

THE EARLIEST PORTRAIT OF CHRIST?

Reproduced on the back cover, this remarkable, now deteriorated, fresco of Christ in the Orpheus Cubiculum, not open to the public, deep in the Catacomb of St Domitilla under Rome, was first copied by English artist Thomas Heaphy in the 1850s. His copy was published in black and white in 1861. It was first published in colour by Rex Morgan in 1986 in his book *The Holy Shroud and the Earliest Paintings of Christ*. Both Heaphy and Morgan, who believed the portrait to be 1st Century, were ridiculed by "experts" In 1979 British researcher Sylvia Bogdanescu independently rediscovered the portrait and took the first known photograph of it. In 1993 Morgan took the second known series of photographs of the portrait and nearby features of the catacombs and in 1996 mounted a full-scale expedition which added much evidence for the antiquity of the fresco. With the corroboration of world famous art expert Isabel Piczek the fresco is now dated at well within the 1st Century. It is now believed to have been painted by someone who had actually seen Christ on account of the similarity of its detailed features to those of the image on the Shroud of Turin. In other words they are two independent likenesses of the same man. The publication of the original fresco has been inexplicably avoided by the authorities.



THE EARLIEST PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

A fresco dated to the 1st Century AD and having similar characteristics to the image on the Shroud of Turin and representing one of the most important recent pieces of evidence for the antiquity of the Shroud

[Pic: Christopher Morgan 1996]