

ART OF THE CHURCH

“A Christian should use [the] arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God. An art work can be a doxology in itself.”

— Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*

“There is a certain sense in which art is its own justification. If art is good art, if it is true art, if it is beautiful art, then it is bearing witness to the Author of the good, the true, and the beautiful.”

— R.C. Sproul, *Lifetimes*

According to ancient Greek legends, the peacock did not decay after death. These legends led to the peacock becoming a symbol of immortality. In the Greco-Roman culture shared by many of the early Christians, the peacock naturally became associated with Christian teachings about immortality and resurrection. Peacocks frequently appeared in church mosaics and on tombs, reminding Christians of their future hope of resurrection.

Peacocks, early 6th century.
Stone mosaic



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Christ Pantocrator, sixth century.

Encaustic on wood, St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai



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Christ Pantocrator (“Christ, ruler of all”) is a type of icon that portrays Christ as simultaneously the righteous judge and loving savior.

The example shown to the left is the oldest known Pantocrator icon, and its multiple layers of symbolism function as a visual apologetic for orthodox Christology. Christ’s left hand holds the book of the Gospel by which we are judged, and the right hand is raised in blessing. The two halves of Christ’s face are strikingly different. On the side on which He holds the book of the Gospel, there is a three dimensional depth—His face is shadowed and severe, the intense gaze piercing the soul of the viewer with judgment. This half of Christ’s face is strikingly naturalistic for an icon, emphasizing the humanity of Christ. The other side of the face is flattened and serene; it invites the viewer with gentleness, and the traditional two-dimensionality associated with icons has a spiritualizing effect, symbolizing Christ’s eternity and divinity. These dualities are united in the one face of Christ: holy judgment and compassionate grace, divinity and humanity, eternity and temporality.