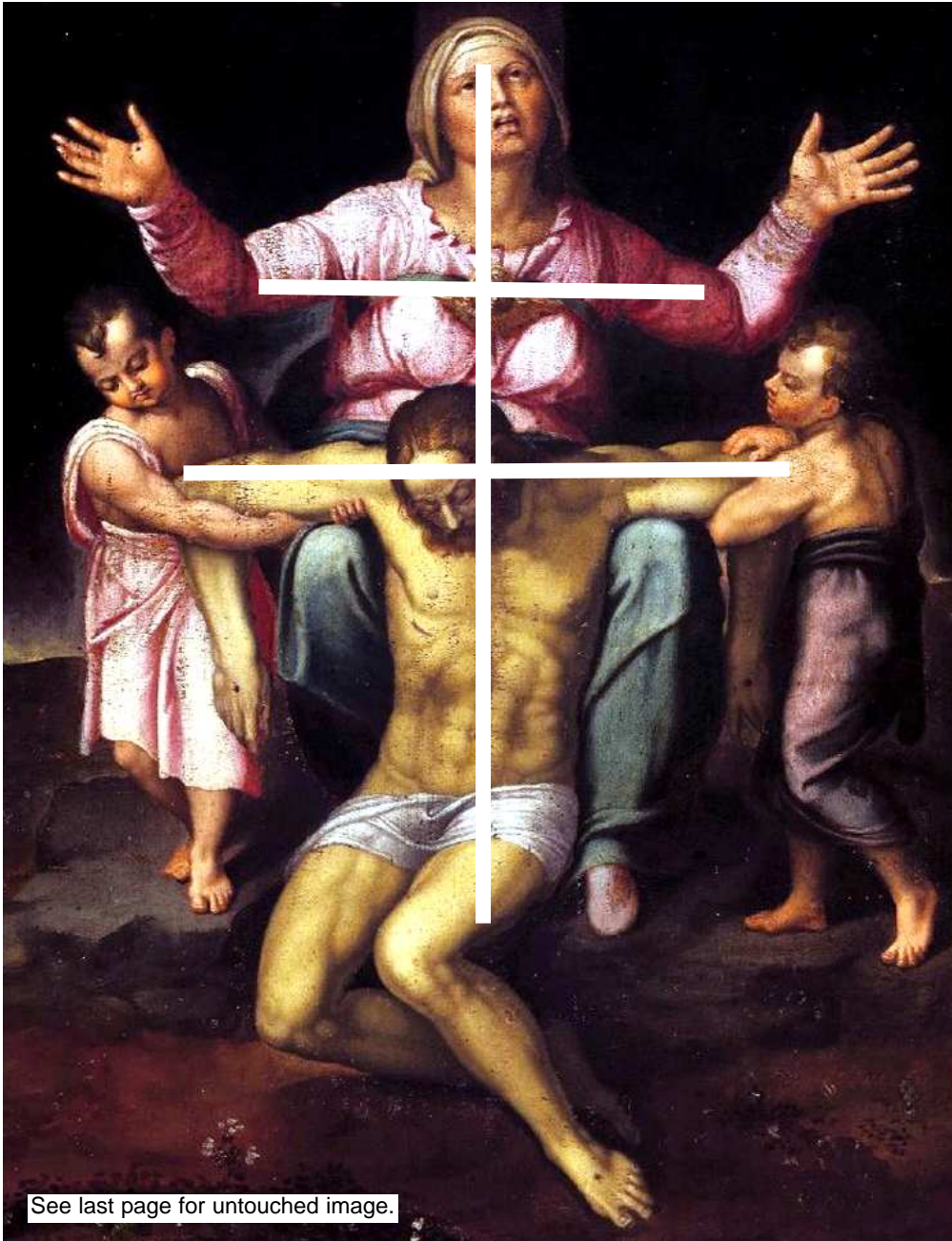


MICHELANGELO MUSING

MSCNY ARTICLE No. 47

A Personal Perspective by C. L. Murphy, BF



See last page for untouched image.

The position of the arms of both Magdalene and Christ can be said to form the Patriarchal Cross. This was pointed out by the Italian professionals who analyzed the painting. The cross is used by the Church, but was also associated with the medieval Knights Templar. In the United States it is a US Knights Templar symbol and when placed on a slant is the symbol of the 33rd AASR degree. See the entry from Mackey's encyclopedia below.

Michelangelo put a lot of obscure symbolism in his paintings; he even gave Adam a navel. For sure, he was too smart to overlook this. Could he have been a bit of an evolutionist at heart?



Cross, Patriarchal. A cross, the upright piece being twice crossed, the upper arm shorter than the lower. It is so called because it is borne before a Patriarch in the Roman Church. It is the insignia of the officers of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templars of the United States. *The same cross placed on a slant is the insignia of all possessors of the Thirty-third Degree in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.*

Wikipedia Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarchal_cross

Newspaper Report: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/8057148/300m-Michelangelo-painting-found-behind-sofa.html>



The painting seen here recently surfaced in Buffalo, New York, and after several years of research was determined to be by Michelangelo (Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475–1564).

The painting reflects a significant departure from Michelangelo's accepted religious artwork and may indicate his displeasure with the Roman Catholic Church. He and others formed the *Spirituali*, which disagreed with various doctrines of the Church. The group actually had a considerable following and they physically revolted in an attempt to "bring down" the Roman Church. The Church viciously put down the revolution, and Michelangelo went into hiding in a bunker he had prepared. The Pope was convinced to forgive him, and he emerged to carry on his painting for the Church.

At the time, the Church had strict rules as to the depiction of the Virgin Mary. What we see in this painting is a major departure from these rules if the woman seen here is the Virgin. However, it appears more appropriate that the woman is Mary Magdalene, who would have been about the same age as Jesus. The Virgin Mary was at least 14 years his senior, making her about 47 when Jesus was crucified at age 33.

Obviously, this painting was not given to the Church as it ended up in Buffalo, New York. After many years of research it was declared (to the best of modern knowledge) to have been painted by Michelangelo. See the newspaper link below, left, for details.

The painting does not depict a known Biblical event. The Bible does not provide an account whereby Magdalene or the Virgin Mary are said to be holding Jesus' body and two individuals (whatever they are) came along and carried the body away. Indeed, if the body were carried away by such "beings,"

then this would have been after it was placed in a tomb, and to my knowledge nobody else was present when such may have occurred. As a result, the painting is a symbolic expression of grief, with the two somewhat grotesque individuals symbolically carrying Jesus' body down "to the dead."

Professional people who analyzed the painting pointed out that it might have possible medieval Knights Templar influence. What is known as the *Patriarchal Cross* might be said to be indicated by the positions of the woman's and Christ's arms. If this placement, as it were, was intentional, and the cross was used as a symbol of the Spirituali, then the painting doubles as a possible expression of protest. The rationale here is that the lower bar may represent a balance of justice—certainly a connection as to the aims of Spirituali.

For certain such subliminal "messages" were not beyond Michelangelo. Indeed, he used all sorts of "messaging" in other paintings which "got by" the Popes who did not have art as one of their strong points. Perhaps the image in the first stamps on the right is of this nature (i.e., an insult)

Whatever the case, the Patriarchal Cross found its way into the Roman Church and Freemasonry—both in the Masonic Knights Templar and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR). However, these Masonic bodies were not present during Michelangelo's time. Nevertheless, the cross might have been significant in Freemasonry of the 1400s and beyond.

Although the medieval Knights Templar Order had ceased in about 1314, long before Michelangelo's time (1475-1564), it still maintained a presence in other organizations, and possible in the Spirituali.

It needs to be stressed that there is no direct connection between the medieval Knights Templar and the Masonic Order Knights Templar. That medieval Templar symbolism emerged in Masonic annals was likely due to very early Free Masons (i.e., stone masons) getting involved in medieval Knights Templarism. We have the same sort of thing with Christianity finding its way into Masonic ritual. In this case, Christians became Freemasons and introduced Christian symbolism. As I have discussed in other papers, most of us don't have a problem here; however, if one is not a Christian it's a different story.

Would Michelangelo been aware of Freemasonry? Definitely. During his time, Freemasonry was all about churches, and so was Michelangelo. Freemasonry sort of made its official debut in 1459, so he likely had friends who were members. At that time, Freemasonry and the Roman Church were "on the same page," as it were. It would be quite some time before Freemasonry and the Church "parted company," (essentially 1738). In this connection, the Church kind of followed suit in its treatment of the medieval Knights Templar. However, we now have what might be termed a belated apology. The following is quoted from Wikipedia:

The current position of the Roman Catholic Church is that the medieval persecution of the Knights Templar was unjust, that nothing was inherently wrong with the Order or its Rule, and that Pope Clement was pressed into his actions by the magnitude of the public scandal and by the dominating influence of King Philip IV, who was Clement's relative.

A most interesting "revelation" would be finding out how many Freemasons of the time were members of the Spirituali, or were sympathetic to its aims.

Postage stamps issued by Vatican City show only Michelangelo's

paintings as they relate to the Old Testament. Seen below are the main stamps issued in 1994—created as a result of the restoration of the Sistine Chapel. Although Michelangelo produced a considerable number of Christian era paintings, it does not appear that any found their way onto Vatican stamps (I am excluding sculptures in this connection).

Aside: The painting does not seem to show the wounds suffered by Jesus as a result of his "crown of thorns." Would Michelangelo have missed that?



1. Creation of the sun and moon: A. Sun; B. God pointing toward moon.
2. Creation of Man: A. Adam; B. God
3. Original Sin: A. Adam and Eve taking apple from serpent; B. Adam and Eve forced from the Garden of Eden
4. The Flood: A. People on dry ground; B. People on stone outcropping.

