
WILSON, JAMIE 505

CHAPTER 8

Judaism

FIRST ENCOUNTER

After spending two days in Tel Aviv, you leave for Jerusalem and arrive at your hotel near the old part of the city. Once there, you can't wait to begin exploring. The Old City is a place for walking and wandering, with wonderful sights in its narrow streets.

Drawing you like a magnet is the site of the ancient temple, destroyed by Roman soldiers nearly two thousand years ago. Only its foundation stones remain. On the mount where the temple once stood is now a glittering golden dome. Built by Muslims, the Dome of the Rock covers the great stone beneath it, which is venerated by Muslims and Jews alike, who hold that their ancestor Abraham came to this spot.

You decide to walk down from the city, to view the mount from below, after which you plan to turn back and travel, like a true pilgrim, "up to Jerusalem." You buy food for a picnic lunch at stalls as you walk inside the city. Soon you are beyond the Old City gate. Luckily, the day is sunny but not hot. You see a large stone tomb in the valley below and beyond it, in the east, Mount Scopus.

At last it is time to stop for a rest and to eat your lunch. You sit under a tree and look back, thinking to yourself about the events this site has witnessed. Your mind becomes crowded with the names of biblical kings, prophets, and priests associated with Jerusalem: David, Solomon, Melchizedek, Isaiah, Jeremiah. As the sounds of everyday traffic filter through your thoughts, you imagine the many battles over this holy city and the successive waves of conquerors—Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and European crusaders—who took possession of it in the past, and you think of the more recent battles and problems here. You cannot help thinking of the contrast between the violence that this place has seen and the root of the city's name—*salem*. Like *shalom* and *salaam*, words to which it is related, the word *salem* means "peace" and "wholeness."

You start back, walking uphill thoughtfully. You see the small tombstones in front of the walls, the high walls themselves, and a beautiful double stone gate, now sealed. Slowly, you make your way back through the city streets around to the western side, to what is left of the great temple. The immense foundation stones, set there during an enlargement ordered by King Herod the Great, were too solid to be knocked down and too big to be carted off. An open area at their base, the **Western Wall,** is now used for contemplation and prayer—on the left stand men, and on the right, women. Some hold prayer books, and many touch their hands and foreheads to the wall. You see little pieces of paper, which have prayers written on them, rolled up or folded and placed in the cracks between the stones. These have been left here by people who have come to speak with God and to remember their family members in prayer. You reflect on the historical events that led up to the building of the temple. You think of the long and great history of the Jews, who developed and flourished in spite of persecution in lands far away. It is deeply moving to be here, and you stay a long time in silent contemplation.

WELCOME TO JAMESTOWN 1607

AN OVERVIEW OF JEWISH HISTORY

Jewish history goes back two thousand years or far longer, depending on one's point of view. This difference of opinion revolves around a major historical event—the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. (Timeline 8.1), which brought about the end of the temple-based ceremonial religion of that region and the widespread dispersion of its people to lands far away from Israel. Following the calamity of the temple's destruction, the earlier religion had to develop in new ways to survive. From the centralized, temple-based religion practiced in Israel, another form of religion arose that could be practiced among the Jews who lived outside of Israel. Jews anywhere in the world could now practice

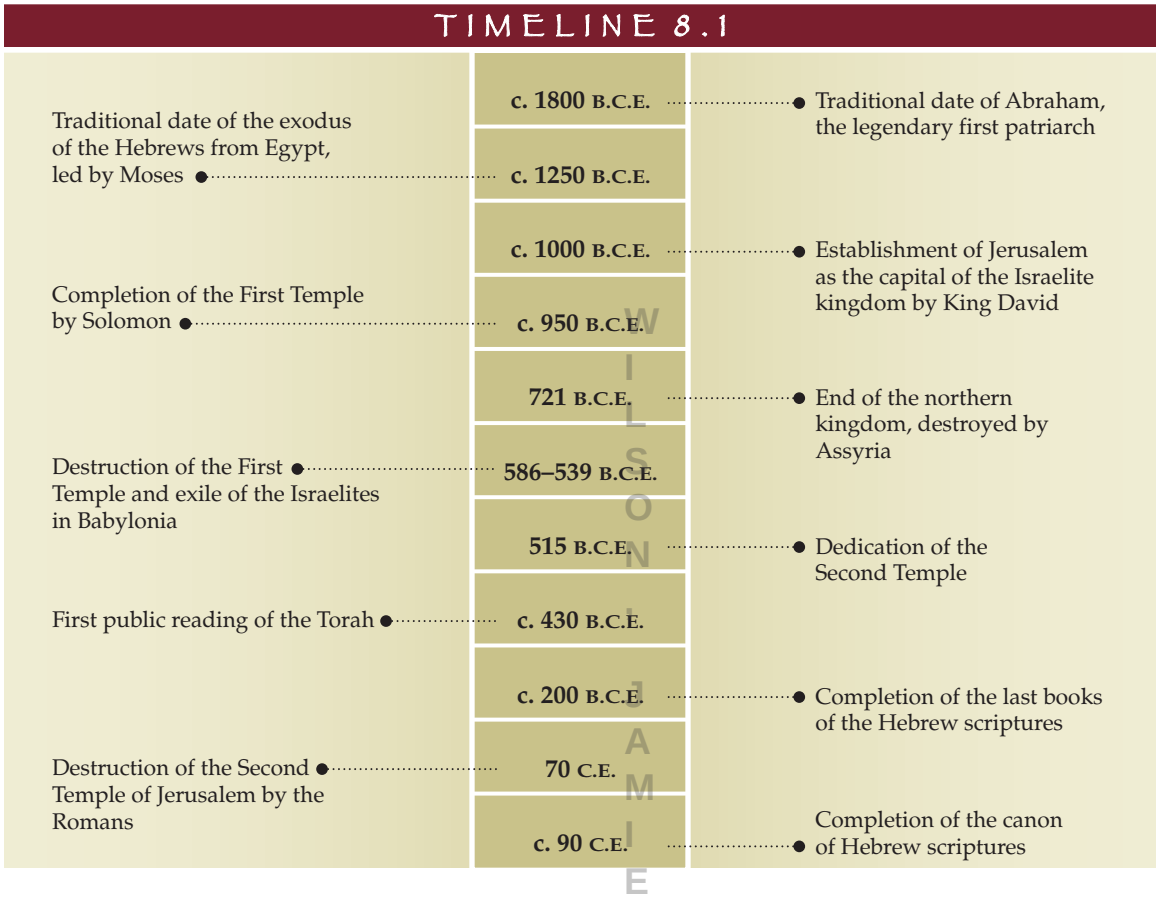
their religion in the home and synagogue. In recognition of this fundamental religious reorientation, a distinction is often made between **biblical Judaism** and **rabbinical Judaism.** When we study the Judaism practiced today, what we are really studying are the forms of Jewish belief and religious practice that largely came into existence after the destruction of the Second Temple.

The two great spans of time—before and after the destruction of the Second Temple—are also commonly subdivided into two periods each. Over the first great span of time, a landless people established a homeland in Israel and made Jerusalem the capital of its kingdom. Great change occurred and another period began, however, when the kingdom of Judah and its First Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians (586 B.C.E.), forcing the Israelite people into exile in Babylonia (present-day Iraq) for nearly fifty years. These events made clear to the exiled people that religious law and history had to be put in written form to guarantee their survival. As a result, the Hebrew Bible was created, and study of the scriptures and prayer in synagogues became important, even after the temple was rebuilt.

The second great time span comprises the two thousand years of the development of Judaism in the common era. It also can be subdivided into two periods. The first period marks the evolution of rabbinical Judaism and traditional Jewish life, from about 100 C.E. to approximately 1800 C.E., the beginning of the modern period. About two hundred years ago, a movement began in Judaism as a response to (1) the new thinking of the European Enlightenment, (2) the liberal thought of the American and French Revolutions, and (3) the laws of Napoleon, which were carried widely beyond France. The movement, called the **Reform,** questioned and modernized traditional Judaism and helped produce the diverse branches within Judaism that exist today. The Reform also raised the issue of Jewish identity. Who is a Jew? What is essential to Judaism? These are two questions to which we will return later.

The Hebrew Bible records that the roots of Judaism go back far into the past, to a landless people sometimes called Hebrews and more commonly called Israelites, who traced themselves to an ancestor named Abraham. Because much of what we know of the first span of Hebrew history comes from the Hebrew Bible, we will examine it first. We should note, however, that the Hebrew Bible is not a history book in the modern sense; it presents instead what might better be called sacred history. It is the Israelites' view of their God's relationship with them in the midst of historical events.

We should note, too, that the Hebrew Bible is significant not only in terms of the history of the Hebrews but also in terms of its role in the development of Judaism over the past two thousand years. When the ceremonial religion of the Jerusalem Temple ended in the first century C.E., it was the Hebrew scriptures that provided a foundation for the development of rabbinical Judaism. The scriptures offered a firm basis for Jewish **rabbis** (teachers) to offer their **midrash** (interpretation) of biblical laws and practices: the books outlined the Ten Commandments and other ethical teachings; they



Timeline of significant events in the history of Judaism.

established the major yearly festivals that would guide and sanctify the lives of Jews; and they contained the psalms that became the everyday prayers of Jews everywhere.

Thus, we turn first to the Hebrew Bible, to understand its structure and to examine the laws and history of the Hebrew people. After looking at the Hebrew Bible and at Hebrew and Jewish history, we will then consider Jewish belief, practice, and influence.

THE HEBREW BIBLE

Judaism is often associated with the land of Israel, but Judaism is perhaps better associated with its most important book, the Hebrew Bible. Although nowadays the Hebrew Bible is published as a single volume, it is made up of individual "books," which were once separate written scrolls. The word *Bible,* in fact, comes from the Greek term *biblia,* which means "books." The individual books were originally oral material that was subsequently written

down in some form perhaps as early as 900 B.C.E., although the final form was not achieved until about 200 B.C.E. It was once thought that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible—the Torah—but this is no longer commonly held. Instead, scholars see the Torah as composed of four strands of material, which arose in different periods but have been skillfully intertwined by later biblical editors.[1]

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections: the **Torah** (the Teaching), **Nevi'im** (the Prophets), and **Ketuvim** (the Writings). Considered as a whole, it is often called **Tanakh** (or Tanak), which is an acronym made up of the first letters of the Hebrew names for the three sections: *t, n, k.*

The Torah is the sacred core of the Hebrew Bible, with its stories of the creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, and the Hebrew patriarchs and matriarchs—the early ancestors of the Hebrew people. It introduces Moses, the great liberator and lawgiver, and his brother Aaron, the founder of the priesthood. It includes laws about daily conduct and religious ritual—material that

Traditional Jews open a Torah scroll in Jerusalem.

would be of great importance to the later development of Judaism. Because the Torah comprises five books, it is sometimes called the Pentateuch (Greek: "five scrolls"). (We should recognize that the term *Torah* is also used more widely to refer to all teachings, both written and orally transmitted, that are thought to have been revealed by God.)

The second part of the Tanakh, called the Prophets, is named for those individuals who spoke in God's name to the Jewish people. The books that concentrate on the history of the Israelite kingdom are called the Former Prophets, followed by additional books, which are more strongly visionary and moral in tone, called the Latter (or Later) Prophets. In the Latter Prophets, the voices of the individual prophets tend to predominate.

The third part of the Tanakh, called the Writings, is closer to what we think of as imaginative literature. Although it includes some late historical books, it contains primarily short stories, proverbs, reflections on life, hymn (psalm) lyrics, and poetry.

We will use the term *Hebrew Bible* for all of this material. (Jews do not refer to the Hebrew scriptures as the Old Testament, as do Christians, because the title implies that the Jewish books have meaning only in relation to the Christian books, collectively called the New Testament. Also, the order of

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Books of the Hebrew Bible

TORAH

- Genesis (Bereshit)
- Exodus (Shemot)
- Leviticus (Vayiqra)
- Numbers (Bemidbar)
- Deuteronomy (Devarim)

THE PROPHETS (NEVI'IM)

- Joshua (Yehoshua)
- Judges (Shofetim)
- Samuel (Shemuel)
- Kings (Melakhim)
- Isaiah (Yeshayahu)
- Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu)
- Ezekiel (Yehezaqel)
- Book of the Twelve (Tere Asar): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

THE WRITINGS (KETUVIM)

- Psalms (Tehillim)
- Proverbs (Mishle)
- Job (Iyyov)
- Song of Songs (Shir Hashirim)
- Ruth (Ruth)
- Lamentations (Ekhah)
- Ecclesiastes (Qohelet)
- Esther (Ester)
- Daniel (Daniel)
- Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra-Nehemyah)
- Chronicles (Divre Hayamim)

books in the Hebrew Bible, in the format that it assumed by the end of the tenth century C.E., differs somewhat from the general order that is found in Christian Bibles.) The commonly used titles of some of the books are Greek, based on early Greek translations.[2]

The historical accuracy of the Hebrew Bible is not always certain, because not all biblical accounts can be verified by archeological finds or references in other historical records. Although we can presume that many of the accounts (particularly those of events after the Jewish kingdom was established) are based on historical fact, we must also recognize that they were recorded by the Jews themselves, who naturally viewed historical events from their own special perspective. Furthermore, many accounts were transmitted orally long before they were written down or assembled in final form, thus affecting the way they were recounted.

BIBLICAL HISTORY

Whatever its historical accuracy, the heroic and mythic power of the Hebrew Bible cannot be denied. It is filled with astonishing people and powerful images. Adam and Eve, for example, stand naked and suddenly aware

among the trees and streams of the Garden of Eden. Noah and his wife are surrounded by animals in their big wooden boat, riding out a long flood. Moses climbs to the top of cloud-covered Mount Sinai to speak with God and receive the Ten Commandments. These images and ideas are not only unforgettable, but they are also part of Western culture and have influenced its laws, art, literature, and ways of living.

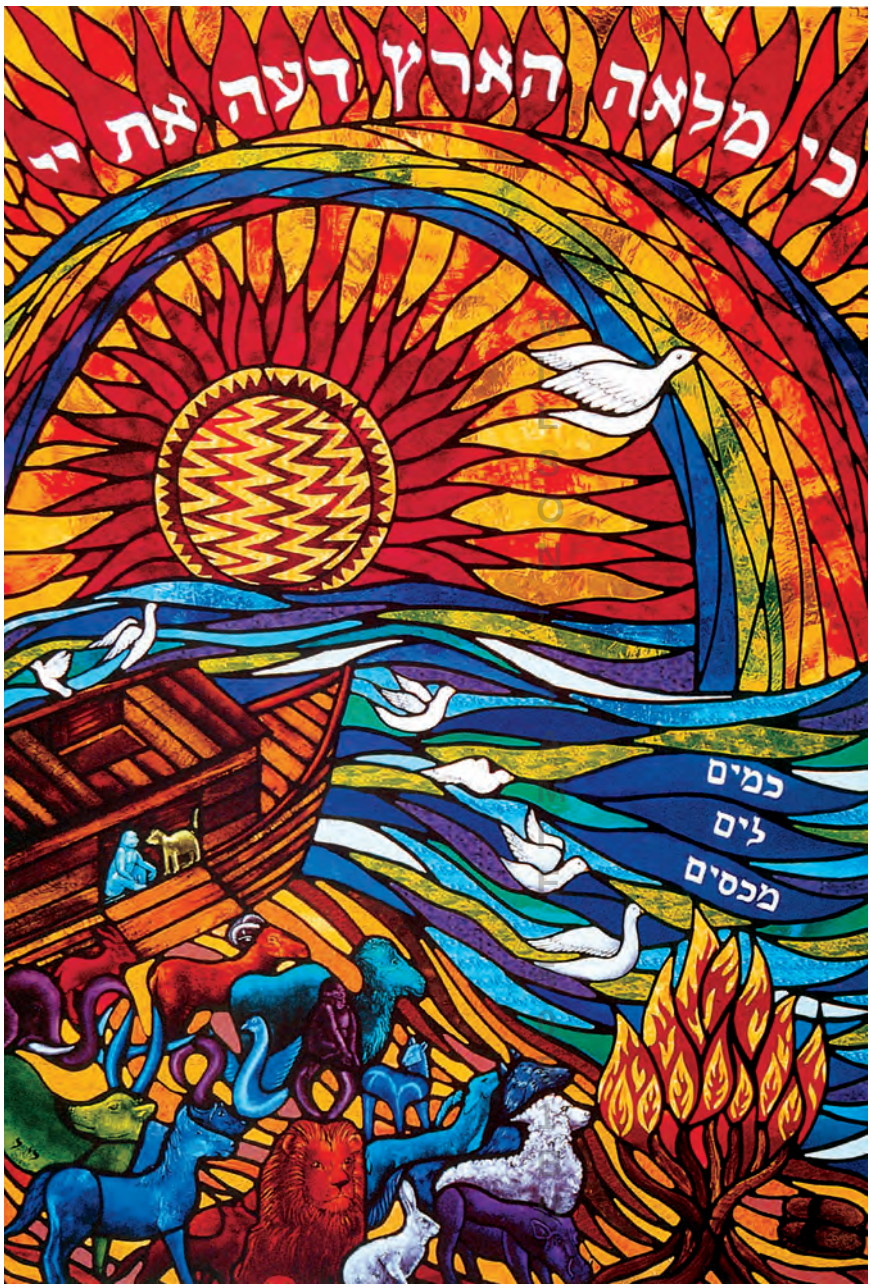
In the Beginning: Stories of Origins

The earliest stories of the Hebrew Bible, given in Genesis 1–11, have a mythic quality that is universally appealing. The story of the origin of the world presents God as an intelligent, active, masculine power who overcomes primeval chaos. To create order, God imposes separations—separating light from darkness and land from water—and completes his work of creation in stages, spread over six days. At the end of each day, God views what he has done and sees that it is good. Finally, satisfied with the result of all his labor, God rests on the seventh day.

This account (which shows parallels with the creation story in the Babylonian epic poem *Enuma Elish*) appears in the first chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. This first account is cosmic and measured—possibly written that way in order to be read out solemnly by a priest at temple ceremonies. The second account (perhaps written earlier than the first) begins in the second chapter of Genesis. This account is more human, utilizes colorful dialogue, and focuses on the first human parents, Adam and Eve, and on their moral dilemma.

The Garden of Eden, which God has created for his refreshment, is based on the pattern of a walled garden, complete with fruit trees, birds, exotic animals, a central fountain, and streams to cool the air. God creates Adam to live in the garden as its gardener and caretaker, forming his body from the dust of the earth and breathing life into Adam with his own breath. In some way, Adam is a copy of God himself, for the human being, the Bible says, is made "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27),[3] bearing some of the dignity of God. Soon, though, because Adam is lonely, God decides to give him a companion. Taking a rib from Adam while he is in a deep sleep, God forms Eve around that rib. In the first account of creation, male and female were created simultaneously, but in the second account, the male is created first and the female afterward—leading to the interpretation that while the male is a copy of God, the female is only a copy of the male.

Interestingly, the conception of God in the creation stories is somewhat different from many later views. For one thing, although the biblical God has no apparent rivals, he does not appear to be alone, and when he declares "Let *us* make man" (Gen. 1:26),[4] he is most likely addressing his heavenly counselors, some of whom are identified in later texts (such as Psalms and Job). In addition, God is not represented as pure spirit. The account in chapter two of Genesis says that God walks and eats; and having made the garden to enjoy, he strolls in it when he wants to enjoy its cool breezes. God



New Beginnings, a contemporary painting by Bruce David, is a reminder of the rainbow that signaled God's promise at the end of Noah's journey. the Hebrew inscription quotes Isaiah 11:9: "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

allows Adam and Eve to eat from almost all the trees but forbids them to eat fruit from one of the trees that he especially needs to nourish his supernatural life and insight. Eve, tempted to eat from the forbidden tree, does so, then urges Adam to do the same. For their disobedient act, they are exiled from God's garden. God can no longer trust them, knowing that if

they were to remain they might become his rivals. Now they must live outside the garden, work, and suffer for the rest of their amazingly long lives.

To some, the portrait of Eve—a temptress who brings down punishment on Adam and herself—is distressing. But it should be pointed out that Eve is the one with ambition and personality, while Adam seems far less colorful. Whatever the interpretation—and there have been many—the story of Adam and Eve has influenced Western views of women, men, and marriage for several thousand years.

Next is the story of Adam and Eve's children, Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1–16), whose sibling rivalry ends in Cain's murder of Abel. This tale may reflect ancient rivalries between farmers and herders.

Following this is the story of the Great Flood (Gen. 6–9), which echoes a Mesopotamian tale, the *Epic of Gilgamesh.* Disgusted with the rapidly growing, immoral human population, God sends a flood to do away with humanity—all of humanity, that is, except the righteous Noah and his family. He warns Noah to build a large wooden boat (an ark) and fill it with animals, because only those in the boat will survive the coming downpour. At the end of the flood, God makes a pact with Noah never again to destroy the earth by water. As a sign of this promise, God places his "bow" (perhaps an archer's bow) into the sky. The rainbow is a reminder of his solemn promise. Like several of the early stories, this account gives an explanation for a natural phenomenon. This story also explains how, from the three sons of Noah, different races arise.

Chapter eleven of Genesis tells the story of the tower of Babel (or Babylonia). Wanting to reach the heavenly realm that was believed to exist above the skies, people begin building a very tall tower. God, not willing to have his private world invaded, stops the construction by making the builders speak different languages. Because they can no longer understand each other, they cannot finish their tower. This story also gives a convenient answer to the question, Why are there different languages in the world?

Did Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah, and the others really exist? For centuries, Jews have thought of them as historical figures. Now, however, influenced by the views of scholars, many Jews view them instead as symbolic figures who set the stage for the events that follow. The first eleven chapters of Genesis are, in effect, a great allegorical introduction to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. There are many indications of this nonhistorical, symbolic purpose. For example, Adam and his immediate descendants are described as living to great ages—Adam is said to have lived to be 930 years old (Gen. 5:5) and Methuselah, the longest-lived, 969 years old (Gen. 5:7). Moreover, many names are apparently symbolic; for example, *Adam* means "humankind" and *Eve* means "life." Scholars, as pointed out earlier, believe that the stories of the creation and the flood derive from earlier Mesopotamian tales. What is important to understand, though, is that these stories were given new meanings by the Israelite scribes who adapted them.

The World of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs

Abraham is the first Hebrew patriarch (Greek: "father-source"). He is introduced in chapter twelve of Genesis, the point at which the book becomes more seemingly historical. Abraham, first known as Abram, is called by God to leave his home for another land. Originally from Ur (in present-day Iraq), Abraham migrates via Haran (in Turkey) to the land of **Canaan.** "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation'" (Gen. 12:1–2a).[5] This passage is significant to Judaism because it is seen as establishing a claim to the region now called Israel. Abraham's migration becomes a pilgrimage of great importance, making him, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob the patriarchs of Judaism.

After assuring Abraham of land and many descendants, God enters into a solemn **covenant,** a contract, with Abraham. In return for God's promise to provide land, protection, and descendants, Abraham and his male descendants must be circumcised as a sign of their exclusive relationship with God (Gen. 17).

The most famous story of Abraham concerns his son Isaac. Abraham has long been unable to have a son by his wife, Sarah. At Sarah's urging, he fathers by her maid, Hagar, a son named Ishmael. But then, to the amazement of all, Sarah herself has a son (Gen. 19). Soon, though, Sarah jealously demands that Ishmael and Hagar be sent away. (This aspect of the story will be important

Marc Chagall's *Abraham and the Three Angels* includes Abraham's elderly wife Sarah, whose pregnancy is an important part of matriarchal history.

later on in Islam.) Shockingly, God then asks (in Gen. 22) that Abraham offer Isaac, the beloved son of his old age, as a sacrifice. (Perhaps this is a vestige of an earlier practice of human sacrifice.) Abraham agrees and sets out with his son to Mount Moriah, believed by Jews to be the hill on which Jerusalem now rests. Just before the boy is to die, God stops Abraham, and a ram, whose horns had become tangled in a bush nearby, is used as the sacrifice instead. God has thus tested Abraham's devotion, and in so proving his absolute loyalty to God, Abraham has shown himself worthy of land, wealth, fame, and the joy of knowing he will have innumerable descendants. (This passage may show the replacement of human sacrifice with the sacrifice of animals.)

Genesis also contains stories about some extremely memorable women, the matriarchs of the Hebrew people: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. Although these women are always linked with their husbands, they all have strong and carefully drawn personalities. Sarah, for example, stays modestly inside the tent when strangers arrive but laughs so loudly that they hear her and then question her about why she is laughing (Gen. 18:10–15).

The stories in Genesis also tell of mysterious contacts with God—called **theophanies**—which are sometimes friendly in nature but at other times fierce and frightening. God appears to Isaac, for example, and promises him protection and many descendants (Gen. 26:24). One of Isaac's sons, Jacob, has a vision of God in a dream (Gen. 28). He sees a stairway leading from earth into the sky. God is at the top, and angels are ascending and descending, linking heaven and earth. A more unusual theophany occurs when Jacob wrestles all night long with a mysterious stranger—God or God's angel. At dawn the fight is over, and Jacob receives from the stranger a new name: Israel ("wrestles with God"). Because Jacob and his sons would settle the land of Canaan, it came to be called Israel after his new name. Jacob, with his two wives and two concubines, has many sons, who would become the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joseph, Jacob's next-to-last son, is the focus of the final section of Genesis. Because Joseph's brothers sense that his father loves him best, they scheme to have him killed. Ultimately, though, they sell him as a slave, and he is taken to Egypt (Figure 8.1). There, through his special gifts, he rises in importance to become a government minister. When a famine in Israel brings his brothers down to Egypt to look for grain, Joseph is not vengeful but invites his brothers to bring their father to Egypt and to settle there permanently. They do so and settle in the land of Goshen in northeastern Egypt. The Book of Genesis ends with the death of Jacob.

How historically true are these stories, especially that of Abraham? Traditional believers and some scholars think that the stories surrounding Abraham do express historical truth, though shaped by oral transmission. Other scholars, however, argue that the Israelites arose in Israel itself, possibly as a landless peasant class that revolted against its rulers. If that view is true, then the story of Abraham and his entry into Israel from elsewhere may not be historically accurate. In addition, no archeological evidence has yet been found to prove the existence of Abraham. The debate about the historical existence of Abraham may never be resolved.

FIGURE 8.1
The ancient eastern Mediterranean, with an inset of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (c. 900 B.C.E.).

Moses and the Law

The Book of Exodus records that the population of Hebrews in Egypt grew so large, after several centuries, that the Egyptians saw them as a threat. As a solution, the pharaoh commands that all baby boys be killed at birth. However, the baby Moses (whose name is probably Egyptian) is spared by being hidden. After three months, when his Hebrew mother is afraid to keep him any longer, she and her daughter fashion a watertight basket, put him inside, and place the basket in the Nile River. There he is discovered by an Egyptian princess who raises him as her own. As a young adult, Moses sees an Egyptian foreman badly mistreating an Israelite slave. In trying to stop the cruelty, Moses kills the foreman. Moses then flees from Egypt.

Our next glimpse of Moses comes when he has found a new life beyond the borders of Egypt, where he is now a herdsman for a Midianite priest named Jethro, whose daughter he has married. One day, when Moses is out with his father-in-law's herds, he sees a strange sight: a large bush appears to be burning, but it is not consumed. As Moses approaches the bush, he

hears the voice of God, who commands Moses to return to Egypt to help free the Hebrews.

Living in a world that believes in many gods, Moses is curious to know the name of the divine spirit speaking to him. The deity, however, refuses to give a clear name and says mysteriously, "I will be who I will be," and then commands Moses to tell the Hebrews "that 'I will be' sent you" (Exod. 3:14).[6] In Hebrew the mysterious answer provides an etymological clue to the name for God. The name for God, usually associated with the verb *hayah* ("to be"), is Yhwh, and it is often translated as "I am." The name is usually written Yahweh, but the exact pronunciation is unknown.

As mentioned, Moses lived in an age when people believed in many gods, and he had grown up in the polytheistic culture of Egypt. People everywhere believed in multiple gods and thought of them as guardian deities of particular groups and regions. Could Moses—or the patriarchs and matriarchs before him—have really been monotheistic? We do not know. A possibility is that Moses and the Hebrew patriarchs and matriarchs believed in the existence of many gods, of whom one, possibly a major deity, declared himself the special protector of the Israelites. If this is true, monotheism was not the original belief system of the Israelites but evolved over time. Some scholars wonder whether the actions of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten (Ikhnaton, reigned c. 1352–1336 B.C.E.) influenced the development of Jewish monotheism. Akhenaten gave sole worship to the sun god Aten, and he unsuccessfully attempted to suppress the worship of all other Egyptian gods.

Ultimately, the god of the Jews would come to be proclaimed "the one true God." We see two traditions in the Torah. In one (possibly older) tradition, Yahweh is embodied and appears directly to human beings. In another (possibly later) tradition, Yahweh exists as a spirit, existing apart from human beings. The notion of God as being transcendent and distant grew stronger over time, and the transformation was complete when Yahweh came to be considered pure spirit and any reference to his body was considered to be metaphorical. In addition, God's name eventually was thought of as being too sacred to be pronounced; instead of speaking the name *Yahweh,* priests and lectors substituted the Hebrew word *Adonay* ("the Lord").[7] Ultimately, all other gods were considered false gods; images of anything that could be construed as a god were prohibited; and Yahweh at last was considered the one God of the entire universe.

But these changes would all occur after the time of Moses. In the Book of Exodus, Yahweh, the god of the Hebrews, simply needs to show himself to be more powerful than any of the gods of the Egyptians (Exod. 12:12). It is by his power that ten plagues strike the Egyptians and convince the pharaoh (possibly the great builder Ramses II, c. 1292–1225 B.C.E.) to let his Israelite slaves leave.

The last and greatest of the plagues is the death of the first-born sons of the Egyptians. The Israelites' sons are spared because they have followed Yahweh's warning and have marked the doors of their homes with the blood of a substitute—a sacrificial lamb (Exod. 12:13). Because God has

The Gods of Egypt

Egypt, as the earliest great imperial state in history, left a significant cultural mark on the ancient Near East. Even countries that had never experienced its direct political control felt its sway through trade, which carried Egyptian goods, culture, and religion far beyond its borders. It's not surprising that Egyptian religious artifacts have been found in Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and the islands of the Mediterranean. However, not all peoples welcomed the Egyptian influence, including the Hebrews, who recorded their concerns about it in their scriptures. The Ten Commandments, in particular, show a desire to escape from Egypt's influence. The first commandment, for example, implies the gods of Egypt when it orders, "you shall have no other gods before me." The next commandment reinforces this demand by forbidding the making of images that portray any creature in the sky, on the earth, or in the waters. This prohibition would especially exclude many of the animal-like gods of Egypt. In order to understand these biblical concerns more clearly, we have to consider Egyptian religious beliefs.

The culture of Egypt dates back to ancient times. Archeology reveals the existence as early as 5000 B.C.E. of complex societies in Egypt and Nubia, a region to the south of Egypt. Egyptian life was centered on the Nile River, whose waters irrigated crops and served as a great highway on which goods, people, and ideas traveled easily. Because cultural centers were spread up and

This papyrus portrays Nut, goddess of the sky, as a canopy over the reclining Geb, god of the earth.

down the river, sometimes at great distances, Egyptian religion initially developed in a localized and diverse fashion, with each community having its own gods and stories of creation. Later, as a unified Egyptian state developed after 3000 B.C.E., so did a more unified Egyptian religion. (The same unifying process occurred in Greco-Roman religion, as we will see in the next chapter.) Some gods were blended, many were linked in myth, and a few emerged as preeminent. Here we will mention only the most important. (We will use their familiar names, some of which are Egyptian and some of which are Greco-Roman.)

THE PANTHEON

Although at least four major creation stories existed, the one that became most common told of an original watery chaos called Nun and the eventual birth of nine gods. This creation myth tells how, in the midst of the formless body of water, a mound of earth arose, and from this mound emerged the primordial sun god, called Re (Ra) or Atum. From the exertions of the sun god came an initial parent pair, a god of dry air named Shu and his consort, Tefnut, goddess of rain and mist. These two, in turn, gave birth to another pair—the sky goddess Nut and her consort, the earth god Geb. And from them came four children: one pair was Osiris and his consort, Isis; the other pair was Set (Seth) and his consort, Nephthys. (These nine interconnected deities are often called the Ennead; from a Greek word for "nine.")

The goddess Nut was especially beloved. She is frequently shown as a great female being, usually blue and covered with gold stars, who crouches protectively over the earth. She is held up over the prostrate earth god Geb by the air god Shu, whose power keeps sky and earth separate. It was believed that every night the sun god Re entered the sky goddess, sailed in the dark on a boat with other gods under the earth, and was reborn from Nut every morning.

Isis, Osiris, and their son Horus were also deeply revered. Their stories served as guides for generations of Egyptians. According to the primary myth, Osiris was killed by his jealous brother Set and sent down the Nile in a coffin. Isis searched for Osiris and found his body in Byblos (today in Lebanon). She brought his dead body back to Egypt, but Set found them and cut Osiris into pieces. Binding the pieces with linen, Isis put the body of Osiris back together (one missing part, eaten by fish, she fashioned from wood). Because of her love, Osiris was allowed to be reborn and to live again for one day with Isis. It was at this time that their son Horus was conceived. Osiris returned to the underworld and became the god and judge of the dead. After his birth, Isis hid Horus in the reeds of the delta so that he might escape the wrath of Set. Once Horus came of age, he conquered Set and became the ruler of Egypt. Egyptians came to believe that by imitating Osiris, they would be identified with him and could gain eternal life in his realm. Mummification, because it ritually reenacted Isis's wrapping of the body parts of Osiris, was an important way of achieving that identification.

"passed over" Egypt, the event is thereafter called the **Passover** (*Pesach*), and its yearly memorial has become one of the major Jewish festivals (which we will discuss later).

The Bible tells of the Hebrews' journey out of Egypt through a large body of water, the Red Sea, on their way to the Sinai Peninsula. (The Hebrew term may be translated as either "Red Sea" or "Reed Sea." The second translation may refer to the reed-filled marshes of northeastern Egypt.) Movies have dramatized the event, showing two walls of water held back as the Hebrews marched between them. But the reality was possibly less dramatic. Although Egyptian records do not mention it, the exodus from Egypt has become a central theme of Judaism. A whole people, protected by God, leaves a land of oppression and begins the march toward freedom.

The Books of Exodus and Numbers describe in detail the migration back to Israel—a migration that lasted a full generation, about forty years. The most

Belief in the afterlife was strong and complex. Egyptians envisioned that after death they would be led before a court of gods, where Osiris was the chief judge. The testimony of the deceased would be recorded by the scribal god Thoth, and each person's heart would be placed on a scale. On the other side of the scale was the symbolic feather of the goddess Ma'at, deity of balance and order. If the heart and the feather weighed the same, the deceased would safely enter the afterlife and would live forever with the gods.

Of the few thousand gods worshiped in Egypt, several dozen gained widespread affection throughout Egypt. Many of the most beloved deities were associated with certain animals and were shown with animal characteristics. These deities probably began as animal gods who became increasingly humanized. Among them, Hathor, shown as a cow or as a woman with cow horns, was associated with love and motherhood. Bastet, with a cat's head, was a household protector. Thoth, the god of writing, was shown with the head of an ibis (a heronlike bird); his bill suggested the scribe's reed pen. Anubis, with a jackal's head, was the god who carefully guided the dead to the courtroom of Osiris.

Gods were worshiped both at temples and in the home. Temple activity, managed by priests, involved daily care for the images of the gods, celebrating festivals, counseling, and the production of art, medicines, and amulets. Egyptians seem to have been highly religious, organizing their lives according to the religious festivals of their area and protecting themselves with temple visits, chants, charms, and prayers.

EGYPTIAN INFLUENCES

Despite the Hebrews' desire to separate themselves from the culture of Egypt, Egyptian influences could not be entirely overcome. There are many signs of that influence in the Hebrew Bible. The name Moses, for example, is apparently Egyptian, variously translated "child," "born," or "son." (It is also found in the name Tutmose, meaning "child of Thoth," which was the name of several pharaohs.) The goddess Ma'at may have inspired the figure of the Wisdom of God in the Hebrew Book of Proverbs, where Wisdom is shown as a female figure who assists God in the work of creation (Prov. 8). Some of the psalms also may have Egyptian origins. The clearest example is Psalm 104, a hymn to the beauties of nature; it shows many parallels with an earlier hymn—found by archeologists in the ruins of the city of Aketaten (Tell el-Amarna) on the Nile—that praises Aten, the daytime sun, whose rays descend to nourish the earth.

As we've seen in previous chapters, the histories of religions show evidence of borrowings and influences, some obvious and others subtle. The history of the Hebrew religion is no exception. Archeologists and scholars will no doubt find more evidence of such connections as they continue their research and understanding of Hebrew and Egyptian history.

significant event during this period of passage is God's encounter with Moses at Mount Sinai. The Book of Exodus (chap. 19) paints a terrifying picture: the mountain is covered with cloud and smoke; lightning and thunder come from the cloud; and the sound of a trumpet splits the air. The people are warned to keep their distance, for only Moses may go to meet God at the top of the mountain. Moses enters the cloud and speaks with God.

When Moses descends, he returns to his people with rules for living—the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20). The strong moral orientation of Judaism is apparent here, for Moses does not return with an explanation of the universe, with science, or with art, but rather with ethical precepts. Parallels have been drawn to several other early codes, particularly that of the Babylonian King Hammurabi (c. 1792–1750 B.C.E.).

Undergirding the commandments is the conviction that a covenant—a contract—exists between Yahweh and his people. He will care for them, but

they must fulfill their half of the bargain by following his laws and giving him sole worship. Such an agreement had already been made between God and Noah and later with Abraham. The covenant is reaffirmed with Moses and solidified by the laws and commandments, which give it legal form.

The Book of Leviticus begins with detailed laws about animal sacrifice (chaps. 1–7) and then takes up the complexities of ritual purity. In addition to laws about general honesty and humaneness, Leviticus outlines many special laws that would be important to the later development of Judaism: laws specifying which animals may and may not be eaten (chap. 11), laws prohibiting the consumption of meat with blood in it (17:10) or the cutting of one's beard (19:27), and laws governing the observance of the major religious festivals (chap. 23). The Book of Numbers returns to historical themes, recounting specifically the years of wandering before the Hebrews entered Canaan. But it also spells out laws about ritual purity and the keeping of vows. The Torah ends with the Book of Deuteronomy, which repeats the Ten Commandments and describes the death of Moses, an event that occurs just before the Hebrews enter the Promised Land of Canaan.[8]

The historicity of Moses is, like that of Abraham, another focus of debate. Virtually all Jews believe him to have been a real person. So far, however, no Egyptian archeological records have been found that mention Moses, a slave rebellion, or an exodus from Egypt. Specialists in mythology point out parallels between the story of Moses and Egyptian religious tales. Also, no archeological evidence has yet been found to give proof of the forty years of wandering in the desert. The lack of historical evidence, however, does not disprove the historicity of Moses. A common view sees the biblical account as representing basic historical truth that has been magnified and embellished over time.

The Judges and Kings

After Moses' death, the Israelites were led by men and women who had both military and legal power, called judges. To think of them as military generals is more accurate than to envision them as modern-day courtroom judges.

The Books of Joshua and Judges describe this period and give accounts of Israelite expansion and the eventual division of Canaan among eleven tribes. Realizing that they needed to be unified for their protection, the people of Israel soon established a king, selected a capital city, imposed a system of laws, and built a temple for centralized worship. The biblical Books of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings describe the process.

The first king, Saul (whose reign began c. 1025 B.C.E.), became a tragic figure, suffering repeatedly from depression and then dying after a battle—one tradition says from suicide (1 Sam. 31:4). After a civil war divided the country's allegiance, a new king emerged to lead Israel. David (c. 1013–973 B.C.E.) was a young man from Bethlehem, a town in the tribal area of Judah. As an accomplished military leader, David oversaw the buildup of the kingdom. Recognizing the need for a central city, he took over the hilltop town of Jebus, renaming it Jerusalem and establishing it as the national capital.

The Ten Commandments

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other god to set against me.

The Ten Commandments[9] begin with a reminder that Yahweh is the protector of the Hebrews and that because of his help they owe him their obedience. There seems to be an understanding, however, that other peoples have their own gods.

You shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous god. I punish the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. But I keep faith with thousands, with those who love me and keep my commandments.

The commandment not to make images was meant to prevent worship of any deity but Yahweh, and it has been observed quite strictly over the centuries. Although a few early synagogue paintings of human figures have been found,[10] the prohibition has restrained in general the development of Jewish painting and sculpture. Only in the past hundred years have Jewish artists emerged, and many have been nonrepresentational artists.

You shall not make wrong use of the name of the Lord your God; the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who misuses his name.

The commandment against misuse of Yahweh's name opposes using God's name to bring misfortune on people, as by curses and black magic. Eventually, it was considered unacceptable to pronounce the name of Yahweh for any purpose whatsoever. Only the high priest had this privilege and did this but once a year.

Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. You have six days to labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; that day you shall not do any work, you, your son or your daughter, your slave or your slave-girl, your cattle or the alien within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and on the seventh day He rested. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

The commandment to keep the Sabbath was a humane commandment, intended to give regular rest to servants, slaves, children, workers, and animals.

Honor your father and your mother, that you may live long in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

The commandment to honor one's parents offers a reward: long life. We should note that Hebrews generally thought of rewards and punishments as being given on earth and in one's lifetime. The notion of rewards given in a future life or an afterlife was a later development.

You shall not commit murder.

This commandment does not prohibit all killing but prohibits murder—that is, unlawful and undeserved killing of human beings. Killing human beings in wartime and in self-defense was allowable, and execution was expected as the punishment for many types of crime.

You shall not commit adultery.

The commandment against adultery is only incidentally concerned with sex. Primarily it is a property law, because a man's wife was legally considered his property. This commandment is linked with the commandments immediately before and after it, because all three refer to property rights. To murder is to take unlawful possession of another person's body; to commit adultery is to disregard a man's right to sole possession of his wife; and to steal is to take unlawful possession of another person's goods.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false evidence against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his slave-girl, his ox, his ass, or anything that belongs to him.

In this last commandment, property rights are linked together and spelled out clearly.

Recent archeological evidence seems to confirm the historical existence of David and his son Solomon, who constructed the temple envisioned by David. The Book of Chronicles records how Solomon built and dedicated the First Temple in Jerusalem. In this way he created a home for Yahweh, whose presence, it was hoped, would protect the kingdom. Services included prayers and hymns, accompanied by musical instruments such as trumpets and cymbals (see Ps. 150). Incense and grain were common offerings, and animals were ritually killed and offered as burnt sacrifices to Yahweh.[11]

Having a royal palace and the national temple in Jerusalem unified the separate Hebrew tribes for a time, but the taxes required to fund these and other extensive building projects quickly made the people rebellious. After the death of Solomon, the northern tribes broke away from the control of the king in Jerusalem and set up their own kingdom.

Division weakened the two kingdoms, and in 721 B.C.E. Assyria, an expanding power in the northeast, took over the northern kingdom. A theological explanation for the destruction of the northern kingdom came from prophets of the time. **Prophets** (human beings who spoke in God's name) were significant figures—both as groups and as individuals. They were active from the earliest days of the kingdom; but individual prophets became especially important in the three hundred years after 800 B.C.E. Typically the prophet experienced a life-changing revelation from God and then felt commissioned by God to speak his message to the people. The prophet Isaiah, who was active in the eighth century B.C.E., is possibly the best known. He had a vision of God in the temple of Jerusalem, which he described as being filled with smoke—a symbol of the divine presence. In his experience there, he heard the voices of angels. They were crying out "Holy, holy, holy" in the presence of God (Isa. 6). His feeling of unworthiness dissolved when an angel touched a lighted coal to his lips, thus purifying and empowering Isaiah. From then on, he could speak his message. Isaiah and other prophets explained that political losses were punishment from Yahweh for worshiping other gods and for not having kept his laws. The losses were not a sign of God's weakness, but rather of his justice and strength.

The southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, carried on alone for more than another century—though with constant anxiety. Unfortunately, another power had emerged—Babylonia—and at first the southern kingdom paid tribute; but when tribute was refused, Babylonia took control. In 586 B.C.E. Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Solomon's temple, tore down the city walls of Jerusalem, and took the aristocracy and a great part of the Jewish population off to exile in Babylonia. Their exile would last almost fifty years. Because the kingdom had ended and temple worship was no longer possible, the religion of Israel seemed to lose its heart.

Exile and Captivity

The period of exile in Babylonia (586–539 B.C.E.) was a monumental turning point and one of the most emotional chapters in the history of Judaism.

WOMEN AND RELIGION

Women in Hebrew Scriptures

The status of women in the Hebrew scriptures involves many opposites. The scriptures state repeatedly that from a legal point of view, women were in many ways inferior to and dependent on men. Women were subject to fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, and Hebrew law regarded them as a type of property. On the other hand, dozens of women named and portrayed in the Hebrew scriptures showed themselves to be strong personalities, psychologically independent, and occasionally even in charge of men. A few, like Deborah and Esther, even achieved the status of heroic figures.

The Ten Commandments clearly show women's legal status as property; they are listed along with houses, mules, and oxen as possessions (Exod. 20:17). The inequality between men and women is especially noticeable in regard to marriage. Men were allowed more than one wife, but women were allowed only one husband. Women had to be virginal at marriage, but this was not demanded of men. Hebrew law defined adultery as sex between a man and another man's wife, which was considered a crime because it violated the husband's right to his own property. Only males could Institute divorce, which was fairly easy to arrange. Inheritance money and property normally passed to sons and male relatives rather than to females.

In general, women were expected to center their lives around children and home. Thus, a primary female role model in the Hebrew scriptures is the dutiful wife. She is a loving and industrious helpmate. The early matriarchs particularly exemplify this type of person: Sarah, the aged wife of Abraham; Rebecca, the wife of Isaac; and Rachel, the second wife of Jacob. Ruth is such a model wife that even after her husband had died, she continued to care for her husband's mother, Naomi. Ruth even returned with her to Naomi's ancestral home in Israel (Ruth 1).

It has sometimes cynically been said that there are two types of women in the Hebrew scriptures: dutiful wives and dangerous temptresses. (Maybe this division comes from the human tendency to divide people into opposing moral categories.) Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel—all devoted wives of patriarchs—are given as examples of the first type. Examples of the second are Eve, who tempted Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6), Delilah, who tempted Samson to reveal the secret of his strength (Judg. 16:16–17), and Jezebel, a wicked queen (1 Kings 18).

But the Hebrew scriptures are actually filled with a larger array of colorful women who do not neatly fit into either category. Among them are Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, who was a prophetess and poet (Exod. 15:20–21); Bathsheeba, a strong wife of King David, who ensured that her son Solomon would become king (1 Kings 1:17–31); the military leader Deborah, who led a fight against the Canaanites (Judg. 4–5); and Esther, a queen who saved the Jewish people from annihilation (Esther 2–9). Even a witch (the Witch of Endor) and a foreign queen (the Queen of Sheba) make their appearance (1 Sam. 28:3–5 and 1 Kings 10:1–13). And women are often shown playing major roles in important events. The story of the child Moses, for example, is filled with the helpful actions of women (Exod. 1–2). Among these women are two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah; Moses's mother and sister, who save him from death; and an Egyptian princess, who takes him from the River Nile to safety and raises him to adulthood.

The characterization of women in the Hebrew scriptures is thus quite complex. Though legally weak, women nonetheless show strong character and play major roles in the Hebrew scriptures.

Psalm 137 is a manifestation of the sorrow felt by the Jews during their captivity. It tells of their inability to sing happy songs as long as they were in exile: "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion."[12]

Without a temple, public ritual had come to an end, but in its place the written word took on new importance. During their exile in Babylonia, the Jews began to meet weekly to discuss the scriptures and to pray. What

developed was the **Sabbath** service of worship, study, sermon, and psalms, performed in a meetinghouse, or *synagogue* (Greek: "lead together"). The period of exile also made it clear that the oral Hebrew religious traditions had to be written down if the Jews were to survive.

During their exile, the Jewish people began to assimilate influences from the surrounding Babylonian culture. Knowledge of the Hebrew language declined, while Aramaic, a sister language, emerged as the common tongue. (Aramaic eventually even crept into the sacred literature.[13]) Also emerging at this time was a growing sense of an active spirit of evil, often called Satan, and of a cosmic antagonism between good and evil. Although the sense of moral opposition was present in the Israelite religion from an early time, it may have been sharpened by the pain of exile.

Return to Jerusalem and the Second Temple

In 540 B.C.E., Cyrus came to the throne of the Persian Empire and, after taking over Babylonia, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. The returning exiles rebuilt their temple, dedicating it in 515 B.C.E., and the sacrificial

Although the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., descriptions allow craftsmen to build models that show how it looked.

cult was reestablished. The Book of Psalms, containing the lyrics of 150 hymns, is often called the hymnbook of the Second Temple, and when we read in the closing psalms of all the instruments used in temple worship, we get a sense of the splendor of the ceremonies performed there.

At the same time, the work of recording oral traditions and editing written material also grew in importance. Scribes did not want the history of their people to be lost, and the result of their work was to become the Hebrew Bible. A final edition of the Torah (Pentateuch) was made, the prophetic books were compiled, and new books were written as well. Several of the last books written were literary—such as Ecclesiastes, a dark meditation on life, and the Song of Songs, a collection of love poetry. The books that would eventually be accepted into the Hebrew canon were finished by about 200 B.C.E.[14]

CULTURAL CONFLICT DURING THE SECOND TEMPLE ERA

The historical record in the canonical Hebrew scriptures ends with the building of the Second Temple. But the history of the region did not end here. Because of the geographic location of Israel, it seemed that the Jews in Israel would continually have to contend with invasions—and in some cases conquests—by foreign powers.

The Seleucid Period

When the army of Alexander the Great was on its way to conquer Egypt, it made Israel part of the Greek Empire, and after Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E, his generals divided up his empire. Israel at first was controlled by Egypt, which was ruled by the descendants of Alexander's general Ptolemy. Later, Israel was controlled by Syria, ruled by the descendants of Alexander's general Seleucus.

In 167 B.C.E. a Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV (Antiochus Epiphanes) took over the temple, apparently with the intention of introducing the worship of the Greek god Zeus to the site. He deliberately placed on the altar a dish of pork—a forbidden meat. He also forbade circumcision. His acts caused such hatred among the Jews that they rebelled. Led by a Jewish family of five brothers, the Maccabees (or Hasmoneans), the Jews took back the rule of their country, and the temple was rededicated to the worship of Israel's one God. (The winter festival of **Hanukkah,** widely kept today, is a joyous memorial that recalls that rededication of the Second Temple.) The country retained its autonomy for almost a century, until the Roman general Pompey took control in 63 B.C.E.

Antagonism between Jewish culture and the growing Greek-speaking culture in the region was inevitable, because Jewish culture had values and practices that made absorption into Greek culture difficult, if not impossible. For example, all Jewish males were circumcised, which meant they were easily identified in the public baths or while exercising in gymnasiums.

There were also Jewish dietary restrictions that forbade the eating of pork and shellfish and strict prohibitions against work on the Sabbath. These practices conflicted with the sophisticated Greek-speaking culture called Hellenism (from *Hellas,* meaning "Greece"). This culture was becoming dominant in the entire Mediterranean area, even after the Romans took control of the region. Greek plays and literature were read everywhere around the Mediterranean; Greek history, science, medicine, and mathematics were considered the most advanced of their day; and Greek architecture and city planning were becoming the norm. Because of its sophistication, Hellenistic culture was hugely attractive to educated people.

Responses to Outside Influences

Contact with Hellenistic culture led to a variety of responses. Some people welcomed it; some rejected it, clinging passionately to their own ethnic and religious roots; and the rest took a position in between. Tensions led to the rise of several religious factions among the Jews in Israel starting around 165 B.C.E.

The **Sadducees** were the first of the factions to emerge.[15] They were members of the priestly families, living primarily in Jerusalem, and were in charge of the temple and its activities. The fact that they derived their living from temple worship would have made them traditional—at least in their public behavior.

The **Pharisees** were the second faction that arose.[16] Their focus was on preserving Hebrew piety through careful observation of religious laws and traditions. (Later rabbinical Judaism would develop from and continue the work of the Pharisees.)

A third faction, eventually called the **Zealots,** was opposed to foreign influences and after 6 C.E. was bitterly opposed to Roman rule of Israel. The Romans called them "robbers." The name Zealots—from the Greek word for *zeal*—was given to them when wars began between the Jews and the Romans. The patriots sometimes used violent means to achieve their ends.

The **Essenes** were the fourth group. Not a great deal is known with certainty about them, although current interest in them is intense. They were written about by three authors of the classical world: Philo (c. 10 B.C.E.–50 C.E.), a Jewish theologian of Alexandria; Josephus (c. 37–100 C.E.), a Jewish general and historian; and Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.), a Roman writer. These classical writers indicate that the Essenes numbered several thousand; lived a communal, celibate life, primarily in the desert area near the Dead Sea; rejected animal sacrifice; and avoided meat and wine. We also are told that the Essenes were skilled in medicine, dressed in white, followed a solar calendar that was different from the lunar calendar used in the temple, studied the scriptures assiduously, and kept separate from the rest of society. Moreover, we now recognize that there may have been several varieties of Essenes and that a strict celibate core at Qumran (called the Covenanters) was supported by a noncelibate network of supporters and sympathizers throughout Israel.

Archeologists hoping for more evidence sift sand at the site of the Dead Sea Scrolls' discovery.

The Essenes saw themselves as an advance guard, preparing for the time when God would end the old world of injustice and bring about a new world of mercy and peace. They described themselves as "sons of light" who were fighting against the forces of "darkness."[17] Because their center was no more than fifteen miles east of Jerusalem, they would have had some contact with the political currents of their day, and they may have shared some of the ideals of the Zealots and Pharisees.

Scrolls and scroll fragments, called the Dead Sea Scrolls, were uncovered between 1947 and 1955 in caves near Qumran, above the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. It is possible that the scrolls constituted the library of the Essenes. It is also possible that they were a more general library of Jewish sacred books, brought from Jerusalem for safekeeping during the rebellion against the Romans that began in 66 C.E. Besides containing all or part of nearly every book of the Hebrew scriptures, the cache of scrolls contained works that commented on scriptural books, gave details about the organization and practices of the Essenes, and spoke of a coming judgment and end of the world. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that during the later part of the Second Temple period, there was no universally accepted norm of correct religion, and the canon of scripture was still in the process of formation. Instead, there were many books and interpretations of correct practice, each competing for acceptance.

Although the Second Temple was flourishing, the older, ceremonial, temple-based religion was in fact giving way to a more decentralized religion, based on the Hebrew scriptures, on the practice of the Pharisees, and on religious practice in the synagogues.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RABBINICAL JUDAISM

The Roman Empire assumed direct political control of much of Israel in 6 C.E., and it ruled with severity. Consequently, there was much anti-Roman fervor and a widespread hope that, as in the time of the Maccabees, the foreigners could be expelled and a Jewish kingdom reestablished. A major revolt broke out in 66 C.E., but Roman legions crushed it brutally in 70 C.E., when they destroyed the temple and much of Jerusalem.

The end of the Second Temple was a turning point for the Jewish faith, producing two major effects. It ended the power of the priesthood, whose sacrificial rituals were no longer possible. It also forced the religion to develop in a new direction away from temple ritual, moving Judaism toward a central focus on scripture and scriptural interpretation.

The Canon of Scripture and the Talmud

Once the temple-based religion had been destroyed, it was necessary to clearly define which religious books—of the several hundred being revered and read by various groups—constituted the sacred canon. Although some scholars now question it, an old tradition holds that in about 90 C.E., twenty years after the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish rabbis gathered together in Israel at the town of Yavneh (Jamnia). There, it is said, they examined each book individually to decide which books would be included in the canon. (Some books, such as the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, were hotly debated and were almost excluded.) The canon of the land of Israel resulted from this process of selection. A slightly larger number of books had already been accepted by Jews in Egypt and came to be known as the Alexandrian canon.

Another revolt began in Israel in 132 C.E. Some declared its leader, Bar Kokhba, to be the **Messiah,** the long-awaited savior sent by God to the Jews. In 135 C.E., the Romans put down this second revolt even more cruelly than the first, with many public executions. Jewish families who had remained in Israel even after the destruction of the Second Temple now fled. They went not only to Egypt but settled around the Mediterranean, expanding the number of Jews living in the **diaspora** (dispersion of Jews beyond Israel). The existence of a canon of scripture, which could be copied and carried anywhere, brought victory out of apparent defeat. Rabbinical Judaism, based on interpreting sacred scripture and oral tradition, could spread and flourish.

Once the Hebrew scriptures were declared complete, the next logical development was their protection and explanation. Interpretive work, called midrash ("seeking out"), became a central focus of evolving Judaism. The work of interpreting the Hebrew scriptures and applying their principles to everyday problems went on in stages. By about 200 C.E. there existed a philosophical discussion in six parts of specific biblical laws and their application, called the Mishnah ("repetition"). By about 400 C.E., the Mishnah had received further commentary (the Gemara, "supplement"), and the result was the Palestinian **Talmud** ("study"), or Talmud of the Land of Israel.

When people use the word *Talmud,* however, they usually are referring to a second, larger collection of material. Because it was compiled by religious specialists in Babylonia, it is called the Babylonian Talmud. Complete by about 600 C.E., the Babylonian Talmud consists of the earlier Mishnah and an extensive commentary. After the Hebrew Bible itself, the Babylonian Talmud became the second-most important body of Jewish literature, and it continued to be commented on over the centuries by rabbinical specialists.

Two rabbis speak:

Hillel used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? Yet if I am for myself only, what am I?

Shammai said: Set a fixed time for thy study of the Torah; say little and do much; and receive all men with a cheerful countenance.

—from The Sayings of the Fathers[18]

The Babylonian Talmud is vast, sometimes being compared to an ocean in which a person can sail or swim. In the Babylonian Talmud, rabbis of different generations added their insights and solutions to problems. The growth of opinion is visible, because the earliest material is printed in the center of each page, and later commentary is arranged around it. The Babylonian Talmud contains legal material (*halakhah,* "direction") and nonlegal anecdotes and tales (*haggadah,* "tradition"). It is really a large encyclopedia, organized into sections, or tractates, according to subject matter. Its size and complexity, along with the difficulty of mastering it, would contribute to a strong scholarly orientation in later Judaism.

Islam and Medieval Judaism

The diaspora introduced Jewish vitality to places far from Israel, such as Spain and Iraq. After the ninth century, this Jewish presence was possible because of the tolerance with which Islam—now dominant in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East—usually treated the Jews. Islam has held that Jews and Christians have a special status: called "peoples of the Book," they are members with Muslims in the same extended religious family. The result was that cities such as Alexandria, Cairo, Baghdad, and Córdoba became havens for Jewish thought.

Foremost among the Jewish medieval thinkers was Moses Maimonides (called Rambam, 1135–1204). Maimonides was born in Córdoba, but he and his family fled that city when it was occupied by Muslim forces hostile to both Jews and Christians. He eventually settled in Cairo, where he practiced medicine at the court of Salah al-Din (Saladin). The work that made him famous was his book *The Guide of the Perplexed,* in which he argued that Judaism was a rational religion and that faith and reason were complementary. He wrote this work in Arabic in order to make it accessible to a wide readership. Maimonides is also known for his *Mishneh Torah,* a scholarly work written in Hebrew, which is a summary of the Talmud and other rabbinical writings. Maimonides is renowned for his list of the basic principles of Jewish belief, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

Jewish thought has consistently shown several approaches in its interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. The more conservative tendency, which produced the Talmud, has interpreted the Hebrew scriptures fairly strictly, using them as a guide for ethical living. Another trend has been speculative, using the scriptures imaginatively as a way to understand more about the nature

of God and the universe. Out of this second tendency came works of Jewish mysticism, which we look at next.

The Kabbalah

The Middle Ages saw renewed interest in Jewish mysticism. The whole body of Jewish mystical literature, called **Kabbalah** ("received," "handed down"), began to emerge even before the common era in works that speculated on mysterious passages of the Hebrew Bible. For example, kabbalistic literature speculated about Enoch (an early descendant of Adam) and the prophet Elijah, who had not died but had simply been transported upward to God's realm (Gen. 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11). It also speculated about Yahweh's throne (*merkebah*) and the sound of the surrounding angels (see Isa. 6:2), using the scriptures as a tool for understanding more about the reality of God and the hidden structure of the universe. A frequent mystical assumption was that the Hebrew Bible was written in coded language that could be interpreted only by those who knew the code. Much biblical language, this view held, was to be read not literally but symbolically.

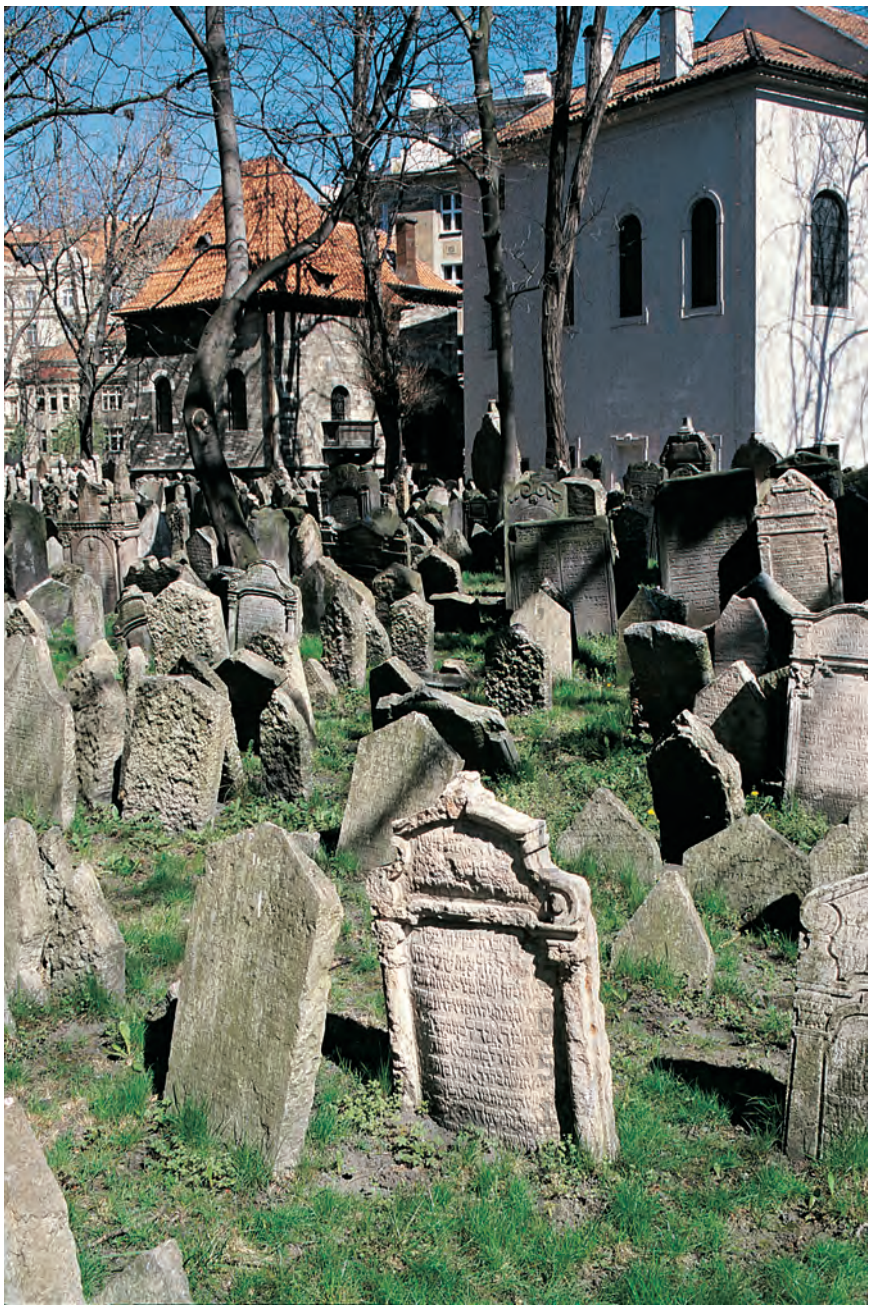
New mystical speculation arose in the medieval period, sometimes as a response to the growing persecution of Jews. Common themes were the divine origin of the world, God's care for the Jews, and the eventual coming of the Messiah (spoken of in Dan. 7 and elsewhere). The human world was frequently seen as the microcosm of a greater heavenly world beyond the earth and the human being as a microcosm of the universe: "the superior and inferior worlds are bound together under the form of the Holy Body, and the worlds are associated together."[19]

The most famous book of the Kabbalah is the *Zohar* ("splendor"). It was long believed to have been written in the first centuries of the common era, but in actuality it was probably written about 1280 in Spain by Rabbi Moses de León. The *Zohar* sees the universe as having emerged from a pure, boundless, spiritual reality. From the divine Unity come the ten *sefiroth*—ten active, divine powers, such as wisdom, intelligence, love, and beauty. The *Zohar* compares them to colors, and sees the sefiroth as links between God and his creation. Human beings are particularly significant in creation, blending the divine and the earthly, for within their bodies is a spark of divine light that seeks liberation and a return to God. Other texts included the *Sefer Yetzira* and the *Sefer HaHasidim.* Some Jewish circles valued the mystical texts of the Kabbalah as much as, or even more than, the Talmud.[21]

> From the innermost center of the flame sprang forth a well out of which colors issued and spread upon everything beneath, hidden in the mysterious hiddenness of the Infinite.
>
> —The *Zohar*[20]

Christianity and Medieval Judaism

The mystical movements gave comfort to European Jews as their persecution increased. Christianity had become the dominant religion in all Europe by the late thirteenth century, but Christianity carried with it an anti-Jewish prejudice that had been present since the first century C.E., when Christianity was separating—sometimes angrily—from its Jewish origins (see, for example, Matt. 27:25 and Acts 7:31–60 in the Christian New Testament).



Beginning in 1215, Jews were often forced to live in separate sections of towns, called *ghettos*. Here we see the Jewish cemetery in the old ghetto of Prague.

The dominant position of Christianity in medieval Europe also had political implications, because Christians were thought of as loyal citizens, whereas Jews were treated as suspicious and even traitorous persons. Because so much of Jewish religious practice was carried out in the home, superstitious stories circulated among Christians that Jews needed the blood of

Christian children for their Passover meal or that they stole and misused the consecrated Christian communion bread. Because Jews were often forbidden to own farmland, they were excluded from agriculture; and because they were kept out of the guilds (the medieval craft unions), they were excluded from many types of urban work. Furthermore, because Christians in the Middle Ages were generally prohibited from lending money at interest, this role became a Jewish occupation, but it generated much ill will among those to whom money was lent. In many places, Jews were forced to wear a special cap or display some other identifying detail. They were sometimes also forced to live in a separate section of town, called a *ghetto,* which might be walled so that Jews could be locked in at night.

Jews were persecuted regularly. At the time of the First Crusade, for example, many were killed by crusaders who were on their way through what is now Germany to Israel. During the period of the bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death (1347–1351), Jews sometimes were blamed for the deaths. In retaliation, many Jews were killed; some were even burned alive in their synagogues.

Beginning in the late Middle Ages, European Jews were forced into exile. Often the motive was economic as much as religious, because exiling the Jews would allow the Christian rulers to confiscate their property and to be freed of debt to them. Over a period of two centuries, Jews were expelled from England, France, Spain, and Portugal. In Spain, they were forced in 1492 to become Christians or to leave. Some Spanish Jews converted to Christianity but continued Jewish practice in their homes. As a result of the Spanish Inquisition, which sought out Jews who had converted only in order to remain in Spain, Jews fled elsewhere—to Morocco, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Holland, central Europe, and the New World. It is at this time that two great cultural divisions of Judaism emerged—Sephardic Judaism in the Mediterranean region, North Africa, and the Middle East, and Ashkenazic Judaism in Germany, central Europe, and France. We will look at their cultural differences later, when we examine the branches of Judaism.

QUESTIONING AND REFORM

The Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries began a new era for Europe. As people began to travel more, they were exposed to a multitude of previously unknown religions, cultures, and regions of the world. The invention of printing with movable type quickened this process by making written material widely available. Discoveries in science and instruments such as the telescope revolutionized people's perception of the earth and its relationship to the larger universe. These changes, which presented challenges to the Christian worldview, also affected Judaism.

After the Renaissance, Judaism began to move in two directions, both of which continue today. One direction cherished traditional ways; the other saw a need for modernization. The traditionalist way, strong in eastern

Europe, offered refuge from an uncertain world. In central Europe, traditionalism expressed itself both in Talmudic scholarship and in the devotional movement *Hasidism* ("devotion," "piety"). The Hasidic movement was founded by Israel ben Eliezer (c. 1700–1760), a mystic and faith healer known affectionately as the Baal Shem Tov (the "good master of the Holy Name"). He felt that living according to the rules of the Torah and Talmud was important, but he also felt that devout practice should be accompanied by an ecstatic sense of God who is present everywhere.[22] Hasidism emphasized the beauty of everyday life and the physical world, teaching that "only in tangible things can you see or hear God."[23] Hasidism continued to inspire Jews for centuries and remains one of the most vital movements in Judaism today.

The other direction in which Judaism moved was toward modernization. The liberal direction, which was strongest in Germany and France, urged Jews to move out of the ghettos, to gain a secular education, and to enter the mainstream of their respective countries. In Germany, the modernizing movement, called the Reform, began in the late eighteenth century. With the goal of making worship more accessible, the Reform movement translated many of the Hebrew prayers into German and introduced elements such as organ and choir music. The Reform movement, however, generated many counterresponses—among them, an attempt to preserve traditional Judaism (Orthodox Judaism) and an attempt to maintain the best of tradition with some modern elements (Conservative Judaism). We will look at all these movements later in more detail.

The creator and the object of His creation are a Unity inseparable.
—Hasidic saying[24]

JUDAISM AND THE MODERN WORLD

The growth of freedom for European Jews over the nineteenth century did not end anti-Jewish activity. The Russian Empire, where Eastern Orthodox Christianity was the established religion, continued its restrictions on Jews, with occasional outbreaks of persecution. In response, Jews from Russia, Poland, and the Baltic area emigrated, and from 1880 to 1920 more than a million Jews came to the United States, most coming to or through New York City. Their children and grandchildren sometimes moved farther, settling in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and elsewhere. Jews also emigrated to other large cities in North America and Latin America, such as Montreal, Toronto, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires—bringing a new freedom to Judaism, but at a price. Jewish identity was compromised because many Jews wished to assimilate with the surrounding culture, and intermarriage grew in frequency.

Traditional Jewish life continued in Europe until the end of the 1930s, particularly in Poland and the Baltic region, where there were still more than three million Jews. Beautiful evocations of this warm, traditional lifestyle are evident in the paintings of Marc Chagall and in the book that he and his wife Bella created together, *Burning Lights*.[25] This centuries-old culture, however, would be destroyed within ten years by Adolf Hitler.

The path to death at Auschwitz.

Hitler and the Holocaust

The rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933 as German chancellor and head of the Nazi Party began a prolonged wave of anti-Jewish activity that ended in the most dreadful sufferings. Hitler was fueled by several irrational notions. One was a theory of racial classes, which imagined Jews and Gypsies to be subhuman polluters of a pure but mythical Aryan race. Another was Hitler's belief that Jewish financiers and industrialists had conspired against Germany and helped make possible the Allied victory over the Germans during World War I. Hitler sought both an imaginary racial purity and political revenge.

At first, the Nazis put pressure on Jews to emigrate by forcing them out of government and university positions, by boycotting their stores, and eventually by physically persecuting them. Many Jews did emigrate, particularly to North America—Albert Einstein is a well-known example. After the annexation of Austria and the invasion of Poland (1939), Nazi control eventually spread to Holland, Norway, northern France, and Czechoslovakia; and as Nazi domination spread to these countries, so too did the persecution of Jews. Jews who wanted to flee found it hard to find refuge, because many countries, including the United States, refused to take in large numbers of Jews. Moreover, France and England did not forcefully protest Hitler's policies against the Jews, and the Catholic leader Pope Pius XII had signed an earlier concordat of understanding with Hitler. The Jews were without defenders, and when World War II was declared, they were caught in a trap.

Hitler began plans to exterminate all European Jews. Jews in countries under Nazi control were officially identified, made to wear yellow stars in public, and eventually deported via train to concentration camps. Upon arrival at the camps, Jews were often divided into two groups: (1) those who were strong enough to work and (2) the rest—mostly women, children, the sick, and the elderly—who were to be killed immediately. (The psychologist Viktor Frankl has described the process in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*.) At first, internees were shot to death; but as their numbers increased, gas chambers and crematoria were constructed to kill them and incinerate their bodies. Those who were kept as workers lived in horrible conditions and were routinely starved, insufficiently clothed, and attacked by all kinds of vermin and disease. Few ultimately survived.

By the end of World War II in 1945, about twelve million people—Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, prisoners of war, and political enemies—had died in the concentration camps. Of these, it is estimated that as many as six million were Jews, and of that number about a million and

a half were Jewish children. This immense loss is called the **Holocaust** (Greek: "completely burned") or *Shoah* (Hebrew: "extermination"). It is one of the greatest crimes ever committed against humanity.

The extermination has left a shadow on civilization and a great scar on Judaism. About a third of the world's Jews were killed during the Holocaust, and of those who died, a large number had been devout traditional Jews. Their deaths, under such painful circumstances, raised haunting questions about the faith and future of Judaism.

Creation of the State of Israel

A major result of the Holocaust was the creation of the state of Israel after more than a century of hope, thought, and work. Centuries of virulent anti-Jewish restriction and persecution had created in many Jews a desire for a Jewish nation, where they could live without fear, in the traditional historic home of their faith. The movement came to be called **Zionism,** after Mount Zion, the mountain on which Jerusalem is built.

The state of Israel emerged through several steps. The first was the notion of a separate Jewish nation, popularized by the influential book *The Jewish State,* written by the Hungarian-born Austrian writer Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) following an outbreak of anti-Semitism in France. The second step was the Balfour Declaration, a political statement issued in 1917 by the British government, which endorsed the notion of a Jewish homeland. When World War I ended, the British received control of the area then called Palestine and authorized a limited immigration of Jews to their territory, the British Mandate of Palestine. The third step came after World War II, when the newly created United Nations voted to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, one for Jews and the other for the Palestinians, the Arab residents of the mandate. The Jews accepted the U.N. plan and created the state of Israel when the mandate ended in 1948. The Palestinians, who had opposed Jewish immigration into the region under the British, rejected the U.N. plan and, along with neighboring Arab nations, resisted the creation of Israel.

The difficult relationship between Jews and Palestinians has continued to the present day. There have been repeated wars and an exchange of terrorist activities between Israelis and Palestinians, and the conflict has grown more horrifying in recent years. So far the conflict has not been resolved.

Because European Judaism was almost completely destroyed, Jewish life today has two centers: Israel and the United States. The estimated Jewish population of Israel is about five million and that of the United States is roughly six million. Judaism in the United States is largely liberal and enjoys general freedom of practice. In Israel, Judaism encompasses a wide spectrum of opinions and practices, ranging from liberal and even atheistic to highly conservative and traditionally religious. Some important control of government policy and daily life is in the hands of traditionalists, but for perhaps a majority of the population, Judaism is more a culture than a religion.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: A VISIT TO THE ANNE FRANK HOUSE

In high school I read the diary of Anne Frank, a teenage Jewish girl of Amsterdam who had hidden with her family and others throughout most of World War II. Her sensitive diary covers her years from age 13 to 15. In August of 1944, Nazi soldiers found the family and took them away to the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, where Anne died in March of 1945—just months before the war ended. Her father was the only family member who survived, and when he returned to Amsterdam he was given her diary, found on the floor of the house where they had hidden.

In her diary she wrote of her discovery of the beauty of nature—something she'd never appreciated before. Hiding in the attic rooms, she began to look out an upstairs window for long periods of time. One night she wrote: "the dark, rainy evening, the gale, the scudding clouds held me entirely in their power; it was the first time in a year and a half that I'd seen the night face to face."[26] Anne described having fallen in love there and her first kiss—with her friend Peter, who was also in hiding. As she described it, "suddenly the ordinary Anne slipped away and a second Anne took her place, a second Anne who is not reckless and jocular, but one who just wants to love and be gentle."[27] She wrote as well of God, religion, and belief.

During my first trip to Europe, near the end of my college years, I sought out the narrow house beside the canal in Amsterdam where Anne and her family and others had all lived in hiding. After climbing the steep, narrow stairs, I looked out through the same window that Anne had looked out many times, and I realized that the life and young intelligence that had once lived here had been so meaninglessly destroyed. As I stood there in thought, gazing through the open window, the bells of a nearby church rang out. What complex feelings, I thought, had the sound of those bells evoked in Anne and her family. As for me, I could feel only loss and emptiness.

Afterwards, when reading her diary again, I marveled at the hopefulness she expressed there, near the end of the book, and near the end of her short life: "in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart."[28]

JEWISH BELIEF

There is no official Jewish creed, but there is a set of central beliefs, first formulated by the medieval scholar Maimonides. Among them are

- Belief in God. God is one, formless, all-knowing, and eternal. God is master of the universe as its creator and judge. God is both loving and just.
- Belief in the words of the prophets.
- Belief that God gave the law to Moses.
- Belief that the Messiah, the savior to be sent by God, will come someday.
- Belief that there will be a resurrection of the good "in the world to come."

Regarding these beliefs, there is no universal agreement about the precise meaning of the Messiah, the resurrection of the good, or "the world to come." In the past, these were understood literally. The Messiah would be a heaven-sent, powerful leader who would inaugurate a new age, and at that time the deceased who had followed God's laws would come back to life. Some Jews no longer interpret these beliefs literally but see them as symbols of the ultimate triumph of goodness in the world.

Belief in personal immortality or in the resurrection of the dead has been a frequent topic of debate among Jews. Although the notions of resurrection and even of an immortal soul have been defended by many within the Jewish faith, Judaism more strongly emphasizes the kind of immortality that comes from acting virtuously in this world, living on in one's children, and leaving behind some charitable contribution to the world.

In Judaism, human beings have a special role. Because they are created in God's image, they have the ability to reason, to will, to speak, to create, and to care; and they have the responsibility to manifest these divine characteristics in the world. Jews believe that among human beings, the Jewish people have a special role—a role that some believe is to witness to the one God and to do his will in the world. Others believe that their role is to suffer for a purpose known only to God. And others have said that their role is to bring a sense of justice to a world that often has none. Although there is no agreement about *the* Jewish role, there is general consensus among Jews that they hold a unique place in this world, and there is great pride in knowing that they have contributed so much to world culture.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

To be a Jew, however, does not come only from holding a set of beliefs; it is even more a way of living. Scholars explain this by saying that Judaism is less interested in *orthodoxy* (correct belief) and far more interested in *orthopraxy* (correct practice). The Ten Commandments, of course, are at the heart of Jewish morality, and they direct behavior; but there are many additional laws and specific customs that dictate how time is to be used, what foods are to be eaten, and how prayer is to be conducted. And although Judaism promotes congregational worship, many Jewish celebrations are carried on in the home. Moving like wheels within wheels, the week, month, and year all have their devotional rhythms, established by religious laws and customs. The goal of all laws, however, is the recognition of God's presence and the sanctification of human life.

The Jewish Sabbath

Central to all forms of Judaism is keeping the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, as a special day. The Sabbath, when kept properly, is felt to sanctify the entire week. Recalling the royal rest of God after the six laborious

DEEPER INSIGHTS

What's in a Name?

Just one example of the immense cultural influence of the Hebrew Bible is evident in many commonly used names. Following are some personal names from the Hebrew Bible, along with their original meanings and places where they may be found in the Bible:

Aaron: "exalted one" (Exod. 4–6)
Abel: "breath" (Gen. 4)
Abigail: "father is rejoicing" (1 Sam. 25)
Abner: "The father is a light" (2 Sam. 2–3)
Abraham: "father of many" (Gen. 12–25)
Adam: "humankind" (Gen. 2–3)
Amos: "carried [by God]" (Amos 1–9)
Benjamin: "favorite son" (Gen. 42–44)
Caleb: "dog," meaning "faithful" (Josh. 14)
Daniel: "God is my judge" (Dan. 1–12)
David: "beloved" (2 Sam. 1–24)
Deborah: "bee" (Judg. 4–5)
Esther: "[the goddess] Ishtar" (Esther 1–9)
Ethan: "firmness" (1 Chron. 6:44)
Eve: "life" (Gen. 2–3)
Hannah: "grace" (1 Sam. 1–2)
Isaac: "laughter" (Gen. 21–35)
Isaiah: "The Lord is my salvation" (Isa. 6)
Jacob: "seizing by the heel" (Gen. 25–50)
Jared: "descent" (Gen. 5)
Jeremy: "The Lord frees" (Jer. 12–13)
Joel: "The Lord is God" (Joel 1–3)
Jonathan: "The Lord has given" (1 Sam. 20)
Joseph: "may he add" (Gen. 37–50)
Joshua: "The Lord's help" (Josh. 1–24)
Malachi: "my messenger" (Mal. 1–4)
Micah: "Who is like [God]?" (Mic. 1–7)
Michael: "Who is like God?" (Dan. 10–12)
Miriam: "rebellion" (Exod. 15)
Naomi: "my delight" (Ruth 1–4)
Nathan: "gift" (2 Sam. 12)
Noah: "rest" (Gen. 6–9)
Oprah: re-spelling of Orpah: "back of the neck" (Ruth 1)
Rachel: "ewe" (Gen. 29–35)
Rebecca: "noose" (Gen. 24)
Reuben: "behold, a son" (Gen. 37)
Ruth: "companion" (Ruth 1–4)
Samuel: "name of God" (1 Sam. 1–3)
Sarah: "princess" (Gen. 17–23)
Seth: "appointed" (Gen. 4–5)

days of creation, the Sabbath is a day of special prayer and human relaxation (see Exod. 20:11 and 31:12–17).[29] In earlier times, before watches and clocks were invented, a "day" began in the evening at sundown; thus the Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday at sunset and lasts until Saturday at sunset.

The traditional purpose of the Sabbath was a compassionate one: it was to allow everyone, even slaves and animals, regular rest. The prohibition against work has been interpreted variously over the centuries. Traditionally, fires could not be built on the Sabbath because of the labor involved; this meant that food would have to be cooked beforehand or eaten uncooked (see Exod. 35:1–3). Shops, of course, would be closed. Interpreting the requirement of rest in the modern would, some Jews will not operate light switches or kitchen stoves, nor will they drive a car or use the telephone

during the Sabbath. Although some restrictions might seem excessive, their purpose is to separate the everyday world of labor from the one day of the week in which everyone can enjoy leisure.

The Sabbath is meant to be joyous and is often remembered that way by adults who have grown up in traditional households. The Talmud recommends that the mother of the household welcome the Sabbath on Friday night by lighting candles, and it recommends that the family drink wine at the Sabbath meal as a sign of happiness. During the Jewish exile in Babylonia, synagogue study and worship became a regular way to mark the Sabbath, and today it is common for religious Jews to attend a synagogue service on Friday night or Saturday morning. Friends are often invited over to share the main Sabbath meal, and on Saturday evening the Sabbath is at last bid farewell. There is an old Jewish adage: More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, has the Sabbath kept the Jews.

Jews speak with pride of their observance of the Sabbath, pointing out that the great gift of Judaism to the world has not been the creation of a beautiful temple in physical space but rather the creation of a beautiful temple in time. Jews were once called lazy by the Romans for stopping their work one day out of every seven. But the Jewish practice has triumphed, and one day of the week is generally set aside as a day of rest throughout the world.

Holy Days

Just as the week is sanctified by the Sabbath, so the months and the entire year are sanctified by regular holy days and periods, each marked by a distinctive emotional tone—happiness, sadness, repentance, gratitude.

Before speaking of specific festivals, we must point out that the Jewish religious calendar is lunar, meaning that each month begins with the new moon. However, adjustments must be made in order to keep the lunar years in general harmony with the regular, solar calendar. Because a year of twelve lunar months lasts 354 days, one lunar year is eleven days shorter than one solar year. Therefore, in the Jewish religious calendar an extra month is added approximately every three years. The lunar months of the Jewish year thus vary somewhat, as do the holy days.

The Jewish New Year, **Rosh Hashanah,** recalls the creation of the world and occurs during autumn, in the seventh lunar month (see Lev. 23:23–24). Coming at the end of the agricultural season, this celebration allows people to consider their obligations and to pay off their debts. It is preceded by a month of daily blowing of the *shofar* (a ram's horn), which produces a solemn tone of warning to remind people that they stand before God.

Ten days later comes the most sacred day of the year, **Yom Kippur,** the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 16). To atone means to make up for one's faults, and this day has traditionally been kept by prayer and strict fasting, with no food or drink during the entire day. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called the High Holy Days, and otherwise quite secular Jews frequently keep them in some way, refraining from work or school and often attending

synagogue. The entire period is called the Days of Awe, because of the mood of solemn judgment.

Not long afterward, and complementing the Days of Awe, comes a joyful harvest celebration called **Sukkot** ("shelters," "booths"; see Deut. 16:12–15). In early days it was common for families to sleep outdoors in the

The shofar, made from a ram's horn, is blown at services during the New Year season.

fields during the autumn harvest season—which enabled them to begin work in the fields early, to stay late, and to protect what they had harvested. The small sleeping shed that was traditionally used later became part of the celebration, and eating or sleeping in the shelters came to symbolize the period of wandering in the desert, before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. Today, a shelter made of light wood (referred to in Hebrew as a *sukkah*) is set up in or near the home and is commonly decorated with branches and fruits to suggest the bounty of the earth. (The biblical description of this harvest festival helped shape the first American holiday of Thanksgiving.) The eighth day of Sukkot is called the Day of Rejoicing in the Torah (*Simhat Torah*). With readings from the end of Deuteronomy, the festival of Sukkot ends the cycle of Torah readings that began the year before. The cycle of readings can then begin again. Men carry the Torah in procession, kiss the Torah scrolls, and sometimes even dance with the scrolls to show gratitude for the guidance of the Torah.

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, is an early-winter festival full of joy. Often called the Feast of Lights, it is a welcome celebration during the growing gloom of winter. Each day, over an eight-day period, one more candle is lit on a nine-branched candelabrum—a special form of **menorah**—until, at the end of the festival, all are alight. (The ordinary menorah has seven branches.) The festival commemorates the time in 165 B.C.E. when after a period of desecration by the Syrian forces of Antiochus IV, the Second Temple was rededicated. Tradition says that oil that should have lasted only one day miraculously kept burning for eight days. Consequently, over an eight-day period, families gather in the evening, light the Hanukkah candles, and play traditional games with their children. Children also receive small gifts each night.

A late-winter feast just before spring commemorates another important event. **Purim** recalls a time when the Hebrews were in danger of annihilation in Mesopotamia, as told in the Book of Esther. When Haman, a government minister, wished to destroy the Hebrews, they were saved by Esther, the queen, and her uncle, Mordecai.[30] This happy festival is marked by the reading of the Book of Esther, by parties, and by costume plays that reenact the story.

The weeklong festival of Passover (Pesach) occurs in the first lunar month and may have originally begun as a springtime nature festival of renewal.[31] Its primary role now, however, is to recall the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt and to symbolize their liberation (see Deut. 16:1–8). The blood of the lamb killed for the Passover meal, as the Book of Exodus relates, was placed over the doors of the Hebrews (Exod. 12), thus keeping the angel of death from entering their homes while the power of God "passed over" Egypt. The most significant event of Passover is a memorial meal, the **Seder** ("order"), at which Jews eat several symbolic foods. The bread is a thin, flat bread (*matzah*), made without yeast, recalling how there was no time for bread to rise in the Hebrews' rush to leave Egypt. The meal also includes a shank bone of lamb or other animal, representing the sacrificial lamb. A salad of nuts and fruits (*haroseth*) recalls the mortar used by the Hebrews in their

The Passover Seder includes unleavened bread, wine, haroseth, and bitter herbs.

forced labor. Diners dip parsley in saltwater and eat bitter herbs to remind themselves of the suffering of the Hebrews during their oppression. During this memorial meal, the story of the exodus is retold. An additional place is set at the table for the prophet Elijah, and a cup of wine is reserved for him—actions representing the hope that he will return to earth to announce the coming of the Messiah. A delicious meal follows the ritual part of the supper. Today, many Jews invite non-Jews to share in their Seder and celebration of Jewish customs.

The Holocaust, or Shoah, is memorialized on the day of Yom Hashoah in April or May. It is a new memorial, kept in late spring, and rituals for it are still being worked out, including services in honor of those who died. The theme of the memorials is "Never again!"

The period after Passover is kept with general austerity until the summer festival of Shavuot, called the Feast of Weeks because it occurs at the end of a week of weeks—fifty days after Passover (see Deut. 16:9–12). It began as a summer grain-harvest festival. Later, Shavuot gained a special religious meaning as an invitation to renew the covenant, because it was believed that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments at this time of year.

Nine weeks after Shavuot there is a day of fasting that recalls the destruction of the two temples. Called Tisha Be-Av, this fast, and the week preceding it, have traditionally been marked by lamentations and a very serious mood; but since the creation of the state of Israel, this period of solemnity is not as widely observed.

The month before Rosh Hashanah is marked by the daily blowing of the shofar, and with Rosh Hashanah the religious year begins anew.

Jewish Dietary Practices

From its earliest biblical origins, Judaism has valued cleanliness and care regarding food. What were once basic rules of hygiene developed into rules about ritual purity. In recent centuries, some Jews have relaxed their observance of certain dietary rules, keeping them to a greater or lesser degree as they think suitable and according to the branch of Judaism to which they belong.

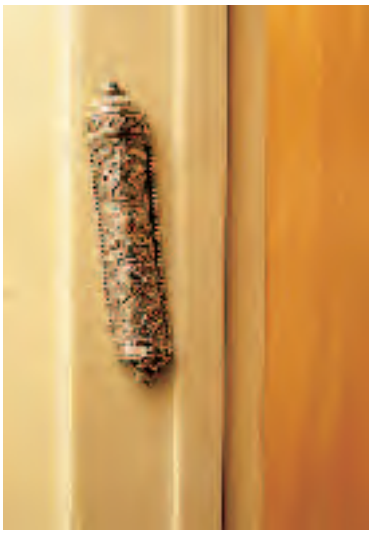
One of the basic tenets of traditional Jewish dietary practice is that food consumption and food handling be done according to religious laws. The term **kosher** (Hebrew: *kasher*) means "ritually correct" and particularly applies to food preparation and consumption. In regard to meat, all blood must be drained before the meat is cooked and eaten, because blood, which gives life, is sacred to God. In temple services, blood was offered on the altar separately from the rest of the sacrificed animal, and only meat without blood could be eaten by the priests and sharers in the sacred meal (see Lev. 17). This rule also ensured that animals that had died in the field or were killed by larger animals—carcasses that might be unsafe to eat—could not be consumed (see Exod. 22:31). In practice, there are very specific methods of kosher slaughter, inspection, and preservation.

Pork and shellfish are forbidden (see Lev. 11), probably because these animals were considered scavengers and thus easily contaminated by what they ate. (Pork sometimes contains a parasite, *Trichinella spiralis,* which can be killed only by cooking at high temperatures.)[32] For traditional Jews, meat and dairy products may not be mixed or eaten together at the same meal. This also means that a household that "keeps kosher" must maintain separate sets of cooking implements, pans, dishes, and utensils—one for meat and one for dairy products. Some households even have separate sinks and refrigerators. These practices derive from a rule of uncertain origin that forbids the cooking of a baby goat or lamb in its mother's milk (Exod. 34:26). It is possible the practice was forbidden for being cruel; some fetal animals, cut from the womb before birth, were considered tender delicacies. The practice of cooking a kid in its mother's milk may also have been associated with non-Hebrew religious practice and therefore forbidden.

Marc Chagall's 1914 *Rabbi of Vitebsk* shows a Russian rabbi deep in prayer, expressing an almost shamanistic intensity.

Other Religious Practices

Regular daily prayer is practiced by devout Jews at dawn, noon, and dusk, and private prayer is often done at bedtime as well. When



Devout Jews place a mezuzah, containing words from the Torah, beside their doors and touch it reverently when they enter.

they pray in the morning during the week, traditionalist males use the **tefillin,** or *phylacteries,* which are two small boxes containing scriptural passages; one is attached to the forehead by leather straps tied around the head, and the other is attached to the upper left arm by straps wound down around the arm and hand. They signify quite literally that God's law is in the mind and heart of the person at prayer (see Deut 6:8). The **talit** (a prayer shawl)—usually white, with dark stripes and fringes—covers the man's head and body during prayer and signifies humility in the sight of God. In less traditional forms of Judaism, the prayer shawl is sometimes not used, but men wear the skullcap (*kippah* in Hebrew and **yarmulke** in Yiddish, the old language of eastern European Jews). Devout males sometimes express their reverence before God during their waking hours by covering their heads continually with a skullcap.

Remembrance of God is also assisted by the presence of a *mezuzah,* which is placed on the doorpost of the entrance to a home and sometimes on the doorposts of interior rooms (see Deut. 6:9). Like the tefillin, the mezuzah is a small container that holds scriptural words; it can be touched upon entering the house or room. Unlike the tefillin, it is used even by secular Jews.

Perhaps because sexuality and the origin of life are considered especially sacred, Judaism has a number of practices relating to them. Eight days after birth, when a male receives his name, he is circumcised—the foreskin of the boy's penis is cut off by a specialist. The ceremony recalls God's covenant with the Hebrew people (see Gen. 17 and Lev. 12:3). The origin of the practice of circumcision in Judaism is uncertain. It began possibly as a health measure, to prevent infection commonly brought about by hot climates; but it is also possible that circumcision began as a way of recognizing divine control over sex and generation. Males mark puberty with a coming-of-age ceremony at age 13, when a young man legally becomes an adult, or "son of the commandment" (**bar mitzvah**).

In some branches of Judaism, girls age 12 to 18 are honored in a coming-of-age ceremony, called a *bat mitzvah.* For women, menstruation and childbirth have also been considered special times, celebrated with a ritual bath (*mikvah*) and purification.

Although in ancient days priests on duty in the temple and soldiers in the field were expected to be temporarily celibate, sex has been viewed positively in Judaism. With the exception of the Essenes, Jews have honored marriage and considered children a major goal of life (see Gen. 1:28 and 12:2).

DIVISIONS WITHIN CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

We find in Judaism both cultural differences and differences in the observance of traditional rules. Some commentators, as a result, talk not of "Judaism" but of "Judaisms."

Culturally Based Divisions

The great ethnic diversity among Jews has resulted in a number of cultural divisions within Judaism. It is important to understand these divisions in order to appreciate the richness of Judaism, as well as the challenges that face Israel, where members of these groups have come to live together.

Sephardic Jews The name *Sephardic* comes from a mythic land of Sephar (or Sepharad), once thought to exist in the distant west of Israel and often identified with Spain. After the Roman victories over the Jews in Israel (70 and 135 C.E.), Jews emigrated from Israel and settled in lands far away. Southern

This Sephardic synagogue is located in Yangon, Myanmar, far from the area ordinarily associated with the diaspora and Jewish emigration. Although the synagogue has no rabbi today, it is maintained as if a rabbi will arrive at any moment.

Spain particularly became a center of flourishing Jewish life, especially under Muslim rule, but this ended with the expulsion of the Muslims and Jews by the Christian rulers in 1492 C.E. Sephardic Jews (**Sephardim**) carried their language and culture to Morocco, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region, as well as to Holland and England. The common language of the Sephardic Jews, termed Ladino in recognition of its ultimate derivation from Latin, was a type of Spanish mixed with Hebrew words and often written in Hebrew characters. Sephardic Jews lived in significant numbers in Morocco until recent times, when most emigrated to Israel. More than half of the Jews of Israel are of Sephardic background.

Ashkenazic Jews The name *Ashkenazic* comes from Ashkenaz, a descendant of Noah who settled in a distant northern land (see Gen. 10:3). The term **Ashkenazim** refers to those Jews who at one time lived in or came from central Europe. A very large population of Jews flourished for centuries in Poland, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, and Hungary, and before the Holocaust three million Jews lived in Poland alone, where sometimes entire towns (called *shtetls*) were Jewish. The origin of Ashkenazic Judaism is unclear, but the most common opinion is that it arose when Jews migrated from France and other countries of western Europe to central Europe, after 1000 C.E.

The common language of central European Judaism was Yiddish ("Jewish"), a medieval form of German mixed with Hebrew words and written in Hebrew characters. While it flourished, Ashkenazic Judaism produced a rich culture of books, stories, songs, and theater in Yiddish. Ashkenazic culture virtually ended in Europe with the Holocaust, but Yiddish language and culture lived on in the United States, Canada, and Israel, and although they once seemed to be rapidly declining, there are recent signs of revival. Yiddish-speaking culture has contributed Yiddish words and ideas to American life. (For example, television has made popular the Yiddish terms *shlemiel* and *shlemozzel*—names for two types of laughable characters. The first term comes from the name Samuel.) Yiddish literature is now being translated into many languages.

Other Jewish Cultures A mysterious form of Judaism exists in Africa among the Falashas of Ethiopia. The Falashas practice a religion that accepts as canonical only the five books of the Torah—a sign that Ethiopian Judaism could be quite ancient. Judaism also established itself in a small community on the western coast of India, though today it is very small. Distinctive Jewish cultures also exist in Yemen, Iraq, and elsewhere.

Observance-Based Divisions

Within Judaism today, divisions also exist based on variations in religious observance. Although some Jews have held to traditional practices, other branches have developed out of the conviction that Judaism will stay vital

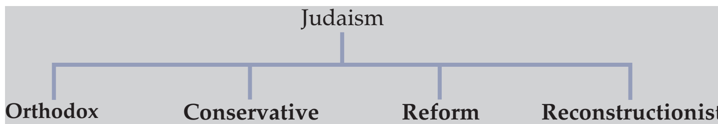


FIGURE 8.2 Observance-based branches of Judaism.

only if it reinterprets its traditions. Four branches have emerged. We begin with the most traditional and move to the least traditional, although the branches did not emerge in this order.

Orthodox Judaism Traditional Judaism is often called **Orthodox** (Figure 8.2), but we might recall that until the Reform movement began, there was no need to give a special name to traditional Judaism, because all Jews were traditional in belief and practice. In a sense, Orthodox Judaism came into being only after the Reform began, and as a response to it. When we use the term *Orthodox* to refer to traditional Jews, we should also recognize the great variety among Orthodox Jews—particularly regarding social and political positions. Some, termed *integrationists,* seek to play a role in civil society, while others, called *separatists,* want to live their traditional lifestyle apart from society. Orthodox Jews also differ in their support for the state of Israel and the need for secular education.

With this said, we can describe Orthodoxy as a branch of Judaism committed to retaining traditional practice and belief. Some specific practices follow.

- Orthodox synagogues separate males and females, with females often sitting in an upstairs gallery.
- For a service to take place, there must be a quorum (*minyan*) of ten Jewish males.
- Services are conducted completely in Hebrew and led by male rabbis.
- Only males may celebrate the coming-of-age ceremony (bar mitzvah).
- Men at prayer use the talit and at weekday morning prayer use the tefillin.
- Males must keep their heads covered (with the skullcap, prayer shawl, or hat) as a reminder that God is above all.
- Social roles (especially among ultra-Orthodox Jews) are strictly separate. Men are the breadwinners of the family, and women are responsible for running the household.
- The hair of the beard and in front of the ears is sometimes left uncut by males, in response to a command in the Torah (Lev. 19:27).
- Some Orthodox Jewish males (and particularly those affiliated with a specific Hasidic community) also wear a style of dress that developed in central Europe during the nineteenth century—a black hat and black coat (originally a beaver-skin hat and a black smock).
- Orthodox women who are married sometimes cover their heads with a kerchief when outside the home. The hair is covered as an expression of modesty, because a woman's hair is considered to be seductive to men.
- The Orthodox household keeps strictly the traditional laws about diet.

- Orthodox Jews closely follow rules that prohibit any manual labor on the Sabbath. Cooking is not allowed, nor is driving a car, walking long distances, dialing a telephone, or even turning on an electric light.

Outsiders might consider the strictness of this lifestyle burdensome. But the Orthodox themselves—particularly those who have been raised as Orthodox—say that it is not difficult. They say that it is even fulfilling, because every waking moment is consciously devoted to the worship of God.

In continental Europe, Orthodox Judaism was nearly destroyed by the Nazis. In Israel, although only a tenth of the population can be considered traditionalist or Orthodox, that segment has considerable political power. In the United States, Orthodoxy constitutes a small minority among those who practice Judaism, but it has gained recognition and visibility particularly through the efforts of Hasidic communities.

Conservative Judaism For some Jews, the European movement for reform seemed too radical. **Conservative Judaism** traces its origins back

A young woman marks her bat mitzvah by reading aloud from the Torah.

to Germany, but it took strong root in the United States among Jews who desired moderate change that was coupled with a protection of beloved traditions, such as the use of Hebrew in services. Thus this branch of Judaism accepts change, but it uses study and discussion to guide change carefully. In the United States, almost half of all practicing Jews belong to this branch.

Reform Judaism Reform Judaism began in Germany out of a desire of some Jews to leave ghetto life completely and enter the mainstream of European culture. An early influence on this movement was Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), a major thinker and writer. Mendelssohn, although he was not a Reform Jew, helped shape Reform and Orthodox Judaism. He argued for religious tolerance, held that Judaism could be combined with civil culture, and embraced many of the ideals of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century—human dignity, equality, individual liberty, democracy, secular education, and the development of science. These ideals brought radical changes in the Jewish circles that espoused them, because in the name of reform, every traditional Jewish belief and practice could be questioned.

The result has been that in Reform synagogue worship, women and men do not sit separately, services are conducted in both the native language and Hebrew, choirs and organ music are common, and use of the talit and tefillin has either been dropped or made optional. Traditional ways of dressing, common among the Orthodox, have disappeared. Perhaps more important, equality is espoused for men and women. As a result, women may become rabbis, and girls have coming-of-age ceremonies in which each becomes a "daughter of the commandment" (bat mitzvah).

Reconstructionist Judaism This newest and smallest branch of Judaism grew out of the thought of its founder, Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983), a Lithuanian who came to the United States as a child. Kaplan was influenced by the American ideals of democracy and practicality. As a leader in the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, Kaplan promoted a secular vision that encourages Jews to become familiar with as many elements of traditional Judaism as possible but that allows them the freedom of individual interpretation. Elements of belief that traditional Jews interpret literally (such as angels, prophecy, revealed law, and the Messiah) are taken as useful symbols by **Reconstructionism;** even the notion of God is seen from a pragmatic viewpoint as "the Power which makes me follow ever higher ideals."[33] Instead of searching for a minimum number of beliefs and practices that are the unchanging essence of Judaism, Reconstructionism sees Judaism as a changing cultural force, with many elements and manifestations. Judaism, in this view, is a whole civilization "which expresses itself . . . in literature, art, music, even cuisine. It never stands still but evolves."[34]

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Eco-Judaism

Because it emphasizes ethical living, Judaism has always had basic principles that address how humanity should appropriately relate to the environment. The Hebrew scriptures, however, were written long before caring for the global environment became a pressing issue. In an effort to update their faith's vision of ecological wisdom, contemporary Jews concerned with the environment have revisited traditional biblical sources.

The Hebrew scriptures offer two stories of value for environmentalists. The first is the story of Adam and Eve, designated by God to protect the Garden of Eden. The second is the story of Noah and the Great Flood. By collecting pairs of animals in his ark, Noah saved these animals (and their offspring) from extinction. As such, the modern environmentalist could regard Adam and Eve and Noah as the first defenders of plant and animal species.

The Hebrew scriptures also provide important passages that show a divine hand in creation and preach respect for nature, especially for plants and animals. The Book of Genesis ends the tale of creation by saying that God saw that the universe he created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Psalm 19 begins by saying, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth declares his handiwork," and Psalm 104 is a hymn praising the beauties of nature. Offering specific rules, the Book of Deuteronomy says that even in wartime, fruit trees must not be destroyed (Deut. 20:19). The Bible also shows concern for the sustainable use of land and animals for agriculture. In order for land to restore its minerals and nutrients, scripture recommends that it lie fallow once every seven years (Lev. 25:3–4), and animals are to be given rest on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:10).

Contemporary Jews express an increasing concern for the environment. The Sephardic and Ashkenazic chief rabbis of Israel have issued statements calling for greater respect for the land. Israel is working to protect the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. (The Jordan River is being rapidly drained by agriculture in Syria, Jordan, and Israel, and this in turn is leading to the depletion of the Dead Sea.) Several Israeli *kibbutzim* (communes) grow organic fruits and vegetables. In England and the United States, Jewish groups are working for the preservation of wetlands, the establishment of recycling centers, and the inclusion of environmental education in Jewish schools.

Borrowing biblical language, modern Israeli environmentalist Moshe Kornfeld has reinterpreted God's commands for the modern world. According to Kornfeld, the Lord tells us today that

> You shall reduce, reuse, and recycle with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your resources. And concern for the planet that I command you today shall be upon your hearts. And you shall teach sustainability to your children and speak of it frequently: when you sit in your energy-star-rated home, or when you ride your bike to work, when you go to sleep and when you wake up. And you shall have a non-disposable mug as a sign on your hand and an organic cotton hat to shade your eyes.[35]

JEWISH IDENTITY AND THE FUTURE OF JUDAISM

Judaism today is particularly concerned with two great questions, which are inescapably linked. What is essential to being a Jew? Will Judaism survive?

Appreciating the cultural and religious divisions among Jews demonstrates how difficult it is today to define what makes a Jew. Three hundred years ago, the question of identity was nonexistent, because Jews were those people who practiced traditional Judaism. Now, however, Jewish identity is no longer so easy to ascertain. Although Orthodox Judaism holds that a person is born a Jew if his or her mother is Jewish, this does not address the matter of practice, and today there are many nonobservant Jews. A person may also convert to Judaism. However, some Orthodox rabbis have refused

Jerusalem's Western Wall, all that remains of the Temple of Herod, and the Dome of the Rock, one of Islam's oldest buildings, are separated by only a few hundred feet. Yet they are worlds apart. Resolving the intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is a key to the future of Judaism.

to accept conversions to non-Orthodox branches of Judaism. Judaism is certainly a religion, but there is great disagreement about the essentials of belief and practice, and many people consider themselves Jews even though they do not practice the religion.

Furthermore, any attempt to define a Jew as a person belonging to a single culture or ethnic group is virtually impossible. Jews are as ethnically diverse as they are ideologically diverse, a fact that becomes quite clear when one visits Israel. Although there is as yet no clear answer to the question of Jewish identity, the topic becomes more important as Jews increasingly intermarry with non-Jews.

The history of Judaism has been marked by displacement and disasters. In the past century, nearly a third of the world's Jewish population was destroyed. Nevertheless, Jewish history has also been marked by the will to endure. The resilience of Judaism has in large part resided in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and environments. This ability suggests that in the decades ahead, Judaism will again take new forms and gain new life.

READING

BLESSING THE SABBATH CANDLES

Bella Chagall, wife of the artist Marc Chagall, wrote about the Sabbath as practiced during her childhood in a traditional Jewish home. The Sabbath begins when the mother of the house blesses candles and prays for the family.

With a match in her hand she lights one candle after another. All the seven candles begin to quiver. The flames blaze into mother's face. As though an enchantment were falling upon her, she lowers her eyes. Slowly, three times in succession, she encircles the candles with both her arms; she seems to be taking

them into her heart. And with the candles her weekday worries melt away.

She blesses the candles. She whispers quiet benedictions through her fingers and they add heat to the flames. Mother's hands over the candles shine like the tablets of the Decalogue over the Holy ark.

. . . I hear mother in her benedictions mention now one name, now another. She mentions father, the children, her own father and mother. Now my own name has fallen into the flames of the candles. My throat is hot.

"May the Highest One give them his blessing!" concludes mother, dropping her hands at last.[36]

TEST YOURSELF

1. The destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. brought about the end of the _____ ceremonial religion of Israel.
   a. temple-based
   b. polytheistic
   c. rabbinical
   d. patriarchal
2. The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections: _____.
   a. Rig, Yajur, Atharva
   b. Adam, Eve, Noah
   c. Genesis, Exodus, Numbers
   d. Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim
3. _____ is the first Hebrew patriarch. God entered into a solemn covenant with him, which involved a promise of land, protection, and descendants.
   a. Abraham
   b. Noah
   c. Isaiah
   d. Genesis
4. In a story from Genesis, Jacob wrestles all night long with a mysterious stranger—God or God's Angel. At dawn, the fight is over, and Jacob receives from the stranger a new name, _____, which means "wrestles with God."
   a. Judah
   b. Israel
   c. Joseph
   d. Noah
5. In Hebrew, the name for God, usually associated with the verb *hayah* ("to be"), is commonly written _____.
   a. Baal
   b. Adonai
   c. Yahweh
   d. Adam
6. The Babylonian _____ contains legal material and nonlegal anecdotes and tales.
   a. Ketuvim
   b. Talmud
   c. Torah
   d. Testament
7. In eighteenth-century central Europe, Jewish traditionalism expressed itself in both Talmudic scholarship and the devotional movement _____ ("devotion," "piety").
   a. Hasidism
   b. Sephardim
   c. Conservative Judaism
   d. Essene
8. By the end of World War II, an estimated six million Jews had been killed. This immense loss is called the _____ (Greek: "completely burned") or *Shoah* (Hebrew: "extermination").
   a. Diaspora
   b. Midrash
   c. Holocaust
   d. Purim
9. Traditional Judaism is often called _____ Judaism.
   a. Reform
   b. Orthodox
   c. Reconstructionist
   d. Sephardic
10. _____, the newest and smallest branch of Judaism, grew out of the thought of its founder, Mordecai Kaplan.
    a. Reconstructionist Judaism
    b. Reform Judaism
    c. Conservative Judaism
    d. Kabbalah

11. Consider the following statement: "The concept that seems to be emphasized most strongly throughout the Hebrew Bible is that God wants his followers to devote themselves to him and him alone." Using instances from the Hebrew Bible stories discussed in this chapter, do you agree or disagree with this statement? If you disagree, what do you think is the most strongly emphasized concept in the Hebrew Bible?
12. Of the many differences between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, which two do you think would cause the strongest disagreement between these branches? Using examples from the chapter, explain why you think these differences cause so much disagreement.

RESOURCES

Books

Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses.* New York: Norton, 2004. A new translation of the Pentateuch by an eminent scholar.

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. Ballantine Books, 1994. A book that shows how the concept of God has evolved over the centuries and how monotheism has been influenced by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Bellis, Alice. *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. Westminster, MD: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994. Feminist interpretations of popular stories about women in the Hebrew Bible.

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl—the Definitive Edition.* New York: Doubleday, 1995. The unexpurgated diary of a young Jewish girl who hid with her family in Holland during World War II.

Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Rev. ed. New York: Washington Square Press, 1997. A two-part book that describes the author's horrifying experiences in several concentration camps and then gives his reflections on the human need for meaning.

Friedman, Richard E. *The Bible with Sources Revealed.* San Francisco: Harper, 2003. A clear explanation of the origin of the Torah.

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, ed. *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories.* New York: Schocken, 2004. Thoughts about the Torah, given from the perspective of women by female rabbis.

Grossman, David. *The Yellow Wind.* (With a new afterword by the author.) New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux/Picador, 2002. Powerful reflections on the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.

Leegant, Joan. *An Hour in Paradise.* New York: Norton, 2003. Ten stories, rooted in Judaism, about unusual people in many places.

Steinsaltz, Rabbi Adin. *A Guide to Jewish Prayer.* New York: Schocken, 2002. A definitive examination of Jewish prayer by a great Jewish Talmudic scholar.

Yehoshua, A. B. *The Lover.* New York: Harcourt Brace/Harvest, 1993. An acclaimed novel by an Israeli writer, exploring the tensions of Israeli life.

Film/TV

Bill Moyer's Genesis: A Living Conversation. (PBS.) A ten-part series that examines the influence of the stories in Genesis on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and world literature.

Eye of the Storm: Jerusalem's Temple Mount. (Films Media Group.) An array of perspectives on the world's most contested site—sacred ground for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Heritage: Civilization and the Jews. (PBS.) A documentary on the history of the Jewish people from biblical times to the present.

The Jewish Americans. (Director David Grubin; PBS.) A miniseries that chronicles the lives and contributions of Jewish Americans from colonial times to the present.

Judaism: Bar Mitzvah Boys. (Films Media Group.) A look at the Jewish rite of passage for 13-year-old boys.

The Ten Commandments. (Director Cecil B. DeMille; Paramount.) The classic film version of the story of Moses, starring Charlton Heston as the Egyptian Prince who becomes the leader of the Hebrews.

Trembling Before G-d. (Director Sandi Simcha Dubowski; New Yorker Video.) An award-winning documentary examining the personal stories of gay Orthodox Jews who struggle to reconcile their sexual orientation with their faith in traditional Judaism, which forbids homosexuality.

Yentl. (Director Barbra Streisand; MGM.) The story of a girl, played by Barbra Streisand, who wished to be a rabbi.

Music/Audio

Cantorials for the High Holidays: Roshashona and Yom Kippur. (Smithsonian Folkways.) A recording of Hebrew prayers sung during the High Holy Days.

Legendary Cantors. (Nimbus Records.) A collection of traditional Jewish liturgical music, sung by the leading cantors of the first half of the twentieth century.

Religious Music of the Falashas. (Smithsonian Folkways.) A recording of the religious music of the Jews of Ethiopia.

Sacred Chants of the Contemporary Synagogue. (Bari Productions.) A recording of mezzo-soprano Rebecca Garfein's groundbreaking performance as the first female cantor to sing in a German synagogue; it includes songs and prayers in Hebrew and Yiddish.

Thank God It's Friday! The Music of Shabbat. (Vox.) A compilation of music for the Jewish Shabbat, including traditional music and works by Samuel Cohen, Louis Lewandowski, and Felix Mendelssohn.

Internet

The Jewish Virtual Library: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/index.html. A comprehensive online Jewish encyclopedia, with more than 13,000 articles and 6,000 photographs and maps; major subject headings include history, women, the Holocaust, travel, maps, politics, biography, Israel, and religion.

Judaism 101: http://www.jewfaq.org/index.htm. An online encyclopedia of Judaism, with sections devoted to beliefs, people, places, things, language, scripture, holidays, practices, and customs.

Navigating the Bible II: http://bible.ort.org/intro1.asp?lang=1. Intended as an online tutor for the bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah ceremony, a Web site that includes key passages from the Hebrew Bible in the original Hebrew with audio recordings, translations, and commentary.

KEY TERMS

Ashkenazim (*ash-ken-ah'-zeem*): Jews who lived in or came from central Europe.

bar (bat) mitzvah: "Son (daughter) of the commandment" (Aramaic); the coming-of-age ceremony that marks the time when a young person is considered a legal adult within the Jewish community.

biblical Judaism: Judaism before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.).

Canaan (*kay'-nun*): An ancient name for the land of Israel.

Conservative Judaism: A branch of Judaism that attempts to blend the best of old and new Judaism.

covenant: A contract; the contract between the Hebrews and their God, Yahweh.

diaspora (*dai-as'-po-rah*): The dispersion of Jews beyond Israel, particularly to Persia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean region.

Essenes: A reclusive semimonastic Jewish group that flourished from c. 150 B.C.E. to 68 C.E.

Hanukkah (*ha'-nuk-kah*): An early-winter festival recalling the rededication of the Second Temple, celebrated with the lighting of candles for eight days.

Holocaust: he destruction of European Judaism by the Nazis; also known as Shoah (Hebrew: "extermination").

Kabbalah (*kab-bah'-luh* or *kab'-bah-luh*): "Received," "handed down"; the whole body of Jewish mystical literature.

Ketuvim (*ke-tu-veem'*): "Writings"; the third section of the Hebrew scriptures, consisting primarily of poetry, proverbs, and literary works.

kosher (*koh'-shur*): "Ritually correct"; refers particularly to food preparation and food consumption.

menorah (*me-noh'-ruh*): A candelabrum usually containing seven—and occasionally nine—branches, used for religious celebrations.

Messiah (*mes-sai'-uh*): A savior figure to be sent by God, awaited by the Jews (see Dan. 7:13–14).

midrash (*mid'-rash*): "Search"; rabbinical commentary on the scriptures and oral law.

Nevi'im (*ne-vee-eem'*): "Prophets"; the second section of the Hebrew scriptures, made up of historical and prophetic books.

Orthodox Judaism: The most traditional branch of Judaism.

Passover (**Pesach**): A joyful spring festival that recalls the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt and freedom from oppression.

Pharisees: A faction during the Second Temple period that emphasized the observance of biblical rules.

prophet: A person inspired by God to speak for him.

Purim (*poo'-reem*): A joyous festival in early spring that recalls the Jews' being saved from destruction, as told in the Book of Esther.

rabbi (*rab'-bai*): A religious teacher; a Jewish minister.

rabbinical Judaism: Judaism that developed after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.).

Reconstructionism: A modern liberal branch of Judaism that emphasizes the cultural aspects of Judaism.

Reform: A movement beginning in the nineteenth century that questioned and modernized Judaism; a liberal branch of Judaism.

Rosh Hashanah (*rosh ha-sha'-nah*): "Beginning of the year"; the celebration of the Jewish New Year, occurring in the seventh lunar month.

Sabbath: "Rest"; the seventh day of the week (Saturday), a day of prayer and rest from work.

Sadducees (*sad'-dyu-sees*)**:** A priestly faction, influential during the Second Temple period.

Seder (*say'-dur*): "Order"; a special ritual meal at Passover, recalling the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt.

Sephardim (*se-far'-deem*): Jews of Spain, Morocco, and the Mediterranean region.

Sukkot (*soo-koht'*): "Booths"; a festival in the late autumn that recalls the Jews' period of wandering in the desert after their exodus from Egypt.

talit (*tah'-lit*): A prayer shawl worn by devout males.

Talmud (*tahl'-mood*): An encyclopedic commentary on the Hebrew scriptures.

Tanakh (*ta-nak'*): The complete Hebrew scriptures, made up of the Torah, Prophets (Nevi'im), and Writings (Ketuvim).

tefillin (*te-fil'-in*): Phylacteries; two small boxes containing biblical passages that are worn by Orthodox males on their head and left arm at morning prayer during the week.

theophany (*thee-ah'-fuh-nee*): A revelation or appearance of God.

Torah (*toh'-rah*): "Teaching," "instruction"; the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures; also, the additional instructions of God, believed by many to have been transmitted orally from Moses through a succession of teachers and rabbis.

Western Wall: The foundation stones of the western wall of the last temple of Jerusalem, today a place of prayer.

yarmulke (*yar'-mool-kah*): The skullcap worn by devout males.

Yom Kippur (*yohm kip-puhr'*): Day of Atonement, the most sacred day of the Jewish year.

Zealots: An anti-Roman, nationalistic Jewish faction, active during the Roman period of control over Israel.

Zionism: A movement that has encouraged the creation and support of the nation of Israel.

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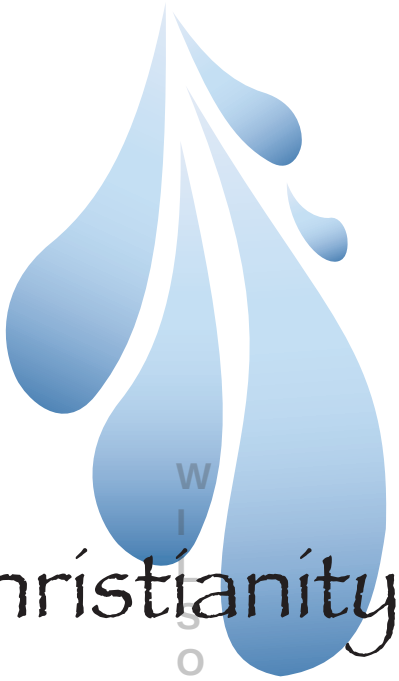
CHAPTER 9



Christianity

WILSON, JAMES 5951B3

FIRST ENCOUNTER

You have come to Egypt to see its great sights: the Nile River, the pyramids of Giza, and the temples of Luxor. In front of your hotel in Cairo, near the Egyptian Museum, you arrange with a taxi driver to take you to the pyramids late one afternoon. The traffic is slow and the horn blowing incessant. From the window you see a donkey pulling a cart full of metal pipes, a woman carrying a tray of bread on her head, a boy carrying a tray of coffee cups, and an overloaded truck full of watermelons, all competing for space with dusty old cars and shiny black limousines.

Your taxi driver is Gurgis, a middle-aged man with a short gray beard and a kind manner. He drives with the windows open and chats with drivers in other taxis along the way. As you near the pyramids, he says, "If you wait till dusk, you can see the sound-and-light show. Tourists love the green laser lights on the pyramids. I can eat my supper at Giza and take you back afterwards." This sounds like an experience not to be missed. You agree.

You'd thought that the pyramids were far outside the city in the lonely desert, but now they

are just beyond a Pizza Hut, a bridal shop, and blocks of shops and apartments. Apparently, the city of Cairo swallowed up the desert some time ago.

When the light show is over, it's hard to believe that in that huge crowd surging out you will find Gurgis. Luckily, he finds you. "Come, hurry," he says, and whisks you away. On the trip back across the river, you ask about his background.

"I'm a Copt," he says—an Egyptian Christian—"and I'm named after St. George." To verify what he's telling you, Gurgis holds up his left arm. In the dim light you see a little blue cross tattooed on the inside of his wrist. Before long, you learn about his birthplace (in Alexandria) and his relatives (in Saskatchewan). He tells you about Coptic Christianity.

"It is very old. The first bishop was St. Mark, who wrote the gospel. Our patriarch, Pope Shenouda, follows him in a long line of patriarchs. We Copts are only about 10 percent of the population in Egypt, but our Church is strong." Noting your interest, he tells you about other places you might like to go. He offers to take you to the old Coptic section of Cairo. "It's along the Nile, not very far from your hotel," he says by way of encouragement. You agree to meet in front of your hotel on Friday morning.

On Friday you visit three churches. There's a lot going on, because it is Good Friday, and all of the churches, already surprisingly crowded with worshipers, will be filled in a few hours for special services. Inside one church, a priest stands in front of the doors to the sanctuary, apparently explaining something to a crowd of listeners. At the last church you visit, you see a painting outside of Mary and Jesus on a donkey. Gurgis explains that the church marks the spot where the family of Jesus stayed when they visited Egypt. You are doubtful, but in the basement of the church, a large sign confirms what he tells you.

As you walk along the old street, heading out of the Coptic quarter, Gurgis tells you more about Copts. "The original Christian hermits were Copts," he says with pride. "Our pope was a monk once, and he has energized monastic life out in the desert. Now he is even sending priests and monks to your country, too. I know there are some in New Jersey."

Back at the entrance to your hotel, Gurgis makes another offer. Sunday he will be going to a Eucharistic service at St. Mark's Cathedral. "Pope Shenouda will be there. The service will be very long, but it is beautiful. Would you like to go?"

"Wonderful," you say. "But let's sit near the door."

"Fine," he says. "There is more air there."

On Sunday you and Gurgis drive to an immense domed church behind a gate. Large men in dark-blue suits, looking like bodyguards, stand along the walkway into the church. Inside, a huge purple curtain hangs in front of the main sanctuary doors. It has a winged lion sewn onto it. "That represents St. Mark," Gurgis whispers. At the left of the sanctuary is a thronelike wooden chair. "That is the pope's chair, the throne of St. Mark."

DEEPER INSIGHTS

The Christian System of Chronology: B.C. and A.D.

The influence of Christianity is apparent in the European dating system, which has now generally been adopted worldwide. The Roman Empire had dated events from the foundation of Rome (753 B.C.E.), but a new system was devised by a Christian monk, Dionysius Exiguus (Dennis the Little; c. 470–540 C.E.). The new system made the birth of Jesus the central event of history. Thus we have "B.C.," meaning "before Christ," and "A.D.," Latin for "in the year of the Lord," *anno Domini*. The date selected as the year of Jesus' birth may have been incorrect, and scholars now think that Jesus was born about 4 B.C.E. (The historical facts given in Matt. 2:1 and Luke 2:2 about the year of Jesus' birth are not compatible.) Also, the new dating system began not with the year zero but with the year one because there is no zero in Roman numerals. Because of the Christian orientation of this dating system, many books (including this one) now use a slightly altered abbreviation: "B.C.E.," meaning "before the common era," and "C.E.," meaning "common era."

The Eucharistic service begins, with incense and singing. There is no organ, but the choir uses small drums and cymbals. It is the Lord's Supper, but in a form you'd never seen before. At times you can only hear the priests, because the sanctuary doors are periodically closed and you can no longer see the altar. The service ends with communion. Through it all, the people—men on the left side, women on the right—are amazingly devout.

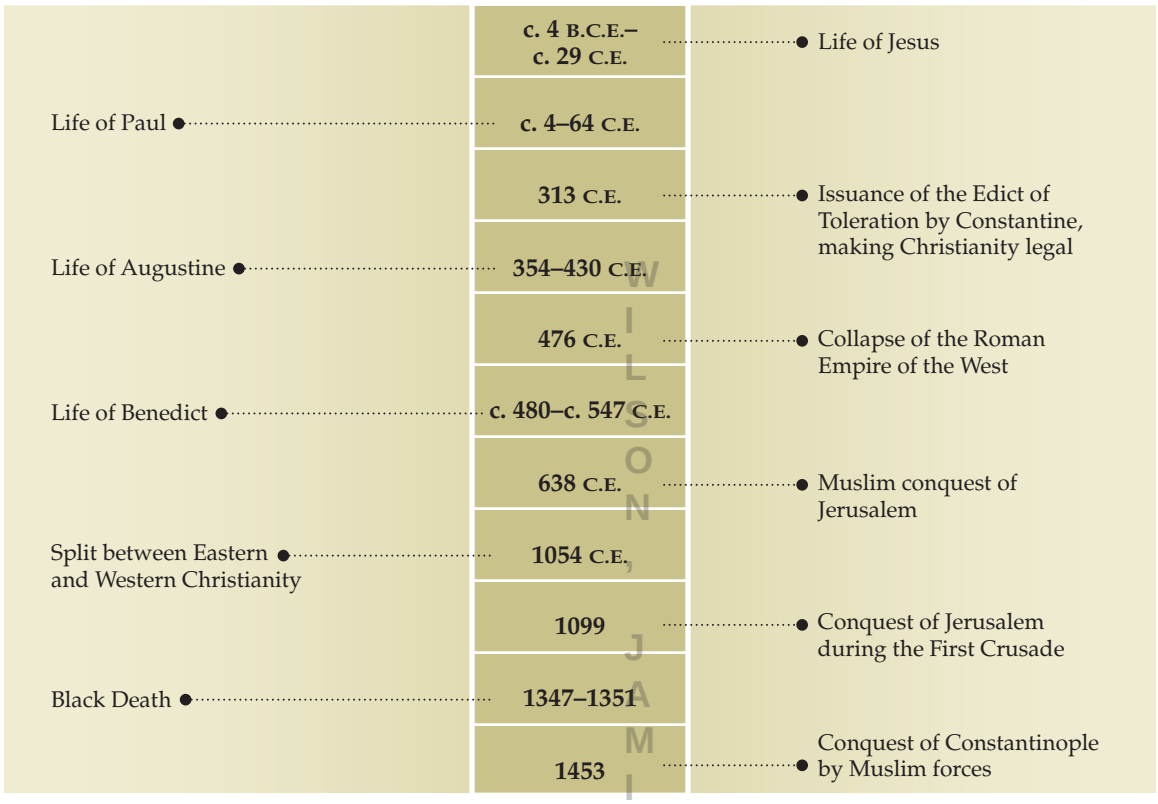
Back in your hotel, you think about what you have seen and heard. You know that the Lord's Supper has something to do with the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. But what about the incense and the cymbals? How did the rituals originate? And how did monks and hermits come about in Christianity? You had heard of a pope in Rome, but never one in Egypt. How did this other pope originate? What thoughts, you wonder, would Jesus have if he were with you today? And finally, what will be the future of this Egyptian Church—and, in this changing world, of Christianity itself?

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Christianity, which grew out of Judaism, has had a major influence on the history of the world. Before we discuss its growth and influence, we must look at the life of Jesus, who is considered its originator, and at the early scriptural books that speak of his life.

Before Jesus' birth, the land of Israel had been taken over repeatedly by stronger neighbors. During Jesus' time, Israel was called Palestine by the Romans and was part of the Roman Empire—but not willingly. The region was full of unrest, a boiling pot of religious and political factions and movements. As we discussed in Chapter 8, patriots wanted to expel the Romans. The Sadducees, a group of priests in Jerusalem, kept up the Jewish temple rituals, while accepting the Roman occupation as inevitable. Members of a semimonastic movement, the Essenes, lived an austere life

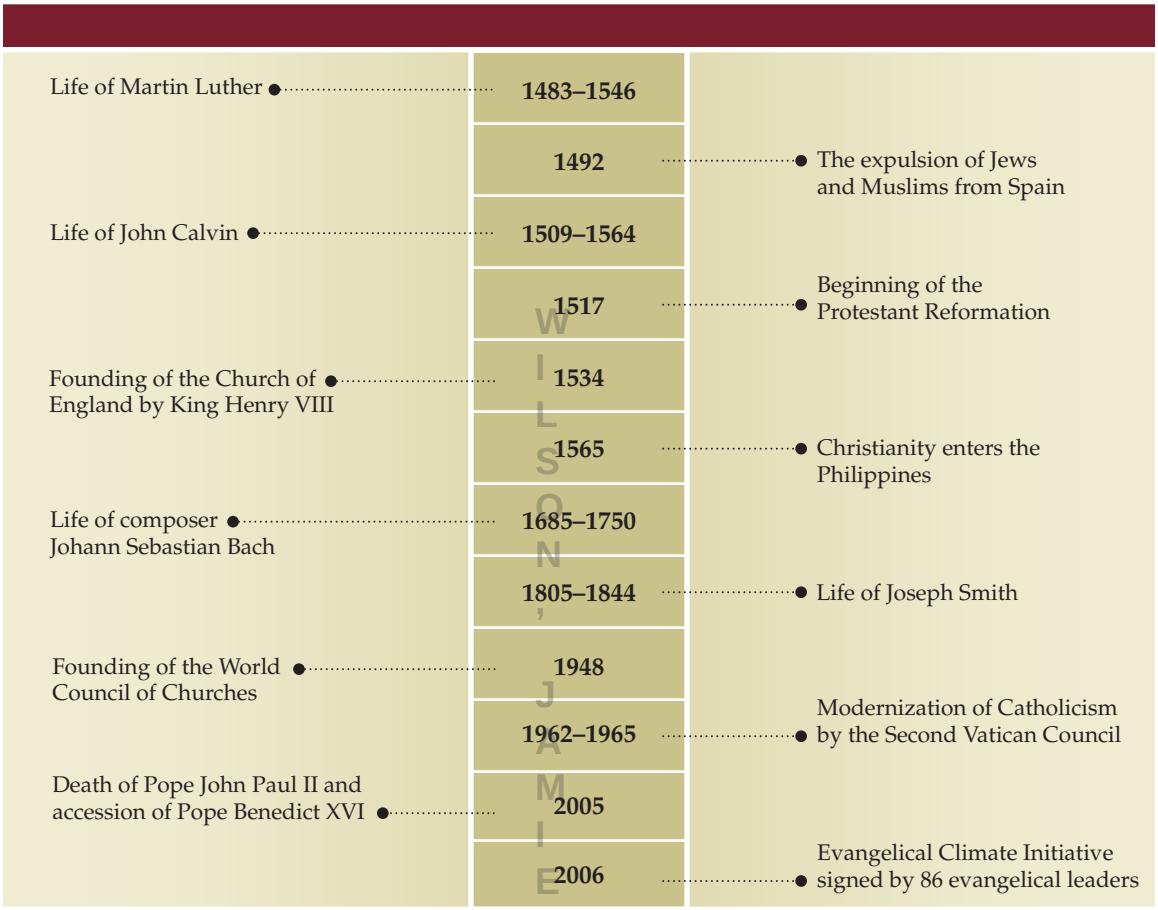
TIMELINE 9.1



Timeline of significant events in the history of Christianity.

in the desert and provinces; for the most part, they deliberately lived away from Jerusalem, which they thought was corrupt. The Pharisees, a lay movement of devout Jews, preoccupied themselves with meticulously keeping the Jewish law.

Many Jews in Jesus' day thought that they were living in the "end times." They expected a period of turbulence and suffering and a final great battle, when God would destroy all the enemies of pious Jews. God, they believed, would then inaugurate a new age of justice and love. Some expected a new Garden of Eden, where the good people who remained after the Judgment would eat year-round from fruit trees and women would no longer suffer in childbirth. Most Jews shared the hope that the Romans would be expelled, that evildoers would be punished, and that God's envoy, the **Messiah,** would appear. The common expectation among the Jews of Jesus' day was that the Messiah would be a king or a military leader who was descended from King David. (The name *Messiah* means "anointed" and refers to the ceremony of anointing a new king with olive oil.) Many held that the Messiah had been foretold in some of their sacred books—such as Isaiah, Micah, and Daniel—and they expected him to rule the new world.



Into this complicated land, Jesus was born about two thousand years ago (Timeline 9.1). Traditional teaching tells of a miraculous conception in Nazareth, a town of northern Israel, and of a birth by the virginal mother Mary in Bethlehem, a town in the south not far from Jerusalem. It tells of wise men who followed a guiding star to the baby soon after his birth. The traditional portrait of Jesus, common in art, shows him in his early years assisting his foster father Joseph as a carpenter in the northern province of Galilee. It is possible that the truth of some of these traditional details—as it is regarding the lives of many other religious founders—may be more symbolic than literal.

There have been many attempts to find the "historical Jesus." Although artists have portrayed Jesus in countless ways, no portrait that we know of was ever painted of Jesus while he was alive. Of course, we can guess at his general features, but we cannot know anything definitive about the individual face or eyes or manner of Jesus.

Almost everything we know of Jesus comes from the four Gospels of the New Testament. (**Testament** means "contract" or "covenant," and **gospel**

This ancient fresco at the Coptic Monastery of the Virgin Mary in the Egyptian desert depicts Mary nursing the infant Jesus.

means "good news.") The Gospels are accounts, written by later believers, of the life of Jesus. The Gospels, however, tell very little of Jesus until he began a public life of teaching and healing. He probably began this public life in his late 20s, when he gathered twelve disciples and moved from place to place, teaching about the coming of what he called the Kingdom of God. After a fairly short period of preaching—no more than three years—Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem at Passover time by the authorities, who considered him a threat to public order. From the point of view of the Sadducees, Jesus was dangerous because he might begin an anti-Roman riot. In contrast, Jewish patriots may have found him not anti-Roman enough. From the Roman point of view, however, he was at least a potential source of political unrest and enough of a threat to be arrested, whipped, nailed to a cross, and crucified—a degrading and public form of execution. Death came from shock, suffocation, and loss of blood.

Dying on a Friday, Jesus was buried quickly near the site of his crucifixion shortly before sunset, just as the Jewish Sabbath was to begin. No work could be done on Saturday, the Sabbath. On the following Sunday, the Gospels report, the followers who went to care for his body found his tomb empty. Some followers reported apparitions of him, and his disciples became convinced that he had returned to life. Forty days later, the New Testament says, he ascended into the sky, promising to return again.

This bare outline does not answer many important questions: Who was Jesus? What kind of personality did he have? What were his teachings? For the answers to these questions, we must turn to the four Gospels. They are the core of the Christian New Testament.

Jesus in the New Testament Gospels

The four Gospels are written remembrances of Jesus' words and deeds, recorded some years after his death by people who believed in him. All the books of the New Testament are strongly colored by the viewpoints of their writers and by the culture of the period. Thus it is difficult to establish the historical accuracy of New Testament statements about Jesus or the words attributed to him. (Perhaps an analogy can clarify the problem: the Gospels are like paintings of Jesus, not photographs.) In compiling our picture of Jesus, we must also recognize that the Gospels are not a complete record of all essential information. There is a great deal we cannot know about Jesus. Nevertheless, a definite person does emerge from the Gospels.

However obvious it may seem to point this out, Jesus believed and trusted in God, just as all contemporary Jews did. But while Jesus thought of God as creator and sustainer of the universe, he also thought of God in a very personal way, as his father. It is Jesus' extremely special relationship to God that is central to Christianity.

Raised as a Jew, Jesus accepted the sacred authority of the Law and the Prophets (the Torah and the books of history and prophecy). As a boy, he learned the scriptures in Hebrew. He kept the major Jewish holy days common to the period, and he traveled to Jerusalem and its temple for some of these events. He apparently kept the basic food laws and laws about Sabbath observance, and he attended synagogue meetings on Saturdays as part of the observance of the Jewish Sabbath (Luke 4:16). It seems he was a devout and thoughtful Jew.

Nonetheless, one striking personal characteristic of Jesus, alluded to frequently in the Gospels, was his independence of thought. He considered things carefully and then arrived at his own opinions, which he was not hesitant to share. Jesus, the Gospels say, taught differently: "unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority" (Mark 1:22).[1]

Perhaps Jesus' most impressive characteristic was his emphasis on universal love—not just love for the members of one's own family, ethnic group, or religion. He preached love in many forms: compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, acceptance, helpfulness, generosity, gratitude. When asked if a person should forgive up to seven times, he answered that people should forgive seventy times seven times (Matt. 18:22)—in other words, endlessly. He rejected all vengeance and even asked forgiveness for those who killed him (Luke 23:34). He recommended that we respond to violence with nonviolence. "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you want them to do for you" (Luke 6:27–31).[2]

Although Jesus' nonviolent, loving message has often been neglected over the centuries, it is spelled out clearly in the Sermon on the Mount

Although never portrayed during his lifetime, Jesus has probably been the subject of more artworks than any other person in history. This mosaic is found at St. Savior in Chora, near the walls of Constantinople (now Istanbul).

sections of the New Testament (Matt. 5–7, Luke 6). In the world of Jesus' day, which esteemed force and exacted vengeance, his message must have been shocking.

Jesus was wary of an overly strict observance of laws that seemed detrimental to human welfare. About keeping detailed laws regarding the Sabbath, he commented, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).[3] He did not confuse pious practices, common among the Jews of his day, with the larger ideal of virtue. He disliked hypocrisy and pretense (Matt. 23:5–8).

From what we can see in the Gospels, Jesus showed many human feelings. He had close friends and spent time with them (John 11:5), and he was disappointed when they were less than he had hoped for (Matt. 26:40). He wept when he heard of the death of one of his dearest friends (John 11:33–36).

Jesus urged simplicity. He recommended that people "become like little children" (Matt. 18:3). He liked directness and strived to go beyond details to the heart of things.

Much of Jesus' advice is good psychology, showing that he was a keen observer of human beings. For example, we are told that as you give, so shall you receive (Matt. 7:2) and that if you are not afraid to ask for what you want, you shall receive it (Matt. 7:7).

Jesus showed an appreciation for nature, in which he saw evidence of God's care (Matt. 6:29). But Jesus did not look at nature with the detached vision of a scientist. He knew scripture well but was not a scholar. As far as we know, he was not a writer, and he left behind no written works. He showed almost no interest in money or in business. In adulthood he probably did not travel far from his home territory, between the Sea of Galilee

and Jerusalem. While he may have spoken some Greek in addition to his native Aramaic, he did not apparently have much interest in the Greco-Roman culture of his day.

Whether Jesus had a sense of humor is hard to know. The four Gospels never mention that he laughed, thus giving him an image of solemnity. But some of his statements come alive when we see them as being spoken with ironic humor and even laughter (see, for example, Matt. 15:24–28). We do know that although he sometimes sought seclusion, Jesus seems to have enjoyed others' company.

Some people would like to see Jesus as a social activist. He cared strongly about the poor and the hungry, but he apparently was not a social activist of any specialized type. For example, the Gospels do not record words of Jesus that condemn slavery or the oppression of women. Perhaps, like many others of his time, Jesus believed that the world would soon be judged by God, and this may have kept him from working for a specific reform. Instead, he preached basic principles of humane treatment, particularly of the needy and the oppressed (Matt. 25).

For those who would turn Jesus into a protector of the family and family values, the Gospels present mixed evidence. When asked about the divorce practice of his day, Jesus opposed it strongly. He opposed easy divorce because it meant that a husband could divorce his wife for a minor reason, often leaving her unable to support herself or to remarry. He stated that the marriage bond was given by God (Mark 10:1–12). And at his death, Jesus asked a disciple to care for his mother after he was gone (John 19:26). But Jesus himself remained unmarried. If Jesus had had a wife, that fact almost certainly would have been mentioned somewhere in a gospel or other New Testament book or would have survived in tradition. Moreover, there is no mention anywhere that Jesus ever had children.

Indeed, Jesus spoke highly of those who remained unmarried "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12).[5] As an intriguing confirmation of Jesus' unmarried state, it is now recognized that celibacy was valued by the Essenes, the semimonastic Jewish movement of that era, which may have had some influence on him.[6] In any case, Paul—one of the most important of the early Christians and missionaries—and generations of priests, monks, and nuns followed a celibate ideal that was based on the way Jesus was thought to have lived. In fact, the ideal of remaining unmarried for religious reasons remains influential in several branches of Christianity today.

The Gospels mention Jesus' brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3). Some Christian traditions have held that these relatives were cousins or stepbrothers and stepsisters, hoping thereby to preserve the notion of his mother Mary's permanent virginity. But it is now widely accepted that Jesus had actual brothers and sisters who were children of his mother Mary and of Joseph. When we inspect his relationship to his family members, it seems that Jesus at times was alienated from them. They quite naturally worried about him and apparently wished he were not so unusual and difficult. But Jesus, irritated by their claims on him, said publicly that his real family consisted

> Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you. Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.
>
> —Luke 6:37–38[4]

not of his blood relatives but of all those who hear the word of God and keep it (Mark 3:31–33). After Jesus died, however, because of their blood relationship with Jesus, his family members were influential in the early Church, and the earlier disharmony was downplayed.

The Two Great Commandments

What, then, was Jesus' main concern? His teachings, called the Two Great Commandments, combine two strong elements: a love for God and an ethical call for kindness toward others. These commandments already existed in Hebrew scripture (Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18), but Jesus gave them new emphasis by reducing all laws to the law of love: Love God and love your neighbor (Matt. 22:37–40). Being fully aware of God means living with love for all God's children. Like prophets before him, Jesus had a clear vision of what human society can be at its best—a Kingdom of God in which people care about each other, the poor are looked after, violence and exploitation are abandoned, and religious rules do not overlook human needs.

It may be that Jesus' emphasis on morality was tied to the common belief in an imminent divine judgment. This belief seems to have been a particularly important part of the worldview of the Essenes, who thought of themselves as preparing for this new world. It was also essential to the thinking of John the Baptizer (also called John the Baptist), whom the Gospel of Luke calls the cousin of Jesus. John preached that the end of the world was near, when God would punish evildoers. As a sign of purification, John immersed his followers in the water of the Jordan River. Jesus allowed himself to be baptized, and when John died, Jesus had his own followers carry on John's practice by baptizing others. Whether Jesus shared John's view of the coming end of the world is debated. Some passages would seem to indicate that he did (see Mark 9:1, 13:30; Matt. 16:28). This vision of impending judgment is called **apocalypticism.** In the apocalyptic view, the Kingdom of God would soon be a social and political reality.

Whatever Jesus' views about the end times, his focus was on bringing about the Kingdom of God in each human heart. This would occur when people followed the Two Great Commandments and lived by the laws of love. Some of Jesus' closest followers were among those who seem to have expected him to be a political leader, wanting him to lead the fight against the Roman overlords to establish a political kingdom of God. But Jesus refused. The Gospel of John records him as saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).[7] Instead of political violence, Jesus chose a path of nonviolence.

EARLY CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND HISTORY

The Book of Acts records that after Jesus' ascension to heaven forty days following his resurrection, his disciples were gathered, full of fear, wondering what to do next. The Book of Acts then tells how the Spirit of God came upon them in the form of fire, giving them courage to spread their belief in

Jesus as the Messiah. This first preaching of the Christian message has been called the Birthday of the Church.

The early Christian message was not complex. It is summarized in the **apostle** Peter's speech in Acts 2, which says that God is now working in a special way; Jesus was the expected Messiah, God's ambassador; and these are the "final days" before God's judgment and the coming of a new world. Early Christian practice required those who believed to be baptized as a sign of rebirth, to share their possessions, and to care for widows and orphans.

The early Christian group that remained in Jerusalem seems to have been almost entirely Jewish and was led by James, called the Just because of his careful observance of Jewish practice. Being one of Jesus' real brothers, James carried great authority. The Jewish-Christian Church, led by Jesus' relatives, was a strong influence for the first forty years. Its members kept the Jewish holy days, prayed in the Jerusalem Temple, and conducted their services in Aramaic. The Jewish-Christian Church, however, was weakened by the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., and it seems to have disappeared over the next one hundred years. Meanwhile, the non-Jewish, Greek-speaking branch of early Christianity, led by Paul and others like him, began to spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul and Pauline Christianity

As the Jewish Christianity of Jerusalem and Israel weakened, Christianity among non-Jews grew because of the missionary Paul. Paul's preaching in Greek, his energetic traveling, and his powerful letters spread his form of belief in Jesus far beyond the limits of Israel.

Originally named Saul, Paul was born of Jewish parentage in Tarsus, a town in the south of present-day Turkey. He was earnest about traditional Judaism and went to Jerusalem for study. At that time he was a Pharisee. There, he was adamantly opposed to the new "Jesus movement," which he saw as a dangerous messianic Jewish cult that could divide Judaism.

Paul, however, came to a new understanding of Jesus. The Book of Galatians says that he pondered the meaning of Jesus for three years in "Arabia" and "Damascus" (Gal 1:17). In a more dramatic, later account, the Book of Acts relates that while Paul was on the road from Jerusalem to root out a cell of early Christian believers, he experienced a vision of Jesus. In it Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"[8] (See Acts 9, 22, 26.) After several years of study in seclusion, Paul became convinced that Jesus' life and death were the major events of a divine plan, and that Jesus was a cosmic figure who entered the world in order to renew it. Consequently, as we will soon discuss, the focus in Paul's thought is less on the historical Jesus and more on the meaning of the cosmic Christ.

Paul discovered his life's mission: to spread belief in Christ around the Mediterranean, particularly among non-Jews, whom he found more receptive to his message. His use of the Greco-Roman name Paul, instead of his Jewish name Saul, shows his orientation to the non-Jewish world.

In this fifteenth-century fresco by Fra Angelico, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, one of several women in gospel accounts of the life of Jesus. According to the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene was the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

Paul's missionary technique was the same in most towns. If the Book of Acts is correct in its portrayal of Paul's missionary work, he would begin by visiting the local synagogue. There, Paul would use Jewish scriptures, such as the Book of Isaiah, to explain his own belief that Jesus was the Messiah whom Jews had long been awaiting. He was unsuccessful with most Jews, who generally expected a royal Messiah, not a poor man who had been

publicly executed. And they sometimes treated Paul as a traitor, especially when he said that it was unnecessary to impose Jewish laws about diet and circumcision on non-Jewish converts to Christianity.

Whether all Christians had to keep Jewish religious laws was a subject of intense debate in early Christianity. Christianity had begun as a movement of Jews who believed that Jesus was the expected Messiah, but it soon attracted followers who did not come from a Jewish background. Questions about practice led early Christianity to differentiate itself from Judaism, to define itself on its own terms. Did adult males who wished to be baptized also have to be circumcised? (Needless to say, adult male converts were not always enthusiastic about the practice of circumcision.) Did new converts have to keep the Jewish laws about diet? Did they have to keep the Jewish Sabbath? Should they read the Jewish scriptures?

Some early Christian preachers decided not to impose Jewish rules on non-Jewish converts, while others insisted that all Jewish laws had to be kept. The faction that insisted on upholding all Jewish laws, however, did not prevail. Ultimately, some elements of Judaism were retained and others were abandoned. For example, circumcision was replaced by **baptism** as a sign of initiation, but Jewish scriptures and weekly services were retained.

These efforts to define what it meant to be a Christian signaled a major turning point in Christianity. Paul's conclusions, in particular, played a prominent role in shaping the movement. His views on the meaning of Jesus, on morality, and on Christian practice became the norm for most of the Christian world. This happened because of his extensive missionary activities in major cities of the Roman Empire and because he left eloquent letters stating his beliefs. Copied repeatedly, circulated, and read publicly, these letters have formed the basis for all later Christian belief.

Paul's training as a scholar of Jewish law made him acutely aware of human imperfection. He wrote that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).[9] He came to feel, in fact, that external written laws, such as those of Judaism, hurt more than they helped; the imposition of laws that could not be fulfilled could only make human beings aware of their inadequacies. For him, Jesus came from God to bring people a radical new freedom. Believers would no longer have to rely on written laws or to feel guilty for past misdeeds. Jesus' death was a voluntary sacrifice to take on the punishment and guilt of everyone. Human beings thereby found **redemption** from punishment. Believers need only follow the lead of the Spirit of God, which dwells in them and directs them.

Thus Paul preached that it is no longer by the keeping of Jewish laws that a person comes into right relationship with God (**righteousness**); rather, it is by the acceptance of Jesus, who shows us God's love and who was punished for our wrongdoing. What brings a person into good relationship with God "is not obedience to the Law, but faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16).[10]

Despite his newfound freedom, Paul did not abandon moral rules. But his notion of morality was no longer based on laws that were imposed

Christians from Ethiopia carry the Gospel book in this Palm Sunday procession at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

externally—and kept grudgingly—but rather on an interior force that inspired people to do good deeds spontaneously. The life of Jesus was for Paul a proof of the love of God, because God the Father had sent Jesus into the world to tell about his love. According to Paul, our awareness of God's love will inspire us to live in a new and loving way.

Paul saw Jesus not only as teacher, prophet, and Messiah, but also as a manifestation of divinity. For Paul, Jesus was a cosmic figure—the preexistent image of God, the Wisdom of God (see Prov. 8), and the Lord of the universe. Jesus was sent into the world to begin a process of cosmic reunion between God and his human creation. **Sin** (wrongdoing) had brought to human beings the punishment of death. But Jesus' death was an atonement for human sin, and the result is that the punishment of death is no longer valid. Jesus' return to life was just the beginning of a process of eternal life for all people who have the Spirit of God within them.

The New Testament: Its Structure and Artistry

What we know of Jesus and early Christianity comes largely from the New Testament. The New Testament, which is also at the core of Christianity, is used in religious services, read regularly, and carried throughout the world.

The New Testament is divided into four parts: (1) the Gospels, (2) the Acts of the Apostles, (3) the Epistles, and (4) Revelation. The Gospels describe the life and teachings of Jesus. Although we now know that the facts surrounding their authorship are complex, tradition has attributed the Gospels to four early followers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who are called **evangelists** (Greek: "good news person"). The Acts of the Apostles tells of the initial spread of Christianity, although its historical accuracy cannot be confirmed. The Epistles are letters to early Christians, primarily by Paul. The New Testament ends with a visionary book, Revelation, which foretells in symbolic language the triumph of Christianity. Altogether, there are twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

> God's love has been poured into our hearts.
> —Rom. 5:5[11]

All the books of the New Testament were written in Greek, the language of culture and commerce in the classical Mediterranean world in the first century of the common era. The quality of the Greek varies; in the Book of Revelation the language is considered rough, while in the Books of Luke and Acts it is considered particularly graceful.

The Gospels We know of the life of Jesus primarily from the Gospels, which are written in an extremely pictorial way. They are filled with powerful stories and images and have been the source of great inspiration for much later Christian art. Each of the four gospels is as unique in its artistry and style as four portraits of the same person painted by four different artists would be: the resulting portraits would certainly be recognizably similar but also different in such details as choice of background, clothing, angle of perspective, and so on. The same is true of the "portraits" of Jesus that are painted in the Gospels: each gospel writer shows Jesus in a different way.

Because the first three gospels, despite their differences, show a family resemblance in stories, language, and order, they are called the Synoptic Gospels (*synoptic* literally means "together-see" in Greek, implying a similar perspective). The synoptic writers show Jesus as a messianic teacher and healer sent by God. It is generally thought that the Gospel of Mark was written first, since it seems to be the primary source for the later Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of John, however, is recognizably different and relies on its own separate sources. It is possible that all the Gospels were originally written to be used as readings in religious services, probably in conjunction with complementary readings from the Hebrew scriptures.

The Gospel of Matthew is thought to have been written (about 75–80 C.E.) for an audience with a Jewish background. For example, it portrays Jesus as the "new Moses," a teacher who offers a "new Torah." In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Jesus delivers his teachings on a mountain, just as Moses delivered the Ten Commandments from another mountain, Mount Sinai. The gospel also contains many quotations from the Hebrew scriptures, showing that Jesus was their fulfillment.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels, which suggests that it is the oldest (written around 65–70 C.E.). This gospel contains no infancy stories and begins instead with the adult public life of Jesus. In the original

DEEPER INSIGHTS

The Books of the New Testament

GOSPELS

Synoptic Gospels

Matthew (75–80 C.E.)

Mark (65–70 C.E.)

Luke (c. 85 C.E.)

Non-Synoptic Gospel

John (90–100 C.E.)

HISTORY

Acts of the Apostles (c. 85 C.E.)

EPISTLES

Pauline Epistles (c. 50–125 C.E.)

Romans

1–2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1–2 Thessalonians

1–2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

Universal Epistles (c. 90–125 C.E.)

James

1–2 Peter

1–3 John

Jude

PROPHECY

Revelation (c. 95 C.E.)

version, it ends with an account of Jesus' empty tomb. The account of Jesus' appearances after the resurrection (Mark 16:9–19) is a later addition.

The Gospel of Luke (written about 85 C.E.) is filled with a sense of wonder, perhaps because it speaks repeatedly of the miraculous action of the Spirit of God at work in the world. It has been called the "women's gospel" because of its delicate portraits of Mary (Jesus' mother), her cousin Elizabeth, and other women. This is a gospel of mercy and compassion, with a strong focus on the underdog.

The Gospel of John stands by itself. The time of its writing is difficult to pinpoint. Traditionally, it has been dated quite late—about 90 to 100 C.E.—because of its apparent elaboration of Christian doctrines. But details that might have come from an eyewitness suggest that parts may have been written earlier. Because it views human life as a struggle between the principles of light and darkness, students of the Gospel of John have wondered whether it was influenced by one or more religious movements of the period, such as the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism (see Chapter 10), Greek mystery religions, or Gnosticism (see Chapter 10)—a movement that saw human life as a stage of purification to prepare the soul to return to God.[12] The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 near Qumran has shown many similarities of language between the Gospel of John and certain phrases found in the Qumran literature (for example,

On Christmas, Christians often display depictions of the birth of Jesus. Here, girls view a depiction inside a Myanmar church.

"sons of light and sons of darkness"). The Jewish origins of the gospel are now clear.

In the Gospel of John, the portrayal of Jesus is full of mystery. He is the **incarnation** of God, the divine made visible in human form. He speaks in cosmic tones: "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). "You are from below; I am from above" (John 8:23).[13] Scholars frequently question the historicity of these exact words, seeing them more as representing the author's vision of the heavenly origin and nature of Jesus.

The central aesthetic image of the Gospel is of a ray of divine light that descends like a lightning bolt into our world, passing through and lighting up the darkness, but ultimately returning to its heavenly source and enabling human beings to follow. Most people, the gospel states, do not really understand the truth; but the true nature of Jesus as divine light can be seen by those who have an open heart. Water, bread, the vine, the shepherd, and the door are additional symbols used in the Gospel of John to indicate aspects of Jesus and his meaning for the believer. These symbols later became regular features of Christian art.

The Acts of the Apostles This book (dating from about 85 C.E.) is really the second part of the Gospel of Luke, and scholars sometimes refer to the two books together as Luke-Acts. It is possible that the single work of Luke-Acts was divided in two in order to place the Gospel of John after the Gospel of Luke. Just as the Gospel of Luke portrays Jesus as moving inevitably toward his sacrifice in Jerusalem, so Acts portrays Paul in a parallel journey to his final sacrifice in Rome. At the heart of both books is a single beautiful image of a stone, dropped in a pond, that makes ever-widening ripples. Similarly, the life of Jesus makes ever-widening ripples as it spreads in a growing circle from its origin in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

The Epistles The word *epistle* means "letter" and is an appropriate label for most of these works, which were written to instruct, to encourage, and to solve problems. Several epistles are long and formal; a few are brief and hurried. Some epistles seem to have been written to individuals; some to individual churches; and others for circulation among several churches. And it appears that a few of the epistles were originally treatises (for example, Hebrews) or sermons (1 Peter).

The wide category of works called the Epistles can be divided into two groups. The first includes those books that traditionally have been attributed to the early missionary Paul—the Pauline Epistles. The second group includes all the other epistles—called the Universal Epistles because they seem to be addressed to all believers. The genuine Pauline letters are the earliest works in the New Testament, dating from about 50 to 60 C.E. The dating of the other epistles is debated, but some may have been finished as late as about 150 C.E. Of the so-called Pauline Epistles, it is now recognized that several were not written by Paul. However, writing in the name of a famous teacher after that person's death was a common practice in the ancient world; it was meant not to deceive, but to honor the teacher.

One factor that has made the Epistles so much loved is their use of memorable images, many of which come from the Pauline letters. For example, life is compared to a race with a prize given at the end (1 Cor. 9:24); good deeds are like incense rising to God (2 Cor. 2:15); and the community of believers is like a solid building set on secure foundations (1 Cor. 3:9–17). Effective images also appear in the non-Pauline epistles: new Christians are compared to babies who long for milk (1 Pet. 2:2); and the devil is like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

The themes of the Epistles vary widely, but they focus generally on proper belief, morality, and church order. The topics include the nature and work of Jesus, God's plan for humanity, faith, good deeds, love, the ideal marriage, community harmony, Christian living, the conduct of the Lord's Supper, and the expected return of Jesus.

Revelation This final book of the New Testament was originally written (around 100 C.E.) as a book of encouragement for Christians who were under threat of persecution. Through a series of visions, the book shows

Women in the New Testament

WILSON, JAMIE 50510BU

It is often claimed that Christianity views women as something less than men. Support for that claim can be found in the New Testament, from which passages have been used to demand that women obey their fathers and husbands, be kept from the ministry, and be banned from leadership roles deemed appropriate only for men. The harshest passages command that women be silent in meetings and forbid their having authority over men (1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–15).

Close inspection of the New Testament and other early documents, however, reveals a more complex picture: women have played important roles both in the ministry of Jesus and in the life of the early Church. This reevaluation of the Church's early history has led some Christians to rethink women's roles today.

Looking at the life and ministry of Jesus as recounted in the gospels, we find repeated mention of the sisters, Martha and Mary of Bethany as close friends of Jesus (see John 11). The gospels also name women disciples, such as Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:3). These and other women gave Jesus needed support—emotional and, undoubtedly, financial. Women stood by Jesus at his crucifixion, when most of his male disciples abandoned him. Mary Magdalene played the most prominent role among the female disciples. She accepted Jesus as her savior, traveled with him, and was the first witness of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:14). Overall, Jesus seems to have treated women as equals. In a culture in which men generally did not speak to women in public, Jesus talks to them without hesitation. In the Gospel of John, he is shown speaking to a woman at a well, asking her for a drink of water (John 4). Elsewhere, he is shown speaking to a Canaanite woman, whose child he cures (Matt. 15:21–28).

After the life and ministry of Christ, the letters of Paul and others describe the roles of women in the early Church. Believers met at private homes, some owned by women. The epistles name various women who are thanked for their work. Their numbers were significant: Paul mentions Phoebe, Prisca, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Julia, Junia, Evodia, Syntyche, Nympha, and Apphia (Rom. 16:1–15; Phil. 4:2–3; Col. 4:15; 1 Cor. 16:16; Philem. 2). Nympha owned a house at which a community of believers met.

Occasionally, images of the Trinity include Mary, thereby bringing a female element into the representation of the divine. This representation, with the Holy Spirit as a dove perched on the cross, stands in the middle of a Czech town square.

Phoebe is called a helper and may have been officially a deacon.

Paul is often accused of misogyny because of the message about women that appears in some of his writings. But, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul contributed to Christianity one of its greatest passages on equality: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

that suffering will be followed by the final triumph of goodness over evil. The last chapters show the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven and the adoration of Jesus, who appears as a lamb.

The language of Revelation is highly symbolic, deliberately using numbers and images in a way that would make the meaning clear to early Christians but obscure to others. For example, the lamb (Rev. 14:1) is Jesus, and the dragon with seven heads (Rev. 12:3) is the empire of Rome, a city built on seven hills. The number 666, the mark of the beast (mentioned in Rev. 13:18), may be the name of Emperor Nero, given in the form of numbers. Although long attributed to the author of the Gospel of John, Revelation is plainly—because of stylistic differences—by another hand. Some of its images were seminal to the development of later Christian art—particularly the adoration of the lamb, the four horsemen of the apocalypse, the book of life, and the vision of heaven.

The Christian Canon

We should recognize that some of the books in the New Testament were not accepted universally for several centuries. Agreement on which books belonged to the sacred **canon** of the New Testament took several hundred years.[14]

Early Christians continued for the most part to accept and read the Hebrew scriptures, particularly those books—such as Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs—that they saw as foreshadowing the events of Christianity. The New Testament books, therefore, were added to the Hebrew scriptures already in existence. Christians thought of the Hebrew scriptures, which they called the Old Testament, as being fulfilled by the Christian scriptures, which they called the New Testament. The Christian Bible thus includes both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament.

There is a whole spectrum of ways in which the Christian Bible is read and interpreted by Christians. One approach emphasizes the subjective aspect of the scriptures, interpreting them primarily as a record of beliefs. A contrasting approach sees the Christian Bible as a work of objective history and authoritative morality, dictated word for word by God. To illustrate, let's consider how the two approaches interpret the stories of creation in the Book of Genesis. The conservative position interprets the six days of creation and the story of Adam and Eve quite literally, as historical records, while the liberal approach interprets these stories primarily as moral tales that express God's power, love, and sense of justice. There are similar contrasts between the conservative and liberal interpretations of miracles (for example, the virgin birth) in the New Testament.

Most contemporary Christians hold a position that is somewhere in between the conservative and liberal poles of the spectrum. They believe that the Bible was inspired by God in its essentials, but they see it as requiring thoughtful human interpretation. Interpretation of the Bible has been and still is a major cause of conflict and division in Christianity; however, the debate has also been—and still is—a great source of intellectual vitality.

DEEPER INSIGHTS

The Christian Worldview

The New Testament and later creeds help define the Christian way of looking at the world. Most Christians agree on the following elements.

God Behind the activity of the universe is an eternal, intelligent power who created the universe as an expression of love. Traditional Christianity holds the belief that God is made of three "Persons": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—together called the **Trinity.** The doctrine of the Trinity is said to be a mystery beyond complete human comprehension, but it hints that the nature of God is essentially a relationship of love.

The Father The loving and caring qualities of God are especially evident in the Father, whom Jesus constantly addressed. Although without gender, God the Father is frequently depicted as an elderly man, robed and bearded.

Jesus Christ Jesus is Son of the Father, but equally divine. Because he is the visible expression of God, he is called God's Word and Image. The life and death of Jesus on earth are part of a divine plan to help humanity. Jesus willingly took on the punishment that, from the perspective of justice, should fall on all human beings who have done wrong. Some forms of Christianity also teach that Jesus' life and death redeemed a basic sinfulness in human beings called **original sin,** which is inherited by all of Adam's descendants. Jesus continues to live physically beyond the earth, but he will someday return to judge human beings and to inaugurate a golden age.

The Holy Spirit The Spirit is a divine power that guides all believers. In art, the Spirit is usually shown as a white dove.

Angels Intelligent, bodiless beings were created by God to serve him and to help human beings. Malevolent angels, said to have rebelled against God, are called devils. Their chief, whose name was Lucifer ("light-bearer"), is called Satan ("adversary").

The Bible God's will and plan are expressed in the Bible, which was written by human beings under God's inspiration. The Bible consists of the books of the Hebrew Bible—which Christians call the Old Testament—and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Human life Human beings are on earth to help others, to perfect themselves, and to prepare for the afterlife. Suffering, when accepted, allows human beings to grow in insight and compassion.

Afterlife Human beings possess an immortal soul. Both body and soul ultimately will be rewarded in heaven or punished in hell. Many Christians also believe in a temporary intermediate state called *purgatory,* where less worthy souls are prepared after death for heaven.

These basic beliefs invite a variety of interpretation. In the first five centuries of Christianity, debate was frequent until these beliefs had been clearly formulated in statements of faith. In recent centuries, however, new and diverse interpretations of all aspects of Christian belief have emerged.

THE EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is a missionary religion. The Gospel of Mark tells how Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs to preach throughout the land of Israel (Mark 6:7). Then the Gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus' command, "Make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).[15] In the following discussion, we will see how Christianity spread in stages: from being a Jewish messianic movement in Israel, Christianity spread around the Mediterranean; then it became the official religion of the Roman Empire; and after the end of the empire in the

FIGURE 9.1
Historical centers of early Christianity, with Paul's journeys.

West, Christianity spread to the rest of Europe. (Later, we will see how it spread to the New World, Asia, and Africa.)

Paul's eagerness to spread his belief in Jesus took him to Asia Minor (Turkey), Greece, and Italy. Tradition holds that Peter, one of the original twelve apostles of Jesus, was already in Rome when Paul arrived and that both Peter and Paul died there under the Emperor Nero about 64 C.E. At that point, early Christianity was only loosely organized, but it was clear even then that some kind of order was necessary. Influenced by the Roman Empire's hierarchical political organization, Christians developed a style of Church organization that has been called monarchical (Greek: "one ruler"). Population centers would have a single **bishop** (*episkopos*, "overseer"), who would be in charge of lower-ranking clergy.

In those days, before easy communication, a truly centralized Christianity was impossible. The bishops of the major cities thus played a significant role for the churches of the neighboring regions. Besides Rome, several other great cities of the Roman Empire became centers of Christian belief—particularly Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt (Figure 9.1). Because the bishops of these important cities had more power than bishops of other,

smaller cities, four early patriarchates arose: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The word **patriarch** (Greek: "father-source") came to apply to the important bishops who were leaders of an entire region.

However, when serious questions arose about doctrine and practice, the early Church leaders needed some way to answer them. On the one hand, they could seek a consensus from all other bishops by calling a Church council—an approach that the churches in the eastern part of the Roman Empire held to be the only correct practice. On the other hand, they could designate one bishop as the final authority. The bishop of Rome seemed to be a natural authority and judge for two reasons. First, until 330 C.E. Rome was the capital of the empire, so it was natural to think of the Roman bishop as a kind of spiritual ruler, like his political counterpart, the emperor. Second, according to tradition, Peter, the head of the twelve apostles, had lived his last days in Rome and had died there. He could thus be considered the first bishop of Rome. The special title **pope** comes from the Greek and Latin word *papa* ("father"), a title once used for many bishops but now applied almost exclusively to the bishop of Rome. (It is also, however, a term still used for the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria.)

The nature of papal authority and the biblical basis for it (Matt. 16:18–19) have been debated. Nonetheless, this hierarchical model of Christianity became common in western Europe. Although the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, which we will discuss later, weakened the acceptance of papal authority, the Catholic bishops of Rome have continued to claim supremacy over all Christianity, and the Roman Catholic Church maintains this claim. Christianity in eastern Europe, however, as we will see later in

Pope Shenouda, Patriarch of Alexandria, presides at a midnight service of the Resurrection.

Greek and Roman Religions and Early Christianity

If you are ever in Rome, be sure to take a walk from the Colosseum westward through the Roman Forum, along the Via Sacra ("sacred way"). Because the large stones of the ancient road are still there, you can easily imagine what it must have been like for a visitor to Rome in the first century C.E. At the end of the Forum rises the steep Capitoline Hill, the ancient center of government and the location of a temple to Jupiter, the father of the gods. You also will notice that just beyond the bare pillars are bell towers and crosses—signs that many of the Forum's buildings were long ago turned into Christian churches.

From its Middle Eastern roots, Christianity grew and spread within the Roman Empire, where it displaced the established religions of the Greeks and the Romans, but slowly. In fact, Christianity did not become the official state religion until the end of the fourth century. And since Rome in classical times was the largest city of the world, religions from faraway lands had also found their way there. (Rome in the imperial period was a great crossroads, much like London or Los Angeles today.) Like the temples that survive as Christian churches, elements from many of these religions were absorbed into the new religion of Christianity.

Since some of their gods came from the same source, the classical religions of the Greeks and the Romans show many similarities. But their religions were made of layers and were constantly evolving. The earliest layers, existing before recorded history, came from the veneration of local gods and nature spirits—often worshiped at sacred wells, groves, and roadside shrines. The next layer came from an array of sacred figures that was brought to Europe about 2000 B.C.E. The same pantheon appears in the Vedas, and some of these gods are still worshiped by Hindus today. Other layers were added when both the Greeks and the Romans absorbed gods from neighboring cultures. Great heroes of the past could be declared to be gods. Later, so could emperors. (One, when he thought that he was dying, is said to have amusingly remarked, "I think that I am becoming a god.")

There were occasional attempts at creating a complete system of deities. We find one such attempt, for example, in the works of Homer. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* placed the major Greek gods on Mount Olympus, living in a kind of extended family under the care of the sky god Zeus. Later, the Romans borrowed those ideas from the Greeks. There were also attempts to bring statues of major gods together for worship in the same place. The Athenians put statues of their most important gods at the Acropolis—a fact that Paul noticed and mentioned when he preached in Athens (Acts 17:19–23). The Romans placed multiple temples in the region of the Forum, and then the emperor Hadrian created the circular Pantheon (Greek: *pan,* "all"; *theos,* "god"), which had altars for the deities that he thought most important. (Today the Pantheon—perhaps the most beautiful of all classical Roman buildings—is a Catholic church.)

Trying to give some order to the divine confusion, Romans began to teach that their gods and goddesses were the same as those worshiped under varied names in other cultures. Here, as an illustration, is a small

The Forum's Via Sacra today leads the visitor past remnants of temples dedicated to Roman gods, often incorporated into later Christian churches.

The goddess Artemis is often associated with fertility.

sample of Roman deities that were seen as parallel with Greek gods and goddesses:

Jupiter/Zeus—sky and rain god, father of the gods

Juno/Hera—wife of Jupiter/Zeus, patron of wives and marriage

Venus/Aphrodite—goddess of love

Mercury/Hermes—messenger god and patron of business

Mars/Ares—god of war

Bacchus/Dionysus—god of intoxication and ecstasy

Pluto/Dis—god of the underworld and afterlife

Roman religious practice, along with the astrology that it borrowed from Syria and Greece, believed in hidden correspondences between gods, months, days, and planets. This belief shows its influence in the names of months that are still used in countries that have centuries of Christian history. Thus, we have,

January—named after Janus, a two-faced god of doorways, who was always invoked at the beginning of undertakings

March—named after the god Mars, associated with storms and war and priestly rites held in March to strengthen national defense

May—from Maia, a goddess of fertility

June—from Juno, wife of Jupiter and patroness of marriages

July—named for Julius Caesar, after he was declared a god

The days of the week showed similar correspondences: *Sunday*—sun; *Monday*—moon; *Tuesday* (Spanish: *Martes*)—Mars; *Wednesday* (Spanish: *Miércoles*)—Mercury; *Thursday* (Spanish: *Jueves*)—Jupiter, Jove; *Friday* (Spanish: *Viernes*)—Venus; *Saturday*—Saturn.

Despite their speculative forays, Greek and Roman religions involved practices as much as doctrine. In the days when medicine was undeveloped, charms and auspicious ceremonies were highly valued. Hence ritual, carefully performed, was essential. Ceremonies were held on festival days throughout the year. Romans had about thirty major festivals and many lesser ones—most with specific purposes, such as defense, fertility, and good harvest. These were largely acts of public religion, performed for the welfare of the nation. Thus, it is not surprising that Christianity continued such practices in developing its liturgical year, anchored in Christmas (the winter festival) and Easter (the spring rite of new birth). Saints' feast days, which were marked by special blessings and rituals, were similar to earlier veneration of the many gods.

Of great importance to the formation of Christianity were the Greek and Roman "mystery religions," so named because initiates vowed not to disclose the details of their initiations and practices. These typically involved an instruction, purification rite, a sharing of sacred food or drink, and a revelatory experience. We see clear echoes in the early training of would-be Christians (the "catechumens"), in baptism, and in eucharistic rites.

As the Roman empire expanded during the time of Jesus and early Christianity, it imported the exotic worship of gods from Asia Minor (Turkey), Persia, and

Egypt. Among the first religious imports was worship of the goddess Cybele, "the Great Mother," and Isis, a mother figure from Egypt. Such worship of goddesses undoubtedly influenced the growing Christian cult of Mary. From Persia came worship of the sun god Mithras, which practiced baptism in the blood of a bull and a ritual sacred meal. Evidence of worship involving Mithras has been found as far away from Rome as London.

As you end your walk along the Roman Forum, you may think of other parallels. Early images of a beardless Jesus, found in Christian burial chambers, resemble images of Apollo and Dionysus. The tendency to treat Zeus or Jupiter as the supreme god—as was shown by the great Temple of Jupiter that crowned the Capitoline Hill—may have helped convert the Roman Empire to monotheism. The ritual meal of Mithraism has echoes in the Christian Lord's Supper—in fact, the ancient church of San Clemente in Rome is built upon a Mithraeum, a Mithraic place of worship.

The exact amount of Greco-Roman religious influence on Christianity's evolution will never be entirely clear. But the influences we've reviewed remind us that all world religions were once new religions that were built, in many different ways, upon what came before them. At the same time, the ability of a new religion to adapt existing religions could help the new religion to be accepted and understood—as we see so well in the case of Christianity.

the chapter, developed and has maintained a different, less centralized form of organization.

The Roman Empire made many contributions to Christianity. In the first two centuries of the common era, Christianity was often persecuted because it was associated with political disloyalty. But when Constantine became emperor, he saw in Christianity a glue that would cement the fragments of the entire empire. In his Edict of Toleration, Constantine decreed that Christianity could function publicly without persecution, and he supported the religion by asking its bishops to meet and define their beliefs. This they did at the first major Church council, the Council of Nicaea, held in Asia Minor in 325 C.E. By the end of the fourth century, Christianity had been declared the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Thus the partnership of Christianity with the Roman Empire marked an entirely new phase and a significant turning point for the religion. Christianity formalized its institutional structure of bishops and priests, who had responsibilities within the set geographical units—based on imperial political units—of dioceses and parishes. And because it now had the prestige and financial support that came with government endorsement, Christianity could enthusiastically adopt imperial Roman architecture, art, music, clothing, ceremony, administration, and law. Most important, through church councils and creeds, Christianity clarified and defined its worldview. And just as historians had written about the history of Rome, so writers such as Eusebius (c. 260–c. 339) came to record the history of Christianity.

Because Christianity in western Europe spread from Rome, much of it was distinctively Roman in origin—especially its language (Latin). Latin was the language of church ritual and scholarship in the West. The Bible had also been translated into Latin. Indeed, scholars often say that though the Roman Empire disintegrated in the late fifth century, it actually lived

on in another form in the Western Church. The emperor of Rome was replaced by the pope, but the language, laws, architecture, and thought patterns of Rome would continue fairly undisturbed in the West for more than a thousand years.

INFLUENCES ON CHRISTIANITY AT THE END OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

As the Roman Empire was collapsing in the West (it would end in 476 C.E.), new sources of energy and direction influenced the next stage in the development of Christianity. Two individuals who had a great impact on Christianity were a bishop, Augustine, and a monk, Benedict.

Augustine

Augustine (354–430 C.E.) was born in North Africa in the later days of the western part of the Roman Empire. Although we think of North Africa today as being quite different and separate from Europe, in Augustine's day it was still a vital part of the Roman Empire.

As a young adult, Augustine left his home in North Africa for Italy to make his name as a teacher of rhetoric. After a short time in Rome, he acquired a teaching position in Milan. He became seriously interested in Christianity as a result of his acquaintance with Ambrose, the bishop of the city. While in his garden one day, Augustine thought he heard a child's singsong voice repeating the phrase, *Tolle et lege, tolle et lege* ("pick up and read").[16] Augustine, who had been studying the letters of Paul, picked up a copy of the Epistles that lay on a nearby table. When he opened the book, what he read about the need for inner change pierced him to the heart, and he felt that he must totally reform his life. Augustine sought out Ambrose and asked to be baptized.

Augustine returned to North Africa to devote himself to church work. Ordained first as a priest and then as a bishop, he decided to live a monastic style of life in the company of other priests. Although he had had a child with a mistress before his conversion, Augustine now preached an attitude toward sex and marriage that encouraged a growing Christian suspicion of the body. A reversal of those attitudes would begin only a thousand years later with the thought and work of the reformer Martin Luther, who had been a celibate member of the Augustinian order but who later married and rejected its idealization of celibacy.

In the years after his conversion, Augustine wrote books that were influential in the West for centuries. His *Confessions* was the first real autobiography in world literature, and it details Augustine's growth and conversion. *The City of God* was a defense of Christianity, which some people in his day blamed for the decline of the Roman Empire. *The Trinity* was Augustine's explanation of the relationship between God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy

Spirit. He also wrote to oppose the priest Pelagius, a thinker who held a more optimistic view of human nature than Augustine did.

Augustine had incalculable influence on Western Christianity. He was *the* authority in Christian theology until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, and he was an influence, as well, on Reformation thinkers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. In short, Western Christianity was basically Augustinian Christianity for over a thousand years.

Benedict and the Monastic Ideal

As mentioned earlier, Augustine, after his conversion, chose to become a priest and live with other priests and monks in a life devoted to prayer and study. This monastic way of life became a significant part of Christianity. It is important to remember that monastic life was not just a religious choice. In the days when life was less secure, when work options were severely limited, and when marriage inevitably brought many children (of whom up to half might die young), the life of a monk offered extraordinary freedom. The monastic life provided liberation from daily cares, leisure time to read and write, a wealth of friendships with interesting people, and a strong sense of spiritual purpose. In fact, monks and nuns are found in many religious traditions today, and monasticism, far from being odd or rare, is a fairly universal expression of piety. Monasticism appears not only in Christianity but also in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism; and in Judaism, the celibate monastic life was carried on among the Essenes for approximately two hundred years.

A monk is not necessarily a priest, nor need a priest be a monk. A monk is simply any male who chooses to leave society to live a celibate life of religious devotion; a priest is a person authorized to lead public worship. In the early days of Christianity, priests were often married and thus were not monks. However, under the influence of monasticism, Western priests were gradually expected to resemble monks and to be unmarried.

Christian monasticism probably sprang from a number of influences. One may have been the Essene movement and another was the fact that Jesus had never married. We might recall that he praised those who do not marry "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12).[17] Paul also was without a wife and recommended that state heartily for others (1 Cor. 7:32–35). Another influence on Christian monasticism came from Egypt, where hermits had been living in caves even before Jesus' time. Lastly, once Christians were no longer being persecuted by the government, becoming a monk or nun was an important way for a Christian to show special religious fervor.

The first Christian monks that we know of are called the Desert Fathers: Paul the Hermit, Antony of Egypt, Paphnutius, Pachomius, and Simon Stylite. There were also women (of apparently shady backgrounds) among them: Saint Pelagia the Harlot and Saint Mary the Harlot. These individuals all turned away from the world to live what they thought of as a more perfect type of life. The movement may have shown a lack of interest in the needs of the world, but the movement also expressed a longing for the life of

A service of prayer at sunset has been part of the monk's daily life for more than 1,500 years. Here, a congregation participates in the service of Evensong in the choir of Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of the Anglican confederation.

paradise—for joy, lack of conformity, individuality, and love of God. In fact, the monastic style of life was often called "the life of the angels."

The monastic movement in the West was greatly influenced and spread by a Latin translation of the *Life of Antony,* the Egyptian hermit. The movement took root in southern France and Italy. The real founder of Western monasticism was Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 547 C.E.). Benedict was born into a wealthy family near Rome but fled to live in a cave, where he began

to attract attention and followers who joined him in the monastic life. Eventually, Benedict and his followers built a permanent monastery on the top of Monte Cassino, south of Rome. From there the movement spread and became known as the Benedictine order.

> What can be sweeter to us, dear brethren, than this voice of the Lord inviting us? Behold, in His loving kindness the Lord shows us the way of life.
>
> —Saint Benedict's *Rule for Monks*[19]

Benedict's influence came from his *Rule for Monks.* Based on the earlier *Regula Magistri* ("rule of the master") and on the New Testament, the *Rule* gave advice about how monks should live together throughout the year. It stipulated that monks should pray each week the entire group of 150 psalms (biblical poems), spend time in manual labor, and remain at one monastery. It opposed excess in any way, yet it was sensible; for example, it allowed wine because, as it lamented, the monks could not be persuaded otherwise. The *Rule* became the organizing principle for all Western monasticism and is still followed today by Benedictines.[18]

Benedictine monks became the missionary force that spread Christianity—and Roman architecture and culture—throughout western Europe.[20] Among the great Benedictine missionaries were Augustine (d. 604 C.E.), who was sent as a missionary to England by Pope Gregory I, and Boniface (c. 675–754 C.E.), who spread Christianity in Germany.

From monastic ideals and practices have come several key elements of Christianity. For example, because monastic life segmented time into periods of work and prayer, it hastened the development of the clock. Even more significant was the ideal of celibacy. Living without family ties gave priests, nuns, and monks much mobility and freedom from care, yet it also promoted the ideal of a studious life somewhat detached from the outer world. It fostered the belief that the unmarried, celibate way of life was more perfect than noncelibacy—a belief that would not be seriously challenged in Christianity until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Up to this point, we have focused on Christianity in western Europe. But another form of Christianity, known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, developed and spread in Russia, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, Romania, Greece, and elsewhere. These were regions that learned their Christianity from missionaries sent out from Constantinople, which Constantine had established as his imperial capital in 330 C.E. **Orthodox,** meaning "correct belief," is used to designate Christianity in the East. The name's Greek roots—*orthos,* "straight," and *doxa,* "opinion," "thought"—reflect Eastern Christianity's desire to define its beliefs and keep them unchanged.

Early Development

In the earliest centuries of Christianity, when communication was slow and authority was rather decentralized, the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, though often at odds in their theology, were looked to for

guidance and authority. They were eclipsed, however, when Constantine made the small fishing village of Byzantion (Byzantium) the new capital of the Roman Empire. He officially named it New Rome, but it was soon called Constantinople—"Constantine's City." (Today it is Istanbul.) The large population of Constantinople, its importance as a governmental center, and its imperial support of Christianity all united to elevate the status of the bishop of Constantinople. Now called a patriarch, he became the most influential of all the bishops in the East.

Constantine had hoped to strengthen the Roman Empire by placing its capital—now Constantinople—closer to the northern frontier. From there, soldiers could be sent quickly to protect the frontier against the many barbarian tribes that lived in the north. But Constantine had in fact planted the seeds for an inevitable division of Christianity into Eastern and Western Churches. For a time there were two emperors—of East and West—although this did not work well. The Latin-speaking Western empire, as we have seen, ended in the fifth century, and Western Christianity developed independently. The Greek-speaking Eastern empire, centered in Constantinople, spread its own form of Christianity and continued until its fall in the Muslim conquest of 1453.

The Orthodox Church is generally divided along ethnic and linguistic lines—Russian, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Romanian. But all these churches accept the statements of faith of the first seven Church councils, particularly those of Nicaea (325 C.E.) and Chalcedon (451 C.E.). The Orthodox Church has always held to a decentralized, consensus-based model. Although it does accept in theory that the bishop of Rome has a "primacy among equals," it holds that decisions concerning all of Christianity should be made collectively, in consultation with all patriarchs and bishops; thus, only Church councils are of ultimate authority.

Monasticism in the Eastern Church

As in the West, the monastic movement was an important aspect of the Eastern Church. It spread northward from Egypt and Syria into Asia Minor, where its greatest practitioners were the fourth-century Church leaders, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394), Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329–389), and Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–379), who set the pattern for the monastic movement in **Orthodoxy.** Basil wrote recommendations for monastic living that are still followed today in Orthodox Christianity. Greek-speaking monks of the eastern part of the Roman Empire carried Christianity from Constantinople into Russia and eastern Europe. The ninth-century brothers Cyril and Methodius are the most famous of these missionary monks, because they or their disciples are said to have authored the Cyrillic alphabet, based on the Greek alphabet, which is in common use in eastern Europe and Russia today.

Eastern Orthodoxy has created great monastic centers. The most famous is on Mount Athos in Greece, the current center of monasticism in that region. All Orthodox branches have sent representatives there for monastic training, and to visit or study there is considered a great honor.[21] Other

Orthodox churches are known for their elaborate two-dimensional art, especially icons and frescoes. Here we see a fresco of Jesus and various saints in one of the domes at Saint John of Rila Monastery in Bulgaria.

monastic centers grew up in Romania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, and Russia. Many of these monasteries still exist and may be visited today.

Eastern Orthodox Beliefs

Several questions in its early development helped define and differentiate the Orthodox Churches. One issue was the nature of Jesus Christ: How is

Jesus related to God? Is God the Father greater than Jesus? If Jesus is divine as well as human, is he two persons or one person? And how did Jesus exist before his human life began? Some believers stressed the human nature of Jesus, while others stressed his divinity. The controversies eventually led to the creation and adoption in the fourth century of the Nicene Creed, which is accepted not only by the Eastern Orthodox but also by all traditional Western Christians. Because the creed was created to overcome several heresies, it speaks of the divine nature of Jesus in some detail:

> We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man.[22]

Even after the Nicene Creed, one school held that the divine and human natures of Christ were two separate persons, not one. Others argued that Jesus had only one nature, not two. The Council of Chalcedon (in 451 C.E.) declared that Jesus had two natures—divine and human—that were united in only one person.

After the major Church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, certain groups of Christians, with differing views about the nature of Jesus, were labeled heretical. They continued to exist, however, though not in communion with the mainstream. The Nestorian Christian Church, existing primarily in Syria today, continues to teach that Jesus had two separate natures that were not united in a single person. The Coptic Christian Church, existing today primarily in Egypt and Ethiopia, maintains its belief that Jesus had only one nature—a belief often called *monophysitism* (Greek: "one nature"). The views of these two early Churches exemplify the diversity of thought that existed among Christian groups in the first few centuries of the common era.

It is hard for some of us today to realize the vehemence with which these doctrinal battles were fought. The questions seem more like arguments over words. But at stake was the important question of the union of God and humanity. The insistence on the union of the divine and the human in Jesus left a strong mystical tendency in the theology of Orthodoxy, which equally emphasizes the potential for union between each human being and God. This mystical tendency expressed itself in every aspect of Orthodoxy—particularly in theology and art—and it still exists today.

Another defining controversy, which has had lasting influence, occurred over the use of images for religious practice. We might recall that one of the Ten Commandments prohibits the making of images (Exod. 20:4), and Jews, as a result, have generally refrained from creating any religious images. Islam has a similar prohibition, as do some forms of Protestant Christianity today. The argument over making and using images reached a crisis when

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Inside a Greek Orthodox Church

In his book *Eleni,* Nicholas Gage documents his childhood in Greece during World War II and the civil war that followed it. His memories include this description of the Greek Orthodox church in his native village of Lia. The church was destroyed by the Nazis.

> For seven centuries the Church of the Virgin had nourished the souls of the [villagers of Lia]. Its interior was their pride and their Bible. No one needed to be literate to know the Holy Scriptures, for they were all illustrated here in the frescoes painted by the hand of monks long vanished into anonymity. In the soaring vault of the cupola, Christ the All-Powerful, thirty times the size of a mortal man, scrutinized the congregation below, his Gospel clasped in his hand. In the spaces between the windows, the prophets and apostles, painted full-length with bristling beards and mournful eyes, made their eternal parade toward the altar.
>
> The villagers of Lia never tired of staring at the wonders of the Church of the Virgin: the walls glowed with every saint and martyr, the twelve feast days, the Last Supper, the life of the Virgin, and as a final warning, on the wall near the door, the Last Judgment, where bizarre dragons and devils punished every sort of evil, with the priests in the front rank of the sinners.
>
> The jewel of the church was the magnificent golden carved iconostasis, the shimmering screen which hid the mysteries of the sanctuary until the priest emerged from the Royal Doors carrying the blood and body of Christ. The iconostasis held four tiers of icons, splendid with gold leaf and jewels, and between the sacred pictures the native wood-carvers had allowed their imagination to create a fantasy of twining vines and mythical birds and beasts perched in the lacy fretwork.[23]

the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (680–740 C.E.) commanded the destruction of all images of Jesus, Mary, and the angels. It is possible that he did this for political as well as religious reasons, hoping to build bridges to Islam. But John of Damascus (c. 676–749), a monk and writer, came strongly to the defense of religious images—or **icons,** as they are often called (the Greek term *eikon* means "image"). John argued that images served the same purpose for the illiterate as the Bible did for those who could read. He also argued that God, by becoming incarnate in Jesus, did not disdain the material world. Icons, he said, were simply a continuation of that manifestation of divine love shown through the physical world. Church councils later affirmed the use of images, thus putting an indelible stamp on the practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which glories in the veneration of religious paintings.

Cracks in the unity of Christianity appeared early, but the first great division occurred in 1054, when disagreements brought the bishops of Rome and Constantinople to excommunicate each other. Despite the fact that the excommunications at last have been revoked, there remains a strong sense of separation.

Although cultural differences assisted the separation, there were small doctrinal differences, as well. The most famous concerned the doctrine of the Trinity. Did the Holy Spirit come from the Father or the Son or from both? The oldest and traditional position held that the Father generated the Spirit, but it became common in the West to attribute the generation of the Spirit to both Father and Son together. The Latin word **filioque** ("and from the Son") was added to creeds in the West from an early period. The Eastern

Church rejected the notion as an improper addition to the Nicene Creed and cited it as a main reason for splitting off from the Western Church. Another dividing issue was the growing power of the pope and the claim that the bishop of Rome was the head of all Christians. Scholars today, however, point out the inevitability of separation because of many factors, such as distance, differences of language, and the political growth of northern and eastern Europe.

Orthodox belief is, in summary, quite similar to that which emerged in the West and eventually became mainstream Christianity. The doctrinal differences are quite small, but the Orthodox Church differs in emphasis. Mainstream Western Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) has focused on the death of Jesus as an atonement for sin. Some scholars have said that that focus indicates a more "legal" emphasis: God is viewed as a judge, and punishment and repentance are paramount. Eastern Christianity has put more emphasis on a mystical self-transformation that human beings can experience through contact with Christ. As a consequence, Orthodox Christian art and literature focus less on the crucifixion of Jesus and more on the resurrection.

With the collapse of Communism in Russia and eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church has regained some of its earlier strength. Church buildings that were banned from religious use have been transferred back to Church ownership and restored. It is notable that after the fall of Communism, Russian authorities decided to rebuild the Cathedral of the Holy Savior in Moscow, which Stalin had destroyed and replaced with a swimming pool. The Russian Orthodox Church was also successful in having laws passed in 1997 that affirmed its special status, thereby giving it assistance against the missionary efforts of some other religious groups.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: INSIDE THE MONASTERIES ON MOUNT ATHOS

Mount Athos is a finger of rocky land jutting into the Aegean Sea in the far north of Greece. The peninsula is a monastic state, where monks and hermits have lived for at least a thousand years. Although politically it is part of Greece, it is semi-independent and conducts its own affairs through a monastic council. At the center of the peninsula is a high mountain, and scattered around it, close to the shore, are twenty large monasteries. One spring, after getting the proper approvals from the government, I spent the week of Orthodox Easter at Athos.

From Athens I went to Thessaloníki, and from there I took a bus filled with people going back home to celebrate the festival. After staying the night in the village of Ouranopolis, I got on a ferryboat to Athos before dawn the next morning. In the small capital of Kariaí, where monks run the shops, I received my passport. Over its Greek words was a picture of the peninsula and of Mary, appearing protectively over its mountain. This

A monk pulls a boat to dock below the Monastery of Saint Dionysiou at Mount Athos.

passport allowed me to stay overnight in any monastery I visited.

Each day I walked from one monastery to the next, a trip of about four hours, and was received graciously everywhere. One day I even hitched a ride on the back of one of three donkeys that were being used to carry supplies to several monasteries for the Easter celebration. The two drivers of the animals gave me brandy and Easter candy as the donkeys ambled along. Spring flowers blossomed everywhere next to innumerable streams, which were fed by water from snow melting on the mountain. At one point, the drivers, no longer sober, began arguing with each other. They jumped off their donkeys and began to fight, and the donkeys fled. A monk in a small rowboat came ashore, scrambled up the hill, and stopped the fighting. We recaptured the donkeys, which were feeding placidly farther up on the green hillside, and went on our way, as if nothing had happened.

The monasteries have high walls designed to protect the monks from the pirates who once roamed the coast. The lower half of each monastery is generally without windows, rising about 70 feet in height, and above that are as many as seven stories of wooden balconies. In the center of each monastery is a separate church building in the shape of a Greek cross, usually painted a reddish-brick color. Each arm of the church building is equal in size, and at the intersection of all the arms is the large central dome.

I can never forget the services of Easter, celebrated in those mysterious spaces. Being inside the churches felt like being in a group of caves. The floors were covered with sweet-smelling laurel leaves, an ancient symbol of victory. Chandeliers full of candles hung from the domes, illuminating the darkness like stars. For the predawn Easter service, monks used long sticks to make the chandeliers swing back and forth. As the chandeliers swayed, they lit up the murals and mosaics on the walls. I could see images of the prophet Elijah in his cave and the prophet Isaiah speaking with a six-winged angel. Jesus stood on a mountaintop, surrounded by an almond-shaped, rainbow-colored halo. Mary held her child and looked at me serenely. Above them all, an austere cosmic Christ held his hand up in blessing. Below him, each holding a lighted, orange beeswax candle that smelled like honey, monks on one side of the church began the Easter greeting. *"Christos anesti,"* they sang. "Christ is risen." Then monks on the other side answered back, *"Alithos anesti"*—"Truly, he is risen." They sang these two phrases

back and forth for minutes. At last they stopped—except for one monk. He had a long white beard and was singing with his eyes closed. *"Christos anesti,"* he continued to sing loudly. *"Christos anesti."* The monks looked at each other in confusion, then smiled as a middle-aged monk came out and tapped the old monk on the shoulder. The old monk opened his eyes and there was silence.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

From its earliest days, when it was just another exotic "Eastern" religion in the Roman Empire, Christianity had made astonishing leaps—at first facing persecution, then becoming the official religion of the empire, and finally rising as *the* religion of all Europe. Christianity also existed on a smaller scale and in varied forms in Ethiopia, the Middle East, and India.

There were many reasons for the growth of Christianity. It preached a gospel of mercy and hope, offered divine help, promised an afterlife, treated the sick, and aided the poor. It taught skills in agriculture and architecture, introduced books, and spread use of the technology of the time. Imagine how a candlelit church at Easter—with its music, incense, candles, jeweled books, glass windows, and gorgeously robed priests—must have appeared to people who were not yet Christians. The effect must have been intoxicating. A legendary story tells of Russian ministers who attended a service at Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Constantinople about 988 C.E. When they returned home to Kiev, they said that during the cathedral service they had not known whether they were on earth or in heaven.

Although many of the religious practices in both Rome and Constantinople were Roman in origin, the two centers, as we have seen, eventually split over differences. The existence of several patriarchates in the East kept any one of them from becoming a single ruling power. But the Roman Church in the West had no competitors for power in its region and thus grew in authority and strength. The pope, as the bishop of Rome, asserted his dominion over all Christians, an assertion that was not widely opposed in the West until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The long-term effect was that the practices of the Roman Church would set the standard for language, practice, doctrine, church calendar, music, and worship throughout western Europe and then beyond, wherever European influence traveled. (To get a sense of the far-reaching impact of Roman culture, consider the fact that the book you are now reading—long after the Roman Empire has ended and probably thousands of miles from Rome—is written in the Latin alphabet: the capital letters come from the classical Latin of Rome; the lowercase letters were created by Christian monks and clerics.)

The growing size of the Christian population and the increasing cultural dominance of Christianity created a climate for a wide variety of religious

In this fresco, Giotto portrays Saint Francis receiving the wounds of Jesus. Some in the Middle Ages saw this as the ultimate mystical experience.

expression: devotional and mystical movements, the founding of new religious communities, the Crusades and the Inquisition, reform movements, and new interpretations of the Christian ideal. Over time, traditional Church authority was questioned, giving rise to a search for new sources of authority.

Christian Mysticism

The word *mysticism* in theistic religions indicates a direct experience of the divine and a sense of oneness with God. Although not always approved of by Church authorities, this sort of transcendent experience is nevertheless an important part of Christianity. Christian mystics have spoken of their direct contact with God, sometimes describing a dissolution of all boundaries between themselves and God. Accounts of their experiences speak of intriguing states of consciousness.

The fact that Jesus felt an intimate relationship with God, whom he called Father, provided a basis for seeing Jesus as a role model for all Christian mystics. The Gospel of John, which has a strong mystical tendency, sees Jesus in this light. We also see mysticism in some letters of Paul. For example, Paul describes himself as having been taken up to "the third heaven" and having heard there things that could not be put into words (2 Cor. 12:1–13). Many monks and nuns from the earliest days of Christianity yearned to experience God, and mystical passages are common in the writings of Origen, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa.[24] Origen (c. 185–254) was the first of many Christians who would interpret the biblical Song of Songs mystically. He saw the young lover as Jesus and his beloved as a symbol of the mystic, "who burned with a heavenly love for her bridegroom, the Word of God."[25]

Mystical experience was especially prized in the West during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Saint Francis of Assisi (1182–1226 C.E.) is possibly the best-known medieval mystic. Originally a playboy and son of a wealthy trader, Francis embraced a life of poverty in order to imitate the life of Jesus. He also showed a joyful love of nature, calling the sun and moon his brother and sister. One of the greatest Christian mystics was Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1328), a German priest whose description of God as being beyond time and space, as "void," and as "neither this nor that"[26] has captured the interest of Hindus and Buddhists as well as Christians.

Many mystics were women. In recent years, the mystical songs of the medieval Benedictine nun Hildegard of Bingen (c. 1098–1179) have become popular through the availability of numerous recordings. An Englishwoman, Julian (or Juliana) of Norwich (c. 1342–1416), had a series of mystical experiences, which she later described in her book *Revelations of Divine Love.* She wrote of experiencing the feminine side of God. "God is as really our Mother as he is our Father. He showed this throughout, and particularly when he said that sweet word, 'It is I.' In other words, 'It is I who am the strength and goodness of Fatherhood; I who am the wisdom of Motherhood.'"[27] One of the most famous female mystics was Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), a Spanish nun who wrote in her autobiography about her intimacy with God. A dramatic statue by Bernini at the Roman church of Santa Maria della Vittoria shows Teresa lost in ecstasy.

> Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.
>
> —Prayer attributed to Francis of Assisi[28]

The mystical approach to Christianity was counterbalanced by Christian attempts to offer reasoned, philosophical discussion of primary beliefs. The religious communities of Franciscans and Dominicans (discussed later in this chapter) were especially active in this work. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a Dominican priest, is the best known. In two major works, the *Summa Theologica* and *Summa Contra Gentiles,* he blended the philosophical thought of Aristotle with Christian scripture and other Christian writings to present a fairly complete Christian worldview. Even he, however, was swayed by the appeal of mystical experience. At the end of his life, after a particularly profound experience of new understanding brought on by prayer, he is said to have remarked that all he had written was "like straw" in comparison to the reality that could be understood directly through mystical experience.

The Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Founding of Religious Orders

During the fourth and fifth centuries and thereafter, Christians all over Europe made pilgrimages to the lands where Jesus had lived and died, and the Emperors Constantine and Justinian had built churches there to encourage this practice. But Muslims took control of Jerusalem in the seventh century, and by the eleventh century, Christian pilgrimage had become severely restricted. To guarantee their own safety in pilgrimage and their access to the "Holy Land," some Europeans felt they had a right to seize control over the land of Israel and adjacent territory. Attempts to take over the Holy Land were called the Crusades—military expeditions that today might be described as religious enthusiasm gone badly astray.

The First Crusade began in 1095, and Jerusalem was taken after a bloody battle in 1099. Europeans took control of Israel and kept it for almost two hundred years, until they lost their last bit of Israel, at Acre near the port of Haifa, in 1291. The suffering inflicted on Muslims and Christians alike was appalling, and most crusaders died not of wounds but of illness. Many Eastern Christians, too, died at the hands of crusaders because they were mistaken for

Muslims. The Crusades also did ideological damage, for they injured Christianity in their promotion of the ideal of a soldier who kills for religious reasons—something quite foreign to the commandments of Jesus. The romantic notion of the Christian soldier, "marching as to war," has remained in some forms of Christianity ever since.

One significant development in Christianity was the founding of nonmonastic religious communities, called *religious orders.* An order is a religious organization of men or women who live communal celibate lives, follow a set of written rules (Latin: *ordo*), and have a special purpose, such as teaching or nursing. The most famous medieval order was the Franciscan order, begun by Saint Francis of Assisi, who idealized poverty and worked to help the poor. Other orders were the Dominicans, who became teachers and scholars, and the Knights Templar, who protected the pilgrimage sites and routes. Most orders also accepted women, who formed a separate division of the order.

In another development of the times, as western Europe became almost fully Christianized, Jews, Muslims, and heretics were considered to be religiously and politically dangerous. Jews were forced to live a life entirely separate from Christians; nontraditional Christians who had emerged in southern France were destroyed; and an effort began that would rid Spain and Sicily of Muslim influence.

The Inquisition received its name from its purpose—to "inquire" into a person's religious beliefs. Church authorities set up an organization to guarantee the purity of Christian belief, and its aim was to root out variant forms of Christianity that were considered *heretical*—divisive and dangerous to public order. Heretics were ferreted out, questioned, tortured, and, if found guilty, burned to death.

The Inquisition was first active in southern France in the thirteenth century, and the same inquisitorial procedures were later employed in Spain. We might recall that in the fifteenth century there was a large-scale attempt by Christian rulers to "reconquer" all of Spain. When all Spanish territory had been taken over by Christian rulers, Jews and Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity or to leave Spain, and many did leave, particularly for Morocco and Egypt. Those who stayed had to accept baptism and to publicly practice Christianity. Some of these new converts continued, however, to practice their old religions in private. The Inquisition attempted to discover who these "false Christians" were, and the religious order of Dominicans was especially active in this pursuit.

Tomás de Torquemada (c. 1420–1498), a Spanish Dominican, was appointed first inquisitor general by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1483 and grand inquisitor by Pope Innocent VIII in 1487. As he oversaw the Inquisition in Spain, he became notorious for his cruelty. The Reconquista, as the Christian movement was called, took over all Spanish territory in 1492. After this date, the Inquisition acted as a religious arm of the Spanish government both in Spain and in Spanish colonies in the New World.

The Late Middle Ages

The complete ousting of the crusaders from Israel (1291) marked the end of the Christian optimism that had been typical of the earlier Middle Ages. The loss was widely viewed as some kind of divine punishment for religious laxity. The feeling of pessimism deepened a half century later, when an epidemic of bubonic plague—called the Black Death for the black swellings that appeared on people's bodies—began to spread throughout Europe. The first major outbreak of disease occurred largely between 1347 and 1351. Beginning in France and Italy, the plague swept throughout western Europe; whole towns were emptied, with no one left to bury the corpses. Priests often fled, refusing to attend the dying—a neglect that brought the Church into great disrepute. Between a quarter and a third of the population died, and the plague continued to break out in many places for years afterward.

We now know that the disease was bacterial, caused by a bacillus found in fleas, which carried the disease to human beings. Rats that carried the fleas had arrived on ships that came from the Black Sea to ports in southern France and Italy. But the medical origin of the plague was not understood at the time, and people saw it instead as punishment from God. Some blamed the Jews, who were accused of poisoning wells or of angering God by their failure to accept Christianity. Others saw the plague as punishment for the lax behavior of Church authorities.

It is natural for a successful institution to take its authority for granted, and by the late Middle Ages it was common for bishops and abbots to be appointed to their positions purely for financial or family reasons. Some even lived away from their monasteries or dioceses. Indeed, for most of the fourteenth century, the popes lived not in Rome but in southern France. This papal dislocation led to a weakening of Church authority, until two and then finally three factions claimed the papacy.

The Middle Ages saw many changes in European society, as travelers to the Middle East and Asia returned home with new goods and ideas. New forms of trade and economy developed. Imagination and independence grew.

By far the greatest development of the late Middle Ages was the invention of printing with movable type. Before that time, all writing had to be done, laboriously, by hand, making the Bible and other works available only to scholars and clergy. Although the first book to be printed (c. 1450) was a Latin Bible, translations were soon necessary. Printing also made possible the spread in modern languages of new and revolutionary ideas. As a result, a multitude of vital new forms of Christianity would emerge.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

As institutions age, they naturally lose some of their earnestness and purity, prompting attempts at reform. The Eastern Church, weakened by the Muslim invasions and its own decentralization, had less need for reform. In contrast, the Roman Church in the West had been enormously successful,

spreading throughout western Europe and building a centralized power structure that had not been seriously challenged in the first thousand years of its growth.

By the late medieval period, people resented the lands and wealth of the Church and its monasteries. Thoughtful people also were troubled by what seemed to be a multitude of superstitious practices—particularly the veneration of relics of saints. Significant relics included the bones of saints and any object supposedly touched by Jesus or Mary or the saints, such as Mary's veil and the nails used at Jesus' crucifixion. Many of these items were not genuine.

Earlier attempts at reform had not been successful. John Wycliffe (c. 1320–1384), an English priest, preached against papal taxation and against the special authority of the clergy. He labeled as superstition the doctrine of transubstantiation (the notion that the sacrament of bread and wine, when blessed at the Mass, literally turned into Jesus' flesh and blood). He also oversaw the first translation of the Latin Bible into English. Accused of heresy by Pope Gregory XI in 1377, he was forbidden to teach. He died a natural death by stroke, but after his teachings were condemned by the Council of Constance (1414–1418), his body was dug up and burned and the ashes were thrown into a river.

Jan Hus (c. 1370–1415), rector of the University of Prague, kept alive many of Wycliffe's criticisms. Excommunicated in 1410 and condemned by the same council that condemned Wycliffe, Hus was burned at the stake in 1415.

Reform was inevitable. Soon another great turning point would occur in Christianity. The north and south of Europe would painfully split along religious lines, and Western Christianity would divide into Protestantism and Catholicism.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483–1546), a German priest, was the first reformer to gain a large following and to survive, and his success encouraged others who also sought reforms. Their joint influence ultimately created the Protestant branch of Christianity, so called because the reformers protested some of the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church.

Luther, convinced of his own personal sinfulness, entered religious life (the Augustinian order) as a young man because of a vow made during a lightning storm. To enter religious life, he had to disobey his father, who wanted him to be a lawyer.[29] But after ordination as a priest, Luther still did not experience the inner peace he had expected.

Luther became a college professor in the university town of Wittenberg, teaching courses in the Bible with a focus on the New Testament—particularly the Pauline Epistles. At a time when he felt overwhelmed by his own sinfulness, he was struck by Paul's words at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans: "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).[30] Luther admitted that

Luther's writings provide a sense of his personality, here conveyed in Lucas Cranach's portraits of Luther and his wife Katharina.

upon reading this epistle he felt as if he had been "born anew" and sensed that now "the gates of heaven" were open to him.

What Luther came to believe was that no matter how great the sinfulness of a human being, the sacrifice of Jesus was enough to make up for all wrongdoing. An individual's good deeds could never be enough; to become sinless in God's eyes, a person could rely on the work of Jesus.[31] Luther also recognized the importance of his reading of the Bible as an important factor in receiving his new spiritual insight. Luther's main focuses have sometimes been summarized by the Latin phrases *sola scriptura* ("scripture alone") and *sola fides* ("faith alone").

Luther's teaching came at a time when the papacy was asking for contributions for the building of the new Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. In return, donors were promised an **indulgence,** which would shorten the time after death that an individual would spend in purgatory, a preparatory state before the soul could attain heaven. Luther opposed the idea that anything spiritual could be sold.

To show his opposition and to stir debate, in 1517 Luther posted on the door of the castle church of Wittenberg his demands for change and reformation in the form of *Ninety-Five Theses.* Despite reprimands, Luther was unrepentant, and in 1521 Pope Leo X excommunicated him. Luther's efforts at reform might have failed—and he also might have been burned at the stake—if he had not received the support of and been hidden by the prince of his region, Frederick III of Saxony. During this period of refuge, Luther

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Emphases of Protestant Christianity

Protestantism seeks to find—and live by—what is essential to the Christian experience. It places great emphasis on the individual's own ability to establish a personal relationship with God.

Return to simple Christianity The New Testament outlines the essentials of Christianity, both in belief and in practice. Christians should imitate the early tradition and avoid unnecessary, later alterations.

Centrality of Jesus Jesus is the one way to God the Father. Devotion to Mary and the saints has distracted believers from their faith in Jesus and should be deemphasized or even abandoned. Trust in relics of Mary and the saints borders on superstition.

Guidance of the Bible The Bible is a divinely inspired guide for human lives. Believers should read it regularly, and ministers should explain it in sermons.

Importance of faith One's deeds alone cannot bring salvation. Faith in Jesus brings righteousness in God's eyes.

Direct relation to God Although ministers assist in religious services, they are not necessary as intermediaries between God and the individual. Every individual has a direct relationship with God.

Individual judgment The Holy Spirit helps each believer make decisions about the meaning of biblical passages and about how to apply Christian principles to everyday life. (The ability of each individual to radically question and rethink accepted interpretation is sometimes called the Protestant Principle.)

translated the New Testament into German, and he soon translated the Old Testament, as well. Luther's translation of the Christian Bible was to become for the Germans what the King James Bible became for the English-speaking world—it had an incalculable influence on German language and culture.

After his insight into the sufficiency of faith, Luther firmly rejected celibacy and the monastic style of life. He married a former nun, Katharina von Bora, had six children, and opened his home to a wide range of visitors interested in his work on church reform.

Forms of Protestantism

The right of every individual to radically question and reinterpret Christian belief and practice is at the heart of Protestant Christianity. This so-called **Protestant Principle** has been responsible for the generation of major branches of mainstream Protestantism, a multitude of smaller sects, and many thousands of independent churches, which continue to proliferate miraculously. Their styles of organization and worship run the spectrum—from ritualistic and structured to informal, emotional, and highly individualistic. Some Protestant denominations emphasize emotional conversion of individuals, while others stress broad social welfare. Some exclude people who are not in their denomination, while others are strongly inclusive, even inviting non-Christians to share in their services. Some have retained traditional ritual and an episcopal structure (that is, involving bishops and priests), while others have rejected all ritual and clergy. We must keep this variety in mind as we read about these denominations.

Lutheranism Martin Luther's version of the reform emphasized faith and the authority of the Bible. To encourage greater participation, Luther called for services to be conducted in German as well as in Latin. He also wrote hymns that were to be sung in German by the entire congregation, thus beginning a strong musical tradition in Lutheranism, which has particularly valued choral and organ music.

Luther's version of the Protestant reform spread throughout central and northern Germany and then into Scandinavia and the Baltic states. It came to the United States with German and Scandinavian immigrants, who settled primarily in the upper Midwest. Over the years, Lutheranism has retained Luther's original enthusiasm for the Bible, a trust in God, and excellent church music.

Calvinism Once the notion of reform was accepted, it was adopted and reinterpreted by others who also sought change. Among them was the French theologian John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin's thought is sometimes said to be darker than Luther's because he saw human nature as being basically sinful and almost irresistibly drawn to evil. He also took the notion of God's power to its logical end: if God is all-powerful and all-knowing, then God has already decreed who will be saved and who will be damned (a doctrine known as **predestination**). One's deeds do not cause one's salvation or damnation; rather, they are a sign of what God has already decreed.

Calvin's view of God as judge may have been influenced by his study of law at the university. Eager for reform, when he was only 26 he published a summary of his ideas in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Persecuted in France, he was forced to flee and eventually settled in Geneva, Switzerland. Because of the work of the reformer priest Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), the Swiss were already considering reforms. Calvin's great success in Geneva made the city a center for the expansion of the reform movement.

Where Luther had allowed much latitude in preserving elements of the Mass and other traditional Catholic practices, Calvin had a more austere view. Looking exclusively to the Bible for what might be approved, he encouraged the removal of all statues and pictures from the churches and the adoption of a style of congregational singing that had no organ accompaniment. The focus of the Calvinist service was on the sermon.

Ministers were not appointed by bishops—there were to be none in Calvinism—but were "called" by a council from each congregation. This practice, being highly democratic, threatened the political and religious leaders of the time, and believers were often forced into exile. Among such believers were the Puritans, who immigrated to New England, and the Huguenots (French Protestants), who were forced out of France in 1685 and settled in several areas of North America. Calvinism spread to Scotland through the efforts of John Knox (1514–1572), who had studied with Calvin in Geneva. It was in Scotland that a Church structure without bishops was refined, providing a pattern for Calvinism in other countries. Calvinism ultimately became important in Holland, Scotland, Switzerland, and the

United States. Later, in the nineteenth century, it became influential in sub-Saharan Africa, Korea, China, and the Pacific. The Presbyterian Church is the best-known descendant of Calvinism. It gets its name from the Greek word *presbyter,* meaning "elder" or "leader."

The Church of England (Anglican Church) Another form of Protestantism, which originated in England under King Henry VIII (1491–1547), unites elements of the Reformation with older traditional practices. Some see the Anglican Church as a compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Henry maintained the traditional Church structure of bishops and priests. (It is called an *episcopal structure,* from the Greek word *episkopos,* meaning "bishop" or "overseer.") He also kept the basic structure of religious services much as before, initially in Latin. He even maintained priestly celibacy, although this was abolished soon after he died. As a concession to reformers, Henry had an English translation of the Bible placed in each church for all to read. The Church of England had a shaky beginning, but Henry's daughter Elizabeth, when she finally became queen, established it firmly.

The Church of England produced several works of great significance in its first century of existence. *The Book of Common Prayer,* with all major prayers in English for church use, was issued in 1559. Its rhythmic sentences set a standard by which other works in English have been measured. Throughout the sixteenth century, composers were commissioned to write choral music in English for religious services. The result was a wonderful body of music, still in use today. In 1611 the King James Bible was published, named for its sponsor, James I, who had succeeded Queen Elizabeth I. It became the single greatest influence on the English language.

The Church of England has been deliberately tolerant of a wide spectrum of interpretation and practice. Some churches have buildings and services of great simplicity (their style is called Low Church), while others use incense, statues of Mary, and stately ritual (called High Church). Furthermore, in spite of great opposition, the Church of England has accepted the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate.

Sectarianism The powerful notion that every individual can interpret the Bible has encouraged—and still encourages—the development of an abundance of independent churches or sects. Most have been formed by a single, charismatic individual, and many have been small. Some have interpreted the Bible with literal seriousness, thus producing special emphases—among them, the rejection of the outside world and its technology, the adoption of an extremely simple lifestyle, total pacifism (rejection of war and violence), complete celibacy, and the expectation of the imminent end of the world. As a loosely defined group, this branch of Protestantism is called Sectarianism. Following are the most prominent sects:

The Anabaptists (meaning "baptize again"), a pious movement that developed during the sixteenth century, stressed the need for believers to be baptized as a sign of their inner conversion—even if they had

been baptized as children. Their worship was simple. From this general movement arose several Mennonite and Amish sects, some communities of which maintain a simple, agricultural lifestyle without the use of cars or electricity. (The movie *Witness* is set against a background of Amish life.)

The Baptists, a denomination that began in England, have grown up as a major force in the United States. Baptists espouse some of the Anabaptist principles, including the need for inner conversion, baptism of adults only, simplicity in ritual, independence of personal judgment, and freedom from government control.

The Quakers were founded by George Fox (1624–1691) in England. Those who came to the United States settled primarily in Pennsylvania. Quakers are ardent pacifists; they have no clergy; and they originated a type of church service conducted largely in silence and without ritual. Their official name is Society of Friends, but the name Quaker came about from George Fox's belief that people should "quake" at the Word of the Lord.

The Shakers grew out of the Quaker movement. They were begun by an Englishwoman, "Mother" Ann Lee (1736–1784), who came from England to New York State. The Shakers accepted both women and men but preached complete celibacy. Their religious services were unusual because they included devotional dance, from which their name derives. Settling in New York State and New England, the Shakers founded communities primarily dependent on farming. Although there are only a handful of Shakers today, their vision of

Baptists, with roots in England, are the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Here, thousands worship at a Baptist service in Dallas.

Christian simplicity lives on in their architecture and furniture, which is unadorned but elegant.

The Pentecostal movement, although it has ancient roots, has been especially active in the last one hundred years. It emphasizes the legitimate place of emotion in Christian worship. At such services one might encounter "speaking in tongues" (*glossolalia*), crying, fainting, and other forms of emotional response, which are thought of as gifts brought by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Methodist Church at first was simply a devotional movement within the Church of England. It was named for the methodical nature of prayer and study followed by Charles Wesley (1707–1788) and his followers at Oxford. But under the strong guidance of John Wesley (1703–1791), Charles's brother, Methodism took on an independent identity. Charles Wesley wrote more than six thousand hymns, which helped spread the movement.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY FOLLOWING THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Catholic Reformation (Counter Reformation)

Although the Protestant Reformation was a powerful movement, Roman Catholicism not only withstood its challenges but also grew and changed in response to it. That response, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—called the Catholic Reformation or the Counter Reformation—strongly rejected most of the demands of the Protestant reformers. Protestants rejected

Saint Peter's Basilica and Piazza stand as a monument to the Catholic Reformation.

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Emphases of Catholic Christianity

Catholicism accepts all traditional Christian beliefs, such as belief in the Trinity, the divine nature of Jesus, and the authority of the Bible. In addition, particularly as a result of the Protestant Reformation, it defends the following beliefs and practices.

Importance of good works The Christian must accompany faith with good works to achieve salvation.

Value of tradition Along with the Bible, Church tradition is an important guide for belief and practice.

Guided interpretation of the Bible Individual interpretation of the Bible must be guided by Church authority and tradition.

Hierarchical authority The pope, the bishop of Rome, is the ultimate authority of the Church, and bishops are the primary authorities in their dioceses (regions of authority).

Veneration of Mary and the saints Believers are encouraged to venerate not only Jesus but also Mary and the saints, who reside in heaven. As an aid to faith, believers may also honor relics (the bodies of saints and the objects they used while alive).

Sacraments There are seven **sacraments** (essential rituals), not just two—as most Protestant reformers held. They are baptism, confirmation, the **Eucharist** (the Lord's Supper, Mass), matrimony, holy orders (the ordination of priests), reconciliation (the confession of sins to a priest), and the anointing of the sick (unction).

the authority of the pope; Catholics stressed it. Protestants demanded the use of native languages; Catholics retained the use of Latin. Protestants emphasized simplicity in architecture and music; Catholics created churches of flamboyant drama.

Nevertheless, the Catholic Church recognized that some institutional reform was necessary. The church's first response was a long council, held in the northern Italian town of Trent between 1545 and 1563. The council set up a uniform seminary system for the training of priests, who had sometimes in the past learned their skills simply by being apprenticed to older priests; it made the Roman liturgy a standard for Catholic services; and it defended traditional teachings and practices (see the box "Emphases of Catholic Christianity"). This council took a defensive posture that erected symbolic walls around Catholic belief and practice.

Several new religious orders came into existence to defend and spread Catholic teaching, of which the most influential was the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. The Spanish founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), was a former soldier, and with this background he brought a military discipline to the training and life of his followers. Ultimately, Jesuits made a lasting contribution through their establishment of high schools and colleges for the training of young Catholics, and many continue this work today.

Because of the varied interpretations of the Bible and of Christian doctrine that began to emerge as a result of the Protestant Reformation, a major part of the Catholic Church's response was to stress discipline and centralized authority. The First Vatican Council (1870) upheld this emphasis when it declared that the pope is infallible when he speaks officially (that is, *ex cathedra,* "from the chair" of authority) on doctrine and morals.

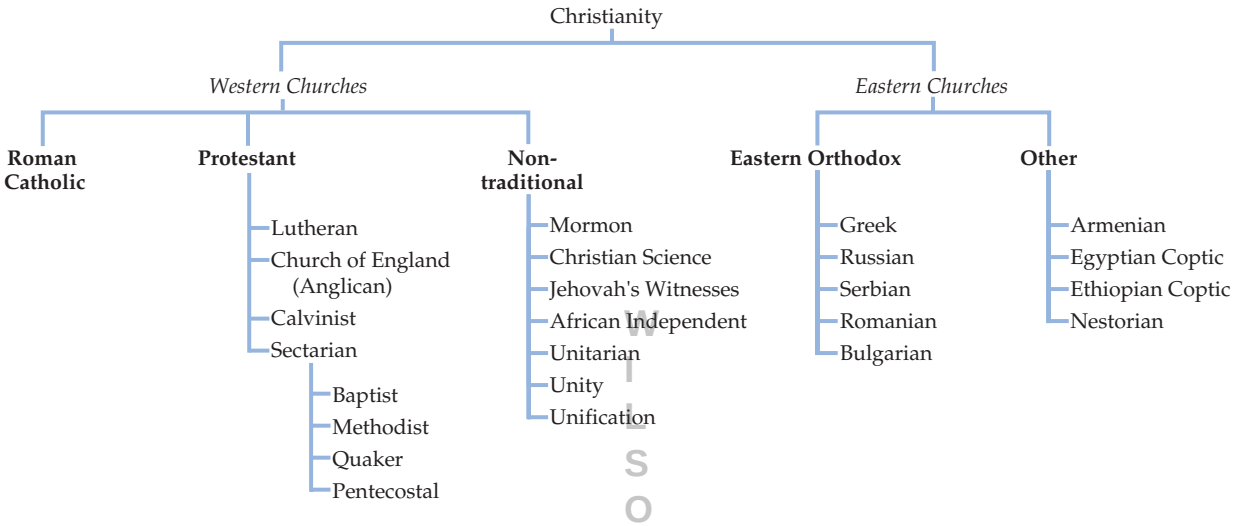


FIGURE 9.2
Branches and denominations of Christianity.

The International Spread of Christianity

The New Testament contains the injunction to "baptize all nations" (Matt. 28:19). As a result of this order, powerful missionary and devotional movements arose within all branches and denominations of Christianity (Figure 9.2). Over the past five hundred years, these movements have spread Christianity to every continent and turned it into a truly international religion.

An early wave of missionary work was conducted by the Catholic Church. Wherever Spanish, Portuguese, and French colonists took power, their missionaries took Catholic Christianity. The Jesuit Père Jacques Marquette (1637–1675) propagated Catholicism in Canada and the Mississippi River valley, and the Franciscan Padre Junípero Serra (1713–1784) spread Catholicism by establishing missions in California. In Asia, early Catholic missionaries at first had little success. Jesuit missionaries were sent out from such missionary centers as Goa in India and from Macau, an island off of southeastern China, to convert the Chinese and Japanese. The Spanish Jesuit Francis Xavier (1506–1552) and Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) were industrious, but their attempts in China and Japan were repressed by the government authorities, who wisely feared that conversion would bring European political control. Catholicism was, however, successful in the Philippines and Guam, where Spanish colonization contributed to the widespread acceptance of the religion. In the nineteenth century, French Catholic missionaries worked in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. Tahiti, after being taken over by the French, became heavily Catholic; Vietnam, too, now has a sizable Catholic population. In sub-Saharan Africa, wherever France, Portugal, and Belgium established colonies, Catholicism also took hold.

Catholicism in Latin America frequently blended with native religions. In Brazil and the Caribbean, African religions (especially of the Yoruba peoples) mixed with Catholic veneration of saints to produce Santería, Voodoo,

and Candomblé (see Chapter 11). In the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, and Spanish-speaking South America, cults of local deities were incorporated into Catholic practice. The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe arose at the place where an Aztec goddess had been worshiped, and nature deities of the Mayans—gods and goddesses of the earth, maize, sun, and rain—are still venerated under the guise of Christian saints. Jesus' death on the cross was easy to appreciate in Mayan and Aztec cultures, in particular, in whose native religions offerings of human blood were an important part. Native worship of ancestors easily took a new form in the Día de los Muertos ("day of the dead"), celebrated yearly on November 2, when people bring food to graves and often stay all night in cemeteries lit with candles.

Protestant Christian missionaries and British conquests also spread their faith throughout the world. Protestant settlers who came to North America represented the earliest wave. The Church of England (the Anglican Church) traveled everywhere the English settled—although in the United States at the time of the American Revolution the name of the Church was changed to the Episcopal Church, to avoid the appearance of disloyalty to the new United States. The Anglican Church is widespread in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other former British colonies. It has also been a major force in South Africa—as demonstrated by its campaign against apartheid (the former government policy of racial segregation) headed by Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu in the late 1980s.

Protestant churches in the United States have played a large role in the lives of African Americans. When slaves were brought to the English colonies of North America, the slaves were (sometimes forcibly) converted to Christianity, usually Protestantism. Most African Americans became members of the Methodist, Baptist, and smaller sectarian denominations. In the nineteenth century, Protestant denominations split over the issue of segregation and slavery, and churches were divided along racial lines. In 1816 the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church emerged from Methodism to serve African Americans exclusively and to save them from having to sit in segregated seating at the services of other denominations. At the same time, some New England Protestant churches became active in the abolitionist (antislavery) movement, helping runaway slaves to escape to Canada and changing public opinion about the morality of slavery. Later, southern Protestant churches played a large role in the movement that fought segregation, and their pastors (such as Martin Luther King Jr.) became its leaders.

Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries have spread their vision of Christianity to Asia and the South Pacific. About a quarter of South Koreans are now Christian. Protestant Chinese have been active in Taiwan, where they are politically prominent, and in mainland China, where today there are many "underground" house-churches that are not authorized by the government.

Missionaries have also spread Orthodox Christianity across Russia to Siberia and even into Alaska, where 40,000 Aleuts (Eskimo) belong to the Orthodox Church. (A noted Russian Orthodox church is located in Sitka,

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929. The fact that both his father and grandfather were Baptist ministers led him naturally to religion. As a young man, he was troubled deeply by segregation and racism, and his studies in college and graduate school convinced him that Christian institutions had to work against racial inequality. His reading of Henry David Thoreau's "Essay on Civil Disobedience" and his study of the work of Mahatma Gandhi led him to believe in the power of nonviolent resistance. In 1959, following Rosa Parks's refusal to move from the white section to the back of a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama, King led a boycott of the buses there. Ultimately, the Supreme Court declared that laws imposing segregation on public buses were unconstitutional. As founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King mobilized black churches to oppose segregation. In 1964 he won the Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated four years later.[32]

King's powerful preaching and writing relied heavily on images taken from the Bible. His "I Have a Dream" speech is inspired by the stories of Joseph's dreams in the Book of Genesis (37:1–10). His "I Have Seen the Promised Land" speech is based on the story of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy (34:1–4).

Martin Luther King Jr. is here portrayed with a halo, a traditional symbol of holiness and sainthood. This contemporary icon was painted by Robert Lentz.

Alaska.) The Orthodox Church also spread to North America through emigration from Russia, Greece, and eastern Europe.

Christianity has been less successful in China, Japan, Southeast Asia (except Vietnam and the Philippines), the Middle East, and North Africa. But elsewhere it is either the dominant religion or a powerful religious presence.

Nontraditional Christianity

Because Christianity is a fairly old religion and has flourished in cultures far from where it originally developed, it has produced some significant offshoots. These denominations differ significantly from traditional Christianity, and

although they are not usually considered a part of the three traditional branches of Christianity—Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox—they all sprang from Protestant origins. They differ in their beliefs, particularly regarding the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the timing of the end of the world, and the role of healing. Because the fastest-spreading of these churches is Mormonism, it is described in some detail. Other nontraditional groups include the Unitarians, Unification Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses (see the box "Examples of Nontraditional Christianity").

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church, is one of the fastest-growing religious denominations in the world. Although Mormons consider themselves to be Christians who belong to a perfect, restored Christianity, mainstream Christian groups point out major differences between Mormonism and traditional Christianity.

Joseph Smith (1805–1844), the founder of the movement, was born in New York State. As a young man he was troubled by the differences and conflicts between Christian groups. When he was 14, he had a vision of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, who informed him that no current Christian denomination was correct, because true Christianity had died out with the death of the early apostles.

When Smith was 17, he had another vision. An angel named Moroni showed the young man to a hill and directed him to dig there. Mormonism teaches that Smith eventually unearthed several long-buried objects of great religious interest. The objects were golden tablets inscribed with foreign words, a breastplate, and mysterious stones that Smith was able to use to translate the words written on the tablets. Smith began the translation work, dictating from behind a curtain to his wife Emma and to friends Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris. The result of his work was the Book of Mormon. Later, John the Baptist and three apostles—Peter, James, and John—appeared to Smith and Cowdery, initiating them into two forms of priesthood—the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods.

Hoping to be free to practice their religion, Smith and his early followers began a series of moves—to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. Opposition from their neighbors resulted from the new Church's belief in the divine inspiration of the Book of Mormon and its practice of polygamy, which Smith defended as biblically justified. At each new location the believers were persecuted and forced to leave. In Illinois, Smith and his brother were imprisoned and then killed by a mob that broke into the jail.

At this point, the remaining believers nominated Brigham Young (1801–1877) as their next leader. Young organized a move to Utah, where he founded Salt Lake City. Prior to the move, a split had developed within the Church—in part over the matter of polygamy. Leadership of the smaller group, which did not travel to Utah, was taken over by Smith's son.

In Utah the Church faced regular opposition but grew in numbers. In 1890, a new revelation that disavowed polygamy was received by the fourth

The Mormon Temple in San Diego is one of the newest in the world.

president of the Church. This rejection of polygamy (sometimes called the Great Accommodation) led to social acceptance of Mormonism. And in 1896, the Utah Territory won statehood.

The Mormon Church has always been a missionary Church, and it made its way very early to England and Hawai`i. The Mormon Church has spread so far through missionary efforts that it is now found worldwide. It has been particularly successful in the South Pacific.

Mormons accept as inspired the Christian Bible, which they usually use in the King James Version. They also believe that several other works are equally inspired. Most important is the Book of Mormon. Another inspired work is the Doctrine and Covenants, a list of more than one hundred revelations that were given by God to Joseph Smith and later heads of the Church. A last inspired work is The Pearl of Great Price, containing further revelations and a compilation of the articles of faith. These three additional works are all thought of as complements to the Christian Bible. More than 100 million copies of the Book of Mormon have been distributed.

While Mormons accept most traditional Christian beliefs, there are some differences. Mormons believe that God the Father has a glorified body, just as Jesus has, although they believe that the Holy Spirit is not embodied. Mormons believe that the souls of human beings once existed in spirit form before taking on earthly bodies and that these spirit-beings were sent into the physical world to perfect themselves.

The Mormon notion of the afterlife includes a belief in hell and in several higher levels of reward: the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial realms. At the peak of the highest realm are Mormons who have performed all the special ordinances in one of the more than one hundred Mormon temples around the world. Couples who have had their marriages "sealed" in a temple service will continue as a married couple in the celestial realm and can become godlike, producing spiritual children there.

The Book of Mormon adds details to traditional biblical history. It teaches that some descendants of the people who produced the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) settled in the Americas but eventually died out. It also teaches that a group of Israelites came to North America about 600 B.C.E. They divided into two warring factions, the Nephites and Lamanites, and Jesus, after his resurrection, came to preach to them. The Book of Mormon tells how in the fourth century C.E. the Nephites were wiped out in battles with the Lamanites, who are considered to be the ancestors of Native Americans.

While Mormons follow the Christian practice of using baptism as a ritual of initiation, they are unusual in that they also practice baptism by proxy for deceased relatives, as was practiced by some early Christians (1 Cor. 15:29). This—along with a general interest in family life—is a major reason for Mormon interest in genealogy. In fact, Mormons maintain the largest source of genealogical records in the world.

Devout Mormons meet for study and worship each Sunday. Their Sunday meetings include a sacrament service (Lord's Supper), which is performed with bread and with water, rather than wine. Ordinary services are carried out in their local places of worship, and these services are generally open to the public. Special services, however, such as the sealing of marriages, are carried out in Mormon temples, and these temple services are closed to non-Mormons. Because they view the body's health as a religious concern, devout Mormons do not smoke or use tobacco, drink alcohol, take illicit drugs, or consume caffeinated beverages, including coffee and tea.

Because the Mormon Church emphasizes different gender roles for men and women, its hierarchy is male. Women, however, exercise leadership roles in their own organizations, which focus on domestic work, child rearing, and social welfare.

Mormons are well known for the importance they place on harmonious family life. Mormons also support the tradition of setting aside one night each week for all family members to stay at home to enjoy their life as a family.

At the top of the Church hierarchy is the church president, who is called the Prophet (as well as Seer and Revelator), because he is considered capable of receiving new revelations from God. Below him is a group of men called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and below that group are the first and second Quorum of the Seventies, who act as general authorities. Below them are area authorities and stake presidents (a *stake* is the equivalent of a diocese). Pastors are called bishops, and the males in their wards (parishes), when they reach the appropriate age, are ordained in various offices of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods. Young men are expected to give two years to preaching the religion, often in foreign countries. Young women are also invited to do missionary work, but the length of their missionary work is slightly less (usually a year and a half). At any one time, about 60,000 missionaries are active. Today the Mormon Church has about twelve million members, half of whom live outside the United States. The headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Mormonism has a strong choral tradition. Hymns and solo works are sung at services, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which gives regular concerts in Salt Lake City, performs a traditional repertory of hymns, oratorios, and other music.

In addition to the Mormons, who form the largest branch of the movement begun by Joseph Smith, there are at least a dozen offshoots. The most important is the Community of Christ, formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS). It changed its name in 2001 in order to emphasize its closeness to mainstream Christianity. Smaller groups exist—some of them continuing the early practice of polygamy—primarily in Utah

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Examples of Nontraditional Christianity

Christianity is capable of taking on new shapes—sometimes blending with other religions. Here are some important examples:

Unification Church Founded in South Korea, this Church blends elements of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It was begun in 1954 by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920), who called himself the Jesus of the Second Coming. The Church hopes to establish God's kingdom on earth. Promoting its vision of society as a harmonious family, the Unification Church arranges marriages between its followers and frequently performs joint wedding ceremonies involving hundreds of couples.

African Independent churches Christianity has been immensely successful in sub-Saharan Africa over the last one hundred years. Although the majority of Christians belong to mainstream traditional churches, thousands of independent churches exist. Some manifest distinctively African characteristics and interests. Among these are a focus on faith healing, prophecy, and charismatic experience. The Harrist Church, for example, was begun in the Ivory Coast by a messianic leader who claimed to have received revelations from the angel Gabriel; and the Mai Chaza Church in Zimbabwe was founded by a woman who claimed to have died and come back to life. These churches also have often adopted elements from African culture, particularly music, dress, and ritual. The Kimbanguist Church of Congo, for example, uses sweet potatoes and honey, rather than bread and wine, in its services.[33]

Jehovah's Witnesses Members of this religion take biblical passages literally and expect the imminent end of the world. The religion does not allow blood transfusions because of the biblical prohibition against ingesting blood. Its members do not believe in the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, or a permanent hell—all of which, they say, are not found in the Bible. For the same reason, they do not celebrate Christmas (or birthdays). Giving allegiance only to God, they are strongly nonpolitical, refusing to salute a flag or show allegiance to any country.

Christian Science and Unity The Christian Science Church and Unity Church began in the movement called New Thought, which emphasized the role of positive affirmations. Christian Science puts emphasis on the power of thought to bring about physical healing. In its services it uses the Bible and the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,* written by its founder Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910). Unity Church is based in Christianity, but it also uses passages from many other religions among its readings. Its services include guided meditations, hymns, and positive affirmations.

Unitarian Church The Unitarian Church rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and prides itself on having no creed. Instead, it imitates the prophetic role of Jesus by emphasizing acts of social justice. The writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were Unitarians.

and western Canada. The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS) is the largest of the groups practicing polygamy and has received much government scrutiny and media coverage in recent years.

CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

While Christianity is very much a religion of doctrines, it is also a religion of ritual, and after more than two thousand years, these rituals have become rich and complex.

Some Christian churches perform baptisms in lakes or rivers. The white garments and the water work together as symbols of purification.

Sacraments and Other Rituals

The most important rituals are thought of as active signs of God's grace and usually are called sacraments. The rituals that are considered essential to the practice of Christianity are the following:

Baptism This ritual cleansing with water is universally used in Christianity as an initiation rite. The ritual originally involved complete immersion of the body, but some forms of Christianity require that only the head be sprinkled with water. Baptism came to Christianity from Judaism, where ritual bathing was an ancient form of purification (see, for example, Lev. 14:8). It was also commonly used to accept converts to Judaism, and the Essenes practiced daily ritual bathing. John the Baptizer, whom the Gospel of Luke calls the cousin of Jesus, used baptism as a sign of repentance, and Jesus himself was baptized and had his followers baptize others. Early Christians continued the practice as a sign of moral purification, new life, and readiness for God's kingdom. In early Christianity, because baptism was done by immersion in water, the act helped recall vividly the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Although early Christians were normally baptized as adults, the practice of infant baptism became common within the first

few hundred years. Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and the more ceremonial forms of Protestantism practice infant baptism. Other forms of Protestantism insist that the ritual be done only as a voluntary sign of initiation and, as such, that baptism be reserved for adults only.

Eucharist Another sacrament is the Eucharist (Greek: "good gift"), or Lord's Supper. Early Christians, particularly Paul's converts, met weekly to imitate the Last Supper, which was probably a Passover meal. At this meal of bread and wine, they prayerfully recalled Jesus' death and resurrection. Sharing the Lord's Supper is a symbolic sharing of Jesus' life and death, but beliefs about it are quite varied. Some denominations see the bread and wine as quite literally the body and blood of Jesus, which the believer consumes; other groups interpret the bread and wine symbolically. All Christian denominations have some form of this meal, but they vary greatly in style and frequency. Catholic, Orthodox, and traditional Protestant churches have a Lord's Supper service every Sunday. Less ceremonial churches prefer to focus their Sunday service on preaching and Bible study, but they usually have the Lord's Supper once a month. Virtually all churches use bread, but some use grape juice or water in place of wine.

In addition to these two main sacraments, accepted by all Christians, some churches count the following rituals as full sacraments:

Confirmation The sacrament of confirmation ("strengthening") is a blessing of believers after baptism. In the Orthodox Church, confirmation is often administered with baptism, but in Catholicism and in some Protestant churches, it is commonly administered in the believer's early teen years.

Reconciliation The sacrament of reconciliation (or penance) takes place when a repentant person admits his or her sins before a priest and is absolved.

Marriage This is the sacrament in which two people publicly commit themselves to each other for life. The two individuals administer the sacrament to each other while the priest or minister simply acts as a public witness of the commitment.

Ordination This sacrament involves the official empowerment of a bishop, priest, or deacon for ministry. (Some denominations ordain ministers but do not consider the action to be sacramental.)

Anointing of the sick In this sacrament (formerly called extreme unction), a priest anoints a sick person with oil—an ancient symbol of health—and offers prayers (see James 5:14).

The Christian Year

By the sixth century a fairly complete Church calendar had evolved, which is still followed by most denominations of Christianity in varying degrees.

Signs and Symbols

In addition to the sacraments, a multitude of smaller devotional rituals has arisen over the two thousand years of Christianity. Making the sign of the cross—in which the fingers of the right hand touch the forehead, the chest, and the two shoulders—is used to begin and end prayer and to call for divine protection. Genuflection—the bending of the right knee—which originated as a sign of submission to a ruler, is a ritual performed by Catholics and some Anglicans on entering and leaving a church. Christians in general often pray on both knees as a sign of devotion to and humility before God.

Devotional objects are also widely used in Christianity. Blessed water (holy water) reminds one of baptism; it is used in the blessing of objects and in conjunction with making the sign of the cross on entering a Catholic church. Oil and salt are used in blessings as symbols of health. Lighted candles symbolize new understanding. Ashes placed on the forehead at the beginning of **Lent** (a time of preparation before Easter) recall the inevitability of death. Palms are carried in a procession on the Sunday before Easter to recall Jesus' triumphal procession into Jerusalem. Incense is burned to symbolize prayer and reverence. Statues and pictures of Jesus, Mary, angels, and saints are common in traditionalist forms of Christianity. Often the statues of saints have special insignia for identification, such as the X-shaped cross on which the apostle Andrew is believed to have been executed.

In addition to devotional rituals and objects, Christianity is a source of much religious symbolism. The fish is an ancient symbol of the Christian believer. It probably began as a reference to Jesus' desire that his followers go out "as fishers of men" (Luke 5:10), seeking converts. It was also used to represent the Greek word *ichthus* ("fish"), which could be read as an acronym for the Greek words that mean "Jesus Christ, God's son, savior." The cross is used to recall Jesus' death; when Jesus is pictured hanging on this cross, the cross is called a crucifix.

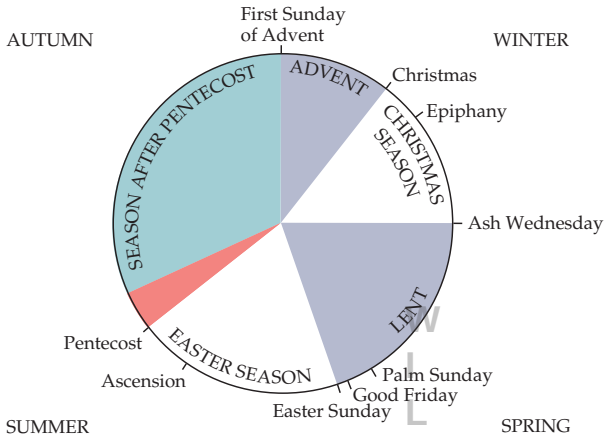
Letters of the Greek alphabet are frequently found in Christian art. Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolize God as the beginning and end of all things (Rev. 1:17). The logo IHS (from the Greek letters iota, eta, and sigma) represents the first three letters of the name *Jesus*. The logo XP (usually written as a single unit and called "chi-rho"—pronounced *kai-ro*) represents the first two letters of the name *Christ* in Greek. (It is also the basis for the abbreviation of *Christmas* as *Xmas*.)

Fish *Latin cross* *Alpha and Omega* *IHS* *Chi-rho*

The most important celebrations are Christmas and Easter. Additional festivals developed around these two focal points. The complete traditional calendar is kept by Catholic, Orthodox, and traditionalist Protestant churches (Anglicans and Lutherans). Because of the Reformation and later developments, many Protestants rejected parts of the traditional Church calendar. (Because the Orthodox generally follow the old Julian calendar of the Roman Empire, Orthodox celebrations can occur up to several weeks after Catholic and Protestant celebrations.)

Matrimony, the blessing of a marriage, came to be considered a sacrament at a relatively late date in Christianity. Here it is celebrated at Rome's church of San Giorgio in Velabro.

Easter The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus was the first Christian festival to develop. Its origins are in the Jewish Passover, a lunar festival of springtime during which Jews recall their exodus from Egypt. (The Western Church came to celebrate Jesus' resurrection on



The Christian Church year.

the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the spring equinox, while the Eastern Orthodox Church may celebrate Easter later.) Although there have been attempts—all unsuccessful—to give Easter a permanent date such as Christmas has, Easter is still an ancient movable feast, connected with the full moon.

Christmas The celebration of Jesus' birth was a later development than the celebration of the resurrection. Although no one knows the exact date of his birth, in Rome, Christians began to use the Roman mid-winter solstice festival called Saturnalia to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The traditional celebration of Christmas lasts for twelve days. It ends with Epiphany (Greek: "showing"), which recalls the visit of the wise men to the child Jesus (Matt. 3:1–12).

Two somber, reflective periods were introduced to help prepare for Christmas and Easter—Advent and Lent, respectively.

Advent The four-week preparation for Christmas that recalls the period before the coming of Jesus is called Advent (Latin: "approach").

Lent The period of forty days of repentance and preparation for Easter is called Lent. The forty days recall the period of fasting and prayer that Jesus spent in the desert before his public life began. For many centuries, people were expected during Lent to do without meat, dairy products, and wine—all foods that were once associated with luxury.

Known as *carnival,* the days just before Lent are given over to the last pleasures possible, before the abstinence of Lent begins. On the Tuesday before Lent—the last day of carnival—meat eating must stop (*carnival* is derived from the Latin *caro*, "meat," and *levare*, "to remove"). Because meat and butter are used up on that day, it came to be called *Mardi Gras* (French: "fat Tuesday") and is the day of a special pre-Lenten celebration in some countries.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when the devout wear ashes on their foreheads to recall the inevitability of death and to show sorrow

The death of Mary, although never mentioned in the New Testament, is celebrated as a major holy day in Orthodox churches. Here, the child in the arms of Jesus symbolizes Mary's soul being taken to heaven.

for wrongdoing. It has been customary for devout Christians to give up pleasures during this time.

Holy Week Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, recalls the acclaim of crowds who waved palm branches when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Holy Thursday reenacts his last supper with disciples. Good Friday recalls his death. Saturday, a day of quiet, ends with a long vigil. At dawn on Sunday comes the first celebration of Easter.

Ascension and Pentecost Forty days after Easter, Jesus' ascension into heaven is celebrated. And ten days later the feast of Pentecost recalls the first preachings of the early Christians. The Sundays after Pentecost are devoted to meditations aimed at furthering the Christian life of the believer. Thus a whole Church year centers on the drama of the life of Jesus and belief in him.

Saints' days and other practices Traditionalist Christians mark certain days to recall their saints, the heroes of Christianity. In the West, Saint Valentine's Day (February 14) and Saint Patrick's Day (March 17) are also celebrated in popular culture. Halloween derives from pre-Christian practice, but the name refers to the evening before All Saints (All Hallows) Day, November 1. Almost every day of the year is dedicated to a special saint or saints, and in some countries children are often named after the saint on whose feast day they are born.

Devotion to Mary

Devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, appeared in Christianity quite early. In the Eastern Church, its strength was evidenced in the fifth century by

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Color Symbolism

Western Christianity has developed a symbolic system of colors, used in many churches and ministers' clothing, to mark festivals and to convey emotions:

white—joy, resurrection; Christmas and Easter
red—love, Holy Spirit, blood of martyrdom; Pentecost
green—hope, growth; Sundays after Pentecost
violet—sorrow, preparation; Advent and Lent
blue—sometimes Advent and feasts of Mary
black—death (now often replaced by white)

Although this system weakened after the Reformation, it is still apparent in weddings (white) and funerals (black).

arguments concerning the titles that could be given to Mary. For example, although some objected, Mary was called *theotokos* ("God bearer"). In the West, Roman Catholic devotion to Mary began to flourish in the Middle Ages. Many of the new churches built after 1100 C.E. in the Gothic style in France were named for *notre dame* ("our lady"), and statues of Mary, often tenderly holding her child on her hip, appeared in almost every church. Praying the *rosary* became common in the West after 1000 C.E. A rosary is a circular chain of beads used to count prayers, with the prayer *Ave Maria* ("Hail, Mary") said on most of the beads. (The use of rosaries for counting prayers is also found in other religions, such as in Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism.)

Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century in the West criticized the devotion to Mary as a replacement for a devotion to Jesus. For this reason, devotion to Mary is less common in Protestant Christianity. But devotion to Mary remains strong in Orthodox and Catholic branches of Christianity.

Catholics believe that Mary appears in the world when her help is needed. The three most important sites where Mary is officially believed to have appeared are Lourdes (in southern France), Fatima (in Portugal), and Tepeyac (near Mexico City). Lourdes, famous for its spring water, is a center for healing, and people hoping for a cure go there to bathe in its waters. Fatima, where Mary is believed to have appeared to three children, is another center of healing. And Tepeyac is the center of the veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is an important part of Hispanic Catholicism. Mary is believed to

Some Christians believe that personal sacrifice will make their prayers and petitions more effective. Here people approach Mexico's shrine of Guadalupe on their knees.

have appeared to a native peasant, Juan Diego, and to have left her picture on his cloak, which is displayed above the high altar in the church at Tepeyac. The site is particularly crowded on December 12, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The festival is celebrated widely with masses and processions in many cities and towns.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE ARTS

Particularly because of its ritual needs, Christianity has contributed much to architecture, the visual arts, and music. This artistic legacy is one of the greatest gifts of Christianity to world culture—a gift that can be experienced easily by traveling, visiting the great churches and museums of major cities, and listening to Christian music.

Architecture

When Christianity began, its services were first held in private homes. As it grew in popularity, larger buildings were needed to accommodate the larger groups, particularly for rituals such as the Lord's Supper. For their public services, early Christians adapted the basilica, a rectangular building used in the Roman Empire as a court of law. In larger Roman basilicas, interior pillars and thick walls helped support the roofs. Windows could be numerous but not too large, because large windows would have weakened the walls. Rounded arches were placed at the tops of windows and doors and between the lines of pillars.

This style—known as Romanesque because of its Roman origins—spread throughout Europe as a practical church design and predominated across western Europe until about 1140. Sometimes two arms were added at each side of one end in order to allow more people to view the ceremonies. Adding two arms also gave the building the symbolic shape of the Latin cross (a cross with the lower part longer than the upper three parts).

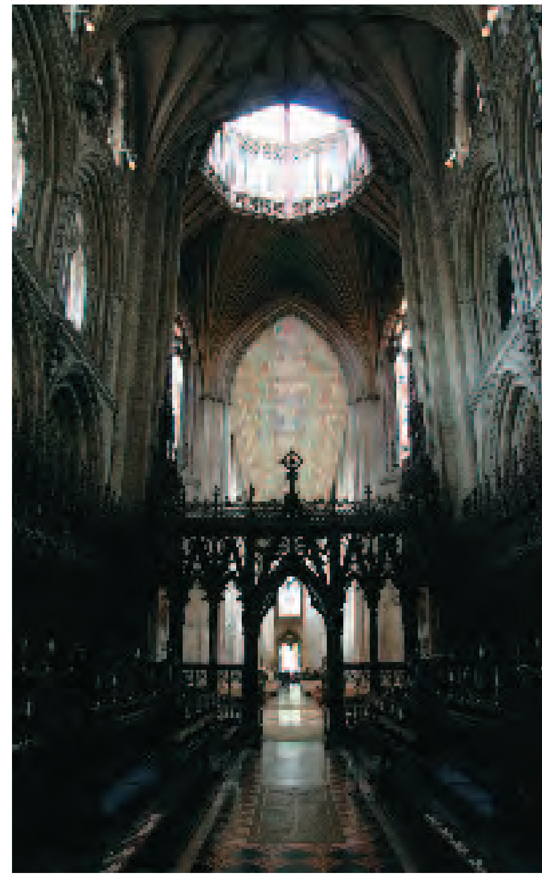
Eastern Orthodox Christianity used the basilica shape but also developed another shape: the model, a perfect square covered by a large dome, was based on the design of the Roman Pantheon. Soon four domed extensions were added on the sides of the main building, which allowed more people inside and offered better structural support to the roof. Like the two arms of the basilica, the four arms gave this building another symbolic shape—that of the Greek cross (a cross with all parts the same length). Because the windows around the domes had to be small, so as not to weaken the roof support, they shed little light, making the interior dark and mysterious. Mosaics with gold backgrounds help to magnify the sometimes dim light.

In the West, probably as a result of contact with Islamic architecture, a new style arose after 1140, known as Gothic style. (The designation *Gothic* was applied to this new style of architecture by a later age, which considered this

style primitive and thus named it after barbarian Gothic tribes. The Gothic style, however, is neither primitive nor a product of Goths. It seems to have developed first in Persia, between 600 and 800 C.E., and elements of it may have been carried to Europe by Europeans returning from Syria and Israel.) The first example of Gothic architecture appeared in France. The cathedral of Saint Denis, near Paris where it began, is still open to visitors today.

Gothic architecture is light and airy; it leaps upward toward the sky. Typical of Gothic style are pointed arches, high ceilings, elongated towers, and delicate stone carving. The walls and roofs are held up externally by stone supports (called *flying buttresses*) that extend outward from the walls and down to the ground. Because these supports do much of the work of holding up the roof, they allow the walls to be filled with large windows, frequently of colored glass.

Gothic churches began springing up everywhere; any town of importance wanted to have a church built in the new style. This was especially true in towns that featured a cathedral. (A cathedral is a bishop's church and takes its name from the bishop's special chair, the *cathedra,* which symbolizes his teaching authority.) The great Gothic cathedrals were so impressive that Gothic style remains *the* style associated with Western Christianity.



The choir of England's Ely cathedral is in Gothic style, while the distant nave exhibits the Romanesque style.

In addition to the influence of the Gothic style in the West, other styles have also been important. The Catholic Reformation popularized the theatrical Baroque style. The word *baroque* is thought to come from the Portuguese name for an irregular pearl, *barroco.* Baroque style uses contrasts of light and dark, rich colors, elegant materials (such as marble), twisting pillars, multiple domes, and other dramatic elements to create a sense of excitement and wonder.

While Catholicism was adopting the Baroque style with enthusiasm, Protestantism generally moved in a more sober direction. With the focus of worship placed on hearing the Bible read aloud and listening to a sermon, new churches were built with pews, clear-glass windows, high pulpits, and second-floor galleries to bring people closer to the preacher. In larger churches, classical Greco-Roman architecture was drawn upon to produce the Neoclassical style.

Mormon temples are architecturally interesting in that they are deliberately unlike older styles, such as Romanesque or Gothic or Byzantine. Instead, the building designs reflect an imaginative style that has been called

Saint John's Abbey Church in Minnesota, completed in 1961, stands in stark contrast to Gothic structures—and to the Crystal Cathedral.

Temple Revival. Elements of the style include large, flat building surfaces that are ornamented with elaborate grillwork and decorated with tall, narrow spires.

In recent times, experimentation has led to innovations in church design, particularly in the United States. The Crystal Cathedral, designed by the noted architect Philip Johnson (1906–2005) for a congregation in southern California, is made entirely of glass. (Robert Schuller, the minister who commissioned the church, began his preaching at a drive-in movie theater, and he said that it inspired him to want a church where he could see the sky.)

Art

Christianity has made immense contributions to art, despite the fact that it emerged from Judaism, which generally forbade the making of images. Mindful of the biblical prohibition against image-making (Exod. 20:4), a few Christian groups still oppose religious images as a type of idolatry. But because Christianity first began to flourish in the Greco-Roman world, it abandoned the prohibition of images and quickly embraced the use of statues, frescoes, and mosaics, which were common art forms there. By the second century, statues and pictures of Jesus had begun to appear, based on Greco-Roman models.

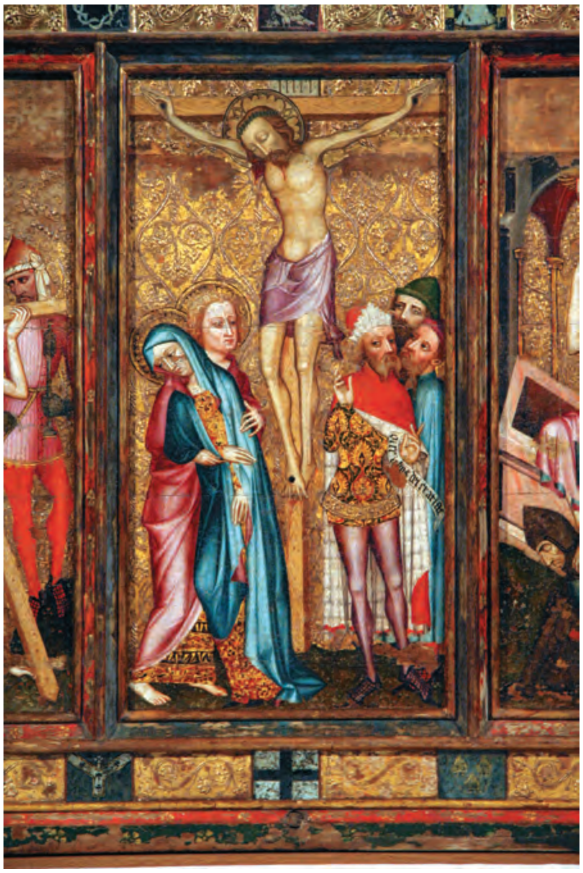
Orthodox Christianity has tended to avoid statues but has concentrated instead on frescoes, mosaics, and icons (paintings on wood). Icons play a special part in Orthodoxy. Churches usually have a high screen that separates the altar area from the body of the church. This screen is called an *iconostasis* ("image stand") because it is covered with icons. Individual icons

The Crystal Cathedral in California, designed by Philip Johnson, has become known around the world for its design and its sometimes patriotic services.

also stand around the church, and during services worshipers may kiss them and place candles nearby. Many homes also display icons.

In western Europe, new directions appeared in Christian art in the later Middle Ages, as wealth and population increased; and after 1300 an interest in the individual person and the human body is evident. As the Middle Ages waned, statues and paintings of Mary began to show her less like a goddess and more like a human mother, and representations of Jesus began to emphasize his bodily suffering. During the Baroque era, painting and sculpture tended toward the dramatic and showy. Paintings of saints often showed the saints' eyes lifted to the skies, the robes blown by wind, and sunlit clouds parted in the background.

Many Protestant groups rejected religious painting and sculpture as being unnecessarily sensual, wasteful, or idolatrous, and because artists in Protestant countries were not greatly patronized by churches, their subjects



The crucifixion of Jesus is perhaps the most frequent subject of Christian art. This painting, at the center of the Despenser Reredos in England's Norwich Cathedral, dates from the late fourteenth century.

tended to be secular, often depicting home life, civic leaders, and landscapes. Christian art however, has begun to flourish again, particularly because it has increasingly been influenced by non-Western traditions and cultures.

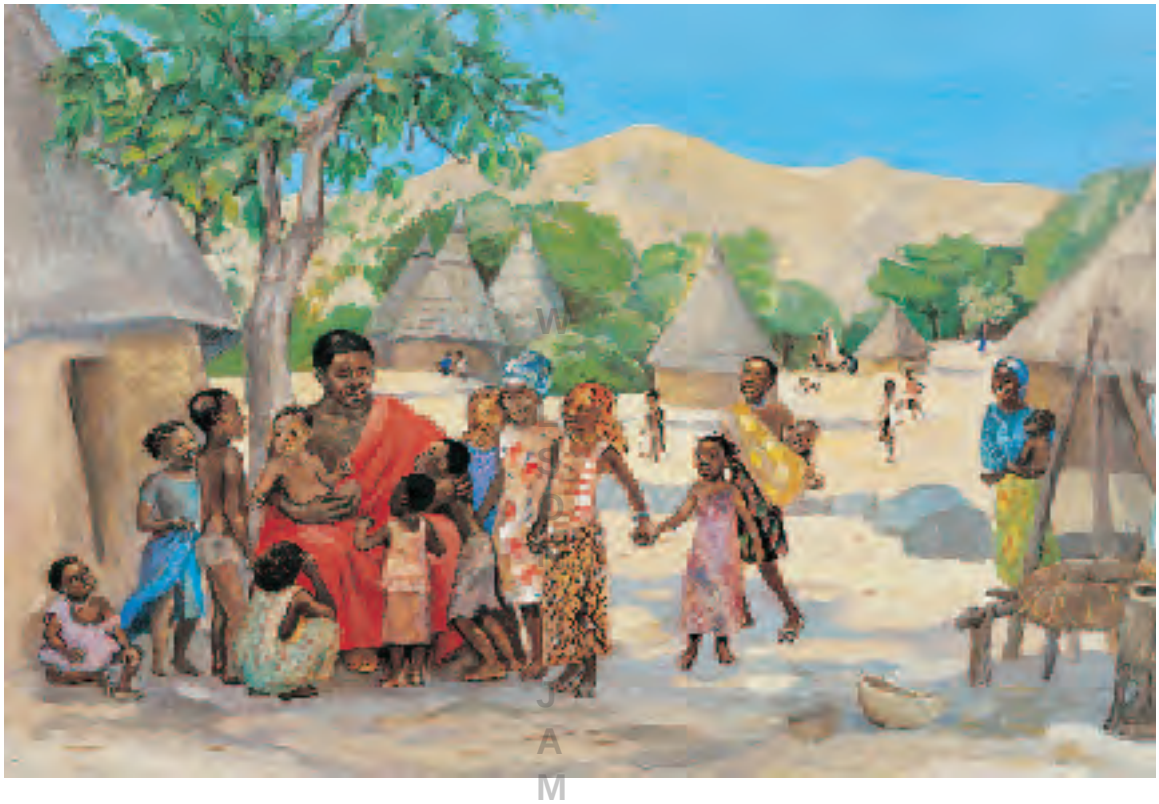
Music

From the beginning, Christianity has been a religion of music. Jesus himself is recorded as having sung a psalm hymn (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). Because of its early musical involvement, Christianity has contributed much to the development of both theory and technique in music. A Benedictine monk, Guido of Arezzo (c. 991–1050), worked to help monks sing the notes of religious chants correctly; he is thought to have systematized the basic Gregorian musical notation system of lines, notes, and musical staffs, from which modern musical notation derives.

For the first thousand years, both Eastern and Western church music was chant—a single line of melody usually sung in unison without instrumental accompaniment. The origins of chant are uncertain, but it probably emerged from both Jewish devotional songs and folk music. Various modes developed, using scales of differing intervals. Each mode conveys its own feeling—some light, some sad, some exalted. Music in the Orthodox Church is sung without accompaniment, thus remaining closer to ancient church music and to its origins in the synagogue and the Near East.

The ancient Greeks were familiar with the principles of harmony as they related to mathematics. But the use of harmony in terms of musical composition (called *organum*) seems to have first developed in Paris, around 1100, in the cathedral of Notre Dame. In the West, initial experiments with harmonized singing eventually led to the introduction of instruments, such as the flute, violin, or organ, which could easily be used to substitute for a human voice or to accompany the chant. Even though it is now considered a primarily religious instrument, the organ at first was opposed for use in some churches because it was considered a secular instrument.

The most important early pattern for Western religious music was the Catholic Mass[34] (Lord's Supper). A variant of the regular Mass is the Requiem ("rest") Mass, the Mass for the dead. Psalms and other short biblical passages were also put to music for the services. These relatively short works, usually in Latin, are called *motets*.



Modern Christian art has been enriched by the artistic traditions of many cultures. This painting portrays Jesus blessing children in an African village.

The Protestant Reformation greatly expanded the variety of religious music, as each branch created its own musical traditions. Luther, we might recall, wrote hymns in German, and although he encouraged some church use of Latin, he recommended that services be conducted primarily in the language of the people. The Lutheran tradition also supported the use of the organ, both on its own and to accompany hymns. The supreme genius of the Lutheran tradition was Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750). A church organist and choirmaster for most of his career, Bach composed many beautiful musical pieces for church use, both solo organ music and choir music. His *Saint Matthew Passion,* a musical reflection on the last days of Jesus, is one of the world's most complex and moving religious compositions. Bach also wrote in forms that derived from the Roman Catholic tradition, producing a *Magnificat* in Latin and his *Mass in B-minor,* which has been compared to a voyage in a great ship across an ocean.[35]

After the Church of England decreed that services be held in English, a body of church music began to develop in England. Much of this music was written for choirs, which traditionally have been supported by Anglican cathedrals.

Other forms of Protestant Christianity have been cautious about the types of music used in church services. Wanting to keep the music popular

The Mass

The Mass is a form of the Lord's Supper that evolved in the Western tradition. Five parts of the Latin Mass have been regularly put to music by composers. They are:

Kyrie (*Kyrie, eleison*—Greek: "Lord, have mercy")

Gloria (*Gloria in excelsis Deo*—Latin: "Glory to God on high")

Credo (*Credo in unum Deum*—Latin: "I believe in one God")

Sanctus (*Sanctus*—Latin: "holy")

Agnus Dei (*Agnus Dei*—Latin: "Lamb of God")

Renaissance composers, such as Giovanni da Palestrina and William Byrd, composed Masses for voice alone. Later composers (such as Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Schubert, and Ludwig van Beethoven) all made use of organ or orchestra in their Masses. The dramatic style of church music reached an artistic peak in the luminous Masses of Mozart. Two Requiem Masses of extraordinary beauty are those by Gabriel Fauré and Maurice Duruflé. Rather than emphasizing divine judgment, they radiate joy and peace.

and simple, Protestant churches have supported the writing and singing of hymns but often have avoided more complex compositions. They have allowed use of the organ and piano but until recently have generally discouraged the use of other instruments. In recent decades, a liberalization of practice has brought about great experimentation in both Protestant and Catholic church music.

CHRISTIANITY FACES THE MODERN WORLD

Christianity—in spite of the strength of its varied interpretations and its international influence—faces obstacles that arise from new nonreligious worldviews.

The Challenges of Science and Secularism

The greatest challenge to Christianity as a whole has been the growth of science, and it will remain so. Along with science have come the demand for scientific proof and a nonsupernatural way of looking at the world. Biblical miracles, such as those written about in the Gospels, have been questioned and proof sought. Critical approaches to the study of scripture have also raised many questions, as have comparative religious studies. These tendencies appeared regularly in the eighteenth century, but the theory of evolution in the next century became a focus for angry public debate.

The debate continues with the theory of Intelligent Design. The theory argues that evolution does not completely explain the complexity and interrelationship of many life-forms. It holds that some entity of cosmic intelligence

must be at work, guiding the development of life. Proponents of Intelligent Design consider it a scientific theory and want it to be included in school science curriculums. Opponents claim that it is religion in the guise of science and has no place in the science classroom. The debate shows that conflict can still exist between science and religion. However, many denominations have fully accepted evolutionary theory and see no conflict between it and the basic religious intent of the biblical story of creation. Perhaps this pattern of accommodation with science will repeat itself in other areas.

Related to science is the growth of secularism. Secularism refers to a worldview that shows interest in this world only and that refuses to refer to beliefs or values derived from any supernatural realm. The medical cures that were once sought from priests and prayer are now sought from doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies. Christians in earlier centuries expected their religion to provide them with art, music, and entertainment; today, people rely on museums, radios, and televisions for these same pleasures. It is possible now to live one's life without any traditional religion, and this possibility makes some people question whether Christianity any longer has relevance. In western Europe, religious skepticism and low attendance at Sunday services are so common that European culture is routinely referred to by scholars as "post-Christian." As a result, the religion of contemporary Europeans—who were once the active figures behind Christianity—is often referred to as "cultural Christianity." This means that Europeans frequently are married and buried by Christian churches but are otherwise uninvolved with traditional religion.

While Christianity seems to be declining in Europe, it is acquiring many new converts in Asia and Africa. The religion places some emphasis on improving the human condition in this world, a value that converts find appealing. The concern of Christians for the poor, the Christian willingness to battle against injustice, and the Christian promise that one can be "born again" to a new way of living are qualities that may give Christianity an enduring relevance.

Contemporary Influences and Developments

Mainstream Christian denominations now look for common ground and work together in a movement called **ecumenism,** from the Greek word for "household." Ecumenism sees all mainstream Christian groups as part of a single "household" of Christianity and tries to encourage dialogue between all its major branches. Marriages between partners of different Christian denominations are no longer discouraged and are sometimes witnessed by ministers of both churches. Several denominations often participate together in community welfare projects. Cooperation and dialogue have occurred, too, at official and institutional levels. The best known of the ecumenical organizations is the World Council of Churches, which emerged from the Church of England. It now includes mainstream Protestant churches, all Eastern Orthodox churches, and observers from the Roman Catholic

Christian Contemplation

Inspired by the biblical admonition to "pray always," many forms of prayerful meditation have emerged in the long history of Christianity.

- In Russia, it became common to repeat some form of the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me." That was done hundreds of times a day, until the repetition became almost as automatic as breathing.
- In Greece, monks practiced sitting quietly, putting their heads forward, and guiding their consciousness to the center of their bodies, where they used their imaginations to experience the inner light of God.
- In Europe of the Middle Ages, a form of walking meditation was done in labyrinths designed in the flooring of grand churches—such as we see at Chartres Cathedral in France. (This walking meditation is becoming increasingly popular today, and labyrinths may be found in many places—two are at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and another is at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Honolulu).
- Beginning in Egypt and the Near East, monks would recite the psalms very slowly, then silently reflect afterwards on the most meaningful verses.

In recent years, one particular form of meditation has been popularized by two Trappist monks, Thomas Keating and M. Basil Pennington. They call it Centering Prayer, and they explain that it was already described in the fourteenth-century classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*. "Contemplative prayer is the opening of the mind and heart, our whole being, to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, emotions. . . . Centering Prayer is another word for a kind of prayer that has been around from almost the time of the apostles. In other times it's been known as the prayer of silence, the prayer of faith, the prayer of simplicity, the prayer of simple regard, pure prayer."[36] Keating and Pennington recommend that practitioners sit comfortably and quietly for twenty minutes, twice a day. They should choose a word from scripture to repeat internally, which will be the center of their meditation for one session—a word such as *love, light, peace, wait, taste, child, rebirth, way, wisdom*. "One of the great advantages of Centering Prayer," says Keating, "is that it's like taking a vacation from the false self for twenty minutes twice a day. As the prayer continues in which we let go of thoughts for twenty minutes, we begin to experience a deep rest on the spiritual level."[37] The Centering Prayer is normally practiced individually but it may also be done in groups.

Church. Churches with similar beliefs have united or are discussing possible unions.

The Catholic Church, after four centuries of a defensive approach, took a new course in the mid-twentieth century. Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli, 1881–1963), who had been elected as an elderly interim pope, convened a council of bishops in 1962. This council, named the Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II), proceeded to make the first major changes since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. The most obvious was to use the living languages of the people in ordinary church services. Also, Catholic documents now endorse the value of other major religions and dialogue with non-Catholic Christian groups. More authority rests with laypeople, and consultation with them is officially encouraged. And modern approaches to understanding the Bible, pioneered by Protestant scholars, are now permitted. These changes have initiated intense debate over other elements of traditional Catholic life, such as the celibacy of priests, the ordination of women, the role of Catholic schools, and traditional

Creation Care

Creation Care is an emerging environmental movement within Christianity that cuts across many of its denominations. Until recently, Christianity did not give much emphasis to the environment—possibly because of its orientation toward heaven as the true home of human beings. But a new, still-evolving theology has sprung up within the faith that critically examines the relationship between humanity and the environment. This theology, drawn from biblical roots, bases itself on the notion that the world is a manifestation of God's love and that, as a result, humanity has an obligation to protect the environment—to give it "care after its creation." To support its view, this theology cites the stewardship assigned to Adam and Eve over the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), Noah's preservation of animal species in his wooden ark (Gen. 7–9), and Jesus' attention to the birds of the air and lilies of the field (Matt. 6:26–30).

Biblical stories may inform the movement's theology, but a major impetus for the development of Creation Care has been the widespread public acknowledgment over the last decade that human activity is leading to climate change, including rising temperatures around the world that threaten to cause untold damage to the environment in the next century. In response to such a threat, a number of Protestant ministers have signed an Evangelical Climate Initiative, which insists on responsible human action against global warming. The Patriarch of Istanbul, Bartholomew I, has declared that acts that harm the environment are sinful. And Pope Benedict XVI has been called "the Green Pope" because he devotes so many sermons and speeches to the environmental cause. He has reforested thirty-seven acres of land in Hungary to offset the carbon "footprint" of the Vatican, and he even directed that solar panels be placed on top of Vatican buildings to provide electricity for the city-state. At the grassroots level, some conservative Christian leaders—not long ago associated with biblical fundamentalism—have even begun to emphasize biblical injunctions for Christian stewardship of the planet. Responses such as these suggest that the emerging Creation Care movement will do for environmentalism what Christianity has long succeeded in doing for education and caring for the sick.

positions on divorce, sex, and birth control. In other words, just about everything is being questioned.

What is happening in Catholicism can be seen as a new wave of the Protestant Principle of individual judgment that emerged in the sixteenth century. Some of the same events that occurred in Protestantism several centuries ago are happening again—but this time within Catholicism. Certain effects are predictable. There is already a spectrum of opinions, from ultraconservative to extremely liberal, on every question, and there is more emphasis on the authority of the Bible and individual judgment. To prevent a breakup of the Catholic Church into factions, Church authorities have responded to these various questions with conservative policies in recent years. The long papacy of Pope John Paul II ended with his death in 2005. He had been conservative in strongly defending traditional Catholic teachings about birth control, divorce, male priesthood, and priestly celibacy. Some of his positions, however, indicated a more liberal opening to the modern world. Among these were his meetings with Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders; his support of the poor; and his apologies for wrongdoings of the Catholic Church. His approach is expected to continue with Benedict XVI (b. 1927).

Charismatic Christianity is growing quickly in Africa. Here we see worshipers at a Pentecostal service in Nigeria.

A development in Protestant Christianity has been the emergence, beginning in the 1920s, of **evangelical** denominations. With an emphasis on the Bible, a conservative morality, and religious services that often encourage the expression of individual emotion, this approach has helped Protestant Christianity develop in several, often interrelated ways. One has been the rise of nondenominational churches, often begun by charismatic ministers who have little or no affiliation with established churches. Another has been the development of televangelism (television evangelism), which grew out of the work of radio evangelists (such as Billy Sunday, 1862–1935). Television evangelism, which often places an emphasis on healing, is significant because of the millions of people who can be reached by one minister. Lastly, because a great deal of Protestant religious television and radio programming is given to singing, Christian rock music and gospel music have entered the mainstream.

Some biblical passages, such as those that have been interpreted as forbidding women to preach (1 Tim. 2:13), have for centuries kept women out of public roles in Christianity. But women have assumed more leadership in Christian denominations over the past hundred years. The earliest examples of women in the ministry were in the charismatic and nondenominational churches. People such as Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), the founder of the Foursquare Gospel Church, advanced the cause of women in the churches. A vital radio preacher in Los Angeles in the early days of radio, McPherson accustomed people to the notion of a woman preacher.

Feminist theory is adding its insights to Christianity, which according to many is overly patriarchal and male-dominated. Some churches have responded by including more women in the ministry, and in some branches of the Church of England and the Lutheran Church women have recently

become not only priests but also bishops. The male-oriented religious language that describes God in the Bible and in hymns (as *king* and *lord*) is giving way to more inclusive language (*ruler* and *creator*).

The environment and the natural world were not strong concerns of Christianity in the past, but this is changing (see the box "Creation Care," p. 415). Based on the notion that the world is the creation of God and reflects God's love, Christians are beginning to work out a theology of environmentalism. Expressing this interest, the design of some modern churches reflects a new interest in nature. For example, modern churches often feature large glass windows to reveal the surrounding sky and trees. The new cathedral of Evry, in France, designed by Mario Botta (b. 1943), even has trees growing on its roof!

Another current development is a renewed interest in Christian mysticism. The rereading of great medieval classics has also led to further interest in Hindu spirituality, Buddhist meditation, and other forms of mysticism. One form of mystically oriented Christian thought, called Creation Spirituality, is gaining renown. Begun by a priest, Matthew Fox (b. 1940), it unites contemporary concerns—mystical experience, feminism, ecology, and individual judgment—with traditional Christianity.

In summary, traditionalists see much to worry about, such as the scientific questioning of belief in the supernatural and the growth of secular values. But optimists see great vitality in Christianity because of its respect for the individual, its ethic of practical helpfulness, its love of the arts, and even its openness to debate.

READING

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

To fully appreciate this story from the Gospel of Luke, we must place ourselves within the cultural mind-set of Jesus and his contemporaries. The priest and Levite in this story are both afraid to touch the injured man because he might die, and to touch a dead body is to violate a religious taboo. Such acts rendered people ritually impure, and ritual impurity kept priests and Levites from performing required ceremonies in the Temple. In addition, in Jewish culture at this time, Samaritans (natives of Samaria, a district of ancient Palestine) were looked down on as outsiders and thought to be only semicivilized.

A man asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite [Temple assistant] when he came to the same place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

The expert in the Law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:30–37)[38]

TEST YOURSELF

1. Christianity grew out of _____.
   a. Hinduism
   b. Judaism
   c. Islam
   d. Buddhism
2. Almost everything we know about Jesus comes from the four Gospels of the New Testament. The word *gospel* means "_____."
   a. vision
   b. good news
   c. enlightenment
   d. covenant
3. The Two Great Commandments of Jesus combine two elements: _____.
   a. love for God and an ethical call for kindness toward others
   b. missionary activity and prayer five times a day
   c. love for God and annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem
   d. refraining from immoral activities and giving to the poor
4. _____ is occasionally called the cofounder of Christianity because of the way that Jesus' teachings and Paul's interpretation of them blended to form a viable religion with widespread appeal.
   a. Peter
   b. James
   c. Paul
   d. John
5. In the Gospel of John, the portrayal of Jesus is full of mystery. He is the _____ of God, the divine made visible in human form.
   a. inspiration
   b. transcendence
   c. incarnation
   d. spirit
6. When _____ became emperor, he saw in Christianity a glue that could cement the fragments of his entire empire.
   a. Herod
   b. Constantine
   c. Antiochus
   d. Hyrcanus
7. _____ was the dominant authority in Christian theology from the fifth century until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.
   a. Hector
   b. Herodotus
   c. John Calvin
   d. Augustine
8. _____, a Dominican priest, blended the philosophical thoughts of Aristotle with Christian scripture through writings such as the *Summa Theologica* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*.
   a. John Calvin
   b. St. Francis of Assisi
   c. Tertullian
   d. Thomas Aquinas
9. _____, a German priest of the late Middle Ages, was the first reformer of Western Christianity to gain a large following and to survive. The movement he founded ultimately created the Protestant branch of Christianity.
   a. John Wycliffe
   b. Martin Luther
   c. John Calvin
   d. Ulrich Zwingli
10. In 1962, Pope John XXIII convened a council of bishops that proceeded to make the first major changes in Catholicism since the Council of Trent. The _____ allowed, among other things, the use of the living languages of the people in ordinary church services.
    a. Council of Nicea
    b. Council of Jamnia
    c. Second Vatican Council
    d. Third Council of Churches
11. Consider the following statement: "Despite the tremendous importance of Jesus in Christianity, Paul played an even more important role than Jesus in shaping Christian beliefs and practices." Using the information from this chapter, explain why you agree or disagree.
12. Review the descriptions of the different forms of Protestantism on pages 386–390. Which one do you think is most unusual? Which one do you think is most similar to Roman Catholicism? Explain your answers.

RESOURCES

Books

Beard, Steve, et al. *Spiritual Journey: How Faith Has Influenced Twelve Music Icons.* Orlando: Relevant Books, 2003. A study of the role of Christianity in shaping several singers and groups, including Wyclef Jean, Moby, Johnny Cash, Al Green, Bob Dylan, Lauryn Hill, and Lenny Kravitz.

Hale, Robert. *Love on the Mountain.* Trabuco Canyon, CA: Source, 1999. An insider's account of daily life as a hermit-monk.

Ingersoll, Julie. *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles.* New York: New York University Press, 2003. A look at conservative Christian evangelical women who challenge the gender norms of their faith.

Keillor, Garrison. *Lake Wobegon Days* (New York: Penguin, 1995); and *Leaving Home* (New York: Penguin, 1989). Humorous sketches of Midwest life that provide serious insights into lived religion, by a writer with an unusual religious consciousness.

Keller, Thomas. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism.* New York: Dutton, 2008. A defense of Christian belief, written by the founding pastor of New York's Redeemer Presbyterian Church, who argues that skepticism and cynicism about religion are themselves alternate forms of belief.

Meyer, Marvin. *The Gospels of Mary: The Secret Tradition of Mary Magdalene, the Companion of Jesus.* New York: HarperCollins, 2004. A new examination of the Gospels of Mary Magdalene, an early Christian figure who has received renewed interest.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996. An examination of God, not as an object of devotion, but as the main protagonist of the Bible.

Norris, Kathleen. *Cloister Walk.* New York: Putnam, 1996. A personal account by a Protestant writer who describes her discovery of monastic life and its rituals.

Pagels, Elaine. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas.* New York: Random House, 2003. An exploration of the textual battles of the early Christian Church.

Tutu, Desmond. *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York: Image, 2000. A description of participation in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, by an Anglican archbishop and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church.* Baltimore: Penguin, 1993. A new edition of a classic on the history, beliefs, and practices of Orthodox Christianity.

Warrior, Valerie. *Roman Religion: A Sourcebook.* Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins, 2002. Translations of well-selected primary texts.

White, Michael L. *From Jesus to Christianity.* New York: HarperCollins, 2004. The story of how early Christianity developed its identity and sacred texts.

Film/TV

The Agony and the Ecstasy. (Director Carol Reed; Twentieth Century Fox.) A classic Hollywood film about Michelangelo's creation of the Sistine Chapel murals.

Brother Sun, Sister Moon. (Director Franco Zeffirelli; Paramount.) A movie about the life of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Christianity. (Films Media Group.) A visit by theologian Hans Küng to the slum district of La Chacra in San Salvador to examine the Christianity there.

Faith and Politics: The Christian Right. (Films Media Group.) A CBS News special that examines the Christian conservative movement to create faith-based educational programs and public policy.

Kingdom of Heaven. (Director Ridley Scott; Twentieth Century Fox.) A mainstream film about the Crusades.

The Mission. (Director Roland Joffe; Warner.) The tragic story of an eighteenth-century Spanish Jesuit who built a mission in the South American wilderness to convert the local indigenous people.

The Robe. (Director Henry Koster; Twentieth Century Fox.) A classic film that tells the fictional story of a Roman soldier who helped kill Jesus but who was then transformed after winning Christ's robe.

Sister Rose's Passion. (Director Oren Jacoby; Docurama.) A documentary chronicling the long effort of a nun's opposition to anti-Semitism within the Catholic Church.

Witness. (Director Peter Weir; Paramount.) A Hollywood film set in Amish culture.

Music/Audio

Following are numerous sources, listed by their composers. Various performances of many of these works are available on CD. Especially approachable compositions are starred.

Bach: **Magnificat, Mass in B-minor*, *motets
Britten: **A Ceremony of Carols*
Byrd: Masses
Distler: *Christmas Story*
Duruflé: **Requiem, Mass "Cum Jubilo,"* *motets
Fauré: **Requiem*
Handel: **Messiah*
Hildegard of Bingen: Hymns and antiphons
Mozart: **Coronation Mass, Requiem,* *motets
Palestrina: Masses
Pärt, Arvo: *Fratres, Te Deum, *Magnificat*
Rachmaninoff: *Evening Vigil* (other Orthodox music is available in collections)
Saint-Saens: *Christmas Oratorio*
Vaughan Williams: **Mass in G-minor, *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*
Vivaldi: **Gloria*
Zelenka: *Missa Dei Patris, Missa Dei Filii*

Following are some specific CD titles of traditional religious music performed around the world.

Beautiful Beyond: Christian Songs in Native Languages. (Smithsonian Folkways.) Christian hymns and songs sung by Native Americans and Hawaiians.

Chant. (Angel Records.) A best-selling compilation of Gregorian chant by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos.

Christmas Vespers. (Smithsonian Folkways.) A performance by a Russian Orthodox cathedral choir of evening prayers.

Gospels, Spirituals, and Hymns. (Sony.) An annotated set of Christian gospel songs, sung by Mahalia Jackson.

Praise to the Lord—Hymns From St. Paul's Cathedral. (Hyperion UK.) A collection of hymns sung at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Wade in the Water: African-American Spirituals. (Smithsonian Folkways.) A two-volume collection of African American spirituals.

Internet

King James Bible Online: http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/. An unabridged, annotated online version of the classic English translation of the Bible.

Religion and Ethics—Christianity: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/index.shtml. The BBC's online encyclopedic Web site on Christianity, with sections on beliefs, history, holy days, rituals, ethics, texts, music, women, and more.

The Vatican: http://www.vatican.va/. The official Web site of the Vatican, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church.

KEY TERMS

apocalypticism: The belief that the world will soon come to an end; this belief usually includes the notion of a great battle, final judgment, and reward of the good.

apostle (*a-paw'-sul*): One of Jesus' twelve disciples; also, any early preacher of Christianity.

baptism: The Christian rite of initiation, involving immersion in water or sprinkling with water.

Bible (Christian): The scriptures sacred to Christians, consisting of the books of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

bishop: "Overseer" (Greek); a priest and church leader who is in charge of a large geographical area called a *diocese.*

canon (*kaa'-nun*): "Measure," "rule" (Greek); a list of authoritative books or documents.

ecumenism (*e-kyoo'-men-ism*): Dialogue between Christian denominations.

Eucharist (*yoo'-ka-rist*): "Good gift" (Greek); the Lord's Supper.

evangelical: Emphasizing the authority of scripture; an adjective used to identify certain Protestant groups.

evangelist (*ee-van'-je-list*): "Good news person" (Greek); one of the four "authors" of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

filioque (*fee-lee-oh'-kway*): "And from the Son"; a Latin word added to the creeds in the Western Church to state that the Holy Spirit arises from both Father and Son. The notion, which was not accepted by Orthodox Christianity, contributed to the separation between the Western and Eastern Churches.

gospel: "Good news" (Middle English); an account of the life of Jesus.

icon (*ai'-kahn*): "Image" (Greek); religious painting on wood, as used in the Orthodox Church; also spelled *ikon.*

incarnation: "In flesh" (Latin); a belief that God became visible in Jesus.

indulgence: "Kindness-toward" (Latin); remission of time spent in purgatory (a state of temporary punishment in the afterlife); an aspect of Catholic belief and practice.

Lent: "Lengthening day," "spring" (Anglo-Saxon); the preparatory period before Easter, lasting forty days.

Messiah: "Anointed" (Hebrew); a special messenger sent by God, foretold in the Hebrew scriptures and believed by Christians to be Jesus.

original sin: An inclination toward evil, inherited by human beings as a result of Adam's disobedience.

orthodox: "Straight opinion" (Greek); correct belief.

Orthodoxy: The Eastern branch of Christianity.

patriarch: The bishop of one of the major ancient sites of Christianity (Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Moscow).

pope: "Father" (Latin and Greek); the bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic Church; the term is also used for the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria.

predestination: The belief that because God is all-powerful and all-knowing, a human being's ultimate reward or punishment is already decreed by God; a notion emphasized in Calvinism.

Protestant Principle: The right of each believer to radically rethink and interpret the ideas and values of Christianity, apart from any church authority.

redemption: "Buy again," "buy back" (Latin); the belief that the death of Jesus has paid the price of justice for all human wrongdoing.

righteousness: Being sinless in the sight of God; also called *justification.*

sacrament: "Sacred action" (Latin); one of the essential rituals of Christianity.

sin: Wrongdoing, seen as disobedience to God.

Testament: "Contract"; the Old Testament and New Testament constitute the Christian scriptures.

Trinity: The three "persons" in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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