

# Christianity

The Fountainhead and source of Christianity and the Christian Church is the Bible, also known as Scripture. The Bible consists of two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, altogether 66 (sixty six) books, having been written in every known form of literature, bound together to form one book.

Approximately 40 (forty) different writers are included to form the Bible, and their work covers a period of 1 500 (one thousand five hundred) years. Yet the whole comprises a unity of theme and purpose that can be accounted for only on the basis that “prophesy never had its origin in the will of man, the men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV, 1985: 1900) We cannot understand Christianity and the Christian Church without the Bible.

The following points will be discussed briefly:

1. The background to Christianity and the Church is found in the Old Testament.
2. The Beginning and development of Christianity and the church is given in the New Testament.
3. The beliefs and message of the church come from both Old and New Testaments.

The background to Christianity and the Church is found in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament records how God prepared the way for the eventual coming of Jesus Christ. There is history in the Old Testament, human history. But it is history plus God, the history of the affairs of men and God's dealings with these men.

In all of this, God is central. The first book in the Old Testament is Genesis, the book of beginnings. The opening words are: “In the beginning God. . .”. Scripture never tries to prove the existence of God. This is significant! The very idea of proof is considered ridiculous to the writers represented in the Bible. God is. God is not for proof but proclamation.

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In Genesis we find the beginnings of foundational truths:

1. The beginning of creation (Genesis 1:1, 26, 27.)

God created the world we know and live in, all living creatures and the crown of his creation, man and woman. The apostle Paul confirmed this when standing in the midst of Areopagus in Athens, he said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am about to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. . . Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day where he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given them proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17: 22-31 (NIV, 1985: 1680)



## 2. The beginning of sin. (Gen 3:6-13)

God planted a garden in Eden, where His newly created human beings might live. Adam was made caretaker of this garden and allowed to eat from every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the only restriction, and any disobedience was to be followed by death. Adam disobeyed and immediately knew he had sinned. He tried to hide from God. Throughout history we see this pattern over and over again.

Paul's words are true: "There is no one righteous, not even one, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (NIV, 1985: 1710)

## 3. The beginning of redemption.

God did not wait till Adam found his way back to His side. God Himself hastened in search of him: 'But the Lord God called to the man: "Where are you?"' (Gen 3:9. (NIV, 1985: 10) Only God could undo what Adam and Eve had done with all the consequences. The message in chapter 3:15 is clear. God promised a redeemer, a savior. He told the serpent-tempter: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman. And between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (NIV, 1985: 11) This was a prophecy referring to the death of Christ. In Galatians 4:4 we find a statement that this was fulfilled: 'But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.' (NIV, 1985: 1785) And also in Hebrews 2:14: '...by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil.' (NIV, 1985: 1861)

God's plan to redeem man was put into action. This was not all at once. Mankind had to be taught and prepared for what God desired to do. They were required to be obedient and trustworthy, to have faith in God and in what He revealed to them. The unfolding of this plan is contained in the rest of the Old Testament, and takes a step further in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament some highlights in this plan are given, showing how God educates and prepares the people.

1. The call of Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham. This was the founder of the Hebrew nation, a devout man, a man of faith in God. By divine command he left his country and went to a new country where God wished him to settle. This was the first of a series of marvelous appearances of God to man, leading at last to the appearance of Jesus Christ in the Incarnation. God made a promise, in the form of a covenant, that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Abraham "believed in the Lord". To ratify this covenant, he was ordered to make a sacrifice to God. This indicated atonement to God. Later, the institution of circumcision was given by God as a seal of the covenant.

## 2. The Law and Tabernacle.

The closing verses of Genesis reveal that the Hebrews (descendants of Abraham) were living in favour in Egypt. In the following book, Exodus, this had changed. Their numbers and wealth had increased. Under a new ruler they were oppressed. They cried to God who heard them and prepared Moses as their deliverer. Moses led them out of Egypt. At Mount Sinai, God reaffirmed His promises to the Hebrews, and commanded the people to prepare for receiving the Law, with ceremonies of purification. The Law was a moral and spiritual code of ten commandments written on two tablets of stone. Jesus summarized the Law thus: "Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.



# Christianity

And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40) Paul, in the New Testament reminds us "the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." (Galatians 3:24)

After the giving of the Law, God spoke through a cloud and commanded Moses to have a sanctuary or tabernacle constructed God gave him the pattern for this structure. The Temple was later built along the same lines.

The Tabernacle was an oblong tent. Only the High Priest might enter the holy of holies once a year. Nothing ordinary or profane was to be allowed to desecrate God's holy sanctuary. The priest performed a sacrificial rite at the altar just inside the gate. He then washed at a copper laver before entering the tabernacle proper.

The only furniture within the "holy of holies" was the ark of the covenant, a chest containing the two tablets of the Law. The Ten Commandments are a loving covenant of God with His people, and not arbitrary commanding of God to His subjects. On one hand a statement of promises, on the other responsibilities. God agrees to be their God giving His fatherly care and love and forgiveness and protection, while they on their part, agree to keep His Law and serve Him alone. If they disobey they forfeit these blessings as described in Deuteronomy chapters 28-30. It was necessary for these commandments to be definitely expressed, because it would have taken ages for man to discover them by himself, moreover, they needed divine authority behind them to make them more effective.

In the New Testament, the author of the book, Hebrews, devotes three chapters (8-10) to the Tabernacle and its worship, pointing out striking types of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ therein.

### 3. The Temple

David, the king of Israel, had planned and prepared to build a temple, to replace the tabernacle containing the Ark of the Covenant. His son, Solomon, built the temple. The temple was built at Mount Moriah at Jerusalem. At present the Mosque of Omar occupies this site.

The building was a gigantic work of construction. In all essential points the Temple followed the model of the tabernacle. The materials used included a lavish use of gold, brass, iron, precious stones, marble, cedar and other wood, fine linens, skins and stone.

In 1 Kings 6:7 it is stated: 'In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.' (NIV, 1985: 480)

King Solomon dedicated the Temple to God in prayer. The temple was the approach of a nation to their God. It was the symbol of God's presence among the people. It expressed by means of worship, and every available form of ceremony and symbolism, the presence and power and glory of God. It was the visible means of access to God. Yet, amid all the symbolism, God Himself was not adored in any material form. The Temple bound the nation together, it was the religious center and capital.

Approximately 400 years later the temple was rebuilt, this temple was not comparable to the structure that Solomon had built. Later still, under Herod, the Temple was again rebuilt in modified form.

The Temple held a religious teaching for the people. It taught the presence of God, the necessity of sacrifice for sin, the need for forgiveness and God's willingness to forgive, in the holy of holies the very presence of God, their hope and strength.



It is important to note that between the 'holy place' and the 'holy of holies', hung the great veil. This veil symbolized the limited access to the divine presence afforded by Judaism. The veil is referred to in Mark 15:38. At the death of Jesus on the cross 'the veil (curtain) of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.' (NIV, 1985: 1529) This was an act of God. God was no longer alienated. Jesus Christ now opened the way of approach to God for all men. Hebrew 10:16-23 ' "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: " Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven there will be no more sacrifice for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.' (NIV, 1985: 1871)

The rest of the Old Testament is a story of religious apostasy and its dire consequences, of prophets who faithfully championed the cause of God and who pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah.

The Beginning and development of Christianity and the church is given in the New Testament.

The first generation of Christians had no New Testament to read. They wrote it!

For us, it is from the New Testament that we learn about the church that Christ established. From it we learn all about the Gospel, the good news of salvation.

The New Testament contains the following:

1. The Four Gospels that record the genealogy, birth, life, teachings, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his Gospel, John states: " These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31 (NIV, 1985: 1637)
2. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is the story of the spread of the Christian gospel during the first generation of Christians.
3. The Epistles are various letters, some of which are personal, others attend to problems, the meaning of redemption doctrinally and practical is explained, and the teachings of Jesus are elaborated and expounded.
4. In the book of Revelation we have the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Central to everything written in the New Testament is Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies made in the Old Testament. He was fully God and fully Man, therefore he was able to die for us in order to redeem us, to save us from our sins, their guilt and power.

1 Timothy 1:15 "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst." (NIV, 1985: 1835) 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all men. . . ." (NIV, 1985: 1836) John 3:17 " For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." (NIV, 1985: 1598)



The Apostle Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus: " Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." This, of course, referring to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

### The Beliefs of the Church come from both Old and New Testaments

The Old and New Testaments unite to explain the beliefs and message of the Christian Church. The message is one and the same. God progressively revealed Himself, His plans for mankind and eternal truths. These truths never changed. They culminated in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. These truths are contained in the Bible. Consider Christ's rebuke of the two on the road to Emmaus for not knowing and understanding the scriptures. "How foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Luke 24:25 (NIV, 1985: 1589)

We will now look at some important Old Testament truths.

1. The belief in God. A central truth. He is Creator (Isaiah 42:5). He is a personal, living God, self-revealing and self-existing. The great 'I am'. God is holy, the most wonderful aspect of His nature. This stands for supreme moral excellence. Total separation from all defilement and sin. Because He is holy, He cannot be pleased with unrighteousness and rebellion in men. The entire book of Leviticus is a great object lesson teaching the holiness of God and the necessity for an atonement to satisfy the requirements of God's holiness. And also, God is Sovereign over all.
2. Moral responsibility. Every person has freedom of choice.
3. Man is sinful by nature. Psalm 14:1-3
4. A promise of redemption. Christ's coming is anticipated. Daniel 9:25 points to the coming deliverer.

And now. Some New Testament Truths

1. The Old Testament is accepted as the Word of God.
2. God reveals Himself in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Holy Triune God.
3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God laid aside His glory and came to this world as the God-Man.
4. He died on the cross and gave His life to make atonement for our sins. He died as our substitute, so that if we accept Him we are justified before God.
5. Man is a guilty sinner and needs Jesus Christ as his Savior because he is condemned and powerless to help himself.
6. The way out is through Christ by the free gift of God. How obtained? Repent of your sin. Confess your sin to God. Place your trust in Jesus as your substitute and savior. He died in your place on the cross. Accept this in prayer and faith. After His death, He was resurrected. He now lives. He will care for you and keep you. Trust Him.
7. To grow in the knowledge of God as His child witness to others. Read the Bible regularly and prayerfully. Pray often. Meet with others in the church. Obey God.

There are other truths as well, and many facets of the calling of the Christian in our world. (Steyn. 2003a)



# The story of Jesus

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (NIV,1993:1176)

John 1:3-4 Everything was created through him; nothing not one thing!- came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was light to live by. The Life- light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. (The Message,1996:218)

# The Story of Jesus

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FIGURE 1: The Beginning. (Steyn, 2000)



# The story of Jesus



John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth. (NIV,1993:1176)

Matthew 1:20-21 "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (NIV,1993:1070)



After Jesus was baptized, He was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Jesus was the conqueror.



Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."



Jesus chose twelve disciples to follow Him. He taught them for three years. Matthew 6:6 "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (NIV,1993:1075)

# JESUS

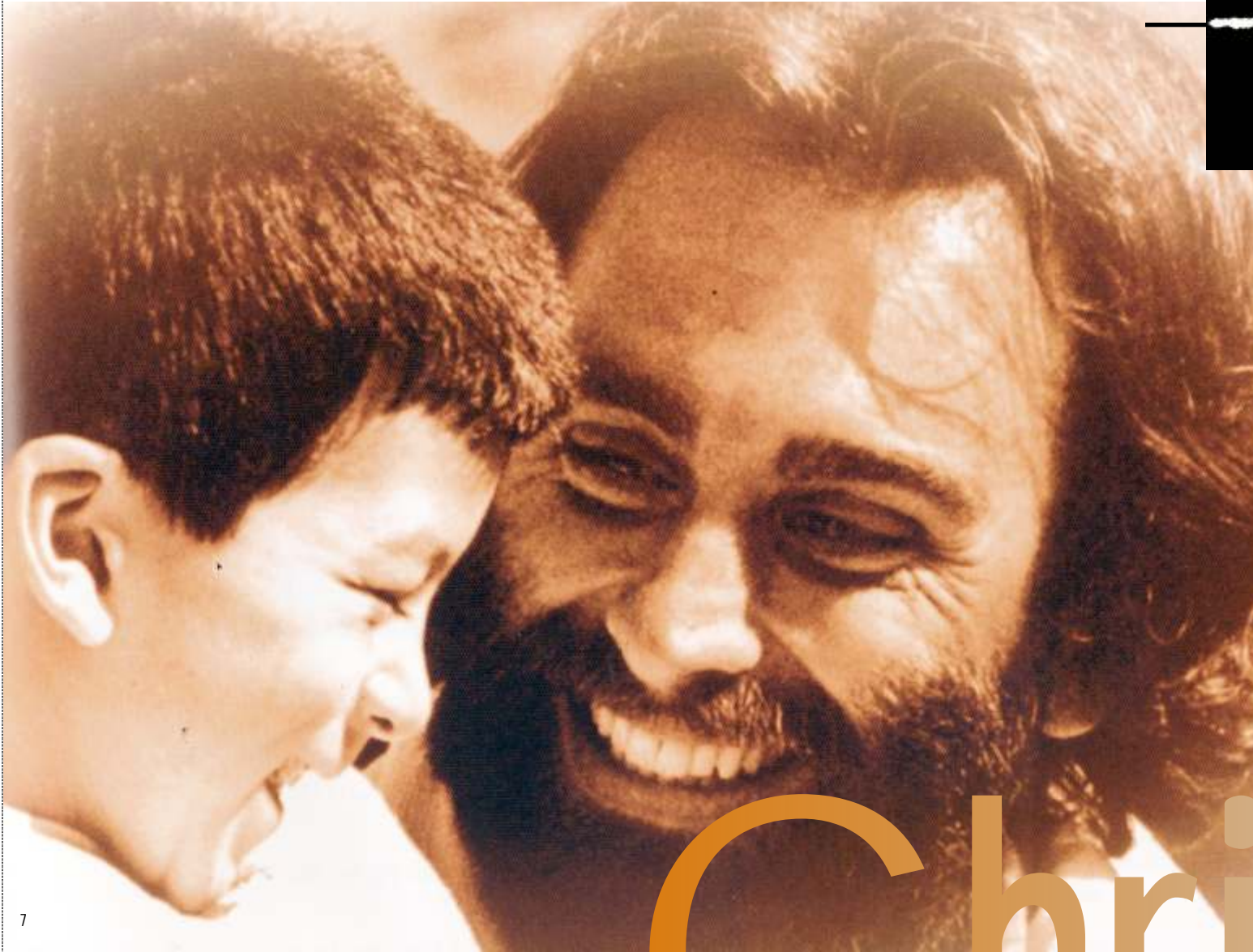


FIGURE : 7 (Marchiano, 2000)

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Matthew 7:11 "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (NIV,1993:1076)

# Christ



# The story of Jesus



Matthew 9:2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." "Get up, take your mat and go home." (NIV,1993:1078)



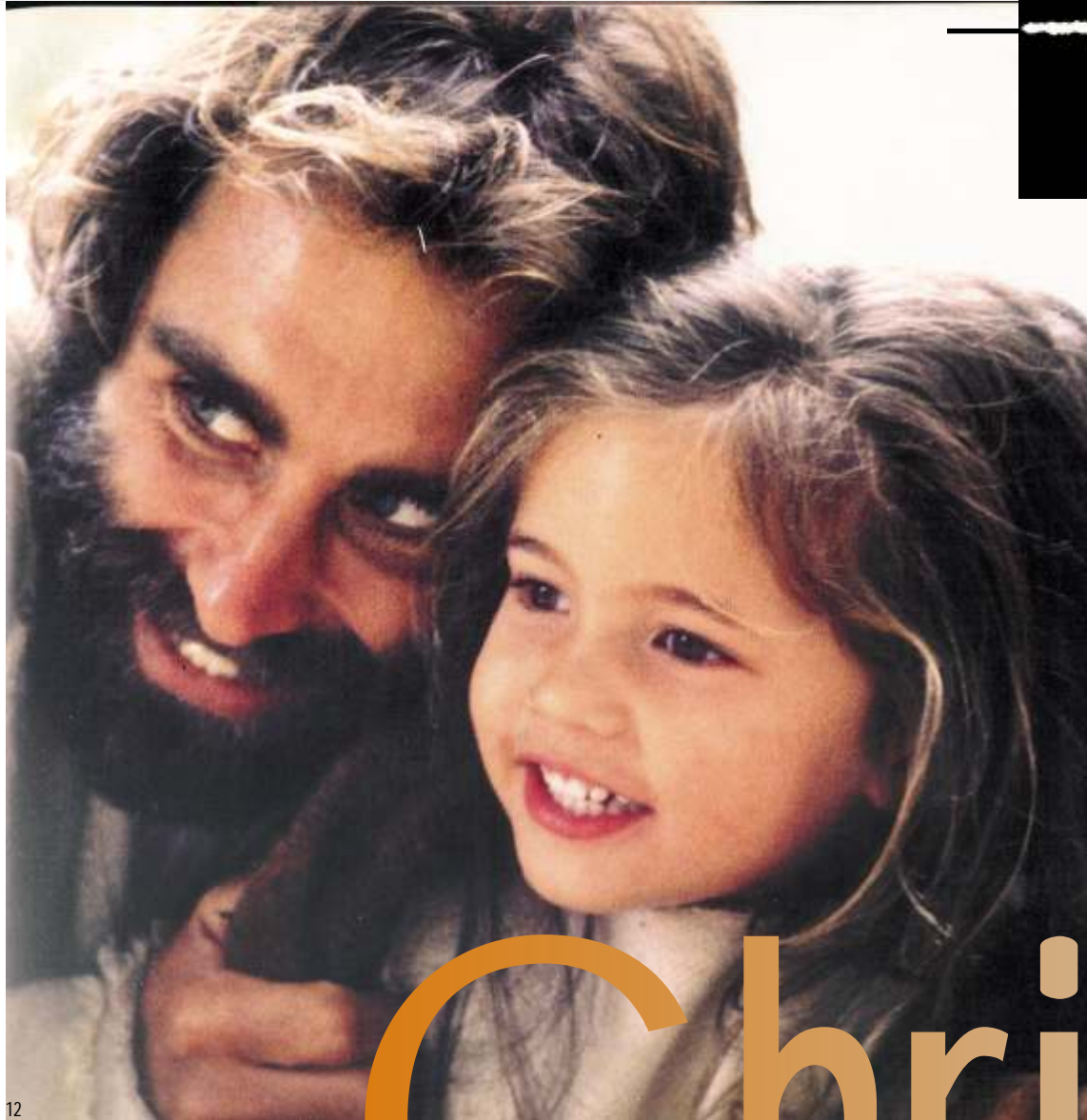
Matthew 9:8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men. (NIV,1993:1078)

# Jesus



# The story of Jesus

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (NIV,1993:1092)



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FIGURE :12 (Marchiano, 2000)

# Christ

# The story of Jesus



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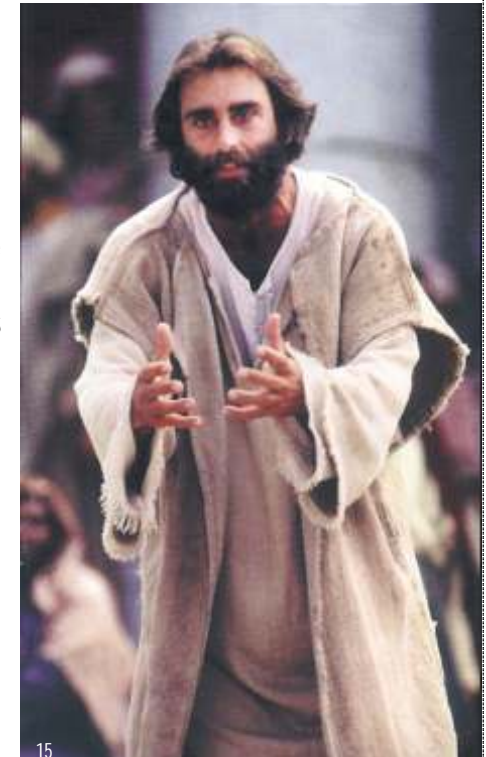
Jesus performed many miracles throughout Israel. He raised the dead and healed the sick.



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In Zechariah 9:9 it was prophesied that Jesus will have a triumphal entry on a donkey into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:7-9 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (NIV,1993:1094 1095)

Matthew 22: 37 40 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind. 'This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV,1993:1097)



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JESUS



# The story of Jesus

The betrayal of Judas was prophesied in Zechariah 11:12, "So they paid me thirty pieces of silver." (NIV,1993:1059)

Mark14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over. (NIV,1993:1128)

Mark14:44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." (NIV,1993:1129)



One of the disciples, Peter, denied Jesus.

Matthew 26:33-34 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (NIV,1993:1103)

Matthew 26:74-75 Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and went away. (NIV,1993:1105)



# Christ



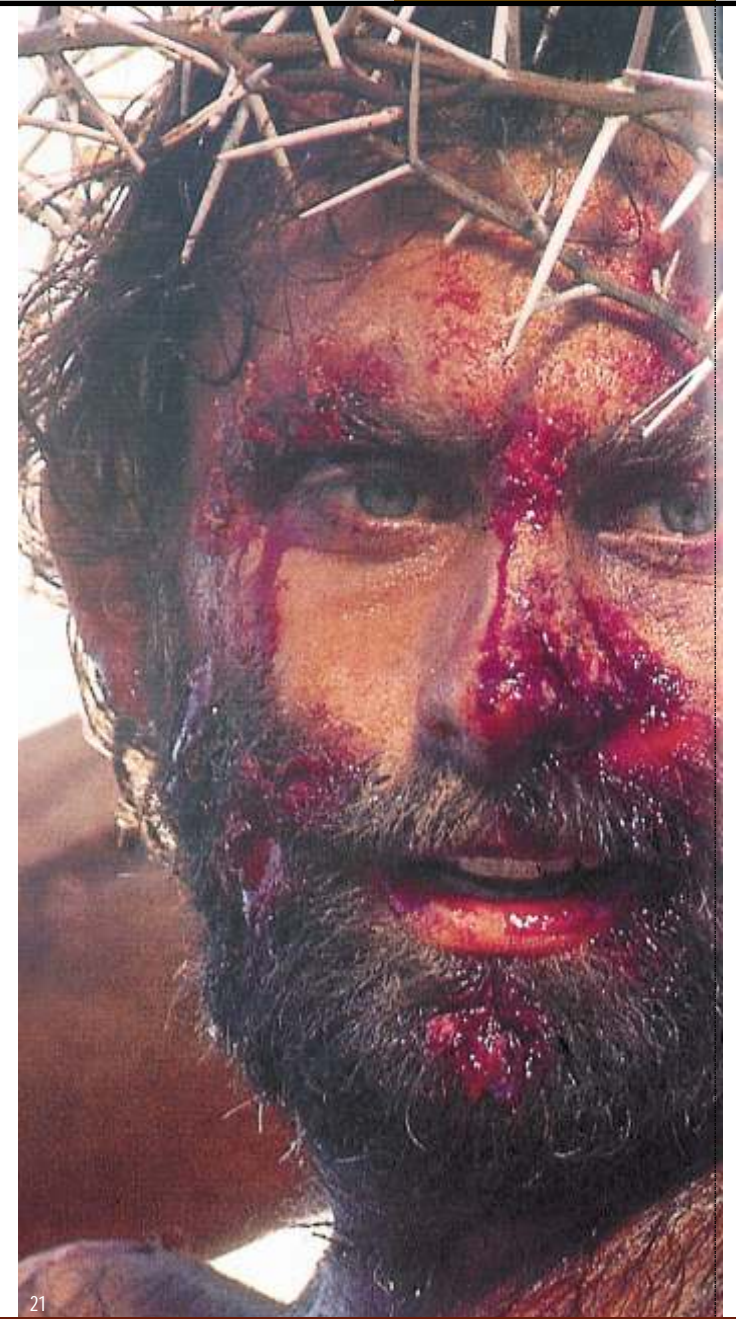
# The story of Jesus



Matthew 27:22  
"What shall I do, then with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" (NIV,1993:1106)

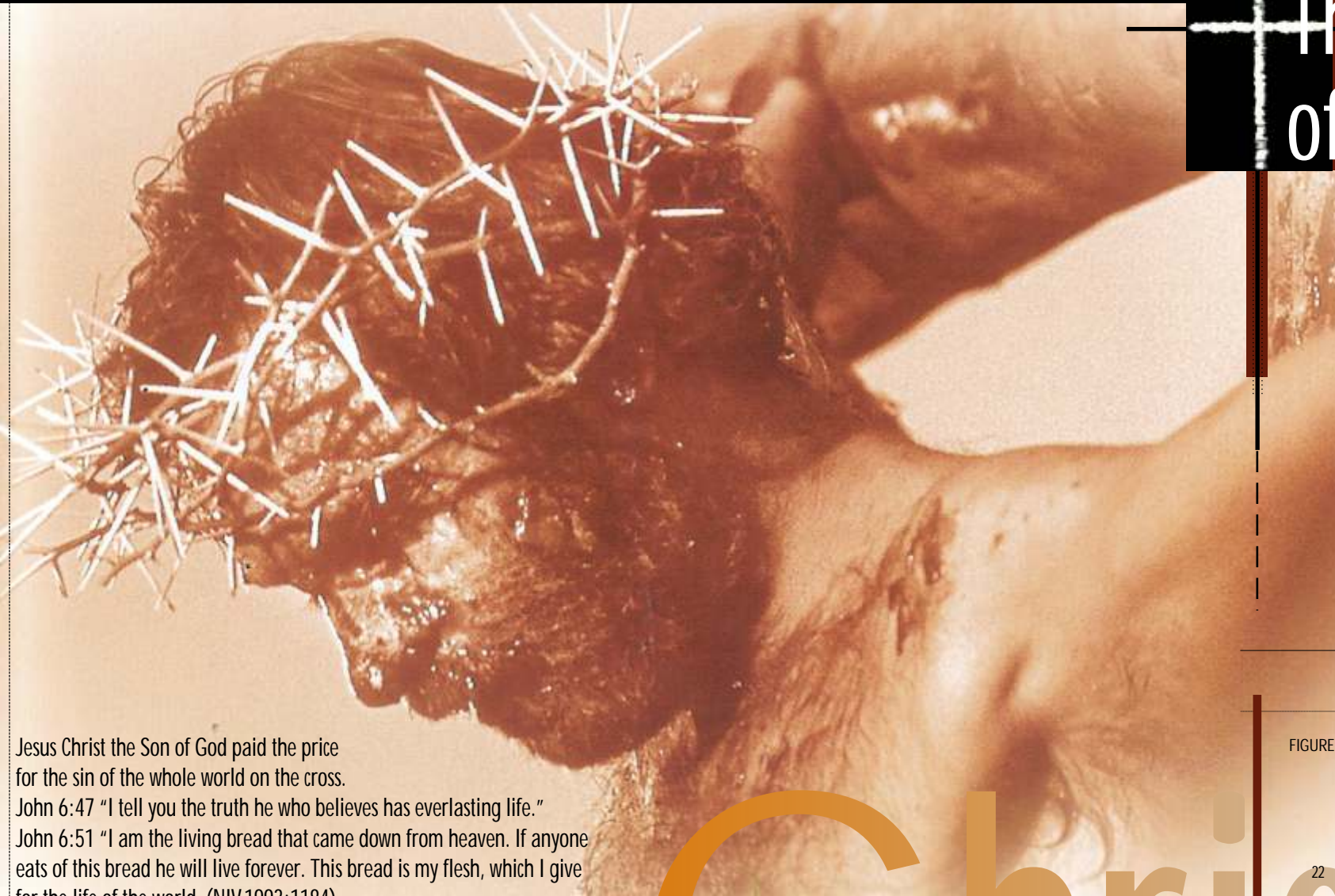


Matthew 27:31 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (NIV,1993:1106)



# Jesus

# The story of Jesus



Jesus Christ the Son of God paid the price for the sin of the whole world on the cross.

John 6:47 "I tell you the truth he who believes has everlasting life."

John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. (NIV,1993:1184)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV,1993:1179)

FIGURE : 22 (Marchiano, 2000)

# Christ

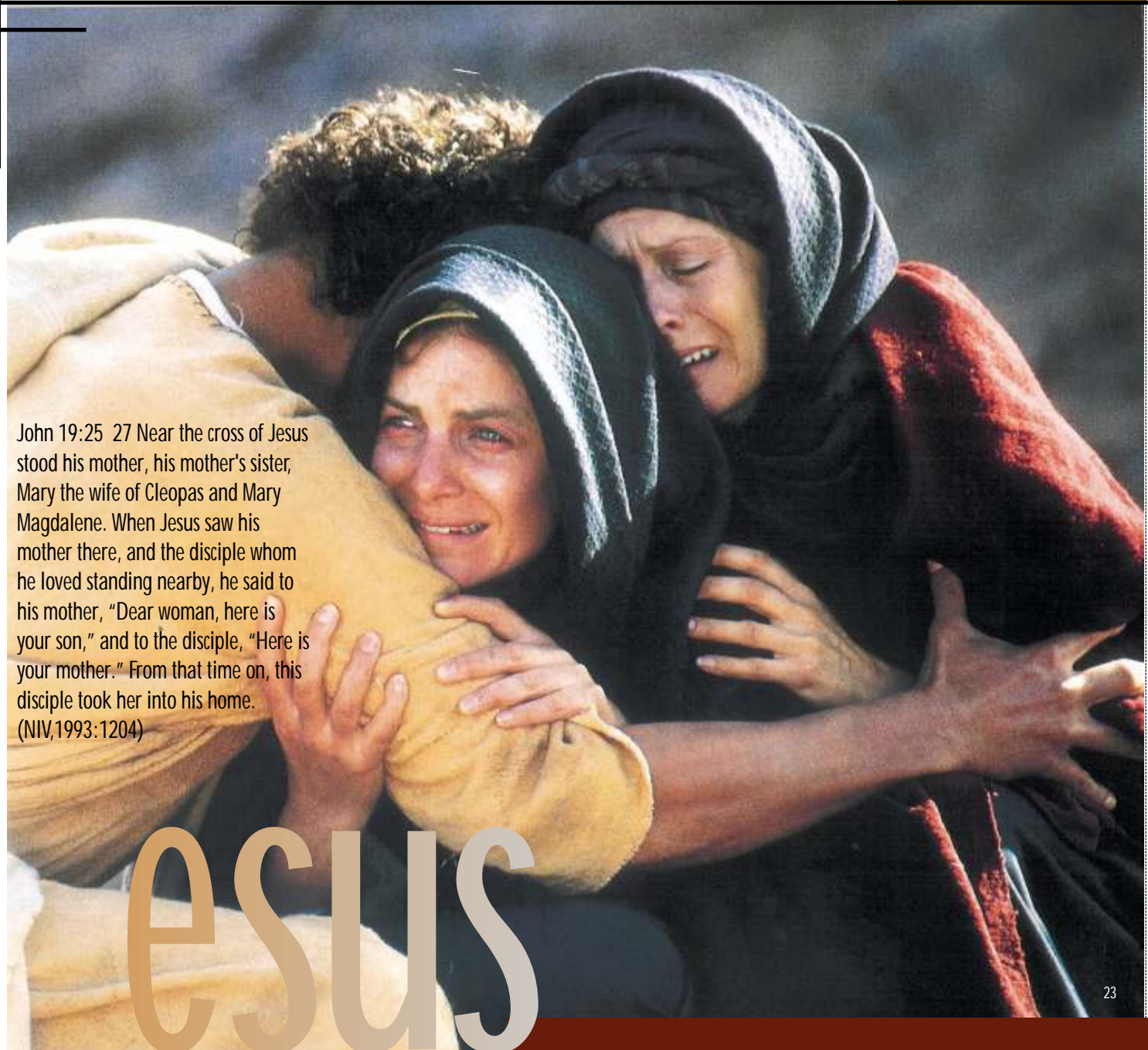


# The story of Jesus

John 19:25-27 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (NIV, 1993:1204)

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FIGURE : 22 (Marchiano, 2000)



# Jesus

# The story of Jesus



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Jesus conquered death and was resurrected on the third day. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb.

Jesus also appeared to his disciples.  
John 20:27 - 29 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."  
Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"  
Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

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Mark 16:19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to his disciples, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his words by the signs that accompanied it. (NIV,1993:1133)

Acts 1:10, 'They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee", they said, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you i heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven." (NIV, 1993:644)

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FIGURES : 24,25 (Marchiano, 2000)

# Christ



# The story of Jesus

GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

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Revelation 21: 6, 'He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha  
and The Omega, the Beginning and the End."' (NIV,  
1985:1949)

# Art and the Church

When the Living God called Moses up the Holy Mountain for 40 days and 40 nights, it involved a discussion on the Arts. (Exodus 25:31) In Exodus 24:12 we read: 'The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction."' (NIV, 1985:122) It was necessary now that Moses should receive full directions for the external worship of God, the sanctuary, and the priesthood. Every religion has something tangible and material about it: holy places, holy things, rites, ceremonies, rules, forms and regulations. Thus God showed patterns to Moses of all that was to be made for the worship. (Wells, 1994, in Steyn, 2003c)

God is the greatest Creator and Artist imaginable. It is sometimes hard to envision where God fits into the universe. In your mind's eye see the following image and then you will understand: take a glass filled with clear water and place a coloured tissue into the glass. The tissue absorbs the water and can from now on not exist without the water. The moment the tissue is removed from the water it will tear and disintegrate. The universe is like this tissue engulfed in God. God does not exist in the universe but the universe exists within Him. The universe cannot contain God, it is His own creation, God contains the universe. (ds Nicol 2003) What is the role of Art in God's House? Architecture is a form of art . . .

God created and maintains patterns and consistency in the universe. This makes science and technology possible. The form and materials of His creation also make art and beauty possible. Human creativity thus echoes God's own creativity. That is why art has a place in society and also a role in changing a corrupt society. (Packer & Howard 1985, in Steyn, 2003c)

The Greek word for art is *ARTUä*, which means to create order. This is more often than not the case with art. Artists tend to be different from other people and not necessarily ordered. But in the history of art, and in South Africa, it is artists who frequently lead the way. An example of this is the Protest Art and Theater against Apartheid in South Africa. These artists expressed those emotions that others could relate to; it brought a form of order to the oppressed. God's plan is to create order. In Genesis 1 we already see this: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said: "Let there be light", and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. . . ."

Before the 16<sup>th</sup> century Art formed a crucial means of communication in the Church. Artists worked for the Church. Then in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a division between Art and the Church occurred. Artists became famous and wanted to go their own way. This had far reaching effects still influencing thoughts today. The Church has become very apprehensive towards any form of art because of this. This is not God's plan for the Arts. The Church should change its paradigm. (Keizer 2003)

However, we need to state clearly what is meant by Art. This brings us to the philosophical background to art. Ernst Cassirer, professor of philosophy at the Graduate School of Yale University, has written a chapter on "Art", in his book "An Essay on Man". The following is a gist of some of the more relevant points he makes.

The character and nature of beauty do not need complicated metaphysical theories for their explanation. Beauty is part of human experience; it is evident and unmistakable. Nevertheless, it does give rise to different thoughts and theories. Before Kant, all systems of thought had looked for a principle of art within the sphere either of theoretical knowledge or of the moral life. It was conceived as an allegory, a figurative expression, which under its sensuous form concealed an ethical or moral sense,



but possessed no independent value of its own. Art was seen as merely a subordinate and subservient means pointing to some higher end. Kant in his 'Critique of Judgment' was the first to give a clear and convincing proof of the autonomy of art. Cassirer dwells on the theories that art falls under the category of imitation. These do not restrict the work of art to a merely mechanical reproduction of reality. All of them had to make allowances, to a certain extent, for the creativeness of the artist. It was not easy to reconcile these two demands. He then points out that the true aim of art is more than imitation; the creativeness of the artist is very important. Rousseau rejected the traditional theory of art. He saw art, not as a reproduction of the empirical world, but as an overflow of emotions and passions. Beauty in the traditional sense of the term is by no means the only aim of art; it is a secondary and derivative factor. Cassirer stresses that art is "neither an imitation of physical things nor a mere overflow of powerful feelings. It is an interpretation of reality not by concepts but by intuitions; not through the medium of thought but through that of sensuous forms." He further states: "To give aesthetic form to our passions is to transform them into a free and active state. In the work of the artist the power of passion itself has been made a formative power." Note the last sentence! This all applies to the artist. What of the spectator? The artistic process is a dialogical and a dialectic one. Not even the spectator is left to a merely passive role. "We cannot understand a work of art without, to a certain degree, repeating and reconstructing the creative process by which it has come into being. By the nature of this creative process the passions themselves are turned into actions." Art becomes a means of self liberation. It must always give us motion rather than mere emotion. Finally, it must be remembered that it is characteristic of the nature of man that he is not limited to one specific and single approach to reality, but can choose his point of view and so pass from one aspect of things to another. The artist feels the inward meaning of things and he externalizes his feelings. This externalization is the highest and most characteristic of artistic imagination. And may we remember one of the greatest triumphs of art is to make us see commonplace things in their real shape and in their true light. (Cassirer, 1951)

The core business of Art is to communicate and give expression to what is revealed within you. Art in the Christian sense, is a form of prophecy.

There are 4 levels of communication:

1. From God to humans. God is the origin of everything and is always the first one to speak. We see this time and again with all the great men in the Bible, God always came to them before they came to God.
2. From humans to God.
3. From humans to humans.
4. From Christians to non-Christians. (Keizer 2003)

It must be pointed out while there are close connections between religion and art, they are not the same, there are real differences between them. The following are some of the differences:

1. Religious beliefs may be enshrined in art. Aesthetic experience may evoke a religious experience or worship.
2. As already pointed out, art has its own autonomy. So does religion. They are, however, different in substance and nature.
3. Art reflects the existence of man in things, religion points to the existence of all things in God.





# Art and the Church

4. Kierkegaard pointed out that the aesthetic (art) deals mainly with feelings. And religion with existing.
  5. Aesthetics deals with the routines of life, religion with God's revelation about external life. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)
  6. Aesthetic life is what one has with other men, but the religious life is what one is before God.
  7. Aesthetics deals with our sense of the sublime, religion with our sense of the sacred and holy.
  8. Aesthetics deals with beauty, religion with ultimate worth.
  9. Art brings pleasure, religion also occasions worship.
  10. Art involves a sense of amazement, religion a sense of adoration.
- These differences sometimes overlap and could be concurrent, but are nevertheless distinguishable. (Geisler & Feinberg, 1992:342-343, in Steyn 2003c)

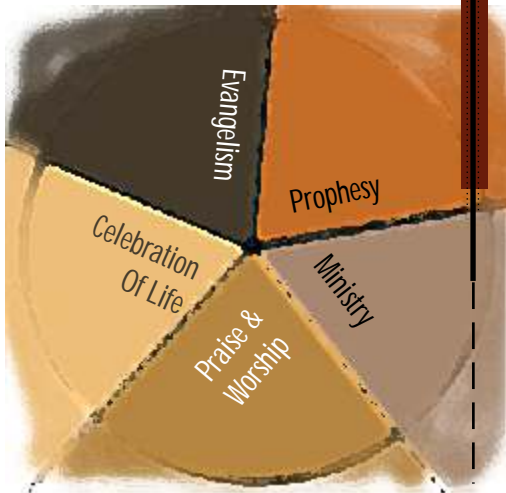


FIGURE 26: Christian Art.

FIGURE 26: Christian Art. (Keizer, 2003)



When God created the earth and everything on it, it formed a whole; everything was in harmony with God. God made man in His image. Genesis 1:26 "Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" (NIV, 1985:7) Adam and Eve ate of the fruit from the tree of Knowledge of Good and evil, and immediately this harmony was broken. God said: Genesis 2:16,17 "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die," when God looked for Adam that evening He found that there was something missing in Adam and Eve. There was a broken image of God in them because they had sinned. God later restored this broken relationship by salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. In the Christian view only a whole human being has this image of God restored in him/her. In other words, a human that has accepted salvation through Jesus Christ.

How does this apply to the Art world? When your relationship with God has been restored, God can work prophecy and healing through the creativity he has grafted in you. Art in the Christian sense has 5 sides to it as illustrated in Figure:26.

Art in the Church is a form of prophecy. It should give direction. It is also a ministry giving people hope and comfort. It should bring healing. The true story of a woman sculptor goes like this. She made a sculpture of a woman with broken joints that had been fixed with nuts and bolts. This illustrated that we as humans are broken and that God comes and heals us. Another woman saw the sculpture and was caught up in its message. But the message for this woman was different. She had joint problems resulting in artificial bolts inside her arms and legs. The moment she looked upon this sculpture of mended joints, she was healed. The reaction to the ministry through art is praise and worship. This in itself is a form of art. From this there is a celebration of life. The next step is evangelism through art forms. At present most Churches only allow art when it comes to the part of Evangelism, which is very unfortunate. (Keizer 2003) Being artistic means being responsible. Designing a Church building implies huge responsibilities. Art is in its nature prophetic and should be applied with sensitivity towards God's plan. In today's church there is too little emphasis on symbolism and portrayal of the Christian faith. Over the past years the Church has shown an inability to keep up with the changing technology and social trends; also the arts.

We live in a visually orientated world and the Church should comply

Concerning the Christian Church certain matters must be pointed out, with the hope that these will give a proper Christian perspective on art as such.

1. Aesthetics, good taste, art are not direct or explicit Biblical concerns. In the Old Testament, the law is entirely ceremonial and moral. When it is not specifying strictly religious observances, it is pointing out guidelines for behaviour. All its imperatives are liturgical or ethical. If there are artistic, architectural or domestic specifications, they are all determined by religion. It was Godliness rather than taste that was taught. Even in the New Testament there is an absence of cultural concerns. Paul is not curious about the cultures of the people he ministered to. To him they represented the potential converts, people who needed to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, people who needed to be saved. (2 Corinthians 5: 17-19) That is the focal point of his interest in them. He is seeing something that others do not see. The good news of the Christian religion is for all. That means for all cultures, for male and female. All need to be changed by the saving power of Jesus Christ. Acceptance by God is in and through Christ. It is by faith alone. The only disqualification is one's own unwillingness to respond to God's message. In Titus 2: 13-14, we read of "Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good." Every culture may thus find renewal.

2. What has been stated above does not mean that art is excluded. In fact, Christianity generates culture and its different forms. All forms of art have felt the influence of the Bible and Christianity. Also architecture as a form of art is very relevant to the Christian Church. Christians believe in the goodness and beauty of creation.

3. And then, we are to serve God by developing our latent capacities and talents in the arts, science and all skills. God gave Adam a mandate to attend His garden. Biblical living is God-centered, and is concerned with obedience and the furthering of God's praise in this world. Art and cultural activity are relevant to both.

4. All who are in any way involved in the Church ministers, elders, deacons, architects, artists, garden landscapers fall under God's mandate to man to tend His garden. As regards the Church, they must take cognizance of:

- a.) The mission of the Church
- b.) The nature of the Church
- c.) The history of the Church
- d.) The beliefs of the Church
- e.) The needs of the Church
- f.) The present day atmosphere in which the Church exists and operates.
- g.) Possible problems and challenges that the Church may have to face in the days to come.
- h.) The opportunities afforded the Church in the present day times. (Packer & Howard, 1985: 170-172, in Steyn, 2003c)

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## Philosophy of the Arts

GREEK-ROMAN      HEBREW-CHRISTIAN

	EGYPTIAN	GREEK-ROMAN	HEBREW-CHRISTIAN
ART IS...	Art is life and death. It captures the powers of heaven. It is used to manipulate.	Art is a reflection of life. It is a copy of life.	Art is an expression of the life of Christ in the artist. It is a form of prophesy and healing.
I AM...	I am an artist.	I am an artist who happens to be a Christian. A Christian artist.	I am a Christian who happens to be an artist. An artistic Christian.
ART AND GOD...	Art is God.	Art replaces God. It is about the mystic and magic of it.	Art reveals God. It shows the heart and mind of God. It makes God tangible and understandable in human terms.
ART AS TOOL...	Art is man's tool to manipulate God.	Art is a tool to manipulate other people. It operates emotions.	Art is God's tool to give life, direction and to express Himself.
FOCUS...	The focus is on the fulfillment of man.	The focus is on the art form i.e. Art activity, drama...	The focus is on my relationship with God as an artistic Christian.

Table 1: Philosophy of the Arts. (Keizer. 2003)





Christianity lends itself to the use of symbols. It is clear from the progress of Church design over the past few decades that there is at present a longing amongst the believers to experience God in the design. Symbolism has once again become vitally important. The design should portray the Christian message. (Swanepoel, 2003)

# Christian Symbolism



FIGURE 27: The young lady.



FIGURE 28: Road Sign.

36

FIGURE 28: Road Sign.

FIGURE 29: Combination. (Covey, 1994:26)

It is vitally important to understand the context in which certain symbols are found. Definition of a symbol: 'When one familiar object is replaced by another familiar object.' (Owen, 1992: viii-x) The meaning of a symbol is mostly determined by:

- Context of the author/receiver
- Context of the symbol
- Context of the symbolic network

Confusion with the correct meaning of a symbol is explained in the following example:

A road sign with an 'S' printed on it is interpreted by three different persons in the following ways:

1. The first person sees the sign and immediately thinks the 'S' stands for snakes and that he should watch out for snakes on the road. This is not a logic deduction since snakes hold no danger for vehicles and is not worthy to be represented on a road sign. He is not considering the context of the author.
2. The next person interprets the sign to be an indication of a scenic route. He is not considering the context of the symbol. The 'S' is situated inside a triangle, meaning danger.
3. The third person interprets the sign literally and looks for S's on the road. He is not considering the context of the network, in other words that it is a road sign relating to the safety of vehicles. (Barr, 1987:274-275)

People perceive differently because they have different backgrounds and prior experiences. Look at the picture on this page. Turn to the previous page and look at the first picture.(FIGURE 27) What do you see in the picture on this page?(FIGURE 29) You possibly see a beautiful young lady? Now, turn the page and look at the third picture. (FIGURE 46) Look again at the second picture. What do you see? It might be an old lady, not very pretty to look at.



FIGURE 29: Combination.

The Cross:

The cross in the Christian realm is a symbol of Jesus Christ and the salvation through His death and resurrection. Even before His crucifixion Christ admonished His disciples that if they were to be His followers they had to carry the cross. Matthew 16: 24, 25. 'Then Jesus said to His disciples: "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."' (NIV, 1985:1466) At first they did not understand that Jesus was referring to a symbolic cross, a cross of self denial. The cross symbolizes Christianity since Jesus suffered and died on the cross at Calvary. Over centuries crosses were placed on altars, roofs of churches, graves, in the homes of people and in public places. Some people even wear it around their necks.

The Christian cross has a clear and significant meaning. It is the symbol of eternal life, redemption and resurrection through faith. The cross on which Christ had breathed his last was made of wood and was probably in the Latin Shaped form because it was a Roman crucifixion. Figure :30 demonstrates this form. This kind of cross consists of an upright pole with a horizontal beam approximately a third from the top. Romans used crosses for the execution of criminals and slaves. The condemned had to carry the cross to the place of execution. In the Roman law there was no limit to scourging, Christ was stripped of his garments and scourged beyond recognizable shape, and still he had to carry the cross on his lacerated back. Although Jesus healed the sick, worked wonders and brought a message of love and hope, he was mercilessly crucified. In the Modern world, Christians do not regard the cross as an object of execution but a glorious symbol of Christ's sacrifice for all mankind. (Solomon, 2002:48-60) The crucifix is the image of a cross with the body of Christ fixed to it. This is symbol of Jesus' victory over death and also as the man of grief. (Bronswijk, 1987:80)

The early Christians did not use the cross as a symbol because it was a sign of execution and disgrace. They rather used the 'Fish' symbol. Only during the fifth century did the Christians adopt the cross as a symbol for Christianity. One of the early Christian crosses is the Labarum. It is a combination of the capital letter P, the Greek cross and the Latin cross. See Figure :36. In the early days and today it is used as an abbreviation for 'Jesus Christ'.

Most of the early surviving crosses are revealed in the mosaics of the Basilican Churches. These crosses are in the Latin form with elaborate design and usually made of gold, silver and adorned with jewels. The different precious stones had significant meanings. The ruby and garnet represent the blood of Christ. Beryl, jade and other greenish stones signify regeneration. Pearls symbolize purity. (Solomon, 2002: 48-60)








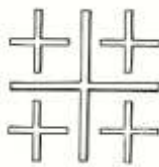
		
FIGURE 30: Latin Cross	FIGURE 31: Greek Cross	FIGURE 32: Tau Cross
		
FIGURE 33: Andreas Cross	FIGURE 34: Gaffle Cross	FIGURE 35: Cardinal's Cross
		
	FIGURE 36: Labarum / Christogram	FIGURE 37: Patriarchal Cross

TABLE 2: The Crosses

FIGURE 30: Latin Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 31: Greek Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 32: Tau Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 33: Andreas Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 34: Gaffle Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 35: Cardinal's Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

FIGURE 36: Labarum / Christogram (Koortz, 1974:102)

FIGURE 37: Patriarchal Cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)



### Agnus Dei:

In Latin, this means literally, 'The Lamb of God'. This symbolizes the crucifixion of Christ and his sacrifice to his followers and his resurrection. It heralds the image of life overcoming death. The Lamb points to Christ. (Solomon, 2002: 62) In the New Testament, the Christians are compared with a flock of sheep and Jesus with the Shepherd. (Bronswijk, 1987:25)

John 10:14. 'I am the good Shepard, I know my sheep and My sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down My life for the Sheep.' (NIV, 1985: 1616)



FIGURE 38: Agnus Dei.

### Alpha and Omega:

These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It also symbolizes the beginning and end of the cosmic creative process in Revelation. Revelation 21:6. "He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.'" (NIV, 1985: 1949) The image signifies the power of God as an initiating creative force. In this lies the potential fulfillment of the theological process. The word omega suggests freedom from all limitation. (Solomon, 2002:63)

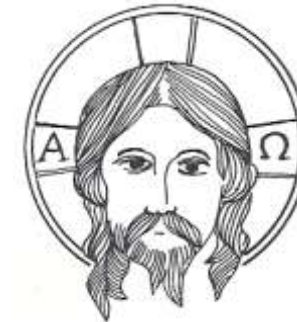


FIGURE 39: Alpha and Omega.

### Angels:

The word angel originates from the Latin word angelus, and from the Greek word angelos, meaning messenger and divine being. (Solomon, 2002:64)



FIGURE 40: Angel.

### The Banner:

This is the symbol of victory. It is usually depicted along with the lamb as a symbol of victory over death. The banner depicted with the cross means that he who has died to himself is living. For this reason Christ is sometimes depicted with a banner as he rises from the grave. (Solomon, 2002:71)



FIGURE 41: The Banner.

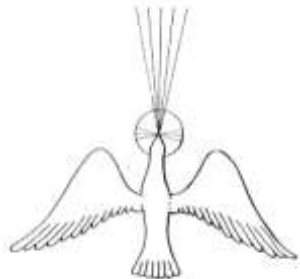


FIGURE 42: The Dove.

**The Dove:**  
 The dove refers to purity and peacefulness and symbolizes the Holy Spirit. (Bronswijk, 1987:19) Then it also refers to the reconciliation between man and God, spirit and matter and is the symbol of God's love for His creation. The New Testament documents that the Spirit of God descended like a dove. (Solomon, 2002:73) Mark 1:9-11. At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John on the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (NIV, 1985: 1493)



FIGURE 43: The Dragon.

**The Dragon:**  
 In Greek the word drakon, means dragon or serpent, addressed in Revelation as Leviathan. The Greek word dermokai, means 'to see'. The main enemy of man's spirit in the world is that of sight. The dragon devours his free spirit. Lucifer means bringer of light while he is the prince of darkness. The killing of the dragon in Christian art symbolizes the overcoming of forces that hold man bondage. (Solomon, 2002:73)



FIGURE 44: The Eagle.

**The Eagle:**  
 This is a symbol of the victory of higher spiritual forces over lower terrestrial ones. The eagle has the ability to survey the earth from great heights. Isaiah 40:29-31. "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint." (NIV, 1985: 1073) The Eagle is also a symbol of Christ's victory in His ascension. The eagle flies higher than any other bird and his eye can handle the light of the sun. (Bronswijk, 1987:17)

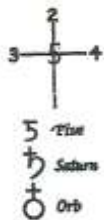


FIGURE 45: The Five Wounds.

**The five wounds:**  
 These were the five wounds inflicted upon Christ when he was crucified. They include the two wounds in his hands and the two in his feet and then the one in the side of his breast. (Solomon, 2002:77)



FIGURE 46: The old lady.

FIGURE 42: The Dove. (Bronswijk, 1987:19)

FIGURE 43: The Dragon. (Bronswijk, 1987:105)

FIGURE 44: The Eagle. (Bronswijk, 1987:17)

FIGURE 45: The Five Wounds. (Solomon, 2002:77)

FIGURE 46: The old lady. (Covey, 1994:45)

**Evangelist:**

In Latin it means 'Gospel' and in Greek 'good tidings'. The Evangelists are the writers of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The four evangelists are expressed in the four elements of the universe: air, fire, earth and water.

Matthew (gift from God) is related to air because he evaluates as a man, sorting the happenings with clarity and formal accuracy. He speaks of the human origin of Christ.

Mark is related to fire. His energy is directed to drawing man out of error.

Luke (Light) is represented by earth. He is more intimate in his writings.

John (God is gracious) he is related to water. He has visionary qualities exceeding the limits of the other three.

The evangelists are associated with the following when depicted in art:

Matthew a man's head

Mark a lion

Luke a bull

John an eagle

These four images are also used to depict the Four Living Creatures in Revelation. (Solomon, 2002: 76)



FIGURE 47: The Four Evangelists.



FIGURE 48: Mark the Lion.

**The Lily:**

In Christian art it is a symbol of the chastity and purity of the Virgin Mary. The lilies in the crown of king Solomon denote kingly and perfect love. A lily depicts the love from a higher Being, God, to a lower, mankind. (Solomon, 2002:81)



FIGURE 49: The Lily.

**Oil:**

It is the symbol of love and the power of compassion. Oil burns, thus illuminating error with the light of Wisdom. (Solomon, 2002:83) Luke 8:16-17. 'No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.' (NIV, 1985: 1554)

Oil is also used for anointing and healing. James 5:14,15. 'Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.' (NIV, 1985:1885) Luke 10:34. 'He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.' (NIV, 1985:1560)

TABLE 5: Symbols



FIGURE 50: The Trefoil.

**The Trefoil:**

This design is often used in the arches and windows of Churches. This becomes the symbol of the Holy Trinity. The Trinity is a division of absolute power. It contains three aspects that have different functions but makes a whole. (Solomon, 2002:89)



FIGURE 51: The Triquetra.

**The Triquetra:**

This image, formed of three interlacing almond shapes, also symbolizes the Trinity. (Solomon, 2002:91)

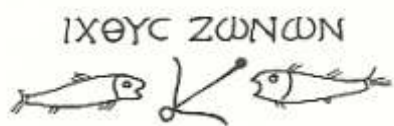


FIGURE 52: The Fish.

**The Fish:**

Ichthos refers to Jesus, the Great fisher of men. The letters in the word spell 'Jesus Christ Son of God Savior'. This symbol was often used in times of persecution for fellow believers to identify secret places of worship. (Solomon, 2002:92) It is one of the oldest and most important symbols in Christianity. The fish lives in the water which is symbol of the baptism. The last request of Jesus before he went to heaven was that the Christian believers should be fishers of men. (Bronswijk, 1987:32)

FIGURE 50: The Trefoil. (Solomon, 2002:89)

FIGURE 51: The Triquetra. (Solomon, 2002:91)

FIGURE 52: The Fish. (Bronswijk, 1987:32)



One symbolizes the undivided unity and is the mother of all numbers. Therefore one is a symbol of God, the Highest being whose might created the universe. (Bronswijk, 1987:59)

1

Two directs to the division of the unity. It shows two parts of one, referring to man and woman, the Old and New Testaments, the two tables containing the Law and to Christ and His bride, the Church. (Bronswijk, 1987:68) Two is also the number of the witnesses. (Kiene, 1977:43)

2

Three is the number of the whole, the victory over the division of two. It has a beginning, middle and end. The cosmos consists of three parts: the heavens, the earth and the under world. It also refers to the past, present and future. It reminds us of three aspects of our faith: faith, hope and love. Most importantly it directs to the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Resurrection of Christ took place on the third day. (Bronswijk, 1987:58)

3

Four points to the universe expanding in the four wind directions. It also represents the four elements found on earth: air, water, fire and earth. It also symbolizes the four Gospels found at the beginning of the New Testament and four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. (Bronswijk, 1987:69)

4

Five is the number of Christ, the Man dependant upon God. (Kiene 1977:45)  
It also represents the five wounds of Christ as He hung on the cross. (Bronswijk, 1987:70)

5

42

Six is the number of the last creation day where the seventh day was a day of rest. It refers to the six periods of world history. (Bronswijk, 1987:71)

6

Seven points to the perfection of the universe. Seven is a holy number. It is used numerous times in the book of Revelation. (Bronswijk, 1987:72)

7

Eight is the number of the holy unity and the new creation. It is the double of four. Eight people are saved in the arc of Noah. (Bronswijk, 1987:55)

8

TABLE 7: Symbols-numbers

9

Nine is the symbol of harmony and higher perfection, above human nature. It is the number of the angles. (Bronswijk, 1987:65)

10

Ten is used extensively in the Bible. Human have ten fingers and ten toes; ten generations from Adam to Noah, ten plaques in Egypt, ten commandments, ten virgins and ten sick men. It is the measure of all other numbers. (Bronswijk, 1987:68)

TABLE 8: Symbols-numbers

Possible symbolic meaning in a church building:

God must be represented as the Trinity, with the Son as the entrance, the Father inside and the Holy Spirit as our companion before we enter and when we leave.

Jesus says in, John 10:9, "I am the gate, whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture." (NIV, 1993:1191)

Jesus is symbolized by a gate and also by the cross. The entrances of the Church building should represent Jesus in these ways. Members and visitors entering the building must be made aware of Jesus. Jesus is also the bread of life. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." Hearing God's word through the preaching of the Gospel will nourish their Spiritual lives.

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." The Father draws one to the inside, to hear the preaching of the Gospel and receive the blessings from the Father's hand. 'Visual lines' must draw the member or visitor towards the inside. These 'visual lines' can be in the form of biblical plants or trees or other architectural features.

The holy Spirit is represented by the Dove and by water. Flowing water must be visible in the procession towards the entrance. It is a symbol of the Comforter that God sent when Jesus was taken up into heaven after His resurrection. The water must remind the people of the constant presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. When leaving the building, the flowing water reminds that it is the Holy Spirit that works within people to share the Good News with others and that they should spread the blessings beyond the boundaries of the Church site.

The architecture must in itself, through the use of forms and symbolism, declare GOD!

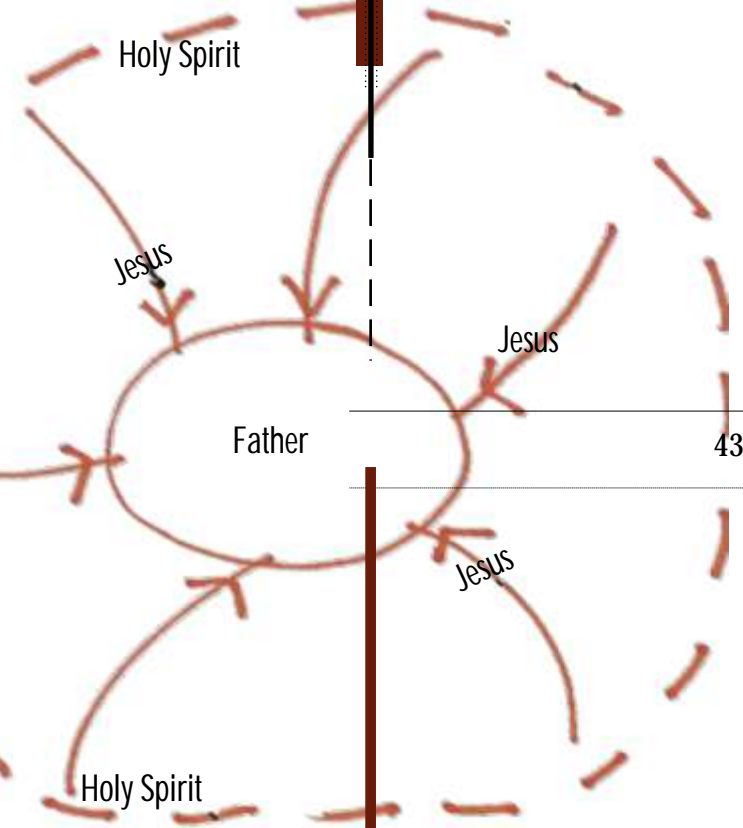


FIGURE 53: Symbolism of the Trinity in the procession towards the building.