

STAINED GLASS IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST CLEMENT, JERSEY

INTRODUCTION

Stained glass making began life as a Christian art form a very long time ago. The instructions that the monk Theophilus wrote in 1100 AD had changed little over the previous 900 years. Most of the glass in St Clement owes its origin to the Gothic Revival that swept Britain in the nineteenth century, and although the history of the windows is interesting, the purpose of this guide is more "to illumine men's minds so they may travel through it to an apprehension of God's light", as one medieval French abbot put it.

Stained glass was originally intended to convey Bible stories



and messages to the illiterate, and although we now live in a time when most people can read, it has lost none of its power to inspire, as we hope you will soon discover.

Go to the east end where the altar is situated to begin our tour of the windows.

The Great East Window - The great window behind the altar was installed as part of the extensive renovations of 1880. It is in three parts, and, going from left to right, shows the birth of Jesus, his ascension and his resurrection (the empty tomb on Easter Day). Here set out for us is the beginning and the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, and we are reminded that Jesus himself is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 21:6). It should not be surprising to see these themes in the sanctuary, dominating the altar, for they lie at the very heart of the Christian faith. In the



middle section Jesus gestures towards heaven and towards earth with his pierced hands; he is going to his Father and yet he will be with us always. And so, even though we see him no more, yet may we still meet with him in the bread broken and the wine poured out.

These three miraculous events present not only a great proclamation of the Christian faith but also a challenge. As St Paul says, "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

The Benest Window - is situated to the south of the altar. Although there are two sections to the window, it shows a single scene - the miraculous catch of fish in Lake Galilee following Jesus' resurrection (John 21:5-7).



This is an appropriate theme for a Sanctuary Window as the Lord's Table is not only a place where Christians gather together, but also a place from where they are sent out to proclaim God's love and to be "fishers of men".

This window was given in 1926 in memory of Jurat Benest, who lived at Rocqueberg, Samarès. Charles Jean Benest had been blessed in many ways - he was a respected member of the community, having served as Connétable of the parish for 21 years from 1885. He had three daughters and owned a good number of properties around St Helier. But it was perhaps his ownership of the Jersey Oyster Company that prompted the theme of this window, for the sea had been a source of great abundance for his family. This window is a measure of the Benest family's thankfulness to God, and perhaps a reminder to us to count our own blessings.

The Le Maistre Window - The window to the right of the Benest Window, facing the organ, was given by Miss Marie Le Maistre in 1881 in memory of her parents. It is a "nurturing" window. The left-hand panel shows children being fed with bread (we cannot escape the reference to Jesus being the

Bread of Life, as we are still in the sanctuary). The children have no shoes, reminding Christians of their obligation to give to the poor (Luke 12:33). The right-hand panel also shows children being fed, but this time with the word of God - the Holy Bible.



In these two scenes we have the feeding of body, mind and spirit with Jesus who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35) and the Word made Flesh (John 1:14).

Here, too, is a reminder that the Church's mission is both practical and spiritual. It also provides a delightful contrast to the Benest window - if the latter is male, the Le Maistre window is female! So we may give thanks for Mother Church. The lilies at the top of the two panels, much loved by the Victorians, are a symbol of purity, which we may take as a reminder of Jesus' words: "Let the little

children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Luke 18:16)

The South Transept Window - The small window in the south transept, in what was once a chapel, is an older window, for it pre-dates the restoration work of 1880. Nothing is known of its origin, although it must be post-Reformation, as all the original glass would have been destroyed at that time. It shows John the Baptist baptising Jesus in the River Jordan and the Holy Spirit coming down upon him in the form of a dove. Here we see the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Why this subject? Because the font was sited in front of this window at one stage. St Mark records that when Jesus was



baptised, a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." This is a very powerful and yet a very personal scene - this is the moment when Jesus must become greater and his cousin John must become less (John 3:30). Baptism is nothing if not transformational.

The waters of baptism are yet another reference to water in the stained glass of St Clement, water that has been so important in so many ways to the people who have worshipped in this church down the ages.

The Seale Window - Move from the south transept past the font and into the nave, and you will find three windows set into the south



wall. The first of these was given in memory of Thomas Seale, Rector of St. Clement from 1729 to 1746 and, like the great east window and the Le Maistre Window, was made by Ward Hughes of London in 1881. It has two panels and shows two groups of women.



In the left-hand panel we see two sisters, Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-41). Mary listens to the words of Jesus while Martha is distracted by many things. Mary, Jesus says, has chosen what is better. In the right-hand panel, a woman is about to anoint Jesus' feet with expensive perfume in the house of Simon the leper (Matthew

26:7-13). In response to the disciples' anger at the waste, Jesus replies that the poor will always be with them, but not Jesus.

Together, these two windows remind us that while Christians are called to love their neighbours as themselves, they are also commanded to love the Lord their God with all their heart (Matthew 22:37-40). Many people do good works, but followers of Christ are also called to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Luke 4:8).

St. Nicholas - to the right of the Seale Window is a window depicting St. Nicholas, to whom our daughter church of St. Nicholas at Grève d'Azette is dedicated in 1927. This window was supplied and fitted by H. A. Anderson of 7 Waterloo Street, St Helier in 1951. Nicholas was a 4th century bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, and so he is shown here with his crook and mitre, the symbols of his office. He was an extremely popular saint in both East and West, and became the patron saint of Russia, children, sailors, unmarried girls, merchants, pawnbrokers, bakers, apothecaries and perfumers. He also gave rise to Santa Claus. Nicholas is often associated with the number three. The three bags he is holding in this window refers to the belief that he

gave three bags of gold to three young women as marriage dowries to save them from loose living. The pawnbroker's sign (three golden balls) also appears to have been derived from this legend. The lighthouse indicates that he is the patron saint of sailors, as he is said to have saved the lives of three sailors near the coast of Turkey. It is appropriate that someone such as this should be patron saint of a church that is so close to the sea. Saints, too, are beacons; beacons of faith.



The Old Testament tells how the land could be both a blessing and a curse for the people of Israel, depending on how they loved the Lord and their neighbours. This window reminds us that the sea has been a source of wealth and prosperity for parishioners down the centuries, but the lighthouse shows that it has also been an ever-present danger.

As we leave St. Nicholas, we may wonder what things in our lives have the potential to be both a blessing and a curse, and why that might be.

St Clement - This window forms a pair along with the St. Nicholas window. These are the saints to whom the two Anglican places of worship in the parish are dedicated.

St. Clement was the fourth Bishop of Rome. According to ancient sources, he was banished to the Crimea by the emperor Trajan, where he was compelled to work in the mines. It was there that he opened up a miraculous supply of



water and so converted the people of the Crimea, where 75 churches were built. Trajan therefore ordered him to be killed (around the year 100 AD) by being thrown into the sea with an anchor round his neck. His bones were apparently rediscovered and were

taken to Rome from the Black Sea in 868. Clement is generally shown either with an anchor, or a tiara, or a cross with three branches.



This window is situated in the nave of the church. The word "nave" comes from the Latin for ship and many naves are actually designed to resemble the upturned hull of a



ship. The Church often feels like a boat being tossed on the storms of life (Matthew 22:22-33). The image of St Clement reminds us that faith is like an anchor when we are being lashed by bad weather - it will hold with God's help, and all will be well.

The Norman Window - in the north wall of the nave at the west end, was again made by H. A. Anderson in 1951, and depicts the legendary figure of Sir Galahad, remover of the sword from the stone, one of the three knights sent in search of the Holy Grail, son of Lancelot. Galahad was known as "The Pure", as indicated by the French superscription ("never speak ill of anyone, never indulge in scandal-mongering") and also "The Perfect Knight". He was perfect in courage, gentleness, courtesy and chivalry. But why is he here? The Poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), had made Galahad into a very popular figure through his poems "The Holy Grail" and "Sir Galahad". But we are now in 1951. Is Galahad, this very Victorian mixture of saint and hero, with his pure heart and solemn quest, an anachronism after two world wars, which had undermined many people's faith that there was a purpose to anything? Perhaps. But Galahad



was on a journey of faith, and, in Tennyson's words, he invites us to follow him:

And hence I go; and one will crown me
king
Far in the spiritual city; and come
thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I
go.

The Le Brocq Window - John Le Brocq moved to the parish in the 1870s and farmed 12 acres of land close to the Rectory. He married Mary Ann Cabot, his neighbour's daughter, and they had four children. By 1905, his wife and two of them were dead.

The window he donated in their memory is set up above the door at the west end of the nave and is designed by the firm of A. L.

Moore & Sons, 89 Southampton Row, London WC1 (whose best work may be seen in Ely Cathedral) and the maker's mark indicates that it represents St. Augustine (we presume of Hippo, one of the Early Church Fathers).

In view of the tragedy that John had experienced, St. Augustine's prayer is particularly appropriate:



Watch, O Lord,
with those who wake,
and watch, or weep tonight,
and give your angels charge
over those who sleep.

Tend your sick ones,
O Lord Jesus Christ;
rest your weary ones;
bless your dying ones;
soothe your suffering ones;
pity your afflicted ones;
shield your joyous ones;
and all for your love's sake.
Amen.

Augustine also wrote that our yearning for God anticipates landfall; "it throws hope as an

anchor toward the shore". That yearning is often expressed through art - it can remind us of the reality that is greater than our own reality.

CONCLUSION

Have you enjoyed your tour of the stained glass windows of St. Clement's Church? We hope you have discovered that, far from being historical works of art that were more relevant to a past time, they in fact have a power to communicate the Christian faith and in a way that transcends their Victorian origins. And yet they can only give us a glimpse of the glory of God. As St. Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."

We hope that as you leave our church, our stained glass will have helped you to see a little more clearly.

St. Clement, 2004

