

OUR WINDOWS: AN INTERPRETATION

Excerpts from "OUR WINDOWS: AN INTERPRETATION" by The Reverend Nevin E. Kendall, North Presbyterian Pastor. This sermon was preached at North Presbyterian Church on September 18, 1960.

When our congregation assembles for worship, we are surrounded by windows whose symbols are intended to speak to us concerning the mighty acts of God. These windows do not serve that purpose unless we know what they mean so that we can hear what they have to say.

Let's begin with the two main windows which stand in the center of each wall. Except for one section - about half way up - these four windows are identical. At the very top, towering over everything else, are a cross and a crown.

CROWN & CROSS

This symbol is another way of saying that God has put all things under His feet, that God has exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name far above all rule and authority and power and dominion - that He is indeed, Lord of lords and King of kings. (Ephesians 1:21-23, Philippians 2:9, Revelation 17:4)

The crown that represents the kingly office of Jesus Christ is not gold or silver, it is red. This red, along with the red which dominates the whole upper section of the center windows, is one more indication that the hour of suffering and death is also, in the words of John's gospel, the hour of His glory.

But this crown is joined inseparably to a cross. This is to say that the kingship of Jesus Christ is expressed toward us through His death. Jesus has overcome the world and has put all things under His feet. Jesus dies a death in which God's love is able to hold its ground and to continue being nothing else except love, even in the face of all the cruel powers that are marshalled against it. This linking of the cross and crown is another way of saying with the writer of Revelation, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever ~ Rev. 5:13



While you are looking at the crown, notice also how the number three is represented in two ways. There are three leaves in crown and three dots. These represent the Holy Trinity.

RAM

Now if you look carefully - very carefully - just below the cross and crown, I think you will see in each of the center windows the head of a ram. The ram represents the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The ram stands for a system in which we try to pay God what we owe, and make amends for our failures, so that once again we can stand in the good graces of God.

The ram represents a savior who has fought the good fight in our behalf. Finally, we are reminded that the ram is the animal which God placed in the thorny bush so that when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son God himself provided the sacrifice.

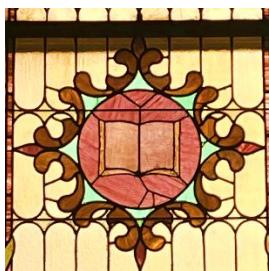
FLEUR-DE-LIS

Directly below the ram, in the same section, there is a three leafed plant which is commonly known as the *fleur-de-lis*, which is a variety of the lily. This is the flower that was chosen by King Clovis as an emblem of his purification through baptism.

Now we come to the one section where there is something different in each of these four main windows.

ANCHOR

The anchor is a very early symbol that was used frequently on the walls of the catacombs. The meaning of this symbol is best expressed by the writer of Hebrews who said that the promises of God are like a "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul ~ Hebrews 6:19



BIBLE

Not only a Bible but an open Bible, because what we revere is not a book, not its sometimes-elegant binding, but the word or message that comes out of that book.



COMMUNION CHALICE

In one of the center windows on the east wall is the distinctive symbol for the communion chalice. Notice again how this is embellished with a three-leaf design.

LILY

In the adjoining window we have a more literal representative of the lily which is used primarily, though not exclusively, as a symbol of Easter and the resurrection. "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be ...but gives it a body as he has chosen ~I Cor. 15:36-38



LYRE

In the bottom section of the four windows is a stylized form of a lyre which is a symbol of sacred music and of worship in general. This is **our** symbol because it represents the praise and rejoicing, we lift up as our response to all the gracious and mighty acts of God.

ROSES

Notice the roses that appear in each corner just above the lyre. The rose represents the prophecy of Isaiah. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them. And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." ~Isaiah 35:1



CROSS PATEE FITCHED

Turning now to the small slender windows on each side of the arch, we find the single motif of a cross. There are as many as 400 different forms of the cross, at least of which two are commonly used in church windows and tapestry. This cross is best known by its French name as the *Cross Pattee Fitched*. The name is derived from its pointed design.

CLOVER OR IVY?

Turning to the windows at the far ends of each wall, notice the clover which appears at the top. There is a legend which says that when Patrick evangelized Ireland, he used the clover to represent the trinity, - a perfect choice because of the three leaves joined together in unity. It is based on this legend that the clover became the national emblem of Ireland.

However, it is also possible that what I am calling clover is actually ivy because it is always green, ivy has frequently been used in connection with death and immortality as a symbol of the faithfulness of God and of eternal life.

VIOLET

In the lower part of the windows, just above the bottom section, observe the figure of a violet. Because the violet is so small and delicate it has been used to denote humility and gentleness, and especially the gracious condescension of our Lord. Philippians 2:6 states that Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used for His own advantage. This verse emphasizes His humility and willingness to relinquish His divine privileges.

COLORS

Yellow – the divine color of the sun, an emblem of divinity

Blue – as the color of the sky, blue symbolizes heaven and heavenly love. It is the color of truth suggesting the unveiling of God's truth as it breaks through the darkness.

Red – blood and fire, a symbol of Christian zeal. Fire is used to commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit during the season of Pentecost.

Green – as the color of spring and the triumph of spring over winter. Green is the symbol of the final victory of life over death.

OVERALL

Looking at the windows as a whole, you will discover the design tends to draw your eyes upward. The vertical line, graceful curved leaves that reach out toward the light of the sun, the upturned diamonds that are like arrows pointing into the

heavens – all blended together in one symphony of color and design whose single theme is a call to worship and a hymn of adoration.

