

# Icon Adoration

## *Topic*

The Byzantine Empire

## *Objective*

Students will recognize icon worship as one source of division between the early Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of the Byzantine Empire.

## *Materials*

- the accompanying Icon Adoration Symbols sheets (pages 55 and 56)
- an overhead and transparencies for each of the pictographs

## *Preparation*

Make an overhead transparency of each of the pictographs on the accompanying sheets.

## *Procedure*

1. While engaged in the study of a unit on the Byzantine Empire, surprise students at the beginning of the class period with the announcement of a “pop” quiz. They need to get out a sheet of paper and number it one to five.
2. The quiz will consist of each of the five pictograph transparencies that students will try to identify by correctly naming them on their papers.
3. When the last of the pictographs has been displayed, collect the quizzes. Then survey students as to their opinions of the quiz: “What did you like about the quiz?” “What was unusual about the quiz format?” “Did you think it was fair?” “Would you like future quizzes like this one if they weren’t surprise quizzes?”
4. The intent of the previous questions is to hopefully engender a discussion where the class presents diverse points of view regarding the quiz’s symbolic nature. Those students who are more visual learners may have liked to take the pictographs quiz. Other students may very well have resented being evaluated on the basis of symbols they did not create or that had not been previously reviewed.

Assure students that the quiz will not count as a grade. Rather, use the simulation as an introduction for a lesson on one of the divisions that developed between the Church of the Western Roman Empire (Roman Catholic) and the Church of the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire (Greek Orthodox). (See Background.)

# Icon Adoration *(cont.)*

## ***Background***

In the eighth century A.D., many Christians in the former Roman Empire used icons, or religious images, to assist in their worship services. In the Byzantine Empire (the eastern half of the former Roman Empire centered in Constantinople), disagreements developed as to whether or not icons broke the second commandment which prohibited the making of “graven images.”

While the emperor of the Byzantine Empire tried to wrestle his people away from icon worship, the leaders of the Roman Church in Italy became upset with the Byzantines. Since most people in Western Europe at this time could not read, icons were valuable assets in teaching Christianity. The Pope and other church leaders in Rome summarily dismissed the Byzantine emperor from the Christian church.

Even though the Byzantine emperor eventually allowed his people to keep icons in their worship, the rift that originated between the eastern and western branches of Christianity over icon worship grew wider and wider with each century. By the middle of the eleventh century, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church were completely separate entities.

## ***Extension***

Pictographs can be a unique way for students to visualize the meanings of various terms. Having students create their own pictographs and sharing them with classmates is a refreshingly different way to review vocabulary.

### **Answers to icons on pages 55 and 56**

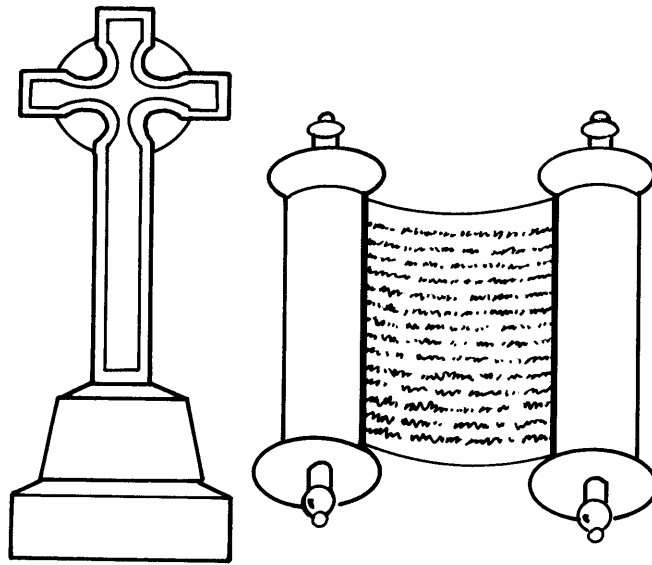
Teachers may wish to substitute their own icons for this simulation. The ones included in this activity are as follows:

1. doctrine (religious teachings)
2. Greek fire (flames used by the Byzantines in warfare, that couldn't be put out with water)
3. dowry (money brought into a marriage by the bride)
4. patriarch (leading church official of the Eastern Orthodox Church)
5. emperor (chief religious, governmental, and military leader of the Byzantine Empire)

# Icon Adoration Symbols

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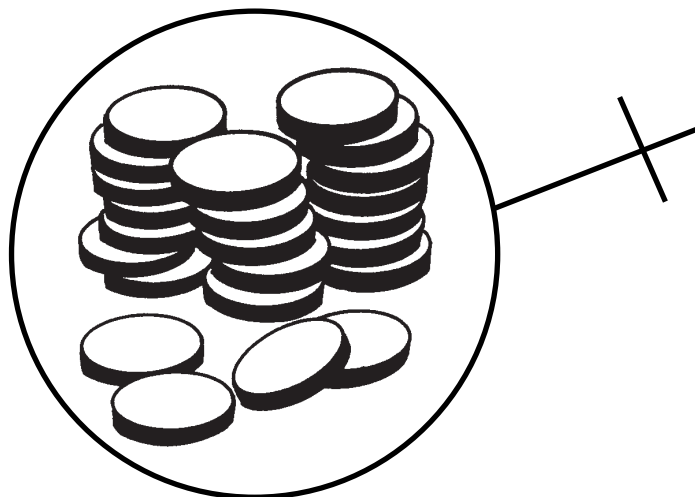
1.



2.



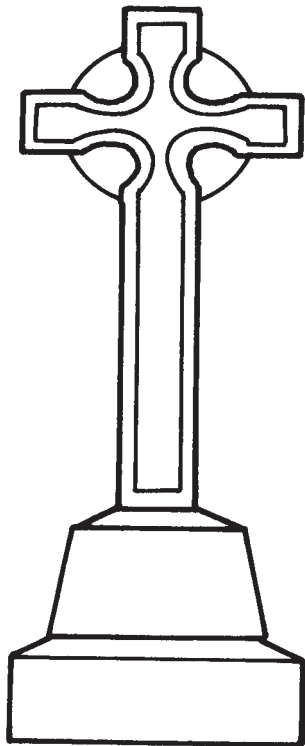
3.



# Icon Adoration Symbols *(cont.)*

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4.



5.

