

INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK PRESENTS A SUSTAINED EXAMINATION OF CONCEPTIONS OF divine inspiration in the literature and visual arts of Byzantium (c. 330–1453). The subject has hitherto never been treated systematically, and its pivotal relevance to the formation of Eastern Orthodox religious doctrine and identity has thus been underestimated. What the book investigates under the umbrella term “inspiration” encompasses the variety of circumstances under which texts as well as material artifacts were conveyed to human recipients by divine initiative. The thesis guiding this investigation is that arguments about the divine origin of sacred literature and art were variously employed in Byzantium to claim and confirm authenticity in order to derive from it religious authority.

Byzantine art and literature bear witness to manifold conceptions of humans being enabled to produce texts or works of art upon divine initiative. The notion of mortals being “inspired” in the literal sense – i.e., imbued with the divine breath, *pneuma* – is rarely made explicit, however, and is only one procedure among several that serve similar ends. This study will explore these different notions and their linkages to beliefs that texts and material artifacts were divinely crafted and conveyed through human vehicles to human recipients in their complete form. Consequently, in this book I examine both literary and visual evidence that illuminates the contents and aims of the Byzantine understanding of inspiration and other forms of divine revelation.

Early Christianity derived the concept of the divine revelation of its Holy Scriptures through two different strands, Greco-Roman paganism¹ and ancient Judaism. Not surprisingly, Christian thinkers made use of many of the expressions and metaphors traditionally associated with these ideas. While the belief in the origin of texts in nonhuman inspiration is to some extent shared between Judaism, pagan polytheism, and Christianity, during late antiquity in the Christian context the concept underwent crucial transformations that are evidenced in written sources and even more strongly in the visual arts. Novel conceptions as to the process and implementation of divine inspiration served to buttress claims to truth that were directed against real or perceived manifestations of religious alterity and error. Therefore, from early on and throughout the existence of the Byzantine Empire, claims to divine revelation featured prominently in arguments about the definition of doctrinal normativity, serving to distinguish between “true” and “false,” “us” and “them.”

Byzantine notions that artisans are divinely inspired or that artifacts of outstanding religious importance result from divine craftsmanship likewise built on ancient Jewish and pagan predecessors. However, these ideas were adopted relatively late, and in the quest of defining and defending religious orthodoxy they experienced significant reinterpretations as well. Ultimately, all arguments voiced in Byzantium about the divine origin of the empire’s most sacred texts and artifacts were aimed at substantiating claims to holiness, religious orthodoxy, divinely bestowed privilege, and superiority.

1.1 DIVINE INSPIRATION: WHAT THE CONCEPT ENCOMPASSES

The notion of the divine breath, *pneuma*, bestowed upon mortals was a feature shared among the cultures of Greco-Roman paganism, Judaism, and Christianity. Importantly, however, no concept similar to that of the “holy spirit” (πνεῦμα ἅγιον; *spiritus sanctus*) that Christianity derived from the Septuagint existed in pagan culture.² In ancient Greek and Byzantine texts, the terms *pneuma*, *pneumatikos*, etc. have a wide range of meanings – including “wind,” “breath,” “life,” “soul,” and “spirit” – and *pneuma* manifests itself in manifold ways.³ To cite a prominent example from the Christian realm, at

¹ In this book, I employ the terms “paganism” and “pagan” (Latin *paganus*; Greek *hellene*) in a neutral way to reference the Greco-Roman polytheistic cults and their worshippers. On the designation, its ancient origins, and its various implications, including pejorative ones, see Bowersock, *Hellenism*, 1–13; Chuvin, *Chronicle*, 7–13.

² This is largely due to the different meaning and use of the word *hagios* in the pagan realm on the one hand and Jewish and Christian culture on the other; Baumgärtel, “πνεῦμα,” 338–339; Williger, *Hagios*, 84–108, esp. 97–98, 102.

³ An extensive overview of the relevant written sources illuminating the occurrences and meanings of *pneuma* in pagan, Jewish, and Christian cultures is offered in the multiauthored entry “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός” in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Baumgärtel,

Pentecost the descent of the Holy Spirit that puts the apostles in a position to prophesy in different languages is perceived by them as “a sound like the rush of a violent wind” (Acts 2:2).⁴ *Pneuma* understood as “breath” enables speech, including that spoken directly by the divinity or through human instruments. In the oral cultures where the concept originated, speech was obviously the major means by which divine inspiration was conveyed to mortals, and this continued to be the case long after literacy and written documents had become more common. With *pneuma* being inseparable from the divinity, the presence of the former automatically signals the presence of the latter: the divinity is present in the very moment a text is being transmitted, and the notion that texts are imbued with the divine *pneuma* implies that the latter remains with these texts when they are repeated aloud by humans and recorded in writing.

The animating feature of the divine *pneuma*, the breath of life, which is manifest, for instance, in the enlivenment of Adam (Gen 2:7),⁵ cannot always clearly be separated from the idea of the transfer of divine wisdom, knowledge, or insight by means of breath. This is, for instance, evident in the notion that the apostles were spiritually “born from above” when the Holy Spirit descended onto them at Pentecost.⁶ Christians continue to apply this dual sense of *pneuma* to Holy Scripture. Being inspired with divine wisdom, it is simultaneously enlivened by the divine breath and thus in turn provides spiritual enlivenment to its readers or listeners.⁷ As we will see, in Byzantium the animating effect of the divine *pneuma* was reinterpreted in rhetoric about inspired icons that are presented as if they were alive, like their sacred prototypes.⁸

In Greek texts since antiquity a variety of words referencing breath or breathing is encountered that are used synonymously with *pneuma* to indicate divine inspiration, such as *epipnous*, *epipnoia*, *empneusis*, *empneisthai*, and *pnoe*.⁹

“πνεῦμα”). See also Saake, “Pneuma”; Crouzel, “Geist,” 495–497; esp. Thraede, “Hauch,” and Thraede, “Inspiration.”

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, English citations from the New Testament are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), and Greek citations are from the SBL Greek New Testament (SBLGNT). Translated citations of the Septuagint are from the New English Translation of the Septuagint (*NETS: Electronic Edition*, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>; last accessed 12/15/2020).

⁵ καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν. On the enlivening breath of God, see Thraede, “Hauch,” 716–718; Crouzel, “Geist,” 499–500. Cf. John 6:63: “It is the spirit that gives life.” The animating breath is also encountered in Greco-Roman mythology; Baumgärtel, “πνεῦμα,” 336, 339–343; Saake, “Pneuma,” 388; Crouzel, “Geist,” 495–496.

⁶ Acts 2:1–21; John 3:3–8; Speyer, “Zeugungskraft,” 67–69; Crouzel, “Geist,” 505.

⁷ For instance, Basil the Great explains that the Holy Spirit is “a living substance”; *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.46, trans. Hildebrand, 81. Origen refers to him as a living being, or indeed life, based on the interpretation of the Holy Spirit being one of the “living creatures” accompanying the Lord in the vision of Habakkuk (Hab 1:2); *On First Principles*, ed./trans. Behr, 1.3.4.

⁸ Chapter 5.

⁹ In Christian thought, however, *pneuma* and *pnoe* are different things; Thraede, “Hauch,” 720–772, 723.

Other terms emphasize the idea of mortals being “full of divinity” (*entheos*), often with the implication that any activity of the mortals’ own consciousness and intellect is excluded. According to ancient notions of mantic inspiration that originate in pagan and Jewish cultures, humans are possessed, or stirred, by the divinity, and in a state of inspired frenzy (e.g., *enthousiasmos*, *mania*, *mantikon pneuma*, *katochos*, *katechesthai*).¹⁰

Hesiod’s *Theogony*, probably composed around 700 or in the early seventh century BCE, is the oldest text that explicitly describes divine inspiration as a transfer of breath: the rhapsodist relates how the Muses conveyed poetry to him by means of their breath (“and they breathed a divine voice into me”).¹¹ This straightforwardness is very rare, however, and not only in ancient Greek literature.¹² Even when it uses common expressions denoting “inspiration,” pagan literature does not normally provide any clue as to the procedure of exactly how divine wisdom is conveyed to humans, and to what extent it was responsible for the outcome, a situation that most often holds true for Jewish and Christian writings as well. The idea lives on in today’s vocabulary commonly used in English as well as in other modern languages to denote concepts of extra-subjective “inspiration,” which may or may not, however, involve tropes of breath.¹³ Importantly, the term “inspiration” has, since antiquity, been most often used in a purely metaphorical sense. The concept’s very flexibility leaves plenty of scope for the imagination when it comes to its phenomena and effects.

Acknowledging the wide range of manifestations of “divine inspiration,” throughout this book the expression is used for the sake of convenience – usually metaphorically – to broadly denote the supernatural, divine origin of texts as claimed in the literature and visualized in the arts of Byzantium. Whether or not they involve the transfer of divine breath, different procedures of the transmission of texts from the divine realm to humanity ultimately all make similar claims to authenticity and hence authority. The first four chapters of this book focus on notions of divine inspiration related to Holy Scripture as evidenced in literature as well as visual images from Byzantium and examine the ambitions governing these claims.

¹⁰ Baumgärtel, “πνεῦμα,” 338, 347–348, 358–359; Leipoldt, “Frühgeschichte,” 122–124. On mantic prophecy, see Baumgärtel, “πνεῦμα,” 362–363; Thraede, “Inspiration,” esp. 334–340, 346–347, 358–359.

¹¹ ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν θεόπιπν; see below.

¹² Murray, “Inspiration,” 160–161. In ancient Greek culture inspiration could be passed on symbolically from the divinity to the mortal by a variety of means, including the transfer of a staff; Falter, *Dichter*, 65–68. Likewise common was the notion that poets drank from the spring of the Muses; *ibid.*, 69–70.

¹³ Ohly, “Metaphern,” 119–171; Schlesier, “Kreation,” 180–187; Falter, *Dichter*, 64–68; Thraede, “Inspiration”; Thraede, “Hauch,” 718, 721–723.

The notion of inspiration originated in ancient cultures to establish the authoritative status of holy texts, and it was the divine origin of religious literature specifically that continued to be emphasized throughout the Christian Middle Ages. However, in both ancient Judaism and polytheistic religions one can also find related convictions that material artifacts of outstanding religious significance are entirely of divine origin, or that the divinity conveyed their design to human artisans, or that their remarkable craftsmanship results from the artist's divine inspiration, the *pneuma*, that imbues the work of art. Importantly, early Christian intellectuals firmly rejected notions about divinely inspired art, and the absence of relevant traditions, I believe, has been much underestimated in its impact on the development and appreciation of Christian art during the early centuries. Claims about inspired art began to resurface during Byzantine Iconoclasm (c. 726/30–787 and 815–843¹⁴) to defend the holiness and venerability of religious icons, and they are frequently voiced in religious literature of the Middle Byzantine period (843–1204). Byzantium ultimately derived its ideas about divinely made or inspired artifacts from pagan and Jewish predecessors, although not without reinterpretations that responded to the specific requisites of its own religious culture. Artifacts, particularly icons, that in Byzantium were regarded as divinely inspired or crafted by God, are the subjects of the last three chapters of the book. These chapters demonstrate that related arguments regarding the divine origin of artifacts served first and foremost to make a case for authenticity, religious orthodoxy, and superiority, as did claims to divinely revealed literature. Remarkably, evidence from Byzantium antedates by several centuries the notion of the divinely inspired artist in Western Europe, which reemerged during the Renaissance.

1.2 AUTHENTICITY: WHAT THE TERM SIGNIFIES

It seems appropriate to explain the understanding and use of “authenticity” and “authentic” in this book, because today's common meanings of these words are only partly equivalent to those used in Byzantium. In ancient and Byzantine Greek the term *αὐθεντία* (*authentia*) in the first place denotes “supreme authority,” or absolute, sovereign power, for instance, of a ruler.¹⁵ In patristic literature it is encountered as a reference to divine power or the authority of Scripture, as an equivalent to the Latin noun *auctoritas*.¹⁶ The Greek noun

¹⁴ The problem of defining the time frame of what is called “imperial Iconoclasm” with exactitude has recently been discussed in publications by Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, particularly in Brubaker/Haldon, *History*.

¹⁵ E.g., Liddell/Scott, *Lexicon*, 275; Sophocles, *Lexicon*, 276; Kriaras, *Lexiko*, vol. 3, 336–337; Trapp, *Lexikon*, vol. 1, 230. These dictionaries list further meanings that are irrelevant with regard to the contents of this book.

¹⁶ Lampe, *Lexicon*, 262–263; Röttgers/Fabian, “Authentisch,” 691.

αὐθεντίας (*authentēs*), among other meanings, references an originator, or author.¹⁷ The adjective αὐθεντικός (*authentikos*), like the Latin *authenticus*, was used to characterize manuscripts and other written documents as “original,” “reliable,” “true,” “warranted,” “genuine,” and “authoritative.”¹⁸ It also denoted autographs, i.e., documents in the handwriting of their authors, and the noun αὐθεντικόν (*authentikon*) referenced original documents or charters, as distinguished from their transcriptions or copies.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, this terminology was employed in the legal realm, as is, for instance, reflected in the name *Authenticum* given c. 1100 or shortly thereafter to the Latin translation of novels, or “new laws” (*novellae constitutiones*) issued by Emperor Justinian the Great. Medieval intellectuals assumed that the work represented the original, official translation from the Greek commissioned by the emperor, and that the laws had come from the emperor himself.²⁰ There are in fact many allusions to charters and legal procedures in Byzantine narratives about divinely inspired writings and in pictures showing inspired individuals. Due to its authenticity, the sacred writ is thus characterized as “legally” binding and authoritative to the utmost degree.²¹

Today, the term “authenticity” is used in various contexts of human life and scholarly disciplines, and, reflecting modern categories, its semantic range has been expanded rather significantly since the eighteenth century.²² This might explain why scholarly investigations have focused almost exclusively on the term’s modern meanings and associations.²³ Throughout this book, I use the terms “authenticity” and “authentic” to denote the originality, genuineness, truth, validity, reality, and authority of holy texts as well as material artifacts that were called inspired or otherwise believed to be of divine origin. Byzantine literature and visual images illuminating the concept of inspiration strongly convey claims to all these qualities in accordance with the meaning of the Greek terms *authentia*, *authentikos* (etc.).

It must be said, though, that writings from Byzantium use these terms and their cognates relatively seldom. Usually *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια) or its derivatives are

¹⁷ Frisk, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, 185; Sophocles, *Lexicon*, 276.

¹⁸ Frisk, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, 185; Liddell/Scott, *Lexicon*, 275; Lampe, *Lexicon*, 263; Sophocles, *Lexicon*, 276; Georges, *Handwörterbuch*, vol. 1, 749.

¹⁹ Sophocles, *Lexicon*, 276; Lampe, *Lexicon*, 263.

²⁰ *Novels of Justinian*, trans. Miller/Sarris, xvii, 23, 50, 343 (*Novel* 34); Kearley, “Creation,” 385–387, esp. 385; Wallinga, “Authenticum.”

²¹ See the material discussed in Chapters 1–4.

²² Krückeberg, “Authentizität”; Röttgers/Fabian, “Authentisch.”

²³ Especially on the modern and contemporary usage of the term, see Knaller, *Fremde*. Despite its claimed historical approach, Knaller’s book offers surprisingly little insight into the ancient origins or premodern contexts and meanings of “authenticity.” Charles Lindholm’s book, *Culture and Authenticity*, does not convey at all that relevant terms and concepts existed long before the modern era (Lindholm, *Authenticity*). More specifically on authenticity in art, see Levinson, “Authenticity”; Dutton, “Authenticity.”

employed to convey notions of truth, originality, reality, and the like. Indeed, the meanings or implications of “truth” and “authenticity” in both the ancient and modern usage of these terms overlap to a significant degree.²⁴ In classical Greek, *aletheia* can also signify “presence,”²⁵ which, as was mentioned above, is also the case with the divine *pneuma* and, consequently, divinity. In fact, *aletheia* in biblical, patristic, and other Christian literature is a very common attribute of God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, all of whom reveal the truth via the inspiration of ordinary humans or saintly persons, in Scripture, doctrines, dogma, material artifacts, etc.²⁶ Early Christian and Byzantine culture developed a rich array of ideas and metaphors to denote the authenticity and truth of divinely inspired texts as well as material objects. The wealth of the associated ideas in literature is reflected – and indeed much enriched – in the visual arts.

I.3 DIVINE INSPIRATION: THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF THE CONCEPT

Conceptions of divine inspiration developed in antiquity, in both pagan polytheism and Jewish culture, were highly formative for how the Byzantines imagined the origins of their own religious literature and to a lesser extent their religious art. Whereas the idea of divine inspiration in ancient cultures has received a fair amount of scholarly attention, its various manifestations in Byzantium have not. The same holds true for the medieval Christian West, though that does not form part of the present study, mostly for reasons of scope. It certainly merits an investigation as well, and it would be interesting to compare the observations and conclusions of such a study to those presented in this book. In Byzantine culture, ancient ideas of inspiration and their literary and visual tropes were either adopted unchanged in their entirety or transformed to fit the changed aspirations and expectations characteristic of Christianity, and Byzantine Christianity in particular. Accordingly, I will now briefly outline the main strands and manifestations of the idea in pagan and Jewish antiquity, focusing on those that were especially influential for the concept of divine inspiration in early Christian and Byzantine culture.

The notion that human beings, especially poets, are inspired by gods, particularly the nine Muses, is commonplace in the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity, and

²⁴ Indeed, it seems that the modern usage of “authenticity” has adopted several meanings of the ancient and medieval Greek *aletheia*, which could, for instance, also mean “sincerity” or “truthfulness” (the nuance of the latter is conveyed in the German “Wahrhaftigkeit”), qualities that are essential for today’s concept of the authenticity of persons; e.g., Liddell/Scott, *Lexicon*, 64, ἀληθής, I.2; Lampe, *Lexicon*, 72 (ἀληθής, D–E), 73 (ἀληθινός, A); Frisk, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, 71; Trapp, *Lexikon*, vol. 1, 54; Knaller, *Fremde*, e.g., 14, 15; Lindholm, *Authenticity*, 3–6. This connection does not seem to have been drawn by scholars who have studied modern concepts of authenticity.

²⁵ Heitsch, *Parmenides*, 35–41, esp. 36.

²⁶ See the various references provided in Lampe, *Lexicon*, 70–73, and throughout this book.

scholarly literature on the subject abounds.²⁷ As goddesses, in whose honor sacred sites were erected, the Muses were an essential component of the Greek worldview.²⁸ They were not the only deities to convey inspiration to humankind; others, such as their leader Apollo, the Nymphs, Eros, and Asclepius, were also occasionally pictured in this role.²⁹ In the oral culture of ancient Greece, divinely conveyed poetry was communicated to human beings by rhapsodists, through chant accompanied by instrumental music and dance.³⁰ This is why musical metaphors for inspiration abound in ancient literature, and in Byzantine literature as well. The oral communication of divine inspiration, along with its traditional vocabulary and imaginings, remained common long after poetry was put down in writing.³¹ From the sixth century BCE on and well into the Common Era, the Muses and the individuals inspired by them were also popular topics of the visual arts.³²

The first description of how the Muses convey inspiration to poets in Hesiod's *Theogony* referenced above is of rare explicitness regarding both the process and its outcome. In the prologue to this poem, Hesiod, a shepherd, claims that he underwent a supernatural experience that enabled him to compose poetry:

And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me, the Olympian Muses . . . : “We know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.” . . . And they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing.³³

The description makes plain that the Muses are omniscient and, should they desire, can convey their divine wisdom and truth to mortals to whom it would otherwise be inaccessible.³⁴ Yet it is also strongly expressed that the goddesses

²⁷ See most recently Murray, “Inspiration”; Semenzato, *Muses*.

²⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IX (LCL, 297), 27.5, 29.5–6, 30.1; ed. Spiro, vol. 2, 59, 63, 64; for further discussion of the Muses, see *ibid.*, index, 310, Μοῦσαι. More generally on the Greek cult of the Muses, see Kambylis, *Dichterweihe*, 35–37; Otto, *Musen*, 23–24, 28, esp. 62–68.

²⁹ Falter, *Dichter*, 66–72; Baumgärtel, “πνεῦμα,” 343–344.

³⁰ See, for example, Otto, *Musen*, esp. 31–39, 71–77; Semenzato, *Muses*, esp. 1, 2, 16–19, 34–41, 78–81.

³¹ On the replacement of purely oral poetry by its written counterpart and on the resulting changes, see esp. Havelock, *Muse*; Rösler, “Schriftkultur,” 109–122.

³² For an overview of the subject in ancient art, see Queyrel, “Mousa”; Harrauer/Hunger, *Lexikon*, 339–341; Faedo, “Muse”; Schmidt, “Musen,” esp. 288–294. See also Chapter 1.

³³ τόνδε δέ με πρόωτιστα θεαί πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπον, Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες . . . ποιμένες ἀγραυλοὶ, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον, ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, ἴδμεν δ’ εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθεῖα γηρύσασθαι. . . ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν θέσπιν, ἴνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ’ ἐσόμενα πρό τ’ ἔοντα; Hesiod, *Theogony*, vv. 24–33, trans. Most. Hesiod’s self-conception as evident in this passage has caused great controversy among scholars. On this debate, see, for example, Collins, “Hesiod”; Podbielski, “Dichter”; Schlesier, “Kreation,” esp. 184–186.

³⁴ Semenzato, *Muses*, 84–88, esp. 87.

may inspire “false things,” meaning fiction – or lies.³⁵ In Christian culture, by contrast, the concept of divine inspiration was from the outset intimately tied to claims of truth. Divine inspiration in fact guaranteed infallibility, an argument that is absolutely central to Byzantine claims of religious orthodoxy.

Hesiod’s description clearly reflects the origin of the ancient concept of divine inspiration in an oral culture, an illiterate society. The poet serves as the Muses’ mouthpiece, as an instrument (*organon*) employed to voice divine poetry to humankind.³⁶ The relatively high level of detail with which the process of the text’s transmission to the poet is characterized notwithstanding, it is equally important to note that Hesiod does not offer any clue as to how far the Muses’ inspiration reached regarding the content or wording of his message. In fact, as has often been pointed out, the questions of the extent to which poetry owes its existence to divine inspiration and how much must be regarded as the human contribution are very much open to interpretation not only in Hesiod, but also elsewhere in Greco-Roman literature.³⁷ Such differentiations are mostly lacking in the Christian era as well.

The passage cited from the *Theogony* illustrates that divine inspiration was understood to have a close relationship with memory, which is also crucially important in Christian contexts. Memory, after all, is essential for conserving the tradition and ensuring that it will be passed on to future generations. The Muses passed down to rhapsodists and others their omniscience resting on the divine and infallible memories that they owed to their mother, the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne.³⁸ Indeed, in some places in Greece, the Muses themselves were called *Mneiai* – “Memories.”³⁹

As an outgrowth of their initial role as the sources of poetry and music, the goddesses gradually became broadly associated with human education and speech, as they passed on their insight to all those whose occupations involved linguistic expression, such as philosophers, orators, politicians, and scientists.⁴⁰ The Muses provided humans with “knowledge and crafts that attain their end by the use of words” and the “correctness of discourse about valid truth,” as Plutarch neatly, if somewhat idealistically, at least so far as truth is concerned, summarizes their gifts.⁴¹ The Muses’ religious significance had depreciated substantially by the beginning of the Common

³⁵ Ibid., 85–88. On poetry as fiction and poetic license according to ancient theories, see Meijering, *Theories*, esp. 54–69.

³⁶ On the concept of the *organon*, see Thraede, “Inspiration,” esp. 339, 346, 356–358.

³⁷ E.g., Kambylis, *Dichterweihe*; Collins, “Hesiod”; Podbielski, “Dichter”; Murray, “Inspiration”; Pötscher, “Selbstverständnis.”

³⁸ *Theogony*, vv. 25, 29, 36, 54, etc. ³⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 9, 743D (LCL, 425).

⁴⁰ The nine Muses and their respective area of responsibilities are named in Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 9 (LCL, 425), trans. Minar, 743C–747, Question 14. See also Barmeyer, *Musen*, 141–182, 185–201; Wegner, *Musensarkophage*, 93–102.

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 9 (LCL, 425), trans. Minar, 744D–E, 272–273.

Era.⁴² This decline resulted from certain socio-political developments that also led to the absolute claim to truth being scrutinized, parodied, and even publicly called into question. Consequently, the divine inspiration of mortals through the Muses gradually became merely a literary trope.⁴³

Despite the Muses' dubious attitude toward conveying divine truth and their lessened authority, they had a significant impact on conceptions of divine inspiration of Christian holy texts. Although Christianity obviously could no longer permit the Muses and other pagan deities to be viewed as the sources of divine inspiration, typical literary motifs and metaphors expressing the idea in Greco-Roman literature were taken up, often along with the traditional vocabulary, by the authors of medieval religious verse and prose.⁴⁴ In Byzantium, ancient influences are in fact not limited to the textual realm; some typical elements in compositions of Muses inspiring poets are mirrored in the iconography of divine inspiration. Artists, however, made important adjustments that are reflective of fundamentally changed attitudes toward the truth contained in the divine text and the necessity of its accurate conservation. This is why, from early on, Byzantine images often highlight the fact that holy texts are not only preserved in written form, but that they are in fact being faithfully recorded in writing in the very moment of their transmission.⁴⁵

Since Homeric times, poets have entreated the Muses and occasionally other gods for inspiration, by which they hoped to emphasize the extrasubjective origin of their words and thus their authority.⁴⁶ The custom of invocation lived on in Christian literature, where the supplication for inspiration was now usually directed toward God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Christ, or in hagiography, toward saints.⁴⁷ In the Greco-Roman world, poets, because of their special relationship with the gods, were regarded as divine and thus elevated from the realm of ordinary mortals.⁴⁸ Hesiod, for instance, viewed his poetic inspiration as hallowed, calling it a “divine gift” (ἱερὴ δόσις).⁴⁹ This idea lives on in Christian writings, conveying, implicitly or explicitly, that inspiration of both literature and art is viewed as a gift of

⁴² Häussler, “Tod,” 117–145; Murray, “Inspiration”; Pötscher, “Selbstverständnis”; Curtius, “Musen,” 133–138.

⁴³ Häussler, “Tod,” 135–142; Murray, “Inspiration,” 90–94; Spentzou, “Introduction.”

⁴⁴ Thraede, “Inspiration,” 343–362; Curtius, “Musen.” For the Latin realm, see Curtius, “Mittelalter-Studien.” To date, we lack similar investigations of Byzantine religious literature. However, the extent of the survival of motifs is here especially noteworthy, as is evident in poetry; for examples, see Browning, “Corpus”; Somers, “Poèmes”; Bentein, “Testament”; Bentein, “Fathers.”

⁴⁵ Chapters 1–4.

⁴⁶ Falter, *Dichter*, 12–13, 34–60; Barmeyer, *Musen*, 97–100; Murray, “Inspiration,” 90.

⁴⁷ Falter, *Dichter*, 38; Curtius, “Mittelalter-Studien,” 258, 262–263; Rapp, “Storytelling,” 432.

⁴⁸ Williger, *Hagios*; Falter, *Dichter*, 78–79. ⁴⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, v. 93, trans. Most.