



Bow Valley Baptist Church

The Cross in Stained Glass

Interpretation of the Iconography
with notes and references

A talk given by the artist

26th April 2009

Manifold is the Grace of God



Introduction

This is the desire of my heart before the Lord: that the presentation of the talk would give a clear interpretation of the symbolic vocabulary worked out and worked into every colour chosen and each piece shaped in order to express the direct correlation between visual composition and spiritual concept. My constant prayer has been, (and continues to be), that the Lord Himself would cause this work to honour and “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.” Titus 2:10.

There is a paradox of celebration in stained glass: physically static, visually lively. Set upon shelf or bench, colours lose their identity, but held up before the light, this medium of cooled melted sand glows into life at sun-rise, and day after day pours forth speech in silent tongues, mutely declaring the Creator of sand, and light, and of all things, visible and invisible.

Knowing that I do not deserve the least of His blessings, it is mysterious privilege and ‘grace abounding’ to have been given glimpses of a God-purposed place where I have walked in wonders beyond myself as one of His artisans - *a craftsman, and designer* – and, peculiar to this art form too - *an embroiderer, in blue, and purple and scarlet.* (Exodus 38:23).

To the praise of the glory of His grace.

For everything comes from Him; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory. To Him be glory evermore. Amen. (Romans 11:36).

Christine Lane A.R.C.A.

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we are looking unto Jesus; for His Name's sake.
Amen.

The LORD is my light and my salvation.¹

In 1993, plans were going ahead for the building of Bow Valley Baptist Church. Pastor Hamish Buntain asked me a question: "Christine, would you like to think about glass for the Cross?"

O my soul, the breadth and length and depth and height of the perfect love of God in Christ!²

.The LORD said, "Seek ye My face." My heart said, "Thy face will I seek."³

Jesus said, "Everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be *fulfilled*.
He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him. On the third day He will rise again."⁴

Jesus Christ our Saviour has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to *light* through the gospel.⁵

By the manifold grace of God,⁶ the Cross was unveiled in the original sanctuary, during the Morning Worship Service, April 4th, 1999.

Could it be that, on this April Sunday, 2009, 10 years later, you and I, and these stones of coloured light, will truly share a bond and a language whose witness will not be muted?
I pray so, for *the old rugged Cross* lights our path to glory.⁷

There is a crimson thread that can be traced as a continuity of oneness from Genesis through to the Book of Revelation. The blood-red of Redemption sings its throbbing tones, as one, with the recurring scarlet red of Holy flame: "Is not My Word like a fire?"⁸ asks the LORD of Majestic Glory.⁹

And so, it was indeed *necessary*¹⁰ to employ the primary power of *red* to blaze forth in honour of Jesus the Christ,¹¹ for it is in Christ, and through the shedding of His precious blood¹² that *we* have forgiveness and Redemption,¹³ and Peace with God.¹⁴

Speaking to His disciples, then - and now - Jesus said, "I am the True Vine, and you are the branches; abide in Me, and I in you."¹⁵

These words form the basis of the composition within the 9' vertical of the Cross.

The crimson-ruby images have been cut and set in a manner of positioning in order that they may suggest an ongoing walk of life with the Lord, by an upward progressive pace reflecting this word of God to us, "live in the Spirit; walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit,"¹⁶ telling of the living and growing, Divinely restored relationship of love which we have with God our Heavenly Father, through faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁷

Wheresoever glass-light is crimson, ruby, red, read : *Saviour*¹⁸

¹ Psalm 27:1

² Ephesians 3:18

LORD beloved, I would ponder. . . Of Thy love's eternal wonder,
All embracing, infinite. Amy Carmichael.

³ If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.
2 Chronicles 7:14

⁴ Luke 18: 31 – 33

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, "It is finished."
John 19:29-30

⁵ 2 Timothy 1:10

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. John 1:4

⁶ 1 Peter 4:10

⁷ "The Old Rugged Cross." Hymn; George Bennard; 1912

⁸ Jeremiah 23:29

⁹ 2 Peter 1:17

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Was it not *necessary* for *the Christ* to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"
Luke 24:26. NASB

¹¹ Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John 20:31

¹² "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sin." Matt.26:28

¹³ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7

¹⁴ . . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

¹⁵ John 15:1

¹⁶ Galatians 5:25

¹⁷ For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26

. . . I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

¹⁸ . . . a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

" . . . you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

The name of *Jesus* - the life of all our joys; a song in a word;
The music with which the bells of heaven ring;
An ocean for comprehension, although a drop for brevity;
A matchless oratorio in two syllables;
A gathering up of the hallelujahs of eternity in five letters.
C.H. Spurgeon

Blue is a colour of power too, second only to red. Blue can shine like a psalm of thanksgiving melody, or picture shy and trembling notes of little-faith before the sapphire throne of grace and mercy,¹⁹ or carry rich, Prussian-blue tones like the bass voice of thunder.

Because blue is the colour having affinity with Jesus' reference to "things heavenly",²⁰ and because of living by trust in His Word,²¹ blue is symbolic of *faith*. Where glass-light holds a measure of blue, read : *faith*.²³

Jesus said, "I am from above . . . I am not of this world."²⁴ In John chapter 7, verse 39,²⁵ Jesus spoke of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive, and the image which is symbolic of the Presence of the Holy Spirit is set at the apex of the vertical, right at the very top, where an inwardly curving piece of antique white glass describes light flowing in from above.

This inwardly-receiving from above,²⁶ and the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer,²⁷ is acknowledged and honoured by variously shaped, unregimented 'flares' of antique whites - in various, and sudden appearing places throughout the vertical of the Cross, based upon Jesus' teaching in John chapter 3, that the Holy Spirit operates far above and beyond any earthly control,²⁸ but always according to the good and perfect will of God.²⁹

Where glass light is of *antique whites*, read : *Holy Spirit*.

Stained glass is seen to come alive with light - and dies without it. So would we. The strong-seeming, but fragile 'body' of a piece of glass offers a comparison to our "earthen vessel,"³⁰ which also is strong-seeming, but, in reality, is frail.

In Genesis chapter 2, it is written that the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life."³¹

Glass is formed mainly from sand, which is *the dust* of earth's rock and stone, and, in the *antique method* of hand-made, mouth-blown glassmaking, a craftsman blows *his* breath into a 'gather' of molten sand.³² This analogy of stained glass³³ and Christian pilgrim³⁴ can be taken further in that whilst glass displays the *temporal* light of the sun,³⁵ we are indwelt by the *eternal* light of the Son of Righteousness.³⁶

Believers in Jesus Christ are described in 1 Peter as *living stones*, being built up as a spiritual house.³⁷ . . . *living stones* - does that remind you that every sheet of glass has been formed from many grains of stone? Each piece of glass here has been chosen, cut and shaped – and I must say, prayed over - to form uniquely fitting relationships with its neighbours.

This building up together of every piece of glass, or *lively stone*, is made secure on every side by strips of lead . . . a reminder of the words in Ephesians 4:16: "being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, growing with a growth which is from God." At one and the same time the connecting leads both join the pieces *and* set them apart, thus presenting a visible Scriptural analogy that, "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and *individually*, members one of another."³⁸

¹⁹ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16
Lord, in mercy, touch my faith; Make it wholly unto Thee.

²⁰ John 3:12

²¹ Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

²² For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

²³ Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Hebrews 12:2

²⁴ John 8:23

²⁵ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him would receive. . .

²⁶ Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12

²⁷ "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."
1 John 4:13

²⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

²⁹ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2

³⁰ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

³¹ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Genesis 2:7

³² The sand of the coasts of Galilee was valuable for the making of glass. *The Compact Bible Dictionary*

³³ For they shall partake of treasures hidden in the sand. Deuteronomy 33:19

³⁴ *All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.* Hymn, *Close to Thee*; Fanny Crosby
For our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20

³⁵ The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. Psalm 74:16

³⁶ But to you who fear [revere] My name, The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. Malachi 4:2

³⁷ Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God, precious. And you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2: 4,5

³⁸ So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Romans 12:5

The 'arms' of the crossbeam, or *patibulum*, are visualized as illuminated psalms of praise and thanksgiving.³⁹ The designs concentrate upon the Biblical plant, the pomegranate,⁴⁰ whose fruit, like a globe *filled* with seeds, refers well to multiplicity in unity; again, "we who are many, are one body in Christ."

The flower of the pomegranate plant has the curving shape of a trumpet⁴¹- the Bible's most mentioned musical instrument. The left and right designs offer a psalmic sense of parallelism, well described, as 'the same in the other' – as are *hands*, left and right, lifted up to God in prayer and thanksgiving.⁴²

The pomegranate offers a third component of spiritual symbolism; the garnet-red globe of the fruit has a unique calyx structure at its top, and the triangular spiky lobes resemble -a crown.
*The Head that once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now.*⁴³

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God,
and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."⁴⁴

God on high is nigh.⁴⁵

The crucifixion of Christ brought to fulfillment⁴⁶ God's purposed meeting of time, place, and Eternity⁴⁷; and it came about that *this* Jesus,⁴⁸ the Head of His church,⁴⁹ had His hands outstretched and nailed to a criminal's cross,⁵⁰ causing Jesus' head to mark forever the definable intersection of the vertical and horizontal beams.⁵¹

There are seven⁵² elements set within this centre square. Each image touches with a humble boldness upon the infinite mystery of "the fullness of the Godhead bodily".⁵³

The star of Christ's Nativity⁵⁴ is etched into the top left corner of the square. This star, symbol of "*the light that shone when Hope was born*"⁵⁵ is a seven-pointed star, in order to ascribe honour to the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who is the seven-horned Lamb of power.⁵⁶

A blood-red 'cross' is formed by four 'nails',⁵⁷ which form a continuing reminder that Jesus was "pierced through for *our* transgressions".⁵⁸ Those four ruby-glass nail-points create an 'X' which becomes the symbol for the fifth wound, often referred to as the heart-wound of Christ's true humanity, the wound caused by the spear thrust into His side.⁵⁹

There is a depiction of the Sacred Monogram, which is a design amalgam of the first two Greek letters of *Christos*, the X and the P. 'Poetic license' has been taken to extend the curve of the letter 'P' to form a shape reminiscent of a shepherd's crook which carries the profound significance of Jesus' words: "I am the Good Shepherd, I give My life for the sheep."⁶⁰

Only Jesus, the Good and Great *Shepherd* could hold together contraries, for He is *the Lamb* of God.⁶¹

³⁹ Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Psalm 100:4
I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart:
and I will glorify Thy name for evermore. Psalm 86:12 KJV

⁴⁰ They made on the hem of the robe pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet. Exodus 39:24

⁴¹ Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Psalm 150:3

⁴² So I will bless Thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on Thy name. Psalm 63:4 RSV

⁴³ Hymn; Thomas Kelly (1769-1854)
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, *Or thorns compose so rich a crown?* Hymn; Isaac Watts

⁴⁴ Colossians 1:15; 2:9

⁴⁵ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:8

⁴⁶ Then Jesus said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be *fulfilled* which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me." Luke 24: 44. He said, "It is finished." John 19:30

⁴⁷ Him, [this Jesus], being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Acts 2:23

⁴⁸ This Jesus whom I [Paul] am proclaiming to you, is the Christ. Acts 17:3

⁴⁹ And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church. Ephesians 1:22

⁵⁰ Matthew 27:38. *Remember, I was crucified between two thieves.*

⁵¹ *Mark* that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete.
From: *Go To Dark Gethsemane*. James Montgomery

⁵² The number 'seven' signifies completeness or perfection of unity.

⁵³ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Colossians 2:9

⁵⁴ "For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2
. . . they shall call His name Emmanuel, which translated, means, "God with us." Matthew 1:23

⁵⁵ *The light that shone when Hope was born*. From *In Memoriam*; Alfred Tennyson

⁵⁶ "I saw a Lamb . . . He had seven horns and seven eyes." Revelation 5:6
(Seven horns symbolize Omnipotence; seven eyes symbolize divine Omniscience).

⁵⁷ . . . in His hands the print of the nails. John 20:25

⁵⁸ He was pierced through for *our* transgressions. Isaiah 53:5

⁵⁹ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. John 19:34

⁶⁰ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." John 10:11

⁶¹ John saw Jesus and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

There was particular choosing in the foundational piece for the square.⁶²
It was cut from a sheet of antique "streaky" blue-on-white glass to re-present an image of the veil of the temple which was rent from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death,⁶³ allowing us to enter the Most Holy Place by a new and living Way.⁶⁴

Jesus' undiminished Deity is declared by the Greek initial letters of Alpha and Omega: "I am the first and the last; the beginning and the end."⁶⁵

And there is a further meaning to the golden 'X' symbol, derived from the mustard seed,⁶⁶ which produces a plant whose flowers have four petals, displaying the form of a cross.

The Holy Seed is the Word of God,⁶⁷ who died for us that we may live together with Him. "Because I live, you will live also."⁶⁸

The design intention of the elliptical curves at the four wide ends of the ruby nails-cross is to touch upon the unbounded Sovereignty of God.⁶⁹ These curved lines represent 'parabolas' - they are open curves which *imply* infinite extent, and are a reminder that, "God's Kingdom will have no end."⁷⁰

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts,
to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷¹

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you,
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.⁷²

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,⁷³

Amen

⁶² The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. Revelation 21:16

⁶³ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Mark 15:38

⁶⁴ ... a new and living way which He consecrated for us. Hebrews 10:20
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

⁶⁵ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1
Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58
Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Hebrews 13:8 ; Revelation 1:8

⁶⁶ Then Jesus said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?
It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." Luke 13:18,19

The word "crucifer" comes from the Latin 'cruX' (cross) and 'ferre' (to bear or to carry).
In 18th century Sweden, Carolus Linnaeus named the mustard family Crucif-eræ because the flowers of its family members bear four petals in the shape of a cross.

⁶⁷ "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:24
By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. 1 John 3:16
His name is called The Word of God. Revelation 19:13

⁶⁸ "Because I live, you will live also." John 14:19

⁶⁹ Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even *from everlasting to everlasting, You [are] God.* Psalm 90:2

⁷⁰ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;
Of the increase of His government and peace *there will be no end.*
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6,7

⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 4:6

⁷² Numbers 6:24

⁷³ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Corinthians 13:57

Amen

