

## 7. How did the church develop?

Crucifix, p. 141

The first three centuries of church saw no depictions of the crucifix, since it was such an article of shame. After Constantine outlawed crucifixions, its brutality as a mode of execution was no longer faced in society, and there began to be images of Christ's crucifixion. The oldest one yet discovered is a small ivory carving on a side of a box, perhaps from 425, now in the British Museum. Note that the carving includes the hanging of Judas.

### Quotes and Images

p. 142: Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) wrote about how vastly different are the symbol systems of the world's religions, some complex, others simple.

p. 143: Catherine Ferguson (1779–1854) exemplifies the Christians who dedicate their energies to teaching the faith to the younger generation. An illiterate freed slave, she organized Sunday Schools, which were originally schools that taught literacy and religion to poor children, who worked each weekday and thus could attend school only on Sunday.

p. 144: This quotation by Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor, writing to Emperor Trajan in 112, is often cited as the earliest description by an outsider of what Christians believed and how they worshiped. Pliny dismisses the idea that Christians were cannibals.

p. 146: The box lists both the undisputed letters of Paul and those letters about which there is scholarly and ecclesial disagreement. The ancient world did not consider a disciple writing under the name of the teacher to be plagiarism.

p. 146: The goal of the Gideon International Society to provide Bibles to travelers is an example of the Christian hope that all persons everywhere will have access to the Scriptures.

p. 147: Augustine's description of the pears is one of the most famous passages in *The Confessions*. His point is that sin in itself is attractive. Many contemporary persons are surprised that Augustine used such a small prank to explain sin.

p. 150: Jozef de Veuster (1840–1889) was a Belgian missionary who in his religious order took the name Peter Damian. Called the Leper Priest, Father Damian served a leper colony on Molokai, Hawaii, and died of the disease. He was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 2009.

p. 153: Egeria’s travel diary was of immense interest to liturgical scholars of the twentieth century as they worked to reconstruct the worship in Jerusalem in early centuries of the church. Egeria’s journal is addressed to “sisters,” but she clearly had considerable means in order to accomplish her travels.

p. 154: Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), a German Lutheran scholar, lived not in a comfortable library in Europe, but in a poor medical mission in Cameroon. He received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his principle of Reverence for Life.

p. 155: Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was a Deist, not a Christian, and thus his report of George Whitefield’s visit to Philadelphia is particularly interesting.

p. 157: The pictograms designed by the sixteenth-century Franciscan missionaries when evangelizing the Nahua natives of Mexico exemplify the principle of inculturation, that Christianity can be translated into any language and expressed in any world culture, since it is believed that Christ came to save the whole world. See other data in Jaime Lara’s 2008 *Christian Texts for Aztecs: Art and Liturgy in Colonial Mexico*.

p. 158: Perpetua and Felicity were martyred in 202 in Carthage in modern Tunisia by being thrown to the beasts in the arena. Perpetua’s journal describes her arrest, the anguish of her father, her care for her infant, her bold confession of her faith, and her dreams during imprisonment. A spectator recorded her death in detail. At one point she pinned up her hair so as not to appear disheveled when she met her Lord. She exemplifies a woman who disobeyed her emperor and her father and gave over her motherhood in order to confess her Christian faith and take the consequences.

p. 158: Although in the early sixteenth century Japan had welcomed Christian missionaries, converting, it is said, 300,000 Japanese to Christianity, by 1587 the church was outlawed and its missionaries brutally executed. The fiction of Shusaku Endo deals with the Japanese attempt to obliterate Christianity from its borders.

p. 159: Vladimir (c. 958–1015), ruler of Kiev, dispatched emissaries to report to him concerning both Western and Eastern Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It was reported to him that the Orthodox liturgy of Constantinople was overwhelmingly beautiful, and Vladimir chose it for himself and his population. His Christianization of his domains came in 988.

p. 162: The documentary hypothesis for the four sources of the Pentateuch is accepted by many scholars, who identify many differences between the several sources. One example of differences is that the J source calls God *YHWH* and the E source calls God *El*.

p. 163: The famous Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, was originally a congregation of the Reformed Church of America. After local bankruptcy, the building was sold to Roman Catholics to use as a cathedral. For the Reformed, “Cathedral” means big building; for Roman Catholics, it means the seat of a bishop.

p. 164: The 1934 painting by Norman Rockwell (1894–1978) of grandparents saying table prayers with their grandson is one of Rockwell’s iconic images of American life. In some parts of the country, some Christians even when dining in restaurants join together in table prayer when their meal is served.

p. 165: Fanny Crosby (1820–1915), blind since infancy, worshiped with several different Protestant churches throughout her long life. She wrote at least 8500 gospel hymns, dictating up to seven hymns a day. She had much of the Bible memorized, and her work is especially popular in evangelical churches.

## Suggestions, p. 167

6. In Romans 16, Paul comments in detail on the persons active in the church of Rome. It is illuminating to determine the names that are female and what those women did in their church.

7. It is appropriate in the chapter on the development of Christianity to read a classic tale. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) is among the most eminent of American authors, and his “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1836) is a masterpiece of symbolic literature. The narrator describes the ministry of Rev. Mr. Hooper, who disturbs his parishioners by covering his face with a black veil. At death he claims that all persons hide behind a black veil of sorrow and secret sin. Note that in nineteenth-century English, the noun “lover” meant one who loves, not a partner in sexual intercourse. Students can recognize in this story the Puritan history of severe attention to sin and guilt. Discussion of the story can focus on those periods and places in Christianity that were obsessed with sin, as well as on Hawthorne’s attitude toward Puritanism.

8. John Bunyan’s 1678 allegory *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was for two centuries the most widely read piece of Christian literature in the English language beyond the Bible itself. On the American frontier, many settlers owned two books: the Bible and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and the work has been translated into over two hundred languages. Many contemporary students would find much of the work virtually unreadable, and so perhaps the “First Part” can be divided up among the students. Yet it is appropriate when considering the development of Christianity to become acquainted with one of its most influential pieces of fiction. Bunyan (1628–1688) began writing this book while in prison for conducting nonconformist religious services outside those of the Church of England. An allegory is a sustained fictional similitude in which each character, each location, and each episode represent a deeper meaning. Discussion of the work can identify the specific beliefs of seventeenth-century Protestant Christianity that Bunyan expresses and can comment on the reception of these beliefs in the twenty-first century.

9. Many films purport to deal with famous episodes of Christian history. An instructive film for this chapter is the 2001 Polish filming of the 1896 novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Quo Vadis Domine*, directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz. Set in Rome in 64 ce, the film ties together (1) the contrast between the lifestyle and values of the Roman aristocracy and the Christian community; (2) Nero’s persecution of Christians after the fire of Rome in 64; and (3) the legend, cited in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, that Peter was leaving Rome to avoid persecution, met Christ on the road, asked Christ where he was going—“Quo vadis, Domine? Where are you going, Lord?”—to which Christ replied, “I am going to Rome to be crucified again.” Peter then turned back and faced his martyrdom. Discussion of the film can focus on the horrific persecutions suffered by the early Christian community. The violence in the film is an appropriate complement to a benign reading of the historical development of Christianity.