

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE WINDOWS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

By BERNARD RACKHAM

Further examination of these windows has made it clear that, of the six ancient figure-panels contained in them, one—with a figure of the Almighty (at one time mistakenly described as St. Gregory)—is of more recent date than the remainder. This is apparent on stylistic grounds, although it has not been remarked by any previous writer on the subject.

The actual date of this panel is a matter of conjecture, since there seems to be no written evidence for it; on grounds of probability it is likely to be the second half of the 17th century, after the Restoration. It will be agreed that a figure of the Deity would almost certainly have found a place among those in the original windows of the Chapel. Such a figure would be the first to fall a victim to Puritan iconoclasm, whilst portrait figures (some of which have since disappeared) would be spared; a parallel is to be found in the 'Royal' window of Canterbury Cathedral, where the figures of Edward IV and his family survive, whilst those relating to the cult of the Virgin and St. Thomas Becket were destroyed as idolatrous. There is evidence that John Dowsing, in his onslaught upon obnoxious features in Cambridge colleges, did not neglect Christ's Chapel; Dr. Lloyd (*Early History of Christ's College, Cambridge*, p. 314) quotes *Baker MSS.*, xxxviii, 456 (University Library, Cambridge) for the obliteration by Dowsing of part of the inscription on the lectern of the College. It is likely that the windows suffered at the same time, though from enquiries made it seems that on this point the records are silent. It may be surmised that the figure in question dates from the reign of Charles II. Mr. John Knowles has pointed out to me that the yellow-stained crocketed canopy fragments are earlier in style than the architectural settings of the five portrait figures, and were doubtless brought from elsewhere when the remnants were reassembled in their present form.

As to the precise nature of the presumed original figure, a new interpretation may be offered. My former suggestion was that it may have formed the central figure of a group showing the three Persons of the Trinity enthroned. Another possibility, perhaps more likely, is prompted by a comparison with the central light in the 15th-century window, originally in Thurbern's Chantry, now in Fromond's Chantry, at Winchester College, representing the Trinity as the Father supporting the dead body of the Son, with the Dove hovering above; the figure at Christ's is so like that at Winchester, as regards its general pose and the sideways inclination of the head, that a similar original composition seems possible, later modified so far as the hands and book are concerned, to suit the Protestant requirements of the Restoration period. M. Jean Lafond, whose opinion on stained glass questions is second to none, concurs in believing that the book and the hand holding it do not belong to the original composition. He also suggests that the figure may be that of Christ, from a Coronation of the Virgin; but such an interpretation seems less likely in view of the dedication of the College.