The Byzantine Empire

(Eastern Roman Empire)

667 BCE: Greek colonists founded Byzantium

324 CE: Constantine refounded the city as Nova Roma or Constantinople

The fall of Rome in 476 ended the western half of the Roman Empire; the eastern half continued as the Byzantine Empire, with Constantinople as its capital.

Portrait of Constantine, ca. 315–330 CE. Marble, approx. 8’ 6” high.

Early Byzantine Art
6-8th c.

The emperor **Justinian I** ruled the Byzantine Empire from 527 until 565. He is significant for his efforts to regain the lost provinces of the Western Roman Empire, his codification of Roman law, and his architectural achievements.

Justinian as world conqueror (Barberini Ivory)
Detail: Beardless Christ; Justinian on his horse mid-sixth century. Ivory.

The Byzantine Empire , ca 600

Theocracy

Government by divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided.

Justinian as world conqueror (Barberini Ivory), mid-sixth century. Ivory, 1’ 1 1/2” X 10 1/2”. Louvre, Paris.

In **Orthodox Christianity** the central article of faith is the equality of the three aspects of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
All other versions of Christianity were considered heresies.

Justinian as world conqueror (Barberini Ivory), mid-sixth century. Ivory, 1' 1 1/2" X 10 1/2". Louvre, Paris.

Comparison: Ara Pacis Augustae, **Female personification (Tellus; mother earth?),** panel from the east facade of the, Rome, Italy, 13–9 BCE. Marble, approx. 5’ 3” high.

Comparison: Equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, from Rome, Italy, ca. 175 CE. Bronze, approx. 11’ 6” high. Musei Capitolini, Rome.

Saint Michael the Archangel, right leaf of a diptych, early sixth century. Ivory, approx. 1’ 5” X 5 1/2”. British Museum, London.

L: Augustus as Jupiter. R: Jupiter (Zeus)
1st c. CE. Marble. Both: St. Petersburg. Hermitage.

Saint Michael the Archangel, right leaf of a diptych, early sixth century. Ivory, approx. 1' 5" X 5 1/2". British Museum, London.

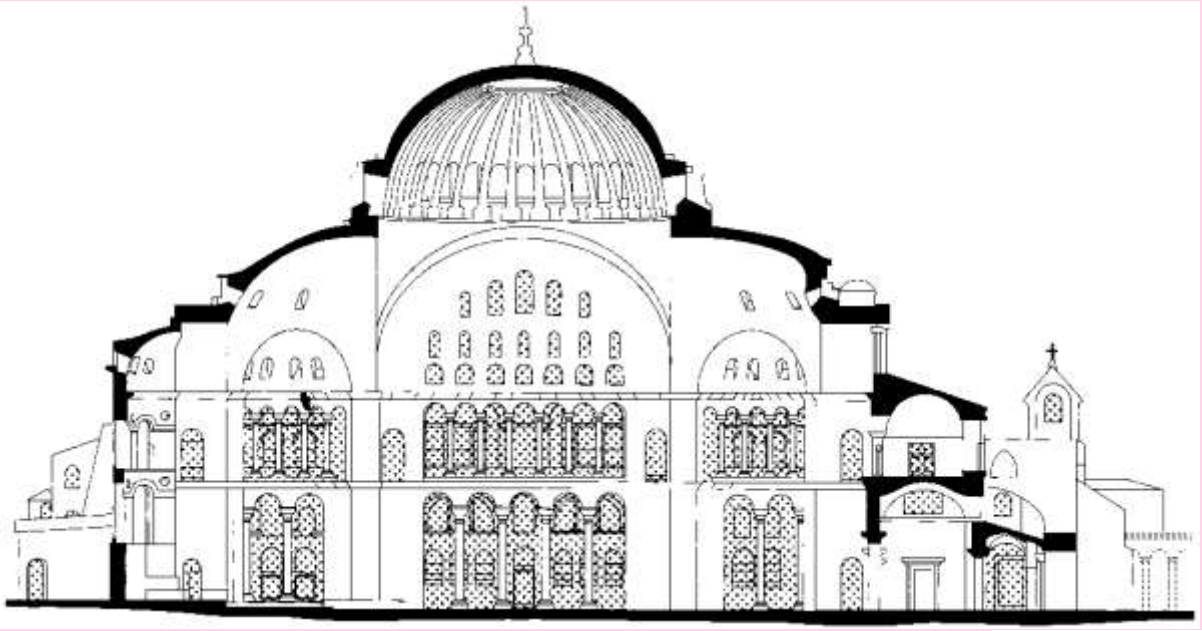
Comparison: Stone Carving of the Greek Goddess Nike, Ephesus, Turkey

Comparison: Nike of Samothrace, from Samothrace, Greece, ca. 190 BCE. Marble, figure approx. 8’ 1” high. Louvre, Paris.

Justinian's building program yielded masterpieces such as the church of Hagia Sophia

ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **Hagia Sophia (Holly Wisdom),** Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.
270' long, 240' wide. Diameter of dome: 108', height: 180'

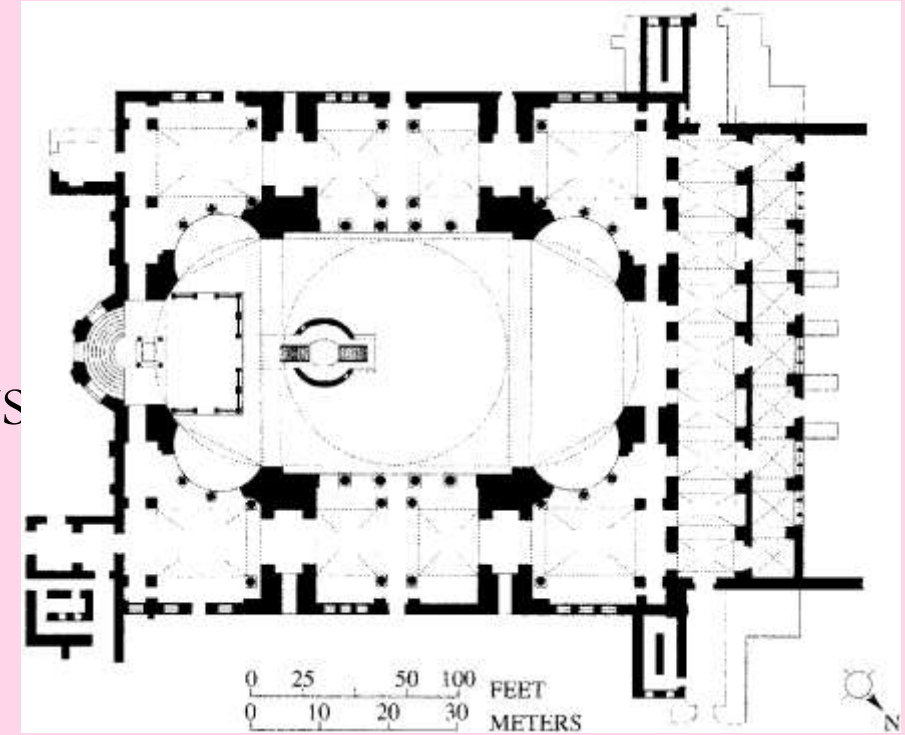
ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **Hagia Sophia**, Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.



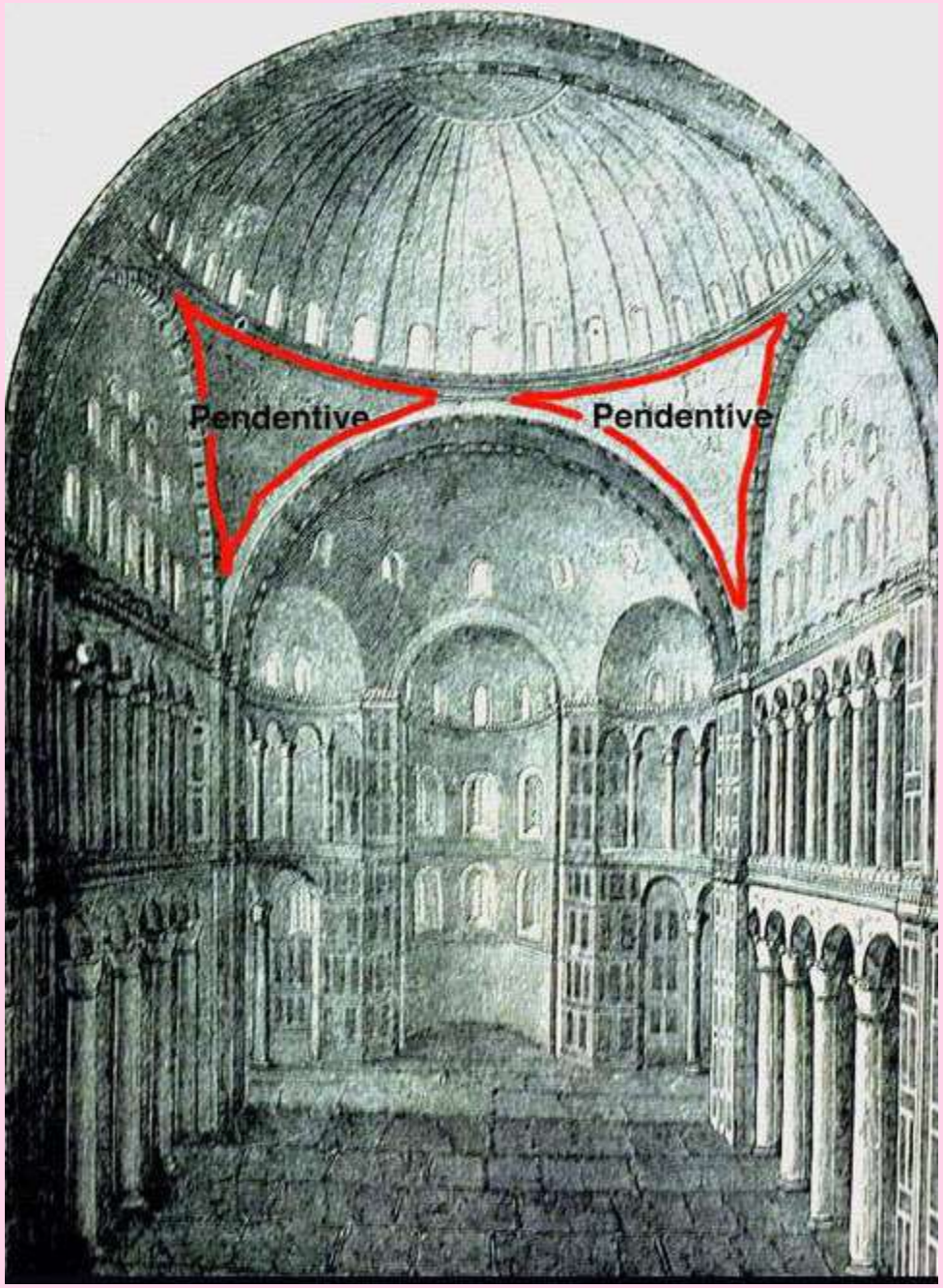
270’ long

240’ wide

Dome: 180’ high



ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, longitudinal section (above) and plan (right) of **Hagia Sophia**, Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537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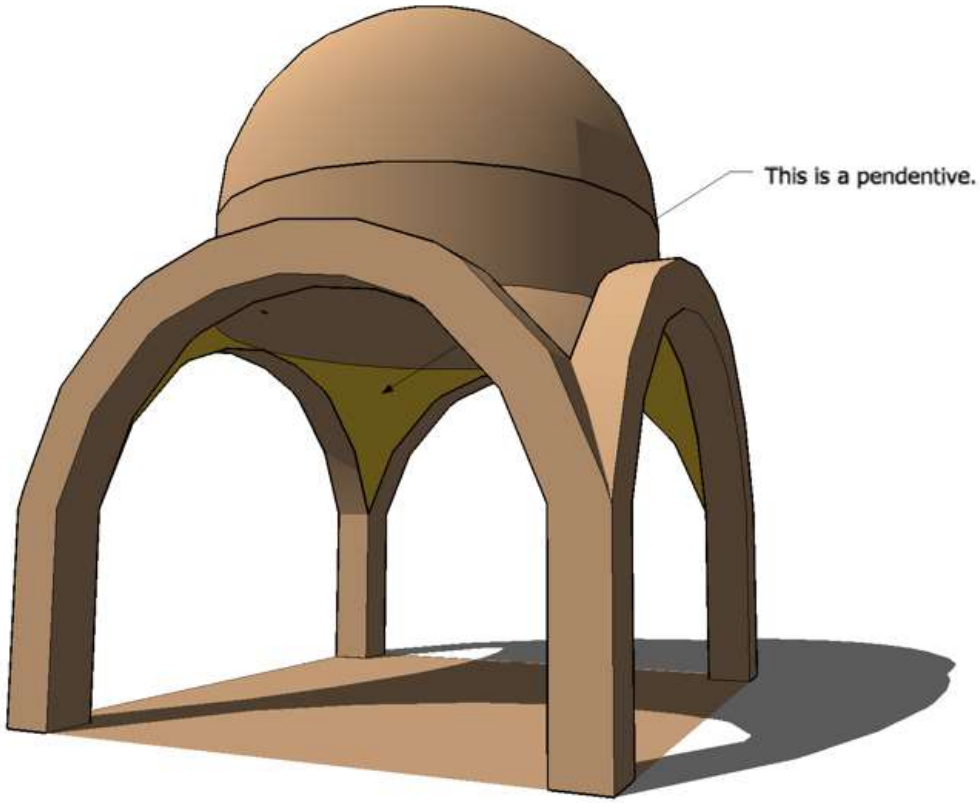

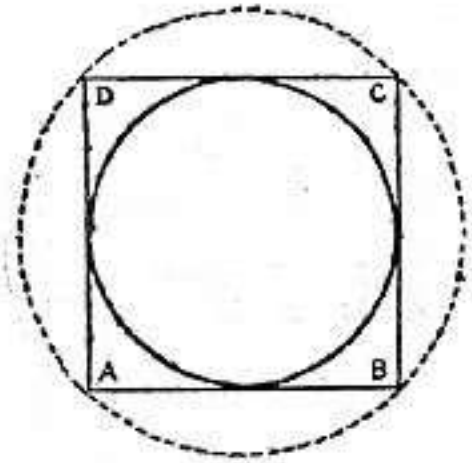

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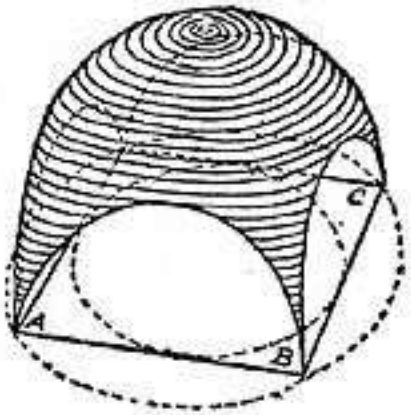

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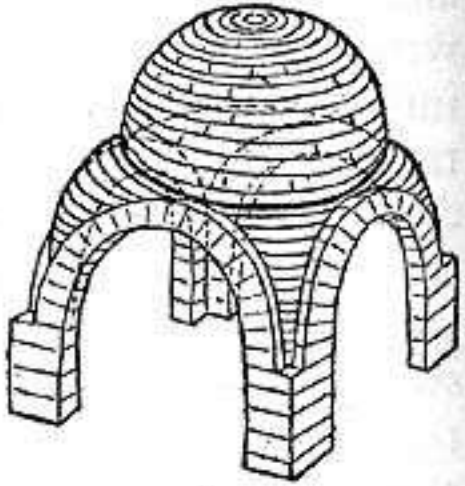

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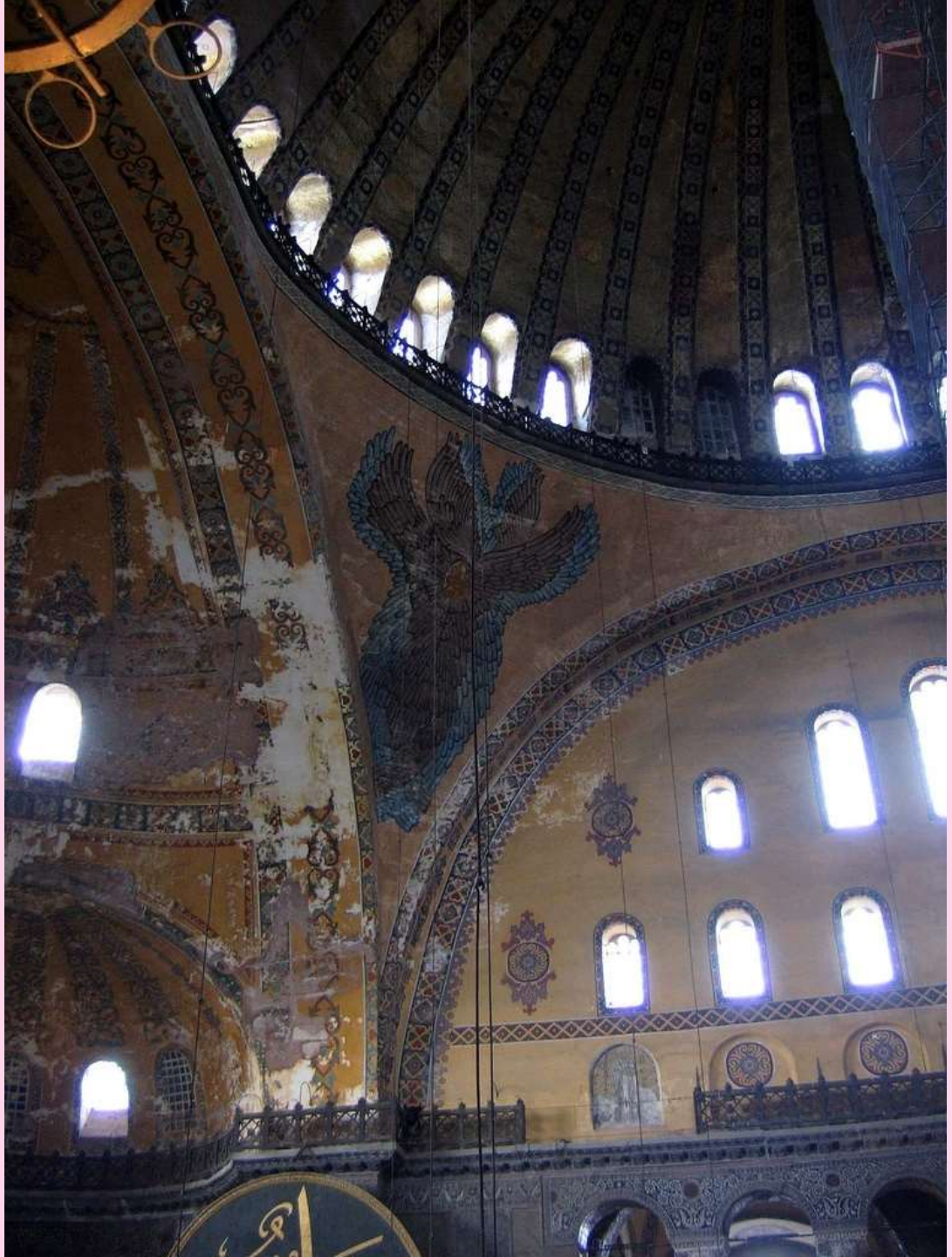
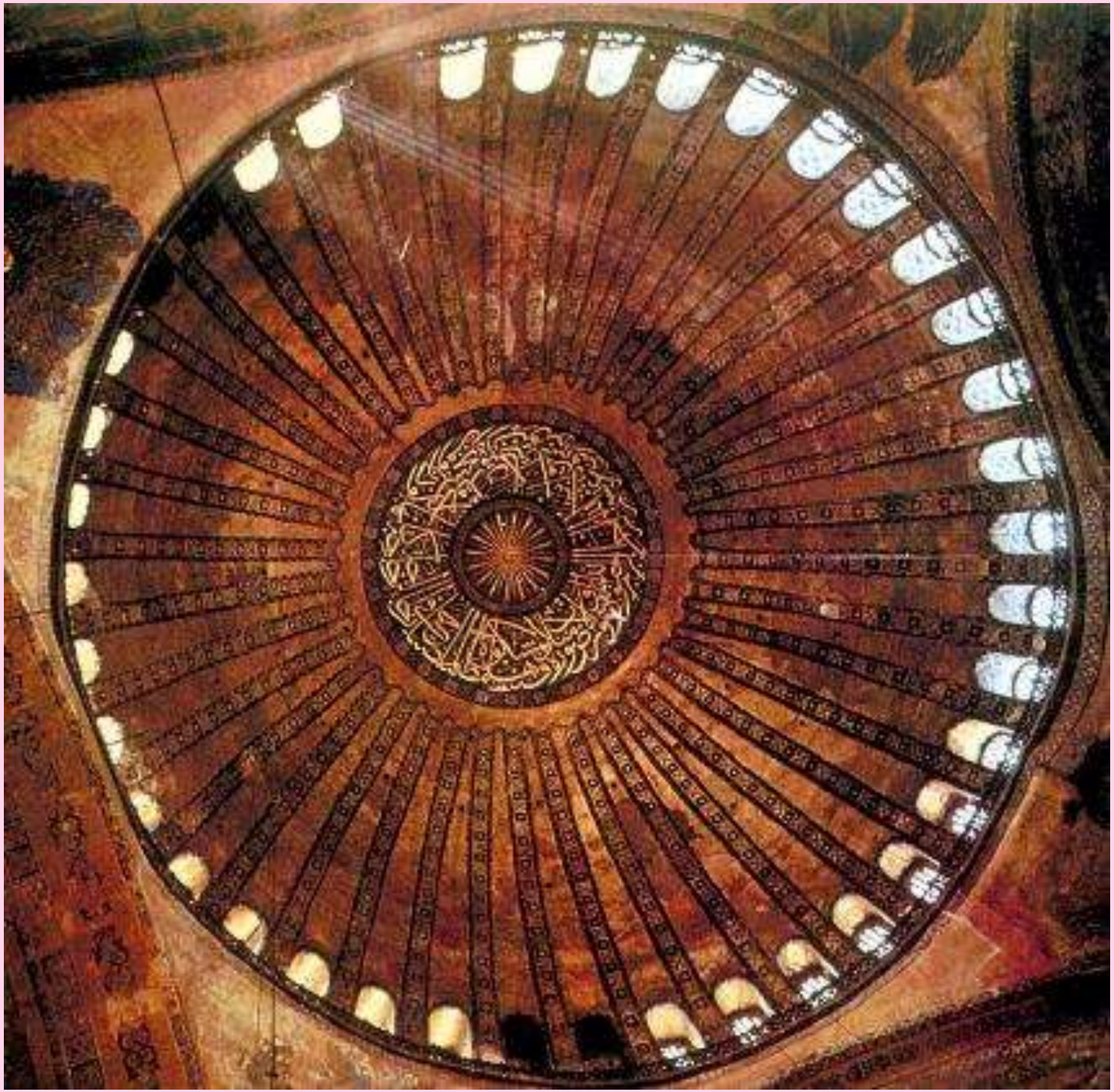
ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **interior of Hagia Sophia,** Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.

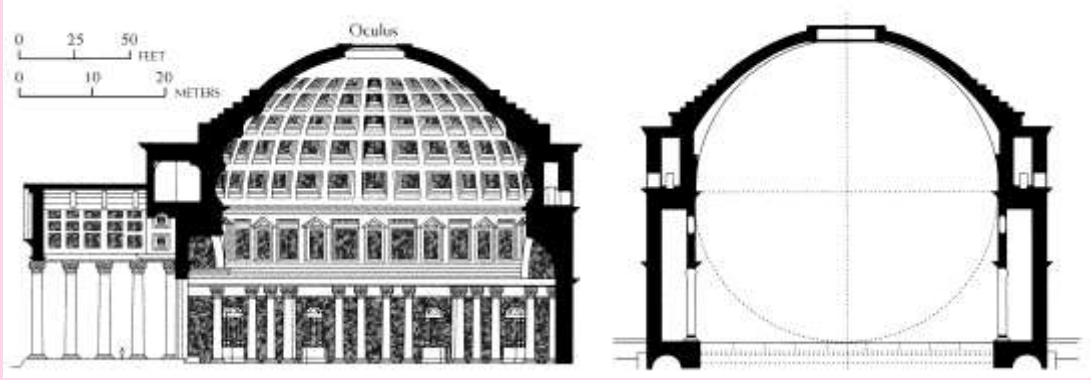


ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **interior of Hagia Sophia,** Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.



Comparison: Dome of St. Andrew's Chapel. Ravenna, Italy. 6th c.

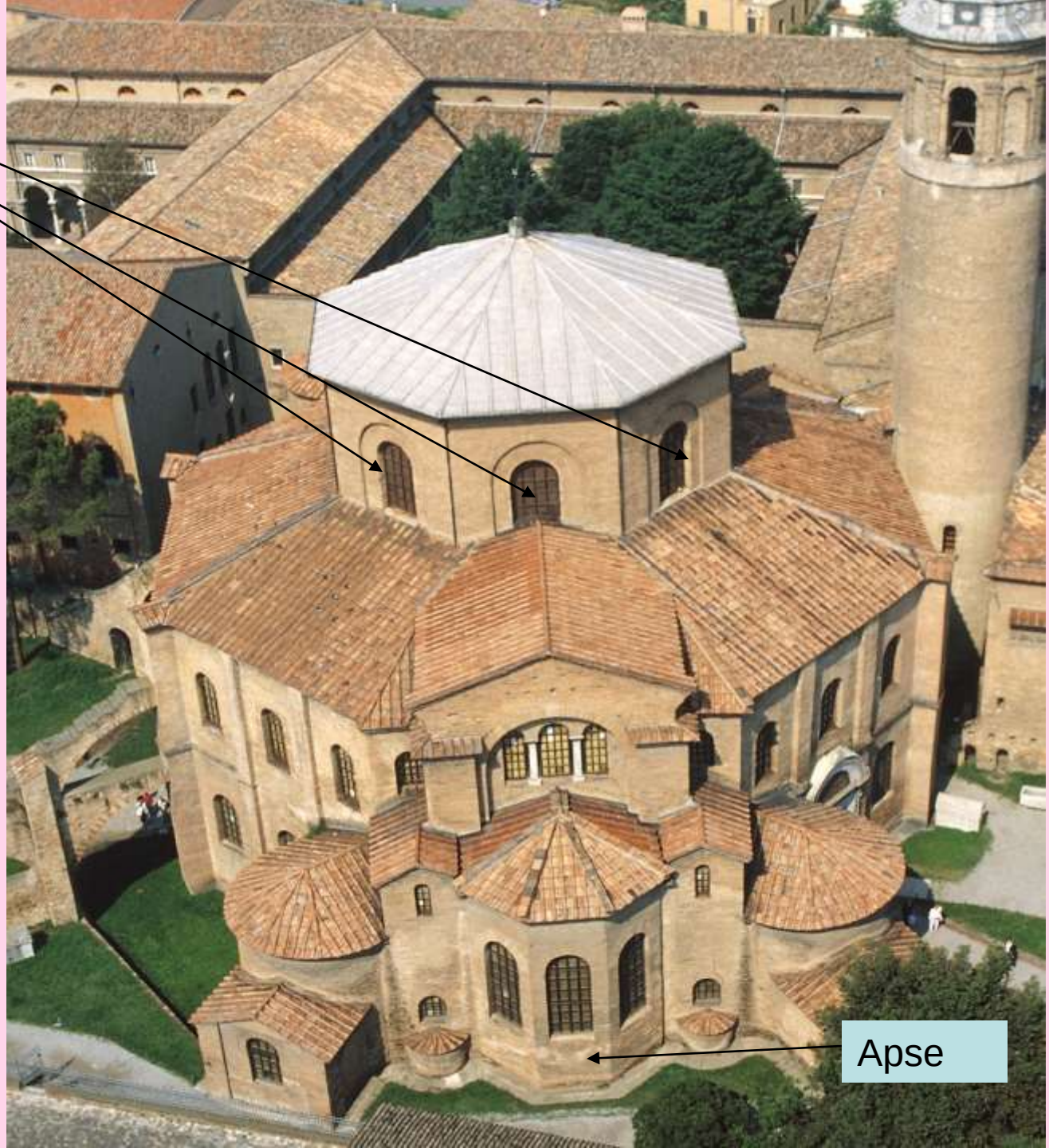
ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **interior of Hagia Sophia,** Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.



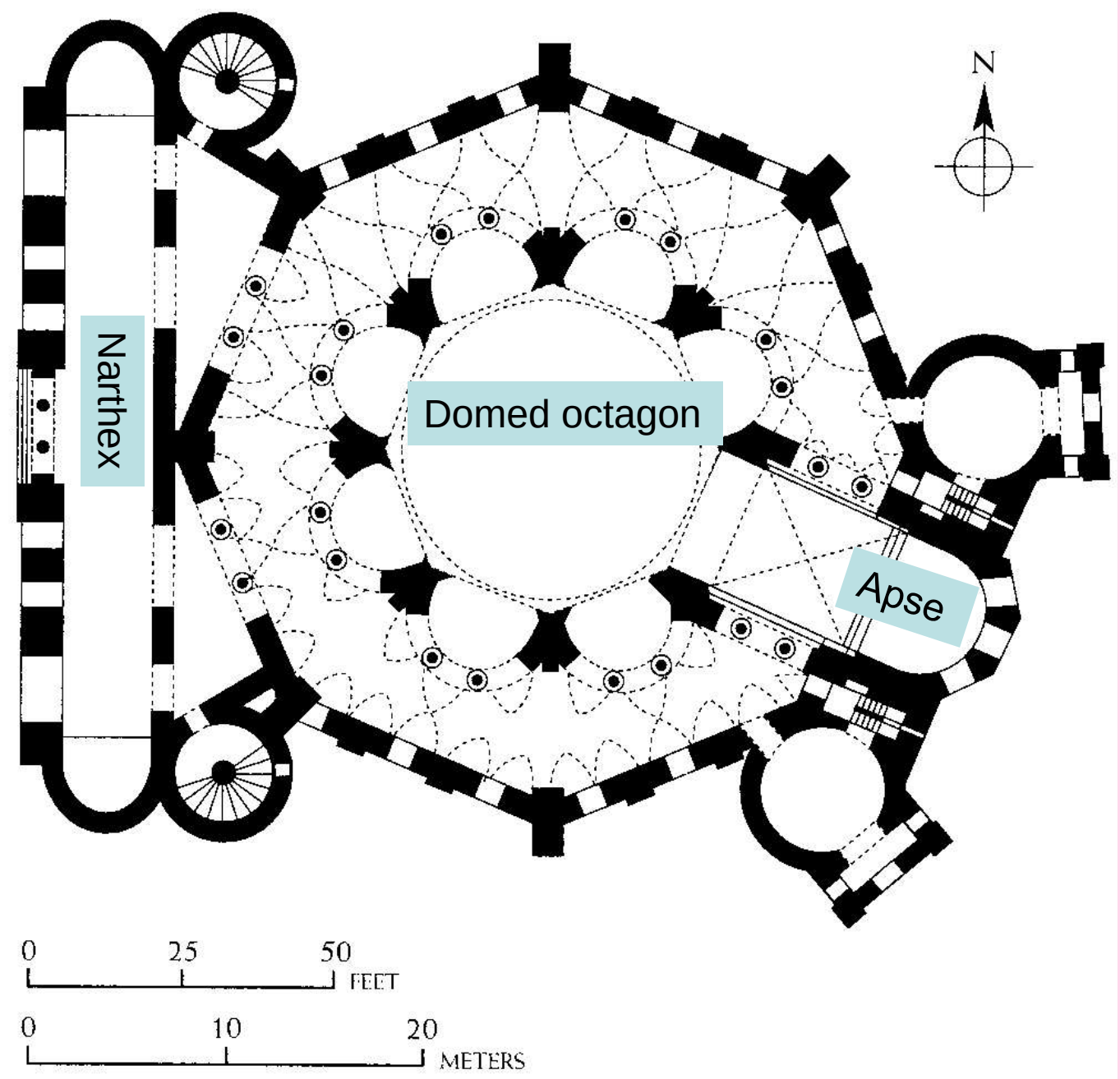
Comparison: Pantheon, Rome, Italy, 118–125 CE. 142’ high.

Clerestory windows

Construction of San Vitale began under the rule of the Ostrogoths, and was completed by the Bishop of Ravenna, Maximian during the Byzantine rule.



Aerial view of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

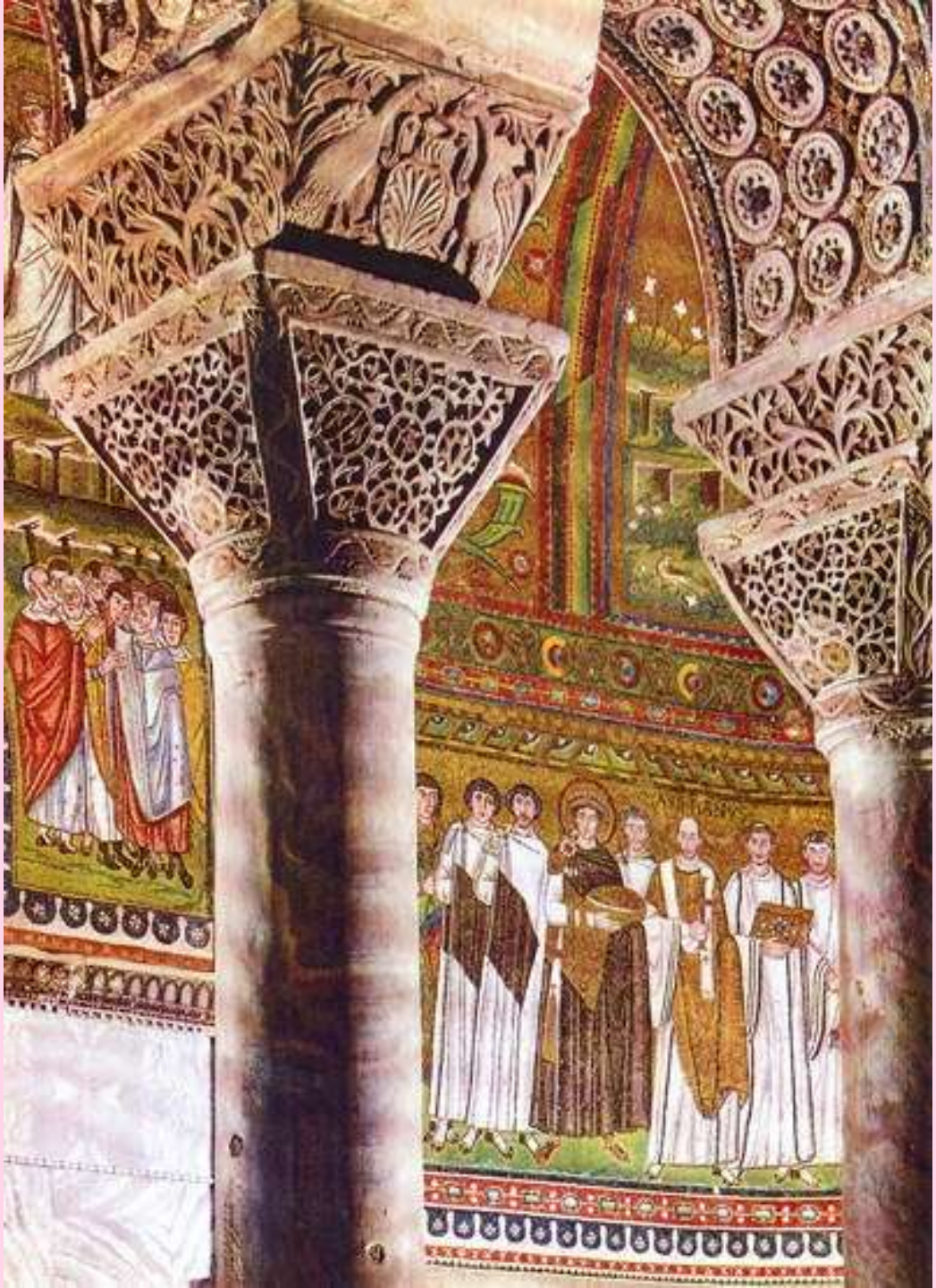


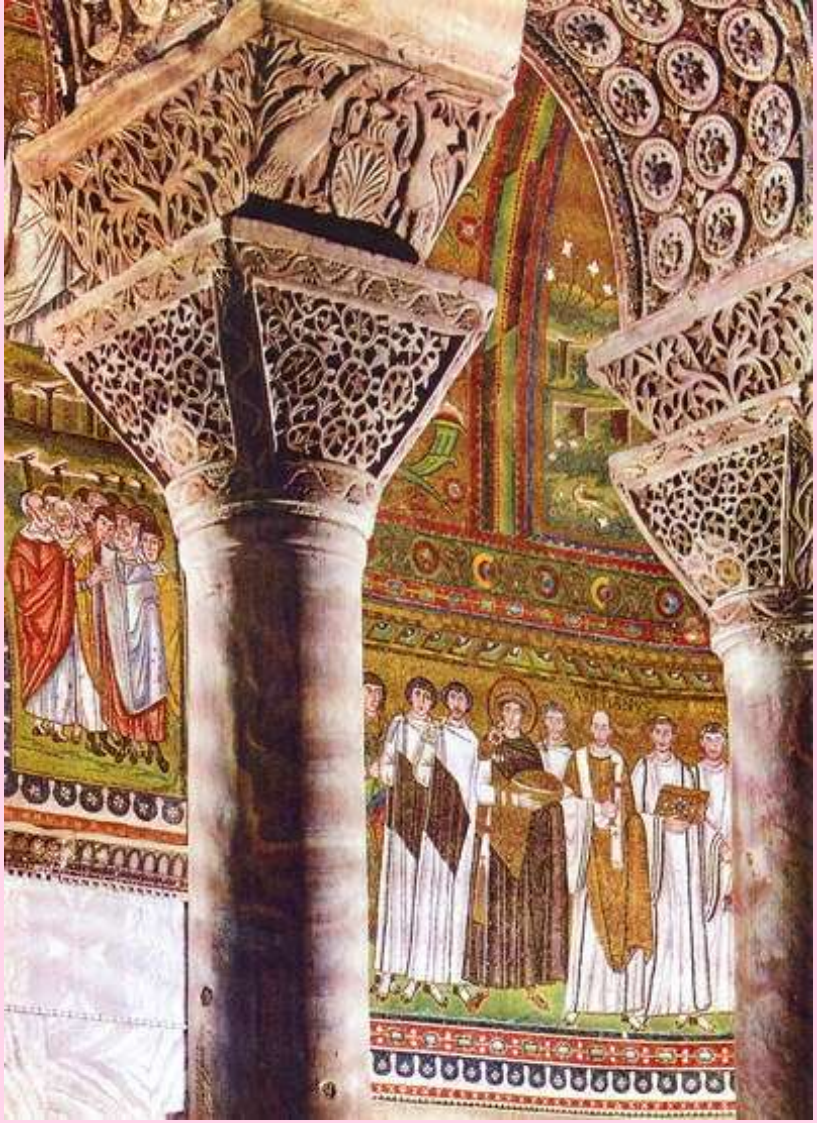
Plan of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

Interior of San Vitale (view from the apse into the choir), Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

Choir and apse of San Vitale with mosaic of Christ between two angels, Saint Vitalis, and Bishop Ecclesius, Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

Interior of San Vitale. Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.





Interior of San Vitale. Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

Comparison: Corinthian capital, Epidauros, Greece, ca. 350 BCE.

Chi-Rho: a Christian monogram and symbol formed from the first two letters X and P of the Greek word for Christ

Justinian, Bishop Maximianus, and attendants, mosaic from San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

Justinian, Detail, mosaic from San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

Ara Pacis Augustae , Procession of the imperial family. Rome, Italy, 13–9 BCE. Marble, approx. 5’ 3” high.

Discuss the development of the pictorial form from Roman illusionism to Byzantine pattern and symbolism, noting changes in style and content.

Justinian, Bishop Maximianus, and attendants. Mosaic from San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

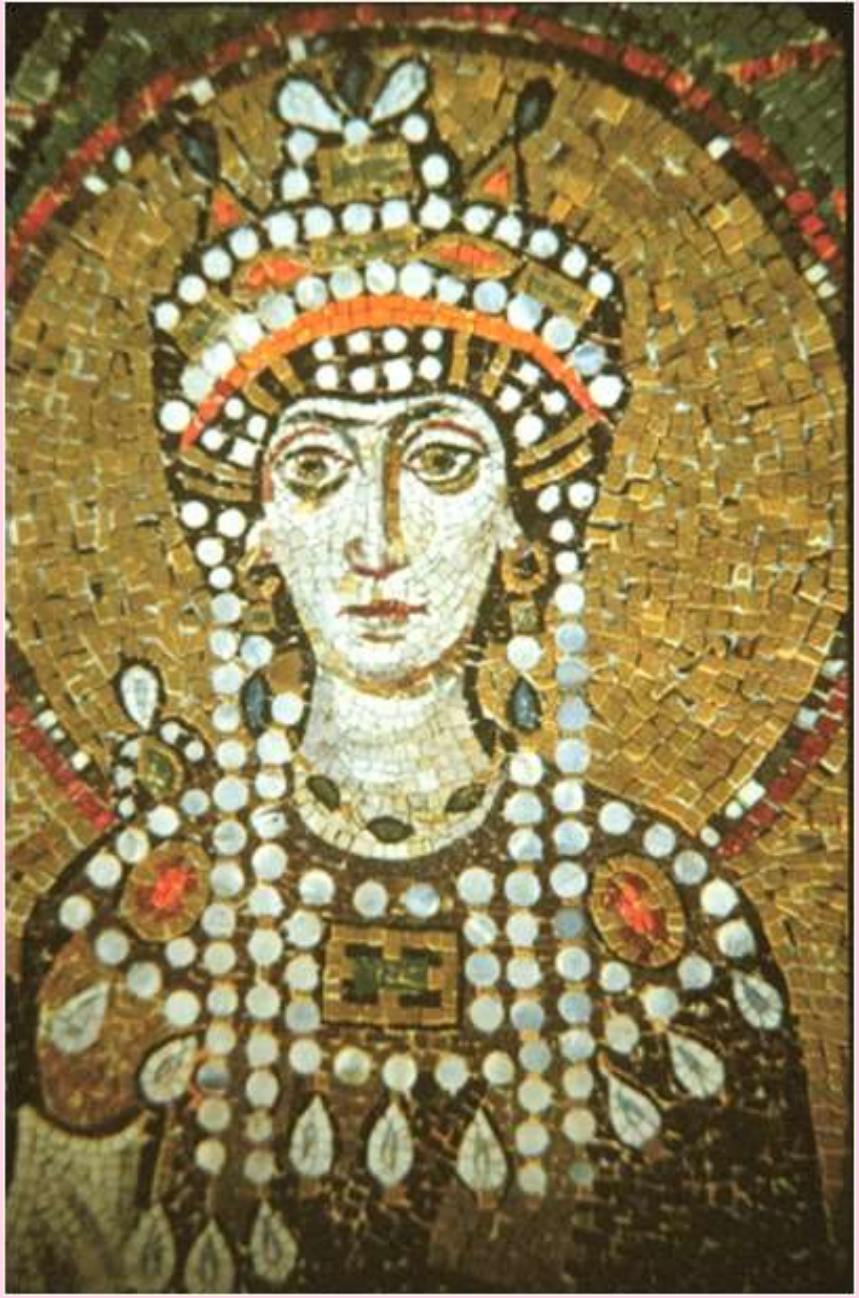
Wall paintings from the House of the Vettii, Pompeii, Italy, ca. 70–79 CE.

Justinian, Bishop Maximianus, and attendants, mosaic from San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

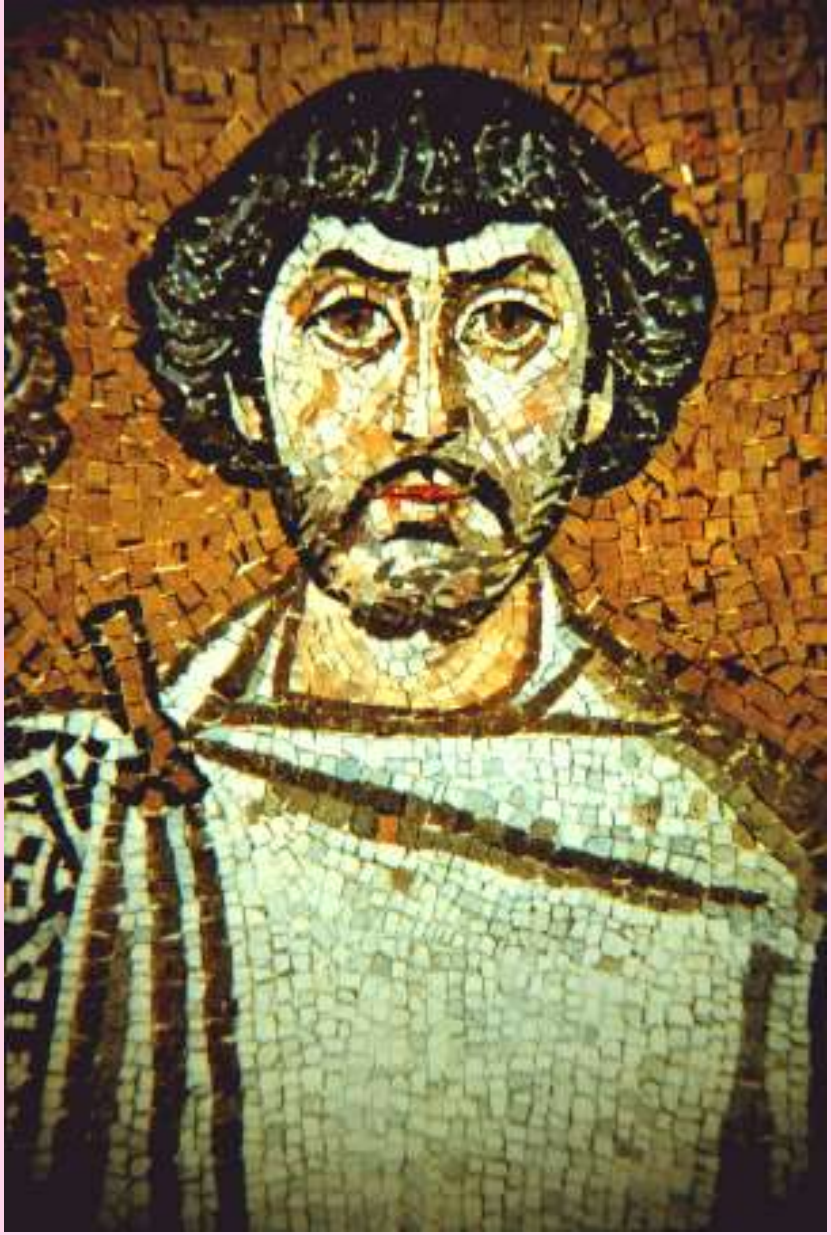
Comparison - Early Christian: Miracle of the loaves and fishes, mosaic from Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 504.

Comparison – Jewish Art: Samuel anointing David.
Fresco from Dura Europos Synagogue. Syria, 3rd c. CE

Theodora and attendants, mosaic from the south wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.



Theodora. Mosaic from the south wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.



Attendants. Mosaic from the south wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

The title "Theotokos“ (Mother of God or "One who gave birth to God”) for Mary was formally affirmed at the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431.

Icon: (“image” in Greek) Small portable portraits depicting Christ, the Virgin or saints; regarded as objects of veneration.

Virgin and Child between Saints Theodore and George

6-7th c. Encaustic on wood, 2’ 3” X 1’ 7 3/8”. Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt.

Comparison: Virgin and Child from Christian Catacombs. 4th c. Rome

Comparison: Isis Nursing Horus
Ptolemaic Period (ca. 300–30 B.C.)
Faience; H. 6.7" Met. Mus., NY

Iconoclasm: The destruction of images. In Byzantium, the period from 726 to 843 when there was an imperial ban on images. The destroyers of images were known as iconoclasts ("breakers of images".) Those who opposed such a ban were known as iconophiles or iconodules ("lovers of images".)

Middle Byzantine
9th – 12th c.

The period between the renewal of art at the end of the Iconoclastic Period and the destruction and conquest of Constantinople by the Frankish armies of the 4th Crusade.

Late Byzantine
13th-15th

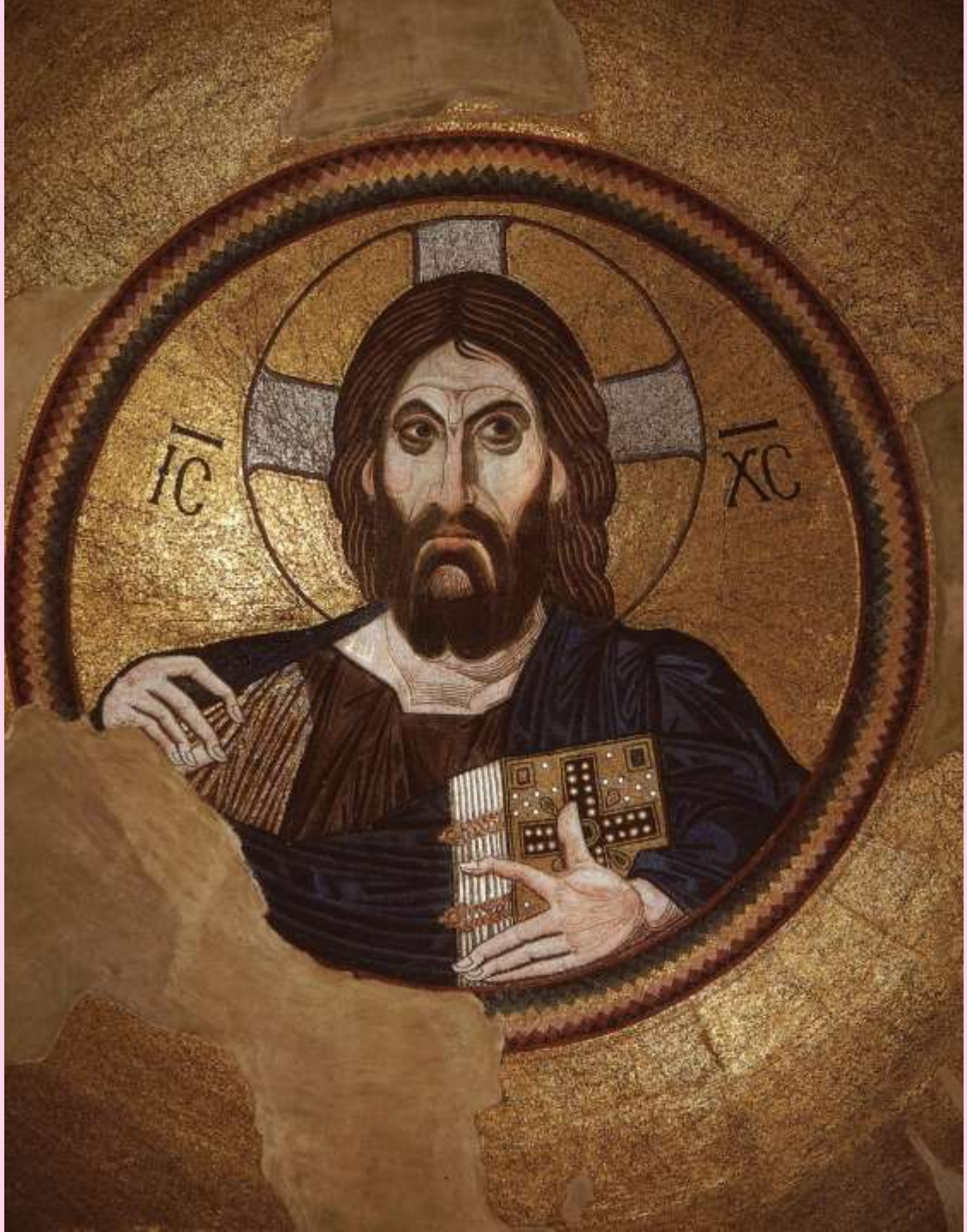
The period between the recapturing of Constantinople to its conquest by the Ottoman Empire.

Byzantine Empire, 9th c.

The Byzantine Empire in 814. By the ninth century, the Empire had lost all its territories but Asia Minor, Greece, the boot of Italy,

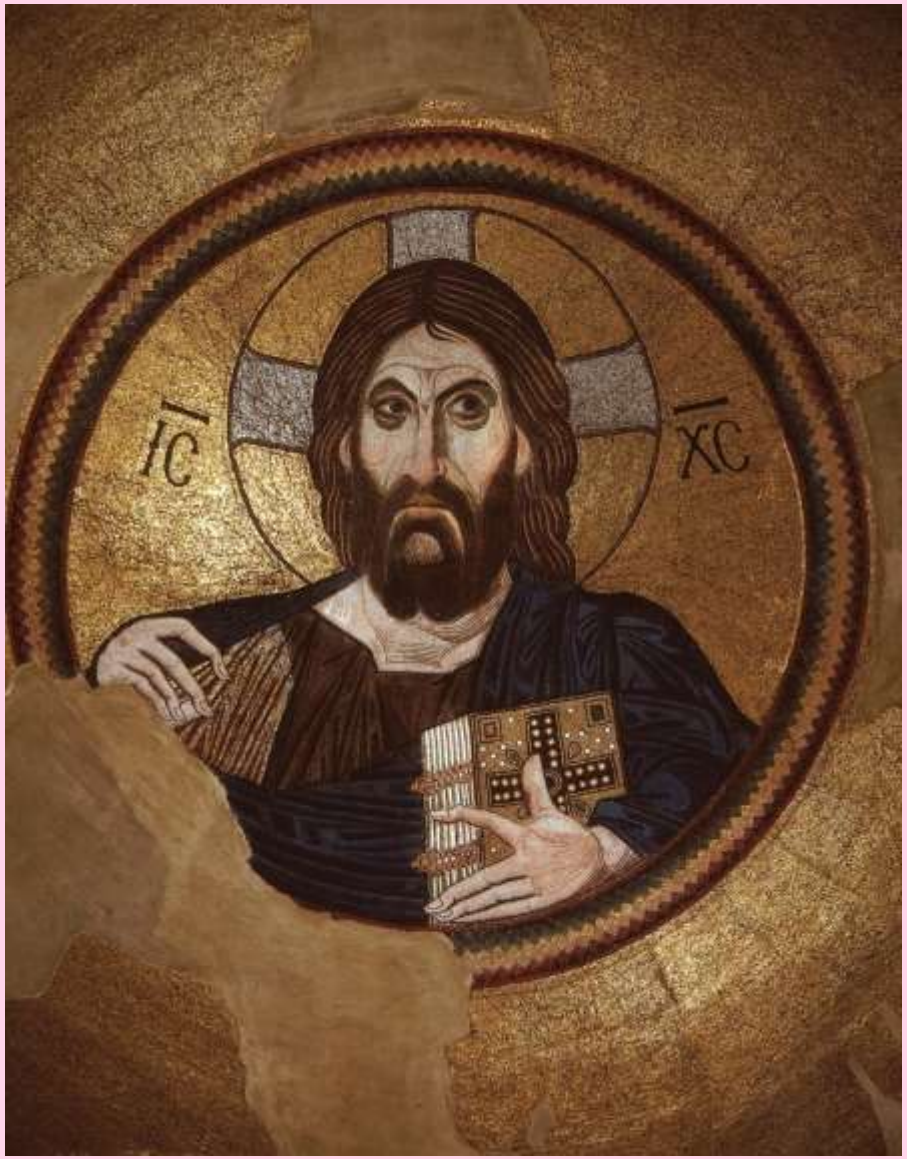
Comparison: Byzantine Empire, 6th c.

Pantokrator: Literally "ruler of all" in Greek but usually applied to Christ in his role as Last Judge of humankind.



Christ as Pantokrator, dome mosaic in the Church of the Dormition, Daphni, Greece, ca. 1090–1100.

Comparison: Jonah Marbles. **The Good Shepherd.** Asia Minor, probably Phrygia (Central Turkey), about 270-280 CE

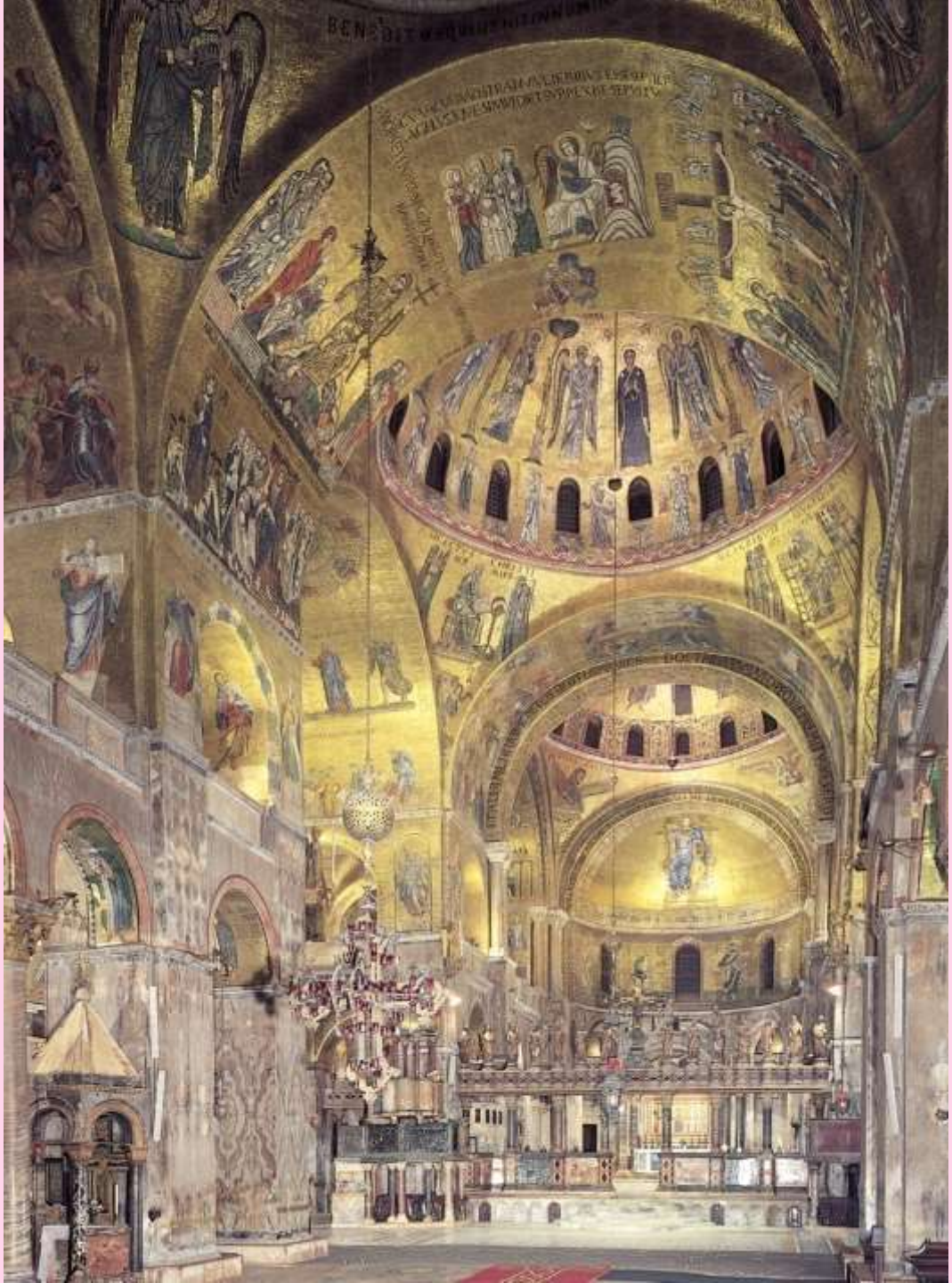


Christ as Pantokrator, dome mosaic in the Church of the Dormition, Daphni, Greece, ca. 1090–1100.

Nicholas Mesarites visited the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople around the year 1200 and left a description of the dome Pantocrator there, by the famous artist Eulalios. "His eyes are joyful and welcoming to those who are not reproached by their conscience, but to those who are condemned by their own judgment, they are wrathful and hostile...The right hand blesses those who follow a straight path, while it admonishes those who do not and, as it were, checks them and turns them back from their disorderly course. The left hand with its fingers spread far apart as possible, supports the Gospel."

Pantokrator, Theotokos and Child, angels, and saints, apse mosaic in the cathedral at Monreale, Italy, ca. 1180–1190.

Interior of Saint Mark's (view facing east), Venice, Italy, begun 1063.



• Venice was an independent city with strong ties to the Byzantine empire.

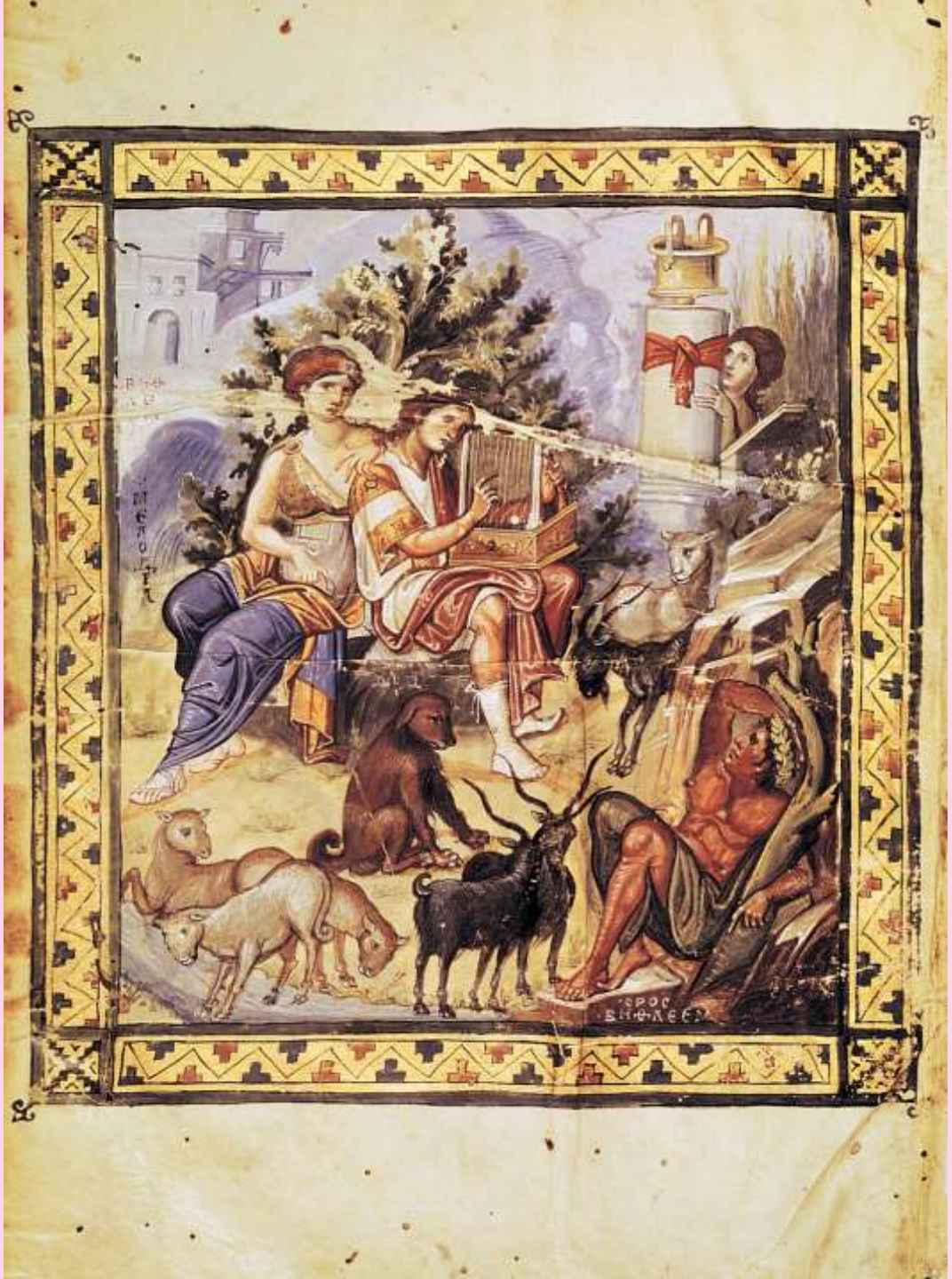
Interior of Saint Mark's (view facing east), Venice, Italy, begun 1063.

Comparison: ANTHEMIUS OF TRALLES and ISIDORUS OF MILETUS, **interior of Hagia Sophia,** Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537.

Interior of Saint Mark's, Venice, Italy, begun 1063.

Naturalistic Trends in Byzantine Art

Lamentation over the Dead Christ, wall painting, Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia, 1164.



David composing the Psalms, folio 1 verso of the Paris Psalter, ca. 950–970. Tempera on vellum, 1’ 2 1/8” X 10 1/4”. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Comparison:

L.: **Orpheus,** wall painting from Pompeii, Italy

R.: Reconstruction of the wall painting.

David composing the Psalms, folio 1 verso of the Paris Psalter, ca. 950–970. Tempera on vellum

The Byzantine civilization influenced Russian and Eastern European civilizations through its religion, culture, and trade.

- Adoption of Orthodox Christianity by Russia and much of Eastern Europe

- Adoption of Greek alphabet to the Slavic languages by St. Cyril (Cyrillic alphabet)

- Church architecture and religious art

This icon was taken to Moscow to protect the city from the Mongols.
In the 17th c. it protected Russia from the Poles.

Virgin (Theotokos) and Child, icon (Vladimir Virgin), late eleventh to early twelfth century. Tempera on wood, original panel approx. 2' 6 1/2" X 1' 9". Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

ANDREI RUBLYEV, *Three Angels* (Old Testament Trinity), ca. 1410. Tempera on wood, 4’ 8” X 3’ 9”. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

1453 – The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks mark the end of the Byzantine Empire

1930: The city was officially renamed Istanbul by the Republic of Turkey

The Siege of Constantinople (painted 1499)