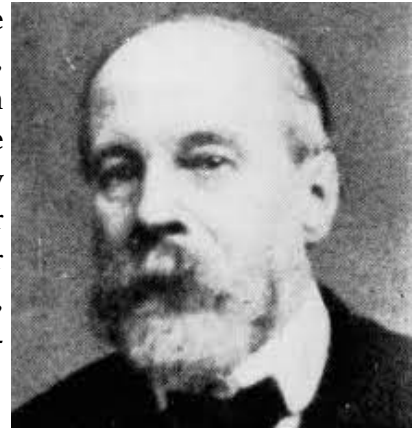


MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

One of the first windows designed by Nathaniel Westlake (pictured) was commissioned for St Andrew's Church, Landford, Wilts in 1861. It marked the start of a long career which led him to join the glass makers Lavers and Barraud, a company that he ultimately took over and ran, till his death in 1921. Indeed, they produced all the windows for this church and many windows for churches throughout the UK and Ireland, though never for Salisbury Cathedral. Their style was strictly Gothic Revival, although Westlake was influenced to some extent by the pre-Raphaelite movement.



However, he is principally remembered today for a series of books he wrote – four volumes of 'A History of Design in Painted Glass'[1], one for each century from the twelfth/thirteenth to the sixteenth, which were first published between 1891 and 1894. They are incredibly detailed covering glass in England, France, Germany and Italy, with hundreds of illustrations. They were widely used as text books for students of art history around the world.

In the C12-13 volume, he explores the enormous influence of Abbot Suger of St Denis, depicted here in a stained glass window from 1140-44 in the St Denis Basilica, at the feet of the Virgin Mary. Suger is widely regarded as the driving force behind establishing Gothic as the dominant design for new Cathedrals. The use of pointed arches and external buttresses allowed for much larger windows and the opportunity for more lavish window decorations. He also strongly advocated the use of dark blue glass, so that the light could be subdued in chapels and draw

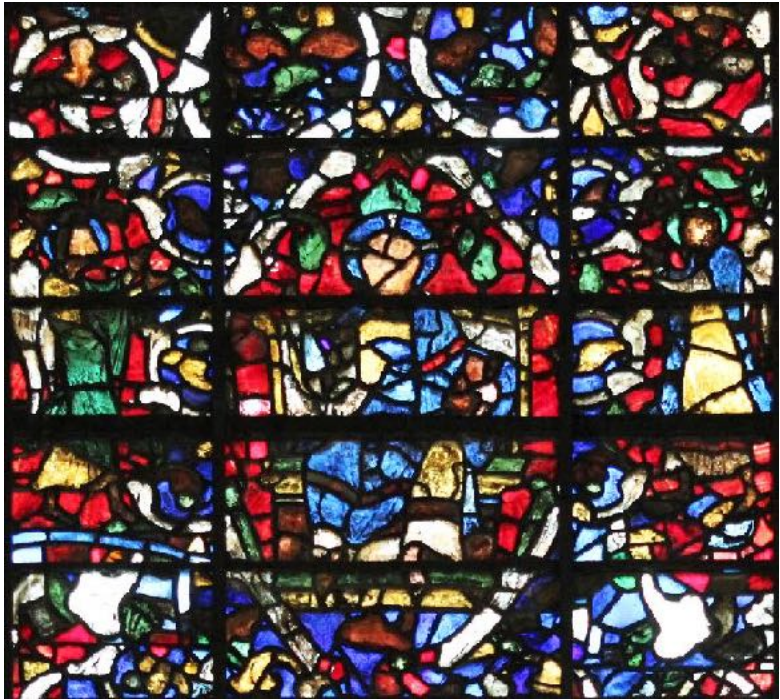


the attention to the votive candles. The ultimate example of this is Chartres Cathedral where it can take minutes for your eyes to adjust to the darkness. Another initiative was the encouragement to feature a Jesse family tree window in new cathedrals, to reinforce the message of Christ's direct descent from Jesse, the father of King David. The earliest of these in England were at Canterbury and York; but Salisbury followed soon after, under the guidance of Elias of Dereham, who, of course, had been forced into exile in St Denis during King John's reign.

Two features that Westlake brings out are the use of mandorla (almond) shapes for framing the individual figures, and the distinctive character of the decorated borders. The mandorla was introduced at York, possibly as early as 1150, and the Salisbury Jesse tree follows the style, as can be seen in this image of Christ from the window in the south nave aisle. The Salisbury tree would have featured at least three figures, of which the images of Christ and the Virgin Mary still survive but the bottom figure – Jesse – is lost. It also includes numerous saints and angels, accompanying the principal figures, which are quite hard to spot but which you can clearly see in this superb photo from Paul Smith's new book[2]. The mandorla-framed images of Christ, St Mary and other saints also became the norm for document seals for the church, contrasting with the circular seals for the state.

These surviving mandorlas were included in Cathedral glazier John Beare's 1819 re-creation of the west window. Here they were on the left and right of an image of an archbishop, half-way up the central lancet. What did Westlake have to say about this? Generally, Westlake tends to defer to Charles Winston, who had written about the Salisbury windows thirty years earlier. But in this case Westlake writes -

'It was not a wise proceeding to place work of such delicacy so far from the eye, and with such strong ornamental work in earlier styles, as that which now surrounds it. One cannot fairly make examination of its detail, and it is useless to the student or spectator in its present position; it appears, however, to be of good quality.'



In the face of criticism like this, it was down to the glazier Mary Lowndes to re-instate the Jesse tree, with the correct configuration of the mandorlas; this she did in the south nave aisle window, when she was re-leading the west window in 1922-24. Although the Jesse tree probably started life in the east window of the Trinity (Lady) Chapel, it may have been here originally; various historians have different views on this.

The strength of Westlake's 'History' is that he sets all this medieval glass in its international and historical context. It is fair to say that the work of Westlake helped to ensure that medieval glass throughout Europe became increasingly valued and protected for future generations. For more thoughts on John Beare and Mary Lowndes, see J&T 77 and 68, respectively.

[1] All four volumes of Westlake's 'History of Design in Painted Glass' are available to view online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001982590> from the collections of universities in the USA.

[2] Paul Smith 'Salisbury Cathedral Windows in the West', private publication, copy in the Cathedral Library