



Extracts from the Chapter minutes from 1733 onwards and divers historical prospecting.

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## A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 3

**M**ike Deeming writes: As you stroll up the North quire aisle past the morning chapel, it's easy to miss one of the Cathedral's most extraordinary windows. Two lancets of grisaille glass rise above two charming biblical scenes.

The grisaille is 13C, some from the Chapter House and some removed from the Trinity Chapel east window when the Prisoners of Conscience window was installed there in 1980. But look more closely at the pictorial panels – the baptism of Christ and Abraham receiving the angels. What is exquisite about these 16C Netherlandish glass images is the use of silver stain.



When we use the term 'stained glass' these days we usually refer to all coloured glass in a window. But most glass isn't actually 'stained' – the colour is introduced in the original glass melt and is correctly referred to as 'pot-metal' glass. So individual pieces of glass would typically be of one colour throughout. Most medieval (and then Gothic revival) glass would be in deep blues, reds, yellow and greens. But look more closely at this picture of the baptism. You can see there are shades of yellow within pieces of white glass – hair and foliage. This is achieved by painting a silver nitrate solution (or mix of silver and gamboge) on the glass, and firing it again. The silver nitrate penetrates the glass and changes the glass ionisation, causing it to filter yellow light instead of the clear or white light. So, in practice, very little

'stained glass' is actually stained. The technique was developed in Germany and Flanders in 14C and here you see some of the best examples in the Cathedral. The contrast with the purple pot metal glass used here for the angel's wings and Christ's cloak is striking. Note the Latin inscription *Hic est filius meus dilectus in quo* ('This is my son in whom I am well pleased', Matthew 3:17) emerging from the Holy Spirit descending as a dove, with silver-stained wings.

Of course, silver stain was very expensive, so its use tended to be limited to such items as hair, halos or royal crowns. It's worth looking at other windows here to see if you can spot the staining!

The window is dedicated to two former Canon Treasurers, Charles Myers and Robert Quirk, and a fitting tribute to their guardianship of the fabric of the Cathedral.

