THE TWELVE THEOLOGICAL WINDOWS

OF

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

The Source of the Verses.

The verses inscribed upon certain painted windows in Canterbury Cathedral have been printed more than once. First by W. Somner in his *Antiquities of Canterbury*, 1640: then by Battely in his edition of Somner in 1703: again in Winston's *Hints on Stained Glass*, from Somner's text: most recently in an admirable little book written by a lady (who remains anonymous), and issued with a preface by the present Dean of Canterbury in 1897 under the title of *Notes on the Painted Glass in Canterbury Cathedral*. I wish to do what I can to call attention to this work: it seems to me exactly what is wanted. I should very much like to see books on the same plan done for York and for others of our churches which possess considerable remains of ancient glass. That is by the way: I was about to say that the text of the verses in this book was taken from a seventeenth century transcript by Brian Twyne in MS. 256, at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

So far as I can gather, none of the editors since Battely's time have consulted the oldest MS. authority available: and since the verses are particularly interesting, and the text as hitherto printed sometimes obscure, I have thought it well to consult the original document from which Somner took them. The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral most generously lent me the MS.—for which I return them my

warmest thanks—and I am now to try and give my readers an accurate transcript of its contents.

It is a roll numbered C 246 in the Chapter archives. It is about 9½ inches wide and 8 feet 10 inches long, and consists of three skins now fastened together with pins (which seem to be quite a hundred years old). The writing is very large and clear, and belongs, I think, to the early part of the fourteenth century. Unless I am much mistaken, the hand might very well be the same as that of the great Inventory of Prior Henry of Eastry (Cotton MS. Galba, E. IV.). The titles, and some other parts of the text (but not the verses) are either rubricated, or underlined with red. This I shall express by the use of leaded and italic types. There is no general heading: the writing begins so near the top of the roll that it is quite possible that an original title has been cut off. Indeed, in the transcript referred to there is a title which I expect was originally inscribed at the top of our roll. It is: *Fenestrae in superiori parte ecclesiae Christi Cant. incipientes a parte septentrionali.* The largeness of the writing suggests to me the conjecture that the roll may have been hung up in the Church itself for the perusal of visitors, just as "tables" containing lists of relics, short histories of the foundation, and particulars about distinguished persons buried there, were hung up in various churches. A specimen of such a table, from Glastonbury Abbey, is, I believe, now at Naworth. These documents were generally written upon parchment and affixed to boards.

This roll was not the only form in which the verses were preserved. In the Catalogue of the Library made under Prior Henry of Eastry, printed in Edwards's *Memoirs of Libraries*, vol. I., we have (on p. 167) the entry

> Versus pannorum pendencium in ecclesia Cantuariensi
> Versus fenestrarum vitrearum ecclesie Christi Cantuar.

and again on p. 216

> Versus fenestrarum vitrearum ecclesie Christi.

The verses evidently enjoyed some reputation in their native dlace: and this is the less surprising when we realize that

they formed in fact one of the most extensive and complete sets of types and antitypes which were to be found in any English church; and, further, that England was the country in which this special product of medievalism found its most copious expression in artistic monuments. It should also be remembered that the inscriptions on the windows themselves were (and are) exceedingly hard to read.

It has been a matter of some difficulty to decide exactly how the text of the roll ought to be printed. The scribe, though a good writer, was either a careless or a stupid man, and I may remark in passing that this fact tends to confirm my notion that he was the person who wrote Prior Henry of Eastry's inventory, for the catalogue of books which occurs in that teems with foolish mistakes. In copying out the verses on his roll this scribe of ours has done his best to impair its usefulness by misplacing considerable portions of his text. How this can have happened I am unable to see very clearly. It might be conjectured that his archetype consisted of a number of loose slips, or of another roll whose membranes had been fastened together in the wrong order; but in fact neither of these suppositions is confirmed by an examination of the character of the mistakes. The mistakes are there, in any case, and they attracted attention at an early date: a corrector in the fourteenth century has noted some of the most glaring, but I am inclined to suspect that some have eluded him. The misplacements which have been detected are as follows:

In the 3rd window are two small portions of the 6th.

In the 6th window is a large portion of the 8th.

In the 8th window is a large portion of the 9th.

The misplacements which I only suspect concern the 9th, 10th, and 12th windows, and shall not be described yet.

The text before us is also guilty of divers small corruptions which are noticed in footnotes; and I have no doubt that in some cases there are omissions of verses. I have decided that it is on the whole safer to print the text of the roll just as it stands, and to call attention to the detected errors where they occur, by means of brackets and notes. I have added

a survey in diagrammatic form of what I suppose each window to have contained. My text is not a line-for-line transcript, but I have indicated how much each line of the roll contains.

As to the date and style of the glass with which we are concerned, the reader should consult the *Notes* I have mentioned and also Mr Westlake's *History of Design in Painted Glass*. All that need be said here is that the glass is of about the middle of the thirteenth century.

The Subjects of the Windows.

Speaking generally, these twelve windows form a well-defined series illustrating the Life of Christ, from the Annunciation to the Resurrection, with a series of types taken from the Old Testament and from other sources. This series bears all the marks of having been thought out at one time, very probably by one man. There is reason to suppose that it, or our record of it, is incomplete. The last window carries the story only so far as the Resurrection of Christ, and intercalates at that point a number of scenes from the Life of St Gregory, instead of giving us—what we have a right to expect—the appearances after the Resurrection, the Ascension, and perhaps the coming of the Holy Ghost and the Last Judgment. We cannot at present tell to what the incompleteness is due.

The series considered as a whole finds its counterpart in many well-known instances. Considered in detail, it differs importantly from any that is known to me. The salient point, to which I find no parallel elsewhere, is the full treatment accorded to the Parables of our Lord. Eight of these are illustrated as copiously as their character admits. There is only one among them which I find handled in the same fashion anywhere else. Here is a rather interesting phenomenon: it shall be examined somewhat more closely.

The parables illustrated in the Canterbury windows are those of (1) the Sower, (2) the Leaven, (3) the Net, (4)

the Tares, (5) the Lost Sheep, (6) the Unjust Debtor, (7) the Wedding Garment, (8) the Good Samaritan.

Among the many windows in foreign cathedrals which can be compared in date and character to those we are considering, I find that only three parables are illustrated with any frequency. My survey, I ought to say, includes Chartres, Bourges, Sens, Troyes, Auxerre, Le Mans, as well as a good many churches less rich in thirteenth century glass. I find among these, windows devoted to the Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and Dives and Lazarus. One church, that of Bourges, adds two to the list, the Rich Fool, and the Unjust Judge, but it stands alone, so far as I can discover. The first named is the only one that is accompanied with types. Good Samaritan windows are to be seen at Chartres, Bourges, Sens and perhaps elsewhere. The selection of illustrative types in all the examples that I am acquainted with, is very close to that of the Canterbury windows. In this case I have little doubt that the Canterbury designer incorporated an already made pattern into his series. For the other parables, I think he may himself be held responsible.

The subject of the illustration of the Parables in early art would be worth studying specially and separately. My present impression about the matter is that except in the Eastern Church and in such isolated examples as I have mentioned, medieval artists left this rich mine of material practically unworked. One or two subjects must be excepted: the story of Dives and Lazarus occurs frequently in Books of Hours as an illustration to the Office of the Dead. The Return of the Prodigal Son, the Shepherd bringing back the Lost Sheep, the finding of the Lost Piece of Silver, are employed as types in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* and the *Biblia Pauperum*. The Ten Virgins are frequently seen on the sculptured portals of the Continent (and at Wells) as pendants to the scene of the Last Judgment. The Good Shepherd—so conspicuous in the earliest Christian art—is an unfamiliar figure in the Middle Ages.

Not until the Renaissance was far advanced do we find painters drawing their themes from the Parables and pictures

of the Sower, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan; and it seems that a large part of their attractiveness was due to their possibilities as *genre* subjects. For continuous illustration of single parables we have to turn to the works of the sixteenth century engravers.

I remarked in passing that the Eastern Church did not omit the parables from its cycle of sacred subjects: at the same time, it did not treat them from the external point of view. A reference to the manual for the use of painters will show that the meaning of the parable was the chief interest. This was illustrated almost to the exclusion of the story by which the meaning was conveyed. I cannot discern that Byzantine art had in this department any strong influence on the Western designers.

To write the history of the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament and its application in art to the illustration of the New is not my task in the present tract. It is my function only to shape a stone which may take its place in that larger structure. I may not even spend time in tracing out the first appearance of the various types which come before us in the Canterbury windows. All that I propose to do in these pages is to point out certain recurrences of the same subjects in other similar cycles of pictures. Foremost among these is the great collection of types, made apparently late in the twelfth or early in the thirteenth century and called *Pictor in Carmine*. An edition of this text I have long planned; and I hope that it may appear at no distant date. All the copies of it which I have so far discovered are of English origin, and I am strongly inclined to believe that the compiler was an Englishman. It seems, indeed, as if at this particular period, the interest in illustrative types was specially active in English monastic circles. The extensive series of paintings which adorned the stalls at Peterborough, the paintings in the chapter-house of Worcester, and the twelve Canterbury windows, are works to which it would be difficult to find parallels in other countries. Each of them is a remarkable series of types and antitypes, and all were produced within a

hundred years. It will be worth while to mark the extent to which the Peterborough paintings, the Canterbury windows, and the *Pictor in Carmine* coincide.

We will take the Canterbury windows as our basis:

Window I.

In the first of these, the types of the Annunciation, Visitation, and Nativity are of the commonest kind and are found in all the series I have mentioned.

The *Angel and the Shepherds* has no proper type, but only the figures of two prophets, with inscribed scrolls. These same prophets and legends occur at Peterborough, but not in the *Pictor*, which takes no note of prophets and prophecies.

Window II.

In the second window, Balaam as a type of the Magi belongs to the common stock. Isaiah is at Peterborough and also at Canterbury. The Exodus is in *Pictor* and at Peterborough. Christ and the Gentiles in neither.

Joseph and his brethren		Peterborough	
The Queen of Sheba	Pictor	Peterborough	
Lot	Pictor	Peterborough	
The prophet of 1 K. xiii.	Pictor	Peterborough	
Melchizedek	O		
Samuel	Pictor	Peterborough	Worcester
David flees from Saul	Pictor	Peterborough	
Elijah from Ahab	Pictor	Peterborough	
Massacre of Benjamites	Pictor		
Massacre of Priests at Nob	Pictor		

Window III.

Moses and Jethro		Peterborough
Daniel and Elders	Pictor	Peterborough
The Ark		Peterborough
The Red Sea		Peterborough
Eve tempted (thrice)	Pictor	Peterborough
David and Goliath	Pictor	Peterborough

Window IV.

Adam and Eve cover themselves	Pictor
Israel under the Law	O
The six ages of the world	Pictor

The six ages of man	Pictor
Peter and the Jews	Pictor
Paul and the Gentiles	Pictor
Esdras reads the Law	Pictor
Gregory ordains readers	Pictor (a bishop, not specified)
The Doctors of the Church	O
Moses receives the Law	Pictor
Paul baptizes	O
Naaman cleansed	(Naaman at Elisha's gate. Pictor)

Window V.

Angel binding devil	O
Drusiana's charity	O
Peter fishing, John reading	O
Jacob with Leah and Rachel	Pictor
The Gospel-mill	O
Peter and Paul	O
Jacob at the well	Pictor
Eliezer and Rebecca	Pictor

Window VI.

The only subject found in *Pictor* is the feeding of the five thousand: and there is but a partial resemblance in one of the types selected.

Window VII.

There is here again no coincidence in subject with *Pictor*, which omits the Transfiguration (!).

Window VIII.

None of the subjects are in *Pictor*.

Window IX.

Three subjects, but no types, coincide.

Window X.

The subjects are in *Pictor*, but not the types.

Window XI.

David carrying himself	Pictor	
The Manna	Pictor	
Laban washes the camels' feet	Pictor	
Abraham washes the angels' feet	Pictor	Peterborough
Joseph sold		Peterborough

Joab and Abner (Amasa)	Pictor Peterborough
Job smitten	Pictor Peterborough (Job and his friends)
Elisha mocked	Pictor (type of the mocking). Peterborough

Window XII.

Isaac	Pictor Peterborough
Widow of Zarephath	Pictor Peterborough
Brazen serpent	Pictor Peterborough
Red heifer	Pictor Peterborough
Death of Abel	Pictor Peterborough
Blood of the Passover	Pictor Peterborough
Elisha and Shunammite	Peterborough
Vision of Ezek. ix.	Pictor (as type of Bearing of the Cross). Peterborough
Samson in Gaza	Pictor
Jonah in the fish	Pictor
David and bear	Pictor Peterborough
Samson and lion	O
Samson and gates	Pictor Peterborough
Daniel and dragon	Pictor
Jonah cast up	Pictor Peterborough
David escapes	Pictor Peterborough
Lion and cub	Pictor
Joseph released[1]	Pictor

It will be observed that in the windows which illustrate the early life of Christ and the Passion the coincidences between Canterbury, *Pictor in Carmine*, and the Peterborough paintings are very numerous, and that they include the obscurer and rarer types as well as the common ones. But in those which illustrate the Ministry and the Parables, the coincidences are practically negligible. In fact the Peterborough series, like the large majority of medieval monuments, passes straight from the Temptation to the Entry into Jerusalem, while the choice of subjects in *Pictor* seems curiously

[1] A good many of the subjects in Window XII are found in the central eastern window in Becket's crown, nearly the whole of which is old glass. The occurrence of the same subjects more than once in the same church is not by any means uncommon.

capricious and incomplete. As we have seen, the Transfiguration is omitted.

It is difficult to believe that the Peterborough series is altogether disconnected with that of Canterbury. Not only do the subjects agree to a large extent, but in twenty-one cases—all in the first three windows—the legends are the same. I have at present no copy of the legends of the latter part of the Peterborough series, but I should expect to find coincidences there as well. The Peterborough paintings were of the twelfth century; the Canterbury windows of the thirteenth. Had Benedict, monk of Christ Church and subsequently Abbot of Peterborough, any hand in communicating copies of the Peterborough legends to his old monastery? It seems not unlikely. I am confirmed in my belief in the connexion by the fact that in spite of the coincidences in subject between *Pictor* and the Canterbury series there is hardly any coincidence in the legends, and this though *Pictor* usually gives more verses than two for each subject. For the beginning and end of his series, then, we may allow the probability that the Canterbury designer derived help from Peterborough; but for the middle portion we cannot trace any source.

If we pursue the subject of Typology down to a later date, we find that the tendency to neglect the story of the Ministry in favour of the Infancy and the Passion is on the increase. In the *Biblia Pauperum* the only subjects between the Temptation and the Entry into Jerusalem are the Transfiguration, and the Raising of Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene washing Christ's feet. In the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* we have only the last-named subject.

In so late a series as the windows of King's College Chapel the Raising of Lazarus is the one subject. The Return of the Prodigal occurs as a type, as also in the *Speculum*.

We have not, as yet, I think, sufficient material before us to pronounce very definitely and dogmatically upon the matter: but at present I hold that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a special interest in the collection of types for artistic