

Bromley Parish Church

A Guide to the Stained Glass Windows



by Michael Camp

Bromley Parish Church was virtually demolished by a bomb on the night of 16 April 1941. On St. Edward the Confessor's Day, 13 October 1949 the foundation stone of the new Church was laid by the then Princess Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth II). Eight years later, on 14 December 1957 the Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester the Right Reverend Christopher Chavasse. Most of the windows were placed during the intervening years as the Church was being built. Just one, that over the main north door was placed later, in 1959. In the Children's Chapel the three windows in the north wall are filled as are four small windows around the apse which forms the east end of the Chapel. In the Nave there is Baptistry window; an East window; a small window in the north wall of the sanctuary, and the largest and best of all, the "Te Deum" window above the north door. The other windows are filled with clear diamond panes giving the Church plenty of light.

The Children's Chapel

North Wall

The windows in the north wall of the Children's Chapel were made in 1954 by Edward Woore of Putney. They show scenes, either biblical or presumed, from the childhood of Jesus. The western and central windows are memorials to the Beer family and are inscribed "IN LOVING MEMORY OF NORAH GREGORY BEER AND HER THREE CHILDREN, DOUGLAS, ROSEMARY & GRAHAM."

The Western window



This window shows an Epiphany scene representing the birth of Jesus. In the right hand light we see the Holy Family. An appropriately young looking Mary, dressed in the traditional blue, worships the infant Jesus and in so

doing provides the viewer with an example of devotion to him. A much older Joseph oversees the scene and holds a lantern. Jesus' arms are up suggesting, perhaps, a degree of agitation. Could he even be crying? Behind the human figures we can see an ox and an ass and the impression of a tree and the stable.

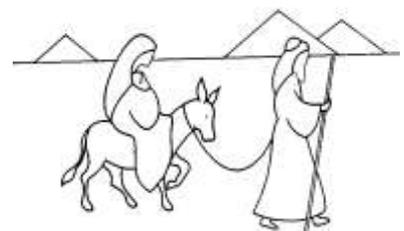
In the left hand light we see three wise men, represented here by a knight, a king and a Moorish looking arab. The knight carries his sword and is clearly a figure used to meting out death. He it is who presents the symbol of death, a horn of myrrh representing the forthcoming suffering and death of the Christ. The gold representing the Kingship of Christ over the whole of creation is presented by a King who is himself crowned; the moor holds a thurible containing the incense of worship indicating that the baby is God incarnate. Behind the 'wise men' we see an angel, wings outstretched, carrying the star which led them to the stable.

The Centre Window

In the central window we see two episodes from the infancy narratives: The presentation of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38) and the flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:14).

The left hand light shows the Presentation. Here we see old Simeon holding the infant Jesus who is shown here at rest. Behind Simeon can be seen the prophetess Anna and in the foreground Mary, who holds a candle. The feast of the Presentation is known as Candlemas from the practice of carrying lighted candles to represent Simeon's words acclaiming Jesus as 'light' (Luke 2:32). Behind all the figures we can get an impression of the tiled floor of the Temple precincts.

In the right hand light we see Joseph leading a donkey on which Mary is seated holding the infant Jesus, now clearly frightened and clinging to Mary. This is reminiscent of a particular style of Russian Icon in which the



infant Jesus, clinging to Mary's breast is startled by the sight of an angel holding a cross before him. A few plants grow alongside the desert road trod by the holy family as they seek asylum in Egypt.

The Eastern Window

In the eastern window we see Jesus as a slightly older child; first in the home at Nazareth and secondly in the incident Luke records of Jesus being found in the Temple at the age of 12.

The left hand light presents a supposed scene from the holy family's home life in Nazareth. Jesus works in Joseph's carpentry shop sawing a piece of wood (with a rather modern looking saw!) Joseph is, once again, portrayed as an attentive and caring father overseeing his son whilst Mary is seen in the background, apparently taking a break from spinning. This window is not intended for use as a visual aid for teaching modern carpentry, note the bare feet and pose which would not be approved by a modern health and safety inspector. This window is a memorial to Hazel Kissick. Hazel, aged 18 was 'fire watching' on the top of the Church tower when the Church was bombed in April 1941. The tower was later restored but it was very badly damaged in the air raid and Hazel lost her life. The rest of the Church was completely obliterated. The Church's Book of Remembrance which can be seen in the north-east corner of the nave was given by Hazel's sister as an additional memorial in 2003. The inscription in the window itself is "IN MEMORY OF HAZEL KISSICK WHO LOST HER LIFE IN THE AIR RAID OF APRIL SIXTEENTH 1941.

The right hand light records the occasion when, aged 12, Jesus went missing from his family following a visit to the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). Luke tells us that Mary eventually found him back in the Temple engaged in erudite discussion of the law with some of the great Temple rabbis. Here Jesus is pictured sitting, in a traditional pose which represents teaching authority. Jesus teaches the teachers because he

is, himself, the subject of the teaching. This window is inserted “IN MEMORY OF LILY SANDFORD A FRIEND OF BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH”

The Children's Chapel

Apse



The four small windows around the apsidal east end of the Chapel were made in 1953 by M. E. Aldrich Rope of Parsons Green South West London. They represent the four Archangels referred to in the book of Enoch (see the description of window 1 for more about this book). In the following description the windows are numbered from left to right. A brass placque beneath window number 1 dedicates the windows as follows “THE ABOVE WINDOWS ARE PLACED TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF F/O KENNETH GORDON SLADE-BETTS DFC AGED 21 YEARS KILLED IN ACTION 29 DEC 1944. HE LOVED LITTLE CHILDREN.”

1

The first window represents an Archangel called Uriel. Uriel appears in a book entitled ‘Enoch’ which probably dates from the first century BC and purports to have been written by Enoch, the father of Methusaleh, referred to in Genesis chapter 5. Enoch we’re told “... walked with God...” The word “Uriel” means “Flame of God” and this archangel figures a lot in the book of Enoch where he is described as a messenger to Noah and also the principal guide to Enoch himself. He also appears

in the second book of Esdras in the apocrypha, where he is sent to enlighten Ezra as he wrestles with the problem of evil. In most Hebrew literature Uriel is associated with light and he is traditionally known as the one who brings light to Israel. The inscription in this window is therefore “Light of God” and he is surrounded by images, including the sun and some rather vivid red flames, which speak of this tradition. Uriel is pictured with a kneeling figure, presumably Enoch who seeks enlightenment from him.

2

The Archangel Gabriel is represented by a picture of the annunciation of our Lord to Mary. Here Mary sits on a box (helpfully labelled ‘Maria’ for anyone who’s not sure!) Above her head can be seen a dove representing the Holy Spirit, by whose power the incarnation is to take place (Luke 1:35). Gabriel himself is dressed in a dalmatic, the traditional garb of a Deacon in the Church. It is the Deacon’s role to serve, and here Gabriel is presented as the one who serves the purposes of God by bringing the news to the one who is to become the mother of God incarnate. On Gabriel’s chest can be seen the monogram “I H S”. This symbol is frequently seen in Churches and it has a number of possible meanings. It may be the first three letters of ‘Jesus’ in Greek. Alternatively the monogram has also been interpreted as standing for “In His Service.” As the artist has dressed Gabriel as a Deacon this second explanation may be closer to his thinking.



3

St. Michael is shown triumphing over the devil, here portrayed as a dragon. This image is drawn from the story of the great cosmic battle St. John saw in his vision (Revelation 12:7-9). Although John describes this

battle in military terms it's clear that he understood it primarily as a legal battle in which the devil, the 'accuser' of humanity, is defeated (Revelation 12:10). This defeat leads to eternal peace with God for a saved humanity, hence the legend "Peace of God" to be seen in the window. On Michael's shield can be seen a lamb and flag motif. This traditional image of the resurrection reminds us that the defeat of the devil, shown here pictorially, was in fact won by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Michael is a representative figure who shows this work of God to us.

4

The fourth window is drawn from the story of Tobias the son of Tobit which is to be found in the book of Tobit in the Apocrypha. The story begins soon after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 721 BC (though it was written much, much later). Tobit spends time in the Assyrian capital Nineveh before being permitted to return home. He leaves some money with a friend in a city called Rages in Media and when Tobit's son Tobias grows up Tobit sends him to reclaim the money. Luckily for Tobias he encounters an angel Raphael who protects him on his journey. In chapter 6 we find Tobias swimming in the river Tigris when a large fish tries to bite his foot. Raphael tells Tobias to catch the fish and to cut out its gall, heart and liver which are useful as medicine. They will free a patient from evil spirits and eye diseases (significant as Tobit had by now gone blind); Tobias encounters a distant relative Sarah who he wishes to marry but Sarah has already been married seven times. The story goes that this was due to the malevolent influence of a demon which killed all seven husbands on their respective wedding nights. Tobias's new found medicine is able to defeat the demon and ensure his survival and happiness. In due time he and Sarah and Raphael return to Tobit and heal his blindness and there are great rejoicings over both the healing and the marriage.



St. Raphael also figures in the book of Enoch where he is said to have 'healed' the earth. Indeed his name means "God has healed." For this reason he has always been associated with the church's healing ministry and the Anglican "Guild of St. Raphael was founded in 1915 to promote that ministry. In the window we can see the young man Tobias with the fish. The archangel stands protecting him and holding a pot of the healing ointment made from the fish.

The Nave

The Baptistry

The Baptistry window was manufactured by M.E. Aldrich Rope, of Parsons Green, south west London. In 2002 a design sketch for the window came to light and this is now displayed in the Shortlands Room. It shows that one or two elements of the design developed between the early phase and the eventual manufacture of the window. Perhaps the most noticeable of these is the change to the angel who is seen shepherding the children at the bottom of the window. The cherubic 'little helper' we now see is very like the children themselves and represents a welcome change from the rather more macho night club bouncer originally envisaged.

The window rather cleverly incorporates the Font itself into the story of the Christian's progress from Baptism to Heaven. The design is held together by a long winding children's pilgrimage leading from the font at the bottom to the City of God right at the top. Immediately below the City can be seen a sun, moon and stars, reflecting the belief that heaven is 'above the sky.' "There's a home for little children above the bright blue sky" in the words of A. Midlane's famous Victorian hymn (set to music by Sir John Stainer). The children are shown the way by an angel. The

contemporary mind will doubtless look a little nervously at this great long procession of white anglo-saxon children followed by a little group representing other races right at the end. The Te Deum window above the main door (also made by M. E. Aldrich Rope) presents a much more inclusive picture in which people of all races and colours are mixed together in the life of the Church.

On the way up the window the children's pilgrimage passes four medallions showing images connected with Christian initiation. The first shows a Bishop administering Confirmation. The second shows Philip the Deacon Baptising the Ethiopian eunuch whom he encounters on the Jerusalem-Gaza road (Acts 8:26-39). Philip was able to lead the eunuch to faith by beginning with the man's own questions and the conclusion is the Baptism of the eunuch. Arguably this event led to the beginning of Christianity in Ethiopia. The third medallion shows Jesus surrounded by children in an echo of the story of him blessing the children in Mark's Gospel (Mark 10:13f). The last medallion shows Jesus' own Baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Above him can be seen hands representing the Father whose voice was heard at the Baptism and also the Holy Spirit who, the Gospel writers tell us hovered over Jesus' head. This is one of the few explicit references in the New Testament to God as Trinity.

At the bottom of the window a text from Zechariah sets out its biblical inspiration. "THE STREETS OF THE CITY SHALL BE FULL OF BOYS AND GIRLS PLAYING IN THE STREETS THEREOF. ZECHARIAH VIII v" (Zech 8:5)



The Nave

The North Transept

The “Te Deum” window above the main north door of the Church is the finest of all. Like a number of the other windows it was made by M. E. Aldrich Rope of Parsons Green, but it wasn’t inserted until 1959, two years after the dedication of the new Church (14 December 1957). The window represents the great early Christian hymn, the Te Deum. The origins of the Te Deum are shrouded in mystery, but it probably originated in the Paschal (Easter) vigil service. It has continued in use by Christians for occasions of thanksgiving to this day; many great composers have set it to music, and it is one of the canticles in the Book of Common Prayer morning prayer (Mattins) service. When the Church was first rebuilt this was probably the main Sunday morning service so worshippers would have been very familiar with it indeed. Now we use the Te Deum less frequently it’s good to have this lovely window to remind us of it.

At the top of the window is a rose, in the centre of which we see Christ as ‘pantocrator’ (ruler of all). He is enthroned and crowned and he holds sceptres signifying his office. His feet rest on an emerald green rainbow (Revelation 4:3). He is enclosed in a ring bearing words from the Te Deum “Thou art the King of glory O Christ. Thou art the everlasting son of the Father.” The central figure is surrounded by seven angels. The figure “7” has enormous significance in the Bible representing wholeness and perfection. The seven angels here tell us that the rule of Christ means the completion of God’s plan for wholeness and salvation for his creation. The top angel is the Archangel Gabriel who is seen here making his announcement to Mary. The Archangel holds lilies (a traditional symbol of Mary) and the whole scene is overshadowed by a dove representing the Holy Spirit. The two angels at the bottom of the rose are offering worship to the Christ. The other four all carry symbols of the Passion: a stick with a sponge; a spear; a crown of thorns, and a

cross. It is only through his passion and death that Christ becomes king. In John's Gospel the moment of his death is the moment of his coronation and the cross is his throne.

The two lights forming the main body of the window present other phrases from the Te Deum. The left hand light is topped by a sun and the right by a moon. Beneath these there is a scene which spans both lights and which carries the caption "The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee." In this scene we can see Mary and the Apostles after the Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:14). Their hands and their eyes are raised to heaven as they sing God's praise accompanied by an angelic trumpeter.

Moving down the left hand light we come next to "The noble army of martyrs praise thee." The group of martyrs shown here all hold palm branches (Revelation 7:9) and they represent a wide range of Christian people. There is a Bishop; a knight (presumably St. George as he carries a St. George's flag); some children, both black and white; a baby, perhaps representing the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2:16) and a Deacon dressed in a white dalmatic. On the Deacon's back may just be discerned his name, Lawrence. Lawrence was a 3rd century Deacon and martyr in Rome and he was killed in a persecution under the emperor Valerian in 258.



In the right hand light we see a group of prophets led by John the Baptist uttering his famous cry "Ecce Agnus Dei" (behold the lamb of God). The caption is "The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee."

The lower scene spans both lights and carries the caption "The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee." This scene depicts a number of images of the life of the Church. We can see a

Bishop; some servers; a font and, most importantly of all, lots of different people from all over the world demonstrating the universal presence of the Church in all cultures and among people from a wide range of different backgrounds. This is a much more inclusive group than the children seen in the Baptistry window; all ages and colours are mixed in together and all are protected by the angel of the Church.

At the very bottom of the window we read one of the final phrases from the Te Deum “O Lord let thy mercy lighten upon us as our trust is in thee”.

The Sanctuary

The East Window

The east window, placed high above the High Altar is dedicated to our Patron Saints Peter (on the left) and Paul (on the right). Each Apostle’s story is told through images of a few significant moments in his life and is surmounted by his name and his symbol; keys for Peter and a sword for Paul.



In the dominant scene on Peter’s side of the window we see the apostle kneeling to receive a pastoral staff from the risen Christ. Around him are the words “Feed my lambs: feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). This episode represents both forgiveness for Peter’s denial and also the commissioning of Peter as the chief Bishop of the Church. The second image from Peter’s life shows his original call; Jesus beckoning him away from his fishing. Finally at the bottom we see a cockerel; a reminder of the low point in Peter’s life; his terrified denial that he even knew Jesus, in the courtyard of the High Priest’s house during Jesus’ trial.

In the right hand light we see images of St. Paul's life. In one we see him displaying for us a quill and a book; signs of his letter writing which is his greatest legacy to the Church of our own day. On one page of the book we see a crucifix; presumably a representation of Paul's own description of his work; that he proclaimed Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). Around Paul's head we see the words "He is a chosen vessel to bear my name and story to the Gentiles." This is a version of the words spoken by God to Ananias, a Christian in Damascus who offered Paul the healing and friendship which completed his conversion (Acts 9:15). At Paul's feet a small black child sits praying.



The second image from Paul's life is the central scene in his conversion story (Acts 9:1-19). Here we see Paul himself cowering beneath the light that has blinded him and the ascended Christ speaking to him telling him that he is persecuting Jesus himself (Acts 9:5). Finally at the bottom we see a ship reminding us of Paul's journeys and of some of the particular difficulties he encountered when being shipwrecked (Acts 27).

The dominant image in the central light is of the risen Christ holding a cross with his hand raised in Blessing. It is from the Altar beneath the window that the Priest blesses the people in the name of Christ at the conclusion of worship. Above Christ's head is a crown speaking to us of his kingship and beneath his feet we can see the dove of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy spirit is part of the resurrection experience of the disciples (John 20: 22) and indeed in John's Gospel Jesus suggests that the bestowal of the Spirit is in some sense dependent on his going away (John 16:7). It's appropriate then that the Holy Spirit should be seen to emerge from this image of the risen Christ. Beneath the figure of Christ we can see our two Patron Saints, Peter and Paul each holding their respective symbols. Behind them is a shadowy crucifix. The shadow of the cross touched both their lives as both gave themselves as martyrs in Rome.

At the top of the east window we can see a selection of images of heaven including angels and the City of God.

The Sanctuary

North wall



To the left of the High Altar in the north wall of the sanctuary can be seen the Resurrection window. At its base we see the word “Resurgam”(“Resurrection”). This window weaves together images of the resurrection of Christ with images of the death and resurrection of Bromley Parish Church. At the top can be seen a coat of arms and the motto “Animo et Fide” (life and faith).

The rest of the window consists of four images; two of these represent the resurrection of Christ. In the first we see the risen Christ worshipped by angels and beneath this the scene at the tomb on the first Easter morning when the women visiting the tomb are met by an angel who tells them that Christ is risen. (Matthew 28:1-7).

The other two images are of Bromley Parish Church. At the bottom of the window we see the badly damaged tower surrounded by the devastation caused by the bomb which demolished the rest of the Church on the night of 16 April 1941 and which took the life of Hazel Kissick. Above this can be seen the new Church which rose from the ashes of that destruction. The tower, though badly damaged, was capable of restoration and still stands today. Recently a Chapel was created in a room within the tower. This Chapel is called the Chapel of the Resurrection and it is with this central and glorious Christian mystery that we conclude this description of the stained glass windows.



