

# **A Classification of Christian Religious Themes in European Paintings**

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# A Classification of Christian religious Themes in European Paintings

## 1. Introduction

The objective of the following paragraphs is to classify the part of European paintings that handle Christian religious themes into classes (or also called 'categories' or 'themes') of the same subjects.

In the classification we will propose two viewpoints.

The first viewpoint might be called a 'reasonable' view, in that one would not want to subdivide into too many categories. We will call these themes 'macro-themes'.

The second viewpoint would be a 'purist', more detailed one, in which one would want to subdivide in more classes, more finely defined. We will call these themes 'micro-themes'.

An example will illustrate the difference between these two viewpoints. A theme from the life of Jesus is the 'Ecce Homo' theme. In the New Testament story, Pilate shows Jesus Christ crowned with thorns, flagellated and with bloody face and body, to the people. In the 'reasonable' classification, all pictures of Christ of that story might be classified in the class or theme entitled 'Ecce Homo'. However, there exist pictures of that scene that show only Jesus Christ, only his bust or face. Other pictures depict the whole scene so that the viewer sees Jesus and Pilate and the gathered Jews, before Pilate's palace, screaming at Jesus. One might therefore in a more detailed way consider two classes for this scene: an 'Ecce Homo' class, which would show only Jesus Christ's bust after the flagellation and crowning with thorns, and a 'Jesus presented to the People' class, which would show the complete scene before Pilate's palace. Nevertheless, these two classes or themes refer to the same Bible story.

In general, in our papers, we have usually classified paintings according to the 'reasonable' or macro view, but in this text on classification we present both views and also in our papers we have indicated whenever possible the various, more detailed micro-themes.

The difference becomes most apparent when we consider paintings from the Old Testament. For certain themes we have taken a more purist viewpoint, for other themes a more 'reasonable one'. We have for instance been more reasonable for the themes on the ancient patriarchs, such as Abraham or Isaac, and more purist for the themes of the life of Moses, dedicating an entire book on the themes of his life.

In the following chapter we present each theme and describe how paintings can be classified in this class. It must be noted that whereas thousands of paintings may exist for a certain class, very few if only one painting may have been made for another. The number of paintings is not a criterion for the definition of a class.

For certain themes there are issues for the classification. It is not always easy to distinguish paintings from one theme to the other. For each theme we mention these issues separately. It must be reminded that the classification we propose here is not always entirely objective. It is difficult to classify some paintings in this or that class.

## 2. The Themes

We classify the religious, Christian themes in the following main themes:

- 2.1.- Themes from the Life of Jesus Christ
- 2.2.- Themes from the Life of Mary
- 2.3.- Themes of Apostles and Saints
- 2.4.- Various religious and spiritual Themes
- 2.5.- The Book Genesis of the Old Testament
- 2.6.- Themes from the Life of Moses
- 2.7.- Themes from the Deuteronomy and other Books of the Old Testament

## 2.1. Themes from the Life of Jesus Christ

### The Young Jesus

#### 2.1.1. The Counting at Bethlehem

This theme shows paintings that illustrate the story in Luke 2. Luke tells that ‘it happened that at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be made of the while inhabited world’. Joseph and Mary set out for the town of Bethlehem since Joseph was from the House of David. Jesus was born at Bethlehem.

There are few paintings made on this theme and the paintings on this theme are mostly if not all Flemish. Especially Pieter Brueghel the Elder has painted the scene most strikingly.

The paintings show Joseph and Mary on their way to the village of Bethlehem. Joseph leads the way and Mary is often seated on a donkey.

#### Class:

Macro-theme: The Counting at Bethlehem.

#### 2.1.2. Nativity

The theme illustrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Luke describes the scene in Luke 2:15. There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the living-space of Bethlehem. Mary gave birth to a child, wrapped it in swaddling clothes and laid it in a manger. The angels find Joseph and Mary, with the Baby lying in a manger.

There are very many paintings on this theme. Apocryphal elements, such as the bull and the donkey warming the manger with their breath, are often added to the theme. Often also the Child lies in a manger in the ruins of antique Roman or Greek buildings, indicating that Jesus was born to change the old order of the world with Christianity.

#### Issue:

There is a problem with this scene and the various ‘Adoration’ scenes (see further on). It is very difficult for some paintings to distinguish between a ‘Nativity’ scene and ‘Adoration’ scenes, in which the child is also lying in a manger but obviously being adored either by Mary, by shepherds or kings, or by other people. The distinction can only be made by the intention of the painter. The title of the picture of course helps

much: when a painter has called a scene of the birth of Jesus as an ‘Adoration’ picture, we will be more inclined to classify the painting as such.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Nativity.

### **2.1.3. The Announcement to the Shepherds**

Luke 2:9 explains that angels came to shepherds in the fields, announcing the birth of Jesus.

There are but few paintings that explicitly show this theme.

The theme shows the angels frightening the shepherds, but announcing in bright light the birth of Jesus, according to Luke’s story.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Announcement to the Shepherds.

### **2.1.4. The Adoration of the Shepherds**

The story is told in Luke 2:15. The shepherds go to the place where the Child Jesus lies in a manger and they adore the Child.

There are many paintings on this theme. Usually the viewer sees the same theme as the ‘Nativity’, but the shepherds are around the Child and kneel before Him, or stand around, in obvious adoration. The title of the painting usually correctly indicates the theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Shepherds.

### **2.1.5. The Announcement to the Kings**

Matthew told in Matthew 2:2 how the Magi or Kings saw a star announcing the birth of the infant King of the Jews. None of the other Evangelists wrote about this scene, so it was also very rare in religious painting overall. A few examples exist, though.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Announcement to the Kings.

### **2.1.6. The Adoration of the Magi**

The story is told in Matthew 2. Matthew tells that wise men came from the East. The men followed a star and came to Jerusalem, searching for the new King of the Jews. The wise men first met Herod, the King of the Jews, who asked them to tell him the



place of the birth. The wise men find Jesus and offer gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They do not go back to Herod.

Subsequent tales turned the wise men into Kings. The paintings show the Magi adoring the Child and presenting their gifts.

The title of the paintings usually correctly indicates the theme as 'Adoration of the Magi'. Apocryphal writings also provided the names of the wise men and the men are shown as representing the known continents of Europe, Asia and Africa so that there is mostly at least one black man among them.

Some paintings show shepherds and wise men together around Joseph and Mary, not in obvious positions of adoration. One may classify such paintings then under the 'Nativity' theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Magi.

### **2.1.7. The Adoration of the Child**

In the purist class of these paintings, the Virgin Mary is alone and she obviously adores the Child. In another detailed class, the Virgin might be accompanied by Joseph or by Saints and in still another class various devotees such as monks or bishops – maybe even not including the Virgin, or with the Virgin – might be adoring the Child.

In a more reasonable and more global view, we assemble all these paintings in one class, the 'Adoration of the Child'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Child.

Micro-themes:

- The Adoration of the Child by the Virgin
- The Adoration of the Child by the Virgin and Saints
- The Adoration of the Child by Devotees

### **2.1.8. The Circumcision of Jesus**

Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth and then also given his name, Jesus. Luke tells the story in Luke 2:21.

The theme is rather straightforward and can hardly be confused with other themes. Many paintings exist of the theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Circumcision of Jesus.

### 2.1.9. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

Luke tells in Luke 2:22 that when the time came for them to be purified according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, there was a pious man called Simeon who sang a song of praise to Jesus, the 'Nunc Dimittis'. There was also a prophetess called Anna who praised the Child. Simeon and Anna prophesied an extraordinary life for Jesus.

In a reasonable view, there is only this one theme of Jesus' presentation in the Temple of Jerusalem but in a more detailed view one might distinguish between scenes in which Jesus is presented to the High Priest of the Temple and between scenes in which Simeon sings his song of praise and those scenes that show the prophetess Anna. These last scenes are extremely rare. In most paintings, Simeon and the High Priest are assumed to be the same.

#### Class:

Macro-theme: The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

Micro-themes:

- The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple to the Priest
- Simeon's Song of Praise
- The Prophecies of Anna in the Temple

### 2.1.10. The Holy Family

The paintings of the theme 'The Holy Family' represent Mary and Joseph with the Child. The Child may be seated in the Virgin's lap or playing close to the Virgin. In certain paintings Saint Anne, Mary's mother, may be present, and in other scenes saints, monks, bishops and devotees might be present. In a reasonable, global view of the theme, we gather all these paintings in one class.

Many paintings represent the Holy family not only with the Child Jesus but also with the infant Saint John the Baptist. We consider these to be a separate theme (see the 'Virgin and Child with the infant John the Baptist', in the themes of the 'Life of Mary'). We accept there also the paintings in which not just the Madonna is represented but also Joseph, which would make of this theme a 'Holy Family with the infant John the Baptist'.

#### Class:

Macro-theme: The Holy Family.

Micro-themes:

- The Holy Family (Mary and Joseph with Child)
- The Holy Family with Saint Anne
- The Holy Family with Saints or Devotees

### 2.1.11. The Tree of Life

Jesus descended from David. There are representations of his genealogical tree. Some of these are called 'The tree of Jesse', others the 'Tree of Saint Anne'. Jesse was the father of David and in Isaiah 11:1 there is a prophecy stating that a Messiah would

come from the house of Jesse. Saint Anne was the mother of Mary. The tree of Anne provides the motherly, female line of provenance of Jesus, as well as a representation of the several husbands of Saint Anne and their children.

In a purist view one might distinguish between the male and female genealogical lines; in a global and more reasonable view one would only consider one theme of the genealogical tree.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Tree of Life

Micro-themes:

The Tree of Jesse

The Tree of Saint Anne

### **2.1.12. The Flight into Egypt**

The Flight into Egypt is told in Matthew 2:13. Herod intended to kill the Child, so an Angel warned Joseph and told him to escape to Egypt. The paintings show Joseph and Mary on their way to Egypt. There are apocryphal stories, told in the 'Golden legend' about events that happened on the way and in some paintings these events are painted in the background.

Many paintings show the Virgin and Child resting on the way to Egypt, some with the Virgin feeding the Child. We have considered such paintings to handle a different theme, and proposed to bring that theme in the 'Life of Mary'. When Mary is feeding the Child on the way to Egypt, we do not bring these paintings in the theme 'Virgo Lactans' (the Virgin feeding the Child). There are rare paintings of the return from Egypt: we consider these a micro-theme here. A few paintings also show the Holy family in Egypt itself.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Flight into Egypt.

Micro-themes:

The Flight into Egypt

The Holy Family in Egypt

The Return from Egypt.

### **2.1.13. The Massacre of the Innocents**

Matthew tells in Matthew 2:16 how Herod was furious that the wise men had not returned to tell him where he could find the Child that was announced as the new King of the Jews. Therefore he had all the male children of two years old and less of the district of Bethlehem killed. This story is called the 'Massacre of the Innocents', for which many paintings exist.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Massacre of the Innocents.

### 2.1.14. Christ in the House of his Parents

Christ lived until the age of about thirty years in the house of his parents. Joseph was a carpenter, so a few paintings represent Jesus helping Joseph as a carpenter. These scenes are about the young life of Jesus.

There are paintings, not many, who represent Jesus specifically as a boy or a young man. Most of these paintings show only Jesus' face. In a purist view one might consider such paintings a different category. In a more global way one might bring all the pictures of the young Jesus, either inside the house of his parents, or pictures of him as a young man, into one theme.

This theme was taken up by few artists. The most notable painting is one of the carpenter's workshop, made by the English Pre-Raphaelite artist Sir John Everett Millais.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ in the House of his Parents.

Micro-themes:

Christ in the House of his Parents

The young Jesus

### 2.1.15. The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple

When Jesus was twelve years old, Jesus' parents took him to Jerusalem – as they did each year – for the feast of Passover. Jesus disappeared and only after a day went his parents to look for him. They found him in the Temple of Jerusalem, where he listened to the doctors of the Law and asking questions to the doctors. This story is told in Luke 2:41. In paintings of this scene, Jesus is only a boy. There may be two kinds of paintings on this theme. One scene may show Jesus' parents finding him speaking to the scholars in the Temple; the other scene may show just the young Jesus among the scholars. These last scenes are often called the 'Dispute in the Temple'.

Later, when Jesus was a man and after he had gathered his disciples and had already preached in many places, he also taught in the Temple of Jerusalem. Luke tells this in Luke 19:47. There are paintings with the title of 'Jesus and the Doctors of the Law', which show Jesus as a boy and others with the same title as a grown-up man.

We will distinguish between these two scenes, but consider paintings in which Jesus sits in the Temple as an adult man in the theme 'Jesus teaching in the Temple'. Nevertheless, even though the paragraph of the finding of Jesus in Luke is most often entitled as 'Jesus and the Doctors of the Law', many of these picture are also entitled 'Jesus and the Doctors of the Law'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Micro-themes:

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The Dispute in the Temple

### **2.1.16. Christ appears to the People**

No specific text alludes to the first time Christ appeared to the people and started to preach. Nevertheless, a few paintings propose exactly this first moment as the theme of their work.

Most notable is the 'Christ appears to the people' of the Russian painter Alexander Ivanov. Ivanov painted several versions of this theme and practically invented the theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ appears to the people

### **2.1.17. The Baptism of Christ**

John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ, baptised Jesus in the River Jordan. The scene is described in Matthew 3:13, in Mark 1:9 and in Luke 3:21.

There are very many paintings of the Baptism of Christ. These relatively will depict the scene as described in the New Testament, and it is not necessary to make a distinction between the various representations.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Baptism of Christ.

### **2.1.18. Christ in the Desert**

Matthew tells in Matthew 4:1 how Jesus spent a time in the Desert and was tempted there by the devil. The story is also told in Mark 1:12 and in Luke 4:1. The devil tempted Jesus several times, with different visions, and these are found together in some paintings. Other paintings may merely show Jesus sitting in the desert, in meditation. We do not find it necessary to distinguish between these scenes, except for the final one (see next theme, next chapter).

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ in the Desert.

### **2.1.19. Christ served by Angels in the Desert**

Matthew tells in Matthew 4:11 how, when the devil left Jesus, suddenly angels appeared and looked after him. One line on this story is also in Mark 1:12A few painters have taken up this theme and shown Jesus served by angels. Christ served by angels is represented in an entirely different way than the previous theme of 'Christ in the Desert', tempted by the devil. We therefore consider it as a theme different from 'Jesus in the Desert'.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ served by Angels in the Desert.

### **2.1.20. Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee**

Luke tells how Jesus was invited in the house of one of the Pharisees, a man called Simon. This is in Luke 7:36. A woman who had a bad name in town came in and wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, covered them with kisses and then anointed them. Jesus praised the woman, saying her faith had saved her. Mark tells that the scene happened in Bethany and that Simon suffered from a virulent skin-disease (Mark 14:3). John, in John 12:2 names the woman as Mary and also Martha and Lazarus – whom Christ had raised from the dead - are present. From this, scholars have assumed that Mary was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. John equally places the scene in Bethany, but he does not mention that the house belonged to Simon the Pharisee.

There exist many paintings, all more or less similar, on this theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ in the House of Simon.

### **2.1.21. Christ Preaching**

There are many tales of Jesus Christ preaching in villages and towns in The New Testament. One of them is Luke 4:14. Although the theme is rare, some paintings exist of Christ addressing the people, usually in meadows and very seldom in towns. The pictures are an occasion for landscape scenes.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ preaching.

### **2.1.22. Christ and the Samaritan Woman**

The story is from John 4:7. Jesus was in Judaea and had to go back to Galilee. While doing so he passed through Samaria. He paused at Jacob's well and when a Samaritan woman comes near, he asks her for water. A conversation ensues between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Christ there for instance says that he is the Messiah that has come. Painters have usually represented the scene indeed near a well and painted a woman near Jesus. All painters approximately treated the subject the same way.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ and the Samaritan Woman.

### **2.1.23. The Transfiguration**

Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up a mountain to pray. Luke tells in Luke 9:28 how Jesus' face changed and his clothing became very bright white. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with him. Meanwhile, the apostles were vast asleep.

Many painters took up this theme. They often show Jesus transfigured into a very bright, shining and godly figure, with Moses and Elijah near, whereas the apostles are seen sleeping. All the paintings of this theme have the correct title of the 'Transfiguration'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Transfiguration.

### **2.1.24. Jesus with Martha and Mary**

Jesus came to a village and was welcomed by a woman called Martha, who had a sister called Mary. Thus says Luke in Luke 10:38. Mary sits down and listens to Jesus, while Martha prepares to serve Jesus. Martha asks Jesus whether he does not care that Mary leaves her to do all the work. Jesus however replies that Martha worries about too many things, whereas only one is necessary. This part, to listen to the word of God, has been chosen by Mary and that is not to be taken from her.

Many paintings exist on this theme. The paintings are interior scenes and they are often an occasion for artists to show a kitchen with the food exposed, as especially in Dutch kitchen-scenes. The scenes are all more or less similarly represented.

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus with Martha and Mary.

### **2.1.25. Christ blessing little Children**

People brought even babies to Jesus and Jesus touched them. The disciples scolded Jesus for this in Luke's story of Luke 18:15, but Jesus called the children in and said to let the little children come to him, for it is to them that the kingdom of God belongs. The scene is sometimes named 'Sinite Parvulos', and treated in more or less the same way by painters. The theme is rather rarely treated.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ blessing little children.

### **2.1.26. Jesus and Zacchaeus**

The theme of Jesus and Zacchaeus is a very rare one in painting. Nevertheless, at least one painting by Jacopo Palma il Giovane on this theme exists. The story is only to be found in Luke.

Jesus came to Jericho when a senior tax collector, a wealthy man, call Zacchaeus, kept trying to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was a small man however and he could not see from within the crowd. So he climbed in a sycamore tree. Jesus saw him in the tree and said, 'Zacchaeus, come down, because I am to stay in your house today.' Zacchaeus came down and welcomed Jesus. The men who accompanied Jesus complained; they said that Jesus would be staying with a sinner. Zacchaeus however

promised half of his possessions to the poor and he said that if he had cheated on somebody he would repay four times the amount. And Jesus said to him, 'today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus and Zacchaeus

### **2.1.27. The glorious Entry in Jerusalem**

Luke tells of Jesus' wanderings before he arrives at Jerusalem, in Luke 19:28. Jesus approached by the Mount of Olives and directs his apostles to a colt. The apostles lifted Jesus on the colt and in this way, seated on the colt, Jesus entered Jerusalem. The disciples spread their cloaks on the ground and proclaimed the miracles they have seen accomplished by Jesus. Luke tells how Jesus lamented on Jerusalem's fate before entering, in the sight of the city. Matthew tells the same story in Matthew 21:1, but he adds how the city was in turmoil at Jesus' arrival. Also Mark talks about the story, in Mark 11:1, telling how the people of Jerusalem spread their cloaks for him on the ground, as well as greenery they had cut in the fields. In John 7:10, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Shelters.

Few painters took this theme as their subject, but some do exist.

Class:

Macro-theme: The glorious Entry in Jerusalem.

### **2.1.28. The Merchants chased from the Temple**

The expulsion of the dealers from the Temple of Jerusalem happens immediately after Jesus entered the city. The story is told in Matthew 21:12, in Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45. Luke tells the story laconically: Jesus drove out all the people that were trading in the Temple because in the Scriptures God had wanted that the Temple was a house of prayer and not a bandits' den.

The theme is rather rare in Christian painting.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Merchants chased from the Temple.

### **2.1.29. The Instruction of Nicodemus**

Only John talks about Nicodemus. In John 3:1, Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews who came to Jesus at night and started to interrogate and talk with Jesus. Later, in John 7:50 this same Nicodemus tries to defend Jesus against the arguments of the Pharisees. After the crucifixion of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate to remove the body and at that moment also Nicodemus came, with myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' corpse.



A few painters have made pictures of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. These scenes are usually scenes of the interior of a house, with Nicodemus and Jesus sitting and talking.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Instruction of Nicodemus.

### **2.1.30. Jesus amongst the Doctors**

Jesus taught in the Temple of Jerusalem and also in other temples. Some paintings show the adult Jesus teaching in the Temple to Pharisees and other learned Jews. Paintings of this theme, with the grown-up Jesus talking in the Temple, are often called 'Jesus amongst the Doctors' and we will use this title for the theme also. Care should be taken with this title however.

The theme should not really be called Jesus 'amongst the Doctors', for that title is most often given to the scene of the finding of Jesus when he was only twelve years old and had disappeared from his parents in Jerusalem. Jesus was found listening to the doctors in the Temple. We have called this last scene the 'Finding of the Saviour in the Temple'. Jesus was only a boy then.

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus amongst the Doctors.

### **2.1.31. The adulterous Woman**

The story of the adulterous woman is told in John 8:1. The scene takes place in or near the Temple of Jerusalem. The Pharisees brought a woman that had been caught at adultery. According to the Law of Moses, the woman had to be stoned. Jesus bends down, however, and writes on the ground. He merely said that he among the Pharisees that was without guilt could be the first to throw a stone at the woman. The Pharisees leave one by one, starting with the eldest. Jesus then tells the woman that since no one condemned her, he would not condemn her either.

The scene and message is rather extraordinary, so it has been taken up by many painters, all in more or less the same way.

Class:

Macro-theme: The adulterous Woman.

### **2.1.32. The Sermon on the Mountain**

The sermon on the mount is presented in a set of paragraphs in Matthew: Matthew 5:1 to Matthew 7:28. It is a major teaching of Jesus, given according to Matthew early in Jesus' ministry. These chapters contain the Lord's Prayer. On the mount also, Jesus

pronounced (Matthew 5) the beatitudes. The beatitudes have also been a subject of a few rare paintings, usually in the form of seven or eight panels forming a polyptych.

Although the chapters are so important for the message of Jesus, few painters have used the theme. There are more paintings of the preaching of John the Baptist, for instance, than of Jesus' sermon on the mount. The sermon on the mount has remained a rare theme for painters.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Sermon on the Mountain.

Micro-theme: The Beatitudes.

### **2.1.33. The Anointing of Bethany**

Matthew tells in 26:6 that Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon when a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of expensive ointment. She poured it on Jesus's head as he was at the table. The disciples exclaimed that this was a waste for the ointment could have been sold at a good price and the money given to the poor. But Jesus noticed this and said, 'why are you upsetting the woman? She has done a good work indeed! You have the poor with you always, but you will not always have me. The woman poured the ointment over me to prepare me for burial.' This story is meant in Matthew to prepare the Passion. There is at least one picture of this scene, made by the Dutch painter Dirck Barendsz.

Class:

Macro-Theme: The Anointing of Bethany

## **The Miracles and Parables**

Painters have taken up the many short stories of Jesus' miracles and of the parables he told. We have found thirteen themes of miracles and nine themes depicting parables. There may of course exist paintings of more themes, but we have not found pictures of those in the major museums.

### **2.1.34. The Wedding at Cana**

According to John 2:1 Jesus was with his mother and his disciples at a wedding at Cana. The people ran out of wine and Mary remarked that the feast was out of wine. Jesus understands the remark, and what Mary asked of him. Jesus replies that his hour had not yet really come, but he complied and asked the jars to be filled with water. The water is turned into good wine.

The theme has been taken up by quite a few painters, some of them Flemish and Dutch, but most notably by Paolo Caliari called Paolo Veronese, in a large, magnificent painting of a Venetian feast.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Wedding at Cana.

### **2.1.35. The Cure of Simon Peter's Mother-in-Law**

In Matthew 8:16 it is told that going into Peter's house, Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law in bed and feverish. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.<sup>G43.</sup>

This miracle is one of the first of Jesus and therefore also one of the lightest: Peter's mother-in-law is merely feverish and Jesus heals the fever. There are very few paintings of this theme, but there is at least one picture painted by Januarius Johann Passo Zick of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Cure of Peter's Mother-in-Law

### **2.1.36. The Cure of a Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda**

John tells in John 5, that Jesus went for a Jewish festival to Jerusalem. There was a pool in Jerusalem called Bethesda, which meant five porticos and under the porticos was a crowd of sick people. Jesus cured a sick man there, on a Sabbath day.

This story has been used mainly by landscape painters, who used the theme to show ancient ruins with porticos. Several painters made works on this theme, in more or less the same way.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Cure of a sick Man at the pool of Bethesda.

### **2.1.37. Christ heals a Deaf-Mute Man**

Mark tells of the healing of a deaf man with a speech impediment, a miracle, in Mark 7:31. The story happens in the Decapolis territory. Jesus put his fingers in the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then he said, 'be opened'. This theme has been taken up by few artists.

Macro-theme: Christ heals a deaf-mute Man.

### **2.1.38. Christ heals a lame Man**

Luke tells in Luke 5:17 of the cure of a paralytic man. This happened while Jesus was talking to a large crowd. The men that brought the paralytic brought the bed to the top of the house, and lowered the stretcher through the tiles of the roof. Jesus saw the faith of the men and healed the paralytic. Few paintings have been made of this scene, but some do exist.

Macro-theme: Christ heals a lame Man.

### **2.1.39. Christ and the Woman who believed**

In Matthew 9:20, Jesus went with one of the officials whose daughter had died. Suddenly, from behind him, came a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhage for twelve years. She touched the fringe of Jesus' cloak. She thought that if only she could touch that cloak, she could be saved. Jesus turned around, saw her and said, 'courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.' From that moment, the woman was saved. This story is also told in Luke 8:43. There is at least one picture of Sebastiano Ricci in the Royal Collection, painted on this theme.

Macro Theme: The Woman who believed

### **2.1.40. Christ heals a Man possessed by the Demon**

Matthew talks in various instances of Jesus driving away demons or driving out demons. In Matthew 8:28 Jesus drives out the demoniacs of Gadara and makes the

devils go into pigs, which charge into a lake and drown. In Matthew 9:32 Jesus cures a dumb demoniac; he drives out the demon of the man and the man started to speak once more. In Matthew 17:14, Jesus cures an epileptic demoniac. This story is also found in Mark 9:14. Mark told in Marc 5:1 how Jesus healed a man in the territory of the Gerasenes from an unclean spirit. Here also, the demons go into pigs. This story is also found in Luke 8:26, so this is the tale that is probably usually represented by painters, although the theme is very rarely represented.

Macro-theme: Christ heals a Man possessed by the Demon

#### **2.1.41. The Daughter of the Canaanite Woman**

The healing of the daughter of a Canaanite woman is a story from Matthew 15:21. Jesus was in the region of Tyre and Sidon when a Canaanite woman asked him to cure her daughter from a devil. Jesus granted her wish and from that moment the daughter was well again. The theme is rather rare in painting. The theme should not be confused with the raising of the daughter of Jairus.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Daughter of the Canaanite Woman.

#### **2.1.42. The Raising of the Youth of Nain**

This is another miracle of Jesus, told in Luke 7:11. Jesus entered the town of Nain when a dead man is brought out. The man was the only son of a widow and Jesus took pity on the woman. He touched the bier and told the man to get up. The dead man sat up and began to talk. Jesus praised the mother for her faith. This is one of the resurrection miracles of Jesus.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ raises the Youth of Nain.

#### **2.1.43. The Awakening of the Daughter of Jairus**

This miracle is told in Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41. Jairus was the president of the synagogue. The daughter of Jairus was still a child and very ill, so the president of the synagogue of a town Jesus passed asked for Jesus' help. Jesus went to the house, but cured a woman, on the way. There, a servant told Jairus that his daughter was very bad, and had died. Jesus prayed Jairus to have faith. Jesus goes to Jairus' house, entered it with Peter and John. He said the girl was not dead, but merely asleep. The men however, did not believe him. Jesus told the girl to get up and he brought her out of the house, alive and cured.

Class:

Macro-theme: The awakening of the Daughter of Jairus.

#### **2.1.44. The Raising of Lazarus**

This is the most forceful miracle of Jesus, in which he raised a man who had been dead and put in his tomb for four days already. The story is told in John 11:1. Lazarus lived in Bethany and he was the sister of Martha and Mary. Jesus received a message from the sisters, warning him that their brother was ill. Jesus lingered before going to Lazarus' town. In the meantime, Lazarus died and he was put in his tomb. Once arrived, Jesus ordered the stone to be removed from the tomb, and he raises Lazarus.

The theme was popular with painters. Many pictures exist of this theme, Jesus' most powerful miracle.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Raising of Lazarus.

#### **2.1.45. The Healing of the Blind**

Matthew tells in Matthew 9:27 that Jesus healed two blind men who came after him, shouting to take pity on them. Jesus gave the men their sight back. Mark tells that Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida, in Mark 8:22. John tells of a similar miracle on a man born blind in John 9:1. A miracle of Jesus healing a blind man is in Luke 18:35. The paintings made on the theme of the 'Healing of the Blind' may refer to any or all of these miracles.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Healing of the Blind.

#### **2.1.46. The Miraculous Fishing**

The miraculous fishing is told in Luke 5:1, in the story in which Jesus called the first four disciples. Jesus was at the lake of Genessaret, when the fishermen returned with boats empty of fish. Jesus stepped in one of the boats and asked to go a little in the water. Jesus taught from out of the boat, speaking to the people gathered on the shore. Jesus then said to the fishermen to go out in deep water again. He ordered to throw out the nets and the men caught such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear. Simon Peter, one of the fishermen, was most touched by the miracle, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

The theme was of course popular in port towns, in harbours of fishermen. These asked painters to represent the miracle in paintings.

Class:

Macro-theme: The miraculous Fishing.

### **2.1.47. Christ appeasing the Tempest**

The calming of the storm is told in Matthew 8:23. Jesus went in a boat and a storm broke out on the lake. Jesus was asleep, but the disciples awoke him. Jesus then rebuked the winds and the sea until calm sat in again. The same story is in Mark 4:35 and in Luke 8:22. The miracle shows the power of Jesus to his disciples. The theme has been used sometimes by painters to show marvellous marine paintings of a sea at storm.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ appeasing the Tempest.

### **2.1.48. The Finding of the Tribute Money**

This miracle is told in Matthew 17:24. It happened in Capernaum that the tax collectors wanted the half shekel tax of Jesus. Jesus told Peter to go to the lake and cast a hook, then to catch the first fish that rose and open its mouth. Jesus told that the fish would hold in its mouth the shekel for Peter and himself. This story is not to be confused with the parable on Caesar's due (see further on). Most of the paintings on this theme have been called the 'Finding of the Tribute Money' even though the half shekel tax is not the tribute to Caesar (which it is in the 'Caesar's Due' text. The word 'Finding' indicates the miracle.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Finding of the Tribute Money.

### **2.1.49. The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish**

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish is narrated twice in Matthew, in Matthew 14:13 and Matthew 15:32. It is also told twice by Mark, in Mark 6:30 and Mark 8:1. Luke tells of the miracle in Luke 9:12 and John in John 6:1. The miracle tells how Jesus fed a crowd of five thousand people with just five loaves and two fish in a basket to start with. The loaves and fish were miraculously multiplied in the basket. Many paintings exist of this theme, which allowed the painters showing a large crowd in a landscape. The theme is sometimes also called the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish.

### **2.1.50. Christ and the Centurion**

The miracle is told in Matthew 8:5 and in Luke 7:1. It happened in Capernaum that a centurion came to Jesus, pleading to heal his servant. Jesus was astonished but praised the faith of the man, believing even that Jesus could heal a man that was not present,

and Jesus healed the servant. The theme is rather rare in painting, but a few examples exist.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ and the Centurion.

### **2.1.51. Caesar's Due**

'Caesar's Due' is a parable, told in Mark 12:13 and in Luke 20:20. The scribes and the chief priests wanted to put Jesus to the test. They asked him whether it was permissible to pay tax to Caesar or not. Jesus answered that they should pay to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, and to God what belonged to God. The theme is rare in painting.

The theme is not to be confused with the 'Finding of the Tribute Money', which is the story of a miracle.

Class:

Macro-theme: Caesar's Due.

### **2.1.52. The Good Samaritan**

The parable of the good Samaritan is told in Luke 10:29. The parable starts when the people to whom Jesus spoke asked him who he called a neighbour. Jesus narrated in the parable how a man travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho, was attacked by bandits and left half dead on the road. Many people passed by, among them a Levite, but all left the man. A Samaritan traveller however was moved by compassion and gave the man to drink and bandaged his wounds. Jesus then asked to the people who they thought the neighbour was. The answer was of course: the man who showed pity. Jesus said to go and do the same.

The theme has been picked up by painters, sometimes to show a muscled, half-naked man being attended to by an elderly traveller.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Good Samaritan.

### **2.1.53. The wedding Feast**

The parable of the wedding feast is told in Matthew 22:2 and Luke 14:15.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. The king invited the people he knew, but none would come. Then, the king told his servants to invite everyone they could find, the poor, the cripple, the blind and



the lame included. The king said that not one of those that were invited would have a taste of the banquet.

So far goes the story of Matthew and Luke, but Matthew added a few lines to the parable. When the party started, the king saw in the hall a man without a wedding garment. When the man did not answer to the king's question as to why the man wore no wedding-garment, the king had the man thrown out in the darkness, saying that many were invited but few chosen.

This is a very rare theme in painting. I know of only one picture alluding to this parable, made by Joachim Anthonisz Wtewael.

Class:

Macro-theme: The wedding Feast

### **2.1.54. The Prodigal Son**

The parable is told in Luke 15:11. A man had two sons and the youngest son asked for his part of his father's inheritance. Once he was in possession of the money, the son left and spent all his money in a far country. He lived there and feasted with harlots. When he had no money anymore, the country he lived in was in famine. So the son hired himself out to feed the pigs and sometimes the pigs had more to eat than he. After a while he returned to his father, who received him with pity. The son said he had sinned and asked for forgiveness. The older son asked his father why the youngest one was received with joy although he had left his father and spent all his money. The father replied that he should rejoice too, for his brother who was thought to be dead and whom had been lost, had been found.

There are many paintings on this theme, and even complete cycles of pictures show the various scenes of the prodigal son. Four main scenes have been taken up by painters: the departure or farewell of the son, the son feasting with women in a far country, the son feeding the pigs, and the return of the son to his father.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Prodigal Son.

Micro-themes:

- The Departure of the Prodigal Son
- The Prodigal Son at the Table with Harlots
- The Prodigal Son in the Pigsty
- The Return of the Prodigal Son

### **2.1.55. Lazarus and the Rich Man**

The rich man was called Epulone, the poor man Lazarus. The parable is from Luke 16:19. Lazarus lived of what dropped from the rich man's table. He was covered with sores and even dogs came and licked at this sores. Lazarus died and was carried away by angels. Epulone equally died, but he was carried away to Hades. He asked Abraham to send Lazarus to ease his thirst. Abraham scolded the rich man however.

The paintings on this theme usually show Epulone eating at a table in the company of women, with the poor Lazarus at the feet of the table, next to dogs. Angels may be seen carrying Lazarus to the heavens. The theme has been rather popular.

Class:

Macro-theme: Lazarus and the rich Man.

### **2.1.56. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard**

There is a parable of workers in a vineyard in Matthew 20:1. A landowner hired workers ever later in the day but paid them all the same amount, the men that worked the longest the same amount as the one he only hired for a short time. The men that worked the longest complained, but the landowner replied that everyone received his due, the money agreed upon. Nobody should be envious told the landowner, and Jesus added that the last will be the first and the first the last.

Very few paintings exist of this theme, which could have been taken up by painters delivering pictures for vine-growing regions.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Workers in the Vineyard.

### **2.1.57. The Parable of the Darnel**

The parable of the darnel is also a parable told by Matthew, in Matthew 13:24. Jesus explained how the kingdom of Heaven might be compared to a man who sowed seed in his field. While the man was asleep, his enemy sowed darnel among the wheat. When the wheat grew, the darnel appeared too. The man however forbade drawing out the darnel, lest also the wheat be damaged. He told the servants to wait until harvest and then to separate the darnel from the wheat. Matthew gives the explanation of this parable in Matthew 13:36.

Very few pictures exist of this theme. As far as I know, only Domenico Fetti painted this theme.

Macro-theme: The Parable of the Darnel.

### **2.1.58. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure**

Matthew tells a parable of a treasure and a pearl in Matthew 13:44. Jesus compares the kingdom of Heaven to a treasure hidden in a field. Someone finds the treasure but hides it again. He goes off, sells all his possessions and buys the field to recuperate the treasure.

Macro-theme: The Parable of the Hidden Treasure.

### **2.1.59. The Blind leading the Blind**

References to blind leading other blind men are in Matthew 15:14 and Luke 6:39. Matthew tells the few lines in a paragraph on clean and unclean (Matthew 15:10). If one blind person leads another, both will fall into a pit. Luke tells the story in a paragraph on integrity. Can one blind person guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit. The disciple, told Jesus, is not superior to a teacher, but a fully trained disciple will be like a teacher.

Very few pictures exist of this theme, but it was used by Pieter Bruegel the Elder for a very famous painting.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Blind leading the Blind.

### **2.1.60. The Good Shepherd**

The parable of the Good Shepherd can be found in Luke and in John. John's parable is very poetic and the text is quite elaborated on the subject. The texts compare Jesus to a good Shepherd who cares for his herd. A good shepherd goes after a lost sheep until he has found it. The texts are in Luke 15:4 (a paragraph called 'the lost sheep') and in John 10:1. The theme has been used by a few painters.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Good Shepherd.

### **2.1.61. The Mote and the Beam**

This parable is a mere one line in Matthew 7.3. Jesus asks not to judge others lest one wants not to be judged the same way. Do not look at the splinter (the mote, a speck of dust) in the eye of your brother, for you may have a log (the beam) in your own eye. This theme has – as far as we know – been only used by the Italian painter Domenico Fetti, who made several pictures on the parables.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Mote and the Beam

### **2.1.62. The Ten Wedding Attendants**

This parable is provided in Matthew 25:1. Ten wedding attendants waited for the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, five were foolish. Five of them took only lamps but no oil; the other five took lamps and oil. The bridegroom was late and the foolish attendants asked for oil from the attendants that had brought some. The wise attendants told they would not have enough oil for all. When the bridegroom arrived, the foolish attendants were not there, for they had gone to buy oil. When they came

in, the bridegroom refused to open the doors for he did not know them. Although this story does not say whether the attendants were male or female, the story is also called 'The five Foolish and the five Wise Virgins', and paintings on this theme have been so entitled.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Ten Wedding Assistants.

### **2.1.63. The wicked Tenants**

In Matthew 21:33-42 a parable tells of Jesus talking to the scribes. A landowner who planted a vineyard, fenced it round, dug a winepress, built a tower, and then leased it to tenants while he went abroad. At vintage time he sent his servants to collect his produce.

But the tenants or husbandmen seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. He sent more servants, but the tenants dealt with them in the same way. Then he sent his son hoping the tenants would respect at least his son. But the husbandmen seized also the man's son and killed him.

Jesus asked what the man would do with the wicked tenants. They answered, 'he will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to others who will duly deliver him his produce.'

Jesus answered that it was written that 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it'. He said, 'the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.' The scribes realised Jesus was talking about them and they would have liked to have Jesus arrested, but they were afraid of the crowds who looked on him as a prophet.

At least one painter, Domenico Fetti, who made many pictures of the Parables, used this theme in a painting.

Class:

Macro-theme: The wicked Tenants

## **Themes of the Passion of Jesus**

No other scenes of the New Testament books as those of the Passion of Jesus have been painted so many times. One should therefore not consider the Passion as just one theme, but as separate themes for each part of the stories in the New Testament. The Passion scenes are also those scenes that have been described by the four Evangelists practically in the same way.

### **2.1.64. The Last Supper**

The Last Supper is presented by all four of the Evangelists. In Matthew 26:17 the main events are the supper itself, the questions asked by Jesus to Judas and Jesus' assertion that Judas will betray him, and the institution of the Eucharist. Peter's denial is also foretold. We will handle the institution of the Eucharist as a separate theme. Mark tells the same story in Mark 14:12, Luke in Luke 22:7 and John in John 13:1. During the supper also, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. We will handle this theme also as a separate subject.

Many paintings exist of the Last Supper. We usually see Jesus sitting at the table with his apostles around him. Often, John leans toward Jesus and sits at Jesus' side, whereas Judas can be the only apostle that does not look at Jesus.

#### Class:

Macro-theme: The Last Supper.

### **2.1.65. Christ washes the Feet of his Disciples**

Christ washing the feet of his disciples is a scene from the Last Supper. John tells this event in John 13:1. Jesus poured water in a basin, took a towel and began to wash the feet. Peter refused, but Jesus forced him to accept, saying that if he did not allow to be washed he could have no share with Jesus.

The theme has been shown by quite a few painters, though the theme was not very popular with painters.

#### Class:

Macro-theme: Christ washes the Feet of his Disciples.

### **2.1.66. The Institution of the Eucharist**

The institution of the Eucharist is told in Matthew 16:26, in Mark 14:22, and in Luke 22:19. Jesus took bread, broke it to give a piece to his disciples, and asked to do this

in memory of him. Then he took a cup of wine, shared the wine with his disciples, and said it was the new covenant in his blood that would be poured for them.

The Eucharist, the sharing of bread and wine is the major and culminating part of the Catholic mass. Although the many pictures of the Last Supper could also represent this institution of the Eucharist, few painters directly alluded to the theme. We add to this class the paintings that allude allegorically to the Eucharist.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Institution of the Eucharist.

### **2.1.67. Christ's Farewell to his Mother**

Before the Passion of Jesus starts, Jesus said farewell to his mother. This scene might be suggested in John 13:31, though these farewell discourses are addressed to his disciples and to his followers in general, not only to Mary. The theme seems to have originated in the Middle Ages. The paintings usually show Jesus in front of his mother in a garden.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ's Farewell to his Mother.

### **2.1.68. The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane**

The moment of fear and agony of Jesus before his arrest and death, a scene happening according to Matthew and Mark in the garden of Gethsemane, are told in Matthew 26:36 and in Mark 14:32. Luke places the scene on the Mount of Olives, in Luke 22:39. As a result, the paintings on this theme may have as title the 'Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane', as well as the 'Prayer on the Mount of Olives'. Since these scenes are then differently handled, one might grant a micro-theme of 'Christ on the Mount of Olives', different from 'The Agony in the Garden'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Micro-themes:

The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane  
Christ on the Mount of Olives

### **2.1.69. Judas and the Arrest of Christ**

The betrayal of Christ by Judas and the arrest of Christ are usually shown in paintings in the same scene. Judas may be giving a kiss to Jesus, thereby betraying him, and soldiers stand all around Jesus and arrest him. The arrest is told in Matthew 26:47, in Mark 14:43, in Luke 22:47 and in John 18:1.

Class:

Macro-theme: Judas and the Arrest of Christ.

**2.1.70. Jesus before the Sanhedrin**

The men that had arrested Christ led him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where also the scribes and elders of Jerusalem were assembled in the Sanhedrin. All looked for evidence against Jesus. The elders asked questions and Jesus answered. The scene ended when Christ asserted that the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of God and come on heavenly clouds. The men of the Sanhedrin cried then that Jesus was blaspheming with those words and they struck him with their fists. This story is told in Matthew 26:52, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:66 and John 18:12.

There are few paintings of this theme, crucial though it is in the Passion.

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

**2.1.71. Saint Peter denies Christ**

While Christ was before the Sanhedrin, Saint Peter three times denied he knew Christ, just as Christ had prophesied. The paintings of this theme often show Peter at a fire, surrounded by people and by women, who ask him whether he knew Jesus. Some paintings show Saint Peter weeping at having denied Jesus.

Since this story is told directly in the New Testament, it is appropriate to classify it in Jesus' Passion instead of in the life of Saint Peter. It is told in Matthew 26:69, Mark 14:66, Luke 22:54 and in John 18:15.

Class:

Macro-theme: Saint Peter denies Christ.

Micro-themes:

Saint Peter denies Christ

Saint Peter weeping.

**2.1.72. The Trial**

The Trial of Jesus happened before the Roman governor of Jerusalem, Pilate. So the trial theme might also be called 'Jesus before Pilate'. The scene is told in Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:1, Luke 23:1 and John 18:28. Paintings of this theme show Jesus brought before Pilate, standing to the trial.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Trial of Jesus.

### **2.1.73. The Flagellation**

Pilate has Christ flagellated at a column, in the Praetorium. Matthew and Mark tell only in one line how Pilate released Barabbas and how Pilate had Jesus scourged before handing him over to be crucified. Matthew tells the scene in Matthew 27:26, Mark in Mark 15:15. Luke does not tell of the flagellation, and also not of the crowning with thorns. John however tells the same scene in John 19:1.

The scene has been the subject of some of the strongest images in the art of painting. Usually, Jesus is shown tied to a column and being flagellated; sometimes with Pilate present and Pilate seated on a throne. Some of these paintings show only Jesus tied to the column, without torturers. These scenes could be brought in a micro-theme.

Macro-theme: The Flagellation of Jesus.

Micro-themes:

- The Flagellation of Jesus
- Christ at the Column

### **2.1.74. The Crowning with Thorns**

Christ was crowned with thorns. The scene is told in Matthew 27:27, in Mark 15:16 and in John 19:2.

Macro-theme: The Crowning with Thorns.

### **2.1.75. Ecce Homo**

When Christ had been flagellated at the column in the Praetorium and crowned with a crown of thorns, John tells that Pilate presented Jesus to the people. Pilate seats Jesus in the seat of Judgement, says John, at a place called in Hebrew Gabbatha, the Pavement. Pilate hoped that the torture might be enough to release Jesus. The people however shouted to crucify Jesus. John tells this in John 19:4.

There are two kinds of paintings of the 'Ecce Homo' theme. In the first type, the pictures show Jesus before the crowd, sometimes Christ is seated, with Pilate pointing at Christ. Usually these pictures hold many figures. In a second type, only Jesus' head or bust, with Jesus in sorrows and crowned with thorns, is represented.

Finally, a kind of other religious pictures is very close to the 'Ecce Home' theme. These pictures show the same Jesus in sorrows as in the 'Ecce Homo', but Jesus may be represented together with saints, with the Virgin Mary, etc. Often, these paintings



are called 'The Man of Sorrows'. Since such images are so close to the 'Ecce Homo' theme, we have made only a micro-theme of this category.

Class:

Macro-theme: Ecce Homo.

Micro-themes:

Ecce Homo, Pilate shows Christ to the People.

Ecce Homo, Jesus

The Man of Sorrows

### **2.1.76. Pilate washing his Hands**

Pilate judged and condemned Jesus to be crucified, but he washed his hands before the people, saying that he, Pilate, was innocent of the blood spilled. Matthew tells this in Matthew 27:24.

The scene has been rarely painted. The paintings show Pilate before the crowd, washing his hands in a large bowl of water.

Class:

Macro-theme: Pilate washing his Hands.

### **2.1.77. Christ leaves the Praetorium**

Some paintings show the exact moment, the scene when Jesus leaves the Praetorium to be crucified. The scene may refer to all the Passion stories told by the four Evangelists.

The scene was an occasion for painters who liked representing many figures to show Christ among the people and the Roman soldiers. The scene is often difficult to distinguish from the 'Ecce Homo' theme, but the distinction can be made by Pilate, who in the scene of this theme is not an important actor and does not necessarily point at Jesus.

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus leaves the Praetorium.

### **2.1.78. The Disrobing of Christ**

This scene is not mentioned in actual words in the Bible. The scene is rare in painting but refers to a line in John 19:23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, one share for each soldier. Jesus' undergarments were in one piece, without seams, so the soldiers played at dice for these clothes.

Class:

Macro-theme: The disrobing of Christ.

### **2.1.79. Calvary**

The scene of Jesus' walk to Calvary, to the place of his crucifixion, is told by the four Evangelists. It is in Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26 and John 19:16. It is the beginning of the Crucifixion scene. Calvary scenes are usually called by that name. We have distinguished between the scenes in which Christ walks among the crowd, in which sometimes it is even hard to discern the figure of Jesus, scenes which we will call 'Calvary' because the painters named the painting specifically so, and paintings in which one sees Christ closer by, carrying the cross. We have called these last paintings 'Carrying the Cross' works.

Calvary works usually depict many people around the Crucifixion, or many people accompanying Christ on Calvary Mountain. When the most important aspect of the painting is not the crowd around the crucifixion of Jesus, but the crucifixion itself, we prefer to organise such pictures in the category of 'Crucifixion'. The distinction between these categories is rather subjective, of course, so these both kinds of paintings might also be classified under one and the same category.

Class:

Macro-theme: Calvary

### **2.1.80. Veronica**

Veronica wiped the face of Jesus Christ with a cloth called the sudarium. The scene is not told by any of the four Evangelists. It is a legend, taken up by the Golden Legend for instance. There are many works of the Veronica theme. The sudarium relic is preserved in the Saint Peter's basilica of Rome. Pictures of this theme could show the complete scene with Christ holding the cross and Veronica wiping Jesus' face. Other pictures only show the sudarium.

Class:

Macro-theme: Veronica

Micro-themes:

Veronica

The Sudarium

### **2.1.81. The Raising of the Cross**

In the events of the Crucifixion of Christ, the cross must have been raised before Jesus could be crucified. Although not specifically mentioned in the Bible, some painters have taken up this theme. The scenes show the exact moment when the cross is raised. There are paintings showing Jesus being nailed to the cross; we consider these to be also of this main theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Raising of the Cross

Micro-Themes:

The Raising of the Cross

The Nailing to the Cross

### **2.1.82. The Crucifixion**

The Crucifixion is the moment when Christ is crucified. Crucifixion scenes are mostly static scenes, showing Christ on the cross. A few painters have shown the cross being raised, with Christ already on the cross, but then we classify such paintings in the previous class (the 'Raising of the Cross'). There are very many pictures of this scene. The Crucifixion has become an icon and Christ on the cross may be accompanied by Mary and John the Evangelist, as well as by saints and bishops. Very few paintings also show the dividing of Jesus' garments, as told by Luke 19:23. We have distinguished between these various scenes except in a purist sense. When Christ is shown on the cross, with or without people at the foot of the cross, we have called these works the macro-theme of 'the Crucifixion'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Crucifixion.

Micro-themes:

The Crucifixion with Mary and Saint John

The Crucifixion with Saints and/or Bishops and/or other Devotees

Jesus' Garments are divided at the Cross

### **2.1.83. The Lance Thrust**

Only John tells how Christ was pierced with a lance by the soldiers, in John 19:33. To ensure that the crucified were dead, the soldiers broke the bones of the crucified men. Jesus had died already, however, so one of the soldiers only pierced Christ's side with a lance.

Few painters have shown the scene.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Lance Thrust.

### **2.1.84. The Descent from the Cross**

In the events after the death of Christ on the cross, Jesus was first taken down. That happened according to John 19:38 by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. According to Luke, also the women were present, and Joseph took down the body of Christ (Luke 23:50). Mark tells that among the women were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and of Joseph, as well as Mary Salome. Mark also tells that

Joseph of Arimathea lowered Jesus, in Mark 15:42 and following lines. Matthew tells the same story in Matthew 27:57.

We call pictures that show actually the lowering of Christ's body from the cross, with the body still going down the cross, and with the cross visible behind the corpse of Christ as scenes of the 'Descent from the Cross'. These scenes should not be confused with scenes that depict Christ on the ground, taken from the cross and also not with scenes of the lamentation over the dead Christ lying at the foot of the cross, or with scenes in which Christ is lowered into the tomb. Many of the works are wrongly named. So, works called the 'Deposition' are actually depicting Christ being taken from the cross, scenes that should rightly be called 'Descent from the cross', and so on. Since there are so very many paintings of these different scenes, we have preferred giving these scenes different names and categorise them in separate classes.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Descent from the Cross

### **2.1.85. The Deposition**

In 'Deposition' scenes, Christ has been lowered from the cross and the pictures show Jesus being laid on the ground, at the foot of the cross. Since there are so very many paintings of this scene, and since painters have often called their paintings by this title, we have preferred giving this scene a different name and we categorised the works in a separate class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Deposition of Christ.

### **2.1.86. Pietà**

The three Maries were present at Christ's death on the cross. When the body was lowered from the cross, the women lamented over the dead Christ. One can distinguish over two different themes. In the first theme, Christ's broken body would be lying in the lap of his mother, with Mary weeping over her dead son. These scenes could be called exclusively 'Pietà'. In other scenes, various people – such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the three Maries and John the Evangelist, as well as Jesus' disciples, may be all lamenting over the dead Christ. Such works might be called with the more general name 'Lamentation', the word 'Pietà' being reserved for the specific weeping of Mary over her son.

Class:

Macro-theme: Pietà.

Micro-themes:

Pietà

The Lamentation over the dead Christ

### **2.1.87. The Descent in Hell**

Christ died to redeem his people. This posed a theological issue however, for since the people that had died before the time of Jesus' death could not have known Jesus and not directed their lives according to Jesus' messages, so they could not have been redeemed. Therefore, a scene was imagined - of which the four Evangelists tell nothing - in which Christ descended into Hell, often called the limbo, to recuperate the souls of the just and so to redeem these. The scene is for instance in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, and also told in the 'Golden Legend'. The scene is not rare in ancient painting.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Descent in Hell

### **2.1.88. The Entombment**

The 'Entombment' shows Christ dead and enveloped in white linen, being lowered inside the tomb. This scene should not be confused with 'Deposition' scenes, although many of so-entitled works shows Christ actually being taken up by two men and held above the tomb.

I know of one painting (a work of Vittore Carpaccio) that shows the preparation of the tomb before Christ is laid in. Since I only found this one picture, I found it not judicious to propose a separate theme of the preparation of the tomb.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Entombment.

Micro-themes:

The Preparation of the Tomb

The Entombment

### **2.1.89. The Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross and the Entombment**

We classified a series of paintings in this class, when the works show Jesus Christ carrying the cross in full detail and in close-up. One might bring these paintings together with the 'Calvary' theme, but we preferred to give them a separate class since there are so very many paintings showing Christ in pain under the cross, without the many bystanders. In 'Calvary' paintings, the landscape and the crowd is most important. In 'Carrying the Cross' scenes, Christ's suffering is the main theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Carrying of the Cross.

### **2.1.90. The Dead Body of Jesus**

Only a few paintings, usually extraordinary images, show the dead body of Jesus, with no other people around. We classified these in a separate class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The dead body of Christ

### **2.1. 91. Magdalene's Sorrow over the Body of Jesus**

A few pictures have as their main theme the sorrow of Mary Magdalene over the dead body of Christ. Such pictures are rare, but we find them enough in number and in specificity of image to justify a separate class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Magdalene's Sorrow over the dead Christ

### **2.1. 92. The Legend of the True Cross**

The legend of the true cross is told in length in the 'Golden Legend'.

Adam's son Seth was offered a shoot from the tree of mercy and ordered to plant it on the mount of Lebanon. It was a branch of the tree under which Adam had committed his sin. Adam had informed Seth that when the branch bore fruit, his father would be made healthy again.

The tree still stood in the times of King Solomon. Solomon admired the beauty of the tree. He had the tree cut down for the building of his forest house of which is also written in the Old Testament. The beam never fit in a right place however, so that it was abandoned and thrown over a pond to serve as a bridge.

The Queen of Sheba was about to pass over that bridge, but she saw in a vision suddenly that the Saviour of the world would one day hang from the wood. She therefore refused to go over it and knelt down and worshipped it. The Queen told her dream or vision that the kingdom of the Jews would come when a man would hang from this wood to King Solomon. Solomon feared the prophecy. So the wood was thrown into the pond. Sacred animals came here to bath and the sick were healed at the pond.

When Jesus's time of passion was drawing near, the wood floated up and the Jews remarked it and used it to make Jesus's cross. After Jesus's Crucifixion, the cross laid hidden underground.

The East-Roman Emperor Constantine was attacked by hordes of Barbarians along the Danube. He could only beat the Barbarians back when an angel showed him a sign of a cross in flaming light. Constantine won the battle and believed in Christ. He converted to Christianity and due to the grandeur of the Constantine's Byzantium would be renamed Constantinople, thus also indicating the transition from heathen gods to Christianity of the East-Roman empire. A biography of the emperor written

by Lactantius told that Constantine was asked in a dream to put the sign of Christ, the chi-rho letters on his shield. The next day Constantine won a battle against Maxentius.

At the death of his father, the younger Constantine sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to recuperate the cross. The Queen asked the Jewish scholars about the place where Christ had been crucified. But the Jews refused to answer for fear of the Emperor. Helena threatened them all to die by fire. The Jews then handed over one of them, Judas, and said that he would answer since he was the son of a just man and a prophet. But the Jews had told Judas to yield nothing to the foreign Queen unless forced to. So Helena had to threaten again and she threw Judas in a dry well. Judas was tortured and of this scene After seven days without food and drink, Judas promised Helena to show where the cross was. Judas took Helena to a place where stood a pagan temple of Venus. Helena had the temple razed and the site ploughed up. Then Judas himself started to dig and found three crosses, which he showed to the Queen. A way had to be found to prove which of the three crosses was the one on which Jesus had been crucified. The crosses were placed in the centre of the town. A body of a young man was being carried past and Judas halted the cortege. When Judas held the third cross over the corpse, the young man came back to life. The true cross was thus identified. Judas was later baptised and given the name Quiriacus. Still later he was ordained bishop of Jerusalem.

Helena also wanted to have the nails of the cross. Quiriacus went to the place of the burial, prayed and the nails appeared miraculously on the surface. Helena brought a piece of the cross and the nails to her son Constantine who had one nail inserted in his crown. Other parts of the cross remained in Jerusalem. Still later, Emperor Julian the Apostate had Saint Quiriacus tortured and put to death.

In 615 Chosroës, king of the Persians, subjected all the earth's kingdoms to his rule. When he came to Jerusalem, he took the part of the Holy Cross that Helena had left there, built himself a huge tower and stayed there with the piece of the wood. He relented power to his son and decreed that he himself was God now. The Christian Emperor Heraclius of Constantinople marshalled a large army and laid battle to Chosroës' son near the river Danube. The two men agreed to fight in single combat on a bridge over the river, the victor to take over the empire and thus sparing both armies. Piero della Francesca made a panel of the battle between Heraclius and Chosroës' son, usually explained as the battle between Heraclius and Chosroës himself. Heraclius won, so all the people of Chosroës acknowledged Heraclius as their Emperor and all were baptised. Heraclius now journeyed to Jerusalem to confront Chosroës himself. He found the 'god' seated on his golden throne and decapitated him.

Heraclius brought the rests of the Holy Cross back to the Mount of Olives. He rode through the same gate through which Jesus had passed on his way to Crucifixion. But the stones of the gateway fell down and blocked the road. An angel carrying a cross in its arms came down and announced that when Jesus had passed here he wore no royal pomp. Whereupon the angel disappeared. Heraclius now shed tears, took off his royal garments and stepped forward thus humbled. The gateway raised itself from the ground to allow passage. The truly devote Emperor thus praised the Holy Cross and brought it back to its rightful place.

We have classified all these scenes in one class, the 'Legend of the true Cross', but in a purist sense all the different scenes of the story could be called with separate names, and there are many. We have not done that since the themes are rather rare, there being only very few pictures for each supposed subtheme. We have also brought in this overall theme paintings of Emperor Constantine and of his wife Helena.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Legend of the True Cross.

Micro-themes:

- Adam and the Tree of the True Cross
- King Solomon and the True Cross
- The Finding of the True Cross (Judas/Quiriacus and Helena)
- The Queen of Sheba and the True Cross
- Saint Helena and the Discovery of the True Cross
- Quiriacus/Judas heals by the True Cross
- Chosroës in Jerusalem
- The Battle between Heraclius and Chosroës
- Heraclius bring the True Cross to Jerusalem
- The Battle at the Milvian Bridge, the Cross appears
- The Baptism of Constantine
- Constantine destroys Idols
- Constantine receives the Instruments of the Passion
- Miracles of the Holy Cross
- Saints and Devotees adoring the Holy Cross

### **2.1.93. The Intercession of Jesus to God the Father**

There are but few pictures in which Jesus pleads with his Father. Yet, these deserve a separate class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Intercession of Jesus to God the Father.

### **2.1.94. Jesus Christ blessing**

There are many paintings of Jesus Christ blessing. These are usually pictures of just the bust of Jesus, and with Jesus blessing with one hand or with his two hands.

Class:

Macro-theme: Jesus Christ blessing.

### **2.1. 95. The Resurrection**

The Resurrection scenes show Christ raising from his tomb and rising to the heavens. The paintings may also not show Christ, but only the open and empty tomb. In some pictures the tree Maries and John the Evangelist stand near the tomb, an angel sits on the tomb, and often also soldiers are asleep at the foot of the tomb. The pictures that



show only the empty tomb, the three Maries and the angel, follow the story as told in Matthew 28, in Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20. Jesus only appears later to the women.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Resurrection.

### **2.1.96. Noli me Tangere**

John tells in John 20:11 that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. Mary spoke to two angels at the empty tomb. She heard someone asking her why she was weeping, and she thought that man was the gardener, standing behind her. When she turns however, she saw Jesus standing before her. Jesus called her name, but he also said, 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father'. These last words in Latin start with, 'Noli me Tangere', and these words have become the title of many paintings representing this scene. Obviously, Mary Magdalene does not touch Jesus and in the pictures Jesus will have a gesture of refusing Mary Magdalene to come nearer. Often also, Jesus is shown dressed as a gardener, wearing tools of a gardener, such as a spade.

Matthew tells that Jesus first appeared to the three Maries (Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Matthew 28:9). Mark mentions in Mark 16:9, but Mark does not tell the 'Noli me Tangere' scene. Luke rather tells first the story of the supper of Jesus with the two disciples at Emmaüs and then tells that Jesus appeared to the apostles. The 'Noli me Tangere' painters thus primarily used John's tale as inspiration for their work.

Class:

Macro-theme: Noli me Tangere.

### **2.1.97. Emmaüs**

The tale of the two disciples on the road to Emmaüs is in Luke 24:13. Luke tells there were two disciples of Jesus, of which one was called Cleopas. The men were on their way to Emmaüs, when a third joins them. There evolves a conversation over the crucifixion of Jesus. Later, the men arrive at a village and Jesus remains to supper with them. At the table, Jesus breaks the bread and blesses, so that the men recognise him. The rather long story of the disciples of Emmaüs is not in Mathew, Mark or John.

There may be two themes from this account. One theme may show the two disciples on their way, and Jesus arguing with them on the road. The second theme might be the supper at Emmaüs, where Jesus ate with the men at the same table. Jesus then enacts the installation of the Eucharist.

Class:

Macro-theme: Emmaüs.

Micro-themes:

The Road to Emmaüs

The Supper at Emmaüs.

### **2.1.98. The Incredulous Thomas**

Luke tells how Jesus appeared to the apostles and showed them his wounds. John, in John 20:24, is the only Evangelist however who also tells that when Jesus came first to the apostles, Thomas was not with them. When Thomas met the apostles later, they told him that Jesus had risen from the dead. Thomas answered however that he would only believe that when he could see Jesus before him, and put a finger in the holes made by the nails. Eight days later, Jesus came again to the apostles and he proposed to Thomas to feel the wounds. Only John tells this story of the incredulous apostle Thomas.

There are quite many paintings on this theme, probably often made for churches dedicated to Saint Thomas. There are very few paintings on the theme of Jesus appearing to his disciples and showing his wounds, without a direct reference to the incredulous Thomas. These paintings we consider here as a subtheme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The incredulous Thomas.

Micro-themes: The incredulous Thomas

Jesus appearing to his Disciples

### **2.1.99. Pentecost**

Pentecost is an event told not in the Gospels, but in the 'Acts of the Apostles'.

In Acts 2 it is told how the Apostles had gathered when a violent wind came from heaven and then tongues of fire that rested on the head of each Apostle. The Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and started to talk different languages.

Class:

Macro-theme: Pentecost.

### **2.1.100. The Ascension of Christ**

The Ascension of Christ is told in Luke 24:50. Christ took his disciples to the outskirts of Bethany, raised his hands and blessed them. Then he was carried up to heaven.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Ascension of Christ.

### **2.1.101. Christ supported by Angels**

There are pictures of Jesus Christ shown with all the wounds of his torture and often also of his Crucifixion, held by angels. Christ is usually not shown in full, but only his bust and head crowned with thorns.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ supported by Angels.

### **2.1.102. Angels**

Many panels exist showing pictures of angels. Usually, these are merely parts of polyptychs. Yet, such pictures deserve a theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: Angels

### **2.1.103. Jesus Christ**

A few painters have shown the face of Jesus Christ. There is a tradition of such pictures, showing only Jesus' face.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Face of Jesus Christ.

### **2.1.104. Christ Pantokrator**

The theme of the Christ Pantokrator, the Christ in Majesty or in Glory, ruling over the world, the ruler of all, was a very traditional theme of Byzantine art. The Christ Pantokrator can be found in huge mosaics in the apses of Byzantine churches and in mosaics and frescoes in the apses of Western-European Roman churches (of which mosaics and paintings few examples remain). The Christ Pantokrator was also a frequent theme for Byzantine, Greek and Russian icons. There are rare oil paintings of Jesus Christ in glory, which we will classify in this theme also.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Christ Pantokrator.

### **2.1.105. Christ appears to Saints and Devotees**

After his death, resurrection and ascension, some pictures show Jesus appearing to his mother, to saints or to devotees. Often, Christ is depicted in an oval of light, or also Christ appearing on clouds in heaven.

Class:

Macro-theme: Christ appears to Saints and Devotees.

## 2.2. Themes from the Life of Mary

Very few stories of the life of the Virgin Mary are told in the Gospels. All the more stories were gathered in the 'Golden legend' however, and painters took to these themes for many paintings.

The devotion to the Virgin Mary was and remains intense. Hence there are many paintings that show this devotion in themes such as the apparition of the Virgin to saints, or representations of the Virgin in sorrows, as a comforter, accompanied by angels, etc. We have brought all these themes in the Book of Mary rather than considered them as general religious themes.

In the following text we will refer with the word 'Madonna' to the 'Virgin Mary and Child'.

### 2.2.1. Joachim and Anne

The Life of Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Virgin Mary, is told in detail in the 'Golden Legend'. Several themes have been taken up by painters from these stories, such as the meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem.

Joachim and Anne were married for twenty years, but the marriage had remained childless. They fervently wanted a child. Joachim went to the Temple of Jerusalem to make offerings so that their wish for a child would be fulfilled. But Joachim was turned away by the priests. Since he was childless he was not allowed to stay with the others. Ashamed, Joachim took refuge with shepherds. Then an angel informed him that his prayers were answered and that Anne would give birth to a daughter who was to be the mother of God<sup>K1</sup>. The angel gave a sign to Joachim as a token of the truth of the conveyed message: Anne would be waiting for his return at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem. Joachim set off for the town and indeed, Anne was waiting for him at the indicated gate. She flung her arms around him and nine months later a daughter, whom they named Mary, was born. The embrace of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate symbolically conceived Mary.

There is no mention of either Joachim or Anne in the Gospels. But a second century apocryphal 'Gospel of James', which is not considered trustworthy by the Catholic Church, tells of the conception of Mary and also gives the story of Anne and Joachim. Thus, the interest in the cult of the Virgin Mary pulled also to the foreground the stories of Anne and Joachim.

Although this is the main theme of Joachim and Anne, paintings exist of other themes about Mary's parents: Joachim was driven from the Temple of Jerusalem, Joachim had a Dream, Saint Anne depicted as a saint, and the death of Saint Anne. A few paintings depict several scenes - together in one picture - of the life of Joachim and Anne.

A special classification should be given to the pictures of the genealogical tree of Jesus, which is often depicted as the tree of Anne. We have rather classified these paintings as part of the Tree of Jesse or the Tree of Life.

Class:

Macro-theme: Joachim and Anne

Micro-themes:

Joachim and Anne meet at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem

Joachim expelled from the Temple

Scenes from the Life of Joachim and Anne

Saint Anne

The Death of Saint Anne

The genealogical tree of Anne

### **2.2.2. The Birth of the Virgin**

Very many paintings were made of the Birth of the Virgin, as narrated in the 'Golden Legend'. Most of these show the house of Joachim and Anne, and Anne in the bed with Mary in her arms, or Mary being held by other women present at the birth.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Birth of the Virgin

### **2.2.3. Saint Anne's upbringing of Mary**

Saint Anne, Mary's mother, taught Mary how to read. A few painters used this theme for pictures.

Class:

Macro-theme: Saint Anne instructing the Virgin

### **2.2.4. The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple**

Mary's presentation in the Temple is detailed in a chapter on the birth of the Virgin in the 'Golden Legend'. When Mary was weaned at the age of three, Joachim and Anne brought her to the Temple with offerings. There were fifteen steps to the entry of the building. The 'Golden Legend' specifies that this corresponded to the fifteen Gradual Psalms. There was no other way to the altar, so the Virgin was set down at the lowest step and she mounted without help from anyone, alone, all the steps.

After the presentation, Joachim and Anne left their child in the custody of the Temple, together with other young maidens, to be devoted to praying and weaving. Mary stayed in the Temple until she was fourteen and ready to be married. Scholars have interpreted this story as the usual education of a girl of high Jewish rank.

The theme of the Virgin being presented to the Temple as a young girl going alone up monumental stairs was particularly popular in Venice, but also other artists took up

the theme. The pictures usually show Mary ascending the stairs of the Temple, with the High Priest waiting for her at the entry.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple

### 2.2.5. The Marriage of Joseph and Mary

The ‘Golden Legend’ tells that when Mary was fourteen, she was still reared in the Temple. The high priest announced that the maidens should return home to be legally joined with their husbands. But Mary refused because she had vowed to virginity for God. The high priest then consulted the Lord and a voice said to him that each unmarried but marriageable man from the house of David should bring a branch to the altar. One of the branches would bloom and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove would perch upon its tip. Joseph was of such an age already that he thought it incongruous to bring forward his branch. So, nothing happened when all the suitors came. The high priest consulted the Lord a second time. The voice responded that the only man who had not brought forward his branch was the right one. Therefore, Joseph now came to the Temple. Joseph’s rod blossomed and a dove came from heaven to perch upon it<sup>G49</sup>.

This was a sign from heaven that Joseph was the chosen one. The flowering rod is a symbol of fertility; only from Joseph could Mary have offspring. The Council of Trent condemned this theme of the flowering rod in the sixteenth century, even though some of the tale was attributed to Jerome<sup>G41</sup>. We recognise here a miraculous story, of the golden Legend, the flowering of the rod and the sign of the dove, as were associated with Mary.

The scene of Mary’s marriage is often called the ‘Sposalizio’, for the name of ‘marriage’ in Italian.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Marriage of the Virgin

### 2.2.6. Joseph

Joseph is the forgotten man of the Holy family. He is described in very discreet words in the Gospels. Luke almost ignores Joseph so that Luke’s Gospel seems to have been written from out of the view of Mary. The Gospel of Mark passes directly to the adult, public life of Jesus, and does not even mention Joseph. Matthew takes on more Joseph’s view and makes him the central character in the birth and infancy of Jesus. Besides the principal source of the Gospel of Matthew, apocryphal narratives relate of Joseph. The ‘Protevangelium of James’ of the second century and more so the ‘History of Joseph the Carpenter’ of the fourth century present him very differently of Matthew’s account. Joseph would have been a widower with children, and he would

already have been old when he became betrothed to Mary. He might have lived over a hundred years. How Joseph died is in fact unknown, but his death may have come before Jesus's public life began since Joseph never appears in one of the miracle scenes or in other events of the Gospels except the Nativity. Maybe due to the influences of the apocryphal writings however, Joseph is usually represented as an older man.

The figure of Joseph was discovered late in the art of painting. Pictures of Joseph are very rare in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The reason for this is probably that the church was at unease with the story of Joseph. What had happened to him was ambiguous. The church did not approve of marriage ceremonies in which the bride was pregnant, nor did it approve of marriages where the bride came in with children at her hand. Painters avoided the subject for their most prominent altarpieces. And of course, pictures were to teach the glory of God and of Jesus's life with the glorious role of Mary stressed, so that Joseph could remain in the background. Only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the painters handled their themes more freely and they were in quest for new religious subjects. Saint Joseph was rediscovered as a means and sign of audacious innovation.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came to live together she was found to be with child<sup>G38</sup>. Her husband Joseph being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace decided to divorce her informally. But when he had made up his mind to do so, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel had told him to do<sup>G38</sup>.

The dreams of Joseph are important in the Gospel of Matthew. When the Magi had left after Jesus's birth, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. This time the angel said: 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him'. So, Joseph took his family and left for Egypt.

After Herod's death, an angel appeared suddenly again in a dream to Joseph. Now the angel told: 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead'.

Still later, and once more in a dream, Joseph was warned not to go to Judaea where ruled Archelaus who had succeeded his father Herod, but to withdraw to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth.

The pictures of Saint Joseph holding the flowering rod, without the Virgin Mary at his side, could be classified under the class of the marriage of the Virgin. We have preferred to classify these pictures under the theme of Saint Joseph.

There are extremely many paintings of the Virgin and Child, but few of Saint Joseph holding the Christ Child; still: some of these pictures, made by strong painters in search of a novelty in depiction, do exist.

Class:

Macro-theme: Saint Joseph

Micro-themes:

Saint Joseph

Saint Joseph and other Saints

Saint Joseph Carpenter

Saint Joseph and the flowering Rod

Saint Joseph and the Christ Child

The Dream of Saint Joseph

The Death of Saint Joseph

**2.2.7. The Annunciation**

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth, to a Virgin called Mary who was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph. The angel said: 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour'. The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, you have won God's favour. You are to conceive and bear a son that you must name Jesus. He will be great and he will be called Son of the Most High. God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will rule over the House of Jacob and his reign will have no end.' Mary asked the angel how this could come about, since she had no knowledge of man. But the angel answered: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you in his shadow. And so the child will be holy and he will be called the Son of God. Then Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said'. And the angel left her.<sup>G38.</sup>

The pictures of the Annunciation are very stereotyped. Usually, Mary kneels before the Angel Gabriel. Many early pictures have an oddity in the perspective whereby a column is out-of-perspective so that when the viewer looks well – for instance at the patterns of the tiles on the floor – he or she will see a column exactly between Mary and the angel. This column represents the column of God, or God. In these paintings, the invisible element of action of the conception of Christ (God) is thus represented by the column.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Annunciation.

**2.2.8. The Incarnation of Christ**

Few paintings tried to show the incarnation of Christ in Mary, but a few artists succeeded in this theme. Usually, the paintings show the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit above her head. The picture hints in some way or other at Mary's pregnancy and also to her innocence, precluding the more obvious theme of the Immaculate Conception.

The theme is very old and may also refer to Arian or Monophysite concepts, since the first believed that Jesus was born human and that his divine nature took shape at the incarnation, whereas the Monophysites thought the reverse. For early Christians, the



incarnation was thus a theme of much significance and the theme lasted through the Middle Ages and Renaissance times.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Incarnation of Christ.

### 2.2.9. Mary ascends the Mountain

In this theme, Mary walks on the path that leads to the mountains. She will visit there her aunt Elisabeth, who is also pregnant – of John the Baptist. The theme that follows is the ‘Visitation’ theme.

‘The Virgin Mary ascends the Mountain’ is a theme of the road to holiness of the Virgin. Other images of this kind are Mary ascending the stairs of the temple and of course her proper Ascension and Coronation in the heavens. The theme also symbolised the road to spirituality in a life of love of the pious.

There are very few paintings of this theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin ascends the Mountain.

### 2.2.10. The Visitation

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was to conceive, Mary asked how that could be. Luke tells that the angel added then: ‘And I tell you this too: your cousin Elisabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God’<sup>G38</sup>.

Luke relates that after the Annunciation Mary went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elisabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elisabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? “Look”, she continued, “the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled”. In Luke’s Gospel then follows one of the most beautiful poems of the New Testament, Mary’s Magnificat. Mary stayed with Elisabeth for some three months and then went home<sup>G38</sup>.

Elisabeth’s child would be Saint John the Baptist.

The words of Elisabeth were repeated in the little prayer, called the ‘Hail Mary’ or ‘Ave Maria’, which is recited many times in the rosary. The prayer starts as ‘Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’. This is the most well known and most spoken little prayer of all; the Catholic Church in the Catechism officially defined it. It has been

cried, whispered, uttered in the mind in billions of devote humans over so many centuries. The words are recited in Roman catholic Mass as the lecture from the Gospels on Mary's feast of her Ascension on August 15.

The Visitation was a welcome theme for Christian painters because it allowed showing two wonderful women, both elegantly pregnant in the beginning stage only, so that pregnancy could be hinted at in all elegant grace. The scene is usually set in marvellous mountain landscapes since Elisabeth lived in hill country. There are very many pictures of this theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Visitation.

### **2.2.11. Madonna of the Rose Garden**

In the paintings of this theme, Mary is usually sitting with the baby Jesus on her lap in an enclosed rose garden. She is sitting like 'a lily among the thistles', which are then the thorns of the rose bushes. She sits in an 'enclosed garden' as is written in the Canticle of Canticles. The roses indeed grow around her in a hedge. The roses are red, the colour of the Passion of Christ. Thus, the theme refers to several mystical symbols associated with the Virgin and the Passion of her Son, Jesus. The theme was particularly popular in Germany and Flanders, and it allowed for wonderful images of Mary surrounded by flowers.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin Mary and Child in the Rose Garden.

### **2.2.12. The throning Madonna**

Two different kinds of images were basically made of the Virgin Mary: as the humble Madonna or as the throning queen. In the 'Throning Madonna' or 'Maestà' paintings, Mary was the queen of the heavens. She was the one who sat with God and who would intercede with God. She was thus depicted sitting on a throne, holding the child Jesus, either alone or with saints and/or angels around the throne. These pictures go back to Byzantine models.

The Throning Madonna paintings in which Mary is seated on a throne holding the infant Jesus in front on her lap is a Byzantine theme called 'Nikopoia'. Another Byzantine example was the 'Hodegetria', often a standing Madonna image or showing Mary only up from the waist, holding Jesus with her left arm and showing Jesus in a sign of adoration with her right hand.

When the Virgin is sitting on a throne, but when the throne is barely visible and when the main aim of the picture is to show the Madonna in the company of saints, we propose to classify these paintings in another class, in the 'Virgin with Saints'. When the Virgin appears to be talking with the saints, the pictures are of another theme, the

‘Sacred Conversations’, named in Italian ‘Sacra Conversazione’. The difference between these three themes is often difficult to discern and whether a classification in one or the other theme is given, the attribution is often rather subjective.

Class:

Macro-theme: The throning Madonna.

### 2.2.13. The humble Madonna

Mary’s humility and her obedience to the word of God have made her an example that was eagerly taken up by a Catholic Church that underscored humility and obedience to her own rules. Mary had accepted God’s wish to receive a child that would die on the cross by saying at the Annunciation merely, ‘I am your humble servant’. This humble obedience stood in direct contrast with the act of Eve, the primeval woman, who had transgressed God’s will by eating from the forbidden fruit of knowledge. Images of the humble Madonna were thus for the Catholic Church the example of the true virtues of mothers and of the obedience of societies.

The real ‘Umiltà’s’ are particular images of a more general class of pictures usually called by the name ‘Mater Amabilis’, or amiable Madonnas. The Umiltà’s show Mary sitting on the ground. We will use the term ‘Humble Madonna’ in general, referring both to the Umiltà’s and the Mater Amabilis pictures.

In the ‘Humility’ pictures, or ‘Umiltà’, the Madonna was the sweet, compassionate and caring mother. Umiltà paintings come in various forms. The Madonna may be standing or sitting, and holding the Jesus child in various ways. She may be feeding the child with soup or milk, and soon. When the Madonna feeds the child Jesus from her own breast, we propose to classify these pictures in a separate class of ‘Virgo Lactans’. A Byzantine presentation was the ‘Eleusa’ in which Mary looks melancholically towards Jesus’s coming Passion.

Class:

Macro-theme: The humble Madonna.

### 2.2.14. Madonna of the Misericordia

The ‘Madonna of the Misericordia’ theme shows the Virgin Mary as a Lady of Mercy, opening her cloak and sheltering under it male and female devotees. Judges, bishops, monks, devote women thus find protection under the tunic of the Virgin, under the mostly deep blue painted ‘maphorion’. The Madonna of the Misericordia is a very old Byzantine theme, used by Florentine painters, but which disappeared almost completely after the fifteenth century. The image became an icon, a symbol that was almost dogmatically copied in the same way as the Maestàs of the thirteenth century. The theme was Byzantine. One of the last most famous relics of Constantinople was the blue cloak or maphorion of the Virgin. There exist early frescoes, Greek Orthodox icons and mosaics of the Virgin spreading her cloak like a veil over the citizens of Constantinople. The image of a Holy Lady protecting figures

under her robe was a universal image that can be found in other pictures however than of Florentine and Byzantine origins.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Madonna of the Misericordia.

### **2.2.15. Our Lady of Succour**

In pictures of the theme of 'Our Lady of Succour', the Virgin Mary liberates a child from the clutches of the devil. The theme is rare in religious painting. The 'Madonna del Soccorso' was however well known as a devotional image in the regions of Umbria and the Marche of Italy.

Class:

Macro-theme: Our Lady of Succour.

### **2.2.16. The Virgin as a Comforter**

The paintings of this theme depict the Virgin Mary as protecting and comforting devotees, without however saving them ostensibly from devils or without spreading her blue cloak over them.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin as a Comforter.

### **2.2.17. The Virgin and Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist**

There exist a very great number of paintings presenting the Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus, with saints around her. Among these however there are also many paintings that show the Virgin holding the baby Jesus with the infant Saint John the Baptist near. In some of these pictures Saint Anne or Saint Joseph may be near, maybe even other saints. Whenever the young John the Baptist is shown with the Virgin and Child, and when that could be the main theme of the presentation, we propose to classify these pictures separately, and not classify them as 'Holy Family' or as 'The Virgin and Child with Saints' paintings.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin and Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist.

Micro-themes: The Virgin and Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist.

The Holy Family with the infant Saint John the Baptist

### **2.2.18. The Virgin with female Saints**

In very few paintings, the Virgin Mary is represented together with exclusively female saints. We have brought these pictures in a class separate from the class of paintings of the Virgin Mary with various saints.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin with female Saints.

### **2.2.19. Virgo Lactans**

Up until the sixteenth century, painters represented the Virgin Mary feeding the Christ child from her breast. Also pictures of the Holy Family, but in which Mary breast-feeds the child Jesus could be classified in this class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgo Lactans.

### **2.2.20. The Rest during the Flight into Egypt**

The Virgin Mary rested during the Flight into Egypt. We have classified pictures in which Mary sits on the ground, often feeding the child Jesus, in this separate class. When Mary sits on a donkey and when the paintings obviously show the flight into Egypt on the move, with Joseph walking before or next to the donkey, then we call these paintings the 'Flight into Egypt'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Rest during the Flight into Egypt.

### **2.2.21. The Holy Family with Angels**

There are very many paintings of the Virgin Mary accompanied by saints and/or bishops. Some pictures show the Virgin and Child, and sometimes also with Saint Joseph, not with saints but only with angels. For these pictures, we foresaw a separate class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Holy Family with Angels.

Micro-themes:           The Holy Family with Angels  
                          The Virgin and Child with Angels

### **2.2.22. The seven Joys and the seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary**

Traditionally, the Seven Joys of Mary were the Annunciation, The visitation, the Birth of Christ, The Adoration of the Magi, the Encounter with Simeon, the Reunion on the Temple and the Coronation of the Virgin. The Seven Sorrows of Mary were Simeon's Prophecy, the Flight into Egypt, the Loss of the twelve-year old Jesus, the Arrest of Christ, the Bearing of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Deposition from the Cross and

the Entombment. Paintings have been made either of the seven Joys or of the seven Sorrows, or of all scenes together. We classify them in only one theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The seven Joys and the seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary

### 2.2.23. Mater Dolorosa

The 'Mater Dolorosa' were pictures of the Virgin Mary, which showed the deep pain and despair on the fate of the Virgin's son. Thus, the Virgin Mary is shown in the pains of a mother and often painted as a graceful, devote lady who has taken the austere habits of a woman dedicated to prayers.

Class:

Macro-theme: Mater Dolorosa.

### 2.2.24. The Virgin of the dry Tree

The Madonna of the Dry Tree paintings are very rare and strange images. A Madonna is standing amidst a thorn bush. The thorn bush grows all around the Virgin and in it hang fifteen letters 'a'. These pictures are laden with symbolism, as liked by the painters and viewers of the Late Middle Ages in Northern Europe.

The dry thorny tree may have several meanings. The tree could prefigure Jesus's Passion and his crown of thorns. A tree without leaves was a symbol of infertility. So, the symbolism of the Dry Tree could also mean the Immaculate Conception of Mary since she conceived Jesus and only him out of a womb remained otherwise barren but for the miraculous conception. And the tree may be a reference to the own birth of the Virgin from her mother Anne. The Virgin Mary was conceived after Anne had become infertile, in a miracle conception announced to Mary's father Joachim. The tree may also signify a reference to phrases of the prophet Ezekiel <sup>P2</sup>:

*I, Yahweh, am the one  
Who lays the tall tree low  
and raises the low tree high,  
who makes the green tree wither  
and makes the withered tree bear fruit.* <sup>G38</sup>

The thorns can also signify the sins over which Mary and Jesus will triumph by Jesus's Resurrection.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin of the dry Tree.

### 2.2.25. The Virgin of the Rosary

The rosary is a sequence of prayers consisting of the 'Hail Mary' and the 'Our Father'. The words of Elisabeth in the Visitation scene as told by Luke were the basis of the 'Hail Mary'. The prayer starts as 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb'. This is the most spoken little prayer of all. The 'Our Father' is the prayer as taught by Jesus himself and as recorded by Matthew. The sequence of prayers, ten 'Hail Marias' to one 'Our Father' is supported by a rosary, that is a string of beads that end in a small crucifix. Each small bead is for a 'Hail Mary', a larger bead or a bead in another colour is for an 'Our Father'. One has to follow the beads in one's hand and cite the prayers as one passes from one bead to the next. Every Catholic Christian has a rosary.

We call paintings that refer to the Rosary and that show the Virgin Mary, with or without the child Jesus, of this class.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin of the Rosary.

### **2.2.26. The Virgin in a Garland of Flowers**

There is a tradition of depicting garlands of flowers, often of roses, and a picture of a person or of an object in the middle of the garland. In a few paintings, the Virgin Mary is thus shown inside a flower garland.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin in a Garland of Flowers.

### **2.2.27. The Virgin with Saints**

The 'Virgin with Saints' is very probably the theme of which the most large number of religious paintings have been made. The Virgin and Child are in this theme accompanied by saints and/or bishops. Usually the saints stand on one or on both sides of the Madonna, and mostly they stand rather rigidly, and are shown in full. Usually also, the Madonna sits on a throne; more rarely she also stands among the saints.

The saints are not conversing with the Virgin – otherwise we propose to classify the pictures in the theme 'Sacra Conversazione', and the real purpose is not to emphasize the royalty of the Madonna seated on a throne – in which case we propose to classify the paintings in the theme 'Throning Madonna'. When the Madonna is accompanied by exclusively female saints, since this theme is rare, we propose to classify the pictures in the theme 'The Virgin with female Saints'. When the aim of the picture seems to represent the Virgin and child with the infant Saint John the Baptist, even with other saints accompanying the scene, we have preferred to classify the pictures in the theme 'The Madonna with the infant John the Baptist'.

It is not very productive to use micro-themes according to the saints that accompany the Virgin and Child, because the number of combinations of saints would be very high.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin with Saints.

### **2.2.28. Sacra Conversazione**

In 'Sacra Conversazione' or 'Sacred Conversation' pictures, the Madonna is accompanied by saints that seem to converse with her. The saints do not stand rigidly at the sides of the Madonna, but they are represented livelier, even gesturing, as if they are engaged in a conversation. The Madonna rarely sits on a throne, more often than not stands or sits among the saints.

Class:

Macro-theme: Sacra Conversazione.

### **2.2.29. Mary inspires the Arts**

There exist few pictures that show the Virgin Mary supporting the arts. These pictures present the Virgin accompanied by ladies, whereby each lady represents one art such as poetry, music, and so on. It is a very rare theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin Mary inspires the Arts.

### **2.2.30. The Virgin with the Host**

In the 'Virgin with the Host', Mary is represented with the host of the Eucharist. She may be beholding the host, or the host is drawn above her. The theme is very rare. The host allegorically represents Jesus Christ, the Virgin's son, as well as the institution of the Eucharist and Mary's support for the Eucharist.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin with the Host.

### **2.2.31. The Virgin with the Girdle**

There are pictures in certain regions of Europe that were made using local themes, such as the Virgin with a girdle or with a sack. Whatever the regional special connotation, we classify all such paintings in one theme: the 'Virgin with the Girdle', a theme that was particularly well used in Northern Italy. In 'Virgin with the Girdle' paintings, the Virgin holds a belt or girdle and she is usually accompanied by saints. The girdle may be a chastity symbol and then refer to Mary's Immaculate Conception, or the link of the Virgin with saints and devotees.



Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin with the Girdle.

**2.2.32. Angels offering Butter and Honey**

A particular kind of regional pictures represent the Virgin Mary while angels offer her butter and honey. This theme was rather popular in northern Italy and a few fine pictures have been made of this subject, so we propose to classify it separately.

Class:

Macro-theme: Angels offer Butter and Honey to the Virgin.

**2.2.33. Our Lady of Loreto**

Legends claim that the Holy House of Mary, called 'La Santa Casa' was transported by angels from Jerusalem around 1291 to a hill near Torsatto in Dalmatia. The house would have been threatened to be destroyed by the Turks and thus was taken up and brought to more peaceful places. The house had been the scene of miracles in Torsatto and allegedly the Madonna had appeared to testify for the house. In 1294 angels brought it again through the skies over the Adriatic to a laurel grove in Italy. The Latin name for laurel is 'lauretum', hence the place was called Loreto. In 1295 the house was transported a last time to its present site.

The Holy House has been venerated in Loreto since the thirteenth century and a small town developed around the relic. Papal bulls attested to the verity of the miraculous healings effectuated by the Santa Casa and even as late as 1920 Pope Benedict XV declared the Madonna of Loreto to be the patron of aviators.

A church was built around the house. This basilica was started around 1464 under Pope Paul II, finished largely by 1587 – mainly its façade - under Pope Sixtus V. The basilica is called the 'Sanctuario della Santa Casa' and stands in the Piazza della Madonna.

Paintings with the Virgin or the Madonna that refer to the Holy House of Loreto can be called 'Our Lady of Loreto' and be classified in a special theme. In the paintings, the Santa Casa may be seen, flying through the airs, accompanied by angels. It is a rather rare theme.

Class:

Macro-theme: Our Lady of Loreto.

**2.2.34. The Death of the Virgin**

According to one of the tales of the 'Golden Legend', Mary longed to be again with her son<sup>G41</sup>. The archangel Michael visited her and foretold her death in three days. Mary asked to see her kin and the apostles before she died, which is why most of the

scenes of the 'Death of the Virgin' depict her surrounded by the apostles. After her death, Mary was only sleeping during the three days until her Resurrection. Because of this, Mary is usually shown as if serenely asleep on the deathbed. The apostles, who were scattered around the world, were caught up by angels and brought in clouds to the home of the Virgin. Mary was about fourteen years old when she conceived, fifteen when she gave birth. She lived for thirty-three years with Jesus and survived him for about twelve years. She died around sixty years of age<sup>G49</sup>. The 'Golden Legend' further told that there were three virgins at hand who removed Mary's robe in order to wash her body. The body immediately shone with such effulgence that although it could be touched and bathed, it could not be seen. The light shone as long as it took the virgins to perform their task<sup>G49</sup>.

Most of the pictures of this theme show the Virgin Mary lying in bed, surrounded by the apostles.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Death of the Virgin.

### **2.2.35. The Assumption of the Virgin**

The images presenting the assumption of the Virgin Mary show Mary in heavenly glory after her death. The Virgin is in the heavens, and may be accompanied by saints and devotees. She is ascending into the heavens.

The concepts of the Assumption and of the Immaculate Conception are linked in a long history of bringing Mary to prominence. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, whereby the Virgin was considered to be free from the original sin, was systematised by Duns Scotus, a British theologian of the thirteenth century. But Pope Pius IX only defined it as dogma in 1854. When this dogma was promulgated, voices rose in the Catholic Church to accept also as dogma the concept of the Assumption. The church had to wait until 1950 however, when Pope Pius XII made that dogma also official.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Assumption of the Virgin.

### **2.2.36. The Coronation of the Virgin**

The paintings of the 'Coronation of Mary' theme show God the Father crowning the Virgin. Usually, many saints and holy bishops accompany the scene. Mary and God are shown in a heavenly setting among clouds. These scenes asserted the very special place among the saints of the mother of Jesus, who therefore also was the Mother of God. In these scenes, all the people that live in the heavens have assembled to witness the crowning of Mary.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Coronation of the Virgin.

### **2.2.37. The Virgin and Child in Glory**

The paintings of the 'Virgin and Child in Glory' are 'adoration' works. The Virgin and Child are adored by devotees, who are often many saints and Holy Bishops. The Virgin and child are often depicted in a mandorla or brightly-lit almond space, around which the devotees are painted.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin and Child in Glory.

### **2.2.38. The Death of Joseph**

A few paintings have been made on the theme of the 'Death of Joseph', as paintings corresponding to the 'Death of the Virgin'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Death of Joseph.

### **2.2.39. The Adoration of the Virgin**

There are a few paintings that show the devotion to Mary. People come to pray at her statues, or have a vision of Mary in the heavens and adore that image.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Virgin.

### **2.2.40. The Immaculate Conception**

The proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the virgin was only given in 1854. Pope Pius IX officially enacted the dogma in the bull 'Ineffabilis Deus' and the proclamation was the final expression of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Feasts were organised throughout Rome and the world. There are several paintings that refer to the concept of the Immaculate Conception and to the Feast of the proclamation.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Immaculate Conception.

### **2.2.41. The Virgin appears to Saints**

There are but few paintings showing scenes in which the Virgin Mary appears to saints. Some saints however, most notably Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, had visions of Mary appearing to them in majesty. We brought these pictures under the theme of the 'Virgin appears to saints'.

Class:

Macro-theme: The Virgin appears to Saints.

## 2.3. Themes from the Life of the Apostles and Saints

Painters of religious art did not just paint scenes of the Virgin Mary and of the life of Jesus. The number of religious themes was far vaster. Jesus was accompanied by disciples among whom the twelve first who were called the apostles. After Jesus's death a few other disciples led the early Christian community. These were Stephen, the first Dean, Paul, Barnabas and others. They were the heroes of the first days of Christianity. Without their tenacity Christendom would not have existed. They were formidable figures. Over the centuries legends developed, constructed from folklore and often linked with real historical events and places. There were various sources for these legends in literature, but most of them were compiled in the 'Golden Legend'. We present the themes on the apostles and saints in macro-themes, but several micro-themes exist for certain apostles and saints had a very adventurous life, as told in the 'Golden Legend', and some of these sub-themes were painted more often.

### The Apostles

There are not remaining paintings from the life of all the apostles. We hereafter indicate the themes only of the apostles of which we know paintings have been made. We propose to define only one macro-theme per apostle. For each apostle there exist polyptychs with scenes from their lives. We have brought these every time in one micro-theme called 'Scenes from the Life of the apostle'.

#### 2.3.1. Matthew

The Theme that appealed most to the imagination of painters was Matthew's calling by Christ. There are also various portraits of the apostle and his martyrdom has been painted a few times. Very few paintings exist of other scenes of his life, but some do.

##### Class:

Macro-theme: Saint Matthew

Micro-themes:

Saint Matthew

The Calling of Saint Matthew

The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew

Scenes from the Life of Saint Matthew

#### 2.3.2. John the Evangelist

As micro-themes on Saint John the Evangelist we should first and foremost mention pictures of John writing his Gospel on the island of Patmos. There exist quite many portraits of John, usually presenting him with a cup out of which a snake coils, the cup of poison he allegedly drank. Other scenes are from the 'Golden Legend' tales of the life and miracles of John.

Macro-theme: Saint John the Evangelist

Micro-themes:

- Saint John the Evangelist
- Saint John on Patmos
- Saint John giving Alms in the Square of Alexandria
- Saint John raising Drusiana from the Dead
- The Martyrdom of Saint John
- The Apotheosis of Saint John
- Scenes from the Life of Saint John

### 2.3.3. Peter

There exist many paintings of Jesus Christ in the act of handing over the keys of the kingdom to his apostle Peter. Other pictures include Peter's calling by Christ, Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus at the arrest of Christ. We have already foreseen a macro-theme at the Peter's denial of Christ in the book on Jesus, in the series of Jesus' Passion.

Other often painted themes are themes from stories told in the Acts of the Apostles, such as Peter's rescue from prison by an angel and Peter's healing of Agatha in the prison. Peter was crucified upside down, so some paintings exist of this scene. Many paintings also represent the two most important saints of the spreading of Christ's words in the early times of Christendom: Peter and Paul.

One of the stories about Peter in the Acts of the Apostles is about a man called Ananias and a woman called Sapphira. Peter persuaded wealthy men to sell their goods so that the money could be distributed to the poor. One of the men, Ananias, with the knowledge of his wife, Sapphira, kept back part of the money for himself. Peter denounced them and they fell both instantly dead.

Malchus was the man whose ear Peter slew off when Jesus was captured.

Tabitha was a woman of Joppa according to the Acts of the Apostles. She was a woman who did many works of charity, such as weaving clothes for the poor. She fell sick and died. Peter prayed for her, alone in her room, and he restored her to life.

Macro-theme: Saint Peter

Micro-themes:

- Saint Peter
- The Calling of Saint Peter

Jesus presents the Keys of the Kingdom to Saint Peter  
 Saint Peter and Malchus  
 The Repentance of Saint Peter  
 Jesus appears to Saint Peter  
 Saint Agatha healed by Saint Peter in Prison  
 Saint Peter rescued from Prison by an Angel  
 Saint Peter resuscitates the Widow Tabitha  
 Saint Peter and Saint Paul  
 The Martyrdom of Saint Peter  
 Scenes from the Life of Saint Peter  
 The Death of Ananias and Sapphira

#### 2.3.4. Paul

Like for the other apostles, many portraits have been presented of Saint Paul. The theme of his martyrdom has practically not been taken up. The most painted scene is the conversion of Saul, whereby Saul was struck down by a lightning and fell from his horse. This was in fact a theme on the calling of Saint Paul. Other scenes are from Saint Paul's life.

Macro-theme: Saint Paul

Micro-themes:

Saint Paul  
 The Conversion of Saint Paul  
 Saint Paul at Ephesus  
 Saint Paul shipwrecked on Malta  
 Saint Paul bitten by a Snake on Malta  
 Saint Paul lapidated in Lystra  
 The Sermons of Saint Paul  
 Scenes from the Life of Saint Paul

#### 2.3.5. Andrew

According to the 'Golden Legend', Andrew converted Maximilla, the wife of Aegeus the Roman Governor of Patras in the Peloponnesos. When he heard of this, Aegeus commanded the Christians to sacrifice to the idols. Aegeus and Andrew argued over this. Aegeus particularly asked Andrew how the apostle could state that Jesus suffered death freely, when everybody knew that Jesus was denounced by one of his own disciples, imprisoned and crucified. But Andrew proved that Jesus's passion was indeed voluntary and he explained the mystery of redemption to the proconsul. But Aegeus only called all this inanities and again wanted to force Andrew to offer sacrifices to all the Gods. Andrew refused. Aegeus threw Andrew in prison, had him flagellated and bound hand and foot to a cross so as to make his agony last longer. Andrew hung alive on the cross and preached to thousands of people. He was not crucified on a cross in the normal shape, but on a cross in the form of an X, a saltire. On the third day like this, the crowds started to threaten the proconsul, saying that such a gentle man as Andrew should not be made to suffer so. Aegeus wanted to release Andrew, but nobody could even touch the saint for Andrew had prayed to the

Lord to not let him come down alive. Andrew died as a dazzling light shone out of the heavens and enveloped him. Aegeus was seized by a demon and died in the street. Maximilla buried the saint.

The martyrdom by crucifixion on the saltire of Andrew was a frequent theme of painters. It was the single best-known legend of Andrew's life and always spectacular for devote viewers. There are many further legends also about the relics of Saint Andrew.

Macro-theme: Saint Andrew

Micro-themes:

- Saint Andrew
- The Martyrdom of Saint Andrew
- Saint Andrew laid in his Tomb
- Scenes from the Life of Saint Andrew

### 2.3.6. Philip

Philip is mentioned a few times in the Gospels, such as in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves of bread and he was present at Pentecost, but very little is known of him. The Acts of the Apostles talk of a man called Philip who undertook early missionary work in Samara, Caesarea and Gaza of Palestine, but this would be the newly elected dean Philip and thus not the apostle. The apostle Philip came from Bethsaida in Galilee. According to tradition Philip converted people in Phrygia and he would have died and buried there at Hierapolis. The Golden Legend quotes from a book called 'On the Life, Birth, and Death of the Saints', written by Isidore, to state that Philip died in Hierapolis. His relics were allegedly translated to Rome, to the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles, a church that was originally dedicated to the saints Philip and James. Philip is supposed to have died by Crucifixion in the same way as Peter, that is upside down.

There exist a few paintings of a scene told in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 8, 26), in which is told how Philip met in Gaza an Ethiopian eunuch and officer at the court of the kandake, or queen, of Ethiopia. The eunuch was reading from the prophet Isaiah when Philip met the man, and a conversation ensued, as a consequence of which Philip baptised the man.

Macro-theme: Saint Philip

Micro-themes:

- Saint Philip
- Philip and the Chamberlain
- The Martyrdom of Saint Philip
- Scenes from the Life of Saint Philip

### 2.3.7. Stephen

Stephen was one of the Deans of the first church. The 'Acts of the Apostles' gives an account of his election, which recalls the first disputes among Jewish members and



non-Jewish members of the early community. The Acts explain how the apostles solved the issue, and thus also give account of the first separation between the worldly and the spiritual organisation of the church.

When the number of the disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them. “It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand over this duty. We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.” The whole assembly approved of the proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them.<sup>G38</sup>

Stephen preached and began to work miracles. He had great wisdom and the Jews of the synagogue could not stand up to him. The elders and scribes took Stephen by surprise and brought him before the Sanhedrin. In the Sanhedrin he continued to give a speech and threw at the priests that there was not one prophet their ancestors had not persecuted.

They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into the heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. “Look! I can see heaven thrown open,” he said, “and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” All the members of the Council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they made a concerted rush at him, thrust him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man, called Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and said aloud, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And with these words he fell asleep. Saul approved of the killing.<sup>G38</sup>

Most paintings of Saint Stephen are about his martyrdom by lapidating or stoning. There are but few other pictures of scenes of his life.

Macro-theme: Saint Stephen

Micro-themes:

Saint Stephen

Saint Stephen preaching

Saint Stephen chased from the Temple

The Stoning (the martyrdom) of Saint Stephen

The Transportation of the body of Saint Stephen

Scenes from the Life of Saint Stephen

### 2.3.8. James Major

Saint James the Great was an apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of another apostle, John<sup>E5</sup>. Their mother presented James and John to Jesus. She wanted her sons not

only to follow Christ, she was ambitious for them in her admiration for the new message Jesus had been talking of. She offered her sons to sit the one to the left, the other to the right of Jesus. But Jesus told them that they did not understand the hardships they would be facing with their proposal. He then asked them whether they were really willing to drink with him the cup of suffering. When the answer was unwaveringly yes, the two new apostles followed Jesus.

Both were witnesses to the most important events in the life of Jesus, the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Only Peter, James and John were with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. John is frequently painted as one of the few bystanders next to the Crucifixion, often supporting the Blessed Virgin. Jesus on the cross gave Mary to John as his adopted mother. John was the apostle beloved of Christ. John also wrote the fourth Gospel. The lives of James and John are wrought with legends. A Samaritan town refused to welcome Christ. When James and John saw this, they urged Jesus to call down fire from the Heavens to destroy the Samaritans. So, Jesus called James and John Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder', because they were impetuous and had a rash temper<sup>E5</sup>. James and John were willing to drink Jesus's cup of suffering and indeed James' fate was an early martyrdom around 44 AD, the first apostle to be martyred, whereas John suffered Domitian's persecution. John would survive those however, go to Patmos, write his Revelation, and continue his preaching.

James preached in Judea and Samaria. Then the 'Golden Legend' tells that he went to Spain but made no headway there, converted only very few to Christianity and soon returned to Judea. Saint James was the first apostle to be martyred. He was killed by the sword in Jerusalem under King Herod Agrippa, just before the same Herod imprisoned Peter. The body of Saint James with his severed head was supposed to be brought by boat from Palestine to Spain in the fourth century. The 'Golden Legend' says that the Christians put the body on a rudderless boat, giving the burial over to divine providence. The boat made port in Galicia of Spain, in the realm of Queen Lupa. Several miracles were performed before the burial, for Queen Lupa tried to prevent the burial on her grounds. But finally she believed the wondrous events and became a Christian herself<sup>G49</sup>. The relics were kept at a village in Galicia, the northwest of Spain, later called Santiago for Saint James. This is the legend as it was written down in the thirteenth century. The first charter mentioning the tomb of Saint James in Spain dates from 829<sup>G14</sup>. A tomb of a martyr with a severed head brought in a boat is probably linked to indeed a historical figure. A Spanish preacher called Priscillus was decapitated around 386 in Trier of Germany. His decapitated body could have been returned to Spain and his cult continued in Galicia<sup>G14</sup>. The legend of James and the historical fact of Priscillus could have been joined.

Saint James is foremost known as the patron-saint of Spain, and especially of the Spanish Reconquista on the Moors. Spain desperately needed a saint in the early ninth century. And not just any saint. Spain needed a very powerful one, a warrior-saint. Who better than James, who had with John been closest to Jesus and who had been a Boanerges at that? The tomb of Saint James may well have been a wishful finding, the culmination of the Spanish Christian energy dressed against the Moors, in order to galvanise once more Spanish war spirit to re-conquer the land from the Moors. James became the patron saint of Spain. A strong image of a fighter-saint was necessary; one who could perform miracles in the battlefield. Soon, 'Saint James' or 'Santiago' was

shouted as the battle cry of Asturian soldiers winning back their land. For that, the tomb was a place to find new strength and support. The site of Saint James' burial was a village that grew to a small town. Along with the success of the wars against the Moors the reputation of Saint James grew. The town of Santiago in Compostella thus became a famous pilgrimage place.

Macro-theme: Saint James

Micro-themes:

Saint James

The Calling of Saint James

Saint James fighting the Infidels

The Martyrdom of Saint James

Scenes from the Life of Saint James

## **The Saints**

There are very many Saints, and very many pictures exist with scenes from the lives of those saints, often even of only locally well-known saints. We will provide a list that is as complete as possible.

### **2.3.9. Saint Jerome**

Saint Jerome's full name was Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius. Jerome or Hieronymus lived from 341 to 420<sup>E5</sup>. He was born in Dalmatia. The 'Golden Legend' says he was born in the town of Stridon on the boundary between Dalmatia and Pannonia (Hungary). He studied extensively in Rome and was baptised around 366. He left for Palestine and arrived in Antioch in 374. He became very ill in Antioch and had a dream in which God condemned him for not being Christian enough and too much of a Roman rhetoric. He became a hermit in the desert rocks of Syria for five years. He left his rocks however, was ordained a priest in Antioch and studied further in Constantinople. There he made translations of Greek works in Latin. He returned to Rome where he became the secretary of Pope Damasus, during whose Pontificate Emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the Roman State. Damasus was also a pope who was violently opposed to dissensions in the Christian church. He opposed the Donatists of North Africa and other schisms. Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome to revise the Latin version of the Bible into a single final volume. Jerome had learned Hebrew earlier already, while a hermit, so made it his life work to revisit the original Hebrew texts. This Latin Bible was later to be called the Vulgate, the reference version of the Bible in Roman Catholicism.

Jerome stayed in Rome for three years. He left for Bethlehem, together with a group of ladies who had lead a convent life in Rome. They made pilgrimages to Palestine and Egypt. Finally, the nuns Paula and her daughter Eustochium founded a convent in Bethlehem. Jerome founded a monastery there too. He remained the rest of his life in Bethlehem. He continued to study, to write, to comment on the lives of saints like Saint Paul the Hermit and Saint Malchus (who had been a hermit like Jerome in the Syrian desert of Chalcis). Jerome died in Bethlehem. He was buried under the Church of the Nativity, but later his body was brought to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

Saint Jerome was known for his difficult character. He was sarcastic, controversial, had a biting rhetoric and like Pope Damasus, refused compromise on all subjects of the Bible<sup>E5</sup>. He was a priest but scarcely said a Mass. He was brilliant and a traditionalist, so, of course, he aroused jealousies. More than once he left a town surrounded by gossip and scandal. He left Rome because of gossip about his relations to Paula.

Jerome wanted as accurate a Bible as possible, soundly based on the oldest texts. He even wanted all monastic life to be directed to the study of the Bible texts, an idea,

which he put into practice both in his simple monastery and in Paula's convent of Bethlehem.

The paintings of Saint Jerome can represent him in various ways. He may be shown as the penitent hermit in front of his rock cave of the Chalcis desert. He can be dishevelled and partly naked, kneeling before a crucifix in the desert. He sometimes holds a rock in his hand, a symbol of his penance. Jerome would also have beaten his chest with such a rock in order to hold back the temptations that disturbed him from his work. Jerome may be shown being whipped by angels for being accused by God to prefer Cicero to the bible. He may be depicted hearing the trumpets of the Last Judgement in the desert<sup>G41</sup>.

Often also a lion is at Saint Jerome's feet. This may come from Saint Paul the Hermit, Paul of Thebes, of whom Jerome wrote about. This Paul is usually shown with two lions who according to legend (Jerome's writings) burrowed Paul's grave at the request of Saint Anthony of Egypt. Anthony had been a hermit also, subject to a series of temptations by which, like Jerome, he became a notable subject of paintings over the centuries. The lion may also come from another medieval legend according to which Jerome had removed a thorn from a lion's paw, after which the ferocious animal thankfully had remained a companion to Jerome. The lion is also a symbol of the power of the scholar over forces of nature and over worldly matters.

The 'Golden Legend' compiled various legends around Jerome, one of which was that while Jerome was in the monastery of Bethlehem a lion suddenly leaped into the courtyard. It showed its wounded foot. Jerome called the monks to wash the animal's feet and to clean the wounds carefully<sup>G49</sup>. They then found the paw to have been scathed by thorns. The lion recovered and lived among the monks. Jerome even assigned a duty to the lion. The beast was to lead an ass that carried firewood from the forest to the monastery. The lion played the role of guardian, but nevertheless merchants came by and stole the donkey. The lion returned ashamed to the monastery. Jerome punished the beast by having it carry the loads of firewood itself. But one day the lion saw the merchants again, sprang upon them and drove the caravan of camels to the monastery. The merchants then offered half their oil for Jerome's blessing<sup>G49</sup>. Because of this legend, paintings of Jerome contain not just images of the lion but also often a caravan with camels and merchants travelling by in the landscape.

Jerome beats his breast with a stone in various paintings. This also is a reference to a story from the 'Golden Legend'. Jerome read Cicero by day and Plato by night, because he disliked the coarse language of the Bible. He came down with a fever however, so sudden that preparations for his funeral were under way and he was hauled before the Judge's tribunal. Jerome said he was a Christian but the Judge told he was a Ciceronian and had him flogged for having lied. Jerome then would have pleaded for pardon and pledged that he would never again deny Christ by possessing worldly books. Whereupon he regained his strength<sup>G49</sup>.

Jerome can also be shown in paintings as a man of learning, seated in his study with books all around him. Or he is painted as a Doctor of the Church, in full cardinal's ornate. He is then translating the Bible. Jerome never really was ordained a cardinal, but again the 'Golden Legend' wrote that he was ordained a cardinal-priest in the Church of Rome at the age of twenty-nine.

Macro-theme: Saint Jerome

Micro-themes:

- Saint Jerome
- Saint Jerome in a Landscape
- Saint Jerome in Meditation
- Saint Jerome in his Study
- Saint Jerome in the Desert
- The penitent Saint Jerome
- The Communion of Saint Jerome
- Scenes from the Life of Saint Jerome

### 2.3.10. Saint Sebastian

Saint Sebastian was a Roman martyr. He was a captain of the Praetorian guards of the Roman Emperor Diocletian around 290. Sebastian was a Christian<sup>E5</sup>. He supported other martyrs while they were imprisoned. Such as the twin brothers Mark and Marcellian who had received some stay of execution and whose families and friends tried to withdraw them from the true faith. Sebastian on the contrary encouraged them in their Christian faith. Fabian, the prefect, persecuted the Christians and denounced Sebastian to Emperor Diocletian. Diocletian reproached Sebastian of ungratefulness and ordered him to death. He was tied to a stake. Mauritanian archers shot Sebastian. They pierced him according to the 'Golden Legend' with so many arrows that he looked like a porcupine<sup>G49</sup>. He was left for dead. Sebastian was thrown in the gutters, but found by a Christian woman Irene and tended by her. Apparently none of his vital organs were touched. The widow Irene nursed him back to health. Therefore Irene is now the patron saint of nurses. Sebastian recovered, and confronted again the emperor with a renewed avowal of faith. He was then beaten to death with cudgels and finally thrown in the Cloaca Maxima of Rome, the main sewers, to prevent the Christians from honouring Sebastian as a saint. But Sebastian appeared to Saint Lucina, revealed where his body was and was duly buried by the Christians<sup>G49</sup>. His early tomb was in the Saint Balbina catacomb of Rome. A church was built in his name.

Saint Sebastian became of course the patron saint of archers. The archers' guilds had an important position in medieval towns, especially in the defence of the walls. They were the main defenders of the towns and thus stood as symbols of the autonomy of the cities. Saint Sebastian was painted from very early times on. Sebastian's martyrdom was a reference to the passion of Jesus. Jesus and Sebastian both died in almost the same position tied to a pole. Jesus suffered the flagellation tied to a column. Sebastian was shot with arrows against a tree but we will see that rapidly in the hagiography of Sebastian painters also placed him against a column. Sebastian was shot against a tree, but he did not die there so he suffered torture only by the arrows. Sebastian recovered from his torture; Jesus resurrected. Irene tended Sebastian. Mary Magdalene anointed Jesus. Images of the Pietà of Mary and Jesus find a similar duality in Sebastian compassionately helped by Irene. Saint Sebastian is always painted pierced with arrows against a pillar or tree, never in the scene where he is clubbed to death. Such a scene would annihilate the analogy with the passion of Christ.

Sebastian was also much venerated and prayed to as a figure that had suffered torture but had survived. His cult grew during the plague epidemics in Rome of 767 and even later during the general European plague years of the middle of the fourteenth century, around 1348. Sebastian had suffered but survived and that image was one of the rare examples of hope for people caught in plague epidemics. Sebastian was also venerated as the saint who could divert and protect from the plague. He was one of the Plague Saints.

Macro-theme: Saint Sebastian

Micro-themes:

Saint Sebastian

The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian

Saint Sebastian helped by Irene

The Glorification of Saint Sebastian

Saint Sebastian and other Saints

### 2.3.11. Saint John the Baptist

Luke presents a quite detailed story about the birth of John the Baptist, about his preaching and his relations to Jesus. He tells little of John's death however. He merely mentions a few words when he talks of Herod's puzzlement because the tetrarch thought that John had reappeared: 'John? I beheaded him. So, who is this I hear such reports about?' More accounts of the death of John the Baptist are given in Marc and Matthew.

The most important acts of John are the baptism of Christ, but also his many preaching sessions. Especially Luke underscores the preaching of John and John's naming Jesus Christ as the Messiah: 'Someone is coming who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals'.

Zechariah, John's father, was a priest who served in the temple. He was married to Elisabeth. The couple was childless and both Elisabeth and Zechariah were advanced in years. Zechariah was burning incense in the sanctuary, when the angel Gabriel appeared to announce him the birth of a son: 'your wife Elisabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John'. This son 'would prepare for the Lord a people fit for him'<sup>G38</sup>. Zechariah did not believe these words, so Gabriel told Zechariah that he would be silenced and lose his power of speech until John's birth. And indeed, Elisabeth became pregnant and gave birth to a son some months before Mary. It happened that eight days after his birth they came to circumcise the child. They wanted to call the child after his father, as was the custom in the family. But Elisabeth told them to call the child John. This was a serious matter. Zechariah was still dumb, but he took a writing tablet and indeed also wrote 'His name is John'.

The martyrdom of John the Baptist is a frequent subject of ancient paintings. Herod the tetrarch had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. John had told Herod that it was forbidden by the law of the Jews to have one's brother's wife. Herodias was furious with John for this and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man.

However, later on Herodias gave a banquet for Herod's birthday and let her daughter Salome dance for the tetrarch. Salome delighted Herod so much, that he swore an oath to Salome: 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it to you'. Salome went to her mother who urged her to ask the head of John the Baptist. The King was distressed, but dared not to break his word. He sent for a guard and had John beheaded in prison. The head was presented to Herodias.

Macro-theme: Saint John the Baptist

Micro-themes:

- Saint John the Baptist
- The Birth of Saint John the Baptist
- Zacharias and Elisabeth
- The infant John the Baptist
- Landscape with Saint John the Baptist
- John the Baptist in the Desert
- Saint John the Baptist preaching
- The Baptism of Christ
- The Banquet of Herod
- Salome
- The Dance of Salome
- The beheading of John the Baptist
- The severed Head of John the Baptist
- Salome receives the Head of John the Baptist
- John the Baptist appears to Devotees
- Saint John the Baptist with other Saints
- Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist

### 2.3.12. Saint Mary Magdalene

The Evangelist writers mention a Mary in various instances. These figures have been brought together by tradition into one. A Mary anointed Jesus's feet in Simon the Pharisee's house. Luke does not give this woman a name, but John does and calls her Mary of Bethany. This Mary apparently is the same as the woman listening intently to Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary. Luke calls Mary a lady out of whom he exorcised seven devils. Mary of Magdala then is one of the followers of Jesus and she is also present at the Crucifixion, the Entombment. She is the first person to whom Jesus shows himself after the Resurrection. But there is a strange message in this Resurrection scene. Jesus asks Mary not to cling to him for he has not yet ascended to God.

Mary's cognomen 'Magdalene' would have come from Magdalum, the name of one of her ancestral properties according to the 'Golden Legend'. She was wellborn. Her father's name was Syrus; her mother was called Eucharía. The 'Golden Legend' says she was of royal stock and her family owned several towns of which Magdalum was given to Mary. She was renowned for her beauty but also for the way she gave her body to pleasure. After the Resurrection of Jesus Peter had given Mary Magdalene, Martha and Lazarus, Martha's maid Martilla and Cedonius the blind who had been cured by Jesus as well as many other Christians in the custody of Maximin. Unbelievers send off Maximin, Lazarus, Martha and Mary and the others in a boat



without oars, sail or rudder. The travel was fraught with miracles. When the boat set off, Sarah the black servant of the two Marias had been retained on the shore and she despaired to get into the boat. Mary, mother of James and John would have thrown her cloak in the sea, which served as a raft for Sarah to reach the other companions. An angel guided the boat miraculously to a site that is now the small town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the delta of the Rhône River. But according to the 'Golden Legend' the boat coasted directly at the old port of Marseilles. Mary and her companions Christianised the Provence from there. Martha left for Tarascon; Lazarus became the apostle of Marseilles. Maximin and Cedonius evangelised Aix-en-Provence, where Maximin became the first bishop of Aix. Mary Magdalene's place was the village of Sainte Baume, called after Magdalene's balms, which is currently still her pilgrimage site. The village is now called Saint-Maximin-de-la-Sainte-Baume and the cave of Mary is the pilgrimage site. Mary's cave is in a dramatic landscape where a high plateau descends abruptly to lower country. Magdalene's pilgrimage site is still visited yearly by more than two hundred thousand people. It was a pilgrimage site where France's kings came to pray and a road there is still called the 'Road of the Kings'.

The two other Marias and Sarah stayed in the Camargue, the estuary of the Rhône River and when they died their relics remained in Saintes-Maries. This site became the most famous pilgrimage of the Gypsies of Europe. Their patron saint is the black Sarah. The Gypsies wear the relics and the boat of the Marias in procession every year. Mary Magdalene stayed near Sainte Baume. She was found by a priest who had built himself a cell near the place without a stream or comfort of grass or trees where Mary lived. When her last hour came, Mary asked the priest to go to Maximin and to tell him that at Resurrection day she would descend the mountains and be in the church of Aix, waited upon by angels. So it happened. Mary Magdalene received the last sacraments of Saint Maximin, bishop of Aix. Then she lay down full length before the steps of the altar and expired.

While Mary Magdalene lived alone in her cave, seven times a day angels came down to elevate her to the heavens and show her the joy of living near Jesus and the saints. She heard the glorious chants of the celestial hosts. This site is close to the village of Saint-Maximin, high on a promontory above her supposed cave in the rocks, and a column has been dressed in remembrance so that the place is now called Saint-Pilon.

The 'Noli me Tangere' theme with Jesus and Mary Magdalene has been described in the themes of the life of Christ.

Macro-theme: Saint Mary Magdalene

Micro-themes:

- Saint Mary Magdalene
- The penitent Mary Magdalene
- Saint Mary Magdalene in Prayers
- Saint Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy
- The Assumption of Mary Magdalene
- Mary Magdalene in Glory
- Noli me Tangere
- Scenes from the Life of Saint Mary Magdalene

### 2.3.13. Saint Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis was born of a wealthy cloth merchant, Pietro Bernardone, in the town of Assisi. His mother was French; he spoke French well, so that his name Giovanni was changed into Francesco or the Frenchman. He was a wealthy young man, who brawled with his friends in the streets of Assisi, went to the war between Assisi and Perugia in 1201, was imprisoned for a year and so was very much in esteem in his home town. Yet, he was not as other young men of his times. He disliked war, once turned his back in a battle and faced cowardice. He fell ill after his imprisonment. It entirely changed the way he thought about life. He turned to the poor. In 1205, when he was 23 years old, he heard voices in the church of San Damiano of Assisi, which seemed to implore him to repair this church that was crumbling. Francis sold his possessions to start the task, but in the act also gave away some of his father's bales of cloth. He fell into a conflict with his father over this. Francis renounced his inheritance and gave everything back, even his clothes, so that he stood naked in front of his community. The Bishop of Assisi however liked Francis, recognised a spark of divine madness, hid his nakedness, gave him a cloak and further supported him.

Francis went into extreme poverty, nursed lepers, and continued to rebuild San Damiano with money begged. At first he lived alone, but then disciples assembled around him, vowing to the same poverty as Francis. They adhered strictly to Catholicism, to obedience and reverence for the Pope. Soon they became preachers of poverty and simple life. They formed a monastery at the Portiuncula of Assisi where they lived in prayer and labour. They continued to beg to live. In 1210 Francis and his disciples wrote their Rules in 25 chapters and went to Rome to receive acceptance of these rules of strict poverty from Pope Innocentius III. They refused all property for themselves as individuals and also for their Order. The Pope accepted orally the founding of a new order of monks, the Franciscans.

While his order grew, Francis himself was driven by a desire to convert the heathens to Christianity. He left Italy a first time in 1212, but his ship was thrown to the Dalmatian coast. He tried again in 1214 and went over Spain to Morocco, but became ill and had to return once more to Italy. Finally, in 1219, he set off for Acre in the Holy Land where the fifth crusade had begun two years before under Leopold of Austria and Jean de Brienne, King of Jerusalem. The Crusaders attacked Damietta, the sea capital of the eastern Nile in Egypt. Francis was soon disillusioned by the Crusaders that lived in these countries, as well as by the Papal legate Pelagius. He found the austere Sultan Malik Al Kamil more to his taste. He talked to the Sultan but could not convert him. He returned to Assisi and to his little church, a disappointed man.

In the meantime, the monastery he had founded had become a real Order of several thousand people. Cardinal Ugolino, the later Pope Gregory IX, wanted to use the fervour of Francis and his Order of Franciscans for a new religious élan, especially since they pledged to complete orthodoxy in Catholicism. But Francis of Assisi was not the organiser such a new Order needed. Francis realised this and resigned as Minister-General in 1220. He retired to Mount La Verna in Tuscany. Yet, he continued to devise simple Rules for his Franciscan Order: renunciation, return to the

conditions of the first followers of Jesus, devotion to the humble child of the Nativity. Pope Honorius III accepted the order now formally in 1223.

In 1224 Francis wrote the famous 'Canticle of the Sun'. He wrote this poem while visiting Sister Clare of Assisi who had followed him. She had become a nun, lived close to the Franciscans in the Portiuncula of Assisi and had founded the Poor Clares sister monastery. Saint Francis also wrote the 'Fioretti', little flower poems and texts. That same year 1224, according to legends, he received while in ecstasy on mount La Verna the impression on his own body of the Stigmata, the wounds of the Crucifixion of Christ. The panel of Giotto of around 1300 shows this event. A winged seraph God sends the Stigmata to Francis who is already wearing the brown coarse cloak of the Franciscans friars.

After that experience Francis fell ill, became blind and died in 1226 at the Portiuncula chapel. He was buried in the church of San Giorgio of Assisi and canonised in 1228 by Pope Gregory IX, the Cardinal Ugolino that had always supported him.

Macro-theme: Saint Francis of Assisi

Micro-themes:

- Saint Francis of Assisi
- The Ecstasy of Saint Francis
- Saint Francis receives the Stigmata
- Saint Francis in Meditation
- Scenes from the Life of Saint Francis

### 2.3.14. Other Saints

There is of course a long list of further saints on which paintings have been made. We provide hereafter a list of all the saints and holy or blessed men and women of which we have found at least one painting and we propose a macro-theme per figure. In this list will not be found figures such as Saint Joseph, Saint Anne, Saint Veronica, Saint Zacharias, Saint Joachim and Saint Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist), who are linked directly with the life of Jesus and are therefore treated in the themes on the lives of Jesus and Mary.

- Macro-theme:** Saint Acacius
- Macro-theme:** Saint Agatha
- Macro-theme:** Saint Agnes
- Macro-theme:** Saint Albert the Great
- Macro-theme:** Saint Alexander
- Macro-theme:** Saint Alexey of Moscow
- Macro-theme:** Saint Alexis
- Macro-theme:** Saint Aloysius Gonzaga
- Macro-theme:** Saint Amand
- Macro-theme:** Saint Ambrose
- Macro-theme:** Blessed Amedeo Menez de Silva
- Macro-theme:** Saint Angela Merici
- Macro-theme:** Saint Anthony Abbot
- Macro-theme:** Saint Anthony of Padua

<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Apollonia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Arsène
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Augustine
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Augustine of Rome
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Barbara
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Barnabas
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bartholomew of Breganza
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Basil
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Baudilia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bavo
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Benedict
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bernard
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bernardino of Siena
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bernardo Tolomei
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bertin
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Biagio
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Blaise
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bonaventure
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Boniface
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bridget of Sweden
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bridget of Ireland
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Bruno
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cajetan
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Calimer
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Camillus of Lellis
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Candidus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Casilda
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cassian
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Catherine of Alexandria
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Catherine of Siena
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cecilia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Chandelle
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Charlemagne
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Charles Borromeo
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Christina of Bolzena
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Christopher
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Clare of Assisi
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Clement
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Columba
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cornelius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Corbinian
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Corona
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cosmas and Damian
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Crispin
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Cyriac
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Denis
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Diego of Sevilla
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Dionysius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Domingo de Silos
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Dominic

<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Domitilla
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Donatian
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Donato
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Edmond
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Eleutherius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Elia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Eligius (Eloi)
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Elisabeth of Hungary
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Emeranziana
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Erasmus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ermengild
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Esteria
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Eusebius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Eustachius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Faustenis (Faustinus?)
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Fermo
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Florian
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Frances of Rome
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Francesca of Chantal
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Francis of Assisi
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Francis Borgia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Francis of Paola
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Francis Xavier
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Frediano
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gabriel Archangel
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gaetano
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Galgano
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Genesisius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Genevieve
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint George
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gerard
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gereon
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gervase and Protase
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Géry (Gervase?)
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Giles (Aegidius)
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Blessed Gioacchino Piccolomoni
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Godeliva
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gregory
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gregory
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Gregory Barbarigo
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Heldrad
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Helen
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Blessed Herman Joseph
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Hippolytus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Hubertus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Hyacinth
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ignatius of Loyola
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ildephonsus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Isidore Farmer

<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Isabella
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ives
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ivo of Brittany
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint James Minor
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Januarius of Benevento
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Joan of Arc
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint John Bishop
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint John Chrysostomus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint John of Nepomuk
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint John the Almsgiver
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Joseph of Arimathea
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Josse (Judoc)
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Juba
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Jude
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Julian Hospitaller
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Juliana
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Julienne
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Julitta
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Justina
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Justina of Padua
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint King Ladislav
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Lambert
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Lawrence
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Leo the Great
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Leonard of Noblac
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Liberate
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Livinus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Louis of France
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Louis of Toulouse
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Lucy
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Macaire
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Mamete
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Margaret
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Margaret of Cortona
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Martha
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Martin
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Martina
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Mary of Egypt
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Aurelius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Maurice
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Maximus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Maurus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Michael Archangel
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Monica
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Namo
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Narcissus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Narcissus of Gerona
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Nemesius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Nicholas
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Nicholas of Bari

<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Nicholas of Tolentino
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Onuphrius
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Paschal Baylón
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Paul the Hermit
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Paula
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Pelagia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Peter Martyr
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Peter of Alcantara
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Petronilla
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Petronio
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Philip Benzi
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Philip Neri
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Placid
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Praxedis
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Proietizio
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Raphael Archangel
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Raymund of Penafort
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rita of Cascia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Roch
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Romuald
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rosalia
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rosanese dei Negusanti
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rose of Lima
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rufina
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Rustico
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Second of Avila
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Saturninus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Savino
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Scholastica
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Sigismund
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Simeon Stylitus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Simon
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Simon Stock
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Sinibald
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Spiridione
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Stanislas Kotska
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint King Stephen
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Sylvester
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	The Ten Thousand Martyrs
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Thaïs
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Thecla
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Theodora
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Theresa of Avila
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Theodore
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Thomas Aquinas
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Thomas Becket
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ulrich
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Ursula
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Valentine
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Veneranda

<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Veranus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Verdiana
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Viatore
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Victor
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Vincent of Saragossa
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Vincent Ferrer
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Villana
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Vitalis
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Vitus
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Wenceslas
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Wilgefortis
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint William
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint William of Aquitaine
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Blessed William of Crema
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Willibald
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Willibrord
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Wolfgang
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Zeno
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Saint Zita
<b>Macro-theme:</b>	Other Martyrs



## 2.4. Religious and Spiritual Themes

Among the themes used by painters over the centuries, one may recognise a few religious or spiritual themes that are not from the lives of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the apostles and saints, and also not of themes of the Old Testament. We have tried to categorise these pictures in the following macro-themes.

### 2.4.1. Christianisation

A few pictures exist on the overall subject of 'Christianisation. These pictures show the missionary work of monks and priests in far-away forested lands or in lands of deserts, but these last may also be parts of Germany, France, etc.

Macro-theme: Christianisation.

### 2.4.2. Christ the Redeemer

A few paintings show Jesus Christ represented as the Redeemer, the saviour of the world or the 'Salvator Mundi', or as the 'Light of the World'. Other paintings (very rare) show Christ in glory. All these pictures can be brought together in one macro-theme, which can be called 'The Redeemer'.

Macro-theme: Christ the Redeemer

Micro-themes:

- Christ the Redeemer
- Christ in Glory
- The Saviour of the World
- Christ, the Light of the World

### 2.4.3. The Trinity

The Trinity is God the Father, Jesus Christ or the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Quite a few pictures take as special subject this Trinity represented. In some of these pictures saints accompany the Trinity. We add to this theme the pictures on the adoration of the name of Jesus, a theme dear to the Order of the Jesuits since their Order was named after Jesus.

Macro-theme: The Trinity

Micro-themes:

- The Trinity
- The Trinity and Saints
- The Adoration of the Name of Jesus Christ

#### **2.4.4. The Adoration of the Lamb**

Christ represented by a lamb is a rare theme. Few pictures show the adoration of Jesus Christ in the form of a lamb, the 'Lamb of God', but at least one polyptychs – made by the brothers van Eyck – is a very major series of paintings on the subject.

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Lamb

#### **2.4.5. The Soul**

Very few painters have taken the soul as a subject for paintings, but there is at least one major series of about forty paintings on the theme made by Louis Janmot, a painter from the city of Lyon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Macro-theme: The Soul.

#### **2.4.6. The Procession**

There is a large tradition of religious procession all over Europe, which in many instances continues till this day. Painters have taken this theme for representations of crowds following the statues of saints and the relics of the saints.

Macro-theme: Processions.

#### **2.4.7. The Guardian Angel**

Few painters have made pictures on the theme of the personal guardian angel, but a handful of pictures do exist on this theme. Most of these paintings show a boy walking with an angel, not unlike the representations of the young Tobias travelling, guided by an angel, from the Book of Tobit in the Old Testament.

Macro-theme: The Guardian Angel.

#### **2.4.8. Prayer**

The religious theme of prayer is represented in a few paintings. Some of these paintings were made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as social-realistic pictures showing the poverty of the working class people. Other paintings show the prayer at the time of the Angelus, when peasants working in the fields stop the harvest or other farm-work to pray.

Macro-theme: Prayer.

#### **2.4.9. Ascetism and the Joy of living**

Catholic priests are celibate. Very few paintings have shown some of the issues of celibacy, but some do. The title we have chosen for the theme is the title of one of those pictures.

Macro-theme: Ascetism and the Joy of Living.

#### **2.4.10. Intolerance**

At times, the Church has been accused of intolerance. A few pictures exist on this theme.

Macro-theme: Intolerance.

#### **2.4.11. The Cathedral**

Many paintings have been made of the cathedrals, but those pictures should probably more be categorised as landscape paintings. Some of the paintings have however tried to represent the spirituality of the cathedrals or the impression made on devotees by the mass and light in a cathedral.

Macro-theme: The Cathedral.

#### **2.4.12. The Jesus of a Jew**

Jesus Christ was a Jew. Marc Chagall represented Jesus in a completely Jewish environment.

Macro-theme: Jesus Christ as a Jew

#### **2.4.13. Christ's Presence**

The idea of Christ's presence among people of all times is a theme that has been used by very few painters, but examples do exist.

Macro-theme: Christ's Presence

#### **2.4.14. Remorse**

Remorse for wrong deeds exist only when a measure for wrong and bad is somewhere described, the norm established. The messages of Jesus Christ as noted in the New Testament provided such a norm. Few painters have used the theme of 'Remorse'.

Macro-theme: Remorse.

#### **2.4.15. Sin**

Sin, as the deviation from the rules ordained by God and Jesus, is a rare theme.

Macro-theme: Sin.

#### **2.4.16. The Last Judgement**

Many painters have taken up the subject of the Last Judgement, mainly inspired by the Apocalypse of John. Very many and famous pictures exist on the theme.

Macro-theme: The Last Judgement.

#### **2.4.17. God the Father**

God the Father, the Pantokrator, is a rare theme in Western-European oil paintings. God the Father is most often represented in paintings together with Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary, or in the Trinity. Few paintings exist of God the Father alone. It is a very common theme in mosaics and frescoes of the early churches, especially in early Byzantine art. We have provided for this theme, since few paintings do exist which represent God the Father instead of Jesus Christ

Macro-theme: God the Father.

#### **2.4.18. Hermits**

Hermits are mostly shown in landscape paintings. The theme was particularly popular in the German romantic period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Macro-theme: Hermits

#### **2.4.19. Rebel Angels**

There are many paintings of Saint Michael destroying the false angels, but few paintings have as subject the rebellion of a part of the angels against God. These paintings usually represent the fall of the angels and their destruction by God.

Macro-theme: Rebel Angels.

#### **2.4.20. The Holy Ghost**

The Holy Ghost, as a religious concept, is a difficult and rare theme in Western-European oil paintings. The Holy Ghost is most often represented in paintings together with Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary, or in the Trinity, and usually represented as a dove. Few paintings exist of the Holy Ghost alone. It is a very common theme in mosaics and frescoes of the early churches, especially in early Byzantine art. We have provided for this theme, since few paintings do exist which represent the Holy Ghost as part of God.

Macro-theme: The Holy Ghost.

#### **2.4.21. The seven Works of Mercy**

The seven works of mercy are enumerated in the catechism of catholic faith. A few painters have used the subject. We also classify in this category the very few paintings on the theme of the seven deadly sins (I know of only one painter, Hieronymus Bosch, who took up this theme.

Macro-theme: The seven Works of Mercy  
The seven deadly Sins.

#### **2.4.22. The Fountain of Life**

There is a mention in Revelation 22 of a river of life, rising from the throne of God and of Jesus, and which flows from them. A few painters, mainly from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries have taken up this theme, painting an elaborate gothic fountain structure from which flows crystal-clear water. The fountain is usually surrounded by many Saints and Holy Bishops, with God the Father and Jesus, sometimes also the Virgin Mary, throning at the top of the picture.

Fountains could also be seen in the large gardens of kings and princes. Hence, the Virgin Mary is sometimes shown in her enclosed garden together with a fountain, which may equally be an allusion to her immaculate conception.

Macro-Theme: The Fountain of Life  
Micro-theme: The Virgin at the Fountain

#### **2.4.23. Abbeys, Nuns and Monks**

Many landscape paintings show abbeys and convents, cloisters or other parts of abbeys. Other landscape paintings show in the setting figures of nuns or monks. We categorise all these paintings in this theme of 'Abbeys, Nuns and monks'.

**Macro-theme:** Abbeys, nuns and Monks.

## 2.5. Themes from the Old Testament Book Genesis

### 2.5.1. The Creation

The very beginning lines of the book of Genesis tell that first, God created heaven and earth. But the earth was without form and dark. God said, 'Let there be light', and then there was light. God saw that light was good, so he divided the light from the darkness and called light 'day' and darkness 'night'. This was the first day. A few paintings show the creation of light, the very beginning of the creation. Other paintings show God the Father in the act of the creation, God creating the universe, earth and water, the sun and the moon, the animals, and so on.

Macro-theme: The Creation

Micro-Themes:       The Creation of Light  
                          God the Father creating the Universe

### 2.5.2. Eden

At the time when God made heaven and earth, no wild bush nor wild plant had sprung for God had not yet sent rain or any man to till the soil. Water flowed out of the ground and from there watered the surface. Then God shaped man from the soil and blew the breath of life into him.<sup>G38</sup> God planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and there he put the man he had fashioned. God caused to grow every kind of tree, beautiful and good to eat, and in the middle of the garden he grew the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed from Eden to water the garden and that river divided to make four streams. The Garden of Eden, also called the Terrestrial Paradise, has been a frequent subject of painters.

Macro-theme: The Garden of Eden.

### 2.5.3. Adam and Eve

God settled man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it. But God thought that it was not right for man to be alone, without helper. Then, God made the man fall into a deep sleep. While the man was asleep God took one of his ribs and closed the man's flesh up again. God fashioned the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to man. Man and woman were naked, but they felt no shame before each other. Many artists made paintings on the theme of Adam and Eve. Eve was tempted by Evil to eat an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, whereupon God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden so that they had to work to survive. All these phases of the story of Adam and Eve have been used as themes by painters.

Macro-theme: Adam and Eve

Micro-Themes:       The Creation of Adam  
                           The Creation of Eve  
                           Adam and Eve  
                           The Temptation of Adam and Eve  
                           Adam and Eve before God  
                           The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden  
                           Adam and Eve at Work

#### **2.5.4. Cain and Abel**

The first-born child of Adam and Eve was called Cain and his brother was Abel. Cain worked the land and Abel became a shepherd. When they grew up, Yahweh favoured the offerings of Abel but he did not look with favour at Cain's gifts. Cain became very angry and depressed. When the brothers were well in the country, Cain killed Abel. Yahweh asked to Cain, 'Where is your brother?' Cain answered that he did not know and that he was not supposed to be the guardian of his brother. But Yahweh knew, and condemned Cain to become a wanderer. Cain pleaded then to Yahweh, complaining that this was an unbearable punishment. Yahweh then put a mark on Cain and told that whoever would kill Cain would suffer vengeance sevenfold.

Macro-theme: Cain and Abel

Micro-Themes:       Cain and Abel  
                           Cain  
                           Adam and Eve find the Corpse of Abel  
                           Adam and Eve lament over Abel  
                           The Remorse of Cain

#### **2.5.5. The Ark of Noah**

Adam had another son, called Seth. From Seth would descend Noah and from Noah's sons the whole earth was peopled. From his direct lineage came Terah and his son Abraham. God wanted to punish the inhabitants of the earth. He prepared to destroy all the creatures by flooding, but he ordered Noah to build an ark and bring a couple of all the living animals in the ark. There are many paintings of Noah building the ark, of the deluge, of Noah sending out doves until one returns with a twig, and of the sacrifice of Noah when the deluge was over. After Noah's sacrifice, Yahweh promises never to destroy the earth again, and shows Noah the sign of his covenant: the rainbow. These are all micro-themes on the theme of Noah.

Macro-theme: Noah

Micro-Themes:       The Ark of Noah  
                           The Deluge  
                           Noah's Drunkenness



The return of the Dove to the Ark  
Noah leaves the Ark  
The Sacrifice of Noah  
Noah and the Rainbow

### **2.5.6. The Tower of Babel**

The Book of Genesis tells that the whole world of people still spoke the same language. In a valley of Shinar the people started to make bricks and to bake them in fire. They told themselves they would build a city and a tower with its top reaching heaven. God saw the city and tower and remarked that all the undertakings of the people would succeed, nothing they planned to do would be beyond them. So he went down and confused the people and their language so that they could not understand one another anymore. Yahweh scattered them all over the world and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel. All the paintings on this theme show the Tower of Babel under construction.

Macro-theme: The Tower of Babel

### **2.5.7. Abraham**

Abram descended from Shem, one of Noah's sons. His father was called Terah. Terah wanted to travel to the land of Canaan. On the way, in Haran, Terah died. God told Abram to proceed to Canaan, as Terah had wanted to do. Abram travelled to Canaan slowly and settled in the Negeb. Then Yahweh appeared to Abram and promised to give him this land of Canaan.

In the Jordan lay Sodom and Gomorrah and nine kings of that region fought a battle there. The King of Sodom was among the defeated and Lot, who had lived there, was captured. When Abram heard of this, he went with over three hundred men after the conquerors and beat them, recuperating Lot and his kinsmen. Melchizedek, King of Salem, was a priest. He brought bread and wine to Abram and blessed him. Melchizedek proposed the spoils of the battle to Abram and asked him to leave the people in Melchizedek's care. But Abram refused to take the possessions and also to give up his people. Abram took nothing, but a share was given to the men who accompanied him.

Abram's wife Sarai had remained barren. So she brought an Egyptian slave girl called Hagar to Abram and proposed to her husband to have children by Hagar. Soon Hagar conceived.

In a double story in the Bible, the Book of Genesis tells that Yahweh appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre. While Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent, three men suddenly stood next to him. He gave the men bread and pieces of a calf to eat, curd and milk to drink. One of Abraham's guests said that he would come back in a year and then Sarah would have a son. That son would be Isaac.

Sarai treated Hagar badly then, so Hagar fled to the desert. An angel of Yahweh found her at a spring in the desert. The angel told her to go back to her mistress but he foretold her also that she would have many descendants. Hagar had to call her son Ishmael. Abram will possess Hagar with his body but he will stay with his old mind with Sarah. Yahweh treated Sarah as he had told. Sarah conceived in her old age of a child that Abraham called Isaac. When the boy was eight days old Abraham circumcised his son as God had commanded.

Isaac grew and was weaned. Abraham gave a great banquet that day. When Sarah saw Isaac play with Ishmael, Abraham's son by her Egyptian slave Hagar, she saw danger. She asked Abraham to drive away Hagar and her son so that Ishmael would not share Isaac's inheritance. Abraham was distressed at this, but God told him to do as Sarah had asked. Abraham put the child on Hagar's shoulder and sent her away. Hagar wandered off into the desert. When all the water was gone, she abandoned the child under a bush. But she could go only a little further, then sat down, and thought that she could not bear to see the child die. Yahweh heard the boy cry and the angel of God spoke to Hagar. He said, "Do not be afraid. Pick up the boy and hold him safe for I shall make him into a great nation." Yahweh opened Hagar's eyes so that she saw a well. She gave the boy to drink. The boy grew up, lived in the desert, became an archer and Hagar found him an Egyptian wife.<sup>G38</sup>

When Abram was ninety-nine, Yahweh appeared again to Abram and repeated his covenant. God said that his name would henceforth be Abraham and Sarai should be Sarah. God pledged to a covenant with Abraham's descendants for all generations. He again gave the land of Canaan to Abraham. He blessed Ishmael, but told Abraham that his son Isaac would father the further descendants of the covenant. As a sign of that covenant, all males had to be circumcised.

One day, God put Abraham to the test. He called, "Abraham, Abraham". God said, "take your son to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains."<sup>G38</sup> The next morning Abraham set on his way. After three days he saw the place Yahweh had indicated. Abraham left his servants behind, took Isaac and loaded the boy with wood for the offering. He carried himself the fire and the knife. Arrived at the top, Abraham arranged the wood, bound his son and put him on the altar on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill Isaac. But the angel of God right at that moment called from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham". The angel said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy. For now I know you fear God. You have not refused your own beloved son." Then Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham slaughtered the animal and offered it as a burnt offering.

All these stories from the Old testament have been themes for painters, which we however propose to gather under one macro-theme of 'Abraham'.

Macro-theme: Abraham

Micro-themes: Abraham

Abraham and Melchizedek

Abraham and the three Angels

Sarah brings Hagar to Abraham

The repudiation of Hagar

Hagar and Ishmael in the Desert, succoured by an Angel  
 The Angel appears to Abraham  
 The Sacrifice of Isaac

### 2.5.8. Lot

Lot was the son of Abraham's brother. Lot accompanied Abraham on the latter's voyage from Ur to the land of Canaan. He separated from Abraham when returning from Egypt, after a famine in Canaan, they decided that the land could not sustain them all. Lot preferred to go to the Jordan, to the region of the cities Sodom and Gomorrah.

But God wanted to punish Sodom and Gomorrah and he sent two angels to Sodom to see whether the Sodomites would mend their ways and to find out how many righteous people lived in the city. Lot invited them in. During the night, men calling out that they wanted to have intercourse with the arrived foreigners surrounded Lot's house. Lot came out and proposed his virgin daughters to the mob, but the crowd wanted to force their way in. The angels pulled Lot back into the house with them and dazzled all those who stood at the door of the house with such a blinding light that they could not find the doorway. The angels told Lot to take his men and relatives at dawn and to flee from the city, for God would destroy the cities. Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire of his own sending. God overthrew the cities, the people living in the cities and everything that grew in the whole plain. While Lot fled, Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. During the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Lot had arrived in the town of Zoar. Lot dared not to stay in Zoar so he settled in the hill country with his two daughters. He lived in a cave.

There were no men around to marry Lot's daughters. The elder daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old and there are no men to marry here. So let us ply our father with wine and sleep with him. In this way the race will be preserved." The next night they made their father drunk and the younger sister slept with him. Lot was unaware of his daughter coming to bed and leaving it. The following night again the sisters made their father drunk and the elder now slept with him.

These stories were often used by painters. We gather all the stories under one macro-theme.

Macro-theme: Lot

Micro-themes: Lot

The Blinding of the Sodomites

The Family of lot fleeing Sodom

Lot and his Daughters

### 2.5.9. Isaac

When Abraham was an old man, he saw it was necessary for his son to marry. Abraham asked his senior servant to go to their native land and to choose there a girl

among their kinsfolk. Abraham also did not want his son to go there himself for God had promised the land of Canaan to him and his descendants. Abraham wanted Isaac to stay in Canaan.

The servant Eleazar therefore took ten of Abraham's camels, loaded them with gifts and departed for the city of Nahar in Aram Naharaim. The servant came with the camels to a well. He prayed to Yahweh to let a girl come and give them to drink. That would be the sign of God the servant would be waiting for. He had not finished speaking when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah who was married to Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with a pitcher on her shoulder. The girl was very beautiful and she was still a virgin.<sup>G38</sup>

Eleazar ran up to her, asking for water from her pitcher. The servant observed her and when she had finished watering the camels he put a gold ring through her nose and put two bracelets on her arms. The girl ran home. Her brother Laban saw the bracelets and ring. Laban ran to Eleazar and offered him shelter as well as room and fodder for the camels. Eleazar told Laban how his master had forced him on his way to seek a spouse for Isaac. Laban recognised Yahweh's design. Eleazar stayed for the night and in the morning Eleazar and Laban asked Rebekah what she thought of the story. Rebekah accepted to go with Abraham's servant to marry Isaac.

Isaac had been living in the mountains. He saw camels approaching. Eleazar told the whole story to Isaac. Then, Isaac took Rebekah with him in his tent. He married her and made her his wife.

After the death of his wife Sarah, Abraham married Katurah and this woman also bore him sons. But Abraham left all his possessions to Isaac. To the sons of his concubines he made grants but sent them away to the East, far from Isaac.

Rebekah was barren at first but Isaac prayed to Yahweh. Yahweh heard Isaac's prayer and Rebekah conceived. While she was pregnant, the children inside her struggled so much that she consulted Yahweh. Yahweh said to her that there were two nations in her womb. The two children would be two rival peoples. And Yahweh predicted that one nation would have mastery over the other. The first child to be born was red, altogether like a hairy cloak. They named him Esau. His brother was born, grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was then sixty years old. Esau became a hunter, a man of the open country. Jacob was a quiet man. He stayed at home among the tents. Isaac preferred Esau because he had a taste for wild game. But Rebekah preferred Jacob.<sup>G38</sup>

Once, Esau returned from the countryside exhausted. Jacob had cooked a stew. Esau asked for some of the stew. But Jacob said, "First give me your birthright in exchange". Esau answered that he was at death's door, so what good was a birthright to him then. So Esau gave his oath to Jacob and thus sold his birthright to Jacob. Then only did Jacob give some of the bread and the lentil stew to Esau. Esau didn't care much for his birthright.

When Isaac had grown old, his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see. One day he summoned Esau and asked him to take his weapons, his quiver and bow and to go hunt some game for him. Isaac asked Esau to make for him an appetising dish he

liked and then Isaac would give Esau a special blessing before he died. Rebekah overheard what Isaac had promised. Rebekah told Jacob to bring back to her two good kids of the flock. She would make from them a dish as Isaac liked. Jacob could bring the dish to Isaac and receive his blessing in Esau's place. But Jacob saw a problem to this scheme. Esau was hairy. So if his father would touch him, he would feel that Jacob was cheating him and would curse him. But Rebekah answered, "The curse is on me then. Just fetch the kids." So, Jacob went and took the kids. His mother made a delicious stew out of them. She took her elder son's best clothes and put them on Jacob. She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skins of the kids. Jacob went into the tent of Isaac. He brought the stew. Isaac was surprised for he heard the voice of Jacob but touched the arms of Esau. He did not recognise Jacob though, and as Jacob said this was Esau, Isaac's first born, Isaac blessed him. Soon after Esau arrived with game and made an appetising dish for his father Isaac. He entered Isaac's tent and asked for his father's blessing. Isaac was seized then with a violent trembling for he understood what Jacob had done. But the blessing had been given.

Isaac told Esau he had given his blessing to Jacob. On hearing his father's words, Esau cried out loudly that Jacob had taken his birthright twice now. But Isaac did not want to bless Esau too. He told Esau that henceforth his home would be far from the richness of the earth and the dew of heaven. Esau would have to live by the sword and serve his brother. But Isaac also told that Esau could win his freedom and shake his yoke off his neck. Esau hated Jacob then. He cried out that as soon as Isaac had died he would kill Jacob. Rebekah overheard these words too. So she sent Jacob away to her brother Laban in Haran.<sup>G38</sup>

These themes have been used by painters for many paintings.

Macro-theme: Isaac

Micro-themes: Isaac

Eleazar and Rebekah at the Well  
The Wedding of Isaac and Rebekah  
Isaac blessing Jacob

### 2.5.10. Jacob

Esau had threatened to kill his brother Jacob once Isaac dead, for Jacob had deceived their father in receiving the blessing of heritage. Rebekah had overheard Esau calling out the threat. Always the sly, she told her husband Isaac to send her favourite son Jacob to her brother Laban. She told Isaac that Jacob should not marry Hittite women like Esau had done, but that Jacob was to marry one of their own kin. Isaac summoned Jacob and told him, "You are to choose a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother." Jacob did so and left Beersheba for Haran.<sup>G38</sup>

Jacob travelled to Haran. He stopped for the night, lay down and used a stone under his head as pillow. He had a dream. He saw a ladder planted on the ground that reached heaven with its top. The angels of God were going up and down on the ladder. Then, suddenly, Yahweh stood at his side and said that God would give the

ground on which Jacob was sleeping to Jacob and his descendants. Yahweh promised to keep Jacob safe wherever he went and to bring him back to this country.

Jacob arrived at Laban's home and Genesis recalls a story of shepherds all having to wait until enough of them were there to roll away a heavy stone from a well to give to drink to their sheep. Jacob helped them with the stone and met Laban. When Jacob had stayed for a month with Laban, his uncle asked him what he wanted for pay. Jacob replied he had seen Laban's youngest daughter and wanted to marry her. Laban had two daughters. The elder was named Leah and she had lovely eyes. But the younger, called Rachel, was shapely and beautiful. Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel. Laban asked Jacob to work for him for seven years and then Jacob could marry Rachel.<sup>G38</sup>

Jacob worked for seven years for Laban and he loved Rachel much. When the time was up, Jacob asked for his wife. Laban gathered all his people and held a banquet. But when night came he brought his elder daughter Leah to Jacob and Jacob slept with her. When morning came Jacob found out he had been tricked. He confronted Laban, but Laban told it was not his custom to marry first a younger daughter. But Laban also promised that if Jacob finished the marriage week with Leah, he would also give him the youngest daughter in return for another seven years of work. Jacob agreed and when the week was finished, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Jacob slept with Rachel and he loved her more than Leah.

Leah gave birth to Reuben, to Simeon, to Levi and to Judah. Rachel, seeing that she herself gave no children to Jacob, became jealous of her sister. She presented her slave-girl Bilhah as a concubine to Jacob and told him to sleep with her so that she, Rachel, would have children too. Billalh soon gave birth first to Dan and then to Naphtali. Leah, seeing that she had ceased to bear children, took her own slave-girl Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a concubine. Zilpah conceived of Gad and of Asher. One day Reuben found mandrakes in a field and Rachel asked for these to Leah. But Leah said, "is it not enough to have taken my husband, do you want to take also my son's mandrakes?" So Rachel said, " Well, all right. Let Jacob sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes". Leah went to Jacob and told him she had hired him at the price of her son's mandrakes. Yahweh heard Leah and she conceived and gave birth to her fifth son, Issachar. Later she gave birth to Zebumun as well as to a daughter named Dinah. Only then did God remember Rachel. She too finally conceived and gave birth to a son, which she named Joseph.<sup>G38</sup>

After the birth of Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to leave to return to Canaan. Laban wanted to pay Jacob. Jacob only asked for the black sheep and the speckled or spotted goats. Laban promised so, but before Jacob could choose he hid all his black sheep and speckled goats, entrusted them to his sons and put three days of journey between him and the rest of the flock that Jacob tended. Jacob got fresh shoots from poplar, almond and plane trees and peeled them in white strips. He put the shoots near the pond where the goats came to drink. The goats mated there in front of the shoots and produced striped, spotted and speckled young. Jacob kept apart the ewes and made them face whatever was striped or black in Laban's flock. Thus he built up droves of his own. Thus Jacob grew wealthy of his own flock.

But Laban's sons conspired against Jacob. Yahweh spoke to Jacob and told him to flee to Canaan, to the land of his ancestors. Forthwith, Jacob took his children and his wives and put them on camels. He took all his possessions and his flock and left while Laban was away, sheering his sheep. Rachel in the meantime had appropriated the household idols belonging to her father, but Jacob did not know of this. Thus, Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramaean so that he would not be forewarned of his flight.<sup>G38</sup>

After three days Laban pursued Jacob, caught up with him and searched his tents. But Rachel had hidden the idols inside a camel cushion. She was sitting on the cushion and asked her father to forgive her for not rising in his presence because he was as women are from time to time. Laban searched everywhere but found nothing. Finally, Laban and Jacob made a treaty. Jacob had to promise to care well for Rachel and Leah and he and Laban delineated their lands with a stone cairn.

Jacob continued his journey to Edom, the land of Esau. He sent messengers in front to win the favour of his brother. But he heard from them that Esau was already on his way to meet him, with four hundred men. He sent many goats and sheep as a gift to Esau then, split his camp in two and waited greatly afraid and distressed.<sup>G38</sup>

A night, Jacob got up and took his two wives, their two female servants and his eleven sons and took them across the stream at the ford of Jabbok. Jacob stayed alone. Then someone wrestled with him until daybreak. Seeing that he could not master Jacob, the other struck him on the hip so that Jacob's hip was dislocated. But Jacob still wrestled on. Then the other said, "Let me go for the day is breaking". But Jacob replied that he would not let go unless he received his blessing. The other said, "What is your name?" "Jacob", he replied. "No longer are you to be called Jacob", the other said, "but Israel since you have shown your strength against God and men and have prevailed." Then God blessed Jacob and left.<sup>G38</sup>

When Esau met Jacob, he was not angry at all. He did not need Jacob's gifts for he had plenty. Esau ran to meet his brother and took him in his arms. Jacob and Esau parted a little while after. Esau returned to Seir in Edom. Jacob settled in front of the city of Shechem and bought a piece of land of Hamor, father of Shechem.

Shechem son of Hamor raped Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. Hamor visited Jacob and asked Dinah's hand for his son. Jacob's sons gave a crafty answer to Hamor and told that only when the people of Shechem were circumcised could they as them and intermarry. Hamor was so in love with the girl that he agreed. Hamor and Shechem talked to the townspeople. They pleaded that the newcomers were friendly and that there was livestock to share and to become a single nation if only the males of the town circumcised. The citizens of the town agreed to the proposal and all the males were circumcised. But Simeon and Levi took their swords three days later and killed Hamor and Shechem. They advanced unopposed against the town and slaughtered all the males. Then their brothers, Jacob's sons, treacherously pillaged the town in reprisal for the dishonouring of their sister. Jacob feared reprisals then.<sup>G38</sup>

Jacob departed again. Yahweh ordered Jacob to travel to Luz, which is Bethel, in Canaan and to dress an altar there for him. Jacob named the place El-Bethel since it was there that Yahweh had appeared to him while he was fleeing from his brother. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died there. God then appeared again to Jacob, blessed him

and said that from now on he would not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel. God said that he was El-Shaddai and that from Jacob's loins would come kings and an assembly of nations. Jacob raised a monument where God had spoken to him and he called the place Bethel.

Jacob left Bethel with his family and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel gave birth to a second son. The midwife told her not to worry and announced her she had again a son, but Rachel breathed her last. Rachel died in the effort of giving birth and she breathed her last. Rachel called her son Ben-Omi, but Jacob named him Benjamin. Jacob raised a monument to Rachel. Jacob had now twelve sons.

The sons of Jacob were now twelve. Jacob reached Mamre where Isaac lived. His father was one hundred and eighty years old when he died. His sons Jacob and Esau buried him. Esau left far from Canaan and from his brother Jacob and went to live with his three wives and five sons in Seir. Esau settled in the mountainous region of Seir and was called Edom. Esau's descendants reigned as kings in Edom before an Israelite king.

Macro-theme: Jacob

Micro-themes: Jacob

- Jacob and Rachel at the Well
- Jacob with Laban
- Jacob's Dream of the Ladder
- The Fight of Jacob and the Angel
- The return of Jacob with his Family
- Laban searching for his Idols
- The reconciliation of Esau and Jacob
- The Birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel
- Jacob refuses to release Benjamin

### **2.5.11. Joseph the Egyptian**

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, for he was the son of his old age. But Joseph was not well loved by his brothers. One day, when Joseph's brothers went to pasture Jacob's flock at Shechem, Jacob sent Joseph out to them to hear how they were doing. Joseph found his brothers at Dothan. The brothers saw him coming from a distance and they discussed a plot to kill him. Reuben pleaded not to murder Joseph themselves. So when Joseph arrived, they only caught hold of him and threw him in a well. Then the brothers sat down to eat. Looking up, they saw a group of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead with camels loaded with goods they were taking to Egypt. Judah proposed to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. Some Midianite merchants were passing and they pulled Joseph out of the well. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites and these men took Joseph to Egypt.

The brothers took Joseph's tunic, a decorative tunic that Jacob had given him, slaughtered a goat and they dripped the tunic in the blood. They brought then the tunic



to Jacob. When Jacob saw the blooded tunic he cried out that a wild animal had devoured Joseph. Jacob mourned his son for many days.

Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold Joseph to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials and commander of the guard. Potiphar made Joseph his attendant and put him in charge of his household, entrusting him with all his possessions.<sup>G38</sup>

Joseph was well built and handsome. Potiphar's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and wanted Joseph to sleep with her. But Joseph refused. Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not agree to sleep with her. One day Potiphar's wife even caught hold of him by his tunic and again enticed him to sleep with her. But Joseph left the tunic in her hands and fled.

Potiphar's wife then ran out screaming to her servants that Joseph had burst in on her. She said she had screamed and Joseph had left his tunic beside her and ran out of the house. When she told the same story to her husband, Potiphar had Joseph arrested and committed to the goal where Pharaoh's prisoners were kept.<sup>G38</sup>

Yahweh did not forsake Joseph in prison. Soon, the chief gaoler put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners. So, Joseph came to meet in prison Pharaoh's cupbearer and Pharaoh's baker. Pharaoh was angry with them and had put them in custody in the goal where also Joseph was a prisoner. The cupbearer and the baker each had a dream. Joseph interpreted the dreams. He said that Pharaoh would lift the head of the cupbearer in three days and restore him to his position. But to the baker Joseph said that Pharaoh would also lift his head in three days, however by hanging him on a gallows. And so it happened. But contrary to what he had promised, the cupbearer did not remember Joseph when he left prison and forgot about him.<sup>G38</sup>

Two years later it happened that Pharaoh had a dream. He saw seven cows, sleek and fat coming up from the Nile and then seven cows, wretched and lean. The wretched and lean cows devoured and ate the seven sleek and fat cows. Pharaoh had another dream. He saw on one stalk seven ears of grain, full and ripe. Sprouting up behind then came seven meagre ears of grain. These swallowed the seven full and ripe ears. All of Pharaoh's magicians and wise men could not interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Then the chief cupbearer remembered Joseph. He talked to Pharaoh about what had happened in goal and how Joseph had interpreted his own dream and fate. Pharaoh then sent for Joseph. Pharaoh explained to Joseph what dreams he had had recently. Joseph said to Pharaoh that the two dreams had the same meaning. Joseph interpreted that seven years were coming, bringing great plenty to the whole of Egypt. But then seven years of famine would follow them. He proposed to Pharaoh to take action and appoint supervisors for the country, to impose special taxes during the years of plenty and to store the grain under Pharaoh's authority keeping it as a reserve for the seven years of famine. Pharaoh and all the ministers approved of what Joseph had said. Pharaoh appointed Joseph as his chancellor. Joseph was to be governor of the whole of Egypt. Pharaoh named Joseph then Zaphenath-Paneah and he gave Asenath, daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife.<sup>G38</sup>

Joseph travelled throughout the length and breadth of Egypt. He collected food during the seven years of abundance and stored it in Pharaoh's storerooms. Before the years of famine came Joseph had two sons with Asenath. He called the first Manasseh and

the youngest Ephraim. After seven years came the famine. People came to Egypt from all over the world to get supplies from Joseph, and Joseph opened the granaries of Pharaoh and rationed out the grain. In Canaan, Jacob also lived in the famine. Seeing that there were only supplies to be had in Egypt, he sent out his sons, Joseph's brothers, to Egypt, except Benjamin the youngest. Joseph's brothers went and they were among the people trying to get supplies from Pharaoh's governor.

The brothers bowed down deeply to Joseph. Joseph recognised them, but they did not recognise him. Joseph remembered his dreams then. Joseph did not make himself known and he spoke harshly to them. He told the men he suspected they were spies. They replied that they were all sons of the same man in Canaan but had left their youngest brother with their father. Joseph put them all in custody for three days. Then he had them brought before him. He told them one brother would have to stay in prison and he chose out Simeon for that. The other brothers would have to leave for Canaan and fetch their youngest brother to prove that what they had said was true. Joseph gave them grain and he filled their baskets, returned even their money and sent them back to Canaan. When Jacob's sons arrived in Canaan they told Jacob that the governor of Egypt wanted them to bring Benjamin to Egypt as a proof that they were honest men. Then Simeon would be released from prison and could as all move freely about in the country. But Jacob despaired. He did not want to listen. He said Joseph was gone, and also Simeon. He did not want to bear also the brunt of losing Benjamin.

But the famine in Canaan grew worse. Then Israel could not refuse any longer. He sent his sons again on their way to Egypt. He loaded their baggage with the best products of Canaan and he gave them double the amount of money they had taken the first voyage. The brothers set off again. Benjamin accompanied them.<sup>G38</sup>

The men arrived in Egypt and were brought before Joseph once more. They offered him the gifts at his house. Joseph invited them to have a meal together for he was much affected at the sight of his younger brother. They feasted with him and drank freely. Then Joseph instructed his chamberlain to fill the men's sacks with grain but also to hide his silver cup in the sack of the youngest brother. The brothers left with their donkeys fully loaded. After a while Joseph sent out his chamberlain to catch up with the caravan and to search their sacks, saying that a silver cup was stolen. The chamberlain reached the brothers. He told them they were suspected of theft and that the one on whom the cup would be found would become his slave, the rest to be set free. The cup was found on Benjamin. The brothers protested now. Judah spoke out and all returned to Joseph. Judah talked to Joseph for all the brothers. He said their father Jacob would grieve atrociously for Benjamin. Judah told that if they returned without Benjamin, Jacob would surely die. Judah spoke with many words and pleaded passionately. Then Joseph could not control his feelings any longer. He sent away his servants and when he was alone with his brothers he made himself known to them.<sup>G38</sup>

Joseph forgave his brothers. He told them this was all God's doing so that he, Joseph, could preserve their lives in the famine and thus assure the survival of their race on earth. Joseph revealed that this was only the second year of the famine and that five more years of hardships were to come to the world.

News reached the Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had arrived. Pharaoh ordained Joseph to load his brothers' beasts with grain and to hurry them away to Canaan. He told, 'Fetch your father and your families and come back to me. I will give you the best territory in Egypt, where you will live off the fat of the land.' So the brothers left Egypt, loaded with food and rich presents. When his sons arrived in Canaan with all Pharaoh's wagons, Jacob was stunned. And when he heard from them what had happened and that Joseph was alive and well, he decided to go to Joseph and see him back before his death. So, Israel set out with his possessions, as Pharaoh had proposed.

Joseph brought his father and presented him to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was clement once again and offered Israel to stay in the best part of the country in the region of Rameses. Thus Israel settled in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They grew numerous, were fruitful and they acquired property there.

When Jacob's time to die had come, he made Joseph promise him to carry him back to Canaan and bury him there, and not in an Egyptian tomb. When Jacob was taken ill and in his last moments, Joseph took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob. Jacob blessed the children. Jacob told these children would be his, as much as were Reuben and Simeon. Israel laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, his left on the head of Manasseh. Joseph wanted to change that for Manasseh was the elder, but Israel told he knew. Manasseh would grow into a great nation, but Jacob predicted the younger brother would be greater, his offspring sufficient to constitute nations. Then Jacob bade farewell to his sons, who would make up the twelve tribes of Israel, giving each an appropriate blessing. He gave them his instructions to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, and died.<sup>G38</sup>

There are very many paintings on stories of the life of Joseph the Egyptian. There are also many similarities in the lives of Jesus and Joseph the Egyptian, so that people preferred to have the sweeter pictures of Joseph's life in their rooms, rather than pictures of the passion of Christ and yet have a reference to Christ. There is another story, part of the larger scenes of Joseph the Egyptian, which has been taken up frequently by painters. This story features a woman named Tamar, and her story should not be confused with the story of Amon, Tamar and Absalom, all children of King David.

Judah, Joseph's brother, had not wanted to kill Joseph and therefore had proposed to sell Joseph to the Midianites. After that, Judah left his brothers and settled with a Midianite called Hirah. Judah married with a daughter of a Canaanite called Shua and he had three sons by her, called Er, Onan and Shelah. When his sons had grown up, Judah chose a wife for his first son, a woman called Tamar. But Er offended Yahweh and Yahweh killed him. Judah gave Tamar to Onan then, telling that thus Er's line would be continued. But Onan knew that if a child were born the line would not be his so he spilled his seed on the ground every time he slept with his brother's wife. This displeased Yahweh so Yahweh killed Onan too. The third brother of the family, Shelah, was still too small, so Judah sent Tamar back to her father to wait until Shelah had grown up. Judah's wife died. He buried her and when he was comforted, one day, he went to Timnah for the shearing of his sheep. That was near the house of Tamar and when Tamar heard that, she reflected that she was still not given to Shelah although Shelah had grown up. So she wrapped a veil around her to disguise herself,

and sat down at the entrance to Enaim on the way to Timnah. Judah, seeing her, took her for a prostitute and asked to sleep with her. He did not recognise Tamar as his daughter-in-law. To allow Judah to sleep with her, Tamar agreed to receive a kid of his flock but she asked for a pledge to this promise. She asked Judah to give her his seal and cord and the staff he was holding, as a pledge of his promise. Judah slept with Tamar and later sent the kid by his friend, Hirah the Adullamite, begging him to recover the pledge. But Hirah did not find Tamar anymore and a prostitute was unknown in the village. Judah told Hirah not to care for the pledge. About three months later, people came to tell Judah that his daughter-in-law had been playing the harlot and that she had become pregnant because of her misconduct. Judah ordered her to be brought to him, to be burned alive. But Tamar then sent a word to her father-in-law, telling that the man whose seal and cord and staff she had here, had slept with her. Judah recognised them and said that the woman was right since he, Judah, had not given her to his son Shelah. But he also had no further intercourse with Tamar.

When Joseph died he was embalmed and laid in a coffin in Egypt. With the death of Joseph ends the Book of Genesis.

Macro-theme: Joseph the Egyptian

Micro-themes: Joseph the Egyptian

Joseph thrown in the Well

The Brothers of Joseph return the Tunic to Jacob

Joseph sold by his Brothers

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Joseph led away to Prison

Pharaoh's Dreams

The seven meagre and the seven fat Years of Egypt

The Pots of Gold of Egypt

The Search for the Golden Cup

The Arrest of Joseph's Brothers

Joseph recognised by his Brothers

Joseph presents his Father to Pharaoh

Judah and Tamar

Scenes from the Life of Joseph the Egyptian

## 2.6. Themes from the Life of Moses

The four books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy form a unity by the figure of Moses, the mediator. Exodus talks of Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. Leviticus tells of Moses providing the investiture of the priests and the Levites. Numbers recalls the census organised by Moses, while Deuteronomy are discourses of Moses providing for a clear text of the law of Israel and finally the book gives an account of Moses' last actions and of his death. Four books of the Bible are on Moses alone. Moses' importance was in his function as a mediator of Yahweh at a moment when the numbers of the Hebrews had grown to the point where a religious and secular organisation was needed. Painters have taken up many stories from these books and painted scenes of Moses' life.

### 2.6.1. Moses rescued from the Waters

While the Jews had been living in Egypt for a very long time, a woman of the tribe of Levi, who had married a man of Levi, conceived and hid her boy. When she could hide him no longer, she put him in a papyrus basket that she had coated with bitumen and pitch and she laid the basket among the reeds at the river's edge. The boy's sister looked from a distance. Pharaoh's daughter bathed in the river and she noticed the basket among the reeds. She knew it was a Hebrew boy, but she felt sorry for it. She told one of her maids to take the child away and to nurse it. When the child grew up, Pharaoh's daughter took the boy to her, treated him like a son and called him Moses because she drew him out of the waters.<sup>G38</sup>

This story is one of the main theme of subjects on Moses painted by artists.

Macro-Theme: Moses rescued from the Waters.

### 2.6.2. The Ordeal of the Fire

Moses stayed at the court of Pharaoh. One day, Pharaoh placed the crown of Egypt jokingly on the young boy's head. But Moses immediately threw it to the ground and he trampled on it. The courtiers of Pharaoh saw this as an omen that Moses would later overthrow Pharaoh. The courtiers proposed a test for Moses to prove the innocence of the boy and to find out whether he was a magician or not. They brought two plates to him, one containing red cherries and the other red burning coals. An angel of God guided Moses and God made Moses choose the coals. Moses put a coal in his mouth and was burned. By doing that he proved to be innocent of any intent to treason. There are very few paintings of these topics.

Macro-theme: The Ordeal of the Fire

Micro-themes: Moses undergoing Trial by Fire

The young Moses tramples on Pharaoh's Crown

### 2.6.3. The Daughters of Jethro

When Moses was grown up, he knew he was not an Egyptian but a Hebrew. One day, while he was watching the forced labour of the Israelites, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew. Moses killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But the matter came to light and Pharaoh tried to put Moses to death. Moses then fled from Pharaoh and he fled into Midianite, that is Arab, territory. There Moses saw seven girls coming to draw water from a well. Some shepherds came and drove the girls away, but Moses sprang to their help. He even watered their flock. When the girls returned to their father, called in Exodus first Reuel and then Jethro, their father told his seven daughters to call Moses in and to give him to eat. Moses agreed to stay.<sup>G38</sup> Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. Moses looked after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian.

There are very few paintings on this theme of Moses and the daughters of Jethro, with Moses fighting off the shepherds.

Macro-theme: Moses and the Daughters of Jethro.

### 2.6.4. Moses in the burning Bush

While Moses stayed with Jethro, Pharaoh died. God heard the call of distress of Israel and he remembered the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. One day, Moses led his flock to the far side of the desert, to a place called Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of God appeared to Moses, in a flame that blazed from the middle of a bush. The blaze however did not consume the bush.<sup>G38</sup> Yahweh told Moses to lead his people out of Egypt and to plead with Pharaoh to let his people go. Moses was reluctant to do this, but Yahweh ordered Moses to the events, although he also gave Moses his brother Aaron the Levite to assist him.

There are not so many paintings of this subject, but since it is the first time in the Bible narrative that Moses appears in all his greatness and in all his doubts, we classify here also paintings of Moses himself, alone.

Macro-theme: Moses in the burning Bush

Micro-themes: Moses in the burning bush

Moses

### 2.6.5. Moses turns Aaron's Staff into a Snake

Moses went to see Pharaoh to ask him to let his people return to Canaan. Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, 'If Pharaoh says to you to display some marvel, you must say to Aaron to throw down his staff and let it turn into a serpent.' Moses and Aaron did so. Aaron threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it turned into a serpent. Then Pharaoh called for the sages and the sorcerers and by their spells the magicians of Egypt did the same. Each threw his staff down and these turned into

serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs. Pharaoh however, remained obstinate.<sup>G38</sup>

This theme is very rare in paintings, but at least Nicolas Poussin made a picture of the scene.

Macro-theme: Moses turns Aaron's Staff into a Snake

Micro-themes: Moses turns Aaron's Staff into a Snake

### 2.6.6. The Passage of the Red Sea

The Israelites left Egypt fully armed, but Yahweh did not lead the people on the road to the Philistine's territory but in a roundabout way through the desert of the Sea of Reeds. When Pharaoh King of Egypt was told that the people had fled, he and his officials changed their attitude towards the Israelites. Pharaoh had his chariot harnessed and set out with his troops among which were six hundred of the best chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers in each. He chased the Israelites. Pharaoh caught up with Moses near Pi-Hahiroth, facing Baal-Zephon. Then the angel of God, who had preceded until then the army of Israel, changed position and followed them. The pillar of cloud thus came between the armies of Israel and Egypt. The cloud was dark and the night passed without one army nearing the other. Then Moses stretched out his hand and Yahweh parted the waters with a strong wind so that the Israelites went on dry ground right through the Sea of Reeds, with walls of water on either side of them. In the meantime the cloud threw the Egyptian army into confusion and clogged their chariot wheels. When the Egyptians also drove through the open ground in the sea, Yahweh told Moses to stretch out his hand again. And as day broke, the sea returned to its bed. Yahweh overthrew the Egyptians in the middle of the sea and Pharaoh's entire army drowned.<sup>G38</sup> The Israelites, seeing the drowning Egyptian army, put their faith in Moses and in Yahweh and sang a song of victory. Miriam, Aaron's sister and a prophetess took up a tambourine and all the women followed the dancing.

Pictures of this subject usually show either the Jews crossing the Red Sea while Yahweh opens the waves, or the army of Pharaoh drowning when the waves strike back in the seabed. The pillar of fire, given by Yahweh to show the Israelites the way, is prominent in ancient paintings. There is a rare painting of Miriam dancing on the shore, but we propose to define only one macro-theme for these scenes.

Macro-theme: The Crossing of the Red Sea

### 2.6.7. The Gathering of the Manna

The Israelites went through the desert of Shur to Elem. From there they entered the desert of Sin. The Israelites had nothing to eat. They feared starvation. But God through Moses promised to provide for them. In the evening after several days quails

flew in and covered the camp. When the dew lifted the next morning, the surface of the desert was covered with something fine and granular. It was small and round, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. The House of Israel called this man-hu or manna, meaning 'what is it'? It was the edible secretion of the insects. Moses told the people to collect it and eat this manna as much as he or she needed. Yahweh told not to keep it until the following day. If it was kept longer than one day it bred maggots and smelt badly. Only when Moses told the day before the Sabbath to collect it and keep it until the next day, for on the Sabbath God sent no manna, only then the heavenly dew stayed edible. It was like coriander seed. It was white and its taste was like that of wafers made with honey. The Israelites ate manna all the time they stayed in the desert and until they reached inhabited country.<sup>G38</sup>

Macro-theme: The gathering of the Manna

### **2.6.8. Moses strikes Water from the Rock**

When the Israelites left the desert of Sin, they pitched camp at Rephidim. There was no water for the people to drink. Yahweh told Moses to take his staff with which he had already struck the river, and go to the rock at Horeb. Moses struck the rock and water flew out for the people to drink. He gave the place the names Massah and Meribah. Water gushed out of the rock in abundance.<sup>G38</sup> The story of Moses and the water in the desert was important for what happened afterwards. Yahweh accused Moses and Aaron not to have believed that Yahweh could assert his holiness in front of the Israelites. Yahweh told Moses and Aaron that they would not lead the Israelites into Canaan. Moses died before he led his people into Canaan.

Macro-theme: Moses strikes Water from the Rock

### **2.6.9. The Tablets with the Law**

They reached the desert of Sinai and set up camp in the desert, facing the mountain. There, Yahweh called Moses to the mountain and he said, 'If you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine. For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.'<sup>G38</sup> At daybreak, two days later, there were pearls of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. In the camp, all the people trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God. Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke. Yahweh had descended in the form of fire. Then Yahweh spoke to Moses. The people of Israel were not allowed to come up the mountain. Moses climbed to the top alone. God then gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. He also told Moses to build an altar and burn sacrifices. Moses received instructions for the building of a sanctuary. Aaron and his sons were to be installed as priests of Israel. Yahweh thus delivered the Law of Israel to Moses. He gave to Moses the stone tablets with the Law and the commandments, written for the instruction of Israel. The tablets of stone were written by the finger of God. The glory of Yahweh stayed in the cloud that covered the mountain. Moses put all Yahweh's words in



writing, built an altar at the foot of the mountain and gave the laws to the elders of the people.<sup>G38</sup>

Macro-theme: Moses and the Tablets of the Law

Micro-themes: Moses receives the Tablets of the Law from God

Moses presents the Tablets of the Laws to the People

### 2.6.10. The Adoration of the Golden Calf

Moses stayed a long time on the mountain. The people started to mutter. They said to themselves, 'Where is that man that has led us out of Egypt?' They feared to stay without a god. So they decided that they needed a god to lead them further.<sup>G38</sup> Aaron organised the construction of the god. The people stripped off the gold rings in the ears of their wives and daughters and sons and they brought all their gold to Aaron. Aaron received what they gave to him, melted it down in a mould and with it he made a statue of a calf. All shouted then, 'Israel, here is your god who brought you here from Egypt.' Aaron built an altar for the Golden Calf and the people sat down to eat and drink and to amuse themselves. Yahweh was very angry that the Israelites had made the Golden Calf and that they were adoring another god. Moses, who was still on the mountain with Yahweh, pleaded with God and Yahweh in the end relented over the disaster that he had intended to inflict on his people. Moses came down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, tablets inscribed on both sides, on the front and on the back, by the finger of God. As he approached the camp with Joshua, he saw the calf and the groups dancing. Moses blazed with anger. He threw down the tablets he was holding, shattering them.<sup>G38</sup> Moses seized the calf they had made and burned it. Moses went back on the mountain and received new tablets from Yahweh.

Macro-theme: The Adoration of the Golden Calf

Micro-themes: The Adoration of the Golden Calf

Moses destroys the Tablets with the Law

### 2.6.11. The Spies of the Land of Canaan

In the desert of Paran, Moses sent out men from each tribe to reconnoitre the land of Canaan. God ordered to send men to explore Canaan, one leader from each tribe. The men departed and spied on Canaan. When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. Then the spies returned to Moses after forty days and they showed to the Israelites the fruit of the land. When the men came back they reported that indeed Canaan was a land of milk and honey, but that it was also a land that devoured its inhabitants. They spoke of the strength of the cities, of the Amalekites who lived in the Negev, the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites of the hills and of the Canaanites who lived along the coast and along the River Jordan. They said they saw powerful tribes there, and giants. Caleb wanted to attack the country immediately, but the other Jews were afraid of the power of the people of Canaan. The Israelites then cried out in dismay and they rebelled against Moses. Yahweh was angry again, but Moses interceded. Yahweh only struck the

messengers that had enticed the people by disparaging the country. Of the men who had gone to reconnoitre the country, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb, son of Jephunneh were left alive. There are very few paintings on this subject, but some do exist.

Macro-theme: The Spies of the Land of Canaan

### **2.6.12. The Chastisement of Korah, Dathan and Abiram**

On the way to Canaan, a serious rebellion once more broke out. This time it was led by Korah, son of Ishar, son of Kohath the Levite, and the men of the tribe of Reuben, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab and On, son of Peleth. They rebelled against Moses and Aaron with two hundred and fifty Israelites. They especially reproached Moses and Aaron to have set themselves higher than the others of the community. Moses threw himself on his face when he heard the accusations. He ordered one censer for each man to be filled with incense and put on fire before Yahweh. Yahweh then would choose who would be the consecrated men. Moses scolded the men to want to be priests and to mutter against Aaron. Dathan and Abiram reacted. They told that they had not seen much yet of the country flowing with milk and honey and they refused to come. Moses repeated to Korah, and also to Aaron as well as to the other men to come with their censers tomorrow, to confront Yahweh. Korah did so.<sup>G38</sup>

Korah assembled the community before the Tent of Meeting. Yahweh spoke to Moses and he told Moses and Aaron to get away from the community of the Israelites for he was going to destroy them all. But Moses pleaded to God and threw himself on his face before Yahweh. God said, 'Stand clear of Korah's tent'. Moses stood up, went to Dathan and Abiram and all the elders of Israel followed him. Moses spoke to them and told them to stand away from Korah's tent and to touch nothing that belonged to Korah, lest his sins be also upon them. Moses then said they would know the power of Yahweh if the earth should open its mouth and swallow Korah's family with all their belongings and if they would go down alive to Sheve. Also Dathan and Abiram were standing at their tent doors, with their wives, sons and little children. As soon as Moses had stopped speaking, the ground split apart under their feet and swallowed them and they disappeared.<sup>G38</sup> Fire then shot out from Yahweh and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who had offered incense.

Macro-theme: The punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

### **2.6.13. The Brazen Serpent**

The Israelites left Mount Hor on the road to the sea of Suph, to go round Edom who refused to give way to the Israelites. On the way the people lost patience. They regretted that Moses and his God had taken them away from Egypt to bring them to these hardships of the road. God then sent fiery serpents among the people. The bites of the snakes brought death. The Israelites repented then and appealed to Moses to intercede with Yahweh to save them from the serpents. Moses spoke to God. Yahweh

then ordered to make a fiery serpent and to raise it like a standard. Anyone who would look at the standard would survive from the bites. Moses made a serpent out of bronze and he raised it as a standard and it happened as Yahweh had told that people bitten by the snakes survived when they looked at the brazen serpent standard.<sup>G38</sup>

The paintings of this scene show Moses brandishing a staff with a bronze serpent and the Jews lying on the ground surrounded by the snakes.

Macro-theme: The brazen Serpent

#### **2.6.14. The Prophet Balaam**

The Moabites of Canaan were afraid of the Israelites, as these approached their land. Balak, the Moabite king, sent messengers to summon Balaam, son of Beor, who lived at Pethor in the territory of the Amawites. Balak wanted to ask Balaam to come and curse the Israelites so that he would be able to defeat them and drive them out of his country. The elder of Moab and the elders of Midian thus went to Balaam. After a while, God said to Balaam to go with the Moabites, but to do only what God would tell Balaam to do. So Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the chiefs of Moab.

But Yahweh was angered. He sent his angel to take stand in the road and block the way. Balaam's donkey saw the angel standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. The donkey turned off the road and went into the open country. Balaam struck his donkey to get her back onto the road. The angel of Yahweh then went further and positioned on a narrow path among the vineyards, with walls on the left and the right. The donkey again saw Yahweh's angel and scraped against the wall. The donkey scraped also Balaam's foot against the wall, so Balaam struck the donkey again. But Balaam and the donkey passed the angel. The angel then went a little further and stood now in a place so narrow that there was no room to pass on either side. The donkey stopped and lay down under Balaam. Balaam now flew into a very rage and he struck the donkey once more. Yahweh gave the donkey the power to talk and the donkey reproached Balaam for having struck her because she had worked for Balaam all her life and Balaam had mounted her often. When the donkey asked whether she had ever behaved this way, Balaam had to answer 'No'. Yahweh then opened Balaam's eyes and now the Prophet also saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the middle of the road with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam then regretted to have struck the donkey, for if the donkey had gone on, Balaam would have been dead. Balaam proposed to the angel to turn back, but the angel said to go on but to only tell what Yahweh told him to tell.

Balaam went to Balak and after having made many offerings to Yahweh, he prophesied that Moab would fall to Israel. And Balaam refused to curse Israel; he left and went home.<sup>G38</sup>

The only painter that I know to have taken up this subject was Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Balaam and his Donkey

### **2.6.15. The Death of Moses**

Moses was then a hundred and twenty years old. He told the Israelites he could not act as their leader anymore. Yahweh had told Moses that he could not cross the Jordan. Moses gave over command to Joshua. Yahweh said to Moses, 'And now the time is near when you must die.' Moses and Joshua went inside the Tent of Meeting and the pillar of cloud stood at the door of the Tent. God gave further commandments to the Israelites, which Moses wrote down in a book. Then Moses sang a song of praise to Yahweh. Yahweh ordered Moses to climb the mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, just opposite Jericho and to view from there Canaan, the Promised Land. Yahweh ordered Moses to die there because he had broken faith with Yahweh at the Waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the desert of Zin. Moses had failed to make Yahweh's holiness clear to the Israelites there. Thus, Moses was allowed by Yahweh to see Canaan, but not to enter it.<sup>G38</sup> Moses blessed the tribes, went up Mount Nebo, and looked at the Promised Land. There, in the country of the Moabites, Moses the servant of Yahweh died. His grave was never found. A few paintings of this scene exist.

Macro-theme: The Death of Moses

### **2.6.16. The River Jordan**

When Moses had died, the new leader was Joshua. Joshua struck camp and set out from Shittim. They camped at the Jordan before they crossed. Yahweh ordered the Levite priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the Israelites. When the bearers of the Ark reached the waters, the upper waters of the Jordan stood still and formed a single mass so that the column could advance unharmed by the river. The people crossed opposite Jericho.<sup>G38</sup>

Macro-theme: The Crossing of the River Jordan.

## **2.7. Themes from the Deuteronomy and other Books of the Old Testament**

### **2.7.1. The Book of Joshua**

Joshua was the warrior-leader who led the Israelites into Canaan and fought against the people that lived there, to conquer the land. Most of the paintings on subjects from the Book of Joshua are therefore battle-scenes, such as the taking of the town of Jericho. When Canaan was conquered, Joshua distributed the land to the tribes of Israel. That allocation of the Promised Land has also been a subject for painters.

Macro-theme: The Book of Joshua

Micro-themes: The Battles of Joshua

Joshua makes the Sun stand still

The Allocation of the Promised Land

### **2.7.2. The Book of Judges**

There are hardly any pictures with scenes from the Book of Judges and from the Books of the Judges Othiel, Ehud, Shamgar and Deborah. I have found no pictures from these books. Nevertheless, we propose to hold an open macro-theme for these books.

Macro-theme: The Book of Judges

### **2.7.3. Jael and Sisera**

Jabin, a king of Canaan who reigned over Hazor, threatened the Israelites. The army commander of the Canaanites was Sisera. The Judge of Israel at that time was a woman called Deborah. She sent for Barak, son of Abino from Kedesh in Pahtali. She told Barak to confront Jabin and Sisera. Barak agreed to that only if Deborah would join him. So Deborah stood up and went with Barak. They encamped on Mount Tabor. Barak charged down from that mountain with ten thousand men behind him and they won the battle against Sisera's army. Sisera fled on foot towards the tent of Jael, the wife of Haber the Kenite. Haber had been with the tribe of Kain before and with the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. They had lived with the Israelite community. Jael prayed Sisera in, gave him milk to drink when he asked for water and she laid him to sleep, and even covered him with a rug. Jael, wife of Haber, then took a tent peg and a mallet. She crept softly onto the hidden Sisera. She drove the peg into Sisera's temple, right through into the ground, shattering his temple. Sisera crumpled between her feet. Sisera had been fast asleep, worn out from the battle. When Barak arrived in pursuit of Sisera, Jael came out of her tent to meet him and she showed the dead Sisera.

There exist a few paintings of the story of Jael and Sisera. The subject is a pendant for the theme of Judith and Holofernes.

Macro-theme: Jael and Sisera.

#### **2.7.4. The Judge Gideon**

Yahweh had given the Israelites over to the Midianites. Then he spoke to Gideon. Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal in the township, as Yahweh had asked him to do. Gideon received the name of Jerubbaal. He assembled an army of Israelites and marched against Midian and Amalek. But Yahweh did not want any victory yet for the Israelites as a whole. He did want a victory only for Jerubbaal-Gideon. So he told Gideon to bring his army to the waterside. Some of the warriors drank with their tongue, hands clapped to their mouths. Others knelt down and drank that way. Yahweh told Gideon only to keep the three hundred men who had drunk as dogs do and he promised Gideon to rescue him with these only.

Gideon attacked Amalek and Midian with his three hundred men only, organised in three groups. The enemy's camp was thrown in confusion and the Midianites fled away. The Israelites pursued them and killed many, among whom the Midianite chieftains Oreb and Zeeb. Then Gideon continued the pursuit of the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna. He took also these two prisoners after having destroyed their army. Gideon also destroyed then the towns of Succoth and of Penuel because they had not wanted to provide him and his army with bread on the pursuit. Finally he killed the Midianite kings.

There are very few paintings on Gideon. I only know of one painter that has taken up this subject: Johann Heinrich Schönhofeld.

Macro-theme: Gideon's Battles.

#### **2.7.5. The Judges Abimelech, Tola, Jair and Jephtah**

The Bible tells of the battles that these judges won for Israel. But the Israelites always did wrong and served many of the old gods of Canaan. They deserted Yahweh. Yahweh then let the Philistines and the Ammonites prevail over Israel. The Israelites were in distress. They prayed to Yahweh, gathered in Gilead and were looking for a volunteer to attack the Ammonites. The elders of Gilead then fetched Jephtah, a valiant warrior. This was the son of a prostitute and his father's wife as well as his father had driven Jephtah out from their house when other, legitimate sons were born. Jephtah fled and settled in the territory of Tob, where he assembled a group of adventurers that raided with him.

There are quite a few paintings on scenes of the life of Jephtah, but these are usually on one subject only: Jephtah sacrificing his only daughter.

Jephtah moved with the army of the Israelites into Ammonite land. He asked Yahweh to deliver the Ammonites in his grasp. He made a vow to Yahweh. He told that if

Yahweh delivered the Ammonites to him, he, Jephthah, when he returned from fighting the Ammonites victoriously, would sacrifice the first thing he saw coming out of the doors of his house to meet him. Jephthah indeed beat the Ammonites severely. When Jephthah returned to his house, his daughter came out to meet him, dancing at the sound of tambourines to welcome him. This was Jephthah's only child. Jephthah remembered his rash promise, tore his clothes then and told his daughter what he had promised to God. He exclaimed his misery, but Jephthah's daughter urged him to keep his promise to Yahweh. She asked her father for two months of respite and went with her companions to wander in the mountains and bewail her virginity. When the two months were over, Jephthah did to his daughter what he had promised with his vow. He sacrificed his only daughter to Yahweh.

Macro-theme: The Sacrifice of Jephthah

### **2.7.6. The Judges Ibzan, Elon, Abdon; Manoah, Father of Samson**

There are but few paintings on the subject of these judges. The only themes taken up by painters have been on Manoah, probably because Manoah was the father of Samson. These pictures then usually are about two stories told in the Bible on Samson's mother.

There was a man called Manoah of Zorah of the tribe of Dan, married to a wife who was barren. She had borne no children. The angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman, told her to drink no wine anymore or to eat anything unclean. He told her she would conceive and give birth to a son who would be God's Nazirite from his mother's womb to his dying day and this son would rescue Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

The angel appeared a second time and also Manoah spoke to it this time. Manoah took a kid and offered a burnt offering to God. The angel of Yahweh ascended in the flames before the eyes of Manoah and his wife and they fell with their face to the ground. The woman gave birth to a son and called him Samson. The boy grew up to a handsome and strong youth.

Macro-theme: Manoah

Micro-themes: The Announcement to Manoah's Wife

Manoah sacrifices to God

### **2.7.7. Samson**

Some pictures on Samson have been made on the theme of his killing a lion. Once, Samson went down the vineyards at Timnah and as he came there a young lion advanced on him. The spirit of Yahweh was in Samson. Samson tore the lion to pieces with his bare hands. Samson then continued on to Timnah to look at the girl and he became fond of her. Somewhat later he went back to her. He found the carcass of the lion on his way and there was a swarm of bees in the lion's body, and honey. He gave some of the honey to his father and mother.

Samson also killed Philistines, and paintings have been made on that subject. The Philistines came to the tribe of Judah and threatened to destroy it. The men of Judah went to Samson. They did not kill him as the Philistines had asked, but bound his hands behind his back and brought him thus as a captive to the Philistines. When the Philistines came up running to Samson, Yahweh's spirit descended on him. Samson's rope broke suddenly? He took a jawbone and killed alone a thousand Philistines. Samson is thus often depicted with a jawbone in his hand.

Most of the pictures on Samson are however on the story of Samson and Delilah, and on the blinding of Samson.

When Samson had been a Judge of Israel for twenty years, he fell in love with a woman of the Vale of Sorek called Delilah. The Philistines came to see her. They asked her to find out where Samson's strength came from. In return for telling them they promised to pay her eleven hundred silver shekels. Delilah pestered on Samson day after day and kept nagging at him. Samson at first made a fool of her and always gave her another untrue story on his strength, which Delilah then tested out. But in the end he gave up and told Delilah that if his hair were shorn, he would lose his strength. He told her he was a Nazirite and that a Nazirite should not be shorn. Delilah knew that this was the true reason for Samson's strength then. She went to the Philistines and asked for the money. She lulled Samson to sleep, called a man and had him cut off Samson's seven locks of hair. Thus she broke the strength of Samson. The Philistines could now seize him, put out his eyes and take him to Gaza where they fettered him with a double chain of bronze.

Samson later took revenge, and that revenge also was a frequent theme for painters. Samson had to turn the mill in the prison. But slowly his hair began to grow again.

The Philistines assembled for a great sacrifice to Dagon their God and for a feast on their victory over Samson. They even summoned Samson out of prison to perform feats for them at the celebration. During the feast Samson came to stand between the pillars supporting the building. The building was crowded with Philistines. Samson called out to Yahweh. He took hold one the two central pillars, braced himself with one arm around the right pillar, and with the other arm around the left pillar. He then heaved with all his might, shouting he wanted to die with the Philistines. The pillars moved and the whole building collapsed on the Philistine chieftains and on the three thousand men and women who had participated at the feast. All were killed.

Macro-theme: Samson

Micro-themes: Samson and the Lion

Samson victorious over the Philistines

Samson and Delilah

The Blinding of Samson

The Revenge of Samson

### **2.7.8. The Virgins of Shiloh**



The Book of Judges terminates with several short stories. A crime was committed in Gibeah, a Benjaminite town. A man there had to offer his concubine to a group of bandits who raped the woman. He then cut his concubine in twelve pieces and sent the pieces throughout the territory of Israel. The tribes of Israel wanted to punish this crime, but the tribe of Benjamin did not agree. So a breach started to grow among the tribes of Israel. There was a great battle between the Israelites and the Benjaminites before Gibeah and with Yahweh's help the Benjaminites were defeated. The town of Gibeah was burned down. The men of Israel swore an oath then never to give any daughter of theirs to marriage to a Benjaminite. The people built an altar at Mizpah and swore a new oath that anyone who did not come to Yahweh and to the assembly of the tribes to offer would certainly die. After a while the Israelites felt sorry for their deed to banish the tribe of Benjamin. Israel was thus amputated of a tribe. So the Israelites thought of how to give wives again to the tribe of Benjamin. But they had sworn not to give them any daughters of their own. It was discovered however that no one from the tribe of Jabesh in Gilead had come to the assembly of the great offering to Yahweh at Mizpah. The Israelites attacked Jabesh, took the virgins and brought them to their camp to Shiloh in Canaan. These were given to the Benjaminites.

There are very few paintings on the subject of the virgins of Shiloh, but there is at least one painting on the theme made by Pieter Paul Rubens, now in the Louvre museum of Paris.

Macro-theme: The Virgins of Shiloh.

### **2.7.9. The Book of Ruth**

A man from Betlehem called Elimelech took his wife Naomi and his two sons to live in the plains of Moab because there was a famine in the country of Israel. The family lived there for ten years and Elimelech's sons married to Moabite women, one of whom was called Ruth. Elimelech and his sons died but Naomi decided to return when the famine was over. Ruth though a Moabitess did not want to leave Naomi so the two women arrived in Betlehem.

Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side that was very well off. His name was Boaz. Ruth asked to Naomi to be allowed to glean in the fields of Boaz. Boaz saw her in the field but he was nice to her. He ordered his workmen to leave her alone. He gave her bread and told his men even to pull a few ears corn and to drop them for Ruth to glean. So Ruth could stay among Boaz' working women and she gleaned for Naomi and herself. Naomi remarked Boaz' kindness. She told Ruth to wash and to perfume herself, to put on her cloak and to go to the threshing floor. She told Ruth not to let Boaz recognise her but to find out where he laid himself to sleep, then to go and turn back. Naomi told Ruth to take the covering away from Boaz' feet and to lie down there herself too. Ruth did that. Boaz woke up in the middle of the night and he remarked Ruth at his feet. She told Boaz he had a right of redemption over her and could spread the skirt of his cloak over her. But Boaz let her sleep then and in the morning gave her six measures of barley. After a time however, Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. They came together and thus Ruth conceived of a son. That son

was called Obed and he was the father of Jesse, the father of David who would be the greatest king of Israel.

Macro-theme: Ruth

Micro-themes: Naomi and Ruth

Boaz and Ruth

### 2.7.10. The Book of Samuel

The Book of Samuel tells mostly about the battles between the Israelites and the Philistines. Paintings have been made only of a few themes from the book, among which the story of the plague of Ashdod. After this, the stories of Saul and David start. There exist however also a few paintings that are portraits of the prophet Samuel.

The Philistines fought fiercely and they defeated Israel. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinelas, died. Also, the Ark of Israel's God was captured. The Philistines took the Ark from Ebenezer to Ashdod. They put the Ark in the temple of their own god, Dagon.

Each morning the statue of Dagon lay face down on the ground before Yahweh's Ark until even Dagon's head and hands were severed. Yahweh brought ravage to Ashdod and he afflicted its people with tumours. When the people were thus oppressed, they went to speak to the Philistine generals and demanded that the Ark be taken away to Gath. But the same afflictions happened at Gath, so the Ark was taken to Ekron. The Ekronites were afraid of the power of Yahweh's Ark. In Ekron too, the people died or were afflicted with tumours. The Ark of Yahweh stayed with the Philistines for seven months. Then the Philistines could hold on no longer. They took two milk cows and harnessed them to a cart on which they placed the Ark. They made golden replica of their tumours and of the rats that had ravaged their country and placed them in a box, as a gift to Yahweh. Of the golden tumours there was one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, for Ashkelon, for Gath and one for Ekron. The cows went to Beth-Shemesh, to the field of Joshua. The Levites then gave burnt offerings to Yahweh. The men of Beth-Shemesh took the Ark to Kiriath-Jearim, where the Jews consecrated Eleazar to guard the Ark. Twenty years later only, Samuel started to speak out and he banished all the foreign gods, the Baals and Astartes. The Israelites mustered, fought the Philistines and defeated them at Mizpah.

Macro-theme: Samuel

Micro-themes: Samuel

The Plague of Ashdod

### 2.7.11. Saul

Saul was a great warrior-king of Israel and he fought the Philistines many times. The prophet Samuel summoned the people of Israel to draw lots for a king. First the tribe of Benjamin was chosen among all the tribes of Israel. Then the clan of Matri was

chosen among the Benjaminite clans. And from the clan of Matri the lots fell on Saul. Throughout Saul's life, there was fierce warfare with the Philistines. Saul fought the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites and the king of Zobah. Saul disobeyed God several times however, sparing his enemies. Later therefore, Yahweh sent Samuel to Jesse, to look at Jesse's children, for Yahweh wanted to make a great king out of one of Jesse's children. That was to become David. An evil spirit of Yahweh afflicted Saul. The king's servants said that only a skilled harpist could ease Saul's afflictions. Harp music would do well to Saul and the servants knew a skilled harpist in the young David, the son of Jesse of Betlehem. Saul sent for David and so David entered King Saul's service. Saul grew very fond of him and David became the king's armour-bearer.

Macro-theme: Saul

Micro-theme: Saul

David playing the Zither to Saul

Saul and Samuel

### 2.7.12. David and Goliath

The story of David's killing of Goliath is well known. David took his stick in one hand. He selected five smooth stones from the riverbed and put them in his shepherd's bag. Then with his sling in hand, he approached Goliath the Philistine. Goliath and David insulted each other, as was the custom before a duel. The Philistine cursed David by his gods. David said he had come in the name of Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel that the Philistine had challenged. He told Goliath he would kill him, cut off his head, and give his corpse as well as the corpses of the Philistines to the birds in the skies and to the wild beasts, for Yahweh's glory. Then David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone penetrated Goliath's head and the giant fell heavily on the ground. David ran to Goliath, stood over him, seized the Philistine's sword, pulled it out of its scabbard, killed Goliath with it and cut off his head.

Painters have used the various phases of this story as subjects for paintings, including David's subsequent triumph among the Israelites.

Macro-theme: David slays Goliath

Micro-themes: David slays Goliath

David beheads Goliath

David with the Head of Goliath

The Triumph of David

### 2.7.13. Saul's attempt on David's Life

Saul put David in command of fighting men and David was successful in his missions so that Saul's staff and the people respected him. After a while however, the people sang songs on David. The songs went, 'Saul has killed thousands and David has killed tens of thousands'. Saul grew jealous then. Saul removed David from his presence and appointed him commander of a thousand men, to lead the people on campaigns.

Saul feared David for Yahweh was with David whereas Yahweh had abandoned Saul. It is told in the Book of Samuel that David fought the Philistines and defeated them for King Saul. But one day, when David was playing the harp in Saul's palace, an evil spirit came over Saul. Saul sat near David with his spear in his hand. Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, but David avoided the thrust and the lance stuck in the wall. David thus avoided Saul's spear twice. David fled then and went to his own home. This theme has been taken up by painters.

Macro-theme: Saul attacks David.

#### **2.7.14. David and Jonathan**

Jonathan was the son of Saul, but also the friend of David. Jonathan still thought his father would not kill David. He said he would hear his father out and in the meantime David could stay in the country. Jonathan swore to David to tell him the truth and he asked David to swear also that if he, Jonathan, died, not to let his name be exterminated with Saul's family. The youth loved each other dearly. Jonathan did try out his father but Saul flew into a rage when Jonathan defended David. Saul said that as long as David lived neither Jonathan nor his royal rights would be secure. Saul was determined that David should die and even in his anger threatened Jonathan with his spear. Jonathan returned to David as promised and he told David the truth. Jonathan then wanted David to stay and hide in the country. The two youths embraced and wept copiously before they departed. But Jonathan kept his oath to David. There are only a few paintings of David and Jonathan walking in the country together.

Macro-theme: David and Jonathan.

#### **2.7.15. David hiding from Saul**

David went in hiding and Saul pursued David. Meanwhile, the fight against the Philistines continues. Of these stories, also of how David and Saul met in a cave, we know of no pictures. Yet we keep the theme for this whole episode of the strive between David and Saul.

Macro-theme: David hiding from Saul.

#### **2.7.16. David and Abigail**

David married Abigail. Samuel died. The Bible tells that when the prophet Samuel died, all Israel assembled to mourn him. He was buried in his home in Ramah. David was at the funeral, and then descended the road to the desert of Maon. David protected the people of Maon. There was a man of Maon called Nabal, married to a woman called Abigail. When David heard that Nabal was at his sheepshearing he sent some of his men to Nabal to ask for whatever Nabal's hand could give them. Nabal flared up and refused to give anything to David's servants, not even some bread.

David was angry when his men came back and four hundred of his warriors buckled their swords to punish Nabal. But Abigail, Nabal's wife, had heard how rudely her husband had answered David's polite quest. She took roasted grain, bunches of raisin, cakes of figs, loaves of bread, skins of wine and several sheep and brought these to David's camp. She fell before David and told her husband was only a brute and that not her husband but she herself was to blame. She pleaded with David to forgive Nabal. David was pleased with what Abigail had brought, accepted it and told her that had she not come he surely would have killed her maniac husband. Now David pardoned Nabal. Abigail returned home to Nabal who was feasting. The next morning she told her husband how she had been to see David. Nabal's heart died within him at the news and he became like stone. He died shortly after. David then sent Abigail, now widow of Nabal, an offer of marriage and Abigail accepted David as husband. David married Abigail. He had two wives since he had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. Michal was still with Palti, son of Laish.

Macro-theme: David and Abigail

Micro-themes: David and Abigail

The Meeting of David and Abigail

### 2.7.17. Saul and David

After Samuel's death, Saul still fought David as well as the Philistines. The Philistines assembled for war and Saul was afraid when he saw their camp. Samuel was dead; all Israel had mourned him and he was buried at Ramah. So Saul could not ask for advice to Samuel anymore. The Philistines pitched camp at Shunem. Saul was afraid of the Philistine strength. Saul called for a necromancer to consult him and since he was encamped at Gilboa, his servants found a witch close by at En-Dor. Saul disguised himself by changing his clothes and went to the witch accompanied by two men. He asked the witch to conjure someone up for him. The witch however answered that Saul had proscribed conjuring. Saul had to promise that nobody would harm her, and then asked to call up the ghost of Samuel. The witch conjured up Samuel for Saul. When she saw Samuel she recognised Saul also and was afraid, but Saul eased her. Saul asked Samuel what he should do since God had abandoned him. Samuel told Saul what he already knew. Yahweh had abandoned Saul and given his favour to Saul's neighbour, David, because Saul did not execute Yahweh's will in front of the Amalekites. Yahweh would deliver Israel and Saul into the hands of the Philistines. Samuel predicted that after the battle of the next day Saul and his sons would be with him, Samuel. Saul fell full length on the ground then and he was terrified.

While David fought the Amalekite bandits, the Philistines gave battle to Saul. The Israelites were defeated and slaughtered at Mount Gilboa as Yahweh had predicted. Jonathan was killed there, as well as Abinadah and Malchishua, two other of Saul's sons. The fighting concentrated on Saul and he was severely wounded by the archers. Saul then said to his armour-bearer to take his sword and run it through him. But the man was very much afraid. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. The armour-bearer seeing that Saul was dead, fell on his sword too and died with Saul.

Macro-theme: Saul and David

Micro-themes:       Saul and David  
                           Saul and the Witch of En-Dor  
                           Saul and the Ghost of Samuel  
                           Saul's Death

### 2.7.18. David's Sin

One evening when David was strolling on the palace roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. David asked who she was and was told, 'That was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite'. David then sent messengers to fetch the woman. She came and he lay with her. Soon after, the woman conceived and she sent word to David that she was pregnant.

David now sent a letter to Joab ordering him to send Uriah to him. Joab sent Uriah back to Jerusalem. David asked Uriah how Joab was, and then sent him home. Uriah left the palace but did not go to his house and slept at the palace gate. This was reported to David. David asked Uriah the next day why he had not gone home. Uriah answered that the Ark, Israel and Judah were lodged in huts and the warriors camping in the open. Uriah said that in those circumstances he could not go comfortably to his house and eat and drink and sleep with his wife. The following day David invited Uriah in and made him drunk. But again, Uriah slept with the bodyguard and did not go to his house. David then wrote a letter to Joab and had this letter be brought by Uriah. The letter said, 'Put Uriah out in front where the battle is the fiercest and then draw back so that he is killed.' Joab did this and Uriah the Hittite was killed. When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned. When her period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her into his house. She became his wife and gave birth to a son.

What David had done displeased Yahweh. Yahweh sent Nathan with a message to David, with a story. The story was about a poor man who had nothing but a ewe lamb and about a rich man who had many. When a traveller came to stay, the rich man did not take anything from his own flock or herd to provide for the wayfarer. Instead he stole the lamb of the poor man and prepared that for his guest. David flew into a great rage. 'This man should die', he cried, 'Who is this rich man?' Nathan then said to David, 'You are the man!' And Nathan told how displeased Yahweh had been with David causing the death of Uriah and taking Uriah's wife to become David's wife. Nathan prophesied that Yahweh would raise misfortune for David out of his own house. Before David's eyes he would take his wives and give them to his neighbour, who would lie with David's wives in broad daylight. David then wept to Nathan, and said, 'I have sinned.' Nathan answered, 'Yahweh forgives your sin. You are not to die. But since you have outraged Yahweh, the child born to you will die.' And the child of David and Bathsheba fell ill and died on the seventh day. David then prostrated himself in Yahweh's sanctuary. He consoled his wife Bathsheba. He slept with her. She conceived and gave birth to a son whom she called Solomon. Yahweh loved Solomon and made this known to Nathan, who named him Jedidah as Yahweh had instructed.

There are very many paintings on the story of David and Bathsheba.

Macro-theme: David's Sin

Micro-themes:       Bathsheba in her Bath  
                   David and Bathsheba  
                   Bathsheba receives David's Letter  
                   David gives the Letter to Uriah  
                   David penitent

### **2.7.19. King David**

There are many paintings of David as king. We assemble these in one theme.

Macro-theme:       King David  
 Micro-themes:       The Anointment of David  
                   King David  
                   The Death of King David

### **2.7.20. Amnon, Tamar and Absalom**

Tamar, Amnon and Absalom were children of David. David had a beautiful daughter whose name was Tamar. David's son Amnon fell in love with her. He was so obsessed with her that he fell ill. She was a virgin and Amnon thought it was impossible to do anything to her.

Amnon had a friend called Jonadab. This friend was a son of Shimeah, King David's brother. Jonadab was very shrewd so he remarked Amnon's distress. Amnon told him he was in love with Tamar but did not know how to come near her. Then Jonadab proposed Amnon to pretend to be ill and when his father would visit him, to ask for his sister to bring him something to eat and prepare that before him. Amnon pretended to be ill and his father visited him. David indeed sent word to Tamar to prepare food for Amnon. Tamar took dough, kneaded it and made and cooked cakes while Amnon watched. She took the pan and offered it to eat to Amnon, but Amnon refused to eat; He ordered everyone to leave his room and bid Tamar to bring the cakes to his inner room. As she showed Amnon the cakes there, he caught hold of her and wanted to go to bed with her. Tamar refused but Amnon overpowered her and raped her.

David heard what had happened and was very angry. But Amnon was David's first born and he loved him very much so he did him no harm. But Tamar's brother Absalom also heard of the rape of his sister since she came to his house inconsolable. He told Tamar that Amnon was his brother and that she should not take the matter too much to heart. But Absalom hated Amnon now for having dishonoured his sister and he did not want to speak to Amnon anymore. Two years later, Absalom prepared a royal banquet and invited David's sons. During the feast Absalom ordered Amnon to be slain. Absalom's servants killed Amnon in the middle of the feasting. David's sons leapt to their feet, mounted their mules and fled. Absalom feared the wrath of his father so he fled too and went to Talmai, son of Ammihud, king of Gehur. He stayed there for three years. David finally admitted Absalom to him. Absalom fell with his

face to the ground before King David and David blessed his son again. Absalom later rebelled against David.

The Tamar of this theme should not be confused with the Tamar of the story of Judah and Tamar. The story of Judah and Tamar is part of the larger story of Joseph the Egyptian in Genesis (see that theme).

Macro-theme: Amnon and Tamar

### **2.7.21. King Solomon**

Solomon, the son of David, was a great king. He became the son-in-law of Pharaoh, king of Egypt and he brought Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem. Solomon loved Yahweh and he followed the precepts of his father David. He sacrificed at Gibeon, the principal high place and he sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings on the altar.

Under the title 'King Solomon' we bring the many portraits representing the king.

Macro-theme: King Solomon

### **2.7.22. King Solomon's Wisdom**

There are many paintings of a small story in the Bible that illustrates the wisdom of King Solomon. All these pictures represent the following scene told in the Bible.

Solomon judged. Once, two prostitutes came to see Solomon. One had given birth to a child and three days later the second woman also gave birth in the same house. Then while the women were alone in the house, the child of the second woman died. In the middle of the night she got up and took the son of the other in her arms while she put her own dead son to those of the first woman. The first woman presented this case to Solomon but of course the second woman protested and there was quite a dispute before Solomon. Finally, Solomon said, 'Bring me a sword, and cut the child in two. Give half to one, half to the other woman.' At these words the mother of the living child spoke to the king, begging him not to kill the child and give it to the other woman. Whereas the other woman said indeed to cut the child in half, since he should not belong to either of them. Then Solomon gave his decision of judgement. He said, 'Do not kill the child. She who wants to save him is the mother.'

Macro-theme: The Judgement of King Solomon

### **2.7.23. The Temple of Jerusalem**

Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem. There are a few paintings that depict the Temple. Here follows the Bible story on that episode.



Solomon started to build a Temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem. Like his father he wrote to Hiram, king of Tyre for help. He needed cedar wood and juniper. Hiram also provided Solomon with wheat and oil. Solomon raised a levy throughout Israel for forced labour and he put Adoram in charge of the workers. Hiram sent workmen too and the huge stones for the foundation were laid immediately. Then, in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt and in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the Temple of Yahweh was built. The building of the Temple was done with quarry-dressed stone. No sound of hammer or pick was to be heard in the Temple while it was being built. It was roofed with a coffered ceiling of cedar wood. Annexes were built too. The inside of the Temple walls was lined with cedar-wood and the floor was covered with juniper planks. The length of the Holy of Holies, the Debir room, was twenty cubits. The Temple measured forty cubits in front of the Debir. The inside cedar wood was ornamentally carved with gourds and rosettes and no stone showed. The Debir was not only twenty cubits long but also twenty cubits wide and twenty cubits high. The inside of the Debir was overlaid with pure gold. The altar was of cedar wood and likewise overlaid with gold. Solomon had two winged creatures made of wild olive wood and had these covered with gold. The statues were placed in the Debir with open wings. In the eleventh year of Solomon's reign the Temple was completed after seven years of work. Solomon spent thirteen years building a palace. This also was a magnificent building, with a huge Hall of the Throne and a Hall of Justice.

Macro-theme: The Temple of Jerusalem

### **2.7.24. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba**

The Bible tells that the Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom. She came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with difficult questions. She came with camels loaded with gold and spices and precious stones. The Queen of Sheba and Solomon conversed and Solomon answered to all the challenges of the Queen. The Queen was breathless at the buildings of Solomon, at his retinue, his organisation of Israel and at his wisdom. She said the reports she had received of Solomon's wisdom were all true. She concluded that Solomon surpassed in prosperity and wisdom all she had heard. She found Israel fortunate to be ruled by such a king and blessed was Yahweh to have set Solomon on the throne of Israel. The Queen of Sheba presented to the king the gold and spices and stones and no such wealth was again brought to the court after her. Then Solomon traded with the Queen and Solomon's fleet brought back great cargoes of timber and precious stones from the land of the Queen of Sheba. Solomon used the wood for his buildings but also for the music instruments of the royal palace, for the harps and lyres. These were also of timber as no one had seen before. King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba everything she wished. Then she left and went home to her own country.

We also bring under this theme the subject of Solomon giving sacrifices to foreign gods, even though this theme is not necessarily part of the visit of the Queen of Sheba. Solomon loved many foreign women. He had Egyptian, Moabite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite wives. Yahweh had said to the Israelites not to go among foreign women for they would distract Israel's love from Yahweh. But Solomon was much attached to his foreign women. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

When Solomon was old these charmed his heart towards other gods so that his heart was not with Yahweh anymore. Solomon became a follower of Astarte. This was the goddess of the Sidonians and also of Milcom, an Ammonite abomination. Solomon built a temple for Chemosh, the god of Moab and also to the mentioned Milcom, the god of the Ammonites, on a mountain near Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives so that they could sacrifice to their own gods.

Macro-theme: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba  
 Micro-themes: The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba  
                   Solomon and the Queen of Sheba  
                   Solomon sacrificing to Idols

### **2.7.25. Rehoboam, Jeroboam and the subsequent Kings of Israel and Judah**

The Bible tells of the lives of these kings. There are few paintings on these kings, and as so often, painters have preferred the small anecdotes told in the Bible. One of those anecdotes is a story of the wife of King Jeroboam and the prophet Ahiiiah.

At that time Jeroboam's son fell sick. Jeroboam told his wife to disguise herself and go to Shiloh to see the prophet Ahiiiah there, the prophet who had said that Jeroboam would be king of ten tribes of Israel. So Jeroboam's wife went to Shiloh and arrived at the house of Ahiiiah who was so old that he could not see anymore. His eyes were fixed with age. But Ahiiiah anyhow received the woman and told her he had bad news for her and for her husband. He told her that Jeroboam had not been like David. David had kept Yahweh's commandments. Ahiiiah further said that Yahweh knew that Jeroboam had done much evil, since the king had cast idols of metal that had angered Yahweh. Yahweh had confided to Ahiiiah that for this he would bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, wipe out every maniac of the family and sweep away the house of Jeroboam as a man sweeps away dung till none was left. Ahiiiah continued the sad foreboding. He told the woman to return home. The moment she would enter the town her child would die. Ahiiiah promised also that Yahweh would abandon Israel for all the sin that Jeroboam had committed. When Jeroboam's wife arrived back in Tirzah, her child died as Ahiiiah had prophesied.

Macro-theme: The Kings Rehoboam, Jeroboam and other Kings of Israel  
 Micro-theme: The Kings Rehoboam, Jeroboam and other Kings of Israel  
                   The Wife of King Jeroboam and the Prophet Ahiiiah.

### **2.7.26. The Song of Songs**

There are but very few paintings illustrating the love stories and other stories of Solomon's Song of Songs'. A few do exist however. We bring all these pictures in one theme.

Macro-theme: The Song of Songs

### 2.7.27. The Prophet Elijah

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the history of Israel. Painters made portraits of Elijah, sometimes of Elijah in the desert, but they preferred to depict the anecdotes of his life, such as the miracle he did to a widow of Zarephath and how he was fed by an angel in the desert.

Yahweh ordered Elijah to go to Zarephath in Sidonia. Yahweh ordered a widow there to give food to Elijah. She said she only had a very little bread and oil for herself and her son. But Elijah told her not to be afraid. The woman went and did as Elijah had said. They ate the food and drank. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied. This was as Yahweh had foretold to Elijah. Sometimes later the son of the house of the woman of Zarephath fell sick and he died. Elijah prayed to God. He took the son from the widow and carried him to the upper room where he lived and laid him on the bed. Elijah then cried out to Yahweh. He stretched himself three times on the child, begging life into him again. Yahweh sent the child's soul back into the body so that Elijah could give the son back to the widow.

Queen Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah for having slaughtered her priests of Baal. Elijah fled from her wrath. He journeyed to Horeb and an angel of God touched him in his desperation and gave him to eat scones and water to drink. Elijah journeyed thus for forty days sustained by the angel. Then he arrived in a cave on Horeb and spent the night there.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Elijah  
 Micro-themes: The Prophet Elijah  
 The Prophet Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath  
 The Prophet Elijah fed by an Angel  
 The Ascension of the Prophet Elijah in a Carriage of Fire

### 2.7.28. The Prophet Elisha

Of the prophet Elisha also painters made portraits, since with Elijah this prophet was one of the main figures of the Bible. Other themes are on an anecdote told in the Bible about the children of the own of Bethel that mocked Elisha.

The Prophet Elisha was in Jericho and he travelled to Bethel. While he was on the road, some small boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Hurry up, baldy!' they shouted. 'Come on up, baldy!' Elisha turned round and looked at them; and he cursed them in the name of Yahweh. And two bears came out of the forest and savaged forty-two of the boys. From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel and then returned to Samaria <sup>G38</sup>.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Elisha  
 Micro-themes: The Prophet Elisha  
 The Death of the Children of Bethel

### 2.7.29. The Prophet Isaiah

Of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, painters have almost only drawn portraits. There exist few paintings on the kings and figures, of Israel and Judaea as well as of Assyria, of the episodes of the Bible in which also these prophets feature – such as Sennacherib and Hilkiyah. We bring these also in the theme of Isaiah.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Isaiah

Micro-themes: The Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah

The Kings of Israel and Judah after the Prophets Elijah and Elisha

### 2.7.30. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

We found practically no paintings on the period of the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah. Portraits of the prophets exist, so we propose to bring these under one theme.

Macro-theme: The prophets Ezra and Nehemiah.

### 2.7.31. The Book Tobit

The Book of Tobit is a romantic, picturesque, long and touching story that involves a young boy sent out by his father on a dangerous travel. In some version of published bibles the story is not even included, but painters have made many paintings on the different scenes of the Book Tobit. Therefore, we split the Book of Tobit in macro-themes on the most important themes used by painters.

The book Tobit tells of Tobit son of Tobiah, who lived in Nineveh in Assyria during the Assyrian exile of the Jews. Tobit was born in the land of Israel however. He married in Israel to a woman called Anna and he had a son from her, called Tobias. Tobit came into the favour of King Shalmaneser and was the king's purveyor. When Shalmaneser died, his son Sennacherib succeeded him. Sennacherib killed many Jews in his rage. Tobit stole their bodies and buried them. A Ninevite told the king what Tobit had done, so Tobit was afraid and fled. All his possessions were confiscated. The son of Tobit's brother Anael, a man called Ahikar was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer for the kingdom. Ahikar interceded for Tobit so that he could return to Nineveh. Tobit returned with his wife Ann and his son Tobias.

One day, Tobias found the body of a Jew that had been strangled and the thrown down in the marketplace. Tobit went to fetch the man and buried him during the night. Afterwards, he took a bath and laid down by the wall of the courtyard. He left his face uncovered and sparrows on the wall let hot droppings fall into Tobit's eyes. This caused white spots to form and after a while Tobit became completely blind.

Tobit's wife Anna worked then. She spun wool, wove cloth and sold her work. Her customers paid her and also once gave her a kid for a meal. Tobit heard the animal bleat. He grudged to his wife and reproached her, for the animal might be stolen. He urged her to give it back to its owners. His wife refused however. She told Tobit that it was a rightful present. Tobit did not believe her; he felt ashamed for her and he insisted to give back the kid. But Anne then replied by asking about Tobit's own alms, his own good works. She asked what he had received in return. Since that was the blindness that afflicted him, Tobit sighed and wept. He was sad and said his lamentations.

Macro-theme: Tobit

Micro-themes: Tobit

Tobit burying the Dead

Tobit and Anna with the Goat

### 2.7.32. The Young Tobias

Tobit remembered that he had left money, silver, with Gabael at Rhages in Media. He told his son Tobias to follow always the Law of Israel in case he, Tobit, would die and he told his son also of the ten talents of silver left with Gabael son of Gabirias. Tobit told Tobias that he and Gabael had signed a note with their signatures and then cut the note in two. Tobit took one piece and he had laid the other with the silver. Thus, Gabael would recognise the owner.

Tobias then went out to look for a man who would accompany him to Media, for he did not know the road. Tobias found the angel Raphael waiting outside for him, though he did not know that this was an angel. Tobias spoke to him, asked him whether he knew the road to Media and the angel told Tobias he had often been there. Tobias presented the angel to Tobit. The angel said he was called Azarias son of Ananias, one of Tobit's kinsmen. Tobit knew Ananias well, so he welcomed the angel. Tobit promised Azarias a drachma a day and the same expenses as his son. Soon Tobias kissed his father and mother and together with the angel he set on his way to Media, the dog following behind.

Macro-theme: The young Tobias

Micro-themes: The young Tobias

Tobias leaves and says Good-bye to his Father

### 2.7.33. The Journey of Tobias and the Angel

Tobias and the Archangel Raphael set out for the journey. There are many paintings of the young Tobias walking with the angel and also many landscape paintings have figured in Tobias and the angel. However, after a marvellous story, Tobias got married.

On the journey of Tobias, the angel Raphael said that in Media lived a man called Raquel, who was a kinsman of Tobit. The angel said that Raquel had a daughter

called Sarah who belonged to Tobias before anyone else and that Tobias could claim her father's inheritance. The angel proposed Tobias to marry her. She could not be betrothed to anyone else; that would be asking for death, as prescribed in the Book of Moses. Tobias had heard about seven previous husbands of Sarah that had died the first night of their wedding because of a demon that harassed Sarah, but the angel told him not to worry about that. Tobias could burn the heart and liver of the fish they had found on the way, burn it in the burning incense. The reek would rise and the demon would flee. The angel continued so much to praise Sarah, that Tobias fell in love with her and he understood that Sarah was his sister, a kinswoman of his father's family.

Tobias and the man called Azarias (the archangel) arrived at Ecbatana and went to the house of Raquel, who was married to Edna. Tobias explained that he was Tobit's son and since Raquel knew Tobit, he gave a warm welcome to Tobias and Azarias. They washed, bathed and when they sat down, Tobias asked for the hand of Sarah. Raquel told that he could not refuse since she was given to Tobias by the prescription of the Book of Moses since Tobias was her next of kin. He therefore entrusted his daughter to Tobias. He drew up the marriage contract and gave his daughter as bride to Tobias. Then they began to eat and when that was finished, it seemed time to go to bed. Tobias was taken to the bedroom. He put some of the fish's heart and liver on the burning incense and the reek of the fish distressed the demon; who fled through the air to Egypt. Raphael pursued him there and strangled him. Raquel had already prepared a grave for Tobias but in the morning he was astonished to see Tobias still alive and asleep next to Sarah. He then gave to Tobias half of everything he had, gave his daughter to Tobias to take her with him and promised the other half of his possessions to Tobias after his death. Then Tobias turned to Azarias and asked him to go to Gabael in Rhages with four servants and two camels to get the silver left by his father. He told Raphael to invite Gabael to the wedding feast at Ecbatana. Raphael went to Gabael and Gabael gave all the sacks of silver to Raphael with the seals intact. Gabael came to the wedding feast and he blessed Tobias.

Macro-theme: Tobias and the Angel  
 Micro-themes: Tobias and the Angel  
 Tobias fishing  
 The bridal Room of Tobias and Sarah  
 The demon Asmodeus expelled from Sarah's Room

### 2.7.34. Tobit healed

The archangel Raphael left Tobias after the journey, and refused his gifts.

When Tobias and Raphael were near Kaserin, opposite Nineveh, Raphael proposed for him and Tobias to go ahead of Sarah. Raphael warned Tobias to take the gall of the fish and the dog followed them. Tobias met his mother and father. He applied the fish's gall on the eyes of his father, and blew into his eyes. He applied the medicine, pulled away a thin skin from the corners of his father's eyes with both hands and Tobit was blind no more.

Macro-theme: Tobias heals Tobit

Micro-themes: Tobias heals Tobit

The Archangel Raphael leaves Tobias and refuses his Gifts

### 2.7.35. Tobit's Death

The Book Tobit ends with the death of Tobias' father. We have found no paintings on this theme, yet propose to hold the theme in reserve.

Macro-theme: Tobit's Death.

### 2.7.36. The Book Judith

King Nebuchadnezzar of Assyria wanted to take revenge on the allies that had not supported him. He sent for Holofernes, general-in-chief of his armies and told him to take over hundred thousand soldiers to advance against all the western lands that had disregarded his call. Holofernes advanced along the Euphrates, crossed Mesopotamia and he butchered the people of Cilicia who offered him resistance. He plundered the Midianites and later reached the edge of Esdraelon in the neighbourhood of Dothan, a village that faces the ridge of Judaea. Holofernes marched on Bethulia and he set siege to the town. The Israelites of Bethulia then became desperate and wanted as much to abandon themselves to Holofernes than to die within the wakes of their city. But Uzziah asked them to hold out five days more.

Judith daughter of Mesari, whose husband Manasseh had died a few years earlier, heard of Uzziah's plan. She immediately sent her serving women, who ran her household, to summon two elders of the town, Chabris and Charmis. She said that the elders should not have bound themselves by oath to surrender to their enemies and not to put God to the test, to demand guarantees from God. She urged them to plead for help from God. She reminded the elders that she intended to do something that would be handed down in the memory of Israel. She predicted that the Lord would make use of her to save Bethulia before the hour of surrender had come. Upon these words the elders left. And Judith prayed and called on the God of Israel. Judith washed herself, dressed her hair, wrapped a turban around her hair, anointed, put on her best robe, sandals on her feet, necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings, all jewellery she had and made herself so beautiful that the eye of any man would beguile her. She handed over to her maid wine and oil, various kinds of cakes, and loaves. Judith took all that and asked for the gates of the town to be opened.

Outside the gates, she was intercepted by Assyrians who stared in astonishment at such a beautiful woman. She told the soldiers she was on her way to Holofernes to give him trustworthy information. The Assyrians took her to Holofernes' camp. There, she fell on her face and did homage to the general. She told Holofernes that the city of Bethulia was doomed because the Israelites had sinned, and would soon fall. Judith told that the elders had sent men to Jerusalem to ask for permission to surrender Bethulia. When Judith had heard that news, she had fled the town. She expected Holofernes to soon take Bethulia and she proposed then to be his guide right

across Judaea until he reached Jerusalem, to enthrone Holofernes in the middle of the city. Holofernes was pleased at these words. He brought Judith in his tent where his silver dinner service was laid out and he gave Judith of his food and wine. After that, Holofernes gave her a tent of her own where she stayed for three days. Holofernes ordered his guards not to prevent her. On the fourth day, Holofernes gave a banquet for his staff and he also ordered his officer in charge of his personal affairs, Bagoas, to persuade the Hebrew woman to eat and drink in their company. Holofernes said the Assyrians would be disgraced to let a woman like Judith go without seducing her. Judith acquiesced to Bagoas' invitation. When she entered Holofernes' tent, his heart was ravished at the sight and his soul was stirred. Holofernes was so enchanted by Judith that he drank far more wine than he had ever done before. After the banquet, Holofernes' staff hurried away. Bagoas closed the tent from the outside. Judith was left alone with Holofernes who had collapsed wine-sodden on his bed. Standing beside the bed, Judith prayed to God. Then she went up to the bedpost at Holofernes' head, took his scimitar, caught Holofernes by the hair and murmured, 'Make me strong today, Lord God of Israel'. She struck two times with the scimitar at Holofernes' neck with all her might and cut off his head. Then she rolled the body off the bed, pulled down the canopy from the bedposts and gave the head to her maid who put it in her food bag. Then the two left the Assyrian camp as they had done each morning to go to prayers. Once they were out of the camp, they climbed the slopes to Bethulia and towards the gates of the city. The Bethulians opened the gates and welcomed the women. This slaying of a powerful general by a woman, Judith's killing of Holofernes, has been a frequent theme for paintings.

Macro-theme: Judith and Holofernes

Micro-themes: Judith

Judith slaying Holofernes

Judith at the Gates of Bethulia

Judith with the Head of Holofernes

The Return of Judith to Bethulia

### 2.7.37. The Book Esther

The Book of Esther tells a long story of the Jews exiled from their land. It is the story of Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai lived at the court of King Ahasuerus. The king's gentlemen-in-waiting searched on the king's behalf for beautiful young virgins and commissioners were sent out to bring all these to the citadel of Susa under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch. In the citadel of Susa Mordecai had brought up a girl called Hadassah, otherwise called Esther, his uncle's daughter, who had lost her father and mother. Esther was taken to the palace. The girl pleased Hegai and won his favour. Esther had not told she was a Hebrew, since Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Each girl had to appear before the king. Each girl could take with her whatever she wished from the royal palace.

When Esther was brought to Ahasuerus, the king liked Esther better than any of the other women. He set the royal diadem on her head and proclaimed her queen instead of Vashti. The king then gave a great banquet for Esther.



Shortly afterwards the king promoted Hannan son of Hammedatha, so that Hannan received precedence over all other officers of the state. But Mordecai refused to bow or to prostrate himself to Hannan. Hannan became very furious at this and when he heard what race Mordecai belonged to, he made up his mind to wipe out all the Jews. Hannan asked the king to sign the destruction of Israel. He told Ahasuerus he was ready to pay ten thousand talents of silver to the royal treasury to please the king. Ahasuerus took his signet ring and gave it to Hannan, telling the officer to keep the money and do whatever he liked to the people. Hannan used Ahasuerus' signet ring to sign letters sent to all nations to order the annihilation of all the Jews in the kingdom. Consternation reigned then in the city of Susa.

Mordecai wailed and mourned. Mordecai asked Esther to plead for the Jews to the king. But Esther said that anyone who approached the king unsummoned would die, and the king had not summoned her for the last thirty days. But Mordecai answered that she should not suppose that she would be the only Jew to escape. She should not persist to remain silent at such a time. Her family would surely perish and maybe she had come to the throne for just an event such as this. Esther then told Mordecai to assemble all the Jews of Susa for her, to pray and to fast for three days. She would do the same and then go to the king in spite of the law. Mordecai did so, and all the Hebrews prayed to their God.

After three days Esther put on her best dress and showed joy and love on her face. She passed door after door of the palace and found herself finally in the presence of the king. He was sitting on his royal throne, dressed in all his robes of state that glittered with gold and jewels. He looked full of anger and saw Esther. Esther fainted and sank to the floor. Ahasuerus sprang from his throne, took her in his arms and soothed her when she recovered. He put his golden sceptre on her neck and told her to speak out. She lauded the king then, but fainted again. The king was really alarmed then and asked her what mattered. Ahasuerus said to Esther that she would be granted what she wanted, even if it were half his kingdom. Esther merely asked to invite Hannan and her to the banquet she had prepared. So the king and Hannan came to the banquet that Esther had prepared and during the feast the king repeated his promise. But Esther merely asked again for the king and Hannan to come to a banquet the next day. Hannan was still angered at the sight of Mordecai. The wife of Hannan, Zeresh, and all his friends told him to ask the king to have Mordecai hung on a gallows in the morning. Hannan erected such a huge gallows in front of his house.

Hannan went to see the king. Ahasuerus had just read in his books how Mordecai had saved him from the plot to assassinate him and he had found out that Mordecai had received almost nothing for this. So he asked Hannan what the right way was to treat a man that the king wished to honour. Hannan thought the king wanted to honour him, Hannan, so he said that such a man deserved royal robes, and a horse from the king's stables. Then the man should be arrayed and led on horseback through the city market, with the noblest of the king's officers proclaiming, 'This is the way a man is treated that the king wishes to honour.' Ahasuerus ordered Hannan to do so for Mordecai. So Hannan had to array Mordecai and lead him through the city square. After that, Hannan was in discomfiture and Zeresh told him that he was beginning to fall and Mordecai to rise.

Hannan went to the second banquet of Ahasuerus and Esther. Now Esther spoke out. She asked the king to grant her life, and the lives of her people. She said she had been handed over to annihilation with her people. Ahasuerus then asked who was the man that had thought of doing such a thing. Esther told it was Hannan. The king stood up in a rage and ran into the palace garden, whereas Hannan stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. When the king returned he found Hannan sprawled across the coach where Esther was reclining, so he thought Hannan was going to rape the queen in his own palace. One of the officers said there was a gallows at the house of Hannan, prepared for Mordecai. 'Hang Hannan on it', said the king and so was done. Then the king's anger subsided.

That same day the king gave Esther Hannan's house. The king gave his signet ring, taken from Hannan, to Mordecai and Esther gave Mordecai the charge of Hannan's house. The king allowed Queen Esther and Mordecai to write letters to all his nations stating that the Jews had the right to assemble in self-defence and to annihilate any armed force that might attack them. The days of the rehabilitation were proclaimed as days of festivity, the days of Purim. Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, wrote a second letter to observe these days of Purim. Mordecai became next in rank to Ahasuerus. He was a man held in high respect.

The various scenes of this story have been shown in paintings.

Macro-theme: Esther

Micro-themes: Esther

- Esther and Mordecai
- Esther before going to Ahasuerus
- Esther before Ahasuerus
- Esther faints before Ahasuerus
- The Banquet of Ahasuerus
- The Punishment of Hannan
- Scenes from the Book Esther

### **2.7.38. The Book of Maccabees**

The Books of Maccabees are a record of the resistance of Judaism against Hellenistic influences. It is a history of the years from about 167 BC to 151 BC. Attempts to impose Greek religion and culture were successful everywhere in Near Asia, but the Jews opposed themselves to the change. Especially interesting to painters was the story of Mattathias. Mattathias, son of John, was a priest of the line of Joarib. The king's commissioners wanted to force Mattathias to conform to the king's decree, but Mattathias refused and when he saw a Jewish man coming forward to offer sacrifice on the altar of Modein, he killed the man and the commissioners. Many people left then to the desert and hid there. A strong detachment of soldiers from Jerusalem pursued them, attacked the Jews on the Sabbath itself and they were all slaughtered, a thousand of them. When Mattathias heard of this he rallied his friends and the Hassidaeans, stout fighting men, joined them. Mattathias used his armed force to overthrow the foreign altars, to circumcise the boys they found uncircumcised in

Israel and to wrest power from the control of the gentiles. There are a few paintings of Mattathias killing the Jews that worship foreign gods.

Macro-theme: Mattathias

### **2.7.39. Judas Maccabeus**

When Mattathias died, his place was taken by his son Judas, known as Maccabaeus. All his brothers supported him and they fought for Israel. The stories of Judas Maccabeus are stories of battles, won by the Jews. When Judas Maccabeus died, his brothers continued the battles. These victorious battles have been used as subject for a few painters.

Macro-theme: Judas Maccabeus.

### **2.7.40. Heliodorus**

The story of Heliodorus in the Bible goes as follows. While Apollonius, son of Thraseos, was commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, Onias was high priest in Jerusalem. A certain Simon of the tribe of Bilgah came to be appointed administrator of the Temple. He came into conflict with Onias over the regulation of the city markets. He did however not get the better of Onias, so to revenge himself he went to Apollonius and told him that the treasury in Jerusalem groaned with untold wealth. Apollonius met the king and told him about the treasures that had been disclosed to him, whereupon the king selected Heliodorus, his chancellor, to go and remove the reported wealth.

When Heliodorus arrived in Jerusalem, Onias told him that some money had been set aside for widows and orphans and that some funds in the Temple belonged to Hyrcanes, a man of exalted position, but that the whole sum amounted merely to four hundred talents of silver. Onias also said that no injustice should be done to those who had put their trust in the sanctity of the Temple. But Heliodorus insisted that the funds be confiscated for the royal exchequer. The whole of Jerusalem mourned but Heliodorus set about his appointed task. Heliodorus arrived at the Treasury with his bodyguard. But then, before their eyes appeared a horse, richly caparisoned and carrying a fearsome rider accoutred entirely in gold. The horse struck at Heliodorus, rearing with its forefeet. Two other young men of radiant beauty appeared at the horse rider's side and they started to flog Heliodorus unremittingly, inflicting stroke after stroke. Heliodorus fell to the ground, enveloped in thick darkness. Such was the power of the God of the Israelites. Heliodorus' men came to his rescue and they brought him away in a litter. They acknowledged the sovereign power of God. Thus the Treasury of Jerusalem was preserved.

Several paintings have been made of this theme of Heliodorus being defeated and chased by a violent warrior-rider from the Temple of Jerusalem.

Macro-theme: Heliodorus.

### 2.7.41. Simon

We keep the figure of Simon as a reserve theme for the Bible stories of the battles led by the sons and grandsons, Jonathan and Simon, of Mattathias. We know of no paintings however of these Bible episodes.

Macro-theme: Simon.

### 2.7.42. The Book of Job

There are many paintings of the figure of Job and of scenes on his life. Job was an honest man of the land of Uz. He had seven sons, three daughters, and a large property. He lived in ease. Satan tempted Yahweh with Job. He said that Job was pious and honest only because he lived at ease. Satan said Job would not remain so for long if Yahweh took away his possessions. So Yahweh gave Job in Satan's power to test him. Job lost his family and his property but he continued to laude and to praise the wisdom of Yahweh.

The Book of Job is a long poem. It describes the dialogue between Job and three friends. They discuss Job's fate. The friends are called Zophar of Naamath, Bildad of Shuah and Eliphaz of Teman. Later joins Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite but he merely restates the arguments. The men argue that Job must have sinned for God to punish him. But Job knows and pleads that he has not sinned. He remains confident in God despite all that happens to him, such as the death of his children and the destruction of his property. Job had seven sons and three daughters and these had the custom to hold banquets in each other's houses in turn and to invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. On such a day a messenger arrived to Job to announce him that when his sons and daughters had thus held a banquet at the house of his eldest son, a gale had sprung up from the desert, bettered the four corners of the house so that the house fell down on the young people, killing them all. The messenger furthermore told that the fire of God had fallen on earth and burnt Job's sheep and shepherds. In the end, Yahweh restores Job's condition and gave him double of what he had before. Job's trust in God was justified and Yahweh rebukes Job's three friends.

Macro-theme: Job

Micro-themes: Job

Job tempted by the Devil

The Destruction of Job's Children

Job chided by his Wife

### 2.7.43. The Book of Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah tells of the prophet Isaiah. There are hardly any paintings of scenes from this Book, but quite some portraits of the prophet. There exist paintings on figures of which the Book of Isaiah tells: Hezekiah and Sennacherib.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Isaiah.  
 Micro-themes: The prophet Isaiah  
 The dying Hezekiah  
 The defeat of Sennacherib

#### **2.7.44. The Book of Jeremiah**

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah contains many stories. Painters know Jeremiah however most for his lamentations over the fate of Jerusalem. There are, of course, also portraits of the prophet.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Jeremiah  
 Micro-theme: The Prophet Jeremiah  
 Jeremiah laments over the Destruction of Jerusalem

#### **2.7.45. The Book of Baruch**

The Book of Baruch is only a short text, attributed to Jeremiah's secretary, but probably written much later, mostly in the first century BC. The first part of the Book is a prayer of the exiles in Babylon. The Jews in exile recognise that Yahweh has brought misery upon them to punish them for having deserted their God. The second part repeats these hopes and it praises the knowledge of Yahweh. This knowledge of Yahweh is called the fountain of wisdom. The third text repeats the lamentations and also the hopes of the exiled Jews in Babylon, whereas the last part is a copy of a letter that Jeremiah sent to the people that were about to be led into captivity.

We propose to bring under this theme paintings on the subject of the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Baruch  
 Micro-themes: The Prophet Baruch  
 The Hebrews in Exile in Babylon

#### **2.7.46. The Book of Ezekiel**

Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon during the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. Ezekiel was more a mystic than Isaiah and Jeremiah. Yahweh gave him fantastic visions and these are presented in the Book. Painters have made paintings of the visions of Ezekiel, interpreting the accounts in the Bible, as well as portraits of this prophet.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Ezekiel  
 Micro-theme: The Prophet Ezekiel

## The Visions of Ezekiel

### 2.7.47. The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel contains many stories, in which also Kings Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his son, King Belshazzar, as well as Darius the Mede and Cyrus, play a dominant role. One of these stories is about Susanna and the Elders, which we propose to bring under a separate main theme. Many paintings are of Daniel and his companions thrown in the lions' den.

Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. He saw a very tall tree in the middle of the world. It bore fruit, was beautiful, and offered shade to the animals. An Angel came down and shouted to cut the tree down, throw away the fruit and let the animals flee from the shelter of the tree. The stump with its roots in the ground was bound in irons and that should be thus preserved. The stump should receive the dew, cease to have a human heart but given the heart of a beast. And seven times should pass over it. When Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to translate the dream, Daniel was confused at first. Then he explained the dream after some hesitation. Daniel told that the tall tree was Nebuchadnezzar himself. The verdict of God was that the king would be driven from the humans and would become an animal until he would understand that God rules over the humans and until the king recognised that only God could confer sovereignty on whom He pleased. Leaving the stump in chains meant that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be kept for him until he came to the understanding of God's superiority. After twelve months, the king sat on the roof of his palace and he oversaw his empire with pleasure, saying that all these splendours had been built by his force alone, and to his glory. Then a voice came down, saying that the empire was immediately taken away from him; Nebuchadnezzar would be driven from humanity and become a beast until he understood that all might was with the Most High alone. Nebuchadnezzar then grew mad and like an animal, he grazed in the meadows. He stayed that way until his reason returned to him and he started praising the King of Heaven.

King Belshazzar of Babylon was the successor to his father, Nebuchadnezzar. Once, he gave a great banquet for a thousand of his noblemen. Belshazzar ordered the gold and silver vessels taken from the sanctuary of the Temple of Jerusalem to be brought to the banquet so that all could drink out of richer vessels. While they were drinking, suddenly the fingers of a human hand started to write on the plaster of the palace walls. The king called for all his soothsayers to read what was written, and he promised that the one that could read the words would receive a purple dress, a golden chain around his neck, and the man would be one of the three governors of the kingdom. None of the king's sages however could read the writing and Belshazzar turned ever paler, ever more alarmed and ever more angry. The queen then remembered to him how his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had in difficult moments always asked the advice of Daniel the Hebrew. Daniel was called in and he told that he could easily read the message. He started by saying that he refused the king's gifts. He then reminded Belshazzar of his father, who had been mighty but had turned into an animal that grazed like an ox until he had recognised who really was the Almighty. Daniel told that Belshazzar had defied the same God by drinking out of the vessels of

His sanctuary. Belshazzar had not humbled himself and praised idols instead. The words that the hand wrote were, 'mene, mene, tegel, parsin'. 'Mene' meant that god had taken the measure of Belshazzar. 'Tegel' meant that the king had been weighed and found wanting. 'Parsin' meant that the kingdom of Babylon would be given over to the Medes and the Persians. Daniel received what the king had promised: he was dressed in purple, received a golden chain around his neck and was chosen as one of the three men that governed the kingdom. But that same night the Chaldaean King was murdered and Darius the Mede received his kingdom.

Darius appointed a hundred and twenty satraps and among the three governors of his kingdom he kept Daniel. Darius even considered giving the governance of this entire kingdom to Daniel. The satraps sought for a trap on Daniel then, so they went to Darius asking him to publish an edict that anyone who within the next thirty days prayed to anyone else but Darius, divine or human, that person should be thrown in the lion's pit. Darius signed the edict. Daniel continued to pray to Yahweh three times a day, so the satraps denounced him to Darius. The king was much distressed and caught in his own words, but however he racked his brains to find a solution to save Daniel, he could not but condemn Daniel. The king ordered Daniel to be brought in and be thrown into the lion's den. But he said to Daniel that his God would surely save him. The pit was closed with a heavy stone and Darius sealed it with his own signet. The next morning at dawn, Darius went to the pit, opened the stone, and called out for Daniel. Daniel was still alive. He said an Angel of God had sealed the lions' jaws. Daniel was harmless. Darius was overjoyed and ordered Daniel to be hauled from the pit. The king now threw the men that had denounced Daniel in the lions' den, as well as their families, and the lions devoured them instantly. Darius then wrote a letter to all nations to acknowledge the glory of Daniel's God. Daniel went well under the reign of Darius the Mede and also under Cyrus the Persian.

In another story, King Cyrus calls Daniel. When Cyrus was King of Babylon, he offered every day much food to the god Bel in his temple. Cyrus was convinced that Bel was a living god for everyday the food disappeared, eaten by the god. Cyrus asked Daniel why he also did not offer to Bel. Daniel replied that he only worshipped a living God and not a statue made by human hands. This made the king angry. He proposed to bring food to Bel and to seal the door. Daniel would see for himself that the food disappeared, eaten by Bel. Daniel and the king did so, but Daniel spread ashes all over the temple floor. Daniel and the king sealed the door after them. In the night, the priests came through a secret door in the temple and ate with their wives and children from all the food. In the morning, the king opened the doors, gave a quick look and saw with satisfaction that the food had gone behind the sealed doors. But Daniel pointed to the ashes, in which the king could not but notice the imprints of the feet of men, women and children. Cyrus angrily ordered the priests to be arrested. The priests showed the secret door under the altar table. The king put the priests to death and gave the statue of Bel to Daniel, who destroyed the idol and its temple.

Macro-theme: The Prophet Daniel  
 Micro-themes: The Prophet Daniel  
 Nebuchadnezzar restored to Royal Dignity  
 The Banquet of Belshazzar  
 Daniel in the Lions' Den

## Daniel and King Cyrus before the Statue of Bel

### 2.7.48. Susanna and the Elders

‘Susanna and the Elders’ is a story from the Book of the Prophet Daniel. It has been a very frequent theme of painters.

In Babylon lived a rich man called Joakim. He was married to a very beautiful woman called Susanna, daughter of Hilkiah. She was very devout and God-fearing. That year, two elderly men had been selected from the people to act as judges and as Joakim opened his house to many, these elders were often in Joakim’s house. Susanna used to take walks in her garden and the two judges saw her frequently there. They began to desire her. They also admitted their desire for Susanna to each other. On a hot day, Susanna came again to the garden, only accompanied by two young maidservants. She asked these to bring some oil and to shut the garden doors while she bathed there. The two elders had concealed themselves in the garden, and as Susanna was alone, they rushed upon her. The elders proposed a choice to her. She could either let the elders have her there, or the elders would give evidence that a young man had been with her in the garden and that this was the reason why she had sent her servants away and closed the doors. Susanna sighed. She knew that she was trapped, but she did not want to sin. So she cried out loud. The elders now also cried loudly. When all the servants came into the garden, the two elders brought forward their accusations to the appalled servants.

The next day too the elders accused Susanna to her husband Joakim and pleaded to put her to death. Susanna was summoned to her husband and she came in, very beautiful, but veiled. The elders repeated their story and Susanna was condemned to death. Susanna then prayed to her God. The Lord appealed to the Holy Spirit in Daniel and suddenly Daniel, who had been looking at the woman being led away to be killed, shouted out that he wanted to be innocent of this woman’s death. Everybody was surprised and Daniel had some respite to tell to the people that the elders had given false evidence. Daniel asked to take the elders separately and to interrogate them. The people granted Daniel his wish. Daniel asked to the first elder under what tree he had seen Susanna and the young man lying. The first man told it had been an acacia tree. Daniel then asked the same question to the second man, and this elder answered that it had been an aspen tree. Daniel now denounced them to the people and the punishment that was given to them was the same as they had schemed for Susanna: they were put to death by stoning. Susanna was acquitted of any crime.

Macro-theme: Susanna and the Elders  
 Micro-themes: Susanna and the Elders  
 Susanna before Daniel

### 2.7.49. The Book of Hosea

The prophecies of Hosea form one long poem delivering the recalling of Yahweh of all the crimes of Israel and the ensuing promise of punishment by God. The poetic lines form a short book, in which also Hosea compares his own love for his faithless



wife with Yahweh's love for faithless Israel. Hosea tells that Yahweh's love will in the end be stronger than his vengeance. Hosea hopes for Israel to be repentant, so that Yahweh would once be reconciled with his people. There are not many paintings on the subject of Hosea, but portraits of the Prophet, mostly with Hosea in a wide landscape, do exist.

Macro-theme:           The Prophet Hosea

### **2.7.50. The Book of Joel, Amos and Obadiah**

We have found no paintings on stories from these books. We propose to keep the theme in reserve.

Macro-theme:           The Prophets Joel, Amos and Obadiah

### **2.7.51. The Book of Jonah**

There are many paintings on the theme of Jonas and mainly on what happened to him at sea.

Yahweh spoke to Jonah, son of Amittai. He told Jonah to go to Nineveh and to announce to the city that its crimes would bring about its downfall. Jonah tried running away from Yahweh and he wanted to get to Tarshish. In Jaffa he found a ship for Tarshish. He paid his fare and went aboard. Once at sea, Yahweh sent a great storm into which the ship was caught and from which it could not escape. The crew threw its cargo overboard and everybody prayed to his god. The men of the crew then drew lots to find out who should be blamed for the bad luck they had. Jonah had been fast asleep below decks, but the men awoke him and he drew lots too. The lots of course pointed to Jonah. He had to confess that he had tried to escape Yahweh. The men were very afraid then. They asked Jonah what had come into his mind to board their ship while such a powerful god as Yahweh was looking for him. They asked Jonah what they could do now. Jonah answered he knew well it was his entire fault. He had brought Yahweh's anger on the crew. He could only propose to the men to simply throw him overboard. The men at first did not want to do that; they rowed hard trying to reach the shore but the storm just became rougher as they approached land and their attempt was in vain. So at last they all called on Yahweh and in despair threw Jonah in the boiling sea. As soon as they had done this, the sea calmed and the storm was over.

Yahweh ordered a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah remained in its belly for three days and three nights. Jonah then prayed to the glory of God and promised to sacrifice to him. Yahweh then spoke to the fish and the fish vomited Jonah on land.

Yahweh spoke again to Jonah, entreating him to go and preach in Nineveh. Jonah went to the city and called out loud the message that after forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. The people of Nineveh believed Jonah's message. They mourned for their crimes, fasted, put on sack-clothes in repentance and sat down in ashes. God saw

all the efforts of the people of Nineveh and of their king, and he relented. There would be no disaster on Nineveh.

Macro-theme:           The Prophet Jonah  
 Micro-themes:         The Prophet Jonah  
                               The Shipwreck of Jonah  
                               Jonah falls into the Sea  
                               Jonah and the Whale  
                               Jonah rejected by the Whale

### **2.7.52. The Books of Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi**

A scene with the Prophet Habbakuk is actually told in the Bible in the Book of Daniel and most of the paintings of Habbakuk are on this scene. Nevertheless, we bring the scene under the theme, here.

The Prophet Habakkuk was in Judaea. An Angel of God appeared to him, told him to get food to Babylon and give Daniel to eat. But Habakkuk had never been to Babylon and he told Babylon was far away. So the angel took the Prophet by the hair and brought Habakkuk near to the pit into which Daniel had been thrown. Habakkuk gave the food to Daniel, who was much comforted at the knowledge that Yahweh had not forgotten him. The Angel brought Habakkuk back to Judaea.

There are however hardly any paintings on the stories of the books here named.

Macro-theme:           The Prophets Habbakuk and Daniel

### **2.7.53. The Conquest of Jerusalem**

The Conquest of Jerusalem is not told in the Bible, though several prophets prophesied the destruction of the city. Roman emperors destroyed Jerusalem. As a conclusion of the Bible themes, we propose to add a main theme for the paintings made on the destruction of Jerusalem.

Macro-theme:           The Destruction of Jerusalem.