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Pilgrimage

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Pilgrimage often refers to spiritual journeys and is a topic associated with multifaceted theories and practices in global, historical Christianity. First, this article explores the physical, internal, and allegorical aspects of pilgrimage journeys. This article then examines the scriptural, church historical, artistic, and scientific dimensions of pilgrimage. While not exhaustive, the biblical and ecclesial surveys intend to address significant concepts and traditions that have shaped both overarching and contextual theologies of Christian pilgrimage. Concerning the arts and sciences, special attention is given to objects of visual and material culture, literature, and music, as well as perspectives from the field of sociocultural anthropology. Finally, this article suggests that ecumenical and interfaith dialogue are two ways forward as Christians journey alongside their neighbours.

Keywords: Christian theology, Pilgrimage, Scripture, Church history, Visual and material culture, Literature, Music, Sociocultural anthropology, Ecumenism, Interfaith dialogue

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1 Pilgrimage as physical, internal, and allegorical

In the study of global, historical Christianity and its various theologies and traditions, ‘pilgrimage’ often denotes corporeal travel to a sacred location such as a church or shrine associated with the life of Christ or with those of saints or martyrs. A pilgrimage may also unfold as one encounters God or visualizes a location in the mind. Fundamentally, however, pilgrimage refers to a theme drawn from scripture: followers of God are sojourners or strangers upon the earth, bound for an eternal, heavenly Kingdom. Thus, Christian pilgrimage may be defined as a spiritual journey that takes physical, internal, and allegorical expressions. These three expressions may be ambiguous or contradictory, but they ultimately reflect that pilgrimage is multivalent and adaptable, able to be reconfigured or inculturated in diverse contexts.

First, physical pilgrimage is a journey to a place where God’s revelation affects one’s spirit and life (Bartholomew and Llewelyn 2016: xii). These pilgrimages require mobility as one travels to a location associated with God’s presence, the life of Jesus Christ, the lives of holy people or saints, or miraculous accounts. A place is geographical and historical – in fact, a place is storied because God interweaves time, space, and events (Brueggemann 1977: 185). Sacred space, demarcated by physical locations or objects as well as by psychological associations, has a complex relationship with both natural and profane spaces and must be studied in context (Kilde 2022; Coster and Spicer 2005). A sacred space may be layered, such as an altar within a church and a church within its grounds. Expanding the scope, shrines must be appreciated within their natural landscapes (Reinberg 2019). Pilgrims, who travel through and to sacred spaces individually or communally, have diverse goals: devotion, forgiveness, healing, tangibility of belief, fulfilment of a vow, material benefits. Transformation occurs through the process of arduous travel, euphoric arrival, and divine encounter as pilgrims’ mundane lives are suspended and replaced by simplified possessions, increased dependence on companions or strangers, greater risk of harm, and heightened spiritual sensitivity (MacGregor 2018: 207–208). Typically, physical pilgrimages have both outward and homeward stretches. They can be plotted linearly or elliptically: from one point to a sacred destination and back to the original point. However, pilgrimages can be multi-site or circuitous, and they are not contingent on distance. Additionally, the outward journey differs from the homeward journey: the former may be slow, devotional, and preparatory while the latter, once the pilgrim is changed, may be a process of reintegration or be swift and touristic (Turner and Turner 1978: 22–23). Physical pilgrimage sites have been appreciated throughout church history, to varying extents depending on the tradition, and are located on every continent.

Second, internal pilgrimage is a journey of prayer and meditation. It may also be understood as ‘imagined pilgrimage, a journey to a sacred destination carried out in the

mind' (Hillman and Tingle 2019: 4). This mode of pilgrimage focuses on interiority and does not necessarily involve physical, external gestures. In a sense, a stable location makes for ease of spiritual movement. Whereas physical pilgrimage may be complicated by actual or perceived age, sex, ethnicity, ability, health, logistics, politics, or other factors, internal pilgrimage is a fully accessible method. Objects of visual culture, literature, or music may aid pilgrims. While internal pilgrimage is personal, the related mode of moral pilgrimage, which is a daily discipline of obedience as a pilgrim lives alongside one's neighbours, has an interpersonal dimension (Dyas 2016: 98). Both of these modes suggest rootedness in one's home or community. Internal pilgrimage has been practised since the early church through contemplative forms of monasticism (solitary or communal), anchoritism, meditation, and mysticism; it developed further in Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant spirituality.

Third, the essential expression of Christian pilgrimage is allegorical: all of life is a journey, from a pilgrim's earthly beginning to heavenly end. The soul may be considered 'fundamentally nomadic' (Hillman and Tingle 2019: 2). In fact, it can be argued that allegorical pilgrimage is literal while physical pilgrimage is metaphorical. This inversion of perspectives recognizes that 'the supreme significance of pilgrimage lies in seeking the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal reality of which the earthly city is but a shadow' (Dyas 2016: 106). Allegorical pilgrimage is the spiritual reality. Life as pilgrimage provides Christians with a sense of present and prophetic identity. They are faithfully present pilgrims who journey with Christ and alongside neighbours in daily life. They are faithfully prophetic pilgrims who are not at home in the world, anticipating and participating in the coming of God's Kingdom. Life as pilgrimage constructs a metanarrative that integrates the physical and internal pilgrimages one may experience on the way. The allegorical posture or worldview has been expressed through a variety of theological and literary works. Notably, Augustine of Hippo primarily understands pilgrimage as spiritual ascent to God, although he maintains pastoral concern for the whole human person and occasionally encourages the undertaking of physical pilgrimages (Harmon 2014). Allegorical pilgrimage has been appreciated across church traditions with less controversy compared to its physical or internal counterparts.

2 Pilgrimage in scripture

2.1 Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew *ger*, which relates to ethnicity but is more defined by class and landlessness, and the Hebrew *toshav* may be translated as stranger, sojourner, immigrant, or resident alien (Jobling 2009; Matlock and Arnold 2009). A *ger* was an individual who resided with, but did not originate from, the Israelite or Jewish community. Since the status of such residents was neither '*nokhri*, a foreigner temporarily in the land', nor '*ezrah*, a citizen with full rights and obligations', the concepts of *ger* and *toshav* had

sociopolitical and theological significance as Israel lived in relation to various lands (Pullan 2005: 394). These terms, which tie to land and community, join with New Testament terminology to nuance Christian theories and practices of pilgrimage.

2.1.1 Abraham's journey

Scripture develops the overall theme of pilgrimage, which takes physical, internal, and allegorical expression in various stories and figures. From the moment God called to Abraham, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you' (Gen 12:1), pilgrimage became characteristic of those who follow God. Abraham's journey can be seen as a reversal of Adam and Eve's involuntary exile from Eden, an outworking of faith rather than a consequence of unfaithfulness (Inge 2016: 36–37). Abraham travelled with his family, slaves, livestock, and possessions from Ur of the Chaldeans (southern Babylonia) to Haran (Upper Mesopotamia), as far as Egypt, and throughout Canaan. He erected altars and memorials to God at places along the way: the oak of Moreh at Shechem, the hill country between Bethel and Ai, the oaks of Mamre at Hebron, a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and a mountain in Moriah (Gen 12:6–8; 13:18; 21:33; 22:1–19). Thus, Abraham established a peripatetic devotional life. Furthermore, God repeatedly promised to give Abraham's descendants the land (Gen 12:1–12; 13:14–17; 15:18–21; 17:1–8). Socioculturally, Abraham was a prosperous, nomadic resident alien in Canaan. Spiritually, he was a pilgrim journeying towards a promised land, a journey of faith that would be recognized as exemplary in Hebrews 11.

Canaan was the land of Abraham and his successors' journeying (Gen 17:8; 28:4; Exod 6:4). Indeed, Isaac and Jacob inherited Abraham's identity as a sojourner or stranger (Gen 28:4; 35:27; 36:7; 37:1; 47:9). The aim of pilgrimage could be to set out, reach a destination, encounter God, and return to the point of departure. Such an account is recorded in Gen 28:10–22 and 35:1–15, when Jacob departed from Shechem to Bethel on pilgrimage to a place where he had previously encountered God and vowed to return. However, the grander purpose of pilgrimage passed down from Abraham to the people of Israel and their prophets was to arrive at an unknown but promised place, encounter and worship God on the way, and shape a new society (Gen 12:1–9; 13:14–18; Exod 19–20; Isa 42:5–9; 66). Scholars have argued that themes of pilgrimage in the stories of the patriarchs were edited in by Deuteronomists (Noth 1972; Smith 1997). Nevertheless, the forebears' experiences living as sojourners and strangers in the land foreshadowed the exilic periods in Egypt, Babylon, Persia-Media, and under the Roman Empire.

2.1.2 Israel's journey

Theologically and literarily, the book of Exodus (and the Pentateuch more broadly) tells of Israel's pilgrimage with and to God through both the content and arrangement of the materials (Smith 1997). The journey from Egypt to the promised land, recounted in

Exodus 12 through Joshua 4, can be viewed as a pilgrimage retracing forebears' steps. The journey is layered. First, the Israelites physically journeyed from Egypt, through the wilderness, and across the River Jordan. Along the way, God instituted days of remembrance that became Jewish pilgrimage festivals and imparted the design of sacred space that became the tabernacle. Second, the Israelites spiritually journeyed in worship towards God, whose presence dwelt at the ark of the covenant kept in the most holy place of the tabernacle. Deuteronomy 26 records the confession, first fruit, and tithes the Israelites will offer God when they settle in the land of their inheritance. The declaration begins, 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor' (Deut 26:5), a possible reference to Jacob (Hos 12:12; Noth 1972: 199), followed by allusions to the Exodus narrative and commentary on the ceremony to take place. The concise description of Israel's history emphasizes God's faithfulness to which people respond. Third, the Israelites' journey can be understood as God's own journey from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion (Ps 68; McConville 2016: 17). God was a present travel companion, appearing in the wilderness as a pillar of cloud and fire, dwelling in the tabernacle, and settling in the land of promise.

Reaching the promised land did not signal an end to pilgrimage; rather, pilgrimage shifted, becoming rooted at local centres of worship. According to scripture, Jewish people were to celebrate three annual pilgrimage festivals related to agriculture and history (Exod 12:14–20; 13:3–10; 34:10–28; Lev 23; Num 28:16–31; 29:12–40; Deut 16:1–17; cf. 2 Chron 30; Kraus 1966: 45–70). First, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or Pesach (Passover), coincided with the beginning of barley harvest and commemorated the sudden exodus from Egypt. Second, the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot (Pentecost), happened seven weeks into the grain harvest and commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Third, the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot (Booths), marked the ingathering of harvest before the autumn rains and commemorated the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness, during which time they lived in tents. Each pilgrimage festival occurred at a chosen place – initially Shiloh but eventually centralized at Jerusalem (2 Sam 6; 1 Chron 15–16; cf. 2 Chron 1:3–6) – and recounted a portion of the exodic journey, cementing historical pilgrimage identity into ongoing, cyclical pilgrimage rituals. All Jewish males from age twelve were required to participate, and many travelled to worship in Jerusalem, the centre of cultural and religious identity, although celebrations also occurred at home with family (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 276). When Jewish people made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they were celebrating their occupation of the promised land (McConville 2016: 17).

That King David desired to build a house for the Lord (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17), and that Solomon accomplished the task (1 Kgs 5–8; 1 Chron 28–29; 2 Chron 2–7), was a departure from the custom of a portable ark, tent, or tabernacle. A new relationship between place, presence, and pilgrimage developed:

> The act of pilgrimage – a physical action in real space – was a response to God's gracious generosity which had given them a physical space (the land). Pilgrims, traversing through the land of Israel, went up to Zion to thank God for the gift of the land through which they had just walked. (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 277)

The relationship between place and presence was disrupted in 586 BCE, when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first temple and the Jews were exiled from the land to Babylon. After returning and rebuilding, pilgrimage continued (Ezra 2:68–6:22). However, there were ambiguities, as Jewish pilgrims travelled from the diaspora and the glory of God had departed from Jerusalem (Ezek 10–11). The relationship was again disrupted in 70 CE, when Titus destroyed the second temple.

Another ambiguous dimension of place and presence is to be found in Old Testament prophets voicing God's will for a broader experience of divine presence. In Isaiah, the vision of new heavens and earth spreads God's presence beyond the historical, geographical boundaries of Jerusalem. The universal scope of salvation and pilgrimage are related metaphors: 'Mt Zion has become a metaphor for the presence of God, and the pilgrimage-feast a metaphor for the salvation of all the world' (McConville 2016: 26). In Isaiah, these metaphors are reflected through all the nations going up to Zion (2:2–4), the mini-apocalypse (24–27), and God gathering foreigners into the 'house of prayer for all peoples' (56:3–8). Similarly, in Ezekiel the vision of the restored Holy Land carries on the idea of holy space, with God's presence unbound from a single place (McConville 2016: 23). Zechariah 8:20–23 also portrays universal pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Thus, the Old Testament portrayal of pilgrimage expands beyond its apparent dependence on people, history, and land by also internalising the journey, reinterpreting holy space, extending holiness, and including the nations.

2.1.3 Songs of Ascents

Psalms 120–134 is a collection of fifteen psalms known as the Songs of Ascents. Three are attributed to David (Pss 122; 124; 131) and one to Solomon (Ps 127), but most date from the second temple period (Goulder 1998: 27–30; Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 4). Most scholars consider the 'pilgrimage psalter' to be a linguistically and conceptually distinct collection of songs that were composed, compiled, and revised to be used in annual pilgrimage festivals (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 4, 287–288, 294). The psalms may also have been used more generally in festal processions, worship services, or in familial or personal devotion (Barton and Muddiman 2001: 359, 361; Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 294). Another theory is that the superscriptions refer to return from exile, having little to do with pilgrimage (Goulder 1998). However, pilgrimage theology is apparent in the language of mundane, agrarian life alongside that of liturgical, nationalistic views of Zion, and a sense of motivating movement to Jerusalem in order to encounter God (Crow

1996). The liturgical perspective is evident in that the collected psalms refer to the Aaronic blessing in Num 6:24–26, with most directly referencing four key words: 'bless', 'keep', 'gracious', 'peace' (Pss 124, 126, and 131 are indirect; Liebreich 1955). It is possible that worshippers sang the psalms in response to priestly blessings or appreciated symbolic correspondence between the fifteen psalms and the number of words in the blessing (Liebreich 1955: 36) or the number of steps leading up to the temple (Mitchell 1997: 109–112). The nationalistic perspective is evident in a theology of Zion that takes pilgrimage allegorically and anticipates the eschaton.

The arrangement of Psalms 120–134 suggests a pilgrimage journey, and various sequences have been proposed (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 289–290; Kaiser 1993: 17; Mitchell 1997: 117–126; Seybold 2003: 357). Generally, the first portion (Pss 120–122) expresses a cry of distress, pilgrimage to Zion, and arrival in Jerusalem. The second portion may be understood as similar songs for use during the festival or as an assortment of songs with distinct themes (e.g. blessing, thanksgiving, confession). The third portion (Pss 132–134) expresses Israel's salvation history, hope in a Davidic Messiah, and unity before offering benediction to departing pilgrims. Overall, Psalms 120–134 convey the tension of searching for a safe place – the communal temple at Zion that is the localized and universal source of God's blessing. It has been observed that Psalm 127 stands as the central psalm, with seven psalms before and after. Each heptade contains twenty-four occurrences of the tetragrammaton, and each heptad can be further divided into a tetrad and a triad with twelve occurrences (Mitchell 1997: 108). All these factors suggest that the Psalms of Ascents were intentionally crafted and arranged.

The book of Psalms contains additional allusions to pilgrimage. Psalms 15 and 24:3–6 feature questions and answers, suggesting that these are entrance liturgies or catechisms for pilgrims approaching the temple (Barton and Muddiman 2001: 361). Psalm 24:3–4 expresses that those who ascend must have clean hands and pure hearts, Psalms 40:6 and 50 criticize sacrificial practices, and Psalm 81 appeals to Israel to walk in God's ways. These selections suggest the importance of internal pilgrimage. Psalm 84 can be considered an entire pilgrimage psalm, an entrance liturgy, or a hymn about Zion (Barton and Muddiman 2001: 390). It suggests that reaching Zion is a process with inward and outward realities (McConville 2016: 19–20). The verses express longing or lament (84:1–2), a sense of home (84:3–4), a description of journeying (84:5–7), supplication for the king (84:8–9), and joy and confidence (84:10–12). Finally, the Psalms portray pilgrimage to Zion as a universal vision. God's people are blessed to be a blessing to 'all nations' so that 'all the ends of the earth' may revere God (Ps 67). Similarly, 'all the earth' is summoned to worship (Ps 100; cf. Pss 65, 87).

2.2 New Testament

In the New Testament, the Greek *paroikos* (alien) designates ‘otherness’ from a majority group while *xenos* (stranger) implies that one should be treated hospitably (Matlock and Arnold 2009). These concepts are distinct from the legal status of *polites* (citizens; Pullan 2005: 395). *Parepidemos* (pilgrim, stranger, or sojourner) may apply metaphorically to one whose home is heavenly but whose journey is earthly. Beginning in the Old Testament with Abraham, who is among the *parepidemoi* or *peregrini* (Heb 11:13, Vulgate), and extending to all who follow Christ, who are each *parepidemos* or *peregrinos* (1 Pet 2:11, Vulgate), the language of pilgrimage threads throughout scripture.

The English words ‘pilgrim’ and ‘pilgrimage’ are etymologically related to the Latin *peregrinus* and *peregrinatio* derived from the root *per ager*, meaning ‘across the fields’. Employed during the Roman period to refer to foreigners or people travelling abroad, the terms held legal and political significance for those who were not Roman citizens but were free subjects able to move throughout the Roman Empire though restricted by common laws (Eade and Albera 2017: 7–8). The terms did not initially carry religious connotations, but semantic shifts, church traditions, and lived experiences resulted in what is now a multiplicity of meanings, attitudes, and practices associated with Christian pilgrimage.

2.2.1 Jesus Christ as a pilgrim

Scripture continues to develop the overall theme of pilgrimage in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born into the sociocultural, religious, and political context of Judaism, the Hebrew scriptures, and the Graeco-Roman Empire. Numerous forms of pilgrimage existed, from *theoria* (the duties of state envoys) to worshipping deities (Elsner and Rutherford 2005: 12–28; Sanders 1992: 112–116, 125–143). Fifty years before Jesus’ adult ministry, Herod the Great commissioned temple renovations that expanded the outer courts, enabling increased capacity during pilgrimage seasons and fuelling social, religious, and political tensions (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 278). These dynamics shaped the context in which Christ, his first disciples, and early generations of Christians made their own pilgrimages.

Indeed, Jesus was a Jewish pilgrim. Joseph and Mary dedicated him as a baby at the temple during the Passover festival (Luke 2:22–38), and when Jesus was twelve years old, he was left behind at the temple during another pilgrimage journey (Luke 2:41–51). Christ’s faithfulness during his temptation in the wilderness alludes to the Israelites’ exodic wanderings. Furthermore, like Moses and the Israelites, Jesus encountered God in the wilderness, as Matt 4:1–11 and Mark 1:12–13 state that angels waited on him. The Gospel of John records Jesus making three pilgrimages to Jerusalem (John 2:13–3:21; 5:1; 7:1–10:39) as well as his Passion journey. The latter transforms pilgrimage and associated sacrificial rituals by fulfilling them in the person of Jesus Christ rather than at the temple (John 4:21–24; Lincoln 2016: 37–39). Christ’s prophetic critique of Jerusalem and his self-

understanding in relation to Jerusalem recast the city's judgment and restoration in light of his death and resurrection (Walker 1996a: 269–289). In Luke 24:13–35, Jesus appears as a pilgrim on the road to Emmaus, but his two companions recognize him only after they reach their destination and Christ breaks bread, a eucharistic and literary reference to Luke 22:19–20. The gospels portray Christ as the exemplary pilgrim, a companion to pilgrims, and the destination of pilgrimage. Thus, aspects of Christ's life may be relevant to the tripart typology of pilgrimage as physical, internal, and allegorical and to the wider human experiences of those expressions of pilgrimage.

Moreover, Christ embarked on a type of pilgrimage through his incarnation and ascension. The incarnation undergirds a sacramental view of the created world in which Christ journeyed, came alongside people, and revealed spiritual realities that reoriented place, presence, and pilgrimage. This christological reorientation had social and religious significance for Jewish Christians who endured expulsion from synagogues and the destruction of the temple (Lincoln 2016: 45). Compared to the Old Testament, the practice of physical pilgrimage is written of less frequently in the New Testament, which does not mandate pilgrimage for followers of Jesus. However, Christ's call to take up one's cross and to follow suggests an invitation to join him on pilgrimage (Matt 10:38; 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Mark 8:34). This pilgrimage may take physical, internal, or allegorical expression as followers become Christlike in character and continue his incarnational, sacrificial ministry – the ultimate destination being the eternal presence of God in the heavenly Kingdom.

2.2.2 Christians as aliens, exiles, and foreigners

The movements of God's people throughout scripture can be described as both centripetal and centrifugal (Kaiser 2000). Centripetal movement occurs as God draws people from all nations to salvation in Christ and onward to the new creation that will be fulfilled in God's Kingdom. This gathering movement echoes the pilgrimage of the Israelites to the promised land and to God's presence in the tabernacle or temple. Yet, it challenges the notion of a terrestrial, geographic centre (although Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome were important locations in the history of early followers of Christ). Centrifugal movement is empowered by the Great Commandment (Matt 22:36–40) and Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). Significantly, the Pentecost events convey the immanence or decentralization of God's presence (which indwelt individual people and manifested in their lives) and the transcendence or translatability of the gospel (which was comprehended in diverse languages; Acts 2:1–11). This sending movement echoes Old Testament pilgrimage patterns such as the blessing of the nations through Israel as well as the descent from the temple and return to mundane, faithful life following Jewish festivals. This movement remains apparent in the worship cycles of Christian church communities as they gather on

the Lord's Day and depart with a benediction. Therefore, Christian pilgrimage and mission are related and multidirectional.

With the inception of Christianity came new understandings of place, presence, and pilgrimage. It has been extrapolated that the Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians) retained a sociocultural orientation towards Jerusalem and regarded themselves as the restoration of Israel, while the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jewish Christians) believed that Christ fulfilled the Torah and temple traditions and regarded themselves as serving a new society (Bosch 2001: 41–46; Hengel 1983: 1–29; Meyer 1986: 53–83). Both Hebrews and Hellenists believed that Gentiles would be incorporated into soteriology, but with different expectations:

> Whereas the former expected their inclusion to be brought about by the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem, promised in the Old Testament, the latter believed that the Gentiles would be brought in through an historical missionary outreach of the church. (Bosch 2001: 44)

As a result, the Hellenists were active in ministry among Samaritans and Gentiles. In Antioch, a remarkable community formed – not a Jewish sect, not a Gentile religion, but a church of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, the first to be called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). The Antioch church became a cradle for missional movement, with the Apostles Paul and Barnabas catalysing Gentile Christian theology and evangelism.

The book of Hebrews has been described as 'an extended sermon based on the theme of pilgrimage' (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 280; see also Johnsson 1978). The author writes of Moses and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt (11:27–29), wandering in the wilderness (3–4), and arrival in the promised land (11:30–31), as well as Jesus' journey to the cross (12:2; 13:12–13). Among the list of the faithful, Heb 11:8–16 depicts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with Sarah and the rest of their families by extension, as 'strangers and foreigners on the earth' (11:13). Abraham in particular 'looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (11:10), and all three patriarchs '[sought] a homeland' (11:14) and '[desired] a better country, that is, a heavenly one' (11:16). Their faith is recognized, and 'God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them' (11:16). Their anticipated home was both a future and an existent reality – now and not yet. Likewise, Christians are to persevere in pilgrimages of faith towards the same end – new Jerusalem, new creation, God's Kingdom fulfilled in Christ (12:1–2, 22–24; 13:12–14).

Although this could be interpreted as a depreciation of place, John Inge argues for a robust theology of place that recognizes pilgrimage as linking God, people, and place according to a biblical paradigm (2016: 91–122). The Old Testament establishes place – the promised land, Mount Zion, the Jerusalem temple – as paramount to faith. Attributing

God’s name to a place was a recognition of divine action in relation to humanity. The New Testament introduces the incarnate Christ, who renegotiates the divine-human relationship and fulfils place-related prophecy, symbolism, and ritual. However, place retains significance. As embodied beings living in the material world, people relate to God in places, some of which may be endowed with value. A sacramental geography continues to develop as divine encounters remind God’s followers that they inhabit the world that God created and makes new. Pilgrimage shrines, for example, ‘root the Christian community to its past, enable its prophetic witness in the present, and encourage it to look towards its future in Christ’ (Inge 2016: 122). Christian pilgrimage neither abandons nor idolizes place. Rather, it appreciates God journeying with humanity in and at places, as well as the sacramental and eschatological dimensions of place.

3 Pilgrimage in church history

The history of Christian pilgrimage is like an extensive, complex tapestry in which the various traditions weave threads of meaning and practice into the whole.

3.1 Pilgrimage in the early church tradition

As the nascent church navigated its Jewish roots and Graeco-Roman context, traditions began to take shape. In early Christianity, *peregrinus*, *peregrinatio*, and similar terms such as *itinerarium* (itinerary), *via* (way, road), and *viator* (traveller) referred to physical travel to holy places or people, or to spiritual exile and pilgrimage of the soul (Pullan 2005: 395). Christian pilgrimage was thus based on heritage and living saints, as recognized in scripture, but also came to incorporate ritual practices and material relics, icons, and images (Elsner and Rutherford 2005: 28–29; Wilkinson 1977: 40–42). Such objects were associated with or depicted holy people or places, and they functioned to bridge the material, the sensory, the memorial, and the spiritual.

The tide of Christian movement went out from Jerusalem, in part because of missional mandate and in part because of sociopolitical dynamics. In fact, Jerusalem was not a major pilgrimage site from 70–325 CE, during which time the second temple was destroyed, Jews were expelled, the city was called Aelia Capitolina, and Christians were persecuted. However, three Christian pilgrims are known to have travelled to Jerusalem in the first two centuries: Melito, the bishop of Sardis; Pionius, who was later martyred; and Alexander, a Cappadocian who became bishop of Jerusalem (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 282). According to Eusebius Pamphilius (c. 260–341) in *Ecclesiastical History*, Alexander journeyed ‘in consequence of a vow and for the sake of information in regard to its places’ – also translated ‘for the purpose of prayer and investigation of the [sacred] places’ (NPNF 2/1: 6.11.2; Eusebius 1995a: 257; Eusebius 1942: 37).

The pilgrimage tide slowly but surely rose. Emperor Constantine's assumption of power in 324 and the Council of Nicea in 325 marked a shift in imperial attitude towards Christianity, which led to greater attention on the Holy Land (Walker 1990). The early fourth-century pilgrimage of Helena, Constantine's mother, was an imperial, religious venture that sparked new interest in sites, archaeology, and relics (Hunt 1982: 28–49). Another female pilgrim, Egeria, travelled from northern Spain or southern Gaul through Israel-Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor in the late fourth century (c. 381–384). She is a notable figure in the development of Christian worship, monastic life, and engagement with sacred places, as well as the development of itineraries as a literary genre (Egeria 2018). The turn towards physical pilgrimage was significant and created tensions for Christians, who for the previous three centuries of the church's existence had moved away from Jerusalem's centrality both literally and theologically. Patristic texts evidence that pilgrimage was subject to debate. Origen (c. 185–254) in *Against Celsus* writes that Judea and Jerusalem are cursed, yet are shadows of the heavenly counterpart (ANF 4: 7.29; Origen of Alexandria 1995: 622). Eusebius in *Life of Constantine* describes the blessedness of places associated with Christ's life, the building of churches, and the destruction of temples (NPNF 2/1: 3.25–59; Eusebius 1995b: 526–555). Notably, however, Eusebius does not call Jerusalem a holy city. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 320–384) in *Catechetical Lectures* argues for worship and witness in what he designates the holy city of Jerusalem (NPNF 2/7: 14.16, 22–23; 17.22, 31; 18.33; Cyril of Jerusalem 1995: 98, 100, 129, 131, 142). In contrast, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394) in *On Pilgrimages* takes a theological and moral stance against pilgrimage, writing, 'When the Lord invites the blest to their inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, He does not include a pilgrimage to Jerusalem amongst their good deeds' (NPNF 2/5; Gregory of Nyssa 1995b: 382). Yet, Gregory also wrote favourably about faithful Christians and holy places in *Letter XVII: To Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa* (NPNF 2/5: 6.17; Gregory of Nyssa 1995a: 542–545). Similarly, in *Letter CVIII: To Eustochium*, Jerome (c. 345–420) wrote to Eustochium concerning her mother Paula's pilgrimage, describing it as faith, disinheritance, inheritance, affliction, martyrdom, and citizenship (NPNF 2/6; Jerome 1995: 195–212). Finally, imagining what has been described as an 'ethic for Christian life' (Claussen 1991: 75), Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in *City of God* uses imagery of pilgrims, citizens, journeying, and home to reflect a terrestrial situation with a celestial end.

In addition to visiting locations spanning the Levant, early church pilgrims travelled to North African sites such as Tipasa and Timgad – the latter of which attracted Donatists who leaned into itinerancy, asceticism, and martyrdom (Frend 1984). Early church pilgrims also visited living saints. These men and women – who themselves practised internal pilgrimage through ascetic, contemplative faith in the deserts of Syria and Egypt – were sought by those seeking to learn of God's ways and encounter God's presence (Wortley 2013: N.487, N.618; Chitty 1966). Alternatively, fifth- through seventh-century Celtic

monks such as St Patrick, St Columba, and St Columbanus embraced ascetic, wandering pilgrimage and mission as a way of life. We are, according to a sermon by Columbanus, to 'live as travelers and pilgrims on the road, as guests of the world, free of lusts and earthly desires' and to 'fill our mind with heavenly and spiritual forms', singing psalms and speaking scripture about desire to be with God (1999: 356). This branch of Christianity blended various expressions of pilgrimage with ministry.

By the sixth century, the ambiguous terminology of pilgrim and pilgrimage stabilized somewhat, as exemplified in the account of the Piacenza Pilgrim (c. 570; Piacenza Pilgrim 1977: 78–89; Pullan 2005: 396). This account suggests a strong relationship between place, event, and ritual, as well as the physical communicability of blessing: washing in a spring at Cana, baptizing in the Jordan, reclining where Christ was betrayed in Gethsemane, touching light and earth in Christ's tomb, drinking at the casket of a martyr named Theodota, bathing at Siloam, consuming manna, collecting ointment from a stone near Clysma, visiting saints' beds in Caesarea Philippi. However, tides shifted again with the Byzantine-Sasanian War (602–628) that overran monastic sites as well as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, after which Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634–644) and the Muslim Arab army entered Jerusalem (638). The early era of Christian pilgrimage closed, having charted a 'new sacred geography' that called to the spiritual imaginations of numerous travellers (Markus 1990: 153).

3.2 Pilgrimage in the Eastern Orthodox tradition

The first seven centuries of Byzantine Christian pilgrimage set the precedent for the wider Orthodox tradition. Christian pilgrims, mostly Eastern but also Latin Western, filtered into the Holy Land during the early Islamic period (638–1099). Simultaneously, places associated with different branches of Eastern Christianity grew in importance. In Oriental Orthodoxy, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia (constructed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) served as a new Jerusalem after Muslim conquests prevented Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The monolithic cave churches continue to be places of pilgrimage and devotion according to the Ethiopian Church calendar. In Eastern Orthodoxy, Constantinople became the most important depository of Christian relics by the eleventh century, in part due to the amassing of relics by Constantine and Helena centuries prior (Majeska 1984: 2–3). Russian Orthodox pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Constantinople, and other sacred places began in the late tenth century, with figures such as Anthony of Kiev (c. 983–1073) and Theodosius of Kiev (1009–1074) taking part. Sources such as the Old Russian *Vita of St Eufrosinija of Polotsk* (late twelfth to fifteenth century), the Bulgarian *Bdinski sbornik* (1360), and the Serbian *Gorički zbornik* (1442) verify that noble women also participated in pilgrimage during this time (Belyakova 2015). The Sack of Constantinople by Crusaders (1204), the Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus' (1237–1241), and the dangers inherent to long-distance pilgrimage decreased traffic

to Jerusalem and Constantinople from the thirteenth century (Majeska 1984: 4–5). Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox pilgrims persisted for a time, however long-distance physical pilgrimages essentially ended with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. Russian Orthodox pilgrimages re-emerged in the nineteenth century with backing from the government, and the majority of pilgrims were peasants (Hummel and Hummel 1995). During the Soviet era, religious repression and its effect on pilgrimage varied. Some lay leaders facilitated processions, such as the Velikoretskii procession of the cross in Kirov, while some laity worshipped at natural sites instead of churches (Rock 2014: 275–301; 2015: 53). Contemporary pilgrimage practices have emerged as 'nomadic Orthodoxy' challenges ecclesiastical structures through religious experiences beyond the parish, including networks around leaders or projects and 'flash mobs' around travelling holy objects (Kormina 2012: 195–227). Finally, two enduringly significant sites are Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai in Egypt and Mount Athos (known as the Holy Mountain) in Greece. Both sites point backward to the Byzantine history of their monastic communities while simultaneously pointing forward to the ongoing importance of literal and figurative mountains as pan-Orthodox pilgrimage sites (Worobec 2014; Speake 2002).

Orthodox views on pilgrimage tend to emphasize presence, and to make reference to mission and death. The sacred presence of venerable people or objects, as well as sensory engagement, are paramount. As Annemarie Weyl Carr explains: 'More than one who traveled, the Byzantine pilgrim was a *proskynetes*, one who venerated; the critical movement was over the threshold of access to the one venerated. The space claimed was one less of distance than of presence' (2002: 76). Thus, entering a sacred space and touching a venerable object constituted pilgrimage, regardless of the distance covered to reach it. Ordinary and special (miraculous) icons were integrated into Orthodox devotion and revenue generation, and in the fourteenth century pilgrims began travelling for their sake (Carr 2002: 87). For example, pilgrims sought to be present with the icons of Megaspilaion, Soumela, Kykkos, Karyes, and Pelagonia as well as named icons such as the Virgin of the Blachernai, the Virgin of the Chalkoprateia, and the Virgin Hodegetria (Carr 2002: 87; Oikonomides 1991). Not only did pilgrims travel to shrines, but icons and relics became pilgrims, in a sense, during processionals. This form of 'inverted pilgrimage' gained post-revolution popularity, taking sacred objects to different regions and becoming an accessible liturgical, even missional, activity (Rock 2014; Rock 2015: 48–49, 55–57). An Orthodox missiology views the church as an allegorical pilgrim people that invites those from all nations to join in pilgrimage towards the heavenly land. Missional pilgrim identity is rooted in the Divine Liturgy and the real presence of Christ: 'The liturgy is an invitation to join with the Lord and to travel with him', and '[t]he eucharist is precious food for missionaries, bread and wine for pilgrims on their apostolic journey' (Bria 1986: 18, 94). This allegorical journey may involve physical pilgrimage towards the end of one's life; indeed, death is a motif in Eastern Orthodox pilgrimage. Travelling to the Holy Land

has been considered ‘a vicarious visit to one’s future home – the heavenly Jerusalem’, with associated acts of penance, prayer, and blessing seen as preparation for death (Hummel and Hummel 1995: 43). More profoundly, ‘dying in Jerusalem’ (symbolically or mystically) is seen as tied to Christ’s death – and to resurrection into the heavenly kingdom (Belyakova 2015: 2, 11).

3.3 Pilgrimage in the Roman Catholic tradition

Early church perspectives on pilgrimage shaped Roman Catholic outlooks on pilgrimage. However, Western pilgrimage to the Holy Land decreased during the early Islamic period (638–1099). The difficulties pilgrims faced en route to Jerusalem became a motivating factor for the Crusades (1099–1291), which wedded religious pilgrimage with ideals of chivalry and war-based opportunity (Coleman and Elsner 1995: 96). To go on crusade was to go on pilgrimage. This period also saw the institutionalization of indulgences, which could take the form of voluntary or mandatory penitential pilgrimage (Sumption 2003). Following the Crusaders’ defeat in the thirteenth century, the only remaining Latin Christian influence in the Holy Land was the Custodia Terrae Sanctae, a Franciscan priory designated to guard Christian sites. However, physical pilgrimages to European sites such as Rome, Santiago de Compostela, Canterbury, and Cologne remained popular. One fifth-century pilgrimage site, St Patrick’s Purgatory (a cave at Lough Derg in County Donegal, Ireland), garnered renewed interest during the Middle Ages following the publication of Henri de Saltrey’s *Treatise on Saint Patrick’s Purgatory* (c. 1180–1184). Veneration of relics and the cult of the saints thrived during the Middle Ages, with pilgrims seeking thaumaturgical, or miraculous, experiences. Holy places, events, and people or relics were interconnected, allowing a pilgrim to tap into the continuity of what was past, yet present. Some Catholics, such as John Wycliffe (c. 1329–1384), Jan Hus (c. 1369–1415), Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380–1471), and Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536), criticized the inconsistency and immorality associated with pilgrimage antecedent to the Protestant Reformation. Long-distance pilgrimage decreased after the Reformation, but local and regional pilgrimages in northern and western Europe increased and were even considered Counter-Reformative (Tingle 2020). Medieval and early modern sites remain attractive to present-day pilgrims. For example, the 1531 apparition of the Virgin Mary to Aztec Christian Juan Diego led to the building of a shrine – what is now the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City – and its replicas (Peña 2011; Ruiz-Navarro 2010). Martyr sites also became pilgrimage destinations, such as the Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum and Monument in Nagasaki, Japan, commemorating the deaths of saints in 1597. The global proliferation of Catholic pilgrimage sites suggests the complicated expansion of both Christianity and European colonialism in the early modern period. For example, the mythohistory of the *Santa Casa* in Loreto – with its purported miraculous re-locations from Judea to Dalmatia and Italy, as well as its replicas throughout Europe and the Americas – exemplifies how Catholic devotion spread in various places, through various

peoples (Vélez 2019). The broader Roman Catholic tradition continues to recognize new pilgrimage sites, including those related to Marian apparitions reported in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Stations and labyrinths are accessible forms of physical, internal pilgrimage in the Roman Catholic tradition. Stationed liturgies developed in Jerusalem in the fourth century and became a compressed, transplantable form of pilgrimage that have endured to the present day. The Via Dolorosa is a processional route in the Old City of Jerusalem that represents the way Jesus walked to his crucifixion. Widespread replicas of this route in the form of Stations of the Cross enable pilgrims to walk and contemplate the Passion. For example, the crypt chapel at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (Washington, D.C., USA) features glazed ceramic tiles depicting the stations, while Saint Joseph's Oratory (Montreal, Canada), has a winding, outdoor garden walk featuring statues representing the stations. The first known church labyrinth is a mosaic from the Basilica of Reparata (c. 324), now located at the Sacred Heart Cathedral of Algiers in Algeria (Kern 2000: 88). Its original function in Christian pilgrimage is uncertain, however more is known about the function of labyrinths in the Middle Ages. For example, the Chartres Cathedral in Chartres, France (built c. 1220) served as a symbolic copy of Jerusalem, and walking its path continues to be a feature of liturgy today (Connolly 2005). Alternatively, miniature labyrinths may be traced with one's fingers.

Roman Catholic perspectives on pilgrimage have both inward and outward orientations. Like their forebears, medieval Christians appreciated the internal and allegorical dimensions of pilgrimage, developing contemplative forms of spirituality in monasticism, anchoritism, meditation, and mysticism. The destination was an 'inner Jerusalem', according to St Bonaventure (1221–1274), who wrote *The Mind's Road to God* (1259) after a mystical, ecstatic walk on Mount Alverne (1953: 7.1). Similarly, in *Revelations of Divine Love* (1373), Julian of Norwich (c. 1342–1413) writes of God opening her spiritual eyes to see her soul or heart like a citadel in which Jesus Christ sits, suggesting unity of spiritual place, self, and Christ (1901: 166–167). Julian also refers to Christ on pilgrimage as he is present with and guides people to heaven (1901: 193–194). An early modern source, *The Spiritual Exercises* (1548) by Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), is a guide for prayer and spiritual formation that engages an exercitant's imagination and senses (1996: 281–360). Ignatius, who went on physical pilgrimage to Jerusalem via Rome in 1523 and called himself 'the pilgrim' in his autobiography, was, like many Jesuits, a practitioner of internal pilgrimage as well as a lifelong pilgrim and missionary (Ignatius of Loyola 1996: 3–66; 1959: 332; O'Malley 1984). The Roman Catholic tradition upheld the church's dual identity as pilgrims and missionaries in *Ad Gentes*: 'The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature' (Second Vatican Council 1965: 1.2).

3.4 Pilgrimage in the Protestant tradition

During the Reformation, Protestants contested sacred space, saints, and relics, all of which featured in Catholic traditions of physical pilgrimage. Protestants also challenged the belief that good works secure salvation and questioned whether works such as pilgrimage hold any value at all. Martin Luther (1483–1546) separates pilgrimage, one of many allegedly good works, from salvation and care for others in *Treatise on Good Works* (1520) and *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (1520; Luther 1966: 40, 171). John Calvin (1509–1564) includes pilgrimage in a litany of medieval piety practices that Christians are to reject because they are corrupt, licentious, and not commanded in scripture (Calvin 1844 on Ps 50:16; 1846 on Hos 4:13–14; 5:6; 14:1–2; 1847 on Jonah 1:16; 2:8–9). While the former criticized pilgrimage because it was caught in a theology of merit (a concern with faith), the latter criticized pilgrimage because it conflicted with a theology of worship (a concern with idolatry). Their views are nuanced – Luther does not condemn pilgrimage in itself and Calvin implies that a proper form of pilgrimage is possible – but they tend towards avoiding pilgrimage entirely rather than carefully extricating it from aspects they deem unwise or unhealthy. These perspectives influenced the history of pilgrimage from the sixteenth century on (Tomlin 2016).

Both Protestant Reformers and Catholic Counter-Reformers tended towards interiority through prayer, meditation, conversion, and transformation. However, allegorical pilgrimage, rooted in the Augustinian interpretation of the Church peregrinating, soon became the primary expression among Protestants. The concept was a metaphor in Puritan spirituality and devotion, inspiring literature such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678; see Bunyan 2003). Bunyan, among others, informed the sermons and spiritual autobiographies of later Protestants, whose 'favorite allegory is the sojourner, the pilgrim and traveler in this world which is not home, for the pilgrim is only here en route to a final destiny' (Peacock and Tyson 1989: 216–217). In what may appear to contradict allegory in favour of physicality, commemorative locations associated with the lives of Protestant figures or movements also came to play a role in Protestant identity and piety. For example, American Methodists may visit sites from the lives of John and Charles Wesley's for the purpose of recalling the narratives of historical or spiritual events (Tweed 2000). These places can be understood as having symbolic or memorial value, not sacramental value, which reinforces the notion that Christians are allegorical pilgrims.

The nineteenth century saw explosive historical, theological, and political interest in the Holy Land. Protestant visitors grounded an appreciation for the Holy Land in an appreciation for the Bible, which manifested in numerous streams of activity: geographical and archaeological research, educational and medical services, Jewish or Muslim missionary work, and hope in prophecies or eschatology (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 296). Visitors included scholars, professionals, missionaries, clergy, celebrities, politicians, and

royalty among their ranks – precursors to modern tourists (Walker and Hoyland 2023: 298–303). Present-day American visitors to the Holy Land, for instance, blur tourism with spiritual desires to 'return to the "source" of their faith, physically and imaginatively' and to 'walk where Jesus walked' (Kaell 2014: 3). Other modern Protestants, such as Anglican theologian N. T. Wright, recognize the sacramental quality of the world and the value of physical pilgrimage in teaching, prayer, and discipleship (Wright 2014).

Broader study on pilgrimage, movement, and globalization has brought pilgrimage into conversation with Pentecostalism (Coleman 2014; 2021; Fortuny and de Mola 2018). Both are international religious phenomena, yet Pentecostalism is often perceived as nimble, with an outward or centrifugal orientation, while pilgrimage is often perceived as nostalgic, with an inward or centripetal orientation. However, Pentecostal forms of pilgrimage do exist, such as the charismatic ministry Livets Ord (Word of Life) in Uppsala, Sweden, and its journeys to the Holy Land. These pilgrimages emphasize agency to move and bless globally, with a theological, imaginative, temporal, and spatial orientation towards Jerusalem and the apocalypse (Coleman 2004: 65). A contrasting example among Scandinavian pilgrimage movements is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden's pilgrimage centre, opened in Vadstena in 1997. Ordained ministers – pilgrim pastors – lead shrine visitors on physical pilgrimages with an emphasis on freedom, simplicity, silence, light-heartedness, slowness, spirituality, and sharing (Lindström 2005). These pilgrimages are contextualized to a culture that values walking and nature, attending to the journey rather than the destination (Gemzöe 2020). Thus, despite what can be a strained relationship between Protestants and pilgrimage, physical, internal, and allegorical expressions have grown and developed within the tradition.

4 Pilgrimage and the arts

4.1 Visual and material culture

Objects of visual and material culture are significant in Christian pilgrimage. They include images, icons, *proskynetaria*, altarpieces, folding triptychs, sculptures, crosses, rosaries, relics, reliquaries, ampullae, badges, medals, pins, brooches, chains, lockets, rattles, bells, whistles, mirrors, stained glass, and architecture. Some function in communal liturgy, others in personal devotion. For example, European medieval and early modern churches commissioned altarpieces, some of which were so large in the Baroque and Rococo periods as to blur the categories of image and architecture. In contrast, portable mass-produced objects fashioned from paper, textiles, plants, wood, stone, shell, glass, metal, plastic, water, oil, or soil have been desirable souvenirs (or *eulogiae*, meaning a blessed object, in the Byzantine tradition; Vikan 1982) that signify that one visited a sacred site. The general purpose of such objects is to facilitate physical, internal, or allegorical pilgrimage.

Relics and icons are intertwined with pilgrimage traditions. Relics are objects associated with holy people or places and may be considered sacred or powerful, while icons are depictions of holy figures and may be considered 'windows' to the divine. For example, the wood of the true cross was purportedly recovered from debris around the site of Calvary by Helena in the early fourth century (Hunt 1982: 28–49; cf. NPNF 2/1: 4.7; Eusebius 1995b: 527–532; Cyril of Jerusalem 2000: 68–70). This discovery is celebrated in the liturgical calendar of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches. With the exception of Protestants, who have heavily criticized the finding and veneration of relics (see Calvin 1870), Christian pilgrimages integrate relics, sites, the cult of the saints, and miracles into a multifaceted ritual system (Waterworth 1848: 233–236). This system is not merely about objects or places. It includes senses of sight and touch as well as a relational dimension between the pilgrim and the person whose relic is being venerated (Inge 2016: 97). Similarly, icons have been integral to Byzantine and Orthodox pilgrimage rituals. Icons serve to identify a sacred place or person (sometimes being placed near a corresponding relic), disseminate a saint from a site in the form of souvenir medals or images, function as votive gifts, develop into icon cults, and stimulate physical, internal, or allegorical pilgrimage (Carr 2002: 81–88).

Medieval badges are another common pilgrimage object. The earliest of such souvenirs were palm branches collected between Jordan and Jericho and worn by pilgrims or Crusaders returning from Jerusalem, leading to pilgrims becoming known as 'palmers' (Kühnel, Noga-Banai and Vorholt 2014). Similarly, pilgrims returning from Santiago de Compostela collected or purchased scallop shells, which became iconographically fashionable and somewhat emblematic of pilgrimage (Tingle 2020: 192–195). The controlled production of lead-tin alloy badges, which were cast from moulds depicting site-specific iconography, became profitable for merchants and churches (Blick 2019). Badges were multifunctional. They were identifiers or mementos, exhibiting to oneself or others that a pilgrimage had been undertaken. They were also used in ongoing personal devotion, even as secondary relics associated with miraculous stories of healing or safety.

In late medieval and early modern Europe, church and domestic altarpieces functioned as devotional aids for localized, internal pilgrimage. The frames were like thresholds or borders for the gaze to cross when embarking on a journey, while the images within depicted holy people or events and elicited spiritual responses (Sadler 2018: 194). For example, Hans Memling's 'Passion of Christ' (1470) invited beholders to accompany Christ on his Holy Week journey, while 'Joys of the Virgin' (1480) brought beholders into Christ's infancy – depicted in the central image of the Adoration of the Magi, themselves pilgrims encountering God – as well as his post-Resurrection appearances (Hull 2005). Multi-episodic altarpieces mapped out for worshippers 'a sequence of meditational stops

not unlike a pilgrimage' (Sadler 2018: 34). Portable altarpieces, which were smaller-scale objects featuring similar images and iconography, functioned in private chapels or homes. Additionally, early modern Iberian Catholic missionaries used portable altarpieces in ministry in Japan and New Spain (Mexico). These objects became European and Indo-Pacific assemblages – for example, Japanese-made lacquer frames containing European-style oil paintings or Mexican-made featherworks – suggesting that pilgrimage became inculturated (Luterbacher 2019).

Objects of visual and material culture continue to symbolize or embody spiritual journeys for pilgrims. These objects suggest that the sacred and the material or commercial are related, and may blur the lines between pilgrimage and tourism souvenirs (Reader 2014). For further background on the significance of the arts in Christianity, see Visual Arts and Christian Theology.

4.2 Literature

Pilgrimage has long been a literary motif. Virgil's Latin epic poem, the *Aeneid* (29–19 BCE), tells the story of Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Italy, his founding of the Roman people, and his sense of duty or piety (Virgil 1909). It can be interpreted as a heroic journey to a sacred centre (Mills 1983: 36). This story was part of the literary context in which the early church's own story unfolded, and it has been suggested that its influence stretched into medieval Christianity (Valentine 1931).

The massive body of Christian pilgrimage literature includes itineraries, guidebooks, diaries, travel accounts, certificates, books of indulgences, devotional aids, poems, stories, and blogs. It has been suggested that the abundance of literature renders Christian pilgrimage an 'overdetermined journey' (Coleman and Elsner 2003: 13). Nevertheless, drawing from Scriptural references and echoing the impulses of broader literary traditions, pilgrims and pilgrimages have been woven into the multivocal Christian literary imagination.

Early church pilgrimage literature exhibits a range of theological, historical, geographical, and personal insights. Eusebius' gazetteer, *Onomasticon* (c. 313–325), alphabetizes biblical places according to sections of the Septuagint (Eusebius 2023). While Eusebius' list is perhaps more scholarly than devotional, the genre of personal travel accounts also emerged in the fourth century. The Bordeaux Pilgrim, who travelled from Gaul to Constantinople and the Holy Land in 333, systematically lists his itinerary, his mileage, and events associated with the places he visited (Bordeaux Pilgrim 1877). Egeria, who travelled from Spain or Gaul through the Holy Land in the late fourth century, conveys her impressions and experiences of biblical sites to her sisters and may have inspired fellow women in their religious, biblical educations (Egeria 2018). These writings were contemporaneous with patristic debates on the topic, but early church tensions about

pilgrimage also carried into medieval Catholic literature. For example, Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (c. 1308–1320), William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1380), Walter Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection* (c. 1380–1396), Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400), and Margery Kempe's *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1436–1438) exemplify (or criticize or satirize) the complexities of physical, internal, moral, and allegorical pilgrimage. New iterations of Catholic pilgrimage literature grew out of early modern missionary and colonial movements and the inculturation of Christianity in local contexts. For example, northeastern Brazilian *folhetos* or *literatura de cordel*, based on chapbooks introduced by the Portuguese, are present-day oral or written tales about local saints or miracles, and they function in pilgrimage (Slater 1991). Furthermore, historical pilgrimage travel guides continue to be explored and elaborated upon today (Bale 2023).

Protestant and Orthodox traditions each have model pilgrims. Protestant writings focus on allegorical pilgrimage. Works such as Simon Patrick's *The Parable of the Pilgrim* (1664) and Benjamin Keach's *Travels of True Godliness* (1684) characterize Christians as pilgrims journeying from earth to eternity. Similarly, Bunyan's widely translated *The Pilgrim's Progress* follows the character Christian, who is burdened with the weight of his sin and the question, 'What shall I do to be saved?' He undertakes a journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. In the portion of the book that follows the journey of Christian's wife, Christiana, their sons, and their neighbour, Christ is referred to as 'the Prince of pilgrims' (Bunyan 2003: 204, 268, 279; see also European Literature and Christian Theology (1700–1900)). For Orthodox writings, the pilgrim motif was already present in Russian folklore, but pilgrim tales based on writers' experiences developed as a literary genre in the twelfth century (Majeska 1984: 4, 6–9). A more recent example, the nineteenth-century anonymous Russian spiritual, *Rasskaz strannika* (the way of a pilgrim or the pilgrim's tale), tells the journey of a common *strannik* (pilgrim) through Russia, Ukraine, and Siberia as well as describing the journey of his heart in relation to God (Savin 2001). His method of internal pilgrimage is hesychasm, the uninterrupted recitation of the Jesus Prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. From an Orthodox perspective, internal pilgrimage – or 'internal liturgy' (Ugolnik 2016) – is closely related to prayer and stillness. Monastic hesychastic practice dates from the fourth century, and this book contributed to its revival in twentieth-century Eastern and Western spirituality (Phillips 2010: 300).

4.3 Music

Ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman has stated: 'Pilgrimage does not exist without music' (1996: 435). The Songs of Ascents discussed above are a well-worn collection of pilgrimage poetry. They may even have functioned as musical souvenirs that pilgrims memorized or purchased in written form so that, whether at the temple or at home, they could sing of the blessings experienced at Zion (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 294).

These psalms have also been translated and adapted for present day Christians on their discipleship journeys (Peterson 2000; Barker 2005).

Music has continued to play a part in pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Felix Fabri (c. 1437–1502), a Dominican from Ulm who made pilgrimages to the Holy Land in 1480 and 1483–1484, describes receiving a small book titled ‘Processional for pilgrims in the holy land’. It included ‘all the versicles, collects, responses, hymns, and psalms which ought to be said or sung at all the holy places and throughout the course of a pilgrimage beyond [the] sea’ (Fabri 1896: 290). Yet, music was also spontaneous. Some of Fabri’s fellow pilgrims sang Christmas hymns, singing ‘*Gloria in excelsis Deo*’ in chorus en route to Bethlehem; upon arrival at the Nativity site, they modified the lyrics of ‘*Christe, redemptor omnium, ex patre patris unice*’ to sing of the place rather than the day of Christ’s birth (Fabri 1896: 548, 557). Fabri’s accounts portray a connection between music, holy person or event, and place, and music continues to function in such pilgrimage processions. In fact, present-day Jerusalem is a polyphonic soundscape, with diverse pilgrims adding their voices and musics (and silences) – but not without intercultural, intertraditional, and postcolonial tensions (Wood 2014).

Musicking expands beyond the genre of psalms and the location of Jerusalem to feature in a diversity of physical, spiritual, and allegorical pilgrimages. In Orthodox and Catholic traditions, music can be highly liturgical. Egyptian Christians have incorporated cantillated biblical prose, antiphonally chanted psalms, and sung strophic hymns into practices of place-based pilgrimage (MacCoull 1998: 408). Seventh-century pilgrims to the shrine of St Cyrus and St John at Menouthis sang psalms about healing; late seventh- or eighth-century pilgrims to the Hermopolis basilica or the Koskam site sang hymns commemorating the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt; and ninth-century pilgrims to the monastery of St Shenoute of Atripe followed the prescribed textual and musical liturgy of the monastery’s festal calendar (MacCoull 1998). Another liturgical source, the Sarum Missal (used in Latin rites from the eleventh century), contains an ‘Order of Service for Pilgrims’ (1913: 166–173). It reflects the relationship between an individual pilgrim and a corporate church, as well as between a distant place and a local base. Pilgrims are members of the body of Christ who are commissioned by a community and return to that community after visiting a site that holds significance for their wider tradition.

In the Protestant tradition, internal and allegorical expressions of pilgrimage run through many hymns, such as those by Charles Wesley (1707–1788), who linked music to prayer and meditation (Rattenbury 1954). One Methodist hymnal, *Hymns for the Pilgrim Way* (1937), was compiled for Caribbean churches and stated the hope that the book would be ‘a great ministry in the salvation of souls, also in the deepening of the spiritual life of God’s people […] while they journey through an alien world as “Pilgrims and Strangers” to the Better Land’ (Ives 1937). Similarly, Baptist ethnomusicological research about the

Senufo peoples in Côte d'Ivoire indicates that *kologo* (path) is a core linguistic and cultural concept, and that expressions of *kologo* as the 'Jesus Road' have been incorporated into religious music (King 2009). As a final, unique example: the ecumenical monastic community of Taizé, France blends physical pilgrimage with aspects of internal and allegorical pilgrimage by cultivating lifelong pilgrims, in part through individual and shared musicking (Brother Roger 2006). More in-depth discussions on music in Christian theology and spirituality can be found in Music and Orthodox Theology and Music in the Western Theological Tradition.

5 Pilgrimage and the sciences

5.1 A sociocultural anthropological perspective

Between the 1960s and 1980s, mainstream anthropological study of pilgrimage boomed. Victor Turner and Edith Turner's *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (1978) was a foundational contribution of theory and fieldwork. It offers a typology of pilgrimage based on historical origins: prototypical pilgrimages set by a religion's founder, first followers, or key evangelists; archaic pilgrimages of syncretized religious traditions; European medieval Christian pilgrimages; and European post-Tridentine modern pilgrimages (Turner and Turner 1978: 18–19). Liminality and communitas are core concepts in the Turnerian model. Liminality is a phenomenon in which an individual steps onto a threshold from a mundane or structured cultural space and enters a state of ambiguity (Turner and Turner 1978: 249–250). Communitas is 'a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion' between individuals and 'combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship' (Turner and Turner 1978: 250). There are resonances between liminality and communitas within Christianity, as followers of Jesus are seen as aliens, exiles, and foreigners – perpetually in transition and in relationship. Moreover, Christianity has institutionalized liminality in monastic and mendicant orders (Turner 2011: 107).

The Turnerian model has been tested and contested (Crumrine 1991; Dubisch 1995; Frey 1998; Morinis 1992; Nolan and Nolan 1998; Sallnow 1981). In *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (1991), John Eade and Michael Sallnow argue that pilgrimage must be examined in specific historical, cultural contexts, not brought under a universal, integrative rubric of characteristics or functions. According to this view, a pilgrimage shrine may be a space for the sacred and for communitas but is more accurately 'a religious void' filled with discourses from diverse pilgrims (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 15). The elements of person, place, and text may be examined to understand Christian pilgrimage in context (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 9; Coleman and Elsner 1995). The Turnerian and Eade-Sallnow paradigms have been applied in ongoing empirical

research on communitas and contestation, however since the 1990s theoretical debates have generally turned to postmodern and interdisciplinary enquiries.

The sociocultural anthropological study of pilgrimage has continued with increased attentiveness to globality and creativity. In *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies: Global Perspectives*, Dionigi Albera and John Eade build on their previous work by moving their focus from Anglophone to non-Anglophone voices and from Eurasia to the Global South, featuring both Christian and non-Christian pilgrimages that sometimes intertwine (Albera and Eade 2015; 2017). Additionally, the internet facilitates new experiences of virtual or cyber pilgrimage that appeal variously to return visitors, diasporic communities, and the curious. Recent examinations of non-religious pilgrimages have challenged the dichotomies between sacred and secular, religious and tourist. By one definition, 'pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal' (Morinis 1992: 4). Whereas theology, the sacred, and spirituality are integral to Christian perspectives of pilgrimage, these features are differentiated from the concept of pilgrimage in secular research. Attempts to disentangle the divine from pilgrimage allow anthropologists to draw from what people classify as 'pilgrimage' more broadly. From a sociocultural anthropological perspective, any linguistic or theoretical pilgrim-tourist dichotomy is more accurately a pilgrim-tourist continuum (Badone and Roseman 2004; Bauman 1996; Reader and Walter 1993; Timothy and Olsen 2006).

6 Pilgrimage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue

Christian pilgrimage, with its physical, internal, and allegorical expressions, is taking place in an increasingly globalized world. Therefore, it is possible to suggest two ways forward as Christians journey alongside their neighbours.

First, pilgrimage is a topic that enables ecumenical dialogue. Ecumenism refers to the movement embracing the unity and fellowship of the global, historical church. Ecumenism can be considered 'a pilgrimage of accompaniment' and an opportunity for fellow pilgrims to journey with Christ and one another, to discuss denominational distinctives honestly, and to grow together in unity and mission (Ford 2013). Pilgrimage may be particularly well suited to generate ecumenical dialogue because theoretical and practical manifestations of it appear across early church, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions. Each of these branches has an appreciation for the incarnate Christ who walked in the world he made, and for allegorical expressions of pilgrimage. This theme provides a shared sense of identity: Christians are earthly pilgrims journeying towards a heavenly country. Shared identity does not, however, negate points of conflict. These remain and may never be reconciled – such as the general tendency to accept physical pilgrimage, saints, icons, and relics in Orthodox and Catholic churches as opposed to the tendency

to reject them in Protestant churches. A posture of grace and hospitality towards fellow pilgrims, however, enables Christians to navigate such distinct perspectives in pursuit of unity and fellowship. For example, ecumenical pilgrimages have bloomed at Iona, Scotland and its dispersed, global community. The Wellspring Community in Australia comprises Christians from various denominations. In 2023, this community brought the Christian gospel and Indigenous spirituality into dialogue through a month-long pilgrimage that explored themes of creation care and appreciation of place, and included leaders belonging to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Prentis 2023: 14–15). The physical, internal, and allegorical expressions of pilgrimage take on renewed significance in Indigenous Christian theology, a perspective that recognizes the centrality of memory, land, people, exile, and Christ as someone who 'becomes that safe place. And all of a sudden you are talking about a sacred place…' (Champion 2014: 25). These cases exemplify the ways in which ecumenical dialogue enables Christian pilgrims to journey alongside their neighbours.

Second, pilgrimage is a topic that enables interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue (or interreligious dialogue) refers to the practice of positive, cooperative interaction between people of different religious traditions or spiritual beliefs. Every major world religion, as well as New Age and secular worldviews, features forms of pilgrimage. Some studies compare pilgrimage across the Abrahamic religions in which Abraham is the archetype of one who journeys and Jerusalem is of particular significance (see Albera and Couroucli 2012). Jews continue to observe three annual festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot), although they can no longer occur at the Temple, and may visit the Western Wall or Wailing Wall at the Temple Mount. Muslims may visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on the Temple Mount, but the primary Islamic pilgrimage is the Hajj to the *Kaaba* (House of Allah) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Other studies examine pilgrimage across many world religions (Albera and Eade 2015; 2017; Coleman and Elsner 1995). In Hinduism, pilgrims may visit sites located near rivers that are seen as fords or bridges to the divine, and every twelve years the major Kumbh Mela pilgrimage festival occurs. Sikh pilgrims may visit the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar, Punjab, while Jain pilgrims may visit sites associated with wise human beings, such as the Gommateshwara statue in Shravanabelagola, Karnataka. In Buddhism, pilgrims follow routes associated with the Buddha's life, and in Japan multi-site circuits blend with Shinto to include temples, shrines, or sacred mountains. Finally, New Age pilgrims may visit sites associated with premodern rituals or with spiritual powers, while secular pilgrim-tourists may visit diverse sites for diverse reasons including heritage, fandom, or holiday destination (Olsen and Timothy 2022; Reader and Walter 1993).

Pilgrimage routes, sites, and practices are becoming increasingly shared (Hobart and Zarcone 2017). One site may be a locus of activity for multiple faiths, and shrines may share spatial and cultural proximity. Whether intentionally or unintentionally shared, these practices hold the potential to foster understanding and relationship across religions.

Beyond physical pilgrimages that are rooted in places, interfaith dialogue is also attentive to the internal and allegorical expressions of pilgrimage appreciated in diverse traditions and worldviews. All these dynamics are apparent, for instance, among Muslims and Catholics in south central Java, Indonesia – a context shaped by Islam, Catholicism, Javano-Islamic sultanates, and the Hindu-Buddhist heritage of Javanese culture (Laksana 2016). Thus, like ecumenical dialogue, interfaith dialogue too enables Christian pilgrims to journey alongside their neighbours.

Throughout global, historical Christianity, followers of God have embarked on pilgrimage – spiritual journeys with physical, internal, and allegorical expressions. The latter expression is essential: followers of God are sojourners and strangers upon the earth, imitating Jesus Christ and venturing as his church towards an eternal, heavenly Kingdom. The topic of pilgrimage has been controversial, particularly in terms of how to interpret its christological reorientation in the New Testament and how to navigate various perspectives or practices. Nevertheless, the multivalence and adaptability of Christian pilgrimage is evident as it has been reconfigured and inculturated in diverse contexts. This plurality endures today as pilgrimage sparks ecumenical and interfaith dialogue while Christians faithfully journey alongside their neighbours.

Attributions

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