Chapter Thirteen

Early Christian Interpretation in Image and Word: Canon, Sacred Text, and the Mosaics of Moni Latomou[*]

Laura Nasrallah

Toward the beginning of his *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus argues that people who interpret scripture wrongly are like those who arrange mosaic tesserae to produce the likeness of a fox instead of a king.[1] The image of the mosaic reappears when Daniel Boyarin states, in developing a theory of midrash, that "the text is always made up of a mosaic of conscious and unconscious citation of earlier discourse."[2] That both the late second-century Christian writer Irenaeus and Daniel Boyarin, a Jewish Talmudist and scholar of religion writing in the late-twentieth century, should use the metaphor of a mosaic for the interpretation of sacred texts is a significant coincidence. For both, interpretation of scripture is a matter of piecing together and juxtaposing various authoritative texts like tesserae in order to form an image, a mosaic of meaning. Such a mosaic is literally what we find at Moni Latomou in Thessalonikē, which this paper takes as a test case to

[*] Thanks to colleagues who have read drafts of this piece and kindly offered advice: Joan Branham, David Frankfurter, Herbert Kessler, AnneMarie Luijendijk, and Larry Wills, among others.

[1] Καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὰς ψηφῖδας γνωρίσει, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀλώπεκα ἀντὶ τῆς βασιλικης εἰκόνος οὐ παραδέξεται (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.1.20 in the Greek edition or 1.9.4 in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* translation). The Greek edition is Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis*.

[2] Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 12. The image of biblical interpretation as mosaic and tesserae continues at various points in the book.

Fig. 1. View of the apse, Moni Latomou, Thessaloniki, Greece. Photo: Holland Hendrix, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

explore the interpretation of sacred texts in the literary and visual practices of early Christianity.

The apse mosaic of the church of Moni Latomou or Hosios David in Thessaloniki—either the sanctuary of the Monastery of the Stone Worker or, as it was rededicated in 1921, the church of the Holy David, an ascetic saint of the city[3]—dates to the third quarter of the fifth century (fig. 1).[4] The meaning and the literary and artistic sources of its iconography have been debated ever since it was uncovered in the 1920s, and even much earlier, as we know from the eleventh- or twelfth-century *Narrative of Ignatius*, which recounts legends of the sanctuary's founding, a miracle regarding the original mosaic program, and the rediscovery of the mosaic by an Egyptian monk. The focal point of the mosaic is the beardless Christ sitting on a rainbow, sailing over the *oikoumenē* or inhabited world, shining in a circle of light. This Christ has been interpreted many ways: as an emperor, a philosopher-teacher, an anti-Arian statement that Christ *is* God.[5] The mosaic as a whole has often been interpreted as borrowing from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Revelation, or a combination of these texts.

This chapter takes up again the question of the interpretation of the mosaic at Hosios David. It does so less to explicate the mosaic itself and more in order to think about what methods we use to interpret early Christian images, and how the very making of an image is a hermeneutical process. The early

[3] Regarding Hosios David, see Vasiliev, "Life of David of Thessalonica"; this attribution to Hosios David may date earlier. Tsigarides mentions this title in relation to a 1917 survey of churches in Thessaloniki (*Latomou Monastery*, 8).

[4] The majority of scholars date the original structure (and the mosaics) to the fifth century: Xyngopoulos, "Sanctuary of the Monastery," 151; Diehl, "A propos de la mosaïque," 335–38; Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches*, 175; Grabar, *Martyrium*, 1:146, 2:192; Gerke, "Il mosaico absidale," 179–99. Debates, however, continue over the dating of the mosaic. Diehl suggests a date as early as the fourth century (*Comptes Rendus*, 256–61). Morey dates the mosaic to the seventh century, arguing that the image of Christ seated on the *arcus coeli* rather than a throne does not appear before ca. 600 ("Note on the Date," 342–43).

[5] The mosaic of Moni Latomou has most often been interpreted in light of other early Christian apse iconography around the empire. Spieser ("Representation of Christ," 63–73) used the mosaic of Hosios David as one piece of evidence in his diachronic framework of early Christian apse decoration. Mathews, in his influential and controversial *Clash of the Gods* (118–19) uses the mosaic of Hosios David to argue against what he calls the "emperor mystique": the idea, advanced by Grabar (*Christian Iconography*, 44) that iconographic programs like this present Christ as a new emperor over and against the Roman imperial rhetoric of old. Mathews insists instead that we should read the mosaic at Hosios David—and most early Christian mosaics—as opposing Roman imperial iconography and in light of the Arian controversy: the glowing light at the center of the mosaic responds to the Nicene creed's "light from light, true God from true God" (Mathews, *Clash of the Gods*, 118). Hosios David's beardless Christ for Mathews becomes a god, not an emperor.

Christian homilist or commentator and the early Christian mosaicist or frescoer (or the person who commissions the image) engaged in similar acts. In bringing together the question of early Christian practices regarding making literature and images, I advance two arguments. First, I argue that an image may reveal that noncanonical texts or even those labeled "heretical" were read and used in a given location, despite arguments to the contrary found in contemporaneous literary sources and even among contemporary scholars. That is, early Christian images may offer evidence about the boundaries of canon at the time of their production. Second, I argue that by analyzing literary and imagistic depictions of authoritative texts together, we deepen our understanding of the hermeneutical principles that underlie the production of texts such as homilies and commentaries, as well as images like the apse mosaic at Hosios David. Looking simultaneously at how an image and how a literary text engage in interpretation of sacred texts may break down our logocentrism—our tendency to try to pin down an image by indexing aspects of it to a particular passage or verse in scripture—and expand our understanding of intertextual impulses in the ancient world.

The first part of this chapter describes the church and its mosaic, discussing the various links scholars have tried to make between scripture and the iconographic program of the mosaic. I focus particularly on Revelation and its putatively fragile position within the canon of the Greek East. The second part uses John Chrysostom's homily on 1 Thessalonians to show that the production of early Christian images such as the Moni Latomou mosaic is similar to the production of early Christian literature that interprets sacred texts. In addition, I suggest that 1 Thessalonians 4, written to first-century C.E. residents of Thessalonikē, may have been one of the inspirations for the production of the mosaic at Moni Latomou, and that 1 Thessalonians may have been evoked for those who looked at its completed images.

The Mosaic and the Canon

The church of Moni Latomou or Hosios David is located on the winding streets of the *Ano Polis*, above the regular grid of the lower city of Thessaloniki. In the modern period, it was first examined in 1921 by Andreas Xyngopoulos, who also discovered its mosaics in 1927. The majority of scholars concur with Xyngopoulos's conclusion that it dates to the latter

part of the fifth century.[6] The small church, a cross-in-square, originally measured some 4.5 m by 14.75 m in its central bay, with a central dome and four corner chambers with domed ceilings.[7] Today, two-thirds or less of the original structure remains.

The fifth century was a time of a Christian building boom in Thessalonikē. We find roughly contemporaneous building projects in the large basilicas of St. Demetrios or of the Virgin Acheiropoietos.[8] In such churches one moved in a great thrust through the monumental space of the large main aisles toward the apse. The Rotunda, a slightly older Galerian structure that was converted into a church, provides a different kind of space with stunning mosaics that date to perhaps the fifth century.[9] Its dome lifts the eyes upward to the glittering heavens and to a ring of saints who stand in the midst of ecclesiastical or palace architecture.[10] I mention these churches to give a sense of walking the ancient city of Thessalonikē in the fifth century, with its monumental architecture and rich imagery. It was filled with different architectural, iconographic, and literary interpretations and assertions of encounter with the divine and the holy.[11] The church of Moni Latomou in contrast offered its viewer an intimate space in which to "behold our God," as its inscription says.

[6] Xyngopoulos, *Sanctuary of the Monastery*, 142–80. Pelikanides concurred in his 1949 review *Early Christian Monuments of Thessalonikē*.

[7] According to Krautheimer and Ćurčić, the cross-in-square type was fully developed by the last third of the fifth century; because of the style of the mosaics they suggest an early date for Moni Latomou, "shortly before 500" (*Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 240). Its form changed slightly as it was renovated over the years, and some time before the early sixteenth century, it was converted into the Suluca Mosque. Part of it may have fallen into ruins early, as a minaret was built over the southwest corner of the church (Tsigarides, *Latomou Monastery*, 13–14).

[8] Regarding the uses of the basilica of St. Demetrios, see the contribution of Charalambos Bakirtzis in this volume.

[9] For the hypothesis that the Rotunda was a Constantinian building project and church from the start, see Ćurčić, *Some Observations and Questions*, 11–14.

[10] These buildings are carefully constructed to have an aesthetic impact upon the worshiper; for example, the windowsills of the Rotunda are angled perfectly so that the sills' white marble slabs reflect warm light onto the old tesserae (Iliadis, "Natural Lighting," 13). For a discussion of the Rotunda and early Christian literature, see Nasrallah, "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki."

[11] See the chapter by Ćurčić in this volume. For the idea of walking the city, see Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 98–99, and Nasrallah, "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki," 471–72.

Legend and General Description

The church and its mosaic have often been interpreted in light of Ignatius's *Narrative* or, to give the full title, the *Edifying Account of the Theandric Image of Jesus Christ our Lord which manifested itself in the Monastery of the Stone-workers at Thessaloniki*. The text dates to the mid-eleventh or twelfth century but contains legends from an earlier date.[12] I recount portions of its legends in some detail because the story of the *Narrative* and its account of the mosaic have influenced subsequent scholarly identification of the mosaic's figures and meaning.

In the story, the monk Senouphios from Egypt is called to Thessalonikē to see God: He had asked God to reveal Godself as in the final judgment,[13] and was told to go to the Monastery named Latomos in Thessalonikē, dedicated to the prophet Zechariah. When he met the monks, he was told that such a monastery did not exist in the city. He left, having seen nothing at all and thinking the whole trip had been the devil's deceit. Asking God again, he was called to go to Thessalonikē, where he prayed alone in the church of Moni Latomou during a thunderstorm. From the apse ceiling fell a covering of leather, bricks, and lime, and Christ's face appeared.

This apparition was not the only strange revelation at Moni Latomou that Ignatius's *Narrative* records. According to Ignatius, this church was commissioned by Theodora, daughter of the Christian-persecuting emperor Maximian (by which perhaps Galerius Maximianus is meant). One day she wandered by a church and went in during the time for the reading:

> When the time even had come for the reading of the holy sayings (for it was a reading concerning the second coming (ἐπιδημία)[14] of Christ our true God, in which he should lead all creation into judgment and give to each according to his or her works), she received the seeds of

[12] Papadopoulos-Kerameus published the text in 1909, using a vellum manuscript from 1307 (*Varia Graeca sacra*, 102–13). Tsigaridas suggests that Ignatius wrote at the end of the ninth century or in the eleventh century (*Latomou Monastery*, 9) but offers no arguments; Diehl states that he wrote "without a doubt in the twelfth or thirteenth century" but offers no evidence ("La mosaïque," 333). New research understands Ignatius to have been the head of the Akapniou monastery in Thessalonikē; the founding of this monastery dates to the end of the tenth century at the earliest, and so the *Narrative* dates later (Kaltsogianni, *Thessaloniki in Byzantine Literature*, 133).

[13] For an English translation of portions of the *Narrative*, see Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches*, 68–69 and 178–79.

[14] Lampe, s.v. ἐπιδημία. In early Christian writings the word is roughly equivalent to *parousia*, since it signals a visit or stay, or even, as translated here, the second coming (3b).

> the word like so much good earth; she fostered the seeds in the warmth of her heart and they soon began to root in her soul.[15]

She was converted and baptized. Concealing her Christianity, she said that she was ill and asked for her father to build her a house with a bath near the quarries in the northern part of the city, the opposite corner, so to speak, from the pagan imperial palace. This "house" became the church. She commissioned a mosaic of Christ's mother, which at the last minute was suddenly transformed into "Christ with a man's features sitting on a shining cloud." When her Christian identity was discovered, Theodora had the mosaic covered to protect it. Theodora was killed at the command of her own father, but, although he ordered that the bath be burned down, the mosaic somehow survived.

This *Narrative* has informed later scholarly interpretations of the meaning of the mosaic and the identification of its figures, as well as the history of the church itself: Tsigarides's idea that the church was built on top of a Roman bath, for instance, and Hoddinott's and Grabar's conclusions that the church was dedicated to Zechariah. The *Narrative* names the two figures on either side of Christ as Ezekiel and Habakkuk, and these identifications too have influenced scholars. This later legend *interprets* the mosaic, not only labeling its figures, but also setting it within a story of imperial power and its destructive forces, on the one hand, and a reading about judgment and the sudden miraculous appearance of Christ, on the other.

The mosaic itself is enclosed by two framing bands. The outer band, which traces an arch on the flat wall before the apse, consists of gold swans on a red and blue ground, interspersed with vessels and plants,[16] a motif similar to one found at the mosaics of the nearby Rotunda.[17] The second band is folded onto the edge of the curved apse, and depicts on a red background multi-colored rectangles and ovals, like jewels, linked by a golden chain. At the bottom of this band we find an anonymous donor inscription, the letters in silver tesserae against a red background.[18]

We shall see how the mosaic refers to a variety of literary traditions; it also draws from a variety of imagistic traditions. The Christ with hand raised reminds one of scenes of imperial or philosophical address, as with the Prima

[15] Ignatius *Narrative* in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia graeca sacra*, 104 lines 27–33, [translation mine].

[16] Tsigaridas, *Latomou Monastery*, 40.

[17] Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches*, 178; Morey, "Note," 34; Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 157.

[18] Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes*, 98.

Fig. 2. Detail, central portion of the mosaic. Hosios David, Thessaloniki, Greece. Photo: Holland Hendrix, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

Porta Augustus; Christ's seat upon the rainbow throne draws on imperial enthronement imagery, such as that found nearby in the Arch of Galerius, as well as its Christian articulations in scenes of the *maiestas Domini* and even the *traditio legis* (as on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus). The rivers of Paradise too appear in a variety of scenes, including that of a youthful Christ seated on the glowing blue orb, holding Revelation's scroll with the seven seals at San Vitale in Ravenna. Thus the various compositional elements of the Moni Latomou mosaic are themselves a bricolage of motifs that can be applied in a variety of typical scenes.[19]

The central portion of the mosaic depicts a young, beardless man with long, dark hair seated on a rainbow, his right hand raised in the *ad locutio* gesture of imperial or philosophical address, later sometimes interpreted as a gesture of blessing (fig. 2).[20] His clothes are civilian rather than military or imperial: a blue himation covers a red tunic with gold detailing, and he wears gold sandals. He sits on a rainbow and emerges from within a ball of light; behind his head is a golden nimbus. Behind the orb of light, with the eyes on their wings shining through, are four creatures holding closed, jeweled codices: a man or angel (with a halo), an eagle, an ox, and a lion.

At Christ's feet are four streams that lead to rivers full of fish (fig. 3). To the viewer's left, the river contains a figure (perhaps a river god), and a bearded old man at its banks, bent slightly, mirrors that figure with hands on either side of his face, reacting in fear or with an apotropaic gesture (fig. 4). Behind the man are fences on a tall hill, and behind that an unidentified city with five or six buildings with columns rising in the distance. Whether the city is Jerusalem (perhaps hinting at Isaiah's vision of a New Jerusalem) or Thessalonikē or some other city is unclear. Opposite the figure in front of the city, and on the other side of Christ, is another older, bearded man, who sits thoughtfully, hand on chin, in a bucolic setting with a hut in the distance. An open codex lies on his lap and he seems to be reading (fig. 5). Although some have argued that these figures—the two bearded men and the river god—are reacting to Christ, upon closer inspection we see that they are engrossed in their own worlds: the river, on the one hand, and the codex, on the other. This may be a theophany, but it does not seem to come with much thunder, even if, as Ignatius's *Narrative* claims, Theodora's conversion was inspired by a reading about judgment, and even if a thunderclap shook down the

[19] This idea, for which I am grateful, was pointed out to me by Herbert Kessler; see also the discussion in Spieser, *Thessalonique et ses monuments*, 158–61.

[20] Hoddinott, drawing in Grabar's earlier connections of this image with Buddhist iconography (e.g., *Martyrium*, 2.192), argues for its connection to gestures of reassurance made by the Buddha in Buddhist iconography (*abtaya mudra*) (*Early Byzantine Churches*, 176).

Fig. 3. Detail, central lower portion of the mosaic. Hosios David, Theassaloniki, Greece. Photo: Holland Hendrix, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

Fig. 4. Detail, left side of the mosaic. Hosios David, Thessaloniki, Greece. Photo: Robert Stoops, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

Fig. 5. Detail, right side of the mosaic. Hosios David, Thessaloniki, Greece. Photo: Holland Hendrix, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

mosaic's covering to reveal it to the monk Ignatius. In Thessalonikē, Christ hovers over a placid scene in the *oikoumenē*; his commanding presence is both imperial and divine—not a surprising combination, given the Roman blurring of the body of the emperor with the body of a god in imperial cult and iconography.

Most scholars who have written about this mosaic have been concerned with one of two things. One group has been concerned with how its depiction of Christ relates to the Christological controversies and discussions of the fifth century, and with how this Christ is or is not like a Roman emperor.[21] In what follows we shall be concerned with the other conversation about the mosaic, which has attempted to link the mosaic's iconography to certain passages from the Bible—that is, to understand the mosaic by providing source texts for its images.

The Mosaic's Inscriptions

Both art historians and scholars of early Christianity have often turned to biblical texts to decode early Christian images, noting with some surprise when the image "diverges" from the literary text. The mosaic at Moni Latomou resists scholars' attempts to index its images by means of written texts. Yet this mosaic is concerned with books and writing (fig. 6). While finding mosaic inscriptions or books depicted within a monumental iconographical program is not unusual,[22] the mosaic of Hosios David—with its five codices, one scroll,[23] and three inscriptions—calls the viewer's attention not only to images but also to writing and to the connection between image and text.[24]

One inscription lies outside the images of the mosaic itself: at the bottom of the mosaic is the dedicatory inscription, which contains letters written in

[21] See n. 5.

[22] We can picture, to give only two examples, the Latin on the open codex Christ holds at Santa Pudenziana in Rome, or the Greek "labels," providing name, profession, and some sort of dating system, of the figures on the bottom register of the Rotunda mosaic in Thessalonikē. We also find books laid carefully on pillowed thrones in various early Christian images.

[23] See discussion of the scroll and of the mosaic as a whole as evidence of "realized eschatology" in Luijendijk, "Behold our God."

[24] Of course, if Weitzmann and Kessler are right, then we must consider too that image and word are already connected in illustrated manuscripts and pattern books to which artisans and patrons referred in planning images, and which artisans adjusted to fit the space and medium of production. Moreover, as Kessler argues, the choice of images may signal something about Jewish-Christian relations and competition over scripture in a given location (Weitzmann and Kessler, *Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*).

Fig. 6. Detail, central portion of the mosaic. Note the four jeweled codices (one can be seen only partially, on the bottom right) and the scroll. Hosios David, Thessaloniki, Greece. Photo: Holland Hendrix, Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project.

silver tesserae on a deep red background.[25] The inscription is fragmentary, but with the help of Ignatius's *Narrative* and another inscription on the mosaic, it has been reconstructed to read:

1. + Πηγὴ ζ(ω)τική, δεκτική, θρεπτικὴ ψυχῶν πιστῶν ὁ πανέντιμος οἶκος οὗτος. Εὐξαμένη ἐπέτυχα καὶ ἐπιτυχοῦσα ἐπλήρωσα. +
2. + Ὑπὲρ εὐχῆς ἧς οἶδεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸ ὄνομα.[26]

> 1. A life-giving spring, receiving, nourishing faithful souls, is this all-honored house. Having made a vow, I (feminine) attained to it, and having attained to it, I fulfilled it. 2. On account of a vow of her whose name God knows.

The fact that the donor was female of course either stimulated the legend of Ignatius's *Narrative*—which relates that Theodora, the emperor's daughter, dedicated the church and mosaic—or is stimulated by it.

The dedicatory inscription expands an inscription contained within the image itself. The figure to the viewer's right and Christ's left sits thoughtfully reading words in an open codex. These words are echoed in the dedicatory inscription at the bottom of the mosaic. The words of the codex are upside down to the viewer, and, in epigrapher Denis Feissel's assessment, are full of mistakes due to the compression of aspects of the dedicatory inscription and due to the small number of tesserae available to form each letter. Feissel offers the following reconstruction:

> On the left:
> ✣ Πη|γὴ ζω|τική, δ̣ε | κτ(ικ)ή, θ̣ρε|πτική
> On the right:
> ψυ̣|χῶ̣ν πι|στοῦν (*sic*) | ὁ <π> πανι|έν(τι)μος | οἶ̣(κ)ος οι(ῦ̣τ)ος̣ ✣[27]
>
> Life-giving spring, receiving, nourishing
> faithful souls, is this all-honored house.

Unlike the words on Christ's scroll, discussed below, these inscriptions do not clearly cite an authoritative or scriptural text.

The scroll, rolling downward from Christ's left hand, reads:

> + Ἰδοὺ ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς | ἡμῶν, ἐ|φ' ᾧ ἐλπίζο|μεν κ(αὶ) ἠγαλ|λιώμεθα | ἐπὶ τῇ σωτ|ηρίᾳ ἡ|μῶν ὅτι ἀ|νάπαυσιν | δώσει ἐπὶ | τὸν οἶκον | τοῦτον.[28]

[25] Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes*, 97.

[26] Ibid., 98.

[27] Ibid., 99.

[28] Ibid., 99. Feissel mentions that the initial cross is noted only by Pelikanides and gives

> Behold our God, upon whom we hope; and we rejoice greatly in our salvation, that he may give rest in this house.

This text modifies the Septuagint version of Isaiah 25:9–10a:

> καὶ ἐροῦσιν τῇ ἡμέρα ἐκείνῃ Ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, ἐφ' ᾧ ἠλπίζομεν καὶ ἠγαλλιώμεθα, καὶ εὐφρανθησόμεθα ἐπὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ ἡμῶν. ὅτι ἀνάπαυσιν δώσει ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τοῦτο.
>
> And they will say on that day, "Behold our God, in whom we hope and rejoiced, and we have delighted in our salvation." God will give rest upon this mountain.

The inscription on the scroll condenses the Septuagint's redundancies and shifts the end of the verse from "this mountain" to "this house."[29] Thus the church itself, tucked high on the city hill, with its view of the bay below, becomes the hoped-for mountain of God. The rest of the passage in LXX Isaiah[30] describes this mountain as Zion, the eschatological location where the Lord Sabaoth makes a rich feast for all the nations, a mountain where death is swallowed up, tears are wiped away, and the people's shame or disgrace is removed (LXX Isa 25:5–8). This passage from Isaiah is quoted in Rev 21:3–4: The heavenly Jerusalem is a place that is "the dwelling (σκηνή) of God with humans. . . . God himself will be with them and will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more."[31]

The scroll's quotation from Isaiah, together with the imagery of the mosaic, communicates a message that fluidly draws from and evokes a variety of sacred texts. The fact that Christ holds a scroll, rather than an open codex like the figure below, may signal that Christ offers an ancient and venerable proclamation (and a variation of Isaiah) linked with the antiquity and honor given to the Jewish scriptures compared to the recent texts and still-coalescing canon of the New Testament. The image of Christ holding out a scroll is similar to "portraits" of prophets that predate the Hosios David mosaic, such as that of Jeremiah displaying the "new covenant" (according to Herbert Kessler's interpretation) at Dura Europos,[32] or the prophets depicted on either side of the apse at San Vitale in Ravenna. The form of the old covenant as

---

in the notes variations in Ignatius's *Narrative*.

[29] See LXX (Rahlfs) Isa 25:9–10a. The inscription also skips one phrase found in the Septuagint ("and we delight"). (All LXX translations are mine.)

[30] The Septuagint differs from the Hebrew of the Masoretic text.

[31] See also, e.g., Zech 2:14–15, Ezek 37:27, 2 Kgs 6:16, Isa 8:8.

[32] Kessler, Herbert, "Prophetic Portraits in the Dura Synagogue," *JAC* 30 (1987) 149–55.

scroll collapses with the meaning of a new covenant and its bringer: Christ (the Messiah) thus offers the words of Isaiah as now his own, a bit revised to fit the "house" of the small church rather than the eschatological mountain to which Isaiah referred. This "house" of Hosios David becomes the location of the *parousia* or appearance of Christ, perhaps the very second coming that Theodora heard about in the reading that inspired her conversion. The "house" of Hosios David is also a place of rest, a life-giving spring (as the dedicatory inscription says), and an evocation of Revelation's promise of an end-time transformation of all humans.

In the center of the mosaic, four closed, jeweled codices are held between the wings, paws, or covered hands of the four creatures described in Ezekiel and Revelation, which are commonly used as signs of the gospel writers or evangelists.[33] While the codex, which looks so much like our books, might seem a commonplace, fifth-century eyes may have seen it as a newer technology that marked Christian identity. Christians of the second century and beyond innovated by elevating the codex to a conveyor of sacred texts, which had earlier usually been inscribed in scrolls.[34] Alongside the open codex held by the figure on the right, Christ's scroll, and the dedicatory inscription, the closed codices speak in their own way of the importance of written texts in relation to the visual image of the mosaic. The mosaic is not only an image, but an image that contains within itself multiple references to literature and writing. These images of writing may in turn encourage the viewer to consider how sacred texts are used in liturgical performances in Hosios David itself: the worshiper may reflect upon the quotation of sacred texts from the Jewish scriptures and from new emerging Christian ones, but also upon the physicality of the texts employed during worship.

Revelation and the Interpretation of the Mosaic

Debate over the meaning of this mosaic has focused not only on Christ, but also on the two figures on either side of him, and how these figures might

[33] But neither Ezekiel nor Revelation has creatures holding books. The conflation of the four creatures with the four gospel writers is a later phenomenon; for the inspiration for these sorts of images in early Christianity we need to move to the late-second century and to Gaul, to Irenaeus's *Haer* 3.11.8. Irenaeus does not describe creatures holding books, but suggests that the gospels are inevitably four, and to be associated with the four animals surrounding the throne in Ezekiel and Revelation.

[34] The codex was more commonly associated with the counting house or the lecture room (Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 9–16); see also Gamble, *Books and Readers*.

help in better understanding the center of the mosaic. Because Ignatius's *Narrative* describes a chapel dedicated to Zechariah, one or the other of the figures has often been interpreted as that prophet.[35] Tsigarides summarizes the many options: "The two figures in the lower corners have been variously identified as Ezekiel and Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zachariah, Ezekiel and St. John the Evangelist, Isaiah and St. John the Evangelist, and also as the Apostles Peter and Paul."[36]

Much work has been done to analyze whether the mosaic inscriptions give clues as to the artist's "sources" for the mosaic, and thus clues as to an interpretation of the mosaic as a whole. In the 1940s, Grabar nicely summarized the various possibilities, which have been echoed ever since. Grabar shows that the scroll Christ holds echoes Isa 25:9–10. Both Ignatius's *Narrative* and the fourteenth-century icon now in Bulgaria (which probably takes as its source both the mosaic in Thessalonikē and Ignatius's interpretation of it) identify the two figures on either side of Christ as Ezekiel and Habakkuk, and thus, according to Grabar, so have scholars thereafter.[37] This identification has some logic to it, as both prophets experienced theophanies.[38] Grabar rejects this identification with Ezekiel and Habakkuk, and suggests instead Zechariah and Ezekiel.[39]

[35] Diehl ("La mosaïque," 335) states that one is Ezekiel and the other Habakkuk.

[36] Tsigarides, *Latomou Monastery*, 43.

[37] A fourteenth-century icon from the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Poganovo, Bulgaria, seems to be a copy of the Hosios David mosaic. It labels the figures Ezekiel and Habakkuk. See Gerasimov, "L'icone bilatérale de Poganovo," 279–88; see also Grabar, "A propos d'une icone."

[38] Ezekiel's "visions of God" happened as "the heavens were opened" beside the river Chobar while he was in exile or captivity (LXX Ezek 1:1 καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον ὁράσεις θεοῦ) and the figure on the left seems particularly interested in the rivers that course from Christ's feet. Habakkuk too speaks of visions at the end times. Hab 2:1 describes the prophet as standing on guard; the Lord says to him: "Write the vision even plainly upon a tablet," and Habakkuk hears from God that "the just shall live by faith" (Hab 2:4; Grabar, *Martyrium*, 2:198. The Septuagint has "by my faith."). This phrase, Grabar says, could be linked to the "souls of the faithful" mentioned on the dedicatory inscription and the small codex held by the figure on the right. Although this phrase from Hab 2:4 would indeed become famous in some early Christian communities—perhaps especially because of Paul's use of it in Rom 1:17 where it becomes a key statement of the epistle—a link between the mosaic and Hab 2:4 based only upon the root πιστ- is tenuous indeed, as Grabar himself later mentions.

[39] Grabar, *Martyrium*, 2:199. He finds instead in Zechariah an "evocation of the new Jerusalem" (200) which better fits the figure on the left: "And on that day living water shall issue forth from Jerusalem, half of it to the first sea and half of it to the last sea, and in summer and in spring it will be thus. And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be one and his name will be one" (LXX Zech 14:8–9). Grabar considers Zechariah to offer a better

Scholars have spent much time trying to identify the two figures on either side of Christ; so too, much attention has been paid to determining the meaning of the mosaic as a whole. Since its discovery it has been interpreted as a vision of the glory of God, the *maiestas Domini*, and three biblical texts of theophanies are given as possible sources: Isa 11:2–9, Ezek 1:1–28, and Rev 4:1–11. Certainly, elements of the visions of Ezekiel and Revelation are present in the image. Since the late-first-century text of Revelation quotes and draws from Ezekiel, disentangling the two texts is nearly impossible. Both refer to a rainbow. LXX Ezek 1:28 states: "Like a vision of a bow, when it is in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the state of the light all around. This rainbow was a vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Revelation places "around the throne" a rainbow that "looks like an emerald" (Rev 4:3). The four animals are found in Ezekiel in the center of the fire, but with four faces each, and are given a highly complex description (Ezek 1:5). Revelation simplifies the picture: around the throne are four living creatures, "full of eyes in front and behind" and their wings too are "full of eyes all round and within" (Rev 4:7–8), just like the creatures in the mosaic. Moreover, Revelation, written in the late-first century C.E., co-opts the language and imagery of the Roman Empire in order to resist it, and offers an imperial and divine Christ in order to contest the economic and persecutory political order of the day where emperors made claims to be gods.[40] Of course the mosaic does not directly copy from the book of Revelation—with its "one like a son of man" with head and hair "white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze" (Rev 1:14–15a)—but we should not expect it to. Images are not indexically related to literary texts, but are interpretations of them, rich with associative logic; they are visual examples of intertextuality. The Christ at Hosios David (at least in the legend

---

textual link because this passage has the motif of living waters and the idea that "Jerusalem shall dwell in security" (Zech 14:11 RSV), a concept that could be echoed in the reference to peace or repose for "this house," found in the scroll of Christ on the mosaic. Grabar does not note that the Septuagint downplays the original Hebrew (וְיָשְׁבָה יְרוּשָׁלִַם לָבֶטַח) using the Greek term πεποιθότως, which has connotations of persuasion, consent, trust, and belief, but is not a particularly strong term in the Greek for "safety." Grabar concludes that the "author of the mosaic" was guided by Ezek 47:1 and Zech 14:8–9, as well as Isa 25:9, which is found on Christ's scroll. The image thus "offers an eschatological theophany anticipated by the prophets of which two, Ezekiel and Zachariah, are represented as they witness this vision" (Grabar, *Martyrium*, 2.201). He then bolsters his insight that the seated figure can be identified as Zechariah by referring to the historical legend of the dedication of the church to the prophet Zechariah, which is mentioned in Ignatius's *Narrative*.

[40] See Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire*; Friesen, *imperial Cults*.

of Ignatius) hints at a similar interpretation: this mosaic is a theophany that survives all persecutions, whether Roman, iconoclastic, or Muslim.

Yet those writers, who interpret early Christian apse mosaics, have generally argued that Revelation is not a likely influence on the mosaic at Hosios David. Montague R. James states, for example: "It can be shown then that by the middle of the fifth century the scene of the great Adoration in the Apocalypse had won a central position in the greatest churches of the West. In the East we look for such a thing in vain."[41] James Snyder argues that the images at Hosios David "have usually been interpreted as the Visions of Ezekiel or Isaiah" precisely because "it is a principle, generally accepted, that the East Christian world rejected John's Apocalyptic vision," although he rightly argues against this conclusion.[42] Art historians' assumptions about Revelation are grounded in comments such as that of James Charlesworth, in his introduction to the Pseudepigrapha: "The Greek Church apparently was not thoroughly convinced about the canonicity of one book, Revelation, until about the tenth century."[43]

It is often assumed that by the end of the second century the canon of the New Testament was closed forever, decided definitively by some church council. The reality was of course much messier.[44] In earliest Christianity, there was no one criterion such as "inspiration" by which books could be collected together; instead, the continued and widespread *use* of certain texts within liturgy and by community determined whether they were considered

[41] James, *Apocalypse in Art*, 33. So also Meer, *Maiestas Domini*, 21–24.

[42] Snyder, "Meaning of the Maiestas," 144. He concludes that "the textual sources that inspired the liturgical *Maiestas domini* in Hosios David included *Revelation*, a book of the Bible rarely accepted in the East" (152). Snyder explains Revelation's impact at Hosios David in light of western influences, which I think is not necessary.

[43] Charlesworth, "Introduction for the General Reader," xxiii; see also Metzger, *Canon*, 16.

[44] Scholars have sometimes argued that the New Testament canon was more or less fixed by the second century C.E. The etiology of canon formation is often traced to the anti-Jewish bishop (or bishop manqué) Marcion, who was perhaps the first to develop a Christian canon, and a radical one at that: The gospel of Luke, and the letters of Paul expurgated of hints of Paul's Jewish identity or use of Jewish scriptures. Regarding epigraphic evidence and biblical texts, Feissel surveys church inscriptions, house inscriptions (especially lintels) and funerary epitaphs and concludes that "epigraphy . . . can contribute to determining the state of a biblical text in use at a given period in a given part of the Greek world, and to discerning its connection to various manuscript traditions. . . . It is obvious from these all too lacunary pieces of evidence that epigraphy, so varied in time and space, did not even come close to using a uniform biblical text; yet, perhaps in a more modest way, it can be one helpful source in trying to understand the history of the formation and corruptions of the text of the Bible" (Feissel, "Bible in Greek Inscriptions," 294–96).

worthy of inclusion.[45] A closer look at the evidence regarding the book of Revelation reveals that its status in the Greek East was ambiguous.

In the early-fourth century, Eusebius in the *History of the Church* (3.25) famously placed Revelation in two categories: the "agreed upon" or recognized texts (ταῦτα μὲν ἐν ὁμολογουμένοις) *and* the books that are "not genuine" (ἐν τοῖς νόθοις). Athanasius's *Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter,* penned in 367 in Egypt, includes Revelation and is the first list to correspond to the books now in the New Testament.[46] But evidence from the late-fourth century, especially in Cappadocia, indicates both the inclusion and exclusion of Revelation from the Christian canon.[47] And of course the question of Revelation's value continued for centuries. Martin Luther, for example, said: "I miss more than one thing in this book, and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic."[48] Revelation even continues to be maligned (offhandedly) by modern-day scholars such as Manlio Simonetti, who says that in the mid-fifth century learning was in decline in both Alexandria and Antioch, and "it is symptomatic that only in this late stage, a period of obvious weariness, do the first Greek commentaries on Revelation appear."[49]

[45] See, e.g., Koester, "Writings and the Spirit"; McDonald, *Formation*. On Revelation in the New Testament canon in general, see appendix IV: "Early Lists," in Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 305–15. On the use of the Bible in early Christian communal gatherings, see, e.g., Justin *1 Apol*. 66; see discussion of variations in the use of texts from the Old and New Testaments in different regions of the Mediterranean in Rouwhorst, "Readings of Scripture."

[46] On the politics of developing this list and fixing canon over and against Alexandrian schools, see Brakke, "Canon Formation."

[47] The canon of Gregory Nazianzen, bishop in Cappadocia in the late-fourth century, does not count Revelation among the books "of the New Mystery." The canon of Amphilochius of Iconium, again in the late-fourth century, expresses ambivalence: "and again the Revelation of John, / Some approve, but the most / Say it is spurious." The canon approved by the third synod of Carthage (397) accepts the book of Revelation (Metzger, *Canon*, 313–15).

[48] In Luther, "Preface to the Revelation of St. John." Martin Luther famously questioned Revelation's authority in the introduction to his translation of the Bible (1522–1527): " 'About this book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own opinions. I would not have anyone bound to my opinion or judgment. I say what I feel.' Luther marked his evaluation of the book of Revelation even more explicitly in the table of contents, where the twenty-three books of Matthew to 3 John are each assigned a number. Then, below, a blank line precedes the listing of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation, which are all unnumbered" (Metzger, *Canon*, 242). The book of Revelation has long had a strange status in relation to the New Testament canon, from antiquity to our own day. In today's U.S. culture, one rarely hears Revelation read or preached from the pulpit in mainstream Christian churches. Yet the book pervades the national consciousness in many and multifarious forms. The *Left Behind* series of novels, an imaginative retelling of the events of Revelation, is tremendously popular. See Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*; Shuck, *Marks of the Beast*.

[49] Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation*, 111.

The mosaic of Hosios David is another "manuscript" of this contentious text, another instantiation of the themes of Revelation, with its rainbow, its four creatures, and its depiction of divinity ruling over the *oikoumenē*. Even if Eusebius's canon list is ambivalent about Revelation, we know from other evidence that the text was alive and well in the second and third centuries, at least. $\mathfrak{P}^{47}$, which Bruce Metzger dates to the mid- or late-third century, contains ten codex leaves of Revelation; Revelation is also found in Codex Sinaiticus, which dates to the fourth century.[50] Ideas such as that of the descent of the new Jerusalem are found in sayings attributed to the Montanists, who thrived in the late-second century and originated in Asia Minor.[51] We find rich borrowings from Revelation in so-called apocryphal texts, such as the perhaps mid-second century C.E. *Epistula Apostolorum*,[52] the perhaps fifth-century Pseudo-Titus Epistle, and especially the second-century *Apocalypse of Peter*, which enjoyed occasional status in the Christian canon. Revelation emerges in apocalypses such as the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (which fleshes out Rev 11:4–12's reference to two prophetic martyrs), the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, and the *Sibylline Oracles*, as well as other prophetic or apocalyptic texts.

The iconography of the Moni Latomou mosaic is evidence that Revelation was read and freely interpreted in Thessalonikē in the fifth century.[53] This fact has broader implications. If we acknowledge that the New Testament canon does not begin to close until the fourth century, and indeed that our fourth-century evidence indicates an ongoing dispute about the authority and canonicity especially regarding Revelation, then a mosaic program of the fifth century that *thinks with* Revelation can be an important piece of evidence for the study of canon formation. Such a study cannot be limited to manuscript evidence or canon lists from early Christian writings and church councils. Rather, we must use iconographic evidence in various centuries to investigate the patterns of use of texts and stories that stood on the edge of canonicity.

[50] Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 38, 42. Revelation may also have been found in Codex Vaticanus, another possibly Constantinian text, but unfortunately that manuscript breaks off after part of Hebrews (Metzger, *Canon*, 207).

[51] E.g., the saying of either Quintilla or Priscilla found in Epiphanius, *Pan*. 49.1.

[52] See esp. 1.251.

[53] So James, *Apocalypse in Art*, on the popularity of Revelation in early Christian art.

The Parousia of 1 Thessalonians, or, How a Homily and a Mosaic Look Similar

Our first illustrated Greek classical texts come from the fourth century C.E., and it is possible that illustrated versions of the Septuagint, for example, predated the mosaic of Hosios David.[54] We should not assume, however, that this mosaic provides a scene or scenes from a literary text. The New Testament canon at this time was fluid; other early Christian texts such as those found in the apocryphal acts of the apostles were also fluid in their variations on beloved stories; early Christian ritual and use of authoritative oral traditions too were in flux.[55] If illustrated manuscripts or pattern books circulated from which artisans drew ideas for their images, yet another level of variety and flux is added to the interpretation of Christian sayings, stories, and ideas.

To understand the mosaic of Hosios David more fully, we must see it as one of many literary and visual "texts" that interpret authoritative sacred texts to offer their own theological, political, and social messages. As I have indicated above, I agree with scholars like Christa Belting-Ihm and Wayne and Martha Meeks[56] that no one text lies behind the iconography of this mosaic;

[54] See the work of Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*. Weitzmann theorizes an evolution in artists' depictions of narrative literary texts. His argument depends, however, upon his assumption that artists were precisely interpreting such texts (see, e.g., his comments on an Odysseus cup "in each of which only seventy to eighty verses of the twenty-second book were illustrated" [p. 23]). Weitzmann's thesis is frustrated by what he must assume is artists' "increasing independence from the textual units": "Not very long after the cyclic method was introduced into the representational arts under the influence of literary narration, artists learned to use this method with increasing independence from the textual units, selecting pictures from various texts and mixing them up" (Weitzmann, *Illustrations*, 27). We should consider instead that versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—two prime texts that Weitzmann argues are illustrated from the archaic period on—were fluid and debated into the Roman period. See Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*. See discussion of the influence of Weitzmann's ideas in Lowden, *Octateuchs*, 4–8; for a critique of the circular reasoning regarding a "lost model," see ibid., 80–83. The Octateuchs that contain illustrations are traditionally dated to the tenth or eleventh centuries C.E. (ibid., 2); Lowden posits a prototype that dates to the eleventh century (ibid., 83). It is possible, as Weitzmann and Kessler argue, that the third-century C.E. frescoes of the synagogue at Dura Europos may be modeled on manuscript illustrations (*Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*). The mosaic of Hosios David of course differs from the Octateuchs and the Dura synagogue in that it does not contain what Weitzmann terms "narrative art" or "cyclic illustration whereby one episode is divided into a number of phases that quickly follow each other" (*Frescoes*, 5).

[55] On textual fluidity see Thomas, *Acts of Peter*; for an important study of early Christian ritual which uses Nagy's ideas from *Poetry as Performance*; see Aitken, *Jesus' Death*.

[56] Wayne and Martha Meeks, in their study of the mosaic of Hosios David, sum it up well: "Our survey of biblical passages to which the motifs of the Latomou mosaic might allude

even the attempt to pin a multitude of texts to certain figures or images within the mosaic is too limited an approach.[57] Instead, this mosaic is evidence of *ongoing practices of early Christian interpretation of sacred or authoritative texts*. I use the awkward locution "sacred or authoritative" because we must keep in mind the fluidity of the canon and Christian predilections for having a variety of authoritative texts. We can think of the fifth-century mosaics at Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome that depict portions of the *Protevangelium of James*, or of the popularity of depictions of Thecla in Egypt and elsewhere in early Christian art.[58] These stories, whether transmitted orally or in a variety of written forms,[59] might or might not become part of a Bible, but they were sacred and authoritative for some communities.[60]

Scholars have tried to shoehorn early Christian biblical interpretation into neat categories such as allegorical and historical, which those very interpretations defy.[61] This scholarly attempt to organize early Christian

---

amply vindicates Ihm's observation that it does not illustrate a particular text. . . . It is not a pastiche of the three great theophanies Ihm cites, Is 6:1–5, Ezekiel 1, and Revelation 4. There are more features of the composition that recall Ezekiel's visions than any other, but elements of the Apocalypse are also undeniable, and there are more or less probable allusions to many other texts . . ." (Meeks, "Vision of God," 132). See also Spieser, *Thessalonique*, 159. For a broader discussion, see Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 32–51; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 69–79; eadem, "Early Christian Images and Exegesis."

[57] For an eleventh/twelfth century example of the multiple possible readings of images, see Bruno of Segli. Kessler states: "Bruno's most important claim, however, is that the patent subjects of church decoration constantly change through the process of interpretation: 'not all of everything is seen at one time,' he insists; some things, in fact, are 'invisible beneath a single image, in some way hidden'" (Kessler, "Gregorian Reform?," 25–48).

[58] Regarding the cult of Thecla especially in Egypt, see Davis, *Cult of Saint Thecla*. Regarding S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, see Sieger, "Visual Metaphor as Theology," 84.

[59] On the topic of the fluidity of manuscripts and storytelling in early Christianity, see Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, esp. ch. 4.

[60] On issues of canon and authority, see Koester, "Writings and the Spirit."

[61] Early Christian biblical interpretation is usually characterized as either Antiochene or Alexandrian in nature, as tending toward "history" or allegory. Young instead explains: "The Fathers were more aware of these complexities ['language and its usage, context, references, background, genre, authorial intention, reader reception, literary structure and so on'] than standard accounts suggest. The traditional categories of 'literal', 'typological' and 'allegorical' are quite simply inadequate as descriptive tools, let alone analytical tools. Nor is the Antiochene reaction against Alexandrian allegory correctly described as an appeal to the 'literal' or 'historical' meaning. A more adequate approach needs to be created" (Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 2). The question of what constitutes a historical/literal interpretation in contrast to an allegorical one is largely up to scholars' interpretations. Simonetti, for example, in his study *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, will sometimes dismiss a writing because it is too homiletical or moral in focus and insufficiently exegetical. The criterion of what constitutes "exegesis" in the first place, however, is not defined (Simonetti,

biblical interpretation has also prevented us from seeing how early Christian interpretation, whether in literary text or image, engages in practices similar to contemporaneous or slightly later rabbinic interpretation or midrash. Daniel Boyarin demonstrates that the logic of midrash in the Talmud is that "this is a verse made rich in meaning from many places"; that is, a verse is impoverished if considered only in its own context, and is enriched when juxtaposed with other verses. As Boyarin goes on to explain: "the fundamental moment of all of these midrashic forms is precisely the very cocitation of several verses."[62] The nature of midrashic reading "is founded on the idea that gaps and indeterminacies in one part of the canon may be filled and resolved by citing others."[63] The mosaic of Moni Latomou can be read as a fifth-century midrash that brings together various authoritative sacred texts, known through writing or oral performance, in order to offer its own interpretation of the coming of Christ.

I have already argued that Revelation was read in Thessalonikē in the fifth century and should be understood as one facet of the production of the Moni Latomou mosaic. I have also offered in some detail a summary of others' interpretations of how scripture might influence the text of the mosaic inscriptions, the images of the mosaic as a whole, and the identification of the figures to the right and left of Christ. I now wish to suggest another important text to the early viewer's interpretation of the Moni Latomou mosaic a text that to my knowledge has never been considered as one of the many sources for interpreting this mosaic—a curious oversight, since it found its first home and interpreters in the very city where Moni Latomou is.[64] This source is Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. I suggest 1 Thessalonians for two reasons: First, because it is a local text and among others may have been influential in Thessalonikē, and second, and more importantly, because this source leads us to a late-fourth-century homily, which provides a good example of the fluid mixing of sacred and authoritative texts that constituted biblical interpretation at the time.

The first-century city of Thessalonikē, with its imperial cult sites and local honors for Roman benefactors,[65] is the backdrop to Paul's 1 Thessalonians, a letter from the late 40s, addressed to what is likely a community of poor

---

Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church, 53–81, esp. 74 on John Chrysostom and 77 on Athanasius).

[62] Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 27–29, quotations at 28 and 29.

[63] Ibid., 27.

[64] See Nasrallah, "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki."

[65] Hendrix, "Thessalonicans Honor Romans."

laborers in the city.[66] Language of persecution, opposition, and comfort threads through the letter. Paul is responding to what seems to him a crisis in this community concerning those members who have died:

> For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thess 4:15–17)

This "day of the Lord," Paul continues, "will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them" (1 Thess 5:2–3).[67] Paul describes the coming of the Lord as a *parousia*, a term often used for the appearance of a Roman emperor. As Helmut Koester, James R. Harrison, and others have argued, this passage should be read in light of Roman imperial propaganda. Paul translates the Roman *pax et securitas* into Greek: Those who make claims to offer εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια do so falsely. There is no "peace and security" in this present empire; there is no "peace and security" in the face of the "day of the Lord"—a technical term that signals the idea of the coming judgment and the end of the present world.[68]

Later interpreters reading 1 Thessalonians expanded on the connections between Christ's *parousia* and theophany, an imperial *adventus*, and judgment, all themes of the Moni Latomou mosaic and/or its interpretation in Ignatius's *Narrative*.[69] Investigation of a homily by John Chrysostom on 1 Thessalonians, especially its comments about Christ's *parousia* or

[66] Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies"; Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 65–66. For an analysis of Paul's language of suffering and space in 1 Thessalonians, see Johnson-DeBaufre, "Extreme Geography," article in draft. I thank the author for allowing me advance access to this research.

[67] The translation is RSV.

[68] Later interpreters would explicitly state that Paul in 1 Thessalonians was describing "the day of judgment"; see, e.g., Hippolytus *Comm. in Dan*. 4.21.2. See Koester, "imperial Ideology," 161–62; Harrison, "Paul and the imperial Gospel." See also Donfried, "imperial Cults of Thessalonica." I disagree with Donfried's use of Acts 17 to elucidate 1 Thessalonians and his over-reading of the epistle, where any mention of affliction becomes evidence of Roman persecution of Christians.

[69] "Likewise, when a king enters some city, people in office and of highest station meet him at some distance, while those accused of crimes await the arrival of the judge inside" (Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary*, 118).

appearance in the sky, allows us to deepen our understanding of the practice of early Christian biblical interpretation—its intertextuality, to use Boyarin's theory of midrash—and so to understand better how the Moni Latomou mosaic engages in the same practice. Many pieces of literature could have demonstrated how early Christians and their Jewish contemporaries weave together various authoritative sacred texts into new ones; Revelation itself, for example, draws from Ezekiel, Daniel, and other traditions of the Jewish Bible. I have chosen Chrysostom's homily for two reasons. First, it provides a unique example of a sermon about Paul's discussion of the *parousia* of Christ in 1 Thessalonians; although we have commentaries on and references to the Thessalonian correspondence, Chrysostom's writing is the only extant early Christian sermon I know on the topic. Second, I have chosen Chrysostom's homily because it is a homily, and so allows us to imagine better how rhetoric was deployed in church space. Although we do not know how the small church of Moni Latomou was originally used—it is not a massive public space like the churches of St. Demetrios or Acheiropoiitos in the city below—we should imagine the space alive with people who not only saw the mosaic but participated in the liturgy, which included the reading of sacred texts and their interpretation.[70]

John Chrysostom's sermon helps us to understand the mosaic of Moni Latomou in two ways. First, this literary passage allows us a new vantage point from which to understand the synthesis of texts and images at Moni Latomou (and potentially in other early Christian images): That is, it helps us to understand concretely the *practices* of interpretation that may have been developing in *both* textual commentary and visual images.[71] Second, John Chrysostom's sermon on 1 Thessalonians 4 provides evidence that even in the late-third century, the king's appearance and the appearance of Christ are linked, and that the concept of theophany is already blurred with Paul's 1 Thessalonians 4 and quasi-imperial appearance. Thus, Chrysostom's reading suggests that art historical debates over whether the Moni Latomou mosaic depicts Christ's theophany or Christ as king are moot: both can be evoked by the image.

[70] On early Christian liturgy and especially Eucharistic practices, see Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*.

[71] I am not arguing here that Christian iconographic practices derive from Jewish interpretive practices as might have been found in illuminated manuscripts of the Septuagint; see Weitzmann, "Illustration of the Septuagint," 45–47, but rather that literary and visual processes of interpretation developed alongside each other and sometimes exhibited similar characteristics. See also Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 70.

In his homilies on 1 Thessalonians, the fourth-century John Chrysostom tends to summarize part of the epistle's text for his congregation. Thus Paul's second-person-plural address to the first-century community in Macedonia mixes with Chrysostom's own address to a fourth-century community in Antioch. This mixing is not a surprise, given Chrysostom's own identification with Paul.[72] Yet not only does Chrysostom identify himself with Paul; he also blurs Paul's audience with his own and in doing so links one civic community (Thessalonian) to another (Antiochene), and one time period (first century) to another (late fourth century).[73] Within the physical walls of the church, identity and time are conflated. This fluid transition between one audience and another, one time period and another, one text and the production of another is a product of the midrashic and intertextual impulses of interpreters of the second to sixth centuries and beyond. So also the hovering Christ of the Hosios David mosaic cannot be limited to one time (the judgment) or one text (Revelation or Ezekiel) but evokes a variety of accounts of theophany.

Chrysostom speaks of Paul's praise of the Thessalonian community. In 1 Thess 1:7–10, Paul says, "you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia; for from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that it is not necessary for us to say anything."[74] John Chrysostom paraphrases, and it is unclear whether he addresses the Thessalonians or his own congregation: "Therefore you have filled all

[72] Mitchell begins her book on Chrysostom's portraits of Paul with this quotation from Chrysostom: "I love all the saints, but I love most the blessed Paul, the chosen vessel, the heavenly trumpet, the friend of the bridegroom, Christ. And I have said this, and brought the love which I have for him out in the public eye so that I might make you, too, partners in this love charm" (Chrysostom, *In illud: Utinam sustineretis modicum* 28–33 in Migne 51.301; quoted and translated in Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 1). This phenomenon of identification with Paul extends, as Mitchell discusses, to an eleventh-century manuscript (Vat. Cod. gr. 766, fol. 2^{v}; plate 1 in Mitchell's book). A small illumination depicts Chrysostom writing; behind and above him hangs a picture of Paul, which is centered near the top of the image; below, Paul himself stands intimately close, looking over Chrysostom's shoulder as he writes (pp. 34–35 and 490; see especially the latter for further bibliography).

[73] See Dawson, who borrows the term "figural" from Auerbach, on "the Christian figural reader": "Figural 'meaning' describes the intelligibility discovered in the relation between two events comprising a single divine performance in history. In order to discern the meaningfulness of the relationship, the figural reader cannot allow the description of that relationship to replace the graphic character of the representations being related" (Dawson, *Christian Figural*, 86).

[74] All translations of John Chrysostom's *Hom. in 1 Thess.* are mine. The Greek is taken from the Migne edition available through the TLG.

people nearby with learning, it says, and the inhabited world (*oikoumenē*) with wonder" (*Hom. in 1 Thess.* 2). Chrysostom dwells on Paul's use of ἐξηχέω which, he believes, marks something like the sound of a trumpet. Thus Chrysostom ties Paul's praise of the Thessalonians at the beginning of the letter (immediately following the greeting) with the eschatological message to come in 1 Thessalonians 4–5.[75] The trumpet sounds early, and the noise filling all the world at the *parousia* of Christ is prefigured in the Thessalonians' (or Antiochenes'?) own good report and evoked, I would argue, in images such as that at Hosios David. Of course, as Chrysostom's listeners might recognize, that good report is still filling the world, reaching Antioch and elsewhere.

As we have seen above, New Testament scholars have argued that the message of 1 Thessalonians 4–5, where Christ appears in the clouds, is a political one. Chrysostom confirms the possibility of this reading not only for twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars, but also for those readers of the fourth century. He frames the fame of the Thessalonian Christians in terms of Macedonian imperial prominence, saying that the Romans were admired for having captured the Macedonians.[76] He reads this straightforward political insight in terms of the vision of the prophet Daniel, who saw Alexander as a winged leopard. The book of Daniel, written in the second century B.C.E. as a critique of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, reaches back to Alexander the Great; John Chrysostom stretches its import forward to the city of Thessalonikē at the time of Paul and perhaps even in the late-fourth century. The trumpeting of Thessalonikē (and of the appearance of Christ) in the *oikoumenē* seems to move backward and forward in time, and, as we shall see, visionary builds upon visionary. Here and elsewhere, Chrysostom weaves 1 Thessalonians with ancient prophets and theophanies; this interpretation of one text by means of another results in a mixing of literary sources. The mosaic of Hosios David makes a similar interpretive move through its images and texts, mixing phrases that evoke not only Isaiah but Ezekiel, Revelation, and other texts with images that evoke those prophetic materials as well as authoritative sacred texts into a visual midrash.

Chrysostom's homily on 1 Thess 4:15–17 insists that Paul experienced a vision, and that this vision fits into a larger biblical tradition of theophanies. At the very beginning of the homily, we can observe two things. First, we see the speed and complexity of Chrysostom's quotations and allusions. Second,

[75] Chrysostom does the same in *Hom. 1 Thess.*, 1, in which he addresses 1 Thess 1:1–7 but still brings in the language of the day of the Lord as a thief from 5:2, 4.

[76] Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Thess.*, 2.

we note that Chrysostom is interested in bringing together these quotations in order to demonstrate the continuity of Paul's visionary experience and prophetic voice with the great authorities of the past (the Jewish prophets), as well as Paul's difference and greater authority in this visionary realm:

> The prophets, wishing to demonstrate the trustworthiness of [their] sayings, said this before all other things: "The vision, which Isaiah saw," and again, "The word of the Lord, which came to Jeremiah," and again, "The Lord says these things," and other such statements. And many saw God himself seated, as it was possible for them to see. But Paul did not see him seated, but having in himself Christ speaking, instead of this ["The Lord says these things"], he said, "Or do you seek proof of Christ speaking in us?" (2 Cor 13:3) and again, "Paul apostle of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:1 modified), showing that nothing [he said] is his. For the apostle uttered the word of him who sent him. And again, "I think that even I have the spirit of God." (1 Cor 7:40) (*Hom. 1 Thess.* 8)

In this passage we find structural and conceptual echoes of the mosaic of Hosios David. Chrysostom clusters together, fast and furious, a set of authoritative prophets and their means of guaranteeing their visionary experience. In addition, he weaves together the weighty authority of past Jewish prophets, who are indubitably canonical scripture in the fourth century, with a newer and more contentious figure, Paul, to whom Chrysostom is particularly attached. Chrysostom lifts Paul up and suggests that his visionary experience of Christ's theophany in 1 Thessalonians 4 is not lesser than ancient forms of prophetic experience gained through vision (the debate over the seated God) or audition (the collapse of the prophet's and God's voices, or of Paul's and Christ's voices).

When Chrysostom comes to the quotation and discussion of Paul's statement about the *parousia*, his midrashic moves are no less complex. Thus Chrysostom engages the sacred text point by point, explaining it by means of other scripture. I quote at length:

> Therefore let us see now even what he says. "For we say this to you in a word of the Lord, that we who are living, who survive until the *parousia* of the Lord, will not outstrip those who have fallen asleep, because the Lord himself by a word of command, by the voice of an archangel, and by a last trumpet will descend from heaven."[77]
>
> • Christ also then said this very thing: "The powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt 24:29).

[77] Chrysostom offers a slight variation on the now-accepted text of 1 Thess 4:15–16.

> • Why in the world by a trumpet? For also on Mount Sinai we saw this, and there were angels there [see Exod 19:16; 20:18; Acts 7:39 regarding an angel being at Mount Sinai; also Exod 32:34].
>
> • But what does "the voice of the archangel" mean? Just as he said concerning the virgins: "Rise, the bridegroom has come" (cf. Matt 25. Either it says this, or that just as with a king, thus also it will be then, with angels [or messengers] serving at the resurrection. For it says, "Let the dead rise," and the deed is done; the angels are not mighty enough for this work, but his word is. It is as if a king commanded and said: "Let those who have been shut up go forth, and let the servants lead [them] out: they do not now [do this] finally by their own might, but by his voice. And Christ said this elsewhere: "He will send his angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from the four winds, from the edges [i.e., from one end of heaven to the other; Matt 24:31]." (*Hom. 1 Thess*. 8)

This passage demonstrates four interpretive practices in which both Chrysostom and the mosaic of Moni Latomou engage. First, one scripture is explained by another, and catchwords or phrases govern the logic of the explanation. Authoritative texts broadly construed can be concatenated to advance a new meaning. Second, those scholars, who are familiar with rabbinic texts of the Mishnah (codified in the third century), for example, will hear the similarities of John Chrysostom's method of arguing with rabbinic modes of thought. In the latter, as Daniel Boyarin puts it, midrash seeks to explain puzzles within the biblical text.[78] The Mishnah offers us multiple voices side by side: rabbis over time and space seek together to puzzle out the meaning of scripture. Here we are reduced to Chrysostom alone; nevertheless, a similar interpretive logic governs. Choices that might puzzle ("Why in the world by a trumpet?") are explained by means of other scriptures. Third, the passage allows us to see a heavenly Lord in action, to experience the *parousia* and to note the differences and similarities between Chrysostom's presentation of it and that at Moni Latomou. Fourth, Chrysostom's treatment of 1 Thessalonians shows that 1 Thessalonians 4 can reasonably be added to the many scriptural allusions or quotations that scholars have attributed to the mosaic of Moni Latomou.

[78] Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, x.

Conclusions

The mosaic of Moni Latomou thus provides a site for thinking about the intersection of literary and visual texts in early Christianity, and the hermeneutical processes by which authoritative written and visual texts are combined and recombined. Despite my own training as a scholar of New Testament and early Christian literature, my goal in this essay has been to move away from our impulses—impulses shared even by art historians—to give priority to literature and to find firm literary links to "explain" the images of a mosaic. Instead, the mosaic of Moni Latomou has allowed us to explore the fluidity of the canon of the Christian Testament in the fifth century, on the one hand, and the midrashic interpretive practices of early Christians, on the other. These themes elucidate the early Christian interpretive practices that produced this beautiful mosaic.

This essay has advanced two arguments in relation to the early Christian mosaic of Moni Latomou. Scholars have questioned the links between the mosaic's images and the book of Revelation. Some scholars have argued that the mosaic represents the "vision of Ezekiel," stating that Revelation was not included in the canon of the Greek East and could not have influenced it. I have argued that this logic is backward, especially because of the fluidity of the New Testament canon in the fourth century and beyond. We should instead see that the mosaic of Moni Latomou provides evidence that Revelation was part of a *local* canon for Thessalonikē; it was *not* marginal, but was vibrantly used and interpreted in at least one early Christian community there.[79]

Second, the mosaic of Moni Latomou, as we have seen, is concerned not only with communicating through images, but also through written texts: five codices and a scroll; Revelation, 1 Thessalonians, and the prophets of the Jewish scriptures. The mosaic is self-consciously intertextual, bringing together with its image of the reigning, pacific, teaching Christ writings that would have had meaning to those persons of the fifth century, who worshiped there. It is an intertextual response that, like the book of Revelation itself, brings together a variety of texts to produce an entirely new message. The inscriptions point us to Isaiah; the two figures on either side to ancient prophets; the four signs which came to be understood as stand-ins for the evangelists point us to Revelation; Christ seated on the rainbow, his hand in a gesture of *ad locutio*, brings us to the speaking emperors and the philosophers

[79] In fact, earliest Christian iconography is a tool for the study of New Testament canon formation. Images should inform our understanding of how various texts were used in various locations and at various times.

of Jesus' own time. As John Chrysostom's imaginative catena or chain weaves 1 Thessalonians with prophets and theophanies, with Matthew's four winds and angels, as it confuses and mixes texts together, so we can imagine a similar associative logic operative for those Christians, who planned the Hosios David mosaic.

Chrysostom's sermon is thus a literary model of the sort of intertextuality performed at Moni Latomou. It also supports my argument that the ordinary viewer in Thessaloniki in the fifth century may have seen in this mosaic resonances with 1 Thessalonians. John Chrysostom's rhetoric demands that his listeners consider their own righteousness before the judge in the skies at the last trumpet. So also the mosaic at Moni Latomou exerts its own rhetoric on the viewer, demanding that she behold her God, asking that she understand her God in *this* form, hovering over the inhabited world in *this* way.

Bibliography

Aitken, Ellen Bradshaw. *Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004.

Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image." Pages 32–51 in *Image—Music—Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Brakke, David. "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth 'Festal Letter.'" *HTR* 87 (1994) 395–419.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984.

Charlesworth, James. "Introduction for the General Reader." Pages xxi–xxxiv in *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*. Vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by idem. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983.

Ćurčić, Slobodan. *Some Observations and Questions Regarding Early Christian Architecture in Thessaloniki*. Thessaloniki: Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities of Thessaloniki, 2000.

Davis, Stephen J. *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Dawson, John David. *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002.

Diehl, Charles. "A propos de la mosaïque d'Hosios David à Salonique." *Byzantion* 7 (1932) 335–38.

———. CRAI (1927) 256–61.

Dix, Gregory. *The Shape of the Liturgy*. 2d ed. London: Black, 1960.

Donfried, Karl. "The imperial Cults of Thessalonica and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians." Pages 215–23 in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman imperial Society*. Edited by Richard A. Horsley. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997.

Feissel, Denis. "The Bible in Greek Inscriptions." Pages 294–96 in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*. Edited and translated by Paul M. Blowers. The Bible through the Ages 1. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

————. *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III^e^ au VI^e^ siècle*. Athens: École française d'Athènes, 1983.

Friesen, Steven J. "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus." *JSNT* 26 (2004) 323–61.

————. *imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Frilingos, Christopher. *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Frykholm, Amy. *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gamble, Harry. *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995.

Gerasimov, Todor. "L'icone bilatérale de Poganovo au Musée archéologique de Sofia." *Cahiers archéologique* 10 (1959) 279–88.

Gerke, Friedrich. "Il mosaico absidale di Hosios David di Salonicco." *Corsi di Cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* XI (1964) 179–99.

Grabar, André. *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et de l'art chrétien antique*. 2 vols. Paris: Collège de France, 1946. Repr., London: Variorum Reprints, 1972.

————. *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*. Bollingen Ser. 35.10; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968.

————. "A propos d'une icone Byzantine du XIV^e^ siècle." *Cahiers archéologique* 10 (1959) 289–304.

Harrison, James R. "Paul and the imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki." *JSNT* 25 (2002) 71–96.

Harvey, W. Wigan. *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libri quinque adversus haereses*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1857. Accessed on *Thesaurus linguae graecae*.

Hendrix, Holland. "Thessalonicans Honor Romans." Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1984.

Hoddinott, Ralph F. *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia*. London: MacMillan, 1963.

Iliadis, I. G. "The Natural Lighting of the Mosaics in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki." *Lighting Resource and Technology* 33 (2001) 13–24.

James, Montague Rhodes. *The Apocalypse in Art*. The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1927. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

Jensen, Robin. "Early Christian Images and Exegesis." Pages 65–85 in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*. Edited by Jeffrey Spier. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007.

————. *Understanding Early Christian Art*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Johnson-DeBaufre, Melanie. "Extreme Geography: Mapping the Bodies of Believers in 1 Thessalonians." Article in draft.

Kaltsogianni, Heleni et al., eds. *Thessaloniki in Byzantine Literature: Historical and Hagiographical Texts*. Byzantine Texts and Studies 32. Thessaloniki: Byzantine Research Centre of the University of Thessaloniki, 2002. [in Greek]

Kessler, Herbert. "A Gregorian Reform Theory of Art?" Pages 25–48 in *Rome e la Riforma Gregoriana: Tradizioni e innovazioni*. Edited by Serena Romano and Julie Enckell Julliard. Études Lausannois d'histoire de l'art 5. Rome: Viella, 2007.

————. "Prophetic Portraits in the Dura Synagogue." *JAC* 30 (1987) 149–55.

Koester, Helmut. "imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians." Pages 158–66 in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman imperial Society*. Edited by Richard Horsley. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997.

————. "Writings and the Spirit: Authority and Politics in Ancient Christianity," *HTR* 84 (1991) 353–72.

Krautheimer, Richard and Slobodan Ćurčić. *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. 4th ed. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986.

Lampe, Geoffrey W. H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Lowden, John. *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.

Luijendijk, AnneMarie. "Behold our God: The Apse Mosaic of Osios David." Unpublished paper. April 1995.

Luther, Martin. "Preface to the Revelation of St. John" (1522) found at http://www.bible-researcher.com/antilegomena.html.

Malherbe, Abraham. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Anchor Bible 32B. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Mathews, Thomas. *The Clash of the Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

McDonald, Lee. *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*. Rev. ed. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995.

Meeks, Wayne and Martha. "Vision of God and Scripture Interpretation in a Fifth-Century Mosaic." Pages 124–45 in *Reading in Christian Communities: Essays on Interpretation in the Early Church*. Edited by Charles A. Bobertz and David Brakke. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

Meer, Frederik van der. *Maiestas Domini: théophanies de l'Apocalypse dans l'art chrétien*. Rome: Pontifical Institute of Christian archaeology, 1938.

Metzger, Bruce. "Early Lists of the Books of the New Testament." Pages 305–15 in idem, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.

————. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Migne, Jacques-Paul. *Patrologiae Graecae*. Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–1866. Accessed at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:patrgrae.

Mitchell, Margaret. *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation*. Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 2002.

Nagy, Gregory. *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Nasrallah, Laura. "Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda." *JECS* 13 (2005) 465–508.

Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Athanasios. *Varia Graeca sacra. Sbornik grečeskich neizdannych bogoslovskich tekstov IV-XV vekov*. St. Petersburg: Zapiski of the Historical-Philological Faculty of the University of St. Petersburg, 1909.

Pelikanides, Stylianos. *Early Christian Monuments of Thessalonikē: Acheiropoiētos, Moni Latomou*. Thessaloniki: Pan. Pournara, 1973. [in Greek]

Rahlfs, Alfred, ed. *Septuaginta. Verkleinerte Ausgabe in einem Band*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibel-Gesellschaft, 1935, 1979.

Rouwhorst, Gerard A. M. "The Readings of Scripture in Early Christian Liturgy." Pages 305–31 in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem: Essays on Classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster*. Edited by Leonard V. Rutgers. Leuven: Peeters, 2002.

Rufus, Charles. "A Note on the Date of the Mosaic of Hosios David at Salonika." *Byzantion* 7 (1932) 342–43.

Shuck, Glenn. *Marks of the Beast: The Left Behind Novels and the Struggle for Evangelical Identity*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Sieger, Joanne Deane. "Visual Metaphor as Theology: Leo the Great's Sermons on the Incarnation and the Arch Mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore." *Gesta* 26 (1987) 83–91.

Simonetti, Manlio. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*. Translated by John A. Hughes. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.

Snyder, James. "The Meaning of the 'Maiestas Domini' in Hosios David." *Byzantion* 37 (1967) 143–52.

Spieser, Jean-Michel. "The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches." *Gesta* 37 (1998) 63–73.

Spieser, Jean-Michel. *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IV^e^ au VI^e^ siècle*. Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome. Paris: Boccard, 1984.

Theodoret of Cyrus. *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul*. 2 vols. Translated by Robert Charles Hill. Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001.

Thomas, Christine M. *The Acts of Peter, Gospel Literature, and the Ancient Novel: Rewriting the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Tsigarides, Efthymios. *Latomou Monastery (The Church of Hosios David)*. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1988.

Vasiliev, A. "Life of David of Thessalonica." *Traditio* 4 (1946) 115–47.

Weitzmann, Kurt. "The Illustration of the Septuagint." Pages 45–47 in *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*. Edited by Herbert Kessler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

———. *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947. Repr., 1970.

——— and Herbert Kessler. *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990.

Xyngopoulos, Andreas. "The Sanctuary of the Monastery of the Stone-Worker in Thessalonikē and its Mosaics." *Archaiologikon Deltion* 12 (1929) 142–80. [in Greek]

Young, Frances. *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.