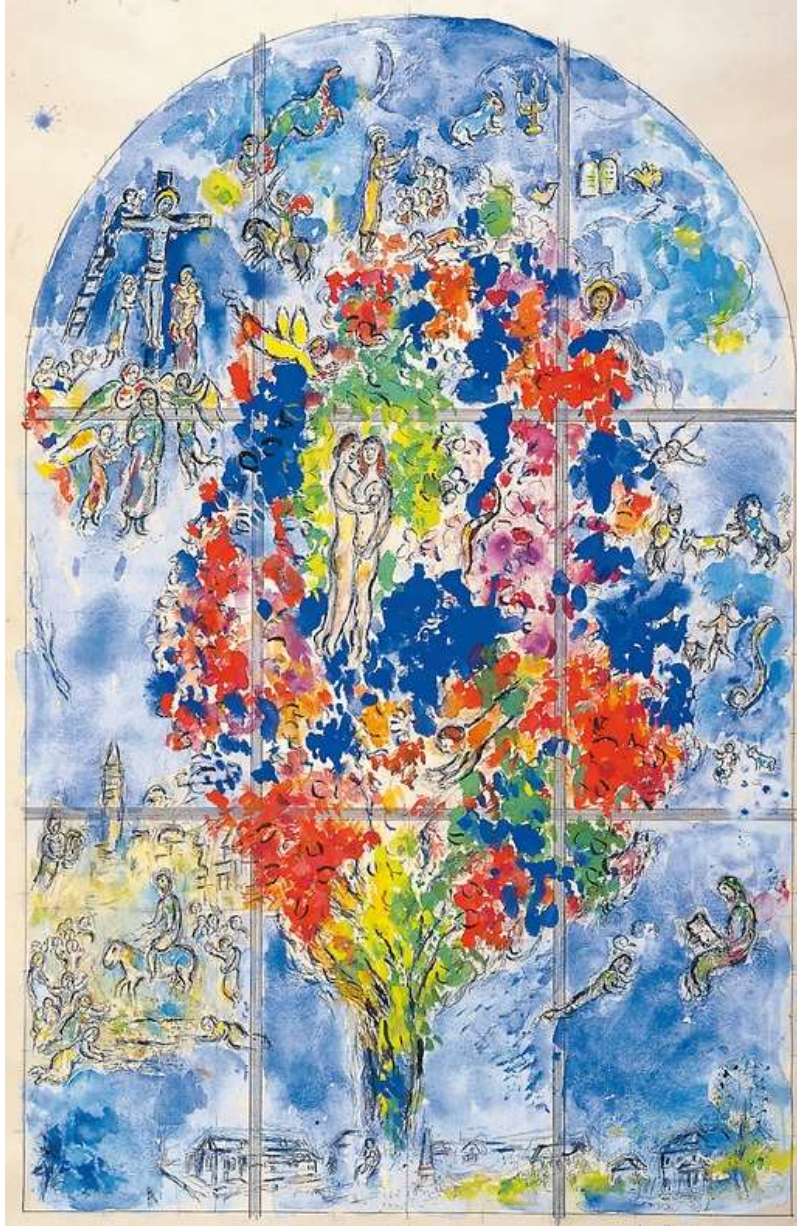


MARC CHAGALL: THE TREE OF LIFE (1976)

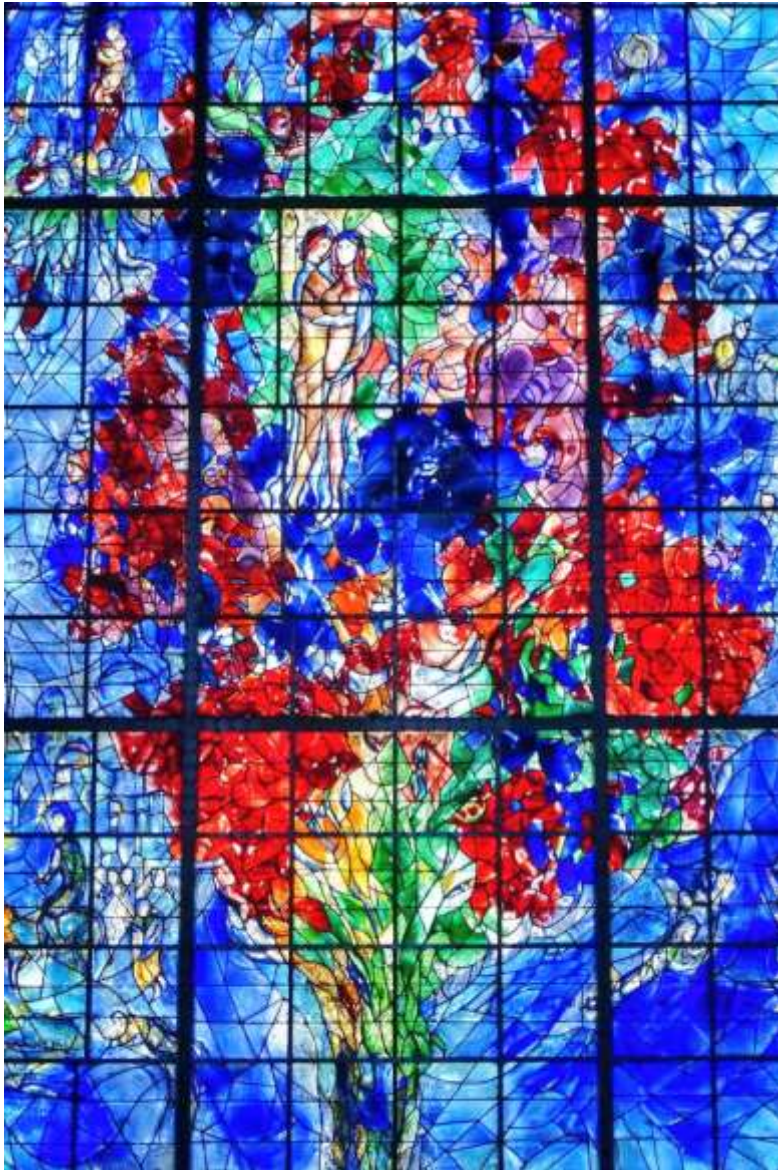


Marc Chagall: The model of the stained glass window of the Tree of Life (1976)

The word "Paradise"
is found only twice
in the New Testament:
in this excerpt from Revelation:
"If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen
to what the Spirit is saying to the churches:
those who prove victorious
I will feed from the tree of life
set in God's paradise.» (Rev 2:7))
and once in the Gospel of St. Luke,
in the very mouth of Jesus,
declaring to the so-called
"good thief":
"Amen, I tell you:
today, with me,
you will be in Paradise." (Lk 23:43

*Mery Crístmas 2021 !
Happy new Year 2022 !*

**THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW
OF THE TREE OF LIFE, AN IMAGE OF PARADISE**



Marc Chagall, stained glass window of the Tree of Life 1976

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW OF THE TREE OF LIFE, AN IMAGE OF PARADISE

The stained glass window of Marc Chagall's *The Tree of Life* is the image par excellence to make us discover the colours and splendors of Paradise. This word barely spoken, we are back in the time of Genesis, when God creates Adam and Eve, and places them in the Garden of Eden. In fact, the first meaning of the word Paradise is this place of Genesis, this garden in which the newly created man - Adam and Eve - lives in harmony with all creation, in the presence of God. *"Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned."* (Gen 2:8).

Taken as an image of eternal life, Paradise thus evokes this place prepared for us by God, and in which he fills us with his benefits: *"Yahweh God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden"*. (Gen 2:9).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, there is a passage about Man in Paradise : « The first man was not only created good, but was also established in friendship with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him, in a state that would be surpassed only by the glory of the new creation in Christ. The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original "state of holiness and justice". This grace of original holiness was "to share in. . . divine life". By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed.

As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die. ... The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman (cf. Gen 2:25), and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation constituted the state called "original justice".

The sign of man's familiarity with God is that God places him in the garden. There he lives "to till it and keep it". Work is not yet a burden, but rather the collaboration of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation. The entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents. » And indeed, after original sin, Paradise is closed to Adam and Eve who are cast out of it. Because they have disobeyed God, they no longer have access to the Tree of Life, which was in the center of the garden.

But in these last times, the Tree of Life gives itself to us in the very person of Jesus Christ... The word "Paradise" is found only twice in the New Testament: in this excerpt from Revelation: "If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: those who prove victorious I will feed from the tree of life set in God's paradise.» (Rev 2:7)) and once in the Gospel of St. Luke, in the very mouth of Jesus. This is the moment of His Passion: while He is nailed to the Cross, two evildoers are crucified with Him. The so-called "good thief" makes this request to Jesus: "Jesus, remember me when you come to your Kingdom." (Lk 23:42). It was then that Jesus declared to him: "Amen, I tell you: today, with me, you will be in Paradise." (Lk 23:43)

Where Sin Abounded, Grace Abounded All the More

ADAM AND EVE, AT THE HEART OF THE TREE OF LIFE



ADAM AND EVE, AT THE HEART OF THE TREE OF LIFE

It is in Sarrebourg, precisely in the chapel of the Cordeliers (Franciscans), located in the historic center of the city, that the greatest religious work on glass by Marc Chagall is located: *The Stained Glass window of Peace or the Tree of Life* (1976). Admirers of art who went to this place and saw this masterpiece were greatly impressed by the magnitude of this stained glass window 12 meters high by 7.50 meters wide and they were seized by the huge tree of life in the middle of the stained glass, similar to a large bouquet of all colours.

"On an immense blue expanse rises, as if above an ocean, *the Tree of Life*," writes Éloi Leclerc. It occupies the central space of the stained glass window. It is a huge multicolored bouquet. Its momentum and deployment, as well as the abundance of its foliage and the diversity of its colours, make it a hymn to life. It symbolizes the whole of creation, in its dynamic unity and its prodigious fecundity... This is the *Tree of Life* that Chagall gives us to contemplate. He does this by taking inspiration from the Bible. According to the account of Genesis (2:9), the Creator planted the *Tree of Life* in the middle of the Garden of Eden, as a symbol of the immortality to which man was called."

Chagall placed, at the heart of the *Tree of Life* and carried by it, the original human couple. "The first man and the first woman," writes Éloi Leclerc, "stand side by side in the light, at the call of the Creator. It is as if, with the coming of the human couple, the whole of creation opens up and vibrates in the light. The large multicolored bouquet makes perfect sense here: it is to welcome and celebrate the first man and woman that *The Tree of Life* has put on its festive dress..."

According to the first account of Genesis, God, on the sixth day of creation, wanting to crown his work, said to himself: "Let us make man in our image, as our likeness". Haydn, in his Oratorio *Creation*, put to music this passage of Genesis told with simple and familiar words and to joyful and enthusiastic music similar to 'a hymn to love':

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

In dignity and greatness clad with beauty, strength, and courage endowed, his face towards heaven raised, stands man: a man and the king of nature. His wide, arched, high forehead discloses the seat of his wisdom, and from his clear eyes beams his soul; he is the breath and image of his Creator. On his breast there leans, for him and out of him formed, sweet woman full of grace. In happy innocence she laughs; Spring's fascinating likeness, she brings him love, happiness, and delight.

And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good; and the heavenly choir celebrated the end of the sixth day, with loud singing.

Completed is the great work; the Creator sees it and rejoices. Therefore let our joy ring loudly out! Let God's praise be our song!

«Chagall saw that the human couple was the object of special attention in the Bible, writes Éloi Leclerc. At the Museum of Nice, he allocated a significant space to the *Song of Songs*, a true celebration of the love that unites man and woman. Here we touch on what is deepest in the human being, but also in creation. For man only truly finds himself in his truth and depth, *themselves, but opens them to the immensity of Creation.* by opening himself up to the very source of the relationship: creative love. »

**SARREBOURG AND A MATERNITY
AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE OF LIFE**



SARREBOURG AND A MATERNITY AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE OF LIFE

At the foot of the *Tree of Life*, we notice an evocation of the country of Sarrebourg, with its houses, forests and troops of wild animals such as the deer that live there. But did we take a look at the sketch of the church with its pointed bell tower that is just to the right of the image of the mother with child? What could this presence of this mother-church couple to the left and right of the trunk of the *Tree of Life* mean for Chagall? It would be difficult for us to answer them. But many of us could easily see in this mother-church couple the image of Mary, Mother of the Church: the one who, while being "raised in the glory of heaven, accompanies and protects the Church with her maternal love." On the other hand we can assume that the presence of a church in his stained glass window of the *Tree of Life* was undoubtedly a good opportunity for Chagall to indicate to future spectators of his work that they were in a church: the "Chapel of the Cordeliers" or if we want of the Franciscans since they were so called in the Middle Ages because of the large rope that served as their belt.

What does this motherhood at the foot of the Tree of Life mean for Chagall? This artist is a 'dreamer' who 'awakens' us every time he creates a new work. Who could have thought of inserting near the colossal trunk of the Tree of Life, a tiny image of a young mother with a child? And yet Chagall was right to do so. Without this motherly love, coming from the love of the Creator of heaven and earth, what would have happened to the Tree of Life? The tree, in all its splendor, would have dried up. But, fortunately, a motherhood is there that watches over the foot of the Tree of Life.

Chagall, in his writings, makes us discover that love is one of his major sources of inspiration: "I love love. Love helps me find colour. I can even say that it is love itself that finds the colour and that I only report it on the painting. It is stronger than me. That's how I see life. Life is beautiful, terrible. Strange too, probably because I look at her with the eyes of love... Despite the difficulties of our world, I have never renounced in my heart the love in which I was raised, nor the hope of man in love. As on the palette of a painter, there is only one colour in our life that gives meaning to life and art: the colour of love. »

I guess for Chagall, the colour of love is blue, since he chose this colour to draw the image of motherhood, at the foot of the stained glass window of the Tree of Life. We see a woman with a veiled head, holding her child on her left hip. The young woman tilts her head to the right and slightly down, and we do not know if her black eyes are looking at us, or if she is lost in her thoughts. The child boils down to a circle, three rounds and the silhouette of the nose. This mother-child couple is backed by two lines in a v-shape rising upwards that draw the trunk of the Tree of Life.

What an admirable figure that this young mother very happy to carry her little child near her! Life, all human life, begins with this birth of the fragile child by his mother, with her gestures of tenderness, it is the first love, this maternal love, which is indeed the foundation of all life! It's a tiny detail (barely visible)... and yet all the splendor of the tree of life rests on this reality.

"Love always gives life" Pope Francis.

THE ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM



THE ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM

At the bottom left of the stained glass window *The Tree of Life* or *Peace*, Chagall evokes this messianic entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem. The Prince of Peace selects the right moment and prepares the details of his entry into the city of "David," his father" (Lk 1:32). "When they had come near Jerusalem, and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to me"... This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Mt 21, 1-5)

"Jesus comes, not as a mighty king or a fearsome warrior, but as a man of peace," writes Éloi Leclerc. No sign of power accompanies him, no visible sheen, no human pomp. Nothing that's likely to seduce the crowds. He sits on a donkey, the most humble mount... He comes, in fact, not to dominate, but to serve. Not to condemn, but to save. Not to sow death, but to give life, and life in abundance... The Prince of Peace enters Jerusalem, cheered by the crowd of the poor and the little ones who honour him by waving olive branches. This people on the move, gathered in a restored unity, is not a deployment of force, but the humble gathering of peace and Beatitudes, which ascends into the city of David, to the cry of: "Hosanna to the son of David!" (Mat 21, 9).

It should be noted that Chagall evoked the figure of King David in the top left corner of the window above this evangelical scene.

He recognizes in Jesus his Lord, he rejoices when he sees him approaching and, with joy, he sings and plays the harp. We know that David is one of Chagall's favorite figures.



King David playing the harp (detail)

The acclamation: "Blessed is the King who comes, in the name of the Lord!" (Lc 19:38) is found only in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus is explicitly given the title of king when he enters Jerusalem in triumph. Their cry of homage summed up the crowd's reasons for rejoicing. The pilgrims who approached the temple were greeted by the priests from inside the shrine with the blessing: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The formula of blessing became a cry of homage which was addressed to Jesus. He was the king appointed by God, on whom God conferred all power.

Jesus comes to offer himself for the peace of the world. This ascent into Jerusalem preludes the elevation to the cross. Our gaze, carried by the upward movement of the lines, soars, towards this final stage: Christ, by his shed blood and his given life, seals the new Covenant.

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

MARC CHAGALL: DEATH AND BIRTH



MARC CHAGALL: DEATH AND BIRTH

"All night I thought... I thought... I have to paint today, on the stained glass window, the face of Christ. You know, with Christ you can't do just anything. It is sacred... He is a poor man like you, like me, but he is Christ... You have to make that felt. It's very difficult, almost impossible." (Marc Chagall)

Even if the period of reflection, before beginning a project on Christ on the cross, was painful for Chagall, it certainly did not diminish his inspiration, since we know with accuracy that during his long life he composed three hundred and sixty-three works with a crucified motif.

"Chagall," writes Éloi Leclerc, "has always been attracted to the person of Christ. It was the artist's personal trials, the persecutions that fell upon his people that made him discover the figure of the Crucified. He saws in him the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: 'It is our sufferings that he bore'. From that moment on, the Crucified became in his eyes the emblematic figure of his people, but also of all suffering humanity. »

At the top left of the stained glass window of The Tree of Life, presented here, appears the cross of Christ. If we look closely at this Crucifixion, we find that the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus crucified, is not there, but is replaced by that of the Mother with the Child which is very often found in the crucifixions of Chagall.

The icon of the mother with her child has a secret root that penetrates the deepest layers of the artist's experience.

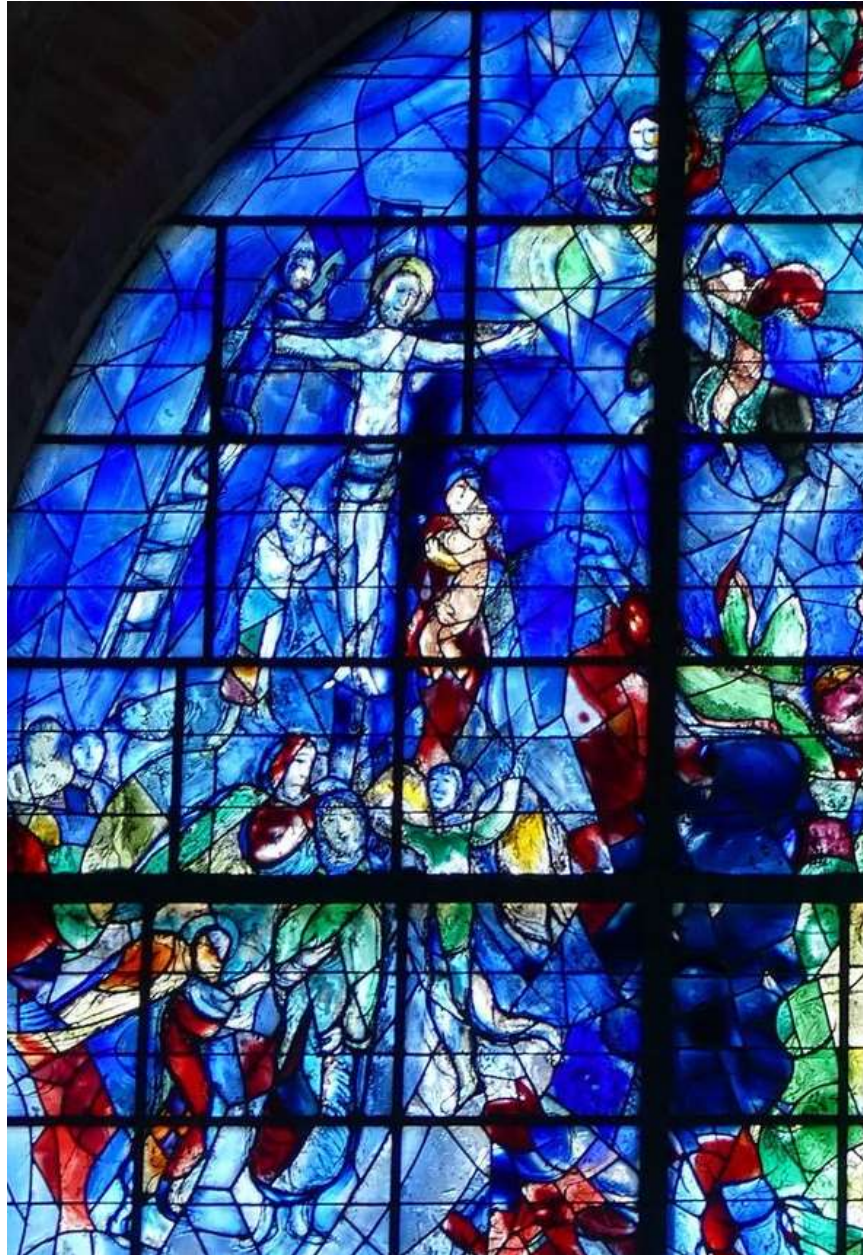
He left a moving trace of it in the opening passage of his biography *My Life* in which he recalls the difficulties of his birth: "I don't remember – perhaps my mother told me – but at the very moment I was born a great fire broke out, in a little cottage, behind a prison, near the highroad, on the outskirts of Vitebsk. The town was on fire, the quarter where the poor Jews lived. They carried the bed and the mattress, the mother and the babe at her feet, to a safe place at the other end of town."

Another singularity relating to Chagall's birth is his stillborn state upon her mother's womb. The artist himself explained: "But first of all, I was born dead. I did not want to live. Imagine a white bubble that does not want to live. As if it had been stuffed with Chagall pictures. They pricked that bubble with needles, they plunged it into a pail of water. At last it emitted a feeble whimper. But the main thing was, I was born dead. I hope the psychologists have the grace not do draw improper conclusions from that!" This is how the theme of birth and death will often appear on Chagall's easel.

In his many paintings with a crucified motif, some say of Chagall that he portrays (always) Jesus as the suffering Jew. But this is not the case in his stained glass windows, where the artist has other views on the person of Jesus. In the stained glass window presented here, Chagall reveals the peaceful character of Jesus. Even in the crucifixion, we see not only a suffering Jew, but Jesus the Prince of Peace who by his death brings reconciliation and thus the possibility of peace with God.

"I leave you peace, I give you my peace."

**CHAGALL: THE LADDER AND THE CROSS
BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH**



CHAGALL: THE LADDER AND THE CROSS BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Chagall said that "a painting appeared to him to be a kind of window through which he was flying in another world." He claimed that he was "born between heaven and earth" and constantly resided in this "intermediate" space. For Chagall, there is no distance between the visible and the imaginary or the invisible.

At the top left of his stained glass' *Tree of Life*, Chagall places the ladder and the cross between heaven and earth. This long curved ladder, the colour of the sky, at the top of which is the Roman soldier for the crucifixion, is leaning against the cross.

"The ladder occupies a significant place in Chagall's work," writes Éloi Leclerc. It can be found in his paintings and stained glass windows as well as in his poems. It is not only an instrument of Christ's passion. It accompanies the artist's inner approach. First of all, in his eyes, it evokes the dream of Jacob, who saw in his sleep a ladder standing on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and there were angels of God going up it and coming down (Genesis 28, 10-13). [...]

It is no coincidence that Chagall placed at the foot of the cross the biblical scene of the visit of the angels to Abraham, in the oak of Mamre. This is, it must be acknowledged, a genius intuition.

The death of Christ on the cross opens the sky, and the angels descend from it. The man regains his full size. In Christ, he again becomes "the ladder placed on the ground and touching the sky with the head."

On the other hand, this scene of the visit of the angels to Abraham (Genesis 18) shows that the sky is open again, that communication is restored. We have gone from a closed world to an open world. »

This idea of the transition to an open world is expressed in one of Chagall's poems, *Behind the Clouds*: "Someone said to me: there is a cross there. A rider from above came, takes me in his arms". On the stained glass window, we can actually see, on the right side at the top of the Cross, this liberating rider who runs from above. It was not possible to speak more forcefully of what the cross of Christ was for Chagall: a liberation and an opening to light, a escape from a closed world.

This last vision introduces us to this 'New Country' that Chagall sang in one of his poems: "... I'm reaching out. I look for the stars and the sign of David (...) All these years of tears. I have sought you under heaven on earth. Two thousand years I waited. May my heart calm down and see you *lying down like Jacob asleep*. I dreamed a dream. *An angel grabs me and lifts me up the ladder*. Extinct souls sing on the new country, over two thousand years of exile, on David my son, these souls sang sweeter than Mozart and Bach."

"Your father Abraham" Jesus said to the Jews, "rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). It is the light of this day that flows down to us through the stained glass window of Chagall.

"The sky was separated from the earth. The cross has brought them together and it is at the foot of the cross that start all that goes to heaven."



**MARC CHAGALL : THE RISING SUN,
A PATH OF PEACE**



MARC CHAGALL : THE RISING SUN, A PATH OF PEACE

The theme of peace was not for Chagall a mere artistic motif. His whole life was a tormented search for peace. Thus, just above the top of his stained glass window, *Peace or the Tree of Life*, we see in the blue of a nascent day, the yellow silhouette of Christ, the colour rising sun: arms outstretched, he teaches his disciples grouped around him. His message is simple, but so enlightening: "Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9).

The name 'Rising Sun' is a title that Jewish tradition has reserved for the future Messiah. In the Jewish mentality, Yahweh must send his liberator from the East, the usual place of his divine apparitions. It is indeed in the East that God manifests Himself when He comes to the aid of His people. The Messiah will even merge so much with the East that he will bear the name of the Rising Sun: "See, the days are coming – it is Yahweh who speaks – when I will raise up to David an authentic Rising Sun" (Jer 23:5).

Zechariah's Song of the 'Benedictus' (Lk 1:68-79), as well as Mary's 'Magnificat' (Lk 1:46-55) are hymns woven with explicit and implicit biblical quotations. Through these songs of thanksgiving, the Holy Spirit teaches us how to read history with faith. The praise which rises from the heart and lips of Zechariah is both a blessing for the past, and prophecy for the future; by the same token, it articulates the Old and New Testaments, the proclamation and the realization.

The Messiah, the sun of salvation, brings deliverance and redemption to humans oppressed by sin and death.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone" (Is 9:1). With Christ, therefore, the light appears that illuminates each creature (cf. Jn 1:9) and life blooms, as the evangelist John will say, by precisely combining these two realities: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4).

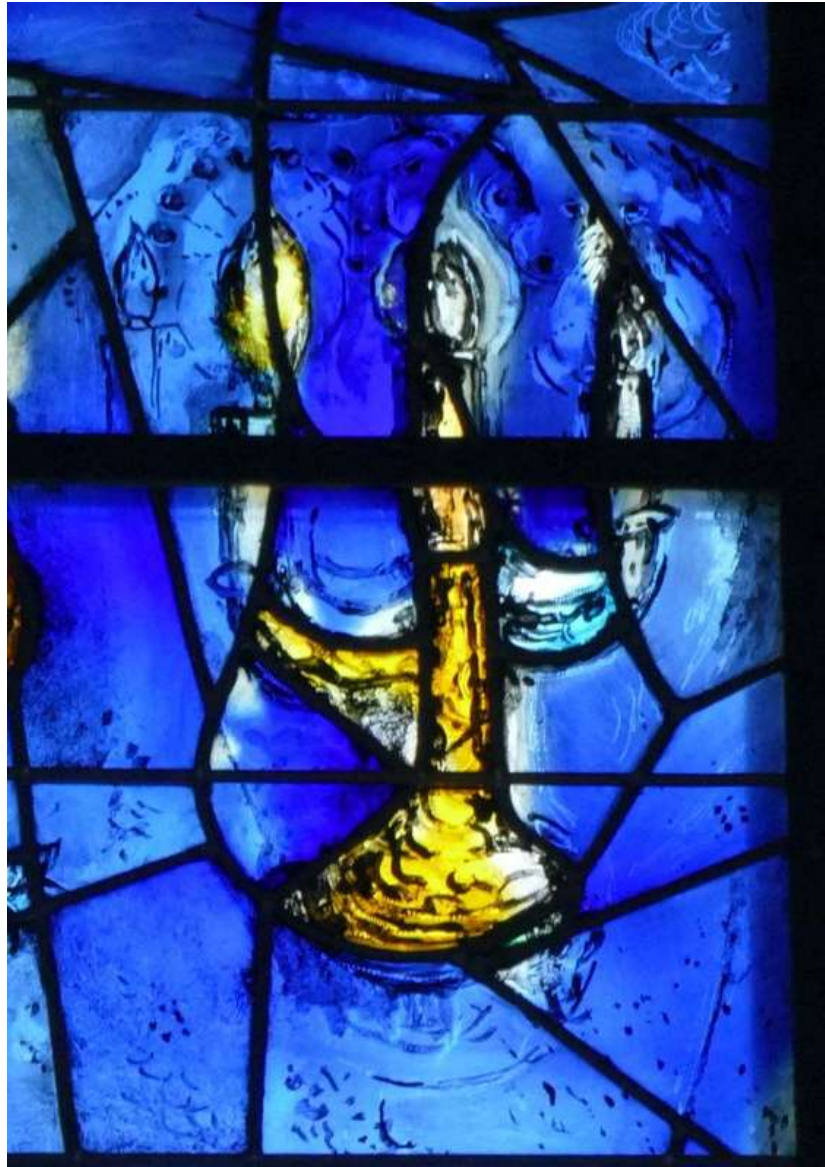
Humanity, which is enveloped "in the darkness and shadow of death", is illuminated by this dazzling revelation (cf. Lk 1:79). As the prophet Malachi had announced, "for you who fear my Name, the sun of righteousness will shine out with healing in its rays" (3:20). This sun "will guide our feet in the way of peace" (Lk 1:79).

Luke shows the accomplishment of this mission with concrete examples using words like path, road or way. Therefore, the picture of the way appears regularly to illustrate the realization of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Every morning, the Church prays the *Song of the Benedictus* of Zechariah, when night and darkness are dissipated by the rising sun. We pray at the edge of the grave; for above all nights of death shines the star from on high when Christ rises. By his resurrection, he has overcome the dominion of sin and death and he brings the renewal and restitution of the universe into a new universe (Rev 21:3).

Come, rising sun, splendour of eternal light, brilliant justice, spread your clarity on those who lie in the shadow of death. Alleluia.

AROUND THE TREE: THE PATH OF PEACE



The Menorah, the seven-pointed candlestick "reduced model".

AROUND THE TREE: THE PATH OF PEACE

"On the large blue expanses that border the Tree of Life on both sides, Chagall has drawn figures that recall the great founding moments that marked the history of Israel.

The first figure that is offered to us at the very top, on the right, is that of the *Menorah*: a *Ménorah* "reduced model", so to speak. For the *Menorah*, as the Bible describes it, is the candlestick with seven branches: three on each side, and a seventh in the middle. Indeed, we read in the book of Exodus: "You are to make a lamp-stand of pure gold," Yahweh said to Moses. The lamp-stand must be of beaten gold, base and stem (...) Six branches must extend from the sides of it, three from one side, three on the other side (...) The whole thing will be made from a single piece of pure gold, beaten out. Then you are to make lamps for it, seven of them, and set them so that they throw their light towards the front of it..." (Exodus 25:31-40).

Jewish tradition attaches great importance to this candlestick, because of its symbolic function. The light of the Menorah must illuminate man's face and open his heart to the light that comes from above. We need God's light to receive His Word. It is only "in his light that we see the light."

The second figure that appears on the stained glass window, going down to the right, is an evocation of the Tables of the Law. The light that emanates from the Menorah therefore leads us first of all to "the God encountered at Sinai and whose Word inscribed on the Tables of Witness always speaks with a clear heart and a clear conscience" (Raphael Draï, *The Crossing of the Desert*).



In the history of Israel, the gift of the *Torah* to Moses on Sinai during the Exodus is an extremely important event. It is a founding event. No man can ignore this moment in his journey towards the God of the Covenant and Peace.

The Torah appears to be the best guarantee of human rights. It is, therefore, the obligatory passage towards peace, By welcoming it, man finds the way of the covenant: he returns to the source of all true relationship: the love of the Creator, the creative love" (Éloi Leclerc).

It is only "in his light that we see the light."

MARC CHAGALL : THE VISION OF PROPHET ISAIAH



MARC CHAGALL : THE VISION OF PROPHET ISAIAH

"After the light of the *Torah*, here is the light of the *Prophets*. The Law pointed the way. The Prophets, on the other hand, offer a glimpse of the new promised land: A land reconciled with God and with itself. A world finally open and united beyond conflicts.

To evoke this world, Chagall chose the vision of the prophet Isaiah (11:6-9).

To the right of the stained glass window, on the way down, we notice, in fact, soberly drawn, figures of animals: a lion stands near two cows, which are in no way frightened. Then, a little below, a young boy plays happily between a wolf and a cobra. It looks like he's doing a dance step. And the snake seems to want to imitate him. Even lower, an infant is distinguished. Overlooking this set, hovers an angel figure that inspires the prophet his vision of a peaceful world:

"The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together. The lion eat straw like the ox. The infant plays over the cobra's hole; into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand. They do not hurt, no harm, on all my holy mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of Yahweh..." (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Chagall attached great importance to this prophetic vision. It seemed to him heavy with meaning. He made it the central theme of another stained glass window on peace, the one he made in New York, at the headquarters of the United Nations. Could we choose a more eloquent symbol of peace and universal reconciliation?

This prophetic vision is by no means a nostalgic reminder of the lost paradise. The prophet does not look back, he does not evoke a mythical past. It is forward-looking. It symbolically describes the new Promised Land, the messianic times. If he uses the language of the most archaic dreams, it is to open man to his most authentic future. He gives a glimpse, in a pictorial way, of man's highest destiny and task: "to convert all hostility into fraternal tension, within a unity of creation" (*Paul Ricoeur, The Philosophy of the Will*), by entering into the covenant proposed to him by his Creator.

This vision unites the destiny of man with that of the whole of creation. Men can only achieve their unity by placing themselves within the unity of creation: by fraternizing with all creatures, reconnecting with the Creator's love and purpose of covenant.

In prophetic thought, this universal reconciliation cannot be a merely human work. It is linked to the coming of the *Prince of Peace*, on whom rests the fullness of the Spirit of God. It is the Messiah of God who will shine on all peoples the light of the *Torah* and who will open to all men the way of the Covenant and Peace:

"The people who walked in the night saw a great light. On the inhabitants of the land of the shadow a light shone ... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. He received power on his shoulders. He is called: Wonderful Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Behold, power will extend into an endless land for the throne of David and over his kingdom, established and strengthened in law and justice" (Isaiah 9:1-6) (Eloi Leclerc).

"The Path of Alliance and Peace".

MARC CHAGALL: THE TIME OF WAITING AND HOPE



MARC CHAGALL: THE TIME OF WAITING AND HOPE

"This messianic vision opens the time of Advent: that of waiting and long desire.

Still on the right side of the stained glass window, as we descend, our gaze meets a figure of prophet, probably Isaiah. He sits and holds the Book in his hands. He meditates on the Word addressed to him. It's time for inner rumination. The time of silence and hope, when the heart prepares for the welcome of the One who must come and inaugurate on earth the reign of justice and peace.

It is still dark on the world, but the face of the prophet lights up; he has the color of dawn. And his green garment, that of hope. "Winter on our furrows continues, but spring has already exploded in the stars!" (Caudel). And we see the eager disciples of the Word rushing towards the prophet, in an attitude of welcome and listening.

At the very bottom, bypassing the *Tree of Life*, we notice an evocation of the country of Sarrebourg, with its houses, its forests, its herds of deer. All creation and everyday life are associated with this messianic expectation. Let us salute in passing, at the foot of the Tree, a maternity: the time of waiting is that of gestation and childbearing. He comes, the Prince of Peace. The earth will give its fruit.

Chagall's stained glass window *La Paix ou l'Arbre de vie*, which adorns the Cordeliers chapel in Sarrebourg, takes us to the summits. The artistic adventure of the painter joins here the human adventure in what is highest. This stained glass window offers us, in fact, a striking interpretation of man, his history, his tragedy as well as his splendor, within the whole creation.

The Tree of Life stands before our eyes in its high and full dimension, at once cosmic, human and divine, in the form of a huge bouquet with bright colours. This stained glass window is a song of hope, a hymn to life" (Éloi Leclerc).

"He is coming, the Prince of Peace."



"Let us greet in passing, at the foot of the Tree, a maternity."

THE CORDELIERS CHAPEL



The Cordeliers Chapel in Sarrebourg

THE CORDELIERS CHAPEL

It was in 1266 that the Franciscan friars, also called Cordeliers because of the rope they wore around the waist, settled in Sarrebourg. They built their convent in the city center. A last mass was celebrated in 1792, when the convent was transformed in barracks and the chapel into a stable, following the Revolution. During the German annexation of 1870, the convent chapel again became a place of worship for Protestant soldiers.

From 1927 to 1970, the chapel housed the museum of the Society of History and Archaeology of Sarrebourg. The old barracks was disused from the military domain in 1947, its demolition took place in 1955 and 1972. The chapel is nevertheless preserved and restored. To close the gaping hole located at the western end of the chapel, the city asked Marc Chagall to make a stained glass window.

This one, whose theme is peace, is delivered in 1976. It is 12 meters high by 7 meters 50 wide and weighs 900 kilograms. It was Charles Marcq, a master glassmaker from the Simon Marcq workshops in Reims, who reproduced Chagall's painting on glass, in collaboration with his wife Brigitte Simon.

It should be noted that 10 years earlier, Chagall, in 1958 to 1961 had made two stained glass windows at Metz Cathedral.

*Montreal, at the Franciscan Fraternity of the Resurrection,
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Georges Morin, o.f.m.

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**AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE OF LIFE,
THE DEER OF THE SARREBOURG COUNTRY**

