

OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

LECTURE 14 – (1) EVANGELISM IN EAST; (2) RISE OF ISLAM (3) DIVISION OF CHURCH; (4) EVANGELISM FROM CONSTANTINOPLE

We'll start with a prayer from the period to be studied.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

St. Francis, who evangelised in Middle East between 1212-20

The rest of this page is an outline of this lecture.

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In preparation, read Cairns, 165-71, 196-201; Olson, 251-4, 301-10; Lion, 234-6; Vos, 54-6.

1. EVANGELISM IN EAST, that is outside the Roman Empire

1.1 Introduction

This Lecture is, as you see on page 1, in four parts – (1) evangelism eastward, that is outside the Roman Empire, to Persia, India and to China by the year 600; churches were founded that have a continuous Christian history to this day, (2) the rise of Islam, which conquered vast areas of Christian lands, (3) the division of the Church into two, the western half looking to Rome and the Eastern half looking to Constantinople, and (4) evangelism from Constantinople, northwards into Russia – so, on the one hand, a huge expansion of the Church into new areas, and on the other hand, a huge contraction of the Church as Islam took over large parts of it. Our four parts are linked and overlap, as I hope we'll see.

1.2 Who took the gospel outside the Roman Empire?

It wasn't the Church; as we saw in the last Lecture, the early Church had a curiously blinkered understanding of the Lord's parting injunction in Matthew 20:19, to make disciples of all nations. They interpreted that as all nations within the Roman Empire, not the barbarians outside it. So who?

(a) Converted Jews

We saw in our first Lecture, that there were Jewish synagogues all over the ancient world, because wherever people made a living by trading, Jewish people were involved, often financing the venture; wherever there were ten Jewish men, they could form a synagogue. When traveling converted Jews came to these synagogues and declared that in Jesus, the Messiah had come, both the Jews and the God-fearers who attended the synagogues were fertile for the Christian gospel.

(b) Traders

From the days of the apostles, individual traders took the gospel to places beyond the imperial boundaries; we'll look later at two examples, Ethiopia and Arabia.

(c) The Roman army

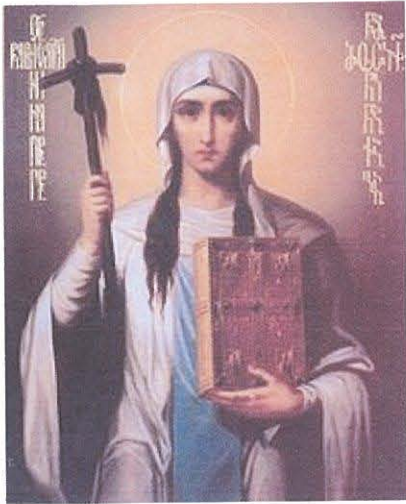
More correctly, some soldiers within the Roman army, which recruited mercenaries from outside the Empire, for a set number of years' service and then they went home; some of them were converted during their military service; on their discharge, they returned to their own countries as Christians, and propagated their faith.

(d) Hostages

Romans regularly took hostages from tribes outside the Empire, to guarantee good behaviour toward Rome from the rulers in those territories; by definition hostages were important people. Some of them were converted while they were being held as hostages in Constantinople and when they were allowed to return home, they spoke about their new faith.

(e) Slaves

Barbarians regularly crossed the Danube, which was the northern boundary of the Empire, and carried away slaves. Some captured Christians evangelised their captors. The



Nina (picture from an icon).

best-known example is Nina, a Christian girl who was captured and taken to pagan Georgia (yellow in the top right of the map below). She was sold as a slave to the royal family. Her devout life made such an impression in the palace that first the queen was converted, and then the king, and he then made Christianity the national religion of Georgia. (Remember that in those days, a king made the decision for the whole of his country.)

Although the Catholic Church didn't evangelise outside the Empire, when they heard about Christian communities starting, wherever, they provided bishops to lead them, and that's what happened here - the church at Constantinople sent a bishop to Georgia, and he was at the Council of Nicea in 325 (Lecture 10).

(f) Students who came for education and who went home as Christians

A spectacular example of this is Gregory the Illuminator (which means he brought the light). We need to spend a little time on him, as through his influence Armenia became the first nation outside the Roman Empire to adopt Christianity and the Church there still exists, with two million believers.

Armenia (near the top right of the map below) was a buffer state between the Roman Empire and Persia, and so had a turbulent history.



Gregory was born into a noble family in Armenia, related to the king. When his father was executed for attempting a coup, relatives took him to Cappadocia (in modern Turkey, then part of the Roman Empire) and entrusted his education to a Christian teacher. He became a devout Christian and returned to Armenia to atone for his father's crime by evangelizing his homeland. He persuaded his relative, the King of Armenia, to be baptized in 303, so there was a Christian ruler before Constantine in 312 (Lecture 7). That meant, in those days, as we are going to see time and again in this lecture, the rest of the population called themselves Christian, and the Bible was translated into Armenian.

Last on the list of those who took the gospel outside the Empire is:

(g) Exiled heretics (unorthodox Christians)

These were the main evangelists outside the Empire. When the Catholic Church condemned heretics, they sent them away, banished and exiled them outside the Empire, to keep the Church within the Empire pure – remember that after 312, Church and State worked hand in glove together. Exiled Christians were free to preach the gospel as they understood it in the areas to which they were sent. We have already seen (Lecture 10) that Arius was condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325 for teaching that the Son of God was less divine than the Father. He and two of his colleagues were banished to the north of the Black Sea, where they evangelized the pagan tribes, many of whom adopted Arius' form of Christianity. In fact, all the tribes to the north of the Empire, who ultimately became orthodox Christians, came by this route – paganism to Arianism (because of the exiled Arians' missionary zeal) and then, later, to orthodoxy, as they came into contact with the orthodox Church.

Equally significant was the banishment of the Bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius (386-451) and his followers, after they were condemned at a Council at Ephesus in 431, for their teaching about the divine and human natures of Christ. We'll not go into the details of that here, but, very briefly, Nestorius taught that Christ's divine nature and his human nature were distinct and separate, that he was had 'two natures and two persons'. This went against the orthodox Christian doctrine that Christ was fully God as well fully man, that he took on human nature (John 1:14) and yet was always God (John 8:58;10:30).

Exiled Nestorians made a huge impact, right across Asia to China – see the map below. One of my sons was a missionary in China for some years, and when we visited him, he took us to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province in south-west China. We went to the church there on Sunday and I asked the pastor about its history. He produced a book, in Chinese, which he translated; it included a paragraph from the diary of Marco Polo, the C13 explorer - see Marco Polo's name on the map, on the right. In the diary there was an entry: 'At the end of five days journey you arrive at the capital city (of Yunnan province in China) and it is very great and noble. In it are found ... Nestorian Christians'. They had probably been there since about the year 600 – 1.7 below; there is an active and lively church there today, proud of its heritage, fourteen hundred years old.

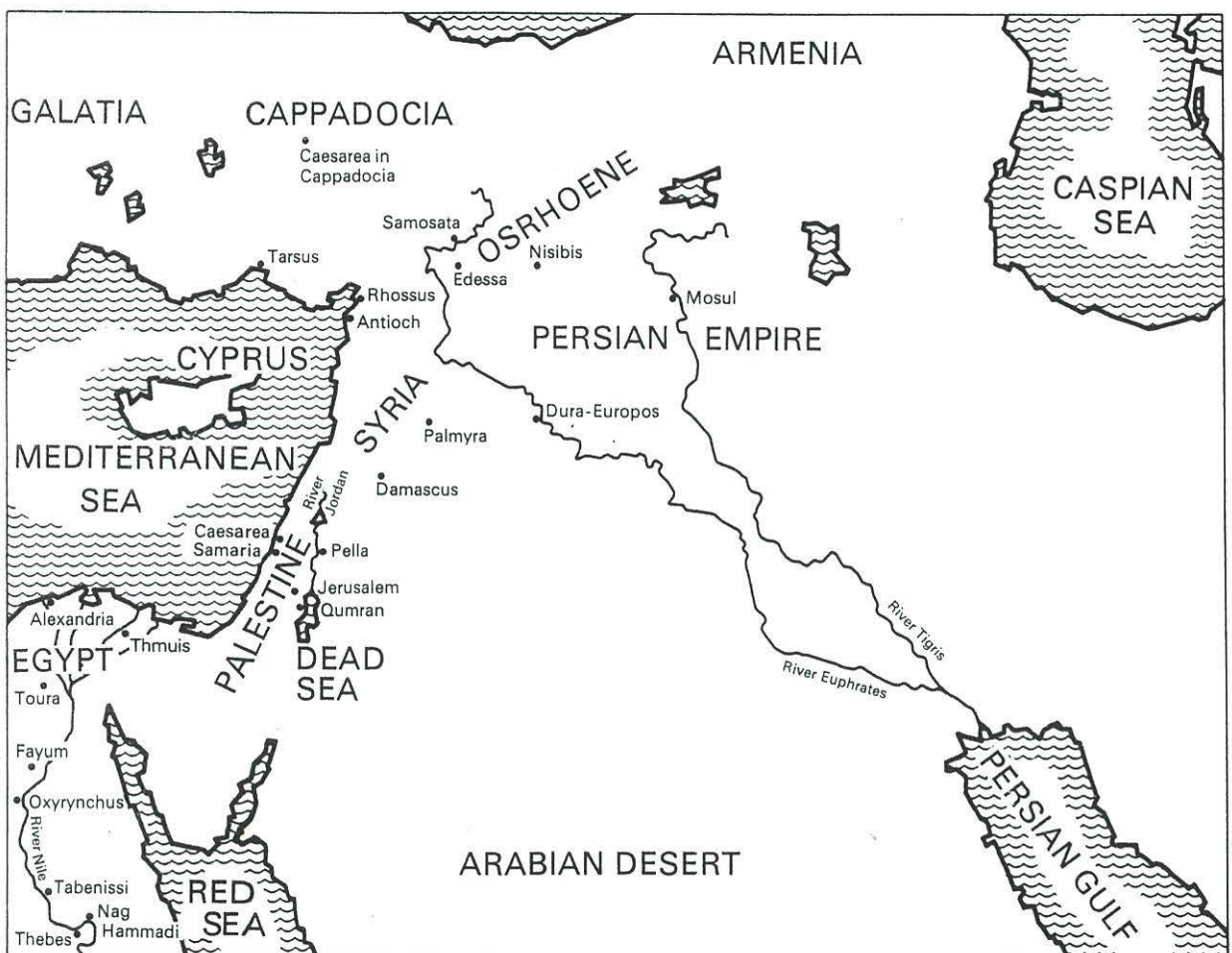
Expansion of the Nestorian Church.



1.3 Ethiopia (see the map on the previous page, at the bottom left)

In Acts 8:26-40, Philip met the Chancellor of Ethiopia, who was returning after a visit to Jerusalem. We don't know whether he planted a church in Ethiopia as the first we hear about Christianity there is early in the C4, when two Christian traders, who were travelling in Ethiopia, were captured and taken as prisoners to the palace. Because they were educated men, they were told to teach the young prince. They taught the Christian faith to him and many others. When the prince attained majority, they were permitted to leave Ethiopia, and they reported to Alexandria – again, see the map on page 4. The Church in Alexandria consecrated one of them as a bishop, and sent him back to Ethiopia c340 as the first bishop of the Ethiopian Church. Like Armenia, it has a continuous Christian history from then until now - today 52 million of the total population of 85 million call themselves Christians.

1.4 Persia



As you see on the map, Persia was on the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire – they were bitter foes and regularly fought each other. The first Christians were probably refugees from persecution within the Roman Empire, and they planted churches from the Euphrates in the west to the Hindu Kush in the east (off the map) and from Caspian Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. By 225, that's 200 years before the Nestorian Christians arrived, there were more than twenty bishops in Persia. For the next hundred years, the Persian Church grew and multiplied, independently of the Church within the Roman Empire.

There was then, in 340, a nasty persecution, because the Roman Emperor, now a Christian, invaded Persia and the Persians treated Christians as 'stooges of the (Christian) Emperor'. 190,000 Persian Christians were killed, but the Persian Church recovered after Rome made peace.

When the Church within the Roman Empire condemned Bishop Nestorius, for his views on the divinity and humanity of Christ (page 4), and exiled him and his many sympathisers, some of them bishops in the Church, they went to Persia, where they formed churches, called Nestorian after their leader, modelled on the Church within the Roman Empire, apart from its teaching on the Person of Christ.

Nestorian Christianity blossomed throughout Persia. Many civil servants and most of the medical profession became Nestorian Christians and Nestorians dominated the teaching faculty at the University of Baghdad; however, they never achieved the position of the West, where Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. Nestorian Christians were missionary-minded, and, as the map on the next page shows, they used the trade routes and planted churches across Arabia, India and China.

Then, c650, as we're going to see later in this Lecture, Islam conquered Persia and the Church went into a slow decline as Islam took over. There were, however, Christians living peacefully in Iraq until the Western military toppled Saddam Hussain in 2003 – Christians were recognised and tolerated in Iraq until then, but not any more since 2003.

1.5 Arabia

South of Persia - see the map on the previous page - was the huge peninsula of Arabia. Although now one of the least Christian areas on earth, between the year 200 and Islam taking over in the C7, there were Christian communities in the trading posts along the Red Sea, modern Yemen and Aden, and along the Persian Gulf. By 340, 'the way to India was strewn with bishoprics and monasteries'. Whenever the Church learned that there were Christians in these remote places, they sent a bishop to consolidate the witness, and there were 19 bishops from Arabia at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, including bishops from (what we call) Qatar and Bahrain. (You may remember Chalcedon in lecture 10, where the doctrine of the Person of Christ was finally agreed.) When persecution broke out in Persia, waves of Christian refugees moved out of Persia and into Arabia – it was a lively witness.

1.6 India

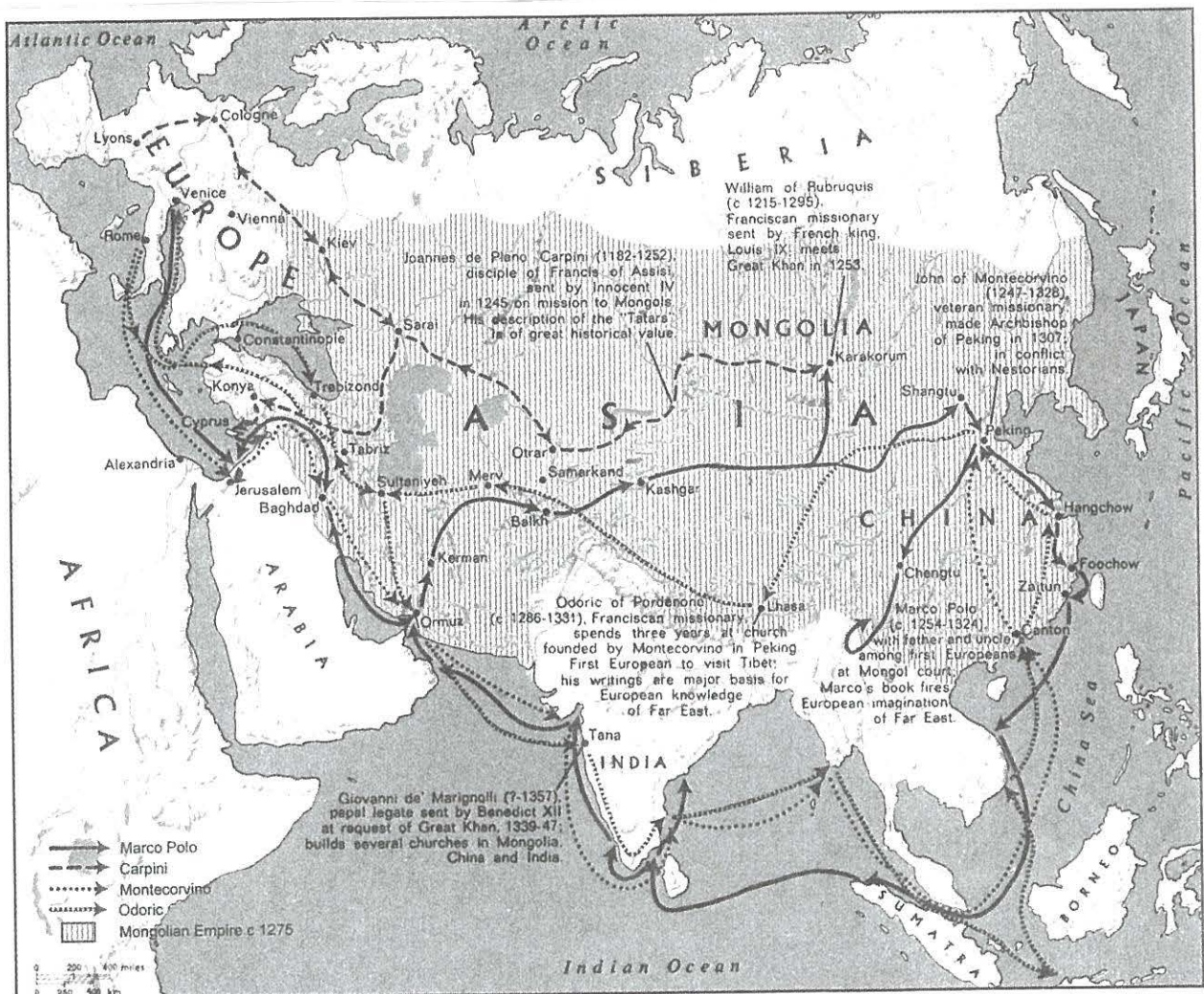
There is a strong tradition, as we saw in our first Lecture, that the apostle Thomas preached fearlessly before kings and princes in India and founded the Church there. Certainly, when the Persian Church was persecuted in 340, a Persian merchant led a number of Christian families, four hundred people in all, including deacons, priests, and a bishop, to safety on the Malabar coast of India. They were welcomed by the existing Christian community, who traced their origins back to Thomas. The new arrivals reinvigorated the church.

The Church in India had strong ties with the Church in Persia, and sent their priests to Persia for study. Although the Indian Church was well organized and established with bishops, clergy, and believers, we must remember that in India, as in most of these Asian countries, the Church there was always a tiny minority, in a vast non-Christian area.

1.7 China

Persia had traded with China for centuries and as many of the Persian merchant class became Nestorians, there may have been Christians in China, evangelised by them, from the C5. The first record we have is when Nestorian missionaries, as opposed to traders, reached the capital of China in 635, and, with the Emperor's permission, built a Christian church. There are records of the Christian faith being preached right through central Asia, by both missionaries and traders, among the Mongol tribes on the northwest frontier (see Mongolia on the map) and also into Tibet and what is now southern Russia - but again, as in India, the Christians were a tiny minority of the population.

Medieval trade routes from Europe to the Orient



The dates on the map are mostly in the 1200s, and this marks the arrival from Rome of Catholic (i.e., non-Nestorian) missionaries. We saw, in our last Lecture, how the followers of Francis, called Franciscans, had great missionary zeal; Franciscan missionary-monks were sent by Rome in 1245, and we'll have a quick look at them now. They went first to Mongolia, in 1245, and they were so persuasive that in 1260, the Kahn (king) Kublai Kahn, who had a Nestorian Christian mother, asked them:

... to go to your High Priest (Pope) and pray him to send me a hundred men skilled in your religion ... And so I shall be baptized, and then all my barons and great men, and then their subjects, and so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.

In response, the Pope sent two missionaries – what a missed opportunity, but these two were outstanding. Marco Polo, the explorer, went with them, and recorded their work. You see his travels with the solid black line on the map and you may just be able to see, in the white bit below China, the words ‘Marco’s book fires European imagination of Far East’. He moved on, but the missionaries spent thirty years in Mongolia, building churches, translating the New Testament and winning several thousand converts. Other missionaries joined them and by 1304 there was Catholic Bishop in Kahnbalik (Beijing). The Emperor protected both Catholic Christians and Nestorians for a hundred years, but in 1368, Islam invaded and took over China. Many Christians were martyred, both Catholic and Nestorian; as we’ll see in the second part of this lecture, Muslims made life very difficult for all Christians. The miracle is that the Church in Asia survived at all under Muslim rule.

That brings us to the second part of this Lecture:

2. THE RISE OF ISLAM (Cairns, 167-71; Lion, 234-6) Hanks, *Great Events*, 109-18

2.1 Definitions

To study Islam as a religion is beyond the scope of this Course, but we’ll look briefly at how and why Islam conquered territory that had been Christian for over five hundred years. First, a few key definitions:

Allah is the Arabic word for God.

Islam (which means ‘submission, or total surrender of oneself, to Allah’) is the religion set out in a book called the *Qur’an*.

The *Qur’an* (*Koran*) is a collection of 114 revelations that Muhammad claimed to have received from angel Gabriel over 23 years, beginning in 610, when he was aged 40, and concluding in 632, the year of death.

Those who follow Islam are called Muslims (‘those who submit to God’).

Muslims / Moslems (interchangeable words) regard their religion (Islam) as the completed version of a monotheistic faith that was revealed to many people, starting long before Muhammad, but completed by revelations given to him. *Qur’an* lists Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus as ‘Muslims’ because they ‘submitted to God’; Muhammad is (they say) the last and greatest prophet.

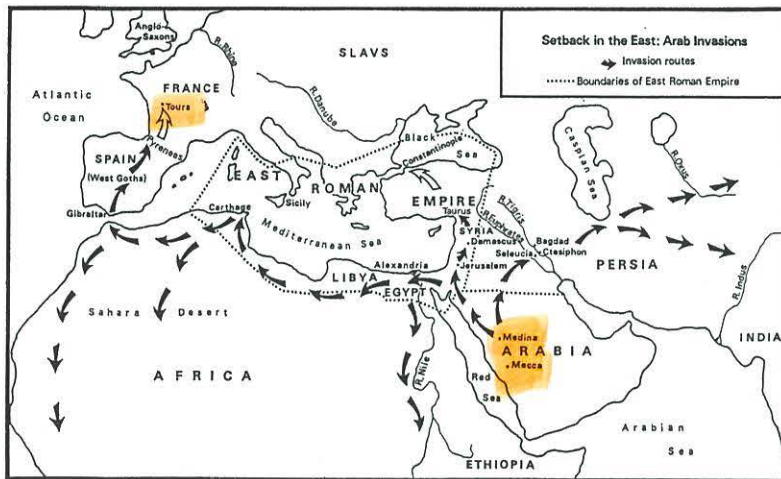
2.2 A brief biography of Muhammad (570-632) (Cairns, 167)

As I said, we’re not studying Islam but only trying to understand how it changed the map of Christianity. Muhammad was born c570 in the city of Mecca (which you can see on the map on next facing page), a trading centre near the coast of Red Sea. He became a successful merchant. He was quiet, sincere, thoughtful man: prosperous, kind to the poor, happily married, with a deeply religious nature, dissatisfied with paganism and seeking to find God.

According to Muhammad, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in the year 610, and gave him a message, to start a new religious movement in Mecca, calling on people to worship Allah alone, with himself as the prophet of Allah (Allah being the Arabic for God). Converts grew, but the majority of Mecca's inhabitants opposed Muhammad, because his condemnation of their idolatry undermined the ceremonies and pilgrimages from which they made money. He therefore left Mecca in 622 for the more northerly city of Medina (see the map below). The Islamic calendar starts from this event – 622 in the Christian calendar is year 1 in the Muslim calendar.

In Medina, his preaching met with success, attracting converts from surrounding areas. Eventually he returned to Mecca, destroyed the pagan gods and made Mecca the most holy place of Islamic worship. Now we come to the bit which matters for this Lecture

2.3 Conquest by the sword



Islamic invasion routes from Medina to 732

Arrows north.

Three of five Christian patriarchs - Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria - came under Muslim control. The mosque of Omar in Jerusalem was built on the site of the Old Testament Temple. Muslim fleets captured the Mediterranean islands, such as Cyprus.

Arrows east

Another army swallowed up the whole of the Persian Empire and descended on India.

Arrows west

Another Muslim army swept from Egypt into Christian North Africa. It took the Muslims 50 years of savage fighting to subdue the native Africans, but when they did, the Africans embraced Islam and became strict and zealous Muslims. The Christianity of Tertullian and Cyprian and Augustine disappeared and the area (Tunisia, Algeria) is still overwhelmingly Islamic.

In 711, the Islamic Berber army crossed from Africa into Spain, and by 718 had conquered almost whole of it. They then pushed on into France. So, within a hundred years of Muhammad's death, Muslims had conquered from France in the West to what is now Pakistan in East, creating one huge empire under Islamic rule.

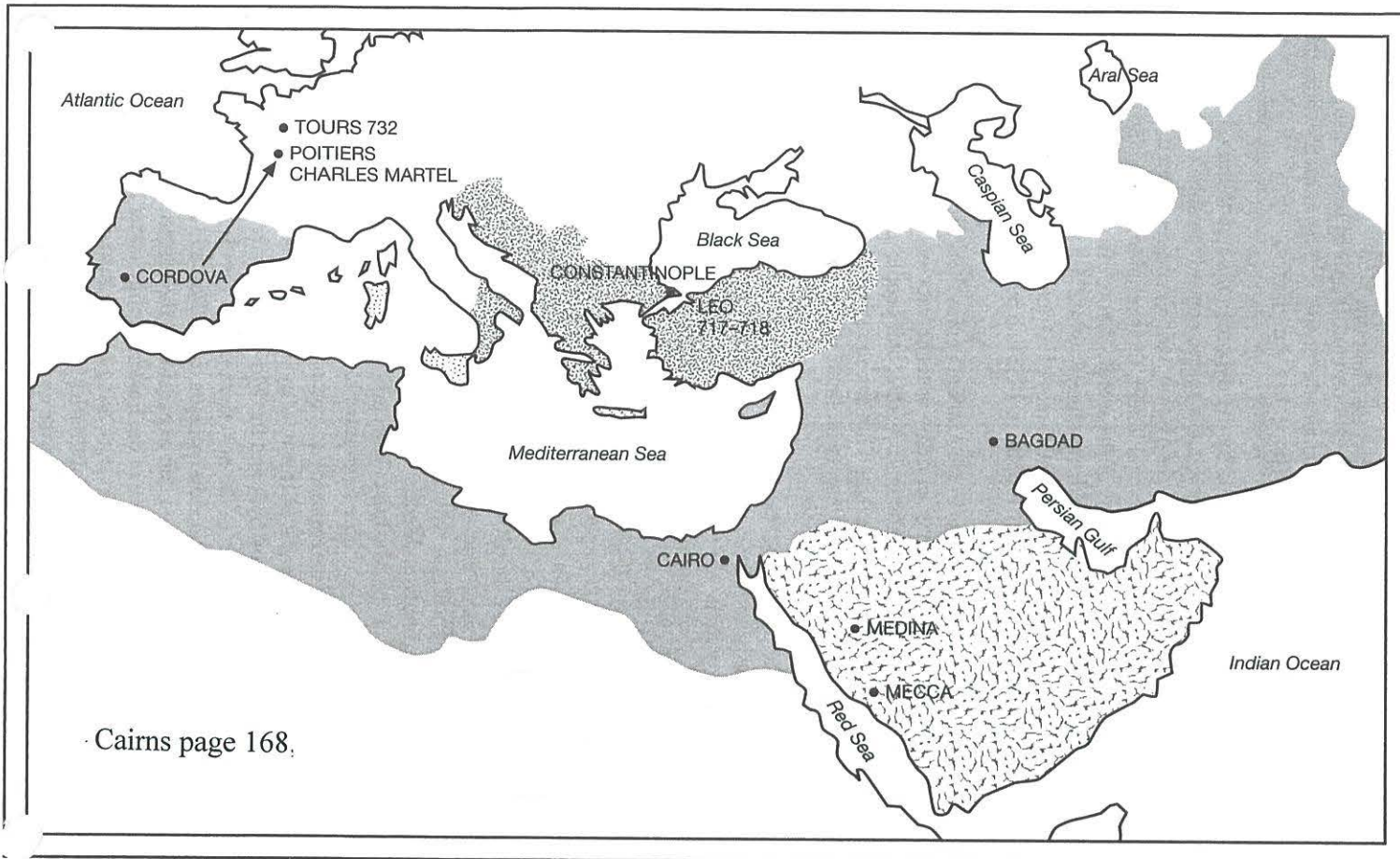
732, exactly one hundred years after Muhammad's death, is one of the most crucial dates in world history. At Tours, in northwest France (on the map below), the Moslem army was met by a Frankish Christian army. The Franks won and this permanently halted the Western invasion of Islam. If they had won, all Europe would be Muslim (which is, of

Islam, like Christianity, is active in evangelism, but their methods could not be more different. Islam teaches 'Jihad' or 'Holy War' as a legitimate way to spread the faith, by force, and Arab Muslims did this on a massive scale. Their armies were brave, tough, completely sober (Islam did not allow Muslims to drink alcohol), and burning with zeal for their faith, which made them unafraid of death. They swept out of Arabia like a desert storm.

course, still their ambition and they are working hard at it.) The Franks forced the Muslims back into Spain, and there they stayed for next 700 years.

This map shows the end result by three different dates.

MUSLIM EXPANSION, 622–900



Cairns page 168.



2.4 Christians under Moslem rule

You remember how Greek was the common language of the Roman Empire. Islam made Arabic its compulsory sacred language, so Arabic was the language for all the countries they conquered. There were serious disadvantages for Christians under Muslim rule - they were second-class citizens, they required to pay heavy tax and to wear distinctive clothing, they were forbidden to use swords or horses or to hold public processions carrying crosses or icons or to announce services of worship, marriage between Christians and Muslims was forbidden and, most damaging of all, Islamic law prohibited Christians from evangelising Muslims; conversion from Islam to Christianity was punished by death. Given these conditions, churches under Islam declined steadily. The majority of professing Christians converted to Islam to secure benefits of full citizenship.

2.5 Why did Islam spread so rapidly?

There were several factors:

1. Prospects of temporal and eternal reward. To be promised booty, positions of leadership, and salvation was a powerful incentive. 'All this and heaven too'.

2. Decay of the Roman Empire. Both the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire had exhausted their resources in fighting each other, and neither was a match for the fanatical Arabs.
3. Alienation from Constantinople, which had exacted high taxes to finance the Persian wars and which was still intolerant of any deviation from the orthodox Christian faith, excommunicating groups which held other religious views.
4. Semitic sympathies. Many of the conquered people had more in common with the Arab invaders than they did with their Greek-speaking overlords.
5. Minimum interference with local life. Muslims were not despoilers like the barbarians; it was to their advantage to maintain a prosperous economy in areas they conquered.
6. Superior military forces and far better generals.
7. Image worship looked like polytheism. The use by the Eastern Church of icons made Islam with its strict monotheistic emphasis seem to be superior.

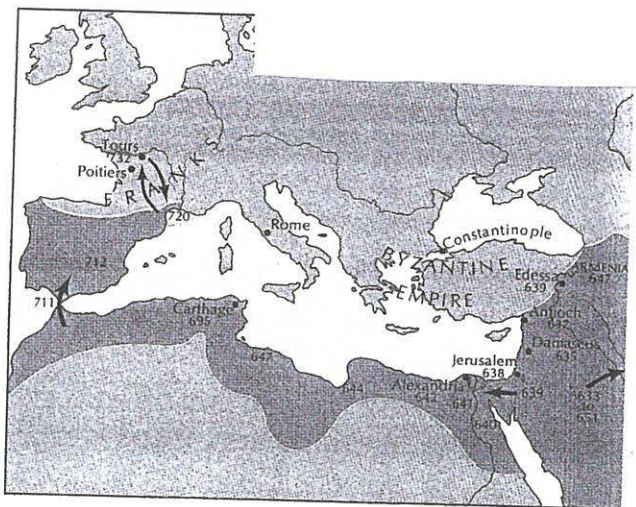
TOPIC - ICONS - was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

2.6 Christian response

Christians had only two practical ways of combating the spread of Islam: they could fight it by the sword but generally Christian nations couldn't match the Islamic military and the outcome of the battle of Tours was a rare exception.

The other way was by writing books against Islam. The Church in the Middle Ages produced streams of Christian literature, disputing Muhammad's claims – it all came back to the Church fixing the Canon of the New Testament, meaning that no new doctrinal or moral revelations could be valid after Christ and the apostles, so Muhammad's revelations could not contradict Scripture.

2.7 Christian perception



Territories covered by Islam to 732

The Arab conquests altered forever way that Christians viewed the world. The southern and eastern parts of Christendom had gone forever, so future planning had to encompass only the North. Having lost the southern part of its Mediterranean Empire, the Church built a new Empire in the North, as we saw in Lectures 13 and 14. Christians could never again look at the world without seeing millions of Muslims and the Islamic faith, from its origin to present day, has been a challenge to Christians.

3 DIVISION OF THE CHURCH BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IN 1054

(Cairns, 196-99; Lion, 275-6; Vos, 63-64)

3.1 Introduction

The Church in the West (led from Rome) formally broke with the Church in the East (led from Constantinople) in 1054, but West and East had been drifting apart for centuries. They had always spoke different languages (Latin in the West, Greek in the East), and they had always lived in different cultural and political worlds. This became more marked after barbarians invaded and overran most of the territories of the Western Church in the fifth century; the Western Empire became increasingly uncivilised, while the Eastern Empire became the cradle of art, literature and commerce.

However, they were still nominally one Church until 1054, after which they were known as the Catholic Church in the West and the Orthodox Church in the East. Both believed, and still believe, that there is only one true Church, them, and that the other is in schism.



THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD AFTER 1054

The above map shows the boundaries of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity after 1054 and how far Islam had extended its

influence by this stage. The Muslim area embraced many Orthodox, Monophysite, and Nestorian Christians, living under Islamic rule.

3.2 Reasons for the division

Nine reasons are summarized in the chart on the next page, but why did it come to a head in 1054? In the mid-eleventh century, some bored Norman (Western) knights attacked both the papal lands of the Western Church and also the Byzantine lands of the Eastern Church. (Historians now call the Eastern Roman Empire the 'Byzantine Empire'.) The Holy Roman Emperor (the civil leader in the West) and the Pope (the spiritual leader in the West) made a military alliance – a mutual defence pact – with the Byzantine emperor,

the civil leader in the East. The Patriarch (the spiritual leader in the East) refused to join the alliance, because, typically, the Pope insisted that in order to get Western military help, the Patriarch must acknowledge the superiority of Rome over Constantinople.

The Patriarch was determined to uphold the independence of the Eastern Church. To justify his refusal, he sent a letter to the Pope, detailing the errors (as he saw them) of the Western Church – including using unleavened bread for communion, where the East insisted on leavened bread, different days for fasting, eating meat from strangled animals (Acts 15:29), and not singing Alleluia during Lent. The Pope replied, setting out the claims of the papacy in uncompromising terms.

When the Norman military threat to Constantinople increased, the Byzantine Emperor persuaded the Patriarch to make peaceful overtures to the Pope. The Pope sent ambassadors to Constantinople, but their leader, Cardinal Humbert, was the opposite of diplomatic. Their meetings got nowhere, and eventually Humbert lost patience, went into the church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), and placed on the altar a bull (a papal decree, that he himself had written) excommunicating the Patriarch and all who followed him. They then shook the dust off their feet, and left. An Eastern deacon ran after Humbert, trying to return the bull, but the overture was rebuffed, and the paper was dropped in the street. The Patriarch responded by excommunicating the papal legation – see the last box in the chart below.

The Primary Causes of the East-West Schism of 1054

CAUSE	EASTERN CHURCH	WESTERN CHURCH
POLITICAL RIVALRY	Byzantine Empire	Holy Roman Empire
CLAIMS OF PAPACY	Patriarch of Constantinople was considered second in primacy to bishop of Rome.	Bishop of Rome claimed supremacy over entire church. See footnote 1
THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT	Stagnated after Council of Chalcedon.	Continued to change and grow through controversies and expansion.
FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY	Declared that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.	Declared that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
ICONOCLASTIC CONTROVERSY	Engaged in 120-year dispute over the use of icons in worship; finally concluded they could be used (statues prohibited).	Made constant attempts to interfere in what was purely an Eastern dispute (statues permitted).
DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE	Greek/Oriental	Latin/Occidental
CLERICAL CELIBACY	Lower clergy were permitted to marry.	All clergy were required to be celibate.
OUTSIDE PRESSURES	Muslims constricted and put continual pressure on Eastern church.	Western Barbarians were Christianized and assimilated by Western church.
MUTUAL EXCOMMUNICATION OF 1054	Michael Gerularius anathematized Pope Leo IX after having been excommunicated by him.	Leo IX excommunicated Patriarch Michael Gerularius of Constantinople.

So Western and Eastern Christianity broke into two separate Churches (referred to, from this point onwards, as the Western Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church). Both Churches regard themselves as the (only) true successor of the apostolic Church – hence the name ‘Orthodox’. Most of us probably know little about the Orthodox Church, but it is ‘Christianity’ for a large part of the inhabited world.

3.3 Crusades seal the schism

The breach of 1054 was not at the time considered permanent by either side. It was the outrages committed by Western Crusaders against Eastern Christians during the Fourth Crusade of 1202-4 (next Lecture and Topic, 15) that made the schism permanent.

3.4 Attempts to heal the breach

There have been attempts to repair the breach. In 1274, a reunion council met in Lyons, France, and agreed terms, but the Orthodox in the East rejected them. A century later, another reunion council was held in Florence, Italy, but again, the Eastern churches rejected the terms for reunion.

Recent Popes have been eager for reunion, visiting Orthodox patriarchs and welcoming them to Rome. In 2001, Pope John Paul II asked the Greek Orthodox for pardon for 'sins of action and omission' against the Orthodox Church - see the newspaper cutting. This Pope continued his efforts throughout 2001, visiting Orthodox churches and speaking to leaders. However, the main stumbling block today is that the Orthodox Church will not accept the universal authority of the Pope.

Pope says sorry for murderous Crusaders

From John Carr
in Athens

THE Pope took a bold step towards healing a 1,000-year-old breach with Greek Orthodoxy yesterday by apologising for the sacking of Constantinople by Catholic Venetians 797 years ago.

At the start of the first visit to Greece by the head of the Roman Catholic Church since eastern and western Christianity split in 1054, the Pope expressed deep regret for the fate of the Byzantine capital during the Fourth Crusade and the massacre of thousands of inhabitants.

During a meeting with Archbishop Christodoulos, head of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Pope said: "I am thinking



their own brothers in the faith. The fact that they were Latin Christians fills Catholics with deep regret." He implored God to "heal the wounds that still cause suffering to the spirit of the Greek people".

The apology came after Archbishop Christodoulos had lectured him about some Greeks "justifiably" objecting to his visits. After the Pope's words, however, Archbishop Christodoulos said: "The Pope was very kind to us."

In March Archbishop Christodoulos criticised the Vatican for intransigence over the sacking of Constantinople and demanded an apology. The Pope instead offered a general apology for the Crusades.

of the disastrous sack of the imperial city of Constantinople, which was so long the bastion of Christianity in the East.

"It is tragic that the assailants, who set out to secure free access for Christians to the Holy Land, turned against

The Times newspaper, 5 May 2001

4. EVANGELISM FROM CONSTANTINOPLE (Cairns, 198; Lion, 316-320; Vos, 61)

Hanks, *Great Events*, 119-124

4.1 Introduction

Generally speaking, the Eastern Church, like the Western Church, evangelised only within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Since the East remained intact for centuries after the West had been over-run by pagans and crumbled, outreach from Constantinople was slower 'off the mark' than in the West. To the north of Constantinople there stretched huge lands, larger than Western Europe, inhabited mostly by pagan Slavic peoples and nomadic groups who had moved in westward from Asia. The first mission from Constantinople was in 863, to the (modern) Czech Republic, then called Moravia.

4.2 Moravia (now the Czech Republic), Bulgaria, Romania

What possible relevance can the 863 mission to Moravia have for us, today? It demonstrates how God moves in mysterious ways. On this map you see Moravia in the territory under the Catholic Church. Why would the Orthodox Church send missionaries there? In 862, a letter arrived in Constantinople from the King of Moravia:

The boundaries of the Eastern Church were greatly widened in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries by missionary activity extending out from Constantinople. The Eastern Churches allowed the people to celebrate the liturgy in their native language.



ORTHODOX MISSIONS IN THE EAST

‘Many Christians have arrived in our midst, some Italian, some Greek, and some German, and they have spoken to us in their different ways. But we Slavs are simple people, and have no one to teach us the truth. ... Therefore we pray you to send us someone capable of teaching us the whole truth.’

Letter from the King of Moravia to the Patriarch (leader of the Eastern Church) at Constantinople in 862.

The King of Moravia was not as naive as he made his letter sound. He feared that the ‘Christians who had arrived in our midst’ from the Latin West were western missionaries who would serve as a spearhead for the conquest of his country. His letter was designed to get Constantinople on his side, to safeguard his kingdom against the West.

Constantinople welcomed the opportunity to extend its influence, and sent two missionaries, who, like modern Wycliff Bible Translator missionaries, first of all prepared an alphabet for the hitherto unwritten Slavic language, so that they could reach the Slavs by giving them the Scriptures in their native tongue. They were very successful for three years, planting an Orthodox Church.

We must notice one dramatic incident because it was ...

4.3 The beginning of the Russian Orthodox Church

A pagan tribe called the Rus (they later gave their name to the whole country ‘Russia’ - land of the Rus) lived in the city of Kiev – see the map above. In 988 Byzantine missionaries told the ruler of Kiev about Eastern Christianity, but he was also considering Judaism, Islam and Western Catholic Christianity.

He therefore invited representatives of all four religions to come to Kiev and expound the merits of their respective faiths – what we might now call ‘a beauty parade’. Judaism and Islam did not impress him, but he found it difficult to decide between the two wings of the Christian Church, so he sent delegates to Rome and Constantinople. When the delegates arrived in Constantinople and witnessed Byzantine worship in the Church of Hagia Sophia, it overwhelmed them and they reported back:

We did not know whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere on earth. We cannot describe it to you; all we know is that God dwells there among men.

This tipped the balance in favour of the East and Viadimir decided to adopt the Orthodox faith. Soon there was Russian church, organized on the Byzantine model, utilizing



RISING TO THE HEAVENS

The historian Procopius (born c.500) was ecstatic in his admiration of Hagia Sophia: "It rises to the very heavens as if surging up from amongst the other buildings. It stands aloft and looks down upon the rest of the city ... the church is full of light, so that you would declare that the place is lit, not by the sun without, but the light that is within."

Byzantine-style buildings, and acknowledging the Patriarch of Constantinople as its supreme head. It was the State religion of Russia until the Communist revolution in 1917, and despite Communist attempts to stamp out Christianity, the Russian Church is today the largest Orthodox Church in world. Ever since the delegates report, and to this day, important aspect of Orthodoxy is their pride in their beautiful form of worship and architecture.

These are two pictures of how the Hagia Sophia looks today – it was then a worshipping Church; it is now in Moslem hands and is a museum.



Hagia Sophia, built in Constantinople in A.D. 535–37. It was originally a Christian church, became a mosque, and is now a museum of Byzantine art. The Turks, who captured the city and renamed it Istanbul, added the minarets.

4.4 Varieties of Orthodoxy

We're not coming back to the Eastern Orthodox Church in any future Lecture, so a word before we leave it, about its position today.

Within the Eastern Church, there are today a variety of Orthodox churches, Russian, Greek, Rumanian, fifteen in all, all with their own systems of authority. They have no single leader with a status like the Pope. The Patriarch of Constantinople presides over gatherings of Orthodox bishops but he does so as first among equals.

The Orthodox Church has today about 250 million members, around the world. It is deliberately in a time warp – which it is proud of. It believes that it alone has preserved the structures of the early Church and the faith of the apostles. Priests sport beards and long hair in imitation of the apostles. The few pews are restricted to the elderly and infirm – everyone else stands. Orthodoxy has steadfastly refused to update its liturgy, which it believes mirrors the early centuries of Christianity.

Sadly, the doctrine of justification by faith is virtually absent from the theology of the Orthodox Church. Rather, it emphasizes *theosis* (literally, 'divinization'), the gradual process by which Christians become more and more like Christ. What many in the Orthodox tradition fail to understand is that 'divinization' is the result of salvation, not a requirement for salvation itself.

Other Orthodox distinctives that conflict with the Bible include:

- The equal authority of Church tradition and Scripture
- Discouragement of individuals interpreting the Bible apart from tradition
- The perpetual virginity of Mary
- Prayers for the dead
- Baptism of infants without reference to individual responsibility and faith
- The possibility of receiving salvation after death
- The possibility of losing salvation.

While many in the Orthodox tradition have a genuine salvation relationship with Jesus Christ, the Orthodox Church does not speak with a clear message that can be harmonized with the biblical gospel of Christ. The call of the Reformers (Lecture 19) for 'Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Christ alone' is missing in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and that is too precious a treasure to do without.

Finally, a quick word about

4.5 Uniate Churches (sometimes known as 'Eastern Catholic Churches')

See, on the map on page 15, where the green and the yellow colours interface. Some States, which were courted by both the Eastern and the Western Churches, took what they wanted from both – for example, they acknowledged the Pope as their spiritual head but retained the Orthodox liturgy and practices – including that married men may be ordained as priests.

From 1596, they became known as Uniate Churches, and there are today twenty-three different self-governing Churches in full communion with the Pope in Rome, with a total membership of about sixteen million. Major areas today include the Balkans, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Russia, and through emigration and persecution, the Americas and Oceania.

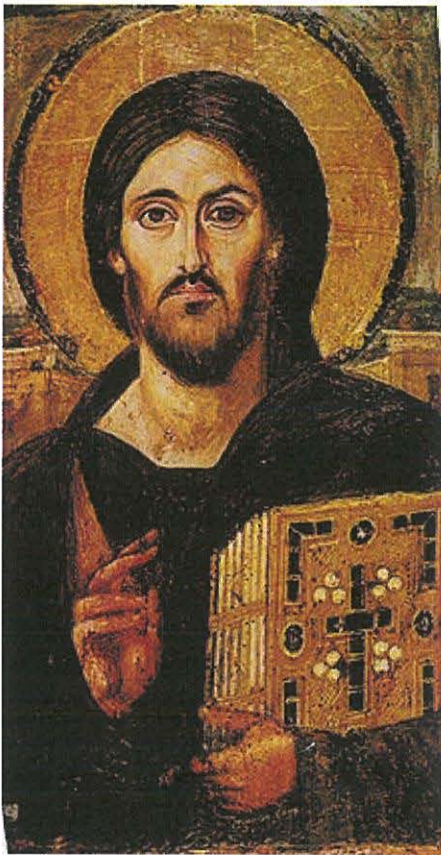
OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

TOPIC FOR LECTURE 14 – ICONS

An icon (Greek *eikon* = image) is, in religious sense, a flat panel painting, generally on wood, or a carved portable object, common to this day in Eastern (Orthodox) Church, representing Christ, Mary or saints. More generally, word is widely used today for any symbol.

Please tell us where, when and why icons became popular, why they were controversial, and where they are venerated today.

The Course textbook, Olson, has a good description of icons at p. 301-303; Cairns mentions them briefly at p. 183 and 197. There is a full treatment in Lion at p. 256-58.



A fairly elaborate Orthodox Christian icon corner as would be found in a private home

This, oldest known ‘Christ Pantocrator’ icon, is from C6 and is now in monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai desert (Lecture 9). Remote location enabled icon to survive iconoclastic years (726-815), when most icons were destroyed.

‘Christ Pantocrator’ (Greek = ‘ruler of all’) represents a full or half-length and full-face. He holds the Gospels in his left hand and blesses with his right hand – portraying the Righteous Judge and the Lover of Mankind, both at the same time. The Gospel is the book by which we are judged, and the blessing proclaims God's loving kindness toward us, showing us that he is giving us his forgiveness.

Those who encouraged the use of icons were known as 'iconodules' and those who disapproved of them and destroyed them were known as 'iconoclasts'. This inscription, in favour of icons, is located beside the mosaic shown below, which is today at the eastern end of the building in Constantinople known as the Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom).

*'The images which
imposters once cast down,
the pious emperors have
restored.'*

EARLY-NINTH-CENTURY
INSCRIPTION AGAINST
ICONOCLASM IN THE
MOSAIC OF THE VIRGIN
AND CHILD IN THE APSE
OF HAGIA SOPHIA,
CONSTANTINOPLE



This mosaic, dating from the early ninth century, shows the Virgin and Child.

The final acceptance of icons, instead of a policy destroying them, came about in 843. The Emperor Theophilus had died and his successor, his son Michael III, was aged only four. His mother was therefore 'regent' and as a confirmed iconodule, she revoked (in the name of her son) the iconoclast laws of the past three decades and reinstated the use of icons in Church worship and private devotion once and for all.