

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

7 NOVEMBER, 1900, TO 29 MAY, 1901,

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XLII.

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SCULPTURES AT LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.

An unique feature in the West Front of Lincoln Cathedral is the fragmentary series of bas-reliefs built irregularly into the Norman portion of the structure. One point about them must at once become obvious to any one who looks at them, and that is that they were not designed to occupy their present position; and a little closer inspection will shew that the order in which they are arranged cannot possibly be correct. As to these two matters all who have written about the sculptures are agreed. There is not, however, a similar unanimity either as to their date or as to their provenance.

Some have thought that they were brought by Remigiüs, the first bishop of Lincoln, from the earlier Cathedral of Dorchester; others that they are a relic of a church of St Mary Magdalene, which occupied the site of the present Cathedral. It has been held, on the one hand, that they are Saxon work of the tenth or eleventh century, and on the other that they were inserted in the front built by Remigiüs, at a date later than his episcopate. To me they seem to be rather Saxon than Norman in character; and I suspect that they are not earlier than the middle of the eleventh century. A consideration in favour of their being early works is the evident respect felt for them by those who assigned to them so prominent a place, in spite of their fragmentary condition: works of comparatively recent date would not, I think, have been so carefully preserved.

My present concern with these sculptures is to point out their subjects, some of which have, I am sure, been wrongly interpreted by previous writers. Two descriptions are before me: that of Professor C. R. Cockerell (*Wells Cathedral, Appendix L.*), and that of Archdeacon Trollope (*Archaeol. Journal*, xxv.), which latter is adopted by Mr Kendrick, the writer of the excellent volume on Lincoln in Bell's *English Cathedrals*.

I shall enumerate the slabs from left to right, and shortly describe those whose subject is not at once plain and obvious.

1—4. Groups of devils tormenting souls.

These form part of an *Inferno*, which itself most probably belonged to a large composition illustrating the Last Judgment. According to precedent, this *Inferno* should be placed on the spectator's right, and on the Judge's left hand, if the composition were complete.

5. Hell-mouth on *L.* and broken figures in it. Two draped figures of larger scale stand upright.

This may be part of the *Inferno*, representing two potentates cast into Hell: or it may be the Descent of Christ into Hell. It would do very well for the latter scene, but the fact that no other events in the Life of Christ figure in the series makes me hesitate to adopt this explanation.

6. Six draped figures: the one on *R.* points upward to *R.*

I think this must also be a portion of the Last Judgment, and must represent either the Apostles as assessors of the Judge, or the Blessed being led toward Paradise.

7. Abraham's bosom. The patriarch is seated and holds a cloth full of little figures of souls. Above, and at the lower angles, are angels, doubtless bringing more souls.

This subject appears prominently as an incident of the Last Judgment, on the portal of St Trophime at Arles, and on one of the two northern portals at Rheims; as well as at Moissac, Vezelay, and elsewhere. Here it has a context of a more strictly appropriate character, as will appear.

8. On *L.*, under architecture, three men seated at table eating and drinking. On *R.* a narrow compartment with defaced remains of figures, including three heads of dogs.

This represents Dives and two friends banqueting. On the *R.* was Lazarus at the door and dogs licking his sores.

Trollope's interpretation (Christ at Emmaus) is untenable in view of the fact that none of the figures are nimbed, and that there are clear traces, even in his plate, of the dogs and Lazarus.

9. In two tiers. Above, a man reclining on a bed. Two angels over him. Below, three men falling headlong into Hell-mouth, where a demon awaits them.

This is evidently a picture of the death of Lazarus, "carried by angels into heaven," and of Dives, whose two friends share his doom. Nos. 7, 8, 9, therefore, all illustrate the Parable of Dives and Lazarus: and no. 7 should be placed last.

10. A fragment of drapery, which belonged to a figure apparently inclining to *R*.

The careful preservation of this fragment (which cannot be interpreted as it stands) is noteworthy.

This carries us up to the *L*. hand of the central portal. Of the sculptures which formed the central portion of our series none have been built in; but fragments found buried in the Cathedral close and now kept in the cloisters show that, as we should expect, it represented a "majesty," i.e. Christ, enthroned in glory, surrounded by the Evangelistic emblems.

All the slabs on the right of the central door belong to a series illustrating Old Testament history.

11. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

12. Two figures tilling the ground with an adze and another tool. Above is a band of conventional foliage, and on *R*. a hand, immediately under this, holds a bag (?). The figure on *L*. is beardless, that on *R*. bearded.

This is generally taken to represent Adam toiling, after the Fall. But both figures, as I think, are male: and the absence of Eve spinning constitutes a very strange deviation from the accepted scheme. I am more inclined to see in it Noah cultivating the vine. If the object which the Divine Hand is holding can be a cluster of grapes, this would be certain. If it really is a bag, I do not see what it means.

13. Above, a band of foliage: below it a figure (?) reclining (head to *R*.) with hand on body. A mutilated figure in a stooping position is near this point. Below, on *L*., a headless figure seated: one in excited motion on *R*.

Cockerell calls this the Death of Isaac, with Jacob, Esau and Rebekah.

Trollope, Hannah with the infant Samuel, and (below) Samuel prophesying to Eli.

I venture to connect it with the last subject (the band of foliage shows that there is a close connexion), and to see in it the Shame of Noah and Noah cursing Canaan.

14. Christ speaks to Noah and commands him to build the ark.
15. Noah and one of his sons make the ark.
- 16 (interpolated). Daniel in the lions' den.
17. Five figures in the ark. Above, on *L.*, are a bird or birds (the Dove and Raven); below, in front, are animals.
18. Eight figures, two and two (leaving the ark), face *R.*
19. Christ speaks to Noah (after the Deluge).
20. The Deluge.

This slab is only visible from the interior of the south-western Chapel, which was added before 1250, and thus gives us a *terminus ad quem* for the insertion of the sculptures into the west front.

We have so few relics of early medieval narrative-sculpture in this country that it is well worth while to see that we understand and value such as we do possess.

When we have instanced the two slabs at Chichester (evidently part of a larger series), the portals at Malmesbury and Glastonbury, the Lincoln reliefs, those on the west front of Wells, those in the Chapter-house at Salisbury, in the Lady Chapel of Ely, and on the roofs of the Cathedral and cloisters of Norwich, our list of continuous Bible histories is well-nigh exhausted.

It is not probable that such things were ever so common here as they were in France; nor did our workmen commonly attain to such high excellence as the sculptors of Auxerre, Bourges, or Chartres. For all that, they produced beautiful and interesting work; and a good deal has yet to be done before the remains of it have been fully elucidated.

Lincoln, for instance, offers, besides its bas-reliefs, a series of figures of angels which are so noble in conception that they have given a name to that part of the Church in which they are—the Angel-choir. In spite of their excellence, it is impossible to procure any satisfactory illustration of the

whole series, much less any tolerable interpretation; for that of Professor Cockerell is to the last degree forced and unnatural.

Will not some one who is a competent photographer as well as a lover of beautiful things, procure us good pictures of these Lincoln angels? We should then be in a position to judge whether it is really possible to assign a definite meaning to each of the figures.

W. M. FAWCETT, M.A., exhibited to the Society a Cyprian coin.

Wednesday, May 15, 1901.

Dr GLAISHER, President, in the Chair.

The election of the following was announced :

Mr EDWARD MACDONALD HUGH JACKSON.

Mr CHARLES PETER ALLIX.

Dr C. HOSE and Dr A. C. HADDON made a communication :

ON STONE IMPLEMENTS FROM SARAWAK.

The publication of the communication is delayed owing to the absence from England of Dr Hose.

Dr HADDON also exhibited specimens of Stone and of native pottery from Rhodesia, presented by Mr FRANKLIN WHITE.

CONTENTS

OF PROCEEDINGS, No. XLII.

VOL. X. (NEW SERIES, VOL. IV.) No. 2.

	PAGE
Two Series of Paintings formerly at Worcester Priory. By Dr JAMES	99
Exhibition of English Pottery. By Dr GLAISHER	116
Cambridgeshire Place Names. By Professor SKEAT	117
Underground Dwellings in the British Isles. By Mr DAVID MACRITCHIE	118
Paten from Parson Drove. By J. E. FOSTER, M.A. and Mr E. M. H. JACKSON	118
Tinder-box attributed to Shakespeare. By C. E. SAYLE, M.A.	119
The Seals of the Commonalty and of the Mayor of Cambridge. By Mr T. D. ATKINSON	123
A Medal of Justinian I. By the Rev. W. G. SEABLE, M.A.	129
The Sculptures on the South Portal of the Abbey Church at Malmesbury. By Dr JAMES	136
Sculptures at Lincoln Cathedral. By Dr JAMES	148
Stone Implements from Sarawak. By Dr HOSE and Dr HADDON	152
Annual General Meeting	153
Annual Report of the Council for 1900—1901	154
County History Report, 1900—1901	156
List of Presents	160
Summary of Accounts, 1900	167
List of Officers and Council, 1901—1902	168
Plates V—VIII.	