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Fig. 1 The inscribed plaster fragments at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo © The Israel Museum Jerusalem, by Elie Posner

New Testament Quotations on Painted Plaster Fragments in the Israel Museum

Addenda et Corrigenda to
Biblia Epigraphica
(nos. 162–164 and 177)

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In 1970 Baruch Lifshitz published a short paper in the *Revue Biblique* about several fragments of painted plaster featuring quotations of New Testament texts,¹ which are now on permanent display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (fig. 1).² Lifshitz reported that the fragments, of unknown provenance, were bought from an antiquarian in Hebron and noted that they probably belonged to a fresco from a church that had been uncovered at one of the several archaeological sites in the region of Hebron.

The three texts were included in *Biblia Epigraphica*, the corpus of Early Christian inscriptions bearing direct quotations from the Old and New Testaments, based on the original reading as proposed by its editor.³

I. The first text described by Lifshitz (fig. 1, C) is on two plaster fragments [(a) 14 × 10; (b) 14 × 13], which are on the right in the present arrangement in the museum. The inscription is painted in red in letters 1.2–2 cm high.⁴

(a) ((*crux*)) δεῦτ[ε]
πρός με π-
άντες οἱ
κοπιῶν-
τες κ(αὶ) π[εφ]-
(b) [ορτισμέ]-
νοι, [κ]ἀγῶ
ἀναπαύ-
σω ὑμᾶς⁵

Note, that there is no cross at the beginning, Felle 2006: 2–3. π|άντες | κοπιῶν|τες, Lifshitz; π|άντες κοπιῶν|τες, with consequent incorrect line counting, Felle 2006; 5 κᾶ|i], Lifshitz; the same also in Felle 2006.

“Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”⁶

Lifshitz read the inscription as a faithful verbatim reprise of Matthew 11:28. In the photograph he published, as in the Israel Museum display, the two larger fragments are shown so close together that they seem to complete one another, but, in fact, they do not, as one should allow additional space for the lost line 6. Thus, the height of the two fragments would have been slightly over 30 cm.

II. The second text published by Lifshitz is also painted in red in letters 1.3–1.6 cm high and written on the left-hand lower fragment – as it is presently displayed in the museum (fig. 1, B: 12.5 × 14.5).⁷

[[((crux))]? ὁ πιστεύω]ν

εἰς ἐμὲ

ἔχει ζωὴν αἰ=

ώνιον κ(αἰ) εἰς

κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχετ(αι)

“Who believes me has eternal life and will not be judged.”

As in the first case, Lifshitz identified the source of the text as being another New Testament passage, this time John 5:24,⁸ although the quotation is not identical with the Gospel text: after the participle, the following dative τῷ πέμψαντι in the New Testament text was omitted.

III. The third and last text Lifshitz published is painted on the top-left fragment (fig. 1, A: 9 × 12) in red letters identical to the others in letters 1.3–1.6 high.⁹

((crux)) ἐγὼ εἶμι

τὸ φῶς καὶ

ἡ ζωὴ κ(αἰ)

ἄλ[φα καὶ ὦ]

No cross at the beginning; 3–4. ἡ ζωὴ | κ(αἰ),

Felle 2006.

Lifshitz linked the text to two passages from the New Testament, John 8:12¹⁰ and Revelations 1:8,¹¹ respectively. Whereas in the previous fragments the scriptural texts were

quoted verbatim, here he recognized the inscriptions as a combination of excerpts from these two passages meant to recall the self-definitions offered by Christ in the Gospel according to John and Revelations.¹²

The first text was evidently added to the fresco between images that had been painted there earlier, at least the first five lines. Indeed, the right edge of the lower fragment showing this inscription has traces of paint that could reasonably have been part of an image. In the second inscription, a diagonal colored stripe on the right was clearly meant to delineate the writing space. There is also a small section of a similar stripe with the same oblique orientation in the lower-left corner of the fragment. Thus, the text was originally disposed in a predetermined space defined by these two parallel stripes. Further, on the left and above on the last fragment, we see painted stripes outlining the space dedicated to the inscription, and – as in the second fragment – one of the stripes runs in a diagonal direction with respect to the line of script.

Even if the original context is unknown, it is evident that all the fragments belong to one textual and visual work, which – considering that the quotations all pertain to Jesus – evidently had his image as its principal motif. Only two other inscriptions in the corpus of *Biblia Epigraphica* quote Matthew 11:25. One – maybe lost – was reported by the editors as being on a wood enkolpion (a pectoral medaillon) found in Selemiyeh in Syria (ancient Salamias in the Phoenice Libanensis).¹³

The only other citation of the same passage was seen in a painted inscription in connection with the decoration of the apse in the cave-church of the ancient monastery of St. Theoctistus in the Judean Desert (Deir el Mukalik¹⁴). In 1928, D. J. Chitty published a photograph of the painting, which follows the well-known iconographic scheme of the so-called Ascension – in Greek, *Analepsis* (according to its Eastern typology of the ascended Christ enthroned in heaven; fig. 2). On the top of the double-register image, Jesus Christ – identified by the usual abbreviated *nomen sacrum*



Fig. 2 Enthroned Christ holding the open codex. Fresco of the Analepsis, abside, cave-church Deir Mukallik (after Chitty 1928, pl. V, fig. 7)



Fig. 3 Enthroned Christ as it appeared after 1928. Fresco of the Analepsis, abside, cave-church, Deir Mukallik (after Kühnel 1988, fig. 113)

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| + ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ | × ΔΕΥΤΕ |
| ΤΟΦΩΣ ΚΑΙ | ΠΡΟΣΜΕΠ |
| Η ΖΩΗ ΚΑΙ | ΑΝΤΕΣΟΙ |
| ΑΝΑΤΑCΙC | ΚΟΠΙΩΝ |
| ΟΠΙCΤΕΥ | ΤΕC ΚΑΙΠΕ |
| ΩΝΕΙCΕΜΕ | ΦΟΡΤΙCΜΕ |
| ΕΧΕΙΖΩΗΝΑΙ | ΝΟΙ ΚΑΙΕΓΩ |
| ΩΝΙΟΝ ΚΑΙΕΙC | ΑΝΑΠΑΥ |
| ΚΡΙCΙΝΟΟΚΕΡΧΕΤΑΙ | CΩ ΥΜΑC |

Fig. 4 Transcription by Chitty of the epigraphs painted in the codex. Fresco of the Analepsis, abside, cave-church, Deir Mukallik (after Chitty 1928, 148)

Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς on both sides of his head – is represented as enthroned in an ogival halo (the mandorla), surrounded by four angels. Jesus' right hand is shown in the speaking – or blessing – gesture, and his left hand is holding an open codex showing some inscriptions, which are illegible in Chitty's photograph.

In the decades following Chitty's visit, the section of the painting that showed the codex was intentionally removed, apparently by antiquities' robbers (see fig. 3). Fortunately, Chitty provided a transcription – the only one we have (fig. 4). On the right-hand page of the codex there was a faithful quotation of Matthew 11:28:



Fig. 5 Proposed reconstruction of the inscribed plaster fragments in the Israel Museum, according to the Chitty transcription of the Deir Mukallik inscriptions (by the author)

((crux)) δεῦτε / πρὸς με πάντες οἱ / κοπιῶν/τες και
πε/φορτισμέ/νοι και ἐγὼ / ἀναπαύ/σω ὑμᾶς.¹⁵

The disposition into nine lines corresponds exactly with the first text published by Lifshitz (Felle 2006, 111-112, no. 162: see above, p. 41).

On the left-hand page of the codex, Chitty transcribed the following:

((crux)) ἐγὼ εἰμι / τὸ φῶς και / ἡ ζωὴ και / ἀνάστασις
/ ὁ πιστεύ/ων εἰς ἐμὲ / ἔχει ζωὴν αι/ώνιον και εἰς /
κρίσιν ο<ὐ>κ ἔρχεται.

In Felle 2006, 117 no. 177.1. In error, I published only the first words: ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις και ἡ ζωὴ [...], so there is no record of the quotation of Matthew 5:24, which is only indexed for Felle 2006, 111-12, no 162.

This text is in almost complete correspondence with the combination of the other two texts that Lifshitz published in 1970 (see p. 42); there are very few differences: the

abbreviations of the conjunction κ(αι) systematically solved by Chitty and the Lifshitz proposal of integration at 1.4 ἄλ[φα], instead of the word ἀνάστασις.

The fragments in the Israel Museum are very probably – if not surely – the remains of the lost codex that was shown in the decoration in the apse of the cave-church in the monastery of St. Theoctistus. This identification is supported by the appearance of the stripes on both sides of the inscriptions, which can be easily understood as the edges of pages of the codex. Moreover, the horizontal lines visible along the right border of the first fragment (I) are clearly the traces of the fingers of Christ's left hand holding the book.¹⁶ On the basis of the copy by Chitty, I suggest a new arrangement of the fragments in the Israel Museum: they should be moved and slightly rotated, according to the arrangement of the original image to which they pertain. Arranged in this way the first two fragments according to the Lifshitz's edition (I and II: see fig. 1, B and C) fit perfectly with each other (fig. 5).¹⁷ The final result is the following transcription (the letters read by Chitty but by now illegible are underlined>:

a. ((crux)) ἐγώ εἰμι
 τὸ φῶς καὶ
 ἡ ζωὴ καὶ
 ἀνάστασις.
 ὁ πιστεύ-
 ων εἰς ἐμέ
 ἔχει ζωὴν αἰ-
 ώνιον κ(αὶ) εἰς
 κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχετ(αι)
 b. ((crux)) δεῦτε
 πρὸς με π-
 άντες οἱ
 κοπιῶν-
 τες κ(αὶ) πε-
 φορτισμέ-
 νοι, κἀγὼ
 ἀναπαύ-
 σω ὑμᾶς

There are two separate sentences in text *a* on the left-hand page. A direct echo of the first one – ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς καὶ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἀνάστασις – can be found in a passage in the *Commentary on Isaiah* by Eusebius of Caesarea that is in the same order as our inscription: φῶς – ζωὴ – ἀνάστασις: ὡς περ δὲ νοοῦμεν αὐτὸν εἶναι θεόν, λόγον καὶ φῶς καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ἀνάστασιν.¹⁸ However, the sequence has its clear scriptural base in the Gospel of John. The first part of the text quotes John 8:12 (ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου) according to the abridged variation that appears, for example, in the *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate* by Cyrillus of Alexandria.¹⁹ The other part of the sentence, although with an inversion, echoes the first part of John 11:25 (Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ). The inversion in the sequence with ζωὴ before ἀνάστασις is found in the above-mentioned passage by Eusebius, as well as in the versions of other Christian authors.²⁰

I contend that it is very likely a direct and unique reference to this verse²¹ because the second part of John 11:25 (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ κἀν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται) could be easily “enchained” with the following reprise of John 5:24 by the participle πιστεύων:

Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.

John 5:24 is the only verse to be quoted faithfully in the inscription on the left-hand page (cf. particularly lines 7–9: ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται: the actual existence of the word κρίσις precludes any other possible references to the Gospel according to John²²). Moreover, I think it remarkable that the inscription quotes precisely this particular verse according to a version that we only find in a single passage in Cyrillus of Alexandria’s *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate* 15: ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται.²³

In this same work, Cyrillus also quoted John 8:12 and John 11:25, verses that appear in our fragments.²⁴ Moreover, he reprised these two verses together again in his *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate*,²⁵ precisely in order to define the divine nature of Christ as different from the not divine nature of the angels, which we see in the apse painting around the mandorla of the enthroned Christ in the iconography of the Analepsis.

The inscription labeled *b* on the right-hand page of the codex is a faithful version of Matthew 11:28. I already noted that this verse is very rarely found in early Christian inscriptions and, further, as far as I know, it is not referred to in other representations of the Analepsis, whereas its appearance is common in the image of Christ as Pantokrator. The correlation between Matthew 11:28 and this iconography is also clear owing to the only other occurrence of the quotation among Christian Late Antique and Early Byzantine inscriptions on the above-mentioned wood enkolpion found in Salamias in Phoenice Libanensis. The quotation ran along the edge of the object, which carried an image of Christ identified by the initials of his *nomina sacra* and just the term παντοκράτωρ – as his main attribute: δεῦτ[ε πρὸς με πᾶ]ντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ <πεφορ>τισμένοι. || Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χρ(ιστὸ)ς ὁ παντοκράτωρ.²⁶



Fig. 6 The left part of the inscription with the quotation from Psalm 23:7–9. Fresco of the Analepsis, abside, cave-church, Deir Mukallik (after Kühnel 1988, fig. 122: detail): ἄρατε πύλας, / οἱ ἄρχοντες, ὑμῶν, || κ(αὶ) ἐπάρθ[ητε], πύλαι αἰών[ιοι]. (Felle 2006, 117 no. 178: CIIP 4/1, no. 3167)



Fig. 7 Virtual repositioning of the plaster fragments from the Israel Museum on image of Christ in the Analepsis fresco, abside, cave-church, Deir Mukallik (by the author: based on Kühnel 1988, fig. 113)

This passage is quoted twice in the *Dialogi de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate* by Cyrillus of Alexandria, always in contexts referring to the regality and the divinity of Christ,²⁷ which constitute the principal subjects of the representation in the apse of the St. Theoctistus cave-church. Another piece of evidence in this regard is the inscription, which, according to the orientation of the lower angel on the left, is painted vertically, that quotes Psalm 23:7–9 (fig. 6): “Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.” This scriptural passage was cited in just this sense by Cyrillus of Alexandria,²⁸ as it was first quoted by his predecessor Athanasius of Alexandria.²⁹

Ultimately, the primary issue regarding the inscriptions painted in the apse decoration in the cave-church of the St. Theoctistus monastery is about their datation, which should obviously be the same as that of the frescoes (fig. 7).

Based on their stylistic features, in 1988 Gustav Kühnel proposed that the fragments date to the late twelfth century (around the fall of Jerusalem, in 1187).³⁰ Almost twenty-five years ago, the last complete survey in the monastery by Goldfus, Arubas, Alliata, and Di Segni³¹ delineated the very long life of the entire archaeological complex: from the middle of the fifth century to the very last interventions, which might have been in the eleventh or twelfth century CE.

According to this last survey, the wall painting in the apse of the cave-church revealed different phases in relation to its three different layers: the last one, displaying the image of the Analepsis,³² has been dated “in the course of the second half of 11th century.”³³

The problem is that the inscriptions in the codex – as well as the inscription quoting Psalms 23:7–9 – do not confirm this dating. Paleographic features indicate that their script can be classified as the so-called “sloping pointed majuscule.” The dated and the more-or-less datable examples of this writing are mostly from the ninth and tenth centuries CE, but there are other earlier examples from the sixth century CE.³⁴

This is thus a strong argument for initiating a discussion about a possible different datation of both inscriptions and paintings: perhaps they can be ascribed to an earlier period in the long history of the monastery.³⁵

In view of its paleographical features, the inscription in the codex in the apse decoration could be assigned to a very long – not clearly defined – time span between the sixth and the tenth centuries CE.³⁶ However, the different paleography in comparison with the funerary painted inscription of the “Holy Fathers” – ascribed to the Early Byzantine phase of the complex³⁷ – leads me to suggest a more delimited dating: perhaps, although without any hints that could offer certainty – “in the course of the seventh century,” when, according to Goldfus, “the major changes were made” in the complex.³⁸

The strongly Orthodox iconography and inscriptions that coherently refer to the divine *and* human nature of Christ by referring to New Testament quotations that appear systematically in texts by “champions” of Orthodoxy – as Athanasius and Cyrillus of Alexandria – suggest that the inscriptions in the codex displayed in the image of the enthroned Christ in the apse of the St. Theoctistus monastery cave-church could be small but very significant records of the important role of Christian monastic communities in the Near East. As has been noted, “the monasteries of Palestine ... struggled ... to defend the doctrines of ‘Byzantine’ Orthodoxy against Christian adversaries within the Caliphate, such as the Jacobites (former sixth-century Monophysites) and the Nestorians, as well as to answer the multiple religious and social challenges of an intellectually ever more confident Islamic establishment.”³⁹

Notes

- 1 Lifshitz 1970.
- 2 IMJ 74.6.296. I wish to thank David Mevorach, who suggested that I reconsider these inscriptions.
- 3 Felle 2006, 111-12, nos. 162-64.
- 4 Lifshitz 1970, 77 no. 15, pl. VIb; Felle 2006, 111-112, no. 162, Fig. 1, C.
- 5 In the transcriptions I adopted the commonly shared Krummrey-Panciera system of diacritical signs: cf. Krummrey-Panciera 1980; Panciera 1991.
- 6 All the English translations are reprised from Bible: New International Version.
- 7 Lifshitz 1970, 78 n. 16, pl. VIIa; Felle 2006, 112, no. 163, Fig. 1b.
- 8 Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν (“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life”).
- 9 Lifshitz 1970, 78. n. 17, pl. VIIb; Felle 2006, 112, no. 164, Fig. 1a.
- 10 Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων, Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοὶ οὐ μὴ περιπατήσει ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἔξει τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς (“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said: ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’”).
- 11 Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ω, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ (“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’”).
- 12 Concerning the well-known association φῶς/ζωή, which we see in many inscriptions and artifacts as well, Lifshitz wrote that its presence in Gnostic literature may have its origins in an earlier Christian tradition (cfr. *Corpus Hermeticum* I, 9; I, 12; I, 21.1). In this last passage we have the same sequence as in our inscription; in the others, ζωή comes before φῶς. Cf. Lifshitz 1970, 79.
- 13 Felle 2006, 151, no. 278.
- 14 See <https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/688042>.
- 15 Felle 2006, 117 no. 177.2.
- 16 In the recently published volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* (CIIP 4/1), Walter Ameling proposes that the fragments in the Israel Museum and the Deir Mukallik inscription are one and the same, although, in actual fact, he did not include a detailed explanation (CIIP 4/1, no. 3166). I read his text only after I reached my own conclusions about the issue. I am very glad to know that I came to the same idea as so renowned a scholar.
- 17 The proposal for the reconstruction is my own: I thank Dr. Maria Martinelli (Department of Humanities, University of Bari “Aldo Moro” – Italy) for her help with the digital drawing and the treatment of the images.
- 18 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentarius in Isaiam*, 1, 62, 79: J. Ziegler (ed.), *Der Jesajakommentar. Eusebius Werke*, Bd. 9 [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, 9], Berlin 1975, 82, l. 3.
- 19 Cyrillus of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali trinitate*, Assertio XII, 108 [PG. 75, col. 180, l. 6]: λέγει ὁ υἱὸς· ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ζωή.
- 20 For example, John Chrysostom quoted John 11:25 in both versions: the canonical one, *In quatruiduanum Lazarum = Contra Anomoeos - Hom.* 9 [PG 48, 784, l. 19] and the one with the inverted sequence (ζωή, then ἀνάστασις as in our inscription) in *In filium viduae* [PG 61, 793, l. 2], as like as in *In Illud: Pater si possibile est* [PG 61, 752, l. 35]. The inversion in quoting John 11:25 is also found in Severianus Gabalensis’ *In cosmogoniam homiliae*, 2 [PG 56, 440, l. 11] and in Didymus Alexandrinus’ *de Trinitate* 3, 11 [PG 39, 860, l. 12] and 3, 21 [PG 39, 905, l. 27]. Interestingly, in this passage by Didymus of Alexandria the quotation of John 11:25 is associated with John 8:12, exactly as in our inscription.
- 21 Whereas Ameling defines the text as a ‘Greek pasticcio of John’ (cf. CIIP 4/1, no. 3166, part. p. 555).
- 22 See the proposals by Ameling: CIIP 4/1, p. 555.

- 23 PG 68, col. 976, l. 22.
- 24 Cf. respectively PG 68, col. 664, l. 41; PG 68, 744, ll. 44–45.
- 25 Cyrillus of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate, Assertio XX*, 209 [PG 75, 355].
- 26 Felle 2006, 151 no.278, follows the description of the enkolpion by its editors (in IGLS V, 231, no. 2541): “Au centre, le Christ de majesté, barbu et nimbé, sous une croix grecque qu’accostent des épis dressés et retombants. Il est assis et des ses bras étendues, l’index et le médium levés, il bénit. Autour de lui, en 12 médaillons, les Apôtres, tenant un livre. – Le cercle extérieur porte au sommet un personnage en buste (Dieu le Père?), qu’accostent d’un côté sept saints nimbés portant un livre et de l’autre côté sept autres tenant la croix; au-dessous un seul personnage étend les bras pour unir tout cet ensemble. Un arbre pousse ses rameaux depuis le bas, format de ses vrilles tous les médaillons. Une inscription [the one quoting Matthew 11,28], sculptée en relief, court sur un bandeau, au pourtout du cercle extérieur; une inscription [the other one] surmonte l’image du Christ.” Surely the image displayed on the enkolpion is a copy of an original iconography pertaining to a monumental context.
- 27 Cyrillus of Alexandria, *De sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate Dialogi V*, 581[PG. 75, 990]; VI, 613 [PG. 75, 1046]. Searching the on-line *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, I found that for the most part, the quotations from Matthew 11:28 among the Early Christian authors were by Cyrillus of Alexandria, who quoted this part of the verse sixteen times.
- 28 Cyrillus of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate, XXXV (Testimonia Sacrae Scripturae quibus probatur quod Filius sit genitus ex Patre, non creatus)*, 384 [PG. 75, 649, l. 34]; *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate, XX* [PG. 75, 332, l. 5].
- 29 Athanasius of Alexandria, *Oratio contra Arianos I*, 41; *Oratio contra Arianos III*, 28 [cf. respectively PG. 26, 97, l. 23; 26, 384, l. 27]. It is interesting that the same Athanasius of Alexandria, in a passage affirming the Orthodox dogma of the human and divine nature of Christ quoted Matthew 11:28 in an immediate association with the sentence in the Gospel of John that reads “Εγώ ειμι η ζωή”: Athanasius of Alexandria, *In illud: Qui dixerit verbum in filium* PG. 26, 676, l. 11].
- 30 Kühnel 1988, part. 191.
- 31 Goldfus et al. 1995; Denys Pringle (Pringle 1998, 268–71, no. 220) does not mention this very important paper in his discussion about the monastery of St. Theoctistus.
- 32 But it has to be considered a duplicate of a similar earlier representation: “The upper zone of the second layer probably featured the same monumental painting of the Ascension as that of the third layer”: Goldfus et al. 1995, 272 and note 67.
- 33 Goldfus et al. 1995, 272.
- 34 Cf. lastly the very recent Orsini 2019, 133–164, part. 154.
- 35 I think it useful to note the different lettering of the inscriptions in the codex: the writing there is very far from that of another inscription painted in a niche above the cave-church displayed on a scroll held by the figure of St. John Damascene dated to the twelfth century (*CIIP 4/1*, no. 3171). I think that it is a bit unreasonable to consider all these inscriptions as contemporary.
- 36 About the “wall paintings depicting among others Jesus Christ between two angels,” I am reminded here of the words by A. Ovadiah: “This well-preserved fresco is apparently the earliest (sixth century) among the groups of other wall paintings which date from the period of the Macedonian renaissance (ninth to twelfth centuries) and its late stages. [...] It appears that the church and the monastery within the cave continued to exist until the Persian invasion in 614, and perhaps even later; the paintings on the walls of the chapel also testify to this.”: Ovadiah 1970, 48. In addition, Goldfus et al. 1995, 282, consider that the datation of the tower was not determined with precision; they suggest for the ‘medieval (?) tower’ a long time span, between the eighth and the twelfth centuries CE.
- 37 Cfr. Goldfus et al. 1995, 279.
- 38 Cfr. Goldfus et al. 1995, 273; 249.
- 39 Griffith 2006, 181.

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