

Christian Art, Space Exploration and Human Civilization

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17 Ottobre, 2023

Humans are wonderful beings because they evolve through time within societies. This evolution has been a testament to our belief, adaptability, resilience, and capacity for growth. The good society will also support humanity to grow sustainably with their civilization and peace. Meanwhile, art is related to human civilization because it reflects and shapes the cultural, social, and historical aspects of human societies throughout history.

In addition, comprehending the significance of “love”, which fosters unity and inspire growth, holds significant importance. The power of love cannot be measured, such as the profound love parents have for their children. Hence, love serves as a universal language that links all elements of the universe in a state of harmonious “oneness”.

Nevertheless, art can indeed be considered as a form of love and passion, through which artists engages in communication, expressing their ideas and perspectives that resonant with their current state of mind. It illuminates the progression of human civilization through the stories shared with audiences. The origins of human arts, specifically cave paintings, date back to the prehistoric period. These artworks were closely associated with the lifestyles, cultures, and civilizations of that time. Notable examples include the Chauvet cave in France, El Castillo cave in Spain, and Bhimbetka cave in India, as shown in Fig 1.



Fig 1. Chauvet cave – France (left), El Castillo cave – Spain (middle), and Bhimbetka cave – India (right) / Sources: Ministère de la Culture de France, Science, Wikimedia commons

Furthermore, the theological and cultural stories of Christianity have contributed to sundry fascinating Christian painting ranging from the Early Christian Art up to contemporary times as shown in Fig 2. The Early Christian Art period (2nd to 4th centuries AD) predominantly flourished in the catacombs of Rome and other burial sites. These paintings were mostly symbolic and depicted the scenes from the Old and New Testaments. The painters also focused on expressing faith and hope discreetly amidst the challenges of persecution and mortality. Thus, these paintings extend beyond mere imaginary because they serve as

communicating windows for the believers to devote themselves and profess their faith in Christianity. The painting scenes also involve with the life of Jesus such as nativity, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection.

After that period, the Christianity moved to the Byzantine Art (4th to 15th centuries AD) with the establishment of Byzantine Christianity in the Eastern Roman Empire. A new style of art emerged in a form of flat and abstract perspective with richly ornamented backgrounds and extensive use of gold leaf and mosaic to convey narratives. Overall, Byzantine-influenced paintings in Christianity is not just about aesthetics because it also includes spiritual connection with Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and saints, as example in Fig 3.

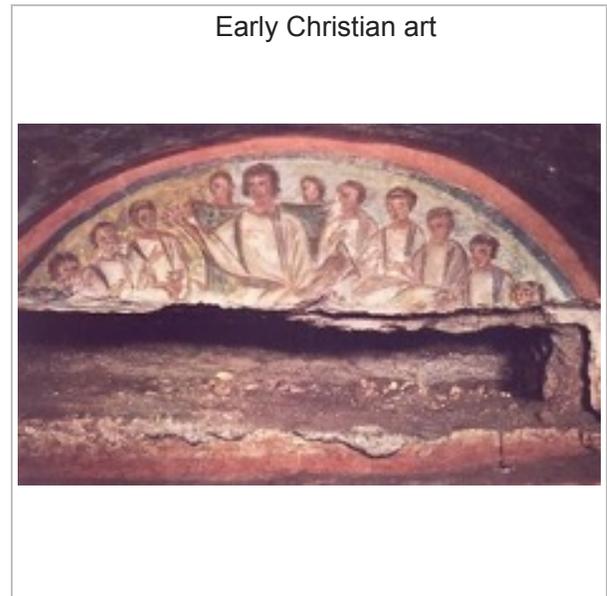


Fig 2. The early Christian art “Christ and The Apostles” in Rome / Source: Wikimedia commons



Fig 3. Byzantine-influenced art “Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus” in Venice / Source: Tripadvisor

During the period of Byzantine art, three other forms of art also occurred which are Romanesque Art (11th to 12th centuries AD), Gothic Art (12th to 16th centuries AD) and Renaissance Art (14th to 17th centuries AD). During the Romanesque period, art flourished in churches, monasteries, cathedrals, and other sacred spaces across Europe. The style was robust and straightforward, exemplified by large two-dimensional paintings and frescoes on thick walls. These paintings generally depict the Christianity's teaching and spiritual wisdom through biblical sceneries that inspire the devotion as example in Fig 4.

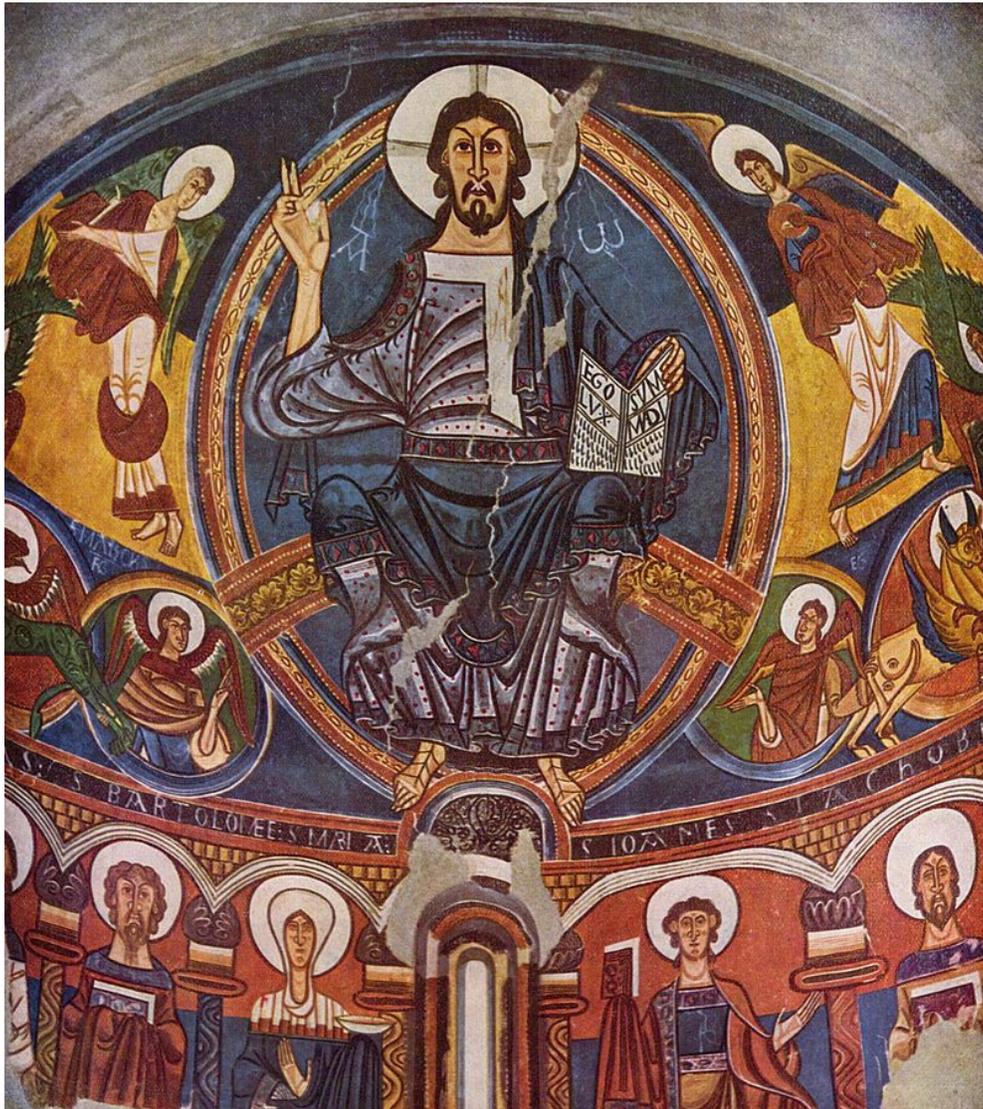


Fig 4. Romanesque-style fresco "Apse of Sant Climent de Taüll" in Barcelona /
Source: Wikipedia

Meanwhile, the Gothic art witnessed a dramatic shift in Christian art. Churches and Cathedrals were built with soaring architecture and stained-glass windows, allowing the portray of light and color. Therefore, the light and color influence architecture and painting style, leading to more divine atmosphere and spiritual expression of figures and scenes. Creativity also plays an important role to create artworks in this period as example in Fig 5.



Fig 5. Gothic-style painting "The Annunciation" in Sienna // Source: Canvas

The renaissance period marked a profound transformation of painting art in Europe as well. Famous luminary artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci illustrated religious themes with a paradigm shift, reshaping more realistic presentation through the lens of precise anatomy and human fascination. Biblical figures and events were portrayed with a sense of human emotion and drama that can offer new experiences in Christianity's artistic style as example in Fig 6.

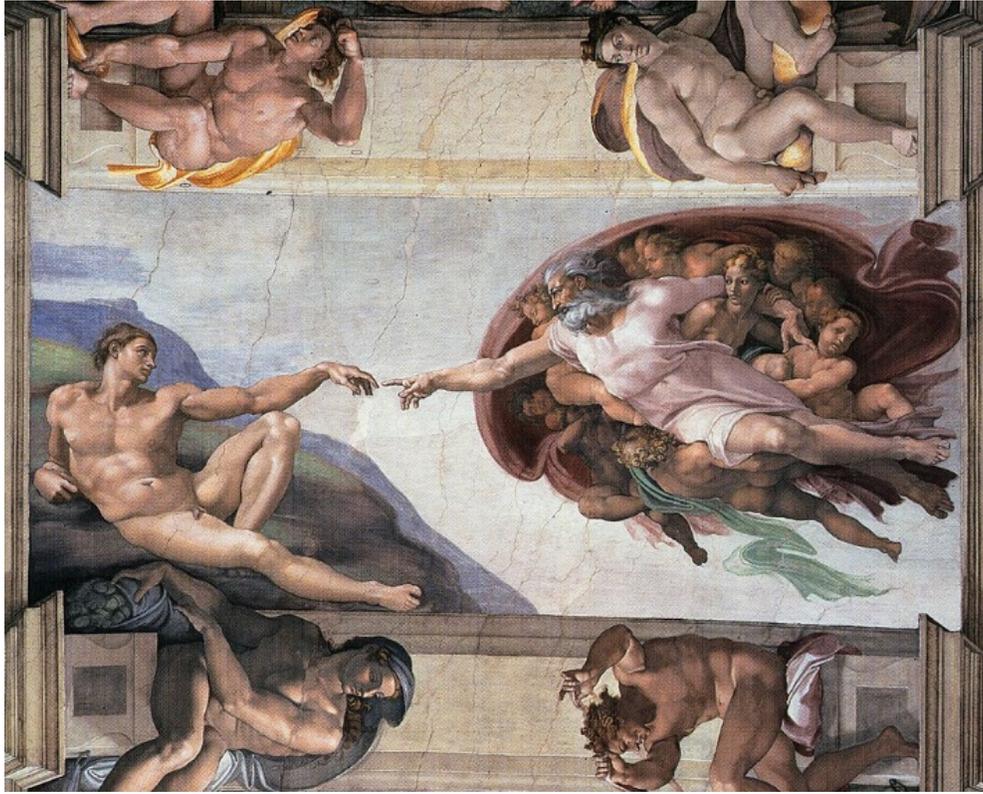


Fig 6. Renaissance-style painting “The Creation of Adam” in the Vatican / Source: BBC

The next period is Baroque art (17th to 18th centuries AD) which also put more emphasize on the emotional aspect of Christian art. Paintings often presented the intense moments in the bible with dynamic composition and skillful use of light and shadow to evoke the viewers’ feelings. Therefore, it can provide more experiences of the viewers as example in Fig 7.

Whereas, the Neoclassical and Romantic Art period (18th to 19th centuries AD) provided a return of classical aesthetics and exploration of emotion and imagination. Christian theme continued to blossom in the artistic world. However, artists preferred to add their personal and individualistic perspectives, reviving through the influences of ancient Roman and Greek cultures, into their artworks. The combination of individual interpretation based on history and imagination gave rise to the innovative expression of Christian arts as example in Fig 8.

At present, the period of modern and contemporary Christian art (20th century to present) turns the artistic movements and individual expression to the new heights of experiences. Artists have expressed abstract, surreal, and conceptual approaches to give narratives of Christianity, reflecting more diverged experiences. This circumstance shows that modern artists tend to value ideas based on the progress of science and technology for the creation of their artworks. In addition, the progress in space exploration inspires many artists to think beyond in the realm of Earth, which include space, and allow them to create new Christian paintings and artworks through the new scientific discovery. For example, Robert MacCall’s “The Space Cathedral” transcend the Christian art through the stained-glass painting that provide the experiences of cosmic spirituality and the divine space exploration beyond

Earth's atmosphere as shown in Fig 9.



Fig 7. Baroque-style painting "The Immaculate Conception" in Madrid / Source: Corpus Christi Catholic Church

The Angelus (painting) - Wikipedia



Fig 8. Romantic-style painting "The Angelus" in Paris / Source: Wikipedia

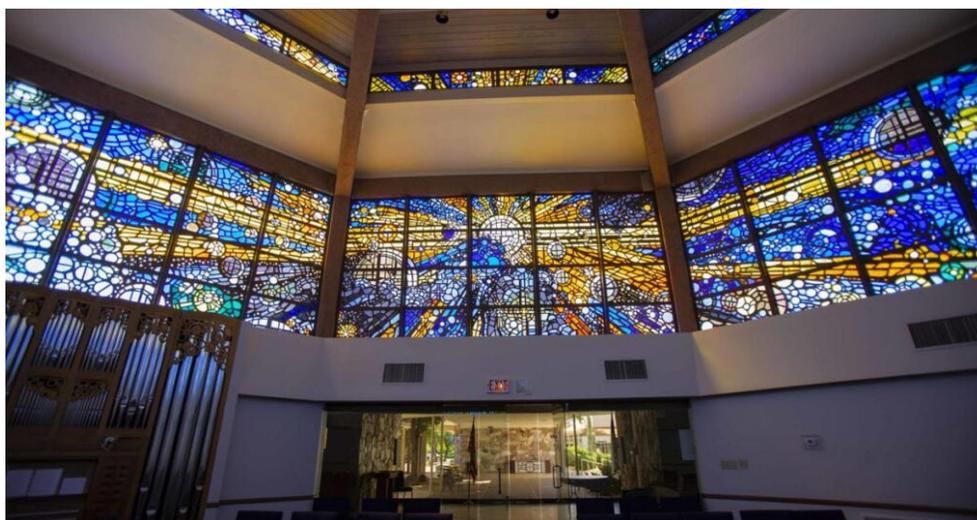


Fig 9. Modern-style painting "The Space Cathedral" in Arizona / Source: Scottsdale Progress

Through the historical evolution of Christian art, the painting style has changed in relation to the lifestyle, culture, and civilization. By the way, the value of Christianity remains with us, the humanity, to share the love of God and forgiveness. The modern artists shall continue to pass the spiritual wisdom with their passion to deliver these messages to the audiences. Meanwhile, the progress in science and technology will reshape the ideas of new crafting artworks. Therefore, there is a question that evokes a sense of anticipation, especially when human civilization moves to the next level, like the settlement in outer space: "will we accept a new style of good Christian art in the future that may be different from the past?"