

## **More Information on Casper B. Nervig Collection**

The lamps in this collection are both wheel-made and mold-made from clay and fired in a kiln. The lamps were all designed to hold oil, probably olive oil. A wick was leaned over the edge of the bowl and when lit, provided protected and controllable light. Later lamps had handles and one or more spouts. Eventually, the lamps developed into a one-piece, closed form with two openings in the top which were for the wick and adding oil. The more elaborate, sophisticated lamps were regarded as works of art, but also as functional objects. Christian symbols began to appear on lamps in the 4th century. Large numbers of these have been found around Jerusalem. Several lamps in the Fine Arts Collection are decorated with Christian symbols such as crosses.

The lamps have been found throughout the Mediterranean geographical area extending into Spain although those in the Nervig Collection were all collected and originated in Palestine. It has been speculated that they were especially useful in the warm climate of these areas where candles were problematic to use. Later lamps (ca. 800) returned again to the simple bowl or saucer shape, perhaps reflecting the changing culture which led to the "Dark Ages."