

**A GUIDE TO THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS  
IN THE CHAPEL OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE**

Ian Phillips MA MD, sometime scholar.



**St John ante Portam Latinam**

## Introduction

The present Chapel at St John's was designed by George Gilbert Scott, by the 1860s an architect of great eminence, in the Early Decorated style that prevailed when the original College Chapel was built. Building started in 1863 and the Chapel was consecrated on 12 May 1869, replacing the old Chapel demolished by September of the same year. James Bass Mullinger (1901), the College Librarian, and later, Alec C Crook (1978, 1980), a former Junior Bursar, have good accounts of the deliberations from the 17th century on, that led up to its building. The latest College history has little to say further, but does include the sad view that the Chapel – “nothing if not imposing” – was redundant by the time it was completed (Linehan 2011)! That some of us admire the building is indicated by the fact that the Victorian Society's reviewer of the latest edition of “The buildings of England, Cambridgeshire” finds it “the greatest Victorian monument in the county” (Butler 2015).

Scott suggested that the stained glass windows for the Chapel be made by the firm of Clayton and Bell, and Lord Powis, the University High Steward, concurred with this choice. A College committee in 1865 decided to ask Clayton and Bell for cartoons of the apse windows, but there is no further indication that they were produced, or whether they now exist. However, in 1867 a sample apse window was approved, and Clayton and Bell were asked to paint four further apse windows. The whole suite of windows was fitted as donors came forward, either in 1869 or soon after, with one outlier in 1910. Sadly, the archives of Clayton and Bell were destroyed by bombing during the Second World War, and the College archives remain as a tantalising glimpse of the relationship with the artists and craftsmen.

According to Peter Larkworthy (1984), Richard Clayton (1827 – 1913) met Alfred Bell (1832 – 1895) when both were students of Gilbert Scott. By this time Clayton had worked with Pugin, and so came to know the architects of the Gothic revival. He admired John Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelites, and worked on the technical development of coloured window glass with James Powell of Whitefriars. By 1860 Clayton had joined the Ecclesiological Society and had become a member of the Hogarth, the social club frequented by most of his professional friends. He was therefore at the centre of all the important developments. Bell joined Scott when he left school. His fellow students were Street and Bodley, later to achieve great eminence as architects. Clayton and Bell's first commission as business partners was for clerestory windows in Westminster Abbey in 1856, and they quickly became leaders in the field. William Waters (2012) greatly elaborates in his book “Angels and Icons” beautifully illustrated by Alastair Carew-Cox, in a section devoted to the work of the firm up to the end of the 1860s .

The account of the consecration of the Chapel on 12 May 1869, in the Eagle (Anonymous, 1869 pp333-364), includes a list of the eight windows (including one on the south side, according to Crook 1980 p109) in place in the main body of the Chapel at the time, curiously with an indication of the subject of only five of them, as well as considerable detail of the subjects of the five apse windows given by the Earl of Powis, and a mention of the great west window depicting the Last Judgement, paid for by current members of the College. The logical order of the subjects of the windows was apparently ensured by the then Senior Bursar, Dr George Reyner. The last of the windows, fitted in 1910 (Crook, 1978), is a memorial to the Master, Dr Taylor, and is remarkable for having a portrayal of St John ante portam Latinam seated in the cauldron of oil, yet evading martyrdom. In all, 17 nave windows, five apse windows and the West Window were produced by Clayton and Bell. Other

windows now in the antechapel, including those designed by Hardman and by Wailes (the latter possibly modified), were transferred from the old Chapel, and perhaps include some of the “good and hable Normandy glass” ordered to be fitted into the newly perpendicularised windows of the old Chapel in Tudor times (Mullinger 1901) .

The general plan of the tracery of the 17 nave windows provides three lancets with two rows of scenes and figures, and sometimes an extra row or two, usually of heads, and all have varied small windows in the tracery above. All have Latin dedications at the base and various inscriptions within them, often too small to be deciphered easily. The five apse windows each have two lancets with three rows of scenes and figures. The west window has two clusters of three windows, the central one of each trio taller than those on either side, and a central lancet taller than all the rest. Above these are two sets of small windows and a central large one. Crook (1980) provides detailed information on the donors and the general subject of each window, with appropriate bible references. The information on the apse windows is even more detailed. The order in which the windows are listed by Crook would seem not to follow Dr Reyner’s logic. Interesting detail of the tracery of the windows and , to a lesser extent the glass, is to be found in a short book and an unpublished essay available in the Library, both by a former student (Beckett 2011, Lewis 1989). The College website (St John’s College, accessed 2014), has a photograph of the Chapel from the antechapel.

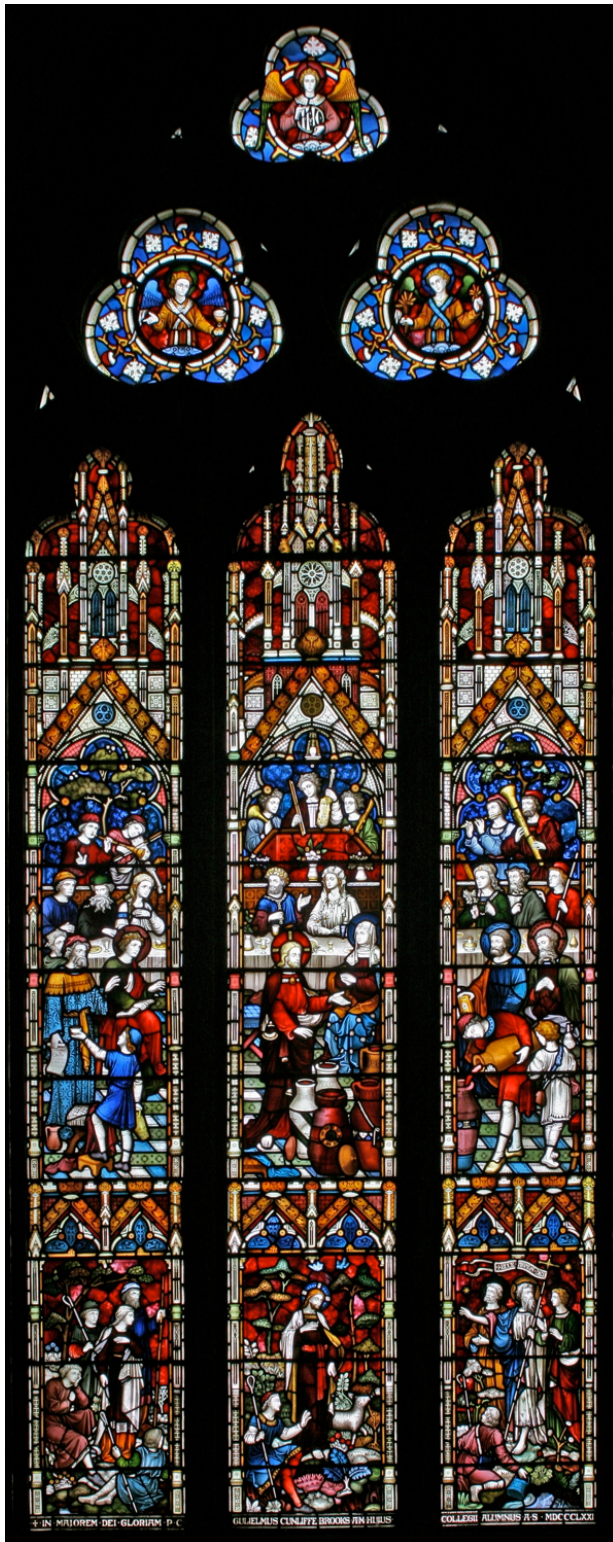
Fortunately, most of the Chapel windows were photographed in 2007 by Rev Stephen M Day (Day *a* accessed 2014) with the permission of the Dean and the help of the Chapel Clerk. The College holds copies of some of his photographs, but a more complete file is to be found on Mr Day’s flickr file (Day *b*, accessed 2014). His technique was simple – a bright but not overly sunny day, a camera on a tripod and manipulation to produce rectangular images (Day *c*, accessed 2014). Each photograph on Mr Day’s flickr site also has an appropriate, sometimes extensive referenced quotation from the bible. His images run from left to right as viewed from the antechapel, a system more appropriate to our use than that of Crook (1980) in view of the logical order aimed for by Dr Reyner. The College website also has a brief note on the nave windows and rather more on the great west window, a portrayal of The Last Judgement. A pamphlet produced by Patrick Boyde, intended to accompany guided tours (Boyde 2011), lists the sequence of biblical scenes, and draws attention to the four typologically correlated scenes from the Old Testament (Windows 5 and 11 -13).

## **The Windows**

The pictures of the Clayton and Bell windows on the following pages, are arranged in order from the first on the left (Window 1) as one enters the antechapel to the last on the right (Window 17) followed by the west window. The subjects follow a sequence based largely on St John’s Gospel (see biblical references) or relating to St John, who is usually portrayed beardless in red and green garments. For each window a definitive number is followed by corresponding numbers, C followed by the number in Crook (1980), eg C13, and The Eagle, E followed by the number eg E7. The text in Latin capitals at the foot of each picture is the dedication on the base of the window, with the sense of the inscription in English. By the side of each window are listed the subjects portrayed in the window on left and right, as far as possible opposite each of them. Latin inscriptions within the window are shown in small capitals at the side of the window. Relevant biblical sources are listed as Matthew, Mark, Luke , John, Acts etc with chapter and verse numbers.

**WINDOW 1, C13**

The Lamb of God and the Wedding at Cana



Angels in triforia

Wedding at Cana

Jesus in front of the table, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2 1-11).

ECCE AGNUS DEI

John the Baptist (on the right) pointing out Jesus (in the middle) as the Lamb of God (John 1 29-36)

*IN MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM P C GULIELMUS BROOKS IN HUIUS COLLEGII ALUMNUS A S MDCCCLXXI.*

In memory of William Cunliffe Brooks MP, Alumnus of the College. 1871

**WINDOW 2, C12, E7**

Christ and Jairus' daughter and calling the fishermen



Roses

Raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5 35-43).

TALITHA CUMI – Little girl, I say unto you, arise

Jesus calling the fishermen (Luke 5 10-11).

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM M GULIELMO SELWYN PRO DNA MARGARETA IN S THEOL LECTORIS OB AS  
MDCCCLXXV*

In memory of William Selwyn, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. 1855-1875.

**WINDOW 3, C11**

The transfiguration and Christ with the disciples



Eagle

Angels

Jesus' Transfiguration

Peter, James and John hide their faces from Jesus' brightness while he converses with Moses (left with commandments and 'horns') and Elijah (right). (Mark 9 2-8).

Jesus with the disciples: the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee asking for places at the right and left in his kingdom (Matthew 20 17-28). Judas has doubts

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM HENRICI HEBBLETHWYTE BENEF PC JOSEPHUS HINDLE STB COLL OLIM SOCIUS*

In memory of Henry Hebblewayte, Benefactor, and Joseph Hindle, former Fellow.

**WINDOW 4, C10**

Lazarus and preparation for the Passover



Angel bearing initials JHC

ALPHA OMEGA

Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11 38-44)

Jesus sending Peter and John to prepare the Passover meal - the Last Supper (Luke 22 8-13).

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM GULIELMUS PAKENHAM SPENCER. GULIELMUS SELWYN AS MDCCCLXXI*

In memory of William Pakenham Spencer, former Fellow, and William Selwyn, former Fellow and Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. 1871.

**WINDOW 5, C9, E1**

The last supper and its Old Testament antecedent, manna in the desert.



Angels

Isias, Jeremias, Ezeke, Daniel, Iosee, Ioel

The last supper (Matthew 26 20, John 6 54)

Amos, Obadiah, Jonas, Michael, Nabuc, Nahum

The people of Israel gathering manna in the wilderness. Aaron (left) and Moses (right) are standing in the centre panel(Exodus 16 14-17).

*IN MEMORIAM AUGUSTI VAUGHTON HADLEY SOCI ET TUTORIS*

In memory of Rev. A.V. Hadley, Fellow and Tutor



## The Apse Windows

The Passion of Christ



6

7

8

9

10

*IN MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM ET IN HONOREM DNI JOHANNIS EVANGELISTAE  
FENESTRAS HUIUS APSIDIS VITREIS ORNARI CORAVIT*

In honour of St John the Evangelist

*EDWARDUS JACOBUS COMES DE POWIS LLD SUMMIS ACADEMIAE  
SENESCHALLUS A S MDCCCLXIX*

The five apse windows were the gift of the Earl of Powis, 1869.

**WINDOW 6, C Apse I, EI**

The Light of the World (John 8 12).



The first of the Passion sequence at the east end. Jesus washing Peter's feet and suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus with lamp

Jesus worshipped by patriarchs and saints

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS (John 18 6).

Left: Jesus washes Peter's feet before the Last Supper (John 13 5-8).

Right: Jesus is sustained by angels as he accepts his task in the Garden of Gethsemane, while the disciples sleep (Matthew 26 36-46).

Left: Mary Magdalen anointing Jesus feet (John 12 3)

Right: Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus with a kiss (Matthew 26 47-50).

**WINDOW 7, C Apse II, EII**

The Bread of Life (John 6 35).



The second window of the Passion sequence at the east end.

Jesus

Prophets and Priests in contemplation

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (left, John 18 24) and  
before Pilate (right, John 18 29)

Jesus arrested, captive (John 18 12), and

Jesus scourged by Pilate (John 19 1)

**WINDOW 8, C Apse III, EIII**

The Lamb of God (John 1 29)



The third window of the Passion sequence.

The lamb of god surrounded by lamps

Apostles and Apostolic Men looking upwards in contemplation

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Left: Jesus, crucified (John 19 18), gives up his spirit (John 19 30)

Right: Jesus being taken down from the cross (John 19 38) in the presence of His mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (John 19 25)

Left: Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha (John 19 17)

Right: John takes Mary as his mother (John 19 27)

**WINDOW 9 C APSE IV EIV**

Christ of Revelation (Rev 1 12-20)



The fourth window of the Passion sequence

Christ with seven stars in his right hand, surrounded by lamps and with a sword coming from his mouth (Revelation 1 12-20)

Martyrs - men on the left, women on the right (note John the Baptist centre left and St. Catherine far right)

Pieta

Jesus is taken from the cross, and Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea declare themselves followers of Jesus.

Left: Mary mourning over Jesus.

Right: Jesus' body being wrapped for burial (John 19 40).

Left: Joseph of Arimathea asking Pontius Pilate for Jesus' body.  
*Regavit Pilatum ut tollerit corpus Jesu*

Right: Nicodemus with myrrh and aloes to prepare Jesus body for burial (John 19 39).

**WINDOW 10 C APSE V EVI**

The Good Shepherd (John 10 11)



The final window of the Passion sequence.

Church figures, Doctors left, Priests and Deacons right, praising Christ.

Left: Jesus' resurrection, when "for fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men" (Matthew 28 1-4)

Right: Mary Magdalene meeting the risen Jesus (John 20 14-17).

Left: the Empty Tomb with St Peter and St John (John 20 3-5)

Right: Mary Magdalene weeping outside the tomb. "They have taken away my Lord, and know not where they have laid him." (John 20 11-13).

**WINDOW 11, C2, E(2)**

Jesus appears to his disciples



Peace: PAX PAX PAX

Saints Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, and Hieronymus with Paul and Barnabus.

Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection (John 20, 19-22),

The evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, joined by Timothy and Stephen, the first martyr.

Moses ordains his brother Aaron as Priest (Leviticus 8 12)

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM RANDOLPHI HARE EQ AUR PC EXHIB SUI AS MDCCCLXIX*

In memory of Sir Ralph Hare, subscribed by his Exhibitioners. 1869.

**WINDOW 12, C3, E3**

The Ascension of Christ and Elijah



Christ's Ascension (Acts 1 9)

Elijah ascending to heaven in a chariot of fire leaving Elisha behind. (2 Kings 2 11-12) Linked typologically to Christ's ascension immediately above

*IN HONOREM DEI PC CAROLUS BAMFORD AM HUJIUS COLL ALUMNUS MDCCCLXIX.*

In honour of Charles Bamford 1869.



**WINDOW 13, C4, E5**

Pentecost and the ten commandments



PATER, FILIUS, SPIRITUS SANCTUS

ALLELUJA ALLELUJA

The descent of the Holy Spirit on the Disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2 1-4)

Moses bringing the stone tablets inscribed with the ten commandments down from Mount Sinai (Exodus 20 1-17, 32 15)

*IN HONOREM DEI PC FRANCISCUS SHARP POWELL AM HUJIUS COLL NUPER SOCIUS MDCCCLXX*

In honour of F.S. Powell, former Fellow. 1870.

**WINDOW 14, C5**

Jesus reinstating Peter, and the miraculous catch of fish.



The eagle of St John

Peter's reinstatement (John 21 15-23).

Jesus by the Sea of Tiberias: the miraculous catch of fishes (John 21 4-9).

*IN DEI GLORIAM ET IN PIAM MEMORIAM ROGERI LUPTON SCHOLAE SEDBERGH FUNDAT PC  
HENRICUS H HUGHES TB COLL OLIM SOCIUS*

In memory of Roger Lupton, Provost of Eton, and of Henry Hunter Hughes, former Fellow.

**WINDOW 15, C6, E5**

Miracles of the Disciples and their calling to account by the High Priest at the Beautiful Gate.



Eagle bearing banner SANCTUS JOHANNES

Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple healing man lame from birth." *In nomine Jesu Cristi Marenī Surget Ambula*" (Acts 3 2-8)

Peter and John before Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander after healing a lame man (Acts 4 5-7)

*IN HONOREM DEI ET IN PIAM MEMORIAM JOHANNIS HAVILAND MED PROF REG OLIM SOCII OB DIE VIII JAN MDCCCLI.*

Gift of Rev A.C. Haviland in memory of his father, John Haviland, Regius Professor of Physic, who died on 8 January 1851

**WINDOW 16, C7, E6**

Paul receiving the right hand of fellowship in Jerusalem, and believers in Ephesus



The dove.

SANCTUS SANCTUS SANCTUS

Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem receiving the "right hand of fellowship" from James, Peter and John (Galatians, 2, 9)

Paul at Ephesus with some disciples, who believed and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8 14-19; 19 1-6)

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM FRATRIS DILECTISSIMI PC STEPHANUS PARKINSON ST COL SOC AS MDCCCLXXI*

In memory of Rev. Stephen Parkinson President of the College. 1871.

**WINDOW 17, C8**

Eminent Alumni and the miracles of St John.



Portcullis, marguerites – symbols of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Foundress of the College.

Foundress and eminent Alumni (vide infra)

Legendary scenes from the life of Saint John the Evangelist. On the left, he survives being thrown into boiling oil outside the Latin gate (ante portam latinam), in the middle he redeems a thief, and on the right he survives drinking from a poisoned chalice. From The Golden Legend.

*IN PIAM MEMORIAM CAROLI TAYLOR STP COLLEGII PER ANNOS XXVII MAGISTRI VIXIT ANNIS LXVIII  
OBIT AS MCMVIII.*

Gift of Mrs M.S. Taylor, in memory of her husband, Dr Taylor, who died in 1909, former Master.  
1910.



Eminent alumni ranged around St John in the presence of

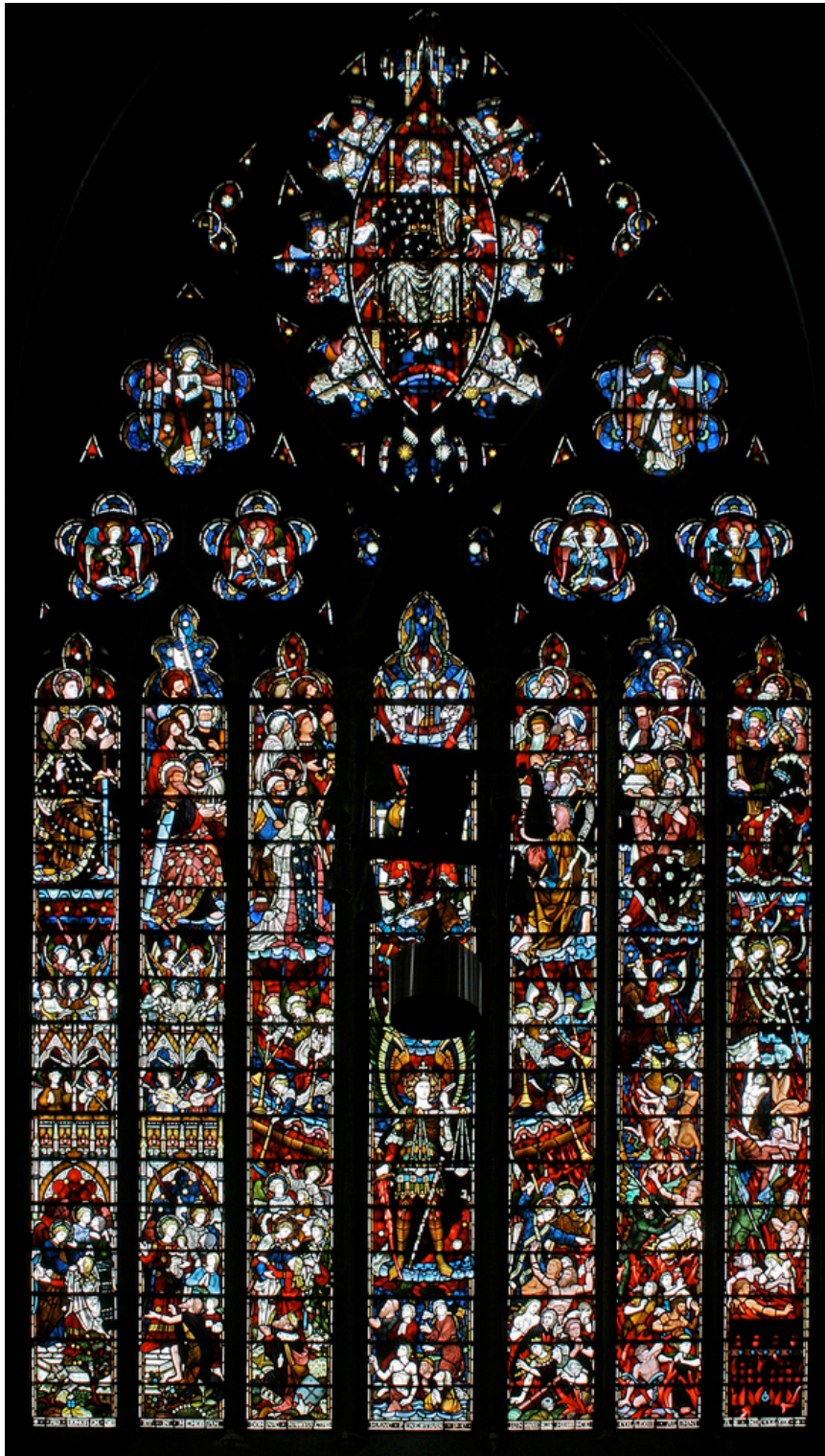
Lady Margaret Beaufort and her son, the future Henry VII

- 1 George Augustus Selwyn (1809-1878), BA 1831 Fellow, Bishop of New Zealand, and later of Lichfield
- 2 William Wordsworth (1770-1850) BA 1791 Poet Laureate
- 3 Henry Martyn (1781-1812) BA 1801 Fellow, missionary
- 4 Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston (1784-1865) MA 1806 Prime Minister
- 5 William Wilberforce (1759-1833) BA 1781 MP Slavery abolitionist
- 6 Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) BA 1783 Slavery abolitionist
- 7 Thomas Denman (1779-1854) BA 1800 Lord Chief Justice
- 8 Edward Henry Palmer (1840-1882) BA 1867 Fellow, Professor of Arabic, Orientalist
- 9 Benjamin Hall Kennedy (1804-1889) BA—Fellow, Professor of Greek
- 10 Charles Taylor (1840-1908) BA 1862 Fellow, Master, Hebraist
- 11 John Frederick William Herschel (1792-1871) BA1813 Astronomer, photographer
- 12 John Couch Adams (1819-1892) BA1843 mathematician, astronomer, co-discoverer of Neptune

(Crook 1978, p36).

## THE WEST WINDOW

### The Last Judgement



Christ in glory,  
surrounded by censing  
angels.

VITA AETERNA MORS  
AETERNA

Left: Saints and martyrs  
and the instruments of  
their martyrdom (Paul  
with sword and Steven  
with stones).

Right: Patriarchs,  
Prophets, Kings (including  
Moses with the Ten  
Commandments, Noah  
with the Ark, and David  
with his harp).

Angel (obscured, vide  
infra)

St. Michael weighs the  
souls of mortals and  
consigns the blessed to  
the joys of heaven (left)  
and the damned to the  
flames of hell (right).

*AD HONOREM DEI ET IN MEMORIAM DOMINAE MARGARETAE HANC FENESTRAM P C JUNIORES  
HUJUSCE COLLEGII ALUMNI AS MDCCCLXIX*

The gift of members of the College in memory of the Lady Margaret



The angel obscured in the centre of the photograph of the entire West Window.

The angel with the book of the saved and the damned

VITA AETERNA MORS AETERNA

### Antechapel

In addition to Clayton and Bell's West Window, the Antechapel has the Hardman window of 1855, transferred from the old Chapel, on the north-east wall, relating to St John as a writer with scenes from the book of Revelation. It commemorates Dr Blunt, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. Two windows by Wailes are on its north wall. High above the West Window are coats of arms of eminent Johnians placed in 1888 (Lewis 1989) as well as ancient glass.

### The aesthetic significance of the windows.

There is little to suggest that the College thought much of its windows, perhaps excepting the apse. Dr Reyner offered trenchant criticism of others as they were produced. The College Archives covering the years 1865-68, especially Bundle D33/4/6-10, yield some of these. There is a criticism of "bad arrangement of inscriptions" (D43/6/2), a complaint of "falling off of the general tone" (D33/4/6/24) and of the "absolute blackness" of one of the windows, leading to a plea for more white and so light (D33/4/6/26). Since these comments clearly referred to windows in situ one wonders whether coloured sketches (such as are mentioned for a later project, not pursued) had been produced, since these so-called vidimi might have settled some of the problems before the windows were actually made. Clearly, full-scale cartoons were made (D33/4/6/29 and 34) but these were presumably in monochrome. I found nothing in the Archives to say what action, if any, was taken. Nevertheless Dr Reyner is said by Crook (1980 p108) to have sent a note of appreciation to Clayton and Bell. Crook includes the "craftsmanship of the painted glass" among the exquisite interior details including the roof (also by Clayton and Bell) and the sanctuary paving (Crook 1980 p114). The Reverend Steve Day found the West Window "huge and spectacular". Larkworthy (1984) found the St John's glass "interesting but unremarkable" while Waters (2012) ends his review in



1868, and so does not mention St John's. But, as Waters maintains, British glass of the nineteenth century "has never been justly regarded". The latest edition of "The buildings of England: Cambridgeshire" dismisses our Clayton and Bell glass in two lines (Bradley and Pevsner 2015).

By 1869 Clayton and Bell were becoming overwhelmed by their commercial success and with a workforce of over 300 artists, craftsmen and apprentices, could clearly not give as much of their personal effort to every commission. This was known to Scott in 1864 (Harrison 1980 p31) and to Dr Reyner, since he sought assurances on the subject. Waters (2012) maintains that "they continued to produce work of a high level of craftsmanship". Note, not art!

It has been suggested that Clayton and Bell's best glass in the period after the late 1860s is in Pearson's Truro Cathedral of 1886. Comparison of the Truro glass with ours is difficult since only a small amount (in the retrochoir) relates to the story at St John's. I see no great superiority. They seem equally crowded with detail. The major nave series at Truro is based on groups of three Old Testament figures in each window, ending with Queen Victoria above General Gordon and Tennyson, reflecting the dominant role of Bishop Benson, just as the St John's windows reflect the supervision of Dr Reyner. Our windows have also been compared unfavourably with the Clayton and Bell west window of Kings College Chapel: since its objective was compatibility with the sixteenth century glass, its style is clearly quite different.

The initial impression of our windows is of a riot of blue, red and white, contributing significantly to the overall beauty of the whole interior. On closer examination one appreciates that the series is tied together, by such motifs as the relatively simple canopies of five arcs above the figures in each of the lancets across the middle of the window. There is a striking use of plants throughout, ranging from stylised palms to flowers in pots. One has to admit to overcrowding, especially where details are difficult to decipher even with binoculars – for example, the rows of tiny heads with identifications in Window 1.

### **The religious significance of the windows.**

Our glass tells the story of Christ's ministry and death, much according to St John's Gospel, but almost always involving St John. It does so selectively, as is inevitable. However, there is a general sense of orderliness and calm that seems to fail to reflect the hostility of the opposition of Christ and the Jewish authorities that one finds in the Gospel itself. The scenes of Christ before Pilate and the Sanhedrin are depicted with pomp but little aggression. Yet there is evidence that Clayton and Bell were well able to depict drama, in the cameo appearance of Elijah dashing for heaven in his chariot of fire in Window 12. The apse windows representing the Passion are, to my mind, particularly beautiful and telling.

I have learned nothing to suggest that the windows have been held to have an important role in worship in the College. Indeed, my belief that stained glass did have such a role in mediaeval times when illiteracy among the congregation was the norm, has been dismissed as "rather romantic" (Cowen 2008), although Waters (2012) believes that in the thirteenth century it did have a dual role in education and decoration – the former presumably including religious education in its broadest sense. He adds further that churches had art that was "instructive, beautifying and uplifting" and that the nineteenth century resumed those roles.

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