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**transilluminations:
making the transcendent
transparent
jojada verrips**

ABSTRACT

Chapter 21 of the Book of Revelations contains a detailed description of the New Jerusalem as a city full of divine light and erected on a foundation of brilliant minerals. In the gothic cathedrals built in the Middle Ages this radiant and transcendent place was often represented in their stained glass windows and so made partly visible by the incoming and always changing light. In this contribution light will be shed on the use of stained glass as a translucent medium to make the transcendent transparent. Next to the imagery of the New Jerusalem, attention will be paid to chandeliers representing this holy city as well as to windows with the sacred heart and the remarkable stained glasswork the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, by many considered to be blasphemous.

Keywords: light, stained-glass windows, chandeliers, New Jerusalem, sacred heart, x-ray art

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It is precisely this wealth of light that becomes a symbolic expression of God's omnipresent love or "the city (that) had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it" (Rev. 21.23).

Else Marie Bukdahl (2019, 231)

Introduction

The church I used to frequent as a kid and adolescent did not have stained and painted glass windows.¹ In earlier days it had a few –with heraldic weapons- but they were removed, not by Protestant iconoclasts, but by secular authorities in 1798, 150 years before I first set foot in it at the hand of my mother. There was not much to look at in the building except the people gathered in it, the pulpit, and the preacher in his dispiriting and disheartening black gown. The walls were whitewashed and the windows –as usual placed at more than a man's height- were made of plain, transparent glass contained in wooden frames through which one could only see part of the sky, alternately blue or cloudy depending on the weather. Nowhere was there any imagery: only two notice boards left and right from the pulpit with the numbers of psalms that were to be sung by the congregation. I still remember how I could stare out of the windows, fantasizing about a revengeful Lord sitting on a radiant throne far beyond the clouds and what His unfathomable thoughts might be about me, little sinner. No images of the Father, His Son, His Mother Maria and the Holy Ghost in the church of my youth, only representations/descriptions of these vital divine entities on the basis of the alphabet, in other words: WORDS.

Not that I was raised without any sort of religious imagery. There were, for example, the illustrations of biblical scenes and actors in the Christian children's books I read. But I had not the slightest idea of the rich representations of these actors and scenes as they could be found in Roman Catholic churches, for they were considered to be tabooed spaces for Calvinists. Only after I had left the Calvinist world and beliefs behind me, was I able to enter them. And one of the material things that hit me immediately as very impressive and fascinating were the richly coloured stained glass windows with their brilliant and magnificent images of, for instance, God, Jesus Christ, Maria, the Holy Ghost, the Apostles, and an army of Saints. Not just clouds or a blue sky, but glittering and radiant moving sights of sacred creatures and situations evoked by the incidence of light.

In this contribution, I want to pay attention to stained glass windows of a certain type and how their transillumination by daylight helps make an invisible transcendence *transparent* or *visible* for people who believe in its existence. More precisely, instead of a description and analysis of light as a metaphor for divine entities,² I want to concentrate on the important role that

light, as a physical phenomenon, plays in helping not to only connect a professed invisible transcendent with the immanent by shining through a specific type of material medium – that is, a stained glass window – but to also make this transcendent translucent or visible in the immanent. My approach is directly inspired by Birgit Meyer's work on how specific forms of visual culture function as prime material media of religion that streamline and sustain religious notions of the invisible and the visible (Meyer 2015). Next to paying attention to the revealing role of 'normal' light shining through stained glass windows in churches, I will also deal with the same role played by another sort of light, namely the light used (by artists, for instance) in radiography.

Because of the great number of religious – or perhaps better stated, transcendental – themes and topics that have been depicted over time by stained glass artisans and artists ornamenting Roman Catholic cathedrals and churches, I will limit myself here to two categories: a) stained glass with images of the New Jerusalem, and b) stained glass with portrayals of Jesus with the Sacred Heart and of Mary with either the Immaculate Heart or the Heart of Sorrows. I opt for these two categories and not, for instance, single depictions of God, the Holy Ghost, (arch) angels, Patriarchs and Saints, for the following reasons. In the magnificent and shining New Jerusalem - expected by Christian believers to become visible and concrete in an unknown future - these holy characters will be united with a limited number of humans who will be given the right to enter on Judgment Day. I find it fascinating that this glorious and holy city evoked in the Book of Revelations is not only sketched as a place full of powerful divine light, but also as consisting in large part of glass and glasslike materials. Stained glass portraying the New Jerusalem is thus not simply a representation of the heavenly city, but also involves an immense artistic effort to represent, or to make visible, with the help of incoming sunlight, the glassy, transcendent paradise that John claimed to have seen in a vision. My choice of dealing with stained glass making visible the holy heart of Jesus and Mary – a crucial internal organ encased in their bodies – will enable me to link this kind of religious imagery with the semi-religious stained glass windows designed by the contemporary Belgian artist Wim Delvoye. His works of art, which were not only exhibited separately but also as part of fake gothic chapels in museums, showed, for example, Madonnas, ironing boards and sexual imagery of a very specific transparent nature. Whereas the motif of heavenly Jerusalem renders visible a future city, the motif of the Sacred heart reveals an organ inside the body, one that is normally barred from view. Both motifs are not merely depictions on glass, but also depend on the use of glass, a medium to transmit light, to transilluminate the very invisible realm to which they refer: a future city, or the inside of a human body.

Before turning to a more detailed treatment of the three sorts of stained glass selected, I want to briefly say something about the craft itself and its development over time.

The Production of Stained Glass

The production of glass is very old. Colourless glass in its pure form is made of a particular mixture of silicon dioxide, limestone and natrium carbonate.

One can give it a colour by adding certain ingredients, for example, metal oxides. In churches of the Roman type, glass was scarcely used to ornament them. In these buildings one mostly found frescos and mosaics, sometimes with little pieces of coloured glass. Every now and then, the small windows had panes with rather simple images, for example of apostles or saints, consisting of rudely cut pieces of coloured glass held together by leaden strips or frames.³ However, with the development of the Gothic pointed arch in the Early Middle Ages, the window space in the walls of churches, especially cathedrals, suddenly became much larger, and this meant an invitation to use it for the placement of greater and more refined glasswork: that is, better cut and stained glass held together by less leaden strips. The staining of glass implied the painting of it with differently coloured (and fireproof) enamels (e.g. grisaille) that were melted on its surface in a kiln at temperatures of 640 degrees (Koolen and van Raaij 1997, 6). In the beginning of this new architectural style, the craftsmen or glaziers making the panes still combined this technique with the old fashioned use of pieces of coloured glass, but this did not last long. In short, ever since the early Middle Ages glass, lead and fireproof paint (or enamels) have been the basic materials for the production of stained glass windows in churches, especially Roman Catholic ones. But without light, this production would have been senseless. Light formed the crucial factor the glaziers always had in the back of their minds when designing their creations. Their craft implied in the last instance always a kind of “painting with coloured light.” A French expert on stained glass once said: ‘Peindre le verre c’est essentiellement modifier sa translucidité’ (Boom n.d., 21) (Painting glass essentially is transforming its translucency).⁴

In the 12th and 13th centuries, France took the lead in the production of stained glass, as many cathedrals were built in the new gothic architectural style. It all seems to have started with the building, or better stated, through the application of this new style in the renovation and expansion of the old Abbey of Saint Denis on the Île de France, under the supervision of Abbot Sugerius (1081–1151), who wrote extensively on the project (Figure 1).⁵ Sugerius, who was inspired by the light theories of pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite (a Syrian mystic from the 6th century), ordered a series of stained glass windows that he had designed himself and were placed in his abbey between 1140

FIG 1

Abbot Suger, Abbey
St Denis, St. Denis,
Paris. Courtesy of
Jacques Mossot and
Structurae.



and 1144. When he entered the renovated building, he was very much impressed by all the jewels and coloured glass.⁶ They possessed, so he wrote, the ability to transform “that which is material to what is immaterial. ... Then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world.”⁷

For Sugerius and many other Roman Catholics of his time, the new abbey represented the New Jerusalem on earth. In his classic study on the gothic French cathedrals Émile Mâle writes: "The cathedral like the plain or the forest has atmosphere and perfume, splendour, and twilight, and gloom. The great rose-window behind which sinks the western sun, seems in the evening hours to be the sun itself about to vanish at the edge of a marvellous forest. But this is a transfigured world, where light shines more brightly and where shadows have more mystery than in the world of fact. Already (one – JV) feels himself in the heart of the heavenly Jerusalem, and tastes the profound peace of the city of the future" ([1898] 1972, 397).⁸ Though it became less important and outspoken, this idea remained over time.

If one looks at the history of stained glass windows in churches, one is confronted with a capricious development, too capricious to be sketched here in detail. However, it is important to know that the use of this type of windows in these buildings for ages occurred only on a large scale in north-western Europe and no so much elsewhere in the world (Macfarlane and Martin 2002, 183).⁹ After the Middle Ages, stained glass became less important, and many of them were destructed after the Reformation and replaced by unpainted windowpanes. In the first half of the 16th century, an iconoclastic fury in several West European countries (such as Germany, Switzerland, Scotland and France) led to a massive destruction of religious imagery in Roman Catholic churches by Protestants, especially the followers of Calvin. Stained and painted windows were smashed in great numbers (Figure 2). In the Low Countries this fury raged in 1566 (Bauwens 2016, 85), while in England many of such windows had first been destroyed in 1535, after Henry VIII had broken with Rome and established the Anglican Church, and the destruction was resumed in 1642, during the Civil War between the monarchy and the Puritans (Chieffo Raguin 2003: 165-168; Hoogveld 1989, 16, note 6 and 7). During the Baroque (17th century) and Enlightenment (18th century), stained glass production came almost to a standstill. But in the 19th century, especially in second half, the art of making stained glass experienced an impressive revival in several West European countries (for example, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands) that continued far into the 20th century. Among the reasons for the remarkable return of this old artistic craft were the rise of Romanticism and a renewed interest in the Gothic age (e.g., in England and Germany), as well as the emancipation of the Catholics (e.g., in Protestant-dominated countries, such as the Netherlands).¹⁰ Next to an increase in its production, one can also observe in this period a growing interest in restoring old stained and painted glass windows.¹¹ This trend continued into the 20th century, and received a boost after the two World Wars, when many churches were seriously damaged and numerous windows ended in thousand pieces. When one nowadays enters "houses of God," especially Roman Catholic ones, one therefore has to



FIG 2

Iconoclastic fury, 1566. Engraving by Frans Hogenberg (1538? – 1590?). Courtesy of Atlas van Stolk Foundation, Rotterdam.

realize that very often one is confronted with windows that were made in different periods and that, when renovated, might contain glass produced at distinct moments in time. In short, the simultaneity of dis-simultaneity in churches usually is enormous.

New Jerusalem Windows

In Chapter 21 of *The Revelation to John*, the New Jerusalem is described: the city where all those selected by the Lord will be gathered after the Apocalypse and the Last Judgement. It concerns a very exceptional city, for its length, width and height are equal, which means that it has the form of a cube, just like such minerals as diamond, garnet and pyrite (Figure 3).¹² This remarkable cubiform place consisting of “pure gold, like clear glass” was shining like “a stone of crystal clear jasper” and was surrounded by a wall of the same material with twelve gates: three on each side, and each made out of pearl, with angels and the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel written on it.¹³ Moreover, the wall had twelve foundation stones each adorned with a specific sort of glittering gem (such as amethyst, beryl, emerald, and sapphire) that reminds one of the twelve precious stones on the ephod of the priests mentioned in the Old Testament (Exodus 28: 15-22).¹⁴ The street (no plural!) of the

FIG 3

The New Jerusalem in cubical form as represented on the website of Never Thirsty. Courtesy of Pat Marvenko Smith ©1982/1992 - www.revelationillustrated.com



city was also made of “pure gold, like transparent glass” and there were no sun and moon to shine on it, “for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb” (21: 23). So, in the New Jerusalem there would be no more night and no more “need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine” the ones who have seen His face and bear His name on their foreheads.

This vision of John of a transcendental and holy city called the New Jerusalem, which was supposed to come down from heaven on earth in an absolutely unforeseeable future, has been and still remains a great source of inspiration for architects¹⁵ as well as glaziers. This is so not only, I think, because the vision is very concrete and detailed, but also because it represents an absolute contrast with the daily, inferior and slimy world about which, for example, the Abbot Sugerius wrote in the 12th century. As if it was not already enough to call churches, and especially cathedrals, a kind of New Jerusalem on earth, one also depicted this heavenly city rather often in the windows of these buildings (Figure 4). The German scholar Claus Bernet, the editor of the series *Meisterwerke des Himmlischen Jerusalem*, has published almost forty booklets on this sacred city to come, three of which are exclusively devoted to “Kirchenfenster und Glasarbeiten,” i.e., stained glass windows with the New Jerusalem motif in churches in Europe and elsewhere (Bernet 2013, 2014, 2015b).¹⁶

FIG 4

Portrayal of the New Jerusalem on a stained glass window showing the narrow and the broad way designed by Louis Emile Manche in the Johannes the Baptist Church, Mijdrecht-Wilnis (The Netherlands). Courtesy of Henk Butink, Photographer.



For the 15th century, Bernet mentions *two* windows in Great Britain, for the 16th *six* in France, for the 17th *two* in France, for the 18th *none*, for the 19th *three* in France, *two* in Great Britain, *one* in Germany and *one* in Spain. In total, 17 windows constructed over five centuries. I hear you think: "That is not much," but one should not forget that many stained glass windows got lost, especially on account of the iconoclasm during the Reformation. For the first half of the 20th century, Bernet mentions *nine* windows for Great Britain, *four* for Germany and *one* for each of the following countries: France, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, the US and the Netherlands,¹⁷ in total 19. With regard to the second half of the 20th century, one can speak of a boom in the placement of stained glass windows with an image of the New

Jerusalem in churches (and not only Roman Catholic ones) both within and outside Europe. They seem to be rather popular in Germany, where Bernet has documented almost 160 such windows placed in churches between 1945 and 2000. This has probably everything to do with the fact that many churches were totally or partly destroyed during World War II and rebuilt thereafter. Bernet calls the windows he describes and studies as “Tore zum Himmel” (Gates to Heaven) and is convinced of the fact that there is almost no West European city in which one cannot find “ein Himmlisches Jerusalem in Glas” (a heavenly Jerusalem of glass) (2013, 5). In this connection, it is interesting that one can also find in a small number of German churches: the so-called wheel chandeliers (“Radleuchter”) representing the New Jerusalem (Bernet 2015a).¹⁸

In these cases, one is faced with a triple presence of this radiant, transcendental phenomenon, maybe waiting for us in a near or faraway future: first, because of the idea that churches (and especially cathedrals) “are” a kind of New Jerusalem, and in the second and third place, while this dazzling city is also visualized in their glass stained windows and their lighting equipment (Figure 5). Though the New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John is undeniably described as a cube that did not hold back the designers of chandeliers to use a circular form instead of at least a square one. They even could defend their deviation on the basis of a text in Isaiah (62: 3) where the New Jerusalem is compared with a crown.¹⁹

As a matter of fact, most stained visualizations of the holy city are very free representations, especially the more abstract ones made in modern times. But in all cases, the designers strove -now as well as in the past- for a revealing transillumination of their transparent creations that brought a fascinating transcendental entity nearer (as opposed to the effects produced by reading a text and/or listening to a sermon about it). This is, in a sense, beautifully expressed in the following quote

FIG 5

Hezilo chandelier representing the New Jerusalem, Hildesheim Cathedral (Germany). Courtesy of Bischöfliche Pressestelle Hildesheim (bph).



from the catalogue *Zerbrechliche Schönheit Glas im Blick der Kunst*: "In the context of religious themes glasses can become important vehicles of meaning. In the art of modern times they have functioned rather long as indicators of (certain) expressions of faith or as symbols of the representation of the invisible. Glass is able to represent the visible and the invisible at the same time. It mediates in this way also ideal and spiritual contents and points to the transcendental" (Ricke 2008, 15/16).²⁰ But I want to add immediately that the stained glass windows I am dealing with in this essay are not only symbols, but also transparent or translucent materials: in other words, as media that help make the invisible transcendental somehow imaginable in our immanent world (cf. Meyer 2015).

Sacred Hearts

Let me now say something briefly about the second category of stained glass windows mentioned in the introduction, namely the ones showing Jesus with his Sacred Heart and Maria with hers (*The Immaculate Heart* and *the Heart of Sorrows*). This kind of window did not occur in the Middle Ages, since the devotional practice developed much later. Its roots are to be found in the 17th century, when the French nun Margu rite-Marie Alacoque (1647–1690) was faced with apparitions of Jesus, who not only showed her his burning heart, but also invited her to touch it (Figure 6). She even claimed that she and Christ exchanged their hearts and that they became one. Furthermore, Christ told her to start a devotion to his sacred heart together with her spiritual mentor, Claude de la Colombi re. In a publication she wrote on his instigation about her exceptional experiences, she presented a precise sketch of how the heart had to be represented. It had to be a heart with the word "charitas" in golden letters in it, a burning cross on top and a crown of thorns around it. Only in 1856 did Pope Leo XIII proclaim the devotion to be a feast for the whole Roman Catholic Church; before that year, it was only celebrated by certain groups and in specific countries (cf. Haneveld 1991, 224-228, Morgan 2008).

It is interesting that the ecclesiastical authorities did not allow representations of Jesus and his heart that were deemed to be too exuberant. It was, for example, not allowed that Jesus held his heart in his own hand;²¹ rather, it had to be placed on his chest. The representation of his heart alone was strictly forbidden (Klinckaert 2004). MacKendrick, however, writes: "...the Sacred Heart is *shown* either visible *through* (Ital. JV) Christ's chest or held in his hand, on fire, bleeding, wrapped in a crown of thorns..." (2004, 117). I will shortly come back on this "shown through," but only after a few remarks about the background of the devotions to the two hearts of Mary. Though the devotion to her Immaculate Heart seems to have explicitly started in the 11th or 12th century, it only became public and widely practiced (although still unofficially propagated) in the 17th century. Its more or less official recognition took place in 1855. The devotion to Mary's Heart of Sorrows had a parallel development. According to



FIG 6

Maria Alacoque sees Jesus' Holy Heart as portrayed on a stained glass window designed by Joseph Casier in the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Bijstand kerk (Aalst, Belgium). Courtesy Wikimedia Commons in the Netherlands.

Mackendrick, "the Immaculate heart is shown against Mary's chest or in her hand, afire or radiant, wrapped in roses; and the Heart of Sorrows is shown likewise in or on her chest but not...in the hand, pierced by seven swords, and bleeding" (2004, 117). It is in the 19th century that we find the first efforts to produce stained glass windows showing Jesus with his Sacred heart (with or without Alacoque) and Mary with either her Immaculate or her Heart of Sorrows. They can be found rather frequently in Dutch, Belgian and French Roman Catholic churches.

What I find remarkable with regard to the representations on stained glass windows of Jesus (again, with or without Alacoque) and his Mother Mary, with their hearts made transparent or visible to both believers and non-believers by incoming light, that they show a striking likeness or family resemblance with an X-ray. In my opinion, one might legitimately call them religiously coloured 'X-ray images avant la lettre' of highly important religious figures

showing an organ inside their bodies that normally is not visible to the naked eye. In a way, we are confronted here with a double transparency or visibility of the transcendent. Another striking example of an earlier version of such a religiously coloured “X-ray image avant la lettre” is the glimpse the mystic Gertrude of Helfta had of the body of Saint Mary: “There... appeared the immaculate womb of the glorious Virgin, as transparent as the purest crystal, through which her internal organs, penetrated and filled with divinity, shone brightly, just as gold, wrapped in a silk of various colors, shines through a crystal” (Trinca 2018, 17).

This brings me to the third kind of glass stained windows I want to deal with in this article: the rather exceptional windows created by Wim Delvoye, the Belgian artist, which caused quite a stir everywhere in the world where they were exhibited, on account of Delvoye’s faeces-producing machine *Cloaca* (cf. Wim Delvoye *Cloaca New & Improved* 2001).

Wim Delvoye and Others

At the end of the 1980s Delvoye, started using X-rays and stained glass for artistic ends, a fascinating combination of a scientific technique using photons with a particularly high energy level to show the inside of the body and a classical material medium to make the transcendent translucent with sunlight.²² Since he was interested not only in the skeletons of humans and animals, especially pigs, but also in the softer parts of their bodies, he used radio-opaque media, so that one at least got an image of their outlines. Together with a specialist, he made a whole series of X-rays of people making love in different ways. These photos made visible what otherwise remains totally invisible, for example, the position of a penis inside a vagina or a mouth.²³ At the end of the 1990s, Delvoye began to make a whole series of church windows, one for each month of the year. There he used what one might call “eros-and-thanatos-X-rays” (a term I find better than “seXrays”),²⁴ since they show not only bones and skeletons, reminding one of dying and death, but also the organs and place of human reproduction. Let me cite Peter Bexte here: “A first example of the series, *Transparency*, was to be seen in the Norbertines’ Chapel (formerly part of an abbey, now an art gallery), Ghent, in 2000. The rosette at the top, where ecclesiastical tradition would have led us to expect the Dove of the Holy Spirit, is an X-ray of a mobile telephone. The rest of the window is made up of fragmentary X-ray images of couples having sex” (2002a, 16, see also Bexte 2002b).²⁵

Though it would be tempting to deal with the imagery of all the stained glass windows Delvoye made, I just want to concentrate on one of them: *May* (Figure 7). This window is particularly interesting, for it shows three Madonnas with child in combination with three X-rays of fellatio scenes. It is striking that one of the Madonnas is represented with an X-rayed skull instead of a normal face. The window is a very nice example of bringing together or mixing up the sacred and the profane in a touching

FIG 7.

Wim Delvoye "The Chapel Series – 'May,'" 2001 Courtesy of Studio Wim Delvoye, Gentbrugge.



and confusing way, and within a very specific frame: or perhaps better stated, the sacred in its pure as well its impure manifestation.²⁶ In this connection, the following observation by Sterckx is very pertinent: "Sacred transparency and medical transparency, the religious iconography of death and the clichés of eroticism: all this connects in a single diagram, a single sheet of film. All four layers of reading have been invested with a powerful charge of light, of sign content and of bodily presence" (2002, 23).

What makes the windows of Delvoye so fascinating is the fact that they confront us with two types imagery made visible by two types of light: the normal light of the sun and X-rays consisting of photons with a much higher energy level. Both types of images refer to specific invisibilities, *one* pertaining to the transcendental and the *other* to the inside of our bodies connected with the beginning and the end of our lives: penis and vagina on the one hand and our skeleton on the other. He confronts us, in other words, in a stunning way with visualizations of both transcendental and immanent invisibilities at the same time by combining an old fashioned sort of transparency made possible by glass with a rather new one made possible by sophisticated X-ray machines.

Reflections

I want to conclude with some brief reflections on what Peter Bexte has written on exactly this kind combination of different transparencies in Delvoye's work. According to him, each new type of transparency is characterized by its own specific juxtaposition of visible and invisible things (Bexte 2001). Sunlight falling through a stained glass window makes in a certain way visible what otherwise remains invisible. X-rays make surfaces invisible and what is lying under it visible. However, in both cases one is confronted with the creation of a visibility. This does not imply that one can *really* see with the naked eye what is made visible, for that will always remain impossible, hidden from our view. In both cases we will, in the last instance, remain blind to the real realities made transparent. *We have always been, still are, and will remain blind seers.* Right now, we are faced with a lot of phenomena that can be made visible on screens, but which will always remain unseen. The screens we live by are in a certain sense the new stained glass windows that help us to orient ourselves in a world and a universe that one learns to better unravel and understand with ever more sophisticated technologies of light. However, this ongoing process of unravelling and understanding will, at least in my view, imply that a lot of what is made visible to spectators (especially on various micro and macro levels) via a variety of glass materials that transmit light will go hand in hand with factual invisibleness, or the impossibility to perceive what is claimed to be revealed. Beholders are enlightened, and at the same time also lured to think that they really can observe what is claimed to be unveiled. This fascinating process will not end with the use of an optimal medium to reveal the unseen, but rather will remain an important source of ongoing enchantment.

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notes and references

¹“Stained-glass panels are constructed from pieces of coloured glass, which are cut and arranged to form a pattern or image, often painted and then bound together by strips of lead. Painted details and silver stain are used to enrich the design, and fixed to the glass by firing in a kiln. The term ‘stained glass’ is often used interchangeably with ‘painted glass,’ although painting with coloured enamels represents a different process. In order to be seen, stained glass must be illuminated from behind. (...) Uniquely, stained glass has an extra non-static dimension: as Arscott has stated, ‘the light and the colour are the kinetic aspect of the artwork’. It is this ‘spectacle’ of the light’s transmission, a movement and refraction through coloured pieces of glass, which perhaps best characterizes the medium” (Allen 2012).

² In this connection it is interesting, that the Christian God, whose first act in the beginning was the creation of light, as well as his son Jesus Christ in the Bible are both frequently depicted as beings of light, more specific the Light of the World. In the case of God the Father this boils down to the fact that he in a sense equals His own creation.

³ This technique was developed for the first time in the 10th century (Boom n.y., 10) and described circa 1100 by the German monk Theophilus (Groot 1960, 584).

⁴ See Chieffo Raguin (2003, Ch 2) for detailed information on the production of stained and painted glass.

⁵ “...he left explicit writings (named *De Administratione* and *De Consecrazione*) detailing his construction and embellishment of the church” (Chieffo Raguin 2003, 63).

⁶ It is good to know that glass, and certainly dark blue glass (in Latin *saphirorum materia*) in the Middle Ages was seen as being a kind of precious stone or metal. Sugerius was convinced of the fact that glass just like “other” gemstones, especially sapphire, had sacred virtues (Gage 1982, 44, see also Nachtigall, Oppitz, and Pech 1988, 62

and Schlink 1978, 148/49). However, not all Roman Catholic contemporaries were happy with the stained glass windows Sugerius designed. The Cistercian abbot of Clairveaux, Sint-Bernard, for instance, compared the new Abbey of Saint Denis with “a workplace of Vulcanus and a synagogue of Satan” (Boom n.y., 27; Boom 1960, 74; Chieffo Raguin 2003, 66, 75).

⁷ Quote in Cowen (1979, 7) who found it in the work of Erwin Panofsky, who edited Sugerius’ writings (see note 5) and published extensively about him and his building activities. See also Gage (1982, 44), Shaver-Crandell (1994, 35), and Chieffo Raguin (2003, 14) on Sugerius’ ideas about the role of stained glass as a material medium to get an impression of the transcendental without really seeing it.

⁸ Måle explains this statement in a footnote as follows: “It was thus that the Middle Ages defined a church. The deed by which the chapter of the Abbey of St.-Ouen decided to continue their church begins as follows: ‘Urberem beatam Jerusalem, quae aedificatur...’” ((1898) 1972, 397). In fact, this perception of churches as a kind of New Jerusalem on earth pops already up in the fourth century in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea. See Podhradsky who writes: “Het van buiten in de kerk invallende licht wordt reeds door Eusebius... beschouwd als een symbool van de verlichting door God; door het lichtspel van de ramen van de gotische kathedraal wordt het licht het middel om de hemelse stad op aarde zichtbaar te maken” (Podhradsky 1965, 192, see also p. 137; Timmers 1985, 118, 167). Translation of the quote: “Eusebius already perceived the light falling into the church as a symbol of the enlightenment by God; because of the light play of the windows in the Gothic cathedrals light becomes the instrument to make the heavenly city visible on earth.”

⁹ According to Macfarlane and Martin the use of stained glass hardly occurred in the Muslim world: “Books on Muslim architecture occasionally mention the use of small stained glass segments in

religious and secular buildings, but there is little evidence beyond this" (2002, 102).

¹⁰ See for the revival of stained glass in the countries mentioned as well as in the United States Chieffo Raguin (2003, Ch. 7 and 8). In the Netherlands it was the immediate consequence of the fact that the Catholics in 1853 got the right back to build churches again, which led to a real building boom and an impressive rise of the number of ateliers making stained and painted glass for the newly built (often neo-Gothic) places of worship (Hoogveld 1989, 29)

¹¹ Mâle ((1898) 1972)) was very negative with regard to restorations, for he considered them to be, at least in most cases, downright destructions.

¹² Though *The Revelation to John* is crystal clear about the cubical form of the New Jerusalem, this brilliant city wherein the righteous persons will stay after Judgement Day, it is remarkable that Dante's paradise consists of concentric circles and God is depicted as a faraway point of concentrated light surrounded by a series of similar circles. Sloterdijk who in his book on spheres extensively deals with Dante's circular representation of the heavenly world also neglects John's description of Gods City of Light as a cube (Sloterdijk (1998) 2007, 663).

¹³ The comparison of gold with glass by John forms the basis for the classification of glass as a precious metal that crops up later. But at the same time glass is also -though indirectly- classified in the category of precious stones or crystals, which made it for a long time even more precious and admirable.

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the precious stones mentioned by John differ in, e.g., the Dutch, English and German translations of the Bible.

¹⁵ I found two examples of churches that were built as a cube, the St Pius church in Meggen (Switzerland) designed by architect Franz Füeg (see <https://www.detail.de/artikel/st-pius-kirche-in-meggen-29/>) and the Stephanuskirche in Kelkheim (Germany) designed by Rolf Romero (see [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephanuskirche_\(Hornau\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephanuskirche_(Hornau)))

¹⁶ See <https://himmlischesjerusalem.wordpress.com/shop/>

¹⁷ This number is too low, for I found several windows to be seen in Dutch Roman Catholic churches Bernet apparently does not yet know.

¹⁸ See for a detailed description of such a wheel chandelier, the "Hezilo Leuchter" in

the Cathedral of Hildesheim (Germany), Gallistl (2009). In 2007 the artist and architect Luc Merx designed a morbid counterpart of the New Jerusalem chandeliers representing *The Fall of the Damned*. In this connection it is important to realize that in the *Revelation to John* the negative, urban counterpart of the New Jerusalem is the devilish and doomed city Babylon. It was John Martin who made an impressive painting of this gloomy place surrounded by sinister and infernal torches looking like the gaslights of London entitled *Pandemonium* (1841) and Milton who described the palace of Satan in his poem *Paradise Lost* (1670). The former explicitly contrasted this work with the holy city (Blühm and Lippincott 2000, 128). I know only of one stained glass window that represents both cities at the same time and that is the window made by the French-Algerian artist Jean-Michel Alberola in Nevers (Fr) (Van Speybroeck 2014, 247/248).

¹⁹ According to Isaiah Jerusalem "...will... be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord. And a royal diadem in the hand of...God." Wheel chandeliers occurred in churches all of over Europe, but especially in Germany. Of the 37 specimens described by Bernet (2015a) 35 are to be found in this country. According to him this form of lighting was very popular in the beginning of the 11th century and can this popularity be seen as an aftereffect of the widely expected Apocalypse around the year 1000.

²⁰ "...Gläser können im Kontext religiöser Themen...zu wichtigen Bedeutungsträgern werden. Bis weit in die Kunst der Neuzeit hinein dienen Glasgefäße als Hinweise auf Glaubensaussagen oder als Symbole für die Veranschaulichung des Unsichtbaren. Glas kann Sichtbares und Unsichtbares zugleich darstellen. Es vermittelt so auch ideelle und spirituelle Inhalte und verweist auf das Transzendente." Compare this with Mâle's observation: „Aware of the power of art over childlike and humble souls, the mediaeval Church tried through sculpture and stained glass to instil into the faithful the full range of her teaching. For the immense crowd of the unlettered, the multitude which had neither psalter nor missal and whose only book was the church, it was necessary to give concrete form to abstract thought. (...) By its marvellous inner force Christian thought created its own medium. Here...Victor Hugo saw clearly. The cathedral was the people's book of stone (and stained glass – JV)

rendered gradually valueless by the coming of the printed book. 'The Gothic sun,' he says, 'set behind the colossal press at Mainz' ((1898)1972, 391).

²¹ It might be that this was forbidden, because it reminded too much of Saint Augustine, who sometimes was also represented with his heart in his hand. Such a representation occurs, for instance, in a manuscript of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* from the 15th century that is preserved in the library of the University of Utrecht. It goes back to the following passage in his *Confessions*: "You had pierced our hearts with the arrows of your love, and we carried your words with us as though they were staked to our living bodies" (Augustine 1986, 182). The representation in Utrecht is so interesting, because it next to the heart of the Saint also shows the city of God or the New Jerusalem.

²² Delvoye was, as far I know, the first to explore this combination, whereas other artists either used stained glass (e.g. Gilbert & George) or X-rays (e.g. Ivan Tsupka). See for Delvoye's stained glass windows: <http://www.iftshipitshere.com/x-ray-and-anatomical-stained-glass-windows-by-wim-delvoye> and for an overview of the history of X-ray art and artists: <https://xraypics.wordpress.com/history-of-x-ray-art-and-artists/> and <https://xraypics.wordpress.com/people/>

²³ The precursors of this kind of picture are, of course, cross sections of the type already made by Leonardo da Vinci. "I expose to men the origin of their first, and perhaps second, reason for existing! Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) wrote these words above his drawing 'The Copulation' in about 1493. The Renaissance sketch shows a transparent view of the anatomy of sexual intercourse as envisaged by the anatomists of his time" (see Schultz et al. 1999, 1596).

²⁴ See for the use of the term seXrays in connection with Wim Delvoye's artistic work Bexte (2002a, 5–16).

²⁵ Interesting is that Delvoye not only produces art objects that show a great family resemblance to a classical monumental art form applied in churches, but that he also exhibits them in similar environments such as chapels, temples (e.g. in China) and even in neo-Gothic pseudo-chapels within museums.

²⁶ A salient detail is that the Madonna's are positioned on X-rayed ironing

boards with irons on them, for these domestic appliances are often associated with a man and a wife having sex.

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