



# The Hinton St Mary Mosaic Pavement: Christ or Emperor?

By SUSAN PEARCE

## ABSTRACT

*The significance of the well-known central roundel of the mosaic from Hinton St Mary, Dorset, which carries a young male head with a chi-rho monogram behind it and pomegranates on each side, has been much discussed. This paper marshals evidence which suggests that the head is not a representation of Christ, but of one of the emperors of the House of Constantine, perhaps Constantine himself. Some of the implications for the nature of fourth-century imperial culture are discussed.*

Since its discovery in September 1963, the bust in the central roundel (FIG. 1) in the principal mosaic pavement known from the Roman site at Hinton St Mary, Dorset, has been generally accepted as a representation of Christ, perhaps the earliest in the North-Western Empire.<sup>1</sup> More recently, several writers have questioned this interpretation,<sup>2</sup> suggesting instead that, although the roundel clearly has Christian content, its iconography may be imperial also. The controversy appeared in a recent edited volume, where Henig, having evidently changed his mind, declared for the head being that of Christ,<sup>3</sup> while Cameron comments, ‘So unusual did the image appear when first found that the resemblance between the features of the face and those of contemporary emperors on coins originally made some scholars wonder whether it was a portrait of a ruler, perhaps Constantius II, rather than Christ. It is hard to think that those who looked on it would not have made some sort of connection...’<sup>4</sup> The reason for this debate is the extremely unusual, perhaps unique, position of the Hinton bust. No unquestioned images of Christ, outside what are clearly churches or acknowledged Christian burial sites (chiefly the Roman catacombs), have been recognised in the Western Empire of the fourth century; equally no undisputed imperial images have appeared as building adornments.<sup>5</sup> There are images of

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee 1964; Thomas 1981; Painter 1967; 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Petts 2003, 107–14; Henig 2001, 37–8; Pearce 2004, 83–5.

<sup>3</sup> Henig 2006b, 204, cat. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Cameron 2006, 92.

<sup>5</sup> Room 3 at Bignor, Sussex, had a nimbed and diademed (or perhaps helmeted) female bust in a prominent position in the rounded end of the pavement. She has usually been interpreted as a goddess, but, given the diadem, an important, imperial female cannot be ruled out (Black 1986, 152, fig. 2), although her nakedness makes this less likely. The ceiling frescoes from the imperial palace at Trier, which showed four nimbed female busts, were originally interpreted as female members of the imperial family — perhaps Constantia, half-sister of Constantine; Helen, wife of Crispus; Helen, mother of Constantine; and Fausta, wife of Constantine (Pohlsander 1984, 83–5; Weber 1984). More recently, they have been seen as personifications (Weber 2000). A fifth- or sixth-century Carthaginian mosaic from the church of St Monique shows the bust of a woman in imperial costume, nimbed and making a gesture of benediction; even if this is meant to be St Monica, it must surely also have been seen as imperial, but must be too late to affect this discussion directly (Dunbabin 1978, 251, pl. LIII, 135).



FIG. 1. Central roundel depicting a human head from the mosaic at Hinton St Mary, Dorset (Photo: British Museum)

Christ and the imperial families in some numbers, but they appear on small, portable objects. This paper is intended to review the pavement's imperial character, and to consider briefly some of the implications.

#### THE CULT OF CONSTANTINE IN ROMAN BRITAIN

It is important, first, to discuss the impact Constantine made upon fourth-century Britain and subsequent tradition. In A.D. 306, the Caesar Constantius Chlorus, who had been campaigning in northern Britain, died at York. His son, Constantine, who had joined him in A.D. 305, was immediately hailed *imperator*, and sailed from Britain to conquer his empire, finally achieving mastery over the West by his victory at the Milvian Bridge outside Rome in A.D. 312. The victory was associated with Constantine's famous vision of the Christian chi-rho monogram, which provided the occasion for the toleration of Christian worship in A.D. 313, and the subsequent Christianisation of the Empire, while Constantine himself had a semi-divine status. The coin evidence suggests that Constantine visited Britain three more times, in A.D. 312, 313–314 and 314–315,<sup>6</sup> and Constans, his son, came to Britain in A.D. 343. This was greater than the normal

<sup>6</sup> Casey 1978.

number of imperial visits to an outlying part of the Empire, and in fourth-century Britain there must have been a substantial number of people who had met one of the imperial family, and even more who had seen one at a distance.

The events at York fed the ambitions of various British would-be emperors in the late fourth/early fifth centuries, one of whom, Constantine III, story said, was chosen simply because of his name.<sup>7</sup> Constantine was used as a royal name in both south-western and northern Britain in the period before A.D. 800, and appears in hagiographical traditions of all kinds in the North and West. In the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth conflated the Emperor Constantine with the Constantine of Dumnonia mentioned by Gildas,<sup>8</sup> in order to produce what, interestingly, was seen as an appropriate pedigree for Arthur. This ensured a high profile for the Constantine figure, but Geoffrey probably picked up pre-existing hints; certainly, the use of Constance as a name for the highest-born ladies was well established before Geoffrey's time.<sup>9</sup>

Hawkes has shown how Constantinian images and building styles influenced the practice of Anglo-Saxon architecture and monumental carving: 'It is this association of Church and imperial Rome through the person of Constantine that seems to pervade the understanding of "Rome" current in the Anglo-Saxon world'.<sup>10</sup> Nennius' compilation<sup>11</sup> has a story that Constantine, son of Constantine the Great, was buried under an inscribed stone by *Caer Seint* (*Segontium* or Caernarvon). The tomb seems to have been a show-piece, and the *Flores Historiarum*<sup>12</sup> records that in 1283 the body of the father of Emperor Constantine was found at Caernarvon, and Edward I had it honourably buried in the church. In the sixteenth century, Camden recounted a tradition that a lamp was kept burning in the vault of a chapel in York, and that Constantius was thought to be buried there.<sup>13</sup>

Constantine's mother, Helena, was the subject of a separate British cult. Whatever the truth behind the stories of her search for the True Cross, recent scholarship<sup>14</sup> indicates that the earliest known source for the tradition is the account of Bishop Gelasius of Caesarea (raised to the episcopate in A.D. 367), and that therefore the story was current soon after the middle of the fourth century.<sup>15</sup> She was conflated with Elen, a figure in British mythology connected with roads and armies, and as a result was believed to be British-born. The legendary ramifications of Helen, various Constantines, stories deriving ultimately from the career of the would-be emperor

<sup>7</sup> Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.2. Constantine III was called Flavius Claudius Constantinus, and although presumably he had been born some seventy years after Constantine left York, his name shows that the emperor was still in Romano-British thoughts. His sons were named Constans, which shows the same theme, and Julian, which might suggest some hedging of bets but probably has no particular significance; see Drinkwater 1998. For Bede's references to Constantine I, see Hawkes 2006, 104.

<sup>8</sup> *De Excidio Britanniae* 28.1; Winterbottom 1978, 29. Among others, the genealogy of Dyfed included 'Constans son of Constantine the Great, son of Constantius and Helen who originated from Britain, sought the Cross of Christ in Jerusalem and brought it to Constantinople, where it is to this day'. The genealogy of the Men of the North included Constans, Constantius (and many earlier emperors); see Bartrum 1966, 9–11; Bromwich 1978, 314–16. For Geoffrey of Monmouth see Thorpe 1968.

<sup>9</sup> It was carried by Constance of Toulouse, the second wife of Robert II of France, who was born about 974, by a daughter of William the Conqueror, born about 1066, a daughter of Robert I Capet, Duke of Burgundy, born in 1046, and by an illegitimate daughter of Henry I, who must have flourished in the early twelfth century. These were followed by at least thirteen ladies called Constance between c. 1150 and 1300; the name was fashionable in the ruling houses of France, England, Brittany, Portugal, Aragon, and Castile, see <http://www.royalist.info/execute>.

<sup>10</sup> Hawkes 2006, 105.

<sup>11</sup> *Historia Brittonum* 25; Morris 1980, 24. Nennius also mentions a *Caer Custent*, 'City of Constantine', Morris 1980, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Luard 1890, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Magilton 1980, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Borgehammar 1991.

<sup>15</sup> See Cameron 2006, 100, for the view that Ambrose's funeral oration for Theodosius I in A.D. 395 is the first mention of Helen's finding of the Cross.

Magnus Maximus,<sup>16</sup> and Arthur are considerable.<sup>17</sup> The cult of Helen (c. A.D. 255–330) was relatively early and widespread in Britain.<sup>18</sup> A number of significant churches are dedicated to Helen, and these have a claim to be considered among the earliest Christian sites in Britain. By 1736 the chapel in York, which Camden mentioned, was identified with the parish church of St Helen on the Walls. Here the first church, built some time after c. A.D. 700, may possibly have featured a floor showing a female head, which had originally belonged to the floor mosaic of the underlying fourth-century Roman building; conceivably the head was identified as Helen.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that a substantial, if confused, cult of Constantine and Helen (and to a much lesser extent other members of their family) developed, appearing firstly in the British-speaking areas of Britain and perhaps Brittany, and then in Anglo-Saxon-speaking areas, and spreading into areas of northern France adjacent to Brittany, following the interests of the Angevin and Plantagenet kings. It was essentially an early medieval British development, with its roots in the British fourth century.

#### THE HINTON ST MARY MOSAIC

We must now turn to the site at Hinton St Mary, Dorset. This site is included within the group conventionally called ‘villas’, but its plan is not well understood. The mosaic pavement is in the north-east angle of a layout with two wings set at approximately a right angle. There is a spring site lower down the field.<sup>20</sup> The room, 8.5 by 6 m, floored by the mosaic had an east–west long axis.<sup>21</sup> It was divided into two unequal parts by responds. The western, smaller, rectangular section had a border and a central roundel showing Bellerophon on Pegasus slaying the Chimaera, with rectangular panels either side depicting hunting scenes. The border pattern continued into the larger, eastern section. This was square, and had quadrants in the corners, occupied by four male busts adapted from representations of the Winds, and four semi-circles, three with hunting scenes, and that beneath the central roundel with a spreading tree. In the central roundel is a male bust, facing forward, wearing a *tunica* beneath a *pallium*. Behind the head is a chi-rho monogram, of Constantinian form,<sup>22</sup> with serifs except at the bottom left, presumably an oversight on the mosaicist’s part. Either side of the head are pomegranates. Two of the corner busts are also flanked by pomegranates. Along the south-eastern wall of the room was a parallel foundation, perhaps for a small raised platform, or bench.

Reece,<sup>23</sup> by making stylistic comparisons between the central bust and coins, has suggested a date between A.D. 335 and 355. Moorhead<sup>24</sup> suggested that the model for the chi-rho and the central head was the reverse and the obverse respectively of one of the bronze nummi struck by Magnentius at Amiens (A.D. 352–353).<sup>25</sup> Since Magnentius was defeated and his supporters

<sup>16</sup> Magnus Maximus was proclaimed emperor in Britain in A.D. 383; he went to Gaul, taking the best troops in Britain with him, and became sole ruler of Britain, Gaul and Spain until he was defeated and killed by Theodosius in A.D. 388. For his impact on British tradition, see Bromwich 1978, 451–3.

<sup>17</sup> Harbus 2002, 52–63.

<sup>18</sup> Jones 1986; Bromwich 1978, 314–16, 341–3, 355–60, 364–7.

<sup>19</sup> Magilton 1980, 2–6, 16–18.

<sup>20</sup> Painter 1965.

<sup>21</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 156–60.

<sup>22</sup> i.e. with the letters chi and rho superimposed to give a six-pointed figure, with the top of the central upright bent over into a loop on the viewer’s right. All the symbols referred to here as ‘chi-rho’ or ‘monogram’ are of this Constantinian form unless specified otherwise; for details of forms, see Thomas 1981, 86–92.

<sup>23</sup> Reece 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Moorhead 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 146, cat. 95. The coins have reverse, chi-rho flanked by alpha and omega and obverse, bare-headed bust, right, with curls on the neck, strong features and a prominent chin, e.g. Kent 1978, nos 675, 681. The Hinton bust looks full ahead.

rooted out in A.D. 353, this would date the pavement closely. However, dates drawn from such stylistic comparisons are open to the objection that both coins and mosaic may be drawing on the same artistic trends, that they need not be contemporary, and that the mosaic need not be the later. The coins from the site mostly date between A.D. 270 and 400, indicating that the villa, and the pavement, belongs to the fourth century, but the evidence does not allow a more exact date.<sup>26</sup>

A number of features of the Hinton pavement require discussion: the chi-rho monogram and its broad use; the portrait style of the central bust in relation to representations of Christ and of the emperor; the iconography of imperial figures; the remainder of the mosaic associated with the central head, particularly the corner heads, the spreading tree, the hunting scene and the pomegranates; the Bellerophon panel; the floor position of the bust and the function of the room overall; and the significance of the pavement as a whole.

#### THE CHI-RHO MONOGRAM

As Toynbee pointed out,<sup>27</sup> the chi-rho was used before A.D. 300, sometimes in ligatured form like, or identical with, the Christian monogram, as an abbreviation within, or for words containing, the two Greek letters, and also as a marginal symbol to indicate an important line. Use of this abbreviation or mark was a standard element in normal handwriting and reading. However, the particular Christian significance of the abbreviation as a way of representing the Greek form of 'Christ' was not overlooked before A.D. 300: the monogram appears in a Christian inscription in the Hypogaeum of the Acilians, in a late second/third-century part of the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome, and also with a Christian inscription accompanying a pre-A.D. 270 burial between the Via Appia and the Via Latina.<sup>28</sup> The sign had a range of religious and mundane connotations already when it was appropriated by Constantine after A.D. 312 and began to be used in a large range of contexts. Its appearance as a post-A.D. 300 motif in mosaics and other features of buildings in Britain, and in Gaul and Iberia, will be considered first, followed by its use on portable objects.

The appearance of the chi-rho at Hinton is not quite alone. A few chi-rhos appear as part of the decor of British buildings broadly contemporary with the Hinton site. The monogram appears in a mosaic at one other British villa, just possibly two,<sup>29</sup> at two sites in wall paintings, and at one incised in pavestones. The Frampton site in Dorset,<sup>30</sup> which may have been a religious complex,<sup>31</sup> is 20 km south-west of Hinton. Room 2 had a tripartite pavement, where the smaller rectangle featured Bacchus and hunters and the section joining this to the larger rectangle had ornament and a fragmentary inscription. The central panel in the larger section showed Bellerophon riding Pegasus and slaying the Chimaera, flanked by paired gods and mortals and a border of dolphins. On the apse side of this panel was a head of Neptune with two dolphins coming from his mouth, flanked by another inscription. The apse, which featured a cantharus, was joined to this section

<sup>26</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 156–7.

<sup>27</sup> Toynbee 1964, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> The mosaic flooring a room at the villa at Halstock, Dorset, must now be deleted from the group of possible sites, following the publication of a coloured painting of the mosaic by Stephen Cosh, based on a sketch by Thomas Rackett, with details elucidated from the watercolour by James Lickman, rediscovered in 2003; Lickman drew on a lost original sketch made by Samuel Lysons (Cosh and Neal 2006, frontispiece, 142–9).

<sup>30</sup> Lysons 1813, 3; Sparey Green 1994; Henig 1984; Collingwood and Wright 1992, 88–9; Cosh and Neal 2006, 130–40.

<sup>31</sup> Farrar 1956.

by a panel containing a central chi-rho within a circle, with the foot of its rho towards Neptune, flanked by circles of the same size filled with a whirling pattern, three on each side.<sup>32</sup> The mosaic in general, and the chi-rho in particular, has received a number of interpretations. Perring suggested a strong gnostic element in the design,<sup>33</sup> and Black saw it as essentially Christian, probably part of a chapel or house church,<sup>34</sup> while Henig regarded it as the inspiration of an 'independent thinker' who was creating his own religious statement in which Christ, represented by the monogram, was treated 'no more nor less than as a pagan god'.<sup>35</sup>

The possible site is the villa at Fifehead Neville, 5 km south-south-west of Hinton, which had two wings arranged on the north and east sides of a courtyard. The main, northern, range had a bipartite room aligned east–west, the western part of which was floored with a mosaic carrying nine tangent circles truncated by a square frame, with lateral semicircles and quadrants in the corners. The mosaic had a central bust, which is known only from a painting, and indeterminate features to the left of the head and above it could be interpreted as fragments of a chi-rho placed behind the head, as at Hinton. However, it seems more likely that the head is Bacchus holding a *thyrsus*.<sup>36</sup> The theme of the mosaic in the eastern part of this room is unknown. It should be noted that two silver rings marked with chi-rhos were found together with a silver necklace/girdle fastener, nine bronze bracelets and fragments of others, hidden under a stone in a hollow cut in the concrete floor at the end of the west block.<sup>37</sup>

The figured mosaic from the villa at Lullingstone, Kent, features Bellerophon slaying the Chimaera, and Europa riding on the bull. The Lullingstone pavement included a verse couplet, which Henig has suggested incorporated a cryptographic message which includes the words 'Aventus', perhaps the villa owner, and 'Jesus',<sup>38</sup> although this remains speculative. The pavement should probably be taken in conjunction with the famous wall-paintings in Room A, although the dating problems are not fully resolved.<sup>39</sup> These include a frieze of six *orans* figures and several monograms,<sup>40</sup> features which have suggested to most commentators that this room was a 'house-church'.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the truth of this, it might not exclude reference to the imperial house in the painted scene in the eyes of contemporary viewers. Another wall-painting of a chi-rho occurs at the cemetery of Poundbury, Dorset (see below). Chi-rhos were carved into the stone slabs forming part of the rim of the ornamental pool at the villa site at Chedworth, Gloucester. The carving may have been done some time after the villa had been built; late in the fourth century the stones were dispersed and re-used as ordinary paving slabs.<sup>42</sup>

Many of the fourth-century mosaics in southern Britain are more ambitious than those found in Gaul, and suggest that both financial and intellectual investment was greater in Britain in this area. This would not prevent the inclusion of chi-rhos in Gaulish mosaics, but a search of the

<sup>32</sup> The mosaic is known only from Lysons's coloured engraving, and he believed that the chi-rho was inserted into the mosaic scroll at a later period (Lysons 1813, I, part 3, 6; Cosh and Neal 2006, 137).

<sup>33</sup> Perring 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Black 1986, 149–50.

<sup>35</sup> Henig 1986, 164.

<sup>36</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 125–9.

<sup>37</sup> Mawer 1995, 66–8.

<sup>38</sup> Henig 1997.

<sup>39</sup> The mosaics seem to be fourth-century, but may be earlier than the fourth-century wall painting with *orans* figures (Meates 1979, 31–78; Meates 1987). The whole Lullingstone site needs fresh consideration.

<sup>40</sup> Meates 1979, 27–59; 1987, 5–45.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Petts 2003, 78–83.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas 1981, 220, where the possible function of the site as a baptistery is discussed. The site of Gabia la Grande, Granada, Spain, had an underground chamber, accessible by a ramp and steps, containing an octagonal pool interpreted as a nymphaeum, and 'traces of decoration suggest a structure of the fourth century may be Christian' ([www.perseus.harvard.edu](http://www.perseus.harvard.edu)). For discussion of the possible Christian use of decorative pools, see Todd 2005; Henig 2006a.

literature has not produced any examples.<sup>43</sup> The symbol occurs in southern Gaul on a range of architectural fragments, as at Riez, Digne, Poilhes, Marseilles and Viviers.<sup>44</sup> These seem to be funerary and ecclesiastical in character, but their lack of context makes discussion difficult. There is also a re-used sarcophagus with a chi-rho flanked by alpha and omega from Moissac.<sup>45</sup>

Two mosaic examples are known from Spain.<sup>46</sup> Room 28 at the Villa Fortunatus, at Fraga, in north-east Spain, was a principal room of the main villa complex. It had a mosaic in the 'light' later fourth-century style, carrying a range of bird, fruit and vessel images; part of it may be a vintage scene. This is surrounded by a patterned border, beyond which, on one of the long sides, is the word FORTUNATUS,<sup>47</sup> with a break between U and N occupied by a chi-rho flanked by alpha and omega.<sup>48</sup> The villa at Prado, Valladolid, also seems to have had a mosaic chi-rho, but this may have been of later date.<sup>49</sup> Probable chi-rho forms, combined with probable alpha and omega forms, carved in marble, came from the villa at Gabia la Grande, Granada, but again their dates are unclear.<sup>50</sup>

Chi-rhos do not appear on the elaborate fourth-century mosaics of the North African provinces,<sup>51</sup> although they were used on fifth-century tomb mosaics.<sup>52</sup> In Italy, they appear on a range of specifically Christian structures; for example, a fresco from the Roman cemetery of Vigna

<sup>43</sup> No mosaics in Gaul with chi-rhos are given in the published volumes of *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule* series (*Gallia* Suppl. No. X (CNRS, Paris)): Stern 1957, 1960, 1963, 1967; Stern and Blanchard 1975; Darmon and Lavagne 1977; Blanchard 1991; Darmon 1995; Lavagne 1979; Lancha 1981; Balmelle 1980, 1987. The closest is that from near Metz cathedral which is apse-shaped, with geometric decoration in the top two-thirds and a panel at the base divided into three rectangles, the centre one of which has an eight-pointed star with an indeterminate centre, in a circle with a geometric surround: the points of the star are serified but there is no sign of the loop on the top upright which would turn it into a chi-rho (Stern 1960, 54–5, pl. XXXIII). However, see the cylindrical glass beaker from ?Bonn, where such stars are sometimes seen as Christian symbols, Hartley *et al.* 2006, 172, no. 134.

Mosaics in Gaul featuring scenes similar to those in southern Britain are: at Forêt de Brotonne, near Rouen, Seine-Maritime, with Orpheus in a central circle surrounded by four rectangular panels with animals and four corner circles with busts of the Seasons (one survives) (Darmon 1995, 85–8, pls LI–LV); at Blanzly-les-Fismes, with Orpheus and animals, near a spring basin (Stern 1957, 50–2, pls XXIV–XXVI); near Vienne, with Orpheus and animals (Lancha 1981, 89–93, pls XXXVI–XXXVII); at St Romain-en-Gal, Vienne, with Orpheus and animals (Lancha 1981, 282); near Autun with Bellerophon on Pegasus spearing the Chimaera in a central circle surrounded by panels of key/meander ornament (Stern and Blanchard 1975, 73–80, pls XXXV–XXXIX, LXXXIII); at Reims, near the Archbishop's Palace, with Bellerophon, Pegasus and the Chimaera (Stern 1957, 24, pls III–IV); at Vinon, near Vienne, with Bacchus (Lavagne 1979, 317–20, pls CVI–CIX). The Forêt de Brotonne Orpheus pavement most closely approaches the British ones in style; a large proportion of the Gaulish pavements featuring Orpheus, Bellerophon and Bacchus are in the North, but they are relatively few.

<sup>44</sup> Duval 1995, 53, 79, 92, 136, 222.

<sup>45</sup> Duval and Laurin 1996, 149.

<sup>46</sup> The publication coverage for Iberia is not yet complete, but see Blázquez and Mezquiriz 1985; Martin 1902; Cortez 1946; Blanco Freijeiro 1978; 1993. There are mosaics featuring Pegasus at Arroniz, Navarre, Bellerophon at Gerona, Dionysius at Mérida and Tarragona, and Orpheus at Saragossa (Dunbabin 1978, 221).

<sup>47</sup> Fortunatus has been assumed to be the name of the fourth-century owner, who commissioned the pavement. The villa has a number of mosaics, most in the earlier, heavier style, and no other quite like that in Room 28. A Visigothic church was built on the south-western side of the villa, probably using some existing structures; this church has produced a substantial fragment of stone relief carrying a chi-rho and alpha and omega within a circle (Rafols 1943, plan, p. 12, relief pl. 9, fig. 2). The Deutsches Archäologische Institut, Madrid Department, is currently carrying out a research project 'Villas and Christianity: the Christianization of Villa Complexes on the Iberian Peninsula'.

<sup>48</sup> Rafols 1943, pl. X; Galiay 1943.

<sup>49</sup> Santervas has a fish symbol, 'Mosaicos de la villa romana de Santervas del Burgo' <http://webs.ono.com/usr037/fuenteamegil/vilaromana.htm> (01/01.06). A further Christian symbol is reported on this web site from a villa at Valladolid, see also Castro Fernandez 1981.

<sup>50</sup> See Olmedo Perez 1994, pl. 5a; these elements may have been part of a longer inscription. There are various other occurrences of Christian motifs in Spanish mosaics, but these seem to be either specifically funerary and/or later, see Schlunk and Hauschild 1978.

<sup>51</sup> Africa has some mosaics with the traditional range of gods and goddesses, but 'these appear seldom, and when they do, seem to lack profound religious significance' (Dunbabin 1978, 172); however, Dionysius and his companions are very common, and some scenes seem to represent a real interest in his mystery cult (Dunbabin 1978, 173–87).

<sup>52</sup> Dunbabin 1978, 188–95.

Chiaraviglio, probably pre-A.D. 300, shows Peter and Paul meeting and embracing, and to the right of their heads a chi-rho appears in the sky.<sup>53</sup> One striking example comes from the double church built by Bishop Theodore of Aquileia (?A.D. 308–319). This featured two halls, both of which had mosaic pavements carrying inscriptions to Theodore himself as builder of the church. That in the southern hall was in a *clypeus* set in a very large and splendid seascape showing the story of Jonah and the Whale.<sup>54</sup> It had an inscription, highly laudatory of Theodore, positioned between two curved lines, with the text set in six lines with Theodore's name taking up the first line. The space between the name and the arch of the top curve is occupied by a chi-rho.<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that Theodore almost certainly attended the Council of Arles in A.D. 314, at which we know British bishops were also present.<sup>56</sup>

In fourth-century Italy, the monogram appears on a range of small objects, many obviously associated with Christian practice. A fourth-century gold-glass medallion, for example, probably from Italy, shows the draped bust of a man holding a long cross, flanked by alpha and omega, with a chi-rho without a nimbus behind his head. Beside him is the inscription LAVRENTIO.<sup>57</sup> A silver reliquary from the end of the fourth century, also probably from Italy, has a scene showing the youthful Christ giving the Law to Peter and Paul; Peter (probably) carries a staff over his shoulder which ends in the simple monogram form with one horizontal crosspiece.<sup>58</sup> A silver gilt ampula of the early fifth century, with busts of Peter and Paul, shows Peter's head with a nimbus enclosing a gilded cross.<sup>59</sup> The impression given by the relevant accounts<sup>60</sup> suggests that the monogram was used much less frequently in Gaul, and in Spain,<sup>61</sup> but more from these areas may await publication.

In Britain, a wide range of fourth-century objects carrying the chi-rho, and apparently related symbols, have been listed and discussed by Thomas and Mawer<sup>62</sup>. The great majority of these do not seem to be unequivocally associated with direct Christian piety in the way in which the Italian pieces are. These relatively numerous objects must be borne in mind, but for the present purpose, several pieces seem to be particularly indicative of the possible functions of the symbol.

A finger-ring, in silver, with a chi-rho on the bezel was found at the villa site of Fifehead Neville, Dorset, and with it was a second silver ring with a chi-rho and a bird and palm leaves.<sup>63</sup> Other similar rings, are known from Brentwood, Essex, in gold, and from Thruxton, Hampshire, in silver.<sup>64</sup> Petts suggested that such rings were seal-rings, perhaps used by imperial or local government officials, as well as by private individuals and perhaps bishops.<sup>65</sup> Such an imperial

<sup>53</sup> Donati 2000, 52–3.

<sup>54</sup> Dunbabin comments that the seascape is in the African style and that, 'Jonah appears as a somewhat irrelevant detail introduced among the fishing Erotes' (1978, 215). However, Elsner shows how Jonah relates to classical motifs of sleeping figures like Endymion (1998, 152–8). The inclusion of texts in mosaic pavements is quite rare and a striking feature about the monograms within buildings is that they tend to be associated with such inscriptions. At Aquileia and the Villa Fortunatus, the association is as direct as possible, and the inscription (probably) records the name of the person by whom the building work was commissioned. At Lullingstone, the inscription is some distance from the wall-painted monograms, but it is possible (if unlikely) that, cryptographically, it included the name of the owner. At Frampton, one inscription was closely, but not immediately, adjacent to the chi-rho, and the other (fragmentary) on the area leading into the adjacent space. These all seem to indicate a strong assertion of ownership, personality, and philosophical position.

<sup>55</sup> Humphries 1999, 74–7, 162–3, 191–6.

<sup>56</sup> Gaudemet 1977, 59–61.

<sup>57</sup> Toynbee 1964.

<sup>58</sup> Donati 2000, pls 155, 218.

<sup>59</sup> Donati 2000, pls 144, 215.

<sup>60</sup> Duval 1995; Duval and Laurin 1996; Duval and Gauthier 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Castro Fernandez 1981.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas 1981; Mawer 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Mawer 1995.

<sup>64</sup> Mawer 1995, 67, 71, 73.

<sup>65</sup> Petts 2003, 110.



function for the chi-rho symbol could account for its use on pewter ingots<sup>66</sup> dredged from the Thames. An official silver ingot from the Balline hoard (Co. Limerick) was stamped EX [chi-rho] OFC VILIS.<sup>67</sup> A lead seal from Silchester carries a chi-rho and also the letters P M C; two comparable sealings, but from different dies, are known from Trier. In all three cases the P M C is interpreted as PROVINCIA MAXIMA CAESARIENSIS,<sup>68</sup> the south-eastern British province in the fourth century. The use of the monogram to indicate imperial governmental activity, at times in quite mundane circumstances, is demonstrated by the copper-alloy grain-measure found in the Rhine at Gersheim near Strasbourg,<sup>69</sup> which was engraved with a large chi-rho within a garland flanked by alpha and omega, and inscribed *corrector Venetiae et Istriae*.<sup>70</sup> This was clearly part of the apparatus of fourth-century government, and probably was used to check that correct quantities were being supplied. It may be that many of the occurrences of the monogram on portable objects are in fact similar badges of secular, imperial authority.

It is clear that the chi-rho symbol began as a utilitarian marker, and was subsequently used as a Christian monogram. It acquired its major imperial and Christian significance together in the context of Constantine's vision. Surviving chi-rhos are rare in building contexts in the Western Empire, other than churches and catacombs, mostly Italian: three (just possibly four) come from Britain, one from a cemetery, and one clear example comes from northern Spain. The emphasis is clearly British. Throughout Italy, and possibly to a more limited degree in Gaul and Spain, the symbol was used on portable items directly associated with the Holy Family and the saints. In Britain, Gaul and northern Italy it seems to have been used quite extensively as a marker of imperial authority, rather like the use of the crown in contemporary Britain.

#### THE HINTON BUST

If the Hinton face represents Christ in a straightforward way, we would expect it to conform to contemporary images of him. Two such images are known from fourth-century Britain. The copper-alloy casket sheet from Uley, with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, shows a naturalistic, although not especially youthful, Christ wearing a *himation* and perhaps boots, in depictions of the healing of the centurion's servant and the healing of the blind man. The Uley sheet was found folded tightly in four, as though to render it appropriate for deposition by those who recognised its sacred nature but did not wish to make use of it.<sup>71</sup> The second piece is the little wooden beaker covered in sheet bronze from the cemetery at Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire,<sup>72</sup> which has a cross<sup>73</sup> flanked by alpha and omega and three scenes from the New Testament; Christ appears in all of these, but no details of his appearance can be made out.

Outside Britain, a series of sarcophagi shows Christ as a beardless youth, with soft features

<sup>66</sup> Collingwood and Wright 1990, 68–70; Petts 2003, 108–9. The ingots are stamped with Christian symbols and the name Syagerius, so they probably came from the same workshop, although the metal in them, or the ingots themselves, perhaps came from the South-West.

<sup>67</sup> Collingwood and Wright 1990, 29.

<sup>68</sup> Collingwood and Wright 1990, 94–5.

<sup>69</sup> Duval 1995, 21.

<sup>70</sup> The *Notitia Dignitatum* (Fairley 2001) lists Venetia and Istria as one of the seventeen Italian provinces under the Prefect of Italy; it included the area around what was to become Venice, and the adjacent Illyrian peninsula. *Correctores* were the second rank of provincial governor, lower than *consulares* but superior to *presides*; by the date of this entry in the *Notitia*, Venetia and Istria is listed as having a *consularis* so presumably its status rose at some point in the fourth century.

<sup>71</sup> Henig 1993, 109–10.

<sup>72</sup> Henig and Booth 2000, 185–6.

<sup>73</sup> This part of the bronze sheet is badly damaged. The alpha is quite clear but the presumed omega is missing; two upper transverse elements in the cross form seem to be at an angle, appropriate to the chi of a chi-rho figure.

and curls, and without any distinguishing symbols. The style of the scenes is naturalistic, and the Christ figure appears in the appropriate pose, from the appropriate angle, and often not centrally. The type clearly derives from the earlier depiction of youthful, male classical gods, like Apollo. One from Les Alyscamps at Arles has an arcade of figures with Christ in the centre giving the Law; he is boyish, clean-shaven and curly haired.<sup>74</sup> The sarcophagus originally from St Maria Antiqua, Rome, dating *c.* A.D. 270, shows Christ twice in this style, being baptised and as the Good Shepherd.<sup>75</sup> One from Syracuse from the first half of the fourth century shows a similar Christ figure three times,<sup>76</sup> and that of Junius Bassus, dating to A.D. 359, shows the same Christ giving the Law and entering Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup> A similar sarcophagus, in the Grottoes of St Peter, of about the same date, shows a similar Christ, also giving the Law. The same type also appears in the Catacombs: the youthful Christ appears in Roman dress and with the apostles in an arcosolium in the Crypt of Ampliatius in the Catacomb of Domitilla, painted around A.D. 350.<sup>78</sup> The naturalistic type continued till at least A.D. 400, and probably a little later; an ivory panel in Milan, probably of the first decades of the fifth century, with the women at the Sepulchre, and another of similar date in Munich, with a scene of the Ascension, both depict the youthful Christ.<sup>79</sup>

A parallel type of Christ portrait appears around A.D. 350, for example, in the apse mosaics of the south and north ambulatories in the church of St Constanza, Rome, where a formally robed figure appears enthroned on a globe (north) or standing (south) almost straight on to the viewer. He is a mature man, long-haired, bearded, with strong eyes.<sup>80</sup> The same image appears in the Catacombs, where a mid- to late fourth-century bust in the Catacomb of Comodilla shows this Christ, with his nimbus flanked by an alpha and omega.<sup>81</sup> A sarcophagus, probably from Les Alyscamps, of Concordius, bishop of Arles about A.D. 374, has features belonging to both styles. It has Christ in the centre of his apostles, looking quite mature and formal, with hair brushed forward and a curly beard.<sup>82</sup> By the A.D. 420s the mature style appears in sarcophagus carving, witnessed by one from Ravenna, which shows a front-facing Christ, long-haired and bearded, standing centrally on a rock giving the Law to two apostles; he is nimbate and has a chi-rho behind his head within the nimbus.<sup>83</sup> A second Ravenna sarcophagus shows the mature, central Christ, enthroned and nimbate with chi-rho.<sup>84</sup> Another Ravenna sarcophagus, also early fifth-century, shows a very stiff Mary and a rather mature Christ-child greeting the Magi. Here the Child has a nimbus with a chi-rho.<sup>85</sup> By the end of the century, the central, mature style, frequently with a nimbus enclosing a cross or a chi-rho, had become the norm, although variants were still possible. The mosaics in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, for example, show a centrally-placed Christ, wearing purple robes and with a nimbus enclosing a cross, but clean-shaven.<sup>86</sup>

The central Hinton bust does not conform to either of these styles. It is naturalistic rather than hieratic, but its stance is full face, with heavily marked eyes looking directly into those of the viewer and a gaze characterised by confidence and mature authority. The hair is combed forwards, and hangs in curls behind the neck. The face is broad and clean-shaven, with a strong,

<sup>74</sup> Duval 1995, 120.

<sup>75</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 4–5, pp. 309–10.

<sup>76</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 37–9, p. 319.

<sup>77</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 41–3, p. 320.

<sup>78</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 7, 10, p. 310–12.

<sup>79</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 92, p. 328; pl 93, pp. 328–9.

<sup>80</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 33, p. 319.

<sup>81</sup> Jensen 2005, fig. 11, 31.

<sup>82</sup> Duval 1995, 120.

<sup>83</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 176, p. 345.

<sup>84</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 177, pp. 345–6.

<sup>85</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 179, p. 346.

<sup>86</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 150, 151, pp. 341–2.

straight nose, and full cheeks. The chin has a very well-marked cleft, not a very common feature of mosaic busts. Overall, the Hinton image is much like the face on the colossal marble statue of Constantine from the Basilica Nova, the head of which survives;<sup>87</sup> in particular the Hinton cleft chin is very like that shown on this portrait of the emperor (FIG. 2 ). The same chin shows up



FIG. 2. Head of Constantine I from a colossal statue from the Basilica Nova c. A.D. 315–330, in Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.  
(*Photo: Robin Margaret Jensen*)

<sup>87</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 16, p. 315.

in the head of Constantine on his Triumphal Arch in Rome,<sup>88</sup> and appears again, together with a hair-style strikingly similar to that at Hinton, in another colossal statue, of bronze, probably of Constantius II (A.D. 337–361) (but possibly of Constantine), in Rome.<sup>89</sup> The corner busts at Hinton also have cleft chins, as do their Wind equivalents on one of the Frampton mosaics.<sup>90</sup> The Hinton animals have distinctive, bulging, musculature drawn in much the same way as the chin, so this may be an idiosyncrasy on the part of the mosaicist(s), but possibly the style of Constantinian portraiture provided the inspiration. There do not appear to be any early/mid-fourth-century portraits of Christ which show these facial features. The closest is the Christ shown sitting enthroned on the lid of the relics casket in San Nazaro, Milan,<sup>91</sup> dating from about A.D. 388, which has the same kind of gaze and similar hair, although in a curved line over the forehead, but lacks the marked cleft chin.<sup>92</sup>

A mosaicist in south-western Britain need not have lacked inspiration for an image of Constantine. A sculptured head probably of him survives from York (the chin is full, but the features are now too worn for close comparisons) and there may have been others elsewhere, given the number of visits he made.<sup>93</sup> Severian of Galba, writing about A.D. 400, tells us, ‘Since an emperor cannot be present to all persons, it is necessary to set up the statue of the emperor in law courts, market places, public assemblies, and theatres’.<sup>94</sup> Official imperial icons were distributed and displayed in places like wine shops, as demonstrated by the relief from Dijon which shows one in the background of a bar.<sup>95</sup> One of these, or something very similar, has survived. It is a terracotta disc, the relief impressed with a stamp and baked, showing the emperor in his imperial box holding up his right hand in blessing; below him is a crowd, either side of him are courtiers, and at his right side are two money bags marked with chi-rhos.<sup>96</sup> This suggests that people would generally be familiar with the official image of the emperor. Coins also, of course, carried the imperial image. Full-face coin portraits were rare but in A.D. 316, for example, Constantine issued a solidus with one. His hair is combed forward, his chin is full and prominent, and he has prominent eyes and large ears. He is shown with a nimbus, intended to represent the sun’s rays emanating from his head as a visual expression of his divine power.<sup>97</sup> Altogether, experience of the imperial image seems to have been more powerful, and also more frequent, in daily life that we sometimes allow.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 16, fig. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Volbach 1961, pls 18, 19, p. 316.

<sup>90</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 132–3.

<sup>91</sup> For the San Nazaro piece, see Buechsel 2003, pls 19, 20; Volbach 1961, pl. 115. The face of the image of King Solomon on one end of the same casket is markedly like that of Christ, suggesting that royal and Christological images were inter-changeable.

<sup>92</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 111, pp. 332–3.

<sup>93</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 120 cat. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Jensen 2005, 53.

<sup>95</sup> Duval 1995, 239.

<sup>96</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA, catalogue of exhibition *Romans and Barbarians* (1976), nos 143, 125. The central figure has sometimes been thought to be Christ, but the imperial box and the money-bags suggest that it represents an emperor about to distribute gold and silver gifts, a key moment in imperial ceremony, and the design in general is like a crude, cheap version of, for example, the Missorium of Theodosius found in southern Spain, see Leader-Newby 2004, 1–59.

<sup>97</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 144, no. 90.

<sup>98</sup> The Hinton head was not nimbed. In a pre-Christian context, the nimbus was always used to emphasise divine or hero status e.g. Room I in the building at Kingscote, Gloucestershire, had a wall-painting which featured three nimbed female figures (Timby 1998; Davey and Ling 1982, 119–23). As depictions of Christ show, during the fourth century the use of the nimbus for him was optional, although growing more usual by the end of the century. Fourth-century imperial figures were sometimes shown nimbed, as on the silver missorium of Theodosius found near Mérida in southern Spain (Leader-Newby 2004, 10–14), but this was not always the case. It seems that, at this period, both Christ and the emperor might, or might not, appear nimbate.

The Hinton bust is shown wearing a tunic and a *pallium*, white with orange-red edges, which is thrown over the right shoulder. Painter<sup>99</sup> in part rejected the idea that the bust might represent a Christian emperor, because its dress seemed more appropriate for Christ, who is usually shown wearing the *pallium* in the fourth and fifth centuries, while emperors wear togas, military uniform, or elaborate court-dress. In the earlier Empire, the *pallium* was associated with Greek philosophers, and it began to be fashionable as a part of the early second-century Hellenistic revival, although rejected by those who identified themselves with ancient Rome. The controversy was a live issue, moving Tertullian, in about A.D. 210, to write a defence of *pallium*-wearing, which concludes, 'but I confer on [the *pallium*] a fellowship with a divine sect and discipline. Joy, Pallium, and exult! A better philosophy has now deigned to honour you, ever since you have begun to be a Christian's vesture'.<sup>100</sup> His association of the *pallium* with the Christian life helped the garment's increasing popularity during the third and fourth centuries, when the combination of tunic and *pallium* seems to have been gaining ground anyway as the daily male dress of a citizen, and the toga gradually dropped out of use. Through the fourth century, also, a form of imperial court-dress was developing, which combined versions of the *pallium*, the dalmatic, which was a wide-sleeved tunic, and the military cloak, which fastened on the right shoulder with a large brooch. This was produced in a range of colours and jewelled decorations, and by the later fifth century it had become a standard part of the imperial image. When the Hinton mosaic was made, the development of full court-dress probably lay in the future. In the first half of the fourth century, when old traditions were being reworked and new images being created, the *pallium*, already strongly associated with Christians, and with the image of Christ, and beginning to appear as a significant element in emerging imperial dress, may have seemed an appropriate alternative to military uniform for an imperial image.

#### IMPERIAL ICONOGRAPHY

Tradition asserted that, after Helena's successful search for the relics of the Crucifixion, (some of) the Nails were embedded in Constantine's helmet (or his diadem) and in his horse's bit.<sup>101</sup> The clearly acceptable notion that something so sacred could be used to boost the power of the emperor's horse-harness is particularly striking, and shows how far the identification of the emperor with Christ-as-warrior had gone; the idea of the emperor appearing publicly with this war-gear would surely have been virtually equivalent to an epiphany of Christ. This sense of the special position of the emperor appears throughout imperial iconography. The possible complexity of the message is well demonstrated by the sheeting of a casket now in Budapest, which had two New Testament scenes closely matching those on the Uley sheeting, portraits of Crispus and Fausta<sup>102</sup> above the lock-plate, and also a chi-rho and images of Orpheus, Jupiter, Mars, Minerva and Mercury. The solidus mentioned above reminds us that Constantine identified himself with Sol, and in A.D. 316 he issued a solidus with double side-facing busts showing the Sun God and the emperor together.<sup>103</sup> All imperial representations, in the fourth century and beyond, were much more than simple pictures. Such images were venerated as a substitute for

<sup>99</sup> Painter 1967, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Tertullian, *De Pallio* 6, trans. S. Thewall <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0401.htm> (5.2.2007).

<sup>101</sup> Borgehammar 1991, 29–30, 47–9, 132; Drijvers 1992, 80–104.

<sup>102</sup> Crispus, proclaimed Caesar in A.D. 317, was Constantine's son by an early wife, and Fausta, daughter of Constantine's then co-emperor Maximian, was his later wife, married in A.D. 307. Crispus was executed in A.D. 326 and Fausta strangled, perhaps because they were lovers (Pohlsander 1984). For the caskets see Hartley *et al.* 2006, 225, no. 227.

<sup>103</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 144, no. 89.

the emperor himself, and stood magically for his divine presence when he was elsewhere. Much the same was also true of images of close members of the imperial family.<sup>104</sup>

Whatever the exact nature of Constantine's vision in October A.D. 312, the controversial details of which need not concern us here,<sup>105</sup> it turned out to be a brilliant stroke of religio-political propaganda, with implications for the rest of the fourth century and beyond, and we have several probable representations of the event. One came from the Loire near Nantes, an area easy of access from Britain. The Loire find is a rough copper disc or medallion, with projections either side, which are the remains of fastenings. It shows two larger, facing busts, of a bare-headed man and a woman, with below them three smaller busts, one full-faced, flanked by a facing male and a facing female. Between the two large busts floats a chi-rho. The large male seems to be Constantine, and the woman facing him Helena. The three smaller busts may be Constantine's sons, Constantine and Constans, and his half-sister, or his daughter, both called Constantia.<sup>106</sup> The reference to the vision is evident, although it is applied to several members of the imperial family. Two small pieces come from Britain. A small silver disc, recognised by Casey as a copy of Constantine's 'Constantinopolis' issue of A.D. 330–335, mounted on a bronze hairpin, comes almost certainly from London.<sup>107</sup> It shows a helmeted bust, presumably of an emperor, turned to the left and gazing up at a small cross to his left, which has been created by transposing the original version of the sceptre from behind Constantine's head to this position and allowing it to be crossed by a diadem ribbon.<sup>108</sup> An unstratified bronze medallion from Richborough<sup>109</sup> shows the bust of a bare-headed, clean-shaven man encircled by a laurel wreath and pointing to a chi-rho monogram just above his hand. Toynbee notes that the hand points to, rather than holds, the monogram.<sup>110</sup> Mattingly identified the head as that of Magnentius (A.D. 350–353), a usurper trying to establish himself in the West (although another emperor, including Constantine, is a possibility).<sup>111</sup>

Finally, there are the fragmentary and complex wall-paintings from Mausoleum R8 in the cemetery at Poundbury near Dorchester (it should be noted that Mausoleum R9 also produced painted plaster decoration). Surviving pieces from the southern part of the wall carry the heads and shoulders of standing male figures, apparently portraits of actual individuals, arranged in three ranks against a blue expanse, which looks like the sky. The back row comprises a lost head close to the centre of the composition. In the middle row is a bearded man, who wears a purple cloak fastened on the right shoulder and holds a long staff against the same shoulder. A second figure in pale green, with his head either 'obliterated' or worn away, carries a staff tipped with a round knob, or possibly a cross-bar.<sup>112</sup> A third figure, beardless and wearing dark

<sup>104</sup> Elsner 1998, 54–8.

<sup>105</sup> The exact shape Constantine saw, or came to believe he saw, is a matter of debate; at any rate, the Constantinian chi-rho was subsequently adopted by the emperor and others as the usual form, although variants are also known. The nature of Constantine's relationship to Christianity, which probably changed during his life, is also problematic; see, most recently, Cameron 2006, 96–103.

<sup>106</sup> Duval and Laurin 1996, 215.

<sup>107</sup> Mawer 1995, 91.

<sup>108</sup> The helmet is a little strange, or at least inexpert, and the device on the breast of the bust's tunic is obscure. The cross has six dots or small roundels beneath it, and a similar roundel at each terminal. It is of 'Latin' cross form, with a long central shaft below the cross piece; in the lower left angle of the shaft and the cross piece, and to the left of the lower terminal, more marks are shown in the published drawing (C. Roach Smith, *Catalogue of London Antiquities*, p. 63, no. 288, and fig.). Mawer (1995, 91) suggests that the cross effect is accidental and unimportant, but there is no reason why the sceptre could not have been transposed deliberately to its position.

<sup>109</sup> Bushe-Fox 1949, vol. 4, 140–1, pl. 142.

<sup>110</sup> Toynbee 1964, 12.

<sup>111</sup> Bushe-Fox 1949, vol. 4, 140–1, pl. 142; Bushe-Fox here quotes a letter from H. Mattingly, and he cites a comparable piece with a portrait of Constantine on a casket from a fourth-century grave in the cemetery at Vermand, France.

<sup>112</sup> Sparey-Green 1993, 138.

purple drapery, with a staff over his right shoulder, overlaps the second. In the front row stands an elderly man, wearing a white dalmatic. All these figures are looking to the right, that is, the east. Further surviving fragments suggest that the scene contained other, perhaps a number of other, figures: one shows the end of a staff, probably double-knobbed, with a hand holding it. In the blue expanse floated a small, white chi-rho set at an angle, and apparently above the now lost head.<sup>113</sup>

Broadly similar scenes, but without chi-rhos, are known from elsewhere in Britain. The fragmentary fourth-century wall-painting from a town-house in the *vicus* at Malton, North Yorkshire, shows a male head with heavy eyes surrounded by a nimbus and associated with a cross-head staff, and part of a draped shoulder, probably of a female.<sup>114</sup> Very close geographically and chronologically to Hinton St Mary is the villa at Tarrant Hinton, which had high-quality painted wall-plaster showing a youth associated with a long staff in purple with a yellowish edge, possibly Bacchus.<sup>115</sup>

The staffs appear to be rods of office, and seem to have been carried at every social level from the Imperial family downwards. Rods of office have been recovered from various temples, e.g. Wanbrough, Surrey,<sup>116</sup> from a second-century, lead-coffined burial from Stepney, London, where a woman had two ivory rods and a figure of Cupid, and from a wooden-coffined burial from Brough, Yorkshire, where a man had two rods.<sup>117</sup> The surviving mosaic in the room of Iao, Brading, Isle of Wight, shows two busts bearing rods over their right shoulders; one bust occupies the central roundel.<sup>118</sup>

The purple draperies at Dorchester suggest an imperial connection, although not necessarily the representation of imperial personages. Various interpretations of this scene have been offered: as a representation of the local *ordo* of decurions, as deceased members of the owner's family gathered for ceremonies for the dead,<sup>119</sup> or as purple-wearing bishops with the rods 'assimilated by the early church' or being used as 'an aberrant form of the bishop's crook';<sup>120</sup> Sparey-Green also suggests that the scene shows the Apostles, with the bearded man as Peter, as depicted in the Catacombs (wearing white dalmatics), the Cemetery of the Jordani, and the apse mosaic in the chapel of San Aquilo in Milan.<sup>121</sup> Whatever the detailed truth may be, it is inconceivable that the scene would not also have brought the image of Constantine's famous vision to any viewer's mind; indeed, it is this image which gives the whole scene sense and coherence.

Constantine, and his successors, of course, habitually used the chi-rho as self-identification and authentication. Constantine's *labarum* featured the monogram, as demonstrated by a nummus issued at Constantinople in A.D. 327, which shows on the reverse the standard topped with a chi-rho, and below it the banner with three roundels representing imperial images of Constantine himself and his two sons.<sup>122</sup> This practice was continued by his successors, as shown, for example, by the Diptych of Probus, where a nimbate Honorius carries a version of the standard, surmounted by a chi-rho in a circle.<sup>123</sup> The monogram as symbolic of the Imperial House of Constantine was deliberately employed by Magnentius who minted nummi at Amiens

<sup>113</sup> Davey and Ling 1982, 106–10; Sparey-Green 1993, 135–40.

<sup>114</sup> Smith 2000; Hartley *et al.* 2006, cat. 129.

<sup>115</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, cat. 126.

<sup>116</sup> O'Connell and Bird 1994.

<sup>117</sup> Sparey-Green 1993, 138.

<sup>118</sup> Price and Price 1881; Henig 1986, fig. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Davey and Ling 1982, 110.

<sup>120</sup> Sparey-Green 1993, 139.

<sup>121</sup> Sparey-Green 1993, 139; Hartley *et al.* 2006, 207.

<sup>122</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 145, cat. 92.

<sup>123</sup> Leader-Newby 2004, 38–9, fig. 1.15.

in A.D. 350 with a large chi-rho and alpha and omega on the reverse.<sup>124</sup> Constantius II used the reverse legend ‘*Hoc signo victor eris*’.<sup>125</sup>

The Column of Arcadius, set up in the hippodrome area at Constantinople in A.D. 402/3, depicted his victory over the Goth Gainas, and was crowned with a capital carrying the monogram. In A.D. 408, after his death, his son, Theodosius II, added a statue of his father to the top, and the exact relationship of this statue to the chi-rho appears not to be known; the column was demolished in 1717 and only the base survives.<sup>126</sup> A cameo, possibly made to commemorate the marriage of Honorius and Maria in A.D. 398, shows Honorius wearing a diadem with a chi-rho on a rectangular plate at its centre.<sup>127</sup> A gem now in Leningrad shows a boy emperor being crowned by two senior emperors,<sup>128</sup> while winged victories on either side of the group crown them; there is a chi-rho above the boy’s head. Toynbee dismissed this as ‘simply meaning that the whole scene is taking place under the patronage of Christ’,<sup>129</sup> but this probably under-rates the power of the message the symbolic juxtaposition was meant to convey. The most interesting survival is a silver *largitio* plate now in Geneva (FIG. 3) showing Valentinian I (emperor A.D. 364–75) or Valentinian II (emperor of the West A.D. 375–92). Unfortunately it is badly worn, but it clearly shows the emperor standing holding the *labarum*. He is nimbate, and the nimbus encloses a chi-rho which appears behind his head. The letters alpha and omega flank the monogram.<sup>130</sup>

Constantine’s vision clearly had the impact of an iconic scene in Britain. Across the Empire, the key relationship between the chi-rho and the emperor was, as the *labarum* shows, fundamental to the imperial vision. This remained so true that Valentinian (I or II) could be shown with the sacred symbols incorporated directly into his personal image.

#### THE REMAINING FEATURES OF THE HINTON CHI-RHO MOSAIC

As already observed, the four corner busts appear to be adaptations of Winds. At Frampton, the mosaic in the range at right-angles to that with the chi-rho mosaic has a panel with corner circles featuring Winds, and squares between each corner (three are known) showing Aeneas taking the Golden Bough, a figure with a trident killing a monster, and a hero spearing a snake coiled round a tree. The central circle probably had a hero. Winds are also known from, for example, villas at Brading, Isle of Wight,<sup>131</sup> Pitney I, Somerset, with Bacchus, and East Coker, Somerset, with Bacchus and Ariadne.<sup>132</sup> The adapted Winds at Hinton raise the question of why they were adapted and what they were adapted to. Toynbee suggested that they were the Four Evangelists, but this interpretation depends upon the view that the central bust represents Christ. If the central head has a strong imperial character, then the logical conclusion would be that the four corner heads are those of other imperial figures, perhaps Constantine’s sons and successors, but there is no direct evidence for this, and it cannot be pressed as a possibility. As they stand, the special role, if any, of the corner figures at Hinton is unclear.

Hunting was of great social importance in the ancient world, and it a favourite subject for

<sup>124</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 146, no. 95.

<sup>125</sup> Kent 1978, nos 675, 681.

<sup>126</sup> Humphries 1999, 164.

<sup>127</sup> Volbach 1961, pl. 59, p. 323.

<sup>128</sup> The emperors may be Valentinian I, Valens, and the young Gratian, suggesting a date of around A.D. 367, or Valens, Gratian, and the young Valentinian II, suggesting one of around A.D. 375 (Drexel 1930, 38).

<sup>129</sup> Toynbee 1964, 11, n. 13.

<sup>130</sup> The alpha and omega are just visible in the photograph, and are noted in *Schweizerische Altertumskunde* 22 (1920), 26, n. 2; fig. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Price and Price 1881, fig. op. p. 16.

<sup>132</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 144, 284, 208–9.





FIG. 3. Silver *largitio* plate of Valentinian I or II in Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva.

illustration in all kinds of media. Henig, taking the bust as Christ and looking at the spreading tree and the hunting scenes in this light, suggested that, 'The mosaic as a whole is an example of scriptural exegesis which cannot be understood without reference to Psalm 22, on which it is a commentary'.<sup>133</sup> Erikson suggested that the five scenes showing a deer hunted by dogs represent 'the struggle of a Christian's life or the pains of Christ', within a broad syncretic expression.<sup>134</sup> However, similar hunting scenes with stags, hounds and trees appear also at East Coker, Dewlish,

<sup>133</sup> Hartley *et al.* 2006, 204, cat. 190.

<sup>134</sup> Erikson 1980, 43.

Dorset, and Cherhill, Wiltshire. As Cosh and Neal say,<sup>135</sup> the inclusion of hunting scenes, particularly with a tree in the background, and personifications of the Winds are characteristic elements in the work of the Durnovarian group of mosaicists, probably based in Dorchester. The images may simply be standard choices from the pattern-book; in any case, syncretic approach to iconography in the British fourth-century mosaics is so far-reaching that hunting hounds, deer, and trees could find a place in virtually any interpretation of this pavement, or any other.

Pomegranates were associated in myth with Demeter, and the Christian re-interpretation of them as fruit symbolising the many seeds of the faith is well established. Pomegranates are uncommon on British mosaics, but three other pavements in the Hinton area are known with images of the fruit. At Frampton there are pomegranates, with leaves springing either from below or either side, on the spandrels of all five circles of the Winds mosaic, making twenty pomegranates known from the site.<sup>136</sup> The mosaic from Durngate Street, Dorchester, has a square panel with interlace ornament and *canthari* in the spandrels; one of the interlace spaces has a possible pomegranate with a stalk on one side and a leaf on the other.<sup>137</sup> The villa site at Dinnington, Somerset, excavated in 2005, produced mosaic fragments from the filling of a composite hypocaust heating the main room, located at the north end of the west range. These came from at least two panels, one with a figure scene including Apollo and Daphne, and another with very large open guilloche. Some, at least, of the centres of the guilloche design had large, multi-colour pomegranates, circular, with a small cross indicating the tops of their cores.<sup>138</sup> Pomegranates are rare outside Britain, although there is one in a mosaic from Orange, which has a central circle with a garland enclosed by cable ornament, with two fish, a trident, and a ?flower in the spandrels. It has a geometric border featuring leaves, fruit and flowers in small squares: one of these, possibly two, is a pomegranate.<sup>139</sup>

Neither the Dinnington nor the Durngate mosaics has any known, overt, Christian features. The mosaics at Hinton, Frampton and Durngate all come from the Durnovarian group and Cosh has suggested that the small pomegranate and leaf may represent a mosaicist's 'signature', or trademark.<sup>140</sup> If this is so, their appearance at both sites which have chi-rhos in their mosaics would be coincidence. In any case, they are not in themselves sufficient evidence on which to build an explanation of the Hinton mosaic.

#### THE BELLEROPHON PAVEMENT

The occurrence of large scenes featuring Bellerophon at key sites is more significant. The mosaic panel in the smaller section of the room at Hinton has a roundel with Bellerophon riding Pegasus and killing the Chimaera, flanked by two rectangles, one showing two hunting hounds and the other one hound catching a deer. At Frampton, also, the chi-rho panel is associated with a mosaic having a roundel with Bellerophon, and corner squares holding pairs of lovers; the adjacent area probably had Bacchus riding a leopard. At Lullingstone, too, chi-rhos in the wall-paintings are associated with a mosaic depicting Bellerophon, if indeed the dating permits their association.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 209.

<sup>136</sup> Cosh and Neal 2000, 132–3.

<sup>137</sup> Cosh and Neal 2000, 99.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas 1981, 105. For Dinnington, see Time Team, Big Roman Dig, at <http://www.channel4.com/history> (10/2/2006). For details of the mosaic fragments as understood in November 2006, I am very grateful to David Neal.

<sup>139</sup> Lavagne 1979, 56, pl. XX.

<sup>140</sup> Cosh 2001b, 4, fig. 5.

<sup>141</sup> The only other known British depiction of Bellerophon is at Croughton, Northants., which has no direct Christian references. For Gaulish examples, see note 43.

Three such associations between the chi-rho, interpreted as an imperial as well as a Christian symbol, need explanation, and perhaps one is not difficult to suggest. Bellerophon on Pegasus using his spear to kill the Chimaera is easy to see as a divine type of Constantine the Great and his successors, who were regularly shown on their coin reverses in a similar pose, on horseback, with their spear slanting down to kill a captive, or barbarian, on the ground. Constantine I, for example, chose such an image of himself for the reverse of a bronze medallion,<sup>142</sup> and Magnentius and his brother Decentius both issued coins with similar reverses between A.D. 351 and 353, from several Gallic mints in a range of billon and bronze types.<sup>143</sup> The brothers were insecure usurpers who hoped to achieve an association with the emperor, and obviously they chose an image which would link them most powerfully with the ruling house. Interestingly, between A.D. 354 and 357, Constantius II issued a gold multiple from Milan, with the reverse showing the emperor on horseback, galloping with his cloak flowing, his right hand raised, and a coiled serpent below his horse's hooves.<sup>144</sup> Other gods, who are fashionable in British mosaics, such as Orpheus playing his lute, or Bacchus with his drunken retinue,<sup>145</sup> might not work well as reflections of the imperial image. The image of Bellerophon,<sup>146</sup> on the other hand, as the young hero on horseback killing the evil beast of chaos, was well suited to stand for an emperor, or his successors, who defended the Empire, and whose horse, with the Crucifixion Nail in its tack, could be seen as at least as special as Pegasus.

#### THE FLOOR POSITION AND FUNCTION OF THE ROOM

A number of the symbols considered here appear on the fabric of buildings, and a number are, rather oddly, placed on the floor. This includes the Hinton head and symbol, the chi-rho at Frampton, and those at Aquilina and Fraga. At Chedworth, some of the stone slabs with chi-rhos, originally perhaps on the basin rim, were re-used as paving.<sup>147</sup> Painter suggested that the floor position, and the fact that the subjects in the Hinton mosaic are placed the wrong way round as viewed from most positions in the room, is because the mosaic was conceived as a ceiling decoration, following 'the prevailing Hellenistic attitude to the floor as a kind of "easel" or "wall" on which to hang a central and wholly dominating panel picture'.<sup>148</sup> This would certainly provide an artistic context for the Hinton composition, and for the other broadly contemporary British mosaic pavements featuring pagan divinities, which share the floor position, and which are thought to make important philosophical and political statements.

Nevertheless, the representation of Christ had always been a difficult theological issue,<sup>149</sup> and

<sup>142</sup> Bruun 1966, nos 360, 339–40, pl. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Kent 1981, Arles, nos 155, 215; Trier, nos 269–70, 158; Amiens, nos 4, 34, 122–3, pl. 1.

<sup>144</sup> Kent 1981, no. 1(P), 233, pl. 8. The Frampton mosaic without the chi-rho also had side squares showing at least two young heroes killing monsters, Cosh and Neal 2006, 132–4.

<sup>145</sup> The Great Cameo now in Utrecht shows Constantine with members of his family in a chariot being pulled by centaurs, with a Victory overhead. At the base are conquered enemies and a *cantharus* on its side; this vessel may give a bacchic flavour to the scene, which already had a broad range of references, but *canthari* appear frequently in contexts which are not explicitly bacchic (Hartley *et al.* 2006, 138–9, no. 76).

<sup>146</sup> Bellerophon was a prince of Corinth who went to Lycia and was sent to kill the Chimaera, which was devastating the land; helped by Athene, who gave him Pegasus, he succeeded. Late in his life, he tried to ride Pegasus to Olympus and Zeus punished his presumption. An imperial identification would, of course, stress the early glory and moral victory. In any case the important element is the central image of the victorious hero on horseback spearing the enemy. The Bellerophon figures, and the coin reverses, have a generic resemblance to the 'horse and rider' type brooches, which are broadly third century in date, and believed to have a cultic significance; there is a cluster of them in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire (Mattingly 2006, 486–7).

<sup>147</sup> Thomas 1981, 220.

<sup>148</sup> Painter 1976, 49.

<sup>149</sup> Jensen 2005, 69–115.

a floor position presumably particularly so. As early as the beginning of the fourth century, the Spanish Church Council of Elvira (c. A.D. 306) had decided 'that there should be no pictures on walls' for fear these would be worshipped in their own right.<sup>150</sup> This kind of thing had apparently little effect, and eventually an imperial decree of Theodosius II and Valentinian III issued in A.D. 427 forbade the depiction of the *signum Salvatoris Christi*,<sup>151</sup> a description which presumably included chi-rho forms as well, perhaps, as other forms of the Cross, in mosaic ('earth or stone or marble') *humi positus*, presumably meaning at floor level, and ordered that such existing mosaics should be taken away. This decree only had force in the Eastern Empire, but it is clear that the practice was known in the West, and may even have been quite common. The decree seems to have tapped into a cultural shift during the fifth century, which took Christian symbols off floors, and confined them to the walls and ceilings of churches and buildings, like palaces, which shared in their sacred character.

One reason for the floor coverings may have been their ability to create distinct areas of social space within a room, which could be seen easily by all visitors, and could articulate various hierarchies and relationships.<sup>152</sup> The plan of the Frampton villa means that the room with the chi-rho and Bellerophon mosaic was approached by way of a long corridor, which brought the visitor first to the smaller area, perhaps an anteroom, and then into the main space. This is of 'miniature basilica' design, with an apse and a square area, and the two are divided by the panel with the chi-rho. Perhaps the master stood, or sat, in the apse, and selected dependants were ushered into his presence after the long walk down the corridor and a nervous wait in the anteroom. The lesser folk would not have crossed the chi-rho panel. The plan of the Hinton villa is less clear, but there may have been a similar corridor arrangement giving access to the smaller 'anteroom' area with Bellerophon, with the audience area beyond it; there is no apse here, but the master could have positioned himself in the main area facing, and just behind, the central head with its chi-rho, which need not have been trodden upon, but, like the Frampton chi-rho, would regulate the social, spatial hierarchy. Perhaps members of the master's entourage would use the wall bench. Villas with broadly similar plans are known from Dewlish and Whatley, Somerset, Box, Wiltshire, and elsewhere,<sup>153</sup> and may have been quite common.<sup>154</sup>

Rooms with multiple areas, with or without apses, are traditionally interpreted as dining-rooms, rather than as rooms where dependants were received. They may, of course, have functioned as both, either at different times, or concurrently. Watching the master's family dine, and perhaps sharing in the feast in some way, may have been a feature of fourth-century life, as it was to be of early medieval life. The 'basilica' plan, originally developed for judgement halls, was adapted by Constantine I's architects for churches at Rome and Jerusalem, but, like so much else in the fourth century, this was dramatic new thinking. There is no reason why very small versions of the scheme should not have been used in the plans of British villas to make the same points about imperial and Christian hierarchy. We might even remember the sacred meal which took place at a table in the apses of the churches. Be this as it may, evidently, among the élite, it was seen as appropriate to harness a range of religious symbols to make clear public statements about the

<sup>150</sup> Lee 2000, 258.

<sup>151</sup> '*signum Salvatoris Christi nemini licere vel solo in silice vel in marmoribus humi positus insculpere vel pingere, sed quodcumque reperitur tolli*', *Codex Justinianus* 1.8. *Signum* is sometimes translated as 'image' but 'sign' or 'symbol' seem closer; it presumably referred chiefly to various cross forms, including, perhaps especially, the chi-rho; the reverse legend of coins of Constantius II certainly means a cross, almost certainly the chi-rho, when it uses the phrase '*hoc signum*'.

<sup>152</sup> Scott 1991.

<sup>153</sup> Fifehead also had an area forming a similar two-space suite, with the head in the inner part; what rooms, if any, connected with the outer part is not clear (Cosh and Neal 2006, 125–8).

<sup>154</sup> Cosh and Neal 2006, 80, 303–4, 322.

role of the proprietor, and there is no reason why imperial symbols could not be made to function in this way also.

#### SOME CONCLUSIONS

The Hinton bust is not very much like any of the styles employed to portray Christ. It is closest to the two colossal heads of Constantine and Constantius, so close that a connection between them, and an element of imperial portraiture at Hinton seems undeniable. The presence of the chi-rho monogram behind the Hinton head is quite appropriate for such an imperial representation, as the material described makes clear. The silver plate of Valentinian (I or II) from Spain, showing the emperor with a nimbus carrying a chi-rho and flanked by alpha and omega behind his head, is particularly striking. All this was, of course, intended to establish the position of the emperor, and to a lesser extent other, principal members of his family, as the earthly equivalent of Christ. Constantine himself came quite quickly, perhaps in his own lifetime, to be so closely identified with Christ that stories of his personal use of the Nails from the Cross were considered appropriate. In Britain, with its close links with Constantine's own history, the story of his vision is probably represented in three surviving works, or at least would have reminded a viewer of that event, and a cult developed around his name.

During the fourth century, all the time-honoured images of the classical past were being reworked. The portrayal of Christ as a pretty youth was inspired by images of Apollo and other young gods; the nimbus, the cross and the chi-rho behind the sacred head drew on the image of Sol with his radiate sun head;<sup>155</sup> the pomegranate, representing fertility, belonged originally to Demeter; and the chi-rho began as a scribal device and was quickly appropriated by some Christians. In Britain, and elsewhere, during the fourth century the monogram was clearly used as a symbol of imperial authority at the mundane level of daily government. During the same period of shifting images, it was used also in association with various holy figures. The monogram came to be associated with portraits of the person of Christ only gradually through the fourth century, and by this time the image of Christ was settling into the mature, long-haired, bearded head. By the mid-sixth century, it was used virtually exclusively for Christ and Ruler, as demonstrated by the medallion diptych of Justinus, which presents Justinian and Theodora with a cross-nimbate Christ between them, the same horizontal position signifying no marked hierarchical distinction between the three.<sup>156</sup> As part of this new exclusivity, imperial-Christian symbols ceased to be used on floors, and probably also on secular buildings.

The Hinton pavement and those at Frampton and Fifehead belong within a considerable class of southern British, fourth-century, elaborate, polychrome mosaics carrying complex mythological scenes and flooring villa rooms. These could be seen as demonstrations of *paideia*, as representations of moral and mystical truths, and perhaps as icons of particular beliefs like those associated with gnosticism.<sup>157</sup> The range of possible interpretations of these pavements is the clue to their nature. They show us a society whose belief systems were in flux, and they were deliberately designed to offer a number of meanings, interlinked but shaded in various directions, in order to embrace a very broad range of religious and philosophical positions. As a part of this, the mosaics were intended to enhance the parade of élite culture which saw country establishments and their decoration as a way of showing off intellectual and social status. They

<sup>155</sup> Christ is conflated with Sol explicitly on a vault mosaic from a tomb under St Peter's, Rome, which shows a figure in a chariot with solar rays elongated in forms reminiscent of a chi-rho or a cross (Henig 2006b, 85, fig. 34).

<sup>156</sup> Olavsdotter 2005, 149.

<sup>157</sup> Black 1986; Stupperich 1980. Eriksen (1980) has analysed the Hinton pavement itself in detail, focusing on 'the syncretic tradition which probably prompted the mosaic's blend of pagan and Christian elements'.

are on the floor because the controlled use of floor space was the recognised way of creating distinctions and hierarchies.

The philosophical complexity of the pavements has often been stressed, but the political significance of religious expression has been neglected. Third-century Britain had a history of secession from the Empire under home-grown emperors, which had always ended eventually in defeat, and presumably in at least some dispossessions, by the central power; Constantine himself began in this way, and his final success could not have been predicted. Fourth-century proprietors in Britain would have been right to be cautious: Magnentius tried to gain power in A.D. 350 and his defeat brought major reprisals in Britain; Magnus Maximus tried in A.D. 383, with some initial success; Marcus, Gratian and Constantine III tried in quick succession between A.D. 406 and 411, Constantine, too, with some early success. Christianity had been spasmodically persecuted until Constantine and Licinius agreed to allow it toleration in A.D. 313, and Julian, with his power base in the North-Western Empire, tried to bring the Empire back to paganism from A.D. 360, when he was proclaimed Augustus, to 363 when he died. Moreover, although Constantine settled finally on Christianity as the imperial faith, he also associated himself with the Unconquered Sun, who was sometimes conflated with Christ, and with other pagan deities. Nobody of substance could feel secure, or certain that either religious or political allegiance could be correctly calculated. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that villa artwork embraced a large repertoire of scenes and symbols, and the mosaics carrying them in their many combinations were capable of multiple interpretations at many levels.

At Hinton, Frampton and Poundbury (and possibly Fifehead, which certainly had the two rings carrying chi-rhos), however, together with Lullingstone, Kent, and one site (at least) in northern Spain (with which south-western Britain may have had connections<sup>158</sup>) a more overt statement was made. The chi-rhos and the Hinton bust, together with the image of Bellerophon at the three British villas, suggest a declaration of loyalty to the imperial house of Constantine. Such declarations may have been clear elsewhere to fourth-century viewers in ways that are no longer clear to us.

The group of imperial-Christian icons from villas in Dorset is very striking. It is reasonable to think that we are dealing with a small group of élite families over two or three generations, who knew each other, and quite probably inter-married. It is possible that they had connections with those buried in Mausoleum R8 at Poundbury, and with those who ordered its wall-paintings. It is likely that some of them at some point in their lives held the kind of imperial appointments which might involve insignia like the Fifehead rings. It is even possible that the families had played some specific role in Constantine's affairs, which meant that they had nothing to lose by displaying their connection, since any major political change would inevitably destroy them, but this speculation goes well beyond the evidence. The Hinton St Mary pavement shows that the simple dichotomy between pagan and Christian is an inadequate way to characterise the multi-faceted culture of the period. There were a number of ways of being Christian at various points in the fourth century, and one of these was by loyalty to Constantine and his successors, and through them to imperial Rome. Icons of a Christ-Emperor, who held the cosmic fabric together, placed in the most significant, semi-public spaces of private buildings, represented one possible vision of the fourth-century state. As the unique status of the Hinton bust shows, it proved to be a limited one; as the theology of Christ was clarified through the fourth and fifth centuries, new ways of being Christian emerged, which required separation from past pagan images, and a reworking of the ideal of the Christian ruler.

*Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester*  
 smp14@le.ac.uk

<sup>158</sup> For an early account of some possible links, see Thompson 1968.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Balmelle, C. 1980: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Aquitaine partie méridionale (Piedmont pyrénéen)* IV, 1, Paris
- Balmelle, C. 1987: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Aquitaine partie méridionale, suite (les pays gascons)* IV, 2, Paris
- Barley, M., and Hanson, R. (eds) 1968: *Christianity in Britain, 300–700*, Leicester
- Bartrum, P. 1966: *Early Welsh Genealogies and Tracts*, Cardiff
- Bellamy, J. 1818: 'Tessellated pavement near Halstock, Dorset', *Gentleman's Magazine* January 1818, 5–6
- Black, E. 1986: 'Christian and pagan hopes of salvation in Romano-British mosaics', in Henig and King 1986, 147–58
- Blanchard, M. 1991: *Province de Lyonnaise, partie occidentale* II, 4, Paris
- Blanco Freijeiro, A. 1978: *Mosaicos romanos de León y Asturias. Corpus de mosaicos de España*, Madrid
- Blanco Freijeiro, A. 1993: *Mosaicos romanos de Itálica. Corpus de mosaicos de España*, Madrid
- Blázquez, J., and Mezquiriz, M. 1985: *Mosaicos romanos de Navarra. Corpus de mosaicos de España*, Madrid
- Borgehammar, S. 1991: *How the Holy Cross was Found*, Stockholm
- Bromwich, R. 1978: *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads*, Cardiff
- Brusin, G., and Zovatto, P. 1957: *Monumenti palaeocristiani di Aquilina e di Grado*, Udine
- Bruun, P. 1966: *Constantine and Licinius AD 313–337. The Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. VII* (ed. C. Sutherland and R. Carson), London
- Buechsel, M. 2003: *Die Entstehung des Christusporträts*, Mainz am Rhein
- Bushe-Fox, J. 1949: *Excavations at Richborough Vols 1–4*, London
- Cameron, A. 2006: 'Constantius and Constantine: an exercise in publicity', in Hartley *et al.* 2006, 18–30
- Carr, G., Swift, E., and Weekes, J. (eds) 2002: *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Canterbury 2002*, Oxford
- Casey, J. 1978: 'Constantine the Great in Britain – the evidence of the London mint, AD 312–314', in *Collectanea Londoniensia. Studies presented to Ralph Merrifield*, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Special Paper 2, London, 181–93
- Castro Fernández, M. 1981: 'Villa romana y Basílica Cristiana en España', in M. Castro Fernández, *La religio romana en Hispania*, Madrid, 381–401
- Collingwood, R.G., and Wright, R.P. 1990: *The Inscriptions of Roman Britain. Vol. II, Fascicule I*, Gloucester
- Collingwood, R.G., and Wright, R.P. 1992: *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain Vol. II, Fascicule 4*, Stroud
- Cortez, R. 1946: *Mosaicos romanos de Douro. Separata dos Anais do Instituto do Vinho do Porto*, Porto
- Cosh, S. 2001: 'Alas, poor Terentius, I knew him well', *Mosaic* 28, 4–7
- Cosh, S., and Neal, D. 2006: *Roman Mosaics of Britain. Vol. II. South-West Britain*, London
- Darmon, J.-P. 1995: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Lyonnaise, partie nord-ouest* II, 5, Paris
- Darmon, J.-P., and Lavagne, H. 1977: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Lyonnaise, partie centrale* II, 3, Paris
- Davey, N., and Ling, R. 1982: *Wall-Painting in Roman Britain*, Britannia Monograph 3, London
- Donati, A. 2000: *Pietro e Paolo. La storia, il culto, la memoria nei primi secoli. Catalogue of Exhibition in Palazzo della Cancellaria*, Rome
- Drexel, F. 1930: 'Die Familie der Valentinianer', *Germania* 14, 38–9
- Drijvers, J.W. 1992: *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross*, Leiden
- Drinkwater, J. 1998: 'The usurpers Constantine III (407–411) and Jovinus (411–413)', *Britannia* 29, 269–98
- Dunbabin, K. 1978: *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, Oxford
- Dunbabin, K. 1999: *The Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge
- Duval, N. 1995: *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. I. Sud-Est et Corse*, Paris
- Duval, N., and Laurin, L. 1996: *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. 2. Sud-Ouest et Centre*, Paris

- Duval, N., and Gauthier, N. 1998: *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. 3. Ouest, Nord et Est*, Paris
- Elsner, J. 1998: *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100–450*, Oxford
- Eriksen, R. 1980: 'Syncretistic symbolism and the Christian Roman mosaic at Hinton St Mary: a closer reading', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 102, 43–8
- Fairley, W. 2001: *Notitia Dignitatum or Register of Dignitaries*, Philadelphia
- Farrar, R. 1956: 'The "Frampton Villa", Maiden Newton', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 78, 81–3
- Farwell, D., and Molleson, T. 1993: *Excavations at Poundbury 1966–80. Volume II: The Cemeteries*, Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc. Monograph 11, Dorchester
- Finn, C., and Henig, M. 2001: *Outside Archaeology. Material Culture and Poetic Imagination*, BAR International Series 999, Oxford
- Galiay, J. 1943: 'Los mosaicos de Fraga en el Museo de Zaragoza', *Arch. Esp. Arq.* 16, 227–30
- Gaudemet, J. 1977: *Concileé Gaulois du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris
- Harbus, A. 2002: *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend*, Woodbridge
- Hartley, E., Hawkes, J., Henig, M., and Mee, F. 2006: *Constantine the Great. York's Roman Emperor*, York
- Hawkes, J. 2006: 'The legacy of Constantine in Anglo-Saxon England', in Hartley *et al.* 2006, 104–14
- Henig, M. 1984: 'James Engleheart's drawing of a mosaic at Frampton, 1794', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 106, 143–6
- Henig, M. 1986: 'Ita intellexit numine inductus tuo: some personal interpretations of deity in Roman religion', in Henig and King 1986, 159–69
- Henig, M. 1993: 'Votive objects: weapons, miniatures, tokens, and fired clay accessories', in Woodward and Leach 1993, 130–47
- Henig, M. 1997: 'The Lullingstone mosaic. Art, religion and letters in a fourth century villa', *Mosaic* 24, 4–7
- Henig, M. 2001: 'The unchanging face of God', in Finn and Henig 2001, 29–38
- Henig, M. 2006a: 'Neither baths nor baptisteries', *Oxford Journal Archaeology* 25.1, 105–7
- Henig, M. 2006b: 'Religious diversity in Constantine's empire', in Hartley *et al.* 2006, 86–95
- Henig, M., and Booth, P. 2000: *Roman Oxfordshire*, Stroud
- Henig, M., and King, A. 1986: *Pagan Gods and Shrines of the Roman Empire*, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph 8, Oxford
- Humphries, M. 1999: *Communities of the Blessed. Social Environment and Religious Change in Northern Italy, AD 200–400*, Oxford
- Jensen, R. 2005: *Face to Face. Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity*, Minneapolis
- Jones, G. 1986: 'Holy wells and the cult of St Helen', *Landscape History* 8, 59–76
- Kent, J. 1978: *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Vol. IX*, London
- Kent, J. 1981: *The Family of Constantine I, AD 337–364. The Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. VIII* (ed. C. Sutherland and R. Carson), London
- Lancha, J. 1981: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Narbonnaise, Vienne*, III, 2, Paris
- Lavagne, H. 1979: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Narbonnaise, partie centrale*, III, 1, Paris
- Leader-Newby, R. 2004: *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity*, Aldershot
- Lee, A. 2000: *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity. A Source Book*, London
- Luard, H. 1890: *Flores Historiarum. Vol. III AD 1265–1326*, London
- Lucas, R. 1991: 'The Halstock mosaic found in 1817', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 113, 133–8
- Lysons, S. 1813: *Reliquiae Britannico-Romani I*, parts 1–4, London
- Magilton, J. 1980: *The Church of St Helen on the Walls, Aldwark. The Archaeology of York. The Medieval Walled City North-East of the Ouse*, 10/1, York
- Martin, J. 1902: *Mosaicos romanos de Portugal (Separata d'Archeologo Portugues VII, no. 12)*, Lisbon
- Mattingly, D. 2006: *An Imperial Possession. Britain in the Roman Empire*, Aylesbury
- Mawer, C. 1995: *Evidence for Christianity in Roman Britain*, BAR British Series 243, Oxford
- Meates, G. 1979: *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent. Volume I – The Site*, Canterbury
- Meates, G. 1987: *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent. Volume II – The Wall Paintings and Finds*, Canterbury



- Moorhead, S.T. 2000: 'An inspiration for the Hinton St Mary head of Christ', *British Museum Magazine* 36, Spring, 22
- Morris, J. (ed. and trans.) 1980: *Nennius. British History and Welsh Annals*, Chichester
- Neal, D., and Cosh, S. 2002: *Roman Mosaics of Britain. Volume I. Northern Britain*, London
- O'Connell, M., and Bird, J. 1994: 'The Roman temple at Wanborough, excavations 1985–1986', *Surrey Archaeol. Colls.* 82, 1–168
- Olavsdotter, C. 2005: *The Consular Image*, BAR S1376, Oxford
- Olmedo Perez, E. 1994: 'El *opus sectile* parietal del yacimiento romano de Gabia La Grande (Granada)', in *Historia Antigua*, Cordoba, 595–614
- Painter, K. 1965: 'Excavation of the Roman villa at Hinton St Mary, 1964', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 86, 150–4
- Painter, K. 1967: 'The Roman site at Hinton St Mary, Dorset', *British Museum Quarterly*, 32, nos 1–2, 15–31
- Painter, K. 1972: 'Villas and Christianity in Roman Britain', *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueología Cristiana 1969*, 149–66
- Painter, K. 1976: 'The design of the Roman mosaic at Hinton St Mary', *Antiq. Journ.* 56, 49–54
- Pearce, S. 2004: *South-Western Britain in the Early Middle Ages*. Continuum, London
- Perring, D. 2002: 'Deconstructing the Frampton pavements: Gnostic dialectic in Roman Britain?', in Carr *et al.* 2002, 74–83
- Petts, D. 2003: *Christianity in Roman Britain*, Stroud
- Pohlsander, H. 1984: 'Crispus: brilliant career and tragic end', *Historia* 23, 79–95
- Price, J., and Price, F. 1881: *A Description of the Remains of Roman Buildings at Morton, near Brading, Isle of Wight*, Shanklin, Isle of Wight
- Rafols, J. 1943: 'La Villa Fortunatus, de Fraga', *Ampurias* 5, 1–35
- Reece, R. 1980: 'A date for Hinton St Mary', *Mosaic* 2, April, 21–2
- Schlunk, H., and Hauschild, T. 1978: *Hispania Antiqua. Die Denkmaler der Frühchristlichen und Westgotischen Zeit*, Mainz
- Scott, S. 1991: 'An outline of a new approach for the interpretation of Romano-British villa mosaics and some comments on the possible significance of the Orpheus mosaics of fourth century Roman Britain', *Journal Theoretical Archaeology* 2, 29–35
- Smith, D. 2000: 'The wall-paintings of the town-house in the *vicus* outside the Roman fort of Malton, North Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 72, 7–13
- Sparey-Green, C. 1993: 'The mausolea painted plaster', in Farwell and Molleson 1993, 135–40
- Sparey Green, C. 1994: 'The "Frampton Villa", Maiden Newton: a note on the monument and its context', *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 116, 133–5
- Stern, H. 1957: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Belgique, partie Ouest* I, 1 (reprint 1979), Paris
- Stern, H. 1960: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Belgique, partie Est* I, 2, Paris
- Stern, H. 1963: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Belgique, partie Sud* I, 3, Paris
- Stern, H. 1967: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Lyonnaise, Lyon* II, 1, Paris
- Stern, H., and Blanchard, M. 1975: *Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule Romaine: Province de Lyonnaise, partie Sud-Est* II, 2, Paris
- Stupperich, R. 1980: 'A re-consideration of some fourth-century British mosaics', *Britannia* 11, 289–301
- Thomas, C. 1981: *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, London
- Thompson, E.A. 1968: 'Britonia', in Barley and Hanson 1968, 201–5
- Thorpe, L. 1968: *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Aylesbury
- Timby, J. 1998: *Excavations at Kingscote and Wycomb, Gloucestershire*, Cirencester
- Todd, M. 2005: 'Baths or baptisteries? Holcombe, Lufton and their analogues', *Oxford Journal Archaeology* 24.3, 307–11
- Toynbee, J. 1953: 'Christianity in Roman Britain', *Journal British Archaeological Association* 16, 2–24
- Toynbee, J. 1964: 'A new Roman mosaic pavement found in Dorset', *Journal of Roman Studies* 54, 7–14

- Weber, W. 1984: *Constantinische Deckengemälde aus dem römischen Palast unter dem Trierer Dom*, Trier
- Weber, W. 2000: *Constantinische Deckengemälde aus dem römischen Palast unter dem Trierer Dom*, Trier
- Webster, G. 1983: 'The function of the Chedworth Roman "Villa"', *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Arch. Soc.* 101, 5–20
- Winterbottom, M. (ed. and trans.) 1978: *Gildas. The Ruin of Britain and other Works*, Chichester
- Woodward, A., and Leach, P. 1993: *The Uley Shrines*, London
- Volbach, W. 1961: *Early Christian Art*, London