



Valentin Bousch, *The Creation and the Expulsion from Paradise*, 1533.
Stained glass, 114 x 90 inches (289.6 x 228.6 cm)

In the stained glass window *The Creation and Expulsion from Paradise* (1533) by Valentin Bousch, light enhances the religious and aesthetic experience of the viewer. Bousch uses light in two forms—illustrated light and literal light—to achieve this. While light is depicted within the piece to emphasize the divinity and holiness of certain figures, it also passes through the colored glass, illuminating the scene of the window as a whole and creating a more immersive experience for the viewer.

Creation and Expulsion looms at 114 x 90 inches (289.56 x 228.6 cm) and illustrates both the creation and banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. The window is split into

three different panels, each featuring different figures. At the left of the window, the figure of God draped in a large swath of bright red fabric immediately draws the eye as it takes up the majority of the first panel. Leaning forward He points to His left, directing the viewers' eyes towards the second and third panels. The third panel depicts two nude figures, Adam and Eve, who hold leaves across their bodies as they shrink away from a red-winged angel in a purple robe who holds a sword above their heads. The second and center panel also features Adam and Eve. In this panel, they sit, flanked by animals, encompassed by a pale blue circle with the sun at the top and blue crescent moon resting at the bottom. Their bodies partially obscure the trunk of a tree wrapped in green vines and red fruit. Above the circle and emerging through clouds of varying vibrant blues, a figure suspends in a halo of a deep golden light. In the sky to his left, on the first panel flies the holy spirit, depicted as a white dove, surrounded in a similar halo. Two small cherubs with pale skin and blond hair sit in the clouds with them, one in the sky of the first panel and one in the sky of the third. The scene takes place on a pedestal featuring an image of the commissioner, a man with blonde hair and a brown cap, and two inscriptions. The inscription to the left of the man is from Genesis and reads, "FACTUS ETS HO IN ANIMAM VIVENTE." The inscription to the right is the commissioner's personal motto, it reads, "FRAUS INIMICI LUCI." Where it is installed in the Hill Art Foundation, the window is installed against a wall with backlighting so that it is always illuminated.

Valentin Bousch was born in about 1490 in Strasbourg, France. He was an eminent window designer and painter in charge of one of the largest glass painting workshops in Strasbourg and received numerous commissions to create windows for basilicas and churches. He is known for his ability to work with cuts of glass that required difficult support systems but achieved an impressive degree of dynamic movement. *The Creation and Expulsion from*

Paradise, which was originally displayed in the Church of St. Firmin, is an example of Bousch's technique, as its composition was created around the T-bar supports that usually hinder the detail of stained glass windows.¹

Stained glass windows like *Creation and Expulsion* contribute to the religious experience of the viewer by creating "divine light." Abbot Suger, a French statesman, defined divine light to be created when natural light, *lux*, streams through colored glass and gems and becomes *lumen*, divine light. The creation of divine light allows one to "spiritually experience God through natural light brought in through vivid, large-scale windows of art glass."² By pairing the illustrated light of halos with the divine light that is created through the glass of the window, *Creation and Expulsion from Paradise* successfully creates an immersive religious and aesthetic experience for the viewer.³

Light is clearly illustrated in the three halos of *Creation and Expulsion*. The light of the halos denote the religious significance of each person that they encircle, stressing their divinity and detailing the gravity of the scene. The first halo parts the clouds around the head of the figure in the red drapery, denoting him as Jesus. Above him flies the dove of the Holy Spirit, encircled in the same golden light. The third halo wraps around God, who looks down across the three panels, surveying his creations and their fate. The presence of halos around these three figures work to emphasize their divinity, separating them from the rest of the figures of the piece and denoting them as Holy Trinity—the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the halo that surrounds God darkens on its right side, casting a shadow on the sky of the Expulsion of the

¹ Timothy Husband. "Et Facta Est Lux: The Creation and Expulsion Window of Valentin Bousch." In Hill Art Foundation, 12-31. Accessed March 28, 2023.

² Robert Jayson. "Color and Light." *Faith and Forum*. Accessed March 28, 2023. <https://faithandform.com/feature/color-and-light/>.

³ Amy DiGregorio. "Evolving Stained Glass." *Faith and Forum* 49, no. 2. Accessed March 28, 2023. <https://faithandform.com/feature/evolving-stained-glass/>.

third panel. The shadows work to illustrate the new disconnection of the figures who flee the scene, the absence of light anchors the depiction in a more severe gravity.

Not only is light used to express the mood of each panel but it is used to further immerse the viewer within the experience of the piece. As light streams through the figures of the window it is “scattered and refracted... creating what appears to be a glow from within the glass itself.”⁴ The light reaches the viewer in a physical sense, pulling them in so that they are more fully connected to the piece.

In conclusion, the divine and alluring light produced by and within *The Creation and Expulsion from Paradise* by Valentin Bousch reveals the nuanced relationship between light and art. It is an incredible experience to see how the two influence each other as well as the viewer. Furthermore, it was interesting to learn about how the context and setting of *Creation and Expulsion*, which changed throughout time, shifted its significance.

⁴Amy DiGregorio. "Evolving Stained Glass." Faith and Forum 49, no. 2. Accessed March 28, 2023.

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