

Inscribed within the Image:
The Visual Character of Early Christian Mosaic Inscriptions

Sean Villareal Leatherbury
Corpus Christi College

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
History Faculty
University of Oxford
Michaelmas Term 2012

Short Abstract

Between the fourth and the seventh centuries CE, Christian patrons erected thousands of churches, chapels, and monasteries in cities and villages across the Mediterranean, decorating the apses, walls and floors of many of these structures with figural and geometric mosaics. These late antique Christian mosaics have been studied for their iconography, their Graeco-Roman components, and as evidence for the religious beliefs of newly-Christian patrons. However, art historians largely have ignored the ways that texts, inscribed within the visual field and composed of the same mosaic material, functioned as images in Christian spaces. For the first time, this thesis assembles the foundations of a comprehensive catalogue of early Christian mosaic inscriptions, places them back into the physical spaces in which they were meant to be read, and analyzes how these texts functioned both verbally and visually for the late antique reader/viewer, against the backdrop of Graeco-Roman traditions. I first examine the ekphrastic components of Christian inscriptions and look more closely at the different ways in which texts work with and against images and spaces, encouraging the viewer to react physically and mentally. Second, I study the language of light used by the inscriptions, and argue that this language linked text to the material of mosaic and enabled patrons to make complex statements about their cultural erudition and religious affiliation. Third, I investigate the functions and visual forms of short *tituli* which label scenes or name figures to simplify, authenticate or transform static images into narratives in motion. Finally, I turn to the frames of the inscriptions and contend that different forms conveyed powerful visual arguments. By writing these texts back into their mosaics, this thesis argues that texts and images were inseparable in the period, and that text written into images performed and played in more complex ways than has been previously thought.

Long Abstract

Between the fourth and the seventh centuries CE, Christians erected thousands of churches, chapels, monasteries and other sacred structures all across the Mediterranean, decorating the interiors of many of their structures with programmes of geometric and figural mosaics. These mosaics adorned the apses, walls and floors of monumental churches in Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople built by and for the urban elite, as well as more humble village churches and chapels. While historians and art historians have previously studied the mosaics of early Christian spaces for their iconography, their Graeco-Roman and/or 'pagan' origins and components, and as evidence for the tastes and religious beliefs of new Christian patrons, they largely have ignored the texts inscribed within the visual field and composed of the same mosaic material as the images. Meanwhile, epigraphers have catalogued these texts alongside other types of inscriptions but have tended to focus on the identities and positions of Christian donors at the expense of broader cultural-historical themes.

For the first time, this thesis assembles the foundations of a comprehensive catalogue of early Christian mosaic inscriptions in Greek and Latin from all provinces of the late antique world, places them back into the physical spaces in which they were meant to be read, and analyzes how these texts functioned both verbally and visually for the late antique reader/viewer, against the backdrop of Graeco-Roman traditions. However, this dissertation is not an epigraphic handbook; rather, it is an interdisciplinary examination of the ways in which the texts, images and spaces of early Christianity were conceived of and received by patrons, artists and viewers/readers. By writing these texts back into their mosaics, I argue that texts and images were inseparable in the period, and that text written into image performed and played in more complex ways than has been previously thought. By focusing on the ways in which texts functioned in interiors to emphasize, particularize

and expand various readings of the interiors of churches and chapels, this thesis is an exploration, guided by the inscriptions themselves, of the limits of the possible relationships between text and image in early Christian sacred spaces.

After considering preliminary issues of methodology and definition, in Chapter One I examine the ekphrastic components of early Christian inscriptions. While inscriptions and literary ekphraseis are very different in form and intended function, texts inscribed in churches feature content and rhetorical devices drawn from ekphrasis, including emphases on motion, narrative exegesis, manipulation of voice and theorization of the relative descriptive powers of text versus image. However, while epigrams and inscriptions could be 'ekphrastic', revealing the erudition (*paideia*) and cultural preferences of Christian patrons, they also used their ekphrastic components to assist viewers in reading and interpreting images and particular spaces in churches. First, I consider the famous 'earth and ocean' inscription from the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis in Greece, as an *exemplum* of the epigraphic tropes drawn from ekphrasis which, as many of the inscriptions considered in this thesis do, purports to explain 'what you (the viewer) see'. Second, I compare the contexts of ekphrasis and inscription as texts meant to be performed, defining intended audiences and audience expectations. Next, I discuss four ways in which inscriptions assisted viewers in reading to see (and to interpret) images: texts which enumerated iconography; *tituli* which emphasized the powers and roles of saints, especially Saints Martin, Peter and Paul; inscriptions from Italy and Jordan which guided viewers' responses to images of the Virgin; and texts which more generally directed the physical and mental reactions of viewers to sacred interiors. I then focus on a group of biblical quotations which guided motion more specifically, quoting biblical texts to cast the acts of entering, moving around, and exiting the church in symbolic terms. Subsequently, I investigate the ways inscribed texts 'spoke', using different voices and

verbal strategies (for example, question-and-answer) to give voice to donors and, occasionally, to the buildings themselves. Finally, I examine how inscriptions themselves adopted the classical trope of the competition between texts and images, asserting their status as written texts which occasionally deny their own readability and instead argue for the primacy of Christian belief.

Chapter Two functions as a case study for many of the issues raised in Chapter One, and engages with the language used by Christian mosaic inscriptions to describe their own visual properties and elements, including brightness, colour, and materials. I begin by enumerating the epigraphic terms used to describe light and brightness. I connect these descriptive formulae to similar ones used in Roman and late antique ekphraseis of buildings, and argue that Christian patrons commissioned mosaic inscriptions which wrote ekphrastic *topoi* related to the quality of shine into their interiors in order to display their *paideia*. Second, I address the connection between texts and the materials—stone and glass tesserae—with which they were written, made explicit in the inscriptions themselves both visually, through their layout and through the alternation of colour and material within texts, and verbally, through the epigraphic formulae they use to describe their own substance. These formulae not only allowed texts to describe and emphasize their own materiality, but also to make complex arguments about the patrons of buildings and about the experience of viewing gleaming mosaic programmes. Next, I analyze the ways in which light was used as a rhetorical device to construct panegyrics to patrons. Finally, I discuss how inscriptions used popular tropes of light and material from classical and Christian literature in order to compare and contrast Graeco-Roman cultural values with new Christian ones, quoting or paraphrasing Homer and Nonnus as well as Christian exegetes such as Pseudo-Dionysius, sometimes expressing a preference for one tradition or the other but always melding the language of the two.

In Chapter Three, I turn away from the ekphrastic epigram to consider simpler texts which purport to label narrative scenes or individual figures. While the content of these verse and prose *tituli* seems to be straightforward upon first glance, they never functioned *only* as labels, as images did not require labels in the period: different sets of their multivalent meanings would have been clear to different groups of viewers more or less familiar with particular visual-cultural codes. This chapter surveys the extra-labelling functions of *tituli* vis-à-vis the images they ‘labelled’. First, I briefly investigate the classical tradition of ‘labelling’ images with words, and then discuss the nascent tradition of Christian *tituli*, particularly verse *tituli* composed by educated elites who wrote lengthy sets of verse inscriptions meant to be inscribed next to related images. Second, I focus on the relationships between narrative *tituli* and their images, both extant and non-extant, concentrating on biblical quotations inscribed within scenes of the Samson narrative, of the ‘Peaceful Kingdom’ of Isaiah, and of the Jewish Temple sacrifice of Psalm 51(50). Rather than solely fixing meaning (and thus turning images into mere illustrations), these *tituli* and others added speech and motion to static mosaics, emphasized particular iconographic or symbolic elements of images, and provided a backdrop against which images could either function in parallel or assert themselves as independent from the text. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the functions of text-as-speech, biblical quotations written within the scrolls (*rotuli*) and books (codices) held by Christian figures of authority in figural church mosaics, including prophets, saints and Christ; and to verbal and visual powers of the name label. Both types of inscriptions acted to bestow biblical authority on the figure labelled, enabling holy persons to ‘speak’ their words via the mouths of readers, and working as visual (as well as verbal) markers to structure how viewers saw and interpreted groups of saints or to emphasize individual figures such as Christ within larger compositions.

The final chapter extends this focus on the visual properties of inscriptions and analyzes the different forms used to frame Christian mosaic inscriptions. Incorporating contemporary scholarship on the role of the frame relative to the artwork, I consider the forms of frames in their Graeco-Roman context, and contend that different forms conveyed powerful visual arguments, some traditionally classical, others more novel and Christian. First, I examine the *tabula ansata*, a common frame invented for Greek votive tablets which became an extremely popular frame in the Roman period, especially for dedicatory and building inscriptions. By tracing the importation of the *tabula* into the medium of mosaic and into Christian contexts, I demonstrate the continued popularity of the form as frame through which patrons could advertise their acts of architectural *euergetism* in the classical mode. While the standard ‘Roman’-type *tabula ansata* added a generic traditional significance to the text contained within, different varieties of the form, including the ‘Greek’ type, decorative additions, and visual arrangements allowed patrons and artists to express their levels of cultural knowledge or familiarity with the classical past of the form, simultaneously increasing the decorative qualities of the frame while hinting at deeper embedded meanings. Second, I explore the use of five discrete types of ‘object’ frames, which take the forms of real objects. I begin by discussing two other frames with Graeco-Roman histories, the *clipeus* and the wreath. The *clipeus*, originally used to display an individual’s achievements, continued to be used to frame mosaic inscriptions in much the same way as its classical predecessor. However, while the wreath also continued to be used as a frame by Christian artists, its form became increasingly decorative, and true wreaths rarely framed inscriptions other than those celebrating martyrs, as in Christian tradition the wreath gained a new religious valence as a reward for Christ and the saints. Finally, I examine three unusual frames which have explicitly (if not exclusively) Christian significances, including the cross, the *kantharos*, and the building-

or church-front, all of which fixed the inscriptions inside as Christian texts (the latter two by playing with Graeco-Roman and Jewish formal precedents) while expanding the visual and symbolic implications of the texts.

As this thesis repeatedly demonstrates, Christian mosaic inscriptions were always attuned to their visual, material and more ephemeral ritual surroundings. By putting mosaic texts back into their proper architectural and artistic context, and reading them within the cultural, linguistic, religious and ritual life of the period, I demonstrate the power of an interdisciplinary approach which allows us to view inscriptions holistically, and to read the ways in which the texts were seen through the images and the spaces surrounding them. Because this thesis engages with a large number of texts from many different regions, certain differences emerge in each of the four thematic/functional categories which the four chapters of this thesis consider. These inscribed texts spoke in different voices, and encouraged varied visual, physical and conceptual responses to sacred images and interiors which veered between the classical and the Christian, often combining elements of both. However, while the inscriptions considered here vary in language, appearance and function, the thematic theoretics with which they were conceived consistently reveal a focus on the dynamic between patron, viewer/reader, and the Heavenly hierarchy, providing a window into both the permanent (i.e. memorializing) and the more phenomenological aspects of Christian and late antique religious, visual, cultural and social life across the early Byzantine Empire.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation began its life as an M.Phil. thesis at Oxford in 2009, but has evolved substantially over the past three years. My most heartfelt thanks go to my supervisor, Jaś Elsner, who has taught me not to fear tackling a big project, and without whom this work would not have been possible. I cannot thank him enough for all of the drafts he has read, and, even more importantly, for all of the support and encouragement he has given me since I first came to Oxford in 2007.

At Oxford, I owe a great deal of thanks to Ida Toth, always willing to help with her brilliant translation skills. Judith McKenzie has been extremely supportive with her time and resources. Susan Walker has been a great help with advice and support. Thanks also to Mark Whittow, Milena Grabacic, and Gervase Rosser for inviting me to share and develop my arguments with the audiences of the Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Seminar and the Medieval Visual Culture Seminar. Neil McLynn was ever a witty Graduate Adviser, as well as a skillful translator, and I thank him for pushing me to improve my language skills. My studies with Marlia Mango during the M.Phil. were vital in exposing me to the value of the archaeological material. I will always be grateful to Rob Portass, Simon Ford, Caterina Franchi, Dimos Papamarkos, and Marlena Whiting for their help with editing, translation and discussion of larger issues, as well as for dinners and drinks shared.

Over the past three years, I have been generously assisted by a Senior Scholarship at Corpus Christi College (2010-11) and a Leventis Graduate Award from the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research (2012). Travel grants from Corpus and from the Association for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics enabled me to take study trips to Jordan and Syria (in 2010) and to Tunisia (in 2012), allowing me to study many of the images and inscriptions considered here in person and greatly affecting the content of this work.

My lovely friends on both sides of the Atlantic helped keep me (relatively) sane for the duration. Rob and Pili, former housemates and current friends, assisted with many lunches, coffees, dinners and pints. Matthew and Joe frequently came to the rescue when breaks were urgently needed. Though we were often far apart, Sabrina, Abe, and Ashley were constant sources of both stability and perspective.

Last but certainly not least, I owe the greatest debt to my family. This work would not exist without the tremendous love and support of my parents, who have always encouraged me to follow my own path, and have been there to help along the way. I dedicate this thesis to them, to my grandparents, to my dear great-aunt Theresa, and to my partner Steve, whose love has kept me going on all the many transatlantic flights of the past years.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
List of Abbreviations	6
Introduction	10
Methodology and Aims	15
Chapter One: Inscribing ekphrasis, guiding vision	23
<i>Eisphrasis</i> and experience	27
Reading to see	31
a. Reading iconography	31
b. <i>Tituli</i> and the roles of the saints	35
c. Contemplating the Virgin	40
d. Inscriptions and encouraged responses	45
Reading to move: inscriptions as signposts for motion	52
a. Entering and exiting the church	53
b. Actions in church	62
Voice as amplifier	65
a. The speaking donor	66
b. The speaking church	70
c. Other voices	74
Writing, reading, and seeing	76
Chapter Two: Reading light and materials	82
Epigraphic light and colour: vision and materials	88
a. Vision and erudition	88
b. The materials of light and colour	96
Light as panegyric tool	108
Physical and divine light in inscription and image	113
a. Between the classical and the Christian	113
b. The Christian over the classical	118
c. The Christian <i>and</i> the classical	124
Chapter Three: Labels, names, and texts within images	129
The origin and functions of Christian <i>tituli</i>	132
The functions of narrative <i>tituli</i>	138
a. Samson in text and image	139
b. The Peaceful Kingdom, east and west	141
c. Other labels in churches and synagogues	144
The inscribed book, inscribed	152
a. Inscribed scrolls and simulated texts	152
b. From (sc)roll to codex	159
Labelling Christian present and ‘pagan’ past	166
a. Naming and orthodoxy	166
b. Saints and their names	173
c. The absence of names	178

Chaper Four: Framing the early Christian inscription	185
The <i>tabula ansata</i> : Graeco-Roman euergetism visualized	190
a. Form, content, and placement	197
b. Formal variation and associative meanings	203
c. The decorative language of the <i>tabula</i>	206
1. <i>Ansa</i> e decoration	206
2. The superimposed frame	210
3. The <i>tabula</i> , aloft	212
The object frame and Christian innovation	216
a. <i>Clipeus</i> and wreath	217
b. The cross	225
c. The <i>kantharos</i> frame	228
d. The architectural frame	230
Conclusion	234
List of Illustrations	239
Appendix One: Figures	256
Appendix Two: Catalogue of Inscriptions	381
Bibliography	410

List of Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>The Art Bulletin</i>
<i>Acta ad archaeologiam</i>	<i>Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia</i>
<i>ADAJ</i>	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>Antiquité tardive</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques, Fin de l'Antiquité et Moyen Âge</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout, 1953-).
<i>CEG</i>	P.A. Hansen (ed.), <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> , (Berlin, 1989).
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (Berlin, 1828-77).
<i>CII</i>	J.B. Frey (ed.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudicarum</i> (Rome, 1936-52).
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1863-).
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (Paris, 1881-).
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866-).
<i>DACL</i>	F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de la liturgie</i> (15 vols., Paris, 1907-53).
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>

<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>ICUR</i>	G.B. de Rossi, <i>Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores</i> (2 vols., Rome, 1857-68).
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IGLS</i>	L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde, and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> (Paris, 1929-).
<i>IKnidos</i>	W. Blümel (ed.), <i>Die Inschriften von Knidos</i> (Bonn, 1992-).
<i>ILCV</i>	E. Diehl (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae christianae veteres</i> (4 vols., Berolini, 1925-67).
<i>Inscr. It.</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i> (Rome, 1931-).
<i>Inventaire</i>	<i>Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique</i>
<i>ISmyrna</i>	G. Petzl (ed.), <i>Die Inschriften von Smyrna</i> (Bonn, 1982-90).
<i>JAC</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JOB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Krautheimer,	R. Krautheimer, S. Corbett, and A.K. Frazer, <i>Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae. The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV-XI cent.)</i> (5 vols., Vatican City, 1937-77).
<i>LA</i>	<i>Liber Annuus</i>
<i>MAMA</i>	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome</i>

<i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine</i> 4	J-P. Darmon and A. Rebourg (eds.) <i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine IV: IVe Colloque international pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique</i> , Trèves, 8-14 août 1984 (Paris, 1994).
<i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine</i> 7	M. Ennaïfer and A. Rebourg (eds.), <i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine VII: VIIe Colloque pour l'étude la mosaïque antique</i> , Tunis, 3-7 octobre 1994 (Tunis, 1999).
<i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine</i> 9	H. Morlier (ed.), <i>La mosaïque gréco-romaine IX: IX Colloque pour l'étude la mosaïque antique</i> , Rome, 2001 (Rome, 2005).
Matthiae, <i>Mosaici</i>	G. Matthiae, <i>Mosaici medioevali delle chiese di Roma</i> (2 vols., Rome, 1967).
MEFR	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome</i>
Michel	A. Michel, <i>Les églises d'époque byzantine et umayyade de Jordanie (provinces d'Arabie et de Palestine), Ve-VIIIe siècle: typologie architecturale et aménagements liturgiques (avec catalogue des monuments)</i> (Turnhout, 2001).
PBSA	<i>Papers of the British School at Athens</i>
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i>
Piccirillo, <i>Chiese</i>	M. Piccirillo, <i>Chiese e mosaici della Giordania settentrionale</i> (Jerusalem, 1981).
Piccirillo, <i>Madaba</i>	M. Piccirillo, <i>Chiese e mosaici di Madaba</i> (Jerusalem, 1989).
Piccirillo, <i>Mosaics</i>	M. Piccirillo, <i>The Mosaics of Jordan</i> (Amman, 1993).
PL	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> (1844-550).
PLRE	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
QDAP	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine</i>
RAC	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>

<i>Repertorium</i>	G. Bovini, F.W. Deichmann, H. Brandenburg et al., <i>Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage</i> (3 vols., Weisbaden, 1967-2003).
<i>RM</i>	<i>Römische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Römische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Amsterdam, 1923-).
<i>Spiro, Corpus</i>	M. Spiro, <i>Critical Corpus of the Mosaic Pavements on the Greek Mainland, Fourth/Sixth Centuries</i> (2 vols., New York, 1978).
<i>Σύνταγμα, 1</i>	S. Pelekanides and P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, <i>Σύνταγμα των Παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος, I. Νησιώτικη Ελλάς</i> (Thessaloniki, 1974).
<i>Σύνταγμα, 2</i>	P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, <i>Σύνταγμα των Παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος, II. Πελοπόννησος-Στερεά Ελλάδα</i> (Thessaloniki, 1987).
<i>TIB</i>	<i>Tabula Imperii Byzantini</i>
<i>T&M</i>	<i>Travaux et memoires</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Greek and Latin translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. Quotations from the Old and New Testaments are from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

Introduction

Immediately upon entering the most recent exhibition of Byzantine objects at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Byzantium and Islam*, visitors came face-to-face with a striking mosaic pavement from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash, in modern-day Jordan (Fig. 1.1).¹ The six metre-high mosaic dominated the wall with depictions of Memphis and Alexandria as walled cities, including its famous *Pharos* (lighthouse); an elaborate dedicatory inscription in white tesserae, beautifully framed and offset by a red-ground *tabula ansata*; and, at the top, a *kantharos* surrounded by vine scrolls. This large mosaic proved an impressive beginning, and encapsulated a number of artistic and cultural themes explored throughout the exhibition, including the popularity of vine scrolls and walled cities as motifs in Byzantine and Umayyad art.

For the scholar of Byzantine art, however, this work and its display brought into sharp relief the many issues which frame any examination of Byzantine mosaics and inscriptions. The mosaic was originally part of the pavement of a church, a sacred building, which would have been viewed by the clergy (including the donor, Bishop Anastasios, mentioned in the inscription) and members of the congregation in the sixth and seventh centuries CE.² These viewers would have looked at and understood the work in very different ways as they walked over it during, before or after the liturgy.³ These

¹ The pavement dates to c. 540, and is now in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery: H.C. Evans with B. Ratliff (eds.), *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th-9th Century* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 12, cat. 1; also C. Welles, 'The Inscriptions', in C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (New Haven, 1938), 484, no. 327; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 554; Michel, *Églises*, 257; A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme, Band 1. Byzantinische Epigramme auf Fresken und Mosaiken* (Vienna, 2009), 393-4.

² On sacred space, a popular topic of late, A.M. Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge, 2011); B.D. Wescoat and R.G. Ousterhout (eds.), *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2012).

³ The field of early Christian liturgical and ritual studies is ever-growing, although many problems remain, particularly the always troubling issue of knowing which liturgy was practiced in a given place at any time, outside of the centres of Constantinople, Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem: R.F. Taft, SJ, *Beyond East and West*:

inhabitants of Jerash (Roman Gerasa), a city with a rich classical past, would have interpreted the mosaic in its local context as part of a wave of new churches built and decorated with mosaics in the city in the sixth century, whose decorative programmes and dedicatory inscriptions reveal the continued influence of Graeco-Roman artistic and literary traditions.⁴ Many of the Christian residents of the city, particularly the clergy and other elites, would have appreciated the classicizing language of the inscription and recognized the Egyptian cities of the mosaic. Some might have even visited them, especially Alexandria, a hub of both classical and Christian culture in the period.⁵ The floor of the church would have been read with and against the other mosaics of the building, as well as liturgical objects such as lamps, silver vessels, and the vestments of the clergy.⁶

While reconstructing the experience of a sixth-century Gerasene viewer in all its particulars is impossible, we can make inroads towards this goal.⁷ As scholars, we must read artistic and epigraphic ensembles as holistically as possible, both internally, based upon surviving images and inscriptions within their architectural contexts, as well as

Problems in Liturgical Understanding (Washington, D.C., 1984). Architecture and the relationship of parts of a building to liturgy continues to be problematic as well: T.F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA, 1971); S. de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale* (2 vols., Vatican City, 1994); P. Donceel-Voûte, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1988), 492-540; N. Duval 'Architecture et liturgie dans la Jordanie byzantine', in idem (ed.), *Les églises de Jordanie et leurs mosaïques. Actes de la journée d'études organisée le 22 février 1989 au musée de la Civilisation gallo-romaine de Lyon* (Beirut, 2003), 35-114; A. Doig, *Liturgy and architecture from the early church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2008), 53-108; and more generally on architecture, C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976); R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1965, revised with S. Ćurčić, 1986).

⁴ Jerash (Gerasa), a Hellenistic foundation, was originally one of the cities of the Decapolis, a loose league of semi-autonomous cities which were largely culturally and linguistically Greek. These cities were altered by Roman rule, notably through the modification of their street grid: C.M. March, *Spatial and Religious Transformations in the Late Antique Polis* (Oxford, 2009), 113ff.

⁵ On the importance of Alexandria, C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997); E. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley, 2006); J. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (New Haven, 2007), 229ff.

⁶ Loose glass tesserae were found in the apse, indicating the presence of ceiling mosaics: J.W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Jerash* (London, 1931), 28-9.

⁷ The laudable though difficult goal articulated by Michael Baxandall, *Painting in Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1988). A defense of studying the visuality of pre-modern cultures is made strongly in R. Nelson (ed.), *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge, 2000).

externally, reading them against primary literary sources, including biblical exegesis, theological writings, and contemporary genres of less explicitly Christian literature (ekphrasis, panegyric), and on the evidence of related spaces.

Certain scholars of late antique and Byzantine art, notably Ernst Kitzinger and Henry Maguire, have long been engaged with this relationship between inscribed words and images, but only in the past two decades has the wider academic community begun to investigate more deeply the relationship between Byzantine texts and images.⁸ This new sub-field has been approached from a number of angles, as in the collected volume of articles edited by Liz James, *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, which provides a good view of the scope of current areas of research and shows how far scholarship has come from its initial interest in ekphrasis alone.⁹ Interest in the junctions and disjunctions

⁸ E. Kitzinger, 'Studies on Late Antique and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics, I. Mosaics at Nikopolis', *DOP*, 6 (1951), reprinted in his *Studies in Late Antique, Byzantine and Medieval Western Art* (London, 1976), i, 187-243; idem, 'Mosaic Pavements in the Greek East and the question of a "renaissance" under Justinian', *Actes du VIe Congrès international d'études byzantines. Paris 27 juillet – 2 août 1948* (Paris, 1951), ii, 211-17, reprinted in idem, *Studies*, 49-63; idem, 'Stylistic developments in pavement mosaics in the Greek east from the age of Constantine to the age of Justinian', in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine, I. Paris 29 Août – 3 Septembre 1963* (Paris, 1965), reprinted in idem, *Studies*, 64-88; idem, 'The Threshold of the Holy Shrine: Observations on the Floor Mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem', in P. Granfield and J.A. Jungman (eds.), *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (Aschendorff, 1970), ii, reprinted in idem, *Studies*, 244-59; and H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (State College, PA, 1987); idem, *Image and Imagination: The Byzantine Epigram as Evidence for Viewer Response* (Toronto, 1996). Other important, if summary, exceptions include P.-A. Février, 'La lettre et l'image', in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine*, 4 (Trèves, 1984), 383-401; A. Arnulf, *Versus ad Picturas: Studien zur Titulusdichtung als Quellengattung der Kunstgeschichte von der Antike bis zum Hochmittelalter*. Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien Band 72 (Berlin, 1997); K.M.D. Dunbabin, 'Mosaics and their public', in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine*, 7 (Tunis, 1999), 739-45.

⁹ L. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge, 2007); also S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece* (Vienna, 1992); A. Papalexandrou, 'Text in context: eloquent monuments and the Byzantine beholder', *Word & Image*, 17, 3 (July-Sept. 2001), 259-83; A. Eastmond and L. James (eds.), *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack* (Aldershot, 2003). Outside of the United Kingdom and the U.S., Wolfgang Höradner and Andreas Rhoby at the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna have been particularly active, cataloguing inscriptions on Byzantine works of art and holding several conferences over the past decade: W. Höradner, A. Rhoby and A. Paul, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, 1-2 (Vienna, 2009-present); W. Höradner and A. Rhoby (eds.), *Die Kulturhistorische bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme. Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.-2. Dezember 2006)* (Vienna, 2008); A. Rhoby, 'The structure of inscriptional dedicatory epigrams in Byzantium', in C.B. De Lorenzi and M. De Gaetano (eds.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale: IV Convegno internazionale di studi. Perugia, 15-17 novembre 2007. Atti in onore di Antonino Isola per il suo 70 genetliaco* (Alessandria, 2010), 309-332; idem, 'The Meaning of Inscriptions for the Early and Middle Byzantine Culture. Remarks on the Interaction of Word, Image and Beholder', in *Scrivere e leggere nell'alto medioevo. Spoleto, 28 aprile – 4 maggio 2011* (Spoleto, 2012), 731-53. Also see the recent issue of *Acta ad*

between art and text has not been limited to Byzantinists, and scholars have undertaken similar examinations in the arts of Assyria,¹⁰ Pharaonic Egypt,¹¹ classical Greece and imperial Rome,¹² the Middle Ages,¹³ and the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁴ The area is a vibrant one at the moment, and scholars have moved beyond early problem areas such as literacy to examine the true verbal and visual potential of texts read aloud by viewers in the presence of images.¹⁵

Summary investigations of the relationship between inscriptions and images have been undertaken for individual monuments and programmes, for example Maguire's study

archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia, 24, n.s. 10 (2011), dedicated to 'Inscriptions in Liturgical Spaces'.

¹⁰ J.M. Russell, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions* (Winona Lake, IN, 1999), who mines the text-rich world of Assyrian palaces, including the well-known 'Standard Inscription' which is inscribed across cycles of sculptural reliefs and lists the titles and deeds of the king.

¹¹ J. Baines, *Visual and Written Communication in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2007).

¹² S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (*Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism*) (Cambridge, 1994); M. Corbier, 'L'écriture dans l'image', in H. Solin, O. Salomies and U.-M. Liertz (eds.), *Acta Colloquii epigraphici Latini Helsingae, 3-6 Sept. 1991 habiti*. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 104 (Helsinki, 1995), 113-61, reproduced in M. Corbier, *Donner à voir, donner à lire: mémoire et communication dans la Rome ancienne* (Paris, 2006); J. Elsner (ed.), *Art and text in Roman culture* (Cambridge, 1996); Z. Newby and R. Leader-Newby (eds.), *Art and Inscriptions in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 2007); M. Squire, *Image and Text in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009); and idem, *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae* (Cambridge, 2011).

¹³ Recent works include W.J. Diebold, *Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art* (Boulder, CO, 2000); M. Hageman and M. Mostert (eds.), *Reading Texts and Images. Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication. Papers from the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy, Utrecht 2000. Utrecht Studies of Literacy*, 8 (Turnhout, 2005); R. Wetzell and F. Flückiger (eds.), *Au-delà de l'illustration. Texte et image au Moyen Âge. Approches méthodologiques et pratiques. Medienwandel – Medienwechsel – Medienwissen*, 6 (Zurich, 2009); K. Krause and B. Schellewald (eds.), *Bild und Text im Mittelalter* (Cologne/Vienna, 2011).

¹⁴ Contemporary art has been interested in the intersection between word and image since its inception: S. Morley, *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003); J. Dixon Hunt, D. Lomas and M. Corris, *Art, Word and Image: Two Thousand Years of Visual/Textual Interaction* (London, 2010), especially 111ff.

¹⁵ The essential survey of literacy in the Graeco-Roman world remains W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 285ff; also see *Literacy in the Roman World. JRA Supplement*, 3 (Ann Arbor, 1991); A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1996); B. Burrell and T. Habinek in W. Johnson and H. Parker (eds.), *Ancient Literacies. The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 2009). On late antique literacy, R. Browning, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *BMGS*, 4 (1978), 39-54; R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), 246-60; idem, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East. Sather Classical Lectures*, 69 (Berkeley, 2011); and J.L. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2006), 88-117, with whose optimistic account I side. On the interaction between spectator and inscription, J. L. Franklin, Jr., 'Literacy and the parietal inscriptions of Pompeii', in M. Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World. JRA Supplementary Series*, no. 3 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), 77-98, especially 86-7; B. Kellum, 'The Spectacle of the Street', in B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle. Studies in the History of Art*, 56 (Washington, D.C., 1999), 283-99.

of the anonymous saints in the apse of the sixth-century Basilica Eufrasiana at Poreč (Parenzo),¹⁶ as well as the literary value of epigrams,¹⁷ but the large number of inscriptions which survive from late antique churches has thus far made it difficult to look for broader epigraphic and conceptual trends.¹⁸ These inscriptions have been largely edited and published, and while recent publications include images of the texts as well as editions, the texts have been studied more for the names, dates and titles they provide than for their relationships to the buildings in which they were written.¹⁹ Similarly, the mosaics

¹⁶ H. Maguire, 'Eufrasius and Friends', in James, *Art and Text*, 139-60; A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč* (2 vols., University Park, PA, 2007).

¹⁷ Gianfranco Agosti has focused on the metre, style and erudition of verse epigrams, including several covered in this study: G. Agosti, 'Note a epigrafi tardoantiche (Miscellanea epigrafica II)', *ZPE*, 160 (2007), 41-9; idem, 'L'epigramma lungo nei testi letterari ed epigrafici fra IV e VII sec. d.C.', in A.M. Morelli (ed.), *Epigramma longum: Da Marziale alla tarda antichità* (Cassino, 2008), 2, 663-92; idem, 'Literariness and Levels of Style in Epigraphical Poetry of Late Antiquity', *Ramus*, 37,1-2 (2008), 191-213, among other works; however, while his work is significant and valuable, he also tends to strip epigrams from their contexts as material objects in order to demonstrate their value as poetry.

¹⁸ On the current state of late antique epigraphy, still in need of a proper handbook which considers both Greek and Latin material, F. Millar, 'A quarter century of Byzantine epigraphy: and where next?' *AT*, 16 (2008), 349-56; responding to the important bibliographic work of D. Feissel, *Chroniques d'epigraphie Byzantine, 1987-2004* (Paris, 2006); also the seminal earlier work of L. Robert, *Hellenica IV: Epigrammes du Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1948); and E. Popescu, 'Griechische Inschriften', in F. Winkelman and W. Brandes (eds.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des frühen Byzanz (4.-9. Jahrhundert): Bestand und Probleme* (Amsterdam, 1990), 81-105; H. Mihăescu, 'Lateinische Inschriften', in *ibid.*, 106-119; C. Mango, 'Byzantine Epigraphy (4th to 10th centuries)', in D. Harlfinger and G. Prato (eds.), *Paleografia e codicologia greca* (Alexandria, 1991), 235-49; G. Cavallo and C. Mango (eds.), *Epigrafia medievale greca e latina. Ideologia e funzione. Atti del seminario di Erice (12-18 settembre 1991)* (Spoleto, 1995); D. Feissel, 'Les inscriptions des premiers siècles byzantins (330-641): documents d'histoire sociale et religieuse', in *XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina. Roma, 18-24 settembre 1997* (Rome, 1999), i, 577-89. On 'Christian' epigraphy, used here inclusively for the sake of simplicity, as it is not particularly useful as a restrictive category, O. Marucchi, *Christian epigraphy*, trans. J.A. Willis (Cambridge, 1912); C. Carletti, "Epigrafia cristiana", "epigrafia del cristiani": alle origini della terza età dell'epigrafia", in A. Donati (ed.), *La terza età dell'epigrafia* (Faenza, 1988), 115-35; idem, *Epigrafia dei cristiani in occidente dal III al VII secolo. Ideologia e prassi. Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores, Subsidia VI* (Bari, 2008), focusing on the funerary epigraphy of the Roman catacombs. The study of Roman epigraphy has provided the theoretical basis for many of the above studies, as the Romans were particularly obsessed with monumental writing: R. MacMullen, 'The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire', *AJP*, 103 (1982), 233-46; G. Woolf, 'Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire', *JRS*, 86 (1996), 22-39; T.D. Barnes, 'Latin Epigraphy and the History of the Western Roman Empire After Constantine', in *XI congresso internazionale di epigrafia greca e latina: Roma, 18-24 settembre 1997: atti* (Rome, 1999), i, 565-76. On late antique and Byzantine Greek inscriptions, I.G. Galli Calderini, 'L'epigramma greco tardoantico: tradizione e innovazione', *Vichiana*, 16 (1987), 103-134; M.D. Lauxtermann, *The Byzantine Epigram in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: a generic study of epigrams and some other forms of poetry* (Amsterdam, unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, 1994), 21ff; B.H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great Down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.-A.D. 337)* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 184, 196-8, 246ff; M.D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: texts and contexts* (Vienna, 2003), 19-26, 131ff.

¹⁹ In addition to the work of Kitlinger and Maguire, notable exception are Yasin, *Saints*; and a short but fascinating piece by F. Millar, 'Narrative and Identity in Mosaics from the Late Roman Near East: Pagan,

of Christian churches and chapels have been studied locally and trans-regionally in terms of figural and geometric iconography, style, patronage and production.²⁰ However, mosaic specialists have been slow on the whole to incorporate the study of inscriptions, as well as to study the relationship between floor mosaics and apse and wall mosaics.²¹

While many issues remain with the evidence, not least the differential distribution of different kinds of mosaics amongst regions (more extant floors in the east, many more apses and triumphal arches in the west), we must consider late antique mosaics and their inscriptions trans-regionally. Despite regional artistic and linguistic differences (style and iconography on the one hand; Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, and Armenian on the other), many of the same iconographic motifs and epigraphic formulae feature in mosaics and their inscriptions from Arabia (Jordan) and Syria to Hispania (Spain).²²

Methodology and Aims

Thanks to the regional catalogues of mosaics and inscriptions published in the past few decades, as well as older *corpora*, we now are able to begin reassessing how inscribed

Jewish, and Christian', in Y.Z. Eliav et al. (eds), *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East* (Leuven, 2008), 225-56.

²⁰ While catalogues of mosaics have long included inscriptions, this has not led to close analysis of the texts within their spatial contexts. On Graeco-Roman mosaics, K.M.D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge, 1999).

²¹ For example, the recent survey by Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements: Themes, Issues, and Trends* (Leiden, 2009), which has only a few brief words to say on inscriptions. Exceptions include C. Ihm, *Die programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1960), who includes apse inscriptions in her catalog; idem 'Zum Verhältnis von Bildprogrammen und Tituli in der Apsisdekoration früher westlicher Kirchenbauten', in *Testo e'immagine nell'alto Medioevo: 15-21 aprile 1993* (Spoleto, 1994), ii, 844-84; R. Leader-Newby, 'Inscribed mosaics in the late Roman Empire: perspectives from east and west', in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 179-99; B. Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon: An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Wiesbaden, 2010); B. Küllerich, 'Visual and Functional Aspects of Inscriptions in Early Church Floors', *Acta ad archaeologiam*, 24, n.s. 10 (2011), 45-63.

²² On the common epigraphic culture of late antiquity, Mango, 'Epigraphy'; I. Ševčenko, 'Inscriptions East and West in the First Millennium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 22 (1998), 527-39, who places the epigraphic divide as late as the eighth century. The broader justification of trans-regional Mediterranean studies for the period is that of P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000).

texts functioned in churches, both as texts to be read and as images to be viewed and responded to. This reassessment is essential, as we cannot properly understand even the basic facets of Christian culture without reading the texts Christians wrote into the very fabric of their sacred buildings, which are simultaneously a check against over-interpretation of the texts from the period and evidence for verbal, physical and mental actions in and reactions to sacred spaces.

For the first time, this thesis collects a corpus of over 2,000 dedicatory, funerary, prayer, invocation and other types of mosaic inscriptions of the late antique or early Christian period, defined as the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries, from all over the late antique Mediterranean in order to examine these texts within their spatial contexts in Christian spaces, including churches, chapels, monasteries, and even the houses of Christians.²³ Its primary goal, broadly conceived, is to place these texts and their decorative programmes within the cultural, religious and visual contexts of the period, and to scrutinize the relationships between inscriptions and the spaces in which they were inscribed. This goal corresponds with that articulated by Amy Papalexandrou more than a decade ago, to ‘put the texts back on the buildings’.²⁴ The aim of reattaching text to context, or context to text, is interpreted broadly here, so my focus will remain on overall features and trends seen across individual churches and regions rather than on readings of programmes in isolation. While it remains true that we must analyze individual

²³ Several eighth-century churches will also be considered in Arabia (modern Jordan), as the local populations there continued to decorate their churches with mosaics of the same sort as in previous centuries: on these later mosaics, L. Di Segni, ‘Greek inscriptions in transition from the Byzantine to the early Islamic period’, in H.M. Cotton, R.G. Hoyland, J.J. Price and D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge, 2009), 352-73. While absolute comprehensiveness is to be desired, church mosaic pavements continue to be excavated in Israel, Jordan, Greece and Asia Minor at a fairly rapid rate, and as a result a number of inscriptions have yet to be published. While cult buildings (churches and chapels) and houses were used differently, Christians contemplated and performed religious acts in both types of structure, and as a result there is overlap in the images and inscriptions between sacred and domestic spheres: see K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008).

²⁴ Papalexandrou, ‘Text’, 260.

monuments and their programmes, equally we must further develop our knowledge of the range of textual possibilities across spaces.

This thesis limits its main consideration to mosaic inscriptions not because these were the only texts inscribed in early churches, but rather because they comprise a sufficiently large and geographically broad corpus to be representative, and are often internally dated.²⁵ As they were incorporated into the very fabric of church decorative programmes and were pre-planned along with adjacent images, mosaic inscriptions are distinguished by their medium from other types of inscribed texts, all of which could be added later.²⁶ Mosaic texts were public ones, typically written in majuscule letters and placed in highly-visible spaces within buildings, and were meant to be read by donors, members of the local congregation and visitors from near and afar.²⁷ However, Christian donors and the faithful carved, painted and incised in graffiti texts with similar content and epigraphic formulae. These latter kinds of texts are included here for comparison when relevant, as are images in other media. While inscriptions from late antique synagogues are considered when they relate to texts inscribed in Christian spaces, their unique features are not examined at length in this work.²⁸ In order to explore the chronological

²⁵ On dated inscriptions, Y. Meimaris, with K. Kritikakou and P. Bougia, *Chronological Systems in Roman-Byzantine Palestine and Arabia: The Evidence of the Dated Greek Inscriptions* (Athens, 1992); L. Di Segni, 'Dated Greek Inscriptions from Palestine from the Roman and Byzantine Periods' (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, 1997).

²⁶ While this is the case for most mosaics in the eastern provinces and Italy, the prevailing use of the medium for tomb decoration in North African churches meant that different panels were added at different times without a pre-existing plan: see Yasin, *Saints*.

²⁷ Elite visitors were meant to and did read these inscriptions, as attests the fifth-century nobleman and poet Sidonius Apollinaris, who writes with dry humour to his friend Domitius about the readability of the verses inscribed on the walls of his private baths in Clermont-Ferrand, in Roman Gaul: '...only a few lines of verse will cause the newcomer to stop and read: these strike the happy mean, for although they inspire no longing to read them again, they can be read through without boredom', Sidonius, *Epistulae* 2.2.7, trans. O.M. Dalton (Oxford, 1915), i, 38. On majuscule letters, especially the role of the Filocalian script sponsored by Pope Damasus, L. Cardin, *Epigrafia a Roma nel primo medioevo (secoli IV-X): Modelli grafici e tipologie d'uso* (Rome, 2008), 47-60.

²⁸ I am wary of the problem of splitting the Christian from the Jewish, pointed out by J. Elsner, 'Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art', *JRS*, 93 (2003), 114-28. However, while Jews inscribed the same sorts of texts in their synagogues, they also displayed texts which have no Christian counterparts, for example the lengthy rabbinic inscription in the

development of various epigraphic features, I make arguments related to relative chronologies, but do not attempt to establish an absolute chronology for epigraphic formulae or themes, as such an undertaking would require a separate technical study which inevitably would run into problems related to dating mosaics by style and by palaeography.²⁹ Unless otherwise specified, all dates are given in CE. Place-names, including cities, villages, provinces, and regions are given in the most easily recognizable ancient or modern forms, occasionally both.³⁰ Further theoretical issues, including problems of later restorations or alterations, are considered as they relate to particular monuments or programmes.

Throughout, this thesis looks at Christian inscriptions as they engage with or consciously disengage from the previous epigraphic, cultural and religious traditions of the Graeco-Roman world. All Roman inscriptions were considered *tituli*, literally ‘titles’ inscribed on buildings, incised into or painted onto stone or metal plaques or incorporated into artworks.³¹ *Tituli* were typically short, but their content could range from funerary to dedicatory or simple explanatory text.³² As a result of the flexible definitions of the classical period, I am wary of placing particular inscriptions in boxes according to the strict epigraphic categories popular in contemporary scholarship.³³ Although these categories are useful for comparing like to like, they are restrictive and fail to account for numerous inscriptions which perform multiple functions simultaneously. The dedicatory

synagogue at Rehov in Palestine: S. Fine, *Art & Judaism in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2005), 92-3, fig. 33; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 235-6.

²⁹ On the promise and problems of using palaeography as a dating method, see McLean, 42-5.

³⁰ While provinces are important as political and military units, they are not particularly useful for examinations of artistic or epigraphic traditions, as political boundaries are commonly much more defined than those of cultural trends and practices.

³¹ For example, the short funerary inscription on the tomb of Fabricius and Aquinus, described as a *titulus quod brevior*, in Martial, *Epigrams* 1.93.4; on this epigram, S. Johnson, ‘The Obituary Epigrams of Martial’, *The Classical Journal*, 49, 6 (March 1954), 265-72.

³² *Titulus* is used to refer to both the inscription and the plaque on which the inscription was written: M. Hitchcock, ‘The Use of γράφειν’, *JTS*, o.s. 31 (1930), 271-5. John 19:19 refers to the plaque over Christ on the cross naming Christ as ‘Jesus Christ, King of the Jews’ as a ‘τίτλον’. Some scholars consider all types of inscriptions *tituli*, including Belting-Ihm, ‘Zum Verhältnis’; others, including Arnulf, *Versus*, 9, define the *titulus* solely as a ‘metrical building inscription’.

³³ On these categories, McLean, *Greek Epigraphy*.

inscription from Jerash with which we began, also a building inscription, functioned as a panegyric to the patron who ‘brings beautiful marvels’ to the city;³⁴ as a Christian theological statement on behalf of the apostles Peter and Paul, ‘to whom the Saviour gave authority’; and as a miniature ekphrasis or *descriptio* of the decoration of the church, of silver and the ‘vividly-coloured stones’ of the mosaic.³⁵

A second aim of this thesis is to investigate which features, if any, differentiate ‘Christian’ inscriptions and images from their ‘pagan’ or classical predecessors, as well as features or themes which persist throughout.³⁶ In this context, I argue that through the texts and images inscribed in their churches, late antique Christians expressed their cultural and religious affiliations in much more playful ways than has previously been thought.³⁷ Words written in mosaic enabled educated patrons to employ what Anthony Kaldellis has called ‘Christian classicism’, the continued use of classical language, literature and cultural references, to couch their new faith in old terms and put their *paideia* on display.³⁸ However, these texts were not produced by a backward-looking culture, but by Christians who used familiar forms of expression in order to make new and sophisticated points about the nature of their religion and culture.

Most surviving inscriptions from late antiquity have either dedicatory or funerary components, and have been studied for the facts they provide, including donors’ names,

³⁴ *Supra* n. 1.

³⁵ See pp. 10-1.

³⁶ On the classical and the Christian, J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: the transformation of art from the pagan world to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1995); idem, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: the art of the Roman Empire A.D. 100-450* (Cambridge, 1996); idem, *Roman eyes: visibility and subjectivity in art and text* (Princeton, 2007); A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), 173ff; also M.W. Merrony, ‘The Reconciliation of Paganism and Christianity in the Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements of Arabia and Palestine’, *LA*, 48 (1998), 441-82.

³⁷ On play in the medieval Christian inscription, A. Cutler, ‘The Image of the Word in Byzantium and Islam: An Essay in Art Historical Geodesy’, in H.J. Hornik and M.C. Parsons (eds.), *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art* (Macon, GA, 2004), 81-105, reprinted in Cutler, *Image making in Byzantium, Sassanian Persia, and the early Muslim world* (Aldershot, 2009), Article VI.

³⁸ Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 177.

dedications of buildings, and dates. This information is invaluable, and inscriptions of the period have been explored in terms of the relative popularity of church-building,³⁹ the epigraphic formulae of donation,⁴⁰ the identification and self-promotion of donors in inscription and image,⁴¹ as well as identity more broadly.⁴² More work remains to be done to analyze the common formulae used from east to west; the combination of donor inscriptions with prayers and invocations; the function of repeated formulae;⁴³ donors'

³⁹ B. Ward-Perkins, *From classical antiquity to the Middle Ages: urban public building in northern and central Italy, AD 300-850* (Oxford, 1984); C. Dauphin, 'Mosaic Pavements as an Index of Prosperity and Fashion', *Levant*, 12 (1980), 112-34; M.W. Merrony, 'Socio-economic aspects of the Byzantine mosaic pavements of Phoenicia and northern Palestine' (University of Oxford, unpub. D.Phil. Thesis, 2001).

⁴⁰ For example, J.-P. Caillet, 'Les dédicaces privées de pavements de mosaïque à la fin de l'Antiquité, Occident européen et monde grec: données socio-économiques', in X. Barral i Altet (ed.), *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge. Colloque international de Rennes, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 2-6 mai 1983* (Paris, 1987), ii, 15-38; idem, *L'évergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie à ses marges d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe-VIIe s.)* (Rome, 1993); A. Zettler, *Offerenteninschriften auf den frühchristlichen Mosaikfußböden Venetiens und Istriens* (Berlin, 2001); J. Moralee, 'For Salvation's Sake': Provincial Loyalty, Personal Religion, and Epigraphic Production in the Roman and Late Antique Near East (New York & London, 2004); A. Saastamoinen, *The Phraseology of Latin Building Inscriptions in Roman North Africa. Commentationes humanarum litterarum*, 127 (Helsinki, 2010), especially 396-404.

⁴¹ On donor inscriptions, especially clerical ones, G. Cuscito, 'Vescovo e cattedrale nelle documentazione epigrafica in Occidente', in *Attes du XIe Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* (Rome, 1984), ii, 735-78; D. Feissel, 'L'évêque, titres et fonctions d'après les inscriptions grecques jusqu'au VIIe siècle', in *ibid.*, ii, 801-28; Y. Duval and L. Pietri, 'Évergétisme dans l'occident chrétien (IVe-Vie s.)', in *Attes du Xe Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine* (Paris, 1997), 371-96; J.-P. Caillet, 'L'évergétisme monumental chrétien dans la Jordanie de la fin de l'Antiquité' in Duval, *Églises*, 297-302. On the intersection between donors' images and inscriptions, L.-A. Hunt, 'The Byzantine Mosaics of Jordan in Context: Remarks on Imagery, Donors and Mosaicists', *PEQ*, 126 (1994), 106-26; B. Hamarneh, 'Ritratti e immagini di donatori nei mosaici della Giordania', in N. Cambi and E. Marin (eds.), *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis archaeologiae Christianae (Split-Poreč 25 September-1 October 1994)* (Rome/Split, 1998), ii, 411-22; P. Baumann, *Spätantike Stifter im Heiligen Land: Darstellungen und Inschriften auf Bodenmosaiken in Kirchen, Synagogen und Privathäusern* (Wiesbaden, 1999); L. Habas, 'Donations and Donors as Reflected in the Mosaic Pavements of Transjordan's Churches in the Byzantine and Umayyad Periods', in K. Kogman-Appel and M. Meyer (eds.), *Between Judaism and Christianity: Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher* (Leiden, 2008), 73-89; J.-P. Caillet, 'L'image du dédicant dans l'édifice culturel (IVe-VIIe s.): aux origines de la visualisation d'un pouvoir de concession divine', *AT*, 19 (2011), 149-69. On synagogue donation inscriptions, B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives: Répertoire des dédicaces grecques relatives à la construction et à réfection des synagogues. Cahiers de la Revue Biblique*, 7 (Paris, 1967); J. Naveh, 'Al pesefas ya-even : ha-ketovot ha-Aramiyot yeha- 'Ivriyot mi-bate-ha-keneset ha- 'atikim (Jerusalem, 1978) (Hebrew); L. Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions in the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem, 1987).

⁴² Funerary epigraphy has been vital to debates about community structure, Romanization and cultural and ethnic identity in the late antique world: for example, G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: the origins of provincial civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, 1998); M.A. Handley, *Death, society and culture: inscriptions and epitaphs in Gaul and Spain, AD 300-750* (Oxford, BAR, 2003); J.M. Downs, 'The Christian Tomb Mosaics from Tabarka: Status and Identity in a North African Roman Town' (University of Michigan, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 2007); Yasin, *Saints*; J. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁴³ On verbal and visual repetition, J. Ma, 'The Two Cultures: Connoisseurship and Civic Honours', *Art History*, 29, 2 (April 2006), 325-38; J. Trimble, *Women and visual replication in Roman imperial art and culture* (Cambridge, 2011).

monograms; as well as the motivations for donor anonymity.⁴⁴ However, due to the large amount of epigraphic material under consideration in the current work, certain areas must inevitably remain unexamined. The goal of this thesis is to plumb particular thematic categories of inscriptions in depth, looking at developments from east to west throughout the period, and to consider the reception of inscribed texts as well as their production (and their producers). As a result, I do not engage exhaustively with the Christian donor here, although the epigraphy of donation is a promising area for future work.

As previous studies of donors have focused on the hard facts provided by inscriptions, many of the more interesting cultural features of these texts, including those related to vision and visuality, have often been overlooked.⁴⁵ A third and final aim of this thesis is to correct this imbalance by focussing on the very elements of the epigraphy which have been written out of Christian spaces by modern scholarship. By reading these elements within and against the larger context of early Byzantine theorizations of the visual, we may glimpse the ways in which texts were intended to complement, supplement or complicate visual experiences. The specific facets of the visual character of inscriptions considered in the following four chapters have been selected based upon an examination of the primary evidence, the inscriptions themselves, rather than upon a pre-existing model or set of assumptions. Chapter One begins by considering the language of early Christian inscriptions by comparing it to the language of ekphrasis and ekphrastic epigram, specifically the responses advocated by both types of texts. By analyzing the ways in which inscriptions directed viewers to read, view and respond to them, and to images and spaces more generally, this chapter provides a window into the uses inscriptions made of *topoi* derived from the genres of ekphrasis and the ways in which the linguistic overlap

⁴⁴ See n. 233.

⁴⁵ The situation is the opposite of that in Islamic art history, where the word has long been recognized as art: E.C. Dodd and S. Khairallah, *The Image of the Word. A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture* (2 vols., Beirut, 1981); Cutler, 'Image of the Word'.

between inscriptions and literature might have been understood within the spaces of early Christianity. Chapter Two acts as a case study for the wider issues discussed in the first chapter, and focusses on the language of light, colour and material in Christian inscriptions. As we shall see, many of these texts play with the very glass or stone substances of which they are made in order to make statements about visibility as well as theology or religious faith. Chapter Three turns from the more complex epigrams of Chapters One and Two to the simpler biblical quotations of narrative scenes and name labels of figures, especially of Christ and the saints. This chapter evaluates the relative independence of the image from its supposed source text, and interrogates how labels functioned both textually and visually. Finally, Chapter Four moves away from the texts and explores the ways inscriptions looked, examining the frames of inscriptions and their potential symbolic meanings.

Chapter One: Inscribing ekphrasis, guiding vision

In the pavement of the north transept of the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis, a well-known early sixth-century mosaic depicts a paradisiacal landscape lush with fruit and cypress trees, flowering plants and birds on the ground and in the air (Fig. 1.2).⁴⁶ Around the panel, framed by multiple borders, runs a wide zone containing a marine scene of fish, birds and aquatic plants, as well as two vignettes where nude fishermen sit on a rock (on the right) or stand in order to harpoon fish (on the left).⁴⁷ The iconography of the main panel and its marine frame was not unique in late antiquity—Ernst Kitzinger cites one earlier example from Antioch and at least six later related versions, all in Palestine and Arabia—but the mosaic inscription, framed by a *tabula ansata* immediately below the ground line of the panel, is unusual, if not unique.⁴⁸ The text reads:

Ὦκεανόν περίφαντον ἀπίριτον ἔνθα δέδορκα
γαῖαν μέσσον ἔχοντα σοφοῖς ἰνδάλμασι τέχνης
πάντα πέριξ φορέουσιν ὅσα πνίει τε καὶ ἔρπει
Δουμετίου κτέανον μεγαθύμου ἀρχιερέως.

Here you see the famous and boundless ocean
containing in the middle the earth,
bearing round about by means of the skilful forms of art everything that
breathes and creeps;
the property of Dometios, the generous archpriest.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See most notably Kitzinger, 'Studies', 81-122; idem, *Byzantine art in the making: main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean art, 3rd-7th century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 90ff; Maguire, *Earth*, 21-4; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 439-41, 443-5, 452-3, 458-9, 464, 657-8; W. Caraher, 'Church, Society and the Sacred in Early Christian Greece' (Ohio State University, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 2003), 171-4.

⁴⁷ The panel is framed by a single line border, a narrow border adorned with bead-and-reel ornament, a running spiral and interlocking circles containing birds with ribbons around their necks: Kitzinger, 'Studies', 198-9, 204-6.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 201ff.; Maguire, *Earth*, 20-40, who cites more examples of what he terms the 'Earth and Ocean' scheme; G. Agosti, 'Immagini e poesia nella tarda antichità: per uno studio dell'estetica visuale della poesia greca fra III e VI sec. d.C.', *Incontri Triestini di Filologia Classica*, 5 (Trieste, 2004-5), 351-74.

⁴⁹ Trans. Kitzinger, 'Studies', 207, adaptations mine; also see G.A. Sotiriou, *Tò ψηφιδωτὸν δάπεδον τοῦ ἀνευρεθέντος ναοῦ ἐν Νικοπόλει τῆς Ἠπείρου* (Athens, 1915); A. Philadelphus, 'Ἀνασκαφαὶ Νικοπόλεως', *Αρχαιολογικὴ Εφημερίς*, (1916), 33-45, 65-72, 121-2; idem, *Αρχαιολογικὴ Εφημερίς*, (1917), 48-71; F. Grossi-Gondi, 'Una basilica Cristiana a Nicopolis in Epiro', *Nuovo Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana*, 23 (1917), 121-7; A. Ch. Chatzes in *Αρχαιολογικὴ Εφημερίς*, (1918), 29ff.; G.A. Sotiriou, 'Ἀτ παλαιοχριστιανικαὶ βασιλικαὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος', in *Αρχαιολογικὴ Εφημερίς*, (1929), 159ff; S. Pelekanides, 'Die Symbolik der frühchristlichen Fussbodenmosaiken Griechenlands', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 3,

The inscription has been read by Kitzinger as ‘equating the floor with the earth’,⁵⁰ and by Henry Maguire as a hyperbolic explication of the image, with trees, birds and fish meant to be read as signs for all plants and animals.⁵¹ Kitzinger and Maguire both noted the discrepancy between the florid epigram, which quotes Homer’s *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in its third and fourth lines (πάντα ὅσα πνίει τε καὶ ἔρπει, ‘everything that breathes and creeps’, and μεγαθύμος, ‘generous’), and the sparser iconography of the mosaic.⁵² The text also uses language and the hexameter verse common to later poems by such authors as Nonnus, the poet from late fifth- or sixth-century Panopolis in Egypt, although Gianfranco Agosti argues that the inscription is more Homeric than Nonnian in style.⁵³ Kitzinger and Maguire both explain the gap between text and image as indicative of the semiotic processes at work in the period: the images of trees and birds stand in for larger numbers,

Folge X, 59 (1940), 114-24; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 439-1, 443-5, 452-3, 458-9, 464, 657-8; Maguire, *Earth*, 21-4; Caraher, ‘Church’, 323-4, nos. 21-4.

⁵⁰ Kitzinger, ‘Studies’, 215.

⁵¹ Maguire, *Earth*, 22-4.

⁵² The first instance is a melancholy quotation from a speech by Zeus, *Iliad* 17.447, as well as a subsequent speech by Odysseus, *Odyssey* 18.131, pointed out by Kitzinger, ‘Studies’, 207, n. 76. Both are delivered in the context of the supreme wretchedness of man among all the creations of the gods. Gregory of Nazianzus quotes the passage in reference to God’s power to give voices to all things, *Carmina quae spectant ad alios* (*Carmina* 2.2.2), PG 37,1528; while Shenoute of Atripe, the abbot of the White Monastery in Upper Egypt, uses similar language in the early fifth century to describe negatively the forms of the hieroglyphs inscribed on Egyptian temples: Shenoute, *Acephalous work* A6, ed. and trans. D. Young, ‘A Monastic Invective Against Egyptian Hieroglyphs’, in idem (ed.), *Studies Presented to Hans Jakob Polotsky* (East Gloucester, MA, 2001), 354. The epithet ‘great-hearted’ is used to describe Achilles, *Iliad* 20.498: see Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 57-9. On Homer in Byzantine education and thought, R. Browning, ‘Homer in Byzantium’, *Viator*, 6 (1975), 15-33.

⁵³ Agosti, ‘Immagini’, 358ff. Specific Nonnian parallels are more evident in two other hexameter inscriptions in the basilica: see S. Isager, ‘Pagans in Late Roman Halikarnassos II: The voice of the inscriptions’, *Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens*, 1 (1995), 213-5; idem, ‘The late Roman villa in Halikarnassos: The inscriptions’, in idem and B. Poulsen (eds.), *Patron and Pavements in Late Antiquity* (Odense, 1997), 29, n. 11. However, this inscription does use Nonnian language, for example the word ἰνδάλμα (also used by Homer) to refer to images or, more frequently, likenesses of people or things, used by the poet in his *Dionysiaca*, including 5.202 (Selene as ‘image of the Graces’); 3.280 (the ‘horned image’ of Io); and 32.169 (a shield with ‘the graven image of Medusa..’), etc.: see *Dionysiaca*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (3 vols., Harvard, 1940). On the *Dionysiaca* and the style of Nonnus, L. Miguélez Caverio, *Poems in Context: Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid 200-600 AD* (Berlin & New York, 2008), 106-90. On the development of so-called ‘Nonnian’ style, Mary Whitby, ‘From Moschus to Nonnus: The Evolution of the Nonnian Style’, in N. Hopkinson, (ed.), *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus* (Cambridge, 1994), 99-155.

as well as different kinds, of plants and animals, and the ‘sign-ness’ of these images is made clear by the paired inscription.⁵⁴

Of course, as Maguire and others have made clear, late antique viewers were accustomed to reading images as multivalent signs, potentially signifying different things to different audiences.⁵⁵ We have come a long way from Kitzinger’s formulation in the 1950s that ‘Form is no longer self-sufficient and must be supplemented by words...its [the mosaic’s] meaning would be quite unintelligible without the poem...’⁵⁶ However, while Maguire correctly asserts that the inscription does indeed speak to modes of viewing current at the time, there is clearly more going on at Nikopolis. Not only does the epigram speak in the language and metre of the classical and late antique epic poetry of Homer, Nonnus and others, it relies upon rhetorical *topoi* commonly found in works of ekphrasis, as well as classical ekphrastic epigrams, designed as poems to identify works and to issue ‘an important interpretative pronouncement upon’ them.⁵⁷ These *topoi* include direct

⁵⁴ Kitzinger, ‘Studies’, 214; Maguire, *Earth*, 23-4.

⁵⁵ Maguire, *Earth*, 1-15; Elsner, *Roman Viewer*, 249ff.; idem, *Imperial Rome*, 251-9; R.M. Jensen, *Understanding Christian Art* (London, 2000).

⁵⁶ Kitzinger, ‘Studies’, 208, n. 78.

⁵⁷ The literature on the so-called ‘ekphrastic epigram’ is large and vibrant, dominated by scholarship on Hellenistic epigrams: S. Goldhill, ‘The naive and knowing eye: ecphrasis and the culture of viewing in the Hellenistic World’, in Goldhill and Osborne, *Art and Text*, 197-223; P. Bing, ‘Between Literature and the Monuments’, in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (eds.), *Genre in Hellenistic Poetry. Hellenistica Groningana*, 3 (Leuven, 1998), 21-43; L. Rossi, *The Epigrams Ascribed to Theocritus: A Method of Approach. Hellenistica Groningana*, 5 (Leuven, 2001), 15-27; K. Gutzwiller, ‘Art’s Echo: The Tradition of Hellenistic Ekphrastic Epigram’, in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (eds.), *Hellenistic Epigrams. Hellenistica Groningana*, 6 (Leuven, 2002), 85-112; I. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild. Zum Verhältnis der Künste in der hellenistischen Dichtung* (Heidelberg, 2007), 37ff; J.S. Bruss, ‘Ecphrasis in fits and starts? Down to 300 BC’, in M. Baumbach, A. Petrovic and I. Petrovic (eds.), *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram* (Cambridge, 2010), 285-403; and Squire, *Image*. Not all scholars approve of the designation of epigrams as ‘ekphrastic’: for example, G. Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (Madison, WI, 2004), especially 82-4, and n. 26; whose points are nicely rebutted by M. Squire, ‘Making Myron’s Cow Moo? Ekphrastic Epigram and the Poetics of Simulation’, *AJP*, 131 (2010), 589-634, especially 592-3, n. 15; and idem, ‘Reading a view: poem and picture in the Greek Anthology’, *Ramus*, 39, 2 (2010), 73-103. On Roman ekphrastic epigram, idem, ‘The motto in the grotto’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 102-27; Squire, *Image*, 202-38. On later Greek ekphrastic epigrams, B.D. Hebert, *Schriftquellen zur hellenistischen Kunst: Plastik, Malerei und Kunsthandwerk der Griechen vom vierten bis zum zweiten Jahrhundert* (Graz, 1989), 87-100; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Epigram*, 56ff; and articles by B.V. Pentcheva and A. Papalexandrou in James, *Art and Text*. Of course, there is a difference between ancient ekphrasis in poetry or prose and what scholars now call the ‘ekphrastic epigram’, as examples of the latter type of text tend to guide, comment upon or complicate the viewing experience rather than conjure up or recreate a sight in the mind’s eye: on this distinction, R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Aldershot, 2009), 1-11; I.

address to the viewer/reader/listener (‘you see’, δέδορκας), inclusion of a deictic marker (‘here’, ἔνθα), and a statement about the relationship between the visual and the verbal (σοφοῖς ἰνδάλαμασι τέχνης, ‘the skilful forms of art’, or perhaps the ‘cleverly-devised images’ of the artist/designer of the mosaics rather than those of the poet), in this case a seemingly straightforward praise of images problematized by the very presence of the epigram itself—for if the images were indeed skilful enough, they alone would have been sufficient. Why was it considered necessary or desirable for this mosaic inscription, otherwise a testament to the donation of Dometios,⁵⁸ to describe an adjacent image in the language of epic poetry and the *topoi* of ekphrastic or, more appropriately, ‘eisphrastic’ epigram?⁵⁹ As Agosti has demonstrated, late antique poets generally were engaged with visuality and the visual, in both literary ekphrasis and in epigram.⁶⁰ But how were contemporary readers and viewers meant to read inscriptions with or against the images or the spaces of the church?

This chapter examines the ways in which early Christian inscriptions employed and adopted the *topoi* of ekphrasis and ekphrastic inscription, as well as potential viewers’ responses. First, the circumstances of ekphraseis as performed are investigated, as are questions of viewer/reader responses. Second, inscriptions which describe images are discussed, before I move on to consider *tituli* which supply a narrative-symbolic context to

Männlein-Robert, ‘Epigrams on Art: Voice and Voicelessness in Hellenistic Epigram’, in P. Bing and J.S. Bruss (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram: Down to Philip* (Leiden, 2007), 251-71, especially 252-3, who argues that the term ‘ekphrastic epigram’ is flawed as these texts were inherently multi-genre.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, the evocation of the earth and ocean (Ωκεανόν) as the ‘property’ (κτέανον) of Dometios evokes yet another classical image, that of Roman emperors such as Augustus, who were frequently paired with personifications of Earth and Ocean in art, as on the Gemma Augustea: J. Pollini, ‘The Gemma Augustea: Ideology, Rhetorical Imagery, and the creation of a Dynastic Narrative’, in P. Holliday (ed.), *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* (1993), 258-98.

⁵⁹ The term ‘eisphrasis’ was coined by Squire, ‘The motto in the grotto’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 102-27. While Squire pulls back from the term in his recent book (*Image*, 205-8), the word seems particularly appropriate in the case of church mosaic inscriptions which act as frames for viewing the mosaic images with which they are paired.

⁶⁰ Agosti, ‘Immagini’; also see bibliography n. 17.

images of saints. In the end of the first section, we turn to imagined responses to images and spaces, always staying alert to cultural and theological contexts.

As does the Dometios inscription, some higher-register church inscriptions emphasize movement, both of the reader's body in the church as well as the motion of his/her eyes from one image to another. The second section of this chapter examines epigrams which encourage movement, action or particular ritual practice within Christian spaces. First, we look at how inscribed texts could prompt particular reactions to spaces within the church or commemorate ritual motion. We then turn to issues of voice and vision, exploring the rhetorical means through which inscriptions gained the visual and verbal attention of viewers. Throughout, this chapter considers what it meant to late antique patrons and viewers to inscribe and to read these 'eisphrastic' texts next to the pictures or inside the spaces described.

Eisphrasis and experience

We are, as many late antique Christians were, accustomed to reading ekphraseis in sixth-century works such as the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius,⁶¹ Chorikios of Gaza's encomia on the Bishop Marcian,⁶² or in records of performed speeches such as Eusebius of Caesarea's panegyric on Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre,⁶³ and Paul the Silentiary's ekphrasis on Hagia Sophia.⁶⁴ These compositions preserve the tropes of classical ekphrasis: expressions

⁶¹ Procopius, *De Aedificiis* (henceforth *DA*) 1, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 1940).

⁶² Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1-2, ed. R. Foerster, *Choricii Gazaei opera* (Stuttgart, 1929), 1-47, portions trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), 60-72; also R. Webb, 'Rhetorical and theatrical fictions in the works of Chorikios of Gaza', in S. Fitzgerald-Johnson (ed.), *Greek literature in late antiquity: dynamism, didacticism, classicism* (Aldershot, 2006), 107-26.

⁶³ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.4; on this passage, C. Smith, 'Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 43 (1989), 226-47.

⁶⁴ Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis of St. Sophia*, ed. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig, 1912), 227-56; on this text, see R. Macrides and P. Magdalino, 'The Architecture of *Ekphrasis*: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary's Poem on Hagia Sophia', *BMGS*, 12 (1988), 47-82; and Mary Whitby, 'The vocabulary of praise in verse

of indescribability and innumerability, used to problematize the relationship between image and text; the reaction of wonder (θαῦμα) or amazement at sights and their religious significances; simile or metaphor imbued with symbolism; emphasis on motion, both in terms of vision and narrative scenes of artworks described; and, most importantly, a focus on vividly evoking ‘the effect of perception’ within listeners’ minds.⁶⁵ All explicitly used these tropes to construct panegyrics on the patrons of the churches described, who also happened to be their patrons. These ekphraseis on opulent houses of worship reflected back on the men behind the buildings, as does the final line of the Nikopolis inscription, which effectively acts as a credit line for the work (‘the foundation of Dometios’).⁶⁶

The ekphraseis of Procopius and Paul, and most likely that of Chorikios as well, originally were performed within the spaces they describe, complicating the very nature of ekphrasis itself, which was normally conceived of a rhetorical performance that brings the (usually absent) subject matter ‘vividly (ἐναργῶς) before the eyes’.⁶⁷ The problematic of performing an ekphrasis on a building from inside that building itself was not unknown in classical antiquity, as is evidenced by Lucian’s *The Hall*, in which the author sets up a

celebration of 6th century building achievements: AP 2.398-406, AP 9.656, AP 1.10 and Paul the Silentiary’s *Description of St. Sophia*, in D. Accorinti and P. Chuvin (eds.), *Des Géants à Dionysios. Mélanges de mythologie et de poésie grecques offerts à Francis Vian* (Alexandria, 2003), 593-606. Paul of course was no stranger to the epigram or to the classical tradition, as demonstrated by his many poems on mythological topics in Books V, VI, VII and X of the *Anthologia Graeca* (henceforth AG): J.C. Yardley, ‘Paulus Silentarius, Ovid and Propertius’, *Classical Quarterly*, 30 (1980), 239-43; Mary Whitby, ‘Paul the Silentiary and Claudian’, *Classical Quarterly*, 35, 2 (1985), 507-16; I. Martlew, ‘The Reading of Paul the Silentiary’, in P. Allen and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?* (Brisbane, 1996), 105-11.

⁶⁵ R. Webb, ‘The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor and Motion in “Ekphraseis” of Church Buildings’, *DOP*, 53 (1999), 59-74, especially 64ff; V.M. Limberis, *Architects of Piety: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Cult of Martyrs* (Oxford, 2011), 59-62; H. Maguire, ‘Truth and Convention in Byzantine Works of Art’, *DOP*, 28 (1974), 113-40; R. S. Nelson, ‘To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium’, in idem, *Visuality*, 143-68. Although all examples cited thus far are from the eastern half of the empire, western writers of the third, fourth and fifth centuries also authored similar ekphraseis in Latin, including Paulinus of Nola (to be discussed shortly) and Claudian, among others: A. Arnulf, *Architektur- und Kunstbeschreibungen von der Antike bis zum 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich and Berlin, 2004), 51-81. On Claudian, A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and propaganda at the court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 292ff.

⁶⁶ Procopius is probably the most explicit about this in late antiquity: DA 1.1.12-19; on this trope, see J. Elsner, ‘The Rhetoric of Buildings in the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius’, in James, *Art and Text*, 33-57.

⁶⁷ This is the typical goal of ekphrasis, found in early educational texts such as Theon, *Progymnasmata* 1.7, ed. and trans. M. Patillon and G. Bolognesi (Paris, 1997), 118; and repeated by later authors. On the occasions of ekphrasis, Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 14ff, 87-106; Mary Whitby, ‘The Occasion of Paul the Silentiary’s *Ekphrasis* of S. Sophia’, *Classical Quarterly*, 35, 1 (1985), 215-28.

dialogue between the initial orator and a second speaker, *logos* personified, to investigate the potential benefits and problems of performing an ekphrasis on a space within that space.⁶⁸ Lucian's two speakers argue that it is proper for cultured spectators to be driven to speeches of praise by beautiful sights,⁶⁹ but it is difficult to do justice verbally to things seen (the beauty of the hall overpowers, distracts and overwhelms the orator),⁷⁰ and to keep the attention of the audience.⁷¹ The audience of an ekphrasis needs to be a cultural in-group in order to understand references to literature and to other works of art (the imagined viewer as '*pepaideumenos theates*'), but does not necessarily need to be standing in front of the work of art or in the building being described, or even be familiar with it.⁷² By inscribing texts which use the rhetorical devices of ekphraseis, patrons were able to affix their *paideia* to their buildings, setting up visual expectations for the literate viewer/reader to acquiesce to, to question or, on occasion, to contest.⁷³

In Christian spaces, as in secular ones, epigrams functioned as public *paideia* emphasizing the education and status of the donors who composed or commissioned them.

⁶⁸ Lucian, *De Domo (The Hall)*, trans. A.M. Harmon (Cambridge, MA, 1913, reprinted 2006), i, 176-207; on this text, see Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 172-5; Z. Newby, 'Testing the boundaries of ekphrasis: Lucian On the Hall', *Ramus*, 31, 1-2 (2002), 126-36; idem, 'Reading Programs in Graeco-Roman Art: reflections on the Spada Reliefs', in D. Fredrick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore, 2002), 110-48; S. Goldhill, 'The erotic eye: visual stimulation and cultural conflict', in idem (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge, 2007), 154-94, especially 160-7; E. Thomas, *Monumentality in the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age* (Oxford, 2007), 229-35; Squire, *Image*, 239-48.

⁶⁹ *De Domo* 1-3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 15-21. Chorikios utilizes the same trope: *Laudatio Marciani* 1.23, 2.37, trans. Mango, *Art*, 69, where the 'elaborate craftsmanship' of the Church of St. Stephen lures the orator in before he can finish describing the exterior. The trope of the irresistible artwork is written into inscriptions themselves, as in an epigram inscribed in the atrium of Old St. Peter's, erected by Pope John I in the sixth century, which proclaims that after looking at the beauty and brightness of the church, 'the precious art seizes the eyes' (*..oculos ars pretiosa rapit*): *ICUR*, 2, 54, 6; *ILCV*, 2, no. 1757.

⁷¹ *De Domo* 22-32. In the end of the work, the personified *logos* turns his attack into praise for the orator's attempt, and even one-ups the initial speaker by performing his own ekphrasis of the images (termed alternatively *γραφάς* and *εἰκόνας*) on the walls.

⁷² Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 124-6. The lack of a proper context for an ekphrasis could on occasion confuse the audience, for example Libanios' claim that an ekphrasis of the Great Church at Antioch by the rhetor Bemarchios was confusing when it was performed for a second time outside of the church: Libanios, *Autobiography*, ed. and trans. A.F. Norman (Oxford, 1965), 39-41; on this text, see Webb, 'Aesthetics', 62.

⁷³ On the productive disjunction between epigrams and paired artworks, Squire, *Image*, 209, 239-88; L. James, 'Art and Lies: Text, image and imagination in the medieval world', in Eastmond and James, *Icon & Word*, 59-71.

We will investigate this aspect of competitive display in Chapter Two. In addition, a number of these inscriptions encourage particular responses to viewers' experiences of images or spaces, some rooted wholly in the classical tradition, others reflecting new Christian understandings of art and its functions.⁷⁴ It is important to keep in mind that these responses or interpretations were in fact imagined by their authors as desired responses, and do not necessarily preserve the actual reactions of large sections or sub-sections of viewers.⁷⁵ Little evidence survives, however, for 'actual' responses in these prescribed ones, and is limited to potentially biased accounts of visits to churches written by the same elites who enjoyed composing these epigrams.⁷⁶ As a result, we effectively cannot determine whether most readers, or even the 'average' reader, would have read an inscription and followed its advice. In a sense, the problem is similar to that of reading (or over-reading) ekphrasis back into the church interior, where one is dealing with a literary genre full of rhetorical *topoi* which must be dealt with carefully.⁷⁷ However, while we must be careful not to confuse imagined responses for actual ones, in many cases these

⁷⁴ A number of more secular epigrams from villas and baths in both the eastern and western Mediterranean make use of classical rhetorical *topoi* and metre to emphasize the *paideia* of the patron: A. Ovadiah, 'Allegorical Images in Greek Laudatory Inscriptions', *LA*, 47 (1997), 39-49, on examples at Sheikh Zouède, in the Northern Sinai, and Hammat Gader in Palestine; K.M.D. Dunbabin, '*Baiarum grata voluptas*: pleasures and dangers of the baths', *PBSR*, 57 (1989), 6-46; G. Agosti, '*Saxa Loquuntur*? Epigrammi epigrafici e diffusione della *paideia* nell'Oriente tardoantico', *AT*, 18 (2010), 163-80; idem, 'Literariness'. On *paideia* in late antiquity as it relates to the creation and reception of artworks, R. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Aldershot, 2004), 123-208. On education more generally, H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (Madison, WI, 1982); R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

⁷⁵ On this difference, Gutzwiller, 'Art's Echo', 98; J.W. Day, 'Poems on Stone: The Inscribed Antecedents of Hellenistic Epigram', in Bing and Bruss, *Brill's Companion to Hellenistic Epigram*, 29-47, especially 46. Where preserved, graffiti is useful to trace more spontaneous responses to sacred space, although in most cases it indicates rather formulaic responses: A. Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon* (Cambridge, 2009), especially 74-80.

⁷⁶ Paulinus describes the importance of *tituli* as labels for scenes in his churches at Nola and Fundi in his *Carmen* 27, ed. G. de Hartel, *CSEL* 30; also see C. Kaesser, 'The Body is Not Painted On: Ekphrasis and Exegesis in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* 9', *Ramus*, 31, 1-2 (2002), 158-74. On Roman epigraphic vision, see the pessimistic account of P. Bing, 'The Un-Read Muse? Inscribed Epigram and Its Readers in Antiquity', in idem, *The Scroll and the Marble: Studies in Reading and Reception in Hellenistic Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009), 116-46, who cites two scenes of inscription reading in Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 12.29-115 and 41.339-99; and, *contra* Bing, the optimism of Squire, *Image*, 148-51, especially n. 237. On the viewing of mosaics, Dunbabin, 'Public', 739-41.

⁷⁷ L. James and R. Webb, "'To understand ultimate things and enter secret places": Ekphrasis and art in Byzantium', *Art History*, 14 (1991), 1-17.

inscriptions are the only surviving evidence which can tell us about how viewers read texts and looked at images inside churches. We have to mine them for evidence of the attitudes of elite patrons as well as for potential responses by different groups of viewers of varied social strata.

Reading to see

a. Reading iconography

As we have seen in the Dometios inscription, vision and visuality could be quite explicitly articulated in early Christian mosaic inscriptions. The text tells the viewer/reader what he or she is seeing directly in front of him or her (δέδορκας), using the perfect tense to emphasize the continuous act of looking: the viewer/reader looks at the mosaic, reads the inscription, and is directed back to the image by the text. The range of ‘seeing’ words used in the inscriptions is wide, including in Greek forms of ὁράω (as at Nikopolis),⁷⁸ βλέπω,⁷⁹ κατανοέω,⁸⁰ δερκόμαι;⁸¹ and Latin equivalents of the Greek terms, typically a form of *cerno*,⁸² or *video*.⁸³ Despite this semantic range, the act described by the inscriptions is the same, and necessitates being able to *see* the related images.

One might expect the inscriptions which place an emphasis on vision to describe and explicate specific iconographic programmes, as do passages of literary ekphrasis in

⁷⁸ Similar inscriptions feature in the annex of the Cathedral Church at Madaba, early seventh century: see R. Sauvignac, *RB*, 20 (1911), 439; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 140; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 22; idem, *Mosaics*, 116; Michel, 305-7

⁷⁹ As in the Church of St. John the Baptist at Jerash (531): Crowfoot and Biebel, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 328-9; Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 38-41; idem, *Mosaics*, 288-9; R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule* (Princeton, Darwin Press, 1995), 317-8; Michel, 247. Also, the Church of St. Christopher at Qabr Hiram (575) in Lebanon: W. Froehner, *Inscriptions grecques du Louvre* (Paris, 1864), 309-11, nos. 269-74; F. Barrate, *Mosaïques romaines et paléochrétiennes du Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1978), 138; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 414, 412 fig. 402.

⁸⁰ E.g. in the church at al-Rashidiyah (574) in Arabia: see n. 132 below.

⁸¹ In the inscription in the central nave in the Church of the Virgin at Madaba (mid-eighth century): see n. 134 below.

⁸² As in Old St. Peter's, Rome (352-61), see n. 475 below; and the Basilica Eufasianiana, Poreč (c. 550), n. 129 below, among many other churches, to be discussed in Chapter Two.

⁸³ As in the Baptistry of the Great Basilica, Tipasa, in the context of a heavenly vision: *CIL* VIII, 209; *Inventaire*, iii, 90, nos. 373-4; I. Gui, N. Duval and J.-P. Caillet, *Basiliques chrétiennes d'Afrique du Nord. I, Inventaire de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1992), i, 21-4.

sixth-century works by Procopius,⁸⁴ Chorikios of Gaza,⁸⁵ and Asterios of Amaseia,⁸⁶ who favour vivid descriptions of figures in motion.⁸⁷ According to Procopius, in the mosaic of the Chalkê vestibule of the imperial palace in Constantinople, the figures of Justinian and Theodora seem ‘to rejoice and to celebrate victories over both the king of the Vandals and the king of the Goths’, while the Roman Senate is ‘all in festal mood’.⁸⁸ In the Church of St. Sergius at Gaza, the image of the patron, Stephen, asks the saint to accept the church as a gift (probably implying that the image included a model of the church), and the saint consents and ‘looks down upon the man with a gentle gaze...’⁸⁹ For Byzantine orators and their audiences, the figures depicted in mosaics moved, spoke, gestured and felt, refusing to be confined by their two-dimensional forms.⁹⁰

Some church inscriptions, including the Dometios inscription, explicitly emphasize the movement of figures and animals depicted in the mosaic image. Other epigrams describe static scenes as active, especially the *tituli* of the Basilica Nova at Nola, composed in iambic trimeter by Paulinus of Nola, who recorded the epigrams in a letter to his friend Sulpicius Severus.⁹¹ In the apse mosaic, the Trinity ‘sparkles (*coruscat*)’,⁹²

⁸⁴ Procopius, *DA* 1.10.15-20.

⁸⁵ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1-2.

⁸⁶ Asterios of Amaseia, Homily 11, ‘On the Martyrdom of St. Euphemia’, ed. F. Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcedoine* (Brussels, 1965), 4-8, describes the painted cycle of scenes to be found in the church of Hagia Euphemia at Chalcedon; on this homily, R. Webb, ‘Accomplishing the Picture: Ekphrasis, Mimesis and Martyrdom in Asterios of Amaseia’, in James, *Art and Text*, 13-32.

⁸⁷ Later Byzantine authors continue to compose ekphraseis in the same tradition, for example the Patriarch Photios and his ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia delivered in the church in 867: Nelson, ‘Ekphrasis and Vision’, 146ff.

⁸⁸ *DA* 1.10.17-19, trans. Dewing, 87, who explains that the emotions of those depicted ‘is expressed by the cubes of the mosaic, which by their colours depict exultation on their very countenances’.

⁸⁹ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1.31-2, trans. Mango, *Art*, 62.

⁹⁰ Webb, ‘Aesthetics’, 64.

⁹¹ The letter is *Epistula* 32, ed. W. von Hartel, *CSEL* 29, 10, trans. R.C. Goldschmidt, *Paulinus’ Churches at Nola. Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Amsterdam, 1940), 38ff. On the *tituli*, J. Engemann, ‘Zu den Apsis-Tituli des Paulinus von Nola’, *JAC*, 17 (1974), 21-46; T. Lehmann, ‘Eine spätantike Inschriftensammlung und der Besuch des Papstes Damasus an der Pilgerstätte des Hl. Felix in Cimitile / Nola’, *ZPE*, 91 (1992), 243-81, especially 255-8, 281, with previous bibliography, who demonstrates that based upon its structure, the apse inscription was arranged in two columns; D. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, 1999), 151-53; G.H. de la Portbarre-Viard, *Descriptions monumentales et discours sur l’édification chez Paulin de Nole: le regard et la lumière (epist. 32 et carm. 27 et 28)* (Leiden, 2006), 519-22; Arnulf, *Versus*, 55-60; idem, *Kunstbeschreibungen*, 85-7; H. Brandenburg and L. Ermini Pani (eds.), *Cimitile e Paolo di Nola* (Vatican City 2003). On the apse mosaic in particular, F. Wickhoff,

Christ ‘stands as lamb (*stat Christus agno*)’, while the voice of the Father (God) ‘thunders from heaven (*vox patris caelo tonat*)’⁹³ and the Holy Spirit represented as a Dove ‘flows (down) (*fluit*)’.⁹⁴ The inscription, which was probably arranged in two columns in the apse, continues to describe the mosaic in symbolic terms, ending with Christ standing as lamb on a rock ‘from which four seething springs issue (*de qua sonori quattuor fontes meant*)’, the four rivers of paradise which stand for ‘the Evangelists, the living streams of Christ (*Evangelistae viva Christi flumina*)’.⁹⁵ After the viewer reads the inscription, figures and forms move not only in space; their symbolic valences merge with each other and flow apart again, creating a doubled sense of motion in iconography as well as meaning.⁹⁶

The epigrams are prime examples of inscriptions which offer detailed and elaborate symbolic readings of the images with which they were paired. A number of scholars, including Franz Wickhoff and Günter Bandmann, have attempted to reconstruct the apse mosaic programme based upon these inscriptions (Figs. 1.3-4).⁹⁷ These proposed reconstructions are substantially similar, centring on the depiction of a monumental cross with a row of the Apostles as lambs below, a reconstruction for which the extant sixth-

‘Die Apsis-Mosaik des Paulinus in Nola’, *RQ*, 3 (1889), 158-79; G. Rizza, ‘Pitture e mosaici nelle basiliche paoliniane di Nola e di Fundi’, *Sicilorum Gymnasium*, n.s. 1(1948), 311-21; A. Weis, ‘Die Verteilung der Bildzyklen des Paulin von Nola in der Kirchen von Cimitile (Campanien)’, *RQ*, 52 (1957), 129-50; Ihm, *Programme*, 179-82; G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini: Eschatological Thought in Fourth-Century Apses and Catecheses* (Leiden, 1989), 90-7. On the complex, T. Lehmann, ‘Lo sviluppo del complesso archeologico a Cimitile / Nola’, *Boreas*, 13 (1990), 75-93; idem, ‘Zur Genese der Trikonchosbasiliken’, *Innovation in der Spätantike: Kolloquium Basel 6. und 7. Mai 1994* (Weisbaden, 1996), 317-57; L. Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London, 2004), 105-10, 117.

⁹² *Epistula* 32.10.8, ed. von Hartel, 283-4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 10.9.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 1-21; on the reconstruction of the *titulus*, Lehmann, ‘Inchriftensammlung’; Portbarré-Viard, 113-25.

⁹⁶ Paulinus was aware of the tropes of classical *ekphrasis*, as he includes one on the very same church in the *Natalicia*, *Carmen* 27, where he paints a picture of himself leading his friend Nicetas around the renovated shrine: see Arnulf, *Versus*, 60-4.

⁹⁷ Wickhoff, ‘Apsismosaik’, proposes a jeweled cross surrounded by a field of stars and a jeweled wreath. G. Bandmann, ‘Ein Fassadenprogramm des 12. Jahrhunderts und Seine Stellung in der Christlichen Ikonographie’, *Das Münster*, 5 (1952), 1-21, proposes a jewelled cross surrounded by a circular wreath, with rays of light radiating from the cross. For reproductions of these two proposed versions, Portbarré-Viard, 519-20, Annexe II, figs. 1-2.

century apse of Sant'Apollinare in Classe was influential (Fig. 1.5).⁹⁸ However, reconstructions based upon epigraphic evidence are impossible to confirm with any certainty. We can only use inscriptions to deduce which iconographic elements or motifs might have been present, not to combine them properly. The ekphrastic character of the Nola inscription itself complicates the situation further, as its heavily symbolic reading of the mosaic iconography and use of verbs of action cannot be used to generate a reliable reconstruction of the mosaic.⁹⁹

While some Christian inscriptions do function in similar ways to those of Paulinus,¹⁰⁰ many of them treat their relationships to images, and the images themselves, in very different ways. Mosaic inscriptions rarely refer to specific figures or scenes, and when they do, they tend to complicate rather than clarify readings of iconography, as does the exaggerated rhetoric of the Nikopolis inscription.¹⁰¹ While exaggeration might not be such a problem, as it was a well-recognized poetic *topos*, other inscriptions reveal different kinds of vagueness, including the popular trope that words cannot do justice to images.¹⁰² Mentions of iconography are rare in the inscriptions, and the most evocative examples are preserved from the western provinces.¹⁰³ When inscriptions do include mentions of iconographic elements, their descriptions are often intentionally vague and only make sense once combined with the images being described. These texts instead focus attention

⁹⁸ F.W. Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes. Bd. 1. Geschichte und Monumente* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 257-78, especially 270-5; idem, *Ravenna, Bd. 2*, 234-82, especially 245-72; D.M. Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010), 267-74.

⁹⁹ On the problems of using ekphraseis to reconstruct works of art, Maguire, 'Truth and Convention', 111-40; James and Webb, 1-17; Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 7-9; Squire, *Image*, 139-46.

¹⁰⁰ Texts which function in a similar fashion to that of Paulinus include the inscription over the main entrance to the fifth-century church of Santa Croce in Ravenna which described the image of an apocalypse: 'O Christ, Word of the Father, concord of all the world, you who know no end, so also no beginning. The winged witnesses, whom your right hand rules, stand around you saying "sanctus" and "amen". In your presence the rivers run, poured through the ages, the Tigris and the Euphrates, Fison and Geon': Andreas Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* (henceforth *LPR*), 41, ed. D.M. Deliyannis, *CCCM* 199 (Turnhout, 2006), trans. idem, *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna* (Washington, D.C., 2004), 150.

¹⁰¹ *Supra* p. 23.

¹⁰² As can be seen in the elaborate carved epigram in Hagios Polyuktos, AG 1.10.30-34; see pp. 87-9 below.

¹⁰³ Rossi, 15-27.

on the different narratives and roles for saints, define a special role for images of the Virgin, and encourage specific responses to the acts of looking and reading. While Christian inscriptions with ekphrastic components performed different functions, for the most part they acted to emphasize certain aspects of images and to prescribe specific modes of viewing particular images.

b. Tituli and the roles of saints

A number of cycles of *tituli* from western churches paraphrase passages from the Bible and from saints' lives in order to focus attention on particular messages meant to be conveyed by paired images. One of the most early and influential epigrammatic programmes, composed by Pope Damasus in the late fourth century, did not include images, but paired evocations of the lives of the martyrs in verse with their gravesites in the Roman catacombs.¹⁰⁴ A later set of *tituli* from Tours Cathedral, built by Gregory of Tours around 590, was composed by the poet Venantius Fortunatus and related to an earlier life of St. Martin which he had composed between 573 and 576.¹⁰⁵ The cycle of

¹⁰⁴ *Epigrammata Damasiana*, ed. A. Ferrua (Vatican City, 1942). On these epigrams, idem, *Damaso e I Martiri di Roma* (Vatican City, 1985), 11ff; C. Pietri, *Roma christiana* (Rome, 1976), i, 529-57; L. Spera, 'Interventi di papa Damaso nei santuari delle catacombe romane: il ruolo della committenza privata', *Bessarione*, 1 (1994), 111-27; A. Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 31 (Leiden, 1995), 368-97; V.F. Nicolai, 'The Origin and Development of Roman Catacombs', in idem, F. Bisconti and D. Mazzoleni, *The Christian catacombs of Rome: history, decoration, inscriptions*, trans. C.C. Stella and L.-A. Touchette (Regensburg, 1999), 49-59; J.R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital* (Oxford, 2000), 146-57; Grig, *Martyrs*, 127-35; D. Trout, 'Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome', in D.B. Martin and P. Cox Miller (eds.), *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography* (Durham, NC, 2005), 298-316; A. Thacker, 'Rome of the Martyrs: Saints, Cults, and Relics, Fourth to Seventh Centuries', in E. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds.), *Roma Felix – Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome* (Aldershot, 2007), 13-49, especially 29ff.

¹⁰⁵ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 10.6.91-2, 'Ad ecclesiam Toronicam quae per Gregorium episcopum renovata est', ed. F. Leo (Berlin, 1881), 234-8; trans. H.L. Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul', in Kessler and M.S. Simpson (eds.), *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Studies in the History of Art*, 16 (Washington, D.C., 1985), 75-91, especially 76-7. On the *carmen*, E. Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la gaule antérieures au VIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1856), 251-5; H. Delehaye, 'Une inscription de Fortunat sur Saint Martin', *Mélanges Camille de Borman* (Liège, 1919), 19-26. The related *Life* of the Martin is Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Mart. Dedicatio*, ed. F. Leo, *MGH AA* 4, 1, 293-371. On the *Life*, G. de Nie, 'The poet as visionary: Venantius Fortunatus's "new mantle" for Saint Martin', *Cassiodorus*, 3 (Catanzaro, 1997), 49-83, reprinted in idem, *Word, Image and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Aldershot, 2003); M. Roberts, 'Venantius Fortunatus's

eight *tituli*, seven of which were descriptions of episodes in the saint's life, was paired with mosaic images of the episodes.¹⁰⁶ The *tituli* are not ordered chronologically, and stress miracles with local ties: the resurrection miracles of the fourth *titulus* (*mortuos suscitavit*) took place in Tours,¹⁰⁷ as did the event of the third *titulus*, Martin's gift of his tunic to a poor man, for which the saint was rewarded with sleeves which appeared to be 'covered with gems' (*tegi gemmis*).¹⁰⁸ Herbert Kessler argues that seven of the *tituli* were inscribed alongside related images on the triumphal arch (Fig. 1.6), as in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (Fig. 1.7), or on the walls of the apse niche, as in the Basilica Eufasianiana in Poreč (Fig. 1.8) (although neither of these programs feature inscribed labels),¹⁰⁹ and places the second *titulus* and scene of Martin healing a leper in the apse, as the last two lines of the *titulus* preserve the request of the poet for saintly assistance through the intercession of the patron: 'Through your intercession, Gregory, may the holy pastor take away so many stains from the guilty Fortunatus'.¹¹⁰ The third *titulus*, which describes Martin's jewelled sleeves, may have been placed on the rear wall of the apse to connect the hagiographic tale with contemporary ritual, given that Gregory's lavish ecclesiastical vestments would have shone as he raised the Eucharistic offerings.¹¹¹

Life of Saint Martin', *Traditio*, 57 (2002), 129-87. This cycle was composed in the same vein as those of Paulinus, Rusticius Helpidius and others: see p. 136-8.

¹⁰⁶ Kessler, 'Narrative', 76; Arnulf, *Versus*, 138-9.

¹⁰⁷ *Carmina* 10.6; Kessler, 'Narrative', 78-9;

¹⁰⁸ *Carmina* 10.6. Kessler, 'Narrative', 78-9, who points out that this is also the reason that Gregory deems the cathedral important enough to renovate it, although the miracle did not in fact occur in the church itself.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 76-7. On Santa Maria Maggiore, C. Cecchelli, *I mosaici della basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore* (Torino, 1956), 206-53; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 87-124; W. Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome, from the third to the fourteenth centuries* (London, 1967), 73-7; Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art*, 66ff; B. Brenk, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Weisbaden, 1975); and, on the Christian triumphalism of the mosaic program, M.R. Miles, 'Santa Maria Maggiore's Fifth-Century Mosaics: Triumphal Christianity and the Jews', *Harvard Theological Review*, 86, 2 (April 1993), 155-75. On the Basilica Eufasianiana, Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 100-4; and n. 129 below.

¹¹⁰ *Carmina* 10.6, trans. Kessler, 'Narrative', 76-7, 80, 87-8, who argues that the *titulus* was paired with the scene of the donor, Gregory, paired with St. Martin, a similar program to that in the apse of the Basilica Eufasianiana.

¹¹¹ Kessler, 'Narrative', 80ff. On ecclesiastical garments and their visual powers, F. Barrate, 'Le vêtement dans l'antiquité tardive: rupture ou continuité?', in *Tissus et vêtements dans l'Antiquité tardive. Actes du Colloque de l'Association pour l'Antiquité tardive, Lyon, Musée Historique des Tissus, 18-19 janvier 2003*. *AT*, 12 (2004), 121-36; M. Parani, 'Fabrics and Clothing', in E. Jeffreys et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook*

Because none of the images of the church at Tours survives, we cannot know for certain how images either matched or diverged from the *tituli*. However, certain functions of the *tituli* can be deduced purely from their texts and their spatial contexts within the church. Fortunatus chose to emphasize the deeds of the saint which were local and which could be seen as imitative of those of Christ, including acts of miraculous healing and charity, raising the dead and vanquishing pagan idols (*'idola prostrata'*).¹¹² Kessler speculates on the images paired with the inscriptions, but his proposed reconstructions are quite literal: for example, he argues that the Jordan River would have been represented in the image accompanying the second *titulus* because the text compares Martin's curative powers to those of the river: '...it was not necessary to go (*ire*) to the Lord's river; that which the Jordan has (*habet*), the saint gave (*edit*) from his mouth (*ore*)'.¹¹³ The *titulus* instead could have acted as a symbolic exegesis of the visual in a similar fashion to the *tituli* of Paulinus, encouraging the viewer/reader to link the events of Christ's life to those of Martin's.¹¹⁴ The first two lines of the fourth *titulus*, on Martin's gift of his cloak to the pauper, casts the text in didactic terms: 'You who wish to know (*noscere qui mavis*) the deeds of blessed Martin, here [you] can learn concisely (*hic...breviter discere*) about the man's marvels'.¹¹⁵ But while the texts define themselves as educational, they performed other functions as well, revealing to readers the proper responses to the images. The introduction to the fifth *titulus*, on Martin raising the dead, shows how one might refer to the miracles of Martin in conversation, or perhaps use them as ammunition in an argument with a nonbeliever: 'You can prove grandly (*magna probare potes*) through the works of

of *Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 407-20, especially 413; W. Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2012).

¹¹² Kessler, 'Narrative', 80ff.

¹¹³ *Carmina* 10.6, trans. Kessler, 'Narrative', 80ff.

¹¹⁴ de Nie, 'Poet', 56-7, who argues that images in late antique Gaul were 'officially intended as commemorative and didactic' rather than meant to be venerated or adored.

¹¹⁵ *Carmina* 10.6, trans. Kessler, 'Narrative', 76-7.

Martin what God the glorious lover works by means of his servants'.¹¹⁶ The sixth and seventh *tituli* provoke reactions from the reader through a series of rhetorical questions: 'who would not acknowledge (*quis non...commodet*) the divine power [of Martin]?'; 'how great is (*quanda*) the faith of this man...?'¹¹⁷ Absent from the images they describe, the texts are still able to narrate the miracles of Martin in such vividly visual terms that they can convince modern scholars they were literal descriptions of images.

Inscribed *tituli* and dedicatory inscriptions occasionally emphasize the identities of saints to be read into and against more static portrait images. At San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome (renovated in 440-61), the inscriptions now placed on either side of the triumphal arch name and enumerate the symbolic associations of Peter, 'the rock of faith (*fidei petra*), pinnacle of honour, governor of the apostolic seat...', and Paul, who, '...persecuting the vessel of God (*Persequitur...vasa dei fit Paulus*), he himself becomes the vessel of faith (*vas fidei*) chosen by peoples and kingdoms' (Fig. 1.9).¹¹⁸ The viewer is reminded that Peter's name evokes his role as 'rock' (*petra*) of the church, and that Paul only became the *vas fidei* after his conversion on the road to Damascus. Both apostles are depicted immediately below their respective inscriptions: Peter stands on the viewer's right and holds a key ('the door-keeper', *ianitor*) in his left hand while gesturing upward to Christ with his right; Paul, to the left (to Christ's right), leans on a sword, the instrument of his martyrdom.¹¹⁹ While neither text would have conveyed new information to the average Christian viewer, each evokes the apostle as an instrument of faith, clarifying his role in the hierarchy of the church. Peter may be the 'pinnacle of honour', but Paul is

¹¹⁶ *Supra* n. 105.

¹¹⁷ *Supra* n. 105.

¹¹⁸ G. Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta, in quibus praecipue musiva opera* (Rome, 1693), i, 228ff; *ICUR*, 2, 28, 81, 98; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1761 a-d; J.M. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV.-XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg, 1916), ii, 547, 594; Ihm, *Programme*, 136; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, v, 98-9.

¹¹⁹ The mosaic has been heavily restored since the fifth century, but the iconography is not unusual for the period: Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 125-9; Ihm, *Programme*, 136ff.

marked as continuously ‘chosen by peoples’, including the congregation within his own church.

Tituli function similarly on the apse wall at Sant’Agata dei Goti in Rome (c. 460-70), where they were inscribed around two bust-length portraits of Peter, framed by roundels below the main apse mosaic (Fig. 1.10).¹²⁰ Both images of Peter reach up to heaven to take keys from the descending hands of God, and both roundels are surrounded by explanatory texts which reference gospel episodes. The left roundel is inscribed, ‘You left the ship (*navem*) for me, take the key (*clavem*)’, and the right, ‘That which you shall bind I shall bind, that which you loosen I myself shall undo’. These two inscriptions combine Christ’s actions and His words to Peter in two episodes described in the Gospel of Matthew, in which Peter leaves the boat to try to walk on the water to reach Christ (Matthew 14:29-34); and is named the ‘Rock of the Church’ in reward for recognizing Christ as the Messiah (Matthew 16:13-20). In depicting Peter twice (three times, if the apse mosaic is included) and drawing attention to his acts during the life of Christ as well as the basis for his episcopal authority, the programme uses text and image to reinforce the apostle’s status in the church hierarchy.¹²¹ The local importance of Peter in Rome would not have been lost on the patron of the church, Ricimer, a powerful *magister militum* of the western empire and a Goth, who moulded the decoration of his church to assert visually his political and religious control of the city.¹²²

¹²⁰ The mosaic is no longer extant: Ihm, *Programme*, 153-4; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 131ff; G. Bovini, *Mosaici paleocristiani di Roma (Secoli III-VI)* (Bologna, 1971), 229ff; M. Humphries, ‘From emperor to pope? Ceremonial, space and authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great’, in K. Cooper and J. Hillner (eds.), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2007), 21-58, especially 43; R. Mathisen, ‘Ricimer’s Church in Rome: How an Arian Barbarian Prospered in a Nicene World’, in A. Cain and N. Lenski (eds.), *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2009), 309-25. Neither Ihm nor Mathisen mention the roundels below the scene of Christ enthroned on a globe and flanked by apostles, although they are clearly depicted in the drawing by Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, i, Tf. LXXVII (after Ugonio); reproduced by Ihm, *Programme*, Pl. 4, 1.

¹²¹ On the late antique understanding of scenes where a figure appears more than once, see Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistula* 16, PG 77, 220, trans. Mango, *Art*, 34.

¹²² Mathisen, ‘Church’, who connects the iconographic program and inscriptions of the apse vault to Arian tenets. The debate over whether ‘Arian’ imagery actually exists, or rather whether any extant church

c. *Contemplating the Virgin*

Epigrams both east and west expound upon the Virgin and her special role in the heavenly hierarchy as mother of Christ. These inscriptions provide us with an interesting window into the expansion of the Marian cult in the sixth century and beyond, and are useful as they physically unite the language which was used to talk about the Virgin with the spaces in which she was venerated. The mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore in Ravenna (531-2), funded by Bishop Ecclesius with the help of Julius Argentarius, are no longer extant, but featured an image of the Virgin on a gold ground in the apse,¹²³ and below it an inscription which praises the Virgin in her many guises:

*Virginis aula micat,¹²⁴ Christumque cepit ab astris
nuntius e coelis angelus ante fuit.
Misterium! Verbi genetrix et virgo perennis
auctorisque sui facta parens Domini.
Vera, magi, claudi, coeci, mors, vita fatentur.*

The hall of the Virgin shines, and she seized Christ from the stars, an angel from the heavens announcing it beforehand.¹²⁵ O mystery! Mother of the word and perennial virgin, she was made parent of the Lord her creator. Truth, the magi, the lame, the blind, death, life confess her.¹²⁶

decoration expounds the tenets of Arianism, still lacks consensus: B. Ward-Perkins, 'Where is the Archaeology and Iconography of Germanic Arianism?' in D.M. Gwynn, S. Bangert and L. Lavan (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2010), 265-92; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 171-2, 177-87. On Peter and Paul in Rome, J. Huskinson, *Concordia Apostolorum: Christian Propaganda at Rome in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries. A Study in Early Christian Iconography and Iconology* (Oxford, 1982), 32-43; H. Kessler, 'The Meeting of Peter and Paul in Rome: An Emblematic Narrative of Spiritual Brotherhood', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 265-75; L. Grig, 'Portraits, pontiffs and the Christianisation of fourth century Rome', *PBSR*, 72 (2004), 203-30.

¹²³ As reported by Agnellus, *LPR* 57, trans. Deliyannis, 171.

¹²⁴ The beginning of the epigram is very similar to that of the text inscribed by the emperor Justin II in the apse of the restored Blachernae Church, also dedicated to Mary, which begins, 'This lovely temple shining with beauty the earlier Justin [Justin I] built to the Mother of God,': *AG* 1.3, trans. Paton, 3. On the complicated history of the church at Blachernae, C. Mango, 'The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople', in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae. Split – Poreč (25.9. – 1.10.1994)* (Vatican City, 1998), ii, 61-75.

¹²⁵ The earlier fifth-century *titulus* from the apse of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome also celebrated the Virgin's womb (*salutifero...ventre tuo*): *ICUR*, 2, 71; *ILCV*, 1, no. 6; Belting-Ihm, 'Zum Verhältnis', 860.

¹²⁶ Agnellus, *LPR* 57, ed. Deliyannis, 224-5, trans. Deliyannis, 171, adaptations mine; *CIL* XI, no. 284; Ihm, *Programme*, 173; Deichmann, *Ravenna, Bd. 2,1*, 343ff. On the reliability and political and religious agenda of Agnellus, J.M. Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna: The Liber Pontificalis of Andreas Agnellus* (Ann Arbor, 1995), especially 81-8.

While the apse mosaic of the church does not survive, the inscription reveals several of the multiple epithets which were assigned to Mary at some point in the later fifth or sixth century. Mary was hailed by many names in the period, as is evidenced most famously by the Akathistos hymn, probably dated to the sixth century.¹²⁷ The text of the Santa Maria Maggiore inscription focuses on her role as Virgin Mother of God, as well as on the events which led to the ‘mystery’ (*misterium*) of the birth of Christ, including the Annunciation (*...nuntius e coelis angelus...*) and the visit of the three magi. The mention of these events makes it possible that the decorative programme of the church included a Marian cycle like that of the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome,¹²⁸ or an isolated scene of the Annunciation like that on the wall of the apse of the Basilica Eufрасiana (Fig. 1.11).¹²⁹ Chorikios describes a similar painted Annunciation scene in the Church of St. Sergius in Gaza.¹³⁰ However, even if the church in Ravenna only featured a mosaic of the enthroned Virgin in the apse, the inscription would have transformed the static iconography into an active narrative sequence, emphasizing the major events of Mary’s life while drawing attention to important episodes in the life of her son, Jesus, including his healing of the

¹²⁷ The hymn is available in C.A. Trypanis, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica* (*Wiener byzantinische Studien*, 5) (Vienna, 1968), 17-39. The traditional sixth century dating is that of J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 35-6. Others have recently questioned this date and have proposed instead a date in the 430s or 440s immediately after the Council of Ephesus, at which the Mary was confirmed as Theotokos: V.M. Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London/New York, 1994), 89-97; L. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn. The Medieval Mediterranean : Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1453*, 35 (Leiden, 2001), 113-5. Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), 12-6, finds the arguments of Limberis and Peltomaa problematic, and instead places the hymn in the context of the late fifth or early sixth century urban context of Constantinople.

¹²⁸ On the church, Ihm, *Programme*, 132-5; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iii, 1ff; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 87ff; Bovini, *Mosaici*, 147ff; Oakeshott, *Mosaics*, 73-89; Ceccelli, 197ff; Brenk, *Mosaiken*, 35ff, 36-7, n. 9-13.

¹²⁹ Ihm, *Programme*, 167-9; A. Šonje, ‘I mosaici parietali del complesso architettonico della basilica eufрасiana di Parenzo’, *Atti del Centro di Ricerche Storiche di Rovigno*, 12 (1982-5), 65-138; Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 95-8, 99ff.. For an unconvincing imperial interpretation of the mosaics, D. Milinović, ‘Le programme iconographique’, in J. Centre and C. Picard (eds.), *Romanité et cité chrétienne* (Paris, 2000), 359-70. Additionally, the three preliminary study reports by Terry and Maguire are useful, in *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 4 (1998), 199-221; 6 (2000), 159-81; and 7 (2001), 131-66.

¹³⁰ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1.48-50, trans. Mango, *Art*, 64.

blind,¹³¹ his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, all of which testify (*fatentur*) to the status of Mary herself.

Around forty years later, in a church at al-Rashidiyah (574) in Jordan, a female patron, Megale, commissioned an image of the Virgin and Child along with a complementary inscription in the central nave pavement:

Ἐνταῦθα εἰ-
σελθὼν κατανοή-
σις μητέρα παρθένον,
Χ(ριστο)ῦ ἄφραστον λόγον, Θ(εο)ῦ
οἰκονομίαν καὶ, εἰ πιστεύ-
σῃς, σωθήσῃ·

Having entered into this place you will see (the image of) the Virgin Mother of Christ, the ineffable (inexpressible) *Logos*, dispensation of God, and if you were faithful you will be saved.¹³²

Megale assures her own salvation through her commission, and declares as much in the remainder of the inscription ('completed...for her salvation') (Fig. 1.12). But the text does more than advertise the Marian image. Rhetorically, it refers to Christ as *Logos* (John 1:1) and as the dispensation of God (Colossians 1:25, Ephesians 3:2). More significantly, the text explains to the viewer what 'you will see' (κατανοήσις), the image of the Virgin, and promotes her role as intercessor through whom the faithful can attain salvation (εἰ πιστεύσῃς σωθήσῃς).¹³³ The inscription promotes a specific path to salvation through vision: if a faithful Christian enters the church and gazes at the image, he or she will be saved. The specific mechanism of salvation is not outlined, but is left intentionally

¹³¹ Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 8:22-26, Luke 18:35-43 and John 9:1-12.

¹³² H. Mahamid, 'Results of the excavation of the church of al-Rashidiyah/al-Tafilah', *ADAJ*, 27 (2003), 7-16; D. Feissel and P.-L. Gatier, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG*, (2005), no. 555; L. Di Segni, in 'Ricerca', *LA* 56 (2006), 587-8; Gatier, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG*, (2008), no. 571; *SEG* 53, 1884.

¹³³ Scholarship traditionally places the development of Mary's role as intercessor in literature and artistic compositions such as the *deesis* dating to later centuries: Averil Cameron, 'Introduction', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God: perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2004), xxvii-xxxii; Pentcheva, *Mother*, 111-3. On the *deesis* in particular, C. Walter, 'Two Notes on the Deesis', *REB*, 26 (1968), 311-6; idem, 'Further Notes on the Deesis', *REB*, 28 (1970), 161-87; and on the flexibility of the iconography, A. Cutler, 'Under the Sign of the Deësis: On the Question of Representativeness in Medieval Art and Literature', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 145-54. The Akathistos hymn reveals the existence already in the fifth or early sixth century of prayers directed towards the Virgin, depending on its date: *supra* n. 127.

oblique, and the formula is overly simplistic. It would seem that faith, in this case through contemplation of a Marian image, was enough to guarantee one a spot in Heaven, as long as one was steadfast in one's faith.

Another inscription, written in hexameter in the center of a medallion in the nave pavement of the Church of the Virgin at Madaba (renovated in 767), outlines a very similar progression from vision to salvation:

Παρθενι-
κήν Μαρίην Θεο-
μήτορα καὶ ὄν ἔτικ-
τεν Χ(ριστὸ)ν παμβασιλῆα Θε-
οῦ μόνον νύεα μούνου
δερκόμενος καθάρει-
ε νόον καὶ σάρκα καὶ ἔ-
ργα ὡς καθαράϊς
εὐχαῖς αὐτὸν
Θ(εὸ)ν (ἱ)λαον <ἔυρης>.

Behold (the image of) the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and whom she bore, Christ, ruler of all, the only son of the only God, and cleanse your mind and flesh and deeds. May you find gracious God Himself through cleansing prayers.¹³⁴

Again, the medium of the Marian image—whether a mosaic, fresco or portable icon—is not specified, but is referred to by name as the Virgin herself (Fig. 1.13).¹³⁵ Of course, the inscription does not need to describe in detail the image of the Virgin, which

¹³⁴ Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 48-9; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 130; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 65; Michel, 318; Rhoby, *Epigramme, Band 1*, 394-5, with full bibliography. While Rhoby's interpolation of the verb 'find' makes metrical sense, it must be noted (as Rhoby does) that the mosaic itself leaves no room for it, either because of an error by the mosaicist in copying the text, or an error in its composition. On the date of the church, L. Di Segni, 'The Date of the Church of the Virgin in Madaba', *LA*, 42 (1992), 251-7.

¹³⁵ L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast era (ca. 680-850): a history* (Cambridge, 2011), 230-2, adopt the questionable translation of Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 65, which removes the connection between vision, prayer and purification. They argue that the inscription could just as well refer to 'spiritual rather than physical sight'. While no evidence of a Marian image survives, the verb, a form of *δερκόμεναι*, is unusual in inscriptions of the period, although a fascinating ekphrastic epigram, AG 3.8, composed in the fourth or fifth century CE on one of the second-century BCE Homeric reliefs in the Temple of Queen Apollonis at Kyzikos, describes Odysseus 'seeing' (*δερκόμενος*) the ghost of his mother, Antikleia, during his trip to the underworld (*Odyssey* 11.152ff). This text uses the verb to describe both the scene (what Odysseus sees), as well as what the viewer (and the epigram's composer) see. On the reliefs, probably either attached to or carved into column shafts in the temple, P.A. Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture: Figural Motifs in Western Anatolia and the Aegean Islands* (Madison, 1996), 17.

probably included the Christ-Child,¹³⁶ as it would have been visible to any eighth-century viewer. As in the al-Rashidiyah inscription, the text emphasizes Mary as Virgin (παρθενική) and as Mother of God (Θεομήτορα), and outlines a path of prayer through vision. However, the Madaba inscription emphasizes different names for Christ: he is the ‘ruler of all’ or ‘all-emperor’ (παμβασιληα) and the ‘only son of the only God’ (Θεοῦ μόνον υἱέα μόνου). The epigram proposes a modified function for vision which connects the act of viewing the image or icon of the Virgin to the act of ‘cleansing’ (καθάρευε) and to ‘cleansing prayers’ (καθάραις εὐχαῖς). Through vision combined with prayer, one can become cleansed in both mind and body, a solution the text ‘speaks’ in words strikingly similar to those of Gregory of Nazianzus, who teaches that the only way for the ‘man of God’ to escape the mortal world and to reach Heaven is to have been ‘purified in mind and flesh’ (νόον καὶ σάρκα καθήρας).¹³⁷ While the text defines the image of Mary as a focus for prayer, the image itself does not promise purification or salvation, but merely channels the viewer’s veneration in the proper direction.

The inscription was installed as part of the renovation of the church in 767 when the region was under Abbasid control, and in the midst of the debate over the status of images in Byzantium.¹³⁸ While issues related to the dating of the mosaic have been much-discussed by scholars, it remains very difficult to chart the specific impact on the programme of either iconoclasm in Constantinople or of the reactions to Christian images by Muslim authorities.¹³⁹ Whatever the particular context of its production, the text

¹³⁶ We might imagine a composition similar to that in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, re-erected by Patriarch Photios in 867 after the end of Iconoclasm: C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, 8 (Washington, D.C., 1962), 80-3; idem and E.J.W. Hawkins, ‘The Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Report on Work Carried out in 1964’, *DOP*, 19 (1965), 115-61; R. Cormack, ‘Interpreting the Mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul’, *Art History*, 4 (1981), 131-49; N. Oikonomides, ‘Some Remarks on the Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia’, *DOP*, 30 (1985), 111-5.

¹³⁷ Gregory, *Carmina dogmatica* 4 (‘On the Cosmos’), PG 37, 423.

¹³⁸ *Supra* n. 135. On the Abbasid Caliphate generally, H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: a political history* (London, 1981).

¹³⁹ Brubaker and Haldon, 230-4; Schick, *Christian communities*, 180-219; S. Ognibene, *Umm al-Rasas: La Chiesa di Santo Stefano ed il “Problema Iconofobico”* (Rome, 2002); N. Duval, ‘Architecture’, in idem,

emphasizes what happens when the viewer looks at an image of the Virgin and Christ and proposes that the mechanism of purification is simultaneously personal and communal: one prays by oneself, through a holy image in the shared space of the church.

d. Inscriptions and encouraged responses

The inscriptions considered thus far offer different articulations of the functions of their ekphrastic components. The inscription of Dometios with which we began the chapter focuses attention on the iconography and quality of the paired mosaic image. *Tituli* in the forms of quotations or paraphrases of hagiographic texts inscribed next to narrative images of events from the lives of saints, as at Tours Cathedral, could act as didactic texts to draw out relevant lessons from the scenes depicted, encouraging readings of images as simultaneously narrative and symbolic. Inscriptions placed next to non-narrative images of saints, as at San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome, turn these images into narrative sequences, projecting the imagination of the viewer backwards to the events of the Gospels while simultaneously reaffirming his/her continual veneration of the apostles. Inscribed texts could act as simplistic explanations for the depictions of certain scenes, or complicated articulations of symbolic meanings, as in Paulinus' churches at Nola.

However, inscriptions also encouraged perception, contemplation and prayer above and beyond the image. These texts build in intended responses to images, occasionally putting conditions upon which kinds of viewers are allowed to use images 'correctly', as at al-Rashidiyah. Other inscriptions trade more implicitly in the language of action. Some of these inscribed texts offer more generalized guidelines for response, such as the first line of the inscription which was put up in the apse of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome,

Églises, 111-14; F.B. Flood, 'Christian Mosaics in Early Islamic Jordan and Palestine: A Case of Regional Iconoclasm', in Evans, *Byzantium and Islam*, 117-8. Although the scholarly consensus has rejected this proposal, some scholars still attempt to link the image destruction and repair to an edict of Caliph Yazid II: G. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 103-5, 109-11.

renovated by the empress Galla Placidia and her sons in the early fifth century, adapting Psalm 148 (147):11-2: 'Kings of the earth and all peoples (*omnes populi*), princes and all judges of the earth, praise the name of the Lord!'.¹⁴⁰ The text uses biblical language to exhort the congregation (*omnes populi*) to join the patrons (Galla Placidia and her children as the *reges*) in praise of God in terms which would have been re-recited continuously as part of the normal liturgy of the church.¹⁴¹ Floor mosaic inscriptions often encourage the reader to pray for the donor, as in texts inscribed pavements of in the first phase of the First Sanctuary of the Memorial of Moses at Mount Nebo (350-400) (Fig. 1.14),¹⁴² and of the Basilica of Saints Silvanus and Fortunatus at Sbeitla (Basilica IV) (late fourth century) (Fig. 1.15).¹⁴³

At Sant'Andrea Catabarbara in Rome (c. 470-80), built by Pope Simplicius, the inscription, no longer extant but originally placed under a mosaic of Christ and the apostles in the apse, went a step further in promoting a commercialized model of salvation (Fig. 1.16). After describing the donation of the church in quite legalistic language involving the translation of the *titulus* of the property to the church, performed by the

¹⁴⁰ The text is preserved in anthology only, and leaves out the additional subjects 'iuvenes et virgines senes cum pueris': *ICUR*, 2, 435, 108; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1775. On the church, V.A. Sirago, *Galla Placidia e La Trasformazione Politica dell'Occidente* (Louvain, 1961), 260; L. Brubaker, 'Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', in L. James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London, 1997), 52-75, especially 61. On Galla Placidia generally, J.R. Martindale, 'Aelia Galla Placidia 3' in idem, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1980), ii, 888-9; H. Sivan, *Galla Placidia: the last Roman empress* (Oxford, 2011), 117.

¹⁴¹ This psalm was part of the everyday cathedral morning office or service in Rome in the mid-fifth century, according to Arnobius the Younger, *Commentary on Psalm 148*, *PL* 53, 566, written c. 470; R.F. Taft, *SJ, The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN, 1986), 143, 204.

¹⁴² 'You entering, I beseech you [...] pray for [...]' (Ἰκετεύω σε τὸν εἰσίο[ντα ... αἰτ]ήσασθαι ὑπὲρ...): S.J. Saller 'Chronique l'Église du Mont Nebo', *RB*, 43 (1934), 120-7, Pl. 18; idem, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo* (Jerusalem, 1941), i, 260-2, no. VII, Pl. 117, 2; *SEG* 8, 324; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, 2, 71, Pl. XVIII, 61; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 152-3, no. 1; Di Segni, in M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *Mount Nebo: new archaeological excavations, 1967-1997* (Jerusalem, 1998), 426-7, no. 1; Michel, *Églises*, 331. A similar text is inscribed in a Christian building at Kallion: 'All those who enter, pray for him (the donor, priest Dionysios) and his family', V. Petrakos, *AD*, 26 (1971), 283; D. Rousset, *BCH*, 130 (2006), 428-9; *SEG* 56, 605bis, B.

¹⁴³ '...we petition that you bear our prayers in mind...' (...petimus ut o[r]at[i]ones nostr[a]s in mente hab[e]atis...), where the prayers of the donor become those of the reader: *CIL* VIII, 23230-3; Y. Duval, *Loca Sanctorum Africae: le culte des martyres en Afrique du IVe au VIIIe siècle* (Rome, 1982), i, 75-9; N. Duval, 'Nouvelles recherches d'archéologie et d'épigraphie chrétienne à Sufetula (Byzacène)', *MEFR*, 68 (1956), 247-98, especially 266; Yasin, *Saints*, 226-8.

‘sound mind’ of the previous landowner Valila (*mens Valilae*),¹⁴⁴ the inscription ends with an exhortation to the congregation:

*Plebs devota, veni perq(ue) haec commercia disce,
terreno censu regna superna peti.*

Pious people, come and learn through this exchange,
the kingdom above is reached by property on earth.¹⁴⁵

Faithful readers are invited to learn (*disce*) and follow the example of the patron by donating their earthly wealth (*terreno censu*) to the church in order to guarantee their salvation. In its construction of a kind of *imitatio patroni* in place of the traditional *imitatio Christi*, the inscription clearly articulates a commercial, transactional model of salvation, which was often veiled in more pious language.

Of course, faith was not always articulated in such economic terms. The middle portion of the mosaic dedicatory inscription from the east end of the nave pavement of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, at Jerash (533) (Fig. 1.17), encourages prayer for the sake of prayer and for the atonement of sins:

[Τ]ῶν ἀθλοφόρων νῦν τὴν καλὴν ξυνωρίδα
σέβων προσεύχου. καὶ γάρ εἰσιν ἅγιοι
τέχνην ἔχοντες τῶν παθῶν θελκτήριον.
Ἐντεθεὺν ἕκαστος πρ[ο]σφέρων ἀγάλλεται
ταύτῃ καλύπτων τοῦ βίου τὰ πταίσματα.

Now be faithful (and) worship the beautiful pair of triumphant ones
[Cosmas and Damian]. For they are saints, having the art of healing
sufferings. Everyone who worships there rejoices in this [the art], veiling
the sins of life.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ On the church generally, see *Liber Pontificalis* (henceforth *LP*) 49.1, trans. R. Davis, *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): the ancient biographies of the first ninety Roman bishops to AD 715* (Liverpool, 1989), 42; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, i, 64-5; J. Hillner, ‘Families, patronage, and the titular churches of Rome, c. 300-c.600’, in Cooper and Hillner, 225-61, especially 236-7, 242.

¹⁴⁵ *ICUR*, 2, 436, no. 115; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1785; Ihm, *Programme*, 154-6; M. Cecchelli, ‘*Valilae o valide?*’ *Romanobarbarica*, 11 (1991), 61-78. On the apse mosaic, Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 131ff; Bovini, 225ff. For the drawing of the apse image, Ciampini, *Vetera Monimenta*, i, Taf. LXXVI; reproduced in Ihm, *Programme*, Pl. VIII, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 482, no. 314; Piccirillo, *Giordania*, 38-41; idem, *Mosaics*, 288-9; Schick, *Christian Communities*, 317-8; Michel, 250.

The text exhorts the reader to worship the doctor-saints, possibly channeled through an image of them, and prayer is cast as the proper method of overcoming one's sins (τοῦ βίου τὰ παίσματα). This exhortation uses direct address in order to explain to the reader why and how (s)he might access the spiritual powers of the martyrs, in contrast to the apse inscription in Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome (526-30), which declares that the faithful will inevitably be healed *physically*: 'To the people, certain hope of health comes from the medical martyrs...' (*Martyribus medicis populo spes certa salutis venit...*).¹⁴⁷ While both texts praise the powers of the same saints, the former invites the reader to directly engage with them as a more effective way of ensuring the desired result. An equally interactive inscription decorates the apse conch of the Cappella di San Venanzio at the Lateran Baptistery in Rome (640-2), the last two lines of which clarify the purpose of the chapel and its decoration, 'where each person, advancing, leans forward, and worships Christ, and offers effusively his/her prayers to Heaven' (*quo quisquis gradiens et C(h)r(istu)m pronus adorans / effusaque preces mittat ad aethra suas*) (Fig. 1.18).¹⁴⁸

In slightly different fashion, the inscription in the narthex of the Church of the Holy Martyrs (el-Khader) at Madaba (second third of the sixth century), placed in a medallion immediately in front of the entrance to the nave, encourages the viewer to perform specific ritual veneration of the titular martyrs: 'Whoever enters here, may he hold a pure palm branch (βάϊαν ἀγνήν), preserving [the memory] of the most holy martyrs, and giving glory to God as His due' (Fig. 1.19).¹⁴⁹ In the *editio princeps* of the inscription,

¹⁴⁷ The inscription is *ICUR*, 2, 71, 134, 152, 353, 439; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1784; also Ihm, *Programme*, 138; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, i, 138-9. On the mosaics, G.B. De Rossi, *Mosaici Cristiani e saggi dei pavimenti delle Chiese di Roma anteriori al secolo XV* (Rome, 1899), tav. XV; G. Matthiae, *SS. Cosma e Damiano e S. Teodoro* (Rome, 1948), 19ff; idem, *Chiese*, 147-8; idem, *Mosaici*, i, 135ff; Bovini, *Mosaici*, 241-55; Oakeshott, *Mosaics*, 90-4; R. Budriesi, *La basilica dei SS. Cosma e Damiano a Roma* (Bologna, 1968), 113-33. On the late eighth century triumphal arch mosaic of the church, R. Wisskirchen, 'Zur Apsisstirnwand von SS. Cosma e Damiano/Rom', *JAC*, 42 (1999), 169-83.

¹⁴⁸ Ihm, *Programme*, 144-5; G. Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage* (Toronto, 2003), 212-30, 333 n. 5. On the mosaics, Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 191-7.

¹⁴⁹ Ὅστις πρόσσεισι / [ῶδε] βάϊαν ἀγνήν ἔχοι / [μνήμην φ]υλάττων / [τῶν ἀγ]ιω(τά)των μαρτύρων/[v], δούς τε δόξαν / τῷ θεῷ κατ' ἀξίαν: Di Segni, in 'Ricerca', *LA*, 56 (2006), 586-7. On the church, Piccirillo, *Mosaics*,

Leah Di Segni expresses a slight confusion about whether the requirement of a palm branch was meant to be taken literally or not by worshippers.¹⁵⁰ Palm trees were intimately associated with the martyrs in early Christian symbolism, and are often depicted next to or behind martyrs in late antique churches in Rome and Ravenna.¹⁵¹ In Revelation 7:9-10, martyrs are also described as standing in front of the throne of God, wearing white and carrying palm fronds (φοίνικες). Palms were also associated with the triumphal entrance of the original martyr, Christ, into Jerusalem on a donkey, during which his followers held out branches in tribute, an event still celebrated in contemporary Christianity on Palm Sunday with palm branches or crosses made out of palm leaves.¹⁵² The inscription certainly evokes the symbolic valence of the palm, but might conceivably preserve a kernel of sixth-century ritual practice, if not rituals undertaken on a daily basis. Palm branches were in use in fourth-century processions of palms on Palm Sunday, witnessed by the pilgrim Egeria during her visit to Jerusalem,¹⁵³ and figures hold palm branches in church mosaics elsewhere in Arabia, including the donor Soreg, who is clad in ecclesiastical costume and flanked by two palm trees in miniature in the pavement of the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg in Jerash (first half of the sixth century) (Fig. 1.20).¹⁵⁴

Other inscriptions encourage the viewer to feel and to express wonder at the magnificence of a building.¹⁵⁵ The mosaic inscription on the west wall of the nave of Santa Sabina, in Rome (c. 422-32) connects the expected reaction of wonder (*miraris*)

129-31. P.-L. Gatier, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG*, (2008), no. 571, reads the first two lines as: 'May whoever enters here have a pure heart' ([κα]ρδίαν ἀγνήν ἔχοι), which would rid the text of any specific ritual implication.

¹⁵⁰ Di Segni, in *LA*, 56 (2006), 586-7.

¹⁵¹ In sixth-century art, palm trees separate the martyrs in procession on the nave walls of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna: Deichmann, *Ravenna*, Bd. 2,1, 144-6 Palms also appear on either side of the apse mosaic in Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome: *supra* n. 147.

¹⁵² Matthew 21:8 ('the branches from trees', κλάδους ἀπὸ τῶν δένδρων); Mark 11:8 ('cut branches from the fields', στιβάδας κόψαντες ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν); and the closest account, John 12:13 ('the branches of palm trees', τὰ βῆτα τῶν φοινίκων). The account in Luke 19:28-44 does not mention any branches.

¹⁵³ *Itinerarium Egeriae* 31.2-4, in *IAG* 28-90, trans. J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (London, 1971), 133.

¹⁵⁴ Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 296; Michel, 272-3; Baumann, *Stifter*, 208-10.

¹⁵⁵ On the classical tradition of this *topos*, see pp. 27-8.

with the donor, a presbyter named Peter, and in doing magnifies Peter's foundation.¹⁵⁶ In the courtyard of Cathedral Church of Madaba (575/6), a fragmentary inscription details the expectation that viewers exclaim aloud at the new double cistern of the church: 'everyone, marvelling, says, "A cistern within a cistern, O the wonder!"' ([θαυμ-]άζοντες πάντες ἔλεγον λάκκος ἐν λάκκῳ ὃ τοῦ [θαύ]ματος) (Fig. 1.21).¹⁵⁷ An inscription from the pavement of the north annex of the same church, dated to 603, performs a similar function: 'Looking upon (Ὠρῶν) the gentleness of Leontios the priest, wonder (θαύναζε) at the honor of the buildings and works'.¹⁵⁸ The language of a number of other inscriptions seems to imply that an exaggerated reaction to the grandeur and dazzling decor of interiors was appreciated in the period, as we have already seen at Nola and at Jerash, although not as common as in secular contexts, for example in late antique villa and bath inscriptions.¹⁵⁹

In explicitly advising the viewer to give in to the visual appreciation of the more stunning aspects of church decoration, these texts fall into the trap which ekphraseis advise against, namely that beautiful images or sights prompt superficial responses. Lucian articulates these issues most clearly in *The Hall* as they relate to the viewer's level of education:

- . ..the same law does not hold for ordinary and for educated men (πεπαιδευμένοις ἀνδράσιν). No, for the former it is enough to do the usual thing—just to see, to look about, to cast their eyes everywhere, to crane their necks at the ceiling, to gesticulate and to take their joy in silence for

¹⁵⁶ See n. 378 below.

¹⁵⁷ Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 135; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 29; idem, *Mosaics*, 116; Michel, 307. For the Aramaic- or Syriac-speaking visitor, a nearby inscription in the same courtyard repeats the prescribed phrase, 'a cistern within a cistern' in Christian Palestinian Aramaic written in Greek script, *goubba bagoubba*: Gatier, 136-7; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 30. While the phrase does not seem to be a direct quotation of a specific work, Sophronius of Jerusalem refers to the womb of the Virgin as 'λάκκος' in his *Homilia in nativitate Christi*, in H. Usener, 'Weihnachtspredigt des Sophronios', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, N.F. 41 (1886): 501-516.

¹⁵⁸ Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 140; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 22; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 116; Michel, 305-7. We do not know definitively what function the north annex served, but the inscription might be referring to an image of the donor Leontios placed in the annex, in a similar fashion to the inscriptions at al-Rashidiyah and the Church of the Virgin at Madaba.

¹⁵⁹ Dunbabin, 'Baiaurum'; Agosti, 'Saxa loquuntur'. On light and dazzle in churches, see Chapter Two.

fear of not being able to say anything adequate to what they see. But when a man of culture beholds beautiful things, he will not be content, I am sure, to harvest their charm with his eyes alone...he will do all he can to linger there and make some return for the spectacle in speech.¹⁶⁰

This passage serves as a justification for the subsequent ekphrasis of the hall performed by the nameless orator of the first half of Lucian's work. The second speaker, *Logos* personified, proceeds to counter this first justification to ekphrasis with a wink: rather than prodding the educated man to speech, a beautiful hall '...dazzles (ἐκπλήττει) and frightens him, disturbs his thought and makes him more timid, for he reflects that it is disgraceful beyond everything that his discourse should not match a so beautiful.'¹⁶¹ In the end, neither argument matters, as the audience has already been distracted by the wondrous images themselves.¹⁶²

While Lucian simultaneously embraces and challenges the possibilities of ekphrasis, Philostratus offers up his concerns about the expressive powers of art itself: 'Wonder and awe (ἐκπληξίς) often frustrates Imitation (μίμησιν, *mimesis*), but nothing will frustrate Imagination (φαντασίαν, *phantasia*) as it goes imperturbably towards its own appointed purpose', in this case the full depiction of the thing described in words.¹⁶³ The capacity of art to create joy, wonder and awe prompted different reactions from classical authors: the ordinary viewer of Lucian gives into wonder and remains mute; the educated viewer is at least occasionally capable of overcoming this first-order response; while the

¹⁶⁰ Lucian, *De Domo* 2-3, trans. Harmon, 177, 179.

¹⁶¹ *De Domo* 17, trans. Harmon, 193, 195.

¹⁶² *De Domo* 21, trans. Harmon, 199.

¹⁶³ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 6.19, trans. C.P. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 2005-6), ii, 155-7, adaptations mine. Of course, the very nature of ekphrasis of art involves imagination, visualizing beyond the static two-dimensional work to conjure up vivid (*enargeia*), moving mental pictures, as is accomplished by Philostratus himself in his *Imagines*: J. Elsner, 'Between Mimesis and Divine Power: Visuality in the Greco-Roman World', in Nelson, *Visuality*, 45-69, reprinted as Chapter 1 in Elsner, *Roman eyes*, 1-26, especially 9ff. On the *Imagines*, idem, 'Making Myth Visual: The Horae of Philostratus and the Dance of the Text', *RM*, 107 (2000), 253-76; E.W. Leach, 'Narrative Space and the Viewer in Philostratos' *Eikones*', *RM*, 107 (2000), 237-41; R. Webb, 'The Transmission of the Eikones of Philostratus and the Development of Ekphrasis from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance' (University of London, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 1992).

viewer of Philostratus is prone to see depictions of the gods as merely wonderful or dazzling rather than as convincing images of the gods themselves.

Of course, we are concerned here with the Christian viewer, who would have seen the likenesses of saints, the Virgin and Christ as a confirmation of their existence, as well as a means of access to them through vision.¹⁶⁴ The reactions encouraged by these inscriptions from Rome, Jerash, Madaba, and elsewhere avoid the problem of the shallow visual response by linking wonder and awe to the donor, describing decoration in the language of panegyric in order to shift the viewer's consideration from dazzling sights to the substance of patronage. Interestingly, all of these features are encapsulated in one striking carved epigram from a church at Kanatha (c. 400), in Arabia, where the reader is instructed to pray, and then enjoy the beauty of the church: 'First, pray now; then, having prayed, look again; enjoy yourself looking at the richly-made works...'.¹⁶⁵ The epigram continues by praising the donor, Bishop Kassius Epiodorus, and describing the marble pavement, columns and great height of the interior, further directing the reader's gaze around the space and endowing the physical with spiritual significance. In church, as long as the faithful viewer remembered to pray, (s)he could enjoy the pure aesthetic beauty of the building, which served as a permanent testament to the greatness of the patron.

Reading to move: inscriptions as signposts for motion

In addition to directing vision and prescribing prayer, inscriptions could perform a similar function to that of the narrator in ekphrasis, directing worshippers into the church, pointing out particular features and guiding the eye to different images or parts of the

¹⁶⁴ Elsner, 'Between Mimesis'.

¹⁶⁵ Εὖχεο νῦν πρότιστα καὶ εὐζάμενος πάλιν <ἀθρεῖ> / τέρπεο φθαλμοῖσιν ἰδὼν πολυδαίδαλα ἔργα: R. Donceel, 'L'évêque Epiodore et les basiliques de Kanatha, d'après une inscription grecque inédite', *Le Muséon*, 100 (1987), 67-88; R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus der griechischen Osten* (Munich, 2002), 22/35/20; *SEG* 37, 1537; E. Magnelli, 'Notes on Four Greek Verse Inscriptions', *ZPE*, 160 (2007), 37-40, especially 40; Agosti, 'Literariness', 202-3, on the Nonnian elements.

building. Pauline Donceel-Voûte and Karen Christina Britt, among others, have pointed out that church mosaic pavements were often designed specifically to direct motion, defining areas for the clergy and for the congregation.¹⁶⁶ However, little attention has been paid to the relationship between the written word and motion. At one end of the spectrum, epigrams such as those at Nikopolis and Nola bring to life the figures depicted in the adjacent images. The Nikopolis inscription describes an encircled image and prescribes a similarly circular act of viewing: the mosaic of the earth was surrounded by the ocean, and these images ‘bear round about’ their contents (περίξ φορέουσιν). Images in the text move about, ‘breathe and creep’ (ὅσα πνίει τε καὶ ἔρπει), as does the sight of the viewer, which is encouraged to respond in kind through his/her own motion. Indeed, movement is one of the core devices of late antique ekphrasis, utilized most effectively in the encomia of Chorikios of Gaza, who writes that in the church of St. Sergius at Gaza, ‘...your [the viewer’s] gaze darts hither and thither in your attempt not to leave anything unobserved...’¹⁶⁷ While ekphraseis of church interiors are typically structured along the lines of classical *periegesis*, in which the speaker or writer leads the audience or reader(s) phenomenologically (rather than systematically) around the space he is describing, inscriptions directed motion in symbolic terms, drawing viewers around spaces and forcing them to confront the meanings of their movements.¹⁶⁸

a. Entering and exiting the church

Texts inscribed in Christian interiors greeted readers and offered guidelines as to how to worship or how to reflect symbolically on the actions one takes in sacred spaces. Inscriptions often were placed at doorways, either in mosaic immediately at the threshold

¹⁶⁶ Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 492ff; K.C. Britt, ‘Mosaics in the Byzantine Churches of Palestine: Innovation or Replication?’ (Indiana University, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 2003), 104ff.

¹⁶⁷ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1.23, ed. Foerster and Richtsteig, 8, trans. Mango, *Art*, 61. On movement in ekphrasis, Webb, ‘Aesthetics’; idem, ‘Fictions’.

¹⁶⁸ Webb, ‘Aesthetics’, 65-8.

or carved on lintels, as doors were boundaries between the secular and the sacred and thus needed to be protected by words or other magical or pseudo-magical signs.¹⁶⁹ Triumphal arches were frequently inscribed, as they were boundaries between the nave and the sanctuary, as were intercolumniations between the nave and the aisles.¹⁷⁰ Paulinus is our best witness to this epigraphic concern with liminality. In his church at Nola, Paulinus placed verses on lintels above entrances and exits to direct the physical and spiritual motion of the faithful. On the main door, an inscription read: 'Peace to all who enter the sanctuary of Christ, God, pure with peaceful minds'.¹⁷¹ Above the door, along with an inscription encouraging worshippers to engage in *imitatio martyri*, another inscribed text connected the triple-arched entrance (*triplici...arcu*), also referred to as a 'triple door' (*ianua trina*), with the Trinity, and thus to 'pious faith' (*piam...fidem*).¹⁷² A more private single-arched entrance to the adjacent Basilica Vetus was framed by another text:

*Caelestes intrate vias per amoena virecta,
christicolae; et laetis decet huc ingressus ab hortis,
unde sacrum meritis datur exitus in paradisium.*

Enter, worshippers of Christ, the heavenly roads along beautiful greenery;
entering here from a happy garden is proper too,
from which an exit is given to holy paradise, as a due reward.¹⁷³

This 'garden' from which the viewer entered was perhaps allusive to paradisiacal spaces such as the Garden of Eden rather than descriptive of a real garden, as the only cultivated

¹⁶⁹ Yasin, *Saints*, 194-7.

¹⁷⁰ F.W. Deichmann, *Einführung in die Christliche Archäologie* (Darmstadt, 1983), 94-6, 105-6, who cites simple formulae dedicating structures to God, especially on doorways in Syria, or occasionally more complicated texts which speak either in the voice of God (biblical quotations such as Exodus 3.6.14, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham...', which appears on a doorway at Sinai) or in the personified voice of the door, i.e. John 10:9, 'I am the door...', as on the doorway of the nave of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople; J.-M. Spieser, 'Portes, limites et organisation de l'espace dans les églises paléochrétiennes', *Klio*, 77 (1995), 435-45, trans. as 'Doors, Boundaries and the Use of Space in Early Christian Churches', in idem, *Urban and religious spaces in late antiquity and early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001), Article XV; S.E.J. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religions Screens, East and West* (Washington, D.C., 2006); and on domestic lintels, K. Bowes, 'Christian Images in the Home', *AT*, 19 (2011), 171-90.

¹⁷¹ Paulinus, *Epistula* 32.12, ed. von Hartel, 287, l.11-28, and 288, l.1-10, trans. Goldschmidt, 41, adaptations mine. On these *tituli*, Portbarré-Viard, 145-54; Lehmann, Paulinus, 186.

¹⁷² *Epistula* 32.13, ed. von Hartel, 288-9, trans. Goldschmidt, 43; also Yasin, *Saints*, 187-8.

¹⁷³ *Epistula* 32.12, ed. von Hartel, 287, l.11-28, and 288, l.1-10, trans. Goldschmidt, p. 41, adaptations mine; also see Portbarré-Viard, 148-54.

green space at the complex, originally situated between the two basilicas, was destroyed during the course of Paulinus' renovation.¹⁷⁴ At a local level, the passage served to evoke the memory of St. Felix's original burial in a simple brick tomb within a garden around which the Basilica Vetus was subsequently built.¹⁷⁵ While the entrance to the church was the physical manifestation of the Gates of Heaven, the same doorway also acted as an exit after services were completed. Aware of this fact, Paulinus inscribed another epigram on the inner side of the archway:

*Quisque domo domini perfectis ordine votis
egrederis, remea corpore, corde mane.*

You who leave the house of the Lord having completed your vows in order,
return with your bodies, remain with your hearts.¹⁷⁶

These texts, probably painted or carved rather than executed in mosaic, reveal the patron's awareness of the power of inscriptions to shape the physical and mental responses of congregants to movement into and out of church. Paulinus paid similar epigraphic attention to the arched passageway linking his new church to the Basilica Vetus, where he inscribed one main text and two secondary couplets on each side of the arches of the passageway, to be read by congregants going in either direction. These texts emphasize the architectural unity of the complex, achieved by Paulinus himself, and conceptually connect the unification to the actions of Christ in joining the old order with the new.¹⁷⁷ By conceptualizing the physical movements of worshippers in deeply spiritual terms and offering readers an interpretative model for their own visits to the church, the epigrams of Paulinus functioned as much more than simple directions to be followed.

While Paulinus' epigrammatic programme appears to have been unusually extensive, other churches featured inscriptions which functioned much the same way as

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 149.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 151-2.

¹⁷⁶ *Supra* n. 175.

¹⁷⁷ *Epistula* 32.15, ed. von Hartel, 289-91, trans. Goldschmidt, 43-45; also see Portbarré-Viard, pp. 186-208; Yasin, *Saints*, 187-8.

did those at Nola. In the Cappella di Santa Croce (461-8) at the Lateran Baptistery in Rome, the patron, Pope Hilarus I, placed the text of Psalm 6 (5):7 above the doors of the main entrance: ‘I will come, Lord, into your house, and I will worship towards your holy temple in fear of you (*Introibo, Domine, in domum tuam et adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum in timore tuo*)’.¹⁷⁸ The text symbolically connects the chapel to the Jerusalem Temple, while inscribing a form of apotropaic protection onto the exterior entrance of the church meant to be read by all who entered as a promise of the actions the worshipper intended to take, as well as the expected divine response (protection) articulated by the rest of the psalm.¹⁷⁹

While Psalm 6 is not commonly quoted in early Christian inscriptions, a number of texts inscribed at the entrances and exits of churches quote other psalms which relate to movement into and action within the buildings. Psalm 121 (120):8, ‘The Lord will guard your entrance and exit’, is most common, occurring at least 43 times at the entrances to buildings, although around forty of these are lintel inscriptions from houses, most in Syria.¹⁸⁰ The psalm is not common in Syrian churches, but does feature in a number of Christian buildings in Palestine and Arabia, including in the atrium of the crypt of St. Peter in Gallicantu, in Jerusalem (seventh century phase);¹⁸¹ the Viri Galilei Church, also in Jerusalem;¹⁸² the pavement of a room at the Monastery of Tell Basul in Palestine (fourth

¹⁷⁸ Mackie, *Chapels*, 195-211, with previous bibliography; M.J. Johnson, ‘The Fifth-Century Oratory of the Holy Cross at the Lateran in Rome’, *Architectura*, (1995), 129-56. The foundation of the chapel is recorded in *LP* 48, trans. Davis, 38-9.

¹⁷⁹ Mackie, *Chapels*, 205-6.

¹⁸⁰ D. Feissel, ‘The Bible in Greek Inscriptions’, in P.M. Blowers (ed.), *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity* (Notre Dame, 1997), 289-98, especially 290-2, 297-8 n. 22; K.J.H. Vriezen, ‘Inscriptions in Mosaic Pavements in Byzantine *Palaestina/Arabia* Quoting Texts from the Old Testament’, in L. V. Rutgers et al. (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven, 1998), 247-61, especially 249-50. On inscriptions of the psalm in domestic contexts, on the lintels of houses in Syria, Bowes, ‘Christian Images’, 180-1.

¹⁸¹ L.H. Vincent, ‘Saint Pierre en Gallicante’, in ‘Mélanges’, *RB*, 39 (1930), 235.

¹⁸² M. Avi-Yonah, ‘Mosaic Pavements in Palestine’, *QDAP*, 2 (1932), 136-81, especially 165.

to seventh century);¹⁸³ the pavement of a funerary chapel at Tel Malhata in the Negev, in Palestine (fourth to sixth century);¹⁸⁴ the sanctuary pavement in the church at Jubayhah in Arabia (Fig. 1.22);¹⁸⁵ and the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg at Jerash (seventh century), where the passage is inscribed in the east border of the vestibule pavement, among other examples.¹⁸⁶ The preceding line of Psalm 121 (120):7, ‘May the Lord guard you against all evil’, appears in the entrance pavement of the Chapel of St. Anna on the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem (early seventh century),¹⁸⁷ and in the pavement of a room of a monastery at Siyar el-Ghanam (sixth century),¹⁸⁸ both in Palestine. Lines 7 and 8 are never found united in the same mosaic inscription, but a number of lintel inscriptions in Syria feature both.¹⁸⁹

Interestingly, while Psalm 121:8 typically functions as an apotropaic text in domestic contexts, protecting the entrances of dwellings, in Christian buildings the text is placed at different locations within structures. In churches at Jubayhah and at Khirbet Samra, in Palestine, the psalm is situated between the nave and the sanctuary, at the crucial liminal boundary between the congregation and the altar. The pavement of the church at Khirbet Samra (fourth to sixth century) also features two additional inscriptions in the same vein (Fig. 1.23). In the eastern portion of the nave, the text reads, ‘May your entrance (be) in peace. May your solitary stay be lengthy by the guiding grace of God’; while the western nave inscription expresses multiple wishes for peace:

¹⁸³ N. Tzori, *The Beth Shean Valley, The Seventeenth Archaeological Convention* (Jerusalem, 1962), 190, Pl. XXVI, 2-6; idem, in *EI*, 10 (1971), 240, Pl. 68, 3; idem, ‘A Greek Inscription from Tell Basul’, *IEJ*, 24 (1974), 227, Pl. 32c; R. and A. Ovadiah, *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel* (Rome, 1987), 137-8, no. 235.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Tel Malhata- Roman-Byzantine Sites’, *ESI*, 1 (1982), 69.

¹⁸⁵ M. al Hussein, ‘Jbeyha Church 1976’, *ADAJ*, 21 (1976), 15; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, p. 314; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 6; Michel, 288.

¹⁸⁶ Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 296; *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 34, no. 6; Michel, 272-3.

¹⁸⁷ B. Bagatti, ‘Scavo di un Monastero al “Dominus Flevit”’, *LA*, 6 (1955-6), 240-70, no. 18, figs. 1-16, Pl. 1; J. T. Milik, ‘Notes d’épigraphie et de topographie palestiniennes’, *RB*, 67 (1960), 550-91, especially 552-4, fig. 1, Pl. 29; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 81-3, no. 120.

¹⁸⁸ V. Corbo, *Gli scavi di Khirbet Siyar El-Ghanam* (Jerusalem, 1955), 19-56, Pls. 12-7; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 99-100, no. 169.

¹⁸⁹ Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 249-50; M. von Oppenheim and H. Lucas, ‘Griechische und Lateinische Inschriften aus Syrien, Mesopotamien und Kleinasien’, *BZ*, 14 (1905), 1-72, especially 37.

+ Ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χ(ριστο)ῦ
 ἡ ὑπερέχουσα παντα<χ>οῦ σόν
 [...] ἡ πᾶσσοφία πνεύματος
 καὶ ἐν τῇ σπ(...) τ<ῶ>ν (πρώτων) Ἀγίων τὰς ἰσόδους
 καὶ εἰρήν(η) ἐξόδους ὑμῶν, ν<ῦ> Κύρι[ε],
 + ἀμήν. +

+ The peace of our saviour, Christ, which prevails everywhere [.....] all the wisdom of the spirit and in [...] of the first saints, may peace be of your entrances and exits, now Lord, + amen. + ¹⁹⁰

While the inscriptions do not directly quote biblical passages, they reference the spirit of the question ‘Do you come in peace?’ asked of Samuel (1 Samuel 16:4-5),¹⁹¹ as well as Christ’s words to his disciples when he reappears to them after his crucifixion, ‘Peace be with you (Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν)’ (John 20:19).¹⁹² When read, these two latter inscriptions would have expressed a general wish for peace and preservation in terms similar to those of Christ, to the kiss of peace exchanged during services, as well as to the frequent invocations of the ‘peace of Christ’ in the popular liturgies of the late antique east, the Liturgy of St. James, Brother of Our Lord and the Divine Liturgy of St. John

¹⁹⁰ Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 98-9, no. 168; *SEG* 37, 1499B; V. Tzaferis, in M. Heltzer, A. Segal and D. Kaufman (eds.), *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel in honour of Moshe Dotan* (Haifa, 1993), 243-9, who provides a slightly variant transcription of the heavily corrected inscription; *SEG* 43, 1064. A mosaic inscription at the fifth or sixth-century ‘Imhoff’ Monastery at Beth Shean (Scythopolis) reproduces a similar plea for peace: *ibid.*, 32, no. 138; as does the inscription in the doorway into the north aisle of the Church of St. Christopher at Qabr Hiram in Lebanon (575), *supra* n. 79.

¹⁹¹ This question is also asked of Adonijah, son of Haggith, by Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon: 1 Kings 13.

¹⁹² Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 252, also connects these types of inscriptions to Deuteronomy 28:6, ‘You will be blessed when you go in and blessed when you come out’, as this passage is quoted on the lintel of a seventh-century prayer hall next to an earlier synagogue in Meroth, Upper Galilee: Z. Ilan and E. Damati, ‘Meroth (Kh. Marus) – 1986’, *ESI*, 5 (1986), 65. While the general valence of the Deuteronomy passage, one of many related to blessings and curses for acts performed, is present in the Christian inscriptions, the language of the passage in the Septuagint differs slightly: εὐλογημένος σὺ ἐν τῷ εἰσπορεύεσθαι σε καὶ εὐλογημένος σὺ ἐν τῷ ἐκπορεύεσθαι σε.

Chrysostom.¹⁹³ Peace seems to have been a common theme of entrance inscriptions in the period, also seen in secular and Jewish contexts.¹⁹⁴

Lintels in Syria also pair the text of Psalm 121 (120):8 with that of Psalm 118 (117):20, ‘This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it (Αὕτη ἡ πύλη τοῦ Κυρίου οἱ δίκαιοι εἰσελεύσονται ἐν αὐτῇ)’.¹⁹⁵ This verse is found by itself as well, and Denis Feissel identifies at least 31 inscribed texts which quote Psalm 118, the largest number inscribed upon the entrance lintels of churches in Syria.¹⁹⁶ At the sixth-century Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, the passage is inscribed within a *tabula ansata* on a machicolation on the outer walls above the entrance to the fortress-monastery (Fig. 1.24).¹⁹⁷ The inscription also appears in at least seven mosaic pavements in the east. In Palestine, the text is inscribed on the threshold floor of the main doorway into the nave of the North Church at Herodion (fourth to sixth century) (Fig. 1.25), evocatively laid out in the shape of a door;¹⁹⁸ in a church at Bethlehem;¹⁹⁹ immediately inside the doorway from the narthex to the atrium at Church A, Magen (sixth century) (Fig. 1.26);²⁰⁰ and in the pavement of the doorway to the Upper Church at Abu-Hof in the Negev (sixth century), among other places.²⁰¹ The psalm also appears immediately inside the entrance to the nave

¹⁹³ The kiss of peace is attested in the late-fifth century (post-471) *Life of St. Marcian the Oeconomus*, PG 114, 429-56. On this kiss, see R.F. Taft, SJ, ‘Byzantine Liturgical Evidence in the Life of St. Marcian the Oeconomus: Concelebration and the Preanaphoral Rites’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 48 (1982), 159-70; idem, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Volume VI: The Communion, Thanksgiving, and Concluding Rites. Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 281 (Rome, 2008), 96-8, 110-4.

¹⁹⁴ The same text, ‘May your entrance and your exit be in peace’, is inscribed on the fifth- or sixth-century mosaic pavement of a revenue office at Caesarea Maritima: C.M. Lehmann and K.G. Holum, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima* (Boston, 2000), 98-9, cat. 87.

¹⁹⁵ Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 250-1; von Oppenheim and Lucas, 33, 37, 40, 42-4.

¹⁹⁶ Feissel, ‘Bible’, 290-1, 294; Vriezen, in Rutgers, 248-51. Examples also occur in Palestine: R.C. Gregg and D. Urman, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Golan Heights. Greek and Other Inscriptions of the Roman and Byzantine Eras. South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism*, 140 (Atlanta, 1996), 276-7, no. 236, fig.

¹⁹⁷ I. Ševčenko, ‘The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in Light of Its Inscriptions’, *DOP*, 20 (1966), 255-64, especially 262.

¹⁹⁸ L. Di Segni, ‘The Greek Inscriptions in the Northern and Eastern Churches at Herodion’, in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and E. Alliata (eds.), *Christian archaeology in the Holy Land: new discoveries. Essays in honor of Virgilio C. Corbo* (Jerusalem, 1990), 177-90, especially 182-3, no. 3, with previous bibliography.

¹⁹⁹ Avi-Yonah, *QDAP*, 2, 150, no. 33, 2.

²⁰⁰ V. Tzaferis, ‘Mosaics and Inscriptions from Magen’, *BASOR*, 258 (1986-7), 25-31, no. 1.

²⁰¹ P. Figueras, ‘New Greek Inscriptions from the Negev’, *LA*, 46 (1996), 265-84, especially 274-5, no. 8.

of the Church on the Acropolis at Ma 'in in Arabia (719/20) (Fig. 1.27),²⁰² at the western end of the nave of the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis, discussed already,²⁰³ in the portico of the church at Aladja Kislé (Myra);²⁰⁴ in the west side of the nave in the basilica *intra muros* at Hagioi Saranda in Illyria;²⁰⁵ in a church at Hagioi Pente in Cyprus;²⁰⁶ and in the narthex at the entrance of the Basilica of St. Anastasia at Arkasas on the island of Karpathos (sixth century) (Fig. 1.28).²⁰⁷ Several of these inscriptions, including the one at Abu-Hof, quote the preceding line of the psalm as well: 'Open to me the gates of righteousness, (and) going into them, I will give praise to the Lord' (Ἀνοίξατέ μοι πύλας δικαιοσύνης εἰσελθὼν ἐν αὐταῖς ἐξομολογήσομαι τῷ Κ(υρί)ῳ).

All of these texts are placed either at or next to the thresholds of doorways. However, while one might expect that the texts be positioned immediately in front of the threshold facing east in order to be read by anyone entering the church, as at Magen, the inscriptions at Herodion, Abu-Hof, and Ma 'in, among others, are oriented to the west, and thus were meant to be read by those exiting the church. William Caraher has argued that the examples in Greece, at Nikopolis and Arkasas, were oriented to the west because clergymen were the main audience for nave mosaics, as the congregants would have for the most part been forced to stand in the aisles.²⁰⁸ However, members of the congregation would still have been able to read the inscriptions on their ways into and out of the basilica. This audience-specific explanation also fails to account for why some examples of this particular psalm, which specifies entry, were aimed at those processing out of the building. It remains unclear exactly why some of these 'entrance' inscriptions were instead

²⁰² Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 232; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 158; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 201; Michel, 371.

²⁰³ *Supra* n. 46, 49.

²⁰⁴ Dated to the fifth century: H. Grégoire, *Inscriptions d'Asie Mineure* (Amsterdam, 1968), 98, n. 288.

²⁰⁵ Dated to the late fifth or early sixth century: *Σύνταγμα*, 1, 60, Pl. 21D.

²⁰⁶ D. Michaelides, "'Ayioi Pente" at Yeroskipou. A New Early Christian Church in Cyprus', *Musiva & Sectilia*, 1 (2005), 189-91.

²⁰⁷ *Σύνταγμα*, 1, 59-60, no. 17, with extensive bibliography.

²⁰⁸ Caraher, 'Church', 146-7.

oriented towards the exit, but this flexibility was possibly associated with the apotropaic nature of the text of the psalm. By inscribing the invocations of the psalm onto the entrance pavement of a church, the text became a ward against evil, no matter the direction in which it faces. Worshippers reading the text aloud would have continuously reactivated its protective powers, symbolically guaranteeing themselves places in heaven: if the church portal was an earthly echo of the Gates of Heaven, then entering into the church as a believer prefigured one's eventual entry into Paradise.

Other examples of apotropaic entrance texts survive from eastern churches, including quotations of Psalm 88 (87):2, 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the tents of Jacob' (Ἀγαπᾷ Κ(ύριο)ς τὰς πύλας Σιὼν ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ σκινόματα Ἰακώβ), inscribed in three churches in Palestine and Arabia. Two of these examples, at Horvat Hesheq (sixth century) and in the Church on the Acropolis at Ma 'in (719/20) appear in the entrance pavements of the churches,²⁰⁹ with the latter also quoting Psalm 118 (already discussed),²¹⁰ while the third example, in the Church of the Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas (c. 587/8), is placed between the nave and the sanctuary, at the foot of the chancel steps (Fig. 1.29).²¹¹ This particular psalm celebrates the divinely-ordained supremacy of Jerusalem over all other cities, and was used by fourth- and fifth-century Christian theologians such as Jerome to contrast the physical gates of the city of Jerusalem with the gates of Hell, which the Christian church guards, and to evoke the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 22:14.²¹² While Psalm 88 is quoted less than a handful of times in Christian spaces, these examples illustrate both the continuing focus on Jerusalem as

²⁰⁹ On Horvat Hesheq, L. Di Segni, 'The Greek Inscriptions at Horvat Hesheq', in Y. Tsafir (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1993), 66-70, especially 70, no. 5. On Ma 'in, *supra* n. 201.

²¹⁰ Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 281-2; idem, *Mosaics*, 235; idem, in idem and Alliata, 259-60, no. 15; Michel, 387.

²¹¹ Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 280-1; idem, *Mosaics*, 234; idem and E. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas, Mayfa'ah 1: gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994), 260, no. 16; Michel, 387.

²¹² Jerome, *Epistula* 108 (*Ad Eustochium*), 9, CSEL 55, 315, who quotes the psalm in a passage describing the pilgrimage of Paula the Younger to Jerusalem.

supreme *locus sanctus* and as a symbolic model for the village church.²¹³ By placing the psalm at important liminal spaces in the church, patrons were able to recreate the heavenly Jerusalem within their more humble spaces while emphasizing their connections to the earthly Jerusalem nearby.²¹⁴ When clergymen or congregants entered the church or approached the altar and read the psalm, they were symbolically entering the heavenly city through the ‘gates’ or doors of the church.²¹⁵

b. Actions in church

Epigrams occasionally memorialized and permanently re-enacted more specific ritual motions in church interiors, as did the inscription from the Church of the Holy Martyrs (el-Khader) at Madaba.²¹⁶ Similarly conceived texts feature in several early Christian baptisteries in Rome, including at the Lateran Baptistry (San Giovanni in Fonte) (Fig. 1.30), remodeled in the first half of the fifth century by Pope Sixtus III and his archdeacon, who later became Pope Leo I.²¹⁷ The epigram, carved in distiches on the octagonal architrave surrounding the baptismal font, articulates baptismal practice in

²¹³ On the power of the idea of Jerusalem, R. Ousterhout, ‘The sanctity of place and the sanctity of buildings: Jerusalem vs. Constantinople’, in Westcoat and idem, *Architecture*, 281-306.

²¹⁴ This trend towards systematic theological interpretations of every part of the architecture of the church is evident in the sixth-century Syriac ‘Hymn on the Cathedral of Edessa’, ed. and trans. H. Goussen, *Le Muséon*, 38 (1925), 117-36, trans. C. Mango, *Art*, pp. 57-60. Symbolic interpretations are developed further in the eighth century, as attested in the writings of the patriarch Germanos: R. Ousterhout, ‘The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy’, in L. Safran (ed.), *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 1998), 81-120, especially 98-9; Doig, 80-3.

²¹⁵ The heavenly ‘new Jerusalem’ is described in Revelation 21, as well as alluded to in the Old Testament, at Hebrews 12:22.

²¹⁶ *Supra* pp. 50-1.

²¹⁷ R.M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols and Settings of Early Christian Baptism. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 105 (Leiden, 2011), 184-8, with further bibliography; idem, ‘Inscriptions from early Christian Baptisteries in Rome’, in *Acta ad archaeologiam*, 24 (Rome, 2011), 65-83; F.J. Dölger, ‘Die Inscript im Baptisterium S. Giovanni in Fonte der Lateranischen Basilika aus der Zeit Xystus III (432-440) und die Symbolik des Taufbrunnens bei Leo dem Grossen’, *Antike und Christentum*, 2 (1930), 252-7; G. Cuscito, ‘Epigrafi di apparato nei battisteri paleocristiani d’Italia’, in *L’edificio battesimale in Italia. Aspetti e problemi: ACIAC*, 8 (2001), 441-66. On the ritual of baptism, Jensen, *Water*, 127-78. A lengthy text, probably once inscribed on the dome or around the font of the baptistry of San Giovanni at Santa Thecla, Milan, combines this type of practical advice about ritual (‘Let whoever wishes to shed their shameful lives’ transgressions wash their hearts here...’) with the symbolic participation of Christ in the service: *ibid.*, 195-8, with further bibliography; the inscription, possibly composed by Ambrose himself, is preserved in the Vatican, *Palatino Latin Codex* 833; *CIL* V, 617,2; *ICUR*, 2, 1, 161 no. 2; S. Banterle et al. (ed.), *Opera omnia di sant’Ambrogio. Inni, Inscrizioni, Frammenti* (Milan, 1994), 145-66.

symbolic terms, but at the same time guides practice: it instructs the reader to ‘plunge’ (*purgente*) into the font if one wishes to ‘be cleansed’ (*esse volens...mundare*) in the water, and admonishes him not to let their sin ‘terrify’ (*terreat*) them.²¹⁸ These instructions are simple enough, and on occasion are pared down even further, as in the baptistery of the cathedral of Tipasa (late fourth or early fifth century), in Algeria, whose inscription takes the form of a simple equation: ‘If anyone searches to learn how to live eternally, here let him be washed by water (*hic lavetur aqua..*) and let him see the heavenly [kingdom] (*..videat caelest[ia regna]*)’.²¹⁹ These practical texts stand out from other baptistery inscriptions, which are either simple donation inscriptions, as in the baptistery of Kélibia (Demna), Tunisia,²²⁰ or epigrams which grandly proclaim the symbolic meanings and virtues of baptism, as in the Orthodox (Neonian) Baptistery (early fifth century) at Ravenna, whose mosaic texts set over four interior niches quote biblical passages in order to contextualize the ritual in typological, Christological terms (Fig. 1.31).²²¹ Oscillating between the practical (‘use this space for...’) and the symbolic, these texts define readers’ responses at multiple levels.

Another Christian building at Tipasa, the Church of Alexander (fourth or early fifth century), features a dedicatory inscription which ends with a striking description of the liturgy of the Eucharist, celebrated by the personified ‘Christian Age’, *Crhristiana* (sic) *aetas*: ‘...and happy to touch the holy thresholds with its feet, (the Christian Age), always singing sacred songs, happy to extend hands in the sacrament’ (*...liminaque sancta*

²¹⁸ Dölger, ‘Inscript’, 258; Jensen, ‘Inscriptions’, 67-70.

²¹⁹ *CIL* VIII, 209; *Inventaire*, iii, 90, no. 373-4; Gui, Duval, and Caillet, i, 21-4.

²²⁰ C. Cortois, ‘Sur un baptistère découvert dans la région de Kélibia’, *Karthago*, 6 (1955), 97-127; J. Cintas and N. Duval, ‘L’ Église du Prêtre Félix (region de Kélibia),’ *Karthago*, 9 (1998), 157-265; Duval, *Loca Sanctorum*, i, 54-8; S. Ristow, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien. JAC Supplement*, 27 (Münster, 1998), 260, no. 728; Jensen, *Water*, 213-6.

²²¹ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Bd. 1*, 130-51; idem, *Ravenna. Bd. 2*, 17-47; S. Kostof, *The Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna* (New Haven, 1965), 58-62; A.J. Wharton, ‘Ritual and Reconstructed Meaning:: The Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna’, *AB*, 19,3 (1987), 358-75; Ristow, *Baptisterien*, 189, nos. 389-9; Jensen, *Water*, 198-204.

pedibus contingere laeta / omnis sacra canens, sacramento manus porrigere gaudens).²²²

The text describes the approach of the assembled faithful, represented by a Christian personification,²²³ to the threshold of the sanctuary, records the celebration of the rite by the congregation, and concludes with the ‘rejoicing’ hands (*manus...gaudens*) of the presiding priest reaching out to distribute the Eucharistic sacrament to the congregants. Inscribed immediately in front of the sanctuary (and in the very space it describes), the text serves as a witness to contemporary liturgical practice and as a text which fixes that practice in place permanently, rather than as a guide to specific steps of the ritual. These same lines appear again, slightly altered, in the dedicatory inscription of the church of Bishop Cresconius (Church II; the South Church) at Djemila (fifth century?), in which the sacrament and the liturgy become medicine which heal a schism in the church (*sacramento Dei medicinam sumere (s)c[h]ismae*), probably the Donatist schism which divided the African churches in the period.²²⁴

While these ‘active’ inscriptions exhibit the ekphrastic interest in motion, they serve a much more immediate purpose than do descriptions of the moving viewer in ekphrasis, as they are written into the very spaces in which the clergy and the congregation moved. Inscribed texts recorded ritual practice to guide to participants involved, but more

²²² The mosaic is not extant, but the text is preserved as *CIL* VIII, 20903; *Inventaire*, iii, 95-6, no. 397, 4; Gui, Duval and Caillet, i, 32-7, no. 9, Tipasa, 6; also Duval and Pietri, ‘Évergetisme’, 388; Yasin, *Saints*, 97-8, figs. 2.23-4. On anti-Arian sentiment in the text, A. Ferrua, *La polemica antiariana nei monumenti paleocristiani. Studi di antichità cristiana*, 43 (Vatican City, 1991), 136-7, no. 130.

²²³ While more common in eastern mosaics (especially at Antioch), personifications feature in the mosaics of the sixth-century churches at Qasr el-Lebia and Ras el-Hilial in Cyrenaica, built after the Justinianic reconquest of the province: E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum and J. Ward-Perkins, *Justinianic Mosaic Pavements in Cyrenaican Churches* (Rome, 1980), 40-1, 140-1.

²²⁴ Y. Duval, ‘La Maurétanie Sitifienne à l’époque byzantine’, *Latomus*, 29 (1970), 157-61; Gui, Duval and Caillet, i, 96-8, no. 27, Djémila, 2 (as part of episcopal group); W.H.C. Frend, ‘Altare Subnixus: A Cult of Relics in the Romano-British Church?’, *JTS*, n.s., 48, 1 (April 1997), 125-8. On Donatism, W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford, 1952); M.A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis, 1997), 130-74; L. Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* (Berkeley, 2010), 173-94. For a more critical view of the identities of various ‘Donatist’ groups, B.D. Shaw, ‘African Christianity: Dispute, Definitions and “Donatists”’, in M.R. Greenshields and T.A. Robinson (eds.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Religious Movements: Discipline and Dissent* (Lampeter, 1992), 5-34. On potential hints of similar doctrinal conflicts in southern Arabia between Monophysites and Chalcedonians in mosaic inscriptions, P.-L. Gatier, ‘Les mosaïques paléochrétiennes de Jordanie et l’histoire de l’Arabie byzantine’, in Duval, *Églises*, 289-95, especially 295.

importantly emphasized the symbolic associations of the liturgy, memorializing ephemeral practice in the space in which it occurred. These texts were thus meant to be read by worshippers as confirmations of the symbolism and meaning of their own actions in church, but also to act as apotropaic guardians of sacred interiors, to record proper ways of thinking about one's actions, and to activate spaces of worship continuously, even when services were not taking place.

Voice as amplifier

Many of the inscriptions considered thus far address the reader directly in the second person ('you see'). The use of direct address personalized texts for readers, reaching out and grabbing the attention of literate Christians and encouraging them to interact with spaces and monuments just as large numbers of Graeco-Roman dedicatory and funerary inscriptions had done in the preceding centuries.²²⁵ These texts also address the reader or audience in the same way as do late antique ekphraseis: Chorikios, for example, addresses the 'you' of the audience in his descriptions of the Churches of St. Sergius and St. Stephen at Gaza, inviting 'you' to follow him around the buildings.²²⁶ However, mosaic inscriptions used other strategies as well, speaking in the voices of donors and of mosaics and the buildings themselves.

²²⁵ On epigraphic orality and re-performance, Papalexandrou, 'Text'; G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris, 2006); G. Agosti, 'La voce dei libri: dimensioni performative dell'epica greca tardoantica', in E. Amato, A. Roduit and M. Steinrück (eds.), *Approches de la Troisième Sophistique: hommages à J. Schamp* (Brussels, 2006), 33-60; J.W. Day, *Archaic Greek epigram and dedication: representation and reperformance* (Cambridge, 2010); A.P.M.H. Lardinous, J.H. Blok, and M.G.M. van der Poel (eds.), *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion. Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World*, 8 (Leiden, 2011).

²²⁶ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1-2. On the modeling of ekphrasis after classical *periegesis*, Webb, 'Aesthetics', 65-8; idem, *Ekphrasis*, 54-5.

a. *The speaking donor*

Occasionally dedicatory inscriptions ‘quote’ the donor of the building speaking in the first person.²²⁷ Previously, Roman *tituli* claimed to accurately reproduce real speech, as in the third-century Magerius mosaic from Smirat in Tunisia, where a *venatio* scene is inscribed with the words spoken by the herald of the games, appealing to the generosity of the patron (Magerius) in order to encourage him to pay his gladiators, as well as the subsequent acclamations of the crowd celebrating the generosity of the donor, who pays twice the amount requested (Fig. 1.32).²²⁸ A number of secular building inscriptions which quote or purport to quote the words of donors date to the fourth or fifth centuries. An epigram from a villa at Aïn Témouchent, near Sétif in Algeria, paired with an apotropaic mask-like head of Ocean, demanded in the voice of the patrons that ‘hateful’ or ‘reckless speech’ (*lingua proterva*) be silenced in their house, a house in which they outdo our ancestors (*superamos avos*) (Fig. 1.33).²²⁹

²²⁷ Late antique funerary inscriptions continue in some cases to be composed in the first person, for example the oft-studied epitaph of Abercius, dated to the late second century C.E. and inscribed on his tombstone at Hierapolis in Asia Minor: F.J. Dölger, *IXΘΥΣ. Der heilige Fisch in den antiken Religionen und in Christentum* (Munich, 1922), ii, 454-507; M. Guarducci, ‘L’iscrizione di Abercio e Roma’, *Ancient Society*, 2 (1971), 174-203; W. Wischmeyer, ‘Die Aberkiosinschrift als Grabepigramm’, *JAC*, 23 (1980), 22-47; R. Merkelbach, ‘Grabepigramm und Vita des Bischofs Aberkios von Hierapolis’, *Epigraphica Anatolica*, 28 (1997), 125-39; P. Thonemann, ‘Abercius of Hierapolis: Christianization and Social Memory in Late Antique Asia Minor’, in B. Dignas and R.R.R. Smith (eds.), *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 2012), 257-82.

²²⁸ The mosaic is now in the Sousse Museum: K.M.D. Dunbabin, *The mosaics of Roman North Africa: studies in iconography and patronage* (Oxford, 1978), 67-9, 268, Pls. 52-3; A. Beshouch, ‘La mosaïque de chasse à amphithéâtre découverte à Smirat en Tunisie’, *CRAI*, (1996), 134-57; Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 116-7. Leader-Newby, ‘Mosaics’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 184-8, references a similar ‘spoken’ inscription from a second-century mosaic of a drinking party at El Djem, also in Tunisia; on this mosaic, also Dunbabin, *North Africa*, 78-9.

²²⁹ Now in the Algiers Museum: *CIL* VIII, 8509; *Inventaire*, iii, 75, no. 318; Dunbabin, *North Africa*, 151-2, 268, Pl. 143. Another example from a Roman villa in Ténès, Algeria, reports in the first person that the patron can see the roofs of other houses as well as the sea, a brash assertion of the prominence of his own house disguised as an innocent observation which would have been echoed and confirmed by visitors when they read it: *CIL* VIII, 21510. Similar inscriptions occur in eastern contexts as well, for example the ‘speaking’ donor Tiberius Iulius Septimius Iulianus, who declares that he paid for the mosaic decoration of the Baccheion Temple at Smyrna: *I. Smyrna* 733; V. Scheibelreiter, *Stifterinschriften auf Mosaiken Westkleinasiens* (Vienna, 2006), no. 2; idem, *Die Mosaiken Westkleinasiens: Tessellate des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. bis Anfang des 7. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Vienna, 2011), 381, cat. 135, Pl. 609. On ‘speaking statues’ which were given new words by pilgrims and passersby in antiquity and the Renaissance, see also V. Platt, ‘“Shattered Visages”: Speaking statues from the ancient world’, *Apollo*, (July 2003), 9-14.

Bold statements such as these are echoed by church dedicatory inscriptions, including that of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in the Basiliscus district of Constantinople, built in the early sixth century by the empress Sophia, as well as by the dedicatory inscription of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (432-40), which began in the words of its patron, Pope Sixtus III: ‘Virgin Mary, I, Sixtus, have dedicated to you new roofs as proper gifts...’ (*Virgo Maria, tibi Xystus nova tecta dicavi / digna...munera*).²³⁰ Readers may well have read this texts aloud, re-performing the original dedication in Sixtus’ words. Donors chose to emphasize different aspects of their gifts in different contexts. In a mosaic inscription in the pavement of the Chapel of Christ Pantocrator at Beth Guvrin in Palestine (c. 500), the patron, Obodianos, combines self-praise with Homeric language:

Χριστοῦ παμβασιλῆος
ἐκόσμησα τὸ μέλαθρον
οὗδας ὁδὸν ψηφῖσιν ἰδίων
διὰ μαθητῶν
τοῦδ’ ἱερεὺς ἀμύμων
Ὀβοδιανὸς ἡπιόθυμος.

I, noble priest of this place, gentle Obodianos, decorated the house, the floor (and) the entrance of (the church of) Christ, Emperor of All, with mosaics, through my disciples.²³¹

This text employs a symmetry of arrangement, strengthened by the placement of line breaks, which pairs the ‘Christ, Emperor of All’ of the first line with the ‘gentle Obodianos’ of the final line, so that the reader begins with Christ (in the genitive, as dedicatee) and ends with Obodianos (in the nominative, speaking as dedicant), emphasizing the connection between the Christ and the donor, described in Homeric

²³⁰ The inscription of the Church of Cosmas and Damian is not extant, but is preserved as AG 1.11. The Santa Maria Maggiore dedicatory inscription was destroyed in later restorations of the mosaic program, but is preserved in *ICUR*, 2, 71; *ILCV*, 1, no. 976. Synagogue inscriptions sometimes speak as well, for example the dedicatory inscription of the fourth-century synagogue at Smyrna, which records the donation of seven *solidi* of ‘I, Irenopoios’: *CII* 2, 739; Lifschitz, 22-3, no. 14.

²³¹ L.H. Vincent, in *RB*, 30 (1922), 259-81, Pls. VIII-X; F.M. Abel, ‘Chronique: découvertes récentes à Beit-Djebelin’, *RB*, 32 (1924), (1924), 584-604, figs. 1-4, Pls. X-XVI; Avi-Yonah, ‘Mosaic Pavements’, *QDAP*, 2, 147, no. 23, 8; *SEG* 8, 243.

adjectives.²³² A similarly modest yet forceful voice speaks in the middle portion of the apse dedicatory inscription of Hosios David (c. 540), at Thessaloniki, in which an anonymous female patron draws attention to her fulfilment of a vow, presumably the construction or decoration of the church: ‘Having made a vow, I was successful, and having succeeded, I fulfilled (the vow)’ ((Εὐξαμ)ένη / ἐπέτυχα καὶ ἐπιτυχο(ῦσ)α ἐπλήροσα) (Fig. 1.34).²³³ The inscription concludes with another reference to her vow, referring to her as ‘one whose name God knows’ (ἧς οἶδεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸ ὄνομα), allowing her to promote her accomplishments while remaining humble.²³⁴

Other patrons were eager to proclaim their humility in different terms, as in the dedicatory inscription of the Basilica of St. Anastasia at Arkasas (Fig. 1.35), Greece (sixth century), laid in mosaic in the central pavement of the narthex:

+ Ἀναστασίαν νόμφην καὶ συνζυ-
γὸν τοῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ ἦν περ ἐξεγόρασεν διὰ
τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος ὁ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ζω-
ῆς δοξῆς περιβεβλημένην καὶ πε-
πυκλιμένην δοξάζοντες ἐγὼ
ὁ ἁμαρτολὸς καὶ ἐλεεινὸς
Κῦρος ἐπίσκοπος οἱ τε εὐλαβεῖς
κ(αὶ) θεοφιλεῖς, κληρίκοι τὸν τόπον
ἐκοσμήσαμεν ἐν μ(ηνὶ) Ἰουνίῳ κ(αὶ) ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) Γ. +

²³² The adjective ἀνύμων is used frequently in the *Odyssey* (1.232, 3.111, etc.) and the *Iliad* (4.194, 14.144). The Three Fates are described as ‘gentle (ἡπιόθυμοι) powers’ in *Orphic Hymns* 59.15.

²³³ D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle*. *BCH supplément*, 8 (Athens, 1983), 97-8, no. 103a; L.S. Nasrallah, ‘Early Christian Interpretation in Image and Word: Canon, Sacred Text, and the Mosaic of Moni Latomou’, in idem, C. Bakirtzis and S.J. Friesen (eds.), *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē: Studies in Religion and Architecture*. *Harvard Theological Studies*, 64 (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 361-96; L. James, ‘Images of Text in Byzantine Art: the Apse Mosaic in Hosios David, Thessaloniki’, in Krause and Schellewald, *Bild und Text*, 255-66. On the mosaic generally, O. Diehl, ‘A propos de la mosaïque d’Hosios David à Salonique’, *Byzantion*, 7 (1932), 335-8; A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: a study of its origins* (London, 1969), 44; T.F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, 1993), 118; J.M. Spieser, ‘The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches’, *Gesta*, 37 (1998), 63-73; R. Wisskirchen, ‘Zum Apsismosaik der Kirche Hosios David’, in *Stimuli. Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassman* (Münster, 1996), 582-94. On the church in general, A. Xyngopoulos, ‘The Sanctuary of the Monastery of the Stone-Worker in Thessalonikē and its Mosaics’, *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον*, 12 (1929), 142-80 (Greek); A. Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et de l’art chrétien antique* (Paris, 1946), 1, 146; R.F. Hodinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia* (London, 1963), 175.

²³⁴ On the formulae of anonymity, G. Babić, ‘North Chapel of the Quatrefoil Church at Ohrid and Its Mosaic Floor’, *Zbornik Ravova (Bvisantoloki Instituta)*, 13 (1971), 263-75, especially 267-70; J. Russell, *The Mosaic Inscriptions of Anemurium* (Vienna, 1987), 59-60, n. 151-3; Baumann, *Stifter*, 296; Yasin, *Saints*, 148 n. 106.

I, the sinner and merciful Kyros, bishop, and the pious and God-loving clerics, glorifying Anastasia, bride and spouse of Christ, whom the source of glorious life redeemed by his own blood, (Anastasia) having been clad and worked in colours, beautified this place in the month of June and in the third indiction.²³⁵

As at Beth Guvrin, the patron, Kyros, begins with the titular St. Anastasia as dedicatee, before going on to detail his act of decorating the church. Although he does give his name, Kyros presents himself as more humble than either Obodianos or the anonymous patron of the Hosios David mosaics, and speaks in much more typically Christian language, with no classical elements to speak of. Interestingly, the inscription tells us Anastasia had been ‘clad and worked in colours’ (περιβεβλημμένην καὶ πεποικιλμένην), a quotation of Psalm 45:13, here referring either to the vivid adornments of her soul, to her image in the church, or perhaps to both.²³⁶ While the patrons of Hosios David and the Basilica of St. Anastasia also speak in their inscriptions, the classicizing rhetoric of the Beth Guvrin text is the exception rather than the rule, and is most likely due to the learnedness of the patron. By fixing their own words onto their churches, elites could preserve the verbal and

²³⁵ Σύνταγμα, 1, 59-60, no. 17, with previous bibliography. Also the similar mosaic dedicatory inscription of the ‘Thanksgiving Basilica’ in the same city, built in the late fourth or early fifth century, which speaks similarly in the first person (although the name of the donor is not preserved: ‘I, blameless presbyter...’ (Εγὼ [ἄμ]εμπος πρεσβύτερος...): Σύνταγμα, 1, 54, no. 16, with further bibliography. Other Christian examples of this formula preserve the humility of the Hosios David and St. Anastasia inscriptions, including a door lintel from a church or monastic building dedicated to Mary at Ramsaniyye in the Golan Heights, ‘...I built the mountain monastery (ὄρομόνιον), Mary; it is your church’: Gregg and Urman, 189-90, no. 156, fig.; also more formulaic inscriptions, including from Basilica E at Knidos, ‘I, Cleopatra, *femina clarissima*, having made a vow, decorated [the church] with mosaic’: *IKnidos* 243; Scheibelreiter, *Stifterinschriften*, no. 22; idem, *Mosaiken*, 299-300, Abb. 366. A small number of inscriptions speak prayers in the first person, as in the text inscribed in the Diakonikon of the Propylaea Church at Jerash (565), quoting Psalm 65 (66):1-3, ‘Lord, lean your ear and hear me...’: Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 486, no. 331B; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 297; Michel, 267.

²³⁶ The psalm describes the daughter of the King of Tyre as ‘dressed in robes woven with gold and adorned with many colours’ (ἐν κροσσωτοῖς χρυσοῖς περιβεβλημένη πεποικιλμένη), but was popularly interpreted by Christians as referring to spiritual beauty, as by John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Gospel of Matthew* 22.14, PG 58, 651, 44ff. This psalm perhaps is particularly appropriate in both the material and spiritual senses as it relates to St. Anastasia, as her later *passio*, set during the persecution of Diocletian, plays on the themes of fine clothing. The saint is wealthy, as the daughter of the *vir illustris* Praetextatus, but disguises her wealth by wearing shabby clothing to visit Christian prisoners; her ‘sisters in Christ’ Agape and Chyonia are burnt, but their bodies and clothes remain unscathed; and Anastasia herself refuses to be bought by fine jewelry, resisting in order to stay true to her faith: *Passio sancti Chrysogoni et sanctae Anastasiae*, ed. H. Delehay, *Étude sur le légendier romain: les saints de novembre et de décembre. Subsidia Hagiographica*, 23 (Brussels, 1936), 221-49.

performative essences of their donations, which were then reactivated when read by worshippers.

b. The speaking church

Several dedicatory inscriptions from the sixth century adopt an alternate strategy which also had classical roots, giving voices to buildings themselves.²³⁷ These ‘speaking churches’ play with the relationship between patron, monument and reader, imbuing the building with a fixed *ego*, but one which must be interacted with and vocalized by a reader to have any effect upon an audience.²³⁸ In the church at Apollonia (Reshef) in Palestine (Fig. 1.36), an inscription in the nave uses the language and dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic, enabling the church to declare its own supremacy over pagan structures:

+ Ἀμβροσίης τελέθω καὶ [νέκταρος οἴκο]ς ἀρείων
καὶ με Μαρῖνος ἔτευξε, θεὸ[ν κλυτόμ]ητιν (ἅ)[ίρ]ων
[μυσ]τικὸν ἀχράαντον ἀεὶ νόον ἡνιοχέων.

I am a house better than ambrosia and [nectar], and Marinos built me,
praising the divine renowned skill and always preserving his pure and
mystic mind.²³⁹

Asher Ovadiah places this epigram in the specific context of the emperor Justinian’s persecution of paganism. However, as he discusses, the classical educational system was

²³⁷ The famous classical example of a ‘speaking’ object is the sixth-century BCE funerary memorial of Phrasikleia, ‘I am the *sema* (‘sign’, here the grave marker) of Phrasikleia; I shall always be called *kore* (maiden), the gods allotting me this name in place of marriage’ (CEG 24): L.H. Jeffrey, ‘The inscribed gravestones of Archaic Attica’, *ABSA*, 57 (1962), 115-53, especially 138-9, no. 46; J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Lloyd (Ithaca, NY, 1993), originally published as *Phrasikleia: anthropologie de la lecture en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1988); D. Tarn Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton, 2001), 14-5, 258-9; R. Wachter, ‘The origin of epigrams on “speaking objects”’, in Baumbach, Petrovic and Petrovic, *Epigram*, 250-60; Squire, *Image*, 151-3; and generally, M. Burzachechi, ‘Oggetti parlanti nelle epigrafi greche’, *Epigraphica*, 24 (1962), 3-54. Roman examples of similar funerary monuments also exist, for example the late first century CE monument of Tiberius Claudius Tiberinus in Rome: M. Koortbojian, ‘*In commemorationem mortuorum*: text and image along the “streets of tombs”’, in Elsner, *Art and Text*, 210-34, especially 227-9, fig. 36; E. Ruggiero, *Catalogo del Museo Kircheriano* (Rome, 1878), 49ff., cat. no. 158; also generally, M. Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford, 2006), 53-8. On the dearth of later Byzantine ‘speaking objects’, R. Nelson, ‘Image and Inscription: Pleas for Salvation in Spaces of Devotion’, in James, *Art and Text*, 100-19, especially 107-9.

²³⁸ Svenbro, 30-37.

²³⁹ Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 11, no. 2; R. Birnbaum and A. Ovadiah, ‘A Greek Inscription from the Early Byzantine Church at Apollonia’, *IEJ*, 40 (1990), 182-91; Ovadiah, ‘Allegorical Images’, 444-5, fig. 5.

still operating healthily in the sixth century, and the borrowing of classical language and metre to praise the Christian faith should not be read as unusual,²⁴⁰ although the Homeric references in the passage are especially strong.²⁴¹ In personifying the church as speaker, the inscription forces the reader to assume the role of the building as (s)he reads the text aloud, praising both the church itself and the donor. However, at the same time that the church credits Marinos as its patron, it emphatically asserts the ‘absence of the author who, at the moment when his inscription is read, is no longer there’.²⁴² The pointed physical absence of the donor, contrasted with the eternal preservation of his memory in the inscription, would have been made more evident by the reader’s act of performing the text aloud, the reader in effect temporarily becoming the donation of the absent patron. This emphatic assertion of the patron’s presence in the face of his absence is paralleled by the linguistic games played by the voice of the church, simultaneously embracing and denying the fruits of classical culture, which (as we will see shortly) was a popular rhetorical move in the period.

Not all Christians in late antique Palestine would have appreciated the Homeric valence of this text, and some would have understood it simply as a dedicatory inscription which praised both God and the patron. For viewers who were familiar with the classics, the text reads as an epic poem in miniature. Two other epigrams preserved in the *Anthologia Graeca* endow the church with voices which speak in similar epic modes. A church built in Constantinople around 520 proclaims its donation by the consul and prefect Theodorus to Justin and Justinian:

²⁴⁰ Ovadiah, ‘Images’, 444-5. On classical education in late antiquity, *supra* n. 74.

²⁴¹ In *Odyssey* 5.93, Calypso sets out ambrosia and nectar for Hermes to eat, while κλυτόμητος is a common epithet for Hephaestus, as in *Homeric Hymns* 20.1.

²⁴² Svenbro, 31.

I am the celebrated temple of the Emperor Justin, and the consul Theodorus the strong, thrice a prefect, dedicated me to the Emperor and his son Justinian, the general of the whole army.²⁴³

A second lapidary inscription from the same church indicates that Theodorus means to convey the church was built *on behalf of* the emperor, rather than dedicated to him: ‘You see the famous work of the Emperor Justin and Justinian...this was made by famous Theodorus’.²⁴⁴ No archaeological trace of the church survives, but the inscription focuses on that very act of dedication, which when read aloud bound the reader verbally to the emperor and his successor, Justinian. An entire cycle of inscriptions from the renovated Church of Hagia Euphemia in the district of Olybrius, first built by the empress Eudoxia in the fifth century and renovated by her daughter Galla Placidia and again by Anicia Juliana in the early sixth century, focusses attention on the magnificence of the renovated church, the first of which begins: ‘I am the house of the Trinity, and three generations built me’ (Εἰμι δόμος Τριάδος, τρισσὴ δέ με τεῦξε γενέθλη).²⁴⁵ Cleverly connecting the Christian Trinity and the three generations of imperial female patrons who built and redecored the church, the epigram places these classicizing words into the mouths of elite Constantinopolitans who would have recognized the verbal pun, which emphasizes personal patronage, *paideia*, and dynastic continuity.

²⁴³ Νηὸς ἐγὼ κύδιστος Ἰουστίνου ἄνακτος, / καὶ μὲν ὑπάτος Θεόδωρος, ὁ καρτερός, ὁ τρις ὑπαρχος, / ἄνθετο καὶ βασιλῆϊ, καὶ νιεὶ παμβασιλῆος, / Ἰουστινιανῶ, στρατιῆς ἡγήτορι πάσης: AG 1.97, trans. Paton, 40-1, adaptations mine. While the *Anthologia* reports that the inscription was ‘ἐν τῇ Μελίτῃ’, implying the Greek designation for Malta, this is unlikely; the Vandals took Malta in the mid-fifth century and the Byzantines did not win the island back until the 530s under Justinian, at which point the main dedicatee, the emperor Justin, was already dead and Justinian had taken over rule. Instead, the correct reading is probably Μελέτη, designating an area of Constantinople: T.S. Brown, ‘Byzantine Malta: A Discussion of the Sources’ in A.T. Luttrell (ed.), *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta Before the Knights* (London, 1975), 71-87, especially 74; and J.R. Martindale, ‘Theodorus *qui et Teganistes* 57’, in idem, *PLRE*, ii, 1096.

²⁴⁴ AG 1.98, trans. Paton, 42-3.

²⁴⁵ AG 1.12, trans. Paton, 12-3; also AG 1.13-17. On the church, C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, ‘Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople’, *DOP*, 15 (1961), 243-7, especially 244; R. Janin, *La géographie de l’église byzantine. Vol. 3, Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 124-6; Brubaker, ‘Helena’, 52-75. A later inscription from the late sixth-century baptistery at Horvat Be’er-She ‘ema in Palestine modifies this formula, ‘This is the house of the Trinity, which was built by villagers in the time when Halladios occupied the (episcopal) seat of Gerrar...’: D. Gazit and Y. Lender, ‘Horvat Be’er She ‘ma’, *ESI*, 10, 1 (1991), 43-5; eadem, ‘St. Stephen’s Church at Be’er-She ‘ma, Northern Negev’, *Qadmoniot*, 24, 1-2 (1992), 33-9; V. Tzaferis, ‘Greek Inscriptions from the Ancient Church at Horvat Be’er-She ‘ma’, *EI*, 25 (1996), 75-85, especially 76-7, no. 2; D. Feissel, ‘Bulletin épigraphique’, *REG* (1997), no. 659.

While these epigrams from the capital exhibit similar attention to classicizing the Christian, the Apollonia inscription is unusual as it speaks explicitly with the language of Homer in order to praise the triumph of Christianity over classical culture.²⁴⁶ This same combination of Christian triumphalism and Homeric language are united with even stronger anti-pagan sentiment in two inscriptions carved into lintels of the Church of St. Theodore at Jerash (494-6) by a bishop with a classical name, Aineias (Aeneas).²⁴⁷ As viewers walked into the open atrium of church, they looked up to the lintel over the doorway and read a verse epigram in which the Christian church trumpeted its victory over the previous, polluted pagan space: ‘I have been made at once an amazement (θάμβρος) and marvel (θαῦμα) to those passing by (παρερχομένοισιν), for the entire cloud of disorderliness has been dispersed, [and] instead of the former eyesore all the grace of God has surrounded me’ (Fig. 1.37).²⁴⁸ In any case, the church itself speaks first to proclaim its own victory over the pagan past, and again, from the inner face of the lintel of its main doorway (Fig. 1.38), to be read as visitors exited the building, saying:

+ Ἀχραντο[ς] δόμος εἰμί ἀεθλοφόρου Θεοδώρου, μάρτυρος ἀθανάτου,
θεοειδέος οὗ κλέος ἔπτη ἐν χθονὶ κ(αὶ) πόντῳ
καὶ τέρμασιν ὠκεανοῖο. Σῶμα γὰρ ἐν γαίῃ, ψυχὴ δ’ εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν,
ἀγγελικῆς μετὰ πότμον αἰεὶ μετέχουσα χορείης.

+ I am the undefiled house of victorious Theodore, immortal martyr,
godlike, whose fame rushed over land and sea and the limits of the ocean.
While his body is in the earth, his soul [has gone] to broad heaven, after
death joining the angelic choir.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ On Homeric hexameter verse in other church inscriptions in Palestine, Browning, ‘Homer’, 22ff., who mentions sixth-century inscriptions at Eleutheropolis (Beit Jibrin), *SEG* 8, 243; and at El-Boberije in Samaria, *SEG* 8, 119.

²⁴⁷ J.W. Crowfoot, ‘The Church of St. Theodore at Jerash’, *PEQ*, 61 (1929), 17-36; Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, nos. 299-300.

²⁴⁸ Trans. J. Moralee, ‘The Stones of St. Theodore: Disfiguring the Pagan Past in Christian Gerasa’, *JECS*, 14, 2 (Summer 2006), 183-215, especially 192-4; also Jones in Crowfoot, ‘Theodore’, 21-2; Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, no. 299, Pl. CXXIX, b. The exact nature of the ‘former eyesore’ of the pagan past is unclear, and popular suggestions have been one of the pagan temples of the city, perhaps the temple under the adjacent Cathedral or the central Temple of Artemis, or a rubbish dump for the carcasses of animals sacrificed at a nearby temple: Moralee, ‘Stones’, 193.

²⁴⁹ Trans. *ibid.*, 193; Jones in Crowfoot, ‘Theodore’, 22; Welles, no. 300, Pl. CXXIX, a; also Yasin, *Saints*, 196-7.

The text goes on to praise St. Theodore and his role as an ‘aged foundation’ for the community before reverting to the third person to provide the date of the construction of the church. The verse epigrams use Homeric language to describe the ‘broad heaven’ (οὐρανὸν εὐρύν) to which the saint’s soul has ascended, effectively replacing the pagan heavens of the Greeks with the Christian heaven of the martyrs while evoking the life and death of Theodore in the terms of epic.²⁵⁰ When read, the words of the building also would have transformed the reader into a container for the saint (‘I am the house...’, δόμος εἰμι), making personal the connection between building, martyr and faithful reader.

This group of fifth- and sixth-century epigrams, composed in the first person and displayed prominently in urban churches in Palestine, Arabia and Constantinople, testifies to a remarkable continuity of the classical epigrammatic tradition in both the capital and in provincial urban and rural contexts. While the inscriptions were composed in a very similar way to the ‘speaking’ funerary inscriptions of Graeco-Roman antiquity, they functioned slightly differently as the inscriptions of communal houses of worship rather than of the gravestones of individuals. By adapting the context and playing within the world of Christian classicism, patrons (as producers) and educated viewers (as consumers) moved away from ekphrastic tropes but remained engaged with previous epigrammatic traditions, giving classical voices to churches in order that they might articulate their own triumph over the spaces of paganism.

c. Other voices

So far, we have seen donors and the churches themselves speak, declaring their presence, manipulating readers and prompting them to adjust the ways in which they

²⁵⁰ A phrase used twice by Homer, once in *Iliad* 3.364 to describe the heaven to which Menelaus turns after his sword breaks to ask Zeus for justice against Paris, and again in *Odyssey* 19.40, when Telemachus wonders about the source of the miraculous bright light which has appeared in front of him and Odysseus in the hall at Ithaka; noted by Moralee, ‘Stones’, 193.

related to Christian spaces. Inscriptions also asked questions, forcing the reader to first read prescribed interrogatory statements out loud and then to answer them. In the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash (Fig. 1.39), an inscription at the east end of the north aisle imagines a dialogue between reader and mosaic:

Ψηφίς, τίς σ' ἀνέθηκεν; ὁ δώματα ταῦτα τελέσας.
τίς δ' ὁ γραφεὶς ποιμήν; τίνοϋς εἵνεκα ἔργα πιφαύσκει;
οὐνομ<α> Ἀναστάσιος [τ]ετράπολις, ε[ὗ]χος ὁ Σωτήρ.

Mosaic, who dedicated you? The one who paid for these dwellings.
And who is the shepherd who is painted? Because of whom do these works
shine?
His name is Anastasios, of the Tetrapolis, a vow, Saviour.²⁵¹

By supplying the questions which the donor, Anastasios, most wanted visitors to ask, and then allowing the mosaic itself to answer, the text adopts a question-and-answer format with deep classical roots to attract the reader's attention and to play with imagined and real engagement.²⁵² The layout of the line breaks of the inscription help define the structure of question and response, and the 'speaking mosaic' acts as variant on the 'speaking building', vivifying the pavement so that it can respond, identifying a nearby portrait of the bishop as the patron, Anastasios.²⁵³ When read aloud, the text forces the reader to assume the roles of passerby and of the work of art itself, simultaneously inviting continuous re-performance while permanently affixing the name of the patron, Anastasios, and the *ego* of his artwork to the pavement. Dialogue inscriptions could ask and answer, as does this text, or just ask, as does an epigram inscribed in a church in Rome, which puts words into the mouth of the reader: 'You ask: "Who has designated starry Olympus for the Lord?"' (*Quaeris: 'Quis Domino astriferum signavit [Olympum]?'*).²⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the

²⁵¹ Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 485, no. 330; Michel, 259.

²⁵² On question-and-answer literature, called *quaestiones et responsiones* in the Roman period and *erotapokriseis* in later Byzantine culture, A. Volgers and C. Zamagni (eds.), *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context* (Leuven, 2004).

²⁵³ Probably a wall fresco: see Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 485.

²⁵⁴ The location and dedication of the church remains unknown, but its inscription is preserved by a medieval codex: *ICUR*, 2, 248; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1764.

last line or lines of the text are lost, but they would have most probably declared the name of the patron (previously designated a prelate, *praesul*), who honours God by building a great church, claiming Heaven for Him.

Another inscription which makes use of the same question-and-answer format is extant from the sixth-century Basilica of Bishop John at Sandanski (modern Popova) in Bulgaria, on the Balkan Peninsula: 'Who built this marvellous work which delights the eyes with beauty, you want to know? John...' (Τίς ἔτευξε θέσκελον ἔργον / καλλονῇ ὄμματ' εὐφρῆνον / ποθὶς μαθῖν; Ἰωάννης...) (Fig. 1.40).²⁵⁵ The layout of the text emphasizes both question and answer. The first line begins with the question, 'who', while the third intensifies and answers said question: 'you want to know? John'. As the reader performs the text, (s)he is first required to praise the work as delightful and beautiful, before asking the logical question: 'Who made this?' At Sandanski, the inscription employs direct address in order to dictate reading and response, allowing the reader to vocalize the text first for him- or herself, then pushing him/her to perform the text as a kind of tour guide for those standing nearby, inscribing instant expertise as well as the expectation of interaction between text, patron, and the wider community of potential readers.

Writing, reading and seeing

Most of the texts discussed in this chapter have encouraged the viewer-reader to read in order to 'see' the interiors of Christian buildings, often intervening to offer narrative, symbolic or focused readings of parts of these structures. While the act of reading was implied in the presence of any text, inscriptions on occasion drew additional

²⁵⁵ V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (Berlin, 1964), 171, no. 239; R. Hodinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity* (New York, 1975), 288-9; V. Popova, 'The Pavement Mosaics of Bishop Iohannes' Basilica in Sandanski', in *Spartacus, Symposium rebus Spartaci gestis dedicatum 2050 a Sofia* (Sofia, 1981), 173-81; R.E. Kolarik, 'Sixth Century Bishops as Patrons of Floor Mosaics in the Balkan Peninsula', in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* 9, ii, 1255-67.

attention to themselves as texts written and displayed to be read. These inscriptions resurrect the classical *topos* of the overlapping functions of the verbal and the visual, eliding word and image to push the reader to prayer or deeper contemplation.²⁵⁶ Two Latin floor mosaic inscriptions in the western Mediterranean substitute a form of the verb *lego* for a ‘seeing’ verb, focusing attention on the inscriptions themselves rather than on the geometric or vegetal/figural patterns of the surrounding mosaic decoration. In the Pre-Eufasian Basilica at Poreč (fifth century), an inscription from the east side of the north aisle pavement instructs the reader ‘who reads (this)’ (*qui leg[is]*) to ‘have us [the donors Felicissimus and Nigasius or Nigasia] in mind’ (*in mente no[s] habeas*) (Fig. 1.41).²⁵⁷ Recording the number of feet of mosaic paid for by the donors (a common epigraphic formula in the region in the fifth and sixth centuries),²⁵⁸ and then defining the proper reader’s response, the text links image (the donated mosaic) to text (the inscription), privileging reading over viewing. The last four lines of the lengthy inscription from the nave pavement of the Church of the Martyrs at Haïdra in modern Tunisia (also known as Basilica II, ‘of Candidus’) (sixth century) (Fig. 1.42), go further and set up an explicit comparison between reading and belief:

*Felix
semper vivat qui intentissime lege-
rit, felicior qui Deo omnipotenti per Chr(is-
t(um) eius tota fide crediderit. +*

May he who has read it most intently always live happily; happier he who has entrusted all his faith in God omnipotent through Christ.+²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ This relationship was famously articulated by Simonides in the late sixth century BCE, ‘painting is silent poetry and poetry is talking painting’: Simonides, fragment 190b, Bergk; and repeated and commented upon by Plutarch, *Moralia (De gloria Atheniensium)* 364ff; also Squire, *Image*, 147. Byzantine authors picked up on this trope, for example Gregory of Nyssa, *De Sancto Theodori*, PG 46, 737D, who claimed that ‘the painter wrought by means of colours as if it were a book that uttered speech’; on this passage and later reception of this and other theories of the relationship between word and image, James, ‘Introduction’, in *idem*, *Art*, 2, with further bibliography.

²⁵⁷ The inscription is now installed in the baptistery of the sixth-century basilica, on site: *Inscr. It.*, X, 2, 32, no. 67; Caillet, *Évergetisme*, 311-2, cat. 32, 10.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 451-65.

²⁵⁹ L. Poinsett, *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* (1934-35), 70-81; N. Duval, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra. I. Les inscriptions chrétiennes* (Rome, 1975), 193-5, no.

This text, repeated with slightly varied spellings on one of the sides of the stone balustrade in the centre of the nave (Fig. 1.43), problematizes the verbal-visual divide, advocating that the reader consider more intently the relationship between reading, *paideia*, and belief.

The inscriptions at Poreč and Haïdra thus play with the classical philosophical trope of the ‘good life’ achieved through the proper interpretation of texts and images through *paideia*, encouraged in the *Tablet of Cebes*, a first-century imagined dialogue between an old philosopher and a crowd of viewers on the images inscribed upon a votive tablet dedicated to Cronus.²⁶⁰ While the Roman crowd struggles to understand the images on the tablet, the philosopher offers his own exegesis of the images, declaring that those who pay attention to his interpretation will be ‘wise and happy’ (φρόνιμοι καὶ εὐδαίμονες), while those who do not listen will remain ‘unwise...unlearned’ (ἄφρονες...ἄμαθεῖς), and ‘lead a bad sort of life’ (κακῶς βιώσασθε).²⁶¹ The text inscribed twice in the Church of the Martyrs inverts this belief in salvation through reading and intelligent interpretation. By encouraging the reader to put his faith in God rather than to read its words, the inscription privileges faith over its own consumption as composed text. In this case, in order to ensure lasting happiness one must be a faithful Christian believer, not simply an erudite Roman. Similar advice is found in other sacred contexts, as on a marble plaque in the Sardis synagogue, found near the base of the Torah Shrine, which urges one to read and observe the laws of the Torah: ‘Find, open, read, observe [my

200 A-C; Y. Duval, *Loca sanctorum*, i, 105-15, nos. 51-2; W.H.C. Frend, ‘The Cult of Martyrs: From Donatist Opposition to Byzantine Loyalism: The Cult of Martyrs in North Africa 350-650’, in A.H. Merrills (ed.), *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique Africa* (Aldershot, 2004), 259-70, especially 261, 266; Yasin, *Saints*, 222-6; F. Baratte, F. Bejaoui, N. Duval and J.-C. Golvin, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra, IV. La basilique II dite de Candidus ou des martyrs de la persécution de Dioclétien* (Rome, 2011), 60 fig 65 (colour restoration drawing of the inscription), 34.

²⁶⁰ *Die Bildtafel des Kebes. Allegorie des Lebens*, ed. R. Hirsch-Luipold, R. Feldmaier, B. Hirsch, L. Koch, and H.-G. Nesselrath (Stuttgart, 2005); also *The Tablet of Cebes*, ed. J.T. Fitzgerald and L.M. White (Chico, CA, 1983). On this work, see Elsner, *Roman Viewer*, 39-46; Squire, *Iliad*, 122-6.

²⁶¹ *Tabula Cebetis* 3.1, trans. Squire, *Iliad*, 122-3.

commandments]’ (Fig. 1.44).²⁶² However, at Haïdra, the slightly joyless hierarchy established between reading and faith is challenged by the repetition of the inscription, as the lengthy text appears twice in the central nave of the church, the mosaic example concluding by listing the names of thirty four martyrs in the genitive. This surfeit of text subverts the notion that reading is not enough, cleverly reasserting the power of inscriptions to convey information about the donor and act as foci for prayer to the numerous martyrs of the inscription who are also buried in the church.

Inscriptions also asserted themselves as texts which were composed and produced, forcing the reader to contemplate the original producers of the inscriptions.²⁶³ In the Church of St. Menas at Rihab, the written text of the dedicatory inscription marks the completion of the church, testifying that it ‘was written (<E>γράφη) in the month of March, of the eighth indiction, of the year 529 (635 CE)’ (Fig. 1.45).²⁶⁴ A similar dedicatory inscription in the pavement of the sanctuary of the church at Houedjit Halaoua in Syria (471), written in Syriac, preserves before God the memories of the patrons ‘whoever participated in this work, and of the sinner who writes these letters’ (Fig. 1.46).²⁶⁵ The ‘sinner’ is not named, and might be the scribe who composed the inscription

²⁶² A. Seager, ‘The Synagogue at Sardis’, in L.I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), 178-84, especially 181; A.T. Kraabel, ‘Impact of the Discovery of the Sardis Synagogue’, in G.M.A. Hanfmann (ed.), *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times; Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis 1958-75* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 178-90, especially 189; L.H. Feldman, ‘Diaspora Synagogues: New Light from Inscriptions and Papyri’, in S. Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (New York & Oxford, 1996), 64-6, fig. 3.14; R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden, 1998), 410.

²⁶³ On earlier precedents for this emphasis, D. Meyer, ‘The Act of Reading and Writing in Hellenistic Epigram’, in Bing and Bruss, 187-210.

²⁶⁴ Avi-Yonah, ‘Mosaic Pavements’, *QDAP*, 3, 69; S. Mittman, ‘Die Mosaikinschrift der Menas-Kirche in Rihab’, *ZDPV*, 83 (1970), 42-5; Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 76-7; idem, *Mosaics*, 313; Michel, 217. The same verb is used in the dedicatory inscription of the Church of St. Basil, also at Rihab (594): Avi-Yonah, ‘Mosaic Pavements’, *QDAP*, 3, 69; Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 70-2, Pls. 54-7; idem, *Mosaics*, 311; Michel, 214. The verb γράφω could mean ‘to draw an image’ as well as to ‘write a text’, so the sense of this inscription potentially encompasses both the creation of the mosaics as well as the ‘writing’ of the inscription, made explicit in the late fourth-century by Servius Grammaticus in his *Commentary on Virgil’s Aeneid* 6.34, ed. G. Thilo and H. Hagen, *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii* (Lipsiae, 1883-4), ii, 11; on this text, Elsner, *Art and Text*, 1-6; Squire, *Image*, 147-8.

²⁶⁵ A. Assaf, ‘Ktâbât suriyâniye jdîde fî el-Mathaf el-Watani b Dimaš (Nouvelles inscriptions syriaques au Musée national de Damas)’, in *Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes*, 22 (1972), 135-44 (Arabic); Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 147.

or the mosaicist.²⁶⁶ A similar text inscribed in the narthex pavement of the fifth- or early sixth-century chapel at Shiloh in Palestine asks the Lord to remember (μνήσθητι) the patrons as well as ‘the writer’ (τοῦ γράποντος).²⁶⁷ These short formulaic texts are fascinating because they preserve hints of the original composition of dedicatory inscriptions of churches, before the texts were inscribed. Examples survive of carved inscriptions which emphasize in like fashion their own existence as texts written down before they were inscribed.²⁶⁸ However, these mosaic inscriptions would have drawn the reader’s attention even more strongly precisely because one did not ‘write’ mosaic inscriptions but ‘laid’ them (*tesselavit*; ἐψηφώθη) on top of a preparatory sketch.²⁶⁹ This focus in turn would have redirected the reader to think on the patrons, who at least at Houedjit Halaoua were left veiled, intended to create a special bond between the anonymous patrons and God.

Mosaic inscriptions performed many functions within Christian spaces. In addition to emphasizing the *paideia* of the donor, texts inscribed in sacred buildings occasionally pointed out iconographic details, adding extra symbolic punch to images, but more often supplemented ways of looking at images and interiors in ways which were consistent with the modes of ekphrasis. These texts frequently demand particular responses, some classicizing (for example, the act of listening to a building ‘speak’), others Christian and

²⁶⁶ On the difficulty of separating artist from patron in the inscriptions, P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, ‘Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με τους τύπους υπογραφής καλλιτεχνών και τεχνιτών στην παλαιοχριστιανική εποχή συγκριτικά με τε ελληνική και τη ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα’, in Αμητος. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Καθηγητή Μανόλη Ανδρόνικο 1 (Thessaloniki, 1987), 89-99.

²⁶⁷ Avi-Yonah, ‘Mosaic Pavements’, *QDAP*, 2, 187-93, nos. 300-302; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 130-1, no. 219; a term also used in an inscription in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash: *supra* n. 1.

²⁶⁸ For example, the dedicatory inscription of the Church of St. George at Mumsiyye (472 or 486/7 C.E.), carved into a stone block, which concludes: ‘Written (ἐγράφη) in the month of December (?)...’: Gregg and Urman, 213-4, no. 174, fig.

²⁶⁹ On ‘artists’ signatures’, which typically state generically that an individual or a workshop ‘made’ the work, M. Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung: Eine Quellenstudie* (Erlanger Forschungen, Reihe A, Gesteiswissenschaften, Band 48) (Erlangen, 1989); J. Gómez Pallarès, ‘Nombres de artistas en inscripciones musivas latinas e ibericas de Hispania’, *Epigraphica*, 53 (1991), 59-96; Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 269-78.

more personal than many of the visual responses to objects enshrined in classical literature.²⁷⁰ Texts were inscribed in order to spur the viewer to contemplation, prayer, or more physical reactions such as motion around the church, which would supplement the images moving on the walls and floors of the building. Donors also composed or commissioned inscribed epigrams which played with voice as well as with the acts of reading and writing, problematizing the formulae and structure of traditional dedicatory inscriptions and forcing the reader to re-perform and react to texts in church. In the next chapter, I continue to explore the connections between text, image and material, and turn to one specific aspect of the eispheuristic epigram: its emphasis on the symbolism of light, variance, and materiality.

²⁷⁰ Although epiphanic and revelatory vision was not unique to the Christian world of images: V. Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge, 2011), especially 77-123, 335ff.

Chapter Two: Reading light and materials

As discussed in the previous chapter, Christian inscriptions only occasionally describe the iconography of mosaic images. However, they tend to engage more frequently with general qualities of spaces, including the lightness, brightness and colour of church interiors. Scholars have made much of the role of light and colour in late antique and Byzantine art, focusing attention on the light-reflecting properties of materials, especially gold glass mosaic tesserae and marbles,²⁷¹ as well as the depiction of light and the significance of the gold background, often used in church apse mosaics.²⁷² Thanks to the important work of Liz James, we now have a much clearer idea about Byzantine understandings of light and the colour spectrum. In her book *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1996), James analyzes texts of the period and concludes that they

²⁷¹ On mosaic materials, the study of glass over the past two decades has provided important insights: L. James, 'Byzantine glass mosaic tesserae: some material considerations', *BMGS*, 30, 1 (2006), 29-47; C. Fiori, 'Appendix E, The Composition of the Glass Wall Mosaic Tesserae', in Z.T. Fiema, C. Kanellopoulos, T. Waliszarsk, and R. Schick, *The Petra Church* (Amman, 2001), 303-5.

²⁷² Light as depicted in late antique church mosaics has been investigated in terms of its symbolism of the divine, as in the halos of saints and the mandorla of light which surrounds Christ in scenes of the Transfiguration or the Second Coming: D. Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998), 143ff; J. Engemann, 'Images parousiaques dans l'art paléochrétien', in Y. Christe (ed.), *L'Apocalypse de Jean: Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques* (Geneva, 1979), 79-94; O. Brendel, 'Origin and Meaning of the Mandorla', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 25, 6th Series (1944), 5-24. This iconography has been studied particularly in the context of the decoration of the apse of St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai: W.C. Loerke, 'Observations on the Representation of *Doxa*', *Gesta*, XX/1 (1981), 15-22; J. Mitziolek, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse of Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 53 (1990), 42-60; J. Elsner, 'The Viewer and the vision: The case of the Sinai Apse', *Art History*, 17, 1 (March 1994), 81-102; R.S. Nelson, 'Where God Walked and Monks Pray', in idem and K.M. Collins (eds.), *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai* (Los Angeles, 2006), 1-37. Scholars have also studied other light effects, particularly the rays of light which emanate from Christ or the cross: on the 'heavenly sky' filled with red and blue clouds, A. Grabar, 'L'Iconographie du Ciel dans l'art chrétien de l'Antiquité et du haut Moyen Âge', *CA*, 30 (1982), 5-24; also the starry sky, as in the 'Mausoleum' of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, E. Swift and A. Alwis, 'The role of late antique art in early Christian worship: a reconsideration of the iconography of the "starry sky" in the "Mausoleum" of Galla Placidia', *PBSR*, 78 (2010), 193-217; and the rainbow, as in Hosios David in Thessaloniki: L. James, 'Colour and the Byzantine Rainbow', *BMGS*, 51 (1991), 66-94, especially 70ff. Christian floor mosaics depict light-related images comparatively infrequently, but images of candles and lamps hanging from representations of church buildings do appear in North African churches, for example in the 'Ecclesia Mater' church at Tabarka in modern Tunisia: Downs, 241; and the Lighthouse of Alexandria, depicted in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash, Jordan, *supra* n. 1. On the Roman origins of light symbolism, Hellemo, 32-9.

‘serve to focus attention on the Byzantine concern with colour primarily in the context of qualities like gleam and shine...’²⁷³ While critics of her work argue that she privileges luminosity and brightness over hue, James’ analysis of the technical uses of colour words and focus on the medium of mosaic are extremely useful because they enumerate the many ways in which the Byzantines understood the workings of light and colour, including ‘real’ light, filtering into buildings via windows and doors.²⁷⁴ Additionally, Robert Nelson has clarified the Byzantine adoption of the ancient visual theory of extramission, whereby, aided by light, ‘optical rays emanate from the eye, extend to the object of vision, touch it, and return to the eye’ with an image of the thing seen.²⁷⁵ James, Nelson and others have pioneered a new (or, more appropriately, an old) way of looking at light via primary texts and extant mosaics, and have been able to demonstrate convincingly the correlation between light as rhetorical *topos* and physical light harnessed by Byzantine mosaicists through a number of different effects, including the selection of special materials (especially glass, gold and silver tesserae) and the utilization of curved spaces (apses or squinches), uneven setting beds, and different tesserae layouts.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ L. James, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1996), 125-7; reviewed by T. Hunter, *The Burlington Magazine*, 139,113 (August 1997), 552-3; D. Russo, *Revue de l’Art*, 120 (1998), 100. Also James, ‘What Colours were Byzantine Mosaics?’, in E. Borsook, G.F. Superbi and G. Pagliarulo (eds.), *Medieval Mosaics: light, colour, materials* (Milan, 2000), 35-46; idem, ‘Colour and Meaning in Byzantium’, *J ECS*, 2 (Summer 2003), 223-33.

²⁷⁴ For criticism of the approach of James, M. Bradley, *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 2009), x-xi, 22. On the effects of real light on the experience of viewing mosaics, W. Schöne, *Über das Licht in der Malerei* (Berlin, 1954), 47-48, 52-4; R. Franses, ‘When all that is Gold does not Glitter’, in Eastmond and James, *Icon and Word*, 13-23; Nelson, ‘Where God Walked’. On windows in early churches, G.R. Wand, *Fenster und Licht in der Trierer Palastaula und in spätantiken Bauten* (Herford, 1968); F. Dell’Aqua, ‘Glass and Natural Light in the Shaping of Sacred Space in the Latin West and in the Byzantine East’, in A. Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow, 2006), 298-318.

²⁷⁵ Nelson, ‘To Say and to See’, in idem, *Visuality*, 150ff. This phenomenon is best seen as a developed concept in the sermon of the Patriarch Photios delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the apse mosaic, restored in 867 after the clashes between iconophiles and iconoclasts: Photios, *Homily 17*, trans. C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 286-96.

²⁷⁶ James, ‘What Colours’, 41-4; James, 105ff, especially 111-2. More recent work has concentrated on scientific and mathematical approaches to studying the ways in which mosaics reflect light around buildings: I.G. Iliadis, ‘The natural lighting of the mosaics in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki’, *Lighting Research and Technology*, 33, 1 (March 2001), 13-24; N. Schibille, ‘Astronomical and Optical Principles in the Architecture of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople’, *Science in Context*, 22, 1 (2009), 27-46. Also useful is the

However, while a great deal of ink has been spilled on Byzantine perceptions and uses of light and colour, relatively little attention has been paid to the relationship between the glittering interiors of churches and the mosaic inscriptions, placed at important and eminently visible locations within these spaces, which often focus attention on these bright and colourful images.²⁷⁷ In fact, the language and symbolism of light and gold evident in these texts are the same as those used by late antique authors in their descriptions of artworks and monuments. This chapter examines the shared language of light and materials used by inscriptions and works of literature. Though eisphrastic inscriptions and literary ekphraseis use the same language and reference similar themes, glittering mosaic texts inscribed within the very mosaics they praised had distinct functions and meanings because of their spatial contexts and specific materiality.

The lengthy carved inscription from Hagios Polyeuktos, built in Constantinople by the noblewoman Anicia Juliana in the early part of the sixth century, showcases the various rhetorical and spiritual functions of light imagery in the late antique epigram (Fig. 2.1).²⁷⁸ The first section of the epigram, placed outside the narthex, begins by evoking the

new searchable database put together by Liz James and Bente Bjornholt, 'The Composition of Byzantine Mosaic Glass Tesserae', accessible at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/byzantine/mosaic/>.

²⁷⁷ Brief lists or mentions of some of the examples to be discussed are found in J. Gage, 'Colour in history: relative and absolute', *Art History*, 1 (1978), 104-30, especially 120; Fevrier, 'La Lettre'; Janes, 146; E. Borsook, 'Rhetoric or Reality: Mosaics as Expressions of a Metaphysical Idea', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 44, 1 (2000), 2-18; E. Thunø, 'Inscription and divine presence: golden letters in the early medieval apse mosaic', *Word & Image*, 27, 3 (2011), 279-291; idem, 'Inscriptions on Light and Splendor from Saint-Denis to Rome and Back', *Acta ad archaeologiam*, 24, n.s. 10 (2011), 139-59.

²⁷⁸ The inscription is AG 1.10, trans. Paton, 6ff; the epigram was identified as belonging to Hagios Polyeuktos by Mango and Ševčenko, 'Remains', 243-7. On the inscription and a discussion of its form, content and arrangement, C.L. Connor, 'The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople and Its Byzantine Response', *Byzantion*, 69, 2 (1999), 479-527; Mary Whitby, 'The St. Polyeuktos Epigram (AP 1.10): A Literary Perspective', in S.F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2006), 159-87. On the church itself, M. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium* (Austin, 1989), 77ff.; J. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople* (Oxford, 2004), i, 62-4, 111-16; idem, 'A new temple for Byzantium: Anicia Juliana, King Solomon, and the gilded ceiling of the church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople', in W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge and C. Machado (eds.), *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2006), 339-70; P. Speck, 'Juliana Anicia, Konstantin der Grosse und die Polyeuktoskirche in Konstantinopel', *Poikila Byzantina*, 11, Varia 3 (Bonn, 1991), 133-47. On the architectural decoration of the church, and its antecedents, McKenzie, *Alexandria*, 332-339. On Anicia Juliana, Martindale, 'Anicia Iuliana 3', *PLRE*, ii, 635-6. Other epigrams also focus attention on the glittering properties of the decoration, including an epigram in a church built by the consul Theodorus for the emperors Justin and Justinian, AG 1.98, trans.

‘holy all-golden light’ of Theodosius, one of Juliana’s royal ancestors.²⁷⁹ Hagios Polyeuktos ‘extends from the west, stretching to the east, glittering (ὕπαστράπτων) with the indescribable brightness of the sun on this side and on that!’; and contains a ‘golden-roofed covering’ (χρυσοφόρου ἀκτῖνας, probably a gilded vaulted ceiling rather than a dome), while its ‘recesses hollowed out in arches have given birth to the ever-revolving light of the moon (φέγγος...σελήνης)’.²⁸⁰ Continuing, the text describes the ‘manifold devices’ (πολύτροπα δῆνεα) on the walls, which decorate the ‘shining house’ (οἶκον...λάμποντα) of the church, implying the presence of a cycle of images as well as their potential changeability, suggesting that they were mosaics which twisted or shifted (πολύτροπα) as the light hit them.²⁸¹ The programme included a mosaic of Constantine’s baptism on the exterior facade of the church, showing how, ‘escaping the idols he (Constantine) overcame the God-fighting fury, and found the light of the Trinity (Τριάδος φάος) by purifying his limbs in water’.²⁸² The second half of the inscription, placed

Paton, 43: ‘...glittering with the lustre of vast store of metals (i.e. mosaics)’, λαμπόμενον στεροπήσιν ἀμετρήτοιο μετάλλου; on this epigram, Alan Cameron, ‘Theodorus τρισέπαρχος’, *GRBS*, 17 (1976), 269-86.

²⁷⁹ AG 1.10.44, trans. Paton, 8-9, with adaptations by Whitby, ‘Epigram’, 161-4, after Harrison and Bardill. On the placement of the inscription, Bardill, ‘New temple’, who summarizes and disagrees with previous proposals by Mango and Connor and proposes his own scheme, where lines 42-76 were placed around the exterior of the narthex and lines 1-41 ran along the interior of the nave; Whitby agrees with Bardill’s scheme.

²⁸⁰ AG 1.10.53-57, trans. Paton, 10-1; Whitby, ‘Epigram’, 164; Harrison, *Temple*, 127-34; Connor, 491, 506, who argue the depth of the foundations excavated and the inscription imply the existence of a dome, while Bardill, 357ff, argues instead for a flat coffered, gilded ceiling. Bardill, 362-3, figs. 1-2, provides a side-by-side comparison of his plan with the plan of Harrison.

²⁸¹ AG 1.10.66-76, trans. Paton, 10-1; Whitby, ‘Epigram’, 164. This portion of the epigram uses the popular Homeric epithet in *Odyssey* 1.1, for Odysseus, ‘πολύτροπον’, as the shifty man ‘of many devices’, trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, MA, 119, reprinted 1998), 1; or ‘of twists and turns’, transl. R. Fagles (New York, 1996), 1. Nonnus appropriates this language in the prologue to his *Dionysiaca*, 1.13-5: ‘but bring me a partner for your dance in the neighboring island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns (πολύτροπον), that he may appear in all his diversity of shapes (ποικίλον εἶδος), since I twang my harp to a diversity of songs (ποικίλον ὕμνον)’, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA, 1940), i, 2-3; also see Cavero, *Poems*, 162ff, 286. The broader concept of ποικιλία or *variatio*, frequently referenced in the inscriptions, will be discussed shortly.

²⁸² AG 1.1.65-73, trans. Paton, 10-1; Whitby, ‘Epigram’, 164. On this image, C. Milner, ‘The Image of the Rightful Ruler’ in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines* (Aldershot, 1994), 73-81; G. Fowden, ‘Constantine, Silvester, and the Church of S. Polyeuctus in Constantinople’, *JRA*, 7 (1994), 274-84. In fact, the language of early Christian baptism itself makes use of the language of light, as the ceremony was also referred to as ‘enlightenment’, φωτισμός, in the early church, while epigraphic evidence makes clear individuals were referred to as ‘newly-enlightened’ or ‘newly-baptised’, ‘νεοφώτιστος’ in inscriptions as well as in texts on the liturgy, as in a mosaic floor inscription in the Necropolis Church at Anemurium (modern Anamur) in Cilicia, dated to the mid-fifth century: Russell, *Anemurium*, 85, no. 23; S.D. Campbell, *The Mosaics of Anemurium* (Toronto, 1998), 44-5, fig. 44, Pls. 193-4; F. Tülek, ‘Late Roman and Early Byzantine Floor

around the nave of the church, makes reference to the sun in the classicizing form of the god Helios to express the patron's wish to be remembered.²⁸³ Thus, the epigram effectively uses the terminology associated with light to refer to the glittering decoration of the interior space itself, but also to praise and memorialize Juliana and her family, as well as to reference light in the context of divine enlightenment.²⁸⁴

Though it is extraordinary, the language of the Polyeuktos inscription is very similar to that used by late antique authors in their descriptions of church interiors. Eusebius of Caesarea, the first to author an ekphrasis on a Christian building, describes the church at Tyre using *topoi* related to the problem of verbally describing what one sees: the interior is one of 'brilliant beauty' (φαιδρὰ ταῦτα κάλλη) and the workmanship of 'dazzling appearance' (ἀποστίλβουσιν ὄψιν), of which 'the witness of the eye leaves no place for the instruction that comes through the ears'.²⁸⁵ In their sixth-century descriptions of Hagia Sophia, Procopius and Paul the Silentiary also turn to light-related imagery to praise the church and its patron, Justinian.²⁸⁶ Procopius describes the tremendous light inside the newly-built church (Fig. 2.2), which:

Mosaics in Cilicia (Turkey)' (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 2004), 222-3.

²⁸³ Helios does appear in early Christian and contemporaneous Jewish iconography, for example a mosaic of Helios in his chariot (occasionally read as Christ) in the Tomb of the Julii in Rome, D. Levi, 'Aion', *Hesperia*, 13 (1944), 302-4. Early Christian emperors, particularly Constantine, also appropriated the visual language of the sun god and incorporated it into their own iconography of power: J. Bardill, *Constantine, divine emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2012), 159-202, 326-37. Mosaic pavements of Jewish synagogues in Palestine feature Helios in his chariot (or, on one occasion, the sun represented atop a column) with depictions of the seasons personified and the symbols of the Zodiac: Hachlili, *Pavements*, 35-56, with additional bibliography. The meanings of these images are still hotly-debated by scholars, most recently Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue. Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005), 231-5; J. Magness, 'Heaven on Earth: Helios and the zodiac cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues', *DOP*, 59 (2005), 1-52, especially 49-50.

²⁸⁴ Mary Whitby, 'The vocabulary of praise', 593-606.

²⁸⁵ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.4.43-4, ed. H.J. Lawlor and trans. J.E.L. Oulton (Cambridge, MA, 1932, republished 2000), 424-5. On this as the first Christian ekphrasis, see Webb, 'Aesthetics'. Eusebius is of course not the first author to mention the brightness of an interior, and ekphraseis of buildings by Roman authors express similar ideas, including the description of the Sun God's palace by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.1-18; on the Roman origins of this trope, see Arnulf, *Kunstbeschreibungen*, 61-2.

²⁸⁶ Procopius, *DA*. On this text, Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1996), ch. 6; A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea* (Philadelphia, 2004), especially 115-7; Michael Whitby, 'Pride and Prejudice in Procopius' Buildings: Imperial Images in Constantinople', *AT*, 8 (2000), 59-66; Mary Whitby, 'Procopius' Buildings, Book I: A Panegyric Perspective', *AT*, 8 (2000), 45-57, especially 56; R. Webb,

...abounds exceedingly in sunlight and in the reflection of the sun's rays from the marble. Indeed one might say that its interior is not illuminated from without by the sun, but that the radiance comes into being within it, such an abundance of light bathes this shrine.²⁸⁷

Paul details the interior roof of the church in a similar fashion, which:

...is compacted of gilded tesserae (χρυσεοκολλήτους...ψηφίδας) from which a glittering stream of golden rays pours abundantly and strikes men's eyes with irresistible force. It is as if one were gazing at the midday sun in spring, when he gilds each mountain top.²⁸⁸

Western authors also make hyperbolic statements about the effects of light within the church, including the poet Sidonius Apollinaris, who quotes an epigram he composed and placed in the apse of the Church of St. John at Lyon (c. 470) in a letter to his friend Hesperius: 'Within [the church] light shines, and the sun is incited by the gilding of the coffered ceiling, which shimmers of the same golden colour as the metal.'²⁸⁹

While they rarely make quite so poetic statements about light as do Procopius, Paul, and Sidonius, mosaic inscriptions, particularly those placed in the apses and above the triumphal arches of churches, utilize the language of light, gold and material in distinct ways. The Polyeuktos epigram is an *exemplum* of the three particular functions light and gold play in early Christian inscriptions, an *exemplum* which structures this chapter. First, light and gold were often included as descriptors of the qualities of interiors, intended to remind the viewer/reader to appreciate the aesthetics and materials of brilliance and variety. Second, the language of light was used to praise patrons, occasionally through the

'Ekphrasis, Amplification and Persuasion in Procopius' *Buildings*', *AT*, 8 (2000), 67-71; Elsner, 'Rhetoric of Buildings', in James, *Art and Text*, 33-57. For the text of Paul's poem, P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius* (Leipzig/Berlin, 1912), 227ff. On the poem, see Mary Whitby, 'Paul the Silentary and Claudian', 507-16; idem, 'Vocabulary', 593-606; Macrides and Magdalino, 'The architecture of ekphrasis', 63ff. Other late antique authors regularly describe church interiors as bright and dazzling, for example Gregory of Nazianzus in his description of his hometown church: Gregory, *Oration 18 (On the Death of His Father)* 39, PG 35, 1037. On this ekphrasis, Limberis, 66-8.

²⁸⁷ Procopius, *DA* 1.1.29-31, trans. Dewing, 16-7; echoing Gregory, *Oration 18.39*, PG 35, 1037, trans. Mango, *Art*, 26-7: 'At the top is a gleaming heaven that illuminates the eye all round with abundant founts of light—truly a place wherein light dwells'.

²⁸⁸ Paul, *Ekphrasis*, 668-72, ed. Friedländer, 246, trans. Mango, *Art*, 86.

²⁸⁹ *Intus lux micat atque bratteatum sol sic sollicitatur ad lacunar, fulvo ut concolor erret in metallo*: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* 2.10.4, trans. Dalton, 465, adaptations mine. On the church, built for Bishop Patiens, M. Viellard-Troiekourov, *Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les œuvres de Grégoire de Tours* (Paris, 1975), 139.

use of classicizing tropes (for example, the sun as Helios). Finally, certain inscriptions use the *topos* of light to comment upon or to describe the divine. This last category of symbolism, which might be termed exegetical, is the most varied, because texts can and do use light as divine symbol in both simple ('the light of the Trinity' in the Polyekutos epigram) and complex ways, some of which play with the very nature of vision, perception and belief.²⁹⁰ However, even as these three discrete symbolic functions of light emphasize particular aspects of the experience of the viewer/reader, they simultaneously participate in the literary game of eisphrasis, creating strong conceptual connections between well-known high-register texts, written by and performed for the elite, and the experience of viewing mosaics and reading their inscriptions.

Epigraphic light and colour: vision and materials

a. Vision and erudition

Most frequently, light and colour words feature in dedicatory inscriptions, particularly in churches in the western half of the empire, as what seem initially to be simple descriptors of the brilliant visual effect of mosaic programmes. The apse inscription of Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome (526-530) praises the 'brilliant' (*speciosa*) church interior which 'shines with bright metals', i.e. mosaic (*claris radiat...metallis*) (Fig. 2.3).²⁹¹ According to the ninth-century church historian Agnellus, the apse inscription of Santa Maria Maggiore in Ravenna began by describing the bright church interior: 'The hall of the Virgin shines' (*Virginis aula micat*).²⁹² In a similar phenomenological vein, the apse inscription of the Basilica Eufasianiana (c. 550) describes the *metallum*, the gold tesserae of the mosaic background, as 'gleaming' or 'shining' (*fulgere*), documenting and

²⁹⁰ On light and the liturgy, especially the celebration of Vespers, Taft, *Beyond East and West*, 127-50.

²⁹¹ *Supra* n. 147.

²⁹² *Supra* n. 125-6. In addition to the similar inscription at Blachernae, a related text once decorated Sant' Agnese fuori le mura in Rome: 'The hall of the Virgin shines, adorned with varied metals': *Virginis aula micat, variis decorata metallis*: *ICUR*, 2, 63, 89, 104, 137; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1769.

confirming in text the viewer's experience of the decoration (Fig. 2.4).²⁹³ The introduction to the *tituli* written by Venantius Fortunatus, placed above scenes of the life of St. Martin in Tours Cathedral, engages in the same self-referential description in naming both internal and external light sources: 'Today it is a fitting temple illuminated by large windows, and where, during the night, the darkness is suppressed by artificial means' (*Nunc placet aula decens, patulis oculata fenestris, quo noctis tenebris clauditur arte dies*).²⁹⁴

The popularity of light as epigrammatic motif continued into the seventh century, as seen in three dedicatory inscriptions in Rome which point out the gilded, shining interiors of the buildings. At Sant'Agnese fuori le mura (625-38), the apse inscription begins by describing the 'golden picture' (*aurea...pictura*) which rises up from the 'pieces of metal' or golden tesserae (*concisis...metallis*), creating the impression that the daylight, 'having been embraced is at the same time confined' (Fig. 2.5),²⁹⁵ language which closely echoes that of Procopius and Paul. In a simpler fashion, the apse inscription of Santo Stefano Rotondo in Rome (640s) summarily describes the 'golden roof' (*auratum...tectum*) of the dome, the golden backdrop for the 'heavenly' scene, and 'a starry face gleaming with bright light' (*astriferum que micans preclaro lumine fultum*), either the face of Christ (*fultum* as a corruption of *vultum*, face) or the background of the

²⁹³ *Supra* n. 129. On the unnamed saints in the apse mosaic, Maguire, 'Eufrasius', 139-60. On the use of the Latin term '*metallum*' for mosaics, Borsook, 'Mosaics', 4-5.f

²⁹⁴ *Supra* n. 105. On the poet's use of light imagery generally, J.W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), 121-2, 124-7. On lamps in church, L. Boura and M. Parani, *Lighting in Early Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 2008).

²⁹⁵ *ILCV*, 1, no. 1769A; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, i, 17. On the mosaics of the church, *LP* 72.6, trans. Davis, 66, recording Pope Honorius as patron of the apse decoration; Ihm, *Programme*, 141-3; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 169ff; Oakeshott, *Mosaics*, 148-50; A.P. Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale di Sant'Agnese* (Vatican City, 1960), 34ff, especially 45-8. Janes, 167-9, sees Sant'Agnese as the culmination of a trend towards increased use of gold in late antique churches. However, the presence of gleaming gold was of course not new to the church in the seventh century; the fourth-century apse inscription erected by Constantina, daughter of the emperor Constantine, mentions the gold mosaic of the golden summits, '*aurea...fastigia*', of the roofs, which gleamed reddish (*rutilant*): *ICUR*, 2, 44s; *ILCV*, 1, 1768; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, ii, 16.

mosaic itself (*fultum* as support) (Fig. 2.6).²⁹⁶ In describing the decorative programme, the inscription maintains a hint of the language of Eusebius and Procopius in its description of the church's 'golden roof'. In the apse of the San Venanzio Chapel in Rome, an inscription praises the 'gleaming metals' (*fulgente metallo*) of the mosaics, which are compared to the brilliant sacred waters of the Lateran Baptistery to which the chapel is attached.²⁹⁷

In their descriptions of the brightness of interiors, the inscriptions turn to a stable range of terms, most frequently the verbs *coruscare*, *nitere*, and *fulgere*, which speak to the material qualities of glittering gilded glass mosaic tesserae, usually referred to as 'metals' (*metalli*).²⁹⁸ Centuries earlier, in Roman times, these terms evoked not only reflectivity but also colour.²⁹⁹ This self-referential language of brightness, often paired with direct address ('you see...'), continues to be used into the seventh century and beyond, including in the apse inscription of Pope Paschal I's ninth-century church of Santa Prassede in Rome.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ The inscription is preserved in the Lorsch Syllogue, and was restored in the apse in 1735: De Rossi, *Musaici*, fasc. 17, 'S. Stefano Rotondo', 2ff; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iv, 202. On the mosaic, Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, i, Pl. 32; Ihm, *Programme*, 143-4; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 181ff; Oakeshott, 153-4. On the church, also LP 75.4, trans. Davis, 70.

²⁹⁷ Ihm, *Programme*, 143-4; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 181ff; Oakeshott, *Mosaics*, 153-4. On the chapel, LP 75.4, trans. Davis, p. 70; Mackie, *Chapels*, 333 n. 5, with additional bibliography; Borsook, 5.

²⁹⁸ Other verbs used in the Latin apse inscriptions include *splendere* (San Paolo f.l.m., Rome, to be discussed further on in this chapter); *radiare* (Santi Cosma e Damiano, Rome); and *micare* (Santi Cosma e Damiano, Rome; and Santo Stefano, Ravenna). Venantius Fortunatus, the poet of the sixth century, utilizes the same language of brightness: George, 121-2. The range of terms is extensive, but that should not trouble us as different authors of inscriptions chose to emphasize different aspects of 'shininess' (although Thunø, 'Inscription and divine presence', 286, takes issue with the lack of consistency in the verbs used and argues the only real function of the language is as hyperbole). On the semantic range of earlier Latin poetry, see the concordance in J. Clarke, *Imagery of Colour and Shining in Catullus, Propertius and Horace* (New York, 2002), 15 (*adfulgeo*), 83-9 (*fulgeo*), 97-8 (*mico*), 106-10 (*niteo*), 134-5 (*radio*); also J. Andre, *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 123ff.; M.J. Edgeworth, *The Colours of the Aeneid* (New York, 1992), 1-17, 60ff; J. Elsner, 'Physiognomics: Art and Text', in S. Swain (ed), *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford, 2007), 203-24, especially 218ff on the use of colour words by Second Sophistic authors to allude to flash and sparkle.

²⁹⁹ Clarke, 8, '...words for shining such as *fulgeo* or *niteo* frequently carry the same emotive connotations as colour terms like *candidus* (gleaming white) or *aureus*'.

³⁰⁰ On Santa Prassede in particular, Oakeshott, 204-12; R. Wisskirchen, *Die Mosaiken der Kirche Santa Prassede in Rom* (Mainz am Rhein, 1992). On Santa Prassede and other churches erected by Paschal, including Santa Cecilia and San Maria in Domnica, *ibid.*, 194ff; E. Thunø, 'Decus suus splendet ceu Phoebus in orbe: Zum Verhältnis von Text und Bild in der Apsis von Santa Maria in Domnica in Rom', in B. Janowski and N. Zchomelidse (eds.), *Die Sichtbarkeit des Unsichtbaren: Zur Korrelation von Text und Bild im Wirkungskreis der Bibel* (Stuttgart, 2003), 147-165; *idem*, 'Materializing the Invisible in Early Medieval Art: The Mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica in Rome', in G. de Nie, K.F. Morrison, and M.

Conceived of as united programmes of image and text, or of text and image, early Christian mosaic programmes were meant to be viewed, read and understood as unified wholes.³⁰¹ Even inscriptions which only seem to have confirmed the viewer's experience of mosaics as glittering emphasized particular aspects of vision: one entered the church, saw the mosaic image, then read the inscription and looked back at the image, seeing and reading each against the other in a process which was inherently two-directional. Patrons were able to signal their appreciation of shining, glittering surfaces by constructing these adorning their buildings with bright images confirmed by adjacent bright texts, presenting a unified visual-verbal message.

However, as Michael Squire has demonstrated with regard to Graeco-Roman epigrams, inscriptions which purport faithfully to describe or explain the images or spaces with which they were paired should not necessarily be taken at face value as simple 'how-to' guides for deducing meaning.³⁰² As we have seen, the language of the inscriptions discussed thus far is in fact strikingly similar to the language of contemporaneous literary ekphraseis of the same kinds of mosaic decoration, used by writers both in Latin, including Venantius Fortunatus and Prudentius (to be discussed shortly), among others, and in Greek, including Eusebius, Procopius and Paul the Silentiary. The overlap of technical terms and broader imagery conveyed by both inscriptions and ekphraseis is perhaps most evident in the florid seventh-century apse inscription of Sant' Agnese in Rome, but can be seen earlier in the sixth-century epigram written in gold tesserae on a blue ground in the narthex of the small Cappella di San Andrea (*cappella arcivescovile*) in

Mostert (eds.), *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005), 265-79; C.J. Goodson, 'Material memory: Rebuilding the Basilica of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome', *Early Medieval Europe*, 15, 1 (2007), 20-52; idem, *The Rome of Pope Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817-824* (Cambridge, 2010), 149-58.

³⁰¹ Squire, *Image*, 190, 202-38, although in these cases the images and inscriptions were clearly contemporaneous, unlike the sculpture and epigram in the Sperlonga grotto. On image-text conjunction in archaic and classical culture, Bruss, 'Ecphrasis', in Baumbach, Petrovic and Petrovic, *Epigram*, 385-403; C.M. Keesling, 'The Callimachus monument on the Athenian Acropolis (CEG 256) and Athenian commemoration of the Persian Wars', in *ibid.*, 100-30

³⁰² Squire, *Image*, 202-38.

Ravenna, built by Bishop Peter II between 494 and 519 (Fig. 2.7).³⁰³ The varied meanings of the text will be discussed shortly, but the text is rife with classicizing language which would have been fully recognizable to Procopius and Paul:

*Aut lux hic nata est aut capta hic libera regnat.
Lexestante venit c(ae)li decus unde modernum,
aut privata diem pepererunt tecta nitentem,
inclusumque iubar secluso fulget Olimpo.
Marmora cum radiis vernant(ia) cerne serenis,
cunctaque sidereo percu(ssa) in murice saxa
auctoris pre(t)io splendent munera Petri.*

Either light was born here, or captured here it reigns free.
It is the law, from which comes the present glory of heaven,
or the deprived roofs have given birth to shining day,
and the enclosed radiance gleams forth as if from secluded Olympus.
See the marble blooming with bright rays,
and all the stones struck in starry purple shine in value,
the gifts of the founder, Peter.³⁰⁴

The inscription presents an image of the church structure as the birthplace of light very similar to that articulated by Procopius, connecting the light-filled physical space of the chapel with the ‘source’ of heaven’s ‘current glory’. The third and fourth lines provide a classicizing gloss along the lines of Paul the Silentiary’s ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia, connecting the chapel with Heaven as ‘secluded Olympus’. The text also details the other shiny materials, including marble (*marmora*) and other stones (*cuncta...saxa*), which make up the bright chapel interior.³⁰⁵

Why did patrons deem it desirable for inscriptions to explain the viewer’s visual experience of mosaics and marbles in the same terms being used to describe church

³⁰³ Deichmann, *Ravenna.Bd. 1*, 201-6; M.C. Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace* (Ithaca, 2000), 219; Mackie, *Chapels*, 104-15; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 188-96.

³⁰⁴ *LPR* 50, ed. Deliyannis, 214-5, trans. Deliyannis, 162, adaptations mine; *CIL* XI, 1, 260. The text as it appears in the chapel today has been substantially reconstructed. The language of the inscription resembles that of an inscription put up in the atrium of Old St. Peter’s by Pope Symmachus in the early sixth century, preserved in the Codex Palatinus Vaticanus 591: *ICUR*, 2, 53; *ILCV*, 2, no. 1756..

³⁰⁵ Glass mosaic tesserae are not typically referred to as ‘stones’ in mosaic inscriptions, but here the term *saxa* might describe the *opus sectile* pavement of the chapel, and presumably was chosen to play on the name of the patron, Peter, and his namesake, the ‘rock’ of the church.

decoration for audiences or readers not actually present in churches themselves?³⁰⁶ For the learned person in-the-know (the *pepaideumenos theates* of Lucian, discussed in Chapter One), these inscriptions were more than just guides to images. By composing or commissioning ekphrastic epigrams, lay and clerical patrons participated in an established text-image game which had been played by the elite for centuries. Educated late antique viewers were accustomed to reading text alongside and against images, and were practiced in deciphering multivalent implications and allusions to works of literature in the course of discussions associated with dinner (*cena*), still held in the fourth century as in Roman times.³⁰⁷ Mosaic inscriptions pointed out the glittering effect of mosaic images not only to make sure the viewer appreciated the reflective effects of the medium, but to advertise in familiar terms that patrons understood the aesthetic appeal of bright interiors, a feature in one sense specifically Christian (as gold-ground mosaic do not seem to have been common in the imperial period) but articulated in classical terms.³⁰⁸

Perhaps not surprisingly, the language of light is most often present in the relatively erudite epigrams placed within church apses, and rarely in floor mosaic inscriptions. While no pavement inscriptions discuss the reflective properties of the mosaics themselves, some do make use of the rhetoric of light to encourage viewers to take note of the shining decoration and to connect elaborate interiors with patrons. The

³⁰⁶ Paul initially delivered his ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia in the church itself: see n. 64. However, it and other ekphraseis written for public performance were also circulated afterwards to readers who might or might not have seen the monument or work of art being described.

³⁰⁷ Squire, *Image*, 217, 219-21. On the continuing practice of the *cena* as occasion for erudite discourse, Leader-Newby, *Silver*, 123-71. On the Roman *cena*, K.M.D. Dunbabin, 'Convivial spaces: Dining and entertainment in the Roman villa', *JRA*, 9 (1996), 66-80; A. Booth, 'The age for reclining and its attendant perils', in W. Slater (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), 105-20; D. Fredrick, 'Grasping the pangolin: sensuous ambiguity in Roman dining', *Arethusa*, 36, 3 (2003), 309-43.

³⁰⁸ Roman examples of mosaics with gold are few and far between, and include sections of Nero's Domus Aurea: F. Sear, *Roman Wall and Vault Mosaics* (Heidelberg, 1977), 42-3, also cats. 77 (Stadium of Domitian), 234, 243, 251, 253, 256-7, 263, 273 and 275 (late Roman provincial buildings in Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland). However, Roman authors such as Ovid did employ the same tropes: see Arnulf, *Kunstbeschreibungen*, 61-2. On the late antique patron's love of broadcasting his *paideia*, Agosti, 'Saxa loquuntur'; R. Leader-Newby, 'Personifications and *paideia* in late antique mosaics from the Greek East', in E. Stafford and J. Herrin (eds.), *Personifications in the Greek World: From Antiquity to Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2005), 231-46; Arnulf, *Versus*.

dedicatory inscription in the nave of the Church of Alexander at Tipasa in modern-day Algeria (fourth or early fifth century) begins with language very similar to that of the apse inscriptions considered previously, with a self-referential description which praises the place ‘here where the walls with gleaming roofs are praised, you see these heights which shine and the holy altars’ (*Hic ubi tam clavis laudantur maenia tectis, / culmina quod nitent sanctaque altaria cernis...*).³⁰⁹ A few lines further on, the text praises the remains of the Bishop Alexander’s ‘righteous predecessors’ (*iusti priores*) who ‘now gleam forth with light resting under the decorated altar’ (*Nunc luce praeferulgent subnixa altare decoro*), referencing the altar of the church, which was set up over nine above-ground burials of the *priores* in stone coffins.³¹⁰ The Tipasa inscription is repeated almost verbatim, with slightly variant (mis)spellings of words, in a mosaic inscription in the pavement of the nearby Church of Bishop Cresconius at Djemila (Cuicul), dating to the fourth through sixth century.³¹¹ These two texts elegantly combine praises of the shining materiality of their interiors with the spiritual light emanating from the tombs of local clerics.³¹²

In a slightly different vein, the commemorative floor mosaic inscription in the nave of the Church of Saint Salsa, also at Tipasa (fifth century), begins by praising the brightness of gifts on the altar of the church: ‘The offerings which you see with which the

³⁰⁹ *CIL* VIII, 20903; *Inventaire*, iii, 95-6, no. 397,4; Gui, Duval and Caillet, i, no. 9, ‘Tipasa’, 6, 32-7. For the archaeological context of the church, C.J.S. Green, ‘The significance of plaster burials for the recognition of Christian cemeteries’, in *Burial in the Roman World. C.B.A. Research Report*, 22 (1977), 46-52; Duval and Prévot, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra*, 1; Duval, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra*, 2: *La basilique I dite de Melléus ou de Saint-Cyprien* (Rome, 1981); A.M. Yasin, ‘Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community’, *AB*, 87, 3 (Sep. 2005), 433-57, especially 446-7.

³¹⁰ On this language, Yasin, *Saints*, 97.

³¹¹ P. Monceaux, after A. Ballu, ‘Séance 17 janvier’, in *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, (1922), xxvi-xxxii; also P.-A. Février, in ‘Notes sur le développement urbain en Afrique du Nord: Les exemples comparés de Djémila et de Sétif’, *CA*, 14 (1964), 1-47, who dates the church to the sixth century on the basis of prosopography; Gui, Duval & Caillet, i, no. 27, ‘Djémila’, 2, 96-8 (as part of episcopal group).

³¹² These examples indicate a clear epigraphic connection to examples from Italy, a link which makes sense in terms of political and economic links as well as ties between mosaic production in North Africa and Italy, seen most famously in the ‘African’ style and iconography of the Piazza Armerina mosaics on Sicily, probably commissioned by a fourth-century aristocrat with ties to Africa: Dunbabin, *North Africa*, 196-233; idem, *Mosaics*, 130-43; A. Carandini, A. Ricci and M. de Vos, *Filosofiana: The villa of Piazza Armerina. The image of a Roman aristocrat at the time of Constantine* (Palermo, 1982), i, 27-47, 59ff.

sacred altars gleam' (*Munera quae cernis quo sancta altaria fulgent...*) (Fig. 2.8).³¹³ While the text itself does not specify what kinds of offerings are being described, their placement on the altar implies that they were silver liturgical vessels, common donations to churches in the period.³¹⁴ The location of the inscription in the nave in front of the altar accords with its description of donated vessels, perhaps also donated by the patron(s) who commissioned the mosaic. At Tipasa, the text points outside itself, directing the viewer's gaze towards the holy altar and its precious adornments, other objects possibly associated with the patron.

Finally, an inscription in the east side of the nave pavement of the Church of St. Stephen in Horvat Be'er-She 'ma (Khirbet el-Far) in Palestine (late sixth or early seventh century), describes the church and other churches as being erected and 'made shining' or 'graced' (λαμποί(ν)ονται) (Fig. 2.9).³¹⁵ This usage of the term is slightly strange, as the word is most commonly used epigraphically to label men or women as 'λαμπρότατος/α', the Greek equivalent of a *vir clarissimus*.³¹⁶ However, other examples of this usage are preserved in the *Anthologia Graeca*, including in epigrams which were placed in the apse of the Church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, in Constantinople,³¹⁷ and in a sixth-

³¹³ *CIL* VIII, 20914; *Inventaire*, iii, 92, no. 379; Y. Duval, *Loca sanctorum*, i, 358-62, no. 170, fig. 235; Frend, 'Altare'. On the church more generally, S. Gsell, *Recherches archéologiques en Algérie* (Paris, 1893), 21-6, 29-30, Pl. 5. On the disputed dating of the Cuicul pavement, see Gui, Duval & Caillet, i, 32-7.

³¹⁴ For eastern examples, M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures* (Baltimore, 1986). Extensive silver liturgical vessels are also listed in the inventories contained in the *LP*, especially Constantine's endowments, *LP* 32. Y. Duval, *Loca sanctorum*, i, 361, argues that the brilliance of the altar as mentioned is a vague *topos* 'symbolise la beauté de l'édifice', although late antique silver vessels have been found in North African contexts, for example the Capsella Africana reliquary casket, found in the ruins of an early Christian church at Aïn Zirara in Numidia, now in the Museo Sacro at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, inv. no. 60589; Maguire, *Earth*, 11-2, fig. 5; G. Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: An Art Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries* (Oxford, 2008), 64ff, and n. 6. Procopius, *DA* 1.1.64-5, also mentions the forty thousand pounds of silver vessels alone donated by Justinian to the Inner Sanctuary of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

³¹⁵ V. Tzaferis, 'Horvat Be'er-She 'Ma', *EI*, 25 (1996), 79-80, no. 7.

³¹⁶ Tzaferis translates the relevant phrase as 'are graced', which is possible but ignores the more common usage of the word, particularly in Christian contexts. On the Platonic usage of the word as primary colour, as well as its use in the sixth-century *Akathistos* hymn, James, *Light*, 53-8, 77-8. Examples of the word used as title occur in mosaic inscriptions in Palestine at Aristobulias (Khirbet Istabul), L. Di Segni, 'Christian Epigraphy in the Holy Land: New Discoveries', *ARAM*, 15 (2003), 235-55, especially 251-3, fig. 4, among many other eastern examples.

³¹⁷ *AG* 1.3.2, 'shining with beauty' (λαμπρόμενον).

century church built by the consul Theodorus on behalf of the emperors Justin and Justinian in Miletus, on the Anatolian coast.³¹⁸ The Be'er-She 'ma and other inscriptions imbue the language of light with a secondary valence of donation, praising the patron in the same language used to describe his shining donations.

b. The materials of light and colour

Descriptive references to light and colour in inscriptions deliberately focused the viewer/reader's attention on the material properties of mosaic by using terms, phrases or concepts with deep literary and cultural roots.³¹⁹ These inscriptions were placed in the apses and on the floors of churches and chapels, and different materials were valued in different spatial contexts. As discussed previously, the Hagios Polyeuktos inscription lies at the more elaborate end of the spectrum in its description of the golden dome (χρυσορόφου) and the walls of the church 'clothed in marvellous metallic veins of colour (θεσπεσίους λειμῶνας..μετάλλων) like flowery meadows which Nature made to flower in the depth of the rock...'³²⁰ The *topos* of metallic mosaics and marbles described as meadows full of flowers is present in the earlier fourth-century description by Prudentius of the golden-covered ceiling beams and glass mosaics of San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome 'like meadows bright with springtime flowers'.³²¹ An epigram by Sidonius

³¹⁸ AG 1.98.3, 'shining with the luster of vast amounts of metals' (λαμπρόμενον στεροπήσιν ἀμετρήτοιο μετάλλου). This inscription, ascribed to Gregory of Nazianzus in the *Anthologia*, probably was set up in the apse or triumphal arch of his church to refer to the golden mosaic set up there: Limberis, *Architects*, 66-8.

³¹⁹ James, *Light*, 19-46.

³²⁰ AG 1.10.57-65, trans. Paton, 11; *supra* n. 277. Procopius also makes use of this *topos* in his ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia: DA 1.1.59-60.

³²¹ Prudentius, *Liber Peristephanon* 12.49-54. On this text, M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993); H. Brandenburg, 'Die Basilica von S. Paolo fuori le mura, der Apostel-Hymnus des Prudentius (Peristeph. XII) und die architektonische Ausstattung des Baus', in F. Guidobaldi and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi (eds.), *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma* (Vatican City, 2002), iii, 480-505; B. Brenk, 'Visibility and (Partial) Invisibility of Early Christian Images', in de Nie et al., *Seeing the Invisible*, 139-83, especially 157-9. On this *topos* as used by other authors, J. Onians, 'Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity', *Art History*, 3 (1980), 1-24; M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY, 1989), 75-6. On the Homeric origins and Roman uses of this trope by authors such as Plutarch, Thomas, *Monumentality*, 232.

Apollinaris, written for the apse of the church of Bishop Patiens at Lyon (c. 469), describes the decoration in similar terms, where ‘mosaic green as a blooming meadow shows its design of sapphire cubes winding through the ground of verdant glass’.³²² A related *topos* is used in the apse inscription of Sant’Agnese fuori le mura in Rome, where Dawn personified (*Aurora*, the goddess of Dawn) ‘is coming up from snowy fountains into the clouds, watering the fields with her dew’.³²³ Summary references to the shining qualities of glass mosaics, particularly gold tesserae, are more common, as discussed previously, but other tropes are also used. The first *titulus* in the cycle at Tours Cathedral concludes by commenting upon the convincing reality of the images in the apse and on the triumphal arch: ‘The display of pictures that decorates the building leads one to think that the coloured forms are living figures’ (*Lucidius fabricam picturae pompa perornat, ductaque qua fucis vivere membra putes*).³²⁴ This concept of ‘living pictures’ is yet another *topos* common to ekphrasis, as well as to ekphrastic epigrams, closely tied to the rhetorical goal of conjuring up a vivid image of the work of art or other object or scene being described (*enargeia*), and should not be over-interpreted.³²⁵

In the remainder of the *tituli* at Tours, the author, Venantius Fortunatus, emphasizes the standard goal of ekphrasis, *enargeia*, and content such as the visual appreciation of gems. On the triumphal arch, the *titulus* relating the story of Saint Martin giving his cloak to a needy man ends with the saint’s arms seen gleaming, ‘covered with gems’ (*visa tegi gemmis est manus illa viri*) instead of wool, as if ‘bejeweled by an angelic artist’. The text favours the ‘gleam of precious stones’ (*nobilium lapidum lumine*) as God’s reward to Martin for his selfless act, and the scene associated with this particular

³²² Sidonius, *Epistula* 2.10.

³²³ *Supra* n. 294.

³²⁴ Trans. Kessler, *supra* n. 105.

³²⁵ Squire, *Image*, 235, e.g. on epigrams devoted to Myron’s cow; also James and Webb, ‘Ekphrasis’, 1-15; R. Webb, ‘Accomplishing the Picture’, in James, *Art and Text*, 13-32; idem, *Ekphrasis*, 87-106. On colour as crucial to form in classical and late antiquity, Bradley, *Colour and Meaning*; James, *Light*.

titulus might have included a depiction of Martin clad in gems.³²⁶ The appreciation of the colours and marvelous physical properties of gems was not new in late antiquity, and precious stones were much-praised by Greek and Roman authors, most famously by the Hellenistic poet Posidippus of Pella in his epigrams.³²⁷ Christian authors such as Victricius of Rouen used the imagery of ‘spiritual jewels’, representative of virtues, to conjure up mental images of the crowns of the martyrs.³²⁸ Additionally, images of actual gems often appear in the mosaics of church apses and walls, where they adorn martyrs’ crowns or the walls of the heavenly cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as on the triumphal arch at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, while precious materials such as mother-of-pearl were also used for accents.³²⁹

When mosaic inscriptions included descriptions of the materials of tesserae, as mentioned already, the general term *metalli* was preferred, sometimes modified by the adjective *varii* to imply that the tesserae are either variegated in terms of colour or perhaps that the mosaic itself represents a variety of forms.³³⁰ Specific colours are rarely mentioned.³³¹ Indeed, not only do these texts describe the golden, variegated nature of

³²⁶ Trans. Kessler, ‘Pictorial Narrative’, 76-7; also *supra* n. 105.

³²⁷ The epigrams are ‘On Stones’ (Λιθικά), in G. Bastianini and C. Gallazzi with C. Austin (eds.), *Posidippo di Pella: Epigrammi* (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309) (Papiri dell’Università degli Studi di Milano, 8; Milan, 2001), 28-45. On the epigrams, A. Kuttner, ‘Cabinet Fit for a Queen: The Λιθικά as Posidippus’ Gem Museum’, in K. Gutzwiller (ed.), *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (Oxford, 2005), 141-63. On Nonnus’ use of the brightness of gems, Caverio, *Poems*, 137-8.

³²⁸ Victricius, *De laude sanctorum* 12.26-33, ed. J. Mulders and R. Demeulenaere, *CCSL* 64 (Turnhout, 1985), 89; trans. G. Clark, ‘Victricius of Rouen: Praising the Saints’, *JECS*, 7 (1999), 396-7. On this text, also P. Cox Miller, ‘Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles in Late Ancient Christianity’, in G. de Nie et al., *Seeing the Invisible*, 25-52, especially 49-50.

³²⁹ On Santa Maria Maggiore, *supra* n. 109. Mother-of-pearl was expensive, and was only used for highlights, as in the crown of Theodora on the apse wall of San Vitale at Ravenna, where mother-of-pearl is used to depict real pearls.

³³⁰ The question of whether the term refers to colour or form is difficult to answer, although most scholars seem to prefer the side of colour: G. Agosti, ‘The ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ of Paul the Bishop’, *ZPE*, 116 (1997), 31-8; E. Schwarzenberg, ‘Colour, Light and Transparency in the Greek World’, in E. Borsook, F.G. Superbi and G. Pagliarulo (eds.), *Medieval Mosaics: light, colour, materials* (Milan, 2000), 15-34, especially 18. On the popularity of this *topos* in late antique ekphrasis versus its later use by Nicetas Choniates and other twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers as a negative term, James, *Light*, 122-3. As James, *Light*, and Bradley, *Colour*, make clear, colours were perceived as creating form, and as such the term could presumably carry both associations simultaneously.

³³¹ Specific colours, other than material-as-colour, are rarely mentioned in ancient ekphrasis, a feature apparently inherited from epic poetry, although Philostratus’ *Imagines* are an exception to this rule: S.

mosaics, often executed in gold tesserae as in Sant'Agnese (Fig. 2.10), or in silver, as in the fifth-century church of Hosios David at Thessaloniki, ensured that the medium and the message were inextricably linked.³³² These metallic letters would have visually evoked the *litterae aureae*, gilt bronze-filled letters of carved inscriptions on Roman public monuments such as the Arch of Constantine in Rome, enhancing their public-ness and connection to Graeco-Roman tradition.³³³

While gold tesserae were often used for apse inscriptions, a very small handful of floor mosaic inscriptions also were produced with metallic tesserae.³³⁴ Examples include two donor inscriptions in the pavement of the early fifth-century Basilica alla Beligna at Aquileia, where gold letters against a blue-glass ground record the donors' names and the number of feet of mosaic for which they paid,³³⁵ as well as a similar gold inscription in the central nave pavement of Santa Eufemia at Grado (Fig. 2.11).³³⁶ At an earlier date, in the mid-fourth century, a donor used gold tesserae to write his dedicatory inscription into the pavement of a church dedicated to St. Paul at Philippi in eastern Macedonia: 'Bishop

Dubel, 'Colour in Philostratus' *Imagines*', in E. Bowie and J. Elsner (eds.), *Philostratus* (Cambridge, 2009), 309-321.

³³² Thunø, 'Inscription and Divine Presence'; idem, 'Looking at Letters: "Living Writing" in S. Sabina in Rome', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 34 (2007), 19-41. On Hosios David, *supra* n. 232. On Sant'Agnese, *supra* n. 294. Agnellus also records a dedicatory-funerary verse inscription made of silver tesserae in the atrium of San Vitale, either on the wall or (perhaps) on the floor: *LPR* 61, ed. Deliyannis, 231, trans. Deliyannis, 177; *CIL* III, 1, no. 292; Deichmann, *Ravenna. Kommentar*, 2, 3; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 224-5.

³³³ Thunø, 'Letters', 26-8. The inscription on the Arch, erected in 315 between the Forum and the Flavian Colosseum, is *CIL* VI, 1139; the gilt bronze fillings are no longer extant.

³³⁴ Glass was occasionally used in floor mosaics, as in the late Roman villa mosaics at Antioch-on-the-Orontes, to achieve special colours (such as blues, greens or oranges) or optical effects: D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947), i, 630-2; also, glass paste tesserae, now damaged, which possibly formed the necklace of a Nike figure who holds up a *tabula ansata* in the Building on the Point at Anemurium, dated to the second quarter of the fourth century, Russell, *Anemurium*, 35; Campbell, *Anemurium*, 1-2. Gold-glass tesserae were used even more rarely on floors. Exceptions include the Megalopsychia mosaic from the Yakto Complex, now in the Antioch Mosaic Museum: Levi, *Antioch*, i, 630; and the *syrinx* held by the musician in the central emblem from Room 10 of the fifth- or early sixth-century phase of the Roman House of Stone Carpets in Ravenna, G. Monteverocchi (a cura di), *Archeologia Urbana a Ravenna: La "Domus dei Tappeti di Pietra": Il complesso archeologico di via D'Azeglio* (Ravenna, 2004), 103-9, 108 fig. 158 (detail).

³³⁵ G. Brusin and P. Zovatto, *Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado* (1957), nos. 1-2; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 153-4, nos. 10-11; Yasin, *Saints*, 123-4; Kiilerich, 'Inscriptions', 46. These 'gold' tesserae are different from gold-glass tesserae used to produce wall and vault mosaics, as they were made with a sheet of gold set between two layers of dark blue rather than clear glass, as was typical in the period: James, 'Tesserae'.

³³⁶ Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 231-2, no. 11, fig. 166.

Porphyrios made the mosaic of the Basilica of Paul in (the name of) Christ' (Fig. 2.12).³³⁷

The awareness of colour and material in the layout of this text is striking. Only the names of the donor ('Bishop Porphyrios'), Paul and Christ are executed in gold tesserae against a dark grey stone ground for rich contrast in colour and sheen, while the rest of the inscription is of blue stone tesserae against a white ground, with one word, 'in (Christ)' (ἐν) in red stone tesserae. Precious materials highlight the important names within the text, connecting Porphyrios in text and material with St. Paul and Christ, elevating all three names through their own composition.

Similar awareness of the attention-grabbing power of colour and material is evident in a number of funerary inscriptions from the floors of North African churches and cemeteries, including the inscription of Severina from the Catacombs of Severus outside of Sousse (Hadrumetum) in modern Tunisia, where the first five lines of text alternate between black and red in an epigraphic technique which goes back to the Hellenistic period (Fig. 2.13).³³⁸ While the Sousse example achieves its colouristic effects without the use of glass or glass paste, other floor inscriptions do make use of the material, as seen in the inscription of Hermes in the Catacomb of Hermes, also at Sousse, executed in greenish glass on a white stone ground above a marine scene with an image of an anchor.³³⁹

While these examples are fascinating, they are exceptions rather than the rule. Most floor mosaics are composed of tesserae of various types of stone, often locally

³³⁷ The church was later replaced by the famous Octagon Church in the fifth century: S. Pelekanides, 'Ανασκαφή Φιλίππων', *Πρακτικά της εν Αθηναίς Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, (1976-7), 71-4; idem, 'Οι Φίλιπποι και τα Χριστιανικά τους μνημεία', in *Μακεδονία-Θεσσαλονίκη. Αφιέρωμα τεσσαρακονταετηρίδος της Εταιρείας Μακεδονικών Σπουδών* (Thessaloniki, 1980), 101-25; Feissel, *Macédoine*, 192, no. 226, Pl. LIII; A. Lazaridou (ed.), *Transition to Christianity: Art of Late Antiquity, 3rd-7th Century AD* (New York, 2011), 135, cat. 96, with further bibliography. The gold tesserae are actually of glass paste mixed with gold, and as a result the visual effect is duller than that of true gold-glass tesserae.

³³⁸ The inscription is Gauckler, *Inventaire*, ii, *Add.*, nos. 218f-1, pp. 26-8. On red-blue and -black bicoloured inscriptions, L. Robert, 'Épigraphie et paléographie', *CRAI*, (1955), 195-222, especially 211 n. 1-2. On funerary mosaics in North Africa generally, P.-A. Février, 'Mosaïques funéraires chrétiennes datées d'Afrique du Nord', *Karthago*, 9 (1958), 433-56.

³³⁹ The inscription is now in the Sousse Museum: Gauckler, *Inventaire*, ii, *Add.*, 24-6, no. 18. On the anchor as symbol, Jensen, *Christian Art*, 138, 140.

quarried limestone, basalt or jasper, or locally baked clay, rather than glass.³⁴⁰ This difference in materials is picked up by the inscriptions themselves. While golden apse mosaics are called *metalli*, inscriptions typically refer to the floor mosaic as a ‘ψήφωσις’, often used as a passive form of a verb in the past tense, ‘was decorated with mosaic’ (ἐψηφώθη).³⁴¹ Alternate Greek terms are occasionally used, including κέντησις in Greece (as in the inscription from Philippi) and in Asia Minor, derived from the verb ‘to prick’ or ‘stab’, a term which also refers to ‘embroidery’ and emphasizes the small units (tesserae) of which mosaics are made.³⁴² Latin inscriptions rarely mention the medium of their creation, only occasionally proclaiming that donors ‘tesselated’ (*tesselavit*) a pavement.³⁴³ These technical terms seem to place the art of floor mosaic in a different category to that of ceiling and wall mosaic, a distinction made clear in Diocletian’s Edict of Maximum Prices, issued in 301, which records higher salaries for the artists who produced the latter.³⁴⁴ If floor mosaics were considered of lower value and quality than ceiling mosaics, we might assume that inscriptions on floors did not make the same sophisticated

³⁴⁰ While the materials of late antique and Byzantine apse mosaics have been studied to some extent, extensive studies of the composition of floor mosaic tesserae have not yet been undertaken. On the Petra Church floor mosaic, T.R. Paradise, ‘Appendix C, Lithologic Composition of the Mosaic Tesserae’ in Fiema et al., *Petra Church*, 298-9., which are made primarily of local limestone, as well as marble imported from elsewhere, possibly Asia Minor or Greece. The floor mosaic of the Monastery of Martyrius at Ma’ale Adummim in Palestine is also of local stone: Y. Magen and R. Talgam, ‘The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma’ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Muraşşas) and its Mosaics’, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 91-152, especially 149. On the materials of Italian pavements, Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 152-4. This local focus accords with mosaic practice in the Roman provinces, including Britain: J.R.L. Allen, ‘Early Roman mosaic materials in southern Britain, with particular reference to Silchester (Callewa Atrebatum): a regional geological perspective’, *Britannia*, 35 (2004), 9-38.

³⁴¹ Baumann, *Stifter*, Anhang 13-14, 373, 376.

³⁴² See N. Bees, ‘Zum Verbum kentein’, *Πρακτικά της Χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, 4 (1936-8), 52.

³⁴³ As in the late fourth- or early fifth-century South Church at Brescia, ‘Syrus diac(onus) h(unc) l(ocum) t(essellauit) c(um) s(uis)’: *CIL* V, 4842; *Inscr.It.* X, V/2, no. 715; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 61-2. A number of secular epigrams from North African villas and baths describe their mosaic composition as ‘variis...tessellis’, as the inscription from a reception hall of a house at Tipasa: E. Albertini, in *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, (1920), 387; S. Gsell, *Promenades archéologiques aux environs d’Alger* (Paris 1936), 119-20; Février, ‘Lettre’, 389.

³⁴⁴ *Edict. Diocl.* 7.6-7, ed. M. Giaccherio, *Edictum Diocletiani et Collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium* (Genoa, 1974), i, 1510-1. The Edict makes a distinction between the *musaearius*, paid sixty *denarii* a day (plus board), and the *tessellarius*, paid fifty *denarii*. While the traditional interpretation of the terms has been mosaicists who work on walls versus those who work on floors, the distinction might be one of quality instead: Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 275-6.

statements about light, colour and *paideia* as did the texts inscribed in glass tesserae in more elevated architectural contexts.

However, this was not the case. Patrons played with the terms with which inscriptions on floors describe their own materials in much the same ways as they did with glass mosaic inscriptions. The central dedicatory inscription in the nave of the late fourth-century Church of St. Sphyrion at Trimithous (Tremethousa), on Cyprus, proclaims that Kartairios, at the instruction of the saint, adorned the church ‘with decorative and multicoloured mosaic’ (ψηφί[δι γρα]πτῇ ποικιλήται) (Fig. 2.14).³⁴⁵ This text might appear to simply describe the multicoloured mosaic pavement of the church, but the final term, ποικιλήται, requires further examination. By the fourth century, its root, ποικίλος, already had a rich and ancient Greek history, used by Homer as a colour word and later by Hesiod and Euripides to describe Prometheus and Odysseus as cunning, as well as by Roman authors to describe objects as either variegated in colour or form.³⁴⁶ Aristotle valued ποικιλία as a stylistic feature of good epic and epideictic,³⁴⁷ while later literary critics such as Demetrios connected variegation as embellishment to pleasure or charm (χάρις),³⁴⁸ a concept still resonant in late antique villa and bath inscriptions, for example the fifth- or sixth-century mosaic inscriptions from Sheikh Zouède in the northern Sinai, which hits the

³⁴⁵ Σύνταγμα, 1, 142-3, no. 135; D. Pallas, *Les monuments paléochrétiens de Grèce découverts de 1959 à 1973* (Vatican City, 1977), 286-8, no. 166; D. Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* (Nicosia, 1987; re-published 1992), 36, no. 38; W. Daszweski and D. Michaelides *Mosaic Floors in Cyprus* (Ravenna, 1988), 88, 99, 103 fig 15. On ποικιλία in late antique poetry, particularly that of Nonnus, and its frequency in descriptions of works of art, Agosti, ‘ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ’, 31-8. On the general valence of the term, typically used in terms of changing or variable perception of colours (i.e. sheen) and thus fast-shifting thoughts or actions, i.e. cunning, M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. J. Lloyd (Sussex, 1978), 18-20. On the term as used by Homer, G.M. Bolling, ‘ΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΣ and ΘΡΟΝΑ’, *AJP*, 79 (1958), 275-82.

³⁴⁶ Philostratos is clearly concerned with polychromy in descriptions of works of art within his *Imagines*: Dubel, 314-21. For further specific textual examples from the Roman and late antique periods, Caverro, *Poems*, 162-4.

³⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1371a.25-8, 1416b.25-6; cited by Caverro, *Poems*, 164-6.

³⁴⁸ Demetrios, *On Style (De elocutione)* 164: ‘Charm (εὔχαρι) is expressed by means of embellishment through beautiful words. These contribute most to charm (χάριτας) as, for instance, “the earth with its variegated embroidery (ποικίλλεται) of flowery garlands”...’, trans. and analysis Caverro, *Poems*, 166, n. 389. On this text, J.F. Lockwood, ‘Direction-Posts and the Date of Demetrius’ *De Elocutione*, *The Classical Review*, 52 (1938), 59.

reader over the head with descriptions of how pleasing the mosaics are: the work is the ‘*peplos* of the Graces’ (Πέπλον...Χαρίτων), into which the goddess Cypris has put ‘much charm’ (χάριν...πολλήν), and it depicts ‘charming things’ (τὰς χάριτας) (Fig. 2.15).³⁴⁹ In the church at Trimithous, the author of the inscription used the term deliberately to focus attention on the variegated colours and forms of the mosaic, forcing the viewer to appreciate the work and giving us insight into the continued appreciation for variety in late antique art and literature.³⁵⁰

Sixth-century floor mosaic inscriptions make it clear that this love of variety, articulated in exactly the same terms, persisted in Christian contexts. Two inscriptions in the pavement of the East Cathedral at Apamea (533) proclaim the variegated nature and colour of their materials, one in mosaic and one carved into marble set into an *opus sectile* pavement, as well as setting up a complex philosophical-spiritual and Homeric panegyric of the patron of the church, the metropolitan Bishop Paul, in eleven short lines.³⁵¹ Both inscriptions are framed by roundels, and appear to have been conceived of as a unified programme by Paul himself (Fig. 2.16).³⁵² As the main church space is entirely contained in the inner tetraconch, both inscriptions, one set into the outer tetraconch pavement and the other laid in the southeast room, would have only been legible once one had left the

³⁴⁹ J. Clédat, ‘Fouilles à Cheikh Zouède (janvier-février 1913)’, *Annales de Service des Antiquités de l’Egypte*, 15 (1915), 21-8; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 51-3; A. Ovadiah, C. Gómez de Silva and S. Mucznik, ‘The Mosaic Pavements of Sheikh Zouède in Northern Sinai’, *Tesserae – Festschrift für Josef Engemann*. JAC, 18 (1991), 181-91; Ovadiah, ‘Allegorical Images’, 441-4. On the inscription, E. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l’Egypte gréco-romaine* (Paris, 1969), 483-4, no. 122. On bath inscriptions, which frequently include *Charis* as abstract concept, Dunbabin, ‘*Baiarum*’, 12; idem, *Mosaics*, 323-4.

³⁵⁰ Cavero, *Poems*, 162-6, on variety as used by Nonnus as descriptor and as organizing poetic principle; also W. Fauth, *Eidos Poikilon: zur Thematik der Metamorphose und zum Prinzip der Wandlung aus dem Gegensatz in den Dionysiaka des Nonnus von Panopolis* (Göttingen, 1981); D. Gigli Piccardi, *Metafora e poetica in Nonno di Panopoli* (Florence, 1985), 97-8, 150-4, 214-17.

³⁵¹ J.-Ch. Balty, ‘Nouvelles mosaïques païennes et groupe épiscopal dit “cathédrale de l’Est” à Apamée de Syrie’, in CRIAL, (janv.-mars, 1972), 123-7; idem, ‘Le groupe épiscopal d’Apamée, dit “cathédrale de l’est”. Premières recherches’, *Apamée de Syrie: bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1969, 1971: Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 15, 17 et 18 avril 1972* (1972), ii, 189-207, especially 192-3, Pl. 75, 1-2; idem, ‘L’évêque Paul et le programme architectural et décoratif de la cathédrale d’Apamée’, in *Mélanges d’histoire ancienne et d’archéologie offerts à Paul Collart* (Lausanne, 1976), 31-46; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 206-10; Merkelbach and Stauber, SGO, 20/05/04; Agosti, ‘ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ’.

³⁵² J.-Ch. Balty, ‘Évêque’, 44; Maguire, *Earth*, 14.

inner space and walked around the outer ambulatory.³⁵³ The inscriptions both face east and were meant to be read together. The mosaic inscription in the southeast room (Fig. 2.17) describes the patron as having donated the ‘multi-coloured’ or ‘multi-formed mosaic’, τὴν ποικίλῃν ψηφίδα, while the inscription carved into the more expensive *opus sectile* pavement of the ambulatory immediately behind the altar (Fig. 2.18) reads:

Πολλῶν μετ’ ἄλ-
λων κ(αὶ) τόπον τὸν
ἐνθάδ’ ἐκόσμησε
Παῦλος τῇ πολυ-
μόρφῳι συνθέσει.

Together with many other places, Paul adorned this place here with a multi-formed composition.³⁵⁴

Each text specifically designates its materials as distinct. The mosaic inscription emphasizes the many colours present in the mosaic pavement, while the lapidary inscription uses the classical *topos* of innumerability, seen previously at Horvat Be’er-She ‘ma, drawing the reader’s attention to the *opus sectile* pattern of intersecting triangles of marble which decorates ‘this place here’ (Fig. 2.19).³⁵⁵ The two materials, mosaic and cut marble, are paired in one programme and united by the inscribed texts which would have encouraged viewers to discuss the colours and forms of each section of the pavement. By emphasizing the substances of which they are composed, the texts engage with the Roman hierarchy of materials in a discursive exercise similar to the elite rhetorical practice of ‘marble-watching’ popular in Rome in the first and second centuries CE, where viewers attempted to identify from which quarries different stones had come.³⁵⁶ Echoes of this practice survive in late antique texts, including Chorikios’ two encomia to Bishop Marcian

³⁵³ For discussion of the arrangement and plan of the church, Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 212-4, fig. 192.

³⁵⁴ J.-Ch. Balty, ‘Éveque’, 34, fig. 7.

³⁵⁵ *Supra* p. 99.

³⁵⁶ Bradley, *Colour*; idem, ‘Colour and Marble in early Imperial Rome’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 52 (2006), 1-22. On *opus sectile* decoration, Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 254-66; F. Guidobaldi and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti marmorei di Roma dal IV al IX secolo* (Vatican City, 1983), 486-523.

of Gaza,³⁵⁷ and Gregory of Nazianzus' description of his church at Nazianzus, in which 'the local [stone] which does not yield [in quality] to the imported'.³⁵⁸ In these texts, as in the Polyeuktos epigram, materials are mentioned in order to confirm the specifics of the decoration, but also to make clear to the viewer that the patron spent great amounts of money on decorating the church and to encourage further discussion on the sources of materials, particularly the different types of marble which make up the *opus sectile* of the pavement.

Other floor inscriptions articulate the love of colour and variety in explicitly material terms. The main dedicatory inscription of the fourth- or fifth-century Thyrsos Basilica at Tegea praises the 'noble deeds' of the patron, Bishop Thyrsos, to which the church and the 'well-arranged decoration of delicate stones (i.e. tesserae) bear witness...' (μαρτυρῖ...καὶ λίθου λεπταλέης εὐσύνθετος κό[σ]μ[ος] ...) (Fig. 2.20).³⁵⁹ This text replicates the emphasis on variety evident in the Apamea Cathedral inscription, but focusses specifically on the stone composition of the pavement. A related inscription from

³⁵⁷ Chorikios, *Laudatio Marciani* 1.41-2, ed. Foerster and Richtsteig, 12-3, trans. Mango, *Art*, 63-4; as well as *Laudatio Marciani* 2.36, ed. Foerster and Richtsteig, 37, trans. Mango, *Art*, 69: 'A double benefit accrues from these marbles: [they provide] the church [with material] for decorous workmanship and are a source of honor to the cities that sent them, since a man who has seen them and admired them at once praises the donor'. Paul the Silentiary's description of Hagia Sophia contains the most classicizing descriptions of different types of marble, as at 617, trans. Mango, *Art*, 85-6: 'Yet who, even in the thundering strains of Homer, shall sing the marble meadows gathered upon the mighty walls and spreading pavement of the lofty church? Mining [tools of] toothed steel have cut these from the green flanks of Carystus and have cleft the speckled Phrygian stone...'

³⁵⁸ Gregory, *Oration* 18.39, *PG* 35, 1037, trans. Mango, *Art*, 27. On the awareness and existence of the meanings of materials in the period, F.W. Deichmann, 'Saule und Ordnung in der frühchristlichen Architektur', *Römische Mitteilungen*, 55 (1940), 114-30; idem, *Die Spolien in der spätantike Architektur* (Munich, 1975); Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 254-66; R.M. Schneider, 'Coloured marble. The splendour and power of imperial Rome', *Apollo*, 154 (July 2001), 3-10; D. Kinney, 'The discourse of columns', in C. Bolgia, R. McKitterick, and J. Osborne (eds.), *Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas c. 500-1400* (Cambridge, 2011), 182-199, especially 191-8. Even in the eighth and ninth centuries, scholars continue to be deeply fascinated by the origins of specific marbles, even using famous marble quarries such as that on Proconnesus as rhetorical devices to make ideological statements about monuments or entire cities, as does Agnellus of Ravenna: D.M. Deliyannis, 'Proconnesian Marble in Ninth Century Ravenna', in J. Emerick and Deliyannis (eds.), *Archaeology in Architecture: Studies in Honor of Cecil L. Striker* (Mainz am Rhein, 2005), 37-42.

³⁵⁹ Pallas, 181-3, no. 89D; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 186, 188-93, 655 (trans. I. Ševčenko); D. Feissel and A. Philippidis-Braat, 'Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. III. Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra)', *T&M*, 9 (1985), 273-371, especially 296-97, no. 38, 371, no. 137; Σύνταγμα, 2, 77-9, no. 21; A. Avramea, 'Η βασιλική τοῦ Θύρσου στὴν Τεγέα καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς', *Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτικόν*, (1998), 35-40; Caraher, 'Church', 316, nos. 5-6.

the pavement of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash (c. 540), discussed in the introduction, describes the decoration of the church, which was decorated ‘with adornments of silver and vividly-coloured stones’ (ἀργυρέοις κόσμοισι καὶ εὐβαφέεσσι λίθοισιν) (Fig. 1.1).³⁶⁰ The text does not identify the particular colours of the ‘stones’, but does appreciate their variety. What the silver adornments of the building were is less clear, but they might have been silver vessels, lamps, or wall revetments. Glass tesserae were found in the east end of the church, indicating the existence of a mosaic in the apse conch whose bright materials those mentioned in the inscription.³⁶¹ These inscriptions trade in the ancient language of material variety, and speak of stone mosaics in the same terms as did authors of the first century BCE, including Diodorus Siculus, who described the mosaic inscriptions of the Hellenistic tyrant Agathocles of Syracuse on the towers of the ‘Little Harbor’ of the city as made of ‘stones of different kinds’ (ἐτερογενῶν λίθων) which proclaimed the name of the founder.³⁶²

The main dedicatory inscription in the nave of the church of Santa Eufemia in Grado (579) engages in this same process of linking particular materials to particular spatial contexts (Fig. 2.21).³⁶³ While the language and content of the text has more in common with that of apse inscriptions, such as that of the Basilica Eufrasiana,³⁶⁴ the first line of the Grado inscription changes the Eufrasian reference from *vario...metallo* (for glass tesserae) to *vario...decore*, referring to the geometric patterns of stone tesserae which decorate the floor and frame over fifty-six donor inscriptions. The Latin *vario* is to be read

³⁶⁰ *Supra* n. 1.

³⁶¹ Crowfoot, *Churches*, 28-9.

³⁶² Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* (*Bibliotheca Historica*) 16.83.2. Also see the work of his contemporary, Horace, *Satires* 2.4.83-4, who refers to a mosaic pavement as ‘of varied stones’ (*lapides varios*).

³⁶³ *CIL* V, 149; G. Pirone, in *DACL*, 13, 2 (Paris, 1938), s.v. ‘pavement’, cols. 2737-8; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 226-7, cat. 27, 7; Yasin, *Saints*, 125-9.

³⁶⁴ On the Basilica Eufrasiana, *supra* n. 129.

as equivalent to the Greek ποικίλος of the Trimithous and Apamea inscriptions.³⁶⁵ In the second line of the text, these adornments are contrasted with the carved ‘marble decorations’, *picto...marmore* (possibly *opus sectile*), which decorated the earlier fifth-century church at the site.³⁶⁶ The text references the earlier decorative programme in order to praise the superiority of the varied forms which decorate the new church. The first two lines of the inscription pay special attention to the specific materiality of their circumstances, as they praise the material in which they are written in such a way that emphasizes the very substance of their composition. If the previous decorations were indeed of *opus sectile*, as seems to be implied, the text sets up a hierarchy of materials which privileges *opus tessellatum* over *opus sectile*, a reversal of the usual ladder of preciousness, as marbles were considered more precious than the local stone and brick tesserae used to produce the floor mosaic at Santa Eufemia.³⁶⁷ Rather than upend the entire traditional Roman hierarchy of materials, this inscription probably represents a local Italian preference for the fine-quality geometric patterns which were in vogue in the mid-sixth century.

Apse, wall and floor inscriptions use similarly complex language to discuss the varied materials and colours of mosaics. The existence of this common language of materials and colour in Christian inscriptions, related to Graeco-Roman visual preferences and the rhetorical *topoi* used to articulate them, makes it clear that the same relative conception of materials and love of variation held true regardless of the placement of

³⁶⁵ As suggested by A. Carlini, ‘Nota sull’iscrizione musiva eliana nella basilica di Sant’Eufemia’, in *Grado nella storia e nell’arte* (Udine, 1980), ii, 351-3; also Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 226-7; followed by Agosti, ‘ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ’, 37.

³⁶⁶ Brusin and Zovatto, *Monumenti*, 453-500; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 227. Caillet disagrees with the argument of Tavano that the inscription refers to the first church on the site, a small church of the late fourth or early fifth century: S. Tavano, ‘Mosaici di Grado’, in *Atti IIIo Congresso nazionale archeologia cristiana* (Trieste, 1974), 177-99; idem, *Grado, guida storica e artistica* (Udine, 1976), 57-117, 131-4. The fifth-century apse inscription of Santa Pudenziana in Rome, preserved by Panvinio in Ms. Vat. lat. 6780, Kap. 63, indicated the church was adorned in a similar fashion ‘with marbles and (mosaic) pictures’ (*marmoribus et pictoribus*): Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iii, 279ff.

³⁶⁷ Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 221-2.

inscriptions within interiors. Even the reversal of the Roman hierarchy of materials, as at Grado, first reaffirmed tradition in order to play with it.

Light as panegyric tool

A discrete group of mosaic inscriptions uses the technical terms and concepts particular to the language of light and materials in order to praise patrons for euergetic activities. We have already examined several floor mosaic inscriptions in Palestine (Horvat Be'er-She'ma) and North Africa (Tipasa and Djemila) which link the appreciation of shining interiors to praise of the donor. However, certain inscriptions forged an even more focussed linkage between donors and their efforts to renovate Christian buildings. This specific connection between light and renovation, articulated in what might be termed the discourse of *renovatio*, is clear in the Santa Eufemia inscription and its explicit contrast between the earlier marble floor of the church and the new sixth-century mosaic floor (Fig. 2.21):

*Atria quae cernis var[io for]mata decore,
squalida sub picto cae[latu]r marmore tellus,
longa vetustatis senio f[us]cay[e]ra[t a]etas.
Prisca en cesserunt magno novitatis honori,
praesulis Haeliae studio praestante beati.
Haec sunt tecta pio semper devota timori.*

The hall which you see, decorated with different patterns (shapes),
previously squalid, the floor carved with adornments of marble,
long eras of time had darkened with age.
Behold, the former ceded to the great honour of newness,
through the outstanding zeal of the blessed prelate Haelias.
Here are the coverings on the holy, always devoted to reverence.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ *Supra* n. 363. On this phenomenon in Italy in particular, G. Cantino Wataghin, 'Architecture and Power: Churches in Northern Italy from the 4th to the 6th c.', in W. Bowden et al. (eds.), *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2006), 287-309, especially 294-9; G. Cuscito, 'Vescovo e cattedrale nella documentazione epigrafica in Occidente', in *Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne* (Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste 21-28 septembre 1986) (Vatican City, 1989), 746-53; Thunø, 'Letters', 23-4.

The text defines itself as a guide to viewing the renovated building.³⁶⁹ While the previous church was ‘squalid’ and dark, the new church built by Haelias has a magnificent new mosaic floor and deserves honour precisely because it is *new*. Christians visiting the renovated church in the late sixth century might have had no clear idea what the old church looked like, or if it was truly squalid. The idea that old churches were dirty, dark and small was a popular *topos* in late antique literature, frequently used by authors Procopius in Book One of his *De Aedificiis*.³⁷⁰ However, although the association of old church buildings with dirtiness and darkness was rhetorical, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the Grado inscription describes an accurate sixth-century reality.³⁷¹

Contemporaneous floor inscriptions also make use of the language of light and colour to characterize patrons as virtuous individuals. The two mosaic dedicatory inscriptions placed at the entrances to the nave and to the chapel south of the narthex of the sixth-century Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis, discussed in Chapter One, refer to their patron, Dometios, as the ‘great light (μέγα φέγγος) of the homeland’ (Fig. 2.22).³⁷² The two inscriptions in roundels from the East Cathedral at Apamea engage in this same rhetorical linkage, where Paul ‘offers the multi-coloured (ποικίλην) mosaic, he whose

³⁶⁹ On the self-referential ekphrasis conducted by the inscription (‘...which you see’), see Chapter One, pp. 23ff..

³⁷⁰ For example, Justinian tears down and rebuilds the ‘small and very badly lighted’ shrine of the Archangel Michael, which had committed the sin of bad taste in resembling ‘a tiny bedroom of a dwelling-house, and that, too, of the house of one who is not very prosperous’: *DA* 1.3.14-8, trans. Dewing, 43. Similar episodes involve the Church of Acacius, which is transformed from a ruin into a paragon of ‘astonishing whiteness’, *DA* 1.4.25-6; and the Church of St. Panteleimon, *DA* 1.9.11.

³⁷¹ On the believability of building inscriptions, E. Thomas and C. Witschel, ‘Constructing Reconstruction: Claim and Reality of Roman Rebuilding Inscriptions from the Latin West’, *PBSR*, 60 (1992), 135-77; G.G. Fagan, ‘The Reliability of Roman Rebuilding Inscriptions’, *PBSR*, 64 (1996), 81-93; G. Kalas, ‘Writing and Restoration in Rome: Inscriptions, Statues, and the Late Antique Preservation of Buildings’, in C. Goodson et al. (eds.), *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400-1500* (Aldershot, 2010), 21-44.

³⁷² *Supra* n. 49. This term resonates with the contemporaneous description by Paul the Silentiary of Justinian: ‘Remain, O sceptre-bearer, unto cycles of many years, to be an evening and morning light, for on you, much-hymned one, both east and west know they can rest their cares’, *Ekphrasis* 921-33, ed. Friedländer, 253, trans. Macrides and Magdalino, 56. On the donor’s contributions to the ‘homeland’ or ‘fatherland’ as traditional in honorific inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Roman ‘Greek’ East, Ma, ‘Two Cultures’, 332-3.

mind abounds with higher (ποικιλόφρων) dogmas' or 'beliefs', while the nearby *opus sectile* pavement is 'multi-formed' (πολυμόρφωι). This word-play involving 'multiples' of things—colours, forms and the more abstract higher beliefs—would have been appreciated by educated viewers of sixth-century Apamea, many of whom would probably have recognized the Homeric reference embedded in the first inscription, with which Paul cheekily links himself to Odysseus, a hero famous for his cleverness.³⁷³ The inscription could be read in different ways by different audiences: a devout Christian might have understood the phrase as simply emphasizing the patron as learned, with an understanding of the 'higher teachings of theology' which could put the conflicts over orthodoxy in the past,³⁷⁴ while another reader might have honed in on similarities to specific idioms in the poetry of Nonnus and his followers.³⁷⁵ While this set of texts does not explicitly describe the patron as *renovator*, it does mark the Christianization of the site, as the Cathedral is built on top of a Roman structure which was decorated with a mosaic of the Seven Sages, representing the classical ideal of σωφροσύνη (Fig. 2.23).³⁷⁶

The discourse of Christian architectural *renovatio* as connected with the language of light had its roots in earlier centuries. The triumphal arch inscriptions of San Paolo fuori

³⁷³ Balty, 'Paul', 40ff, believed 'ποικιλόφρων' was a *hapax* in classical literature, the term appearing once in Euripides' *Hecuba* 131, trans. D. Kovacs (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 410-1, used to refer to Odysseus as 'shifty'. Similar descriptive terms are applied to Odysseus by Homer, for example πολύτροπον, *Odyssey*, 1.1; also Detienne and Vernant, 18-20. Ibid., 35, and Agosti, 'ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ', 32ff, point out a second, negative usage to refer to a fox in Alcaeus, *Fragments* 69.6-7. Agosti also argues more generally for the common usage of related terms in late antique literature, especially poetry.

³⁷⁴ Balty, 'Paul', 40ff, connects the inscription and the mosaic images of the gazelle, panther and deer biting snake to the specific climate within the empire in 533, characterized by the desire for peace in the church. In terms of the inscription, the terms continue to be used as descriptors of people in the early Christian literary world in a similar fashion to the assimilation of Odysseus to Christ: Agosti, 'ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ', 34; Caverio, *Poems*, 163.

³⁷⁵ Agosti, 'ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ', 33ff, who argues that Paul probably came across the crucial word in an anthology or a poem of the *Odyssey*, commonly used to educate young boys at school; he might also have associated it with πολυτροπία, interpreted by Neoplatonist authors such as Porphyry as a 'spiritual quality', and even seen Odysseus as a moral *exemplum*, as did Gregory of Nazianzus in his poem *On Virtue* 1.2.10.406, PG 37,709. Agosti also emphasizes numerous other parallels to the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus.

³⁷⁶ Balty, 'Paul', 40; idem, 'Nouvelles mosaïques du IV^e siècle sous la cathédrale de l'est', *Apamée de Syrie: bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1965-1968. Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 29 et 30 avril 1969* (Bruxelles, 1972), i, 163-85, especially 171, Pl. 50-1; J. and J.-Ch. Balty, 'Julien et Apamée. Aspects de la restauration de l'hellénisme et de la politique anti-chrétienne de l'empereur', *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, 1, 1 (1974), 267-79 especially 276.

le mura in Rome, renovated by Galla Placidia in the mid-fifth century, utilize the light motif in a more symbolic fashion, expressing the patroness' pleasure that 'all the dignity of her father's work' 'shines' (*splendere*) through the work and 'zeal of Pope Leo' (*studio Leonis*) (Fig. 1.9).³⁷⁷ Here, Placidia uses the brilliance of her mosaic commission to refer to her unnamed imperial father, the emperor Theodosius. A similar inscription in gold-glass tesserae on the back wall of the nave of Santa Sabina in Rome (c. 422-32), executed in gold-glass tesserae, links the language of light to praise of the presiding Bishop of Rome (and patron): 'When Celestinus held the apostolic throne, and shone forth as chief bishop in the whole world...' (*Culmen Apostolicum cum Caelistinus haberet / primus et in toto fulgeret episcopus orbe...*) (Fig. 2.24).³⁷⁸ Bishop (Pope) Celestinus was not the primary patron of the church, but the text turns the traditional dating formula (according to the bishop or clergyman presiding over the period of church construction) into a brief panegyric of the bishop through the use of the verb *fulgere*, a term which, as we have seen, was most often used in inscriptions to describe the visual effect of glass mosaics. Celestinus is praised in the same way as the patron of the Basilica of St. Paul at Pisidian Antioch (c.380), where Bishop Optimos is described as having 'shone forth' (*διέλαμπεν*).³⁷⁹ In the context of the former text, the bishop's very name, literally 'from (or 'of') the heavens', emphasizes the praise, becoming part of the inscription's light-related praise.³⁸⁰

However, besides these two inscriptions, all extant examples of the *renovatio* discourse linked to light date to the sixth and seventh centuries, including apse inscriptions

³⁷⁷ On San Paolo, *supra* n. 118. On the patron, Galla Placidia, *supra* n. 140.

³⁷⁸ The inscription is *ICUR*, 2, 24, 111; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1778. On the mosaics, Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iv, 75; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 127; Thunø, 'Letters', 19-41, with additional bibliography.

³⁷⁹ S. Mitchell and M. Waelkens, *Pisidian Antioch: The Site and Its Monuments* (London, 1998), 210-7; *SEG* 52, 1388.

³⁸⁰ This same sort of play on the name of the patron is also evident in the Cappella di San Andrea inscription in Ravenna, where the patron, Bishop Peter, decorates the vestibule of the Archbishop's Palace with different stones, *saxa*: *supra* pp. 95-6.

of the Basilica Eufasianiana in Poreč and San Lorenzo and Sant' Agnese in Rome (to be discussed shortly).³⁸¹ At Poreč, Eufasius demolishes the earlier structure, described as 'small, filthy, and at that time devoid of great metallic decoration' (*exiguum...que carens tunc..metallo... putria*), and on the verge of collapse, erecting a new church from the ground up with a golden apse mosaic, 'what you now see, gleaming with varied metallic decoration' (*quas cernis nuper vario fulgere metallo...*).³⁸² The overall narrative effect of the inscription is one of drama and action, with the past and present contrasted through use of words which describe the multicoloured glass tesserae depicting a diverse array of heavenly and earthly figures. In the mosaic above, the patron, Bishop Eufasius, is depicted standing next to the local saint Maurus, who introduces the patron to the Virgin and Child enthroned in the centre of the apse (Fig. 2.25). While the background of the mosaic is composed of glittering gold tesserae, the robes of Eufasius are of deep purple tesserae, a colour with long-standing connotations of imperial and/or divine power, allowing the donor to make a powerful statement about his importance in the church and the community while linking himself via colour to the Virgin and to Christ enthroned on a globe on the triumphal arch immediately above, both of whom also wear purple garments.³⁸³ The purple robes of Eufasius, the Virgin and Christ stand out against the golden background because of their colour, as the tesserae appear to absorb light rather than reflect it.³⁸⁴ Even more strikingly, the patron presents a model of the newly-renovated church to the heavenly figures, supercharging the connection between the building and

³⁸¹ The discourse of 'renovatio' reemerges in the ninth-century decorative and epigraphic programs of the churches of Pope Leo III and Paschal I in Rome, previously mentioned, including Santa Susanna, Santa Cecilia and Santa Maria in Domnica: Goodson, *Rome*, 52-4, 217 n. 88; Thunø, 'Inscription and divine presence', 285-6. Also related is the inscription, recorded by Agnellus, over the doors of the early eighth-century entrance chamber of an unnamed church in Ravenna, possibly the church of St. Andrew, which reports that the place which 'formerly was squalid...now is renewed by the merits of the bishop': *LPR* 149, trans. Deliyannis, 273.

³⁸² Trans. Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 4, adaptations mine; also Ihm, *Programme*, 168.

³⁸³ On the colour purple in late antique and Byzantine literature, James, *Light*, 50, 73-4, 77-8, 81; H. Blum, *Purpur als Statussymbol in der griechischen Welt* (Bonn, 1998).

³⁸⁴ Franes, 'When all that is gold', in Eastmond and James, *Icon and Word*, 13-24.

Eufasius. Inscription and image work together, focusing visual attention on the donor through his brightening-up of the interior.

By articulating the concept of *renovatio* through narratives which emphasized shining church interiors, patrons were able to drive home their architectural and artistic efforts and to record the previous dilapidated state of the building in order to set up a contrast with their renovations rooted in the language of light. At the same time, these donation inscriptions allowed patrons to speak in conceptual terms familiar to the educated viewer, writing ekphrastic responses to the buildings into the buildings themselves.

Physical and divine light in inscription and image

a. Between the classical and the Christian

In Rome in the late sixth and seventh centuries, patrons commissioned inscriptions which combine light as panegyric device with a deeper strand of religious sentiment. The mosaic inscriptions and images on the triumphal arch of San Lorenzo fuori le mura, renovated c. 578-90, exemplify this development.³⁸⁵ The text runs below the mosaic of Christ, saints and the donor, Pope Pelagius, and contrasts the horror of St. Lawrence's 'martyrdom by flames' (*martyrium flammis*) with the return of the 'venerated light' (*lux beneranda*), aided by the gold tesserae of the inscription and the background of the mosaic, to Lawrence's shrine due to the efforts of the pope.³⁸⁶ Lawrence is the sole figure in the mosaic clothed in golden robes, evoking his martyrdom as well as his newly-lit *templum* (Fig. 2.26).³⁸⁷ The first two lines of the longer inscription, originally placed in

³⁸⁵ *ILCV*, 1, nos. 1770-1; Ihm, *Programme*, 138-40; Krautheimer *Corpus*, ii, 10. On the mosaic programme, see G. Matthiae, *Le chiese di Roma dal IV al X secolo* (Bologna, 1962), 159-64, 304-7; idem, *Mosaici*, i, 149ff; Bovini, *Mosaici*, 265ff; Oakeshott, 145-6; A. Muñoz, *La Basilica di S. Lorenzo fuori le mura* (Rome, 1944); P. Baldass, 'The Mosaic of the Triumphal Arch of San Lorenzo fuori le mura', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 49 (1957), 1-18.

³⁸⁶ A similar sentiment is expressed in an epigram on baptism attributed to Ambrose, possibly inscribed on or around the baptismal font of Santa Tecla in Ravenna, ...*vera salus rediit luce resurgentis Chr(ist)i*): *CIL* V, 617; *ICUR*, 2, 161; *ILCV*, 1, no. 1841.

³⁸⁷ Oakeshott, 145; also *LP* 1.62.2, trans. Davis, 63, which mentions the renovation.

the apse but restored in the top zone of the arch, link the visible light of the interior to scriptural precedent: ‘As the Lord, creating light, has removed the darkness, so a gleam is now present in what was a shadowy place’ (*Demovit dominus tenebras ut luce creata,/ his quondam latebris sic modo fulgor inest*). By paraphrasing the creation of light by God (Genesis 1:1-19), the inscription magnifies both the act of Pope Pelagius’ patronage (without mentioning him by name until later in the inscription) and the importance of the renovation itself. Although the image which was originally paired with the inscription is not extant, the text powerfully connects earthly light present in the church with light at the moment of its biblical creation. This inscription turns to Old Testament rather than to classical referents, moving away from the classicizing world of writers such as Procopius, Paul the Silentiary and Chorikios of Gaza and drawing increasingly on Christian textual tradition for symbols and referents.³⁸⁸

In an even more striking variant on the new Christian language of light, the apse mosaic inscription and image of Sant’Agnese fuori le mura (c. 625-638) present a powerful vision of light expressed via a rhetorical move from classicizing rhetoric to Christian imagery (Fig. 2.5).³⁸⁹ The text uses the personified Dawn (*Aurora*) in order to praise the brilliance of the church building: she ‘is coming up from snowy fountains into the clouds, watering the fields with her dew’, a *topos* already discussed. The classical personification of Dawn is also evoked by Paul the Silentiary in his description of the windows embedded within the base of the dome of Hagia Sophia: ‘...and through fivefold openings pierced in its back it provides sources of light, sheathed in thin glass, through which, brilliantly gleaming, enters rosy-ankled Dawn (*Eos*)...’.³⁹⁰ While the Sant’Agnese

³⁸⁸ On Paul, *supra* n. 64. On Chorikios as rhetor, n. 62.

³⁸⁹ *Supra* n. 294.

³⁹⁰ Paul, *Ekphrasis* 398, ed. Friedländer, 238, trans. Mango, *Art*, 82. This particular personification of dawn as ‘rosy-ankled’ finds an early late antique echo in Quintus of Smyrna’s *Fall of Troy*, written in the fourth century CE, including occurrences at 1.115-6 (Andromache); and 1.138 (Dawn). On Quintus generally, see S. Bär, *Quintus Smyrnaeus ‘Posthomerica’ 1: die Wiedergeburt des Epos aus dem Geiste der*

inscription does not quite preserve the depth of the Homeric gloss given to Dawn by Paul, the text maintains an interest in the classicizing language still popular in the sixth century.

The light within Sant' Agnese is so intense that it is compared to that produced by a 'rainbow...between the stars' or a 'purple peacock bright with colour' (*colore nitens*).³⁹¹ In the mosaic immediately above, the solid gilded background above creates an intensely reflective setting for the figures in the foreground, while two coloured bands of green and blue tesserae represent the firmament bedecked with stars, or perhaps the interstellar 'rainbow' of the text.³⁹² After employing classical imagery to praise the church's radiance, the next two lines of the inscription speak purely in the language of Christian symbolism. As in the San Lorenzo inscription, the text evokes the image of God as creator of light: 'God who might bring an end to night or light has banished chaos from here out of the tombs of the martyrs' (*Qui potuit noctis vel lucis reddere finem martyryum e bustis hinc reppulit ille chaos*). The transition from classical to Christian imagery ends with God as all-powerful creator, or potential terminator, of light and night, as well as enabler of the renovation of the church, famously sited over the catacombs in which St. Agnes is buried.³⁹³ Image and inscription work in parallel: God's hand reaches down through the clouds to crown the titular saint, its position at the apex of the apse making clear its power to bestow or create, as in the first line of the inscription. The text ends by returning to the patron of the redecorated church, Pope Honorius, and again relies upon the language of brilliance to praise him as God's agent in the renovation: he 'shines' (*lucet*) and his heart,

Amazonomachie, mit einem Kommentar zu den Versen 1-219 (Göttingen, 2009), 11-109; A. Gotia, 'Light and Darkness in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* 2', in M. Baumbach and S. Bär (eds.), *Quintus Smyrnaeus: transforming Homer in second sophistic epic* (Berlin, 2007), 85-106. Earlier epithets for dawn, including 'with rose-red fingers', occur with frequency in Homer's writings: *Odyssey*, 2.1, 3.451, 4.343, 5.252, and 9.488. Examples of 'with (her) lovely locks' occur with less frequency, at 5.431, 9.85, and 10.158. J. Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London, 1993), 57, argues for Homer's ekphrasis of the Palace of Alcinous (*Odyssey* 7.82-130), as well as Lucian's and Nonnus' elaborations of the passage, as the model for Paul's description

³⁹¹ On the imagery of rainbows, James, *Light*, 91-109. On the colour purple, *supra* n. 382.

³⁹² James, *Light*, 6; Janes, 111ff; Spieser, 'Representation'.

³⁹³ Krautheimer, *Corpus*, ii, 10ff.

or perhaps his soul, is ‘gleaming’ (*lucida corda*). This language is parallel to that of Prudentius and Venantius Fortunatus, the latter of whom uses similar panegyric *topoi* to describe the appearance and bearing of a noble Roman: ‘You have lights (eyes?) of the heart, the lamp of your soul radiating light, and your head flashes with eternal light’ (*lumina cordis habes, animi radiante lucerna, et tuus aeterna luce coruscat apex*).³⁹⁴

The inscriptions of San Lorenzo and Sant’Agnese combine the language of light, the *renovatio* discourse, and clear references to the Old Testament as well as to Graeco-Roman literary tradition, turning light into a symbol of the divine. One might argue that light as used in inscriptions or in the ekphrasis of Procopius, Paul the Silentiary and other late antique authors is imbued with an inherent Christian symbolism. However, certain inscriptions use light as specific symbol, as does the mosaic inscription from the *cappella arcivescovile* in Ravenna. Discussed already in terms of its classicizing and ekphrastic language, the text acts as an exemplum of the conjunction between the visual and textual languages of *renovatio* and light in the period (Fig. 2.7).³⁹⁵ In the tiny narthex of the chapel, the epigram runs from left to right around the upper zone of the walls, the first part of which reads:

Either light was born here, or captured here it reigns free.
It is the law, from which comes the present glory of heaven,
or the deprived roofs have given birth to shining day,
and the enclosed radiance gleams forth as if from secluded Olympus.
See the marble blooming with bright rays,
and all the stones struck in starry purple shine in value,
the gifts of the founder, Peter.³⁹⁶

The adjacent mosaic image over the doorway, of Christ as Roman military victor, does not seem to convey the same ideological message as the inscription until one reads the text inscribed in the open book held by Christ: ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ (*Ego / sum*

³⁹⁴ Venantius, *Carmina* 7.5.29-30 and 7.1.3, trans. de Nie, 64-5.

³⁹⁵ See pp. 95-6.

³⁹⁶ *Supra* n. 303.

/ *via*, / *veri/tas et / vita* +) (John 14:6).³⁹⁷ When combined, the two inscriptions and the image promote Christ not only as ‘the way, the truth and the life’, but also as ‘the law’ and the source of heavenly light, a similar articulation to that found on the apex of the restored triumphal arch mosaic of the Basilica Eufrasiana at Poreč, where Christ is enthroned on a globe against a gold background and holds a book which proclaims, ‘I am the true light (*Ego / sum / lux / vera*)’ (Fig. 2.27).³⁹⁸ Maureen Miller, following F.W. Deichmann, reads the iconographic programme of the chapel as a visual defence of orthodoxy against the Arian tenets espoused by Theodoric in Ravenna at the time, and points out that the text inscribed in Christ’s book is quoted often by Athanasius to refute the Arian Christology.³⁹⁹ A depiction of St. Euphemia, a popular martyr among orthodox Christians, is also included in the programme.⁴⁰⁰ Whether or not we are able to read opposition to Arianism in the chapel’s mosaics, this inscription concisely combines classicizing appreciation of light while encapsulating the turn from the classical to the Christian, both rhetorical acts which would have been appreciated by the clergymen who were the regular viewers of the mosaic.

b. The Christian over the classical

Other sixth-century texts inscribed in mosaic do something substantially different: they set up a careful distinction between earthly light and the more metaphorical ‘light of faith’. In the Rotunda chapel of Sant’Andrea at Old St. Peter’s in Rome (498-514), built

³⁹⁷ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Bd. 1*, 203.

³⁹⁸ Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 51-4, 137-9, who do not discuss the mosaic of the triumphal arch in detail due to its problematic later restorations, in which the nineteenth-century restorer might have copied the features of the figure of Christ in the apse of San Vitale; however, the text in the book is unique to the Poreč mosaic, at least in the period.

³⁹⁹ Miller, 219, n. 13; Deichmann, *Ravenna. Bd. 1*, 203. On Theodoric and Arianism in Ravenna in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, Ward-Perkins, ‘Arianism?’ in Gwynn and Bangert, *Religious Diversity*, 265-89; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 139-200.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 188-96.

by Pope Symmachus, the mosaic inscription under the apse vault began in the same fashion as did the inscription in Santo Stefano in Ravenna, but proceeded to set up a contrast between the glittering glass mosaic and polished marble decor of the church and the light of Christian faith:

Templa micant plus compta fide quam luce metalli ... nitet... opus

The shrine sparkles more brightly adorned with faith than with the gleam of polished stone and the building shines...⁴⁰¹

In Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome (Fig. 1.11), built only a decade or two after Sant'Andrea, the first two lines of the inscription underneath the main mosaic image of the Second Coming of Christ again privilege the spiritual brightness of the church over the material glitter of its decoration:

*Aula d(e)i claris radiat speciosa metallis,
in qua plus fidei lux pretiosa micat.*

The brilliant hall of God shines with bright metals,
in which the precious light of faith gleams more.⁴⁰²

The inscription begins with the standard self-referential articulation of the bright mosaic-filled interior, discussed already, but then compares these mosaics and marbles with the 'precious light of faith' (*fidei lux pretiosa*) which gleams forth even more brightly. This distinction or progression from visual perception to faith through prayer made by both inscriptions echoes the guidance given by the late fifth- or sixth-century Syrian theologian Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁴⁰³ In *De Divinis Nominibus*, Pseudo-Dionysius

⁴⁰¹ The chapel is not extant, but the inscription is preserved in *ICUR*, 4, 4109; also J.D. Alchermes, 'Petrine Politics: Pope Symmachus and the Rotunda of St. Andrew at Old St. Peter's', *Catholic Historical Review*, 81, 1 (Jan. 1995), 1-40, especially 21; Goodson, *Rome*, 183, n. 68. A similarly non-extant mosaic inscription, from Sant'Agnese fuori le mura (seventh century), proclaims, 'The hall of the Virgin glitters, adorned with varied metals, but shines even more, gleaming brighter with great merit' (*Virginis aula micat variis decorata metallis, sed plus namque nitet meritis fulgentior amplis*): *ICUR*, 2, 63, 89, 104, 137; *ICLV*, 1, no. 1769.

⁴⁰² *Supra* n. 147. On the influence of this inscription on Abbot Suger and his new abbey at Saint-Denis, E. Panofsky, *Abbot Suger. On the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures* (Princeton, 1949), 164, 168; and Thunø, 'Inscriptions', 145ff, who defends the side of influence against recent attacks.

⁴⁰³ On Pseudo-Dionysius, P. Rorem, *Biblical and liturgical symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian synthesis* (Toronto, 1984), 64-5, 99-116; idem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: a commentary on the texts and an introduction to*

articulates a complex and developed theory of perception in his attempt to explain a way around the eternal problem of how one can know or perceive God through worship and contemplation, articulated in the language of light:

We are raised up to the enlightening beams of the sacred scriptures, and with these to illuminate (φωτιζόμενη) us, with our beings shaped by songs of praise we behold the divine light (θεαρχικὰ φῶτα), in a manner befitting us...In most holy contemplation we shall ever be filled with the sight of God shining gloriously around us as it once shone for the disciples at the divine transfiguration. And then we shall be, our minds away from passion and from earth, and we shall have a conceptual gift of light (νοητῆς...φωτοδοσίας) from him and, somehow, in a way we cannot know, we shall be united with him and, our understanding carried away, blessedly happy, we shall be struck by his blazing light.⁴⁰⁴

In the same text, Pseudo-Dionysius uses the image of a ‘great shining chain’ which lifts worshippers upward to the ‘dazzling light’ of the rays emanating from God.⁴⁰⁵ The author distinguishes conceptually between earthly light, ‘the sun’s rays’, which in a basic sense emanate from ‘the Good’ (i.e. God), and the ‘blazing light’ of the sight of God which is only perceivable as mental image.⁴⁰⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius pursues the same line of argumentation in *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. He makes clear most Christians need material assistance in order to grasp these abstract concepts, and thus sights and other sensory experiences one might have in a church, such as smelling incense, should be read symbolically as signs of divine archetypes:

For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the

their influence (Oxford, 1993); U. Juck, ‘Ps. Dionysios Areopagites und der Bilderstreit in Byzanz: Überlegungen zur Dionysiosrezeption des Johannes von Damaskos’, *Hermeneia. Zeitschrift für ostkirchliche Kunst*, 8, 2 (1992), 71-80. On his theory of perception and its applicability to late antique art, Elsner, ‘Viewer’, 81ff; Nelson, ‘Where God’, 1ff.; E. Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm’, *DOP*, 8 (1954), 137ff; Averil Cameron, ‘The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation’, in D. Wood (ed.), *The Church and the Arts* (London, 1992), 1-42, especially 24ff; A. Louth, ‘“Truly visible things are manifest images of invisible things”: Dionysios the Areopagite on knowing the invisible’, in de Nie et al., *Seeing the Invisible*, 15-24. Western theologians also adopt light and the sun as symbols of spiritual power in their treatises, for example Victorinus of Rouen in his *De laude sanctorum*: on the text, Cox Miller in *ibid.*, 44-50.

⁴⁰⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* 1.3, 589B and 1.4, 592c, in *Corpus Dionysiacum*, i, ed. B. Regina Suchla (Berlin & New York, 1990), 111, 114-5, trans. P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (1987), 50-3.

⁴⁰⁵ *De Divinis Nominibus* 3.1, 680, in *Corpus*, i, ed. Suchla, 138-9, trans. Rorem, 68.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.1, 693B-696A and 3.4, 697C-700A, in *Corpus*, i, ed. Suchla, 143-4, 147-8, trans. Rorem, 72-4.

aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires. Hence, any thinking person realizes that the appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness...Material lights are outpourings of an immaterial gift of light.⁴⁰⁷

Other authors picked up on the Pseudo-Dionysian line and applied it more specifically to church decoration. In a letter to Julian, Bishop of Atramytiun, Hypatius of Ephesus writes:

For these reasons we, too, permit material adornment in the sanctuaries, not because God considers gold and silver, silken vestments and vessels encrusted with gems to be precious and holy, but because we allow every order of the faithful to be guided in a suitable manner and to be led up to the Godhead, inasmuch as some men are guided even by such things towards the intelligible beauty, and from the abundant light of the sanctuaries to the intelligible and immaterial light...⁴⁰⁸

Hypatius, the archbishop of Ephesus in the 530s and one of Justinian's key theological advisors, uses the language of light from Pseudo-Dionysius to promote a 'ladder of images' as the path for contemplation of God.⁴⁰⁹ Hypatius concretizes this path to a 'heavenly intelligence' by connecting it with the physical world, applying the terminology of light to the physical and the mental experiences of viewing images and contemplating

⁴⁰⁷ *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, 1.3, 121C-D, in *Corpus Dionysiacum*, ii, ed. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter (Berlin & New York, 1991), 8-9, trans. Rorem, 146.

⁴⁰⁸ Hypatius of Ephesus, *Fragment of 'Miscellaneous Enquiries'*, in E. Diekamp (ed.), *Analecta Patristica, Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 117 (Rome, 1938), 127-9, trans. Mango, *Art*, 117; also see Elsner, 'Viewer', 81-3. Brubaker and Haldon, 44-50, following P. Speck, 'ΓΡΑΦΑΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΓΛΥΦΑΙΣ', in *Poikilia Byzantina*, 4, Varia, 1 (1984), 213-72, argue that this text is an eighth century invention, although as per the text's most recent editor H.-G. Thümmel, 'Hypatios von Ephesos und Iulianos von Atramytiun zur Bilderfrage', *BS*, 44 (1983), 161-70, especially 166, it seems unlikely that the text was intentionally fabricated but was instead slightly corrupted through later transmission.

⁴⁰⁹ On Hypatius and images, P.J. Alexander, 'Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Worship in the Sixth Century', *HTR*, 45 (1954), 177-184; S. Gero, 'Hypatius of Ephesus on the Cult of Images', in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, 2 (Leiden, 1975), 208-16. An epigram composed by Agathias and placed on an icon of the Archangel Michael on the Greek island of Platé provides a similar apparatus for spiritual vision: AG 1.34, trans. Paton, 21, 23. On the epigram as 'bridge between mundane reality and spiritual truths otherwise unattainable' as well as the nervousness it, and two related epigrams on works of the Archangel, convey about depicting angels, G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 2001), 62, 95-8, 192; Brubaker and Haldon, 775-6. On Agathias and his epigrams generally, especially their dates, see Alan Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993), 16, who dates the group to c. 568; Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), 14, 16-7, 105ff, who revises her dating to not earlier than 566/7, but assumes their inclusion in the *Cycle* prior to their assimilation into the *Anthologia Palatina*; and Averil and Alan Cameron, 'The Cycle of Agathias', *JHS*, 86 (1966), 22-3, who date the group to c. 567; R.C. McCail, 'The Cycle of Agathias: New Identifications Scrutinised', *JHS*, 89 (1969), 92-4; idem, 'On the Early Career of Agathias Scholasticus', *REB*, 28 (1970), 142, who advocates for a broader date range (555-570).

the divine. In their writings on light, the Church Fathers, including Gregory of Nazianzus on the symbolic qualities attributed to light,⁴¹⁰ and Cyril of Alexandria, on the association between mental contemplation of the Transfiguration and the illuminated mind,⁴¹¹ make similar associations to those of Pseudo-Dionysius and Hypatius.⁴¹²

While Jaś Elsner and Robert Nelson have pointed out Pseudo-Dionysian overtones in early Byzantine mosaic images, especially in the apse mosaic of the *katholicon* of the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, few have realized the influence of the author's theology on inscriptions.⁴¹³ In Sant'Andrea and Santi Cosma e Damiano, inscriptions present the Pseudo-Dionysian solution to the problem of image contemplation adjacent to the images themselves. In both cases, the explanation of or ekphrasis on the iconography of the mosaic morphs into advice to the faithful as to the proper mode of viewing the mosaic: first, the inscriptions affirm their own glittering substance, making their subsequent negation of their materiality even more jarring.⁴¹⁴ The opening lines of the texts reassure the viewer that gazing upon beautiful, sparkling artworks in churches is acceptable because the power of faith will always be greater. In Santi Cosma e Damiano, this 'light of faith', while a general concept, could also have been read as descriptive of the martyrs Cosmas and Damian, mentioned in the third line of the inscription as the 'doctor-martyrs' (*martyribus medicis*), because martyrs were considered to have earned

⁴¹⁰ R.R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969); L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999), 1ff, 119-36; J.A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: an intellectual biography* (Crestwood, NY, 2001).

⁴¹¹ Elsner, 'Viewer', 97.

⁴¹² *De divinis nominibus* 1.4, in *Corpus*, i, 112-5, trans. Elsner, 'Viewer', 96.

⁴¹³ Elsner, 'Viewer'; Nelson, 'Where God Walked'. Thunø, 'Letters', has noted the relationship between the Santi Cosma e Damiano inscription and the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, and the impact of both on Abbot Suger.

⁴¹⁴ Thunø, 'Inscriptions', 147ff, following Arnulf, *Kunstbeschreibungen*, argues that the classical impulse to emphasize splendor, precious materials and radiance has more to do with the Santi Cosma e Damiano inscription than does Pseudo-Dionysius. However, these inscriptions turn the Graeco-Roman *topos* of light on its head, using the undeniable brightness of church interiors to make complicated points about the nature of material versus spiritual reality.

‘spiritual gold’, or illumination gained through martyrdom.⁴¹⁵ The inscription espouses a distinction between physical light and the ‘light of faith’ which is different from the Hypatian progression to faith via contemplation of physical light and images, as it implies a definite pride of place for faith over physical experience and hints at a tension between materiality and contemplation of the divine, albeit a tension problematized by the very existence of the figural decoration in the church. However, despite the conceptual gap between the two epigrams and the Pseudo-Dionysian/Hypatian theorization of the image, the progression from the physical to the spiritual espoused by the inscriptions indicates the spread of a related discourse on proper vision, contemplation and prayer, articulated alongside the relevant images themselves in the classicizing language and golden mosaic material of illumination.⁴¹⁶

Floor mosaic inscriptions also cast light, colour, and material as symbols of classical culture and Christian faith. A text inscribed on the pavement of the annex of the Complex of Eustolios, a villa and bath complex at Kourion in Cyprus (first half of the fourth century) (Fig. 2.28), skillfully weaves the dactylic hexameter and vocabulary of Homeric verse into a statement of Christian faith:

Ἀντὶ λίθων μεγάλων, ἀντὶ στερεοῖο σιδήρου
χαλκοῦ τε ξανθοῖο καὶ αὐτοῦ ἀντ’ ἀδάμαντος
εἶδε δόμοι ζώσαντο πολύλλιστα σήματα Χριστοῦ.

In place of big stones (walls) and solid iron, bright bronze and even adamant, this house has girt itself with the much-venerated signs of Christ.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Janes, 74-5, on biblical commentaries by Victorinus, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, ed. F. Lo Bue, *Comentarius in Apocalypsin Editio Victorini et Recensio Hieronymi*, CSEL 49 (1916), 42, 44; and Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 4. 21.62, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143ab (1971), 206, lines 43-6.

⁴¹⁶ On the spiritual function of golden lettering, Thunø, ‘Letters’.

⁴¹⁷ T.B. Mitford, *The Inscriptions of Kourion* (1971), 352-7, nos. 201-4; Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics*, 40-3, nos. 45-7; I. Nicolau, ‘The Transition from Paganism to Christianity as Revealed in the Mosaic Inscriptions of Cyprus’, in J. Herrin, M. Mullett and C. Otten-Froux (eds.), *Mosaic. Festschrift for A.H.S. Megaw* (Athens, 2001), 13-8, especially 14-6; Bowes, ‘Christian Images’, 188-9.

While the inscription was part of the decoration of a private residence, albeit a fairly grand one rather than a structure with an explicitly Christian function, the text contrasts the substantial mass and fortifications of an imagined Archaic Greek palace (not a description of the fourth-century building itself) with the ‘signs of Christ’, the ornate mosaic Greek crosses with which the floor is decorated.⁴¹⁸ Although the spatial context of this text is different from those of the inscriptions in Rome, all make strong statements about the triumph of faith over the traditional tropes of light and materiality while still using these very tropes.

Other inscriptions on floors feature much-simplified references to God, Christ and other figures in the heavenly hierarchy. Characteristic formulations of this type are primarily found on floors in the eastern provinces. The formula ‘light, life’ (φῶς ζωῆ) appears on two mosaic floors in Palestine, in both lateral apses of the sixth-century baptistery at Susita (Fig. 2.29),⁴¹⁹ and in a monastic cell at the coenobitic monastery at Choziba (Wadi el-Qilt).⁴²⁰ The formula, a reference to Christ made most explicitly in John 1:4 (‘In him was life, and the life was the light of men’) and John 8:12 (‘I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’), acts as symbolic reference to the Saviour.⁴²¹ In the case of the Susita inscriptions, each of which is written in the form of a cross, the formula, though placed on the floor, would have evoked a similar glitter as the same text arranged similarly on early Christian gold

⁴¹⁸ On the signs of the cross, H. Maguire, ‘Christians, Pagans, and the Representation of Nature’, in D. Willers (ed.), *Begegnung von Heidentum und Christentum im spätantiken Ägypten, Riggisberger Berichte 1* (Riggisberg, 1993), 132-60, especially 156 fig. 26, reprinted as Article VI in idem, *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art* (Aldershot, 1998); idem, ‘Magic and geometry in early Christian floor mosaics and textiles’, in W. Höradner, J. Koder and O. Kresten, *Andrias: Herbert Hunger zum 80. Geburtstag. Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik 44* (Vienna, 1994), 265-74, especially 271, reprinted as Article VIII in idem, *Rhetoric*. Another mosaic inscription in the East Portico of the complex testifies to the baths as gift of Eustolios to the city of Kourion: Mitford, 352-7.

⁴¹⁹ On Susita, S. Yeivin, ‘Archaeology in Israel (November 1951-January 1953)’, *AJA*, 59 (1955), 163-7; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 136, no. 231, Pl. CLXX, with previous bibliography. On Choziba, J. Patrich, ‘The Cells (*ta kellia*) of Choziba, Wadi el-Qilt’, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 205-26, especially 214-6, fig. 14.

⁴²⁰ Avi-Yonah, ‘Pavements’, *QDAP*, 2, 153-4, no. 62, with previous bibliography.

⁴²¹ Nelson, ‘Where God’, 25.

crosses worn as jewellery (Fig. 2.30).⁴²² A mosaic inscription in the baptistery of the church at Horvat Beit Loya adapts a similar biblical passage from Proverbs 13:9: ‘The light of the righteous through all’ (Φῶς δικέοις διὰ παντός).⁴²³ This inscription, added in a later phase of renovation around 500 in which the baptismal font was moved from the center to the southern side of the room, was placed deliberately at the opening of the railing around the font from which newly-baptized individuals would have exited.⁴²⁴ Given that they were placed in baptisteries, it is not surprising that the Susita and Horvat Beit Loya inscriptions explicitly reference baptism as spiritual enlightenment.⁴²⁵

c. *The Christian and the classical*

While some floor mosaic inscriptions take up the classical symbolism of light and play with it in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christian illumination, other texts use the trope more ambiguously. In the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis, two inscriptions rely on the language of light to connect the church and its decoration with visions of the heavenly city in the Books of Ezekiel and Revelation as well as the description of the Temple of Solomon in the Book of Kings.⁴²⁶ The texts, both framed by *tabulae ansatae* and placed at the entrance to the main nave of the church and in a chapel south of the narthex, are the same ones which describe the founder Dometios as a ‘great light’ (discussed previously) and are practically identical. The first line of the inscription

⁴²² For example, a late sixth-century cross now in Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, which bears an identical inscription in gold wire on the reverse: M.C. Ross, S.R. Zwirn and S.A. Boyd, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and early medieval antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection . Volume 2, Jewelry, enamels, and art of the migration period* (Washington, D.C., 2005), 136, no. 179H, Pl. XCVII. A very similar pendant cross, also dating to the sixth century, is in Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico, inv. A A0.9.6469.

⁴²³ J. Patrich and Y. Tsafir, ‘A Byzantine Church Complex at Horvat Beit Loya’, in Tsafir, *Ancient Churches*, 265-72, especially 269-71. The entire passage reads: ‘The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.’

⁴²⁴ Patrich and Tsafir, ‘Horvat Beit Loya’, 267, with site plan.

⁴²⁵ *Supra* n. 281.

⁴²⁶ *Supra* n. 49.

in the church reads: ‘A stone flashing from God’s grace on either side...’ (Λίθον ἀπαστράπτοντα Θεοῦ χάριν ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα). The chapel inscription is identically composed, except it replaces the ‘stone’ of the previous inscription with ‘house’ (οἶκον), which seems an obvious replacement if one reads ‘stone’ as a synecdoche for ‘wall’ (τεῖχος), or for ‘house’ (Fig. 2.22).⁴²⁷ The participle in the inscriptions is derived from the verb ἀστράπτω, ‘to flash’ or ‘to lighten’, which is not infrequently used in the Old and New Testaments to describe lightning, often associated with either the second coming of Christ or the glittering, dazzling clothing of heavenly beings.⁴²⁸ In the Gospel of Matthew 24:27 and the equivalent passage in Luke 17:24, lightning on both sides of the sky is connected to the coming of Christ. While the exact phrase of the inscription, ‘on either side’ is not used, the implication of both passages is the same.⁴²⁹ These lines in Luke and Matthew are Christian rewritings of the Vision of Ezekiel in the Old Testament, particularly passages such as Ezekiel 1:4, ‘As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and *fire flashing forth continually...*’ (πῦρ ἐξαστράπτον).⁴³⁰ The description of the Second Coming of Christ in the Book of Revelation picks up on the same themes, and utilizes the same language of lightning, to refer to the throne of God (4:5), the openings of the Seventh Seal (8:5) and of God’s Temple (11:19), and the Second Coming itself (16:18).

⁴²⁷ *Supra* n. 49. A similar synecdoche of ‘stone’ – ‘wall’ occurs in the previously-discussed inscription from the Complex of Eustolios at Kourion: see pp. 126-7.

⁴²⁸ For example, in the Synoptic Gospels of Luke 10:18, 17:24 (‘For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day’); and the equivalent passage in Matthew 24:27 (‘For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man’) as well as at 28:3 (‘His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow’). The term also describes dazzling clothes of angels, as in Luke 24:4, ‘While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel’ (ἐν ἑσθῇτι ἀστραπτουσίῃ); and the flashing of a spear, as in Habbakuk 3:11, ‘The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear’.

⁴²⁹ In the version of Matthew, the lightning shines from east to west, ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ φαίνεται ἕως δυσμῶν; while in Luke it shines from one side of the sky to the other, ἐκ τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰς τὴν ὑπ’ οὐρανόν.

⁴³⁰ The Septuagint version of Ezekiel 1:4; and a similar passage at Ezekiel 1:13.

The language of the Nikopolis inscriptions is closest to that of the Books of Matthew and Luke, which use the dramatic language of lightning and share a concern for symmetry which brings us back to the first inscription we considered, the Polyeuktos epigram. Jonathan Bardill has connected that inscription's fascination with symmetry to its desire to evoke the visionary temple of Ezekiel, made real in Juliana's church.⁴³¹ The Polyeuktos epigram is even more closely linked to the accounts of Matthew and Luke in its description of the brightness of the church: '...from east to west (δ' ἀντολῆς...ἐς δύσιν) it extends itself glittering (ὕπαστράπτων) with unspeakable brightness in the sunlight on both its sides (τῇ καὶ τῇ πλευρῇσι)!'⁴³² Both the Polyeuktos and Nikopolis inscriptions seem to use the Christian language of light, while incorporating the eschatological overtones of the Gospel passages.⁴³³

At the same time, scholars have also noted the Nonnian vocabulary of the epigrams.⁴³⁴ Nonnus prefers the language of 'flashing', as he uses variants of the verb ἀστράπτω fairly frequently in his *Dionysiaca* to describe the brilliance of the appearance of different gods, as well as materials, including marbles and clothing.⁴³⁵ The first line of the second Nikopolis inscription (Λίθον ὑπαστράπτοντα...) directly echoes a speech by the suitor Lyaios in Book 42, who describes the neck of his beloved Beroë as outshining 'a sparkling jewel'.⁴³⁶ This fascination with movement back and forth, and here and there, evident in both Nikopolis inscriptions is also evident in Nonnus' work, with ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα

⁴³¹ Bardill, 'Temple', 343-5.

⁴³² AG 1.10.53-5, trans. Paton, 10-11.

⁴³³ While the Book of Revelation was not considered canonical in the east in the sixth century, eschatological symbolism is evident in fourth- and fifth-century church decorative programmes: Hellemo, *Adventus Domini*; Nasrallah, 'Moni Latomou'.

⁴³⁴ Isager, 'Pagans', 213-4; Agosti, 'ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ'.

⁴³⁵ W. Peek, *Lexikon zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnus* (Berlin, 1968-75), i, cols. 208-9.

⁴³⁶ Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 42.424, trans. Rouse, 258-9, where Rouse inserts 'outshines' to fill a lacuna in the text.

occurring sixty times in the *Dionysiaca* alone.⁴³⁷ Indeed, the Nonnian parallels are perhaps more direct than the explicitly Christian ones.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, early Christian mosaic inscriptions were often multivalent in their imagery and symbolism, and their authors reveled in jumping back and forth between the classical and the Christian, allowing them to publically write their *paideia* as well as their faith into their buildings for different audiences to read.⁴³⁸ The inscriptions of Dometios from Nikopolis also provide a clear window into a literary culture that drew from a melting pot of different influences and models. The language of light seems to have been a nexus at which it is possible for us to see different inscriptions referencing discrete traditions, moving between one (classical ekphrasis) tradition and another (Christian faith) while explicitly referencing authors' and the audiences' familiarity with both.

The inscriptions of late antique churches, chapels and baptisteries all around the Mediterranean utilize the language of light, colour and material to focus readers' attention on the brilliance of mosaics as decoration by using the same rhetoric and *topoi* as were popular among educated elites who were comfortable code-switching between classical and Christian cultural affiliations. Christian inscriptions also employed the themes of light and colour as *topoi* in order to emphasize the euergetic efforts of patrons as well as to encourage viewers/readers to move from viewing glittering mosaics to contemplating the spiritually illuminating nature of the divine. By placing luminous texts which describe their own brightness next to works of art executed in materials chosen specifically to reflect light, mosaic inscriptions were conceived as much more than straightforward

⁴³⁷ Isager, 213.

⁴³⁸ On the flexibility and wide range of influences of late antique and early Byzantine authors and educated readers, E. Jeffreys, 'Writers and Audiences in the Early Sixth Century', in Johnson, *Greek Literature*, 127-39.

textual guides to images. Whether complex or simple, these texts consistently reveal Christian patrons eager to verbally enshrine their aesthetic tastes, as well as their expressions of faith, within the decorative programmes of their sacred buildings. In the next chapter, we turn to analyze another function of inscriptions which also changed in the early Christian period: the power of texts within images to label scenes and name figures.

Chapter Three: Labels, names, and texts within images

Up to this point, this thesis has been engaged primarily with high-register Christian inscriptions which use both classical and Christian rhetoric to evoke the visual and material characteristics of church interiors for specific purposes. This chapter turns its attention to another category of inscriptions altogether, those which narrate scenes, name figures or act as speech. Scholars long have argued that these texts worked in a straightforward manner, fixing for the viewer/reader the identities of figures, the meanings of images, or the correct symbolic interpretations of different spaces in church. However, as has been discussed in Chapters One and Two, relationships between texts and images ran both ways, and images ‘could *complicate* as much as *clarify* a verbal text’.⁴³⁹

In Archaic and Classical Greece, names inscribed on votive dedications were not straightforward labels, but rather acted ‘as something like an annotation to the statue, a verbal “representation” of its dedicator’,⁴⁴⁰ just as the real and made-up names of ‘beautiful’ (*kalos*) boys inscribed on vessels used in the symposium were erotic and playful signs which also acted on occasion to name the artist of the work.⁴⁴¹ On Roman works of art, *tituli* identified particular figures or scenes, a famous example of this latter type being the ‘title’ inscriptions on the *Tabulae Iliacae*, but performed other functions as well.⁴⁴² On occasion, images and inscriptions which included quotations, paraphrases of or responses to literary texts were paired together, as in the mosaic pavement of the

⁴³⁹ Squire, *Iliad*, 141, his italics preserved. On combinations of inscriptions and images and the multiple potential relationships between text and image, *ibid.*, 127-96; *idem*, *Image*, 146-93.

⁴⁴⁰ C. Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge, 2003), 16.

⁴⁴¹ R. Osborne and A. Pappas, ‘Writing on archaic Greek pottery’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 131-55; Squire, *Image*, 157-60; and on the playful *kalos* inscriptions, F. Lissarrague, *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual*, trans. A. Szegedy-Maszak (Princeton, 1990); *idem*, ‘Publicity and performance: Kalos inscriptions in Attic vase-painting’, in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge, 1999), 359-73.

⁴⁴² N. Horsfall, ‘Stesichorus at Bovillae?’, *JHS*, 99 (1979), 26-48; M. Squire, ‘Texts on the tables: The *Tabulae Iliacae* in their Hellenistic literary context’, *JHS*, 130 (2010), 67-96; *idem*, *Iliad*. On the term *titulus*, *supra* pp. 18-9.

apsidal triclinium of the fourth-century villa at Lullingstone in Kent, which pairs an image of the Rape of Europa with an inscribed paraphrase of the relevant episode, *Aeneid* 1.50-80, in which Juno asks Aeolus to send a storm against Aeneas (Fig. 3.1).⁴⁴³ Though the inscription is Virgilian in content, its language is derived from that of Ovid, an interesting mash-up of sources which must have kept many guests entertained during dinner.⁴⁴⁴ New epigrams were composed to be paired with scenes from Greek myths, including in the late first- or early second-century House of Propertius at Assisi, where elegaic couplets and hexameter inscriptions in Greek were scratched above or below related images on the walls, in some cases revised later with alternative poetic forms incised below the original texts.⁴⁴⁵

This thesis is not concerned solely with the playfulness and adaptability of the Greek or Roman epigram, although these features did enjoy a long afterlife, as we have seen. We are focussed here on inscriptions composed within a tradition founded upon a set text, the Bible, which sets itself up as originating from the verbal essence of God himself: ‘In the beginning was the Word (ὁ λόγος), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). In and out of church, the faithful were expected to listen to or to read the

⁴⁴³ J.M.C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain* (London, 1962), 200, no. 192; idem, *Art in Britain Under the Romans* (Oxford, 1964), 263-4; G.W. Meates, *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent* (Maidstone, 1979), i, 75-8; R. Ling, ‘Inscriptions on Romano-British Mosaics and Wall-Paintings’, *Britannia*, 38 (2007), 63-91, especially 78-9 and fig. 13; S.S. Frere and R.S.O. Tomlin (eds.), *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain II. Instrumentum domesticorum 4* (Stroud, 1992), 86, no. 2448.6; Leader-Newby, ‘Inscribed mosaics’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 191ff. Ling, ‘Inscriptions’, 79, disagrees with Martin Henig’s interpretation of the inscription as concealing a crypto-Christian code: M. Henig, ‘The Lullingstone mosaic: art, religion and letters in a fourth century villa’, *Mosaic*, 24 (1997), 4-7; idem, ‘The secret of the Lullingstone mosaic’, *Kent Archaeological Review*, 139 (Spring 2000), 196-7.

⁴⁴⁴ While the event explained by the inscription is Virgilian, the metre of the text as well as the subject of the paired image is derived from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.846-75: A.A. Barrett, ‘Knowledge of the literary classics in Roman Britain’, *Britannia*, 9 (1978), 307-13, especially 311-3. On the *cena* as setting for literary games, *supra* pp. 96-7.

⁴⁴⁵ Squire, *Image*, 249-93, with additional bibliography; M. Guarducci, ‘*Domus Musae*: epigrafi greche e latine in un’antica casa di Assisi’, *Atti dell’Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti*, 23 (1979), 269-79; idem, ‘La casa di Propertio: nuove riflessioni sulla Domus Musae di Assisi e sulle epigrafi’, *Atti dell’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti*, 30 (1986), 163-81. The other famous Roman domestic example of epigrams combined with paintings is the House of the Epigrams (Casa degli Epigrammi) at Pompeii, (briefly) discussed by Squire, *Image*, 176-89; also B. Bergmann, ‘A painted garland: weaving words and images in the House of the Epigrams in Pompeii’, in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 60-101, with additional bibliography.

Old and New Testaments, supplemented by the exegetical writings of the Church Fathers and the sermons of local clergymen.⁴⁴⁶ Because early Christians so prized the authority of scripture, scholars such as William Harris have argued that their attitudes to and approaches towards both written and inscribed texts must have been distinct from those of pagans.⁴⁴⁷

This clean epigraphic break between the classical and the Christian would be convenient if it in fact existed.⁴⁴⁸ Quotations of biblical texts did become a feature of the early Christian church interior to a much greater degree than quotations of pre-existing literary texts had been in classical art, although most of these ‘quotations’ are prayers or invocations from the Book of Psalms and are not specifically paired with images.⁴⁴⁹ However, quotation took many forms. Inscriptions in Christian buildings incorporated, played with and adapted specific passages from texts, both classical (for example, the ‘earth and ocean’ inscription of Dometios) and explicitly Christian. These texts could act to confirm the ‘truth’ of a particular iconography, evoke additional layers of meaning, or complicate a seemingly straightforward image. Inscriptions could perform all three of these functions simultaneously, as in the pavement mosaic of the apse in the fourth-century basilica at Chrysopolitissa (Kato Paphos), in which a *kantharos* with vines emanating from it is inscribed in Greek with the words of Christ: ‘I am the true vine’ (John 15:1) (Fig. 3.2).⁴⁵⁰ This inscribed text explicitly Christianizes the classical motif of the

⁴⁴⁶ *Supra* n. 15; also Bagnall, *Writing*, 27-53.

⁴⁴⁷ Harris, *Literacy*, 285ff.

⁴⁴⁸ This picture of the close relationship between writing and religion aligns nicely with Mary Beard’s defense of the role of written and inscribed word in Graeco-Roman paganism: M. Beard, ‘Writing and religion: *Ancient Literacy* and the function of the written word in Roman religion’, in *Literacy in the Roman World. JRA Supplementary Series*, 3 (1991), 35-58; also Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 20-3.

⁴⁴⁹ J. Lancha, *Mosaïque et culture dans l’Occident romain (Ier-IVe s.)* (Rome, 1997), 387-90, who references only five examples of Roman inscriptions from western provinces which quote literary texts; also Squire, *Image*, 168-73. On biblical quotations in inscriptions, *supra* n. 180.

⁴⁵⁰ Maguire, *Earth*, 9-10, fig. 3, who contrasts the Chrysopolitissa example with two other mosaic inscriptions which emphasize slightly different symbolic meanings; also V. Karageorghis, ‘Chronique des fouilles à Chypre en 1976’, *BCH*, 101, 2 (1977), 707-79, especially 778ff, fig. 14; P. Hadjichristophi, ‘Les

vine *kantharos* seen frequently in Dionysiac scenes, simultaneously expanding its range of referents (Christ; the value of community in Christ) while contracting its larger symbolic range, cutting off the motif from its pagan, Dionysiac roots.⁴⁵¹ This is not to say that the latter function, that of shifting the motif's range of reference, is completely successful, but rather that it was part of the intended goal of inscribing this text within this image.

The origin and functions of Christian tituli

Christian verse *tituli* composed to be inscribed in churches began to gain in popularity in the late fourth and early fifth centuries in the western half of the empire, although their first appearances are difficult to trace.⁴⁵² Early examples include the epigrams of Pope Damasus, which were finely incised on marble plaques and placed in the catacombs of Rome in the second half of the fourth century. These texts acted as *tituli* because they in effect gave elaborate narrative titles to the graves of the early Christian martyrs of the city, ones which constantly alluded to Virgil's *Aeneid* (Fig. 3.3).⁴⁵³ The fourth-century Latin epigrams of Prudentius, the *Dittochaeum* or *Tituli historiarum*, are held up by some scholars to be early examples of such texts inscribed next to images of the Old and New Testament episodes which they described, although this is by no means certain, and the texts might instead be later ruminations on a pictorial cycle Prudentius had seen in a church in Rome.⁴⁵⁴ Prudentius' epigrams do not quote directly from the bible,

nouvelles mosaïques de la basilique de la Chrysopolitissa à Paphos', *La mosaïque gréco-romaine*, 7, 91-6, especially 93.

⁴⁵¹ On the vine and *kantharos* as popular motifs, Maguire, *Earth*, 9-10, 37-8; also C. Dauphin, 'Symbolism or Decorative? The Inhabited Scroll as a Means of Studying Some Early Byzantine Mentalities', *Byzantion*, 48 (1978), 10-34; idem, 'The Development of the "Inhabited Scroll" in Architectural Sculpture and Mosaic Art from Late Imperial Times to the Seventh Century AD', *Levant*, 19 (1987), 183-212.

⁴⁵² Belting-Ihm, 'Zum Verhältnis', 844-84; G. Bernt, *Das lateinische Epigramm im Übergang von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter* (München, 1968); Arnulf, *Versus*, 17ff.

⁴⁵³ *Supra* n. 104.

⁴⁵⁴ Prudentius, *Tituli Historiarum (Dittochaeon)*, trans. H.J. Thompson (Cambridge, MA, 1953), ii, 346-73. On the epigrams, C. Davis-Weyer, 'Komposition und Szenenwahl im Dittochaeum des Prudentius', in O. Feld and U. Peschlow (eds.), *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet* (Bonn, 1986), 3, 19-29; R. Pillinger, *Die Tituli Historiarum oder das sogenannte*

but instead paraphrase important events, explaining the different iconographic components of scenes as well as articulating symbolic valences and labelling different elements with the deictics of a tour guide, as on the Three Magi: ‘*Here* the wise men bring costly gifts to the child Christ on the Virgin’s breast...’.⁴⁵⁵

The textual record preserves a number of sets of *tituli* similar to those written by Prudentius, including cycles by Paulinus (previously discussed),⁴⁵⁶ Ambrose,⁴⁵⁷ and a particularly extravagant series of late fifth-century *tituli* commissioned by different famous poets, including Sidonius Apollinaris and Paulinus of Périgaux, set into the interior of the Basilica of St. Martin at Tours.⁴⁵⁸ Paulinus of Nola, as well as Sidonius, claim in their letters that composing epigrams was part of the early Christian epistolary culture in which a bishop would write to his friends and ask for narrative verses with the intent of then inscribing them in his new or newly-redecorated church.⁴⁵⁹ These cycles of *tituli* were not unique to the Latin West, and although no complete example survive in situ in the east, the *Anthologia Graeca* preserves a cycle written by Agathias which is comparable to that of Prudentius.⁴⁶⁰ The poems of Agathias describe scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and are for the most part classicizing in their approach in that they feature a voice (of the poet and/or the viewer) describing or reacting to scenes,

Dittochaeum des Prudentius: Versuch eines philologischarchäologischen Kommentars. Denkschriften der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 142 (Vienna, 1980); Arnulf, *Versus*, 67-110. I share the uncertainty of Christa Belting-Ihm, ‘Zum Verhältnis’, 844-5, of whether the epigrams of Prudentius were actually combined with actual images, *contra* Davis-Weyer, Pillinger and Arnulf.

⁴⁵⁵ Prudentius, *Tituli* 27, lines 105-6, trans. Thomson, 359, italics added.

⁴⁵⁶ See pp. 33-4.

⁴⁵⁷ Arnulf, *Versus*, 111-3; S. Merkle, ‘Die Ambrosianischen Tituli’, *RQ*, 10 (1896), 185-222.

⁴⁵⁸ On the basilica, C. Chevalier, *Les Fouilles de Saint-Martin de Tours* (Tours, 1888); C. Lelong, *La Basilique Saint-Martin de Tours* (Chambray-lès-Tours, 1986). On the *tituli*, L. Pietri, *La Ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle* (Rome, 1983), 372-405, 798-822; idem, ‘Une nouvelle édition de la sylloge martinienne de Tours’, *Francia*, 12 (1984), 621-31; idem, ‘Pagina in pariete reserata: épigraphie et architecture religieuse’, in Donati, 137-57; idem and J. Biarne, *Province ecclésiastique de Tours (Lugdunensis Tertia). Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle*, 5 (Paris, 1987), 32-4; R. Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), 308-17.

⁴⁵⁹ Paulinus, *Epistula* 32.12, trans. Goldschmidt, 41; and Sidonius, *Epistula* 2.10.4, trans. Dalton, 53-5, in which he discusses with (false) humility his ‘hurried’ inscription written for the church of Bishop Patiens in Lyon, which was apparently paired with texts by the Gallic poets Constantius and Secundinus.

⁴⁶⁰ The cycle is AG 1.37-89; Arnulf, *Versus*, 141-5. On Agathias generally, *supra* n. 409.

occasionally addressing figures in the scenes directly. In conception, these *tituli* are very similar to ‘interactive’ classical epigrams such as those inscribed next to related relief images on the columns of the Temple of Queen Apollonis at Kyzikos which speak as narrator, as viewer and even as character in the scenes.⁴⁶¹ As with the epigrams of Prudentius, it is not clear whether the poems of Agathias were ever inscribed next to images or if they were purely literary compositions, poems free from context which allowed the poet to respond to biblical images.

Poems as *tituli* pose an evidentiary problem for modern scholarship, as their survival within churches is quite rare, and they were not considered a requirement in the period. In fact, *tituli* are absent from the major mosaic and fresco narrative cycles of Old and New Testament scenes along the walls of the fifth-century churches of Santa Maria Maggiore (Fig. 3.4)⁴⁶² and San Paolo in Rome,⁴⁶³ the Theodorican mosaics of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (3.5),⁴⁶⁴ as well as from the narrative cycle on the fifth-century wooden doors of Santa Sabina in Rome (Fig. 3.6).⁴⁶⁵ Similar pictorial cycles were popular as wall decoration in early churches west and east, as attested by the writings of Nilus of Ancyra (d. c. 430), who instructed the prefect Olympiodorus that Old and New Testament scenes were proper for church interiors so that ‘the illiterate who are unable to read the Holy Scriptures, may, by gazing at the pictures, become mindful of the manly deeds of those who have genuinely served the true God, and may be roused to emulate

⁴⁶¹ On the epigrams, *supra* n. 135.

⁴⁶² *Supra* n. 109.

⁴⁶³ The narrative cycle is not extant: Ihm, *Programme*, 135-7; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iv, pp. 93ff; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 125ff; Bovini, *Mosaici*, 187ff.

⁴⁶⁴ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Bd. 1*, 125ff; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 153-8.

⁴⁶⁵ G. Jeremias, *Die Holztür der Basilika S. Sabina in Rom* (Tübingen, 1980); M. Cecchelli, ‘Le più antiche porte cristiane: S. Ambrogio di Milano, S. Barbara al Vecchio Cairo, S. Sabina a Roma’, in S. Salomi (ed.), *Le porte di bronzo dall’Antichità al secolo XIII* (Rome, 1990), i, 59-69; J.-M. Spieser, ‘Le programme iconographique des portes de Sainte-Sabine’, *Journal des Savants*, (1991), 47-81, trans. as ‘The iconographic program of the doors of Santa Sabina’, in idem, *Urban and Religious Spaces*, Article XIII; Yasin, *Saints*, 195 n. 92.

those glorious and celebrated feats...'⁴⁶⁶ The trope of pictures as scripture for illiterate congregants (the *biblia pauperum*) was a popular one, employed by Gregory of Nyssa,⁴⁶⁷ Basil of Caesarea,⁴⁶⁸ Paulinus of Nola,⁴⁶⁹ famously echoed by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century,⁴⁷⁰ and repeated yet again by John of Damascus in the eighth century in his commentary on a sermon of Basil.⁴⁷¹ If we believe this trope, cycles of narrative images were meant as substitutes for quotations of biblical texts and thus did not need to be paired with explanatory inscriptions. However, images were never *only* 'bibles for the illiterate', as Paulinus' own writings make clear: though he defends pictures as a proper didactic substitute for text, he commissioned and composed elaborate poems which explicate the spiritual significances of images and spaces in his churches.⁴⁷² Indeed, images in church would have been viewed by learned individuals like Paulinus who were

⁴⁶⁶ Nilus, *Letter to Prefect Olympiodorus*, PG 79.577-80, trans. Mango, *Art*, 32-3; also see Elsner, *Roman Viewer*, 260. On the identity of Nilus and his extensive corpus of letters, most of which were probably written by others, D.F. Caner, *History and Historiography from the Late Antique Sinai* (Liverpool, 2010), 73-5, 138-9. While H. Thümmel, 'Neilos von Ankyra über die Bilder', *BZ*, 71 (1978), 10-21, argues that the letter was an eighth-century interpolation, its association with the genuine *Letter to Heliodorus the Silentiary* and its knowledge of the fifth-century context of church decoration argue for its authenticity, even if it was edited later, probably in the sixth century: A. Cameron, 'The authenticity of the letters of St. Nilus of Ancyra', *GRBS*, 17, 2 (Summer 1976), 181-96, especially 189-92.

⁴⁶⁷ Gregory, *Laudatio Sancti Theodori*, PG 46, 737D, trans. Mango, *Art*, 37.

⁴⁶⁸ Basil, *Homily* 19 ('In sanctos quadraginta martyres'), PG 31, 509A; on this passage, L.G. Duggan, 'Was art really the "book of the illiterate"?', *Word & Image*, 5 (1989), 227-51, especially 228.

⁴⁶⁹ Paulinus, *Carmen* 27.541-51; for a critical view of the traditional reception of Paulinus' advice, Kaesser, 'Ekphrasis', 162-5, arguing that the inscribed *tituli* were crucial interpretative tools which viewers needed in order to understand the pictures.

⁴⁷⁰ Gregory, *Epistulae* 9.209 (first letter to Serenus) and 10.10 (second letter to Serenus), ed. D.L. Norberg, *Registrum epistularum*. CCSL 140 (Turnhout, 1982), 768 and 873-6. On this trope, H. Kessler, 'Pictures as scripture in fifth-century churches', *Studia Artium Orientalis et Occidentalis*, 2 (1985), 17-35; M. Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Art History*, 8 (1985), 26-49; J.C. Schmitt, 'Écriture et image: les avatars médiévaux du modèle gregorien', in E. Baumgartner and C. Marchello-Nizia (eds.), *Théories et pratiques de l'écriture au Moyen Âge: actes du colloque, Palais du Luxembourg-Sénat, 5 et 6 mars 1987* (Paris, 1988), 119-50; C. Chazelle, 'Pictures, Books and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseille', *Word & Image*, 6 (1990), 138-53; P.A. Mariaux, 'L'image selon Grégoire le Grand et la question de l'art missionnaire', *Cristianismo nella storia*, 14 (1993), 1-12; idem, 'Voir, lire et connaître selon Grégoire le Grand', *Études de Lettres*, 3-4 (1994), 47-59; G. Cavallo, 'Testo e immagine: una frontiera ambigua', in *Testo e immagine*, i, 31-62; C. Chazelle, 'Memory, Instruction, Worship: Gregory's Influence on Early Medieval Doctrines of the Artistic Image', in J.C. Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great: A Symposium* (Notre Dame, 1995), 181-215; J. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary* (New York, 1998), 111-3; G.C. Wataghin, 'Biblia pauperum: Some Observations on Early Christian Art', *AT*, 9 (2002), 259-74.

⁴⁷¹ John of Damascus, *Pro sacris Imaginibus Orationes tres* 1.39-41, PG 94, 1232A-1420C

⁴⁷² On different audiences reading *tituli* and images together, and the ways in which images could supplement texts through their structure, order (typology), and style, P.C.J. van Dael, 'Biblical Cycles on Church Walls: *Pro Lectione Pictura*', in J. den Boeft and M.L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk (eds.), *The Impact of Scripture in Early Christianity. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 44 (Leiden, 1999), 122-32.

already familiar with the biblical or extra-biblical episodes being depicted. Neither these viewers nor viewers who were less literate would have needed explanatory texts next to images, especially if the texts were simple quotations of biblical passages and the images were stories with which they were familiar through repeated exposure in sermons and in other images.⁴⁷³ As in the Roman period, images did not need accompanying text in late antiquity, and thus when text is present, the programme must have been geared to an audience which could read the texts against the images, and the images against the texts, in order to discern different levels of meaning.⁴⁷⁴

Already by the mid-fourth century, *tituli* were in use in churches in Rome, including in Old St. Peter's, which featured two donor inscriptions put up by the emperor Constantius, one in the apse which praised the church 'which you (the viewer) see' as the 'Seat of Justice, the House of Faith, the Hall of Chastity (*Iustitiae sedis, fidei domus, aula pudoris*), and a second on the triumphal arch which established the emperor's motivations for building the church, in thanks for divine assistance with military victories.⁴⁷⁵ While these inscriptions were written in verse, they had a different function than did those of Prudentius, as they convey praise of God and the donor and articulate the space of the church in symbolic terms rather than acting as 'titles' for narrative scenes.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ On literacy, *supra* n. 15, especially Maxwell, 88ff, on sermons and literate congregations.

⁴⁷⁴ Corbier, 'L'Écriture dans l'image'.

⁴⁷⁵ *CIL* VI, 10; *ICUR*, 2, 21, 47, 345; *ILCV*, 1, nos. 1752-3; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, v, 171; J. Ruysschaert, 'L'inscription apsidale de S. Pierre', *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Rendiconti*, 40 (1967-68), 171-190; Belting-Ihm, 'Zum Verhältnis', 850-1; Arnulf, *Versus*, 64. There remains a debate about whether Constantine or his son Constantius built the church. R. Krautheimer, 'The Building Inscriptions and the Dates of Construction of Old St. Peter's: A Reconsideration', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 25 (1989), 1-23, defends the old attribution to Constantine, as does P. Liverani, 'Saint Peter's, Leo the Great and the Leprosy of Constantine', *PBSR*, 76 (2008), 155-72. However, most scholars now believe Constantius to be the true donor: R. Krautheimer, 'A Note on the Inscription in the Apse of Old St. Peter's', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 317-20, who had previously considered the alternative; N. Henck, 'Constantius ὁ Φλοκτίστης?', *DOP*, 55 (2001), 279-304, especially 283-4; G.W. Bowersock, 'Peter and Constantine', in W. Tronzo (ed.), *St. Peter's in the Vatican* (Cambridge, 2005), 5-15, who points out the brickstamps of 'Constantius' from the apse of the church; Bardill, *Constantine*, 243-6.

⁴⁷⁶ Krautheimer, 'A Note', argues that the apse inscription is labelling and commenting upon various components in the adjacent mosaic (for example, the throne of Christ as the 'Seat of Justice', etc.), but this interpretation requires quite an interpretative leap.

While dedicatory inscriptions were quite common in churches and chapels throughout the Mediterranean, simple name labels of figures, especially of figures in narrative scenes, were comparatively rare. The picture which emerges from the material and textual evidence is a complicated one due to the problem of survival. However, we must make use of the evidence we have, as the independence of the image itself is at stake. When text was included within artworks themselves, how did it function? What role did inscriptions such as name labels have in either fixing or expanding meaning for the viewer?⁴⁷⁷ Some scholars have argued that late antique and Byzantine epigrams functioned through their biblical references to encourage a more meditative, internalized response, rather than a public one which engaged actively with images and texts in spaces of worship.⁴⁷⁸ However, while the *tituli* of Paulinus and others do encourage the viewer to consider the symbolic and theological implications of images, Christian engagement with such large-scale images was still substantially public, and text was included for its monumental visual impact.

This chapter investigates the relationship between words and the images which they purport to label, as well as pictures which have managed to escape their labels. First, the narrative scenes deriving from events described in the Old and New Testament are studied, with a view towards clarifying the function of text vis-à-vis the ‘illustrating’ image in Christian church decoration. Second, inscriptions within images, including images of books, are considered. The third section of the chapter examines the name inscriptions of Christian figures, including Christ and the saints, and interrogates these names in terms of their function and efficacy.

⁴⁷⁷ Related are the semiotic issues of narratology and meaning raised by M. Bal and N. Bryson, ‘Semiotics and Art History’, *AB*, 73, 2 (June 1991), 174-208, especially 202ff.

⁴⁷⁸ E.g. Squire, *Image*, 233.

The functions of narrative tituli

In Chapter One, we examined the late sixth-century *tituli* from Tours Cathedral, paired with scenes from the life of St. Martin in order to emphasize elements of the narrative and to connect the events from the life of the saint to the specific locality of the church, as well as to liturgical practice.⁴⁷⁹ However, while a number of similar sets of *tituli* on Christ and the martyrs survive in anthologies and manuscripts, only a handful of *tituli*-image groups are extant from the early Christian period. As is evident from the decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (Fig. 3.4), with its elaborate narrative cycle of Old Testament scenes along the walls of the nave (scenes of Moses and Joshua on the right-hand wall, and of Abraham and his children on the left) and New Testament scenes on the triumphal arch, early Christian viewers did not require inscriptions to identify, appreciate, and interpret sacred scenes. Similarly, the images of the natural world present on the floors of churches east and west did not require verse inscriptions to explain their layers of potential meanings.⁴⁸⁰ Rebecca McGann recently has reminded us of the independence of the evolution of Christian iconography from the textual tradition.⁴⁸¹ While iconography was never completely divorced from the text of the Bible and other canonical (and non-canonical) writings, it developed as a distinct tradition which then had the potential to influence the interpretations of texts and, in some cases, the texts themselves. If biblical quotations or explanatory titles did not need to be inscribed next to images of the same scenes, what were the functions of narrative *tituli* in late antiquity?

⁴⁷⁹ *Supra* pp.36-8.

⁴⁸⁰ Maguire, *Earth*; Jensen, *Christian Art*, 30-1.

⁴⁸¹ R. McGann, 'Art and Text in Late Antiquity: The Language of Christian Narrative Images' (University of Oxford, unpub. D.Phil. Thesis, 2011), 9-10; also Nasrallah, 'Moni Latomou'.

a. Samson in text and image

A small number of extant *tituli* are paired with Old Testament scenes in the pavements of churches in Cilicia, Syria and Arabia. The earliest of these, the Samson cycle from the outer north aisle of a late antique basilica at Mopsuestia (modern Misis) in Cilicia, is labelled with the appropriate biblical text, Judges 14-16 (Figs. 3.7-8).⁴⁸² Debate still exists over the date of the building,⁴⁸³ as well as its function as church or as a synagogue.⁴⁸⁴ The original number of scenes is also unclear due to the extent of damage to the mosaics.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² The bibliography on the mosaics is extensive: H.T. Bossert, '1959 Misis Çalışmaları', *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 10.1, 15 (1960), 15, fig. 1; L. Budde, 'Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von Misis-Mopsuestia in Kilikien', *Pantheon*, 18 (1960), 116-26; idem, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien* (Recklinghausen, 1969), i, 57-76; E. Kitzinger, 'Observations on the Samson Floor at Mopsuestia', *DOP*, 27 (1973), 133-44; H.G. Thümmel, 'Das Samson-Mosaik in Misis (Mopsuestia) und seine Inschriften', *ZDPV*, 90 (1974), 69-75; R. Stichel, 'Die Inschriften des Samson-mosaiks in Mopsuestia und ihre Beziehung zum biblischen Text', *BZ*, 30 (1978), 50-61; M. Avi-Yonah, 'The Mosaics of Mopsuestia: Church or Synagogue?', in Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, 186-90; F. Hild, H. Hellenkemper and G. Hellenkemper-Salies, 'Kommagene – Kilikien – Isaurien', *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, 4 (1984), 202-4; F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien. Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 5 (Vienna, 1990), 357; S. Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches of Cilicia and Isauria* (Aldershot, 1996), 235-6; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 51-2, 209-16, 256-62; Tülek, 67ff; L.I. Levine, 'Jewish Collective Memory in Late Antiquity: Issues in the Interpretation of Jewish Art', in G. Gardner and K.L. Osterloh (eds.), *Antiquity in Antiquity. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism*, 123 (Tübingen, 2008), 217-54, especially 231. The building also includes a mosaic which depicts Noah's Ark with animals streaming out of it. Two recently discovered synagogues feature individual scenes from the Samson narrative, including at Huqoq, currently being excavated by Jodi Magness, and at Wadi Hamam (Lower Galilee): U. Leibner and S. Miller, 'Appendix: A figural mosaic in the synagogue at Khirbet Wadi Hamam', *JRA*, 23 (2010), 238-64; however, neither scene appears to be paired with the related biblical passage.

⁴⁸³ The excavator, Ludwig Budde, dated the mosaics stylistically to the end of the fourth or early fifth century: Budde, *Mosaiken*, i, 31-6. Kitzinger, 'Observations', 137-8, and Avi-Yonah, 'Mopsuestia', 188-9, both date them to the second half of the fifth century based upon similarities to the mosaics of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 214-6, and idem, *Pavements*, 67, dates them more generally to the fifth century. H. Buschhausen, 'Die Deutung des Archesmosaiks in der Justinianischen Kirche von Mopsuestia', *Festschrift für Otto Demus zum 70. Geburtstag. JÖB*, 21 (1972), 57-71, dates the building to the sixth century based on the style of the Noah mosaic pavement, which Kitzinger et al. argue seems unlikely.

⁴⁸⁴ Budde, *Mosaiken*, i, 31-6, who believes the building is a martyrium, as does Kitzinger, 'Observations', 133-44. Avi-Yonah, 'Mopsuestia', 189-90; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 214-6; and idem, *Pavements*, 67, argue for its identity as a synagogue. The arguments cited by Avi-Yonah will not be rehearsed or refuted in full here, but are mostly negative, i.e. no specific Christian symbols were found (besides of course a bronze cross). I agree with Stephen Hill on the building's identity as a church based upon his comparisons to local church architecture, not taken into account by Hachlili: Hill, *Churches*, 36. Additionally, Hachlili's negative reading of the mosaics as non-Christian because they are narrative rather than symbolic seems to be rather superficial and over-generalized. In the light of the limited nature of the comparanda based upon accident of survival, the picture is most certainly not as clear either Avi-Yonah or Hachlili would have it seem.

⁴⁸⁵ Budde, *Mosaiken*, i, 57-76, and Avi-Yonah, 'Mopsuestia', 187-8, argue for nine; Kitzinger, 'Observations', 138ff, identifies eleven.

We can, however, discern the relationship between text and image in the Samson mosaics. The Greek *tituli* in the Samson cycle variously quote and paraphrase passages from the Septuagint version of the narrative, identifying the scenes depicted below (or in one case, above) and encouraging the viewer/reader to focus on specific narrative components of the episodes.⁴⁸⁶ No frames or borders separate the scenes, which are laid out in a single strip from the sanctuary in the east towards the front of the nave in the west, but the inscriptions do seem to have been divided so the viewer could have read them intelligibly with the relevant scenes.⁴⁸⁷ Kitzinger and others have found the texts difficult to read alongside the scenes due to the length of the passages, and dismiss the texts as mere didactic tools.⁴⁸⁸ Bente Kiilerich proposes that the inscriptions were not captions to be read, but were placed to lend the authority of biblical text to the images.⁴⁸⁹ However, she concedes that viewers standing in the nave of the building would have been able to read the inscriptions in context.⁴⁹⁰ While the inscriptions must have conveyed the impression of authority to some viewers, their primary function as *tituli* was to be read and processed alongside the figural representations of the episodes, each informing the other. The fragmentary state of the evidence does not allow us to compare inscription text to image, but the remaining blocks of text indicate that the texts would have acted as framing

⁴⁸⁶ Kitzinger, 'Observations', 138-42.

⁴⁸⁷ For example, the division between Budde, *Mosaiken*, i, 37, inscriptions no. 3 and 4. On the lack of borders, Kitzinger, 'Observations', p. 141.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 141-3, also attempts to use the continuous narrative of the Mopsuestia mosaic to establish the existence of the late antique rotulus, the most famous Byzantine example being the Joshua Roll, with biblical scenes and the relevant texts inscribed underneath: K. Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll: A Work of the Macedonian Renaissance* (Princeton, 1948); idem, 'Die Illustration der Septuaginta', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3-4 (1952-3), 96-120, reprinted and trans. as 'The Illustration of the Septuagint', in idem, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. H.L. Kessler (Chicago, 1971), 45-75; also Kiilerich, 'Inscriptions', 59-61.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 60-1.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 60.

devices for the discrete episodes, isolating each from the episodes next to it to enable viewers to focus on each scene in its turn.⁴⁹¹

b. The Peaceful Kingdom, east and west

The Samson mosaics are unique in terms of surviving examples in pairing lengthy narrative *tituli* with corresponding scenes, but similar combinations of text and image were utilized elsewhere in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Another image with a biblical precedent, that of the ‘Peaceful Kingdom’ or the ‘End of Days’, is labelled with related passages from the Book of Isaiah on a group of mosaic pavements from a number of Christian and Jewish buildings both east and west.⁴⁹² The earliest of these examples, from the pavement in front of the apse of the Necropolis Church at Anemurium (modern Anamur) in Cilicia (mid- to late-fifth century), features a leopard and kid bending their heads downward and flanking a tree, and above them is inscribed the Septuagint text of Isaiah 11:6: ‘[and the] small child will lead them, and the leopard will lie down with [the kid] ([... καὶ παιδίον] μικρὸν ἄξει αὐτοὺς καὶ πάρδ[α]λι[ς] συν[αναπ]αύσεται[αι ἐρίφω])’ (Fig. 3.9).⁴⁹³ The inscription rearranges the clauses of the Septuagint,⁴⁹⁴ and makes explicit that this otherwise common scene of two confronted animals is a specific representation of the Kingdom of God, a powerful image-text combination to place in front of the altar, as it expresses the future hope of all Christians for the kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁹⁵ As at Mopsuestia, this image does not depict all the events of the text—the ‘little child’ is missing—but does represent the leopard and the kid, animals which are

⁴⁹¹ Kitzinger, ‘Observations’, 133-41, notes some interesting linguistic features of the inscriptions, including at least one divergence from the standard Septuagint version of the story.

⁴⁹² Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 254-6; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 88-90.

⁴⁹³ Russell, *Anemurium*, 70-4, no. 14; Campbell, *Mosaics*, 46-7, fig. 48, Pls. 206-8; Tülek, 222-3; *SEG* 37, 1278.

⁴⁹⁴ Russell, *Anemurium*, 70-4; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 89.

⁴⁹⁵ On the motif of facing animals, a very popular one in classical as well as late antiquity, Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 255-7; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 199-208.

natural enemies, peacefully inhabiting the same space. Related programmes decorate the pavements of two other churches in Cilicia, in the nave of the church at Karlik (late fifth or early sixth century) (Fig. 3.10),⁴⁹⁶ and in front of the sanctuary in the Cathedral of Korykos (of disputed date).⁴⁹⁷ At Karlik, the inscription includes more of the biblical passage (Isaiah 11:6-7), again inscribed out of order, and the animals appear in pairs below the text, except the pair of the stag and elephant in the third register of the mosaic, neither of which appears in the biblical vision.⁴⁹⁸ The mosaic pavement of the church at Korykos only survives in a fragmentary state, but the surviving portion preserves a fragment of Isaiah 11:6, as well as a lioness, a leopard and a ram.⁴⁹⁹ Parts of the related passage from Isaiah 65:25, 'The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox' (also Isaiah 11:7) were paired with depictions of animals in the Mariana Church in Corsica (late fifth or early sixth century) (Fig. 3.11),⁵⁰⁰ the Acropolis Church at Ma'in in Arabia (719/20) (3.12),⁵⁰¹ and the hall of the Jewish Beth Midrash at Meroth in Palestine (early seventh century).⁵⁰²

This visual-verbal scheme seems to have been universal in its appeal, used from Corsica to Palestine, both in Christian and Jewish buildings. That the latter passage, Isaiah

⁴⁹⁶ M. Gough, 'Karlik and Dağ Pazarı, 1958', *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 9, 2 (1959), 5-6; idem, "'The Peaceful Kingdom". An Early Christian Mosaic Pavement in Cilicia Campestris', *Mansel 'E Armağan. Mélanges Mansel* (Ankara, 1974), i, 411-9, especially 416-7; Tülek, 119.

⁴⁹⁷ E. Herzfeld and S. Guyer, 'Meriamlik und Korykos: Zwei Christliche Ruinenstätten des Rauhen Kilikiens', *MAMA*, 2 (Manchester, 1930), 106-7; *SEG* 37, 1311; Tülek, 307-8. On the mosaic, also C. Foss, 'A Mosaic of Korykos', *ZPE*, 25 (1977), 282-5; Budde, *Mosaiken*, i, figs. 273-4; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 89-90. The mosaic has been dated alternatively to the mid-fifth century (Herzfeld and Geyer) and the seventh century, although the former date is probably to be preferred.

⁴⁹⁸ Gough, 'Kingdom', 418-9; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 89.

⁴⁹⁹ *Supra* n. 497.

⁵⁰⁰ G. Moracchini-Mazel, *Les monuments paléochrétiennes de la Corse* (Paris, 1967), 21-30; P. Pergola, 'Considérations nouvelles sur les mosaïques et les sculptures du complexe paléochrétien de Mariana (Corsica)', *Actes du Xe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne, Thessalonique, 1980* (Vatican City/Thessaloniki, 1984), ii, 397-408; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 90.

⁵⁰¹ R. De Vaux, 'Une mosaïque byzantine à Main (Transjordanie), Chronique', *RB*, 47 (1938), 227-58, especially 238-40; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 159; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 231; idem, *Mosaics*, 201; Michel, 371.

⁵⁰² R. Talgam, 'Remarks on the Mosaics of the Synagogue and Beth-Midrash', in Z. Ilan and E. Damati (eds.), *Meroth: The Ancient Jewish Village* (Tel Aviv, 1987), 149-53 (Hebrew); Z. Ilan, 'The Synagogue and Beth Midrash of Meroth', in R. Hachlili (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues in Israel. Third-Seventh Century CE* (Oxford, 1989), 21-41, especially 33-4; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 88, with further bibliography.

65:25, should appear in a Jewish house of study and learning makes sense, as its biblical context relates to God's promise to turn Jerusalem into a peaceful city for the Jews (Isaiah 65:17-25).⁵⁰³ Scholars have connected the scheme to the hope for peace between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christians during the intense Christological debates of the fifth century,⁵⁰⁴ as well as to the baptismal rite,⁵⁰⁵ although the latter connection is quite tenuous, as none of the surviving examples relate directly to any spaces of baptism. We cannot be certain of the fixed meanings of similar images which lack the related text, as in the sanctuary mosaic of the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa (Fig. 3.13), where a lion and a bull are confronted in the east end of the pavement.⁵⁰⁶ It is unclear if the promise of the peaceful kingdom is implicit in these pavements and would have been understood by the sixth-century viewer, or if the images had gone rogue and were picked by patrons and artists for their popularity, formal balance, and suitability for a variety of spaces within churches.⁵⁰⁷ In the Deacon Thomas mosaic, though the animals are separated by a tree, the lion appears to be about to leap onto the bull, perhaps negating the peaceful symbolism of the scene. In scenes of the Peaceful Kingdom, then, inscriptions made the eschatological hope for peace explicit in images which could otherwise be read as simply decorative, but are paired with images which either pare down (as at Anemurium) or supplement their content (as at Karlik), playing with the biblical texts and provoking more or less expansive readings of the mosaics.

⁵⁰³ On wishes for peace more generally in churches and synagogues, see pp. 56, 59-60.

⁵⁰⁴ Gough, 'Kingdom', 419, who points to the *Henotikon* of Emperor Zeno, issued in 482, as a similar wish expressed in politico-religious terms. Hachlili, *Pavements*, 90, summarizes these arguments.

⁵⁰⁵ S.D. Campbell, 'The Peaceful Kingdom: A Liturgical Interpretation', in P. Johnson, R. Ling and D.J. Smith (eds.), *Fifth International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics, held at Bath, England, on September 5-12, 1987* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1994), ii, 125-34, especially 129-33; also Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 255-6, for examples in Arabia or Palestine.

⁵⁰⁶ M. Piccirillo, 'Il dayr del diacono Tommaso alle Uyun Musa Monte Nebo', *LA*, 40 (1990), 227-46, especially 235, Pl.12; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 218; idem, *Mosaics*, 187; *SEG* 40, 1535; Di Segni in Piccirillo and Alliata, *Mount Nebo*, 456, no. 70; Michel, 358-9, fig. 334.

⁵⁰⁷ A similar situation occurs with images of Psalm 42 (41):1 ('As the hart pants for flowing streams...'), as mosaics of deer flanking a fountain are common in late antique churches, but are only rarely paired with the actual text of the psalm. One rare example of an inscribed version decorates the fifth-century pavement of rectangular hall D at Salona: *CIL* III, 2673 and 8654; J.-P. Caillet et al., *Salona IV. Inscriptions de Salone chrétienne, IVe-VIIe siècles* (Rome/Split, 2010), i, 241-3, no. 64, with previous bibliography.

c. Other labels in churches and synagogues

Outside of these examples, narrative biblical *tituli* were rarely paired with figural images in late antique art. The well-known sixth-century Madaba Map in the Church of St. George includes over 157 labels of biblical sights in the region, with a number named by paraphrases of Old and New Testament passages: for example, Desert of Sin is the place ‘where were sent down the manna and the quails’ (Exodus 16) (Fig. 3.14).⁵⁰⁸ A late fifth- or early sixth-century mosaic of Adam and Eve from Syria depicts the two covering themselves with leaves after having eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which appears to the right.⁵⁰⁹ Above the two figures runs a paraphrase of the relevant text from Genesis 3:6-7: ‘And they ate, and they were made naked... (Καὶ ἔφαγον ἐγυμνόθη [...])’ (Fig. 3.15). The exact context of this particular panel within its original pavement is unknown, although one could imagine it in a similar position to that of the late-fifth century mosaic of Adam naming the animals from the North Church at Huarte, also in Syria, which was placed in the centre of the east end of the nave pavement, on axis with the altar (Fig.3.16).⁵¹⁰ The semi-nudity of the two figures, especially of Eve, is potentially

⁵⁰⁸ M.-J. Lagrange, ‘La mosaïque géographique de Mādaba’, *RB*, 6 (1897), 165-84; A. Schulten, *Die Mosaikkarte von Madaba und ihr Verhältnis zu den ältesten Karten und Beschreibungen des heiligen Landes* (Berlin, 1900); M. Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map* (Jerusalem, 1954); H. Donner and H. Cüppers, ‘Die Restauration und Konservierung der Mosaikkarte von Madeba’, *ZDPV*, 83 (1967), 1-33, Pls. 1-12; Y. Tsafrir, ‘The Maps Used by Theodosius: On the Pilgrim Maps of the Holy Land and Jerusalem in the Sixth Century C.E.’, *DOP*, 40 (1986), 129-45; P. Donceel-Voûte, ‘La carte de Madaba: cosmographie, anachronisme et propagande’, *RB*, 95,4 (1988), 519-42; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 76-95; idem, *Mosaics*, 26-33 (with the legends and their sources), 81-95; idem and E. Alliata (eds.), *The Madaba Mosaic Map Centenary 1897-1997. Travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad Period, Amman 7-9 avril 1997. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio maior*, 40 (Jerusalem, 1999); *SEG* 38, 1656; Michel, 309-11; Bowersock, *Mosaics*, 65-90. Other mosaics from near Madaba, especially from churches at ‘Umm al-Rasas and Ma‘in, feature depictions of cities with their names inscribed, but these are fairly straightforward labels which identify the otherwise generic cityscapes: N. Duval, ‘Les représentations architecturales sur les mosaïques chrétiennes de Jordanie’, in idem, *Églises*, 211-86.

⁵⁰⁹ The mosaic is now in Cleveland, Museum of Art, acc. no. 1969.115; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 487, 489 fig. 456.

⁵¹⁰ M.-T. and P. Canivet, ‘La mosaïque d’Adam dans l’église syrienne de Huarte’, *CA*, 24 (1975), 49-67, especially 56-7; J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* (Brussels, 1977), 128; M.-T. and P. Canivet, ‘I complessi cristiani del 4 e del 5 secolo a Huarte (Siria settentrionale)’, *RAC*, 56 (1980), 146-72; M.-T. and P. Canivet, ‘Recherches en Apamène: Huarte (IV-VIe s.)’, *Damaszener Mitteilungen*, 1 (1983), 21-9; J. Balty, ‘Les mosaïques de Syrie au Ve siècle et leur répertoire’, *Byzantion*, 54 (1984), 437-68; H. Maguire, ‘Adam

problematic in the context of a church decorative scheme, although images of female personifications, such as that of the sea in the central nave pavement of the Church of the Apostles at Madaba, were represented with bare breasts (3.17).⁵¹¹ But the narrative and the text require the nudity, and in the Adam and Eve panel the artist has chosen to depict the comparatively demure moment after the first man and woman have covered themselves. Eve is naked in the small fresco inside the niche behind the font in the third-century baptistery at Dura Europos (Fig. 3.18),⁵¹² and in versions of the scene on late Roman sarcophagi (Fig. 3.19),⁵¹³ as well as in catacomb paintings in Rome.⁵¹⁴ Here, the relationship between image and text is one of narrative in motion: Adam and Eve's actions in the inscription—they ate, and discovered they were naked—precede their act of covering themselves in the image. The text articulates the background to the image, and the image completes the text. While the context of the mosaic is unclear, its primary function was didactic and symbolic, as the episode of 'original sin' depicted sets the stage for the coming of Christ and His redemption of mankind through His sacrifice.

Biblical *tituli* occasionally appeared in the mosaic pavements of synagogues as well. Although they were rarely paired with images of related scenes, *tituli* do label the

and the Animals: Allegory and the Literal Sense in Early Christian Art', *DOP*, 41 (1987), 363-73, especially 367ff; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 104-5, fig. 71.

⁵¹¹ Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 106. On nudity in Byzantine art, see J.Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden, 1978), 1-23; M. R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Tunbridge Wells, 1992), 85-116; E. Dauterman Maguire and H. Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton, 2007), 97-134.

⁵¹² Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 19-24, Pl. 40; Jensen, *Christian Art*, 178; U. Mell, *Christliche Hauskirche und Neues Testament. Die Ikonologie des Baptisteriums von Dura Europos und das Diatessaron Tatians* (Göttingen, 2010), 113-156, 163-88.

⁵¹³ For example, on the bottom register of the front of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, c. 359: see Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 12-3, Pl. 28; Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, 279-283, no. 680, Taf. 104. Another example is the scene of Christ between Adam and Eve on the upper register of the front of the so-called Dogmatic Sarcophagus, now Vatican Museums 104, dated to c. 325-50: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, 39-41, no. 43, Taf. 14. On depictions of Adam and Eve on sarcophagi generally, G. Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage. Handbuch der Archäologie* (Munich, 2000), 135-7.

⁵¹⁴ For example, a fourth-century painting on an arcosolium in the Catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter in Rome: J.G. Deckers, H.R. Seeliger and G. Mietke, *Die Katakomben "Santi Marcellino e Pietro"*. *Repertorium der Malereien. Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*, 6 (Rome, 1987), 265-6, no. 44, Tf. 29c.

mosaic of Abraham and Isaac in the synagogue at Beth Alpha (518-27),⁵¹⁵ as well as some of the biblical scenes in the sixth-century synagogue at Sepphoris.⁵¹⁶ Rachel Hachlili interprets the short inscriptions in both synagogues as explanatory, and privileges the images above the short texts.⁵¹⁷ However, at least at Beth Alpha, the words may be short, but are placed with such intentionality that they become an integral part of the narrative (Fig. 3.20). Yahweh's voice thunders down from the heavens, along with his hand, to stop the sacrifice of Isaac, causing Abraham to see the ram which he will then offer as a sacrifice in place of his son. The words are not only explanatory, but function to highlight the crucial turning point of the narrative and allow the viewer/reader to establish the portion of the episode depicted, as the narrative structure of the scene is slightly opaque due to the schematization of the figures and the multiple perspectives employed by the artists.⁵¹⁸ The inscribing of spoken text is logical, as the words of God could not be represented iconographically, although they could be introduced to the scene by the viewer's imagination, as described by Gregory of Nyssa in his evocation of his own personal reaction to the dramatic climax of the scene as painted: 'Already the edge of the sword touches the body, when a voice sounds unto him from God prohibiting the deed'.⁵¹⁹ However, the dramatic placement of the inscribed speech of God invites anyone gazing upon the mosaic to read the text aloud, allowing them to perform a role in the retelling of Jewish narrative, inhabiting the tension-filled moment as a character in the story. In fact, the placement of the inscriptions in the Beth Alpha pavement is much more deliberate than

⁵¹⁵ The events are described in Genesis 22:10-13, 19. The artists have worked in God's command to Abraham in Hebrew ('Do not raise your hand') underneath a depiction of the Hand of God, as well as the narrative passage describing Abraham's subsequent action ('He saw a ram') next to the object seen, a ram: E.L. Sukenik, *The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha* (Jerusalem & London, 1932), 40; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 288-92; idem, *Pavements*, 57-9 and fig. IV-1, b, 64; Millar, 'Narrative and Identity', 247-8.

⁵¹⁶ Z. Weiss and E. Netzer, *Promise and Redemption, A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris* (Jerusalem, 1996), 30-1; Weiss, *Synagogue*, 141-53, 199-219 (on the inscriptions); Hachlili, *Pavements*, 64.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁵¹⁸ On the mosaics of the synagogue, Sukenik, 21-46; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 194. On artists of Beth Alpha, usually regarded as 'local' (i.e. less skilled than a metropolitan workshop), if innovative, Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions*, 29-30; Fine, *Art*, 102; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 250.

⁵¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, PG 46, 572C, trans. Mango, *Art*, 34.

that of biblical *tituli* which identify the scenes painted on the walls of the narthex and nave of the Church of St. John the Theologian at Ephesus (begun c. 535/6),⁵²⁰ and the atrium at the fifth-century Basilica A (of Damokratia) at Demetrias in Greece.⁵²¹ In both of these latter cases, texts acted as visual framing and separating devices in the mode of the Samson mosaics at Mopsuestia, breaking up the otherwise continuous scene into episodes to be viewed and interpreted separately, but do not take an active part in the images themselves.

While these text-image combinations were primarily symbolic and narrative in nature, one illustrative programme popular around the area of Mount Nebo in Arabia was instead a complex articulation of liturgical practice and Christian triumph. In three churches in Arabia, near Mount Nebo, the end of Psalm 51 (50):19, ‘...then they shall offer young bulls upon your [God’s] altar’ (τότε ἀνοίσουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριόν σου μόσχους) was inscribed alongside an iconographic programme depicting bulls processing towards a central altar.⁵²² The earliest of these, placed in the west end of the nave pavement in the Church of the Holy Martyrs of Lot and Procopius at Khirbet Mukhayyat (557/8), is oriented towards the west and would have been read by worshippers as they left the church

⁵²⁰ Images include both biblical scenes, including Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, as well as others, for example Christ crowning Justinian and Theodora: H. Gregoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d’Asie Mineure* (1922), 100; *Forschungen in Ephesos: veröffentlicht vom Österreichischen Archäologischen Institute, Band 4, Heft 3, Die Johanneskirche* (Vienna, 1951), 22f, 195, 185, 266f; P. Verzone, ‘S. Giovanni e S. Maria di Efeso e la ricostruzione della città nell’VIII secolo’, *Corsi di cultura sull’arte ravennate e bizantina*, 12 (1965), 603-6; C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1980), 88-90, with further bibliography. The iconographic program is largely destroyed, but it is possible that the interior nave was decorated with Old and New Testament scenes labeled with short poetic inscriptions which are preserved as AG 1.37-89, some of which mention Ephesus (e.g. AG 1.50, 1.80): N. Bees, ‘Μελετήματα σχετικά πρὸς τὴν μεσσαιονικὴν Ἐφεσον καὶ τὸν καλούμενον Θεόλογον’, *Αρχαιολογικὸν Εφημέρις*, 54 (1953), 263-83.

⁵²¹ These include paraphrases of Genesis 28:12, Joshua 5:2-9 and 8:30-35, and Matthew 21:1-10: C. Habicht, ‘Neue Inschriften aus Demetrias’, in S. Bakhuizen (ed.), *Demetrias V* (Bonn, 1987), 295-303; Caraher, 141ff, Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 60, n. 35; P. Marzloff, ‘Bilder aus dem Heiligen Land. Ein griechischer Wandmalereizyklus des 5. Jahrhunderts’, in E. Dassman and J. Engemann (eds.), *Akten des XII internationalen kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn 22.-28. September 1991* (Munich, 1995), ii, 1024-32, Taf. 141-4. A church at Bregovina in modern Serbia, near Iustiniana Prima (Caričin Grad), features psalms and other biblical texts carved on the altar and painted on the walls: V. Popović, ‘Trois inscriptions protobyzantines de Bregovina’, *Starinar*, 40-1 (1989-90), 279-90.

⁵²² Vriezen, in Rutgers, *The Use of Sacred Books*, 253-4; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 206ff.

after services (Fig. 3.21).⁵²³ In the accompanying image, placed immediately above (to the west) of the inscription within the same framed panel, two bulls process towards a simple stone altar with a central niche and a small fire burning on top. The text of this popular psalm of repentance, included in the liturgy of the region in the period, is one of repentance, and involves the speaker asking God for mercy and salvation.⁵²⁴ In its last four lines, the psalm sets up a complex statement on sacrifice and asks God to take a special interest in Jerusalem:

For will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give them; you will not be pleased with burnt offerings (ὀλοκαυτώματα). My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar. (Psalm 51 (50):16-9)

The end of the psalm evokes the heartfelt pain of the Jewish faithful caused by the destruction of the Temple of Solomon and the hope for the Temple to be rebuilt, fulfilled by the construction of the Second Temple in the sixth century BCE.⁵²⁵ By the sixth century CE, five centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple by Emperor Titus in 70 CE, Judaism had changed from a religion in which sacrificial rites were central into something closer to the modern religion, although scholars still debate the extent to which the practice of animal sacrifice continued in religious and civic contexts in the fourth century and afterward.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ S. Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo* (Jerusalem, 1949), 105; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, 2, no. 97; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 187; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 164; Di Segni in Piccirillo and Alliata, *Mount Nebo*, 442-3, no. 42; Michel, 347.

⁵²⁴ The psalm was part of the Liturgy of the Faithful, the latter part of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and the last line of the psalm was repeated three times by the officiating priest after he had placed the offerings of the Eucharist on the altar: Saller, *Memorial of Moses*, 254-5; J.R. Branham, 'Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Early Churches', *AB*, 74 (1992), 375-94, especially 381-2. On the secondary preface attributing the psalm to David, E.M. Menn, 'Sweet Singer of Israel: David and the Psalms in Early Judaism', in H.W. Attridge and M.E. Fassler (eds.), *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical and Artistic Traditions* (Leiden, 2004), 61-74, especially 64.

⁵²⁵ The current form of the psalm probably dates to the period of Babylonian Exile or immediately thereafter: A. Weister, *The Psalms*, trans. H. Hartwell (Louisville, KY, 1962), 401-2.

⁵²⁶ On sacrifice in the Second Temple period, M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1978). On late antique Judaism and attitudes to sacrifice, M.D. Swartz, 'Sage, Priest and Poet: Typologies of religious leadership in the ancient synagogue', in S. Fine (ed.), *Jews, Christians, and*

However, we are concerned with the Christian response to imagined Jewish practice. Late antique Christians interpreted the ending lines of Psalm 51 very differently, as exemplified by Hebrews 10:1-18, which contrasts the practice of sacrifice as decreed by Mosaic law with the words of the Messiah in Psalm 40 (39), concluding that ‘...through those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year, for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins’.⁵²⁷ For Christians, Christ’s sacrifice changed the ritual context of animal sacrifice for good, privileging the metaphorical sacrifice (‘a broken spirit’) over the physical.⁵²⁸ At Khirbet Mukhayyat, the text of the psalm is inscribed in order to make the same argument as Hebrews, but also to particularize and ‘biblicize’ the otherwise popular scene of confronted animals processing towards an altar or fountain.⁵²⁹ Confronted bulls are seen elsewhere as at the Church of St. John the Baptist (c. 500) at Oum Hartaine in Syria, where two bulls, wearing jolly expressions despite being stuck with arrows, process towards an altar-shaped pedestal which elevates a birdbath (Fig. 3.22).⁵³⁰ In particularizing the programme, the inscription also turns the illustrative image into a statement of Christian triumph over previous Jewish (and indeed pagan) practice.⁵³¹

Mosaic pavements from two other churches nearby contain versions of the same text-image programme. In the Theotokos Chapel in the Basilica of Moses on Mount Nebo

Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural interaction during the Greco-Roman period (London, 1999), 101-17; M.-Z. Petropoulou, *Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greek Religion, Judaism and Christianity, 100 B.C. to 200 A.D.* (Oxford, 2008), 127-206. On the transformation of Jewish ritual practice, G. Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice: Les mutations religieuses de l’Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 2005), trans. S. Emanuel as *The end of sacrifice: religious transformations in late antiquity* (Chicago, 2009), 56-83; Petropoulou, 279-84. On pagan sacrifice in late antiquity, N. McLynn, ‘The fourth-century *taurobolium*’, *Phoenix*, 50, 3-4 (1996), 312-30; M.R. Salzman, ‘The End of Public Sacrifice: Changing Definitions of Sacrifice in Post-Constantinian Rome and Italy’, in J.W. Knust and Z. Várhelyi (eds.), *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (Oxford, 2011), 167-83.

⁵²⁷ Petropoulou, 274-5; L. Salah Nasrallah, ‘The Embarrassment of Blood: Early Christians and Others on Sacrifice, War, and Rational Worship’, in Knust and Várhelyi, 142-66.

⁵²⁸ On the complicated dynamics of early Christian responses to and rejections of animal sacrifice, D.C. Ullucci, *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice* (Oxford, 2012).

⁵²⁹ On confronted animals, *supra* n. 495.

⁵³⁰ Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 193ff, figs. 168, 181; the mosaic is paired with a Syriac inscription which gives the name of a donor, Sergis (or Sargis).

⁵³¹ On Christian triumphalism as seen in late antique iconography, Miles, ‘Santa Maria Maggiore’, 155-76.

(c. 603-8), the rectangular panel immediately in front of the altar includes the last line of Psalm 51 and, immediately below it, an image of two deer and two bulls approaching an altar from either side (Fig. 3.23).⁵³² The altar is depicted as covered with a ciborium, with a fire burning on top, and as viewed through an entrance portal, shaped like an aedicule, which resembles images of the main portal into the Temple of Solomon in the frescoes of the third-century synagogue at Dura Europos (Fig. 3.24),⁵³³ as well as in a relief from the Capernaum synagogue, which depicts the arch without a triangular gable.⁵³⁴ This entrance portal and the precinct beyond have been convincingly interpreted as a representation of the Temple in Jerusalem, in which a sacrificial fire has been lit in front of the Holy of Holies.⁵³⁵ The Mount Nebo programme must have had much of the same didactic tone as that at Khirbet Mukhayyat, although the substitution of Temple for altar intensifies the polemic tone of the programme, as does its placement. Rather than being placed at the exit of the building and facing west, as at Khirbet Mukhayyat, the image and inscription were positioned at the east end of the chapel and facing east, immediately in front of the four-legged marble altar table but behind the chancel screen. While the mosaic was separated from the main room of the small chapel by a low screen, it could still be seen by worshippers standing in the main space.⁵³⁶ For both officiating priests and congregation,

⁵³² Saller, *Memorial of Moses*, 255-8, Pl. 116,3; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, 2, no. 78; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 165; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 151; Di Segni, in Piccirillo and Alliata, 433-4, no. 14; Michel, 339; Branham, 'Sacred Space', 381-2; idem, 'Mapping Sacrifice on Bodies and Spaces in Late-Antique Judaism and Early Christianity', in Westcoat and Ousterhout, 201-30, especially 209-14.

⁵³³ On the Dura synagogue, K. Weitzmann and H.L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 130-2; Kessler, 'The Program and Scripture of the Dura Synagogue Frescoes', in idem, *Studies in Pictorial Narrative*, (London, 1994), 302-31, especially 321; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 172-83; idem, 'Jewish Identity' at the *Limus*: The Earliest Reception of the Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings', in E.S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles, 2011), 303-20, especially 304. The central star-like form is similar to those seen in the depictions of the entrance portal: Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 155-8, fig. III-38. In the Theotokos Chapel, the motif, probably originally a conch shell as seen in the borrowing of that element to decorate the arch of numerous depictions of the Torah Shrine as either Ark of the Covenant or the Temple: idem, *Pavements*, 23-8.

⁵³⁴ On the Capernaum synagogue, idem, 'Torah Shrine and Ark in Ancient Synagogues: A Re-evaluation', *ZDPV*, 116 (2000), 1-21, especially 158; also Hachlili, *Pavements*, pp. 32-3; Branham, 'Mapping', 209-14.

⁵³⁵ Saller, *Mount Nebo*, 235-8; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 151; Branham, 'Sacred Space', 381-2; idem, 'Mapping' in Westcoat and Ousterhout; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 32-3.

⁵³⁶ Branham, 'Sacred Space', 381-2, figs. 10-1.

then, the inscription and image connected the tradition of Jewish sacrifice to that of the Eucharist, and went one step further, proclaiming the superiority and the literal triumph of Christian over Jewish ritual.⁵³⁷ It is unclear whether the altar in the chapel was used to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy, but if it was, this polemic would have been supercharged.⁵³⁸

The third mosaic pavement to feature the text of the psalm, in the Acropolis Church at Ma'in (719/20), has been heavily damaged by both later iconoclasts and by time.⁵³⁹ The inscription, placed in a rectangular panel in front of the sanctuary as at Mount Nebo, is extremely fragmentary, and the paired image does not survive. However, the Ma'in example serves to as evidence of the continuity of this particular text-image pairing into the eighth century, after the beginning of Umayyad rule in the region.

Tituli were not often inscribed alongside narrative scenes from the Bible, but when they were, they were texts with intent. These texts functioned to particularize images, turning generic iconographies into ones redolent with symbolism, narrative and speech, and, in the case of Psalm 51, connections to liturgical practice past and present. *Tituli*-less images could have been read in the same or similar ways by different viewers, so while inscriptions had the power to privilege one or several interpretations among many, texts rarely *added* meanings to biblical images. This situation is very different from that of images of inscribed scrolls and codices in church mosaics, to which we now turn, where despite the inherent significance of these objects as text-bearing, the text itself needed to be inscribed for the sign to speak.

⁵³⁷ Branham, 'Sacred Space', 382. However, artists also were presumably reproducing the schematic and formulaic image of the Temple from a pattern book: Hachlili, *Pavements*, 23ff.

⁵³⁸ Although we have no archaeological or textual evidence for this, Saller argues the image implies that the altar was used for the rite of the Eucharist: Saller, *Memorial of Moses*, 254; repeated by Branham, 'Sacred Space', 381-2.

⁵³⁹ De Vaux, 238-240; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 159; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 231; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 201; Michel, 371. On iconoclasm in eighth-century Arabia and Palestine, *supra* n. 139.

The inscribed book, inscribed

While only a handful of narrative *tituli* have survived in combination with the images with which they were meant to be read, Christ or saints are often depicted in mosaic in highly visible zones of Christian buildings holding scrolls (rolls) or open books (codices) inscribed with texts. Even absent inscriptions, these scrolls or books were seen as meaningful objects which could act as symbols of identity, power and authority. When combined with text, scrolls and books spoke for the figures who held them, extending the symbolic meanings of holy images and connecting the act of viewing with the performance of the liturgy.

a. Inscribed scrolls and simulated texts

Scrolls (*rotuli* or rolls) were symbols of learning and of office in the Roman world, and frequently appear clutched by portrait statues of emperors and officials, confirming their elite civic status, for example the togate portrait statue of the emperor Titus from Rome (Fig. 3.25).⁵⁴⁰ The scroll remained a popular iconographic device in late antique art, and was often depicted on gold-glasses, produced in Rome in the late third and fourth centuries, on which scrolls, held by martyrs or used as visual devices to separate or frame figures, point to the fascination with the motif as decoration, as well as the desire to legitimize the pantheon of Christian holy figures through Roman visual language (Fig.

⁵⁴⁰ Now in the Vatican Museums: W. Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* (Berlin, 1903), i, cat. 26, Taf. 4. Late antique statues continue to hold scrolls in the same mode, as does the early fifth-century statue of Oecumanus, the *praeses* of Caria: R.R.R. Smith, 'The Statue Monument of Oecumenius: A New Portrait of a Late antique Governor from Aphrodisias', *JRS*, 92 (2002), 134-56; U. Gehn, *Ehrenstatuen in der Spätantike* (Wiesbaden, 2012), 412-25, cat. O 26, Taf. 15-17, with further bibliography. The iconography is also popular on Roman sarcophagi, where men typically hold scrolls as generic symbols of status or of office, an iconography that continues in the fourth century, as on the Dogmatic Sarcophagus, also in the Vatican: *supra* n. 513.

3.26).⁵⁴¹ The scroll continued to be a popular status object in early Christian church mosaic programmes.⁵⁴² Closed scrolls are held by holy figures as generic markers of identity (often designating them as prophets) and religious authority, as by the anonymous prophets and/or saints in the second zone of the walls of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Fig. 3.27).⁵⁴³ However, revealing the preference towards playful visual variation typical of the period, this programme also features other prophets holding open scrolls, as does the earlier, fourth-century mosaic of a youthful Christ surrounded by his apostles in the Chapel of Sant'Aquilino in Milan, in which Christ acts as teacher in the mode of Graeco-Roman philosopher, holding an open scroll in his left hand with a red basket (*capsa*) full of rolled-up scrolls at his feet (Fig. 3.28).⁵⁴⁴ Other closed motifs which transmit the authority of texts include the Torah Shrine, common on the mosaic pavements of late antique synagogues in Palestine.⁵⁴⁵

As opposed to these baskets of closed scrolls or individual rolled-up scrolls held by saints as symbols of learning and religious authority, Christ's open scroll in the Sant'Aquilino mosaic is presented to the viewer as an object of text, although its three lines of 'text' are in fact pseudo-text, comprised of marks which imitate words. While the

⁵⁴¹ For example, the scrolls held by the two martyrs Lawrence and Cyprian (mislabelled as 'Criprianus') on a fourth-century gold-glass from Rome, now in the Vatican: C.R. Morey, *The gold-glass collection of the Vatican Library, with additional collections of other gold-glass* (Vatican City, 1959), cat. 36, Pl. 6. Scrolls appear as symbols of office on another gold-glass in the Vatican, on which Peter and Paul are seated and hold scrolls, while four additional scrolls frame the central scene: *ibid.*, no. 69, Pl. 11.

⁵⁴² On the iconography of Evangelists holding scrolls, K. Krause, 'Heilige Schrift im Bild. Spätantike Portraits der inspirierten Evangelisten als Spiegel eines neuen Medienbewusstseins', in Krause and Schellewald, 41-83.

⁵⁴³ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt, Kommentar, Teil 2*, 1, 152-3; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 158.

⁵⁴⁴ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 72-3; Mathews, *Clash*, 118. A similarly blank scroll is held by Christ pictured as teaching his apostles in a fourth-century arcosolium painting in the cubiculum of the Pistoires in the Catacombs of Domitilla: Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni, *Christian catacombs*, 87, fig. 95.

⁵⁴⁵ D. Milson, *Art and Architecture of the Synagogue in Late Antique Palestine: In the Shadow of the Church* (Leiden, 2007), 106-140; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 68-72; *idem*, *Pavements*, 23-7. Also a rectangular panel in two parts (the shape of a diptych?) in the synagogue mosaic at Naro (Hammam Lif) in Tunisia, which labels the 'instruments (*instrumenta*) of your [God's] servant to Naro', often interpreted as referring to Torah scrolls: J.-P. Darmon, 'Les mosaïques de la synagogue de Hammam Lif: un réexamen du dossier', in Johnson, Ling, and Smith (eds.), *Fifth International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics*, ii, 7-29; Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 409; K.B. Stern, *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa* (Leiden, 2008), 193-254, who argues the 'instruments' could be other objects, such as lamps.

scroll maintains its status as signifier of learning and/or status when depicted as open, it becomes something more when it displays text, even pseudo-text, as in the Dura synagogue frescoes, where a prophet, perhaps Jeremiah or Ezra, displays an unfurled scroll with pseudo-Hebrew inscribed upon it (Fig. 3.29).⁵⁴⁶ By emphasizing their own agency as ancient documents which purport to speak in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, the scroll at Dura, as with the similar scroll held by the prophet Jeremiah on the north side wall of the sanctuary in San Vitale (Fig. 3.30), authenticates the figures as prophets and bestows the full authority of textual tradition upon them.⁵⁴⁷

In the mosaic programmes of Byzantine churches of the late ninth and tenth centuries, including Hagia Sophia and a church dedicated to the Virgin of Pharos in the imperial palace, both in Constantinople, prophets were depicted holding scrolls inscribed in Greek. These prophets ‘spoke’ either their own words, for example David speaking the words of the Psalms in the Pharos church, or the words of other Old Testament authors: Jeremiah’s scroll on the tympanum of Hagia Sophia reports a verse from the Book of Baruch 3:35, 3, 6 (Fig. 3.31).⁵⁴⁸ In his sermon celebrating the replacement of the mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the apse of Hagia Sophia after the official end of Iconoclasm,

⁵⁴⁶ This ‘fake’ text found on depictions of scrolls and codices is different than pseudo-text, but does bear similarity to pseudo-Kufic, although is much less articulated visually. On pseudo-inscriptions, D. Aanavi, ‘Devotional Writing: “Pseudoinscriptions” in Islamic Art’, *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 26, 9 (May 1968), 353-8; A. Walker, ‘Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl’, *AB*, 90, 1 (March 2008), 32-53. On Dura, *supra* n. 533; also H. Kessler, ‘Prophetic Portraits in the Dura Synagogue’, *JAC*, 30 (1987), 149-55; Krause, ‘Heilige Schrift’, in Krause and Schellewald, *Bild und Text*, 75-7.

⁵⁴⁷ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt*, Bd. 1, 239-40; C. Rizzardi, ‘Considerazioni sui mosaici di San Vitale di Ravenna: il ciclo di Mosè’, in Johnson, Ling, and Smith (eds.), *Fifth International Colloquium*, ii, 219-30, especially 228-30. On the authenticating function of scrolls and writing, which connect the writer to God through divine inspiration, Krause, ‘Heilige Schrift’, 46-7, 81-3.

⁵⁴⁸ On the prophets on the tympanum of Hagia Sophia, including Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, Mango, *Materials*, 60; idem and E.J.W. Hawkins, ‘The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. The Church Fathers in the North Tympanum’, *DOP*, 26 (1972), 1-41; N. Teteriatnikov, ‘Hagia Sophia, Constantinople: Religious Images and their Functional Context after Iconoclasm’, *Zograf*, 30 (2004/5), 9-19. The decorative program of the church of the Virgin of Pharos, probably built by the emperor Michael III c. 864, is known only through the description of Photius, *Homily* 10, trans. Mango, *Homilies*, 184-92, especially 188; also R.J.H. Jenkins and C. Mango, ‘The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius’, *DOP*, 9-10 (1956), 125-40; James, ‘Art and Lies’, 62-5. On depictions of prophets holding scrolls more generally, and their connection to contemporary Byzantine liturgical practice, S. Gerstel, ‘Liturgical Scrolls in the Byzantine Sanctuary’, *GRBS*, 35, 2 (Summer 1994), 195-204.

delivered in the church on 29 May 867, the patriarch Photius interpreted the text on the prophets' scrolls as speech: each figure 'cries out his sayings of yore' which have been fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ and the spread of the Christian religion.⁵⁴⁹

The typology-reinforcing iconography of prophets with text-bearing scrolls was not new in the ninth century, and manuscript precedents from the sixth century such as the Rossano Gospels reveal the early stage of the development of the type, in which David and other prophets are depicted as half-length figures holding long scrolls which appear as rectangular blocks of text underneath scenes from the life of Christ, revealing His fulfilment of their prophecies (Fig. 3.32).⁵⁵⁰

No prophets 'speak' specific words in early church programmes, but the saints and Christ do. In the lost fourth-century apse mosaic of Old St. Peter's, Peter and Paul, labelled in both Greek and Latin, stood to either side of the enthroned Christ and held scrolls in their left hands inscribed with their own words to Christ from the Gospels: Peter proclaimed, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (*Tu es Chr(istu)s, fili/us Dei vivi*) (Matthew 16:16); while Paul cried out, 'For me, to live is Christ' (*Mihi vivere Chr(istu)s est*) (an abbreviated version of Philippians 1:21).⁵⁵¹ Christ also occasionally holds an inscribed scroll, though unlike those of Peter and Paul, these scrolls never allow Him to 'speak' his own words. The inscriptions label the particular symbolic relevance of the scroll, as in the fourth- or early-fifth century apsidiole mosaic of Santa Costanza,

⁵⁴⁹ Photius, *Homily* 10.6, trans. Mango, *Homilies*, 188. On scrolls as speech, Nelson, 'Image and Inscription', 108-9.

⁵⁵⁰ G. Cavallo, J. Gribomont and W.C. Loerke, *Codex purpureus Rossanensis*, Museo dell'Arcivescovado, Rossano calabro. *Commentarium* (Rome/Graz, 1987); P. Sevrugian, *Der Rossano-Codex und die Sinope-Fragmente* (Worms, 1990), 40-84; B. Zimmermann, 'Die Codexillustration als neuer Kunstzweig – Spiegel einer geänderten Funktion des Buches in der Spätantike', in Rutgers et al., *The Use of Sacred Books*, 263-85, especially 280ff.

⁵⁵¹ The programme is preserved in a seventeenth-century painting by Augusto Mariotti, Vatican, BAV, Cod. Barb. lat. 2733, 158-9; printed as a diagram in G. Ciampini, *De sacris aedificiis a Constantino Magno constructis: synopsis historica* (Rome, 1693), iii, Pl. XIII; reproduced in Ihm, *Programme*, 22-4; also J. Ruysschaert, 'Le Tableau Mariotti de la mosaïque absidale de l'ancien S.-Pierre', in *Rendiconti della pontificia accademia Romana di archeologia*, 40 (1967-8), 295-317; H. L. Kessler, 'St. Peter's Basilica at the Time of the First Jubilee', in idem, *Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Italy* (Spoleto, 2002), 1-13, especially 2-3, originally printed as 'L'apparto decorativo di S. Pietro', in *Romei e Giubilei. Il pellegrinaggio medievale alla tomba di San Pietro (350-1350)* (Rome, 1999), 263-70.

where Christ presents an unrolled scroll to Peter which reads, ‘The Lord gives peace’ (*Dominus pacem dat*) (Fig. 3.33).⁵⁵² This phrase has been critical to the interpretation of the image as an early *traditio legis* (i.e. Christ giving the Law to Peter),⁵⁵³ but here ‘peace’ (*pacem*) could also suggest a funerary reading in the context of the building it decorates. References to peace, including the common epigraphic formula *requiescit/requiescat in pace*, are typical in funerary inscriptions in fourth-century Italy and elsewhere.⁵⁵⁴ In addition, the text on the scroll potentially expresses hope for either political calm or the ‘peace of the church’, either from doctrinal schisms of the period (already seen as expressed in several inscriptions in North African churches) or, depending on the date of the mosaics, from any one of the conflicts between pope and emperor (for example, that of Liberius and Constantius, resulting in the former’s exile from Rome) or religiously-motivated violence between candidates for pope, including that which swept Rome in 366 during the contest between Damasus and Ursinus.⁵⁵⁵ While some of these readings might be more plausible than others, depending on the date and original function

⁵⁵² Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 35-41. Some scholars argue the original inscription read ‘*Dominus legem dat*’, although there is no art historical evidence for this: Hellemo, 65-89. A similar inscription is preserved in Christ’s codex in the apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana in Rome (c. 402-17), which reads ‘The Lord, conservator of the church of Pudenziana’ (*Dominus conservator ecclesiae Pudentianae*): Ihm, *Programme*, 130-2; Krautheimer, *Corpus*, iii, 280; Oakeshott, 65-7; Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 55-76; E. Dassman, ‘Das Apsismosaik von S. Pudenziana in Rom. Philosophische, imperiale und theologische Aspekte in einem Christusbild am Beginn des 5. Jh.’, *RQ*, 65, 1 (1970), 67-81; O. Feld, ‘Das Apsismosaik in S. Pudenziana als Bild der Gemeinschaft mit Christus’, in G. Casper, B. Müller and J. Biemer (eds.), *Gemeinsam Kirche sein. Theorie und Praxis der Communio. Festschrift der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Freiburg i.Br. für Erzbischof Oskar Saier* (Freiburg, 1992), 253-62; Mathews, *Clash*, 98-109. Hellemo, 39-46, reads the Pudenziana text as an acclamation. The text of the mosaic was the subject of restoration in the Renaissance, and originally included the word ‘Saint’ (*Sanctae*) before ‘Pudenziana’ (*Pudentianae*): F.W. Schlatter, ‘The Text in the Mosaic of Santa Pudenziana’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 43, 2 (1989), 155-65, especially 156.

⁵⁵³ However, Matthiae makes the point that restorations are to blame for the interpretation of the scene as a *traditio legis* rather than as what he defines as a ‘*largitio pacis*’, based upon imperial iconography: *Mosaici*, 1, 37. On the *traditio legis*, an iconography whose existence is still debated and whose precise implications remain unclear, W.N. Schumacher, ‘*Dominus legem dat*’, *RQ*, 54 (1959), 1-39; C. Davis-Weyer, ‘Das Traditio-Legis-Bild und seine Nachfolge’, *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, s. 3, 17 (1961), 7-45; Hellemo, 65-89, who summarizes the history of the debate; also Spieser, ‘Representation’, 9, 14-6. The scene is often found on early Christian sarcophagi: Koch, 191-3. A fourth-century mosaic in the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte in Naples depicts a similar scene, but replaces ‘peace’ with ‘law’ (*legem*): J.L. Maier, *Le baptistère de Naples et ses mosaïques: étude historique et iconographique* (Fribourg, 1964), 108-19, Pl. 8.

⁵⁵⁴ Marucchi, *Christian epigraphy*; Handley, *Death*.

⁵⁵⁵ On North African examples, see p. 66. On the conflict between Damasus and Ursinus, *Collectio Avellana* 1-7, 13, CSEL 35, 2ff; also bibliography n. 104.

of the building (which remain unclear), the inscription is inherently a multivalent text which unites the authority of God/Christ, the idea of the hierarchical church built on Christ's transfer of authority to Peter, and the hope for peace in this life and the next.

However, scrolls were not confined to *traditio legis* scenes. In the apse mosaic of the monastery church of Hosios David (Moni Latomou) in Thessaloniki, Christ holds an inscribed scroll whose text enhances the typological and prophetic valence of the image in which it appears (Fig. 3.34). The mosaic, generally dated to the fifth to seventh century, has challenged scholars over the years with its unique and complicated imagery, which relates to the apocalyptic visions of the Old and New Testaments but does not precisely illustrate any one in particular.⁵⁵⁶ Recently, Laura Salah Nasrallah has argued convincingly for an interpretation of the programme which does not privilege text over image but instead uses the mosaics as evidence for the acceptance of or debate about certain texts, especially the Book of Revelation.⁵⁵⁷ Nasrallah articulates the complex relationship between visuality and textuality in the mosaic: the scene is of an epiphanic-prophetic vision, but texts and textual objects play important visual roles. Christ holds an inscribed scroll, the prophet to His left (possibly Ezekiel or Habbakuk) holds an inscribed codex, and the four creatures or signs of the Evangelists appear around Christ, each holding a closed golden codex.⁵⁵⁸ A dedicatory inscription in two lines of silver tesserae on a red background runs below the image which identifies the church, paid for by an anonymous female donor, as 'a life-giving spring' (Πηγὴ ζ(ω)τικὴ).⁵⁵⁹ The traditional association of Old Testament prophets with scrolls is reversed in the mosaic, as the

⁵⁵⁶ *Supra* n. 233.

⁵⁵⁷ Nasrallah, 'Interpretation', 361ff. For a different reading which emphasizes the private meaning of the inscriptions in the prophet's book and below the image, James, 'Images of Text', 264-6.

⁵⁵⁸ On the identity of the prophets, see the summary of *ibid.*, 258-9, n. 12.

⁵⁵⁹ For the inscription, see Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions*, 97-9; also Ihm, *Programme*, 182-4; Spieser, 'Further Remarks', 6; Wisskirchen, 585-6; Nasrallah, 'Interpretation', 375ff.

prophet to the left holds a codex, while Christ holds a scroll on which is inscribed in twelve lines:

+ Ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς
ἡμῶν, ἐ-
φ' ᾧ ἐλπίζο-
μεν κ(αὶ) ἡγαλ-
λώμεθα
ἐπὶ τῇ σωτ-
ηρίᾳ ἡ-
μῶν ὅτι ἀ-
νάπαυσιν
δώσει ἐπὶ
τὸν οἶκον
τοῦτον.

Behold our God, in whom we hope, and we rejoiced in our salvation, that he may give rest in this house.⁵⁶⁰

The inscription condenses the Septuagint version of the text of Isaiah 25:9-10a and substitutes ‘this house’ for ‘this mountain’, transforming the church on the hill in Thessaloniki into the mountain of God, the symbolic location of the Second Coming.⁵⁶¹ By inscribing the words of an Old Testament prophet onto Christ’s scroll, an object which portends the Second Coming in the eschatology of Revelation 5-9, the programme transfers prophetic authority to Christ, and collapses the usual association between the words of the prophets and the events of the New Testament, used typologically in works such as the Rossano Gospels.⁵⁶² However, when activated, the text speaks in the voice of the prophet, as performed by the reader, but does not speak in the voice of Christ Himself.

⁵⁶⁰ Feissel, *Recueil*, 97; trans. Nasrallah, ‘Interpretation’, 375-7, adaptations mine. For a translation which varies slightly, James, ‘Images of Text’, 257.

⁵⁶¹ Nasrallah, ‘Interpretation’, 376.

⁵⁶² See p. 155.

b. From (sc)roll to codex

The invention of the codex and its gradual replacing of the roll (or scroll) has been a popular topic of study, still dominated by the fundamental works of Kurt Weitzmann.⁵⁶³ However, here we are concerned more with the ways in which codices were imagined, depicted and imbued with distinct sets of meaning. In art of the fifth and sixth centuries, the codex replaces the scroll as a marker of identification, authority and the textuality of the New Testament in general, and of the Gospels in particular. As the scroll could be elevated to the status of luxury object through purple dye and gold and silver ink, the codex became an iconographic signifier of wealth and status through its jewelled covers, as seen on the closed codices held by those apostles or prophets who do not hold scrolls in the second zone of the nave wall mosaics of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo (Fig. 3.27).⁵⁶⁴ On display as part of the procession which made up the First Entry of the Byzantine rite, bejewelled covers and rich bindings of gospel books were luxurious details noted by authors, details which often were imported into their representations.⁵⁶⁵

The open codex appears in Christian images as early as the fourth century, including in the ceiling vault painting of an enthroned Christ surrounded by Peter and Paul and the martyrs in the Catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter in Rome, where Christ holds an

⁵⁶³ K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* (Princeton, 1947); idem, 'Observations on the Cotton Genesis Fragments', in idem (ed.), *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, NJ, 1955), 112-31; idem, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (London, 1977); L.W. Hurtado, *The earliest Christian artifacts: manuscripts and Christian origins* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2006), 43-94.

⁵⁶⁴ *Supra* n. 543. Closed codices could also be labelled with the names of their authors, as are the Four Gospels in the open cabinet (*armarium*) in the mosaics of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, probably originally a chapel dedicated to St. Lawrence (in the mosaic): Deichmann, *Ravenna. Kommentar, 1. Teil*, 75-9; Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 136ff; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 74-84. G. Mackie, 'New Light on the So-called Saint Lawrence Panel at the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia', *Gesta*, XXIX (1990), 54-60, instead identifies the saint in the mosaic as St. Vincent based upon the similarity of the scene to the text of a poem by Prudentius.

⁵⁶⁵ Nelson, 'Image', 108; also R.F. Taft, SJ, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-Anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 200 (Rome, 1975), 40-1, n. 99. The mosaicists who decorated the churches of Ravenna had a special interest in both the variety of jewelled decoration and the particular details of bindings, including closures and ribbon markers.

open codex in his left hand (Fig. 3.35).⁵⁶⁶ Its pages are inscribed with the *alpha* and *omega* (Α Ω), echoing the same letters inscribed next to Christ's head.⁵⁶⁷ Pseudo-text is present instead on the two open codices held by the personifications of the 'Church' of the Jews (*Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*) and the Church of the Gentiles, i.e. the Christian Church (*Ecclesia ex Gentibus*), both labelled with their titles and dressed as proper Roman women, in the mosaic on the back (west) wall of the nave of Santa Sabina in Rome (Figs. 3.36-37).⁵⁶⁸ As in the scroll of the prophet Jeremiah at San Vitale, the codex of the personification of the Jewish *Ecclesia* is inscribed with pseudo-Hebrew, while that held by the Christian *Ecclesia* is decorated with pseudo-Latin or -Greek written in lines of continuous letters, possibly representing Latin cursive.⁵⁶⁹ These books inscribe identity and authority onto their images, privileging appearance over function as legible bearers of text.⁵⁷⁰ Similarly, the image of Christ's book on the sixth-century gold- and silver-embroidered altar cloth of Hagia Sophia did not include a particular text, but Paul the Silentiary still was able to identify the object and its value as a symbol of the Gospels: 'He [Christ] seems to be stretching out the fingers of his right hand, as if preaching his immortal words, while in his left he holds the book of divine message—the book that tells what He, the Lord, accomplished with provident mind when His foot trod the earth'.⁵⁷¹

When Christ is depicted with an open codex, His own words from the Gospels are often inscribed within. In the *cappella arcivescovile* at Ravenna (discussed previously in

⁵⁶⁶ Deckers et al., *Santi Marcellino e Pietro*, 199-201, no. 3, Tf. 1; Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni, *Christian catacombs*, 129, 131 fig. 144. The fourth-century apse mosaic of Old St. Peter's also featured an enthroned Christ holding a closed codex: see p. 155.

⁵⁶⁷ On the eschatological valence of these two letters, see p. 182 below.

⁵⁶⁸ *Supra* n. 378.

⁵⁶⁹ Thunø, 'Letters', 21-22, 29, who points out that the codices held by Peter and Paul in the triumphal arch mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome are also filled with the image of text rather than real text; N. Rowe, *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City: Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2011), 47-8. Similarly, in the now destroyed apse mosaic of Sant'Agata dei Goti in Rome, commissioned by the Gothic general Ricimer around 460, Christ held an open codex which appears to have been decorated with faux text: Ihm, *Programme*, 153-4; Mathisen, 'Ricimer's Church', in Cain and Lenski, 307-25, especially 314.

⁵⁷⁰ Thunø, 'Letters', 26.

⁵⁷¹ Paul, *Ekphrasis* 755ff, ed. Friedlander, 248-9, trans. Mango, *Art*, 89.

Chapter Two), Christ, dressed in military garb, holds an open codex which is inscribed with the words of John 14:6: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (*Ego / sum / via / veri/tas et / vita / +*) (Fig. 2.7).⁵⁷² This passage, in which Jesus comforts His disciples about their future path, becomes a communal decree spoken to congregants, a decree which also casts readers in the role of disciples when they read it aloud.⁵⁷³ A variant of the phrase is inscribed in Christ's book in the triumphal arch mosaics of the Basilica Eufrasiana: 'I am the true light' (*Ego / sum / lux / vera*) (Fig. 2.27).⁵⁷⁴ This latter version is not strictly scriptural, but echoes many concepts present in the Gospels, including the assertion in John 1:9 that Christ's coming into the world was the birth of the 'true light' ('*erat lux vera...*'). In later Byzantine churches of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Christ's codex is typically inscribed with the related words of John 8:12, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'.⁵⁷⁵ These texts, activated in the Eufrasiana mosaic by the gesture of speech made by Christ, would have been reinforced by the readings of these particular Gospel passages during the liturgy.⁵⁷⁶

However, while the inscribed codices at Ravenna and Poreč are sixth-century examples of a textuality which became traditional in later centuries, codices held by Christ display many different texts in the period before Iconoclasm. In the apse of San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna, His codex quoted part of the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for God will show (them) mercy' ('*Beati misericordes, quoniam miserabitur Deus*').⁵⁷⁷ Text and codex took on an additional

⁵⁷² *Supra* n. 304, 397 for bibliography.

⁵⁷³ This phrase was also used as an anti-Arian slogan: see p. 121.

⁵⁷⁴ *Supra* n. 398. Although the mosaic has been restored, the inscribed text is recorded in pre-restoration drawings: Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 176-8.

⁵⁷⁵ Nelson, 'Image', 108-9.

⁵⁷⁶ On references to light in the liturgy, *supra* p. 91, n. 290.

⁵⁷⁷ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt, Kommentar 1. Teil*, 108ff; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 68-70, 329 n. 160, who points out that the text is from the *Biblia Itala* rather than the Vulgate Bible.

significance in the mosaic, as twelve additional codices appeared around Christ. This iconography is unique and continues to confuse scholars, but appears to be a substitution of generic sign (book) for figure (apostle) (Fig. 3.38). While these codices were represented as closed, they could also be read in light of the eschatological symbolism of the open codex held by St. Victor in the dome mosaic of San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro at Sant' Ambrogio in Milan, which is inscribed with his own name, 'VIC/TOR' (Fig. 3.39).⁵⁷⁸ As the bust of the saint appears within a jewelled wreath or *corona*, representing the triumphal crown awarded to martyrs, and against a gold background, scholars have interpreted the codex as the Book of Life described in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 20:11-15). The codex names Victor as one who is guaranteed salvation because of his deeds and his martyrdom, and thus transforms the saint into a model for all those who wish to be saved themselves.⁵⁷⁹

The apse mosaic of the small church of San Michele in Africisco (545), originally in Ravenna and now in the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (Bode Museum) in Berlin, also presents Christ speaking through his codex: on the left page, 'He who has seen me has also seen the Father' ('+ *Qui vi/dit me / vidit et / patrem*') (John 14:9); and on the right, 'I and the Father are one' ('*Ego et / pater / unum / sumus*') (John 10:30) (Fig. 3.40).⁵⁸⁰ While the mosaic as it exists today is a nineteenth-century reconstruction, the work was produced based upon drawings of the sixth-century original

⁵⁷⁸ Also known as the Chapel of the Golden Heaven: G. Mackie, 'Symbolism and Purpose in an Early Christian Martyr Chapel: The Case of San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan', *Gesta*, XXXIV, 2 (1995), 91-101, who points out the play on words: the saint, named Victor, is a victor, as he has triumphed over death through martyrdom; idem, *Chapels*, 116-29. On late fourth- and fifth-century Milan in general, N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian capital* (Berkeley, 1994).

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 229.

⁵⁸⁰ Deichmann, *Ravenna*. Bd. 1, 220; Ibid., Bd. 2, *Kommentar 2. Teil*, 38-9; A. Effenberger, *Das Mosaik aus der Kirche San Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna: Ein Kunstwerk in der Frühchristlich-byzantinischen Sammlung* (Berlin, 1975), 29-40; and Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 250-4, who links the mosaic to the plague of 543.

made in the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵⁸¹ Though the style and some of the more minor details might be modern inventions, we must consider the possibility that the mosaic is based on a sixth-century original. The texts from the Gospel of John are not attested in contemporaneous church mosaics elsewhere, but were used by Chalcedonian Christians to defend Christ as *homoousios* with God, against heresies such as Arianism.⁵⁸² While these texts are quite polemical, they do fit the anti-Arian (and anti-Ostrogothic) climate in the city after it was reconquered by the Byzantines under Belisarius in 540.⁵⁸³ The central image, of a youthful, beardless Christ standing in a paradisiacal landscape, flanked by the archangels Gabriel and Michael, and holding an open codex inscribed with Trinitarian texts, parallels the doctrinal argument of the inscriptions, as Christ appears as a bearded adult enthroned in the mosaics of the triumphal arch, immediately above His image in the apse.⁵⁸⁴ Quite literally, the words of the open codex are transformed into images to be seen, so that the viewer observed Christ as both Christ and the Father.

Christ also could ‘speak’ the words of others. He sits enthroned in the seventh-century apse mosaic of the Pantocrator Church at Latmos, makes the gesture of speech with His right hand, and with His left holds a codex inscribed with the words of John 1:1, ‘In the beginning was the word (λόγος)’, textually emphasizing His own identity as

⁵⁸¹ On the mosaic as a creation of nineteenth-century restorers using antique tesserae, I. Andreescu-Treadgold, ‘The Wall Mosaics of San Michele in Africisco. Ravenna Rediscovered’, *Corso di cultura sull’arte ravennate e bizantina*, 37 (1990), 13-57; idem, ‘I mosaici antichi e quelli ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco: lo studio filologico’, in C. Spadoni (ed.), *San Michele in Africisco e l’età giustiniana a Ravenna: atti del Convegno “La diaspora dell’arcangelo, San Michele in Africisco e l’età giustiniana”*: *Giornate di studio in memoria di Giuseppe Bovini, Ravenna, Sala dei mosaici, 21-22 aprile 2005* (Milan, 2007), 113-50; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 252-3.

⁵⁸² Effenberger, 43-8; R. Sörries, *Die Bilder der Orthodoxen im Kampf gegen den Arianismus. Eine Apologie der orthodoxen Christologie und Trinitätslehre gegenüber der arianischen Häresie, dargestellt an den ravnatischen Mosaiken und Bildern des 6. Jahrhunderts; zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des germanischen Homöertums. Europäische Hochschulschriften*, 23, *Theologie*, 186 (Frankfurt, 1983), 226-43

⁵⁸³ For example, Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 254. On the Justinianic reconquest, *ibid.*, 204-6. A similar inscription, ‘You are said to be the Son and are found to be the Father’ (*‘Qui filius diceris et pater inveneris’*), runs around the arcosolium mosaic of Christ enthroned between Peter and Paul in the Catacomb of Domitilla: R. Giordani, ‘Probabili echi della crisi ariana in alcune figurazioni paleocristiane’, *RAC*, 54 (1978), 229-63, especially 238-50; Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni, *Christian catacombs*, 74-5, fig. 78

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 254; Effenberger, 60-4.

logos.⁵⁸⁵ In the apse of Chapel XVII of the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, painted at some point between the sixth and eighth centuries, Christ sits enthroned within a mandorla of light from which the four creatures of the Evangelists radiate, and holds an open codex in which is written, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ (Ἅγιος, / Ἄγιος, / Ἀγιος) (Fig. 3.41).⁵⁸⁶ This phrase was the basis of the popular Trisagion hymn (‘Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal....’), sung in the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and of St. James, Brother of Our Lord, and incorporated into the later Byzantine rite.⁵⁸⁷ The exact phrase is found in two epiphanic visions in the Old and New Testaments, including Isaiah 6:3 (‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory’) and Revelation 4:8 (‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come’). In the vision of Isaiah, the phrase is spoken by one of the six-winged seraphim who stand above the enthroned God (Isaiah 6:1-4), while in the vision of John described in Revelation, the Four Creatures surrounding the throne of God cry out the words continuously (Revelation 4:1-8).⁵⁸⁸ These Four Creatures, also symbols of the Four Evangelists, surround the throne of Christ in the Bawit apse. Rather than ‘speak’ his own words, Christ records His own praise spoken by the creatures. Through their performance of the Trisagion in the context of the liturgy in the chapel, the monks of Bawit would have interacted with the inscription, reading out a version of the text inscribed in the codex in praise of Christ and, in the

⁵⁸⁵ Ihm, *Programme*, 190-1.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 198-204; P. van Moorsel, ‘The Coptic Apse-Composition and its Living Creatures’, *Études nubiennes: colloque de Chantilly, 2-6 juillet 1975* (Cairo, 1978), 325-33. The same passage is inscribed on the standards held by the sixth-century mosaics of the archangels Michael and Gabriel on the lower zone of the triumphal arch of Sant’Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, restored in 1906-7: Deichmann, *Ravenna. Bd. 2, Kommentar 2. Teil*, 245, 262-4; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 266-7, 270; L. Abramowski, ‘Die Mosaiken von S. Vitale und S. Apollinare in Classe und die Kirchenpolitik Kaiser Justinians’, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, 5 (2001), 289-341. The same text was inscribed around the mandorla of Christ in the apse of the Pantokrator Church at Herakleia near Latmos: Ihm, *Programme*, 190-1.

⁵⁸⁷ Taft, *Great Entrance*, 225-7; R.J. Daly, *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), 76-7. The first part of the Trisagion also appears inscribed on Byzantine works of art, including a sixth-century processional cross from Syria, part of the Antioch Treasure, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 50.5.3: G. Downey, ‘A Processional Cross’, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 12, 9 (May 1954), 276-80; Mundell Mango, *Silver*, 192-7, cat. 42a-c.

⁵⁸⁸ The image of the four creatures is clearly based on the six-winged seraphim of Isaiah, as well as the four living creatures of the vision of Ezekiel 1:5-14.

process, preserving and re-enacting (or in this case, pre-emptively acting out) the continuous praise-song of the Four Creatures.⁵⁸⁹

Additionally, saints occasionally hold inscribed books whose texts related to the liturgy, although these inscriptions functioned differently than those of Christ's book. On the triumphal arch mosaic of San Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome, the saints Lawrence and Stephen appear to either side of the central tableau of Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul, and hold open codices which are inscribed with texts from the Psalms (Fig. 3.42).⁵⁹⁰ The titular saint of the church, Lawrence, wears a golden toga and is connected iconographically to Christ through the processional cross he holds in the same hand as his book, which quotes Psalm 112 (111):9: 'He [God] has distributed; He has given to the poor' (*Dis/per/sit dedit / pau/peri/bus*). This text transfers the Old Testament praise to the saint, reminding the reader of his refusal to turn over the riches of the Church to the urban prefect of Rome in the mid-third century. Instead of presenting money, silver and gold to the prefect, Lawrence distributed and gave (*dispersit, dedit*) the earthly wealth to the poor, and presented the poor to the prefect as the true treasures of the Church.⁵⁹¹ The text inscribed within the saint's codex reminds the reader of his life, although it reads his deeds through the lens of the Psalm rather than through the text of his *Vita*. Additionally, the remainder of Psalm 112, with its references to righteousness (Psalm 112:3-4, 6, 9), the 'wealth and riches' of God's 'house', that is, His church (Psalm 112:3), as well as light, which 'dawns in the darkness for the upright' (*Ortum est in tenebris lumen iustis*, Psalm

⁵⁸⁹ The Trisagion was often inscribed in both apotropaic and funerary contexts: W.K. Prentice, 'Fragments of an Early Christian Liturgy in Syrian Inscriptions', *TAPA*, 33 (1902), 81-100; J.W. Day, 'Toward a Pragmatic of Archaic and Paleochristian Greek Inscriptions', in D. Kries and C. Brown Tkacz (eds.), *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter, S.J.* (New York, 1999), 243-58, especially 248-51.

⁵⁹⁰ *Supra* n. 385 for bibliography.

⁵⁹¹ *Passio Sancti Laurentii*, ed. H. Delehay, 'Passio Polychronii', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 51 (1933), 34-98. Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 138-41, points out that Prudentius also focuses on this part of the saint's *passio*: *Peristephanon* 93-108, 125-3, 139-40; also C. Conybeare, 'The Ambiguous Laughter of St. Lawrence', *JECS*, 10, 2 (Summer 2002), 174-202, on the numerous verse versions of his life.

112:4), links the good deeds of the righteous Lawrence to the brightness of the sanctuary, emphasized by the two other inscriptions of the mosaic (discussed in Chapter Two).⁵⁹²

On the other side of Christ, St. Stephen holds a codex in his left hand, inscribed with the words of Psalm 63 (62):8: 'My soul clings (to you [God])' (*A/d(h)e/sit / a/ni/ma / me/a*).⁵⁹³ With his right hand, the saint 'speaks' these words, addressing the Psalm to Christ in the centre of the mosaic as well as to the viewer, at whom he looks directly. However, this text does not work in the same way as Lawrence's text, as it does not directly connect to the life of the saint, most famous for his status as the first martyr who was executed as a heretic by the Sanhedrin of the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 6-7).⁵⁹⁴ Rather than evoking something particular about the saint who 'speaks' it, the text inscribes the incipit of the antiphon texts used for both Stephen and Lawrence, which would have been recited by the presiding priest to introduce the specific veneration of both saints as early as the fifth century.⁵⁹⁵ The programme thus props up the authority of the presiding priest as activator, putting the words of the saint directly into the mouth of the celebrant, or vice-versa.⁵⁹⁶

Labelling Christian present and 'pagan' past

a. Naming and orthodoxy

As we have already seen, narrative and iconic scenes appeared on the floors, walls and apses of early churches and chapels both east and west, and frequently were composed

⁵⁹² See pp. 117-8.

⁵⁹³ Oakeshott, 145, misreads this text as a reference to Acts 7:59, 'A de [SC. ad Deum?] sit anima mea'.

⁵⁹⁴ Stephen's vision of God and Christ as described in Acts 7:54-56 is interesting, however, particularly as it interacts with the *maiestas domini* composition of the central tableau of the San Lorenzo mosaic.

⁵⁹⁵ R.-J. Hesbert, *Corpus antiphonarium officii. Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, Series maior, Fontes*, 7-12 (Rome, 1963-79), iii, nos. 1271-2; also P. Jeffrey, 'Monastic Reading and the Emerging Roman Chant Repertory', in S. Gallagher, J. Haar, J. Nádas and T. Striplin (eds.), *Western Plainchant in the First Millennium: Studies in the Medieval Liturgy and its Music* (Aldershot, 2003), 45-104, especially n. 116, who cites the writings of Arnobius the Younger.

⁵⁹⁶ A similar use of text occurs in the now-lost frescoes of La Daurade, in Toulouse, where Christ held a codex inscribed with the blessing of peace, 'Peace be with you': H. Woodruff, 'The Iconography and Date of the Mosaics of La Daurade', *AB*, 13, 1 (March 1931), 80-104.

without accompanying text (either poetic *tituli* or quotation) to help shape viewers' responses. Similarly, many figures both Christian and classical appear without name labels, ensuring that viewers had to rely upon iconographic clues in order to identify figures correctly. The issue of naming mythological figures in classical art was commented upon as early as the fourth century BCE, when Aristotle claimed of ancient works of art that 'one could not recognise what each thing was unless someone had inscribed it'.⁵⁹⁷ Some artworks from Graeco-Roman antiquity appear to bear out Aristotle's remark, including the François Vase and the (non-extant) Chest of Cypselus, the latter a votive cedar chest with meticulously labelled mythological scenes in gold and ivory described by Pausanias during his detailed recounting of the things he saw at Olympia.⁵⁹⁸ Of course, Aristotle was exaggerating, as many figures in Graeco-Roman works of art are not named. Hellenistic and Roman mosaics frequently lack name labels, although different regions had different conventions in terms of inscribing the names of figures.⁵⁹⁹ By the beginning of the sixth century, almost all non-Christian figures depicted in churches were labelled, especially personifications of rivers (including the four rivers of Paradise),⁶⁰⁰ months, seasons and the earth and ocean.⁶⁰¹ This fixation with labelling 'pagan' or classical figures can be credited to several factors, including an enhanced interest among patrons in the public display of *paideia* in the period.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 140a, 21-2; on this passage, Squire, *Image*, 151.

⁵⁹⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece (Hellados Periegesis)* 5.17.5-5.19.10. On this passage, Squire, *Image*, 150-1, with additional bibliography.

⁵⁹⁹ Leader-Newby, 'Personifications', 231-46; idem, 'Inscribed mosaics'.

⁶⁰⁰ For examples, H. Maguire, 'The Nile and the Rivers of Paradise', in Piccirillo and Alliata, *Madaba Map*, 179-84; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 180-2.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 179-98, 230-1.

⁶⁰² Leader-Newby, 'Personifications'. This fixation on naming the 'pagan' in monumental Christian art is the inverse of the situation in the Middle Byzantine period, when classical figures on secular artworks such as ivory caskets are always left anonymous in order to break the potentially dangerous link between image and prototype: Dauterman Maguire and Maguire, 160-7; H. Maguire, 'Validation and Disruption: the Binding and Severing of Text and Image in Byzantium', in Krause and Schellewald, *Bild und Text*, 267-81, especially 275ff.

The inconsistency with which Christian figures were labelled is striking when read against this backdrop of the labels of ‘pagan’ figures in churches, as well as when compared to Byzantine art produced after Iconoclasm, in which labels, especially the *nomina sacra*, for Christ (IC XC), the Virgin (MP ΘV), and saints were compulsory in order to cement the link between image and prototype, lest worshippers be led astray and venerate the image instead of the figure represented.⁶⁰³ The practice of labelling Christ and other holy figures was first codified in the iconophile Second Council of Nicaea (the Seventh Ecumenical Council) in 787: ‘The image resembles the prototype not with regard to essence, but only with regard to the name and to the position of the members which can be characterized’.⁶⁰⁴

Names were a useful and powerful feature of earlier Christian art as well, used to identify holy figures.⁶⁰⁵ Both of these functions were noted by early Christian authors and clerics, including Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, who proclaimed in the fourth century that he could tell images of the apostles Peter, John and Paul in churches through ‘...the inscription (τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν) of each of these false images...’.⁶⁰⁶ Epiphanius needed these figures to be inscribed in order to make his polemic against figural images work, as the

⁶⁰³ On *nomina sacra*, most of which probably originated in Jerusalem in the first century CE, L. Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der christlichen Kürzung* (Darmstadt, 1907); A.H.R.E. Paap, *Nomina Sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries A.D.: The Sources and Some Deductions*. *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batavia*, 8 (Leiden, 1959); C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, society and belief in early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979), 26-48; Hurtado, 95-134. On the non-verbal functions of labels, Cutler, ‘Image of the Word’.

⁶⁰⁴ J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence & Venice, 1759-98), xiii, col. 244 B; on this issue, H. Maguire, *Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1996), 101ff; K. Boston, ‘The Power of Images and the Trouble with Texts’, in Eastmond and James, *Icon and Word*, 35-57, who argues that labels of Christ served not to link icon to prototype but to unite the two natures, divine and human, of Christ into one image; Maguire, ‘Validation’, 275ff; Nelson, ‘Image’, 101. This idea of the link between image and prototype was already present in the fourth century, as articulated by Paulinus in his *Carmen* 27.511-5, ed. Hartel, 285: ‘The man who looks at these and acknowledges the truth (*vera*) within these empty figures (*vacuis figuris*) nurtures his believing mind with an image which for him is not empty’; on this passage, Elsner, *Roman Viewer*, 249.

⁶⁰⁵ On the various potential functions of names, B. Kiilerich, ‘A che cosa serve un nome? What’s in a name? The meaning of name inscriptions in Byzantine art’, in A. Carlo Quintavalle (ed.), *Medioevo: immagine e racconto. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi Parma, 27-30 settembre 2000* (Parma, 2003), 87-95.

⁶⁰⁶ G. Ostrogorsky (ed.), *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bildestreites* (Amsterdam, 1964), 68-9, trans. Mango, *Art*, 41.

presence of the saints' names proves (for him) the fact that human works cannot and should not represent the holy. Though he uses inscriptions to argue against the 'authenticity' of images, his polemic in fact proves that name labels could and did 'work' to identify pictures of saints.

Name inscriptions also acted as seals of divine approval, guaranteeing the authenticity of the images of holy individuals. A seventh- or early eighth-century version of the *Life of St. Procopius* inserts an interesting episode into an earlier version of the *Life*, in which the saint as a young pagan military officer commissions a gold-and-silver cross from a silversmith after he has a divine vision on his way from Jerusalem to Alexandria.⁶⁰⁷ After the cross is finished, the images of Christ and the archangels Michael and Gabriel appear on three of its arms, each labelled, Christ as 'Emmanuel', 'Michael' and 'Gabriel', in 'the Hebrew dialect' (εἰκόνες γραφαῖς ὀνομάτων...τῇ ἑβραϊδὶ διάλεκτῳ) rather than in Greek.⁶⁰⁸ Both the silversmith and Procopius are confused by this state of affairs:

Becoming suspicious, Mark [the silversmith] tried to erase them [the figures], but was unable to do so, for his hand was paralysed. When the cock had crowed, the *dux* Neanias [Procopius] came to Mark's house to take the cross, and when he saw it, he did obeisance to it and said to Mark, 'What are these figures, and what is the inscription?' He answered, 'Sir, at the time when the work was finished, these three images appeared, and I do not know whose they are or what the inscription is'.⁶⁰⁹

This miraculous cross with its three holy images (*eikones*) stuns Procopius, as he recognizes the power of the object and kneels in veneration (*proskynesis*) before paying the silversmith and going on his way. The cross then proceeds to assist the saint in defeating a group of thousands of 'Hagarenes' (Arabs), at which point Procopius finally

⁶⁰⁷ *Passio Sancti Procopii* 4, ed. A. Papadoupoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta Hierosolymitikês stachyologias* (St. Petersburg, 1898), v, 5ff, trans. Mango, *Art*, 144-5; also see H. Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris, 1909), 82ff, trans. as *The Legends of the Saints* (South Bend, IN, 1962), 108ff. The vision of the cross which Procopius has replicates Constantine's vision of the True Cross as reported by Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.26-31. Interestingly, the *Passio* quotes Eusebius' account when stating that Procopius heard the voice of God telling him, 'Under this sign you will conquer', an appropriate borrowing for the life of the military saint.

⁶⁰⁸ *Passio Sancti Procopii* 4, ed. Papadoupoulos-Kerameus, 6.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4, trans. Mango, *Art*, 144-5.

decides to convert to Christianity, breaking his mother's figures of the household gods, and in a moment of charitable inversion, donating the silver and gold of which they were made to the poor.⁶¹⁰ More significantly, this very episode of images not created by human hands (*acheiropoieta*), quoted by defenders of icons at Nicaea in 787, confirmed for Byzantines the authenticating power of language and inscription.⁶¹¹ For these inscriptions to authenticate the images as *acheiropoieta*, the saint and the silversmith must recognize the language in which they are written but not be able to read them, thus proving that the portraits are not human forgeries. The inscribed images of Christ and the Archangels work in similar ways to images of prophets or personifications holding scrolls on which pseudo-text is inscribed, as at Santa Sabina, although they possess the extra charge of being divinely created.

In addition to its power as symbol, the language of name inscriptions was also a practical issue for the late antique viewer,⁶¹² most visible in decorative programmes from the eastern provinces in which a larger number of languages were spoken. The painters and/or donors of the sixth-century wall-painting of Saints Cosmas, Damian and other saints from a building (possibly a house) at Wadi Sarga in Egypt might have had similar issues in mind when they chose to label the doctor-saints and their brothers in Greek rather than the Coptic of the (earlier?) painted dedicatory inscription (Fig. 3.43).⁶¹³ Name labels of figures in Christian mosaics tend to be given in the status language of the region—Latin in the west, Greek in the east—even in cases where other church inscriptions, usually prayers or invocations in Aramaic or Syriac, demonstrate that communities were speaking

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁶¹¹ Mansi, 13, 89.

⁶¹² On issues of language, especially in the eastern provinces, Cotton et al., *From Hellenism to Islam*.

⁶¹³ Now in the British Museum, inv. no. EA73139; O.M. Dalton, 'A Coptic Wall-Painting from Wadi Sarga', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 3, 1 (January 1916), 35-7, with figs. Even if the patrons who commissioned the work read both Coptic and Greek, the choice of each language was still presumably a choice rather than an unconscious act: Bagnall, *Egypt*, 230-60; idem, *Everyday Writing*, 75-94.

other languages in their daily lives.⁶¹⁴ Name labels in synagogue mosaics are typically in Hebrew (as at Sepphoris or Beth Alpha) rather than Greek, although Jewish dedicatory inscriptions are more frequently in Greek, presenting a complex picture of the multilingual code-switching of eastern Jews under Byzantine rule which accords with that of the textual and archaeological evidence.⁶¹⁵ In the Sepphoris synagogue alone, inscriptions are written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Aramaic.⁶¹⁶

But how do these accounts of the functions of names and naming match up with the images of early churches? While many mosaics featured unnamed saints, some churches were decorated with named New and Old Testament figures, including the church of La Daurade in Toulouse, whose dome was adorned with mosaics in which figures depicted on a gold background featured simple name labels inscribed in Latin near their heads (although Christ was named ‘Saviour’, *Salvator*);⁶¹⁷ and the painted narrative cycle decorating the domes of many of the chapels in the necropolis of el-Bagawat in the Kharga Oasis in Egypt, including the Chapels of the Exodus (fourth century?) (Fig. 3.44) and of Peace (sixth century), both of which feature Old and New Testament scenes with figures labelled in Greek (although in the latter chapel the names are placed inside a circular red band at the top of the main zone of figural decoration, instead of next to or immediately above the figures’ heads).⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁴ S. Brock, ‘Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria’, in Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*, 149-60; W. Ameling, ‘The epigraphic habit and the Jewish diasporas of Asia Minor and Syria’, in Cotton et al., *From Hellenism*, 203-34.

⁶¹⁵ On synagogue inscriptions, *supra* n. 41. There are of course exceptions, as in the Noah scene in the vestibule of the synagogue at Jerash, where Noah’s sons Shem and Japhet are named in Greek: Sukenik, 55-6; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 220; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 65-7.

⁶¹⁶ *Supra* n. 516.

⁶¹⁷ *Supra* n. 596.

⁶¹⁸ Some of these labels reflect Coptic influence: M. Martin, ‘Observations on the paintings of the Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis, Kharga Oasis, Egypt’, in J. Burke et al. (eds.), *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott. Byzantina Australiensia*, 16 (Melbourne, 2006), 233-56. On the two chapels, also H. Stern, ‘Les peintures du mausolée “de l’Exode” à El-Bagaouat’, *CA*, 11 (1960), 93-120; M.L. Thérél, ‘La Composition et le symbolisme de l’iconographie du mausolée de l’Exode à el-Bagawat’, *RAC*, 45 (1969), 223-70; M. Zibawi, *Bagawat: Peintures paléochrétiennes d’Égypte* (Milan, 2005); G. Cipriano, *El-Bagawat. Un cimitero paleocristiano nell’alto Egitto. Pontificia Accademia Cultorum Martyrum, Ricerche di Archeologia e Antichità Cristiane*, 3 (Todi, 2008). Other contemporaneous programs which feature named

In fact, Old Testament figures are often named for clarity in monumental mosaics, for example the busts of Moses and Elijah, labelled in Greek written in Latin script, the latter's name awkwardly spelled, in the apse of Sant'Apollinare in Classe (c. 549) (Figs. 3.45-46);⁶¹⁹ or the same two prophets who stand on either side of the Transfiguration scene in the apse of the *katholicon* of the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai.⁶²⁰ Old Testament figures in Christian mosaic pavements tend to be named, including Adam (ΑΔΑΜ), in three mosaics from Syria;⁶²¹ and Noah, whose ark is labelled 'the ark of Noah' (κιβωτός Νωε ...) at Misis-Mopsuestia (discussed previously) and who is labelled in person in the south transept of the sixth-century East Church at Apollonia in Cyrenaica (modern Libya).⁶²² Jonah also appears named in Greek ('ΙΩΝΑΣ') in the north aisle pavement of the sixth-century church at Mahtat al-Urdi (Beth Guvrin) in Palestine (Fig. 3.47),⁶²³ and in Latin ('Ionas') in the central choir pavement of the basilica at Bordj el-Ioudi in Tunisia, where he appears with the whale (*cetus*).⁶²⁴

saints include the painted cycles of the chapels and cells of the Monastery of St. Apollo at Bawit, also in Egypt: J. Clédat, *Le monastère et nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo, 1904-116), i-ii; Ihm, *Programme*, 198-205; and the wall-painting of saints at Caesarea Maritima in Palestine: T. Avner, 'Early Byzantine wall-paintings from Caesarea', in K.G. Holum, A. Raban, and J. Patrik (eds.), *Caesarea Papers 2: Herod's Temple, The Provincial Governor's Praetorium and Granaries, the Later Harbor, a Gold Coin Hoard, and Other Studies. JRA Supplementary Series*, 35 (1999), 109-28.

⁶¹⁹ Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt, Kommentar 2. Teil*, 266; Ihm, *Programme*, 165-7; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 265-74.

⁶²⁰ G.H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1965); for the inscriptions, Ševčenko, 'Early Period', 255-64. However, prophets are not always named, for example the two prophets in the apse mosaic of Hosios David, see pp. 162-3 above.

⁶²¹ Examples include the mosaics of Adam naming the animals in the North Church at Huarte and two panels of Adam enthroned, now in the Copenhagen and Hama Museums, the latter of which features Adam named both in Greek and Syriac: Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 104-5 fig. 71, 112-3 figs. 78-9; Maguire, 'Adam', 363-73. Adam and Eve are also depicted with name labels on the nave pavement of a mid-sixth century basilica at Santa Maria del Camí in Spain, along with two scenes from the life of Joseph where he and his brother Judas are named: J. Gómez Pallarès, *Epigrafía cristiana sobre mosaico de Hispania. Opuscula Epigraphica*, 9 (Rome, 2002), 62-4, PM 3, Pl. XIV.

⁶²² J.M. Reynolds, 'The Christian Inscriptions of Cyrenaica', *JTS*, 11 (1960), 284-94, especially 288, no. 9; J. and L. Robert, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG*, 74 (1961), no. 835; J.M. Reynolds, 'Inscriptions on the Christian Mosaics of Cyrenaica', in Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 150.

⁶²³ D.C. Baramki, 'A Byzantine Church at Mahtat el Urdi, Beit Jibrin', *LA*, 22 (1972), 130-52; R. Ovadia, 'Jonah in a Mosaic Pavement at Beth Govrin', *IEJ*, 24 (1974), 214-5; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 91-2.

⁶²⁴ Gauckler, *Inventaire*, ii, 173-5; *CIL VIII, Add.*, 25809.

b. Saints and their names

Saints were also named for the purposes of identification and authentication, for example the cycle of bust portraits of female saints, some relatively obscure, along the underside of the triumphal arch of the Basilica Euphrasiana at Poreč/Parenzo.⁶²⁵ But the inscribed names of saints also had functions beyond the verbal. Names could visually structure mosaics, equalize saints, or give precedence to one holy figure over another. As with the inscriptions which quote portions of the story of Samson at Misis-Mopsuestia, the names of saints could act to establish a regularized visual structure and directionality for the viewer.⁶²⁶ Visible, legible names structured sequences of images of figures, particularizing individual saints while ensuring epigraphic equality so that each saint, no matter how famous or locally important, was framed by an identically-formulated inscription. At Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, the processions of twenty-two female and twenty-six male martyrs on the north and sides of the walls are labelled in black tesserae, creating two continuous lines of text above the processions that run from St. Eugenia towards the apse on the north wall, and from St. Martin towards the exit on the south wall (Figs. 3.48-9).⁶²⁷ Each name label begins with an incipit cross (except for those of Eugenia, the first female saint, and Martin the last—or easternmost—male saint) which visually divides the names in much the same way as the palm trees immediately below frame the images of the saints.⁶²⁸ The saints are labelled with the standard abbreviated male or female forms of the title 'Saint' (SCĀ, 'Sancta', or SCŚ, 'Sanctus') followed by their full names, ensuring that while their order in procession might have revealed their

⁶²⁵ Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 133, figs. 84-5.

⁶²⁶ *Supra* pp. 143-5.

⁶²⁷ O. Von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Princeton, 1948), 81-110; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 164-71; Yasin, *Saints*, 202-4, 258-60.

⁶²⁸ Incipit crosses were common epigraphic markers used as punctuation: J. Durliat, 'Épigraphie chrétienne de langue latine', in Cavallo and Mango, *Epigrafia Medievale*, 227-66, especially 240-3, Tables 1-2. However, it is also possible they were something more in the context of Christian spaces of worship, encouraging congregants to assume the position of prayer or to cross themselves: G. Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2005), 13-26.

relative positions in the hierarchy, the content and display of their names did not.⁶²⁹ Ann Marie Yasin has argued that these particular saints were chosen because their names were read out during the liturgy and contextualized the place of the local community of worshippers by situating their saints (Apollinaris and Vitalis, among others) within the global collection of martyrs.⁶³⁰ If this was the case, the celebration of the liturgy itself would have activated the inscribed texts, also encouraging the congregation to look at each saint in order, moving around the nave and engaging with each figure. Though the names run in different directions on the two nave walls, they are consistently inscribed from left to right, the direction with which readers of Latin would have been most familiar. This ordering of text means that on the south (right) wall, the names of the male martyrs run towards the exit, the opposite direction to that of their procession, preserving the consistency of the roughly-symmetrical iconographic programme (both processions run in the same direction, towards the apse) while creating a tension between portraits and names, ensuring viewers would notice the latter (Fig. 3.50). By deliberately and aggressively naming the saints, who were themselves plastered on top of an earlier programme commissioned by the previous Gothic ruler of the city, Theodoric, the archbishop of Ravenna, Maximianus, was able to cleanse the church of any Arian (or non-

⁶²⁹ Names were used to equalize in much the same way in Hagios Georgios (the Rotunda) at Thessaloniki, where the late fourth- or fifth-century male saints in the dome were labelled with their names, professions and feast dates (also their dates of martyrdom): the inscriptions are Feissel, *Recueil*, 103-10. On the programme, E. Weigand, 'Der Kalendarfries von Hagios Georgios in Thessaloniki', *BZ*, 39 (1939), 116-45; M. Sotiriou, 'Sur quelques problèmes de l'iconographie de la coupole de Saint-Georges de Thessalonique', in *Acta Congressus Madvigiani Hafniae MDMLIV. Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Classical Studies* (Copenhagen, 1957-8), 1, 218-30; W.E. Kleinbauer, 'The Iconography and Date of the Mosaics of the Rotunda of Hagios Georgios, Thessaloniki', *Viator*, 3 (1972), 27-108; idem, 'The Orants in the Mosaic Decoration of the Rotunda at Thessaloniki: Martyr Saints or Donors?', *CA*, 30 (1982), 25-45, who argues that the figures are images of donors who paid for the mosaic, although this seems unlikely; J. Kurth, 'Die Mosaïkinschriften von Salonik', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*, 22 (1987), 470-2; B. Kiilerich, 'Picturing Ideal Beauty: The Saints in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki', *AT*, 15 (2007), 321-36; L. Salah Nasrallah, 'Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda', *JECS*, 13, 4 (Winter 2005), 465-508, especially 484-91; and recently, H. Torp, 'An Interpretation of the Early Byzantine Martyr Inscriptions in the Mosaics of the Rotunda at Thessaloniki', *Acta ad archaeologiam*, 24, n.s. 10 (2011), 11-44, who attempts to clarify the saints' identities and connect them to the geography of the empire.

⁶³⁰ Yasin, *Saints*, 258-9. On the registers of saints' names read out during the liturgy in Rome and Milan, V.L. Kennedy, *Saints of the Canon of the Mass. Studi di Antichità Christiana*, 14 (Vatican City, 1938), 67-9.

Byzantine) influence and to differentiate his saints from the unnamed saints and/or prophets in the zone immediately above.⁶³¹

Images of holy figures in different pictorial formats were also named, especially bust-length portraits of saints in circular medallions, which feature inscribed names either inside the medallion, as in the apses of the Sinai church and the Panagia Kanakariá at Lykanthromi in Cyprus (Fig. 3.51),⁶³² and on the soffit of the triumphal arch of San Vitale, in Ravenna (Fig. 3.52); or immediately above, as on the soffit of the arch of the Basilica Euphrasiana (Fig. 3.53).⁶³³ This format, derived from the Roman *clipeus* portrait, was most likely first deployed in a monumental Christian context in Old St. Peter's in Rome.⁶³⁴ Sequences of bust portraits organized saints into visual sets which functioned spatially and architectonically to separate the sanctuary from the more public areas of the church, especially the nave, and to construct hierarchies of saints which inevitably culminate at the apex of the cycle in Christ.⁶³⁵ The names of saints were inscribed in similar ways east and west, featuring the name in the nominative case occasionally preceded by the title 'saint' (Ἅγιος or Ἁγία in Greek; 'Sanctus' or 'Sancta' in Latin), usually abbreviated (Ο'Η ΑΓ or ΣCΣ / ΣCΑ), although the title is absent from earlier programmes in eastern churches, including at Sinai and in the Panagia Kanakariá.

However, eastern and western names were inscribed differently. As at Sant'Apollinare

⁶³¹ This 'Orthodox'/Theodoric division between naming and leaving figures anonymous is also visible in the Orthodox (Neonian) and Arian Baptisteries in Ravenna, where the personified river Jordan is named in the former, earlier monument (JORDANES) but left anonymous in the 'Arian' Baptistry: Kiilerich, 'What's in a name?', 88. On these baptisteries, also Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, 88-100 (Orthodox Baptistry), 177-87 (Arian Baptistry), with previous bibliography. On the Byzantine modifications to the church, A. Urbano, 'Donation, Dedication, and *Damnatio Memoriae*: The Catholic Reconciliation of Ravenna and the Church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo', *JECS*, 13, 1(Spring 2005), 71-110.

⁶³² Ihm, *Programme*, 188-9; A.H.S. Megaw and E.J.W. Hawkins, *The Church of the Panagia Kanakariá at Lykanthromi in Cyprus: Its Mosaics and Frescoes* (Washington, D.C., 1977), 81-5.

⁶³³ Not all cycles of busts of saints in medallions were labelled, including the program of the triumphal arch at Santa Sabina (c. 430): Ihm, *Programme*, 151-3. On the *clipeus* generally, J. Bolton, *Die imago Clipeata, ein Beitrag zur Portrait-und Typengeschichte* (Paderborn, 1937), 38-55, 61-8; Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 73-4; R. Winkes, *Clipeata imago: Studien zu einer römischen Bildnisform* (Bonn, 1969); Mathews, *Clash*, 117.

⁶³⁴ *Supra* n. 551.

⁶³⁵ Yasin, *Saints*, 260-71.

Nuovo, the names of the saints in San Vitale run from left to right in single lines, creating horizontal axes which counterbalance the verticality of their portraits. However, in eastern contexts, the name labels of the saints, as in the Sinai church, were written vertically, starting from the upper left, running downwards and then jumping to the right side of the portraits. While labels in western churches in Italy and Croatia serve to visually balance the portraits of saints, in eastern churches they work with rather than against images, allowing the viewer to read inscribed names in the same way as he or she read the corresponding images.

While names could equalize and structure the viewing of images of saints, inscriptions equally particularized and promoted saints by focussing visual attention on them. In the apse mosaic of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome, the only named figure is the titular saint herself, Agnes (S(an)c(ta) Agnes), highlighting her image and her presence in the church (Fig. 3.54).⁶³⁶ Her title and name, written in the same dark blue tesserae which make up the band of sky immediately above, as well as the background of the dedicatory inscription below, appear centred above her head, strengthening the central vertical axis from the Hand of God descending from Heaven to offer a wreath as a martyr's crown to the figure of the saint herself.

In certain cases, names of saints even more tightly unified iconography and symbolism. The apse mosaic of Sant'Apollinare in Classe depicts the named titular saint, Apollinaris, as an orant venerating a central jewelled cross with its miniature central bust of Christ (Fig. 3.55).⁶³⁷ Within the star-filled mandorla nimbing the cross, Christ is named three times: twice by popular Greek *nomina sacra*, including the acrostic IXΘΥΣ (literally 'fish', standing for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour') on top of the cross,⁶³⁸ and the

⁶³⁶ *Supra* n. 295.

⁶³⁷ *Supra* n. 98; also Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt, Kommentar 2. Teil*, 254-6.

⁶³⁸ This acrostic is popular across media and region, and also appears on floor mosaics, as in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem: Kitzinger, 'Threshold'.

letters *alpha* and *omega* to either side;⁶³⁹ and once by the Latin phrase *Salus Mundi*, ‘salvation of the world’, immediately below the vertical arm of the cross.⁶⁴⁰ All three ‘names’ are written in silver tesserae to stand out against the blue mandorla, and all emphasize His origins, death, resurrection, and Second Coming (Revelation 1:8, 22:13). Importantly, the monumental cross with its three labels recalls Eusebius’ description of the ‘cross of light’ seen by Constantine before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, inscribed with the words ‘By this [sign] conquer’ (ἐν τούτῳ νίκα), as well as the jewelled standard inspired by the vision, itself inscribed with one of the *nomina sacra*, the Chi-Rho.⁶⁴¹ However, while all three texts were powerful symbols and would have extended the interpretative range of the image, especially its theological (and eschatological) implications, Christ’s names are much smaller and harder to read than the name of St. Apollinaris (+ *Sanctus Apolenaris*), writ large in black tesserae on either side of the saint’s head.⁶⁴² His name begins with a small cross, as do the names of the saints in Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, and the monumental cross above him as well as his orant stance unify the programme, amplifying the viewer’s response to his likeness. The linkage of cross, inscription, and image of the saint thus encourages the viewer to channel the remembrance of Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection, and thus one’s own hope for future salvation, through the person of the titular saint of the church.⁶⁴³ At Classe, the inscribed name of the saint fixes his identity, but also brings together the saint and Christ, promoting his role as intercessor and pushing the viewer to respond via *imitatio sancti*, channeling responses to the form of the cross through the named body of the saint.

⁶³⁹ The *alpha* and *omega* emphasize God-Christ as both first and last; also Boston, ‘Inscriptions’, 38, who interprets the letters *alpha* and *omega* symbolically as ‘not a name, but a guarantee of salvation’.

⁶⁴⁰ On *nomina sacra*, *supra* n. 603. Christ was labelled similarly in the apse of Sant’Agata dei Goti in Rome: see *supra* n. 120 for bibliography.

⁶⁴¹ *Supra* n. 603. On the Chi-Rho and other staurograms, Hurtado, 135-54.

⁶⁴² Apollinaris’ title, *Sanctus*, is spelled out in full unlike those of the two sanctified bishops of Ravenna on the lower apse wall, whose sainthood is abbreviated (‘SCS’).

⁶⁴³ Peers, *Shock*, 27-34.

c. *The absence of names*

While names had purpose and power in late antique art, they did not appear next to all or even most images of Christian holy figures in either narrative or iconic representations.⁶⁴⁴ As has been noted, the figures in some of the earliest examples of Christian narrative art, in the baptistery at Dura Europos and the Roman Catacombs, lack name labels. Saints, prophets and figures in mosaics of both Old and New Testament scenes also frequently lack name inscriptions. While images of Jonah are named in the churches at Mahtat al-Urdi and Bordj el-Ioudi, he is not labelled in the pavement of the fourth-century south hall of the Complex of Bishop Theodore at Aquileia (Fig. 3.56).⁶⁴⁵ Daniel also goes unnamed in several mosaics in North Africa, including in a funerary chapel, at Bordj el-Ioudi, where he stands as a nude orant flanked by four lions (Fig. 3.57).⁶⁴⁶ In more elevated spaces, as on the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, the figures all lack names except Herod (*'Herodes'*) at the centre of the right side of the mosaic, focusing visual attention on his role in the narrative of Christ's life.⁶⁴⁷ At Santi Cosma e Damiano, the central figures of Christ, Peter, Paul and the titular saints of the church all lack name inscriptions, while the outermost figures, St. Theodore and the

⁶⁴⁴ On naming and absence, *supra* n. 604; and recently, P.L. Grotowski, 'Defining the Byzantine Saint—Creating a Message in Orthodox Art', in Grotowski and S. Skrzyniarz (eds.), *Towards rewriting? New approaches to Byzantine archaeology and art. Proceedings of the symposium on Byzantine Art and Archaeology, Cracow, September 8-10, 2008. Series Byzantina*, 8 (Warsaw, 2010), 133-58.

⁶⁴⁵ C. Cecchelli, 'Litostrati di Aquileia', *Memorie Storiche Forogiuliesi*, 18 (1922), 1-27; idem, 'Gli edifici e i mosaici cristiani nella zona della basilica', in *La basilica di Aquileia* (Bologna, 1933), 107-272; G.C. Menis, *Nuovi studi iconologici sui mosaici Teodoriani di Aquileia* (Udine, 1971), 21-6; C. Sotinel, *Identité civique et christianisme: Aquilée du IIIe au VIIe siècle* (Rome, 2005), 76ff; M. Stroumsa-Uzan, 'A Gesture to Constantine the Great', in Kogman-Appel and Meyer, 55-72.

⁶⁴⁶ The scene includes a funerary inscription which names the mosaic a *memoria* to the actor Blossus Honoratus: *CIL* VIII, Add., 25817; Gauckler, *Inventaire*, ii, no. 514, pp. 172-3; Dunbabin, *North Africa*, 191. However, Daniel is named in Hebrew in the pavements of synagogues at Khirbet Susiya and Na'aran ('Daniel, Shalom', turning label into acclamation): L.A. Roussin, 'The Iconography of the Figural Pavements of Early Byzantine Palestine' (Columbia University, unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, 1985), 189-90.

⁶⁴⁷ *Supra* n. 109.

donor of the church, Pope Felix, are named (Fig. 3.58).⁶⁴⁸ In the apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana (c. 400), Christ is surrounded by his apostles and personifications of the church, but none of the figures, including Christ himself, are named (Fig. 3.59).⁶⁴⁹ Similarly, the archangels Gabriel and Michael and the apostles Peter and Paul are frequently left without inscribed appellations, as in the Chapel of San Venanzio at the Lateran Baptistery, where every saint in the lower register of the apse mosaic is labelled except for the two apostles (Fig. 3.60).⁶⁵⁰

In examining these programmes and others, one struggles to find a reason for why some figures are named while others are left without labels. Evidentiary problems such as subsequent restoration only cloud the issue further. Scholars have proposed different functions for these nameless images, including expanding the potential meanings of particular figures⁶⁵¹ or transforming otherwise public images into private dedications to saints.⁶⁵² However, because of the relatively small number of monumental mosaic images of saints which survive, these theories are difficult to verify. Even accounting for individual cases is problematic. The anonymity of the three saints to the left of Christ in the apse mosaic in the Basilica Eufasianiana (Fig. 1.8), used by Henry Maguire as examples of private images in a public context, is especially puzzling because the saints so closely resemble each other in facial appearance, pose and dress, while their attributes are so generic as to be unhelpful (Fig. 3.61).⁶⁵³ These might be votive images meant to be understood by the donors alone, but the absence of identifying inscriptions supercharges

⁶⁴⁸ *Supra* n. 147. Felix's name label is the work of later restorers: Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali. Tavole*. The title 'Pope' (*Papa*) is anachronistic, as the leaders of the Roman church were called 'Bishops' (*Episcopi*) in the early church, as can be seen on the San Lorenzo mosaic. Felix also would not have been designated a 'Saint' in the original name inscription, as he was still alive when the apse mosaic was completed:

⁶⁴⁹ See bibliography *supra* n. 552.

⁶⁵⁰ Matthiae, *Mosaici*, i, 191-8; Oakeshott, 150-3. Peter and Paul also lack inscribed names at Santa Maria Maggiore, Santi Cosma e Damiano, and a number of other churches.

⁶⁵¹ Kiillerich, 'What's in a name?', 92-3, argues that the two Old Testament prophets in the apse mosaic of Hosios David are not named widens the potential meanings or implications of the image and allows the viewer to read the figures as (s)he wishes.

⁶⁵² Maguire, *Icons*; idem, 'Eufasius', 139-60.

⁶⁵³ Maguire, 'Eufasius'.

the impact of the individuals who are in the apse, the local saint (Maurus), Bishop Eufrasius and the two other donors, one a child. They are inscribed in order to memorialize them, but also to promote them as praiseworthy individuals who perform close relationships to the hometown saint and to Christ.⁶⁵⁴ While the absence of saints' names in the Basilica Euphrasiana is certainly intentional, this intentionality might stem instead from the visual concern for emphasis placed on particular figures. Absence is as complicated as presence, if not more so.

But what of Christ Himself? As we have already seen at Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Christ could be named by various *nomina sacra*, including symbolic acrostics (ΙΧΘΥΣ); the *alpha* and *omega*, or with phrases which encapsulated aspects of His life, death and resurrection on earth and His future return. Other *nomina* are attested from the early period, including *Salvator*, at La Daurade,⁶⁵⁵ and 'Emmanuel' (Ε[ΜΜΑ]ΝΟΥΗΛ), on an early seventh-century icon of Christ from Sinai.⁶⁵⁶ These sacred names and titles reminded the faithful of particular aspects of Christ's narrative, especially ones which could not easily be represented visually. However, Christ was most often depicted *sans* name or title in the period, in contrast to art produced after Iconoclasm, in which He is always named by one of his various *nomina sacra* (usually ΙC ΧC, 'Jesus Christ').⁶⁵⁷ Kiilerich has argued that visual anonymity was a way of avoiding the problem of naming the unnameable, hinted at in the vision of the Second Coming in Revelation: 'He (Christ) had a name written that no man knew, but He himself' (Revelation 19:12).⁶⁵⁸ In the same passage, though, the author reports the presence of inscriptions on Christ's *himation* and on his thigh (probably another portion of his *himation*) which read: 'King of Kings and

⁶⁵⁴ Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, i, 109-13.

⁶⁵⁵ See p. 176.

⁶⁵⁶ K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Icons, Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976), 41-2, cat. B16, Pl. XVIII; T.F. Mathews, 'Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai', in Nelson and Collins, 38-55, especially 45, 46 fig. 44.

⁶⁵⁷ Boston, 39-47.

⁶⁵⁸ ἔχων ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός; see Kiilerich, 'What's in a name?' 88.

Lord of Lords' (Revelation 19:16). These repeated inscriptions identify and authenticate the anonymous figure in the vision as Christ, just as other figures in John's vision bear names inscribed on their foreheads.⁶⁵⁹

In the vision, however, the labels on His garment were not necessary for identification, as John had already recognized Christ as Christ. This same ease of identification applied to the late antique Christian viewer in general. When Christ appears as a central figure in mosaic, He is typically not named because His iconography was so recognizable to contemporary audiences, even though it was inconsistent between regions and changed over time.⁶⁶⁰ The distinctive features (portrait types, attributes, dress, etc.) of different representations were significant and intentional, and perhaps signalled different emphases to different viewers, but the range of artistic conventions does appear to have been familiar even to less educated viewers.

Because images of Christ were recognizable as such, they did not need to be named to be identified. However, absence should not *only* be read as the opposite of presence. The absence of inscriptions could act to amplify the visual impact of inscribed text, but could also be read as tangible presence, especially when read against names which *are* present. This juxtaposition of absence and presence is especially visible in scenes of procession, as on the south wall of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, where Christ sits enthroned surrounded by angels at the end of the procession of named male martyrs,

⁶⁵⁹ Even the villains of the piece are named, including the first beast, which has 'blasphemous names on its [seven] heads' (Revelation 13:1). Interestingly, the first faithful to be saved, the 144,000 virgins, are recognized by John because they have been inscribed with the names of the Lamb (Christ) and the Father (God) 'on their foreheads' (Revelation 14:1).

⁶⁶⁰ Boston, 37-9 On the iconography of Christ, also Ihm, Programme, 5ff; Mathews, *Clash*, 98ff.; Spieser, 'Representation'; R. Cormack, *Icons* (London, 2007), 27-9. However, while the images themselves are clear evidence of this, the cautionary tale of the painter who made an icon of Christ which too closely resembled Zeus and was punished by God should remind us that the desire to fix a standard iconography of Christ also had its roots in late antiquity: the story is reported in the sixth century by Theodore the Reader, *Ecclesiastical History* and repeated by John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores* 3.130, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (Berlin/New York, 1975), iii, 196; also see Maguire, 'Validation', 277. The story ends with the painter being healed by the patriarch Gennadios, suggesting that this episode might have more to do with hagiographic tropes than a widespread concern with 'dangerous' images of Christ, at least among the general public.

remains unlabelled (Fig. 3.62). While this mosaic is a remnant of the original programme executed by Theodoric, as is evident from the change in the ground line between the procession and the seated tableaux, the mosaicists who redecorated the church intentionally left Christ (and the Virgin and Christ-child opposite him on the north wall) nameless in the renovation.⁶⁶¹ Christ also remains unlabelled in more static scenes, including on the triumphal arches of the Basilica Euphrasiana and San Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome, where Christ is the only figure without a name in the mosaic.⁶⁶² The conspicuous absence of His name had a pronounced visual function which served to focus attention on His image. Even if Christ's inscribed anonymity was a widespread phenomenon in the period, in certain cases the viewer had to confront the contrast between named saints and nameless Son of God.

A strikingly noticeable absence is evident in the apse mosaic of the *katholicon* of the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai (Fig. 3.63). In the mosaic, Christ is not named, but all other figures in the apse conch mosaic are, and their names emanate from Christ himself. The name labels of the two prophets (Elijah and Moses) and the three apostles (John, Peter and Jacob) in Greek are specifically oriented to run parallel to the beams of divine light radiating outwards from the central mandorla around Christ.⁶⁶³ Each name with its incipit cross appears immediately below a ray of light, and follows the directionality of the ray as the name runs either towards (the figures on Christ's right) or away from Christ, although in the case of John's name (+IWANNHC) the relationship between name and ray is slightly less direct. The names of the apostles are arranged on either two or three lines, an arrangement which must be intentional based upon the alignment of names to beams, even if lack of space also played a role. This structuring of

⁶⁶¹ *Supra* n. 464.

⁶⁶² As noted by Boston, 39.

⁶⁶³ Elsner, 'Viewer'; Nelson, 'Where God Walked'; also S. Ćurčić, 'Divine Light: Constructing the Immaterial in Byzantine Art and Architecture', in Westcoat and Ousterhout, 307-37, especially 307-12. On the church generally, *supra* n. 620.

names over more than one line echoes the poses of the bodies of the apostles, most evident in the figures of John and Jacob, where the *sigma* of John's name and the second half of Jacob's name (-BOC) descend in the same way as do their thighs, sloping downwards until their knees meet the ground. Peter, the most surprised of the three, has fallen completely onto the ground, and his name follows him, breaking into three lines as it descends. The names of the apostles, whose parts tumble down into increasingly lower and lower lines, offer a striking contrast to the names of the two Old Testament prophets, whose names run in a single horizontal line. Through their orientation and organisation, these name labels clarify the division between Old and New Testament figures and emphasize the theme of divine (and material) light. Even more importantly, when read against the named prophets and apostles, the figure of Christ becomes the epigraphic centre of the mosaic through the very absence of his name. Christ's inscribed anonymity is another focussing tool used by the mosaicists to ensure the viewer recognizes Christ not only as the source of the 'true light', but as the originator of all, including the prophets, apostles, and their names.

The *tituli* and names inscribed within early church mosaics rarely *added* meanings which were not already ingrained in the images. However, these texts emphasized specific meanings, particularizing and isolating individual works from their wider contexts. By inscribing biblical quotations next to related images, artists and donors structured images with texts, reintroduce speech into iconography, and connected images to the Christian liturgy. Real and pseudo-text written onto mosaic scrolls and codices reveal an erudite sense of play in the images of the period, inscribing distinctions between Old (Judaism) and New Testament (Christianity), and allowing Christ and the saints to speak their words and the words of the faithful, by whose mouths these texts would have been vocalized. The names of classical, Old and New Testament figures were not only labels, but also

were emphatic visual markers, variously equalizing or privileging figures, focussing and guiding the attention of viewers around sacred interiors. Names functioned similarly in absentia, clarifying relationships between holy figures and encouraging contemplation on possible reasons for their absence. Now that we have considered the visual functions of inscriptions within images, we turn in the final chapter to another visual element which necessarily defined the ways in which inscribed texts were produced, read, viewed and understood, namely the frames of inscriptions.

Chapter Four: Framing the early Christian inscription

As discussed in the previous chapters, inscriptions had visual functions beyond their legibility as texts. Texts inscribed within mosaics emphasized particular figures and functioned as symbols through the very materials of which they were composed. Different scripts, letter forms and sizes, use of guidelines,⁶⁶⁴ colour and punctuation-as-decoration could enhance the iconic appearance of inscriptions, emphasize the magical or protective elements of texts, or turn text into decoration through the use of serifs and ligatures.⁶⁶⁵

In addition to these visual components, the frames of inscriptions crucially impacted upon the ways in which texts were read by the late antique churchgoer. Patrons and artists framed mosaic texts in different ways to improve legibility and to incorporate the inscription field smoothly into the overall design of the mosaic decorative programme. The majority of Christian mosaic inscriptions are framed by simple rectangles, squares or circles, sometimes elaborated by decorative elements such as patterned geometric borders or vines. Simple frames isolate inscriptions from surrounding geometric or figural iconography, drawing attention to texts as separate visual entities while incorporating them into the overall design of mosaics. Geometric frames could also link inscriptions, associating texts meant to be read together, as in the mosaic pavement of Santa Eufemia at Grado (Fig. 4.1), where votive donor inscriptions are visually linked by the shapes of their intertwined frames, or unite different parts of the same inscription, as in the pavement of the Crypt of St. Elianus (595/6) (Fig. 4.2), underneath the Church of the Prophet Elias at Madaba, where the dedicatory inscription is spread out between four interconnected

⁶⁶⁴ Guidelines are epigraphic holdovers from the process of laying out and then cutting lapidary (carved) inscriptions in straight lines, and are maintained for their usefulness as well as their decorative properties: McLean, 9.

⁶⁶⁵ L. James, “‘And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?’ Text as Art”, in idem, *Art and Text*, 188-206. On palaeography, *supra* n. 29.

octagonal frames.⁶⁶⁶ Some inscriptions spill out of their frames, as in the Sinai apse mosaic (Fig. 4.3),⁶⁶⁷ while others are not framed at all, as with most name labels.

While they were decorative forms, frames were more than just empty containers for text. Rather, they were active participants in providing context and signifying authority and/or tradition. Certain types of inscription frames carried their own symbolic baggage which had accrued over the long course of Graeco-Roman antiquity, and would have potentially drawn particular cultural responses from late antique viewers. These frames have been largely ignored thus far in the worlds of classical and late antique art historical scholarship,⁶⁶⁸ although frames in general been studied by art historians as well as by philosophers, beginning with the theoretical and formal investigations of Meyer Schapiro and Jacques Derrida in the 1960s and 70s.⁶⁶⁹ Schapiro argued that the frame as isolating devices around an image did not become conventional until late in the second millennium BCE.⁶⁷⁰ He described the frame as ‘a finding and focussing device placed between the observer and the image’, marking the image within as a pictorial plane separate from its

⁶⁶⁶ On Santa Eufemia, Brusin and Zovatto; Caillet, *Évergétisme*. A similar type of visual ‘quilt’ effect is typical in the pavements of North African churches, although the effect is more *ad hoc* as the *loculi* mosaics were not all laid at the same time. On the Crypt of Elianus, P.-M. Séjourné, ‘L’Élianée de Madaba’, *RB*, 6 (1897), 648-56, especially 649; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 74; idem, *Mosaics*, 125; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 147; Michel, 322.

⁶⁶⁷ Ševčenko, ‘Early Period’, 258-61, 263, no. 7, who upholds the sixth-century date of the inscription against the objections of A. Guillou, ‘Le monastère de la Théotokos au Sinaï. Origines; épiclèse; mosaïque de la Transfiguration; Homélie inédite d’Anastase le Sinaïte sur la Transfiguration (Étude et texte critique)’, *École française de Rome, Mélanges de archéologie et d’histoire*, 67 (1955), 217-58. Spillover or decreasing letter size (in order to fit more text in) are not necessarily epigraphic indicators of poor quality, but rather of the failure of the mosaicist or carver to properly lay out the text before beginning to lay or carve it, and occurs even on expensive official projects such as the monumental carved Diocletianic Edict of Maximum Prices at Aphrodisias: K.T. Erism and J. Reynolds, ‘The Aphrodisias Copy of Diocletian’s Edict on Maximum Prices’, *JRS*, 63 (1973), 99-110.

⁶⁶⁸ An exception is Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 46-51. While the geometric patterns of late antique mosaics are much-discussed, Hachlili, *Pavements*, 237, has but one sentence to say on the subject of frames: ‘The usual location of the inscriptions recording donors, benefactors and donations on mosaic floors is within a *tabula ansata*, a wreath, or a rectangular panel’.

⁶⁶⁹ M. Schapiro, ‘On some problems in the semiotics of visual art: field and vehicle in image-signs’, *Semiotica*, 1, 3 (1969), 223-42, reprinted in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 6, 1 (1972-3), 9-19; J. Derrida, ‘Parergon’, in idem, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris, 1978), trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago, 1987), 1-13, 15-147. Derrida is responding to Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, part of his third critique or *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*), published in 1791. On their respective analyses of frames, J. Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis & London, 2009), 246-9; P. Crowther, *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (even the frame)* (Stanford, 2009), 52-9.

⁶⁷⁰ Schapiro, 9-11.

surroundings.⁶⁷¹ While Schapiro's approach was not new in the 1960s, as it built upon Heinrich Wölfflin's earlier examinations of plane and recession and closed versus open form, it reenergized the debate among art historians over the functions of the frame.⁶⁷²

Jacques Derrida took a different approach. In his essay on the 'parergon', his term for the frame (after Immanuel Kant), Derrida fleshes out Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, explaining that the frame creates the distinction between internal and external while simultaneously problematizing that division:

The *parergon* stands out both from the *ergon* (the work) and from the milieu, it stands out first of all like a figure on a ground. But it does not stand out in the same way as the work...With respect to the work which can serve as a ground for it, it merges into the wall, and then, gradually, into the general text....There is always a form on a ground, but the *parergon* is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears...⁶⁷³

Derrida goes on to dispute Kant's discussions of various *parerga*, but does not seriously call into question the Kantian definition. In this conceptualization, the frame is always situated between interior (the work) and exterior (its surroundings), and because of its liminal position 'can augment the pleasure of taste, contribute to the proper and intrinsically aesthetic representation if it intervenes *by its form* and only by its form'.⁶⁷⁴

Derrida argues that the tasteful frame should be viewed as essential, although the frame is always 'a-signifying and a-representative'.⁶⁷⁵

While Derrida was more interested in investigating the meta-frames of experience and how these influence the formation of conceptions of beauty and aesthetics, he succeeded in articulating the interstitial and functional nature of the frame as it relates to

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 9, 11-2.

⁶⁷² H. Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (Munich, 1915), portions trans. in M.D.M. Hottinger, *Principles of Art History: the problem of development of style in later art* (New York, 1932), chs. 2-3.

⁶⁷³ Derrida, 61; also Tagg, 246; P. Duro, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of Artwork* (Cambridge, 1996), 2-3.

⁶⁷⁴ Derrida, 64, his italics preserved.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 98.

the image (or text) framed.⁶⁷⁶ Both Schapiro and Derrida made clear the function of the frame to include and to exclude, creating a distinct space for the picture to act as a picture, to construct itself as ‘an illusion rather than a reality’.⁶⁷⁷ In more recent years, Georg Simmel and Paul Crowther have analyzed the aesthetic functions of frames to limit and separate pictorial space from ‘real space’ to ‘place it [the image] at that distance from which alone it is aesthetically enjoyable’, and to trap the viewer’s gaze within the painting to allow focus on the particulars of the work.⁶⁷⁸ Art historians have continued to apply the approaches of Derrida and Schapiro to frames of different periods and media, including Wolfgang Kemp’s study of the function of engaged frames to make late antique and medieval narrative images more intelligible.⁶⁷⁹

Art historians of late antique and Byzantine art, including Ernst Kitzinger and Dale Kinney, have explored the frame as formal device in both late antique mosaics and ivory diptychs, while Glenn Peers recently has considered some of the larger questions about frames and viewers’ responses to them might themselves frame our readings of Byzantine works of art.⁶⁸⁰ Peers writes that the Byzantine frame was crucial for interactive viewing: ‘...the frames of the medieval world, both textual and artistic, were highly visual and interactive areas. Here encounters between viewer and object of contemplation were dynamically activated in a constant give-and-take of material and divine realities’.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁶ Tagg, ch. 6.

⁶⁷⁷ J. Simon, *The Art of the Picture Frame: Artists, Patrons and the Framing of Portraits in Britain* (London, National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 13.

⁶⁷⁸ G. Simmel, ‘The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11 (1994), 11-17, especially 11; Crowther, 52-9.

⁶⁷⁹ W. Kemp, ‘The Narrativity of the Frame’, in Duro, 11-23, especially 14-5. Frames have also been the subject of several exhibitions, including T. Newbery, G. Bisacca and L.B. Kanter, *Italian Renaissance Frames* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990); Simon, *Picture Frame*. On the value given to frames in Italy during the Renaissance, B. Savedoff, ‘Frames’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57, 3 (1999), 345-356, especially 348; and, applying these ideas to ancient art, B. Küllerich, ‘Savedoff, Frames and Parergonality’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59, 3 (Summer 2001), 320-3.

⁶⁸⁰ Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art*, 53-6, 81-92; D. Kinney, ‘Review Article of “Byzantine Art in the Making”’, *Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines*, 9 (1982), 326-7; Peers, *Shock*, 1-12.

⁶⁸¹ Peers, *Shock*, 6.

However, inscription frames have been overlooked. As with the frames of images, the frames of inscriptions are part of the texts they enclose, as the ways in which texts were laid out and presented were crucial not only to their legibility but to visual impact. Greek and Roman passersby could often recognize inscription types based upon the shape, frame, and placement of an inscribed text, and powerful visual schemes were often reused for different types of inscriptions: for example, early classical monumental inscriptions in Greece often adopted the appearance of archaic marker stones in order to preserve that layout's Archaic association with authoritative, public versions of texts.⁶⁸² The inscription frame might be slippery to the (post-) modern scholar working in the footsteps of Derrida, but its specific powers of form and function seem to have been more stable and signifying in antiquity.⁶⁸³

Unfortunately, even these stable frames still prove slippery for us, as texts from the period do not tell us much about frame types or the reasons for the choice of one type of frame over another. Even the names of inscription frames are, for the most part, modern designations.⁶⁸⁴ As a result, any examination of late antique frames must be based upon the patterns which emerge from the surviving material evidence. This chapter attempts to expand the discussion of the forms, functions and potential symbolism of inscription frames, and takes a close look at five frames which were intended to produce specific visual responses: two common types, the *tabula ansata* and the *clipeus*/wreath, and three types of what might be termed the 'object' frame, the cross, *kantharos*, and church-front. First, I focus on the *tabula ansata* ('eared tablet'), a form with a long history in Greek and

⁶⁸² R. Thomas, 'Literacy and the city-state in archaic and classical Greece', in Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and power*, 33-50. On frames and the Roman viewer, Kellum, 292.

⁶⁸³ On the problem of framing the frame, Peers, *Shock*, 7-8.

⁶⁸⁴ For example, while Romans used the term '*tabula*' to describe various types of writing tablets or inscription fields, the term *tabula ansata* is a completely modern designation first used in the *CIL*: P. Fraser and T. Rönne, *Boeotian and West Greek Tombstones* (Lund, 1975), 179-82; G.G. Pani, 'Segno e immagine di scrittura: la *tabula ansata* e il suo significato simbolico', *Miscellanea greca e romana*, 10 (1986), 429-41, especially 430, n. 2.

Roman art which frequently frames inscriptions in important spaces within early Christian decorative programmes. As a common isolating device for mosaic (and other) texts, the *tabula ansata* allowed patrons to use Roman visual language to lend an aura of self-promotion and power to their Christian expressions of donation and religious sentiment. In certain cases, patrons used versions of this frame to emphasize their familiarity with particular ancient forms. At the same time, while the form continued to carry its Roman symbolic baggage, it became increasingly decorated and decorative, turning framed text into art. Second, I turn to the round forms of the *clipeus* and wreath frames, both of which also had lengthy histories of use. Finally, I examine frames in the shapes of objects, including crosses, flasks or architectural settings. Frames of this final type were rare, but were chosen to supplement the meaning of the texts within, often adding explicitly Christian significances to otherwise standard texts.

The tabula ansata: Graeco-Roman euergetism visualised

While it was as popular as the rectangular, octagonal or circular mosaic forms used to frame both text and image in the Roman period and in late antiquity, the *tabula ansata* (henceforth *tabula*) was reserved for text alone.⁶⁸⁵ The form is first attested in Greece in the late seventh or early sixth century BCE as a rectangular frame for metal votive plaques with *ansae* (literally ‘ears’, or handles) allowing the plaque to be fixed to a column, altar or temple wall without damaging the text inside.⁶⁸⁶ By the fourth century CE, the *tabula*

⁶⁸⁵ One exception to this rule is the mosaic *tabula* from the sixth century C.E. Church of St. Bacchus at Horvat Tinsahmet, Palestine, where the *tabula* frames a cross: U. Dahari, ‘Horbat Tinsahmet, Church of St. Bacchus’, *ESI*, 18 (1998), 67-8. This example seems to be an isolated instance of artistic experimentation where the artist combined two popular signs without a specific symbolic implication in mind.

⁶⁸⁶ The first ‘history’ of the *tabula* as inscription frame, still the clearest enumeration of the origins of the form, is Fraser and Rönne, 179-82; also W.-D. Albert, ‘Die *tabulae ansatae* aus Pergamon’, *Pergamon: Gesammelte Aufsätze. Deutsches archäologische Institut, Pergamenische Forschungen*, 1 (Berlin, 1972), 1-34 and ‘Katalog’; P. Veyne, ‘“Titulus Praelatus”: offrande, solennisation et publicité dans les ex-voto gréco-romains’, *Revue Archéologique*, 2 (1983), 289-90. On *tabulae* and votive practice in the Roman period, E.A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World: Tabulae in Roman Belief and Practice* (2004), 28. On Graeco-Roman votives generally, W.H.D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings. An Essay in the History of the*

had been an established frame for Roman votive, funerary, dedicatory and military inscriptions for at least three hundred years, with a long previous history of Greek usage.⁶⁸⁷ In the major cities of the late Roman world, any person who strolled through a city, went to a cemetery, or visited the villa of a wealthy citizen would have seen the *tabula* form used as a frame for monumental dedications on buildings and triumphal arches (Fig. 4.4),⁶⁸⁸ votive dedications at temples (Fig. 4.5),⁶⁸⁹ artists' signatures,⁶⁹⁰ and funerary inscriptions (Fig. 4.6).⁶⁹¹ Attendees of Roman triumphal processions might have

Greek Religion (Cambridge, 1902), 1-3; F. Van Straten, 'Gifts for the Gods', in H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 1981), 65-151; idem, 'Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries', in A. Schachter and J. Bingen (eds.), *Le Sanctuaire Grec* (Geneva, 1992), 247-84; G. Schörner, *Votive im römischen Griechenland* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 214-15; J. Bodel and M. Kajava (eds.), *Religious Dedications in the Greco-Roman World: Distribution, Typology, Use. Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, American Academy in Rome 19-20 aprile 2006* (Rome, 2009).

⁶⁸⁷ On the late antique *tabula*, Pani, 'Segno', 429-41; idem, 'Forma, linguaggio e contenuti delle dediche epigrafiche nei *tituli ansati* (iv-ix sec. d.C.)', in Donati, *Terza eta*, 169-94. *Tabulae* continue to be used to frame carved dedication inscriptions, both major, as in the Emperor Justinian's building inscription dedicating his *Nea Ekklesia* in Jerusalem: N. Avigad, 'A Building Inscription of Justinian', *IEJ*, 27 (1977), 148-51, Pl. 19a-b; and minor, as in a carved donation inscription on a shed at Khirbet Dah-dah in Palestine, D. Amit, 'Khirbet Dah-dah', *ESI*, 9, 2 (1990), 162-3, fig. 156. On the *tabula* on ivory consular diptychs, A. Sartori, 'Eburnea verba', in M. David (ed.), *Eburnea Diptycha. I dittici d'avorio tra Antichità e Medioevo* (Bari, 2007), 221-43.

⁶⁸⁸ For example, an imperial dedication to Hadrian on the attic story of a triumphal arch: Welles, in Kraeling, *Gerasa*, 401-2, no. 58; a Tetrarchic dedication of a temple to the *gens Valeria aeterna* at Thibar: A. Mastino, M. Khanoussi, C. Cazzona, and E. Ughi, 'Nuove scoperte epigrafiche in Africa Proconsolare: *Uchi Maius, Uchi Minus, Thibaris, Thugga*', in M. Mayer i Olivé, G. Baratta and A.G. Almagro (eds.), *Acta XII Congressus internationalis epigraphiae graecae et latinae* (Barcelona, 2007), ii, 941-52, especially 946-8; and an early fourth-century dedicatory inscription recording the renovation of the public baths on the eastern part of the Caelian Hill at Rome: *CIL* VI, 1136; Pani, 'Forma'.

⁶⁸⁹ Metal votive plaques were common, including a plaque dedicated to Zeus from Hedderheim, now in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin: Albert, 'Tabulae', 28-9, fig. 65. Other stone and metal votive plaques are extant from Pergamon (dedicated to Asklepios) and Pompeii: *ibid.*, cat. A 1-3, 6-7, figs. 53-5; and from the regions along the Danube, many dedicated by soldiers, including from Bern: G. Walser, *Römische Inschriften in der Schweiz* (Bern, 1979), cat. 53; and a large number from the Poenine Alps, dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Poeninus: G. Walser, *Summus Poeninus. Beiträge zur Geschichte des grossen St. Bernhard-Passes in römischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1984), cats. 1-4, 7-9, 17, etc.

⁶⁹⁰ For example, the signature of Archelaos of Priene, on the Apotheosis of Homer relief (225-205 BCE), now in the British Museum, London, inv. GR 1819.8-12.1 (Sculpture 2191): Z. Newby, 'Reading the allegory of the Archelaos Relief', in Newby and Leader-Newby, *Art and Inscriptions*, 156-78.

⁶⁹¹ Examples are numerous and include the tombstone of Potitus Valerius Messalla (c. 10-12), in Rome, Museo Nazionale: *CIL* VI, no. 37075; A.E. Gordon, *An Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1983), 106-7, no. 32, Pl. 20. Also, a funerary altar of a man and a woman, currently in the Museo Nazionale delle Terme, Rome, inv. 124514: D. Kleiner, *Roman Imperial Funerary Altars with Portraits* (Rome, 1987), 104-7, cat. 6. The *tabula* also frames epitaphs on numerous sarcophagi in the Vatican Museum, including a sarcophagus dated to 235 by inscription: Albert, 25, fig. 61. For other examples, *ibid.*, 22-7, 62, figs. 58-59, 63. Outside Italy, examples include the funerary altar of the family of Q. Ennius Liberalis in Leibniz and the mortuary inscription on the sarcophagus of Vitalius Vigor from Augsburg: F. Wagner, *Raetia (Bayern südlich des Limes) und Noricum (Chiemseegebiet), Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani (CSIR) Deutschland*, 1, 1 (Bonn, 1973), no. 54; M. Hainzmann and E. Pochmarski, *Die römerzeitlichen Inschriften und Reliefs von Schloss Seggau bei Leibnitz* (1994), Pl. 4. For other examples,

seen *tabulae* held aloft on poles, framing inscriptions advertising the military victory being celebrated, as is depicted on the ‘Spoils from the Temple’ relief on the inner wall of the Arch of Titus in Rome, set up around 81 to celebrate the suppression of the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem and the sacking of the Temple eleven years earlier (Fig. 4.7).⁶⁹² The *tabula* appears to have remained in use in military triumphs through the early fourth century, as a relief found in Caesarea (Cherchel) in Algeria depicts a *tabula*-framed inscription carried on a pole during a triumph celebrating Constantine’s victory over Maxentius in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (Fig. 4.8).⁶⁹³ Though the *tabula* form was created to meet a functional requirement, it remained in use for centuries due to the simplicity of its design and its ability to call attention to the text within via its arrow-like *ansae*.

Mosaicists began using the form in the late first or early second century CE to frame their own signatures, as well as donation inscriptions. An early example of a mosaic *tabula* on a second-century villa mosaic of Apollo and the Muses from Mérida frames the names of two artists (or perhaps donors) in the border of the pavement (Fig. 4.9).⁶⁹⁴ Other second- and third-century examples include mosaic pavements both east and west, from Rome; Lillebonne in Roman Gaul; Mas’udije, in Syria; Nisibis, in Eastern Anatolia

Albert, cat. A 4-5, 9, fig. 56 (Pergamon); K. Herbert, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Brooklyn Museum* (New York, 1972), 31-2, no. 11, Pl. 9 (Egypt, now in the Brooklyn Museum).

⁶⁹² I.S. Ryberg, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (Rome, 1955), 146, Pl. LII, fig. 79b; M. Pfanner, *Der Titusbogen* (Mainz, 1983), 50-65, 71-6, Pls. 54-67. For the tradition of the Roman triumph in reality and art, M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA & London, 2007), 43-5, 151ff; I. Östenberg, ‘*Titulus oppida capta leget*: The role of the written placards in the Roman triumphal procession’, *MEFR*, 121, 2 (2009), 463-72; idem, *Staging the world: spoils, captives, and representations in the Roman triumphal procession* (Oxford, 2009), 111-9, who argues the plaques held *tituli* proclaiming the identities of the booty and captives in the procession, or perhaps the actions accomplished, as with the famous *titulus* of Julius Caesar, ‘VENI VIDI VICI’, described by Suetonius, ‘Vita Divus Julius’, 37, in idem, *Vitae Caesarum*. On the triumph itself, described by Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 7.123ff, M. Beard, ‘The Triumph of Flavius Josephus’, in A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (eds.), *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Leiden, 2003), 543-58, especially 548-52.

⁶⁹³ *CIL* VIII, 9356; also M. Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1982), Pl. V, 6; A. Mastino and A. Teatini, ‘Ancora sul discusso “trionfo” di Costantino dopo la battaglia a Ponte Milvio’, in Angeli Bertinelli and A. Donati (eds.), *Varia Epigraphica. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Epigrafia* (Faenza, 2001), 273-327.

⁶⁹⁴ ‘C(olonia) A(ugusta) E(merita) f(ecerunt) Seleucus et Anthus’: Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, cat. 83, 105-6; J. Gómez Pallares, *Edición y Comentario de las Inscripciones sobre Mosaico de Hispania. Inscripciones no Cristianas* (Rome, 1997), 57-8, no. BA2, Pls. 11a-b; Lancha, 213-8, no. 105, Pl. XCIX.

(modern Turkey); and Oudna (Uthina), in Tunisia.⁶⁹⁵ A unique second-century series of mosaics from the Square of the Corporations in Ostia features graphic *tabulae*-framed inscriptions in black tesserae on a white ground which labelled areas as ‘booths’ for commercial groups from different cities in North Africa, Sardinia and Gaul (Fig. 4.10).⁶⁹⁶ These inscriptions include the professions (shippers, etc.) and hometowns of the vendors, and are paired with figural emblems, including merchant ships, grain measures, amphorae, and other images which advertised the types of business conducted at the various booths.⁶⁹⁷ The labelling format in use at Ostia parallels the usage of the *tabula* as frame for the names of the deceased in a first-century CE *cubiculum* under the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome, where the inscription fields under burial niches were left blank until needed (Fig. 4.11).⁶⁹⁸

As the *tabula* had been used to frame many different kinds of inscriptions in the Roman period, the form had presumably lost its specific links to votive practice and became a general frame for all sorts of texts in different media, including graffiti (Fig. 4.12).⁶⁹⁹ From the fourth century onwards, the form remained popular throughout the empire as a frame for Christian inscriptions of all types, including depictions of the ‘first’ Christian *titulus* in scenes of the Crucifixion, the sign on the top of the cross on which Christ’s name and Roman title were written: ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’ (Fig.

⁶⁹⁵ Donderer, cat. C19, Pl. 60,2 (Rome); A86, Pl. 50 (Lillebone, now in the Rouen Museum); A12, Pl. 10 (Mas’udije, Syria); A14, Pl. 11 (Nisibis); A63, Pl. 37 and A72, Pl. 42 (Oudna, now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis).

⁶⁹⁶ G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia 4. Mosaici e Pavimenti marmorei* (Rome, 1961), 64-85, nos. 83-138, 345-8, Pls. 172-86; I. Pohl, ‘Piazzale delle Corporazioni ad Ostia. Tentativo di ricostruzione del Portico Claudio e la sua decorazione’, *MEFR*, 90 (1978), 331-55, especially 332-4.

⁶⁹⁷ Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 62.

⁶⁹⁸ Some of the frescoes from the columbarium are now in the Museo Nazionale, Palazzo Massimo: R. Ling, ‘The Paintings of the *Columbarium* of Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome’, in E.M. Moorman (ed.), *Functional and Spatial Analysis of Wall Painting. Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Ancient Wall Painting* (Leiden, 1993), 127-35.

⁶⁹⁹ For example, two Latin inscriptions from Brindisi written by soldiers, one of which gets the ‘ears’ of the *tabula* wrong: C. Romano, ‘Due iscrizioni greche su *tabulae ansatae* da Brindisi’, *Acta XII Congressus*, 1243-6; as well as numerous early Christian graffiti from the Catacomb of San Sebastiano: Nicolai, Bisconti and Mazzoleni, 177, fig. 176.

4.13).⁷⁰⁰ However, many *tabula*-framed texts were dedicatory inscriptions. While the *tabula* frame alone did not transmit specific associative meanings in every case, the popularity of the form in late antique mosaics reveals a continuity of association with Graeco-Roman artistic and epigraphic traditions, and thus of significances transmitted to the viewer via the frame rather than via the text within.⁷⁰¹

Tonio Hölscher has argued eloquently that Roman artists employed particular stable visual paradigms in their works based upon the content and subject represented.⁷⁰² Roman viewers of the period would have recognized the power of artistic style and form to transmit the allegorical, symbolic or historical meanings.⁷⁰³ These meanings were variable and inclusive: a portrait could be executed in the classical style because of the patron's desire to capture classical *dignitas* (symbolic meaning), but also to echo the particular style of a specific work, like that of Phidias' Parthenon frieze, dated to the mid-fifth century B.C.E. (historical and/or symbolic), or the iconography of a particular deity or hero, such as Hercules (allegorical and/or symbolic).⁷⁰⁴

In a similar fashion, the *tabula* frame continued to be employed by late antique patrons because of its historical association with Graeco-Roman cultural norms, but also because the form had become strongly correlated with public euergetism and monumental

⁷⁰⁰ For example, on the obverse of a lead pilgrim ampulla from Jerusalem, now at Dumbarton Oaks, BZ.1948.14: most recently published in Evans, *Byzantium and Islam*, 91-2, cat. 59. On this sign, reported in all four Gospels (although only John 19:19 calls it a *τίτλον*), F. Millar, 'Latin in the Epigraphy of the Roman Near East', in *Acta Colloquii Epigraphi Latini*, 403-19.

⁷⁰¹ On formalism as art historical paradigm, Wölfflin, vii-ix, 9-16, and 226-237. Wölfflin discusses forms as perceived differently by viewers from different contexts (i.e. time periods or cultures), which would seem in accordance with an attempt to reconstruct a particular form as meaning (in this instance, a discrete, literal form) by tracing its usage through time.

⁷⁰² T. Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*, trans. A. Snodgrass and A. Künzl-Snodgrass (Cambridge, 2004).

⁷⁰³ On form as bearer of allegorical, symbolic and historical meaning, G. Bandmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger* (Berlin, 1951), trans. K. Wallis, *Early Medieval Architecture as Bearer of Meaning* (New York, 2005), Ch. 1.

⁷⁰⁴ Hölscher, 47-57. Commodus chose to depict himself as Hercules in the famous half-length portrait executed in 191-2 in Rome, now in the Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori: K. Fitschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom* (Mainz, 1985), 1, 63-90; R. Hannah, 'The Emperor's Star: The Conservatori Portrait of Commodus', *AJA*, 90 (1986), 337-42.

display.⁷⁰⁵ In the introduction, I began with a *tabula*-framed inscription from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash (Fig. 1.1), whose frame takes the standard ‘Roman’ form (to be discussed shortly), similar to that which frames the main donor inscription in front of the steps up to the elevated sanctuary in the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Khirbet Mukhayyat (557/8), the same church discussed in the previous chapter for its inscription and image of Psalm 51 (Fig. 4.14).⁷⁰⁶ This latter *tabula*, which features floral-vegetal decorations in its *ansae*, encloses an inscription executed in elaborate script in black tesserae, with some letter forms with serifs, attenuated lines making up other letters (especially A), letter forms with decorative gaps (Ψ, W), and branches and red and black ivy leaves for punctuation, naming the priest of the church and the donors and giving the various motivations for donation. This *tabula* abuts the border of the main nave panel and faces east, ensuring it would be noted by anyone approaching the sanctuary. The monumental form of the frame evokes the resonance of Roman dedicatory inscriptions, hinting at the *tabula*’s contents even before viewers came close enough to read the framed text.

While it remains difficult to establish comprehensive numbers of mosaic *tabulae* from early churches, chapels and baptisteries, over two hundred and fifty mosaic *tabulae* are attested from the fourth through early eighth centuries. Mosaic *tabulae* were used as frames for Christian inscriptions in almost all regions of the early Byzantine world, although the form was much more common in Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon (Phoenicia Libanensis), as well as in Greece, than in the west. *Tabulae* began to appear in the mosaic pavements of Christian structures in the fourth century, including as frames for a dedicatory inscription in a Christian building at Elche (La Alcúdia), Spain (first third of

⁷⁰⁵ Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 48, hints at this when she argues that the *tabula* gave authority to the text inscribed within.

⁷⁰⁶ Saller and Bagatti, *Town of Nebo*, 184; also *supra* n. 523.

the fourth century) (Fig. 4.15);⁷⁰⁷ a dedicatory inscription from the church at Lod, in Palestine;⁷⁰⁸ three funerary inscriptions from a cemetery at Portotorres, Sardinia (fourth century) (Fig. 4.16);⁷⁰⁹ two dedicatory inscriptions in the Kaoussie Church at Antioch-on-the-Orontes (387);⁷¹⁰ two inscriptions in the First Sanctuary of Moses at Mount Nebo (second half of the fourth century) (Fig. 4.17);⁷¹¹ and dedicatory inscriptions in the pavements of the South Church at Brescia (Fig. 4.18), the Basilica of Daphnousia in Greece (Fig. 4.19), the Church of St. Sphyridon at Trimithous and the Soloi Church on Cyprus,⁷¹² Church C at Magen,⁷¹³ and the Basilica of Karm-el-Arabis at Homs, Syria, all dated by style to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth centuries.⁷¹⁴ All of these early examples, besides the ones at Portotorres, are dedicatory. Roughly the same numbers of Christian mosaic *tabulae* survive from the eastern and western Mediterranean from the fourth century. Synagogue mosaic pavements also began to feature *tabulae* in the fourth century, as is evident from the Hebrew dedicatory inscription in two parts in the eastern aisle of the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias.⁷¹⁵ Around fifty-four churches, chapels and baptisteries dated to the fifth century feature mosaic *tabulae* as parts of their floor, wall or triumphal arch decorative programmes. More than 112 Christian mosaic pavements dated to the sixth century contain one or more *tabulae*, although by the sixth century the form

⁷⁰⁷ Gómez Pallarès, *Epigrafia cristiana*, 26-9, cat. A 2, Pl. II, with additional bibliography.

⁷⁰⁸ Y. Zelinger and L. Di Segni, 'A Fourth-Century Church near Lod (Diospolis)', *LA*, 56 (2006), 459-68, Pls. 23-4.

⁷⁰⁹ S. Angiolillo, *Mosaici antichi in Italia. Sardinia* (Rome, 1981), 193-4, cats. 173-5, Pl. XXXVIII.

⁷¹⁰ Levi, 283-5; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 22-4, 28; Campbell, *Antioch*, 43-5. On the church generally, W. Mayer, 'The late antique church at Qausiyyeh reconsidered: Memory and martyr-burial in Syrian Antioch', in J. Leemans (ed.), *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity: Festschrift Boudewijn Dehandschutter. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium*, 241 (Leuven, 2010), 161-77.

⁷¹¹ *Supra* n. 142.

⁷¹² *Supra* n. 345. On the Soloi church, *Σύνταγμα*, 1, 141, no. 134; Daszewski and Michaelides, 93.

⁷¹³ Tzaferis, 'Magen'; *SEG* 35, 1553.

⁷¹⁴ On the Brescia inscription, *CIL* V, 4842; *ILCV*, 1, 1866; *Inscr.It.* X, V/2, no. 715; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 61-2, cat. 13.4. On Daphnousia, P. Roussel, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG*, 44 (1931), 210; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 267; *Σύνταγμα*, 2, 173-6, cat. 111; Caraher, 'Church', 333, no. 49. On Homs, L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, with C. Mondésert, *IGLS*, 5, 109-10, no. 2205; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 135.

⁷¹⁵ M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias. Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains* (Jerusalem, 1983), 50-2; Ovadiah, *Pavements*, 63-5, no. 87, Pls. LXV-LXVIII, CLXXIX-CLXXXII; Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 189-91, fig. 202.

was largely confined to the eastern Mediterranean, as only a handful of *tabulae* from Italy and Africa date to the sixth century or later.⁷¹⁶ After the sixth century, the popularity of the mosaic *tabula* appears to have declined, although at least twenty-three examples are extant from seventh- and eighth- century churches, all located in the eastern provinces of the empire, primarily in regions under Umayyad and later, Abbasid control.

a. Form, content, and placement

A few preliminary words must be said about the two main forms of the *tabula*, the ‘Greek’ and ‘Roman’ types. Fraser and Rönne provide a working definition for the two types:

The Greek *tabula ansata* is oval in shape with small *ansae*. This form is found without significant variation...The Roman *tabula*, on the other hand, though it takes various forms, has one constant feature which is lacking in the pre-Roman Greek pieces: the *tabula* is always rectangular (either square or oblong) and the handles are usually much larger than on the Greek *tabulae*.⁷¹⁷

The vast majority of early Christian mosaic *tabulae* are of the Roman type, as is the example from Khirbet Mukhayyat (Fig. 4.14), with triangular *ansae* of variable sizes that intersect to varying extents with the main rectangular body of the inscription field.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁶ The *tabula* also flourished on sixth-century synagogue mosaic pavements, appearing in at least seven synagogues from Palestine, including Huseifa: Hachlili, *Pavements*, 21, fig. II-8; Beth Alpha, *ibid.*, 19, fig. II-3; Ma’on-Nirim, *ibid.*, 233, fig. XI-3b; Beth Shean, *ibid.*, 126, fig. VI-10; Hammath Gader, *ibid.*, 20, fig. II-7; and Kissufim and Rehov, *ibid.*, 233-8. The only sixth-century examples from the west are outliers, including the *tabulae* on the triumphal arch of San Lorenzo fuori-le-mura in Rome, to be discussed shortly, and at Qasr el-Lebia, Cyrenaica, in the ‘Second Church’, built after the Justinianic reconquest: M. Reynolds, ‘Inscriptions on the Christian Mosaics of Cyrenaica’, in Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 145-8.

⁷¹⁷ Fraser and Rönne, 182. The Greek type predates the Roman type, but the Roman type was in use by the Hellenistic period, as on the sarcophagus of Apollonios from Cyanae, Lycia, which features the earliest *tabula* carved on stone: O. Benndorf and Niemann, *Das Heroon von Gjöbaschi-Trysa* (1889), 60, fig. 42; and P. Jacobsthal, ‘Zur Kunstgeschichte der griechischen Inschriften’, in *Χάρτες. Festschrift für Friedrich Leo* (Berlin, 1911), 453-65, especially 455. The inscription is published in E. Kalinka, *Tituli Asiae Minoris, 1. Tituli Lyciae: lingua Lycia conscripti* (1901), 72: Ἀπολλωνίου / τοῦ Ἡρακλείδου / τοῦ [Α]λεξίου. Interestingly, only the Greek inscription was framed with a *tabula*, not the adjacent Lycian inscription.

⁷¹⁸ The Roman form predominates in *tabulae* on late antique secular mosaics for example the ‘Leontios’ mosaic from avilla at Azwa’i in Syria, J. Balty, *Mosaïques*, Pl. XXXII; and the Sheikh Zouède pavement: *supra* n. 349. The majority of *tabulae* found on Christian sarcophagi are also of the Roman type, although most of the inscriptions they contained are now lost, possibly because they were painted: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, cats. 119, 833; *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 267, 288, 300-2; *Repertorium*, iii, cats. 73, 152, 539, 593, 650. On the frame on early Christian sarcophagi in general, Koch, 9ff, 99ff, 448ff.

While the Roman-type *tabula* became more decorative in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries than it had been in previous centuries, the form retained its essential characteristics.

The *tabula* also continued to be used as a frame for the same types of inscriptions as in the Roman period. Around twenty-six mosaic inscriptions framed by *tabulae* are even votive in nature, including the inscriptions in the Church of Lot and Procopius at Khirbet Mukhayyat, demonstrating that the form continued to be used for its original purpose.⁷¹⁹ Mosaic *tabulae* also continued to be used to frame funerary inscriptions, especially in North Africa, but also in Italy and the eastern provinces. This practice accords with the contemporaneous use of *tabulae* to frame inscriptions on early Christian sarcophagi from west and east⁷²⁰ and in the catacombs of Rome.⁷²¹ *Tabula*-framed funerary inscriptions decorate the elaborate funerary pavement of the Church of the Priest Felix at Kélibia (Demna) in Tunisia (Fig. 4.20), the funerary pavement at Portotorres (Fig. 4.16), and the burial chapel at Mamilla in Palestine, where a superimposed *tabulae* is placed in front of the entrance (Fig. 4.52).⁷²² Several other mosaic *tabulae* contain inscriptions which invoke the memory of particular figures ('for the memory of', 'remember') in the South Church (of Photios) at Huarte, and the Church of the Apostles at Madaba.⁷²³ Christian mosaic *tabulae* frame several artists' inscriptions as well, as in

⁷¹⁹ *Supra* n. 523.

⁷²⁰ Although not all *tabulae* on sarcophagi contain inscriptions, either because they are unfinished or the original painted inscription has worn away, some do, for example the simple Latin inscription utilizing the formula 'in pace' framed by a *tabula* on a sarcophagus from Tunis: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, iii, cat. 650, Pl. 154; or the lengthier funerary inscriptions on sarcophagi from Spoleto and Split, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 107, Pl. 38, and 303, Pl. 100.

⁷²¹ For example, the painted mortuary inscription below a loculus in the *basilichetta* of the Catacomb of Commodilla: J.G. Deckers, G. Mietke, A. Weiland and C. Carletti, *Die Katakombe "Commodilla"*, *Repertorium der Malereien* (Vatican City, 1994), no. 3, Pl. 10a, Color Pl. 7.

⁷²² On the Church of Felix, see Cintas and Duval. On the Portotorres mosaics, *supra* n. 709. On Mamilla, see n. 785 below.

⁷²³ On the South Church, M.-T. Canivet, 'Le reliquaire à huile de la grande église de Huarte (Syrie)', in *Syria*, 55, 1-2 (1978), 153-62, especially 156; P. Canivet, 'Nouvelles inscriptions grecques chrétiennes à Huarte d'Apamène (Syrie)', *T&M*, 7 (1979), 349-62, especially 350; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 92-4. On the Church of the Apostles, Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 143; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 106; idem, *Mosaics*, 106; Michel, 328.

churches at Houedjit Halaoua and ‘Ein Fattir,⁷²⁴ as well as biblical inscriptions, as at Khirbat Samra.⁷²⁵

Even *tabulae* which contained texts other than dedicatory inscriptions visually presented themselves as Roman forms. The fifth-century funerary mosaic inscription of St. Gaudiosus, set into a small chapel within the San Gennaro Catacomb in Naples, is framed by a yellow *tabula* on a dark green ground placed on the arcosolium above the saint’s tomb (Fig. 4.21).⁷²⁶ While it frames a funerary inscription, the *tabula* is placed on the arched arcosolium, evoking the triumphal symbolism of Roman triumphal arches through its form.

However, the vast majority of *tabulae* frame dedicatory inscriptions. At a basic level, all mosaic inscriptions were dedicatory, as their very presence implied patrons willing to fund the laying of the mosaic. In terms of texts which explicitly assert their patrons, 174 *tabulae* (out of the total 250, around 70%) frame donor inscriptions. These range from simple, formulaic texts to higher-register prose, particularly in Jerash, where *tabulae* frame high-register donation inscriptions in the Churches of Saints Cosmas and Damian and Saints Peter and Paul.⁷²⁷ This link between form and content held true in other late Roman and late antique contexts, including secular mosaics,⁷²⁸ synagogue mosaics (primarily inscriptions in Hebrew),⁷²⁹ carved donation inscriptions,⁷³⁰ and manuscript frontispieces, for example that of the Codex Calendar of 354 (Fig. 4.22), where

⁷²⁴ On Houedjit Halaoua, *supra* n. 265. On ‘Ein Fattir, A. Chambon and A. Strus, ‘Ein Fattir – 1990’, *ESI*, 12 (1993), 82-4; P.H.F. Jakobs, ‘Reste einer Byzantinischen Seidlung bei Beit-Jimal. Ergebnisse der jüngsten Ausgrabungen von Ayin Fattir (1989/90)’, *Akten des VII internationalen kongresses für christliche Archäologie* (1995), 873-80.

⁷²⁵ *Supra* n. 180, 190.

⁷²⁶ *Hic requiescit in pace S(an)c(tu)s Gaudiosus...*: *ILCV*, 1, no. 1017; *CIL* X, 1538; Sear, 138-40, cat. 160, Pl. 60, 3.

⁷²⁷ *Supra* n. 147 (Cosmas and Damian), 1 (Peter and Paul).

⁷²⁸ Almost all extant examples are from the western provinces: Donderer, cats. A12, A14, A57, A62, A63, A68.

⁷²⁹ Examples include *tabulae* in at least seven synagogues from Palestine: Hachlili, *Pavements*, 21, fig. II-8 (Huseifa); *ibid.*, 19, fig. II-3 (Beth Alpha); *ibid.*, 233, fig. XI-3b (Ma’on-Nirim); *ibid.*, 126, fig. VI-10 (Beth Shean); *ibid.*, 20, fig. II-7 (Hammath Gader), among others.

⁷³⁰ Examples include carved *tabulae*-framed donation inscriptions on church lintels from Syria and Arabia, as well as the machicolation inscription at Sinai: *supra* n. 197.

putti lift up a *tabula* which frames the dedicatory inscription which names and celebrates the patron, Valentinus.⁷³¹

The form functioned similarly in the wall and triumphal arch mosaics of fifth- and sixth-century churches, echoing its monumental Roman predecessor in equivalent Christian architectural settings. In the north aisle wall mosaics of the fifth-century church of Hagios Demetrios in Thessaloniki, Roman-type *tabulae* framed dedicatory inscriptions, invocations and vows above the north inner aisle spandrels (Fig. 4.23).⁷³² In Rome, Roman-type *tabulae* also frame the two halves of the dedicatory inscription on the triumphal arch of San Paolo fuori le mura (Fig. 4.24), while a Greek-type *tabula* frames the short martyr inscription on the triumphal arch of San Lorenzo fuori le mura (Fig. 4.25).⁷³³ Although both monuments have been repaired since the sixth century, the *tabulae* were original to the mosaics.⁷³⁴ Even in imagined depictions, the *tabula* continued to act as a monumental architectural form, as seen on fourth-century gold-glass from Rome, where *tabulae* which frame saints' names appear atop columns (Fig. 4.26).⁷³⁵

Most significantly, however, late antique mosaic *tabulae* were most often placed in spatially significant locations on the floors of Christian buildings to frame primary dedicatory inscriptions, but also to frame viewers' overall experiences. As discussed previously, in the Roman period carved *tabulae* were often the frame of choice for

⁷³¹ H. Stern, *Le calendrier de 354* (Beirut, 1954), 118-23; Pani, 'Forma', 171-2; M.R. Salzman, *On Roman Time. The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1992), 25-6, fig. 1; Elsner, *Roman eyes*, 204.

⁷³² The mosaics are very badly damaged, but are preserved in watercolour drawings: R. Cormack, 'The Mosaic Decoration of S. Demetrios, Thessaloniki: a re-examination in the light of the drawings of W. S. George', *PBSA*, 64 (1969), 17-52, Pls. 1-15; and more generally, J.C. Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th-7th Centuries CE* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

⁷³³ On San Paolo, *supra* n. 118. On San Lorenzo, *supra* n. 385. The roughly contemporaneous fresco in the Catacomb of Marcellino e Pietro features a *tabulae* held by winged Victories placed on the spandrel of an arch, to be discussed shortly: see p. 223 below. The Greek type also will be discussed in more detail shortly.

⁷³⁴ Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali. Tavole*.

⁷³⁵ Morey, nos. 88, 240. The frame was conceived as sign for monumental architecture beginning in the imperial period, as on a sarcophagus (c. 180-90) made in Rome, now in San Lorenzo itself, on the centre of which four Ionic columns support a blank *tabula* (possibly originally meant for the funerary inscription), evoking a temple facade or a triumphal arch: C. Reinsberg, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben, Dritter Teil, Vita Romana* (Berlin, 2006), Kat. 113.

important inscriptions, which were placed and oriented to ensure their visibility and their ability to be recognized as significant texts. While some of these examples were placed so high up that legibility must have been an issue, the form of the frame signalled the inscriptions as important. Extant mosaic *tabulae* from earlier Roman secular contexts, including villas at Mérida and Faro, were frequently placed in important liminal spaces on the borders of mosaic pavements of particular rooms,⁷³⁶ in order to differentiate public from private areas and act as protective *apotropaia*.⁷³⁷ Christian patrons maintained the same interest in defining, elaborating and protecting boundary spaces, including entrances and the space immediately in front of the sanctuary, through forms with magical or protective powers, including crosses and more decorative motifs.⁷³⁸ Some types of frames and geometric patterns did explicitly signal a protective or magical association, including the mosaic grid frame which decorates the pavement of a Christian building at Beth Hashitta (fifth to seventh centuries) in Palestine, which is based on ancient ‘magic square’ inscriptions (Fig. 4.27), as well as motifs such as the eight-pointed star which acts as a supplementary frame to the circular-framed inscription in the central nave of the Church of the Virgin at Madaba, discussed in Chapter One (Fig. 1.15).⁷³⁹ However, although *tabulae* did not serve any particular apotropaic function, they were placed at particular spots on the floors and triumphal arches of early Christian buildings because they were considered appropriate frames for liminal spaces, especially points of access into and out of the

⁷³⁶ On the Mérida mosaic, *supra* n. 695. A similar *tabula*-framed inscription was placed in the vestibule of a building at Faro, now in the Museo Arqueológico Lapidario Infante D. Henrique Faro: Gómez Pallarès, *Edición y Comentario*, 181-5, no. FAR 1, Pl. 84.

⁷³⁷ Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 304-16; J.R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D.250: Ritual, space and decoration* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1991), 1-30; E. Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors* (Aldershot, 2009), 32-74.

⁷³⁸ Kitzinger, ‘Threshold’, 244-59; Spieser, ‘Doors’; Gerstel, *Thresholds*.

⁷³⁹ Y. Aharoni, ‘Excavations at Beth-Hashitta’, *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, 18, 3-4 (1954), 209-15 (Hebrew); V. Sussman, ‘The Beth Hashitta Mosaic Floor: A New Perspective in the Light of Samaritan Lamps’, *LA*, 54 (2004), 351-68. On magic square inscriptions generally, Squire, *Iliad*, ch. 5. On the Church of the Virgin, *supra* pp. 44-6, n. 134. Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, who points out other examples of this motif, which occurs elsewhere, including in the basilica of Chlef (Orléansville) in modern Algeria; on this basilica, Yasin, *Saints*, 140ff, fig. 3.21. On the magical properties of geometric motifs in church floor mosaics, especially the power of repetition, Maguire, ‘Magic’, 265-74.

church, between the nave and the aisles, and between the nave and the sanctuary. The frame frequently appears in or in front of the main doorway into a building, as at the Church of the Rivers at ‘Umm al-Rasas.⁷⁴⁰ The placement of mosaic *tabulae* in the liminal spaces of entrance into and movement within Christian structures is echoed by the use of carved *tabulae* on church and house lintels,⁷⁴¹ as well as by *tabulae* displayed on the lintels of architectural facades which decorate the top zones of ivory diptychs, including the diptychs of the consul Areobindus, issued in 506 (Fig. 4.28).⁷⁴² The appropriateness of the *tabula* as a frame for liminal spaces is thus manifest in actual architectural spaces as well as in representations of imagined architecture.

Tabula-framed inscriptions frequently decorate the zone between the nave and the sanctuary floor, an even more spiritually loaded liminal space, as in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash.⁷⁴³ Occasionally, *tabulae* frame inscriptions in the sanctuary pavement itself, as in the churches at Oum Hartaïne and Houedjit Halaoua in Syria, but in other regions this placement was not common.⁷⁴⁴ When placed between the nave and the sanctuary, the frame acted as boundary between earthly (nave) and sacred space (sanctuary) in a similar way to the chancel barrier, but without physically impeding sight

⁷⁴⁰ J. Bujard, with contributions from M. Piccirillo and M. Poiati-Halldimann, ‘Les églises géminées d’Umm er-Rasas. Fouilles de la mission archéologique suisse (fondation Max van Berchem)’, *ADAJ*, 36 (1992), 293-306, especially 300-1, no. 70; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 240-2; Michel, 415.

⁷⁴¹ For example, a lintel from Areopolis (Rabbat Moab), Syria, bearing a *tabula*-framed building inscription dated to 687 C.E.: F. Zayadine, ‘Deux Inscriptions Grecques de Rabbat Moab (Areopolis)’, *ADAJ*, 16 (1971), 74-6, fig. 3; also a lintel fragment found at Horvat Sumaq, Israel: S. Dar, ‘Horvat Sumaq—1990’, *ESI*, 10, 2 (1991), 104-5, fig. 113; and a lintel from a sixth century house at Ruweiha, Syria, which bears two *tabulae*-framed inscriptions, separated by a cross-in-circle, acting as apotropaic guardians of the doorway: I. Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria* (Reading, 1997), 172.

⁷⁴² R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1929), 107-17, N9-15; W.F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz, 1952), 32-4, no. 8-14, Pls. 5-7. The Symmachii-Nicomachi diptychs also feature inscribed *tabulae* at the top of the visual field, abstracted and functioning as *tituli* rather than any sort of architectural feature: Delbrueck, 209-15, N54; Volbach, 51, no. 55, Pl. 29. Other ivories include a diptych representing the apostle Paul, dated to the sixth century, now in Paris, Musée Cluny: *ibid.*, 99, no. 150, Pl. 79.

⁷⁴³ *Supra* n. 1.

⁷⁴⁴ On Oum Hartaïne, *supra* n. 530. On Houedjit Halaoua, *supra* n. 265.

or movement between the two zones.⁷⁴⁵ This placement in-between allowed patrons to take credit for decorating the most sacred space in the church, the sanctuary, without actually putting their names on the sanctuary floor itself, a self-aggrandizing act that might have seemed inappropriate for lay or female patrons.⁷⁴⁶

b. Formal variation and associative meanings

While most mosaic *tabulae* are of the Roman type, a small number are of the Greek type, with *ansae* in the shapes of semi-circles. While the Greek type was the original form of the *tabula*, it had mostly gone out of fashion in the Roman period, but had come back into use in the western provinces by the third century as attested by a villa pavement at Oudna, Tunisia, which displays several unusual features, including Greek-style *ansae* pierced by an intermediary triangle and the continuation of the inscription into the *ansae* field (Fig. 4.29).⁷⁴⁷ Six small blank Greek-type *tabulae* adorn the fourth-century porphyry Sarcophagus of Helena, either in connection with the military iconography on the body of the sarcophagus, or perhaps as frames for painted funerary inscriptions (Fig. 4.30).⁷⁴⁸ However, on the whole Greek-type *tabulae* remained rare in late antiquity. Practically all examples of Greek *tabulae* from Christian contexts are found within a very small area of Arabia (particularly in Jerash, Rihab and Khirbat al-Samra) and within a relatively tight temporal range (c. 550-650), produced by a workshop or workshops willing and able to experiment with less common forms. The earliest of these Greek-type

⁷⁴⁵ Churches with *tabulae*-framed inscriptions in front of their sanctuaries frequently had chancel barriers as well, as in Church of St. Basil at Rihab, *supra* n. 264; or steps up to a raised sanctuary space, as at Khirbet Beiyûdât, L. Di Segni, 'Khirbet el-Beiyûdat: The Inscriptions', in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 265-73, especially 265-7; idem, 'The Inscriptions at Khirbet el-Beiyûdat', in Tsafir, *Ancient Churches*, 164-9, especially 164-5, no. 3.

⁷⁴⁶ Including the *tabula*-framed inscription at the entrance to the bema in Basilica A, Demetrias, dated to the late fourth-early fifth century, which proclaims the name and title of the female patron: 'Δαμοκρατία / ἡ λαμπροτάτη': Spiro, *Corpus*, 657; Bachuizen et al, *Demetrias V*, nos. 23-4; *SEG* 37, 465.

⁷⁴⁷ The form frames an artist inscription, now in the Bardo Museum: *CIL* VIII, 24109; *Inventaire*, 2, 129ff, no. 381; Donderer, 98-9, cat. A 72, Pl. 42.

⁷⁴⁸ The sarcophagus, probably originally carved for Constantine, is now in the Vatican: P. Grierson, 'The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors', *DOP*, 16 (1962), 1-62; Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, cat. 173.

tabulae, in the Church of Isaiah (559 C.E.), at Jerash, has semicircular *ansae* whose bases are of the same height as that of rectangular *tabula*, as if the triangular *ansae* of a Roman-type *tabula* have been inverted and rounded off (Fig. 4.31).⁷⁴⁹ Semicircular *ansae* appear again on *tabulae* in the Churches of St. Mary (582-583) and St. Peter (623) at Rihab (Figs. 4.32-33), while similar (though slightly smaller) semicircular *ansae* are found on a contemporaneous *tabula* in the Church of St. Paul, also at Rihab (595) (Fig. 4.34); and on seventh-century *tabulae* in the Chapel of Anastasios (638-639), and ‘Church 20’, both at Khirbat al-Samra.⁷⁵⁰ These three *tabulae* have few parallels in other media, and are probably the results of local workshop experimentation with the traditional Greek type.⁷⁵¹

Three other versions of Greek-type *tabulae* are also distinct. In the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore at Madaba (562), the *tabula* features semicircular *ansae* derived from the Greek type which were then hybridized with *ansae* of the Roman type, with an open triangle pasted onto the semicircle of each *ansa* (Fig. 4.35).⁷⁵² The *tabula* in the Chapel of Anastasios at Khirbat al-Samra has yet another version of hybrid Greek/Roman *ansae*, in which the semicircles of the *ansae* have been merged into the rectangular body of the frame, while the intersecting Roman-type triangle is made more distinct (Fig. 4.36).⁷⁵³

This cluster of variations on the Greek-type *tabulae* occurs in the same part of Arabia in which patrons composed higher-level verse inscriptions which praise the euergetic activities of donors, such as the inscription in the Church of Saints Peter and

⁷⁴⁹ J.M.C. Bowsher, ‘The Church Inscriptions’, in F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project 1981-1983* (Amman, 1986), 1, 319-21, no. 1, Pl. II, 3; Michel, 265.

⁷⁵⁰ On the Church of St. Mary, Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 82-5, Pls. 72-8; idem, *Mosaics*, 311; Michel, 221. On the Church of St. Peter, Piccirillo, *Giordania*, 80-2, Pls. 67-71; idem, *Mosaics*, 312; Michel, 219. On the Church of St. Paul, Piccirillo, *Giordania*, 78-9, Pls. 62-6; idem, *Mosaics*, 312; Michel, 219. On the Chapel of Anastasios, Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 308; P.-L. Gatier, in J.B. Humbert and A. Desreumaux (eds.), *Khirbat es-Samra, Jordanie, I. La voie romaine. Le cimetière. Les documents épigraphiques* (Turnhout, 1998), 51, no. 77 (S. 0464); Michel, 202. On ‘Church 20’, Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 308-9; Gatier, in Humbert and Desreumaux, 52-3, no. 70 (S. 0482); Michel, 194.

⁷⁵¹ One carved example can be found on the front of a sarcophagus from Carthage, dated to the fifth century: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, iii, cat. 627, Pl. 149.

⁷⁵² Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 25, 27-8; idem, *Mosaics*, 117; Michel, 307. One of two fragmentary *tabulae* found in the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg (early seventh century) is a sized-down version of this same form: see n. 154 for bibliography.

⁷⁵³ *Supra* n. 750.

Paul at Jerash with which this thesis began.⁷⁵⁴ While not all higher-register inscriptions in these churches are framed by Greek *tabulae*, they are incorporated into the same pavements which feature the form, possibly representing a group of patrons interested in deliberately archaizing texts and frames, the Greek *tabula* acting as the visual equivalent of the classicizing dedicatory inscription. By choosing the more ancient form of a popular frame, patrons such as Beroios and Eulampias, the two *lamprotatoi* (i.e. *clarissimi*) who commissioned the *tabula*-framed inscription in the Church of Isaiah at Jerash, could show off their learning and elevated aesthetic taste to their compatriots.⁷⁵⁵

While the large majority of Christian mosaic *tabulae* are of the Roman or Greek types, several *tabulae* do not fit neatly within the confines of either type. The pavement of the Church of the Priest Wa'il (586) at Umm al-Rasas contains a *tabula* whose *ansae* have been transformed into stylised diamonds with looped points (Fig. 4.37).⁷⁵⁶ The *tabula* in the pavement of the Church of Bishop Sergius (587/8), also at Umm al-Rasas, placed in the fourth intercolumniation between the nave and the north aisle, only has one Roman-type *ansa*; instead, the remaining space in the intercolumniation is taken up by a diamond surrounded by geometric patterns.⁷⁵⁷ The *tabula* at the centre of the nave of the church at Houeidjit Halaoua (471) has one surviving *ansa* which appears abstracted, missing the line that would close the shape to form a triangle, converting the *ansa* into a literal arrow to draw the eyes of viewers (Fig. 4.38).⁷⁵⁸ Similar *ansae* decorate the *tabula* in the mosaic pavement of a funerary chapel at Siyagha Monastery in Arabia.⁷⁵⁹ The central nave of the Church of St. Christopher at Qabr Hiram in Lebanon (575) features a *tabula* where the

⁷⁵⁴ *Supra* n. 1.

⁷⁵⁵ On the Church of Isaiah, *supra* n. 749.

⁷⁵⁶ Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 242-3; idem, 'La chiesa del Prete Wa'il a Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa in Giordania', in F. Manns and E. Alliata (eds.), *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents* (Jerusalem, 1993), 313-34, especially 322; Michel, 409.

⁷⁵⁷ *Supra* n. 211.

⁷⁵⁸ Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 147.

⁷⁵⁹ Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 170; idem, *Mosaics*, 192; idem, in idem and Alliata, 402-13, figs. 35-6; SEG 40, 1538; Di Segni, in Piccirillo and Alliata, 437-8, no. 34.

ansae have become curly vegetal scrolls (*gescheiften Ansaen*) (Fig. 4.39), a form which first appeared on third- and fourth-century sarcophagi (Fig. 4.40), and subsequently on sixth-century ivory diptychs (Fig. 4.41).⁷⁶⁰ These more experimental forms imply the existence of circles of artists and patrons interested in innovation, and hint at a trend towards the use of the frame as decoration rather than as marker of public euergetism.

c. The decorative language of the tabula

1. Ansaen decoration

As the form of the *tabula* varied based upon the particular symbolic and aesthetic preferences of patrons and artists, so did the decorative features applied to the frame. Although Christian mosaic *tabulae* typically have plain *ansae*, rendered either as empty (the same colour as the surrounding pavement outside the frame) or filled with a colour (often red), both Roman- and Greek-type *tabulae* feature *ansae* decorated with one of several figural or geometric motifs. Decorated *ansae* were not an innovation of the Christian period: a carved second-century *tabula* from Egypt features ivy leaves in its *ansae*,⁷⁶¹ while a third-century villa mosaic from Rome includes a *tabula* with a palm branch in each *ansa* (Fig. 4.42).⁷⁶² The early Christian symbols found so often in the earliest Christian art, such as the anchor or the fish, do not decorate late antique mosaic *ansae*. However, the cross-in-circle motif is used in the *ansae* of a *tabula* in the Basilica of

⁷⁶⁰ On Qabr Hiram, Froehner, 309-11; E. Michon, 'L'inscription en mosaïque de la basilique de Medeba et la mosaïque de Kabr Hiram', *RB*, 5 (1897), 263-7; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 416, 419 fig. 414. A similar *tabula* features on Tomb Mosaic 39 from the Church of the Priest Felix at Kélibia, Cintas and Duval, 'Église', no. 39. For examples on sarcophagi, Koch, 541, 591ff. Comparative *tabulae* of varying quality are found on third- and fourth-century sarcophagi from Italy, Gaul and North Africa: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, cats. 118, 929; eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cat. 270; eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 558, 632-4, 639. This form is also present on *tabulae* which grace the tops of the ivory diptychs of Justinian: Delbrueck, 142-3, N26-8; Volbach, 39, 41, nos. 25-7, 33, Pl. 12-4, 17; C. Olovsson, *The Consular Image* (Oxford, 2005), Pl. 16; also, the 'Archangel' Panel in British Museum, London, BM inv. OA999: Volbach, 78-9, Nr. 109, Pl. 59; Olovsson, Pl. 21b.

⁷⁶¹ Herbert, no. 11. A carved funerary monument to an athlete, Marcus Aurelius Hiramgoras, also contains an *ascia* in one of its *ansae*: *IG XIV*, 739; M. Guarducci, *L'epigrafia. Epigrafia greca dalle origini al tardo impero* (Rome, 2005), 410-2, fig. 137.

⁷⁶² Donderer, cat. C19, Pl. 60,2.

St. Demetrios at Nikopolis (cross-in-circle with fillets or ribbons) (Fig. 1.2), and in the Basilica of St. Sphyrion at Trimithous (Tremethousa) (cross within concentric circles),⁷⁶³ while two of the three fourth-century *tabulae* from Portotorres have the Chi-Rho within their *ansae* (Fig. 4.16).⁷⁶⁴

However, the most popular *ansae* motif was the ivy leaf. As mentioned previously, the ivy leaf was a popular symbol from Roman imperial times onward. Ivy leaves (*hederae distinguentes*) were used in both Latin and Greek inscriptions ‘to mark the end of hexameters in metrical inscriptions or to fill up a space where a letter could not be carved without breaking the rules of syllabification’, or in the case of lower-register inscriptions, as simple punctuation at the ends of clauses or sentences.⁷⁶⁵ *Hederae* continued to be paired with Christian inscriptions, occasionally to decorative extremes, for example the magnificent *tabula*-framed inscription in front of the apse of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Jerash, where each line begins and ends with a flower, a vine scroll or an ivy leaf (Fig. 1.17).⁷⁶⁶ Ivy leaves appear in the *ansae* of the very earliest Christian *tabulae* both western, at Elche, Hispania (Fig. 4.15), and eastern churches, in the Kaoussie Church at Antioch.⁷⁶⁷ The leaves were particularly popular *ansae* decorations in sixth-century Arabia, and well-executed examples adorn the *ansae* of the *tabula* in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash, where enlarged white ivy leaves stand out against the red ground of the frame (Fig. 1.1).⁷⁶⁸ These leaves should be read as decorative devices which, like

⁷⁶³ See n. 46, 48 (Nikopolis), 345 (Trimithous). This motif (also called the *stephanostaurion*, the wreathed cross) often decorates chancel screens from Palestine and the Levant, including the marble screen from the sixth-century church at Massout Yitzhak: R. Hachlili, ‘Synagogues in the Land of Israel: The Art and Architecture of Late antique Synagogues’, in Fine, *Sacred Realm*, 96-129, especially 127 fig. 5.9b; and screens from Petra, Nebo, Jerash and Umm al-Rasas: Michel, 51-2; J.-P. Sodini, ‘La sculpture architecturale des églises de Jordanie’, in Duval, *Églises*, 124-45, especially 138-9.

⁷⁶⁴ *Supra* n. 709. On the Chi-Rho generally, *supra* n. 603.

⁷⁶⁵ Marucchi, 70; McLean, 49.

⁷⁶⁶ *Supra* n. 146.

⁷⁶⁷ *Supra* n. 707, 711.

⁷⁶⁸ *Supra* n. 1.

the *tabulae* themselves, had a long previous history as functional and decorative motifs, and which were increasingly put to use for their ornamental properties.

Mosaic *ansae* were also decorated with geometric patterns, most frequently a series of concentric triangles in varying colours which radiate from the center of the *ansa* outwards, as on *tabulae* in the Church of the Holy Apostles, Anemurium (425-50) (Fig. 4.43), and the North Church at Herodion (400-600), where each of the two *ansae* of the *tabula* placed in front of the chancel contains a different geometric pattern (Fig. 4.44).⁷⁶⁹ Mosaic *tabulae* in the Monastery of Martyrius, Ma'ale Adummim (550-600) feature intricate knot patterns in their *ansae* which might have functioned as apotropaic or magical symbols.⁷⁷⁰ Flowers, shell-like forms and other vegetal shapes also decorate *ansae*, as in the case of the three- and four-section 'shells' in the *ansae* of the *tabula* in front of the apse of the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius, Khirbat Mukhayyat (557/8) (Fig. 4.14);⁷⁷¹ the similar forms in the Church of St. Basil, Rihab (594) (Fig. 4.45);⁷⁷² the hybrid flower-chalices in the Lower Church at al-Quwaysmah, near Amman (sixth century) (Fig. 4.46);⁷⁷³ and the vegetal forms in the Karlik church (490/1).⁷⁷⁴ While floral and vegetal *ansae* decorations were popular in Arabia, geometric patterns were more popular in Syria, Palestine and Cilicia. Geometric patterns remained confined to mosaic *ansae*, while floral/vegetal motifs were also popular for the *ansae* of carved *tabulae*.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁶⁹ On the Church of the Holy Apostles, Russell, *Anemurium*, 50-2; Campbell, *Anemurium*, 23, figs. 23-4; Tülek, 207-8. On the North Church, Ovadia, *Pavements*, 70, no. 96; Di Segni, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 177-82, nos. 1-2.

⁷⁷⁰ One of the *tabulae*, in the Chapel of the Three Priests, is also flanked by two additional knotted apotropaic symbols, including Solomon's Knot: Magen and Talgam, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 132ff. On the knot motif as apotropaic, Swift, 41-3.

⁷⁷¹ See pp. 201-2.

⁷⁷² Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 70-2, Pls. 54-57; idem, *Mosaics*, 311; Michel, 214.

⁷⁷³ Saller and Bagatti, *Town of Nebo*, 257-63, no. 2; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 266-7.

⁷⁷⁴ *Supra* n. 496.

⁷⁷⁵ For examples of floral/vegetal *ansae* decoration on sarcophagi: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 303, 367. The *ansae* of *tabulae* on sarcophagi at Solin are decorated with holes combined with leaves as *ansae* filler: eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 300-1, 303.

Most interesting, however, is the motif of *ansae* holes, as these forms recalled the original function of the *tabula ansata* as bronze or stone plaque meant to be attached to the wall or column of a temple. Most *ansae* holes appear triangular rather than round, as in the First Sanctuary at Mount Nebo (Fig. 4.17), transformed by artists from the original round shape of nail holes into decorative forms which more successfully echo the triangular shape of the *ansae*. A similar transformation had already taken place in the medium of sculpture, as seen in the concentric circles of the holes in *ansae* on several fourth-century sarcophagi from Split and Salona (Solin), Croatia (Fig. 4.47).⁷⁷⁶ However, some representations of *ansae* holes in carved stone and mosaic maintain their original round shape.⁷⁷⁷ Mosaic *tabulae* from Christian contexts also represent *ansae* holes as round, as in the Basilica outside-the-walls at Delphi (first half of the sixth century), among other structures (Fig. 4.48).⁷⁷⁸ Although relatively few mosaic *tabulae* have *ansae* decorated with distinctly round holes, the presence of either round or triangular hole decoration indicates that artists and/or patrons had some level of familiarity with or interest in the original appearance of the form, even if that familiarity was not with a particular monument first-hand but with a drawing in a pattern book.⁷⁷⁹ Though these representations of holes are perhaps more decorative fantasy than conscious efforts to hearken back to inscribed votive tablets, something of the original visual language of the form remained in use up through the early eighth century.

⁷⁷⁶ Eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 300-1, 303, Pls. 99-100.

⁷⁷⁷ As seen on a provincial sarcophagus of the fifth to sixth centuries from Ancona: eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 254, 288, Pls. 79, 94; a sarcophagus of the third century reused in the sixth century in Ravenna: J. Kollwitz and H. Herdejürgen, *Die Sarkophage der westlichen Gebeite des Imperium Romanum. Zweiter Teil, Die Ravennatischen Sarkophage* (Berlin, 1979), cat. A 17, Pl. 9; and a fourth-century mosaic from the Building on the Point in Anemurium: Russell, *Anemurium*, 34-8, no. 5, Pl. V; Campbell, *Anemurium*, 1-4, Fig. 5, Pl. 8.

⁷⁷⁸ Pallas, 20-1, fig. 8; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 244-5; Σύνταγμα, 2, 194-6, no. 129; Caraher, 'Church', 30, nos. 40-

1.
⁷⁷⁹ On the use of pattern books, Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 300-3.

2. *The superimposed frame*

Another remnant of the classical visual language of the frame survived in the form of the superimposed *tabula*, where the frame appears to have been pasted on top of the geometric, vegetal or figural field of the background. More than a dozen examples of the type are extant, including a *tabula* in the pavement of the north room of the North Church at Herodion (fifth or sixth century) (Fig. 4.49),⁷⁸⁰ in the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis, and in the late fifth- or sixth-century church at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât in Palestine (Fig. 4.50).⁷⁸¹ The effect of superimposition was not new in the Christian period, and can be seen in the *tabula* framed within a rectangle and placed on top of the regularized patterned background from the villa mosaic from Mérida, discussed previously (Fig. 4.9), dated to the second half of the second century.⁷⁸² Interestingly, the superimposed *tabula* appears to attempt to imitate something of the visual effect which the original bronze votive *tabulae* would have had when cut out and fixed in place to temple walls or columns. While most superimposed *tabulae* frame donor inscriptions or invocations, some examples feature votive donations, including a *tabula* in the nave pavement of the Vrina Plain Basilica at Butrint, Albania (late fifth or early sixth century), which frames an anonymous votive donor inscription: ‘for a vow of those whose names God knows’ (Fig. 4.51).⁷⁸³

Other *tabulae* achieve the visual effect of superimposition by playing with tesserae size and colour, as in the inscription from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Jerash, where the red ground of the frame stands out against the white stone tesserae of the

⁷⁸⁰ Di Segni, ‘Herodion’, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*.

⁷⁸¹ On the Basilica of St. Demetrios, *supra* n. 46, 48-9. On the church at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât, *supra* n. 744.

⁷⁸² On the Mérida mosaic, *supra* n. 695.

⁷⁸³ J. Mitchell, ‘The mosaic pavements of the baptistery’, in R. Hodges, W. Bowden and K. Lako (eds.), *Byzantine Butrint: Excavations and Surveys 1994-99* (Oxford, 2004), 202-18; idem, *The Butrint Baptistery and its Mosaics* (London & Tirana, 2008), 87-93.

surrounding pavement (Fig. 1.1).⁷⁸⁴ Similarly, the mosaic inscription in front of the entrance to a burial cave in Mamilla (late sixth or early seventh century), is set into a *tabulae* made of the same off-white-coloured limestone as the rest of the pavement, but the tesserae inside the rectangular field of the frame are much smaller than those of the rest of the pavement, creating the visual illusion that the frame is composed of a finer material than its surroundings (Fig. 4.52).⁷⁸⁵ By varying tesserae size and colour, mosaicists imitated the effect achieved when classical Roman *tabulae* were attached to buildings, for example the white marble *tabula* set into the lintel of the brick Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana, built in Ostia in the mid-second century (Fig. 4.53), or the contemporaneous example built into the exterior of the Tomb Tower of Elhabel at Palmyra (Fig. 4.54), drawing further attention to the frame and its text.⁷⁸⁶

Of course, not all Christian mosaic *tabulae* are of the superimposed variety. Often the *tabula* appears within its own rectangular frame, neatly incorporated into the overall design of the floor (what might be termed the ‘engaged’ *tabula*), as in the pavement of the Old Cathedral at Bari in Italy (fifth or sixth century) (Fig. 4.55).⁷⁸⁷ Variants of the engaged *tabula* exist as well, including the frame itself framed by geometric shapes such as rhombuses, as in the nave pavement of the early fifth-century church at Hir esh-Sheikh in Syria (Fig. 4.56).⁷⁸⁸ Several *tabulae* also appear to be hybrids of the engaged and superimposed types, including *tabulae* in the Basilica of St. Sphyridon at Trimithous, and

⁷⁸⁴ *Supra* n. 1.

⁷⁸⁵ R. Reich, E. Shukrun and Y. Bilig, ‘Jerusalem, Mamilla Area’, *ESI*, 10, 1 (1991), 24-5. Another example of a similar *tabula*-ground contrast occurs in the sixth-century church at Beit Mery, in Lebanon: R.P. Mouterde, in M. Chéhab, *Mosaïques du Liban. Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 14 (Paris, 1957/8), 167; J. and L. Robert, ‘Bulletin épigraphique’, *REG*, 74 (1961), no. 783; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 339-40, fig. 324.

⁷⁸⁶ The Ostia inscription is *CIL* XIV, no. 4709; also G. Becatti, ‘Ostia, Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana’, in *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*, (1940), 32-50, especially 44. The Palmyra inscription is *CIS* 4134; also K. As’ad and J.-B. Yon, *Inscriptions de Palmyre. Promenades épigraphiques dans la ville antique de Palmyre. Guides archéologiques de l’Institut Français d’archéologie du proche-orient*, 3 (Beirut, Damascus & Amman, 2001), 104, no. 32.

⁷⁸⁷ Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 13-5, cat. 3, with previous bibliography.

⁷⁸⁸ J. Balty, *Mosaïques*, 92, ‘Deir esh-Sharqi’; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 126-8.

Basilica A at Demetrias, which are enclosed by rectangles but still appear to be laid on top of an underlying geometric design (Fig. 4.57).⁷⁸⁹ This flexibility of type must relate to the willingness of artists to innovate, as well as the late antique love of variety which drove that innovation.

Superimposed and engaged *tabulae* were not mutually exclusive forms, and could co-exist in the same pavement. The mosaic pavement of the North Church at Herodion features an engaged *tabula*-framed donor inscription given pride of place in the east end of the nave, immediately in front of the chancel barrier (Fig. 4.44), while a superimposed *tabula* frames another donor inscription on the floor of a subsidiary north room attached to the church (Fig. 4.49).⁷⁹⁰ These two inscriptions are not dated, but are clearly contemporary as they mention the same two donors, Anael and Saprika. While the decision to place one donation inscription in an engaged *tabula* and the other in a superimposed *tabula* was perhaps driven by the desire for decorative variety, the hierarchy of spaces within the church also played a role. As at Herodion, many superimposed *tabulae* appear in the aisles or subsidiary rooms of Christian buildings rather than in more important spaces, where the engaged *tabula* was more common. Even if superimposed *tabulae* were mostly relegated to secondary spaces in churches, their existence implies some amount of interest in imagining the *tabula* as three-dimensional, an interest which consciously or unconsciously references the original form.

3. *The tabula, aloft*

One other *trompe l'oeil* format was available to patrons: the *tabula* held aloft by two figures. The iconography of two figures holding a panel of text was already ancient by the fourth century BCE, as attested by several archaic Greek tombstones from Boeotia

⁷⁸⁹ On the Basilica of St. Sphyridon, *supra* n. 345. On Basilica A, Pallas, 54-5, no. 33; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 390, 397, 657; Bakhuizen et al., 292-5, nos. 23-4; SEG 37, 465; Caraher, 'Church', 334, nos. 52-3.

⁷⁹⁰ *Supra* n. 769.

which depict winged Victories holding panels inscribed with the names of the deceased (Fig. 4.58).⁷⁹¹ While similar examples are not uncommon as frames for funerary inscriptions on late antique sarcophagi, this particular iconographic format is rare in Christian mosaics.⁷⁹² In fact, only two examples are extant, both from Christian structures in Greece, the Thyrsos Basilica at Tegea (late fourth or fifth century) and the Basilica of St. Demetrios at Nikopolis (second half of the sixth century). At Tegea, the simple Roman-type *tabula* with round *ansae* holes at the entrance to the nave frames the main dedicatory inscription and is held by two curly-haired putti clad in short tunics and wearing floral crowns whose feet are aligned with the west wall of the nave (Fig. 4.59).⁷⁹³ The putto on the left seems to be superimposed over the geometric border of the panel, while the putto on the right is bordered by a line that slashes across the otherwise regular geometric design, conveying the illusion that the putti are standing in the foreground on top of a recessed background.

In the south transept pavement of the Basilica of St. Demetrios, two lightly-bearded soldiers, probably donors, appear clad in armor and bearing spears and shields, and stand on either side of a *tabula* containing a fragmentary inscription (Fig. 4.60).⁷⁹⁴ Because of the damaged state of the mosaic, it is difficult to tell whether the soldiers are in fact holding the frame up, as in the Thyrsos Basilica, or if the *tabula* is superimposed in front of the scene. However, the feet of the soldier on the left are posed similarly to those

⁷⁹¹ Fraser and Rönne, Pls. 27, 1-2.

⁷⁹² While *putti* frequently hold up rectangular inscription frames on sarcophagi, only a handful elevate ansate *tabulae*: Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, cats. 472, 715; eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cats. 20, 63, 123, 187, 367; eadem, *Repertorium*, iii, cat. 309; also, on a late Roman sarcophagus reused by later Christians: Deichmann, *Ravenna. Geschichte*, 85, Abb. 171.

⁷⁹³ Pallas, 181-3, no. 89D; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 186, 188-93, 655; Feissel and Philippidis-Braat, 296-7, no. 38, 371, no. 137; Σύνταγμα, 2, 77-9, no. 21; E. Sironen, *The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions of Athens and Attica* (Helsinki, 1997), 327; Caraher, 'Sacred', 316, nos. 5-6.

⁷⁹⁴ Kitzinger, 'Mosaics', 83-102; Spiro, *Corpus*, i, 439-41, 443-5, 452-3, 458-9, 464, 657-8; Caraher, 'Sacred', 323-4, nos. 21-4. While Kitzinger posits that these men might be military saints, their iconography seems to fit his alternative suggestion better, that they are military donors to the church. A similar figure, a hunter, is named ('Stephanos') in the nave pavement of the Church of the Deacon Thomas (early sixth century), in the 'Uyun Musa Valley, Arabia: Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 218; idem, *Mosaics*, 187.

of the putti in the Thyrsos Basilica mosaic, as if he is leaning forward to support the weight of the frame. A similar representation of the scheme appears on a late fourth-century sarcophagus from Vincigliata, where two men (probably Peter and Paul) pop up behind the large *ansae* of the central *tabula* (Fig. 4.61).⁷⁹⁵ However, the soldiers at Nikopolis are more individualized, differentiated by costume, facial features and beard length.

The rarity of the mosaic *tabula* held aloft by figures is such that the artists and patrons at Tegea and Nikopolis must have made concerted decisions to buck the overriding trend of plain *tabulae* incorporated into the overall mosaic pavement design. The texts and placement of the inscriptions provide further evidence of the exceptional nature of the works: the Thyrsos inscription is relatively learned in its vocabulary and themes, while the fragmentary Nikopolis inscription faces another erudite *tabula*-framed text, the ‘earth and ocean’ inscription discussed in Chapter One.⁷⁹⁶ At Nikopolis, the soldiers call to mind the form as frame for military *tituli* in triumphal processions, although by the sixth century that particular association might not have been readily apparent. However, we should recall the association of elevated tablets and other objects with triumph, as seen on the Arch of Constantine in Rome (erected in 315), where winged Victories on the spandrels elevate military trophies (Fig. 4.62), or the Arch of Dativius Victor in Mainz, dated to the middle of the third century, where putti on the attic story elevate an inscription framed by a *tabula* with *ansae* in the shapes of *pelta* shields (Fig.

⁷⁹⁵ The sarcophagus, whose authenticity has been questioned, is now in Florence: H. Brandenburg, ‘Ein verschollener Mailänder Sarkophag’, *RAC*, 48 (1972), 43-78, figs. 1-2 (as a modern fake); G. Cuscito, ‘Studi e ricerche di epigrafia cristiana a Milano’, *Felix Ravenna*, 127, 30 (1984-5), 133-57, especially 143ff, fig. 5; Brandenburg, ‘La scultura a Milano nel IV e V secolo’, in *Il millennio ambrosiano. Milano, una capitale da Ambrogio ai Carolingi* (Milan, 1987), 80-109, 94ff (as late fourth century); Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, 89-90, cat. 253, Pl. 79, 6, summarizing arguments for and against its authenticity. A similar scheme appears on the front of the tomb/*memoria* of St. Victorinus at Amiternum, dated to the second half of the fifth century: L. Pani Ermini, *Il Santuario del martire Vittorino in Amiterno e la sua catacomba* (Terni, 1975); idem, ‘Il santuario di S. Vittorino in Amiternum. Note sulla origine’, *RAC*, 3 (1979), 95-105; Pani, ‘Forma’, 174-6, figs. 2-3.

⁷⁹⁶ See pp. 23ff.

4.63).⁷⁹⁷ This triumphal valence could be transferred iconographically from the military sphere to acts of donation, as on a *tabula*-framed dedicatory inscription at Pavia, held aloft by putti, which celebrates the renovation of an amphitheatre by Atalaric (Fig. 4.64).⁷⁹⁸ Putti, or the donors themselves, elevated the frames of donation inscriptions in order to draw additional attention to the text, as well as to celebrate the achievements of the donors inscribed within these frames.

While Victories or angels do not hold up *tabulae* on any church floors, a single Nike does support a *tabula*-framed dedicatory inscription in the mosaic pavement of Room A in the fourth-century Building on the Point at Anemurium (Fig. 4.65).⁷⁹⁹ A similar scheme appears on an arcosolium in the Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter in Rome, where two winged Victories/angels hold up a *tabula* containing a funerary inscription (Figs. 4.66-67).⁸⁰⁰ The inclusion of winged bearers at Anemurium, whether they were read as classical victories or as Christian angels, would have even more explicitly elevated the donor and his achievements, displaying his love of classical form through the appropriation of a typical Roman sculptural motif.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁷ On the Arch of Constantine, H.P. L'Orange and A. von Gerkan, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens* (Berlin, 1939), 150-5; B. Berenson, *The Arch of Constantine or the Decline of Form* (New York, 1954). The arch in Mainz is now in the Stone Hall of the Landesmuseum: H.G. Frenz, 'Der Ehrenbogen des Dativius Victor zu Mainz und seine neue Rekonstruktion', *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission*, 62 (1981), 220-60; G. Bauchhenss, *Denkmäler des Iuppiterkultes aus Mainz und Umgebung. CSIR Deutschland II.3, Germania Superior* (Mainz, 1984), 78-83, cat. 94, Taf. 125-8; K. Cassibry, 'Provincial Patrons and Commemorative Rivalries: Rethinking the Roman Arch Monument', *Museion*, 8, 3 (2008), 417-46; the inscription is *CIL* XIII, 16705. The *tabula* on the arch has modified *ansae* in the shape of pelta shields or axes (*asciae*), possibly to harness the apotropaic or magical properties of that motif: Pani, 'Segno', 435.

⁷⁹⁸ *CIL* V, 6418; A. Silvagni, *Monumenta epigraphica Christiana saeculo XIII antiquiora quae in Italiae finibus adhuc extant*, 2, Fasc. 3: *Pappia* (Vatican City, 1943), tav. 1, n. 3; G. Panazza, *Lapidi e sculture paleocristiane e pre-romaniche di Pavia* (Torino, 1953), 232-3, n. 10, tav. LXXXIV; Pani, 'Forma', 178-80, fig. 6.

⁷⁹⁹ Campbell, *Anemurium*, 1-3, cat. 1, Pl. 8; Russell, *Anemurium*, 35, no. 5.

⁸⁰⁰ Deckers, Seeliger and Mietke, 199, no. 2, Pl. 2.

⁸⁰¹ The mosaics of the nearby Baths III 15 also include a *tabula*-framed dedicatory inscription depicted on top of a column, a very literal translation of the three-dimensional iconography of sculpture into the flat medium of mosaic: Campbell, *Anemurium*, 39-40, Pl. 166. This format resembles that found on the gold-glass from Rome, where *tabulae* on tops of columns bear the names of the martyrs depicted, as on a gold-glass now in Florence, Museo Nazionale: Morey, no. 240, Pl. 26.

The *tabula* frame varied in its specifics, but the form itself presented the Christian inscriptions written within as elite Roman expressions of donation. Different types of *tabulae* were chosen by patrons to convey specific meanings: patrons and artists in parts of Arabia chose the Greek-type *tabula* to emphasize their knowledge of Graeco-Roman visual culture, while Greek patrons included frame bearers to evoke the euergetic or military triumphalism of classical forms. The frame was not a conveyor of specific meaning in every instance, but late antique patrons, artists and viewers were clearly aware of the possibilities of different types of the form, exploiting each traditional type and creating novel visual riffs on more standard types. *Tabulae* added visual interest to texts and incorporated text into the surrounding decoration, projecting an illusion of three dimensions and forcing the viewer to respond to their presence as sculptural forms. The frame emphasized the inscriptions within as texts to read, but also transformed text into culturally-coded decoration. At the same time that the *tabula* called attention to the text within, the increasingly elaborate iterations of the form turned both the frame and its text into art. The frame was not in every instance imbued with symbolism independent of the text it displayed, but particular types were chosen and placed in significant spaces to nuance the act of reading, to monumentalize the texts within, and to visually reference the classical civic ideal of donation through form.

The 'object' frame and Christian innovation

Mosaic inscription frames also took other forms with classical and/or Christian symbolism, including the *clipeus*, wreath, cross, *kantharos* (amphora) and church/temple front. Like the *tabula ansata*, the *clipeus* and wreath were both frames for classical images and inscriptions, but the wreath gained Christian new significance as a crown for Christ and for the martyrs. The latter types of object frames, including the *kantharos*, derived in

conception from the experimental visual tendencies of Greek and Roman poets, including Simias, whose Hellenistic pattern poems, laid out in various shapes connected to their content (an egg, wings, etc.), inspired the fourth-century poet Optatian.⁸⁰² The forms of these inscription frames display deeply symbolic connections between form and content, reflecting the texts written within but also affecting their verbal messages visually.

a. Clipeus and wreath

The *clipeus* and wreath were distinctively Roman forms which remained in use as frames for early Christian inscriptions.⁸⁰³ However, although both frames appealed due to their round shapes, they each evoked distinct associations. In the imperial period, the circular *clipeus* or ‘shield’ was typically used to frame carved bust portraits of individuals or deities in both public and more private art, including on sarcophagi.⁸⁰⁴ The form was also used as a frame for text (the *clipeus virtutis*), as well as the act of writing itself, especially Victory inscribing the military accomplishments of the emperor on a shield, a ubiquitous iconography found in monumental state relief sculpture, including on the Column of Trajan in Rome, where the image occurs midway up the historiated frieze and divides the two cycles of Dacian campaigns (Fig. 4.68).⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰² On Simias, L.A. Guichard, ‘Simias’ Pattern Poems: The Limits of the Canon’, in M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (eds.), *Beyond the Canon. Hellenistica Groningana*, 11 (Leuven, 2006), 83-103, with additional bibliography. On Roman pattern poems such as the ‘Altar’ of Vestinus (AG 15.25), N. Livingstone and G. Nisbet, *Epigram* (Cambridge, 2010), 121-3. On Optatian, Squire, *Iliad*, 219-22, with previous bibliography.

⁸⁰³ Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 48. On the *clipeus*, *supra* pp.180-1, n. 633.

⁸⁰⁴ Pliny, *Natural History* 35.3-4, discusses the origin of *imagines clipeatae*, which he dates to the fifth century BCE, as well as the practice of pairing the shield portraits with inscriptions which list the honours of the individual depicted.

⁸⁰⁵ K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Die Trajanssäule: Ein römisches Kunstwerk zu Beginn der Spätantike* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926); L. Rossi, *Trajan’s Column and the Dacian Wars*, trans. J.M.C. Toynbee (Ithaca, NY, 1971); W. Gauer, *Untersuchungen zur Trajanssäule, Erster Teil: Darstellungsprogramm und künstlerischer Entwurf. Monumenta Artis Romanae*, 13 (Berlin, 1977), 25; R. Brilliant, *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca, 1986), 90-108; F. Lepper and S. Frere, *Trajan’s Column: A New Edition of the Chichorius Plates* (Gloucester, 1988), 121, Pl. LVII; M. Galinier, *La collone Trajane et les forums impériaux* (Rome, 2007), 85-8.

The *clipeus* was adapted to serve as a frame for early Christian inscriptions and images on pavements. While most scholars refer to these types of frames as ‘roundels’ or ‘medallions’, the circular rimmed shape had cultural and symbolic connotations which these generic classifications either essentialize or ignore. Mosaic *clipei* in many cases retained their sculptural quality, appearing to be superimposed upon pavements to give the impression that the inscribed text was placed upon a preexisting background in the same mode as superimposed *tabulae*. A simple *clipeus* frames the dedicatory inscription in the pavement of the fourth-century south hall of the Complex of Bishop Theodore at Aquileia, seemingly pasted on top of the marine scene of *putti* fishing (Fig. 4.69).⁸⁰⁶ The form of the *clipeus* is defined by the border, composed of two concentric black lines, which gives the impression that the body of the epigraphic field, the ‘shield’, projects outward from a thin recessed rim. Interestingly, the text of the inscription is similar to what one would expect on a Roman *clipeus virtutis*, describing the donations of the bishop Theodore, and begins in classical fashion by describing him as ‘happy’ (*Theodore feli[x]*).⁸⁰⁷ A similar superimposed *clipeus* with a thick single-line border frames the text of a Greek inscription in the main hall of a hermitage of the Siyagha monastery in Jordan (late fifth or early sixth century), whose text strays from the classical model of the Aquileia inscription and instead proclaims that the work was done ‘for the peace and salvation of our father, (Abbot) Procapis’ (Fig. 4.70).⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ *ILCV*, 1, 1863; Caillet, *Évergétisme*, 136-9, cat. 21, 4, with further bibliography. Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 48, 49 fig. 2, points out the decreasing size of the letters as one reads the lines from the top, a common feature of Roman monumental public inscriptions. This pavement also features *imagines clipeatae* of donors: H. Kähler, *Die Stiftermosaiken in der konstantinischen Südkirche von Aquileia* (Cologne, 1962); G. Brusin, ‘Il mosaico pavimentale della basilica di Aquileia e i suoi ritratti’, *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti della classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche. Estratto*, serie VIII, vol. VIII, fasc. 7-12 (luglio-dicembre 1967) (Rome, 1968); Menis, *Nuovi studi*, 21-6; Caillet, ‘L’image’, 165.

⁸⁰⁷ A similar text (*Felicitas Tiberi*) is inscribed upon the *clipeus* held by the emperor Augustus on an early first-century sword scabbard found in Mainz: BM inv. no. 1866,0806.1; *CIL* XIII, 6796.

⁸⁰⁸ Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 170-4; idem and Alliata, in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 398-400, 405, fig. 23; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 193; *SEG* 40, 1537; Di Segni in Piccirillo and Alliata, 438-9, no. 35; Michel, 94.

More elaborate versions of the *clipeus* feature multicoloured borders or borders with stepped or jewelled decoration along their rims. These *clipei* may have been based upon Roman sculptural *imagines clipeatae* framed by multiple decorative borders, such as the second-century *imagines* of donors which originally decorated the walls of the Baths of Mithras at Ostia (Fig. 4.71).⁸⁰⁹ In Chapter Two, we examined two round inscriptions of the Bishop Paul from the pavement of the East Cathedral at Apamea, the mosaic one with a guilloche frame, the other in *opus sectile* with a border of trapezoidal stones from which triangular stones radiate outwards (Figs. 2.17-18).⁸¹⁰ Different types of decorated roundel appear in the pavements of sixth-century churches at Umm al-Rasas. The dedicatory inscription of the Church of the Lions (574 or 589) is framed inside a *clipeus*, set into the acanthus scroll of the nave, whose border is composed of concentric solid lines of red, gray and yellow tesserae, each one tessera wide (Fig. 4.72);⁸¹¹ while *clipei* in the Church of the Bishop Sergius (587/8) frame lengthy inscriptions in the pavement at the entrance to the nave, with a cable border, and in the sanctuary, with a red border inset with diamond-shaped ‘jewels’ and three-lobed leaves which visually echo the flowers surrounding the frame (Figs. 4.73-74).⁸¹² As at Aquileia, the sanctuary inscription in the church emphasizes its production ‘in the good times of our Lord...’ (Ἐν τοῖς / ἀγαθοῖς χρόνοις / τοῦ Δεσπότου ἡμῶν). Variants of the cable frame were popular in Italian and North

⁸⁰⁹ Heintze, 68, no. 107; Winkes, 190-5, cat. Ostia 1-2; *Scavi di Ostia V*, Taf. 42. Eastern examples of *imagines clipeatae* also feature decorated frames, including the bronze *imago* of Trajan’s father from Ankara, whose border is decorated with incised scales: L. Budde, ‘Imago clipeata des Kaisers Traian in Ankara’, *Antike Plastik*, 4 (1965), 103-17.

⁸¹⁰ See pp. 107-9.

⁸¹¹ Bujard et al., 219, no. 71; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 236; Michel, 406. A similar *clipeus* frames an inscription at in the church at Nebha, dated to 557: Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 399, fig. 386

⁸¹² Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 234-5. The stepped pattern as ‘rim’ decoration is also used in secular contexts, as in a *clipeus*-framed inscription in a civic complex along the *cardo* in Jerash, which informs the viewer that the place ‘of the venerable Blues’ was decorated with mosaic in 578, within a decade of the decoration of the Church of Sergius: Ibid., 284, fig. 524. Also, the *clipeus* in the narthex of the church at ‘Evron in Palestine, dated to the late fifth century (490): V. Tzaferis, ‘The Greek Inscriptions from the Early Christian Church at ‘Evron’, *EI*, 19 (1987), 36-53, especially 45, no. 8, fig. 11.

African pavements, where the concentric lines were used to create a rainbow effect.⁸¹³

Other decorative elements incorporated into the iconography of the frame also derive from Roman sculptural tradition, including lotus flowers, as in the Church of St. George at Deir el-‘Adas (722), where a *clipeus* frames the donor’s request for the ‘remission of (his) sins’ (Fig. 4.75).⁸¹⁴ Similar frames were also used for texts inscribed on consular diptychs, including on the diptychs of Justinian, issued in 521 before he became emperor, where the central dedicatory inscription is framed by a lotus-rimmed *clipeus* in the centre of each leaf (Fig. 4.76).⁸¹⁵ However, though all of these versions of the frame were formally related to Graeco-Roman prototypes, the late antique viewer would not have read them as particularly ‘Roman’ due to their ubiquity.

True *imagines clipeatae* in mosaic, already discussed in Chapter Three, also feature in church pavements paired with inscriptions which run around the round rim of the frame. Roman and late Roman mosaics frequently represent figures as bust portraits within *clipei*, particularly personifications, but their inscriptions are limited to name labels rather than dedicatory texts or invocations, as in the mosaic of ‘Salvation’ (ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑ) from the fifth-century Baths of Apolausis at Antioch-on-the-Orontes, now in the Antakya Mosaic Museum (Fig. 4.77), whose cable frame features a similar stepped motif to that of the *clipeus* in the nave of the Church of the Bishop Sergius.⁸¹⁶ However, church mosaics

⁸¹³ For example, a number of inscription frames in the Church of Priest Felix at Kélibia: Cintas and Duval, ‘Église’, nos. 25-6, Pl. VIIa-b, who refer to the frame as a ‘couronne polychrome’. On the ‘rainbow’ band as a light-related motif symbolic of the divine in later Byzantine churches, Ćurčić, ‘Divine Light’, in Westcoat and Ousterhout, 307-37.

⁸¹⁴ Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 48; also a *clipeus* framing a dedicatory inscription in the northern aisle of the sixth-century Church A at Magen: Tzaferis, ‘Magen’; and a seventh- or eighth-century dedicatory inscription in the western wing of the Monastery of Theodore and Kyriakos on Mount Scopus: D. Amit, J. Seligman and I. Zilberbod, ‘The Monastery of Theodorus and Cyriacus on Mount Scopus’, in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and L.D. Chrupcala (eds.), *One Land – Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffredo*, OFM (Jerusalem, 2003), 139-48; L. Di Segni, ‘A Greek Inscription in the “Monastery of Theodorus and Cyriacus” on Mount Scopus’, in *ibid.*, 149-51; *idem*, ‘Christian Epigraphy’, 250-1. Acanthus scrolls decorated all kinds of inscription frames, including the square-framed martyrs’ inscription in the basilica at Henchir Chigarnia (Uppenna) in Tunisia: Yasin, *Saints*, 176-80, fig. 4.18, with previous bibliography.

⁸¹⁵ Delbrueck, 141-3, N26-8; Volbach, 38-9, cats. 25-7., Pl. 12-3.

⁸¹⁶ Levi, *Antioch*, 304-6, Pls. LXVIIId, LXVIII; Campbell, *Antioch*, 15-7, cat. IV A 5 (as ‘Bath D’).

included *imagines* framed by texts inscribed along the rim, as in the Church of the Apostles at Madaba (578), where a bust portrait of the female personification of the sea (ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ) appears within a clipeus in the centre of the nave, framed with two sets of concentric lines in blue and red, which bookend an inscribed invocation: ‘Lord God, maker of Heaven and earth, give life to Anastasios and Thomas and Theodora and Salamanios, mosaicist’ (Fig. 4.78).⁸¹⁷ The text combines an epithet for God used in many of the Psalms, including Psalm 115:3, with a request for Him to ‘give life’ (δὸς ζωὴν), i.e. salvation in the afterlife, to the donors and the artist, a striking combination of classical image and Christian inscription. However, this format was not unique in the period, and relates closely to similar arrangements on silver plate, including a sixth-century paten with a fluted border, part of the Sion Treasure now at Dumbarton Oaks, where a central cross is framed by a circular inscription, ‘+ For the memory and repose’ of the donor, Angeleuos Roufinos (Fig. 4.79).⁸¹⁸ Though similar layouts are not uncommon on silver objects, only a handful of inscriptions paired with *imagines* survive from Christian contexts, implying that the format was not as popular with patrons as other layouts.

While the *clipeus* continued to be popular due to its generic associations with public, monumental praise of patrons, the wreath was popular for its Roman as well as its new Christian symbolic values. In the Graeco-Roman period, wreaths were awarded as prizes to the victors of athletic games, as seen recorded on a second-century stele from Greece, where wreaths of pine and celery (as well as a *clipeus*) are inscribed with the

⁸¹⁷ Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ Θε(ός) ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν δὸς ζωὴν Ἀναστασίῳ καὶ Θωμᾷ καὶ Θεοδώρα κ(αὶ) Σαλαμανίου ψηφ(οθέτου): Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, 142; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 105; idem, *Mosaics*, 106; Michel, 328; Kiilerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 46-7, fig. 1. A similar circular inscription is set into the central nave pavement of the Sepphoris synagogue, framing a depiction of the zodiac: Weiss et al, *Synagogue*, 211-2.

⁸¹⁸ S.A. Boyd, in idem and M. Mundell Mango (eds.), *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 1992), 20, cat. 4, figs. S.4.1-4.3; Leader-Newby, *Silver*, 89-92, fig. 2.17. Other examples include Mundell Mango, *Silver*, cats. 4-6, 36.

names of the Panhellenic games at Isthmia and Nemea (Fig. 4.80).⁸¹⁹ The wreath was imported into the arena of politics and state iconography at an early date. In the Roman period, the *corona civica*, a crown of oak leaves tied by a fillet, was worn by emperors in their official imagery, for example a mid-first century statue of Claudius with the attributes of Jupiter (Fig. 4.81).⁸²⁰ Wreaths retained their status as signifiers of triumph and authority in late antiquity, and were still being awarded to victorious charioteers in the Hippodrome in Constantinople in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁸²¹

Wreaths were often used to frame images and inscriptions in the mosaics of late antique secular buildings, as in the Villa of Charidemios at Halikarnassos (Fig. 4.82), as well as in the Baths of Herakleides at Gadara of the Decapolis (Fig. 4.83), where two identical laurel wreaths tied with fillets and decorated with gems frame inscriptions which wish health to the ‘builder’, Herakleides, and ‘to those using the *thermae*’.⁸²² Similar wreaths frame dedicatory texts inscribed in the pavements of late antique synagogues, including in the sixth-century synagogue at Tiberias, where a laurel wreath tied with fillets and adorned with two jewels frames a dedicatory inscription: ‘Proklos, (son of) Crispos,

⁸¹⁹ The object is MMA acc. no. 59.11.19; also D. von Bothmer, ‘Etruscan, Greek, and Roman: Sculptures in the Recent Accessions Room’, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. 19,6 (1961), 181-4, especially 181-2, fig. 1.

⁸²⁰ Now in the Vatican Museums, Inv. 243; G. Lippold, *Die Skulpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* (Berlin, 1936), iii, 1, 137-40, cat. 550.

⁸²¹ This act is depicted on the southeast side of the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius in Constantinople (c. 390), where the emperor stands in his box and extends a wreath downwards with his right hand: G. Bruns, *Die Obelisk und seine Basis auf dem Hippodrome zu Konstantinopel* (Istanbul, 1935), 61-8, Abb. 77; B. Kiielerich, *The Obelisk Base in Constantinople: Court Art and Imperial Ideology* (Rome, 1998), 55-7; on the obelisk itself, also S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), 219-22, no. 138. Wreaths are also held by charioteers on their tombstones and on honorific monuments, including the column bases of the charioteer Porphyrius which were erected in the Hippodrome around 500: A. Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), 17-28, Pl. 1.

⁸²² On the Halikarnassos villa, *supra* n. 53. On the Gadara baths, Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 328, figs. 685-6; T.M. Weber, *Gadara—Umm Qes. I, Gadara Decapolitana. Untersuchungen zur Topographie, Geschichte, Architektur und der Bildenden Kunst einer “Polis Hellenis” im Ostjordanland. Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 30 (Wiesbaden, 2002), 144, 302-3, Taf. 98B-C. Wreaths were also popular frames for *protomai* images of personifications of seasons in North Africa, for example in the *triclinium* of the house next to (and later joined to) the Maison des Chevaux at Carthage: D. Parrish, *Seasons Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (Rome, 1984), cat. 7, Pls. 10-2.

built (this synagogue)' (Fig. 4.84).⁸²³ These begemmed wreaths also derived in form from the oriental crown of Roman emperors, worn by Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla in the so-called tondo portrait from the Fayum, which displays the same type of oval gems in gold settings (Fig. 4.85).⁸²⁴

However, for Christians, the wreath also came to symbolize victory over death, especially those of Christ and of the martyrs, who carry jewelled wreaths on the walls of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, discussed in the previous chapter (Figs. 3.48-49).⁸²⁵ As a result of its new status as Christian symbol, the wreath was considered a proper frame for images of the martyrs and for symbols like the cross or Chi-Rho.⁸²⁶ While Christians continued to frame dedicatory texts in wreaths in their homes, very few true wreaths frame text in Christian spaces. The triconch chapel of the basilica at Tebessa (Theveste), Algeria, built around 400 and possibly dedicated to a local martyr, St. Crispina, contains an inscription framed by a laurel wreath tied with fillets which lists the names of the martyrs venerated by the congregation: 'On the eleventh (day before) the *kalends* of January, the *memoria* of the saints Heraclius, Donatius, Zebbocis, Secundianus, Victorianus, Publicia and Meggenis (was built or decorated)' (Fig. 4.86).⁸²⁷ The wreath frames the inscription of the saints in order to represent the crown which they have won through their deaths.

⁸²³ Fine, *Art*, 108, 109 fig. 45; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 200, 202 fig. IX-5. The wreath was very popular as a frame for text in late antique synagogue pavements, often flanked by lions: see Fine, *Art*, 108, points out the inclusion of wreaths in the liturgy; also Hachlili, 200-1, figs. IX-1,2. The donor inscriptions on the ceiling of the Dura synagogue also are framed by simplified red and yellow wreaths: idem, *Jewish Art*, 406.

⁸²⁴ Now in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 31.329: F.W. Goethert, 'Die Söhne des Septimius Severus auf dem Berliner Familienbild', in R. Lullies (ed.), *Neue Beiträge zur klassischen Altertumswissenschaft: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Bernhard Schweitzer* (Stuttgart, 1954), 361-3, Pl. 81; A.M. McCann, *The Portraits of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211)* (Rome, 1968), 79-80, Pl. XXI.

⁸²⁵ See pp. 178-80. On martyrs' crowns generally, Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 41-3.

⁸²⁶ For example, a wreath surrounding a Chi-Rho framed by the letters *alpha* and *omega* in the nave pavement of the fifth-century Cathedral of Hama (Epiphania) in Syria: M. Piccirillo, 'La Chiesa Cattedrale di Hama-Epiphania in Siria', *LA*, 57 (2007), 597-621, especially 604-5, fig. 6, Photo 3.

⁸²⁷ *XI k(alendas) Ian(uarias) memoria sanctorum Heracli, Donati, Zebbocis, Secundiani, Victoriani, Publiciae, Meggenis*: P.-A. Février, 'Nouvelles recherches dans la salle triflée de la basilique de Tébéssa', *Bulletin d'archéologie algérienne*, 3 (1968), 167-91, especially 189-90; J. Christern, *Das frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum von Tebessa: Architektur und Ornamentik eine spätantiken Bauhütte in Nordafrika* (Heidelberg, Habilitationsschrift, 1976), 112, 126-7; Yasin, *Saints*, 162-3, fig. 4.6. Jewelled wreaths

Several other inscriptions are framed by wreaths in North African church pavements, including two Greek inscriptions in the nave and the north-east chapel of the Justinianic Second Church at Qasr el-Lebia in Cyrenaica, in modern Libya.⁸²⁸ Both of these texts are surrounded by jewelled laurel wreaths depicted schematically, restricted by concentric lines which form their borders. The former inscription (Fig. 4.87), which names the donor, Bishop Makarios, is placed at the centre of the nave, surrounded by square panels which display cityscapes (including one which features the *Pharos* of Alexandria as a colossus), marine scenes, animals, mythological creatures, and personifications of the four rivers of paradise as well as of ‘Renewal’ (ANANEΩΣΙΣ), ‘Adornment’ (ΚΟΣΜΗΣΙΣ), and ‘Foundation’ (ΚΤΙΣΙΣ). While the first wreath is an exception, it seems to be included because it fit with the Graeco-Roman iconography of the rest of the nave. The second wreath more appropriately (for its Christian context) frames an inscription which consecrates the martyrial chapel to God (Fig. 4.88).⁸²⁹

Two laurel wreath frames also surround funerary inscriptions in the pavement of the Church of the Priest Felix at Kélibia, in Tunisia, each of which records two names (Constantia and Gaudiosa; Peregrinus and Valeria), implying that the individuals within each inscription are connected to each other through blood or marriage (Figs. 4.89-90).⁸³⁰ These two texts are the only ones in the church framed by true wreaths, a form chosen to set them apart from the numerous other nearby funerary inscriptions framed by *tabulae* or by *clipei* with multicoloured concentric circle borders in the popular ‘rainbow’ pattern (Fig. 4.91).⁸³¹ While the leaves of the wreaths are depicted similarly, the wreath

similarly frame the names of martyrs in the Chapel of the Martyrs at a monastery at Carthage (Dermech), now in the Bardo Museum: Gauckler, *Inventaire*, ii, nos. 707-8, 237-41.

⁸²⁸ Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 145-8, nos. 10, 15.

⁸²⁹ Τὰ μαρ/τύρια σου / ἐπιστώθη/σαν σφό/δρα τῷ οἴ/κῳ σου πρ(έπει): Reynolds, in Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 147, cat. C III, Pl. 106,2

⁸³⁰ Cintas and Duval, ‘Église’, Pls. XIII, XXIV.

⁸³¹ Similar examples can be found in the eastern provinces, including in the funerary chapel at Khirbat Munyah-‘Asfur in Arabia, where the dedicatory inscription is framed in an abstracted wreath whose border,

surrounding the inscription of Peregrinus and Valeria features two jewels like those which decorate the wreath frame in the Tiberias synagogue.⁸³² In addition to the standard birds, peacocks and flowers which adorn many of the tomb mosaics, the panels also contain abbreviated marine scenes which define the rectangular spaces of the burial plots. These wreaths and the surrounding marine scenes were chosen to set the burials of the four individuals apart, an intent also evident in their layout, as both panels are almost double the size of the surrounding panels, the latter (of Peregrinus and Valeria) dominating the lateral south chapel of the church.⁸³³ While these are exceptions to the rule, they were meant to be exceptions.

b. The cross

While scholars originally believed the prohibition recorded in an edict of the co-emperors Theodosius II and Valentinianus, issued in 427, against placing the ‘sign of Christ’ on the floor, to have been absolute, discoveries of simple and elaborately-decorated crosses on sixth- and seventh-century floor mosaics make it clear that the ban was not enforced, at least not diligently.⁸³⁴ As we have seen, crosses were common as incipits and punctuation marks of inscriptions, and as motifs in pavements, but the cross was rarely used as a frame for inscriptions.⁸³⁵ The most striking exception, framing the mosaic dedicatory inscription of the so-called ‘Church of the Inscription’ at Hâs, near

decorated with variants of the rainbow pattern, retains the jewels common on martyrs’ crowns: Piccirillo, *Chiese*, 112-3; idem, *Mosaics*, 299, fig. 587; Michel, 276.

⁸³² *Supra* n. 823.

⁸³³ Cintas and Duval, ‘Église’, 269, fig. 16.

⁸³⁴ The relevant passage of the edict reads: *...signum salvatoris Christi nemini licere vel in solo vel in silice vel in marmoribus humi positum insculpere vel pingere, sed quodcumque reperiatur tolli*; repeated in Codex Iustinianus 1.8.1, ed. P. Krueger (Berlin, 1977), 61; and reaffirmed in the canons of the Council of Trullo in 629: Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, xi, col. 975, no. 73. On this prohibition, Kitzinger, ‘Threshold’, 646-7; H. Brandenburg, ‘Christussymbole in frühchristlichen Bodenmosaiken’, *RQ*, 64 (1969), 89-97; Tzaferis, ‘Evron’, 50-1; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 224-6.

⁸³⁵ For examples of crosses on pavements, *ibid.*, 224-6. North African mosaics commonly feature jewelled crosses with hanging *pendilia*, for example the pavement of the South Church at Sidi Jdidi, dated to c. 430: A. Ben Abed-Ben Khader, M. Fixot, M. Bonifay and S. Roucole, *Sidi Jdidi I: La Basilique Sud. Collection de l’École Française de Rome*, 339 (Rome, 2004), 108-11, fig. 59.

Apamea in Syria (338/9), is not extant today, but was surveyed by Tchalenko in 1958, although the plan of the church and the original context of the inscription remain unclear (Fig. 4.9).⁸³⁶ In terms of content, the text is unremarkable, composed of a lengthy list of priests, deacons and other ecclesiastical officials (the *dekaproti*, etc.) who are included to date the construction of the mosaic as well as to credit the individuals as patrons who contributed to the decoration of the church. Two or more mosaic artisans, Markellos and at least one other person, are named as well, and the inscription ends with an invocation: ‘Christ, help’.

In form, the inscription most closely resembles funerary inscriptions framed by crosses, including a Latin inscription on a sarcophagus lid carved in Rome in the first half of the fourth century (Fig. 4.93),⁸³⁷ and Greek inscriptions on fifth-century tombstones from Zoora (Ghor es-Safi) in Palestina Tertia (Fig. 4.94).⁸³⁸ However, unlike these inscriptions, whose cross frames act as guarantees of salvation for the deceased, the frame of the Hâs inscription functions as *apotropaion*, sanctifying the inscription and activating its final request for Christ’s help. Related invocations associated with the names of donors are inscribed on both public processional and private crosses of the period, including on a sixth- or seventh-century votive cross from Epiros, now in Munich, whose inscription reads: ‘Lord...have mercy on the donors’ (Fig. 4.95).⁸³⁹

⁸³⁶ H. Seyrig, in G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord. Le Massif du Bélus à l’époque romaine* (Paris, 1958), iii, 35-6, no. 39, Pl. CXLIX; Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 117-9, fig. 81.

⁸³⁷ Now in the Museo Nazionale d’Abruzzo, L’Aquila. Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, 82, cat. 239, Pl. 79, 3.

⁸³⁸ Y.E. Meimaris and K.I. Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou, *Inscriptions from Palaestina Tertia, Vol. 1a: The Greek Inscriptions from Ghor es-Safi (Byzantine Zoora) (MEATHMATA, 41)* (Athens, 2005), 296-7, 314-7, nos. 205, 225, 227, Photo Pl. XLI, Color Pl. XII.

⁸³⁹ The cross is in Munich, Sammlung C.S. inv. no. 2838: B. Furlas and V. Tsamakda, *Wege nach Byzanz* (Mainz, 2011), cat. III.5.9, with previous bibliography. For an overview of processional crosses, as well as the function of inscriptions on processional crosses to replace images, E.C. Dodd, ‘Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses’, *DOP*, 41 (1984), 165-80. The famous Antioch Cross, now at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is inscribed with the Trisagion: Mundell Mango, *Silver*, cat. 42, with earlier bibliography. Four crosses from the Hama Treasure are also inscribed, now in the Walters Art Gallery and the Toledo Museum of Art: *ibid.*, cats. 7, 9-10, 67. Several provincial crosses are extant, including a cross with an Armenian inscription, found during excavations at Divrigi, now in Istanbul, as well as another cross possibly from Asia Minor, now in the collection of George Ortiz, with a Greek inscription: Dodd, 165ff.

Cross frames are extant from two other early Christian spaces. Two identical inscriptions, ‘light, life’ (φῶς ζῶῃ), decorate the lateral apses of the sixth-century Susita baptistery, discussed in Chapter Two (Fig. 2.29).⁸⁴⁰ These texts are not framed, but the two words are laid out in the shapes of crosses, with the letter ‘ω’ in the middle connecting the two words. These texts and their frames should be read analogously to images of Christ holding a book inscribed with His own words, so: ‘Christ says: “(I am) the light of life”’. At Susita, the cross stands in for Christ, as He cannot be depicted on the floors of churches, allowing Him to ‘speak’ without being stepped on.

A third short inscription framed by a cross in the centre of the sanctuary of the Church of St. Lot at Dayr ‘Ayn Abata (seventh century) in Jordan, reads: ‘+ Good end’ (+ Τέλος καλόν) (Fig. 4.96).⁸⁴¹ The layout of the mosaic inscription, with ‘Τέλος’ running along the upright and ‘καλόν’ placed along the cross bar, allows the reuse of the *lambda*. Although the words inscribed within the cross are not those spoken by God, the content specifically relates to the form of its frame if the text is read as a supplication for either a good end to mortal life on earth, or the hope of resurrection and a ‘good end’ in heaven thanks to Christ’s redeeming death on the cross. The position of the frame within an inhabited vine scroll and between two lambs unites three alternate ways to refer to or to invoke Christ: the cross on which He was crucified, as self-proclaimed ‘true vine’ (John 15:1-8), and as ‘Lamb of God’ (John 1:29). Vine scrolls and lambs appear on many other mosaic pavements and in the apses of churches in Ravenna and Rome, as well as on early Christian sarcophagi, for example on the front of a sarcophagus now in Narni, Italy, where two lambs flank a jeweled cross under which runs an ivy vine (Fig. 4.97).⁸⁴² However, the pairing of cross-framed inscription, vine and lambs at Dayr ‘Ayn ‘Abata, near the altar

⁸⁴⁰ *Supra* n. 419.

⁸⁴¹ Excavation reports by K.D. Politis in *ADAJ*, 34 (1990), 377-87; *ADAJ*, 36 (1992), 281-90; *ADAJ*, 37 (1993), 503-20; *ADAJ*, 39 (1995), 477-92; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 366; Michel, 150, with further bibliography.

⁸⁴² Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, cat. no. 282.

where the Eucharist was celebrated, is a most elegant articulation in text and image of Christ's own words, and His life and death. Although form is linked to content in distinct ways in each of these examples, in all cases the form of the cross sanctifies the text within and specifically emphasizes the connections between text, space and the redemptive power of Christ.

c. The kantharos frame

Only one mosaic example of the *kantharos* frame is extant from Christian contexts, from the atrium pavement of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Anemurium, dated by style to the second quarter of the fifth century (Figs. 4.98-99).⁸⁴³ Although Sheila Campbell and others have classified this frame as a chalice form, the forms of the bulbous body, narrow neck, flaring mouth and handles which characterize the frame are not solely those of a chalice.⁸⁴⁴ Closer in form is the classical *kantharos*, originally a two-handled Greek drinking cup that became a popular form in the late antique period, by which point its form had become elided in Christian art with the larger amphora form.⁸⁴⁵

This unique chalice-*kantharos* frame was chosen with specific intent. Chalices were traditional apotropaic motifs used in Roman villa mosaics at important liminal spaces to guard boundaries and keep the house spiritually secure.⁸⁴⁶ The motif decorates early church pavements in the east, as do many examples of *kantharoi*, often with vines springing up out of them and associated with wine, the eucharistic rite, and thus with

⁸⁴³ Russell, *Anemurium*, 53-60; Campbell, *Anemurium*, 23, fig. 25.

⁸⁴⁴ Chalices from the Hama Treasure and other hoards, as well as chalices represented in art, for example on the Riha Paten, tend not to have necks or handles: Mundell Mango, *Silver*, cats. 1-3, 27-30, etc.

⁸⁴⁵ Mitchell, 75; and Hachlili, Chapter 6, who refers to the forms as amphorae although they are often quite elaborately decorated, unlike the forms of late antique transport amphorae we think of today, catalogued by J.W. Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery* (London, 1972).

⁸⁴⁶ Swift, 68.

Christ.⁸⁴⁷ At Anemurium, however, the vessel form was chosen as frame to connect visually to the text of the inscription within:

Δέσποτα Κ(ύρι)ε
καρδιωνῶστα, ἐκ τῶ(ν)
σῶν δωρημάτων σ[ο]ι
[ε]ὐχαριστῶ(ν) προσήνε[γκα]
πρόσδ[εξ]ε αὐτὰ εἰ[ς]
ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν
κ(αὶ) μνίσθητι Κ(ύρι)ε
οὗ τὸ ὄνο-
μα
γιν-
ώσκεις.
Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) Ϛ´

Lord, master, knower of men's hearts, from your gifts I gave (these gifts) in thanksgiving. Accept them for the remission of (my) sins and Lord, remember him whose name you know. In the sixth indiction.

By laying out an anonymous donation inscription in the form of a liturgical vessel-*cum*-sign for Christ, the donor emphasized the 'gifts' given to the church, which might have included silver liturgical vessels in addition to the donation of the mosaic.⁸⁴⁸ While inscription and its frame are unique, they can be compared to a set of four inscriptions from the atrium of the first-century House of A. Umbricius Scaurius at Pompeii (Fig. 4.100).⁸⁴⁹ At each corner around the *impluvium*, a figural mosaic of a one-handled jar (*urceus*) is inscribed with its contents, either *garum* (fish sauce) or the more generic *liquamen*, as well as the name of the workshop which produced the sauce, owned by Scaurus himself (the longest inscription reads '*ex offici[n]a Scauri*'). Not only are they a similar shape, but the *kantharos* and the *garum* jar frames both display texts which write prominent individuals into spaces for all to see. However, while it retains some of the

⁸⁴⁷ On *kantharoi* as motif, especially associated with inhabited vine scroll pavements, Hachlili, *Pavements*, 111-47.

⁸⁴⁸ Just as chalices were depicted on church pavements, Jewish liturgical implements such as the *lulav* and *ethrog* occur frequently in synagogue mosaic pavements: Hachlili, *Pavements*, 28-33, with additional bibliography.

⁸⁴⁹ The house is VII 16, 15; R. Curtis, 'A personalized floor mosaic from Pompeii', *AJA*, 88 (1984), 557-66; I. Bragantini et al., *Pitture e pavimenti di Pompei*, 3, *Regioni VII, VIII, IX, Indici delle regione I-IX* (Rome, 1986), 243-4; R. Curtis, 'A. Umbricius Scaurus of Pompeii', in idem (ed.), *Studia Pompeiana et Classica in Honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski* (New Rochelle, NY, 1988), i, 19-49; Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, 319, fig. 315;

flavour of the Pompeiian inscriptions, the text at Anemurium remains anonymous, permanently enshrining the donor's humility and sincere belief.⁸⁵⁰ Oriented to the west, the text and its frame would have left a strong impression on worshippers exiting the church after services. The text was paired in the atrium with two other *tabula*-framed inscriptions which quote passages from the Book of Isaiah, focusing attention on the patrons' personal relationships with God, crediting Him rather than donors with the 'work' of the construction and decoration of the church.⁸⁵¹

d. The architectural frame

The final type of object frame, the architectural church- or temple-front frame, is also unique among extant mosaic examples. Only one mosaic building-front frame survives, from the pavement of the Upper Chapel of Priest John at Khirbet Mukhayyat, dated to the second half of the sixth century (Fig. 4.101).⁸⁵² The mosaic panel at the eastern end of the main chapel pavement contains a finely-executed representation of a church facade as seen head-on from the exterior with a triangular pediment and four columns separating the main entrance (with the text inscribed inside) from two side entrances, each containing a golden candelabrum holding a single lit candle. The structure is depicted as elaborately decorated, with a shell niche immediately above the central opening, striated marble columns with Corinthian capitals, and decorative pedimental borders featuring a colourful repeated floral-vegetal pattern. Cocks perch on either side of the roof, peacocks flank the structure and fruit trees and flowers fill the rest of the space. While the organization of the scene is somewhat spatially confusing, the scale of the frame ensures viewers would have focused on it, and the natural elements (animals, foliage)

⁸⁵⁰ On anonymous donor inscriptions, *supra* n. 234.

⁸⁵¹ See bibliography *supra* n. 769.

⁸⁵² Saller and Bagatti, *Mount Nebo*, 176-7, no. 7, Pl. 33, 3; Gatier, *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, ii, no. 107; Piccirillo, *Madaba*, 190-2; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 174; Di Segni, in Piccirillo and Alliata, 447-8, no. 52; Michel, 351.

establish the appropriate reading of the scene, placing the viewer outside the church looking in. The natural world is not depicted as realistic, allowing for the possibility that the structure is situated in Heaven rather than on earth.

Churches were often depicted frontally or in profile in early Christian mosaic pavements, particularly in Arabia and Syria. On occasion, images of church buildings were paired with inscriptions identifying the structure or situating the monument in a particular place, for example the church seen in profile at el-Bara, and the churches seen in depictions of cities at Ma'in, Umm al-Rasas and Tayibat al-Imam.⁸⁵³ Similar structures were used to represent Torah Shrines on the floors of synagogues, as at Beth Alpha (Fig. 4.102).⁸⁵⁴ Candles also regularly appear in the windows of churches, although they are usually hung from chains attached to the ceiling, and these free-standing candelabra are closer to depictions of menorahs in synagogue mosaics, at Beth Alpha or at Ma'on.⁸⁵⁵ However, none of these pavements features a building facade as inscription frame. The nearest parallels to the church-front with pediment are found on several early Christian sarcophagi fronts from Rome, Ravenna and Solin.⁸⁵⁶ However, none is an exact match for the frame at Khirbet Mukhayyat, and only two, in Solin and Ravenna, feature a triangular pediment (Figs. 4.103-104). All of these buildings, including the mosaic example in the Church of Priest John, visually referencing the Temple in Jerusalem.⁸⁵⁷

The church front frames an eight-line donation inscription which lists the patrons' names and reasons for donation:

⁸⁵³ Duval, 'Les représentations', in idem, *Églises*.

⁸⁵⁴ Hachlili, *Jewish Art*, 68-72.

⁸⁵⁵ Churches with candles or lamps represented in the windows include the pavilion surmounted with a cross from a church in Lebanon, now in the Beirut Museum: Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, 483, fig. 453. On the synagogue at Beth Alpha, Sukenik, *Beth Alpha*; Hachlili, *Pavements*, 26-8; on Ma'on, idem, *Jewish Art*, 68-72.

⁸⁵⁶ Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, cat. 842, Pl. 85 (Rome, Campo San Teutonico); eadem, *Repertorium*, ii, cat. 298, Pl. 98, 1-4 (Solin); also on the third-century sarcophagus of Marcus Aurelius Macedo and Aurelia Victoria, Ravenna, Museo Nazionale: *CIL* XI, 1, no. 349; Kollwitz and Herdejürgen, 40-1, cat. A 44, Pl. 18.

⁸⁵⁷ G. Foerster, 'Allegorical and Symbolic Motifs with Christian Significance from Mosaic Pavements of Sixth-Century Palestinian Synagogues', in Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, 545-52, especially 546-7.

Ὑπὲρ σωτερί-
 ας καὶ προσφορᾶς
 τῶν δούλων σου
 Σεργίου Στεφάνου
 καὶ Προκοπίου Πορ-
 φυρίας καὶ Ῥώμης καὶ
 Μαρίας καὶ Ἰουλιαν-
 οῦ μοναχοῦ.

For the salvation and the offering of your servants Sergios, (son) of Stephanos, and Prokopios, (son) of Porphyria, and Roma and Maria and Ioulianos, monk.⁸⁵⁸

The number of patrons and mix of men, women, lay donors and monk is fairly unusual in a single inscription, though certainly not unique. In all its other features, the inscription is standard, as the use of the language of salvation appears in a large number of inscriptions from the region as well as from the wider Mediterranean. The key word in the text is ‘offering’ (προσφορᾶς), which is reflexive, as it labels the mosaic pavement itself, paid for by the five donors mentioned in the inscription as well as by other anonymous donors mentioned in the main building inscription immediately to the east of the panel.⁸⁵⁹ While the church facade itself is not a realistic representation of the front of the Upper Chapel itself, the frame would have functioned visually the same way depictions of church donation models did, as a material reflection of the donation recorded and memorialized by the inscription.⁸⁶⁰ However, this structure is represented between earth and Heaven in order to connect the worldly structure in which the mosaic was laid to the patrons’ hope of salvation and resurrection, spelled out in the text and symbolized by the paradisiacal scene and the presence of peacocks as symbols of resurrection.⁸⁶¹ The frame connects the

⁸⁵⁸ *IGLS*, 21, *Jordanie*, 2, 107; Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, 174; Di Segni, in Piccirillo and Alliata, *Mount Nebo*, 52.

⁸⁵⁹ The second inscription in the church utilizes the same language, although it is more specific in terms of building phases and more obscure in its concealment of patrons’ names: ‘[ὁ]πὲρ σωτηρίας καὶ προσφορᾶς τῶν προσεγγόντων καὶ μελλόντων προσεγγεῖν. Perhaps mentioning the patrons’ names once was enough.

⁸⁶⁰ On donors presenting models of their churches to Christ, Caillet, ‘L’image’; in later medieval art, also E.S. Klinkenberg, *Compressed meanings: the donor’s model in medieval art to around 1300 . Origin, spread and significance of an architectural image in the realm of tension between tradition and likeness* (Turnhout, 2009).

⁸⁶¹ Kiillerich, ‘Inscriptions’, 49, who argues that the frame simply ‘elevates the named donors’. On peacocks in early Christian art, Jensen, *Christian Art*, 159-60.

Jerusalem Temple to the church as offering to God, extending the meaning of the inscription and connecting the church as holy space to the nearby city of Jerusalem.

At a basic level, mosaic inscription frames served to separate texts from surrounding geometric patterns and figural images which would otherwise have overwhelmed the eye with their complexity. The object frames discussed—the *clipeus*-wreath, cross, *kantharos*, church-front—are unusual because they quote the forms of real objects or buildings which were present and active in the same space as the inscription. These forms dictated the layout of their inscriptions, impacting upon the process of reading the texts within. As with Graeco-Roman pattern poems, object-framed inscriptions forced viewers to consider their appearance while reading each line of the texts, allowing them to make connections between the frame, particular parts of inscriptions, and other objects around them, such as processional crosses, liturgical chalices or *kantharoi*, or even the church building itself. Unlike the more widespread usage and frequently generic symbolism of the *tabula ansata*, which in its most basic form marked out the inscription as connected to donation, object frames were classical or Christian forms which allowed patrons to make targeted, symbolic visual enhancements to the standard texts inscribed within.

Conclusion

This thesis puts the mosaic texts of late antiquity back onto their buildings, allowing inscriptions to speak to the contemporary reader from their original contexts. By assembling the basis for a comprehensive corpus of Christian mosaic inscriptions from the period, I bring a large amount of previously neglected material back to the forefront of scholarship, encouraging scholars from diverse fields to incorporate inscriptions back into the study of material culture, and buildings and artworks back into the study of epigraphy. I have attempted here to leave aside for the moment the separate boxes into which we put different types of texts, or texts and images, and to zoom out and look at the wider picture, free (or as free as is possible) from the impact of modern perspectives on inscribed texts. The panoramic picture investigated here is varied and diverse, but allows us to see the potential functions of texts inscribed within Christian spaces, as they actively draw the viewer/reader in and attempt to define particular aspects of his or her experience.

Inscribed texts worked with and against images, but the two always remained engaged, and were meant to be read, viewed, and considered together. When read aloud by literate viewers or heard by illiterate ones, inscriptions had the power to shape viewers' experiences of and actions in churches, chapels and other Christian structures. These inscribed texts spoke in different voices, and encouraged varied visual, physical and conceptual responses to sacred images and interiors which veered between the classical and the Christian, often combining elements of both. However, while the inscriptions considered here vary in language, appearance and function, the thematic theoretics with which they were conceived consistently weave together patrons, viewers/readers and holy figures in the Heavenly hierarchy.

Accordingly, each chapter of this thesis has explored a particular dimension of the relationship between mosaic inscription, image, interior and the viewer/reader, against the

background of the broader contexts of late antique literature and art. Using the well-worn *topoi* of ekphrasis, inscriptions focused attention on aspects of images and spaces not connected to specific iconographic details, but to modes of vision and comprehension. Texts inscribed within and next to artworks reminded viewers of the local and universal roles of saints, placed figures within their appropriate narrative and/or symbolic contexts, and encouraged particular forms of personal and communal contemplation and response, including converting physical motion and action within sacred spaces into deeply significant religious events. Inscriptions spoke in different voices, engaging the reader by means of different classical forms of address in order to provide him or her with a prescribed mode of engagement with images, to vivify buildings, and to draw attention to their very production as texts written or commissioned by erudite donors who performed their *paideia* epigraphically while identifying themselves (and their images or buildings) as Christian.

Texts inscribed in glass or stone mosaic eloquently articulated their own particular materialities in the language of classical and Christian literature, enabling donors to write their learning and appreciation of classical aesthetics into their buildings. In these inscriptions, materials spoke both verbally and visually. However, while late antique secular inscriptions continued to speak primarily in the Graeco-Roman idiom, Christian inscriptions often employed *topoi* of luminosity to praise their donors, make complex statements about the relationships between classical culture and Christian faith, and clarify the phenomenological experience of art and decoration.

Just as they used the language of materials to make complex statements about religious and cultural affiliation, inscriptions which seem only to have labelled images in fact worked to particularize or expand spectra of meaning. Inscriptions simplified and supplemented the content of images, and vice versa, enlivening works with narrative and

orality, allowing characters to speak and readers to respond verbally to artworks through set prayers. Images of texts, including scrolls and codices, spoke for their bearers, reminding viewers of their authority, enhancing symbolism, and placing Christ and the saints within the oral framework of the liturgy. While the absence of the written names of Christ or the saints is difficult to explain today, both the absence and presence of names in images worked visually to structure images and focus viewers' attention on particular figures, especially Christ.

Inscriptions had both verbal and visual functions, and the frames of inscriptions distinctly impacted the ways viewers read texts. Frames sometimes conveyed parallel messages to the texts within, such as the *tabula ansata*, whose variants emphasize donor inscriptions as donated texts in the traditional Roman mode, or supplemented texts with new implications, such as the wreath or the cross. By framing mosaic texts as works of art in their own right, patrons and artists advertised not only the aesthetic value of inscriptions, but visually enhanced the classical and Christian statements of the texts within, linking text with traditional or innovative forms, or using traditional forms in new ways to Christianize Graeco-Roman motifs.

Because of my focus in this work on the visual character of inscriptions, certain issues and themes raised by the material have gone unaddressed, and would make for fertile future projects. While I have considered particular biblical quotations related to the themes of the thesis, other inscriptions quote different passages which impact our understandings of communal engagement with church doctrine and personal engagement with the divine. Prayers in the first person, often related to the liturgy, were also frequently inscribed in Christian pavements, enabling us to consider how responses were channelled and understood through pre-set texts.

However, my focus on vision and visibility performs an important task. By engaging with the texts inscribed in the images and spaces of early Christian worship, which themselves use the language of looking, as visual objects—indeed, as images—this thesis rewrites these texts, both simple formulae and elaborate verses, into larger academic discourses on late antique art, archaeology, religious and cultural history. This thesis alone cannot mend the split between disciplines and approaches. However, as I have demonstrated repeatedly, Christian inscriptions were always attuned to their material and more ephemeral surroundings, including ritual movement in church, the liturgy, the figural or geometric images surrounding them; to external literary and artistic tropes of the period; and, most importantly, to their engagement with the viewer/reader. Epigrams from urban centres composed by more learned patrons, or at least those keener to show off their education, reveal their composers (and commissioners) engaging with the above issues more openly. However, even formulaic inscriptions from more rural sites were similarly disposed, indicating a deeper cultural awareness, not limited to the elite or to one particular region, of the ways in which mosaic texts were supposed to function in Christian cult spaces.

This thesis also plumbs the extent to which inscriptions in Christian spaces were overtly Christian. While a more extensive examination of this (large) issue is required, I have signalled some important preliminary findings which accord with the current scholarly consensus about the influence of classical culture upon Christian literature, epigraphy, art, and architecture. The inscriptions considered here reveal the push and pull of different influences to varying degrees. Some quote Homer or paraphrase the classicizing works of Nonnus, some embrace classical tropes only to overthrow them in favour of Christian faith, while others appear to be wholly Christian in content and form. Indeed, it would seem to make sense that the texts inscribed in spaces of worship match

the tone (if not the exact language) of the premier preachers of early Christianity, all of whom were well-educated in the Graeco-Roman system still operating in the period, and who peppered their sermons with similar references. What is important in the context of this work, however, is not the relative amount of classical influence in the inscriptions of particular periods or regions, but rather how this influence manifested itself in particular rhetorical strategies which, though they would have been more or less recognizable to different readers with different backgrounds, reveal patrons and viewer/readers accepting, rejecting or playfully modifying both traditional (classical) *and* innovative (Christian) modes of engagement with the sights one sees. By putting one type of inscribed text back into its proper architectural and artistic context, and reading it within the cultural, linguistic, religious and ritual life of the period, we are able to see verbal continuity with the classical tradition, as well as change, but also to read the ways in which the texts were viewed through the images and the spaces surrounding them.

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1.1 Watercolour of the nave mosaic, pavement of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Jerash, by Ignaz Reich (mosaic now in the Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1735) (J.W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Jerash*, Pl. 12).
- 1.2 Transept mosaic ('Earth and Ocean'), pavement of the Basilica of St. Demetrios, Nikopolis (E. Kitzinger, 'Studies on Late Antique and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics: I. Mosaics at Nikopolis', fig. 5).
- 1.3 Reconstruction drawing of the apse mosaic, Basilica Nova, Nola, by F. Wickhoff, 1889 (G. Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard, *Descriptions monumentales*, Annexe II, fig. 1).
- 1.4 Reconstruction drawing of the apse mosaic by G. Bandmann, Basilica Nova, Nola (Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard, Annexe II, fig. 2).
- 1.5 Apse mosaic, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 1.6 Reconstruction drawing of the apse and triumphal arch mosaics, Tours Cathedral, Tours, by H.L. Kessler (Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul', fig. 2).
- 1.7 Triumphal arch mosaics, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome (Photo: author).
- 1.8 Apse and triumphal arch mosaics, Basilica Eufasianiana, Poreč/Parenzo (A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 2).
- 1.9 Triumphal arch mosaics, San Paolo fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 1.10 Drawing of the apse and apse wall mosaics, Sant'Agata dei Goti, Rome, by G. Ciampini (Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, i, Tf. LXXVII).
- 1.11 Annunciation mosaic, apse wall, Basilica Eufasianiana, Poreč/Parenzo (Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 97).
- 1.12 Drawing of the mosaic inscription, church at al-Rashidiyah (after L. di Segni, 'Ricerca', *LA* 56 (2006), fig. 7).
- 1.13 Mosaic pavement inscription, nave, Church of the Virgin, Madaba (Photo: author).
- 1.14 Mosaic pavement inscription, First Sanctuary, Basilica of Moses, Mount Nebo (S.J. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, Part II: The Plates*, Pl. 117,2) .
- 1.15 Mosaic pavement inscription, Basilica of Saints Silvanus and Fortunatus (Basilica IV), Sbeitla (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (Y. Duval, *Loca*

Sanctorum, i, fig. 48).

- 1.16 Reconstruction drawing of the apse mosaic, San Andrea Catabarbara, Rome, by G. Ciampini (Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, i, Tf. XLVI).
- 1.17 Mosaic dedicatory inscription, east end of the nave pavement, Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, Jerash (Photo: author).
- 1.18 Detail, apse mosaic and inscription, Cappella di San Venanzio, Lateran Baptistery, Rome (Photo: author).
- 1.19 Mosaic pavement inscription, narthex at entrance to nave, Church of the Holy Martyrs (el-Khader), Madaba (L. Di Segni, 'Ricerca', *LA* 56 (2006), fig. 6).
- 1.20 Detail of 'Soreg', mosaic pavement, Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg, Jerash (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 515).
- 1.21 Plan of the Cathedral Church, Madaba, with mosaics and inscriptions, by G. Ortolani (after Piccirillo, *Madaba*, fig. 25).
- 1.22 Mosaic pavement inscription, sanctuary, church at Jubayhah (M. al Hussein, 'Jbeyha Church 1976', fig.).
- 1.23 'Entrance and exit' mosaic inscription, church at Khirbet Samra (R. and A. Ovadiah, *Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, Pl. 102,2).
- 1.24 Machicolation inscription above the entrance, Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai (G.H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai*, Pl. XII A).
- 1.25 Mosaic pavement inscription, narthex at the entrance to the nave, North Church, Herodion (E. Netzer, 'The Byzantine Churches of Herodion', in G.C. Bottini et al., *Christian Archaeology*, fig. 8).
- 1.26 'Entrance and exit' mosaic inscription, Church A, Magen (V. Tzaferis, 'Mosaics and Inscriptions from Magen', fig. 15).
- 1.27 Plan of the Acropolis Church, Ma 'in, with mosaics and inscriptions (Piccirillo, *Madaba*, fig. 229, plan by M. Pozzorno).
- 1.28 Drawing of the mosaic pavement inscription, Basilica of St. Anastasia, Arkasas, Karpathos (after *Σύνταγμα*, 1, Pl. 21, d).
- 1.29 Mosaic inscription, nave pavement near chancel, Church of the Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas (Photo: author).
- 1.30 Architrave around baptismal font, Lateran Baptistery (San Giovanni in Fonte), Rome (Photo: author).

- 1.31 Baptismal mosaic inscriptions, architrave, Orthodox (Neonian) Baptistry, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 1.32 Magerius mosaic, Smirat (now in the Sousse Museum) (A. Ben Abed-Ben Khader (ed.), *Image de pierre: la Tunisie en mosaïque*, fig. 196).
- 1.33 Mosaic of Oceanus, Roman Villa, Aïn Témouchent (now in the Algiers Museum (K.M.D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Mosaics of North Africa*, Pl. LVI, 143).
- 1.34 Apse mosaic inscription, Hosios David (Moni Latomou), Thessaloniki (T.F. Mathews, *Clash of Gods*, fig. 88).
- 1.35 Mosaic pavement inscription, narthex, Basilica of St. Anastasia, Arkasas, Karpathos (Σύνταγμα, 1, Pl. 21, c).
- 1.36 Mosaic pavement inscription, nave, church at Apollonia (Reshef) (R. Birnbaum and A. Ovadia, 'A Greek Inscription from the Early Byzantine Church at Apollonia', Pl. 18).
- 1.37 'Entrance' inscription on outer face of lintel, Church of St. Theodore, Jerash (C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, Pl. CXXIX, b).
- 1.38 'Exit' inscription on inner face of lintel, Church of St. Theodore, Jerash (Photo: author).
- 1.39 'Question-and-answer' mosaic inscription, pavement of the east end of the north aisle, Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Jerash (Kraeling, *Gerasa*, Pl. LXXVI,a).
- 1.40 Mosaic pavement inscription, nave, Sandanski (R.F. Hodinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity: An Archaeological Introduction*, Pl. 175).
- 1.41 Mosaic pavement inscription, Pre-Eufasian Basilica, Poreč/Parenzo (Caillet, *Évergetisme*, fig. 230).
- 1.42 Plan of the central nave pavement, Basilica of the Martyrs (II; 'of Candidus'), Haïdra, by N. Duval (after Y. Duval, *Loca Sanctorum*, i, fig. 73).
- 1.43 Carved stone balustrade inscription, central nave pavement, Basilica of the Martyrs (II; 'of Candidus'), Haïdra (N. Duval, *Recherches archéologiques à Haïdra*, i, fig. 185).
- 1.44 Carved inscription on marble plaque, Sardis synagogue (L.H. Feldman, 'Diaspora Synagogues: New Light from Inscriptions and Papyri', in S. Fine (ed.), *Sacred Realm*, fig. 3.14).

- 1.45 Mosaic pavement with dedicatory inscription in the north intercolumniation nearest the chancel, nave pavement, Church of St. Menas, Rihab (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 634).
- 1.46 Syriac mosaic inscription, sanctuary pavement, church at Houedjit Halaoua (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 120).
- 2.1 Fragment of carved architrave inscribed with a portion of AG 1.10, Hagios Polyuktos, Constantinople (now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum) (Photo: author).
- 2.2 Interior view, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (C. Mango and A. Ertuğ, *Hagia Sophia: A Vision for Empires*, 22).
- 2.3 Detail (left side), apse mosaic inscription, Santi Cosma e Damiano, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.4 Detail (left side), apse mosaic inscription, Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč/Parenzo (Maguire and Terry, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 60).
- 2.5 Detail (left side), apse mosaic inscription, Sant'Agnese fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.6 Apse mosaic inscription, Santo Stefano Rotondo, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.7 Mosaic inscription and image of Christ-as-Victor, narthex, Cappella di San Andrea (*cappella arcivescovile*), Ravenna (G. Gardini and P. Novara (eds.), *Le collezioni del Museo Arcivescovile di Ravenna*, 57).
- 2.8 Watercolour of the nave mosaics, Church of St. Salsa, Tipasa (after S. Gsell, *Recherches archéologiques en Algérie*, Pl. V).
- 2.9 Mosaic pavement inscriptions, Church of St. Stephen, Horvat Be'er-She 'ma (Khirbet el-Far) (V. Tzaferis, 'Greek Inscriptions from the Ancient Church at Horvat Be'er-SHEMA', fig. 8).
- 2.10 Detail (left and central sections) apse mosaic inscription, Sant'Agnese fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.11 Mosaic pavement inscription, Santa Eufemia, Grado (G. Brusin and P.L. Zovatto, *Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado*, fig. 33).
- 2.12 Mosaic pavement inscription, Church of St. Paul (under the Octagon Church), Philippi (now in the Philippi Archaeological Museum, Δ15.265 (A. Lazaridou (ed.), *Transition to Christianity*, 135).
- 2.13 Funerary inscription of Severina, Catacomb of Severus, Sousse, now in the Sousse Museum (Photo: author).

- 2.14 Mosaic pavement inscription, Church of St. Sphyridon ('of the Holy Bishops'), Trimithous (Tremethousa) (*Σύνταγμα*, 1, Pl. 125).
- 2.15 Mosaic inscription and mythological scene (Hippolytus and Phaedra), Roman villa at Sheikh Zouède (D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, i, fig. 29).
- 2.16 Plan of East Cathedral, Apamea (Qal'at al-Moudiq), by P. Donceel-Voûte (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 192).
- 2.17 Mosaic pavement inscription, southeast room, East Cathedral, Apamea (J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie*, fig. 66).
- 2.18 *Opus sectile* pavement with inscription, ambulatory behind the altar, East Cathedral, Apamea (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 190).
- 2.19 Detail, *opus sectile* pavement, ambulatory behind the altar, East Cathedral, Apamea (Photo: author).
- 2.20 Mosaic pavement inscription, entrance to nave, Thyrsos Basilica, Tegea (*Σύνταγμα*, 2, Pl. 103).
- 2.21 View of nave mosaics with dedicatory inscription, Santa Eufemia, Grado (Brusin and Zovatto, *Monumenti paleocristiani*, fig. 55).
- 2.22 Mosaic pavement inscription, chapel, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Nikopolis (Spiro, *Corpus*, ii, fig. 466).
- 2.23 Mosaic of the Seven Sages, pavement of late Roman building under the East Cathedral, Apamea (J.-C. Balty, 'Nouvelles mosaïques du IV^e siècle sous la "Cathédrale de l'Ést"', in *Apamée de Syrie*, 7, Pl. LIII, 1).
- 2.24 Mosaic inscription, west (back) wall of nave, Santa Sabina, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.25 Detail, Bishop Eufraius and St. Maurus, apse mosaic, Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč/Parenzo (Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 22).
- 2.26 Triumphal arch mosaic and inscription, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 2.27 Pre-restoration photograph of Christ enthroned, triumphal arch mosaic, Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč (Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 243; Photo © Centre d'études Gabriel Millet—Photothèque, École pratique des hautes études—Sciences religieuses).
- 2.28 Homeric mosaic pavement inscription, annex, Complex of Eustolios, Kourion (*Σύνταγμα*, 1, Pl. 128, c).

- 2.29 Mosaic pavement inscription ('Light, life'), lateral apse, Baptistery, Susita (S. Yeivin, 'Archaeology in Israel (November 1951-January 1953)', Pl. 51, 16).
- 2.30 Gold cross pendant with inscription ('Light, life'), Milan, Civico Museo Archeologico, inv. A A09.6469 (Photo: author).
- 3.1 Mosaic of the Rape of Europa with inscription, Roman villa, Lullingstone, Kent (G.W. Meates, *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent*, i, Pl. XV, b).
- 3.2 Apse mosaic pavement, basilica, Chrysopolitissa (Kato Paphos) (H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean*, fig. 3).
- 3.3 *Titulus* of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, commissioned by Pope Damasus, Catacomb of Nereus and Achilleus, Rome (A. Ferrua and C. Carletti (eds.), *Damaso e i martiri di Roma*, 13).
- 3.4 Detail, Old Testament mosaics, nave walls, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.5 Detail, New Testament mosaics, upper zone of nave walls, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.6 Detail, New Testament scenes, wooden doors of Santa Sabina, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.7 Plan, Samson mosaics, north aisle pavement, church at Mopsuestia (Misis), by L. Budde (Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien*, i, 37).
- 3.8 Detail, Samson mosaics, north aisle pavement, church at Mopsuestia (Misis) (Budde, *Antike Mosaiken*, i, 154).
- 3.9 Peaceful Kingdom mosaic, pavement of Necropolis Church, Anemurium (S. Campbell, *The Mosaics of Anemurium*, Pl. XV).
- 3.10 Drawing, Peaceful Kingdom mosaic, pavement of church at Karlik (after M. Gough, "The Peaceful Kingdom", in *Mansel'e Armağan: Mélanges Mansel*, i, fig. 63)
- 3.11 Peaceful Kingdom mosaic, pavement of Mariana church (P. Pergola, 'Considérations nouvelles sur les mosaïques', fig. 2).
- 3.12 Peaceful Kingdom mosaic, pavement of Acropolis Church, Ma'in (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 302).
- 3.13 Sanctuary mosaic, Church of the Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 266).
- 3.14 Detail, Madaba Map, Church of St. George, Madaba (Photo: author).

- 3.15 Adam and Eve mosaic with inscription, Syria (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1969.115) (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 456).
- 3.16 Mosaic of Adam Naming the Animals, nave pavement, North Church, Huarte (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 71).
- 3.17 *Thalassa* mosaic, central nave pavement, Church of the Apostles, Madaba (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 78).
- 3.18 Tracing of fresco of Adam and Eve, Baptistry, Dura Europos (frescoes now in the Yale University Art Gallery) (C.H. Kraeling and C. Bradford Welles, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report VIII, Part II: The Christian Building*, Pl. XXXII, 3).
- 3.19 Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus with Adam and Eve (lower left), Vatican Museums, Rome (Bovini, Deichmann, and Brandenburg, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage. Erster Band, Rom und Ostia. Tafelband*, Tf. 104).
- 3.20 Detail, Abraham and Isaac mosaic, pavement of synagogue at Beth Alpha (E.L. Sukenik, *The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha*, Pl. XIX).
- 3.21 Psalm 51 in text and image, mosaic of the west nave pavement, Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Khirbet Mukhayyat (Photo: author).
- 3.22 Confronted bulls flanking a birdbath, mosaic pavement of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Oum Hartaine (now in the Ma 'arat an-Nouman Mosaic Museum) (Photo: author).
- 3.23 Psalm 51 in text and image, mosaic in front of the altar, Theotokos Chapel, Basilica of Moses, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 200).
- 3.24 Presentation of Aaron at the Jerusalem Temple, frescoes, Dura Europos Synagogue (now in the Damascus Museum) (C.H. Kraeling, C.C. Torrey, C.B. Welles, and B. Geiger, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report VIII, Part I: The Synagogue*, Pl. LX).
- 3.25 Portrait statue of Emperor Titus holding a *rotulus*, Rome (now in the Vatican Museums) (W. Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des vaticanischen Museums*, Band 1: Tafeln, Pl. 4, 26).
- 3.26 Gold-glass bowl base with Saints Lawrence and Cyprian holding *rotuli*, Roman catacombs (now in the Vatican Museums) (C.R. Morey, *The gold-glass collection of the Vatican Library*, Pl. VI).
- 3.27 Prophets holding scrolls and a codex, nave wall mosaics, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.28 Detail, Christ surrounded by Apostles, apse mosaic, Chapel of Sant'Aquilino, Milan (W.F. Volbach, *Early Christian Mosaics*, Pl. VIII).

- 3.29 Fresco of a Prophet (Jeremiah or Ezra?), Torah Shrine wall, Dura Europos Synagogue (now in the Damascus Museum) (Kraeling et al., *Synagogue*, Pl. LXXVII).
- 3.30 Mosaic of Prophet Jeremiah, north side wall of sanctuary, San Vitale, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.31 Pre-restoration drawing of the mosaic of Jeremiah, tympanum of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, by Fossati (Fossati Drawing, no. 363v, Archivio Cantonale, Bellinzona; after Mango, *Mosaics of St. Sophia*, Pl. 86).
- 3.32 The Raising of Lazarus with King David and the Prophets Hosea and Isaiah, manuscript illumination, Rossano Gospels, fol. 1r (Rossano Cathedral Treasury) (K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, Pl. 29).
- 3.33 Mosaic of Christ and Peter ('Traditio Legis'), apsidiole, Santa Costanza, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.34 Detail of Christ holding an unrolled scroll, Apse mosaic, Hosios David (Moni Latomou), Thessaloniki (Mathews, *Clash of Gods*, fig. 89).
- 3.35 Christ enthroned surrounded by Peter, Paul and Martyrs, ceiling fresco, Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Rome (J.G. Deckers, H.R. Seeliger and G. Mietke, *Die Katakombe "Santi Marcellino e Pietro": Repertorium der Malereien. Tafelband*, Colour Pl. 2).
- 3.36 *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*, west (rear) nave wall mosaic, Santa Sabina, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.37 *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*, west (rear) nave wall mosaic, Santa Sabina, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.38 Reconstruction drawing of apse and triumphal arch mosaic, San Giovanni Evangelista, Ravenna, by D.M. Deliyannis (Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, fig. 13).
- 3.39 Mosaic of St. Victor, dome of San Vittore in ciel d'oro, at Sant'Ambrogio, Milan (Photo: author).
- 3.40 Apse mosaic, San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna (now in the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin) (Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, fig. 89; Photo © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY).
- 3.41 Detail, Christ enthroned, apse fresco, Chapel XVII, Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit (J. Clédât, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît. Planches*, Pl. XLII).

- 3.42 Detail, Christ and Saints, triumphal arch mosaic, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.43 Wall painting of Saints Cosmas and Damian, Wadi Sarga, Egypt (now in the British Museum) (Photo © Trustees of the British Museum).
- 3.44 Detail, frescoes, Chapel of the Exodus, el-Bagawat, Egypt (M. Zibawi, *Bagawat: Peintures paléochrétiennes d'Égypte*, fig. 17).
- 3.45 Moses, apse mosaic, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.46 Elijah, apse mosaic, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.47 Jonah, north aisle mosaic pavement, church at Mahtat al-Urdi (Beth Guvrin) (Hachlili, *Pavements*, fig. VI-24).
- 3.48 Detail, procession of female saints, north nave wall mosaics, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.49 Detail, procession of male saints, south nave wall mosaics, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.50 Detail, St. Martin, procession of male saints, south nave wall, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.51 Detail, medallion portraits of saints, mosaics of soffit of triumphal arch, Panagia Kanakariá, Lykanthromi (Megaw and Hawkins, *The Church of the Panagia Kanakariá*, Pl. 41).
- 3.52 Detail, medallion portraits of saints, mosaics of soffit of triumphal arch, San Vitale, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.53 Detail, medallion portraits of saints, mosaics of soffit of triumphal arch, Basilica Eufraiana, Poreč (Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 70).
- 3.54 Apse mosaic, Sant'Agnese fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.55 Apse mosaic, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.56 Jonah, mosaic pavement, south hall of the Complex of Bishop Theodore, Aquileia (G.C. Menis, *Nuovi studi iconologici sui mosaici teodoriani di Aquileia*, fig. 67).
- 3.57 Funerary mosaic of Blossi Honoratus with Daniel in the Lion's Den, mosaic pavement of chapel, Bordj el-Ioudi (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (Photo: author).
- 3.58 Apse mosaic, Santi Cosma e Damiano, Rome (Photo: author).

- 3.59 Apse mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.60 Detail, apse mosaic, Cappella di San Venanzio, Lateran Baptistery, Rome (Photo: author).
- 3.61 Detail, anonymous saints, apse mosaic (right side), Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč (Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*, ii, Pl. 42).
- 3.62 Detail, Christ, angels and saints with procession of male saints, east end of south nave wall mosaics, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Photo: author).
- 3.63 Apse mosaic, *katholicon*, Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai (Forsyth and Weitzmann, Pl. CIII).
- 4.1 Interconnected frames of mosaic pavement, Santa Eufemia, Grado (Brusin and Zovatto, fig. 60).
- 4.2 Detail, mosaic inscriptions, pavement, Crypt of Elianus, Madaba (Photo: author).
- 4.3 Detail, apse mosaic inscription, *katholicon*, Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai (Forsyth and Weitzmann, Pl. CLXXI, A).
- 4.4 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *tabula ansata*, temple dedicated to the *gens Valeria aeterna*, Thibaris (Thugga) (A. Mastino et al., 'Nuove scoperte epigrafiche in Africa Proconsolare', *Acta XII Congressus*, ii, fig. 13).
- 4.5 Roman metal votive *tabula ansata*, Sanctuary of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Poeninus, Poenine Alps, Switzerland (G. Walser, *Summus Poeninus*, cat. 9, photo 90).
- 4.6 Tombstone of Potitus Valerius Messala, Rome (now in the Museo Nazionale (A.E. Gordon, *An Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy*, Pl. 20).
- 4.7 Spoils from the Temple relief, Arch of Titus, Rome (Photo: author).
- 4.8 Triumph of Constantine relief, Caesaraea (Cherchel) (now in the Cherchel Museum) (M. Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs*, Pl. V, 6).
- 4.9 Drawing of mosaic of Apollo and the Muses with *tabula*, Mérida (Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia) (after M. Donderer, *Mozaisisten*, Pl. 48, 2).
- 4.10 Detail, Square of the Corporations mosaics, Ostia (K.M.D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, fig. 64).
- 4.11 Detail, frescoes from the Villa Doria Pamphili *cubiculum*, Rome (now in the Museo Nazionale) (Photo: author).

- 4.12 Graffiti framed by *tabulae*, Catacomb of St. Sebastian, Rome (V.F. Nicolai et al., *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, fig. 176).
- 4.13 Scene of the Crucifixion with a *tabula*, obverse of metal pilgrim ampulla from Jerusalem (now in the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection, BZ 1948.18) (H. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium and Islam*, cat. 59).
- 4.14 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *tabula*, nave pavement (in front of the sanctuary steps), Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Khirbet Mukhayyat (Photo: author).
- 4.15 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *tabula*, Elche (La Alcúdia), Spain (J. Gómez Pallarès, *Epigrafia cristiana sobre mosaico de Hispania*, Pl. II).
- 4.16 Funerary inscriptions framed by *tabulae*, Portotorres, Sardinia (S. Angiolillo, *Mosaici antichi in Italia. Sardinia*, Pl. XXXVIII).
- 4.17 Dedicatory inscription, First Sanctuary, Basilica of Moses, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 176).
- 4.18 Dedicatory inscription, South Church, Brescia (Caillet, *Évergétisme*, fig. 51).
- 4.19 Dedicatory inscription, basilica at Daphnousia (Σύνταγμα, 2, Pl. 295d).
- 4.20 *Tabula* framing the funerary inscription of Bonifatius, Church of the Priest Felix, Kélibia (Demna) (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (Photo: author).
- 4.21 *Tabula*-framed inscription of St. Gaudiosus, chapel in the San Gennaro catacomb, Naples (F. Sear, *Roman wall and vault mosaics*, Pl. 60, 1-2).
- 4.22 Drawing of the frontispiece to the Codex Calendar of 354, dedicated to Valentinus, Romanus 1 ms., Barb. lat. 2154, fol. 1 (Biblioteca Vaticana, Rome) (after M.R. Salzmänn, *On Roman Time*, fig. 1).
- 4.23 Watercolour of wall mosaics with *tabulae*-framed dedicatory inscriptions, Hagios Demetrios, Thessaloniki, by W.S. George, sheet no. 3 (after R. Cormack, 'The Mosaic Decoration of S. Demetrios, Thessaloniki', Pl. 8).
- 4.24 Detail, *tabula*-framed dedicatory inscription, triumphal arch (right side), San Paolo fuori le mura, Rome (Photo: author).
- 4.25 Diagram of restorations to the triumphal arch with *tabula*, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome (after Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali. Tavole.*).
- 4.26 Gold-glass bowl base with *tabulae*-framed inscriptions on columns, Roman catacombs (now in the Vatican Museums) (Morey, Pl. XXVI).

- 4.27 'Magic square' inscription, pavement, Christian building at Beth Ha-Shitta (Ovadiah, *Pavements*, Pl. XIV, 1).
- 4.28 *Tabula*-framed inscription on a lintel, ivory diptych of the consul Areobindus (now in the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum, Zurich) (Volbach, Pl. 4).
- 4.29 Detail, Greek-type *tabula*, Roman villa, Oudna (Uthina), Tunisia (Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, Pl. 42, 2).
- 4.30 Greek-type *tabulae*, porphyry 'Sarcophagus of Helena', Rome (now in the Vatican Museums) (Photo: author).
- 4.31 Modified Greek-type *tabula* framing a dedicatory inscription, Church of Bishop Isaiah, Jerash (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 564).
- 4.32 Modified Greek-type *tabula*, Church of Mary, Rihab (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 624).
- 4.33 Modified Greek-type *tabula*, Church of St. Peter, Rihab (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 630).
- 4.34 Modified Greek-type *tabula*, Church of St. Paul, Rihab (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 629).
- 4.35 Hybrid Greek-/Roman-type *tabula*, Chapel of the Martyr Theodore, Madaba (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 57).
- 4.36 Hybrid Greek-/Roman-type *tabula*, plan and drawing of the Chapel of Anastasios, Khirbet al-Samra (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 610).
- 4.37 *Tabula*, Church of the Priest Wa'il, Umm al-Rasas (Michel, fig. 393).
- 4.38 *Tabula*-framed inscription in Syriac, Church at Houeidjit Halaoua (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 118).
- 4.39 Drawing of *tabula* with curly *ansae*, central nave pavement, Church of St. Christopher, Qabr Hiram (after Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 414).
- 4.40 *Tabula* with 'curly' *ansae*, Roman sarcophagus, Rome (now in the Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano) (Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, i, cat. 118).
- 4.41 *Tabula* with 'curly' *ansae*, ivory consular diptych of Justinian (now in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan) (W.F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, Pl. 12).
- 4.42 *Tabula* with palm branches in *ansae*, villa mosaic, Rome (Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, Pl. 60, 2).
- 4.43 *Tabula* frame with geometric-patterned *ansae*, narthex pavement, Church of the Holy Apostles, Anemurium (Campbell, *Anemurium*, Colour Pl. XI).

- 4.44 *Tabula* frame with geometric-patterned *ansae*, east end of nave pavement, North Church, Herodion (E. Netzer, 'The Byzantine Churches of Herodion', in Bottini et al, *Christian Archaeology*, fig. 7).
- 4.45 Plan of the Church of St. Basil with *tabula* frame with floral-vegetal *ansae* decoration, east end of nave, Rihab (after Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 626).
- 4.46 *Tabula* with floral *ansae* decoration, Lower Church, al-Quwaysmah (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 484).
- 4.47 *Tabula* with *ansae* holes, sarcophagus, Solin (in situ) (Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, Pl. 99, 3).
- 4.48 *Tabula* with round *ansae* holes, Basilica Outside-the-Walls, Delphi (*Σύνταγμα*, 2, Pl. 351b).
- 4.49 Superimposed *tabula*, north room pavement, North Church, Herodion (L. Di Segni, 'The Greek Inscriptions in the Northern and Eastern Churches at Herodion', in Bottini et al, *Christian Archaeology*, 182).
- 4.50 Superimposed *tabula*, nave in front of the chancel, church at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât (H. Hizmi, 'The Byzantine Church at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât in the Lower Jordan Valley', in Y. Tsafir (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed*, 158).
- 4.51 Superimposed *tabula*, nave pavement, Vrina Plain Basilica, Butrint (J. Mitchell, *Pagëzimorja e Butrintit dhe Mosaikët e saj. The Butrint Baptistery and its Mosaics*, 87).
- 4.52 Superimposed white *tabula*, pavement in front of the entrance, Burial Cave, Mamilla (Photo G. Avni, 'The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 CE)', BibbiaBlog, published 13 November 2010, <http://www.bibbiablog.com/2010/11/13/the-persian-conquest-of-jerusalem-614-ce/>, accessed 19 June 2012).
- 4.53 White marble *tabula*, lintel of the Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana, Ostia (Photo: author).
- 4.54 *Tabula*, Tomb Tower of Elhabel, Palmyra (Photo: author).
- 4.55 Engaged *tabula*, nave pavement, Old Cathedral, Bari (Caillet, *Évergétisme*, fig. 8).
- 4.56 Engaged *tabula* framed by rhombuses, nave pavement, church at Hir esh-Sheikh (now in the Ma 'arat an-Nouman Mosaic Museum) (Photo: author).
- 4.57 Hybrid engaged/superimposed *tabula*, Basilica A, Demetrias (Spiro, *Corpus*, ii, fig. 427).

- 4.58 Archaic Greek tombstone with *tabula* held by Victories, Boeotia (P.M. Fraser and T. Rönne, *Boeotian and West Greek Tombstones*, Pl. 26).
- 4.59 *Tabula* held by putti, nave pavement at the entrance, Thyrsos Basilica, Tegea (Σύνταγμα, 2, Pl. 103b).
- 4.60a-b *Tabula* held by soldiers (donors?), south transept pavement, Basilica of St. Demetrios, Nikopolis (Spiro, *Corpus*, ii, figs. 529-30).
- 4.61 *Tabula* elevated by two men (Peter and Paul?), sarcophagus, Vincigliata (Private Collection) (Bovini et al, *Repertorium*, ii, Pl. 79, 6).
- 4.62 Detail, winged victory elevating a military trophy, spandrel, south side of the Arch of Constantine, Rome (Photo: author).
- 4.63 Putti elevating a *tabula* with pelta shield *ansae*, attic story, Arch of Dativius Victor, Mainz (G. Bauchhenss, *Denkmäler des Iuppiterkultes aus Mainz und Umgebung*, Pl. 127).
- 4.64 Putti elevating a *tabula*, amphitheatre at Pavia (A. Silvagni, *Monumenta epigraphica*, tav. 1, n. 3).
- 4.65 Nike elevating a *tabula*, pavement of Room A, Building on the Point, Anemurium (Campbell, *Anemurium*, Pl. 8).
- 4.66 Drawing of putti elevating a *tabula*, frescoes of the Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Rome, by R.C. Lau, 1976 (after Deckers et al, *Die Katakombe "Santi Marcellino e Pietro"*, no. 2).
- 4.67 Detail, putti elevating a *tabula*, Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Rome (J.G. Deckers et al., *Die Katakombe "Santi Marcellino e Pietro"*, Colour Pl. 1c).
- 4.68 Victory writing on a shield, Column of Trajan, Rome (F. Lepper and S. Frere, *Trajan's Column: A New Edition of the Chichorius Plates*, Pl. LVII).
- 4.69 Mosaic inscription framed by a *clipeus*, pavement of the south hall, Complex of Bishop Theodore, Aquileia (Brusin and Zovatto, *Monumenti*, fig. 49).
- 4.70 Inscription framed by a *clipeus*, pavement of the Siyagha Monastery (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 285).
- 4.71 Relief *imago clipeata* from the Baths of Mithras, Ostia (now in the Ostia Archaeological Museum) (*Scavi di Ostia* V, Taf. 42).
- 4.72 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *clipeus*, pavement of the Church of the Lions, Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 378).

- 4.73 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *clipeus*, nave pavement at entrance, Church of the Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 369).
- 4.74 Dedicatory inscription framed by a *clipeus*, sanctuary pavement, Church of the Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 369).
- 4.75 Detail, inscription framed by a *clipeus* with lotus decoration, Church of St. George, Deir el-‘Adas (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 25).
- 4.76 *Clipeus* frame with lotus decoration, ivory diptych of Justinian as consul (now in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan) (Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, Pl. 12).
- 4.77 *Imago clipeata* of ‘Salvation’ (*Soteria*), Baths of Apolausis, Antioch-on-the-Orontes (Photo: author).
- 4.78 *Imago clipeata* of ‘Sea’ (*Thalassa*) with dedicatory inscription, central nave pavement, Church of the Apostles, Madaba (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 78).
- 4.79 Circular inscription around a cross, paten, Sion Treasure (now in the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection) (S.A. Boyd and M. Mundell Mango, *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Pl. S4.1).
- 4.80 Roman relief stele with inscribed wreaths and a *clipeus* (now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 59.11.19) (Photo: author).
- 4.81 Statue of Emperor Claudius with the attributes of Jupiter, Rome (now in the Vatican Museums) (Photo: author).
- 4.82 Wreath-framed inscription, pavement of the Villa of Charidemus, Halicarnassos (S. Isager ‘The late Roman villa in Halikarnassos’, in idem and B. Poulsen, *Patron and Pavements in Late Antiquity*, fig. 2).
- 4.83 Wreath-framed inscription, pavement of the Baths of Herakleides, Gadara of the Decapolis (T.M. Weber, *Gadara –Umm Qēs*, i, Taf. 98C).
- 4.84 Jewelled wreath-framed inscription, pavement of the Tiberias synagogue (Hachlili, *Pavements*, fig. IX-5).
- 4.85 Painted tondo of Septimius Severus and his family, Fayum (now in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) (A.M. McCann, *The Portraits of Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211)*, Pl. XXI).
- 4.86 Wreath-framed martyr inscription, triconch chapel, basilica at Tebessa (Theveste) (J. Christern, *Das frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum von Tebessa*, Pl. 23a) .

- 4.87 Wreath-framed dedicatory inscription, central nave pavement, Second Church, Qasr el-Lebia (E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum and J.B. Ward-Perkins, *Justinianic Mosaic Pavements*, Pl. 106, 1).
- 4.88 Wreath-framed martyr inscription, chapel pavement, Second Church, Qasr el-Lebia (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, Pl. 106, 2).
- 4.89 Wreath-framed dedicatory inscription of Constantia and Gaudiosa, Church of the Priest Felix, Kélibia (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (Photo: author).
- 4.90 Wreath-framed dedicatory inscription of Peregrinus and Valeria, Church of the Priest Felix, Kélibia (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (J. Cintas and N. Duval, 'L'église du prêtre Félix (Région de Kélibia)', Pl. XXIVa).
- 4.91 *Clipeus*-framed inscription with rainbow cable border, Church of the Priest Felix, Kélibia (now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis) (Photo: author).
- 4.92 Diagram of cross-framed dedicatory inscription, Church of the Inscription, Hâs (Donceel-Voûte, *Pavements*, fig. 81).
- 4.93 Cross-framed funerary inscription, sarcophagus lid, Rome (now in the Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo, L'Aquila) (Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, Taf. 79).
- 4.94 Cross-framed funerary inscription, Zoora (Ghor es-Safi) (Y.E. Meimaris and K.I. Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou, *Inscriptions from Palaestina Tertia, Vol. 1a: The Greek Inscriptions from Ghor es-Safi*, Pl. XII, inscr. 227).
- 4.95 Votive cross with inscription, Epiros (now in Munich, Sammlung C.S., inv. no. 2838) (B. Furlas and V. Tsamakda, *Wege nach Byzanz*, 333).
- 4.96 Plan of sanctuary mosaics with central cross-framed inscription, Dayr 'Ayn 'Abata, by K.D. Politis (after Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 276).
- 4.97 Lambs flanking a jewelled cross framed by vines, sarcophagus at Narni, Italy (in the Narni Cathedral) (Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, Pl. 92).
- 4.98 *Kantharos*-framed inscription, atrium pavement, Church of the Holy Apostles, Anemurium (Campbell, *Anemurium*, Pl. 106).
- 4.99 Drawing of *kantharos*-framed inscription, Church of the Holy Apostles, Anemurium (after Campbell, *Anemurium*, fig. 25).
- 4.100 *Garum* jar-framed inscription, atrium pavement, House of A. Umbricius Scaurius, Pompeii (Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, fig. 315).
- 4.101 Building-front frame, pavement of the Upper Chapel of Priest John, Khirbet Mukhayyat (Piccirillo, *Mosaics*, fig. 228).

- 4.102 Mosaic of Torah Shrine, pavement of the Beth Alpha Synagogue (Sukenik, Pl. XVIII).
- 4.103 Building-front frame, sarcophagus, Solin (in situ) (Bovini et al., *Repertorium*, ii, Pl. 98).
- 4.104 Building-front frame, Sarcophagus of Marcus Aurelius Macedo and Aurelia Victoria, Ravenna (now in the Museo Nazionale, in the Cloisters of San Vitale) (Photo: author).