one could envision assigning a section of essays (that on "Constantine and the Power of the Cross," for instance) as an effective reading assignment in a graduate seminar.

Jeremy M. Schott
University of North Carolina–Charlotte

doi:10.1017/S0009640711000795

Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community. By **Ann Marie Yasin**. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xx + 338 pp. $102.00 cloth.

In late antiquity, the basilica became the dominant form of Christian sacred architecture. Basilicas were built throughout the Roman Empire, and there are many examples known from excavation, even though there are relatively few still standing and even fewer whose decoration survives even in part. Such surviving decorations, in places like Thessalonike, Rome, Porec, and Ravenna, display a wide variety of iconographic motifs and formal layouts. We assume that these tell us something about the designers and their audiences, whether having to do with theology, politics, aesthetics, liturgy, and/or ritual. However, it has proven difficult to draw broad conclusions about the functions and meanings of late antique churches from a few examples.

Ann Marie Yasin has done precisely this: she has addressed the question, what is the function of decoration in the context of what people actually did in churches? To answer this question, she uses a wide variety of sources, including mosaic pavement inscriptions, architectural plans, wall mosaics, theological treatises, hagiographies, letters, and poems. Yasin's main argument is that it was not saints' relics that were the focus of architecture and ritual activity in a late antique church, but instead it was prayer and the eucharistic ritual, which had defined Christian places of worship even before the basilica was invented. Yasin does an excellent job of showing that a church was a community gathering place, where people attended eucharistic services, stopped to pray, and venerated relics of saints, all the while looking around at the decorations. She contends that the church's physical structure was a framework upon whose walls and floors the members of the community created a communal memory both of themselves and of the saints. Prayer was the linchpin because it was the primary activity that took

place in the church, and prayer was what the inscriptions and images called forth from their viewers. As Yasin writes in her conclusion, "Churches worked as commemorative spaces *because* they were public gathering places of the Christian community *and because* they were sacred spaces ritually charged for the communal communication with God through prayer" (287).

Chapter 1 presents a theoretical background for the concept of "sacred space," and Yasin then argues that for early Christianity, space was sacred when (and because) it was the location of communal gathering and ritual, not because of anything particular about the place. As such, collective ritual and other activities that helped to build communal memory were viewed, both before and after the time of Constantine, as the most important functions of a church. This discussion sets up chapter 2, in which Yasin argues that burials in basilicas took place not because people wanted to be buried near saints' relics but because people wanted to be publicly commemorated in church. Yasin takes up this idea again in chapter 3, in which she notes that the church replaced the forum in Roman cities as the locus of public commemoration through inscriptions, either funerary or in honor of donors to the church. These themes are taken up again in chapter 5, where Yasin discusses the importance of prayer in a church, and the advantage, according to Augustine, of being buried in a place where people are praying all the time. Yasin extends this by noting that inscriptions in churches usually ask the viewer to pray for the donor and, thus, the commemoration literally involves both donor and viewer in the primary ritual of the church.

All of these arguments are very convincing. Harder to understand is what Yasin argues about sacred space and saints, which somehow frames the other argument. After de-centering saints and their relics from being the most important features in churches, she then proceeds to demonstrate that saints were nevertheless an integral part of churches: their names were recited in the liturgy, their portraits appear both in the apse and along the walls of various churches, and their bodies are found both under altars and in other parts of the basilica, or even in separate buildings that make up part of a basilica complex. In chapter 4, she discusses the layouts of churches and church complexes to show that relics were not always found under the altar; her main argument is that despite an apparent lack of focus, the church complexes created a unified space through experience. Unfortunately, the only textual evidence that she cites is Paulinus of Nola's description of his complex in honor of St. Felix, but otherwise her discussions of how people moved around a church or complex rely too much on what "could have been." Her conclusion that "diverse formal solutions belie a common function: the spatial arbitration of multiple sacred focal points" (189) seems to be trying too hard to craft some unity out of disunity. Chapter 5 on prayer

as the function that links all focal points and people in a church together, based both on texts and donor inscriptions and portraits, is very convincing. Chapter 6 on the ways that saints performed a commemorative function in churches, both in liturgies and through their portraits, is likewise very useful, although more might have been said about the ways that such pictures both commemorated and created social space and social hierarchies within a church, particularly with regard to gender. Overall, Yasin certainly demonstrates that saints were an important part of church activities, but so were many other things—Christ, the Virgin, the Cross, concepts such as the Transfiguration, biblical narratives—all of which were also part of the liturgy and also depicted on walls. She seems to be privileging saints here merely because she has decentered their relics and wants to show that they were nevertheless significant.

This book did not address some questions related to the functions of late antique basilicas. For example, Yasin does not discuss the implications of Roman extramural burial laws, and thus does not address the question of whether intramural churches were different from extramural burial churches/martyria, and for how long. This idea has long dominated interpretations of late antique urban topography and merited more argument than it received here. Another problem is that much of Yasin's evidence for wall decoration comes from two churches, St. Demetrios in Thessalonike and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. Given the paucity of churches with surviving wall decoration, this is understandable, but since other surviving examples of decorative schemes do exist, I found myself wondering what she makes of, for example, Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which has such a different type of iconography.

Overall, Yasin's study brings together a wide array of evidence and greatly enhances our understanding of the way that the Christian basilica functioned in its community.

Deborah M. Deliyannis
Indiana University, Bloomington

doi:10.1017/S0009640711000801

***The Apocryphal Adam and Eve in Medieval Europe: Vernacular Translations and Adaptations of the* Vita Adae et Evae.** By **Brian Murdoch**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. vi + 292 pp. $110.00 cloth.

Brian Murdoch's book, *The Apocryphal Adam and Eve in Medieval Europe*, marks the latest in his over forty-year interest in the medieval popular Bible