



Leonardo da Vinci, (1452 – 1519)

The Virgin of the Rocks **The Theology and** **‘Heresy’ of Leonardo** **(and His Students)**

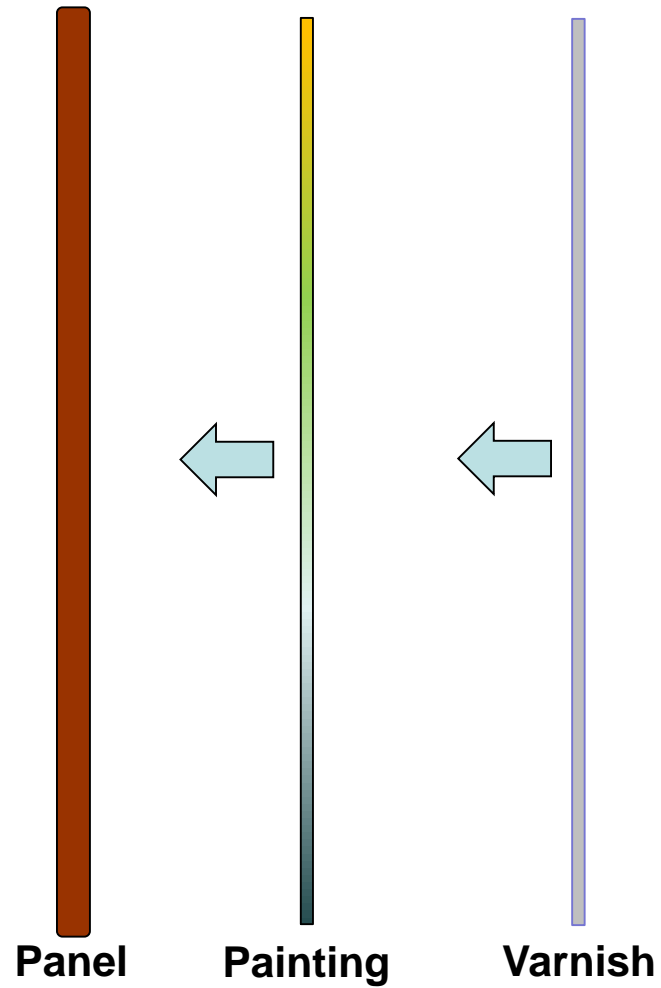
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Side View



VoR NG, Side View



After



Before



What Did the Restoration Affect?



Lecture Outline

- Why was paint above the varnish?
 - Leads to many other questions
- Why two (or three) paintings
 - Art historians
- Conclude: Painting's Revelation – a 15th C heresy
 - What heresy? Two Messiahs.
 - Where from? Ancient texts.
 - How did Leonardo learn about it? Plato Academy
- Early Christianity theological ideas depicted
 - Proof from comparing paintings
- Call for Renaissance 2.0

Virgin (or Madonna) of the Rocks

Two paintings!

No, 3!

Why?



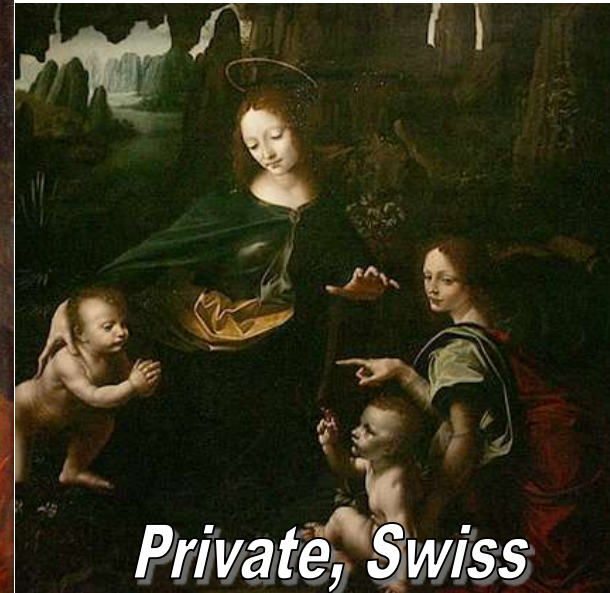
National Gallery, London

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Louvre, Paris

Virgin of the Rocks



Private, Swiss

***From Getty Images
Private collection***



What Art Historians Say

- **Original: The Louvre, Paris**
 - **Copy: the National Gallery, London**
- Both: oils and 2 meters
- Both: on wooden panel
 - The Louvre's transferred to canvas

Who is Depicted?

- Art historians have concluded:
 - Mary,
 - Angel
 - Christ child,
 - John the Baptist,

Annunciation
by LdV &
Verrocchio,
1475, Uffizi



Correct Depictions?

- Seems to be an archangel
 - Nat'l Gallery: Uriel - archangel
 - Why not with JtB?
- If not JtBaptist, who else?
- Is the central figure Mary?
 - Why not with her child?



Why and How Are These Paintings Different?











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Virgin of the Rocks

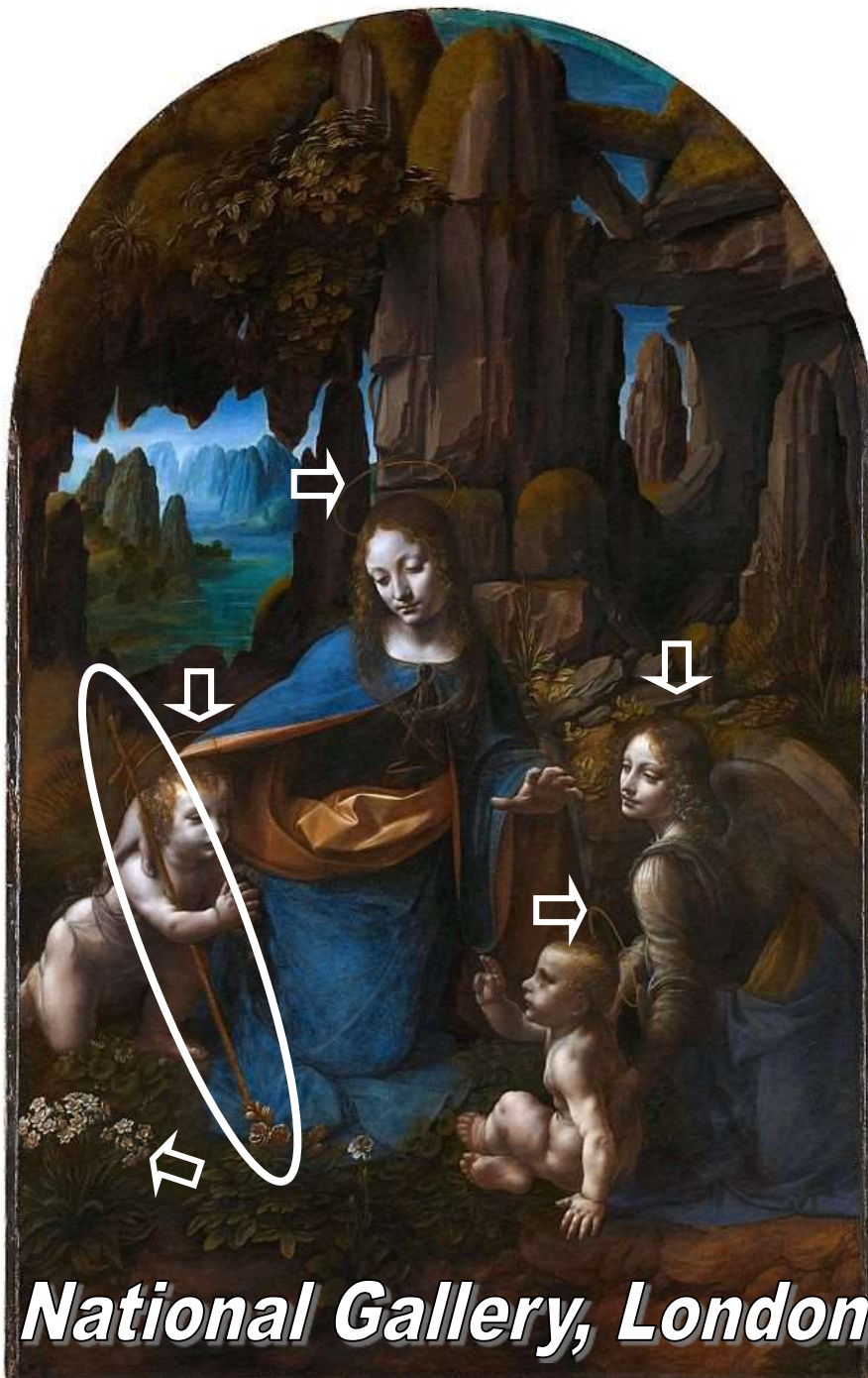
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Remember These Two Gesturing Boys!





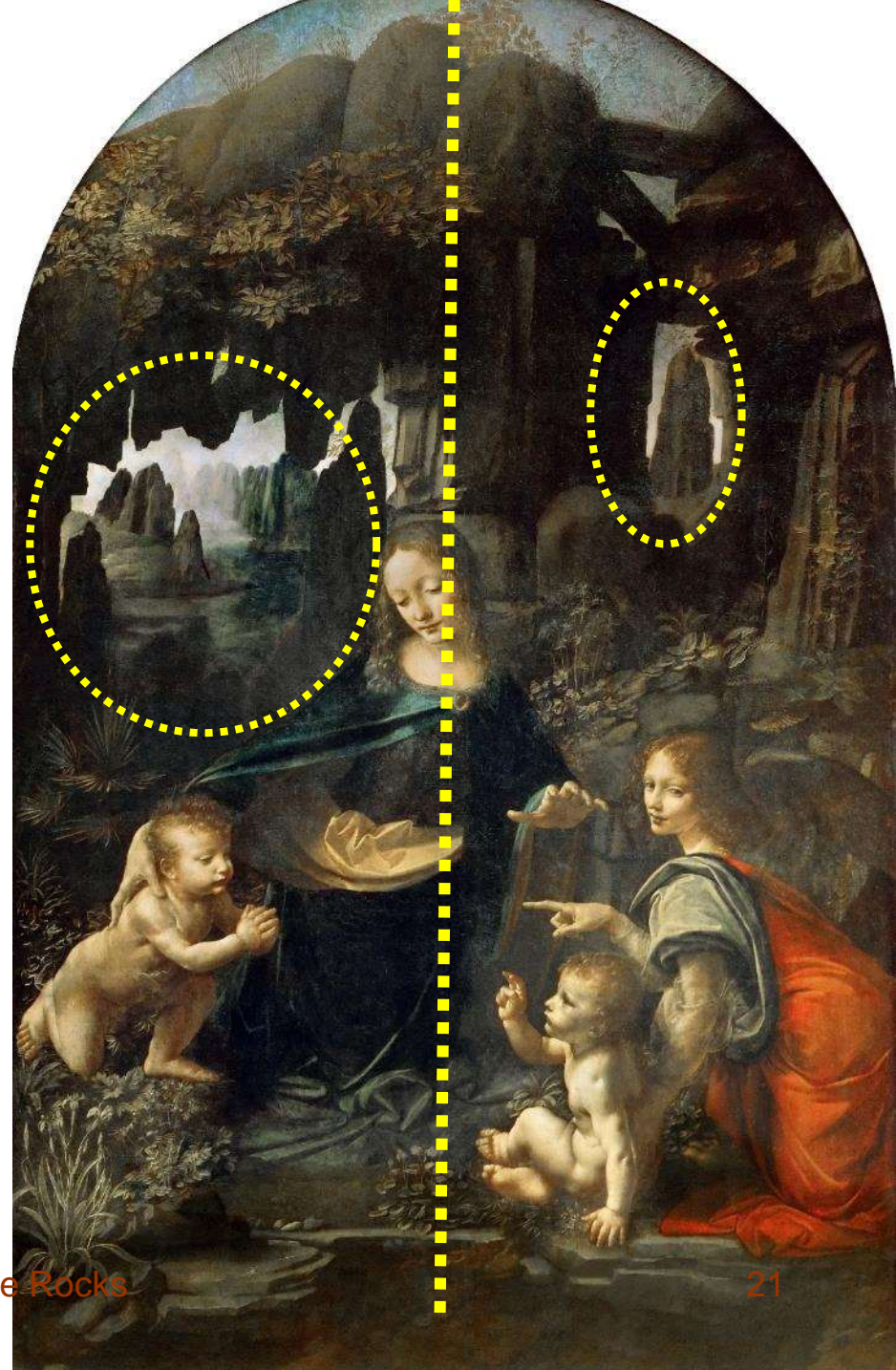
Rocks

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Virgin of the Rocks

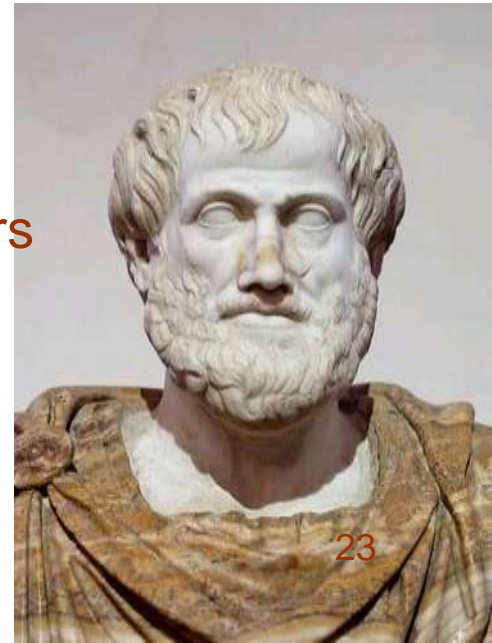


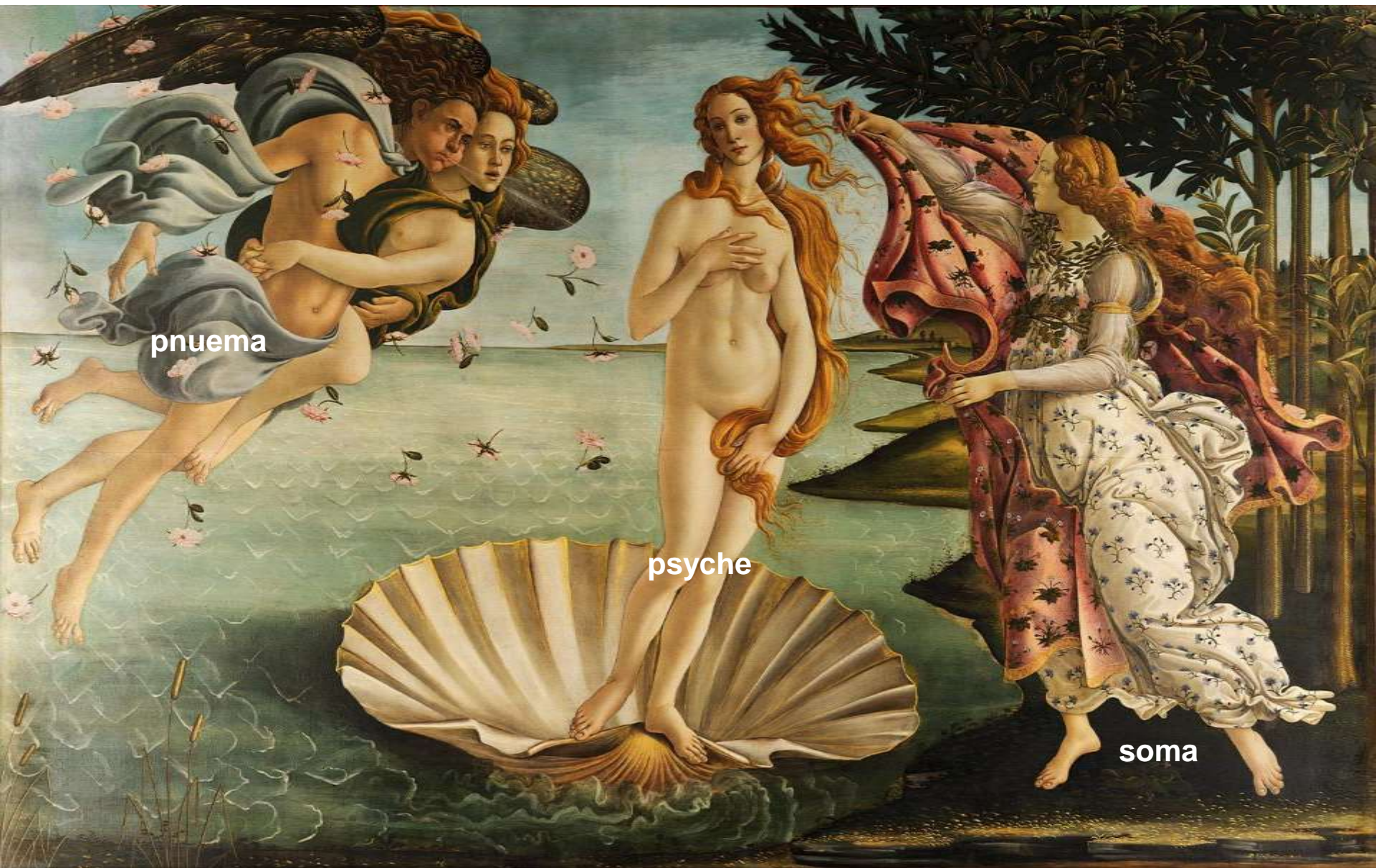
Before we venture into the historical background, any

QUESTIONS?

Renaissance: Rebirth of Greek Philosophy

- Greek (& Mystery) knowledge to Europe
- Florentine art revived Neoplatonism:
 - Christian + Greek
 - Greek statues excavated from underground
 - Aristotle then Plato and other Greek philosophers
 - Milan Academy Entrance: Plato's quote on Geometry
 - Ancient Mysteries and Gnosticism?
- Why secrecy about this?
 - All Ancient Mysteries considered heresies
 - Death to Heretics, Hounds of God – the Inquisitors
 - Divulging Mystery Center's secrets meant death





pnuema

psyche

soma

G. Gemistus Plethon

- b. Constantinople 1355, d. Mystra **1452**
- 1428: Byzantine Emperor John VIII asked Plethon
 - Unify split churches?
- **1438 - 39 Council of Florence** (age 83)
 - Envoy because of his renowned wisdom and morality
 - Military need & reconcile the East-West schism
 - Invited to set up a school in Florence
- **Becomes the Catalyst for the Renaissance**
 - Cosimo de' Medici attended
 - Founded **Accademia Platonica**
 - Continued well after the council ended
 - Book *On the Differences of Aristotle from Plato*
 - Inspired Renaissance paintings on Greek mythology



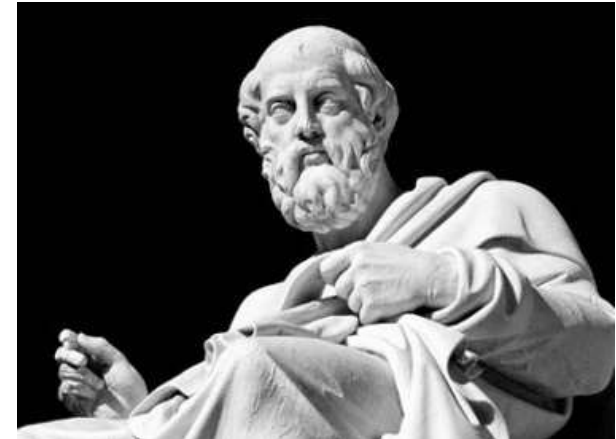
For more see [paper](#)
by Shawn Gray

Who Was Plethon?

- A “Prince Among the Philosophers”
- Marsilio Ficino: **'the second Plato'**
- Cardinal Bessarion: Is Plato's soul in this body?
- Foremost Scholar
 - Plato & Aristotle & Greek Philosophers
 - **Zoroaster / Zarathustra & *ancient mysteries***
- Trunk full of books
 - Medici team allowed to translate
 - Byzantines had many scholars and documents
 - **Hermes Trismegistus**



Siena Cathedral, 1480s
Mosaic floor



Plethon After Florence

- 1440: Founded **mystery center** in **Mystra**
 - **Who could found a mystery center?**
- 1452: Died at age 97 – same year (day? 4/15) Leonardo was born
 - Alexander born on the same day Herostratus burned the Temple of Artemis
- 1453: Constantinople fell to Ottomans
- 1466: Remains from Mystra
 - Stolen, interred in Rimini
 - Florence's Adriatic Seaport
 - "So that The Great Teacher may be among free men"



Manuel Chrysolorus (1355-1415)

- 1391: Envoy to West from Constantinople
 - Sought Western military help
- Gave lectures on Greek philosophers
 - Taught Roberto de' Rossi, Cosimo de' Medici's tutor
- 1396: Invited to teach at Univ. of Florence
 - **Preparer of the Renaissance**
- 1400: Teaches at Bologna, Venice, and Rome
- **Inspires Florentine missions to save ancient texts of the East**
 - 1258: Destruction of Baghdad, Gondhishapur and other centers of learning
 - 1423: Giovanni Aurispa: 238 texts
 - 1469: Basilios Bessarion: 800 volumes



Eastern Christian Church

34 AD:12 Christianities, more to come

- Nestorius (386–451), Patriarch
 - Thomas, Mani, Montanus, Gnostics
- 424–427: broke with Western Church
 - Rejected the Council of Ephesus in 431
- Theology: dyophysite (vs monophysite)
 - Divine and human natures: Christ and Jesus
 - Roman Catholicism: Jesus as Man
 - Eastern: Cosmic Christ
- 9th - 14th centuries: become world's largest Christian church
 - Mediterranean to Mongolia, India to China
- Co-existence with Islam till Hulagu destroyed Baghdad 1258



LdV's Education




- Born 15 April 1452
 - Illegitimate son of a notary
- Early Education
 - At 8: Enrolled in Florence, 1460
 - At 12: Best artistic workshop: Andrea del Verrocchio, 1464
 - Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi
 - Michaelangelo and Raphael in the next generation
 - At 24: Arrested (for nudity, possibly sodomy)
 - Charges dropped
 - Member of the Garden of San Marcos
 - By 28: de Medici household (Lorenzo the Magnificent)

Leonardo da Vinci and Greek Wisdom

*“He alone uses each thing well who has learned
of his own power and that of others, from wisdom”*

-- Ficino

- **Attended Plato Academy**
 - Marsilio Ficino (1433 – 1499), Head 1462 – 1492
 - LdV was 10 YO – was he ever initiated?
 - 1456: John Argyropoulos, **Aristotelian**
 - 3 Philosophers
 - What taught?
 - Academy in Milan
 - Plato, geometry
 - **Secret schools?**
 - Kabbalists
 - Cathars
 - Templar Knights
- 
- A detail from a Renaissance painting, likely by Sandro Botticelli, depicting three men in period clothing. The man on the left is older, with white hair and a red cap. The man in the center is also older, with white hair and a black cap. The man on the right is younger, with dark hair and a red cap. They are all wearing red robes and appear to be engaged in a serious conversation. The background is dark and indistinct.



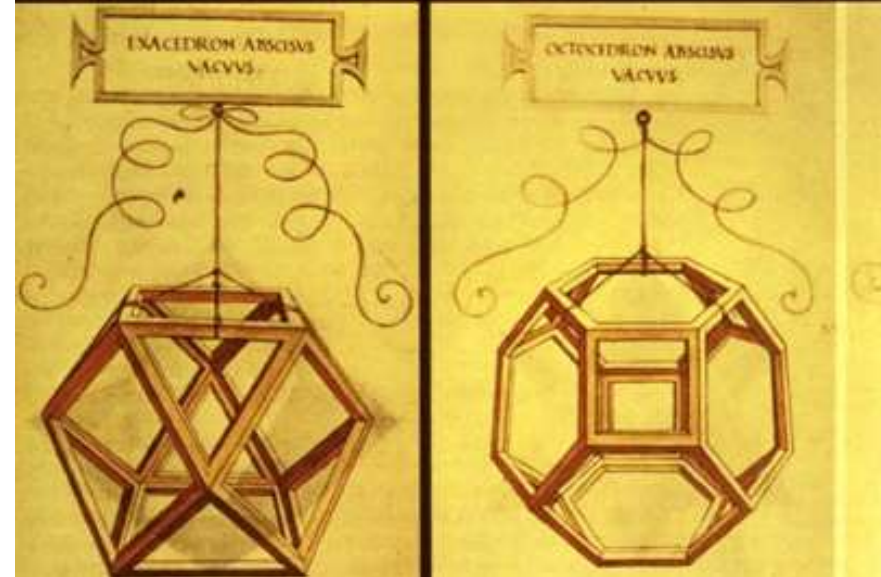
**Leonardo knew
Ficino well – he
painted him!**



Source: Ficino

LdV After Florence

- 1482: Leonardo left Florence
 - Traveled with his paintings
 - Savonarola mobs
- 1485: Academy in Milan active
 - 1492: Mathematician Luca Pacioli invited
- 1499: Fled Milan at the start of the 2nd Italian War
 - French troops destroy Horse
- 1501: Working again in Florence (Mona Lisa, Raphael)
- **1506: Returned to Milan from Florence** (*to finish that painting!*)
- 1515: Moved to Rome
- 1516: Moved to France
 - Accepted a commission from the King Francois I of France
 - Died at Clos Lucé, France, on May 2, 1519 at age 67



Before we venture into an analysis of the paintings, any

QUESTIONS?

Early Christianity's Support for an “Heretical” Mystery

Gnostic Story
Pistis Sophia



Pistis Sophia (Gnostic)

- <http://gnosis.org/library/pistis-sophia/ps063.htm>
- Refers to **two messiahs and two families!**
 - Two boys about age 12. One working vineyard.
 - Other spirit comes. Mary fetches 2nd. Become united.
- Chapter 59
 - "Thou also, **Mary**, ... **thou and the other Mary**"
- Chapter 61
 - "he embraced thee, he **kissed** thee. And thou also, thou didst kiss him and you **became one**."
- Chapter 62
 - "The **other Mary** came forward"
 - http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/PistisSophia/pistisSophia_Book1.html

Kissing Babes from Pistis Sophia?



Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519)



Joos van Cleve (1485-1540)
Called Leonardo of the North

Holy Infants Embracing (Kissing Babes)

Joos van
Cleve
1485 – 1541
Flemish
(Antwerp)





↑
JvC

Students



of th

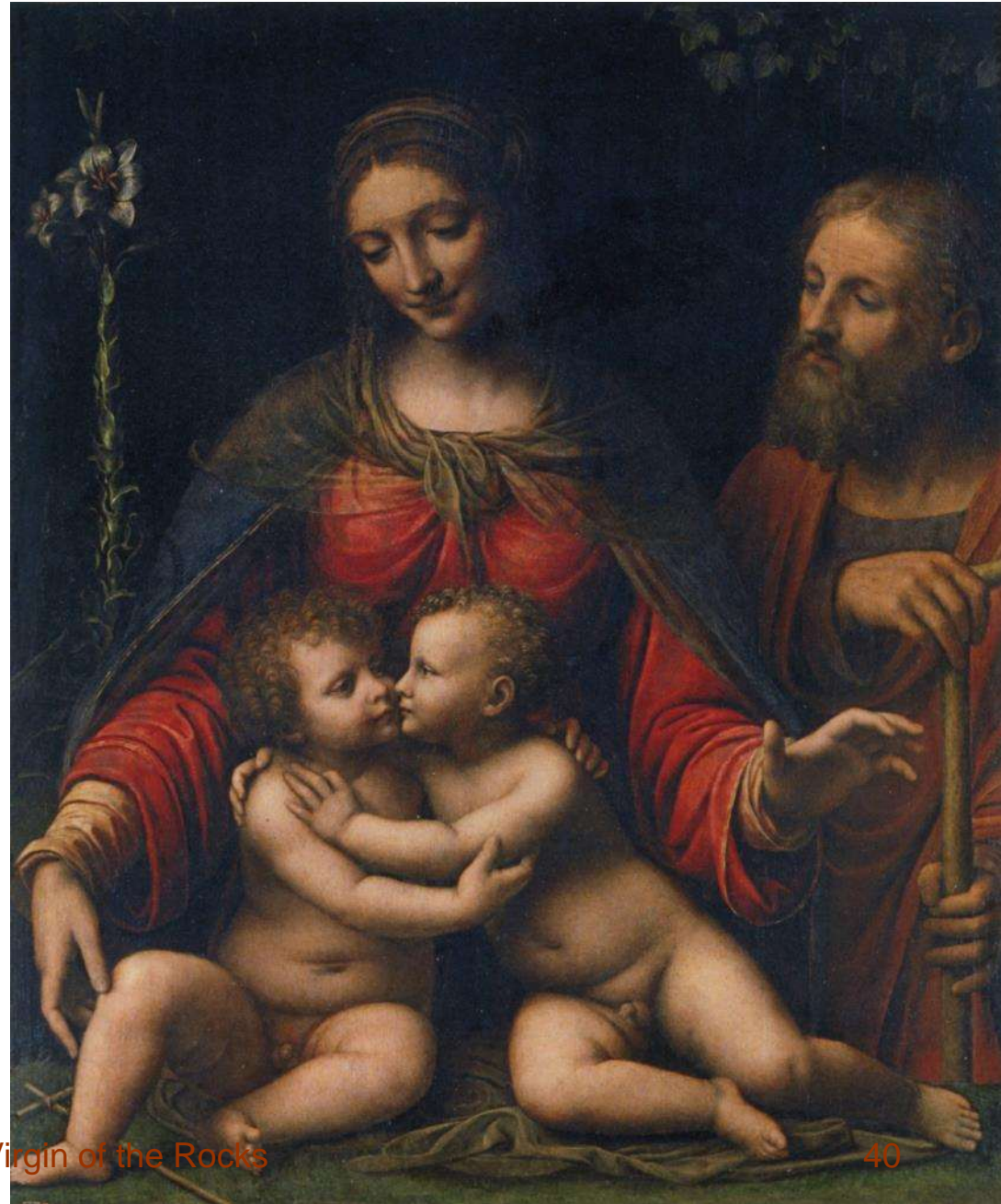
Kissing Babes with Madonna

- ***Thuelin Madonna***
 - Marco d'Oggiono
 - Thuelin collection, Paris
- Note:
 - Kissing Babes
 - Hand gestures
 - Madonna left hand on wisdom
- Escaping the slaughter of the innocents?



Bernardino Luini

- 1480 - 1532
- ***Holy Family***
- Pupil of
 1. Ambrogio Bergognone
 2. Leonardo
- Note female's hand gestures
 - Same as VoR with *Kissing Babes* in between







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Virgin of the Rocks

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John the Baptist! – Protection?

Bernardino de Conti
from a private collection

Clues:

- **Staff**
- **Two ‘windows’**
(*impossible – clue?*)
- **Haloos!**
- Bird
- Students knew of each other's works



Bernardino de' Conti

- Private collection
- Appeared exhibition in Ancona, Italy, 2005.



Three Children by Bernardino de' Conti

- Who are these three?
- Exact VoR poses
 - Boys not reversed
- Halo
- Hands
- Why John? Baptism!
- Note the “*transfer*”
- https://elpais.com/diario/2005/10/09/cultura/1128808804_740215.html



Three Children by Bernardino de' Conti



Madonna Terranuova

Raphael

1483-1520

Painted 1505

LdV in Milan
by 1483!

LdV in
Florence
1501-06



Before we venture into a proof of the depictions, any

QUESTIONS?

Deeper into the Heresy: Expectation of Two Messiahs

Dead Sea Scrolls

Essenes



Dead Sea Scrolls



- Discovered 1947
 - Essenes of Qumran
 - 11 caves (more recently)
 - 872 scrolls
- Synopsis: Two messiahs were expected
 - [see J. J. Collins, J. Starcky, M. Karnawalski, J. Tabor, & *livius.org*]
 - Qumranites expected the coming of not one, but **two Messiahs**
 - “Its members [Essenes of Qumran] were looking forward to a 'Messiah of Israel' and a 'Messiah of David' who resemble the **priestly and kingly** descendants.”
 - One of a **priestly** lineage [Aaron] and one **kingly** [Israel]
 - Some scholars see the priestly as ‘above’ the kingly

DSS: Two Become One

- *Damascus Document*.
 - "The Messiah, which is the Son of Joseph
 - **will be made one** with the Son of David,
 - but he will be killed..."
- *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*
 - (version translated 13th C by Robert Grosseteste)
 - Available for Leonardo to read
 - Testament of Simeon 7.1-2: "For the Lord will raise up from Levi someone as a **high-priest** and from Judah someone as **king**.
 - "He will save all the gentiles and the tribe of Israel."



Other Expectations of 2 Messiahs

- Kabbalistic Roots: Zohar

*"Another Messiah, the son of Joseph, will **unite** himself with the **Messiah**, the son of David. But the son of Joseph will not remain in life, **he will be killed and will become alive again**, when the little hill receives life upon the great hill."*

- "Old Testament": *Zechariah 4:14, Numbers 24:17, Ezekiel 37:15-17,*
 1. *"These are the **two** anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth"*
 2. *"There shall come a **star** out of **Jacob**, and a **scepter** shall rise out of **Israel**"*
 3. *"They [sticks of Judah and Joseph] **shall become one** in thine hand"*
- Summary: Expected **two births** (messiahs), a later **merging**

Births of Jesus

*Mark & John start at **Baptism***

Matthew 1:1-25

- From Abraham,..., David, **King Solomon** (father ...)
- Angel to Joseph
- **Middle-aged, royal lineage**
- Live in **Bethlehem**
- Comfortable setting
- **Magi** from the East
- *Kingly and wise*
- Family **flees to Egypt** – returns to Nazareth after Herod dies
- **Brothers and sisters**

Luke 3:23-38 (at baptism)

- **Priest Nathan** (son of ...), David ,..., Abraham,..., Adam
- Angel to Mary
- **Young and poor**
- Live in **Nazareth**
- In a stable in Bethlehem
- **Shepherds**
- *Pure and loving*
- **No threat.** Jesus grows up in Nazareth
- **Only child**

New Testament: Luke & Matthew

- No records: Christmas not celebrated until 354 AD
 - Not till 380 in Constantinople
- Historical inaccuracies:
 - King Herod's death between 4 – 1 BC
 - **Matthew**: slaughter of the innocents carried out by Herod
 - Thus Jesus born in 1BC (or even 4BC)
 - **Luke**: no slaughter
 - No mention of Herod
 - Luke: Jesus after Herod (and after Matthew Jesus, ~1AD?)
- Could there have been two?
 - Same first names very possible
 - But different families with same parents' names?

The Forgotten Early Christian Theology

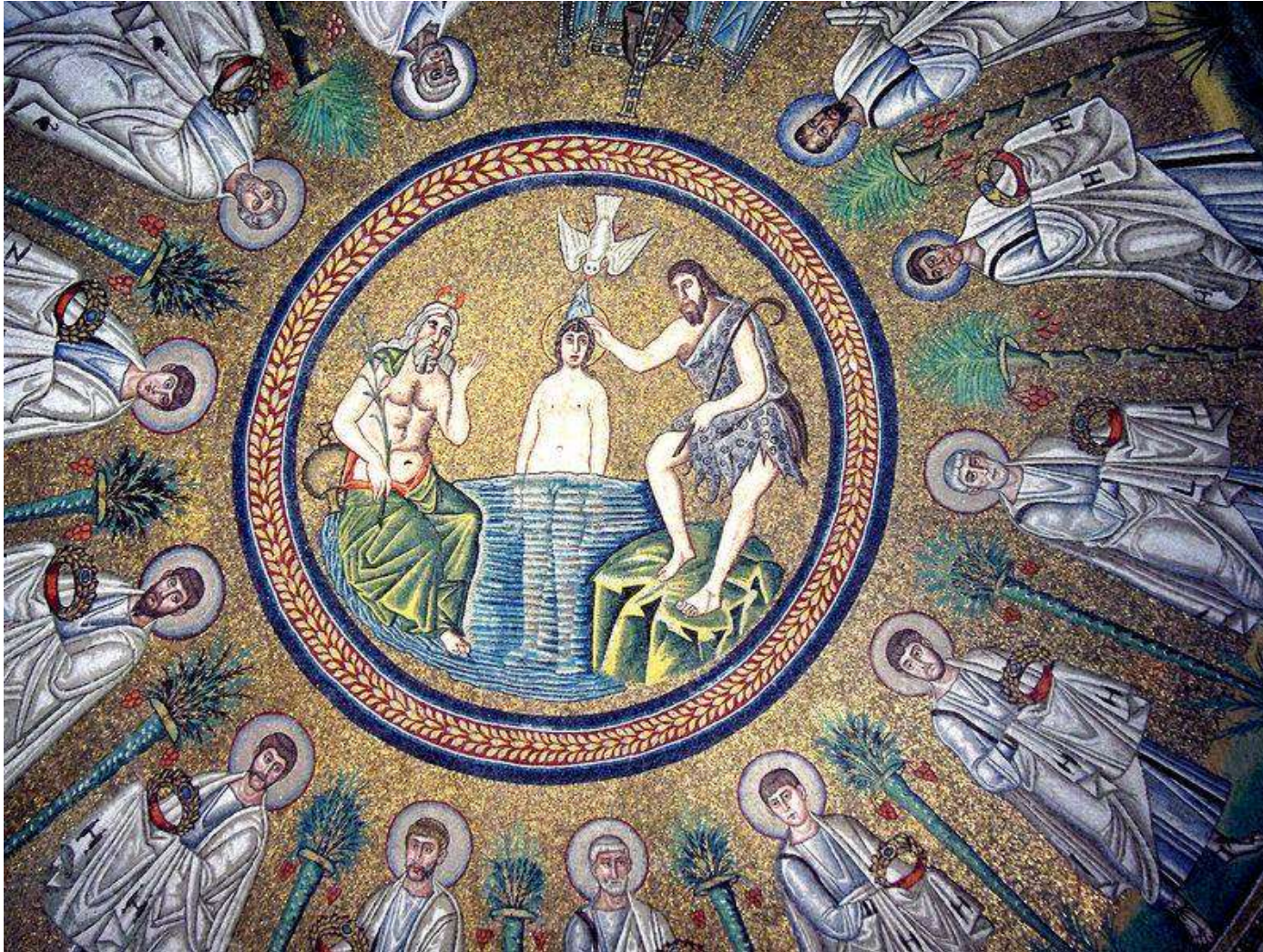
- Focus: **Mystery** of Golgotha and Easter
 - Origin: **Mystery wisdom and Hellenistic philosophies**
 - Plato's 'transmigration of the soul'
 - St. Augustine: Christianity existed before Christ
 - *Christmas* not important
- Christ entered Jesus *at 30*
 - **Birth of Christ at baptism**
 - Cosmic Christ united with Jesus of Nazareth
 - Christ (God) would experience death
 - Lost philosophical basis and knowledge:
 - Pnuema, psyche, & soma
 - Spirit, soul, & body
 - Today, reality = physical (body)
 - **Gnostic** knowledge of Mystery of Golgotha
 - "Mine hour has now come" – cosmic Christ



Fra Angelico, 1442, San Marco Florence

What Happened at the Baptism?

Arian Baptistry in Ravenna, Italy 5th Century



Right to left:

- John the Baptist
- Jesus receiving the Spirit (Dove)
- God of the Jordan River
- = Man + God

Circled by 12 Apostles

Built by Ostrogoth King Theodoric the Great, Arian Christian

Christian states in 495 AD



Arian rule



Catholic rule

ARIAN RULERS AND THEIR DOMAINS

+	Gundobad	(Burgundians)
△	Clovis I	(Franks)
○	Theodoric	(Ostrogoths)
◇	Theodemund ?	(Suebi)
×	Gunthamund	(Vandals)
⋈	Alaric II	(Visigoths)

CATHOLIC RULER AND HIS DOMAIN

□	Anastasius I	(Romans)
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2 Messiahs?

Center figure:

- I will draw with my right hand and bestow with my loving left

Kingly Jesus:

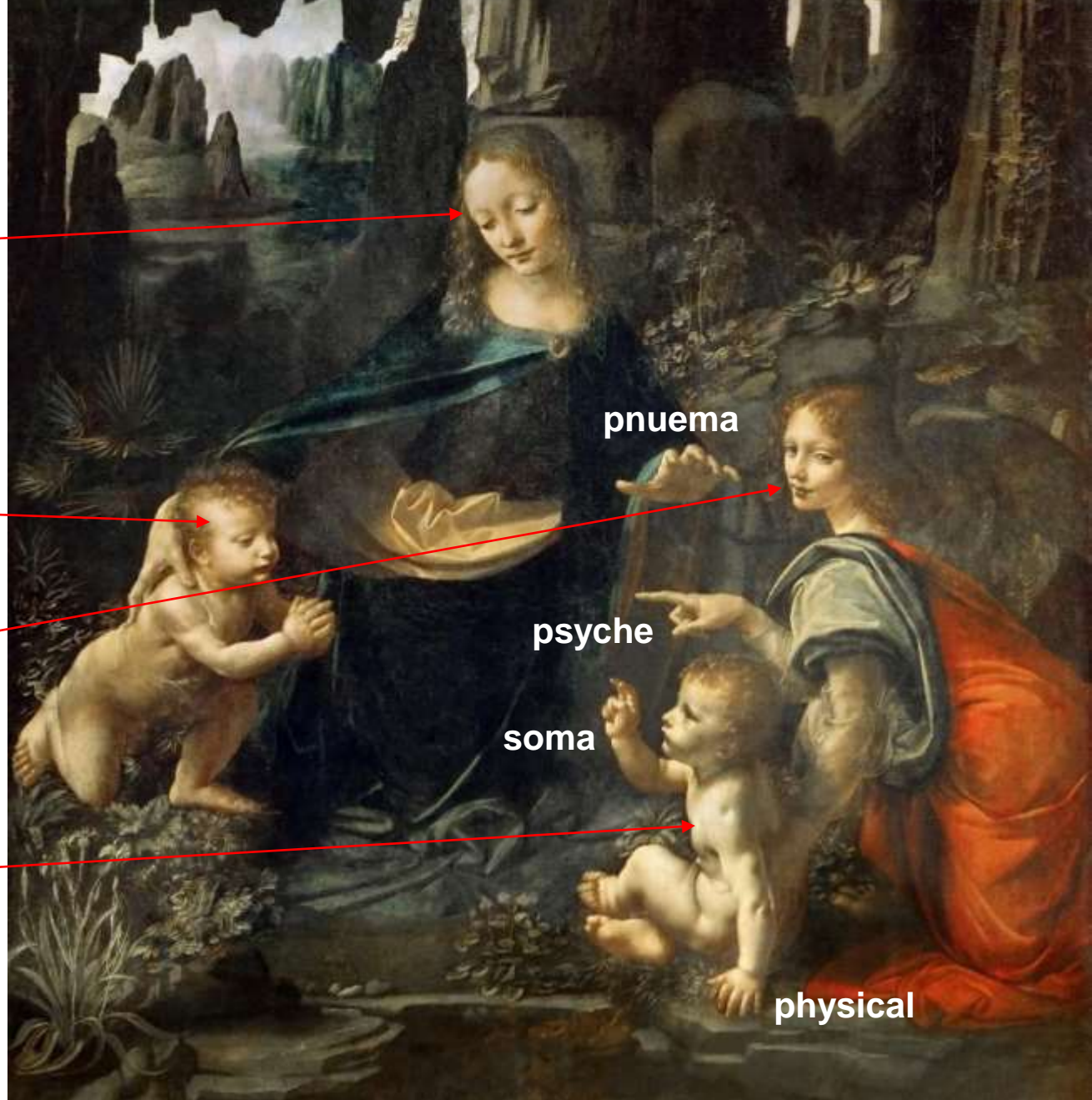
- I honor you as our archetype

Arch-angel:

- 3 members of him shall be replanted in you

Priestly Jesus:

- Your wisdom, my purity, God's will be done



Problem with Our Conclusion

If it is two Jesus children, Luke: *Priest* & Matthew: *King*
then why is there just one Jesus later in life?



Merging of the Two Messiahs

Where in NT are two Jesus children united?

- Luke: story of Jesus at age 12 in the Temple
 - Not mentioned in Matthew (its Jesus is 13 or 14)
- Behind the Curtain of the Holy of the Holies
 - Jerusalem Temple
 - "And Jesus grew in wisdom, maturity, and grace before God and men" [Luke 2:52]



Based on Rudolf Steiner's insights.

6th Century Byzantine Art – Two at 12



The Bohdan And Varvara Khanenko Museum Of Arts, Kiev

Jesus Among the Doctors

- Bernardino di Betto (Pinturicchio)
 - 1452-1513
 - Bergognone & LdV
- Painted 1501
- Fresco, Bagloioni Chapel, Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello, Italy



Jesus Among the Doctors

- Notice hands

<http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Bernardino+Luini>

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Virgin of the Rocks

Jesus Among the Doctors

- Colors, socks, clothes



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Virgin of the Rocks

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Jesus Among the Doctors

- Clothing colors
 - Black, blue, gold, magenta
 - Royal purple
- Objects in hand
- Four plus one
 - Hierophant
 - Four bodies
- Wall off two children
- Socks:poor, shoes:rich



Jesus Among the Doctors

Ambrogio
Bergognone
b.1452–d. 1524

"And Jesus grew
in wisdom, age
and grace before
God and men"
[Luke 2:52]



Jesus Among the Doctors Bernardino Luini

- Student of both Leonardo and Bergognone
- Painted 1515
- Leonardo's signature appears 3 times on the back



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Virgin of the Rocks

Defendente Ferrari (1490 – 1540)



Painted 1526
Staatsgalerie
Stuttgart

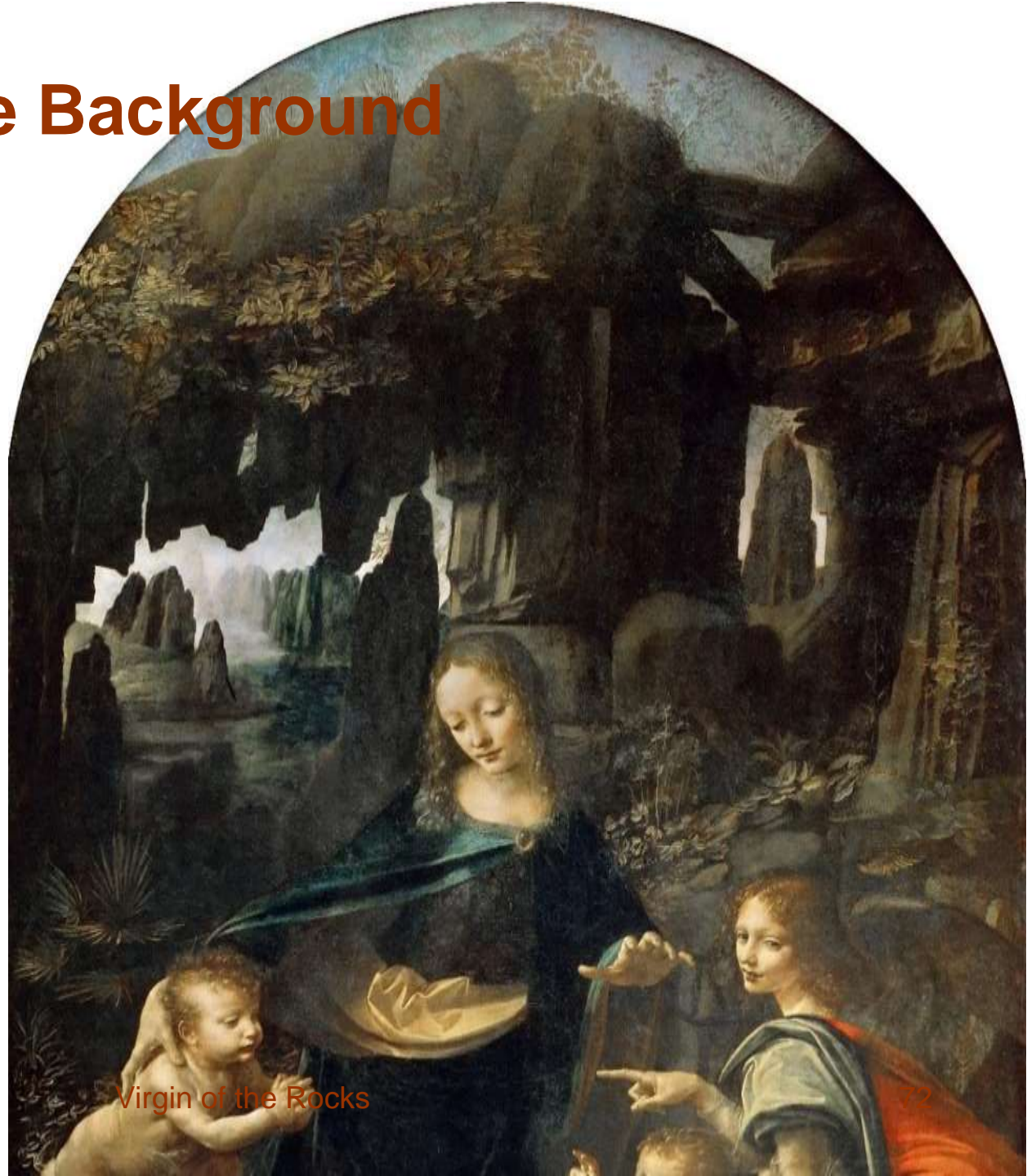
Apprentice to
Giovanni
Martino
Spanzotti
who studied
in Milan

Before we proceed into sacred geometry, any

QUESTIONS?

Secrets of the Background

- Window through the rocks (earth)
- Each child has their own
- Past lives
- Left child has had many
- Right child has only one → must be Adam!
 - Adam Kadmon



***Background
closeup***



Background

***Matthew story:
King
Zarathustra***



***Luke story:
Priest
Adam-Kadmon***

Conclusion: A Christian Mystery Revealed!



Sacred Geometry



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Reproduction

Virgin of the

Sacred Geometry



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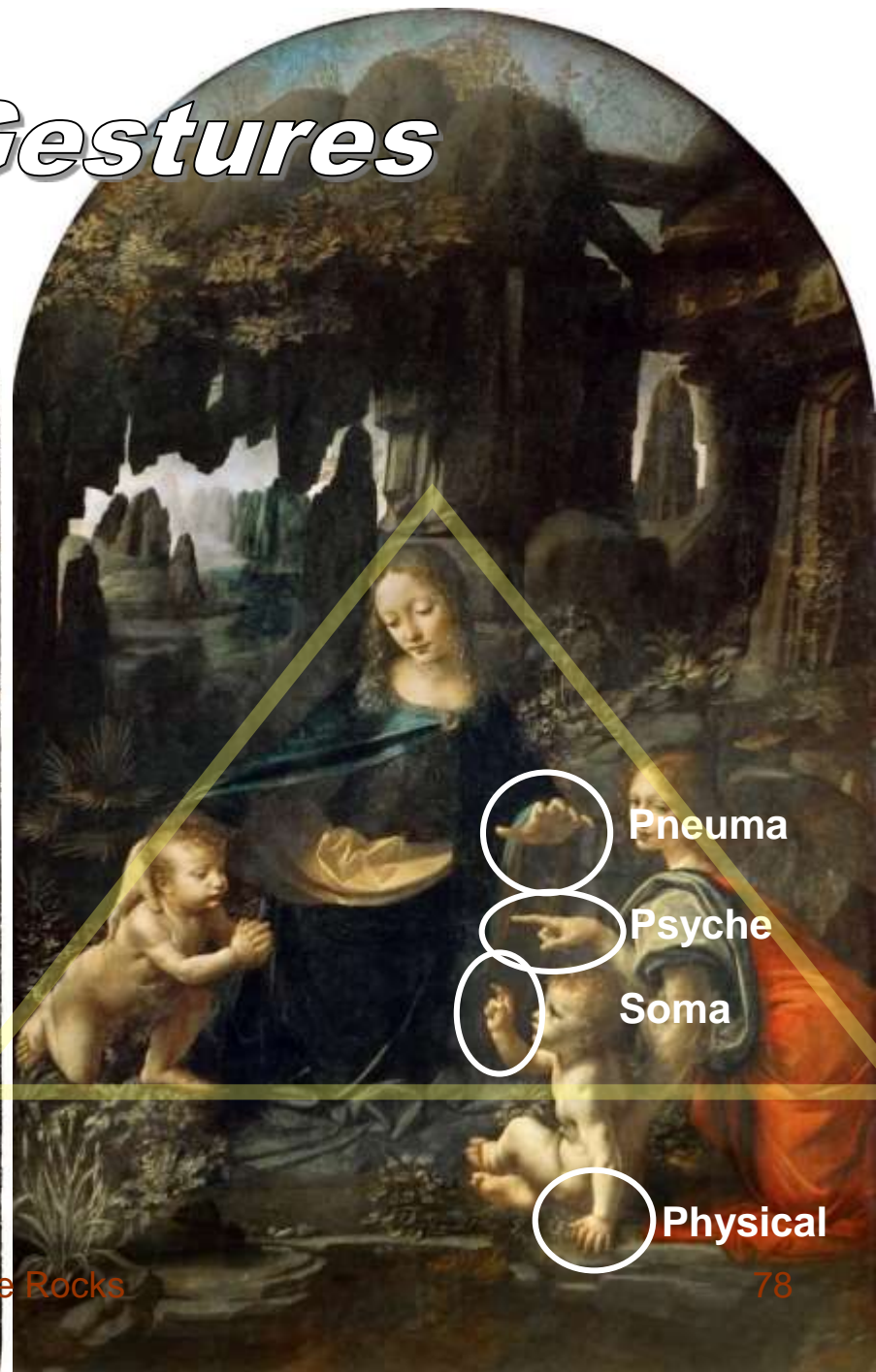
Virgin of the

Hand Gestures



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Virgin of the Rocks



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Model of Dionysius the Areopagite



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Virgin of the Rocks

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Before we wrap things up, any

QUESTIONS?

History of *The Virgin of the Rocks*

- 1482: Unfinished original travels with LdV to Milan
- 1499: Legal dispute (after 16 years): Ambrogio de Predis claimed to have completed the work, wanted payment
- **1506:** April 27: Dispute settled with the requirement that LvD return to Milan within two years “to complete” the painting
- 1507: Artists paid for copy
- 1508: Copy installed
- 1516: Goes to France with LdV
- After LdV’s death → royal property
- 1625: Found with *Mona Lisa*
 - French Royal collection – donated to Louvre

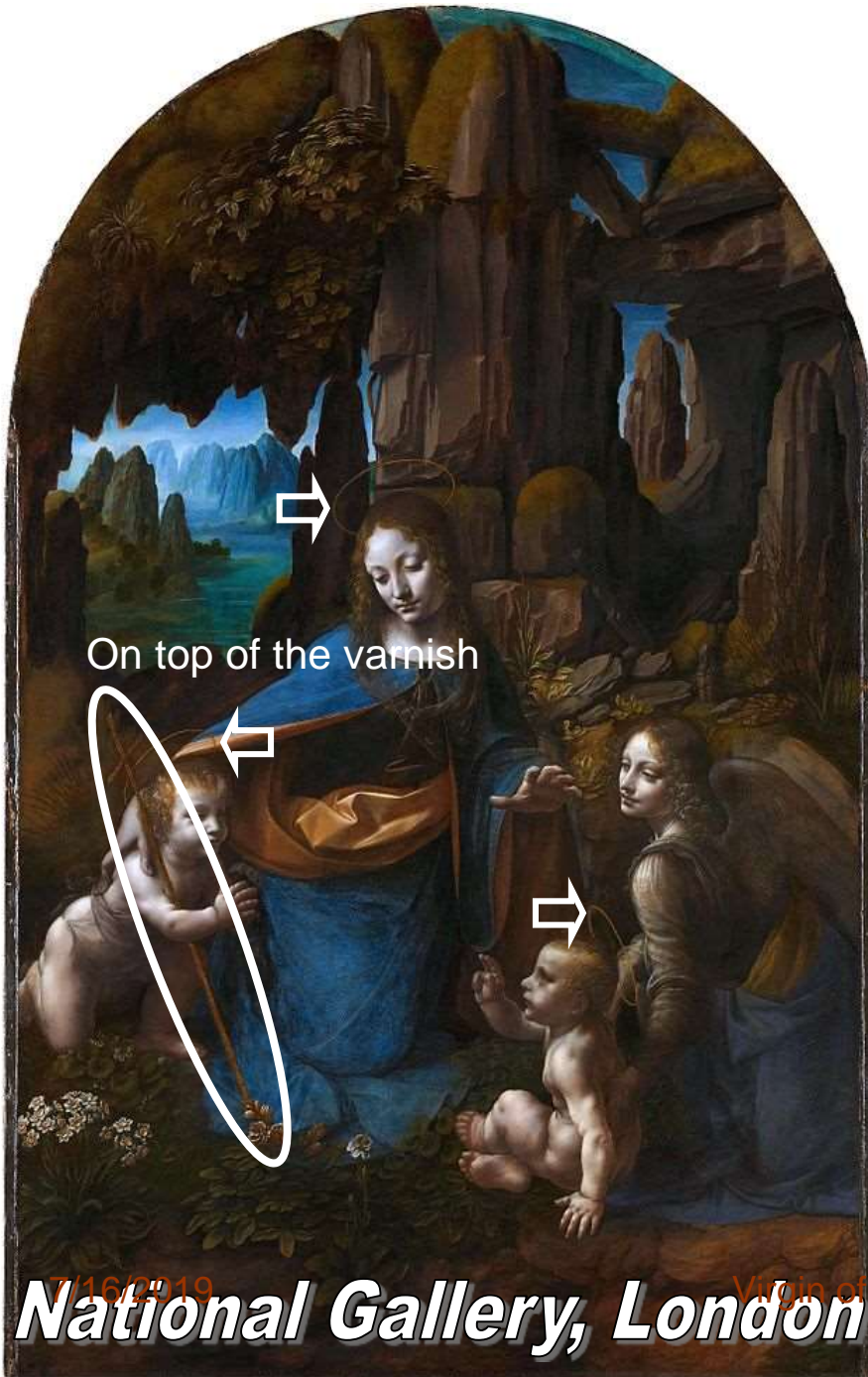


Why Was This 2nd Painting Made?



- Confraternity rejected original
- February 1485: 800 lire paid.
- Work continued
- 1490: Ambrogio and Leonardo asked for more
- + 1,200 Lire
- The Confraternity: + 100 Lire
- Duke Sforza asked to intervene

Solving the Dispute



- March 1503: Louis XII intervened
- June 1503: Confraternity contested
- Requested 'expert evaluation or return of the painting'
- April 1506: judge ruled the work incomplete – Leonardo obliged to complete it
- Leonardo performed 'touch-ups'
- August 1508: painting installed

Lecture Conclusions

- Answered why paint was above the varnish on copy
- Original painting revealed a 15th C heresy
 - Two Messiahs in Ancient texts
 - Matthew and Luke of New Testament texts
 - Early Christianity theological ideas depicted
 - Two boys both named Jesus – merged in Temple at puberty
 - Cosmic Christ born at baptism of Jesus
 - Plethon → Plato Academy → Leonardo
- Proof from student's paintings
 - Depicted: Two Jesus boys, arch-angel, and Elohim-Madonna
- Leonardo's Call for Renaissance 2.0
 - Human being: spirit, soul, and body

Conclusion: Warding of the Inquisition!



The “Smoking Gun”



Jesus Among the Doctors



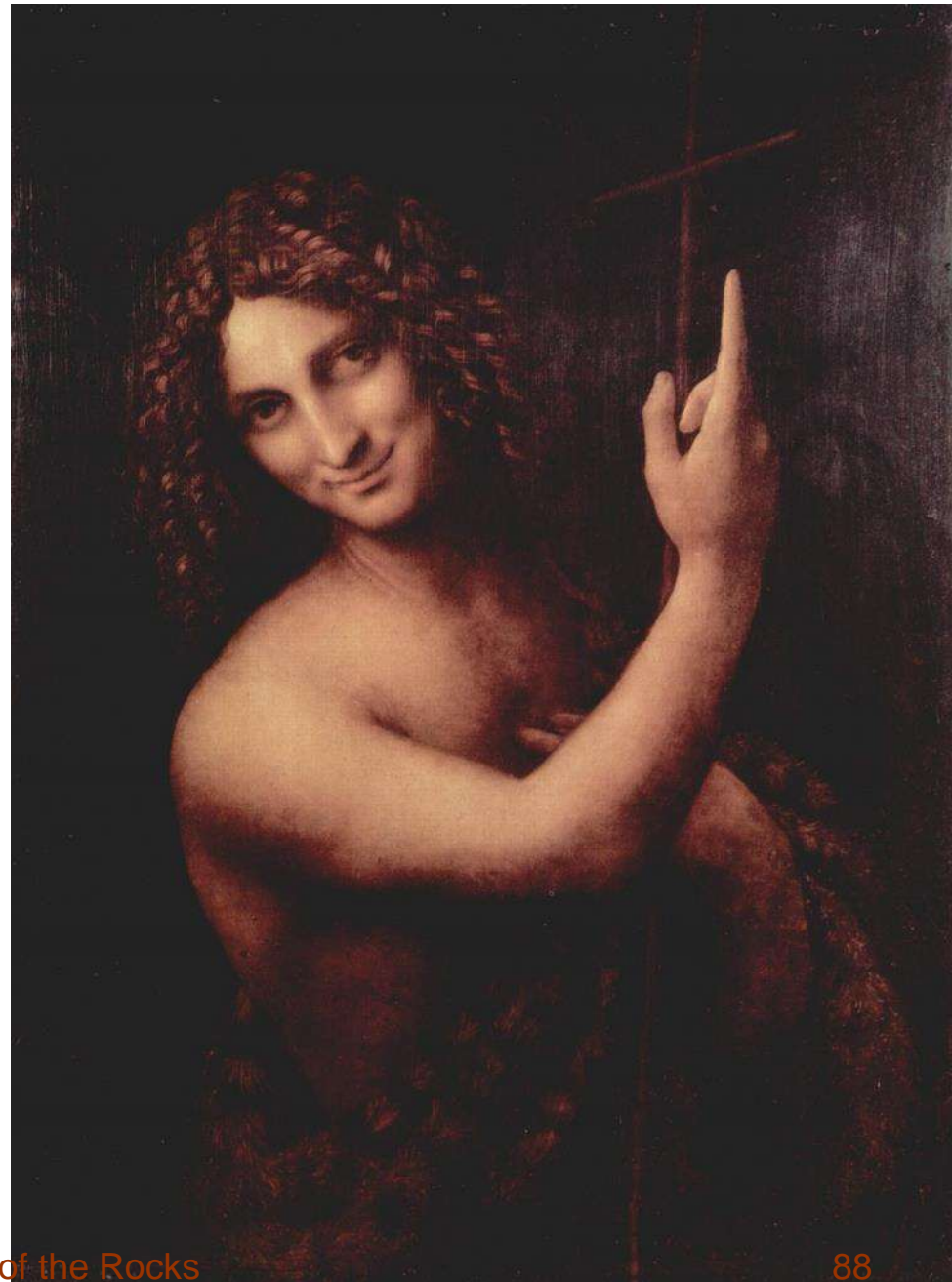
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Virgin of the Rocks

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John the Baptist

- Gospels of Mark and John
 - Begin with baptism
 - Jesus of Nazareth becomes Jesus-Christ
- Gestures
 - Right hand
 - Left hand
- Staff and fingers
- Smirk
 - Mocking the Church?
 - Christian Mysteries?





Discussion Time

What Questions Arise for You?
Why might Leonardo risk this?

Slides are available at www.thechristianmysteries.com

Leda and the Swan

- Cesare da Sesto
- 1515-1520



Summary: The Two Jesus Stories

	Matthew	Luke
Theme	Kings, Magi - Star	Poor Shepherds, Heavenly hosts
Lineage	Through King Solomon	Through Priest Nathan
Generations	42 (14x3) from Abraham	77 (7x11) from Adam
Angel speaks to	Joseph	Mary
Original home	Bethlehem	Nazareth
Slaughter of the innocents	Yes	Not mentioned
Escape to Egypt	Yes	No
John the Baptist's birth	Not mentioned	Mary visits Elizabeth
History at birth	Many lives, wisdom - Zarathustra	Purity, no karma – Adam Kadmon

Dead Sea Scrolls Recap

- 'Messiah of Israel' and a 'Messiah of David' expected
- Priestly and Kingly descendants
- References:
 - http://www.livius.org/men-mh/messiah/messiah_14.html
 - Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls: New Scrolls and New Interpretations*, Viking Press, 1958
 - Jona Lendering, ***Qumran's dual Messianism***
<http://www.livius.org/articles/religion/messiah/messiah-9-two-messiahs/>
 - http://www.livius.org/men-mh/messiah/messiah_14.html
 - John Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reappraisal*, Penguin Books, 1956; see also <http://www.blackelectorate.com/articles.asp?ID=857>

Associations Made by Edward R. Smith

Kingly

- Solomon / Hiram Abiff
- **Cain** stream
- Perfection of “the 3 loaves” from **Abraham*** (14x3)
- **Tree of Knowledge** *forward*
- Magi imply Zoroaster aka **Zarathustra** stream

Priestly

- Nathan (Aaron)
- **Abel** stream
- No karma, **Adam Kadmon**
- Redemption is to find way *back* to **Tree of Life**
- Heavenly hosts surrounding

* For more see E. R. Smith's *The Burning Bush*, pg. 411

Bacchus

- St. John the Baptist
 - *Note the Staff of John*
- 1515
- Louvre, Paris
- The painting originally depicted John the Baptist.
- In the late 17th century, between the years 1683 and 1693, it was overpainted and altered to serve as *Bacchus*.



What Did We Cover?

- What is this painting, *Virgin of the Rocks* about?
 - The story of the two Jesus boys
- What is the historical context?
 1. Early Roman Christianity sought to free itself of the Ancient Mysteries
 2. Mysteries continue, underground, rising up from time to time – flowerings, but brutally crushed each time
 3. Western Christian Church was in a moral crisis entering 15th Century
- What do we know about the painting's history?
 - Painted while Leonardo exposed to Florentine Flowering
 - Louvre painting done first but not accepted by confraternity
 - National Gallery painting accepted by confraternity after touchup
 - Like the Mona Lisa, VoR ends up in the French Royal collection

BACKUP MATERIAL

Biographical Citations

1. Carmen C. Bambach, editor, *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 2003 and *Leonardo da Vinci Rediscovered*, Yale,
2. Pietro C. Marini, *Leonardo da Vinci: the Complete Paintings*, New York, 2003
3. James Kettlewell, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Virgin Of The Rocks': The Subject Matter Explained*, <http://www.jameskettlewell.com/virgin.html>
4. Ernst Ullman, *A Rediscovered Leonardo da Vinci: The Concetto of the Virgin of the Rocks*, Karolinger Verlag 2010
5. Martin Kemp, *Leonardo: Revised Edition*, Oxford University Press, 2011
6. Frank Zollner, *Leonardo*, Taschen, 2000
7. <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~matc/math5.geometry/unit14/unit14.html>

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Conclusions

Why there were two (or three) paintings

- The ‘heresy’ in the first one was rejected by the confraternity
- A copy was made for their commission, keep original ‘clean’
- Copy deemed theologically erroneous till touch-ups over varnish
- Additional copy perhaps for Leonardo’s studio after he fled Milan

Christian “mystery” revealed in original VoR

- Important for LdV to portray
- Theological proof of Two Messiahs
 - Old Testament, Dead Sea scrolls, Kabbalah
 - New Testament (and Nag Hammadi)
- How Leonardo da Vinci knew
 - Plato Academy, **Plethon**, Garden of San Marcos
- Corroboration? Leonardo’s own students were in on this!

Why his Paintings Are at Louvre?

- DaVinci carried with him major works
 - Virgin of the Rocks
 - Mona Lisa
- French King had intervened
- 1516: manor house Clos Lucé
- Here he spent the last 3 years of his life,
 - Accompanied by his pupil Francesco Melzi
- After LdV's death, paintings became royal property
- Eventually the his works were donated to the Louvre

