

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON THE NORMAN TYMPANA AT QUENINGTON CHURCH.

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The two Norman doorways at Quenington Church may justly claim to rank with the finest specimens of the sculptor's art of the twelfth century remaining in this country. The numerous and varied ornamental mouldings with which the arches are enriched, and the curious and elaborate sculpture on the tympana render them worthy of the most careful observation, and we find that as far back as 1790, Mr. Samuel Lysons read a short paper about them before the Society of Antiquaries, which with excellent illustrations is published in *Archæologia*, Vol. X, p. 128, and Plates VII and VIII, and they are further figured in Mr. J. Romilly Allen's work on *Early Christian Symbolism*, Figs. 93 and 99, in the recently published work by the writer of this article, on the sculptured Norman tympana and lintels, etc., Figs. 97 and 130, and elsewhere.

The subject on the tympanum over the south doorway is perhaps the earliest representation in sculpture in this country of a tradition which afterwards became an exceedingly popular one, namely, the Coronation of the Virgin, in this instance the emblems of the four Evangelists being also introduced, and many of the details are very remarkable. There is another example at the apex of the Norman south doorway of Healaugh Church, Yorkshire.

The subject on the tympanum over the north doorway, viz., the Descent into Hell or Limbus, or the Harrowing of Hell, as it is variously designated, is more common at this early period. As in the instances at Beckford in Gloucestershire, and probably at Shobdon in Herefordshire, this subject and others of a like terrifying character were placed on the north side of the church. The example at Quenington furnishes us with the most elaborate treatment of the great event mentioned in the first Epistle of St. Peter iii. 19, and very fully described

in the spurious Gospel of Nicodemus. The introduction of the sun exactly accords with the account therein contained, for in Chapter XIII, verse 3, we read of the light of the sun suddenly illuminating the depths of hell, the precursor of the advent of Christ, whose arrival shortly afterwards, His binding the Prince of Hell, and delivering the souls of Adam and the early saints from the terrible prison in which they had been for so long incarcerated, is so minutely described. The manner in which the Prince of Hell is bound corresponds with an early sculptured representation on a Cross at Kirkby Stephen in Westmoreland,¹ and on a carved slab portraying this subject on the west front of Lincoln Cathedral,² on the late twelfth century wall painting on the west wall of Chaldon Church, Surrey, and in two MSS. in the British Museum, viz., Tiberius C.vi. of the eleventh century, and Nero C.iv. of the twelfth century. As we find the subject thus portrayed both in early work, and as late as the end of the twelfth century, we may fairly assign a middle date to this example at Quenington, and may claim it as the work of the reign of King Stephen, with which period the other architectural details well accord.

During the Norman period we also find examples of this subject with slight variations in the treatment on the tympana at Shobdon and Beckford already referred to,³ on a large stone coffin lid preserved in the Chapter House at Bristol Cathedral, on another coffin lid let into a niche over the south doorway of South Cerney Church, Gloucestershire, and on a stone inserted above the north doorway of Jevington Church, Sussex.

¹ J. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Symbolism*, p. 281, Fig. 100.

² *Archaeol. Journ.*, XXV, p. 16, Fig. 13.

Associated Architect. Soc. Reports, VIII, p. 288, Fig. 13.

³ *A List of Norman Tympana and Lintels with Figure or Symbolical Sculpture, still, or till recently, existing in the Churches of Great Britain*, by Charles E. Keyser, M.A., F.S.A., p. lv, Figs. 95 and 96.