

Chapter 1

ART DOES NOT LIE, THE REALITY OF THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 1:8

1 INTRODUCTION

When considering the art of a society far removed from mankind's own, the ideas of what is 'good', 'beautiful', and so on may be quite different from those of the people who actually produced the art. Whether the social, religious or other ideas that gave birth to the art were fully comprehend or not, can hardly be seen in the same light as did people of the time. All works of art are judged at least according to aesthetic criteria but that does not mean the observer doesn't necessarily admire it. When a person say a picture is beautiful, that means the remark is an aesthetic judgement. But as far as ancient societies are concerned, such judgments are, in a sense, irrelevant, because they were utterly foreign to the people of those societies.

To say that an Egyptian pyramid or a Babylonian mosaic is 'beautiful' would have made no sense at all to the people who created them.

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Chapter One



Fig. 51: Ram in the Thicket – c.2600 - 2400 BC: gold, copper, shell, lapis lazuli and limestone.

When man had learned to live a settled life, growing crops and keeping animals, building towns for a safer and more organized society, life became more complex. The search for an explanation for the inexplicable forces of nature led to the growth of religion; the need to organize community life led to the development of laws and government, usually a form of kingship.

The earliest advanced cultures of this kind grew up in the Middle East, roughly from Egypt to Persia, and in particular the river valleys - the Nile in Egypt and the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, where the earliest civilizations have been discovered. The wandering hunters and herds-men who came to these valleys learned how to exploit the rivers by irrigation and canals, and were able to grow crops more than sufficient for their own needs. A surplus of food created a stable society, and allowed trade with less fortunate neighbours.

City states, with sophisticated political systems and considerable military power, came into being. In Egypt, the supreme ruler was known as the pharaoh.

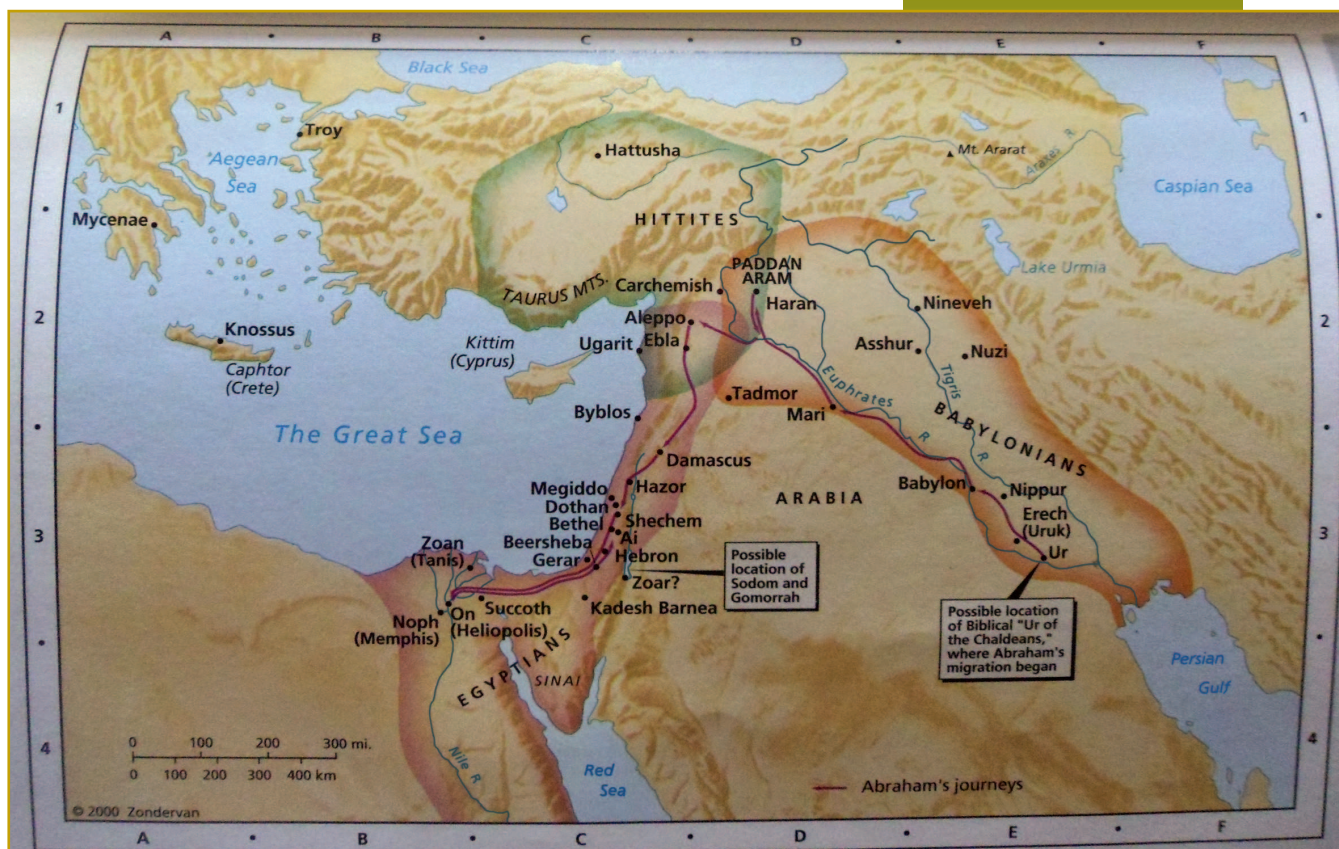


Fig. 52: Map of the Middle East

He was a very exalted figure, regarded by his subjects as divine, and controlled a wide area. Further to the east, no comparable empire appeared; Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia consisted of city states, more or less independent, and the ruler, though a powerful, priestly figure, was not treated as a god.

From our great distance in time, the civilizations of the ancient Middle East appear similar, but they would not have done so to the people of the time. Time's telescope minimizes the process of change, and it is quick to view the Sumerian or the Babylonian civilizations as less dynamic than they really were.

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Some periods may see greater changes than others of comparable duration, but no human society remains static for long. While keeping these facts in mind, a legitimately search for characteristics which these ancient societies had in common, can be made. The widely sepa-

rated societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Iran all developed writing, though in different forms, at roughly the same time. In the arts, though, styles and methods varied greatly, the motives that produced the art were similar. Egypt, geographically separate and more self-contained, remained thoroughly and exclusively 'Egyptian' in its art and culture for an amazingly long period of time, but the region further east had a more disturbed history, with many different peoples appearing on the scene at various times, bringing with them new ideas, new types of government, and new forms of art. Though that was sometimes enriching, the frequency of war and other social upheavals was an inhibiting factor not present in Egypt, and perhaps explains why, to most modern eyes, the arts of Egypt reached a higher level of accomplishment than did those of other ancient civilizations. The earliest ancient civilization developed not in Egypt but in Mesopotamia, a region roughly corresponding to modern Iraq.



Fig. 53: Warka Vase – alabaster. c. 3300 - 3100 BC.

The Sumerians arrived around 3500 BC, merging with the local inhabitants and ultimately founding a strong, theo-cratic society based on large-scale agriculture with extensive irrigation works.

At Uruk, called Erech in the Bible, they built temples of bricks made from mud, and a great ziggurat which was the base of a temple. On the walls, striking geometric patterns with pieces of terracotta set in the plaster were made. The stone sculpture included hunting scenes in relief as well as heads and nude figures in the round. The alabaster vase, which dates from about 3000BC, is a remarkably sophisticated shape, with its flaring top and recessed base. It was found in one of the temples of Uruk and was used in religious rites: the scenes depicted in low relief are of crops and animals being offered to the goddess of fertility, who, in the topmost band, receives them outside her temple.

The stately arrangement of the figures reflects the Sumerians' love of good order and conveys a sense of calm assurance.

A work still more impressive to modern eyes is the head of a woman from Uruk in marble, which may once have been part of a full-length figure. The elegant sensitivity of this face can scarcely be excelled in the art of any period.

Fig. 54: White marble head of a Sumerian woman the "Lady of Uruk", probably a part of a wooden sculpture, from Uruk (Warka); early 3rd millennium B.C.



1.1 RATIONALE AND PRINCIPALS UNDERLYING THIS SCRIPTURE BASED VIEW

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

Isaiah 44:6

God has written both the first and the last chapter in the history of all things. In the book of Genesis can be read of the beginnings of all things – the universe, life, man, sin, death and society. In the Revelation of John, which is the climax of the New Testament and of the prophetic Scripture, is the learning school of how all things will find their goal and final fulfilment. Daniel ask, *“What shall be the end of these things?”* (Daniel 12:8). Only God can answer this perplexing question for which so many desperately want an answer for. God has done this very thoroughly in His Word.¹

To emphasize the above title, it is necessary to present an in depth analysis of Art as seen generally, Biblically and theoretically as foundation in order to understand God’s plan and purpose for restoring humankind to its original purpose.

In the late 3rd century AD the Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into two halves, East and West.

¹ Christian Life Bible School, *The Last Things*

The result was that the two developed into quite separate political units. The Roman empire in the West soon disappeared, while the Eastern or Byzantine empire (its capital at Byzantium, the modern Constantinople or Istanbul) lasted into the modern era, and was only finally destroyed by the Turkish conquest of 1453. With the collapse of imperial authority in Rome, the Christian Church was left to assume the dominance earlier exercised by the state. *'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's'*, Jesus said, and in the context of His time this was a revolutionary idea. In Rome, religion and the state were one. The emperor was divine, or semi-divine; temples were built to *'Augustus and Rome'*. In every provincial town temples and statues glorified the gods and worshipped emperors. Christianity grew up in this unpromising environment.

At first it was merely one of many eastern cults, like the strange cult of Mithras, a powerful rival in Britain and other parts of the empire, which helped to pave the way for the victory of Christianity in the Roman world by introducing monotheism (one god) and the vital moral principles of Good and Evil. But Christianity had certain advantages over pagan religions.

Fig. 55: Emperor Diocletian



It offered a deep spiritual life of hope, something that neither the secular religion of Rome nor the mystery cults of the east could do. It was naturally hostile to pagan religion, and in particular the concept of the divinity of the emperor aroused fierce opposition among the early Christians.

However, the Christians of the 4th and 5th Centuries were not antagonistic to Roman civilization: such a thing was hardly imaginable, as no other form of civilization was known. They were Christians but they were also Romans – inhabitants of the Roman empire – and early Christian art differs from that of imperial Rome largely as a result of different economic circumstances.

Fig. 56: Roman mosaic



Since the early Christians were humble people of small means – slaves, craftsmen, women – there was scarcely enough money to create Christian art. Moreover, they probably felt no need for it: the Jewish tradition from which Christianity sprang was against religious art. There are exceptions, of course, but Yahweh's condemnation of graven images was not forgotten.

The pagan statues and temples were found in every town for their worshippers, the dwelling places of the gods, but for Christians they were the devil's works. Christians, therefore, had grave reservations against developing a parallel art form. Neither were there any churches, partly because the Christians did not have the money to build them, partly because to do so invited the hostile attention of the authorities, and partly because in architecture too the problem had to be faced of what form such buildings should take: they should certainly not resemble the temples of the heathen. The early Christian transformers met in private houses, or the room of a house, in which, no doubt, they were often surrounded by unfavourable Roman decorations. The earliest churches, small, unpretentious and invariably built over in later times, have proved very hard to discover.²



Fig. 57: Priest King c 3300 BC. Limestone.

The cap worn by this early image of a Mesopotamian ruler remained part of the royal regalia for two millennia. The king's nudity probably refers to involvement in a ritual, possibly relating to agricultural fertility.

The Dark Ages began when the Roman empire started to crumble, everything changed and the greatest Empire the world has seen, disappeared back into the cultural shadows. Various powerful artistic forces step up to take it's place. They were the Dark Age Creators, the Christians.

Art never lies and the story art tells us of this exciting times is that this was never an age of darkness but an age of Light.

1.2 THE DARK AGES – THE CLASH OF THE GODS

1.2.1 THE ROTAS SQUARE

Fig. 58: The ROTAS square is deeply mysterious and are found all over the Roman Empire in Syria, Gaul and even in England.



The Christian Art of the Dark Ages, is an art of mystery and magic, a suggestion in miracles, transcending into light. The ROTAS Square is not art but an excellent

pointer to a new Art direction. Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD and everything was covered in ashes and preserved for posterity in perfect condition. Here in Pompeii proof were found that there was already Christians by 79 AD. The proof was a ROTAS Square. It is deeply mysterious, are found all over the Roman Empire in Syria, Gaul, even in England.

It is inscribed in the walls of houses and columns outside houses. A mysterious word game plastered outside houses. ROTAS OPERA TENET AREPO SATOR. Rotas is SATOR backwards, Arepo is OPERA work backwards. “As *he sew, so shall he reap*,” only if you ignore Latin Grammar. Twisted for decades, it still didn’t mean anything. Then, an EUREKA moment – the code was broken. The important point was the letters – those letters could be re-arranged to form a cross and it meant the same both ways – it formed the word PATERNOSTER – ***Latin for Our Father***. It is the opening words for the Lord’s Prayer.

Fig. 59: PATERNOSTER – Latin for Our Father. It is the opening words for the Lord’s Prayer.

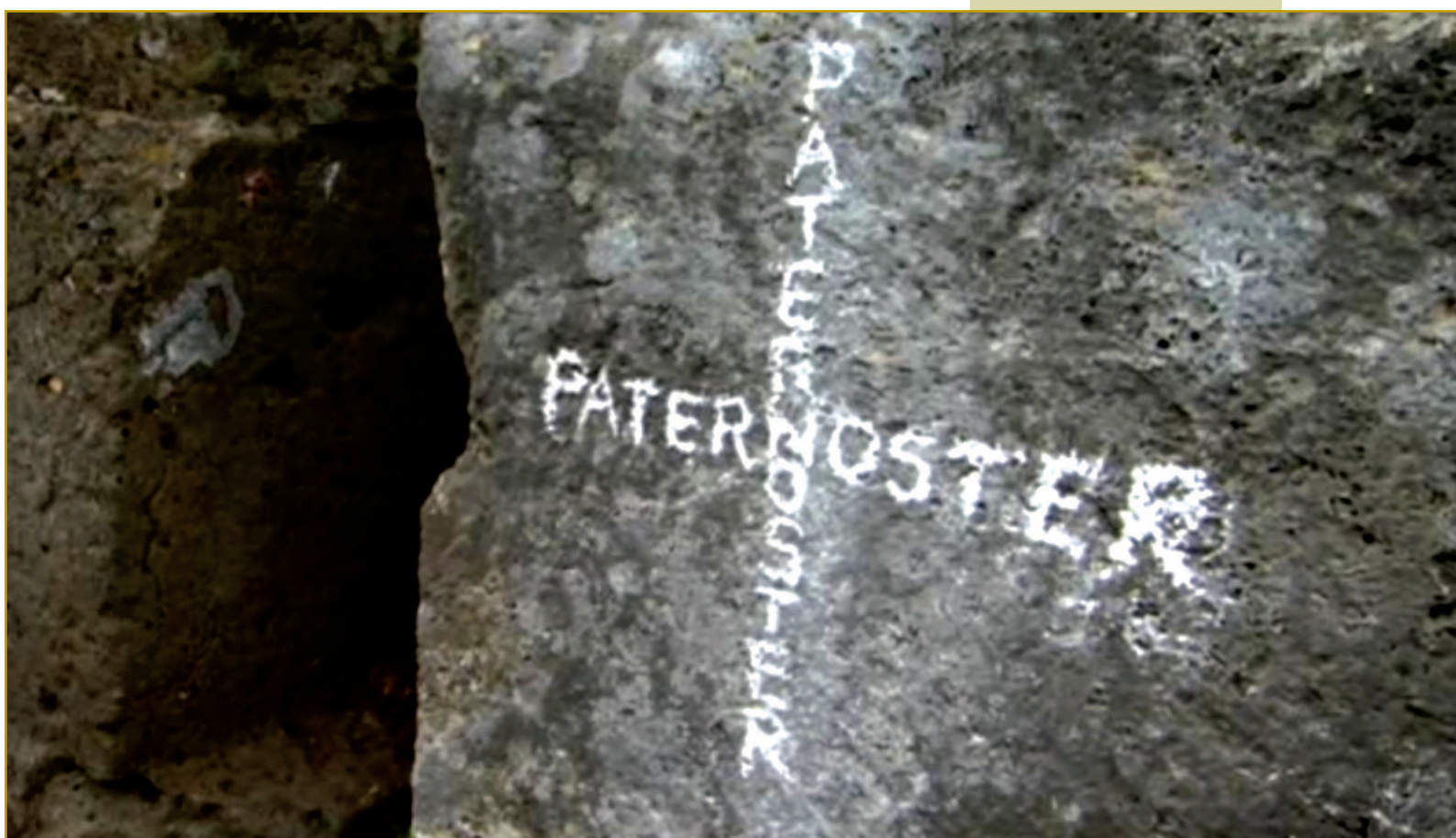




Fig. 60: The lines drawn by two Christians that forms a fish.

1.2.2 ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

Alpha and Omega, in their Roman form, is the last letters to remain of the Greek Alphabet. They can be seen in the Roman Catacombs. The beginning and the End. A popular Christian code for the one true God. This mysterious Word square outside the door, show that the inhabitants were Christians and supposedly ward off evil. Although that isn't art yet, it is an inscription but it has artistic implications. What we see in here is an appetite for Science, symbols and secret meanings.

Reason early Christian Art is so exciting because one finds it in exciting places. Rome is wild enough on the surface but when a person descends into it's underground, it becomes scary and fascinating. The Catacombs were hiding places, underground shelters wherein persecuted Christians hide from the Romans. An underground City as huge as this can't be hidden away under any ones nose.

The Romans knew it was here but what they didn't know was what one Christian was saying to another one down there.

1.2.3 CHRISTIAN SIGNS

First Christian Art was filled with secret signs and hidden meanings. That is why the fish became an ambiguous symbol. When two Christians met on the road, the one would draw a single oval line in the sand and the other one would draw the same line upside down (forming a fish) and the two would know immediately that they are Christians together.



Fig. 61: Inside the Roman Catacombs – hiding place for persecuted Christians.

Fig. 62: Chi-Ro with the Alpha and Omega.





Fig. 63: Alpha and Omega, a popular Christian code inside the Monogram of Christ.

The Monogram of Christ or Chi-Rho represented Jesus himself. Made by combining two Greek letters Chi (X) and Ro (P), which interweave forming the X and P on top of each other – they are the first letters of the Greek word Christòs, Christ – means the anointed one.

Fig. 64: The Anchor sign.



Another popular Christian sign was *The Anchor* because the top part of the anchor looks like a cross in a discreet and veiled manner. The anchor's fundamental meaning is hope in the promise of a future life.

*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.
Hebrews 16:19*

As the anchor gives security to the ship, so hope assist the believer to reach the harbour of eternity with serenity.

Christian symbols in the Catacombs



Fig. 65: A bird pecking grapes, a symbol of the soul nourishing upon the Eucharist.

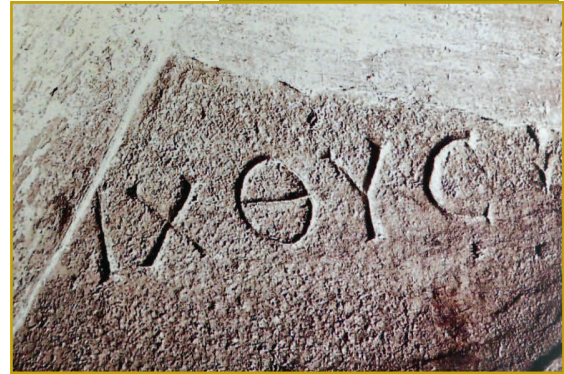


Fig. 66: IΧΘΥC (Ichthús = fish), the popular acrostic signifying "Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour".



Fig. 67: A bird quenching its thirst.



Fig. 68: The dove with the olive twig.



Fig. 69: The dove holding a crown with its bill, symbol of the soul that has attained its eternal reward.



Fig. 70: The fish, symbol of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour".



Fig. 71: Small boat

The dove with the olive branch in its beak: it is a symbol of the soul in eternal peace. Everywhere you look in the Roman Catacombes, the first Christians declare their faith in such mysterious encrypted ways. These symbols and signs were not only secret language but they are also a different way of seeing and understanding things with your eyes and your imagination.

One thing about this first Christian art one find in the Catacombes, is that there is only a few pictures, no image of Jesus, no Mary's, no Saints. For the first few Centuries of Christianity there were no Christian images. It was not until the beginning of the so called Dark Ages, 300 years after the birth of Christ that figures and scenes began to appear in Christian Art.

Fig. 72: Rich Christian family buried in 3rd Century Catacombes of Priscilla.





Fig. 72a:



Fig. 72b:



Fig. 72c:

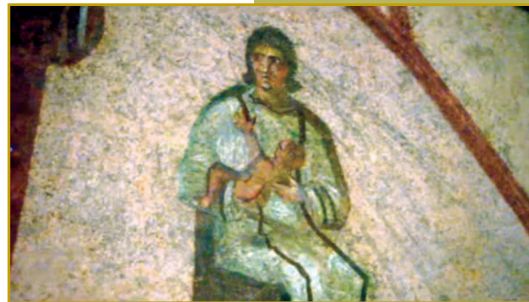


Fig. 72d:



Fig. 72e:



Fig. 72f:

In the 3rd Century Catacombes of Priscilla, a rich Christian family laid buried. On the one wall is a peacock, on the other, three men standing in the fire and on the other wall some kind of sea dragon with someone coming out of his mouth. When decoding all these images, the result portrays the peacock as the symbol of eternity. Peacocks replace their beautiful feathers once a year and the ancient believe is that their flesh cannot rot, it is eternal. The three young men that was described by Daniel in the Bible was set on fire by the Babylonians but God protected them. The fire couldn't touch them. The person coming out of the mouth of the sea monster is the Prophet Jonah. He was swallowed by the whale and spit out after three days and he returned to dry land a wiser man. The thread that unites all these images together is salvation and hope. God saved the three young men from the fire and Jonah from the whale and He will save all men.

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Fig. 73: Jonah's sculpture.



Jonah's sculpture, one of the earliest surviving masterpieces of Christian sculpture, can be seen in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Jonah is of quite significance because the early Christians used him as a symbol of Jesus himself. Jesus also rose from the dead after three days and the reason why Jonah is so popular in the Catacombes, is because he is a way of showing Jesus without showing Jesus. Replacement of another code, a symbol, Jesus was portrayed in many different symbols without actually showing Him. Jesus is portrayed in many different ways – He is the Curro, the Word sign, Jonah in the fish, the anchor. What is not seen, is a Jesus that actually look like Jesus.

The truth is that no one in early Christian Art knew what He looked like. The Bible doesn't describe Him, no one does. Art took a very long time to come up with a face for Jesus. The search for that face was the biggest artistic tussle of the Dark Ages. The Relic, the Shroud of Turin is proof that nobody actually knew what He looked like. According to the evidence that was left behind by the first Christian artists, Jesus didn't look like that at all. According to these artists, Jesus was blond, fresh faced curly hair and blond.

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Fig. 74: Jonah.

Fig. 75: A Jesus that looked like a Jesus.



Fig. 76: The Relic, the Shroud of Turin.



Fig. 76a-h: Early Christian artists portrayed Jesus with blond curly hear and a girly face.



Fig. 76a.



Fig. 76b.



Fig. 76c.



Fig. 76d.



Fig. 76e.



Fig. 76f.



Fig. 76g.



Fig. 76h.

He is usually showing, waving His wand about performing remarkable miracles. In the painting of the wedding in Canaan, He is turning water into wine. In another scene He is curing the paralytic who could not walk until he met the baby faced Jesus and the blind man is also cured by Jesus and finally Jesus is raising Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus looked like an Egyptian Mummy, all wrapped up.

In this very first early Christian Art we never see a Jesus who is suffering in pain and covered in blood. Jesus didn't turn up in Art for a 1000 years or so because the tortured Jesus is a creation of the Middle Ages, an expression of Medieval guilt and terror. What horrible pain the artistic mind went through to reflect on the crucified Jesus in the Centuries ahead. How harsh they whipped, tormented and punctured Him.

Fig. 77: A whipped, tormented and punctured Jesus.



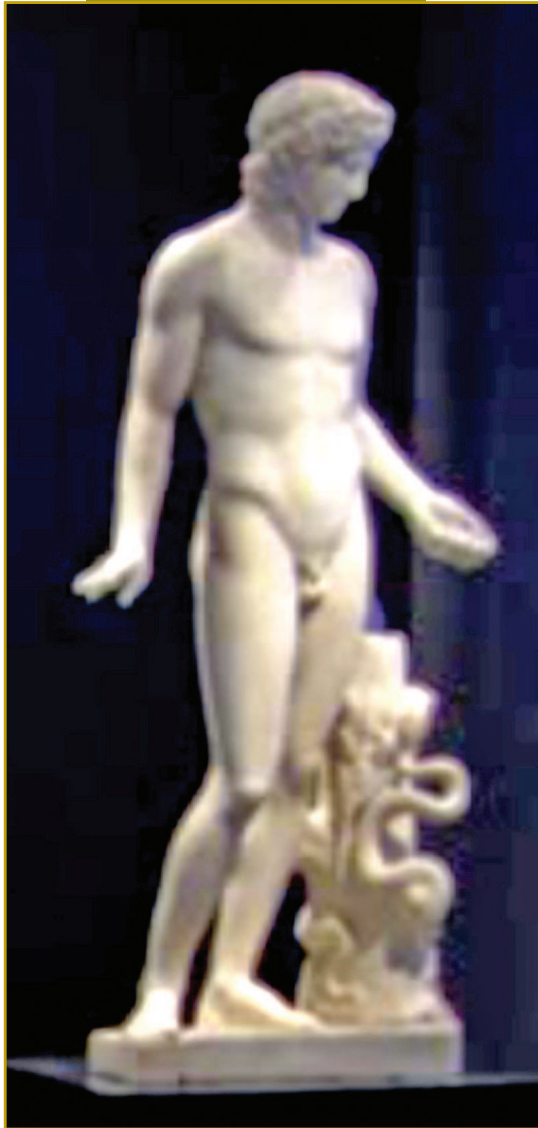


Fig. 78: Apollo was chosen to be the Pagan god's Jesus.

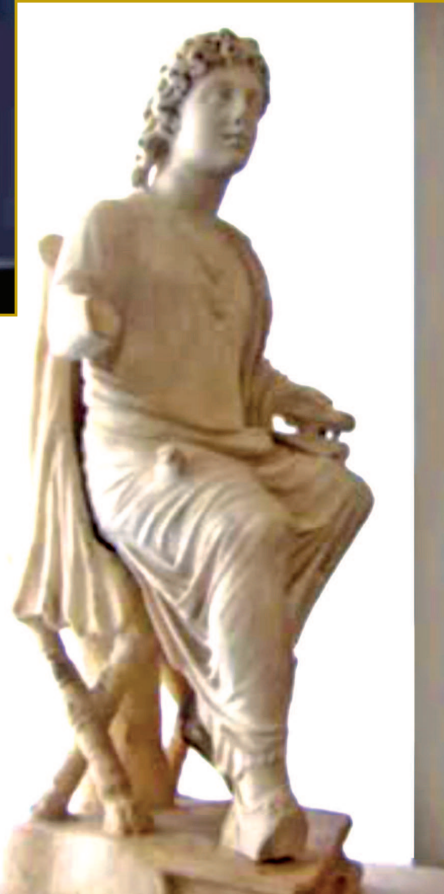


Fig. 79: This was also an early Jesus.

The first Christians were not looking for a God who make them feel guilty, that would never have caught on. They were looking for a God who could save them and fill them with hope. Christian Artist went to the Pagan gods and selected the youngest and most handsome god to represent Jesus. They chose Apollo, god of the sun. Blond and unbearded, youthful and curly hair. Apollo was a god who made you feel good. When this mysterious Christian statue was dug up out of the ground, it was thought to represent a woman, an unknown goddess, a muse. Only later was it realized that this too is an early Jesus.

Fig. 80: Apollo and Nike.



In the Cleveland Museum, there is a carving of Apollo performing a miracle with Nike, the goddess of victory. Apollo is the rascal figure on the left with a very shapely figure. A person can easily mistake him for a woman. Pagan gods can be male and female. They can amalgamate the sexes and represent both genders at once, just like this “Jesus”. The first “Jesus” was sometimes made to look feminine on purpose. They were given suggestions of breasts, beautiful faces, soft bodies and long hair. The pagans had lots of goddesses to worship, Venus, Isis, Diana and many more. Christianity had none.

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Fig. 81: Unbearded Jesus, a Christ with childlike hips. He is soft and feminine.

Christianity believed in one true God and He was masculine. There was an entire feminine side missing. The feminization of Jesus was a deliberate artistic attempt to cater for both sexes. It produces some of the Dark Ages' most unexpected imagery. In the Baptistery in Ravenna, there is an unbearded Jesus being baptized in the river Jordan and he is so soft and feminine, a Christ with child bearing hips. Before this girly Jesus could become fully masculine, grow a beard and turn into a man, Christianity needed to find a feminine presence of its own. The fact that Christ's face was borrowed from Apollo should not surprise us.

The early Christians borrowed from the pagans because that is what art does. It uses what is already there. For most of these early Centuries of Christianity, Christians and Pagans lived together in reasonable harmony.

Later when the Roman Empire became officially Christian under Emperor Constantine, aggressive Christian writers looking back on these times of persecution when the Romans murdered the Christians, do what the Victor always does in a war, they re-wrote history from their point of view. They dramatised and exaggerate it. In most of the Roman Empire, particularly the borders here in Roman Syria, the Pagans lived next door to the Christians and they lived next door to the Jews and all of them cluttered together.

The earliest known Christian Church was found in the Syrian border town of Daraa. It is next to the earliest known Synagogue and close to the Temple of the Bullgod, Mithras.

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Fig. 82: The Roman Empire became officially Christian under Emperor Constantine



Fig. 83: History were rewrote.



Fig. 84: Emperor Constantine.



Fig. 85: Double-faced Mithraic relief. Rome, 2nd to 3rd century AD .

All these different religions swap each others converts, borrowed each others gods and influence each others art. The Mithraic Mysteries³ were a mystery religion practiced in the Roman Empire from about the 1st to 4th centuries AD. The name of the Persian god Mithra (proto-Indo-Iranian Mitra), adapted into Greek as Mithras, was linked to a new and distinctive imagery. Writers of the Roman Empire period referred to this mystery religion by phrases which can be anglicized as Mysteries of Mithras or Mysteries of the Persians; modern historians refer to it as Mithraism, or sometimes Roman Mithraism. The mysteries were popular in the Roman military. Worshippers of Mithras had a complex system of seven grades of initiation, with ritual meals. Initiates called themselves syndexioi, those “united by the handshake”. They met in underground temples (called mithraea), which survive in large numbers. The cult appears to have had its centre in Rome.

Numerous archeological finds, including meeting places, monuments, and artifacts, have contributed to modern knowledge about Mithraism throughout the Roman Empire. The iconic scenes of Mithras show him being born from a rock, slaughtering a bull, and sharing a banquet with the god Sol (the Sun). About 420 sites have yielded materials related to the cult. Among the items found are about 1000 inscriptions, 700 examples of the bull-killing scene, and about 400 other monuments. It has been estimated that there would have been at least 680-690 Mithraea in Rome. No written narratives or theology from the religion survive, with limited information to be derived from the inscriptions, and only brief or passing references in Greek and Latin literature. Interpretation of the physical evidence remains problematic and contested.

The Romans themselves regarded the mysteries as having Persian or Zoroastrian sources. Since the early 1970s, however, the dominant scholarship has noted dissimilarities between Persian Mithra-worship and the Roman Mithraic mysteries, and the mysteries of Mithras are now generally seen as a distinct product of the Roman Imperial religious world. In this context, Mithraism has sometimes been viewed as a rival of early Christianity.



Fig. 86: Double-faced Mithraic relief. Rome, 2nd to 3rd century AD .

Studying the halo, the circle of light that is around the heads of holy figures in Christian Art, the conclusion is that at first there was no halos. Jesus was the magician with the wand and that was enough to differentiate Him. But as Christian Art became more and busier, Jesus needed to look more divine and Christian artists

did what the Pagans did. They gave Him a halo that was once again borrowed from Apollo who had his halo long before Jesus acquired a halo. Apollo's halo was a symbol of symbolic sunshine emanating from his head signifying his solar divinity. Another borrowing from the Pagans was the image of the Angel.

A typical Roman Sarcophagus from the early Christian Era, usually shows a pair of winged figures carrying a portrait of the deceased upwards in Glory. They look

Fig. 87: Angels, another borrowing from the Pagans.



exactly like Angels but they are not, they are Roman figures of Victory, Nikes' Pagan transporters of the soul. The most significant borrowings of the Pagans was a female that was adopted from Egyptian Art. She became very popular in Christianity and was very central to it.

Fig. 88a-c: Angels. They look like Angels, but they are figures of Victory.



Fig. 88a:



Fig. 88b:

Fig. 88c:





Fig. 89: The Egyptian Earth mother, Isis.

The Egyptian Earth mother, Isis, was the most revealed Pagan god of all. She was the goddess of fertility, the mother goddess from whom all life originally sprang. If you wanted a baby, you prayed to Isis, if you want your crops to grow, you prayed to Isis. No matter who you were, slave, servant or outcast, you pray to Isis because she would protect you. To emphasize her caring nature she was often shown with a baby on her knee whom she would breast-feeds eagerly. He is Horus, son of Isis. Horus was the god of the sky, the Egyptian Apollo. In Christian Art came the need to worship a mother goddess who could nurture a person and protect him, Isis was an obvious model and together the two of them was soon successfully transported into Christian Art.



Fig. 90: The first known image of Mary holding the baby Jesus on her lap, found in the Roman Catacombes of Priscilla.

This is the first known image of Mary holding the baby Jesus on her lap. It was found in the Roman Catacombes of Priscilla, a touching fragment of a mother and her child. Mary caring for the baby Jesus became one of the most popular of all the Christian images of the Dark Ages.

The artistic discovery of the Virgin Mary had a very important result, because it was no longer necessary to soften Jesus. When Mary emerge as a powerful divine, Jesus no longer need to be girly. His images was free to become masculine. All this new art that was invented by Christianity needed a place to be placed in and what also needed to be invented, was the Christian Church.



Fig. 91: The first masculine Jesus.

The Roman Empire was huge and stretched from the Middle East up to a place that are now called Britain. In the Roman Empire, Countries didn't exist. There was no trade between Asia, Africa or Europe. They were all part of this massive power surrounding the Mediter-

ranean, the mightiest Empire the world has seen. Christianity got to Britain quite early, in a village in Dorset, called Hinton Saint Mary. They dug up one of the earliest mosaic images of Jesus. Jesus looks stately, more like a Roman Senator than a Christian God.

Only the large Chi-Rho that surrounds His head is the sign of Christ. In Lullingstone, in the county of Kent, England, there is remains of the oldest known Christian Churches. Churches were ordinary houses adapted for Christian use. Some Christians were richer and more active than others in the community and their house became the House Church of the neighbourhood. The House Church that was found in Daraa, next to the Jewish synagogue was just a small Town House in which the Christians had some alterations to create more space for their meetings. On the walls of this Church, the Daraa, painted a Christ, walking on the water and on another painting He is healing a cripple, making him walk again. In Lullingstone the House Church was on the first floor of this elegant Roman Villa. It was a simple room with painted walls. Decorating the walls, was a process of praying Christians with crosses on their robes. There was also a Chi-Rho and around this Chi-Rho the momentous letters of the Greek alphabet again, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Fig. 92a-c: The fChristian House Church



Fig. 92a:



Fig. 92b:



Fig. ??c:



Fig. 93: This picture shows Christ walking on the water.



Fig. 94: This picture shows Christ healing a crippled man, making him walk again.



Fig. 95: The walls were decorated with a process of praying Christians with crosses on their robes.



Fig. 96: On this wall the Chi-Ro with the momentus letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.

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Fig. 97: The Arch of Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor.



Fig. 98: Bust of Constantine the Great.

For the first 300 years all Churches were, humble spaces in peoples houses where Christians could worship and celebrate. Then in 313 AD, Constantine the Great adapted Christianity and everything changed. Suddenly this cryptic and secretive Religion with its fondness for codes and clues, became the official religion of the Roman Empire and modesty was no longer an option. Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor, mighty warrior and defender of the faith. Constantine's mother, St Helena, was a Christian and he probably inherited the faith from her. The Edict

of Milan was granted by Emperor Constantine the Great in the West and Licinius Augustus in the East and Christianity was made legal in the Roman Empire and from then on its power grew and grew. Constantine was a builder

par excellence, for example the magnificent Arch of Constantine in front of the Colosseum.

His greatest achievement as a builder was the unexpected invention of the Christian Church. These huge Christian Basilicas that Constantine build brought forth a complete new way of worship and a new kind of architecture. The Basilica of Santa Sabina is a historical church on the Aventine Hill in Rome, Italy. It is a titular minor basilica and mother church of the Roman Catholic Order of Preachers, better known as the Dominicans.

Fig. 99: The Basilica of Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill in Rome.



No one in any religion had to worship like this before. In a Pagan temple the Congregation stayed outside. Only the Priest of the Cult could enter the Holy Sanctuary in which the sacred Idol was kept. Christian Churches were the opposite.

The Christian Church was a huge Assembly Hall with a roof where people can worship indoors and the style of worship was different too. The first Christian Churches had no neat rows and pews where everybody sits quietly and piously. It had huge open spaces in which the Christian crowd would manoeuvre and circulate. The Priestly procession are sometimes illustrated high up on Christian walls progressing through these new naves in a wave of finery and colour. The only building that was useful to take such a crowd was a Roman Basilica. They were build to house big crowds. There was nothing religious about them. They were entered from the side. The Christians took over the shape,

Fig. 100: The use of the cross in the Pagan Temple.



swivelled it around and changed the entrance. The entire building pointed in a different way. During the Pagan era, the first Magistrate's Court was held in the Basilica and when the Christians took over they took over the Magistrate's Apse as well. They put the sacrificial altar in its place and above it the great Apse mosaic, showing the magnificent religious journey.

Fig. 101: A Pagan Temple.



Fig. 102: A Roman Basilica could house big crowds and had nothing religious about them.

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Fig. 103:

Fig. 103 & 104: Most powerful of all the Pagan gods – Jupiter or in his Greek incarnation, Zeus, king of the gods.

Fig. 104:

Jesus is portrayed with a big beard, no more curly head boy. When the time came for a more mature Jesus, a matching Jesus, the Christians turned once again to that reliable source of raw material that were all around them, the art of the Pagans. The most powerful and important of all the Pagan gods was Jupiter or in his Greek incarnation, Zeus, king of the gods. Zeus or Jupiter was grand and beautiful and in the temple of Zeus at Olympia,

the most famous sculptor of the Classical Age, Vidas, had shown the king of the gods throned in majesty. An image the Christians were determined to match.



Fig. 105a:



Fig. 105a-c: Interior of the Basilica of Santa Sabina, the Christians took over the Magistrate's Court and replaced it with the Sacrificial Altar and above it the great Apse Mosaic, showing the magnificent religious journey.



Fig. 105b:



Fig. 105c: Jesus portrayed with a big beard, no more curly head boy.

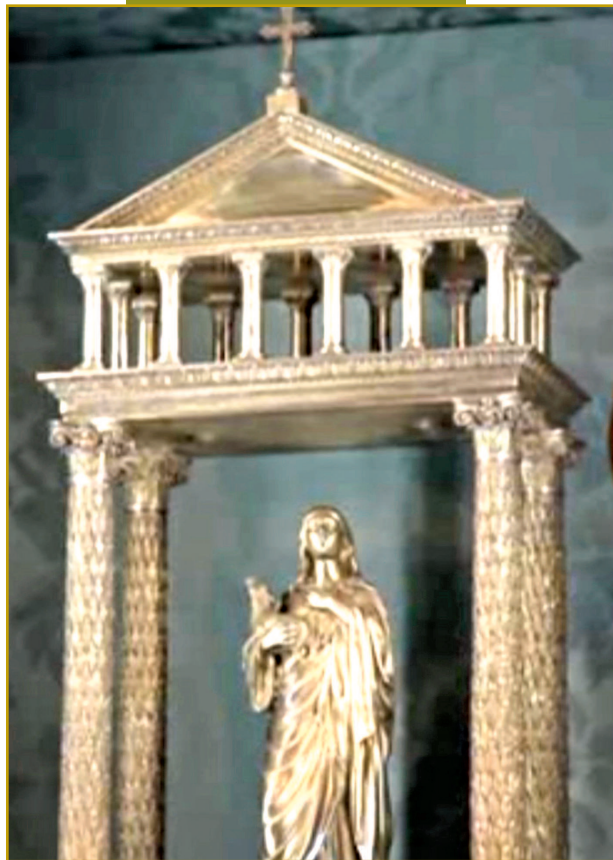


Fig. 106: St Agnes's statue, upper part of the casket with the skull.

Fig. 107: St Agnes's skull kept in Santa Agnezi in the Piazza Navona.



The Christian artists took it all, the beard, the hair, the throne, that sense of godlike power. The curly head Jesus with the girlish body was replaced by this manly mature Jesus. This curly head boy was just not grand enough for Constantine's great new Basilica.

At the Catacombs of St Agnes in Rome, St Agnes is the patron saint of chastity – teenage girls, engaged couples, rape victims and virgins. Agnes was a 13 year old girl, murdered in the raid of Diocletian. A Roman Prefect wanted her to marry his son. Agnes was a Christian, she refused and the Roman Prefect condemned her to death. Roman law didn't permit the execution of virgins, so Agnes was stripped, paraded naked through the streets and dragged to a brothel. Afterwards they tried to burn her but the flames wouldn't touch her and everybody who looked at her naked body was blinded. In the end a Roman soldier beheaded her and her decapitated

body was kept in the Church, but her skull was kept in Santa Agnezi in Piazza Navona, where the faithful come to kneel before it and worship it. Martyrs like Agnes were believed to offer special protection for the early Christians. They were baptized in blood and sat next to God in the next world.

Fig. 108: St Agnes's Catacomb where her body was buried.



Fig. 109:: The ruins of a giant funeral Basilica.



If a martyr favoured a person, that person were guaranteed a place in heaven. To improve their chances to Salvation, every Christian wanted to be buried as close to a martyr as possible. The Catacombs became a very desirable piece of Real Estate.

Just above Agnes's Tomb, are the ruins of a giant funeral Basilica. All this was once covered in Christian graves. The building next door to the Basilica, is Santa Constanza. It's now a Christian Church, but originally this was a Roman Mausoleum. It was built by Constantine's own daughter, Constanza.

Fig. 110: The big Sarcophagus in which Constanza was buried.



Fig. 111: Detail of the big Sarcophagus in which Constanza was buried.



She was buried in a big Sarcophagus. The story goes that when Constanza was a little girl, she contracted leprosy. She prayed to St Agnes and she saved her. That was the power martyrs had and miracles could change history and that is why Constanza wanted to be buried in this Church, close to St. Agnes, as she could be.

Fig. 112: Roman Mausoleum – Santa Constanza.



Fig. 113: The inside of Santa Constanza..



These Roman Mausoleums were completely different in shape from the Basilicas.

Mausoleums were round and they were no place for the crowds to charge up and down.

These were places of burial and contemplation; sacred spaces that enfold you.

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Fig. 114: Edward Gibbon's twelve volumes about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

Fig. 115: Constantinople (Istanbul).

These round Roman Mausoleums had a profound effect on the Christian Church. Edward Gibbon wrote in twelve mighty volumes about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire in the time of Constantine.

According to Gibbon the Roman Empire collapsed because the Romans grew decadent and soft. Looking at the map, one can see what the real problem was – the Empire was just too big. It went all the way to Scotland and the other way deep into the Middle East. It was just too much Empire to govern efficiently. Constantine made the decision to divide the Empire in two with a Western and Eastern Empire.

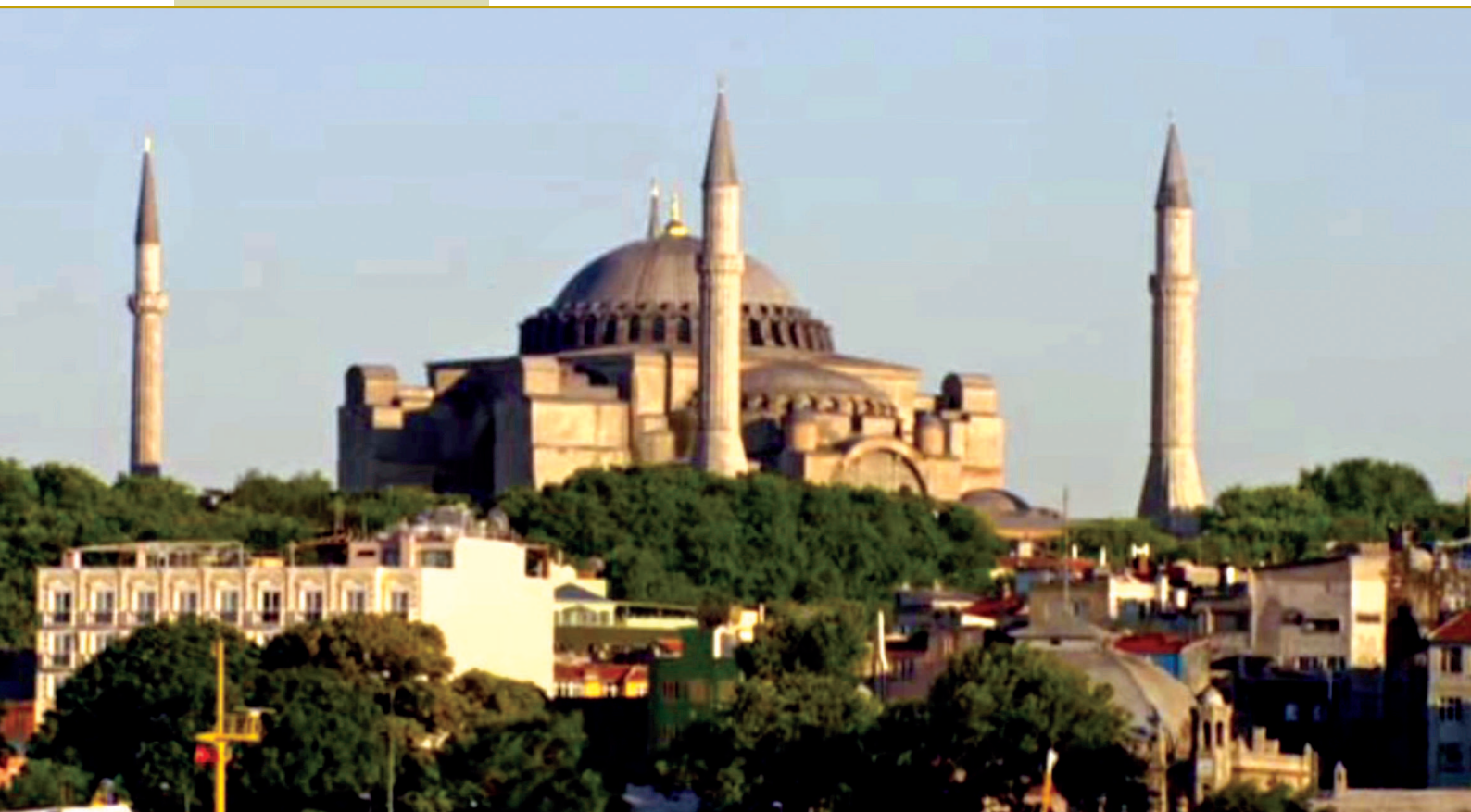




Fig. 116: Map of Western Empire



Fig. 117: Map of Eastern Empire

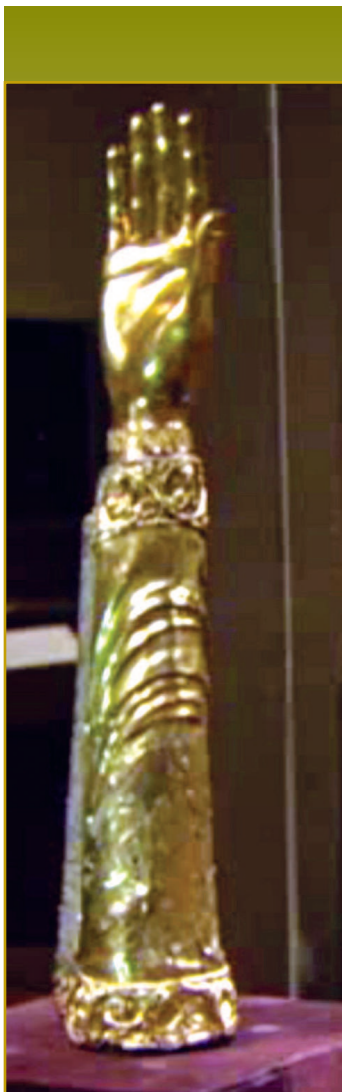


Fig. 118a & b: Precious Relics and Jewelled containers.



To govern this new eastern Empire, called Byzantium, Constantine founded a new Christian Capital on the Bosphorus. A city designed from scratch which he named after himself, Constantinople (now Istanbul).

In the Western half of the Empire, Rome wasn't cut out to be the Capital. It was living on former glories and a pretty collection of ruins. The Empire needed somewhere more vigorous to be ruled from. Somewhere near the sea with connections to the East – such a city was Ravenna. Ravenna is the mosaic heaven where Christian mosaics excelled itself. When studying these mosaics, it is unthinkable that art like this could constitute a Dark Age.

San Vitale is one of the group of Churches in Ravenna, that is filled with these stunning mosaics. The Church is round like a Mausoleum and not long like a Basilica. These round Churches of early Christianity has a particular effect on the visitor. They offer a 360° experience. A sense of enclosure and centring. The early Christians used round architecture, particularly the Churches devoted to the martyrs.

St. Vitale who stood up to Diocletian, died for his faith. The Basilicas were action spaces and the round Churches were thinking spaces. It was not just the burial sites of the martyrs that had special power, bits of their bodies had it too – their hair and their bones.



Fig. 119: Mosaics in the Church of St Vitali.



Fig. 120: These round Churches give a 360° view to the visitor.

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Fig. 121: The Church of Monreali.



Fig. 122: The Virgin and Child borrowed from the Egyptian Isis.



Fig. 123: An enormous Byzantine Jesus, Zeus like.

To house these precious relics, the Christians began to create marvellous jewelled containers, relic boxes made from the finest materials with astonishing delicacy and beauty. Because of the power these relics had, every Christian Altar had to have a relic inside it to validate it and make it sacred. Wherever they were placed they made the space Holy.

When men came to this glorious Byzantine Cathedral at Monreali in Cicily, all the elements of Christian Worship were in place. By the time Monreali was finished, the Dark Ages were over. But all this was shaped by the Dark Age achievements. High up on the walls are scenes from Christ's miracles. Above the altar is the Virgin and child borrowed from the Egyptian Isis and on either side of her two angels, borrowed from Pagan victories and above all this, an enormous Byzantine Jesus, Zeus like and bearded, unmistakably divine. This is a proper divinity, a Byzantine ruler God, one man can look up to, magnificent and powerful.

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Fig. 124 a & b: Jesus's name spelled out in Greek letters.



On either side of Jesus, His name spelled out in Greek letters. On the left Jota and Sigma, J and S, the first and the last letters of Jesus and on the right, C and S, the first and last letters of Christós. It's that Christian word code again. Christ the ruler is spelling out His name with His hands. Even in this giant Jesus, larger than any Roman Emperor, Christianity could not resist a final moment of mystery.

Fig. 125: Monreali Church in Sicily.



1.3 THE BARBARIANS

The word “barbarian” is a misleading expression. And the art that goes within it, is misleading too. *The Sack of Rome* in 410 AD by the Visigoths, was painted in 1890 by an arrogant French painter called Josep-Noel Sylvestre. The Visigoths were a so-called barbarian tribe. In the picture, they’re the ones without any clothes on. The Visigoths were never naked savages, clambering about Rome and destroying civilization. They were pioneering Europeans who produced beautiful art and who achieved important things. It was actually these so-called barbarians who invented trousers. Riding a horse was much easier in trousers. So if it wasn’t for the Barbarians we’d all be wearing togas.

Fig. 126: *The Visigoths.*

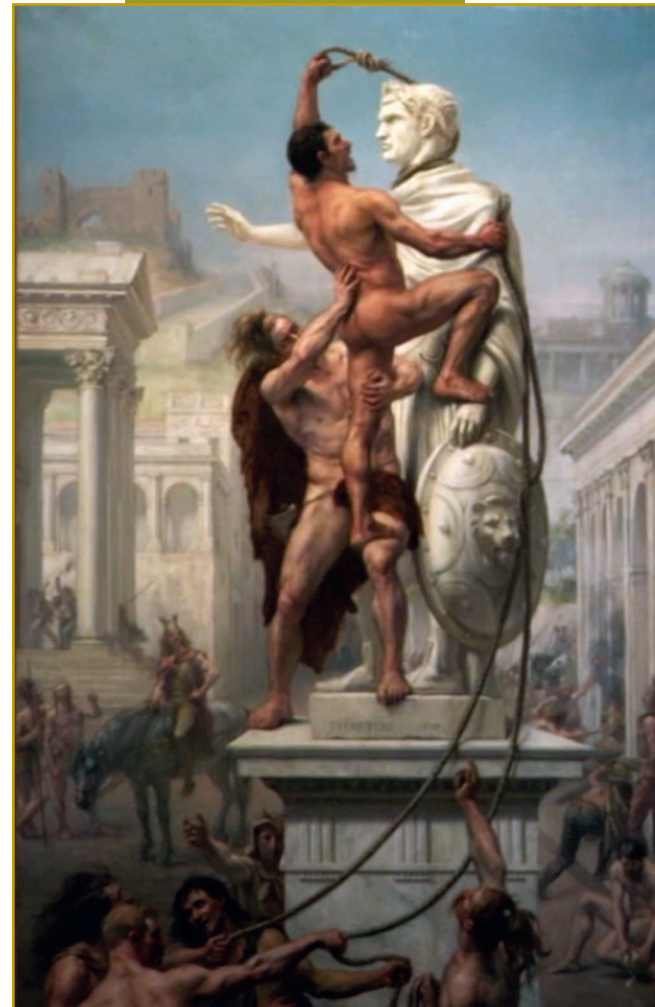


Fig. 128: *The so-called barbarians invented trousers, which made horse riding much easier.*

Fig. 127: *A so-called barbarian.*

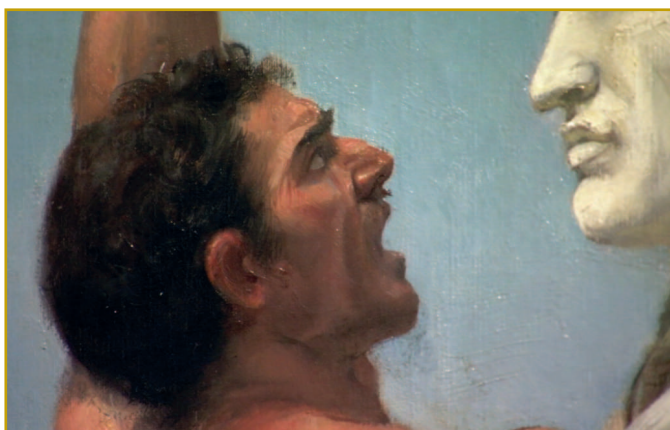


Fig. 129a-c: When the Romans took over the world, everybody else were barbarians.



Fig. 129a.

Fig. 130a-b. Beautiful golden jewellery and objects.

Fig. 130a.



Fig. 130b.

When the Romans took over the world it meant anybody, anywhere who wasn't a Roman. So, the Persians were barbarians, the Indians, the Chinese, the entire non-Roman world. It isn't just the word barbarian that has been demonized and distorted. Take the word Vandal, the Vandals were another fascinating and creative ancient society who made beautiful golden jewellery and objects.

Fig. ??a-b: The objects created by the Vandals.

1.4 THE DARK AGES – AN AGE OF LIGHT

The Dark Ages go roughly from the fourth to the eleventh century. When looking at the art that was made, it wasn't dark at all. This chapter about the barbarians will be looking at them from a positive and defending perspective.



Fig. 129b.



Fig. 129c.

1.4.1 WHAT THE BARBARIANS DID FOR US

The word “barbarians” actually comes from the ancient Greek. Its original meaning was someone whose language can’t be understood, a foreigner. Thus, anyone, who spoke a funny foreign language was a barbarian.

Then, what about the Goths? Today’s Goths are oily punks with dyed black hair who worship the devil. But in real life, in Roman times, the Goths were fabulous and creative and who made the most beautiful Bible anyone has ever seen.



Fig. 131: The Goth Bible.

But the worst of these so-called barbarians, these forgotten ancient peoples whose reputation has been trashed by the Romans, were the Huns. If anyone in ancient history deserves some re-branding, it's this notorious nation of energetic invaders. No one had a good word to say about them. The Goth historian, Jordanis, tells that they were scarcely human and a faithless tribe. The Christians were determined to demonize all pagans and they were particularly determined to demonize the Huns. The conclusion is that the Christian clerics can't be trusted in their portrayal of the pagans, only art can be trusted and art tells a different story.



Fig. 132: A Hunnic coin of the Bank of Kazakhstan.



Fig. 133: A Hunnic medallion.



Fig. 134: A beautiful Hunnic pendant.



Fig. 135: A Hunnic vessel.

In the First World War, the British began calling the Germans, Huns, the worst insult one could think of. It was also very bad geography, because the Huns were not from Germany. Exactly where they came from is one of the big mysteries of the Dark Ages. Nobody knows for sure. But it was somewhere from the Euro Asian steppe.

Somewhere far away and different. The first record of the Huns in Europe dates around 376 AD, when a group of retreating Goths turned up on the banks of the Danube and begged the Romans to take them in.

Fig. 136: A Hunnic vessel, called a cauldron.



Fig. 137: A golden headband with precious stones.



The fleeing Goths had been pushed out of their lands by a nation of nomads coming in from the east. A fighting tribe, of whom everyone was scared. Huns were fierce warriors, but not all the time. Like all Nomads, they lived a precarious, travelling existence. They moved around in small family groups, men folk, women and goats.

Fig. 138: A golden pendant.



Their lifestyle were domestic as can be seen from the objects they've left behind, the defining ones are the cauldrons, preserved in the museum of Budapest. In these robust vessels the Huns cooked their goats and boiled their water. The Huns loved gold. The Hun's graves that have been dug up, showed caches with treasures and valuables. In today's lifestyle, man lost sight of gold's crazy hypnotic power and that special relationship it enjoys with the sun. The Incas called it "*the sweat of the gods.*" In the Dark Ages, gold was a substance with a magical presence and the Huns loved gold in a primitive and unbalanced way.

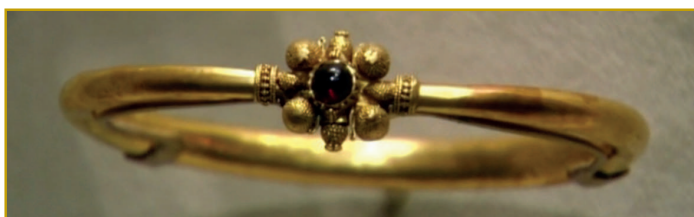


Fig. 139: A golden armband with a precious stone..

1.4.2 WOLF HOWLS



Fig. 140: A neck torque shaped like the head of a wolf.

Fig. 141: The eagle was very dear to the Huns.



Because they spend so much of their life moving and travelling from pasture to pasture, the Huns had a particularly creative relationship with the natural world. Hun treasures are dominated by exquisite animal forms. In the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, there's a wonderful piece of jewellery. It's a golden piece, a bangle or a neck torque, and it's shaped like the head of a creeping wolf. The gold nurses an intense symbolic desire to com-

municate with the natural world. To speak to it and steal some of its power. To steal the power of the wolf.

Another animal that was dear to them was the eagle. They used eagles to hunt with, as nomads of the steppes still do and the great bird in the sky inspired such beautiful Hun bling. Eagles had a special significance for the Hun. They were symbols of power and beauty combined and right across the barbarian world, these garnet studded eagle brooches became noticeably popular. This powerful new relationship to the natural world was one of the great barbarian contributions to civilization. And then of course there was the magnificent horse art. The Hun depended totally on their horses and they loved them deeply, so, they made sure their horses looked splendid too.

These are the remains of a full length horse ornament, delicately fashioned from gold and studded with precious stones. The Huns would ride into battle with wolf skin pulled-down on their faces, screaming demonically in a deliberate effort to get inside their enemy's heads. This was dark, psychological warfare, very sophisticated and one of the reasons the Huns could be so easily demonized, because they looked so strange.



Fig. 142a:

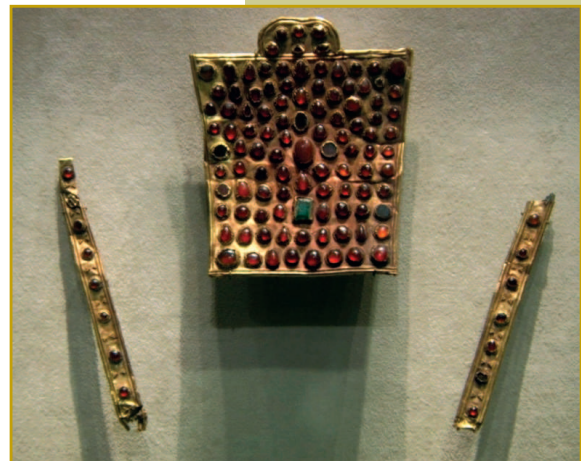


Fig. 142b:

Fig. 142a-c: Different gold and precious studded stone, horse ornament.



Fig. 142c:

Fig. 143: A typical Hun and his horse.



Fig. 144a-b: Garnet studded brooches. The Hun treasures is dominated by exquisite animal forms.

Fig. 144a:



Fig. 144b:

They practiced ritual deformation, and their skulls were deliberately misshapen at birth. Infant Huns would have their heads tightly bound so they grew into these uncanny and elongated shapes and on these deformed heads of theirs, the Huns would balance spectacular crowns of unimaginable preciousness. So the big question is, where did the Huns get the gold? They were nomads, not miners and although they were busy tradesman an awful lot of goatskins must have been traded for the amount of gold left behind by the Huns. But, they didn't trade for it, they got their gold straight from the Romans.



Fig. 145: A misshapen skull. The Huns practiced ritual deformation and their skulls were deliberately misshapen at birth.



Fig. 146: The Huns wear spectacular golden crowns.

Because their bows were so deadly and their horsemen so skilled, the Huns were soon operating as protection across most of the Roman Empire. They would invade or threaten to invade somewhere and then demand large quantities of gold to go away again. The Romans, cowardly diplomats that they were, preferred to pay them than to fight them. And by the time the Hunnic Empire was at its largest extent, the Huns were receiving 2,500 pounds of gold coins from the Romans every year. 2,500 Pounds of gold ... every year, to melt down and turn into art.



Fig. 147: The Huns were paid 2,500 Pounds of gold every year by the Romans, which they could melt down to turn into art.

The map of the Hunnic Empire under Attila, shows the vast size of the Empire. All this was Hunnic. This wasn't a bunch of nomads on the make, this was a rival empire. The new superpower of the Dark Ages turned up to take on the Romans. The moment one mention Attila, the story of the Huns takes on a satanic glint. All the Huns were demonized by history, but Attila was demonized most of all.



Fig. 148: Coin with Attila's face.

Fig. 149: Map of the Hunnic Empire under Attila.





Fig. 150: A memorial to Attila. A replica of the palace, built by Janos, new owner of this piece of land, once owned by Attila.



Fig. 151: Attila, portrayed at his banquet.

The exciting thing is that a lot is actually known about him. A Roman diplomat called Priscus was sent on one of these diplomatic missions to negotiate with the Huns and he has left behind a vivid account of his journey. Janos, bought land 20 years ago, in what is believed to be the Hunnic Empire, to breed horses. Priscus, the Byzantine ambassador, visited Attila in 450 AD, and describes how he found his way to the area where Attila was situated. The site was definitely identified as the site of Attila's palace, and thus the reason for Janos to erect a memorial to Attila on site by constructing a wooden palace. Janos's palace would be created in timber, exactly as Priscus described it. It's shaped like a giant nomad's tent, a kind of glorified yurt with two wooden towers rising cockily at the front. According to Priscus, upon his arrival, he was treated to an enormous banquet, served on silver plates and a procession of young women dressed in white veils came out to sing to him. Attila himself was simply dressed and ate nothing but meat on a wooden platter, while the guests were given goblets of gold and silver. In Europe, Attila had a very bad reputation, but in Hungary he was more a hero. He could speak eight languages by the age of 15 and laid Europe at his feet. Someone unintelligent – a barbarian – could not have done the things that Attila did.



Fig. 152: A young women dressed in a white veil. The women came out to sing to Priscus, who was a Byzantine Ambassador.

Only someone blessed with special talents. That Attila's palace really looked like Janos's model, is very much doubtful. But neither is Janos's fantasy more misleading than all the other Hun fantasies about satanic hordes sweeping through Europe.

1.4.3 HUNNIC BATTLE CRIES

By the time Attila became their ruler, the Huns had created a complex political system. Their huge empire was actually a federation of many nations. A kind of barbarian EU, opposed to the Romans with Goths and Burgundians, Alans, even a few Greeks, all linked together and ruled by Attila.

In the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is a dinner service that was dug out of the ground on the Romanian border in 1799 and it was thought to be Attila the Hun's personal dinner service. 23 Golden Vessels. Nearly ten kilos of pure gold. Today, no-one thinks this was Attila's dinner service. The most recently is that it was left behind

by the Avars, one of those mysterious tribes that emerged from the confederation of the Huns. They obviously had that special relationship with nature, too. The magnificent bull-headed bowl, is another example of powerful natural magic channelled into gold.

Fig. 153: Golden bowl with unbelievable detail.





This is what the Dark Ages were capable of, this is what makes these times is so exciting. The bull bowl has a certain power to it. An animal energy that looses it later on when art loses its connection to the basic stuff of life. The Empire of the Huns didn't last long. For a few decades, it rivalled the Romans and then it was gone. Attila the glue that held it all together had a taste for young brides. But on his final wedding night, he drank himself into a stupor, took his latest bride to bed, and promptly died of a heart attack. They found him the next morning with blood streaming down his nose. Within a few years, Attila's empire was gone.

Fig. 154: Golden dinner service.

Fig. 155: Golden bull bowl.





Fig. 156: Stunning golden piece from the Hunnic era.

Torn apart by feuds and incompetence, but the Huns had done their job. They had punched a hole in the invincible reputation of the Romans. When thinking of the barbarians, hordes of bellicose warriors storming across the plains to attack Rome, come to mind. But that's wrong.

1.4.4 HORSE WHINNIES

It was more of a migration. Think of those wagon trains rolling across the American West, full of brave pioneers searching for a new future. That's a more accurate image, particularly in the case of another great barbarian nation whose name has been well and truly blackened by Dark Age propaganda – the Vandals Neigh. According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary, a vandal is “a wilful ignorant destroyer of anything beautiful, honoured or worthy of preservation.”

Fig. 157: The Vandal's arriving in North Africa.



Fig. 158: Carthage.

That's what it meant in 1663, but it shouldn't be what it means today. The story of the Vandals is actually rather touching. They were basically a nation of Germanic Farmers, living peacefully in central Europe until the Huns pushed them out. For a while, they ended up in Spain, until a group of Goth pushed them out of there as well and the poor old vandals had to move on again to – North Africa. In 429 AD, 80 000 people came across the Straits of Gibraltar, crammed onto small boats. A kingdom on the move, looking for a homeland. The Vandals had arrived in Africa. Originally, the word "Vandal" meant something like "wanderer". Someone who is looking for something.

Fig. 159: Vandal's fishing.



Fig. 160: King Genseric.

It comes from the same Germanic root as the English word “to wending”. The Vandals were great wenders and great wanderers. The Vandals who arrived here in Africa were led by a formidable king called Genseric. Thinking of the Vandals as a lost people and Africa as the promised land, then Genseric was their Moses leading them across the oceans. They made their way along the North African coast, attacking cities, collecting followers, absorbing territory, until eventually in 439 AD, they reached their destination ... Carthage.



Fig. 161a:



Fig. 161a&b: Mosaics showing the lifestyle in Carthage.

Fig. 161b:



Fig. 162: The ruins of the Colosseum in Carthage, where the Romans held their Games.



Fig. 163: A mosaic in Carthage, showing the Gladiators busy with the Games.

Carthage was the second-largest city in the Western Roman Empire. Busy, rich, and a crucial trading centre. The Romans depended on it for the olive oil they burned in their lamps and the wheat from which they made their bread. When the Vandals took Carthage, they shocked the Roman Empire. The capture of Carthage was surprisingly peaceful. Genséric was so clever. He entered the city on the 19th October, the day of the Roman Games. Sports Day. The Romans, who were obsessed with sports, were far too interested in the gladiatorial combat and the chariot racing to fight the Vandals.

1.4.5 BATTLE CRIES

Thus, Genséric and his Vandal Army strolled into the second-largest city of the Western Roman Empire, took control of it and stayed there for the next century. People used to think the Vandals went about destroying and raiding Carthage as soon as they got here. But today, we know they didn't.

The most remarkable thing about the Vandal occupation of Africa is not how much they destroyed, but how little. Later on, angry Romans and Christians writing about these events made sure they blackened the Vandals' reputation as they did with all the barbarians.

Fig. 164: This mosaic has Christian messages. The Alpha & Omega signs are very prominent on this whole mosaic artwork, as well as the Chi sign.



Fig. 165: Julius's mosaic.



But the Art that remains from these times tells a different story. To signal their new status as overlords of Rome's most prosperous province, the Vandals did what the nouveau riche always do – they spent money on the arts. Their jewellers were commanded to make gorgeous Vandal bling and out in the countryside, they built elegant villas for themselves and filled them with superb decorations. Studying the Julius mosaic, it's one of the masterpieces of the period. And Julius himself is sitting in his white robe and he's the man who commissioned the mosaic. No one is hundred percent certain if this was made just before the Vandals got here or just after. And that's the most telling thing about it. This is how rich Romans lived and also rich Vandals. Julius's house, is shown in the middle, the posh, fortified villa. Those domes at the back are the bathhouses, the equivalent today of a luxury swimming pool. All around the villa are busy scenes of rural life in North Africa.

Fig. 166a - d: Detail of Julius's mosaic.



Fig. 166a:



Fig. 166b:

Up on the left, that's winter, the people is picking olives? That's what people do in winter. On the other side on the right is summer, with the shepherds with their summer flock and those fields of ripe wheat behind them. Down are spring and autumn. Spring is the season of flowers, and Mrs. Julius is in her garden admiring herself in a mirror while servant brings her a bowl of roses. They are beautiful and so is she.



Fig. 166c:



Fig. 166d:

On the other side, it is autumn and there's Lord Julius himself sitting on a throne in his orchard, while a labourer brings him a basket of grapes and a hare is caught running around the vines. This is mosaic making of the highest calibre. So imaginative and clever. It isn't just a portrait of Julius and his house, this is a visualization of the perfect lifestyle. A rural dream made real. The message here is how glorious life is when man lives in harmony with nature, when order prevails and the land is fertile and balanced.

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Fig. 167: Julius's house, is shown in the middle, the posh, fortified villa. Those domes at the back are the bathhouses, the equivalent today of a luxury swimming pool



Fig. 168: Vandal King Thrasamund.

Fig. 169: Ruins of the bathhouses before the invasion of the Vandals.



Instead of knocking down Carthage, the Vandals set about making it more homely. They put small houses in the huge Roman clearings and, famously an ambitious new bathhouse was built here by the art-loving Vandal King Thrasamund. Bathhouses were hugely important in Roman society. They were a kind of social club where people would chat and gossip a bit like modern health clubs, except much cheaper. Roman bathhouses had two main spaces – a hot room, or *caldarium*, that heated you up, and a cold room, or *frigidarium*, that cooled you down. The largest of all Roman bath complexes was here in Carthage, the Antonine baths built in the second century by the Roman emperor, Antoninus Pius. These are the ruins. So imagine how big the baths must have been. Long before the Vandals conquered Carthage, the Antonine Baths had fallen into disrepair and the Vandal King Thrasamund, built some new ones. A lot is known about Thrasamund's baths, because amazingly, a collection of Vandal poems on the subject have survived. The Vandals were particularly keen on poetry, and hundreds of poems written here in Carthage in the Vandal years have survived.

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Fig. 170: The Vandal Poems.

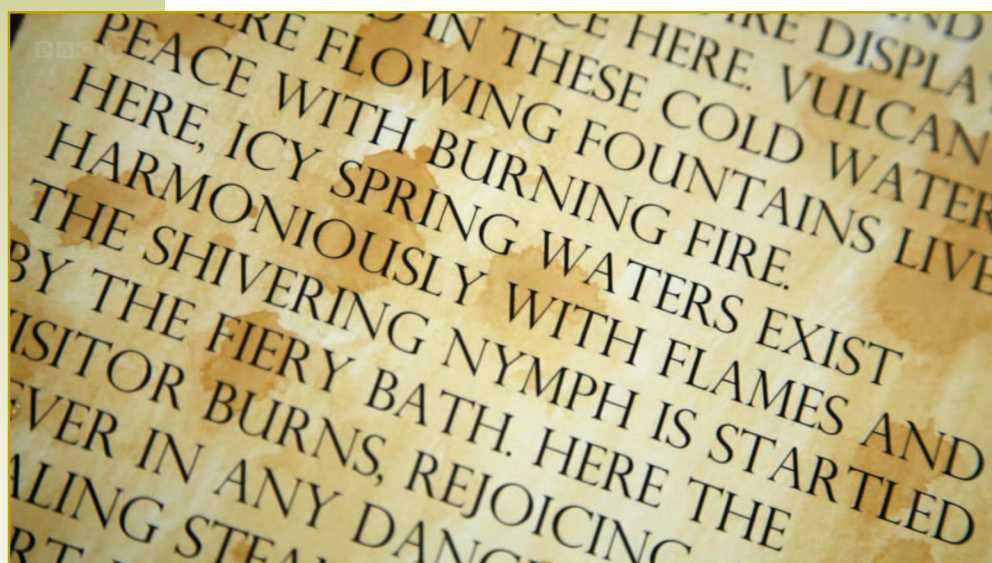


Fig. 171: Extraction from the Vandal Poems.

A poet called Felix has left behind an evocative description of Thrasamund's bathhouse. "This magnificent monument was erected by Royal command." *"Where water and fire display their obedience."* There were no less than five poems by Felix about these great baths illustrating the dramatic contrast between the cool, refreshing springs of the frigidarium and the hot boiling waters of the caldarium,.

Here, says Felix *"I see spring waters exist harmoniously with flames. Here the shivering nymph is started by the fiery bath."* Felix's poems were displayed all around while people bathed, as mosaics, they surrounded the bathers, pushed their way into their thoughts and as they read them, they are prompted to marvel at this great miracle achieved here by Thrasamund. In the Vandal baths, Thrasamund has achieved the ultimate harmony. *"Thrasamund has united fire and water."*

1.4.6 OWL HOOTS AND WOLF HOWLS

Gothic. *"Barbarous, rude, uncouth."* A Germanic tribe who invaded the Roman Empire. In the lexicon of hate spawned by the Dark Ages, a special place is set aside for the Goths. The Dark Ages are full of nastiness, but the Goth is particularly spooky.



Fig. 172: Dark Ages are full of "Nasties".



Fig. 173: The Goth is particularly "Spooky".

1.4.7 THUNDER RUMBLES

If a person walk down the street in London, for example in Camden Town, plenty of modern Goths is wandering about there. They are dressed from head to toe in black and covered in satanic insignia. And they're trying so hard to look "doomy", but according to information from Gothic times that were left behind to be studied, they should be like real Goths, energetic, colourful and inventive. The kind of people who left behind stunning mosaics like in Theodorics Ravenna Palace. The mosaic sparkles with all that gold and throws light all around the dome. There's something peculiar about it too. That's Jesus up there, being baptized, but he is so pink and flaccid, and not very divine? How did Jesus end up like this?

Fig. 174: The sparkling, gold mosaic in the dome of Theodorics Ravenna Palace.



Originally, the Goths came from the Baltic Coast. They were successful farmers, but when their population exploded, they made their way south to the Black Sea, searching for better land and better farming conditions. When the Goths move south, they came into direct contact with the Roman Empire, and their history immediately grew more problematic. The story of the Goths in relation to their migrations, boil down to its essentials, when they settled here in the south, they found themselves in the way of the Huns coming in from the East. To get away from them, the Goths split in two. Some of them fled across the Danube, and begged the Roman Empire to led them in. And they became the Visigoths, or Western Goths, and they settled initially in France and finally in Spain. But the other ones stayed put and joined the Huns in the Hunnic Empire, and they became the Ostrogoths, or Eastern Goths, and they are the ones who did the magnificent mosaics in the palace.



Fig. 175: This Jesus is an Aryan Christ and not a Catholic one – the reason why he look so different.

When one think of barbarians one thinks instinctively of pagans. Of godless and violent people with strange and primitive beliefs. Actually, most of the barbarians were Christians. Even the Vandals, and so were the Ostrogoths and Visigoths. All of them were converted to Christianity in the fourth Century.

Fig. 176: Coin of King Theodoric



Fig. 177: Mosaic of King Theodoric. Later, the Roman Emperor, Justinian took over Theodoric's identity.

However, the form of Christianity they were converted to was unusual. The reason why this Christ looks so unfamiliar and even peculiar is because he is an Aryan Christ, and not a Catholic one. Aryan Christianity is different. Aryanism was a Christian deviation. A different form of Christianity proposed by a priest called Aries in Alexandria in Egypt in the fourth century. From there, it spread across the Roman Empire and then out among the Barbarians. The Aryans believed that Jesus was different from God. He was divine, but less so. The Catholics believed that God and Jesus, father and son were equal. Two different forms of the same great divinity. But the Aryans disagreed. For them, God the father was the one true God. He was the God at the top.

And Jesus, his son, was below him. And that's why the Jesus up here in the baptistery mosaic looks so wimpish. This is a Jesus who is more like the rest of us. Less divine, more human. Perhaps that's why the Barbarians preferred him. He's less imperial, and more like them.



Fig. 178: Ravenna with Basilica.



Ravenna, in Northern Italy were the capital of the Ostrogoths. Right across the Empire, Catholics and Aryans distrusted each other as only co-believers can. But in Ravenna, it was the Aryans who held sway. And it was Aryanism that created this. It was a bit like the Sunnis and the Shia in Islam. Same religion, different only in its details. But so antagonistic towards each other. The Ostrogoths were led by a formidable Aryan king called Theodoric. And it was Theodoric who built the church. Theodoric had been brought up in Constantinople in the court of the Eastern Roman Empire. He had been sent there by his father as a hostage, and educated as a Roman. So he was sophisticated and clever. Having gained the trust of the Roman emperor Zeno in Constantinople, Theodoric persuaded Zeno to let him come to Italy and reconquer it from another Germanic despot, called Odoacer. Theodoric invited Odoacer to a banquet in his honour and then, he murdered him with his bare hands, or so they say. Thus, Theodoric made himself ruler of Italy, based in Ravenna. Under the Ostrogoths, Ravenna thrived as never before.

Fig. 179a-i: Basilica of San Apollinaire in Ravenna.



This is the great Basilica of San Apollinaire, that Theodoric built early in the sixth century. And then filled with this spectacular mosaics. Up on the ceiling, a baby-faced Aryan Christ performs such a lively set of miracles (Fig 179a). Raising Lazarus from the dead (Fig 179b). Conjuring up miraculous fish (Fig 179c). On the one side, the story of the young Jesus performing his miracles and on the other side, the other end of the story. Christ's terrible death and resurrection (Fig 179d). The Last Supper (Fig 179e). The kiss of Judas (Fig 179f). Below that, there is this great golden procession, the 22 virgins bearing sumptuous crowns (Fig 179g). Lined up to pay homage to the Virgin Mary (Fig 179i). With Jesus in her lap. On the other side, in a kind of Aryan call and response, the 26 martyrs dressed more simply in white and advancing in a mighty procession towards the enthroned Jesus (Fig 179h). This is a marvellous religious theatre, with vivid and exciting mosaics. And the real Goths made this and they could definitely not be barbarians to achieve this.



Fig. 179a:



Fig. 179b:



Fig. ??c:



Fig. 179d:



Fig. 179e:



Fig. 179f:



Fig. 179g:



Fig. 179h:



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Fig. 179i:

Fig. 180: Justinian removed what he could of the Aryans that was done by Theodoric. The great mosaic palace is now a ghost town with no one in it.



Fig. 181: A few of the bodiless Ostrogoth's hands remained from Theodorics original mosaic panels.



Unfortunately, later, when the Roman emperor Justinian reconquered Ravenna for the Byzantines, he tampered with what Theodoric had done, removing what he could of the Aryans. The portrait is actually Theodoric, but Justinian has taken over his identity and he is pretending to be him. A great golden palace once filled with magnificent Ostrogoths treasures, has darkened and grown eerie. When Justinian conquered Ravenna, he had all signs of Theodoric and the Ostrogoths removed. And the great mosaic palace is now a ghost town with no-one in it. When looking at the panels, one can still make out a few of the bodiless Ostrogoth's hands that remained.

Fig. 182: The Silver Bible, a piece of Dark Age literature, a Gothic gospel book written in Gothic with the Gothic alphabet.



Theodoric left his mark on many art forms, but the one that is the most surprising, is the Silver Bible, a piece of Dark Age literature, a Gothic gospel book written in Gothic with the Gothic alphabet. It was written in northern Italy probably in Ravenna, for the Gothic, the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric the Great, in the beginning of the sixth century. Most people imagine that the so called barbarian tribe, such as the Goths, didn't have a literature. But this Bible, is written in the Gothic language. That's very remarkable, because nothing is known about the other Germanic languages, but the Gothic language is preserved in this manuscript. It's very beautiful to look at. It's got lovely purple pages with silver writing on it. It's the imperial colour, purple, and Theodora the Great, got permission from the East Roman Emperor to use this purple colour and he behaved and acted like a Roman Emperor.

Fig. 183: Theodoric's Mausoleum where he was buried.



Theodoric, who lived to be over 70, deserves to be remembered as one of the great achievers of the Dark Ages. He was buried in his mausoleum, in Ravenna. A unique example of an Ostrogoth building which seems to have popped out of nowhere, and that's just the outside, the inside is just as spectacular. Theodoric died in 526 AD, and was buried in a huge sarcophagus, shaped like a Roman bath, in a space that is absolutely unique. The roof is made from a single piece of Istrian stone. It's a metre thick, 33 metres wide, and weighs 300 tons. To get it here from Istria, which is where modern Croatia is, they had to load it onto an enormous raft and sail it across the Adriatic.

Fig. 184: The original cross in the roof of the Mausoleum.



Fig. 185: Detail of the art in the Mausoleum.



Fig. 186: The huge sarcophagus in which Theodoric was buried.

The cross up above on the roof, is original. There used to be silver stars all around it, so when a person would look up, it was like looking up at the sky at night. There are some exiting stories about Theodoric's death. Some say he went mad after seeing one of his victims inside the head of a fish. Others say he was thrown from a volcano. One thing's certain. The Ostrogoth empire he created, collapsed quickly after his death.

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Fig. 187: Church of St John the Baptist in Palencia, Spain.



Fig. 188: Detail of the art in the Church of St John the Baptist in Palencia, Spain.



Justinian reclaimed Ravenna. The Ostrogoth era was over. So that's the end of the Ostrogoths but what about the Visigoths, or Western Goths? The Goths in Spain, what happened to them? They achieved a lot.

In Palencia in Spain, is the oldest surviving Spanish church, built in the seventh century by the Visigoths. The Visigoths ruled Spain from around 500 AD to around 700 AD. That's 200 years, but one hardly ever hear about them. One

heard about the Romans in Spain, about the Muslims in Spain but never about the Visigoths. If one hunts around Spain, there is plenty of evidence of Visigoth achievement, like the rustic enunciation, carved into an emerald, and the superb Visigoth crowns, with the name of the King who commissioned them spelled out.



Fig. 189: The enunciation, carved into an emerald.

The Visigoth crowns are not for wearing on your head. They're what's called **votive crowns**, and they are for hanging above an altar in a church. Like the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths were originally Aryans, but here in Spain, they were surrounded by Roman Catholics, and quickly adopted the Romanic version of Christianity. And that's when they built these exciting and inventive Visigoth churches. This is the church of St John the Baptist in Palencia. It's been remodelled but most of what one see is Visigoth. The story goes that the Visigoth king Recesvinto built this church to thank God for curing him of liver disease. He washed himself in the holy waters of Palencia and was suddenly cured.

Recesvinto was on his way north to fight the Basques, so he was particularly grateful for his miraculous cure, and even put up a plaque with the date the church was finished. January 3rd, 661 AD. Recesvinto's plaque is surrounded by typical vigorous bits of Visigoth decoration. So energetic and busy. Completely unlike anything the Romans came up with. It feels as if one can hear a sculptor whistling. There's something so energetic about it, something real and untutored. It's as if, for the first time in art, one can hear from the common man. This wasn't made by an artiste, this was made by a person with big hands, who's speaking to mankind across the ages.

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Fig. 190: A votive Visigoth crown.

Fig. 191: A Visigoth decoration.





Fig. 192: A horseshoe.

Fig. 193: The Visigoths invented elegant horseshoe arches, and it was a brilliant barbarian invention.

The sheer inventiveness of these Visigoths is so invigorating. The arches came round and that's it. The horseshoe arches have a very different effect. Horseshoe arches look wider, airier, taller, more elegant, as if a sail has been unfurled and filled with wind. Less stern. This Architecture is doing more than has been asked of it. It isn't just holding something up, It's having fun and looking good. The Visigoths invented elegant horseshoe arches, and it was a brilliant Barbarian invention. Although the Visigoths invented them, they didn't perfected them. It's yet another of the great achievements of the Dark Ages.



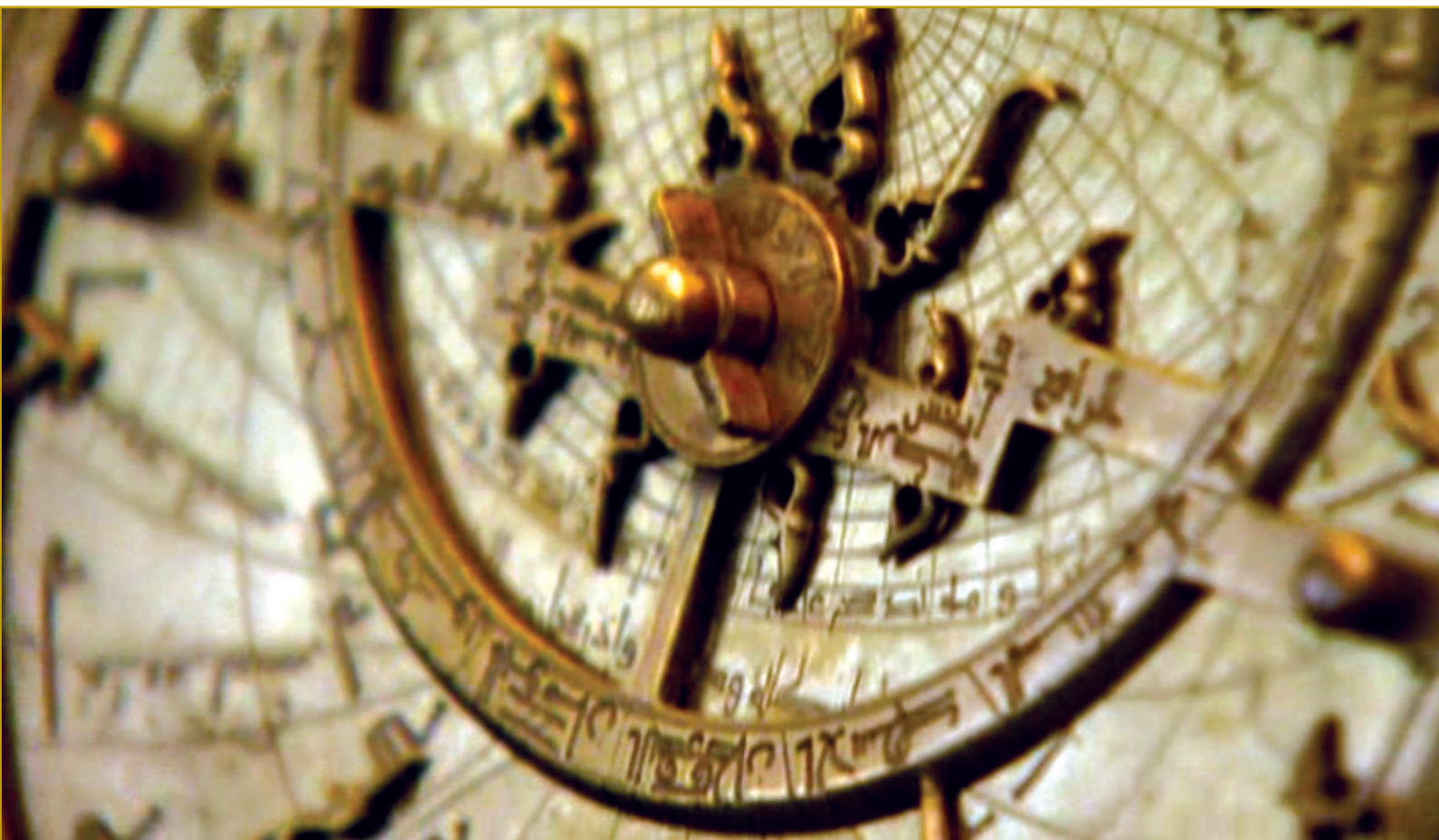


Fig. 194: The astrolabe, used by Islamic star gazers.

1.5 THE DARK AGES – THE INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC ART

The art of this era are some of the most sophisticated ever made, like the great mosque of Cordoba in Spain. This handy little Dark Age gadget is an astrolabe. Some people call this the first computer and what this thing does is calculate exactly where you are by using the stars. Islamic star gazers perfected the astrolabe in the dark ages to work out the direction of Mecca. So they always knew which way to pray. And they field the art with cosmic patterns. Firstly, there need to be travelled back in time to the beginnings of Islam, to the first fascinating creations of the Islamic art and architecture. So right now, here in Cordoba in Spain going back to the beginnings of the Islamic art, the need is to go right across the Mediterranean to the starting point.

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1.5.1 JERUSALEM, THE HEART OF THE RELIGIOUS DARK AGES.

Huge dramas have been happening here, and important art has been created. Most of the art is gone but not all of it, some has survived in the magnificent Golden Dome, the Dome of the Rock. It is one of the most significant buildings that was ever erected, and a piece of Architecture that changed history. The Dome could not have been on a more dramatic location.

1.5.2 THE DOME OF THE ROCK

Mohammed died in 632 AD. And for the first 50 years after his death Islam was preoccupied with expanding. The speed with which the Islamic empire expanded was remarkable. In just a few decades it went from nothing to gigantic. It was the most dramatic, the most aggressive and fastest speed of empire building the world has seen. Just 100 years after Mohammed's death. The whole of Spain, all of North Africa the entire Middle East as far across as the borders of India. In this successful conquest there wasn't much time for art. Almost nothing survived for the first years of Islam. Art was clearly not priority and then out of nothing, as if by magic, the Dome of the Rock appeared. Nothing in Islamic art prepared the people for this. There was definite mathematical clarity and that is something that continues in all Islamic Architecture.



Fig. 195: The Dome of the Rock.

It is build within an octagon, which means eight sides. An Octagon has a special symbolic presence because it combines the geometry of a circle with the geometry of a square. The octagon is a popular Dark Age shape with powerful sacred meanings. If the earth is a square and heaven is a perfect circle the octagon is a symbolic bridge between the two. All the proportions of the Dome of the Rock are meaningful to the walls of the octagon. Each of them is about 20 meters long. The height of the dome in the middle, is also 20 meters and the diameter is also 20 meters. All the proportions were carefully calculated and have a purpose. It is as if the entire building has been shaped by divine mathematics and those divine mathematics have given it a secret meaning.

The domed basilica structure was patterned after the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It was initially completed in 691 CE at the order of Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik during the Second Fitna, becoming the first work of Islamic architecture. The site's significance stems from religious traditions regarding the rock, known as the Foundation Stone, at its heart, which bears great significance for Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is considered **“the most contested piece of real estate on earth”**.

Fig. 196: Inside the Dome of the Rock.



Fig. 197: Wonderful mosaics reflecting paradise.



Fig. 198: More wonderful mosaics, positioned at different angles to portray the light differently.



1.5.3 HEROD'S TEMPLE

Herod's temple was made entirely from white marble and was so huge it covered 67 acres this secret location.

Reconstruction of the temple under Herod began with a massive expansion of the Temple Mount. Religious worship and temple rituals continued during the construction process. Following the Great Revolt of the Province of Iudaea, the Temple was destroyed by Roman troops under Titus during the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The most complete ancient account of this event is *The Jewish War* by Flavius Josephus. Later Roman governors used the remains to build palaces and a Temple of Jupiter, and the Byzantines a Church.

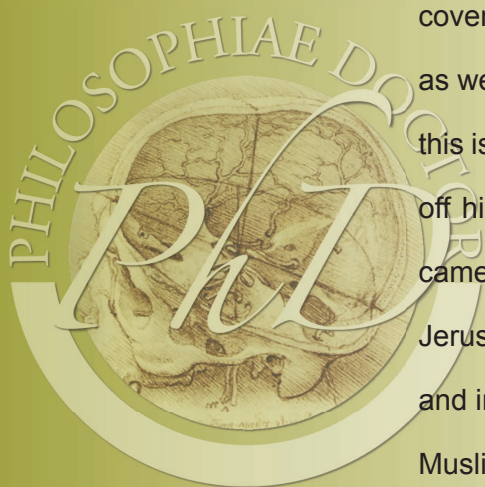
Fig. 199: Herod's Temple.



It was not until the Dome of the Rock was built between 687 and 691 that the last remnants of the Temple were taken down. In addition to the platform, some remnants of the Temple remain above ground, including a step leading to the Dome of the Rock that is actually the capstone of the pre-Herodian wall of the Temple Mount platform. The Temple itself was located on the site of what today is the Dome of the Rock.

The interior is one of the most atmospheric achievements of the Dark Ages. There is something so haunting about the way the light works in there, the shimmer of the mosaics, the whispers of the calligraphy. Basically it's a circular shrine, it is not a mosque it's a place of pilgrimage that built around a secret site.

The Jews believe this is the rock on which Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son Isaac and the arc of the covenant is believed to lie hidden somewhere underneath as well. Islam has a different tradition. Islam believes that this is the holy rock from which the prophet Mohammed set off his great night journey to heaven. The angel Gabriel came to visit Mohammed in Mecca and brought him here to Jerusalem and from this rock a prophet is send to heaven and in paradise he met God and God instructed him of the Muslim duty of pray.



This holy rock with the Architecture around it is a point of contact between man and God and that's the religious message of the whole building. This type of encircling Architecture built over a precious site, are found in the round churches of the Byzantium. San Vitali in Ravenna and Santa Constanza in Rome, to name but two. Caliph Abd al-Malik has also added an explicit inscription which runs all the way round and which gives the date in which the dome was finished 691 AD. It also includes a stone message to the Christians. *"O you people of the book it says, meaning the Bible. Jesus is only a messenger of God. God is only one God."*

It is a deliberate challenge to the Christians. Jesus is just the prophet. *"There is only one God and Gods don't have sons"*. This entire building is taking on Christianity. From the floor to the ceiling is covered with the most exquisite mosaics, gold and green. All the pieces of the mosaics were set in different angles so they reflect the light differently at different times of the day. All these glorious mosaics, were intended to have evoked a vision of paradise.

When you look into Paradise, says the Quran, the lights that cannot be imagined can be seen. Fruits of every kind and all that one could ask for. Islam had invented for themselves an unmistakable new Architecture, and at the centre of this new Architecture was a vision of paradise.

1.5.4 THE DAMASCUS MOSQUE

The Islamic paradise is a green and lush alternative to the harsh desert landscape in which Islam was born and where water is precious. Just a few years after the dome of the Rock was finished the Caliphs in Damascus gave the world another wonderful Islamic structure. The Damascus Mosque. This is one of the most breathtaking buildings. Inside the fabulous Damascus Mosque, Caliph Abd al-Malik set out to describe paradise. But the surrounding pilgrims were delightful and irresistible visions of it. The mosaics portrays the joys that awaits mankind in heaven.

Fig. 200: The Damascus Mosque.



Those magnificent images of paradise in the great mosque of Damascus are like images of the wonderful oasis in the desert of water, palm trees, flowers everything that is so hard to find out here and the Islamic paradise promises so many pleasures in the next life to the “*true believer*”, all you can drink, all you can eat and all you can dream of.

1.5.5 QUSEIR AMRA

Quseir Amra, is the best-known of the desert castles located in present-day eastern Jordan. It was built early in the 8th century, between 723 and 743, by Walid Ibn Yazid, the future Umayyad caliph Walid II, whose dominance of the region was rising at the time. It is considered one of the most important examples of early Islamic art and Architecture. The discovery of an inscription during work in 2012 has allowed for more accurate dating of the structure. Quseir Amra is a bathing establishment in the desert. One of the earliest surviving secular buildings of Islam. The bathhouse in the sands has something remarkable inside it. Quseir Amra is most notable for the frescoes on the inside walls. The main entry vault has scenes of hunting, fruit and wine consumption, and naked women. Some of the animals shown are not abundant in the region but were more commonly found in Persia, suggesting some influence from that area. One surface depicts the construction of the building.



Fig. 201: Qasr Amra, best-known of the desert castles.

Near the base of one wall a haloed king is shown on a throne. An adjoining section, now in Berlin's Pergamon Museum, shows attendants as well as a boat in waters abundant with fish and fowl. An image known as the "six kings" depicts the caliph with the rulers of neighbouring powers—the Byzantine Emperor, the Visigothic king Roderic, the Sassanid Persian Shah, the Negus of Ethiopia and two others who are unidentified, possibly a Khazar or Turkic khagan and an Indian raja. Its intent was unclear until conservators in the late 1970s discovered the Greek word "NHKH", or nike, meaning victory, nearby. It was concluded that the "six kings" image was meant to suggest the caliph's supremacy over his enemies.



Fig. 202a :

Fig. 202b:

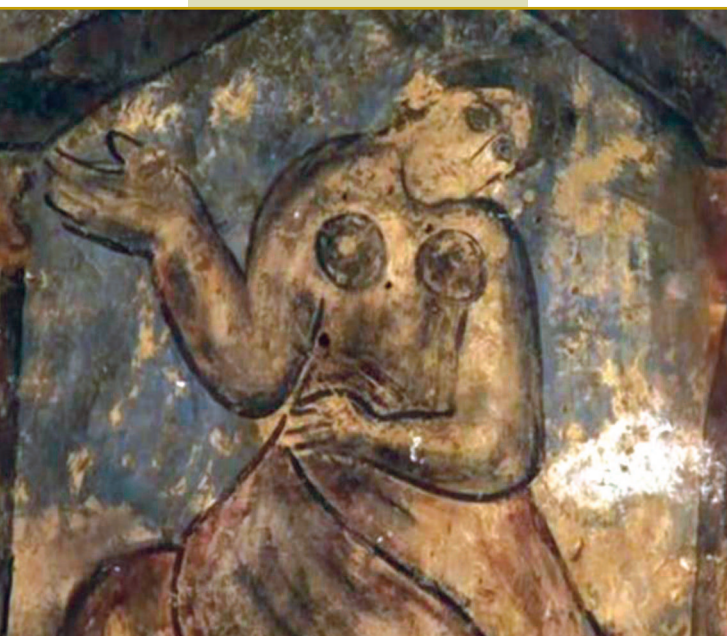


Fig. 202a & b: Naked females in various poses.

The apodyterium, or changing room, is decorated with scenes of animals engaging in human activities, particularly performing music. One ambiguous image has an angel gazing down on a shrouded human form.

It has often been thought to be a death scene, but some other interpretations have suggested the shroud covers a pair of lovers. Three blackened faces on the ceiling have been thought to represent the stages of life. Christians in the area believe the middle figure is Jesus Christ.

On the walls and ceiling of the tepidarium, or warm bath, are scenes of plants and trees similar to those in the mosaic at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. They are interspersed with naked females in various poses, some bathing a child. The caldarium or hot bath's hemispheric dome has a representation of the heavens in which the zodiac is depicted, among 35 separate identifiable constellations. It is believed to be the earliest image of the night sky painted on anything other than a flat surface. The radii emerge not from the dome's center but, accurately, from the north celestial pole. The angle of the zodiac is depicted accurately as well.

The only error discernible in the surviving artwork is the counterclockwise order of the stars, which suggests the image was copied from one on a flat surface. The frescoes in all rooms but the caldarium reflect the advice of contemporary Arab physicians. They believed that baths drained the spirits of the bathers, and that to revive *“the three vital principles in the body, the animal, the spiritual and the natural,”* the bath’s walls should be covered with pictures of activities like hunting, of lovers, and of gardens and palm trees.



Fig. 203: Islamic star chart.

This is the earliest known Islamic star chart painted on the dome at Quseir Amra. Around the edge of the twelve signs of the zodiac. In the middle fresco representations of the constellations the great bear a little bear. What a thing to find in an eight century bathhouse. A fabulous image of the heavens at night above your head but it is if someone’s taken the roof of the dome and looked out into the sky at night and the desert full of twinkling stars and the beautiful idea. These eagles at the bottom is metal work of the highest quality, the way they have been shaped, their wings, their feathers.

Fig. 204: The Qasr Kharana, just another desert palace.



Fig. 205: Beautiful mosaics in Qasr Kharana.

In the four corners, four cuddly nudes prepare to release a small bird into the incense filled air above them.

1.5.6 Umayyad Mosque

The Mosque of Umayyad Mosque, is located in Cairo, Egypt. It is arguably the oldest mosque in the city surviving in its original form, and is the largest mosque in Cairo in terms of land area. The mosque was commissioned by Ahmad ibn Ṭūlūn, the Abbassid governor of Egypt from 868–884 whose rule was characterized by de facto independence. The mosque was constructed on a small hill called Gebel Yashkur, “*The Hill of Thanksgiving.*”

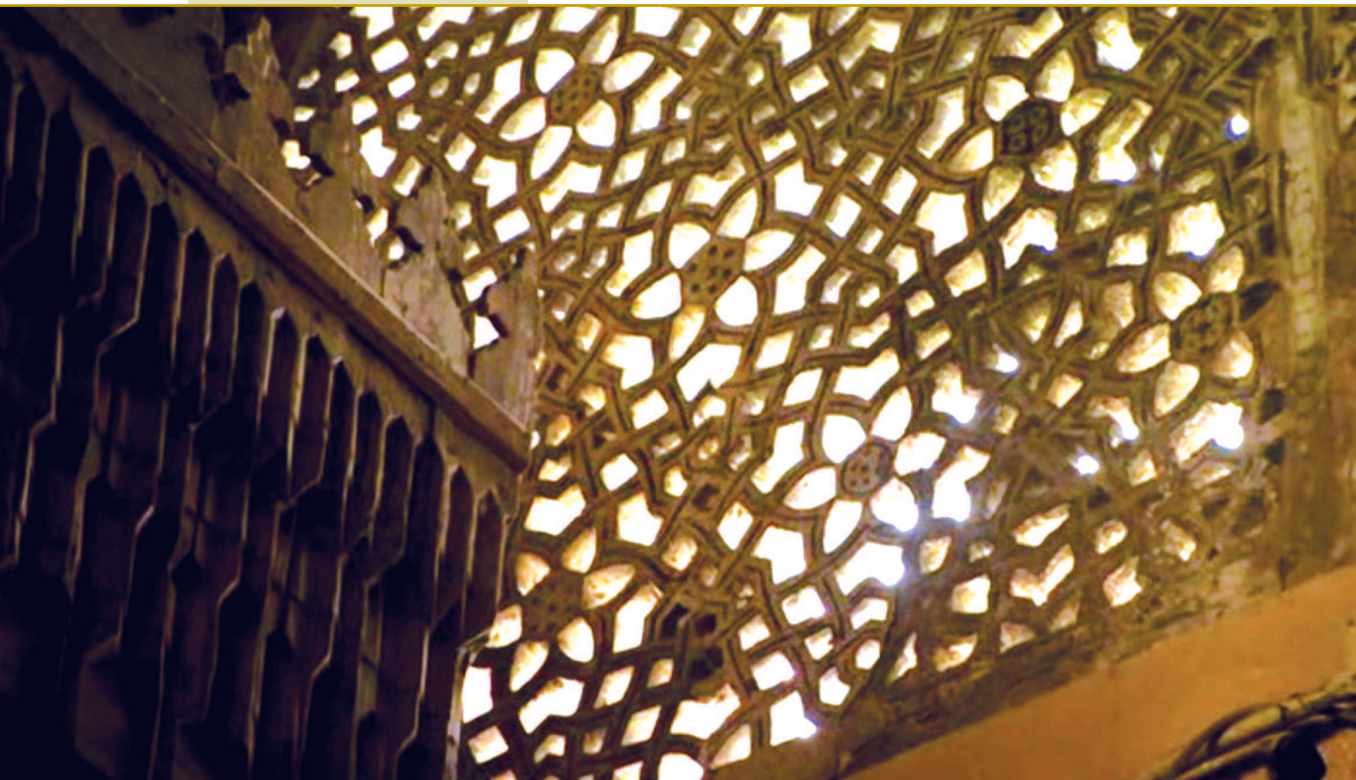
Fig. 206: Umayyad Mosque in Cairo.



Fig. 207: Detail of Umayyad Mosque in Cairo.



Fig. 208: Detail of Umayyad Mosque in Cairo.



One local legend says that it is here that Noah's Ark came to rest after the Deluge, instead of at Mount Ararat. There was certainly water here, that domed creation in the centre is the ablutions fountain where all the Muslims must wash themselves before prayers.

It was a typical mud brick dwelling with a courtyard and in that courtyard the prophets followers would gather to hear him speak. All these great courtyards of Islam, descended directly to the prophets own courtyard.

Evocative sparseness is an echo of their origins and their sun baked simplicity has been there from the start. To protect his followers from the sun the prophet built a simple shelter at the end of his courtyard with a roof made out of palm branches and leaves. And that simple shelter was the inspiration for these great arcades, which still protects the prophet's followers from the sun. And that marvellous communal atmosphere of a space with many purposes is something else that survives to this day in the Islamic Mosque. The largest covered space was the prayer hall which is basically the prophet's own house at the end of the courtyard. And every prayer hall today is a continuation of this marvellous Islamic sense and underneath all this mighty religious Architecture you can still feel the humble presence of the prophet's own dwelling. Christian churches are full of pictures that tell stories.

There are no pictures in the great Islamic interiors. The decoration here communicates in other ways. There is a sense of endlessness to it. It develops in all directions and it makes you feel part in something that's bigger than you.

At the Mosque of Ibn Tulun the Quranic inscription runs for two kilometers around the building. That's one fiftieth of the entire Quran written up on these walls. This is the word of God in the most sacred and purist form. The power of the word is one of great creative obsession of the Dark Ages and in the Metropolitan Museum in New York the most beguiling of the first Qurans, the so-called blue Quran turns the words of God into such glorious art.

Fig. 209: Detail of Umayyad Mosque in Cairo.



1.6 THE PERCEPTION OF THE REALITY OF CHRIST AS THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

In the revelation of Jesus Christ to John on Patmos, the Lord proclaims the all-encompassing truth in five marvelous words: "I AM Alpha and Omega!" (Revelation 1:8). Most believers, whatever their language, are aware that Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the alphabet used by the Greeks. Alpha is the name given to the letter A and Omega is the name for the long O, the last letter of the Greek alphabet. For Christ to affirm that He is "A and O" is, He says, "I am A to Z." The English language has twenty-six letters. All the books ever written, all the libraries of the Western world, have contained only these twenty-six letters. These are used to program space research, label medicines, and give messages to the delivery man. Every newspaper or magazine ever printed has used just twenty-six letters. Arranged, juggled, and placed in millions of different configurations, only twenty-six letters are used for the communication of all information.

This thesis will proclaim that "Jesus is Life and thus the Language of God". Jesus Christ is all that the twenty-six letters can convey. Has the alphabet ever failed poet or lover or has any philosopher, author, statesman, scholar, scientist or theologian proved it inadequate for literary needs?

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Fig. 210: Stained glass
Alpha and Omega



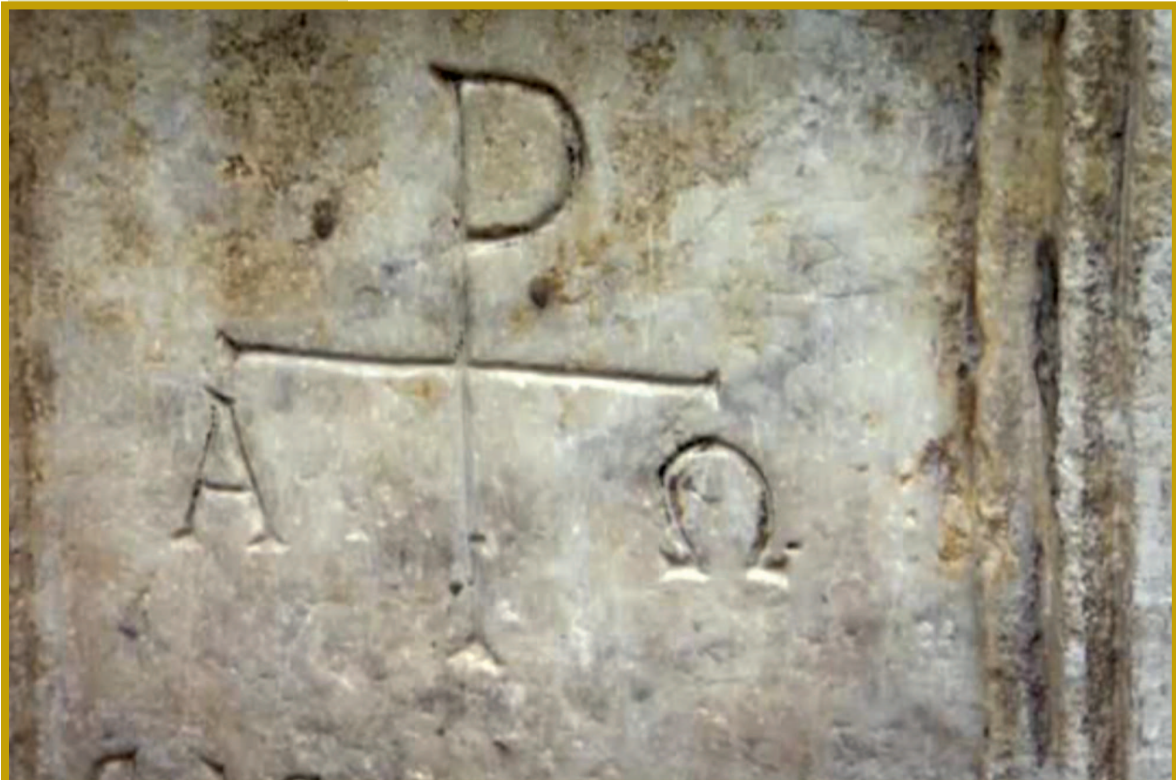
"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"

John 1:1,14.

Alpha and Omega is a revelation and is all that can be said of the Lord Jesus, proclaimed in a way that can be seen and understood.

The inner intelligence of the Lord Jesus represents His all-knowing mind, His almighty power, and His divine nature. In speaking of the inner intelligence of the Lord Jesus, a person is speaking of the greatest reality of Being in the universe.

Fig. 211: Early Christian sign of the Alpha and Omega, found in the Roman Catacombs.



At this point the truth will prove that all man's eternal hopes of son-ship and the kingdom, depend upon one thing and one thing alone: that the mind of Christ, the power of Christ, and the nature of Christ dwell fully in a person. This is the Alpha and the Omega - all that can be said of God written and inscribed in man's inner life. God is the Word - the Word is God. Language describes not only what has happened and what is seen - it creates. *"And God said, Let there be... and there was."* God as the Word creates within the substance of Himself. Believe that word, walk in that word, live by that word and be changed and be filled with all the fullness of God. God will take form in a person and He will write Himself in living reality upon the tables of a person's mind and heart! Christ in man, the Alpha and Omega, is man's only hope of son-ship.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, but that is not the truth set forth in these particular verses.

The first passage is found in Colossians 1: 15-17.

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

Colossians 1: 15-17.



Fig. 212: Christ in the Commodilla catacombs.

Fig. 213: Alpha and Omega stained glass window, circa 1883, near the front door of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

There is a whole world of difference between something being created by Him, or created in Him, and may the Holy Spirit makes this real to everyone. When God planned the present universe, He planned it in and around His Christ. The Christ is the centre and the circumference of all. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The whole vast creation was made in Him and for Him. Before the sun ever kissed this earth, creation began in Him and it will end in Him, for He is the beginning and the end.



The Christ is the beginning of the creation of God! “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD” (Revelation 3:14). Do you see how this theme is stated again and again in different terms throughout the book of Revelation? Christ is the beginning of creation and He is also the end, all things must begin in Him and end in Him, for this is the Father’s purpose for His Son!

Considering the creation of the heavens and the earth – the universe and all that is therein, visible and invisible – fresh from the hands of the Creator in all its original and pristine glory; God being all – wise and almighty; the question presses itself upon us: From where came sin and evil, darkness and death? Why did God permit these to enter the creation which had been made in Him? How did it happen? Why the disruption of the original state? The answer to these monumental questions is to be discovered in the great fact of the creation being brought “out of” God! When God lowered the creation from the realm of pure spirit existence in Christ in the heavenly sphere. The creation was “made subject to vanity” and the whole downward process of disintegration and dissolution begun. Just as man ascent back into the image and fullness of God is ever “from glory to glory,” “from faith to faith,” and “from experience to experience,” so the process downward into fragmentation and dissolution continued through various stages and vast ages of time until the lowest depths of frustration were reached.

Mural painting from the catacomb of Commodilla. Bust of Christ. This is one of first bearded images of Christ. Earlier Christian art in Rome portrayed Jesus most often as the Good Shepherd, disguised as Orpheus, young, beardless and in a short tunic. During the 4th century Jesus was beginning to be depicted as a man of identifiably Jewish appearance, with a full beard and long hair, a style not usually worn by Romans. The symbols on either side are Alpha and Omega signifying “*I am the beginning and the end*”.

The first downward step came when creation was lowered from the realm of pure spirit existence in Christ to this physical and material realm.

Not only did man begin in the spirit, later to be lowered into this material realm, but all things began in spirit and were subsequently lowered into this physical world. The magnificent wonders portrayed in Genesis reveal this truth with divine certainty. As can be read there of:

“every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground... and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life; and man became a living soul”.

Genesis. 2:5,7

Behold how great an understanding divine inspiration has placed upon all who have ears to hear!

These words teach us infallibly that there were plants and herbs before they were in the earth or ever grew in soil, and there was a spirit man who was blown into the clay model of the man Adam by the very breath of God. The union of this spirit man with the clay model produced Adam the living soul. That was the first step downward, even in the glories of Eden. And then the Satan came, man's experiment with sin followed, and death seized man with its unrelenting power. Step by step, stage by stage, the whole creation came out of Christ.

Fig. 214: Unknown Mosaic portraying the Alpha & Omega.



And that is how it is in the new creation. The new creation is the old creation re-conciled, re-deemed, re-generated, re-stored to its original place, condition, and state IN CHRIST. The new spiritual creation is all that is “in Christ Jesus” in the fullness of what that means. Mankind are unified again in Him. These become fully a new creation in Christ. In the life of the one who has truly entered into Christ, and been unified again in Him. All the old has passed away and everything has become new. The prototype of this wonderful reality of restoration into Christ is our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what the book of Revelation is all about; it is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Fig. 215: Christ mosaic in the Basilica of Santa Sabina.



When Jesus says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last” – what a revelation that is. Jesus often spoke of His Father being in Him.

The only way all old things can completely and forever pass away is through mankind’s entrance back into God.

John 3: 16 is called the golden text by many of the Bible.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3: 16

Our Lord called Himself the Alpha and the Omega in Greek, the Aleph and the Tau in Hebrew, or the A and the Z in English, or its equivalent in any other language, without in the least altering the figure of its significance. Alphabetical languages usually have the letters arranged in a fixed order. The first is often used as a symbol of the beginning and the last for the ending. That is, our Lord claims to be what letters and language were meant to be, namely the expression of truth. HE IS THE WORD - the expression of the totality of God’s nature, wisdom, power, purpose and substance from first to last.

God is a spirit – an invisible, intangible, unapproachable Spirit. The manifestation of the invisible Godhead is the Christ, the Logos, the Word - God projected from the plane of the invisible into the realm of the visible.

Ephesians 1 :4,9-11 says, that all began in Christ - and that was all things, everything - shall end in Christ, that He may be the first and the last, the beginning and the end. If you can conceive of God taking Eve and putting her back into Adam, as it was in the beginning, then you may also understand what is this glorious purpose that transcends Adam and Eve - when God takes the whole vast creation and MAKES IT ONE IN CHRIST AGAIN. All of mankind's yearnings and searching after God to fully know Him shall find their complete and eternal satisfaction there where all things are brought back into Christ.

What has now been provided in Christ is a re-turn, a re-storation, a re-newing, a re-demption, a re-conciliation, a re-surrection, a re-stitution. The prefix "re" means BACK, AGAIN, ANEW, and all the words with this prefix indicate something that LEFT ITS PLACE AND HAS NOW MADE ITS CIRCUIT AND COME BACK TO THE POINT OF ITS BEGINNING.

1.7 EXPLORING A BRIGHT NATIVITY

This exquisite little picture, so dramatic in its contrasts of light and shade (known as *chiaroscuro*), contains two separate scenes. In the foreground the Nativity is the main focus, while the background scene depicts the angel Gabriel appearing to the shepherds in the hills to tell them of the birth of Christ.

The Bible story of the birth of Christ in a stable “because there was no room at the inn” forms the basis of the picture in the foreground. The unclothed baby Jesus lies possibly on straw, in a stark, boxlike manger, or feeding trough. The infant is releasing a supernatural light: his whole body is glowing and, for added emphasis *en Geertgen* has painted rays of light radiating from him.

Jesus’s mother, Mary, kneels before him, her hands together as if in prayer, as she gazes down in awe at her newborn son. Her face is aglow, reflecting the streaming light. Behind her – very much in the background – stands the shadowy figure of Joseph, his head bowed in respect. Five childlike angels, one still in flight, also cluster around the infant, and they too are touched by the holy radiance.

Behind the makeshift crib you can just make out an ox and a donkey looking toward the glowing baby. The awe and amazement of the group of figures in the picture is transmitted to the viewer.

The secondary drama, taking place in the background, is identified by an additional light source. Out on the bare hillside we can just make out a group of shepherds, together with the flock of sheep they have been tending, clustered near a makeshift bonfire. However, their attention is not on the sheep at all, but on an angel radiating heavenly light, that has appeared in the night sky. The angel, Gabriel, is bringing them the message that Christ the Saviour has been born nearby and that they should go and worship him. This story is told in the Bible (Luke 2:1-20). This idea that the infant Christ emitted a divine light seems to have originated in the writings of Saint Bridget of Sweden. She lived in the 14th century, and claimed that she had a vision of the birth of Jesus. She wrote that the newborn baby point, cut down on all four sides, so it is possible that Joseph's candle was in part of the picture that is now lost. Certainly he is holding his right hand in a way that suggests that he may be shielding a candle from a draft. It may seem odd that anyone would want to cut down such a picture; it has been suggested that it was once part of a large altarpiece that was reduced in size to be used in a domestic setting. There is no real evidence for this, though, and it may well be that the picture was always for private devotional use rather than part of a larger work in a public place.

Fig. 216: *Nativity at Night* – Geertgen tot Sint Jans



Philosophiae Doctor

1.8 EVOCATIVE PORTRAITURE AS SEEN THROUGH DIFFERENT ART STYLES

The Daughters of Edward D. Boit (1882) exemplifies the technical virtuosity and powerful atmosphere of Sargent's portraits. This large, square painting portrays the four daughters of Edward Darley Boit and his wife, Mary Louisa Cushing Boit, prominent Bostonians who had settled in Paris. Florence (aged 14), Jane (12), Mary Louisa (10), and Julia (4), are all posed in a reception room in the family's elegant apartment in Paris. In terms of furnishings, the main features of the room are the Persian carpet and a pair of huge Japanese vases.

The composition of the painting makes it an especially fascinating portrait. Its unusual square format may have been inspired by *Las Meninas* (1656), by the Spanish Old Master painter Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velázquez, which Sargent had copied when he visited Madrid. The placement of the four girls within the room is very striking, for they appear to be both together and apart from each other. Although their glowing, white smocks and the similarity of their faces and long, flowing hair unite them, each girl is looking in a slightly different direction and there are large expanses of open space between them.

Fig. 217: *The Daughters of Edward D. Boit*, 1882 – Sargent



Sargent balances the feeling of freedom created by childhood's sense of endless time, but also conveys a sense of waiting, perhaps for the girls' parents to come home.

Sargent often constructed his portraits around a bold contrast of light and dark. In *The Daughters of Edward D. Boit* he achieves this contrast both through colour and lighting. The Boits' daughters wear highly contrasted dark dresses and white smocks, while in the room itself, which is half-lit by the suggested window on the left and half-dark in its background depths, he has created chiaroscuro light effects.

Sargent's portraits both reveal the identity of their sitters and offer thoughts about shared human experience, such as a time of life or a profession. *The Daughters of Edward D. Boit* is a meditation upon the transition from childhood to womanhood, as well as a record of the life of four sisters, each at a different stage of this journey.

1.9 RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS PORTRAYED IN MODERN BIBLICAL SCENES

Resurrection, Cookham (1922-27) was one of Spencer's largest and most important early works, which proved a huge success when it was first exhibited in London in 1927. In the work Spencer portrays Cookham's churchyard, with the River Thames in the background. This is not a simple landscape scene, however, for Spencer depicts the dead rising slowly from their graves into a modern paradise. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, can be seen at the center of the image, beneath a flower-covered porch. Behind these divine figures, along the church wall, Spencer has painted a row of prophets (Moses can be seen holding the stone tablets that conveyed God's law to the Israelites). Along with these religious figures Spencer has also included some modern characters, including many of his friends and relatives. Spencer himself appears twice in the painting, firstly emerging from between two gravestones at the centre of the image, and then again on the surface of two tombs in the lower right-hand corner. Spencer also gives the work an international dimension by portraying a group of African people rising from the sunbaked soil of their native land.

Some of the figures that are emerging into Spencer's paradise are being punished. These include the two groups in the tombs in the foreground, who are being rounded up to await their final judgement. Yet even this mild retribution does not diminish the joyous and celebratory mood of the work. This is best expressed in the top left-hand corner of the painting, where the resurrected can be seen climbing aboard boats and drifting down the river. Spencer presents heaven as if it were Cookham.

Fig. 218: *Resurrection*, Cookham, 1922-27 – Spencer



1.10 DRAMATIC PAINTINGS

In his painting of *The Adoration of the Kings* (1573) Veronese shows one of the most important moments in the early life of Jesus Christ. It illustrates the biblical story of the Three Wise Men, or “kings,” who were led by a star to the stable in Bethlehem where the infant Jesus had been born. They brought gifts anticipating his life and death.

In this enormous painting the three kings are shown kneeling in front of Jesus, who is held by his mother, Mary. The eldest king, Caspar, kneels directly in front of Jesus, offering his gift of gold, expressing the kingship of Jesus. Mary’s husband, Joseph, stands behind the child. The painting is filled with other figures, including the king’s attendants, while a shaft of sunlight, surrounded by angels, descends from Heaven upon the infant.

Veronese’s gifts are well illustrated in this painting. The numerous figures are set in a boldly organized setting, which gives a glimpse of the sky beyond but focuses attention on the leading participants, whose importance is established by their places within the composition as well as by their poses. The scene is set within battered palace walls, which are in the classical style and suggest the period of Christ’s birth. The palace symbolizes the Old Testament, which is giving way to the Christian faith in the birth of Christ, and the beginning of the New Testament.

Veronese organizes the scene as though it were the stage of an opera or play. The almost life-size figures are arranged to maximum effect, so that the most important participants, Mary and the infant Jesus, whom she holds, are placed at a greater height than the kneeling kings.

Fig. 219: *The Adoration of the Kings*, 1573



2. CONCLUSION

The experience and knowledge encountered on this exciting journey through the Dark Ages that proofed to be the Age of Light, was undoubtedly unforgettable. The fact that Art never lies were proofed over and over again in the journey through the Dark Ages. The Alpha and Omega once again filled man's senses of one true God and together with all the artists that portrayed this in their Art, the observer encountered a loving understanding of God's promise to His true followers. By investigating the Roman Catacombs, the voyagers into the unknown – the Christians, became a known fact. Their influence on mankind is of the utmost importance and cannot be denied. The way in which Christians communicated with each other without real pictures but by merely using signs is remarkable. Jesus wasn't portrayed in the first early Christian Art, He only turned up in Art in the Middle Ages and He would be portrayed in horrible pain and suffering in the Centuries to come. No one in early Christian Art know what He looked like and even the Bible doesn't describe Him. Firstly He was portrayed as a young girly faced Jesus until the focus also went to Mary. Thereafter He became masculine and wasn't portrayed girlish anymore.

Looking into the Barbarians, their contribution towards mankind's progress cannot be denied and the fact that they could not be barbarians if one looks at the art and objects that were created by them. The conclusion is that they were misunderstood peoples with misunderstood achievements.

And then in any Art the myth of the Dark Ages is the Art of Islam. Islamic art always wanted to create pleasure. Christian Churches are full of pictures that tell stories but there are no pictures in these great Islamic Interiors. The decorations in these interiors communicates in other ways. There is a sense of endlessness to it. It develops in all directions and it makes a person feel part of something that's bigger than one self.

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