

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM  
IN THE  
WINDOWS OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

A paper compiled by Dorothy Newsom Rankin  
and presented as the program at  
The Fellowship Dinner, First Presbyterian Church,  
Durham, N.C., April 19, 1983

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## Christian Symbolism

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Symbolism is a silent language. Since the beginning of time, ideas and ideals have been expressed by means of symbols. We see them every day. A red flag gets across the idea of danger; a burning torch is the symbol of the Olympics; a skull and crossbones on a bottle tells that the contents are poison; a rabbit's foot stands for good luck; and a heart is a symbol of love. These are only a few of the common everyday symbols we see constantly.

A symbol represents an idea, whereas a picture is a likeness. Eternity can be illustrated symbolically with a circle which has no beginning and no ending, but to paint a picture of eternity would be almost impossible.

It is in Christian Symbolism that the universality of this unspoken language reaches its fullness. A Christian symbol is a visible sign or emblem that represents and reminds us of a belief or a spiritual truth.

The cross is the oldest and most universal of all symbols. It is the symbol of Christ, representing his sacrifice upon the cross. It is the cornerstone of all Christian symbolism and is the one universally recognized symbol of Christianity. It is also a symbol of the Church, and speaks of Christianity to people of all faiths everywhere in the world.

When we enter our sanctuary on Sunday mornings we are handed a church bulletin which has on it a combination of symbols, some of which are taken from our stained glass windows.

The cross used on our bulletin was inspired by the cross on our baptismal font. Combined with the cross is also a circle which symbolizes eternity because it has no beginning and no ending. The circle also represents the

unity of the church. Inside the circle on the bulletin is another design -- a quatrefoil. A quatrefoil is a conventionalized form of a flower with four petals or of a leaf with four leaflets. Quatrefoils are used widely in the decoration of ecclesiastical architecture, in stained glass -- as in our windows, and in wrought iron work.

The only symbolism I have found, so far, in the quatrefoil design is in the number four -- the four petals or leaflets. In the field of symbolism, numbers represent not only quantities but also ideas, and the symbolism of numbers is very ancient. The number four is related to the earth, terrestrial space, the material world, and the four points of the compass. So, I suppose that in this beautiful little design, the quatrefoil represents our terrestrial world within the circle of eternity.

This design of a quatrefoil inside a circle is repeated many times in our windows -- at least one hundred and fifteen times. It appears three times in each small window along the side walls and four times in certain windows above the echo organ in the back balcony. How appropriate that this beautiful little design from our windows has been so effectively combined with the Cross and Circle from the baptismal font!

So, next Sunday when you are handed a bulletin as you enter the sanctuary, think of these symbols of the Cross, representing Christ and Christianity; of the circle, symbolizing eternity; and of the quatrefoil, representing our terrestrial world.

In the top quatrefoil of each window of our sanctuary there is a Christian symbol. There are, of course, many symbols all around us in our sanctuary -- we are, indeed, surrounded with symbols -- but it is to these symbols in the upper part of each window that we shall direct our attention tonight.

Many of the earliest symbols by the Christians, representing their beliefs, are found in the catacombs which, as you know, are underground rooms and passages only three feet wide, winding in a maze beneath the surface of the outskirts of Rome. I am sure many of you have visited the catacombs. The catacombs were used as cemeteries by the early Christians and the graves were cut into the walls. On some graves were carved names and words and pictures -- symbols such as a dove, a peacock, an anchor, a fountain, or a palm branch. When the Christians were being persecuted because of their beliefs and their religion, they took refuge in the catacombs because the catacombs were protected by law. Due to the persecution of the first Christians, it was necessary to preserve and pass on their doctrines and ideas by means of a secret language -- the language of symbols. The early Christians used symbols to hide and safeguard as far as possible the doctrines and mysteries of the faith. Thus, they learned to grasp an entire train of thought through a simple diagram or symbol. Even household utensils were decorated with symbols such as a dove, lyre, fish, ship, or anchor. To people who were not Christians a picture of a fish would look more like just a picture of a fish -- used as a decoration. However, to Christians, the fish was a common sign or symbol of Christianity, because Jesus had fed the multitude with loaves and fishes, because Christ had told the disciples to be fishers of men, and because the letters of the word "fish" in Greek contained the first letters of the Greek words meaning "Jesus Son of God Saviour." So, to the Christians, the picture of a fish was a symbol -- it represented an idea or several ideas, and brought to their minds an entire train of thought.

An understanding of Christian symbols can help direct our thoughts and open our hearts to the messages they carry. The use of symbols to decorate and adorn our sanctuary is a message and a reminder of God's word and of our

Christian beliefs, and not a work of art to be considered sacred in itself. Traditional Christian symbols remind us of the everlastingness of the Christian faith. Let us now turn our attention to the windows themselves.

#### A Brief History of Our Windows

I found that it was much easier to research the symbolism in the windows than it was to learn the history of the windows.

I did learn that our present church building was dedicated on May 14, 1916 -- sixty-seven years ago. In my search for some history of the windows I was happy to read, for the very first time ever, some of Mrs. R. D. Blacknall's history of our church written many years ago. In the history she mentioned "the rich but subdued tints of the lovely windows," but did not tell of their history.

From The Centennial Program Commemorating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church in Durham in 1971 I learned that Mr. George W. Watts, whose portrait hangs in the West Parlor of this Church House, had come to Durham as a young man in 1878 to join with the Duke family, first in the tobacco business and then in various other enterprises. Mr. Watts became one of the leading Presbyterian laymen and pioneer philanthropists in the South. He was very active in this church and, among many other positions, he served as the superintendent of the Sunday School here from 1885 until his death in 1921. (Imagine! Superintendent of the Sunday School for thirty-six years!)

From this same source I learned also that in 1915 Mr. Watts offered to pay three-fourths of the cost of some \$80,000 for a new church building. The congregation, which had grown to about five hundred, quickly accepted the generous offer, and in 1916 this present sanctuary -- the third Presbyterian church building on this same lot -- was completed.

As I said, I had great difficulty finding something of the history of the windows themselves. I was delighted finally to obtain the following information taken from a program presented at a meeting of the Women of the Church on June 10, 1968 by five women in the church: Miss Beth MacDonald, Mrs. William Muirhead, Mrs. Walter C. Newton, Mrs. Charles T. Wilson, and Mrs. Thomas C. Worth. And I quote:

"The handsome windows of our church were designed by Mr. Von Gerichten, a distinguished artist in glass. He had offices in Columbus, Ohio and in Germany. The windows were constructed in Munich, Germany, by master craftsmen.

"Members of the congregation remember that the windows were ordered by a church in Philadelphia and delivered around 1914. When the windows arrived in the United States, the Philadelphia church did not accept them, either because they could not pay for them or for some other reason. Hearing of this, Mr. George W. Watts authorized the purchase of the windows for our Church, which was in process of being built. It is thought that Mr. Watts secured the windows for about \$8,000.00, a fraction of their true value at the time."

It is very interesting to me the kind of stained glass windows we have. I think they are most unusual and certainly very beautiful. Whereas the stained glass windows of many churches have pictures of Biblical persons and stories in them, ours have geometrical designs and numerous Christian symbols representing our beliefs. I remember that in the church where I grew up as a child, the windows had Biblical characters and I can still see Stephen and John the Baptist looking over my left shoulder from where I sat in our family pew.

To me, the windows here at First Presbyterian Church are very quiet and subtle. Not only are the colors subdued, but also the message of the symbols is quiet. The symbols never scream out at us. They are just quietly there,

waiting to be sought out and understood -- ready to speak to us through our eyes when we are ready to see.

It is regrettable that this Fellowship Dinner is in the evening and not midday. How helpful it would be if we could be in the sanctuary with the sunlight coming through our windows, and could actually look at the different symbols as we speak about them!

To get ourselves oriented, let us imagine we are in the sanctuary rather than in Fellowship Hall. The altar would be here --. This wall would be the West wall next to Roxboro Street or the wall to your left as you sit in church and as you are sitting here tonight. And this wall would be the East wall or the wall to your right -- next to the Church House. The back balcony and the echo organ would, of course, be to the back of this room. There are eight large windows on each side wall, including the choir loft and back balcony. Each large window consists of two smaller windows, and each of the smaller windows has a Christian symbol in it. In addition, there are three large windows above the echo organ which contain a symbol in each. Thus, there are thirty-five main symbols featured in the windows of the sanctuary.

I had first supposed we would start in the choir loft and consider the symbols along the West wall, then return to the choir loft and consider the symbols along the East wall. However, in my study of the windows over the past few weeks I made a very exciting discovery which changed this plan entirely. I had always thought of each symbol as being a symbol just unto itself. I had not realized until recently that there is also symmetry and relationship in the placing of the symbols on opposite walls. It was very thrilling and meaningful to me when I discovered this relationship!



So, my plan now, instead, is to consider two small windows at a time on the West wall (Roxboro Street side) and, at the same time, the two windows on the East wall (Church House side) opposite these. Since we cannot see the windows as we talk about them tonight, I have prepared some rough sketches to help you recall the symbols you see in the windows every Sunday morning.

[Distribute copies of the sketches of the symbols.]

You may wish to follow your copy of the sketches as we speak of each symbol. Let us begin with the four symbols in the front choir loft.

## CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

in the

### WINDOWS OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

WEST

CHOIR LOFT

EAST



Three interlocking circles:  
The Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost



Crown of thorns:  
Christ's passion & crucifixion



Pomegranate:  
Christ  
His Resurrection & Royalty  
The Church



Three nails:  
Christ's crucifixion

1. **THREE INTERLOCKING CIRCLES:** Three interlocking circles symbolize the Trinity. The concept of three persons incorporated in one God is the central dogma of the Christian church. Three interlocking circles make up one of the symbols for the Trinity -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The three circles imply equality, unity, and eternity in the persons of the Trinity.

2. **THE POMEGRANATE:** This symbol happens to be in three parts too: We see the blossom, the whole fruit, and also the open fruit showing many seeds. The pomegranate is a symbol of royalty and, as such, it is frequently accepted as a symbol of Christ. The pointed terminal of the whole fruit is treated as a heraldic crown, hence the association with royalty. When designed to appear bursting with its seeds showing -- as we also see it in our window -- it is intended as a symbol of the Resurrection, akin to the open tomb.

Another source that I read states that in Christian symbolism the pomegranate as a rule alludes to the church because of the inner unity of countless seeds in one and the same fruit.

Therefore, the pomegranate is a symbol of Christ -- His Resurrection and Royalty; and also a symbol of the church.

3. In the windows of the opposite (East) wall in the choir loft are two Passion symbols. From the seat I occupied for so many years in the choir -- on the alto side -- these are the two symbols I have dwelt upon more than any others in the sanctuary. And they are such sad symbols!
- CROWN OF THORNS:** A crown of thorns is a symbol of Christ's Passion and Crucifixion. The crown is an ancient symbol of honor and sovereignty. When used symbolically the crown is frequently interchanged with a wreath, and both jeweled metal crowns and wreaths of leaves and flowers are found. In this case, however, a crown of thorns -- in derision. Three of the Evangelists mentioned the crown of thorns: "And the soldiers...clothed him with purple and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head; and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mark 15:16-18)
4. **THREE NAILS:** This symbol of three nails also represents the crucifixion. The nails are not mentioned in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion, but their use is confirmed by the statement of Thomas after the resurrection: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25)

The sad symbols in these two windows -- the crown of thorns and the three nails -- both symbolize the crucifixion.

## SIDE WALLS OF SANCTUARY



**Cross:**  
Christ; Christianity  
Salvation



**Crown:**  
Christ's royalty,  
sovereignty, + victory



**Anchor:**  
Fixed hope of Christians  
Steadfastness; Salvation



**Chalice:**  
The Last Supper; Communion  
The Christian Faith

1. **THE CROSS:** The cross, as I mentioned earlier, is a universal emblem for Christ and Christianity. To the Christian it represents salvation.
2. **THE CROWN:** The crown, as I said earlier, is a symbol of royalty and sovereignty and victory. In this window the crown is a handsome gold crown as opposed to the sad crown of thorns in the choir loft window.





Thus, in these two windows we saw the cross and the crown -- two symbols of Christ, his victory and his royalty.

3. **THE ANCHOR:** The anchor is one of the most ancient of Christian symbols. It is found in conjunction with the oldest inscriptions in the catacombs as a sign of the fixed hope of Christians. The source of this symbol is St. Paul: "Which hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast...." (Hebrews 6:19) It is also a symbol of salvation.

Thus, the anchor stands for the fixed hope of Christians, for steadfastness, and for salvation.

4. **THE CHALICE:** The chalice is a symbol of the Last Supper and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross: "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many." (Mark 14:23, 24) A chalice is the cup from which the consecrated wine and water of the Eucharist are partaken at Holy Communion.

Thus, the chalice is a symbol of the Last Supper, the Christian faith, and Holy Communion.

	<p><b>Wheat:</b> bread - body of Christ Holy Communion</p>		<p><b>Passionflower:</b> Christ's death</p>
	<p><b>Grapes:</b> wine - blood of Christ Holy Communion</p>		<p><b>Rose (five petals):</b> Mary The Nativity</p>

1. **GRAIN:** Wheat, a well-known Eucharistic symbol, is used to represent the human nature of Christ. The bread of Holy Communion represents the body of Christ.
2. **GRAPES:** In general, the grape, like the wine of Holy Communion is a symbol of the blood of Christ. In combination with wheat -- as in these two windows -- grapes are a readily recognized symbol of the Holy Communion.

Thus, in these two windows the wheat and the grapes represent the Holy Communion -- the body and blood of Christ.

3. FLOWER:

4. FLOWER:

In the two windows on the opposite wall (East) the symbols are two more plants -- in this case two flowers. And for me these two flowers have been the "mystery symbols" of all the symbols. I have had great difficulty trying to figure these out! In the right window of the two the flower is obviously a rose -- and the rose is a frequent symbol for the Virgin Mary. Even the foliage shown in this window is easily recognizable as that of a rose. And the rose pictured is a five-petaled rose. I read that the Christmas rose which is a hardy white flower with five petals that blooms at Christmas when the rest of the garden is dormant, is a symbol of the Nativity and the coming of the Messiah. However, the five-petaled rose in this window is not white (as the Christmas rose is described) but is a rosy pink. So, I am still uncertain as to the symbolism -- whether it is a symbol of the Virgin Mary or a symbol of the Nativity.




Even more puzzling is the other flower -- the one in the left window! Here, too, the foliage is very prominent and should be a helpful clue. In the several books I studied, I went carefully over all the various flowers mentioned as symbols and not one of those listed seemed to describe the flower in this window. I have worried over it for weeks!


One night I awakened about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, still trying to figure out what that flower symbol can be! When I can't sleep, I no longer count sheep, but try to name all the symbols in our windows in sequence -- which I can now do. (However, it does get me wider awake rather than putting me to sleep.) So, that night I was thinking about this window -- in fact, about the group of the four windows with plant symbols. I thought of the four together -- remembering that on the West wall the wheat and the grapes symbolize the bread and wine of Holy Communion -- the body and blood of Christ. I then thought of the two flowers on the opposite wall (East): if the five-petaled rose were a symbol of the Nativity -- the birth of Christ -- then what would be another symbol that would also have to do with Christ? I asked myself. I thought of his Passion and Crucifixion. Suddenly I thought of the Passionflower -- a flower I have heard about but do not know very well. So, at 2:00 a.m., I got out of bed, got first the World Book Encyclopaedia and then the Encyclopaedia Britannica and read both accounts of the Passionflower. The name Passionflower arose from the supposed resemblance of the corona to the crown of thorns, and of the other part of the flower to the nails, or Christ's wounds; the slender leaf was a symbol of the spear that pierced his sides. According to the legend the tendrils of the plant, by which it climbs, represented whips and cords. The blooms are large purplish or white flowers. The flower in our window is purplish and looks rather heavy or large.



If the rose in one window is a symbol of the Nativity or Christ's birth, then it seems possible and maybe even probable that the adjoining window might contain a symbol of Christ's death. I became so excited over thinking maybe I had finally come upon the correct flower, that I really couldn't go back to sleep then! I could hardly wait until morning to hurry down to the sanctuary with my opera glasses to see if the symbol in the window matched the picture in the Encyclopaedia. Well, it didn't exactly, but, then, I had also read that there are more than four hundred species of the Passionflower! So, unless we have some botanists in our congregation who can help me and perhaps correct me, then, for the time being, I have concluded that my best guess is that the flower is a passionflower and that it symbolizes Christ's crucifixion and death.

Thus, in these four windows are four symbols about Christ: the grain and the grapes symbolizing His body and blood, and representing Holy Communion; the rose symbolizing Christ's Nativity; and the passionflower symbolizing Christ's death.

 <p><b>Chi Rho: (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ)</b> first two letters of name Christ in Greek</p> <p><b>ιhs</b> First three letters of Ihsus: name Jesus in Greek</p>	 <p><b>Alpha:</b> first letter of Greek alphabet</p>  <p><b>Omega:</b> last letter of Greek alphabet</p> <p>} God the Son. The immortality of God</p>
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1. CHI RHO : The history of this symbol -- two Greek letters Chi and Rho -- extends from its beginning as a monogram incorporating the first two letters of the name of Christ in Greek characters to the Cross openly used for the first time by Christians during the fifth century. This monogram was sometimes used in catacomb inscriptions as early as the second century.
2. **ιhs**: Here we have the first three letters of Ihsus or Ihcuc, the name of Jesus in Greek (the s and c are variant forms in the Greek alphabet). (The Latin S replaced the Greek sigma when knowledge of Greek declined.)
3. **A**: Alpha.
4. **Ω**: Omega.

The Greek alphabet consists of twenty-four characters. Alpha, which we have in one window here, is the first letter of the Greek alphabet; Omega, which we have in the adjoining window, is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. St. John records that Christ himself said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...which is, and which was, and which is to come." (Revelation 1:8) Alpha and Omega convey an idea that

would be difficult to present, in any other way, of the One in whom creation began and by whom it will end. The Alpha and Omega are used as a symbol of God the Son, and they suggest the immortality of God.

The characters Alpha and Omega are very often superimposed to form a monogram as we saw in the use of the Greek letters Chi and Rho.

In these four windows we have again seen the relationship of windows on opposite walls, in that all four of these windows contain Greek letters as symbols.


 <p><b>Burning Lamp:</b> Wisdom, intelligence, piety The Word of God</p>  <p><b>Open Book: Holy Bible:</b> Holy Scripture The Word of God</p>	 <p><b>Harp:</b> All music that glorifies God</p>  <p><b>Beehive:</b> Eloquence of speaking Unified community</p>
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1. LAMP: The lamp, because of the light it sheds, is used as a symbol for intelligence, wisdom, and piety. In this window the lamp is sitting on a closed Bible. In Psalm 119:105 we read: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." Thus, the lamp is a symbol of Scripture as the Word of God. A lamp often accompanies an open Bible -- as it does here in the companion window.
2. OPEN BOOK: With the help of my opera glasses I could see that this open book has Holy Bible printed on it. There is more printing too and I thought I could almost read that the Bible is open to the book of Proverbs but I couldn't be sure: However, there is no uncertainty about its being the Word of God in the Holy Scripture.

Thus, in these two windows we see the lamp, symbolizing wisdom and the Word of God; and also the Open Bible, representing the Word of God in the Holy Scripture.

3. HARP: (And this is one of my favorites!) The harp symbolizes all music that glorifies God. It is an attribute of David: "And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps..." (I Chronicles 13:8)
4. BEEHIVE: I had often wondered about this unusual symbol. I have learned that the beehive is a modern symbol which has been used to symbolize great eloquence, or "honeyed words." It is also a symbol of a unified community -- many working together.

So, in these four windows we have the lamp and the open Bible representing the Holy Scripture; all music in praise of God, the eloquence of our ministers in the spoken word; and a unified community of worshippers. This seems to describe our worship service and our church. It takes in all of us, doesn't it?

	<b>Winged Man: St. Matthew:</b> Human genealogy of Christ. Stresses Christ's humanity		<b>Winged Ox: St. Luke:</b> Stresses the atonement made by Christ
	<b>Winged Lion: St. Mark:</b> Stresses royal dignity of Christ		<b>Eagle: St. John:</b> Stresses divinity of Christ. The Resurrection The Christian spirit

In this next group of our windows we see symbols in still another category. We have already seen a group of four windows using symbols of plants, flowers, and fruits, and another set of four windows using Greek letters and monograms. In these next four windows the symbols are in yet another category -- that of beasts and living things. These four windows represent the four Evangelists: St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John.

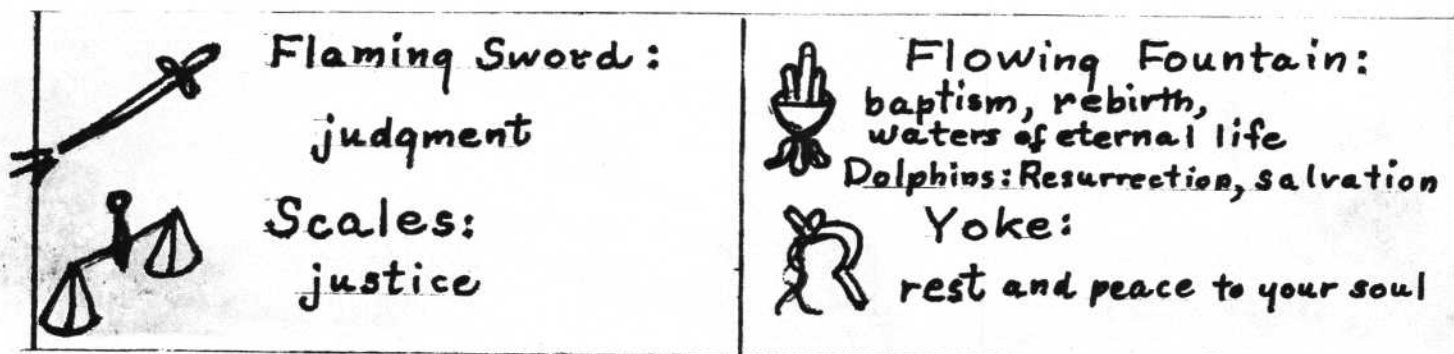
1. **WINGED MAN:** The winged man is a symbol of St. Matthew, assigned to him in his role as Evangelist because his gospel opens with the human genealogy of Christ; and because Christ's humanity is stressed throughout the gospel according to St. Matthew.
2. **WINGED LION:** A winged lion is a symbol of St. Mark, the Evangelist, following the teaching of St. Jerome in his commentary on Ezekiel. The winged creatures are mentioned twice with discrepancies: "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." (Ezekiel 1:10)

The traditional explanation of the lion to St. Mark is because he wrote of the royal dignity of Christ, and began his gospel with an account of John the Baptist: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." (Mark 1:3)

Thus, the winged lion: St. Mark: stressed the royal dignity of Christ.

3. WINGED OX: The winged ox is a symbol of St. Luke the Evangelist. The ox as an animal of sacrifice was deemed appropriate to St. Luke because in his gospel St. Luke emphasized the atonement made by Christ's sufferings and death.
4. EAGLE: The eagle is the particular attribute of St. John, the Evangelist. Because St. John in his gospel soared upward in his contemplation of the divine nature of the Saviour, the eagle became his symbol. (The other Evangelists expounded more the temporal generation and temporal acts equally but said little of Christ's divinity.) The eagle is also a symbol of the Resurrection and of the Christian spirit.

To summarize: the eagle symbolizes St. John who stressed the divinity of Christ; and it also symbolizes the Resurrection and the Christian spirit.



1. SWORD: A sword is a symbol of spiritual armament appropriate to St. Paul and attributed to him in the tenth century because of his teaching: "And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

THE FLAMING SWORD: The flaming sword -- as seen in this window -- is mentioned in Genesis and identifies Jophiel, guardian of the Tree of Knowledge, who drove Adam and Eve out of Paradise: "So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24)

2. SCALES: The scales are a symbol of weighing and justice. In the Old Testament there is a verse: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." (Daniel 5:27)

So, in these two companion windows, the flaming sword and the scales are symbols of judgment and justice.

3. FLOWING FOUNTAIN: The fountain is the symbol of baptism, of life and rebirth. And the flowing fountain symbolizes the waters of eternal life.







The pedestal of the fountain -- as I discovered with my opera glasses -- is made up of three dolphins. The dolphin, a survival from classical mythology, appeared in the catacombs and was used as late as the Middle Ages. The swift and friendly dolphin symbolizes resurrection and salvation. It was thought to carry the souls of the blessed to the Island of the Dead.

Thus, in this one window is a combination of symbols representing baptism and rebirth, waters of eternal life; and also dolphins carrying the souls of the blessed and representing resurrection and salvation.

4. YOKE: The yoke -- the symbol in the companion window -- I couldn't find mentioned at all in the books I studied. However, Christ tells us: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) Christ will help us bear our burdens, and through Him we will find rest and peace.

So, to summarize these four symbols together: the burning sword and the scales speak to us of judgment and justice -- of our inner qualities and the way we live our lives. And the flowing fountain and the yoke speak to us of rebirth and the living waters of eternal life, and of peace to our souls through Christ.

	<p>Dove with olive branches purity, peace</p>		<p>Eye of God:  <math>\Delta</math> The Trinity  <math>\circ</math> Eternity of the Trinity  <math>\odot</math> All-seeing Eye of God</p>
	<p>Lamb with banner: Christ triumphant</p>		<p>Lily: Purity Mary Immortality</p>

1. DOVE: The dove is the most widely used symbol of the Holy Spirit. We shall speak more of that in the final window we consider. The dove has also been the symbol of purity and peace. In this window the dove carries an olive branch. In the story of the flood, as you know, the dove, sent out from the ark by Noah, brought back an olive branch to show that the waters had receded and that God had made peace with man. "And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf, pluckt off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." (Genesis 8:11)
2. LAMB WITH CROSS-EMBLAZONED BANNER: The Lamb, a symbol of Christ, most appealing and persistent, appeared in the fourth century and was most frequently used in the fifth. When the lamb is holding a banner -- as in

this window -- signifying Resurrection, the cross-emblazoned banner is a sign of triumph. Christ, the Lamb of God, is triumphant over death on the Cross.

3. EYE: The all-seeing eye of God is a symbol of the omnipresence and the omniscience of God. The natural reverence which inhibited depiction of God in human form (the hand alone sufficed until the twelfth century) explains the popularity of this symbol which appeared late and yet has ample support from Scripture. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3) "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers." (1 Peter 3:12)....That such a natural symbol did not come into use earlier than the sixteenth century is surprising. We see in this window an equilateral triangle representing the Trinity; the triangle encloses a circle, suggesting the eternity of the Trinity, with rays emanating from the circle; and inside the circle is the all-seeing eye of God.
4. LILY: Unlike the earlier window where I was so puzzled as to what kind of flower it was, in this window there is no mistaking that the flower is a lily. It looks like a lily, and the foliage is definitely that of a lily. The lily has long been a symbol of purity, innocence, and immortality, and has also become the flower of the Virgin Mary.

Let us now turn our attention to the symbols in the windows back of the echo organ in the back balcony; that is, to the windows on the Main Street wall of the building.

## ABOVE ECHO ORGAN



Cross with serpent:  
Christ crucified



Descending Dove:  
The Holy Spirit



Burning Lamp:  
Wisdom, piety  
The word of God

Here, above the echo organ, we find three very large windows which contain a Christian symbol in the top circle and quatrefoil of each window. Leaving the central window until last, let us consider first the window to the East of it -- or to the left as one faces the three windows.

- A. **CROSS AND SERPENT:** In this window is a rugged brown cross (as opposed to the handsome gold cross we saw earlier) and wound around the cross is a green serpent. The cross and serpent together are a symbol of Christ crucified, in reference to the Old Testament story of Moses and the Brazen Serpent. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." (Numbers 21:8) And, in John 3:14, we have the words: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

Thus, the cross with a snake wound around it symbolizes Christ crucified.

- B. **BURNING LAMP:** As we have said before, a lamp stands for learning, wisdom and piety and is a symbol of Scripture as the Word of God.

In this window on the right the lamp is sitting on a closed Bible -- a reminder that the Bible is the Word of God. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105). (In another pair of windows we have seen the lamp in one window and an open Bible in the adjoining window.)

The burning lamp: a symbol of wisdom, piety, the Word of God.

- C. **DESCENDING DOVE:** In this final symbol -- the one in the central window -- we see the descending dove. The dove is the symbol of the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. All four Evangelists record the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The dove appears at the Annunciation, in the baptism of Christ, and as the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In general usage the dove also symbolizes the human soul.

In this window, however, we see the dove descending as the Holy Spirit, and there are marks coming down from the dove's mouth, indicating the breath of the Holy Spirit.

It seems most appropriate that this symbol should occupy the central large window on the front of the building, representing the Spirit of God breathing down upon us as we enter the front door of the church. In fact, this symbol seems so important in its placement and in its meaning, that I now wonder if we really should have started with this window, and proceeded from here, instead of the opposite which we have done.

As one writer has put it: "The language of the sign and symbol is a very simple and very beautiful language which man has known and used since the beginning of time. This language of the sign and symbol is the outward and visible form through which is revealed the inward and invisible reality that moves and directs the soul of man."

I sincerely hope that what I have tried to say tonight will help you have a greater interest in and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the symbols in the stained glass windows of our sanctuary. The beauty speaks to our eyes; the deep meaning of the symbols should speak to our souls.

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