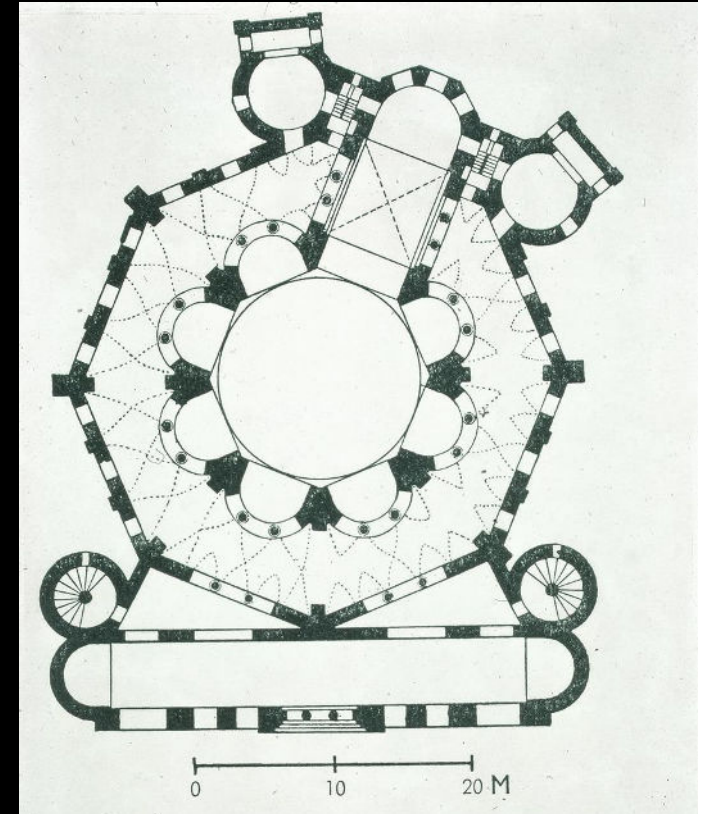


AH 40B
European Art
Medieval and Renaissance

Jan. 11

The Age of Justinian

Ravenna had been the capital of the Western Roman Empire, but eventually fell to the Ostrogoths in the late 5th c. The city was recaptured under Justinian in 540, and then made into a Byzantine outpost on the Italian peninsula, part of Justinian's larger plan to reunite Western and Eastern former Roman Empire.



San Vitale, Ravenna, begun 520s under the Ostrogoths. dedicated to the Christian martyr Vitalis, who was the patron saint of the city

Central plan based on **mausoleums** and Christian **martyria** (both are forms of tombs)

The Age of Justinian

San Vitale at Ravenna, mosaic decorations

Christian Imperial iconography: Christ Enthroned in the Second Coming as Judge at End of World
He is seated on a blue orb of the world, receiving a model of the church from Archbishop Ecclesius (the founder of the church) on one side, and on the other he hands a martyr's crown to Saint Vitalis



The Age of Justinian

San Vitale at Ravenna, mosaic decorations

Ritual procession of Emperor Justinian carrying bread and Empress Theodora carrying wine toward the altar for the celebration of the **Eucharist**. Justinian, accompanied by clergy, soldiers and officials (representing 3 branches of power under his rule) would proceed all the way to the altar, but Theodora would have stopped at the **iconostasis** (the screen behind which the altar was secluded). Only priests and the king could participate in the **Eucharistic Mass**. This reveals how Christianity evolved from a communal set of rituals to a highly stratified and hierarchical structure that supported **theocracy**.



Justinian, holding a “paten” with the Eucharistic bread, is shown w/ clergy, bureaucrats and army officers—to the right is Maximianus, the Bishop who built San Vitale. The shield held by the soldier has the symbol of the **Chi-rho-iota**, a monogram of Christ that began to be used in Byzantium,. The shield represents the idea that Justinian’s army is the army of Christ.

Justinian never visited Ravenna, so the mosaics stand in for him and Theodora

Theodora is shown approaching the door to the sanctuary, beyond which she cannot go



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

During the Byzantine era, veneration of **icons** emerged as one of the most important parts of communal worship.

Icons were often located in churches that themselves marked important places and were the focus of **pilgrimage** (a journey that is undertaken to see and interact with holy sites and relics in order to accrue credits in the afterlife).

St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai

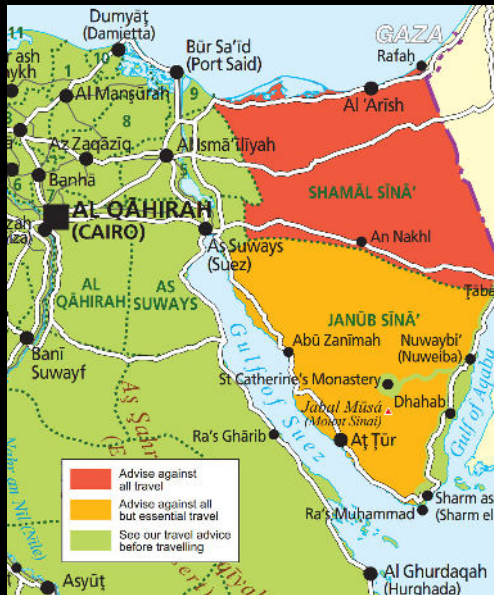
—Marks a spot where some believed, according to the Old Testament, Moses saw Burning Bush and received the 10 commandments

—Constantine's mother, Helen, who traveled to Jerusalem in 327, paid for first chapel

—the chapel eventually evolved into a monastery and became the resting place for the remains of St. Catherine, a 3rd c. patrician Roman convert to Christianity and important early martyr/saint

—It is the oldest, continuously inhabited, Christian monastery (17 centuries)

--The monastery was favored by Justinian who paid for a basilica. Two inscriptions are carved into the beams. "For the salvation of our most august emperor Justinian." and "For the memory and repose of our departed empress Theodora."



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

Two 6th c. paintings were given by Justinian to St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai

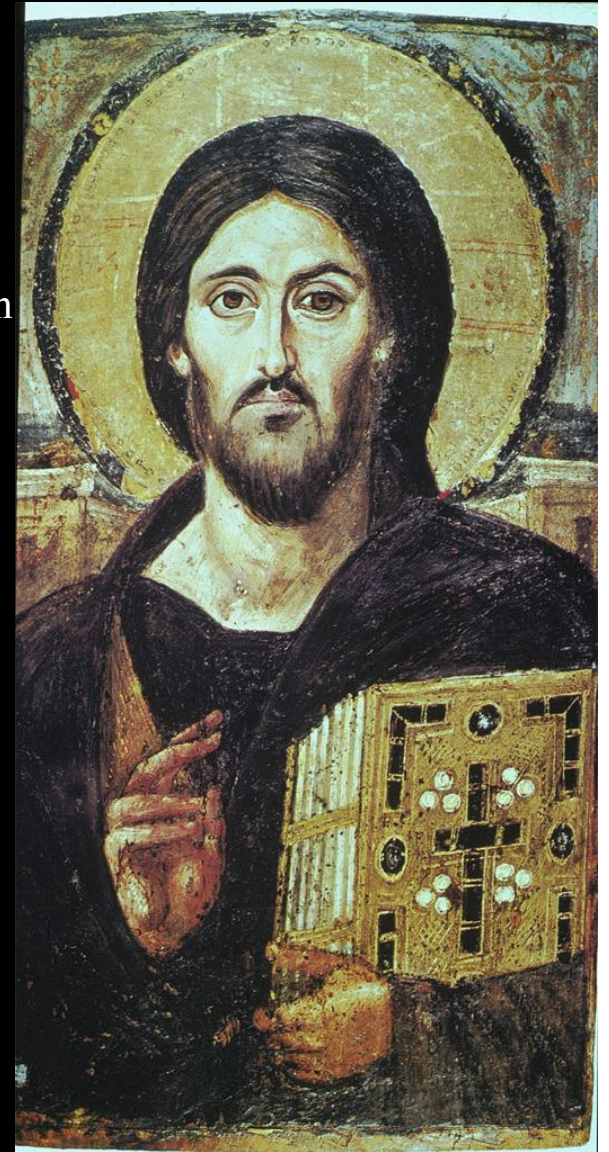


The word *icon* comes from the Greek word for “image.” Icons were hung on the chancel screen or *iconostasis* which closed the altar off from laymen (those who are not a part of the church priesthood)

Left: *Madonna Enthroned with Sts. George and Theodore*

Right: *Christ Pantocrator* (Christ as judge), his gesture signifies teaching/benediction

both paintings are encaustic on wood panel



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

6th c. icons given by Justinian to St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai

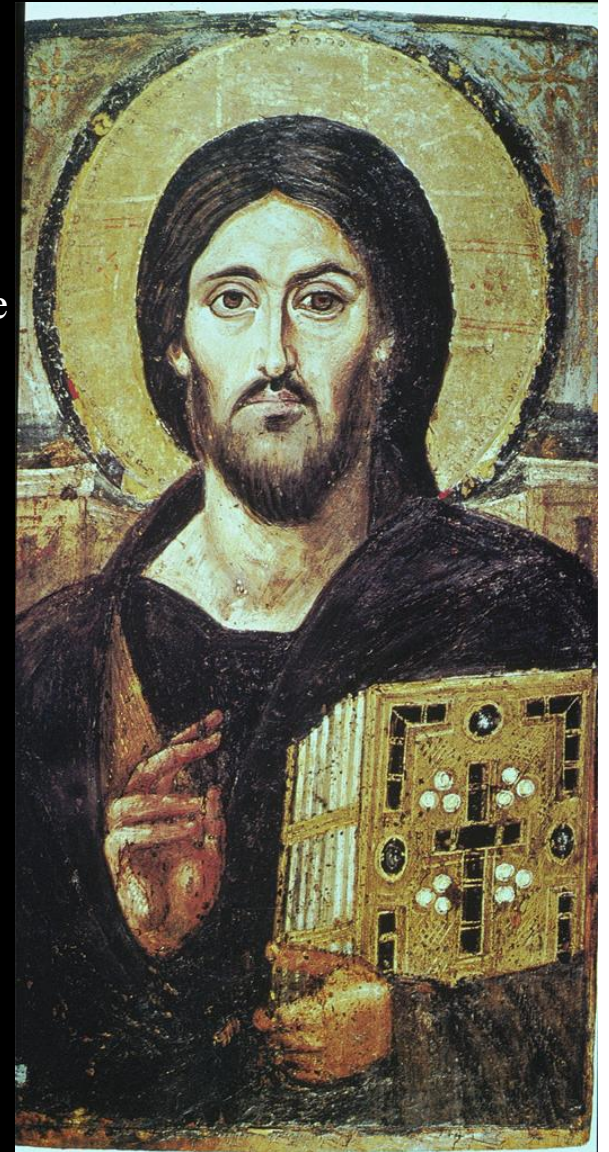


Problem in Christian art: 2nd commandment prohibits worship of graven images

During the Byzantine Era, there were two intense periods of what is called **iconoclasm** or destruction of images, in the 8th and 9th centuries. These were driven by agonized debates over the nature and power of images in a Christian context.

1st iconoclasm: 726-787

2nd iconoclasm: 814-842



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

Right: *Christ Pantocrator*
(Christ as judge), his gesture
signifies teaching/benediction

How would you say that this image
communicates the idea that we are confronting
a divine figure or an incarnation of a god?



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

Right: *Christ Pantocrator*
(Christ as judge), his gesture
signifies teaching/benediction

How would you say that this image
communicates the idea that we are confronting
a divine figure or an incarnation of a god?

Christ is shown up close as the Judge of
mankind, staring out at the viewer, his right hand
raised in a Greek gesture of benediction, and in
his left he holds the liturgy--he appears as a bishop
or priest tying the image to the liturgical functions
occurring in the church--his eyes are widened,
with the addition of a strange muscular underlid on his left
which seems intended to create a kind of hypnotic
visual bond with the necessarily submissive
viewer



Icons and Iconoclasm: the Power of Images

acheiropoietic image (not made by human hands)—an image that “appears” miraculously like that on the Shroud of Turin, which reputedly has the facial imprint of Christ because it was used to cover his dead body

First hand account/*eyewitness image*—the idea that the image is a result of direct contact between the divine figures and the observer who recorded the likeness—this idea doesn’t really emerge until the 8th c., and is specifically connected to the legend surrounding the apostle St. Luke whose myth included the idea he was a painter who produced the first image of the Virgin and Child

Gold nomisma coin
of Justinian II, first to
have Christ on one side

Bearded god type
based on Zeus head coins

