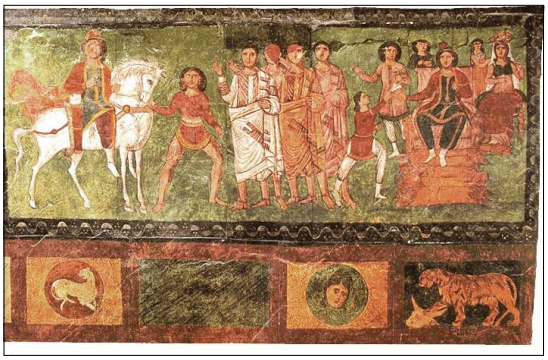
Church Decorative Programs in the Period of Recognition



208 Scenes from the *Book of Esther* from the Dura-Europos synagogue, ca. 244

Image of part of the fresco. This image, illustrating a scene from the Book of Esther, was taken from Goodenough, Erwin Ramsdell (1968) [1953]. Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. New York: Pantheon Books. A complete copy of the fresco is on display at the History of Art Department at Yale University.

Richard Arthur Norton (1958-). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duraeuropa-1-.gif **19:39, 20 February 2011 accessed 2 September 2011 at 12:20**

Unfortunately, if church basilicas built in the 4th century, following the Edict of Milan, included monumental figurative Christian imagery, none has survived.[1] Such imagery does not begin to occur until ca. 400.[2] We can only assume that Christian churches before the start of the 5th century —be they house-churches or basilica churches— were decorated with frescos in much the same manner as Jewish synagogues of the period, like the one down the street from the Christian house church in Dura-Europos that we studied in the first chapter.[3] In the synagogue at Dura-Europos **[208]** entire walls were decorated with rectangular frescos of Old Testament stories and personages. We saw in the house church at Dura-Europos a baptistery with wall frescos of Christian symbols and biblical scenes related to the theme of baptism.

An edict of a regional Church Council in Elvira, Spain (306) forbade the placement in churches of images. That a church council would issue an edict banning images in churches suggests that church images had indeed already begun to appear (at least, in Spain).

However, there are no actual examples of monumental images in churches during the 4th century. There is nothing until the start of the 5th century **[215].** But, in light of the numerous images in the catacombs and on sarcophagi, and the example at Dura-Europos, it would seem strange if churches constructed during the reign of Constantine did not employ figurative imagery.

However, we know from texts that there was at least some sensitivity concerning the use of imagery for religious purposes. But, if there were images in churches, Christian theologians and writers would have had to turn a "blind eye"[4] to it as they were fiercely critical of the *pagan use of images*.

Religiously neutral imagery

There is a strain of thought among some art historians that Christian churches of the 4th century did not include monumental figurative religious imagery. According to these historians such images were only gradually introduced into churches. This theory holds that large scale religious imagery and decorative programs appeared only slowly, subtly introduced through religiously neutral mosaic decoration that had been popular in traditional aristocratic Roman art.[5]

Constructions of —and decorations for— the new Christian churches were sponsored by imperial and aristocratic patrons who highly valued decorative imagery. The Church, it is thought, being somewhat nervous about possibly violating the Second Commandment regarding idol worship, may have put the brakes on, so-to-speak, when it came to introducing full blown Christian images into the new, large, and more public churches. Given the situation, Christian imagery may have been only

slowly introduced by way of subtle incorporation of Christian imagery into non-religious decorative schemes. This would have been most probably accomplished by bishops who were from the aristocratic class but had either given their wealth away or dedicated their assets to church building projects.

A fine example of what may have been a transitional work along these lines is the earliest known ecclesiastical mosaic (ca. 320). This is a floor mosaic in the presbytery of the *Basilica of Aquileia* depicting a maritime seascape **[209]**[6] It may be an example of a work in which a popular Christian image was subtly introduced into a seemingly non-religious decoration. The popular story of *Jonah and the Whale* appears here among maritime images of a lake or river with fish, boats, people fishing and putti playing. Maritime imagery was traditional in secular Roman art among aristocrats and wealthy villa owners because it created an atmosphere for a room that suggested contentment, happiness, and abundance.[7] We might think of similar types of modern day wall-paper designs with landscape or floral motifs. The greater part of the *Aquileia* presbytery mosaic was commissioned by members of the wealthy class but bishops could also be aristocrats who, like many wealthy high-status Christians gave away their wealth and status for Church projects.[8] The *Aquileia* mosaic, therefore, was probably a semi-private initiative[9] that involved a bishop who had aristocratic sensibilities but who also possessed a Christian concern for observance of the Second Commandment. There was no risk of these images being used in an idolatrous manner. The mosaic had an overall neutral theme and was not in an attention grabbing location like the nave or the vault of a church apse but, rather, on the floor between the altar and the apse.

209 detail of the *Story of Jonah*, floor mosaic in Aquileia Cathedral, ca. 314

http://ookaboo.com/o/pictures/picture/21250085/The_story_of_Jonah_floor_mosaic_in_Aquil

210 detail of mosaic with *Christ, hunting motifs,* and *Bellerophon slaying the chimera.*

Floor from Hinton St. Mary, England, 4th c. The trustees of the British Museum, London.

http://www.the-goldenrule.name/Dionysus_ART-EarlyChristian.htm

The floor of the *Aquileia* cathedral —but not the apse— was described by a writer of the period which suggests that perhaps the apse was not even decorated with imagery but finished only with architectural detailing.[10]

Further, the part of the *Aquileia* mosaic given to the Jonah scene is relatively small and not immediately noticeable; it is allowed to freely associate [11] with the other river images. Theologically, the Jonah story fit-in nicely as it was a *type* of resurrection and therefore suggested ultimate happiness.[12] In many such instances, perhaps, Christian images could be introduced into a new church basilica, flying under the radar of the Second Commandment, so to speak.

There is another mosaic example from the 4th century that is only a little less subtle in its introduction of Christian imagery into the church

basilica. This time, in a floor mosaic in southwest England **[210]**, there is a medallion in the center of the mosaic depicting Christ with a *Christogram* behind his head, and two pomegranates. Hunting scenes fill three semicircles to the top, left and right with a tree occupying the fourth side, at the entrance to the room. In a second section of the mosaic, further along, to the left and right sides, dogs chase stags. In the large medallion of that section *Bellerophon* (a mythological slayer of monsters) tramples the *chimera* (monstrous fire-breathing female creature in Greek mythology) near the altar, symbolizing control over earthly passions.

Did mosaic imagery in churches actually begin with such private initiatives of wealthy villa owners and then gradually morph into more obviously Christian figurative imagery in church apses and on church walls?[13] It is certainly possible.

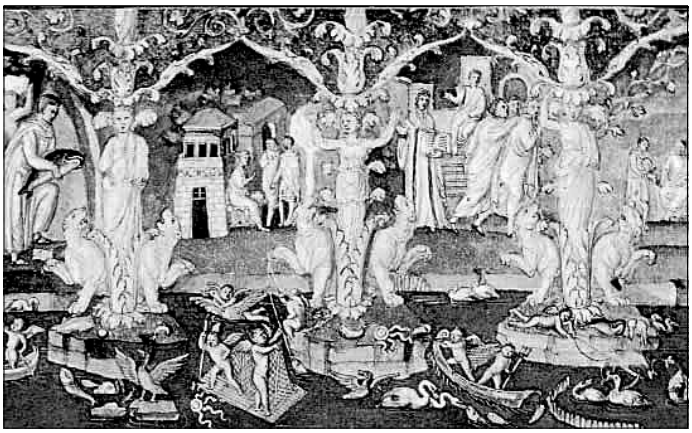
Evidence for early monumental imagery

On the other hand there are other works from the 4th century that could be cited as proof suggesting that monumental imagery may have been introduced into the new church basilicas straight away after the Edict of Milan.

211 detail *Old Testament* scenes, cupola of Santa Costanza, Rome, c. 350

Original watercolor by Francesco d'Ollanda, 1538, Biblioteca de El Escorial, Madrid.

After Schumachacher J. Wilpert; from *The Apse, the Image and the Icon, An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images*, Beat Brenk, (Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2010), Col. Fig. 9. Image has been modified.



One of the best surviving examples from the early period comes from a building that was not originally a church. Consecrated as a church in 1256, *Santa Costanza,* in Rome, actually began as a mausoleum for Constantine's daughter, Constantina (also known as Constantia or Costanza), who died in 354. Recent investigation suggests that it may have been used as a baptistery after its use as a mausoleum. The plan is circular borrowing from the tradition of pre-Christian funerary architecture we looked at earlier in this chapter. It was built about 100 years after the church at Dura-Europos. Its circular ambulatory has original decoration —a continuous mosaic on the ceiling vault featuring cherubs, plants, animals, birds, and pastoral scenes, some of vineyard activities; nothing particularly or obviously Christian. All of these images could have been just as easily used to decorate any non-Christian building. But a watercolor completed in 1538 shows that four Old Testament scenes once decorated the lower register of the dome mosaic [**211]**. Further, there was room for an additional eight scenes but the subjects of those have disappeared.

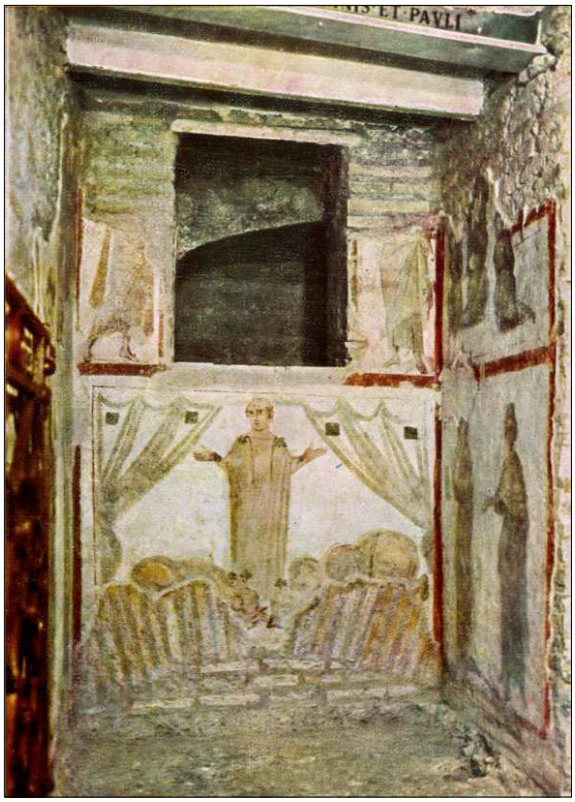
More interesting, still, are two opposing niches off the ambulatory that take the form of apses **[212, 213]**. The sarcophagi of the mausoleum were located there. The mosaics in the vaults are original. One mosaic depicts a *Dominus Legem Dat* or *Traditio Legis*; a center figure of Christ is flanked by Sts. Peter and Paul **[213]**. In the other vault Christ appears enthroned atop a transparent blue globe symbolizing the cosmos **[212]**. He hands the keys of the kingdom to Peter. These apse mosaics, even as small as they are, may be reason to argue that similar imagery may have been deployed in the apse vaults of church basilicas.

212 ***Christ Presenting the Keys of the Kingdom to Peter, one of two*** **apse mosaics in Santa Costanza, ca. 350.**

213 ***Traditio Legis, one of two*** **apse mosaics, Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 35**

Overall, the decorative treatment of the mausoleum is evidence of a co-existence between pagan and Christian imagery in Rome during the 4th century.[14] It points to the continued predominance of Roman paganism in Rome through that century. While some in the imperial family converted to the new religion along with Constantine —and while the poor and working class population of Rome had overwhelmingly turned Christian— most of the aristocratic and senatorial families remained staunchly pagan. The princess Constantina may have been Christian but her two husbands (the first was killed) were aggressively pagan as well most of the aristocratic social class. There is a very good chance the husbands' families exerted some influence on the decoration of Constantina's mausoleum (Constantine predeceased his daughter). At any rate, the decoration was not intended for a church and while it is tempting to imply something from the vaults of the apses and scenes in the lower register of the dome, it is not really possible to state with certainty that similar imagery was displayed on the walls and apse vaults of the new church basilicas being constructed in the 4th century.

Another example **[214]** has proven to be somewhat controversial. Scholars and archeologists debate the possible ecclesiastical use of the domestic ruins that lie under the *Basilica of Sts. John and Paul* in Rome. When first excavated, the 3rd and early 4th century ruins appeared to be of a Christian house-church but subsequent investigation suggests that the space may have been a private chapel dedicated to the memory of the martyrs John and Paul who suffered martyrdom under the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363). Pagan mythological scenes co-existence along with Christian symbols. The unearthed ruins had been two large multistoried imperial dwellings combined into one large mansion originally sepa-



214 ***Confessio,*** **Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul, Rome, ca. 350**

The small *confessio* was created on a platform just above the martyrs' tombs. It is traditionally associated with SS. John and Paul, but also with SS. Crispus, Crispinianus, and Benedicta. All were apparently martyred here.

httpwww.the-goldenrule.nameDionysus_Casa_Celimontana.htm_edited-1.jpg

rated by a small courtyard. The courtyard was transformed into a hall with fountains and wall decorations of cupids riding sea serpents along with a 2nd or 3rd century large fresco of the myth of *Proserpina* returning from *Hades*. The mythological scene was plastered-over in the 5th century). Up the stairs from the hall are the ground-floor rooms and there, on a vault in the *Clivus Scauri*, is a fresco in twelve sections showing male figures carrying scrolls alongside pairs of sheep. An orans figure is painted in the upper corner of one wall. At the top of another set of stairs are frescos from the later part of the 4th century depicting scenes of martyrdom from the passions of John and Paul, and also Crispus, Crispinianus, and Benedicta.

Both the orans figure and martyrdom scenes were funerary subjects. In fact, the tomb of the martyrs John and Paul was precisely there. The image of the twelve male figures carrying scrolls alongside sheep, however, is more interesting because it seems to be an enlargement of the Christian repertoire from what it had been in catacomb art and would seem to indicate that perhaps churches displayed images of a more didactic or even dogmatic nature perhaps as early as the second century. Once again, however, this evidence is interesting but not convincing unless we put it together with all other examples of images in similar situations as evidence that the openness to imagery was such that the use of images in the apses and on the walls of the new basilicas can be considered likely.

The first surviving monumental images in churches

The first pure extant example, however, of a church basilica employing monumental Christian imagery is *Santa Pudenziana* **[215]** in Rome, ca. 400. We have described the apse mosaic previously in this chapter[15] and so it is enough here to suggest that the image is so magnificent and complex in its symbolic and figurative imagery that we can perhaps conclude that we are probably looking at only the latest expression in what was an already established tradition of decorating churches with monumental Christian scenes and personages.

215 ***Apse Mosaic,*** **Santa Pudenziana, Rome, ca. 400.**

The upper walls of the naves of the first monumental basilicas after legalization were probably not decorated any earlier than the *Theodosian* period (380-450). Until then it is possible that the walls were simply decorated with colorful slabs of veined marble. The first basilicas to display a *program* of images on the clerestory walls of a nave were most likely *St. Paul's Outside the Walls,* and *St. Peter's Basilica* **[218]** on the Vatican Hill.[16]

In *St. Paul's Basilica,* Old Testament scenes presented Aaron as a precursor to St. Paul in an extended pictorial style.[17] The New Testament scenes in the nave were episodes from *The Acts of the Apostles*. It is

216 Roman Temple, worship sacrifice.

http://www.proprofs.com/flashcards/cardshowall.php?title=ahis110-final OR

http://www.proprofs.com/flashcards/

217 (above) ***Basilica of Santa Sabina*, Rome, ca.**

http://www.proprofs.com/flashcards/cardshowall.php?title=ars-410-exam-1_1

OR

http://www.proprofs.com/flashcards/

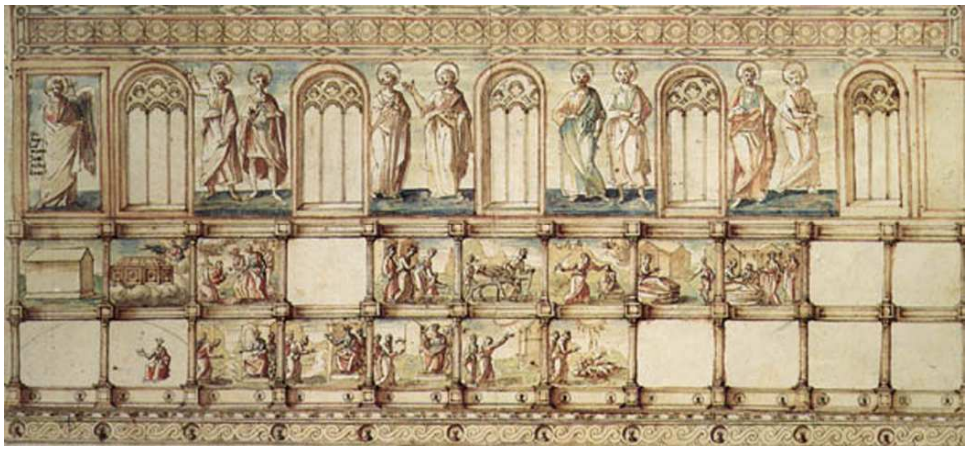
known that at about the same time there was a program of images in *St. Peter's Basilica* that presented St. Peter as the second Moses.[18] Both of these churches are in the early style of processional basilicas. The meaning behind the inclusion of pictorial cycles on the clerestory walls of processional basilicas will be discussed below.

The introduction of monumental figurative images in churches can only be proven to have begun to take place between 400 and 450. It may have happened sooner but no examples have survived or been described by contemporary writers.

The basilica as visual aid

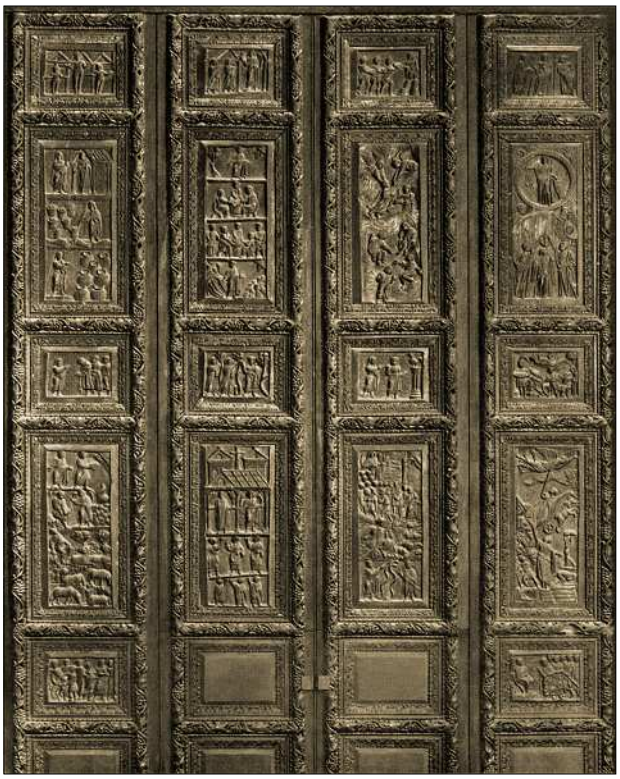
While the church basilicas were, architecturally speaking, Roman in design, their interiors came to be, by the later part of the 5th century, uniquely Christian and visually stunning. In contrast to the pagan temples the exteriors of church basilicas were usually rather plain brick affairs reflecting in their delineated forms the division of the interior space. The interior atmosphere of the churches, however, was bright and colorful affording the worshipper something of an attempted foretaste of heaven.[19] Christian belief looked forward in hope to a future "new Jerusalem" (Rev 21: 1-4) in heaven where there would be *no more tears* (Rev 21:1), only eternal happiness with God. The interiors of the church basilicas reinforced that hope.

Pagan temples had been houses for the statue of the god; congregants did not meet in them as an assembled group. Pagan liturgies were held outside **[216]** on the steps or in the forecourt; the exteriors formed a beautiful and dignified backdrop. As well as sacred precincts, however, Church basilicas were assembly halls for worshippers **[217]** who moved around at various times during the ritual.[21] The sacredness of the mysteries enacted inside the Church building were guarded, and therefore veiled, by a plain exterior. Only exterior entryways were monumentalized and decorated in any way.



218 *Clerestory Nave Images*, Old St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, ca. 400

The interiors of the church basilicas provided just the right combination of wall spaces to meet the unique needs of the new types of converts



219 **detail of *Doors of Santa Sabina*, Rome, 5th c.**

swelling the ranks of the faithful following legalization and subsequent imperial favor. Imagery became an impressive aid to the exegetical work of the Church in forming and confirming the new converts in the faith. The basilica churches provided large *billboard*[22] spaces in which to arrange visual aids to learning the basic truths of the faith. On the exterior, the facades above the doors or porch provided opportunities for imagery that invited the attention of the general public, much like roadside billboards and store signs have done in our age. Doors **[219]** were also sometimes sculpted with Christian imagery. The interior had its *billboard* spaces that displayed instructional pictures to reinforce the *curriculum*. Arranged longitudinally, the interior processional space provided clerestory walls above the nave columns which invited imagery that would move a person along to the other end of the nave where a monumental triumphal arch and curved apse offered a space for climax imagery **[220]**.

Convergence

The principle organizing device for arranging imagery in the Christian basilica was convergence.[23] Judaism and Christianity –biblical religion- is ultimately concerned with an end purpose or goal. Biblical salvation history, whether expounded in scripture or Christian images, is like an arrow directed to a target. It has an absolute beginning and an absolute end.[24] The adaptation of the classical Roman basilica to Christian worship strikingly reinforced that concept. Roman basilicas often had entrances and apses on the long sides. In addition there might be multiple apses and entrances and not necessarily opposite each other. With the exception of imperial audience halls, the space was experienced as non-directional. Apses did sometimes focus attention on a cult statue in a basilica style temple. Christian basilicas, on the other hand, from the start, arranged the experience of the space on a longitudinal axis with movement from the entrance to an apse on the far end of the building. The affect of the long nave created a "continuous and measured"[25] progression that, with the illustrations on the walls "contributed to a dramatic and meaningful experience"[26] of a procession. There might be three apses in a Christian basilica but one was always dominant and always opposite the entrance. The other two flanked it to the right and left.

In the Christian church basilica, one was drawn from an absolute beginning, the entrance, to the absolute end, the apse.

The absolute end point in Christian theology –the omega point- is Jesus Christ. That is the "*world view*" of early Christian art: "*a vision of*

the confluence of humankind toward an omega point in Christ."[27] All of the interior space and carefully arranged imagery in the basilicas led to a glittering apse mosaic of the glorified Christ. The Old Testament prefiguration scenes and New Testament scenes from Christ's historic life or the lives of the saints in the nave draw the worshipper toward the representation of the end of history, an enthroned Christ on a globe of the cos-

220 **The *convergent program* of images in the early Christian basilica**

mos, over the altar **[220]**.[28] Sometimes the apse mosaic would be an image of the transfiguration with a gemmed cross symbolizing the transfigured Christ. Other times it would be Christ enthroned among his apostles.

One of the first churches in the center of Rome, the basilica of *Sts. Cosmas and Damian* (526-530), has an apse mosaic that depicts Christ in glory ascending above the *River Jordan*.[29] Flanking Christ are Peter and Paul leading a procession of figures toward him. All the faithful, through the guidance of the Church represented by Peter and Paul, will ultimately ascend to be with the Lord, transfigured. **[221]**

This Christian imagery was a strong rebuke to the pagan religion of Rome with which it was in competition. The God of the Christians (and the Jews) was the one God, a jealous God who would not tolerate other gods. Unlike the pagans who had a pantheon of gods that grew as new peoples were added to the empire, the Christians insisted on only one God. Christ replaced all the former gods of Rome. Also, unlike the mythological gods, Jesus –an actual historical person— had been raised from the dead and given supreme authority over all the cosmos. He was the definitive self revelation of God.[30] He was the only Son of God and would come again in glory at the end of time (Matt 25:31).[31] Until his second coming, Christ had left his Church as a guide to the attainment of ultimate salvation. In apse imagery such as Christ enthroned among his

221 ***The Parousia of Christ*****, apse mosaic, Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Rome, ca. 527**

apostles, the Church was nudging the Roman state out of its long standing preeminence. The Church taught that it was not earthly reward that was ultimately important but the heavenly rewards of the world to come, and the Church was an essential guide to the world's success in that regard, not the state.

The church doors of basilicas were sometimes left wide open between services so that pagan interest could be aroused by the stunning apse mosaics they might catch a glimpse of at the far end of the nave.

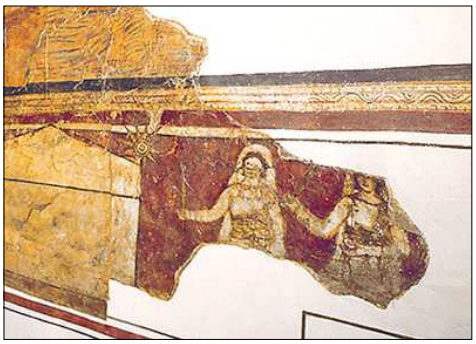
Moving Toward the Lord

Not surprisingly the feeling of a converging procession became the predominant organizing scheme for the decoration of the interiors of Christian churches.

As we discovered when we explored earlier the architectural form of the early church basilicas, processions had been a part of the experience of everyone in the ancient world. They had been a traditional expression of pagan religious piety for centuries. Scenes of public procession were recorded on the *Parthenon* in Athens and the *Ara Pacis* in Rome as well as other places. The Old Testament describes processions of pilgrims to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Christians simply continued the tradition of public processions. In fact, processions of Christians competed with pagan processions, sometimes held on the same date and using the same route.[32]

The development of lay participation in public processions apparently began in Constantinople. It was the Arians who first introduced the chanting of antiphonal psalms while in procession.[33] Liturgical processions in the 5th and 6th centuries took place in the streets in full public view.[34] But, as early as the end of the 4th century a pilgrim to Jerusalem wrote of processions there as part of *stational* liturgies wherein the clergy processed from one holy site to another followed by pilgrims.[35] In Rome and other cities *stational* liturgical processions would take place on holy days with the bishop and his clergy processing from one major basilica to another throughout a holy season.

The processional concept can be found as early as in the baptistery (254) frescos at Dura-Europos. The largest fresco on the walls depicts the *Three Wise Virgins* **[222]** dressed in white and carrying lit tapers, processing toward a representation of the tomb of Christ. The sense of procession is everywhere to be seen in early Church program imagery. Even apostles flanking Christ in mosaics are turned or otherwise posed suggesting a movement toward the *omega point* –Christ. Lambs representing the Church process toward the *Agnus Dei* **[223],** or saints, carrying the victorious wreaths of their martyrdom **[224]**, are presented to Christ after



journeying down the nave of their own personal salvation.

222 (top left, detail) ***Three Wise Virgins at the Tomb of Christ*, Baptistery, house church at Dura-Europos, mid 3rd c.**

223 (top right, detail) ***Apse Mosaic, Sts. Cosmas and Damian. Mid 5th c.***

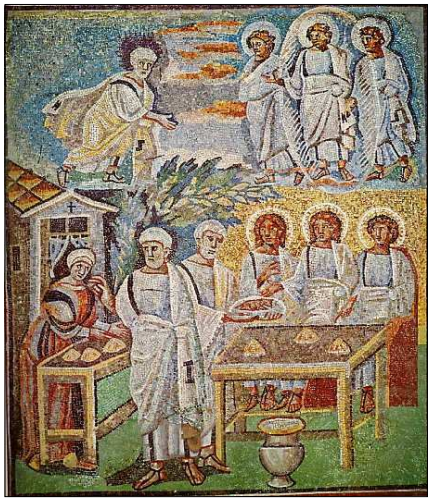
224 (above, detail) ***Apse Mosaic, Sts. Cosmas and Damian. Mid 5th c.***

Repertoire

How was it determined which images to display and where in the church?

We can turn to the Liturgy itself to see a guiding principle that was probably used in determining which Christian symbols, stories and images to use in the decoration of the first great church basilicas built following legalization.

During the Easter Vigil, the Church reads out just a few texts from the Old and New Testaments that it considers the principle events in the history of the Church. There is no doubt that there were some local variations in the 4th and 5th century but the following from the earliest known listing[36] is probably a good representation: The *Story of Creation* (Genesis 1:1-3:24); The *Binding of Isaac* (Genesis 22:1-18); The *Passover Charter Narrative* (Exodus 12:1-24); *Story of Jonah* (Jonah 1:1-4:11); *Crossing of the Red Sea* (Exodus 14:24-15:21); The *Promise to Jerusalem* (Isaiah 60:1-13); The Lord's *Answer to Job* (Job 38:2-28); *Assumption of Elijah* (2 Kings 2:1-22); the *New Covenant* (Jeremiah 31:31-34); the *Entry Into the Promised Land* (Joshua 1:1-9); The *Valley of Dry Bones* (Ezekiel 37:1-14); the story of the *Three Youths in the Furnace* (Daniel 3:1-29). In addition, there were Psalms as well as probably a reading from Romans (Romans 6:3-11 and one of the gospel Resurrection accounts (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8 or Luke 24:1-12).



225 ***The Hospitality of Abraham,* nave mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, 5th c.**

Abraham appears three times in this panel; greeting the 'strangers' at the top; instructing his wife, Sarah, to prepare a meal for the strangers (bottom left); and – immediately behind– serving the meal. This design concept of showing multiple scenes rolled into one panel or strip is called *continuous narration*.

By highlighting these narratives in the most important liturgical celebration of the Church year, the Church indicated what it considered to be the principal historical events in the history of salvation. And so the Church chose to decorate the interiors of the churches with images that reflected the same approach. It also reflected the major catechetical outline of instruction given by bishops to new converts. St. Augustine (d. 430), who was actually somewhat ambivalent concerning the use of images in churches, gave the rationale behind the

226 ***Miracle of the Loaves and Fish*****, mosaic from the top register of the nave wall of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 505.**

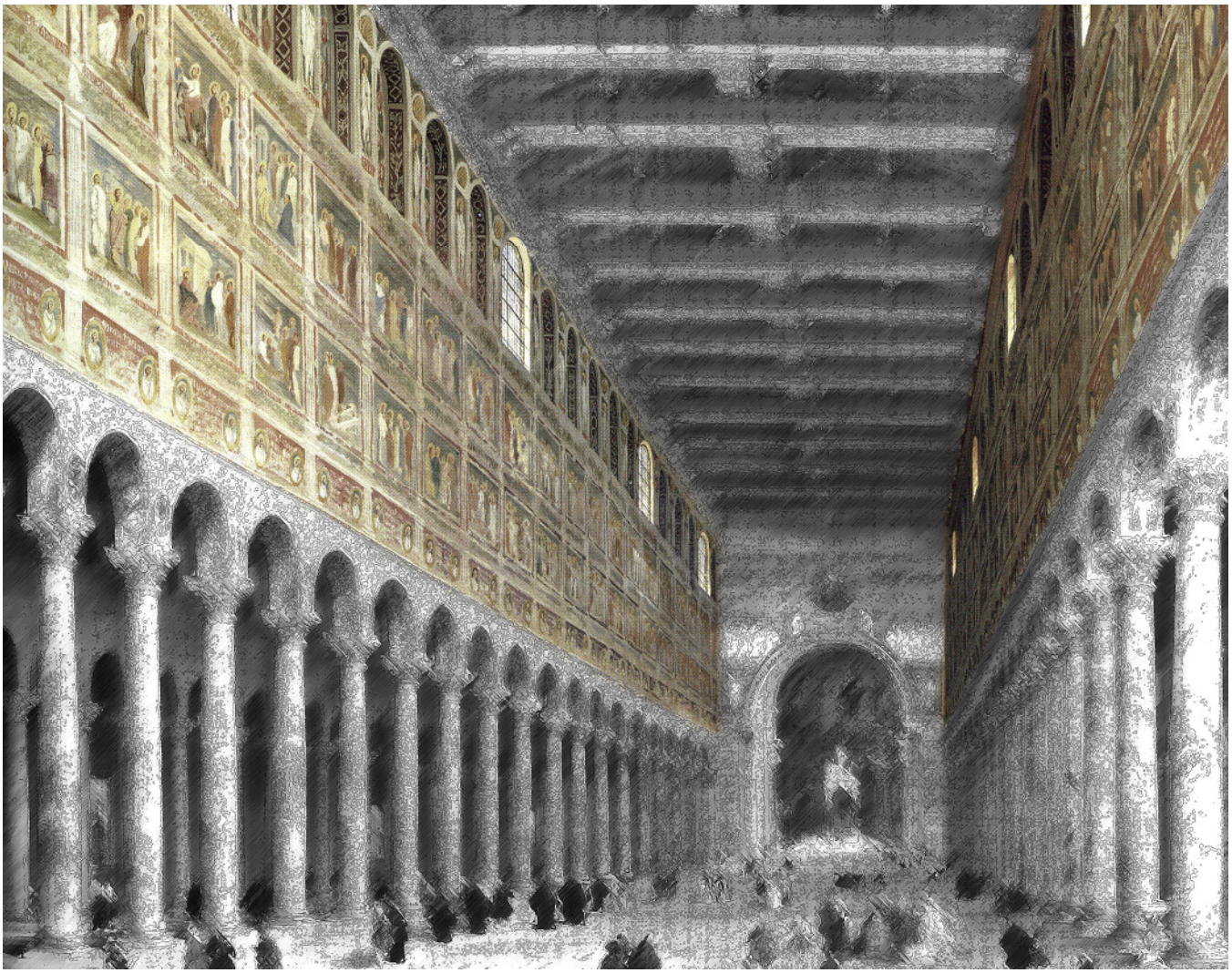
content of the initiation curriculum to those charged with instructing converts. He suggested that rather than tiring catechumens with too much information they should just hit the high points and move through lesser things quickly as those things will come to light later once the overall meaning is understood.[37] That is what determined the content of church art in the 4th through 6h centuries: those stories the Church deemed of primary importance in catechetical instruction were given visual expression on the walls of the churches. Even within those images a hierarchy can be found with principal moments given emphasis by their larger format with supporting details, presented as smaller vignettes, abbreviated and crowded into the composition in a kind of continuous narration through time, in one composite image. Such an instance can be seen in a mosaic in *Santa Maria Maggiore* where the hospitality of Abraham in three distinct scenes is crowded into a single landscape **[225]**.

Augustine, in his monumental *Civitas Dei* (City of God), laid out a comprehensive history and meaning of *ecclesia* (Church). What was represented on the nave walls of churches closely parallels Augustine's division's of time and his interpretations of them.[38]

Paulinus of Nola (ca. 420) described extensive murals in his churches at Cimtile and Fundi (near Naples, Italy), and suggests to his friend and colleague bishop in Gaul decorations for the apses of his basilicas. Paulinus described his "new" basilica as having nave wall murals with stories of Old Testament men and women of saintly character. At the end of the atrium, probably near the narthex, there were paintings from the first eight books of the Bible. Upon entering the basilica one could read both Testaments in pictures along the nave walls.[39]

The instructional nature of the basilica images can be deduced from their stylistic rendering. Because Christian images stressed content over appearance they were different in style from the realistic images found in Roman art of the period. Christian images were abstracted and simplified **[226]**. Two-dimensional shapes were sufficient to convey narratives and so the illusion of three-dimensional form was unnecessary. Scenes incorporated only essential details in the design, looking somewhat like stage props or scenery in a kids' play: *"These are disposed to scoff at Christian writings, and even at the Scriptures for their want of correctness of language. They should be made to see that it is the matter rather than the language which is of importance; it is more profitable to listen to a true discourse than to one which is eloquent."* [40]

As the apse area was the most important part of the basilica —its climax— it is there that we find images of the most important Christian personages, events and theological concepts. The avenue of the nave is, therefore, where we find images preparatory to the climax.

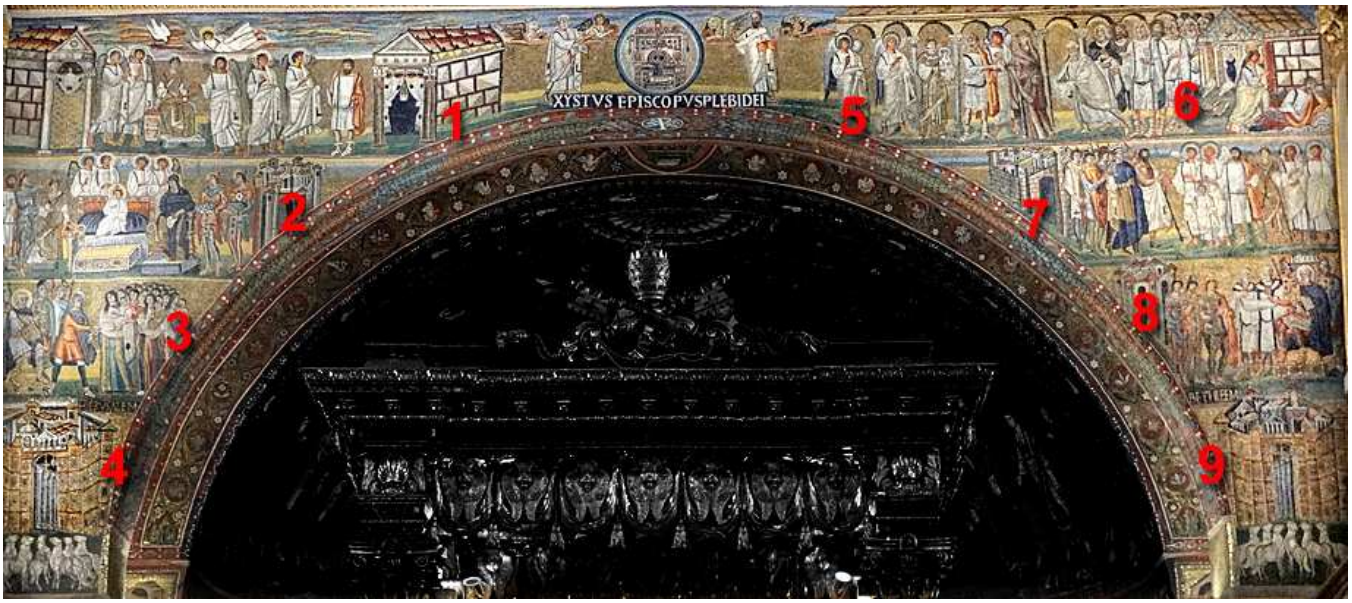


227*Saint Paul Outside the Walls,* Rome, 5th c., Painting by Giovanni Paolo Panini, 1741. Private collection.

Jeffrey Spier with contributors, *Picturing the Bible, The Earliest Christian Art*, (New Haven, Yale University Press/Kimbell Art Museum, 2007) p. 115. Image has been modified.

Typological Ordering

The nave images in the early Christian basilicas showed an overall concern for illustrating the progression of the Church through the Old and New Testaments, culminating in the symbolic New Jerusalem and awesome image of divinity in the apse. This organizing principle according to the history of salvation probably began with old *Saint Peter's Basilica,* and the *Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls* (The original mosaics in those churches have not survived). Old Testament scenes were depicted in the naves on the right clerestory wall with New Testament scenes illustrated on the left. Typological pairing of scenes of Old Testament *types* with New Testament *realities* across from each other in the nave was common **[227]**. We saw that in old *St. Peter's.* Moses and St. Peter were paired in a typological relationship. For example, a scene of Moses causing water to flow from a rock was paired with a scene across the nave of St. Peter doing the same in order to provide water for his jailors' baptisms. At *St. Paul Outside the Walls,* Old Testament scenes depict Aaron as a precursor to St. Paul (the mosaics did not survive the 19th century fire). Sometimes scenes are arranged out of chronological order



228 ***Triumphal Arch,*** **Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, ca. 430**

1. The *Annunciation* and and angel informs Joseph; 2) *Adoration of the Magi*; 3) Herod orders the *Slaughter of the Innocent*; 4) Bethlehem; 5) *Joseph and Mary Present the Child Jesus in the Temple* and are met by the prophetess Anna and Simeon and the tribes of Israel; 6) an angel appears to Joseph and tells him to take his family and flee to Egypt; 7) the *Holy Family* arrives in Egypt and King Aphrodisias is converted; 8) the magi visit Herod and inquire as to where to find the new king; 9) Jerusalem

229 (right) ***Melchizedek Offering Bread and Wine*****, nave mosaic, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, ca. 430**

in order to emphasize the association of the Old or New Testament scene with what is happening at the altar. At *Santa Maria Maggiore* (ca. 400), for example, the depiction of the priest and king, Melchizedek, offering bread and wine to Abraham **[229]** after the latter's victory, appears out of chronological order so as to more closely associate the old king's sacrifice with that of the priest offering the bread and wine of the Mass, at the altar below.[40]

The mosaics of *Santa Maria Maggiore*, the oldest major church dedicated to the Virgin in the West, depict a close association between Mary and Old Testament events. As the Jewish mother of Christ and the final member of the Jewish ancestry inherited by Christ, Mary is the subject of the historical scenes (5th c.) of the triumphal arch **[228]** marking the border between the nave and the apse. Scenes depicting marriage, legitimate birth, and inheritance of the covenant are emphasized as much as the Exodus scenes on the clerestory walls over the sides of the nave. All of this throws light on the role of Jesus Christ, son of the most Holy Mother of God, as the legitimate heir of Jewish patriarchy and priesthood.[41]

The scene of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* was viewed as a type or prefiguration of the *Crucifixion* and was often paired that way in imagery to make that point. But, such organization by association was not necessarily a strict rule and so exceptions are not uncommon.

Imperial or Heavenly Vision?

Because of its adoption of pagan and imperial iconographic imagery, many art historians through the 20th century argued that Christian apse designs are evidence of a pagan transformation of Christian beliefs and practices, and also of the new faith's theological corruption under the

229 (below, top) ***Medallion,*** **Severus Alexander enthroned atop a star-studded sphere symbolizing the cosmos, Rome, 222-35. Bronze.**

Bibliothèque Nationale de france, Cabinet des Mé ailles, Paris. Jeffrey Spier with contributors, *Picturing the Bible, The Earliest Christian Art*, (New Haven, Yale University Press/ Kimbell Art Museum, 2007) p 96. The comparison with the Santa Costanza mosaic is made by Johannes G. Decker.

230 (below, right) **detail of *Christ Presenting the Keys to Peter,* apse mosaic of Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 350**

231 (above) ***detail of 229***

232 (right) ***Christ Pantocrator,*** **top of the triumphal arch mosaic, St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, ca. 440–461**

233 (far right) ***Dedication Slab*** **representing Sun, Moon and Jupiter Dolichenus, dedicated to *Sol Invictus* and to the Genius of the Imperial Batavian horse-guards ("equites singulares") for the emperors)**

author: Jastrow (2006) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stele_Sol_Invictus_Terme.jpg

influence imperial patronage. We looked at this issue of presumed pagan and imperial influence previously in this chapter[42] but discovered, to the contrary, that *anti*-imperialism actually resided in the details of Christian art. Here we revisit the controversy relative to the imagery depicted in early Christian church apses in order to understand the underlying theological vision behind the visual programs that decorated the most sacred part of the basilica.

Christian apse compositions did, in fact, share with pagan designs symmetrical arrangements and a visionary or irrational handling of space.[43] As pagan deities were flanked by lesser divinities, Christ could be flanked by angels, saints and images of patrons. As in pagan iconographic images, hierarchic proportions indicated rank or importance. Imaginative magical creatures in the pagan compositions would seem to be early models for the four *"living beasts"* of the *Book of Revelation*. It is easy to see why Christians would adopt traditional pagan iconography to suggest divinity as the Christian Church was in the midst of resolving the question of the Savior's nature as divine or human, or some mixture of the two. The Church was merely utilizing the culture's visual language for symbolizing Christ's divine nature as part of his dual nature: fully human and fully divine with no mixture of the two.

That Christ seemed to be made over into an emperor of sorts can be seen by looking at the way Roman rulers were sometimes depicted and how those images compare with depictions of the Christian God. A coin from roughly 75 years before the legalization of Christianity shows the emperor Alexander Severus sitting on a sphere of stars symbolizing the cosmos **[230, 231]**. The emperor is depicted as an omnipotent god. The image can be positively compared to a mosaic of Christ giving the keys to St. Peter in the church of *Santa Constanza* where Christ sits on a blue sphere **[232]** and the regally enthroned Christ in the church of *Santa Prudenziana* **[215]**[44]. In the basilica church of *Saint Paul Outside the Walls*, just at the top of the triumphal arch, Christ is seemingly portrayed as *Sol Invictus*, adored by angels and the four living creatures (Rev 4:6b) and

234 Roman Army *Imperial Cult Room*, Temple at Luxor, Egypt, ca. 300

http://www.flickr.com/photos/brooklyn_museum/2364603164/

Color has been intensified, lighting adjusted, and photo cropped to enhance this photograph.

twenty-four elders (Rev 4:10) of the *Book of Revelation* [232][45].

Roman rulers were sometimes represented on the focal walls in *cult rooms* receiving gifts or trophies from soldiers. Such is the case in a room constructed by the Roman army in the Egyptian Temple at Luxor (ca. 300) to honor the Roman Tetrarchs **[234]**. A three-meter wide apse opposite the entrance was painted with images of the four emperors dressed as gods and sporting halos. Flanking the apse, courtiers approach the rulers offering homage.[46]

The anteroom of the *Mirthraeum* of Ostia Antica's (Rome's port city) imperial palace, dating from the second half of the 2nd century, had an altar and a semi-circular apse-like niche decorated with a haloed image of the god Silvanus.[47]

Images of deities and emperors in apses were not, therefore, unknown before the legalization of Christianity; the use of apses for displaying sacred or imperial images was not in itself a Christian innovation. It does not follow, however, that simply because churches utilized an imperial or pagan formula to present its images that the fundamental meaning was imperial or pagan.[48] In nearly all cultures certain design characteristics are commonly found to suggest omnipotence. Divine majesty and power are almost always associated with enthroned, centrally positioned, and symmetrically posed figures.

Imperial or kingly imagery is not an indication that Christianity, or Christian art, underwent *imperialization*. Both Old and New Testaments are filled with kingly metaphors and analogies for God and Christ. Psalm 47 offers just one of a multitude of examples:

> *Sing praises to our King, sing praises!*
> *For God is the king of all the earth;*
> *God reigns over the nations;*
> *God sits on his holy throne."* (Psalm 47:6-8)

An amazing convergence of events in the 4th century resulted in the construction and decoration of Christian churches that brought doctrine, biblical texts, and Roman imagery together. The Christological debates, ascendency of papal primacy, traditional Roman decorative programs, pagan iconographic tradition, and Roman legalization all contributed to the full public flowing of the Christian Church and its houses of worship.

The trappings of the imperial court and lavish interiors were deployed to create a foretaste of the splendor of the *House of the Lord* (*'basilica'*) that will be fully experienced in heaven.[49] When we closely examine the existent imagery, and contemporary Christian texts, we see that it all was meant to create a fitting setting for the liturgy, revealing a close association with the theology presented in the last book of the Bible, the *Book of Revelation*.

The Book of Revelation and the Mass

Imagery described in *Revelation* frequently calls to mind the liturgical worship of the Mass such as in *Revelation 8:4* where an angel is de-

scribed as standing *"before the face of God, thurible in hand. The fragrant incense soaring aloft was the prayer of God's people on earth."* Indeed, *Revelation* describes heavenly worship with imagery most Christians would have associated with the *Divine Liturgy* -the Mass- celebrated in the church basilicas: images of chalices, vestments, incense, and hidden manna.[50] St. John's description of the heavenly court in *Revelation* mirrored the seating arrangement of the bishop and his clergy around the church's altar in the liturgy.[51] The hymns that are chanted by angels and others in the biblical text of *Revelation* reappear in many of the ancient liturgies.[52] Indeed, many biblical scholars maintain that the *Book of Revelation* is really only understandable in light of the liturgy.[53]

The *Apocalypse of St. John*, as the book is also known, has a threefold division. The first part comprises seven exhortatory letters to seven cities in Asia Minor. The central teaching of the second part is the wisdom of Christ. It is symbolized by a book with seven seals. In it are written the eternal decrees of God touching the end of the world, and the final victory of good over evil. No one except Jesus, the lamb **[241]** slain for the sins of the world, is worthy to break the seals and read its contents.[54]

The third part describes the power of Christ over Satan and his kingdom. The lamb defeats the dragon and the beast. This idea is developed in a drama of five acts. In five successive scenes we see before us the struggle, the fall of Babylon the harlot, the victory, and final beatitude.[55]

The lamb, the *Agnus Dei* or *"Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"*, is Jesus Christ. Through his Incarnation, sacrificial death on the cross, and resurrection he conquered evil/death/sin –the dragon/beast of *Revelation*. Raised from the dead and given supreme status over the cosmos Christ is the culmination of all God's purposes. The thanksgiving sacrifice of the *Eucharist*, the Mass, is the timeless celebration of God's action.[56] It is understood as a timeless ritual that is simultaneously enacted in the past, present, and celestial future.[57] God's action in Christ is believed to be eternally *present*.

Well before the legalization of Christianity, an early Church father, St. Irenaeus (150-202), viewed the central worship of Christianity, the Mass, as an earthly participation in the liturgy of heaven; the altar of the church and the altar of heaven as one.[58] Around 387, St. John Chrystostom would write *"When you see the Lord immolated and lying upon the altar, and the priest bent over that sacrifice praying, and all the people empurpled by that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men on earth? Or are you not lifted up to heaven"* [388]?

The word *apocalypse* is also used for other works of a similar nature in the literary genre called apocalyptic literature. Such literature is *"marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism."*[60]

"Revelation *makes use of symbolism and visions, mentions angelic*

mediators, has bizarre imagery, declares divine judgment, emphasizes the kingdom of God, prophesies a new heaven and a new earth, and consists of a dualism of ages"[61]

For a variety of reasons *Revelation's* place in the biblical canon was not immediately guaranteed, with doubts raised as early as the 2nd century about its character, symbolism, and apostolic authorship.[62] The canonicity of the *Revelation* was never seriously questioned in the Church of the Western Roman Empire; its canonicity was affirmed at the regional *Council of Carthage* in 397. Doubts about *Revelation* were pretty much limited to parts of the Eastern Church. In the 4th century, Gregory of Nazianzus and other bishops in the East argued against including *Revelation* because of the difficulties of interpreting it and the risk of its abuse by heretics. Indeed, it remains the only book of the *New Testament* that is not read within the *Divine Liturgy* of the Eastern Orthodox Church,[63] although it was generally accepted by the Eastern Church not very long after acceptance in the West. The Eastern Church, however, did not develop a program of images for churches as obviously related to the *Book of Revelation* as did the Western Church.

235 ***Apse of St. Paul's Outside the Walls,*** **Rome, ca. 400**

This (current) mosaic was ordered by Pope Honorius III in 1220 and was made by Venetian artists.

Upon entering the church basilica of the 5th and 6th century, the believer would be drawn down the nave's celebration of salvation history in biblical scenes and portraits of prophets, patriarchs, saints and popes to the apse, brilliantly decorated in golden mosaics representing the ultimate goal of history. There, the splendid brightness symbolizes the divine glory; the presence of God fills the heavenly Jerusalem with such a brightness that, as revealed in the *Apocalypse* **[235],** there is no need of a sun or moon. Reigning over the new heaven and the new earth beside God the Father is the Lamb with equal rank and dignity. In *Revelation 19:9* we can see the connection between the heavenly and earthly liturgies: "*Blessed are those invited to the marriage of the Lamb.*"[64] By taking part in the liturgy of the Church, especially the Mass, Christians are already entering the sphere of things divine. *"The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her powers flow. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made children of God by faith and Baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper".*[65]

The Imagery of *Revelation*

Several images are commonly found in 5th and 6th century apses that point to the influence of the *Book of Revelation.*

The enthroned figure

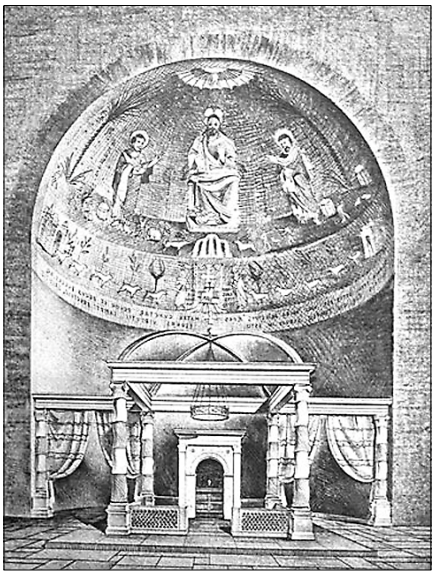
One of the most impressive images in all of Christian art is certainly the *Majestas Domini* which comes straight out of *Revelation.* The image of an enthroned figure originated from scripture and not from imperial tradition:

> *"'Come up here and I will show you what must happen afterwards.' At once I was caught up in spirit. A throne was there in heaven, and on the throne sat one whose appearance sparkled like jasper and carnelian. Around the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald. Surrounding the throne I saw twenty-four other thrones on which twenty-four elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. In front of the throne was something that resembled a sea of glass like crystal.*
>
> *"In the center and around the throne, there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back. The first creature resembled a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like that of a human being, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight."* (Rev 4:1-7)

236 (below, top) ***Sketch*** **of possible apse mosaic in original St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, end of 4th c.**

237 ***Enthroned Cross*****, dome mosaic of the Arian Baptistery, Ravenna, Italy, early 6th c.**

James Snyder in *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, 4th-14th Century*, interprets this image as referring to the anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ in Judgment.



238 detail of ***Apse Mosaic*** **in Santa Pudenziana, Rome, ca. 400**

There are numerous references in the book to the one who sits upon the throne [Rev 5:13; 6:16; 7:9,10; 12:5; 16:17; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5; 22:1]. The figure of the Christian God sitting on a regal throne surrounded by a symbolic aureole dominates the apses of the early Christian basilicas. The heavenly nature of the vision is overwhelmingly brought home by the colorful paradise-like setting of plants, flowers, and animals in a sky of dazzling brilliantly colored mosaic chips.

There are variations on the enthroned figure such as the apse mosaic in *Santa Costanza* where Christ is sitting on a blue sphere **[212]**, symbol-

239 (above) ***One of the Four Living Creatures,*** **St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, ca. 400**

240 (above, right) ***Four Living Creatures,*** **detail apse mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome, ca. 400**

izing his lordship of all creation. The iconic formula is perhaps borrowed from imperial imagery but its meaning is more specifically from *Revelation*. Another variation can be seen in the 5th century mosaic at the top of the triumphal arch in *Santa Maria Maggiore* in Rome. There, a gemmed cross is enthroned **[242]**. In addition, the scroll with the seven seals of *Revelation* (5:1) is depicted at the base of the throne and the four living creatures (a lion, eagle, bull, and man) worship God. Representing the Church, and symbolizing the great multitude of *Revelation* (7:9), are the apostles Peter and Paul, the foremost early leaders of the Church.

The image of Christ as *Sol Invictus* that we saw on the triumphal arch of *St. Paul Outside the Walls* does not employ a throne but the image still communicates the same concept of divinity as expressed in *Revelation* (1:17-18). This medallion is flanked by images of *Revelation's* twenty-four elders and, flying overhead, the symbols of the four living creatures of *Revelation* **[239]**, just as we saw on the arch in *Santa Maria Maggiore*. Between the groups of elders and the medallion of Christ are two angels with censors recalling the angel who stands before the face of God with a censor **[233]**.

The Lamb

The lamb as a symbol for Christ was first used in the Gospel of John (1:29). John was referencing the Old Testament prophet Isaiah who had compared the sufferings of the *Servant of Yahweh*, the Messiah, with the sacrifice of a lamb (Is 53:7) and the blood of the lamb smeared on the doors of houses which served to protect the first-born of the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 12:6-7). That all been a promise and prefiguring of the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, the victim in the sacrifice of Calvary on behalf of all mankind. St. Paul said of Jesus that he was *"our paschal lamb, (who) has been sacrificed"* (Cor 5:7). *The Book of Revelation* reveals that Jesus was victorious and glorious in heaven as the slain lamb (Rev 5:6-14), surrounded by saints, martyrs, and virgins (Rev 7:9, 14; 14:1-5), who render him praise and glory due him as God (Rev 7:10).

241 ***Agnus Dei*****, detail in apse mosaic of Sts. Cosma and Damian, Rome, ca. 526-30**

The *Lamb of God* (*Agnus Dei*) of the *Book of Revelation* appears in the decorative imagery of the *Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian* (526-30) toward the bottom of the apse design standing atop a hillock from which flows four streams **[242]**. In *Revelation* life–giving water flows from the throne and from the Lamb (Rev 7:17; 21:6; 22:1). The four streams of water are often interpreted to refer to the life-giving *good*

242 (right) ***Agnus Dei* and *Seven Lampstands,* triumphal arch mosaic, Basilica of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Rome, ca. *526-30***

The *Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)* sits upon a prepared jeweled throne (an *Etimasia*) that also holds a cushion with a cross. The throne looks like an altar. Below is a parchment scroll bound with the seven seals of the *Book of Revelation.* Flanking the central medallion are the seven lampstands mentioned in *Revelation.*

news contained in the four Gospels. A *Lamb of God* image atop a hillock may also have been included in the bottom register of the apse composition for the original St. Peter's basilica **[236]**. The *Lamb of God* imagery was part of the apse mosaic of *Santa Pudenziana* before a 16th century renovation removed the lowest section that contained the image **[244]**.

243 **Façade mosaic on the Basilica Euphrasiana, Parenzo, *526-30***

The seven lamp stands of the *Book of Revelation* are depicted flanking the center window; four on the right, three on the left.

The New Jerusalem

In the apse mosaic of *Santa Pudenziana* [244], Christ sits enthroned among his apostles. As we saw before, the apostles represent the whole Church which in *Revelation* is called "a great multitude" and also by the enthroned twenty-four elders arrayed pretty much as we see the apostles seated here. To stress that this imagery of the apostles symbolizes the whole Church two female figures personify the two wings of the Church: Jewish and Gentile. One places a wreath on St. Peter (apostle to the Jews) and the other, on St. Paul (apostle to the Gentiles).

Behind this grouping is seen the *new* Jerusalem, the heavenly city of *Revelation*. In the center, just behind and above Christ is a bejeweled cross. The gemmed cross, of course, is a victory monument and represents the Savior's victory over Satan. Shimmering gold mosaic chips highlight the figures, throne, Christ's robes, his halo, the two female personifications and the wreaths, the arches and roof tiles of the buildings, the bejeweled cross, clouds, and the four living creatures in the sky. This is a heavenly scene. This is the heavenly city and the heavenly imagery of the *Book of Revelation*. This is the *new* Temple (the Church, the Body of Christ) and the *new* Jerusalem (the *heavenly* city). Celebrated is the timeless sacrifice of the cross presented in the sacrifice of the Mass and enacted on the altar below the mosaic.

In the lower corners of the triumphal arch of *Santa Maria Maggiore* the faithful gather at the gates of the holy cities of Jerusalem **[245]** and Bethlehem. The cities are ringed by gold walls set with peals and gems in accord with the description in *Revelation* of the heavenly city as having *"the radiance of some priceless jewel… [its] streets of pure gold, like translucent glass"* (Rev 21:11,21) [461].

244 (right) **Apse Mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome, ca. 400**

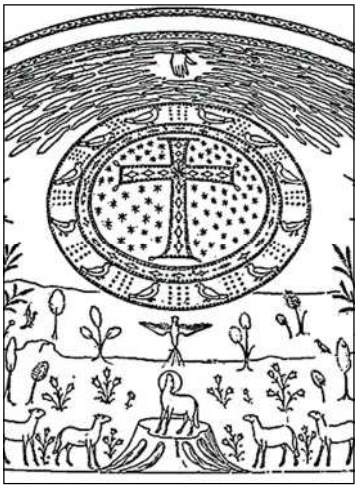
245 Jerusalem, detail of **Triumphal Arch, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, ca. 430**

http://www.paradoxplace.com/Perspectives/Rome%20&%20Central%20Italy/Rome/Rome_Churches/Santa_Maria_Maggiore/Santa_Maria_Maggiore_Triumphal_Arch/Santa_Maria_Maggiore_Mosaics_T.htm

Apse imagery of the period was not all so obviously reflective of the *Book of Revelation*. The *Transfiguration of the Lord* was also a common subject for compositions. But, both *Revelation* and *Transfiguration* imagery share an emphasis on *eschatological* theology, stressing a vision of the ultimate defeat of evil by God and the divinization of humanity at the end of time. The transfiguration experience gave to Peter, James and John a glimpse of Christ's glorification that would follow his sacrifice and death on the cross. The experience was meant to strengthen the apostles' faith which would be sorely tested by the horrible events of Christ's passion.

In the context of the church apses of the early Christian period, the representation of the *Transfiguration* conveyed to the faithful the hope that each of them would also be transfigured –sanctified and glorified— at the end of time when Christ would return with his reward in hand for those who stayed true to him. It was in the Mass, celebrated at the altar in the apse, that the saving action of Christ was *re*-presented and applied to the faithful.

Some of the simplest apse imagery is directly related to the pagan symposia type image common in Hellenistic art. We examined this type earlier while considering the chameleon-like variety of early images of Christ. Students or philosophical colleagues are depicted seated around their teacher, mentor, or leader. The Christian interpretation proffered is one of symbolizing the *Sermon on the Mount*. This type of image was wildly popular on sarcophagi and on catacomb walls and, as such, was widespread in Italy. An example of an apse mosaic from the period appears in the *Chapel of Sant'Aquilino* in Milan. A youthful, seated Christ is depicted among his apostles. He sits upon a cushioned seat and at his feet is a golden basket holding seven scrolls representing his teachings but could also be a allusion to the scroll with seven seals in *Revelation.* In both cases the number seven represents completeness.



246 (detail) **Hypothetical reconstruction of the apse mosaic in the Basilica Apostolorum, Cimitile, ca. 400-402**

James Snyder, *Medieval Art, Painting-Sculpture-Architecture, 4th-14th Century*, (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989) p. 63

246 ***Apse Mosaic*, Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, Italy, 6th c.**

http://03varvara.wordpress.com/tag/emilia-romagna/

247 ***Christ Teaching,* Apse Mosaic, Chapel of Sant'Aquilino, San Lorenzo Maggiore, Milan, Italy, ca. 400**

During the *Period of Recognition* the Church found a public face, reflecting its ascendancy as an official religion as well as its own clarification of the doctrine regarding the nature of Christ. With the rise in importance of the new capital, Constantinople, and corresponding decline of the city of Rome, Christian art in the East developed a visual expression that we call *Byzantine*, a term taken from the name of the fishing port, Byzantium, upon which Constantinople was founded. When we return to the history of Christian art in the West we will see that there, too, things were changing.

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[1] Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church*, (Lowrie Press 2007), p.123

[2] Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, New York, Phaidon Press, 2005), p.38

[3] Bernard Dick, *A History of Christian Art*, *1 Origins*, *Part 4: Dura-Europos "Program", & Characteristics of All Early Christian Art*, p.1

[4] I have lost the source for this observation but I think it is somewhere in: Robin Margaret Jensen, *Face to Face*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005)

[5] See especially Beat Brenk/Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon; An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images*, (Germany, 2010).

[6] Beat p.19

[7] Beat p.19

[8] Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire, A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), p.122

[9] Beat p.19

[10] Beat

[11] Beat 19

[12] Beat 19

[13] Beat, Chapter 1

[14] Marilyn Stokstad, *Medieval Art, Second Edition*, (Boulder, Westview Press 2004), p.27

[15] Bernard Dick, *A History of Christian Art, 2 The Period of Recognition: AD 313-476, Part 4: Dogmatic Images, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, p.1

[16] Jeffrey Spier with contributors, *Picturing the Bible, The Earliest Christian Art*, (New Haven, Yale University Press/Kimbell Art Museum, 2007), p.99

[17] Spier 99

[18] Spier 99

[19] James Snyder, *Medieval Art, Painting-Sculpture-Architecture, 4th-14th Century*, (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989), p.40

[20] Faculty of Theology of the University of Navarre, *The Navarre Bible: The Book of Revel*ation, (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1999), p.13

[21] Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods; a Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, Revised and Expanded edition, (Princeton, Princeton University Press 2003), p.92

[22] Mathews 92

[23] Mathews 150

[24] Stanley L. Jaki, *Why the Question: Is There a God?*, (Pinckney, Real View Books, 2001), p.51

[25] Snyder 48

[26] Snyder 48

[27] Mathews 171

[28] Mathews 150

[29] Mathews 169

[30] Thomas Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills – The World Before and After Jesus*, (New York, Anchor Books 1991), p.261

[31] see also Rev 20:11-33 and Romans 14:10

[32] Mathews 167

[33] Mathews 167

[34] Mathews 167

[35] Mathews 167

[36] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Vigil> This page was last modified on 5 May 2011 at 19:26. 6 May 2011 @ 12:10 PM

[37] Dorothy Verkerk, *Early Medieval Bible Illumination and the Ashburnham Pentateuch*, (Cambrid=ge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.61

[38] Snyder 42

[39] Snyder 41

[39] Catholic Encyclopedia - Christian Doctrine

[40] Spier 123

[41] Snyder 58

[42] Bernard Dick, *A History of Christian Art*, *2 The Period of Recognition: AD 313-476, Part 4: Dogmatic Images, Anti-imperial Themes*, p.7

[43] Mathews 173

[44] Spier 96, the comparison with the *Santa Costanza* mosaic is made by Johannes G. Decker, *Constantine the Great and Early Christian Art.*

[45] Spier 115, Johannes G. Decker

[46] Spier 115

[47] Spier 96-7

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