

Polemical Literature in the Late Byzantine World (13th-15th centuries)



Conference,
Mainz 17th December 2021



Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus
Byzanz zwischen
Orient und Okzident
Mainz/Frankfurt



JOHANNES GUTENBERG
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Program

10.00 - 10.10

GREETINGS

Prof. Dr. Heike Grieser (Mainz)
Dr. Eleftherios Despotakis (Mainz)

CHAIR: Prof. Dr. Hartmut Leppin (Frankfurt)

10.10 - 10.25

Assoc. Prof. Dr. John A. Demetrakopoulos
(Patras)

*Manuel II Palaiologos' Anti-Pagan
Agenda in "Θθεν ἄν τις ἄθειον ἄνδρα μήποτε
λόγον εἰσδεδεγμένον περὶ Θεοῦ χειραγωγίῃ
πρὸς θεογνωσίαν τε καὶ εὐσέβειαν στίχοι and
Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos'
Capita decem pro divinitate Christi*

10.35 - 10.50

Dr. Panagiotis Ch. Athanasopoulos (Ioannina)

*Ancient Historical Sources in the
Service of Scepticism in Bessarion's
In Calumniatorem Platonis, Bk. IV*

11.00 - 11.15

Dr. Demetrios Chatzemichael (Thessaloniki)
Assoc. Prof. Dr. John A. Demetracopoulos
(Patras)

*Aristotle vs. Plato on True Monotheism:
a Commented Critical Edition
of Scholarios' Autograph Note
on Aristotle's Metaphysics XII, 8*

11.25 - 11.40 BREAK

CHAIR: Prof. Dr. Günter Prinzing (Mainz)

11.40 - 11.55

Prof. Dr. Andrea Riedl (Regensburg)

*The Latin Empire of Constantinople
(1204-1261) in 13th-Century Polemical
Writings contra Latins and Greeks*

12.05 - 12.20

Ass. Prof. Dr. Manolis Patedakis (Rethymnon)

*A Short Treatise "On the Holy Spirit, against
Latins ..." and the Book called "Synagmata"
by Athanasios I of Constantinople*

12.30 - 12.45

Prof. Dr. Antonio Rigo (Venice)

*Lists of Heresies and Heresiological
Materials in Works of the 14th-century
Theological Controversy*

12.55 - 14.00 BREAK

CHAIR: Prof. Dr. Johannes Pahlitzsch (Mainz)

14.00 - 14.15

Dr. Marie-Hélène Blanchet (Paris)

*The Criticism of the Roman Ecclesiastical
Vocabulary in the Late Byzantine Polemical
Literature: "Catholic", "Apostolic", "Head",
"Mother", "Teacher" ...*

Program

14.25 - 14.40

Dr. Saskia Dönitz (Frankfurt)

*Lost in Exegesis – Byzantine Jewish
Polemics against Christians*

14.50 - 15.05

Dr. Eleftherios Despotakis (Mainz)

*Remarks on the the Disputatio
contra Iudaeos of the 15th century
Cretan Author Manuel Savios*

15.15 - 15.30

Prof. Dr. Christian Kappes (Pittsburgh, PA)

*A New Polemic: The Origins of the Latin
Argument contra Damascenum on the
Filioque and Greek Reactions*

15.40 - 16.00 FINAL REMARKS

Via Zoom

For register, please contact
Dr. Eleftherios Despotakis:
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Abstracts

Assoc. Prof. Dr. John A. Demetrakopoulos
(University of Patras)

Manuel II Palaiologos' Anti-Pagan Agenda in Ὅθεν ἄν τις ἄθεον ἄνδρα μήποτε λόγον εἰσδεδεγμένον περὶ Θεοῦ χειραγωγήσῃ πρὸς θεογνωσίαν τε καὶ εὐσέβειαν στίχοι and Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos' Capita decem pro divinitate Christi As recently shown, Hermonymos Christonymos Charitonymos' (ob. paulo post 1467) Capita decem pro divinitate Christi (1458/60) should be seen as an apologetic script directed against George Gemistos or Plethon's (ca. 1360 – 1452 or 1454) anti-Christianism, and also connected to another major intellectual issue of the time, the Plato-Aristotle debate. Far from being a defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ targeting the Muslims' denial of it, as previously construed, the writing was instead a reaction to Plethon's allusive yet thorough and unambiguous repudiation of the most sacred figures of Christianity, namely, Jesus Christ and His Apostles, in the introductory chapters of his Laws — a repudiation also reported by one of the earliest readers of the Laws, George Scholarios-Gennadios II. As I shall further argue, Charitonymos' utilization of Eusebius of Caesarea's Demonstratio Evangelica, Bk. III and (Ps.-?) John Chrysostom's Quod Christus sit Deus (Πρὸς Ἐλληνας ἀπόδειξις, ὅτι Θεός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός) shows that Charitonymos was probably inspired by Manuel II Palaiologos' Ὅθεν ἄν τις

ἄθεον ἄνδρα μήποτε λόγον εἰσδεδεγμένον περὶ Θεοῦ χειραγωγήσῃ πρὸς θεογνωσίαν τε καὶ εὐσέβειαν στίχοι, which, contrary to what has so far been thought, did not attack Islam but addressed some vague form of irreligious paganism by closely reproducing the main arguments from the above-mentioned patristic works.

Abstracts

**Dr. Panagiotis Ch. Athanasopoulos
(University of Ioannina)**

Ancient Historical Sources in the Service of Scepticism in Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis*, Bk. IV

The ancient dispute over the merits and demerits of Plato and Aristotle was transformed into a serious theological-philosophical controversy in late Byzantium. The last act of this debate took place in Renaissance Italy between the fervent Aristotelian George of Trebizond and the moderate Platonist Cardinal Bessarion. In 1458, George published his *Comparatio philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis*, in which he unleashed a vicious attack against Plato. Bessarion's response, *In calumniatorem Platonis*, was first written in Greek, but the final (and augmented) version was published only in 1469. In the 4th book of his magnum opus, the learned Cardinal made extensive use of numerous ancient Greek and Latin sources, so as to triumph over his opponent. In this paper, I examine the ancient historiographical material utilized in this context, focusing on its significance for Bessarion's Scepticism that underlies his argumentation in Bk. 4.

**Dr. D. Chatzemiael (Aristotle
University of Thessaloniki) and
Assoc. Prof. Dr. John A.
Demetracopoulos (University of Patras)**

Aristotle vs. Plato on True Monotheism: a Commented Critical Edition of Scholarios' Autograph Note on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII, 8 In cod. Vat. gr. 115, a leaf with a short autograph text by George Scholarios-Gennadios II was inserted, a eulogy of Aristotle's monotheism. A new, critical edition of the text is offered, which emends the errors of the old edition by M. Jugie. The interrelations of the text with the major Scholarian works on Aristotle are explored, suggesting a relatively safe date for its production, its ancient and Byzantine sources are revealed, and its anti-Platonic implications are discussed.

Abstracts

**Prof. Dr. Andrea Riedl
(Universität Regensburg)**

The Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204-1261) in 13th-Century Polemical Writings contra Latins and Greeks
In the middle of the 13th century, the newly confirmed Dominican province of Graecia developed into a center of literary activity for the theological debate with Greek theologians. Against the background of the order's missionary mandate, the Dominicans of Constantinople played an important role in the Latin-Greek controversy during the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204-1261), which had established itself in the capital and all over the former Byzantine Empire. Thus, the Dominican convent of Constantinople can be seen as the 'birthplace' of a range of polemical writings, which left their distinctive mark on the theological East-West debate, while at the same time also advancing it.

In today's ecumenical approach, the Latin Empire of Constantinople (following the sack of Constantinople by the Latin Crusaders in 1204) is increasingly regarded as a decisive break in relations between the Latin and the Byzantine churches. Since this is not just an historical event, but is still formative in its consequences as a definitive schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, a close look at the contemporary polemical sources is all the more important:

how – and with what differences – do Latin and Greek polemical writings evaluate the establishment of the Latin Empire? What significance do they accord it in terms of conflicts and debates between the churches?

Abstracts

Ass. Prof. Dr. Manolis Patedakis
(University of Crete)

A Short Treatise "On the Holy Spirit, against Latins ..." and the Book called "Synagmata" by Athanasios I of Constantinople

In this presentation, I will revisit the treatises of the patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople (1289-1293, 1303-1309), preserved in codex Atheniensis gr. 2583, and known as the only works by this personality that relate to a theological discussion. Apart from the processing for the edition of the text, further issues on the dating (before 1285) and the occasion, as well as the logic for the creation of this composition will be trackled. Furthermore, the use of such a collection in the decades after Athanasios' death (probably around 1320s), in a manuscript that reflects the coming polemics of the long first half of the 14th century, is another interesting point to explain, also judging from the content of the collection itself, and the preservation of relevant sources from the same period.

Prof. Dr. Antonio Rigo
(Ca'Foscari University of Venice)

List of Heresies and Heresiological Materials in Works of the 14th century Theological Controversy

The paper presents an overview of writings related to the Palamite controversy over a period of approximately forty years (1335-1370) and illustrates the constitution of long lists of heresies by the opposing parties.

Abstracts

Dr. Marie-Hélène Blanchet
(CNRS, Paris)

The Criticism of the Roman Ecclesiastical vocabulary in the Late Byzantine Polemical Literature: "Catholic", "Apostolic", "Head", "Mother", "Teacher"...

As Jannis Spiteris has already shown for the twelfth century, the Byzantine criticism of Roman primacy was not limited to a rivalry of jurisdiction or precedence. The Byzantine theologians identified several central ecclesiological concepts and challenged their use in papal rhetoric. The papacy tended to confiscate certain terms of the Creed, such as "Catholic" and "Apostolic", and to reserve their use for its proper see, which was perceived and denounced in the late Antilatin polemical literature. Besides, the Roman institution presented itself as caput, mater et magistra, claiming dominion over the universal Church: the Byzantine authors rejected not only the fact in itself, but also the argumentation on which it was based. Through these lexical issues, a confrontation between two distinct and competing ecclesiologies can be highlighted.

Dr. Saskia Dönitz
(Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Lost in Exegesis – Byzantine Jewish Polemics against Christians

Polemics against Christians in Byzantine Jewish literature is mostly hidden in genres directed towards other achievements (exegesis, philosophy, sermons). Before the 15th century, there are only very few texts originating from Byzantium that can be counted as polemical literature against Christians per se. However, we find polemics hidden in other genres, particularly in Bible exegesis and commentaries on exegetical texts. This lecture will present examples of polemical passages in the writings of Shemarya ha-Ikriti and his Karaite contemporary Ahron ben Elijah. Both Jewish scholars produced a corpus of exegetical writings in the same period (14th century), one in Negroponte, the other in Constantinople. While Shemarya belongs to the Rabbanite group, Ahron represents the Karaite school of Jewish tradition. Parallel motifs resp. ideas and individual characteristics of these authors will be analyzed in their reaction to their Christian orthodox majority society. This literary response will be placed into the larger historical context of Jewish life in Byzantium in this period.

Abstracts

Dr. Eleftherios Despotakis (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

Remarks on the *Disputatio contra Iudaeos* of the 15th century Cretan Author Manuel Savios

In contrast with other anti-Jewish Greek texts composed in the late Byzantine period which raised a copious manuscript tradition – in many cases by famous authors such as Matthew Blastares and George-Gennadios Scholarios – the little known *Disputatio contra Iudaeos* by Manuel Savios is only preserved in MS Lond. Add. 34060, signed by the Cretan copyist George Drazinos in 1438. The author's intention is to engage in the anti-Jewish literature genre for two reasons: a) to refute the impression that he is incapable of rebutting the Jewish thesis due to wickedness; b) to enlighten the people of Crete and make them understand how far from the truth they had erred because of the Jewish deceptions. This statement by Savios concerning his motivation is of great importance because it proves the conversion of a small number of his Cretan compatriots to Judaism for the first time.

Prof. Dr. Christian Kappes (SS. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA)

A New Polemic: The Origins of the Latin Argument contra Damascenum on the Filioque and Greek Reactions

The translation of John of Damascus's *De fide Orthodoxa* by two twelfth-century authors led to a realization that one of the more important Greek authorities on theology was opposed to articulation of the Holy Spirit proceeding "ex filio." This led to a mid-thirteenth century reaction formation on the part of Thomas Aquinas, whereby he created an original narrative in which John of Damascus's allegedly Nestorianizing tendencies led him to reject the filioque. When Aquinas's original narrative was translated into Greek, it predictably led to counter reactions by 14th and 15th century authors. The major sources of discontent in Byzantium take their point of departure from Neilos Cabasilas and culminate in the argumentation of George-Gennadius Scholarios. This paper explores an original polemic of this age whereby a bilateral patristic authority was sidelined ad hoc for Latins in order to defend the filioque, which led to predictably negative arguments against Aquinas, as someone representative of Latin theology in the 14th and 15th centuries.