

From Trinity to Pure Oneness of God



HAGIA SOPHIA

Pocket Guide

Understanding The Islamic Perspective



First Edition
2026



Published by:
Ossoul Center, KSA

Copyright © Ossoul, 2026

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without a written permission from the author or the publisher.

Book and cover design: Taylor & Toglaw

Printed and bound in Kuwait by KHAT Press

Feedback and inquiries:

info@kim.org.tr



C&D: Live chat, 24/7

First Edition, October, 2026

Brief Contents



Introduction	4
Chapter 1: The Roman Empire: From Foundation to Fall	13
Chapter 2: Hagia Sophia: The Early Churches Arianism → Trinitarianism	29
Chapter 3: Hagia Sophia: The Latin Schism Orthodoxy → Catholicism → Orthodoxy	43
Chapter 4: Hagia Sophia: The Great Transition Cathedral → Mosque	51
Chapter 5: Hagia Sophia: The Final Synthesis Mosque → Museum → Mosque	73
Chapter 6: Understanding the Islamic Creed	91
Chapter 7: Divine Messages From the Lord of People to All People Excerpts from the Holy Quran	101
Chapter 8: Epilogue: Return of Jesus A Promise of Peace & Pure Monotheism	111
Appendix 1: Heraclius and Muhammad ﷺ	123
Appendix 2: Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque	151
References	156

Introduction

Standing at the threshold of East and West, **Hagia Sophia** has sheltered the prayers of two worlds and embraced the spirits of Christianity and Islam under a single dome.

To understand why **Hagia Sophia** exists, we must first look at the Roman Empire—not at its height of pagan glory, but during its radical transformation into a Christian state. At the heart of this era was a fierce struggle over the nature of the Divine. We explore the era of Arianism and the early non-Trinitarian debates, examining how the doctrine of the Trinity was eventually codified across the Empire. This sets the stage for the arrival of the Ottomans, who returned Hagia Sophia to a strictly monotheistic worship.

Today, **Hagia Sophia** remains a vivid and vital sanctuary. The cadence of the five daily prayers—before the first light of the sunrise to the evening stillness after the sunset—keeps the space in a state of constant devotion, and fully occupied by the remembrance of our Lord.

To grasp this living legacy, we explain the fundamental differences between Christian and

Islamic creeds. In addition, we explore how trinity was introduced to Christianity after the ascension of Jesus to the heavens. Ultimately, we look toward a shared horizon: **The return of Jesus** as a prophet and a messenger of God who will unite both faiths and all believers in God under the banner of monotheism. He will bring humanity to submit to One and Only One indivisible God, Allah the Creator and Lord of all beings.

Osoul Center



DEDICATION

To those in search of "The One"
The Unique, the Peerless, the Eternal.

We dedicate this work to every visitor of Hagia Sophia who seeks to explore its history from before the birth of Jesus until the present day, as we look forward to the return of the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, to unite all believers in God upon pure Monotheism.



HAGIA SOPHIA

The Divine Wisdom

"**Hagia**" is a Greek word meaning holy or sacred. It is the feminine form of the Greek adjective *hagios* (holy or saint) and is most commonly used in the context of Hagia Sophia which translates to "**Holy Wisdom**". This is similar to other feminine nouns, such as Hagia Irene (Holy Peace).

In Greek, *sophía* (σοφία) literally means wisdom. The Holy Wisdom was considered a specific attribute of God.



This is not to be confused with Saint Sophia in Christian history (a widow who had three daughters). While many other churches are dedicated to her, the Great Church in Istanbul was specifically dedicated to the Divine Wisdom.

Note:

- The Statue of Liberty isn't dedicated to a woman named Liberty; its dedicated to the concept of freedom.
- The Turkish name of Hagia Sophia is **Ayasofya**.



The Roman Empire: Rise to Fall

753 BCE

The Roman Kingdom was established in Rome

27 BCE

It became a Roman Empire.

1 CE

Jesus was born

Due to a calculation error when the AD calendar system was created in the 6th century, Jesus was actually born c. 6–4 BCE rather than 1 CE.

Summarized Visual Timeline

2205 years

395 CE

Split of the Roman Empire to Western part (predominantly Latin-speaking) and Eastern part (predominantly Greek-speaking).

476 CE

The fall of the Western Roman Empire (capital was Rome then Milan then Ravenna in modern day Italy).

570 CE

Muhammad ﷺ was born (570 CE)

In the year 628 - 629 CE approx. Prophet Muhammad sent a letter to Heraclius, the Roman Emperor inviting him to Islam (pure monotheism).

1453 CE

The fall of the Eastern Roman Empire (capital was Constantinople).

Historical Transformations of Hagia Sophia

Constantine I (The Great): 306-337 CE

He moved the capital from Rome to the strategic city of Byzantium. Renamed Constantinople (330 CE),

Constantius II

The Great Church
(burned in 404 CE)

360 - 404 CE

First Church



Theodosius II

Publically called Hagia Sophia
(burned in 532 CE)

415 - 532 CE

Second Church



Justinian I

The building we see today
(since 537 CE)

537 - 1453 CE

**Masterpiece
Hagia Sophia**



Sultan Mehmed II The Conqueror

1453 - 1935 CE

**Ayasofya
Grand Mosque**

Orthodox - Catholic - Orthodox

A museum for 85 years

A Mosque as from 2020 - until Now

Hagia Sophia: Mirror of Empires

How the Rise and Fall of Empires Reshaped a House of Worship

Year CE	Political Changes	Status of Hagia Sophia
476	The fall of the Western Roman Empire The rise of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine)	Church (537)
1453	The fall of the Byzantine Empire The rise of the Ottoman Empire (Sultanate)	Mosque (1453)
1918	The fall of the Ottoman Sultanate The rise of the Republic of Turkey (the Caliphate was abolished in 1924)	Museum (1935)
1923 Until Now	The Republic of Turkey (Founded October 29, 1923)	Mosque (2020)



1

The Roman Empire

From Foundation to Fall

A Historical Review (753 BCE - 1453 CE)



An empire that existed for 2205 years: The Roman Empire began as a small settlement in Rome (central Italy) and grew into one of the most powerful empires of the ancient world.

- The Roman Kingdom (753 BCE - 509 BCE).
- The Roman Republic (509 BCE - 27 BCE).
- The Roman Empire (27 BCE - 1453 CE).

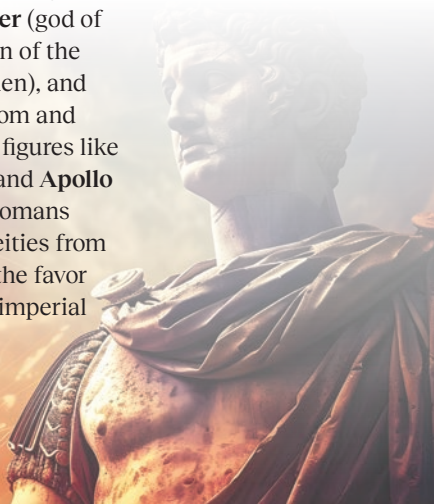
The Roman Empire formally split in 395 CE into the **Western Roman Empire** (which fell in 476 CE) and the **Eastern Roman Empire** (Byzantine) Empire (which fell in 1453 CE).



Romans worshiped many gods: Before their conversion to Christianity, the dominant religion in the Roman Empire (both West and East) was Roman polytheism, a complex system of gods and goddesses, rituals, and cults largely influenced by Greek mythology.

The word “pantheon” comes from the Greek words: “pan” (meaning “all”) and “theos” (meaning “god”). So, when we say the Romans worshipped a “pantheon of deities”, it means they worshipped a collection or family of many different gods and goddesses,

Ancient Rome worshiped a polytheistic pantheon headed by the Capitoline Triad: **Jupiter** (god of sky and state), **Juno** (queen of the gods and protector of women), and **Minerva** (goddess of wisdom and strategy). Alongside major figures like **Mars** (war), **Venus** (love), and **Apollo** (light and prophecy), the Romans routinely absorbed local deities from conquered lands, viewing the favor of the gods as essential to imperial power.



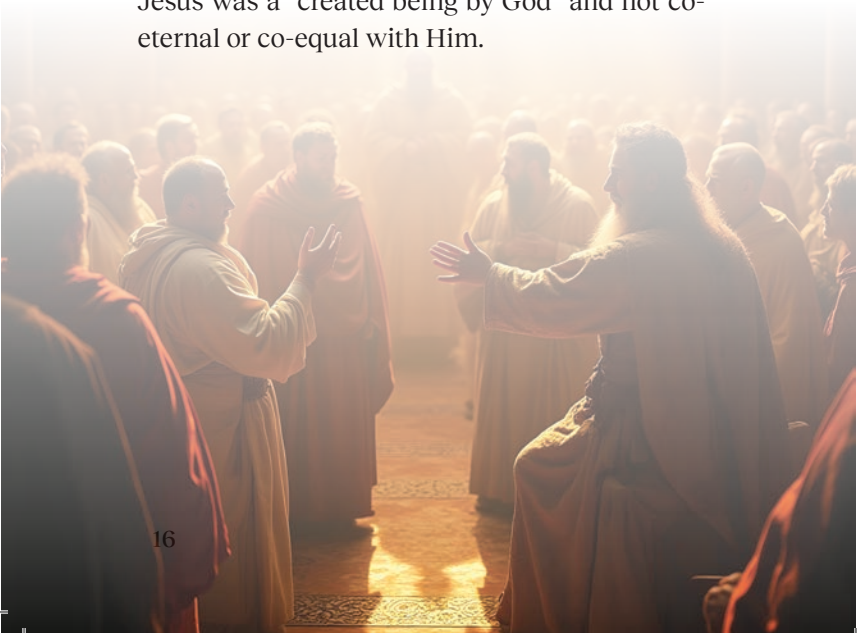
Jesus birth and life (1-33CE): Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the reign of Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, and was later raised in Nazareth. Upon beginning his public ministry at age thirty, he encountered significant opposition from the Jewish religious leadership. According to Christian tradition, his life ended in **crucifixion** (April 33 CE) under the authority of Emperor **Tiberius**, as ordered by **Pontius Pilate**, the Roman governor of Judea.

Constantine I, the first Roman Emperor who converted to Christianity (312 CE): It was just before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. It is narrated that he had a dream where he was instructed to place the Christian symbol (the Chi-Rho) on his soldiers' shields.



Edict of Milan (313 CE) and the foundation of Constantinople: After winning the civil war, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan (i.e. formal rule, 313 CE), ending the state-sanctioned persecution of Christians.

Arianism and the various views about Jesus's divinity and his relationship to God: Arianism was propagated by Arius (the early 4th century), a minister of the Christian Church from Alexandria. He rejected trinity and taught that Jesus was a “created being by God” and not co-eternal or co-equal with Him.



The opposing trinitarian view argued that Jesus Christ was co-eternal and co-equal with God the Father, of the same divine substance. To deny this was to undermine the very nature of salvation and the divinity of Christ.

This significant theological challenge ultimately necessitated the convening of the **Council of Nicaea in 325 CE**, which aimed to establish a definitive understanding of Christ's nature and paved the way for the eventual formalization of the Trinitarian doctrine.

Council of Nicaea (325 CE): The main outcome of the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE was the creation of the original Nicene Creed, which established the core Christian doctrine that Jesus is of the same substance (homooousios) as God the Father

While Nicaea laid the groundwork for Trinitarian theology, the full doctrine of the Trinity—affirming one God in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)—was completed decades later at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE.

The New Rome in Constantinople:

To better manage the empire's wealth and defend its eastern borders against Persia, he moved the capital from Rome to the strategic city of Byzantium. Renamed **Constantinople (330 CE)**, this “New Rome” was built to be a Christian metropolis, free from the pagan traditions and political influence of the old Roman Senate. *(this paved the way for the establishment of the first Hagia Sophia in 360 CE).*





Constantine I passes away in 337 CE: He reigned from (306 - 337 CE) and he was baptized on his deathbed by an **Arian non-trinitarian bishop** (Eusebius of Nicomedia).

When Constantine I died, his son Constantius II took over the Eastern part of the Empire. He was a strict Arian non-trinitarian and actively persecuted Nicene Christians.

Arianism and Nicene Creed: Arianism is an early Christian theological teaching that denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ, asserting instead that he was a created being. He was created by God the Father. However, the Nicene Creed, established the core Christian doctrine that Jesus is of the same divine substance of God.

Edict of Thessalonica (380 CE): Emperor Theodosius I made Trinitarian Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire by issuing the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 CE, which declared Nicene Christianity (*the form of Christianity defined at the Council of Nicaea*) as the official state religion of the Roman Empire. This effectively outlawed other forms of Christianity (*like Arianism which rejects trinity*) and traditional Roman polytheistic practices. Therefore, both the Western and Eastern Roman Empires were predominantly trinitarian Christian after 380 CE.

Closing of Pagan Temples (391 CE): Emperor Theodosius I enacted strict legislation banning traditional sacrifices and official temple rituals. This initiated a gradual, multi-decade process across the empire that systematically phased out public pagan practices in favor of Nicene Christianity.

The split of the Roman Empire into East and West (395 CE): As the empire grew, it became increasingly difficult to manage. In 395 CE, the Roman Empire officially split into two distinct entities: **Western and Eastern**. The capital of the Eastern Roman Empire was Constantinople (*modern-day Istanbul*). The Eastern Roman Empire was later called the Byzantine Empire.

The fall of the Western Empire (476 CE): The Western Roman Empire faced increasing internal problems and external pressures from barbarian invasions, eventually collapsing in 476 CE. The Eastern Roman Empire, however, continued to thrive for another thousand years, preserving Roman law, culture, and traditions.





Spotlight

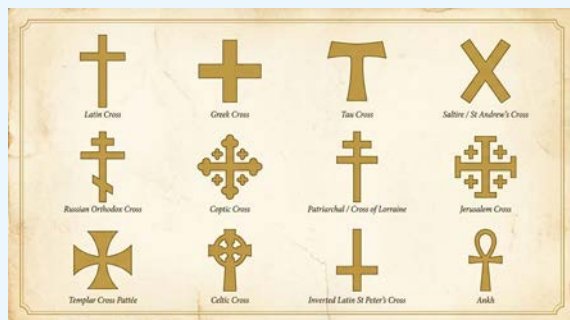
The Christian Debate: The Four Great Councils: (A Timeline of Division)

Council	Key Decision
Nicaea I 325 CE	Divinity of Christ: Formulated the original Nicene Creed; affirmed that the Son is (of the same substance) as the Father..
Constantinople 381 CE	Divinity of the Holy Spirit: Expanded the Creed to fully affirm the divinity of the Holy Spirit, completing the Trinitarian formula..
Ephesus 431 CE	Unity of Christ: Declared Christ to be one united Person (hypostasis) with two unconfused natures; affirmed Mary as (God-bearer)?

Council	Key Decision
Chalcedon 451 CE	Two Natures: Defined Christ as existing in two distinct natures (fully God and fully man) united in one Person
Great Schism 1054 CE	Does the Spirit come from the Father and the Son?

Orthodox: The holy spirit comes from The Father alone.

Catholic: The Holy Spirit comes from The Father and the Son.





The Nicene Creed (Trinitarian Orthodoxy):

Affirms that Jesus is the Son of God, uncreated and co-eternal, sharing the exact same divine substance (Homoousios) with God the Father.

The Arian Creed (Nontrinitarian / Unitarian):

Asserts that God the Father alone is the absolute, unbegotten Creator. It holds that Jesus is a created being with a finite beginning (There was a time when he was not)—exalted and unique, but distinct from and subordinate to the Father.

Key Historical Distinction:-

325 CE (Nicaea): Addressed the deity of Christ against Arianism (paved the theological foundation).

381 CE (Constantinople): Defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit and officially declared Trinitarianism as the state orthodoxy of the Roman Empire.

Note

While the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) established that the Son was of the same substance as the Father, the full, formal doctrine of the Trinity—explicitly defining one God in three co-equal persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)—was officially finalized and codified into imperial law at the Council of Constantinople (381 CE) under Emperor Theodosius I.

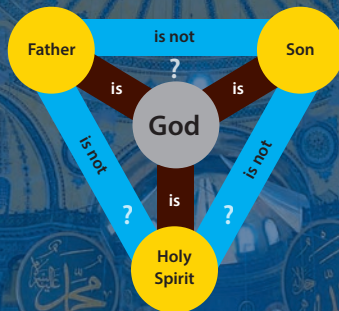
The Islamic Monotheism



He is Allah, the One and (Only One). The Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born. Nor is there to Him any equivalent.

The Quran, 112: 1- 4

The Christian Debate



The Islamic monotheist message didn't enter a vacuum; it entered a world exhausted by three centuries of philosophical clashes about the oneness of God.

Year CE	Hagia Sophia Status
360	First Church (Foundation ground of future Hagia Sophia)
415	Second Church (Foundation ground of future Hagia Sophia)
537	Hagia Sophia (masterpiece - current building)

1054	The Christian World was divided to Catholic and Orthodox. The Great Schism: Hagia Sophia became Orthodox - Prayers in Greek
------	---

1204	The 4 th Crusade: Hagia Sophia became Catholic - Prayers in Latin
1261	Hagia Sophia was restored, an Orthodox Church - Prayers in Greek
1453	The fall of Constantinople and the whole Roman Empire. Hagia Sophia was converted to a grand Mosque of the Ottoman Empire
1935	Hagia Sophia was converted to a museum after the fall of the Ottoman Empire
2020	Hagia Sophia was restored as a mosque



For four decades, the original church on the site of Hagia Sophia was led by Arian (non-trinitarian) bishops under emperors Constantius II and Valens, who rejected the Nicene Creed. This period of Arian dominance in Constantinople was ended by Theodosius I, who codified Nicene Trinitarianism into imperial law.



2

Hagia Sophia: The Early Churches

Arianism → Trinitarianism



2.1 The First of three Churches

Constantine I wasn't just a builder of cities; he was a builder of order. On the site where the Hagia Sophia stands today, his son Constantius II commissioned the first great church (often called the **Great Church**, Megale Ekklesia) on February 15, 360 CE. This was the first of the three churches built on the same site. (Constantius II was a devout Arian nontrinitarian Christian).

Many readers will be surprised to learn that for several decades, Constantinople was an Arian city. The "Great Church" (the first Hagia Sophia) was often led by Arian nontrinitarian bishops.

High-ranking officials and the Germanic tribes who protected the city were almost all Arians.

To them, the Trinity was a “Greek philosophical invention” that complicated the simple monotheism they found in the scriptures.

The “Arian Era” was ended abruptly by Theodosius I (Theodosius the Great) in 379 CE. He was a hardcore **Trinitarian**. He issued the **Edict of Thessalonica**, which made Trinitarianism the only legal religion of the Empire.

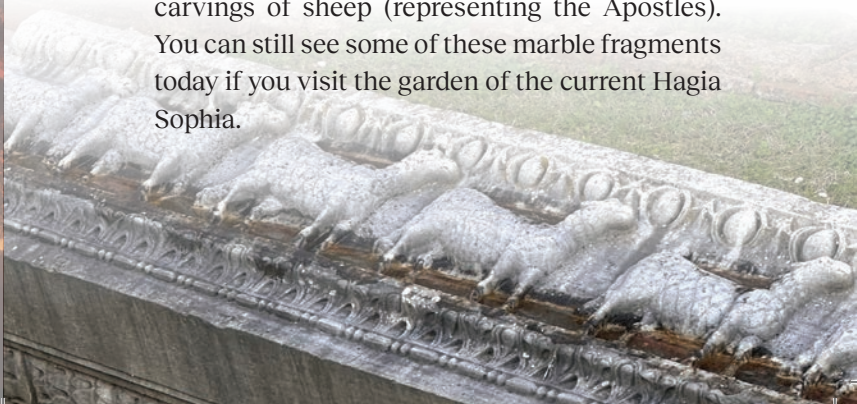


2.2 The Second Church on the Same Site (Built by Theodosius II, 415 CE)

The first church was destroyed in a fire in 404 CE. It was replaced by the **Second Hagia Sophia**, built by Theodosius II. The church was inaugurated on October 10, 415 CE.

By this time, the Council of Constantinople (381 CE) had expanded the Nicene Creed solidifying the Trinity as we know it today. The Arian bishops were expelled, and their followers were marginalized. The Hagia Sophia became the official “Fortress of the Trinity.”

The second Hagia Sophia was also a wooden-roofed basilica, but much grander, with a monumental entrance decorated with marble carvings of sheep (representing the Apostles). You can still see some of these marble fragments today if you visit the garden of the current Hagia Sophia.

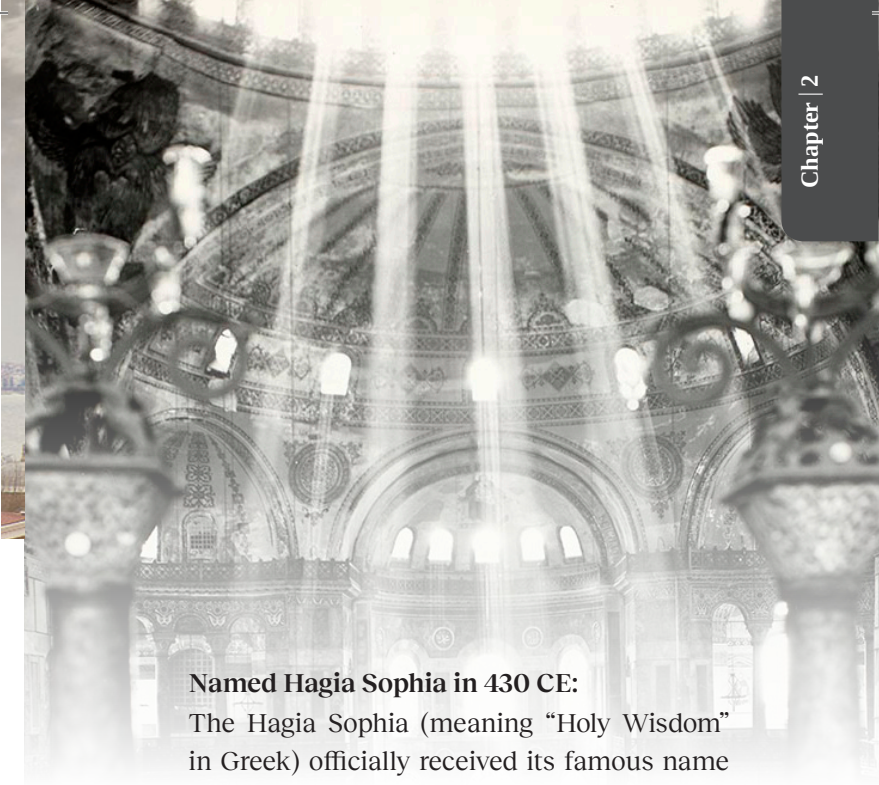




2.3 The Third Church on the Same Site: (Built by Justinian I, 537 CE)

Unfortunately, Constantinople faced massive riots known as the Nika Riots (532 CE) that burned down nearly half of the city including the second church. From these ashes, **Justinian-I** would build the third and final Hagia Sophia—the one that stands today.

The third (and current) Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was built between 532 and 537 CE. It was officially opened on 27th December, 537 CE.

A black and white photograph of the interior of Hagia Sophia, showing the large central dome and intricate mosaics. Sunlight streams through the windows, creating dramatic rays of light. In the foreground, the ornate metalwork of a chandelier is visible, slightly out of focus.

Named Hagia Sophia in 430 CE:

The Hagia Sophia (meaning “Holy Wisdom” in Greek) officially received its famous name around 430 CE.

Originally called the Megale Ekklesia (Great Church) when it was first built by Emperor Constantius in 360 CE, the structure was later dedicated to “Holy Wisdom” as the church was rebuilt and expanded.



Spotlight -I

Theodosius Walls and Hagia Sophia

The walls are named after Emperor Theodosius II, who ruled the Eastern Roman Empire in the early 5th century (408–450 CE). While Constantine the Great built the first set of walls for his new capital, the city grew so rapidly that it quickly “outgrew” its original boundaries.

1. The Great Expansion (413 CE): By the time Theodosius II was a young emperor, the population of Constantinople had exploded. The original walls of Constantine were too close to the city center. Theodosius II (under the guidance of his advisor, Anthemius) ordered the construction of a new line of defense about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) west of the old walls.

This move effectively doubled the size of the city, providing a massive “buffer zone” and room for the city to flourish for the next thousand years.



2. A Masterpiece of Engineering:

The “Theodosian Walls” aren’t just a single wall; they are a complex, triple-layered defense system designed to be impossible to breach.

The Moat: A deep, wide trench filled with water to stop siege engines.

The Outer Wall: A smaller wall used by archers to pick off soldiers who made it across the moat.

The Inner Wall (The Main Wall): This was the massive structure, standing nearly 12 meters (40 feet) high and 5 meters (16 feet) thick, reinforced with 96 massive towers.

3. Resilience Through Earthquakes:

In 447 CE, shortly after the walls were finished, a massive earthquake leveled many of the towers to the ground. In an incredible feat of communal labor, the citizens of Constantinople rebuilt the entire fortification system in just 60 days, making it even stronger than before by adding the outer wall and moat we see today.



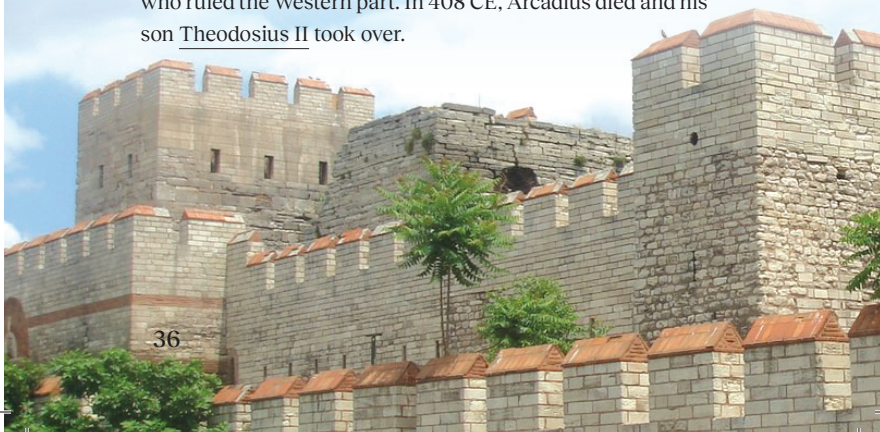
Spotlight - 2

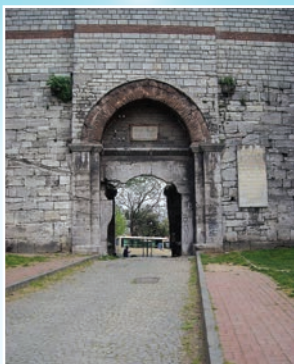
Theodosius II ruled for a remarkably long time (408-450 CE). He was a massive builder and organizer. He built the famous Theodosian Walls a triple-layer defense system that made the city the most un-takeable fortress in the world. In addition, he built the second

Hagia Sophia in 415 CE. The entrance of this church was decorated with marble carvings of sheep (representing the Apostles). You can still see them today left in the outside garden of the current Hagia Sophia.

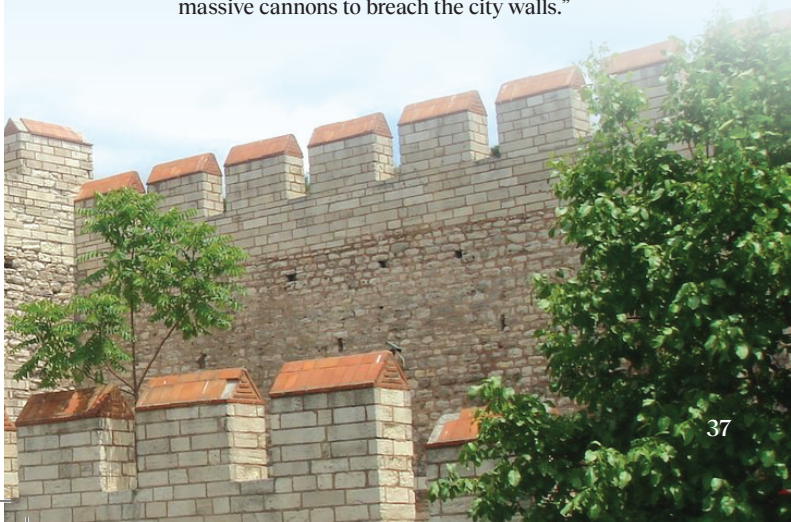


Note: Theodosius I was the last emperor to rule a truly united Roman Empire. As he lay dying in Milan in January 395 CE, he officially decreed that the empire be divided between his two sons: **Arcadius** who ruled the eastern part and **Honorius** who ruled the Western part. In 408 CE, Arcadius died and his son Theodosius II took over.





“The Gate of the Conquest, historically known as the Gate of Saint Romanus, is called today in Istanbul the ‘Topkapı Gate’ (the Cannon Gate). It received this name because it was the area where the Ottomans focused their bombardment with massive cannons to breach the city walls.”





Spotlight - 3

Hagia Irene (Aya İrini)

As the first church built in Constantinople, Hagia Irene (Holy Peace) was commissioned by Constantine I in the 320s CE and served as



the imperial capital's primary cathedral before the erection of Hagia Sophia in 360 CE.

Rebuilt by Justinian I following the 532 CE Nika Riots, the domed basilica holds a unique place in Istanbul's architectural heritage: it was never converted into a mosque following the 1453 Ottoman conquest.

Instead, situated within the outer courtyard of Topkapı Palace, it served as the imperial armory and later as the empire's first military museum.

Today, it stands extraordinarily preserved, featuring a rare Iconoclastic-era mosaic cross in its apse.



2

Hagia Irene



39

Spotlight Spotlight Spotlight Spotlight Spotlight Spotlight Spotlight



Spotlight-4

Hagia Sophia: Catholic or Orthodox?

During the time of Constantine -I, there was no “Catholic Church” in the West versus an “Orthodox Church” in the East. There was only one state church, and both sides called themselves Catholic (meaning “universal”) and Orthodox (meaning “right-believing”).

The West (Rome): Over centuries, the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) claimed supreme authority over all Christians. The West continued to use the title Catholic as their primary identifier to emphasize their “universal” jurisdiction under the Pope.

The East (Constantinople): The Patriarch of Constantinople and other Eastern bishops rejected the Pope’s claim of absolute power. They began to emphasize the title Orthodox to signal that they were the ones preserving the “original, unchanged” traditions of the early Church.

Hagia Sophia was neither “Catholic” nor “Orthodox” in the way we use those labels today, it was simply “Christian” until the Great Schism of 1054 CE. From its construction in 537 until 1054, Hagia Sophia was the heart of a single, undivided Christian world.

Feature	The Western Romans	The Eastern Romans (Byzantine)
Primary Title	Catholic	Orthodox
Center of Power	Rome	Constantinople
Language of Liturgy (worship)	Latin	Greek
Leadership	The Pope (Single Head)	The Patriarchs (Group of Leaders)





3

Hagia Sophia: The Latin Schism



Orthodoxy → Catholicism → Orthodoxy

— 57 years —

3.1 Introduction

The story of Hagia Sophia's transition from Orthodox to Catholic worship cannot be understood without first recalling the great split in Christianity. In 1054 CE, the Church was divided into Eastern Orthodoxy, centered in Constantinople, and Roman Catholicism, centered in Rome, a rupture born of theological disputes and rival claims of authority.



The Great Schism of 1054 CE

It was primarily driven by disputes over papal authority, and other issues. The Catholic Church emphasized the Pope's supreme, universal jurisdiction, which the Eastern Orthodox rejected, preferring a system of collegial patriarchs. Furthermore, the West added “**and the Son**” (**Filioque**) to the Nicene Creed regarding the Holy Spirit's procession, which the East rejected as heresy.

Furthermore, the Latin Church (West) altered the Nicene Creed to state the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The East held that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, viewing the insertion of this (Filioque Clause) as invalid and heresy. In addition, Rome enforced mandatory celibacy for all priests (stay single unmarried), while the East allowed married men to be ordained as priests (though bishops remained celibate).



Understanding Hagia Sophia's brief period under Catholic authority requires shedding the light on the crusades:-

First Crusade (1096-1099): Triggered after Emperor Alexios I requested Western military support against the Seljuk invasion of Asia Minor, leading to Crusaders seizing Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem in 1099.

Second & Third Crusades (1147-1192): Focused on Latin holdings in the Levant. The Third Crusade—led by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa alongside the kings of England and France—aimed at reclaiming Jerusalem from Saladin.

None of these early expeditions touched Constantinople or Hagia Sophia. While the Romans initially sought Western military cooperation in Anatolia, they would later become victims when subsequent Crusades turned directly against their capital.

3.2 The Fourth Crusade, 1204 CE

The Fourth Crusade was diverted from its original mission (strike Egypt to recover Jerusalem), and turned against the Byzantine capital itself. Western Crusaders, largely from Venice and France, stormed Constantinople, looted Hagia Sophia, and imposed Catholic rule for nearly six decades, transforming Hagia Sophia into the seat of the Latin Patriarch and leaving a scar that deepened the separation and hostility between the East and West.

For 57 years (1204-1261), Hagia Sophia stood as a symbol of Western crusade occupation, until the Byzantines reclaimed the city in 1261 CE and restored the church to Orthodox worship. This episode marked one of the deepest wounds in Christian history.

The Great Schism had divided Christianity; the Crusades had militarized faith; and the Fourth Crusade brought betrayal from fellow Christians.

Hagia Sophia became a disputed monument, embodying the clash of empires, the collision of faiths, and the enduring struggle between unity and division in the Christian world.





Spotlight

The Spoils of Hagia Sophia

The sack of Constantinople by crusaders in 1204 CE was not only a military catastrophe but also a cultural transfer. Hagia Sophia, the jewel of Byzantium, was stripped of its relics and icons.

Many treasures looted from Hagia Sophia and Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade 1204 CE were carried to Western Europe, especially to Venice, and many of them still exist today in churches and museums. The most famous collection is in the Treasury of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, which houses relics, chalices, icons, and even parts of Hagia Sophia's altar. Other pieces are scattered across Europe, including Paris and other Italian cities.

Venice profited most from this plunder. The treasures of Hagia Sophia were installed in the Treasury of St. Mark's Basilica, transforming it into a showcase of Byzantine artistry.

For the Byzantines, this loss was more than material. Hagia Sophia had been desecrated (destroyed with disrespect), its sanctity violated, and its treasures scattered. For the Latins, however, the spoils became symbols of triumph, re fashioning Venice as a new Constantinople.

The Church of the Holy Apostles suffered even more severely than Hagia Sophia. As the premier imperial mausoleum of Byzantium, it was stripped of its gold, jewels, and sacred relics. The Latin Crusaders broke into the imperial tombs, desecrating the remains of Byzantine emperors to plunder their burial crowns and royal ornaments. When the Byzantines recaptured Constantinople in 1261, the Church of the Holy Apostles was in a state of deep disrepair.

The original set of ancient bronze horses (taken during the sack of Constantinople in 1204) displayed inside the St. Mark's Basilica Museum (Museo di San Marco) in Venice.





Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

**لَتُفْتَحَنَّ الْقُسْطَنْطِينِيَّةُ، فَلَنَعْمَ الْأَمِيرُ أَمِيرُهَا، وَلَنَعْمَ الْجَيْشُ
ذَلِكَ الْجَيْشُ**

أخرجه الإمام أحمد في مسنده وصححه الحاكم والذهبي، وضعفه ابن حجر والألباني وشعيب الأرنؤوط

**Verily, Constantinople shall be conquered. What
a wonderful leader its leader shall be, and what a
wonderful army that army shall be.**

Narrated in Musnad Ahmad. Graded sahih by Al-Hakim and Al-Dhahabi; graded da'if by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Al-Albani, and Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut.

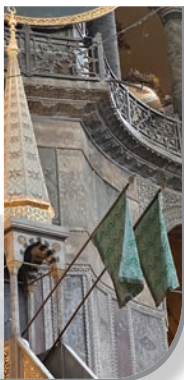


4

Hagia Sophia: The Great transition

Cathedral → Mosque

— 482 years approx —



4.1 Introduction

The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 CE by Osman I, a frontier leader in northwestern Anatolia. By the mid 15th century, the Ottomans had surrounded Constantinople, establishing their capital at nearby Edirne.



Constantinople had endured previous sieges, most notably under Sultan Murad II in 1422 CE. However, Sultan Mehmed II brought new technology and strategy. He constructed the fortress of Rumeli Hisari to block aid from the Black Sea and commissioned massive cannons to break the city's defenses. In April 1453 CE, he launched a full siege for 53 days.

The Eastern Roman Empire, having lost most of its former territories, struggled to defend its capital. Emperor Constantine XI appealed to the West for assistance, but internal European conflicts and the ongoing East-West schism left the city largely isolated.



A pivotal moment of the siege was Sultan Mehmed II's naval maneuver. To bypass the massive iron chain the defenders had stretched across the mouth of the Golden Horn, Mehmed ordered his fleet to be transported overland.

Dozens of ships were dragged on greased logs over the hills from the Bosphorus into the Golden Horn. This unexpected strategy placed Ottoman forces directly inside the inner harbor, tightening the siege on the capital.

May 29, 1453

Following weeks of bombardment, Mehmed II ordered a final assault. The walls were breached, Emperor Constantine XI fell in battle and was killed (his body was never identified).

Sultan Mehmed II entered the city victoriously, establishing Constantinople as the new capital of the Ottoman Empire.



“The Gate of the Conquest, historically known as the Gate of Saint Romanus, is called today in Istanbul the ‘Topkapı Gate’ (the Cannon Gate). It received this name because it was the area where the Ottomans focused their bombardment with massive cannons to breach the city walls”.

Sultan Mehmed II entered the city on **Tuesday, May 29, 1453**. After the walls were breached at the Gate of Saint Romanus (*Topkapı*), the Ottoman forces secured the city. Mehmed entered later that afternoon in a grand procession, marking the official end of the Eastern Roman Empire.

When he reached the great church of Hagia Sophia, he dismounted from his horse, knelt, and poured a handful of soil over his turban as a gesture of humility before God. He then walked inside, ordering that the building be preserved and converted into the central mosque of Constantinople.

4.2 The First Muslim Prayer

Historically, the first official Friday Prayer (Jumaa) took place on the **1st June 1453 CE**. Sultan Mehmed II (Fatih) installed a wooden minbar immediately for the first Friday prayer. However, the ornate marble minbar you see today is a masterpiece from the 16th century, added during the reign of Sultan Murad III. It is considered one of the finest examples of Ottoman marble carving.



The Green Flags of Conquest: Those are the flags you see today at the stairs of the minbar (pulpit). There are typically two green flags hung on the minbar. In Ottoman tradition, these represent the “Flags of Conquest” (Fetih Sancakları). When a city was taken by force (rather than surrender), the central mosque of that city (the Fethiye mosque) was granted the honor of flying these flags.

The Imam and the Sword: You may also see the Imam delivering the sermon while holding a sword. This is an Ottoman tradition; it signifies that the city was conquered by the power of the army and that the Sultan is the protector of the faith.



Sultan Mehmed II Waqfiyya

(Endowment Charter, 1462 CE)

Following the conquest, Sultan Mehmed II established a perpetual Waqf (charitable endowment) to secure Hagia Sophia's maintenance and operation as the city's primary imperial mosque. The Waqfiyya (Endowment Charter) of 1462 CE formally codified this legal status, endowing extensive revenues from real estate and bazaars



across the empire to fund its preservation. The document famously invokes a solemn warning against altering its dedicated status as an Islamic house of worship. This charter remains a foundational legal reference cited in modern Turkish administrative law regarding the monument's historical status.



In Islam, converting churches into mosques was not a standard rule or regular practice. Under Islamic law, if a city taken peacefully by treaty, its churches were legally protected and left untouched. Conversions generally only happened to a few major state cathedrals for political reasons in cities taken by war.

Throughout the Ottoman Empire, the rule was to let non-Muslim communities keep their religious freedom. Christians were recognized as protected citizens. As a result, thousands of churches across the empire—and several even in Constantinople itself—were kept open, repaired, and actively used for continuous Christian worship for hundreds of years.



4.3 The Four Minarets of Hagia Sophia

The four minarets of Hagia Sophia were not built at once; they were added sequentially by different Sultans over nearly 150 years. This gradual addition reflects the mosque's evolution into the premier symbol of Ottoman power.

The First Minaret: Sultan Mehmed II (c. 1453-1460)

Location: The southeast corner (above the library). Immediately after the conquest, a wooden minaret was erected for the first prayer. Shortly after, it was replaced by this permanent brick minaret. It is distinct from the others because of its material and reddish hue.

The Second Minaret: Sultan Bayezid II (c. 1481-1512)

Location: The northeast corner. Mehmed's son, Bayezid II, added this slender stone minaret which was built of white limestone.

The Final Two Minarets: Selim II and Murad III (c. 1570s)

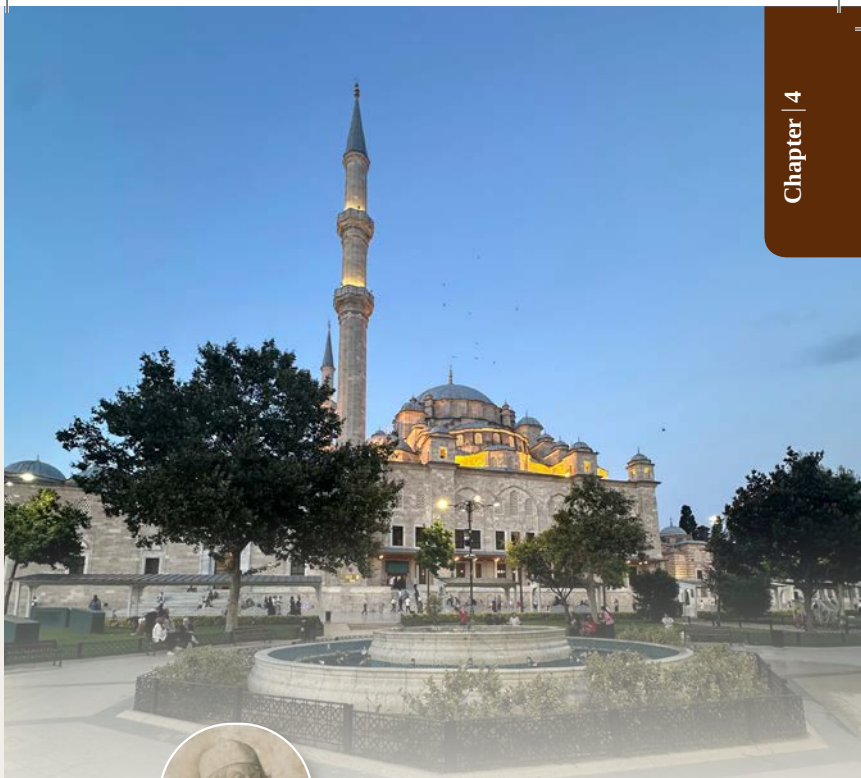
Location: The two western corners.

These are the most massive of the four. During the reign of Selim II, the building faced structural risks. Mimar Sinan was commissioned to add massive buttresses to support the dome, and he integrated these two large limestone minarets into those supports. They were completed under the reign of Murad III.





Portrait of Mehmed II the Conqueror by the Italian
Artist Gentile Bellini, 1480 CE



Gentile Bellini (c. 1429 - 23 February 1507) was a Venetian painter of the school of Venice. In 1479, he was sent to Constantinople by the Venetian government when Sultan Mehmed II requested an artist to spend some time in Constantinople as part of the peace settlement between Venice and the Turks. He painted the portrait of Mehmed II, now in the National Gallery, London.

4.4: Mehmed II: The Conqueror

A Brief Biography (1432–1481 CE)

Mehmed II was one of the most influential leaders in world history. His reign transformed the Ottoman state from a regional principality into a global empire, bridging the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Birth	March 30, 1432 CE, in Edirne (His father is Sultan Murad II)
Education	He mastered Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages.
First Reign (1444-1446)	He was 12 years old when his father stepped down from the throne to him. However, due to internal instability and the threat of Crusades, his father went back to power, and Mehmed was sent to Manisa (city in Turkey's Aegean Region) to continue his education and training. He joined his father's campaigns as a commander and fought at the Second Battle of Kosovo (1448). This battle was his "final exam" in large-scale warfare.

2nd Reign (1451-1481)	His father Murad II passed away in the year 1451. Mehmed was still in Manisa. At the age of 19, he was crowned Sultan for the second time.
Death	He died at the age of 49 while embarking on a new military campaign. He is buried at the Fatih Mosque complex which he constructed in the period (1463-1470).

Mehmed II: Major Achievements

- **The Conqueror:** He successfully led many military campaigns. He conquered Constantinople (1453), the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Then he conquered the Kingdom of Bosnia (1463) and asserted Ottoman dominance over the Crimean Khanate (1475).
- **He codified the Ottoman law**, centralizing power under the Sultan and creating a formal administrative structure that lasted for centuries.
- **He constructed the Fatih Mosque** and complex including a school, library, and hospital. It was the first imperial mosque in the Ottoman Sultanate.

- **Topkapi Palace:** He began construction of Topkapi Palace which served as the primary residence and administrative headquarters of the Ottoman Sultans for nearly 400 years.
- **The Grand Bazaar:** He initiated the construction of the Grand Bazaar (Çarşı-yı Kebir) the core of Istanbul's legendary market.
- **Preserved the Orthodox Church:** After 1453, Mehmed declared himself as (Caesar of Rome). He preserved the Greek Orthodox Church, and appointed Gennadius Scholarius as Patriarch. He gave the Church autonomy and protected the rights of the Greek population. In addition, he saved many Greek and Latin manuscripts from the Byzantine imperial libraries,
- **Art and Culture:** He invited Italian Renaissance artists (like Gentile Bellini) and Greek scholars to his court, blending Eastern and Western cultures.

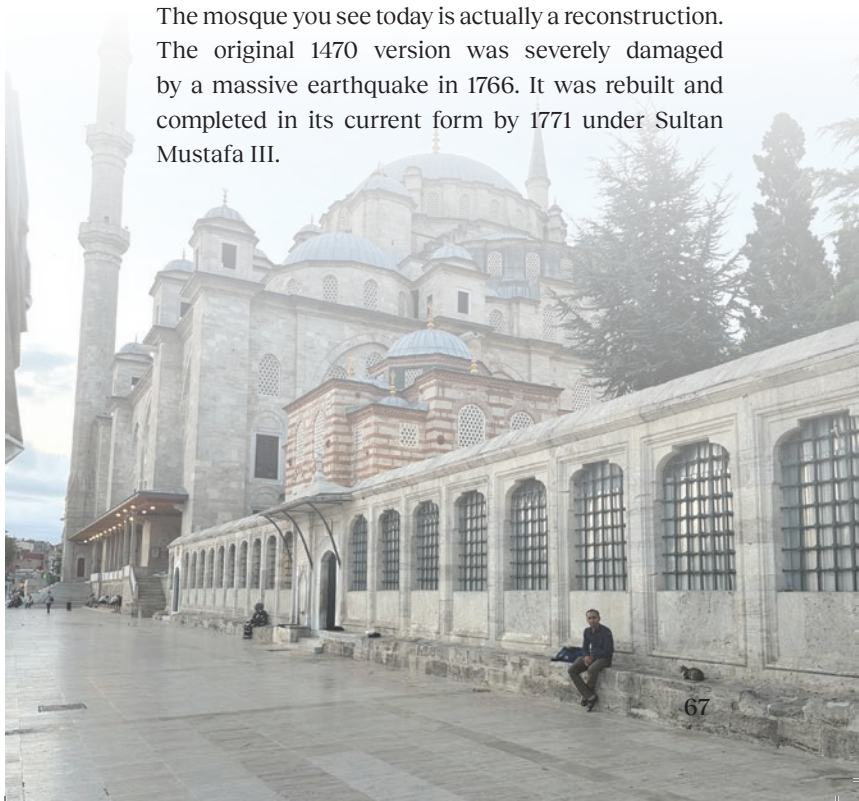
Note

The world's largest cannon was cast in Edirne in 1452 under the supervision of Urban, a Hungarian expert. The massive bronze bombard (Basilica) was capable of hurling stone projectiles weighing over 1,000 pounds against Constantinople's outer walls.

Fatih Mosque (1463–1470 CE):

The first monumental imperial mosque complex built inside the city walls. Constructed on the fourth hill of Constantinople (the site of the former Church of the Holy Apostles), it was the first grand civic külliye—featuring extensive madrasas, a hospital, and a library.

The mosque you see today is actually a reconstruction. The original 1470 version was severely damaged by a massive earthquake in 1766. It was rebuilt and completed in its current form by 1771 under Sultan Mustafa III.





4.5: The Fatih Mosque and the Church of the Holy Apostles:

After he conquered the city, the Church of the Holy Apostles was initially left to the Greek Patriarch. However, it was in such bad condition that it was eventually demolished in 1461 CE.

The Sultan built the Fatih Mosque on top of the site where the Church of the Holy Apostles once stood. Construction on the complex began in 1463 CE, exactly ten years after the conquest of Constantinople. It took roughly seven years to finish that massive project, which was the first imperial mosque built in the city after the Ottoman takeover.

The passing away: He passed away in the year 1481 CE, and he was buried in his tomb in the mosque's courtyard. The mosque wasn't just a prayer hall; it was a külliye (a social complex). When it was finished, it included eight medreses (universities), a library, a hospital, a hospice, and a public kitchen.



Sultan Mehmed
II tomb at Fatih
Mosque



Spotlight

The Panorama 1453 History Museum (Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi)

It is an immersive attraction in Istanbul that pairs directly with the story of Hagia Sophia. Located near the historical Theodosian Walls in Topkapı Cultural Park, it is billed as the world's first fully 3D panoramic museum.



Visitors stand beneath a massive 360-degree hemispherical dome painting (2,350 square meters) that recreates the morning of May 29, 1453—the precise moment Sultan Mehmed II (Al-Fatih) breached the Theodosian Walls.



www.panoramikmuze.com



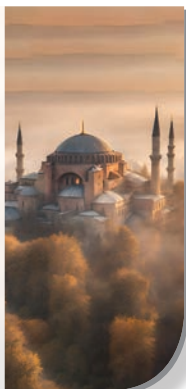


5

Hagia Sophia: The Final Synthesis

Mosque → Museum → Mosque

— 85 years —



5.1 Introduction

To understand the transition of Hagia Sophia to a museum, we need to shed the light on the fall of the Ottoman Sultanate following its fateful entry into World War I. Seeking to safeguard its borders against Russian ambitions and recover lost lands, the Sultanate joined the **Central Powers** of Germany and Austria-Hungary. They were fighting the **Allied Powers** primarily led by Great Britain, France, and Russia (later joined by Italy and the United States). For four years, they fought on multiple front: -

- They were fighting the Russians in the freezing Caucasus mountains.
- They were fighting the British in the scorching deserts of Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt. Also, they were defending their own heartland at Gallipoli.

The fall of the Ottoman Sultanate:

The Sultanate's resources were stretched until they snapped. Many Ottoman soldiers were fighting with outdated gear and poor supplies. While Europe had gone through the Industrial Revolution, building massive factories and advanced weaponry, the Ottoman Sultanate had fallen behind.

Eventually, the Central Powers including the Ottoman Sultanate lost the war and the Allies occupied Istanbul. For the first time in centuries, the seat of the Caliphate was under foreign control.

www.dailysabah.com/turkey

On November 17, 1922, after the Turkish Nationalists (led by Atatürk) abolished the Sultanate, **Mehmed VI the last Sultan** realized his life was in danger.

He was forced to leave Istanbul on a British warship, the HMS Malaya. As the ship sailed through the Bosphorus, past the silhouette of Hagia Sophia, he was leaving his homeland forever. He died in exile in Italy four years later. He was buried in the cemetery of the **Sulaymaniyya Complex** in Damascus, Syria, on July 3, 1926.

The Sulaymaniyya Complex was commissioned by the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the great grandson of Mehmet II. Construction of the complex took place between 1554 and 1559 CE, and it was designed by the renowned master architect Mimar Sinan.



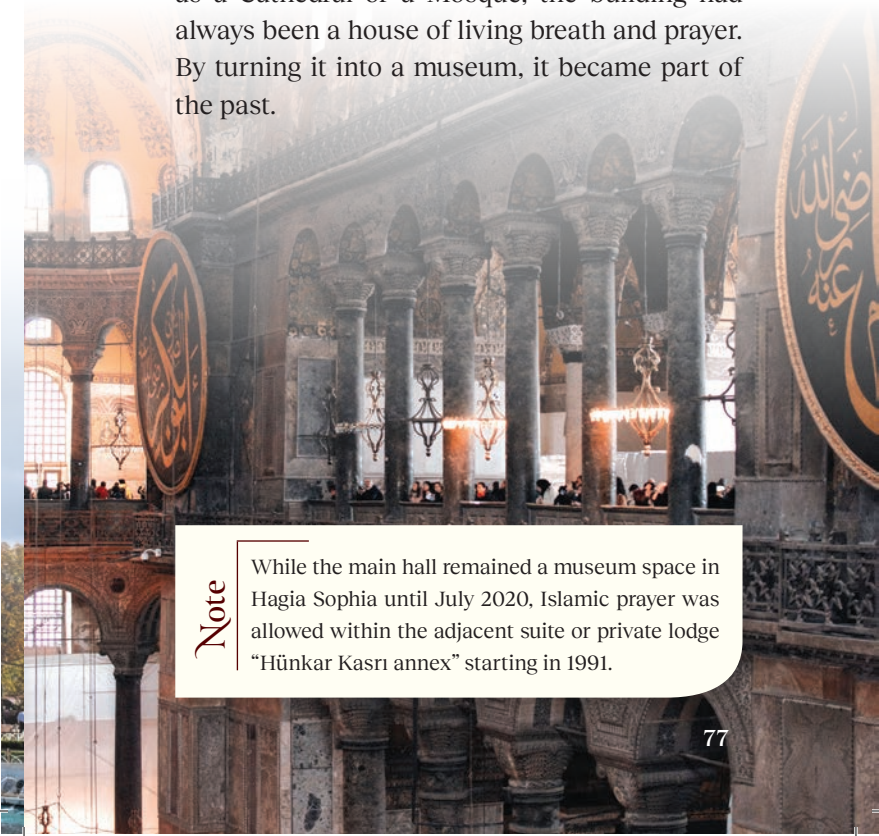
5.2 Hagia Sophia (1935): From a Mosque to a Museum

The Republic of Turkey was officially declared on October 29, 1923. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the first President, and the capital was moved from Istanbul to Ankara to represent a fresh start for the nation.

In 1934, as the new Republic of Turkey sought to modernize and align with secular Western values, Atatürk made the radical decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a museum. It was a message to the world that Turkey was embracing a secular future. Hagia Sophia officially opened its doors to the world as a monument of art and history (no longer a place of worship) on the 1st Feb, 1935.



85 years of Silence: Yet, beneath the new identity of a museum lay a profound and historic stillness. For the first time in nearly 1,500 years—stretching back to its dedication in 537 CE, the great dome of Hagia Sophia fell silent. Whether as a Cathedral or a Mosque, the building had always been a house of living breath and prayer. By turning it into a museum, it became part of the past.

A wide-angle photograph of the interior of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The image captures the vastness of the central dome and the intricate details of the pendentives and arches. Large, ornate chandeliers hang from the ceiling, casting a warm glow. On the left, a large circular medallion with Arabic calligraphy is visible. The architecture features a series of columns and arches that support the massive dome. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and architectural complexity.

Note

While the main hall remained a museum space in Hagia Sophia until July 2020, Islamic prayer was allowed within the adjacent suite or private lodge “Hünkâr Kasrı annex” starting in 1991.

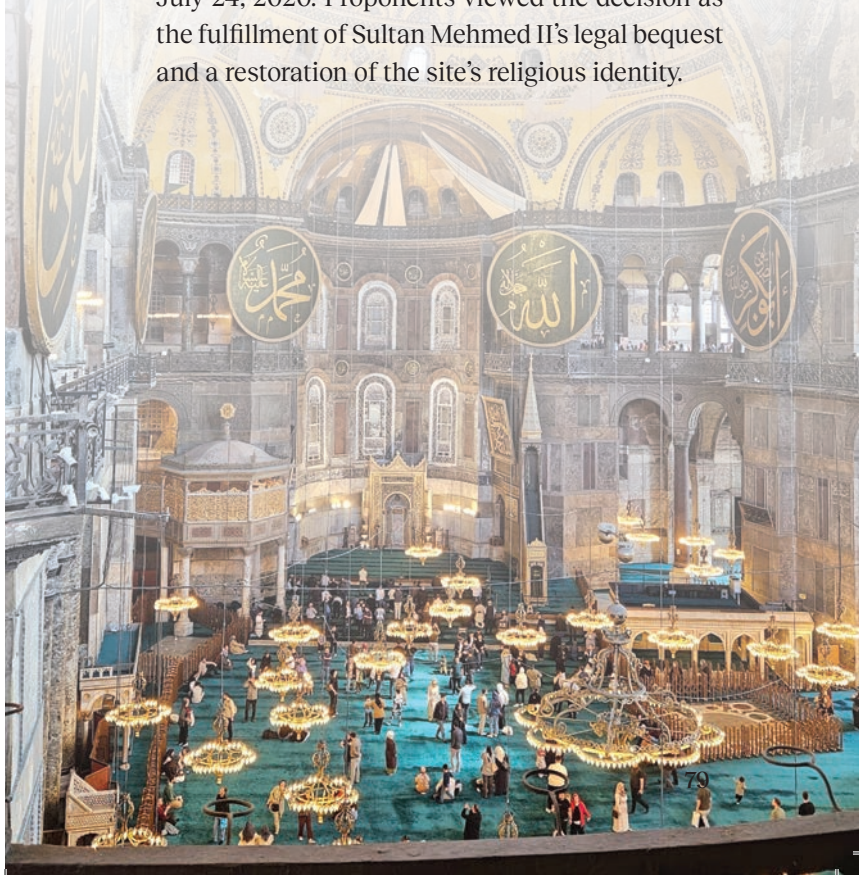
5.3 Hagia Sophia (2020): From Museum to Mosque

The transition of the Hagia Sophia from museum to mosque in July 2020 represents a profound legal and spiritual reclamation, anchored by the nearly six-century-old **Waqfiyya** (Endowment Charter) of Sultan Mehmed II. Many felt that the museum stage of 85 years was a period of “silence” and “lost identity” as a worship place. (86 years counting from the Cabinet decree).

In the eyes of the Turkish law, the Endowment Charter is not merely a historical artifact; it is an eternal deed that established the building of Hagia Sophia as a Mosque (a house of worship that calls to perform five prayers every day). That is a sacred purpose.

By annulling (terminating) the 1934 decree, the modern Turkish state did more than resolve a legal technicality; it restored Hagia Sophia, from a passive, silent relic of the past into a dynamic, vocal participant in the present.

Following the ruling, a presidential decree was signed transferring the management of Hagia Sophia to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), officially reopening it for worship on July 24, 2020. Proponents viewed the decision as the fulfillment of Sultan Mehmed II's legal bequest and a restoration of the site's religious identity.

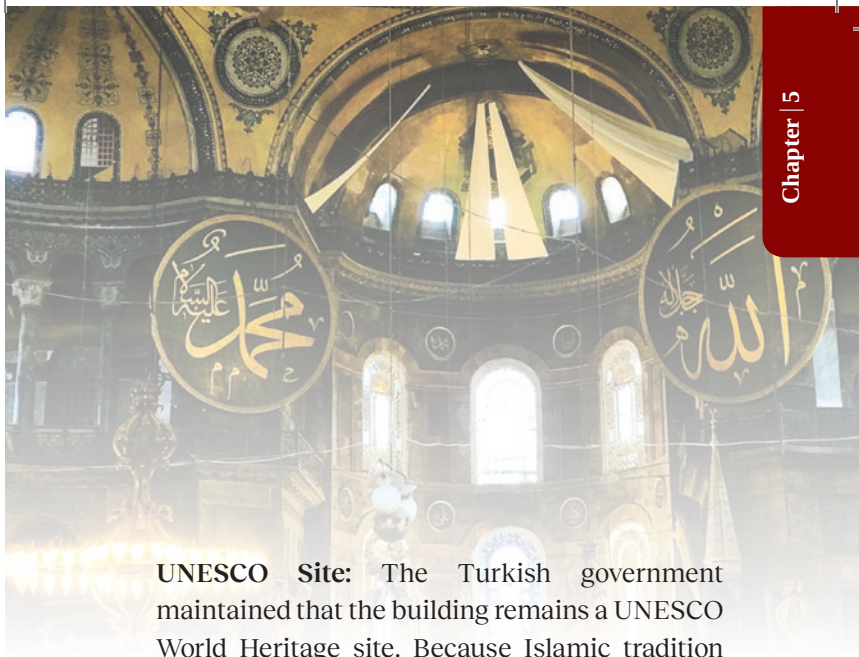


Hagia Sophia: The Mosque Spiritual Atmosphere

Ultimately, the re-opening of the Hagia Sophia for prayer transformed it back into a living manifestation of monotheism. It bridged the silence gap of the 20th century, re-aligning the Turkish Republic with its imperial spiritual legacy.

To step inside today, is to witness a space that has regained its acoustic and spiritual purpose. The “Holy Wisdom” is no longer a whisper among tourists, but a resonant chant that connects the modern believer to the first prostrations of 1453.

The first Friday prayers after 85 years: On the 24th July 2020, the world watched the first Friday prayers after 85 years of silence. The call to prayer (Azan, also written Adhan) echoed once again from the four minarets, signaling a definitive end of silence.



UNESCO Site: The Turkish government maintained that the building remains a UNESCO World Heritage site. Because Islamic tradition generally does not allow figural images during prayer, The Christian mosaics are preserved and simply covered by curtains during prayer times, allowing the building to hold both its Roman and Ottoman histories simultaneously.

The 2020 Verdict: Legally, Hagia Sophia is a Waqf property “endowment”. Its status cannot be changed. Returning it to a mosque was seen as fulfilling the “will of the Mohammad II”.

When Minarets Breathe the “Azan”: The Sound and Call of the Divine

In Islam, prayer (Salat) is a direct connection between the human being (creature) and God (Allah, the Creator of the Universe and all beings). It is the spiritual heartbeat of a Muslim's daily life. Performed five times a day, it serves as an unmediated link pulling the believer away from the chaotic rush of ordinary life into a state of profound mindfulness.



It is an act of total surrender and equality, where all believers stand shoulder to shoulder in identical submission. This daily cycle turns time itself into a sacred journey set in motion by a single, mesmerizing human voice: the “**Azan**”, the Islamic call to prayer. To the traveler standing in the shadow of great minarets, the Azan is often their first and most profound sensory encounter with Islamic culture. It is a lyrical proclamation of faith delivered with raw human emotion.



What Does the Azan Call Mean?

The Azan is not only a call for prayer, it is a declaration of the absolute oneness of God, a testament to His ultimate greatness, and an open, universal invitation to all believers to pause, leave their burdens behind, and come to pray together and enter a state inner peace.

This is the true success (Falah). It is the echo that resonates with the Divine Wisdom.

Allahu Akbar.. (repeated 2 times)	Allah is the Greatest. <i>Declaring God the Creator transcends all worldly worries.</i>
Ash-hadu alla ilaha illallah (repeated 2 times)	I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah. <i>The core testimony of monotheism.</i>



Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasoolullah (repeated 2 times)	I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. <i>Affirming the prophetic guidance that delivered the Divine Message of Islam (Submission to one and only one indivisible God, Allah).</i>
Hayya ‘alas-salah (repeated 2 times)	Come to prayer - A <i>physical invitation to stand before the Divine.</i>
Hayya ‘alal-falah (repeated 2 times)	Come to success - A <i>spiritual promise that true fulfillment lies in worship.</i>
Allahu Akbar.. Allahu Akbar.. La ilaha illallah	God is the Greatest (repeated 2 times). There is no deity but Allah. - <i>A final, unifying echo of the beginning.</i>



Spotlight

Hagia Sophia's Mosaics & Iconoclasm

The Iconoclastic Movement (726-843 CE):

“Iconoclasm” literally means image-breaking. For over a century (spanning roughly 117 years across two waves), Roman emperors banned human and divine figures (icons) in churches. Inside Hagia Sophia, portraits and mosaics featuring Jesus, Mary, and saints were scraped off, plastered over, or replaced with simple, non-figurative symbols

The Post-Iconoclastic Revival (843 CE Onward)

When the ban on icons was lifted in 843 CE (celebrated as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”), emperors spent centuries adding world-famous figurative masterpieces over the old gold background.

Must-See Mosaics

1. The Apse Mosaic (867 CE): The Virgin Mary and Child, installed specifically to replace the Iconoclastic cross.
2. The Deësis Mosaic (c. 1261 CE): Located in the upper South Gallery, famous for its incredible emotional realism and detail.
3. The Imperial Door & Southwest Vestibule Mosaics: Showing Byzantine emperors bowing before Christ or offering models of the city and church to Mary.





Gradual Covering & Preservation:

Rather than destroying the figural mosaics, Ottoman authorities gradually covered them over the course of centuries with protective layers of plaster and decorative whitewash or stenciled designs. During the major 1847-1849 restoration under Sultan Abdülmecid I, architects uncovered, cleaned, and documented these hidden works before re-plastering them.

20th Century Uncovering and Museum Status:

The systematic restoration and uncovering of the hidden mosaics began in 1931 to convert the building into a museum in 1934, officially opening its doors to the public in 1935.

Now: Apse Mosaic (Virgin Mary and Child): Covered by automated textile curtains or drapes. These curtains are closed during Islamic prayer times to align with iconographic requirements in Muslim worship spaces.



51

Hagia Sophia Mosaics

Spotlight

Spotlight

Spotlight

Spotlight

Spotlight

Spotlight

Spotlight



89



In fact, the final transition of Hagia Sophia represents a shift from the Trinitarian theology to the absolute oneness of God (Tawhid, pronounced Tawheed).

It challenged the Nicene Trinitarian creed, echoing the historical critiques of early Arianism and the subsequent Unitarian movements within Christianity.

6

Understanding the Islamic Creed

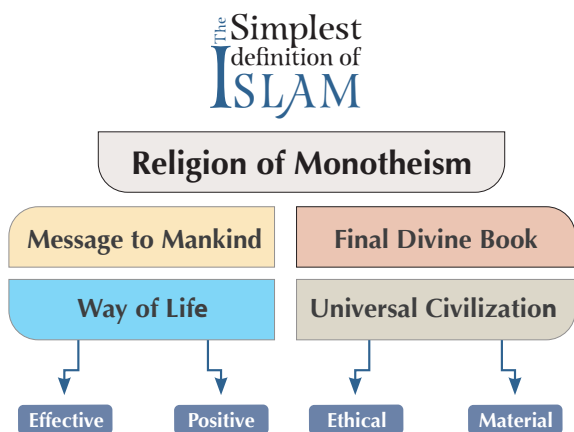
The Pure Oneness of God

6.1 Introduction

Early Christianity emerged from Judaism, which is strictly monotheistic (belief in one God). This strong emphasis on the singular God of Israel (Yahweh) was deeply ingrained in the minds of the first Christians. Jesus affirmed the oneness of God in several occasions (e.g. Mark 12:29 “*The Lord our God, the Lord is one*”).

A Call for Wisdom: It is a striking historical irony that the early prayers offered on the site of Hagia Sophia were led by Arian bishops who, like the Muslims (centuries later), rejected the co-equality of the Trinity in favor of the supremacy of the One indivisible God.

The Message of Islam: Unlike many other religions and creeds established by prominent men across the history, Muslims believe that Islam was originated by the Creator of all beings to guide people to Him, make them aware of the purpose of life and help them make the best of their living on Earth.



6.2 Understanding the Message of Islam

Muslims believe in one God and worship Him alone. His name is Allah (pronounced with a long vowel, Allaah). He is the Lord of all beings who created them.

There is no God or deity except Him. No one is worthy to be worshipped except Him. He neither begets nor is born and He has no partners or children. He alone controls the whole universe and He alone gave life to all living creatures. To Him all people will return after they die.

Worshipping Allah alone is not only by praying to Him, but every good thing we do in His Kingdom and to any of His creatures is an act of worship.

Islam is the religion of **monotheism**. It carries a universal **Message** and the final **Divine Book** from the Lord of people to all people. Once embraced, Islam becomes a prosperous **way of life** and establishes a universal **civilization**.

The Prophet of Islam Muhammad ﷺ was not but a Messenger who conveyed God's final Message and concluding divine Book “The Quran”.

It acknowledges and confirms all previous books God sent to humanity (in their original forms without subtractions and alterations) such as the Scrolls revealed to Abraham, the Torah revealed to Moses, the Psalms revealed to David and the Gospel revealed to Jesus.

Therefore, Islam carries the same Message conveyed by the Messengers and Prophets God sent across the history to protect people from being misled (i.e. go astray, worship false deities and fall in abomination).

It is the Message of monotheism which means worshipping one God alone without associating any partners with Him. It is also a universal Message that alerts people about their short life and awaited meeting with their Lord to question them about their work in their worldly life.

ISLAMⁱⁿ One Sentence

A man asked Prophet Muhammad to explain Islam in simple and clear words. He concisely said to him:

**“Say, I believed in Allah then be steadfast
(in your behavior)”.**

Your belief in “Allah” (your Creator, your Lord and your God, the One and only One) will influence your willingness to behave positively and become disciplined in your sayings and deeds.

ISLAMⁱⁿ Two Words

Islam can be summarized in two words:

Believe & Do.

Strong faith in one’s heart that is reflected in good manners and deeds.

*Believe in your Lord who created you,
(worship Him alone and submit to His Commands)
Do good in His kingdom.*

6.3 Understanding Tawhid

(The Core of Islamic Creed)

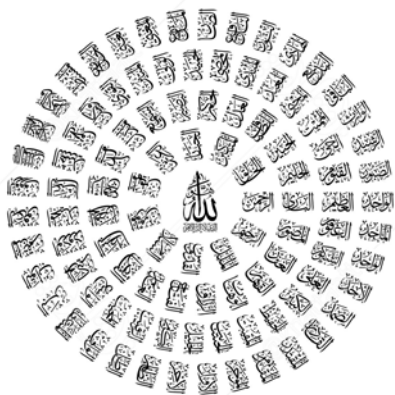
Tawhid (Monotheism) in Islam is the firm belief that God (Allah) is One, with no partners, no equals, and no rivals. It is the absolute foundation of Islam. He is the Creator of the Universe and all beings.

Allah is the only Creator, Provider, Owner, and Ruler of the entire universe. He alone gives life and death to all living creatures.

Muslims direct all acts of worship to Allah alone. This means you only pray, supplicate, or make sacrifices to Him, and no one else.

For non-Muslims, the easiest way to grasp Tawhid is to think of it as radical oneness. It isn't just the belief that there is only one God; it is the belief that God is completely unique, indivisible, and unmatched by anything else in existence.

Muslims direct all their prayers, gratitude, and spiritual devotion exclusively to Him, without using intermediaries like saints, idols, or statues.



"He is Allah , other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

He is Allah , other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.

He is Allah , the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise".

The Quran, 59:22-24



Spotlight

Arianism vs. Islamic Pure Monotheism (Tawhid)

Arianism was an early Christian belief taught by Arius, who maintained that God the Father alone is ultimate and uncreated, while Jesus was created by the Father as the highest and greatest of all creations rather than being co-eternal or equal in essence to God.

Although Arians viewed Jesus as a divine figure and mediator through whom the universe was created, they emphasized that “there was when he was not,” placing him of a different substance (heteroousios) than the Father, in direct contrast to the Trinitarian view that Jesus is fully God and co-eternal (homoousios).

This intense theological debate over the nature of Jesus severely divided the early Church, threatening the political stability of the Roman Empire, which ultimately led Emperor Constantine to convene the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE to restore unity and establish a unified Christian orthodoxy.



Islamic Monotheism (Tawhid)

While Arianism rejected the Trinity by defining Jesus as a exalted, created divine mediator, Islamic Monotheism (Tawhid) establishes an even stricter, absolute distinction between the Creator and all of creation.

In Islam, God (Allah) is strictly One (al-Ahad), Unique, Unbegotten, and completely without partners, offspring, or equals—as declared in Surah al-Ikhlās (“He neither begets nor is He begotten”).

Islam honors Jesus (Isa, peace be upon him) not as a divine or semi-divine entity, but as a revered human prophet and messenger of God, born miraculously to the Virgin Mary (Maryam).

Thus, while Arianism created a middle category of a “created divine being” who shares in God’s heavenly glory, Islamic monotheism completely removes any divine nature from creation itself, upholding pure, uncompromising monotheism where worship, divinity, and ultimate sovereignty belong to God alone.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي
خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَالَّذِي جَعَلَ الْقُرْآنَ
أَنْزِلًا مُبِينًا

7

Divine Messages

Universal Calls from the Lord of
People to All People. Excerpts from
the Holy Quran



We have revealed to you
[O Muhammad],

as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after
him.

We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob,
the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and
Solomon.

And We gave the Psalms to David.

Some messengers We mentioned their stories to
you and some messengers we did not mention to
you.

And God spoke to Moses with direct speech.

We sent messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that people will have no argument against God after [sending] the messengers. God is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.

But God bears witness to what He has revealed to you. He has sent it down with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness as well. God is Sufficient as Witness.

Those who disbelieve and avert people from the way of God have certainly gone far astray.

Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit wrong or injustice, God will never forgive them, nor will He guide them to a path. Except the path of Hell; they will abide in it forever.

This is [ever] easy to God.

O People!

The Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord, so believe; it is better for you.

But if you disbelieve, then, to God belongs whatever is in the Heavens and in the Earth.

God is ever Knowing and Wise.

O People of the Scripture!

Do not commit excess in your religion and say about God except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of God and His Word which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit [created at a command] from Him.

So believe in God and His messengers. And do not say: “Three”; Stop [saying that], it is better for you.

Allah is but one God.

Exalted is He above having a son.

To Him belongs whatever is in the Heavens
and whatever is on the Earth. Allah is All-
Sufficient as Disposer of affairs.

Never would the **Messiah** disdain to be a
servant of **Allah**, nor would the angels near
to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and is
arrogant, He will gather them to Himself all
together.

Then, as for those who believed and did
righteous deeds, He will give them their
rewards in full and grant them extra from
His bounty. But as for those who disdained
and were arrogant, He will punish them with
a painful punishment, and they will not find
besides Allah any protector or helper for
themselves.

O People!

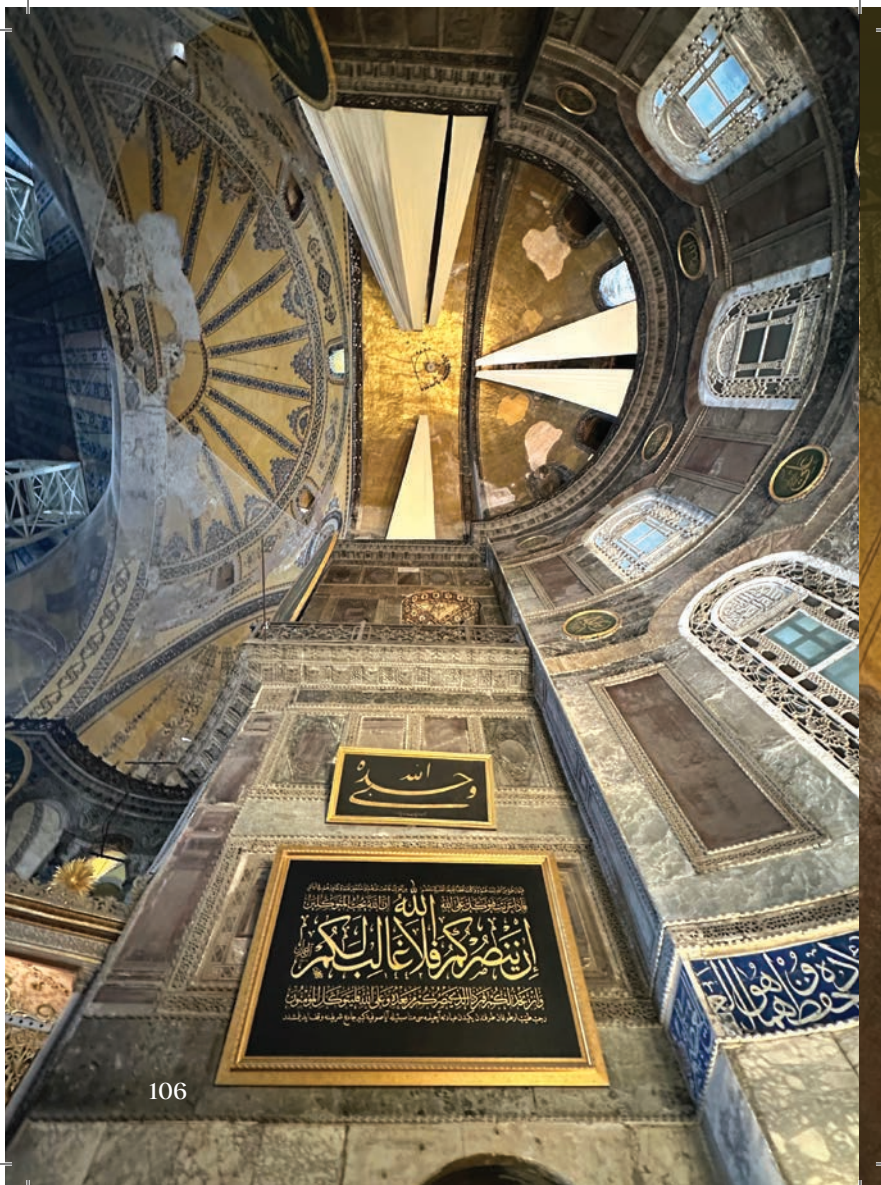
There has come to you a conclusive proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light.

So those who believe in God and hold fast to Him, He will admit them to mercy from Himself and bounty and guide them to Himself on a straight path.

The Quran, 4: 163 - 175

Note

Islam introduces pure monotheism not as a new doctrine, but as the original message taught by every prophet and messenger from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus to Muhammad (peace be upon them all). Across generations, every messenger shared the exact same core mission: to guide humanity away from worshipping created beings and unite them in the worship of the One True God.



Have You Heard of a Dialogue Between Allah and Jesus?

The Quran
contains a
documented
dialogue between
Allah and Jesus

A Dialogue between God and His Messenger, Not The Father and His Son

In mainstream Christian theology, the relationship between God and Jesus is defined by the intimate, metaphysical bond of Father and Son. Yet, the Quran unveils a profoundly different and dramatic interaction in the form of a dialogue between the Creator and His messenger.

Allah said:

“O Jesus, Son of Mary! Did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?”

Jesus said:

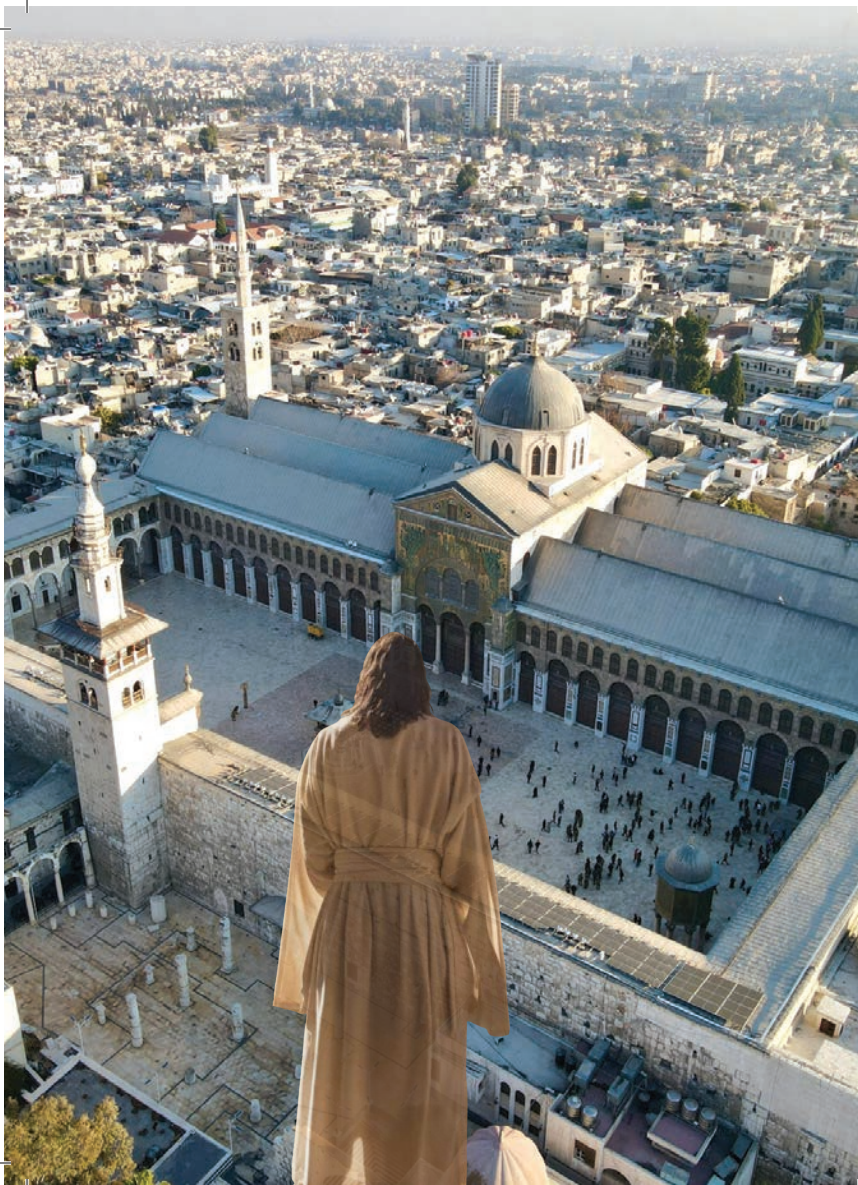
“Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.

I did not say to them except what You commanded me - to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness over them as long as I was among them. But when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are the witness over all things. If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

Allah said:

“This is the Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness.” For them are gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, Allah being pleased with them, and they will be pleased with Him. That is the great attainment. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them. And He is the powerful over all things.

The Quran, 5:116-120



8

Epilogue:

Return of Jesus, A Promise of Peace & Monotheism

8.1 Introduction

In the Islamic tradition, Jesus (Isa ibn Maryam) occupies a position of profound reverence. The Quran describes him as “God’s Word” and “glad tidings” bestowed upon Mary, explicitly honoring him as the Messiah (the blessed and purified).

Supported by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was sent as an illustrious messenger of Allah to the Children of Israel, tasked with guiding them toward the absolute unity of God (Tawhid) and away from theological deviations.

Note: Photo on the left is for Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ indicated that Jesus will return and he will descend from the heavens first in Damascus.

He was granted divine wisdom, the mastery of both the Torah and the Gospel, and the power to perform monumental miracles—healing the blind, curing the leper, and raising the dead by Allah's leave.

Far from being a figure related to the past, Jesus remains central to Islamic faith which dictates that the Day of Resurrection will not occur until Jesus descends from the heavens to the earthly realm.

Muslims believe in Jesus return: According to prophetic narrations (Hadith), his descent will take place at the white minaret on the eastern side of **Damascus**, Syria.

Returning as a just ruler before the end of the world, Jesus the Messiah will dismantle falsehood, defeat the false messiah (Al-Masih ad-Dajjal), and unite all true believers under the banner of pure monotheism, establishing universal peace and divine law on Earth.

Jesus ﷺ

He is one of Arch-Prophets of Determination:

Within Islamic theology, Jesus is recognized as one of the *Ulul-Azm*—an Arabic honorific meaning “The Messengers of Firm Resolve” or “Arch-Prophets of Determination”. This elite title is reserved for only five prophets who bore the heaviest burdens of revelation and exhibited unmatched steadfastness in the face of extreme persecution: Noah, Abraham, Moses, **Jesus** and Muhammad ﷺ.

أول العزم
من الرسل

By placing **Jesus** ﷺ within this ultimate spiritual rank, Islamic doctrine elevates his mission alongside the foundational lawgivers of human history, framing his return not as a secondary event, but as the ultimate fulfillment of God’s Will and plan.

Jesus said:

“I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”. Matthew 5:17

Jesus ﷺ Return

A moment of ultimate clarity for all humanity

The narrative of Hagia Sophia does not end in the past; it points toward a shared future and extends beyond its complex architectural history. Both Christian and Muslim traditions look forward to the return of Jesus (Isa, peace be upon him), a moment of ultimate clarity for all humanity.

In this shared prophecy, he returns not as a figure of division, but as a restorer of the primordial (early) Message: the worship of the One True God, our Creator, “Allah” the Creator of the Universe and all beings.

الله



Islamic scholarship emphasizes that Jesus's original mission was centered on absolute devotion to the Creator, pointing to Gospel accounts such as Mark 12:29 where Jesus affirms the Shema (*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*) as reflecting this original monotheistic calling. The historical record of Jesus's life reinforces this mission. He never invited humanity to worship him; rather, he was a humble servant who directed all praise to Allah (the Father in Christianity).

“The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Mark 12:29

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

John 5:30

Jesus said, “...Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

John 20:17

This strong emphasis on the singular God was deeply ingrained in the minds of the first Christians since early Christianity emerged from Judaism, which is strictly monotheistic.

On the other hand, Islam teaches that all true prophets and messengers have **submitted** to their Lord, Allah the Almighty, the Glorified and Exalted.

In the Quran, chapter 20:14 (Surah Taha), when **God** spoke to **Moses** for the first time, He said:

“Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance”.





Say, He is Allah, (who is) One (indivisible).
 Allah, the Eternal Refuge (The Self-Sufficient
 Master). He neither begets nor is born, nor is there
 to Him any equivalent.

The Quran, 112:1-4

From a Muslim perspective, the “Divine Wisdom” of
 Hagia Sophia resonates with these verses from the
 Holy Quran.



8.2 Jesus's Return and Hagia Sophia

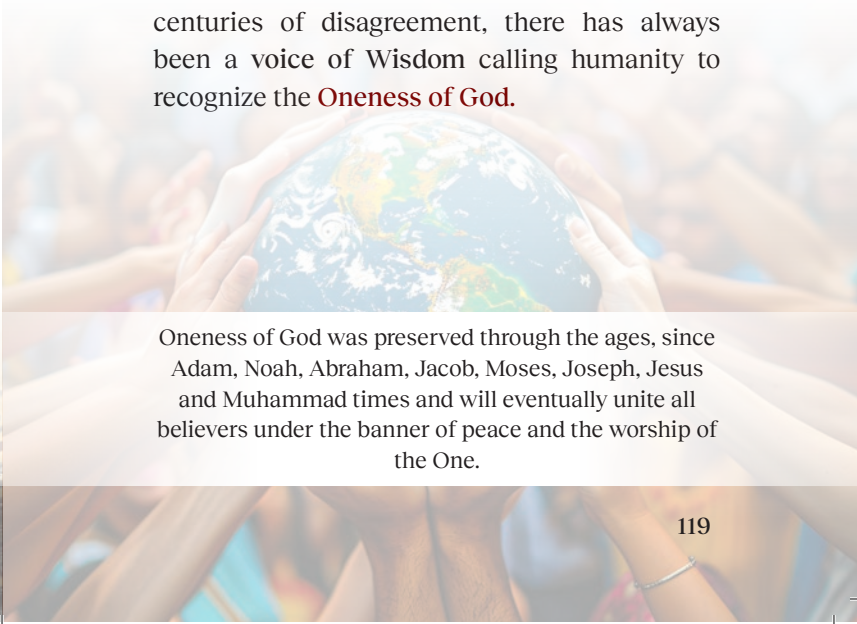
When Jesus returns, let us imagine that he will visit Hagia Sophia, walk beneath its dome and see the Christian and Islamic traditions entwined. Finding it a mosque where the Oneness of God is proclaimed five times a day, he would see a reflection to what he preached in the hills of Galilee in Palestine and an echo of his own core message.

Under his leadership, Hagia Sophia will stand no longer as a prize of conquest or a site of debate, but as a global beacon of monotheism, peace and prosperity.

The stones of Hagia Sophia have witnessed more than the rise and fall of empires; they have stood as a silent theater for a fundamental debate in human history: the nature of God.

The transition of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 1453 CE was the architectural manifestation of this theological return transforming the grand dome into a **canopy for Tawhid** (Oneness of God). Today, as the five daily prayers echo through the building of Hagia Sophia providing a clear witness to the absolute unity of Allah (The Creator of the Universe and All Beings).

Hagia Sophia's journey is a living symbol of humanity's enduring quest for the Truth. It stands as a monumental reminder that despite centuries of disagreement, there has always been a voice of Wisdom calling humanity to recognize the **Oneness of God**.



Oneness of God was preserved through the ages, since Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joseph, Jesus and Muhammad times and will eventually unite all believers under the banner of peace and the worship of the One.

Hagia Sophia

Arianism → Trinity → Monotheism → Oneness of God
nontrinitarian

Trinitarian Unitarian
Cathedral → Mosque → Museum → Mosque

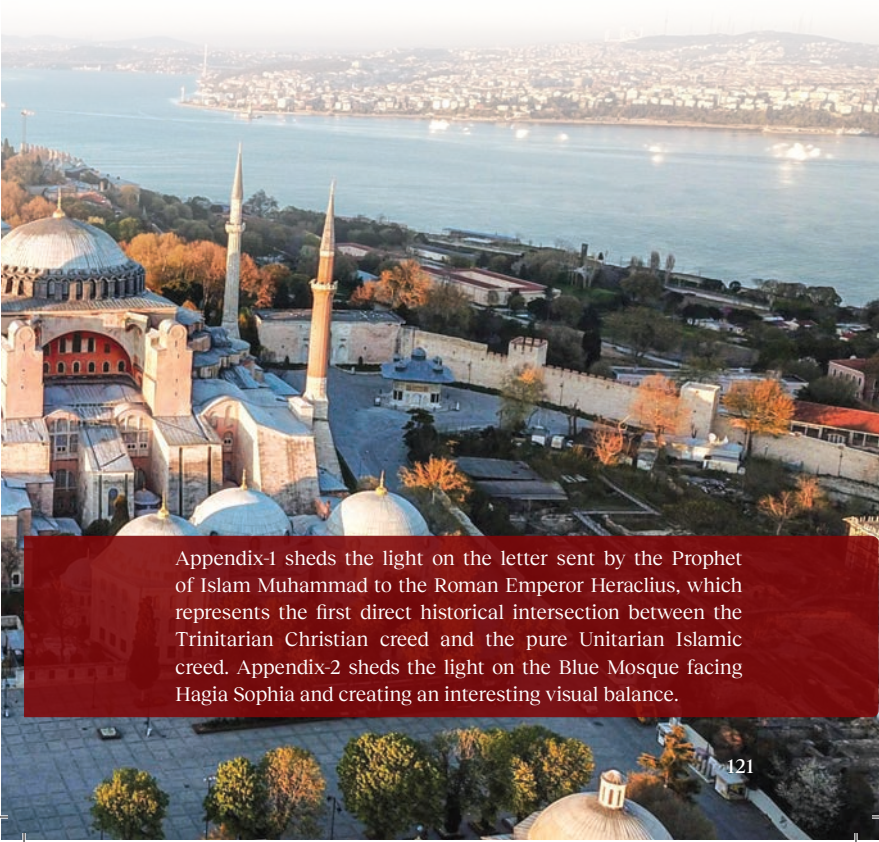
↑
Church-2 (Trinitarian)
↑
Church-1 (Arian)



Appendices

Appendix 1: Heraclius and Muhammad ﷺ

Appendix 2: Spotlight on Sultan Ahmed Mosque

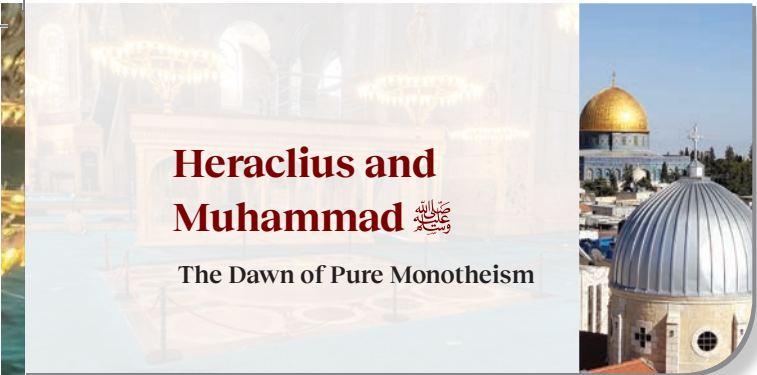
An aerial photograph of Istanbul, Turkey, showing the Hagia Sophia in the foreground with its large dome and minarets. The Bosphorus Strait is visible in the middle ground, with the city of Istanbul on the opposite shore in the background. The image is used as a background for the text in the appendices.

Appendix-1 sheds the light on the letter sent by the Prophet of Islam Muhammad to the Roman Emperor Heraclius, which represents the first direct historical intersection between the Trinitarian Christian creed and the pure Unitarian Islamic creed. Appendix-2 sheds the light on the Blue Mosque facing Hagia Sophia and creating an interesting visual balance.

A photograph of the Omphalion floor panel in Hagia Sophia. The panel is a large, rectangular mosaic with a central circular area and a ring of smaller circular medallions around it. The medallions are inlaid with various colored marbles. The floor is covered with a green carpet. Large, ornate chandeliers hang from the ceiling, casting a warm glow. The background shows the interior of the church with its high vaulted ceiling and other architectural details.

The Omphalion Navel of the Roman Empire

Located beneath Hagia Sophia's massive dome, the Omphalion (Greek for "navel") is a striking floor panel inlaid with concentric circles of colored marble. Representing the spiritual and political heart of the Byzantine Empire, it served as the ceremonial stage where emperors were crowned by the Patriarch of Constantinople as God's anointed ruler.



Heraclius and Muhammad ﷺ

The Dawn of Pure Monotheism

1- Heraclius, a Brief Biography

Heraclius was born around 575 CE in Cappadocia (Central Anatolia Türkiye). He is the son of Heraclius the Elder, the Roman governor of Africa. In 608 CE, he and his father launched a naval revolt (uprising) against the unpopular tyrant Emperor Phocas, sailing from Carthage (Tunisia) with a fleet to Constantinople. By October 610 CE, Heraclius entered Constantinople with local support, deposed Phocas, and was acclaimed emperor of Byzantium.

As the 20th ruler in the line of Constantine I , Heraclius's reign marked a pivotal shift from the "Late Roman" to the "Byzantine" era, most notably through his decision to gradually replace Latin with Greek as the Empire's official language.

Heraclius, crowned in Constantinople, 610 CE

Heraclius did not inherit the throne; he seized it by right of conquest. His coronation followed a powerful Roman Byzantine tradition: The Patriarch of Constantinople crowned him as a divinely sanctioned ruler, underscoring the legitimacy of his reign. He would rule for over three decades, from 610 to 641 CE.

Heraclius presided over solemn ceremonies and blessings within Hagia Sophia following his victory over the Sasanian Empire, where he restored the True Cross to Christendom.



The Roman Empire at the time of Heraclius

When Heraclius was crowned, the geography of the Roman Byzantine Empire looked like this:

- **The Core:** Anatolia (modern Turkiye), Greece, and the Balkans.
- **Egypt:** The Breadbasket (provided grains to feed Constantinople).
- **The Levant:** Syria, Palestine, and Jordan (Arabia Petraea).
- **The Western Remnants:** North Africa (Carthage—where Heraclius came from), Sicily, and small coastal strips of Italy (including Rome and Ravenna).

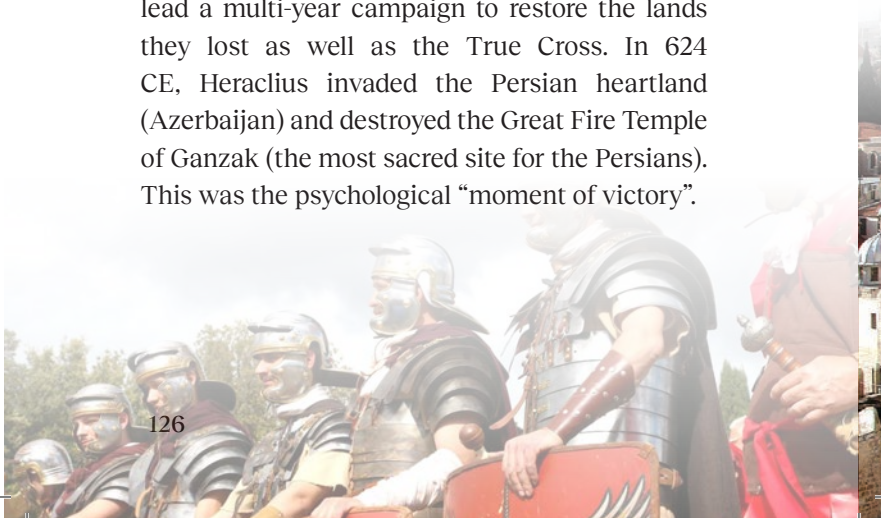


The Great War with the Persians (602 - 628 CE)

The Sassanid Persian King, Khosrow II, had conquered the Roman Levant, Egypt, and Jerusalem. The Persians under King Khosrow II, captured Jerusalem in May 614 CE after a brutal 21-day siege.

They captured the **True Cross** (the holiest relic in Christendom) from Jerusalem and brought it to their capital, Ctesiphon. (The Persian General Shahrbaraz entered the city, burned the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and seized the True Cross).

Heraclius invades Azerbaijan (624 CE): Heraclius lead a multi-year campaign to restore the lands they lost as well as the True Cross. In 624 CE, Heraclius invaded the Persian heartland (Azerbaijan) and destroyed the Great Fire Temple of Ganzak (the most sacred site for the Persians). This was the psychological “moment of victory”.



Battle of Nineveh 627 CE: Heraclius personally led his army to fight the Persians which ended with a great victory to the Romans.

The Peace Treaty (628 CE): The Persian Empire collapsed into civil war, the King (Khosrow II) was killed by his own son, and the Persians finally agreed to return the True Cross.

Heraclius returned the True Cross to Jerusalem after 16 years of capture. In March 630 CE, he personally carried the Cross back to Jerusalem.



2- The Prophet of Islam Muhammad ﷺ, a Brief Biography

Muhammad was born in Makkah (Mecca) in 570 CE, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Justin II. Long before his prophethood, he was renowned throughout the Arabian Peninsula for his exceptional character. In a society built on the pillars of tribal honor and commerce, a man's reputation served as his most valuable currency. Among his people, he was honored with two distinct titles: **Al-Sadiq** (The Truth-Teller) and **Al-Amin** (The Trustworthy).

In his early years, Muhammad led a life of quiet integrity, unaware of the destiny that awaited him. He married Khadijah, a noblewoman of Makkah, with whom he had six children—four daughters and two sons who passed away in their childhood. His marriage lasted for about 25 years until his wife Khadijah passed away in the year 619 CE.

Even in a polytheistic society where idol worship was rife, Muhammad never bowed to stone; he believed that one single, Supreme Creator governed the universe.

Seeking clarity, he often retreated to a cave on a mountain four kilometers east of Mecca. It was here, in 610 CE, that his life—and the course of history—changed forever. At the age of forty, while deep in meditation, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him for the first time with a single, command: “**Read!**”

Read

“Read in the Name of your Lord Who created
(everything), He created man from a clot. Read!
and your Lord is the All-Munificent Who taught
man by the pen He taught man what he didn’t
know!

The Quran 96:1

These few verses marked the beginning of the Quran, the final divine scripture for humanity, which would be revealed over a period of twenty-three years until Prophet Muhammad passed away in 632 CE.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ remained in Makkah for thirteen years, calling first his inner circle and then the public to the worship of the One Creator and the abolition of idolatry.

It was during this period of intense persecution that a specific chapter of the Quran was revealed: **Surat Al-Room (The Romans)**. At a time when the Byzantine Empire seemed on the verge of total collapse, these verses offered a startling prophecy: despite their current defeat, the Romans would emerge victorious over the Persians within a few years.

**In the name of Allah ,
the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.**

The Romans have been defeated in the nearest
(lowest) land. But they, after their defeat, will
overcome (be victorious) within a few years.

To Allah belongs the command before and after.

And that day, the believers will rejoice in the victory
of Allah. He Gives victory to whom He Wills, and He
is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

The Quran 30:2-5

Migration to Madinah (622 CE)

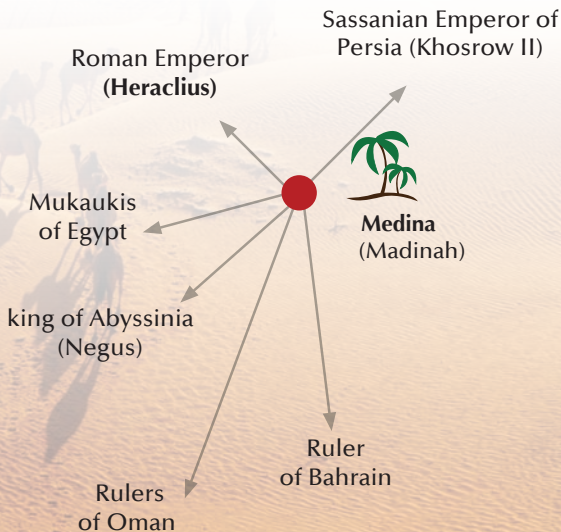
In 622 CE, the Prophet migrated to Madinah (Medina), marking a new era for the Islamic mission. History then produced a remarkable alignment in 624 CE, the year Heraclius launched his successful counter-offensive into the Persian heartland, the Muslims achieved their first major victory at the Battle of Badr. Just as the Quran had foretold, “the believers rejoiced” on that time, celebrating a double victory for the believers in God over paganism.

Photo from Madinah,
Prophet Muhammad Mosque



A ten-year truce:

Four years later, in 628 CE, a ten-year truce known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya was signed between the Muslims and the Meccan leadership. This pause in domestic conflict opened a window for international diplomacy. Seizing this period of peace, the Prophet **dispatched letters** to the great monarchs of the age, most notably **Heraclius** of Byzantium and **Khosrow II** of Persia.



www.nationalgeographic.com

Muhammad's Letter to Heraclius

The letter to Heraclius remains a masterpiece of seventh-century diplomacy. Carried by the companion Dihya al-Kalbi and delivered through the Governor of Busra, the document was a model of statecraft: concise, firm, and meticulously observant of imperial protocols.



In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

From: Muhammad, The servant of Allah and His Messenger,
To: Heraclius, the Great (Leader) of the Romans.

Peace be upon him who follows the right path. Furthermore, I invite you to Islam (submit to One God Allah the Creator of the Universe and all beings) and worship Him alone. Accept Islam and you will be in state of safety; accept Islam and Allah will double your reward. But if you turn away, you will bear the sin of "Arisiyyin" (your subjects: Arians)

'O People of the Scripture! Come to a word that is just between us and you: that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah. Then, if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.

(The Quran 3:64)

Heraclius's Testimony:

The Emperor's Inquiry into Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

When Heraclius, received Muhammad's letter, he was in the Levant region (most likely in Jerusalem), so he invited Abu-Sufyan (one of the main chiefs and tradesmen of Makkah who was by chance doing business in the Levant region) to attend him. Heraclius asked Abu-Sufyan a few questions and requested that he be honest.

Heraclius Which social class of the society does Muhammad come from?

Abu-Sufyan He comes from a noble family in Mecca.

Heraclius Did he ever betray, break a promise, or lie?

Abu-Sufyan No

Heraclius How about his followers, are they increasing or decreasing? And have any of his followers quit because they were not pleased with Muhammad?

Abu-Sufyan In fact, his followers admire him and they are increasing in number.

Heraclius Then what does Muhammad teach his followers?

Abu-Sufyan Belief in One God and social justice.

Heraclius Heraclius made a statement that shocked his generals and the nobles standing in the room:

“If what you say is true, he will soon conquer the ground beneath my very feet. I knew (from the Scriptures) that he was going to emerge, but I did not think he would be from among you. If I knew I could reach him, I would have endured any hardship to meet him; and if I were with him, I would surely wash his feet”. Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim

Heraclius Judging Muhammad ﷺ

Heraclius did not judge the Prophet by miracles; he could present, but he judged him by character. He used his Roman logic to realize that a man who never lied to any one, would not lie about The Creator of the Universe and all beings. In that moment, the Emperor saw the future; he realized his empire's walls could stop armies, but they could not stop the “sweetness of faith”.

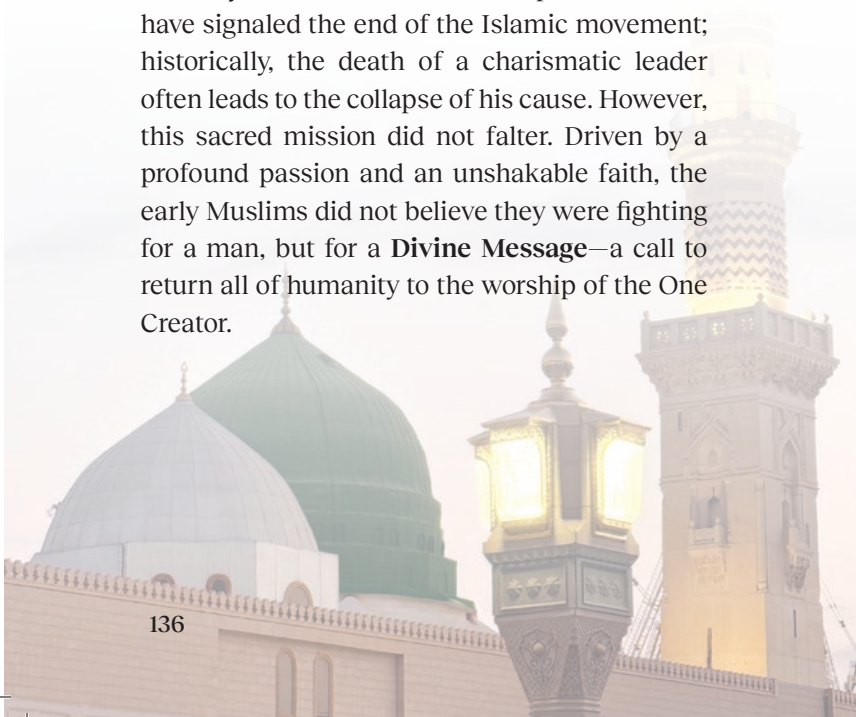
It is a stunning historical coincidence that Muhammad received the first divine revelation in the very same year that Heraclius was crowned Emperor in Constantinople (610 CE).

3 - The Passing Away of Muhammad ﷺ

The Spread of Islam (the unstoppable message of monotheism)

In 632 CE, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away in Madinah, having unified the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Tawhid (the Oneness of God).

To many outside observers, his departure should have signaled the end of the Islamic movement; historically, the death of a charismatic leader often leads to the collapse of his cause. However, this sacred mission did not falter. Driven by a profound passion and an unshakable faith, the early Muslims did not believe they were fighting for a man, but for a **Divine Message**—a call to return all of humanity to the worship of the One Creator.



The Battle of Yarmouk, 636 CE

Under the leadership of the first Caliphs, the Islamic progress continued with an energy that baffled the Roman generals. It was this spiritual momentum that led to the final clashes between the two realms, most notably at the Battle of Yarmouk in 636 CE. While the Romans fought for an aging empire and a complex state theology, the Muslims fought with the conviction of a people carrying a final scripture to the world.

During the decisive battles for Syria, Heraclius was stationed in Antioch, directing the war effort. He witnessed his veteran legions shatter before the tactical genius of the Muslim military commander Khalid ibn al-Walid.

The Peaceful Takeover of Jerusalem, Heraclius departs the Levant

Knowing Jerusalem would soon fall, Emperor Heraclius moved the True Cross to Constantinople to protect it. It was displayed in the Hagia Sophia cathedral during major events until crusaders looted the city in 1204 CE.

As Jerusalem was peacefully surrendered to Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab in 638 CE, Heraclius retreated across the mountains, leaving the province forever. Turning back to gaze upon the land he had spent nearly two decades reclaiming from the Persians, he whispered a final, heartbreaking farewell (according to some historical resources):



**“Peace be with you, O Syria!
What a beautiful land this is for the enemy.”**

The Muslims brought with them a new world order. The Roman retreat was not merely a military withdrawal; it marked the end of an ancient imperial era and the beginning of a transformation that would permanently redefine the region’s religious and political geography.

4 - Heraclius: Personal Life and Final Years

His personal life was as dramatic and controversial as his political one. His family life caused a massive scandal that some believe “cursed” his reign.

His first wife died in 612 CE: He was married to Fabia Eudokia who was crowned alongside him in 610 CE but tragically died just two years later (612 CE) from epilepsy. She gave him a son, Heraclius Constantine (the heir), and a daughter.

Married to His Niece?

About a year after his first wife died, Heraclius did something that shocked the Christian world: he married his niece, Martina. In the eyes of the Church and the Roman people, this was incest. The Patriarch of Constantinople refused to support it, but eventually gave in and crowned her. Martina was hated by the public. When many of her children were born with disabilities or died young, the people of Constantinople whispered that it was a curse and “divine punishment” for the incestuous marriage.

The Passing Away of Heraclius

Heraclius's death was a shadow of his glorious youth. He died on 11th February, 641 CE (about 9 years after the passing away of Prophet Muhammad). He suffered from a terrible condition called **dropsy** (edema) and complications with his urinary tract. Contemporary chroniclers claimed his body was “rotting” as a punishment for his marriage to his niece.



He **died** at the age of **66**, leaving behind a complex legacy of a man who saved the Empire from one enemy only to witness the rise of another. He left an empire that was smaller in size, yet profoundly transformed into the Greek-speaking, medieval Byzantine state that would endure for another 800 years.

Note

During the Fourth Crusade, the Crusaders attacked Constantinople, and broke into the imperial tombs in the Church of the Holy Apostles. They stripped gold and jewels from the stone coffins. Because of this, it is very likely that Heraclius's tomb was robbed and his resting place was ruined.

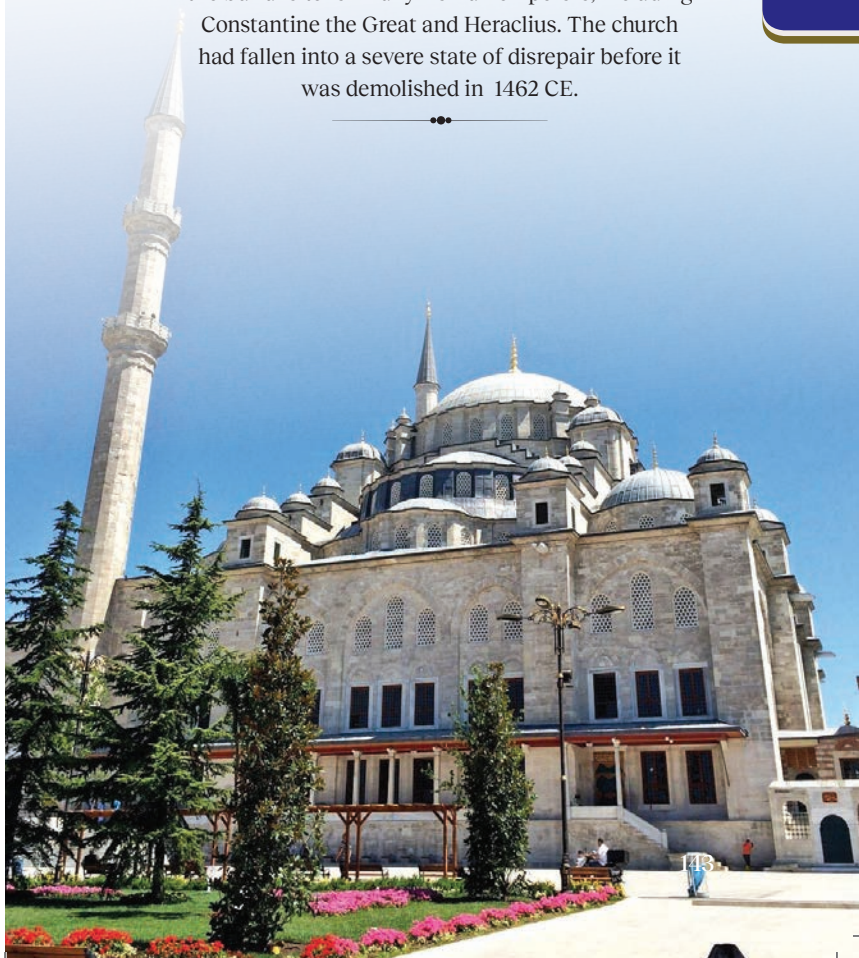
The Burial of Heraclius

Heraclius was buried in the most prestigious location in the Byzantine world: **The Church of the Holy Apostles** in Constantinople. At the time, the Church was the second most important one after the Hagia Sophia. It served as the imperial mausoleum where almost all Roman/Byzantine emperors were laid to rest, starting with Constantine the Great.



There are four Imperial sarcophagi (a stone coffin, adorned with sculpture or inscriptions) - called larnax in Greek - in front of the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. They came from the Church of the Holy Apostles.

Fatih Mosque in Istanbul is built on the site of the Byzantine Church of the **Holy Apostles**. It served as the burial site for many Roman emperors, including Constantine the Great and Heraclius. The church had fallen into a severe state of disrepair before it was demolished in 1462 CE.





Feature Stories

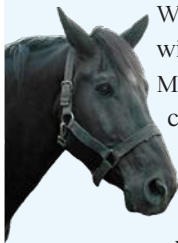


Spotlight

Foretold and Fulfilled: Two Predictions that Reshaped History

1- The Story of Suraqah;

A promise fulfilled 20 years later



When Prophet Muhammad ﷺ migrated to Medina with his close companion Abu Bakr (622 CE), the Meccan leaders announced a large reward of 100 camels for anyone who could bring Muhammad dead or alive.

Unfortunately, Muhammad ﷺ and his companion were tracked down by one of the Arab knights named **Suraqah bin Malik** who was tempted by the big reward. On the way, his horse stumbled and he fell on the ground a few times. He considered these unusual incidents as an indirect message that Muhammad probably had been supported by divine power.

When Suraqah approached Muhammad ﷺ Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ said to him: *"Do return to your people and I promise you that one day (under the umbrella of the Islamic state) you would wear the bangles (bracelets) of Chosroes (Khusrow), the Persian ruler."*

Suraqah asked in wonderment if Prophet Muhammad ﷺ meant the bangles of Khusrow bin Hormuz, the emperor of Persia. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ replied "yes" with full confidence. He had a strong faith that the religion of Islam would reach Persia and would be known all over the world.



Suraqah returned back to Mecca (Makkah) but he didn't embrace Islam until Muhammad took over Mecca peacefully in 630 CE (8 years later).

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away in the year 632 -633 CE but his story with Suraqah was known to his companions who had strong faith that the Prophet's promise would be fulfilled one day.

Time passed until Omar Bin Al-Khattab became the second caliph (ruler of the Muslim state). At his time, Islam reached Persia in the year 642 CE and all the treasures of Khusrow, the emperor of Persia fell in the hands of Omar.

Omar remembered the story of Suraqah and asked his companions to bring him in. Twenty years passed since this story took place and Suraqah had become an old man.



After prayer congregation, Omar said to Suraqah: *“Here are the bangles of Khusrow, the emperor of Persia, this is what Muhammad had promised you. Put them on and let all Muslims see them so everyone becomes certain that Muhammad’s promise is fulfilled.”*

Suraqah cried and every one wept. Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ promise became a reality 10 years after he passed away.

2- The Story of Heraclius Prediction:

How it Unfolded after the Prophet’s Passing Away

Around the same era, Byzantine Emperor Heraclius sat at the pinnacle of global power. Having just defeated the Sasanian Persians (628 CE) in a devastating decades-long war, he received a letter sent by Prophet Muhammad calling him to Islam, alongside reports of a new monotheistic movement emerging from the Arabian Peninsula. Intrigued, Heraclius summoned Arab merchants trading in the Levant—including Abu Sufyan, a leading chieftain of pagan Mecca and a fierce opponent of the Prophet.

Heraclius questioned Abu Sufyan intently about the Prophet’s lineage, character, message, and followers.



Abu Sufyan admitted that Muhammad was nobleman of impeccable honesty, preached strict monotheism (Tawhid), commanded social justice, and that his followers never abandoned his faith.

Upon hearing this, Heraclius recognized the scriptural patterns of historical prophethood and made his famous declaration:

“If what you say is true, he will soon conquer the ground beneath my very feet.”

Heraclius’s prediction unfolded across the Levant. Following the decisive Battle of Yarmouk in 636 CE, Byzantine control over Syria, Palestine, and Egypt permanently dissolved. In 637–638 CE, Jerusalem surrendered peacefully to Caliph Umar.

Heraclius passed away on February 11, 641 CE in Constantinople as a broken leader, having watched the southern half of his empire—including the Levant, Palestine, and Egypt—slip permanently from Byzantine control during his final years.

Note: The Muslims won the Battle of Nahavand in 642 CE, which broke the last organized Sasanian army shortly after Emperor Heraclius’s death and marked the decisive fall of the Persian Empire.



Standing before the Omphalion—the marble floor inlay where Byzantine sovereigns, including Emperor Heraclius, were once crowned—one is struck by a profound convergence of history and prophecy.

Looking up from the very ground where Roman emperors asserted their imperial might, the eye is drawn to the majestic calligraphic medallion bearing the name MUHAMMAD ﷺ towering high above the nave.

Centuries after Heraclius foresaw that the message of Islam would reach the land beneath his feet, Constantinople was transformed, Hagia Sophia was consecrated as an imperial mosque, and the name of the Prophet was elevated over the ancient coronation spot—a visual testament to the shifting tides of empire and faith.

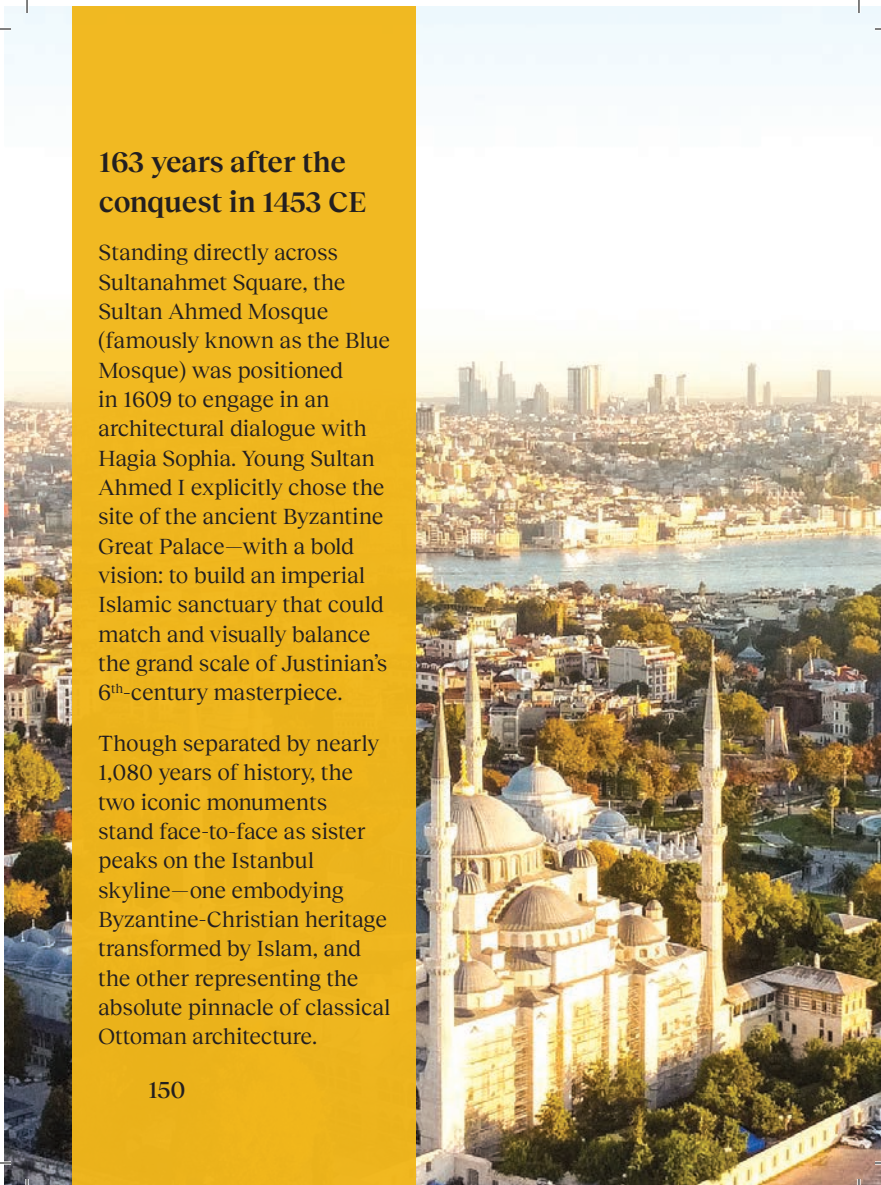
Hagia Sophia's evolution from an imperial cathedral into a celebrated mosque stands as a visual reflection of Heraclius's own ancient insight: that the message brought by the Prophet would one day echo across the great historical capitals of the world. At its heart, this journey reflects the enduring triumph of **pure monotheism**—the singular, timeless truth carried by all prophets throughout history to unite humanity in the worship of the One True God.



163 years after the conquest in 1453 CE

Standing directly across Sultanahmet Square, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque (famously known as the Blue Mosque) was positioned in 1609 to engage in an architectural dialogue with Hagia Sophia. Young Sultan Ahmed I explicitly chose the site of the ancient Byzantine Great Palace—with a bold vision: to build an imperial Islamic sanctuary that could match and visually balance the grand scale of Justinian's 6th-century masterpiece.

Though separated by nearly 1,080 years of history, the two iconic monuments stand face-to-face as sister peaks on the Istanbul skyline—one embodying Byzantine-Christian heritage transformed by Islam, and the other representing the absolute pinnacle of classical Ottoman architecture.



Appendix 2

Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque:

A Tale of Two Landmarks and a Dialogue
Across Centuries:



The Blue Mosque (1609 - 1616)

The Blue Mosque (officially the Sultan Ahmed Mosque) was built between 1609 and 1616 CE. (163 years after the conquest in 1453 CE)

While Hagia Sophia uses its 40 windows to create a “mystical” gloom, the Blue Mosque uses over 200 stained-glass windows and thousands of blue tiles to create a bright interior (over 20,000 handmade iznik tiles).

The Dome: The Blue Mosque’s dome is slightly smaller than Hagia Sophia’s, but because it sits on a series of “cascading” smaller domes, it looks more symmetrical and balanced from the outside.





Massive “Elephant Foot” Columns: The colossal central dome (23.5 meters in diameter) and four semi-domes are supported by four huge fluted marble piers—popularly known as “elephant feet”—each measuring 5 meters in diameter.





Spotlight

Sultans and Notable Mosques

Mehmed II The Conqueror	Eyüp Mosque It marks the discovery of the tomb of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (companion of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) Rebuilt: 1798-1800	1458
Mehmed II The Conqueror	Fatih Mosque Mehmed II built the first minaret of Hagia Sophia (red brick) in 1453	1470 Rebuilt (1771)
Bayezid II	Bayezid II Mosque Bayezid II built the 2 nd minaret of Hagia Sophia (white limestone)	1506
Suleiman I The Magnificent (Lawgiver- Kanuni)	Süleymaniye Mosque	1557

		
Selim II	Selimiye Mosque (Selim II Commissioned the 3 rd and 4 th minarets of Hagia Sophia (designed by Mimar Sinan), completed during Murad III reign (1570).	1575
Ahmed I	Blue Mosque Sultan Ahmed Mosque	1616
Selim III	Eyup Sultan Mosque (rebuilt)	1798-1800
Abdulmejid I	Ortaköy Mosque	1854
Abdulhamid II	Yıldız Hamidiye Mosque	1885
Mehmed V	Bebek Mosque	1913

References

Avdoulos, E. (2015). Istanbul's Hagia Sophia: Challenges of managing sacred places. *Complutense Journal of Scholastic Studies*, 1, 51-68.

Avci, B. (2018). Comparative theology: An alternative to religious studies or theology of religions? *Religions*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9030083>

Al-Mubarakpuri, S. R. (2002). *Ar-Raheeq al-makhtum [The sealed nectar]: Biography of the Noble Prophet*. Darussalam Publishers.

Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1992). *Al-Tawhid: Its implications for thought and life* (2nd ed.). International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Demir, H. (2023). *Hagia Sophia: Politics of space and hauntology* [Master's thesis, City University of New York]. CUNY Academic Works.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. (1994). Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Jeffreys, E., Cormack, R., & Haldon, J. (Eds.). (2008). *The Oxford handbook of Byzantine studies*. Oxford University Press.

Jones, L. (2008). [Review of the book *Art and identity in thirteenth-century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond*, by A. Eastmond]. *Church History*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0009640708000139>

Kaltner, J. (2011). *Introducing Islam: From History to Faith*. Fortress Press.

Mainstone, R. J. (1988). *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, structure and liturgy of Justinian's great church*. Thames & Hudson.

Mark, R., & Çakmak, A. Ş. (Eds.). (1992). *Hagia Sophia: From the age of Justinian to the present*. Cambridge University Press.

Mawson, T. J. (2024). On worshipping the same God. *AGATHEOS - European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, <https://doi.org/10.69574/aejpr.v1i1.22900>

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye. (n.d.). Topkapı Palace. <https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-113764/topkapi-palace.html>

Necipoğlu, G. (1992). The life of an imperial monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium. In R. Mark & A. Ş. Çakmak (Eds.), *Hagia Sophia: From the age of Justinian to the present* (pp. 195-225). Cambridge University Press.

Ozlu, N. (2010). Hagia Sophia and the demise of the sacred. Design Philosophy Papers, <https://doi.org/10.2752/144871310x13968744282719>

Oztig, L. I., & Adisonmez, U. C. (2023). Sovereignty, power, and authority: Understanding the conversion of Hagia Sophia from a performative perspective. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2023.2189543>

Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications. (n.d.). History of Hagia Sophia. Ayasofya-i Kebir Cami-i Şerifi. <https://www.ayasofyacamii.gov.tr/en/ayasofya-tarihi>

Runciman, S. (1951-1954). A history of the Crusades (Vol. 1-3). Cambridge University Press.

Sahih International. (1997). The Qur'an: English meanings and notes. Abul-Qasim Publishing House.

UN Tourism. (2025). International tourism highlights (2025 ed.). World Tourism Organization. <https://www.e-unwto.org/>

World Bank Group. (2026). Tourism for development: Lessons learned from a decade of World Bank experience. World Bank Publications. <https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/topic/tourism>

Society of Biblical Literature. (n.d.). The nativity stories. Bible Odyssey. <https://www.bibleodyssey.org>

Wiles, M. (1996). Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries. Oxford University Press.

World Council of Churches. (2001). Churches in dialogue: The Council of Chalcedon and its reception. WCC Publications.

Zuckerman, C. (2002). Heraclius and the return of the Holy Cross. *Travaux et Mémoires*, 14, 197-218.

TripAdvisor. (n.d.). Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem: Reviews. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g293983-d319062-Reviews-Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre-Jerusalem.html

Go Türkiye. (n.d.). Hagia Sophia travel guide. Retrieved September 26, 2026, from <https://goturkiye.com/istanbul/hagia-sophia>

