
SAVING PARADISE:

How Christianity Traded Love of This World
for Crucifixion and Empire

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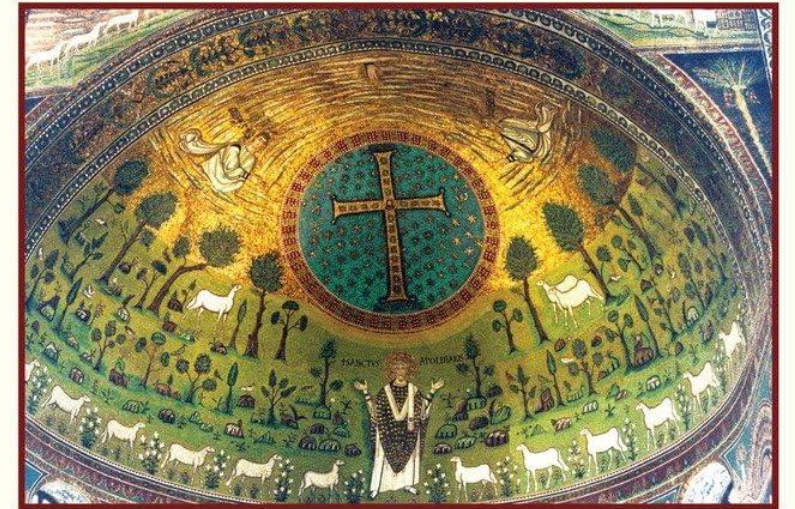
Intent/Focus

“During their first millennium, Christians filled their sanctuaries with images of Christ as a living presence – as a shepherd, teacher, healer, or an enthroned god. He is serene and surrounded by lush scenes, depictions of this world as paradise. Yet once he appeared as crucified, dying was virtually all Jesus seemed able to do, and paradise disappeared from the earth. *Saving Paradise* turns a fascinating new lens on Christianity, from its first centuries to the present day, asking how its early vision of beauty evolved into a vision of torture, and what changes in society and theology marked that evolution. It also retrieves, for today, a life-affirming Christianity that the world sorely needs.”

(Back cover summary)

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Culture of Life

- Prominence of celebrating life and its beauty
- The Eucharist meal with bounties of food in churches
 - Bread was universal, red meat was universally banned
 - Only roses and lilies allowed, fruits encouraged
 - Sacrifices were purposefully “bloodless” (142)
 - “The Eucharist trained the whole person – body, soul, mind, and strength – to know the world and the Spirit in it” (145)
- Focusing on Creation and “the life-giving presence of God in the world” (156)

The Death of Jesus

“How did it happen that Christians wished to see their God suffer and die? Who had released this gushing spring? Who had thus struck the church in its very heart?”

– Emile Male



The Eucharist Changes Meaning

- King Charles the Great (Charlemagne), 742-814
 - Forced the Saxons to be baptized at sword point
 - The peaceful, agrarian people had become Christian in Roman times (hybrid, oral traditions, mixed in pagan nature practices)
 - The blending = pagans with Christian stories and Priests presiding sacrifices to pagan deities
 - Leading to people desiring to make Christianity its purest form
 - *Bloody* campaign against the pagans