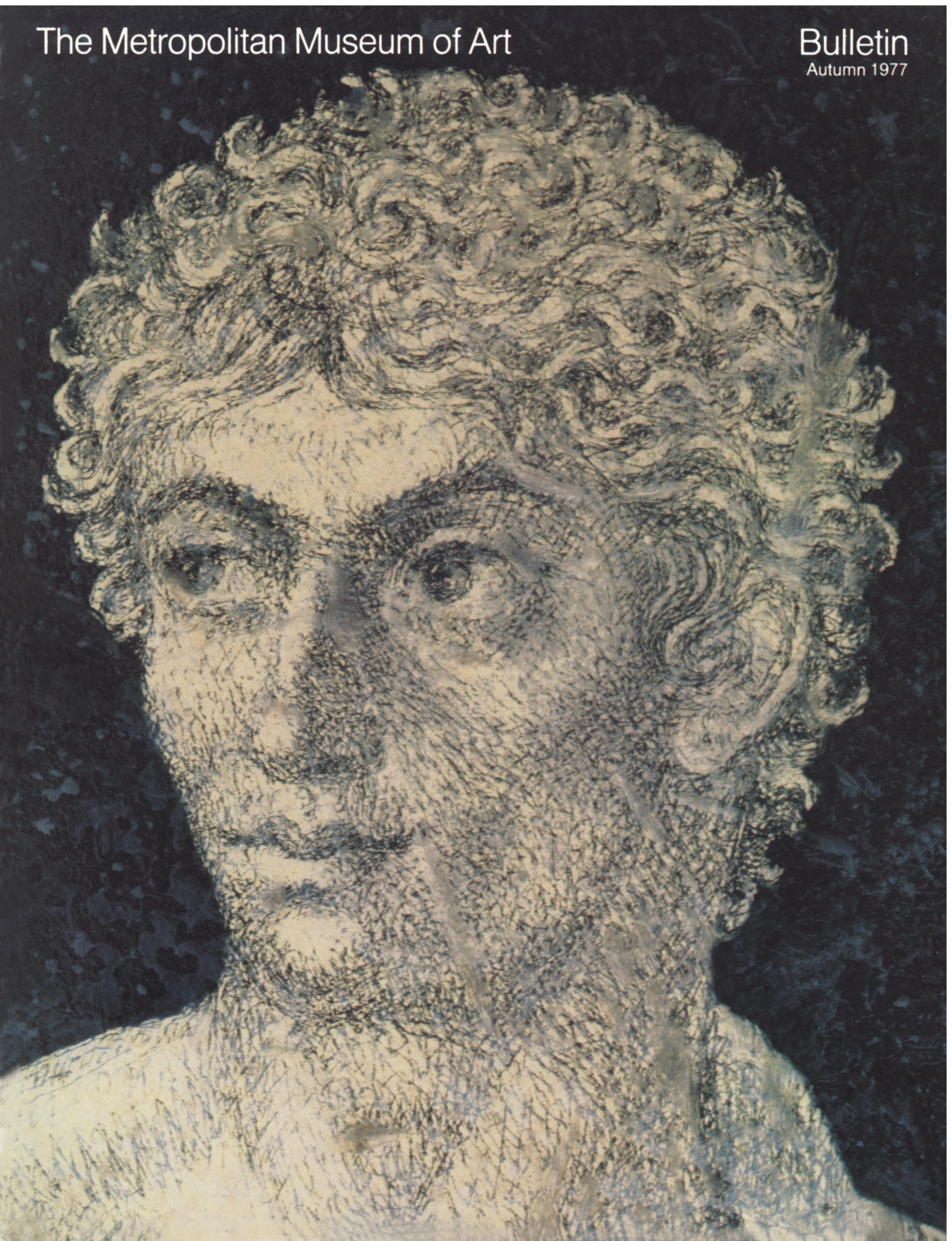
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bulletin
Autumn 1977



Director's Note

Few periods of history have known such dramatic and profound change as the late Roman world. The very essence of the older, classical civilization was being challenged, and would eventually perish. Like the modern world, the late Roman world was multiracial and multireligious. It was compounded by extremes of thought, from the most dire pessimism to the most fervent hope. It was wracked by crises in politics, society, and religion. Under an extraordinary succession of emperors, from the third to the seventh century, the empire was transformed from a great power, with its center at Rome, to a much reduced but still dominant state with a new capital at Constantinople. Devastating wars weakened its economy, and lands were relinquished forever as invaders advanced on the empire's borders. In 410 Rome, once the greatest city in the Western world, was sacked by the Goths. These shattering events were felt by common man and aristocrat alike, and, threatened by tremendous hardships, people by the thousands, turning from the old Olympian gods, sought comfort in mystery religions that offered hope of salvation.

Against this background of change and unrest, Christianity emerged triumphant. It had a humanistic quality not found in other faiths, and many Romans found solace in its tightly knit brotherhood. Despite intermittent persecution, Christians only increased their numbers. And in the fourth century, Emperor Constantine, making one of the most audacious decisions in history, granted Christianity his official sanction. A new era had begun.

The advent of Christianity witnessed the decline of the classical ideal of Greek and Roman art, although the church preserved and adapted classical forms for its own purposes. A new vigorous, more abstract style came to prevail in portraits and luxury goods for emperors and aristocrats as well as in art for the church: illustrations of Biblical stories, icons of Christ, the Virgin, and saints, and sumptuous vessels for its liturgy. By the sixth century, a distinctly Christian ideal dominated the arts of the Mediterranean world.

This complex and fascinating period is the subject of an exhibition to open at the Museum in mid-November. Four hundred and fifty objects from over 100 collections here and overseas will be brought together in a dynamic arrangement that will provide new insights and new public appreciation for Late Antique and Early Christian art. The creative force behind *Age of Spirituality* has been Kurt Weitzmann, Professor Emeritus, Princeton University, and Consultative Curator, Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, who wrote the introduction to this *Bulletin*. The coordinator was Margaret Frazer, Curator, Department of Medieval Art, who adapted these texts from a forthcoming catalogue of the exhibition. She was ably assisted by Sandra Morgan and Stephen Zwirn. The show was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, matched by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Further assistance was received from the Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust. Under the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act, indemnity was granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. We are most grateful to the Council's Executive Secretary, Lanni Lattin, and to her assistant, Nancy Lucia.

Thomas Hoving
Director

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On the cover: Gennadios, detail of a gold glass (number 41). Photograph: William F. Pons. Frontispiece: Saint Theodore, detail of a textile (number 73). Back cover: detail of the Antioch Chalice (number 81). Photograph: William F. Pons

Introduction

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The transition from the dying classical to the rising and finally triumphant Christian culture was a complex process, extending over several centuries, in which the two coexisted and competed with each other. Christianity owed much of its ultimate success to the fact that it outgrew its Jewish beginnings and adopted many elements from the classical culture it had set out to dethrone. Almost two centuries passed before the Christians overcame their lingering aversion, rooted in their Jewish heritage, to the representational arts—though the Jews themselves had at times surmounted this inhibition (see numbers 53, 54)—and began to use the formal vocabulary of classical art to propagate the message of the new religion. In the end the Greek church fathers not only reversed the iconoclastic attitude of the first generations of Christians, but elevated the representational arts to the highest level, that of the Scripture itself: "The image is a memorial, just what words are to a listening ear," said the eighth-century theologian John of Damascus in his treatise on holy images.

The classical and Christian cultures coexisted from the third to the seventh centuries—the period encompassed by the exhibition—but, at the end of this period, classical art, as far as subject matter was concerned, had run its course, and Christian imagery had triumphed with a burst of exuberant productivity. Despite many encroachments during these centuries, the supernational Roman Empire maintained far-reaching political, economic, and cultural coherence, often transcending its actual power. It was still safe for merchants to travel from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, and the widely flung network of roads on which legionnaires and Christian missionaries traveled was still intact. These conditions made possible an artistic production that spread over the entire Mediterranean world and was, like Greek and Latin, understood equally well in the East and the West.

One of the most crucial turning points in history was Constantine's victory over the emperor Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. One of Constantine's first acts as emperor was the Edict of Milan in 313, which established tolerance for the practice of Christianity and marked the birth of monumental Christian art. The first great basilicas in Rome, Jerusalem, and elsewhere were sponsored by Constantine and his immediate successors. This building program, in turn, led to a flourishing age of frescoes and mosaics to cover church walls, with individual hieratic compositions or series of Biblical stories for the edification of the devout—literate and illiterate alike. The next momentous event was Constantine's transfer of the capital, in 324-330, from Rome to Constantinople (formerly Byzantium), which, not invaded until the crusaders' occupation in 1204, soon outranked Rome as the arbiter in matters concerning the arts.

The rapid Christianization of culture and art among Constantine's successors led, in the second half of the fourth century, to a counterreaction by the emperor Julian the Apostate in the Greek East and by such senatorial families as the Nicomachi and the Symmachi (number 32) in the Latin West, all of whom reopened the pagan temples. In the arts this movement was accompanied by the revival of a pure classical style as a reaction against the more abstract trends seen, for example, in the Arch of Constantine (figure 1). This revival spread also into Christian art in a movement often termed the Theodosian Renaissance after the first emperor of that name, under whose rule the Eastern-Western division of the Roman Empire took place in 395.

Figure 1. Constantine distributing largess, detail of the Triumphal Arch of Constantine, Rome. 315

In the sixth century, under Justinian I, the empire was once more and for the last time—though only briefly—restored to its previous grandeur. In this ruler the arts found one of their greatest patrons. With the construction of Hagia Sophia (figure 2), he set the highest standards for church architecture and all the decorative arts that went into this unique building. Much criticized has been Justinian's closing, in 529, of the celebrated philosophical schools of Athens, where, still in the late fourth century, some of the Cappadocian church fathers studied philosophy and rhetoric. But this action did not mean that the classical culture was suppressed entirely: in the sixth and even the seventh centuries, silverwork was produced with subjects from classical mythology, in an elegant classical style. When the emperor Heraclius I (610-641) finally lost Persia to the Arabs in 639, the Byzantine Empire entered a temporary

Figure 2. Interior view of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (Constantinople). Constructed 532-537, and later

decline, and with it a flourishing period in the arts was eclipsed. The onslaught of Islam marked the end of an era.

While centralized imperial governments had made first Rome and then Constantinople leading centers in the arts, other cities had their share of artistic activity. The great metropolises Alexandria and Antioch continued to play major roles in the arts, not only because they remained wealthy commercial centers, but because, along with Rome, they assumed great ecclesiastical power as patriarchates. Only later were added Constantinople (in 381) and Jerusalem (in 451). All five patriarchates were creative centers of Christian art.

Against this historical background the battle of ideologies took place. When Christianity began to spread, it profited from the disaffection of large sections of the population for the state-supported Olympian religion. Yet, the pagan cults were not abruptly abandoned with the Edict of Milan. While major temples were no longer erected or cult statues created, many temples were still standing, ready to be reopened, at the time of Julian's revolt. On the other hand, it is a reflection of the change in cultural climate that by about the fifth century the Olympian Zeus by Phidias, having been brought to Constantinople, was not displayed in a temple but, like a collector's item, in the palace of Lausos. While by the fourth century in the great cities the strengthened Church had begun to suppress overt pagan worship, in more remote rural districts, especially the Egyptian and Syrian provinces, pagan cults survived somewhat longer. Where representations of pagan gods and heroes did survive in Constantinople as late as the sixth and seventh centuries, they were no longer objects of veneration but art objects owned by a humanistically oriented intelligentsia.

Even before Christianity had become a power, skeptics of the Olympian pantheon had found spiritual satisfaction and consolation in the teachings of the major philosophical schools—the Platonic, the Stoic, the Epicurean, and the Peripatetic. Their artistic aspirations were satisfied chiefly by statues and paintings of the founders of these schools, representations that later became the models for extremely popular portraits of the four Evangelists.

The masses were attracted by the mystery religions, whose popularity derived from their promise of salvation of the soul, resurrection, and a better life in the other world. It was mainly this eschatological aspect that made these cults strong competitors with Christianity. Especially popular was the cult of Orpheus, who with his music soothed the wild passions even of animals (number 31) and who was at times associated with Christ himself (number 66). Having originated in Thrace, Orpheus's birthplace, the cult spread throughout the empire. Other mystery cults originated in the East: from Egypt came the popular cult of Isis (number 33), whose ritual provided certain features for Christianity; from Persia came the powerful cult of Mithras (number 30), which, shortly before the time of Constantine, had aspired, and almost succeeded, to become the official state religion; and from Asia Minor came the cult of Cybele, the Magna Mater ("Great Mother").

Christianity, having established itself as a temporal power, soon developed a well-organized bureaucracy, became a state within the state, and adopted ceremonial pomp from the imperial court. This trend was strongly reflected in the arts. In the third century simple representations illustrated Biblical stories, either narratively or symbolically, but in the fourth century the paraphernalia of imperial power was introduced into the pictorial language. Christ no longer sat like a teacher on a chair, but like an emperor on a jewel-studded throne. The infusion into some scenes of liturgical or dogmatic overtones led to the creation of hieratic compositions in which the borrowings from imperial iconography are only too obvious. With an unsurpassed richness of images, the Christian church fully realized the extraordinary effectiveness of pictorial language.

Yet Christianity was not the first to invent Biblical art. It was after all the offspring of Judaism, from which it adopted the Old Testament and many of its moral precepts. But what has become clear only fairly recently is that at a certain period, as documented by the third-century synagogue at Dura on the Euphrates, the Jews possessed an apparently well established representational art, by no means primitive; elaborate and quite sophisticated scenic representations based on illustrations from various books of the Old Testament cover one of the synagogue walls (figure 3).

But no matter how different the tenets of the various religions, the formal vocabulary by which artists expressed themselves pictorially was the same everywhere. The conquests of Alexander had brought about a standardization of the artistic language that originated in Hellenistic Greece and spread thoughout the Near East, and, under the Roman emperors, throughout the whole of the Latin West as well. It was an anthropocentric art in which the human figure could be represented in every possible pose and emotion. This Greco-Roman style is felt even at the periphery of the empire, as, for example, in Dura. Art, like the *Koine*—the form of the Greek language spoken throughout the Greco-Roman area—was understood in all centers of the Mediterranean world.

To bring order to the heterogeneous material of the exhibition, we have divided it into five realms, starting, for several reasons, with the imperial. In these turbulent centuries the monarchy was the most stable institution, rooted in the golden age of Augustus and continuing, at least in

The Late Roman Empire, A.D. 300-700

the Eastern Empire, through the entire Middle Ages. Of course, the emperors' adoption of Christianity brought changes that were reflected in the visual arts. Christian symbols were added to or replaced the traditional insignia, and in official state monuments it was made clear that the emperor had achieved his victories in the name of Christ (number 6). The emperor's portrait was publicly displayed as before, for awhile still in the form of a statue in the round, but eventually the most striking depiction would be in two-dimensional media, especially mosaic. Imperial arts increasingly stressed the ceremonies sponsored by the emperor—whether processions (number 9), acts of warfare (number 11), the hunt (number 17), or various performances in the circus (number 14)—thereby using pictorial language to its fullest advantage as propaganda. Moreover, in his consciousness of being Christian, the emperor at times identified himself with renowned Biblical figures: Heraclius appears, in disguise, as David on the Cyprus plates (number 58). Since the best artists were commissioned by the court, representations of emperors, empresses, consuls, and other officials were among those of the highest quality and rendered in the greatest variety of media—from glyptics, or gem carvings (number 1), to bronze (number 2), to ivory (number 6). Furthermore, since the percentage of dated and datable portraits is relatively high among these imperial monuments, they provide a sound basis for the study of stylistic development.

The second realm, the classical, demonstrates the selective use of the Olympian gods and heroes for several centuries after the firm establishment of the Christian Church. Zeus lost his major position, though he survived—mainly in Egypt—because of his identification with Sarapis, the god of the lower world. Although Dionysos and his revelry must have been repulsive to the Christians, the vine, the kantharos, and vintage scenes became important Christian symbols. Aphrodite, the goddess of universal love, likewise enjoyed great popularity (number 45), as did Asklepios, the patron of physicians (number 22), and Apollo, especially in his role as leader of the muses. As personifications of inspiration, the muses transcended the bonds of paganism and became acceptable in Christian imagery. Among the heroes, Herakles (number 25) and Achilles (number 24) emerged as favorites because they were venerated as symbols of virtue and fortitude, having strong appeal for pagans and Christians alike. There were other mythological representations ideologically unobjectionable to the Christians: scenes of happy bucolic life, for example, introduced into the decoration of Christian catacombs and sarcophagi and elsewhere, to suggest the paradisic afterlife. Personifications of all kinds—cities (number 26), river gods (number 27) or nymphs, seasons, months, and many others—when they appear isolated, often cannot be ascribed with certainty either to a pagan or a Christian milieu.

When worship of the pagan gods was finally abandoned, their rich imagery retreated into media, mainly books, where, as collectors' items, they could satisfy the curiosity of the Christian intellectual. Through illustrated epic poems of Homer and Vergil (number 37), dramas of Euripides and

Menander, mythological handbooks and the like, a wealth of mythological imagery was passed on to the early Christians. The copying of miniatures helped to establish a fixed iconography.

Knowledge of classical sciences was also handed down through the medium of the book. In late antiquity encyclopedic compendia were composed and copied on a scale unknown in classical Greece. It is typical that scientific treatises —whether technical, like a surveyor's handbook; medical, like a handbook on midwifery; or botanical, like an herbal —were frequently illustrated as lavishly and artfully as literary texts (numbers 34, 40). These pictures exerted a wide influence on other media, such as textiles (number 35) and floor mosaics.

As powerful as is the pictorial language serving the propagation of ideologies, not all art is tied to ideologies. The secular realm includes art produced for consumers in every walk of life. A sculpted or painted portrait, even when radiating spiritual power, does not necessarily reveal the religious affiliations of the person who commissioned it. The garments or jewelry a person wears are the same as everyone else's, unless he or she enriches them with specific symbols. The preciousness or decorative splendor of an object more often than not depends on the owner's purchasing power. Also in representations of daily life, where a patron of the arts often had himself portrayed in his natural environment, the main distinctions are sociological. The feudal class imitated the style of the court, although the hunt of a rich landowner may be less lavishly depicted than that of his emperor. Members of the professional middle class liked to have themselves portrayed at their occupations: a wine merchant storing, shipping, or selling his product, an architect erecting a building, or a physician with his medical instruments.

The inclusion of a Jewish realm in the exhibition was motivated primarily by the discovery in 1932 of the synagogue of Dura, whose walls are covered with elaborate frescoes depicting a rich repertory of narrative scenes from various books of the Old Testament (figure 3). The importance of the find is twofold: it proves that the Jews were the first to represent Biblical stories on a vast scale and that Christian Bible illustrations depended on such Jewish antecedents.

In its initial stage, Christian art, our fifth realm, was content to express its beliefs by such symbols as the cross, the fish, the dove, the anchor, the palm leaf, and others. But when, in about the third century, Christianity began to utilize the representational arts for didactic purposes, it made the fullest use of them, developing a repertory unmatched in richness and variety by any other ancient culture. The Holy Scripture was central to Christian life, and artists embarked on its illustration with extensive picture cycles. The method itself was not new: such picture cycles had been developed centuries before for the illustration of the great classics like those by Homer and Euripides, and, as we now know, fully developed Old Testament illustration existed in Jewish art. In addition to the narrative, however, there existed a second mode, whereby the content of a single scene was abbreviated, often leaving just enough to preserve its recognizability. This mode, mostly applied to funerary art—catacomb paintings and sarcophagi—has been widely termed "symbolic," but this is not quite correct, since complete scenes can also have symbolic connotations.

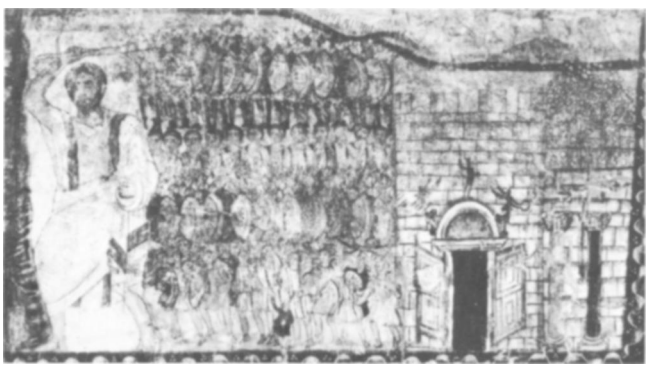


Figure 3. The Exodus, detail of a fresco with Biblical representations from the synagogue at Dura Europus, Syria. 245-256

Biblical imagery is deeply rooted in classical art, not only from the point of view of style but also, to a considerable degree, of content. Wherever possible the Christian artist adapted a classical figure or, if he could, a whole scene with few or no changes. The figure of Christ is a striking example: as a lamb carrier the form is taken from a bucolic context and the idea from a representation of Philanthropy; as a teacher he is surrounded by disciples as are philosophers (number 67); as a divine being he may be associated with Helios or Orpheus (number 66); and he sits on a jewel-studded throne like an emperor (number 68). Many scenes from the Old and New Testaments are based on parallels from classical mythology: the Creation of Adam on man's creation by Prometheus; Jonah under the gourd vine on the sleeping Endymion (number 55); Samson and David on Herakles (number 58); and so forth.

In the fourth century a more hieratic art began to unfold, as can still be seen in frescoes, mosaics, ivories, and textiles (numbers 69, 70), while very little remains today of the icon (number 72), one of the major media transmitting the hieratic mode. The icon's influence upon other media was so great that one may speak of an "iconic" art, where compositions are enriched by liturgical and dogmatic elements. A focal point of creativity was the apse, since here the artist often tried to summarize in one composition eschatological, liturgical, and dogmatic as well as topographical or historical elements, such as titular saints, donor figures, and the like.

Moreover, the increasingly ritualistic character of Christian art was greatly enhanced by the transformation of the implements of the liturgy into elaborate and precious objects. The position occupied in the pagan temple by the cult statue was taken by the altar on which the chief implements were displayed: the sacred vessels, like the chalice (number 81) and the paten (number 79), the Gospel book with its jewel- and pearl-studded covers, and, somewhat later, the reliquaries (number 85). On objects like these Christian artists lavished their greatest skills. Nothing could be less correct than to label them, as has so often been done, "objects of decorative art."

During these centuries, monumental sculpture was dying out, and, although there existed, at least in the third century, a few statues in the Christian realm—like the Cleveland Jonah figures (number 55)—the odium of their association with pagan idols brought this branch of art, which had played such a leading role in classical antiquity, to a halt.

What survived longest were the statues of emperors and empresses (number 5). Relief sculpture was less objectionable and flourished through the fourth and fifth centuries in the triumphal columns and other state monuments of imperial art as well as in Christian art, especially on sarcophagi (number 56).

As a two-dimensional art, fresco painting was more willingly adopted by the Christians; the vast interior surfaces of the basilicas of Old Saint Peter's or Saint Paul's were a welcome outlet for frescoes, covering the walls with extensive Old and New Testament cycles for the edification of the faithful. Mosaics competed in their splendor with frescoes. While in the classical period the mosaic predominantly served to cover floors (number 36), it was now given more prominence on walls; like frescoes, mosaics depicted Biblical stories.

The most spectacular rise of any medium was that of miniature painting. No great artistic skill was bestowed on the illustration of papyrus rolls, as valuable as they were in the invention of storytelling cycles. After the introduction of the durable parchment and the establishment, by the fourth century, of the codex as the principal form for books, miniature painting achieved the highest artistic quality. The most luxurious manuscripts were written in gold and silver on purple—and even on gold-stained parchment (number 63). The Bible and especially the Gospel book on the altar became focal points for the development of an enormously rich imagery.

One medium that competed with the book for a central position in the Christian rite was panel painting in the form of icons. In spite of some startling recent finds at Mount Sinai, the icon is still elusive because of large-scale destruction of holy images during the Iconoclastic controversy (726-843). Yet the fact that they could threaten the foundations of the empire highlights their importance. Icons focus on the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints (number 72), and the great feasts, whose representations are often overlaid with liturgical and dogmatic overtones.

Precious metals, especially gold and silver, held positions of importance in all ancient cultures. The role played by gold is difficult to judge because so much of it was melted down. Yet it is significant that in the fifth and sixth centuries large gold medallions (number 10) were important in the dissemination of imperial propaganda. All the more astonishing is the vast amount of silver that has been preserved. While in classical antiquity silver served mainly as handsome and often elegant table service, in the Late Antique-Early Christian period it was often used solely for display. This is the period of impressive, huge silver plates showing such subjects as the emperor in majesty giving gifts, or deities of the Isis or Cybele cults, or the life of Achilles in either one monumental (number 24) or several small narrative scenes. A cycle of David scenes is even distributed over a whole set of plates (number 58). The huge hoards of Late Antique and Early Christian silver found in all provinces of the Roman Empire are proof that luxurious silver objects were widely distributed, apparently owned by wealthy landholders and army generals as well as by churches, whose acquisitions of implements like precious chalices and patens in silver (numbers 78, 81) had high priority.

Never before had ivory been so widely used in the arts as in the fifth and sixth centuries. The contrast between its previous utilitarian use, predominantly for furniture and appliqué, and its new elevated position is particularly striking. Imperial and consular diptychs (numbers 6, 8) suddenly became a means for the manifestation of state authority. The Christians not only imitated imperial diptychs (number 68) but used ivory for pyxides (numbers 60, 77, 80), elaborate reliquary caskets, and other liturgical objects. The rich repertory of Old and New Testament scenes displayed on them demonstrates anew that the Christians took every opportunity to spread knowledge of the Biblical stories.

The art of glyptics reached its greatest perfection in the Hellenistic and Augustan ages, but cameos of great perfection were still carved in the fourth century, like the sardonyx with a battle scene (number 12). Christian artists also strove for a high level of competence in this imperial craft, but after the fifth century the art went into eclipse.

Other media, like bronze and terracotta, used chiefly for ordinary household utensils are to some extent transformations of ambitious silverwork into cheaper materials. For some objects used in the Christian service, like lamps or censers, bronze casters copied the figurative decoration of models in silver (number 83).

Another medium, at least some examples of which are more than just tableware, is glass. Traditionally emphasizing graceful shapes, texture, and color, in the fourth and fifth centuries glass workers stressed two special types for the rich display of figurative art simultaneously in the pagan and the Christian realms: cut glass, with its sharp-edged straight lines; and gold glass, with its fluent design of golden figures, usually on a blue ground (numbers 15, 17, 41, 67). Once more, the impression is that special effort was made to bring significant subjects to the close attention of the beholder, even when he was drinking out of a bowl.

The last of the major media, and perhaps the most unlikely to have transcended the limitations of ornamental art, is textile. Good fortune has preserved in the dry sands of Egypt an enormous wealth of material from this period. Among the figurative textiles are a great number with Dionysian subjects, representing the god either alone, with Ariadne, or as part of a thiasos (the Dionysian revelry) (number 21). Textiles teach us much about the popularity of the Dionysos cult in late antiquity. Among a variety of mythological subjects, bucolic figures and scenes appear frequently (number 38) and even serially (number 39). Within the Christian realm the Joseph story enjoyed particular popularity, surely because of its association with Egypt. But the highest purpose is achieved when a textile is turned into a holy image, like the Cleveland Virgin Enthroned (number 69).

In every medium discussed, pagan and Christian subjects occur side by side. In some cases it can be proven and in others it is highly likely that the same workshops produced art objects for any customer, regardless of his religious affiliation. When Christians started to bury their dead in sarcophagi, they obviously depended on sculptors trained for different purposes. This explains, for example, the identity of style of the Constantinian reliefs on the Arch of Constantine (figure 1) with that of many sarcophagi (number 56). The similarity of style in such luxury manuscripts as the *Vergilius*

Vaticanus, which contains Vergil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid,* and the *Quedlinburg Itala* with a fragment from the Books of Kings can hardly be explained other than by the assumption that they were made in the same Roman scriptorium. Here, too, several fourth- and fifth-century workshops specialized in the production of gold-glass drinking bowls depicting scenes from the life of Achilles, charioteers, Old and New Testament scenes or Jewish symbols (numbers 15, 53, 67). In Palestine glass flasks with appropriate symbols were apparently sold at holy places, venerated by either Christians or Jews.

The atmosphere of tolerance implied by the workshop practices is confirmed by common burial chambers where members of one family belonging to different religions had depicted subjects from different religious repertories side by side. Three remarkable cases have come to light within the last decades: a burial chamber under Saint Peter's, which has a mosaic with Helios on a quadriga in the apex of its ceiling and a Jonah scene on its walls; the catacomb in the Via Latina where a variety of subjects from ancient mythology, including some labors of Herakles, fill some chambers, while others show a great number of Old Testament and a few New Testament scenes; and a tomb chamber in Alexandria, where a scene of daily life with oxen turning a water wheel is placed alongside a herm set in a sacred grove, a lamb carrier who may well be the Good Shepherd, and Jonah under the gourd vine. The clearest example, however, of the intermingling of pagan and Christian culture is the Projecta casket (number 45), a bridal casket upon which a noble Christian lady is represented next to the toilet of Aphrodite.

Within this ecumenical style, which towards the end of this period was broken up by the barbarian invasions in the West and the rise of Islam in the East, there nevertheless existed considerable variations due to geography and time. The Greco-Roman style, predominant in imperial Rome, was not only shared by Constantinople but preserved in this capital more strongly than in any part of the empire into the sixth and seventh centuries (number 58), nurtured by the imperial court and humanistic intellectuals. On the other hand, the great metropolises Alexandria and Antioch, still clinging to classical tradition as late as the third and fourth centuries, began to succumb to the native styles of their hinterlands—Coptic Egypt in the case of Alexandria and Palmyrene Syria in the case of Antioch. Moreover, in the West, outside the imperial residences of Rome, Milan, and Ravenna, and especially outside Italy, in the provinces of Gaul, Spain, Britain, and the Germanic territories, the classical heritage weakened rapidly and was infiltrated by what is called "Migration of Nations" art. Yet this turning away from the classical tradition was not a linear development. Imperial commissions in provincial cities such as Jerusalem, where they abounded, artistic revivals and other factors produced objects in which the classical heritage was often much better preserved than in other works of art produced contemporaneously in the same regions.

Seen from a wider perspective, the general trend of stylistic development was from naturalism to abstraction, from sculptural to two-dimensional arts for the sake of dematerialization and spiritualization, and from spatial settings to geometric order. Such abstraction was not due solely to the impact of barbarian invasions or the influence of folklore, but was motivated by the desire to achieve a higher degree of spirituality than could be attained by naturalistic expression. Abstraction was not used exclusively in works of lower quality; through its use, a great artist could achieve the highest refinement and sophistication. Naturalistic-classical and abstract modes of expression could be applied simultaneously, even within the same work of art. The best example of this combination is the apse mosaic of Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai founded by Justinian (figure 4), which depicts the Transfiguration of Christ. Christ's face is rendered in abstract lines, his body is flat and dematerialized, while the faces of Moses, Elijah, and the three apostles Peter, John, and James are very lively and emotional and their bodies quite corporeal and vital.

The highly sensitive artist has employed the abstract form for the divinity and more naturalistic forms for human figures. Clearly the artist considered neither of the two modes superior to the other; they are used for different purposes. These two modes are the foundation of the great variety of styles found in the art of the Middle Ages, where at times the naturalistic-classical and at times the abstract elements prevailed.

Figure 4. Detail of apse mosaic with the Transfiguration of Christ, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai. 548-565

Note: In the texts dates of emperors' reigns are given within parentheses after their names

Imperial Realm

The art of the imperial realm was primarily an art of persuasion and celebration by which the emperor and his officials translated their authority into visual terms for all to see. Ubiquitous portraits of the emperor and depictions of his official acts on public monuments such as triumphal arches asserted his rule throughout a vast empire that stretched from Spain in the west to Syria in the east, England in the north to Egypt in the south—a domain that encompassed many different peoples. Even the smallest objects, like the fine cameo shown enlarged at the right, or a splendid gold medallion (number 10), bore the imperial message to subjects of the realm. Most imperial monuments were concentrated at the centers of government, particularly Rome and Constantinople. So impressive was their accumulation of huge buildings and monuments, statues and public squares, processional routes, and large arenas for public games, that even today these cities affect the character of such capitals as Washington and New Delhi.

Since the emperor and members of the ruling class had at their disposal the resources of the empire as well as great personal wealth, imperial art is rich and ostentatious. The most precious materials—silver, gold, ivory, and gems—were used for small-scale objects; marble, bronze, and porphyry were used for larger sculpture and architectural embellishment. The emperor and aristocracy dressed sumptuously, lived in colorfully decorated palaces and villas, and employed the most skillful artists, who were attracted from all over the empire to the capital cities.

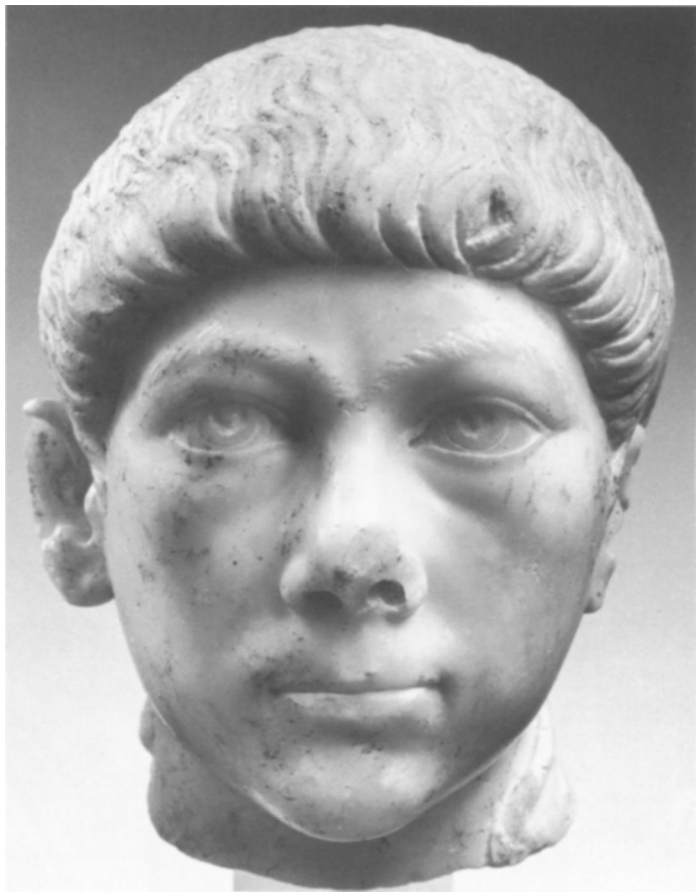
To reflect the exalted status of its patrons, imperial art was stiffly ceremonial. The reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, for example, show him performing official acts and receiving the acclamation of his people (figure 1). He is rigidly enthroned, spiritually and physically elevated above his attendants. Other reliefs on the arch depict Constantine conquering in battle and excelling in the hunt, proof of his virtue and courage. The emperor's officials shared his obligations. Some, like consuls, performed principally ceremonial functions, such as the sponsoring of games in the circus (see number 8). The post of consul was a relic of Rome's Republican past and, like many other offices, was filled by members of the landed aristocracy and the military, who shared the em-

peror's pride and resourcefulness in the hunt.

When emperors became Christian, traditional imperial images were recast in Christian terms. Justinian (527-565), for example, had himself portrayed on an ivory diptych (number 6) as a traditional Roman conqueror, but above his head, overseeing his victory, is the figure of Christ blessing. In the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, Justinian and his wife, Theodora, appear in a symbolic procession honoring the dedication of the church. Although the context is purely Christian, the couple's bearing is strictly imperial: they are larger in scale and more richly dressed than their retinue, and they are the only figures not overlapped by others.

In its all-encompassing role, the art of the imperial realm forms an impressive and appropriate opening to an exhibition of Late Antique and Early Christian art.

1. This chalcedony gem is carved with the busts of two rulers, probably Maximianus Herculeus (286-310) and his son Maxentius (306-312). They ruled, although Maxentius was never officially recognized, during the period of the Tetrarchy, a system devised by the emperor Diocletian (284-305) to overcome the governmental chaos of the third century. Diocletian divided the empire into four sections, each governed by an emperor, or tetrarch. The two senior emperors were called Augusti and the two junior, Caesars. The rulers were thought of as united in their rule, a concept clearly stated by the pairs of embracing emperors in two porphyry sculptures from Constantinople on the façade of Saint Mark's in Venice. On this cameo the emperors are shown in a close-knit composition that emphasizes their solidarity. Maximianus, the senior Augustus at the left, is distinguished by his larger size and independent gaze. The cameo is set as a pendant in a late Roman, but not contemporary, gold mount and hung with chains terminating in smoothly cut beryl, emerald, and clear-glass drops. The quality of the carving, enhanced by the gem's subtle coloration, from creamy white to bright orange, is exceptional. Such images of divine majesty were one of the most important bequests of the imperial realm to the emerging art of a new age. Width of gem: 4.3 cm. (1 11/16 in.). Rome, 306-310. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D.C., 47.14



2. The first Christian emperor, Constantine I (306-337), son of the tetrarch Constantius I (293-306) and Helena, was born at Naissus, modern Nis, in Yugoslavia, where the bronze head at the left was found. He was acclaimed Augustus by the Roman army in England in 306 and, through a series of brilliant military and political victories, gained control of the western part of the empire in 312. In 324 he became sole emperor of the Roman world.

With startling eyes—the pupils and irises are gold—and traces of gilding around the ears, this portrait is among the most impressive of Constantine made for public display to proclaim his sovereignty throughout the empire. Originally part of a statue, the head shows some of Constantine's characteristic features, known from other portraits: the square jaw, large nose, and caplike hair. It is, however, in general more abstractly rendered, pointing to the work of a local artist at Naissus during the late 320s. The unwavering gaze underlines Constantine's divinely inspired authority. Height 24 cm. (9 7/16 in.). National Museum, Belgrade

3. In contrast to the schematic conception of the bronze head, the magnificent amethyst intaglio (above, left) of Constantius II (337-361), Constantine's son, is carefully and richly modeled. While family resemblance is strong in the square jaw, "Roman" nose, and staring eyes under prominent brows, these features are softened by the expressive treatment of the cheeks, mouth, and loose curls at the nape of the neck. Although only 1⅜ inches high, this portrait has the monumentality typical of imperial sculpture of the Constantinian dynasty. Constantinople, about 360. Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Antikenabteilung, Misc. 30931

4. The marble head (above, right) of the emperor Gratian (375-383), appointed Augustus at the age of nine, blends the authority of his office with a sensitivity in keeping with his classical education under the finest poet of the age, Ausonius. Once part of a bust or statuette, this portrait, in its delicately modeled polished surface and small scale, anticipates that of Aelia Flacilla (number 5). Height 14 cm. (5½ in.). Constantinople, about 375. George Ortiz Collection, Geneva. Photo: O. Widmer

5. The art of the Theodosian period (about 380-450) muted the boldly abstract, sometimes rude forms of Constantinian art (see number 2) with a softly modeled, almost sensuous treatment of volume and surface. This beautiful marble statuette of Aelia Flacilla, wife of Theodosius I, exemplifies the new harmony in the classicizing draperies elegantly wrapped around her body and the full, yet idealized, depiction of the face and hair. Despite its sensitivity, the face is probably a less faithful portrait than that of Constantius II on the earlier gem (number 3). The distant gaze, under arched brows, foreshadows the spiritualization of later Christian portraits (see numbers 68-73). The necklace and earrings and the inlays of glass or colored stones that once decorated the statuette must have added a strange dimension — a physical enrichment that intensified the contrast between material reality and the abstract qualities of the face. Height 78 cm. (30¾ in.). Constantinople, 380-390. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 13

6. The magnificent plaque at the right, half of a diptych, was most likely made for Justinian (527-565). The emperor appears as conqueror of the earth, personified by the woman beneath the horse, and of the barbarians, one of whom touches the emperor's lance as a sign of submission. The winged Victory at his left probably once presented a crown or wreath, like that held by the statuette carried by the soldier. Below, representatives of captive nations, European and Oriental, offer tribute. Above, a bust of Christ blessing is supported by angels, Christian successors to the classical Victories.

The ivory celebrates Justinian as defender of the faith and his triumphant reign under Christ's guidance rather than a specific military conquest. Its masterfully carved relief is the work of a consummate artist. By crowding more figures into the central panel than it could comfortably contain, he endowed the ivory with a bursting energy that supports its exultant statement. Height 34.1 cm. (13 7/16 in.). Constantinople. Musée du Louvre, Paris, OA 9063

7. Sculpted portraits of officials lined the streets and forums of late Roman cities like Ephesos on the east coast of the Mediterranean, where the marble head below was found. While today large painted signs announce the governor responsible for the creation of a new highway, in the third quarter of the fifth century this portrait of Eutropios, a member of the street-building commission of Ephesos, was placed on an inscribed wall console as a more attractive and impressive record of his civic contribution. The treatment of the head, now broken from the shoulders, with its elongated face and strongly stylized hair, eyes, and beard, creates an expressive likeness, capturing the spiritual life of the man rather than merely mirroring his physical self. Height 32 cm. (12⅝ in.). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Antikensammlung, I 880

8. According to its inscriptions, this diptych leaf celebrates the appointment in 513 of Clementinus as consul in Constantinople. Enthroned, he supervises the ceremony of *sparsio,* the distribution of money and prizes during the circus games at his inauguration. Below, in the arena, servants pour the riches from sacks. Medallions of Emperor Anastasius (491-518) and of his wife, Ariadne, flank the cross at the top of the panel; similar portraits may have been placed in the consul's box at the circus. Personifications of Rome and Constantinople stand behind the new consul's throne as symbols of his putative authority. The cluttered composition and hieratic display of richly adorned figures is characteristic of many contemporary consular diptychs. Ivory, height 39 cm. (15⅜ in.). Constantinople. Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool, M 10036

9. In a society as severely regimented by laws and social customs as that of the Late Antique world, ceremony was extremely important. Emperors performed their official duties in strictly traditional ways that were depicted on state monuments and on private objects as well.

This leaf of an ivory diptych represents the apotheosis, or deification, of a Roman emperor. In early imperial times, the emperor's death was usually followed by an elaborate ceremony celebrating his apotheosis. Since this ivory was made in the fifth century, when Christianity was the official state religion and no emperor would have been deified, it was probably intended as a nostalgic memorial to an extinct pagan tradition.

Here, the effigy of the emperor is taken to the burning ground on a cart drawn by four elephants. Behind the elephants is a funeral pyre, atop of which is a youth in a quadriga. The two eagles, which were caged in the pyre and released when it was set aflame, symbolize the ascending emperor. Above, the soul of the emperor is carried aloft by two winged genii to join a group of figures, perhaps his deified ancestors. Heaven is bordered on the right by part of the zodiacal band, Libra through Pisces; and in the corner is a bust of Helios, the sun god. The monogram at the top of the panel is perhaps that of the Symmachi (see number 32), an aristocratic pagan family that sought to keep alive the ancient religion and customs. The ambiguous spatial relationships and stout figures with heavy faces indicate the fifth-century date. Height 27.7 cm. (10⅞ in.). Probably Rome. The British Museum, London, 57,10-13,1

10. In 583 and 602, Emperor Maurice (582-602) assumed the consulship at Constantinople, and, in celebration, had gold medallions struck to give to his officials. Four of these and smaller coins of his reign, as well as those of several earlier emperors, make up the girdle above, which was found in Cyprus (see numbers 52, 58). On the front of the medallions Maurice is shown in imperial regalia, and on the back in military dress standing in a quadriga. Together, the medallions and coins weigh nearly one pound. Such gifts were meant for only a very important official, who then had them mounted to display the imperial favor he enjoyed. Length 66 cm. (25½ in.). Probably 583. Metropolitan Museum, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.147

11. Emperors, whether pagan or Christian, commemorated their military conquests on state monuments and on smaller objects like the wood sculpture at the right, which shows Roman soldiers, carrying a standard with Christ's monogram (barely visible at the left), freeing a city under barbarian siege. Barbarians, some on horseback, are being driven off or killed; their leaders are hung from forked stakes in front of the city walls. Although a contemporary battle is depicted here, an allusion to Joshua's rescue of Gibeon (Joshua 10) may also be intended, as Christian emperors often saw their own heroic deeds in Old Testament terms (see number 58). Adding to the scene's excitement are the frank portrayal and general overloading of imagery, which, along with the style of the figures and their difference in scale, indicate a late fourth- or early fifth-century date. Height 45 cm. (17¾ in.). Egypt, probably Ashmunein. Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, 4782. Photograph: Jörg Anders

12. Opposite, a fragment of a splendid sardonyx cameo, of about 325-350, shows a warrior, wearing a diadem, riding over fallen barbarians. It is exquisitely carved to make the most effective use of the different colored strata of the stone. In the tradition of earlier Roman gems decorated with imperial triumphal imagery, it may commemorate the victories of Constantine or one of his sons. The classical subject and warrior's dress recall portraits of Alexander the Great. Height 15 cm. (5⅞ in.). National Museum, Belgrade

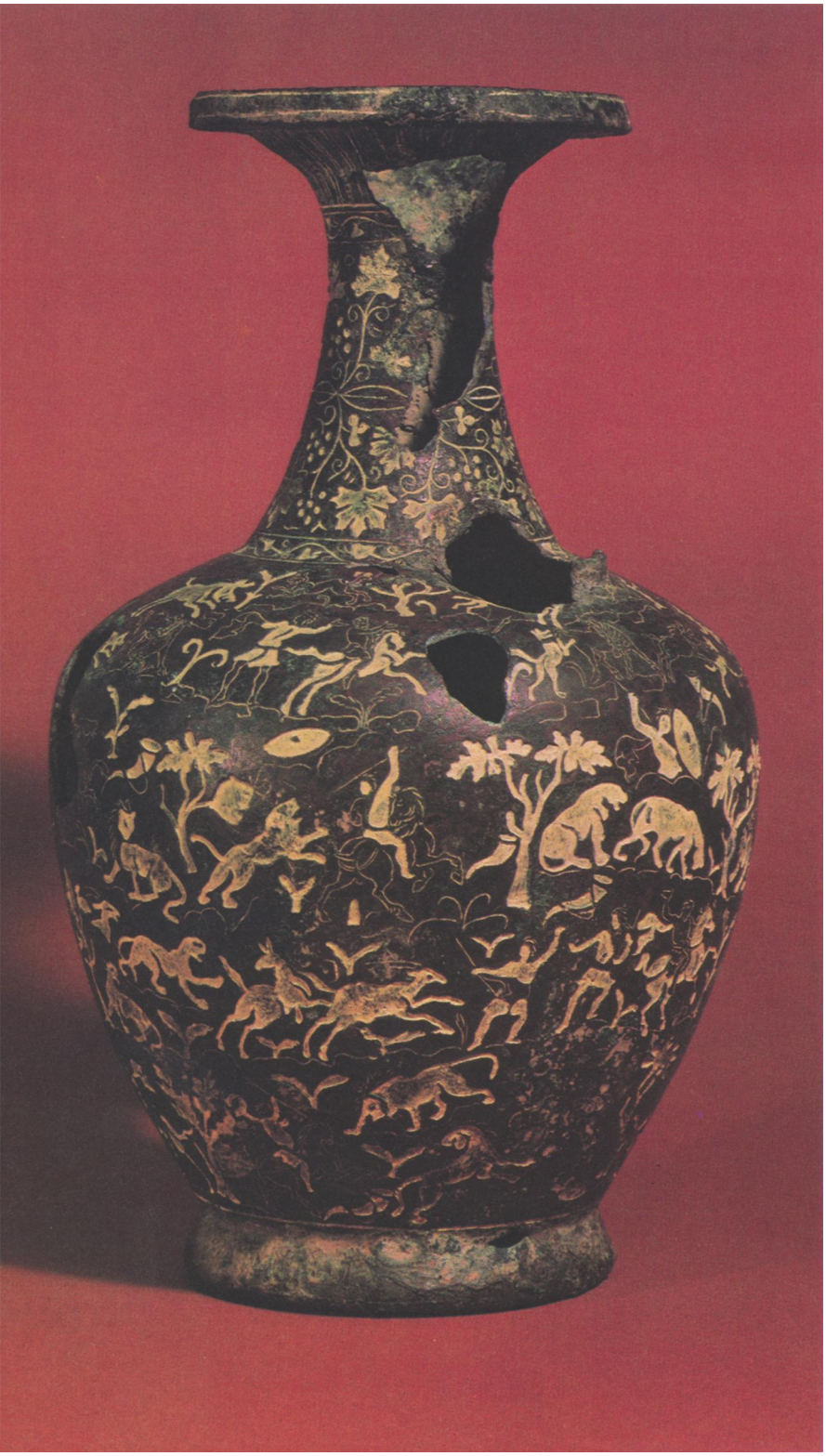
13–15. Games and entertainments for the public, sponsored by the emperor and his officials, were staged in the circuses of Rome and Constantinople. The violent contests and animal hunts (“*venationes*”) appealed to the masses pent up in the great cities. Chariot races were also particularly popular, and the factions supporting the four teams—the reds, blues, greens, and whites—even became powerful political forces.

The ivory plaque on this page, made in Rome in the first half of the fifth century, depicts an elk hunt in an arena observed by three men, probably high officials. The central figure pours a libation from a shallow bowl, a pagan ritual to appease the gods at the start of a performance. The curved arena is shown in a flattened bird’s-eye view, but the animals and hunters, seen from the side, are superimposed in registers, a mixture of perspectives with a long history in Roman art. One hunter spears an elk while others lean out of the doors ready to provide distraction, like participants in a modern bullfight. The agony of the dying animals contrasts dramatically with the businesslike attitude of the hunters and the withdrawn gaze of the patrons.

Below, a small gold glass of the second half of the fourth century portrays a triumphant charioteer named Vincentius and his horse Invictus (“Unconquerable”). The red decoration on Vincentius’s tunic and on his horse’s trappings identifies him as belonging to the red faction.

The bronze horse at the left was probably one of four that drew a model chariot. It may have been a commemorative sculpture to a victorious charioteer or a copy of an emperor’s ceremonial quadriga (see number 10). In style the horse, with its stocky body and stylized mane, resembles Justinian’s mount on the ivory plaque (number 6).

Plaque: height 29.4 cm. (11⅝ in.). Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool, M 10042. Glass: diameter 6.4 cm. (2½ in.). Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 67.11. Horse: height 13.7 cm. (5 7/16 in.). Probably Constantinople. George Ortiz Collection, Geneva. Photograph: O. Widmer



16, 17. The sport of hunting was enthusiastically engaged in by the imperial family and the nobility of the late Roman world, just as it had been by monarchs since ancient times in the Near East. It required ingenuity, skill, and courage, the same virtues necessary to wage war successfully. Hunting scenes enriched public and private works of art from triumphal arches and sarcophagi (where they referred to man's struggle with death and his hope of conquering it) to luxurious furniture and domestic objects like these.

The bronze vase, originally inlaid with silver, copper, and niello, shows a spectrum of hunting scenes—horsemen spearing lions and hunters on foot flushing game from the forest. The decorative effect is enhanced by tranquil details such as lions unaware of the danger and hunting horns hanging from trees that act as fillers between the livelier vignettes. The rich inlay technique was very popular in the third and fourth centuries and had a long tradition dating back to the Late Bronze Age royal tombs at Mycenae, where a pair of bronze dagger blades inlaid with lion hunts in gold and silver was found.

The scene on the glass plate at the right glorifies its owner's courage and success in the hunt. It is inscribed: "Alexander, fortunate man, may you live [long] with your family and friends." Richly dressed and on horseback, Alexander attacks a boar, while two stags flee to the right. The symbolic importance of the scene is heightened by the tight compression of the animals into the circular space and the small scale of the groom, who releases the dog to attack the boar. Although Alexander's identity is not known, he was probably an aristocrat of the mid-third century; the style of the head, with its triangularly shaped face, close-cropped hair, and sensitively drawn eyes, resembles that of other contemporary portraits of the ruling class.

The technique of gold glass, in which this artist excelled, demanded extraordinary skill. The design was incised on a sheet of gold foil applied to a greenish glass roundel, and then was enlivened by white, red, green, and russet brown paint. A second glass roundel, with the plate's rim, was fused over the first. Rarely do gold-glass plates survive with their rims intact.

Vase: height 26.2 cm. (10 5/16 in.). Probably Italy, second half of the fourth century. Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Antikenabteilung, 30244. Photograph: Ingrid Geske. Plate: diameter 25.7 cm. (10⅛ in.). Italy, mid-third century. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Bequest, 69.68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Classical Realm

As the self-appointed heirs of classical Greek culture, the Romans equated Greek gods with their own, chose Greek models in literature, and employed Greek science in their technological achievements. In their art, they adapted both subject matter and style from the classical repertory, often producing careful copies or free interpretations of Greek sculpture and painting. Of central importance was the human figure, rendered with an idealized naturalism. Illusionistic painting and the clear grammar of architectural orders also determined the basic form of Roman artistic production. After the second century A.D., the Roman dependence on Greek models progressively gave way to other influences. Political, economic, and intellectual upheaval provoked a spirit of expressionism seen in official portraiture (number 7), and the influx of mystery religions from the East and Egypt into the heart of the empire brought an increased use of symbol to replace natural depiction, as in the limestone relief of the Persian god Mithras (number 30) that was found in Rome. In the fourth and fifth centuries, passionately nostalgic efforts to keep the old order alive after Christianity had triumphed produced exquisite pagan objects such as the ivory diptych of Asklepios and Hygieia (number 22) or the silver dish at the left. After the fifth century, the representation of pagan gods for cult purposes was abandoned, but the depiction of mythological subjects, especially the exploits of heroes (number 23) and personifications (number 26), continued to decorate luxury objects. Illustrations of epics (number 37) and of scientific texts (number 34) as well as bucolic themes (numbers 38, 39) also remained popular. They preserved the image of classical culture for later generations.

18. The resplendent silver lanx at the left—a large shallow dish which may have served a ritualistic purpose—is one of the masterpieces of the last phase of pagan art. Found in 1734 on the banks of the Tyne in northern England, it presents an assembly of classical deities on the island of Delos, the birthplace of the twins Artemis and Apollo, who stand at the far left and far right. Seated next to Apollo is the twins' mother, Leto, and standing beside her is Ortygeia, Leto's sister, who is a personification of Delos. The armed, gesturing goddess Athena, also venerated on the island, completes the group. The hound, fallen stag, and griffin at the foot of the composition are symbols of the twins. The conscious classicism of the graceful figures is so intense in this work that it is often related to the strenuous efforts of the emperor Julian the Apostate (360-363) to revitalize paganism. The lanx may have been made at Ephesos in honor of his visit in 363 to Delos, where he offered a sacrifice to Apollo. Width 48.3 cm. (19 in.). His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, K. G., Alnwick Castle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

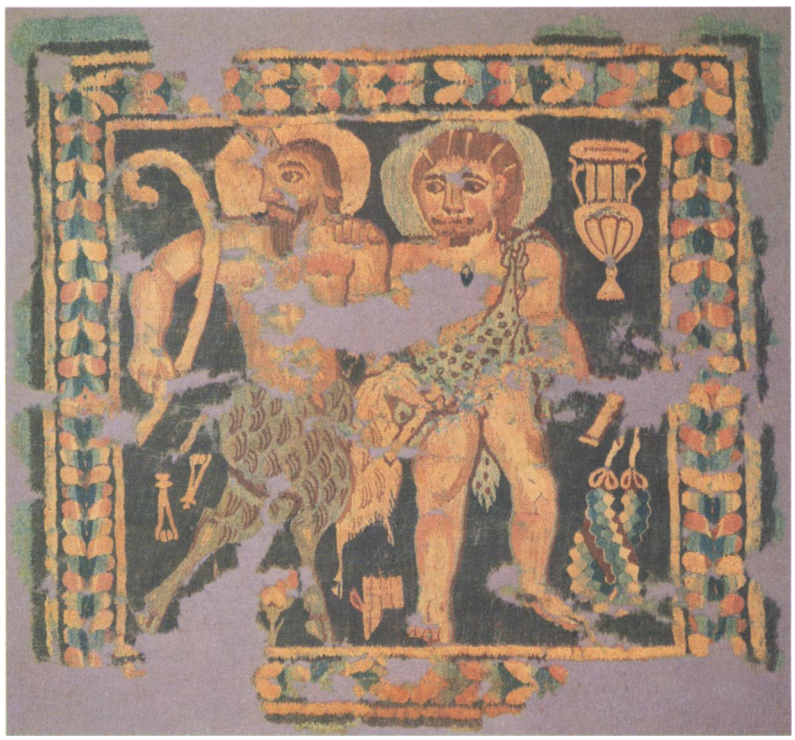
19-21. Dionysos, god of wine and fertility, was worshiped in ecstatic revels that, according to Greek myths, culminated in animal and sometimes even human sacrifices. Since he was the god of the grape harvest and wine was a basic commodity in the Roman world, his cult persisted into the sixth century in otherwise Christianized areas like Egypt, where these objects were made.

The splendid textile opposite is a fragment of a large third- to fourth-century hanging depicting Dionysos and his companions, here a satyr and maenad with haloes, a sign of distinction in pagan art, participating in the cultic revel. The vibrant colors, decorative architectural setting, and graceful yet mannered figures testify to the weaver's skill and to the richness and monumentality of late Roman wall hangings.

Ariadne, whom Dionysos married after Theseus abandoned her on Naxos, appears on the sixth-century ivory below. Two Erotes hold a marriage wreath over her head, while a maenad and Pan (right) peer from behind her legs. The piece, which preserves the shape of the elephant's tusk, was probably made to decorate furniture. The style of its high relief and the tight fit of the smaller figures behind Ariadne resemble those features on the ivory of Justinian (number 6).

On the fifth- to sixth-century textile below, Dionysos, in a leopard skin, and Pan, with his shepherd's crook, walk against a background cluttered with cult objects, including a wineskin, a kantharos, and musical instruments. The impassive faces and stiff poses contrast sharply with the classicizing style of the earlier hanging. The vigorous presentation of the deities and the cultic paraphernalia, however, show a still active appreciation of the cult.

Opposite: wool and linen tapestry, height 138 cm. (54 ⅜ in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, J.H. Wade Fund, 75.6. Below, left: height 42 cm. (16½ in.). Musée de Cluny, Paris, CL 455. Photograph: Hirmer Fotoarchiv. Below, right: height 36.8 cm. (14½ in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Charles Potter Kling Fund, 53.18



22. The beautiful ivory diptych below was probably made in Italy in the early fifth century. It depicts two marble cult statues of Asklepios, the god of medicine, and Hygieia, goddess of health, that perhaps stood in the temple of Asklepios in Rome. Asklepios leans on a club, around which is twined a bearded snake. A young boy in a hooded garment, the spirit Telesphoros, stands beside him. Hygieia, leaning on a tripod, offers an egg to a snake, perhaps symbolizing her role as a fertility goddess. An Eros looks up at her. Both statues are flanked by columns supporting cult objects. The classicistic style, particularly the loosely draped, gracefully posed figures, reveals the conscious imitation of earlier models that is characteristic of other pagan ivories of the period (see number 32). Height 31.4 cm. (12⅜ in.). Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool, M10004

23. The Greek myth of Bellerophon was popular in Early Christian times. On this fifth-century textile, which is part of a larger hanging, he kills, with the aid of the winged horse Pegasus, the monster Chimaera, a terrifying composite of lion, goat, and snake. Although the action is clearly portrayed, the spatial relationship of the figures and landscape is confused. The scene is surrounded by Nilotic subjects—Erotes, or cupids, intermingled with fish, plants, and waterfowl—that are unrelated to the story of Bellerophon. Presented as decoration on secular objects, the heroic deeds of classical myth were enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages as adventure stories, freed from any overt pagan religious content that would conflict with Christian dogma. Wool and linen. Egypt. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Gu 1230. Photograph: Maurice Chuzeville

24, 25. Late Antique and Early Christian society extolled courage and fortitude in the hunt and in circus combats, and therefore it was only natural that the bold deeds of two very popular Greek heroes, Achilles and Herakles, were greatly admired. The impressively large fourth-century plate at the left, found in the Rhône near Avignon, combines several episodes from the Trojan War. Seated in the center is Achilles. At the left, Patroklos leads Briseis from Achilles's tent (*Iliad* 1: 326-356), a scene found in Pompeian painting, while Achilles talks to Odysseus, who came with the embassy of Phoenix and Ajax (*Iliad* 9: 162-657). The subjects of the other episodes can only be inferred since they are represented by single elements excerpted from fuller depictions, a blatantly unclassical approach to this classical subject. A similarly selective combination of events is found in Early Christian illustrations of the Bible and is typical of the period (number 56). The majestic scale, subtly modeled figures, rich display of armor, and the decorative moldings make the plate a truly magnificent testimony to the taste and wealth of the late Roman world.

The fourth-century bronze plaque at the right shows Herakles, the Stoic hero *par excellence,* clubbing one of the five heads of the hydra of Lerna during the second of his twelve labors. The intricate coiling of the monster's body is echoed in the hero's raised arms and right leg and in the rippling contour of his lion-skin cloak. The excitement of the struggle is heightened by the colorful inlay of copper and two shades of silver.

Plate: diameter 70 cm. (27½ in.). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 2875. Plaque: height 18.8 cm. (7⅜ in.). Perhaps Egypt. The Art Museum, Princeton University, 71-35

26, 27. The Romans, even more than the Greeks, personified concepts and geographical locales in figures that were a staple of the classical repertory. The leaves of the impressive ivory diptych at the left are almost filled by the voluminous figures of Rome and Constantinople. Rome is identified by her helmet and military dress. In her veiled left hand she holds a celestial orb surmounted by a Victory, who extends a triumphal wreath. Constantinople wears her usual attribute, a gemmed mural crown—one in the form of a bastioned city wall—that had been used for city personifications since the creation of the image of Antioch in early Hellenistic times. Less typical are her cornucopia and torch.

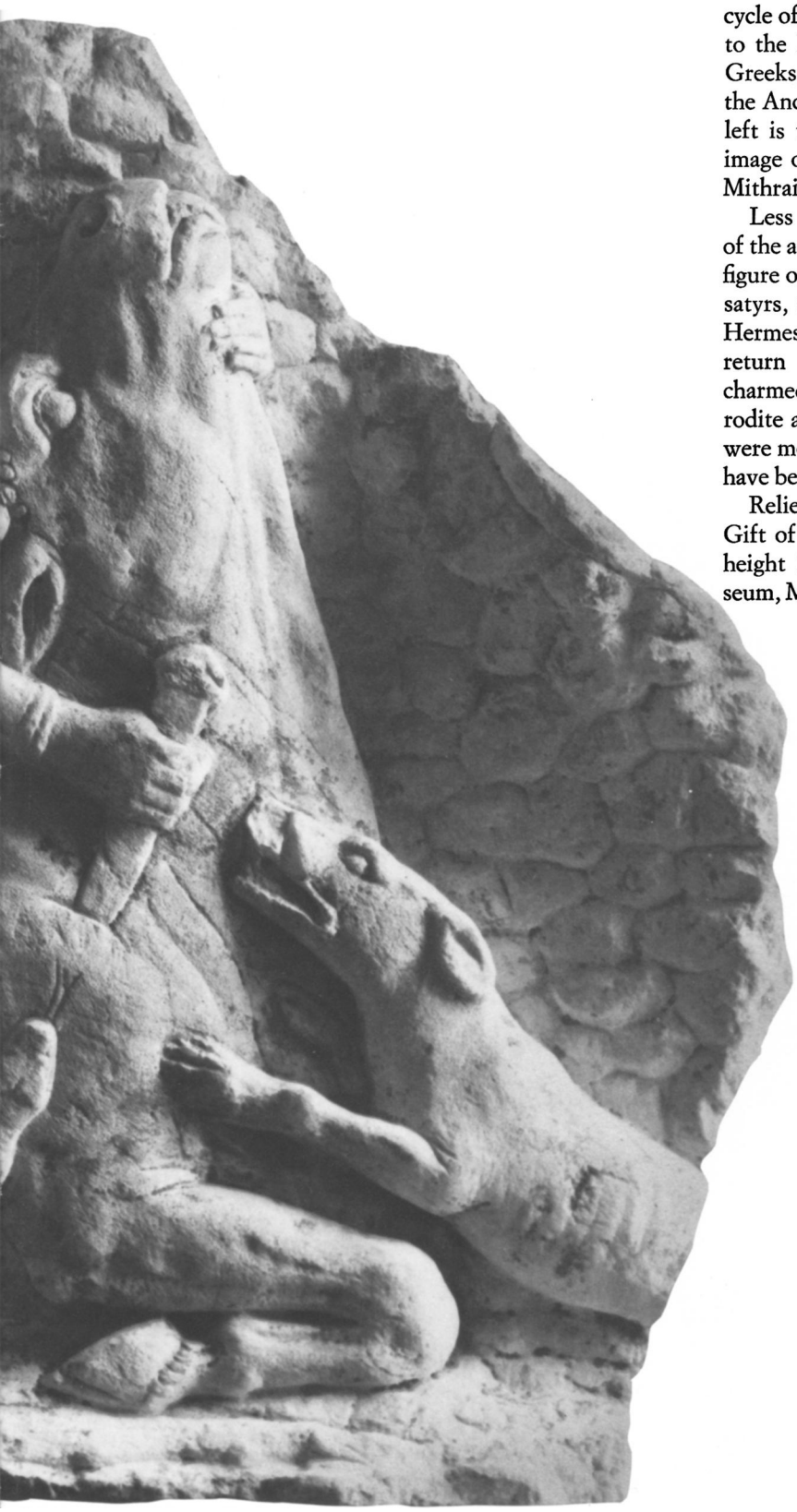
When these plaques were carved, in the late fifth or early sixth century, the image of Rome had a venerable history as a subject in art, but that of Constantinople was a relative newcomer, since Constantine did not transfer his capital there until 330. Consequently, not all of her personifications were as uniform as those of the old capital.

Cities were personified as female but rivers were male, mature, and usually bearded, as is the figure of the Nile in the limestone architectural relief below, made in Egypt in the second half of the fifth century. Reclining in a bower of lotus blossoms, the Nile, diademed and bearing a torch, is accompanied by a female nature deity holding fruit and flowers emblematic of the fertility of the Nile Valley. Executed in the schematic linear style common to the region, this figure is a country cousin of the gorgeous metropolitan personifications of Rome and Constantinople. Nevertheless, its abstract qualities and the fact that it was brightly painted must have made it a particularly impressive image when seen in place, jutting out from the façade of the building it once decorated.

Diptych: height 27.4 cm. (10¾ in.). Possibly Constantinople. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Antikensammlung, X 37, 38. Relief: width 64.5 cm. (25⅜ in.). Said to have come from Herakleopolis Magna (Ahnas). The Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 41.891

28. Three themes long favored in Greek and Roman art decorate the body of this remarkable silver-gilt amphora. From top to bottom are a hunt, a battle between Greeks and Amazons, and a procession of galloping sea monsters bearing Nereids. (The rampant centaurs that form the handles in the illustration have since been lost.) Hunting scenes occur on many Late Antique objects (numbers 16, 17), where they often symbolize victory in warfare. Battle scenes with Amazons had been used since classical times by Greeks to allude to triumphs over Eastern adversaries. Here, the figures are so spirited that one overlooks the disproportion between the standing Greeks and the equestrian Amazons. Below, three Nereids, nymphs of the sea, gambol on three specimens of the Hellenistic maritime menagerie—a hippocamp, a sea lion, and a creature half goat and half fish. This beautifully executed work of about 400 was found in the Black Sea area. Height 42.5 cm. (16⅝ in.). The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 2160/1

29. The artist's sheer delight in decoration and in the colorful textile medium is evidenced in the fifth- to sixth-century Egyptian hanging at the right. Nereids riding on marine creatures cavort in a red "sea" teeming with Erotes in boats, fish, aquatic birds, and lotuses from the Nilotic repertory (numbers 23, 27, 33). They are enframed by a border of winged horses, perhaps representing Pegasus. Although the imagery is more cluttered and the figures more schematically conceived than those on the earlier amphora, they are similarly endowed with spirited movement. The textile's rich coloration of yellow, red, pink, blue, and several shades of green thoroughly charms the viewer. Wool and linen tapestry, height 212 cm. (82¾ in.). The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., 1.48



30, 31. While the traditional subjects of the two preceding works were largely decorative, those on the limestone relief at the left and the redware amphora below served the needs of the late Roman mystery cults of two divinities, the Persian Mithras and the Thracian Orpheus, both associated here with the East by their Phrygian caps. In a powerful composition on the second-century Roman relief, Mithras, in a cave representing the cosmos, slaughters the bull, whose regenerative blood, beneficial to all living things, guaranteed the continuation of the natural cycle of summer and winter, growth and decay. The dog, sacred to the Persians, and the snake, a symbol of the earth to the Greeks, drink the blood. The scorpion, a beneficial power in the Ancient Near East, attacks the bull's genitals. At the upper left is the all-conquering sun god, Helios. Variations of this image of personal and universal salvation have been found in Mithraic temples from Britain to Mesopotamia.

Less successful is the loose assemblage of figures on the face of the amphora, made in North Africa about 300. The dominant figure of Orpheus, playing a lyre, presides over the surrounding satyrs, maenads, and a silenus, a wreath-bearing Victory, and Hermes. The wreath may be a reward for Orpheus's successful return from the Underworld or for his musical gifts that charmed beasts and calmed the forces of nature. Ares and Aphrodite are shown on the other side. The figures and ornaments were molded separately and applied to the amphora, which may have been made in the factory-workshop of Navigius in Tunisia.

Relief: width 95.2 cm. (37½ in.). Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher E. Nyce, 1968.112. Amphora: height 24 cm. (9½ in.). Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz, 0.39570

32, 33. These two works related to two other pagan cults could not be more different in style. The splendid ivory plaque at the left is one leaf of a diptych that was created for members of two enormously rich and powerful pagan Roman senatorial families—the Symmachi and Nicomachi—who resisted the encroachment of Christianity. The plaques were probably commissioned to commemorate a marriage that united the two clans. Outstanding among their members was Q. Aurelius Symmachus (about 340-402), whose daughter's marriage to Nicomachus Flavianus in 401 may be here celebrated. Symmachus, a prefect of the city of Rome and a consul, was, through his speeches and especially his voluminous correspondence, a resolute, subtle, yet ultimately unsuccessful defender of the old order.

The plaque shows a priestess, attended by a boy holding fruit and wine, scattering incense over a small fire on an altar perhaps in honor of Dionysos, alluded to by the ivy wound in the figures' hair, and Zeus, invoked by the oak tree. Its retrospective character is revealed in the quiet classicistic figure style, its palmette border motif, and the lettering of the inscription. In earlier Roman work, the festoon of the altar would have been draped on one face, but here it incorrectly covers two sides, betraying the plaque's late fourth-century date.

The participants who recline at a feast celebrating the goddess Isis on the ivory pyxis at the right (below) are from another, less self-conscious tradition. Working in Egypt in the sixth century, the artist of the pyxis—a small cylindrical box used in the Greek and Roman world for a variety of secular and religious purposes—shunned spatial illusion in order to focus on the symbolic significance of the event. The feast may be identified as honoring Isis, the great and compassionate Egyptian goddess worshiped throughout the Roman Empire, by the personification of the Nile reclining on the pyxis's other side (above). He is accompanied by the usual Nilotic imagery of playful Erotes, lotuses, and sea animals (see numbers 27, 29). Such traits as the faces with prominent noses, thick lips, and the hair organized in a series of tight curls are found on a number of sixth-century ivories, like that of Saint Menas (number 78).

Diptych leaf: height 29 cm. (11⅜ in.). Rome. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 212-1865. Pyxis: height 8.5 cm. (3⅜ in.). Museum Wiesbaden, Sammlung Nassauischer Altertümer, 7865

34. Early scientific treatises, written on papyrus scrolls, were often illustrated with diagrammatic drawings. With the invention, in the late first century, of the more easily handled codex, the book form we know today, and its subsequent widespread use, illustrations became more lavish and sometimes even took precedence over the text. Many early illuminated books with scientific texts have been lost, but later manuscripts provide accurate copies. The picture above is from a ninth-century book, probably made in northern France in the circle of the Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious, that is a copy of a fourth- or fifth-century version of the *Phaenomena of Aratus* of Soloi (a poet of the fourth to third century B.C.). The so-called *"Aratea"* was a popular astronomical treatise giving the locations and configurations of the stars. This full page of Aquarius shows the ancient concept of the eleventh constellation, the Water Bearer, who pours a shower of stars from a vessel held over his shoulder. The rich colors and the sweeping movement make this manuscript one of the most handsome of any age. Height 22.5 cm. (8⅞ in.). 99 fols. Universiteitsbibliotheek, Leiden, Voss. Lat. qu. 79, fol. 48v

35. Fish, like astrological signs, held a particular fascination for the people of the ancient world. Marvelous illustrations of many sea creatures are found on the walls of Hellenistic tombs and decorate Roman works from floor mosaics to glass bowls. In the third-century textile at the right, different varieties of fish appear to be swimming in clear shallow water, an effect heightened by the shadows they cast. The realism, however, is illusory. The fish were not drawn from nature but from the weaver's model book, which ultimately drew upon a scientific study or perhaps even an illustrated cookbook. Wool and linen, height 138 cm. (54¼ in.). Egypt. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons, 908.I.116

36. Illustrations of the theater were very popular in the late Roman world. The floor mosaic below, found in the House of the Masks at Sousse in Tunisia, is a fine example of the third century. Vibrating with contrasting green, white, black, and orange lozenges, the striking background throws into relief the central scene of an actor and poet. The figure standing at the right is the actor, who holds the grinning mask of comedy. He leans against a stand, perhaps a writing stand, incompletely shown; beneath it is a circular case called a *capsa,* which was used for the storage of scrolls, presumably the plays of the poet, who appears on a platform behind the actor. The poet's legs are crossed, and he sits in the classic pose of a thinker. At the left a tragic mask rests on a cabinet in which such masks were stored in the theater. The poet's contemplative attitude is echoed by that of the actor, who seems to be preparing for his role. The scene, however, does not depict an actual performance but is a *tableau* of theater, with its essential components of poet, actor, and masks. Although the poet's pose resembles that of Euripides in a portrait from Pompeii, his features are not idealized; the type of beard he wears is found on Roman portraits of the first half of the third century. He may therefore be the owner of the house, shown in the guise of a playwright in honor of his appreciation, and perhaps patronage, of the theater. Height 215 cm. (84¾ in.). Musée National du Bardo, Tunis. Photograph: Richard Margolis

37. The illuminated page from a manuscript of the works of the Latin poet Vergil illustrates a critical episode in his epic the *Aeneid*. Dido, queen of Carthage, and Aeneas embrace in a cave after having sought shelter from a rain- and hailstorm brought about by the goddess Juno to throw the lovers together. Their horses are tethered to a tree at the left, and two soldiers, one sensibly using his shield as an umbrella, are seated in the surrounding woods.

The unclassical, delightfully expressive style of the illustration betrays the hand of a provincial artist, who illuminated part of this expensively produced manuscript. The decorative effect he has achieved by the use of vibrant color is enhanced by the pattern of the draperies and of the distribution of the figures over the page. The relative importance of the figures is expressed in abstract terms: Dido and Aeneas are the largest and most brightly colored; the horses are unnaturally small. The schematic rendering of the figures, the cave, and the other landscape elements all contribute to the simple and ordered presentation of the scene.

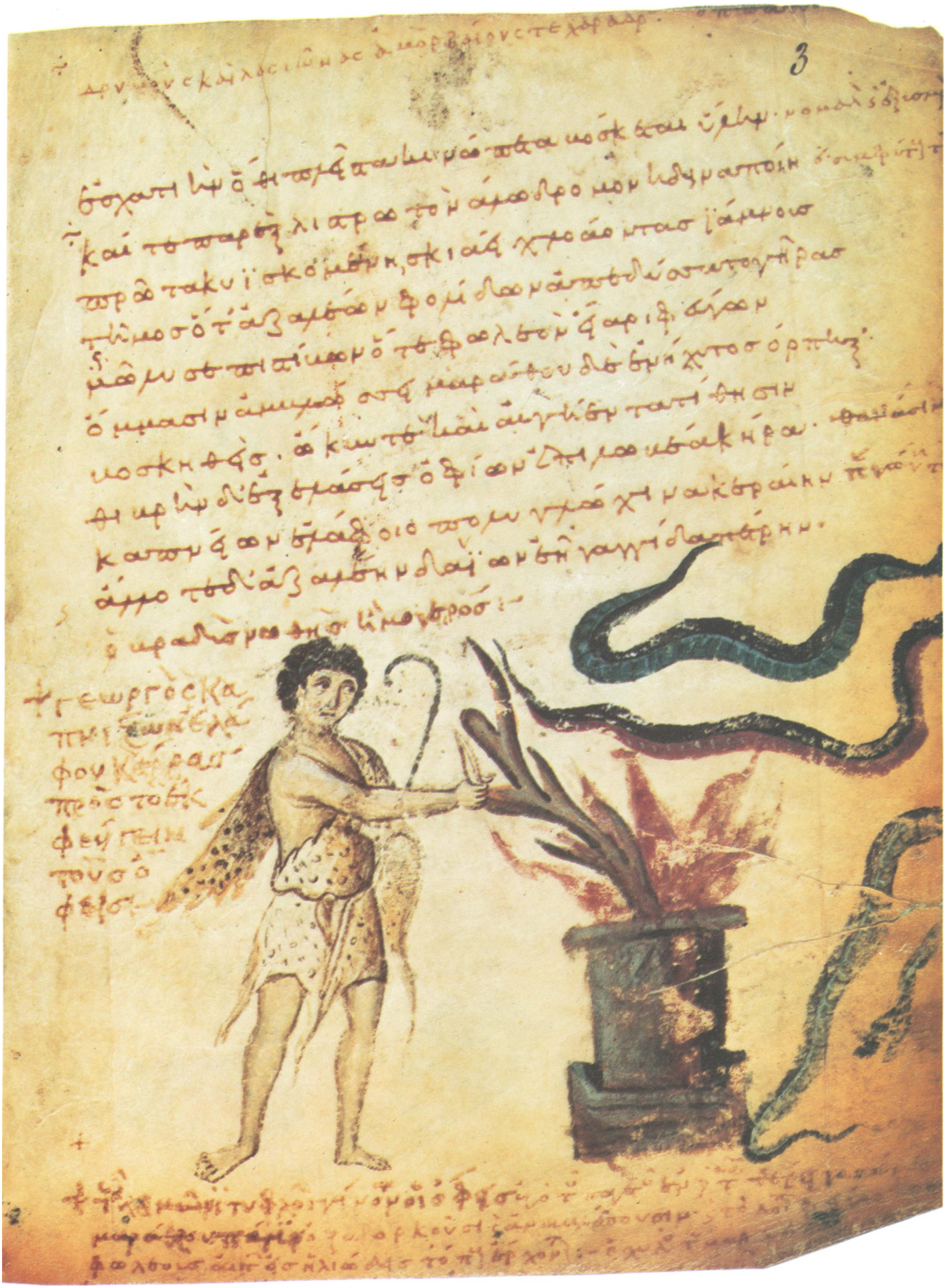
The manuscript, which also contains Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics,* is one of two fifth-century copies of this very popular work that have survived from the Early Christian period. Width 32.3 cm. (12¾ in.). Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican City, cod. lat. 3867, fol. 108r

38, 39. Bucolic poetry, which extols the pleasures of rural life, was an invention of the sophisticated city dwellers of the Hellenistic era. The quiet pastoral existence evoked in literature from Theocritus to Vergil appealed especially to the intelligentsia of the Roman world, who, like Pliny the Younger in the first century A.D., sought refuge from the political and social pressures of the metropolis in country retreats. Their love of an idyllic refuge is reflected in a large number of objects in all media. The textile at the left, woven in Egypt, shows a shepherd milking a goat, with her kid at her side. Hanging from the grape arbor overhead is a wine container which, judging by its shape and scroll handles, is a kantharos. The charming scene is bordered by a frieze of birds and vines. The stylized portrayal of the figures, as seen in the rudimentary pattern of goat's hair, indicates a fifth- to sixth-century date.

The somewhat earlier roundel below is one of a series; four others are known. More sophisticated than the panel at the left, the textile shows a type of scene described in bucolic literature. In a common Roman dining arrangement, three shepherds recline on a semicircular bolster and exchange stories, while their food is prepared below. At the lower left, a shepherd skins a carcass he has strung up in a tree, as it is still done in Greece today. In the center, a dog eagerly awaits scraps from the table. Like the panel opposite, the roundel was probably sewn to a tunic. Treasured by their owners, such adornments could be detached and resewn onto new clothes. Although found in Egypt, this roundel, because of its stylistic relationship with Constantinopolitan and Syrian work, may have been produced in the eastern Mediterranean.

Left: height 33.7 cm. (13¼ in.). The St. Louis Art Museum, 48. 1939. Below: width 12.1 cm. (4¾ in.). The Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 44. 143a

40. Such was the popularity of bucolic scenes that they were even introduced into unrelated scientific treatises to embellish the text. This glowing tenth-century Byzantine manuscript copies a now lost Late Antique book containing the treatises of Nicander of Colophon on poisonous insects and animals and their antidotes. Nicander lived in Ionia, on the west coast of Asia Minor, during the second century B.C. Like Aratus (see number 34), he popularized scientific texts by rendering them into verse. The page below vividly depicts his account of the birth of snakes from the blood of giants, who are shown against a light blue sea. The composition is probably adapted from Roman illustrations of the Greek myth of the battle of gods and giants, where the giants are shown as snake-legged monsters. On the page at the right, the central figure is a shepherd burning an antler on an altar to drive away snakes, seen fleeing to the right. The influence of bucolic themes is apparent in the use of shepherds in this and other illustrations in the manuscript and in the idyllic landscapes in which they are often set. Parchment, height 16 cm. (6½ in.). Constantinople, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, cod. suppl. gr. 247, fols. 47v and 48v



Secular Realm

The secular realm comprises works made for private use and enjoyment. Ranging from mosaics that enhanced the floor of a rich man's house to the silver plate that graced his table, they are ornamented with subjects drawn largely from daily life—harvests, fishing, the preparations for a marriage. Many of these cross the boundaries of the other realms: the portraits on these pages reflect the stylistic traditions of imperial portraiture; the silver plate from Augst (number 43) and the bronze fisherman (number 44) are closely allied with bucolic themes; Projecta's casket (number 45) blends a domestic scene with a mythological one; and the jewelry worn by private citizens might be conceived with abstract patterns or imperial, classical, Jewish, or Christian imagery. The common denominator for the secular works illustrated on the following pages is the high social class and wealth of their owners, although more modest works made for less affluent citizens also survive. The possession of precious materials in any appreciable amount was the privilege of the ruling classes, and they displayed their magnificent plate and jewelry in their houses and at festivals for all to admire.

41, 42. Portraiture was largely the domain of the upper classes since usually they alone were able to afford it. Graced with the beauty of Apollo, the young man below (and on the cover) is portrayed in the classical tradition of the second half of the third century. He is identified by the inscription as "Gennadios most accomplished in the musical art." Exquisitely drawn on gold leaf, and as delicate as a fine Renaissance engraving, this sapphire-blue glass medallion is a masterpiece of portraiture on a small scale. Gennadios and several other of these jewel-like glass portraits have been attributed to Alexandria on the basis of the Greek dialect of their inscriptions. The rim of the glass is beveled for mounting, perhaps as a pendant.

At the right is a superb marble bust of a woman of rank, which was probably part of a double portrait of a husband and wife, a type often found in funerary art. But more than just a memorial, this bust captures some of the lady's gentle spirit: a modest and virtuous spouse, she wears her hair tightly coiffed in a style popular in the fifth and sixth centuries; as a cultivated woman, she carries a scroll emblematic of her learning. The sensitive carving of the eyes, mouth, and chin, and the finely polished surface, date the bust to the late fifth or early sixth century.

Gold glass: diameter 3.9 cm. (1⅝ in.). Metropolitan Museum, Fletcher Fund, 26.258. Bust: height 53 cm. (20⅞ in.). Asia Minor. Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters Collection, 66.25

43. The sumptuous silver-gilt and niello plate above is decorated with subjects that, like bucolic images, evoke the good life amidst idealized nature. Hunting scenes of boar, hares, bears, and stags alternate with geometric patterns around the rim, and a seascape fills the central medallion (opposite). A palace with its outbuildings, including a small rotunda at the upper left that may be a bath, is enclosed by walls with corner towers and a domed entrance. It faces a sea teeming with a great variety of marine life and Erotes fishing from gaily ornamented boats, a felicitous blending of scientific and Nilotic subjects. The plate was found recently in Switzerland with other equally splendid dishes and a cache of coins that dates the hoard to the first half of the fourth century. The plates were probably prominently displayed in their owner's villa much as one would proudly exhibit a valuable tea service today. Diameter: 58 cm. (22⅞ in.). Probably Rome. Römermuseum, Augst, 1962.2. Photograph: E. Schulz

44. The charming bronze at the right depicts a fisherman carrying his empty net over his shoulder and what may be a roughhewn tiller in his left hand. He stands in front of a bollard, a post for mooring lines, from which arch two loops shaped like fingers, a curious but common motif. The bollard and loops may have acted as rope guides on a small ship, but the statuette shows little wear. The strut between the fisherman's shoulder and the bollard is the type of support used to strengthen marble statues, like those of Jonah (number 55), but not needed on sturdier bronzes. This sculpture, therefore, may be a copy of a now lost marble work and may have served only a decorative function. The figure's caplike hair, full face, and simple but realistically draped clothing indicate that it was made in the late fourth or early fifth century, perhaps in Italy, where it was found. Height 17.8 cm. (7 in.). Metropolitan Museum, Rogers Fund, 63.206

45, 46. Marriage was an important event in aristocratic life in the late Roman world, often uniting prominent families—such as the pagan Nicomachi and Symmachi, who commissioned the beautiful ivory diptych (number 32)—and forming political or social unions that were lavishly celebrated. A work of the second half of the fourth century, the magnificent silver and silver-gilt casket above, found in 1793 with a large treasure on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, honored the Christian union of a woman named Projecta and Turcius Secundus, shown together in the wreathed medallion on the lid (illustrated at the left). Although the inscription exhorts the couple to "live in Christ," Projecta is portrayed very much as a pagan bride would have been. On the front of the casket she prepares her toilet, just as Aphrodite does on the lid.

Projecta's handmaidens, standing in arcades on the four sides, offer her the same unguents and utensils as the Tritons and Nereids bring to Aphrodite. Although the goddess, voluptuously seated on her shell, is intended to epitomize Projecta's grace and beauty, the bride, with her pleasantly plump figure, fashionably braided hair, and jeweled robes, looks just like an aristocratic woman of her time.

On the back of the lid is a scene that has been interpreted as Projecta receiving wedding guests or being accompanied by her servants to a Roman bath. Among the articles, perhaps wedding presents, brought by her entourage are a lamp stand, a ewer, and two caskets.

The bronze lamp stand, or candlestick, from Egypt at the right was possibly made for a bride, as it is decorated with the same subject as Projecta's casket. Aphrodite, who forms the stem, may be applying perfume or cosmetics, perhaps kohl to darken her eyes, as was a common custom in Egypt. Nereids riding sea monsters on the feet of the stand carry her toilet articles. The style of this bronze, however, is quite different. Here, Aphrodite, although nude from the waist up, is not a sensual goddess. Her mantle, loose and flowing on the casket, is wrapped tightly and primly around her; her hair is severely crimped. She resembles other images of Aphrodite in Coptic art of the fifth and sixth centuries.

Casket: width 55 cm. (21⅝ in.). The British Museum, London, 66,12-29,1. Lamp stand: height 50.2 cm. (19 ¾ in.). The Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Nelson Fund, 58.8

47. The silver case above, containing bottles for perfume and unguents, was found with Projecta's casket (number 45) and most likely was made for her wedding. It is decorated with the figures of eight muses alternating with vignettes of birds, vases, and flowers. Seen in this illustration are—from left to right—Melpomene, muse of tragedy, with a Heraklean club and mask; Urania, muse of astronomy, with her globe; and Calliope, muse of epic poetry, with a scroll. Another woman, seated in a medallion on the crown of the lid, may represent Projecta. Although not dressed as a muse, she may be associated with Erato, the ninth, muse of lyric and love poetry. On her wedding casket, Projecta, proud of her learning, carries a scroll. Height 30 cm. (11¾ in.). Rome, second half of the fourth century. The British Museum, London, 66, 12-29, 2

48. The splendid late fourth-century vase at the right is carved from one piece of agate. The sides are covered with grapevines in high relief, set off by the vase's thin translucent walls. Two handles, more decorative than useful, are grinning heads of Pan (right), who rejoices no doubt under the influence of Dionysos's wine (see number 21). This flamboyant masterpiece of Late Antique gem carving once belonged to the painter Peter Paul Rubens. Height 19 cm. (7½ in.). The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 42.562

49, 50. Jewelry, more than any other medium, testifies to the extravagant taste and vast wealth of the late empire's aristocracy. These two necklaces are very different in type but equally beautiful in their masterful techniques. Although found separately in Egypt, they were probably made in Constantinople, the center of the Byzantine world and of its artistic production during the early seventh century. At the left, plaques with openwork designs of lotuses and palmettes, mounted with pearls, emeralds, and semiprecious stones, are joined to fit around the neck like a collar.

The pendant above, suspended from a chain (only partially shown) of alternating lapis-lazuli and gold beads, is decorated with a gold Aphrodite set on a lapis-lazuli shell; three gold chains hanging from the shell originally terminated in pearls. The goddess tends her hair like Aphrodite on Projecta's casket (number 45). Although this Aphrodite is less graceful than the earlier one, the figure's conscious classicism and the pendant's exquisite technique, particularly the juxtaposition of gold and lapis lazuli, are characteristic of seventh-century work from Constantinople.

Left: length 58 cm. (22⅞ in.). Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Antikenabteilung, 30219,505. Photograph: Ingrid Geske. Above: height of pendant 4.5 cm. (1¾ in.). Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D.C., 28.6

51. The impressive necklace at the left was made in the early seventh century for a woman, since the Greek inscription ("Lord help the wearer") on the upper medallion uses the feminine gender. It was found at Antinoë in Egypt, but, like the necklaces on the preceding page, was probably made in Constantinople; the medallion has a personification of that city on the reverse side. The artist adapted for Christian use a type of imperial ceremonial necklace, a torque supporting a cluster of imperial coins, which here date from the sixth and early seventh centuries. On the front of the pendant medallion is the Annunciation, and on the back is Christ's first miracle, the Marriage at Cana (John 2:1-11). The Virgin of the Annunciation, seated in a wicker chair, holds the wool with which, according to the *Protoevangelium* of James (chapter 10), a second-century apocryphal text of the life of the Virgin, she wove a curtain to hang in the Temple of Jerusalem. The archangel Gabriel approaches from her left. Length 35.2 cm. (13⅞ in.). Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Antikenabteilung, 30219, 505. Photograph: Ingrid Geske

52. Judging by its luxurious decoration, the bracelet below, made in Constantinople in the early seventh century, was intended for a woman of great wealth. It was purchased in Egypt, where other contemporary pieces of jewelry from Constantinople, like the necklace number 49, were found. They share a delight in the prominent display of gems and in delicate openwork.

Strings of pearls alternating with gold beads frame sapphires and emerald green plasmas (a variety of quartz) on the bracelet's wide gold band. The sapphire of the central mount is set in a circle of pearls, like the heart of a flower surrounded by its petals. The high quality of the craftsmanship extends even to the inside, where the back of the mount is overlaid with an openwork vine and the middle of the band is formed by a series of bow-shaped pieces. Diameter 8.3 cm. (3¼ in.). Metropolitan Museum, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.1671

Jewish Realm

The second commandment that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai prohibited the making and worship of any graven images, or the likenesses of anything in heaven, on the earth, or in the water (Exodus 20:1-5). This prohibition applied to figural art that could be worshiped as idols, such as the golden calf in Exodus, but not to religious artifacts like the lavish gold furnishings of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6-7). A number of works ornamented with Jewish religious subjects have survived from the Roman period. Most are symbols of the Jewish faith and its history, as are those on the objects shown here.

53. Made in Rome in the fourth century, the glass at the left, its gold-leaf images highlighted by colored paint, depicts a domed Torah shrine (the Ark of the Law), its doors open to reveal six Torah scrolls on shelves; two lions representing the kings of Judah, holding two more scrolls between their paws; and below, on each side, a seven-branched menorah, its arms holding seven burning lamps. Surrounding the menorahs are other liturgical objects: in the center is a lulab, clustered branches of palm, myrtle, and willow; flanking it are—at the right—an ethrog, or citron, and—at the left—a shofar, or ram's horn; and in the lower corners are two oil jars. The Greek inscription written in Latin letters at the top of this gold glass, once part of a bowl, exhorts the owner to "drink may you live [long], Elares." Diameter 10 cm. (3⅞ in.). The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Jakob Michael, New York, in memory of his wife, Erna Sondheimer-Michael, 66.36.14. Photograph: David Harris

54. Jewish artists also created rich cycles of figural scenes depicting episodes from the Old Testament. Few examples have survived. The most outstanding are the frescoes on the walls of the small third-century synagogue at Dura Europus (figure 3) on the Euphrates. These apparently derived from an illustrated Old Testament, since they include events found only in the commentaries accompanying the text. Several resemble Early Christian representations, indicating that Jewish illustrated texts were an important source for Christian art.

The terracotta lamp above is an example of such Jewish figural art. Above the seven wick-openings, perhaps referring to a menorah, David (right) slings stones at Goliath. Their appearance on a utilitarian and crudely styled object like this suggests a more widespread use of Old Testament illustration in Jewish art than has been generally assumed. Length 13 cm. (5⅛ in.). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.653

Christian Realm

From its fledgling beginnings as a minuscule Jewish sect in Palestine in the first century, Christianity spread with astonishing speed throughout the Mediterranean world to become a universal religion. Intolerance and persecution, intermittent and usually localized, were unsuccessful in slowing its progress. Christianity's appeal was twofold: it offered the simple but profound morality of Judaism unimpeded by ethnic boundaries, and it promised salvation. The church's growth was fostered by a disciplined organization and the constant intercommunication of its congregations. Its *esprit de corps* was epitomized by the martyrs, who died for their faith and were venerated as heroes. With the Edict of Milan in 313 paving the way, Christianity, by the year 400, became the official Roman religion. By the sixth century, church and state had suppressed all older religions in the Roman Empire except Judaism.

The Christianization of the art of the Roman world was similarly spectacular. There was little or no Christian art created in the first two centuries, but since the majority of Christians were pagan converts accustomed to visual testimony of their gods, by the third century Christian art came into being. Unfortunately few monuments remain from this early period to guide us in understanding its development. But what a foundation artists had to build on—the formal heritage of the Greco-Roman tradition and the seemingly inexhaustible imagery of the Bible.

Nascent Christian art drew upon a variety of sources —imperial, mythological, Eastern cultic, and Jewish— for its images. Constantine's position as emperor rendered his adoption of Christianity unique, and there is no doubt of his active patronage after 313. He built churches, organized synods of bishops, and carried on a voluminous correspondence with prelates throughout the empire. His successors took an even more active role in the church's organization. Christian artists responded to official support by adapting imperial iconography to their portrayals of Christ, the Virgin, and saints (numbers 68, 69). Inspiration in style and subject came also from pagan religious images, like the ram-bearing shepherd adapted for the Good Shepherd (number 55), as well as from mystery cults (numbers 66, 77). Mythological subjects influenced Christian compositions (number 58), and the Old Testament with its legends and commentaries was completely absorbed into Christian cycles (see number 59).

From this heterogeneous base, a distinctively Christian art developed along several different lines. Illustrations of the Bible assumed two interrelated forms. One was a pictorial narration with episodes arranged sequentially, following the Biblical text; it probably was developed for manuscript illustration (numbers 59, 62) but was soon applied to other media as well (numbers 58, 60, 61, 64). The second form depicted single important events that included only those elements essential for recognition of the subject. Called "abbreviated representations," they concentrated on themes of salvation, as in funerary (number 56) and baptismal art.

Portraits of Christ, the Virgin, and saints form a separate category, iconic art. It emphasized the sanctity and otherworldliness of the holy figures through a deliberate abstraction and dematerialization of physical form (numbers 68-73). Developed in the fifth century, and perfected in the sixth, iconic art proved to be one of the most significant contributions of Christian art. Pilgrimage art was another. Commemorative objects with pictorial reference to the holy sites (numbers 74-77) provided a new, popular dimension. Finally, there was the art produced to meet the demands of an enriched liturgy. Chalices, patens, lamps, and reliquaries made of luxurious materials epitomize the creativity and richness of the imagery of Christian worship. They show to what extent the artistry formerly lavished on imperial and pagan art was now concentrated on the glorification of the Christian church.

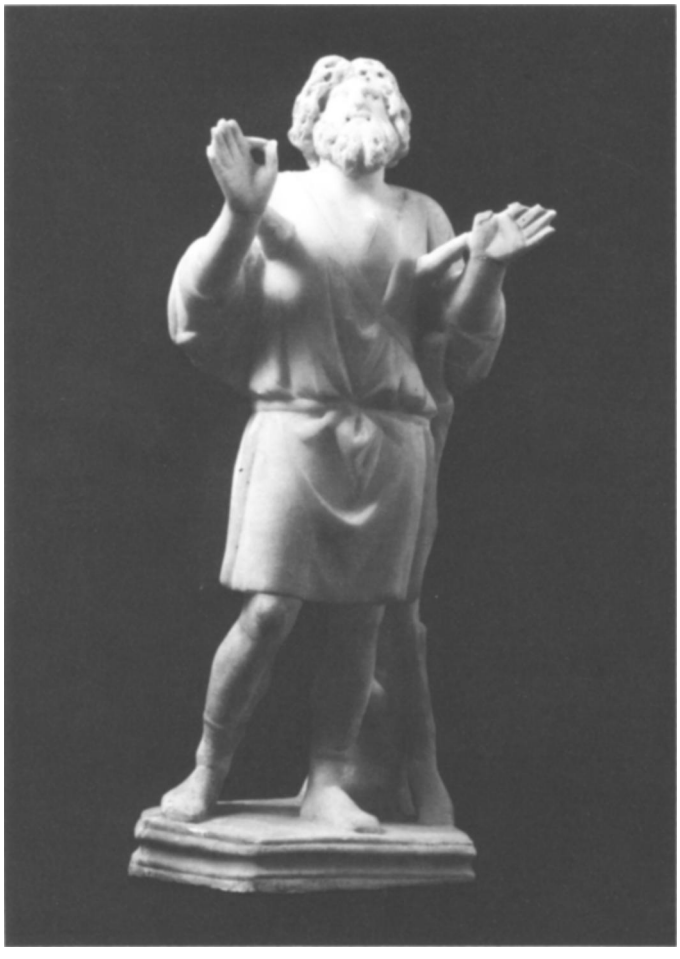
55. An extraordinary group of small marble statues, ranging in height from 13 to about 20½ inches, is illustrated here and on the following pages. They show, sequentially, Jonah swallowed by the sea monster (p. 62), Jonah cast up (at the right), Jonah resting under the gourd vine (p. 63, above), Jonah praying (p. 63, below

left), and Christ as the Good Shepherd (p. 63, below right). They were found with three pairs of small sculpted busts, each portraying the same man and woman of aristocratic rank. The style of the portraits suggests that they, and the sculptures, were made in the third quarter of the third century, probably in Asia Minor.

The lively statuettes are expressive depictions of the Old Testament story (Jonah 1-4). The "big fish," popularly known as the "whale," is shown as a sea monster, part animal, part fish. Its coiled body upright, the monster swallows and regurgitates Jonah with an explosive energy. Few other Early Christian representations of this popular episode are so striking. In contrast, Jonah under the vine stretches languidly like Endymion of Greek myth asleep under a tree, the inspiration for this composition. Jonah upright and praying is momentarily free of worldly cares and in communion with his god. The Good Shepherd is similarly relaxed, leaning on a rough crook, a sheep over his shoulders. Two more lie at his feet. A tree trunk, adding a rural touch, serves to strengthen this statue and that of Jonah praying.

All of the statues are carved in the round, except that of Jonah under the vine. It probably was intended to be seen only from the front, with the others displayed around it. Their exact arrangement cannot be determined, as they were found buried in a large storage jar.

Jonah being swallowed by the fish and cast up after three days was interpreted as a prefiguration of Christ's death, descent into hell, and resurrection, and is a symbol of salvation in Christ, the Good Shepherd. Similar combinations of subjects occur elsewhere in Early Christian art, in funerary contexts like the catacombs in Rome, and in baptistries, where the theme of salvation was particularly appropriate. The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 65.238, 237, 239, 240, 241



56, 57. Christian sarcophagi from Rome were carved with a variety of Old and New Testament scenes dealing with themes of salvation, which were also traditional in pagan Roman funerary art. The same atelier that produced the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine in the early fourth century made the well preserved marble sarcophagus below for a man named Sabino who, according to the inscription at the top, was buried on the sixth day (April 26) before the calends of May.

In the center is a praying woman, who symbolizes Sabino's prayers for salvation. At the woman's immediate right is depicted Christ's miraculous changing of the water into wine at the Marriage at Cana; at her left are Christ Healing the Blind Man (Mark 8: 22-26), the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes (see number 80), and the Raising of Lazarus (John 11: 1-44), with Christ touching the dead man's head with a rod. These events are combined with two from the life of Peter: the apostle being taken prisoner by Nero's soldiers and his apocryphal miracle of causing water to flow from his prison walls so that he could baptize his guards. These episodes symbolize salvation in Christ.

The crowding of the scenes, which are reduced to their bare essentials, is intensified by the insertion of onlookers' heads in the background. The deeply undercut figures with sharply chiseled and drilled features and draperies are typical of Roman sculpture of the early fourth century.

The ivory plaques on these pages were carved in Rome a century later than the sarcophagus. They

illustrate episodes from the life of Christ: at the left —from top to bottom—the Massacre of the Innocents; the Baptism of Christ, in which the river extends to the top of the frame; and the Marriage at Cana. At the right Christ miraculously cures the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34); the paralytic (Mark 2: 1-12), who carries his bed; and the man possessed of demons (Luke 8: 26-33), standing behind the herd of swine into which Christ has caused the demons to enter. The plaques, unlike the sarcophagus, present each event in its own frame, which is decorated with classical moldings.

Some episodes are more elaborately and dramatically presented than others. In the Massacre of the Innocents, for example, babies are hurled to the ground before Herod's eyes while the mothers cry out in despair. Their upraised arms and anguished faces are adapted from classical depictions of grief-stricken Trojan women.

Although less elegant in style than the contemporary ivory Passion plaques (number 61), these show the same compactly proportioned figures and the lucid compositions of those and other Roman work of the first decades of the fifth century.

Sarcophagus: width 200 cm. (78¾ in.). 315-325. Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie, Vatican City, Museo Pio Cristiano, Lat. 161. Plaque, left: height 20 cm. (7⅞ in.). 410-420. Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, 2719. Plaque, right: height 19.5 cm. (7¾ in.). 410-420. Musée du Louvre, Paris, OA7876, 7877, 7878

58. Among the most splendid works from the reign of the emperor Heraclius (610-641), these two silver plates are part of a set of nine with scenes from the Old Testament life of King David. The plate at the right, the largest and most important of the nine, combines several episodes related to David's slaying of the Philistine warrior Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40-54). At the top Goliath curses David in the Valley of Elah, where David took the stones for his sling from a brook, personified by the river god between the two figures. In the center Goliath lunges at David, who, muscles taut, prepares to cast the shot that will stun his adversary. Israelite soldiers (left) observe the combat, while Philistines (right) prepare to flee. At the bottom David beheads the fallen Goliath.

The eight other plates, four each in two smaller sizes, illustrate ceremonial events, such as Saul arming David for his battle, that are depicted as imperial court functions, and less formal episodes in landscape settings, like the one below of David slaying the lion that set upon his flock (1 Samuel 17:34-39). David attacks the lion from behind—a composition adapted from classical representations of Herakles slaying the Nemean lion.

The plates' ambitious subject, centering on David's victory, finds a remarkable parallel in Heraclius's war to free the Holy Land from the Sasanians. A contemporary source records that in 627 the emperor challenged Razatis, the enemy general, to hand-to-hand combat to determine the outcome of the war. Heraclius won and later captured Jerusalem and restored it to Christian rule. The set of plates may well commemorate his campaign.

The plates were made in Constantinople during Heraclius's reign, since they bear imperial control stamps (equivalent to modern hallmarks) with his portrait as it appeared on coins from 613 to about 630. Each plate is formed of a solid piece of silver, intricately chased by hand. Despite the difficulty of this task, the artist has endowed the images with an extraordinary sense of movement and volume and a wealth of decorative detail.

Right: diameter 49.4 cm. (19½ in.). Below: diameter 14 cm. (5½ in.). Found in Cyprus. Metropolitan Museum, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.396, 394

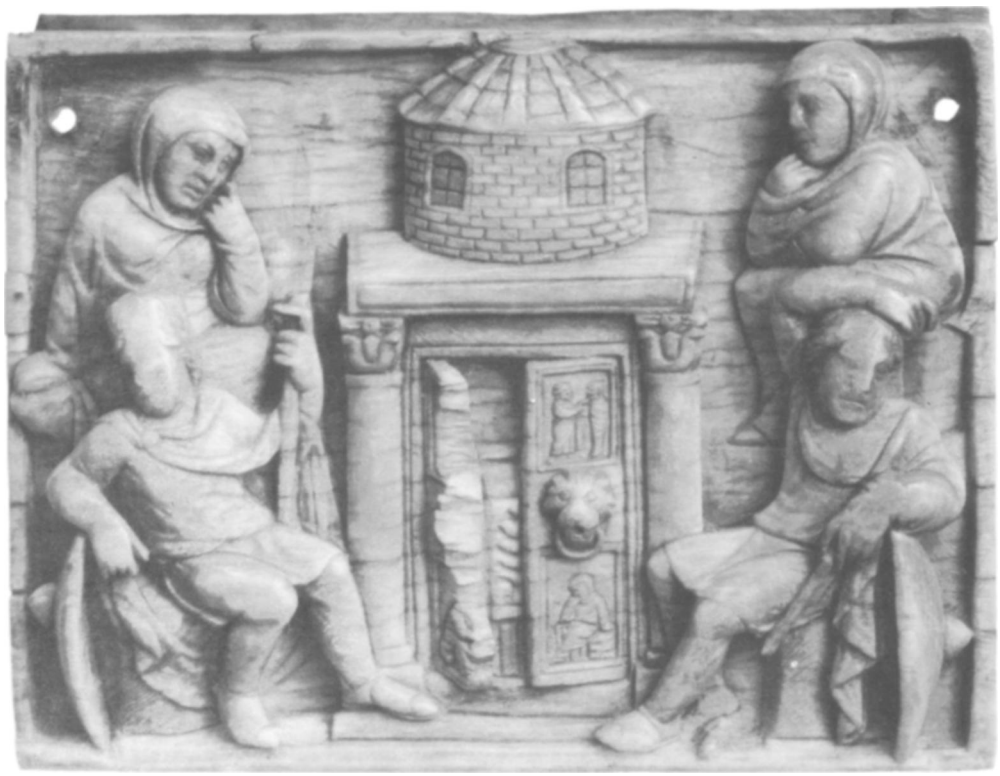
59. The seventh-century manuscript at the left, called the Ashburnham Pentateuch after one of its owners, contains four of the first five books of the Old Testament, which comprise the Pentateuch. It is written in Latin and illustrated with full-page miniatures that group together events in the lives of Old Testament figures, here Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27-28). The lively and richly colored scenes include, at the top left, Rebecca overhearing Isaac send Esau to the field to hunt for game; at the right, Isaac feeling Jacob's hand and neck, which are wrapped in goatskin to deceive him; and, at the bottom right, Jacob's dream of the ladder. The narrative is arranged in three irregular registers with a wealth of architectural and genre detail, a distinctive feature of the manuscript. Parallels for the turreted and columned buildings in North African mosaics and for the expressive figures and strong but dark palette in later Spanish manuscripts suggest that the Pentateuch was made in one of those areas. Height 39.5 cm.(15½ in.). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 25

60. The adventure-filled life of Joseph was popular in Early Christian art. The sixth-century ivory pyxis below bears three scenes from the partly apocryphal Jewish story of Joseph and his divining cup (Genesis 43-44). Here his brothers are brought before him after the cup had been found hidden in Benjamin's sack of grain. Joseph's feast for his brothers and their attack upon Benjamin when the cup was discovered are also illustrated. The vigorous, expressive style is similar to that of the Joseph cycle on the ivory bishop's throne in Ravenna. Although the use of this pyxis is unknown, it may, like other Christian pyxides, have contained the Eucharistic bread, incense, or relics. Height 7.7 cm. (3 1/16 in.). Perhaps Constantinople. The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, w 8

61. The events of Christ's Passion were grouped together as a special series in Christian art and thought. They represented the fulfillment of the promise of his incarnation and gave hope for redemption to the faithful. These four ivory plaques, once part of a casket, are among the earliest Passion series. They depict some scenes from what must have been a more complete pictorial cycle.

Three scenes are crowded into the plaque at the near right (above): Pilate washing his hands to absolve himself of Christ's death; Christ carrying the cross on the road to Calvary; and Peter denying the woman's accusation that he is a disciple of Christ. Above his head, on a pillar, a cock crows, a symbol of Peter's three denials. The overlapping of episodes, with Peter seeming to interrupt Christ's progress to Calvary, is reminiscent of the composition on the earlier sarcophagus depicting Christ's miracles (number 56).

The Crucifixion plaque combines two events: Judas hanging himself for betraying Christ, and the Crucifixion, with the grieving Mary and John at the left of the cross and Longinus, who pierced Christ's side with his spear, at the right. As far as can be judged from surviving representations of the scene, the crucified Christ is shown here in human form for the first time. Previously, the Crucifixion was depicted only symbolically, with a wreath hanging from the cross. Even here Christ does not suffer as the Gospels describe but is portrayed as the triumphant Lord, his eyes open, his body superimposed on, rather than hanging from, the cross. It was not until four



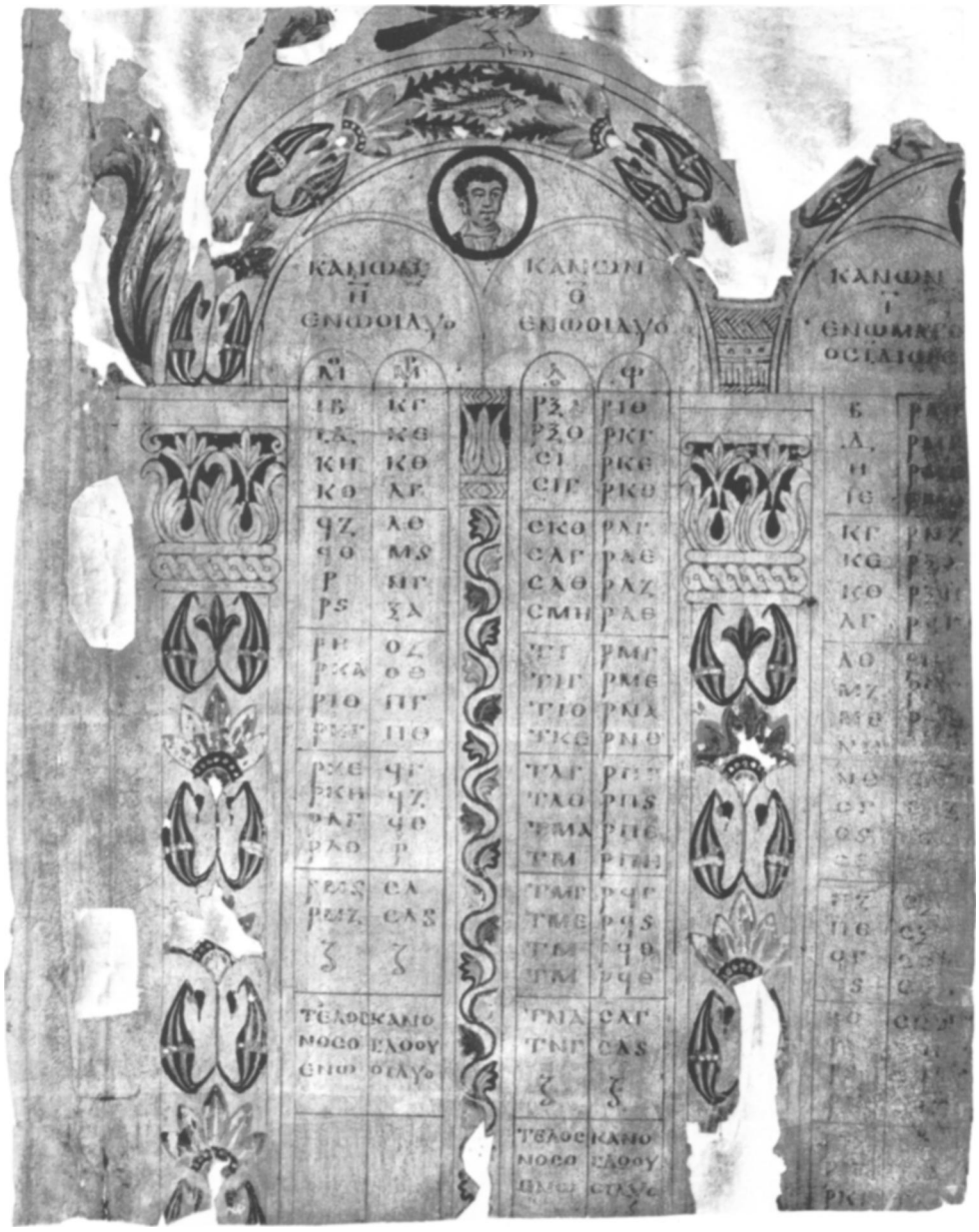
hundred years later that Christian artists dared to show him suffering as a man.

The two other plaques each show a single event following the Resurrection: the two women at the tomb of the risen Christ, and, below, Christ appearing to his apostles. The first scene is arranged schematically, with sleeping guards flanking the open doors of the tomb. Above, the women contemplate Christ's disappearance. The reflective mood is reinforced by the ambiguous spatial relationship of the four figures, who are "stacked" on either side without regard to perspective. All attention is concentrated on the empty tomb. It is an elaborate domed structure with an entrance framed by columns and closed with doors sculpted with the Raising of Lazarus and a mourning woman. The tomb does not represent the actual burial cave but the rotunda built over the site in Jerusalem in the fourth century.

The resurrected Christ appears to his apostles in the final plaque, standing on a dais and showing his wounds to the apostle Thomas, who, doubting him, reaches out to touch Christ's side. Three of the other ten apostles present in the Gospel story gaze wonderingly at Christ.

The plaques are beautifully and elegantly worked in high relief. Although the heads are unnaturally large, the figures are realistically conceived, with graceful draperies. The ivories are among the most accomplished Roman works of the Theodosian period (about 380-450). Width 9.8 cm. (3⅞ in.). The British Museum, London, 56, 6-23, 4-7

62. This fragmentary manuscript, of which two pages are illustrated here, contains forty-three leaves from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. The Greek text is beautifully written in letters of gold ink on vellum that has been stained purple, an expensive color reserved by law for imperial use. Scenes from the death of Saint John the Baptist (Matthew 14: 3-12) are painted at the bottom of the page shown in the detail above. The two disciples at the right bend over his decapitated body in prison (the roof of which has been removed for better viewing), while a servant hands John's head on a platter to Salome at Herod's feast. On the page at the right Christ heals the two blind men from Jericho (Matthew 20: 30-34). Both illustrations are flanked by the Old Testament prophets Moses, Isaiah, and King David, who hold scrolls written with their prophecies, which were interpreted as foretelling the Christian events portrayed here. Isaiah (at the right of the healing scene), for example, said, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened" (Isaiah 35:5). The lavish use of gold for the text is carried over into the figural illustration, in the haloes, Christ's robes, and the decoration of David's tunic and jewelry. The draperies of the figures are described by rapid brushstrokes in various shades of blue, red, and yellow, highlighted by white; the faces are enlivened by pink, beige, and brown shading. The manuscript's style, luxurious format, and skillful illumination point to its production as an imperial commission in a major city like Antioch in Syria during the sixth century. Height: 29.5 cm. (11⅝ in.). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, cod. suppl. grec. 1286, fols. 10r, 29



63. To simplify the task of cross-referencing accounts of Christ in the four Gospels, Eusebius, a fourth-century bishop of Caesarea, drew up a concordance called the Canon Tables. These were usually included at the beginning of the Gospels and arranged under arches, as on the page fragment at the left. Painted with brightly colored foliage, the arches resemble the richly ornamented borders of early church mosaics (see figure 4). The portrait of an apostle, in contrast, is quite realistic; it may be inspired by the sculpted medallions Constantine had made for his mausoleum in Constantinople. The manuscript, written on a gold-stained vellum, was probably made in Constantinople in the seventh century. Height 21.4 cm. (8⅜ in.). The British Library, London, Add. Ms. 5111, fol. 11

64. On the central panel of the diptych leaf at the right are the Virgin and Child in Majesty. The three Magi, in Eastern costumes, offer gifts with the assistance of an angel. Below, the Nativity scene is enlivened by additions from the apocryphal *Protoevangelium* of James, such as the figure of a woman named Salome, in front of the manger, whose hand withers when she doubts the Virgin Birth. In the surrounding plaques are related scenes: at the lower right, Anna is interrupted by her maid as she laments her barrenness; at the upper right, an angel announces Anna's miraculous conception of Mary; at the bottom, the Annunciation to Mary (left), the test of her virginity by water, and the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. At the top, two archangels flank angels bearing a wreathed cross.

The unarticulated, tubular bodies and inexpressive faces, and the draperies described by shallow parallel lines resemble seventh- to eighth-century Palestinian icons. The leaf is similar in its five-part division and hieratic composition to imperial ivories (numbers 6,8).

Top: width 30.8 cm. (12⅛ in.). Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, 2978. Center: height 23.3 cm. (9⅛ in.). The John Rylands University Library, Victoria University, Manchester, 6. Right, upper and lower: height 10.3 cm. (5⅛ in.). The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, w 300, 301. Bottom: width 30.5 cm. (12 in.). Lent anonymously

65. The portrayal of Christ as the Good Shepherd who rejoiced over the recovery of a lost sheep, symbolic of a repentant sinner (Luke 15:3-7), derives from a classical tradition of sheep-bearing shepherds personifying Philanthropy. Popular in the Late Antique period, especially on funerary monuments, they served as images of salvation. So faithfully did Christians adopt pagan models that it is often difficult, as on this late third-century sarcophagus found in the Via Salaria in Rome, to identify the shepherd as pagan or Christian. The shepherd stands in the center, between two trees and other sheep in his flock, next to a woman with outstretched arms, who can also be interpreted in both pagan and Christian terms as praying for the salvation of the deceased (see number 56). The bearded man seated at the left, dressed as a philosopher and reading from a scroll, and the woman at the right, who appears to be in a discussion with him, may represent the couple who commissioned the work. The depiction of a deceased husband and wife engaged in intellectual dispute was an Eastern iconographic tradition assimilated into funerary imagery of the West.

The monumental scale of the figures and of the vigorous crouching rams at the rounded ends makes this one of the most impressive Roman sarcophagi to survive from the second half of the third century. It has undergone extensive restoration. Marble, length 238 cm. (93¾ in.). 250-275. Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie, Vatican City, Museo Pio Cristiano, Lat. 181

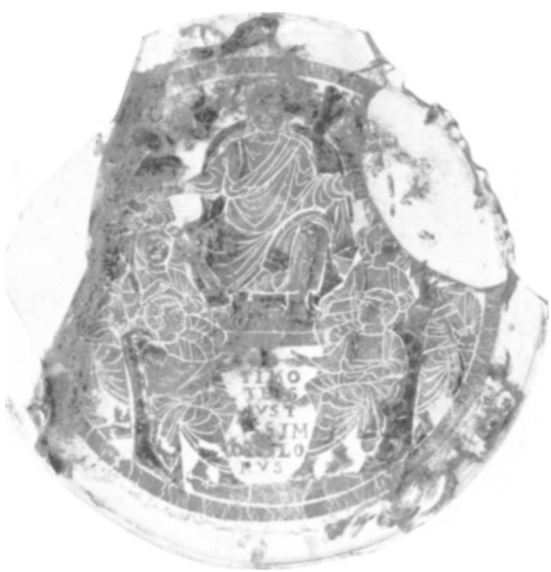
66, 67. The sure identification of Christ as the Good Shepherd depends largely on a Christian context, such as the Jonah group in the Cleveland Museum that includes the splendid statue illustrated on page 63. This fourth-century redware bowl (below, left) from North Africa also combines a Good Shepherd with Jonah, here seated in contemplation, as he appears in a number of Jonah cycles in Roman catacombs. But this Good Shepherd is dressed in a cape and Phrygian cap like Orpheus (number 31), who was sometimes depicted, especially in North African art, carrying a ram in the manner of pagan shepherds representing Philanthropy. This bowl shows that some North African depictions of Christ as the Good Shepherd are derived from Orphic imagery.

Christ teaching was another popular theme in Early Christian art that was modeled on pagan sources. On the fourth-century gold glass (below, right), Christ instructs the apostle Peter at his right and probably Paul at his left, and four saints who are identified by the inscriptions. The composition is based on Roman depictions of philosophers seated in the midst of their students. Rome was a major center for the production of gold glass, and numerous pieces have been found in its catacombs. It is believed that they were embedded in the catacomb walls to mark the gravesites.

Bowl: diameter 18 cm. (7 in.). Römisch- Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz, 0.39447. Glass: diameter 9.3 cm. (3⅝ in.). The Governors of Pusey House, Oxford

68. Christian artists adapted imperial imagery to portraits of Christ, the Virgin, and saints. On the superb ivory diptych at the right, Christ, enthroned as the almighty ruler, is flanked by his palace guard, Peter and Paul. The Virgin and Child on the left wing are protected by angels. The main figures sit beneath elaborately sculpted canopies on lion-legged thrones with richly embroidered cushions. The canopies, with small personifications of the sun, at the left, and moon, at the right, in their spandrels, may refer to the dome of heaven. The architectural setting, ornate furnishings, and hieratic composition imitate those on consular diptychs, such as that of Clementinus (number 8).

The figures appear at first to be in the classical mode, with firmly modeled faces and draperies. There is, however, a dramatic difference between the fourth-century portrayals of Christ on this page and the figures on the ivory, who, although large in scale, are strangely insubstantial. Christ and the Virgin do not sit comfortably on their thrones; they inhabit a two-dimensional spiritual world where everything is subordinate to their authority. The solidity of the architecture and furniture is diminished by an overabundance of decoration, and the apostles and angels, their legs and feet lost behind the thrones, exist solely in their relationship to Christ and the Virgin. Ivory, height 29 cm. (11⅜ in.). Constantinople, mid-sixth century. Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, 564/565




ΟΑΓΙΟCΜΙΧΑΗΛ
ΗΑΗΑΜΑΡΙΑ
ΟΑΓΙΟCΙΩ

69. Probably made in Egypt in the sixth century, this tapestry is a rare example of the magnificent textiles used in churches to cover doorways, to hang from the ciborium around the altar, or, as this one probably was, to decorate the walls. It demonstrates to a greater degree than the ivory diptych in Berlin (number 68) an increasingly iconic art. The subject is the glorification of the Virgin as the Theotokos, the Mother of God. Enthroned with the Christ Child and flanked by the guardian archangels Michael and Gabriel, as on the left wing of the Berlin diptych, Mary gazes into an abstract heavenly space. Above, Christ appears in the starry heavens in a mandorla of light carried by angels, as he is shown in some apse frescoes at Bawit in Upper Egypt. Portraits of the apostles are set in a stylized wreath border (see figure 4). The image of the Virgin was probably inspired by such contemporary painted icons as that of the Virgin and angels at Mount Sinai.

The tapestry is richly colored and handsomely woven, but compared to the earlier diptych from Constantinople, the figures are coarser and classical perspective is even more neglected. To some extent, this is due to the difficult medium and to a less skilled artist, but the dematerialization of the figures also reflects a more fervent attempt to reveal the heavenly realm. Wool tapestry, height 178 cm. (70⅜ in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Bequest, 67.144

70. The archangel on this ivory diptych leaf has been identified as Michael, shown as the protector of an emperor who must have appeared on the lost companion wing. He holds a staff and an orb surmounted by a jeweled cross, an attribute of imperial office, which, judging by the inscription "Receive these gifts . . . ," he offers to the emperor. Angels as portrayed in Early Christian art were derived from the winged Victories who often accompanied emperors in Late Antique art; this image may be based on the archangel who replaced the traditional Victory on the coins of Justin I (518-527). Like the figures on the Berlin diptych (number 68), he clearly belongs to the spiritual world, since his relationship to the architecture—he stands at the top of the stairs but in front of the arcade—is physically impossible.

The ivory is carved with a mastery and refinement unsurpassed in Early Christian art. The youthful beauty of the full-cheeked archangel, his tunic and pallium, or mantle, clinging to his body in supple folds, and the elegance of the setting and beautifully lettered Greek inscription epitomize the splendor of the artistic production of Constantinople in the first half of the sixth century. Height 42.8 cm. (16 ⅞ in.). The British Museum, London, EC 295

71. On these ivories the bearded men holding books are most likely the four Evangelists. Three of them raise their hands in a Roman orator's speaking gesture. They stand in front of a colonnade, above which are depicted Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 6-28) and the Healing of the Paralytic, who is shown carrying his bed and mattress while a disciple looks on. These scenes take place before a masonry wall, perhaps a city's fortifications, a background that occurs on some earlier Christian work. As on the ivory diptych from Berlin (number 68), the architecture acts as a theatrical backdrop for the large figures. The evangelists are clothed in tunics and pallia with folds falling loosely in mannered, graceful patterns. In contrast, their heads, as the centers of their intellect, are emphasized by precise definition of the features and especially of the hair and beards. The use of these ivories is still a puzzle; they may have decorated a bishop's throne or possibly a Gospel book cover. Height 33.3 cm. (13⅛ in.). Egypt or Constantinople, sixth century. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, M10, 11-1904

72. Few early portraits of Christ, the Virgin, and saints painted on panels survive, because of their fragility and the devastating destruction of images during the Iconoclastic period (726-843). Evidence of their use exists in texts, many of which, ironically, argue against their production for fear, not always unjustified, that they encouraged idolatry. Bishop Eusebius, for example, refused to send Constantia, Constantine's sister, the painting of Christ that she had requested of him. Such opposition grew more fervent as the use and sometimes abuse of icons became widespread in the succeeding centuries.

There remain a few paintings from the sixth to seventh centuries, including some splendid icons at Mount Sinai and more modest works like the icon of Saint Mark the Evangelist at the right. According to tradition, Mark was the first bishop of Alexandria; he is dressed here in a bishop's tunic and stole, and holds a book with pearl-studded covers closed by straps. Although a simple provincial work, Mark's stern frontal pose, wide staring eyes, and the complete lack of architectural details or landscape to define earthly space exemplify the ultimate spiritualization of iconic art. Encaustic on wood, height 32.5 cm. (12¾ in.). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Collection Froehner, 1129a

73. Theodore is one of the most popular saints of the Christian church. Like Saint George, Theodore, a soldier and martyr, early captured the imaginations of Christians, and from the sixth century was usually depicted with distinctively dark curly hair, long mustache, and pointed beard, as he appears on the textile at the left (also in color on the frontispiece). This fragment of a large, richly colored hanging was found at Akhmim in Upper Egypt, with another inscribed with Theodore's name. The saint is one of several figures, originally full length, that may have flanked a central image of Christ or the Virgin; the hand shown here next to him is that of another saint. Theodore, who once held the staff at the left in his right hand, is dressed in a beige tunic and cloak with blue and red trim and stands before a red background. With his starkly modeled face and unwavering gaze, he is truly the guardian soldier of the Christian faith. Wool tapestry, height 48 cm. (18⅞ in.). Sixth century. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,1939.112.2

74. Pilgrimages were as much a part of the life of a devout Christian in the early church as they were in Chaucer's England. At the holy sites in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, the cities of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, Constantine and his sons built magnificent churches in which pilgrims could worship. Since their trip was often arduous and expensive, the travelers wanted to take home mementos of the blessing they had received at the site. The most common souvenir was a flask, or ampulla, stamped with a picture of the event commemorated at the church and filled with oil from the lamps in the sanctuary.

This lead ampulla, inscribed "Oil of the wood of life from the holy sites of Christ," came from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. On one side is the Crucifixion, symbolized by the bust of Christ above the cross, which is adored by two men, perhaps pilgrims. The two thieves are crucified on either side. The reverse, inscribed "Christ is risen," depicts the angel and two women at the tomb, after his resurrection. The scene is set in the fourth-century rotunda built over the tomb; some columns and the upper stories are shown here. The figures flank a grilled enclosure through which one can see an altar and lamp, much as a pilgrim might have seen them in the late sixth century when the ampulla was made. So potent were these images because of their connection with the holy site, that they were used in illustrations of these events that were made far from Jerusalem. Diameter 4.6 cm. (1 13/16 in.). Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D.C., 48.18

75-77. Pilgrims also traveled long distances to pray in the churches built at the gravesites of apostles and saints. These objects were made to honor Peter in Rome, Simeon the Elder in Syria, and Menas in Egypt.

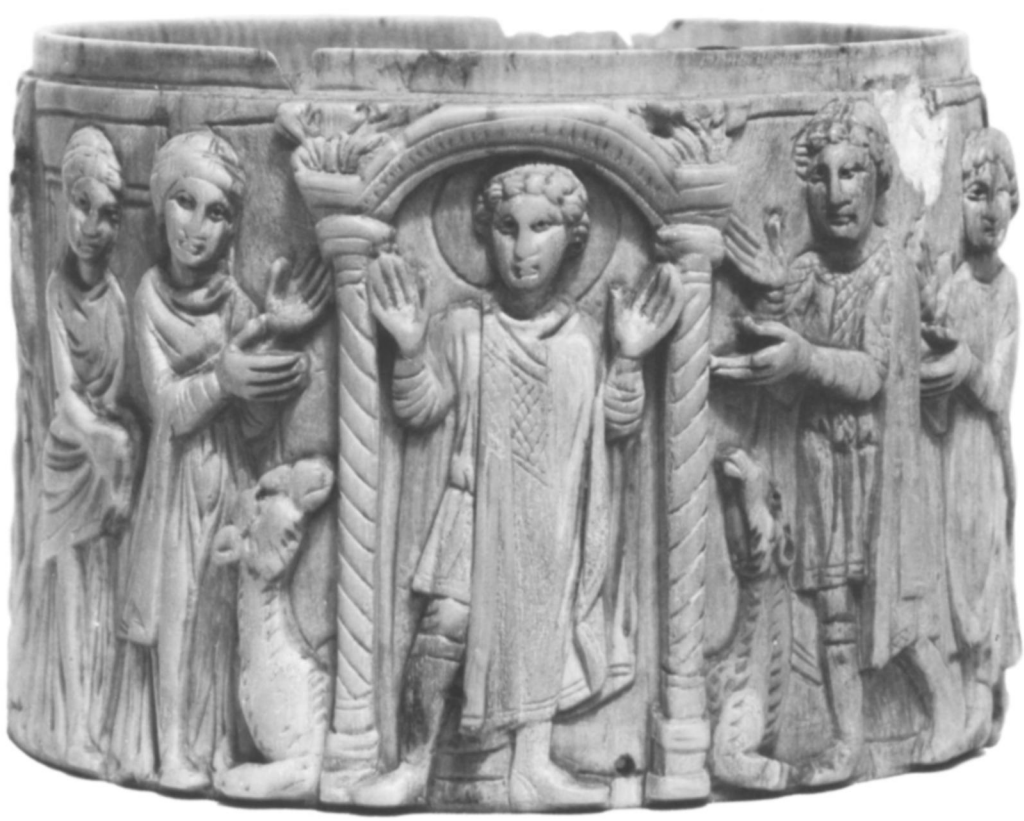
Reportedly found in a catacomb in Rome, the bronze statuette of Peter at the right is readily identifiable by the short curly hair and beard and thick-set figure. The saint carries a cross whose arms and top in the shape of the Greek letter *rho* form Christ's monogram. The cross refers to Peter's role as Christ's principal witness on earth. He is shown as a teacher, his right hand raised in a speaking gesture. The expressive posture and softly modeled drapery make this a fine example of late fourth- and early fifth-century Roman art.

The monk Simeon the Elder, shown at the left, sought to live in great hardship in remote areas of Syria. He spent his last years atop a column at modern Qa'lat Sim'an. After his death in 459, a church was built around it. On this beautiful silver plaque, Simeon stands on his column, around which is coiled an enormous snake, perhaps showing the influence of the cult of Asklepios (number 22). The subject has been identified differently; it may be connected with a legend that Simeon cured the infertility of a snake whose mate had sought his help. The plaque's inscription reads: "I have offered [this] in gratitude to God and to you, Saint Simeon." The donor probably commissioned it in Syria, where it was found. The full drapery folds, falling in patterns having little relation to the anatomy, resemble those depicted on other late sixth- and early seventh-century Syrian silver.

The sixth-century ivory pyxis below bears scenes from the martyrdom of Saint Menas. Enormously popular, Menas drew so many pilgrims to Abu Mena, southwest of Alexandria, where he was supposedly buried, that his memorial church was enlarged three times. Next to his tomb in its crypt was a famous relief, now lost, which most of his commemorative art, including the scene below, appears to copy. Menas stands in prayer with outstretched arms in an arched enclosure that may symbolize his sanctuary. Two camels flank the saint, who is approached by four pilgrims.

Statue: height 9.3 cm. (3 11/16 in.). Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, 1. Plaque: height 30 cm. (11¾ in.). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Bj 2180. Photograph: Maurice Chuzeville.

Pyxis: height 8 cm. (3¼ in.). Egypt or Constantinople. The British Museum, London, 79, 12-20,1



78, 79. With the Edict of Milan, Christian liturgical vessels became as sumptuous as their pagan counterparts. Emperor, bishop, and wealthy citizen alike endowed churches with lavish implements and furniture. Many of these pieces were buried in times of danger; one hoard found near Aleppo, in Syria, about 1910 included this silver-gilt paten and liturgical fan.

Dated by the imperial control stamps of Justin II (565-578), the paten is inscribed with a dedication of the donors, Megalos and Nonnos. It depicts the Communion of the Apostles: behind an altar are two figures of Christ, perhaps reflecting the Eastern practice of a priest and deacon administering the Sacrament. The figures are depicted in a deliberately unclassical fashion that emphasizes the sanctity of the act. The apostles' draperies, awkwardly bundled over their arms and around their knees, exaggerate their humility. The style is typical of sixth-century work in Syria; the paten may have been made there of silver stamped in Constantinople, or in the capital by Syrian artists.

On the fan is a tetramorph, a winged heavenly creature with four faces—that of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle—flanked by flaming wheels, an image inspired by the vision of Ezekiel (1:4-28). Such fans of precious metal served a symbolic rather than a practical purpose in the liturgy of the sixth century. The engraved peacock feathers on this one, however, recall its more functional ancestors, which, equipped with real feathers, were used to keep flies from the Sacrament.

Above: diameter 35 cm. (13¾ in.). Opposite: height 30.9 cm. (12 ⅛ in.). Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D.C., 24.5, 36.23

80. This ivory pyxis is decorated with Christ's miracle of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes (Matthew 14:13-21), a subject that suggests its use as a container for the consecrated bread of the Eucharist. Here, in the upper illustration, Christ blesses the five loaves and two fish offered him by two of his disciples while, in the lower illustration and at the right, others set forth to distribute the food, which sufficed to feed the more than five thousand people who came to hear Christ teach.

Instead of being shown in a deserted landscape, as described in the New Testament, the miracle is depicted symbolically. Christ sits on a throne, like a bishop, and the disciples are placed against an arcaded background that may imitate a church interior. The figures, with their stocky proportions and angular gestures, are similar to those on a number of contemporary sixth-century ivories that were probably made in Egypt. The circular format and the contrast between the static, formal Christ and the lively disciples give a special energy to the composition. Height: 9 cm. (3½ in.). Metropolitan Museum, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.34

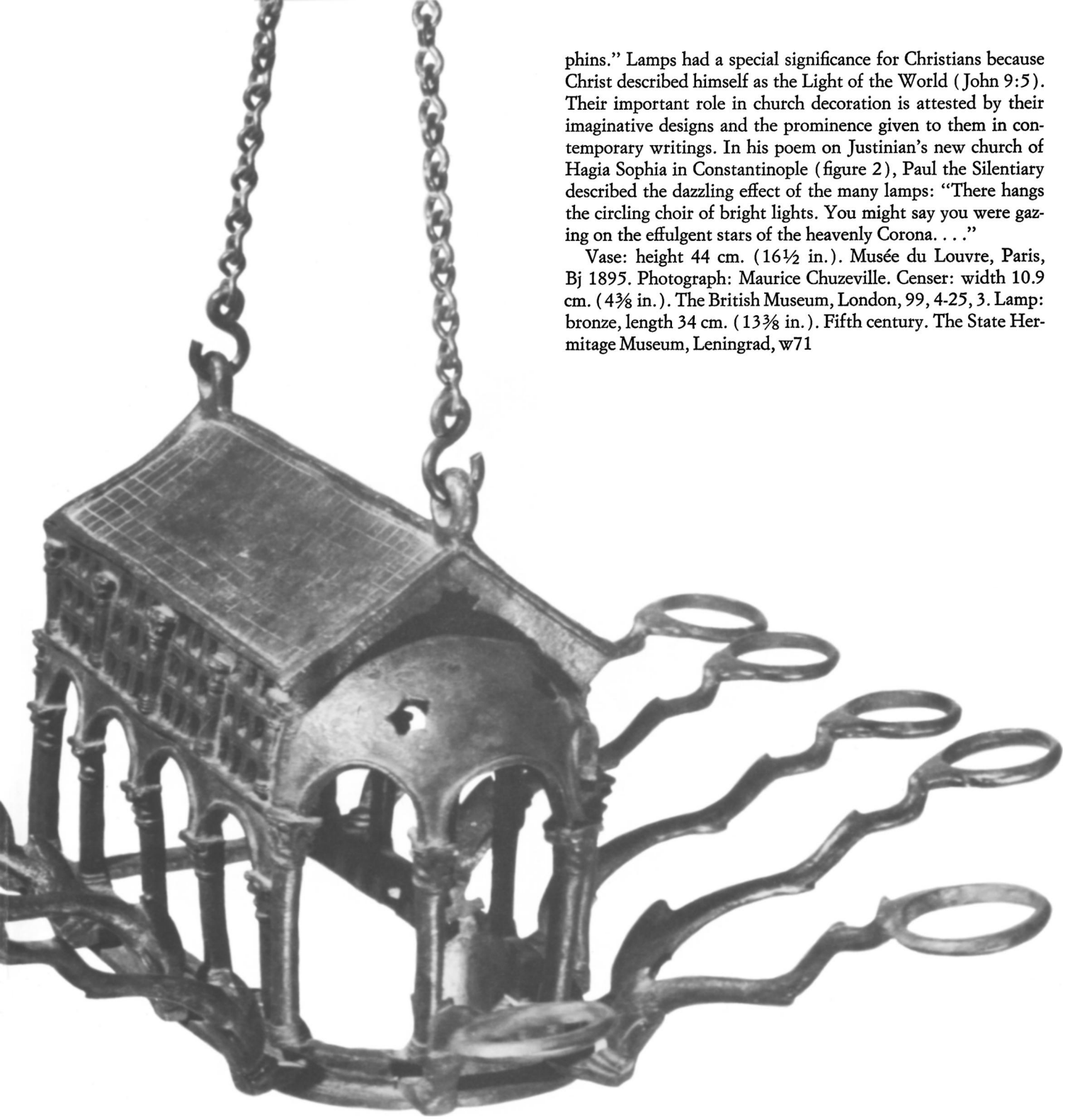
81. The Antioch Chalice is one of the most famous liturgical objects from the early church. Its remarkably rich decoration marks it as the property of a wealthy and thriving parish, probably at Antioch-on-the-Orontes, in Syria, near where it was reportedly found. Made of an openwork silver-gilt casing fitted over a plain silver cup, it displays two figures of Christ surrounded by apostles seated in a lush vine scroll inhabited by birds, butterflies, snails, and other animals. On one side, the youthful Christ instructs his disciples, who salute him; on the other, Christ is enthroned above an eagle with wings outspread, a symbol of the Resurrection, while the lamb at his right refers to Christ's second coming. The scene may represent the resurrected Lord at Judgment Day. The vine scroll (Jesus said, "I am the true vine" [John 15:1]), basket of grapes on which the eagle stands, and basket of what might be loaves of bread (not shown) refer to the Eucharistic function of the chalice.

Although the chalice has suffered considerable wear to its sculpted surface, it is still impressive—as the detail on the back cover well shows—for the dramatic sense of composition and the strong, incisive style of the faces and draperies, qualities characteristic of work of the first half of the sixth century. Height: 19 cm. (7½ in.). Probably Syria. Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters Collection, 50.4

82–84. Among the most beautiful silver vessels of Early Christian craftsmanship is the handsome vase below, simple and chaste in its contours and with exquisitely embossed busts of Christ, the Virgin, archangels, and apostles. Here Christ is shown with a book, his right hand raised in blessing. At his right is Paul and at his left Peter. Subtly modeled and elegantly posed, these figures exemplify the revival of classical form and taste in the Justinianic period. The vase was probably used to hold the sacramental wine in an early Syrian church, since it was found at ancient Emesa (modern Homs).

Similarly arresting are the bust portraits on the silver hexagonal censer (below, right), dated by its imperial stamps to the years 602-610. Less elegant than the figures on the Homs vase, Christ, the Virgin, and apostles gaze out of their medallions in a more remote and hieratic way, reflecting the increasingly iconic portrayal of holy figures in the seventh century. Originally suspended by silver chains, the censer was filled with burning incense and swung by a deacon during the liturgy. It was found in Cyprus in the late nineteenth century but, like most of the objects discovered with it, was probably made in Constantinople.

The unusual lamp, found in a tomb in Algeria, is shaped like a basilica, with an arcaded nave, a clerestory, and a semicircular apse with the bishop's throne in place behind the altar. Ten branches in the form of dolphins terminate in rings meant to hold glass cups. Dolphins were a distinctive feature of Early Christian lamps and chandeliers, and among Constantine's gifts to the Lateran Basilica, the first church he built in Rome, were silver chandeliers whose lamp-holders were described as "dol-



phins." Lamps had a special significance for Christians because Christ described himself as the Light of the World (John 9:5). Their important role in church decoration is attested by their imaginative designs and the prominence given to them in contemporary writings. In his poem on Justinian's new church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (figure 2), Paul the Silentiary described the dazzling effect of the many lamps: "There hangs the circling choir of bright lights. You might say you were gazing on the effulgent stars of the heavenly Corona. . . ."

Vase: height 44 cm. (16½ in.). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Bj 1895. Photograph: Maurice Chuzeville. Censer: width 10.9 cm. (4⅜ in.). The British Museum, London, 99, 4-25, 3. Lamp: bronze, length 34 cm. (13⅜ in.). Fifth century. The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, w71

85. This small silver-gilt reliquary glowing with jewel-like enamels was perhaps made in Jerusalem in the early eighth century to hold a fragment of the True Cross, the cross of Christ's crucifixion. Constantine's mother, Helena, reportedly found the cross, the most sacred of all Christian relics, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The lid of the reliquary depicts the Crucifixion. Mourned by the Virgin and John, Christ is alive on the cross, triumphant over death. He wears the colobium, the long tunic that is characteristic in Palestinian crucifixion images. Surrounding the scene, and decorating the sides of the reliquary, are portraits of twenty-eight apostles and saints. These include the soldiers Mercurios and Eustrathios (above, right and middle) and the doctor Panteleimon (above, left), who were particularly popular in the East, and a bishop named Anastasius (not illustrated here), who provides an important clue to where the reliquary was made. Although the bishop has been identified as a patriarch of Antioch, he may have been the Anastasius who was custodian of the sacred relics at the Holy Sepulcher and then patriarch of Jerusalem in 458. He and all the other saints on the reliquary are included in a liturgical calendar written at the famous monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem; the calendar dates from the tenth century but reflects older customs. The reliquary may, then, have been made in the very heart of the Holy Land decades after the Arab occupation about 637.

The intense colors of the enamels, which range from a radiant translucent emerald green and rich reddish purple—an extremely difficult color to make—to opaque white and yellow, emphasize the spirituality of the crucifixion scene. In curious contrast to the remarkable workmanship of the enameling is the primitive style of the figures and the incorrectly formed letters of the Greek inscriptions, which identify the figures and quote the words that Christ spoke from the cross: "Behold thy mother" and "Behold thy son."

Pope Innocent IV (1243-1252) is said to have owned this reliquary. One of his ambassadors in the Holy Land during the Fifth Crusade may have brought it back to him in Italy. Length 10.2 cm. (4 in.). Metropolitan Museum, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.715