

NOTES ON THE PAINTING OF THE DOOM AT PATCHAM.

By J. G. WALLER.

The general arrangement of this composition follows a common type, and it may be correctly stated as an early example of the subject. Its rude drawing, especially in the figure of our Lord, may very well place it at the end of the twelfth century, and it is at this time that this subject seems to have received its complete development in the Latin Church. Wherever it is found, either at home or abroad, there is no deviation from one general law except in unimportant details. The artist may arrange his materials with some variation, often an account of the nature of the space to be occupied, or some special feature may now and then be introduced as here in the two figures supposed to represent St. Katherine and St. Nicholas, but there is never that striking difference which would have ensued if each had conceived the subject entirely from his own independent judgment.

The figure of Christ with uplifted hand displaying his wounds, generally nude in the upper part of the body, except in some special cases, as in the treatment by Orcagna at Pisa, is to declare his passion and suffering for the salvation of mankind, and when a red mantle is worn, it has reference to that put on in scorn when saluted as "King of the Jews" (Matt. xxvii, 29.) In these cases there is no benediction. But when the figure is completely clothed it represents another phase, and this is the earlier treatment of our Lord in Majesty with the right hand in benediction, the left sometimes holding a book, sometimes the orb with crown, symbol of royal power. The attendant angels, cherubim and seraphim, are disposed in a more or less degree according to space for the subject, or according to the completeness with which it is treated. But those angels with the implements of the Passion are most constant, and are given even in that of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel. St. Michael, as signifer or banner bearer of the heavenly host, is evidently as such introduced in the Patcham painting, though some mediæval writers say that his office is to bear the lance. The incident of the Virgin kneeling on the right side in supplication is of very frequent use, but it would be refining too much to say it is for the souls of purgatory; it is rather for mercy in general, which is more consistent with the popular theology of the Middle ages. It was also common to place the figure of the Baptist opposite to that of the Virgin on the left side, and if the banner-bearer was not identified as an angel, this figure could be referred to the Baptist.

Although in the Patcham painting no representation of the condemned souls is preserved, the subject would have been incomplete without them,

and they must have been there. It is always common to see all orders of society, both amongst those saved as those condemned, represented by such marks of distinction as crowns or mitres and tonsures for the clergy, and they are pretty equally distributed in each. The resurrection of figures from tombs is, as might be supposed, commonly given, but sometimes groups in shrouds take the place. The introduction of the Tree of Life, as it doubtless is, is not at all common, and therefore, though here fragmentary, is so far interesting. But in general disposition there is a type of composition consistent, not only with examples in this country, but following the rule observed on the continent, the variations being of small importance. Figures of the twelve Apostles sitting on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel belong to a complete composition of this subject, but they are very often omitted and sometimes reduced to three or four, as in this instance. It may be supposed, that at all times the painter, even though a monk, as doubtless was always the case, was not always well informed, and rudely imitated familiar conventions without that precision which would indicate a more instructed hand. This will account for some omissions occasionally observed, and it is, therefore, of great value to have compared the several different treatments of the subjects in different periods. Of the appearance of the Doom in Christian art we have probably no earlier evidence than that of the twelfth century.

Having given the drawing a more critical examination than I was at first enabled to do, I feel that there is difficulty in assigning the whole to the twelfth century, and it is quite certain that an early retouching must have taken place. The throne, on which our Saviour sits, was in all probability originally the rainbow, there is yet a curve on one side which proves this. Many of the present details of drapery are unlike what is seen in the twelfth or thirteenth century, in fact it has more the sign of an ignorant retouching. The present shape of the crowns is doubtful, but that of the mitres is certainly of the fourteenth. To what time this is due, whether to the late restoration or an earlier it is impossible to say, but whilst this invalidates the authority of fixing a date of the twelfth century to the whole, there are details in the upper part in angels blowing horns, figure of Saviour, &c., which point to the original painting being possibly executed at the end of the twelfth or the first year of the thirteenth century.