

5. Why does Christianity have so many denominations and spiritualities?

Crucifix, p.91

Some churches prefer that the figure on the cross make clear the sufferings of Christ. The graphic depiction of suffering means to bring the viewer to repentance and faith.

Quotes and Images

p. 92: The colloquial citation from Ninian Smart demonstrates his knowledge that Christianity is understood in many different ways by its practitioners.

p. 93: The photo may be said to illustrate at least Smart's dimensions 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7.

pp. 95 and 96: G. B. Trudeau (b. 1948) composed a set of cartoons satirizing the liberal and entrepreneurial churches of the United States. Part of the joke was to call the church, not after Christ, but after Walden Pond, the site where the transcendentalist, albeit nonreligious Henry David Thoreau had his cabin.

p. 97: Vigen Guroian (b. 1948) is a professor of religious studies in Orthodox Christianity at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. His university setting has made him particularly interested in presenting Orthodoxy to the non-Orthodox.

p. 97: Eastern Orthodox worship multiplies symbols. Here a single candle becomes three candles, three becomes one, to suggest the Trinity. Other candles are one that becomes two, suggesting the two natures of Christ.

p. 99: The primary edifice of the Roman Catholic Church, Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, is said to be built over the grave of St. Peter. The massive baldachin by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) over the altar is said to mark the very location of Peter's bones.

p. 100: Dorothy Day (1897–1980) was a Roman Catholic journalist and social activist who was instrumental in the establishment of the Catholic Worker Movement and the Houses of Hospitality, through which she directly served the poor of New York City. She was known for having combined a conservative religious piety with a leftist vision of society.

p. 101: Gottlieb Mittelberger visited the colony of Pennsylvania from 1750 to 1754, and the colony's unique openness to all monotheistic religions upset him, accustomed as he was to the German pattern of only one religion in each geographical area.

p. 103: Martin Luther (1483–1546), Augustinian monk and the primary theologian of the first wave of the Protestant Reformation, is usually pictured as a biblical scholar, wearing academic garb and holding an open Bible. He was also a priest, a husband, and a father.

p. 104: This second-wave Protestant church values the word—see the raised pulpit – but refuses any religious art in the sanctuary. There is no altar, but rather a table complete with tablecloth.

p. 107: “Life Redeemed Apostolic Church” is one of countless independent churches that transform a commercial site into a worship space. That this church's name includes the word “apostolic” indicates the belief of these Christians that they are obediently following the teachings of the earliest disciples.

p. 108: In the United States, the Salvation Army is most known for its work to alleviate poverty, and some aspects of its spirituality resemble the popular Holiness movement of the early twentieth century. The Salvation Army was founded in England in 1880.

p. 110: Frank Bartleman (1871–1936) was an American Pentecostal evangelist who wrote the most famous description of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles.

p. 113: Many churches worldwide are now built on the model of a stadium utilizing immense projection screens. Such a setting is thought to be familiar, and thus comfortable, for newcomers.

Suggestions, pp. 116–17

4. The Mar Thoma Church of India has been suggested since it eludes all standard categories of Christian branch and denomination.

7. Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964) is famous for two novels and many short stories that feature southern characters usually called grotesques. A devout Roman Catholic, O'Connor believed that literature needed to present exaggerated characters and situations in order to convey religious themes to contemporary readers. Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh”; Elihue means “My God is he.” Parker’s tattoo is a classic Orthodox icon of Christ. His wife is a Protestant who believes that any pictures of God are idolatrous. Discussion of the short story can focus on the craziness of O'Connor’s characters, the religious overtones of their dialogue, and the differences between the Methodist, Orthodox, and Calvinist religious views.

8. In James Agee’s (1909–1955) 1951 novella *The Morning Watch*, an adolescent boy who attends an Anglo-Catholic boys’ boarding school in Tennessee reflects on the sufferings of Christ, his own desire to be saintly, the loss of his father, and his status among his classmates as he participates in a prayer vigil on the night between Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Students may be able to comment on Richard’s denominational experience and on Agee’s references to the Bible, God, Christology, and spirituality.

9. The 2006 Russian film *Ostrov*, in English *The Island*, will introduce what is probably to many students a wholly alien spirituality, that of admiration for the Orthodox *starets*. Anatoly thinks that, ordered by the Nazis, he had committed murder, and in penance he lives as a crazed holy hermit somewhat connected to an Orthodox monastery. Discussion of the film can focus both on the Orthodox rituals of liturgy and prayer, which constitute much of the audio of the film, and on the believed spiritual powers of the *starets*.