

## Metamorphoses of Visualisation: Experiences of Interpreting Stained-Glass Artworks of Anglican Emmanuel College Chapel of Cambridge University

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### ABSTRACT

This research was caused by an accidental discovery of a photo reproduction of one unknown in Russia masterpiece of British stained glass art of the Victorian age found on open spaces of the Internet: a full-height portrait of John Colet, a famous member of clergy of the pre-reform period, Erasmus' and Thomas More's friend and mentor. Exquisite lines of the picture give evidence of masters' using the latest technique of glass processing of the time - so called Tiffany technique. The stained glass is a panel in the opening of a Romanesque window, in the centre of which the John Colet's side-drawn figure is depicted. The figure is encircled in intricate architectural framing: low white-stone gold plated carved columns to the right and to the left are joined overhead with a semi-circular arch with high canopy. Looking back at experiences of interpreting stained-glass artworks of Anglican Emmanuel College Chapel of Cambridge University, we clearly realized how perception of the visual had been changed. This stage of research clearly demonstrated how much the image's content depends on the beholder and that the image has designing nature. "Panoramic" perception of the stained glass composition led to emerging a new image - an ideas man of Broad Church the composition's author F. Horn adhered to.

### KEYWORDS

Visualization; Anglican Emmanuel College Chapel;  
Cambridge University; John Colet; Anglican Church.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### Introduction

This research was caused by an accidental discovery of a photo reproduction of one unknown in Russia masterpiece of British stained glass art of the Victorian age found on open spaces of the Internet: a full-height portrait of John Colet (1467-1519), a famous member of clergy of the pre-reform period, Erasmus' and Thomas More's friend and mentor. This image attracted our attention for a good reason, since it was not previously published in editions dedicated to the English thinker. The transparent portrait was made in 1884 upon designer Clement J. Heaton Jr.'s (1861-1940) project by the Heaton, Butler & Bayne company (founded in 1855), the undoubted leader in the sphere of stained glass production in England of the second

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half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Exquisite lines of the picture give evidence of masters' using the latest technique of glass processing of the time – so called Tiffany technique (Vzhosek, 2012; Savrey, 2011). The stained glass is a panel in the opening of a Romanesque window, in the centre of which the John Colet's side-drawn figure is depicted (Lupton, 1887). The figure is encircled in intricate architectural framing: low white-stone gold plated carved columns to the right and to the left are joined overhead with a semi-circular arch with high canopy (Seregin, 2005). The portrait's details reflect the most important aspects of Colet's activity. As a Catholic priest he is robed in a crimson priestly garb with a cloak pelerine and the traditional for Catholic clergies square biretta cap with four peaks of horn of the same colour. There's Saint Paul's Cathedral in London in the background, of which Colet had been the dean for over fifteen years. Finally, the most significant detail – he keeps in hand a model of the grammar school he founded in 1509 at St. Paul's Cathedral. Obviously, many generations of Englishmen of the 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries had been keeping the Colet's image, the founder of the first English school independent of churchdom that became a model for grammar schools of the Modern age both in respect to school matter organization and curricula content (Tsurkan, 2002). The presence of the grammar school model indicates appreciation of Colet as an innovator of school education and that due to his creation he holds a prominent place in the intellectual history of his country. The Colet's portrait can be therefore interpreted as a peculiar visual life history, reflection of biographic reality and its historical memory (Armstong, 1967).

However, an important circumstance prevents us from assuming such naturalistic understanding of the visual: the stained glass has another panel where religious reformer, translator of the Holy Bible into English William Tyndale (1494-1536) in the priest's garbs keeping a feather and the Bible is depicted. Persecuted by the English crown and forced to work in foreign lands (in Germany and the Netherlands) and led an exile's existence Tyndale translated the Bible into English using not the Latin Vulgate, but texts in Hebrew and Greek. All subsequent English translations, including the King James Bible, drew significantly from Tyndale. William Tyndale also played a leading role in theological argumentation of king's supremacy in England (Koposov, 2001; Bridgett, 1888). Henry the Eighth used a provision regarding the divine origin of the Crown proved in Tyndale's works and afterwards by other Anglican reformers in confronting the Catholic opposition that didn't recognize the king's supreme power. Doctrine of all nationals' (including clergy) obedience to secular authorities developed by Tyndale became the most important principle of Anglican Tudors' Reformation.

### **Methodological Framework**

In trying to answer the question how one should interpret the Colet's and Tyndale's companion portrait represented in the stained glass, let's address to the practice of source review, which is traditional for historical researches. In fact, every image is created and exists within a certain context, which largely determines its content. In our opinion, three circumstances are of prime importance. Firstly, the stained glass decorates a window in Anglican Emmanuel College Chapel of Cambridge University, which was a true nursery of early English Protestantism. It is commonly known that Tyndale and other reformers relate to the Cambridge. Secondly, Emmanuel College was established in the Elizabethan Age as a school for training Anglican preachers (Blavatsky, 1999; Cassirer, 1953; Dobell, 2009; Foxe, 1877; Hort, 1896). It is the very aim founder Walter Midway pursued (to 1523-

1589), a prominent adherent of Protestantism known for Puritan affection. Thirdly, Biblical, more often evagelic scenes were typical for church stained glass artworks of Victorian England. If traditional images were refused in the Anglican chapel, it was probably done in order to recognize the truth of Anglican Church. And Colet's image, an iconic figure in the history of pre-reform England was designed to serve this end.

Prevailing from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the time the stained glass was made – appreciation of Colet (1968) as a precursor of English Protestantism, Tyndale's teacher, confirms acceptability of this assumption. In 1512 Colet represented a program of church reform and his dean's convocation sermon is often called the overture to the great drama of the English Reformation (Gauld, 1968). However, in our opinion, this concept is false. Let's compare Colet's and Tyndale's views of key issues of the Reformation – attitude to papacy, indulgences, relation of secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Colet didn't consider the issue of papacy a priority, even in Colet's convocation sermon the pope was mentioned only once in the first prayer as church hierarchy head. Tyndale, on the contrary, was fiercely critical about the actions of the Roman Curia with its pontiff and the system of church leaders as a whole. Colet named the pope, bishops and all priesthood *pontiff*. He considered the church hierarchy successors of apostles. According to Colet (Green, 1874), the church hierarchy is not an element of church's internal structure, but person's state. Tyndale called the pope Antichrist and his service – Antichrist's order, the reformer tried to prove groundlessness of the dogma of the pope as supreme and impeccable head of the Church and God's deputy on earth. Tyndale rejected the thesis of apostolic succession of Vatican. Colet didn't touch upon the subject of papacy's secular policy and recognized the legal power of the Roman pontiff, while Tyndale accused the pope of infringement on secular authorities and world domination. The reformer believed that the papacy is guilty of distorting the Bible and breaking up Christianity in 1054.

## Results and Discussion

Both thinkers raised the issue of indulgences, however, Colet interpreted the notion of “indulgence” in a different way; he understood it as certain disciplinary easing or “sin permit” (*permission mali*) used for preventing the greater evil (*ne magis malum sequatur*). Tyndale again spoke out against the so-called “permissible document” that allowed, in his opinion, trading martyrs' and saints' merits, and he didn't recognize purgatory. Both theologians criticized clergy's flaws. However, Colet insisted on revitalizing the Church and its reforming *in capite et in membris* through temples of all levels, while Tyndale stood for elimination of the Romanish church and its replacement with a new one based on the Bible (Jowett, 2000; Lloyd, 1996; Lupton, 1887; MacCulloch, 1996). According to Colet, the priesthood is the highest rank of earth hierarchy, which dominates over secular authorities. He argued against the interference of the latter in ecclesiastical affairs and believed that the priesthood should become worthy of its privileges. Tyndale, in his turn, advocated ecclesiastical authorities' submission to secular authorities and suggested to abolish ecclesiastical courts, introduce taxation for the clergy. Moreover, the reformer advanced a doctrine of the “universal priesthood” or the priesthood of all believers. In his translation of the Bible he replaced such important for the Catholicity words as *church* with *congregation*, *priest* with *senior*, *elder*, *penance* with *repentance*, thereby depriving the Church of the pillars its wealth and power was based on.

Obviously, the question is two different trends of religious ideas of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and two programs of the Reformation correspondingly. Tyndale was a typical Protestant, while Colet represented tradition of Christian Revival, striving for reform in the spirit of episcopalism carried out by Councils of all levels headed by the pope, who should give an example of the spiritual and moral renewal first. It is possible to suggest their views' similarity in three ways: modern priesthood criticism, calling for church reforms (the Reformation), appealing to the Holy Scriptures (Mansfield, 1992; Seebohm, 1916; Shea and Whitla, 2000). This similarity is explained not by the fact that Protestantism grew on Christian revival, but belonging to single religious culture "The Autumn of the Middle Ages" these features were typical for. Christian revival was not continued in Protestantism, but in Catholic reform movement, so-called the Counter-Reformation.

Therefore, interpreting the stained glass as an equivalent of a certain historiographic scene, as a visual image of certain verbal practice, we can summarize that the Colet's and Tyndale's companion portrait is representation of Protestant interpretation of the English Reform history.

We planned to complete our research at this point, however, it has been further developed. It has been found the stained glass is not an individual work, but a part of large composition. It consists of eight windows of Emmanuel College Chapel, by four on both sides off the altar, including, therefore, sixteen figures. Churchmen of the early Middle Ages are depicted in first two stained glass artworks. Augustine of Hippo (334–430) and Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) are depicted on the north side of the stained glass. Saint Augustine keeps the book of *The City of God*, the most significant work of the theologian, imperial Rome is depicted behind him. Saint Anselm is portrayed in the stained glass with two significant works of his – the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* (Miles, 1951; Moran, 2004; Patrides, 1980; Seebohm, 1867). A part of Canterbury Cathedral and residence of archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm had been since 1093, are seen in the background.

The opposite south stained glass artwork features Origen (185–254) and John Scotus Eriugena (810–877). Origen keeps his major book *On First Principles*, Alexandrian lighthouse and palm, the symbol of Caesarea where he moved to being persecuted during the reign to Caracalla and stayed there for life are depicted in the background. Irish philosopher Eriugena is shown against a bell tower in a conventual dress with one of his most important books – *De divisione naturae* ("The division of nature") (Shea and Whitla, 2000; Shelley, 1908; Smith, 1938; Southern, 1992).

The following stained glass artwork on the south side is dedicated to John Colet and William Tyndale we started our research from. The opposite stained glass artwork on the north side represents John Fisher (1459–1535) and Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556). The former became a martyr for Catholic faith, the latter – for Anglican. Fisher is depicted with a model of Christ's College at Cambridge founded under his guidance, there's St. Mary's church he restored and the Tower of London, where he had lived his last days, in the background. Fisher's ideological opponent, first Protestant archbishop Thomas Cranmer is shown with an Anglican prayer book of 1549, there's Christ's College at Cambridge he graduated and archbishop's residence in Lambeth Palace in the background.

Emmanuel college graduates are depicted in the remaining four stained glass artworks. All of them hold scrolls with famous Biblical expressions they were associated with. Puritans Laurence Chaderton's (1536–1640) and John Harvard's

(1610–1638) portraits are depicted on the third stained glass artwork off the altar on the north side. Chaderton was the first head of Emmanuel college; a scientist and a preacher, he holds a scroll with the following words: “the Word of the Lord may go forward with increasing glory” (2 Thessalonians 3:1). The first chapel of the college and a fraternity are depicted behind him. The second panel represents John Harvard, who was awarded the Master of Arts degree at Cambridge and, seeking for spiritual freedom, emigrated to the US, where he assisted in founding the prestigious university. He keeps a scroll with such words: “So shall the people that shall be created praise the Lord” (Psalm 102: 18). There’s an urn at his feet saying “the salt of people”, probably, it’s an allusion to Matthew 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth”. John Harvard’s monument at his grave in Charleston, Massachusetts, and a ship he sailed to swim in New England are depicted in the background.

The opposite stained glass artworks on the south side represents the members of Cambridge Platonists Benjamin Whichcote (1609–1683) and Peter Sterry (1614–1672). Whichcote is depicted against the King’s College, Cambridge, where he was provost, and also St. Lawrence Jewry, where he was the vicar. There are words written in his scroll: “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord” (Proverbs 20:27), which reflected the nature of his mystic concept of man’s reason (spirit) as an echo of Divine in man’s soul. Other Cambridge Platonist Peter Sterry has a scroll saying “God may be all in all” (15:28 Corinthians). Buildings depicted behind him highlight Sterry’s authority in religious denomination in the years of revolution: St Margaret’s Church in Westminster shows his membership in the Westminster Assembly (1643–1649) and Whitehall royal palace – relation to Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, the chaplain of whom Sterry was (Webb, 1974).

The last stained glass artwork off the altar on the north side represents William Bedell (1571–1642) and William Sancroft (1617–1693). Bedell is shown with a scroll saying “And from thee shall be those who shall restore the deserts of the age” (Isaiah 58:12). Doge’s Palace in Venice, where he remained for four years as an English ambassador, and a palace in Irish county Cavan, where he stayed captive during the Irish rebellion 1641, are shown in the background. To emphasize that Bedell was an expert in Jewish and promoted its learning in England, three volumes of the Complete Jewish Bible are depicted in the stained glass at his feet. 79<sup>th</sup> archbishop of Canterbury William Sancroft was also a contemporary of the English revolution, he is shown holding a scroll saying “I remember the days of old” (Psalm 142). There are Lambeth Palace’s chapel behind him and a stack of books at his feet.

Two others Emmanuel College graduates’ portraits are depicted in the last south stained glass artwork – John Smith (1616–1652) and William Law (1686–1761). Smith was a Neo-Platonist, Whichcote’s student; a Puritan, an expert in the east theology and an excellent linguist, he is shown holding a scroll with the following words: “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). King’s College tower where he gave lessons and the Acropolis as a symbol of Greek culture and philosophy Cambridge philosophers addressed to are featured in the background. Anglican priest William Law has a scroll with such words: “Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light” (John 12:36). A parish church of his native town King’s Cliffe, Northamptonshire, with a part of house where he lived is depicted to his right; to his left –St. Peter’s Church in

Gorlitz (Germany) related to the name of German Christian mystic Jakob Bohme Law was influenced by in his later years.

It will be recalled that the stained glass artworks decorate not a secular, but ecclesiastic building. The design of this composition is unclear, choice of characters seems puzzling: windows of the Anglican chapel feature both saints (for example, Augustin acknowledged by all Christian denominations) and theologians considered to be heretics – Origen and Eriugena, martyrs for Catholic faith (Fisher) and their ideological opponents martyred by Catholics for their fidelity to Anglicanism (Tyndale, Cranmer). The confessional discrepancy is increased by the presence of archbishop of Canterbury Sancroft and Puritans Chaderton and Harvard. Emmanuel graduates occupy four windows next to the exit. But why exactly these College's members? It became obvious at this stage of the research that the stained glass composition is a certain image designed by the author for some yet undefined purpose. And this image manifests some social and cultural meanings and practices important to the author and society of that time. To reveal this image content let's try to find something common that unites all these representatives of the theological thought that belonged to different Christian denominations. In our opinion, it's possible to distinguish two features more or less typical for them. Firstly, enthusiasm for classic ancient languages and, therefore, Biblical studies. Secondly, adherence to the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition. The most famous of them Saint Augustine even tried to reconcile Christian faith and Neo-Platonism, bringing into line the Biblical and Neoplatonic understanding of God. Neo-Platonism also contributed to Saint Anselm's world view, who took neo-platonic trine as a basis to substantiate the Christian dogma of the Trinity: Whole, Mind and Soul. John Scotus Eriugena translated books of mystic nature, reaching after the synthesis of Christian dogmatics and Neo-Platonism philosophy. Colet is also known for his Oxford lectures on interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, which were distinguished for using text scientific criticism elements and interest in Neo-Platonism. Emmanuel theologians were also adherents of Neo-Platonism, forming the group of Cambridge Platonists. The unity of faith and mind, attempts to unite different religious and philosophical traditions, calls for dialogues between different Christian denominations were important principles of their ideology. In our opinion, the composition's author, therefore, tried to embody, above all, ideas of religious freedom and mutual understanding between different ecclesiastical movements.

These postulates were typical for liberal theology that was widespread in English society in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of many reasons, but, primarily, due to newest scientific discoveries in the area of geology and biology. Thus, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and origin of species (1859) represented a major challenge to the Church and implanted doubt in Christian teaching truth even on the part of episcopate representatives. Later, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal theologians found a way to match Darwinism with Christian teaching - diversity of living organisms and their species, the complexity of natural selection mechanism were perceived as a proof of God's mightiness. But the 1860s was the time of the deepest apostasy of Anglicanism. A year after Darwin's Origin of Species the "Essays and Reviews" collection (1860) was published that was the sharpest evidence of the crisis. Its authors – seven liberal theologians and intellectuals of Oxford and Cambridge – expressed purely rationalistic opinions in respect to Christianity. The work was subject to criticism by all denominations of the Anglican Church, essayists were called Seven Against Christ, however, it didn't prevent conveyance of ideas of a new school. Benjamin Jowett's essay On the

Interpretation of Scripture was central in “Essays and Reviews”, where a claim to read the Bible as any other book rejecting the dogma of its God-inspired nature was announced. The author stood for historical approach to the Holy Scriptures’s texts. According to him, Christians should not ignore but welcome advances of modern Bible criticism and try to prove Old and New Testament events with information from other sources that a priori supposed uncertainty in the Bible’s credibility. Baden Powell wrote about the priority of reason over revelation, need for scientific examination of New Testament’s evidences, mythological nature of many New Testament’s events in *On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity*. Bishop Colenso J.W. continued the trend of Bible criticism in his 1862 essays *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. He rejected the traditional attribution of the Pentateuch basing his concept on the analysis of historical inaccuracies and the use of mathematical methods. Liberal-minded and inclinable to rationalism religious scholars formed so-called Broad Church. Its followers were characterized by indifference to disputes over doctrinal questions, principles of church organization and liturgical practice, tolerance and drive to unite various denominations within Anglican Church based on as broad as possible philosophical interpretation of religious facts. Attempts to found religion on a footing of reason bring the views of liberal theologians of Broad Church and study of Cambridge Platonists, who were also called *Latitude men*, together. It is Neoplatonism that was taken as a philosophical basis for Broad Church’s ideology.

The stained glass composition’s author Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892), an Irish theologian, an expert in ancient languages, a member of commission on New Testament English translation revision, an Emmanuel College professor, a theology lecturer, also belonged to Broad Church. Together with like-minded persons from Trinity College, bishops B.F. Westcott and J.B. Lightfoot, he was the center of spiritual intellectuals at Cambridge. As all representatives of the Anglican priesthood of the 80s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he strived to broaden his spiritual outlook. It is worth noting that Horn was an active participant of London Society for Psychic Research Helena Blavatsky expressed her appreciation for. The Society practiced séances, studied occultism. Moreover, Westcott, Lightfoot, and Hort founded their own secret organization Eranos or The Apostles, imitating hermetic church that had existed in old time. The goal of the Society was to organize meetings of different confessions to share opinions and create some united hermetic organization. We suppose the stained glass composition in Emmanuel College Chapel is the image of Broad Church designed by Hort, representing its ideology and spiritual practices.

## Conclusion

Looking back at experiences of interpreting stained-glass artworks of Anglican Emmanuel College Chapel of Cambridge University, we clearly realized how our perception of the visual had been changed. At the very beginning, when the only Colet’s portrait was in focus, it was taken as a simple reflection of his biography and historical memory. Due to the perspective’s change and revealing the Colet’s and Tyndale’s companion portrait, our own scientific experience, i.e. knowledge of British historiography related to these characters, moved us to designing other image – representation of the Protestant direction of English historiography of the Reformation. This stage of our research clearly demonstrated how much the image’s content depends on the beholder and that the image has designing nature. Finally, “panoramic” perception of the stained glass composition led to emerging a new image – an ideas man of Broad Church the composition’s author F. Horn adhered to.

Our research proved once again that vision itself – “optics of the eye” – is also a problem to be studied.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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