewish community acknowledges the Christian faith, and both Jacob and Ioustos embark on a mission to spread Christianity to other Jewish communities.

The story of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei (Tumā, a town located in the Nile Delta) deals with a Jewish-Christian debate, and is also said to have taken place under Herakleios⁶⁰. The text post-dates the Islamic conquest

58. ROTMAN, Converts in Byzantine Italy.

59. DAGRON – DÉROCHE, Juifs et Chrétiens. See P. ANDRIST, Literary distance and complexity in late antique and early Byzantine Greek dialogues *Adversus Iudeos*, in: *Dialogues and debates from late antiquity to late Byzantium*, ed. A. CAMERON – N. GAUL, New York 2017, ch. 4.

60. R. GRIVEAU, Histoire de la conversion des juifs habitant la ville de Tomei en Egypte

of Egypt, which is mentioned toward the end of the account. At the center of the story we find a wager between two monks from the monastery of Saint Anthony, and the head of the Jewish community of Tomei: they will argue on the interpretation of the Scriptures until one of the two is unable to reply, and who will then convert to the opposing religion. The Jewish leader adheres to the truth of the Christian faith and declares his wish to be baptized along with all other Jews of the city. The baptism of the entire community then follows, conducted by the bishop of the region.

A massive conversion of a Jewish community is also the issue of the hagiographic cycle of the martyrs of Lentini (Alphios, Philadelphos, and Quirinos), which places in the center the story of Samuel the Leper, the head of the Jewish community of Lentini⁶¹. He is cured by the relics of the three martyrs and converts to Christianity along with a large part of his community. Here too the central part of the story is the public debate between the Jews and the Christians, which ends with a conversion of a large part of the Jewish community. Samuel himself is then ordained and appointed as a priest of Antziano.

These three texts reveal clearly a literary *topos* of the seventh century. In contrast to similar Latin texts that deal with conversion of Jews, all three texts are grounded in the Byzantine policy of Herakleios' forced conversion and are constructed on a Christian archetype of a Judeo-Christian debate that leads to conversion⁶². Whether all of these Jewish communities did in fact convert to Christianity or not, the Christian authors who chose the theme of conversion as the main topic of their narratives used more or less

d'après d'anciens manuscrits arabes, *ROC* 3 (1908), 298-313. G. NORMAN, The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt, Part VI: Places of Settlement of the Jews of Medieval Egypt, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33/1 (1974), 144.

61. *Vat. gr. 1591*, f. 165v, in: *AASS Maii II*, 537 ff. M. RE, *Il codice lentinese dei santi Alfio, Filadelfo e Cirino. Studio paleografico e filologico*, Palermo 2007. C. GERBINO, Appunti per una edizione dell'agiografia di Lentini, *BZ* 85/5 (1992), 26-36. M. V. STRAZZERI, I giudei di San Fratello: in *Ubi neque aerugo neque tinea demolitur. Studi in onore di Luigi Pellegrini per i suoi settant' anni*, ed. M. G. DEL FUOCO, Naples 2006, 647-689.

62. Cf. *Justini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*. A. KÜLZER, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudeos. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild*, Leipzig 1990. DÉROCHE, Polémique.

the same elements to construct the story⁶³. In all of the texts the Jews must be assimilated into the Christian majority. However, once the presence of Islam becomes prevalent, this representation, and indeed the conceptualization of the theme of conversion, changes. Conversion dominates the hagiography of the ninth and tenth centuries, yet not necessarily of Jews. In literature that was written in regions of Christian-Muslim confrontations where the religious menace of Islam was dominant, the main concern is the threat of conversion to Islam⁶⁴. Although the anti-Jewish polemics does not disappear once Islam gets a hold in the Byzantine world, it rarely uses the theme of conversion⁶⁵.

While Byzantine hagiography stays normally silent about Christian captives who convert to Islam, cases of renegades are occasionally mentioned. Such, for instance are Cretan inhabitants who converted to Islam, whom Nikon Metanoeite attempts to redeem back to Christianity⁶⁶. Christian believers may be in danger, but the Christian faith must always prevail. This representation is the main objective of Saints' *Lives* written against the background of the Muslim menace in the Mediterranean⁶⁷. Such stories show that starting from the ninth century, Muslims represented the real menace in the local hagiography. The Jews, in contrast, are nearly completely absent. *A priori*, the Christian-Muslim conflict has taken over the place of the Christian-Jewish conflict. However, the two rivalries are not presented on the same level. The Christian-Jewish conflict is presented as an entirely internal Byzantine affair that disturbs the Byzantine society.

63. Cf. Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, ed. and trans. S. BADBURY, Oxford 1996.

64. A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, Life of Joseph the Hymnographer, in: *Monumenta graeca et latina ad historiam Photii patriarchae pertinentia* 2 (1901), 1-14. St. EFTHYMIADIS, Chrétiens et Sarrasins en Italie méridionale et en Asie Mineure (IXe-XIe siècle), in: *Histoire et Culture dans l'Italie Byzantine*, ed. A. JACOB – J.-M. MARTIN – G. NOYÉ, Rome 2006, 589-618.

65. See below for the example of the Διάλεξις between Gregentios and the Jew Herban.

66. D. SULLIVAN, *The Life of Saint Nikon: Text, translation, and commentary*, Brookline MA 1987, 82-84 (ch. 20).

67. G. TAIBBI, *Vita di Sant'Elia il Giovane*, Palermo 1962; Vita S. Eliae Spelaeotae, AASS Sept. III, 843-888; Vita S. Vitali, AASS Mar. VI, *26-*35. *Historia et Laudes SS. Sabae et Macarii iuniorum e Sicilia Auctore Oreste patriarcha hierosolymitano*, ed. G. COZZA-LUZZI, Rome 1893. EFTHYMIADIS, Chrétiens et Sarrans. Y. ROTMAN, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. J. M. TODD, Cambridge MA 2009, 47-55, 160-164.

The Muslims, on the other hand, are presented as complete outsiders, and the Christian-Muslim relationship is portrayed as it was perceived at the time: an external political danger. This difference in the ideological strategy in regard to Jews and Muslims can explain the change that the anti-Jewish attitude underwent in the eighth-ninth centuries.

And yet the venomous descriptions of Jews as the slayers of Jesus, characteristic of early Byzantine hagiography, does not disappear, but is used in the anti-iconoclast literature. This is evident from the hagiographic texts written about the persecutions against iconodoules, which adopt as a model the martyrologies of early Christianity⁶⁸. The iconoclasts not only deny Jesus, but also fight God. Indeed, as Byzantine art historians Kathleen Corrigan and Glenn Peers have shown, destroying the icons of Jesus is understood and presented in Byzantine texts and their illuminations as a second crucifixion⁶⁹. To the iconodoules the icon is not Jesus' representation, but his presence in this world. The Iconoclasts replace the traditional slayers of God: the Jews. In order to present the internal religious-political crisis, the image of the Jews as God's murderers is used as a model to depict the new murderers of God: the iconoclasts.

In general, the Jews are absent from the same texts. The iconoclastic emperors themselves are their substitutes. Thus, for example, Emperor Constantine V is described in the historiographical treatise on the *Life* of Romanus the New-Martyr as "a true enemy of faith, a student of Satan ... as a Jew in his faith and behavior"⁷⁰. In the life story of Stephen the Younger, the execution of the martyr in the Hippodrome takes place in front of an excited iconoclast crowd: "shouting like Jews in the past: Death! Crucify the Son of God!"⁷¹. The Christian-Byzantine aggressive line toward the Jews

68. I. ŠEVČENKO, Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period, in: *Iconoclasm*: [as in n. 12], 113-133.

69. K. CORRIGAN, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, Cambridge U.K. 1992. G. PEERS, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*, State College PA 2004, chs. 1-2.

70. P. PEETERS, S. Romain le néomartyr (1 mai 780) d'après un document géorgien, *AnBoll* 30 (1911), 393-427, 413.

71. M.-F. AUZÉPY, ed., *La Vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacon*, Aldershot Hampshire-Brookfield-Vermont 1997 ch. 19; 15; EADEM, *L'hagiographie et l'iconoclasme byzantin: Le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, Aldershot Hampshire-Brookfield Vermont 1999, 78-80.

is directed at the new religious-internal enemy of Orthodoxy: iconoclasm, which is perceived and is portrayed as a Jewish sect/heresy⁷². As Iconoclasm replaces Judaism in Byzantine hagiographies written by iconodoules, the Jews themselves disappear⁷³.

Thus, with the Byzantine iconoclastic crisis an anti-Jewish ideology took on a new meaning and was used to describe a phenomenon that had nothing to do with Judaism. Although the Jews themselves almost completely disappeared from the historiography and the hagiography of the iconoclastic period, their stereotype proved useful to address the major religious-political crisis of the time, and to form the desired public opinion. It became functional to writers who needed traditional demonic representation to describe the new internal religious rival that threatened the Christian political culture from within. We would have expected to find the Byzantine iconoclasts equated to Muslims, especially since Muslim iconoclasm preceded Byzantine iconoclasm. Islam, after all, presented a real threat to Byzantium. But, the question of whether or not the enemy threatens Christian faith was of secondary importance. The issue here was a Byzantine internal threat to the religious unity of the state, a position that Islam never fulfilled and could not fulfil in the Byzantine political culture. This role was reserved in Byzantium to the Jewish population.

Once the iconoclastic crisis was over and processed, the Jews return to the hagiography of the tenth century, and the Christian-Jewish rivalry regains its importance. This is most notable in the *Life of Basil the Younger*, and in the works attributed to Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar. The first gives considerable place to the Jews in presenting a serious rival to the Christian doctrine. Their erroneous interpretation threatens the faith of the protagonist, the saint's disciple, Gregory⁷⁴. He is attacked by a false thought that the Jews are right in their beliefs. This is soon resolved by

72. A. MARKOPOULOS, Βίος τῆς αὐτοκράτειρας Θεοδώρας (BHG 1731), *Symmeikta* 5 (1983), 249-285, 267.

73. In contrast, the representation of the Jews is present in the anti-iconoclastic theological literature, and appears in illustrations of contemporary manuscripts alongside figures of iconoclasts: ELEUTERI – RIGO, Eretici, dissidenti, 109-123. K. CORRIGAN, *Visual Polemics*, 29-37; 164, n. 35.

74. *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, ed. and trans. D. F. SULLIVAN – A.-M. TALBOT – S. MACGRATH, Washington D.C. 2014, 344-362, 400-402.

Basil's refutation. The Jewish-Christian tension is planted in the story as an introduction to the description of the Christian afterlife and the last judgment, whence Muslims, Jews and pagans acknowledge their erroneous beliefs⁷⁵.

The *Διάλεξις*, attributed to Gregentios the Archbishop of Taphar, narrates a public theological debate between Gregentios and the Jewish leader Herban that takes place in the city of Taphar in the Himyarite kingdom⁷⁶. The public debate ends in the conversion of Herban and the entire Jewish community to Christianity. Albrecht Berger who edited the text, sees here references to the forced conversion imposed by Basil I. Yet, the conversion of the Jewish community is not in itself the main theme but serves to mark the end of the theological debate with a Christian victory. If these hagiographic texts indeed referred favorably to Basil I's forced conversion policy, the treatise attributed erroneously to Gregory of Nicaea (instead of to Gregory of Syracuse), presents quite the opposite view⁷⁷. The text which was composed according to its editor Gilbert Dagron in 878/9 argues that a general conversion of Jews is a serious fault, and the emperor who undertakes it acts in contradiction with the Canons. This argument is based also on the fact that the Jews who convert do not do so out of true conviction, but out of material interests to better their life. The fact that the Jews are not presented as a target of complete integration, follows here their negative stereotype.

The theme of the Jewish convert appears in the literature of the ninth and tenth centuries also with no relation to a Jewish-Christian theological polemic. This is first of all the case of the *Life of Constantine the Jew* (BHG 370), which has come down to us in a single manuscript⁷⁸. The protagonist is a Jew who has converted secretly as a boy, leaves his Jewish bride on their wedding day and embarks on a journey that leads him toward a monastic life. He attempts to convert more Jews in the city of Nicaea. The Jews of

75. This includes the repentance of Jews, Muslims, other heretics and their punishment as well as the punishment of the Roman persecutors, including Diocletian: *ibid.*, 414-436; 470-494; 602-642.

76. A. BERGER, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios Archbishop of Taphar*, Berlin 2006, 100-109, 796-798.

77. G. DAGRON, Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée, 313-357.

78. AASS Nov. IV, 628-656.

the city react in violence and plot to kill him, but fail to do so thanks to the apparition of the Virgin⁷⁹. The Jew who does convert out of true conviction is the exception that proves the stereotypic rule, just as Gregory of Syracuse has laid it out. And this leads to a third type of examination of Byzantine texts which constructed the figures of converts and the religion they renounced.

The theme of religious conversion thus became central in the Byzantine religious ideology created by hagiographers in order to affirm the prevalence of monastic authority in the Byzantine public opinion. Conversion signified the victory over heresies, the “erroneous sects/choices” and constructed a public sense of religious righteousness as ideology. Indeed, Judaism as well as Islam have been perceived and treated within the general Byzantine ideological disposition toward various types of heresy⁸⁰. The Jewish inhabitants of the empire as well as the Muslims who were captured, were both subject to conversion⁸¹. The process of conversion to Orthodoxy was itself a long process, part of which was a public ritual carried out in church. A principal part of the conversion process was that abjuration of the religious principles of the convert’s old religion, the anathema. The abjuration ritual was performed in front of the Christian congregation in church, and revealed the way in which rival religions were presented to the Byzantine Christian public and perceived in its eyes. The ritual itself portrayed the victory of Byzantine Christianity, and therefore played an important role in creating public opinion of self-righteousness. Byzantine *Εὐχολόγια* contain detailed descriptions of conversion rituals for various heretics, such as Manicheans, Armenians, Jacobites, Arians, Athinganoi,

79. *Ibid.*, 642.

80. A. CAMERON, Jews and Heretics—A Category Error?, in: *The Ways that never parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, ed. A. BECKER – A. YOSHIKO-REED, Tübingen 2003, 345–360. STROUMZA, Barbarians or Heretics. M. ABEL, Le chapitre CI du livre des hérésies de Jean Damascène, *Studia Islamica* 19 (1963), 5–25. A.-T. KHOURY, *Les théologiens byzantins et l’Islam: Textes et auteurs (VIIIe–XIIIe S.)*, Louvain-Paris 1969, 49–65. PG, v. 94, col. 764–773.

81. M. CANARD, *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazira et de Syrie*, Paris 1953, 737–739; IDEM, Quelques «à-côtés» de l’histoire des relations entre Byzance et les Arabes, in: *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, Rome 1956, 98–119, reprinted in: IDEM, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, pt. xv. ROTMAN, *Byzantine Slavery*, ch. 1.

Jews, Muslims⁸². They also contain rituals destined to apostates who wish to convert back to Christianity⁸³. The ritual itself was identical in its stages for all types of converts. It lasted two weeks during which the catechumen fasted and learned to pray. At the end of the two weeks the priest led the candidate to the baptistery. The candidate then publicly declared coming into the Christian faith out of free will and love of Christ, followed by a public declaration of the candidate renouncing the old religion and an anathema of its principles, laws and rituals as detailed in the particular versions for each religion. The ritual ended with the Credo declaration of the convert, answered by a *Kύοιε Ἐλέησον* from the congregation. The anathema formulae that specify the principals, laws, rituals and costumes for each heresy, provide important and indeed unique information about the ways in which the Byzantine ideology portrayed its rival religions, in particular Judaism and Islam⁸⁴.

The converted Jew needed to deny Jewish rituals, holidays, and beliefs. These included the preparation of the Passover sacrifice, the Matzos, Sukkot, and the rest of the festivals and customs: circumcision, prayers, purifications, sanctification, fasting, shofar blowing, the holiday of Mordchai, the curse of Haman and his crucifixion. The convert denied the lunar calendar, the Sabbath, synagogues, food, drinks, laws, as well as the antichrist “who is the messiah the Jews anticipate”. Other versions of the anathema include a breakdown of various Jewish faith groups: Sadducees, Pharisees, Nazareans, Essenes, Herodians, Hemerobaptists⁸⁵. The anathema includes

82. ELEUTERI – RIGO, *Eretici*. M. ARRANZ, Les sacrements de l'ancient Euchologe constantinopolitain, *OCP* 48 (1982), 284-335; 49 (1983), 42-90. G. FICKER, Eine Sammlung von Anschwörungsformeln, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 27 (1906), 443-464.

83. E. SCHIFFER, Returning to the Fold. Observations on Prayers for Muslim Apostates in Byzantine Euchologia, in: C. RAPP – E. AFENTOULIDOU – D. GALADZA – I. NESSERIS – G. ROSSETTO – E. SCHIFFER, Byzantine Prayer Books as Sources for Social History and Daily Life, *JÖB* 67 (2017), 196-200.

84. The following discussion is based on *Paris. Coisl.* 213 (copied in 1027), f. 140r-147r, which I have consulted along with the following manuscripts: *Escorial R-I-15*; *Athen.* 662; *Athen.* 714. PG, v. 140, col. 23-136. The following dissertation was not accessible to me: J. M. MAI, *Coisl. 213. Eucologio della Grande Chiesa. Manoscritto greco della Biblioteca Nazionale di Parigi (ff. 101-211): Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum*, Rome 1995.

85. *Paris. Coisl.* 213 in comparison to *Escorial R-I-15*, f. 74v-79v; *Athen.* 662, f. 242r-257v; *Athen.* 714, f. 40r-56v.

a renunciation of the *Mishnah*, “namely the laws and statutes mistakenly attributed to Moses”, those of Rabbi Akiva, of Anan (ben David) and *Pirkei Avot*⁸⁶. In contrast to the anti-Jewish stereotypic scorns that are so prevalent in historiography and hagiography, the anti-Jewish anathema in its various versions does not include pejorative descriptions in general, or anti-Jewish polemics in particular. It is a detailed account of the Jewish faith and its way of life. The formula makes it clear that the Byzantine church was well informed of Jewish customs, laws, and principles. Comparing this to the humiliating ritual that Byzantine Jews needed to pass in order to participate in litigation with Christians, the anathema conveys no such attitude⁸⁷. The formulae in any case do not distort Jewish customs or beliefs. This is not the case in regard to the abjuration formula for Muslim converts.

Catechumenate Muslims passed through the same ritual and the same stages as catechumenate Jews⁸⁸. Their abjuration of Islam was of course different and reflects the principles of Islam in Byzantine eyes⁸⁹. The Muslim must renounce Muhammad, his followers, the Koran, Jesus and biblical figures according to Islam, the Muslim concept of paradise and all Muslim rituals⁹⁰. The anathema of Muhammad and his successors lists Abu-Bakr, Umar, Talkhan, Mu‘awyia, Zubair, Abdalla, Zeit, Izit, Uthman, Muhammad’s wives. In other versions this list includes Muhammad’s successors according to the Shi‘a: Ali, his sons Hasan, Husein, as well as

86. *Paris. Coisl.* 213, f. 148r-v. Cf. *Novellae Justiniani*, no. 146, ed. R. SCHOELL, Hildesheim 1993. Cf. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, ed. and trans. F.R. WILLIAMS, Leiden-Boston 2009, 33.9.2. A. KREPS, From Jewish Apocrypha to Christian Tradition: Citations of Jubilees in Epiphanius’s Panarion, *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 87/2 (2018), 345-370, 361.

87. E. PATLAGEAN, Contribution juridique à l’histoire des juifs dans la Méditerranée médiévale: les formules grecques de serment, *Revue des Études Juives* 124 (1965), 137-156, reprinted in: EADEM, *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance: IVe-XIe siècle*, London 1982, pt. xiv.

88. Cf. SCHIFFER, Refuting to the fold.

89. See D. SAHAS, Ritual of Conversion from Islam to the Byzantine Church, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36/1 (1991), 57-69. E. L. MONTEL, Un rituel d’abjuration des Musulmans dans l’église grecque, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 53 (1906), 145-163. Both are focused on the ritual itself rather than on the content of the anathema formula.

90. *Paris. Coisl.* 213, f. 140-145v. Cf. A. RIGO, Una formula inedita d’abiura per i Musulmani (fine X - inizi XI secolo), *RSBN* 29 (1992), 163-173.

Muhammad's daughter Fatima⁹¹. This absence of the Shi'ite succession chain suggests a relatively early origin of the anathema formulae. After the succession chain follows the anathema of the Koran which "Muhammad pretended to have received from Gabriel", his writings and mysteries, and the Koranic angels, all "lies that Muhammad told about biblical figures", an anathema of Jesus according to the Koran, an anathema of the creation of man according to the Koran, of predestination and Jihad⁹². Along with such accurate descriptions of the Muslim faith the abjuration formula implants imaginary descriptions. Such is, for example, the anathema of the Muslim paradise where "Muslims and their women will engage in eating the flesh of their favorite birds and fruits", their bodies will rise up to the sky. Having phalluses of 40 feet they will engage in continuous fornications in front of the shameless God⁹³.

We find more derogatory descriptions of Muslim rituals and practices which the catechumen needed to deny. Along the anathema of polygamy, the praying to Mecca, Mecca itself and the Haj, the formula specifies the stoning of Christians, as well as the adoration of the morning star: Lucifer and Aphrodite, the starts as cavaliers as well as other imaginary prayers and sayings attributed to Muhammad⁹⁴. Such descriptions of Islam in the Byzantine liturgy is therefore composed of authentic elements alongside imaginary and even demonic elements. This could reflect a misunderstanding of the Koranic references to deities, or a deliberate representation of the Muslims as idolaters. The origin of some is the "Refutation of the Koran" (*Ἀνατροπὴ*) written by Nicetas of Byzantium, which is dated to the middle of the ninth century⁹⁵. It refers to passages from the Koran, and offers

91. Hasan, Husayn and sons are added in *Escorial* R-I-15, 84r, as well as in *Athen.* 662, 250v-257v; *Athen.* 714, 1r-12r, in comparison to *Paris. Coisl.* 213, which does not mention them.

92. *Paris. Coisl.* 213, f. 142r-143v.

93. *Paris. Coisl.* 213, f. 142r. Cf. *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, ed. S. GÜNTER – T. LAWSON – C. MAUDER, Leiden 2017.

94. *Paris. Coisl.* 213, f. 143r-v.

95. PG, v. 105, col. 670-842. A. RIGO, Nicetas of Byzantium, in: *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, ed. D. THOMAS – B. ROGGENMA, v. 1, Leiden – Boston 2009, 751-756. KHOURY, *Les théologiens*, 110-162. A. ARGYRIOU, Perception de l'Islam et traductions du Coran, *Byz* 75 (2005), 25-69. J. M. DEMETRIADIS, *Nicetas of Byzantium and*

an exceptional interpretation of certain verses. Some of the imaginary descriptions of the abjuration formula of Islam, like the shameless God, and the description of Muslims as idolaters, are based on it. On the other hand, some of the descriptions of the anathema formula do not appear in the writings of Niketas of Byzantium or in other Byzantine texts which describe Islam, the Muslim believers and their customs⁹⁶. Moreover, other texts of the same period clearly show that the Byzantines were well informed about the principles of the Muslim faith and its practice⁹⁷.

What then could be the reason for such imaginary depictions of Islam? And why do we find them in a composition that is supposed to be the most accurate description of the actual principles of faith, a composition whose use requires authenticity? Abjuration of imaginary principles can certainly undermine the very nature of the process of conversion. After all conversion depended on the converts' abjuring their old religion. This is evident from the accuracy of the abjuration formula for Jews. The fact that these abjuration formulae were spoken out loud in public invites to consider them as Byzantine propaganda intended to be heard in church in public by the converts. Such imaginary depictions of a rival religion, which portray it in shameful and disgraceful manner do not appear in other Byzantine sources concerning Muslims. Yet, they appear in Byzantine hagiographic descriptions of Jews and iconoclasts that portray both groups as the immoral persecutors of the Christian truth.

To conclude: Byzantine writers made extensive use of religious hatred in different ways and for different ends. This article presented a typology of

his Encounter with Islam: A Study of the “Anatropē” and the two “Epistles” to Islam. A PhD thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1972. M. ULRICH, The Byzantine translation of the Qur'an from the eighth/ninth century CE and its role in the polemic of Nicetas of Byzantium, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 8 (2014), 4-5.

96. Part of them appear in later anti-Islamic descriptions of Muslim cult attributed to Bartholomew of Edessa: PG, v. 104, col. 1383-1458, as well as in 14th-century Demetrios Kydones: PG, v. 154, col. 1037-1152.

97. R. GLEI - A. KHOURY, *Johannes Damaskenos und Theodor Abu Qurra. Schriften zum Islam*, Würzburg 1995. E. JEFFREYS, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*, Cambridge U.K. 1998, 26-30, 52.

the uses and functions of religious hatred in Byzantine texts toward distinct groups of religious rivals that had nothing to do one with the other. This analysis focused not on the actual hatred that believers might feel for members of different faiths. Rather, the main interest was to reveal the cultural, rhetorical and political functions that religious hatred filled in Byzantium. To this end the analysis compared the ways Jews, Muslims and Iconoclasts were portrayed in Byzantine historiography, hagiography and liturgy. All three groups were positioned as both religious and political opponents.

Islam threatened Byzantium, both politically and religiously, and the conversion of Byzantine Christian prisoners was a reality that Byzantine society needed to come to terms with. The Byzantine abjuration formula of Islam reveals a demonizing propaganda in opposition to more temperate representations of Islam and Muslims in other Byzantine texts, namely in historiography and hagiography. The Jews, on the other hand, although they posed no real threat to neither Christianity nor the Byzantine state, were nevertheless presented as such in both Byzantine historiography and hagiography. In contrast, the abjuration formula for Jews portrayed an accurate description of Judaism and Jewish customs, and is free from stereotypes. This contrast reveals the importance of the rhetorical function of religious hatred as an ideological construct. Moreover, the polemical depiction of the Jews became a model to represent a religious-political internal crisis that threatened the unity of the Christian faith from within, namely Iconoclasm, and reveals the main function of religious hatred in Byzantium. Religious hatred provided a conflictual prism for the Byzantines to perceive themselves, their ideas, and their state as righteous, and was used to construct Byzantine ideology by using three literary genres. Each constructs different kinds of authority and aims at a different public. Together they form what we can call Byzantine public opinion. Construction of religious hatred proves to be extremely functional for Byzantine political rhetoric and ideology. We saw how this was done in different periods in response to different political circumstances. It was especially needed in times of crisis when the Byzantine state was struggling against external and internal threats. Religious hatred played a central role in constructing an ideology for the Byzantine state. It was a tool to perceive, understand and act in view of internal and external political Crises, in the process of the formation of Byzantium as a medieval Empire.

ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΤΙΚΟ ΜΙΣΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗ ΙΔΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΠΡΙΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΙΣ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ

Το άρθρο εξετάζει το θρησκευτικό μίσος και τον ρόλο που έπαιξε στο Βυζάντιο. Προτείνει μια συγκριτική προσέγγιση για την ανάλυση των εκφάνσεων θρησκευτικού μίσους στα βυζαντινά κείμενα σε μια περίοδο μεγάλων αλλαγών και μεγάλων πολιτικών κρίσεων. Η σύγκριση εκφάνσεων θρησκευτικού μίσους για Εβραίους, Μουσουλμάνους και Εικονομάχους αποκαλύπτει τον τρόπο που εμφανίζεται στα κείμενα ως λογοτεχνικό και θρησκευτικό κατασκεύασμα. Η ανάλυση αυτού που μπορεί να ονομαστεί «βυζαντινή τυπολογία του θρησκευτικού μίσους» όπως παρουσιάζεται και κατασκευάζεται σε διαφορετικούς τύπους κειμένων από διαφορετικούς συγγραφείς αναδεικνύει πώς κατασκευάστηκε μια κοινή βυζαντινή οπτική για να χαρακτηρίσει τους πολιτικούς εχθρούς ως θρησκευτικούς αντιπάλους και το αντίστροφο. Προκειμένου να γίνει κατανοητός ο στόχος του, το άρθρο προτείνει να φωτιστεί πιο προσεκτικά ο τρόπος με τον οποίο το θρησκευτικό μίσος χρησίμευσε ως εργαλείο για τη διαμόρφωση της κοινής γνώμης στο Βυζάντιο κατασκευάζοντας μια ιδεολογία: ένα μέσο για να αντιληφθούν οι Βυζαντινοί την πολιτεία τους και τον εαυτό τους ως δίκαιους.