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## Building Baptism: Theology and Ritual in the Structure and Interior Decoration of the Neonian Baptistery of Ravenna

Aesthetic and physical features of early Byzantine Christian spaces and structures were commonly influenced by biblical text, and Christian theology and liturgy. The Neonian Baptistery, also known as the Orthodox Baptistery, was built in relation to the Basilica of Ursiana in Ravenna, Italy by Bishop Ursus in the late fourth century. Christian theology revolving around baptism is built into the structure of the baptistery and is undeniably the driving force for the way the space was meant to be used and experienced by fourth century Byzantines. Scholar Spiro Kostof contends that the “coherent system of decoration *could be* disposed to satisfy both liturgical and artistic demands:” however, it could be argued that the connection between structure and decoration scheme to ritual and early Christian theology are undoubtedly interdependent.<sup>1</sup> Through the ritual and theology of baptism, one can see how the Neonian Baptistery becomes a physical manifestation of the divine liturgical rite and theology as reflected in the mosaic program of the interior decoration as well as the physical structure of the building itself.

This study begins by looking at the very structure of the baptistery. The ritual of baptism symbolizes an individual's acceptance of Christ and, therefore, an entrance to his kingdom. This is why a baptism happened in a separate structure which “invit[ed] and unit[ed] its inhabitants and nourish[ed] what is best in the human spirit” through baptism.<sup>2</sup> The newly baptized Christian then exited the baptistery and was ushered into the church to symbolize their entrance into the kingdom of God (Fig. 1). Afterward, the initiate would receive the Eucharist—participating in two of the most important rituals of the Christian faith on the same day. The baptismal liturgy took place once a year on Easter eve, Holy Saturday, as the day of the resurrection was deemed the most appropriate moment in which to die and be reborn in Christ. Celebrations often occurred during Pentecost, but it was otherwise reserved as a rite performed under the threat of death to ensure one's entrance into heaven. While infant baptism became increasingly popular for this reason, many still reserved the baptismal rite for spiritual maturity later in life which created the need for large group baptisms usually taking place on the eve of Easter. Catechumens, those wishing to be baptized, obtained sponsors during the time prior to Easter, known as Lent, in order to prepare for the initiation into fellowship; fasting, attending teachings and

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<sup>1</sup> Spiro Kostof, *The Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 140. Italics my own.

<sup>2</sup> Earle Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds between Art and Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88.

daily exorcisms were included in their preparation. Teachings and exorcism took place in the basilica and other structures. Baptisteries, however, were exclusively used for the baptismal ritual, emphasizing the significance of those buildings since they had one specific purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Sacred spaces created for the sole purpose of performing the baptismal ritual have been documented as early as the third-century. Early fourth-century Roman religious authorities began the tradition of constructing separate structures from their affiliated cathedrals and churches when Christian buildings began to increase in size.<sup>4</sup> The “liturgy [of baptism] has been primarily [about] action” having its “concrete, practical, simple function” reinforced and enhanced by the structure and interior design of the baptistery.<sup>5</sup> Specific Christian theology is reflected in the octagonal structure of the baptistery and symbolism of the theology of Christ’s death and resurrection can be observed throughout the space (Fig. 2). Bishop Ambrose of Milan was a proponent of the centralized and octagonal floor plan, which was not uncommon among baptisteries throughout Italy. Ambrose believed that the number eight was “symbolic of baptism because it correctly responds to the Resurrection of Christ that took place on the eighth day.”<sup>6</sup> Ambrose wrote that “...Whoever is baptized is baptized in the death of Jesus...From when you dip, you take on the likeness of death and burial” emphasizing the font as a tomb from which catechumens would be resurrected.<sup>7</sup> The motif of the number eight can be seen in other places throughout the baptistery, including the number of windows in the dome, which is pierced by eight holes and rings which were presumably used to hang lights to illuminate the space at night since it is likely the baptisms took place then. The number eight reappears through the eight reused Roman columns supporting the arcade.<sup>8</sup>

Entering from the eastern door, baptizands chanted Psalm 32:1, which reads “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” and looked forward to experiencing this phenomenon of faith.<sup>9</sup> Neophytes entered from the east so that upon entrance, they confronted the devil

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<sup>3</sup> Annabell Warton, "Ritual and Reconstructed Meaning: The Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (September 1987): 93.

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Maukopf Deliyannis, "Ravenna and the Western Emperors, AD 400-489," in *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 88.

<sup>5</sup> Otto Georg von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 113.

<sup>6</sup> Deliyannis, 98.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York [u.a.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art [u.a.], 1979), 642. The layout of the many baptisteries throughout Italy, including the Neonian baptistery, is borrowed from the floor plan of a mausoleum, reflecting the belief that the ritual of the Christian baptism was a symbol of death: one would leave one’s past life to become a follower of Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Pub., 2006), 95.

in the west. After renouncing the devil, they turned to the east to acknowledge Christ. It is worth noting that one of the four apses of the baptistery is oriented to the southeast as is the sanctuary apse of the main basilica, reaffirming the connection between the buildings as spaces for followers of Christ both old and new. The east versus west script is based on the direction of the rising and setting of the sun; darkness follows the setting of the sun in the west which is associated with the devil, and the sun rises from the east bringing light which is associated with the presence of Christ. Bryan Spinks' book *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* provides a brief overview of the series of events carried out during the ritual, confirming that baptizands would first face west to renounce the devil, followed by the affirmation of Christ facing east, and next receiving a blessing through laying of hands by the bishop before the immersive part of the ritual.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of the relationship between direction and baptizands is supported by imagery on the walls. According to Ambrose, catechumens would be facing the northwest wall and looking at images from the New and Old Testament: Daniel and the Lions, Christ giving the law to Peter in the presence of Paul, Christ trampling a serpent and lion, and Jonah and the whale. These stories are significant within the context of the baptismal ritual because they are associated with Christ triumphing with goodness over evil; catechumens would have been looking at or near these images as they renounced the devil.<sup>11</sup> Through baptism, all sin and evil are removed from an individual who acknowledges Christ as their Savior, Redeemer, against all future temptations and Protector and from evil. Thus, the wall imagery served as visual reminders of the eternal promise granted to followers of Christ by baptism, and also informs the exact actions to be performed within the baptistery.

The “divine drama” of baptism takes place at the font, or “sacred stage,” situated in the center of the baptistery and constructed with eight sides (Fig. 3).<sup>12</sup> The font is slightly deeper than floor level, making it big enough for a full body immersion. Bishop Ambrose notes that those being baptized would go down into the water and exit the font rising up out of it, though Annabel Wharton contends that there is no archaeological evidence to support this theory in regards to how the font was constructed. Presumably, once in the font, the initiate would be dunked in the water three times—first in the name of the Father, then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit—“descending with Christ into a watery grave” and being brought back up.<sup>13</sup> Even before the Gospel of Matthew was written, the apostle

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Warton, 362.

<sup>12</sup> von Simson, 114.

<sup>13</sup> Weitzmann, 660.

Paul expressed a kind of “drowning baptism” indicating a “disciple’s sinking and rising up from the water.”<sup>14</sup> This translates to the baptismal ritual as Christ’s death and resurrection, alluding to Romans 6:4 which states that “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite the detailed texts from Bishop Ambrose, the exact way in which one was baptized in the Neonian Baptistery is not clear. In her book *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism*, Robin Margaret Jensen explains that depending on the depth of a font a catechumen could have knelt while water was poured upon them or immersed their heads rather their whole bodies. Although predicting that one may have had water poured on their head in the Neonian baptistery as it is shown in the dome mosaic, and contrary to Warton’s contention, based upon the depth of the font at the Neonian baptistery one can surmise that in this space full-body immersion was likely.<sup>16</sup> While full-body immersion remains a tradition in many modern Christian circles, some denominations of Christianity have adopted smaller fonts for the purpose of sprinkling water on the head of the baptized.

The decorative scheme of the font also continues the dialogue of baptismal motifs and theology. Two sides have clear Latin and Greek inscriptions that were most likely originally painted in blue-green paint. One of the four panels has both Latin and Greek written upon it. The Greek presents a passage from John 3:6: “That which is born of the spirit is the spirit.”<sup>17</sup> In Latin, the inscription is from Galatians 3:27 which reads: “For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”<sup>18</sup> A passage from Acts 2:38 is the sole inscription on another panel and written in only Latin: “and be baptized every one of you...for the remission of sins.”<sup>19</sup> Of the remaining two sides, one has been obliterated and rendered illegible while the other has no inscription at all. The original fifth-century font appears differently from the one seen today as a result of a later medieval renovation and during a restoration of the font in 1960. The side without an inscription was dismantled and a relief depicting a lamb, a cross, and a part of a wreath was discovered on the reverse side of the panel.<sup>20</sup> Kostof suspects that the design of the relief might resemble that of a sarcophagus— if true, the reuse of a piece of a sarcophagus or at least a commonly used motif for sarcophagus

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Robin Margaret Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 179.

<sup>17</sup> John 3:6 NRSV

<sup>18</sup> Gal 3:27 NRSV

<sup>19</sup> Acts 2:38 NRSV

<sup>20</sup> Kostof, *The Orthodox Baptistery*, 140.

decoration for the construction of the font would continue with the theme of death as a part of the baptismal ritual. Following this logic, the neophyte would quite literally descend into and come back out of a grave.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that the font was constructed with a sarcophagus in mind also further supports the teachings of Bishop Ambrose of Milan. For him, the font symbolizes the tomb, as “regeneration is linked to new life and resurrection” and provides an avenue for breaking sin.<sup>22</sup> Ambrose writes that though man has committed sin which “subjects him to death...a remedy was found. It was that man should die and rise again.”<sup>23</sup> Ambrose’s writing confirms the belief that not only does the font and the act of baptism cleanse and renew, it also has the power to “break the hold of the devil.”<sup>24</sup> According to Bishop Ambrose, the bishop would first exorcize the water so that the water “may be sanctified and that the eternal Trinity may dwell there” at the moment of baptism.<sup>25</sup>

Observing the font as it is seen today, it is unclear where the baptizands would enter. It is only known that the original font was internally circular; it cannot be inferred from evidence how deep the font was or how it was entered. It was noted by Bishop Isidore (c. 560-636), the bishop of Seville, that a font would have “seven steps; three downwards representing the three things that we renounce, three others upward for the three things we confess...a stable place for the feet and a foundation for the water” and this further supports Bishop Ambrose’s teaching that the “whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily” as well as in the water.<sup>26</sup> As the font is seen today, there do not appear to be steps in or out of the water, only two steps lead the way to a small pulpit, where the bishop would stand.

In the mosaic hovering directly above, which is made out of glass and gold tessera, Christ is shown in the nude “without gestures suggesting embarrassment.”<sup>27</sup> Though the initiates would have most likely entered the baptistery garbed in white robes, it is suspected that these candidates for baptism were baptized nude for immersion and anointment. The clothes are “proof of morality,” which would consequently be removed perhaps to honor one’s natural state at birth.<sup>28</sup> The presumed sixteen stucco prophets situated at the level of the

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<sup>21</sup> Kostof, 139.

<sup>22</sup> Spinks, 61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>26</sup> Jensen, 229.

<sup>27</sup> Warton, 362.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

windows just below the dome would have most likely been painted, though their robes would have remained white like the baptizands' robes (Fig. 4).<sup>29</sup>

Vault domes with mosaics were common throughout fourth and fifth-century Byzantine Christian architecture, and the dome mosaic in the Neonian Baptistery holds significant meaning in the context of the space it is in (Fig. 5). The decoration of the dome was sponsored by Bishop Neon and replaced the original wooden ceiling.<sup>30</sup> This alteration is noteworthy because the mosaic depicting the baptism of Jesus is the one and only space in which a decorative scheme becomes a narrative scene. The composition of the baptismal scene connects Jesus' relationship with the other figures via the "dramatic unities of place, time, and action."<sup>31</sup> While the personified river Jordan and John the Baptist face inward to address Christ, the artist has intentionally positioned Christ to look forward, and address his audience. As a result of this, Christ looks downward rather than outward upon his people. Kostof argues that without this specific direction of Christ's gaze and without the font situated directly below, "dual orientation of the actors [baptizands] would be questionable."<sup>32</sup> Yet, because of the downward gaze, the mosaic fosters interaction between Christ and the new believer.<sup>33</sup> Davies, too, emphasizes the idea of the entrance into a "heavenly life" as communicated and represented by the dome mosaic.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned before, the narrative scene of Jesus' baptism in the dome alludes to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. Specifically Matthew's Gospel describes Jesus being lifted back out of the water as "heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descend upon him."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the Gospel according to Mark states that Jesus saw "heaven being torn open" and the Spirit descending upon him.<sup>36</sup> Thus it is seen once more that biblical text becomes exquisite visual narrative, communicating the powers of God in the transformation that is baptism. However, Kostof notes that the scene is "one that occurred at a definite moment in the past and in a known place" and is a story that all who enter would understand, regardless of literacy.<sup>37</sup>

Deliyannis contends that the "fantastical setting" of the baptistery is "far removed from everyday life, [possibly representing] the heavenly kingdom attained by those being baptized,"<sup>38</sup> similar to the ideas behind Gothic cathedrals

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Weitzmann, 644.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Kostof, 111.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> J.G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Mat 3:16 NRSV

<sup>36</sup> Mat 1:10 NRSV

<sup>37</sup> Kostof, 112.

<sup>38</sup> Deliyannis," 97.

whose windows let in more light with the aim to transport visitors to a heavenly realm.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the strikingly dull and unimpressible brick exterior would create a much more divine experience upon entrance into the baptistery as one is struck by the glass and gold tesserae that embellish every wall.<sup>40</sup> Deliyannis writes further that “the central scene is set off from the apostle register [below] by the mosaic cornice with egg-and-dart molding, which creates the effect that one is looking through a hole in the center of the dome directly into heaven.”<sup>41</sup> This is further emphasized by the copious amounts of gold used in the background which offset it from the dark blue background of the Apostle mosaic, further removing it from the natural world and “plac[ing] it in a separate, divine space.”<sup>42</sup>

The dome has three register spaces of mosaic decoration, intended to be separate from the baptism mosaic at the top as they are separated by copious amounts of gold. The space below that proceeds the baptismal scene is twelve figures determined as the Apostles dressed in elaborate robes, carrying crowns, still elicits a potential interaction between the earthly and the divine. It is unknown exactly to whom the Apostles are delivering their crowns—Weitzmann claims the procession of the initiates was meant to mimic the procession of the Apostles towards Christ in the dome,<sup>43</sup> however Weinry maintains that the Apostles are “carrying their crowns to their successor on earth” which would be the bishop.<sup>44</sup> Weinry’s claim is compelling if it is taken into consideration that parts of the baptistery were ordered to be renovated by Bishop Neon.

Peering upwards past the Apostles facing southeast, one is properly oriented to see the baptism mosaic upright. When facing this direction, the viewer is also facing the southeast, where Psalm 31:1-2 is inscribed in the dome. These verses directly refer to the removal of sin through baptism.<sup>45</sup> Each of the four lunettes in the dome has an inscription of a Bible verse that evokes the symbolism of water. From the various inscriptions in the baptistery, we can define the other various parts of the ceremony, which have been provided above in the discussion concerning the symbolism of water.

It is evident that water holds great importance in Byzantine theology and ritual as it is emphasized through the central placement of the font. In the four lunettes that line the lower level of decoration are four biblical passages that contain the water motif throughout the New Testament and perpetuate the role of water during the baptismal ritual (Fig. 6).

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<sup>39</sup> Albert Edward Bailey, ed., *The Arts and Religion* (London: Macmillan Company, 1944), 78.

<sup>40</sup> Jensen, 199.

<sup>41</sup> Deliyannis, 99.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Weitzmann, 660.

<sup>44</sup> Ittai Weinry, "A Tale of Two Baptistries: Royal and Ecclesiastical Patronage in Ravenna," *Assaph*, no. 7 (2002): 49.

<sup>45</sup> Deliyannis, 95.



Southwest lunette: “Jesus walking on the sea takes the hand of the sinking Peter, and with the Lord commanding the wind ceased” (paraphrase from Matthew 14:29).

Southeast lunette: “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin” (paraphrase from Psalm 32:1-2).

Northeast lunette: “Where Jesus laid aside his clothing and put water in a basin and washed the feet of his disciples” (paraphrase from John 13:4-5).

Northwest lunette: “He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me by still waters” (paraphrase from Psalm 23:2).<sup>46</sup>

These biblical passages emphasized to the initiates images of water and Jesus’s miracles with it. Peppard theorizes that the images “likely indicated the kind of power over nature and fate that they hoped would be enacted through [baptismal] rituals.”<sup>47</sup> This idea is complemented by the nature motifs of plants, birds, and animals in parts of the dome mosaics.<sup>48</sup> Jensen suggests that these inscriptions were renovated in the 19th-century, which might refer to missing mosaics and inscription later included to substitute them.<sup>49</sup>

The ritual of baptism removes and purifies one from sin which is evidence of our humanity. In Christian theology, Christ’s baptism is one way in which his humanity is revealed, and he becomes more accessible to humans through it. This impacts the design of the dome positioned directly over the baptismal font. An elaborate mosaic fills the dome and illustrates in incredible amounts of gold Christ waist-deep in the river with John the Baptist pouring water from a dish on Christ’s head. A dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit falls in alignment with the dish in John’s hand directly above Christ. This image gives direction to the ritual and affirms the connection between Christ and his new follower through this ritual, sending the message that Christ was baptized in the Holy Spirit and thus the initiate is, too. Additionally, to the right of Christ is a personification of the river Jordan offering a cloth to Christ. Though not personified in the Gospels, a pictorial representation was not uncommon in scenes of Christ’s baptism throughout Byzantium. The baptism of Christ as shown in the dome refers to passages from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, both of which mention John the Baptist, the River Jordan, and the Holy Spirit:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Peppard, “Lord and Shepherd of Water,” in *The World’s Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 86.

<sup>48</sup> Peppard, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Jensen, 202.

to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13-17).

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:9-11).<sup>50</sup>

Modern day translations of these texts reveal key differences between tellings of Jesus’ baptism which could be of value in the symbolism of the dome mosaic. In Mark, the voice of God addresses Jesus directly by saying “*You* are my son” and “with *you* I am well pleased” while the voice of God in Matthew’s version of the story speaks to bystanders and those receiving the story. In the context of the baptistery, and by analyzing the relationship of the font with the dome mosaic above, it would make sense that Matthew’s version of the story would be favored over Mark’s because God widely acknowledges those below who are observing the scene on earth, or above in the dome. These biblical stories further embody how baptizands might identify themselves with Christ, John the Baptist with the Bishop, and the deacon with the river Jordan who was responsible for assisting the bishop with the immersion, clothing, and anointing afterward, as presented by Deliyannis.<sup>51</sup>

From the northwest niche, it becomes apparent that foot washing was also performed in the baptistery as a part of the baptismal ritual for all neophytes. The inscription in the niche paraphrases John 13:4-5, mentioned above, and articulates a tradition that stems from Jesus washing the feet of the apostles before the Last Supper, representing a “model of sacramental humility.”<sup>52</sup> After immersion, the bishop would wash the feet of the neophytes in the baptistery—in this scenario, the bishop symbolizes Christ and the neophytes the Apostles, as contended by Warton, and a different role reversal than what Deliyannis describes in relation to the baptism narrative in the dome.<sup>53</sup> According to Bishop Ambrose of Milan, this ritual of foot washing was not practiced in rituals performed in other congregations throughout Italy, but that it was unique to the ritual Neonian Baptistery.

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<sup>50</sup> Peppard, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Deliyannis, 99.

<sup>52</sup> Warton, 365.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

After the foot washing, the service would conclude with the bishop anointing the newly initiated members of Christ, sealing their faith with holy oil.<sup>54</sup> Pope Gregory the Great associates the incarnation of Christ with anointing by “interpreting the ‘oil of gladness’” as described in Psalm 45 which refers to the Virgin Mary being anointed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup> The incarnation of Christ through the Virgin Mary is seen as his anointment and “Christian anointing enacted, in turn, [is] an incarnation and new birth in the Spirit.”<sup>56</sup>

The decorative mosaics transport baptizands to a heavenly realm reachable only through the ritual of baptism they participated in below while an octagonal building is a reminder of the reason for baptism. The experience of a baptismal candidate taking part in one of the most sacred rites to the Christian faith would have been divinely inspired by the architectural setting and decorative elements within the Neonian Baptistery. With support and analysis from biblical texts, theologies of water, anointment, and Christ’s humanity begin to take shape through visual cues and imagery of Christ’s baptism. Ultimately, visual analysis of the mosaic scheme in the dome and structural choices regarding the large font and centralized plan reveal to the modern-day visitor how early Christian theology informed the construction of sacred spaces and supported the performance of rituals.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Peppard, "A Woman at a Well," in *The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 55.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 156.



Figure 1. Neonian Baptistery Exterior.<sup>57</sup>

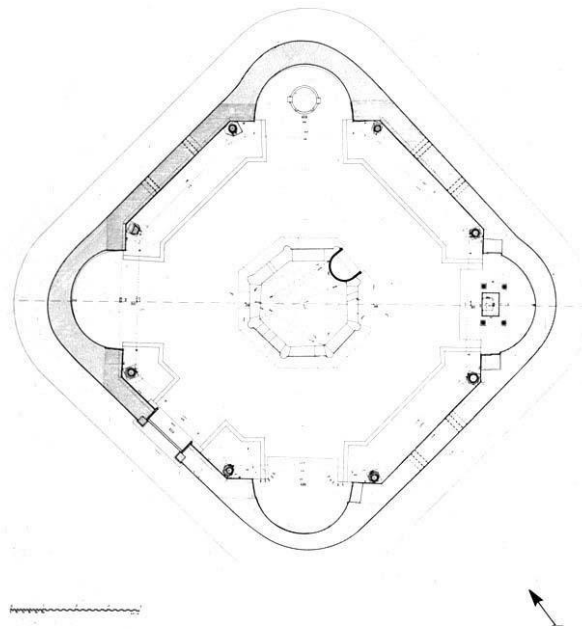


Figure 2. Floor plan of Neonian Baptistery.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Michael H. Marchal, "The Interplay of Ritual and Art: The Dome Mosaic in the Neonian Baptistery of Ravenna," *Sacred Architecture Journal* 29 (2016), accessed May 15, 2019, [http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/the\\_interplay\\_of\\_ritual\\_and\\_art\\_the\\_dome\\_mosaic\\_in\\_the\\_neonian\\_baptistry\\_o](http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/the_interplay_of_ritual_and_art_the_dome_mosaic_in_the_neonian_baptistry_o).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



Figure 3. The font.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 4. Stucco images.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Messalla, "Ravenna: The Orthodox Baptistery," *Corvinus*, last modified July 19, 2016, <https://corvinus.nl/2016/07/19/ravenna-the-orthodox-baptistry/>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*





Figure 5. Dome mosaic of Christ's Baptism.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 6. Apostle mosaic below Christ's Baptism.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> José Luis Bernardes Ribeiro, "Baptism of Christ - Neonian Baptistry - Ravenna 2016," *Wikimedia Commons*, last modified September 17, 2016, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic\\_of\\_the\\_Apostles\\_-\\_Neonian\\_Baptistry\\_-\\_Ravenna\\_2016.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_the_Apostles_-_Neonian_Baptistry_-_Ravenna_2016.jpg).

<sup>62</sup> José Luis Bernardes Ribeiro, "Mosaic of the Apostles - Neonian Baptistry - Ravenna 2016," *Wikimedia Commons*, last modified September 17, 2016, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic\\_of\\_the\\_Apostles\\_-\\_Neonian\\_Baptistry\\_-\\_Ravenna\\_2016.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_the_Apostles_-_Neonian_Baptistry_-_Ravenna_2016.jpg).

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