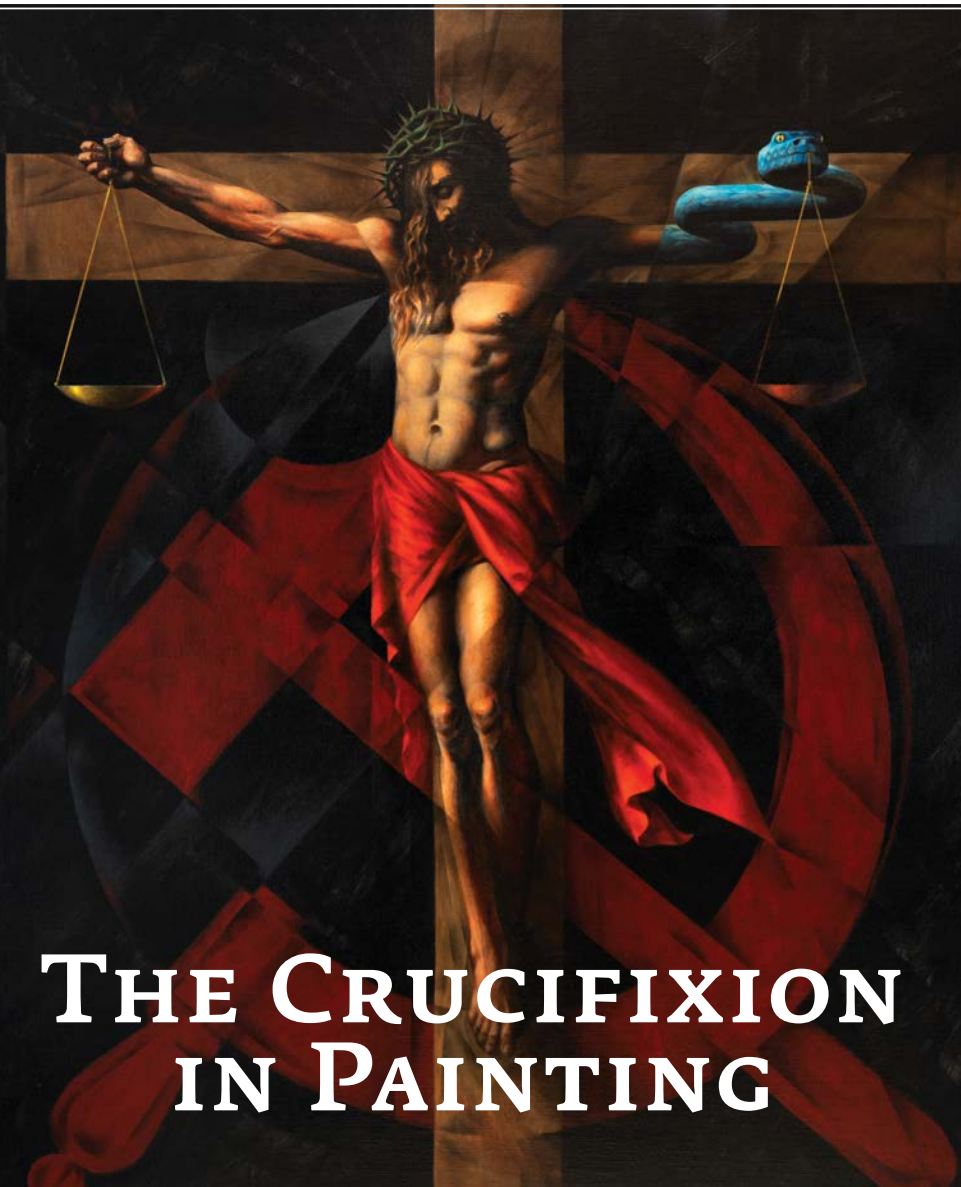


MIKHAIL SERGEEV



THE CRUCIFIXION IN PAINTING

From the Middle Ages to Post-Modernism



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IN PAINTING

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO POST-MODERNISM

With a Foreword by Rev. Michael A. Meerson

BOSTON · 2023

MIKHAIL SERGEEV

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From the Middle Ages to Post-Modernism***

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*To my dearest mom and dad
with filial love and
spiritual affection*

It seems to me that the contemporary expressive style gives, and has already given, new possibilities for religious art... To say it in <terms of> religious symbolism, the subject matter is man crucified, not God-Man resurrected.

Paul Tillich

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FOREWORD

by Rev. Michael A. Meerson, Ph.D.

*“Christ Crucified, a scandal to the Jews,
and madness for the Greeks.”*

(1 Cor. 1: 23)

IN THE PRESENT BOOK, MIKHAIL SERGEEV invites us to revisit the mystery of the Cross as it is presented through the medium of modern art, specifically visual art. He also emphasizes the radically new nature of such representations. Starting in the nineteenth but mainly in the twentieth century, the genre of the Crucifixion came to keep transcending all canonical and theological boundaries. Sergeev states that following the zeitgeist and the anthropological paradigm shift of modernity, “the crucified Christ became a social emblem, a symbolic expression, and redemption applied to everybody beyond confessional difference, gender, race or social status” (26).

The most vivid horror of human pain and death, the Crucifix has grown into the icon of human suffering at large. Sergeev brings to our attention the awareness of one of the artists who understood this, a German Expressionist, Otto Dix. As recorded by the art critics, Dix shared his impression of dread at envisioning the deadly torments of a crucified person: “When you read a detailed description of a crucifixion... that is so horrible, awful. How the limbs swell up... How the person cannot breathe. How the face changes color. How he dies a horrible, utterly horrible death” (142).

The Expressionist master's reaction brings us to the actual reality of the cross, on which St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Christian community in Corinth: "We preach Christ Crucified, a stumbling block (scandal) to the Jews, and madness for the Greeks" (1 Cor. 1: 23). We might add that for the Romans, this preaching amounted to a mortal insult. What reaction to the worshiping of a crucified person could be expected from the empire which introduced this most torturous death as a dreaded punishment for the enemies of its state and military power? Jesus died on the cross as a rebel against this power. Such was the accusation against him forced out from Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, by the Jewish high priests envious of Jesus and afraid of his prophetic appeal to the people.

Roads in Judea were covered with crucifixes a generation after this event, during the stages of the Jewish war of liberation, which Rome managed to suppress by straining all its military forces. Elevated for public display, Jewish rebels expired in agony upon them. In the mind of simple Roman folks and, especially of the military or state officials, the worship of the Crucified Christ, believed to be the chief of rebels ("the King of the Jews"—according to Pilate's subscription),—revered now not merely by some marginal Jews, but even by Roman citizens of significant standing,¹—had come to be perceived as the most insolent mockery at the Roman state power. Otherwise, it is impossible to understand the insane cruelty with which the Imperial authorities executed whole army regiments along with their commanders for their profession of faith in Christ.²

¹ In his letter to Philippians, written about 56 C.E. during his first imprisonment in Rome, St. Paul mentioned, among Christians, some "of the Imperial household" (Phil.4: 22).

² On April 23, the Orthodox Church commemorates the martyr Alexandra, the Empress and wife of Diocletian (d. 303 C.E.). There is no historical confirmation that she was executed during Diocletian's most cruel persecution of Christians, but the very fact of the

Therefore, it is not surprising that the veneration of the cross came from Judeo-Christian circles and only gradually permeated the devotion of the Catholic Church with its majority of Gentile Christians. “In Judeo-Christian literature,—stated Bellarmino Bagatti,—the cross was considered not as a wood to be thrown away after the death of Christ, but as His personified power, which will remain with Him in His passion and death, and his glorification.”³ In the apocryphal “Gospel of Peter,” the cross followed the risen Jesus and two angels who accompanied Him into heaven. In the mind of the Judeo-Christians, the Cross, having ascended into heaven with the resurrection of Jesus, remains there and will return with Jesus in His second coming.” Fr. Bagatti emphasized the Jewish-Christian origin of the belief in the religious significance of the cross in referring to the martyr Pionium in the second century, who “educated after the Greek manner, found these ideas strange and attributed them to the Jews.”⁴

Jesus Himself had spoken not only of His imminent death at the hands of authorities but also of the most painful and shameful mode of His execution elevated for the public display: “... the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). And again, He says it in His final address to the crowd gathered for the Passover, challenging their confidence in the unclouded eternal glory of God’s Anointed One: “‘When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me’ (In saying this He indicated the kind of death He was going to suffer.) The crowd answered: We heard from the Law that the Messiah will live forever. How, then, can you say that the Son of Man must be

Church’s commemoration reveals the wide diffusion of the faith in the Crucified Savior among various strata of Roman society.

³ Bellarmino Bagatti, o.f.m. *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of Judaeo-Christians*, trans. Fr. Eugene Hoade, O.F.M., Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971, 221.

⁴ *Ibid.*

lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” (John 12: 32–4) Here is set forth the paradox of the future iconographies of the cross—as the confluence of the human unbearable suffering and death on the one hand and the divine glory of eternal life on the other. In Chapter 1, Sergeev points out that Byzantine and Roman canons developed their specific versions of the Crucifixion’s art. The Byzantine tradition focused more on the divine glory of the Son of God, while Roman Catholicism emphasized the Savior’s humanity and His redemptive sufferings. The stress on Christ’s human nature and his vulnerability has remained the most characteristic feature of Western Christian art and has passed on into its modern development.

The Byzantine canon had emerged in the same Roman Empire, which eventually surrendered, starting with Constantine the Great, to the overwhelming superiority and practicality of the new religion. It had pushed, however, the horror of its traditional tool of execution, now abolished, into the depth of the unconscious, converting it into the symbol of divine victory.⁵ The Roman Church, remaining part of the same empire for centuries, followed the same canon through its early Middle Ages. As Sergeev pointed out, only Renaissance artists, aspiring to achieve historical accuracy, turned to “the exactness of its illustrative representation” and accentuated the Savior’s humanity.

The Renaissance introduced and pursued the anthropological shift and the rise of subjectivity, which both came to fruition in the twentieth century. The turning point, however, was announced in the nineteenth century in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach.

⁵ According to tradition, the night before his decisive battle with Maxentius, Constantine “the Great,” later canonized as a saint by the Church, had a vision of the cross accompanied with words: *In Hoc Signo Vincas* (“In this sign, thou shalt conquer”).

**FEUERBACH'S TRANSLATION
OF THEOLOGY INTO ANTHROPOLOGY**

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), a German atheistic thinker, re-interpreted Christianity as a projection of human nature into the eternal realm of religion. For him, God was nothing but “the mirrored image of man.”⁶ Christian faith has reflected what was sacred to human beings: its ultimate foundation—the human personality. In Feuerbach’s view, Christianity has mistakenly subordinated anthropology to theology. He claimed, on the contrary, that by reducing theology to anthropology, he had exalted anthropology into theology by correctly reading Christianity, which, by “lowering God into man, made man into God.”⁷ Having introduced the anthropological shift in theological discourse, he proceeded to interpret the teaching of the Church that God was love in strictly human terms, arguing that love was mainly a human affair. Yet, as he thought this out, true human love impelled the sacrifice of self to another; hence a human God could only be a God of love. “Who then is our Savior and Redeemer? God of love!”⁸ In his chapter on the “Mystery of the Suffering God,” Feuerbach pointed out the essential definition of the incarnate, or, equivalently, human God, that God’s love has found its full expression in Christ’s Passion. It has simply exemplified that love reveals itself in the ability to suffer for others. The image of the crucifixion, which we still find in all temples, —Feuerbach argued, —presented us not so much with the Savior, but with the crucified sufferer. This meant that God as Christ embodied all human suffering. As the highest metaphysical idea, Christ’s pure suffering pierced the human heart.

⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, ed.& abridged by E. Graham Waring & F. W. Strothmann, (Milestones of Thought), NY: Continuum, 1989, 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

Nothing made such a strong impression on the human soul as suffering, especially the suffering of the sinless, the innocent offering himself in self-sacrifice. So, Christ's Crucifixion came to symbolize suffering as such and expressed the capacity to suffer in general.

This anthropological dimension called for trinitarian theology, whose human content Feuerbach claimed to lay bare. "Only a being who comprised in himself the whole man can satisfy the entire man," he argued. "Man's consciousness of himself in his totality is the consciousness of the Trinity." Humanity needs God the Father as "the sum of all human perfection" and God the Son, the Christ, as "the sum of all human misery."⁹ Reflecting on human nature in his "atheistic dogmatics," he pointed out two aspects of anthropocentric theology: the Incarnation is brought about from the inner necessity of God-love on the one hand and from the human need for the suffering Redeemer on the other. Humanity needs the God of mercy in addition to the God of intellect and justice. The divine love expressed in the Incarnation unites God with humankind. "Love makes man divine, and it makes God human,"¹⁰ states Feuerbach, maintaining that only the attribution of flesh and blood to God establishes a natural bond between humankind and God. Feuerbach makes the Christian God the stronghold of humanism, insisting on the fundamental exclusive humanity of the Incarnate God.

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Some of the twentieth-century Christian theologians, across various denominational borders, influenced by existentialism, readily accepted Feuerbach's anthropological shift as fitting

⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

more with the anthropocentric worldview of contemporary man and consequently serving as a way to revitalize the Christian faith. Among them, and even anticipating this anthropological shift, were some Russian thinkers, of whom I single out Nicholas Berdyaev (1874–1948) in philosophy and Sergey Bulgakov (1871–1944) in theology. Both started as Russian populists and Marxists, whom Feuerbach’s paradigm shift had strongly influenced. Their humanism, however, through their personal experience of human fragility, made them rethink it in Christian terms and embrace what their Russian predecessor Vladimir Solovyov called “divine humanity.” Bulgakov even labeled Berdyaev’s existential dialectic of human and divine as “mystical feuerbachianism.” Berdyaev, however, revised Feuerbach’s optimistic humanism. Having lived through the First World War, the Russian Revolution, exile, and the Nazi’s occupation of France, Berdyaev had corrected atheistic humanism with its false promises that had become bankrupt in the face of twentieth-century totalitarian regimes with their total disrespect of human freedom, dignity, and life itself. Pointing—obviously—at the Crucified Savior, he uttered his famous dictum: “Man is not humane; it is God who is humane.” In Berdyaev’s rectification of Feuerbach, it is not God who borrows his kindness and goodness from man. It is the man who reflects the goodness of God while acting kindly and sacrificially.

Sergey Bulgakov developed the theology of the cross as the universal, both cosmic and all-human: the sacrifice God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, offered for “the life of the world” (Jn. 6:51). To be sure, he had found the basis for his theology in the Holy Scriptures, summed up in St. Paul’s words: ... “Our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed for us” (cf. Cor. 5:7).¹¹ What Bulgakov had emphasized was “the universal instinct of sacrifice, common throughout the religious world,” not solely

¹¹ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, Trans. Mark Roosien, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021, 2.

in monotheistic faiths, but in pagan religions as well. He references, therefore, to the enigmatic character of Melchizedek, from both the book of Genesis (14:18–20) and Psalms (110:4) and to the Christian elaboration on it in the Epistles to the Hebrews, which presented him as the Old Testament icon of the eternal high-priesthood of Jesus Christ. Bulgakov observes that Melchizedek “does not emerge from the Old Covenant but appears out of the darkness of time and the nations in order to meet Abraham,” the forefather of all three monotheistic religions. “The borders between the Old Covenant and pagan world fade away at the appearance of the one who bears in himself the image of the Coming High Priest.”¹² So Christ, representing all humanity, sacrificed Himself on behalf of it. As Bulgakov insists, the sacrifice of Christ is not only the crucifixion but also encompasses his entire cruciform earthly life, which was a path to Golgotha beginning in the manger in Bethlehem and the flight for life from the persecution of Herod. That is the crucified body, which God, in His Incarnation, shares with all humanity. However, the crucifix of the Christian churches is venerated not only as the symbol of human suffering and expression of God-man’s suffering on behalf of humanity but also as its witness to the “power of an indestructible life” (Heb.7:16) revealed in the Resurrection. Such is the meaning of the Eastern Orthodox hymn sung at the veneration of the Cross: “Before Thy Cross, we fall down and worship, o Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify.”

Bulgakov goes even further in his universalization of the Crucifix by applying his theological thinking to the words of St. Peter in his general address to Christians: “You were... ransomed... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:19–20). Christ’s suffering has earthly

¹² Ibid., 10.

and cosmic dimensions and points to the ontology of creation. “It is not eternity that is defined by time, but the other way around... Our conception of the sacrifice on Golgotha and of its eucharistic ‘remembrance’ must be raised to its Divine Prototype on the holy and immaterial (*noeron*) Altar above the heavens.” It must be understood based on Trinitarian dogma. As if following Feuerbachian translation of Christian theology into anthropology and then taking it back into theological discourse, Bulgakov states that the doctrine of the Trinity implies the “sacrificial love” within the Deity. Bulgakov holds as the axiom of personal love, including the love of divine hypostases, that there is no love without sacrifice.¹³ All three Persons share in the same sacrificial love, each in His proper fashion. The sacrificial character of the Father’s love is expressed in His total self-negation and self-emptying in the birth of the Son. The sacrifice of the Son’s love is expressed in being always born of the Father, of accepting His birth as being ever born.¹⁴ The Holy Spirit also has *kenosis* or self-emptying. The Spirit is the very hypostatic love, deprived of any selfhood; the Spirit is entirely transparent for the other hypostases being the hypostatic “*in-between*” that connects them.¹⁵

Since the Three Persons of the Trinity are One God, the creation is the sacrifice of the whole Trinity, simultaneously the hypostatic and functional sacrifice specifically of the Son. Thus, the eternal *kenosis* of the Son is manifested in time. It is not the fall of Adam that calls for redemption. This fall expresses the instability of a creature that comes from nothingness. To be saved, the creature must be deified. The initial decision of God to create the world necessarily includes His decision to redeem it by uniting it with Himself. In other

¹³ Bulgakov, “Glavy o Troichnosti,” in *Pravoslavnaia Mysl*, Paris, 1928, 2:66.

¹⁴ Bulgakov, *Agnets Bojii*, Paris: YMCA-press, 1933, 122.

¹⁵ Bulgakov, *Uteshitel*, Paris: YMCA-press, 1936, 213–214.

words, humanity, from its very origin, is called to become divine humanity which is the proper foundation of creation.¹⁶ Creation and redemption are ontologically identical. Golgotha manifests both. Each is the development of the same act of the Divine Priest in the Holy Trinity. This act has a triple structure: creation-incarnation-cross, representing the three facets of Son's sacrifice.

Bulgakov became the mouthpiece for the twentieth-century theology of the cross (Jürgen Moltmann, theologians of Liberation, etc.), claiming that the image of God dying on the cross for the sake of humanity is the response of the God of Love to the suffering of the world created by Him. With this doctrine, Bulgakov responds to the question raised by modern existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre: why do innocents suffer? Golgotha is the proper justification of God in the eyes of the suffering creature who wants to know the reason for its suffering. The High priesthood of God, as the sacrifice and the sacrificer in the same person, serves as God's unique justification. With it, He answers the biblical Job, who suffers from the revenge and slander of Satan without realizing it.¹⁷

Bulgakov's close friend, Fr. Pavel Florensky, a Russian Orthodox priest, a seminal theologian, and scientist, who died as a martyr in Stalin's Gulag,¹⁸ had cast theology of the cross in artistic terms. At one point in his scholarly career, deprived by the Bolshevik Revolution of his positions as a professor at Moscow Theological Academy and as the editor of the leading Russian theological quarterly, Florensky taught the theory of perspective in Vkhutemas.¹⁹ Pointing at the crucifix as an ar-

¹⁶ Bulgakov, *Agnets*, 374–375.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 399. This passage is taken from my chapter on Bulgakov in Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*, Quincy, Il.: Franciscan Press, 1998.

¹⁸ Florensky was executed in 1937 at the Solovky labor camp after several years of imprisonment.

¹⁹ Vkhutemas (Higher Art and Technical Studios) was an early So-

tistic icon that combined anthropology and theology, he asserted that “the cross is the image of God in man...” He had in mind Da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man*, ranked as a universal symbol of European humanism and an archetypal representation of Renaissance art. The drawing illustrated Leonardo’s concept of ideal body proportion. Endowing his theology of the cross with the artistic expression remindful of Da Vinci’s model, Florensky claims that man “is created as a noumenal cross. Hence every higher manifestation of human nature is in the cruciform spread. Like a crumpled bud, shrinking, sits a man in the mother’s womb. It grows and straightens like a bud blooms. The flowering of the human species is the most beautiful thing that is in a person—when he is cross-stretched.”²⁰

THE UNCONSCIOUS IN MODERN ART

The Vitruvian Man, cross-shaped within a circle, is “justly ranked among the all-time iconic images of Western civilization” (Carmen C. Bambach) because it refers to Christ on the cross, which Carl Jung considers one of the central archetypes of the Western collective unconscious. He is that

viet “educational undertaking of unprecedented scale and complexity,” which served as one of the major platforms for the institutionalization of the avant-garde movement... that “translated radical experiments in art, architecture, and design into a systematized body of knowledge.” <http://grahamfoundation.org/grantees/6269-vkhutemas-laboratory-of-the-avant-garde-19201930>. It had branches in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vitebsk, and other cities. Such world-known artists as Alexander Rodchenko, Vasily Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, and Vladimir Tatlin worked at one point among its faculty. It was established in 1920 and survived until 1930, when Stalin’s rising “Socialist realism” crushed it with the rest of Russian avant-garde.

²⁰ Pavel Florensky, “Iz bogoslovskogo nasledia”, *Bogoslovskie Trudy*, Moscow Patriarchate Publ. # 17, 1977, 92.

divine, glorified Man, “after whose likeness our inner man is made, invisible, incorporeal, incorrupt, and immortal,” according to Jung’s quoting from Origen.²¹ Christ exemplifies this archetype. After all, He occupies, in Jung’s words, the “center of the Christian mandala” because He is “the still living myth of our culture, our culture hero.” Therefore, “He is in us, and we in him.”²²

“From the intellectual point of view,” Jung further explains, “it is nothing else but a psychological concept, a construct, which is to name the entity undistinguishable and unknowable to us because it exceeds the limits of our comprehension... With the same success, we could call it ‘the deity within us.’ At this very point, the origins of our psychic life begin, and all the loftiest and ultimate goals converge.”²³ In Jung, this notion does not extend beyond psychology and phenomenology, but the Russian Symbolist poet and thinker Vyacheslav Ivanov endows it with theological input. Christ is the absolute unique model of the utterly divine human being, “the Son of Man who is in heaven,” who “came down from heaven” (Jn.3:13), lived with men, died, and then rose and ascended to where he had been before (Mk.16:19; Lk.24:51–2). Ivanov asserts this point while explaining Christ’s role as the inner center of human personality because he shares the most miserable human conditions and his descent into ontological nothingness, which is what man is. Quoting from the Nicene Creed, Ivanov states: “Compared with other religions, Christianity is the most radical affirmation of the divine *kenosis* (condescension) to the point of the interment of the God-

²¹ C. C. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1959, 37–8.

²² *Ibid.*, 36.

²³ C. Jung, “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious,” in the *Collected Works*, Bollingen Foundation, Pantheon Books, V 7, Part. D. (in Russian translation p. 271).

man in the womb of the earth. ‘Who... came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and became man, and suffered and was buried; and rose again, and ascended,’” “making oneself nothing (“self-emptying,” cf. Phil.2:7) to the point of standing alone in the face of *nothing*, and feeling oneself, for a brief moment, equal to eternity, totally non-divine because abandoned by the Father, —such is the price of the saving resurrection and victorious return to the Spring of being.” Ivanov emphasized the total compatibility of the *kenotic* descent of the Word becoming Flesh and the lowliness of the human condition. Both the incarnate Word and the human being, created by this Word, submit to this supreme law of becoming, which Ivanov finds in the testimony of the Gospel: “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (Jn.12: 24).²⁴ By dying it becomes immortal. This also occurs in the sense that it enters each of us, making it its dwelling place.

In his study, Sergeev highlights modern art’s appeal to the power of the unconscious in us. According to Jung, “The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere.”²⁵ These archetypes do not stay there passively. They actively suffuse human creativity, finding ever-new embodiments in various art forms. Thus, art is an ongoing improvisation of old myths and symbols that spring from the wealth of our subconscious. Since archetypes are found as artistic images and motifs, art presents one of the main fields

²⁴ Ivanov, “Discorso Sugli Orientamenti dello spirito moderno”, “Razmyshleniia ob ustanovkakh sovremennogo duha,” (“Reflections on premises of contemporary spirit (mind)”), SS., III, 462, 465.

²⁵ Carl Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” in C. G. Jung, *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1968, Vol.9, Part I, 42–3.

of investigation for Jungian analysis, which appreciates that religion and mythology have been intertwined with art from prehistoric times to the present.²⁶

Jung observes two types of the creative process, “the two entirely different modes of creation.” One is wholly subordinated to the will and reason of an artist. In the other, the work of art forces itself upon the author: “his hand is seized, his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement. The work brings its own form; anything he wants to add is rejected, and what he would like to reject is thrust back at him. While his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images he never intended to create, which his own will could never have brought into being. Yet despite himself, he is forced to admit that it is his own self-speaking, his inner nature revealing itself and uttering things he would never have entrusted to his tongue. He can only obey the apparently alien impulse within him and follow where it leads, sensing that his work is greater than himself and wields a power that is not his and that he cannot command. Here the artist is not identical with the process of creation; he is aware that he is subordinate to his work or stands outside of it, as though he were a second person; or as though a person other than himself had fallen within the magic circle of an alien will.”²⁷

MARC CHAGALL – AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD MODERN ARTIST

Among contemporary artists, the one who had embraced the subject of this study across the board, and to whom Sergeev, to

²⁶ Aniela Jaffe, “Symbolism in the Visual Arts,” in *Man & His Symbols*, 257.

²⁷ Carl Jung, “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” *The Portable Jung*, The Viking Press, Penguin Books, 1971, 310–11.

be sure, dedicated a very informative chapter, is Marc Chagall. As early as 1912, he painted his cubist *Golgotha* and dedicated it “to Christ.” As it was said in the introduction to the exhibition in the Jewish Museum in New York (Sept.15, 2013-Feb.2, 2014): *Chagall: Love, War, and Exile*,

||| The most prevalent image Chagall used during World War II was of Jesus and the Crucifixion. For Chagall, the Crucifixion was a symbol for all the victims of persecution, a metaphor for the horrors of war, and an appeal to conscience that equated the martyrdom of Jesus with the suffering of the Jewish people and the Holocaust. While other Jewish artists depicted the crucified Jesus, for Chagall, it became a frequent theme.²⁸

In his art, the crucifix symbolizes the sharing of the world’s suffering by the Crucified and belongs to those archetypal images he employed throughout his painting career. Chagall confessed that he understood art “primarily as a condition of the soul” and focused on its inner life, which he magically depicts in his works full of a bright mixture of people and animals, nymphs and satyrs, flowers, birds, and fish playing musical instruments, hugging lovers, over all of which reigns the image of a Jew immersed in prayer, as well as the crucifix.

In one of his early works, he places himself on the cross. In the poem dedicated to him by his French friend Blaise Cendrars (October 1913), are the words:

He’s asleep
 He’s awake
 Suddenly he’s painting
 He takes a church and paints with the church
 He takes a cow and paints with a cow...

²⁸ See: <https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/chagall-love-war-and-exile>.

He paints with all the dirty passions of a little Jewish town
With all the fired-up sexuality of provincial Russia...
He paints with his thighs
He has eyes in his back side
And all at once it is your portrait
It's you gentle reader
It's me
It's him
It's his fiancée...
Skies gone mad
Mouth of modernity...
Christ
He's Christ
He spent his childhood on the cross
He commits suicide every day...
Chagall is astonished that he is still alive.²⁹

These symbols, interiorized and found within an individual soul but common to all of us, belong to the collective unconscious in Jung's terms and touch upon the domain of religion. So, no wonder "Chagall—as Sergeev emphasized—is also considered one of the most significant religious painters" of the last century" (170). According to André Breton, his art overcomes the gravity of the material world, including humans and animals, by transposing them into a paradise realm in which the human condition is somehow alleviated from the weight of the original sin. (S. cf.129) Chagall did not merely use Bible stories; he perceived the world through its prism. "I went back to the great universal book, the Bible," he wrote, "Since my childhood, it filled me with a vision about the fate of the world and inspired me in my work... For me, it is second nature. I see the events of life and works of art through the wisdom of the Bible.

²⁹ Quoted in Jacob Baal-Teshuva, *Marc Chagall 1887–1985*. Taschen, 1998, 46.

A truly great work is penetrated by its spirit and harmony... Since the spirit and world of the Bible occupy a large place in my inner life, I have tried to express it. It is essential to show the elements of the world that are not visible..."³⁰

The Biblical anthropocentric world is recreated in his art: man, the mediator between God and the rest of creation, stands at its center. Archetypal images cluster around him, and angels and animals accompany him. Along with the Old Testament characters, we find the crucified Christ, who appears in the scenes of the creation of man, or Moses in front of a burning bush with the angel, hands/wings spread crosswise, addressing him from within. We see it also in contemporary subjects like the revolution, where Lenin stands upside down with an outstretched arm directly opposite the Crucifixion, as if turning over and parodying Christianity, or in *War*, where Jesus looks from the cross at the fire that has engulfed the earth. In this picture, the standing crucifix seems to be facing a murdered woman lying with her arms spread out, in front of whose body kneels a praying Jew. The lamb emphasizes the sacrifice's symbolism as if ready for slaughter, or instead symbolizing it, hanging across the painting with the burning town, its fugitives, and dead bodies.

The artist painted not just life but the essence of human existence—existence threatened by the danger of annihilation. The beauty and blessedness of life are riddled with violence and death and therefore depicted under a sign of the cross. Chagall, both as a human and as an artist, felt the incompleteness of this ontology without Christ. The presence of the crucifix in his painting is consonant with the existential and artistic themes of twentieth-century Russian religious thought, particularly with Pavel Florensky.

³⁰ *Chagall by Chagall*, ed. Charles Sorlier, New York: Harrison House, 1982, 193.

A brilliant master of space arrangement who applied the techniques of the Orthodox Vita Icon to his art, Chagall could barely manage without a crucifix as constructive support for every accurate composition. In the words of Fr. Pavel Florensky: “The cross lies at the foundation of being, as the true form of being.”³¹ Florensky taught at Vkhutemas (Moscow) in the same years (1920–23)³² when Chagall organized art schools in Vitebsk and St. Petersburg, where Vkhutemas had branches, and could have known Florensky personally. The same is true about Berdiaev and Bulgakov, well-known religious thinkers and cultural figures, whom Chagall could have met in Moscow or St. Petersburg, as well as in Paris, where he and they belonged to the same Russian émigré intellectual and artistic milieu in the 1920s and 1930s. At least, Chagall painted what Bulgakov wrote about Christ, “crucified for us,” “a lamb destined even before the creation of the world” (1 Peter, 1:19-20).

Although it is generally accepted that Chagall used the theme of the Crucifixion to symbolize both universal, Jewish, and, finally, personal suffering, he also preserved the Christian symbolism of the Cross, interpreting it in the spirit of modernity. As if painting Feuerbach’s secular essence of Christianity, he universalizes the crucifix as the symbol absorbing all human suffering. He also returned it to the Jewish environment from where it originated. It retains, however, its Christian meaning of redemption that can be discerned in his biblical paintings, such as *Jacob’s Ladder* or the *Sacrifice of Abraham*.” In the second painting, we see Abraham lifting a knife over Isaac lying on the wood. In the background, Jesus carries His cross, accompanied by weeping people, women with in-

³¹ Florensky, Op.Cit., ibid.

³² Chagall called this period of working in Russia (1914–1922) “the most productive years of my whole career.” Jacob Baal-Teshuva, *Chagall*, Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1998, 75.

fants in their arms, and religious Jews. From the Crucifixion emanates a red bloodstream reaching Abraham and Isaac. This biblical passage is read at Vespers of Holy Saturday, after Good Friday, and before Easter. The Orthodox Church interprets Isaac's sacrifice as the prototype of Calvary. In response to Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his promised son Isaac to God, God offers His Own Son in redemption for Abraham's offspring that will embrace all humans. God had not permitted the shedding of Isaac's blood, yet the blood of Jesus, "His only begotten Son," was shed on the Cross. As if following this theology, in Chagall's painting, the scarlet stream flooding Abraham and Isaac comes from the Crucifixion. Abraham's sacrifice is performed in the gesture of Christ. The theme of Isaac's sacrifice as the prototype of the eternal offering is clearly expressed in Chagall's stained-glass window in Reims Cathedral named *Abraham and Christ*. There on the left side, Chagall depicts Abraham sacrificing Isaac. At the same time, the right one builds the ladder of the Old Testament prototypes of Calvary in the spirit of the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews. At the bottom, we see Abraham conversing with three angels, who are depicted in Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, "the priest of God the Most High."

Chagall charges the religious message for his painting with the existential intensity of his own time, a victim of which he had almost fallen.³⁵ In his canvas *Falling Angel*, there is a gigantic red figure of an angel in the center falling downward with wings spread. The figure seems to push aside the prayer images that appear on its edges. On the right, there is a burning candle with a crucifix on one side and a woman with a baby in her arms on the other. On the left, an old Jew runs away with the Torah. On everything lie fiery flashes onto which pass the blood-red wings of a falling angel. This recalls the pas-

³⁵ Chagall, with his wife and daughter, had miraculously escaped the arrest by the Gestapo in the south of France.

sage from the Apocalypse, telling of Satan cast down to earth who, in his powerless rage, pursued a woman with a newborn child.³⁴

In this preface, Mark Chagall is given prominence in anticipation of the author's chapter on him because he is perceived by many as the international public artist of the modern West. His works have spilled over the walls of art museums, galleries, and private collections into the public square. Two of his huge panels, one in red, the other in blue, look at passers-by from the glazed facade of the Metropolitan Opera at the Lincoln Center in New York. With their heads up, visitors to the Paris Opera can gaze at the details of the ceiling he painted. Through his stained-glass windows, light streams on delegates from around the world in the UN building in New York and upon the worshipers at the oldest Catholic cathedrals in Europe, as well as in the synagogue of the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem. The Israeli Knesset deliberates amidst his tapestries. His mosaics stare from the walls of the First National Bank in Chicago.

His art, along with its crucifixes, made its way to the public square because it expresses the archetypes of the collective soul of humanity in the language of modern art. It reverberates with its secular side as if echoing Feuerbach and with its unpronounced religious aspirations; with the groaning of atheistic existentialism, as well as with theology of the cross of Sergey Bulgakov and others, with the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, as well as with Hasidic spirituality. Whoever questions the validity of the Crucifix for a contemporary man may find an answer in his art. Sergeev's whole book points to the artistic import of this validity.

³⁴ The passage on Chagall is based on my article: Michael A. Meerson, "Evangelié ot Marka Shagala" (The Gospel according to Marc Chagall), published in Russian in *Orthodox Almanac Put'*, #7 (Winter 1985–86) by Christ the Savior Orthodox church in NYC.

PREFACE

THE PRESENT VOLUME RESULTS FROM MY teaching experience at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. For a quarter of a century, I have offered courses in religion and the arts to my students, who represent various creative disciplines. My teaching responsibilities included standard curriculum courses in world religions, Asian spiritual traditions, and an introduction to the Bible. I also taught the history of modern art, which was part of a required program for all incoming freshmen. This yearly course was called Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Modernism, and it included sections on painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, theater, and film.

After several years of teaching, I embarked on creating courses that would merge the study of religion and the arts. I had already used this strategy in my lectures on the Bible and world religions, which I heavily illustrated with examples from church frescoes, biblical paintings, and other sacred art forms in different faiths. I planned on developing a course about the founders of great religions through examples from music, literature, and film using a three-act opera by Arnold Schoenberg, *Moses and Aaron*, the novel by Herman Hesse *Siddhartha: An Indian Poem*, and a movie by Martin Scorsese, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. I was also preparing a course about the central story of the Christian faith and the New Testament: The Crucifixion of Jesus. Because of its frequent depiction in Christian sacred art, the idea was to study the biblical Gospels and non-canonical sources of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Extensive research into this topic proved problematic. Plenty of scholarly studies focused on individual painters, specific art movements, and even biblical art. But no volume covered the history of Crucifixion paintings, especially in the twentieth century. To my great surprise, I discovered there was a need for more accessible, comprehensive sources on the subject.

During the next four years, from 2005 until 2009, I made a series of presentations at the regional Mid-Atlantic American Academy of Religion annual conferences in Baltimore, MD, and New Brunswick, NJ, about the Crucifixion in Expressionist, Cubist, Surrealist, Abstract, and Postmodern painting. I also published several papers on the subject in various American journals.³⁵ After that preliminary research, I devoted myself to composing a book about Crucifixion art through the centuries.

The structure of this volume follows historical chronology. The introduction discusses the story of the Crucifixion, based on Christian sources and contemporary research and reconstruction by biblical scholars of this central event in the Christian faith.

The first chapter presents my theory of religious cycles, which distinguishes five stages in the evolution of Christianity—formative, orthodox, classical, reformist, and critical. In

³⁵ Mikhail Sergeev, "Crucifixion in Twentieth-Century Painting," *Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in the U.S.A.*, vol. XXXVII, New York, 2011–2012, 395–416. "Crucifixion in Twentieth-Century Art: The Paintings of Marc Chagall," *Symposium: A Journal of Russian Thought*, Vol. 15 (2010), 47–56. "Crucifixion in Painting: Historical Considerations and Twentieth-Century Expressionism," *ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*, vol. 18, 1(2006), 26–36. "Biblical Themes in Twentieth-Century Painting: Wassily Kandinsky's Apocalyptic Abstractions," *Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in the U.S.A.*, vol. XXXIII, New York, 2003, 323–332. Reprinted in *ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*, vol. 16, 2(2004), 12–18.

the history of religion, they correspond to the early Christian, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and modern churches. In the next part of this chapter, I discuss traditional forms of Crucifixion art related to those phases.

In the formative church period, we discover the depiction of crosses with a figure of Christ in a small circle at the center of the cross in catacomb ceiling and wall paintings. The oldest surviving Crucifixion scene dates to the early fifth century. From the sixth through the thirteenth centuries, Byzantine Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism developed their own unique versions of Crucifixion art. The Byzantine model portrayed the divine glory of the Son of God, who offers salvation to his obedient flock. The Catholic version of the Crucifixion emphasized the Savior's humanity and suffering for the human race's sins.

Crucifixion paintings retained their revered status in the early modern (Renaissance) period. However, the Renaissance masters paid more attention to historical facts and the accuracy of pictorial representation. The subsequent Protestant Reformation, on the contrary, removed sacred art from its churches. In their iconoclastic zeal, reformers prohibited most religious imagery, including the Crucifixion, as an act of idolatry.

This book's second chapter focuses on the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment and the burgeoning of the modern period in Western history, culture, and art. According to my theory of religious cycles, Enlightenment ideology initiated the systemic crisis of Christianity and established a rationalistic worldview based on secular values. Traditional art and artistic practices also underwent significant changes.

Neoclassicism was the first modern art movement—after the Renaissance—that sought to revive the “noble simplicity and calm grandeur” (Winckelmann) of classical Greek painting, sculpture, and architecture. The nineteenth-century succession of Romanticism, Realism, and Symbolism, on the con-

trary, had nothing to do with imitation. Those movements asserted modern art's originality, uniqueness, and profound impact on Western societies.

An unprecedented number and variety of twentieth-century art groups and schools marked the culmination of the Enlightenment-inspired modern art project. Contemporary artists challenged the three most vital tenets of art. They reimagined a conventional relationship between the means of representation and the object of art, reinvented the role of the author in the creative process, and reinterpreted the relationship between art and life.

In those cultural and artistic circumstances, Crucifixion painting also underwent a fundamental and profound transformation. In the nineteenth century and, especially in the twentieth, it transcended dogmatic and theological boundaries and significantly broadened its message and appeal. The crucified Christ became a social emblem, a symbolic expression of suffering and redemption applied to everybody—whether Christian or not, religious or secular, wealthy or poor, men or women, black or white, and so on.

Chapters three through seven explore in detail five twentieth-century art movements—Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Abstraction, and Postmodernism. I discuss various Crucifixions created in different styles and from diverse social and ideological platforms by individual painters in these chapters. Emil Nolde (1867–1956), Georges Rouault (1871–1958), Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), and Otto Dix (1890–1969) represent German and French versions of Expressionism. Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Renato Guttuso (1911–1987), and Jacques Villon (1875–1963) demonstrate Cubist explorations. Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), Marc Chagall (1887–1985), and Antonio Saura (1930–1998) exemplify Surrealist experimentations. Barnett Newman (1905–1970), Francis Bacon (1909–1992), and Graham Sutherland (1903–1980) reflect the art of abstraction. And finally, Gudmundur Gudmundsson (Erró, b. 1932), Wil-

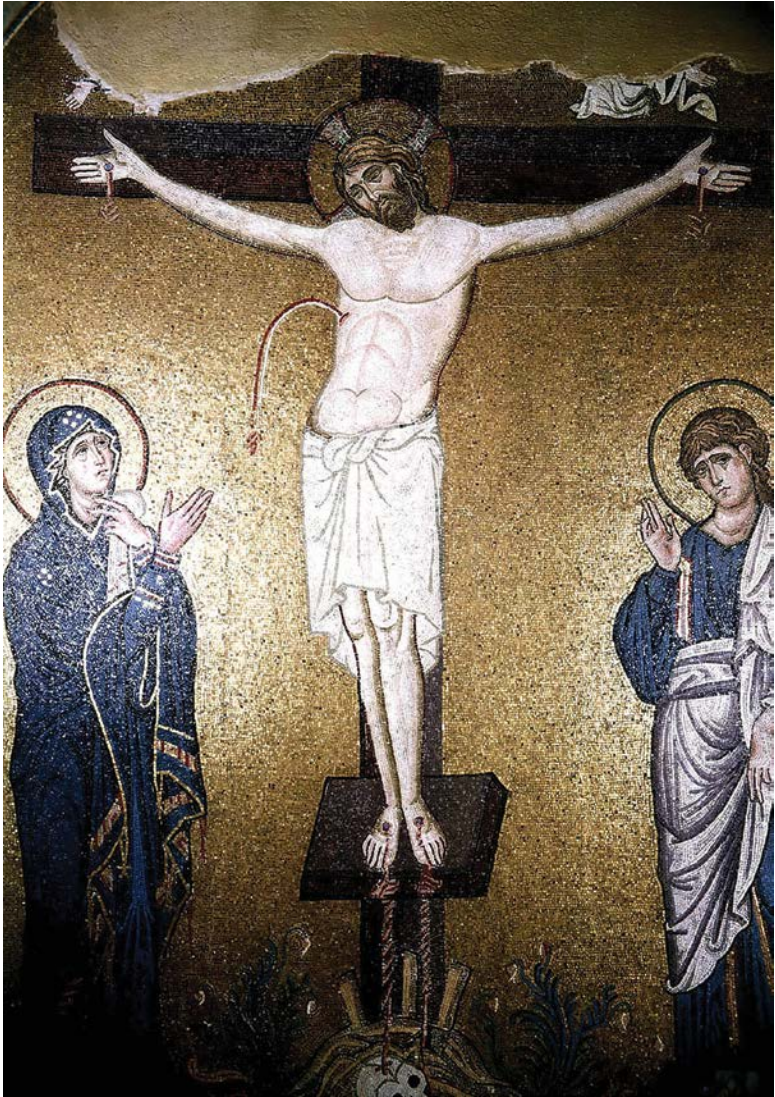
liam H. Johnson (1901–1970), and Arthur Boyd (1920–1999) illustrate Pop Art and Postmodernism.

In concluding remarks, I trace the commonalities of twentieth-century Crucifixion paintings discussed in previous chapters. To sum up, the religious context and theological implications of depicting Jesus on the cross were softened, challenged, and frequently gave way to portraying the Crucifixion as the social archetype of righteous suffering. This newfound approach to this genre of painting served as the perfect instrument for expressing modern anxieties and existential crises of perhaps the bloodiest century in human history.

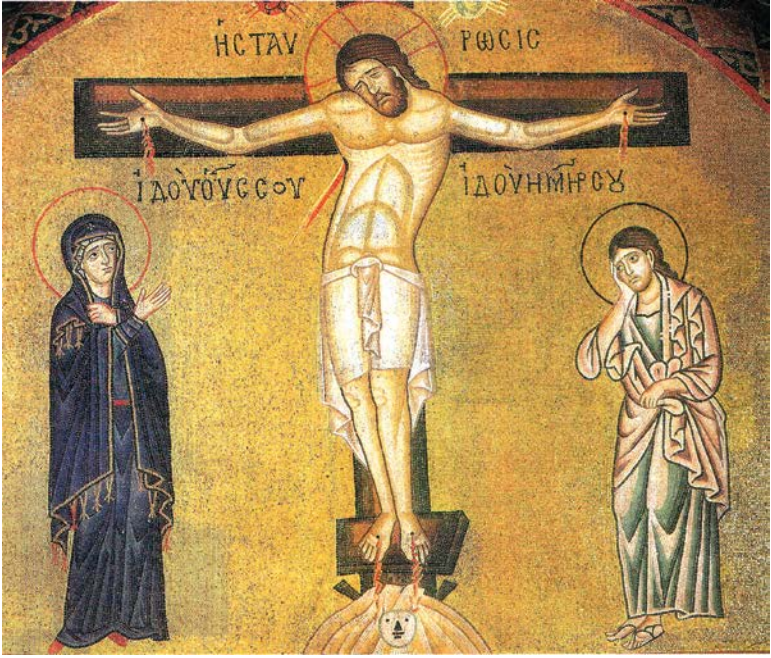
This book includes two sets of color illustrations. The first consists of the thirty-one most representative images from the fifth through the nineteenth centuries. They offer a systematic overview of Crucifixion paintings in classical Christian art. The second collection of twenty-four images focuses specifically on the twentieth century. It covers the avant-garde movements I explore in the corresponding chapters—Fauvism and Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and Post-Modernism. Due to the difficulties of obtaining copyrights, not every painting I discuss in my book is illustrated. In turn, not every visual example found in the volume is examined in the text. However, taken together, the illustrations and commentary provide a comprehensive summary of the evolution of the Crucifixion in painting during the first two millennia of Christian history.



Ivory relief, c. 420–30. North Italy. Casket. Crucifixion, Death of Judas.
London, Great Britain.



The Crucifixion, mosaic in the monastery church in Daphne, Greece, 1090–1100.



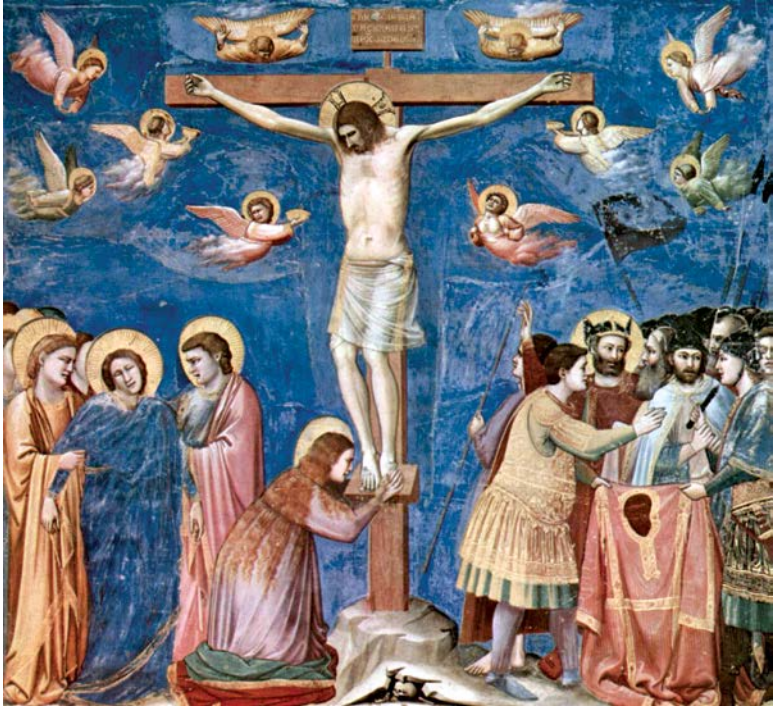
Byzantine Mosaics, *Crucifixion*, 1025,
the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, Greece.



Crucifixion, Orthodox Icons, 1200–1300,
Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, Greece.



School of Pisa: *Crucifix with Episodes from the Passion*, the second half of the 13th century, Uffizi, Florence, Italy.



Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337), *Crucifixion*, c. 1300,
Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy.

CHRONOLOGY OF MODERN ART MOVEMENTS

1755

In his book *Thoughts and Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), the German theorist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) popularized a memorable slogan for the Neoclassical approach to art — “noble simplicity and calm grandeur.”

1780

A Spanish Romantic painter and printmaker, Francisco De Goya Y Lucientes (1746–1828), made his *Christ Crucified* (1780), now located at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain.

1781

In sculpture, Neoclassicism was explored by Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828), who specialized in portraiture. His *Voltaire Seated* (1781) displayed all the features of Neoclassicism and was rightly acclaimed as a “modern classic.”

1784

In architecture, England was the birthplace of the Neoclassical style. The spirit of Neoclassicism manifested in the first half of the eighteenth century in the so-called “Palladian revival.” Initiated by Lord Burlington (1694–1753) in Great Britain, Palladianism spread abroad to the American colonies, branded as the Georgian style. Thomas Jefferson’s House in Monticello, Charlottesville, Virginia (1784) represents a magnificent example of the Neoclassical style in the United States.

1793

The leading Neoclassical painter of the time, Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), followed the French Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) in his style, favoring clarity and order and preferring line over color. David's accomplishments served as the foundation for our understanding of the movement. In his masterpiece, *The Death of Marat* (1793), David immortalized a historical figure as a secular hero and revolutionary martyr.

1809

A French Neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), created *The Crucifixion*, now located at the Musée Ingres, Montauban, France.

1800–1850

The flourishing of Romanticism in visual arts, literature, and music. Romantic painters rediscovered and thoroughly explored the richness of landscape artworks as a distinctive genre of modern art.

1819

Focusing on emotional intensity and colorful palettes, Romantics loved to portray people in extreme circumstances — revolutionary wars, mass executions, massacres, miraculous rescues, and so on. *The Raft of the “Medusa”* (1819) by a French painter and lithographer, Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), readily comes to mind.

1848

A French Romantic artist Eugene Delacroix (1798–1863) painted his *Crucifixion*, now located at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

1849

A French Realist painter Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), exhibited his first programmatic canvas, *The Stone Breakers*.

1850s

Realism rose to prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century as a new movement in art and literature. Great Realist writers—Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) in France, Charles Dickens (1812–1870) in England, Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) in Norway, and Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) in Russia—rejected the conventions of Romanticism and turned their attention to the reality and truth of contemporary societies.

1857

A French Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), published his infamous collection of poetry, *Flowers of Evil*.

1862

A French Symbolist artist Gustave Moreau (1826–1898), created a series of artworks, *The Stations of the Cross*, which included the *Twelfth Station: Christ Dying on the Cross*.

1875

A new cultural and artistic movement called Symbolism flourished in Europe in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Having rejected the social criticism of Realist artworks, the Symbolist writers and artists turned their attention to the inner world of humanity with its evil passions and forbidden desires.

1888

A Belgian Symbolist painter and printmaker, James Ensor (1860–1949), made his *Christ in Agony*, now located at the Galerie Bellier in Paris, France.

1889

A French Post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), painted his *Yellow Christ*, now located at the Albright–Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y., USA.

1893

A Norwegian Symbolist artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944), created his famous painting *The Scream*.

1904

A French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon (1840–1916), painted *The Crucifixion*, now located at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

1905

Les Fauves (Wild Beasts), including Henry Matisse (1869–1954), André Derain (1880–1954), and Maurice Vlaminck (1876–1958), exhibit together at the Salon d’Automne in October.

The Dresden group of expressionist artists Die Brücke (The Bridge) is formed. The group, including such painters as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938), lasted till 1913.

1906

At the Salon des Indépendants, Matisse exhibits his programmatic painting *Joie de Vivre* (Joy of Life).
Ernst Kirchner publishes an expressionist Manifesto.

1907

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) paints *Les Femmes d’Alger*, which, according to some critics, is the most critical single pictorial document of the century.

1909

The First Futurist Manifesto, written by the founder of this movement, an Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), appears in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*.

1910

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and George Braque (1882–1963) developed an analytic form of Cubism.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) makes the first non-objective watercolor.

1911

Two exhibitions of the Munich group of Expressionist artists, Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), were organized by Wassily Kandinsky and Franc Marc (1880–1916) from December 1911–February 1912.

Kandinsky published his book *On the Spiritual in Art*, and created his painting of the Crucifixion: *Crucified Christ*; *Gekreuzigter Christus*. 1911.

The first significant showing of Futurist paintings takes place in Milan.

Crucifixion by Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980).

1912

Picasso and Braque invent collage.

Emil Nolde (1867–1956) paints *The Life of Christ*.

1913

The Armory Show, which introduces America to European avant-garde art, is held in New York.

Beginning of the synthetic phase of Cubism which lasts till the death of its primary representative Juan Gris (1887–1927).

Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935) launched his abstract art movement called Suprematism.

1914

Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) designated one of his first “ready-made”—a bottle rack.

1916

Cabaret Voltaire opened in Zurich, Switzerland, marking the beginning of the Dada movement that would last till 1921.

1917

The beginning of the De Stijl abstract art movement that lasted until 1931. The primary representative of De Stijl was Piet Mondrian (1872–1944).

1918

The First De Stijl manifesto is published in the De Stijl magazine.

1924

The first Surrealist manifesto, written by André Breton (1896–1966), is published in the opening issue of the Surrealist review *La Révolution Surréaliste*.

1925

Max Ernst (1891–1976) discovers “frottages,”—an automatic technique in painting.

1927

An Italian Futurist painter Gerardo Dottori (1884–1977), one of the signatories of the 1929 “Aeropainting Manifesto,” created a Futurist representation of the *Crucifixion* (1927), which is now housed in the Vatican Museum.

1930

Pablo Picasso paints his *Crucifixion*.

1935

A French artist and theoretician, one of the founding fathers of Cubism, Albert Gleizes (1881–1953), painted a Cubist representation of the Crucifixion (c. 1935).

1938

The International Exhibition of Surrealism in Paris marks the acme of the movement between the World Wars.

White Crucifixion by Marc Chagall (1887–1985).

1939

Georges Rouault (1871–1958) paints his *Christ on the Cross*.

1941

Crucifixion by Renato Guttuso (1911–1987).

1944

Richard Poussette-Dart (1916–1992), paints *Crucifixion, Comprehension of the Atom*.

William Johnson (1901–1970), *Mount Calvary*.

Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion by Francis Bacon (1909–1992).

1946

The Northampton Crucifixion by Graham Sutherland (1903–1980).

1948

A group of Abstract Expressionist artists founded a school called “The Subject of the Artist.” Abstract Expressionist movement, also called “Action painting” or “American-type painting,” dominated in the 1950s.

The Crucifixion by Otto Dix (1891–1969).

1951

Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) paints his *Christ of St. John of the Cross*.

1954

Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus) by Salvador Dalí.

1956

Richard Hamilton's collage "Just What is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?" brings about the beginning of Pop-Art.

1960

Pierre Restany wrote the first manifesto of the Nouveaux Réalistes.

1961

Crucifixion by Jacques Villon (1875–1963).

Antonio Saura (1930–1998), paints *Crucifixion*.

1965

The Responsive Eye Exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art became the first international exhibition with a predominance of Op-Art paintings.

An exhibition, "Pop Art and the American Tradition," at the Milwaukee Art Center, USA.

Crucifixion, triptych by Francis Bacon (1909–1992).

Barnett Newman (1905–1970), paints *The Stations of the Cross—Twelfth Station*.

1966

"Primary Structures"—one of the first exhibitions to present Minimalism as an accomplished body of work.

1970s

Rise of Postmodern ideology and art.

1980

Crucifixion and Rose by Arthur Boyd (1920-1999), now stored in the Bundanon Collection, Australia.

Nuclear Crucifixion, by Alex Grey, Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM), New York, USA.

1997

Gudmundsson Erró (b. 1932), paints *George Grosz*, which incorporates a Pop-Art parody image of the Crucifixion.

There have been several approaches to painting the Crucifixion during the past two Christian millennia. Byzantine Orthodoxy emphasized the divine glory of the Son of God, while Roman Catholicism focused more on the Savior's humanity and his redemptive sufferings. The stress on Christ's human nature and vulnerability has remained the most characteristic feature of Western Christian art, starting with the Renaissance. The image of the Crucifixion—the central event in Christian history—also remained widespread in the apparently secular and frequently atheistic modernist art scene.

Twentieth-century Crucifixions exhibited great novelty, variety, and complexity. Contemporary painters used the body on the cross to explore a wide range of social and spiritual concerns, including their distinct iconoclastic causes. What is the common denominator behind the incredible diversity of the avant-garde depictions of the crucified Jesus? According to the author, it consists of the transformation that the perception of the Crucifixion underwent in the twentieth century—from a religious event with crucial dogmatic and theological implications to a primary cultural archetype that symbolizes righteous suffering. As such, it has become the ideal vehicle for rendering the existential and social realities of the century's history.



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