

and along the lower Mississippi (Louisiana), while the colony of Maryland was established in 1632 by George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, specifically as a refuge for Catholics fleeing persecution in England. In time, other regions, including Atlantic Canada and the future Ontario, would also attract Catholic settlers from the British Isles.

From the mid-nineteenth century on, the growth of industrial cities along the East coast of North America attracted large numbers of immigrants from Ireland and later from Italy. In fact, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Catholic Church in North America has tended to mirror the local settlement history. Thus in the past many American bishops were of Irish descent, and their successors are increasingly likely to come from Italian or Hispanic backgrounds. There are also newer Catholic immigrant communities of Portuguese, Filipinos, and others. Modern migration reflects the worldwide spread of Christianity; because of their links with the Western Christian world, Christian minorities are somewhat overrepresented among the migrants from different parts of Asia settling in the West today.

PRACTICE

The Early Church

The early Christians gathered regularly in one another's homes on Sunday mornings, perhaps choosing that time because of its association with the risen Christ. Spontaneous, even trance-like, activity was accepted as a manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, but the norm was a more formalized ritual consisting of prayer, affirmations of faith, song, scripture reading, preaching, and the Eucharistic service. Many services concluded with a benediction or blessing by the officiating minister or priest.

Christian prayer is reverent and contemplative conversation with the divine, in which practitioners seek to align their attitudes and motivations

with it. Christians can pray individually as well as in groups; indeed, Jesus instructs his disciples not to make a show of prayer, but to pray in privacy. He teaches them what is known as the Lord's Prayer, often referred to by its opening words, 'Our Father' (in Latin, *Pater noster*). This prayer was already in fairly wide use around the end of the first century, when the gospels were produced, and is shared by all branches of Christians.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever].²

Since most Christians know the Lord's Prayer by heart, it is usually recited in unison during worship. Most of the other prayers included in a service are recited by the officiating priest or minister on behalf of the congregation.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist is also common to all branches of Christianity, although it is referred to by different names. It re-enacts the Passover supper that, according to the synoptic gospels, was Jesus' last meal with his disciples, when he distributed the bread and wine, declaring them to be his body and blood, and asked the disciples to do the same in remembrance of him.

Because Jesus gives thanks before distributing the bread and wine, the ritual is called the Eucharist, from the Greek word for thanksgiving. Roman Catholics commonly refer to the Eucharistic service as the mass, from the final words of the Latin Eucharistic ritual, *Ite, missa est* ('Go; it has been delivered'). Many Protestants refer to the ritual as Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. Eastern Orthodox Christians frequently refer to the

service as the Liturgy, from a Greek word meaning 'service'.

The heart of the ritual is the 'Eucharistic prayer', in which the officiating priest or minister repeats the account of Jesus' last supper and invites the congregation to 'communicate'—to receive communion—by taking a portion of the 'elements' of bread and wine. A communicant who takes the bread only is said to receive communion 'in one kind', whereas dipping the bread into the wine or sipping from a cup extends the communion to 'both kinds'.

Baptism

Baptism is the Christian ritual in which a person is admitted into participation in the community. At the time of Jesus, a baptismal ritual signified the washing away of uncleanness, so that the person

could enter a new condition. Various movements practised ritual bathing, including the one with which Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, was associated.

As long as Christianity remained a minority religion, joining it entailed some potential personal sacrifice. Therefore its initiation ritual was not something to be undertaken lightly. One was baptized into the faith only after a course of instruction. The content of that instruction was called catechism, and those who received it were catechumens.

Worship in the Greek Church

In the first centuries of Christianity, religious services must have included chanting. The evidence is only fragmentary, but similarities in medieval



Greek Orthodox worshippers at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem light their candles from the 'Holy Fire' (AP/Wide World/Getty Images).

Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish melodies and harmonies point to a common background, and the signs used for musical notation in the Byzantine era are virtually identical to those recording Jewish cantorial tradition in medieval Hebrew manuscripts.

Many Christians celebrate the eve of Easter with a vigil service in which a flame symbolizing Jesus' resurrection is passed from candle to candle among the congregation. The ceremony is particularly spectacular in the Greek Orthodox service at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Hundreds of worshippers, each carrying a candle, pack the church's rotunda. A priest is ritually searched to ensure that he is carrying no matches. He then enters the chamber at the centre of the rotunda, which marks the traditional site of Jesus' tomb. After a time he extends his arm from the chamber with a miraculously burning taper. The people closest to him light their candles from his and then share the fire with others, so that within moments the vast rotunda is a sea of flame. Outside the church, the fire is carried by runners to Orthodox congregations elsewhere. This ritual impressively symbolizes the spreading of the Easter light and the going forth of the gospel message.

The Concept of Sacrament

The Latin word *sacramentum* originally meant an oath of allegiance, but it came to be applied to a wide variety of formal Christian actions. In the fifth century Augustine used it to refer to formulas such as the Lord's Prayer and the creeds. In Latin Christianity in the twelfth century, as many as thirty sacraments were enumerated, but in the next century a list of seven emerged that became standard for the Catholic tradition: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing the seriously ill, ordination, and marriage. Many Protestants pared the list down to baptism and the Eucharist, as the two ritual actions inaugurated by Jesus. The Anglican prayer book's words, 'an

outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace', sum up many Christians' understanding of such rituals.

Pilgrimages and Relics

In the early Church, the bodies of saints and martyrs were interred in churches. This practice marked a break from Jewish tradition, which regarded the dead as unclean and required that they be promptly buried in cemeteries. By the fourth century, it was customary to celebrate the Eucharist with altar cloths that had fragments of saints' bones sewn into their hems. And at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, it was declared mandatory to have a relic—part of the body or personal paraphernalia of a venerated individual—in order to consecrate a church sanctuary.

The importance of relics in popular piety in the medieval era can hardly be overestimated. As tangible things, they were easy for people with little or no schooling to understand, and the practice of making pilgrimages to see them became common in the Middle Ages. For people whose horizons were typically limited to the fields and towns where they lived and worked, a pilgrimage was an experience to look forward to. It was almost the sole form of tourism in the Middle Ages. Organized groups set out to visit various centres and shrines, many of which contained relics, much as people today sign up for package tours to cultural or recreational destinations. The fourteenth-century English pilgrims travelling to the shrine at Canterbury in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* represent a variety of social types (including one who is ready to make a quick profit by producing fraudulent relics).

Possession of relics might bring rewards in the next world, but in the interim, cities or chapels that possessed them could expect tangible economic benefits from the pilgrimage trade. Princes and priests made deals to acquire relics, bought them, fought to capture them, stole them, or

fabricated them. One English bishop, kneeling to venerate a bone of Mary Magdalene at a pilgrimage site, is said to have bitten off the end of the bone and taken it home with him.

Rarely did all of a saint's bones remain together in one place. Thus even though Santiago (i.e., St James) de Compostela in northwestern Spain was a major pilgrimage destination, portions of the same saint's body could be visited in half a dozen other places. The most treasured relics were those associated with Jesus himself, especially with his suffering and death. Chips and slivers of wood purported to be from the True Cross were highly prized, as were spines from the Crown of Thorns that was placed on Jesus' head before he was crucified. Various pieces of cloth were preserved for the impressions of Jesus' body they were said to carry: his face en route to the crucifixion on Veronica's veil and his entombed body on a shroud that turned up in France in the fourteenth century and later came to be kept in Turin, Italy.

A relic of Jesus' mother, Mary, venerated at Chartres in France, was known as the *Sainte Chemise* or holy undergarment, which she reportedly wore when giving birth to Jesus. This was by no means the most intimate Christian relic. Since doctrine held that Jesus and Mary alike had been taken bodily into heaven, the only physical relics available were body parts or substances left behind during their lifetimes. Hence another prize held at Chartres was a trimming from the circumcision of the infant Jesus; known as the *Saint Prépuce*, it was only one of several holy foreskins venerated at various sites across Europe. As for Mary, the milk she allegedly spilled while nursing Jesus was preserved in surprisingly large amounts; pilgrims to Bethlehem over the centuries have been able to visit a Latin chapel and bring away packets of soil from the place said to be the site of the event.

Relics carried on one's person were contained in pieces of metal jewellery resembling amulets, with the piece of bone or sliver of the cross visible through glass like the bubble in a carpenter's level. Relics kept in a church for the faithful to venerate

were displayed in reliquaries, ornate containers at least the size of a candlestick, often with a crystal window through which the object itself could be seen. Reliquaries made of gold or silver, which could be quite costly, took a variety of forms, from treasure chests to models of church buildings. The most ambitious reliquary, in a sense, is the thirteenth-century sanctuary in Paris known as the *Sainte Chapelle* ('holy chapel'), which was built by Louis IX to house a Crown of Thorns acquired in Constantinople. Its magnificent stained-glass windows are among the truly great treasures of medieval Christian art.

Protestant Worship

Like the various ideologies held among the spectrum of denominations, different Protestant forms of worship express varying degrees of departure from the Roman model. Thus Anglicans will make the sign of the cross on their own bodies (touching face, chest, and shoulders), as Orthodox and Catholic Christians do, but other Protestant denominations make a point of avoiding this gesture.

One central issue was the status of the officiating clergy. For medieval Latin Christianity, the priest was a representative of the divine and practically a dispenser of miracles. Now Protestants, who stressed the human side, made the officiant more a representative and spokesperson for the congregation. Protestants claimed that there is no need for a human intermediary—whether living priest or dead saint—between a Christian and God.

For denominations at the Catholic end of the spectrum, such as the 'high-church' wing of Anglicanism, the clergy were still termed priests and addressed as 'father', though they were no longer required to be celibate. Low-church Anglicans and most other Protestants preferred to call their clergy 'ministers' with reference to their role as leaders of worship or 'pastors' with reference to their role as spiritual counsellors. Protestants gave more responsibility to the laity as preachers and leaders

of worship, and a few denominations, such as the Quakers, were led largely by lay people.

Protestants also departed from Rome in their interpretation of the sacramental rituals, particularly the Eucharist. Some Anglicans and Lutherans, who sought to retain a sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist, believed that the body and blood of Christ are present in or together with the bread and wine of the ceremonial meal. In Switzerland, however, reformers such as Zwingli and Calvin established the more common Protestant understanding of the Eucharist less as a sacrifice than as a memorial in which the bread and wine symbolize Christ's body and blood.

The way in which communion is received varies as well. In the denominations closest to the Catholic tradition, the communicants line up near the altar, whereas many Protestant congregations remain seated as elders or ushers serve the bread on trays and the wine in little individual glasses. The materials used as bread and wine have also varied: often, the Catholic tradition has used unleavened wafers for bread, and many Protestant churches use unfermented grape juice instead of wine. In some parts of the world, bread and wine may not be available: thus in the Philippines, for example, some Protestants share rice cakes and fruit juice or cola instead.

In the later Middle Ages, the congregation might rarely have the opportunity to take part in the Eucharist—perhaps as infrequently as twice a year. The Reformation demanded greater participation by the people. In recent years, some Protestant denominations, among them the Anglicans, have made the Eucharist a weekly event. Ironically, though, most have come to celebrate the sacrament less often—in some congregations, only once every three or four months. Instead, they emphasize the reading of scripture and the interpretation of scripture in the minister's sermon.

The first decades of the Reformation in Germany and England saw the development of systematic plans for the reading of consecutive portions of the entire Bible in the daily services

of morning and evening worship. Known as 'lectionaries', these plans were not unlike the medieval monastic 'offices' or schedules for the reading of scripture. Each testament was covered twice during the year. The *Genesis* account of creation would thus be read on New Year's Day, but Jesus' crucifixion might come up closer to Christmas than to Good Friday. In the course of time, as it became clear that many people would not be attending church twice a day, more selective plans were designed that scheduled the texts judged more important on consecutive Sundays and tried to cover the highlights of scripture in a three-year cycle. Practice varies quite widely today, but in churches that maintain more formal worship, the norm is to preach from a passage assigned for the day.

Rejecting priestly mediation, Protestants looked for signs of direct activity on the part of the Holy Spirit. Thus the clergy in some denominations cultivated an extemporaneous style of prayer intended to evoke the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, as we have seen, Quaker meetings tend to be highly formalized.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, each emerging Protestant movement usually drafted its own affirmation of faith or 'confession'. Since these confessions tended to be rather long, however, many Protestant denominations continued to use either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed in worship services.

The Christian Year

The liturgical year for Christians is structured around the two main festivals of Christmas and Easter. It begins with **Advent**, the series of four Sundays that precede Christmas. Today, four special candles in the sanctuary, lit cumulatively over the four weeks, often mark the anticipation that characterizes the Advent season.

Christmas

The time of the year when Jesus was actually born is not known. For some time the date was

the subject of speculation; one third-century text identified 28 March as the date by reasoning that the world would have to be perfect, with trees in leaf and flowers in bloom, and the day would have to be a Wednesday because in *Genesis* the sun and moon are created on the fourth day. But by the fourth century the date had been more or less set around the midwinter solstice, coinciding with the Roman celebration of the unconquered sun. The Christian idea of a birth that would bring new blessings was easily associated with the annual renewal of the sun's radiance.

Many early Christians paid more attention to the baptism of Jesus than to his birth. This was especially true in the Greek-speaking churches of the eastern Mediterranean. In the Latin West, however, a theological difference appears to have prompted a shift in ritual emphasis to the feast of Jesus' birth. At a time when some Christian teachings maintained that the human side of Jesus' nature was less important than the divine, the Latin Church affirmed the centrality of the incarnation by celebrating the feast of his birth. The word 'Christmas' means 'the mass of Christ'. Thus the solemn significance of the mass figures as a theme even amid the joy and optimism of Christmas.

Christmas today is a blend of religious and cultural elements. Carols and hymns proclaim joy that the Christ-child is born. Greetings and family visits enhance a feeling of community. Some elements of Christmas observance in the English-speaking world come from the midwinter traditions of pre-Christian northern Europe: evergreen trees (Germany), holly and mistletoe (Britain), the yule-log and reindeer (Scandinavia). The same traditions are practised even in such dramatically different climates and seasons as those of the Caribbean, Hawaii, or Australia. The jolly, avuncular figure of Santa Claus goes back to the third-century St Nicholas of Myra, in what is now Turkey, who was a patron saint of sailors before becoming a bearer of children's gifts. Christians themselves consider many of the holiday season's

cultural trappings to be secular rather than religious. In theory, they distinguish between the sacred and the secular. The distinction is rooted in the early history of Christianity, which survived three formative centuries as a minority movement before it became the established religion of any state. In Christian history, however, the distinction has not always been easy to apply; sorting out the spheres of church and state was a problem in the Middle Ages and remains one today. And modern Christians who expect states to be secular have had difficulty adjusting to states recently built on religio-communal identity, such as Islamic Pakistan or Jewish Israel.

The feast of the Epiphany comes twelve days after Christmas, on 6 January in the Gregorian calendar. It celebrates both the visit of the 'wise men' (or *magi*) to the infant Jesus and his baptism as an adult. The link between these events may be the fact that both can be understood as manifestations of his mission or lordship; in fact, 'manifestation' is the meaning of the word 'Epiphany' in Greek. In some Christian countries, Christmas gift-giving is delayed until Epiphany or is spread, one gift per day, over the 'twelve days of Christmas'. The date of Epiphany in Latin Christianity corresponds roughly to that of Christmas in the Julian calendar—the calendar followed by the Greek Orthodox.

Easter

Christmas has a fixed date in the calendar because it is related to the solar year. Easter, by contrast, is related to the phases of the moon and therefore has a variable date. The event that Easter commemorates occurred just after the Jewish spring festival of Passover, but the Latin Church eventually fixed its date as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Thus it can fall anywhere across a range of five weeks from late March to late April. The date of Easter in the Greek Church is calculated in a slightly different way, with the result that it coincides with the Latin Easter only about once in every four years.

Easter, which is the feast of Jesus' resurrection, comes as the conclusion of **Lent**: a period of six and a half weeks of which the last seven days constitute what is called Holy Week. For most Christians Lent is the time of the year for the greatest solemnity, most serious reflection, and most stringent discipline. Eventually, in Latin Christianity, it became common practice to mark Lent by 'giving up' or abstaining from various pleasures, such as meat, with the cultural result that the last day before Lent has been a time of wild partying. Shrove Tuesday, as it is called in English, is Mardi Gras ('fat Tuesday') in French, notably in New Orleans, and Carnival ('goodbye, meat') in the Hispanic culture of the Caribbean.

The English term 'Lent' is a reference to the season, when the days are 'lengthening'. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, so named because in some Christian traditions the foreheads of the worshippers are daubed with ashes from the palm-leaf decorations used for the preceding year's Palm Sunday—the last Sunday before Easter. The palm branches used to decorate churches recall the greenery that decorated Jesus' processional route into Jerusalem as he began the last week of his life. The Hebrew ritual exclamation *hosanna*, 'O save now', with which Jesus was greeted, expresses the optimism of this day.

In four brief days, the mood of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem shifted from enthusiasm to foreboding, and this is reflected in the course of Holy Week. Thursday, the day of Jesus' last Passover supper with his disciples, is called Maundy Thursday in English, after the commandment (in Latin, *mandatum*) to love one another that (in *John* 13) Jesus gives on that occasion. In various traditional churches, a bishop or ranking priest re-enacts Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet by washing the feet of a dozen priests or of a group of poor people.

The Friday of Holy Week is known as **Good Friday**. Although it has been suggested that the name is a reference to the 'good' that Jesus'

self-sacrificing death did for humanity, a more convincing explanation is that the original term was 'God's Friday'. This most solemn day of the Christian year is marked by services recalling Jesus' Passion—his suffering on the cross. Services generally run from noon till three in the afternoon (more or less matching the hours of the crucifixion according to three of the gospels). Some follow the narrative of the Passion as told in one or another of the gospels; others follow the seven 'last words' or utterances of Jesus from the cross.

Easter day itself commemorates the disciples' discovery, on the morning after the Sabbath, that Jesus has risen from the dead. Among the layers of meaning that Christian worshippers find on Easter is a sense of cosmic triumph over sin and death.

Like Passover, Easter is a spring festival associated with the renewal of life. In popular Christian culture, some traditional symbols connoting fertility probably originated in the pre-Christian era: the egg, for instance, and the rabbit. The English word 'Easter' itself comes from Eostre, a pagan goddess; in most other European languages, though, the name is derived from Pesach, the Hebrew name for Passover (e.g., the French *Pâques*).

Pentecost

The fiftieth day after Easter is **Pentecost**, from the Greek for 'fifty'. In the Jewish tradition this was the festival of Shavuoth, the Feast of Weeks celebrating the end of the grain harvest and the giving of the ten commandments to Moses. But Christianity celebrates the event recounted in *Acts* 2, when the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in diverse languages; therefore Pentecost marks the emergence of the Church as a missionary movement with a message for all people. In England, Pentecost is often called Whitsunday, on account of the white garments formerly worn by persons baptized on that day. In Latin countries, it is generally known as the feast of the Holy Spirit.

CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

Early Christian Art

The Cross

The cross is the central symbol of Christianity. Yet it did not come into widespread use until the reign of Constantine. The crucifixion of criminals was abolished, now that the crucified saviour was seen as glorified, and the symbol went wherever Christians did, acquiring many variations in form and decoration.

The Latin cross has a vertical bar somewhat longer than the single horizontal bar. The Greek cross has two horizontal bars. In Ireland and Scotland, the cross of the Celts has a circle superimposed on it. A cross with twin flared points at the ends of four arms of equal length is associated with Malta. And the Copts of Egypt sometimes represented the top arm of the cross as a loop, thus associating the cross with the ancient Egyptian *ankh*, a symbol of life.

Devout Anglicans, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians touch their face, chest, and shoulders to make the sign on their own bodies. Medieval warriors placed crosses on their shields, a practice that survives in the heraldry of arms and in national flags. The flags of Switzerland, Greece, and all the Scandinavian countries feature crosses, and Britain's flag, the Union Jack, consists of three superimposed crosses, one of them the diagonal Cross of St Andrew, representing the Scots.

The hot cross buns traditional in the English-speaking world around Easter are descended from the cross-marked cakes that pre-Christian Saxons ate at the spring festival of Eostre, their goddess of light. Instead of fighting that custom, the Christian clergy in England introduced their own cross-marked cakes, made from the same dough as the Eucharistic wafer and distributed to the congregation at the close of the Easter service.

Constantine's cross-like monogram, called the *labarum*, is used in both the Latin and Greek

Christian worlds. It superimposes X and P, *chi* and *rho*, the first two letters of the name 'Christ' in Greek.

Other Symbols

Among the oldest of the Christian symbols is the fish. Stylized fish designs can be seen in the catacombs, outside Rome. Many interpreters see the fish symbol as a kind of code spelling out a Christian declaration of faith, since the Greek word for 'fish', *ichthus*, is made up of the initial letters of the Greek phrase *Iesous Christos, Theou huios, soter* ('Jesus Christ, son of God, saviour'). Others believe that the fish is a reference either to the story in which Jesus multiplies a few loaves of bread and fishes to feed a crowd or to his description of his disciples as 'fishers of humanity'. Another sort of symbol or monogram consists of the letters IHS: the first three letters of the name 'Jesus' in Greek. Latin speakers, however, offered their own interpretations: *in hoc signo* ('in this sign [you shall conquer]'), associated with reports of Constantine's vision of a cross in the heavens, and *Iesus hominum Salvator* ('Jesus, humanity's saviour').

The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha and omega, together refer to *Revelation* 22: 13: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.' A lamb represents Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, while a dove represents God's Holy Spirit. The spirit can also be represented by a male figure, sometimes youthful, sometimes mature, often equipped with birds' wings. An orb (a ball with a cross at the top), represents the world; when it appears with God the Father in royal attire, it signifies his role as creator, sustainer, and judge of the world or universe. During the years of persecution before Constantine, symbols such as these may have served as a code, allowing Christians to affirm their faith without attracting attention. Some scholars have suggested that they may also reflect the resistance to picture-making that can be found in the rabbinic literature (although ancient synagogues actually had pictorial

decoration). Whatever their origin, symbols were capable of surviving times when pictorial images were not tolerated (in eighth-century Byzantium, for example, or sixteenth-century Reformation Germany).

Jesus in Art

Archaeologists often find funerary art—such as the elaborately carved stone sarcophagi created to hold the remains of wealthy or venerated Christians—to be better preserved than other types of artwork because it is buried intact. Often such carvings depict scenes from the biblical narrative or visions of the final judgment.

Central to many of these tableaux is the figure of Jesus. In early representations he is portrayed as a simple shepherd, sometimes carrying a lamb across his shoulders. Such images were clearly intended to evoke Jesus' description of himself as the good shepherd (in *John* 10), but their actual form seems to derive from earlier Roman representations of the god Hermes (Mercury) as a shepherd. In some other early images, Jesus is a beardless young man wearing the simple attire of a pilgrim or ascetic.

Byzantine Art

The influence of the Byzantine imperial tradition can be seen in pictorial representations of Jesus. After Constantine made Christianity respectable, Jesus began to appear not as the young shepherd of the early centuries, but as an older, bearded man, a king or a judge, attired in robes reflecting the dignity of his office. It was also around this time that he came to be depicted with a halo or nimbus representing the glory and radiance of the sun. (Halo imagery goes back a long way: third- to seventh-century Sasanian kings were portrayed with halos; similar imagery was used throughout Asia in representations of the Buddha.)

By the sixth century, Byzantine mosaics were depicting Christ enthroned in heaven as the ruler

of creation. Usually located in a place of honour, such as directly above an altar, these formal, frontal Byzantine representations position Christ in the centre, flanked by attendant figures in a kind of heraldic symmetry. The cosmic ruler-Christ generally has a far more mature and distinguished appearance than the carpenter from Nazareth who was crucified in his early thirties.

Icons in the Orthodox Church

The Orthodox churches, such as the Greek and the Russian, developed a distinctive form of portraiture for depicting Jesus, Mary, and other religious figures. These portraits are known as icons, from the Greek word for image. An icon might be an entirely two-dimensional painting, often on a piece of wood, or it might be overlaid in low relief, in wood or precious metal and ornamented with jewels. While the robes clothing the figure were executed in relief, the hands and face were typically two-dimensional, so that the parts of the image representing flesh appeared to exist on a different plane from the material world around them. Nevertheless, in the seventh and eighth centuries these images became the subject of a heated dispute known as the iconoclastic controversy.

Pitting a faction called the iconoclasts ('icon breakers') against one called the iconodules ('icon worshippers'), the controversy served in part as a vehicle for other antagonisms (political, regional, etc.). But points of principle were also at stake, and Byzantine intellectuals engaged in serious theological discussions concerning the role of images in worship. In the end the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 decided that icons were permissible and could be venerated, as long as the faithful did not actually worship them.

Some historians continue to wonder whether the dispute might also have had something to do with the success of Islam, which rejects any kind of iconography, since the iconoclastic movement seems to have been particularly strong in the regions bordering Syria. In any event, their

opponents prevailed in the end, and Eastern Christendom retained its distinctive tradition.

In Orthodox sanctuaries today, a massive screen in front of the altar shields it from the main portion of the sanctuary. The screen is called an iconostasis ('place for icons') and is designed to hold a row of large icons. Smaller icons are hung in private homes; some, as small as a pocket diary, are equipped with folding covers so that they can be carried on the person, especially when travelling.

Church Architecture

Since the earliest Christians did not have separate ecclesiastical buildings, some probably gathered in synagogues to preach their new message. Some may also have met in secret places such as the catacombs (a third-century underground tomb complex on the outskirts of Rome), at least from time to time. Most often, though, small groups met in private homes.

The early church buildings that have survived, such as the Christian building in the eastern Syrian frontier town of Dura-Europos, took the same form as Roman houses, with rooms off an interior atrium or courtyard. To ensure privacy, the room for worship was probably out of the direct line of sight from the street door.

With imperial patronage, Christians began to build more ambitious large-scale sanctuaries in the fourth century. Constantine's mother, Helena, is said to have visited Palestine herself to identify the sites of Jesus' birth and his crucifixion and have large sanctuaries (the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem) erected in the appropriate locations.

Christianity repudiated the religion and temples of the Roman Empire as pagan. Instead, it adopted the building style of civil law courts and tribunals, known as the 'basilica' (from the Greek meaning 'royal'). The classic basilica had a dais raised a few steps at the end of the hall farthest from the entrance, and a nave or hall usually two storeys high, with clerestory windows to admit light. In

the hands of the Christians, the sides of the basilica were extended by arms ('transepts') that gave the overall floor plan the shape of a cross. From Byzantium to Rome to northern Europe, this plan became standard for the interior space of Christian sanctuaries, especially cathedrals, throughout the Middle Ages.

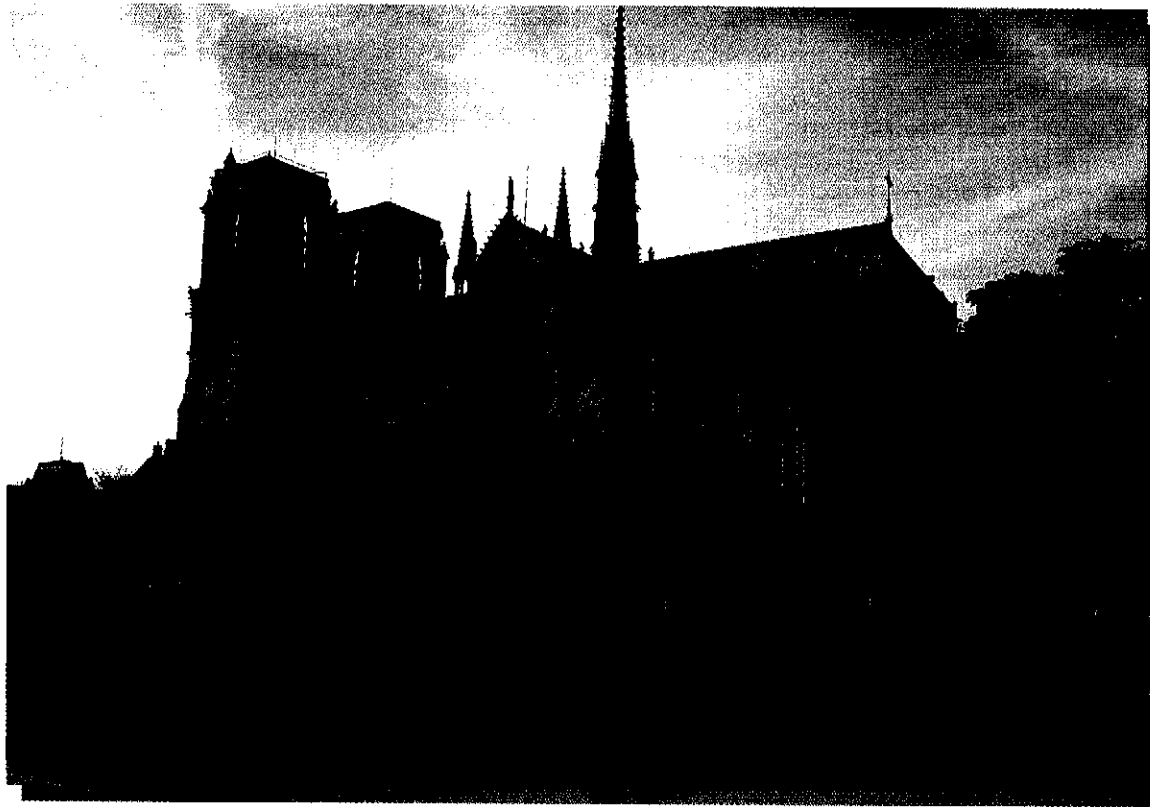
Not every church was built on the cruciform plan, however. A second pattern that was influential from the fourth or fifth century onward was the circle or octagon. Over the centre, where a shrine object could be situated, was a dome resting on a polygon or circle of columns and arches. This radial plan, used in the Eastern Roman Empire, served as the prototype for Islam's masterpiece, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which was constructed at the end of the seventh century.

Hagia Sophia, the Church of Divine Wisdom in Istanbul (Constantinople), is a treasure of Byzantine architecture completed under the emperor Justinian in 537. For centuries it was the largest church in the world; its dome was a work of engineering genius, and its interior was sumptuously decorated with gilded mosaics. When Sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople in 1453, he had such respect for the magnificent building that at first he refused to enter it. Later he had it converted to a mosque, but since 1953 it has been a museum.

Medieval Church Architecture

In the western Mediterranean, as in Byzantium, the round arch was standard. In northern Europe, however, a new style of arch came into fashion around the twelfth century. This 'Gothic' arch had two curved sides rising to a point at the top, and it enabled architects to build churches with increasingly high interior spaces; in some cases the nave of a Gothic cathedral reached a height five times its width. Many writers on Gothic architecture have suggested that the great height of these structures directed the thoughts of worshippers heavenward.

In any case, the architects were pushing the capacity of their material—stone—to the limits. Many Gothic churches had to be buttressed from outside



Flying buttresses support the walls of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris (Andrew Leyerle).

to keep the weight of the roof from forcing the upper parts of the walls outward. When these supports stood free of the wall and were bridged to it with half-arches, they were called 'flying buttresses'.

The exteriors of Gothic churches were usually much more elaborate than their Byzantine or Romanesque counterparts, and their interiors were often full of ornamental detail. Carvings in stone and wood, usually brightly painted, depicted events in the life of Christ and the lives of the saints. Above the altars in the side aisles of a church there might also be paintings, often in the form of a triptych. Another feature that developed in the Middle Ages was the stained-glass window, made up of thousands of pieces of coloured glass, especially

strip, to serve as teaching aids in an era when literacy was limited and written texts were the almost exclusive preserve of the clergy. The only way for most lay people to learn the stories of the faith was by listening and 'reading' the stories told in the visual art that decorated the churches.

A feature unique to Roman Catholic churches is a sequence of fourteen paintings, plaques, sculptures, or (in austere churches), simply Roman numerals or crosses, usually located along the side of the nave, representing the '**Stations of the Cross**': the sequence of events from Jesus' trial to the placing of his body in the tomb. During Lent, the individual worshipper proceeds from one station to the next, meditating on Jesus' final

promoted by the Franciscans, the order that was made responsible for sites in the Holy Land. The present list of the fourteen stations was finalized only within the past two centuries.

Protestant Art and Architecture

Protestant architecture in northern Europe was not markedly different from earlier Catholic forms, since in many cases Protestants took over existing churches. Within the sanctuary, however, Reformed Churches rearranged the furniture to suit their sacramental theology. Instead of an altar that the priest faced with his back to the worshippers, Protestants adopted a communion table behind which the minister stood, facing the congregation.

The sixteenth-century reformers had little patience with images, especially those of Mary and the saints, and they preferred an empty cross to a crucifix with the suffering Jesus on it. Statues and paintings were destroyed with fanatical zeal, though stained-glass windows were generally spared. Denominations that condemn what they consider image worship have kept their church interiors bare and austere. Other Protestants, who regret the loss of so much fine art, retain at least an aesthetic affection for Renaissance paintings of Mary with the infant Jesus. Mary does appear in Protestantism at the Christmas season, but she is clearly subordinated to the figure of Jesus himself and is associated mainly with his childhood.

Music

From the beginning, music was part of Christian worship, for the Church inherited from Judaism the biblical psalms that had been sung in the temple. The fact that hymn-like passages were incorporated into the text of the New Testament (in the opening chapters of Luke's gospel, for instance) suggests additional compositional activity.

Catholic Music

In medieval Europe, the entire Latin mass had been chanted in a melodic musical form known as

plain-song. With the Renaissance, Europeans made increasing use of polyphony, in which different musical lines were sounded at the same time by different instruments or voices. Since polyphonic music was better suited to groups than to individuals, it was used for choral or congregational responses rather than for the solo parts of the mass said by the officiating clergy.

Choral settings of the Latin mass generally consist of the following sections:

- the Kyrie: '*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*' (Greek for 'Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy')
- the Gloria: a long section that begins '*Gloria in excelsis Deo . . .*' (Latin for 'Glory to God in the highest')
- the Credo: the entire Nicene Creed, beginning '*Credo in unum Deum . . .*' ('I believe in one God')
- the Sanctus: '*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus sabaoth . . .*' ('Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts')
- the Benedictus: '*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini; hosanna in excelsis*' ('Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes; hosanna in the highest')
- the Agnus Dei: '*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; dona nobis pacem*' ('Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; give us peace').

Among the many settings of the mass in the choral literature are five by Johann Sebastian Bach, seven by Franz Joseph Haydn, and seventeen by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Franz Schubert composed six but omitted from the 'Credo' section of each of them the phrase 'and [I believe] in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.'

European composers also produced many substantial choral settings for parts of the requiem mass (the mass for the dead), which has a different Latin text. Another Latin text frequently set to music was the hymn of praise that begins *Te Deum laudamus, Te Dominum confitemur* ('We

praise you, O God; we acknowledge you to be the Lord'). Also popular among Catholic composers was a long medieval Latin devotional poem that describes Mary's grief at the crucifixion and is known as the *Stabat Mater*. Here is a literal translation of two of its stanzas:

The mother stood sadly
By the cross, in tears
As her son hung there.
Have me truly weep with thee
To share the grief of the crucified one
As long as I live . . .

Protestant Music

In music Protestantism was much less austere than in the visual arts, often taking over the tunes of folk songs and dances for use in worship. Perhaps the most widely cherished Protestant hymn of all was composed by Martin Luther, and since the rapprochement of Protestants and Roman Catholics in the 1960s it has been widely used by Catholics as well. Here is the first stanza:

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark
never failing;
Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills
prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work
us woe;
His craft and power are great; and armed
with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.

Often tuneful and musically simple, Protestant hymns express a wide range of religious emotions, from praise of God as creator, to the longing for social justice and world peace, to hopes for individual strength and divine guidance.

In the sixteenth century, the Calvinists in Switzerland and Scotland produced a collection of musical settings of the biblical psalms known as the 'psalter'. The psalms were also the principal focus of congregational song in the Church of England following the Reformation.

From the middle of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, many hymns evoke the personal experience of conversion. An example is 'Amazing Grace', which is usually sung to a familiar early American tune. The words date from 1779:

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

✿ INTERACTION AND ADAPTATION

The Enlightenment

By the end of the eighteenth century, Christianity was no longer at the centre of Western civilization and the ties between Church and state had been significantly loosened. The intellectual movement responsible for those changes is generally known as the Enlightenment. At the heart of the Enlightenment was a growing confidence in human reason.

The precise beginning of the Enlightenment is hard to identify, but a crucial early moment came in 1543, when the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus proposed that the universe revolved around the sun rather than the earth. Half a century later, the Italian mathematician Galileo Galilei confirmed that theory through observation. The Church responded by adding Copernicus' book to its list of prohibited writings and, in 1633, bringing Galileo to trial before the Inquisition. Found guilty of heresy, he was forced to 'abjure, curse, and detest' his supposed errors, and to live the remaining eight years of his life under house arrest. Three and a half centuries later, in 1992, the Church finally admitted the truth of Galileo's findings and retracted its condemnation.

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