



Physical Descriptions of Jesus

The Oldest Views and Literary Data on the External Appearance of Jesus the Nazarene



"There is no description of Jesus in the New Testament or in any contemporary source. Yet, in hundreds of icons, paintings, and even coins, there is a common quality that enables us to identify Jesus in works of art. Starting in the sixth century, artistic depictions of Jesus seem inspired or even copied from a single source."

The Oldest Views and Data on the External Appearance of Jesus.

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (§ 1).

The Church Fathers (§ 2).

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Iconoclasm: The Religious and Political Destruction of Sacred Images or Monuments.

The Oldest Views and Literary Data on the External Appearance of Jesus

The Description of Publius Lentullus

The following was taken from a manuscript in the possession of Lord Kelly, and in his library, and was copied from an original letter of Publius Lentullus at Rome. It being the usual custom of Roman Governors to advertise the Senate and people of such material things as happened in their provinces in the days of Tiberius Caesar, Publius Lentullus, President of Judea, wrote the following epistle to the Senate concerning the Nazarene called Jesus.

"There appeared in these our days a man, of the Jewish Nation, of great virtue, named *Yeshua* [Jesus], who is yet living among us, and of the Gentiles is accepted for a Prophet of truth, but His own disciples call Him the *Son of God*- He raiseth the dead and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall, and comely, with very reverent countenance, such as the beholders may both love and fear, his hair of (the colour of) the chestnut, full ripe, plain to His ears, whence downwards it is more orient and curling and wavering about His shoulders. In the midst of His head is a seam or partition in His hair, after the manner of the Nazarenes. His forehead plain and very delicate; His face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a lovely red; His nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; His beard thickish, in colour like His hair, not very long, but forked; His look innocent and mature; His eyes grey, clear, and quick- In reproving hypocrisy He is terrible; in admonishing, courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in conversation, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen Him *Laugh*, but many have seen Him *Weep*. In proportion of body, most excellent; His hands and arms delicate to behold. In speaking, very temperate, modest, and wise. A man, for His singular beauty, surpassing the children of men."

New Advent disputes the authorship of this letter:

"Publius Lentulus is a fictitious person, said to have been Governor of Judea before Pontius, and to have written the following letter to the Roman Senate...The letter was first printed in the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Carthusian (Cologne, 1474), and in the "Introduction to the Works of St. Anselm" (Nuremberg, 1491). But it is neither the work of St. Anselm nor of Ludolph. According to the manuscript of Jena, a certain Giacomo Colonna found the letter in 1421 in an ancient Roman document sent to Rome from Constantinople. It must be of Greek origin, and translated into Latin during the thirteenth or fourteenth century, though it received its present form at the hands of humanists of the fifteenth or sixteenth century."

The argument and evidence can be viewed at:

[Full Text at New Advent](#)

The letter from Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Caesar

This is a reprinting of a letter allegedly from Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Caesar describing the physical appearance of Jesus. Copies are in the Congressional Library in Washington, D.C. This fact in and of itself does not prove authenticity of the letter; however, it is listed in the Library of Congress Index.

[Congressional Library Index for Letter](#)

TO TIBERIUS CAESAR:

A young man appeared in Galilee preaching with humble unction, a new law in the Name of the God that had sent Him. At first I was apprehensive that His design was to stir up the people against the Romans, but my fears were soon dispelled. Jesus of Nazareth spoke rather as a friend of the Romans than of the Jews. One day I observed in the midst of a group of people a young

man who was leaning against a tree, calmly addressing the multitude. I was told it was Jesus. This I could easily have suspected so great was the difference between Him and those who were listening to Him. His golden colored hair and beard gave to his appearance a celestial aspect. He appeared to be about 30 years of age. Never have I seen a sweeter or more serene countenance. What a contrast between Him and His bearers with their black beards and tawny complexions! Unwilling to interrupt Him by my presence, I continued my walk but signified to my secretary to join the group and listen. Later, my secretary reported that never had he seen in the works of all the philosophers anything that compared to the teachings of Jesus. He told me that Jesus was neither seditious nor rebellious, so we extended to Him our protection. He was at liberty to act, to speak, to assemble and to address the people. This unlimited freedom provoked the Jews -- not the poor but the rich and powerful.

Later, I wrote to Jesus requesting an interview with Him at the Praetorium. He came. When the Nazarene made His appearance I was having my morning walk and as I faced Him my feet seemed fastened with an iron hand to the marble pavement and I trembled in every limb as a guilty culprit, though he was calm. For some time I stood admiring this extraordinary Man. There was nothing in Him that was repelling, nor in His character, yet I felt awed in His presence. I told Him that there was a magnetic simplicity about Him and His personality that elevated Him far above the philosophers and teachers of His day.

Now, Noble Sovereign, these are the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth and I have taken the time to write you in detail concerning these matters. I say that such a man who could convert water into wine, change death into life, disease into health; calm the stormy seas, is not guilty of any criminal offense and as others have said, we must agree -- truly this is the Son of God.

Your most obedient servant,
Pontius Pilate

The Emerald of Caesar



This Likeness of Jesus was copied from a portrait carved on an emerald by order of Tiberius Caesar, which emerald the Emperor of the Turks afterwards gave out of the Treasury of Constantinople to Pope Innocent VIII for the redemption of his brother, taken captive by the Christians.

"The Archko Volume"

Another description of Jesus is found in "The Archko Volume" which contains official court documents from the days of Jesus. This information substantiates that He came from racial lines which had blue eyes and golden hair. In a chapter entitled "Gamaliel's Interview" it states concerning Jesus (Yeshua) appearance:

"I asked him to describe this person to me, so that I might know him if I should meet him. He said: 'If you ever meet him [Yeshua] you will know him. While he is nothing but a man, there is something about him that distinguishes him from every other man. He is the picture of his mother, only he has not her smooth, round face. His hair is a little more golden than hers, though it is as much from sunburn as anything else. He is tall, and his shoulders are a little drooped; his visage is thin and of a swarthy complexion, though this is from exposure. His eyes are large and a soft blue, and rather dull and heavy....' This Jew [Nazarite] is convinced that he is the Messiah of the world. ...this was the same person that was born of the virgin in Bethlehem some twenty-six years before..."

- The Archko Volume, translated by Drs. McIntosh and Twyman of the Antiquarian Lodge, Genoa, Italy, from manuscripts in Constantinople and the records of the Senatorial Docket taken from the Vatican of Rome (1896) 92-93

Josephus, the "Antiquities Of The Jews"

This is a quote from Josephus, from his historical first-century writings entitled, "Antiquities Of The Jews," Book #18, Chapter 2, section 3.

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian

Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian who lived circa 56-120 AD. He is believed to have been born in France or Gaul into a provincial aristocratic family. He became a senator, a consul, and eventually governor of Asia. Tacitus wrote at least four historic treatises. Around 115 AD, he published Annals in which he explicitly states that Nero prosecuted the Christians in order to draw attention away from himself for Rome's devastating fire of 64 AD. In that context, he mentions Christus who was put to death by Pontius Pilate.

Christus: Annals 15.44.2-8

"Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome..."

Images and Pictures of Jesus

1. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

Neither the New Testament nor the writings of the earlier post-Biblical Christian authors have any statements regarding the personal appearance of Jesus, thus contrasting sharply with the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha and especially with the works of the Gnostics. In the "Shepherd" of Hermas (ix. 6, 12) the lofty stature of the Son of God is emphasized, and according to the Gospel of Peter he even towered above the heaven at his resurrection. Gnostic influence is betrayed by visions in which Christ appears as a shepherd, or the master of a ship, or in the form of one of his apostles, as of Paul and of Thomas, or again as a young boy. In the Acts of Andrew and Matthew he assumes the figure of a lad, and the same form is taken in the Acts of Peter and Andrew, in the Acts of Matthew, and in the Ethiopic Acts of James. Manazara is healed by a youth in the Acts of Thomas, and a beautiful lad appears to Peter and Theon in the *Actus Vercellensis*, which also mentions the smile of friendship in the face of Jesus. A handsome youth with smiling face appears at the grave of Drusiana in the Acts of John, but certain widows to whom the Lord restored their sight saw him an, aged man of indescribable appearance, though others perceived in him a youth, and others still a boy. The youthfulness of Christ is also mentioned in the life and passion of St. C^ol^olus and the vision of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas ascribed to the risen Christ the face of a youth with snow-white hair.

2. The Church Fathers.

The early Christian authors were by no means concordant in their opinions of the personal appearance of Jesus. Some, basing their judgment on Isa. lii. and liii., denied him all beauty and comeliness, while others, with reference to [Ps. xlv. 3](#), regarded him as the most beautiful of mankind. To the former class belong Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Isidor of Pelusium, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Origen declared that Christ assumed whatever form was suited to circumstances. It was not until the fourth century that Chrysostom and Jerome laid emphasis upon the beauty of Jesus. While Isidor of Pelusium had referred the phrase, "Thou art fairer than the children of men" in [Ps. xlv. 2](#), to the divine virtue of Christ, Chrysostom interpreted the lack of comeliness mentioned in [Isa. liii. 2](#) as an allusion to the humiliation of the Lord. Jerome saw in the profound impression produced by the first sight of Jesus upon disciples and foes alike a proof of heavenly beauty in face and eyes. From the insults inflicted upon Jesus Augustine concluded that he had appeared hateful to his persecutors, while actually he had been more beautiful than all, since the virgins had loved him.

3. Other Data.

The Problem of the life passion of St. C^ol^ous, and the external appearance of Jesus possessed but minor interest for the Church Fathers, although the Catholic Acts of the Holy Apostles ascribe to him an olive complexion, a beautiful beard, and flashing eyes. Further details are first found in a letter to the Emperor Theophilus attributed to John of Damascus (in *MPG*, xcv. 349), which speaks of the brows which grew together, the beautiful eyes, the prominent nose, the curling hair, the look of health, the black beard, the wheat-colored complexion, and the long fingers, a picture which almost coincides with a hand-book on painting from Mt. Athos not earlier than the sixteenth century. In like manner, Nicephorus Callistus, who introduced his description of the picture of Christ (*MPG*, cxlv. 748) with the words, "as we have received it from the ancients," was impressed with the healthful appearance, with the stature, the brown hair which was not very thick but somewhat curling, the black brows which were not fully arched, the sea-blue eyes shading into brown, the beautiful glance, the prominent nose, but brown beard of moderate length, and the long hair which had not been cut since childhood, the neck slightly bent, and the olive and somewhat ruddy complexion of the oval face. A slight divergence from both these accounts is shown by the so-called letter of Lentulus, the ostensible predecessor of Pontius Pilate, who is said to have prepared a report to the Roman Senate concerning Jesus and containing a description of him. According to this document Christ possessed a tall and handsome figure, a countenance which inspired reverence and awakened love and fear together, dark, shining, curling hair, parted in the center in Nazarene fashion and flowing over the shoulders, an open and serene forehead, a face without wrinkle or blemish and rendered more beautiful by its delicate ruddiness, a perfect nose and mouth, a full red beard of the same color as the hair and worn in two points and piercing eyes of a grayish-blue.

II. Literary Data on the Oldest Pictures of Jesus:

(1) A handkerchief embroidered with the figures of Jesus and his Apostles, and made, according to legend, by his mother, is said to have been seen by the monk Arculfus during his residence in Jerusalem (Adamnan, *De Locis sanctis*, i. 11 [12]). (2) In his account of his visit to C^ol^orea Philippi, Eusebius mentions (*Hist. eccl.* vii. 18) a group of statuary in brass which consisted of a kneeling woman and a man standing with his hands stretched out toward her. Local tradition saw in this a figure of Jesus and the woman healed of an issue of blood, who was said to have come from C^ol^orea Philippi. This legend was accepted by Eusebius, Asterius Amasenus Photius, Sozomen, Philostorgius, and Macarius Magnes, the last-named calling the woman Beronike. The actual meaning of the group is uncertain. Some have seen in it an emperor and a province, possibly Hadrian and Judea while others have regarded it as Yculapius and Hygeia, a view which is vitiated by the fact that no mention is made of the serpent-staff characteristic of statues of the god of healing. It is entirely possible that the group actually represented Christ and either the woman with an issue of blood or possibly the woman of Canaan who implored him to heal her daughter. (3) According to Iren^ous (*H^ol^og^o*, i., xxv. 6), pictures of Christ were possessed by the Gnostic sect of Carpocratians, who crowned them with garlands like the pictures of philosophers--Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others--while, according to the Carpocratians, Pilate had a portrait of Jesus painted during his lifetime, and the Carpocratian Marcellina possessed a picture of Christ which she honored, like those of Paul, Homer, and Pythagoras, with prayer and incense. (4) The Emperor Alexander Severus had a picture of Jesus; it must have been, however, only an ideal portrait, like those of Apollonius, Abraham, Orpheus, and others, which were also included in his lararium (Lampridius, *Vita Alex. Sev.* xxix.). (5) A brass statue of the Savior was erected by Constantine the Great before the main door of the imperial palace of Chalce (Theophanes in *MPG*, cviii. 817). (6) A picture of Jesus "painted from life" was possessed by the Archduchess Margaret which may be the same one as D^ol^ol^o's altar-piece of St. Luke at Brussels (M. Thausing, *D^ol^o*, p. 420, Leipsic, 1876).

While the portraits just mentioned were prepared by human agency, there were others to which a supernatural origin was ascribed. To this category belong (7) a picture at Camulium in Cappadocia, apparently on cloth and perhaps a copy of that of Edessa (see below). It was mentioned at the second Nicene Council and was carried to Constantinople by Justin II., where it was regarded as so sacred that a special festival was instituted in its honor, and it

was frequently carried in war as a potent icon (J. Gretsei opera, xv. 196-197, Regensburg, 1741). (8) In the war against the Persians the General Philippicus had a picture of Christ which the Romans believed to be supernatural in origin, and the same portrait served to quell a mutiny in the army of Priscus, the successor of Philippicus. This icon was apparently on cloth, and was a copy of an original which was frequently confounded with a portrait in Amida, although the latter is expressly said to have been painted, and was, consequently, natural in provenience (Zacharias, MPG, lxxxv. 1159). (9) A Syriac fragment mentions a picture of Jesus painted on linen and found unwet in a spring by a certain Hypatia shortly after the Passion. This portrait left a miraculous imprint on the napkin in which it was wrapped, and one of these pictures found its way to C³re^a while the other was taken to Comolia (possibly identical with the city of Camulium already mentioned), although a copy was later found at Dibudin (?) (Lipsius, Die edessenische Abgarsage, p. 67, n. 1, Brunswick, 1880). (10) About 570 a linen mantle was shown at a church in Memphis which bore the impress of the Savior's face and was so bright that none could gaze at it (Antoninus Martyr, De locis sanctisxliv.). (11) Byzantine literature frequently mentions pictures of Christ impressed on bricks. According to a legend which presents several slight variations, the portrait of himself which Jesus had sent to Abgar at Edessa was believed to have been walled up to save it from the attack of King Ananun and to have been rediscovered in 539 together with a brick which bore a miraculous copy of the original (Georgius Cedrenus, ed. Bekker, i. 312, and others). (12) The patriarch Germanus, when forced to leave Constantinople, is said to have taken with him a picture of Christ which later came into the possession of Gregory II. (G. Marangoni, Istoria dell' oratorio di San Lorenzo, pp. 78 sqq., Rome, 1747). (13) The cloth with a picture of Christ presented by Photius to the hermit Paul at Latro in the ninth century was merely a copy of a miraculous original, although only he to whom the gift was made was able to perceive the portrait, others seeing only the cloth (Gretses, ut sup. p.186). (14) More important than all other statements concerning the oldest pictures of Christ is a passage of Augustine (De trin. viii. 4), stating that the portraits of Jesus were innumerable in concept and design.

III. Extant Pictures of Jesus.

1. Portraits Ostensibly Authentic:

1. Portraits by Painters, Sculptors, etc.

(1) The paintings of Luke, of which the best known are two at Rome. One of these is in the chapel Sanctus Sanctorum, although the statement that Luke painted a portrait of Jesus dates only from medieval times, the monk Michael, the biographer of Theodore of Studium, being one of the earliest sources. In the last quarter of the twelfth century the legend of Luke was interwoven by Wernher of Niederrhein with the tradition of Veronica (see below). Luke, in answer to Veronica's entreaties, is said to have made repeated attempts to portray Christ, but his endeavors were unsuccessful. Jesus then impressed the image of his face upon the handkerchief of Veronica. Another picture ascribed to Luke and painted on cloth is in the Vatican library, while a third is said to have been placed in the cathedral of Tivoli by Pope Simplicius. Other pictures are likewise ascribed to a similar provenience, and very late traditions even attribute statues of Christ to the chisel of Luke. [In the church of San Miniato at Monto, in the environs of Florence, Italy, is shown a portrait of Christ, attributed to Luke.] (2) To Nicodemus is ascribed a statue of the crucified Christ carved in black cedar and preserved in the Cathedral of Lucca. Its design shows that it dates at the earliest from the eighth century, although tradition states that the model of Nicodemus was furnished by the impress of the Savior's body on the linen cloths purchased to cover the corpse at the descent from the cross. (3) A "true and only portrait of our Savior taken from an engraved emerald which Pope Innocent VIII. received from Sultan Bajazet II. for the ransom of his brother, who was a captive of the Christians," frequently reproduced in photograph is in reality the copy of a medal which may have been cut at the command of Mohammed II., and which is, at all events, of comparatively modern date. (4) The mosaic in the Church of St. Praxedis in Rome, which is exhibited on festal occasions, is by no means one of the earliest Christian mosaics, although tradition regards it as a present to Pudens from the Apostle Peter.

2. Alleged Supernatural Pictures.

Alleged supernatural pictures may be divided into those which represent the entire figure of Jesus, and those which give only his face. (1) Clothe of medieval date containing more or less clear outlines of the figure of a man, all claiming to be the "napkin" in which Jesus was wrapped in the grave and on which his image was impressed, were formerly found in Chamb³ and until the end of the eighteenth century, in Besan³, while they still exist at Compi³ and Turin, the latter "napkin" being declared authentic by a bull of Sixtus IV. Far more famous, however, are the cloths which bear only the impress of a head or face and of these one of the best known is (2) the picture of Edessa, or the Abgar picture. According to the Doctrine of Addai and Moses of Choren, Hanan, the envoy of the king of Edessa, painted a portrait of Jesus and took it to his royal master. Evagrius, on the authority of Procopius, states that Christ sent to the king a picture of miraculous origin. The legend apparently arose about 350, and may well have been based on an actual painting which remained at Edessa till 944, when it was brought to Constantinople by the Emperor Romanus I. Its subsequent fortunes are uncertain, although various cities laid claim to its possession, especially Genoa, Rome, and Paris, the first-named city advancing the most probable arguments for authenticity and receiving the confirmation of Pius IX. (see [ABGAR](#)). This picture shows only the head of Jesus, but legend also knows a full-length Edessene portrait on linen produced by contact with the body of Christ. It is mentioned by Gervase of Tilbury in the beginning of the thirteenth century, who bases his statement on ancient sources and says that it was exhibited on festivals in the chief church of Edessa, and that on Easter it shows Jesus successively as a child, boy, youth, young man, and in the ripeness of years. (3) One of the choicest treasures of the Roman Church is the handkerchief of Veronica, which is shown only on special occasions, particularly in Passion Week. This portrait is said to have been transferred in 1297 by Boniface VIII. from the Hospital of the Holy Ghost to St. Peter's in Rome, where it reposes behind the statue of St. Veronica. The picture, which is now much faded, shows an elliptical face with a low-arched forehead, in marked contrast with the long nose. The mouth is slightly open, and the scanty hair is visible only on the temples. The beard on the cheeks is thin, but is stronger on the chin, where it ends in three points, while the mustache is more conspicuous for color than for strength. The eyes arched by scanty brows, are closed, and, combined with features distorted by agony and stained with blood complete the picture of a martyr pale in death. From the point of view of esthetics and the history of art, the picture is probably Byzantine. Although one would expect the picture of Veronica to be regarded as the napkin which covered the head of Christ, there is no tradition as to its origin, although a mess of medieval legends connects it with the name of a woman.

These may be divided into two classes. In the older group, apparently written shortly before the ninth century, Veronica appears as the woman afflicted with an issue of blood, who had a portrait of Jesus either painted by herself or at her bidding, or else impressed by Christ himself upon a piece of cloth. The second form of the legend sprang up in France and Germany in the course of the fourteenth century and superseded the older version before 1500. According to this tradition, Veronica gave the Savior a handkerchief on his way to Golgotha, and received it back impressed with his features. Further amplifications of the tradition stated that the napkin was brought to Rome by John VII., or even during the reign of Tiberius, while it is certain that Celestine III. prepared a reliquary for it. At all events, what is clear is that during the medieval period Rome possessed a cloth picture of Christ, which was apparently supposed to be the miraculous impress of the head of Jesus in the sepulcher. It is significant, moreover, that it bore the name sudarium before the rise of the legend of the handkerchief given Christ to wipe his face on his way to the cross, nor was it until the twelfth century that the name of Veronica even began to form a part of the tradition, a connection suggested by a popular etymology of Veronica as Vera + *? ("true image"). This legend of Veronica gave rise to a tendency of art which reached its culmination in 1860, who represented the napkin of Veronica and the Savior with a crown of thorns, combining the suffering in the face of Jesus with the loftiness and the majesty of the Son of God. (4) The picture of Christ in the apse of St. John 2nd century A.C.E.

The image right is of a marble bust of the god, Serapis, a composite of several Greek and Egyptian deities. It dates to the 2nd century A.C.E.

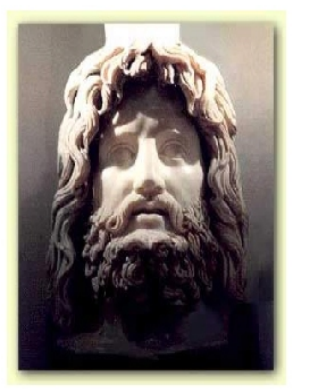
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Lateran at Rome is supposed to have been miraculously produced when the church was dedicated by Pope Sylvester on its recent date.

2. Pictures of Jesus in Ancient Art:

1. Symbolical and Allegorical Representations.

In the course of time pictorial representations of Jesus became either real or symbolical and allegorical, the latter term the former. To the category of symbols belong the fish, the lamb, the various monograms of Christ, and the Good Shepherd. The representations of Jesus in human form. As early as Tertullian the Good Shepherd adorned chalice, and it was a favorite representation in the catacombs, where the figure usually carries a goat or a wether. In these pictures, often adorned with other animals, the Christ appears only in youthful guise, although the Shepherd is usually clad in garment Roman tunic and the pallium as well as sandals. The figure, moreover, is Latin instead of Oriental in type, and represents sometimes even boyish figure, a round head with curling hair, and a frank face with regular features. This type of picture underwent evolution in the course of time. In the third century the face grew more oval, while the unparted hair grew to center and flowed on the sides in wavy or curly locks.



2. Representation as Teacher and Lawgiver.

The first real impulse, however, to artistic representations of Jesus was given by his miracles, though the risen Lord as a teacher and a lawgiver became more and more a subject for pictorial representation. In the midst of all or a part of his disciples, including Paul, Christ appears either on a plain, as in Spain and southern France, or standing on a mountain either within or without the four rivers of Eden, or sitting on a throne with his feet on a footstool or on the clouds while mosaics represent him as seated on the celestial globe. As a teacher, he is depicted as speaking and as holding a book or scroll either in his hand or on his bosom, while as a lawgiver he proffers the Gospel to Peter or Paul. In both of these latter categories the beardless, youthful type gradually grows less frequent, so that on Roman, Upper Italian, and French sarcophagi the central Christ appears bearded, although in the reliefs on their sides he wears no beard, the former representing the risen Lord and the latter the earthly Savior. Originally a characteristic of the ascended Christ, the beard was attributed to Jesus during his earthly ministry after the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. The struggle between the two types is seen in the mosaics of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna and of St. Michael, but the earliest specimen of the bearded Christ is generally believed to be the so-called Callistinic mosaic which was found in the catacomb of St. Domitilla. In conformity with the manhood implied by the beard, the body increased in height and breadth, while the features became more sharply defined as the bones gained in accentuation over the flesh. The nose became longer and more prominent, and the eyes were deeper and their pupils enlarged, while the angles of the nose and mouth were more sharply outlined. The hair, while frequently less curling than hitherto, was now represented as falling to the neck and shoulders, and was often parted in the middle. The color both of the hair and of the beard varied through all shades from yellow to gray and black. The upper lip was never clean-shaven, and the beard was sometimes close and sometimes either pointed or rounded, the parted type being found only in rudimentary form in early Christian art.

The bearded Christ represents the climax of the art of early Christianity, and the fifth century ushered in a period of decay marked by all manner of exaggeration. Majesty became stiffness, exaltation unapproachability, and earnestness gloom. Thus the Christ of Saints Cosmas and Damian (q.v.) in Rome, dating from the sixth century, is a figure with, long face, projecting cheek bones, ashen complexion, attenuated nose, mane-like hair, and scanty beard.

It was the task of the Middle Ages to reduce the multiplicity of concepts of the likeness of Christ to unity, a task which required centuries for its completion. The Carolingian period saw a sort of fruitless recrudescence of the process of evolution of the early Christian Period. Even during the Renaissance the beardless type struggled for supremacy with the bearded, especially in miniatures and ivories, but the former steadily lost ground, so that its last sporadic occurrence is a Scandinavian Christ in glory of the thirteenth century, such pictures as the Pietà of Botticelli at Munich being mere anachronisms.

IV. Origin of the Pictures of Jesus:

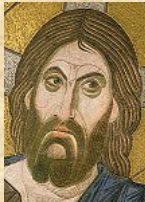
While the theory may be advanced that the oldest pictures of Christ were based either on works of art still more ancient or on tradition, it is practically certain that they are not real portraits but ideal representations. This is clear both from their extreme diversity and from the words of Augustine: "What his appearance was we know not." The most primitive type, wherein early Christian and Gnostic documents agree, is that of a boy or youth. The youthful vigor of the early Church in religious and in moral thought, sustained by the belief in the second coming of the Lord and strengthened by persecution, inspired the artist to depict the Christ as the incarnation of undying youth, even as Noah, Job, Abraham, and Moses were represented as beardless boys. Herein, too, lay the genesis of the concept of the Good Shepherd.

With the fourth and fifth centuries the bearded type was evolved side by side with the beardless. The explanation of this change lies in the perfection, strength, and manliness implied by the beard. The parted hair, on the other hand, which is characteristic of the pictures of Christ in this period, especially in the mosaics, typifies his earthly lineage and designates him as one of the children of Israel, since of human beings only Jews and Judeo-Christians are represented with parted hair in early Christian art. The theory, advanced by many scholars, that Greek religious art influenced the various early Christian concepts of the personal appearance of Christ seems to lack sufficient evidence to be in any wise conclusive.

V. Other lines of investigation suggest that "Jesus" may have been a role played by a contemporary philosopher and student of Pythagoras and Plato known as *Apollonius of Tyana*, as Rome attempted to merge Judaism with Greek philosophy. Several busts of Apollonius are in museums around the world.

Apollonius of Tyana web site

These three images (below) are busts of Apollonius found at Robertino Solarian's website:



In the 1930's, French Shroud scholar Paul Vignon described a series of common characteristics visible in many early artistic depictions of Jesus. The Vignon marking, as they are known, all appear on the Shroud suggesting that it is the source of later pictures of Jesus.

Christ Pantocrator, c. 1100 from dome of Church at Daphni, near Athens. Note U at bridge of nose, triangle on nose, raised right eyebrow, uneven hair, owlsh eyes.

- A square U-shape between the eyebrows.
- A downward pointing triangle or V-shape just below the U-shape, on the bridge of the nose.
- Two wisps of hair going downward and then to the right.
- A raised right eyebrow.
- Large, seemingly "owlsh" eyes.
- An accent on the left cheek and an accent on the right cheek that is somewhat lower.
- A forked beard and hair parted in the middle, a custom of the Nazarenes.
- Hair on one side of the head that is shorter than on the other side.
- An enlarged left nostril.
- An accent line below the nose and a dark line just below the lower lip.
- A gap in the beard below the lower lip.
- Draped clothing of white linen typical of the ancient Essenes.

Iconoclasm

The religious and political destruction of sacred images or monuments

Literally, iconoclasm is religious and political destruction of the sacred images or monuments, usually (though not always) of another religious group. People who destroy such images are called iconoclasts, while people who revere or venerate such images are called iconodules.

In 725 the Emperor Leo III, ignoring the opposition of both Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople and Pope Gregory II in Rome, ordered the removal of all icons from the churches and their destruction. Nearly all ancient images of Jesus were destroyed during the iconoclastic periods in the eighth and ninth centuries.

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Just as in our own time there is controversy about icons, so was there dispute in the early Church. Early critics of icons included Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Minucius Felix and Lactancius. Eusebius was not alone in fearing that the art of the pagan world carried with it the spirit of the pagan world while others objected on the basis of Old Testament restrictions of imagery. Christianity was, after all, born in a world in which many artists were employed doing religious or secular work. Idolatry was a normal part of pagan religious life. Thus we find that in the early centuries, in the many areas of controversy among Christians, there was division on questions of religious art and its place in spiritual life.

Byzantine Iconoclasm

The first iconoclastic period: 730-787 Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (reigned 717-741) banned the use of icons of Jesus, Mary, and the Saints and commanded the destruction of these images in 730. The Iconoclastic Controversy was fueled by the refusal of many Christians resident outside the Byzantine Empire, including many Christians living in the Islamic Caliphate to accept the emperor's theological arguments. St. John of Damascus was one of the most prominent of these. Ironically, Christians living under Muslim rule at this time had more freedom to write in defense of icons than did those living in the Byzantine Empire. Leo was able to promulgate his policy because of his personal popularity and military success - he was credited with saving Constantinople from an Arab siege in 717-718 and then sustaining the Empire through annual warfare.

The first Iconoclastic period came to an end at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, when the veneration of icons was affirmed, although the worship of icons was expressly forbidden. Among the reasons were the doctrine of the Incarnation: because God the Son (Jesus Christ) took on flesh, having a physical appearance, it is now possible to use physical matter to depict God the Son, and to depict the saints. Icon veneration lasted through the reign of Empress Irene's successor, Nicephorus I (reigned 802-811), and the two brief reigns after his.

The second Iconoclastic period: 813-843

Emperor Leo V (reigned 813-820) instituted a second period of Iconoclasm in 813, which seems to have been less rigorously enforced, since there were fewer martyrdoms and public destructions of icons. Leo was succeeded by Michael II, who was succeeded by his son, Theophilus II. Theophilus died leaving his wife Theodora regent for his minor heir, Michael III. Like Irene 50 years before her, Theodora mobilized the iconodules and proclaimed the restoration of icons in 843. Since that time the first Sunday of Lent is celebrated in the churches of the Orthodox tradition as the feast of the "Triumph of Orthodoxy".

Islamic Iconoclasm

Because of the prohibition against figural decoration in mosques - not, as is often said, a total ban on the use of images - Muslims have on occasion committed acts of iconoclasm against the devotional images of other religions. An example of this is the 2001 destruction of frescoes and the monumental statues of the Buddha at Bamiyan by the Taliban, an element of the Islamist movement.

In a number of countries, conquering Muslim armies tore down local temples and houses of worship, and built mosques on their sites. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was built on top of the remains of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Similar acts occurred in parts of north Africa under Muslim conquest. In India, numerous former Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were conquered and rebuilt as mosques. In recent years, some Hindu nationalists have attempted to tear down these mosques, and replace them with Hindu Temples. This is part of the current conflict today between Indian Hindu nationalists and Indian Islamists.

Reformation Iconoclasm

Some of the Protestant reformers encouraged their followers to destroy Catholic art works by insisting that they were idols. Huldreich Zwingli and John Calvin promoted this approach to the adaptation of earlier buildings for Protestant worship. In 1562, some Calvinists destroyed the tomb of St. Irenaeus and the relics inside, which had been under the altar of a church since his martyrdom in 202.

The Netherlands (including Belgium) were hit by a large wave of Protestant iconoclasm in 1566. This is called the Beeldenstorm.

Bishop Joseph Hall of Norwich described the events of 1643 when troops and citizens, encouraged by a Parliamentary ordinance against superstition and idolatry, behaved thus:

'Lord what work was here! What clattering of glasses! What beating down of walls! What tearing up of monuments! What pulling down of seats! What wresting out of irons and brass from the windows! What defacing of arms! What demolishing of curious stonework! what tooting and piping upon organ pipes! And what a hideous triumph in the market-place before all the country, when all the mangled organ pipes, vestments, both copes and surplices, together with the leaden cross which had newly been sawn down from the Green-yard pulpit and the service-books and singing books that could be carried to the fire in the public market-place were heaped together'.

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Physical Description of Jesus