

A systematic theological comparison of religious iconography: Referring to Groeber and Kinkade

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Iconography and symbolism of religion, correspondingly, are vital and convoluted aesthetic patterns and kinetics in a well-used foundational manner to transcend religious theories and the optical, audible and gesture depictions of religious intelligence with narratives. Iconography and symbolism of religion gain autonomy from all world religions. Subsequently, during the 20th centennial, a few academics emphasized the significance of religious spirit to persuade in citing religion as a rational entity. The symbolic condition of religion is alike viewed by a few academics of mythos and psyche as essential idiosyncratic with a religious explanation. Academics from provisional religionists, developmentalists and psychiatrists harvested with explanation the vast plethora of data on the emphasised views within religion, notably within association with East as well as Western religions. In the new liturgical theology of Christian formalities, additional appraisal of religiously emphasised syntax has transpired.

Contribution: In this article, kinetics of symbols and visuals that are presented in a specific pattern and tenacious accord to the structure, subject matter and motives of the proposal are proclaimed to be among the most profound ways of experiencing and articulating religious details. Such patterns, as I think Prof. Johan Buitendag would agree, also add to the care and reinforced accords between sapiens³ with its domain that is revered or divine transcendental, metaphysical magnitude. That is what this article is about!

Keywords: symbolism; iconography; semantics; semiotics; Groeber and Kinkade.

Introduction

It is this article's purpose to compare two well-known Christian iconographers, namely: (1) Fr Groeber¹ (from an African perspective) and (2) Thomas Kinkade² (from a western) American perspective.³ This comparison seeks to define criticisms that are experienced by Christian Theologians and believers if iconography and symbolism have a place in the Christian context or are (critique) vindicated to be not regarded as equals to, for example, the sacraments, preaching and praying in a Christian ecclesiastical liturgy? Therefore, this article takes its cue by using third and fourth to add to the two main sources, namely: (1) that of Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021) in their *(Re)Presentation of the role of iconography in African Christian liturgy: A case study of Serima Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Gweru in Zimbabwe*, and (2) Shulgina (2021) in her *The interpretation of Christian symbolism in the paintings of Thomas Kinkade*, to answer whether iconography and symbolism have a place in Christian ecclesiastical liturgy or not. From these four sources, many others are brought to light, which will then contemplate a *yes* or a *no* to the (un)importance of the roles that iconography has on Christian liturgy, either negative or positive and why the author came to such and such elucidations. If we say *yes*, as this article proposes we do, a why is relevant and should be detailed. Yet more important if we say *no*, the why becomes even more relevant, let me explain. Before this explanation, however, first of all, the preliminary introduction is *(the) what* and *why* iconography exists in any religious tradition and therefore ecclesiastical contexts, hence the title of the next paragraph.

1. Father John Groeber was a missionary who founded the Serima mission station for the Swiss Bethlehem Mission in Zimbabwe. He is best known for designing and building St. Mary's church on the Serima mission grounds and for training several artists and builders (Groeber 2022:1).

2. Thomas Kinkade, born in Sacramento, California, USA, was an American artist who built a successful industry on his light-infused paintings of tranquility and idyllic scenes (Schreiber 2022:1).

3. Please take cognisance that the author uses the terms homo sapiens or human(s) interchangeably as the continuation with the one or the other sometimes leads to misinterpretation. However, for this article, both mean the same and must be epistemologically understood as the same (Van Rooyen 2016:1).

Note: Special Collection: Johan Buitendag Festschrift, sub-edited by Andries van Aarde (University of Pretoria, South Africa).

Preliminary religious symbolisation

The term symbol originates from the Greek *symbolon*, which factors obligation, memento, decoration and a way of recognition. Parties to this factor, associates, patrons and their moderators could pin-point each other with the assistance of the elements of the symbolon. In its authentic gesture, the symbol speaks for and it then verbalized a systematic larger entity process for the one dimensional. This process, as a kind of declaration of facts, secures the immanence of the gesture and, as a pithy understandable blueprint, pinpoints the bigger picture. The symbol is located, accordingly, on the essence of agreeing with one another. The symbol, factures insignia, traces, terms and kinetics obligate the cooperative of some conscious intelligence sequential to declare what is predetermined by it. To this quantity, it has a dual objection challenge of esoteric (intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a piece of specialised knowledge or interest) or exoteric (intended for or likely to be understood by the general public), contents, with a curtailment objection.⁴ The detection of its nuance surmises a convinced degree of engaged unity. Thus, the concept of symbolisation, as a precedent, is positioned on the covenant of a party that grants simultaneous nuances, ergo the title in the following paragraphs.

Concepts of symbolisation

In the documented evolution and contemporary utilisation of the suppositions of symbolisation, a diversity of groups and kinship prerequisites required set-offs. Religious symbols are utilised to move suppositions perturbed by good-will of religious sapiens kinship to the venerable or holy (e.g. the cross in Christianity) as well as the civil and essential world (e.g. the dharma chakra, or wheel of the law, of Buddhism). Alternative nonreligious classifications of symbols execute proliferated weight in the 19th and 20th centennials, notably those that have to do with religious *sapiens* kinship to and understanding of the essential world. So did rational, scientific symbols that have gathered momentum in their weightiness in contemporary science and technology. They attend partially to classify and to pinpoint, shorten and make lucid the sundry mathematical (e.g. =, equality; ~, similarity; II, parallel or < less than) physical (e.g. ~, alternating current), biological (e.g. male and female ♂♀) and alternative scientific and technical kinships and objectives. These kinds of secularized symbols are embedded, to a grade, in the domain of religious symbolism. Its objectiveness is in this mode resembling the religious symbol by relating a specific understanding with a specific suggestion or nuance.

The elucidation of symbols and symbolical convolution with myths⁵ has been depositional hence the Renaissance. The

4. In these contexts, a curtailed objection means that it is an act of restricting or reducing something or cutting it short. Therefore, in this context, it refers to iconography or symbolism as an objection that is reduceable through and by any means and that is why it has this amazing transcendent plethora in itself.

5. A myth or myths can, in this context, be regarded as a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the worldview of people or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomenon.

hypothesis of a religious symbol has adopted a wide range of classifications and gist. For instance, parables, roles, numbers, analogies, metaphors, insignia (or more to the point, a dramatic depiction of intelligence), suggestions and images as independently codified, with synthetic symbols with an extra rhetorical nuance.

When academics design the usual repute to the many diversities of the designs, they could perhaps nominate the term rational image (meaning-image) to accept the abolishment and murkiness of religious experiences. Yet, the image or symbol is not, and although it walks trailing covertness in its apotheosis, and yet it even has a transcendent peculiarity (as it meanders up and over and also through the foresee aim for those who, as it moves over and through the expected objective), for those who consider its weightiness and its abyss.

Therefore, is the rational image not kept secret in its gist, and more so, on some level it has an articulated (spoken) repute (i.e. it transcends the manifested understanding for those who behold its significance)? This to me points to the urgent requirement for communication and the still obscuring information and significant concepts of its subject matters, and this is the rationale for the title of the next heading.

Diversity and gist huddled with the term design or symbol

Various patterns of experience and kinship to the phenomenon (both sacred and profane) are allied with the perception of design, suggestion and delineation. The purpose of the design is to exemplify a phenomenon or veracity and to try and explain them immediately or over a gradual period. The partnership of the design phenomenon is born out of a slightly straight and exhaustive as well as slightly unintentional and (the) cool or (the) withdrawn. The design is most of the time linked with a phenomenon as it exemplifies an unstained pellucid.⁶ As a delineated suggestion, the purpose of the experience with the kinship to the phenomena has rather an indicative or a pure exemplification gist. For example, the systematisation of the Eucharistic extent of Christ in the pedagogies of eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and the Protestant Reformers substantiality show the extreme and belated flushes of symbolic demeanour. These flushes transcend the idea of physical uniqueness in a kind of transubstantiation postulations of Roman Catholicism (where the delineated suggestion of bread and wine are comprehended to be discounted into the body and blood of Christ, albeit that the vistas of this foundationalism stayed the same):

Furthermore, a symbol in its intermediary function has aspects of the (theory of knowing) epistemology and (theory of being) ontology. Thus, as a means of knowledge, it operates in a characteristically dialectical process of veiling and revealing truths. It fulfils an interpretative function in the process of effectively apprehending and comprehending religious experience. In doing

6. In this context, it is framing the maximum passage of light without diffusion or distortion.

so, the word, or symbol, with its meaning, contextual use, relationship to other types of religious expression, and interpretative connection with the various forms of sign, picture, gesture, and sound, plays an important part in the process of symbolical perception and reflection. (Goldammer 2020:2)

Yet that is not what this article is about. As said elsewhere that the goal of this article will be to correlate the positive or negative of Christian religious iconography when two Western and African contexts are investigated into trying to understand the positive and the negative. Let me explain.⁷

Symbolism and the anomaly of semiotics

Every controversy heightened within this article should be better explained through principles of semiotics (study of signs).⁸ Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021) introduced themselves in the following phrase when referring to iconography in African Christian liturgy as follows:

For decades, African Christian liturgy has been occupied by religious symbols and symbolism that demonstrated and continue to demonstrate real originality in decorating their churches without imitating western art and aesthetics. This has amplified and demonstrated the African whirlwind energy and drive for inculturation. (p. 2)⁹

Set in an opposite pole Shulgina (2021) reminds us of the work of the American Thomas Kinkade when she extrapolates the following:

In contemporary art criticism, discussions about this phenomenon are conducted in three directions – (1) discussion of the commercialization of Christian art and related quality problems, (2) the formation of new iconographic patterns in secular art, and (3) the correctness of the interpretation of images from the point of view of the Christian canon. All three problems can be traced to the example of the work of Thomas Kinkade, one of the most popular and commercially demanded artists, who constantly turn to religious themes in their work. (p. 1)

Although his work provoked a dubious backlash from both art critics and theologians, as a few predicted it as sleazy or vulgar and ‘awful’ and ‘cheap’ theology or like gnostic or atheistic art, and on the counter side of the coin, some critics concede that they have partially one substance with a replication of Kinkade in their domiciling (Shulgina 2021:146).

Also, Aiello (2020) makes the imperative subsequent narration to semiology:

7. Let it be known that the author does not at all suggest that what is being said here is the whole manifestation that is iconography in the Christian religion. There is a vast and infinite knowledge structure about symbolism and iconography.

8. We may not realise it, but semiology can be applied to all sorts of human endeavours, including cinema, theatre, dance, architecture, painting, politics, medicine, history and religion (Seiler 2022:1).

9. Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021:2, footnote 1) explain this term in the following modus: ‘The term inculturation may as well be used interchangeably with terms and concepts such as indigenisation, Africanisation, contextualisation, acculturation, enculturation, concretisation, localisation and adaption. Inculturation involves the meeting between the heart of the Gospel and the heart of African culture so that Christ becomes the principle of animation to generate a new creation’.

[S]emiotics is indeed both a theory and a methodology that can be applied to a variety of texts, including novels, paintings, films, buildings, websites, and even clothing. The term text refers to any semiotic object endowed with material or symbolic boundaries and structural autonomy, or where different parts all have a function concerning a whole and which can therefore be examined as a unit. (p. 368)

Therefore, in a composition procedure, semiology grants the reviewer to scrutinise signs that are at heart, a signing procedure to harmonize them to a particular substance. And in the case of Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana, they harmonize the civilising methodology that manifests the insignia as well as the methodology where the insignia is discounted. Thus, when I read that Shulgina (2021:2) wrote: ‘In many interviews, Kinkade kept saying that he got inspiration from God’. Not every canvas of Kinkade is religiously orientated, yet a consequential component of his canvases, as well as tiny mouldings, prevailed by Shulgina (2021) from the context of religion, yet it is also supported by open religious iconography:

Therefore, particularly replicas of canvasses of landscapes are prominent with a fish iconography and/or expressions from Holy Scripture, most customarily with an expression from the Gospel of John: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)’. (p. 2)

This brings us to the next heading, ‘Junctures of interpretation manifestations of religious iconography’, and the reason for this is that three junctures of interpretations of religious iconography semantic, syntactic and pragmatics must be explained.

Junctures of interpretation manifestations of religious iconography

Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021) refer to Ūjavāri who make use of three junctures of interpretation manifestations of religious iconography, namely semantic, syntactic and pragmatics:

[S]emantics deals with the signification of signs (the representation or conveying the meaning); syntactic involves combinations of signs and pragmatics is that portion of emiotics that examines the origin uses, and effects of signs in the situation in which they occur. (p. 2)

Whereupon Kinkade, who worked in the profane manifestation of art that is related to Christianity, alluded to exhibiting religion-stages for iconographies impressions. This alluded to commandment symbolics and the manifestation of a new symbolics that introspects the metaphysical interpretation of a profane individual and it can be portrayed as the cardinal inclination of contemporary art. As an example, we may use the representation of Jesus rescuing Peter while engulfed by water. In attic semiotics, we observe what is betiding and alfresco when observed from the outside, then contemporary artists, for example, Friemel and Yongsung as well many others, place the viewer in the space and time of Peter

drowning who observe from underneath the water,¹⁰ the emancipation-beam of Jesus reaching out to Peter.

Here is where I think that artists must not try to correct the ecclesiastical precept or canon, as they have to try to escape the sacrilege of the profane, from the conversions from an epochal painting image onto realism from decorating with a practised utilitarian procedure that abides in *sapiens* space and time within moulding of a billboard, message, tapestry of brocade, magnet on a freezer or an edition on a tee-shirt, yet in coinciding space artists must aim to build a stable observational admonition of Christian ethics and intelligence, especially all the intelligence of emancipation from Christ. Kinkade's work is essential without iconography of Jesus and the landscape within the Holy Scripture, as the interpretation of the emancipation of Christ is customarily embodied from the land self with its lone foundation, minute ecclesiastical groupings (small liturgical concepts) in the intermediate within goblin jungle as it continually ensuing iconography of a flash(light)house, hence the title of the following paragraphs, because of that we must explain the contemporary scene of symbolism and iconography, now-today.

The contemporary scene of symbolism and iconography, now-today

The progressive evolution of iconography and symbolism in cardinal spiritualities of contemporary earth is a transparent inquiry. Throughout the extent of the twentieth centennial within Christianity, opponents of the solemn conventions and the ceremonial iconography were in progression, although it was critiqued with venom by a vast number of theologians. Liturgical symbolism then progresses more contemporary and equitable. Theological theories, like the theory advanced by Paul Tillich (Unhjem 2022), were positioned on the notion of the symbol. Notwithstanding this, in the 1960s, the callousness of symbols and iconography progressed because of the intensity of social and moral awareness of spirituality. Myths, pictures, symbols and anthropomorphic (ascribing human characteristics to nonhuman things) sentiments of God were jilted through some theologians, as well as philosophical designs (e.g. the theory of the 'Death of God' or 'demythologization of the Bible'), became alternatives through them. As for the primal unchristian spiritualities, this progress assumes to be reduced. The perspective at the heart of secularized, sceptical and agnostic similarities, religious iconography assumes an anticipated unnecessary, yet notwithstanding this, fresh and new enthusiasm and eagerness in symbols are emerging, precisely among the younger contemporaries who are made aware of both Eastern and non-Western religious and cultural traditions, with their well-to-do originators of symbolic images and

ways of pondering. Therefore, regardless of all discernible contravene trends, a heartened experience for the particular utilities of iconography and symbolism was accepted during the closing time of the twentieth centennial and with this in the pre-part of the 21st centennial, it was embraced by most. Thus, a rebound in perceiving the specific utilities of iconography and symbolism was appreciated at the dawn of the 20th century and the rise of the 21st century, despite facing trends.

Remember the purpose of this article, namely: if iconography and symbolism have a place in the Christian context or is (critique) vindicated to be not regarded as equals too, for example, the sacraments, preaching and praying in Christian ecclesiastical liturgy, therefore the influence of liturgical art in African Christian spirituality will now be discussed.

The role of liturgical art in African Christian spirituality

Although the ambience (the inside of metaphysical entities) at Serima postulated an epitomised timeframe of Catholic liturgy in Africa, and the singularity with the transcendental character of the pansophical, supreme, Omni-kind God of Christianity, the place of the ecclesiastical aesthetics in African venerated cannot abide by overprioritising. The examination of the Catholic liturgy in 1994 is the storage of the Catholic belief, embodying the faith in iconography and symbols, as it systematically pursues, the sacredness of Christ, as it cannot mean the veiled and incomprehensive God. Therefore, foundationally, Christian symbolism is showing, in symbols, the equivalent of veracity meaning what the sacred word tells us in words. The Catholic Church vindicated that all insignia in the liturgical fomentations are affiliated with Christ and thus also the venerable symbols of Magdalen's the progenitor of God and the archangels. All embodied Jesus who is venerated by them (Mudyiwa & Mokgoatšana 2021:5/10).¹¹

Not just to better the aesthetical value of Serima Mission, yet, also to be conscious of the matter that Serima's symbolism is specifically vibrant with iconography in its theology, as it continued to be implemental in designing the belief of objects relevant to Christianity. Considering Groeber's extended stay at Serima (1948–1968), where most of his followers could not read or write, where Bibles were not conveniently accessible and low cost, experiencing catechesis was therefore profoundly important. Notwithstanding this, Fr Groeber utilises symbolism and iconography in his classes, where he uses religious art and images to enhance his teaching, much to the follower's affections of his immense unlettered novices, as Fr Groeber, on many times told his people that Pope Gregory, who is viewed as one of the four most remembered Catholic fathers along with Ambrose,

10. His Mighty Hand is the depiction of Yongsung Kim. This depiction portrays Christ grasping under the water to save Peter. Please also observe Kim Yongsung's: His Mighty Hand in the bibliography at <https://yongsungkimart.com/products/his-mighty-hand-by-yongsungkim.variant=40677002510501>

11. To support this, Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021:5) wrote the following: 'In an interview conducted by one of the authors at Serima Mission to establish the role of iconography in Christian liturgy, particularly at Serima Mission, it was established that the role and function of innumerable sets of murals portraying biblical designs and patterns at Serima Mission are critical'.

Augustine and Jerome; religious art is more-or-less an extension of a book of those who cannot read or write (Mudyiwa & Mokgoatšana 2021:6/10). So, one may ask, what kind of value do we talk about when we want (perhaps important to some or not so important to others), of these symbols and icons?

Valuation of symbols and icons

Notwithstanding that the iconography and symbol sacredness within Christianity may have its foundational origin in the writings of the history of Hebrews, the refute that embodies the character as well as the origin of iconography and symbolism, in the Christian tradition, frenzies on. As Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021) elaborate:

Tracing the history of icons in the Christian religion, Ancient Faith Ministries presents two theories that try to account for the origin of icon veneration within the Christian religion. While non-orthodox writings view icons as the Hellenising and paganising of Christianity, orthodox scholars see icons, not as Hellenising or paganising of Christianity but rather as a Christianizing of paganism. Art historians have also considered the first Christian art in the 4th century simply as an aspect of Roman art of the time, and the elaboration of Christian art under Emperor Constantine as a continuation in Christian dress of more classical aspects of Roman art. (p. 6)

Also, what is said in the above mentioned (Mudyiwa & Mokgoatšana 2021) follows it up with:

Recounting the equal rationale, non-conventional authors have continuously, referred to church Fathers who ferociously doomed church symbols. These include Origen (186–255), Tertullian (160–240), Eusebius (265–399) and Clement of Alexandria (150–216). (p. 7)

Moreover, centennials beyond the dooming of symbols by the church fathers, well-known reformers like Luther, Zwingli and Cavin also doomed the execution of symbols and iconography in Christian ecclesiastical worship and liturgy. Calvin's thinking was that anything that Christians discounted through symbols of what God is like is useless:

Zwingli was convinced that images are unable to communicate the true Christ to humanity. Similarly, Luther considered the matter of paintings and sculpture as having relative unimportance. (Mudyiwa & Mokgoatšana 2021:7)

Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021:7/10) tell us that Serima symbols have obtained extraordinary acclaim from Catholics as well as non-Catholics, yet the other side of the coin is also true as foundationalists from numerous Christian establishments moreover condemned Groeber's ingenuity at Serima:

They have a strong feeling that there should not be any paintings in churches. They argue that putting images and icons in churches is tantamount to depicting that which is honoured in worship. The same critics also argue that even though Fr Groeber gave his art students considerable leeway and liberty in designing their images in their ways, a

handful of Serima Mission art is exaggerated thereby losing its original intended Christian teaching. (Mudyiwa & Mokgoatšana 2021:7)

Usually, Serima works with their cloak-like appearance, big skulls and massive palms with fingers which indicate a heaviness that supports *sapiens* brain and consciousness with the capacity for their inventiveness (Zhou 2017) may not render an access objection into the substance of Christian religion:

... [F]or that reason, one anonymous priest from the same Diocese of Gweru jokingly referred to Serima art, particularly in the church exterior, as resembling goblins devoid of any religious meaning. As emphasised by Zhou (2017:55), since Fr Groeber did not want his students to mimic western modernism in their art, they ended up mimicking their patron instead, thereby exposing their talent to public scrutiny. (p. 54, Unpublished paper: Master of art)

Because of what was mentioned in the paragraph above, another question had to be posed to Kinkade, namely, can religious *sapiens* argue regarding redemption in the world without the Fall?

Another profound question for Kinkade

A further necessary query surfaced with scholars regarding the works of Kinkade: can religious *sapiens* argue regarding redemption in the world without the Fall? I think that the same as with rebirth without death, redemption presumes which substance is to be salvaged from within has betide previously. Yet say, for instance, there was such a thing referred to as there was no collapse (Fall), what is supposedly an anticipated salvaged? If the cosmos is pictured without the Fall, then the veracious content of iconography that is religious, that should manifest in an artist's work, is missing. A lasting paradigm for me is the sketch *Sunrise*. The work is picturing the Cross elevated on an elevated promontory overarching an infinite distance in misty surroundings. See *Cross in the Mountains* (Tetschen Altar). 1808 © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

Alike in the previous work where the viewer in the space and time of Peter, engulfed by water, observes from beneath the water context, the emancipation-carriage beam of Jesus and his reached arm, we are picturing this work, which is identical to redemption, with the cardinal symbol of Jesus, towering over and into the earth in misty surroundings into the upcoming sun. The contents of this work and its cardinal foundational object point to the notable work of the German romanticist Caspar Friedrich (*Cross in the mountains 1808-'Tretschien Altar'*). Yet, besides Kinkade's work, it seems a percipient replica and notes to the pattern, yet thus is understood in total contrary. The execution framework the cardinal of Friedrich's portrayal, with the gleams of the upcoming sun, as though the shine against the cross, spends profound symbolism for redemption regarding primordial violations and wickedness.

In the work of Kinkade, no execution and no Golgotha: Kinkade's-Cross was structured with a breath-taking vista, which is not understood as a symbol of the Christian religion. Notwithstanding this, the cross is pictured by the observer as a symbol of deliverance, as this iconography is understood on earth where no primordial misdeeds and execution are manifested. This work does not show the character of deliverance, yet one of the works of an unspoiled world that Kinkade postered in his works. See Kinkade's work regarding the same as the Tretschel Altar.

Abridged

In the beginning, the purpose of the article was elucidated and to do this the following was explained: In the 'Introduction', it was mentioned that a comparison seeks to define the criticisms that are experienced by theologians and Christian believers if iconography and symbolism have a place in the Christian context or is criticism vindicated to be not regarded as equals to, for example, the sacraments, preaching and praying in a Christian ecclesiastical liturgy? Then, under the heading 'Preliminary religious symbolisation', it was suggested that quantity (of these iconographies and symbols) has a dual objection-challenge of esoteric (intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a piece of specialised knowledge or interest) or exoteric (intended for or likely to be understood by the general public), contents, with a curtailment objection. The detection of its nuance surmises a convinced degree of engaged unity. Next, under the heading 'Concepts of symbolisation', it was told that the rational image is not kept secret in its gist. More so, on some level, it has an articulated (spoken) repute (i.e. it transcends the manifested understanding for those who behold its significance) and it alluded to me that it points to the urgent requirement for communication and the still obscuring information and significant concepts of its subject matters. Consequently, under the heading 'Diversity and gist huddled with the term design or symbol', as Goldammer (2020) postulated it:

Furthermore, a symbol in its intermediary function has aspects of the (theory of knowing) epistemology and (theory of being) ontology. Thus, as a means of knowledge, it operates in a characteristically dialectical process of veiling and revealing truths. It fulfils an interpretative function in the process of effectively apprehending and comprehending religious experience. In doing so, the word, or symbol, with its meaning, contextual use, relationship to other types of religious expression, and interpretative connection with the various forms of sign, picture, gesture, and sound, plays an important part in the process of symbolical perception and reflection. (p. 2)

At that point, 'Symbolism and the anomaly of semiology' were discussed, and it was elucidated that semiology is an important tool-so-to-speak to understand the value of iconography and symbolism. Thereupon, under the heading 'Junctures of interpretation manifestations of religious iconography', it was suggested that artists must not try to

correct the Ecclesiastical precept or canon, as they have to try to escape the sacrilege of the profound, from the conversions of a quintessential mirror onto the realm of decorating shed with practised utilitarian art that abides in *sapiens* space and time into the moulding of a billboard, message, tapestry of brocade, magnet on a freezer or an edition on a tee-shirt, yet in coinciding space artists must aim to build a stable observational admonition of Christian ethics and intelligence, especially all the intelligence of emancipation from Christ. Then, belatedly, in the 'Contemporary scene of symbolism and iconography, of the here and now' it was suggested that regardless of all discernible contravene trends, a heartened experience for the particular utilities of iconography and symbolism was accepted during the closing time of the twentieth centennial and with this in the pre-part of the 21st centennial, it was embraced by most. Thus, a rebound in perceiving the specific utilities of iconography and symbolism was appreciated at the dawn of the 20th century and the rise of the 21st century, despite facing trends. And this then leads to the question of what the role of church art in African Christian liturgy was?, and under subsequent headings namely, the valuation of symbols and icons and another important question to Kinkade, the article drew a comparison and contextual meaning between the work of Friedreich and Kinkade's picturing of Jesus on the Cross.

Conclusion

Therefore, this article compared and defined criticisms experienced by theologians, philosophical designs and Christian believers regarding symbolism and iconography. It showed (using the four examples, Fr Groeber and Kinkade as well as *Sunrise* and *Golgotha* by Kinkade), that the influence is vindicated that symbolism and iconography are equal as perhaps the sacraments, preaching and praying in the Christian ecclesiastical liturgy, as well as any other non-Christian religion!

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Author's contributions

J.A.v.R., is the sole author of this research article.

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