

THE ANCIENT GLASS FROM PETHAM CHURCH NOW IN
CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

By C. R. COUNCER, F.S.A.

IN a recent review (*Arch. Cant.*, LXIII, pp. 156-8) of Mr. Bernard Rackham's work, *The Ancient Glass of Canterbury Cathedral* (1949), I advanced a theory as to the origin of certain figures of Apostles, Prophets, and Patriarchs, now in the east window of the crypt and in the water tower of Canterbury Cathedral. I suggested that these figures had come originally from Petham church, and, with less certainty, that the figure of Christ in Glory, accompanied by symbols of the four Evangelists, now in the south window of the corona, might also have come from Petham.

Further research has augmented the evidence, which now enables me to prove my case up to the hilt, with this particularization: the symbols of the Evangelists accompanying the figure of Christ came from Petham, but the figure itself (as far as I know) did not: in other words the present panel is a nineteenth-century fake, having been made up—very cleverly—of pieces of glass (mostly old) from different sources.

It seems desirable that all the facts should be placed upon record, for what they come to is this: that, after a lapse of more than a century, it is now possible to identify, lurking unknown and unsuspected at Canterbury, nearly all the figure-glazing from Petham chancel. The case must be almost without parallel.

The evidence comes from two MSS. One is Z. Cozens' *History of Kent*—actually a topographical description of some East Kent parishes—written at the end of the eighteenth century, and later bound in two large octavo volumes. It is now in the possession of our member Mr. R. H. D'Elboux, F.S.A., who most kindly lent it to me for study. The other is part of the Rev. Thomas Streatfeild's enormously extended copy of the folio Hasted, now in the British Museum. It is numbered Add. 33,886.

The following is Cozens' description, dated 1794, of the glass which he saw at Petham, from Vol. I of his MS., fol. 309:

In the Chancel
In the West window at the North side
Beneath the emblems of the Evangelists
"Mattheus," "lucas," "marcus", "iohannes."
On the Angel's label, "bini." On the Eagle's, "font."
On the Lion's, "sibis." On the Ox's "e".
In the next window to the Eastward:

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Beneath the effigies of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*.

“ sc. p “ sc̄. pau
etrus ” lus.”

On a label from *Peter's* mouth :

“ ivitsonvs eorv- ”

In the next window :

Beneath the remains of two figures :

“ isa “ iere
ias ” mias ”

On a label from *Isaiah* :

“ pie : pereois. ave- ”

On another from *Jeremiah*

“ nascista lotat-rē ”

In the next window :

Beneath the remains of two effigies .

“ abra “ isa
ham.” ac.”

On a label from *Isaac* :

“ icent oferentē.”

On another from *Abraham*

(obliterated)

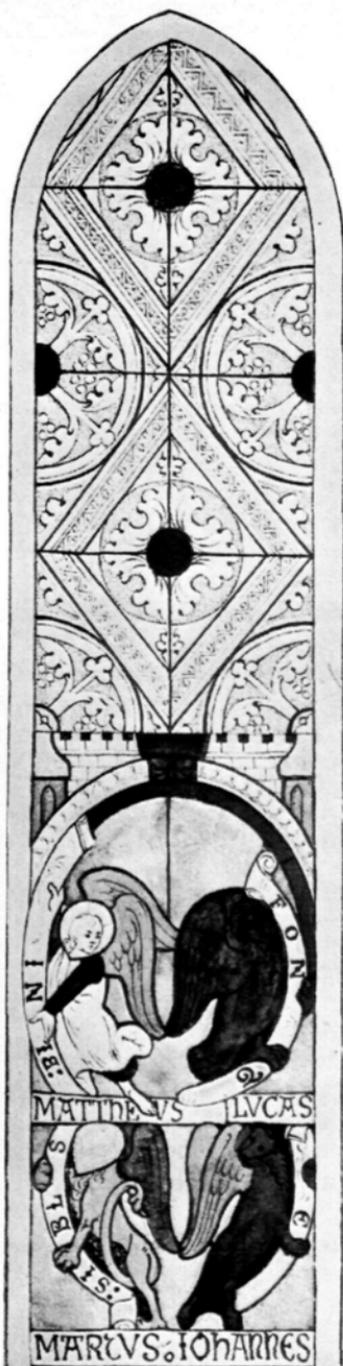
The inscriptions are in Cozens' ordinary handwriting, but are all marked “Saxon capitals”, by which he means Lombardic lettering.

The question of the identification of the symbols of the Evangelists with those now at Canterbury may be dealt with very shortly. Most fortunately Streatfeild visited Petham in 1826 and made a drawing (now at fol. 207b of his MS. above cited) of the window which Cozens had noted over thirty years earlier. This drawing is here reproduced, and it is only necessary to compare it with the reproductions of the Canterbury panel (Pl. 31(a) in Mr. Rackham's book, or the frontispiece to the 12th *Report* of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral (1939)), or with the glass itself, to see that the figures are identical. One or two minor changes have been made in the glass: the labels *Lucas* and *Iohannes*, which had got transposed at Petham, have been restored to their proper figures, and there has apparently been some restoration of the lion's head and the bull's tail. The inscription on the scroll held by Luke has been renewed, rather unskillfully, with an anachronistic “U”, and the “E” which was formerly on it has disappeared. I may say in passing that it has not been possible to make any sense out of these inscriptions: some play on numbers is apparently intended.

Bought, with this panel, at St. Albans Court, Nonington, in 1938, and now in the east window of the crypt at Canterbury are two pairs of thirteenth-century figures—Jacob and Isaac, and Isaiah and Jeremiah—standing under simple canopies and holding inscribed scrolls. They are described by Mr. Rackham at pp. 113-14 of his book, and illustrated *ibid.*, Pl. 21 (c).

Jacob's scroll is inscribed [EX]IVIT SONVS EORVM (from Rom. x, 18), and below the figure is the name IACO

BAS



PETHAM: Streatfeild's drawing of westernmost window, north side of chancel (Add. MS. 33, 886, fol. 207b). Lower part (showing more grisaille like that above) omitted.

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*Isaac's scroll is inscribed DICENT : OFERENTE (Mr. W. P. Blore suggested to Mr. Rackham the readings *Benedicent offerentes* or *offerentem*) and he is named ISA

AC

*Isaiah's scroll appears to read PPREPERE DIC VE (*Præpropere dic ve* suggested by Prof. Claude Jenkins) and he is named ISA

IAS

*The inscription on Jeremiah's scroll is almost illegible, and its meaning is obscure : it appears to read NAS . . . SALVAT . . . RĒ. The name IERE appears below.

MIAS

In 1900 Mr. Samuel Caldwell placed in two windows of the water tower on the north side of the Cathedral four pairs of figures which clearly belong to the same series as those just mentioned. Where they were before 1900 I have failed to discover. They are described by Mr. Rackham, *loc. cit.*, so that it is only necessary here to list them :

St. Bartholomew (S : BA.MEVS) and Simon (S : SIMON). The inscriptions on their scrolls are obliterated.

St. John Evangelist and ? St. James Minor. Inscriptions missing.

St. James Major (S^c. IACOBVS), with scroll, CONIVGATVS, and St. Matthias (S^c. MATHIAS) upon whose scroll remain the letters . . . VS EOR . . . , originally, no doubt, IVIT SONVS EORVM as on the scroll of the patriarch Jacob.

*Two Apostles (names missing), one holding a sword (? St. Paul) and scroll, CONIVGATVS ; the other with book and scroll, IVIT SONVS EORVM (? St. Peter).

There are far too many coincidences here to leave any doubt in my mind—or, I conceive, in the mind of any reasonable person—that the figures which I have marked with an asterisk are identical with those described by Cozens at Petham. The inscriptions are most unusual—indeed, unique in my experience—and though Cozens clearly had difficulty in reading them his versions approximate so nearly to the lettering on the glass as to leave no real doubt about their identity. The only questionable point, of which, however, there are several obvious explanations, is the apparent confusion between Abraham and Jacob.

As it seems beyond dispute (and Mr. Rackham agrees) that all the figures at Canterbury, including those of personages not mentioned by Cozens, form part of the same set, it follows that they all came from Petham. They would be sufficient to furnish nearly all the windows of the chancel.

It would be pleasant to be able to round off this account by showing how and when the Evangelists' symbols, Jacob, Isaac, Isaiah, and Jeremiah got to St. Albans Court, and where the other figures were

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before they turned up at Canterbury in 1900. Streatfeild notes that in 1826 there was no old glass in the windows on the south side of the chancel at Petham, so that all the figures now in the water tower, except SS. Peter and Paul, had already been removed from the church—probably before 1794, since Cozens does not mention them.¹ In 1836 Streatfeild was again at Petham, and added to his previous notes a strongly-worded criticism of the “restoration” which had been carried out in the interval, and which had resulted in the disappearance of *all* the old glass.

This is really all we know. I had hoped that the church documents—e.g. the vestry minutes—at Petham might have thrown some light on the matter, but a careful search, most kindly undertaken by Miss M. W. Harwood after I had failed to obtain from the then incumbent even an acknowledgment of my enquiries, has not revealed anything to the purpose.

¹ B. Faussett's MS. collections (mid-eighteenth century), contain only this note: “[The church] has the Remains of much good Painting in y^e Windows; especially in those of y^e Chancell.” (Vol. I, fol. 9).