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EVIE HONE, HER LIFE AND WORKS

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I discuss the life and work of the stained glass artist Evie Hone under the following headings:-

- SECTIONS: I A Short Historical Account of her Life.
 II The Main Artistic Influences upon her Work.
 III Evie Hone: Worker in Stained Glass.
 IV Conclusion.

Plates and slides accompany the text.

I.

SECTION I A SHORT HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HER LIFE.

Evie Sydney Hone was born 22-4-1894, the daughter of Joseph Hone, at Roebuck Grove, Co. Dublin. Her earliest link with stained glass is possibly the 16th century Gaylon Hone, a pupil of another stained glass worker who emigrated to England from Flanders, there completing a series of windows for King's College Cambridge while in the position of King's glazier. Gaylon himself is reputed to have worked on Chartres Cathedral.

In 1905 at the age of eleven Evie was stricken with polio myelitis. She was sent to Ouchy immediately with a personally appointed governess. She stayed there for eighteen months before going on a tour to Venice and Florence. Years later, in 1911, she was to return to Venice, Assisi and Florence where the work of Giotto, Fra Angelico and Byzantine artists in general left an abiding impression upon her.

During these years she lived mostly in London. She studied art at Harley Street. Soon after she began studies at Westminster School of Art, there studying under Walter Sickert. It was at this school that she met Mainie Jellett who was to be her life long friend and collaborator in working out a means of expression which would satisfy them both.

After five or six lessons Sickert left the Westminster School, leaving Hone with no teacher of note. She left this school continuing drawing at her home. In 1915 she took up night classes in composition with Glen Byam Shaw at his school in 70 Camden St. He advised her to use her "shaky" line as her medium since her illness rendered her unable as yet to draw very steadily.

In 1917 she passed to the Central School of Art in Red Lion Square where she found stimulating masters Walter Bayes and Bernard Meninsky. Meninsky advised her to go to Paris to continue her studies.

Accordingly she went to Paris in the autumn of 1920. She was followed by Mainie Jellett who arrived the spring following. They studied together in France between 1921 and 1931. Their first year was spent with Andre L'hote. He was a cubist greatly affected by Cezanne. They soon tired of him and approached Albert Gleize, one of Cubism's earliest recruits. Gleize refused them at first pleading his friendship to L'hote. But Hone and Jellett argued that they were free to choose their own master. Finally he was forced to accept. In his book "Peinture et ses lois" of 1922, Gleize tells how he profited by working with Hone and Jellett. Mme Roche Gleize says, "Mainie and Evie were so much his 'filles spirituelles', one cannot separate them." ^I

With Gleize they explored extreme forms of non-representational art, the three working into the evening until exhausted in Gleize's studio in Paris or the Ardeche area. This work lasted for four to five months each year in two separate spells. Hone and Jellett would teach art in whatever intervals there were.

In 1924 Hone and Jellett held a joint exhibition at Dublin's Painter's Gallery, 7 St. Stephen's Green. Their work was not received very warmly since they were the first to make a serious attempt at introducing modern art to Ireland. That same year they exhibited in Belgium, England, France and the U.S.A. Hone also held some one-man shows at the contemporary Painter's Gallery, and later at the Dawson Gallery.

In 1925 Hone unexpectedly joined a community of Anglican nuns at Truro in the south of England. Mainie Jellett was very distressed by this fearing that Evie had stopped painting for good. This period lasted for more than a year, after which Hone returned to normal work.

Evie Hone slowly began to tire of abstraction becoming interested in the work of George Rouault. She returned to more figurative work. At the age of thirty eight, a fully developed painter, she turned to stained glass as a medium of expression. Her interest stemmed from seeing the stained glass work at Le Mans, Chartres and Poitiers.

In 1930 she approached Sarah Purser, one of the founder members of the stained glass revivalist workshop An Tur Gloine, requesting permission to carry out three small panels. Purser was entirely discouraging and advised her to join Mr. A. J. Child's stained glass class at the Dublin College of Art. This she did but Hone and Child had a mutual distaste for each other's work.

She went to London. Here her cousin Joseph Hone advised her to visit Arthur Rackham, the illustrator, for guidance. Rackham advised Her to seek out a craftsman, as a London school would be of no use after spending so long a time in Paris.

She approached the Irish stained glass artist Miss Wilhelmina Geddes. Miss Geddes gave her confidence and directed her to show one of her panels to Roland Holst, the director of Ryksakademie in Amsterdam and a famous teacher and stained glass artist. When Holst saw her work he was very impressed and told her that stained glass was her calling.

Purser was still unimpressed when Evie Hone returned to her. Despite this Hone received her first commission in 1933 at Ardcarne Church, Boyle. Her clients were not at all influenced by Purser's opinions. She was accepted as a member of the cooperative of An Tur Gloine on 2nd August 1935. At this time her work was being published in a Parisian magazine "abstraction creation art non-figuratif". She shared a workspace with Michael Healy. Healy, her senior by twenty years, was to be her real crafts teacher.

In July 1937 Hone was received into the Catholic Church. In 1938 her "My Four Green Fields" was commissioned for the Irish Pavilion of New York's World Fair exhibition. It was one of the more important commissions carried at An Tur Gloine, employing the emblems for the four provinces of Ireland held together by an abstract ground.

Michael Healy died in 1941 leaving a series of 2-light windows depicting the seven dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Chapel at Clongowes Wood College. He had completed three of the windows and Hone was commissioned to finish the fourth. She completed it in her own style using colour which would blend suitable with Healy's existing work.

Sarah Purser died in 1943. That same year saw the opening of the Irish exhibition of Living Art, which was founded by Mainie Jellett, with Evie Hone, Louis le Brocqy, Norah McGuinness and Jack Hanlon among it's founder members. This exhibition was born from a frustration at the reactionary course pursued by the R.H.A. at that time who had rejected Louis Le Brocqy's work from their exhibitions.

In 1944 An Tur Gloine dissolved and Mainie Jellett died. Hone started her own studio in Marlay Ranelagh Co. Dublin. Tommy Kinsella who had worked for herself and Healy worked as her glazier. She herself took up residence in the Dower House in Marlay's grounds.

In 1946, about the same time as her discovery of Celtic crosses, Fr. O'Sullivan commissioned her to make five windows for the Jesuit College chapel of St. Stanislaus at Tullabeg in Offaly.

In 1948, on completion of the Kingscourt window, Hone went on an extended tour of Central Italy. She visited Ravenna, as she was becoming interested in mosaic work. This interest had arisen from her friendship with the Russian artist Boris Anrep.

In 1953 she received the L.L.D. Honoris Causa from Trinity College, she was also an honorary member of the R.H.A.

Evie Hone died 13-3-1955 of a heart attack on her way to her parish church in Ranelagh. She is buried in Tallaght, Co. Dublin.

SECTION II THE MAIN ARTISTIC INFLUENCES UPON HER WORK.

The three main artistic influences upon Evie Hone's work were:-

1. That of Albert Gleize's work.
2. That of George Rouault's work.
3. That of Early and Mediaeval Irish stone carvings.

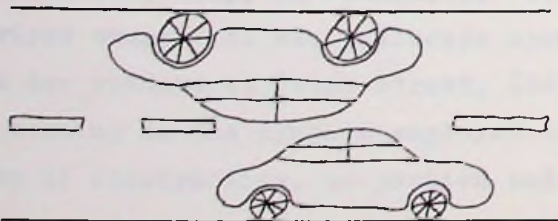
Evie Hone was twenty-eight years old when, with Mainie Jellett, she approached Albert Gleize. He was one of the main founders of Cubism, and one of its most ardent evangelists. Since he had a great influence on Hone's earlier work I will now devote a section to his work.

I. The Influence of Albert Gleize's Work on Evie Hone's Work.

Albert Gleize repudiated single perspective. Unlike Picasso or Braque he never set out to describe visual reality; he did not adhere to the principle of working directly from observation.

In 1913 he introduced some compositional innovations he had made which he called translation and rotation. These were the tilting and rotation of planes. In his work he also tried to express the feeling of distance between objects in terms of time and space. A typical example of his method of painting is his "Symphony in Violet". (Slide I).

The abstract perspective he used allowed him portray an object or scene from varying viewpoints. This idea is the basis for young children's visual understanding, for example when a child wishes to draw cars travelling in different directions on a road he will sometimes portray one car right way up, the other upside down, for example



Gleize believed that all types of human activity bred form. He rejected other forms in favour of architecture as the supreme plastic art.

The members of the Bauhaus gave his ideas sympathetic consideration,

asking him to write articles for them. It is interesting at this point to note that the Bauhaus was instrumental in making society aware of the potential in stained glass.

Both Gleize and the Bauhaus radically rejected the Art Nouveau and Pre-Raphaelite movements. Hone was therefore to develop within a completely different aesthetic climate to such obvious exponents of the Pre-Raphaelite movement as Harry Clarke.

She was never to become very personally involved with Orpen's approach to contour or Whistler's "alla prima" philosophy that the visual image should be committed to canvas as quickly as possible. Walter Sickert, although he had been a student and admirer of Whistler, ultimately disagreed with his approach, his own work being more involved in light and shade.

Gleize's work has quite a visible influence on both Hone and Jellett's work. Their aim was to produce art in which illustrative elements such as human and animal figures, landscape and atmosphere were eliminated. They believed it possible to fill a given space with composition in which forms, planes, colour values and pattern blended sufficiently well to hold the viewer's interest and to provide an aesthetic pleasure.

In the "Resurrection", 1935, in Blackhall Place, Dublin, (Plate I), there is quite a striking use of reds and fluorescent amber colours so reminiscent of Gleize's use of the same, his being slightly more muted than Hone's due to the different natures of their mediums. Hone later began to use warmer colours than Gleize as may be seen in the Eton Window or the St. Fiacre window, 1935, in Clonsilla, Co. Dublin, (Plate 2). But the most obvious example of his influence upon her style, I feel, is to be seen in her windows at Hatch Street, 1947, (Plates 3, 4, 5 & 6). In the abstract backing to the symbols employed there is a definite presence of the principles of construction, proportion and colour basic to Gleize's style.

Hone and Jellett worked with Gleize during the 1920's but by the early 1930's Hone was becoming more interested in the work of another French artist George Rouault. It was also about this time that she became

interested in stained glass and began work at the workshop An Tur Gloine, literally meaning "the tower of glass".

She later admits that her work with Gleize was nothing more than a good discipline or training. Yet I believe that without this discipline much of what she achieved would otherwise have proved impossible.

2. The Influence of Georges Rouault's Work on Evie Hone's Work.

George Rouault began his working life as an apprentice in a stained glass studio. Later he studied under Gustave Moreau at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

After Moreau's death Rouault joined "Le Fauve" art movement with Matisse, Vlaminck and Derain. The name "Le Fauve" literally meant "the wild beast", describing the effect paintings at their first exhibition had upon their viewers. Becoming wary of all imposed organisation on art he left this movement.

In his life he experienced a lot of suffering and this was reflected in his work which tended sometimes to be rather grotesque. This suffering he attributed to the death of Gustave Moreau. His subject matter referred obsessively to the world of the prostitute. Hone was deeply religious and had suffered much from her illness. It is possible that for these reasons she could identify with Rouault and his work.

Rouault's approach to portraits greatly resembles that of Hone's. The expression of the eyebrow and nose as one line is typical of both styles, and indeed of the Irish Romanesque style. These features may be seen in Rouault's "The Passion" c. 1935, (Slide 2) and in Hone's "Head of Christ" of Tabor House, which is a later work than Rouault's (Plates 7 & 8).

In his paintings Rouault leaves his background undeveloped, be this intended or not. There is in general an air of confusion about it. Hone takes up from here and with her understanding acquired by years of work with Gleize, develops the background into a controlled fragmentation. By controlled fragmentation is meant a fragmentation which is intentional. This fragmentation to be seen in the abstract ground given to symbols in Hatch St also comes into play in the blue ground in the Eton Window. She achieved this control more readily using glass than Rouault could with paint.

This is quite understandable as Hone is at an immediate advantage since her medium provides ready made colours which allow colour to run through them while Rouault's paint merely reflects light.

In an article written by Hone on George Rouault she quotes him as saying: "I have painted by opening my eyes day and night on the perceptible world and also by closing them from time to time, that I might better see the vision blossom and submit itself to orderly arrangement. Art is choice, selection and especially an interior hierarchy."²

Rouault expresses himself abstractly without forfeiting the observational approach taught to him by Gustave Moreau. The necessity for deviating from direct observational work is expressed by Kimon Nicolaidis:

"You are never to be concerned with appearances to an extent which prevents reality of content. It is necessary to rid yourself of the tyranny of the object as it appears. The quality of absoluteness, the note of authority, that the artist seeks depends upon a more complete understanding than the eyes alone can give. To what the eye can see the artist adds feeling and thought."³

Rouault's painting "The Old King" is typical of his style. (Slide 3). It portrays a heart-sick reaction of a deeply devout Catholic to the disease and disorder he saw in morals of the 20th century. He demands some potent symbol of universal meaning of his vision. This he achieved by using heavy contour in the same manner in which lead is used to hold areas of glass together. It is believed by many that Rouault was the last great religious artist of our time.

3. The Influence of Irish Mediaeval Stone Carvings on Her Work.

Evie Hone's work was influenced by Irish stone carvings from as early as 1937 when in her panel "The Penal Days" she translated ideas found in Irish antiquities into stained glass. An example of this influence may be seen in her drawing "The Crucifixion", based on a 15th century carving in St. Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare. (Plates 9 & 10). She believed that these images had a potential religious and aesthetic significance

for 20th century people, like the sculpted figures on Gothic buildings which gave her the basis for so many of her ideas. She saw how apt these Irish carvings were for translation into bold composition on glass.

James White tells us that all Evie Hone's non-abstract work was influenced by mediaeval carvings in Irish churches and monastery sites. Hone used also carry out research among illuminated manuscripts and the remains of Irish Romanesque stone tomb carvings. Most of her inspiration comes from the Hiatus period, 1350-1450 A.D., in Irish history. This is the phase, after the Black Death and the Norman invasion and penetration, of native Irish revival. (Slide 4).

Directly preceeding her commission for the Tullabeg window in 1940 Hone had become interested in Celtic art. This art in its initial stages at most took the form of a few descriptive symbols carved on a pillar or slab to mark the tombs of ascetics. With the emergence of monastic cities, inhabited by hundreds of students, there arose a need for more sumptuous ornamentation. Thus we have the arrival of the Irish Stone Cross. These crosses were of a highly narrative character, depicting parables in carved image.

The artists of this age avoided copying natural shapes to an excessive degree, they also avoided geometric rigidity in their ornamentation. This oscillation between direct representation and geometry was the rule for Celtic decoration. The artists involved in carving these crosses sometimes took such liberties as omitting hands or feet in their designs e.g.

Moone Cross, Co. Kildare. Hone took her inspiration for simple visual statement which was so apparent to her from such sources as the Carndonagh Cross Co. Donegal. (Slides 5 & 6). Of this inspiration she says:-

"I am fortunate for I have found a way in which all that the abstract movement stands for combines with all that I love in early Irish art," and also:- "I am fortunate, too, that I have found a medium where my 'shaky' line can become strong as lead and where my colour can count; and I am most fortunate of all that I have found a need for my windows in the churches of Ireland."⁴

SECTION III EVIE HONE: WORKER IN STAINED GLASS.

I shall now discuss what I think are three pertinent factors at play in the work of Evie Hone.

1. Her illness.
2. Her use of stained glass.
3. Religious art.

I. Her Illness.

Between the ages of eleven and twenty Evie Hone received treatment for paralysis. At first it was thought that she would never be able to move again. As a student, being paralysed on her left side, she was unable to participate in normal activities.

Later, as a glass worker she found ways of overcoming some difficulties arising from her paralysis. With the progression of years, she found increasing difficulty in manipulating weightier materials. She used a reducing-glass to avoid the strain of walking across her studio to view her work at a distance, and found it necessary to use a rest when applying pigment. In later years her activities were restricted to the drawing of cartoons for glass and the cutting out of stencils for the component shapes of this glass. These stencils she would leave on the glass she had chosen sometimes with written directions. The construction work in these panels was usually carried out by her glazier Tommy Kinsella and Emmy, her servant and friend for many years. Due to a serious accident arising from her paralysis it was necessary for her to be accompanied in her studio.

2. Evie Hone and Stained Glass.

Besides its obvious utilitarian function, stained glass is used to enhance the environment in which it is set. A panel will allow only those colours which its maker chooses into a building.

The component shapes used in stained glass are of necessity simple due to the nature of the material. These glass shapes are housed in strips of lead. This lead frame is very apt for use in compositional work due to its dark

II

appearance in a panel and its malleability; it easily assumes the curved profile of the piece of glass it will accept.

Lead flange comes in varying widths. Wider leads are used as outlines while thinner leads assume a minor role. Hone seldom exploits this range of widths for effect, her emphasis being more on pigmentation. Many stained glass artists favour the use of flowing lead line yet Hone, in her Hatch St. abstracts, deliberately fragments her lead giving the glass pieces the appearance of large, glowing mosaic tesserae.

Glass may be "painted" upon with black pigment or yellow stain. These must then be fired in a kiln to approximately 600 degrees Fahrenheit, at which stage the pigment or stain will fuse with the surface of the glass. Sometimes pigment is used to darken a piece of glass which is not sufficiently opaque. A hard edge produced by pigment may be softened by lightly brushing the pigment with a bristle brush. Both the softening of hard edges and the darkening down of glass may be seen at Hatch St. In most of her work influenced by Irish art she often uses a hard edge with her pigment, for example in her "Head of Christ" in Tabor house and "St. Matthew" in Milltown Park. (Plate II).

In her "The Betrayal" panel of 1948, (Slide 7), she achieves some textured effects by removing pigments with a sharp instrument, this being done prior to pigment being fired onto the glass. Unlike Harry Clarke, Hone usually worked from light to dark, applying rather than removing pigment.

Hone very seldom acid etched on flashed glass. Flashed glass differs from ordinary glass in that it consists of a colour layer of glass and a clear layer of glass fused together. Areas of colours which are to remain are masked off with beeswax, tallow, bitumen or, more recently, with contact paper. The open areas are then attacked while submerged in hydro-fluoric acid. Hone's acid etching was very rough, remaining in keeping with her general style of stained glass.

She favoured the use of broad areas of glass and bold rich hues, both of these

aspects being quite apparent in her Rose Window at All Hallows. (Plate I2). The use of large areas of glass necessitates the use of heavier leads, such a basic feature of all her work.

She admits borrowing colour hues such as rich green, dark blue, brown and tawny earth from her visit to Ravenna in the spring of 1948. For examples of mosaics in Ravenna see slides 8 to II. She used French glass extensively favouring its brilliance of colour to English glass from which she took muted greys for her grounds. This use of grey glass may be seen in her "St. Anne" window at Northbrook Road Dublin. (Plate I3).

Her four evangelist panels at Milltown Park interpolate as studies for her great work at Eton. In these and the cartoon for her Crucifixion window for Downe in Kent facets of Byzantine and Mediaeval art may be seen, for example the flatness in the feet of the "St. Matthew" panel and the depiction of the sun and moon in the crucifixion scene. In these four panels may be seen her use of very dark glass also very typical of some mediaeval glass work. (Plates II, I4, I5, I6 & I7).

A striking use of bright green is to be seen in her Eton window, made up of eighteen lights and tracery. The Last Supper occupies five lights of the lower register, the remaining four lights are occupied by the symbolic figures of Abraham and Melchisedech, sacerdotal prototypes of Christ. In the crucifixion scene in the upper register she extends the arms of Christ. This was necessary as otherwise the hands would coincide with the two large mullions enclosing the six central lights. (Plate I8).

Her favourite works were at Tullabeg and Kingscourt.

3. Evie Hone as a Religious Artist.

Evie Hone was a deeply religious person. Her aim in religious stained glass was to "raise people's heart and mind to God." Both simple devotion, as seen in her "St. Anne" panel at Northbrook Road, and vibrant exultation, "The Resurrection" in Blackhall Place, were expressed in her work. In the top register of the Eton Window we see an example of her narrative style which was so firmly rooted in the Byzantine and Celtic tradition.

This narrative style is so fundamental to the basic idea of religious stained glass, it being a scripture for the unlettered. An example of this style may be seen in the "Tree of Jesse" window in Chartres, where the tree as mystic symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel is presented in simple visual terms. (Slide I2).⁴

The wide range of characterisation undertaken in these lights may be seen in the faces of the apostles in the four outer panels of the upper register, and particularly in the faces of the apostles in the representation of the Last Supper in the lower register.

SECTION IV CONCLUSION

Being myself a student of stained glass many people have asked me if this subject comes under the heading of design, craft or art. Before going on to discuss whether Evie Hone was a designer, craftswoman or artist, let me define clearly what those nebulous terms design, craft and art mean.

1. Design implies planning, these plans not necessarily having to be brought into actuality. It also implies an aesthetic utilitarianism, that is the application of visual understanding to visual needs.
2. Craft implies the acquisition of skills or techniques. Both skills and techniques can be taught, therefore the criteria for criticism of expressive⁵ work should not be based solely on its craft content.
3. Art is necessarily expressive. In art the cognitive and the emotive are synthesised into the experiential. An art object can be a piece of design or craft work if it is also expressive.

I do not subscribe to Collingwood's⁶ belief that craft necessarily implies a means and end. I believe that means and end exist only where craft and design are used in conjunction with each other. There can be no preconceived end for artistic expression, therefore there is no means and end, where art and craft are used in conjunction with each other. Craft itself is merely a means.

In her later years Evie Hone, as an artist-designer, knew precisely the

limitations of her craft, but more importantly she knew and exploited its potential to express her artistic impulse. This understanding was earned in her earlier years as an artist craftswoman working with her unrelenting medium.

Although prevented from working as a craftswoman by ill health as she grew older, her need for artistic expression remained as strong as ever. She was forced to modify her role to that of artist-designer.

Yet at this late stage in her career Evie Hone was more successful than ever. She designed some of her greatest works within the last ten years of her life, namely, the Kingscourt, Tullabeg and Eton windows.

It was in these works alone that, after two hundred years of decadence in religious stained glass, Evie Hone had brought back artistic expression to this great craft.

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STAINED GLASS IN IRELAND

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(not published) - 1975.

REFERENCES

- 1 Stella Frost, Evie Hone (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1958)
Page 2.
- 2 Evie Hone, "George Rouault", Irish Ecclesiastical Record
Vol. 61 - Feb. 1943.
- 3 Kimon Nicholaides - The Natural Way To Draw - Andre Deutsch
1972.
- 4 Isaiah, Ch. II; I.
- 5 By expression here I mean the translation of the emotive
experience into communicative terms. Unfortunately the
framework of this thesis does not permit me to discuss
expression which is solely self-satisfying.
- 6 See R.G. Collingwood's Principles of Art - University Press,
Oxford, 1971.



PLATE I



PLATE 2



PLATE 3



PLATE 4



PLATE 5



PLATE 6



PLATE 7



PLATE 8



PLATE 9



PLATE 10



PLATE II



PLATE I2



PLATE I3



PLATE I4



PLATE I5



PLATE I6



PLATE I7

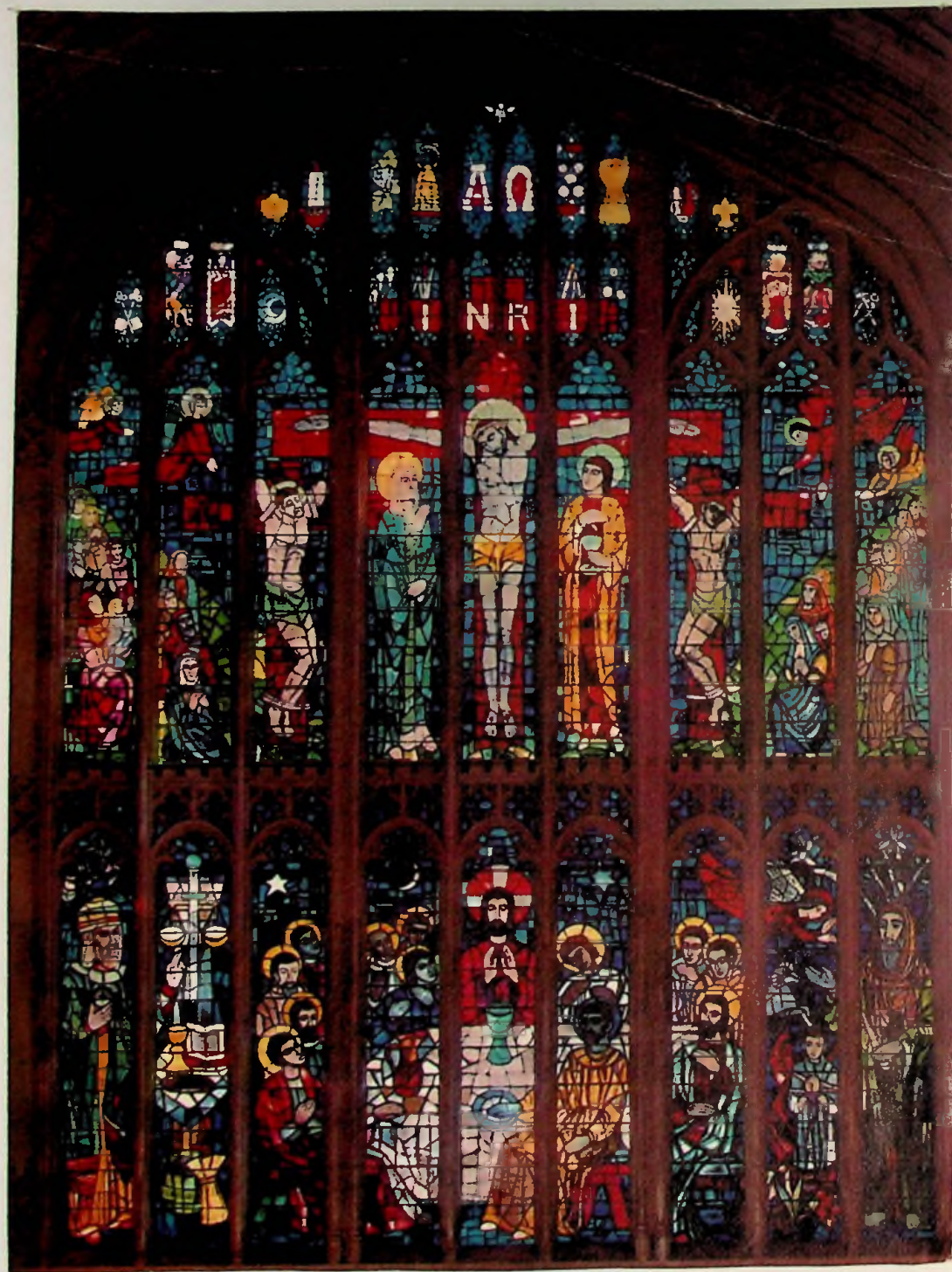


PLATE 18