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**IN THE IMAGE OF SAINT LUKE: THE ARTIST IN EARLY BYZANTIUM**

REBECCA ELIZABETH RAYNOR

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

AUGUST 2012

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature.....

For Diane, Chris, and Lottie Raynor, with love

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

REBECCA ELIZABETH RAYNOR

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE IMAGE OF SAINT LUKE: THE ARTIST IN EARLY BYZANTIUMSUMMARY

This thesis discusses the role and place of artists who painted icons in Early Byzantium. To date, they have not been the focus of much academic attention. Instead, information about artists is spread across a range of discussions concerning Byzantium and the history of art. This thesis collates and interprets the empirical and theoretical evidence to concentrate on the people who produced religious portraits before Iconoclasm. In so doing, I seek to further our understanding of these individuals, and offer a more nuanced view of their socio-cultural context, their practices, and the images they painted.

This thesis is structured around two definitions of what the Early Byzantine artist could be: ideal and real. I start with the legend that St Luke painted portraits of Christ and the Virgin from life. Part One, 'The Ideal Artist', considers in turn: the legend of St Luke as an artist and its origins; Luke as an ideal artist; and two other ideal artists: God and the emperor. Part Two, 'The Real Artist', considers in turn: icons; literary and legislative texts; and finally the motivation for producing religious imagery before the eighth century.

The anonymity of artists working in the Early Byzantine period seems to have delayed scholarly interest in them. In this thesis, however, I consider their anonymity as crucial evidence for who artists were: believers. Christian faith in Byzantium is a recurrent theme in this thesis. I argue that artists practiced humility by not signing their work and painted icons to demonstrate, develop, and deepen their love for God. Further, I argue that artists who depicted Mary and Jesus as Mother and Child, as Luke had done, imitated the Evangelist and participated in his image.

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Finally, and with the deepest love, I thank my parents and my sister. There are no words. This thesis is dedicated to you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND FREQUENTLY CITED WORKS

<i>ABE</i>	Cyril A. Mango, <i>The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1253: Sources and Documents</i> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986; repr. 2009)
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 9 vols (Edinburgh: Clarke, 1885-97; repr. 2001)
BBOM	Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<i>CJC</i>	<i>Corpus Juris Civilis</i> , 3 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-95; repr. 1945-63)
Cod. Just.	<i>Codex Justianus</i> , in <i>CJC</i> , vol. II: <i>Codex Iustinianus</i> , ed. by Paul Krüger
Cod. Theod.	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> , ed. by Jacques Godefroy and others (Leipzig: Weidman, 1736-45)
<i>CRL</i>	<i>Corpus of Roman Law</i> , gen. ed. Clyde Pharr, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1952-[61])
CS	Cistercian Studies
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies
Eusebios, VC	Eusebios of Caesarea, <i>Vita Constantini</i> , ed. by F. Winkelmann, <i>Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin</i> (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975), pp. 3-151
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>

<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Liber Pontificalis, Texte, introduction et commentaire</i> , ed. by Louis Duchesne, 2 vols (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1884-92; repr. Paris: E. de Boccard, 1967)
<i>LPER</i>	Agnellus, <i>Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis</i> , ed. by Oswald Holder-Egger, in <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum</i> (Hanover: [n. pub.], 1878), pp. 275-391
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Lexicon, Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891)
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , 2 series, 14 vols each (Edinburgh: Clarke, 1886-1900)
<i>OAJ</i>	<i>Oxford Art Journal</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca</i> , ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1857-66)
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina</i> , ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1844-55)
Pliny, <i>NH</i>	Pliny the Elder, <i>Natural History</i> , text with trans. by H. Rackman, 10 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1963)
<i>RÉB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
SC	Sources chétiennes
SH	Subsidia Hagiographica
SPBS	Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies
<i>Synax.CP</i>	<i>Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi adiectis synaxariis selectis</i> , ed. by Hyppolète Delehaye, Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1902)

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis collects and interprets evidence of the story that St Luke had been a painter, and uses it to initiate a study into artists, predominantly those who made religious panel paintings, between the years AD 313 and 730.

I will begin by examining Luke the Evangelist, one of the few individuals named as an artist in Early Byzantine texts. As with most biographies of historical figures from that period, there is no way of distinguishing fact from fiction, but the questionable veracity of the story does not inhibit its value. On the contrary, it is the very fact that this aspect of Luke's life was seemingly invented that gives it such significance, because as a legend it reflects the society from which it emerged. As the story may have circulated as early as the fifth century, its contents can be used to understand some of the issues about artists that concerned the faithful at that time. Because the subject of this legend, Luke, was believed to be the *first* Christian painter of the *first* portraits of Jesus and Mary, his story reveals subtle clues about artists who painted icons in particular. Fundamentally, the legend gives an insight into who the ideal artist might have been in Early Byzantium. So for this reason, my thesis is divided into two parts: 'ideal artists' and 'real artists', two terms that will recur throughout. Part One of this thesis will demonstrate the presence and acceptance of 'ideal artists' in Early Byzantium; Part Two seeks to establish a common understanding about 'real artists' who painted icons before the eighth century.

It was arguably through their identification of Luke as a painter that the Byzantines were able to formulate an understanding of religious art and qualify its place within the practices of their faith. To date, neither Luke in his role as an artist, nor the anonymous Early Byzantine artist, has been the subject of focussed academic study. Work on Byzantine artists has looked at those working in the Middle and Late periods, perhaps because there is more information about who they were and what they made.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge, Colloque International, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Université de Renne II, Haute-Bretagne, 2-6 mai 1983*, ed. by Xavier Barral i Altet, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 1986-90), vol. I: *Les hommes* (1986). *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander P. Kazhdan and others, 3 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. I, 'Artist', by Anthony Cutler, pp. 196-201. *Το πορτραίτο του καλλιτέχνη στο Βυζάντιο*, ed. by Maria Vassilaki (Heraklion: University of Crete Press, 1997). Liz James, '...and the Word was with God... What Makes Art Orthodox?', in *Byzantine Orthodoxies, Proceedings from the Thirty-sixth Spring Symposium of*

However, because the role of the artist and religious art both underwent many vicissitudes in Byzantium, I have not engaged with the literature pertaining to the post-eighth-century artist. Nor do I deal with the Evangelist as the patron saint of artists, as both Jean Schaefer and Jean Wilson have done, for it was only after Byzantium and in Europe that he fulfilled this role.<sup>2</sup> Instead of fitting neatly within an existing discourse, this thesis sits alongside a vast body of scholarship on other topics, most notably work on the legend of Luke as a painter, icons, the relationship between art and text, and the concept of the artist in Western art history. I will consider how the legend established Luke as an 'ideal artist', and treat the Evangelist as a possible representative or foil for the anonymous 'real artist'. I will set the two types of artist into the artistic, spiritual, and socio-cultural context of Early Byzantium. My thesis, therefore, is built on primary evidence as well as modern scholarship concerning the historical background of objects, literature, and the myth of the artist.

Discussions about Luke as an artist are usually incorporated into scholarship on 'cult-images', works of art revered by the viewer for the person depicted thereon, and that have added significance because they were believed to have been made by a divine artist. In this context, images attributed to Luke are a sub-genre of Christian cult-images. The earliest study that focussed on the origins of Christian legends surrounding such images was conducted by Ernst von Dobschütz at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> His book, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen Zur Christlichen Legende*, is primarily a compilation of early Christian texts that refer to miraculous images of Jesus. The collection is prefaced by a discussion about the textual basis for such narratives, into which the story that Luke had been an artist is briefly mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Dobschütz uncritically accepted the authorship and dates of the texts he collated, many of which have now been evaluated and shown to have been written by different people, at different times, and significantly, for different aims. As the authenticity of the evidence

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*Byzantine Studies, University of Durham 23-25 March 2002*, ed. by Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday, SPBS, 12 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 103-10. *L'artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, ed. by Michele Bacci, Seminari e convergei (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Jean Owens Schaefer, 'Saint Luke as painter: from saint to artisan to artist', in *Artistes, artisans et production*, ed. by Barral i Altet, vol. I, pp. 413-27. Jean C. Wilson, 'Reflections on St. Luke's Hand: Icons and the Nature of Aura in the Burgundian Low Countries during the Fifteenth Century', in *The Sacred Image*, ed. by Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 132-46.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen Zur Christlichen Legende* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899; repr. USA: Kessinger, [2010(?)]).

<sup>4</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, pp. 26-39.

he used to argue how and why stories about miraculous images evolved in early Christianity has been questioned, so too have his arguments.

The descendent and critic of Dobschütz's *Christusbilder*, is Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence: A History of Images Before the Era of Art*.<sup>5</sup> Belting defined 'cult-images' as 'artefacts', and interpreted them in relation to the beliefs of the people who used them. On this point, the idea that Luke had been a painter is mentioned.<sup>6</sup> Belting stated that portraits by the Evangelist's hand were invented to offer primary relics of Christ and the Virgin. The broad sweep of *Likeness and Presence*, which in less than five-hundred pages deals with sacred images from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age, precluded close scrutiny of the story and its sources. Rather, Belting's analysis of the legend of Luke as an artist is brief and only loosely referenced. I will concentrate on the primary literary and visual evidence for the story in the first chapter of my thesis. In the second chapter, I will focus on the Evangelist as an individual, to determine why he was most widely accepted as the only artist to have painted portraits of Jesus and Mary from life.

The closest to a monograph on Luke as an artist is Michelle Bacci's *Il pennello dell'Evangelista: Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca*.<sup>7</sup> This is structured around some of the images that are believed to have been painted by the Evangelist. It traces the key textual evidence for each attribution, and accounts for the local, national, and religious significance of the images. Bacci's work, therefore, orders and compiles the history of Luke's art, rather than the history of Luke as an artist. The opening chapter discusses the origins of the legend.<sup>8</sup> To begin, it addresses the presence of religious figurative images in Early Byzantium. It then assesses how the faithful used relics and portraits, and how the line between the two became blurred in the sixth century with the advent of miraculous images of Christ that had the properties of both. Bacci acknowledged that legends about such images may be symptomatic of early Christianity, but favoured the view that stories about the 'manifestation of the sacred' corresponded to a limited set of issues particular to the times and places from which

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 57-59.

<sup>7</sup> Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista: Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca*, Piccola Biblioteca Gisem, 14 (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, pp. 33-96.

they emerged. He argued that the legend of Luke as an artist was started in the eighth century by the clergy to offer incontrovertible proof in support of the use and production of religious images by Christians. Bacci's work, however, needs now to be reconsidered in light of the recent publication on the period defined as Iconoclasm by Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon.<sup>9</sup>

Byzantine Iconoclasm happened in two parts, between the years 727-787 and again between the years 815-843, during which periods religious images were banned. The term comes from the two Greek roots: *eikon* (εἰκών), and *klastes* (κλάστης), translating roughly to 'image-breaker'. Until recently, scholars generally accepted that the controversy was prompted by a massive rise in the number and popularity of icons, and that it revolved around whether they were an acceptable part of Orthodox practice.<sup>10</sup> It is on this understanding that Bacci's argument rests. His discussion is consistent with how scholars tend to refer to the legend: as evidence in support of various discourses relating to the debates surrounding images in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium.

However, the importance of icons and their contribution to Iconoclasm have both been reassessed and shown to have been overstated.<sup>11</sup> Brubaker and Haldon have argued that the controversy was in fact a culmination of a much broader set of issues, fuelled by the concept and hierarchy of the holy, the perception of the imperial family, as well as the social, the economic, and the political milieu of the centuries that directly preceded it.<sup>12</sup> This major re-evaluation and reinterpretation of the period means that the sources usually presented as primary historical evidence, including the legend of Luke as a painter, need to be revisited. If the role of images was not central to Iconoclasm, then a legend about an apostolic artist and icons painted from life would not necessarily have been prompted by, nor solved, the debate. Casting doubt on the idea that the legend started in the eighth century prompts the question: if not then, when? This thesis

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<sup>9</sup> Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm', *DOP* 8 (1954), 83-150. André Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Publications de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 75 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1936).

<sup>11</sup> Leslie Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm', in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alta Medioevo: 3-9 aprile 1997*, Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo 45, 2 vols (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1998), vol. II, pp. 1215-54.

<sup>12</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History*.

will push the origins of the legend further back, by arguing how this story could have been formulated in response to a different set of issues that correspond to an earlier time.

According to tradition, Luke painted the first portraits of the Virgin. Recent interest in the cult of Mary in Byzantium has turned attention to Marian imagery, including icons attributed to the Evangelist. The 'Mother of God' exhibition, opened in 2000 at Benaki Museum, Athens, presented a range of objects that carry a representation of the Virgin.<sup>13</sup> Included in the exhibition catalogue is a short summary, translated into English, of Bacci's book, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*.<sup>14</sup> The article concentrates on portraits of Mary in the Eastern Mediterranean that were said to have been painted by the Evangelist. These images had local cults associated with them, and as a group of images they accelerated the wider cult of the Virgin. One of the most legendary images of the Mother of God painted by Luke, but since lost, is the icon known as the 'Hodegetria' ('She who leads the way'). Bacci's article in the subsequent publication of conference papers connected to the exhibition, discusses the phenomenon of the icon in the East and West, which was intermittently attributed to the hand of Luke.<sup>15</sup> Bissera Pentcheva also dealt with the 'Hodegetria' icon in the context of Mary's cult and representations in art.<sup>16</sup> Pentcheva has linked this and other images of the Virgin to the political aims of imperial families throughout the course of the Byzantine Empire. Both Bacci and Pentcheva focussed on the presence, use, and significance of the 'Hodegetria' icon, rather than the importance of the Evangelist as its artist. As one of the most frequently mentioned and potent images of Mary, I will discuss this image, but only briefly because the earliest reference to it as one of Luke's works was made in the eleventh century, and is therefore outside the scope of my discussion.

Part Two of this thesis concentrates on understanding the 'real artist' and starts with the surviving works of art they produced. Scholarship on icons is rich. Georgios

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<sup>13</sup> *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, Catalogue of the Benaki Museum Exhibition, 2000-2001, ed. by Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Michele Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush of the Evangelist Luke', in *Mother of God*, ed. by Vassilaki, pp. 79-89.

<sup>15</sup> Michele Bacci, 'The Legacy of the Hodegetria: Holy Icons and Legends between East and West', in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. by Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 321-36.

<sup>16</sup> Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 109-44.



and Maria Sotiriou laid the foundations for the study of icons in 1956, with their catalogue of those preserved at the Holy Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (hereafter St Catherine's monastery).<sup>17</sup> In the two decades that followed, André Grabar, Manolis Chatzidakis, Kurt Weitzmann, and Ernst Kitzinger published work that presented icons through the lens of 'traditional' art history.<sup>18</sup> Using form and style as methodological approaches, they presented arguments for when and where icons were made. Against this chronology, they charted the formation of iconographic types and compositional schemes, and proposed how the two were disseminated across the empire. Although Grabar, Chatzidakis, Weitzmann, and Kitzinger often arrived at different conclusions, they were unified in their goals: to establish hierarchies, a sense of continuum between the Classical period and the Italian Renaissance, and to secure a place for icons in the history of art. Arguably, the absence of signatures on works of art and the anonymity of artists in Byzantine texts interrupts the link between the three epochs. Understandably therefore, these scholars avoided this point, making only passing comments on the artists themselves.

The traditional approach to art of the Byzantine era was unchallenged until the 1980s, when there was a radical shift in the ways in which icons were analysed. Robin Cormack broke with the formalist tendency that had dominated the field, concentrating instead on the role that art played in Byzantine society.<sup>19</sup> His book, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons*, contributed to a wave of publications, from a range of theoretical standpoints, which used art to open up and address questions about Byzantine life. In his 1997 publication, *Painting the Soul*, Cormack criticised Belting's treatment of icons as 'images before art' rather than as works of art.<sup>20</sup> Cormack established icons as art that were to their contemporary audience, as today,

<sup>17</sup> Georgios Sotiriou and Maria Sotiriou, *Icones du Mont Sinai*, Collection de l'Institut Français d'Athènes, 100, 2 vols (Athens: Institut Français, 1956-58).

<sup>18</sup> A partial list of titles includes: André Grabar, 'Le portrait en iconographie paléochrétienne', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 36 (1962), 87-109. Manolis Chatzidakis, 'An Encaustic Icon of Christ at Sinai', trans. by Gerry Walters, *Art Bulletin*, 49, 3 (1967), 197-208 (pp. 200, 206). Kurt Weitzmann and others, eds, *Icons from South Eastern Europe and Sinai*, trans. by R. E. Wolf (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977; repr. 1980). Their work, the last in particular, was influenced by Alois Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn im Zusammenhange mit der Gesamtentwicklung der Bildenden Künste bei den Mittelmeervölkern* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlichen hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901), and Riegl's critic, Josef Strzygowski. On the schism between the two see: Jaś Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History*, 25, 3 (2002), 358-79.

<sup>19</sup> Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London: G. Philip, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997).

simultaneously aesthetic, religious, and political. Although scholarly opinions about how icons were seen aesthetically, used in religious practice, and harnessed for political aims differ, this view of Byzantine art is now widely accepted. But what about the people who made them? Arguably, the absence of the artist in discussions about icons implies that they were ‘art before the artist’.

Analysing the story about an evangelical artist, who wrote and painted, is aided considerably by discussion into whether, for the Byzantines, words and images were perceived to be different, the same, or equivalent.<sup>21</sup> The relationship between art and text is a theme at the forefront of contemporary scholarship. A collection of essays on the subject edited by Liz James address the relationship and interdependence of visual and verbal representation which, though distinct, were capable of communicating religious and imperial messages in Byzantium.<sup>22</sup> The Greek language used in Byzantium lends itself to the topic: the word *eikon*, for example, means ‘image’: conceptual, pictorial, or verbal; the word *graphei* (γραφῆ) means ‘representation by means of lines’: a word or a drawing.<sup>23</sup> In this context, my thesis will explore the wide semantic field to consider a number of issues, including the ease with which the faithful could interpret Luke’s written portraits of the Mary and Jesus present in his canonical works as visual portraits. With attention focussed on the ‘real artist’, I will demonstrate how icons that represent the ‘Mother of God’ with Child in the same way that images attributed to Luke do, are able to convey, affirm, and for some prove, Scripture. Ultimately, I carry the idea through to the maker: if art and word were analogous, then artists and writers may have been too. On this premise, this thesis will, at times, use the adequate evidence for religious authors to substitute the paucity of evidence for artists in Early Byzantium.

The titles mentioned above only give a glimpse into the total body of work on Byzantine art. They are some of the core texts that have steered the course of

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<sup>21</sup> Leslie Brubaker, ‘Pictures are good to think with’, in *L’écriture de la mémoire. La littérarité de l’historiographie. Actes du III<sup>e</sup> colloque international philologique Nicosie, 6-7-8-mai 2004*, ed. by Paolo Odorico, Panagiotis A. Agapitos and Martin Hinterberger, *Dossiers byzantins*, 6 (Paris: Centre d’études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2006), pp. 221-40.

<sup>22</sup> *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. by Liz James (Cambridge University Press, 2007; repr. 2010). See also: Liz James, ‘Art and Lies: Text, Image and Imagination in the Medieval World’, in *Icon and Word The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. by Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 59-72.

<sup>23</sup> *LSJ*, p. 196. Brubaker, ‘Icons before Iconoclasm’, pp. 1216-17.

scholarship since the mid-twentieth century and the direction of my research. My focus is on the makers of icons about whom, in the vast body of academic work and lively debate, there is very little specific information. Remarks about artists by scholars are so infrequent and irregular that, at best, the noun ‘artist’ is eschewed in the index page at the back of books. As a result, my discussion is built upon primary evidence and a body of work pertaining to different aspects of Byzantine life: its people, their works, and their beliefs.

As our understanding of Byzantine art improves, so too has our access to surviving objects. Three years after the ‘Mother of God’ exhibition in Athens, the Metropolitan Museum of Art followed up a 1997 exhibition with ‘Byzantium: Faith and Power’, in 2008 the Royal Academy of Arts in London hosted ‘Byzantium 330-1453’, and in 2012 the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York presented ‘Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition’.<sup>24</sup> But even as art is brought closer to the public, the people behind the objects remain distant figures.

For the art historian interested in Byzantine art, the absence of artists is unusual, because the discipline tends to adhere to the principle that the individuals responsible for art *matter*. Considerable attention has been paid to the concept of the artist, which will now be briefly reviewed, in order to give an indication of the spur that initially prompted this thesis, and to show the broader framework within which my research fits.

It is common western cultural practice to assume that a work of art is the product of an artistic ‘genius’, invariably male, who, by virtue of his skill and his creativity, stands apart from everyone else, and leaves some imprint of himself on his work.<sup>25</sup> This theoretical proposition, which has been naturalised over time by discourses and institutions that have reaffirmed it, has its origins in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, most notably perhaps the encyclopaedia *Natural History* by Pliny the Elder (AD

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<sup>24</sup> *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, Catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Exhibition, 2004, ed. by Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004). *Byzantium 330-1453*, Catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition, 2008, ed. by Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008). *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition*, Catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Exhibition, 2012, ed. by Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Catherine Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 4.

23/4-79).<sup>26</sup> But it is Giorgio Vasari (1511-74) who is generally credited with having first articulated the modern concept of the artist and the associated concept of the original work of art in his 1550 publication *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani*.<sup>27</sup> His compilation of artists's biographies implied causality between childhood upbringing, adult personalities, and art. Indeed, Vasari's definition of *disegno*, drawing, includes the artist's inner thoughts and vision that resulted in the visual materialisation of a form, and leaves no doubt that he considered art and the artist to be two interconnected concepts.

Both Pliny's and Vasari's texts are the subject of Otto Kris and Ernst Kurz's 1979 publication, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*.<sup>28</sup> Kris and Kurz analysed their biographies of artists to identify recurrent leitmotifs that have contributed to our modern perception of the people who make art. Briefly, their findings, based on anecdotes about artists from Ancient Greece and fifteenth-century Italy, were that they follow a formula championing natural ability and skill. Kris and Kurz were cursory about the legends of artists between the fourth and fourteenth centuries, including that of Luke. They dismissed Byzantium as a period in which artists 'faded away and retreated into the shadows', only to be 'revived' in the Renaissance.<sup>29</sup> As will become clear in this thesis, the leitmotifs that Kris and Kurz highlighted are present in the stories about Luke as an artist. He too was skilled but had not been trained. The Evangelist is therefore part of an uninterrupted chain of artists. Moreover, he is the first ancestor of the Renaissance artist who, in turn, is responsible for how 'the artist' is defined today.

Part of Vasari's impact on the history of art has resulted in the discipline being structured around the *history of artists*, and his method continues to be used as a model for monographs about them. Outside of the biographies of artists, other art historical approaches such as connoisseurship and style, two driving forces behind the discipline in much of the twentieth century, also hinge on the perceived interconnectedness between art and artists. So interdependent are they that, in some instances, particularly

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<sup>26</sup> Pliny, *NH*, esp. xxxv.

<sup>27</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*, 2 vols (Florence: Torrentino, 1550).

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 61-90.

<sup>29</sup> Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p. 45.

when the subject under discussion is neither canonical nor signed, scholars have created pseudonyms for artists. John Beazley (1885-1970), for example, studied ‘systems of forms’ on Classical pottery, including lines, shapes, and figures, to link objects to particular ‘hands’.<sup>30</sup> Using this taxonomical approach, Beazley extended his findings to propose who artists were and how they worked. His work is not without its critics; nevertheless, some modern scholars have adopted a similar approach. Diklah Zohar, for instance, observed stylistic similarities between Byzantine mosaics in Israel and Jordan, to speak about ‘the artist of the flute player’ and ‘the artist of the gazelle’.<sup>31</sup> Early Byzantine icons do not lend themselves to this type of analysis, because there are too few surviving examples through which hands can be identified.

For art historians who apply cultural theory and for scholars in other disciplines such as anthropology, artists have facilitated historical interpretations that seek to understand periods and their people using visual media.<sup>32</sup> To philosophers, artists have been taken as subjects through which ideas about freedom, genius, and originality have all been theorised.<sup>33</sup> Sociologists and psychologists have also treated artists in this way, based on the premises, now commonplace, articulated by Vasari.<sup>34</sup> For artists themselves, a self-awareness of their position and their profession may be seen to culminate in self-portraiture, where they take themselves as the subject to express their creativity.

Continuing Vasari’s bias into twentieth-century art history, Ernst Gombrich’s dictum, ‘There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists’, is reinforced at every level.<sup>35</sup> The art market, museums, and monographs sell personalities, and use names to categorise and promote works of art. The same is true of icons attributed to Luke, all of which, by virtue of the identity of the artist, are considered too valuable to

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<sup>30</sup> J. D. Beazley, ‘Citharoedus’, *JHS*, 42 (1922), 70-98. J. D. Beazley, ‘The Antimenes Painter’, *JHS*, 47 (1927), 63-92.

<sup>31</sup> Diklah Zohar, ‘Mosaic Artists in the Byzantine East: Towards a New Definition of Workshop Construction’, *Early Christian Art*, 3 (2006), 143-52.

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig: [n. pub], 1860).

<sup>33</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin: Friederich, 1790). Milton C. Nahm, *The Artist as Creator an Essay of Human Freedom* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956).

<sup>34</sup> Sociology: Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Psychology: David Feldman, *Nature’s Gambit: Child Prodigies and the Development of Human Potential* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

<sup>35</sup> Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th edn (London: Phaidon, 1995), p. 15.

be exhibited in public and are either hidden or severely obstructed from view by metal bars and cases.

Thus, Catherine Sousloff's bold statement that the significance of artists in culture generally, and the Western tradition of art history specifically, can neither be 'underestimated nor overemphasised', seems to be accurate.<sup>36</sup> The contemporary art historian often remains preoccupied with the idea that art must be attributable to an individual, and that these individuals must have names.<sup>37</sup> But Byzantine art presents problems because of the lack of identifiable artists, which may explain why these shadowy figures have been excluded in discussions about artists to date.

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Part One of this thesis lays out the evidence for the existence of the 'ideal artist'. Chapters One and Two deal with Luke as an artist. The first, 'The Legend of St Luke', organises the primary source material related to the legend as clearly as possible. The bulk of the literary and visual evidence for the story falls outside the Early Byzantine period: it was predominantly during and after Iconoclasm that writers referred to the story and integrated it into Luke's biography. However, this information is included because it helps to explain how the tradition developed over time. The transformations the legend endured shows that the story and icons attributed to the Evangelist met the changing needs of societies, nation states, and the Church. These variations confirm that the story is a significant historical source that can be used to understand the groups who exploited it. My investigation then moves beyond texts that are specifically about Luke to determine when and why the story that he was an artist emerged. Here, I will review some of the key, and at times complicated, issues at play for the faithful in early Christianity. These include the topics of imagination, the relationship between images and texts, theories of vision, and the reception of relics in Byzantium.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Sousloff, *The Absolute Artist*, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> A point made in relation to the Byzantine artist by Maria Vassilaki, 'The *Portrait of the Artist in Byzantium* revisited', in *L'artista a Bisanzio*, ed. by Bacci, pp. 1-10 (p. 5).

<sup>38</sup> On relics: Gary Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection, 5 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1982). *Art and Text*, ed. by James. James, 'Art and Lies', pp. 59-72.

In Chapter Two, ‘St Luke as the Ideal Artist’, I will analyse the legend to isolate the particular issues it raises with regard to artists. I will argue that Luke’s identity was of vital significance. In Early Byzantine texts, a number of other individuals are recorded as having painted portraits of the Virgin and Christ, including Pontius Pilate (prefect of Judaea between AD 26-36) who is first mentioned in a third-century text, and a certain Hanan who is named in a fifth-century text.<sup>39</sup> But these other artists are referred to with far less frequency than the Evangelist. Ultimately, neither Pilate nor Hanan were incorporated into the traditions of the Church, unlike Luke. It is critical to determine why this happened. The only perceptible difference between the stories that Pilate, Hanan, and Luke painted portraits of Jesus or Mary whilst the two were alive is the name of the artist. Something about Luke made him exceptional. Researching his life, Christians accept three points as fact: he was a Christian, an Evangelist, and a doctor. I will argue that this unique combination meant that he was an ideal candidate for the first artist. I will show that his biography sheds light on some of the central issues about artists at that time: for believers, the faith, trustworthiness, and the skill of religious painters mattered. The idea that the Evangelist reflected and embodied Early Byzantine concerns is supported by comparing him to ideal artists before and after him. Differences between his attributes and those of ideal artists in antiquity, and similarities between him and other ideal makers in Early Byzantium, confirm that Luke was deliberately chosen as an ‘ideal artist’.

Chapter Three, ‘Other Ideal Artists’, centres on God and the emperor as the two most prolific artists and architects, if texts are to be taken literally. Authors repeatedly attributed works of art and buildings to God, an emperor, or the two together. Although in part this reflected faith, autocracy, and the literary tradition of panegyrics in which patrons were honoured, I will emphasise that authors had another reason. God and the emperor could secure the authenticity and the authority of an object or a building to which they were connected. In exactly the same way, Luke could be used to guarantee that a portrait was both genuine and legitimate. The importance of the identity of each ideal maker is a crucial theme. God, the emperor, and Luke were clearly significant in Early Byzantium with respect to the art and architecture they were said to have made. Their names are found on inscriptions, in texts that were circulated between

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<sup>39</sup> Pontius Pilate: Irenaeus, *Contra Haeresis*, I, 25.6, PG 7a, 685B. Hanan: *Doctrine of Addai, the apostle*, text with trans. by George Phillips (London: Trüber, 1876), p. 5.

the élite, and in sermons delivered to congregations at church, all of which testify to the importance of these ideal artists.

Part Two, ‘The Real Artist’, is a collection of the surviving material pertaining to artists. Disappointingly and predictably, there is very little evidence for real artists. But the amount of useful information increases substantially when the investigation is opened to other types of makers, such as mosaicists and writers. I will use the conclusions drawn from Part One to navigate through the evidence to determine what is relevant to artists who, like Luke, painted icons.

Chapter Four, ‘Icons: A Trace of the Absent Artist’, is about artists in relation to what they made, and thus begins with the object. As a surviving trace that artists existed at all, icons are the only sensible starting point. They are examples of the work that artists produced and demonstrate the materials they were equipped with and techniques in which they were trained. In line with modern approaches to religious portraits, which considers them in relation to their function rather than their style, this chapter does not conduct a formal study of icons. Rather, it focuses on what is ‘missing’: signatures. I will evaluate three plausible explanations as to why early icons do not carry a painter’s signature. On Weitzmann’s suggestion that icons originally had frames that have since been lost, I will explore whether it is feasible that artists signed these instead of the portraits they painted.<sup>40</sup> Then, as the ‘fact’ that early artists never signed their work is generally accepted, I will address Cormack’s proposition that, because artists were known in their communities, the public knew who had painted icons and did not need a signature to remind them.<sup>41</sup> I will analyse these two possibilities and then propose another explanation: that painters exercised personal Christian humility through public artistic anonymity. To end the chapter, I deal with the issues surrounding the term ‘workshops’. In addition to naming the space where objects are made, the term ‘workshop’ refers to a system of artistic education based on that known to have existed in Italy during the Renaissance. So what do scholars mean when they attribute an icon to ‘a workshop’?<sup>42</sup> To determine which of the two definitions applies to Early Byzantine

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, *The Icon: Holy Images: Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1978), pp. 40, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Robin Cormack, ‘Ο καλλιτέχνης στην Κωνσταντινούπολη: αριθμοί, κοινωνική θέση, ζητήματα απόδοσης’, in *Το πορτραίτο του καλλιτέχνη στο Βυζάντιο*, ed. by Vassilaki, pp. 45-76.

<sup>42</sup> A point made in: James, ‘...and the Word was with God...What Makes Art Orthodox?’, p. 105.



artists, I will set out the evidence to show that although some artists could have worked in a space that was separate, but not always, from their homes, it was obviously just that: a space.

In Chapter Five ‘Texts: A Trace of the Present Artist’, I continue to explore anonymity by consulting the literature in which artists are mentioned.<sup>43</sup> Almost universally, they are referred to as ‘painters’ and ‘artists’ rather than by their names. That said, they are not ignored; rather, they are highly visible in texts, and writers therefore were not disinterested in artists *per se*. I will acknowledge the possibilities that artists were unidentified either because their professional status was low, or because authors were not in the habit of including names. However, on the basis that writers were keen to promote ideal makers, I will ask whether the anonymity of artists is evidence that they simultaneously minimised those who produced religious art because they perceived real artists as not conforming to the concept of the ideal artist.

From literary works, I will move to legal texts. Imperial laws had an impact on artists. Some of the edicts issued between the fourth and eighth centuries organised the production of art, although never with the same clarity as those of the Roman Empire in the West. Most were concerned with practical issues to do with training, monopolies, guilds, and prices. They will be used to suggest that before certain edicts were imposed, artists conducted themselves in a particular way, evidence of which does not exist beyond the laws that regulated them. It is necessary to examine these, as they also show the economic and professional frameworks within which artists worked. Outside the context of my thesis, these edicts do not contribute to how artists are understood beyond demonstrating that there were laws that affected them. Approached with a view to the differences between ideal and real artists, however, these edicts have much more significance. The procedures they prohibited indicate that there were issues to do with real artists that concerned the Early Byzantine state. The laws all relate in some way to the financial profitability of being a craftsman, and one edict in particular, issued by Emperor Justinian I (c. 482-565) in 544, was especially critical of the commercial aspect of the profession.<sup>44</sup> This edict on skilled labour will be used to show that wealth was considered to be a motive for producing objects and that this was religiously

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<sup>43</sup> For a selection see: *ABE*, esp. pp. 4-145.

<sup>44</sup> *Edictum de Constitutione Artificum* (122), in *CJC*, vol. III, pp. 592-93.

improper. The edict also demonstrates that self-fashioning and self-promoting, a process of defining oneself personally and publicly, were considered to be motives for purchasing objects, and that this was not ideal either.

I will then use Byzantine texts to establish who bought religious art and why. The aim is not to repeat the work of scholars who have shown that art was patronised and commissioned because it offered salvation and protection.<sup>45</sup> The faithful owned icons for religious reasons. Artists must have shared these beliefs as members of the faith themselves. Although it is difficult to determine what the working relationships between artists and consumers were like, I will use a surviving employment contract between a craftsman and a wealthy family to evaluate the interaction between the two. The intention is to show that artists cannot have been immune to the motives of the public, especially in instances where they received direct instruction from them. On balance therefore, my argument is that it is quite inconceivable that people only painted icons to make money.

Chapter Six, 'Sacred Passion to Pious Imitation', considers why artists painted religious portraits. I will argue that artists were spiritually motivated, and that they experienced the process of painting an icon as a Christian exercise to which there were two parts. Firstly, that painting was a form of devotional practice that could lead artists to participate in the image of God, *theosis* (θέωσις). Lacking written evidence from artists, I rely on the well-documented motivations of Gospel and spiritual authors. Taking the Byzantine dual meaning of *graphei*, and the associated verb *grapho* (γράφω), 'the act of recording', authorship and artistry seem to have had shared objectives and processes, and so it is reasonable to extrapolate from one and use it to cautiously construct the other. Aware that my hypothesis may at first appear unlikely to some, I bolster it with more evidence related to psalmody and pilgrimage, both of which were also motivated to a degree by the quest for *theosis*. I will then argue that the

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<sup>45</sup> Anthony Cutler, 'Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces of Byzantine Patronage', *JÖB*, 31 (1981), 759-87. Leslie Brubaker, 'Elites and Patronage in Early Byzantium: The Case of Hagios Demetrios, Thessalonike', in *Elites Old and New in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, ed. by John Haldon and Lawrence I. Conrad, *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 6 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004), pp. 63-90. Leslie Brubaker, 'The visualisation of gift giving in Byzantium and the mosaics of Hagia Sophia', in *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 33-61. For patronage after Iconoclasm see: Vassiliki Dimitropoulou, 'Giving Gifts to God: Aspects of Patronage in Byzantine Art', in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. by Liz James (Blackwell: Chichester, 2010), pp. 161-70.

second aspect of the spiritual process was that once the tradition of Luke as a painter was known, individuals painted as an act of imitation. This too was a practice that could lead to *theosis*. Initially, I will explain the extent to which the concept of imitation was entrenched in Early Byzantine culture, to confirm that it would have been one with which most of the population were familiar. For artists who believed that portraits of the Virgin and Child had been made by an Evangelist, it seems likely that when they painted this same scene they considered themselves to be living in the image of Luke.

Temporally, the period my thesis addresses is the so-called ‘first period of images’. It starts with the fourth century, from which point Christianity was tolerated, and New Rome, which I will refer to throughout as Constantinople, was taking shape. It ends at the beginning of the eighth century when the first wave of Iconoclasm broke. Geographically, I have concentrated on Byzantium proper, that is to say the predominantly Greek-speaking Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans. Although tripartite divisions are artificial, for the purpose of clarity I will refer to the period and its place as ‘Early Byzantium’. The terms ‘antiquity’ and ‘Roman Empire’ are used sparingly and refer to the Graeco-Roman past and western half of the Mediterranean respectively.

In terms of primary sources, I focus on Byzantine material and textual evidence from between the fourth and eighth century. For the purpose of comparison, I also include Classical texts as well those written by the western contemporaries of the Early Byzantines. I draw attention to the origins of the sources that fall outside of the temporal and geographic parameters of this thesis. A considerable range of written sources will be analysed. Whether public or private, secular or religious, they had different functions and were intended for different audiences; when these factors are significant I highlight them. For the main, primary sources have been accepted as the work of the authors to whom they are attributed, and true to their dates. A critical analysis of my sources, fundamental though it may seem, is beyond the scope of this thesis but has been addressed where it is deemed necessary. For texts dated from the end of the seventh century, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): The Sources* by Brubaker and Haldon is an invaluable guide.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): The Sources, an annotated survey*, BBOM, 7 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

There are no direct translations from Greek to English for some key terms used in this thesis. The closest Greek term for ‘art’ that the Byzantines used was *techne* (τέχνη), and originated in the fifth century BC. *Techne* roughly translates as ‘art, skill, regular method of making a thing’, but had many definitions and could also refer to intellect and aptitude.<sup>47</sup> Similarly ambiguous are the words used for the people who made art. The term *zographos* (ζωγράφος), translates most closely as ‘one who paints from life’. It combines the two words *zoon* (ζῷον), ‘living being’, and *graphei*.<sup>48</sup> But in addition to *zographos*, other Greek words could be used to denote the makers of art, including the words *historiographos* (ιστοριογράφος), *technarches* (τεχνάρχης), and *ktistes* (κτίστης). These cannot be reliably translated in English using words such as ‘maker’, ‘artist’, ‘artisan’, ‘founder’, ‘creator’, or ‘craftsman’ because Greek definitions fundamentally differ from our own. This is further complicated, J. P. Sodini has noted, by the fact that because ‘makers’ often sold their own goods, single words could be used to denote craftsmen and merchants.<sup>49</sup> In this thesis, I refer to icon painters as ‘artists’ and to other makers either by their craft or as ‘craftsmen’. The term ‘icon’ is defined in art history, and this thesis, as a portrait of a religious figure or group, on wood or linen, painted using encaustic or tempera.<sup>50</sup> Transliterations from Greek are consistent with the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*).<sup>51</sup> Dates are exactly as they are found in the *ODB* or the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*; those of emperors relate to their lifetime rather than reign.<sup>52</sup>

The icons discussed in this thesis have no standard titles. At times, titles are dogmatic and thus predicate a particular interpretation of the image. To avoid confusion and for consistency, I follow the form of title in the source used for the illustration. I aim at readability and generally refer to the ‘Virgin and Child’ rather than their Greek titles: Theotokos, ‘Bearer of God’, and Pantokrator, ‘Ruler of All’.

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<sup>47</sup> *LSJ*, p. 702. Jerome Jordan Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History and Terminology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> *LSJ*, pp. 299, 145.

<sup>49</sup> J – P. Sodini, ‘L’artisanat urbain à l’époque paléochrétienne (IV<sup>e</sup> - VII<sup>e</sup> S.)’, *Ktema*, 4 (1979), 71-119 (p. 95).

<sup>50</sup> Brubaker, ‘Icons before Iconoclasm’, pp. 1216-17.

<sup>51</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Kazhdan and others.

<sup>52</sup> *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 3rd rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

**PART ONE**  
**THE IDEAL ARTIST**

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LEGEND OF ST LUKE

Plotting the development of the story that St Luke (d. c. AD 84) painted icons of Christ and the Virgin from life is complicated and scholarly attempts to do so are often confusing.<sup>53</sup> This chapter will present the literary sources in which either Luke is named as a painter or icons are attributed to him. The sources are arranged chronologically in order of the date they were written, rather than the dates of when the icons to which they refer were painted. This is because icons were always attributed to Luke some centuries after they were made. So, although it may be accurate to speak of a 'sixth-century icon painted by Luke', this sort of remark can imply that the connection to the Evangelist was also made in the sixth century, when it perhaps was not. Having arranged the sources in a clearer manner, I will then explore the modern explanations of why the legend of Luke the artist was born.<sup>54</sup> Scholars often discuss how the story was employed by Iconophiles (those who approved of images) to defend the place of images in Church practice, thereby implying that it began during Iconoclasm. Recently, Belting has argued that first and foremost, the legend served the Byzantine community by offering authentic portraits and, importantly, relics of Jesus and Mary.<sup>55</sup> I agree with Belting's conclusion, and here I intend to reinforce it using evidence that demonstrates the importance of both authenticity and relics in Early Byzantium. Using sources that pre-date the first reference to Luke as an artist in text, I will expand upon Belting's theory to argue that the story existed before Iconoclasm. The confirmation of this dating indicates that the legend of Luke the painter can be used to further the understanding of artists who painted icons before the eighth century.

The earliest text that mentions Luke as an artist is dated to the sixth century.<sup>56</sup> It is attributed to Theodore Lector (d. after 527) who was a reader at Hagia Sophia, the

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<sup>53</sup> See: Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*. Clements Henze, *Lukas der Muttergottesmaler: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis des christlichen Orients* (Leuven: Bibliotheca Alfonsiana, 1948). Gerhard A. Wellen, *Theotokos; eine ikonographische Abhandlung über das Gottesmutterbild in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Thesis: Nijmegen (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1960). Peter Brown, 'A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy', *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), 1-34 (p. 8). Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 47-77.

<sup>54</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*. Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*. Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', pp. 79-89.

<sup>55</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 47-77.

<sup>56</sup> Theodore Lector, *Ecclesiastica Historia*, 1,1, PG 86a, 165A.

Great Church in Constantinople. His account recorded that in 450, Empress Pulcheria (399-453) received an image of the Virgin painted by Luke from her sister-in-law Athenais-Eudokia (c. 400-460) who lived in Jerusalem. However, the text survives only as a fourteenth-century retelling by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (c. 1256?- c. 1335?) in an excerpt of his *Ecclesiastical History*. Because Theodore Lector's text does not survive in its original form, scholars such as Belting and Bacci have dismissed it as spurious.<sup>57</sup>

The earliest reliable text is dated to the beginning of the eighth century and is attributed to the poet and ecclesiastical orator Andrew of Crete (c. 660-740).<sup>58</sup> His treatise *On the Veneration of Holy Icons* includes a passage that reads:

Of the Evangelist and Apostle Luke all his contemporaries said that with his own hands he painted both Christ the Incarnated himself and his purest Mother, and their images are preserved in Rome, so it is said, with great honour; and in Jerusalem they are exhibited with meticulous attention.<sup>59</sup>

From this, it is clear that Andrew believed that Luke painted God, incarnate in Christ, and his mother, the Virgin Mary, with his own hands. The reference to Luke's 'contemporaries' verified the story by offering eyewitnesses to the making of the image or viewers of the portraits. Andrew also stipulated that Luke painted at least two images that were housed at the time of his writing in Rome and Jerusalem. His description demonstrates that in the early-eighth century the legend of Luke was known, and that icons had been attributed to the Evangelist. Andrew indicates that the two images were treated with great reverence.

Andrew of Crete's account is typical of religious literature of that time, when there was an increased interest in 'proof-texts' that could be used to qualify theological

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<sup>57</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 57. Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew of Crete, *De Sanctarum Imaginum Veneratione*, PG 97, 1301-4. On Andrew of Crete see Mary Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Andrew of Crete, *De Sanctarum Imaginum Veneratione*, PG 97, 1304B-C: Λουκᾶν τὸν ἄπόστολον καὶ εὐαγγελιστὴν ἅπαντες οἱ τότε εἰρήκασιν οἰκείαις ζωγραφῆσαι χερσὶν αὐτόν τε τὸν σαρκωθέντα Χριστόν, καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἄχραντον Μητέρα, καὶ τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας ἔχειν τὴν Ῥώμην εἰς οἰκείαν εὐκλειαν. Καὶ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις δὲ ἐπ' ἀκριβείας κεῖσθαι ταύτας φασίν.; trans. in Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', p. 80. On attribution: Marie-France Auzépy, 'La carrière d'André de Crète', *BZ*, 88, 1 (1995), 1-12 (p. 7).

argument.<sup>60</sup> Any delay in the uptake of the story that Luke had painted images of the Virgin and Child, which meant that it was not recorded in text until the end of the early period, may have been because Luke was born after Jesus.<sup>61</sup> This discrepancy meant that he could not have painted Jesus as a child, which is how He is often depicted in icons attributed to the Evangelist, because Luke was younger than Jesus and therefore incapable of doing so. As references to the story and its importance in texts will show, chronological inconsistency did not prevent the story from being accepted, and therefore seems to have been of little interest to the faithful. Presumably, this was because portraying Jesus as a child was understood to be a symbolic representation of the Incarnation, marking the point at which He took a human form; believers did not necessarily interpret it to mean that Luke had seen Jesus as a child.<sup>62</sup>

From the eighth century onwards, references to Luke as an artist are more numerous. The *Nouthesia* (*Νουθεσία γέροντος περὶ τῶν ἁγίων εἰκόνων*), written for the most part before 754, names Luke as a *zographos* twice.<sup>63</sup> It recounts a story that Luke painted a picture of the Mother of God and that he illustrated his own Gospel with a cycle of narrative scenes.<sup>64</sup> At a similar time, John of Damascus (c. 675-c. 753/4) appealed to Iconoclasts (those who opposed images) to consider that Luke had painted a portrait of the Virgin Mary and sent it to Theophilus, a Roman citizen.<sup>65</sup> Repeating John of Damascus, George Hamartolos (ninth century) said that he quoted the words of Germanos I (Patriarch of Constantinople between 715-730), when he wrote in a homily that Luke had sent a portrait along with a copy of his Gospel and Acts of the Apostles to Theophilus.<sup>66</sup> Around 806, Stephen the Deacon composed the *Vita* of St Stephen the

<sup>60</sup> Averil Cameron, 'The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation', in *The Church and the Arts*, ed. by Diana Wood, Studies in Church History, 28 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 1-42 (p. 16).

<sup>61</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 60.

<sup>62</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> *Νουθεσία*, edn in Boris Mikhailovich Melioransky, *Georgii Kiprianin I Ioann Ierusalimlianin. Dva maliozvetnikh borca za pravoslavie v. VIII veke* (St Petersburg: [n. pub.], 1901), pp. v-xxxix, (esp. pp. xxvii-xxix and xxxii) (repr. in Steven Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V with particular attention to the oriental sources*, CSCO, 52 (Leuven: CSCO, 1977), pp. 25-36). On the source see: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): The Sources*, pp. 251-52. Paul Speck, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen. Die legenden bom Einfluss des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslem auf den Ikonoklasmus*, Poikila Byzantina, 10 (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1990), pp. 565-77.

<sup>64</sup> *Νουθεσία*, edn in Melioransky, *Georgii Kiprianin*, pp. xviii (Theotokos), xxix (gospel), xxxii (repeat) (repr. in Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 33).

<sup>65</sup> John of Damascus, *De Sacris imaginibus adversus Constantinum Cabalinum*, v, PG 95, 321C.

<sup>66</sup> George Hamartolos, *Chronicon*, iv, 248, PG 110, 920B (repr. in Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 188\*).



Younger (c. 713-764), in which he too repeated Harmartolos's version of the legend.<sup>67</sup> In the mid-ninth century, the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* listed twelve miraculous images.<sup>68</sup> The letter, which purports to be an original from 836, but was actually a fake that is more likely to have been written around 843, promoted the use of icons within Orthodoxy.<sup>69</sup> Five of the miraculous images it described were icons of the Virgin, and one was said to have been painted by Luke from life.<sup>70</sup>

In Middle Byzantium, the 'fact' that Luke was a painter was an additional aspect to his biography, included by those who recorded his life. Two texts dated to the tenth century, the *Menologion of Basil II* and the *Synaxarion of the Constantinopolitan Church*, describe Luke as a professional 'doctor and painter' from Antioch.<sup>71</sup> Symeon Metaphrastes (d. c. 1000) added further detail to the legend in his late-tenth-century biography of Luke.<sup>72</sup> He explained that the Evangelist used wax pigmentation on wood, a technique known as encaustic, to paint the Virgin and Christ, and that he did so in order that the portraits may serve as a pattern, meaning both a model to be used and one that satisfied the desire to see faces of the two.<sup>73</sup>

As the icons that were said to have been the work of Luke that had been painted before the tenth century were made using these same materials, Metaphrastes' version of the event did not jeopardise their attribution. Encaustic technique became less popular after Iconoclasm, as artists favoured using tempera.<sup>74</sup> So, encaustic became an indicator of age, and in the instance of icons said to have been painted by Luke, it was also an indicator of authenticity. Metaphrastes' text also fleshed out more details concerning the biography of Luke. His *Vita* said that the Evangelist had been trained in various academic fields, and that upon hearing of Christ's deeds and teachings he left Antioch for Palestine. It also affirmed that Luke was a witness to Christ's Resurrection and that he joined Paul (c. 5-c. 67) on his travels between AD 50 and 58 through

<sup>67</sup> *Vita S. Stephen the Younger*, by Stephen the Deacon, PG 100, 1085A.

<sup>68</sup> *Epistola ad Theophilum Imperatorem de Sanctis et Venerandis Imaginibus*, PG 95, 345-86. Synopsis in: Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, pp. 121-31.

<sup>69</sup> Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, pp. 261-62.

<sup>70</sup> Luke's image: *Epistola ad Theophilum Imperatorem de Sanctis et Venerandis Imaginibus*, PG 95, 348D.

<sup>71</sup> *Menologion of Basil II*, PG 117, 113C: ἱατρὸς τῇ τεχνῇ, καὶ ζωγράφος. *Synax. CP*, pp. 147-48.

<sup>72</sup> *Vita S. Luke*, by Symeon Metaphrastes, PG 115, 1129-40.

<sup>73</sup> *Vita S. Luke*, by Symeon Metaphrastes, PG 115, 1136. Encaustic technique is explained by Pliny, *NH*, xxxv, 122-37, 149.

<sup>74</sup> Robin Cormack, *Icons* (London: British Museum Press, 2007), p. 34.

Bithynia (north-west Asia Minor), Macedonia, Palestine and Rome. Those writing after Metaphrastes' *Vita* was composed, used this biography as a blueprint for Luke's life and activities.<sup>75</sup>

It was from this point that existing portraits were identified as being painted by Luke. Before discussing some of these icons, it is worth describing the basis on which attributions to Luke were made. Bacci has commented that very often, the information about the materials Luke had worked with was used to support the claim that certain icons were his originals.<sup>76</sup> The materiality of the icon alone did not determine whether it could be said to have been painted by the Evangelist. Ideally, it was also old and had shown itself to be powerful by performing miracles or interceding on behalf of those who used it, or the town that owned it. However, if the icon was produced using the encaustic technique *in addition* to being old and powerful, then it supported the idea that Luke was responsible for it.

Fulfilling these criteria, the icon known as the 'Hodegetria', housed in the Hodegon monastery, Constantinople, was attributed to Luke in the eleventh century. Before this date, the icon had been used as a palladium, or safeguard, for the city and was believed to have performed miracles. Identifying Luke as the painter explained to the public both how and why the icon was effective; it also confirmed and added to the significance of the icon.

The origin of the 'Hodegetria' is unknown, and the icon itself was lost in the Turkish conquest of Constantinople by the janissaries of the Ottoman ruler Mehmed II (1432-1481) in the fifteenth century.<sup>77</sup> The twelfth century *Anonymous Tarragonensis*, a manuscript, includes a reference to the icon, recording that the Greeks claimed that Luke had painted it.<sup>78</sup> Another manuscript from the same century contains similar detail, confirming this attribution, and specifies that the icon portrayed the Mother

<sup>75</sup> Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', p. 82.

<sup>76</sup> Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', pp. 84, 87.

<sup>77</sup> On the literary sources for the 'Hodegetria' see: Robert Lee Wolff, 'Footnote to an Incident of the Latin Occupation of Constantinople: The Church of the Icon of the Hodegetria', *Traditio*, 6 (1948), 319-28. Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, pp. 114-29. Pentcheva, *Icon and Power*, pp. 109-43.

<sup>78</sup> *Anonymous Tarragonensis*, edn in Krijnie N. Ciggaar, 'Une description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55', *RÉB*, 53 (1995), 117-40 (p. 127) (excerpt repr. in Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, p. 124). On the use of the Hodegetria from the tenth to the twelfth centuries see: Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 56-59, 109-43.

holding Jesus as a child ‘in her arms’.<sup>79</sup> A surviving rule for the monastery of the Pantokrator in Constantinople, details that on the anniversaries of the deaths of Emperor John II Komnenos’s (1087-1143) family members, the icon was to be used and supplicated to during the commemoration of those who had passed away.<sup>80</sup> At the end of the twelfth century, Niketas Choniates (b. between 1155 and 1157-d. 1217) chronicled that Emperor Isaac II Angelos (c. 1156-1204) had displayed the icon on the top of the city walls to warn enemies and rouse the citizens.<sup>81</sup>

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, another two authors wrote that the ‘Hodegetria’ had been made by the Evangelist, showing that Luke was widely recognised as its painter.<sup>82</sup> Recounting his pilgrimage in 1200, Anthony, Bishop of Novgorod, Russia, commented that he had kissed the icon.<sup>83</sup> To this, he added that the icon was carried across Constantinople to Blachernae. Seven years later, in a letter to the first Latin Patriarch of Constantinople Thomas Morosini (b. between 1170 and 1175?-1211), Pope Innocent III (1160/1161-1216) remarked that the ‘Hodegetria’, painted by Luke, was revered by the whole of Greece.<sup>84</sup> In the beginning of the thirteenth century, Morosini moved the icon from the Hodegon monastery to Hagia Sophia. Documents record how, at the time, two Venetian parties fought over the icon and wanted to lay claim to it, partly because the Evangelist was believed to have been its painter.<sup>85</sup>

As the legend of Luke the painter grew, people, churches, and monasteries actively sought to identify icons they owned as his originals, because it not only increased the importance of the icon, but also the place in which the icon was housed. Two of the earliest icons attributed to Luke that survive today are the ‘Madonna of S. Sisto’, from the church of S. Maria del Rosario, Rome [fig. 1] and the ‘Sancta

<sup>79</sup> *Anonymous Mercati*, edn in Krijnie N. Ciggaar, ‘Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pelerin anglais’, *RÉB*, 34 (1976), 211-67 (p. 249) (repr. in Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, p. 125): *Ipsam ergo imaginem sancte Marie genitricis pinxit sanctus Lucas evangelista cum Salvatore in brachio eius.*

<sup>80</sup> Paul Gautier, ‘Le typikono du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator’, *RÉB*, 32 (1974), 1-145 (p. 83).

<sup>81</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia, De Isaacio Angelo*, I, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn: E. Weber, 1835), p. 497. Discussed in Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 75.

<sup>82</sup> Anthony of Novgorod, *The Pilgrim’s Book*, trans. by B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, Publications de la Société de l’Orient Latin, 5 (Geneva: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1889), p. 99. Innocent III, *Epistola 243 ad Patriarche Constantinopolitano*, PL 215, 1077.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony of Novgorod, *The Pilgrim’s Book*, trans. by de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires*, p. 99.

<sup>84</sup> Innocent III, *Epistola 243 ad Patriarche Constantinopolitano*, PL 215, 1077.

<sup>85</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 75-77.

Sanctorum', housed in the chapel of the Scala Sancta, also in Rome [fig. 2]. Separately, they depict Mary and Jesus.



Figure 1: Madonna of S. Sisto, early-sixth century, Rome or Constantinople, S. Maria del Rosario a Monte Mario, Rome, Italy.

Gerhard Wolf dated the 'Madonna of S. Sisto' to the period between the sixth and eighth centuries.<sup>86</sup> It is a half-length portrait of the Virgin made on poplar wood using encaustic. Its first known location was the convent of the nuns of S. Maria in Tempuli, Rome. In the thirteenth century it was moved to S. Sisto and then to SS. Domenico e Sisto before arriving at the convent of S. Maria del Rosario in the first-half of the twentieth century. Posing at an angle to the viewer, the beseeching Virgin raises her hands to draw attention to Herself as a mediator between Jesus and the viewer, towards both of whom She simultaneously gestures. It is through this stance that She opens what has been described as an 'imaginary dialogue' between the earthly and the divine worlds.<sup>87</sup> The gold chasing on the hands dates to the eighth century, suggesting that at this time, Her hands were perceived to be of significance in the image and thus they were protected by a metal revetment on top of the painted wood.<sup>88</sup>

A homily about the icon written around 1100 attributed it to 'the hands of Luke the Evangelist' for the first time.<sup>89</sup> It recounted the story that God had instructed three lay brothers to move the icon to a monastery at Tempuli, near the Baths of Caracalla, where they lived in exile. When the brothers died, the homily continued, Pope Sergius I (687-701) attempted to transfer the icon to the Lateran palace. It was carried to its new destination by the clergy, but overnight it returned itself to the Tempuli monastery. Crucial to this homily was the idea that the icon was inherently powerful. This was demonstrated by the command it took over its own fortunes: God ordered that it should be owned by the three brothers and the icon moved itself, against the Pope's attempt to transfer it, back to the monastery. Identification of Luke as the artist offered answers to questions regarding the icon's provenance and helped to explain the power contained within it. The story of the three brothers and the icon was illustrated in the frescoes of S. Gregorio Nazianzeno in Rome, dated to the early-twelfth century, demonstrating this story's durability.

<sup>86</sup> Gerhard Wolf, 'Icons and sites. Cult images of the Virgin in Mediaeval Rome', in *Images of the Mother of God*, ed. by Vassilaki, pp. 23-50 (pp. 39-41).

<sup>87</sup> Wolf, 'Icons and sites', p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 315. The gold chasing is not visible on fig. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo S. Maria Maggiore 122, fol. 141<sup>v</sup> (repr. in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990), p. 318): per manus Lucae evangelistae.





Figure 2: Sancta Sanctorum icon, early-seventh century (silver chasing c. twelfth century), Rome or Constantinople, tempera on canvas, 142 x 70 cm, Chapel of the Scala Sancta, Lateran Palace, Rome, Italy.

The ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon of Jesus is dated to around AD 600, the silver chasing was probably added around 1200.<sup>90</sup> Before it was attributed to Luke in the late-twelfth century, it was described as an image that was ‘acheropsita’, from the Greek term *acheiropoieta* (ἀχειροποίητα), meaning ‘not made with human hands’.<sup>91</sup> The icon

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 137.

<sup>91</sup> *LP*, I, p. 443 (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 314). *LSJ*, p. 122.

was displayed behind the pope's private chapel in the papal residence of the Lateran and was processed through Rome on the night before the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, celebrated on 15 August. The destination of the procession was the church of S. Maria Maggiore and was first organised by Sergius I, the same pope who tried to move the 'Madonna of S. Sisto'.<sup>92</sup> The pope's ambition was to join these two portraits, as their distinctive compositions suggested that the icons were intended to be a pair. It was more common for Christ and the Virgin to be painted together, but because in these two icons they were not, Sergius considered it to be his duty to unite them. The joining of the icons each year offered the images, or rather Jesus and Mary, an opportunity to meet each other. It also gave the Roman population an occasion to see the icons and appeal to them for assistance.

The parading of the icons in the West mirrored customs concerning miraculous images that were believed to happen in the East. Literary sources from the early-seventh century have been interpreted as evidence that icons were carried to protect against enemies. A sermon delivered by Theodore Synkellos (first-half of the seventh century), for instance, describes an *acheiropoieta* image of Christ being carried around Constantinople while the city was under threat in 626.<sup>93</sup> In his *Homily on the Siege of Constantinople*, delivered the same year as the event, Theodore Synkellos described how Patriarch Sergios I (b. c. 580?) appealed to the miraculous image for protection, and that because Christ was present through the image, the city was saved.<sup>94</sup> George of Pisidia's poem *Bellum Avaricum* related the same event, and emphasised that victory was a result of Christ's actual presence.<sup>95</sup> Whether these particular images were actually used to protect the capital from the Avars, Slavs, and Persians during the seventh century is debatable.<sup>96</sup> But even if they were fictitious, stories from the East concerning

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<sup>92</sup> *LP*, I, p. 356.

<sup>93</sup> Theodore Synkellos, *De obsidione Constantinopolitana*, ed. with trans. by Ferenc Makk, in *Traduction et commentaire de l'homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Syncelle sur le siege Constantinople en 626*, Acta antiqua et archaeologica, 19 (Szeged: JATE, 1975), pp. 74-97. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 36-44.

<sup>94</sup> Theodore Synkellos, *De obsidione Constantinopolitana*, ed. with trans. by Makk, in *Traduction et commentaire*, p. 81.

<sup>95</sup> George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum*, text with trans. by Agostino Pertusi, in *Giorgio di Pisidia: Poemi*, Studia Patristica et Byzantina, 7 (Ettal: Buch-kunstverlag, 1959), pp. 193-94.

<sup>96</sup> In favour of the argument that they were: Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', pp. 83-150. Averil Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople: A City Finds its Symbol', *JTS*, 29 (1978), 78-108. In disagreement, see: Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 36-44.

miraculous images seem to have prompted the West to claim, in the eighth century, that the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon was also of divine provenance.

The *Book of the Pontiffs* recorded that Pope Stephen II (715-757) carried the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ on his shoulders and pleaded with Jesus to protect Rome from the Lombards.<sup>97</sup> The attribution of the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon to Luke occurred four centuries later. In his treatise on the icon, Nicholas Maniacutius (twelfth century) reiterated and expanded on two earlier descriptions of the image. He described Luke as a fine painter, who, inspired by Heaven, painted from life so that Christ’s image would stay with the disciples after His Ascension and provide comfort.<sup>98</sup> Here, Maniacutius combined the already-established miraculous origins of the icon with the widely-accepted idea that Luke had been an artist.<sup>99</sup> To this, he added that this western icon of Jesus was by both the Evangelist’s hands, and the hands of Heaven.<sup>100</sup> It had already displayed its miracle-working capabilities by protecting Rome from the Lombards in the seventh century. A century later, during the reign of Pope Leo IV (790-855), there was a plague in the city that was believed to have been caused by the presence of a dragon.<sup>101</sup> As the pope carried the icon on its annual route, he visited the caves in which the creature lived, and used the image, or rather the presence of Jesus therein, to defeat the monster. Naming Luke and Heaven as its painters further added to, and explained, its power. Andrew of Crete asserted that one of Luke’s originals was in Rome, and Metaphrastes had commented that the Evangelist had used encaustic technique. Based on the icon’s materials, location, and associated legend it was therefore plausible to identify the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon in the city as an original painted by the Evangelist.

<sup>97</sup> *LP*, I, p. 443 (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 314).

<sup>98</sup> Nicholas Maniacutius, *De sacra imagine SS. Salvatoris in Palatio Lateranensi* (Rome: Typis Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1709) (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 321).

<sup>99</sup> For further literature on the icon see: Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 65. Josef Wilpert, ‘L’Acheropita ossia l’immagine del Salvatore nella Cappella del Sancta Sanctorum’, *L’Arte*, 10 (1907), 161-77. Hartmann Grisar, *Il Sancta Sanctorum e il suo tesoro sacro: scoperte e studii dell’autore nella Cappella Palatina lateranense del medio evo* (Rome: Civiltà Cattolica, 1907). Josef Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. Bis zum XIII. Jahrhundert*, 4 vols (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1916), vol. III, pl. 139. Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, ‘Il Cristo di Sutri e la venerazione del SS. Salvatore nel Lazio’, *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, 17 (1941), 97-126 (p. 97). Hellmut Hager, *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes. Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte des toskanischen Hochaltarretabels* (Munich: Schroll, 1962), pp. 35-36, on completion by an angel p. 37 and n. 63. On replicas: Edward B. Garrison, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Italian Painting*, 4 vols (Florence: L’Impronta, 1953-62), vol. II.

<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Maniacutius, *De sacra imagine SS. Salvatoris* (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 321).

<sup>101</sup> *LP*, II, p. 110 (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 314).



Metaphrastes' *Vita* and Maniacutius's treatise are significant because they explain why Luke painted the portrait. Both authors clearly expressed that he painted an image of Christ so that after the Ascension, Jesus could remain in the company of His disciples. As such, they highlighted the deep significance these images held by this time: through the portrait, Jesus remained present despite his corporeal absence. Luke's canonical works record the Ascension with the most detail. His Acts of the Apostles describes that, whilst consoling the apostles and as they looked towards Him, Jesus was taken up and hidden from their view by a cloud.<sup>102</sup> Luke's Gospel implies that angels were responsible for taking Jesus to Heaven, describing Him as having been 'carried up'.<sup>103</sup> Acts records that the gaze of the apostles followed Jesus as He ascended.<sup>104</sup> As they strained to see Jesus through the clouds, two men, presumably angels, appeared and asked the apostles why they were apparently looking idly into the sky.<sup>105</sup> As Maniacutius pointed out, the icon painted by Luke offered the apostles and the faithful a substitute for the incarnated Jesus, as well as an object to which their gaze could be effectively directed.

Texts dated from the twelfth century show that churches other than those in Rome and Constantinople also owned icons attributed to Luke. In his description of the Holy Land, which he visited around 1185, John Phokas (twelfth century) remarked that the Palestinian Orthodox monastery of Our Lady of Kalamon, near Jericho, housed an icon by Luke.<sup>106</sup> He said that it showed the Virgin holding the Child and that it had performed many miracles, emitted a sweet scent, and was revered by the community.

Other so-called originals were also found in Europe. In the fourteenth century it was said that when Charlemagne's (742-814) tomb in Aachen Cathedral was opened, in 1165, an icon was found hanging around the neck of the former emperor.<sup>107</sup> On the reverse of the icon was the image of a bull, the recognised iconographical motif of Luke. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378) had the icon mounted on silver with an inscription claiming that it was by the Evangelist.<sup>108</sup> In fourteenth-century Greece, the

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<sup>102</sup> Acts 1.9.

<sup>103</sup> Luke 24.51.

<sup>104</sup> Acts 1.10.

<sup>105</sup> Acts 1.11.

<sup>106</sup> John Phokas, *Compendium Descriptio*, PG 133, 953C.

<sup>107</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 335.

<sup>108</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 335.

half-length icon of the Virgin and Child, called the ‘Megaspilaiotissa’, in the monastery of Mega Spilaion near Kalayryta in Achaia, was said to be by Luke.<sup>109</sup> The image featured on the *chrysobull*, or seal, of Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (c. 1295-1383) suggesting that in Middle Byzantium the icon was widely known.<sup>110</sup> The attribution of the ‘Megaspilaiotissa’ was based on the materials used and the evidence that Luke had written his Gospel in the town. The icon, dated to the eleventh century, was made of moulded wax painted in colour and could therefore be reliably attributed to the Evangelist because it was made with the same materials used by Luke in Metaphrastes’ version of the legend. The presence of the icon in Achaia was explained by evidence taken from Gregory of Nazianzos (329/330-c. 390) and Jerome (331 or c. 348-420), both of whom had written that Luke had lived in that region of Greece. At a similar time to when the ‘Megaspilaiotissa’ was said to have been painted by him, a notary from Campania called Nicolas of Martoni (fourteenth century), wrote in his pilgrim account that an icon in a small side chapel of the Parthenon in Athens was painted by Luke’s hands.<sup>111</sup> The painting of the Virgin Mary was adorned, he wrote, with pearls, gems, and many other precious stones and was ‘diligently guarded and locked’.<sup>112</sup>

Across the European continent, more and more icons were said to have been painted by the Evangelist. In response to the uncontrolled and unreasonable number of attributions, there is evidence that writers attempted to clarify the details of the story. The German priest, Ludolph Südheim, for example, who recorded his travels through the Holy Land between 1336-41, wrote that the Evangelist painted three portraits from life that both Christ and the Virgin Herself blessed.<sup>113</sup> He wrote that in addition to these three, Luke had painted a number of other icons from memory after the Virgin’s ascent to Heaven. The three icons painted on wood identified by Südheim were to be found in Attalia, Rome, and Constantinople.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>109</sup> On the ‘Megaspilaiotissa’ see: Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>110</sup> *Acta et Diplomata Monasteriorum et Ecclesiarum Orientis*, ed. by Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, 5 vols (Vienna: Gerold, 1860-90), vol. v, p. 191.

<sup>111</sup> Nicolas of Martoni, *Liber Peregrinationis ad Loca Sancta*, ed. by L. le Grand, in *Revue de l’Orient Latin*, 12 vols (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1893-1911), vol. III, pp. 566-669, esp. p. 651: dipinta per mano del beato Luca. Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, p. 169.

<sup>112</sup> Nicolas of Martoni, *Liber Peregrinationis*, ed. by le Grand, in *Revue de l’Orient Latin*, vol. III, p. 652: que cum clavi diligenter custodiri.

<sup>113</sup> Ludolph Südheim, *De itinere terrae sanctae*, ed. by Ferdinand Deycks (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1851), p. 35.

<sup>114</sup> Südheim, *De itinere terrae sanctae*, ed. by Deycks, p. 35.

In early-fifteenth-century Cyprus, the monk Gregory of Kykkos agreed with Sūdheim's identification of the three icons painted from life and added more information.<sup>115</sup> In his version of the legend, the Virgin knew that Luke was a talented painter and asked him to paint Her portrait so that Christians could recognise Her.<sup>116</sup> Luke accepted, and was given a panel of wood by the Angel Gabriel. He painted the Virgin standing alone with her hands raised, an iconographical type known as the 'Hagiosoritissa'. However, the Virgin wanted to be seen as a mother rather than as a virgin, so Gabriel gave the Evangelist another two panels to paint on. Luke then produced two different versions of the Virgin and Child, one with Christ in Her left hand, and one with Christ in Her right hand. The story continues that Mary was delighted with these portraits and exclaimed that She transferred the grace She received from Her Son onto them.<sup>117</sup>

Gregory of Kykkos wrote that while Luke was living as a monk in the Egyptian desert, he sent the first icon to Attalia as a gift. The second icon was the 'Hodegetria'. These two correspond to the icons mentioned in Sūdheim's text. Gregory did not identify the third as in Rome, but rather in Athens. Regarding the 'Kykkotissa' icon, housed at his own monastery of Kykkos in the Troodos mountains, Gregory wrote that it was an example of a portrait painted by Luke after the Assumption of the Virgin. The 'Kykkotissa' was believed to have been a gift to Isaiah, the founder of the monastery, from Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (b. c. 1057-1118) at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>118</sup>

Elsewhere, individual churches agreed that there were three originals painted from life, but continued to disagree on which those three were. The local Church on the island of Naxos, in the central Aegean Sea, for instance, regarded the 'Argokoiliotissa', the 'Ayia', and the 'Glykophilousa' to be the three portraits painted from life.<sup>119</sup> This

<sup>115</sup> Gregory of Kykkos, *Description of the Kykkos Monastery*, edn in K. Chatzipsaltis, 'Το ανέκδοτο κείμενο του αλεξανδρινού κώδικος 176 (366). Παραδόσεις και ιστορία της μονής Κύκκου', *Kypriakai Spoudai*, 14 (1950), 39-69.

<sup>116</sup> Gregory of Kykkos, *Description of the Kykkos Monastery*, edn in Chatzipsaltis, 'Το ανέκδοτο', pp. 51-52.

<sup>117</sup> Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> On the 'Kykkotissa' see: Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, pp. 157-61. Lenia Kouneni, 'The Kykkotissa Virgin and its Italian Appropriation', *Artibus et Historiae*, 29, 57 (2008), 95-107.

<sup>119</sup> On the 'Argokoiliotissa', which was a gift from the Theotokos to the island: S. D. Imellos, 'Δημώδεις παραδόσεις ἐκ Νάξου', *Ἐπετηρίς Ααογραφικοῦ Ἀρχείου*, 11-12 (1958-59), 220-28 (pp. 220-23). Nikos A. Kephalliniadis, *Ἡ λατρεία της Παναγίας στα ελληνικά νησιά*, 2 vols (Athens: Filippotis, 1990-91), vol. I,

reflected the local significance of the icons because the ‘Argokoiliotissa’ was considered to have been a gift to Naxos from the Virgin. As a recipient of the icon and the place where the icon was housed, the island promoted the portrait as one of the three painted from life clearly in order to further their own importance and regional interests.<sup>120</sup>

In the fourteenth century, Xanthopoulos wrote that Luke had painted as many as seventy icons in total with an equal number of portraits depicting the Virgin and Child together, and the Mother of God alone.<sup>121</sup> Xanthopoulos’s account may be seen as another attempt to regulate the number of originals. Seventy was numerically significant because it was equivalent to the number of disciples that Luke mentioned in his Gospel as followers of Christ.<sup>122</sup> Arguably, these details were added to the story in order to arrange the increasing number of icons that were attributed to him. It is worth pointing out the correlation between this version of the legend of Luke as an artist and a much earlier description of images made by Eusebios of Caesarea (c. 260-339 or 340). In the fourth century, Eusebios criticised the presence of Christian portraits of Paul, Peter, and Jesus that he had seen.<sup>123</sup> Xanthopoulos wrote that Luke had painted the portraits of the same three holy figures.<sup>124</sup> This was probably coincidental, but it could have been a conscious effort on the part of the later historian, who tried to connect the apostolic artist to particular icons that were described by the early Church historian.

Another evolution of the legend occurred in the middle of the fourteenth century, when artists in the Low Countries and Italy started to depict Luke in the act of painting [fig. 3]. The earliest surviving example of the Evangelist represented as a painter is in a gospel book dated to 1368 by the Bohemian artist John of Troppau.<sup>125</sup> The miniature shows Luke seated at a workbench with paints, brushes, jars, and a panel supported by a board. He is painting an image of the Crucifixion, the scene therefore does not relate strictly to the Byzantine legend of the Evangelist. The awkwardness of his posture,

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pp. 950-96.

<sup>120</sup> Bacci, ‘With the Paintbrush’, p. 88.

<sup>121</sup> Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae*, PG 145, 876.

<sup>122</sup> Luke 10.1-24.

<sup>123</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 18.4, text with trans. by Kirsopp Lake, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1926-32).

<sup>124</sup> Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae*, PG 145, 876.

<sup>125</sup> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 1182 (Gospels of Johann von Troppau), detail of fol. 91<sup>v</sup>.

twisting to paint, may have been deliberate, as it highlights that he painted the first portraits using his right hand, the side of the body where it was believed God resided.



Figure 3: Saint Luke as panel painter, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS. 1182 (Gospels of Johann von Troppau), detail of fol. 91<sup>v</sup>.

Despite the attempts by both Südheim and Xanthopoulos to restrict the number of originals, more icons continued to be identified and promoted as having been painted by the Evangelist. During the Late Medieval period, for example, Russian tsars identified an icon such as the ‘Theotokos of Vladimir’, as an original by Luke that had

been transferred from Constantinople to Moscow.<sup>126</sup> In fifteenth-century Rome there was a further increase in the number of originals and in the reproductions of originals, such as Antoniazio Romano's (c. 1430-c. 1510) copy of the icon at S. Maria Maggiore that was commissioned by Alexander Sforza (1409-1473).<sup>127</sup> Estimations of the total number of icons attributed to Luke vary. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, his icons spread further, and churches in Pera, India, and Ethiopia maintained that they owned originals.<sup>128</sup> Further retellings of the legend are found in the eighteenth-century *Hermeneia* (*Ερμηνεία*), or *Painter's Manual*, written by Dionysios of Fourni (c. 1640-after 1744).<sup>129</sup>

There is therefore considerable written and visual evidence that confirms that Christians accepted the idea that Luke painted the Virgin and Child from life. This is shown especially by the nature of the texts in which the story is told, all of which were authored by theologians and the faithful. Evidently, the story grew and spread in religious and historical chronicles, biographies of Luke, letters between patriarchs, and pilgrim accounts. But why it emerged at all is still unclear. Instead of addressing the legend's origins, scholars have focussed on exploring points of its development. These are invaluable analyses, but it is important to remember that they answer the question of how the legend evolved, rather than how or why it first started.

#### BEYOND TEXT: THE ORIGINS OF THE LEGEND

By far the most frequently implied explanation for the story's origins is that it emerged in response to the question of whether icons were acceptable to the Church. As the chronological outline of the legend has shown, the earliest texts that refer to Luke as a painter date from the eighth century, the point at which there were heightened tensions between Iconophiles and Iconoclasts. Hostility towards religious images did not begin in the decades preceding Iconoclasm. Texts written by theologians from the third

<sup>126</sup> Ludmilla A. Schennikova, 'Bogomater Vladimirskaia' kak Odigitria evangelista Luki/ The Miracle Working Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir as the Hodigitria of St Luke the Evangelist', *Chudotvornaia ikona* ([Moscow: Martis?], 1996), pp. 252-302, 544.

<sup>127</sup> On replications in Italy and the legend during the Italian Renaissance see: Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 342-48.

<sup>128</sup> On Pera: Michele Giustiniani, *Dell'origine della Madonna di Constantinopoli, o sia d'Itria e delle di lei translationi* (Rome: Reverenda Camera Apostolica, 1656), pp. 80-82.

<sup>129</sup> Dionysius of Fourni, *Ερμηνεία των ζωγραφων, ως προς την εκκλησιαστικην ζωγραφιαν* (Athens: [n. pub.], 1853).

century and proceedings of Church councils demonstrate a consistent disapproval of religious images by some individuals.<sup>130</sup> Eusebios, for instance, opposed icons because he thought that they were too closely associated with pagan customs. He was not alone, and official regulations regarding the use of images in the early period focussed primarily on banning pagan imagery.<sup>131</sup> In addition, Eusebios believed that icons broke the Second Commandment that states:

You shall not make for yourselves any image, or likeness of anything that is in the heavens above; or that is upon the earth beneath; or that is in the waters lower than the earth; you shall not worship them or serve them.<sup>132</sup>

He read the biblical principle to mean that God forbade icons.<sup>133</sup> Other theologians disagreed.<sup>134</sup> The two opposing interpretations of this Commandment contributed to the outbreak of Iconoclasm (c. 727-843). In light of Brubaker's and Haldon's recent work on this period it would be wrong to reduce the whole controversy to the question of whether images were admissible within the Church. Nonetheless, it is obvious that in relation to this specific point, an image painted by an Evangelist could be used as proof of the apostolic attitude towards art, and to defend the presence of and reverence paid towards images in religious practice.

The story about Luke rebutted the criticism that images were idols and therefore unacceptable for use by Christians in religious practice. Because the Virgin had asked Luke to paint Her portrait and had posed for him, She had consented to the use of icons.<sup>135</sup> Later redactions of the story, like that by Gregory of Kykkos, added that She requested the image to be painted so that Christians could recognise Her. This could be

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<sup>130</sup> Opposition to images: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, PG 9, 436-40. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, PG 11, 637-1630. Because God was incorporeal: Eusebios, *Epistola ad Constantiam Augustam*, PG 20, 1545-46. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Testament*, ed. by Georg Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1964), fragments 2, 6, and 7, pp. 67-69. Julian of Atramytion, whose opposition based on a literal reading of scripture is inferred from a letter written to him: Hypatios of Ephesus, *Fragment of "Miscellaneous Enquiries" addressed to his suffragan bishop Julian of Atramytion*, in Franz Diekamp, *Analecta patristica: Texte und Abhandlungen zur Griechischen Patristik*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 117 (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1938), pp. 127-29. Debate as to whether early Christianity was aniconic continues, see: Sister Charles Murray, 'Le problème de l'iconophobie et les premiers siècles chrétiens', in *Nicée II, 787-1987. Douze siècles d'images religieuses*, ed. by François Boespflug and Nicolas Lossky (Paris: Cerf, 1987), pp. 39-50.

<sup>131</sup> Eusebios, VC, II, 45, 59, 62; IV, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Exodus 20.4.

<sup>133</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 2.8.

<sup>134</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, PG 9, 436-40. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, PG 11, 637-1630.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, 'A Dark Age Crisis', pp. 1-34.

interpreted to mean that the Virgin regarded pictures as useful tools for the faithful. Luke was consistently identified as the artist of Her portrait, and because he was an apostle, he reinforced the sanctioning of certain images of holy figures. It is reasonable to suggest that disapproval expressed by Iconoclasts encouraged Iconophiles to offer evidence that images were acceptable, and that they used the legend of Luke in order to do so. Without doubt, George of Cyprus, whose dispute with the iconoclastic Bishop Kosmas the *Nouthesia* purports to record, used the story of Luke the painter to defend his position in favour of images.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, the Iconophiles John of Damascus and George Hamartolos, as well as the author of the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, reasoned their positions with the help of the legend, and presented it as evidence to qualify their support, and confirm that religious portraits were icons, and acceptable to God.<sup>137</sup>

Texts written during the Iconoclastic Controversy support the argument that the idea that Luke had been a painter was harnessed to defend images in the eighth century, rather than that the story emerged in response to Iconoclasm. The adoption of the story by a political or a religious group in order to satisfy their temporary needs has been a continual aspect of the legend's history. When, for example, the cities of Rome in the West and Constantinople in the East competed for the position of apostolic primacy in the mid-twelfth century, their two Churches each presented icons attributed to Luke as evidence of their right to the title.<sup>138</sup> In owning one of the Evangelist's originals, each of the two cities could support their position as the location of the greatest religious power, credibility, and importance. Inevitably, as distance grew between the apostolic age and the present day, so the desire and the need to connect the two increased. The Church in the West referred to Andrew of Crete's eighth-century treatise, in which one of Luke's originals was said to be housed in Rome. They supplemented their argument by referring to how, as Paul's follower, Luke visited the city. In confutation, the Byzantines stressed Luke's time in Achaia, Greece, where he wrote the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles, and believed that while he was in this town, he made copies of the portraits that he had brought with him.

<sup>136</sup> *Novtheia*, edn in Melioransky, *Georgii Kiprianin*, pp. xxvii-xxix, xxxii (repr. in Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, pp. 25-36).

<sup>137</sup> John of Damascus, *De Sacris imaginibus adversus Constantinum Cabalinum*, v, PG 95, 321. George Hamartolos, *Chronicon*, iv, 248, PG 110, 920. *Epistola ad Theophilum Imperatorem de Sanctis et Venerandis Imaginibus*, PG 95, 345-86.

<sup>138</sup> For a historical account of apostolic primacy see: Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966).



Outside the Church, Luke and the icons associated with his legend were used to meet political aims and strengthen social cohesion. Monasteries and communities that owned an icon by Luke deliberately promoted themselves as *loca sancta*, holy places, and the icons were processed around cities to protect regions and their inhabitants from misfortune and foreign enemies. Remarkably, Luke's portraits could serve as primary evidence of an institution or nation state's right to rule. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for example, Russian tsars deliberately used icons that were 'by Luke' to show that they had inherited and were continuing Byzantine traditions.<sup>139</sup> These two examples from Rome and Russia illustrate how critically important Luke's originals were: in these instances, ecclesiastical authority and political power were based on the ownership of an icon painted by the Evangelist.

This varied use of the story influenced Ernst Dobschütz's analysis of how the legend that Luke was an artist evolved. Dobschütz argued that the West claimed icons were by the Evangelist to serve as equivalents to *acheiropoietai* images kept in the East, on the basis that they were used in the same way.<sup>140</sup> In Early Byzantium, Constantinople professed to own relics of the Virgin and of Christ. To match these religiously potent objects, the Church in Rome identified images that they had acquired, such as the 'Sancta Sanctorum' icon, as relics that were equal to those in the East. Owning such relics gave their Church valid status and significance that would otherwise have been missing. Taking Theodore Synkellos's homily and George of Pisidia's poem literally, Dobschütz suggested that popes consequently used their own miraculous icons in processions that mirrored those already established in Constantinople, thereby offering Christians in the West art, ceremonies, and tools that were equivalent to those found in the East.

Dobschütz explained why the story of Luke as an artist was important, and how icons attributed to him could be used, but he was not clear about how the legend began. He focussed on how the story of an apostolic artist was used by the popes in Rome, thereby implying that it originated from the Church in the West. Belting dismissed Dobschütz's explanation of the story as 'no longer tenable', suggesting instead that the

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<sup>139</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 63-73.

<sup>140</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, pp. 272-73.

idea of Luke as a painter originally had two different purposes.<sup>141</sup> Firstly, the icons painted by the Evangelist assured the authenticity of the portraits of the Virgin and Christ; secondly, they substituted for the empty graves that would normally serve as primary relics for Christians. I will expand on Belting's suggestions by looking at the textual evidence and scholarly opinion, to confirm the likelihood that Luke was first described as a painter in response to these two issues. More importantly, the sources that are presented will show that the public desired portraits and relics of Christ and the Virgin before the eighth century, when Andrew of Crete described Luke as a painter for the first time. It is therefore likely that Andrew's treatise does not mark the beginning of the legend, but is a testament to the presence of one that was already in circulation.

Luke was probably first identified as a painter within an oral tradition, perhaps as early as the sixth century. If one considers the evidence that Byzantines implicitly trusted the veracity of oral traditions, this hypothesis is conceivable. Theologians often stressed that unwritten traditions were authoritative: trust in the apostolic teachings was independent of whether they had been written down. According to the Bible, the Word of God was transferred orally, which was reiterated by theologians such as Irenaeus (c.130-c. 202) and Basil the Great (c. 329-c. 379).<sup>142</sup> John of Damascus's *Exposition on the Orthodox Faith* shows that seventh-century theologians maintained this idea.<sup>143</sup> If the story that Luke had been a painter started 'by word' it would have been, for the Byzantines, as reliable as if it had been written down.

It may be that such an oral tradition of Luke as a painter, as well as claims by Iconophiles that the Evangelist had been an artist, prompted a position from the Iconoclasts that was articulated in the *Horos*, or Definition, of their Council of Hieria, which met in 754.<sup>144</sup> The council was convened at the end of the period this thesis considers, but as doctrinal issues were dealt with as and when they arose, such texts inform us of the preceding period. The *Horos* indirectly rejected the idea that apostles were artists by formally stating that:

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<sup>141</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 58, 73.

<sup>142</sup> For example: Mark 13.31. Luke 10.16. Colossians 1.5. 1 Thessalonians 2.13. Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, III, 2, PG 7, 846. Basil the Great, *Liber de Spiritu Sancto*, 27.66, PG 32, 192.

<sup>143</sup> John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae*, IV, 16, PG 94, 1173-76.

<sup>144</sup> *Horos*, Council of Hieria, ed. with trans. by Gero, in *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, pp. 68-94.

The evil name of the falsely so-called images derives its existence neither from the *paradosis* of Christ or the apostles or the fathers nor is there a holy prayer sanctifying [the icon], by means of which it would be transferred from the [sphere of the] common to [that of] the holy; rather it remains common and without honor, just as the painter prepared it.<sup>145</sup>

It seems unfeasible that the Church would draw attention to the idea that images were made during Christ's lifetime if they were unpopular, or only existed in the rare texts known to have been written before the council was arranged. As the Church was reactive rather than anticipatory, their rejection supports the argument that stories about apostolic artists, perhaps Luke, existed before Iconoclasm.

#### FROM PEN TO PAINTBRUSH

My own views on how, rather than why, the tradition began reinforce many premises upon which Belting's arguments rest. So before working through his hypotheses, I will argue here that Luke's *eikonismos* (εἰκονισμός), descriptions of Mary and Jesus in his Gospel were effectively verbal portraits, and were the starting point for the belief that he was also a painter.<sup>146</sup> This proposition is based on the changes that occurred to the legend of the image of Edessa, an *acheiropoieta* image also known as the Mandylion.<sup>147</sup> In the fourth century, Eusebios wrote that Jesus had penned a letter to King Abgar of Edessa (BC-AD 7 and AD 13-50), responding to the invitation to visit the city (modern Urfa in Turkey) and cure the king of an illness.<sup>148</sup> The correspondences between the two were recorded because the Abgar had been cured by Thaddaeus, who Jesus had sent in His place, and who converted the king to Christianity.<sup>149</sup> Pilgrims such as Egeria, who toured the Holy Land between 381-84, visited these letters. Commenting

<sup>145</sup> *Horos*, Council of Hiereia, ed. with trans. by Gero, in *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, pp. 77-78: Ἡ δὲ τῶν ψευδωνύμων κακωνυμία οὔτε ἐκ παραδόσεως Χριστοῦ ἢ ἀποστόλων ἢ πατέρων τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, οὔτε εὐχὴν ἱερὰν ἀγιάζουσιν αὐτήν, ἵν' ἐκ τούτου πρὸς τὸ ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ μετενεχθῇ, ἀλλὰ μένει κοινὴ καὶ ἄτιμος, ὥς ἀπῆρτισεν αὐτὴν ὁ ζωγράφος.

<sup>146</sup> On *eikonismos* and portraiture regarding icons see: Gilbert Dagron, 'Holy Image and Likeness', *DOP* 45 (1991), 22-33.

<sup>147</sup> Averil Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 7 (1983), 80-94 (esp. p. 83). See: Mark Guskin, *The Image of Edessa*, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1500, 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2009). Guskin suggests that the image of Edessa was a full-body portrait (pp. 201-9). However, most of the written and visual evidence points to the image as a portrait of Christ's face, which is how the image of Edessa is defined in this thesis.

<sup>148</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 13.

<sup>149</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 13.18-21.

on them, she wrote that people told her that they were used to protect the city.<sup>150</sup> A century later, the story was retold in the *Doctrine of Addai* (c. 400) but it was amended slightly by the author, who added that in the delegation of individuals sent to Jesus by the king, there was a keeper of the archives called Hanan, who painted a portrait of Christ.<sup>151</sup> In the sixth century, the portrait was no longer attributed to Hanan, but to God, as it was said to have been made miraculously.<sup>152</sup> A study of the changes in language and emphasis in these texts confirms that what was first defined as a word-portrait became, in addition, a picture-portrait.<sup>153</sup> Luke's Gospel and paintings may reflect a similarly deliberate transformation from the written word to the painted image.

The shift from word to image could have been facilitated by the Greek language, in which the word *eikon* simply means image, in any form, and the single word *graphei* means both a 'word' and a 'drawing'. This implies that no distinction was made between words and images, and in the same way, the verbs *grapho* and *historio* (ἱστορέω) were used interchangeably for 'the act of recording', either by drawing or by word. Thus an *eikon* or *graphei* by Luke could be interpreted as a 'word' or an 'image', his Gospel or his icons. His portraits would have been no less significant than his words, because for some Byzantines the two were of equal status; since they could be defined using the same noun, they shared some of the same properties. A verbal-portrait and a visual-portrait conveyed the same information and differed only in the medium they used.

The relationship between image and text in Byzantium is complicated, and has been the topic of much scholarly work.<sup>154</sup> It is worth exploring the similarities between the reception of images and texts briefly, because although they do not directly support the hypothesis that Luke's Gospel was a starting point for the legend that he was a

<sup>150</sup> Egeria, *Itinerarium*, 19, ed. by P. Geyer, in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, CCSL, 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), p. 62.

<sup>151</sup> *Doctrine of Addai*, text with trans. by Phillips, p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> *Acts of Thaddeus*, ed. by Richard Adelbert Lipsius and Max Bonnet, in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 2 vols, in 3 parts (Leipzig: [n. pub.], 1891-1903), vol. I, pp. 273-78.

<sup>153</sup> Steven Runciman, 'Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 3, 3 (1931), 238-52. Averil Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa', pp. 80-94. Guskin, *The Image of Edessa*, pp. 201-9.

<sup>154</sup> Sirarpie der Nersessian, 'The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Paris gr. 510; A Study of the Connections Between Text and Image', *DOP* 16 (1962), 195-228. Michael Camille, 'Seeing and Readings: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Art History*, 8 (1985), 26-49. Margaret Mullet, 'Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium', in *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 156-85 (esp. pp. 167-70).

painter, they do show that the story would have been considered plausible and, indeed, preferable for some.

The writings of certain early Church Fathers show that they considered art and literature to be equivalent. Comparing the two, Basil the Great wrote: ‘The facts which the historical account presents by being listened to, the painting silently portrays by imitation’.<sup>155</sup> A result of this equality was that images could substitute words and vice versa; Luke’s icons could replace his Gospel. There was not necessarily a hierarchy between the two, as it appears that visual and verbal portraits could be used to the same ends; for instance, they could both be used to bring the archetype back to life. Regarding the written word, the idea that letters mediated between the present and the absent was a well-known phenomenon, as it was an element of ancient Graeco-Roman epistolary theory that dated back to the first century BC.<sup>156</sup> In Achilles Tatius’s romantic novel, for example, Clitophon said that he saw his beloved Leucippe, including the torments she endured, through reading the letters she wrote to him.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, it was common practice in Antiquity to converse with statues of gods and goddesses as if they were alive.<sup>158</sup> In a Byzantine context, it was on this premise that the letter Jesus sent to Abgar was able to substitute for Christ’s actual presence and still perform a miracle. Similarly, *Vitae* of saints did more than narrate their lives, they prompted the reader or listener to remember the saint, thereby restoring the saint to life. Thus in a *Vita* of his sister Makrina the Younger (c. 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (b. between 335-340-d. after 394) asks that the reader ‘calling to mind’, *anamnesis* (ἀνάμνησις), Makrina, to remember her and evoke her presence.<sup>159</sup>

One of the clearest examples relates to the apostle Paul, who came back to life through both texts and images. The *Vita* of John Chrysostom (b. between 340 and 350-

<sup>155</sup> Basil the Great, *Homilia 19, In sanctos quadraginta martyres*, PG 31, 509A: Ὁ γὰρ ὁ λόγος τῆς ἱστορίας διὰ τῆς ἀχοῆς παριστήσι, ταῦτα γραφικῇ σιωπῶσα διὰ μιμήσεως δείχνουσιν; trans. in Johan Leemans and others, eds, *‘Let us Die that we may Live’: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 67-77 (p. 68).

<sup>156</sup> Margaret M. Mitchell, ‘The Archetypal Image: John Chrysostom’s Portraits of Paul’, *JR*, 75, 1 (1995), 15-43 (p. 25).

<sup>157</sup> Achilles Tatius, *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon*, 5.19-20, text with trans. by S. Gaselee, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1917; repr. 1961).

<sup>158</sup> For secondary literature on this practice see Deborah Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 136-56.

<sup>159</sup> *Vita S. Makrina*, by Gregory of Nyssa, PG 46, 959-1000. Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 114.

d. 407) written in the seventh century by George of Alexandria (d. 630), said that John had an image of Paul that he spoke to as if the apostle were alive and in front of him.<sup>160</sup> The story was that while John composed his homilies, a man in Paul's likeness was seen whispering into the theologian's ear. Proclos, John's secretary, witnessed the apostle materialise and identified the man as Paul, based on his resemblance to a portrait in John's bedroom.<sup>161</sup> In his own work, John described how he could converse with the apostle through reading Paul's work aloud.<sup>162</sup> So the apostle's verbal portrait, which he recorded himself, was more than a document to be read, it could also be recited to restore Paul to life. This was achieved by the living through the process of reading the apostolic text. I would contend that for those who were illiterate, an image could be used instead.

For some writers, images were actually preferable to texts because they were more accessible to the illiterate. Latin theologians such as Bishop Paulinus of Nola (353?-431) and Gregory I the Great (c. 540-604) justified images depicting narrative scenes from the Bible in churches on the basis that they replaced the written Scripture for the faithful who could not read.<sup>163</sup> In the East, Gregory of Nyssa expressed a similar opinion when he described images as 'the writing that keeps silence' (γραφὴ σιωπῶσα).<sup>164</sup> Later, Evagrius Scholastikos (c. 536-d. after 594) also implied that art could be didactic, commenting that a scene was painted inside a church to convey the story of a miracle to people who were ignorant of it.<sup>165</sup> On the basis of these sources, Kitzinger, for one, argued that the Church used art for educational purposes.<sup>166</sup> He concluded that images illustrated biblical events better than religious texts. Nicholas Gendle re-examined images produced between the fourth and sixth centuries to suggest that they functioned primarily as reminders, used to elicit emotion, rather than bestow

<sup>160</sup> *Vita S. Chrysostom*, by George of Alexandria, ed. by H. Saville, in *Joannis Chrysostomi Opera Omnia*, 8 vols (Eton: Norton, 1610-12), vol. VIII, pp. 192-94.

<sup>161</sup> *Vita S. Chrysostom*, by George of Alexandria, ed. by Saville, in *Joannis Chrysostomi*, vol. VIII, pp. 192-94; picture on the wall: p. 192, lines 10-14; on Paul coming alive: p. 194, lines 13-14.

<sup>162</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos, Argumentum, I*, PG 60, 391. Discussed in Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 20.

<sup>163</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 27, 512-95, text with trans. by R. C. Goldschmidt, in *Paulinus' Churches at Nola* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandische Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1940), pp. 61-65. Gregory the Great, *Epistola 13 ad Serenum Massiliensem Episcopum*, PL 77, 1128-30; trans. and discussed by Celia M. Chazelle, 'Pictures, books, and the illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word and Image*, 6, 2 (1990), 138-53 (p. 139).

<sup>164</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Sancti Ac Magni Martyris Theodori*, PG 46, 737D.

<sup>165</sup> Evagrius Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 26, ed. by Joseph Bidex and Léon Parmentier (London: Methuen, 1898).

<sup>166</sup> Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', p. 87.

knowledge.<sup>167</sup> In terms of religious art, this hypothesis is supported by the evidence of how entrenched biblical narratives were in Early Byzantine daily-life, and that images by themselves are incapable of conveying a complete story. Seen in this light, images were visual cues for the viewer to recollect verbal texts. A single icon could be used to both inform and prompt the viewer, depending on who that viewer was, and whether they needed to be taught or reminded. Regardless of which is closer to Byzantine practices, these sentiments help to explain why tales about portraits of Christ emerged at all. An image of Jesus could have served both roles by illustrating the divine *Logos*, Word, assuming human form.

An icon of the Virgin and Child from Egypt dated to the sixth or seventh century can be used to demonstrate how an image could convey Scripture [fig. 4].<sup>168</sup> The composition simultaneously shows Mary as Theotokos (Mother of God), the moment of the Incarnation, and Jesus as King. Jesus is therefore both human and divine, depicted in the so-called Chalcedonian symmetry.<sup>169</sup> Arguably, it illustrates the sentence in the Book of Colossians that reads: 'He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.'<sup>170</sup> Here, the 'image' relates to the Christian belief that Jesus was made in the image of God, and that the two were consubstantial.<sup>171</sup> The same Greek word (*eikon*), however, can also mean a picture, so this formula lent itself to portraits which were 'consubstantial' with their subject.

The Egyptian icon of the Virgin and Child is an encaustic painting on linen. A brush was used to apply the colours, which are from a narrow palette of predominantly red, yellow, black, and white. Other paintings from Egypt, such as Fayyum Mummy portraits, used a similar palette from the first until the fourth century.<sup>172</sup> Mary is

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<sup>167</sup> Nicholas Gendle, 'Art as Education in the Early Church', *OAJ* (1979), 3-8.

<sup>168</sup> For a description of the icon see: Robin Cormack, 'Virgin and Child', in *Masterpieces of Early Christian Art and Icons*, ed. by Richard Temple (London: Temple Gallery, 2005), pp. 24-29.

<sup>169</sup> Karl-Heinz Uthemann, 'Christ's Image versus Christology: Thoughts on the Justinianic Era as a Threshold of an Epoch', in *The Sixth Century End or Beginning?*, ed. by Pauline Allen and Elizabeth Jeffreys, *Byzantina Australiensia*, 10 (Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1996), pp. 197-223 (pp. 200-1).

<sup>170</sup> Colossians 1.15.

<sup>171</sup> On Jesus as God: Hebrews 1.3. 1 John 1.1. Philippians 2.6 .

<sup>172</sup> On Fayyum Portraits see: Euphrosyne Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (New York: N. H. Abrams, 1995), pp. 90-92. Cormack, *Painting the Soul*, pp. 65-76.





Figure 4: Virgin and Child, sixth or seventh century, Egypt, wax encaustic on linen laid on modern panel, 48 x 23 cm, panel: 53.5 x 29.5 cm, private collection.



presented as 'Theotokos', recognised as Her official title by the Council of Ephesus, held in 431.<sup>173</sup> In portraying the two holy figures in the roles of mother and child, the artist focussed attention on the Theotokos and incarnate *Logos*, thereby conforming to doctrine and reaffirming the Church's position and that of the Bible. She is wearing a white veil beneath a brown *maphorion*, a garment covering the head and shoulders, upon which there is a yellow cross. Her gaze is diverted away from the viewer and She holds a mandorla, an almond shaped cloud motif, within which Jesus is represented as a child. Jesus is clothed in a white tunic, brown *himation*, mantle, and has a halo. He looks directly at the viewer with his right hand held away from his body and his left hand closer to his lap. Belting proposed that mandorle were a common feature of Roman imperial portraiture.<sup>174</sup> In using what may have been an imperial device for a religious portrait, the artist highlighted that Jesus was the earthly 'heir' to God.<sup>175</sup> In this icon, the mandorla 'frames' Jesus and presents Him as 'an image within an image', as the Bible describes. Here, the *mise-en-abyme* is a powerful device: in using it, the artist could convey points of Christian doctrine. Arguably, the mandorla was deliberately placed over the womb of the Virgin to direct attention to the place where Word was made flesh.<sup>176</sup> In simultaneously conveying Mary as Theotokos, the moment of the Incarnation, and Jesus as King, three messages that form the basis of faith, it is conceivable that the icon could have been regarded as 'the writing that keeps silence' of Colossians 1.15.

#### PAINTING AS PROOF

Images and texts could convey the same information, differing just in terms of how they did so.<sup>177</sup> Surely then, it would only have been necessary for either a text or an image to exist. That images were preferable to texts for teaching the faithful is but one reason that both were indispensable. It is well-known that the organs that received images (the eyes) and text (the ears) and their associated senses of sight and hearing

<sup>173</sup> For a discussion of the significance of this theological point see: John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), pp. 3-31.

<sup>174</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 102-14. Rejected by: Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, rev. edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 189.

<sup>175</sup> Jesus as sovereign: Psalm 89.27. As firstborn: Revelation 1.5. Colossians 1.15.

<sup>176</sup> Cormack, 'Virgin and Child', p. 26.

<sup>177</sup> On how images and texts communicated meaning in Byzantium see: Brubaker, 'Pictures are good to think with', pp. 221-40.

were not regarded as equal in Late Antiquity.<sup>178</sup> The hierarchy between the senses meant that images and texts carried different authority. Writing in Late Antiquity, the Greek sophist Lucian (c. AD 120-c. 180) preferred visual portraits because they were more accurate and enduring than verbal portraits.<sup>179</sup> Some Early Christian writers, but not all, shared Lucian's opinion. In a fourth-century homily, Basil the Great, for example, praised art for being more accurate and splendid than text.<sup>180</sup> Passages from the *Vita* of St Spyridon, a fourth-century Cyprian bishop, written in the mid-seventh century by a certain Theodorus, remarked that images could supersede text as proof that events or miracles happened, even when lacking a documented textual account.<sup>181</sup> Theodorus's views were reiterated in the seventh-century *Miracles* of St Demetrios, in which the author wrote that doubts concerning the veracity of a miracle could be allayed by seeing a visual portrait.<sup>182</sup> Later, Anastasios of Sinai (d. after 700) wrote about an image of the Crucifixion, and said that the faithful could trust images more than texts because they were less likely to be falsified.<sup>183</sup> During Iconoclasm, John of Damascus's argument in favour of images hinged on the importance of the eye as the organ through which it was possible to know God.<sup>184</sup> For these writers, images were superior to texts.

By extension, 'seeing' was superior to 'hearing' and the other senses, not least because the eyes are the highest placed sensory organs on the body and therefore closest to God.<sup>185</sup> The superiority of sight, in addition to passages from the New Testament that spoke of faith gained through the sense, were repeated by George of Cyprus in the *Nouthesia* to justify why Luke, the apostle Thomas (d. c. AD 72), and St Peter (c. 1 BC-c. AD 67) had painted biblical narrative scenes.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, the legend of the image of

<sup>178</sup> Sight was the primary sense for Plato and Aristotle: Plato, *Republic*, VII, 514-20, text with trans. by Paul Shorey, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1930-35). Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1, text with trans. by Hugh Tredennick, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1933; repr. Suffolk: St Edmundsbury Press, 1996).

<sup>179</sup> Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture*, 23, text with trans. by A. M. Harmon, in *Lucian*, 8 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1918-67), vol. IV. Discussed in Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 25.

<sup>180</sup> Basil the Great, *Homilia 17 In Barlaam martyrem*, PG 31, 489.

<sup>181</sup> *Vita S. Spyridon*, 20, by Theodorus, ed. with trans. by Paul van den Ven, *La légende de S. Spyridon évêque de Trimithonte* (Leuven: Publications Universitaires, 1953).

<sup>182</sup> *Miracula S. Demetrios*, PG 116, 1265.

<sup>183</sup> Anastasios of Sinai, *Hodegos*, 11, PG 89, 198. See: Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 40-67.

<sup>184</sup> John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatorum orationes tres*, I, 22, PG 94, 1341. Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 178-79.

<sup>185</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio*, 8.1, PG 44, 144.

<sup>186</sup> *Novtheia*, edn in Melioransky, *Georgii Kiprianin*, p. xxvi (quoting I Peter 1.16, II Peter 1.16-17), xxvii (quoting John 1.29, Galatians 3.1) (repr. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 33). Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1. *On the Soul*, II, 7, text with trans. by W. S. Hett, rev. edn, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1957).

Edessa evolved from a story about letters exchanged between King Abgar and Jesus, because a picture was more authoritative than text.<sup>187</sup> Both Dobschütz and Steven Runciman placed the origins of this story in the theological controversy that hit Edessa in the fifth century. The changes to the legend have been interpreted as a manifestation of Early Christendom's debate regarding the human and divine natures of Christ.<sup>188</sup> The miraculous image was, according to George of Pisidia, tangible proof of the Incarnation.<sup>189</sup> Dobschütz's and Runciman's analyses support the proposition that during the fifth and sixth centuries, the decades in which this particular story changed, there was growing demand for a material memento of Christ that could guarantee the authority and apostolic succession of local Churches, and that narratives involving images were developed in order to meet these needs.<sup>190</sup>

Images were intrinsically trustworthy, as was the human function of receiving those images; thus in addition to the biblical account of the Incarnation, a painting of it was necessary in order for Christians to know of, and believe in, the central tenet of their faith. This leads to Belting's first point: that the legend of Luke the painter evolved in order to provide portraits of Christ and the Virgin that were authentic, that is to say true resemblances.<sup>191</sup> To further develop his argument, it is important to establish the need at this time for an 'authentic' and 'original' portrait of Jesus and Mary. It is worth noting that the Byzantines may have recognised a difference in terms of status between originals and copies. The distinction between the importance of the two had been made in antiquity by writers such as Cicero (106-143 BC), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60-after 7 BC), and Lucian, who favoured originals over copies.<sup>192</sup> If the Christian faithful shared this preference, then they would have sought originals and only accepted images of Jesus that were based on the first portraits. The manner of copying religious texts

<sup>187</sup> Runciman, 'Some Remarks', pp. 238-52. Averil Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa', pp. 80-94.

<sup>188</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 119. Runciman, 'Some Remarks', pp. 238-52.

<sup>189</sup> George of Pisidia, *Expeditio Persica*, I, 145, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, CSHB, 2 vols (Bonn: E. Weber, 1837), vol. I, p. 9.

<sup>190</sup> Averil Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa', pp. 82-86.

<sup>191</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 47-77.

<sup>192</sup> On the importance of the 'original type' see: Dionysius of Halicarnassus's distinction between an 'original type or model' and 'a copy' in: *Isaeus*, 4, 5, 11, text with trans. by Stephen Usher, in *Critical Essays*, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1974), vol. I. Discussed by: Nicolas Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism: Language, History, and Identity in Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 235-57. Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture*, 15. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, text with trans. by E. O. Winstedt, 3 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1912; repr. 1956). On imitation in literature see: Herbert Hunger, 'On the Imitation (ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature', *DOP* 23/24 (1969/70), 15-38.

suggests that the importance of the original over the copy expressed in antiquity was maintained. Biblical texts were reproduced and distributed on the basis that they were copied from an original source. One of the reasons that stories about the production of the Gospels developed may have been in order to guarantee that they were originals. In the fifth-century there emerged, for example, the legend that John the Evangelist had dictated his Gospel to Prochoros whilst in Patmos, an island near the coast of Asia Minor.<sup>193</sup> The idea that Prochoros had written the words of John as he spoke them verified the first copy of the Gospel, which could then be copied. There are direct parallels between the story of John as an author and that of Luke as a painter in terms of how, as legends, they both guaranteed the originality and apostolic authority of texts and images, from which copies could be reliably made, disseminated, and used.

On the basis that some Early Byzantines considered art and literature to be interchangeable, it seems likely that if texts needed authenticating, then images would too. Most early Christians believed that the Word of God could be understood not only by reading or hearing Scripture, but also by seeing the faces of holy men and holy women, especially those of Jesus and Mary. Origen (c. 185-probably 254) had written that knowledge of God was dependent on the mind, not the eye.<sup>194</sup> But later theologians, like Augustine (354-430), declared that to love God one must know Him, and to know Him, one must see Him.<sup>195</sup> For those who shared Augustine's view, images were essential. However, the immateriality of God was prohibitive and meant that He had not been seen, nor could He be.<sup>196</sup> Gregory of Nyssa commented on this biblical paradox in his *Vita* of Moses, in which he acknowledged that the human desire to see the face of God was necessary but impossible.<sup>197</sup> God's invisibility meant that the desire to see Him could not be satisfied. As Jesus had been both human and God, His face could be seen by the faithful. So portraits of Jesus could fulfil the wish and need to see the face of God, as long as they were authentic.

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<sup>193</sup> Prochoros, *Acts of John*, ed. by Lipsius and Bonnet, in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. II, 2 parts, part 1, pp. 151-216.

<sup>194</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VII, 33 PG 11, 1468.

<sup>195</sup> Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, IV, v ([Basel]: Iohannem de Amerbach, 1489).

<sup>196</sup> I John 4.12. I Timothy 6.16. Exodus 33.20.

<sup>197</sup> *Vita Moses*, by Gregory of Nyssa, PG 44, 298-430. On desire and icons see: Glen Peers, 'Icons' Spirited Love', *Religion and the Arts*, 13 (2009), 218-47.

If images were, as certain sources suggest, more important than texts, then they would have required a guarantee, especially if they were icons. For Byzantines, icons were not just paintings that recorded the face of a person. Icons came to serve as portals through which the faithful could channel their veneration, they reminded and instructed believers, were objects of dedication, performed miracles, and contained power.<sup>198</sup> The way icons looked was important insofar as they needed to resemble specific holy people. Consistency between likenesses meant that the viewer could identify figures without having to rely on inscriptions or instruction. It was therefore imperative that there was uniformity between portraits of the same individual. Once authentic portraits were identified, they were used as templates by artists to achieve constancy.

A letter to Heliodorus Silentarius from Nilus of Sinai (d. c. 430) shows another function, one reliant on the premise that they recorded features truthfully: portraits helped the public to recognise holy figures.<sup>199</sup> In the miracle of St Plato of Ancyra that Nilus recounts, the saint visited a young man who had been taken into captivity by barbarians. The youth was able to recognise the saint only because he had seen a portrait of him. Successful recognition, as in the earlier instance of Prochoros who recognised Paul in the flesh because he had seen his portrait, implied that the icon was accurate, reinforcing the notion that portraits needed to truthfully represent to an extent the appearance of the person depicted.

From the sixth century it seems that portraits gained extra significance as objects that both satisfied an individual's desire to see God and develop union with Him. In the beginning of the century, a text attributed to the mystic and Neo-Platonist Pseudo-

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<sup>198</sup> For veneration: *Epistola Synodica Patriarcharum Orientalium*, VII, 8, ed. with trans. by Louis Duchesne, in *Roma e l'Oriente*, 5 (1912-13), 225-39, 273-85, 349-66 (p. 283). Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 34, text with trans. by W. R. Paton, 5 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1919), vol. I. To remind: *Vita S. Pankratios of Taormina*, full text unpublished, extracts in *Sbornik Otdelenija Russkogo Jazyka i Slovesnosti Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk*, 40, 2, ed. by A. N. Veselovskij (St Petersburg: Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1886). On silver: *Miracula S. Demetrios*, PG 116, 1265. To instruct: Evagrius Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 26, ed. by Bidez and Parmentier. As dedicatory: Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, XVI, 41. Performing miracles: Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 35. *Vita S. Symeon Stylites the Younger*, 118, ed. with trans. by Paul van den Ven, *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le jeune*, 2 vols (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962), vol. I. Sophronios of Jerusalem, *Miracula SS. Cyri et Ioannis*, 36, PG 87, 2940. *Miracula SS. Kosmas et Damianos*, Miracle 13, 15, ed. by Ludwig Deubner, in *Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), pp. 132-34, 137-38. Power contained within: Theodoret of Cyrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, VI: Symeon the Stylite, 11, text with trans. by Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen, *Histoire des moines de Syrie*, SC, 234, 257, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1977-79), vol. I.

<sup>199</sup> Nilus of Sinai, *Epistola 62 ad Heliodoro Silentiario*, PG 79, 580-88.

Dionysios the Areopagite (fl. c. 500?), suggested the use of material things as springboards to contemplation on the path to union with God.<sup>200</sup> Pseudo-Dionysios was the first to suggest that in Christianity there were incremental stages of divinity between humans and God. At its core, contemplation led from one stage to the next. In his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysios dealt with the issue of understanding and knowing God, not art. His formula was not officially absorbed into Church doctrine, but it did sow the seeds of understanding images, and accepting them as objects of contemplation that could benefit Christians.<sup>201</sup> Writing shortly after, in the mid-sixth century, Agathias (c. 532-c. 580) made similar comments in direct reference to an image when he commended a painting of the Archangel Michael at Platê for being able to lead the viewer ‘to a higher contemplation’.<sup>202</sup> He continued, ‘the eyes stir up the depths of the spirit and Art can convey by colours the prayers of the soul.’<sup>203</sup> For Agathias, as hinted by Pseudo-Dionysios, and later John of Damascus, seeing led to believing.<sup>204</sup>

#### IMAGINED IMAGES

By the sixth century, icons did more than satisfy the curiosity regarding the appearances of holy people; they could lead the faithful to salvation. In order to do so, icons had to conform to accepted patterns. But before the story of Luke spread and icons were attributed to him, there was no way of knowing what the Virgin and Christ looked like. Uncertainty of their appearances resulted in a lack of consistency in religious portraits. Early examples of icons portray religious figures in a range of poses and styles, thereby demonstrating that a coherent model, trend, or scheme was lacking before Iconoclasm. Descriptions of religious portraits in surviving texts confirm that icons existed and differed. Moreover, texts are especially valuable because they record vituperative responses to inconsistencies between portraits of Christ and show that

<sup>200</sup> P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 2, PG 3, 373.

<sup>201</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>202</sup> Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 34.

Ἄσκοπον ἀγγελίαρχον, ἀσαώματον εἶδεῖ μορφῆς,  
 ἃ μέγα τολμήεις κηρὸς ἀπεπλάσατο·  
 ἔμπτης οὐκ ἀχάριστον, ἐπεὶ βροτὸς εἰκόνα λεύσσω  
 θυμὸν ἀπιθύωει κρέσσονι φαντασίῃ·  
 οὐκέτι δ’ ἄλλοπόσαλλον ἔχει σέβας, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἑαυτῷ  
 τὸν τύπον ἐγγράψας ὡς παρεόντα τρέμει·  
 ὁμματα δ’ ὀτρύνουσι βαθὺν νόον· οἶδε δὲ τέχνη  
 χρώμασι πορθεῦσαι τὴν φρενὸς ἱκεσίην.

<sup>203</sup> Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 34.

<sup>204</sup> John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniators orationes tres*, I, 22, PG 94, 1341.

Christian writers tried to decide upon which version of Jesus was the most authentic representation. Determining between authentic and inauthentic portraits of Jesus confirms that theologians acknowledged that the faithful wanted to be sure His portraits were truthful. As evidence that the problem existed, these sources are crucial to the argument that the story of Luke as a painter could be used to provide examples of how Jesus should be depicted, because icons attributed to the Evangelist were guaranteed to be accurate.

Some early writers, such as Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403), criticised the variation between portraits of holy figures. In a letter addressed to Emperor Theodosius I (347-395), Epiphanius recounted that he had seen the Apostles depicted as young and old men, with long and short hair, and sometimes with beards.<sup>205</sup> He criticised artists for *pseudo* (ψεύδω), ‘deceiving’ when they painted religious portraits according to their own inclinations.<sup>206</sup> Recounting the words of Apollonius of Tyana, a contemporary of Jesus, Philostratus (c. 170-c. 247) had also said that painters exercised their imaginations when they made art, explicating that they did so because it was ‘a wiser and subtler artist by far than imitation’.<sup>207</sup> For Apollonius, imagination was preferable to imitation, but this was not so for Epiphanius or the faithful.

Principally, icons were considered to be religious portraits by Christians for whom imitation, *mimesis* (μίμησις), was preferable to imagination, *phantasia* (φαντασία); icons therefore needed to retain the features of the figures they represented. To understand why imagination was so heavily criticised by Epiphanius, the concept of imagination in Early Byzantium must be explained. James has clarified that in Byzantium, ‘imagining’ was reproductive rather than productive: ‘imagining’ a person’s appearance was about recalling an image that one had acquired rather than inventing an image in the mind’s eye.<sup>208</sup> These imagined (recalled or reproduced) images were based

<sup>205</sup> Epiphanius, *Letter to Emperor Theodosius*, ed. by Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte*, fragment 24, p. 71. The questionable authenticity of writings attributed to Epiphanius is been discussed by Ostrogorsky, also: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 45-50.

<sup>206</sup> Epiphanius, *Letter to Emperor Theodosius*, fragment 24, ed. by Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte*, p. 71.

<sup>207</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, VI, 19, text with trans. by Christopher P. Jones, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 2005), vol. II: “φαντασία,” ἔφη, “ταῦτα εἰργάσατο, σοφωτέρα μμήσεως δημιουργός”.

<sup>208</sup> James, ‘Art and Lies’, p. 62. See also: Ruth Webb, ‘Imagination and the arousal of the emotions in Greco-Roman thought and literature’, in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. by Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 112-27.

on shared knowledge and experience. They were reliable if they were based on, and could be traced back to, the original form which itself participated in the archetype, or the ‘first model’.<sup>209</sup>

Within a Christian context, imagination meant not only ‘illusion’, but also ‘delusion’.<sup>210</sup> This was because if the imagination could not recall a familiar image, it had the capability to invent a new and unfamiliar one. Such invention led to false images. It is this aspect of the definition that Epiphanius alluded to when he spoke negatively of the artist’s imagination. The portraits of Paul and Jesus that he criticised were inaccurate because the artists had not seen the faces of those whose portraits they painted. Consequently, the images had no connection with the substance of the figures they purported to represent, the link to which, Gilbert Dagron argued, was interrupted by the artists’ inventive imagination.<sup>211</sup>

It is likely that the wider population were, like Epiphanius, concerned that ‘things seen’ maintained a reliable link to the prototype, without interruptions that could result in false images. This would especially have been so for those familiar with the passage from Basil the Great’s *On the Holy Spirit*, which explained the relationship between the Son and the Father in the Divine Trinity, stating that the honour rendered to a saint made in God’s image was passed on to God’s own image.<sup>212</sup> The same reasoning could be applied to the relationship between portraits and their subjects in that the honour rendered to an image was considered to be passed onto the archetype that was represented in the image.<sup>213</sup> Revering an icon meant that the saint depicted in the portrait was venerated, not the wooden panel or linen cloth their face was painted on. This way of thinking made it crucial that the painting was truthful, because if it were not, the viewer’s veneration or adoration would be misdirected away from the prototype they intended to pay reverence towards.

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<sup>209</sup> James, ‘Art and Lies’, p. 61.

<sup>210</sup> James, ‘Art and Lies’, p. 60.

<sup>211</sup> Gilbert Dagron, *Décrire et Peindre: Essai sur le portrait iconique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2007), p. 73.

<sup>212</sup> Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18, PG 32, 149.

<sup>213</sup> See: Gerhart B. Ladner, ‘The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy’, *DOP* 7 (1953), 1-34.



Clearly, if the chain of images had been corrupted, that is, based on the artist's imagination rather than an authentic original, then Christians could not rely on an image to further their knowledge of God. In fact, because of how the Byzantines understood the sense of sight, false images posed a dangerous threat to the viewer. To understand the danger of sight, and to reinforce the importance of a true likeness, it is important to step back and consider how the Early Byzantines understood vision, before then returning to how the authenticity of a portrait could be guaranteed if it were by Luke.

#### THE VISUAL FIELD OF THE BYZANTINE EYE

The Byzantines inherited two theories of vision from Ancient Greece: intromission and extramission, that existed concurrently. Atomist philosophers such as Democritus (b. c. 460-57 BC), Epicurus (b. c. 340-d. 270 BC), and Lucretius (first century BC) introduced the theory of intromission.<sup>214</sup> They each agreed that objects emanated particles that travelled from the outside world, into the eye, and stamped themselves onto the eye and mind, thereby producing the sensation of sight. Extramission theory was proposed by philosophers such as Alcmaeon of Croton (fifth century BC).<sup>215</sup> For extramissionists, whose theory was most clearly articulated by Plato (b. c. 429-d. 347 BC), sight was experienced when pure fire, emitted by the eye, collided with objects, which emitted their own fire, coalesced, and bounced back into the eye.<sup>216</sup> The Byzantines favoured the theory of extramission and theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa spoke of sight in this way, as capable of reaching out.<sup>217</sup>

Whether received or reached for, things were seen because they touched both the eye and the mind. Therefore, there was physical contact between the viewer and the viewed, or in the instance of a Christian and an icon, between the individual and the saint. The deeper significance of sight was articulated most clearly by Asterios of

<sup>214</sup> Democritus, frag. A. 135, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, 3 vols, 6th edn (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951-52), vol. I, p. 114. Epicurus, 'Letter to Herodotus', in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 10, 48-49, text with trans. by R. D. Hicks, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1925). Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura*, 4, 54-61, text with trans. by W. H. D. Rouse, rev. by Martin Ferguson Smith, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1975).

<sup>215</sup> Alcmaeon, Frag. A. 5, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. by Diels and Kranz, vol. I, p. 212.

<sup>216</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 45, text with trans. by Rev. R. G. Bury, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1929).

<sup>217</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum*, 1.3, ed. by Werner Jaeger and Hermann Langerbeck, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 10 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1952-60), vol. VI, p. 38. On changes to 'seeing' through a study of art see: *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Amaseia (b. between 330 and 335-d. between 420 and 425), who wrote that in visiting the site of the Oak of Mamre (near Hebron), where God had appeared, pilgrims not only saw the *locus sanctus* but also ‘became spectators of the whole history’.<sup>218</sup> To put it simply, the pilgrims did not just see a tree; they saw the visitation of the Lord to Abraham as if they had been present. Applying Asterios’s principle to icons of the Virgin and Child: viewers saw the two holy figures and also became eyewitnesses to the Incarnation.

Sight was not an involuntary physiological process; sight was sensational, experiential, and transformative. To see was to touch, to touch was to change. It could change the viewer because what was seen impressed itself on the soul and left its image there. Theories of vision had deep implications for Christians when the object of their gaze was holy. To see a sacred place, object, or holy person, meant that the energy emanating from them had travelled from the divine world through the eyes into the body and imprinted itself into the soul where it remained in memory. It was on this understanding of sight that the unknown author of the *History of the Monks of Egypt* defended his reasons for visiting John of Lycopolis, explaining that the memory of what had been seen was more enduring than the memory of what had been heard.<sup>219</sup> The permanence of the imprint on the soul guaranteed that the image held in the memory was pure and for a portrait to do so successfully, it had to depict its subject faithfully. The knowledge received through sight then elevated the soul of the viewer and brought them closer to God.

Worryingly for the Byzantines, just as sight had the power to purify, it also had the power to pollute. With regard to icons, if the likeness that was seen was less accurate, as Epiphanius described those of the saints and Jesus, then it left a false stamp on the viewer. The ‘evil’ power of the false-image may have contributed to Epiphanius’s criticism of images. Part of the problem with false images was that they inhibited a proper understanding of God, which is what John of Lycopolis warned

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<sup>218</sup> Asterios of Amaseia, *Homilia 9, PG 40, 304A*: αὐτοὺς ἱστορίας γίνονται θεαταί; trans. by E. D. Hunt, in *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire A.D. 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984). Genesis 18.1. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>219</sup> *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 1, 19, ed. by André Jean Festugière, SH, 34 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961).

pilgrims of when he commented that recalling sensual images disturbed the mind.<sup>220</sup> It may have been on the basis that improper images could delude and obstruct, that canon number one-hundred of the Quinisext Council, which met in AD 692, prohibited some pictures, declaring that they could ‘attract the eye and corrupt the mind, and incite it to the enkindling of base pleasures.’<sup>221</sup>

## THE FACE OF JESUS

The threat that images could lead the faithful astray may have heightened the interest in guaranteeing the authenticity of holy portraits. Proof was required to determine which one of the many different portraits of Christ was the most authentic. Theologians described Jesus’ likeness, suggesting that they tried to agree on His appearance and thereby minimise the need for artists to exercise their imaginations. A surviving fragment written in the sixth century by Theodore Lector, for example, specified which version of Jesus was most accurate: ‘the other form of Christ, viz. the one with the short, frizzy hair, is more authentic.’<sup>222</sup> Theodore’s description was in keeping with what Epiphanius thought Jesus looked like, implicit in his criticism of artists who imagined that He had long hair.<sup>223</sup> However, on the basis that stories about portraits of Jesus painted not by human hands emerged in the sixth century, it seems that Theodore’s written description failed to assure the public of His actual appearance and regulate the portrayal of Jesus by artists.

Attribution of certain portraits to God’s hand shows that authors needed to reassure Christians that icons were based on an authentic image rather than a written description. In the mid-sixth century, when the idea that images could further one’s knowledge of God was fully articulated, miraculous images became popular, as they were portraits of Jesus that had been made without an artist. Because they had been made ‘without human hands’, and by inference ‘with the hand of God’, they were

<sup>220</sup> *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 1, 23, ed. by Festugière.

<sup>221</sup> Canon one hundred, Quinisext Council, ed. by J. B. Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici Graecorum Historia et Monumenta*, 2 vols (Rome: Typis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1864-68), vol. II, p. 70: Τὰς οὖν τὴν ὄρασιν καταγοντευούσας γραφάς, εἴτε ἄλλως ὡς ἀνατιθειμένας, καὶ τὸν νοῦν διαφθειρούσας καὶ κινούσας πρὸς τὰ τῶν αἰσchrῶν ἡδονῶν ὑπεκκαύματα; trans. in *NPNF*, series 2, vol. XIV, p. 407.

<sup>222</sup> Theodore Lector, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 15, PG 86a, 173A: Φησὶ δὲ ὁ ἱστορῶν, ὅτι τὸ ἄλλο σχῆμα τοῦ Σωτῆρος, τὸ οὐλον καὶ ὀλιγότριχον, ὑπάρχει τὸ ἀληθέστερον; trans. in *ABE*, p. 40.

<sup>223</sup> Epiphanius, *Letter to Emperor Theodosios*, ed. by Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte*, fragment 24, p. 71.

intrinsically trustworthy. A brief analysis of one sixth-century miraculous image, known as the Kamoulianai, will suffice to show that some narratives about images evolved in Early Byzantium specifically to resolve issues surrounding authentic types of images. Significantly, the way that the public responded to the Kamoulianai confirms that they distinguished between originals and copies, and paid the greatest reverence to the former.

The Kamoulianai image of Christ was an example of a portrait of Jesus that miraculously appeared.<sup>224</sup> The *Syriac Chronicle* written by Zacharias of Mytilene (c. 465/466-d. after 536), describes the icon's origins.<sup>225</sup> In this version, a pagan woman, called Hypatia, complained that without an image of Jesus she could not worship Him.<sup>226</sup> A short while later, a portrait of Jesus painted on cloth emerged dry from a fountain in her garden, which showed Hypatia the true likeness of the incarnate *Logos*. James has analysed the story in the context of imagination, arguing that Hypatia could not imagine Jesus because she did not have a collection of truthful visual images that she could use to piece together His appearance.<sup>227</sup> So, in response to Hypatia's predicament, and in order to prevent her from exercising the inventive (delusional) aspect of her imagination, she received an image that had not been made by hand, which meant that she could see Jesus, and thus gain knowledge of, and later love for, God.<sup>228</sup> Her desire was met by a miracle that bypassed the human agency of the artist, which could have threatened the accuracy of the portrait and thus impeded Hypatia's conversion.

The *Chronicle* goes on to describe the respect that Early Byzantines paid to the Kamoulianai icon above other images of Christ, because it was not painted by human hands and thus was trustworthy. Between 555 and 561, for instance, it was carried through Anatolia in a manner similar to the tradition of parading imperial images.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Zacharias of Mytilene, *The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, XII, 4, text with trans. by Frederick John Hamilton and Ernest Walter Brooks (London: Methuen, 1899). For commentary see: Averil Cameron, 'Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium', *Past and Present*, 84, 1 (1979), 3-35.

<sup>225</sup> Zacharias of Mytilene, *Syriac Chronicle*, VIII, 1, text with trans. by Hamilton and Brooks.

<sup>226</sup> Zacharias of Mytilene, *Syriac Chronicle*, XII, 4, text with trans. by Hamilton and Brooks.

<sup>227</sup> James, 'Art and Lies', pp. 59-72.

<sup>228</sup> James, 'Art and Lies', p. 66.

<sup>229</sup> Zacharias of Mytilene, *Syriac Chronicle*, XII, 4, text with trans. by Hamilton and Brooks. Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', 83-150 (p. 124).

Processions gave the public a chance to see the original. The twelfth-century writer George Kedrenos recorded that the icon was taken from Cappadocia (central Asia Minor) to Constantinople in 574.<sup>230</sup> Theophylaktos Simokattes (b. late-sixth century) wrote that in 586 the image was used in a battle to rouse the army.<sup>231</sup> In the seventh century, a hanging lamp and incense burner were placed in front of it.<sup>232</sup> Such references to the icon imply that the public accepted the miraculous origins of Christ's portrait. Crucially, the parades and celebrations that were instigated in order to honour it show that the Kamouliaianai icon received particular attention from the faithful because it was authentic and made by the archetype, God.

The further images were from the archetype the less trustworthy they were, so it is unsurprising to find that a common characteristic of miraculous images was their ability to replicate themselves without human intervention. The image of Edessa, for example, another miraculous portrait of Jesus, that had been made when He washed his face on a linen cloth, later produced a copy of itself by itself.<sup>233</sup> The church historian Evagrius included the image of Edessa in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in 590, and credited the contact relic with saving the city from a Persian attack in 544.<sup>234</sup> It was said that a terracotta tile was placed on top of the icon to protect it, and when the tile was removed, an identical image to the image of Edessa could be seen on it.<sup>235</sup> There was no threat of the secondary image, known as the Keramion or Holy Tile, being less authentic than the first because it too was made without human hands.

Places that housed *acheiropoietai* images were destinations on pilgrim routes, because attribution to a divine hand meant that the images had been touched by God or, in the instance of imprints on cloth, by Jesus, and were therefore relics. They were

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<sup>230</sup> George Kedrenos, *Compendium historiarum*, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, CSHB, 2 vols (Bonn: E. Weber, 1838-39), vol. I, p. 685.

<sup>231</sup> Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, II, 3.4-6, ed. by Carl de Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1887; rev. and emen. edn by Peter Wirth, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972).

<sup>232</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 111.

<sup>233</sup> Evagrius Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 27, ed. by Bidex and Parmentier. See also: Averil Cameron, 'The History of the Image of Edessa', pp. 80-94.

<sup>234</sup> Evagrius Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 27, ed. by Bidex and Parmentier.

<sup>235</sup> On the Keramion see: Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, 'The Holy Face of Edessa on the Frame of the 'Volto Santo' of Genoa: The Literary and Pictorial Sources', in *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture: Papers Read at a Colloquium Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1-5 December, 1999*, ed. by Jan Olof Rosenqvist, Transactions, 13 (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2004), pp. 100-32 (pp. 107-108). On this addition to the Edessan legend of King Abgar see: *Abgar Epistles*, ed. by Lipsius and Bonnet, in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp. 279-83.

portable objects that redefined the spaces that housed them from *locus* to *locus sanctus*. This is why religious communities in churches, monasteries, and convents were eager to lay claim to such items. Evidence that pilgrims journeyed to visit miraculous images confirms the status of these authentic originals to the Early Byzantines. The Piacenza pilgrim, who travelled and recorded his pilgrimage through the Holy Land around 570, wrote that he paid reverence towards four different objects that were made miraculously. There was clearly little delay between describing images as *acheiropoietai* in texts and using them as tools for worship.

At the church of Holy Sion, the Piacenza pilgrim prayed in front of a column to which Christ had once been tied, and had left an impression of His chest and hands on it.<sup>236</sup> The pilgrim's description of the column is similar to another in an account of Jerusalem that may date to as early as the late-fifth century. The anonymous author of *Breviarius* described a column in the church that had marks on it from when Jesus held onto it.<sup>237</sup> Around 518, an author known by the name Theodosius, also described the same column, and included that in addition to an imprint of Jesus' body, there was also an impression of His face.<sup>238</sup> At the Praetorium of Pilate, the Piacenza pilgrim recorded that he prayed in front of stone that bore the mark of Jesus' footprints from the time that He had stood upon it to be heard by Pilate.<sup>239</sup> In addition, he described Jesus' appearance as 'handsome, [with] curly hair, and a beautiful hand with long fingers', based on a portrait in the Praetorium that was 'painted while he [Jesus] was alive.'<sup>240</sup> In Memphis, the pilgrim saw a portrait of Jesus that was venerated by the faithful, who told him that Christ's image had appeared on the cloth when He wiped his face with it.<sup>241</sup>

Clearly, in various texts dated to between 569 and 590, many different images were described as *acheiropoieta*, suggesting that there was a heightened interest in

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<sup>236</sup> Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, 22, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 165.

<sup>237</sup> *Breviarius de Hierosolyma*, Form A: Notes on the way Jerusalem is Built, 4, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 111.

<sup>238</sup> Theodosius, *De Situ Terrae Sanctae*, 7, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 118.

<sup>239</sup> Also mentioned by: Epiphanius Hagiopolites, *The Holy City and the Holy Places*, 3, ed. by H. Donner, 'Die Palästinabeschreibung des Epiphanius Monachus Hagiopolita', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 87 (1971), 42-91.

<sup>240</sup> Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, 23, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 166: *pedem pulchrum, modicum, subtilem, staturam commune, faciem pulchrem, capillos subanellatos, manum formosam, digitos longos* image designat, que, illo vivente, picta et posita est in ipso pretorio.; trans. by John Wilkinson, in *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Philips, 1977), p. 84.

<sup>241</sup> Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, 44, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 173.

identifying authentic images in the second-half of the sixth century. The account of the Kamoulianai icon in particular, deliberately responded to the importance of using an authentic portrait of Jesus as a route to faith. With the identification of an original as miraculously made, and thereby authentic, copies could be trusted. These stories may have led to an increased desire to own portraits, perhaps specifically those that were based on miraculous images, to which artists could have responded.<sup>242</sup> Textual evidence has been interpreted by some scholars to show that in the sixth century there was a shift in the popularity, appearance, and use of religious images.<sup>243</sup> Historical evidence is inconclusive on whether legends about *acheiropoietai* images led to an increase in the number and status of icons, or whether icons led to the promotion of authentic originals that had been made miraculously.

On balance, the supposition that the development of the story of Luke as a painter was contemporaneous with those of miraculous images seems plausible. If it was, icons attributed to the Evangelist could have served the same purpose as originals that had not been painted by human hands. Byzantines could trust icons attributed to Luke as authentic portraits of the Virgin and Child, just as they could trust *acheiropoietai* images as authentic portraits of Christ, because Luke was said to have studied and painted the two holy figures from life; in having seen the couple with his own eyes there was no threat that he had used his imagination in an inventive sense. Whether the legend of Luke as an artist was first developed to provide an authentic original, icons attributed to him were used as templates for later artists to follow. As authentic originals, they limited artistic innovation, which was then further restricted by tradition, the expectations of the viewer, and the nature of the portrait.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> On desire leading to image and image leading to desire: W. T. J. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 58. Cited by: Peers, 'Icons' Spirited Love', p. 229.

<sup>243</sup> Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', pp. 83-150. Averil Cameron, 'Images of Authority', pp. 3-35. On there being no cultic images before the ninth century: Paul Speck, 'Wunderheilige und Bilder: Zur Frage des Beginns der Bilderverehrung', *Varia III*, Poikila Byzantina, 11 (Berlin: 1991), 163-247. Questioned by: Beat Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon: An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Weisbaden: Reichert, 2010). Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm', pp. 1215-54.

<sup>244</sup> Robin Cormack, 'Painter's Guides, Model-Books, Pattern-Books and Craftsmen: or Memory and the Artist?', in *L'artista a Bisanzio*, ed. by Bacci, pp. 11-29.

# ICONS AS SUBSTITUTES FOR THE BODIES OF JESUS AND MARY

The second aspect of Belting's explanation for the evolution of the legend of Luke was that it solved the problem of the Virgin and Christ's empty graves, for the story offered icons as substitutes for their bodily remains. In early Christendom, the burial sites of holy figures were important because they had direct contact with those who were buried there. This contact meant that graves were considered to be the most effective locations for intercession between the divine and the human worlds.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, for the faithful, they were places where Heaven and Earth actually met.<sup>246</sup> It was for this reason that in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, people chose to be buried close to the graves or tombs of saints and martyrs.<sup>247</sup> Hagiographical texts, both *Vitae* of saints and descriptions of pilgrimages, suggest that gravesites were regarded as devotional places and destinations worthy of visitation.<sup>248</sup> Miracles that happened where saints were buried, such as the healing of the sick, demonstrated the power that graves contained and promoted them as the most important, or primary relic.<sup>249</sup> But the bodily remains of neither Jesus nor Mary stayed on Earth; their empty graves were a result of His Ascension and Her Metastasis. In the absence of these primary relics, it is likely that the Byzantines actively sought substitutes.<sup>250</sup> The argument is that the story of Luke painting icons of the Virgin and Christ developed to provide relics of equivalent status to their bodies in graves.

In the early-fourth century, John Chrysostom wrote that God provided the faithful with relics in the form of graves.<sup>251</sup> He explained that the places that saints were buried were secondary only to the Word of God in the power and energy that they transmitted to the people who visited them. For those who saw them, he wrote, this power that entered through the eye then changed the viewer and filled them with greater

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<sup>245</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 33.

<sup>246</sup> On the subject of graves of saints in the Mediterranean between the third and sixth centuries see: Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> For example, a Christian nobleman called Cynegius was buried close to the grave of St Felix at Nola and Paulinus buried his son close to the saints at Alcalá: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 27.

<sup>248</sup> On an alternative view of how the concept of holy places developed: R. A. Markus, 'How on Earth Could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places', *J ECS*, 2 (1994), 257-71.

<sup>249</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 59.

<sup>250</sup> Averil Cameron argues the image of Edessa was partly a product of this desire too, see: 'The History of the Image of Edessa', p. 86.

<sup>251</sup> John Chrysostom, *Liber in Sanctum Babylam*, 2, PG 50, 550-51.



love for God. Once again, Byzantine theories of sight are relevant. In seeing the burial place of a saint or a martyr, the viewer received the power inherent to the person within the grave, which had necessarily imprinted itself onto their soul.<sup>252</sup> Sight was repeatedly mentioned in the accounts of pilgrims who visited these *loca sancta*, by authors such as Jerome and Sophronios of Jerusalem (560-638).<sup>253</sup> Writing shortly after Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393-c. 466) commented that seeing the grave, understood as active and beneficial, was one of the purposes of a pilgrimage.<sup>254</sup>

Graves were established as important pilgrim destinations, but the faithful were discouraged from accepting, visiting, and revering empty graves. In some early *Vitae* of saints, for instance, martyrs were described as appearing in visions asking for their remains to stay within the grave.<sup>255</sup> A text dated to before the fourth century recorded that, after his death, the martyr Fructuosus (d. 259), previously Bishop of Tarragona, appeared to his followers who had collected his ashes and told them to restore his remains to his grave.<sup>256</sup> Similarly, albeit in a spurious text, the forty martyrs who were executed by Licinius (b. c. 265-d. 325) at Sebasteia in Armenia requested, in accordance with the wishes of the Holy Spirit, that they should be buried together in Sarim.<sup>257</sup>

To preserve the physical remains of saints within graves, laws were enforced that prohibited the movement and sale of relics. One passed in the East in 386, stated: 'No person shall transfer a buried body to another place. No person shall sell the relics of a martyr; no person shall traffic in them.'<sup>258</sup> The Church also disapproved of empty graves and tried to prevent the public from visiting sites that had no proven connection

<sup>252</sup> Cynthia Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early Medieval Saints' Shrines', *Speculum*, 74, 4 (1997), 1079-106. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*. Georgia Frank, 'The Pilgrim's Gaze in the Age Before Icons', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. by Nelson, pp. 98-115.

<sup>253</sup> Jerome, *Epistola 108 ad Eustochium*, ed. by Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL, 54-56, 3 vols (Vienna: [n. pub], 1910-18; repr. New York: Johnson, 1961), vol. II, pp. 306-51. Sophronios of Jerusalem, *Anacreontica*, 19 and 20, ed. by Marcellus Gigante, *Opuscula: testi per esercitazioni accademiche*, 10-12 (Rome: Gismondi, 1957).

<sup>254</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, IX: Peter the Galatian, 2, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. I.

<sup>255</sup> *Martyrdom of Bishop Fructuosus and his Deacons, Augurius and Eulogius*, 6.3, text with trans. by Herbert Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 184-85.

<sup>256</sup> *Martyrdom of Bishop Fructuosus*, 6.3, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>257</sup> *Testament of the Forty Holy and Glorious Martyrs of Christ who died at Sebaste*, 1.3, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 354-55.

<sup>258</sup> Cod. Theod., IX, 17.7: Humatum corpus nemo ad alterum locum transferat; nemo martyrem distrahat, nemo mercetur.; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 240.

to a holy figure or occurrence. At the Seventh Ecumenical Council, held in 787, the bishops decided that sites could only be consecrated if they held holy relics.<sup>259</sup> Prelates who tried to dedicate churches without relics after this canon was agreed upon, were to be deposed from office. Clearly, the Church and the state agreed that physical remains were fundamental for a place to be considered holy.

If the importance of the grave is understood within the wider context of the role that relics played in Early Byzantium, there can be little doubt that the faithful sought a substitute for the bodies of Jesus and Mary. Their desire may have contributed to the development of a legend about relics of the two holy figures. Similarities between descriptions of how relics and icons were used by the public in the sixth and seventh centuries, makes it likely that the public would have accepted and used Luke's portraits as relics.

Relics were increasingly important in Byzantine Christianity from the mid-fourth century.<sup>260</sup> From this point there was an increase in the trafficking of portable relics of saints, which occurred mainly from East to West. Perhaps the earliest example is the translation of the relics of Babylas (d. c. 250) from Antioch to Daphne in the early 350s.<sup>261</sup> In antiquity, the movement of the dead was prohibited, so the transfer of relics was one aspect of Christendom that stood in complete opposition to past traditions. E. D. Hunt attributed the popularity of relics to 'institutionalised superstition', but this seems to belittle the palpable value they held for Christians who saw and used them.<sup>262</sup> One of the reasons they were significant was that they were a part of the archetype. When they were accurate and truthful, they neither doubled the archetype nor corrupted it; they were tautegorical, different in substance but identical in meaning. So, all of a saint was found in a relic, regardless of how minute the relic actually was. It is therefore unsurprising that Byzantines seem to have responded to a relic in the same way they

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<sup>259</sup> Canon seven, Seventh Ecumenical Council, ed. by Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. II, pp. 110-11.

<sup>260</sup> On the translation of relics by the Imperial family see: Liz James, 'Bearing gifts from the east: imperial relic hunters abroad', in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, March 1999*, ed. by Antony Eastmond, SPBS, 9 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 119-31.

<sup>261</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 34.

<sup>262</sup> E. D. Hunt, 'The Traffic in Relics: Some Late Roman Evidence', in *Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. by Sergei Hackel, Studies supplementary to *Sobornost*, 5 (London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981), pp. 171-80 (p. 176).

would to a living person, an example of which is Gregory of Nyssa's description of the relics of the martyr Theodore (d. early-fourth century):

For those who look at the relics, the body appears as if it were alive and healthy: the eyes, mouth, ears as well as the other senses are a cause for pouring out tears of reverence and emotion, and they direct their prayers of intercession to the martyr as if he were present and well.<sup>263</sup>

It was irrelevant that a relic was part of a saint, as the entire saint was present in, and could come back to life through each separate relic. Describing the public's response to the relics of the prophet Samuel, whose ashes were moved to Constantinople from Palestine, Jerome also wrote that the public received the relics as if the saint himself was present.<sup>264</sup> It was precisely because of this concept that Jerome defended the cult of relics and *loca sancta*, in his written rebuttal to a critique of the eastern practice by Vigilantius (fl. c. 400).<sup>265</sup> Indeed, Symeon the Stylite the Younger (521-592) described his own relics in this way to a priest in an account told in his *Vita*.<sup>266</sup> In a story of a miracle, a priest took his sick son to see and be healed by the saint.<sup>267</sup> Symeon gave the young boy a *eulogia* (εὐλογία), a blessing (sometimes, as here, in the form of an object) but the priest doubted the efficacy of the relic as a cure. The saint replied that his dust contained his power as well as the power of God, and that in looking at the *eulogia*, their images would be stamped into the soul of the viewer and thus could be seen. Here, Symeon reassured the priest that because he was completely present in each of his relics, his holy dust would heal the child. It was for this purpose that relics were often used: to summon up the saint whose relic it was so that the supplicant could ask for a personal favour. This must have meant that the faithful desired relics.

In literature, there are similarities between descriptions of how the public responded to icons and to relics, in the sense that seeing these objects prompted the viewer to recall the lives of holy figures and react as if they were alive. Although

<sup>263</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Sancti Ac Magni Martyris Theodori*, PG 46, 740B: ὡς σῶμα γὰρ αὐτό ζῶν καὶ ἀνθοῦν οἱ βλέποντες κατασπάζονται, τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, τῷ στόματι, τοῖς ἀκοαῖς, πάσαις προσάγοντες ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν, εἴτα τὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας καὶ τὸ τοῦ πάθους ἐπιχέοντες δάκρυον, ὡς ὁλοκλήρῳ τῷ μάρτυρι τὴν τοῦ πρεσβεῦειν ἱκεσίαν προσάγουσιν.

<sup>264</sup> Jerome, *Contra Vigilantius*, 5, PL 23, 343-44. Samuel's arrival in Constantinople: *Chronicon Paschale*, PG 92, 784-86. Hunt, 'The Traffic in Relics', p. 179.

<sup>265</sup> R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 148-49.

<sup>266</sup> *Vita S. Symeon Stylites the Younger*, ed. with trans. by van den Ven, *Vie ancienne de S. Syméon*.

<sup>267</sup> *Vita S. Symeon Stylites the Younger*, Miracle 231, ed. with trans. by van den Ven, *Vie ancienne de S. Syméon*. See: Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, p. 33.

images and relics were not the same thing, the obvious difference being the infiniteness of images that could be reproduced, they were used in the same way.<sup>268</sup> When Paulinus of Nola sent a fragment of the Cross to Sulpicius Severus (c. 363-c. 425), for example, he told Sulpicius to:

Look with the inner eye on the whole power of the cross in this tiny segment. Once you think that you behold the wood on which our Salvation, the Lord of majesty, was hanged with nails whilst the world trembled, you, too, must tremble, but you must also rejoice.<sup>269</sup>

For Paulinus, the sight of the relic was supposed to prompt the recollection of the Crucifixion, and provoke an emotional response. This expectation was entirely in keeping with how his contemporary, Jerome, described the fourth-century pilgrim Paula's emotive response to a picture of a cross.<sup>270</sup> The widow had accompanied Jerome on his tour of the Holy Land. When she saw a cross, Jerome wrote, she fell to her knees and prayed in front of it as though she saw the Crucifixion happening before her.<sup>271</sup> In the sixth century in the East, Agathias wrote that in seeing an image of the Archangel Michael, the viewer feared him as if he were present.<sup>272</sup> Brubaker and Haldon have suggested that here, the presence refers to the figural representation of Michael who, as an angel, otherwise lacked substance.<sup>273</sup> It may be that in addition to this, the painted image evoked the living presence of its subject. This reaction is similar to Gregory of Nyssa's earlier description of Theodore's relics, in terms of the viewer seeing the saint as if he was alive.<sup>274</sup> Because icons and relics could evoke the same reaction in those who saw them, it is likely that the public would have considered paintings as acceptable relics of Mary and Jesus and as substitutes for their empty graves.

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<sup>268</sup> Leslie Brubaker, 'Introduction: The Sacred Image', in *The Sacred Image*, ed. by Ousterhout and Brubaker, pp. 1-24 (p. 12).

<sup>269</sup> Paulinus, *Epistola 31 ad Severo*, 1, *PL 61*, 325-26: Non angustetur fides vestra carnalibus oculis parva cernentibus, sed interna acia totam in hoc minimo vim crucis videat. Dum videre vos cogitates lignum illud, quo salus nostra, quo Dominus majestatis affixus, tremante mundo, pependerit, exsultetis cum tremore.; trans. by P. G. Walsh, in *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola*, 2 vols (New York: Newman, 1967), vol. II, p. 126.

<sup>270</sup> Jerome, *Epistola 108 ad Eustochium*, 9, ed. by Hilberg, vol. II, pp. 314-16.

<sup>271</sup> Jerome, *Epistola 108 ad Eustochium*, 9, ed. by Hilberg, vol. II, pp. 314-16. Another example is Gregory of Nyssa's description of the Sacrifice of Isaac: Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, *PG 46*, 572C.

<sup>272</sup> Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 34.

<sup>273</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History*, pp. 775-75.

<sup>274</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, *PG 46*, 572C.

Byzantine texts record that icons of the Virgin and Christ were treated as though they were living people. Descriptions of processions involving portraits, like that held in Rome, which was arranged to reunite Jesus and Mary, through joining the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon and the ‘Madonna of S. Sisto’, shows that in the West too, icons were believed to contain the presence of the subject depicted. It was on this understanding that the Virgin, present through an image, was credited with Emperor Herakleios’s (b. c. 575-d. 641) defeat over Emperor Phokas (b. c. 547-d. 610) in the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>275</sup> Here, the image and the person were the same; whether the icon actually existed is irrelevant. Around the sixth or seventh century, icons could also be used as guarantors in a legal context, because the presence of the person depicted replaced the physical person.<sup>276</sup> In George of Pisidia’s *Bellum Avaricum*, for example, the physical presence of Jesus, represented in an image, acts as the ultimate judge in an imaginary court trial.<sup>277</sup> The scenario the poet described was entirely in keeping with the legal role imperial portraits had played since Roman times, where they were a proxy when the emperor was absent.<sup>278</sup> Icons attributed to Luke, or those modelled on Luke’s originals, were relics of Mary and Jesus, and if they existed, they may have been used in the same way.

The late-seventh-century *On the Holy Places*, written around 685 by Adomnan (c. 624-704), informs us that by this time icons of saints, secondary relics, could be used by the public instead of primary relics.<sup>279</sup> This Latin text includes a story that Bishop Arculf (late-seventh century), who had visited the Holy Land in or before 683-84, told the author about a portrait of the Holy Confessor George in Constantinople.<sup>280</sup> Adomnan recounted that before going into battle, a soldier visited the image, and spoke to it as though George were present. He asked the saint for protection from dangers posed by war, disease, and water.<sup>281</sup> During the war, many died, but George, who had

<sup>275</sup> George of Pisidia, *Herakleias II*, text with trans. by Pertusi, in *Giorgio di Pisidia: Poemi*, p. 252.

<sup>276</sup> Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, p. 99. Brubaker, ‘Icons before Iconoclasm’, pp. 1233-35. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 37-44.

<sup>277</sup> George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum*, text with trans. by Pertusi, in *Giorgio di Pisidia: Poemi*, pp. 193-94.

<sup>278</sup> Helmut Kruse, *Studien zur offiziellen Geltung des Kaiserbildes im römischen Reiche*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums, 19 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1934). Summarised by: Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, pp. 122-23.

<sup>279</sup> Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 175-234. Discussed in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>280</sup> Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, IV, 14-31, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 231-33.

<sup>281</sup> Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, IV, 16, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 231.

interceded on behalf of the suppliant, and the grace of God, protected the soldier. Upon his return, the story continues, the soldier revisited the portrait of George, spoke to him again, and bequeathed his horse and sixty gold shillings to the saint in recognition of the protection he had received.<sup>282</sup> In this story, the icon acted as an object believed to contain the essence of the person with whom it was associated. In this sense, it was described in a similar way to Symeon's relics, which the saint himself said contained his power.<sup>283</sup>

The significance of the body within the grave, the power relics held, and the importance of seeing both meant that relics of Mary and Jesus were essential for the faithful. It appears that icons could function like relics, because they were part of the same paradigm, and so Luke's portraits would have been easily accepted by those who did not renounce images as objects that substituted the physical remains of the Virgin and Christ. Painted from life, icons 'by Luke' were authentic. As the two holy figures had been present, it was assumed they had some contact with the portraits.<sup>284</sup> This contact meant that Luke's icons could rightfully assume the status of primary relics unlike the icons of saints, which were secondary relics, the primary being of course the physical remains of saints within graves.

Belting's argument, that the story about Luke developed primarily to provide icons that guaranteed the likeness of the Virgin and Jesus and substitute their bodily remains in graves, is therefore convincing. Based on the dates that issues about graves were debated and that images were identified as having been made 'not by human hands', the story about Luke painting their portraits could date to the sixth century. The compositional scheme of the Mother and Child, later accepted as having originated with the Evangelist, certainly existed by this point and survives both on icons and is described in texts.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, IV, 21, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 231-32.

<sup>283</sup> Vita S. Symeon Stylites the Younger, Miracle 231, ed. with trans. by van den Ven, *Vie ancienne de S. Syméon*.

<sup>284</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>285</sup> George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum*, text with trans. by Pertusi, in *Giorgio di Pisidia: Poemi*, pp. 193-94. Theodore Synkellos, *De obsidione Constantinopolitana*, ed. with trans. by Makk, in *Traduction et commentaire*, p. 81. This date is consistent with, but does not rely on, Theodore Lector's version of the legend of Luke found in his *Ecclesiastical Heirarchy*, preserved in the work of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos.

Symbolically, these images illustrated to the viewer the point that the Word became flesh. For those who considered images as superior to words, and sight more trustworthy than sound, images of Mary holding Jesus conveyed the mystery of the Incarnation in the most effective way. Icons of the Virgin and Child painted before the eighth century emphasise this moment. Pentcheva has argued that their iconography is distinct from images painted after Iconoclasm because they highlight the relationship between the two figures and the strong bond of maternal love.<sup>286</sup> For the Early Byzantines, they proved the Incarnation.<sup>287</sup> This was a pivotal moment and hugely significant for the faithful, as their salvation depended on it. Arguably, in articulating precisely this point, canon eighty-two of the Quinisext Council effectively made images of the Incarnation indispensable for the public, stating:

In order that the perfect should be set down before everyone's eyes even in painting, we decree that [the figure] of the Lamb, Christ our God, who removes the sins of the world, should henceforth be set up in human form on images also, in place of the ancient lamb.<sup>288</sup>

With the importance of originals in mind, it is possible that this canon accelerated the evolution of the legend and its importance, because if the Incarnation was to be painted, a pattern for it first needed to be authenticated.

It is important to contextualise the canon within the aims of the bishops who attended the Quinisext Council, which met to complete the work of the Fifth (553) and Sixth (680-1) Ecumenical Councils. They dealt with a number of issues, some of which were linked to the Church's desire to assert authority and ideology and to address political interests.<sup>289</sup> Averil Cameron argued that the council was convened in response to the increasing popularity of the icon, and that it sought to explain and control the place of icons within Orthodox practice.<sup>290</sup> It was here that the Church collectively tried

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<sup>286</sup> Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>287</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 119. Runciman, 'Some Remarks', pp. 238-52. As tangible proof of the incarnation: George of Pisidia, *Expeditio Persica*, I, 145, ed. by Bekker, vol. I, p. 9. Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', p. 121.

<sup>288</sup> Canon eighty-two, Quinisext Council, ed. by Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. II, pp. 62-63. Trans. in: *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, ed. by George Nedungatt, *Kanonika*, 6 (Rome: Pontificio istituto orientale, 1995), pp. 162-64. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 61.

<sup>289</sup> John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; rev. edn 1997), p. 281. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 64.

<sup>290</sup> Kathleen Corrigan, 'The Witness of John the Baptist on an Early Byzantine Icon in Kiev', *DOP* 42 (1988), 1-11. Averil Cameron, 'The Language of Images', p. 23.

to address Christian art, thereby marking the beginning of legislature and literature pertaining to a theory of images and icons.<sup>291</sup> Only after Iconoclasm did the Church officially formulate its position towards art. Nevertheless, at the Quinisext Council, the bishops accepted that art could communicate doctrine, recognising that visual shapes could symbolise religious themes or narratives for the viewer. Canon seventy-three, for example, reiterated an imperial law first imposed by Emperor Theodosios II (401-450) that permitted the cross as a visual symbol of salvation, on the condition that it was not depicted on the ground.<sup>292</sup> In stating that honour should be given to particular symbols, including the cross, the bishops sent a clear message to the public: products of human skill could serve as entry points for the viewer to access Heaven.

Defining art in this way meant that the Church was compelled to regulate images in terms of how they looked, which they duly did, albeit to a limited extent. Canon number eighty-two decided how Jesus was to be represented in art, specifying that it was preferable for Him to be shown as a man rather than as a lamb because it sent a clearer message of God's Word and the life of Christ to the viewer.<sup>293</sup> This canon also defended and justified the use of religious portraits by Christians in response to Islamic and Judaic condemnation, both of whom were opposed to figural imagery in a religious setting.<sup>294</sup> But appeasing outsiders was not the Quinisext Council's principal aim. In its wider Christian context, canon eighty-two necessitated that Jesus be portrayed as the incarnated *Logos* rather than a lamb, because it was His death on the Cross that facilitated humankind's redemption.<sup>295</sup> This belief was repeated in the early-eighth century by Germanos, who wrote that Jesus' life could only be remembered through representations of Him as a man.<sup>296</sup> Thus it is possible that canon eighty-two emphasised the need to identify a definitive portrait of the Incarnation and may also have contributed to the rise of the legend of Luke as an artist. Undeniably, the icons that were attributed to the Evangelist depicted the Incarnation, and over time, that composition was accepted as having originated with Luke.

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<sup>291</sup> Leslie Brubaker, 'In the beginning was the Word: Art and Orthodoxy at the Councils of Trullo (692) and Nicaea II (787)', in *Byzantine Orthodoxies*, ed. by Louth and Casiday, pp. 95-101.

<sup>292</sup> The term 'symbol' has been deliberately chosen. In this thesis a 'symbol' belongs to what is represented. A 'sign' refers to something outside of itself. See: Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 217.

<sup>293</sup> Canon eighty-two, Quinisext Council, ed. by Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. II, pp. 62-63.

<sup>294</sup> Brubaker, 'In the beginning was the Word: Art and Orthodoxy', pp. 95-101.

<sup>295</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 61.

<sup>296</sup> Germanos I, *De synodis et haeresibus*, PG 89, 80-81.



On balance, therefore, it is likely that the legend that Luke had been a painter existed before Andrew of Crete first mentioned the story. Early Christians had concerns regarding icons and relics, which may have prompted a story to emerge that could resolve unanswered questions upon which their faith relied. It is impossible to determine exactly what provided the spark for Luke to be described as a painter. Although correlation does not imply causation, there was an aura surrounding images that would have been conducive to the development and acceptance of the story that the Virgin and Child had sat for a portrait. The criticism expressed by Hyppolète Delehayé that unbelievable legends are an obstruction to understanding antiquity is wrong; they are valuable resources that offer an insight into history.<sup>297</sup> Analysing the story with a view to why it may have developed has drawn attention to the attitudes of the early Christians towards icons and relics, in particular the importance they placed on guaranteeing the origins of devotional objects. Arguably, as a historical source, the legend that Luke was a painter can most effectively be used to further our understanding of Early Byzantine attitudes towards artists who were, like the Evangelist, responsible for icons. This is because, as an invented and ancillary aspect to the Evangelist's biography, Luke was deliberately chosen and therefore clearly reflects what characteristics the Byzantines wanted and believed the ideal artist should have.

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<sup>297</sup> Hyppolète Delehayé, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. by V. M. Crawford (London: Longmans, 1907; repr. Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1974).

## CHAPTER TWO

### ST LUKE AS THE IDEAL ARTIST

Scholars have often ignored Luke as an individual when charting, analysing, and explaining his legend. But in taking the Evangelist and his role as a painter as a focal point, it becomes clear that he was deliberately chosen as the first portrait painter of the Virgin and Child. Luke was not the only individual before the ninth century said to have painted a portrait of Jesus. But it is he whom later writers credited with having painted certain icons, allowing the legends of other artists to fall into obscurity. The fact that Luke was promoted as a painter instead of these other artists indicates that it was the characteristics particular to his life and circumstance that made him, like the art he produced, an ideal model in the eyes of the Early Byzantines.

This chapter will explore the three defining aspects to Luke's biography: that he was a Christian, that he was 'a doctor', and that he wrote one of the Gospels recognised by the Church. The combination of these differentiates him from other artists. The subsequent popularity of the legend that he was a painter hinged on these three points, which made the Evangelist an ideal candidate for the first artist. Although Byzantines appropriated traditions from antiquity more than they created their own, I argue that this particular 'ideal artist' was distinctly of their own making and was deliberately invented to meet their needs. In order to do so, I will show that the qualities that made Luke ideal were different to those of the ideal artist in the Classical period, and similar to the qualities of other ideal makers in Early Byzantium. Demonstrating that the legend is particular to its time and context, reinforces the point that it improves, rather than impedes, the current understanding of artists who painted icons before Iconoclasm.

Before the ninth century, a number of individuals were said to have painted the Virgin and Child, or Jesus alone, from life. Told less frequently than the legend of Luke, other artists are usually mentioned by only one surviving source. In the third century, Irenaeus criticised the Carpocratians, a Gnostic sect, for believing that one of the portraits of Jesus they owned was by Pontius Pilate.<sup>298</sup> Writing shortly after, Epiphanius, who was also incredulous of the attribution to Pilate, repeated that the

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<sup>298</sup> Irenaeus, *Contra Haeresis*, I, 25.6, PG 7, 685.

Carpocratians owned numerous images made from different materials including one painted whilst Christ was alive.<sup>299</sup>

Two texts, both written in Syria in the fifth and sixth centuries, mention other artists. The earliest is the version of the story about the image of Edessa, in which the author introduced to the legend a painter called Hanan.<sup>300</sup> The second Syriac text, the apocryphal *Narrative of Events Happening in Persia on the Birth of Christ*, dated to the late-sixth century, refers to an anonymous artist.<sup>301</sup> The *Narrative* chronicles that while in Bethlehem, the Three Magi ordered a ‘servant skilled in painting from life’ to paint Jesus’ portrait.<sup>302</sup> It was said that this icon was then placed in a temple and inscribed with a line dedicating it to God from Persia.<sup>303</sup> Similarly anonymous is the sculptor responsible for a group of brass statues erected in the centre of the Palestinian town of Pnias, which represented Christ curing the Haimorrhissa, a woman who had bled for twelve years. The statue was described in the fourth century by Eusebios in his *Ecclesiastical History* as a ‘likeness of Jesus’.<sup>304</sup> It was believed to have been made during Jesus’ lifetime, but Eusebios did not specify that it had been modelled from life. The monk, historian, and theologian Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-410) credited the sculpture with magical properties when he translated Eusebios’s text into Latin.<sup>305</sup> Rufinus wrote that a plant grew at the base of the statue, which had the ability to heal, a power that was a result of its direct contact with the sculpture of Christ.

The seventh-century *Vita* of St Pankratios names a man called Joseph as a painter.<sup>306</sup> The story is that St Peter asked Joseph to copy an icon of Jesus, and paint portraits of Pankratios and himself. The *Vita* hints at Peter’s motivation: for the portraits to show their faces to the faithful, to guarantee the Word, and provide examples of images that could decorate churches. The legendary account obviously projects the seventh-century practices of using and producing images in Byzantium onto the

<sup>299</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, I, 2, 6.9, PG 41, 373C.

<sup>300</sup> *Doctrine of Addai*, text with trans. by Phillips, p. 5.

<sup>301</sup> Julius Africanus (spurious), *Narratio de rebus Persicis*, PG 10, 97-108.

<sup>302</sup> Julius Africanus (spurious), *Narratio de rebus Persicis*, PG 10, 108A: Ἐχοντες δὲ μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν εὐφυῆ παῖδα ζωγράφον; trans. in ANF, vol. VI, p. 130.

<sup>303</sup> Julius Africanus (spurious), *Narratio de rebus Persicis*, PG 10, 108A.

<sup>304</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 18: τοῦτον τὸν ἀνδριάντα εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φέρειν ἔλεγον.

<sup>305</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia, *Auctores Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 7, 14 (Basiliae: [n. pub.], 1539) (repr. in Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 256\*).

<sup>306</sup> *Vita S. Pankratios of Taormina*, extracts in *Sbornik Otdelenija Russkogo Jazyka i Slovesnosti Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk*, ed. by Veselovskij.

apostolic age.<sup>307</sup> This particular narrative was woven into the biography of Pankratios to defend icons in response to heightened concerns and criticisms regarding the use of images at the time it was written. The author deliberately ‘quoted’ Peter to assert that religious portraits were useful tools for Christians, because they could be used to reinforce belief and act as reminders of the particular figure represented. Peter’s words both approve of the use of images and consent to the actions of Joseph, thereby functioning in the same way as the narrative concerning Luke. Another similarity with the story about Luke as a painter is of the materials said to have been used by the artist. In both legends, the painters are recorded as having used encaustic technique to make the religious portrait. A key difference between the passage from the *Vita* of Pankratios and those that describe Luke as an artist is that unlike Joseph who painted from memory, the Evangelist painted from life.

After Iconoclasm, an Armenian monastery asserted that an icon it owned was by the apostle John.<sup>308</sup> Armenia was, from the fourth century, an area of particular opposition to images, so it is unsurprising that a legend of an apostolic artist that could be used to defend icons in Orthodoxy developed there. The legend features in a text attributed to Moses of Khorene (c. 410-c. 490), who described the thaumaturgic, or miracle-working, properties of the icon painted by John.<sup>309</sup> The actual date of the text is unknown, but Bacci suggested that it was probably written in the eighth or ninth century. In this version, John painted the Mother and Child on a piece of wood taken from the Holy Cross.<sup>310</sup> In both his Gospel and Epistle, John wrote that he had seen Jesus, which may have given credibility to a story that he had also painted His portrait.<sup>311</sup> It may also have meant that the icon that was attributed to John could be trusted as a true likeness. In the story, the icon first displayed its thaumaturgic qualities when it was taken to the Virgin so that She could use it to intercede on behalf of the public of Jerusalem who were beset by a plague. It was later given to comfort the apostle Bartholomew, who was saddened that he had not witnessed the death of the Virgin. Bartholomew then took the icon to the Persian city of Khorasan, where he used

<sup>307</sup> Robert Grigg, ‘Byzantine Credulity as an Impediment to Antiquarianism’, *Gesta*, 26, 1 (1987), 3-9 (p. 5).

<sup>308</sup> Text in French trans. in: Tamar Dasnabedian, ‘L’histoire de l’icône de Hogeak Vank’. Une attribution à Moïse K’ert’ol’, *Handes Amsorya*, 107 (1993), 149-66. Part text in Italian trans. in: Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>309</sup> Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, pp. 188.

<sup>310</sup> Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista*, p. 187.

<sup>311</sup> For example: John 1.34.

it to drive out demons and spread Christianity. The Hogeak Vank monastery was erected to commemorate this event, the life of the Virgin, and to house the icon.<sup>312</sup> For the monastery, owning a portrait by an Evangelist meant that it was a *locus sanctus* and linked the Armenian Church to the apostolic period. If Bacci's dating is correct, the text was written after Andrew of Crete wrote his treatise in which Luke was described as a painter. Similarities between these two legends suggests that the idea that Evangelists had been artists was widespread from the eighth century.

These examples show that between the third and the ninth centuries, several different individuals were believed to have painted an authentic portrait of Jesus. Arguably, for two Evangelists, John and Luke, to be named and recorded at a similar time in texts is not coincidental. The primary reason that they were chosen was that they were both Christians. It was important for the first artist to be a Christian because it meant that the soul of the artist was pure. As such, the viewer could trust that the artist had contemplated and communicated with the archetype of the subject and depicted him or her truthfully.

Substantial textual evidence supports the argument that artists who painted religious images ought to be Christian. Theodore Lector's *Ecclesiastical History*, however, includes a story about a non-Christian artist painting an image of Jesus.<sup>313</sup> The artist was working for a pagan aristocrat who wanted a portrait of the pagan god Zeus. As state law prohibited paganism, the artist depicted the god as Jesus to avoid punishment and please the patron. But in doing so, and as a supposed consequence, the artist's hand withered. The most common 'punishment' for craftsmen, in response to a variety of offenses, was for their hands to be paralysed. In the *Vita* of St Habib, for instance, the author, John of Ephesus (c. 507-586 or 588), described an incident when two girls refused to pay their art teacher, and were disabled by the saint for their wrongdoing.<sup>314</sup> The story recounted that the art teacher, a poor widow, explained her situation to Habib, who wrote a letter to the pupils instructing them to pay her the fee. Failing to do so, one of the pupils was rendered speechless, and the arm of the other withered and could not move.

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<sup>312</sup> Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista*, p. 189.

<sup>313</sup> Theodore Lector, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 15, PG 86a, 173.

<sup>314</sup> John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, I, *Life of Habib*, text with trans. by Ernest Walter Brooks (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923).

Clearly, Byzantine writers identified the craftsman's 'hand' as responsible for the art. The connection must have meant that when faced with an object or work of art, the viewer recognised that an artist lay behind the work. In reference to icons, the identity of artists may have been more important because their products were so powerful. A passage from the *Chronicle* that goes by the name of Theophanes the Confessor (c. 760-817), implies that this was indeed the situation.<sup>315</sup> It records how, in 507, a public uprising was caused by a Manichean painter who painted religious scenes unrecognisable to the faithful. The public revolted because the paintings did not match their expectations. The alien appearance was attributed to the ethnicity of the painter, a Syro-Persian Manichee; the religious beliefs of the craftsman had a direct impact upon the work he produced. Significantly, this suggests that, to a degree at least, artists were seen as inherent to works of art. This is why the faith of artists mattered. Religious authors identified Manichees and pagans, for example, as undesirable artists, implying that they had considered who 'ideal artists' were too.

The first artist to paint the Virgin and Christ needed to be a believer. Further, the legend surrounding the artist also had to be credible if it was to guarantee the accuracy of the portraits they painted. In other words, the ideal artist had to be chosen from individuals who were known to have been in the presence of the Virgin or Jesus at some point in their lives. This limited the number of candidates for the role. The story that an Evangelist painted Jesus from life did not conflict with the information contained in the Gospels that were received by the faithful as fact. The Gospels proved that Luke and John were contemporaries of Jesus who had direct or indirect contact with Him. Because of this, portraits attributed to one of the two were based on what they had seen or heard and were therefore 'authentic'; they were not based on their imaginations and thus 'false'.

In his biblical texts, John affirmed that he had 'seen' Jesus and described His face as 'full of kindness and honesty'.<sup>316</sup> Luke did not say that he had seen Jesus, and it seems unlikely that he did. There are two possible reasons that this did not prevent the legend of Luke flourishing. Firstly, Luke's Gospel included parables and details not

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<sup>315</sup> Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia, Anno Mundi 5999*, ed. by Carl de Boor, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883-85; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1980), vol. I, pp. 140-50.

<sup>316</sup> I John 1.1. John 1.14. John 1.29.

found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or John. The stories related in Luke's Gospel offer a more comprehensive description of the lives of Mary and Jesus than in John's. This could be interpreted as evidence that Luke had known about the lives of the two better than John had, despite not having been in direct contact with them. The wide debate surrounding whether Luke wrote the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles is broadly irrelevant to my thesis, but the current view is that he wrote neither.<sup>317</sup>

Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* suggests there was an open questioning as to who wrote parts of the Bible in the second century, but the Orthodox Church generally attributed the two texts to Luke.<sup>318</sup> In part, this was based on hagiographical texts about the lives of the Evangelists, in which they were identified as the authors. These *Vitae* flourished from the end of the second century. Eusebios for one, compiled their biographies based on the identities invented by Papias of Hierapolis (second century), Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150?-d. before 215). These contained details of their lives that supported and confirmed that they had composed the Gospels.<sup>319</sup> In texts written by John of Damascus and Germanos, Luke's authorship of the Gospel was emphasised, indicating that the Byzantines generally accepted that he had written it.<sup>320</sup>

The language Luke used in his Gospel may have made him a more ideal artist than John. In the texts attributed to him, the sense of sight is a recurrent and predominant motif. There are in his Gospel, for instance, frequent references to words related to seeing and observing, suggesting that the sense of sight was important to him.<sup>321</sup> Arguably, the sight-orientated nature of Luke's Gospel could also be used to support the idea that he was an artist. This was because the language that he employed could have suggested that he was preoccupied with sight, and thus inclined towards artistic activity that resulted in an object that could be seen. Therefore, based on his

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<sup>317</sup> On authorship see: Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>318</sup> Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen name Luke as the author of the *Gospel*. See also: Johannes Heinrich Emminghaus, *Luke: Text of Story and Legend by Leonhard Küppers*, trans. by Hans H. Rosenwald, *Saints in Legend and Art*, 8 (Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1967).

<sup>319</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p. 36.

<sup>320</sup> George Hamartolos, *Chronicon*, IV, 248, PG 110, 920. John of Damascus, *De Sacris imaginibus adversus Constantinum Cabalinum*, 5, PG 95, 321. *Vita S. Stephen the Younger*, by Stephen the Deacon, PG 100, 1085.

<sup>321</sup> Luke 1.1-4, 12, 29. 2.15, 17, 30, 48. 3.6. 4.20. 5.2, 8, 20, 26-27. 6.20, 41-42. 7.3, 22, 25-26, 39. 8.10, 16, 20, 28, 34-36, 47. 9.9, 27, 32, 36, 49, 54. 10.22-23, 31, 33. 11.33-34, 38. 12.54-55. 13.12, 28, 34. 14.18. 15.20. 16.23. 17.14-15, 22-23. 18.13-15, 24, 43. 19.3-7, 37. 20.13-14, 20, 27, 30-31, 42. 21.1-2. 22.49, 58. 23.8, 40, 47. 24.16, 23-24, 31, 37, 39.

authorship of the Gospel as well as its contents, it could be conceivable to the faithful that Luke had painted the first portraits.

This argument not only means that it was plausible that Luke had been a painter, but that he was favoured over other Evangelists as a candidate for the first artist. His Gospel made him an ideal artist because on the basis of the stories he told, it was assumed that out of all the Evangelists, Luke knew the Virgin and Christ most intimately. For Byzantine Christians this was crucial, because portraits were considered ‘true’ if they illustrated the inner character as well as the outer likeness of the subject. Two literary examples demonstrate this. The first is a description of how a portrait of the Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinos (205-270) was made, and was written by his student Porphyry (233-c. 306) in the third century.<sup>322</sup> The story is that the philosopher did not want his portrait to be painted, but Amelius, who wanted an image of Plotinos, went against his wishes and hired an artist by the name of Karterios. The painter studied the philosopher in secret and Amelius added the finishing touches to the image. The implication of the tale is that Amelius corrected the initial portrait because he knew Plotinos better than Karterios who had only studied his physical appearance. Before Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium, writers had explored whether a portrait could simultaneously represent the outer likeness and the inner likeness of the sitter. In the fourth century BC, Xenophon (b. c. 430 BC) wrote *Memorabilia*, in which Socrates (469-399 BC) fictitiously debated with sculptors and painters if it was possible for artists to illustrate the soul, as they could the body, and stressed that they should strive to do so.<sup>323</sup> Whether the Byzantines knew Xenophon’s text, the idea must have been important for Christians, because the faithful required religious portraits to convey spiritual likeness, as well as physical resemblance, in order for them to function within Orthodox rituals.

Written around the same time as the *Vita* of Plotinos, the apocryphal *Acts of John* described a similar narrative concerning a portrait of John the Evangelist. Here, Lycomedes commissioned a portrait of the apostle and showed it to John. As John had not seen his own face, he did not recognise himself. Moreover, he explained to

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<sup>322</sup> Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus*, 1, text with trans. by A. H. Armstrong, in *Plotinus*, 6 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1969-88), vol. I.

<sup>323</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, III, 10.1-5 (Socrates in discussion with Parrhasius), III, 10.6-10 (Socrates in conversation with Cliton), text with trans. by E. C. Marchant, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1923; repr. 1959).



Lycomedes that because the artist had portrayed his physical body and had failed to depict his inner self, it was not a true likeness.<sup>324</sup> Both of these stories stress that the inner essence and outer appearance of the sitter had to be painted in order for the portrait to be accurate. Images of religious figures that failed to do so were false images and, according to Eusebios, unlawful for Christians.<sup>325</sup> From the story in the *Acts of John*, it appears that the rhetorical question allegedly posed by Socrates in *Memorabilia* was no longer the preserve of abstract philosophical enquiry, but fundamental to the icon.<sup>326</sup> A portrait needed to capture both the person and their physical appearance. This totality was understood by Jerome, who wrote that in the company of Jesus, the apostles saw both His material body that was visible to them as well as His immaterial nature that was not.<sup>327</sup> With respect to icons, the faithful relied on the idea that they portrayed the sitter completely, not just his or her ‘fleshy image’.<sup>328</sup> A requirement of the ‘ideal artist’ therefore, was that he had seen and known the Virgin and Jesus, as Luke had, because it meant that the portraits he painted represented their image completely.

That is not to say that resemblance was unimportant; in order for an icon to perform, it was crucial that it faithfully represented its subject. This can be inferred from a description of how and why an icon of Theodore of Sykeon (d. 612) was made.<sup>329</sup> In the *Vita* of the saint, composed in 612 by the saint’s disciple George, a story explains that some monks and an abbot wanted an icon of Theodore to ensure that the blessing they received from the saint was permanent. The portrait had to be accurate in order for it to be protective, which is why the artist in the story had to see the saint. Similarly, icons of the Virgin and Child were tools central to Christian practice. It was imperative that the first portrait had been painted from life. Andrew’s written legend of Luke corroborates this because he specifically described the Evangelist as *zographos*, ‘the one who paints *from life*’.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Prochoros, *Acts of John*, 28, ed. by Lipsius and Bonnet, in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. II, 2 parts, part 1, p. 166; trans. by Montague Rhodes James, in *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924; repr. 1966), p. 233.

<sup>325</sup> Eusebios, *Epistola ad Constantiam Augustam*, PG 20, 1545-46.

<sup>326</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, III, 10.1-5.

<sup>327</sup> Jerome, *Breviarium in Psalmos*, Psalmos 15, PL 26, 856-63.

<sup>328</sup> Dagron, *Décrire et Peindre*, p. 26.

<sup>329</sup> *Vita S. Theodore of Sykeon*, 139, by Georgius Presbyter, ed. with trans. by André Jean Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, SH, 48 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970).

<sup>330</sup> Andrew of Crete, *De Sanctorum Imaginum Veneratione*, PG 97, 1304.

What made Luke different from all other artists who were said to have painted the Virgin and Christ from life was that he was a ‘beloved physician’.<sup>331</sup> His role as a doctor has not yet been linked to his role as an artist in scholarship. However, the observational skills that were associated with the profession clearly made him the most suitable and ideal artist. The position of doctors in society was not necessarily equal to the position they hold today. The author of the seventh-century *Miracles* of St Artemios (d. c. 362) made critical remarks about physicians, but earlier writers, such as Eunapios of Sardis (b. 345/6 or 349-d. after 414), admired them and praised their ability to heal the sick.<sup>332</sup> It was not because of any associated status that this aspect of Luke’s life made him trustworthy or ideal. Rather, it was the skills linked to his vocation that were relevant to the first artist.

As a doctor in the first century, the Evangelist would have been trained to rely on empirical observation to make diagnoses and prescribe medicines. On the basis that he was skilled in noticing visual details, it may have been assumed that he could be relied upon to produce an accurate portrait. Of course, healing practices in Early Byzantium were different to those of the apostolic time. In the intervening period, Galen (d. c. 200) created a medicinal system that was critical of empirical methods and fundamental to the practice in Alexandria, the centre of medicine until 642 when it was overtaken by Constantinople.<sup>333</sup> Galen accepted Orthodox Christianity, and theologians accepted the Galenic system.

Aside from how Luke was believed to have been trained as a doctor, how he cured the sick may also have contributed to the idea that he was a painter. For the Byzantines, the distinction between religion and science was blurred, and in the sixth century, Alexander of Tralles (525-605), himself a doctor, instructed physicians to prescribe amulets to cure ailments such as fever, colic, and gout.<sup>334</sup> Relics were used for their medicinal properties: Prokopios of Caesarea (sixth century) related that the remains of martyrs cured a painful knee infection that afflicted Emperor Justinian,

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<sup>331</sup> Colossians 4.14.

<sup>332</sup> Eunapios of Sardis, *Lives of the Philosophers (Ionicus)*, 499.2-3, text with trans. by Wilmer C. Wright, in *Philostratus and Eunapius: The Lives of the Sophists*, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1921; repr. 1961).

<sup>333</sup> Oswei Temkin, ‘Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism’, *DOP* 16 (1962), 95, 97-115.

<sup>334</sup> *Alexander von Tralles: Original-Text und Übersetzung nebst einer einleitenden Abhandlung: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Medicin*, ed. by Theodor Puschmann, 2 vols (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1878-79), vol. I, pp. 571-73. Temkin, ‘Byzantine Medicine’, p. 110.

which physicians had been unable to treat.<sup>335</sup> If this were common practice, then it would have been easy for the faithful to rationalise that perhaps one of the reasons that Luke painted portraits of the Virgin and Jesus, was as part of his role as a doctor in curing the sick, because faith in God, materialised in icons, could heal.

His combined identities as Christian, apostle, and physician made Luke stand out and underlined the veracity of his portraits. Based on his biography, the faithful could trust that the icons he had painted simultaneously conveyed the spiritual realities and outer likenesses of the Virgin and Christ. That Luke was not based on an ideal artist who existed before him, and was held in high regard as the first painter, reinforces the idea that he was intentionally chosen.

Classical writers did not concentrate on artists and their biographies, making it difficult to identify their ideal artist.<sup>336</sup> Rather, they focussed on ideal artistry, concentrating on skills, techniques, and inventions and attributing them to particular individuals. A survey of surviving ancient texts suggests that until the fourth century BC, the social position of artists in Greece was low, because they were seen as manual labourers, and therefore members of the servile class.<sup>337</sup> The artist was further demoted by Platonic philosophy that presented art as imitation and therefore as inferior.<sup>338</sup> As members of a subordinate social class, in a mediocre profession, making inferior objects, artists' names were of little interest to upper-class authors and their audiences. Plato in particular made scathing remarks about artists, who he placed beneath poets and musicians, partly because they were paid for their work, and that the work required manual labour.<sup>339</sup> Sculptors were considered to rank below artists because their craft demanded even more physical effort. A separate criticism that related to the status of

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<sup>335</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 7, text with trans. by H. B. Dewing, in *Procopius*, 7 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1914-40), vol. VII.

<sup>336</sup> For a full list of names compiled from a range of sources: Julius Sillig, *Dictionary of the Artists of Antiquity Architects, Carvers, Engravers, Modellers, Painters, Sculptors, Statuaries, and Workers in Bronze, Gold, Ivory and Silver, With Three Chronological Tables*, trans. Rev. H. Williams, to which are added C. Plinii Secundi *Naturalis Historiae libri XXXIV-XXXVI C. 8-5 With four indexes and a preface by E. H. Barker, Esq.* (Black and Armstrong: London, 1837).

<sup>337</sup> See: Edgar Zilsel, *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Antike und des Frühkapitalismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1926). Bernhard Schweitzer, *Der bildende Künstler und der Begriff des Künstlerischen in der Antike: Mimesis und Phantasia: Eine Studie* (Heidelberg: G. Koester, 1925).

<sup>338</sup> Plato, *Republic*, II, III, IV and X. Also Plotinos, *Ennead*, IV, 3.10, text with trans. by A. H. Armstrong, 6 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1966; repr. 1978).

<sup>339</sup> Plato, *Republic*, X.

craftsmen was that art feminised men, a view expressed by Xenophon.<sup>340</sup> Artists were generally seated when working and Xenophon interpreted this as a sign of weakness, in comparison to the physical strength required for other professions. He also criticised Athenian craftsmen because they did not have a connection to the land and were denied citizenship.

Another reason that writers did not focus on the lives of artists was because art was valued on the basis of skill rather than creativity: for art rather than artist.<sup>341</sup> In Pliny's *Natural History* for example, the names of artists are secondary to the inventions they are credited with or the lineage of makers to which they belonged.<sup>342</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that Pliny's text was influential in changing the position of artists, because shortly after it was produced it appears that the Hellenic élite became increasingly interested in both art and artists. Simultaneously, artists started to publish texts about the materials they used, which also helped to establish a more respectable position for their profession in Graeco-Roman society.<sup>343</sup> Their explanations of techniques displayed self-awareness, as well as a desire to assert ownership of their inventions. Some artists did become famous and amassed great wealth, but they seem to have been the exception.

Generally, texts show that artists were celebrated and berated in equal measure by Classical authors.<sup>344</sup> The apparently fluid perception of artists, as either heroes or villains, however, cannot be charted to represent peaks and troughs in their popularity. Different writers working at the same time addressed artists either favourably or unfavourably. On the one hand, artists were championed for their ability to accurately represent nature; on the other, this verisimilitude was criticised, as it was seen as a form

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<sup>340</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 4.1, text with trans. by E. C. Marchant, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1923; repr. 1959). See: Paul Veyne, 'The Roman Empire', in *A History of a Private Life*, ed. by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987-91), vol. 1: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. by Paul Veyne (1987; repr. 2003), pp. 5-234 (pp. 117-37). Alison Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 27.

<sup>341</sup> Philostratus, *Imagines*, text with trans. by Arthur Fairbanks, in *Philostratus Imagines; Callistratus Descriptions*, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1931; repr. 1960). Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (London: Random House, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>342</sup> Pliny, *NH*, xxxv, 16 (Cleanthes invented drawing an outline), 42 (Mico I invented black ink), 122 (Aristides invented encaustic technique). See: Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p. 22.

<sup>343</sup> On the celebration of painters: Pliny, *NH*, xxxv, 58-59.

<sup>344</sup> For assessment see: Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, pp. 38-45.

of trickery intended to rival the ability of the gods to create.<sup>345</sup> Indeed it was on this basis that the early Christian authors Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian (c. 160-c. 225) criticised artists, as did Eusebios, attacking those who attempted to depict the divine with substance, saying that in such a way they could deceive the eyes of the beholder.<sup>346</sup> In the sixth-century *Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite echoed their words, warning that portraits of divine beings in human form could mislead those who saw them, and distract the viewer from considering the spiritual realities they were meant to symbolise.<sup>347</sup>

The ideal artist in the Classical period, if there was such a concept, adhered to rules regarding form, order, and balance and was celebrated by authors for applying rules and inventing techniques. Unlike poetry and music, painting and sculpture were not products of divine inspiration. The names of Classical artists were known in Early Byzantium and writers referred to them. Significantly, they were named as common points of reference, not as ideal artists. An example is found in Gregory of Nazianzos's *Second Theological Oration*, in which Gregory recalled the ancient artists Phidias (b. c. 490 BC), Zeuxis (b. 397 BC), Parrhasius (b. 397 BC), and Aglaophon (early-sixth century BC), when he posed the rhetorical question of where nature received its artistic qualities from.<sup>348</sup> Here, Gregory answered that beauty in nature was evidence of *God's* artistic skill; He was to nature what Phidias *et al* were to ancient artists. Put simply, Gregory pinpointed God as the first in the genealogy of creators. More importantly than that, Gregory presented beauty in nature as the clearest proof of God's existence and presence.

Another Classical artist mentioned in Early Byzantine texts is Euphranor. Pliny dated Euphranor to the fourth century BC, and wrote that he excelled in many genres including painting and sculpture, and that he had written reference works on technique and the use of colour.<sup>349</sup> In the fourth-century AD, Asterios of Amaseia described a painting of the martyrdom of St Euphemia of Chalcedon (d. 303) as resembling the

<sup>345</sup> Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p. 53.

<sup>346</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Cohortatio ad Gentes*, PG 8, 136. Tertullian, *De Spectaculius*, 21-23, text with trans. by T. R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1931). Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 2.8.

<sup>347</sup> P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy*, PG 3, 141.

<sup>348</sup> Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oratio 28 (Second Theological Oration)*, 25, PG 36, 61A.

<sup>349</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXXV, 128-29.

work of Euphranor.<sup>350</sup> This oration was written to establish, promote, and consolidate the saintly status of Euphemia who had been a virgin and a martyr. Asterios's chosen literary style reflected his own education and expectations of his audience, which explains why there are both classicising and Christian elements in his text. Ruth Webb has argued that it was intended for a Christian audience, and that the reference to Euphranor was used by Asterios to control the image that was imagined in the mind of his audience.<sup>351</sup> The speech was probably delivered to a public that had not seen the image. To help the audience visualise the painting, Asterios likened it to work by Euphranor, thereby suggesting that his name was well-known to the public.<sup>352</sup> As such, Asterios could use Euphranor's name to stimulate an image in the collective mind of the audience that resembled the painting of Euphemia. In a similar way, Asterios described the grey tunic the virgin was dressed in by likening it to robes worn by philosophers and religious subjects. Here too, Asterios used a common image that the audience knew, in order to prevent them from imagining a 'false image'.

Euphranor was not an 'ideal artist', nor was he mistakenly identified as the real artist. Asterios did not refer to the actual artist by name: however he did connect the faith of the painter to the image, commenting that he was a believer.<sup>353</sup> Describing the artist in this way reinforces the point that painters of religious scenes were, ideally, Christians. Moreover, Asterios described the painter as *eusebeis* (εὐσεβής), meaning 'pious', stressing that the artist's piety was expressed through the practice of painting.<sup>354</sup> Clearly, the depiction of Euphemia was perceived to be a product of an individual who had chosen to pay reverence to the martyr using the image, as Asterios did using text.

Before the mid-sixth century, when Classical history became less familiar to even the élite, orators used Euphranor, Phidias, Zeuxis, Parrhasius, and Aglaophon to monitor the imaginations of their audiences.<sup>355</sup> This suggests that most members of society had some knowledge of these Classical artists as artists if nothing else. They were not used to enhance the status of works of art by association, because they

<sup>350</sup> Asterios, *Oratio 11*, PG 40, 336A.

<sup>351</sup> Ruth Webb, 'Accomplishing the Picture: Ekphrasis, Mimesis and Martyrdom in Asterios of Amaseia', in *Art and Text*, ed. by James, pp. 13-32.

<sup>352</sup> Webb, 'Accomplishing the Picture', p. 19.

<sup>353</sup> Asterios, *Oratio 11*, PG 40, 336B.

<sup>354</sup> Webb, 'Accomplishing the Picture', p. 27.

<sup>355</sup> On the decline of Classical knowledge see: Averil Cameron, 'The Language of Images', p. 3.

represented the Classical, not the Byzantine, ideal. The legend of Luke addressed the absence of an ideal individual who embodied the traits desired in the artist who painted religious figures, just as the icons he painted addressed the absence of primary relics of Mary and Jesus.

Luke was ideal for reasons different to those artists he followed. The idea that he was untaught, and therefore reliant on inspiration from God, distinguished him from the Classical ideal in particular, and contributed to what made him ideal in a Christian context. In the Bible, the apostles were described as untrained and unschooled. John, for example, was believed to be ignorant because he was the son of a poor fisherman.<sup>356</sup> The implication was that because of their upbringing, they could not have composed their Gospels by themselves. The faithful believed that the Evangelists had overcome literary ineptitude because God had aided them. This is certainly how Eusebios accounted for the composition of the Gospels. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, he wrote that they were simple men through whom the Spirit of God worked, enabling them to write.<sup>357</sup> Produced in this way, the Gospels were evidence of divine-human cooperation. This idea was rooted in Scripture, as Moses was said to have written the words that God dictated to him.<sup>358</sup> As biblical figures had written *with God*, it was also preferable for early Christian writers to have cooperated with the divine. For this reason, writers such as Augustine and Theodoret of Cyrillus asserted that they too wrote with the grace of God.<sup>359</sup>

As Luke was an untrained artist, the icons attributed to him were also evidence of divine-human cooperation. This point was stressed by Nicholas Maniacutius in the twelfth century in reference to the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon, and by Gregory of Kykkos in the fifteenth century in reference to the icon of the ‘Hagiosoritissa’.<sup>360</sup> In these two versions of the legend, an angel, identified by Gregory as Gabriel, completed the

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<sup>356</sup> Acts 4.3. Homilies on John 2.1.

<sup>357</sup> Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 24.2.

<sup>358</sup> Exodus 34.

<sup>359</sup> Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, VII, preface, text with trans. by George McCracken and others, 7 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1957-72). Theodoret of Cyrillus, *Philothéos Historia*, XXI: James of Cyrrhestica, 19, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. II. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p. 104.

<sup>360</sup> Nicholas Maniacutius, *De sacra imagine SS. Salvatoris* (repr. in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, pp. 321-25). Gregory of Kykkos, *Description of the Kykkos Monastery*, ed. by Chatzipsaltis, ‘Το ανέκδοτο’, pp. 51-52.

composition that Luke had started. For icons ‘made by hand’ the idea that artists cooperated with God was implicit, and was reinforced by the notion that they had not been taught. In addition, cooperation also protected the maker, in this instance Luke, from the charge of competing with God. As the following chapter will discuss in greater depth, Christians believed God to be the Ultimate Creator and so in posing as creators themselves, artists and authors could be criticised as acting as *alter dei*, or other gods. Deliberate and recorded participation between earthly creators and *the* Creator proved that the former were dependent on the latter; as such they cooperated rather than competed.

Comparing Luke’s attributes to those of artists before him exposes differences between the two. This supports my argument that this Evangelist was chosen because he had the characteristics that the first Christian artist should have, and that these qualities were indicative of those deemed important during the time in which he emerged in the role. Significantly, and in relation to other makers in Early Byzantium, there are strong similarities between Luke’s characteristics and those of ideal architects. The following chapter will concentrate on the idea that God and the emperors were ideal makers, using texts that describe them in this way.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### OTHER IDEAL ARTISTS

In the centuries before and after Andrew of Crete wrote that Luke painted images of the Virgin and Jesus with his own hands, it was customary for art and architecture to be attributed to God and to emperors.<sup>361</sup> The Bible describes sculptures as ‘fallen from Heaven’, icons as painted ‘not by human hands’, and churches as ‘built by God’.<sup>362</sup> At first glance, this attribution to God was a result of the premise that He was the Ultimate Creator and therefore responsible for everything that existed. Emperors meanwhile, were described as architects of certain buildings because they had funded their construction. Arguably, the idea that God and emperors were the ideal makers of images and builders of churches was another reason why authors described them in this way. This chapter will look at a selection of literary sources in which specific images and churches are attributed to one of these two other ideal artists. It will show that in so doing, authors could guarantee the authenticity and authority of an object or a building. The previous chapter established that Luke was described as a painter because this helped to identify which portraits of the Virgin and Child were authentic, and therefore carried authority over other images. The evidence presented here confirms that long before the outbreak of Iconoclasm, authors identified ideal Christian figures as builders and painters because their identities improved the authenticity, trustworthiness, and status of the building, object, or image they were associated with. My argument is that the legend of Luke as a painter can be seen as part of a tradition of attributing art and architecture to credible individuals who were in close proximity to God, in order to strengthen the significance of works of art for the population, and to minimise concerns regarding the efficacy, veracity, and relevance of liturgical objects and sacred spaces.

‘FOR HE CREATED ALL THINGS’.<sup>363</sup> GOD, THE FIRST ARTIST

A fundamental tenet for Byzantine Christians was that God was the Ultimate Creator. In Gregory of Nazianzos’s *Second Theological Oration*, the theologian alerted his audience to notice God’s creativity in all of nature, including the webs of spiders, the

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<sup>361</sup> Andrew of Crete, *De Sanctarum Imaginum Veneratione*, PG 97, 1304.

<sup>362</sup> Acts 19.35. II Corinthians 5.1. Mark 14.58.

<sup>363</sup> Colossians 1.16.

nests of birds, and the fruits of trees.<sup>364</sup> Here, Gregory reinforced the biblical message found in the Books of Genesis, Wisdom, and II Maccabees, that God had created everything.<sup>365</sup> Every concept and every earthly object could be traced back to God as the Creator of all things, irrespective of whether they had required human agency to be realised. Images not painted by human hands were particularly obvious examples, because they were clearly the work of God alone. Like the nature He created, portraits on cloth and impressions on stone that were described as *acheiropoietai* were made by, and more importantly proof of, God.

Dobschütz was the first to recognise that the concept of *acheiropoietai* images was not a Christian invention.<sup>366</sup> The idea that objects and buildings could miraculously appear came from Greek and Roman antiquity. Classical authors including Homer described figures as *diipeteis* (διιπετής/διειπετής), ‘things cast down by Zeus’, and Cicero described an image of the goddess Ceres as *non humana manu factum, sed de caelo lapsam*, ‘not made by human hand, but fallen from heaven.’<sup>367</sup> Christians accepted the idea that certain works of art had not been made by craftsmen, but thrown from the sky by God. Indeed, in Acts, Luke referred to the image of Artemis in her temple at Ephesus as *diipeteis*, which was in turn repeated by later authors.<sup>368</sup> Clearly, the concept of objects made without human hands was part of a longstanding tradition that was then appropriated by Christians. Significantly therefore, legends about *acheiropoietai* images must not be treated as curiosities that were only invented to mollify individuals and groups who opposed the use of images in Early Byzantium, which is how they are most often viewed in academic discourse. Rather, the earliest descriptions of miraculous portraits were written in order to justify the authenticity of certain images for the faithful.

The term *acheiropoieta* first features in a Christian context in II Corinthians: ‘For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens.’<sup>369</sup> The

<sup>364</sup> Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oratio* 28 (*Second Theological Oration*), 16, PG 36, 60C.

<sup>365</sup> Genesis 1. II Maccabees 1.24. Wisdom 1.14.

<sup>366</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 1, 263-94.

<sup>367</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 1. Cicero, *Against Verres* 2, v, 72.187, text with trans. by L. H. G. Greenwood, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1929; repr. 1959), vol. II.

<sup>368</sup> Acts 19.35

<sup>369</sup> II Corinthians 5.1.

tautology in this passage makes it clear that, for Christians, something not made with human hands was made by God. A passage taken from chapter fourteen of the Book of Mark, which narrated Jesus' death, implied that things made *acheiropoieta* were preferable to those made *cheiropoieta*, 'with hands'. The line reads: 'We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"<sup>370</sup> It was on the basis of this statement that Jesus was arrested and sentenced to death. The purpose of this biblical passage was not to establish a hierarchy between buildings made by, or without, hands. Instead, it was interpreted as a prognostication of both Christ's resurrection, and the new community of Christians who formed a collective that was in a sense a 'spiritual temple' in the place of the physical temple.<sup>371</sup> Nevertheless, the Bible clearly Christianised the adjective and, redefined in this way, objects that would later be described as *acheiropoietai* were acceptable. Moreover, because God was the implied maker, they were preferable to those made by human hands.

What is of crucial relevance here is why, besides reflecting their genuine belief that divine hands made art and built churches, authors credited God rather than specific craftsmen. With regard to portraits, I have already shown that miraculous images were promoted partly on the basis that they were by the first artist, God, and were therefore authentic and a point of contact with the divine. Buildings were also described as made by God, and demonstrate Him as an artist on a larger scale. Prokopios, for example, credited some of the sublime decoration of Hagia Sophia to the divine. In the panegyric written in praise of Justinian entitled *Buildings*, written around twenty years after the church was completed in 557, he exclaimed: 'And whenever anyone enters this church to pray, he understands at once that it is not by any human power or skill, but by influence of God, that this work has been so finely turned'.<sup>372</sup> For Prokopios, the beauty of the church excelled what humans were capable of producing and could be traced to God's hands. This meant that the church was evidence of God for the faithful, which is how Gregory of Nazianzos had presented nature.

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<sup>370</sup> Mark 14.58.

<sup>371</sup> Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>372</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.61: ὁπνίκα δέ τις εὐξόμενος ἐς αὐτὸ ἴοι, ξυνήσι μὲν εὐθὺς ὥς οὐκ ἀνθρωπεῖα δυνάμει ἢ τέχνῃ, ἀλλὰ θεοῦ ῥοπῇ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο ἀποτετόρνευται.

In addition to God, Prokopios named some of the other individuals responsible for Hagia Sophia, including the patron Emperor Justinian, and the two architects Isidore of Miletus (d. before 558) and Anthemios of Tralles (d. before 558). Clearly, the author was interested in the identities of those who had helped build the church. Indeed Prokopios's words may simply reflect the 'truth' that God brought everything from non-existence into existence. However, with particular reference to Hagia Sophia, it seems that God was deliberately mentioned in order to enhance the status of the church. In implying that He played an active role in the decoration of Hagia Sophia, it connected the physical church to the holy realm. The association with God was vital in raising the church from the status of religious structure to a *locus sanctus*, or destination to which Christians could travel and be in a space where He had been active, and therefore have direct contact with Him. It seems that the identity of the architect determined a building's primacy, power, and prestige, and that it was for this reason that they were attributed to particular individuals who were considered to be ideal.

#### THE EMPEROR AS BUILDER

In Early Byzantium, buildings were attributed to emperors primarily because they had paid for them. Authors often wrote that particular emperors 'built' a church, 'conceived' of its construction, or were 'responsible' for its execution. This is how, for instance, Eusebios wrote of Constantine I (Augustus from 306), Prokopios and Theophanes wrote of Justinian I, and how Leo Grammatikos wrote of Tiberios (d. 582).<sup>373</sup> Emperors were consistently described as architects, whether in texts written with the obvious purpose of extolling the virtues and skills of an emperor, or those written in praise of a building's design. Regardless of the author's primary motivation, and in spite of the centuries that separate the sources, there is a perpetual absence of the names of the individuals or groups of individuals who physically constructed the church, contributed to its decoration, or adorned its interior. This is in keeping with other sources, in which the individuals responsible for the design, execution, and completion of objects are anonymous. Emperors were presented as architects because they patronised construction, but another aspect beyond this was that it was preferential

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<sup>373</sup> For example: Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, *Anno Mundi* 6058, ed. by de Boor, vol. I, pp. 241-42. Leo Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn: E. Weber, 1842), pp. 137-38.

to link buildings to imperial figures. Arguably, in describing the emperor as an architect, authors deliberately attributed buildings to ideal architects, in addition to following a literary standard.<sup>374</sup> This chapter will now explain that emperors were ideal because of their close association with God and significant position in society. Identities of makers were important. They were significant for both contemporary and future Christians: they validated the ‘new’ and gave authority to the ‘old’. The example of the emperor as an architect reaffirms the significance of ideal makers in Early Byzantium.

As I have already argued, in relation to artists, it is important to clarify that, in the Early Byzantine period, ‘ideal architects’ were different to ‘real architects’. To highlight these differences, what is known about the profession must first be made clear. A distinction was made between the *mechanikos* (μηχανικός), and the *architekton* (ἀρχιτέκτων), and between the types of builder. Nadine Schibille offered a precise definition of the architect in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium and showed that the public understood the role.<sup>375</sup> Working from textual evidence, such as Pappos of Alexandria’s (fl. c. 320) fourth-century *Collection*, Schibille explained the differences between types of architect. *Architekton* was the individual responsible for the design of an edifice and oversaw its construction.<sup>376</sup> *Mechanikos*, in contrast, was a term given to a person who was fluent in academic subjects and craft-skills, which included geometry, mathematics, and astronomy, as well as carpentry and painting.<sup>377</sup>

Education was used to differentiate between *architekton* and *mechanikos*. For the population as a whole, a person’s level of education may have determined their social status. The learning required for the profession may have meant that architects held a respected position in society, which could be why authors identified some of them by name. Zenobios who built a martyrium at Jerusalem around 336, and Rufinus

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<sup>374</sup> On the use of rhetoric and ancient literary standards by the early humanists in Italy see: Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy 1350-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), esp. pp. 1-50.

<sup>375</sup> Nadine Schibille, ‘The Profession of the Architect in Late Antique Byzantium’, *Byzantion*, 79 (2009), 360-79. See also: Glanville Downey, ‘Byzantine Architects: Their Training and Methods’, *Byzantion*, 18 (1946-48), 99-118.

<sup>376</sup> Schibille, ‘The Profession of the Architect’, p. 367.

<sup>377</sup> Pappos of Alexandria, *Collection*, VIII, ed. by Friedrich Otto Hultsch, 3 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1876-88), vol. III.

who built a cathedral at Gaza around 402, for instance, are two named architects.<sup>378</sup> Another two are the architects responsible for Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Anthemios and Isidore, who were described by the writers Prokopios and Agathias, as *mechanikos* and *mechanopoios* (μηχανοποιός).<sup>379</sup> The term *architekton*, which invariably alluded to a man, changed during the sixth century and was used flexibly to refer to the cerebral and well-educated *mechanikos*, as well as the more vocational and hands-on *oikodomos* (οικοδόμος), builder.<sup>380</sup> This information clarifies both the role of the architect in Early Byzantium and what their defining attribute was: as much as any other of their accomplishments, they were well educated.

In contrast, what was striking about emperors described as architects was that authors emphasised their *lack* of professional training. This was ideal because it meant that the buildings that were attributed to them were evidence of God, as it was assumed that a divine spirit compensated for their lack of formal training. Prokopios, for example, wrote that without any formal architectural training, the Emperor Justinian was able to solve the problem that caused the piers of Hagia Sophia to collapse.<sup>381</sup> Prokopios emphasised that, unlike the architects Isidore and Anthemios, Justinian was not a trained *mechanikos*. He had what today might be defined as ‘genius’. The emperor’s ‘genius’ was made more explicit in an anonymously written and semi-legendary description of the church, dated to either the eighth or the ninth century, which states that Justinian had built the church alone.<sup>382</sup>

Another reason that emperors were ideal architects was that they were understood to be God’s representatives on Earth. If a writer’s intention was to promote the status of a building, he could do so by attributing it to an emperor instead of, or in addition to, God, as, for example Prokopios did with Hagia Sophia.<sup>383</sup> It was implicit that all makers collaborated with God in order to create. Presented to the public as

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<sup>378</sup> Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, *Anno Mundi* 5828, ed. by de Boor, vol. I, p. 33. *Vita S. Porphyrios of Gaza*, 78, by Mark the Deacon, text with trans. by Henri Grégoire and Marc Antoine Kugener, *Marc le Diacre: Vie de Porphyre évêque de Gaza* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1930).

<sup>379</sup> Schibille, ‘The Profession of the Architect’, p. 363, n. 13, 14. Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.1, .24, .50, .71, .76. Agathias, *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum libri*, v, 6.3, ed. by Rudolfus Keydell (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967).

<sup>380</sup> Schibille, ‘The Profession of the Architect’, p. 361.

<sup>381</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.68.

<sup>382</sup> *Narratio de S. Sophia*, 26, ed. by Theodorus Preger, in *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901), vol. I, p. 102.

<sup>383</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.68.

intermediaries between the divine and the human worlds, emperors had a closer connection to God than most.<sup>384</sup> Therefore, if an emperor was named as a maker, a designer, or a builder, the final product could be viewed as a tangible display of the connection between the imperial and the holy family. Furthermore, through the relationship between the two, the product of the collaboration would have added authority and value for those that used it because it had ‘contact’ with the divine. As architects, emperors served to authenticate and guarantee the status, power, and importance of certain buildings. Texts that refer to Constantine in this way are evidence that the importance of a building was based on who was responsible for its construction. This reaffirms the likelihood that in the instance of the first portraits of the Virgin and Child, the importance of the image was also based on who had produced it.

Sources written about Constantine’s reign that describe him building churches and erecting public art, provide a rich supply of examples in which the emperor is presented as a builder or an architect for the first time in a Christian context. This became a literary standard. In his biography of the emperor, for example, Eusebios credited Constantine with the erection and decoration of buildings, shrines, and monuments. Concerning the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, for instance, Eusebios enthused about the beauty and functionality of the site and praised the choices made by the emperor.<sup>385</sup> The language Eusebios used invoked the idea that Constantine himself was responsible for all aspects of the design, which were attributed to him because he had paid for them. Of course, Constantine had little option but to commission buildings if he was to establish the new seat of the empire in the East, but Eusebios stressed that the emperor’s primary motivation was his divine passion.<sup>386</sup> So by the fourth century, the act of building, or as was more likely, paying for the act of building, was understood as a Christian performance and an outward display of inward faith. Presenting the emperor’s motivations in this way underlines the point that Byzantines understood objects and buildings as products of a religiously motivated process. A letter written by Constantine to Bishop Macarius about the construction of a church suggests that his involvement went beyond offering financial support.<sup>387</sup> The

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<sup>384</sup> Constantine as chosen by God: Eusebios, *VC*, IV, 24. Emperor as God’s agent: Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oratio* 4, 80, *PG* 35, 605-68.

<sup>385</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 29.

<sup>386</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 49.

<sup>387</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 49.

letter shows that the emperor estimated the cost of completing the church decoration and asked the bishop to employ enough workmen. In this instance at least, the emperor was involved, albeit remotely, in the practical organisation of the church's construction.

However, and importantly, Eusebios's attribution of particular buildings to the emperor was not simply a result of what might be understood as the polysemy in the Greek language, or a reflection of Constantine's minor involvement; it was intended to affirm the importance of specific buildings. In describing how the emperor built Constantinople, for example, he wrote that the emperor had commissioned churches, shrines, and houses, and thereby sanctified the new capital and bestowed honour upon the city.<sup>388</sup> Arguably, Eusebios deliberately attributed buildings to the emperor because they were tangible proof of Constantinople's connection to the imperial family, on which the importance of the city rested. The emperor, understood as God's representative on Earth, provided the link to the divine world that granted a building, as well as the place it was located, its primacy. Conversely, the identities of the architects who designed buildings on behalf of the emperor, as well as those who physically erected them, would not have had an impact on a building's significance or raised the status of the city. Thus, a church attributed to a real architect, or more bluntly a commoner, was less important than one attributed to an ideal architect, the emperor.

For Eusebios, visual symbols, such as a cross, were able to consecrate and protect the new city if they were made by the emperor. It seems likely that the attribution to Constantine of the elaborate and richly adorned cross in the centre of a ceiling in the imperial palace was done in order to support the idea that it had the power to act as a phylactery, or charm.<sup>389</sup> The cross, 'by the emperor', like the image 'not made by human hands', and portraits 'by Luke', contained power because of who was believed to have made them, especially as tradition held that Jesus appeared to Constantine in a vision, showed him an image of a cross, and told him to paint it on his army's shields.<sup>390</sup> The legend attached to the *labarum*, standard, which Constantine then had reproduced, assured the authenticity and authority of the symbol, reaffirming once again the importance of these themes in Early Byzantium.

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<sup>388</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 48.

<sup>389</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 48.

<sup>390</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, I, 28-32.



The early-seventh-century *Paschal Chronicle* also records the construction of Constantinople, and echoes Eusebios's assertion that the emperor was responsible for the building of the city. It attributes many architectural features to the emperor, partly to remind Byzantines that the city was connected to the holy family through the identity of its founder.<sup>391</sup> The buildings that the emperor commissioned were not simply architectural landmarks, they were incorporated into the cults of Constantine, Constantinople, and of the empire itself, that survived through written and oral tradition for centuries. The *Paschal Chronicle* demonstrates that the idea of emperors as architects was still important in the seventh century.

Literary examples of emperors as architects are not restricted to the reign of Constantine. Prokopios attributed the rebuilt Hagia Sophia to Justinian because the emperor secured the church's importance.<sup>392</sup> This association then secured the emperor's own legacy, which was another motivation behind financing buildings.<sup>393</sup> Status worked in two ways: a building accrued rank because it was associated with a particular person; in return, a person accrued status because he or she was associated with a particular building. In part, Justinian was celebrated as responsible for many practical and decorative elements as well as the broader architectural plan, because he was ideal. Prokopios presented Justinian as responsible for sponsoring the project and for applying intellectual sense and moral values to the design of the church.<sup>394</sup> Accounts related to Hagia Sophia are particularly interesting because they closely correspond to the biblical tale of Solomon, thereby placing designing, planning, and building a sacred space within a Christian framework.

On completion of Hagia Sophia, Justinian was said to have exclaimed: 'Solomon, I have outdone thee.'<sup>395</sup> R. M. Harrison suggested that the church could have been refurbished in reaction to the church of St Polyeuktos, also in Constantinople.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> *Chronicon Paschale*, PG 92, 527-30.

<sup>392</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.27.

<sup>393</sup> On patronage see: Robin Cormack, 'Patronage and New Programs of Byzantine Iconography,' in *The 17<sup>th</sup> International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers: Dumbarton Oaks/Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., August 3-8, 1986*, International Congress of Byzantine Studies (New Rochelle, NY: A. D. Caratzas, 1986), pp. 609-38. Cutler, 'Art in Byzantine Society', pp. 759-87.

<sup>394</sup> Prokopios of Caesarea, *On Buildings*, I, 1.67.

<sup>395</sup> *Narratio de S. Sophia*, ed. by Preger, in *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, vol. I, p. 105: ἐνιχησίτ σε, Σολομών.

<sup>396</sup> R. M. Harrison, 'The Sculptural Decoration of the Church of St. Polyeuktos', in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueología Cristiana, Barcelona, 5-11 octubre 1969*, Congresso

The church of St Polyeuktos was built between 524-27 and was funded by Anicia Juliana (b. probably 461 or 463-d. 527 or 529).<sup>397</sup> An inscription inside the church included two lines of a poem, which read: '[Anicia Juliana] alone did violence to Time and surpassed the wisdom of renowned Solomon by raising a habitation for God.'<sup>398</sup> Based on these words, and similarities between the carved decoration and motifs within the church and the biblical descriptions of Solomon's own temple, Harrison argued that the patron and architects based their designs on the temple described in the Bible.<sup>399</sup> When it was built, St Polyeuktos was considered to be the most impressive church in Constantinople. Justinian was compelled to outrank it, and scholars have suggested that his reference to Solomon was in fact, an allusion to Anicia Juliana.<sup>400</sup>

Incorporating Solomon into the legendary construction of Hagia Sophia introduced a key idea to the public: emperors mimicked, and were then likened to, biblical characters. With regard to buildings, direct parallels were drawn between the emperor-architect and the story of King Solomon. In the instance of Hagia Sophia, this may have been further reinforced by the church's name, which means 'Holy Wisdom', because wisdom was Solomon's most praiseworthy attribute. In the Bible, Solomon is said to have built and decorated the First Temple, and made liturgical and church objects for its interior.<sup>401</sup> Emulating Solomon's approach to building described in the Bible, emperors were also credited with the interior decoration of churches. In a poem describing Hagia Sophia that was delivered in the presence of the emperor, Paul Silentiarios (sixth century) attributed the cornicing and lighting, for example, to

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internazionale di archeologia cristiana, 2 vols (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972), vol. II, pp. 325-26.

<sup>397</sup> Cyril Mango and Ihor Ševčenko, 'Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople', *DOP* 15 (1961), 234-47.

<sup>398</sup> *Anthologia Graeca*, I, 10: χρόνον ἧδ' ἐβήσατο μούνη, καὶ σοφίην παρέλασεν ἀειδομένου Σολομῶνος, νηὸν ἀναστήσασα θεηδόχον, οὗ μέγας αἰὼν οὐ δύναται μέλπει χαρίτων πολυδαίδαλον αἴγλην. R. M. Harrison, 'The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul and the Temple of Solomon', *Okeanos: Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 7 (1983), 276-79 (p. 277).

<sup>399</sup> Harrison, 'The Church of St. Polyeuktos', pp. 276-79.

<sup>400</sup> R. M. Harrison, 'The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople. An Excavation Report', in *Akten des VII Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Trier 5-11 September 1965*, International Congress of Christian Archaeology, *Studi di antichità cristiana*, 27 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1969), pp. 534-39.

<sup>401</sup> II Chronicles 3-4.

Justinian.<sup>402</sup> A similar, but later description of the church, attributes the marble revetments, gilded ceilings, and floor mosaics to the emperor.<sup>403</sup>

The extent of the emperor's involvement echoes the example set by Solomon. The naming of Anthemios and Isidore in descriptions of Hagia Sophia did not undermine the connection, as an architect had also assisted Solomon. The attribution to Justinian does not only reflect an established literary style that the author employed without the intention of imposing a connection between the two. Rather, it is likely that authors deliberately articulated similarities between them, especially before the relationship between the imperial and holy family was properly codified. It is also possible that emperors commissioned buildings as personal acts of imitation. In mimicking this sort of narrative, which would have been familiar to the public, emperors could present themselves as 'new Solomons'. Obviously, emperors would not have wanted to be associated with King of Israel in totality, as his empire was divided in divine retribution for the sins he committed.<sup>404</sup> However, in presenting themselves in the context of buildings as new Solomons, emperors could imply that the Byzantine Empire would prosper, be wealthy, and become very powerful, as was that of the biblical king.

In turn, elite members of society then mimicked the example set by emperors and patronised the arts. Authors described non-imperial patronage in the same way as imperial patronage: by attributing the art to the person who paid for it. Zacharias of Mytilene, for example, wrote that Marinus of Apamea, who was Praetorian Prefect, depicted Justinian in a painting at the public baths, because he had commissioned it.<sup>405</sup> A selection of pontifical examples is found in the *Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, written by Agnellus (ninth century).<sup>406</sup> The text recorded, for example, that Victor (Bishop of Ravenna between 538 and 545) made a replacement for an old wooden canopy at the altar in the church of Ursiana in the town.<sup>407</sup> This church was

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<sup>402</sup> Paul Silentiarios, *Description of Hagia Sophia*, 862, ed. by Paul Friedländer, in *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912).

<sup>403</sup> *Narratio de S. Sophia*, 15, ed. by Preger, in *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, vol. I, pp. 92-93.

<sup>404</sup> I Kings 11.9-13.

<sup>405</sup> Zacharias of Mytilene, *Syriac Chronicle*, VIII, 1, text with trans. by Hamilton and Brooks.

<sup>406</sup> Agnellus, *LPER*.

<sup>407</sup> Agnellus, *De Victore*, 66-68, *LPER*.

named after its ‘builder’, Ursus, who had been a bishop in the early-fifth century.<sup>408</sup> Again, this is an example of a building being attributed to a patron, but in this instance it was a bishop rather than an emperor who received credit. Like emperors, bishops were communicators between the spiritual and mortal spheres. The association of a bishop with a church, like Constantine’s and Justinian’s association with buildings in Constantinople, conferred power and value to the site. The site then reflected its power onto the bishop. Describing the new canopy, Agnellus connected the object to the emperor by writing that Justinian had proposed that Victor make one, adding that he gave the bishop the taxes that had been collected from Rome to finance it. This suggests that it was still beneficial for the emperor to be seen as connected to a site in some way. The local community considered the interior workmanship a collaborative product of the sixth-century bishop and the emperor. This account further reinforces the idea that emperors could bestow legitimacy and prestige onto buildings. Here, the connection to Justinian would have had the added benefit of linking Ravenna in the West to Constantinople in the East, with its associated history, stability, and traditions. A commemorative inscription inside the church only mentions Victor by name, alluding to the possibility that Justinian’s involvement was only imagined. The combination of an inscription and a portrait of Victor demonstrates his own desire to record his personal input, which may not have survived in the oral tradition as those related to imperial figures did.<sup>409</sup> In addition, they show that in the West, as in the East, individuals were conscious of the idea that publically displaying their names would ensure that they could be remembered.

In stressing the connection between emperors and buildings, authors hinted that power was not, or could not be, intrinsic to a structure but had to be imparted by its maker. This explains why the names of certain architects were given: their identities contributed to the status of the building. The converse was also true: the names of architects that did not add to a building’s status were not recorded. There are direct parallels here between how an ideal architect and an ideal artist could be used to promote the building or the painting to which they were associated. An important difference between icons and buildings was that the power contained in an icon was inherent in the subject depicted, and independent of the artist. But miraculous images

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<sup>408</sup> Agnellus, *De Victore*, 66, *LPER*.

<sup>409</sup> Agnellus, *De Victore*, 66, *LPER*.

and those painted by Luke were exceptions. They were the first images and needed to be truthful, in these instances, the person or spirit to whom they were attributed guaranteed their authority. Once these first images were accepted as 'by God' or 'by Luke', the public responded by paying greater reverence towards them, in the same way that they held churches built by emperors in higher regard than those that were not.

My examination of ideal artists and ideal architects demonstrates that Early Byzantines had an interest in who had built the churches they worshipped in and who had painted the icons they revered. The characteristics of Luke, being similar to those ascribed to emperors and distinct from previous ideals, shows that the Evangelist is indicative of the early period. The parity between the impact Luke had on icons, and the impact God and emperors had on images and buildings, in terms of guaranteeing contact between the material object and the divine, further confirm both the dating of the legend and the importance of ideal makers. The popularity of buildings, decoration, and images attributed to God, emperors, and Luke shows that the faithful accepted these ideas. The deliberate attribution of icons, buildings, and texts to ideal artists, architects, and authors has shown that the identities of makers were critical in a particular way. Early Byzantine writers were interested in makers. In this context, a reassessment of the place of real artists who painted icons before the eighth century is necessary.

**PART TWO**  
**THE REAL ARTIST**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ICONS: A TRACE OF THE ABSENT ARTIST

In Part Two of this thesis, I will present a collection of data relating to painters, including their art, the regulatory framework placed on their profession, the public for whom they produced portraits of holy figures, and their motivation for painting icons. The sources I use range from surviving works of art to legislative documents. Such disparity is inevitable, the scarcity of primary sources necessitates a broad, if a little scattered, approach. The conclusions drawn from Part One of my thesis transform the information from a miscellany of facts into a cohesive body of work that contributes to our understanding of the real Early Byzantine artist.

The first chapter of this section will analyse primary evidence for artists in the form of images. Icons, the paintings artists made and a surviving trace of their presence, serve as an obvious starting point. Indisputably produced by hand, icons are evidence that at some point, someone, somewhere, had the impulse or received an instruction to create, had the access to necessary materials, and also had the technical skill, time, and a place suitable for the entire process of production. Reversing the art historical tradition of using artists to interpret art, this chapter will begin by using art to understand artists by focussing on what is missing from icons: signatures. I will explore the possible reasons why artists did not sign their icons to show that their persistent anonymity informs, rather than inhibits, our understanding of who they were.

The earliest academic work on icons painted before Iconoclasm is characterised by description based on observation, and was often heavily influenced by the author's own flair and impression of the object.<sup>410</sup> Kitzinger, Weitzmann, and others conducted a formalist art historical approach, focussing on the style, composition, and proportions of figures depicted.<sup>411</sup> In comparing icons to each other, as well as to earlier portraits and contemporaneous secular imagery, scholars were able to date them and propose that

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<sup>410</sup> Jaś Elsner has argued that the discipline of art history is inherently, but discretely, based on the rhetoric of describing objects, see: Jaś Elsner, 'Art History as Ekphrasis', *Art History*, 33 (2010), 10-27.

<sup>411</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, 'Sinai Peninsula: Icon Painting from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century', in *Icons from South Eastern Europe and Sinai*, ed. by Weitzmann and others, pp. 7-20 (pp. 9-10). Kurt Weitzmann, *The Icon*. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*. George Galavaris, 'Early Icons from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century', in *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of St. Catherine*, ed. by Konstantinos A. Manafis (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1990), pp. 91-101.

they were produced in particular cities. Chatzidakis, for one, compared the icon of the 'Blessing Christ' to portraits in Fayyum and images of Roman officials; Kitzinger and Galavaris compared the archangels in the icon of the 'Enthroned Mother of God with Angels and Saints' (hereafter 'Enthroned Mother') to Hellenistic images; Weitzmann compared the icon of St Peter, that had been compared to consular diptychs, to Western icons and the Fayyum portraits.<sup>412</sup>

Although stylistic analysis is invaluable in terms of assigning icons to specific periods and places, it can present problems. The method stems from a preoccupation with the belief that if works of art are organised chronologically and geographically, they can be used to chart the stylistic evolution and history of art. Motivated, it seems, by a determination to secure a place for icons within that history, twentieth-century art historians incorporated into their stylistic analyses terms such as 'workshops', which are in part defined by the practices of Renaissance artists, as if to imply a ceaseless continuum between the two periods.<sup>413</sup> The term 'workshop' is problematic, and I will address the issues it raises after my discussion about icons. A fundamental dissimilarity was that unlike many Renaissance artists, fourth- to eighth-century artists never signed their work. In contrast, Early Byzantine manuscript illuminators and floor mosaicists sometimes did sign the texts they copied and mosaics they laid. Because the absence of signatures on icons stands out, I will explore what it may mean. To begin, the possibility that artists signed frames will be evaluated. The argument that artists neither signed frames nor icons is generally accepted, and Cormack has argued that this was because they were known in their communities, and therefore did not need to advertise themselves by signing their names.<sup>414</sup> Using signed mosaics and unsigned texts for comparison, I will argue that artists deliberately refrained from signing icons as an act of humility.

I will then turn to evidence of real artists in texts written between the fourth and eighth centuries. Passages from hagiographical texts, epigrams, speeches, treatises,

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<sup>412</sup> Chatzidakis, 'An Encaustic Icon', pp. 200, 206. Grabar, 'Le portrait en iconographie paléochrétienne', pp. 87-109. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, p. 117, here Kitzinger compares them to the head of Achilles in a fresco from Herculaneum. Galavaris, 'Early Icons', p. 94.

<sup>413</sup> James, '...and the Word was with God...What Makes Art Orthodox?', p. 105.

<sup>414</sup> Cormack, 'Ο καλλιτέχνης στην Κωνσταντινούπολη', pp. 45-76.



histories, biographies, and letters all include comments about craftsmen.<sup>415</sup> Generally, their names are omitted. One exception to this is the names of Classical artists, including Euphranor, who was mentioned by Asterios, and used to assist the reader or audience in imagining the image described to them. Another exception are the craftsmen who were characters within the *Vitae* of saints, like the painter Joseph who was mentioned in the *Vita* of Pankratios.<sup>416</sup> In this text, Joseph was named to aid in the telling of the story. It cannot be said that Joseph was a real artist. As with the examples of churches built by emperors, and Gospels written by God, Joseph reflects who the author imagined the artist to be, rather than who he or she actually was. The religious nature of the sources is not the only factor that complicates an investigation into artists using texts. Another problem is the language, especially when terms such as *techne* and *graphei* are used, as they have no modern English equivalents.

It is the context that determines the subject; however, as texts frequently survive in fragments and the objects they describe are since lost, this context is often as unclear as the vocabulary used. The texts that are analysed in this thesis include those which imply that an artist or a work of art is the subject. Special attention will be paid to painters and paintings. But as there are so few examples relating to artists, texts that mention other types of makers and products will be discussed as and when relevant. First, I will analyse the validity of the academic assumption that authors did not consider artists as important, and that this indifference manifested itself in the anonymity of artists in texts. Second, in light of my analysis of Luke as a painter and the intentional omission of signatures by artists, I explore the possibility that authors deliberately referred to artists anonymously to minimise the threat posed by real artists, who may have been perceived as not ideal.

A small number of surviving icons have been dated to the before the eighth century. Two examples now housed in Rome include the ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ icon and the ‘Madonna of S. Sisto’. Other examples include the icon of the Virgin and Child from Egypt as well as the collection housed at the St Catherine’s monastery. Before the eighth century, artists painted different types of religious portraits, two of which, for the

<sup>415</sup> For a selection see: *ABE*, for those dated to before the eighth century see esp. pp. 4-145.

<sup>416</sup> *Vita S. Pankratios of Taormina*, extracts in *Sbornik Otdelenija Russkogo Jazyka i Slovesnosti Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk*, ed. by Veselovskij.

purpose of clarity in this thesis, may be defined as *ex voto* portraits and relic portraits. Today, both types are included under the umbrella term 'icons'. Using one word in reference to both can lead to the assumption that they were equal in status, meaning, and function. Although this may be true from the ninth century on, it is not necessarily representative of the two in Early Byzantium, when they were designed, used, and received differently.<sup>417</sup> Thus, in the context of this chapter, it is important to make the distinction between them clear.

*Ex voto* portraits were painted throughout the early period, but relic portraits were a sixth-century development.<sup>418</sup> Visually, the central difference is that the former usually included a portrait of the donor, typically an emperor or a member of the clergy, alongside a portrait of a saint. The term *ex voto* covers a range of votive gifts that were offered as supplication or used to express thanksgiving, often in return for a saint's intercession.<sup>419</sup> An example of an *ex voto* portrait from the sixth or seventh century is the icon of St Peter [fig. 5]. Peter is identifiable by the cross of his martyrdom and keys of office held in his hands signifying him as the first apostle. Above Peter are three smaller portraits contained within medallions, the central of which depicts Christ. Either side of Him are two smaller portraits of a mother and her son.<sup>420</sup> Grouped in this way, Brubaker has argued, the image represents the Saint interceding on behalf of the mother, who has petitioned Jesus to heal her sick son. Another example of an *ex voto* icon is the 'Madonna della Clemenza', housed at S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome [fig. 6]. It has been dated to early-eighth century, specifically the pontificate of Pope John VII (705-707).<sup>421</sup> The figure depicted at the feet of the Virgin is most likely to be John VII, who had a penchant for having himself included in the paintings he donated.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 50-51. For a comparison between icons made before and after Iconoclasm see: Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>418</sup> Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, p. 36.

<sup>419</sup> Other *ex votos*: mosaics in the church of St Demetrios, Thessalonike, see: Robin Cormack, 'The Mosaic Decoration of S. Demetrios, Thessaloniki: A Re-Examination in Light of the Drawings of W. S. George', *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 64 (1969), 17-52. Offered by pilgrims see: Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*.

<sup>420</sup> Brubaker, 'Icons before Iconoclasm', pp. 1236-37. Brubaker, 'The visualisation of gift giving', pp. 41-42.

<sup>421</sup> Carlo Bertelli, *La Madonna di Santa Maria in Trastevere* (Rome: [n. pub.], 1961). Per Jonas Nordhagen, 'Icons Designed for the Display of Sumptuous Votive Gifts', *DOP* 41 (1987), 453-60.

<sup>422</sup> Nordhagen, 'Icons Designed for the Display', p. 454.



Figure 5: Saint Peter, sixth or seventh century, Constantinople, encaustic on panel, 93.4 x 53.7 x 1.25 cm, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.



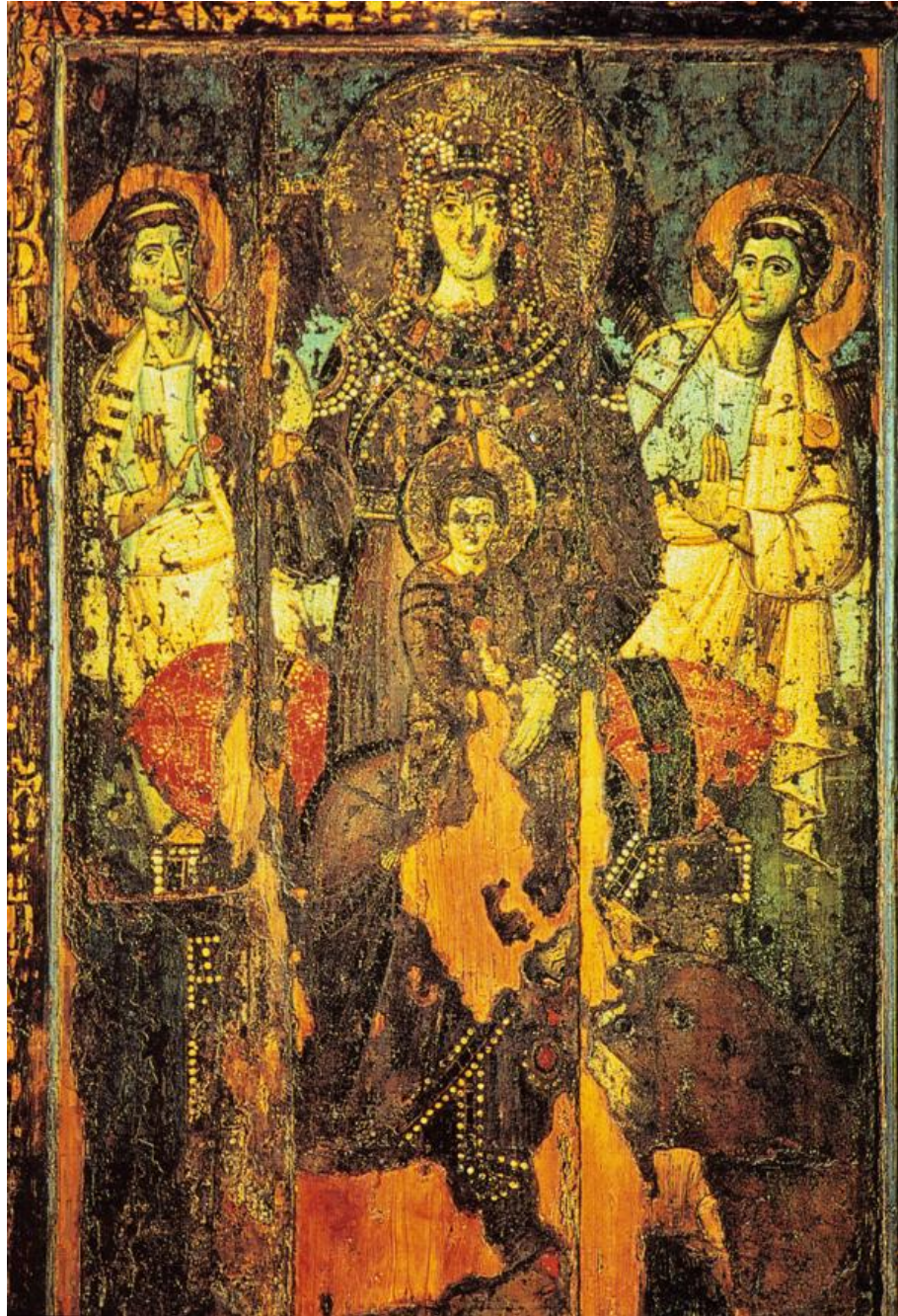


Figure 6: Madonna della Clemenza, sixth century, Rome, encaustic on panel, 164 x 116 cm, S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome, Italy.

In contrast to *ex voto* portraits, relic portraits, such as those attributed to Luke, do not include depictions of their donors. Relic portraits, in particular those said to have been painted ‘not by human hands’ such as the Kamouliaṇai, were believed to contain unparalleled intercessory and salvific powers. They were relics by virtue of who had made them: either God or Luke. In 787, the idea that a painting of a religious figure was inseparable from the sacred power the figure represented was canonised in Church law, thereby marking the beginning of equivalence between the two types.<sup>423</sup> But before this time, *ex voto* and relic portraits were different. In addition to these two types of icons, there is a third group: icons that were neither received as relics nor donated in thanksgiving. The original function and reception of these images is less clear, but setting ambiguity about the icons aside, they raise questions about the people who painted them.

The modern expectation of works of art, and by extension icons, is that they contain signatures, but icons do not. Although it is generally accepted that Early Byzantine artists never signed their work, it is worth assessing the possibility that they did, but that their signatures have not survived. Based on the damage to the outer edges of the sixth-century icons of the ‘Blessing Christ’ [fig. 7] and the ‘Enthroned Mother’ [fig. 8] at St Catherine’s monastery, Weitzmann proposed that originally, they were framed, and that these frames carried inscriptions.<sup>424</sup> The inscriptions could have related to the figures depicted, the donor, or even the name of the artist. The scarcity of icons makes it difficult to substantiate the proposition that artists signed frames, but the idea may be approached if with caution.

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<sup>423</sup> *Horos*, Seventh Ecumenical Council, ed. by J. D. Mansi, in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio* (Florence-Venice: [n. pub.], 1759-98; repr. Paris: Welter, 1903-27), vol. XIII, pp. 373-79. Discussed in: Marie-France Auzépy, ‘L’iconodoulie: défense de l’image ou de la dévotion à l’image?’, in *Nicée II, 787-1987*, ed. by Boesplug and Lossky, pp. 157-65. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>424</sup> Weitzmann, *The Icon*, pp. 40, 42. Literature on ‘Blessing Christ’: Chatzidakis, ‘An Encaustic Icon’, p. 206. The sixth-century date is broadly accepted. Kitzinger dated it to the seventh century: *Byzantine Art in the Making*, pp. 120-21. Sotiriou and Sotiriou dated it to the thirteenth century: *Icones*, vol. II, p. 161. *Holy Image Hallowed Ground, Icons from Sinai*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (Los Angeles: Getty, 2006), fig. 50, p. 52. Literature on ‘Enthroned Mother’: Sotiriou and Sotiriou, *Icones*, vol. I, p. 9. Weitzmann, ‘Sinai Peninsula’, pp. 9-10. Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 42. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, p. 118 (argues that the icon was made between the seventh and eighth centuries). John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London: Phaidon, 1997), pp. 96-99. *Holy Image Hallowed Ground*, ed. by Nelson and Collins, fig. 46, p. 48.





Figure 7: Blessing Christ, sixth century, Constantinople, encaustic on panel, 84 x 45.5 x 1.2 cm, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.





Figure 8: Enthroned Mother of God with Angels and Saints, sixth century, Constantinople, tempera on panel, 68.5 x 49.7 x 1.5 cm, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Inscriptions sometimes accompanied icons before the eighth century, but surviving ones always relate to the image, never to its painter. Early Byzantine texts that mention inscriptions alongside religious portraits support this. Epiphanius, for example, described images of the apostles and remarked that their names accompanied their

portraits.<sup>425</sup> For icons to carry inscriptions suggests that the public could not rely on a figure's likeness to recognise who was depicted, which would be consistent with Epiphanius's criticism that portraits differed. That is not to say that incompetent artists painted icons; inscriptions may have been used before Iconoclasm, as they were after, to militate against non-recognition, and remove the threat that the portrait was an idol rather than an icon. After all, this was a period when there were no conventions on how particular holy figures should be portrayed and in turn identified. So rather than reflecting artistic quality, they may reflect that artists knew that it was paramount that portraits were instantly recognisable.

Inscriptions were also used in Western churches where they accompanied pictures and portraits. Around the year 400, Prudentius (348-d. after 405) wrote a poem, the verses of which may have been composed as inscriptions that could be placed within churches.<sup>426</sup> Another poem, written in the early-fifth century by Bishop Paulinus of Nola for Bishop Nicetas (c. 366-414), justified the use of inscriptions found in the church to St Felix, which Nola had built, on the basis that they were useful for the congregation.<sup>427</sup> He explained that inscriptions could clarify to the viewer what had been painted. A clay pilgrim token from Bobbio, northern Italy [fig. 9] demonstrates the complementary use of inscription and image side-by-side.

The scene depicted on the token is of a soldier chasing a mother and child who are approaching a cave. Hovering between the two is an angel. The inscription around the circumference reads: 'Blessing of the Lord from the Refuge of St Elizabeth'.<sup>428</sup> The central scene therefore, is of the Protoevangelium legend in which Elizabeth and her child find refuge in a cave during the Massacre of the Innocents, which may not have been immediately obvious from the image.

<sup>425</sup> Epiphanius, *Testament*, ed. by Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte*, fragments 6-7, pp. 68-69.

<sup>426</sup> Prudentius, *Lines to be Inscribed under Scenes from History*, text with trans. by H. J. Thompson, in *Prudentius*, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1953), vol. II, pp. 346-71.

<sup>427</sup> Paulinus, *Carmina* 27, 512-95, text with trans. by Goldschmidt, in *Paulinus' Churches*, pp. 61-65.

<sup>428</sup> Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, p. 17.





Figure 9: Clay pilgrim token with the Flight of St Elizabeth, sixth or seventh century, Palestine, Treasury of the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Monza, Italy.

Discussing early Christian figurative mosaics, Henry Maguire has argued that the absence of inscriptions that identified particular subjects could also be deliberate, so as not to specify who was depicted.<sup>429</sup> Un-inscribed symbols, such as the lamb for instance, could simultaneously allude to Christ, a member of His flock, or an apostle.<sup>430</sup> The ambiguity of the symbol allowed viewers to interpret the lamb for themselves. The absence of an inscription meant that a symbol was not reduced down to a specific meaning. Rather, it opened up the possibility that the lamb communicated different messages at the same time, thereby enhancing the power within the image.<sup>431</sup> Regarding *ex voto* portraits, those offered as thanksgiving, Maguire explained that as the patron knew which saint was depicted, inscriptions were superfluous.<sup>432</sup> Evidently, religious images could be accompanied by inscriptions or not, depending on the aims of the patron and artist. But in no instance were they inscribed with any reference related to their painter.

<sup>429</sup> Henry Maguire, 'Eufirasiu and Friends: On Names and Their Absence in Byzantine Art', in *Art and Text*, ed. by James, pp. 139-60.

<sup>430</sup> Maguire, 'Eufirasiu and Friends', pp. 139-40.

<sup>431</sup> Maguire, 'Eufirasiu and Friends', pp. 139-43.

<sup>432</sup> Maguire, 'Eufirasiu and Friends', p. 144.

Most early images of Christ are without inscriptions.<sup>433</sup> However, in the catacombs of Petrus and Marcellinus, and Commodilla in Rome, the letters *αω* are found alongside His image. Karen Boston has argued that here, inscriptions reaffirmed that God was present at ‘alpha’, the beginning, and capable of offering salvation at ‘omega’; the end: death. In these funerary contexts, inscriptions did not identify Jesus, whose likeness was known by the viewer, but to communicate a doctrinal message that would be understood in this particular setting.<sup>434</sup> Similarly, early icons such as that of ‘Christ and Abbot Mena’ [fig. 10] and Jesus as ‘Ancient of Days’ [fig. 11], use the inscriptions ‘ΨΩΤΗΡ’, Saviour, and ‘Ε[... ]ΝΟΥΗΛ’, Emmanuel, to communicate a message rather than to label Jesus.<sup>435</sup> In contrast, inscriptions could fulfil this purpose for images of saints, and a sixth-century tapestry depicting the Virgin from Egypt illustrates how [fig. 12].<sup>436</sup> The composition of this large tapestry is divided between two registers surrounded by a border. Jesus features, without an inscription, in both the lower and upper zones of the tapestry, but Greek inscriptions do accompany the bust portraits of the twelve apostles who are depicted within medallions around the tapestry’s circumference.

Clearly, inscriptions could be used to emphasise doctrine as well as identify or confirm the identity of the subject. This was partly a result of the symbiotic relationship between words and images, which meant that a name in an inscription was equal to a face in a portrait. Dagron has described inscriptions and images as homonyms, similar appearance but different in meaning.<sup>437</sup> Meronym is perhaps more appropriate because a portrait and a name were considered to be two distinctive parts of a single whole, the archetype. So, for instance, the name of a saint, a portrait of a saint, and a living saint may look different, but the archetype of that particular saint was equally and simultaneously present within each. Semantics aside, the connection between a name, a portrait, and the archetype was properly established after Iconoclasm.<sup>438</sup> It was because of this direct relationship that images and inscriptions could be used together to confirm

<sup>433</sup> Karen Boston, ‘The Power of Inscriptions and the Trouble with Texts’, in *Icon and Word*, ed. by Eastmond and James, pp. 35-58 (pp. 37-39).

<sup>434</sup> Boston, ‘The Power of Inscriptions’, p. 38.

<sup>435</sup> Boston, ‘The Power of Inscriptions’, pp. 38-39.

<sup>436</sup> On the tapestry see: Dorothy G. Shepherd, ‘An Icon of the Virgin: A Sixth-Century Tapestry Panel from Egypt’, *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 56, 3 (1969), 91-120.

<sup>437</sup> Dagron, *Décrire et Peindre*, p. 67.

<sup>438</sup> Boston, ‘The Power of Inscriptions’, pp. 43-46.

the authenticity and accuracy of the other.<sup>439</sup> At the same time, however, this relationship meant that artists could not sign icons, as their names were not part of the archetype. If they had wanted to sign their works of art, frames could have been a more appropriate place to do so.



Figure 10: Christ and Abbot Mena, late-sixth early-seventh century, Bawit, Egypt, paint on sycamore fig wood, 57 x 57 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris, France.

<sup>439</sup> Dagron, *Décrire et Peindre*, pp. 67-68.





Figure 11: Christ as the Ancient of Days, early-seventh century, Constantinople, tempera on panel, 76 x 53.5 x 2.3, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.





Figure 12: Tapestry icon of the Virgin and Child, fifth or sixth century, Egypt, wool, slit and dovetailed tapestry weave, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, America.

If the body of material evidence consulted is extended to include mosaics, the possibility that artists signed frames seems plausible. Floor mosaics are useful for comparison, because they furnished the same religious spaces as icons. Dated to between the fourth century BC and the eighth century AD, there are around eighty

surviving Greek and Roman examples of signed mosaics. In most instances, mosaicists signed their names, followed by the Greek verb ‘to make’, *poieo* (ποιέω) in past tense, *epoieseo* (εποίησεω), or prefaced their names with ‘work’, *ergon* (ἔργον).<sup>440</sup> Inscriptions found in Jordan often use the word ‘mosaicist’, *psifothetai* (ψηφοθεται), in conjunction with a name.<sup>441</sup> Signatures pertaining to a mosaic workshop read *ex officina*, followed by a name presumed to be that of the master of the workshop.<sup>442</sup> The range of surviving examples shows that mosaicists did not adhere to strict conventions when wording an inscription. Sometimes, mosaics were signed by just one person, like Alexander, whose sixth-century signature is found in Kissufim church in the north-western Negev desert in Israel.<sup>443</sup> In other instances, many mosaicists are named. At the Old Diakonikon baptistery on Mount Nebo, near Madaba, for instance, another inscription dated to the sixth century asks that Soel, Kaium, and Elias all be remembered for their work.<sup>444</sup> In addition to signing mosaics with their own names, mosaicists sometimes included the names of their family members, or omitted names altogether, acknowledging themselves by professional title rather than personal name.<sup>445</sup> Variances in signatures show that inscriptions were personal rather than prescriptive, most importantly, they confirm that some craftsmen signed their work.

One consistent element with almost all mosaic signatures is that they are framed, usually by a *tabula ansata*, a rectangular panel, or a medallion. The presence of inscriptions within such frames indicates that mosaicists followed one rule when they ‘signed’ their work: they did so in a space outside of the decorative composition and used a border around the outside of the ‘signature’ to achieve this. Conceivably, this separation need not have been stylistic, but ideological: framed names did not interfere with a mosaic’s composition. A frame on an icon would have represented similar detachment. It can be argued that it was unacceptable for artists to sign their names on

<sup>440</sup> Martin Robertson, ‘Greek Mosaics’, *JHS*, 85 (1965), 72-89 (p. 81).

<sup>441</sup> Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, American Centre of Oriental Research Publications, 1, ed. by Patricia M. Bikai and Thomas A. Dailey (Amman: American Center for Oriental Research, 1993), p. 47. This term is less common, and is troublesome as the root is pebble, or tessera, *psifidion* (ψηφίδιον).

<sup>442</sup> Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 272.

<sup>443</sup> Michael Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung: eine Quellungsstudie* (Erlangen: Universitätsbibliothek, 1989), p. 53, A1 (repr. in Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaics: Themes, Issues, and Trends* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 246).

<sup>444</sup> Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, p. 146. Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 273.

<sup>445</sup> Mosaicists and their families see: Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaics*, pp. 244-46. For anonymous mosaicists see: Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, p. 235. Michele Piccirillo, ‘The Mosaics at Um er-Rasas in Jordan’, *Biblical Archaeologist*, 51, 4 (1988), 208-13, 227-31 (p. 208).

the icons for two reasons. The first reason is based on how the Byzantines perceived portraits, as a non-divisible part of the archetype represented. The second reason is that viewers were expected to venerate the figure depicted and not be diverted in any way from that act. Signatures would have been distracting and could therefore have been deliberately and specifically excluded. It was improper to sign icons; but frames, which were decorative and practical, could have been used as spaces on which to identify the figures depicted or artists responsible. The idea that artists signed frames is a possibility, but scholars widely agree that artists did not sign their work at all. Answers to the question of ‘why not?’ vary.

The most recent explanation is that because artists worked in towns and villages where they were known, they did not need to sign their names for posterity.<sup>446</sup> This hypothesis is supported by inscriptions found on mosaics, where the converse of the argument is true: mosaicists were strangers in the areas in which they worked and therefore included signatures so they could be identified, traced, and remembered. Two signed mosaics dated to the fourth or fifth century found at a villa at Carranque, Toledo in Spain, demonstrate this effectively. The excavated complex includes a basilica and a residential site. The villa was lavishly decorated with expensive marbles, porphyry, and mosaics; evidently the owners were considerably wealthy. The two signatures relate to two different mosaic workshops.<sup>447</sup> One is found at the entrance to the formal dining room, which has at its centre the Greek mythological scene of Achilles and Briseis. The damaged Latin signature reads: ‘*Ex officina Iu[li] Pru[...]*’, it is the work of Iulius Prudens’s workshop.<sup>448</sup> The second signature is found in a smaller room and records that the mosaic was laid by Ma...nus’ workshop (the name is damaged) and painted by Hirinius.<sup>449</sup> In addition, the inscription extends a wish for felicity for Maternus, presumably the villa’s owner.

The inscriptions at the villa in Carranque imply that the two mosaics were completed by two different workshops. This is supported by the differences in style

<sup>446</sup> Cormack, ‘Ο καλλιτέχνης στην Κωνσταντινούπολη’, pp. 45-76. Cormack, ‘Painter’s Guides’, pp. 12, 14.

<sup>447</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 155.

<sup>448</sup> Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten*, p. 94, A64 (repr. in Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 272, n. 19). See also: Dimas Fernández-Galiano, ‘La villa de Materno’, in *Mosaicos Romanos: Actas de la I Mesa Redonda Hispano-Francesa sobre Mosaicos Romanos* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1989), pp. 255-69.

<sup>449</sup> Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten*, p. 96, A68 (repr. in Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 272, n. 19).

between the two scenes: the metamorphosis scenes in the smaller room are more lively and crude than the classicising image of Achilles and Briseis. There is nothing to suggest that these mosaics were completed at different times, so it is possible that the two workshops worked simultaneously.<sup>450</sup> Although these mosaics come from the western-half of the Roman Empire, they are cited here to demonstrate that signatures were included so that workshops could be acknowledged for their work. The villa probably welcomed wealthy visitors and guests, who could see the mosaics and read the inscriptions. Therefore, they also acted to display the patron's wealth, as was done elsewhere in the villa through the use of luxurious building materials.<sup>451</sup>

The signatures on floor mosaics reflect that mosaics were laid on site; their size and function meant that they were immovable once completed. Although small portions of a mosaic could be made offsite and then integrated into the whole, it is more likely that for practical reasons the larger figures were made *in situ*. Mosaicists needed to travel and to design a scheme that would fit the already standing architectural space. Similarities between floor mosaics excavated in different cities confirm that mosaicists moved. Some mosaics found in Thebes, for example, share stylistic, iconographical, and technical qualities with collections at Delphi (central Greece) and Hypati.<sup>452</sup> Those mosaics at Delphi and Hypati are unsigned, but stylistic comparison suggests that Demetrius and Epiphanes, two mosaicists whose names are recorded in the inscriptions at Thebes, made them.<sup>453</sup> For these mobile workshops, inscriptions assisted in identifying which was responsible for particular mosaics. This is not a quirk specific to mosaics executed and subsequently discovered in Greece. Excavations in Italy have revealed similar evidence. The mosaics at Syracuse and Agrigentum in Sicily, for instance, contain African patterns and motifs, suggesting that they are probably the work of a third-century African workshop that was set up in the area.<sup>454</sup> There is considerable evidence that mosaicists travelled both independently and in groups, in response to commissions and in search of work.

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<sup>450</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 272.

<sup>451</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 272.

<sup>452</sup> Marie Spiro, *Critical Corpus of the Mosaic Pavements on the Greek Mainland, Fourth/Sixth Centuries with Architectural Surveys*, 2 vols (New York: Garland, 1978), vol. I, pp. 210-11.

<sup>453</sup> Spiro, *Critical Corpus of the Mosaic Pavements*, vol. I, p. 209.

<sup>454</sup> Robert John Anthony Wilson, 'Roman Mosaics in Sicily: The African Connection', *AJA*, 86, 3 (1982), 413-28 (p. 417, pl. 51, figs. 5-7).



Indeed the mobility of craftsmen was nothing new; in antiquity they moved to more economically active areas because they were attracted by the opportunities wealthy towns offered.<sup>455</sup> When large buildings were erected, there was a spike in demand for craftsmen that meant they were brought in from elsewhere, as in the case of the third-century construction of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome. The sheer volume of work meant that vast numbers of craftsmen from outside the city were needed to set the mosaic.<sup>456</sup> A letter from Gregory of Nyssa to Amphilochios of Ikonion (between c. 340 and 345- d. after 394), who was consecrated as Bishop of Ikonion (now Konya) around 373, demonstrates one of the ways this was done. In his letter, Gregory asked the bishop to send artisans who could complete the building and decoration of the martyrion at Nyssa.<sup>457</sup> In this instance, Amphilochios was delegated the task of organising craftsmen and sending them almost two hundred and fifty kilometres to the town. The numbers of craftsmen differed most notably between the East and West of the empire. During the fourth and fifth centuries, skilled labourers in the West migrated from urban centres, prompted by the scarcity of patrons who chose to live in rural estates. This migration hints that most craftsmen relied upon their craft to generate income.

Cormack made the point that because icons were portable, artists did not need to travel. In addition, because the wealthy did not isolate themselves from the poor, artists did not need to move for financial reasons.<sup>458</sup> Rich families and landowners preferred to live in towns, thereby providing sufficient demand for local businesses.<sup>459</sup> Furthermore, after Constantine signed the Edict of Milan in 313, the personal wealth and social status of Christians started to improve, thereby opening up a new group of individuals who were wealthy enough to sponsor the arts.<sup>460</sup> From the sixth century, individual wealth was spent on supporting religious buildings and purchasing related objects. Working in

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<sup>455</sup> Burford, *Craftsmen*, pp. 64-67.

<sup>456</sup> Jennifer Price, 'Glass-working and Glassworkers in Cities and Towns', in *Roman Working Lives and Urban Living*, ed. by Ardle MacMahon and Jennifer Price (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), pp. 167-90 (pp. 184-85).

<sup>457</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistola 25 ad Amphilochios*, PG 46, 1093-100.

<sup>458</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'Land, Labour and Settlement', in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 14 vols in 19 books (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970-2010), vol. XIV: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425-600*, ed. by Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby, pp. 315-45 (p. 328).

<sup>459</sup> A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1964; repr. 1986), vol. I, pp. 762-72.

<sup>460</sup> Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), p. 25.

communities where they were known, artists did not need to leave a signature as a trace, as mosaicists did.

However, icons did not necessarily have to remain where they were made, nor were they necessarily bought by people familiar with the artist who made them. Unfortunately, there is no data relating to the trade and movement of icons. So, it is questionable that artists did not sign icons because their public profile preserved the local knowledge of who they were painted by or where they came from. Evidence related to other materials is available and offers insights into the wider network and organisation of trade in portable objects that spanned the Byzantine Empire.<sup>461</sup> Crucially, just as objects could move, so too could artists.

Generally, trading activity was greater in the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans. Foreign trade was particularly active in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>462</sup> By the seventh century, places that were once economically active, such as Aegean Greece and Asia Minor, were losing their dominance to other regions like Armenia, which became a centre of innovation and construction.<sup>463</sup> Changes in urban centres reflected the economic climate of the seventh century, which saw the wealth of many cities reduce. Irrespective of its precise scale, there was a vibrant trade in objects between cities in Early Byzantium. It is difficult to ascertain the nature of trade, but looking at the movement of wine, wool, oil, and slipware, it seems that goods moved for both commercial and non-commercial reasons.<sup>464</sup> Evidence related to marble, used prolifically in this period, can be used to explain the two types of movement. The capitals of marble trade were Corinth, Athens, Thessalonike, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Sardis, and Constantinople. In these cities, marble was fashioned into objects for the state as well as commercial markets.<sup>465</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins offers explanations to why marble that was sourced from the quarries near Constantinople was so widely distributed. A commercial explanation is that non-imperial patrons had to purchase marble from imperial quarries such as that at Proconnesos, regardless of where they

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<sup>461</sup> See: Michael McCormick, *Origins of European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>462</sup> On commerce and trade see: Michael F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>463</sup> Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 363.

<sup>464</sup> Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 369.

<sup>465</sup> Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 358.

were intending to place the marble. The non-commercial hypothesis is that emperors offered marble from the quarry as a gift or favour.<sup>466</sup>

Icons were probably, like marble, also exchanged as both gifts and commodities. Indeed, the icon of the 'Blessing Christ' has been described as an imperial gift. Galavaris and Cormack have proposed that it was personally donated by Justinian I, who had it sent from Constantinople to the newly-founded St Catherine's monastery.<sup>467</sup> The monastery would have received the icon as both an imperial gift and as a devotional object. As such, it would have simultaneously served a political and a religious function, both of which, at that time and in that context, were more important than its aesthetic properties. It is reasonable to assume that the monastery would have received such pious gifts from its founder, but there is no firm evidence to support the hypothesis. This may be because an inscription identifying the donor was placed on a frame that has since been lost. But the fact that there is no evidence, either on the icon or in any texts, hints that this modern suggestion may stem from an institutionalised academic desire to justify and explain the icon's quality, rather than understand its actual origins. As neither commission nor contractual information survives regarding the icon of the 'Blessing Christ', the chance that it was not a gift from the emperor should also be acknowledged.

Although is unlikely that this icon was made speculatively, it is a possibility. For an artist to produce an icon of this size (84 x 45.5 x 1.2 cm) without a specific purchaser in mind would require the painter to be wealthy enough to afford the necessary materials without a sponsor. Size cannot be ignored in relation to this hypothesis, as the 'Blessing Christ' is exceptionally large and must have been both costly to make and also cumbersome to move. Therefore, if it had not been commissioned, it was probably made in the region of Sinai, either to minimise transport costs or make it more holy by virtue of the *locus sanctus* upon which it was made.<sup>468</sup> Of course, it is also possible that giving icons as gifts was not a practice exclusive to the imperial family. There is considerable evidence that pilgrims, for example, offered gifts as thanks for the cures

<sup>466</sup> Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 370.

<sup>467</sup> Galavaris, 'Early Icons', p. 91. Robin Cormack, 'Sinai: The Construction of a Sacred Landscape', in *Sinai Byzantium Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Yuri Piatnitsky and others (London: St Catherine Foundation, 2000), pp. 40-45.

<sup>468</sup> Sinai is where God appeared to Moses: Exodus 3.2, and where Moses accepted God's law: Exodus 31.18.

they received, or believed they would receive, from the sacred places and the holy people they visited. These gifts ranged from inscriptions that expressed gratitude, to valuable metal liturgical objects, and expensive jewellery.<sup>469</sup> Perhaps icons, including the 'Blessing Christ', were also offered in the same way, as the region definitely received pilgrims.

Conceivably, icons were sold in shops and at markets, known as *agora* (ἀγορά). Both of these retail outlets offered an infrastructure for trade. Descriptions of markets and tradesmen in texts both show that it was customary for craftsmen to travel to various markets to sell their wares. Writing in the fourth century, the pagan intellectual Libanios (314-c. 393) described the plethora of goods on sale, both luxurious and modest, in shops at Daphne.<sup>470</sup> He enthused about the many different streets that teemed with trade activity day and night in the city. Libanios's explanations of how markets worked are particularly useful, as he noted that tradesmen, synonymous with craftsmen, exchanged goods at markets in the city and invited each other to markets elsewhere.<sup>471</sup> Whether all craftsmen were merchants is unclear, but a story recounted in the *Vita* of St Theodore of Sykeon suggests that this was certainly true of silversmiths, *argyrokopoi* (ἀργυροκόποι).<sup>472</sup> In his *Vita*, Theodore was said to have sent his archdeacon to Constantinople to buy a chalice. The author used the same word, *argyrokopoi*, for the merchant and the craftsman, implying that it was the same person.<sup>473</sup> Another example of the merchant/craftsman may be the sixth-century voyager known as Kosmas Indikopleustes (fl. first-half of sixth century). He was a merchant from Alexandria who travelled and recorded his travels in an illustrated text entitled *Christian Topography*.<sup>474</sup> Professionally, he was a merchant, but the geographical manuscript he composed, and the accompanying illustrations that he may have drawn himself, shows that he was skilled in areas that craftsmen were, and he may well have likened himself to one.

The movement of tradesmen between markets in different cities is also shown in Theodoret of Cyrrhus's description of a fair at Imma, east of Antioch, which brought a

<sup>469</sup> Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, pp. 44-46.

<sup>470</sup> Libanios, *Oratio 11*, 251-53, ed. by R. Foerster, *Libanios: Opera*, 12 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-27), vol. I, 2 parts, part 2, pp. 526-27.

<sup>471</sup> Libanios, *Oratio 11*, 230, ed. by Foerster, *Libanios*, vol. I, part 2, pp. 517-18.

<sup>472</sup> *Vita S. Theodore of Sykeon*, 42, by Georgius Presbyter, ed. by Festugière.

<sup>473</sup> Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', p. 104.

<sup>474</sup> Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography*, text with trans. by Wanda Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, SC, 141, 159, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1968-70).

throng of traders from outside the city.<sup>475</sup> This seems to have been commonplace in seventh-century Jerusalem too, where an annual market held on 12 September drew people from different nationalities to exchange goods.<sup>476</sup> Because they attracted buyers and sellers from nearby towns and different regions, markets introduced the public to exotic art and objects from other areas of the empire and contributed to a diverse and ever-expanding visual culture. Such openness of trade was possible because there was a common currency, low internal taxes and duties, and viable transport routes. That is not to say that trade was well organised or stable; trade restrictions, taxes, and commercial conditions were repeatedly revised and altered and, in Egypt, were particularly complicated.<sup>477</sup> Markets could be temporary, occasional, or periodic, often taking place in specific areas of cities where other commercial activities were concentrated. For the artist, they were not just places where goods could be bought and sold; markets helped organise price formation, regulate those prices, and offered a space where artists could interact. If icons were traded and given in this way, and if signatures were directly linked to notions of preserving posterity, then the idea that artists were known in their communities would not have influenced whether they signed their work. Artists must have known that their icons could be sold at foreign markets because they were also tradesmen.<sup>478</sup> Exchanged outside of an artist's immediate community, icons were distanced from those who made them.

Even if icons were sold locally, the fact remains that people who purchased icons were mobile, as were those who made them.<sup>479</sup> So the explanation that artists did not sign icons because they did not need to is not wholly convincing, especially as consumers and craftsmen were not necessarily familiar with each other. The popularity of pilgrimages meant that the faithful often travelled because of their beliefs.<sup>480</sup> Artists may have embarked on journeys themselves as artists, as tradesmen, or as pilgrims. Details of pilgrimages to sites consecrated by the presence of Christ in Palestine and by the apostles in Rome, survive in documents from the fourth century, such as the

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<sup>475</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, VII: Palladius, 2, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. I.

<sup>476</sup> Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, I, 7, ed. by Geyer, *Itineraria*, p. 200.

<sup>477</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. I, p. 825. On Egypt see: Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 350.

<sup>478</sup> Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', p. 104.

<sup>479</sup> On movement over land and river see: McCormick, *Origins of European Economy*, pp. 64-82.

<sup>480</sup> On pilgrimage art see: Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*.

accounts of Egeria and the Piacenza pilgrim.<sup>481</sup> They record the distances travelled, the routes and, from the end of the sixth century, a description of the pilgrimage.<sup>482</sup> General travel literature, itineraries, and journals that survive present a broad range of issues that inform our understanding of how the public moved.<sup>483</sup> They detail the dangers associated with travelling overland that were presented not only by poorly maintained roads, but also by local communities hostile to outsiders.<sup>484</sup> It is difficult to know the scale of threats and whether they posed a perceived or real problem to travellers, so scholars have interpreted the information differently.<sup>485</sup> These issues are irrelevant here, but what is highly pertinent is that the survival of texts related to travel confirms the mobility of the public.

Surviving accounts written by pilgrims testify to one of the motivating forces behind travel: to visit *loca sancta* where a strong connection between the individual and the divine could be made. To maintain that connection, on leaving, pilgrims wanted religious objects to take away with them. Gary Vikan described these not as souvenirs in the modern sense, but as ‘portable, palpable sanctity.’<sup>486</sup> Archaeological evidence confirms that shops in cities that were points on major trade routes sold ready-made objects that may have served this purpose. Excavations of the Street of Monuments in Beit She’an (Skythopolis), for instance, uncovered shops that sold religious objects including ampullae and tokens. Petrographic analysis indicated that these *eulogia* were produced in Israel, and because the area was destroyed by fire in AD 540, their presence shows that tokens were in common use by the sixth century at the latest.<sup>487</sup>

<sup>481</sup> Egeria, *Itinerarium*, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 35-90. Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 127-54. For collection of the main sources from AD 365 to 1099 in trans. with intro. See: Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*.

<sup>482</sup> Blake Leyerle, ‘Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives’, *JAAR*, 64, 1 (1996), 119-43 (p. 119).

<sup>483</sup> See: McCormick, *Origins of European Economy*.

<sup>484</sup> On roads see: Cod. Theod., XV, 3.4; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 431. Also: Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. I, p. 825. On hostilities see: Rutilius Namatianus, ‘A Voyage Home to Gaul’, text with trans. by J. Wight and Arnold M. Duff, *Minor Latin Poets*, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1934; repr. 1961), vol. I. *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 7, 2; 23, 1, ed. by Festugière.

<sup>485</sup> Travel in Palestine see: Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, pp. 15-32. Also: McCormick, *Origins of European Economy*. *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. by Ruth Macrides, SPBS, 10 (Aldershot: Variorum, 2002). *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Angeliki E. Laiou, DOS, 39, 3 vols (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002). On pilgrim travel especially see: Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, pp. 38-61.

<sup>486</sup> Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, p. 13.

<sup>487</sup> Yoram Tsafrir, ‘Local Trade and Production: Shops and Workshops: Trade, Workshops and shops in Bet Shean/Scythopolis, Fourth – Eighth Centuries’, in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-eighth Spring*

Presence of ampullae and tokens does not necessarily mean that icons were sold in the same way. However, Karl Holl suggested that an icon mentioned by Theodoret of Cyrrhus was in fact a *eulogia* that had been bought as a souvenir.<sup>488</sup> In his biography of Symeon the Stylite the Elder (b. c. 389-d. 459), Theodoret of Cyrrhus commented that workshops of craftsmen in Rome displayed icons of the saint, having adopted him as their representative:

It is said that the man [Symeon the Stylite] became so well-known in the great city of Rome that at the entrance of all the workshops men have set up small images of him, providing thereby some protection and safety for themselves.<sup>489</sup>

This passage is the first written mention of an apotropaic Christian icon. It could only have offered ‘protection and safety’ if it had come into contact with Symeon. Because the saint had lived in Syria, and the icons were used in Rome, it is conceivable that the icon was painted in the East, where it could have come into contact with the saint, and subsequently brought to the West. The use of an icon to protect craftsmen is unsurprising; examples from antiquity show that potters often erected apotropaic signs in their workshops.<sup>490</sup> There is other evidence that groups of craftsmen revered icons. In a text that may date to the sixth or seventh century, workmen are described as venerating the Virgin through an icon that they embraced, kissed, and saluted.<sup>491</sup> Just as European painters from the fourteenth century onwards adopted St Luke as *their* patron saint, workshops across the Byzantine Empire appear to have adopted representatives and used their images that contained thaumaturgic properties. This would be consistent with other groups who assumed patron saints, such as seafarers from Chersonesus on the Black Sea, who used the Sts Phocas and Isidore to protect them on their travels.<sup>492</sup> Whether the icon of Symeon was a souvenir or not, evidence of the public’s desire for

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*Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004*, ed. by Marlia Mundell Mango, SPBS, 14 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 61-82 (p. 72).

<sup>488</sup> Karl Holl, ‘Der Anteil der styliten am Aufkommen der Bilderverehrung’, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, 3 vols (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921-28), vol. II, pp. 388-98.

<sup>489</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, XXIV: Symeon the Stylite, 11, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. II: Περὶ γὰρ Ἰταλίας περιττὸν καὶ λέγειν. Φασὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἐν Ῥώμῃ τῇ μεγίστῃ πολυθρόλλητον γενέσθαι τὸν ἄνδρα, ὥς ἐν ἅπασιν τοῖς τῶν ἐργαστηρίων προφυλαίοις εἰκόνας αὐτῷ βραχείας ἀναστῆναι, φυλακὴν τιναν στίβιν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀσφάλειαν ἐντεῦθεν πορίζοντας.

<sup>490</sup> Burford, *Craftsmen*, p. 122.

<sup>491</sup> *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection*, ed. by William Hoyt Worrell, University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, 10 (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 370. Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, p. 99.

<sup>492</sup> Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, pp. 14-15.

take-away religious objects and the equivalent portability of the icon makes it likely that icons were sold as mementos. If so, then those who purchased them would have been unfamiliar with their makers. If signatures were used in order for craftsmen to advertise themselves, as floor mosaic inscriptions suggest, then the portability of the icon and the mobility of the public would have meant that artists needed to sign icons regardless of whether they were known in their communities.

There is scope for another explanation to why icons are not signed: artists actively demonstrated their humility by not leaving signatures. In Byzantine Orthodoxy, humility was an important Christian virtue.<sup>493</sup> Humility, *tapeinosis* (τᾰπεινῶσις), or meekness, *prathtis* (πραῖτης), is a central theme in the Bible, embodied by Moses in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament.<sup>494</sup> This virtue is also reiterated through numerous parables, so the faithful were aware that humility was a route to salvation. Just as humility was praised, pride, its opposite vice, was condemned.<sup>495</sup> In the Book of Isaiah, pride is embodied by an angel who, on presenting himself as equal to God, falls from Heaven.<sup>496</sup> In a homily on vainglory delivered around 388 in Antioch, John Chrysostom damned pride and greed as sinful passions.<sup>497</sup> Boasting of one's name was driven by vanity, synonymous with pride, and was acknowledged by early Christian writers who preserved their own anonymity to convince readers that they were humble.

Humility is a theme found in a variety of sources from individuals that span the social spectrum. For the author of the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, anonymity was conceptually bound to Christian concerns regarding humility.<sup>498</sup> This concept was a subject for the Church Fathers and early Byzantine writers, and was communicated to the public through sermons and services. Arguably, both mosaic inscriptions and descriptions of individuals who renounced their identity in favour of anonymity, demonstrate that the public received, understood, and shared these beliefs. I propose that artists, as members of that public, were also conscious of this and produced art that was deliberately anonymous as an act of piety and an expression of humility.

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<sup>493</sup> I Peter 5.

<sup>494</sup> Moses: Numbers 12.3. Jesus: Philippians 2.5-11. II Corinthians 8.9. John 12.12-16. Matthew 8.1-34.

<sup>495</sup> Proverbs 29.23. I Timothy 6.4.

<sup>496</sup> Isaiah 14.11-15.

<sup>497</sup> John Chrysostom, *De Inani Gloria*, text with trans. by Anne-Marie Malingrey, *Jean Chrysostome: Sur la vaine gloire et l'éducation des enfants*, SC, 188 (Paris: Cerf, 1972).

<sup>498</sup> *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, ed. by Festugière.



The nature of authorship was a philosophical subject for writers from the fourth century, the same time that artists began openly producing icons for the public. Derek Krueger has analysed early Christian texts to show that writers in Early Byzantium demonstrated a theoretical interest in the concepts of making and makers.<sup>499</sup> Religious texts show that their authors were conscious of their role as ‘creators’ and that they defined the act of writing as a three-way process of practice, exercise, and display of Christian devotion and piety.<sup>500</sup> Their self-awareness extended to a preoccupation with how readers and listeners would respond to them as writers. Typically, authors would defend their motivation for writing, admit personal failings, and highlight their mediocrity, thereby expressing humility.<sup>501</sup> In doing so, they imitated the Evangelists, such as Luke, who had done the same. Humility became a central concern for writers and was a theme that quickly became a literary standard. Some articulated their humility in religious texts: the author of the *Vita* of St Daniel the Stylite (409-493), for example, described himself as witless and humble in the preface of the saint’s biography.<sup>502</sup> Similarly, the sixth-century Sophist hymnographer Romanos the Melode (d. after 555) signed his *kontakion*, sermons in verse, with an acrostic that represented ‘by the humble Romanos’ or a variation of it.<sup>503</sup> To reinforce their message, authors would then reiterate apologies and expressions of humility throughout their work. Texts intended to be delivered as speeches also included these elements and would have informed the public, most of whom would have been unable to read *Vitae*, of such issues. Makers, including artists, may have inferred a need to mirror the speakers’s humility and excuse their own creativity in some way.

As this thesis has already discussed, text and image were almost equal in value, function, and meaning. Putting Plato’s hierarchy of poets and artists to one side, it is possible that there were also similarities between the roles of artists and authors. A difference between painters and writers was that the icons that artists painted had no mediator beyond themselves and no equivalent to the literary preface. Therefore, the only way for artists to express humility was by exercising their own anonymity, which would also protect them from criticisms based upon taste or theological argument. On

<sup>499</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*.

<sup>500</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, esp. pp. 1-14.

<sup>501</sup> For example: *Vita S. Daniel*, in *Les Saints Stylites*, ed. by Hyppolète Delehaye (Paris: Picard, 1923), pp. 1-94. Adomnan, *De Locis Sanctis*, esp. VI, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, p. 234.

<sup>502</sup> *Vita S. Daniel*, 1, in *Les Saints Stylites*, ed. by Delehaye.

<sup>503</sup> On Romanos: Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 159-88.

the one hand, this could be interpreted as reducing an artist's personal identity; on the other, it offered an artist a daily opportunity to exercise their faith.

Articulating their humility protected authors from being vainglorious, *kenodoxos* (κενόδοξος), considered a sin by the Orthodox Church. Simultaneously, their anonymity implied authorship by God, which was ideal. Some authors deliberately renounced their own identity and unequivocally attributed religious texts to God instead, thereby conforming to the request of certain early Church Fathers for the public not to record their names. Within élite circles, philosophers and theologians criticised evidence of identity at all. John Chrysostom, for one, pointed to Moses and the Evangelists as examples of anonymity stating that they had not put their names on the texts they had written.<sup>504</sup> He stressed that the Evangelist John in particular, was loved by Jesus *because of his modesty*.<sup>505</sup> For Chrysostom, the 'lack of boasting' epitomised by biblical figures served as a model for writers to then follow. On the basis that Moses and the Evangelists were anonymous, he implored contemporary writers not to record their names either.

This concept was not restricted to authorship in the literary world. There is evidence of individuals who were not connected with creative processes, forfeiting their own titles and wealth in order to live in the image of Christ. For example, in a text dated to 304, three young women from Macedonia, Agapê, Irenê, and Chionê, who were martyred, were praised as virtuous because they had rejected their property and possessions.<sup>506</sup> At the end of the fourth century, a similar story was told concerning a female saint, Melania the Younger (383-439), who donated her gold in secret by entrusting it to someone who administered charity, because she did not want to be seen doing so.<sup>507</sup> Her charity, and that of her sisters, was compounded by the humility with which they donated to the poor. There is a strong sense that Melania's 'good deeds' would have been less authentic if she and her sisters had handed the gold to the poor themselves. A later example is included in the *Vita* of St Alexis, written in Syriac in the

<sup>504</sup> John Chrysostom, *Epistolam ad Romanos, Homilia 1*, PG 60, 395.

<sup>505</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Joannem 33*, 3, PG 59, 191.

<sup>506</sup> *Martyrdom of Saints Agapê, Irenê, and Chionê at Saloniki*, 1, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 280-81.

<sup>507</sup> *Vita S. Melania the Younger*, 35, by Gerontius, text with trans. by Denys Gorce, *Vie de Sainte Melanie*, SC, 90 (Paris: Cerf, 1962).

second-half of the fifth century.<sup>508</sup> It recounted the legendary life of a Roman nobleman born to wealthy parents who, on the day he was to be married, left Rome for Syria in order to follow an ascetic life.<sup>509</sup> In Edessa, he rejected his wealth and expressed his personal virtuousness and humility by living anonymously as a beggar. When he died he was buried as a stranger. The author of the text was also nameless, thereby mirroring the nobleman whose story he related.<sup>510</sup> This example in particular makes it clear that humility and anonymity were connected, and that the latter was understood as an expression of the former. It also implies the converse: that identity and pride were connected, which is what authors sought to avoid by drawing attention to their inadequacies in the prefaces of their work. These issues were not exclusive to writers and theologians, but deep concerns shared by the public.

Signatures on floor mosaics can be interpreted as evidence that the wider population understood the association between anonymity and humility. A particularly interesting group of inscriptions, dated to around 587, was found at the church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al Rasas in Jordan.<sup>511</sup> The mosaics depict birds, flora, animals, the Four Seasons, and narrative compositions including a hunting scene and a peasant carrying grapes to make wine. The accompanying inscriptions are passages from psalms, and record the names of donors and mosaicists. One found in the northernmost church refers to the people who laid the mosaics anonymously.

The anonymity of these mosaicists can be interpreted in different ways. Perhaps it reflects the preference of some donors who did not want have the names of craftsmen included in their prayers. Alternatively, they may have been a standard phrase borrowed from inscriptions that acknowledged donors anonymously. As in the apse mosaic in Hosios David, Thessalonike, for example, mosaic inscriptions often substituted the

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<sup>508</sup> *Vita S. Alexis*, text with trans. by Carl J. Odenkirchen, in *The Life of St. Alexius in the Old French version of the Hildesheim manuscript: The original text reviewed, with comparative Greek and Latin versions, all accompanied by English translations* (Brookline: Classical Folia, 1978), pp. 21-29.

<sup>509</sup> This is a typical plot in the *Vitae*, another example is of the *Vita* of St Luke the Stylite, see: Robert Browning, 'The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World', in *Byzantine Saint*, ed. by Hackel, pp. 117-27.

<sup>510</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 94-109. See: Han J. W. Drijvers, 'Hellenistic and Oriental Origins', in *Byzantine Saint*, ed. by Hackel, pp. 25-36 (pp. 26-27).

<sup>511</sup> Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, pp. 234-35. See also: Piccirillo, 'The Mosaics at Um er-Rasas', p. 208.

donor's name for the phrase 'she (or he) who God knows the name'.<sup>512</sup> At least one reason that both male and female patrons chose to be anonymous was that it demonstrated their humility, thereby strengthening the sincerity with which they offered mosaics. Clearly, this was a formulaic inscription used in the hope of salvation that mosaicists were familiar with, and it is reasonable to propose that they adopted it for themselves. In keeping with this and Dunbabin's suggestion that mosaicists purposefully omitted their names in 'aspiration of heavenly reward', it is possible that anonymous signatures were expressions of their own humility.<sup>513</sup> If this was their motivation, then these inscriptions are evidence that they were aware of issues regarding anonymity and authorship.

Combining the anonymous inscriptions of mosaicists with the evidence that poets, writers, theologians, monks, and women connected humility with identity, it is reasonable to propose that artists were also aware of this. To put one's name on an icon was to be vainglorious and is another reason why icons are unsigned. In effect, artists asserted their Christian presence through their artistic absence. Artists then preserved their anonymity in order to display their piety.

#### WHERE ICONS WERE PAINTED: THE PROBLEM WITH 'WORKSHOPS'

The question of where artists painted icons is open to interpretation. By attributing icons to 'workshops' and '*ateliers*', scholars have maintained an idea that they were made by artists in a particular environment.<sup>514</sup> A workshop, or studio, has two main definitions: an artist's place of work, and a 'training centre' for young artists to learn from an experienced master.<sup>515</sup> James has highlighted that the term 'workshop' carries with it ideas based on the master-apprentice set-up and practices of studios in the Renaissance, and that these have been retrospectively projected onto Byzantium.<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> Brubaker, 'Elites and Patronage', pp. 63-90. Liz James, 'Images of Text in Byzantine Art: the Apse Mosaic in Hosios David, Thessaloniki', in *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, ed. by Karin Krause and Barbara Schellewald (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), pp. 255-66.

<sup>513</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 273.

<sup>514</sup> Weitzmann, 'Sinai Peninsula', pp. 9-10. Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 42. Chatzidakis, 'An Encaustic Icon', p. 199. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 96-99.

<sup>515</sup> *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. by Jane Turner, 34 vols (London: Macmillan, 1996; repr. with corr. 1998), vol. XXXIX, 'Studio', by Carole Hicks, pp. 850-59.

<sup>516</sup> James, '...and the Word was with God...What Makes Art Orthodox?', p. 105.

Discussion about ‘workshops’ is therefore problematic, as it can mislead an investigation into Early Byzantine artists by prompting questions about the specialisation, reputation, and hierarchy of painters who were associated with them. In fact, from the material and textual evidence, it is clear that workshops, *ergasterion* (ἐργαστήριον), in Early Byzantium were spaces for production that did not have systems akin to those that started to appear in thirteenth-century Europe. This chapter now lays out the evidence for where artists worked. It is impossible to answer the question of whether icon workshops existed based on conventional stylistic analysis, as too few icons survive for hands or schools to be determined. For this reason, archaeological evidence, including that pertaining to other crafts including glass, pottery, and mosaics, will be presented. It is important to do this as it clarifies that a ‘workshop’ in Early Byzantium was a room or building where materials were housed and objects were made. Separating ‘workshops’ from the Renaissance model is a fundamental distinction to make; recognising that artists did not work in a two-tier system based on skill and status strengthens the argument that, for those who painted icons, craft and faith were inextricably linked.

Descriptions of Early Byzantine works of art often substitute the unknown names of artists with a place name, almost always Constantinople, and the word ‘workshop’, without engaging with the facts and implications of such a phrase. This is in keeping with mid-twentieth century studies of icons by scholars like Weitzmann, who described the icon of the ‘Enthroned Mother’ at St Catherine’s monastery as ‘by a workshop’.<sup>517</sup> Likewise, Chatzidakis assumed that the icon of the ‘Blessing Christ’ was made ‘by an *atelier*’.<sup>518</sup> In his discussion of the icon, Chatzidakis observed differences in the quality of primary and secondary elements in the icon’s composition. He described the modelling of Jesus’ face, the primary element, as ‘highly sophisticated’ based on how it had been contoured. He concluded that Christ’s face was the work of a highly talented artist. Chatzidakis then commented that His hands, the drapery of cloth, the ornamentation of the book, and architectural setting, were of a poorer quality and the work of a separate, and by inference mediocre, artist. This ignores the possibility that one artist painted the whole portrait and simply spent more time on Jesus’ features.

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<sup>517</sup> Weitzmann, ‘Sinai Peninsula’, pp. 9-10. Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 42. Also: Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 96-99.

<sup>518</sup> Chatzidakis, ‘An Encaustic Icon’, p. 199.

Considering that by the fourth century, the face was thought to be a metonym for asceticism and proof of a virtuous life, it seems equally, if not more, likely that any difference in quality reflects that the artist spent more time and care on His face.<sup>519</sup>

With so few other icons to compare that of the ‘Blessing Christ’ to, it is difficult to quantify Chatzidakis’s remark. Nevertheless, his description of this icon implies that more than one artist produced it. This is because the treatment of primary and secondary elements differs in terms of skill rather than style. If the icon was painted in a workshop as Chatzidakis describes, his comments imply there was a master-artist and an apprentice. There were certainly individuals, both men and women, who taught the art of painting to students.<sup>520</sup> But no evidence supports the supposition that pupils assumed the position of apprentices. Byzantine texts do refer to *misthos* (μισθός), which could translate as ‘apprentice’, but as with the terms for architects and artists, its definition was not fixed, and *misthos* identified anyone who received a wage.<sup>521</sup>

It has been widely assumed that monks painted icons in workshops inside their monasteries. *Histories* and *Vitae* record churchmen acting as goldsmiths, of hermits labouring on land during harvesting season, and of monks performing civic responsibilities.<sup>522</sup> With the exemption of religious men and women from the *chrysargyron* (χρυσάργυρον), a tax that craftsmen had to pay, and the use of images within their own faith, it is logical to think that monks painted icons. Monasteries did contain *scriptoria* that were used by scribes as spaces in which to copy liturgical books and monastic literature. This practice of manuscript reproduction was not restricted to

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<sup>519</sup> Evidence of the primacy of the face see: *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 8.6 and 10.9, ed. by Festugière. *Vita S. Antony the Great*, 67.4-6, by Athanasios, text with trans. by G. J. M. Bartelink, *Athanase d’Alexandrie: Vie d’Antoine*, SC, 400 (Paris: Cerf, 1994). For an introduction see: Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, pp. 134-70.

<sup>520</sup> References to teachers see: John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, I, *Life of Habib*, text with trans. by Brooks, pp. 15-16. Cod. Theod., XIII, 4.4; trans. in CRL, vol. I, p. 391.

<sup>521</sup> LSJ, p. 448. As hired workers see: Itskhok Fischelevich Fikhman, *Egipet na rubezhe dvukh pokh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), p. 109. As journeymen in guilds see: *Tò éparchikòn biblíon*, text with trans. by Jules Nicole (Geneva: H. Georg, 1893; repr. London: Variorum Reprints, 1970).

<sup>522</sup> For an introduction to monasticism see: Hyppolète Delehaye, ‘Byzantine Monasticism’, in *Byzantium: An introduction*, ed. by Norman Baynes and H. St. L. B Moss (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948; repr. with rev. 1961), pp. 136-65. On how men became monks see: Peter Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80-101. On the relationship between the Imperial family and ascetics see: Charles A. Frazee, ‘Late Roman and Byzantine Legislation on the Monastic Life from the Fourth to the Eighth Centuries’, *Church History*, 51, 3 (1982), 263-79.

the religious community, and the public also commissioned copies of texts.<sup>523</sup>

Anastasios of Sinai, for example, wrote about an Egyptian official who was said to have employed fourteen scribes to copy patristic texts for his personal use.<sup>524</sup>

There is clear evidence that in Middle and Late Byzantium monks produced religious paintings. In the *Chronicle* of Theophanes, for example, a man called Lazaros (d. c. 865), was described as both a monk and a painter, who was imprisoned and tortured under the iconoclastic Emperor Theophilos (829-842).<sup>525</sup> However, there is no documentary or archaeological proof of artistic workshops inside Eastern monasteries from any period of the Byzantine Empire equivalent to those found in relation to the West.<sup>526</sup> Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. But it is dangerous to ignore the fact that there is neither textual nor archaeological evidence dated to the early period to substantiate the theory that monks painted icons in their monasteries. Indeed, towns and cities where multiple workshops have been excavated in close proximity to one another and religious complexes suggest that the demand for religious art could easily have been sufficiently met by the lay population, and perhaps eliminated the need for monks to produce icons themselves.

Literary sources, laws, and other legal documents refer to places where crafts were made in Early Byzantium. In praising the city of Antioch, for example, Libanios enthused that most houses had workshops facing them.<sup>527</sup> In Africa, a fourth-century edict explicitly decreed that the '*picturae professores*', teachers of paintings, should be supplied with studios and '*officinas in locis publicis*', workshops in public places.<sup>528</sup> Documents from the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, a group of manuscripts from northern Egypt that date predominantly to the sixth century when the area was under Greek

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<sup>523</sup> Jean Nigel Irigoin, 'Centres de copie et bibliothèques', in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium 1971 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1975), pp. 17-27. L. Politis, 'Quelques centres de copie monastiques au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *La Paléographie grecque et byzantine*, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 559 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977), pp. 291-303. Suzy Dufrenne, 'Problèmes des ateliers de miniaturistes byzantins', *JÖB*, 31, 2 (1981), 445-70.

<sup>524</sup> Anastasios, *Hodegos*, 10, 2.7, PG 89, 184-85. Averil Cameron, 'The Language of Images', p. 16.

<sup>525</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronicon*, III, 13, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn: E. Weber, 1838), pp. 102-3.

<sup>526</sup> R. E. Swartwout, *The Monastic Craftsman: An Inquiry into the Services of Monks to Art in Britain and in Europe North of the Alps during the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1932).

<sup>527</sup> Libanios, *Oratio 11*, 254, ed. by Foerster, *Libanius*, vol. I, part 2, p. 527.

<sup>528</sup> Cod. Theod., XIII, 4.4; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 391.

administration, also attest to workshops.<sup>529</sup> The collection includes short-term leases for pottery workshops, which stipulates that the tenants had to pay a fee and return the space free of debris.<sup>530</sup> Thus in Egypt at least, groups of craftsmen shared and rented workshops rather than owned them privately and, Roger Bagnall has shown, formed partnerships with other local workshops.<sup>531</sup> Texts also refer to workshops in the West, showing that they were commonplace and not exclusive to the East.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered places where craftsmen worked in towns. A significant number of fifth- and sixth-century workshops were found in Sardis and Ephesus, located in present-day Turkey.<sup>532</sup> In Ephesus, an *embolos*, colonnaded street, was lined with shops, workshops, and houses for craftsmen.<sup>533</sup> Byzantine glass-workshops have been found in modern-day Israel and Turkey.<sup>534</sup> One dated to the seventh century was excavated at Beit She'an, and comprises a courtyard, central room, and storeroom.<sup>535</sup> This layout supports Sodini's idea that craftsmen were merchants who directly sold their own wares to the consumer.<sup>536</sup> In some places, workshops were placed in close proximity to raw materials or transport networks that improved their commercial viability. An example of this is found in Aphrodisias, a coastal town in Turkey, where, just three kilometres from a quarry, a sculpture-workshop was excavated.<sup>537</sup> The scale of this workshop and others explains why multiple workshops have been found in towns: they were small and therefore the demand for art could be met by a number of businesses. The size and layout of the workshop at Aphrodisias

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<sup>529</sup> General literature see: *Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts*, ed. by Alan K. Bowman and others, Graeco-Roman Memoirs, 93 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007).

<sup>530</sup> P.Oxy., L, 3595, transcribed with trans. by Helen Cockle, 'Pottery Manufacture in Roman Egypt: A New Papyrus', *The Journal for Roman Studies*, 71 (1981), 87-97 (pp. 87-88). On Egypt see: Itskhok Fishelevich Fikhman, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im spätantiken Ägypten: kleine Schriften*, ed. by Andrea Jördens, Einzelschriften Heft, 192 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006). Price, 'Glass-working and Glassworkers', p. 172.

<sup>531</sup> Roger S. Bagnall, 'Family and Society in Roman Oxyrhynchus', in *Oxyrhynchus*, ed. by Bowman and others, pp. 182-93 (pp. 186-87).

<sup>532</sup> On Sardis see: Charlotte Roueché, 'Asia Minor and Cyprus', in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIV, pp. 570-87 (p. 581).

<sup>533</sup> Marlia Mundell Mango, 'Building and Architecture', in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIV, pp. 918-71 (p. 933). On Ephesus see: Clive Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 73-74. On Sardis see: J. Stephens-Crawford, *The Byzantine Shops at Sardis*, Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>534</sup> Price, 'Glass-working and Glassworkers', p. 174.

<sup>535</sup> Price, 'Glass-working and Glassworkers', p. 171.

<sup>536</sup> Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', p. 100.

<sup>537</sup> Peter Rockwell, 'Unfinished Statuary Associated with a Sculptor's Studio', in *Aphrodisias Papers 2*, ed. by R. R. R. Smith and Kenan T. Erim, *JRA*, 2 (1991), 127-43 (p. 138).



means that it would only have been possible for two workers to use it at any one time.<sup>538</sup> That is not to say that the two sculptors were defined as a master and an apprentice.

Like sculptures, mosaics were also produced in and by workshops. Inscriptions that include the phrase ‘from the workshop’ are proof of this. At a house in Mascula in present-day north-eastern Algeria, for example, a mosaic is signed: ‘*ex officine Iunioris*’, from the workshop of Iunioris.<sup>539</sup> Phrased in a way that includes the name of just one man, this type of inscription suggests that members of mosaic workshops were not all equal. The mosaic decoration extends through the entire house, so for practical reasons it is likely that in this example Iunioris led a group of craftsmen. Obviously, the task of painting an icon could be sufficiently met by one artist, thereby negating the role of ‘master’ that Iunioris may have played.

Some floor mosaic inscriptions record the collaboration between painters and mosaicists. It is possible, Roger Ling remarked, that because they worked together, they were members of the same ‘workshop’.<sup>540</sup> Here, the term refers to a group of people working together on a particular project. A third-century mosaic inscription from Kephallionia in Greece, for instance, recorded that a painter drew the image of Phthonos, the personification of Envy, which a certain Krateros then made into stone.<sup>541</sup> It distinguished clearly between the names of those who drew the plan and those who laid the tesserae. More commonly, inscriptions affirmed that mosaicists worked alone. A second-century example from Trikkala, north-west Thessaly, gives the names of Titos Flavios Hermes and Basos.<sup>542</sup> It acknowledges them as mosaicists who both drew the plan and laid the mosaic. In other examples, inscriptions specify that the mosaic was laid *without* the help of a painter.<sup>543</sup> An example from the fifth or sixth century, found at Sidi bou Ali, near Enfidacille, modern-day Tunisia, reads: ‘[*S*]abinianus Senurianus pingit et pa.v.imentav,i.t’ and ‘*Sabiniani e manus/ sine pictore*’.<sup>544</sup> The mosaicist both

<sup>538</sup> Rockwell, ‘Unfinished Statuary’, pp. 134, 141. Also discussed in: Anthony Cutler, ‘The Right Hand’s Cunning: Craftsmanship and the Demand for Art in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 72, 4 (1997), 971-94 (p. 978).

<sup>539</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 272.

<sup>540</sup> Roger Ling, *Ancient Mosaics* (Spain: British Museum Press, 1998), p. 130.

<sup>541</sup> Ling, *Ancient Mosaics*, p. 130. Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 276-77.

<sup>542</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 277.

<sup>543</sup> Ling, *Ancient Mosaics*, p. 130.

<sup>544</sup> Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten*, pp. 104-5, A82. Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 276.

painted the plan and decorated it '*sine pictore*', without a painter. Clarifying that no painter had been involved may mean that this was an exception to normal practice.

Surviving objects corroborate that craftsmen sometimes worked together; African slipware, for example, was clearly produced by groups of craftsmen but they collaborated rather than divided particular roles.<sup>545</sup> This is also implied by Augustine's description of the working practices of silversmiths, about which he remarked: 'a vessel passes through the hands of many craftsmen before it comes out finished.'<sup>546</sup> For mosaicists, potters, glassworkers, and silversmiths, work was divided on the basis of technique rather than quality. In no instance does it appear that workshops were used to organise craftsmen on a production line or facilitate a division of labour based on skill. Since the evidence shows that a range of craftsmen worked in dedicated areas to make objects, it is likely that artists did as well. Of course, workshops were not the only places artists could work, and between the fourth and sixth centuries painters and small-scale craftsmen also worked from their own homes. On balance therefore, the term 'workshop' is both artificial and unhelpful. Far from solving the problem of the unknown artist, attributing icons to 'workshops' actually inhibits how the people who made them are understood today.

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<sup>545</sup> Ward-Perkins, 'Specialised Production and Exchange', p. 368. On Roman pottery production see: D. P. S. Peacock, *Pottery in the Roman World: An Ethnoarchaeological Approach* (London: Longman, 1982).

<sup>546</sup> Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, VII, 4: in uico argentario, ubi unum uasculum, ut perfectum exeat, per multos artifices transit, cum ab uno perfecto perfici posset. Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', p. 111.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TEXTS: A TRACE OF THE PRESENT ARTIST

This chapter looks at texts written between the fourth and eighth centuries that mention artists. Although very much present in texts, artists are almost always anonymous. Authors chose to refer to ‘artists’ and ‘painters’ by their professional titles rather than their personal names. A chapter about artists in texts would be incomplete without an explanation as to why this is so. With the exception of ideal artists, including Luke, only one painter has been named and dated to Early Byzantium. In the early-twentieth century, August Heisenberg dated Eulalios to the sixth century.<sup>547</sup> Eulalios was a painter named and praised by several writers, including the poet Theodore Prodromos (c. 1100-c. 1170?) and the chronicler Nicholas Mesarites (c. 1163/1164-d. after 1124).<sup>548</sup> In the fourteenth century, Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos described Eulalios as a famous painter who had ‘eloquent (εὐλόγος) hands’, a deliberate pun on his name.<sup>549</sup> If indeed Eulalios could be reliably dated to the sixth century, then these Late Byzantine texts would be astonishing examples of a unique artist’s exceptional fame and lasting reputation. However, evidence that places Eulalios in the early period is not convincing. N. A. Bees, Otto Demus, and Cyril Mango agree that he was most probably active in the twelfth century, during the reign of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1118-1180) at which time it was conventional for painters to sign their work.<sup>550</sup>

Artists are mentioned in a range of Early Byzantine texts. They are included in stories, admired for their artistic skills, used as metaphors, and alluded to by authors writing about works of art. More often than not, they are anonymous. Named artists are

<sup>547</sup> Sixth century dating first made by August Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche, zwei Basiliken Konstantins: Untersuchungen zur Kunst und Literatur des ausgehenden Altertums*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908); again in August Heisenberg, ‘Die Zeit des byzantinischen Malers Eulalios’, *Philologische Wochenschrift*, 41 (1921), 1024-32.

<sup>548</sup> Theodore Prodromos, poetry fragments, ed. by É. Miller, ‘Poésies inédites de Théodore Prodrome’, *Annuaire de l’Association pour l’encouragement des études grecques*, 17 (Paris: A. Durand et Pedrone Lauriel, 1883), p. 32. Nicholas Mesarites, *Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles*, 23.10, ed. with trans. by Heisenberg, in *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, vol. II, p. 47. Agrees: Charles Diehl, ‘Byzantine Art’, in *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, ed. by Baynes and Moss, pp. 166-99 (p. 173).

<sup>549</sup> Excerpt ed. with trans. by Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in ‘Nikêphoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos’, *BZ*, 11 (1902), 38-49 (p. 46, nos 14 and 16); trans. in part in *ABE*, pp. 231-32.

<sup>550</sup> Dating Eulalios to the twelfth century based on his link with the decoration of the church of the Apostles, Constantinople: N. A. Bees, ‘Kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Eulaliosfrage und den Mosaikschmuck der Apostelkirche zu Konstantinopel’, *Repetorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 39 (1916), 97-117, 231-51. Otto Demus, “‘The sleepless watcher’: ein Erklärungsversuch”, *JÖB*, 28 (1979), 241-45. Cyril Mango considers this to be correct: *ABE*, pp. 229-33.

frustratingly rare in Early Byzantine literature. Like Pliny's use of artists as characters, artists feature in texts to allow an author to ascribe an object to an individual or group. Irrespective of whether artists did not sign icons because they signed the frames, were known by those who purchased icons, or wanted to display humility, all of which were discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible that their anonymity in literature simply reflects their anonymity on icons. Essentially, when writers came to discuss works of art they did not necessarily know to whom they should be attributed, because they were not signed. Based upon my own argument regarding the absence of signatures, it is conceivable that even when the names of artists were known, authors excluded them from texts because they could have jeopardised the humility that artists sought. Perhaps the more standard position is to interpret their anonymity as a symptom of their professional status, or the status of icons, or to see it as a consequence of the literary tradition writers followed. I will present and consider these possibilities, but will show that they can only explain some of the reasons why artists were not identified. Then, with the ideal artist in mind, I will propose that authors deliberately minimised the presence of real artists, who may not have been perceived as ideal, by referring to them anonymously.

One possibility is that artists's anonymity reflected their modest position in society. Put simply, they were not important people, so their names were not important. In order to use this hypothesis it would be necessary to know the status of artists in Early Byzantium, but it is impossible to do so. Of course, it is easy to identify the imperial family and the destitute at the top and bottom of society, but it is much harder to assess those in between. Even primary sources that offer insights into social orders, such as the anonymously authored treatise on strategy that classified civilians into ten categories, or the *Vita* of St Symeon of Emesa that described the lower section of society, cannot be used to determine how they functioned in those hierarchies or how they interacted.<sup>551</sup> Social stratification and status can be constructed based on a range of criteria, sometimes according to birth, wealth, education, or religious or moral authority. None of this information is known in relation to Early Byzantine artists. Indeed, even if

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<sup>551</sup> Anonymous, *On Strategy*, I-III, edn in *Griechische Kriegsschriftsteller*, trans. by Herman Köchly and Wilhelm Rüstow, 3 vols (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1853-55), vol. II, p. 42. *Vita S. Symeon of Emesa*, by Leontios of Neapolis, ed. by André Jean Festugière and Lennart Rydén, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 95 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974), pp. 1-222. Discussed in: Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of the New Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), pp. 33, 65. Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', p. 100.

that information did survive, the positions of individuals changes depending on the criteria used to rank them. Moreover, it is not even clear that there was a class system at all in Byzantium, and there was certainly fluidity between social roles.<sup>552</sup> Structured in such a way, social status was not determined by professional duties.

Scholars have proposed the social status of other craftsmen; some have suggested that architects, for example, ranked highly, and that builders and mosaicists occupied a lower position.<sup>553</sup> Working through the idea that names in texts reflected status, it is apparent that authors identified architects, such as Anthemios, Isidore, Rufinus, and Zenobios, with greater frequency than builders or mosaicists.<sup>554</sup> But even if the supposed positions of architects and mosaicists are accepted, it is difficult to assess whether writers considered this. Moreover, it does not appear that mosaicists or builders held a position equal to artists. Although in the *Vita* of Habib, an artist is described as a poor widow woman, the assumption that, as a group, artists were part of the lower echelons of society, based on how they were remunerated, has been revised.<sup>555</sup> In fact, because artists were often members of guilds, they may have ranked reasonably high by virtue of their affiliation to a professional body. A preserved report sent to the Empress Theodora (c. 497-548) from an Aphroditan élite, for example, lists artisan guild members alongside legal, tax, and clerical leaders, suggesting that in sixth-century Egypt, they were part of the gentry.<sup>556</sup> In all likelihood, artists were anonymous for reasons other than status.

A fundamental problem with the status-linked anonymity is that it assumes that artists were a homogenous group, but evidence of a lack of heterogeneity in other crafts means that this was not necessarily so. Funeral inscriptions attest that mosaicists, for

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<sup>552</sup> Herbert Hunger, 'State and Society in Byzantium', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 82c (1982), 197-209 (p. 201).

<sup>553</sup> Catherine Bamelle and Jean-Pierre Darmon, 'L'artisan-mosaïste dans l'Antiquité tardive', in *Artistes, artisans et production*, ed. by Barral i Altet, vol. I, pp. 235-53.

<sup>554</sup> Bamelle and Darmon, 'L'artisan-mosaïste dans l'Antiquité tardive', pp. 235-53.

<sup>555</sup> John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, I, *Life of Habib*, text with trans. by Brooks, pp. 15-16. Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 33.

<sup>556</sup> P.Cair.Masp., III, 67283, quoted in: Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 99. Leslie MacCoull, 'Notes on the Social Structure of Late Antique Aphrodito', *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, 26 (1984), 66-77. J. G. Keenen, 'Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite', in *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*, 3 vols (Naples: Centro internazionale per lo studio dei papiri ercolanesi, 1984), vol. III: *Papirologia documentaria; Papirologia araba*, pp. 957-63. Bagnall, 'Family and Society in Roman Oxyrhynchus', p. 187.

instance, came from a range of social backgrounds and that they could increase their social standing. A first or second century AD burial-inscription from Perinthos in Thrace is of an eighty-year-old mosaicist and includes a reference to his son, also a mosaicist. His son is noted as a member of the *boule* or local city council, and presumably held a respectable position in society. In Beneventum, Italy, an inscription at the grave of a wall mosaicist called Hermas, identifies him as a slave, but other graves are of freedmen.<sup>557</sup> On this evidence, Dunbabin proposed that both slaves and those who were freeborn could be mosaicists.<sup>558</sup> Her hypothesis would be consistent with other craftsmen such as book-copyists, who were described by Libanios as both slaves and free.<sup>559</sup> On this basis, it is plausible to suggest that the same was true for painters. The anonymity of artists in texts may be attributable to the status of the profession, but because the evidence used to support this argument is inadequate and open to interpretation, other theories must be explored.

Another possible reason that authors did not give the names of artists was because there was simply no tradition from antiquity of so doing. Although it is true that Pliny included particular artists in his *Natural History*, he only ever did so to acknowledge that they had invented a particular technique or produced a work of exceptional verisimilitude. It does not appear that names *per se*, and certainly not personalities, mattered to Pliny. Unsurprisingly, he recorded just one mosaicist, Sosus (c. 150-100 BC), whose ‘unswept room paved in mosaic’, *asarotos oikos* (ασάρωτος οίκος), at Pergamon, north-western Asia Minor, has since been lost.<sup>560</sup> Sosus was named, like other artists, because he had invented a new decorative type and produced a work of exceptional naturalism.<sup>561</sup> Continuing the literary styles, exercises, and traditions from antiquity, it is possible that authors considered the names of artists to be irrelevant. I will evaluate this interpretation before balancing it with the suggestion that authors were in fact acutely conscious of artists, and intentionally minimised their role by omitting their names.

<sup>557</sup> Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten*, pp. 92-93, A61, pp. 94-95, A65, p. 97, A70. Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 274.

<sup>558</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 274.

<sup>559</sup> Libanios, *Oratio I*, 184-85, text with trans. by A. F. Norman (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>560</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXXVI, 184.

<sup>561</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXXVI, 184.

When Early Byzantines wrote about art, they did so to discuss the *painted* not the *painter*. Works of art dominated their attention and that of their audiences; artists meanwhile were less important and hence were not identified.<sup>562</sup> Writers focussed instead on expanding upon the story or life summarised in the work of art, often because images were seen as abbreviations of a much longer narrative.<sup>563</sup> Even in instances where they appear to engage with art aesthetically in the modern sense of the term, artistic criticism was not their primary concern.<sup>564</sup> This was in keeping with the Greek word *aesthesis* (αἴσθησις), which means ‘sense-perception’ or ‘sense experience’, from which the modern English ‘aesthetics’ derives.<sup>565</sup> They commented on artistic elements to promote and reinforce the efficacy of the work of art they described. In effect, the reverse of Gombrich’s dictum was true: for the Byzantines there really was no such thing as artists, there was only art.

Icons were mentioned in hagiographical texts when they were used as a tool to bring the subject back to life, as a portrait of the apostle Paul did for John Chrysostom.<sup>566</sup> Another reason that authors mentioned specific works of art was because they had performed miracles. A passage in the hagiographical collection *Spiritual Meadow*, by John Moschos (b. between 540 and 550-d. 634), for example, describes a woman from Apamea, north-western Syria, who found no water in the well she had built.<sup>567</sup> She was visited by an apparition of a man who instructed her to send for an image of the local monk Theodosios of Skopelos. She sent a man to fetch the image, lowered the portrait into the well, and straightaway, the well was filled with water. Later, icons were written about because they had qualities that gave them the same properties as relics, mementos, and protectors. One of the stories in the seventh or eighth-century *Miracles* of the Sts Kosmas and Damianos, for example, describes a soldier taking an icon of the two saints to war for protection.<sup>568</sup> Clearly, authors consistently wrote about

<sup>562</sup> James, ‘...and the Word was with God...What Makes Art Orthodox?’, p. 107.

<sup>563</sup> Gendle, ‘Art as Education’, p. 7.

<sup>564</sup> See: Liz James and Ruth Webb, ‘To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places’: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium’, *Art History*, 14 (1991), 1-17.

<sup>565</sup> *LSJ*, p. 21. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1987, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Bollingen Series 35, 36 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 102.

<sup>566</sup> *Vita S. Chrysostom*, by George of Alexandria, ed. by Saville, in *Joannis Chrysostomi*, vol. VIII, pp. 192-94; picture on the wall: p. 192, lines 10-14; on Paul coming alive: p. 194, lines 13-14.

<sup>567</sup> John Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, PG 87c, 2940.

<sup>568</sup> *Miracula SS. Kosmas et Damianos*, Miracle 13, ed. by Deubner, in *Kosmas und Damian*, pp. 132-34. An earlier example is of Constantine who set up the cross for protection: Eusebios, *VC*, III, 49.

art, and did so positively, but in these texts, artists are anonymous because they played no part in the function or power of art and so were irrelevant to the stories.

Instead, the power that icons were believed to contain was transmitted by the subject depicted. Quite unlike ‘ideal artists’, real artists could not contribute to a religious portrait’s power, miracle-working capabilities, or protecting qualities. In each text that identifies an artist by name, the name is used to secure an image’s importance or explain why it was able to perform in a certain way. As I have already shown, in terms of the legend of Luke as a painter and the attribution of buildings to emperors, naming certain people as artists and architects authorised material objects and sacred spaces. Connecting a building to an emperor elevated its status, power, and importance. Connecting an icon to Luke meant that portraits of Jesus and Mary could be trusted and revered as primary relics. The faithful assumed that icons painted by artists were based on authentic originals, and the power they contained was inherent to the icon.

It has been suggested that to their contemporaries, the role of artists was simply to paint ‘a shell, limp and meaningless in itself’ that the saint could reside in, bringing his or her own power to the portrait.<sup>569</sup> Kitzinger extrapolated this conclusion from an interpretation of Leontios of Neapolis’ (fl. c. 590-650) sermon against the Jews.<sup>570</sup> The sermon included a justification of the use of images by Christians, part of which implied that the Holy Ghost dwelt inside them.<sup>571</sup> In this specific context, Leontios was referring to saints as images of God, rather than painted icons, but an aspect of his intention was to defend religious art. Continuing his logic through to painters, it is conceivable that he considered artists as responsible for designating a material space, on canvas or board, within which the saint could descend from Heaven and act of their own accord. Crucially however, the authenticity of the text upon which Kitzinger’s argument is based has been questioned and it is probably not genuine.<sup>572</sup> In all likelihood, the sermon was written, or

<sup>569</sup> Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, pp. 141, 150.

<sup>570</sup> Leontios of Neapolis, *Contra Judaeos et de Imaginibus*, PG 93, 1597-1612.

<sup>571</sup> Leontios of Neapolis, *Contra Judaeos et de Imaginibus*, PG 93, 1603-4. Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, pp. 141, 150.

<sup>572</sup> Edward James Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1930]), pp. 141-42. Paul Speck, ‘Der Dialog mit einem Juden angeblich des Leontios von Neapolis’, *Varia II*, Poikila Byzantina, 6 (Berlin: 1987), 315-22. Paul Speck, ‘Τραφαῖς ὁ γλυφαῖς. On the Fragment of Hypatios of Ephesos on Images, with an Appendix on the *Dialogue with a Jew* by Leontios of Neapolis’, in Paul Speck, *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources*, ed. by Sarolta Takács (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 50-83. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: The Sources*, pp. 252-53. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A*



heavily interpolated, during Iconoclasm. It certainly fits with other eighth- and ninth-century texts, which often emphasise that icons are the manifestation of a higher reality, not the product of an individual.<sup>573</sup> Not to eliminate this as a possibility completely, artists were not necessarily viewed in this way before Iconoclasm.

Rather, the promotion of ideal artists shows that before the eighth century, the Byzantines were interested in identifying painters and architects. References to artists by theologians and historians show that they were not ignored. The public were warned of ‘bad’ artists whose hands were withered, and asked to pay attention to the work of ‘good’ artists, whose paintings were praised. Asterios, for one, admired the artist who painted the martyrdom of St Euphemia.<sup>574</sup>

In Early Byzantium, artists may have been viewed as mediators who, along with the medium of paint, canvas, and wood, assisted in the visual realisation of the archetype.<sup>575</sup> At that time, tradition had not yet established that all icons came from the hand of God. It is possible that theologians and historians identified ‘ideals’ not only because they were beneficial, but because real artists were detrimental to the veracity of an icon. Real artists, who were at times neither divinely inspired nor painting from life, could devalue the power and authenticity of images. Their anonymity may be interpreted as evidence that authors deliberately sought to minimise and ultimately erase the traces of real artists as part of the tradition they developed related to the ideal origins of icons. Anonymity separated the work of art from the individual responsible for it, which contributed to the desired ‘disappearance’ of the artist, as did attribution to ‘hands’ and ‘art’. For Gregory of Nyssa, it was art that provoked him to cry when he saw an image of the sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>576</sup> For Prudentius, it was ‘*docta manus*’, a skilled hand, that painted the illustrations of martyrs he described.<sup>577</sup> Such disappearance reassured the public that the image was accurate and therefore an *icon* rather than an *idol*.

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*History*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>573</sup> James, ‘...and the Word was with God... What Makes Art Orthodox?’, p. 105.

<sup>574</sup> Asterios, *Oratio 11*, PG 40, 337A.

<sup>575</sup> Plotinos, *Ennead*, v, 8.1.

<sup>576</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, PG 46, 572C.

<sup>577</sup> Prudentius, *Crowns of Martyrdom*, xi, 123-30, text with trans. by H. J. Thompson, in *Prudentius*, 2 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1953), vol. II.

It is difficult to assess whether the public shared the concerns about artists, because the illiteracy of the general population meant that they were unable to record their views about artists or art. Those who could write, the élite, had no interest in documenting the opinions of the public, so access to the general assessment of artists and responses to art is severely limited. Because of the issues I outlined above, artists were not a topic for writers either, so there are very few texts about them that were not prompted by works of art. In the second century, Justin Martyr (100-165) described craftsmen as intemperate and immoral, and implied it was common knowledge that they corrupted the young girls who worked with them.<sup>578</sup> Justin's criticism relates to the Late Antique artist, but it is included here because the sentiment does correspond to Peter Brown's assessment of Early Byzantine artists. Brown claimed that in the seventh century, some artists had a poor reputation based on the relationships they had with their models and the pornographic Classical scenes they depicted.<sup>579</sup> Although the public's opinion of artists is hard to identify, edicts issued by successive emperors can be interpreted to propose how the ruling class viewed painters.

#### LEGAL TEXTS

Edicts were formal pronouncements of law that were passed both on the government's own initiative and in response to official corporations, local dioceses, city prefects, magistrates, and guilds who petitioned the emperor. Some laws determined, and to a degree imposed restrictions on, artistic practice and production. They inform us of the institutional and organisational systems that artists worked in. The edicts analysed here do not relate exclusively to painters, but in making references to monopolies, guilds, maximum prices, and income, they do broaden our understanding of how craftsmen may have operated. For example, one passed by Emperor Justinian in 544, regulated the price that artists could charge and that consumers could offer to pay.<sup>580</sup> The language of this specific edict goes further than confirming that there were laws to which craftsmen needed to adhere. By attributing the inflated price of objects to the 'covetous greed' of craftsmen, the law hints at the emperor's perception of artists. The edict was equally critical of individuals who purchased objects to display their wealth.

<sup>578</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apologia Prima pro Christianis*, 9, PG 6, 340.

<sup>579</sup> Brown, 'A Dark Age Crisis', p. 9.

<sup>580</sup> *Edictum de Constitutione Artificum* (122), CJC, vol. III, pp. 592-93.

Supported by texts that express similar criticisms, it raises the question of whether artists were perceived to be financially motivated to make art.

The signing of the Edict of Milan in 313 by the co-emperors Constantine and Licinius had an effect on citizens including craftsmen.<sup>581</sup> It decreed that Christians were allowed to observe their faith freely and openly, thereby elevating both the status of the religion and those who practiced it. For craftsmen, it meant that there was a new group of increasingly wealthy individuals they could sell their wares to.<sup>582</sup> Early Christian art, including the mid-third century wall paintings from a baptistery at Dura Europos in Syria, as well as those in Roman catacombs, and a set of marble sculptures from Asia Minor, illustrate that at this time paintings and sculptures had already been incorporated into worship.<sup>583</sup> When Christians began practicing their faith more publicly they continued to use traditional and functional objects, including works of art, that had accrued significance for them. Images were used to communicate Christian beliefs, and artists who made them must have profited directly from the toleration of the faith.<sup>584</sup>

Following the Edict of Milan, Constantine's defeat of Licinius in 324 and naming of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire also had a considerable impact on artists. Craftsmen were employed to produce art that would explain and disseminate the reconfigured empire to the broadly illiterate and, as a result of its size, diverse population. Evidence of these public works is not restricted to the material culture. The surviving literature from the fourth century onwards recorded how the transformation occurred, who initiated it, what obstacles were faced, and where there was activity.

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<sup>581</sup> Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 48, ed. by O. F. Fritzsche, in *Lactantius Opera*, 2 vols, Bibliotheca patrum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, II (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1844), vol. II, p. 288.

<sup>582</sup> Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, p. 25.

<sup>583</sup> For Dura Europos see: Charles Welles and Carl Kraeling, *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: final report 8*, 2 vols (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1956-67). For catacombs see: Vincenzo F. Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti and Danilo Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions*, trans. by Cristina Carlo Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2002). For carvings see: William D. Wixom, 'Early Christian Sculptures at Cleveland', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 54 (1967), 65-88.

<sup>584</sup> André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1961, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 7.

The identity of the 'recycled empire' required building and furnishing in all aspects: religious, secular, and imperial, and employed craftsmen to do the work. In Constantinople, the layout and public buildings of Rome served as a model for the urban formation of the city.<sup>585</sup> Contemporary authors recognised the deliberate similitude, and texts such as Paul Silentiarios's *Description of Hagia Sophia* and the *Paschal Chronicle* describe the construction of the city in this way.<sup>586</sup> To a degree, pagan art was incorporated into the Christian city, with Constantine initiating the transportation of Classical statues and monuments into Constantinople where they were publicly displayed.<sup>587</sup> In addition to reusing existing sculptures for ideological purposes, the emperor commissioned artists to produce new works of art that were appropriate for Christianity. For obvious reasons, the architectural landscape across the empire also changed: pagan temples were gradually consecrated as Christian spaces and new churches were built.<sup>588</sup> Evidence of Constantine's commitment to introducing Christian elements to the East is found in letters encouraging the erection of churches, as well as Eusebios's *Vita* of the emperor.<sup>589</sup> Further to describing Constantine's patronage of religious and public sites, the *Vita* also explains that buildings were financed by an income generated by laws and generous grants.<sup>590</sup>

Works of art and architecture were used to help define the empire so craftsmen, required for the production of both, were needed. The Edict of Constantine to the Praetorian Prefect Felix, posted in Carthage in 334, may be seen in light of the increase in demand brought on by the shift of the empire's centre from West to East:

There is a need of as many architects as possible; but since there are none of them, Your Sublimity shall encourage this study [...] In order to make this attractive to them, it is Our will that they themselves as well as their parents shall be immune from [their] services [...] and that a suitable salary shall be appointed for the students.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> Averil Cameron, 'Old and New Rome: Roman Studies in Sixth-Century Constantinople', in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, ed. by Philip Rousseau and Emmanuel Papoutsakis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 15-49.

<sup>586</sup> Paul Silentiarios, *Description of Hagia Sophia*, ed. by Friedländer, in *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius*, pp. 227-65. *Chronicon Paschale*, PG 92, 527-30.

<sup>587</sup> Liz James, "'Pray Not Fall into Temptation and Be on Your Guard": Pagan Statues in Christian Constantinople', *Gesta*, 35, 1 (1996), 12-20.

<sup>588</sup> An example of a citizen doing so is found in: *Vita S. Eutychios*, by Eustratios, PG 86b, 2333.

<sup>589</sup> Eusebios, VC.

<sup>590</sup> Eusebios, VC, III, 29.

<sup>591</sup> Cod. Theod., XIII, 4.1: Architectis quam plurimis opus est; sed quia non sunt, sublimitas tua in provinciis Africanis ad hoc studium eos impellat, qui ad annos ferme duodeviginti nati liberales litteras

In fourth-century Carthage, demand outstripped the number of craftsmen. With this edict, Constantine tried to resolve the shortage of architects by ordering Felix to offer incentives, including exemptions from civic duties and guaranteed salaries, to those prepared to learn the profession. Such immunities were used to stimulate the economy. An edict signed thirty years later in Trier, similar to that of Carthage, stated:

It is Our pleasure that teachers of painting, provided they are free-born, shall not be liable to tax-assessment neither on their own heads nor on those of their wives and children [...] they shall not be called to the tax payment of tradesmen on condition that they deal only in those wares that pertain to their art.<sup>592</sup>

With this law the co-emperors Valentinian I (321-375), Valens (c. 328-378), and Gratian (359-383) exempted painting teachers and their families from the *chrysargyron* – a tax that was first imposed by Constantine and applied to all professions in the empire. The tax affected sellers who sold their goods directly, including craftsmen. Paid in gold and silver every five, or later four, years, it was collected by locally elected leaders. Evagrius was critical of the exorbitant *chrysargyron*, which was so high that citizens were sometimes forced to sell their children in order to pay it.<sup>593</sup> As a result of the hostility it invoked from traders and craftsmen towards the imperial office, Emperor Anastasios I (c. 430-518) abolished it completely in 498.<sup>594</sup> The *Chronicle* of Joshua the Stylite, composed in Syria around 507, reported that artisans and the general public rejoiced and celebrated annually, dressing up and parading through cities carrying candles and censers, singing, and praising God and Anastasios.<sup>595</sup> Evidence that the Byzantine state encouraged craft production by offering exemption from the *chrysargyron* shows that they believed that the tax inhibited productivity. The public opposition to the tax and the celebration of its abolition in the fifth century would corroborate this, as craftsmen obviously found the tax excessive and prohibitive.

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degustaverint. Quibus ut hoc gratum sit, tam ipsos quam eorum parentes ab his, quae personis iniungi solent, volumus esse immunes ipsisque qui discent salarium competens statui.; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 390.

<sup>592</sup> Cod. Theod., XIII, 4.4: *Picturae professores, si modo ingenui sunt, placuit neque sui capitis censione neque uxorum aut etiam liberorum nomine tributis esse munificos et ne servos quidem barbaros in censuali adscriptione profiteri, ad negotiatorum quoque collationem non devocari, si modo ea in mercibus habeant, quae sunt propria artis ipsorum.*; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 391.

<sup>593</sup> Evagrius Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 40-41, ed. by Bidex and Parmentier. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. II, p. 853.

<sup>594</sup> A. D. Lee, 'The Eastern Empire: Theodosius to Anastasius', in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIV, pp. 33-62 (p. 54).

<sup>595</sup> *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite: composed in Syriac A.D. 507 with a translation into English and notes by William Wright* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), p. 22.

It is important to contextualise this tax exemption. Craftsmen were not the only professionals to receive certain immunities. Various groups were offered exemptions from civic obligations and fiscal contributions. In 346, for instance, Constantine's son, Constantius II (317-361), decreed that the clergy were excused from paying the *chrysargyron* if they practiced a trade.<sup>596</sup> Veterans were offered cash grants if they took on a trade and were also exempt from the *chrysargyron* up to a limit of capital investment fixed at fifteen *solidi*.<sup>597</sup> That said, the exemption of artisans illustrates that the state encouraged craftsmen working in different media. Furthermore, the edict issued at Trier also ordered that magistrates should not order artists to paint '*sine mercede*', without payment.<sup>598</sup> In specifying that artists should be paid for the religious art they produced, the law infers that in some instances artists worked for free, seemingly at the request of local churches or governments.

Until the sixth century, the prices that artists could charge were not specified. This raised its own problems. In the fifth century, the emperors Leo I (c. 400-474) and Zeno (d. 491), in 472 and 483 respectively, prohibited monopolies in all professions.<sup>599</sup> The state, at least, believed that individuals and groups tried to control the supply and price of products. That successive emperors reaffirmed the bans of the late-fifth century may be testament to a legal system that was awash with duplications and contradictions, but it is also possible that edicts were repeatedly issued in response to a persistent violation of the law.<sup>600</sup> It is uncertain if artists, specifically those who painted religious images, organised themselves and arranged monopolies to control prices in this way. Nevertheless, icons were definitely commodities necessary for piety: paying reverence towards an icon was a part of private Christian practice and the sale of such items was also central to the economy.<sup>601</sup> It is logical to suppose that commodification of religious portraits prompted unease in the public who purchased them as well as the producers who made them, especially from the sixth century, when certain icons held a status akin to relics. The introduction of an edict that specified how much items should cost may be

<sup>596</sup> Cod. Theod., XVI, 2.10; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, pp. 118-19.

<sup>597</sup> Cod. Theod., VII, 20.9-10; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 181. Cod. Theod., XIII, 1.2 and 1.7; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 385.

<sup>598</sup> Cod. Theod., XIII, 4.4; trans. in *CRL*, vol. I, p. 391.

<sup>599</sup> Cod. Just., IV, 59.1-2, *CJC*, vol. II, p. 186.

<sup>600</sup> Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. I, p. 826.

<sup>601</sup> Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, 'Icons in the Liturgy', *DOP* 45 (1991), 45-57.

evidence that Byzantine officials recognised the dichotomy, and played a role in addressing the concerns it presented.

Justinian's sixth-century edict on the regulation of skilled labour addressed the prices that craftsmen charged for the work they produced.<sup>602</sup> Signed in 544, it adopted the tone of Emperor Diocletian's (b. 244 or 245?-d. 313 or 316) *Price Edict*.<sup>603</sup> Diocletian's edict applied to the Roman Empire from the beginning of the fourth century and set a list of maximum prices for a variety of goods and services. It also included the daily wages for craftsmen. It stipulated, for example, that mosaicists should be paid either fifty or sixty *denarii* per day. Different theories have been proposed to explain why some mosaicists were paid ten *denarii* per day more than others. Frank Sear related the wages to the surfaces that mosaics occupied, thus wall mosaicists were paid extra for the precarious nature of the task.<sup>604</sup> For Dunbabin however, it was the detail of a composition that determined how much a mosaicist would be paid.<sup>605</sup> The day wages of other craftsmen were higher still than those of the mosaicist: *pictor parietarius*, wall painters, were paid seventy-five *denarii* per day; *pictor imaginarius*, figure painters, were paid double that with added subsistence. The wage differences between wall and figure painters are significant and corroborate other evidence that there was a hierarchy between the two in the West in the early-fourth century.<sup>606</sup> Ling has stated that the varied wage limits reflect the social position of figure painters, both those who painted on walls and on wood, their 'talent and education', the nature of the scenes they painted, and the demand for their art at this time.<sup>607</sup> Equivalent evidence related to artists in the East does not exist.

At first glance, the usefulness of Justinian's edict seems limited by the absence of other evidence related to the price of art, or lack of comparable detail with Diocletian's *Price Edict*. In other words, it offers information but has no implication on understanding Early Byzantine artists. However, if the edict is cast in its sixth-century context, and analysed with a view understanding how Early Byzantine artists were

<sup>602</sup> *Edictum de Constitutione Artificum* (122), in *CJC*, vol. III, pp. 592-93.

<sup>603</sup> Diocletian, *Price Edict*, text with trans. by Elsa Rose Graser, in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. by Frank Tenney, 6 vols (Paterson, NJ: Pageant Books, 1933-40; repr. 1959), vol. V: *Rome and Italy of the Empire*, pp. 310-421. See: Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, vol. I, pp. 37-76.

<sup>604</sup> Frank B. Sear, *Roman Wall and Vault Mosaics* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle, 1977), p. 18.

<sup>605</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, p. 275.

<sup>606</sup> Burford, *Craftsmen*, p. 143.

<sup>607</sup> Roger Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; repr. 2006), p. 213.

perceived by their contemporaries, then it is highly relevant. The edict was imposed on anyone involved in various arts, as well as agriculturalists and seamen.<sup>608</sup> In its preface, the edict stated that the imperial office had been prompted to regulate prices and wages because the greediness, *pleonexia* (πλεονεξία), of craftsmen and labourers had made them inflate their prices. The breadth of the individuals that the edict addressed must have included painters. Ostensibly, the emperor considered some artists to be greedy.

Justinian's evaluation of artists echoed that of Diocletian, whose *Price Edict* identified 'avaritiae', avarice, as the root cause of excessive market prices.<sup>609</sup> A letter written in the early-second century by a member of a middle-ranking family in Roman Egypt also comments on greedy craftsmen.<sup>610</sup> Eudaimonis, writing to her daughter-in-law Aline, complained that workmen moved around the city in search of the highest wages. This private exchange between relatives can be taken as an account of craftsmen in a small province in Middle Egypt in Late Antiquity. Praising or criticising artists based on their commercial roles also occurred in antiquity. Plutarch's (c. 46-120) *Vita* of Cimon from the first century BC, for instance, describes the fifth-century BC artist Polognotos as: 'not a mere artisan', for he 'did not paint the stoa for a contract price, but gratis, out of zeal for the welfare of the city.'<sup>611</sup> In Plutarch's opinion, Polognotos raised himself from the status of 'common workmen' by dedicating his painted colonnade to the city; his motivation was to honour, not to earn.

Justinian's opinion may reflect a commonly-held belief passed down from antiquity, but placing avarice within a Christian context gives his criticism added significance. In the Bible, 'love of money', *philargyria* (φιλαργυρία), was the 'root of all evils'.<sup>612</sup> *Philargyria* and *pleonexia* (πλεονεξία), greed more generally, were sins.<sup>613</sup> Theologians, though initially in disagreement on the precise definition of the two terms, agreed that cupidity was evil and that desiring more money or possessions than were

<sup>608</sup> *Edictum de Constitutione Artificum* (122), in *CJC*, vol. III, pp. 592-93.

<sup>609</sup> Diocletian, *Price Edict*, in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. by Tenney, p. 313.

<sup>610</sup> P. Brem., 63, transcribed at <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.brem.;63> [accessed 18 May, 2011].

<sup>611</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Cimon*, IV, 6, text with trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, in *Lives*, 11 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1914-20; repr. 1937), vol. II: ὁ δὲ Πολύγνωτος οὐκ ἦν τῶν βαναύσων, οὐδ' ἀπ' ἐργολαβίας ἔγραφε τὴν στοάν, ἀλλὰ προῖκα, φιλοτιμούμενος πρὸς τὴν πόλιν.

<sup>612</sup> Timothy 6.10.

<sup>613</sup> *LSJ*, p. 758, 564. Richard Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 41 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 7.



sufficient led to apostasy from God. Early Christian thinkers such as the Cappadocian Fathers and John Chrysostom vigorously criticised greed in homilies and treatises that impelled the laity to exercise thrift and generosity.<sup>614</sup> Against this background, the language of Justinian's edict carries a deeper theological resonance.

Justinian's edict did not bring an end to issues caused by the financial aspect of craftsmanship. Icon production remained challenging; it was difficult to resolve the fact that icons, which could assist the faithful, could financially profit their makers. In the middle of the eighth century, the *Horos* of the Council of Hieria specifically criticised artists on the basis that they were motivated by 'sordid love of gain', *aisxrokerdeia* (αἰσχροκέρδεια).<sup>615</sup> Clearly, artists continued to be criticised for the commercial aspect to their craft. Evidence suggests that because both the Church and the state considered artists to be avaricious, when legends of ideal makers were invented, it was important to identify their reasons for painting. Early Byzantine references to ideal artists, architects, and authors emphasised that their *faith* had compelled them to paint, build, and write without payment.

Justinian's edict goes on to regulate patrons and customers, forbidding them from paying a higher than recommended price. Imperial price fixing was part of a wider scheme that regulated the cost of items and the wealth of citizens, reaffirming both the power that objects had in Early Byzantium and that patronage was linked to personal ambition.<sup>616</sup> John Chrysostom spoke of this as another sin, suggesting that self-fashioning through luxury objects was nothing new.<sup>617</sup> If anyone was found in breach of these edicts, it was the responsibility of the city prefect to levy a fine or subject the guilty to punishment.

It is important to be cautious when extending Justinian's critical opinion to artists who painted, and those who purchased, icons. Texts that describe icons refer to them as expressions of thanks or tools for Christian worship. Unlike buildings, ivories, and textiles, they were not just linked to their owner's self-promotion. Their financial market value could never have matched their priceless spiritual value. There is no

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<sup>614</sup> Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed*, pp. 26-46.

<sup>615</sup> *Horos*, Council of Hieria, ed. with trans. by Gero, in *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 74.

<sup>616</sup> Cutler, 'Art in Byzantine Society', p. 783.

<sup>617</sup> John Chrysostom, *De Inani Gloria*, 13, text with trans. by Malingrey.

evidence testifying to the motivations of artists, but it is clear that religious art was purchased for religious reasons. Considering the contact between craftsmen and consumers, it is plausible that artists were aware of why the public bought icons. The following section looks at who purchased art and why, to illustrate this point more fully.

#### THE ARTIST'S PUBLIC

A compelling incentive to buy religious art, or certainly the most prevalent reason preserved in texts, was that it offered the owner protection and power, and could be used to display their faith.<sup>618</sup> By the seventh century, the demand for icons must have been ubiquitous and constant because of who and what they represented for most Byzantines. The public were repeatedly told through speeches and stories that icons carried thaumaturgic capabilities. They came to venerate saints and adore God using images as conduits that worked as functional objects for their own safety and healing. The Church and the state also purchased art, and probably commissioned artists to paint icons for the same reasons. It is impossible to determine what the nature of the relationship between craftsmen and consumers was like with any historical confidence. The purpose here is to reaffirm the point that they had contact with each other, and to show that in some instances they may have worked together. One contract between a skilled worker and his employer survives, and introduces the idea that craftsmen could be employed for periods of time rather than particular tasks.<sup>619</sup> Regardless of how typical this arrangement was, it confirms there was an open dialogue between some craftsmen and their public. Through this interaction, craftsmen must have been aware that at the centre of most patronage of the arts was love for God, and also that the objects they produced could help a person's salvation. On balance, it is sensible to argue that this would have had an impact on how craftsmen, in particular artists who painted icons, approached their profession.

Universally, authors identified affection as the driving force behind the purchase of art and the patronage of buildings. The most commonly used Greek words for love

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<sup>618</sup> Brubaker, 'Elites and Patronage', pp. 63-90. Brubaker, 'The visualisation of gift giving', pp. 33-61. Cutler, 'Art in Byzantine Society', pp. 759-87. Post-iconoclastic patronage see: Dimitropoulou, 'Giving Gifts to God', pp. 161-70.

<sup>619</sup> P.Oxy., LI, 3641, transcribed at <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;51;3641/> [accessed 20 April 2011].

were *eros* (ἔρως), and *agape* (ἀγάπη).<sup>620</sup> Narrowing the two to particular types, *eros* referred to passionate, sometimes sexual, love, and *agape* referred to Christian love. In Byzantium, both carried religious meaning and were used interchangeably.<sup>621</sup> In relation to art, Michael Grammatikos, for example, described a portrait of the sixth-century orator and poet Agathias as a gift *of love* from his birthplace Myrina.<sup>622</sup> The portrait was said to be a manifestation of *storge* (στοργή), another term for love, and a testimony to the devotion felt by the citizens of Myrina towards the rhetor and his family. Early Byzantine epigrams about images of courtesans and dancing girls suggest that commissioning secular portraiture, which may or may not have existed, could potentially have been motivated by passion too. There are examples found in the literary collection of the *Greek Anthology*, one of which relates that a certain Thomas was goaded by *eros*, passionate love, to set up a portrait of a harlot to display his permanent ardour for her.<sup>623</sup>

Art was used as an agent through which intangible ‘love’ could be displayed, including that felt towards holy people and God. In the fourth century, for example, Eusebios explained that the Constantine built churches and furnished their interiors with expensive materials because he was overwhelmed by ‘divine love’, *theios eros* (θεῖος ἔρως).<sup>624</sup> Similarly, referring to Bishop Agnellus’s (487-570) decoration of the church of S. Martin the Confessor (S. Apollinare Nuovo) in Ravenna, the author wrote that the bishop adorned an altar cloth with the story of the Magi on account of his affection for them.<sup>625</sup> Evidently, authors repeatedly stressed that the sponsorship of art was prompted by love, and that art could then serve as a public testimony to that devotion.

A sermon on the Rich Man and Lazarus by Asterios of Amaseia suggests that adoration could be misguided and channelled in an unacceptable fashion.<sup>626</sup> The text criticised wealthy men and women who wore vestments embroidered with scenes from

<sup>620</sup> *LSJ*, pp. 272-73. Averil Cameron, ‘Sacred and Profane Love: Thoughts on Byzantine Gender’, in *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. by Liz James (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-23 (pp. 7-17). See also: Averil Cameron, ‘Desire in Byzantium – the Ought and the Is’, in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-first Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1997*, ed. by Liz James, SPBS, 6 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 205-13.

<sup>621</sup> Averil Cameron, ‘Sacred and Profane Love’, p. 7.

<sup>622</sup> Michael the Grammarian, *Anthologia Graeca*, XVI, 316.

<sup>623</sup> Agathias, *Anthologia Graeca*, XVI, 80.

<sup>624</sup> Eusebios, *VC*, III, 49.

<sup>625</sup> Agnellus, *De Agnello*, 88, *LPER*.

<sup>626</sup> Asterios, *Homilia 1*, *PG 40*, 165-68.

the life of Christ. Asterios acknowledged that they had intended to exhibit their Christian love and devotion, but he deemed it an improper display, and asked them to sell their clothes. The presence of Gospel imagery on woven textiles was not unusual. Biblical scenes were also depicted on wall mosaics, ivories, metal work, and wall paintings. This variety of media suggests that the public responded to the story depicted irrespective of the material on which it was presented.<sup>627</sup>

Orations and panegyrics made clear to listeners the connection between a patron's love of God and the art he or she sponsored. In addition, artists were probably familiar with the motives of consumers through the open dialogue they had with them. Objects that include the portraits of their donors, as well as inscriptions that refer to the people who paid for them, testify that some individuals and groups gave instructions to craftsmen. This came into fashion most prominently after Iconoclasm, but did exist beforehand. *Ex voto* icons, like that of St Peter [fig. 5], show that individuals told artists to paint their own portraits alongside those of holy figures. Similar examples existed in churches, at the Ursiana church in Ravenna, for example, there was a portrait and commemorative inscription of Victor, the priest who had financed its construction.<sup>628</sup> In Gaza, the apse mosaic in the church of St Sergios, had at its centre an image of the Virgin and Child, and included portraits of Stephen and Marcian, the governor and bishop of Palestine, who 'built' the church.<sup>629</sup>

It is unclear how these patrons and craftsmen worked together in terms of their relationship, the division of responsibility, and who had control over the composition and the style of a mosaic, icon, or other work of art. A case can be made that, in Italy at least, theologians and bishops had a strong input on the decorative planning of churches.<sup>630</sup> But there is nothing to suggest that craftsmen in the Eastern Mediterranean were given similarly direct instructions. Although it is not possible to be certain *how* patrons and craftsmen worked together, material evidence shows that they *did* work together.

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<sup>627</sup> Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, p. 97.

<sup>628</sup> Agnellus, *De Victore*, 66, *LPER*.

<sup>629</sup> See: Maguire, 'Eufasius and Friends', p. 156.

<sup>630</sup> It has been argued that the church of S. Maria in Antiqua, Rome, was planned by theologians, see: Corrigan, 'The Witness of John the Baptist', 1-11 (p. 8). On the Greek influence in Rome at this time see: Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon*, pp. 100-7. The letters between Paulinus of Nola and Sulpicius Severus that are concerned with church decoration support the theory that they passed on their tastes and expectations to craftsmen.

Only one employment contract involving a craftsman survives and is found in the collection of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*.<sup>631</sup> This contract can be used to understand the relationship between one craftsman and his employer.<sup>632</sup> Written in 544, the contract outlines the terms and conditions of a craftsman employed by the Apion dynasty. It names Aurelius Serenus as a millstone cutter, who was contractually bound to the family for his lifetime to provide new mill-parts. It stipulated that if Serenus broke the contract he had to pay a fine, unless the reason behind the contractual breaking was poor health, and that if the Apion family broke the contract they had to pay him compensation to the same value. This arrangement suggests that Serenus held a strong position in the contractual arrangement.<sup>633</sup> The economic organisation of Egypt was quite different to the rest of Byzantium and therefore the condition of this contract cannot be used as a model for the rest of the empire.

However, from the fourth century, there is evidence that wealthy individuals employed other types of craftsmen, such as copyists and carpenters, for a long period rather than a one-off commission. Therefore, the arrangement between the millstone cutter and the Apion family may have been typical. Libanios, for example, regularly maintained professional copyists to transcribe books.<sup>634</sup> His fondness for his scribes, revealed in some of his letters and orations, attest to the long periods that they worked for him.<sup>635</sup> Though few in number, privately maintained copyists were part of wealthy households.<sup>636</sup> The wording in a letter, written sometime between 425 and 450, suggests that the theologian Theodoret of Cyrrhus maintained a carpenter.<sup>637</sup> The letter was sent to inform Isocasios, a professor, that a carpenter called Gerontios had been despatched to him. Theodoret described the carpenter as excellent and highly skilled, to which he added that he would need the carpenter returned for his own service. Describing Gerontios in this way, and clearly in the position to send the craftsman from Aleppo to Antioch, Theodoret may be revealing that the carpenter was his employee. It is possible to infer that in employing craftsmen for life, élite individuals and families expected

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<sup>631</sup> P.Oxy., LI, 3641, transcribed at <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;51;3641/> [accessed 20 April 2011].

<sup>632</sup> Discussed in: Sarris, *Economy and Society*, pp. 50-70. Lee, 'The Eastern Empire: Theodosius to Anastasius', p. 58.

<sup>633</sup> Lee, 'The Eastern Empire: Theodosius to Anastasius', p. 58.

<sup>634</sup> A. F. Norman, 'The Book Trade in Fourth Century Antioch', *JHS*, 80 (1960), 122-26 (p. 123).

<sup>635</sup> Libanios, *Oratio 1*, 43, 184-85, text with trans. by Norman.

<sup>636</sup> Norman, 'The Book Trade in Fourth Century Antioch', pp. 123-24.

<sup>637</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Epistola 38*, 34, text with trans. by Yvan Azéma, *Théodore de Cyr, Correspondance*, SC, 40, 98, 111, 3 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1955-65), vol. I, pp. 102-3.

work, and arranged contracts to have a skilled craftsman available to them when necessary.

Because of the nature of Aurelius Serenus's craft, and specifications of the contract to repair and maintain millstones across the estate, the contract may seem too distant from the craft of painting and therefore irrelevant to this discussion of the artist. But, the existence of the contract, as well as evidence of the scribes that Libanios employed and the carpenter Gerontios, can be interpreted to show that craftsmen were contracted for terms rather than particular tasks and may have been commonplace. A letter written by Gregory of Nyssa to Amphilochios confirms that contracts existed in other crafts, and that they were sometimes broken.<sup>638</sup> Gregory's letter made it clear that mobile craftsmen were necessary for the construction of a church, and that they would receive shelter, food, and payment for their work.

It is important to note that none of the aforementioned sources relate to icon production. The popularity of icons meant that artists did not necessarily need to wait for formal requests to paint, and the portability of icons meant that artists did not need to travel. But it is necessary to balance the previous examination of edicts that regulated independent craftsmen, with evidence that, on some occasions, craftsmen were employed.

Whether contracted or not, craftsmen were always closely connected with the public to whom they sold their wares. It is inconceivable that craftsmen were unaware that individuals from every level of society wanted religious art for religious reasons. Surviving evidence of devotional objects found by archaeological excavations, as well as descriptions of objects by authors, demonstrate that artists met the demands of the public. The contents of edicts that organised prices and production, as well as the evidence of shops and spaces dedicated to making objects further substantiate this. So too do Church canons issued to regulate relics and art, which responded to the proliferation of objects by craftsmen. Texts that condemn the public's demand, such as the *Vita* of Daniel the Stylite, the homily by Asterios of Amaseia, and another by John

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<sup>638</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistola 25 ad Amphilochius*, PG 46, 1093-100.

Chrysostom, also testify to the popularity and use of art and objects by the faithful.<sup>639</sup> Of course, artists must have been consumers as well as producers, compelled to own icons themselves. In light of this, the motivations for making art must be re-examined. Reducing artistic motivation to the desire or the need for economic gain, as Justinian's edict and *Horos* of the Council of Hieria incline us to do, is too simplistic to account for why objects, especially icons, were made. In the following chapter I will argue that those who painted icons were, like those who purchased them, spiritually motivated.

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<sup>639</sup> *Vita S. Daniel*, 12, in *Les Saints Stylites*, ed. by Delehay. Asterios, *Homilia 1*, PG 40, 165-68. Cutler, 'The Right Hand's Cunning', p. 981. John Chrysostom, *De Inani Gloria*, 13-15, text with trans. by Malingrey.

## CHAPTER SIX

SACRED PASSION TO PIOUS IMITATION:<sup>640</sup> SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION

Icons were commodities that were sold to generate income, and bought by those who wished to display their faith. However, financial rewards and security, which were enshrined in law by edicts that regulated the production of crafts, were by-products of what was principally a spiritually-motivated act. At first, this may seem inconsistent with the texts that make disparaging remarks about artists.<sup>641</sup> Vitriolic criticisms would surely have been inappropriate if authors believed artists were motivated by their faith. However, there are, in fact, far more examples of authors referring to artists favourably, even as metaphors for Christian doctrine, than there are examples of unfavourable comments about the profession. Indeed, Christian writers, who were keen to display their own faith that motivated them, often used painting as an analogy for their own act of writing. Quite possibly, it was a combination of the love for God, humility, piety, and mimetic performance that artists displayed and the public observed, which meant that painters could be used as metaphors, as theologians repeatedly did.<sup>642</sup> The use of the artist as a metaphor to communicate doctrine would have been inappropriate if the profession was held in little or no regard.

To return to the ideas of love and humility, but in a different context, I propose that there were two aspects to this spiritual motivation. They were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first aspect was that individuals could display their piety through artistic practice, which they may have viewed as a religious activity. At its most basic level, this was because the prolonged contemplation of the subject needed for an icon to be painted benefited artists. In order to produce a portrait with verisimilitude, artists needed to reproduce the outer and inner essence of their subjects. As descriptions of artists studying their models have shown, resemblance was achieved through observation and reflection. Profound meditation meant that their souls were ‘engraved’ with the holy image of the subject. Finished icons were then a tangible product of that

<sup>640</sup> Vita S. John Eleemon, I, by Leontios of Neapolis, ed. by Festugière and Rydén, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, p. 257; trans. by Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver* (London: Blackwell, 1948), p. 199.

<sup>641</sup> For example: Epiphanius, *Testament*, ed. by Ostrogorsky, in *Studien zur Geschichte*, fragments 2, 6, and 7, pp. 67-69. *Horos*, Council of Hieria, ed. with trans. by Gero, in *Byzantine Iconoclasm*.

<sup>642</sup> For example: John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catechesis* 2, PG 49, 233. John Chrysostom, *De Inani Gloria*, 22, text with trans. by Malingrey.



sustained contemplation and deep understanding. The icons that artists painted then served the broader Christian public who could venerate holy people through portraits.

The second aspect of the spiritual process was that once the story that Luke had been a painter was known, individuals produced images as part of an act of imitation, a practice that the early Church encouraged. Painting portraits of the Virgin and Child meant that artists cultivated their own holiness by re-enacting an aspect of Luke's biography. If artists considered their profession in this way, then they could have understood painting an icon as a deeply religious act, rather than a way to make money. Much later and in the West, in his eleventh-century *The Various Arts*, Theophilus Presbyter (fl. c. 1070-1125) emphasised that making art was inextricably linked to spirituality.<sup>643</sup> In the preface to his book, he made clear that making works of art that pleased God, and offering them to Him, filled the craftsman's heart with the Spirit of God.<sup>644</sup> Much more recently, the prominent twentieth-century iconographer Fotis Kontoglou (1895-1965) wrote that only those who lived ascetically, with humility, and had a special sensibility, could be entrusted to paint icons.<sup>645</sup> Although it was never articulated quite as clearly as this in Early Byzantium, there are subtle indications that artists could have had a similar view towards their own practices.

Love of God was the greatest spiritual virtue, and it motivated painters.<sup>646</sup> The belief that love of the subject motivated individuals to *make* art, as well as to buy art, dates back to antiquity. It was love, Pliny wrote, that compelled Praxiteles (fl. c. 375-330 BC) to paint Phyrne as Venus in the fourth century BC.<sup>647</sup> Early Byzantine texts also describe works of art as objects that were inspired by love, implying that they were seen to display not only a donor's love, but an artist's love too. Of course, the love of Praxiteles for Phyrne was different in nature to the love of the faithful for God. In a letter to Titus the hierarch, Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite sought to resolve the awkward similarities between the experience and expression of lascivious love and

<sup>643</sup> Theophilus, *De Diversis Artibus*, ed. with trans. by William C. R. Dodwell (London: T. Nelson, 1961).

<sup>644</sup> Theophilus, *De Diversis Artibus*, III, preface, ed. with trans. by Dodwell.

<sup>645</sup> Fotis Kontoglou, *Εκφρασις της Ορθόδοξου Εικονογραφίας* (Athens: Papadimitriou, 1979). See: Constantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Thought and Art: A Collection of Essays* (Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1968), p. 37.

<sup>646</sup> I Corinthians 13.13.

<sup>647</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXXV, 117-20. Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, pp. 116-19.

Godly love.<sup>648</sup> In the same letter, Pseudo-Dionysios accepted that visual symbols could be used to understand God.<sup>649</sup> By extension, it could also have been appropriate for the faithful to paint icons resulting from their love for God. Towards the end of the Early Byzantine period, writers expressed with greater clarity the idea that icons were indeed the product of an *artist's* love. In the eighth century, John of Damascus was clear that authors wrote about the lives of saints, just as artists painted portraits of saints, because they loved them and wanted to perpetuate their memory.<sup>650</sup> Love maintained and strengthened its relationship with imagery after Iconoclasm, and is referred to with greater frequency from the Middle Byzantine period on.

Early Byzantine artists left no explanations as to why they painted icons, so it is necessary to look at the motivations of other individuals. Because Early Byzantine writers like Eusebios and John of Damascus likened the act of writing to the act of painting, it seems that authorship and artistry were perceived to have shared processes, objectives, and similar motivations behind their production.<sup>651</sup> Religious writers explicitly credited their personal love for holy figures as their principal motivation; John Chrysostom, for instance, described himself as 'burning up with love for the man [Paul].'<sup>652</sup> Chrysostom wrote that in addition to motivating him, his affection for the apostle gave him the capacity to write and guaranteed that he did so truthfully.<sup>653</sup>

The relationship between truth and love was consistent with Lucian's earlier description of two artists, Aeschines and Socrates, that were, for him, the finest copyists because they painted with love.<sup>654</sup> The implication from Lucian, and more importantly Chrysostom, was that if an author or artist loved their subject, then the resulting verbal- or visual-portrait would be accurate.<sup>655</sup> This reinforces why artists who painted icons had to be Christian: their love motivated them and guaranteed that their portraits were truthful. The descriptions of artists studying subjects from life and painting an accurate

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<sup>648</sup> P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Letter 9*, PG 3, 1104-13. Also: P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 2, PG 3, 373.

<sup>649</sup> P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Letter 9*, PG 3, 1105.

<sup>650</sup> John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniators orationes tres*, I, 23, PG 94, 1344.

<sup>651</sup> Eusebios, VC, I, 10. John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniators orationes tres*, I, 23, PG 94, 1344.

<sup>652</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Genesis 11*, 5, PG 53, 95: Ἐκκαίομαι γὰρ εἰς τὸν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς πόθον; trans. in Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 21.

<sup>653</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos, Argumentum*, I, PG 60, 391.

<sup>654</sup> Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture*, 17. See: Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 25.

<sup>655</sup> Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 25.

likeness supports this, because they stress the importance of conveying the ineffable essence of the individual that could only be ‘seen’ and achieved through contemplation.

Most significant, is that in response to his love for Paul, John Chrysostom composed texts, so the importance of spiritual passion is in relation to the act of writing rather than the final written composition. Following Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus wrote that he had blessed himself by writing and reciting the lives of holy men.<sup>656</sup> In modern scholarship, sacred texts, art, and music are often discussed in relation to the spiritual significance they hold, overlooking the spiritual significance of the process of writing, painting, and composing, which Chrysostom and Theodoret highlighted. Authors considered writing to be a spiritual activity, and it was much more than a ‘means to an end’: writing was a Christian performance in itself. Evagrius Scholastikos and Dorotheos of Gaza (c. 500-d. between 560 and 580), both described the practice of writing as an exercise of devotion and shared Chrysostom’s sentiment.<sup>657</sup> The act of painting an icon should be seen as an alternative form of Christian activity that exercised and displayed the faith of the individual who performed it. If other religious activities, such as psalmody, pilgrimages, and rituals associated with religious objects are considered, then it is clear that for the early Church and the faithful, *actions* benefited the soul. Indeed, the word ‘ascetic’ comes from the Greek *askesis* (ἄσκησις), meaning ‘exercise’ or ‘training’.<sup>658</sup>

The Bible stressed that the most immediate way to gain knowledge of God was through action, marking the Christian origins of this belief. The apostle Paul, for example, advised the Ephesians to *sing* in order to gain knowledge: ‘And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.’<sup>659</sup> It was therefore preferable for Christians to be active rather than passive in their faith, in this instance to sing. Psalmody was encouraged, Athanasios (295-373), for instance, wrote that psalmodising quelled sadness and calmed the soul.<sup>660</sup> Basil the Great later repeated these words, and he promoted chanting and singing as gateways to

<sup>656</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, vii: Palladius, 4, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. I.

<sup>657</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 94-109.

<sup>658</sup> *LSJ*, p. 108.

<sup>659</sup> Ephesians 5.18-19.

<sup>660</sup> Athanasios, *Epistola ad Marcellinum*, PG 27, 40.

union with God.<sup>661</sup> The importance of psalmody was enshrined by the Church in canon seventy-five of the Quinisext Council, the same council that regulated images for the first time.<sup>662</sup> This reinforced the equivalence of ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’ that had been recorded in the Bible.<sup>663</sup> It is feasible that artists were aware that performing was superior to observing, as there is considerable evidence that this idea was successfully communicated to the public.

Pilgrimages show that the wider population understood that activity was a necessity.<sup>664</sup> The importance of physical contact with a saint compelled Christians to visit *loca sancta*. The popularity of pilgrimages demonstrates that the public responded to the ‘call to action’ by visiting religious sites, where they performed some activity in front of holy objects or at holy places. The Piacenza pilgrim, for one, described *bathing* at the river Jordan, *reclining* on a couch at the valley of Gethsemane, and *drinking* out of the Cup of the Apostles, in order to receive a blessing.<sup>665</sup> His *Travels* draws attention to the idea that in addition to the movement from one site to the next, the faithful were obliged to perform physical activities in order to establish a connection with the saint, the presence of whom resided at a specific site or within a specific object, and gain lasting benefit from it. The rituals known to have been performed by the faithful as part of everyday Christian worship in Early Byzantium, including the use of censers, bowing, kissing, as well as the Eucharist, reinforce the point that the faithful were expected to participate.<sup>666</sup>

Hagiographies were particularly useful in encouraging the public to get involved, as they narrated stories where pietistic practice led to miracles and intercession by the saints. In Evagrios’ sixth-century *Ecclesiastical History* for example, Zosimos’s prayers were answered *after* he used a censer, prayed, and supplicated.<sup>667</sup> The story emphasised that Zosimos had pleased God by actively demonstrating his

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<sup>661</sup> Basil the Great, *Letter 2*, text with trans. by Roy Joseph Deferrari, *The Letters*, 4 vols, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1926-34), vol. I.

<sup>662</sup> Canon seventy-five, Quinisext Council, ed. by Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. II, p. 60.

<sup>663</sup> Matthew 13.16-17. Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, p. 116.

<sup>664</sup> Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, p. 3.

<sup>665</sup> Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, 11, 17, 22, ed. by Geyer, *Itineraria*, pp. 161, 163, 165.

<sup>666</sup> Proskynesis evidence see: Hypatios of Ephesus, *Fragment of “Miscellaneous Enquiries”*, in Diekamp, *Analecta patrisca*. Piacenza pilgrim, *Itinerarium*, ed. by Geyer, in *Itineraria*, pp. 127-54. Discussed by Kitzinger, ‘The Cult of Images’, p. 108. On the sources see: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>667</sup> Evagrios Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 7, ed. by Bidex and Parmentier.

faith. Clearly, the Church encouraged Christians to be active rather than passive. On this basis, as well as the evidence that the Bible stated that singing was *better* than listening to song, and that the early Church Fathers considered writing as *better* than reading a text, I propose that painting was *better* than seeing an icon.

Painting is different to psalmody and writing in medium alone. The act of painting an icon could well have been an alternative form of Christian practice that exercised and displayed the faith of the individual who performed it. This is corroborated by Asterios's homily that described a picture of the martyrdom of Euphemia, where he implied that the artist *expressed* his piety by painting the image.<sup>668</sup> The process of producing this painting was a performance of love that was both significant and spiritual for its artist. Such an image, and of course icons, then prompted the viewer to exercise their own spirituality by way of *aspasmos* (ἄσπασμός), meaning greeting, and *proskynesis* (προσκύνησις), meaning prostrating, before it. Such practices may be considered as an extension of Athanasios's remark about chanting; that people did so with their minds as well as their mouths.<sup>669</sup> In this context, painting an icon is more than mechanical production by hand; it involved the artist's pious spirit and knowledge of God.

It is important to understand that for early Christians, love, at its root, was more than strong affection, it was a yearning for *theosis*, divinisation.<sup>670</sup> Participating in the image of God was the ultimate goal for the faithful.<sup>671</sup> The idea of a path to God was vividly explained in the seventh century by John Klimax (b. before 579-d. c. 650), in his widely known text entitled *The Heavenly Ladder*.<sup>672</sup> The work set out thirty sequential steps that led the faithful up to perfection, which revolved around practicing Christian virtues (like humility) and avoiding vices (like greed) [illustrated in fig. 13].

<sup>668</sup> Asterios, *Oratio 11*, PG 40, 336B. Webb, 'Accomplishing the Picture', p. 27.

<sup>669</sup> Athanasios, *Epistola ad Marcellinum*, PG 27, 40-41.

<sup>670</sup> First established by: Origen, *In Canticum Canticorum*, prologue, PG 13, 62-3. Cited and discussed by: Averil Cameron, 'Sacred and Profane Love', pp. 11-12.

<sup>671</sup> Psalm 82.6. II Peter 1.4. Athanasios, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 54, PG 25, 192B. P. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Divine Names*, PG 3, 712.

<sup>672</sup> John Klimax, *The Heavenly Ladder*, ed. by Pietro Trevisan, *S. Giovanni Climaco, Scala Paradisi*, Corona Patrum Salesiana, Series Graeca, 8, 9, 2 vols (Turin: Società editrice internazionale, 1941). John Duffy, 'Embellishing the Steps: Elements of Presentation and Style in *The Heavenly Ladder* of John Climacus', *DOP* 53 (1999), 1-17.



Figure 13: Heavenly Ladder of John Klimax, twelfth century, tempera and gold on panel, 41.3 x 29.9 x 2.1 cm, Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

There are three stages to union with God, the first of which is purification, *katharsis* (κάθαρσις). Moving through the stages required practice, *praxis* (πράξις). For Gregory of Nazianzos, *praxis* could take many different forms including prayer,

meditation, witness, and praise.<sup>673</sup> Writing was one form of *praxis* that seems to have motivated Theodoret of Cyrrhus who, in the closing passage of his *Vita* of St Domnina, asked the saint to draw him up the stages of understanding to the summit.<sup>674</sup> Theodoret clearly believed that writing offered him the opportunity to scale what John Klimax would later refer to as the ‘ladder’, and participate with the divine.

Painting an icon could offer an alternative route to God, and may have appealed especially to the illiterate. John Chrysostom used an artist painting a portrait as a metaphor for the process of purifying one’s soul.<sup>675</sup> Since artists relied on sight, and vision could be cleansing, painting a religious portrait then appears as a form of *praxis* at the first stage towards divinisation. Artists painted portraits by looking at their model, a saint for example, through both their eyes and their minds. They ‘saw’ the saint because he or she had emanated rays, which hurtled into their eyes and stamped themselves onto the viewer’s soul. These rays impressed themselves into the inner body of the artist where they remained. Because the source of those rays was holy, and conveyed within their energy the whole of the saint, the imprint was purifying. The sight of the saint transformed the inner body of artists, who were cleansed by the act of seeing and being seen.

*Praxis* could not be unilateral; it had to be cooperative between a person and the Holy Spirit. Sight was similarly multilateral, relying on emission of rays from the ‘seen’ to enter the eye of the viewer. In addition, painting was not an independent act; it was a cooperative act between the artist and God. Holy-human cooperation was not clearly expressed with regard to artists in Early Byzantium, but that may simply have been because the belief that God was the Ultimate Creator was universal and needed no further comment. For the public, everything was attributable to God rather than to man, so it was implicit that the artist painted with some divine energy working through him. So, for *praxis* to be true, it had to involve participation between human beings and God. Both ‘seeing’ and painting were perceived to be cooperative, reliant on the artist and the

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<sup>673</sup> Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oratio* 27 (*First Theological Oration*), PG 36, 16. Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oratio* 20 (*On Theology and the Appointment of Bishops*), 12, PG 35, 1080.

<sup>674</sup> Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Philotheos Historia*, XXX: Domnina, 8, ed. by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, vol. II.

<sup>675</sup> John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catechesis* 2, PG 49, 1173-76.



Holy working together. It was therefore an exercise that could be legitimately defined as a form of *praxis*.

The *praxis* of painting was amplified by that seen within the model. In order to paint a truthful portrait, artists had to convey the inner likeness and the outer resemblance of the sitter. Painting from life achieved the latter, but the former required artists to know the sitter well. As they painted, artists may have contemplated the life of the saint they portrayed who had already achieved communion with God. This could have included recalling the ascetic life a saint had led, the visitations they had received from Jesus, their seclusion, and the miracles they had performed. In so doing, artists did not limit their recollection to the life of a saint, but extended their contemplation to recall the life of Jesus, and ultimately the existence of God. This is consistent with descriptions of relics, in which those who saw a fragment of the True Cross, for instance, recalled not just the Passion, but the whole of the life of Christ. So as artists painted, artists contemplated. The result of sustained and prolonged meditation was the second stage to *theosis*, called *theoria*, or illumination.

In Greek, *theoria* (θεωρία), meant ‘looking at, beholding, or viewing’.<sup>676</sup> ‘Seeing’ was done by the *nous* (νοῦς), ‘eye of the mind or heart’, rather the physical eye, but theories of extra- and intromission make it hard to separate the two. To be clear: *theoria* did not refer solely to, or require, the physiological process of sight understood in today’s terms. The connection being made between *theoria* and the process of painting an icon is not based on the idea that artists ‘viewed’ holy figures in order to paint them, thereby entering the second stage. Painting led to *theoria* because Early Byzantines understood images to be symbols. As symbols, images were part of what was represented and contained within themselves the whole of the archetype. Images may abbreviate a narrative or a life, but the eye of the Byzantine immediately recalled the whole narrative, the whole life, and experienced it. Artists in particular needed to recollect in this way in order to paint a ‘true likeness’.

It is reasonable to think that artists engaged with religious practices outside of art. In preparation for painting a religious image, artists may have read the Bible, heard

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<sup>676</sup> *LSJ*, p. 317.



sermons, sung psalms, and visited holy sites. Despite there being no evidence of artists doing so, almost all early Christians engaged in one or more of these religious activities, so it is logical to think that painters did too. These rituals are other examples of *praxis* that could lead to *theosis*. If artists held in their minds theories of vision when they thought of the process of painting, then they must have considered it to be a particularly immediate mode of *praxis*. Physiological vision led to spiritual vision, the final stage of deification.

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The relationship between love and icons is complicated. They are two elements within an intricate matrix of Christian belief, practice, and ritual. Icons emerged in response to love and then generated more love that required more images. Artists were motivated by their own love for God, as well as that of the public. Another dimension to their spiritual motivation is concerned with imitation of a holy figure and will now be explored. Ancient ethical and pedagogical theory was based on the premise that learning was achieved through the imitation of ideal figures.<sup>677</sup> With the advent of the legend that Luke painted the Virgin and Child from life, which may date to the sixth century, artists could model themselves on the Evangelist to live *in imitation of Luke*. For people already living in the Evangelist's image, artistry may have been incorporated into their lives.

The concept of imitating exemplary people was first theorised in antiquity by Aristotle who wrote that 'human beings learn their first lessons by imitation'.<sup>678</sup> Modelling was integral to Christianity as humans were modelled on God.<sup>679</sup> However, doctrine held that after the Fall, humankind lost the moral and spiritual values of God. To return to their prelapsarian state and to share in His image, humankind was required to imitate Christ. Imitating figures that were religiously exemplary was another *praxis*

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<sup>677</sup> For training methods see: Donald L. Clark, 'Imitation: Theory and Practice in Roman Rhetoric', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 37 (1951), 11-22.

<sup>678</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, III, 4.2, text with trans. by Stephen Halliwell, Loeb (London: Heinemann, 1995): τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας. On imitation in literature see: Hunger, 'On the Imitation', pp. 15-38. Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 25.

<sup>679</sup> Genesis 1.26. See also: Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio*, PG 46, 128. Repeating: Basil the Great, *Homilia 19*, PG 31, 507-26.

for the faithful.<sup>680</sup> Similarities between authorship of parts of the Old Testament and authorship of the Gospels demonstrated that the Four Evangelists had modelled themselves on earlier biblical figures who served as early paradigms. In his analysis of religious authorship in Byzantium, Krueger cited the apocryphal example of John, who dictated to his Acts to Prochoros, thereby imitating Jeremiah, who had dictated the Word to Baruch.<sup>681</sup> This is a very subtle example and it is possible that the public did not make the connection between the two. A clearer instance concerns John Klimax, who, having written *The Heavenly Ladder*, was presented as a new Moses by his biographer Daniel.<sup>682</sup> Speeches that were delivered in churches, supply ample evidence of the faithful being given instructions on imitating holy men and women.

Theologians used artists as a metaphor to explain modelling to the faithful, and identified the apostles as paragons of virtue to follow. Basil the Great for example, in his letter to Gregory of Nazianzos, described saints as living imitable examples.<sup>683</sup> *Vitae* of martyrs and saints often described how they had imitated Christ and other holy figures during their lifetime.<sup>684</sup> Central to those of Augustine by Possidius (c. 370-440), Martin by Sulpicius Severus, and Ambrose by Paulinus of Milan (fourth-fifth centuries), was this idea that the saints provided an ascetic model to the reader and the Church.<sup>685</sup> Saints's *Vitae* offered a range of ways for the public to model themselves on their ascetic lives: by fasting, being celibate, and exercising self-control. They were used to influence society by changing behaviour.<sup>686</sup> Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita* of Makrina, for example, was a model for asceticism and the rejection of wealth and status for those who read it.<sup>687</sup> For the illiterate, both the Church and the state promoted models through speeches that celebrated specific saints and encouraged the public to imitate them. The faithful were repeatedly asked to imitate exemplary martyrs, rather than just celebrate their lives. Theologians in the East also specified certain apostles on which to model

<sup>680</sup> Expressed in a letter by Basil the Great, *Letter 269 to the wife of Ariathaeus, the General, in Consolation*, text with trans. by Deferrari, in *The Letters*, vol. IV.

<sup>681</sup> Prochoros, *Acts of John*, 154-55. Jeremiah 36.4. Discussed in: Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p. 37.

<sup>682</sup> *Vita* of John Klimax, by Daniel, ed. by Trevisan, *S. Giovanni Climaco, Scala Paradisi*, vol. I, pp. 17-19.

<sup>683</sup> Basil the Great, *Letter 2*, text with trans. by Deferrari, *The Letters*, vol. I.

<sup>684</sup> For example: *Vita S. Theodore of Sykeon*, 19, by Georgius Presbyter, ed. by Festugière. *Martyrs of Lyons, 2*, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 82-83. *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*, 14, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 228-29.

<sup>685</sup> *Vita S. Augustine*, by Possidius, *PG* 32, 33-66. *Vita S. Martin*, by Sulpicius Severus, *PL* 20, 159-76. *Vita S. Ambrose*, by Paulinus of Milan, ed. by Michele Pellegino (Rome: Editrice Studium, [1961]).

<sup>686</sup> Drijvers, 'Hellenistic and Oriental Origins', p. 28.

<sup>687</sup> *Vita S. Makrina*, by Gregory of Nyssa, *PG* 46, 959-1000. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 110-32.

oneself. John Chrysostom, for instance, implored Christians to take Paul as the perfect exemplar of virtue and imitate him.<sup>688</sup> This idea was then reinforced by visual representations, usually in the form of portraits, and feast-days that celebrated specific individuals.

Living people were also models, especially for those who neither read religious texts nor heard sermons. Alexander, a martyr of Lyons, for example, was said to have been well known because of his love of God, and was likened to the apostles because he preached the Word.<sup>689</sup> The presence of monks and hermits in communities and their peripheries served as living breathing examples for Christians, as did emperors.<sup>690</sup> In addition to being exemplars, emperors modelled themselves on God and in so doing demonstrated imitation to the public. The emperor imitated Jesus by presenting himself as charitable and as a lawgiver. As early as the fourth century, authors made direct links between the holy figures and the emperor: Constantine's victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 was compared to Moses leading the Israelites in the Exodus against the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea.<sup>691</sup> Grand building schemes like those conducted by Constantine and Justinian in the fourth and sixth centuries were 'modelling in action'. In both instances, texts inferred that emperors modelled themselves on the biblical narrative of King Solomon. Claudia Rapp has suggested that modelling occurred at court-level too, with individuals re-enacting the actions of pious individuals whose lives they knew.<sup>692</sup> Widespread in the late-fourth century was the idea that sins could be erased if one confessed to them in a written document and gave it to a holy man. Many authors included a variation of this tradition in hagiographies.<sup>693</sup> Because of their popularity and the public presence of monks, it is likely that individuals imitated such legends, and that monks fulfilled the role of the holy man.

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<sup>688</sup> John Chrysostom, *Epistolam ad Romanos*, *Homilia* 32, PG 60, 682.

<sup>689</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons*, 1.49, text with trans. by Musurillo, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>690</sup> Brown, 'The Rise and Function', pp. 80-101. The self-mortification of the likes of Symeon the Stylite the Elder in the fifth century was an example of extreme asceticism, see his *Vita*, in *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, ed. Paul Bedjan, 7 vols (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890-97), vol. IV.

<sup>691</sup> Eusebios, VC, I, 38. Exodus 15.5. Hunger, 'State and Society in Byzantium', p. 200.

<sup>692</sup> Claudia Rapp, 'Safe-conducts to Heaven: Holy Men, Mediation and the Role of Writing', in *Transformations of Late Antiquity*, ed. by Rousseau and Papoutsakis, pp. 187-203.

<sup>693</sup> A version is told in: *Vita S. John Eleemon*, by Leontios of Neapolis, ed. by Festugière and Rydén, in *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, discussed in Rapp, 'Safe-conducts to Heaven', p. 189.

Undeniably, the concept of modelling was widespread. What is of relevance is that certain actions could have formed part of the public's modelling. The idea that daily activities could help the person who practiced them was promoted by writers like Basil the Great. He explained that studying pagan literature, for instance, was good preparation for studying Scripture.<sup>694</sup> The Byzantines accepted the idea that humankind was 'fallen' and that personal salvation depended both on pious living, and on taking steps towards redemption through practice. Imitating holy figures was a route to salvation because they had led virtuous lives and had purity of spirit.

In addition to imploring the faithful to imitate, theologians modelled themselves on particular saints. John Chrysostom, for example, modelled himself on Paul by writing, because the apostle had written.<sup>695</sup> Chrysostom's descriptions and recollections of Paul were not intended, first and foremost, to be verbal-portraits. Rather, they were products of imitation. Mimicking Paul in this way, Chrysostom cultivated his own humility. Icons may also be seen in this context, and I have already argued that artists were not necessarily concerned with what they painted, but with the spiritual journey of painting. Following John Chrysostom's lead, authors deliberately turned to the Evangelists as models for authorship, upon whom they could self-style their own identities. There was an additional dimension to modelling: authors replicated what had actually been written, as well as the act of writing. The process of writing was seen as a re-enactment of the writing of the Bible and therefore had a profound resonance.<sup>696</sup> Authors deliberately sought models, imitated 'ideal writers', and presented their own writing as a form of imitation. Conceivably, artists did the equivalent with the same objective: to participate in the image of God.

When the story that Luke had painted portraits of the Virgin and Child started to circulate, modelling on the Evangelist could have taken two forms. On the one hand, artists could style themselves as Luke as they painted icons. On the other, those who wanted to live *in the image of Luke* could paint as part of that act of imitation. The Evangelist was, like Paul, an imitable figure and exemplary individual to whom the

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<sup>694</sup> Basil the Great, *To Young Men, on how they Might Derive Profit from Pagan Literature*, 2, text with trans. by Deferrari, in *The Letters*, vol. IV.

<sup>695</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam ad Philippenses Commentarius, Homilia 12, PG 62, 273*. Discussed in: Mitchell, 'The Archetypal Image', p. 25.

<sup>696</sup> Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p. 33.

faithful could turn. So Luke was both an *ideal* individual and an *ideal* artist and was therefore an *ideal* model for painters as well as the broader Christian population.

Painters of icons did not use Luke as a patron to guarantee their protection; his role was much more significant than that. Whether people became painters to imitate Luke, or adopted him after assuming the profession, the Evangelist was an operative model to follow. This was especially so for artists when they painted the same portraits with the same techniques. In painting the Virgin and Child, artists never competed with the Evangelist but mimicked him as part of a spiritual practice that was both creative and experiential. To reiterate, representing Mary and Jesus as Mother and Child marked the point God became flesh, and the image could only be made because Christ had assumed human nature. Therefore, in addition to imitating the Evangelist, artists proved and re-enacted the Incarnation.<sup>697</sup> In doing so, they also complied with canon eighty-two, issued at the Quinisext Council, which stipulated that images had to present an interpretation of the Bible rather than replace it.<sup>698</sup> Whilst deepening and cultivating their own faith, artists simultaneously re-enacted the historical event of Luke painting the first icons.<sup>699</sup> Redemption of humankind was only possible because of the Incarnation. This idea was fundamental for the faithful, so artists must have been aware of the significance and benefit that could be offered to them when they took part in re-enacting this pivotal moment. As they painted the Virgin and Child, they became eyewitnesses to the event that they depicted. Once finished, viewers could look to the icons and transform themselves too. For artists, however, the significance was far greater: in assisting in the production of the image, they took part in the Incarnation, re-incarnating the *Logos* each time they portrayed Jesus in the arms of His mother. Ultimately, when artists painted the Virgin and Child together, they became Luke and were eyewitnesses to the moment that God was made flesh.

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<sup>697</sup> Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images', p. 142.

<sup>698</sup> Canon eighty-two, Quinisext Council, ed. by Pitra, in *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. II, pp. 62-63. Herbert L. Kessler, "'Pictures Fertile with Truth': How Christians Managed to Make Images of God without Violating the Second Commandment", *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 49/50 (1991/92), 53-65 (p. 57).

<sup>699</sup> Bacci, 'With the Paintbrush', p. 81.

## CONCLUSION

The overall aim of my thesis was to discuss the role and the place of artists who painted icons between the fourth and eighth centuries in the Byzantine Empire. To date, the subject of artists who worked before Iconoclasm is not one that has been much explored. They have instead been subsumed into other discussions about Byzantium, resulting in their implicit disappearance from the period and indeed from the history of art. My objective was to collate the scattered empirical and theoretical evidence about artists, and to address anonymous artists by focussing on the most significant named artist in Byzantine texts, St Luke, the artist responsible for painting portraits of the Virgin and Child from life.

I began by making two definitions of what the artist could be: ideal and real. Through Luke, I gained the clearest insight into both ideal and real artists before the eighth century. Luke was a product of Early Byzantine attitudes towards painters of religious portraits and a representative of contemporary artists. For the faithful, the ‘ideal artist’ was embodied by the Evangelist: he was a believer, he was reliable, and his skill was endowed by God. The ‘real artist’ was expected to be the same: a Christian, faithful to tradition, and an assistant to God’s creativity. The ideal artist set an example to which real artists could aspire and on whom they could model themselves, their art, and their profession.

Part One argued for the presence and acceptance of the concept of an ideal artist in Early Byzantium. I started by plotting chronologically the texts that made reference to Luke as an artist. On the reasoned assumption that stories started circulating orally, I worked back in time from the textual evidence to argue that the religious and the socio-cultural context of the sixth century would have been particularly conducive and receptive to a legend about an apostolic artist. At that time, and indeed before, the belief that such images existed, both those painted by human hands and those that were not, was commonplace among theologians, historians, and pilgrims. But with the obvious exception of God, only Luke has retained his designation as an artist, because he was considered to be ideal.

The next step was to determine what made the Evangelist an ideal artist, and was the subject of my second chapter. His faith, his profession, and his circumstance meant that Luke was the most appealing candidate for the position of the first artist to have painted the portraits of the Virgin and Child. This specific combination also made him the person most likely to be accepted by the Church and the people as a painter. As an Evangelist, his Gospel was proof that he had known Jesus and Mary intimately, and its language implied that he perceived sight as the most important sense. As a doctor, his eye was trained to notice fine detail, a skill that he was believed to employ when studying his sitters. The legend that emerged and endured, that Luke had also been an artist, in addition to an Evangelist and a doctor, reflected a need to trust that portraits of Jesus and Mary were authentic. Further to serving the general public, Luke provided artists with a common apostolic ancestor for their craft. Significantly, it was, and remains, Luke who in his Gospel and with his art assured the faithful, supported the Church, and ultimately established a pattern for the depiction in art of the Mother and Child.

In my third chapter, I employed the concept of the ideal artist to consider texts that described God and the emperor as artists and architects. They too were ideally responsible for images and buildings, and guaranteed the power of the object or site that was attributed to them. For the faithful, as the Creator of the Universe, God was the first artist. In relation to works of art, the Byzantines appropriated the term *acheiropoieta* to attribute images, sculptures, and architecture to God. These were either made miraculously or by Jesus' touch: the Kamoulianai image of Christ sprung from a fountain and converted its recipient, Hypatia; the image of Edessa was a portrait of Jesus made when He washed his face with a cloth. *Acheiropoietai* objects were both made by God and proof of His existence. The faithful revered images and sculptures 'not made by human hands' as relics, and believed that they had been used to defend cities from enemies, cure the sick, convert doubters, and drive out demons. Importantly, as portraits, they illustrated the image of God. The second half of the sixth century marked the high-point in references to *acheiropoietai* objects in texts. This indicated that a prominent issue for Christians at the time was to assure what Jesus had really looked like. Writers, who described His face, were seemingly unable to settle the debate with words. An image, more trustworthy and accurate than text, was needed. The legend of Luke as an artist may well have started circulating at a similar time, offering reliable

images of Jesus, Mary, and the Incarnation. It was through the identity of Luke, that these images carried apostolic authority.

As God's mediator on Earth, an emperor was also considered to personify the ideal artist. In addition to conforming to literary conventions, writers attributed works of art and architecture to the emperor because he was an ideal artist and an ideal architect. For example, authors repeatedly stressed that through sheer zeal for God, and without any training, Constantine founded Constantinople and erected buildings to sanctify the city. As an architect, the emperor did not fit the Early Byzantine definition of the real architect. Rather, he shared the characteristics of Luke, the ideal artist: he was also a believer, he too had not been trained, and his skill was similarly endowed by God. Significantly, it was through the identity of the emperor that the work carried imperial and divine authority.

Early Byzantine texts established God and the emperor as other examples of ideal artists. The faithful accepted the strong presence of the two in the roles of the ideal artist and ideal architect, and paid special honour and respect towards that which they made. God was the Ultimate Creator, and theologians and poets instructed and reminded believers that the emperor, and later Luke, were creators too.

Upon the model of ideal artists constructed in Part One, it was possible to explore the questions: who were real artists and how did they relate to ideal artists? Were they also believers; were they also reliable; and were they also trusted? Close examination of Byzantine thought and practice emphasised the importance of these questions in contemporary discourse. Thus, Part Two set real artists in relation to Luke and against the material production and reception of art and craftsmanship before the eighth century. In looking for evidence for artists who painted icons before Iconoclasm, I analysed the works and lives of people in Early Byzantium including emperors, theologians, and assorted craftsmen. Grounded in the primary evidence, it was possible to discuss what artists made, where they worked, and, most significantly, why they painted.

Icons are a tangible trace of Early Byzantine artists, and were the subject of my fourth chapter. The real artist is persistently anonymous. Far from obstructing my view,



however, their anonymity was in fact the most crucial piece of evidence for who they were: believers. The lack of their names on icons revealed that for the real artist, renouncing one's name could retain one's faith: it was a rejection of pride and exercised their humility. Through Jesus, Moses, and the Evangelists, the Bible established the virtue as a necessary attribute of the faithful. Byzantine writers then emphasised the importance of humility, to which the public responded: men and women renounced their titles, choosing instead to live as strangers in towns where they offered charity in secret; patrons of art chose to have their names omitted from the *ex voto* gifts they offered in thanks. Repeatedly, early Christian writers explained that, for them, anonymity was part of the practice of humility, and was consistent with the model of writing set out by the apostolic ancestors of their own craft: the Evangelists. It meant that their texts were received not as their words, but as those of God. From the material evidence, craftsmen responsible for Christian works of art, like mosaicists, shared these views and those of the people who commissioned them, signing their work anonymously, if at all, in the hope that they would ascend to the Heavenly summit. For the early Christian writer, the mosaicist and, I argued, the artist, to promote oneself was to be an apostate, running away from the very Creator their craft could lead them towards and whom their work was intended to honour.

On the subject of icons, it was necessary to comment on the suppositions and assumptions made in previous scholarship that Early Byzantine artists worked inside 'workshops'. In all likelihood, these artists sometimes worked in a space dedicated to their craft, as did undoubtedly contemporary glassworkers, mosaicists, sculptors, and silversmiths. But there is no indication that these spaces were used as training centres, where members either taught, or learnt, the craft of painting. Against the implicit idea that artists divided work between 'workshop' members of different rank, the material and textual evidence points to a different scenario: they painted icons alone. Therefore, throughout my research into real artists I kept open the idea that they followed a spiritual, in addition to an occupational, vocation into the craft of painting.

From the absence of evidence of artists on icons, I then turned to the presence of real artists in Early Byzantine texts. In private, public, and patristic texts, writers did not include the names of real artists. Here too, artists were anonymous. Early Byzantines did, however, speak highly of art and, importantly, of an artist's skill. It is uncertain

whether names were forgotten, ignored, or suppressed, as indeed they were later. But, the role of the artist was certainly acknowledged, recognised, and praised by some of their contemporaries. There was nevertheless a sense of public unease, I would suggest, towards real artists. This was, of course, nothing new, nor has it since abated, but for the faithful the concern was with consequence. In time, the ideal artist, Luke in particular, offered consolation. But without Luke as a guarantor, could the Early Byzantines trust that artists were faithful to their subject and their craft? On the surface at least, legal texts that regulated various crafts suggested that, at times, real artists failed to live up to the standard set by ideal artists. Literary texts narrated that the motivation for Luke to paint images, and for the emperor to build churches, was faith. In contrast, imperial laws alleged that the motivation for craftsmen to produce objects was greed. Supposedly, their avariciousness led them to drive up prices by controlling the supply and demand of goods in the empire. To early Christians this attack was profound, because greed led individuals away from God. This jarred with the humility artists practiced, that writers commended, as well as the religious art they produced, that the faithful revered. I argued that deep love for God, which definitely stimulated the demand for art, also stimulated the production of icons.

The evidence and arguments in chapters one to five laid down the foundations for my sixth chapter. My discussion in Part One about Early Byzantine theories of vision, belief in God, and trust in relics, all contributed to an understanding about artists who used their eyes, took holy people as their subjects, and made icons that became relics. Part Two discussed ‘real artists’ who were part of the people, and, like all believers, desired salvation. As merchants, artists must have known why their icons were commissioned, bought, and donated; as Christians, they must have also known how icons were used and why. In their role, though, artists acted as creators who could challenge God’s authority to create, and were potential targets and recipients of attacks. They had to negotiate the sharp separation between vice and virtue, and took a measured step towards their goal by not signing icons. To further my interpretation of the material and textual evidence, I returned to the ideas of humility and love for God to argue that artists shared the ambitions of contemporary writers and theologians, and pursued the path towards union with God by painting icons and imitating Luke.

I proposed that faith motivated the Early Byzantine artist to paint icons. The process of painting the portrait of a holy person was contemplative and thus beneficial, and could then deepen the faith of the artist. The finished product was then a locus for that archetype, and could help the viewer to acquire or develop their own faith. For those familiar with the story that the apostles were artists, I argued that painting was also an act of imitation that led to union with God.

The faithful were instructed to incorporate into their lives pious practices that would benefit them. Drawing on the basic Christian theological concept that imitation was not inferior to the archetype, but participated with it, modelling oneself on another was not mimicry in any pejorative sense of the term. On the contrary, it was an honourable exercise with lasting results: those who wrote patristic texts, for example, ultimately re-enacted the composition of Scripture. What then, did it mean for artists living in the image of Luke, to paint an image of the Virgin and Child together? Encouraged by Luke's example, artists achieved their ambition and realised the Incarnation by painting the Virgin and Child and becoming the Evangelist in imitation of him. In that moment, real artists participated in the image of the ideal artist completely, a significant step towards the ultimate goal for believers: divinisation.

My thesis was based on surviving art and texts, and throughout, the relationship between the two was an often visited theme. The polysemy of Greek nomenclature meant that it was only a matter of interpretation whether an *eikon* or *graphei* was verbal or visual. It is likely that the legend of Luke as an artist derived, in part, from the portraits of Mary and Jesus that he had painted with words in his Gospel and Acts. Image and word were different, and performed different functions, but one reciprocated the authenticity and authority of the other. Both could be used to the same ends: to bring the subject back to life, to be used as proxies for the archetype, and to communicate Scripture to the viewer or the listener. The word of the author and the art of the artist, therefore, shared certain characteristics, as did, it would seem, the practices and processes of the two professions. Like the author who wrote patristic texts, artists who painted religious images were conscious that they should avoid the accusation of competing with God. As creators, their goal was not to contest the Creator, but to participate in His creation.

An important consideration throughout this thesis was sight. For the Early Byzantines, sight was terrific in both senses of the word. What they saw could lead them in one of two directions, either to God or away from Him. Powerful in a way that is hard to grasp now, the significance of sight in relation to artists should not be underestimated. Artists looked with the eye of the mind and of the body to their subject, which they touched or were touched by, and carried in them a permanent imprint of what they saw. If artists painted the Virgin and Child together, then beyond the two archetypes, they also saw the Incarnation and became eyewitnesses to the moment that Word was made flesh.

The concept of the ideal artist and the real artist do, and to a degree did, fall into the much larger concept of 'the artist'. In Early Byzantium, the two had different roles and places. Artists were necessary to maintain the Christian iconic tradition. But their imagination, for one, could present a problem for the faithful who relied on icons as accurate portrayals of holy people. One of the reasons that the ideal artists emerged was clearly to identify a pattern from which real artists could work and paint portraits that the public could then use. Over time, the two became intertwined; real artists participated in the creativity of ideal artists, and artistic skill was hailed as a 'gift' from God. Ultimately, the modern concept of the artist: a genius who possesses inherent skill and ability that cannot be wholly explained, which is widely believed to originate in the Italian Renaissance, is in fact consistent with the Early Byzantine concept of the ideal artist.

To an extent, this thesis presents both the ideal artist and the real artist in the image of St Luke. An understanding of the primary material and engagement with its content enabled me to scrutinise the concept of the artist and substantially shift its meaning. No longer defined as a period before art, Early Byzantium should no longer be seen as a period before artists.

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