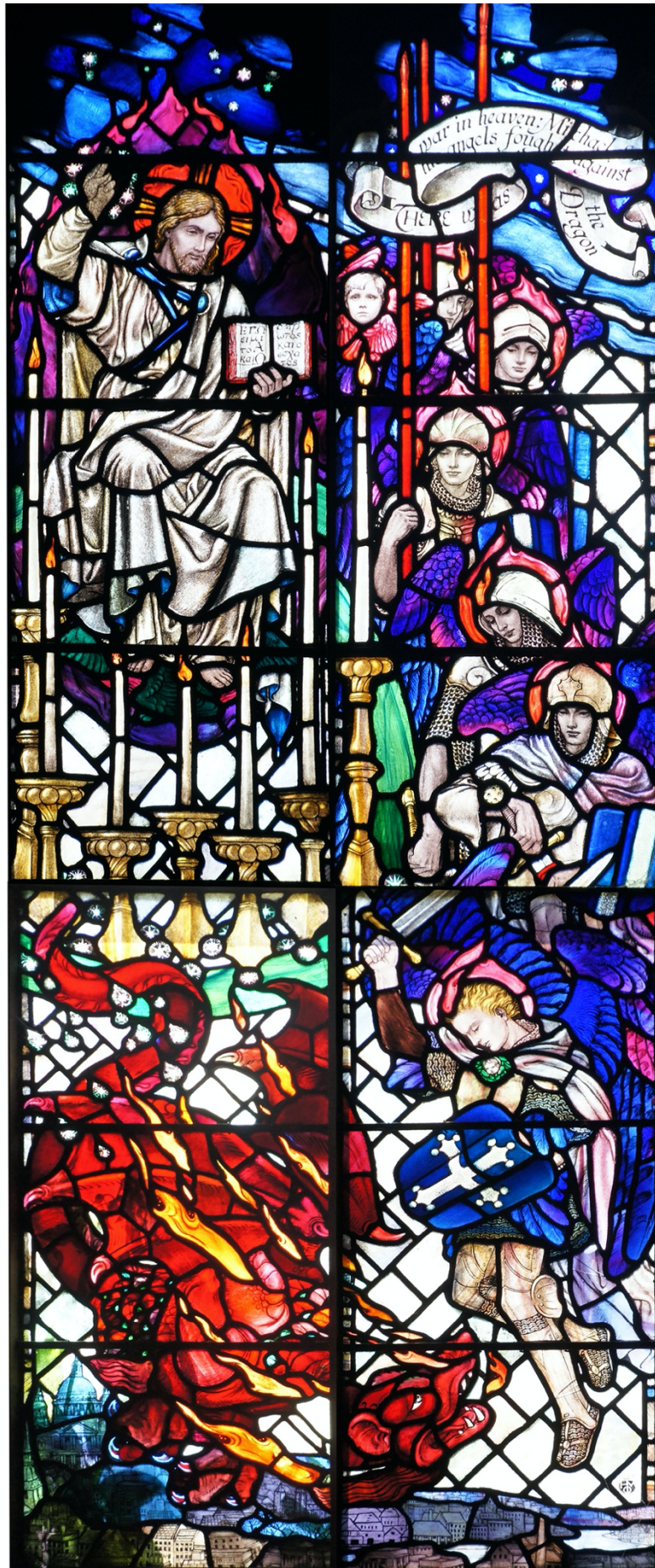


Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



All Souls Chapel Window (South side)

Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent



Reading: Revelation 1: 9 -20

I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'

Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.'

Commentary

This part of the window was given, in memory of John William Walton who died on 3 August 1895, by his daughter Beatrice Scott who was married at St Michael's on St Stephen's Day 1891. They lived in 26 Priory Avenue.

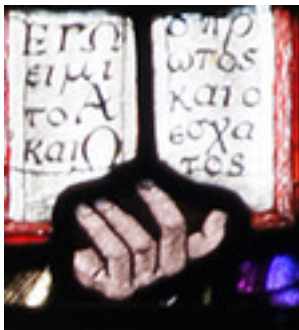
In the Book of Revelation, St John recounts his vision 'on the Lord's Day' (Sunday) whilst in exile on the island of Patmos. He is commissioned to send messages to seven churches on the mainland.

The depiction of Christ in the 'Michael' window is as St John describes in his vision, with Christ in the midst of seven candlesticks (representing the seven churches) in a long, white robe with a sash (though in our window it is blue not golden), his right hand raised in blessing with the seven stars clustered about.

In his left hand is a book on which is written, in Greek, words from Revelation 22:13:

ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος.

("I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end").



These words are also marked on the Paschal candle at the Easter vigil before it is lit, as the sign of the presence of the Risen Jesus in the midst of His Church now.

The Christ depicted in our window is One who has been exalted into the Heavenly Places, who at the end of time will be the Judge of all things.

The title, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,' has previously only been used of God and is now ascribed to Christ. In fact, the Alpha and Omega was a popular symbol in early Christian wall paintings. Here in this window, it is a sign that Christ is ultimately in control, His love will conquer all that is evil and so reign in the whole universe. 'In the beginning was the Word' -and at the end too, when God will complete what He began.

Charles Wesley in his famous hymn 'Love Divine,' refers to the Christian doctrine that creation is 'unfinished.' It is in the process of being made and that means we are more 'human becomings' than human beings. Wesley urges God,

'Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee,'

We see here in this image of the Exalted Christ, the potential for all creation to be, as the hymn puts it, 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven... praise the everlasting King.

Meditation

God has given each of us a gift. It is your life. Your being. There is something gift-like, fragile, but unique about you.

And there is a gift we are asked to give back in return. Our becoming. Who we become as human beings, 'human becomings.'

A good glimpse at how we are doing at this is to ask ourselves:

Who do people become in my presence?

What do I make them become when they are with me?

It gives us a snapshot of the sort of person we are turning into. Ponder on that snapshot and, if you don't like what you see, use it for some amendment.

Prayer

Each day the first day —. Each day a life.

Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and give back.

It must be held out empty —
for the past must only be reflected
in its polish, its shape, its capacity.

... And those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us.

Dag Hammarskjöld