

A fifth-century mosaic in S Constanza, Rome; Christ gives the Word to Peter and Paul; probably based on an earlier mosaic, for Peter and Paul have no haloes. The water of life flows below.

where it was to several towns in a province, 'to the *ecclesiae* in Galatia'. This word meant 'the people called out', or 'chosen'. By AD 400 it also began to mean the place where Christian people met, the building.

Although in Germanic and Slavic languages the word for a church is derived from *kuriakon*, Romance and Celtic languages use words taken from *ecclesia*, for instance *église* in French and *eglwys* in Welsh.

When the meeting became too large for the house church, it might be deemed safer to meet outside the city. But Roman meetings never met in the catacombs outside the city, which were nothing but passages for burial below ground; services in catacombs were only held by little groups for burials or to commemorate the dead. At one time there was a view that congregations must have hired schools in which to meet, but there is no evidence for this. Otherwise, a congregation that grew too big to meet in the house church had to split up and meet in two places. This was the start of separate congregations in the cities. If they were asked by a pagan why they did not all meet in one spot, they are known to have replied that God is not in one place, but in all places.

There was still no accepted idea of what a church building ought to look like. Nor could

The sixth-century altar in S Vitale, Ravenna; altars at first were wooden tables; by now often stone.

