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Source: *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Feb. - Mar., 1975), pp. 17-29

Published by: [The Classical Association of the Middle West and South](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3296444>

Accessed: 04/09/2013 17:10

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## THE ART OF RAVENNA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The invasion of Alaric and the sack of Rome in A.D. 410 was to the ancient world a calamity of cosmic significance, fulfilment of the forebodings that give the art and literature of late antiquity their somber quality. St. Augustine's *City of God*, written shortly after the fall of the city, was designed to reassure the morale of Mediterranean Christianity, shaken by this visitation of the wrath of God. Honorius Augustus, worthless son and successor of the great Theodosius, took his frightened person and the shattered remnants of imperial dignity into refuge at Ravenna, behind the bulwark of its marshes and within reach of escape through its seaport of Classis. The role of Rome as political center of the Western Empire was definitely closed by the catastrophe of 410, however much its prestige as focus of Latin Christendom was thereby eventually increased.

The receding wave of Visigothic invasion, as the raiders passed on into southern Gaul and Spain to found there their surprisingly civilized state, left behind it definite confirmation of the shift of political and cultural gravity to the north. This began in the fourth century with the location of the *de facto* Western capital at Milan and its transference in the fifth to Ravenna. Another aspect of it was the widespread influence of the Milanese Church and liturgy and still another the Gallic renaissance of Latin literature marked by such names as Ausonius and Sidonius Apollinaris. The troubles of Italy during the rest of the fifth century enhanced rather than diminished the importance of Ravenna, and it was the fall of that city to Theodoric in 493 which closed the career of Odoacer and marked the real end of the Western Empire.

Capital of the Ostrogothic Kingdom, Ravenna remained the residence of the exarch who represented imperial power in Italy after the Byzantine reconquest, and lost its importance commercially only by the gradual silting-up of its harbor of Classis, and politically only with the donation of the Adriatic marches to the Holy See by Pepin in the middle of the eighth century. Ravenna in the fifth century was thus at once an emporium of Oriental trade like Marseilles in Gaul and, in its role of capital city, the dispenser of artistic fashion. By way of its eastern trade and through the Syrian clergy, who formed so remarkably large an element in its ecclesiastical polity,<sup>1</sup> came the Greco-Asiatic notions

<sup>1</sup>Agnellus in his history of the bishops of Ravenna tells us that up to and including Peter I (396-425), they were all of Syrian origin. Cf. Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina*, CVI, p. 513. The well-known passage in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris concerning Ravenna (*faenerantur clerici, Syri psallunt*: "Clerics practice usury and Syrians sing the psalms") is not to be taken too seriously in view of the banter of which the letter is composed. Cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, ed. W. B. Anderson,

which were so effective in regenerating the Latin style of northern Italy and Gaul.<sup>2</sup> The brevity of its career as an imperial city and commercial center and the unusual preservation of the monuments which it acquired during its leading role on the stage of history make it a veritable museum of the art of late antiquity, an early medieval Pompeii.

Its series of mosaics may open with the cupola of the baptistery (S. Giovanni in Fonte), decorated by the bishop Neon in the middle of the fifth century, and displaying the Baptism of Jesus in the central tondo, around which march the twelve Apostles in procession, led by Peter and Paul. In the third and lowest zone, the Asiatic scheme of an architectural frieze is adopted, as at St. George of Salonica, but with symbolic intent: the four gospels are pictured as four books, each inscribed with four episcopal thrones as the significant motifs of the frieze. Altar and cathedra convey the concept of the inspired government of the Church, since the bishop's chair as the seat of the Holy Spirit is no stranger to early Christian imagery, and only a variant of the more esoteric notion of the Throne of God embodied in the well-known type of the *Etimasia*.<sup>3</sup> The first appearance of this profoundly significant type is upon the arch of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome, where a cross is set upon the throne, which is surrounded by the figures of Peter and Paul and the four Evangelistic symbols; in a lunette mosaic of S. Prisco in Capua Vetere, also of the fifth century, the throne is flanked by the Dove of the Holy Spirit. In both these last two examples the book of seven seals lies on the throne, thus indicating, together with the beasts, the apocalyptic source of the symbol: it is the "throne set in heaven" of the fourth chapter of Revelation.<sup>4</sup>

Restoration has substituted a cross for the pedum (the shepherd's crook) held by the Baptist in the Baptism of Ravenna mosaic, and is probably also responsible for the bearded Jesus; in the original state the scene was a developed form of the baptisms of the Italo-Gallic sarcophagi and ivories, adding the oriental features of the river-god. The mosaic conformed to this type in the details of the exomis or sleeveless tunic worn by John, and the pedum he carried.<sup>5</sup> We can restore the original appearance by an apparent replica of this tondo in its original state which decorates the center of the Arian Baptistery's cupola of the time of Theodoric, wherein the Baptist's exomis is rendered as made of skins, the Savior is beardless, and John carries the pedum. Here the symbolic alternation of altar and cathedra is omitted, the sense of it be-

*Sidonius: Poems and Letters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 380. Cf. also L. Bréhier, "Les colonies d'orientaux en Occident," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 12 (1903), 9 ff.

<sup>2</sup>W. Volbach and M. Hirmer, *Early Christian Art* (New York, 1961), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>S. Kostof, *Orthodox Baptistery of Ravenna* (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>5</sup>O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (London, 1941), pp. 69-70. Cf. Kostof, p. 36.

ing concentrated in the throne surmounted by a cross (as in S. Maria Maggiore) toward which the two files of six Apostles direct their steps and offer their wreaths. The acanthus candelabra which separate the figures in S. Giovanni in Fonte are here replaced by palm trees, bringing the whole composition into similarity with the same scene on the Pola casket, and indicating again the connection of Ravennate art with the Italo-Gallic school.<sup>6</sup>

Such compositions, especially the mystic association of altar and cathedra in the lower zone of the Orthodox cupola, reflect a period of fairly free symbolism during a time when Christian dogma was still very much in debate, and before its tenets had reached a fixed and unalterable embodiment in art. The fluid state of theological thinking explains the difficulty one encounters in attempting an explanation of the arch of S. Maria Maggiore, and the curious modifications which were wrought in the Septuagint tradition by the mosaics of its nave.<sup>7</sup> It is to such untrammelled invention that we owe the loveliest of the Ravenna mosaics which decorate the little cruciform structure known as the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (c. 450), an accessory originally of the basilica of S. Croce whose remains are seen beside it, and probably meant as a burial chamber for members of the imperial family. The vaults of the east and west arms of the cross, with their pattern of rosettes and stars, are perhaps the first mosaics of the West to seek the effect of a tapestried wall.<sup>8</sup> The other tunnel vaults retain the current fashion of acanthus scrolls, while the pendentive vault in the center suggests heaven with a blue field dotted with stars and containing the four Evangelist-symbols surrounding a central cross. The lunettes of the central vault have each a pair of apostles flanking the four windows, below which is the old Hellenistic motif of a pair of doves beside a vase or drinking from it, the whole composition crowned by a conch of Latin form, terminating in the eagle's head which is a frequent embellishment of such conches on the Gallic columnar sarcophagi.<sup>9</sup> The lunette terminating the eastern arm containing the martyrdom of St. Lawrence is identified only by the flaming gridiron set below the window, for no specific rendering of the episode is attempted.<sup>10</sup> A bookcase in which we see the four gospels

<sup>6</sup>Demus, p. 72. Cf. D. T. Rice, *The Art of Byzantium* (New York, 1959), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup>Kostof, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup>The remaining apostles decorate the lateral vaults, above lunettes showing stags approaching a fountain. Cf. Kostof, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup>The most scholarly treatments of this mosaic are by W. Seston, "Le Jugement Dernier au Mausolée de Galla Placidia à Ravenne," *Cahiers Archéologiques I* (1945), 37 ff.; and P. Courcelle, "Le Gril de Saint-Laurent au Mausolée de Galla Placidia," *Cahiers Archéologiques III* (1948), 28 ff. The first article endeavors to prove that "Saint Lawrence" is Jesus in his Second Coming, the grille being the "altar of Holocaust" of *Exodus XXVI* on which on the Last Day the unregenerate will be consumed. This thesis, partly based on an assumption of a fourth century date for the silver casket of S. Nazaro in Milan (which is much more likely of the sixteenth century; cf. Demus, p. 73, and Kostof, p. 41.) is

duly inscribed presents the source of the martyr's inspiration, and the saint himself marches triumphantly toward his martyrdom, bearing a cross and holding the open book of Scripture in his hand. To enliven his motion, his pallium is floating out in long lateral sashes which produce a symmetrical mistranslation of the Hellenistic flying fold—a feature characteristic of Ravennate art in the fifth century. It is especially marked in the figures of prophets and apostles who stand in the sixteen niches of the Orthodox Baptistery as part of the peculiar decoration in stucco relief which decorates the window-zone of this building.<sup>11</sup> Opposite this original rendering of a martyrdom, over the entrance door, is the famous Good Shepherd, seated in the remnants of a Latin landscape amid his flock but dressed in patrician robes, nimbed, and holding aloft a cross. One need only compare this figure with the Good Shepherds of the catacombs or the well-known statuettes of the same theme, to measure the Christian shift from Hellenistic naturalism, wherein the allegory never transcends the physical, to an arbitrary rearrangement of nature in the interest of transcendental truth.<sup>12</sup>

The composition of the central vault finds somewhat of a parallel in the ceiling of the vestibule of the chapel in the archiepiscopal palace at Ravenna, executed in the early years of the sixth century. Here the place of the central cross is taken by the peculiar form of the monogram \*, which was a Greek import met with on the Ravennate sarcophagi.<sup>13</sup> It is inclosed within a medallion surrounded by the four Beasts, and upheld by four angels whose figures rise from the corners and reproduce the Victories that supported the portraits of the deceased in the undertomb of Palmyra—even to the globes on which they stood previous to restoration. The arches bearing the vault have their soffits decorated also with mosaic: on two sides the apex of the arch contains a medallion portrait of a beardless Jesus with long hair falling on his shoulders—the Asia Minor portrait reproduced in the frontispiece of Morey's *Early Christian Art* here assumes the form that was later adopted by the miniaturists of early Carolingian illumination.<sup>14</sup> On either side

refuted by Courcelle who brings new textual evidence in support of the grille as the instrument of Lawrence's martyrdom and the traditional interpretation of the mosaic.

<sup>11</sup>A. Colasanti, *L'Art byzantin en Italie I* (Paris, 1926), pls. II and V; L. W. Jones and C. R. Morey, *The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence II* (Princeton, 1932), p. 116. The most satisfactory publication and reproduction of the mosaics of Ravenna are to be found in the text and plates of C. Ricci, *Monumenti: Tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna* (Rome, 1930). A somewhat more convenient collection of plates is that in G. Galassi, *Roma o Bisanzio* (Rome, 1930).

<sup>12</sup>For the type of the Good Shepherd, cf. R. Dussaud, *Revue archéologique* 70 (1903), 378.

<sup>13</sup>Rice, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup>C. R. Morey, *Early Christian Art*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1935), p. 159. For Carolingian examples, cf. A. Boinet, *La miniature carolingienne* (Paris, 1913), pls. IV, XVI.

of this medallion are grouped the similarly framed busts of six apostles, the arrangement being quite identical to that of the medallion frieze on the Brescia casket. The Jesus-medallion is replaced on the other two soffits by the same monogram which decorates the center of the vault, and this is flanked by a series of busts of male martyrdom on one side, and female saints on the other, some of the latter closely resembling in features and dress the renderings of the Virgin and of Pharaoh's daughter in the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore. The originality of Ravennate iconography of the period is manifest in the mosaic decorating a wall of the small rear room; only the upper half is left, showing Jesus dressed imperially in a purple chlamys and bearing a cross over his shoulder, while he holds in his left hand an open book inscribed with the Latin words of *John XIV:6*: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."<sup>15</sup>

The earliest existing cycle of the life of Jesus in Christian art in sculpture is met upon the ciborium columns of St. Mark's.<sup>16</sup> In painting, our first existing series that can claim completeness is the sequence of mosaics above the nave windows of S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, built during Theodoric's reign (493-526) and dedicated in 504 to St. Martin.<sup>17</sup> The bishop Agneilus (553-566) transferred the church from Arian to Orthodox use, but it received its dedication to St. Apollinaris only in 856, when Muslim raids induced the transfer of the relics of Ravenna's apostle from the church in the port of Classis.<sup>18</sup> There are thirteen panels on each side. On the left side Jesus is beardless and wears a crossed nimbus; he is always, like an emperor, accompanied by an attendant in the person of a disciple. His eyes are blue, the hair brown; throughout the series the nimbus is gray with a gold cross, in each arm of which a gem is set. Both cross and nimbus are outlined in red. His costume is always a violet tunic and purple pallium; the tunic has golden stripes (clavi), and the pallium is decorated with "letters." The sandals are black. The attendant disciple has a dark blue gray tunic with a dark

<sup>15</sup>Kostof, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup>Morey, p. 105.

<sup>17</sup>The mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo are conveniently illustrated in halftone reproductions in C. Ricci, *Ravenna* (Bergamo, 1913), figs. 54-82; Galassi, pls. XXII-LXI; and large plates in fasc. IV of Ricci's corpus of the Ravennate mosaics, *Monumenti: Tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna*. The dependence of the selection of episodes from the life of Jesus on the Ravennate liturgy, and the relation of both to Syria, were suggested by A. Baumstark, "I mosaici di Sant' Apollinare Nuovo e l'antico anno liturgico ravennate," *Rassegna Gregoriana* 9 (1910), 32 ff. Concerning the dedication of S. Apollinare Nuovo to St. Martin, cf. Cassiodorius, *Variae*, ed. T. Mommsen, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores Antiquissimi* XI, Var. XXXIV, 242-243.

<sup>18</sup>O. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1911), pp. 69-70; Demus, p. 74. Concerning the transference of the church of S. Apollinare Nuovo from Arian to Orthodox use, cf. Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis* in Migne, CVI, p. 559. Concerning its dedication to St. Apollinaris in 856, cf. "Life of Benedict III," *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne (Paris, 1886), II, 578, note 3, for the importance and significance of papal participation in the event.



clavus, and a white pallium, and wears dark sandals.<sup>19</sup> In the second series on the opposite wall, illustrating the voluminous lessons of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, the cross-nimbed Jesus is bearded, with blond hair, and the compositions are fuller.

Between the scenes are decorative panels containing conch shells of yellow edged with white and terminating in a bird's head like the conch shells on Gallic columnar sarcophagi and the conches of the mosaics of Galla Placidia's Mausoleum. From the bird's beak hang two ropes of pearls supporting a corona. Above the shell is a small white cross flanked by white doves. Between the windows stand, on green foreshortened pedestals and against a golden background, thirty-two figures in blue white tunics with purple clavi and white pallia. Over the windows is the familiar Hellenistic motif of birds flanking a vase, like those of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia.<sup>20</sup>

The above review of the iconography of the Life of Jesus in S. Apollinare Nuovo has made clear the dual character of Ravennate art of the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, a dualism well symbolized by the use of both the bearded (Syrian) type of Jesus and the beardless heard with long hair bunched on the nape of the neck or the shoulders, which had been introduced from Asia Minor into Italy to supplant the short haired head of the catacombs in the course of the fourth century.<sup>21</sup> Latin still is the retention of the two fishes of the Multiplication in the Last Supper, and the gabled aedicula in the Raising of Lazarus; to the current iconography of the Italo-Gallic school we may ascribe the placing of the incredulous Thomas on Jesus's left, and the cock on a column of Peter's Denial, as well as the rendering of Jesus before Pilate in a composition found elsewhere only on the columnar sarcophagi.<sup>22</sup> But Asiatic are the Healing of the Paralytic of Capernaum; the wellhead of the Rabula Gospels that appears in Jesus' meeting with the Woman of Samaria; the Two Marys at the Sepulchre; and above all the identity of the Last Supper with that of the Rissanensis. The eastern influence is equally evident in style; the faces, round-eyed and staring, having nearly forsaken the Hellenistic three-quarters view to assume frontality; the antique allegory which still survives in the Good Shepherd of Placidia's tomb is replaced by a direct and primitive symbolism that makes Jesus distinctly larger than the other figures; the landscape of the earlier settings has given way to Neo-Attic neutrality.<sup>23</sup> Many as are the survivals of the Latin art of Italy in these mosaics, they reflect the art of the Christian Orient sufficiently to serve as substitute

<sup>19</sup>Demus, p. 75; Kostof, p. 44. Cf. A. Grabar, *Byzantine Painting* (New York, 1953), p. 86.

<sup>20</sup>Demus, pp. 75-76; Grabar, p. 87; Kostof, pp. 44-45.

<sup>21</sup>Rice, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup>Grabar, p. 89. Cf. Dalton, pp. 72-73; Demus, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup>Demus, pp. 77-78; Grabar, p. 90. Cf. Kostof, p. 46.

for the lost mosaics and frescoes that once adorned, in the fifth and sixth centuries, the churches of the East.

The lowest zone of the south wall of the nave is decorated with a procession of twenty-six male saints, led by St. Martin from the city of Ravenna to Jesus enthroned between two pairs of angels at the eastern end of the frieze. In this mosaic restoration has considerably transformed the angels, especially those at Jesus' left, and substituted a torch (?) for an original book held in his hand.<sup>24</sup> His bearded figure represents the definitive integration of the Asiatic conception of the Savior, here after the prevailing rendering in Italy. On the other side of the nave twenty-two female saints advance from Ravenna's port of Classis in a procession headed by the Magi toward the Virgin, frontally enthroned with an equally hieratic Child upon her lap, flanked by attendant angels as is her Son on the opposite wall. The Magi are original, but much restored, and the angels to Mary's right have been retouched. The frontal posture of Mary is a feature of Asiatic epiphanies, but it is noteworthy that despite her regal aspect, she is not as yet sufficiently an isolated object of veneration to do without the Adoration of the Magi as the motivation of her presence.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that the Gallic St. Martin leads the male procession, and the original dedication of the church to him, may be added to the data that show the close connection of Gaul and northern Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries. The rest of the saints are mostly western martyrs, and only five are directly connected with Ravenna. All save St. Martin (whose figure is a restoration) and St. Lawrence, who occupies the fourth place, are in white.<sup>26</sup>

The representation of Ravenna from which the procession starts reveals the date of the frieze. The facade of Theodoric's palace adjoining the city gate occupies the foreground; behind it we see five buildings among which can be recognized the church of S. Apollinare itself, and the Arian Baptistery; the others are uncertain. The tympanum of the gateway contains a figure of Jesus trampling the Beasts as in the stucco relief of the Orthodox Baptistery and in a frequent type on the terracotta lamps of "African" type.<sup>27</sup> Here and there on the columns of the portico of the palace we can still make out a hand or an arm, remnants of the figures of Theodoric and his court, once filling the intercolumniations but later removed and replaced by existing curtains. This change is explained by the *Liber Pontificalis of Ravenna* compiled by Agnellus in the ninth century:

<sup>24</sup>Demus, p. 79.

<sup>25</sup>G. Bovini, *Ravenna Mosaics*, transl. G. Scaglia (Greenwich, Conn., 1956), pp. 104-105.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 106; Demus, p. 79; Kostof, pp. 47-48.



Igitur reconciliavit beatissimus Agnellus pontifex intra hanc urbem ecclesiam sancti Martini confessoris, quam Theodoricus rex fundavit, quae vocatur Caelum aureum, tribunal et utrasque parietes de imaginibus martirum virginumque incedentium tessellis decoravit.<sup>28</sup>

From this it transpires that the odd relation of the saints to the city is not original, and that while Ravenna and Classis (together with Jesus, the Virgin, and their attendant angels) formed part of the original decoration under Theodoric, the saints (and Magi) were put in by the Ravennate bishop Agnellus in the middle of the sixth century.<sup>29</sup>

The date is important. One can suppose from the manner in which the nave of S. Maria Maggiore was decorated in the first half of the fifth century, and from the paneled Life of Jesus of the end of the century which still remains of Theodoric's mosaics here, that the lowest zone originally was divided into panels. This is natural late antique treatment of a long oblong area while Hellenistic taste was still predominant, since it provided the means of making the separate scenes into axial compositions.<sup>30</sup> Here however the space is filled by the long files of undifferentiated figures carrying the eye forward by their slightly swaying stance, but retarding it as well by the staring frontality of their gaze. The principle of composition is new to the West and is oriental, its unity achieved by the repetition of identical accents at regular intervals as in the carpet-patterns of the later mosaics of Antioch. Thus has the East established in the Latin Occident not only its preferences in iconography and details of style, but its fundamental mode of composition as well.<sup>31</sup>

A predecessor of the bishop Agnellus who provided S. Apollinare Nuovo with its two beautiful friezes was Ecclesius, who governed the Ravennate Church a generation earlier. Ecclesius, returning c. 525 from an embassy to Constantinople, brought into Italy the Asiatic rival of the Latin basilica, the church of central plan, stemming from the famous Domus Aurea, the octagonal temple erected by Constantine at Antioch.<sup>32</sup> The octagon of S. Vitale which he commenced was finished by his successor Maximianus in 547, and its decorations may therefore be dated at least in part after the Byzantine reconquest of Ravenna in 539.<sup>33</sup> In the apsidal mosaic, however, the founder of the church appears with the patron St. Vitalis, and offers to Jesus a model of the new church, while St. Vitalis approaches on the other side to receive the crown extended by the Savior. Jesus is depicted according to the Latin

<sup>28</sup>Agnellus, p. 571.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 571. Cf. Bovini, p. 107.

<sup>30</sup>Bovini, pp. 107-108.

<sup>31</sup>Bovini, p. 108; Demus, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup>Rice, p. 60.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 61. A convenient set of reproductions of the mosaics of S. Vitale may be found in S. Muratori, *I Mosaici ravennati della Chiesa di S. Vitale* (Bergamo, 1945).

formula as beardless and with short hair, and sits upon the Latin globe. This rests on a rocky ground-strip, from which flow, beneath the globe-throne of Jesus, the Four Rivers of Paradise. In the spandrels above are the Latin symbols of the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, devoid however of their lambs. In the vault of the choir four angels on globes support a central garland encircling the Lamb, repeating the scheme of the chapel of the archbishop's palace, but the field about them is filled with rich acanthus scrolls after a manner that had been customary in Italy since the fourth century.<sup>34</sup> The motif is here developed in an Asiatic sense by animating the rinceaux with the varied menagerie of beasts and birds that populate the vine-rinceaux of the Antioch pavements. The apostles whose busts in medallions flanked the head of Jesus on the soffits of the arches in the archbishop's chapel, reappear (but with the Savior bearded) on the soffit of the entrance arch of the choir, together with the busts of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, the sons of St. Vitalis. These two were the saints especially honored at Milan,<sup>35</sup> which is evidence again of the influence of the Milanese Church throughout north Italy.

The gallery which surmounts the encircling aisle of the octagon is continued into the choir, opening upon it as does the aisle below it, by three arches supported on columns. Over the lower of these arcades is a lunette on each side, filled with the mosaic scenes embodying *Old Testament* anti-types of the Eucharist and the Crucifixion. On the left as one enters, Abraham and Sarah prepare to serve with food the three angels who sit at a table under the oak of Mamre, to which scene is added, with no attempt at division, Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>36</sup> On the opposite wall Abel offers a lamb and Melchizedek a wafer to the Hand of God which hovers from a blue sky striped with clouds above a draped altar. On this between two eucharistic leaves stands the chalice which here as in the mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore symbolically justifies the strange association of Abel with the priest-king Melchizedek as typifying the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. A colonnaded basilica retreats with good foreshortening into the background behind Melchizedek; a tree behind Abel indicates a landscape. Above the lunette on either wall two flying angels support a disc inclosing a cross from whose arms hang the Alpha and Omega. Toward the entrance beyond the lunette a prophet stands on each wall; on one side Isaiah, on the other Jeremiah—the one the prophet of the Incarnation, the other of the Passion. Toward the apse the corresponding space is filled with episodes of Moses' life: on one side he removes his shoe before the burning bush and tends the flock of Jethro; on the other he receives the tables of the Law while the people of Israel await his return below at the foot of

<sup>34</sup>Demus, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83; Dalton, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup>Bovini, p. 109.

Sinai—scenes adapted from types familiar to us as traditional illustrations of the Septuagint.<sup>37</sup>

On the walls between the gallery openings and the entrance and apsidal ends of the choir we see the four Evangelists in wholly unfamiliar guise. They sit at their lecterns, with *scrinia* beside them, in the same rocky landscape in which the Good Shepherd of the Tomb of Galla Placidia is placed, while on the cliffs above them stand their symbols, the lion and the ox being here in natural form without the addition of wings. They are neither the standing evangelists of Egyptian usage, nor the seated profiles of Asia Minor, nor the conflation of these types that were characteristic of Syria.<sup>38</sup> This odd rendering might be ascribed to mere invention were it not that there is evidence of a Latin tradition of depicting the evangelists thus in a landscape setting, not indeed to be found elsewhere in existing examples of late antique painting, but surviving in Carolingian imitations.<sup>39</sup>

A direct imitation of the Ravenna Evangelists seems to be present in the author-pictures of the *Godescale Evangelary* of c. A.D. 782, whose colophon states the book was completed at the time of Charlemagne's journey to Italy.<sup>40</sup> Here again we find the otherwise unique motif of wingless beasts occupying a ledge in a rocky landscape behind the seated evangelist. The original conception however is rather to be found in those Carolingian manuscripts which though of later date than the *Gospel-Book of Godescale* use Latin models of more remote antiquity than the mosaics of the sixth century, and thus reflect what may have been the archetypal illustration of Latin Gospels in the *Vulgate* edition of Jerome or its early copies, from which both they and the Ravennate mosaicists drew.<sup>41</sup> Such reflection can undoubtedly be found in the evangelist-portraits of gospel-books of the school of Reims, such as the Evangelaries of Schatzkammer at Vienna, and of Xanton, Blois, and Epernay, where the same landscape background is the conspicuous feature.<sup>42</sup> The peculiar rendering in S. Vitale may therefore be added to the Latin elements in the decoration of its choir.

<sup>37</sup>Bovini, p. 110. The survival of the Septuagint type of Moses receiving the Law in Greek miniatures of later date is illustrated in Figs. 23, 40, 43, 51 of Morey's article "Notes on East Christian Miniatures," *Art Bulletin* 11 (1929), 34 ff.

<sup>38</sup>Morey, *Early Christian Art*, p. 121.

<sup>39</sup>Bovini, pp. 110-111.

<sup>40</sup>Boinet, pl. III.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, pls. LVIII-LX, LXVIII, LXX, LXXII. In the same connection may be cited the extract from a letter of Archbishop Maximianus of Ravenna concerning two Bibles he caused to be copied, which is quoted by Agnellus: "emendavicautissime cum his quae Augustinus, et secundum Evangelia quae beatus Hieronymus Roman misit. . . ." Cf. Agnellus, p. 610. These "Latin" landscapes may however be well regarded as intrusions into western art of Greek and especially Alexandrian practice, as adaptations of such backgrounds as those of the frescoes

In point of iconography, then, it may be said that the mosaics so far described exemplify no more than a later phase of the Latin style whose evolution we have been following, both in the retention of Italian-types such as the short-haired youthful Jesus on the globe in the apsidal mosaic, the characteristic fluctuating and inventive iconography evinced in the eucharistic types employed in the lunettes of the choir, and the peculiar rendering of the Evangelists.<sup>43</sup> But the orientalizing of the style has unmistakably advanced. In spite of the interrelation of the figures of the apsidal composition, they are separate and frontal to the utmost degree, and the heads have turned outward with their expanded eyes fixed on the spectator in the characteristic oriental stare which so spiritualizes the scenes of Jesus' career in S. Apollinare Nuovo. The bits of naturalism surviving in the backgrounds of the lunettes and the landscapes in which the Evangelists sit, cannot obscure the wholly symbolic selection and combination of actions and figures, excluding even a hint of actuality.<sup>44</sup>

The transcendental purpose of this art is most manifest when we see how it can denaturalize the rendering of a real event, as in the two famous groups of Justinian and Theodora with their suites and ecclesiastical escorts, executed in mosaic panels which in the apse replace the marble dado elsewhere employed throughout the choir. Abstraction is evident at once in the gold background which replaces here as in the apse the cloudy blue sky of the lateral wall mosaics. The imperial panels, and probably the apsidal composition above them, date after the Byzantine reconquest of Ravenna in 539, and since the bishop Maximianus, who took over the see only in 546, the date may be moved forward to at least the year of the dedication of S. Vitale, in 547.<sup>45</sup> In fact the donations which the mosaics record—Justinian bearing a paten or a bowl for eucharistic purposes, and Theodora a chalice—imply the completion of the church's decoration and its outfitting for service. The Augustus is accompanied by three courtiers whose patrician rank is marked by the tablion on their mantles and the embroidered symbols on the shoulder of their tunics, and by his bodyguard of *spatharii*; Hellenistic tradition survives in the nimbus which surrounds the imperial head.<sup>46</sup>

In the corresponding group on the other side of the apse, Theodora with her ladies and two officials of the court prepare to enter the vestibule of the church from the atrium, indicated by a fountain, to present the jeweled chalice which she holds in her hands. Of the seven ladies in her suite, two are somewhat distinguished by a partial isolation and

of S. Maria di Castelseprio. Cf. M. Schapiro, "Latin Landscapes of Late Antiquity," *Art Bulletin* 34 (1952), 162; Morey, "Evangelaries of Schatzkammer," *Art Bulletin* 34 (1952), 198 ff., and Morey's *Early Christian Art*, p. 194.

<sup>43</sup>Bovini, p. 112.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>45</sup>Agnellus, p. 612. Cf. Dalton, p. 80; Rice, p. 71.

<sup>46</sup>Bovini, 114; Rice, p. 73.

more elegance of dress, and the older of these has drawn her mantle over her head. The costume of the two, rich as it is, is far surpassed by the splendor of the Augusta, who wears a diadem hung with pearls and a heavy pearl necklace, and is costumed in a purple mantle embroidered on its edge with the Adoration of the Magi.<sup>47</sup> The portraiture of the two ladies next to the Augusta, and of the bishop Maximianus on the other panel, is a remarkable record in view of the otherwise unreal conception of the groups. Spatial relation is so far eliminated that the figures seem to stand on each other's feet; the suggestion of an interior, faintly visible in Theodora's group, is lost in that of Justinian. The movement is a slight swaying of the figure which in no way affects the staring frontality of their faces focused on the eyes of the spectator as on a camera. The scale of the figures shows still some trace of the proportions observed in the miniatures, but they almost fill the space and have acquired a dignity of pose that would make them more Hellenic were it accompanied by any mass behind their flat silhouettes. The Byzantine style is announced but not realized by these strangely arresting figures; a Byzantine artist would not crowd his space with so casual an assemblage, would throw the weight of each figure on one leg, and would modify the staring eyes by some suggestion of obliquity of gaze.<sup>48</sup>

The centuries between the sixth and the ninth were to be sure the most repetitive phase of Latin style. Italy succumbed to a steadily disintegrating imitation of the Ravennate manner that lasted until her art was revitalized by transalpine and Byzantine infusions in the eleventh century.<sup>49</sup> During this period too her ornament was barbarized by the same infiltration of Teutonic taste whose beginnings we have noticed on the late sarcophagi of Ravenna. The mosaics with which Paschal I and Gregory IV adorned the tribunes of the churches of Rome in the early years of the ninth century were often but flattened and stylized copies of the apse of SS. Cosmas and Damian.<sup>50</sup> Outside of Italy mosaics and frescoes almost disappeared from c. 600 to the ninth century, and the Merovingian manuscripts substituted for illustration a barbaric initial ornament constructed of birds and fishes.<sup>51</sup> If the poverty of Merovingian illumination shows the disastrous effect of the collision of barbarian with Latin culture, the art of the British Isles that reached its climax during this dark period on the continent displays a sophistication of barbarian design that carries the bewildering involutions of its ornament in manuscripts and metal work to unique beauty. The human figure

<sup>47</sup>Bovini, pp. 114-115.

<sup>48</sup>Bovini, p. 116; Rice, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup>The effect of both of these transfusions may be seen in the frescoes of S. Angelo in Formis in south Italy of the eleventh century. Cf. F. X. Kraus, *Die Wandgemälde von S. Angelo in Formis* (Berlin, 1893), pls. XVI-XXIV, pp. 29-31.

<sup>50</sup>Color-plates of the apse of SS. Cosmas and Damian are found in Volbach and Hirmer, pls. 102-107.

<sup>51</sup>E. H. Zimmermann, *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen* (Berlin, 1916-1918), pp. 11-13.

which Christianity imposed upon its iconography was reduced by Celtic style to the abstract requirements of its complicated pattern.<sup>52</sup>

On the continent the human figure returns in timid copies of late antique models in manuscripts of the late eighth century.<sup>53</sup> At this point begins the first of the Carolingian schools, which produced the manuscripts of the so-called "Ada" group, decorated for Charlemagne and the members of his court with more magnificence than taste and drawing mainly upon Ravennate style for its types.<sup>54</sup> The school of Tours in the ninth century seeks Latin models of the fifth century, and Carolingian "renaissance" style is progressively retrospective in its appropriation of the antique until the most original of its schools, that of Reims, harks back to Latin copies and adaptations of the Alexandrian manner.<sup>55</sup> Here first appears the realistic bent of Latin medieval art that was to carry it ultimately far from any antique style at all, but the forms in which this realism was first cast, in such miniatures of the Reims school as those of the Utrecht Psalter,<sup>56</sup> were none the less part of the Alexandrian vocabulary, revealing their origin in architectural landscapes, mountainous backgrounds, and a lively uninhibited handling of the figures. Out of these, by a vigorous creative process that left its antique, particularly Ravennate, sources far behind, the Christianity of the West ultimately evolved its self-expression in Romanesque and Gothic, while the eastern Church, more conservative of ancient forms, was developing from a revision of Neo-Attic style the stately beauty of Byzantine art.

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<sup>52</sup>F. Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* (London, 1940), p. 32.

<sup>53</sup>E.g., the Evangelists of the *Gundohinus Gospels*, executed at Fleury in the latter part of the eighth century. Cf. Zimmermann, pls. 81-84.

<sup>54</sup>Boinet, pls. XXXIV-XXXIX.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 57-61.

<sup>56</sup>D. T. Tselos and G. R. Benson, "New Light on the Origin of the Utrecht Psalter," *Art Bulletin* 13 (1931), 53 ff.