



Book Painting

The Heritage of Antiquity

The Carolingians owed their knowledge of antiquity to monuments of various epochs that still survived in eighth-century Italy and to their sequelae, barbarian or otherwise. Though most of these were in ruins or much changed from their original condition, they were still sufficiently evocative and numerous to enable the Franks to carry their imitation of the ancients much further than their predecessors and initiators on Latin soil, the Lombards. For, not content like the latter with merely copying, they made efforts to penetrate the underlying meaning of classical art, and succeeded in this attempt within a century. The Carolingians not only preserved the classical heritage, but in their manner ensured its continuity, and they deserve full credit for the amazing revival of European art. Wherever they made their mark, the ancient tradition was given a new lease on life, particularly in Gaul, whereas in other regions, to which they devoted less attention, that tradition tended to lose its force or fall to pieces. This was soon the case with Rome, which, however, had been the source from which they drew their knowledge of the past. It is, then, worth while trying to form a picture of the Italy they knew—or anyhow the Italy which, after twelve centuries of constant depredation, we still can conjure up. Wall paintings, mosaics, ivories and illuminated manuscripts supplied the Franks with a great diversity of forms deriving from many lands; but quite soon, perhaps even from the start, they were able to distinguish originals from copies, Mediterranean from barbarian works of art—in a word to acquire as by right the status of successors to the Empire of the West. Surprising at first sight, this phenomenon was due to the fact that they had at their disposal the many well-trained technicians, artists and craftsmen, whom they had brought from Lombard Italy and from Rome, and, above all, that under the guidance of enlightened advisers they could select, and give employment to, the best of them.

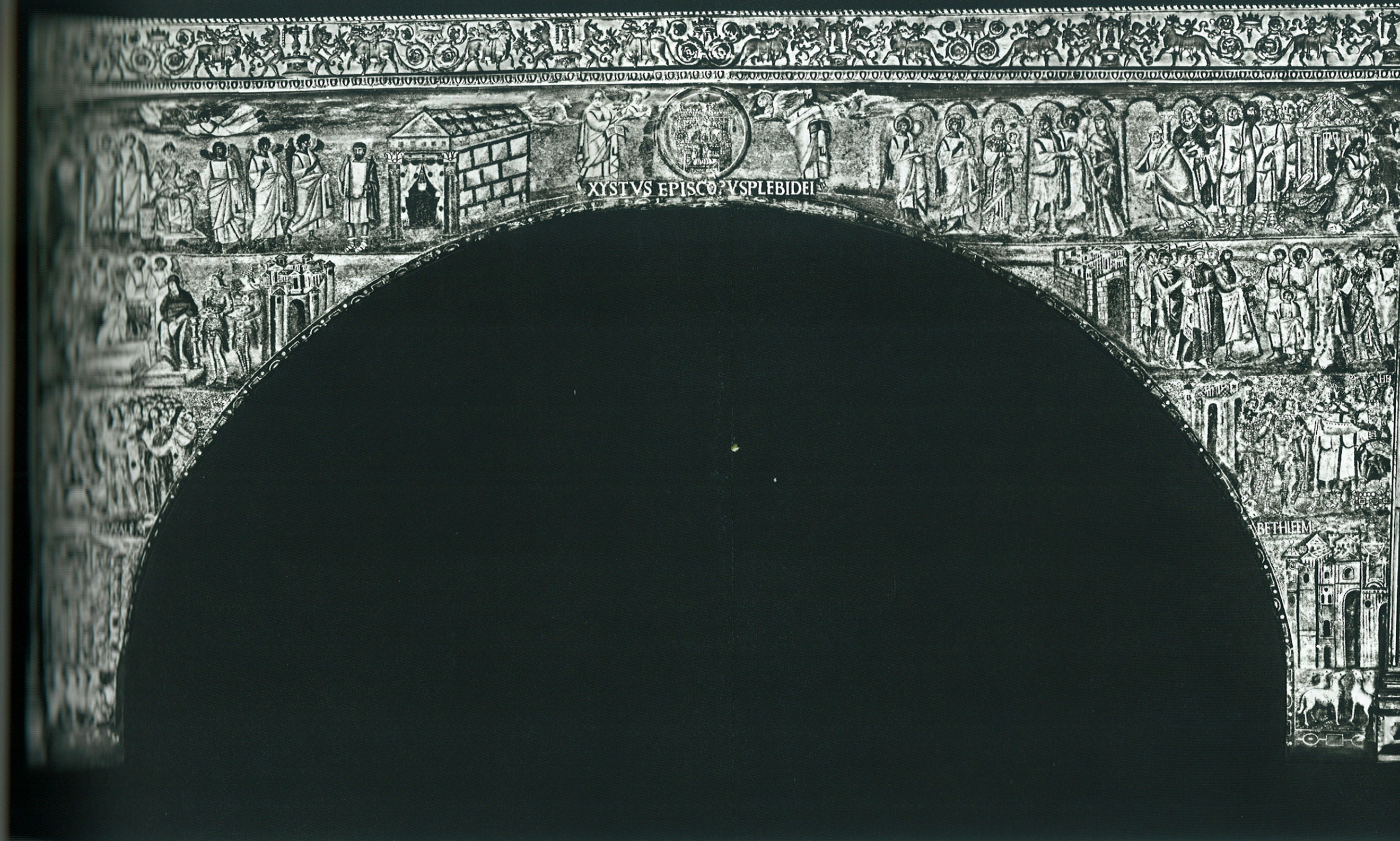
Outstanding among the many archaeological treasures of Rome, that unique repository of art and history, is the church of Santa Maria Antiqua. Built on the north-eastern slope of the Palatine Hill, on the site of a former record-room of the Roman legions, used after that as a chapel staffed by Greek monks of the imperial



palace, and finally allowed to fall into disuse in the ninth century, this ancient sanctuary provides in superimposed fragments, like geological strata, a sort of résumé of three centuries of Christian painting; indeed there is no better place for charting its development. The successive phases of this painting, in the strongly Hellenized environment of Rome, reflect in seeming disorder the conflicting tendencies that were then operative in the Mediterranean world. A single, yet a complex world; the antinomy West-East meant nothing at this time (except as regards iconography). True, a certain image, a certain way of regarding it might belong to one region rather than to another. But the images follow a line of evolution of their own, not always coinciding with the art currents of the age. In the period when the Latin master of the world established the capital of his empire on Greek soil and became βασιλεύς τῶν Ῥωμαίων; when the Byzantine Emperor Justinian reconquered Latin Italy; when (from 642 to 752) with brief intermissions Greek and Syrian popes reigned in Rome; when the Mediterranean was a busy highway of commerce and exchanges of ideas; when, despite sometimes extremely bitter doctrinal quarrels the Empire was united by Christianity as it had never been before—throughout this period these diverse art currents proliferated in all directions, crossed and interacted. The Carolingians made their breakthrough at the heart of this complex of art trends, then took from it whatever served their turn, and it is far from easy for us today to disentangle their prototypes. Yet whether these were eastern or western, Greek or Latin, matters little; Rome and Italy supplied all alike in equal measure at the same time.

It was towards the beginning of the sixth century that Santa Maria Antiqua was given its first Christian decoration. At the time when Theodoric was ruling Italy from his headquarters at Ravenna, a 'Virgin Queen' of which large fragments have survived was painted on the west wall of the gallery. *Maria Regina* is seated frontally on a high throne, wearing a crown decked like her garment with large gems. On her knees she holds her Son, who like herself is shown full face. Her huge, staring eyes fix the beholder with a supernatural intensity. On her left an angel (only the head survives) bends towards her—a simple, natural, wholly human movement that strikes an evidently intentional contrast with the demeanour of the central group. On the right was another, matching angel, now lost. Mary and her Son, divine beings, reign in heaven; the angels are intermediate entities. This dualism in the conception of the images (it is not a mere difference of style) was stressed more and more as time went on. The picture, largely overlaid by new paintings made in the middle of the same century, was a typically Roman version of an icon which had already become widespread throughout Christendom, but in which Mary was not yet a queen; this painting is the first in which she is shown crowned, transfigured, withdrawn from the human condition, in her capacity of celestial sovereign. On the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, among the scenes of Christ's childhood in which the mosaicist aims at conveying by the imagery the dual nature of Christ as set forth at the Council of Ephesus (431), the Son is king in Heaven as the emperor is on earth; but His royalty does not transpose Him into a world different from ours, and His Mother does not share in it. The pictures in Santa Maria Maggiore are datable at the latest to the pontificate of Sixtus III (430-440); they still derive from





108 - ROME, SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE, TRIUMPHAL ARCH. SCENES OF THE LIFE OF THE VIRGIN AND THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST.

109 - ROME, SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE, TRIUMPHAL ARCH, DETAIL.

125 - ROME, SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE, TRIUMPHAL ARCH, DETAIL. ►



126 - ITALY. CODEX VERGILIUS VATICANUS. VATICAN LIBRARY.

the classical narrative tradition and nothing except the style differentiates them from the illustrations in early Virgil and similar manuscripts. At the beginning of the fifth century, or perhaps at the end of the fourth, a realistic art, based on the imitation of nature, was still in favour. For though Christian art made little attempt to render depth, it kept to classical procedures; only the subjects differed.

A magnificent icon in Santa Maria in Trastevere, assignable to the beginning of the eighth century, is an exact replica of the nearly two hundred years earlier Virgin of Santa Maria Antiqua. Here the two angels are raising their hands in awed amazement (*stupentes* is the term used in the inscription on the contemporary frame), as they gaze at the queenly figure, invested with a statuesque serenity. For the angels ('messengers') belong as much to earth as to heaven, they move to and fro on their errands, and are swayed by semi-human emotions, whereas the perfect symmetry of the postures of the Mother and her Son precludes any idea of movement, any trace of emotion that might ruffle the majesty implied by the crown, rich garments, and wealth of glittering jewels. Like the image in Santa Maria Antiqua, this splendid Roman icon combines the world of the unmoving with that of movement, and in it we have a perfect example of that hieraticism which was not, as is so often assumed, peculiar to Byzantium, though it was propagated by the theological capital of the East over a longer period and wider area than by any other art centre of the Empire.

Some hundred years elapsed before, about the seventh century, the *Maria Regina* in Santa Maria Antiqua was overlaid by a new painting. It represented the Annunciation and enough of the two heads (of the Virgin and the angel) has survived



127 - ITALY. CODEX VERGILIUS ROMANUS. VATICAN LIBRARY.

to show that the artist reverted to the technique of first-century Roman painting, as we see it at Pompeii, in the House of Livia, and in the Farnesina stuccoes. Hellenistic in spirit, it is characterized by sensitive, smoothly flowing, impressionist modelling. Obviously a theme of this kind had to be handled in a narrative manner, without hieratic stylization; but here the vigour, unconstraint and fluency of the style are diametrically opposed to the style of Santa Maria Maggiore, and to that of the Virgil illustrations mentioned above. This reversion after six centuries to an earlier manner might seem surprising, even inexplicable, were it really a return; in point of fact, 'this style never quite died out: certain techniques persisted without change for hundreds of years, and this is one of the reasons why datings are so difficult for our period. Attempts have been made to account for this putative 'return' on historical grounds, and indeed it is quite possible that the barbarian invasion of Egypt in the seventh century drove the artists westwards, leading to a birth of Alexandrian 'impressionism' in the West. In any case there is no question that this classical revival linked up with general conditions whose effects made themselves felt in the seventh century throughout the West, from Italy to the British Isles, by way of Gaul and Spain. The previous century was that of the Byzantine conquest, under Justinian, then Heraclius I (610-644). Byzantium brought to the West, impoverished by the invasions, the resources of the eastern Mediterranean where the papacy, having come to terms with Constantine IV after the Council of Constantinople (681), and consolidated its political and spiritual power, was now to confront the Lombards, assume the moral governance of the western world, quell the



111. ROME, SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA. FRAGMENT OF AN ANNUNCIATION.

Arian heresy, and unite the Church under the aegis of Pelagius II and—yet more effectively—under that of Gregory the Great (590-604). Thus the papal See attracted to itself all the most vital elements of the imperial art imported by the Byzantines and disseminated them. Of these elements the 'Alexandrian wave' formed part.

In an earlier age the mosaic-worker commissioned, about 340, to decorate the mausoleum of Constantine's daughter Constantina, now the church of Santa Costanza in Rome, had utilized for this tomb of a Christian lady a pagan repertory (at least in the decorations that have survived): garlands of vine leaves diversified with *putti*, games, children harvesting grapes, birds of various kinds, and small mythological figurations (Eros, Psyche). In the apse a double *traditio legis* (?), a very poor work, probably made much later, clashes with the otherwise wholly classical ensemble. Later, at the beginning of the fifth century, one of the vestibules in the Lateran baptistery was given decorations in the same spirit. Only a lamb surrounded by four doves, signifying the evangelists, strikes a faintly Christian note.

112. VIRGIN OF CLEMENCY. SANTA MARIA IN TRASTEVERE, ROME.



130 - ROME, SANTA COSTANZA, VAULT, DETAIL. BACCHIC SCENES.

A century later Pope John VII (705-707), who was a Greek, son of Plato, prefect of the imperial palaces, adorned the back wall of the presbyterium (an axial chapel) in Santa Maria Antiqua with a new group of pictures. The paintings in the apse proper, at the centre of this wall, were overpainted during the pontificate of Paul I (757-768); the others, on the triumphal arch and its springers, are in the same style as the Hellenistic Annunciation described above. Despite its ruined state, this decoration constitutes a landmark in the early history of western art, for, traditional as is the execution, it points to an overall plan in which, perhaps for the first time, a painter used the lines of the architecture as guide-marks for the layout of his decorative scheme. The central axis of the arch is occupied by the figure of Christ crucified, and complementing it in the apse was that of the Virgin Queen (only a few traces remain). Crucified but living, already transmuted by earthly death into the immobility of eternity, His arms outstretched to their fullest extent, Christ dominates the scene. Standing on each side of Him are the Virgin and



131-132 - ROME, SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA, ARCH OF THE PRESBYTERIUM. RECONSTRUCTION—PRESENT STATE.

St John, and two groups of angels—the day hours and the night hours that mete out terrestrial time—are leaning forward, aligned to the bends of the arch on either hand. These two groups narrow down towards the centre in a movement complementary to the sweeping curve that centres on the towering, dominant mass of the body of the Saviour. A Greek inscription spans the interval between earth and sky, reminding us of the description in the Scriptures of the Redemption and Last Judgment, and lower down, at ground level are the Faithful, men and women of different walks of life and the flock of the Good Shepherd. Next we see the Popes, vicars of Christ (doubtless the founders of Santa Maria Antiqua). John VII, last on the left, is wearing a square nimbus, signifying that he was still alive. Below, we see four Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church, its 'founding fathers.' Leaning slightly forward as they walk, the Popes conform to the curve of the intrados, this movement emphasized by the book each holds out at arm's length—whereas the Fathers, shown full face, stand bolt upright like the shafts on which they figure. Here we





134 - CASTELSEPRIO, SANTA MARIA FORIS PORTAS. NATIVITY AND ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS.

have, in fact, an image of the supernal world situated outside Time and its fleeting appearances, and presided over by a Christ triumphant whom death has failed to vanquish; the tragedy of the Passion is disregarded and, protected by the Cross, the Universe is flooded with a radiant promise of redemption. When we compare this imagery with that of Santa Maria Maggiore we find it pervaded with a new spirit, the same spirit as that which bathes the face of the Virgin Queen with an otherworldly light. The scenes in the basilica are likewise strictly theological in purport, but presented separately and treated on narrative lines. Here they have been replaced by the painter of Santa Maria Antiqua with a huge synthetic decoration whose architectural disposition and compositional scheme combine to figure forth the divine plan. Medieval art has appeared.

We must not leave Santa Maria Antiqua without drawing attention to the fragments of two Annunciations originally superimposed on the left-hand pillar of the nave. They have recently been detached from each other and enable us to compare a work of the time of Pope Martin I (649-655) with a version of the same scene made fifty years later by a painter in the employ of John VII. The handling is the same in

135 - ROME, SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA. ANGEL OF AN ANNUNCIATION.



116 : BRESCIA, SAN SALVATORE. HEAD OF A SAINT.

both cases, impressionist, but slightly heavier in the second, in which we find some methods employed which in the first third of the ninth century Carolingian artists of the Reims school were to take over and exaggerate: zig-zag, flickering lines used to suggest the buoyancy of a garment or rapid movement, also that curious gibbosity which was to characterize the figurations of the Reims artists and of their many successors in the Romanesque epoch. These details evidence a kinship of style and technique in all the works of the period and also unmistakable affinities with those wonderful, intriguing frescoes of the small chapel of Castelseprio, near Milan.

Discovered in 1944, the Castelseprio frescoes are still something of an enigma to archaeologists. Their dating is highly conjectural; art historians have assigned them to various dates ranging from the seventh to the tenth century. They vouch for the presence in northern Italy of a Byzantine tradition as pure as that of the illuminated manuscripts made in the imperial scriptoria of Constantinople during the ninth century: a local tradition which, like many others, though driven by iconoclasm into exile or clandestinity, remained unbroken. There as elsewhere, the 'renaissance' was not so much a resurrection as a restoration to the light of day. The art of the Franks had similar manifestations and practitioners. The frescoes (c. 753) recently brought to light in San Salvatore, Brescia, though differing in quality as to their finish, contain here and there sketches comparable to the Castelseprio paintings. Their affinities with the art of Cividale, which have been rightly commented on (we deal with them at a later page), go to show the active intercourse in northern Italy between art currents stemming simultaneously from East and West.

117 : CASTELSEPRIO, SANTA MARIA FORIS PORTAS. PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.



At the entrance of the prothesis of Santa Maria Antiqua the spectator is confronted on the outer wall by the images of four standing saints who seem to be gazing at him across an abyss of time. These are the 'unknown martyrs,' *martyres quorum nomina Deus scit*, and their uniform faces have a strange remoteness, as if all alike were lost in an inner dream. This austere painting is datable to the period of the Greek Pope Zacharias (741-749). Its strict frontalism, the carefully calculated attitudes of the figures, the forms of the faces and the eyes have exact equivalents in the large, contemporary or near-contemporary figures adorning a small church remote from Rome, in Lombard territory, but in the vicinity of the domain of Byzantine art in Italy: the church of Santa Maria in Valle at Cividale del Friuli. Recent



138 - CIVIDALE, SANTA MARIA IN VALLE. A MARTYR.



SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA. THE STORY OF JOSEPH (ABOVE) AND CHRIST WITH THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH (BELOW).

research has established the date of this famous 'Tempietto' built for Desiderius, last king of the Lombards, whom Charlemagne took prisoner in 774 and who ended his days in France, at the abbey of Corbie. At Cividale, as in Santa Maria Antiqua, saints and martyrs form a line of impersonal, hieratic, little differentiated figures, and the similarity of the technique employed in the portrayal of both groups suggests that the artists concerned had been trained in the same school. Both John VII and Zacharias were Greeks, surrounded themselves with Greeks, and the Tempietto was a Near-Eastern enclave in Lombard territory. Presumably it was Pope Zacharias who had the walls of the prothesis painted with a series of images of a nature diametrically opposed to that of the preceding group. The legend of St Cyrus and his

mother Julitta, a narrative cycle treated like others in the same church deriving from the Old and New Testaments, is set forth in rectangular pictures, painted in sweeping brushstrokes and full of lively, gesticulating figures. For these images relate to facts of human history, facts described in detailed legends, all of which begin with the Latin conjunction *ubi* meaning 'at which time,' 'whenas,' followed by a verb in the historic present, a classical Latin usage, and equating the ancient Greek word *ἐνθα* used in the inscriptions on the frescoes of the nearby church of San Saba. The same layout is employed for the tale of Joseph (painted in the time of Pope Paul I, 757-767), while, below it, the figures of Christ and the Greek and Latin Fathers beside Him are given the traditional hieratic alignment.



139 - CIVIDALE, SANTA MARIA IN VALLE. A MARTYR.



140 - ROME, SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA. FOUR SAINTS.

It is the same with the full-page compositions in the famous seventh-century manuscript known as the Tours or Ashburnham Pentateuch, which was probably made in north-eastern Italy, somewhere near the Adriatic. In about the middle of the eighth century, it was brought to eastern Gaul; then, in the ninth, to the abbey of Saint Martin at Tours. The arrangement of the narrative scenes in this remarkable, not to say unique work, shows a departure from the normal. The images are echeloned in zones of varying sizes on the same page—almost as if pieces cut from a strip of paintings had been pasted on to the parchment. Perspective is completely vertical, the total absence of depth transforms architectural structures into flat patterns affixed to the background, and the figures, devoid of weight, seem to float in air. All the same these figures are accurately, if summarily, modelled, are given correct proportions and lively attitudes, and still conform to the classical norm. Also, the inscriptions preceded by the conjunction *ubi* keep to the traditional narrative formula. True, there is here an abundance of African details which may seem surprising: women's costumes, interminglings of whites and Negroes, camels, donkeys of a distinctively African breed, mountains of a special shape. But this is easily explicable when we remember that the Arab invasions may well have driven westwards many artists domiciled in the eastern Mediterranean area.

Of the many forms of art in northern Italy, where the Lombards caused widespread havoc before aligning themselves to the civilization they had set out to destroy, only vestiges remain. They enable us to take the measure both of the damage done and of the high artistic culture of a region in which Milan and Ravenna, West and East, joined forces; in which insular and Germanic barbarians, pouring down from the nearby Alps, were soon to establish themselves: a region rich in promise for the future. The Tempietto of Cividale and the Castelseprio decorations (whatever their exact date) testify to the presence of the tradition of the Mediterranean east on Latin soil, as do, in Rome, the superimposed paintings of Santa Maria Antiqua. Another instance of this Greco-Latin symbiosis is provided by the many bilingual manuscripts made in this part of Italy between the sixth and ninth centuries: an illustrated Psalter at Verona, the Epistles of St Paul and commentaries on the Bible at Milan, and other texts elsewhere. As capital of the western Empire from 292 to 404, religious metropolis of North Italy, residence of St Ambrose and St Augustine, yet quite near Ravenna, Milan seemed marked out to act as a sort of hinge between the two dominant trends, Latin and Hellenic, of Mediterranean culture. Here were combined both aspects of that narrative art genre which, as in certain paintings in Santa Maria Antiqua, is charged in the Castelseprio frescoes with a restless vivacity, a mannerist tension far removed from the quietude and naturalness, without a trace of hieratic rigidity, which other monuments owe to the western Roman tradition. The fragmentary fourth-century mosaics in Sant'Aquilino, Milan, have something of this nature; others, in San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro (so called after their gold grounds, soon to be adopted throughout the West), are affected by the frontalism which was something of an obsession at the time but which, here too, is tempered with a discreet feeling for supple, lifelike form. From the fourth to the tenth century a large body of wall paintings and above all illuminated manuscripts made its imprint on a vast



TOURS PENTATEUCH: THE STORY OF JOSEPH. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, PARIS.



144 - MILAN, SANT'AMBROGIO. ST PROTASIVS, DETAIL.



145 - NORTH ITALY. ST HILARY, 'DE TRINITATE,' DETAIL. PARIS.

domain of art, extending far into the North. It was an Italo-Alpine art whose widespread success was bound up with the family relations between the Bavarian ducal house of the Agilofings and the Lombard royal dynasty: an art directly stemming from antiquity, independent both of the Carolingians (though in touch with them) and of Lombard art proper. By way of the manuscripts these illustrations were widely diffused and it was thanks to them that the imagery of North Italy crossed the Alps into the North East and the Carolingian West. Also, the art of the British Isles drew inspiration from this ancient source, some of their monks migrated to the continent, and the barbarians (last of all, the Lombards) not only settled in this part of Europe but introduced into it their techniques. Until the birth of the national Romanesque schools this Italo-Alpine art current flowed unbroken, varied only by the passing years and intercourse with neighbouring cultures. The earliest example is a book containing 'twin' texts, Greek and Latin, of the

146 - MILAN, SANT'AMBROGIO, CHAPEL OF SAN VITTORE. ST AMBROSE — ST MATERNUS.



146 - NORTH ITALY. GOSPEL BOOK OF ST AUGUSTINE: ST LUKE. CAMBRIDGE.

Bible. Unfortunately only two illustrations of the sixth-century Gospel Book said to have been brought to England by St Augustine of Canterbury in 596 have survived; the larger one shows St Luke seated between pilasters enframing six small scenes illustrating the text. The layout here reminds us of certain Mithraic monuments, large numbers of which existed in Italy, on which are sequences of scenes, equivalents of illustrated Bibles. Paintings of so early a date are rare and it is of interest to find a close parallel to the St Luke figure: the image of the 'Blessed Man' hymned by the psalmist, a sketch of the late sixth century in a Latin version of the Gospels made in Upper Italy and bearing contemporary annotations in Greek. Points in common are the features, the way the hair is cut, the drooping moustache and short beard, the eye with its pupil entirely surrounded with white, the similarly shaped nose drawn in side view, though the face is turned towards us. This Cisalpine,

147 - NORTH ITALY. GOSPEL BOOK OF ST AUGUSTINE: THE LIFE OF CHRIST. CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE.





148 - ROME. DIPTYCH OF BOETIUS, INNER LEAVES. MUSEO CIVICO CRISTIANO, BRESCIA.

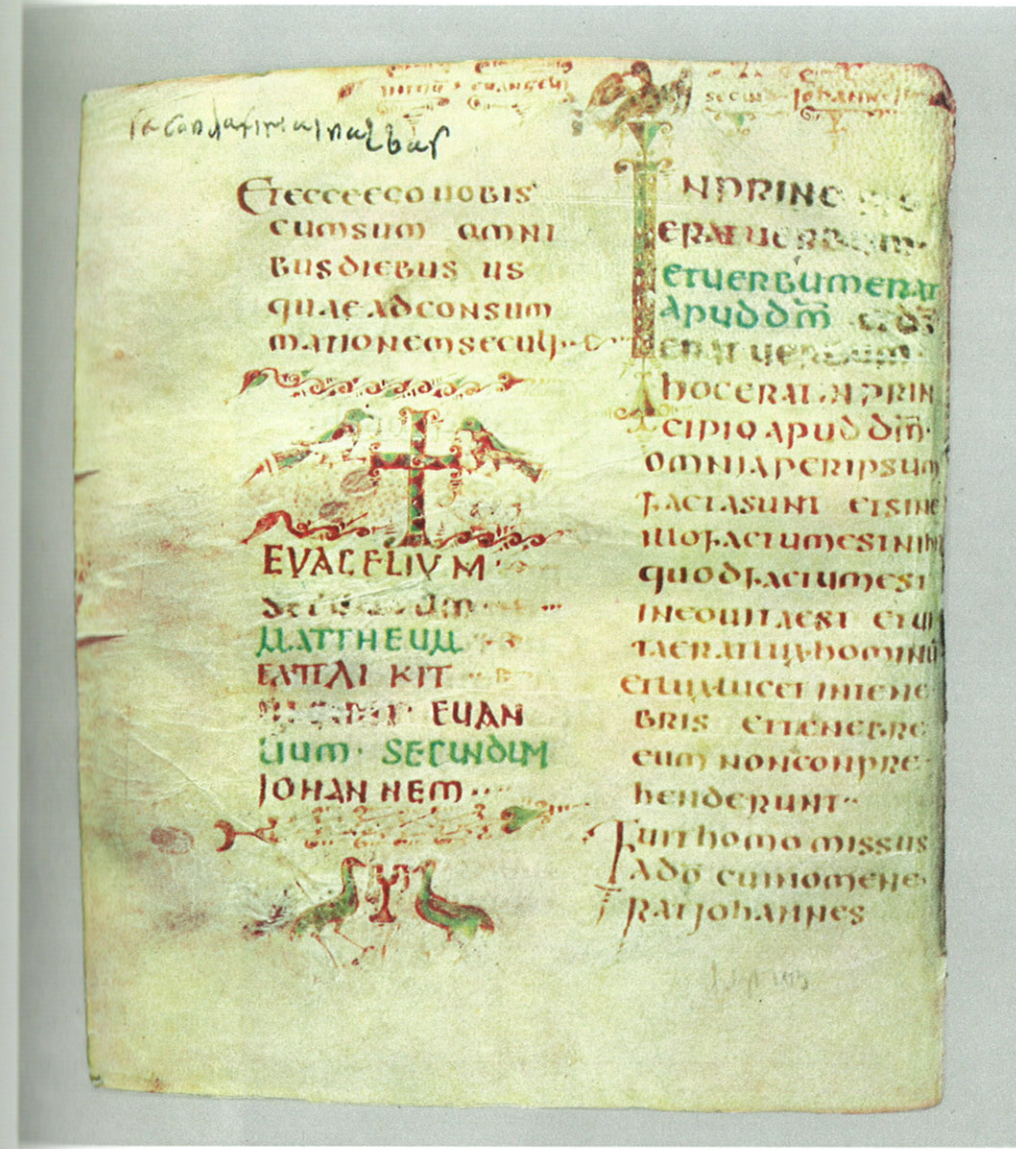


149 - ROME. DIPTYCH OF BOETIUS, OUTER LEAVES. MUSEO CIVICO CRISTIANO, BRESCIA.



150 - NORTH-EAST ITALY. GOSPEL BOOK, SO-CALLED CODEX VALERIANUS. MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK.

'Italo-Greek' youth was to have many descendants. In the course of the seventh century, some paintings representing Lazarus raised from the dead and several saints were inserted in an ivory diptych originally made for the Prefect Boetius (father of the famous philosopher whom Theodoric the Goth imprisoned and put to death in 524) so as to adapt it to Christian usage. Boetius has bequeathed to us a work which had far-reaching repercussions on medieval thought, his famous *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, in which the best of stoicism is blended with Christian spirituality, in much the same way as in the Brescia triptych ancient art in its Cisalpine form is combined with early intimations of medieval art. Thus from the ruins of antiquity there arose some works charged with both historic and symbolic values. A copy of the major



151 - NORTH-EAST ITALY. GOSPEL BOOK, SO-CALLED CODEX VALERIANUS. MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK.

work of St Ambrose, *De Fide*, and some gospel books probably written in the same part of northern Italy by a scribe named Valerianus, have been preserved, the former at Sankt Paul im Lavanttal (Carinthia), the other at Munich, to which it was brought from Freising. Valerianus wrote in Greek characters (c. 675) the Latin names of the Gospels and their *explicits*, adorning them with scroll-work, letters embellished with palmettes or green and red geometric motifs (like those of textiles or enamels), columns, birds done from life, fishes, pendants directly borrowed from paintings, and Christian inscriptions engraved on stone or marble. His work contained all the basic elements of the decorated initial letters adopted by the Merovingian scribes and there is no need to look elsewhere for their sources. The history of the St Ambrose



152 - AUGSBURG. GOSPEL BOOK: ADORATION OF THE MAGI. MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK.

manuscript is known and from it, and others of its kind, derived the so-called Reichenau school of Ottonian painting. At the same time as this manuscript some Gospel Books, later in date (ninth century), but still keeping faithfully to the tradition of ancient narrative art, crossed the Alps. Each text is illustrated with pictures of the chief events described, set out on the four branches of a cross. Here we may note the complete identity of the Massacre of the Innocents (e.g. the stance and gestures of Herod and those of the executioners) with analogous scenes of the martyr-



153 - AUGSBURG. GOSPEL BOOK: MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS. MUNICH, BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK.

dom of Sts Cyrus and Julitta at Santa Maria Antiqua; here, in fact, we see to full effect the persistence of the antique tradition. Also noteworthy is a book of 'homilies' written at the close of the eighth century and presented in 799 to the cathedral of Verona by Bishop Egino when he left for Reichenau. It accounts for the art associated with this abbey and also has striking stylistic resemblances with the paintings in Santa Maria Antiqua, San Crisogono and the Catacomb of Commodilla in Rome. A compendium of canon law at Vercelli, dating to the early ninth century,



154 - VERONA. CODEX EGINO: ST AUGUSTINE DICTATING TO A SCRIBE. DEUTSCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, BERLIN.

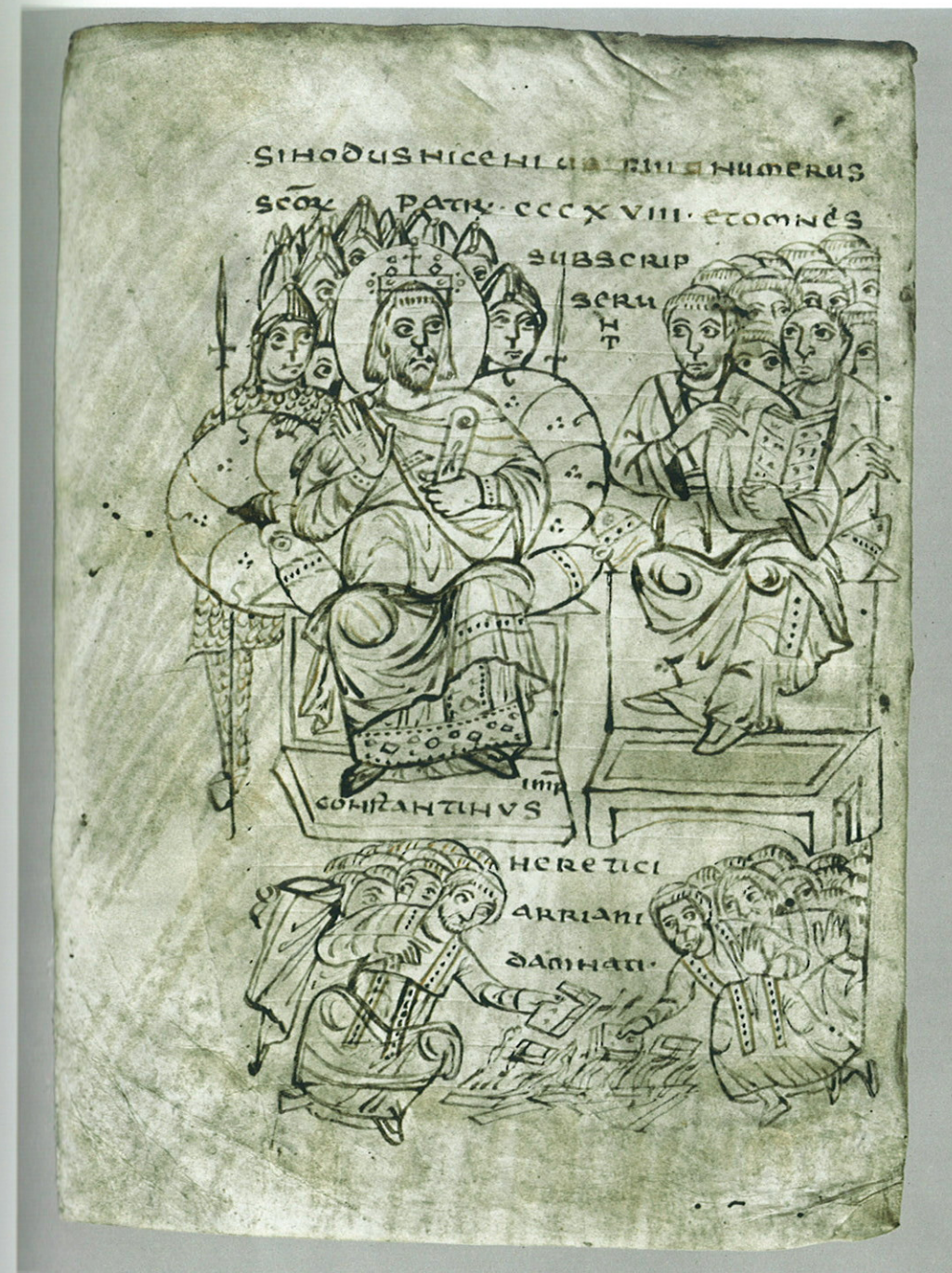


155 - VERONA. CODEX EGINO: ST GREGORY. DEUTSCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, BERLIN.



156 - NORTH ITALY. COMPENDIUM OF CANON LAW. BIBLIOTECA CAPITOLARE, VERCELLI.

contains crude but remarkably vivacious illustrations of the history of the various Councils. The narrative style (probably reflecting that of some earlier model) displays a keen feeling for horizontal space and natural movements, and once again we find that key word *ubi* used to designate the place and time (e.g. the scenes of the



157 - NORTH ITALY. COMPENDIUM OF CANON LAW. BIBLIOTECA CAPITOLARE, VERCELLI.

Finding of the Cross by St Helena, Constantine's holocaust of the Arian books, Peter and Paul commenting on the Council of Nicaea) and long explanatory texts. At Vercelli, again, the homilies of St Gregory—these with painted illustrations—have, like other manuscripts of the same type, affinities with the Verona group.



theodosius iunior imperator cum imperatore confirmaverunt et subscripserunt;

VBI PETRUS PAULUS
de hoc concilio con-
ferunt;





160-161 - NORTH ITALY. COMPENDIUM OF CANON LAW: APOSTLES PAUL AND PETER, DETAILS, BIBLIOTECA CAPITOLARE, VERCELLI.

162-163 - NORTH ITALY. HOMILIES OF ST GREGORY, BIBLIOTECA CAPITOLARE, VERCELLI. ►





164 - MÜSTAIR, JOHANNESKIRCHE, NAVE. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

But it is at Müstair in the Grisons (eastern Switzerland) that we see the capital achievement of Italo-Alpine art—capital in view of its historical importance: a double sequence of frescoes almost contemporary with the church built by Charlemagne about the year 800. Scenes from the Old and New Testaments, depicted in the purest narrative style (as in San Salvatore, Brescia, and Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome), adorn the north and south walls of the nave; each of the three apses has an image of Christ in the vault, while on the walls are the lives of Sts John the Baptist, Stephen, Peter and Paul. The small church at nearby Malles Venosta belongs to the same group, both in its architecture and its decorations. The narrative style, the presentation in independent pictures and the types of figures represented link this art with that of North Italy, without surrendering to Carolingian ascendancy.

165 - MÜSTAIR, JOHANNESKIRCHE, NAVE. HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN, 800.





166 A AND B - MÜSTAIR, JOHANNESKIRCHE, NAVE. SCENES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

166 A AND B - MALLES, SAN BENEDETTO. SCENES OF SAINTS' LIVES — SCENE OF MARTYRDOM.

