IN SEARCH OF THE JEWS IN BYZANTINE LITERATURE*

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This article is not concerned with Jews in the Byzantine Empire in general or their standing in Byzantine society. Jewish sources, such as the texts of the Cairo Genizah, provide better and more reliable information on these topics. Indeed, I am only concerned with the portrayal of Jews in Byzantine literature, a picture which has been characterized by clichés over the centuries. It is well known that research on Byzantine history is largely done without documentary evidence, since, with rare exceptions, such as Mount Athos, Patmos, or southern Italy, Byzantine archives have not survived. As a result and in contrast with Medievalists working on the history of Western Europe, Byzantinists are far more dependent on the analysis of texts which are literary in the broadest sense of the word. Thus in my Proustian search I should like to see if it is possible to find out more, beyond the clichés, about the life of Byzantine Jews and if so, in which texts and contexts. I would therefore ask you to accompany me on a somewhat winding path through the literary genres and religious topoi of Byzantium. Normative sources, including the Codices of civil and canon law, are deliberately excluded because they form a separate subject, which has already been very competently and thoroughly explored by scholars such as Amnon Linder and Spyros Troianos. Finally, I should like to add that this article will focus primarily on the period between the end of the sixth and beginning of the thirteenth century, since the Fourth Crusade and its consequences changed the demographic and social structures of Byzantine society to such an extent that 1204 seems to me a reasonable stopping point.

In his Apologie pour l’histoire, Marc Bloch distinguishes between témoignages volontaires and involontaires (voluntary and involuntary evidence). The former are those in which an author has consciously

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portrayed an historical event or situation, and in so doing has interpreted it. The latter on the other hand are the more or less coincidental by-products of another story, facts that are only mentioned in passing. The latter are rarer than the former but certainly more historically reliable and credible.¹ An example that comes to mind is the recently published recipe for the preparation of ink, which is preserved in a Greek manuscript (Ambros. C 222 inf.) generally dated to the eighties of the twelfth century. The unknown author points out that oak apples, which were amongst the most important ingredients, did not have to be imported from Alexandria or any distant land, but grew in the Πομακία, that is on Byzantine territory, and were acquired by the Jews, from whom one could buy them.² Thus a Byzantine quack, who is trying to explain how to make ink, provides us with a good example of Jewish participation in retail trade. We know that Jews were involved in silk and foreign trade from other sources: in his Book of the Eparch (spring 912), for example, Leo VI forbade the silk traders of Constantinople from selling their products to Jews or other merchants for resale outside the city.³ In a similar fashion, the emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII in their privilege for Venice of 992 forbade Venetian traders from transporting products belonging to Jewish, Amalfitan, or Apulian traders in their ships, which were subject to lower Byzantine custom duties.⁴

Looking at the indices of editions of Byzantine texts of any type, one comes across the words Ιουδαῖοι and Ἑβραῖοι relatively often. The reason is obvious, since the Bible was the most widely read and quoted corpus of literary examples for Byzantine authors, whether secular or religious. The Old Testament in particular was held in far greater esteem in Byzantium than in the West. The Byzantine calendar was not based on the incarnation but on the creation of the world, which, after initial differences in calculation, was eventually fixed in

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³ J. Koder, ed., Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen (Vienna, 1991), [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 33]: 100, § 6.16.
5508–5509 B.C. Many Byzantine world chronicles begin with Adam; the history of Israel consequently stood at the beginning of the history of the world and therefore of Byzantium itself. And whilst on the one hand, biblical figures were used again and again as models, David for the emperor, Moses for the bishop, Elijah for the monk, and Daniel for the martyr; on the other, the Bible included numerous stories, quotations, and prophecies that emphasized the disobedience of the Jewish people and God’s anger towards them. In the New Testament, by contrast, it was possible to find much material for attributing malice and blindness to the Jews. Finally, the Acts of the Apostles and in particular the apocryphal Acts showed the Jews to be vicious persecutors of the apostles, their followers, and other important persons of the New Testament. This corpus of imagery then formed the basis of the epithets with which the Jews were described in the liturgical hymns of the Byzantine Church. Thus the hymns mention the illegal (παράνομος) synagogue of the Jews in Bethlehem.  

“With words and wonders you punished the lawless impudence (ἀνόμον φρύσαμα) of the Jews,” according to a canon in praise of St Stephen. Another hymn lauded St Longinus for his use of theological argument to “cut the blasphemy of the Jews as if with a knife” whilst using wordplay to contrast his role as worshipper of Christ (χριστολάτρης) with the gold-worshipping Jews (χρυσολάτραι). This theme was especially prominent in the hymns to Pope Sylvester, who according to legend was said to have had lively discussions with the Jews on religion; thus, for example, “You let streams of pure doctrine pour over the Earth, so that you might drown the blasphemous voices of the Jews,” “with the ashes of your wise words you illuminated the Church and extinguished the ideas of the Jews,” “with the fire of your words..., with the rivers of your tears...you destroyed the seeds of the Jews,” and the malevolence (κακόνοια) of the latter was again specifically cited. Also the apostle James was said to have “dispelled the Jews’ nonsense” and it would be possible to quote many more such examples. This was simply the verbalization of the anti-Jewish ideology, which every

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6 Ibid., 667.
7 Ibid., II. Canones Octobris, A. Debiasi Gonzato, ed. (Roma, 1979), 197.
8 Ibid., V. Canones Ianuarii, A. Proiou, ed. (Roma, 1971), 51, 53, 61, 63.
9 Ibid., II. Canones Octobris, 273.
Byzantine sang or heard if not daily then on Sundays in church. Adjectives such as ἄνομος (impious) or παράνομος (lawless) were especially popular in this barrage of abuse, because they made clear the ideological chasm between the law (νόμος) of Moses and the Jews’ rejection of the new divine law, but words such as κακός, κάκιστος or κακόνοια (bad, worst, malevolence) were equally widespread.

Such verbal insults, which were almost automatically associated with the word ‘Jew,’ could even become independent to a certain extent: In the more than four thousand verses of the vernacular epic ‘Digenis Akritas,’ the word Ἰουδαίος is used only once and with reference to the artistic decoration of the palace to which the aging hero wishes to retire. The walls were decorated with mosaics depicting the most important stories from the Bible and Greek mythology: David and Goliath, Achilles and Agamemnon, Moses’ miracles, the Plagues of Egypt and the Exodus of the Jews, κακίστων, ἀγνωμόνων, most evil and foolish. Although the Exodus in Christian theology became a topos for God’s liberation of his chosen people from serfdom, the word ‘Jew’ immediately evoked associations of evil and foolishness for the anonymous poet. It is not surprising to find that in every corner of the Empire the sanctiones of Byzantine private documents often included the same formula that whoever did not adhere to the contract should be struck by the same curse as those who shouted “ὁρόν, ἀρόν, σταῦρος τὸν θεοῦ υἱόν,” “crucify, crucify the son of God,” or “as the Jews, who sold God” (τῶν θεοκατηπήλων Ἰουδαίων). In a like manner Jews could be caricatured in Byzantine illustrations.

But how, in reality, did the Byzantines see their Jewish contemporaries? The general impression is that the ideologies passed down from the past obscured their view of the present. For example, leafing through the so-called Suda, the Byzantine encyclopedia, compiled

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towards the end of the tenth century, most of the references to Jews are to be found in the descriptions of people from the Old Testament. Under the specific lemma Ἰουδαίος there is the entry: “The historian Damocritos says about the Jews that they worship the golden head of a donkey and that every three years they hunt down a foreigner and kill him by cutting his flesh into small pieces.”14 This story, which accuses the Jews of idolatry and human sacrifice, was already in circulation in the second century B.C., albeit attributed to different historians,15 but never gained widespread currency in Christian polemics. Under the heading Ἐβραίος the Suda only explains, as in Genesis 10–11, that the name derives from Eber, the son of Sala, a descendant of Noah’s son Sem, who divided the land amongst his people and called the inhabitants Hebrews.16 Something similar can be found in Flavius Josephus (Antiquitates, I, 148–150). The names of Eber’s descendants are passed down in slightly different forms in the various Byzantine commentaries on the Septuagint, the result probably of different transcriptions or vocalizations of the original Hebrew text. Symeon Logothetes and Psellus, for example, refer to them as Phalek and Ragaû or Ragav.17 Interestingly, evil demons or rather heathen idols by the names of Eber,18 Phalkon,19 and Raps or Ipsar20—demons which, as far as I am aware, are otherwise unknown—make appearances in Sicilian hagiography of the seventh to ninth centuries, in particular in the Passio of the Martyrs of Lentini, the holy brothers Alphius, Philadelphus and Cyrrinus, the Passio of Pancratius, the Bishop of Taormina, and, finally,

16 Suidæ Lexicon, II, 190.
the *Vita* of Gregory, Bishop of Agrigento. Albrecht Berger identified Eber as the progenitor of the Hebrews.\(^{21}\) Could it be that Phalkon and Raps are derivations of the names Phalek and Ragav, whereby Ipsar is Raps read from right to left with an initial vowel? \((\psi = ps\) is a single letter in Greek!) It should be noted here that particularly in the *Passiones* of Alphius and his brothers and of Pancratius, the dispute with the Jews and their conversion play a large part. Presumably the Sicilian hagiographers no longer had any knowledge of the possible Biblical origin of their heathen idols.

But back to the *Suda*. A further somewhat astonishing reference to the Jews is to be found under the lemma ‘Jesus Christ, our Lord’. This recounts a conversation between Theodosius, the ὄρχηστος τῶν Ἰουδαίων or head of the Jewish community, and his Christian friend, the money-changer Philip, which was supposed to have taken place in the time of of the Emperor Justinian. Theodosius admits at the very beginning of the story that, against his better judgment, he was unable to make the move to convert to Christianity on account of his influential social position, which had also brought him great wealth. However, he wishes to confide a well-kept Jewish secret to his good Christian friend, which is recounted in the registers of the Synhedrion of Tiberias, namely that the young Christ was co-opted into the body of priests at the temple in Jerusalem. It was customary in such cases for the parents of the elect to enter their anagraphic details into the register. Since Joseph had already died, Mary was asked and she declared that there were witnesses to the fact that she had given birth to Christ, that an angel had announced to her that God was the father and that she had remained a virgin. Midwives, who were summoned, confirmed the latter. Thereupon the following text was entered in the register: “On such and such a day Jesus, son of the living God and the Virgin Mary, was elected priest.” When Philip wished to run immediately to the emperor to advise him to rescue this important record, Theodosius discourages him from doing so, since this would certainly lead to bloodshed, and the Jews would burn the document.\(^{22}\) This text, which probably dates from the seventh century, was translated into

Georgian, Arabic, Latin, and Church Slavonic, and enjoyed, as the great number of medieval copies prove, an extraordinary popularity. Even if the informative aims of the Suda cannot be compared with those of the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, one has to concede that a Byzantine reader seeking to acquire knowledge from these entries would learn nothing about contemporary Jews living in the empire.

The Jewish religion had been tolerated in the empire since Roman times. Although their legal space was gradually restricted with the increasing Christianization of the Empire, especially under Theodosius and Justinian, the Jews were protected as a minority, could practice their religion and repair their synagogues though they were not permitted to build new ones. They were not, however, allowed to proselytize or to own or acquire Christian slaves. Marriage between Christians and Jews was regarded as adultery. It is easy to imagine how the Jewish population was thus subject to frequent harassment from local or Church authorities as for example the letters of Pope Gregory the Great, make very clear, but in this regard they were not alone in the Byzantine Empire.

A central topic was their conversion, a topic, however, which the state often approached differently from the Church. If some emperors were keen to convert the Jews to Christianity in certain political situations, using pressure if necessary, the Church, or rather, many theologians, were more cautious in this respect. Many emperors thought they could govern the empire better if all their subjects shared one religion, although the pressure was even greater on heretics than Jews, and they considered it pleasing to God to bring new believers to Christianity. Theologians from Maximus the Confessor to Gregory of Nicaea, by contrast, feared that those converted under pressure could form a fifth column in the Church. They also rejected the idea

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23 Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 130.
26 This always reflected to their credit: see, for example, G. Ficker, “Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites,” in *Festschrift der Universität Kiel zur Feier des Geburtstages Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm II.* (Kiel, 1911), 22.
of giving the sacraments to those who were unbelievers at the bottom of their hearts on the grounds that this was ungodly (and a betrayal of Christ).\(^{27}\) Finally, according to the apocalyptic literature, some Jews must remain until the end of time in order to be present at the Last Judgment.\(^{28}\) The very rare imperial conversion campaigns, for instance those under Heraclius,\(^{29}\) Leo III,\(^{30}\) and Basil I,\(^{31}\) were amongst the few events affecting Jews mentioned in Byzantine chronicles and historiography. To my knowledge the imperial attempts to convert Jews at the end of the reign of Romanus I, recorded in Jewish and Arab sources,\(^{32}\) on the other hand, do not, as far as I am aware, appear at all in Byzantine sources. How then did one convert the Jews? The first stage was to enlighten them. Dialogues between a Christian and a Jew were a favorite and popular genre of Byzantine literature, a sub-category of the general *Adversus Iudaeos*, and were, incidentally, much more common than the comparable dialogues between a Christian and a Muslim which attracted great notoriety towards the end of 2006 as a result of a much discussed pontifical lecture in Regensburg. Andreas Külzer has assembled 37 such dialogues dating from the second to fifteenth centuries, including the conversation between Theodosius and the money-changer Philip cited above.\(^{33}\) One further “dialogue” could perhaps be added to Külzer’s list, namely the anacreontic poem by the *protasekretis* Christopher, which was probably written during Basil I’s conversion cam-


\(^{29}\) C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographica*, I, (Leipzig, 1883), 328. This example concerns a single case but other contemporary sources also document Heraclius’s policy of conversion.


\(^{33}\) A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 95–220.
These texts often had an astonishingly wide circulation. At least 52 manuscripts are known to exist of the dialogue between Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar, and Herban, the Jew, of which a critical edition has recently been published. The majority of these treatises were produced in the south-eastern Mediterranean region (Egypt, Palestine, and Syria), which, with the possible exception of certain parts of Italy, was home to the largest and most active Jewish communities. This was also where the numerical relationship between Christians and Jews, as well as the social structure, was still relatively balanced. About half of the dialogues date from the period prior to the Arab conquest of the south-eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire. The main themes, which repeat themselves with beautiful regularity, were the Trinity (that is, the question of whether Christianity was really a monotheistic religion), the recognition of Christ as the Messiah (should the prophecies in the Old Testament be applied to him?), the Virgin Birth, and beginning in the seventh century, the veneration of images. The selection of themes also explains why there were many more dialogues with Jews than with Muslims. In the case of the latter, the Byzantine theologians not only had to learn new subject matter, in many cases they also had to learn a new language, since the Greek translation of the Koran was not easily available in Byzantium. Discussions with Jews, however, were based on a common basis of religious knowledge, since one traded quotations from the Old Testament and then talked in a monologue using quotations from the New Testament. Moreover, until the eleventh century more Jews than Muslims lived within the borders of the Byzantine Empire. The structure of these dialogues, which, as I have just said, often took the form of monologues, varied: sometimes the interlocutors had names, generally fictitious ones, although occasionally, as in the case of Emperor John VII Kantakuzenos, their

36 Külzer, Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos, 248–86.
own; sometimes they were just a Jew and a Christian; sometimes they had an audience and even an arbitrator; sometimes the Jew or the Jews are converted to Christianity and let themselves and their families and slaves be baptized (the figures given range from 1 to 500,000) and assume new Christian names. This was probably done to give the texts some semblance of historical authenticity. The influence of this literature can be discerned, I think, in the still unedited seventh-century legend of the conversion of the Sicilian Jew Samuel and his family, a posthumous miracle of the Martyrs of Lentini, the holy brothers Alphius, Philadelphus, and Cyrius, in which this method of listing the new Christian names and the numbers of those converted is used to excess. Sometimes, however, the Jewish participant sticks to his inherited religion.

The aim of such literature, if it can be said to have had a practical aim, was to give the reader or user of these texts the necessary material for discussion and debate. And if the arguments failed to convince, there was still the possibility of a miracle. Miracles were included in a number of dialogues, such as in the disputatio between Gregentios and Herban, in which the miraculous appearance of Christ decided the dialogue in favor of the Christian and led thousands of Jews, blinded by his appearance, to seek conversion and healing.

Of course, miracles also play a role in hagiography. Older hagiography often favored bleeding images or crosses for this purpose. Think, for example, of the miracle of Beirut, in which a Jew pierced a cross with a lance and the cross then began to bleed, the blood flooding through the town. Many sick people were healed, Beirut’s Jewish community was converted to Christianity, and the synagogue was changed into a church. A similar story is told about a Jew who slashed the picture of Christ (or the Virgin Mary) at the fountain of the Hagia

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39 Ibid., 121, 137, 155f., 160, 171, 179, 190, 196.
40 Ibid., 114f.
41 Ibid., 106–111, 114f., 127, 146, 157, 194.
42 Ibid., 121, 207, 212.
43 Strazzeri, "I giudei di S. Fratello," 651–86.
44 Küßer, Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeeos, 187, 193.
45 Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, 780–96.
Sophia with a knife. When the picture began to bleed following his attack, he threw it into the fountain; when he was accused of murder as a result of his blood-drenched clothes, he confessed to his misdeed and converted to Christianity with all his family.47

Sometimes a gesture was enough to trigger conversion. A young Jewish boy, on the way to the market in Synada in Asia Minor, saw a Christian trader making the sign of the cross over his open mouth while yawning. It was probably an apotropaic gesture designed to prevent demons from hopping into his mouth. The Jewish child imitated the gesture automatically out of curiosity and immediately felt Christian, without yet being fully aware of it himself. This Christian feeling increased to such an extent that the young man eventually decided to be baptized and enter a monastery on Mt Olympus in Bithynia. This story is said to have taken place in the second half of the ninth century and may be linked to the conversion measures introduced by Basil I.48

This monk, who was converted in such unusual circumstances, was eventually venerated in his monastery as St Constantine ο εξ Ιουδαιων (the former Jew).49 Most conversions, however, are attributed to the miraculous healing of illnesses and afflictions.50 The collection of miracles of the otherwise little known St Artemios, recorded between 660 and 669 in Constantinople, is also interesting in this context. Even when those miraculously healed are not Jews, two reports of St Artemios’ miracles close with the refrain-like sentence: “What will you say, O nation of Jews, … Artemios lays bare your actions and because of your actions he scorns you, he crushes you into the ground, he flogs you with invisible scourges, he wounds you severely and you

47 von Dobschütz, Christusbilder, 216**–219**.
do not feel it,” or something similar. In similar unfriendly fashion, however, Buddha and Mani and heretics, such as Arius, Eunomius, Eutyches and Nestorius, are also challenged. The miracle in these cases served a different purpose. It was not about the individual, who converted out of gratitude for having been healed from his sufferings, but rather about every non-believer, who, on witnessing or experiencing the miraculous intervention of divine grace, was supposed to convert swiftly to Orthodoxy.

Other favorite tales of miracles are constructed on the paradox that derive from aspects of the divine, which are hidden to Christians, but revealed in visions to the blind Jew (blind because he has not recognized Christ). Thus a Jewish fellow prisoner of St Anastasius the Persian (early seventh century) saw angels clothed in white surround and minister to St Anastasius as he celebrated the mass and sang his psalms at night. In his Vita of the Holy Fool Symeon of Emesa, written at about the same time, Leontios of Neapolis describes the vision of a strongly anti-Christian Jewish tradesman, who saw the saint talk to two angels whilst at the baths. During a Slav attack on Thessalonica, the local Jews saw the town’s patron saint, St Demetrios, dressed in a white chlamys, race across the sea, as if it were a street, and force the enemy to flee. Also of interest, finally, in the context of salvific history, is the story of a Jew, who attends mass and then asks for the meat of the lamb that he saw in the moment of transubstantiation, a miracle which Agnellus of Ravenna includes in his Liber Pontificalis. In some vitae of the middle Byzantine period, the holy monk discusses questions of faith with a Jew who is normally described as especially

52 Ibid. 172–4, 214.
56 Agnelli Ravennatis Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis, D. Deliyannis, ed. (Turnhout, 2006) [Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Medievalis, 199], 310, § 133.
learned (νομομαθής). The latter, however, generally has two options. Either he falls down dumb or dead or he converts.57

The encounter between a saint and a Jew in the Life of Nilus of Rossano, a cultured Greek monk from Calabria who died at a ripe old age in 1004 in Grottaferrata near Rome, took a different path. Nilus’s \textit{Vita} was written about twenty years after his death by a learned disciple. The \textit{Vita}, which is quite anti-Jewish in tone, relates the argument between Nilus and Donnolo, a learned and respected Jewish doctor whom he had known since his youth, who wanted to prescribe him medicine to help him through his strict ascetic regime. Nilus indignantly rejects the help with the words that God was his doctor and that Donnolo’s aim was to mislead true Christians by claiming that he, Nilus, was taking a Jewish doctor’s medicine. Nonetheless, Donnolo neither converts to Christianity nor falls over dumb or dead, nor is he entrusted to evil demons; instead he and Nilus meet again after some time at the sickbed of a senior Byzantine official, as doctor and spiritual guide respectively.58 This case not only depicts the normal daily intercourse between Jews and Christians and the high professional regard in which the Jewish doctor was held, though in other hagiographic texts Jews were often portrayed as magicians and mixers of poison,59 but also and more importantly, it tells of a Jewish doctor who was not a fictitious character but rather the well-known southern Italian doctor and astrologer, Shabbetai Donnolo, whose connections with Rossano are attested at this time,60 though he is not otherwise


58 G. Giovanelli, \textit{Biòs kai politeía toû ósíou patroû ëmôno Neîlou toû Nêou} (Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972), 93, 98.

59 \textit{La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Styliste le Jeune} (521–592), Paul van den Ven, ed., I (Bruxelles, 1962) [Subsidia hagiographica, 32], 178–81; F. Nau, “Le texte grec des récits utiles à l’âme d’Anastase (le Sinaite),” \textit{Oriens Christianus} 3 (1903): 70. This story of Daniel, the Jewish poisoner, who confessed just as he was about to be burned on the stake that his magic potions had no effect on Christians who went to Communion daily, was so popular that it was still told in Comnenian time in the \textit{Vita} of Saint Cyril Phileotes. \textit{La Vie de saint Cyrille le Philèote, moine byzantin (+ 1110)}, É. Sargologos, ed. (Bruxelles, 1964) [Subsidia hagiographica, 39], 253.

mentioned in the Greek and Latin sources of the period. We could be dealing with a piece of reality here, since the eleventh Canon of the Trullan Council, which forbade contact with Jews and especially treatment by Jewish doctors,\(^{61}\) was, it seems, never taken particularly seriously. The Emperor Manuel I was for instance supposed to have had a Jewish doctor.\(^{62}\) I do not know whether a working knowledge of human anatomy was normally required for those in charge of punitive blinding, but, interesting enough, the only Jew mentioned in the Historia of Michael Attalites (ca. 1020-after 1085) is the incompetent executioner charged with the cruel blinding of Emperor Romanus IV (1072). The historian does not fail to say that he belonged to the lineage of those who killed God (ὁ τῆς θεοκτόνου τυγχάνον σειρᾶς).\(^{63}\)

The seemingly innocent question, “Why is the Jews’ faith bad and ours good?” which the disciple Gregory puts to his spiritual father Basil the Younger (tenth century), could reflect the daily relationship between Christians and Jews. After all, Gregory argued, the Jews did not believe in idols but in God, who had made Heaven and Earth; and even if their ancestors had been guilty of the murder of God (θεοκτονία), their descendants, who adhered to the old law, were innocent before God. Here, however, the naïve disciple was immediately put right by his eager mentor, who told him that the Jews were no longer God’s chosen people (λαὸς Θεοῦ) but instead cursed and destined for extermination, and that when they gathered in the synagogues on the Sabbath for the explanation of the law, it was not the Lord but the Devil who was amongst them.\(^{64}\) This response is probably the reason why Gregory’s question was included in the hagiographic text, since several Byzantines may have asked themselves exactly the


same question about their Jewish neighbors and all had to be put right in a similar fashion. Some normal situations can also be perceived in a tract, written in Constantinople in the eleventh century, against the Phundagiagites, a Bogomil sect. According to the author, it was quite possible to meet and eat with Jews and thereby cause little damage to the soul, since even if the Jew was unclean, he believed in God and otherwise admitted to his religion. In contrast, contact with heretics, who disguised themselves as Christians but in reality served the Devil, led to certain ruin.\textsuperscript{65} Interestingly, Jews were not listed as a separate category in Byzantine penitential books, which only forbade sexual intercourse with heretics and the unbaptized in general.\textsuperscript{66}

Conversion to Christianity could create considerable difficulties. The converted Jew lost the support of his family, if all members did not convert together, as well as that of the Jewish community, whilst Christians often regarded newly baptized members of their faith with mistrust. This is why accounts of the conversion campaign under Emperor Basil I make repeated reference to the emperor rewarding the freshly converted with gifts of money and positions.\textsuperscript{67} Interesting in this context, for example, is a quotation from the Typikon of the Kosmosoteira Monastery in Thrace, which was founded by the Sebastokrator Isaac, one of the younger sons of Emperor Alexios I, in the mid-twelfth century. It reads “You must reward with special attention those who with God’s help convert from other religions to ours and receive holy baptism. This has to be done so that my soul finds favor with God. I therefore resolve that Alexios and his wife Irene, who were called from the Jewish faith to us and the true faith, shall receive the following gifts for as long as they live: as I already resolved in an earlier document, Irene shall receive three modioi of grain a month and fifteen trachea nomismata and a coat a year. Her husband, Alexios, shall, if he continues to live with her, receive two modioi of grain and

\textsuperscript{65} G. Ficker, \textit{Die Phundagiagiten. Ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters} (Leipzig, 1908), 4f.

\textsuperscript{66} M. Arranz, \textit{I penitenziali bizantini. Il Protokanonarion o Kanonarion Primitivo di Giovanni Monaco e Diacono e il Deuterocanonarion o “Secondo Kanonarion” di Basilio Monaco} (Roma, 1993) [Kanonika, 3], 168, § 22.

two measures of wine a month and two *hyperpyra nomismata* a year.\(^68\)

Alexios and Irene were the names of the imperial parents of the Sebastokrator, which the two converts presumably adopted when they were baptised. The text suggests that Isaac expected a heavenly reward for each converted Jew but that he had some doubts as to the sincerity of the conversion of the husband.

If material help was inadequate, relapses might occur. The Metropolitan of Corfu, Giorgios Bardanes, wrote a request for official assistance from his Latin colleague in Otranto in 1220 in the matter of a Jewess of Corfu who, having converted to Christianity, had returned to her original religion following her marriage to a Jew, which had been arranged by her brother, and had subsequently disappeared to Otranto with her husband for fear of punishment.\(^69\) Such relapses were, it seems, not all that rare; to prevent them, newly baptized Jews had to utter such fearsome curses against their original religion that it was difficult for them to return to it.\(^70\) The discussion between Bishop Gregentios and Herban the Jew, cited above, suggests another method. Here the numerous newly baptized converts and their descendants were forbidden to marry Jews. In addition, the Jewish converts to Christianity were to be settled amongst other Christians so that they forgot their roots and traditions.\(^71\) An example of an apparently successful conversion is Leon Mungos, a Jew by birth who became Archbishop of Ochrid in the second quarter of the twelfth century and was known by the title ‘Teacher of the Pagans’.\(^72\) On the one hand, it is very

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\(^71\) *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, 798.

\(^72\) Λέον ὁ Μονογάρος, ἐξ ἱουδαίων ἐκ προγόνων, χρηματίσας διδάσκαλος τῶν ἕθων: Θεοφύλακτe d’Achrida, *Discours, traités, poésies*. Introduction, texte, traduction et notes par P. Gautier (Thessalonique, 1980) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 16, 1], 30.
revealing that a convert was considered especially suitable for service as a ‘Teacher of the Pagans,’ and on the other, it is interesting that even long after he had attained high office in the Church, he remained ὁ ἐξ ἠθωθίων ὅν ἐκ προγόνων (descended from Jewish ancestors) to his colleagues who came from generations-old Christian stock. Conversions of Christians to Judaism, reported in Jewish sources, are not mentioned at all in Byzantine literature.

References to Jews are rife in the literature relating to Iconoclasm. The more the intellectual quality of Byzantine theology deteriorated, the more important the veneration of icons became. As already mentioned, the number of edifying legends involving images taking an active part in events had been increasing since the seventh century. Examples include the icon of Christ Antiphonites, upon which an oath was sworn to seal a credit agreement between a Christian and a Jewish merchant and which actually forced the dilatory partner to stick to the terms of the agreement; the Beirut crucifix and the icon of Christ in Constantinople, which bled when Jews attacked them with knives; or the image of the Theotokos in Lydda, which Jewish painters sought in vain to whitewash. In most cases, the miracles led to the conversion of such dramatically enlightened Jews. The image question is—pace Paul Speck—then incorporated into the Jewish-Christian dialogue literature by Leontios of Neapolis and Anastasius of Sinai.

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73 Here I am thinking of Andrew, Archbishop of Bari, for example, who is supposed to have converted to Judaism in the 1060s in Constantinople (C. Colafemmina, "La conversione al giudaismo di Andrea arcivescovo di Bari," in Giovanni-Ovadiah da Oppido, proselito, viaggiatore e musicista dell’età normanna. Atti del convegno internazionale di Oppido Lucano, 28–30 marzo 2004, eds., A. De Rosa e M. Perani [Firenze, 2005], 55–65). At about the same time, a Jew complained about the rabbis of Constantinople, who made it unnecessarily difficult for those who wished to convert to Judaism. (Dagron, “Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée,” 371, n. 71.)


75 von Dobschütz, Christusbilder, 146*; Gauer, Texte zum byzantinischen Bildersstreit, 34–6.


and continues to be repeated down to the twelfth century under the shop-worn rubric of whether the icons of Christ or saints were idols.79 According to Theophanes, the Emperor Leo III persecuted the Jews because of a Messiah who had appeared in Syria at that time.80 This is possible but it is necessary to remember that he and his followers were described as ‘Judaizing’ by their Iconophile contemporaries for their opposition to images, an expression that was used both in hagiography81 and in theological literature.82 Leo had, therefore, to openly demonstrate his enmity towards Judaism. Byzantine chronicles did, however, make a connection between him, and subsequently Michael II, and Jewish magicians, to whom they were supposed to have sold their souls.83 In this period, Byzantine literature is full of devils and demons, who disguise themselves as Jewish merchants and magicians to buy the souls of good Christians or otherwise lead them into temptation.84 After a century and a half these themes disappear, but the equation of the terms ‘Jew’ and ‘opposition to pictures’ remained. For example, the Vita of St. Andrew the Fool quotes a woman, who indignantly rebukes her ungodly husband for not bowing and crossing himself before an icon with the words “You wretch, why do you stand there like a Jew!”85

79 Ibid., 185f., 198.
80 Theophanis Chronographia, I, 401.
82 G. Fatouros, ed., Theodori Studitae Epistulae, II (Berlin, 1992) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 33/2], 214, esp. 93; 258, esp.141; 336, esp. 214; 345, esp. 221; 443, esp. 301; 456, esp. 313; 464, esp. 321; 557, esp. 402; 590, esp. 421; 663, esp. 463; 772, esp. 518; J. M. Featherstone, ed., Nicephori patriarchi Constantinopolitanis Refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815, (Turnhout, 1997) [Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, 33], 6 et passim; Canon on the setting up of the Holy Images probably written by Methodios: Migne, Patrologia Graeca 99, 1773, 1777.
85 The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool, 240.
In some texts it is all a matter of the expulsion of the Jews from the towns. Thus in the description of the last days of the world in the *Vita* of Saint Andrew the Fool (tenth century), the good Roman emperor is characterized as someone who wins back Illyria for the Empire, makes Egypt pay its dues, defeats the blonde people (which were generally understood to be the Germanic people of Western Europe), and persecutes the Jews. According to his *Vita*, Saint Nikon Metanoeites (late tenth century) was supposed to have expelled the Jews from Sparta to rid the city of a terrible epidemic; when a member of the local upper class (ἄρχων) recalled a particularly skilled Jewish weaver, he was roundly berated by the zealous monk, whilst the Jewish craftsman was viciously beaten. Such examples are to be found not only in hagiographic literature. In an *encomium* for his former teacher Nicetas, the deceased Metropolitan of Chonai, the highly educated Metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates (1138–1222) writes approvingly that Nicetas loathed Jews to such an extent that he did not allow them to live on his estates or to serve the Church in the professions they liked to follow. Nicetas had, instead, driven them from their homes, so that they now lived like leather-chewing dogs as tanners and dyers at the edge of the city. In this context, it is notable that even Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Constantinople in the late 1160s, observed that the Jews did not live in the city but on the other side of the Golden Horn and were scorned by the Greeks because of the foul-smelling effluents from the tanneries which flowed through their quarter, polluting it.

Conversion and expulsion are thus the main themes we encounter again and again in different forms in Byzantine literature. Christian Byzantines seem to have found the different dietary rules and divergent calendar of feast-days, the Sabbath and new moons, that is, the most visible signs of religious difference, the most disturbing, since the problem of circumcision was generally only encountered at a much more advanced stage of acquaintance. The collection of posthumous

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86 Ibid., 262.
miracles of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, generally dated to the late sixth or early seventh century, reports the miraculous healing of a Jewish woman suffering from a painful cancer who prayed for help at their shrine in Constantinople. Three times the Saints ordered her to eat pork, without which there would be no remedy. When, after long hesitation, the Jewess finally overcame her inherited disgust for the forbidden meat, she was healed and became a Christian. Apparently this miracle was so popular that it was attributed to other medical saints, as for instance to Sts Cyrus and John.\(^90\) “Idleness is for me like the consumption of pork for Jews,” says Timarion in the eponymous early twelfth-century satire.\(^91\) The problem of the Sabbath appears as well in the dialogue literature,\(^92\) in hagiography,\(^93\) and in canon law.\(^94\) At the end of the tenth century, the above-mentioned monk Nikon Metanoeites, founder and abbot of a monastery near Sparta, records in his will that he freed the Peloponnese from the plague and expelled the Jews from the area, so that they should pull down their abattoirs near the monastery, slaughter on Saturdays, and observe Sunday as a feast-day.\(^95\) A prayer to be recited by the Athinganoi who had returned to Orthodoxy includes, *inter alia*, “I damn those who consecrate the Sabbath as do the Jews,”\(^96\) whilst Jews who converted to Christianity had to forswear *expressis verbis* the rules of fasting, the Sabbath, and the new moons.\(^97\) In the eleventh century the problem appears regularly in discussions with the so-called Latins or Roman Catholics who fasted on Saturdays during Lent. Fasting on Saturdays and the use of unleavened bread for the practices of Ἐucharist were liturgical rituals which the Byzantines passionately condemned as Judaizing.\(^98\) In


\(^92\) Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 285f.


\(^94\) Canon VIII of the council of Nicaea II (787) mentions the pseudo-Christians or crypto-Jews who secretly continue to observe the Saturday (λαθραῖος σαββάτων): *Cencillorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, I, 328f.


\(^96\) Dmitrievskij, *Bogoluzenie v russkoj čerkvi*, 50.


\(^98\) C. Will, *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae graecae et latinae saeculo undecimo composita extant* (Leipzig, 1861), 56–9, 180f.; J. Darrouzès, “Le mémoire
a polemical poem by Michael Psellos about a monk from the Sabbas Monastery, that is, a Sabbaïte, who had dared to poke fun at the great philosopher’s monastic calling, it is written “You should not be called Sabbaïte but Sabbatite, someone who adheres to the Sabbath and the new moons and to the old law, which is no longer valid, whilst rejecting the new Grace.”99 By playing on the word ‘Sabbath,’ Psellos has dismissed the bumptious monk as Judaizing without even using the word ‘Jew’. Thus not only everything that was Jewish but also anything that looked Jewish or was reminiscent of Jewish customs was to be rejected and eliminated straight away.100

Marcel Proust concluded his À la recherche du temps perdu with the volume Le temps retrouvé. He had found his time again. I fear that the Jews will for the most part remain lost in Byzantine literature.
The combined Dumbarton Oaks and Fogg collection of Byzantine seals is one of the largest in the world, containing 17,000 specimens. Volume 5 in the catalogue includes seals with place names from the East, Constantinople and its environs, and seals with uncertain readings. Each section begins with a short essay on the region’s history. Geschichte der türkischen moderne Topics: Byzantine literature -- History and criticism, Greek literature, Modern -- History and criticism. Folkscandony Religion: Books on Faith, Spirituality and Worship. 818 818. The first chapter, "Byzantines as seen by medieval Bulgarians," brings together rich evidence from the times of pagan Bulgaria to the early years of Ottoman domination (this chronology is repeated in all three chapters of the book). Reintegration of the Bulgarian lands into the Byzantine Empire in 971-1018, begun by John Tsymisces (969-976) and vigorously completed by Basil II 'the Bulgar-slayer' (976-1025), was understood by Bulgarians as the establishment of "Greek slavery." However, the vast and deeply rooted apocryphal literature of Bulgaria (and its iconographical parallels) ascribed to Jews participation in the execution of Jesus, the continuing deceits practiced on Christians, etc. The Transformation of a Culture (Cambridge 1990) 345â€“48 CrossRef Google Scholar, who also notes the derogatory use of the terms â€“Jewâ€™, â€“Jewishâ€™ in Byzantine literature in contexts detached from reference to real Jews. Quelques jalons pour une histoire de lâ€™identité grecque, Actes du colloque de Strasbourg 25-27 octobre 1989 (Leiden 1991) 287â€“313 Google Scholar; â€“Byzantium in the seventh century: the search for redefinitionâ€™, in Fontaine, J. and Hillgarth, J., eds., The Seventh Century (London 1992) 250â€“76 Google Scholar.