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## **Christianized Ancient Symbols in the Imagery of the Catacombs and Their Reflection in Coffered Ceilings**

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**Abstract:** Several viewpoints took shape about pictures and icons during the history of Christianity. Image representations have been subject to debate not only among religions but among various Christian approaches, too. This debate flamed up quite strongly at various points in history. The study aims to determine the extent to which icons and representations are rooted in the Christian tradition. The study points out that early Christian art did not appear and develop in a void. It was the outward manifestation of a new spirituality as well as the result of a development process that occurred when the local cultures of the ancient world got in contact with each other.

**Keywords:** Christian Symbols; Catacomb Paintings; Visual Sermons; Frescos; Iconography.

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### **Origins of Christian Imagery**

In the history of Christianity, different views have emerged concerning images and icons, not only among religions, but also among different Christian perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

In the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the icon is the result of the embodiment of God. From this teaching, the above-mentioned Church concludes that pictorial representation stems from the essence of Christianity and is therefore an integral part of spiritual practice and religious experience.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this, the emergence and spreading of the Reformation brought about a changed worldview that not only redefined its relation to “this world”, but also had an impact on artistic issues. Its prohibition of images and its puritanism allow for such a sacred system of symbols that thinks in archetypes, on the basis of which it creates its own distinctive formal language by integrating and synthesizing the heritage of Christianity and folk culture, as we shall later see in the visual representations of coffered ceilings.

A tangible proof of the search for a “god-related experience” is one of the most ancient depictions of a praying man discovered in the Anatolian Catal Hüyük<sup>3</sup>. The imagery carries the mark of the *homo symbolicus* and testifies to man’s ability to use his imagination to grasp the invisible based on the things he sees. The cave drawings and material culture heritage of the *homo symbolicus* suggest the existence of a system of symbols, conceptual thinking, and the ability to capture the transcendent. Julien Ries puts it in the following terms:

We can state that we can speak of homo religious all along, who, by also being symbolicus, discovered transcendence and could live a sacred experience. We are not talking about an original seed, but rather a dynamism that has its roots in the symbolic thinking of man.<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which sacred images and representations have their roots in Christian tradition is still debated today. Most Jews rejected the possibility of depiction, referring to the banning of images in the Old Testament;<sup>5</sup> they excluded all figurative representations and used only decorations. In doing so, they wanted to protect their community from paganism, idolatry.<sup>6</sup> In the diaspora, Jews lived in a cultural environment favourable to images, thus becoming much more tolerant under new and foreign conditions. The most famous example of this art is the Dura-Europos Synagogue in Mesopotamia (3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>7</sup>), where one is fascinated by the rich variety of elaborate themes.<sup>8</sup> Based on such precedents, we conclude that depictions with a “religious content” were not created

by the Christian Church. The material evidence of this are the catacomb paintings from the first centuries. These paintings are located in places where worship and commemorations were occasionally held in honour of the martyrs. Christians rejected cremation,<sup>9</sup> which is closely related to the doctrine of bodily resurrection, but they were too poor to buy a piece of land for their graves, as the rich Romans did. This was the reason why they were buried in common underground graves.<sup>10</sup> One of the most serious consequences of poverty in ancient man’s perception is the lack of a worthy burial that prevents the deceased from gaining eternal peace.<sup>11</sup> We need to mention though that Roman Jewry was also averse to the Roman practice of cremation.<sup>12</sup>

Catacomb paintings were also known to the clergy of the time, not just to common believers. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that the clergy did not notice them, or that Christianity, which was hostile to contemporary pagan art, did not take action against them.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, early ancient Christian art was not born and did not develop in a void. It is the outward manifestation of a new spirituality and the result of a development that occurred when the local cultures of the ancient world came into contact with one another. Christianity has encountered these cultures throughout its historical journey and has defined its own course by assimilating some of their components: it surpassed Judaism in Palestine, Hellenism<sup>14</sup> and its Oriental variants in Greece and the Middle East, and Roman spirituality with its own image perception in Italy.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, after a theoretical study of ancient art, it seems highly unlikely that

the many types of pagan images did not have – consciously or unconsciously – an effect on Christian art and iconography.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Greek and Latin imagery bears Christian characteristics, and lives on directly in the catacomb-art of ancient Christian times. The difference is that although this “underground” art has religious topics, it does not come close to the above-ground pagan art concerning its artistic execution. The need for portrayal was brought underground from the Greek-Latin culture above, however, without its talent and education. Their conditions were no more favourable than the harsh conditions of prehistoric cave painters fifteen to twenty thousand years prior.

Early Christian art is also known as “ancient Christian art”, which began to unfurl its wings in the shadow of the great art of the Roman Empire. As shown above, this art is not a direct continuation of withered Roman art, but merely a take-over of some artistic forms filled with new content.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the ecclesiastical monuments of the first centuries were destroyed. Nevertheless, this early Christian art can be assessed based on the small number of frescoes remaining in the Roman catacombs. It cannot be determined exactly what the icons of the Saviour and the Virgin Mary looked like. We can assume though from the icons and wall paintings that they did not follow the typical art-forms of the age. This was mainly due to the fact that these works had a new subject, they had to convey a new message, a new religion, a new worldview. There was a need for a new style that sought not only to portray the things visible, but also to “reproduce the spiritual content of the things portrayed.” Pagan

symbols and some elements of Greek-Roman mythology were used to express the teachings of the Church. They also used ancient art forms filled with new content, which resulted in a change in the forms themselves. The use of myths has been introduced to better explain their teachings to the “newly arrived” pagans. However, these myths had to be somewhat parallel to Christian teaching. For example, there is a relatively rare portrayal of Christ from ancient mythology depicting Christ as Orpheus, who charmed wild animals with his lute play. Similarly, Christ by the Word of God “*attracts people and curbs the forces of nature*”.<sup>18</sup>

André Grabar points out how Christians have assimilated the pagan portrayal of their age for their own benefit. Christ became the philosopher, the apostle, or a prophet; scenes of apotheosis were changed to depict the ascension; the image of the Good Shepherd came from the pastoral mindset of the area. Starting with the peace times of the church, Christian art was under the influence of court ceremonies; the emperor or empress became Christ or the Virgin among the angels or saints; the offering of gifts became a worship of the wise men; the arrival or the victorious entry of the ruler became the entry of Christ in Jerusalem. Portrait art also found its models in pagan art: instead of portraying the saints with their own characteristics, they produced Christian art types and explained their role. For the pagans of those times, the seasons symbolized life after death, for Christians they became a symbol of resurrection. The garden, the palm tree, the pigeon, the peacock reminded of heavenly paradise. The ship became the church instead of a symbol of

prosperity and a happy journey in life; the arrival of the ship in the port no longer meant death but became a symbol of eternal peace. Even erotic symbols like Eros and Psyche have been given new meaning in Christian circles: they symbolized the hunger of the soul and God's love revealed in Christ.<sup>19</sup> Christians thus took on pagan symbols but attributed a deeper meaning to them. Thus, pagan depiction served as a model for Christian depiction.<sup>20</sup>

### **Catacomb Depictions, Tools for Nonverbal Preaching**

The early Christians were characterized by their efforts to distance themselves from pagan cult buildings, altars and pictures. It is now widely accepted that there are no reliably dated Christian archaeological finds from before 200 AD. This also applies to catacomb paintings.<sup>21</sup> The first pictorial representations in the catacombs date from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>22</sup>

The art of the catacombs was, in fact, dogmatic art, since most of the portrayal topics corresponded to scriptural texts. At the same time, symbolic language played an outstanding role. This was mostly necessary in order to "express truths that cannot be represented directly by means of art".<sup>23</sup> Another reason for the symbolic language was the need to hide the basic Christian sacraments for a certain period from catechumens because the meaning of the symbols gradually unfolded to them, depending on how prepared they were for baptism.

Catacomb paintings are surprisingly uniform in style and theme. The same symbols are found everywhere: from Asia Minor to Spain, from North Africa to Italy,

even though there is no indication that the Church has established any official artistic trend.<sup>24</sup> Despite the impression of unity, "[the] pictures are placed irregularly on the walls, regardless of one another" says László Éber.<sup>25</sup>

The works from the first centuries can even be interpreted as "visual sermons", which helped in guiding and explaining God's word.<sup>26</sup>

The main aspirations of early Christianity are portrayed through symbols: redemption and the afterlife (the good shepherd, the magi, fish, bread, etc.). New Testament representations (e.g. the Virgin Mary with her child) only became popular in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> Many images, scenes, symbols are religiously and morally neutral, so they could be used by pagans and Christians alike.

We will mention only a few of the above symbols. For example, the good shepherd carrying the lamb was a traditional pagan symbol of humanity, *philantropia*. Christians have given this usual symbol a new meaning, referring to Jesus, the good shepherd of his flock.<sup>28</sup>

Another example is the grapevine. The representation of the vine refers, on the one hand, to Christ and His Church: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15,5) In the Old Testament, the vine was the symbol of the Promised Land. Along with the fish, the lamb symbol also appears, these being the main symbols of Christ.<sup>29</sup>

The fish is one of the first Christian symbols, since the birth of the Christian religion was linked to an astronomical change, the spring point shifted to the constellation Pisces around the beginning

of our time, meaning that the disappearance of the Pisces constellation marks the approach of spring, the time of Jesus's crucifixion.<sup>30</sup> In this way, the fish appears on almost every creation of ancient Christian art – it symbolizes Christ himself and the baptized<sup>31</sup> believers.<sup>32</sup> It was also used by ancient Christians as a secret sign for recognizing each other during the persecution. From the Greek name of the fish (*ikhthys*) they read Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer, as the acronym of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Soter.<sup>33</sup> The anchor depicted in Christian paintings and sarcophagi was also one of the fishing and nautical symbols used. In the Letter to the Jews we read about hope as a spiritual anchor. Our life can be compared to a stormy sea voyage that ends in a heavenly port.<sup>34</sup>

From the Old Testament, Christians chose scenes that were realized in their daily lives as well, such as the escape from danger. In the catacomb pictures, Old Testament scenes are always precursors to a New Testament event. Conferring Adam's name, the Fall, Adam and Eve are dressed in leather. The fresco of the Catacomb of Via Latina also shows a scene of expulsion from paradise, but it also reflects the influence of *targums*, for God is present between two cherubim at the gate of paradise.<sup>35</sup>

Christians interpreted the pictures of Noah and the ark as referring to their own situation: the destructive waves of water meant their persecution; the ark was a symbol of the church. Instead of the ark, they drew a box. The connection of early Christian Old Testament scenes with Jewish patterns is undeniable. A proof of this is a catacomb depiction of Noah, which is very similar to Apameian coins depicting Noah and the ark issued at the end of the

2<sup>nd</sup> century and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The history of these coins is that Jewish residents of the Phrygian Apameia, claimed that the remains of Noah's Ark were on a hill near their city.<sup>36</sup>

In the scene of Isaac being sacrificed, the idea of escape and salvation is implicit: one of the paintings also shows the dove, a symbol of liberation and peace.<sup>37</sup>

The images paid little attention to Moses' childhood, we see more of the events on Mount Horeb, the suffering of the Jews in Egypt, the exodus, the conquest, the rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Moses was depicted with or without a beard, possibly depending on the depictions of Christ. Moses' getting water from the rock refers to Christ as living water flows from Christ, Christ being the rock. The people catching the water in the painting have got Roman military headwear. According to legend, there was a spring in Peter's Roman prison as well, perhaps also linked to the Old Testament event. This scene is featured on 69 frescoes.<sup>38</sup>

Jonah's stories were usually painted along with those of Noah and Daniel. Jonah became a symbol of resurrection for Christians.<sup>39</sup> Job was often portrayed in the Roman catacombs, either alone or with his wife, who brought him food. Job is a symbol of resurrection.<sup>40</sup> László Ványó reports on an eloquent moment about Job's blasphemous wife: when she talks to her husband, she holds her hand in front of her nose because of his smelling wounds.<sup>41</sup>

Captivity became tangible for Roman Christians in the pictures of the catacombs in form of the Prophet Daniel. Daniel appears strikingly often in the frescoes.<sup>42</sup> In the furnace, the three young men were depicted *orante*, i.e. with a praying gesture.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, we can sum up that catacomb art has emerged at a time when the arts have generally undergone profound changes. This was probably the style that best suited the various Christian liturgical centres of the time, the “churches”, which were small rooms in private homes and in catacombs. The new style has also made it possible to transform ancient pagan symbols and provide them with a special Christian message.

### Heritage of Catacomb Imageology in Protestant Churches

The catacomb symbols and the visual theology is thought to continue on the coffered ceilings of Protestant churches.

In many respects the Reformation brought ancient simplicity back to Christianity. Initially, the frescos on the walls of the churches were whitewashed and the interior furniture of the churches was simplified. The reformers treated images as objects of worship with criticism. Calvin, among others, refrains from pictorial representation, i.e. image theology by referring to the Old Testament law and stating that it “does not benefit us.” Thus, the need for images and a relationship to them were not integrated into the Protestant theological system. Nevertheless, after the Reformation, pictorial representation continued to be of interest to Protestant theologians.

The era of the strengthening of churches created by the Reformation coincides with the flourishing of Renaissance art, thus it is not by chance that this style has also been adopted in the construction and decoration of the churches. The humanist symbol system unites the rediscovered Roman imagery with symbols of

Eastern origin that are at the same time folk symbols.<sup>44</sup> The occurrence of the new style resulted in the gradual appearance of wood panel painting in the Transylvanian Protestant churches, which mainly meant the decoration of the busts of the gallery and the coffers of the ceiling with images.

Naturally, the question arises as to how the image prohibition of Puritan Calvinist conception can be reconciled with the allegorically, typologically and colourfully painted world view of the ceilings. The stark Calvinist image ban explains the fact that at first only floral ornamentation flourished and painted floral ornamentation was introduced in Hungarian Protestant churches the motifs of which are found in folk art. This decorative art has dominated Hungarian Protestant churches for over 300 years, beginning with the 1600s.

Our coffered ceilings are not a denominational, but an ethnic-specific phenomenon in the Carpathian Basin. In the Carpathian Basin, there are hundreds of coffered ceilings that have been preserved as a whole or in part and there are on average one hundred coffers per church. There are places where their number is much smaller, such as in the village Daia in the Szeklerland area, but there are also churches where there are more than two hundred coffers, for example in Crasna or in Șimleu Silvaniei from the Sălaj region.

It should be noted that there are also two Romanian churches with wooden cofferings, namely in Lupșa (Alba County) and in Leșnic (Hunedoara County – the work of Márton Asztalos from 1681).

In Transylvania we have a total of 64 churches with coffered ceilings, of which the above-mentioned five are from the

16<sup>th</sup> century, twenty of them are from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the rest are from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The original source of painted coffered ceilings is the Italian Renaissance board painting, and, as a result, in the Carpathian Basin, and thus in Transylvania, the ancient art of catacomb painting experienced its renaissance in painted coffers. By this we primarily mean the colour and rich motifs of the drawings, and, finally, it gave a possibility of symbolic action for the faith-practices of the congregation. There is a imagological similarity between the two. Just like the frescoes of the catacombs, the painted coffers are not icons, their wide panorama is metacommunication-oriented, they are a mirror, by which one can observe eternal life. As the motifs of catacomb paintings, each figure on the coffered ceilings is a symbol and emblem of the church and of nature, and each became justifiable in the pictorial theology of the Reformation. The painted ceiling is thus metacommunication, an element of meditation, which refers to the invisible world of the Scripture and the Gospels. The invisible world is portrayed by means of real and symbolic animals, plants and figurative and floral ornamentation generally, and there is no principle along which the images are placed next to each other, just like in the case of the catacomb paintings. The coffers portray the ideal of sanctifying life, the wildlife created by God, which is sublimated by the painted pictures to a higher state of existence, a worship service.<sup>45</sup>

Another parallel between the catacomb art and Protestant ceilings is that they are both “visual sermons”, i.e. “preaching art”<sup>46</sup>. The reason for this is, on the one hand, that in rural Protestant churches

we can very often read Bible and Psalm quotes or texts on grace, but as the frescoes show which biblical stories – from the Old Testament or about Jesus – the ancient Christians knew, Protestant church ceilings reflect the message of the sermons of the time period. This idea is also supported by Éva Szacsavay, who points out that contemporary sermons and pictorial representations are intertwined, and that the messages conveyed on the various channels of communication are connected to the theological program of the Reformation.<sup>47</sup>

As the catacombs were the burial place and thus the memorial and gathering place of the persecuted ancient Christians, they sought to decorate them and make them as appropriate as possible. The church was the “communal space” of 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century village communities as well, and this is where the primary need for decoration arises.<sup>48</sup> The frescoes and “epic” pictures of the catacombs transformed the space into a book, a teaching tool for those who could not read.<sup>49</sup>

The rich motifs of coffered ceilings that are still visible today<sup>50</sup> are closely related to the decorative treasure of other folk-art works. In the view of some radical art historians, e.g. Gábor Pap, coffered ceilings are linked to Eurasian culture. He also believes to see star predictions and the ancient Hungarian religion in the imagery.<sup>51</sup> Gábor Pap links coffered ceilings to fresco painting, e.g. the well-known frescoes of Afrasiab and Panjakent, the motifs of which are brought to life in Protestant churches. Gábor Pap deduces the Hungarian and Eurasian features from the system types in the ceiling artwork, e.g. the twelve constellations and the zodiac; from the classic seven-planet-system (Patapoklosi);

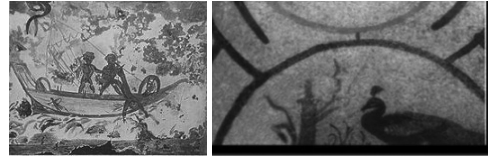


from one of the typical representatives of the “ancient Hungarian faith system”, the Wandering Magician riding on the dragon (Tiachiv), who lives on in Hungarian folk tradition, and who is similar to Alexander the Great in Tonciu; from the Manicheanist system of salvation, which can be traced back to the Scythian roots and whose central elements are grapes and melons, which are also found on coffers, etc. (Noszvaj).

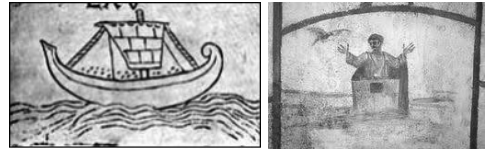
There is also a similarity in the identity of the creating “artist”. While the catacomb images were painted by the common “fossore” – “grave diggers”, the painted coffers were made by “painter carpenters”. Catacomb images depict ancient Christian symbols, and the same motifs are found on painted coffers as well. Quite often the brush strokes, the red outlines and the naivety of the figures are also similar. To support our hypothesis, let us just mention a few examples that can be found in catacombs: Noah’s ark, the vine, the dove, Jonah in the belly of the fish, the zodiac. While in the catacombs Orpheus was depicted as Jesus, on the coffered ceiling of the Tonciu church the figure of Alexander the Great is portrayed as the “savior of the world”, in analogy to Christ”.

In conclusion we can state that the ceilings are not merely intended to satisfy the aesthetic tastes of the people or the customer, but have also offered, and still offer the possibility of ascension and of encountering the transcendent. Catacomb images and painted coffered ceilings both have a message. The decoration always contains elements of the creator’s and the people’s worldview, value system and religion. At the same time, these messages fit into the whole of the European symbol system. According to Klára Gazda, “decoration has

a positive psychological effect on people. Substances, forms and colours have a certain emotional potential that is activated spontaneously, according to the individual’s current mood, and consciously, as a result of his or her cultural knowledge.”<sup>52</sup>



*Priscilla-catacomb*



*Callixtus-catacomb*



*Lompirt, 1778*

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## NOTES

1. Géza Xeravits, "A képtisztelet dogmatörténeti háttere", in *idem.* (ed.), *Ikonográfia ökumenikus megközelítésben*, Pápa-Budapest, PRTA-LHarmattan, 2005, p. 17.
2. Leoniyid Uszpenszkij, *Az ikon teológiája az ortodox egyházban*, Budapest, Kairosz–Paulus Hungarus, 2003, p. 7-9.
3. An inhabited city in 6200–5500 BC.
4. Julien Ries, *A hívő ember a zsidó, keresztény és az iszlám vallásban*, Budapest, Typotex Kiadó, 2006, p. 17.
5. Sarolta Püsök, "Művészet, képrombolás, reformáció és a képi megjelenés jogosultságáról", in *Studia Reformata Transylvaniensis*, Cluj-Napoca, no. 1, 2001, p. 142-143.
6. For the most part, it is generally believed that the attitude of Judaism towards images has always been completely negative. This attitude is based on the prohibitions of the Torah: "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." (Exodus 20: 4). Exodus 20: 23 and Deuteronomy 27: 15 seem to limit the prohibition to depicting deities, which are idols. In fact, not all pictorial representations were forbidden, as we see in the section on the bronze snake (Numbers 21: 4-9), and especially in the commandments concerning the cherubim on the ark: "And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover." (Exodus 25: 18). These commands were performed again when Solomon built the temple (1 Kings 6: 23). Similarly, Ezekiel spoke of palm trees that adorned the temple with human and lion faced cherubim (Ez. 40: 16,31; 41: 18). Victor Schultze, *Die Katakomben: Die Altchristlichen Grabstätten - Ihre Geschichte und Ihre Monumente*, Hamburg, Severus Verlag, 2013, p. 18; István Bugár M., *Szokrális Képzőművészet a keresztény ókorban*, Volume I, Budapest, Paulus Hungarus–Kairosz Kiadó, 2004, p. 97-109.
7. Arne Effenberger, *Frühchristliche Kunst und Kultur. Von den Anfängen bis zum 7. Jahrhundert*, München, Verlag C. H. Beck, 1986, p. 87-92.
8. The stories of Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and other biblical figures present full cycles. Effenberger, *ibidem*, p. 18.
9. The evolution of Roman catacombs is closely linked to the changes in burial habits. Up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, cremation was common in Rome. Subsequently, both pagan and Christian burial practices changed based on the pattern of the burial of Jesus, and from this point on, interment was accepted. The new burial mode had primarily religious significance, namely the belief in the physical resurrection. "Faith in the underground. The catacombs of Rome. At the gates of Rome lies an underground city of the dead. The huge tombs of the catacombs preserve the most important testimonies of early Christians", <https://www.g-geschichte.de/plus/die-katakomben-roms>; Effenberger, *ibidem*, p. 24.
10. Mary Hollingsworth, *Művészetek világtörténete*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1995, p. 95.
11. This explains why the dead bodies of Christian martyrs were often burned and defiled.
12. In their understanding, a single pagan would have ritually defiled the entire Jewish community, so they took common cemetery ownership, where only members of the community could be buried.
13. Uszpenszkij, *op. cit.*, p. 7-9.
14. For pagan Greeks, images were mythical and even magical. There is no doubt that their images originate from the oldest Eastern cults and their rites, sometimes cruel, preserved in people's subconscious. All mortals who dared to look at the deities were blinded or went crazy, but the same power was attributed to the depiction of some deities. Some statues, such as the statue of Athena and Artemis from Ephesus were said "not to be made by men", but that they fell from the sky. People adored these images with rituals of washing oneself and one's hands, decorated them with flowers, and even served them food.
15. Roman religious art developed under the influence of Greek culture. The pictures of the rulers in the Greek East were worshiped as cult objects, and this Hellenistic tradition is the basis for worship of the Roman emperors. In the Roman world, images were not confined to the religious sphere, but also played a legal role. Under certain circumstances, the image of the ruler took his place and became his legal substitute, the secondary manifestation of his presence.

16. *Az ikonfestés elmélete és gyakorlata*. Teacher's note. Made by: Gábor Bálint József O. Praem, Jeanette Murainé Dancs. The note was based on Egon Sendler's *The Icon, Image of the Invisible, Elements of Theology, Aesthetics and Technique*, transl. Steven Bigham, Oakwood Publications, 1984, p. 4.
17. László Éber, "Európa művészete", in László Éber – Zoltán Felvinczi Takács – Béla Barát (ed.), *A művészet története*, Budapest, Dante Könyvkiadó, 1939, p. 215–216.; Géza Nagymihályi, *Az angyalok. Liturgia és ikon a keresztyén keleten*, Budapest, Paulus Hungarus–Kairosz Kiadó, 2002, p. 59.; Géza Nagymihályi, "Képtisztelet a bizánci kereszténységben", in Géza Xeravits (ed.), *Ikonográfia ökumenikus megközelítésben*, Pápa–Budapest PRITA–L'Harmattan, 2005.
18. Uszpenszkij, *op. cit.*, p. 30-35; Thomas Migge, *Frühe Christen unter der Erde. Die Marcellinus-Katakomben in Rom ist wieder zugänglich*, talk of 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014. [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/fruehe-christen-heiligenbilder-unter-der-erde.1278.de.html?dram:article\\_id=285007](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/fruehe-christen-heiligenbilder-unter-der-erde.1278.de.html?dram:article_id=285007) (Last viewed on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018)
19. Andre Grabar, *The Beginnings of Christian Art, 200–395* (Arts of Mankind 9.), London, Thames&Hudson, 1967, p. 216–217.
20. Effenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
21. Everett Ferguson, *A kereszténység bölcsője*, Osiris, Budapest, 1999. 495.
22. Wilfried Koch, *Építészeti stílusok*, Budapest, Officina Nova, Magyar Könyvklub, 1997, 42.
23. *Az ikonfestés elmélete és gyakorlata*, p. 31.
24. *Ibidem*, p. 6.
25. Éber, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
26. Dr. Foltin Brúnó, *Jézus feltámadása. Húsvéti meditáció az énekeskönyvünk 219. sz. éneke alapján*, in *Evangelikus Élet*, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1998, p. 3. [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/EvangelikusElet\\_1998/?pg=86&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/EvangelikusElet_1998/?pg=86&layout=s) (Last viewed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018)
27. Koch, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
28. Henry Chadwick, *A korai egyház*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2003, p. 259.
29. Uszpenszkij, *op. cit.*, p. 30–35.
30. Marcell Jankovics, *Jelkép-kalendárium*, Debrecen, Csokonai Kiadó, 1997, p. 71.
31. Tertullian used it as a symbol of baptism: he called the dipper a fish (*pisciculi*), the baptismal pool a pond (*piscina*).
32. Jutta Seibert (ed.), *A keresztény művészet lexikona*, Budapest, Corvina Kiadó, 1986, p. 114.
33. Mihály Hoppál – Marcell Jankovics – András Nagy – György Szemadám, *Jelképtár*, Budapest, Helikon Kiadó, 2010, p. 84-85.
34. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
35. Vanyó, László: *Az ókeresztény művészet szimbólumai*, Jel Kiadó, Budapest, 2010. 73-74.
36. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
37. Vanyó, *op. cit.*, p. 74-75.
38. *Ibidem*, p. 76-77.
39. *Ibidem*, p. 77-78.
40. Job 19: 26
41. Vanyó, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
42. Éber, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
43. Vanyó, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
44. Sándor Békési, *Vizuális nyelv. A síkbeli vizuális műalkotások olvasási technikája és értelmezése*, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Hittudományi Kar, 2015, p. 146.
45. Hajnalka Görög, "Az értelmes élet tükré 17-18. századi erdélyi templomok kazettás mennyezetein", in *Koinónia*, no. 62, Stuttgart, István Gémes (ed.), 2004. p. 23.
46. I borrowed the name from Éva Szacs vay.
47. Éva Szacs vay, *Protestáns ábrázolások tanításai (Egyházművészet-népművészet)* <http://pseg.hu/html/begy/kiad/bef-1/11-34.pdf>

48. Ilona Tombor, *Magyarországi festett famennyezetek és rokonemlékek a XV-XIX. századból*, Budapest, 1968. p. 28.
49. Éva Szacs vay, <http://pseg.hu/html/begy/kiad/bef-1/11-34.pdf>
50. Zoltán Bereczky, a minister from Hungary, has undertaken the mapping of the complete collection of motifs of the coffers. The rich imagery collection he has gathered so far is already remarkable and he aims at preserving this mighty Protestant treasure for the posterity. Cf. Zoltán Bereczky, *Ősképekönyv Jelképvásókönyv*, Budapest – Balatonszepezd, 2014.
51. Cf. Gábor Pap, *Az ég mennyezeti*, Uropath kiadó, 2012, Két Hollós kiadó 2016.
52. Gazda, *op. cit.*, p. 13.