

image, and it was particularly sinful to portray God, for God is spirit and too high and holy to be drawn without error. Early Christians seem to have been happy to allow artists to use their skills outside the church in secular art. Pagans mocked the Christians for having no likeness of God in their church. The Christians retorted that men and women are the images of God, and nothing made by an artist's hands ought to be there.

The converts who flooded into the church brought with them the desire for pictures. People would pin small religious images on their clothes. At martyrs' tombs artists portrayed the martyr's face, though some critics did not think it right. At Aquileia in northern Italy there was soon a church with a mosaic floor depicting Jonah and the whale.

Preaching

From the ambo the bishop or one of his presbyters 'preached'. Such an address was not meant to be a lecture; it was part of worship, and linked with prayer. As Paul in his letters had mingled the gospel of Christ with the moral demands made by that gospel, so the preacher was to tell of the truths of faith and apply those truths to the lives of the hearers.

We know that this frame of mind was found very early among the Christians, for from Antioch comes a strange comment on behaviour in church. This rich trading city had one of the first big Christian communities, and was the town where they were first called 'Christians'. Its bishop was as important as those in Rome or Alexandria – and of more weight than the bishop in Jerusalem, who might be expected to be the chief of bishops, because Jerusalem had been laid waste in the Jewish revolt of AD 70.

About 270 the bishop of Antioch was Paul of Samosata. He preached with such power that the congregation clapped and cheered. Some people thought it natural and fitting to applaud. But visitors from other towns, and some of those who lived in Antioch, found this noise not to their taste, feeling that it was at odds with the spirit of prayer and the

decorum of a church service. From this it is clear that the words from the ambo were considered to be near prayer, and were not meant to be a speech such as one might make to rally support for a political party. Critics in Antioch thought that the bishop's words were tantamount to a political speech, and an unfitting use of the ambo.

The use of Greek in services

At first all services, except among the Jewish Christians, were in Greek. Even in Rome or as far away as Gaul, Greek was used because the first Christians in these places were traders from the Greek world and learnt the faith as God-fearers. St Paul and St Peter came to Rome and taught and prayed in Greek. Even when the mother tongue of most of the people in church was Latin, the prayers were still in Greek; for this was the custom which they had received, and Greek was the language of the New Testament and they had the Old Testament in the Greek version. For a time there was a sense, even in the West, of the holiness of the Greek tongue. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire, where Greek was the common tongue, this feeling that Greek was sacred because it was the language of the Gospels continued through the centuries.

About AD 200 the community at Rome began to use Latin for its prayers; they wished the people to understand what was said. But there were certain Greek words now so deep a part of prayer that they were kept even while the Latin grew to be the norm. They went on saying *Kyrie eleison*, 'Lord have mercy' in Greek, and calling the feast of Whitsun by the name of Pentecost, from the Greek for 'fifty', originally meaning fifty days after Passover and later after Easter. They went on calling the feast of 6 January by its Greek name of Epiphany. When artists started to draw the crucifixion, they placed on top of the cross the letters IHS, the first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek – the H is a long E. Some Westerners could not grasp this. Consequently they sometimes spelt Jesus as 'Jhesus', or thought that the letters stood for