

## SUNLIGHT AND SAINTS\*

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VINCENT MARIA FITZGERALD, O.P.

*"To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace." (Luke i, 79)*



LIFE without God may be likened to a stained glass window without light. The medium of beauty is there but the source of its beauty is lacking. The soul of man, ever groping for truth and beauty, which is God, can only use the medium of the sense organs and their control faculties, the intellect and will, for this purpose. The closer then that an object of the senses brings us to a knowledge of God the more noble that object is. In the case of a stained glass church window we have a twofold nobility.

In the breaking up of pure white and intense sunlight into its beautiful component colors we have a high utilitarian purpose or physical beauty. It is, as it were, a melody from nature played with a harmony of colors by the mighty force that makes life possible upon this planet. This produces an understanding of God through His creature—light. It is the beauty of God reflected in nature. But we place windows in our churches not alone for their physical beauty or utilitarian purpose.

There is another light which blinds by its brilliancy and this is the light of God's greatness and perfection. The brilliancy of Godliness causes thoughtful men to bow their heads in awe and wonder. But God Who gave men their power over sunlight would surely not leave those who are seeking Him to be overcome by His Light which is "the life of men." In His divine providence He has provided a medium by which men may come to a better understanding of Himself through the separation of His excellencies and the less lustrous effulgence of His perfections as found in the lives of His Saints.

It remained for the ingenuity of man to combine this double

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\* Appreciation is extended to Mr. C. J. Connick for the descriptive material and photographs used in this article.

form of the knowledge of God in an art which can be such a fertile source of inspiration. A present day example of the handiwork of a master craftsman conveying through the medium of stained glass the knowledge of God and offering a source of inspiration to men may be found in the two new windows recently placed in the great nave clerestory windows west of the transept of Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church in New York City.

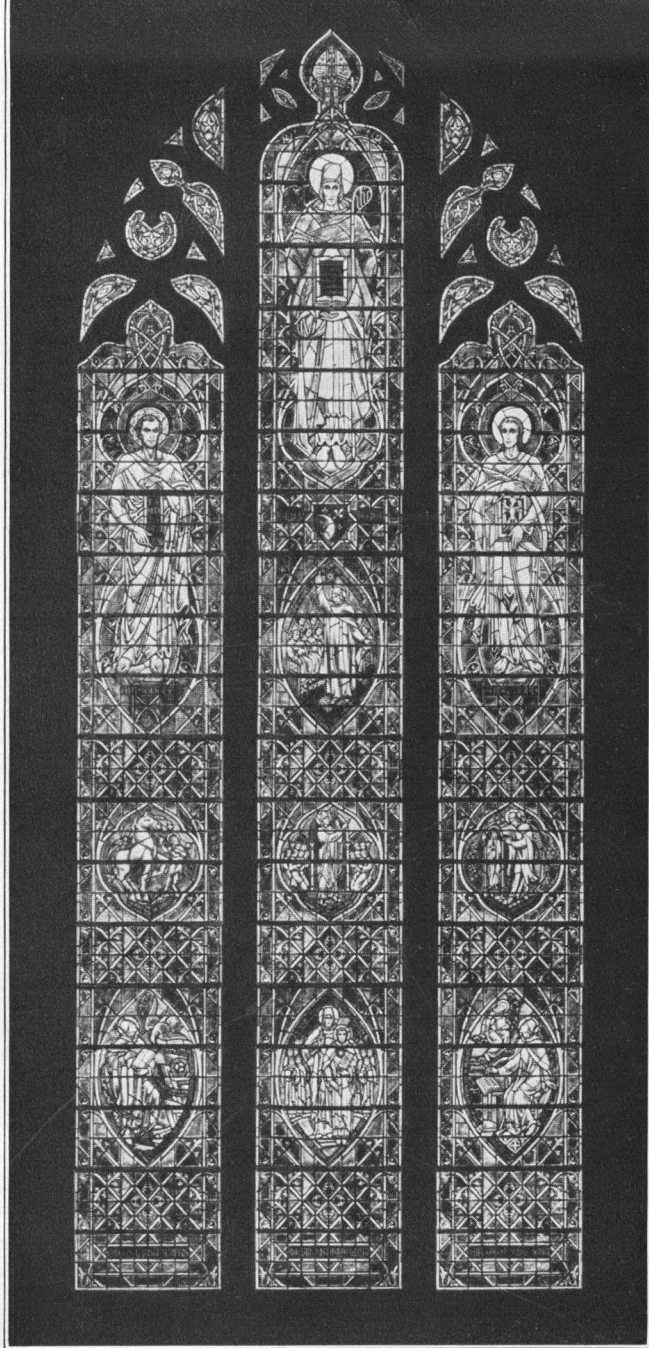
The Albertine window with its beauty of dominant blues gives to men of an age dedicated to the pursuit of science the hope and inspiration that they too, may come to their God through the sciences that are so dear to their hearts. Saint Albert, combining in his life holiness with learning, could well be chosen the patron of those who desire to increase their knowledge by a knowledge of the First Cause of all things. The distinguished Doctor is represented at the top of the center lancet, wearing the Dominican habit and the Doctor's hat. As bishop of Ratisbon he holds the pastoral staff, and the mitre appears above. He also holds a pen and book with the quotation from his *Summa Theologica*, "*Intellectus noster perficitur variis luminibus et elevatur,*" suggesting his broad intelligence and varied interests. His family coat of arms is placed at his feet.

Saint Albert's eager interest in the nature of things places him among the great natural philosophers, and suggests the figure of Aristotle at the left. This also recognizes Saint Albert's lifelong devotion to Aristotle's works as a source of universal truths, to be verified in the light of Christian knowledge.

The balancing figure of Saint John the Evangelist symbolizes Saint Albert's profound faith and his inspired theological writings which laid the foundation for those of his famous pupil, Saint Thomas Aquinas.

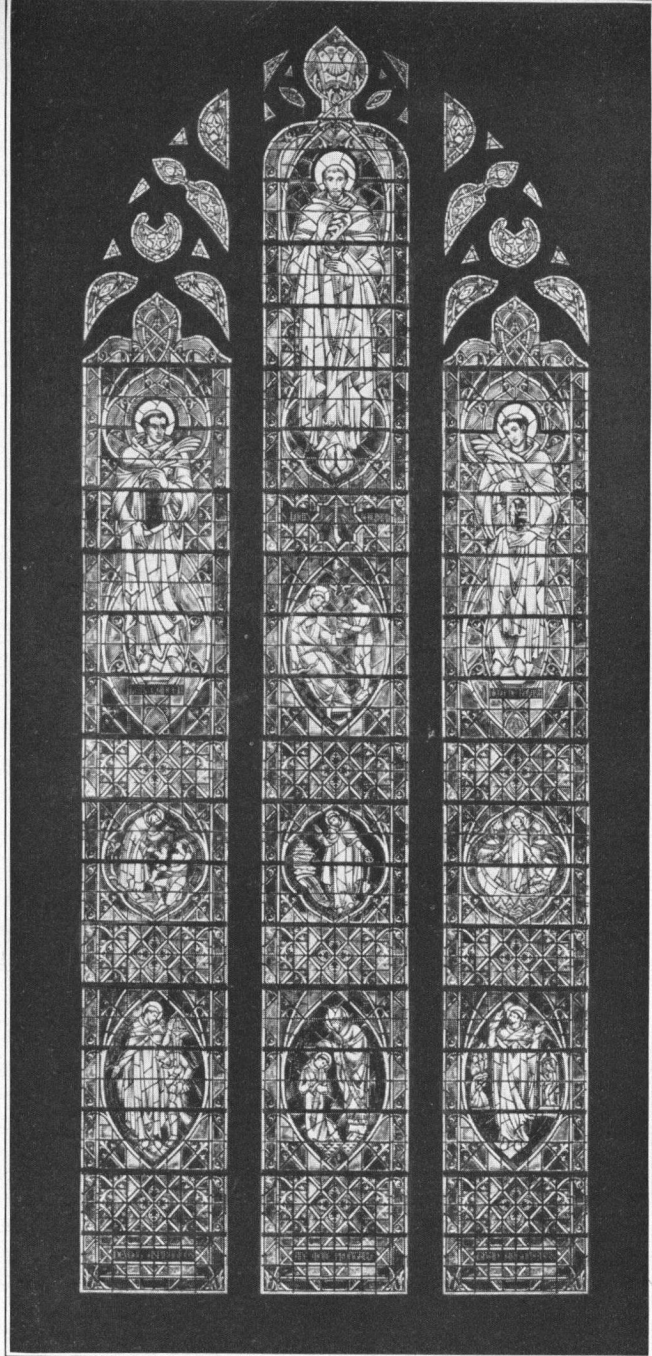
Seven colorful medallions below these figures celebrate Saint Albert's character as Doctor, his love of nature and his special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Three in the center represent Saint Albert teaching the young Saint Thomas Aquinas, preaching at Ratisbon, and defending the theology of Saint Thomas after the latter's death. Two on the left symbolize Saint Albert studying the flight of eagles, and the legend of the white horse of Lauingen that could only be led by the young Saint. Those on the right symbolize his vision of the Blessed Virgin and his dedication of a shrine in her honor.

On the North side of the transept the window of Saint Louis Bertrand demonstrates the universality to which the goodness of God extends. This window is in a dominant of red to contrast with the



(ST. ALBERT)

"SO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN" *Matt. v, 16.*



(ST. LOUIS BERTRAND)

"FOR YOU WERE HERETOFORE DARKNESS, BUT NOW LIGHT IN THE LORD. WALK THEN AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT. FOR THE FRUIT OF THE LIGHT IS IN ALL GOODNESS, AND JUSTICE, AND TRUTH" *Eph. v, 8, 9.*



Saint Albert window in blue, placed opposite and on the south side of the church. Saint Louis Bertrand was one of the first missionaries to the New World. By the ardor of his faith and the nobility of his character he was able to overcome the savageness of the hearts of a primitive people. He is represented at the top of the center lancet holding a cup and serpent, symbolizing his deliverance from poison through faith and purity of heart.

The companion figures of Brother Luis Cancer and Brother Diego de Tolosa, also Dominican missionaries to the New World, bear palms as martyrs for the Faith.

The medallions below symbolize events from the life of Saint Louis Bertrand: his elevation to the priesthood by Saint Thomas of Villanova, his burial of the plague-stricken of Valencia, his preservation from poison, his preaching at Valencia, and subjects related to his mission in South America.

The designer of these windows, Mr. Charles J. Connick, of Boston, Mass., has made a great contribution to the modern man by presenting in such a beautiful setting the example of virtues that would lead him far in the right direction, erudition combined with sanctity, purity of heart and a consuming desire to bring the knowledge of God to all men.

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### ECCE REX

No royal purple graced His bed;  
No downy pillow held His head;  
No blare of trumpets hailed the birth  
Of the Infant King of heaven and earth.  
He fashioned man and earth and sea  
And none returned His charity.  
The ox and ass their homage paid  
As Virgin hands in manger laid  
The King of earth and sea and sky—  
Born for man—for man to die.  
His petal fingers lightly rest  
Upon His swaddled infant breast—  
Infinity is made erstwhile  
In the beauty of an Infant's smile.

—Anselm M. Vitie, O.P.