



Davies, E. 2010. 'Byzantine attitudes towards fetuses, newborn babies and infants: a multidisciplinary approach.' *Rosetta* 8: 1-41.

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/articles/davies-foetus/davies-foetus.pdf>

Byzantine attitudes towards fetuses, newborn babies and infants: a multidisciplinary approach

Eve Davies

University of Birmingham

Abstract

Academic enquiry into Byzantine infancy has previously focused on the Byzantine's textual construction of this perilous life stage, which was often tragically cut short. Looking at hagiographies, histories, legal codes and examples of material culture, there is a substantial quantity of evidence which exposes Byzantine perceptions of the lived experience of infants too. This paper considers the significance of specific Life Course markers (conception, pregnancy, birth, baptism and weaning). The study exploits a range of evidence including textual and pictorial sources in order to compare genres and ultimately acquire a fuller understanding of ideals. Extracts from the sources demonstrate that from the sixth century onwards, the Byzantines attached increased value to a child's earliest years – including their development in the womb – as a reflection of their personal characteristics and adult life.

Scholars are in agreement that the Byzantines were concerned and anxious for their infants' chances of survival.¹ As a result, historical interest in the life stage of infancy has focused on premature death, including the prevalence of exposure, burial customs as a reflection of societal value, the extent of parental bonds to their newborn infants and their grief at the loss of their baby.² Littlewood, Talbot and Abrahamse have explored the high prevalence of infant mortality and Byzantine parental attitudes towards babies' demise.³ It has been argued by William Harris and Patlagean that infant exposure diminished following new legislation implemented in the fourth century, which enabled parents to sell their babies, changed murdering an infant into a capital offence and made it illegal for a father to reclaim his child after neglecting it (diminishing the hope that a family could re-establish a relationship with their child once the child had matured beyond the stages of economic dependency).⁴ Tritsaroli and Valentin used the results from grave excavations to conclude that there was no evidence of infanticide.⁵ In contrast, Rautman and Baun argued that baptism soon after birth symbolised social acceptance into the family unit.⁶ This brief summary of existing academic enquiry demonstrates that Byzantines concern for infant survival has become a focal point in academic analysis.

¹ Baun 1994; Talbot 2009; Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008.

² Abrahamse 1979; Harris 1994; Littlewood 1999; Patlagean 1975; Talbot 2009.

³ Littlewood 1999, 37; Talbot 2009, 283; Abrahamse 1979, 511: 'Most striking is the vivid view of childhood beyond the bounds of the literate aristocracy: these texts show, with startling clarity, the danger and uncertainty inherent in rearing and raising children and the pitifully few resources this world could call upon to arm itself against nature, disease, accident, or malformation.'

⁴ Harris 1994, 1: 'Then after the sale of infants was authorized by Constantine in AD 313, the need for child-exposure somewhat diminished, and at latest – probably in 374 – it was subjected to legal prohibition. But of course, it did not cease.'; Patlagean 1975, 9.

⁵ Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008, 107: 'The earliest age of education and the accomplishment of weaning allow associating a biological development stage of childhood and a socially defined age grade around the age of 3 or 4 as the lower limit for an individual to be considered full member of the family and the right to be buried at the same place as the rest of its members.'

⁶ Rautman 2006, 8: 'The practise of infant baptism brought early recognition of children as full spiritual members of the Christian community, despite the fact that only half of all newborns survived to the age of five.'; For a breakdown of the ceremonies and rituals following birth including circumcision, baptism and naming

But this mentality of morbidity was not the only type of expression expressed about infants by the Byzantines. The devotion of parents to infants is depicted in the vita of Ioannikos, who lived in the ninth century: 'But nonetheless <the story> will be told, even if inadequately, since the prattlings of children are dear to their fathers (ἐπτεὶ καὶ φίλα πατράσι τὰ τῶν νηπίων ψελλίσματα) and our best efforts are dear to God.'⁷ The implication of this specific simile is that an infant's undeveloped speech, though incoherent to most, is highly valued by the devoted parents. Congourdeau wrote: 'Celui-ci est peu à peu considéré comme un être humain, et non plus comme cette énigme fragile et menaçante, lieu de toutes les terreurs.'⁸ The scope of this article focuses on the lived experience of infants, the portrayal of newborns and toddlers, and the attitudes and ideologies attached to the process of conceiving and raising a small child. Although the survival of a Byzantine infant was continually endangered, adults nevertheless recounted their attachment to babies with fondness and affection.

Defining infancy is problematic. The Byzantines did not keep accurate records of age and consequently our evidence does not provide comprehensive or reliable details of numerical age.⁹ The texts reveal that infancy consisted of several Life Course markers including conception, pregnancy, birth, baptism and weaning. It would be misleading to set rigid boundaries determining the beginning and end of infancy. Life Course stages are transitory and fluid: an individual can traverse between several Life Course stages at once. Bourbou and Garvie-Lok found that, unlike common contemporary practice, breast milk was phased out of a child's diet from six months

the child see Baun 1994, 117; 123: 'The existence or non existence of the child, theologically and culturally, was also inextricably linked with its having a name. Cabasilas highlights the baptismal day as the day that God first knows us by name...'

⁷ V. *Ioan.*, Greek: 385, English: 258.

⁸ Congourdeau 1993, 176.

⁹ Laiou-Thomadakis 1977, 271.

through to four years of age.¹⁰ The completion of weaning marked the end of nutritional dependence on the mother and an increased likelihood of survival to adulthood.¹¹ Tritsaroli and Valentin found that children who had been weaned were buried within their family unit, unlike neonatal infants, who were buried in isolation from their deceased family.¹² Therefore, this chapter takes a fluid approach to the definition of infancy, looking at the stage of life from the union of the parents and conception through to the end of the weaning process.

There are a number of limitations to analysing infancy. Our textual sources speak mostly about 'predestined' emperors, patriarchs and saints. Consequently, anecdotes about infancy and childhood were written with hindsight, following a pre-determined agenda, shaped by subsequent adulthood achievements. Didacticism is apparent in the Life of Theodore of Sykeon, who lived in the seventh century, when the author writes: 'And I have written them [the tales] after his death so that the young (οἱ νέοι), through hearing of his virtuous manner of life as a child (τὴν παιδικὴν), may strive to emulate his angelic and blameless life, and be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven...'¹³ Anecdotes that are included are idealised and not necessarily realistic. Usually, the author writes about a deceased or older person, diminishing the possibility of remembering the subject's infancy. The Byzantine writers' own direct experiences of being an infant is, of course, obscured in the records due to their undeveloped memories. One may also wonder to what extent the Byzantine literati – who were mostly male, urban-dwelling and elite – had direct experience of caring for infants.¹⁴ Moving onto the limitations of legal sources,

¹⁰ Bourbou and Garvie-Lok 2009, 84.

¹¹ Bourbou and Garvie-Lok 2009, 84.

¹² Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008, 107.

¹³ *V. Theo. Skye.*, Greek: 19, English: 102.

¹⁴ Rautman 2006, 8: 'The centrality of the family emphasised the important place of children, even though few sources speak directly of their experiences.' Patlagean 1975, 18: 'On the contrary, the concept of having children is restrictive and underemphasized'; 22: 'Abstinence was observed on such a wide scale and in such a variety of forms that it became a pertinent element in demographic and social history.'

Troianos has argued that laws were not necessarily adhered to: abortion was not treated as murder due to the high prevalence of miscarriage and the difficulty in proving meditated removal of the foetus.¹⁵ Material culture can be used to expose the daily life of infants in terms of the items used for their care, such as toys and feeding implements or murals depicting them. The depictions are open to interpretation and reliable assertions must be supported in alternative sources of evidence. This paper uses a full range of evidence in order to counterbalance the problems associated with specific genres or media types.

The textual construction in infancy is standardised; rhetoricians advised subsequent writers to limit anecdotes pertaining to infancy and childhood in biographies.¹⁶ Third-century Aphthonios advises enkomiasts: 'Then you will place birth, which you will divide into nation, homeland, ancestors and parents.'¹⁷ Fourth-century Menander instructs biographers to commence their narrative with specific information: race and city, family and events at birth (dreams and portents).¹⁸ But from around the sixth century onwards, textual and pictorial evidence draws upon the biblical model of Jesus' infancy. Key points of Christ's infancy (e.g. conception, birth and presentation at the temple) are incorporated into the standard hagiographical model.¹⁹

For instance, in the Bible, the angel Gabriel visited the pregnant Mary, advising her that she carried the son of God.²⁰ In the *vita* of Theodore of Sykeon, who lived in the

¹⁵ Troianos 1991, 4: 'This demonstrates that, even at the time of Arethas it was held that the ordinances prohibiting and punishing abortion were useless, because no human is put to death.'

¹⁶ Abrahamse 1979, 500: '...fourth-century hagiographers found childhood behaviour surprisingly irrelevant to their subject.'

¹⁷ *Aph.*, 212

¹⁸ *Mena.*, 81

¹⁹ Luke 2: 22-40.

²⁰ Luke, 1: 29-33: 'Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most

seventh century, we are told that his mother dreamt that a messenger came to her in the night and predicted a great future for her unborn baby:

She awoke all trembling with fear and related the vision she had seen in the night to Cosmas, the imperial messenger, and he said to her, “Take good care of yourself, dear, for perchance God will watch over you and give you a son (καρπὸν) who will be deemed worthy to become a bishop”. With these words he left her in the morning and went on his way rejoicing.²¹

The same author writes: ‘For thus, He [God] is wont to consecrate His worthy servants in the womb before they are born.’²² Based on the Scriptures, the Byzantines began to look for signs and symbols of divinity before a baby was born. This chapter will argue that hagiographers and historians begin to make note of attributes from conception. The Byzantines perceived that the beginning of the Life Course, instead of starting abruptly at birth, was a transition from conception through to pregnancy and birth to baptism.

The tension between the biblical model and the traditional rhetorical structure of enkomion can be noted in hagiographies and histories alike: ninth-century Methodios (c. 788 – 847) states that he is excluding childhood anecdotes, but nonetheless includes them in his account of the life of the Hieromartyr Euthymios.²³ Anna Komnene (c. 1083–1153) wrote: ‘In Diogenes’ reign, my father was only a youth; he had done nothing worthy of note, unless childhood doings (τὰ παιδικὰ)

High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; for his kingdom will never end.” ‘

²¹ *V. Theo. Skye.*, Greek: 4, English: 88. This literally translates as ‘God will give you fruit...’

²² *V. Theo. Skye.*, 89.

²³ *Anna*, 113: ‘As for Alexios, who had enjoyed a good education from his earliest years and, obedient to the precepts of his mother...’; Chevallier Caseau 2009, 127: ‘In the Life of Our Saintly Father and Hieromartyr Euthymios, written by Methodius around 831, the author declines to write about the childhood of the iconodule saint on the grounds that he knows nothing about it and feels no need to describe it. He adds that he did not make the effort to inquire about the period of Euthymios’s life preceding adulthood because it would be useless for readers, who cannot imitate being the parents of a saint... Still, even with this warning, Methodius starts his tale with some discourse on parents and childhood.’

are to be made the object of enkomion.²⁴ Anna implies that she suppressed other information about Alexios' early years. Nonetheless, she writes that he was an obedient child, emphasising the connection with his adult character.²⁵ In the twelfth century, Theodosios Goudeles lists the traditional assets, as advocated by Menander, despite protesting that they are irrelevant.²⁶

Conception

When conception is mentioned by the authors of histories and saints' lives, authors attach importance to the circumstances, including the marital status of the parents, the day on which they copulated, the ease with which they conceived a baby and the place of conception.²⁷

²⁴ *Anna*, Greek: Vol. I: 6, English: 19.

²⁵ *Anna*, 79: 'The Emperor who from infancy had received a good education and always conformed to his mother's counsels, and was imbued with a deep-seated awe of God, was now tortured with remorse for the plundering of the city, which had taken place on his occupation of it, and brought suffering upon all the inhabitants.'

²⁶ *V. Leon*, 35: 'However, why do I care about the country of this brave one or about his earthly parents, as a reason supposedly for exaltation of him, who exchanged his country for the higher one, and was blessed to have God as his father because of his way of life and his proximity to the good?'

²⁷ *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 22, English: 23: '...it pleased the Lord of all that a fine child goodly in the eyes of God, was conceived on the piece of property neighbouring that which had been consecrated for glorious Holy Sion.' The day of fornication is noted as important to Byzantine authors by Troianos 1991, 6: 'The pernicious effects on children conceived during sexual intercourse unsanctioned on natural or religious grounds are presented by another, equally simplistic text traduced with the rejoinders of Ioasaf, Metropolitan of Ephesus. In this text, it is interesting to note that the effects on children's health are associated to coition, not only during menstruation but also during puerperium—a notion indirectly implicit in some of the aforementioned eponymous works as well—and also on days when coition of the spouses is deprecated by the Church for reasons of respect for the specific day. Such days are Saturdays, Sundays and the major feasts. In these cases, genetic abnormalities don't appear in the offspring as a consequence of trespassing the natural laws but as punishment for disobeying the divine commands. Thus, the threat of bearing defective children became an additional means of psychological coercion aimed at betokening the erotic conduct of people.'

Firstly, the marital circumstances of the parents and the legitimacy of the baby are remarked upon. Southon found in Late Antique Latin writings, children born out of wedlock were considered to be inferior to legitimate children.²⁸ The concern for legitimacy is perpetuated in Byzantine sources. We see the high significance attached to circumstances of conception, as a means to validating legitimacy, most markedly in the imperial dynasty. In Nikephoros' *Short History*, Herakleios (c. 575 – 641) is said to have given only his bastard sons by a concubine as hostages, signifying their lesser value.²⁹ Dagron pointed out that Psellos recorded that Michael VII Doukas (c.1050– 1090) was subjected to a test, in order to see if he was fit to rule, because he was conceived and born before his father ascended the throne and therefore was not a porphyrogenitos (born in the purple).³⁰ Legitimacy is crucial to the descriptions of imperial newborns: as a means to validate their heritage and secure their succession.

It is clear that to the Byzantines, conception within marriage was the ideal. Illegitimate babies are shown to exhibit negative attributes as adults. In George the Synkellos' ninth-century *Chronicle*, it is written: 'Abimelech, the son of Gideon by his concubine, slew all his brothers except Jonathan the youngest son and led the

²⁸ Southon (unpublished), 68.

²⁹ *Nike.*, 59.

³⁰ Dagron 2003, 44; *Psel*, 340: 'The other two brothers, having been born before the accession (the remarkable Michael and the younger son, Andronikos), counted as ordinary citizens. However, it was not long before his father adorned the eldest and most handsome son, this same Michael, the truly devout Michael, the imperial diadem; but, just before he took his seat on the throne, Constantine put him to a severe test, to find out if the young man was really suited to be emperor. The question he asked concerned political theory. As Michael solved the problem and gave the correct answer, the emperor regarded it as an omen that he was destined to win great renown in his future reign, and the ceremony of enthronement was at once performed.' This is some evidence to suggest that up until the eighth century, the status of the imperial mother was not consolidated until she had produced an heir. See: McCormick 1997, 245.

people into fornication'.³¹ This is an elaboration on the biblical version, in which Abimelech's impious behaviour is not recorded.³² Here George portrays the illegitimate Abimelech as a murderer of his legitimate brothers, who then led others to follow the path that generated his own illegitimacy - apparently random fornication.³³ The ecclesiast firstly notes the illegitimate status of Abimelech, implying that his illegitimacy contributed to his impious behaviour.

In some cases, authors reinterpreted the legitimacy of their subject, in order to prevent potential insults. This is well-established practice: the founder of the Byzantine Empire, Constantine the Great (c. 272 – 337), is denounced on the basis of his illegitimacy.³⁴ Lieu and Montserrat have suggested that sources subsequently reinterpreted the marital status of his parents, portraying him as legitimate.³⁵ In the Syriac (Monophysite) tradition, Maximos the Confessor (c. 580 – 662) is presented as the illegitimate son of a Persian slave and an Arab whore. In the Greek (Chalcedonian) tradition, he is the son of two married aristocrats.³⁶ Illegitimate status was sometimes whitewashed in order to prevent defamation of adult character.

In hagiography, the same topos is inverted. In the Life of Theodore of Sykeon, who lived in the seventh century, the baby was conceived by a prostitute, out of wedlock, but – in the face of all opposition – became a saint.³⁷ During an exorcism, the demon exclaims: '...and now He has given authority to the son of a harlot to cast us out.

³¹ *Synk.*, 230; 425: '...his illegitimate son, known as Jugurtha, assassinated his father's legitimate offspring and seized control of the kingdom.'

³² Judges 8: 31: 'His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.'

³³ Clark 1994, 25: 'Augustine envisaged humans born infected with sexually transmitted sin.' Baun 1994, 116: 'In fact, most Orthodox treatments of the question, from the Byzantine period to the present day, take pains to distance themselves from the Augustinian tradition of original sin, human nature, judgement and purgatory.'

³⁴ *Zosi.*, 28.

³⁵ Lieu and Montserrat 1998, 81.

³⁶ *Maxi.*, 11; Louth 1996, 119.

³⁷ *V. Theo. Skye.*, 88.

Woe is me, wretch that I am, to be expelled by such a child!³⁸ Theodore's sanctity is empowered, because he – unlike most – overcame 'the thistles of harlotry (ἐκ πορνικῶν ἀκανθῶν)...'³⁹

Secondly, hagiographers, in particular, remark upon the ease with which the parents conceived. It is often written that the parents conceived their child after a long period of infertility, as the result of divine intervention.⁴⁰ This is a biblical motif: babies including Samson, David, Jacob and Esau and John the Baptist were all born to previously sterile parents.⁴¹ The sixth-century Saint Thegnios is reputed to grant fertility to women.⁴² It is noted in the *vitae* of Nicholas of Sion, who lived in the sixth century, and George of Amastris, who lived in the eighth century, that the parents tried to conceive a baby for thirty years before being successful.⁴³ The biographer of George writes:

Not all of those who are not born from barrenness (στειρόρας) are remarkable, some are and some are not. For each, as we know, attracts divine glory on account of his increase in virtue. But there is no one born from barrenness who is not famous. Why is that? Because he was born from barrenness? Not at all! Before He who knows everything before creation allows such a man to appear in the world, He prompts the request of the bonds or barrenness, so that the gist might be given in response to prayer, rather than by chance. I am not saying these things in order to heap more honour upon that man (for words are unable to make the brilliance of the sun brighter, nor to expose the

³⁸ *V. Theo. Skye.*, 99: 'But the dreadful thing for me is that he has made a beginning with me and I dare not return to my father the Devil, after being expelled by such a child. For if it had been done by an old man, my shame would not be great; accursed be the day on which you were born!'

³⁹ *V. Theo. Skye.*, Greek: 22, English: 105.

⁴⁰ *V. Euth.*, 5: 'Blessed Dionysia, after cohabiting with her husband for many years, had not given birth, being sterile. Being as a result much disheartened the two of them continued for a long time to entreat God earnestly to give them a child.' This is a concept noted to be prevalent in western *vitae* by De Jong 1996.

⁴¹ Judges 13: 1-24; Ruth 4:13; Genesis 25: 19-21; Luke 1: 6-7.

⁴² *V. Theog. Paul.*, 158: 'He is the one who through prayer granted childbirth to sterile women.'

⁴³ *V. Geor. Amas.*, 2, 3: 'For the longest time they remained childless, but they did not cease to petition God with fasting and prayers that a divine fruit be given to them for the succession of their family.' *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 22, English: 23.

greatness of heaven, the position of the stars or any other of those things which are frightful to see and even frightful to comprehend). Rather, I am saying this so that you may know to what extent God chose him before the creation and how rich he was in gifts of divine grace.⁴⁴

A child born out of infertility was born in response to a request, a prayer, or an intercession: therefore, the child was highly desired.⁴⁵ Tenth-century Luke the Younger was said to be 'a greatly longed for delight'.⁴⁶ Chevallier Caseau wrote:

All children were believed to be gifts from God, especially those long-awaited children born to couples affected by sterility. Many saints' lives reveal that these parents had prayed for a child and felt indebted to God and to the saint whose intercession was powerful enough to grant their wish. This debt was usually repaid by offering the child to God's service, whether as a cleric or as a monk.⁴⁷

This topos is adapted in the vita of ninth-century Michael the Synkellos: his parents were not infertile and had borne many children, but none of them were male:

His parents had many children, but a male child had not been born to them and they were greatly disheartened by this. His mother, who was a lover of God and a pious woman, often visited God's houses of prayer, spending time there and beseeching God by night and by day that the Lord might grant male fruit to her body (ὅπως δώη αὐτῇ κύριος καρπὸν κοιλίας ἀρρενικόν)...⁴⁸

Similarly to other saints, Michael was the result of a request through prayer: he was highly desired. In gratitude for the miracle conceptions, the parents of such babies were often reported to have subsequently dedicated their child to a convent or monastery, thereby returning their gift to God. This can be seen, again, in the Life of Michael the Synkellos: 'When the boy had been weaned (ἀπουαλακτισθέντος)

⁴⁴ *V. Geor. Amas.*, Greek: 11, English: 4.

⁴⁵ *V. Geor. Amas.*, 4: 'Or coming upon Job's struggles, he learned from him courage and patience, since in his situation everything was turned to the opposite, poverty from wealth and childlessness from many children'.

⁴⁶ *V. Luke*, Greek: 4, English: 5.

⁴⁷ Chevallier Caseau 2009, 145.

⁴⁸ *V. Mich. Synk.*, 45.

and had reached the age of three, she offered him to God in accordance with her promise.⁴⁹ The dedication of the only son and heir to God was considered to be the ultimate sacrifice, as in *The Lives of David, Symeon and George of Lesbos*, who lived in the ninth century, the author writes that usually parents dedicated their younger children to God, only when their older children had secured familial succession: 'Their parents bore an additional four children: <of these last four> one pair they left in the world for a continuation of their family line (γένους διαδοχήν), while the other pair, along with the three luminaries mentioned, they offered as a pure sacrifice (θυσίαν καθαρὰν) to God...'⁵⁰ In the same vitae, the elder child is said to be first-born but nevertheless spiritually inferior to his younger brother, who was an ascetic monk.⁵¹ George, the biographer of seventh-century Theodore of Sykeon records that he himself is the result of such a miracle:⁵²

For my parents who were natives of the village of Adigermarae, had been married for several years, yet had had no children, so they came to the Saint who prayed over them and blessed their girdles, and through that prayer, I was conceived and born.⁵³

Hinterberger observes that Theodore gave George's parents another son, in order to replace their first son, who they had dedicated to God.⁵⁴ Miracle conceptions, whether overcoming infertility or an absence of male offspring, symbolised the birth of a saintly baby. In hagiography, the consequences of such a miracle were far-reaching for the parents: they were expected to dedicate the baby to the service of God, without regard to the succession of their family line.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ *V. Mich. Synk.*, Greek: 46, English: 47.

⁵⁰ *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*, Greek: 212, English: 152.

⁵¹ *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*, 170: 'As for the man's brother, the one who preceded him in order of birth, but followed him in spiritual rank and order...'

⁵² Hinterberger 2000, 149: 'In many Saints' Lives, the author assures his audience of having been an eyewitness (αὐτόπτης) of what he relates, and emphasizes that he himself had been strongly connected to his hero'.

⁵³ *V. Theo. Skye.*, 184.

⁵⁴ Hinterberger 2000, 158.

⁵⁵ The sacrifice of offering an only child or male heir to the service of God would have been great. See Talbot 2009, 289: 'Like their modern counterparts, Byzantine

It is significant that all of the miracle babies recorded in hagiographies were the same gender: male. In the sixth century, friends of Abba Aaron request the Saint as their intercessor to bestow them with a male son:⁵⁶

So he came to us and related the story to my father, saying “I have lived with my wife from the time I was a youth and [we have had] no [male] child [even after all these] years...” And just as he had said, so it happened, and within a year the man came up to us with his small son perched upon his shoulders.⁵⁷

In the Life of Elias of Helioupolis, who lived in the eighth century, we hear of merriment on the birth of the first son: ‘Thereafter his son had a male child and with the exhortation of his fellows he celebrated the birthday of his son, preparing a feast.’⁵⁸ Borrowing the *topos* from hagiography, Anna records that her brother, John, was the object of her father’s and mother’s prayers, too.⁵⁹ Once Eirene had given birth to a son: ‘...not a trace of disappointment remained now that their desire had been fulfilled’.⁶⁰ We are told by Anna that John was ‘naturally’ promoted to the rank of emperor and bequeathed the empire as his heritage.⁶¹ The regularity of rejoicing upon the birth of a son, narrated across a variety of genres, implies that a specific

mothers and fathers not only had powerful emotional bonds to their children, but also hoped that they would live into adulthood to provide emotional continuity to the family line by bearing grandchildren and inheriting property, to look after their parents in old age, and to ensure their proper burial and posthumous commemoration’.

⁵⁶ *V. Abba. Aaro.*, 127: ‘Now one day when he was thinking about him coming to see us, his wife said to him, ‘If you’re going to see the holy man Abba Aaron, entreat him to pray to Christ to give us a male child.’

⁵⁷ *V. Abba. Aaro.*, 127: This excerpt seems inconsistent as it is a year between the man’s request for a son and his return with his son, yet, the baby is said to be able to sit up. Either the woman was already pregnant at the time of the request or a three month old baby was able to miraculously sit up.

⁵⁸ *V. Elia. Heli.*, 94.

⁵⁹ *Anna*, 197.

⁶⁰ *Anna*, 197.

⁶¹ *Anna*, 198.

value was attached to lower status male children too: probably linked to the economic dependence of parents on their sons in their later life.⁶²

Pregnancy

Parallel topoi in saint's lives and histories demonstrate the consolidation of rhetorical strategies and shared ambitions: to portray the adult as divinely inspired from conception.⁶³ As early as the sixth century, the Byzantines wrote that an individual's characteristics were developed even before their birth. Sixth-century Sabas was recorded to have been 'predestined from the womb', and his contemporary, Nicholas of Sion, was said to be 'chosen by God, from his Mother's womb (κοιλίας)'.⁶⁴ Ninth-century Tarasios preserved his immutability of mind 'from the time he was in his mother's womb and in swaddling clothes'.⁶⁵ In the twelfth century, Theodosios Goudeles writes: 'But He who knows our affairs even before our birth...'⁶⁶ This contrasts with Roman and Late Antique sources, wherein we find no mention of fetuses' characteristics before birth.⁶⁷ Looking at the Late Antique Life Course, Alberici points out that Ambrose's talents were considered to be apparent from birth.⁶⁸ In the fourth century, Menander had advised subsequent rhetoricians to

⁶² Skinner 1997, 394.

⁶³ Chevallier Caseau 2009, 135: 'Yet their relationship to classical rhetoric was often complex: Christian writers criticized this formal approach to a biography, although many eventually adopted it'. Angelov 2009, 92: 'There are prominent cases of borrowing and cross-fertilization among the three genres'. Hinterberger 2000, 145: 'As I have mentioned above, in Byzantium Saints' Lives were the narrative genre par excellence, and in one way or another virtually all attempts to relate a life story were orientated on the hagiographical pattern.'

⁶⁴ *V. Saba.*, 95; *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 32, English: 33.

⁶⁵ *V. Tara.*, 198.

⁶⁶ *V. Leon.*, 75.

⁶⁷ Roman sources do not acknowledge evident characteristics in fetuses, but the legal sources do make provision for the individual, once born: Rawson 2006, 99: 'The law also recognised the prospective inheritance rights of a child in the womb by providing explicitly for posthumous commemoration.'

⁶⁸ Alberici (unpublished), 52.

make note of miraculous signs after birth.⁶⁹ But this precedent seems to have been reinterpreted; in Byzantine hagiographical texts it is common for the writers to record the occurrence of symbolic events after the conception of a predestined pious individual.⁷⁰ In the *Life of George of Amastris*, who lived in the eighth century, it was written: ‘Nor is it fitting to neglect the divine wonders that were worked before the birth of the saint; how he was chosen from above, and how he had his name not from men, nor on account of men, but rather was anointed and dedicated a priest before being born from the womb (πρὶν ἐκ μητρώων ἐκοσπασθῆναι λαγόνων).’⁷¹ In the same *vita*, the city leaders dreamt that his mother, Megethos, was carrying a ‘holy babe’ in her womb.⁷² In the ninth-century *vita* of Theodora of Thessalonike, it is written:

And thus the Devil shamelessly lay in wait for <Anna> upto the time of her death, although she reconciled herself to the <Lord> from the time she was in her mother’s womb through her monastic office and had directed her entire life in a manner pleasing to God.⁷³

Post-sixth century hagiographical writing is abundantly clear in its message: personal characteristics are not only ordained at infancy, but during pregnancy too.

⁶⁹ *Mena.*, 81: After country and family, then, let the third heading, as we have just said, be ‘birth’, and if any divine sign occurred at the time of his birth, either on land or in the heavens or on the sea, compare the circumstances with those of Romulus, Cyrus and similar stories...’; Vinson 1998, 357: ‘In fact, in his discussion of the topic ‘Birth’, Menander actually encourages the prospective encomiast to use fabrication if it can be done convincingly...’ This is also a trait of Roman narratives. See Wiedemann 1989, 59: ‘Frequently omens occur during the pregnancy of the future emperor’s mother, or at the actual moment of birth.’

⁷⁰ This is not the only example in which Menander’s instructions are adapted to a new Christian model. Instead of comparing the newborns to Romulus or Cyrus, as Menander had advised, the saints were compared to Christian figures. For instance, George of Amastris was compared to the Old Testament figures Isaac, Samuel and John; David, brother of Symeon, was compared to Samuel and Jeremiah, Lazaros of Mount Galesion was compared to Job. *V. Geor. Amas.*, 3; *V. Laza. Moun. Gale.*, 78; *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*, 154.

⁷¹ *V. Geor. Amas.*, Greek: 8, English: 3.

⁷² *V. Geor. Amas.*, 3: ‘Finally, they yielded to the request of the city leaders and declared the reason for their threats, explaining that the woman who passed through the midst of them on the previous day had in her womb and holy babe’

⁷³ *V. Theo. Thes.*, 197.

Ninth-century historian, George the Synkellos, maintains that it is from birth onwards that personality is formed: 'Such was the nature of divine grace bestowed on Moses from infancy, and the kind of divine power and authority granted him in the palace of the Egyptians over the course of the life of Phana and the Pharaoh Amosis.'⁷⁴ Similarly, Michael Psellos (c. 1017 - 1096) writes: 'At the time of our birth we are endowed with certain natural virtues or their opposites.'⁷⁵ Chevallier Caseau asserted: 'The Byzantines believed that the future of their children was partly inscribed in their first few years'.⁷⁶ But in the Middle Byzantine period, hagiographical works show that the baby's future was being formulated from the foetal stage. In the Lives of David, Symeon and George of Lesbos, who lived in the ninth century, a monk of the local community pointed out to soldiers a foetus with a great future:

So once when that marvellous woman was carrying in her womb her first-born child (πρωτόγονον παῖδα), the all blessed David, and was going into the baths, a certain inspired monk who also could see the future was seated among a large number of soldiers on the street and was instructing them about salvation and divine teachings; when he saw her going by, he stood up suddenly and with reverent silence did obeisance. And when, on her way back home he very reverently rendered her the same honour a second time, the soldiers sitting with him were very surprised and inquired anxiously "Why in the world have you given such a double honour to that woman holy father?" And he said "Look at this holy woman, brothers; by the providence of God a company of great holy men will be born <of her>, and the foetus (ἔμβρυον) she now carries in her womb will be the way and the beginning and the leader of the offspring who succeed him as well as a light for the wilderness and a shining star for his compatriots, for among all pregnancies her womb has been hallowed."⁷⁷

David was said to be 'consecrated even before birth'.⁷⁸ Ninth-century Basil of Thessalonike poignantly summarises the newfound emphasis on the development of

⁷⁴ *Synk.*, 174.

⁷⁵ *Psel.*, 177.

⁷⁶ Chevallier Caseau 2009, 128: 'Paying attention to signs in early childhood was tantamount to foretelling their future as adults'.

⁷⁷ *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*, Greek: 213, English: 153.

⁷⁸ *V. Saba.*, 95; *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 32, English: 33; *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*, 154.

life before birth, when writing: 'For just as eggs nurtured in the womb generate life, so concealed thoughts progress to deeds.'⁷⁹ Authors of hagiography wrote that an individual's characteristics were shaped from their earliest existence.

In the twelfth century, the historian Anna Komnene used this topos in order to portray that her own parental devotion was apparent, even before her birth:

I was that baby. On several occasions I have heard my mother tell how, two days before the emperor's return to the palace (he was coming back then after his battle with Robert and his other numerous wars and labours) she was seized with the pains of childbirth (τῆ γαστρὶ) and making the sign of the cross over her womb, said, "Wait a while, little one, till your father's arrival". Her mother, the *protovestaria*, so she said, reproached her soundly: "What if he comes in a month's time? Do you know when he'll arrive? And how will you bear such pain?" So spoke her mother; but her own command was obeyed – which very clearly signified even in her womb the love that I was destined to have for my parents in the future.⁸⁰

Anna recorded her mother's prayers to God and noted that divine intervention occurred, an anecdote more commonly found in the pregnancies of hagiographies, but used here to represent the author's obedience to her parents. From the sixth century, hagiographical writers began to engage with the concept of an individual's existence before their birth: indicating the foetus' personality through a series of miraculous events and symbolisms. This strategy is not adopted in the historical texts until the twelfth century, when Anna Komnene exploits the topos to different ends: not to show her sanctity but, in contrast, to show devotion to her parents.

Significantly, in Roman Law, punishment for abortion was exile; further, abortion was not treated as murder but the main interest lay in the deception of the father of the unborn baby.⁸¹ In the seventh century, Christian Law changes the penalty for abortion. The Council in Trullo, which met in 692, decided that abortion constituted

⁷⁹ V. *Euth. Thes.*, 15.

⁸⁰ *Anna*, Greek: Vol. II: 61, English: 196.

⁸¹ Troianos 1991, 4.

murder.⁸² This penalty seems to have been specific to canonical rulings. In the eighth-century *Ecolga* of Leo III (c. 685 – 741), the legal code states that if a woman is found to have procured an abortion, she is to be whipped and exiled, reiterating Roman Law.⁸³ The secular texts continue not to equate abortion with murder. Therefore, it can be suggested that the emerging importance of foetal characteristics can be linked to the biblical model and Christian ideology.

Depictions of pregnant women are rare. The scene of the Visitation is the most predominant portrayal of pregnancy, whereupon Mary, mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, embrace one another. The shift in stylistic representation of this scene can be seen to show the changing attitudes towards fetuses, as already noted to be exemplified in histories, hagiographies and Canon Law. A sixth-century mosaic in the Euphrasian Basilica at Poreč shows the two expectant mothers with protruding stomachs. Perhaps tailored to a more sensitive audience, or to a societal trend, both the Duomo di Milano Ivory and the fresco in the Church of Agios Georgios, cover up the visible signs of pregnancy with drapery. Yet by the 14th century, as outlined by Verheyen, 'foetal icons' were produced across

⁸² *Nice.*, 404: 'CANON XCI. Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the foetus, are subjected to the penalty of murder.' The first instance of abortion being equated with murder is analysed by Troianos, 1991, 3: 'Chronologically, the next canonical ordination with reference to abortion following Canon 21 of Ankara is included in Canons 2 and 8 of Basil the Great. Both are contained in the canonical epistle to Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconion. It is more than likely that the first of the two rules is an answer to the question of whether the Church, in determining the canonical penalty, takes the Old Testament distinction between "figured" and "not figured" embryos into account. Basil's answer was categorical: "The intentional abortress is responsible for murder. For us there does not exist a distinction between formed and unfigured. For here is avenged not only that which is about to be born, but also who oversaw it, because women usually succumb during the course of these undertakings. In addition, there is also the destruction of the embryo, another murder under the oversight of those attempting these things. One should not extend the duration of penitence until the end of life, but rather adopt the duration of ten years, appraising not by the duration but by the manner of penitence." In the second canon, Canon 8, Basil the Great equates-with respect to penal responsibility-a woman who commits abortion to those who provide the means for such a purpose.'

⁸³ *Leo III.*, 78: '7. If a woman is carnally known and, becoming pregnant, tries to produce a miscarriage [abortion], she shall be whipped and exiled.'

Europe.⁸⁴ Examples of this trend include the fresco in the Timios Stavros Church, Cyprus. It is possible that this iconographic trend is born in the promoted importance of pregnancy in Byzantine texts.

Fig. 1.



The Euphrasian Basilica, Poreč. Sixth century.
With permission from:
<http://nickerson.icomos.org/porec/euf-s.htm>
(13/05/10)

⁸⁴ Verheyen 1964, 536.

Fig. 2.



Church of Agios Georgios, Kurbinovo. 1191.
With permission from: http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/HellenicMacedonia/en/img_B22231c.html (14/05/10)

Fig. 3.



Duomo di Milano, Milan. Post-ninth century.
With permission from: http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/milan-treasury-photos/slides/xti_7749pac (13/05/10)

Fig. 4.



Timios Stavros Church, Cyprus. 14th century.
<http://creativecommons.org/> (13/05/10)

Birth

Picking up Menander's fourth-century instructions, hagiographers intertwine daily realities and miraculous events in their description of the birthing process.⁸⁵ In the life of Nicholas of Sion, who lived in the sixth century, it is written:

⁸⁵ *Mena.*, 81: After country and family, then, let the third heading, as we have just said, be 'birth', and if any divine sign occurred at the time of his birth, either on land or in the heavens or on the sea, compare the circumstances with those of Romulus, Cyrus and similar stories...'; Vinson 1998, 357: 'In fact, in his discussion of the topic 'Birth', Menander actually encourages the prospective encomiast to use fabrication if

For at the time of his birth while he was still in the washbasin, by the power of God he stood upright on his feet for about two hours (τῆ τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμει ἕστη ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὀρθὸς ὡς ὥρας δύο). And awestruck, his parents praised God. And they went to the Monastery of Akalissos, to the holy man Nicholas, the uncle of the child, and told him about the birth of the child, and how he stood upright in the basin for as much as two hours.⁸⁶

The above excerpt can be paralleled to the Life of Lazaros of Mount Galesion, who lived in the eleventh century:

When Lazaros emerged from his mother's womb, a light at once shone forth miraculously from heaven and filled the whole interior of the house with an indescribable flash of lightening. Indeed, the people who were there could not stand the brilliance of this light and, leaving the mother with the baby, rushed out of the house and stood somewhere nearby in great fear and trembling. They waited for a little while and then, after that terrible light had gone away, went back into the house again. When the midwife approached the woman who had just given birth, she found the baby standing upright; he was facing east and had his hands pressed tightly to his chest in the form of the cross. The midwife who delivered him recounted this herself. She was the wife of the great Leontios, the monk who, in turn told me these things and <all> the rest about Lazaros' childhood and what happened to him up to his departure from his own country for the Holy Land. So when his parents and those who were there saw these things (as well as what they learned from hearsay), they were filled with wonder and amazement and from then on began to guess the future well enough and to say that they expected to see something great and auspicious in connection with the child.⁸⁷

Details can be noted, such as multiple people attending the birth including the father of the child and the midwife, the baby being washed and the family being informed (in this excerpt, it is an uncle who is informed).⁸⁸ But, much less ordinary, both babies stand up shortly after birth. In addition to standing newborns, another inverted

it can be done convincingly...' This is also a trait of Roman narratives. See Widemann 1989, 59: 'Frequently omens occur during the pregnancy of the future emperor's mother, or at the actual moment of birth.'

⁸⁶ *V. Nich. Sion.*, 23.

⁸⁷ *V. Laza. Moun. Gale.*, 78.

⁸⁸ Shaw 2001, 31: In Roman society, the birth of a child was followed by a ritual to demonstrate acceptance into the family unit: 'The ritual, we are told. Consisted of the father ceremonially lifting the newborn infant up from the ground after it had been placed at his feet, and then raising the infant in his arms for all to see.' This act of acceptance parallels the Byzantine custom of informing all the relatives of the baby's birth.

concept includes the painless labour of a mother, which may be reflective of the normative concern for the perils of childbirth.⁸⁹ In addition, John of Moschos (c. 550 – 619) presents mentally competent talking newborns.⁹⁰ We see hagiographers inverting what they thought to be normative infant behaviour or occurrences to draw attention to the exceptional nature of the future adult saint, whom they portray in their writing. Hagiographers strategically include excerpts about painless labours or babies who are advanced for their age as evidence of their divine inspiration.

In other instances, rhetoricians invert this topos and use the normally perilous birthing process as a metaphor to portray beliefs or events in an unfavourable tone. When writing about concepts that the author disapproves of, the author capitalises on the Byzantines' fear and anxiety surrounding pregnancy and labour. In the vita of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople (c. 758– 828), Ignatios writes: 'You tried to conceive years of royal rule, but gave birth to aborted fetuses that died young.'⁹¹ Later, he writes: '...and so the labour pangs of heresy produced still born offspring.'⁹² And, as if to demonstrate his gynaecological knowledge, the author subsequently writes: 'And when they drew near the tyrant was still sitting, they saw the patriarch offering opposing arguments in quite a loud voice, and smiting the emperor with argument as if he were <slapping> a baby at its birth <to make it take its first breath>.'⁹³ In the vita of Niketas of Medikon, who lived in the ninth– century, Theosteriktos notes: 'In addition to all this, the abortions of madness came to him every day...'⁹⁴ Ninth– century Ignatios the Deacon writes: 'For if the fetuses of the heresy have been aborted through a council of Caiaphas, it is through an ecumenical council that children may be born to the Church and grow up to the measure of the

⁸⁹ *V. Syme. Styli.*, 16.

⁹⁰ *John.*, 95: 'When they had eaten, the elder took the baby in his arms and said to it (with everyone watching) "Who is your father?" The child said: "That man" and with the finger of his hand he pointed to the young man. The child was twenty-two days old.'

⁹¹ *V. Nike.*, 128.

⁹² *V. Nike.*, 46.

⁹³ *V. Nike.*, 100.

⁹⁴ *V. Niketas*, 29.

stature of Christ...⁹⁵ In the *Life of Luke the Younger*, who lived during the tenth-century, a man 'gave birth to injustice' and 'was unable to conceive of anything great or lofty'.⁹⁶ The fragility of a baby's life was so poignant to the Byzantine mind that writers exploited natal language to heighten the emotion in their narratives.

As the metaphorical discourse makes abundantly clear, pregnancy, birth and nursing were perilous times for a mother and baby. In the sixth-century *Life of John the Almsgiver*, new mothers encounter poverty:

Once when a severe famine was oppressing the city and the holy man's stewards were, as usual, ceaselessly distributing money or some small gift to the needy, some destitute women, overcome with hunger and but latterly risen from child-bed were obliged to hasten to receive help from distributors while they were still in the grip of abdominal pains, deadly pale, and suffering grievously...⁹⁷

In this excerpt, the newborn infants are not referenced, but by the implication of dependency on their mother's milk, the babies are either already dead or close to expiry. Skinner notes that it is unusual for writers to record miscarriages or stillbirths and our understanding of these occurrences is based on miracle stories.⁹⁸ The survival of a mother and her baby were the subjects of a miracle performed by sixth-century Abba Aaron:

Now there was in Philaea a woman who was about to give birth, but her child withered inside her and died. And when she remembered the miracles that God had worked through the holy man Abba Aaron, she cried out, saying, "God of the holy man Abba Aaron, hear me in the hour of my distress!" Immediately she gave birth to a small child, but he was dead. And her parents greatly mourned for the small child, but when the young woman saw her parents' heavy hearts, she said to them, "Why are you so heavy hearted about the child? Had I not asked the God of the holy man Abba Aaron I too would have sunk into death..." And the father of the child [took] a little earth from beside the door of Abba Aaron's home and tied it up in his neckerchief. And when they came into the house, they found a large crowd of people

⁹⁵ V. *Tara.*, 177

⁹⁶ V. *Luke*, Greek: 102, English: 103; Greek: 104, English: 105.

⁹⁷ V. *John. Alms.*, 202.

⁹⁸ Skinner 1997, 395.

gathered together and the man's wife and child, the child's father uncovered the little bit of earth tied up in his neckerchief and sprinkled it upon the dead child. Immediately he moved his body and opened his eyes. Those who were sitting beside the mother were astounded and they glorified the God of the holy man Abba Aaron.⁹⁹

Ninth-century Niketas of Medikon's unnamed mother is recorded to have died eight days after the birth of her first and only son.¹⁰⁰ The depiction of vulnerable mothers and babies is utilised by some authors in order to portray the barbarity of their villains. In the *Life of Symeon Stylites*, who lived during the sixth century, it is written that people attacked the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon:

And they even entered into houses and seized people, and snatched infants from their mothers' breasts, and ate them before them, while they stood and looked on their sucklings, unable to succour their own children, so that there was mourning and lamentation.¹⁰¹

Byzantine narratives depict the savagery of their enemies, recording that they attacked humanity at the most vulnerable life stage. In Nikephoros' ninth-century *Short History*, a pot full of boiled baby's blood is used to inspire men to fight.¹⁰² Ninth-century Ignatios the Deacon ridicules pagans, who are accusing women of killing suckling infants.¹⁰³ Later in the tenth century, Leo the Deacon employs the same rhetorical device: 'And they [the Rus] made sacrificial offerings by drowning suckling

⁹⁹ *V. Abba. Aaro.*, 120-121.

¹⁰⁰ *V. Niketas*, 3.

¹⁰¹ *V. Syme. Styli.*, 25.

¹⁰² *Nike.*, 121: 'By some devilish intention the inhabitants of the City took a pregnant girl who was about to give birth to her first child, cut her open and having removed the infant from inside her boiled it in a pot of water, in which the men who were preparing to fight the enemy dipped the sleeves of their rights arms'.

¹⁰³¹⁰³ *V. Tara.*, 172: 'What this accusation was I will tell <you>: they were slanderously accused of murdering suckling infants after having penetrated through the house fissures or closed doors and clandestinely killing the new born children. These <women> were dragged into court by those who believe in myths and are reluctant to follow the teaching of Christ our Lord, which is devoid of all fantasy. It is indeed a myth related by the Greeks that a certain woman, Gello by name, after meeting an early death, is in the habit of visiting babies and newborn children in the guise of ghosts and plotting against their life.'

infants...¹⁰⁴ Infants are employed in narratives in order to conjure up the ferocious nature of the opponents. On the other hand, the motif of a suckling infant is used as a connotation for someone who is easily impressionable, helpless and moreover, powerless. Leo the Deacon writes: 'The emperor believes in ignorance that Rus' soldiers are like pampered women, and tries to frighten us with these threats, as if we were suckling infants to be frightened by hobgoblins.'¹⁰⁵ Infants are not only susceptible to attack from opponents: they are also more susceptible to being involved in accidents. In the vita of Nikon, who lived in the tenth– century, we hear of a suckling infant losing his genitalia as a result of an accident.¹⁰⁶ Prior to weaning, the vulnerability of infants was not solely attributable to malnutrition and poverty but also to the occurrences of accidents and misfortune.¹⁰⁷ The high–dependency of a suckling infant, not only for its food, but also for its safety, is consistently conveyed in the texts.

Vulnerable infants demanded care and protection from carers to ensure their survival (Fig. 5– 6). The devotion exemplified by parents to newborn children is metaphorically applied to God's love for Christians.¹⁰⁸ In the ninth– century vita of Euthymios the Younger, Basil of Thessalonike writes:

For it will perhaps seem inappropriate and will be judged ridiculous by people of intelligence not to demonstrate my strength in composition to the one who laboured to give birth to me through the gospel, who swaddled me with

¹⁰⁴ *Leo.*, 193.

¹⁰⁵ *Leo.*, 157.

¹⁰⁶ *V. Niko.*, 233: 'For there was a child quite young in age and still at the breast, whose name was Manuel. He was handsome and well off physically and intellectually. As a result of an accident, one of his vital parts received serious damage and the misfortune threatened the loss of his genitals. It was in no way possible by force for the inner parts to come down and it seemed in pitiful manner to bring an ugly and most deadly burden upon his testicles. And so his parents and who better than parents, were moved by their natural feelings and pricked by the goad of grief...And they were sorely struck by arrows of grief and a sword pierced the middle of their heart. For they saw their child a monster instead of a child and that he would be practically beardless.'

¹⁰⁷ Bourbou and Garvie 2009, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Galatians 3: 26: 'For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.'

prayers and holy admonitions, who suckled me with the milk of virtues and nourished me with the living bread of divine knowledge and prepared me, to the best of his ability, to mature into a man of the congregation (company) of Christ, even if out of foolishness we entwine ourselves with infants whose minds are devoid of intelligence, especially since the proposition holds no danger for me, whether the narrative is equal to the magnitude of the deeds, or whether it fails to match the greatness of the actions.¹⁰⁹

We see this language being used reciprocally to describe a person's love for God: in the vita of Irene of Chrysobalanton, who lived in the tenth century, the Empress Theodora (c. 815 – 867) is said to be pregnant (ὠδίνησεν) with piety and the fear of God.¹¹⁰ Vocabulary pertaining to the life stage of infancy is applied to other scenarios in order to convey both the vulnerability of the life stage, as well as the care and devotion required by the carers of the infant to nurture the baby through such a perilous period.

Fig. 5.



¹⁰⁹ *V. Euth. Thes.*, 1.

¹¹⁰ *Iren.*, Greek: 2, English, 3.

Detail of a miniature depicting a woman shaking a rattle above a child's cradle. Sixth century. With permission from Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

Fig. 6.



Uncial illuminated with a scene depicting the first steps of the Virgin, from a codex containing the Homilies of Grigorios of Nazianzos. Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin. c. 1062.

With permission from:
http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/HellenicMacedonia/en/img_D21i.html (14/05/10)

Baptism

Surprisingly, unlike references to birth, parentage and ethnicity, references to baptism are not commonly incorporated into the standard rhetoric of hagiographies. When baptism is mentioned in the sixth to twelfth century *vitae* studied here, it takes place, without exception, during infancy.¹¹¹ Hennessey wrote: ‘...children were integrated into church practice. Infant baptism and confirmation were the norm by the sixth century, after having become widespread in the fourth and fifth centuries.’¹¹² In the *vita* of sixth-century John the Almsgiver, we see parents asking close friends to become godparents to their children: ‘And from that day, so strong a bond of affection was knit between the two men that the Patriarch became the godfather of the patrician’s children.’¹¹³ Macrides asserted: ‘Monastic charters of all periods expressly forbade monks to act as godparents; yet they did so.’¹¹⁴ Thus, in the *vita* of sixth-century Nicholas of Sion, when a couple miraculously conceived upon the intervention of the Saint, they requested him to be their son’s godparent:

And a year later they returned with a male child. And the servant of God Nicholas took him, and baptized him in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and became the godfather (ἀνάδοχος). And they went away thanking God, who had given them a child after thirty years through the prayers of the servant of God.¹¹⁵

Here we see one of the ways in which a monk or ecclesiast may have been able to obtain direct familiarity with an infant: in a mutually bonding spiritual link. Prokopios c. 500 – 565) revealed the ceremonial practise of ‘purification’ through washing for

¹¹¹ *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 68, English: 69; *V. Syme. Styli.*, 1; *V. Mich. Synk.*, 47; *V. Phil.*, 107; *V. John. Alms.*, 221.

¹¹² Hennessey 2008, 21.

¹¹³ *V. John. Alms.*, 221.

¹¹⁴ Macrides 1987, 144; 154: ‘Men and women had easier access to each other’s company through ties of spiritual kinship, and this was at least one of the reasons monastic founders forbade baptismal sponsorship for monks’.

¹¹⁵ *V. Nich. Sion.*, Greek: 70, English: 71.

baptism was used in infants' adoption ceremonies too.¹¹⁶ The similarities between the adoption and baptismal ceremonies indicate the shared purpose of both: to consolidate family ties.¹¹⁷ From at least the sixth century, baptism was associated with the bestowing of family alliances for parents and infants alike.

In the seventh century, Canon Law orders infants to be baptised. If it was uncertain whether baptism had occurred previously, the sacrament was to be conducted again.¹¹⁸ In baptism ceremonies for infants, the baby acquired a name, as we see in the vita of ninth-century Michael the Synkellos: 'For during those days, when she had laid with her husband, she conceived in her womb and bore a son. In the bath of regeneration (τῆσ παλιγγενεσίας λουτρῶ) she called his name Michael, which means 'general of God'.¹¹⁹ Nikephoros of Constantinople, in the ninth century, sees the baptismal ceremony as a method of conferring new family allegiances upon the infant: 'Since Herakleios was devoted to Pyrros, whom he called his brother (because when he was being baptised in the holy bath the emperor's sister had received him in her arms)...'¹²⁰ In the same text, Nikephoros records that the baptismal ceremony is a method of forging non-blood ties: 'Now Herakleios pretended that he was about to purify his son in the sacred font and would have him

¹¹⁶ *Prok.*, Greek: 26, English: 42: 'Belisarius washed the youngster in the sacred bath (τὸ θεῖον λοθτρὸν).'

¹¹⁷ Macrides 1987, 141. Macrides looks at the similarities in terminology between adoption and baptism during the ninth-century.

¹¹⁸ *Trul.*, 402: 'Following the canonical laws of the Fathers, we decree concerning infants, as often as they are found without trusty witnesses who say that they are undoubtedly baptized; and as often as they are themselves unable on account of their age to answer satisfactorily in respect to the initiatory mystery given to them; that they ought without any offence to be baptized, lest such a doubt might deprive them of the sanctification of such a purification.' On the time at which a person was baptised, please see: Moffatt 1972, 82: 'But in the fourth century, as in the case of Basil himself, baptism was still often deferred to a mature age, it not until close to death.'

¹¹⁹ *V. Mich. Synk.*, Greek: 46, English: 47. 'Bath of regeneration' could be literally translated as the 'bath of re-birth'.

¹²⁰ *Nike.*, 75.

adopted by Krispos...'¹²¹ Although not condoned by the church, Nikephoros revealed that baptismal ceremonies could have the secondary purpose of betrothing infants; again confirming that one of the purposes of baptism was to consolidate family alliances.¹²² The theological texts lead us to believe that baptism held a specifically spiritual value, but analysis of the texts exposes that, to the Byzantines, the Life Course rite of baptism consolidated the social and familial identity of the child through the acquisition of a name and the formulation of relationships with godparents.¹²³

The relationships initiated at baptism, in the same way as those at adoption ceremonies, were intended to last for the duration of the lives of those involved. So in the eighth century, Niketas writes that when Philaretos, his grandfather and godparent was dying, the old man attached the utmost significance to speaking to his godson, over all his other grandchildren because of their spiritual bond.¹²⁴ Philaretos' preference for his godson over his other grandchildren is reiterated in his dying words to him:

He then took the third, spiritual son Niketas, lifted him up on his bed and kissed him, and both wept, the old man as well as the boy (ὁ τε γέρον καὶ τὸ παιδίον). And lifting him up towards the height of heaven with his own hands he said, "Master and Lord, in Thy hands I commit this boy, whom I loved dearly when I lived and for whom I grieve when I die. But I beg You, Lord, grant me this boy, that he may remain in this world and live longer than all his brothers and sisters and his parents, keeping Thy commandments and Thy testimonies and performing the liturgy over us all who have predeceased, commemorating us. Grant him, Lord, this gift of mercifulness that I also

¹²¹ *Nike.*, 39. We see the process of baptism as a process of cementing alliances between adults too. *Nike.*, 5: 'The latter received him gladly: the Roman noblemen became baptismal fathers of the Hunic noblemen, and the wives of the former (did the same) to the spouses of the latter'.¹²¹

¹²² *Nike.*, 75.

¹²³ Macrides 1987, 147: 'They emphasise the gravity of the task and the need to watch over, counsel and correct the spiritual child for his entire life.'

¹²⁴ *V. Phil.*, Greek: 106, English: 107: 'They brought in the third, Niketas, whom he had received in his arms at his baptism. Taking him by the hand he put him aside for a moment at his pillow while he ordered the fourth to be brought before him.'

received from You, Master, and give him both wisdom and insight that he may first fear Your name and keep Your commandments, and then have utterance in opening his mouth so that he can write down all that we have done for future generations. Make him also worthy of the holy and apostolic garment and make him, my Lord, inseparable from me in the place where You have shown me to settle.” For so much did he love him, like Jacob once loved Joseph, that Niketas did not go down from his knee when he was in the house, and wherever Philaretos went, he carried him in front of him on his horse.¹²⁵

This passage reveals the ongoing commitment of godparent to child, a relationship set up to endure from infancy through to the death of either partner and even, as is suggested in this passage, beyond death through into the afterlife.

Conclusion

Each type of evidence is inhibited from fully expressing attitudes towards infants. Eulogists mostly concentrate on standard rhetorical approaches to their texts, recording parentage, miracles at birth and place of birth. Hagiographies follow the biblical precedent, recording symbols of divinity exhibited from the womb. Legal codes record that abortion was outlawed, even equated with murder by the Nicene Fathers; but, in reality, the incidence of miscarriage may have blurred any judgement from being passed.¹²⁶ Images portray that, at least until the 12th century, depictions of pregnancy were to be treated with sensitivity (Figs. 1– 4). In isolation, material culture does not shed any further light on the development of attitudes towards infancy. Yet, when analysing these disparate sources together, a pattern clearly emerges.

There is a marked difference between Late Antique and Middle Byzantine perceptions of infancy: an increased interest in the formulation of the individual’s

¹²⁵ *V. Phil.*, Greek: 108, English: 109.

¹²⁶ Troianos 1991, 4.

character prior to birth emerges. This is supported across a variety of sources. Miracles and symbolic events occurring before birth are included in hagiographies from the sixth century onwards. In the seventh century, Canon Law newly equates abortion with murder. The ninth- and tenth- century histories of Patriarch Nikephoros and Leo the Deacon employ copious quantities of pregnancy and birthing metaphors in their narratives.¹²⁷ In the twelfth century, Anna Komnene applies hagiographical topoi to the construction of her own infancy, suggesting that she was obedient to her parents before her birth.¹²⁸ In the fourteenth century, 'foetal icons' depict Jesus and John the Baptist inside their mother's wombs.¹²⁹ Barbara Zisper has found a new emphasis on the physical development of the foetus in medical manuscripts dated to the 14th century, but most likely copied from earlier examples.¹³⁰ Future studies might consider the increasing Byzantine interest in foetal characteristics as a consequence of an emerging interest in predestination and fate.

¹²⁷ *Nike.*, 46, 100, 121, 128; *Leo*, 193, 157.

¹²⁸ *Anna*, Greek: Vol. II: 61, English: 196.

¹²⁹ Verheyen 1964, 536.

¹³⁰ Brisson, L., M.-H. Congourdeau, and J.-L. Solère 2008, *passim*; Pers. comm. Barbara Zisper (29/04/10) 'There are, however, a number of shorter texts, usually just a couple of pages long, on embryology, which appear frequently in medical manuscripts from the 14th century onwards. Nobody really knows where they come from. They are obviously late antique or medieval, and they are usually (falsely) attributed to Hippocrates. These texts can often be found in the first half of a manuscript, and they describe the formation of the fetus. The aim of these texts is to explain how the general humoral physiology of the human body comes into existence, and they are usually followed up by a discussion of bloodletting or prognosis, where these very general matters about the four humours and the colour of blood or urine become very important.'

Bibliography of cited works

Primary sources

Vita of Abba Aaron, trans., T. Vivian, 'The monk as a holy man: Abba Aaron', *Journeying Into God: Seven Early Monastic Lives*, Minneapolis, 1996: 106– 133. Abbreviation – *V. Abba. Aaro.*,

Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata*, Greek ed., H. Rabe., *Aphthonii Progymnasmata*, Lipsiae, 1926. Abbreviation – *Apht.*

Vitae of David, Symeon and George of Lesbos, ed., Van den Geyn, 'Acta graeca ss. Davidis, Symeonis, and Georgii Mitylenae in insula Lesbo', *Analecta Bollandiana* 19. 1899: 209– 59. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/01/10). trans., D. Abrahamse and D. Domingo– Forasté, *Byzantine defenders of images: eight saints' lives in English translation*, ed., A.– M. Talbot, Washington DC, 1998: 143– 242. Abbreviation – *V. Davi. Syme. and Geor.*

Vita of Elias of Helioupolis, ed., A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Sylloge PPSb* 19.3 1907: 42-59. Available online: www.doaks.org (19/03/10). trans., S. McGrath 'Elias of Helioupolis: The Life of an Eighth Century Syrian Saint', ed., J.W. Nesbitt, *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations*, Leidne, 2003: 85-107. Abbreviation –*V. Elia. Heli.*

Vita of Euthymios the Great, trans., R.M. Price, *Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, Kalamazoo, 1991: 1– 92. Abbreviation – *V. Euth.*

Vita of Euthymios of Thessalonike, ed., L. Petit, 'Vie et office de saint Euthyme le Jeune', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 8, 1903: 155– 203; 503– 36. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/01/10). trans., A.– M. Talbot, 'Life of our blessed father Euthymios of Thessalonike'. Unpublished – I thank A.– M. Talbot for its provision. Abbreviation – *V. Euth. Thes.*

Vita of George of Amastris, ed., V. Vasil'evskij, *Russko– vizantijskie issledovanija*, 2, St. Petersburg, 1893: 1– 73. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/01/10). trans., D.

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/articles/davies-foetus/davies-foetus.pdf>

Jenkins, 'The Life of Saint George of Amastris'. Available online: http://www.library.nd.edu/byzantine_studies/documents/Amastris.pdf (24/01/10).

Abbreviation – *V. Geor. Amas.*

George the Synkellos, ed., D. Wilhelm. *Georgius Syncellus. et Nicephorus*, Bonn. 1829. trans., W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronology of George Synkellos*, Oxford, 2002. Abbreviation – *Synk.*

Vita of Ioannikos, Acta Sanctorum Nov. 2, Brussels, 1894: 332– 83;384– 435. trans., D. F. Sullivan, *Byzantine defenders of images: eight saints' lives in English translation*, ed., A.– M. Talbot, Washington DC, 1998: 243– 352. Abbreviation – *V. Ioan.*

Vita of John the Almsgiver, trans., E. Dawes, 'The Life of John the Almsgiver', *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, London, 1948. Abbreviation – *V. John. Alms.*

John Moschos, *Pratum spirituale*, trans. J. Wortley , *The spiritual meadow*, Kalamazoo, 1992. Abbreviation – *John*

Komnene, Anna. ed., B. Leib, *Alexiade*, Paris, 1945. trans., E.R.A. Sewter. London, 2003. Abbreviation – *Anna*

Vita of Lazaros of Mount Galesion, Acta Sanctorum , Nov. 3, Brussels, 1910: 508– 88. trans. R.P.H. Greenfield, *An Eleventh Century Pillar Saint: The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*, Washington DC, 2000. Abbreviation – *V. Laza. Moun. Gale.*

Leo the Deacon, Greek ed., K. B. Hase, *Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem. et liber De Velitatione Bellica Nicephori Augusti*, Bonn, 1828. trans., A.– M. Talbot. *The history of Leo the Deacon*, Washington DC, 2005. Abbreviation – *Leo*

Leo III the Isaurian, Ecloga, trans., E. Freshfield, *A Manual of Roman Law: The Ecloga*, Cambridge, 1926: 108-12. Reprinted in D. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, Chicago: 1984: 78. Abbreviation – *Leo III.*

Vita of Leontios, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Greek ed., with English trans., D. Tsougarakis, *The Life of Leontios, Patriarch of Jerusalem*, New York, 1993. Abbreviation – *V. Leon.*

Vita of Mary the Younger, Acta Sanctorum, Nov. 4, Brussels, 1902: 692– 705. trans., A. Laiou, 'The Life of Mary the Younger', ed., A.– M. Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium*, Washington DC, 1996: 239– 289. Abbreviation – *V. Mary. Youn.*

Vita of Nicholas of Sion, Greek ed., with English trans., I. and N.P. Sevchenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion*, Brookline, 1984. Abbreviation – *V. Nich. Sion.*

The Trial of Maximos the Confessor and his companions, Greek ed., with English trans., P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions: documents from exile*, Oxford, 1999. Abbreviation – *V. Maxi.*

Menander, *Rhetor*, Greek ed., with English trans., D.Russell and N. Wilson. *Menander Rhetor*, Oxford, 1981. Abbreviation – *Mena.*

Vita of Michael the Synkellos, Greek ed., with English trans., M. Cunningham, *The Life of Michael the Synkellos*, Belfast, 1991. Abbreviation – *V. Mich. Synk.*

Nicene Fathers, 'The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church', trans., H.R. Percival, P Schaff and H. Wace, *A select library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers of the Christian Church*, Oxford,1900: 356– 408. Abbreviation – *Nice.*

Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short history*, Greek ed., with English trans., C. Mango, *Short history, Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople ; text, translation, and commentary*, Washington DC, 1990. Abbreviation – *Nike.*

Vita of Niketas of Medikion, Acta Sanctorum, Apr. I. Appendix. 3rd ed., Brussels: 18– 27. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/01/10). trans., J.O. Rosenqvist, 'A funeral oration on our holy father and confessor Niketas, written by Theosterikos, disciple of that most blessed man'. Unpublished – with thanks to J.O. Rosenqvist for its provision. Abbreviation – *V. Niketas*

Vita of Nikon, Greek ed., with English trans., D. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Brookline, 1987. Abbreviation – *V. Niko*

Vita of Philaretos the Merciful, Greek ed., with English trans., L. Rydén, *The life of St Philaretos the merciful written by his grandson Niketas : a critical edition with introduction, translation, notes, and indices*, Uppsala, 2002. Abbreviation – *V. Phil.*

Prokopios, *Procopius din Caesarea Istorica Secreta*, Romania, 1972. trans., R. Atwater. *Secret history*, Michigan, 1961. Abbreviation – *Secr*

Psellos, Michael, *The History of Psellus*, London, 1899. trans., E.R.A. Sewter, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: the 'Chronographia' of Michael Psellos*. London, 1979. Abbreviation – *Psel*

Vita of Sabas, trans. R.M. Price, Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine, Kalamazoo, 1991: 93– 219. Abbreviation – *V. Saba*.

Vita of Symeon Stylites the Younger, ed., P. Van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de Saint Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, Paris, 1962. trans., F. Lent. Available online: [http://www.tertullian.org/fathers.simeon stylites vita 01 trans.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers.simeon_stylites_vita_01_trans.htm) (30/06/10). Abbreviation – *V. Syme. Styli*.

Vita of Patriarch Tarasios, Greek ed., with English trans., S. Efthymiadis, *The Life of Patriarch Tarasios*, London, 1998. Abbreviation – *V. Tara*.

Vita of Theodora, the Empress, ed., A. Markopoulos, 'βίος τῆσ αὐτοκράτειρασ θεοδώρασ', *Symmeikta* 5, 1983: 249– 285. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/01/10). trans., M. A. Vinson, *Byzantine defenders of images: eight saints' lives in English translation*, ed., A.– M. Talbot, Washington DC, 1998: 353– 382. Abbreviation – *V. Theo. Empr*.

Vita of Theodora of Thessalonike, ed., E. Kurtz, *Des Klerikers Gregorios Bericht über Leben, Wundertatn und Translation der heiligen Theodora von Thessalonich*. Petersburg, 1902. Available online: www.doaks.org (24/11/09). trans., A.– M. Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium*, ed., A.– M. Talbot, Washington DC, 1996: 159– 237. Abbreviation – *V. Theo. Thes*.

Vita of Theodore of Sykeon, ed., A.– J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, Brussels, 1970. trans., E. Dawes, *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, London, 1948. Abbreviation – *V. Theo. Skye*.

Theophanes the Confessor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, Reinheim, 1963. trans., C. Mango, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford, 1997. Abbreviation – *Theo*.

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/articles/davies-foetus/davies-foetus.pdf>

Vita of Thomais of Lesbos, Acta Sanctorum, Nov. IV: 233– 42. trans., P. Halsall, *Holy Women of Byzantium*, ed., A.– M. Talbot, Washington DC, 1996: 291– 322. Abbreviation – *V. Thom. Lesb.*

Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, trans. J. Buchanan and H. T. Davis, *Historia Nova* , Texas, 1967: 249– 58. Abbreviation – *Zosi.*

Secondary Sources

Abrahamse, D., 1979. 'Images of Childhood in Early Byzantine Hagiography', *The journal of psychohistory* , 6: 497– 517.

Alberici, L.A., *Age and ageing in late antiquity: a Life Course approach*, PhD thesis: The University of Birmingham, 2008.

Angelov, D., 2009. 'Emperors and Patriarchs as Ideal Children and Adolescents: Literary Conventions and Cultural Expectations', in A. Papaconstantinou and A.– M. Talbot, eds, 2009. *Becoming Byzantine*, Washington D.C.: 85– 126.

Baun, J., 1994. 'The fate of babies dying before baptism in Byzantium', in Wood, ed., 1994: 115– 25.

Bourbou, C. and S.J. Garvie– Lok. 2009. 'Breastfeeding and weaning patterns in Byzantine Times: evidence from Human Remains and Written Sources' in A. Papaconstantinou and A.– M. Talbot, eds, 2009. *Becoming Byzantine*, Washington D.C.: 65– 84.

Brisson, L., M.-H. Congourdeau, and J.-L. Solère, 2008. *L'embryon: formation et animation: Antiquité grecque et latine, tradition hébraïque, chrétienne et islamique*, Paris.

Brubaker, L., 2004. 'Sex, lies and textuality, the Secret History of Prokopios and the rhetoric of gender in sixth– century Byzantium', in Smith and Brubaker , eds, 2004. *Gender in the early medieval world: East and West, 300– 900*, Cambridge: 83– 101.

Carp, T., 1980. 'Puer Senex in Roman and Medieval Thought', *Latomus*, 39: 736–739.

Clark, E. A., 1994. 'Ideology, history and the construction of 'woman' in late ancient Christianity', *J ECS* 2: 155– 184.

Chevallier Caseau, B., 2009. 'Childhood in Byzantine Saints' Lives' in A. Papaconstantinou and A.– M. Talbot, eds, 2009. *Becoming Byzantine*, Washington D.C.: 85– 126.

Congourdeau, H.M., 1993. 'Regards sur l'enfant nouveau– né à Byzance', *REB*, 51: 161– 75.

Dagron, G., 2003. *Emperor and Priest*, trans., J, Birrell. Cambridge.

Harris, W.V., 1994. 'Child exposure in the Roman empire', *JRS* 84: 1– 22.

Hennessy, C., 2008. *Images of Children in Byzantium*, London.

Hinterberger, M., 2000. 'Autobiography and hagiography in Byzantium', in *Symbolae Osloenses*, 75, no. 1: 139– 169

Laiou– Thomadakis, A.E., 1977. *Peasant society in the late Byzantine empire. A social and demographic study*, Princeton.

Lieu, S.N.C., and D. Montserrat., 1998. *Constantine: history, historiography, and legend*, London.

Littlewood, A., 1999. 'The Byzantine Letter of Consolation in the Macedonian and Komnenian Periods', *DOP* 53: 19– 41.

Louth, A. 1996. *Maximus the Confessor*, New York.

Macrides, R.J., 1987. 'The Byzantine Godfather', *BMGS* 11: 139– 62.

McCormick, R., 1997. 'Emperors', in Cavallo, G., ed., 1997. *The Byzantines*, Chicago: 230– 254.

Patlagean, É., 1975. 'Birth Control in the Early Byzantine Empire', in *Biology of Man in History: Selections from the Annales* 1, Baltimore: 1– 22.

<http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8/articles/davies-foetus/davies-foetus.pdf>

Rautman, M.L., 2006. *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire*, London.

Rawson, B. 2006. *Children and childhood in Roman Italy*, Oxford.

Shaw, B., 2001. 'Raising and killing children: two roman myths', *Mnemosyne: a journal of classical studies* 54: 31– 77.

Skinner, P., 1997. ' "The light of my eyes": medieval motherhood in the Mediterranean', in *Women's History Review* , 6, No. 3: 391– 410.

Southon, E., *The development of the idealised Christian female in the third century AD*, MPhil Thesis: The University of Birmingham, 2008.

Talbot, A.– M., 2009. 'The Death and Commemoration of Byzantine Children', in A. Papaconstantinou and A.– M. Talbot, eds, 2009. *Becoming Byzantine*, Washington D.C.: 85– 126.

Tritsaroli, P. and F. Valentin. 2008. 'Byzantine burials practices for children: case studies based on a bioarchaeological approach to cemeteries from Greece' in *Sèrie de prehistòria*: 93– 116. Available online: <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/oaiart?codigo=2794985> (28/09/09)

Troianos, S. 1991. 'The embryo in Byzantine canon law', *Biopolitics* 3, Athens. Available online: <http://www.biopolitics.gr/HTML/PUBS/VOL3/fpage.htm> (12/04/10)

Verheyen., E. 1964. 'An Iconographic Note on Altdorfer's Visitation in the Cleveland Museum of Art', *The Art Bulletin*, 46, No. 4: 536– 539

Vinson, M., 1998. 'Introduction to the Life of the Empress Theodora', in ed., A.– M. Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, Washington D.C.: 353– 359.

Wiedemann, T., 1989. *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire*, London

