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THE PAINTING OF THE LEGEND OF ST. EUSTACE IN CANTERBURY

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The painting of the legend of St. Eustace in Canterbury Cathedral has recently undergone thorough cleaning and conservation treatment. This has provided an opportunity to study the painting closely, and has revealed some interesting details.

The mural painting is on the north wall of the north ambulatory in the bay immediately west of the choir transept. The best preserved area of painting is on the back wall of the blind arch (measuring 19 ft. high by 8 ft. 9 in. wide) which has a rounded top formed by the Norman arch (Plate I). The sides or reveals of the blind arch have fewer remains, which are also part of the main composition. During conservation faint shadows of trumpeting angels were discovered on the spandrels on either side of the arch; evidence that the painting continued over on to the surrounding wall. The reveals and spandrels were probably a separate area of work, but there is no indication whether they were made before or after the main composition on the back wall.

The composition divides the wall surface horizontally into three sections, within which the painter has chosen to illustrate six scenes from the legend. The central section is the largest and contains four scenes. The other two scenes fill the top and bottom sections which are each approximately 6 ft. high. The sections are not divided by means of a clearly defined framework, but by breaks or changes in the landscape setting which performs as more than just a decorative background. It contributes to the narrative that weaves upwards through it, and, by separating the incidents, also serves as an indication of the time-scale.

The first scene in the lowest section takes place against a verdant countryside which is wooded on the right side.

The central section is separated from the first by a narrow river that enters from the left and cuts through the land with steep cliffs on

either side. The river turns up towards the top of the painting, and widens to form an expanse of grey water rippled with green waves that at its highest point spans the whole width of the back wall. The background setting of the central section is therefore divided vertically into three; with the water in the middle and two triangular banks of green land on either side. The cliff face enclosing the water along its top edge defines the limit of the central section and the beginning of the top section which contains the last scene.

In the last scene the setting returns to being a single land mass. The terrain is not painted in the rich green of the other scenes, but in a more dusty brown, set against a pale evening sky.

The fullest account of the legend of St. Eustace may be found in the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa (d. 1298). It shall be this account that is referred to in describing the painting.¹

According to the legend, St. Eustace was originally a Roman general under Emperor Hadrian, and was called 'Placidus'. His conversion to Christianity occurred whilst he was hunting with some fellow soldiers near Rome. They were chasing a herd of hart when the most beautiful of the herd separated from the others and leapt into a thick forest. Placidus alone followed it and suddenly saw a vision of Christ crucified between its antlers. The vision addressed him and he dismounted from his horse to kneel before it in deference.

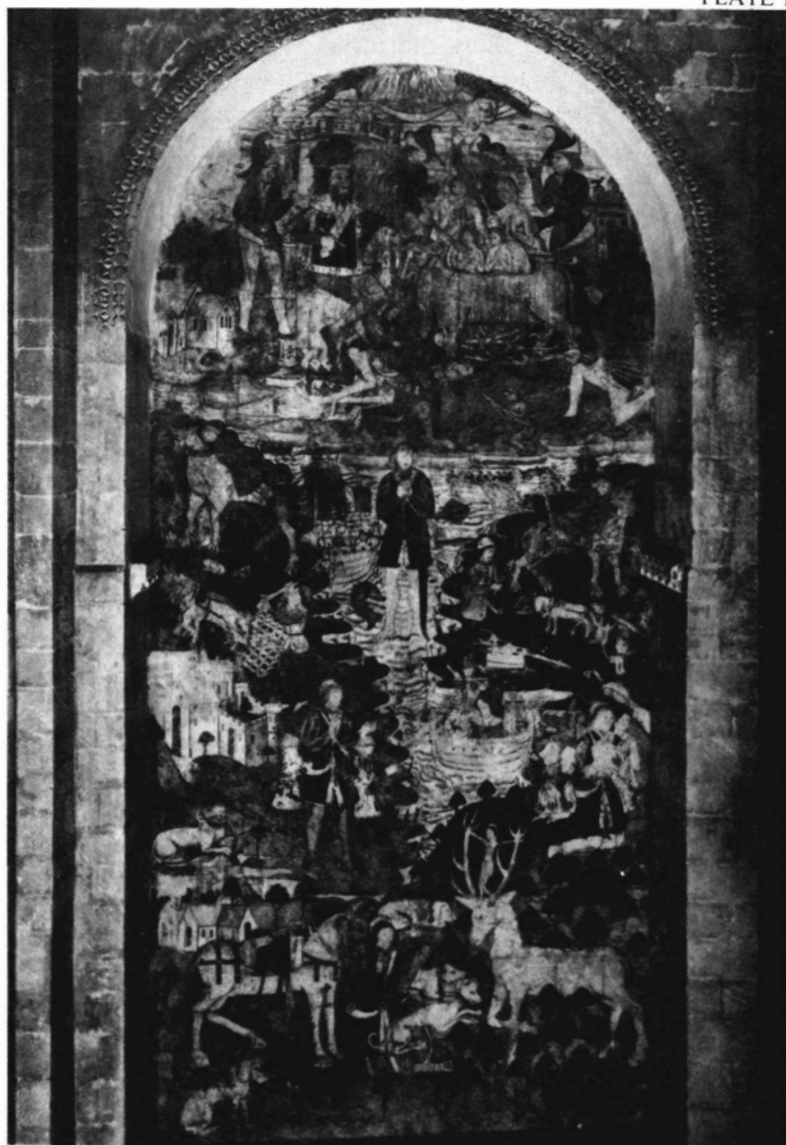
The Canterbury painter has pictured him at this moment. He is kneeling in the centre foreground with his hands held up in astonishment. The hart stands on the right in profile facing Placidus, with the crucifix clearly visible between its antlers. The dense woodland into which it had leapt is indicated by numerous small trees painted around it. The trees have triangular canopies and long twisting trunks. They are on a much smaller scale than the stag, and it stands out far above them rather than being hidden amongst them. Placidus is dressed in the fine fifteenth-century hunting dress in which he is portrayed throughout the painting. He has a horn tied to his belt and is accompanied by a horse and three hounds. The horse is painted as if it were a grey dappled pony and stands behind Placidus providing a balance in the composition to the figure of the hart on the right. Three elegant hounds cower between Placidus and the stag. Beneath the horse, in the lower left corner is a small boar (a detail that is not included in the legend).² Possibly its docile appearance may be

¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Westminster Edition (1493).

² This creature may be the result of a confusion between the legend of St. Eustace and the legend of St. Hubert, in which the saint discovered a strange hairy beast and released the devils that possessed it. E.W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the 14th century*, (1955), 87-8.

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PLATE I



Overall Photograph of finished Painting. (Photo. M. Lewis)

because it, too, has been transfixed by the vision. Above the horse is a small village on the river's edge. The buildings have grey stone walls, red-tiled sloping roofs and round-arched door and window openings, a fairly accurate representation of a typical medieval Kentish structure.³

During his conversion Placidus was directed by Christ to go, with his family, to the Bishop of Rome in order to receive baptism. The painter has chosen to illustrate this incident next. It takes place on the right above the stag. Placidus is shown kneeling with his wife and two sons. The pope's hand and the baptismal cup may be seen over their heads, but the pope himself was painted on the side wall and is no longer clearly visible. Conservation work has made it possible to discern his head and long-flowing beard and to see that he would have been wearing a cope. It has also revealed a large building like a basilica, with its nave pierced by a row of round-arched windows. This idea of continuing the painting round on to the reveals is quite a sophisticated compositional device. It is a great pity that so little of the paint remains. Placidus and his family are painted in fine fifteenth-century court dress. His wife wears a simple gown with a flat 'Bertha' collar, and his sons wear long, red pleated jackets.

Placidus was now baptised Eustace. Jacobus de Voragine writes that 'Placidus' means 'pleasant to God', and that Eustace means 'good fortune'. Before his conversion 'He was pleyasant to God in his conversaycon and after he helde him in good werkys'. But his good fortune is to be of a spiritual nature. For as Christ warned him during his vision, he now 'must suffre moche' in order to obtain 'spirytuell Rychesses' and compares his temptations to those suffered by Job.

In the remainder of the central section the painter has selected just a few of the misfortunes that befell Eustace and his family.

The first to be illustrated is the kidnapping of Eustace's wife, although this was not the first of the trials as narrated in the legend.

Eustace's beautiful wife, baptised Theopispe, was taken by the captain of a ship as payment for giving passage to Eustace and his family who were fleeing to Egypt. Eustace and his two sons are shown deposited on the left bank of the water. They hold their hands up in farewell to his wife who looks back at them from the ship. There is a striking difference in scale between the ship and Theopispe who seems gigantic beside the sailors. The ship in turn is too large for its setting and looms up above the cliffs, filling the narrow stretch of water in which it is painted. Although the legend describes Eustace and his family as destitute and naked, the painter has portrayed them in the same courtly dress of the earlier scene.

³ N. Pevsner, *West Kent and the Weald*, (1969), 409 and illus. 28, Merham Court Lodge c. 1350.

The painting follows the order of the legend closely at this stage. Sorrowing for the loss of Theopispe, Eustace and his sons wandered the countryside and reached a full river. It was difficult to cross and Eustace had to carry his sons over separately. He took one son across, leaving the other to wait on the shore. Whilst returning to pick up the second son the first was taken away by a wolf (on the left), and the second was taken by a lion (on the right).

In the painting Eustace is standing helpless in the middle of the water, while his two sons are being abducted on either side. His bare legs indicate that he was immersed in water to his knees. It may also be a reference to his destitute state, although the rest of his clothing is intact. Cleaning has revealed the tiny figure of a devil (c. 8 in. high) standing just beneath Eustace's feet (Plate II). Its cloak falls from its outstretched arms and it has two horns. The devil is not mentioned at this point in the narrative, but the painter may have been referring back to Christ's words to Eustace after his baptism: 'Eustace thou arte blessed which hast taken the wasshing of grace for now thou hast surmounted the devyll which had deceyved the and troden hym under foot. Now thy faythe shall appere. The devyll now bycause thou hast forsaken him is armed cruelly against the'.

Whereas the narrative describes him as distraught, the painter has chosen to see him in the wider light of the whole story, and shows him steadfast and strong in his faith. The five fish swimming around him in the sea may be symbolic of Christ and baptism. And indeed this iconic portrayal of St. Eustace as he stands in the water bears comparison to baptism scenes.⁴

The legend tells how the two boys were rescued by peasants who brought them up as though they were their own sons. The painter implies this part of the tale by painting two peasants at work in the fields. On the left bank beneath the figure of the wolf is a man with a harrow pulled by three horses. The harrow is seen from above as a grid and leaves furrows in the earth. On the right bank is a ploughman with a team of horses. They are both painted in simple blue jerkins that button up the front, red shirts, and black hose. Their farm implements are accurately observed. These figures are on a smaller scale – they are only 26 in. high as opposed to Eustace who is 42 in. high. On the left is a beautifully painted castellated town, on the same scale as the landscape.

The legend provides a full account of the period between the loss of Eustace's family and his death. It tells how the emperor, who was

⁴ For example 'The Baptism' by Piero della Francesca (c. 1450) in the National Gallery, London. It also bears comparison with the iconography of St. Christopher, see p. 130.



Close-up of Devil

(Photo. M. Lewis)

being threatened by the enemy, sought him out and asked him to rejoin the Roman army. Eustace complied and succeeded in subduing the enemy. He was re-united with his wife and sons and given great riches. But the new emperor, Hadrian, insisted that he offer a sacrifice to the gods for his victory, something that Eustace as a Christian could no longer do. The emperor in his anger ordered that Eustace and his family be thrown to 'a ryght cruell lyon'. But the lion ran up to them and bowed its head in worship. Hadrian then condemned them to death by burning in a brazen ox, and they 'yielded up their spyrytes unto Ihesu Criste'.

This is the subject of the last scene in the painting. It fills the top section and is divided off from the lower scenes by an irregular horizontal cliff edge.

The Emperor Hadrian is shown sitting on the left. He is a large imposing figure and fills two-thirds of the height of this section. His size is accentuated by his elaborate dragon-shaped helmet or crown and his long flowing black hair and beard. He is dressed in a dark green velvet tabard trimmed with ermine, and red hose. He brandishes a scalloped sword in his right hand. His large throne has an orange-coloured satin cushion and a frame carved to resemble castellated towers. The throne is raised on a chequered dais. To the left of him stands a courtier and between his ankles is a jester who points towards the martyrdom taking place in front of them. The bull-shaped cauldron is on the right side and faces the emperor. St. Eustace and his family are visible, standing naked inside it. There is a fire underneath the bull's belly which is stoked and tended with bellows by two kneeling courtiers. Some distance beneath is a small monkey who appears to be threatening one of the courtiers with a long stick. Above and behind the bull are three more courtiers who pour boiling water or oil over the saint and his family and hold them down with pitchforks.

The scene is crowded and full of action. All the figures are on a large scale except for the jester and the man with the bellows. These figures are only slightly smaller possibly to show that they are jesters rather than courtiers, or perhaps simply to fit them into the composition. The heat generated by the cauldron is suggested both by the dusty brown-green of the background, and by the way in which the space between the bull's front and the jester has been painted. Here, deep rich brown paint has been applied in swirling brushstrokes that make the air appear to be moving with heat. The scene is framed on both sides by trees and buildings. The trees do not have the same triangular canopies of those in the lower scenes (which look like a cross between a deciduous oak and a fruit tree). Here they have long oval-shaped leaves that grow upwards to form oval canopies. Their

trunks are long and ringed and they have an altogether more exotic appearance. An imposing castle is painted on the right with a large central gateway and a weather cock on the left tower. A humbler more familiar-looking building is just visible on the left. Two birds, possibly ravens may be seen against the evening sky. One is flying across above the figures in the cauldron; the other is perched on the emperor's throne.⁵ The sky divides the earthly context of the scenes beneath from the final and eminently spiritual event in the legend of the saint.

According to the legend their bodies were removed from the cauldron after three days and 'were founden all nooll and not touched by the fyre, ne as moche as an heere of them was brente ne none other thyng on thei(m).' They were given an honourable burial by the Christians in Rome.

In the apex of the curved top of the arch are two angels supporting a drapery in which the tiny figures of St. Eustace and his family are being transported heavenwards. Between them is a dove in the centre of a sunburst. These four little figures may represent the souls ascending to heaven. Or they may refer to the miracle of their bodies being found intact and therefore to their corporeal ascent. The two trumpeting angels still visible on the spandrels are receiving them into heaven. Between them is the faintest trace of what may be a sunburst, symbolising their rebirth.

Professor Tristram was responsible for the previous restoration of the painting carried out in the 1930s by Miss E. and Miss M. Bridges.⁶ The painting had been lime-washed over, probably during the Reformation. This had been removed during the 1830s after which the painting remained untouched for about a hundred years. The work supervised by Professor Tristram involved securing the painting by applying wax to the surface and toning back some of the missing areas by hatching in a neutral brown colour. During the fifty years since this operation the wax had darkened considerably and was obscuring the painting. There was also a danger that it had begun to 'pinch' the paint off the wall. It was decided that the wax should be removed and any other necessary conservation work undertaken, and a full photographic survey was made of the painting before commencing. It was found that the wax and retouchings could be safely removed by applying a solvent mixture of dichloro-methane, toluene and methanol over the surface on swabs. This had no effect upon the original colours. Once cleaned, a graphic record of all the original paint was made.

⁵ G. Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, (1955), 18.

⁶ *Canterbury Cathedral Chronicle*, ii (1929), 6-8.



Martyrdom Scene before Conservation

(Photo. National Monuments Record)



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Martyrdom scene after Conservation

(Photo. M. Lewis)

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Large discrepancies were found in the condition of the painting. For instance, the left half of the martyrdom scene was very damaged, whilst the right side was remarkably well preserved (Plate III). This may have been due to water seeping in at the corner between the tower behind and the outer wall. The central area was evenly preserved, but in the conversion scene the condition was again variable. The central figures of St. Eustace and his hounds were clear. Whereas his horse was almost impossible to decipher, and the stag was very faded. The Christ figure was completely lost from the waist down, and the landscape background was almost entirely gone along the lowest edge, leaving only faint traces of the trees, which looked more like tadpoles swimming up into the painting.

This patchy overall impression rendered the narrative difficult to read. It was decided therefore to fill in the missing areas that destroyed the unity of the composition in order to retrieve its legibility (Plate IV). A thin coat of limewash was applied to those areas intended for in-painting in order to protect the wall and to provide a smooth white ground for the new paint. The original paint surface was left untouched. The in-painting may be seen from close-up by the interested observer as the colour has been applied in small dots. This method has three advantages; it allows accurate colour matching; it is not noticeable at a distance; and it may be easily distinguished from the original. A limited number of pigments from the Winsor and Newton water colour Series I were used because they are non-reactive and may be washed off easily. No form of surface varnish was applied.

During work it was possible to see how the original painting had been executed. The wall surfaces, made of large regular blocks, had been prepared with two thin ground layers. The lower one was a red ground that filled the deepest crevices. Over this was a thin white layer. In spite of these two layers the surface was not absolutely smooth; however, the painter seemed unperturbed by its unevenness and the paint may be seen to go in and out of the dips in the surface as though they did not exist. An under drawing was found in places where the overlying paint had faded or disappeared. It was executed in a sure sepia line approximately 2 mm. thick. There are no signs of 'squaring up' (enabling the painter to enlarge a small-scale drawing), but the sureness of the line indicates that the composition was already planned. The drawing plots in the edges of the cliffs and all the main figures. It even includes some quite small details of dress, for instance the S-shaped patterning on the hat worn by St. Eustace's wife, and all the features of the faces. However, the trees and the waves in the sea that were to be painted over the background were not included. The painter varied from the drawing on a number of occasions when

painting in the final composition. In the martyrdom scene the figures in the bull have been painted approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ in. below the outlines of the preliminary drawing and the position of the bull has been altered slightly.

The thinness of the preparatory grounds means that there are no overlapping sections of plaster that might indicate the order in which the painter executed this picture. The normal order of work for a wall painter would be from the top downwards, if only for practical reasons of avoiding paint drips. As the painting is divided into three sections (see p. 115) one might suppose that the painter completed the top section before moving down to start the next, therefore working in reverse order to the narrative, which begins at the bottom and ends at the top. However, the overall unity of the background setting and the way that the painting of the figures consistently overlaps the background at their edges regardless of their position in the painting suggest that the painter began by putting in the background areas of all three sections at once; that is, the land, water and sky. During this operation he left unpainted the areas within the outlines.

When applying the colours the painter seems to have commenced by painting in all the back-ground areas first, that is, the land, water and sky. He left unpainted all the areas within the outlines of the figures as drawn in the preliminary sketch. The only rare occasions where the figures are painted to any extent over the background colour rather than onto their own reserved areas, for example the antlers of the stag and the Christ figure, are where the painter had decided at the last moment to vary from the outlines of the drawing.

Having painted the landscape setting for the whole composition, the individual figures would then have been filled in. Each figure has been treated separately, and completed in one operation, with no set order for applying the colours. It would seem that the artist started at the top of the painting and worked down, both when painting the landscape and the figures. But there is no conclusive proof of this.

The painter's palette was limited. The main pigments are green and red, with yellow, black, white, brown less widely used, and a very small amount of blue. The range has been amplified by mixing the colours, usually with black and white to lighten or darken, but also with each other on occasion to produce purples and orange tones.

The green is generally well preserved and is a rich tone. It has been used to paint the landscape background as well as clothing. The green was mixed with black to make a darker mixture for the trees, yellow to enrich the colour of the earth in places, and white to obtain the very pale green of the waves in the sea.

Red is less widely used. The pigment has not survived as well as the green and has become a little powdery. Red was chiefly used to paint

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clothing, and mixed with white to obtain pink for the flesh tints and the sky. Yellows and browns were used to paint some of the animals and details of dress. The horse, bull, and monkeys are in a grey with pink and yellow added to vary its tone – especially noticeable on the bull. Grey is also used to paint the buildings, the numerous stones that are dotted over the landscape, and the sails of the ships. The small amount of blue used is to be found on the jackets of the two peasants that rescued St. Eustace's sons. Blue was not used to paint either the water or the sky, but a small amount may be seen on the edges of the clouds.

Traces of quite extensive gilding may be seen on different parts of the painting. All the haloes, the metallic parts of the horses' bridles and details such as the intricate patterning on St. Eustace's hunting horn and the woven gold chain from which it hangs were gilded.

The pigments are mixed with oil. This is normally considered a little unusual in mural painting which is usually executed in pigments mixed with size, egg, or casein.⁷ However it is not exceptional in England. The paintings in St. Stephen's Chapel, which were done over a century before the St. Eustace painting (1352–58), were painted in oils (and also on to a red preparation ground), as were the paintings in Eton College Chapel (1479–83) almost contemporary with the accepted dating of St. Eustace. Although the history of the development of oil painting is shrouded in mystery, it is now thought that this medium was certainly employed in Germany, France, Italy and England during the fourteenth century, if not before.⁸

Nothing, as yet, is known about the identity of the Canterbury painter, but the appearance of the painting would suggest that he was English. Unfortunately, very few examples of other late fifteenth-century English paintings remain. However, a comparison with those few that we do have shows the Canterbury painter to be somewhat outside the mainstream of English art of the time. The Eton College Chapel paintings for example, are sophisticated and elegant and display the strong Flemish and Burgundian influences then affecting court art.⁹ The Canterbury painting does not display such elegance or precision. The painter's craftsmanship should not be doubted; his painting technique is competent and often very skilled, but his drawing may be clumsy on occasion. His style at its most elegant is in an old-fashioned idiom that is rooted in the courtly traditions of

⁷ The true fresco method, normally associated with wall paintings, is rare in Britain.

⁸ R.J. Gettens and G.L. Stout, *Encyclopaedia of Painting Materials* (1966), 42. Eastlake is quoted here as being of the opinion that oils may have been used more for ordinary purposes and mechanical decorations.

⁹ O.E. Saunders, *A History of English Art in the Middle Ages* (1932).

fourteenth-century Europe. For example the beautiful but highly stylized drawing of St. Eustace's hounds; the semi-aerial perspective view of the buildings and cliffs, and the whole idea of painting the landscape on a smaller scale than the figures. The painting of the figures themselves shows greater awareness of contemporary developments, although these are often not fully realised. The figures have neither the swaying forms of fourteenth-century European art, nor the greater interest in studying from the model and in portraying emotion that developed in the fifteenth century.

The main aim of the Canterbury painter was to tell the story. The feelings of his characters are not displayed through their facial expressions, but the way they hold their hands for example (a method that has its roots in very early Christian art). When the painter does attempt to portray expression, the effect is almost absurd, for instance the grimacing lioness on the left in the central section, who is presumably meant to look fierce. The painter's style is strongly influenced by his technique which also displays a curious mixture of conflicting elements. He adheres to an old-fashioned method of finishing off figures and details by heavily outlining them in black, which has a tendency to flatten forms and to accentuate pattern. However, he painted the objects within these outlines with swift, free brush-strokes, often long and thick, that follow the shapes that they describe. He thus shows an interest and ability in creating effects of three-dimensionality and solidity. This bold and distinctly 'painterly' handling of colour may be clearly seen on the courtier's hats in the martyrdom scene (Plate IV) where the brush-strokes have an almost baroque sense of movement.

It seems a little strange that a more fashionable painter was not chosen for this large commission. It is possible that our artist had the advantages of being a fast worker, local, and economical. In any event, he managed to produce a painting which, even if clumsy on occasion, is a lively and original illustration of the legend.

There is no obvious reason why the legend of St. Eustace should be illustrated in Canterbury Cathedral. There are only three churches dedicated to St. Eustace in this country;¹⁰ and Keyser says of this painting¹¹ that it is 'the only instance in England where this saint is portrayed in mural painting'.¹²

¹⁰ F. Bond, *Dedications of English Churches, Ecclesiastical Symbolism, Saints and Emblems*, (1914), 109. At Ibberton in Dorset, Tavistock in Devon, St. Andrew and St. Eustachius at Hoo in Suffolk.

¹¹ C.E. Keyser, *A List of Buildings in Great Britain and Ireland having mural and other painted Decorations*, (1883), lvii.

¹² Tristram (*op. cit.*, 186) mentions a painting of what could be the conversion scene in Ingham Church in Stalham, Norfolk. The painting is on the back wall of the tomb

There is an early sculpted representation of St. Eustace on the north-west tower of Wells Cathedral (dated 1240) now badly damaged, which shows the saint standing almost knee-deep in water, holding a son on each arm.¹³ But no full representations (other than the Canterbury painting) are known in this country. On the Continent as well, it is more usual to find a single incident illustrated. The most famous is what is thought to be 'The Vision of St. Eustace' in the National Gallery, London, dated 1436.¹⁴ There are, however, examples of the whole legend being illustrated, for instance a series by Vitale da Bologna in the abbey at Pomposa, (c. 1300) and a stained glass window in Chartres commissioned by the furriers.¹⁵ Not all, but some of the scenes chosen by the Canterbury painter are shared in all three examples. It is very likely that the Canterbury painter knew of the window in Chartres, and he may have referred to it in his choice of scenes (the window contains more scenes than the painting). But the differences in design, and the whole method of representation make it impossible to conclude any direct influence.

When the Canterbury mural was painted, it is more than likely that it formed part of a series of paintings in the choir. Tristram writes¹⁶ that when the painting was discovered (during the 1830s) corresponding paintings referring to St. Christopher and St. George were still extant 'which were scarcely less fine in their narrative and romantic quality'. He continues 'there can be little doubt that these paintings all formed part of a general scheme that extended even over the walls themselves, a scheme which must be regarded as the last which was ever executed in the Cathedral before the obliteration and lime-washing of all such work buried from sight every vestige of early painting.'

An idea may be formed of the appearance of the paintings of St. Christopher and St. George from some drawings made during the 1830s and 1840s by George Austin (then senior architect and surveyor to the Dean and Chapter) reproduced in an article in *Archaeologia Cantiana*.¹⁷ They were both in the Corona and filled blind arches comparable to that containing the St. Eustace painting. A reference to these paintings in 1808¹⁸ states that 'the walls have

recess of Sir Oliver de Ingham (*d.* 1344) and seems to represent a hunting scene. The painting is very damaged and it is impossible to be certain of its subject. It could be the St. Hubert legend.

¹³ F. Bond, *op. cit.*, 110 (illustration).

¹⁴ This could again be confused with St. Hubert, although it is unlikely.

¹⁵ L'Abbé Y. Delaporte, *Les Vitraux de la Cathédrale de Chartres*, (1926), 398.

¹⁶ Canterbury Cathedral Chronicle, xxii (1935), 19-20.

¹⁷ *Arch. Cant.*, xxii (1895-6), 34-44.

¹⁸ E.W. Brayley, *Beauties of England and Wales*, 1808, 805.

been ornamented with paintings of which the legends of St. Christopher and St. George are still visible'. The St. Eustace legend would still have been covered at this date, but the statement implies that there would originally have been more paintings in this part of the church. The paintings in the Corona are generally accepted to date to the 1470s, about ten years earlier than the Eustace painting. A strict comparison between the Eustace painting and the two drawings is impossible. The reproductions show that the Saint figures almost filled the whole height of the wall, and the narrative was limited to a single incident. The buildings painted in the background of the St. George painting are very like those in the St. Eustace legend and even have the same cross-shaped windows. The fish swimming near the feet of St. Christopher are strongly reminiscent of the fish in the water around St. Eustace; there is even a speckled plaice in both paintings. It is not impossible to believe that they were all painted by the same man, nor is it possible to prove such an assertion.

A tenuous link between the three saints is that they all belong to the group of saints known as the fourteen Holy Helpers¹⁹ who were believed to have powers of intercession in sickness and death. No definite conclusions may be reached on this problem as nothing more is known at present about any other paintings in the choir. It is more than likely, however, that the painting of the legend of St. Eustace was part of a magnificent decorative programme, and its importance as such is invaluable.

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¹⁹ D.H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, (1979), 156. The so-called 'fourteen Holy Helpers' were a group of fourteen auxiliary saints who enjoyed a collective cult in the Rhineland from the fourteenth century. This devotion spread into other parts of northern Europe but had little following in France and Italy. It was at its height in the fifteenth century but was discouraged by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. The names of the fourteen saints varied slightly from place to place. The main principle of their selection seems to be the efficacy of their intercession against various diseases, and especially at the hour of death, in view of supposed revelations that their clients would thus obtain salvation. Several of them are of doubtful historicity. The list generally comprises: Acacius, Barbara, Blaise, Catherine of Alexandria, Christopher, Cyriacus, Denys, Erasmus, Eustace, George, Giles, Margaret of Antioch, Pantaleon, and Vitus. Sometimes any one may be substituted by Antony, Leonard, Nicolas, Sebastian or Roch.