

Philosophy of Religion (Christianity) 2. Religious and spiritual experience

History of Christian Places of Worship

- Jesus' first disciples were Jew and would have been familiar with both **Temple** and **synagogue** worship
- The first Christians worshipped in each other houses
- In the first three centuries Christians were often persecuted and were forced to meet in secret
- Sometimes Christians met underground in burial chambers called '**Catacombs**'
- After the Edict of Milan (313 CE) Christians started meeting in public
- Christians adopted the style and architecture of Roman public buildings e.g. magistrate courts called '**Basilicas**'
- Basilicas evolved into the traditional church that exists today i.e. nave, apse, aisle

Main Features of an Anglican Church

- **Nave** – main part of the church
- **Pews** – benches which the congregation sit on
- **Chancel** – front of the church containing the choir and the high altar
- **Choir** – place where the choir sits
- **Table/Altar** – table on which the minister celebrates the Eucharist
- **Transept** – part of the building forming a cross shape in the floor plan
- **Aisle** – walk way between the pews
- **Rood Screen** – a screen which separates the nave from the chancel
- **Font** – a raised bowl which is used for Christenings
- **Lectern** – stand from which the Bible is read during the service can be in the form of an eagle
- **Pulpit** – place where sermons are given

Anglican Holy Communion Service

- **Entrance - Minister** enters and takes his/her place.
- **Greeting and Preparation - Priest** welcomes the **congregation**, and leads a **general confession**.
- **Ministry of the Word** - Members of the **congregation** read from the **Bible** on a **lectern** at the front of the church.
- **The sermon** follows the gospel reading, usually explaining one or more of the readings.
- **The Nicene Creed** - The congregation stand and recite it together.
- **The Prayers – Intercession Prayers** led by the **priest** or another **minister**.
- **The Ministry of the Sacrament** - The **priest** invites the **congregation** to exchange a **sign of peace**. The **bread and wine** are then brought to the table by the members of the **congregation** during which the **collection** is taken and presented. The priest then takes the **bread and wine** in his/her hands and recites a **Eucharistic Prayer**. The prayer is not recited in order to effect any change in the **bread and wine**. Anglicans believe that **Communion** is a '**remembrance**' of the **Last Supper** and "we celebrate...his (i.e. Jesus') one perfect sacrifice".
- The **congregation** recite the **Lord's Prayer** and then receive the bread and wine.
- **The Dismissal** - A short time of prayer is followed by the words of **blessing**
- The **priest** and other **ministers** walk to the church door to meet the **congregation** as they leave.

Own point of view and different points of views

- In order to get full marks on the last 12 mark question it is necessary to give another point of view, your own point of view as well as references to Christianity in your answer.
- Questions on this section might be about the use of art and music in public worship. Students should be aware of the variety practices within the Christian church e.g. Quakers don't make use of art and music in their services.
- Judaism has strict laws about the use images and idolatry following one of the Ten Commandments 'Do not make graven images'. Sometimes the Torah is sung or chanted.
- Islam follows Judaism in forbidding the use of images. Mosques are often decorated with calligraphy and verses from the Qur'an. Muslims are required to pray five times a day. Muslims also fast during the month of Ramadan.
- Hindu temples are often highly decorated especially with statues of the various gods.
- Buddhist shrines often have statues of the Buddha to help people to meditate.

Prayer and Meditation

- Prayer is a form of communication with God.
- Communication is important in any relationship.
- Prayers can be said publically or privately.
- They can be spoken out loud or said in silence.
- In meditation the worshipper seeks to concentrate their mind on God in silence.

The Lord's Prayer/Our Father

Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. The Lord's prayer is a model for Christian prayer. It contains several themes:

- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Adoration
- Concern for others (intercession)
- Humility

It is used in both public and private worship.

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

Amen

Christian Symbols

- Symbols are images or pictures that have a deeper meaning.
- They can help believers focus their minds on their faith and help them in their worship.



- The cross is a reminder of Jesus' death and resurrection.



- A crucifix is a reminder of Jesus' suffering on the cross



- The ICHTHUS is an old Christian symbol. The first letters of the Greek – Jesus Christ God's Son and Saviour form the acrostic 'ichthus' which is Greek for fish.



- 'Alpha' and 'Omega' are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christians believe Jesus was present at creation and will be present at judgement.



- The two Greek letters 'Chi' and 'Rho' are the first letters of 'Christ'

Christian Art

- Roman Catholic churches often have statues of saints.
- Orthodox churches are often highly decorated with religious icons.
- Anglican churches often have stained glass windows.
- Some evangelical churches might be decorated with simple banners with passages taken from the Bible on them.
- Some Christian churches do not have any religious decoration. They think it detracts from their worship.
- Quaker meeting rooms are plain and simple with little or no decoration.

Christian Music

- Music features prominently in Christian worship.
- It unites believers and provides a form of expression.
- It may be compared to the sense of union gained from joining together to sing at a football match.
- There is a wide diversity of Christian music:
 - Prayers may be sung or chanted
 - Wide selection of hymns (and carols)
 - Traditional organ music
 - Contemporary guitar music
 - Spontaneous singing (Evangelical Churches)
- Some churches don't use music in their meetings e.g. Quakers.

Fasting

- Fasting is when you go without food or drink for a set amount of time.
- The most common time for Christians to fast is during the season of Lent.
- Jesus taught that if people want to fast, they should do it for the right reasons.
- At the time of Jesus many Jews made a big show of fasting. Some put on sack cloth and ashes so that everyone knew they were fasting and would be impressed.
- Reasons for fasting:
 - Ideas of purification of body and soul
 - Concentrate on faith
 - Empathise with others less well off
 - Make them less selfish
 - Reflect on others rather than self
 - Becoming a stronger person – resisting temptation
 - Realise they are dependent on God
 - Become closer to God

The Sacraments

A sacrament is defined as an outward visible sign of an inward invisible grace ordained by Jesus Christ for the benefit of the soul. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches claim seven:

- **Baptism** – the rite of initiation into the Church.
- **Confirmation** – the rite of confirming one's faith involving evoking the Holy Spirit.
- **Eucharist** – service of thanksgiving, a re-enactment of the Last Super with bread and wine.
- **Reconciliation** – sometimes called Confession, an act of seeking God's forgiveness.
- **Marriage** – the commitment a couple makes before the eyes of God and the Church.
- **Ordination** – the rite of becoming a priest.
- **Unction** – the blessing of the sick with holy oils.

Many Protestants only accept the two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

Non-Eucharistic Worship

The main feature of these services tends to be prayer, bible readings, hymns and a sermon. Some Evangelical services tend to be very informal and interactive with singing, music and even drama and dance.

In the Pentecostal and Evangelical traditions there may sometimes be people speaking and singing in **tongues**. This is known as '**glossolalia**'. This recalls the first day of **Pentecost** when the **Holy Spirit** came down on Jesus' disciples enabling them to preach and spread the Gospel (see Acts 2).

The Society of Friends (Quakers) have a completely different form of worship. Their meeting rooms are sparsely decorated and furnished with only a table in the centre of the room surrounded by chairs. There is no service as such. The meeting sit around the table, often with a Bible on it, in silence waiting for someone to be moved by the Spirit to speak. The meeting ends with the shaking of hands.