

THE STAINED GLASS
WINDOWS IN
ST PAUL'S
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
SOUTH CROYDON



*"And storied Windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light."*

Milton

Il Penseroso.

Based on a series of articles
in *"The Pauline"* by
Mr. Farquhar L. Jones
with later additions.

Additional research from
Mr. Kenneth Oubridge.

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CHURCH WINDOWS – AN INTRODUCTION

Church windows with their variety of shape, size and design make a most interesting study. This is especially the case when stained glass is used to illustrate a Bible story; to commemorate an early Christian Saint or, perhaps, a prominent Christian of a later age. In St. Paul's all these subjects are to be found in the windows.

Early Christian places of worship were mostly small buildings as were the windows which generally were few in number. There are some churches in England still used regularly for worship and dating from pre-Norman times - Worth in Sussex and Deerhurst in Gloucestershire are two such and both have examples of these early small windows. But, in France, there is one church – St. Jean in Poitiers - which pre-dates the English examples by several centuries. St. Jean, built in the fourth century, is the earliest Christian building in France. A little over 40 feet in length it has but six small windows!

There are several reasons for the use of small windows. Early churches were frequently used as a refuge for local people in time of war and internal troubles. Few openings were made in the walls to ensure they were as strong as possible and at the same time able to bear the weight and thrust of a heavy roof. This latter requirement continued into the era of Romanesque/Norman church buildings. Only in the twelfth century did the design change when experiments with new ideas began.

About the year 1144 an influential French churchman, the Abbot Suger, who was also the French King's first Minister, was anxious to have his abbey church rebuilt. His building still stands in what is now a somewhat rundown suburb of Paris, St Denis, which the French term a basilica, embodies many of the new structural ideas which became known as Gothic architecture. Suger's great wish was to have a great church in which vast windows would stress the importance of light in the Christian faith - no doubt having in mind the words of Christ - "*I am the Light of the World*" (John 8:12).

The new form of construction allowed spaces for large windows to be set in the walls which no longer had to be tremendously thick. This was possible through the use of internal columns forming part of the walls and which transferred part of the weight of the roof down to the foundations, also by flying buttresses outside which bore the thrusts of the roof, again carrying these down to the foundations. At the same time beautiful medieval glass was becoming available and so Suger was able to fill his windows with such material. Unfortunately almost all this medieval glass in St. Denis was lost at the time of the French Revolution but, now filled with plain glass, even more light streams through the windows. One of the writer's most treasured memories is of a visit to St. Denis some years ago when the great nave of the church was filled with a vivid golden light as the sun's rays poured into the building.

Over the following centuries stained glass was used in church after church throughout Europe and the British Isles. In the larger churches the plan was to set in windows on the north side (the 'Dark' side) stories from the Old Testament while on the south side (the 'Light' side) scenes from the New Testament were, for obvious reasons, used to fill the windows.

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards the rudiments of good stained glass making were unfortunately lost. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the art was re-discovered, so far as this country is concerned, by William Morris and others. So it is only about 100 years ago (sic) that glass comparable with medieval glass became available again.

St. Paul's is indeed fortunate in the quality of the stained glass set in so many of its windows.

THE NORTH AISLE LANCET WINDOWS

Although the United Reformed Church has no cult of the Saints, St. Paul's has thirteen windows depicting Saints of the New Testament, Saints of the early Christian Church in Great Britain and Martha of Bethany. Five New Testament Saints are to be found in the lancets along the north aisle of the church and, in the North Transept, is a window devoted to St. George.

Entering the church from the vestibule the first window in the north aisle is devoted to **ST. PETER** who stands barefoot, clothed in a blue robe worn over a highly ornamental golden cloak. The Saint is bearded and above his head is a halo. His right hand grasps the Keys of Heaven while a large book - the Bible - rests in his left hand, and he stands before a background of a harbour and ships.

The second window shows **ST. PAUL**, also bearded and with a halo above his head. Dressed in a long blue cloak with a green cope, he stands barefoot on a black and white tiled floor and, in the background, is the wall of a large hall, suggesting the "*Court of Areopagus*" (Acts 17:19). The Saint is holding a long sword - "*The Sword of the Spirit*" - in one hand and with the other he is holding a book - presumably the volume containing his letters to the Churches!

(These two windows form the Rev. Henry Crombie Memorial, Minister of this Church from 1909-1917. They were originally dedicated on 20th October 1935 and damaged by enemy action in 1944. They were restored at the expense of the family and re-dedicated in July 1951).

The tablet between these windows reads:

A.M † D.G.
***These windows are placed in
happy Memory of
The Rev. Henry Crombie
Died 21st August 1934 aged 67 years
Minister of this Church 1909 to 1917
"How beautiful upon the mountains are the
feet of him that publisheth salvation"***

The next window is devoted to **ST. MATTHEW**, bearded, barefoot and standing on a pedestal. He is writing his Gospel with a quill pen and is wearing a red cloak worn over a blue cope. Notice the small figure of a man or angel - the symbol of St. Matthew - by his right leg. The symbolism of these four Gospel writers' windows is based on Revelation 4:6-7 "*Round about the throne were four living creatures: and the first creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a face as of a man and the fourth was like a flying eagle*". It is associated with a beautiful poetic idea. In the devout fancy of the early Christian fathers the four living creatures round the throne were regarded as emblems of the four evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John, who have given to the Christian Church, from their own several standpoints, the priceless portrayal of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This window was dedicated in 1926 to the memory of Jessie Maria Comley, wife of Thomas Belfield Comley, Session Clerk from 1917 - 1919, to whom the adjoining window of St. John is dedicated.

The tablet reads:

***In Loving Memory of
Jessie Maria Comley
Born 7th October 1852 Died 26th August 1926
Wife of Thomas Belfield Comley
"May Light perpetual rest upon her"***

ST. JOHN occupies the fourth window and, in line with ancient tradition, he is clean shaven but like the other apostles, is unshod. Standing on a pedestal, he wears a long purple cloak with a green outer garment. He writes his Gospel with a quill pen and on his left is the traditional symbol of St. John - the eagle.

The tablet reads:

***In Loving Memory of
Thomas Belfield Comley
Born 7th April 1843 Died 25th May 1919
Session Clerk of this Congregation
"Well done thou good and faithful servant"***

The fourth and fifth windows were dedicated on 5th April 1924 to the memory of Mr. J.J. Reid and Mr. T.B. Comley. Mr. R.S.McMinn, Editor of 'The Pauline' in reporting the Dedication Service wrote: "*the windows ... are side by side, just as side by side these two brethren laboured together in the work of their Church. Next to their love of home, the Church had the first place in their minds and hearts; no sacrifice was too great to make, no time too much to give, no burden too heavy to bear for the welfare of St. Paul's.*"

The fifth window depicted **ST. LUKE**, with associated emblem the book and the calf (of bull). The tablet read:

***In loving memory of John Johnstone Reid
Born 30th June 1849 Died 29th February 1916
Convenor of the Building Committee and first
Session Clerk of the Congregation.***

The original window was destroyed by enemy action in 1944 and, for some reason, not replaced. A window donated by Mr. Andrew Reid in memory of his mother filled this lancet from about 1951 to 1999. This window, depicting Martha of Bethany is now in the North Transept.

A very generous offer to re-instate a window depicting St. Luke was accepted. This latest window, designed and executed by Mr. Leslie Huitson is traditional and complements the windows of the other evangelists. It was dedicated on 20th June, 1999 to the memory of Farquhar Langford Jones 1908 - 1995, an Elder and Superintendent of the Sunday School and Junior Church, and a member of St. Paul's for over 40 years.

(His love of Church architecture and stained glass inspired him to write these articles, and it is fitting that a window is now dedicated to his memory.)

The sixth and last window in the north aisle shows **ST. MARK**, bearded and barefoot, dressed in a white cloak over a long green tunic. His Gospel is in his left hand while he has a quill pen in his right. Note the Lion (Mark's symbol) lying quietly on the left of the Saint.

This window was dedicated to Robert Inglis McMinn, Session Clerk 1901-1916 and was also damaged. It was restored and re-dedicated in 1947.

The tablet reads:

***In Piam Memoriam
Robert Inglis McMinn
Session Clerk 1901 - 1908 and in 1916
Given by his sons and daughters***

Turning into the North Transept, the first lancet window here contains a representation of **ST. GEORGE**, one of the two windows in St. Paul's devoted to the Patron Saint of England. It is a later work than that in the south aisle and was given to St. Paul's by the Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies of the groups attached to St. Paul's and dedicated in 1952. Below the figure of St. George will be noticed the emblems of the four organisations. St. George himself is clad in armour and is booted and spurred. In his right hand is a long broad sword while he carries a staff in his left. Under his feet lies the Dragon slain by the Saint.

The last window depicts the sole woman in St. Paul's windows - **MARTHA OF BETHANY**. Her hair, long and fair, hangs down over her shoulders and she is clad in a blue robe. In her right hand she holds a large ewer while in her left there is a bunch of keys - perhaps those of the domestic rooms of her house! She stands on a clear black and white tiled floor. This window was donated by Mr. Andrew Reid in memory of his mother.

THE EAST - "NATIVITY" WINDOW

The "Nativity" Window in St. Paul's - the largest and most splendid of the stained glass work in the church - was, until severely damaged by a flying bomb incident which occurred on 14th June 1944, at the west end of the building. Restored some years later, after the end of the war, by Mr. Henry Grylls, it was reassembled and placed, appropriately, at the east end where, illuminated by the rising sun, it faces the congregation.

The window has five main sections (lights) and a number of smaller compartments all divided one from the other by fine stone tracery. These five high vertical lights depict the appearance of the angels to the shepherds and the stable scene as described in the first verses of Chapter 2 of St. Luke's Gospel.

Traditionally, windows of this type are to be 'read' from the bottom upwards and from left to right of each scene.

The design ignores the stone window mullions and is skillfully bound together by a border of its own of painted tracery, panelled, cusped and foliated in full Gothic detail, with highly successful results.

The design also embraces buildings indicating Bethlehem, the city of David, in the background, with farm life grouped in the middle distance. There is also a rare and exquisite foreground of herbage and flowers, wrought and enriched with unusual detail, beneath the feet of the central figures.

Subtle beauty and rare craftsmanship distinguish the principal figures. The Madonna and the Shepherds in adoration are apparelled in robes of wonderful beauty. The ruby robe of the Virgin, covered partly by a mantle of a Murillo blue, and the glorious raiment of the visitors are finished with rare attention to detail, and may well be considered equal to fine mediaeval work. The Heavenly Host and the kneeling Angels strike a quite separate note, and their simplicity adds also to the charm of the whole.

The figure of Joseph, plainer, of course in garb and practical, as befits his journeyings, points out the time of day, or rather announces it is night. A homely touch is the lantern in his hand aglow with light.

In the upper part of the centre lights and dominating the entire scene is the Heavenly Host bearing a scroll with the words:

"Gloria in altissimus Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis"
Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. (Luke 2:1).

The smaller sections of tracery contain a number of interesting illustrations in colour. There are the three emblems of the Presbyterian Church of England - the Dove, the Open Book and the Burning Bush. In the centre is a large bright star - the Star of Bethlehem - and, immediately below, seven other smaller stars. It is possible that the designer of the window intended these to represent the "Seven Stars and Orion" to which reference is made in Amos 5:8 *"Seek him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion and who turneth the shadow of death in the morning the Lord is his name."*

Higher still are four shields in line across the window. These commemorate the Rev. Archibald Neilson Mackray, M.A., the first Minister of St. Paul's. The shields represent (a) Stirling, his birthplace (b) his Clan (c) Edinburgh, his university and (d) Croydon, the place of his main ministry and where he died.

The remaining tracery is filled with angels bearing scrolls reading *"Ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum, quod erit omni populo"* - "For, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people",

and "*Quia natus est vobis hodie Salvator in civitate David*" - "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour" - Luke 2:10-11.

On the scrolls on either side of the Dove at the top of the window are the words "*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*" - "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

This "Nativity" or, as it might be called the "Christmas" window, reminds us Sunday by Sunday of God's greatest gift to His world. At the same time the various symbols above the main scene showing the Nativity, can but give much food for thought for all who gaze at the window.

THE SOUTH TRANSEPT WINDOWS

THE 'GOODSIR' MEMORIAL WINDOWS

The three stained glass windows in the South Transept, known as the '*Goodsir Memorial Windows*' might also be termed the '*Resurrection*' windows for they remind the viewer of two accounts of the finding of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

Here we have a couplet subjects under canopies, depicting on the left-hand side, the Easter Morn, with the text "*He is risen; He is not here*" (Mark 16:6). Mary Magdalene, with Mary, the mother of James and Salome carrying sweet spices are confronted by '*a young man, clothed in a long white garment*' at the sepulchre.

On the right-hand side is depicted the appearance of our Lord to Mary Magdalene in the garden, with the text "*Touch me not, for I am not ascended to my Father*" (John 20:17).

In the trefoil pieces of tracery above these two windows are introduced, within wreaths of thistle, the arms of Musselburgh (Mr. Goodsir's birthplace) with a scroll bearing the motto "*The honest Town of Musselburgh*" and the arms of George Watson's College, Edinburgh (his School) with the motto "*Ex Corde Caritas*" (Love from the Heart).

At the base of the lights runs the memorial inscription "*To the glory of God and in loving memory of George Goodsir - Born 19th October 1857, Died 9th November 1922. Erected by his wife and children.*"

Above the pair of vertical windows is a circular one - a modest Rose window which with its restricted size cannot be compared with the great Rose windows to be found in cathedrals in England and in France. Nevertheless, the design is worthy of note. The central feature shows the emblem of the Cross in a halo of light. The frame of stone is surrounded by six angelic figures - two immediately above, one on each side and two below. These celestial figures are linked together by a long circular scroll carrying the words "*Now is Christ risen and become the first fruits of them that slept*" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The last seven words are difficult to make out as they appear to the observer to be inverted.

Between the Angels are other roundels, each of which contains stained glass depicting a different flower. The whole window is most attractive.

The three windows constitute a memorial to the late George Goodsir - a founder member of St. Paul's and for many years Session Clerk.

(The original windows were dedicated on 5th October 1924, but were considerably damaged in November 1944. They were restored and reset in April 1952 as an exact facsimile of the original design).

Present day Paulines are much indebted to their far-sighted predecessors who, in the early years of the century, built St. Paul's and handed down to later generations a beautiful building designed for worship and adorned with so many features set up for the glory of God.

DRS. WILLIAM AND ELIZABETH DUNCAN MEMORIAL WINDOW

The crest on the right-hand side of the window is that of the clan Duncan together with the motto '*Disce Pati*' (Learn to Suffer). On the left-hand side two scenes, one of their house, and the other looking down Loch Goil where it joins Loch Long and to the hills which divide Loch Long from Gare Loch

The window was presented by Miss Morag Duncan, in memory of her parents.

WAR MEMORIAL

The first west-facing window replaces the 1914-1918 **War Memorial** window which was sited originally at the east end of the Church. This was destroyed by enemy action in the late summer of 1944. A full description is given later in these notes. The head of Christ was the only usable fragment found of the original window and has been incorporated in this window.

The base of the window and the flames symbolise the turmoil and damage inflicted by enemy action. The bands of green and brown represent the hills and valleys of East Surrey on which the Church stands. The winding rose and leaves are the rising spirit of Christianity and the new life of the restored Church. The head of Christ set within the cross is symbolic of the power of God.

The window was restored in memory of Mr. Sam McCutcheon and a brass plate below the window reads:

***In thanksgiving for the Life of
Sam McCutcheon 1913 - 1989***

It was dedicated on 6th November 1991.

CORINNA LOUISE PRESTON

The second west-facing window in the South Transept is a memorial to **Corinna Louise Preston** (8.7.72 - 14.2.89) who died following replacement heart surgery. The window was designed by Edward Payne of Box in Gloucestershire who died shortly after its completion in May 1990.

"Farewell but not for ever" is a quotation from the finale of Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius", and the inspiration behind the creation of this window, where the Angel is seen ascending with Corinna towards Heaven. The river symbolises her love of life and includes roses and lilies, her favourite flowers.

The base of the window depicts her brother, Dominic, and three of her friends, Tamara Clarke and Caroline Beeton from Croham Hurst School and Sarah Kilroy from the King's School, Canterbury. They are shown singing madrigals to typify Corinna's love of music.

THE SOUTH AISLE LANCET WINDOWS

The first lancet windows in the Church to be re-glazed with stained glass were those depicting St. Andrew and St. George. They were given by the Ryan family, members of the congregation for many years, in memory of their son, Captain Alfred Eric Ryan M.C. who was mortally wounded on 23rd March, 1918.

ST. ANDREW, white haired, is dressed in a long red tunic over which he has a voluminous blue cloak. He holds a book in his right hand and with the left he supports the Cross of St. Andrew - this is shown as two balks of timber placed cross-wise and fastened at the centre with a strong rope.

ST. GEORGE, wearing armour, has a shield depicting the red cross of St. George, resting on the ground. In the Saint's right hand is a long lance. His hair is dark and he is clean-shaven. This is, of course, an earlier window than that in the North Transept.

Between these windows, fixed to the south wall, is a plaque:

1897 - 1918

To the Glory of God and in proud and precious memory of Captain Alfred Eric Ryan M.C. (Mentioned in Dispatches) 11th Battalion "The Queen's" Royal West Surrey Regt. who served during 1916-1918 in Flanders, Italy & France & Fell in action near Bapaume 23 March 1918

Aged Twenty Years

Mortally wounded, he called to his men "Leave me, boys and save yourselves." Erected by his father, mother and sister, sorrowing yet rejoicing that, being faithful unto death, he has received the crown of life.

The family pew was immediately opposite the memorial plaque. It is believed that the features of St. George in the window are, in fact, those of Captain Ryan. The windows were dedicated on Advent Sunday, 1920.

In November 1922, the four other lancet windows were re-glazed, also the gift of the Ryan family. St. Andrew and St. George were joined by the other two patron saints, and between the outer pairs are the 'Dove-Saint' Columba and the proto-martyr St. Alban.

ST. DAVID, vested in a jewelled cope, holds his archiepiscopal cross and book.

ST. PATRICK, vested in chasuble and dalmatic, holds a pastoral staff, from which at the base a serpent is creeping - a symbol introduced to express the legend that St. Patrick drove snakes out of Ireland.

ST. COLUMBA is represented preaching, with the island of Iona and the Cathedral, which he founded there, in the background. A dove is shown at the top of the window.

ST. ALBAN is represented as a soldier in the Roman army of occupation in Britain. The Saint became a Christian and, traditionally, was the first Briton to suffer martyrdom for his faith. This was during the third century in the reign of Emperor Diocletian. He is holding a cross and sword, with the Abbey of St. Albans which enclose his shrine, in the background. There are also shown the river Ver, the half-timbered houses and the Abbot's gatehouse, leading to the precincts.

Between the windows of Columba and Alban there is a tablet (dedicated on 12th September 1954 which reads:

In memory of Alfred Francis Ryan 1870 - 1939 and of Grace Ryan 1871 - 1952 beloved parents of the late Eric Ryan and of Dorothy Lewis and grandparents of Jean, Alison and Helen.

THE 1914-18 WAR MEMORIAL WINDOW

The original stained glass East window above the chancel - **the War Memorial window** - in memory of those members of St. Paul's who gave their lives during the First World War, was unveiled and dedicated during an impressive service on Sunday 26th June 1921.

The window was most regrettably destroyed by enemy flying bomb action in 1944, the only fragment of any size being the head of Christ which was found almost intact and now incorporated in the new memorial window in the South Transept. The black and white illustration of this window shows it must have been a most beautiful piece of work. The following description compiled by the late R.S. McMinn and included in *'The Pauline'* for July 1921 is given below.

"The five-light Window, designed and executed by Messrs. Wippell & Co of Exeter and London, has as its central motive a Calvaire in stone, surmounted by a crown and standing on a ground as of battle, which shows smaller crosses and 'blossoms red' with flowers, some of which, in lovely symbolism, twine round the pedestal itself. The extreme left 'panel' represents Abraham and young Isaac with ass and faggot and the hill-altar of sacrifice in the distance. Next stands St. Peter, fisher's net on arm, with one hand resting on a jagged rock. (This last happy touch, like the word 'jeoparded' in the inscription, was Mr. Macray's contribution.)

Behind are 'other little ships' at sea. To the right is St. Paul, erect and leaning on the 'sword of the Spirit', with the whole armour of the Christian disposed around him. The background tents suggest at once his calling and the battlefield. The 'light' on the extreme right shows sweetly the dedication of the boy Samuel by his mother, Eli standing before the seven-branched candlestick.

In the upper part of each outer panel, separated from the main figures by an ornamental fringe of grapes, are seen the motives of dedication and consecration on either side of the central crown - hooded Justice with scales and sword, and Truth with flaming torch. To left and right are representations of a kneeling novice keeping vigil by his sword, and of the same knight, his blade and casque laid down, being crowned with a laurel chaplet by an outstretched hand above.

Over all broods the descending Dove of Peace. Amid this topmost tracery are found angels with palms and crowns - the compassing 'cloud of witnesses' - flanked right and left by the red Crusader's cross and that of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John. At the base of the Central Figure are the words, "Greater love hath no man than this" and the crests of the particular regimental units to which the nine belonged have been skillfully introduced at the foot of the panels.

The Tablet, of Culin brass on an oak mount, bears their names in relief lettering. It has replicas at the corners of the Military Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the Military Cross again, and the Presbyterian emblem - the Burning Bush - in proper colours. Messrs Gawthorp & Sons of Long Acre executed the Tablet, and to our Mr. V.E. Gawthorp, F.S.A. Scot., the gratitude of the Congregation is due for his valuable advice and superintendence of the work of both Memorials from first to last."

The Tablet referred to in the final paragraph above is still in position below the present East Window, immediately behind the organ console, it has fortunately escaped serious damage in the bomb incident.