

PAPERS

1.1

The Role of Ornament in the Conception and Significance of Medieval Figurative Stained Glass

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Das Ornament und seine Rolle in Konzeption und Bedeutung mittelalterlicher figurativer Glasmalereien – Zusammenfassung

Nach den Richtlinien gehört es zu den Aufgaben der Corpus-Autoren die Ornamente der Glasmalereien in den Einleitungen und Katalognotizen der Bände zu analysieren. Die Ornamente sind in mittelalterlichen Verglasungen allgegenwärtig. Sie erscheinen als reine Ornamentscheiben und sind in jeder figürlichen Darstellung des Mediums präsent. Die Bedeutung des Ornaments wird schon im Traktat des Theophilus (um 1100) hervorgehoben (caput XXI: De ornatu picturae in vitro), wobei der Autor sowohl die reinen Ornamentscheiben als auch die gemusterten Hintergründe der figürlichen Darstellungen beschreibt. Die Überlegungen im vorliegenden Text werden sich mit den Hintergründen der Bilder, ihren Mustern und ihrer Funktion beschäftigen. Diese Ornamente waren für die Glasmaler ein so selbstverständlicher Teil ihres Werkes, dass die erhaltenen Entwürfe mittelalterlicher oder frühneuzeitlicher Glasmalereien sie meist gar nicht wiedergeben, sondern sie dem Ermessen der ausführenden Künstler überließen. Zunächst wird die

Entwicklung der Hintergrundornamente des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts in den Glasmalereien Frankreichs und des Reichs kurz dargestellt und nach den Vorlagen gefragt, an denen sich die Glasmaler inspiriert haben könnten. Italienische Seidenstoffe des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts, später auch Samte mit Brokatmustern, aber auch ältere Stofftypen lassen sich in den Glasmalereien des Berner Münsters, der Klosterkirche von Königsfelden und in den Kathedralen von Evreux und Bourges als Inspirationsquellen nachweisen. Im Falle eines Werkes in Krakau bezog sich der Glasmaler auf Ornamente der Goldschmiedekunst, indem er deren Technik nachahmte. Stoffe und Gegenstände der Schatzkünste sind wie die Glasmalereien Medien, die in der Ausstattung der mittelalterlichen Sakralbauten eine zentrale Rolle spielten. Die Evokation dieser Materialien in der Glasmalerei, besonders der Stoffe, fordert dazu heraus, nach der Bedeutung der Ornamente zu fragen. Hypothesen lassen sich nur aufstellen, wenn der architektonische Kontext der Glasmalereien in die Überlegungen einbezogen wird.

L'ornement et son rôle dans la conception et la signification des vitraux médiévaux figurés – Résumé

Selon les directives, il revient aux auteurs des volumes du Corpus Vitrearum d'analyser les ornements des vitraux dans les synthèses et les notices de catalogue. Il est vrai que l'ornement est omniprésent dans les vitraux médiévaux, non seulement comme thème principal dans les verrières purement décoratives, mais aussi comme accompagnement dans les verrières figurées. Déjà Théophile, dans son traité sur le vitrail rédigé vers 1100 (caput XXI : De ornatu picturae in vitro), soulignait l'importance du décor et faisait une large place à la réalisation des panneaux ornementaux et à celle des motifs de fond. C'est ce dernier aspect qui retiendra mon attention. Les parties ornementales étaient un aspect si évident du travail des peintres verriers du Moyen Âge et du début de l'Époque moderne qu'elles

étaient laissées à leur appréciation et ne faisaient pas l'objet de projets spécifiques. Dans un premier temps, je reviendrai brièvement sur l'évolution des fonds ornementaux des XIV^e-XV^e siècles en France et dans l'Empire avant de poser la question des sources des peintres verriers. Aux XIII^e-XIV^e siècles, les soieries italiennes et plus tard les velours à motifs de brocart inspirèrent ainsi les vitraux de l'ancienne collégiale de Berne, de l'ancienne abbatale de Königsfelden et, en France, des cathédrales d'Évreux et de Bourges, mais pas exclusivement comme en témoignent les motifs empruntés à des types de tissus plus anciens. Les étoffes précieuses jouaient du reste un rôle éminent dans le parement des églises et dans la liturgie. Aussi convient-il de s'interroger sur ce que signifie leur évocation dans les fonds décoratifs des vitraux.

The study of ornament, whether it be non-figurative stained glass or ornamental motifs within figurative windows, is one of the fundamental tasks of the authors according to the guidelines for the publication of Corpus Vitrearum volumes.¹ Usually authors limit themselves to a short characterisation

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¹ For the analysis of the ornament see corpusvitrearum.org, *Guidelines*, last version of 2016, pp. 12, 14.

of the decorative elements. It is only recently that more attention has been paid to ornament in stained glass outside Corpus work. Reference should be made, for example, to Michael Burger's dissertation on the ornamental glazing of the Rhineland² and to Dobrosława Horzela's essay on the unusual background ornament of a panel with the image of Mary Magdalene,³ which comes from the Dominican Church in Cracow. Both studies have enriched our understanding of the ornamentation of medieval stained glass.

This paper will take up issues regarding ornament raised by the Cracow panel along with my own observations about the surface-covering decoration of the choir glazing of Bern Minster.⁴ Neither Horzela's work nor my own observations limit the study of the ornament to formal analysis. Rather, we each ask what kind of materials the ornamental motifs evoke, and what meaning can be derived from the materiality displayed by means of the ornament, such as engraved metal in the case of the Cracow panel, and precious cloths in the Bern glass. In addition, Herbert L. Kessler's analyses of the materiality and non-mimetic aspects of medieval images⁵ and new research on ornament in medieval art,⁶ especially Anna Bücheler's exemplary study of textile pages in early medieval manuscripts,⁷ are fundamental for my argument. In particular, Bücheler persuasively demonstrates that the context in which ornament appears is crucial for its interpretation.

The meaning as well as the function of the ornamental grounds in stained glass can only be determined through consideration of medieval image theory and the special materiality of the medium of glass. The following considerations will assume educated observers such as the daily celebrating clergy of the church, who viewed the stained-glass windows over extended periods of time. The members of this group were accustomed to regard sacred images as well as the texts of Holy Scripture as conveyors of complex messages with multi-layered meanings.⁸ We can characterise these celebrants' onlook on images by turning to medieval authors such as Honorius Augustodunensis, Abbot Suger, and St Bonaventure to name only a few,⁹ who describe the ways that works of art appeal to the senses and awaken feelings of devotion,¹⁰ enabling viewers to establish a connection to a spiritual world through imagery. For such beholders, the image could mediate between the material world and the invisible

² Michael BURGER, *Fenestrate non historiatae. Ornamentale Glasmalerei der Hochgotik in den Regionen am Rhein (1250-1350)* (CVMA Deutschland, Studien, III), Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin, 2018.

³ Dobrosława HORZELA, "Opus punctile and Stained Glass around 1400", *Umění*, LXV-3, 2017, p. 226-243.

⁴ Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, "Rahmen, Bilder, Ornamente. Die Glasmalereien des Berner Münsterchors (1441 – ca. 1455)", in Bernd NICOLAI and Jürg SCHWEIZER (eds), *Das Berner Münster. Das erste Jahrhundert: Von der Grundsteinlegung bis zur Chorvollendung und Reformation (1421-1517/1528)*, Schnell & Steiner, Regensburg, 2019, pp. 373-403.

⁵ Herbert L. KESSLER, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity", *Kairos*, 32/33, 1990/1991, pp. 53-77; Herbert L. KESSLER, *Spiritual Seeing. Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (The Middle Ages Series), University Press of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2000; see especially the chapters "Medieval Art as Argument", pp. 53-63 and, "Real Absence. Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision", pp. 104-148; Herbert L. KESSLER, *Seeing Medieval Art* (Rethinking the Middle Ages, 1), Broad View Press, Toronto, 2004; now also Herbert L. KESSLER, *Experiencing Medieval Art*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2019.

⁶ Vera BEYER and Christian SPIESS (ed.), *Ornament. Motiv, Modus, Bild*, Fink Verlag, München, 2012; Jean-Claude BONNE, "Ornementation et représentation", in Jérôme BASCHET and Olivier DITTMAR (ed.), *Les images dans l'Occident médiéval* (Atelier du médiéviste, 14), Brepols, Turnhout, 2015, p. 199-212.

⁷ Anna BÜCHELER, *Ornament as Argument. Textile Pages and Textile Metaphors in Early Medieval Manuscripts* (Zurich Studies in the History of Art, Georges-Bloch-Annual, University of Zurich, Institute of Art History, 22/23), De Gruyter, Berlin, 2019. In the older literature, these textile pages are often referred to as "carpet pages" (a literal translation of the German word "Teppichseite"), but see BÜCHELER's discussion pp. 34-35.

⁸ KESSLER 2004, pp. 166-168; Jean-Claude SCHMITT, "Introduction", in BASCHET and DITTMAR (ed.) 2015, p. 7-18, especially 16-17; KESSLER 2019, pp. 91-116.

⁹ Lawrence G. DUGGAN, "Was art really the 'book of the illiterate'?" *Word and Image*, V, 1989, pp. 227-251; Herbert L. KESSLER, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries", in Conrad RUDOLPH (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art. Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, second ed., Wiley Blackwell, Hoboken NJ, 2019, pp. 221-244.

¹⁰ KESSLER 2004, pp. 165-179; KESSLER 2019, pp. 113-116.

spiritual world, an idea based on the dual nature of Christ, who is visible as man but invisible as God.¹¹ This is the reason why countless medieval images depict God in the likeness of Christ (fig. 1).

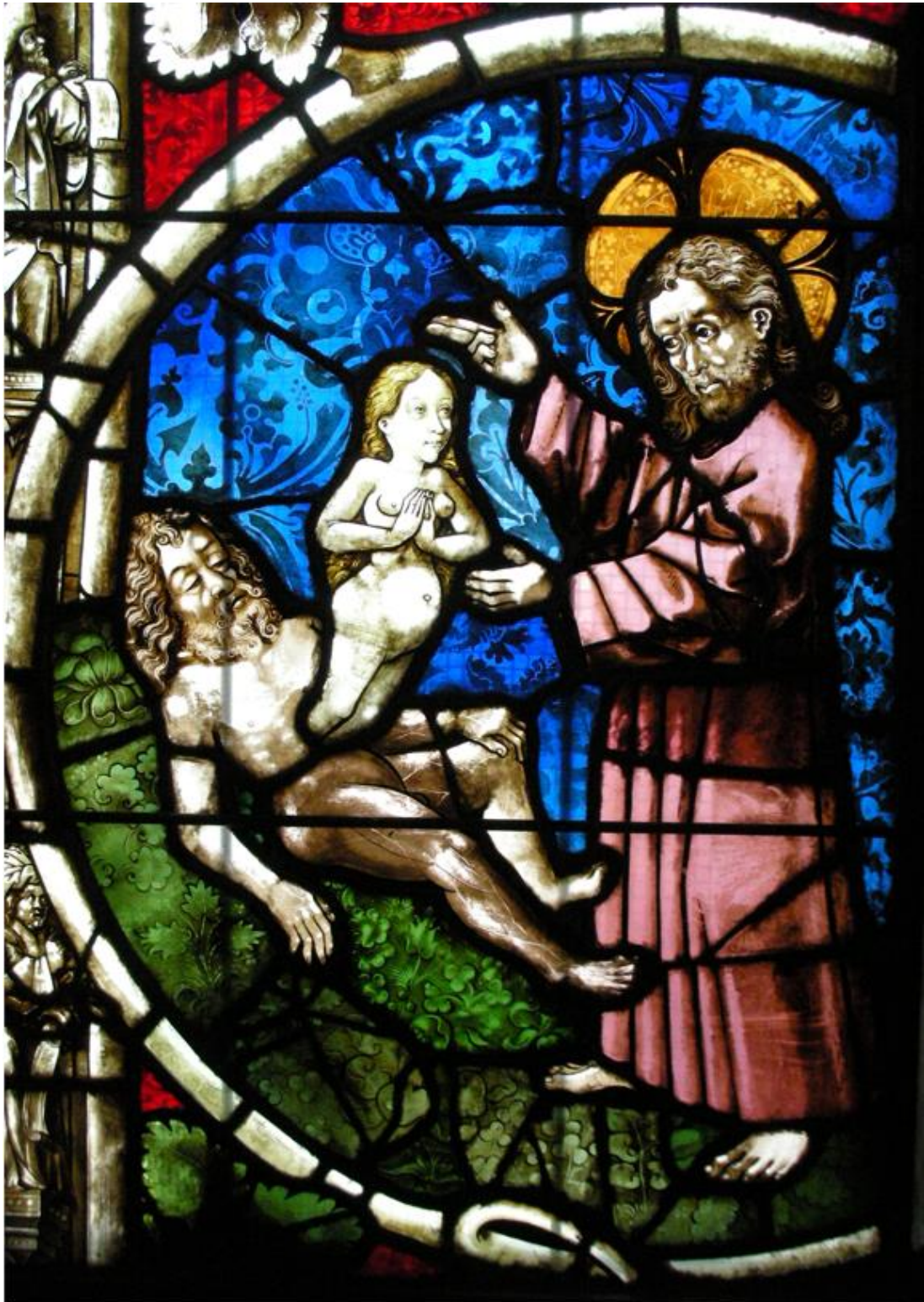


Fig. 1. Bern, Minster, bay nll, Tree of Jesse, Creation of Eve, c.1452. © Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz.

¹¹ All the essays in KESSLER 2000 deal with this problem.

Admittedly, the definition of medieval images offered here is somewhat simplified, but it nevertheless suggests that painted or carved works of art can initiate a process in the attentive medieval viewer's mind, leading that person from the visible to a spiritual dimension that can only be perceived with the inner eyes. For the modern interpreter, the question then arises which formal elements the artists of the Middle Ages used to allow medieval beholders to perceive the image as a mediator to an invisible world and as a catalyst to a spiritual vision.

There is no doubt that medieval theories about sacred imagery influenced artists' choices of both the forms and materials with which they created religious images. Recently, this has been established in studies of medieval panel paintings by scholars such as Klaus Krüger and Gerhard Wolf to mention only two examples,¹² whereas stained glass has barely begun to be investigated through the perspective of "Bildwissenschaft", or the consideration of the function, materials, and communicative potential of images.¹³ Below I examine examples of stained glass from the 14th and 15th centuries in France



and the Empire to show that, far from serving as mere background filler, the ornament plays a decisive role in the perception of sacred images. First, I will summarize the development of ornament over the two last centuries of the Middle Ages and then, with reference to selected examples, I will discuss the materiality that this ornament evokes. Finally, I will consider the function of these ornamental designs in the structure of the image and their significance for the spiritual understanding of stained glass.¹⁴

In the 14th century, the backgrounds of vitreous images were often covered by geometric patterns and rinceaux designs based on various plants, which were either painted on the glass surface or picked out of a translucent wash

Fig. 2. Königsfelden, former abbey church, bay nIV, prophet Habakkuk, c.1340.
© Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz.

¹² Klaus KRÜGER, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren. Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien*, Fink, München 2001; Gerhard WOLF, *Schleier und Spiegel. Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance*, Fink, München 2002.

¹³ A notable exception are the studies of Wojciech Bałus: Wojciech BAŁUS, "Diaphanum. Bildwissenschaftliche Überlegungen zur Glasmalerei", in Katharina GEORGI, Barbara von ORELLI-MESSERLI, Eva SCHEIWILLER-LORBER, Angela SCHIFFHAUER (eds), *Licht(t)räume. Festschrift für Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz zum 65. Geburtstag*, Michael Imhof Verlag, Petersberg, 2016, pp. 10-17; id., "A Matter of Matter: Transparent – Translucent – Diaphanum in the Medium of Stained Glass", in Elizabeth CARSON PASTAN and Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, *Investigations in Medieval Stained Glass. Materials, Methods, and Expressions*, Brill, Leiden, 2019, pp. 109-118; see also Elizabeth C. PASTAN and Sylvie BALCON, *Les vitraux du chœur de la cathédrale de Troyes (XIII^e siècle)* (CV France, 2), CTHS, Paris, 2006, pp. 134, 142 (with references to studies of Meredith Lillich, Helen Zakin, and Madeline Caviness, who have published works that moves in this direction).

¹⁴ There are only a few studies dealing with the perception of stained glass: Angela SCHIFFHAUER, "Wunderbare Glasfenster. Zur Frage der Wahrnehmung gläserner Bilder in mittelalterlichen Heiligenviten", in Carla DAUVEN- VAN KNIPPENBERG, Cornelia HERBERICHS, Christian KIENING (ed.), *Medialität des Heils im späten Mittelalter* (Medienwandel – Medienwechsel – Medienwissen, 10), Chronos, Zürich, 2009, p. 331-350; Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, "Ordnungsplan als Form und Inhalt gotischer Glasmalerei? Zur Wahrnehmung der gläsernen Bilder in den Großkirchen Frankreichs", in Kornelia IMESCH, Karin DAGUET, Jessica DIEFFENBACHER, and Deborah STREBEL (eds), *Transdisziplinarität in Kunst, Design, Architektur und Kunstgeschichte*, Athena Verlag, Oberhausen, 2017, p. 247-257.

covering the glass. Painted geometric patterns cover, for example, the backgrounds of the images in the stained glass from the abbey church of Königsfelden (around 1330 – around 1340, fig. 2).¹⁵ The artists creating the contemporaneous chapel glazing in the choir ambulatory of Saint-Ouen in Rouen use stickwork to render the rinceaux designs.¹⁶ These are also taken up in the second quarter of the 14th century by glass painters in southwest Germany, as shown by the window with the life of Our Lady in St Mary's Church Esslingen (n II, around 1330).¹⁷ Only in the second half of the century, around 1360–1370, do the figurative parts of the stained-glass windows in the Chapel of the Rosary in Évreux Cathedral present a new type of background design (fig. 3): These are damascene cloths of the kind hung in the back of three-dimensional niches for figures, and their patterns were painted with the help of stencils.¹⁸ These textile-based designs, hung behind standing or kneeling figures, remained prevalent in windows in France until the end of the 15th century.¹⁹ In the Empire, however, ornamental grounds with rinceaux designs in stickwork remained common for longer. Around the middle of the 15th century, as early examples in the Bern choir glass attest (fig. 1), the first damasks appeared alongside the geometric and the rinceaux patterns.²⁰ Thereafter damask and brocade ornament inspired by contemporary fabrics became commonplace in the workshops²¹ and gradually replaced the rinceaux patterns. German artists also introduced curtains painted with damascene motifs in the second half of the 15th century.²²

The cloths suspended behind the figures in French stained glass and the early damascene patterns in the choir glazing of Bern Minster refer formally and iconographically to late medieval textiles, as they were omnipresent in medieval churches as altar coverings and hangings.²³ The same can also be said of the geometric patterns that recall 12th and 13th century textiles.²⁴ In the vast majority of examples, however, the artists likely did not copy textile patterns directly, but rather made use of stylized and

¹⁵ Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien der ehemaligen Klosterkirche Königsfelden* (CVMA Schweiz, II), Stämpfli, Bern, 2008, p. 148-150, 174-175.

¹⁶ Jean LAFOND with Françoise PERROT, and Paul POPESCO, *Les vitraux de l'église Saint-Ouen de Rouen* (CVMA France, IV-2, vol. 1), Caisse nationale des Monuments historiques, Paris, 1970; Martine CALLIAS-BEY, "Église Saint-Ouen (ancienne abbatiale)", in Martine CALLIAS-BEY et al., *Les vitraux de Haute-Normandie* (CV France, Recensement des vitraux anciens de la France, VI), Éditions du Patrimoine, CNRS Éditions, Paris, 2001, p. 367-384.

¹⁷ Hans WENTZEL, *Die Glasmalereien in Schwaben von 1200-1350* (CVMA Deutschland, I), Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin, 1958, pp. 153-159 (Marienfenster); Rüdiger BECKSMANN, *Von der Ordnung der Welt. Mittelalterliche Glasmalereien aus Esslinger Kirchen* (exhibition catalogue, Esslingen, 1997), Hatje, Ostfildern, 1997, pp. 128-130.

¹⁸ Françoise GATOUILLAT, "Les verrières de la cathédrale", in Annick GOSSE-KISCHINEWSKI and Françoise GATOUILLAT, *La cathédrale d'Évreux*, Évreux, 1997, pp. 131-133; Françoise GATOUILLAT, "La cathédrale", in CALLIAS-BEY et al. 2001, pp. 149-150.

¹⁹ See the stained-glass windows in the side chapels of Bourges Cathedral: Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, *Französische Glasmalereien um 1450. Ein Atelier in Bourges und Riom*, Benteli, Bern, 1988; ead., "La cathédrale de Bourges. Les vitraux des chapelles latérales et de l'église inférieure", in Étienne Hamon (ed.), *Gothique flamboyant et Renaissance en Berry (XIV^e-XVI^e siècle)* (Congrès archéologique de France 176, 2017), Paris, 2019, pp. 353-368.

²⁰ For Bern see: KURMANN-SCHWARZ, "Rahmen", 2019, p. 393-402; Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, *Die Glasmalereien des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts im Berner Münster* (CVMA Schweiz, 4), Bern, 1998, pp. 214-216.

²¹ Françoise LAGARDE et Guy-Michel LEPROUX, "Les étoffes damassées dans le vitrail", in Michel HÉROLD and Claude MIGNOT (ed.), *Vitrail et arts graphiques* (Les cahiers de l'École nationale du patrimoine, 4), Paris, 1999, pp. 76-82; Hartmut SCHOLZ, *Entwurf und Ausführung. Werkstattpraxis in der Nürnberger Glasmalerei der Dürerzeit* (CVMA Deutschland, Studien, I), Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin, 1991, pp. 281-290.

²² See examples in Nuremberg: SCHOLZ 1991, Fig. 53-55, 88, 97-98 (Ingolstadt), 56 (Nuremberg, St Jakob), 73-74, 77 (Nuremberg, St Sebald).

²³ On textiles in liturgical space: Joseph BRAUN S.J., *Handbuch der Paramentik*, Herdersche Verlagshandlung, Freiburg, 1912; Kirstin FAUPEL-DREVS, *Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum. Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im Rationale divinatorum officiorum des Durandus von Mende (1230/1-1296)* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 89), Brill, Leiden, 2000, pp. 293-334 (*cortinae* and *vela*). On the relationship between painted and real textiles: BÜCHELER 2019, p. 113.

²⁴ The polychromy of the statues of the choir pillars in Cologne Cathedral shows comparable patterns: Barbara BEAUCAMP-MARKOWSKY, "Die Gewandmuster der Chorpfeilerfiguren und ihre Vorbilder", in Klaus HARDERING (ed.) *Die Chorpfeilerfiguren des Kölner Domes, Festschrift für Barbara Schock-Werner* (Kölner Domblatt, 77), Köln, 2012, p. 233-255.

simplified pattern designs. Real textiles were the direct source of inspiration for the painted ornaments only in exceptional cases,²⁵ because artists probably used model-book drawings that reproduced ornaments of various origins.²⁶ A textile iconography was developed in various media, the motifs of which are characterized by symmetry, repeating elements that could be extended without limit²⁷ and, they are surface-covering.²⁸ These qualities are capable of evoking textiles, regardless of whether or not the patterns are identified as real textiles, such as hanging cloths, but let us first turn to the context from which the arguments in favour of this interpretation can be drawn.



Fig. 3. Évreux, Cathedral, bay 17, canon at prayer, c.1360–1370
© Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz.

²⁵ BÜCHELER 2019, p. 31-44.

²⁶ Drawings of textile patterns are known from Pisanello: Lisa MONAS, *Merchants, Princes and Painters. Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings 1300-1550*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, pp. 51-53.

²⁷ BÜCHELER 2019, pp. 25-38.

²⁸ BURGER 2018, pp. 47-49.

In stained glass, surface-covering ornament is not only an iconographic and aesthetic element, but it also serves a technical purpose. Already the anonymous author, who calls himself Theophilus, recommends covering the backgrounds of white, sapphire blue and green glass with ornament.²⁹ He states that the glass painter should cover the surface of the glass with a light wash and scratch rinceaux and geometric motifs out of the covering wash with the handle of his brush. Theophilus notes that by means of this technique, the light intensity of large glass surfaces is subdued so that the figurative representations can stand out clearly. It is noteworthy that the ornamental patterns of the background are almost never specified on the few extant medieval and the more numerous early modern designs for stained glass.³⁰ It can be concluded from these designs that surface covering ornamental designs were an integral part of the formal repertoire of the glaziers and that the nature of the design was left to them to determine.

If, due to the diaphanous material of glass painting, a technical reason such as that articulated by Theophilus can be found as to why the backgrounds of vitreous images are completely covered with ornament, this certainly does not apply to late-medieval book, panel and wall painting or woven tapestries.³¹ For a full determination of their meaning, the patterned backgrounds that evoke the materials of textiles must therefore be examined further in the context of the real textiles in church interiors.

Within ecclesiastical settings, there was no altar that was not separated from its surroundings by curtains and covered by cloths. During the service, the priest and his fellow celebrants ministered wearing vestments of precious fabrics. On holidays, not only was the immediate vicinity of the altar decorated with hangings, but, as many sources testify, the choir in particular was decorated with ornamental and figurative tapestries.³² In this way the liturgical centre of the Church was made visible as the successor of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple of the Jews.³³ The sanctuary of the Israelites on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land was made of exquisite woods and metals, precious fabrics and dyed furs. Their splendour and colours are described in the book of Exodus (Ex 26–27) and can be seen, for example, in a miniature of the Codex Amiatinus of the Florentine Bibliotheca Laurenziana³⁴ or in the miniatures of the "Christian Topography" of Kosmas Indikopleustes studied by Herbert Kessler.³⁵ Based on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebr 6:19–20 and 10:19–20), medieval exegetes identified the Temple curtain with the human nature of Christ, which hides his divinity, but also with the firmament that separates the world of men from the dwelling place of God. Herbert Kessler rightly emphasises that no other artistic medium has made this so clear as medieval stained-glass windows with their dominant blue surfaces and the frequently occurring lozenge patterns that adorned the cloths and curtains in many depictions of the tabernacle and temple.³⁶

²⁹ Charles Reginald DODWELL, *Theophilus, De diversis artibus; Theophilus, The Various Arts*, translated from the Latin with Introduction and Notes by Charles Reginald Dodwell, Nelson, London, 1961, Book 2, Ch. 21, pp. 50-51; Christine HEDIGER and Brigitte KURMANN-SCHWARZ, "[...] et faciunt inde tabulas saphiri pretiosas ac satis utiles in fenestris. Die Farbe Blau in der *Schedula* und in der Glasmalerei von 1100-1250", in Andreas SPEER, Maxime MAURIÈGE and Hiltrud WESTERMANN-ANGERHAUSEN (ed.), *Zwischen Kunsthandwerk und Kunst: Die 'Schedula diversarum artium'* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 37), De Gruyter, Berlin, 2014, pp. 256-273.

³⁰ See the examples from Nuremberg: SCHOLZ 1991; for the stained-glass designs after 1500 also: Rolf Hasler, *Die Scheibenriss-Sammlung Wyss. Depositum der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft im Bernischen Historischen Museum*, 2 vols., Stämpfli, Bern, 1996-1997.

³¹ Bałus 2016, pp. 10-17; Bałus 2019, pp. 109-118.

³² See note 23.

³³ KESSLER 2004, pp. 108, 121; id. 2019, pp. 100-101, 139-140.

³⁴ Benjamin C. TILGHMAN, "Patterns of Meaning in Insular Manuscripts: Folio 183r in the Book of Kells", in Michelle P. BROWN / Ildar H. GARIPZANOV / Benjamin C. TILGHMAN (Hg.), *Graphic Devices and the Early Decorated Book*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2017, pp. 163-178.

³⁵ KESSLER 2000, pp. 56-60.

³⁶ KESSLER 2000, pp. 58-59; id. 2004, pp. 173-176; id., "'They preach not by speaking out loud but by signifying': vitreous arts as typology", *Gesta*, 51, 2012, pp. 35-50, esp. p. 58-61.



Fig. 4. Bourges, Cathedral, bay 29 (chapel of the Du Breuil family), Adoration of the Magi, detail, c.1475.
© Paris, Centre André-Chastel, UMR 8150;
photos and montage Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz.

The painted hangings and ornamental surfaces, which were common in stained glass of the 14th and 15th century, also establish a boundary within the picture plane (fig. 4). The patterned ground, however, does not only offer closure in figurative and scenic representations, but also demarcates the space that the stained glass decorates and protects against the elements.³⁷ The typological relationship between the temple curtain and the human body of Christ, both of which conceal the divine, suggests that the textile grounds of the stained-glass windows do not merely mark a material or architectural boundary. Rather, they distinguish as does the temple curtain and Christ's human nature between what human senses perceive and an area that is not accessible to the human eye. The artists therefore created ornamental surfaces as a means to make visible the bridging and mediating functions of sacred imagery and its representations between the material and the spiritual world.³⁸ Regardless of the medium, in the Middle Ages artists used textile motifs to distinguish sacred imagery in the imagination of Christians. They used textiles for this purpose because the material characteristics of fabrics made it clear that this boundary was not impenetrable. Through Christ's sacrifice the temple curtain was torn apart and on Ascension Christ penetrated the sublunar world's firmament, which is impenetrable to the human gaze. The model of Christ, who called himself the gate of salvation ("Ego sum ostium": Jn 10:9), was the promise to all Christians to be like him one day, to go behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies; in other words, through the door of heaven and see God with the eyes of the resurrection. In the stained-glass windows, the holy and biblical figures are present in the church, but their heavenly dwelling is beyond this place.³⁹

³⁷ For an interpretation in the perspective of "Bildwissenschaft" see: Balus 2019, p. 112-113.

³⁸ KESSLER 2000, p. 104-148.

³⁹ SCHIFFHAUER 2009, p. 341.

The diaphanous material of stained-glass windows allowed the promise of the vision of God to be demonstrated particularly vividly to the viewer. The stained-glass surfaces not only form a structural boundary, but they are also located where daylight enters the interior. Herbert Kessler noted that medieval authors connected no other natural phenomenon so closely with God and the divine as light.⁴⁰ Liturgists such as Sicardus of Cremona and William Durandus defined light as the means by which God communicated with the hearts of the faithful.⁴¹ In like fashion, windows are flooded with light through which the divine manifests itself, even though the glass paintings are designed to show the human eye boundaries in the form of ornamental, textile-like surfaces. Other pictorial arts have to resort to precious colours, gold and silver, to somehow represent the light by artistic means,⁴² whereas in stained glass it is simply there because of the unique materiality of the medium, and indeed the luminous images are only visible at all when daylight enters through them.

In summary, it can be said that the patterned surfaces of stained-glass windows were not simply a decorative or technical necessity but must be considered an indispensable part of the concept of glazing a sacred space. According to medieval image theory, which must have been familiar to artists and theologians alike in the Middle Ages,⁴³ the surface ornament was a means of reminding viewers that what they see is a material image and not a transcendent phenomenon. For this reason, motifs that identified the image as a link between the visible and the invisible did not necessarily have to be specified in the design: With the patterned textile-like backgrounds, the artists marked the limit of sensuous perception. At the same time, the motif called upon the viewer to see spiritually. Thus, what had long been regarded as secondary decoration or as evidence of an inability to create pictorial depth proves to be a central element of sacred imagery in general and of representations of stained glass in particular.



⁴⁰ KESSLER 2004, pp. 174-176; id. 2019, pp. 111-113.

⁴¹ KESSLER 2004, p. 173; see also Bałus 2019, p. 111.

⁴² Bałus 2019, p. 112.

⁴³ KESSLER 2000, Preface.