

SOUTHWELL MINSTER  
THE GREAT WEST WINDOW

There will be some authoritative descriptions. The Provost has already got a large photograph of the window and a description by Mr. Graham Beaumont, which will, very soon, be displayed in the nave. This is simply an interim, and definitely unofficial paper, which I have produced in response to many requests from frustrated stewards. I do not guarantee 100% accuracy, so do please be prepared to unlearn some of it if necessary.

It is not easy to get Patrick Reyntiens to talk about his window in detail. He insists that the detail is unimportant. "You have to look at it as a whole" he says, "it is a great gathering of the heavenly host, enjoying being with God; it is just all joy and worship". He doesn't think he made any clear distinctions between the different orders of angels, though some are on fiery wheels and 'could be' cherubim. The little upside down heads right at the top of the window are not fallen angels, but are simply gazing up and shouting their praises to God.

When Mr. Reyntiens does get enthusiastic about his window he speaks in artistic terms, about light, colour, form and movement, and he uses his arms to encourage one to sweep one's eyes up towards God at the top, then round in great circles to gather up the whole of his work. Not being a particularly artistic person I don't find it easy to pass on what he feels so deeply. He makes a great play of the use of silver and gold in the lower panels of the window. Angels with silver robes have golden wings and vice versa, and they alternate with each other. The splendor of the angels' robes contrasts with the simplicity of the Virgin's. The constant changes in colour and format prevent the overall picture from being flat. Mr. Reyntiens calls it a 'push and pull' of colour which give the work depth and movement and a shimmering effect. (Have you noticed how its appearance changes at different times of day and in different weather conditions?) As you look higher in the window your eyes are drawn upwards by the increasing use of colours as they get closer to God: in traditional iconography deep blues and reds represent the higher orders of angels, the seraphim and cherubim.

If we try to dissect it too much we do this magnificent window an injustice. We need to approach it as we would a Mozart symphony, a Constable painting or a Jane Austen novel, and allow it simply to thrill us. That said, there are always people who are interested in major and minor keys, an artist's brushwork or an author's literary style, with all the whys and wherefores. In the same way people do ask what is represented in parts of our window, so I have produced a *very* rough chart (much simplified and out of proportion), which gives an idea of what is where, and also a list of what maybe helpful facts. I hope these will be useful, but they won't tell you everything. Keep looking for details!

The great perpendicular window was inserted into the Norman west wall of the Minster in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century: it measures 57ft. by 34ft. Conceived by the Cathedral Architect, Martin Stancliffe, the new window was painted by Patrick Reyntiens and made by Keith Barley's studio in York. It was installed in 1996 and dedicated on 7<sup>th</sup> July. The cost was £130,000. The glass is protected by isothermal double glazing.

The tracery of the window forms 3 main arches, and its Trinitarian aspect is taken up in the angel window. God the Father can be seen right at the top of the window, with the hand of God in the top of the central arch. The arch to the left shows God the Son, supported on the Cross by an angel, and in the apex of the arch is a red chalice with the Blood of Christ. In the centre of the right hand an angel holds a Dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, with tongues of fire, and a second dove can be seen in the apex. The central panel of all shows the Blessed Virgin Mary, with pale blue halo, and above her head is a cloud (or dove?) with the Hebrew characters for God 'I am who I am'. I do not intend here to explain the significance of anything else which appears on the plan.

### Bible References

Adam and Eve expelled from the garden	Genesis	3. 23-24
Jacob wrestling	Genesis	32. 24-30
Tobias and the Angel	Tobit	6
The Annunciation	Luke	1. 26-38
The Temptation of Christ	Matthew	4. 1-11; Mark 1. 13
Gethsemane (note sleeping disciples)	Luke	22. 39-46
The Resurrection	Matthew	28. 1-8; Mark 16. 1-7;
	Luke	24. 1-9; John 20. 11-13
Let there be light	Genesis	1. 3-5
God made the firmament	"	1. 6-8
Separation of Land and Sea, creation of plants	"	1. 9-13
Sun, moon and stars	"	1. 14-19
Fishes, whales and birds	"	1. 20-23
Beasts and reptiles	"	1. 24-25
Man	"	1. 1. 26-31
God rested	"	2. 1-3
Angels with golden bowls of incense	Revelations	5. 8
Jacob's Ladder	Genesis	28. 10-17

### The Nine Orders of Angels

I plan, eventually to produce a paper on Angelology for the Information Desk. For now I simply list the Orders of angels in their traditional groupings.

Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones

Dominations, Virtues and Powers

Princinalities. Archangels and Angels





