Golden Threads & Silken Gardens

14th Century English Medieval Embroidery (*Opus Anglicanum*)

By

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"...having noticed that the ecclesiastical ornaments of certain English priests, such as choral copes and mitres, were embroidered in gold thread after a most desirable fashion, (the Pope) asked whence came this work. From England. They told him. Then exclaimed the Pope, 'England is for us surely a garden of delights..."

-Mathew Paris

(*Chronica Majora*)

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Abstract

"In contrast to fashionable theories of the present day a medieval work of art asks to be understood as well as admired"- A.F. Kendrick.

England, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries became famous for its production of high quality embroidery known as *Opus Anglicanum* or "English Work". The majority of the surviving examples are religious vestments. Some secular pieces have survived but they are less well documented. Due to this lack of documentation the main focus of this exhibition will be on religious embroidery. Past exhibitions of *Opus Anglicanum* have been presented in a chronological manner. This exhibition will take a different approach. The Butler-Bowdon cope and the Chichester-Constable chasuble, vestments thought to have been produced by the same workshop, will be brought together for the first time. The production, design, use and status of such vestments will be discussed in conjunction with other contemporary gothic works. Medieval art is best understood when studied in context. By placing the vestments in a contemporary medieval context, their worth and importance in the Middle Ages will be illustrated.

12,467 WORDS

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Production and Design of *Opus Anglicanum*

The term *Opus Anglicanum* or "English Work" began to be used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to refer to the high quality embroidery being produced in England at this time. The majority of the surviving examples of *Opus Anglicanum* are religious vestments used in the celebration of Mass. Both the Butler-Bowdon Cope (cat.1) and the Chichester-Constable chasuble (cat.2) are exquisite examples of the last phase of the production of *Opus Anglicanum.* In order to better understand the importance of these finely embroidered vestments, we must begin by looking at where and how they were made as well as the quality and style of their decoration.

It is impossible to determine exactly where most vestments were made. It is generally thought that the most luxurious vestments were made in London, but this is difficult to prove as no documentary evidence has been found connecting a surviving vestment to a specific workshop or person. The names of some of the embroiderers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have come down to us through records of payment and records of complaints.

There are three entries printed in "Memorials of London" from the archives of the city[i]. The first is dated 1307 and refers to the embroiderer Alexandre le Settre who "...came before the mayor...and received from Master William

Testa Archdeacon in the diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, £10 in part payment of £40, whish he owed him "for that embroidered choir-cope of his, which he bought..." [ii] The second entry is dated 1308: "John Bonde and John de Stebenheth, clerk, came before the mayor and delivered the embroidered cope of the value of £30, and the Mayor and Aldermen and commonality did promise to pay....(in certain installments one fourth being the share of Margery, wife of John Stebenheth, and a fourth to Katherine daughter of Simon Godard of full age, and remainder to John Bonde to the use of Thomas and Simon, children of Simon Godard). "The same cope was given by the Mayor and commonality to the Bishop of Worcester at his consecration at Canterbury." [iii] The third entry, dated 1325, is a reference to the previous one and states "An installment of £15 was still unpaid for the "embroidered cope of silk and gold" which was given to the Bishop of Worcester when he was made Archbishop of Canterbury."[iv] These records not only give us the names of embroiderers possibly working in London in the fourteenth century, but also an insight into the organization of the embroiderers workshop and evidence of the great costliness of the goods produced.

The division of payment in the second entry suggests that there were many people involved in the production of this cope, not just a single embroiderer. During this time it was not unusual to have family workshops, where the skills of the craft were passed down generation-to-generation, and additional apprentices were taken on as needed. It is known that by the thirteenth and

fourteenth centuries, professional embroidery workshops were well established and required workers to serve an apprenticeship of seven years. Evidence of this apprenticeship can be found "in a Bill of Complaint brought by John Catour of Reading on the 8th of February 1369, against a broderer of London, Ellis Mympe, for beating and ill-treating his daughter, Alice, who had been apprenticed for five years."[v]

Unlike in Paris, where the embroiderers became a guild in thirteenth century, the workshops of London seem to have had no formal organization as a guild until they were officially incorporated by charter in 1561.[vi] Marc Fitch suggests that this is due to the type of embroidery being produced. In France there was greater need to form a guild early on; the best of the French embroiderers concentrated on creating rich and luxurious clothing for the nobility. In England, the best embroiderers seem to have concentrated on clothing for the church, in the form of finely embroidered vestments. These vestments were often large in size and could take up to several years to produce. A payment record dated 1271 referring to the now lost altar frontal made for Westminster Abbey reveals that it took four women almost four years to complete the work.[vii]

The embroiderers of France were under pressure by the nobility to produce their wares in months instead of years, due to the ever-changing fashions of the court. The fashions of the ecclesiastics were ruled by church edicts that very rarely changed. The increased turnaround of the French embroiderers meant

that decisions and policies concerning their craft had to be made more frequently requiring a certain amount of organization and co-operation, which was provided by the institution of the guild.

Although no documentary evidence exists that states that there was a formal guild of embroiderers prior to 1561, there is evidence to suggest that there was an informal organization of the embroidery workshops of London. It is noted in a register of misteries of the city of London, in the "letter book H", that in 1376 Nicholas Halley and Robert Ascombe represented the Broderers on the Common Council of the city.[viii]

The majority of documentary evidence we have concerning embroiderers from this period places them working in London. By the mid- to- late fourteenth century London had become a bustling city of trade. A crossroads of commerce where merchants could sell their goods and workshops could purchase the raw materials necessary to create their products. The essentials needed for the embroiderers' craft; bolts of cloth, silks and velvets from Italy and the Near East, fine silk threads of many colours as well as silver and gold thread, from Venice, Lucca, and Cyprus, could all be easily attained in London. For the makers of *Opus Anglicanum* it would have been an ideal place from which to ply their trade, not just for the accessibility of raw materials, but also because of the proximity to the court and the aristocracy, the main customers of their trade. It is known that, as of 1330, King Edward III had an official embroidery workshop operating in the Tower of London, overseen by the John

of Cologne, the Royal Armourer.[ix] By comparing contemporary thirteenth and fourteenth century records of property transactions in London with the names of known embroiderers working in London at the same time, Marc Fitch has been able to draw together possible evidence that a number of embroiderers were working in London, to the South of the Church of St. Mary le Bow.[x]

The product made by these embroiderers was considered worthy enough to be given as gifts from the aristocracy to both foreign and domestic high-ranking ecclesiastics. Even the Pope himself was desirous of these exquisitely embroidered vestments. One of the most famous and oft used quotes concerning *Opus Anglicanum* comes from an account by Mathew Paris in his *Chronica Majora* under the year 1246: "...having noticed that the ecclesiastical ornaments of certain English priests, such as choral copes and mitres, were embroidered in gold thread after a most desirable fashion, asked whence came this work. From England, they told him. Then exclaimed the Pope, 'England is for us surely a garden of delights, truly an inexhaustible well'...Thereupon the same Lord Pope (Pope Innocent IV), allured by the desire of the eye, sent letters, blessed and sealed, to wellnigh all the abbots of the Cistercian order established in England, desiring that they should send to him without delay, these embroideries of gold which he preferred above all others, as if these acquisitions would cost him nothing..."[xi]

By 1295 there are over one hundred entries of embroidery described as *Opus Anglicanum* in the Vatican's inventory lists and many more were to be added

by the end of the fourteenth century. On 17th May, 1317, Queen Isabella "paid 50 marks in part payment of a hundred, to Rose, wife of John of Bureford, citizen and merchant of London for an embroidered cope for the choir-lately purchased from her to make a present to the Lord High Pontiff (Pope John XXII)."[xii] Pope John XXII also received lavishly embroidered vestments from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely.[xiii]

The raw materials required to make vestments fit to be worn by the highest orders of the church were not inexpensive. If we look at the raw materials needed to make a vestment such as The Chichester-Constable chasuble, the great expense needed to create such a lavish vestment becomes clear. The crimson velvet material used for the ground was one of the most luxurious and expensive fabrics; around £72 could buy you enough to make five garments, this is more money than the average worker would make in a year.[xiv] The fine silk thread for the embroidery had to be imported from northern Italy, silver and silver-gilt thread was imported from Cyprus or Italy, the pearls and the gold beads could be found in England, these materials plus the cost of the intensive labour involved, all tallied up to a considerable sum. There is a fourteenth century account of the Earl of Lincoln paying £200 for an embroidered cloth.[xv] The luxuriousness of these embroideries often meant that in times of need they were stripped of their gems and pearls, and burned in order to obtain the silver and gold used in the stitching.

London was not only a crossroads for the trade of goods, but also for the transmission of fashions and styles. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the gothic style was dominant both in England and on the continent. The greatest manifestation of this style can be seen in the medieval cathedrals and abbeys of Europe such as Sainte-Chapelle, in Paris (fig.1), and Westminster Abbey in London (fig.2). In fourteenth century England a highbred of the gothic style emerged, moving away from the clear soaring lines of the early gothic period, to one of a more refined nature, concentrating instead on the embellishment of the architecture and complicated window tracery.

This new English decorated style can be seen in the west front of Exeter Cathedral (fig.3). The architectural elements of this style are its most distinctive feature. Not just confined to building design, it was easily transferable into other mediums, such as stained glass, wall and panel painting, illuminated manuscripts, metalwork, embroidery and many other contemporary medieval products, both secular and religious.

Many popular motifs were conveyed to various workshops through the use of artists' model books. One of the most famous surviving examples is the Pepysian model book c.1370-90 (cat.15). It contains drawings of animals and birds, as well as two textile patterns and several architectural drawings, one of which is of contemporary window tracery (fig.4). The use of model books meant that the same design could be adapted for use in a metalworkers workshop (fig.5) as well as in a manuscript workshop (fig.6). Although, model books

contributed to the distribution of the style to many different workshops, ultimately the quality of the execution of the design depended upon the skill of the craftsperson. There can be no doubt that the makers of *Opus Anglicanum* were skilled craftsmen.

The techniques used in making *Opus Anglicanum* called upon not only the skills of an embroiderer, but also that of the illustrator or painter. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was a growing division between the designer and the craftsperson. The designs were not embroidered free hand. On some vestments, where the threads have worn away a very sophisticated underdrawing can be seen.

The similarity between the style of the figures found in fourteenth century embroidery and contemporary manuscript illumination of East Anglia, and wall and panel painting, has led to the suggestion that the masters of these arts provided the design templates for the embroiderers. Eileen Roberts has proposed that there is a stylistic link, between the wall painting of St. William of York situated behind the high altar screen in St. Albans Abbey (fig.7), and one of the Bishops embroidered on the orphrey of the Butler-Bowdon cope (fig.8). She argues that both figures wear the same early type of mitre, that they both employ a straight line for the lower eyelid and have small down turned mouths, the amice that they wear stands away from the neck in a similar manner, and their chasubles fall from the wrists in shallow parallel zigzags.

Upon closer examination, the St. Albans wall painting of St. William of York bears little resemblance to the Bishops embroidered on the orphrey of the Butler-Bowdon cope. They do wear the same early mitre, but that could be because they both portray a Bishop from the early middle ages. The St. Albans figure is more elongated in form and face and he is bearded, not clean-shaven like the Butler-Bowdon Bishop. The St. Albans Bishop's hair is curly and his nose is straight, while the nose of the Butler-Bowdon Bishop is rounded and hooked. The St. Albans wall painting does, however, bear a resemblance to a Pope from the Catworth fragments of embroidery currently in the V&A (fig.9). The Catworth Embroideries bear the arms of the Clinton family. These arms are also found painted on the ceiling of St. Albans Abbey, and the Clinton family is listed in the Abbeys' records of benefactors.[xvi] This evidence suggests that there may have been artists who worked for patrons in many different capacities one region of the country.

The St. William of York wall painting, in St. Albans Abbey, is a rare surviving fourteenth century example. The decorated style of architecture did not allow for much wall space and fewer large-scale commissions seem to have been made. Of the surviving examples, there is a stylistic distinction between a court style and a provincial style. While the majority of the surviving examples are provincial in style, the gracefulness of the figures in both the Chichester-Constable Chasuble and the Butler-Bowdon cope implies that the designer of these vestments was a highly skilled painter, and would have been acquainted

with works of art like the Kingston Lacy Screen (cat.6) and the Thornham Parva retable (cat.7), rare surviving examples of the court style. The decoration surrounding the figures on the vestments is reminiscent of the spiral columns, crocketed arches, spires and sculpture niches found on thirteenth and fourteenth century canopied tombs and shrines (fig.10). The overall effect has been compared to the intricate stained glass rose windows found in many medieval churches and cathedrals (fig.11), and to elaborate sculptural programmes like the one on the west front of Exeter Cathedral (fig.3).

The embroiderers of England excelled at the fineness and competence of their stitching. Many varieties of stitching techniques were used including underside couching, split stitch, raised work, French knots, satin stitch, and laid and couched work. Embroidery worked on a velvet ground had an intermediary layer of linen onto which the stitching would have been done. The excess linen would have been cut away after the completion of the piece, leaving no outward trace.

The Butler-Bowdon cope, the Chichester-Constable chasuble and accompanying stole and maniple, represent the zenith of English embroidery in the mid-fourteenth century. In the late fourteenth century the quality of the embroidery produced in England began to decline. Instead of working directly onto the ground fabric, motifs were embroidered separately and then applied to the fabric. The stitches used became larger and quicker to execute, creating a cruder, less refined effect. At the same time as the decline of English

embroidery, the demand for high quality Flemish and Belgian tapestries increased.

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[i] Riley, 1868, mentioned in Lethaby, W.R. "The Broderers of London and Opus Anglicanum" p.74
[ii] Lethaby, W.R. p.74
[iii] Lethaby, W.R. p.74
[iv] Lethaby, W.R.p.74
[v] Wallis, Penelope p.135
[vi] Lethaby, W.R. p.74
[vii] Young, Bonnie p.291
[viii] Lethaby, W.R. "English Primitives-London Painters and Opus Anglicanum"p.178
[ix] King, Donald–Age of Chivalry catalogue p.159
[x] Fitch, Marc "London Makers of Opus Anglicanum"
[xi] Young, Bonnie p.291
[xii] Christie p.3
[xiii] Young, Bonnie p.291
[xiv] Staniland, Kay pp.28-29
[xv] King, Donald–Age of Chivalry p.160
[xvi] Roberts, Eileen

The Purpose and Spiritual Worth of *Opus Anglicanum*

Unlike today's art, which mostly seems to be a form of commentary about contemporary society, art in the Middle Ages was created to reflect the ideals and beliefs of the time. Thought and use were intimately connected. How these religious vestments would have been worn and used is key to understanding their importance and meaning within Medieval society.

The religious vestments of the Middle Ages; copes, chasubles, amices, maniples etc., all have their origin in secular Greco-Roman fashion of the second and third century AD. Greco-Roman fashion at this time was very closely related to a persons age, class and office within society. Only magistrates, and boys sixteen years old and under, were allowed to wear togas with purple strips; bleached white togas were to be worn by magistrates only. Togas were worn on special occasions and were not considered to be everyday dress.

The pallium tunic, a short version of the toga, was more comfortable and practical for everyday wear. This style of tunic was often decorated with woven strips of coloured wool called clavé. At first these were used as identifiers of status. The colour and design of the clavé on your tunic corresponded to who

you were in society. However, by the second century B.C. the clavé began to loose their symbolism, becoming merely strips of decoration.

The followers of the early Christian church would have been used to garments being used as signifiers of status. Early on in the Christian church there seems to have been a distinction made between the dress of the lay congregation and that of the clergy, a logical transposition of the idea of vestments as symbols of secular status to symbols of religious status. Unlike the earlier era, garments signifying status within the church were not to be worn outside of the church or when performing non-religious tasks. Walafrid Strabo a Medieval writer has recorded that Pope Stephen I (253-257) advised: "Priests should not employ their sacred vestments in the ordinary usage of daily life."[i]

Early Christian art very rarely depicts contemporary clergy or laity. One of the earliest and rare depictions of this division between secular and clerical dress in the early church can be seen in the Byzantine mosaics decorating the dome of the Church of St. George at Salonika (fig.12). Both clerical and secular saints are depicted orans. The clerical saints are shown wearing a *paenula*, the forerunner of the chasuble, underneath which is an unadorned *tunica alba*. The lay Saints are shown wearing a chlamys under which is an embroidered *tunica alba* that is cinched at the waist by a girdle. There is evidence to suggest that by the fourth century attempts were made to regulate the garments worn by the clergy. Pope Silvester (314-336) decreed, "Deacons should wear the (*tunica*)

dalmatica in church rather than the *colobium*...and that their left hand should be covered with a cloth."[ii]

As the church grew in popularity and size, edicts were increasingly issued in order to standardise religious practice. By the year 1250 the Church in Europe had become prosperous and very powerful. As a result, church vestments had become standardised and specific functions were assigned to them. This created a stronger division between everyday clerical dress and the dress worn by the clergy during celebration of Mass and ceremonial occasions. The increased wealth of the church meant that new kinds of cloth could be used in their construction; silk, cloth of gold, velvet, and many possessed hand embroidered decoration. The lavishness of religious vestments in the Middle Ages served to highlight their secondary function, of transforming the ordinary human man into a worthy, holy servant.

The alb became not just an article of clothing worn for added insulation, but took on the function of a metaphorical shield that separated the humble human man, from the precious and holy garb he wore during the celebration of the Eucharist. The vestments became ornaments, akin to the reliquaries (see cat.6), censers (see cat.5), and candlesticks adorning the altar; they were no longer just costumes (fig.13). Like the reredos placed behind most altars (fig.14) they became focal points for religious inspiration.

The chasuble is the chief vestment worn during the celebration of Mass. Of all the religious vestments, the chasuble has undergone the most shape

changes. Originally, the chasuble was a large garment, circular in shape, with an opening for the head. This early shape was derived from the Roman *paenula* also called a *casula* (little house), which is the derivation of the word chasuble.[iii] During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the vestment became increasingly decorated with embroidery, use of silver and gold thread made it quite heavy so that when the priest raised the wine above his head during the Eucharist, the material covering the arms no longer fell back naturally. Thus, the shape of the chasuble was altered in order to perform the Mass unencumbered (fig.15).

Most chasubles have embroidered orphrey bands appliquéd on the back, creating a cross or single vertical column. These embroidered orphrey bands began as plain strips of material used to cover seams and to reinforce areas of stress. Eventually, advances in textile manufacturing in the Middle Ages meant that cloth could be woven in wider lengths. Chasubles could now be created with larger pieces of cloth, reducing the number of seams, and removing the need to attach reinforcing strips of material. Even though the orphrey bands no longer had a practical use, they remained, taking the purely symbolic role, of representing the Cross (fig.16).

In the Middle Ages it was standard practice for the priest to perform the celebration of Mass with his back to the congregation (see cat.11). The orphrey bands on the back of the chasuble, applied in the shape of a cross were a visual focal point for the congregation- a symbol reminding them of the origin and

importance of the Mass being said. On some chasubles the orphrey bands have been abandoned all together, allowing, Biblical and Saintly scenes to take over the entirety of the back panel (see cat.2). These too provided a visual focal point for the congregation.

The stole and maniple, vestments worn in conjunction with the chasuble during the celebration of Mass, were also often decorated with embroidered Saintly scenes. Worn under the chasuble, any decoration on the stole would have been for the edification of the priest only, as it was hidden from the rest of the congregation. Although exposed, the decoration on the maniple would have been relatively small and not easily visible to the congregation. Memorial brasses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provide us with a visual record of how the principle vestments would have been worn (fig.17). The most extensively decorated vestment was the cope.

The cope was mainly worn on ceremonial occasions not associated with the celebration of Mass, and when officiating over the choir. Like the chasuble, the cope is also derived from a form of large Roman cloak equipped with a hood. The large semi-circular shape of the copes, and the vestigial hood provided ample space for embroidered decoration. Due to conservation issues, copes are usually displayed hung fully spread out with the straight edge at the top. However, this is not how the laity would have normally viewed them. Scenes on the cope would have been placed to fall in certain areas whilst being worn. By displaying it flat, the immediate impact created by the three dimensional

dynamics of the scenes is lost. Figures closest to the middle usually face the main subjects down the back, those that would fall on the outer sides of the back face each other and the next segment of figures face towards the straight edge, so that they confront each other on the front. The only instance when the cope would have been fully spread out flat is during the consecration of a Bishop. When the Bishop prostrated himself before the altar, the acolytes of the church "spread out the cope like a ceremonial rug before the altar"[iv]

The adornment of religious garb with Biblical and Saintly scenes would have been in keeping with the themes represented in contemporary church wall painting. *Opus Anglicanum* and religious wall paintings are not just connected stylistically, but also ideologically. The themes painted on the church walls provided a visual method of communication, conveying the importance and relevance of the Biblical and Saintly scenes to their immediate surroundings, on an everyday basis. The scenes embroidered on the religious vestments worn during the celebration of Mass also provided a visual focal point and a method of communication, but one more closely connected to the actual performance of religious rites.

It was the duty of the parishioners to ensure that their church was provided with the basic items needed to perform the liturgy. Censers, chalices, patens, a missal and religious vestments would all have been considered essential church articles. In the thirteenth century, Archbishop Walter Grey of York

declared, "That the church should be provided with the principle vestment of the church (the chasuble) and also a choir cope."[v]

Further statutes were issued in the thirteenth century concerning the colour of the vestments. A document from Lincoln, dated 1260, provides some evidence of the importance of colour. "Let (the Sacrist) see that the copes be as the feast required. If Martyr, Apostle, Evangelist or Virgin let the silken copes be red for the most part." He also states that if Confessor it shall be green or brown, if Matron or Betrothed it should be saffron in colour.[vi]

Most churches were not wealthy enough to possess a full set of vestments in every colour necessary for the feasts of the liturgical season. By examining contemporary inventories of various provincial churches it has become clear that most did own at least three sets of vestments, each one consisting of an alb, chasuble, stole, maniple and girdles, the necessary garments for the performance of Mass. In 1277, 65 out of 150 churches and chapels in Cambridgeshire recorded having three suits of vestments and by 1368, in Norfolk, almost every church is recorded as having three or more suits of vestments. [vii] Janet Mayo has pointed out that the great number of churches possessing three suits of vestments is indicative of a division of the vestments into festal or principle, dominical or Sunday, and ferial or workday.

Of all of these churches, very few listed copes amongst their possessions. In an inventory of the diocese of Norwich taken in 1368, "out of 358 churches, 127 of them do not specifically record the cope."[viii] In contrast, when William of

Wykeham died in 1404 he "left to the Cathedral church of Winchester his new vestment of blue clothe wrought with gold lions, with thirty copes of the same suit orphreyed with the story of Jesse."[ix] An early fifteenth century inventory of Christchurch Canterbury lists 96 copes of green material, and a set of 39 copes of white cloth of gold, as well as, five chasubles, two dalmatics, six tunics, and 76 albs with stoles and maniples.[x] Only through the patronage of the aristocracy, could cathedrals afford to possess such a vast array of lavish vestments. Cloth was so valued that there are many records of the nobility bequeathing secular garments to churches and cathedrals. The garments would be re-used and made into liturgical vestments.

Liturgical vestments were so prized by the church that special chests were created to house them (cat.8). When the main body of a garment was worn through, the embroidery would be carefully cut out, saved and re-attached to a new garment. Many thirteenth and fourteenth century examples of *Opus Anglicanum* can be found on later liturgical vestments, or saved as independent pieces of embroidery (fig.18)

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[i] Hayward, Jane p.300
[ii] Hayward, Jane p.301
[iii] Hogarth, Sylvia p.8
[iv] Frankfurter, Alfred "Opus Anglicanum" p.58
[v] Mayo, Janet p.53
[vi] Mayo, Janet p.55
[vii] Mayo, Janet p.55
[viii] Mayo, Janet p.53
[ix] Mayo, Janet p.53
[x] Mayo, Janet p.53

The Butler-Bowdon Cope
&
The Chichester-Constable Chasuble

The Butler-Bowdon cope (cat.1) and the Chichester-Constable chasuble (cat.2) and accompanying stole and maniple (cat.3) represent the highest quality of *Opus Anglicanum* achieved in the mid-fourteenth century. These vestments use the same ground material, crimson velvet, and are so close in design and technique, that it has long been speculated that they originated from the same workshop and may have been part of the same set of liturgical vestments. The high quality of the workmanship and the richness of the decoration indicate that they were intended for a wealthy religious institution.

The combination and order of the scenes on the back of the Chichester Constable chasuble and the Butler-Bowdon cope appears on no other known pieces of *Opus Anglicanum*. There are two existing inventory descriptions, one dated 1402 belonging to the Duke of Berry, and one dated 1399 from St. Albans Cathedral, that describe copes with the same iconography; from the bottom up: the Annunciation; the Adoration; and the Coronation. Unfortunately there is not enough information to securely link either of the vestments described to currently known pieces of *Opus Anglicanum*. The other peculiarity that both of these vestments have in common is the depiction of angels holding stars.

Angels frequently appear on pieces of *Opus Anglicanum*, but they are usually depicted censing, playing instruments or holding nothing at all.

Several connections have been made between certain motifs found on the Butler-Bowdon cope and Chichester-Constable chasuble, and those found in the now destroyed St. Stephen's chapel in the royal palace at Westminster. St. Stephen's chapel was rebuilt during the reign of Edward III (1327-77) and construction was completed in 1350. In an attempt to compete with France, Edward III created the extravagant chapel to rival that of Ste. Chapelle in Paris. It was decorated using the best techniques and materials, and the latest fashionable motifs, including elaborate micro-architectural spires, crocketed ogee arches, lion masks, gesso gilded stars and crescents, and lions passant (fig.18). All of these motifs, apart from the lions passant appear on both the Chichester-Constable chasuble and the Butler-Bowdon cope. The lions passant do appear on the orphrey of the Butler-Bowdon cope (fig.8).

The Coronation of the Virgin scene on the Chichester-Constable chasuble is the only one known to have both a star and a crescent in the background. Frances Morris suggested that the prominence given to the Adoration of the Magi highlighted the importance of kingship and lineage. She went on to say that the older king perhaps represented Edward the confessor, followed by Edward II, then his son Edward III.

The concept of placing oneself in conjunction with a biblical or Saintly scene, and becoming a part of the message, is one that was increasingly familiar to

medieval patrons. Prior Henry Eastry of Canterbury Cathedral took this idea one step further and in c.1300 had a prior's throne installed in the chapter house (fig.19). The throne, which is set against the wall, is a continuation of the micro-architectural niches that continue on either side. It is thought that at one time these niches contained either Biblical or Saintly scenes. By constructing his throne in such a manner, Prior Eastry became an integral part of the holy surroundings every time he sat down.

The connection between Edward III and the Adoration of the Magi scenes in the Butler-Bowdon cope and the Chichester-Constable chasuble is not as direct. It is known that Edward III proclaimed his father Edward II a martyr and that he was attempting to make Edward the Confessor an important national royal Saint, equivalent to St. Louis in France. Given this, it is easy to see how the Three Magi could be interpreted as being these three English kings. However, due to lack of concrete evidence, this theory must remain speculative. The iconography of the vestments gives us very little evidence as to for whom the cope was made.

The lavishness of the designs and materials used in both vestments, the use of luxurious crimson velvet for the ground material, the addition of pearls, gold and glass beads, and the use of silver and silver-gilt thread suggests that they were intended for a wealthy, if not a royal, religious foundation. The provenance of these two vestments gives further clout to this supposition. The Chichester-Constable family owned the chasuble for many years; it is thought

to have been inherited by the family in the sixteenth century. In the will of Lady Margaret Scrope, wife of Sir John Constable, dated 1559, "she bequeaths 'ye antient vestment' to 'ye fair chappelle,'"[i] The chapel she refers to in her will is one that her husband had recently built on their estate. Lady Margaret Scropes' ancestors served in high -ranking positions at the court of both Edward II and III and it is possible that the chasuble was a royal gift to the family.

There is less evidence of the provenance of the Butler-Bowdon cope. The Butler-Bowdon family had possession of another vestment, which has been associated with the marriage in 1398, of the Earl of Stafford to Anne Plantagenet, granddaughter of Edward III. Since this vestment had come to the family by direct inheritance, it is possible that the Butler-Bowdon cope came to the family in the same way as the other vestment. [ii]

Several other pieces of *Opus Anglicanum* have been associated with these vestments on stylistic grounds. Amongst which are, The Vich cope currently in the Museo Episcopal de Vich, Spain (fig.20), alb apparels in the V&A depicting the Life of the Virgin (fig.21), and part of an altar frontal or dossal depicting Saints Lawrence and Margaret in The Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington D.C. (fig.22). All of these examples have been worked on crimson velvet and exhibit remarkable similarity in the style of their figures. The Vich cope is the closest in style to the Butler-Bowdon cope and Chichester-Constable chasuble, showing only slight variations in its details (fig.20). The similarities in quality

and design between all of these pieces points to their manufacture possibly occurring in the same workshop in London.

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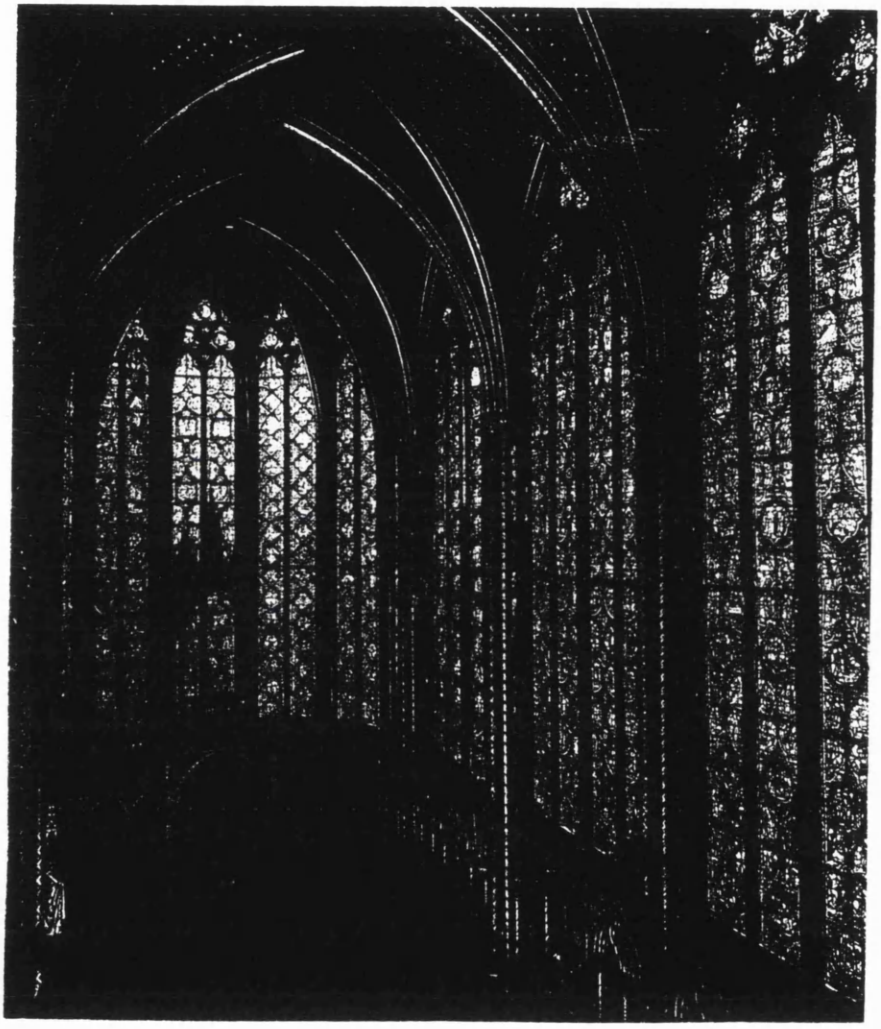
[i] Young, Bonnie "Opus Anglicanum" p.297
[ii] Young, Bonnie "Opus Anglicanum" p.297

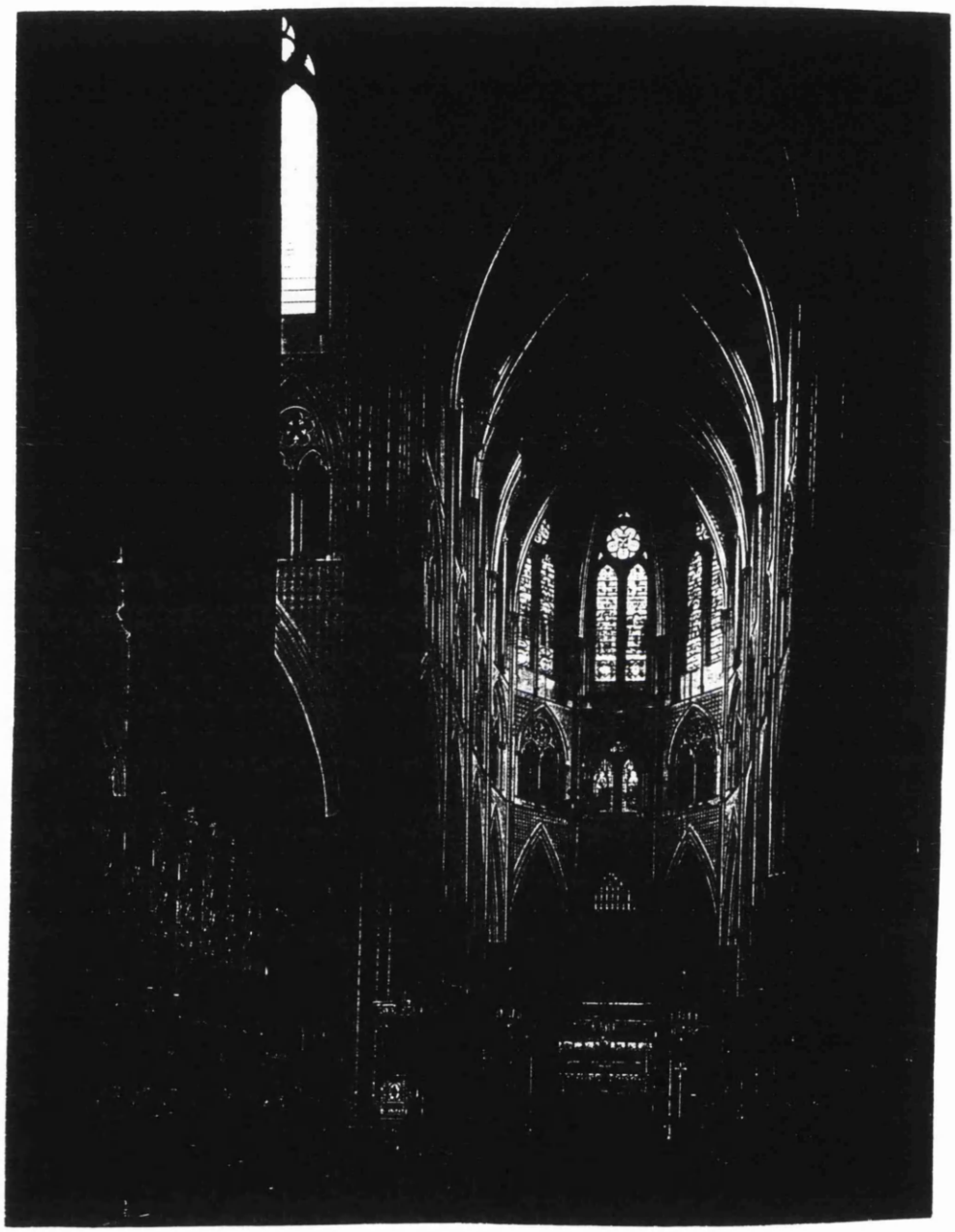
Conclusion

The Chichester-Constable chasuble and the Butler-Bowdon cope would have conveyed meanings on several different levels. These opulent vestments would have been symbols of the power and wealth possessed by the patron or the religious foundation for which they were made. The rich ornamentation of the vestments made them much more than just garments to be worn during church celebrations; they became ornate symbols of faith like the reliquaries, censers, chalices and patens that were placed on the altar. The micro-architectural decoration on them was a direct echo of the church architecture that surrounded them. The Biblical scenes and the Saints embroidered on the vestments created a visual and ideological link between the priest performing the religious rite and the congregation behind him.

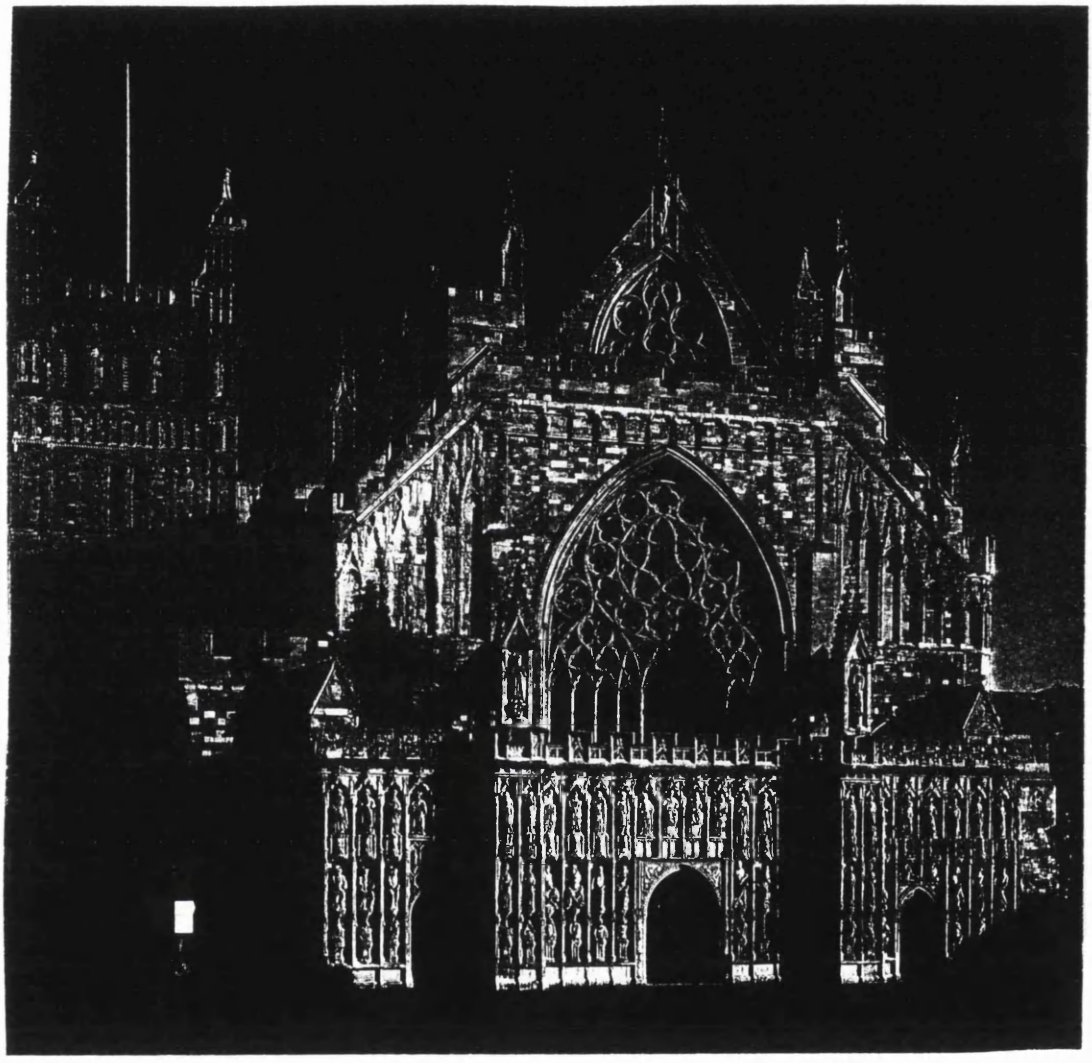
Even though we may never be able to prove where the Chichester-Constable chasuble and Butler-Bowdon cope were produced or that they were made for royalty, the importance of these vestments is in no way diminished. They stand on their own as items of great beauty and when shown in conjunction with other contemporary gothic objects, they provide insight into the ideals and beliefs of the Medieval society that created them. They were produced at a time when art and craft were indistinguishable from one another; a time when virtually everything produced had a purpose and a message.



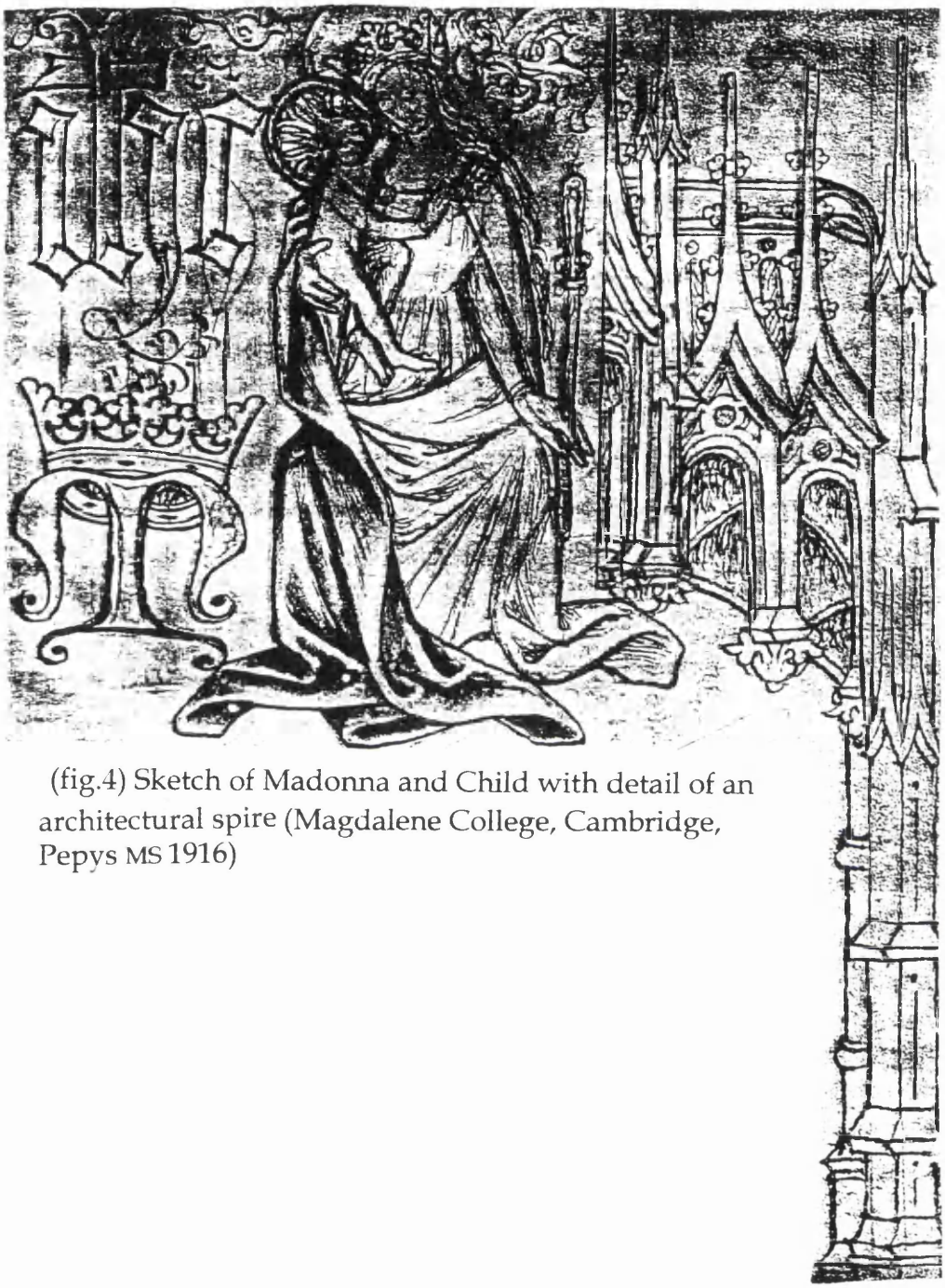
(fig.1) Sainte-chapelle, Paris, built 1241-8



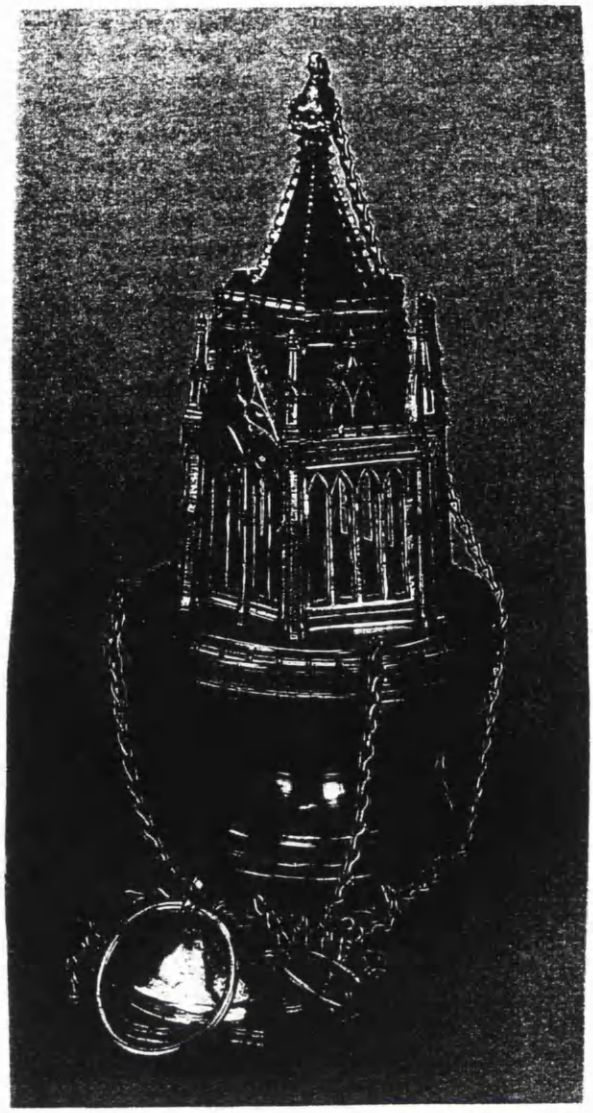
(fig.2) West Minster Abbey, London, begun 1245



(fig.3) West front of Exeter Cathedral 1350-1400



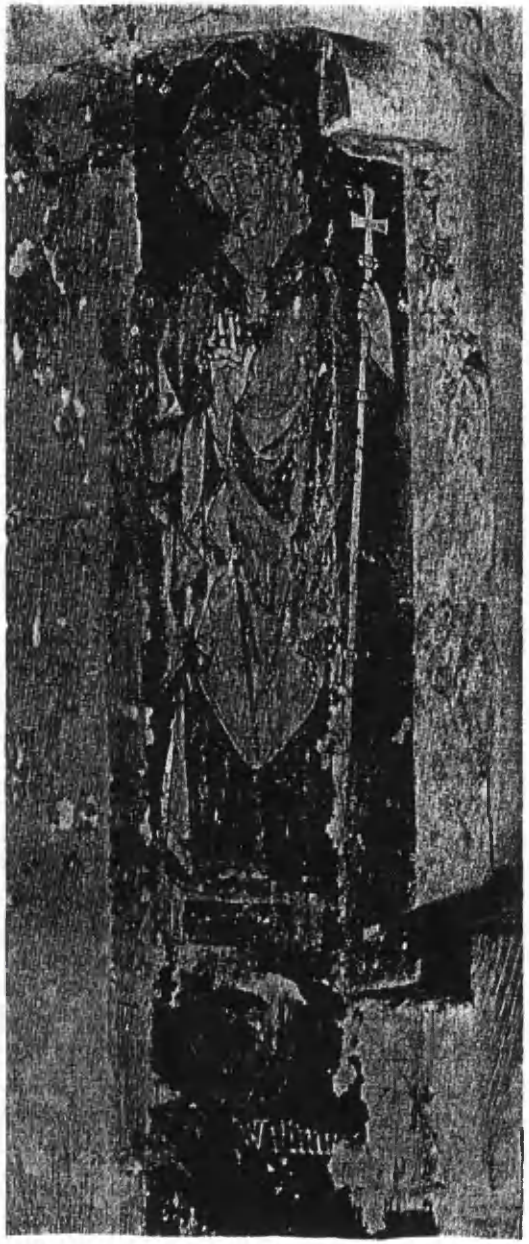
(fig.4) Sketch of Madonna and Child with detail of an architectural spire (Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys MS 1916)



(fig.5) Ramsey Abbey censer, English, c.1325 (V&A M.268-1923)

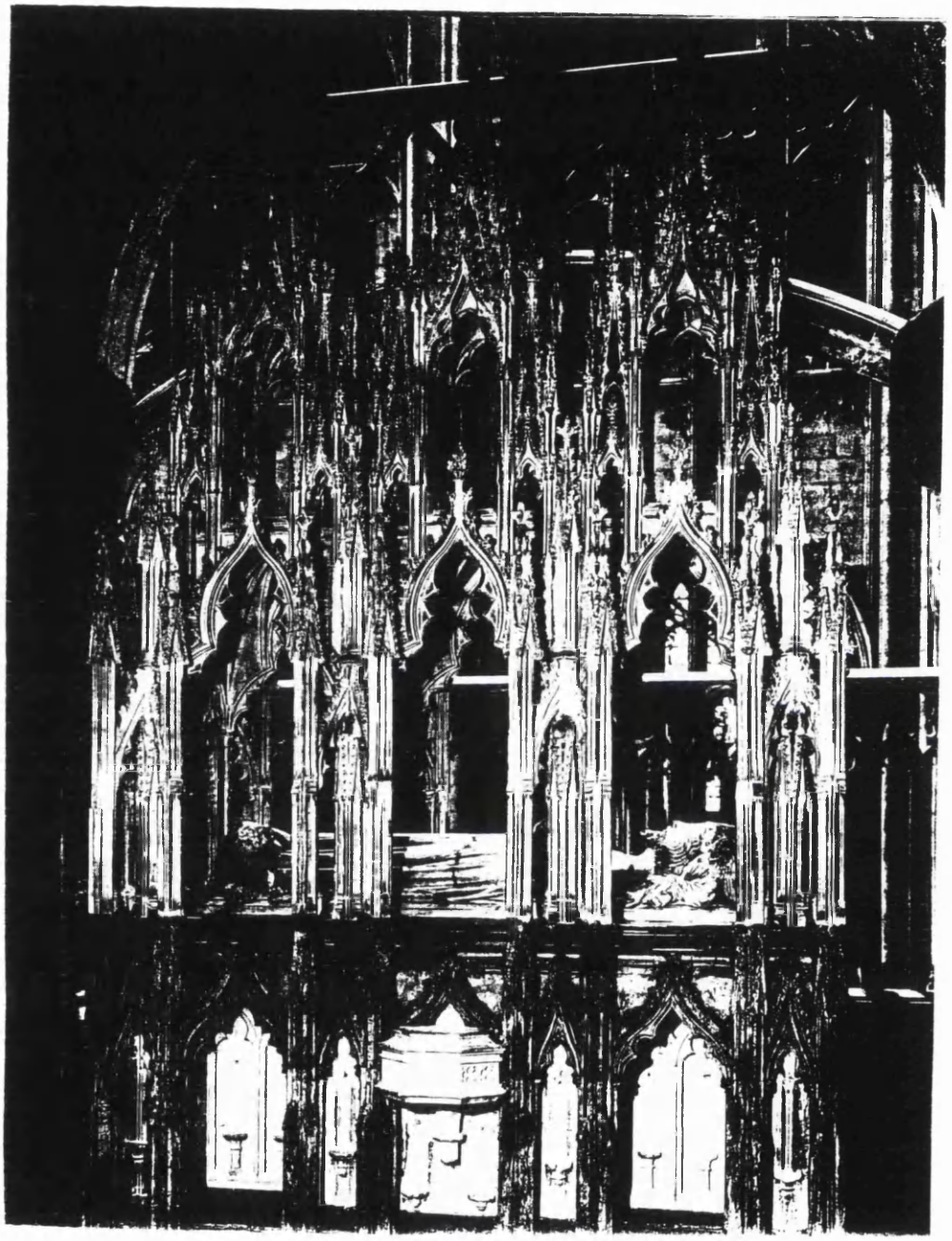
(fig.6) The Anian (Bangor) Pontifical, English, c.1320-8 (Dean and Chapter, Bangor Cathedral)

(fig.8) Detail of a Bishop from the

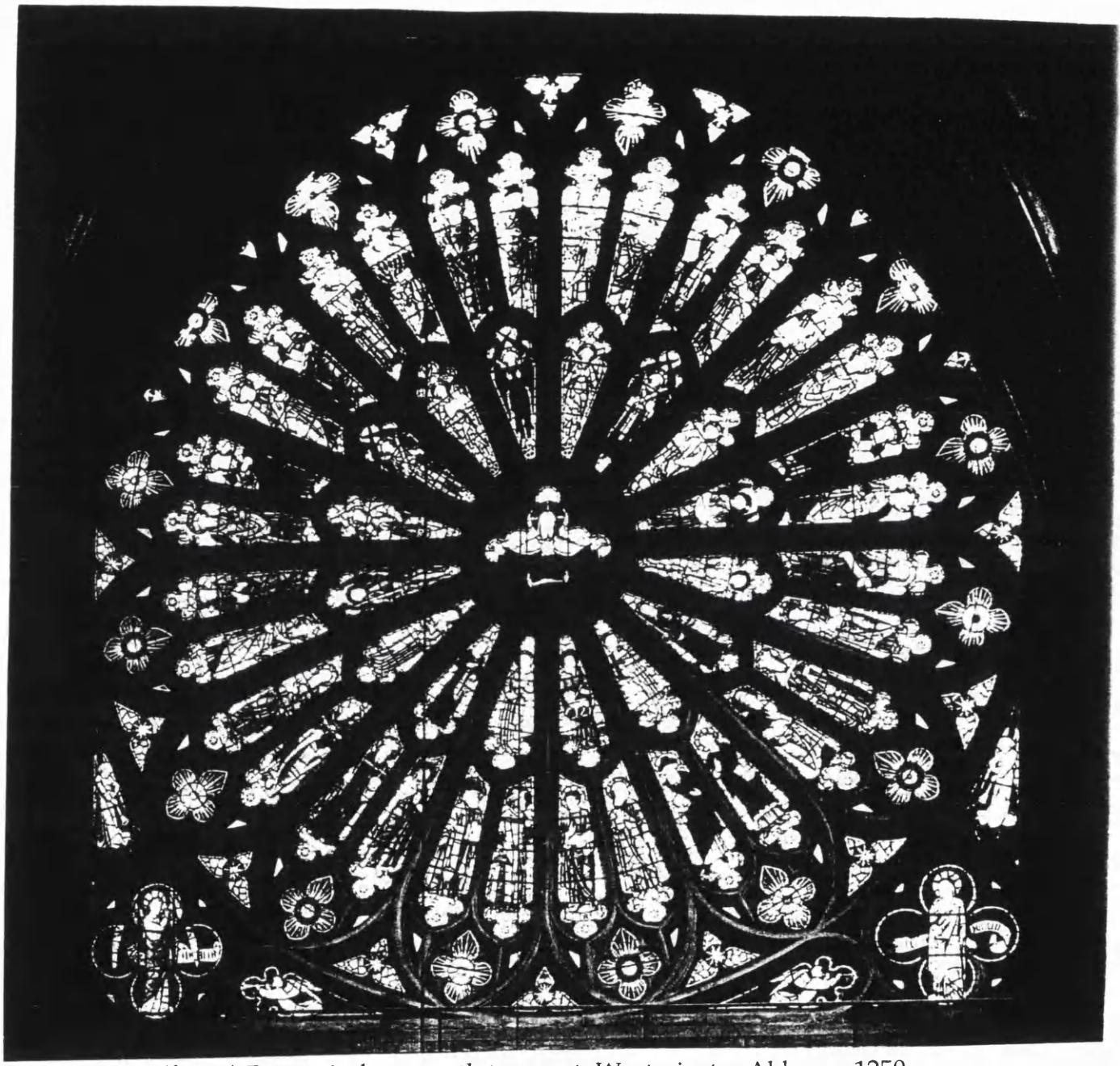


(fig.7) Wall painting of St. William

(fig.9) Detail of a Bishop from the Catworth



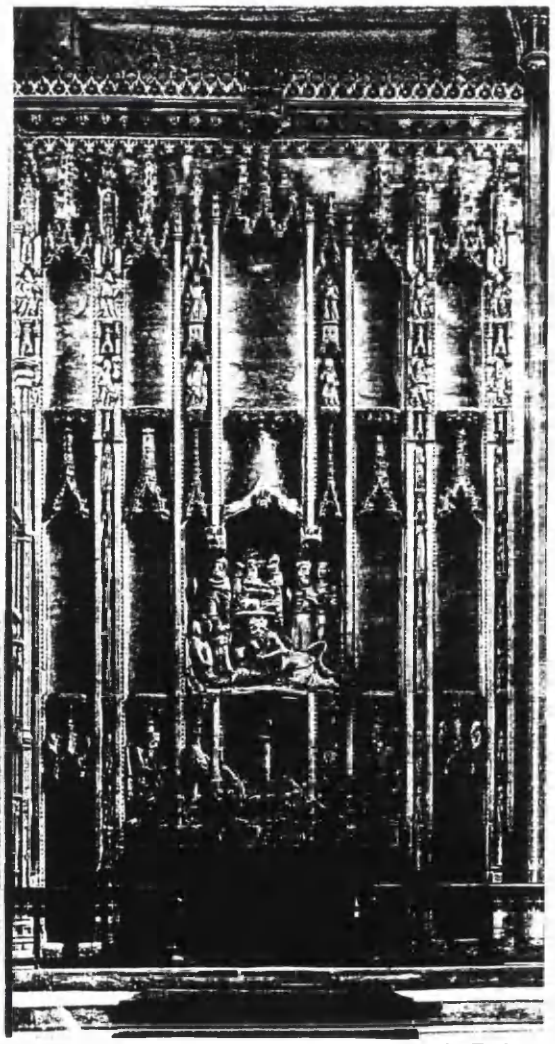
(fig.10) Tomb of Edward II, Gloucester Cathedral, c.1330



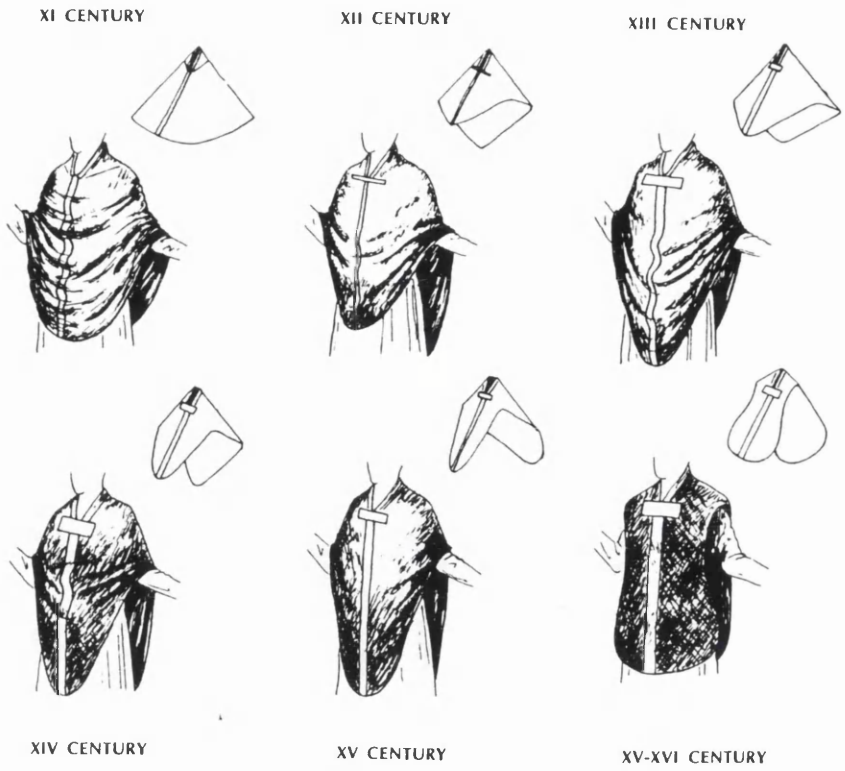
(fig.11) Rose window, south transept, Westminster Abbey, c.1250

(fig.12) Byzantine Mosaic depicting St. Onesiporos & St. Porphyros, Church of St. George, Salonika, c.400

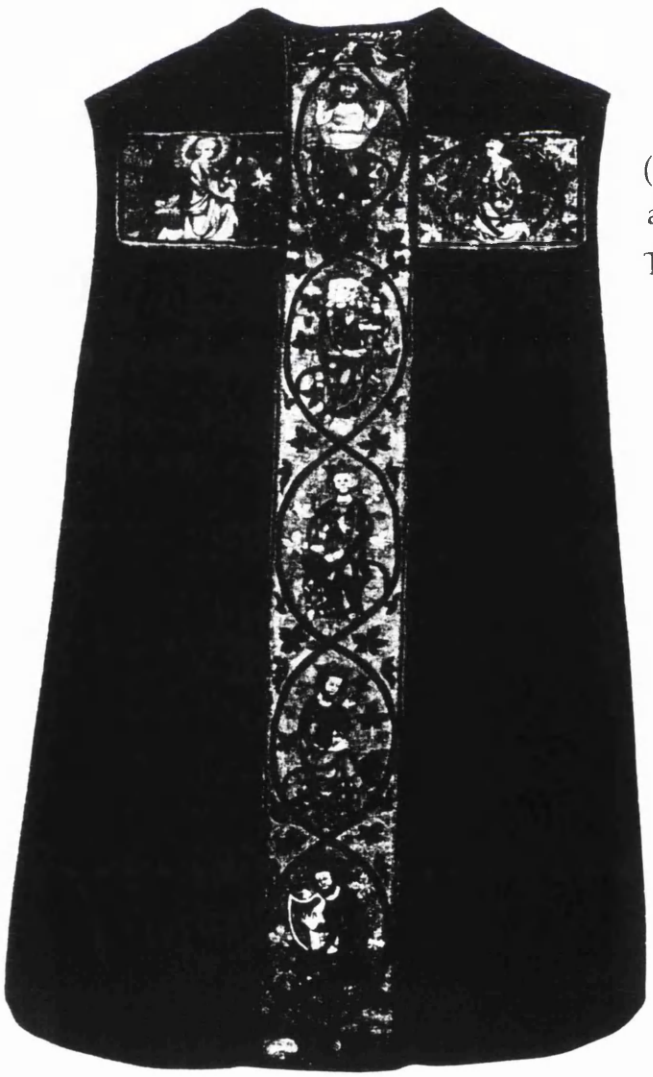
(fig.13) Detail of 'The Consecration of St. Augustine', painted by Jaime Huguet, c.1448?-1487, from the retable of the Guild of Tanners, Barcelona.



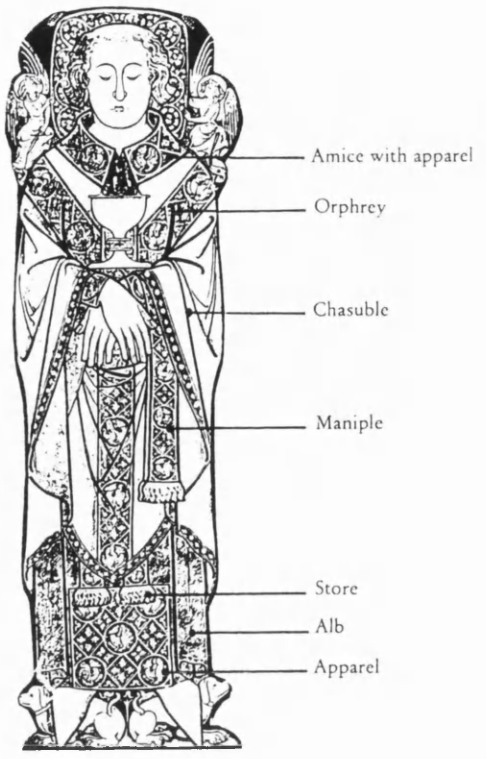
(fig.14) Reredos in Christchurch Priory, Dorset, c.1350-60



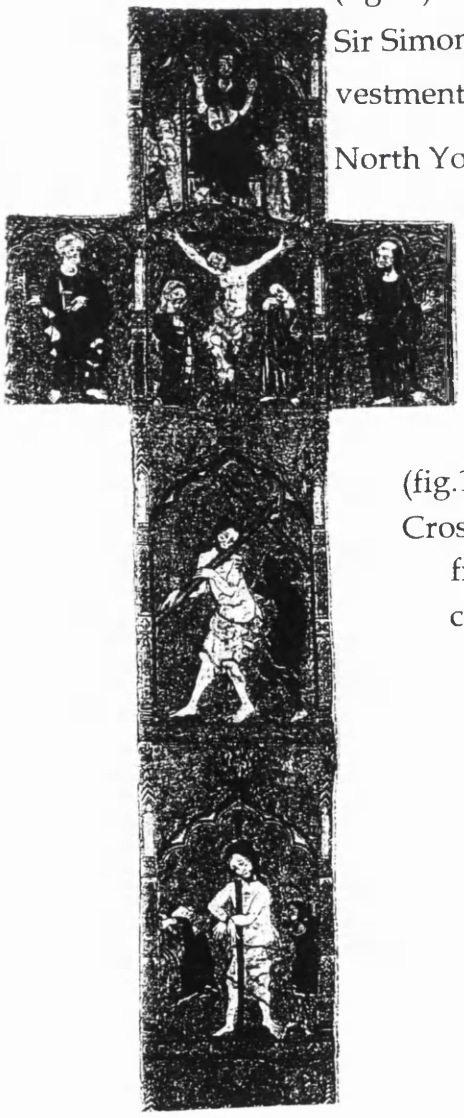
(fig.15)



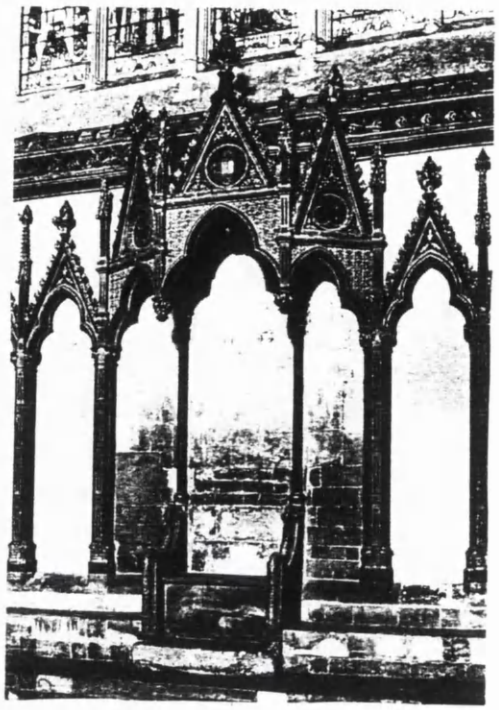
(fig.16) Back of a chasuble with a cross-orphrey 1310-40, (V&A T.72A-1922)



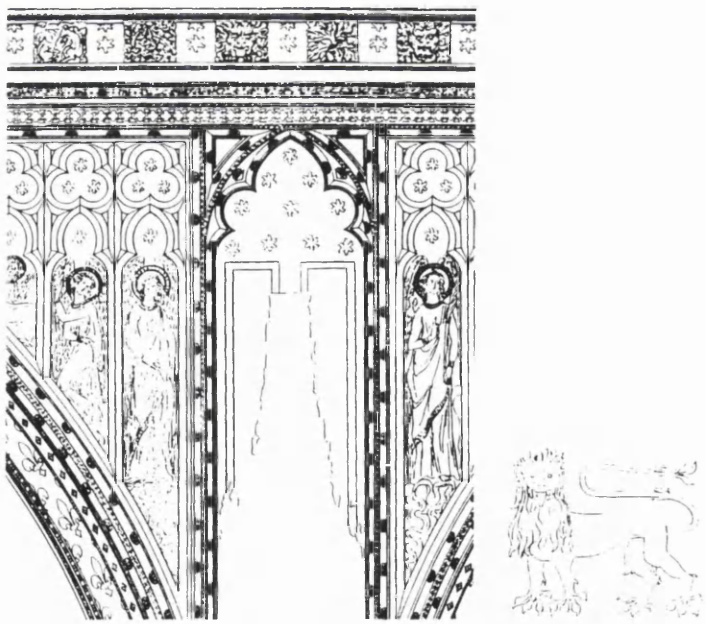
(fig.17) Memorial brass depicting Sir Simon Wensley wearing Eucharistic vestments, Holy Trinity Church, Wensley, North Yorkshire, c.1360



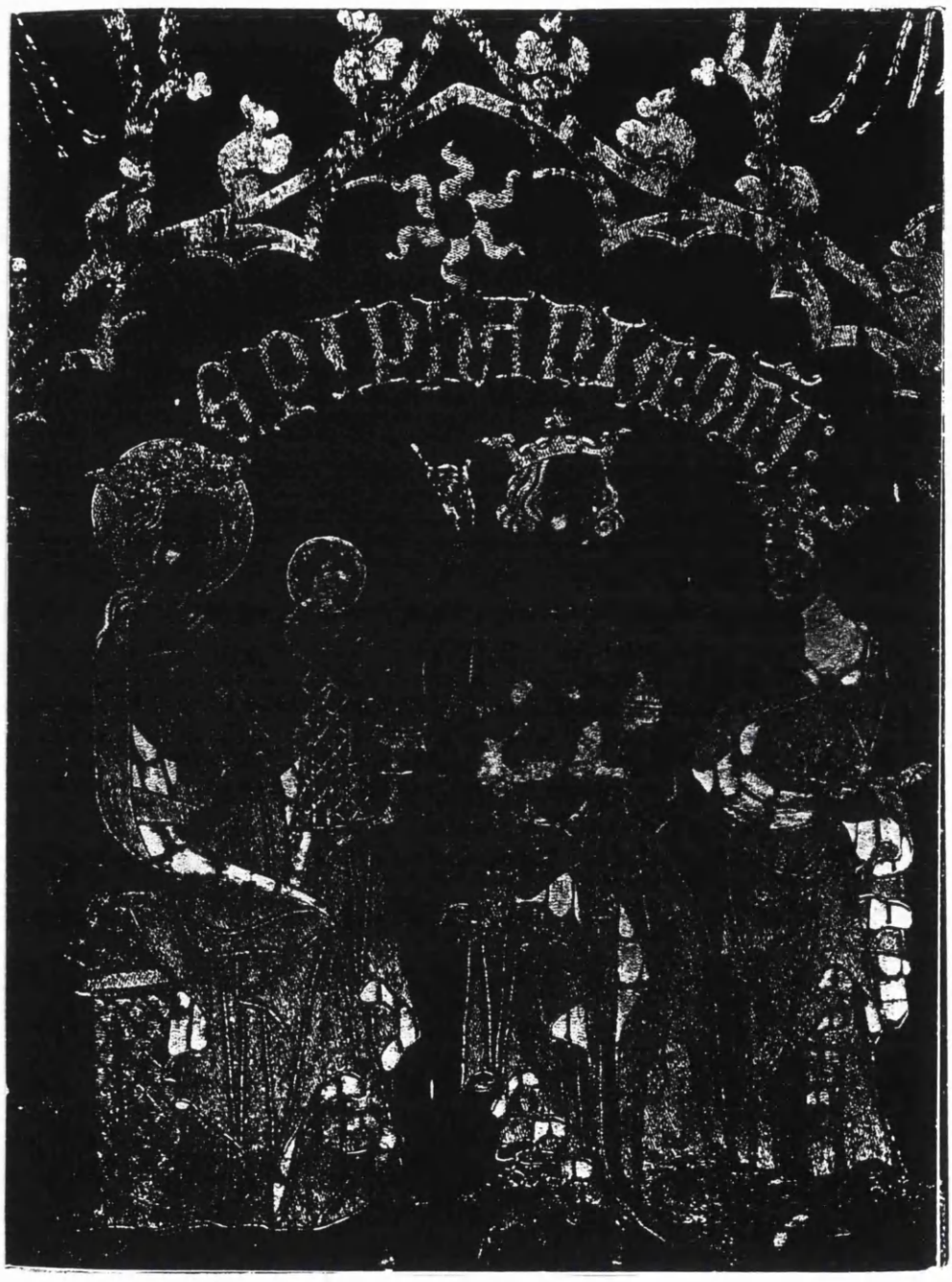
(fig.18)
Cross-orphrey for a chasuble, first half of the fourteenth century, (V&A T. 31-1936)



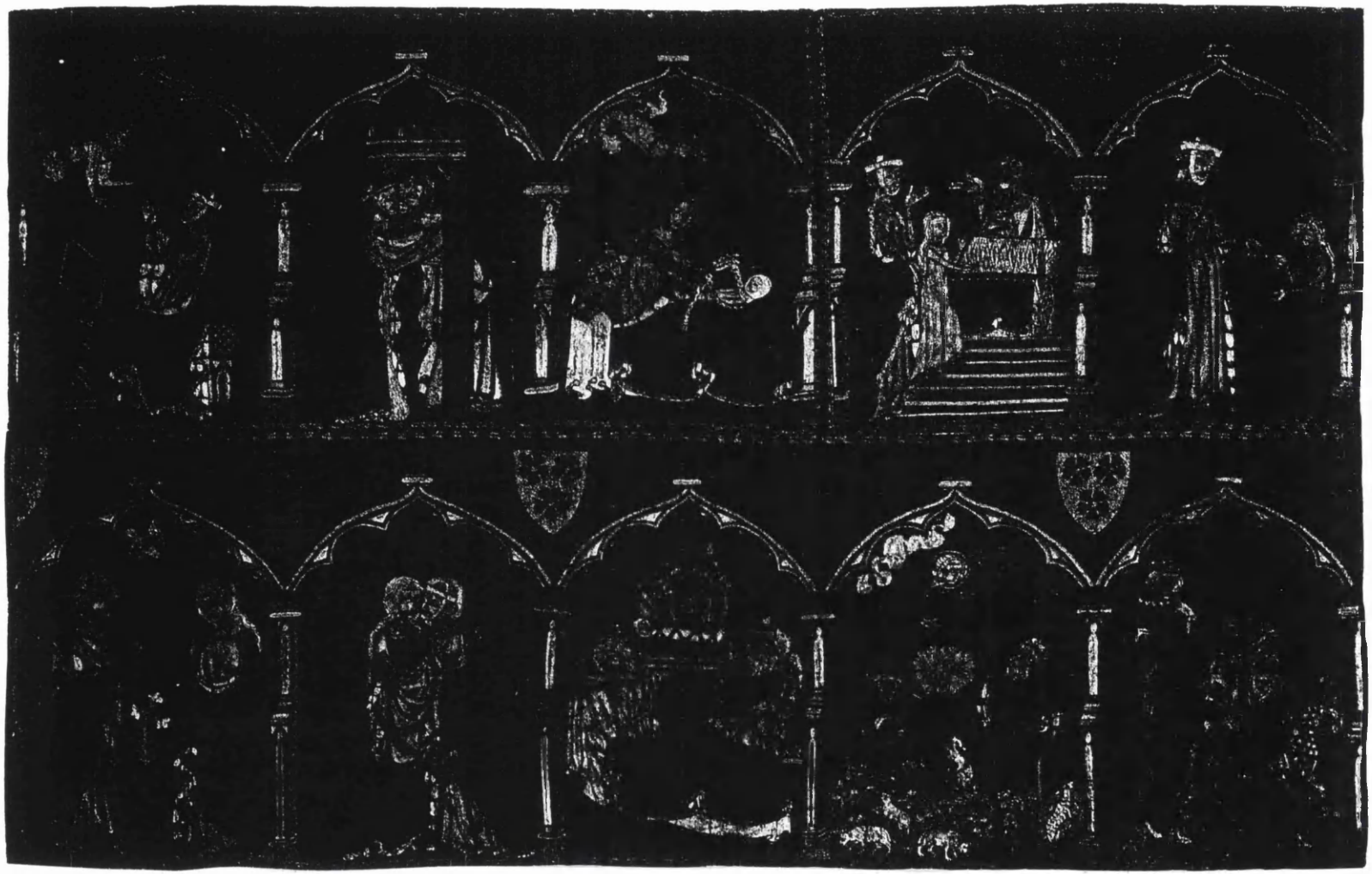
(fig.20) Priors throne, Canterbury Cathedral chapter house, c.1300, commissioned by Prior Henry Eastry



(fig.19) Details from plate 14 of The Architectural Antiquities of the Collegiate Chapel of St. Stephen, Westminster (London, 1844), by Frederick Mackenzie

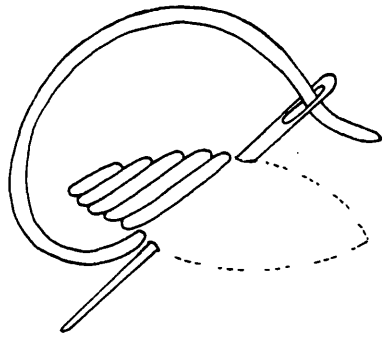


(fig.21) The Vich cope,
Museo Episcopal de
Vich, Spain, c.1340-70

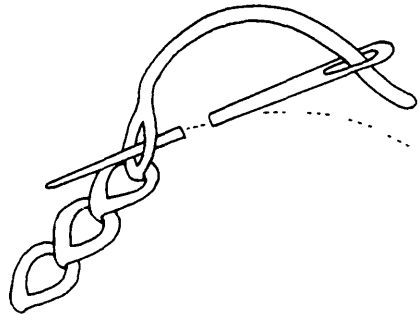


(fig.22) Alb apparels, depicting the life of the Virgin, c.1320-40 (V&A 8128-1863)

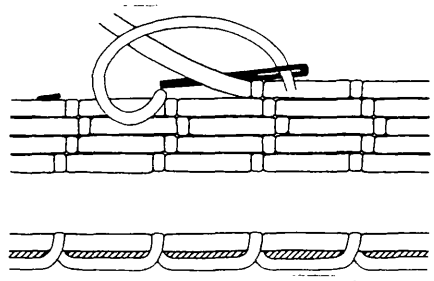
(fig.23) Detail of a fragment of embroidery depicting St. Lawrence and St. Margaret, c. 1320-40 Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington D.C.



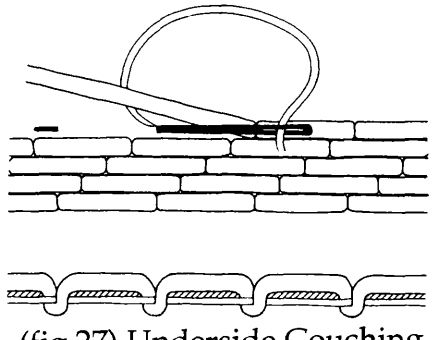
(fig.24) Satin Stitch



(fig.25) Split Stitch



(fig.26) Surface Couching



(fig.27) Underside Couching

Catalogue

1) The Butler -Bowdon Cope

English 1330-50

5 ft. 6" x 11 ft. 4"

V&A (T.36-1955)

Hand embroidered cope worked in fine coloured silk thread, silver and silver-gilt thread on a red, velvet ground. The orphrey and hood have been embroidered on a linen ground. The techniques of underside couching, split stitch, raised work, French knots, satin stitch, and laid and couched work have been employed. Pearls have been used to adorn the lion-masks, stars, acorns, mitres and crowns. Many of the pearls have been lost, leaving only traces of where they would have been attached. Small green beads and gold rings also used to adorn the cope.

Three concentric semi-circular bands of elaborate cinquefoil and squat trefoil crocketed ogee arches. The intertwined coiled columns supporting the arches have been embellished with crouching lions, oak sprigs and lion-masks. Within the spandrels are enthroned angels holding stars representing the cosmos.

Reading from the outside in, (refer to key plan) the subjects on the main body of the cope are as follows: 1) St. Matthew with a sword; 2) St. Simon (his attribute is missing); 3) St. Thomas with a lance; 4) St. Andrew with a cross; 5) St. James the Great with his attributes of pilgrim staff and wallet decorated with a scallop shell; 6) St. Peter with keys; 7) The Annunciation; 8) St. Paul with a sword; 9) St. Matthias with a halberd; 10) St. James the Less with a cross; 11) St. Philip with three loaves; 12) St. Jude with a boat 13) St. Bartholomew with a large flaying knife; 14) St. Edward the Confessor holding a

model of Westminster Abbey; 15) A mitred Bishop with a pastoral staff (perhaps St. Nicholas); 16) St. Margaret wearing the crown of martyrdom and spearing a dragon; 17) St. John the Evangelist with silver palm branch; 18) Adoration of the Magi; 19) St. John the Baptist with large disc containing the Agnus Dei; 20) St. Catherine of Alexandria with spiked wheel and gold sword; 21) A mitred Archbishop with a long stemmed cross (perhaps St. Thomas of Canterbury); 22) St. Edmund of Bury with large silver tipped arrow; 23) St. Laurence with silver gridiron; 24) St. Mary Magdalene with loose long hair and a vase of ointment; 25) Coronation of the Virgin; 26) St. Helen with a crown and a cross; 27) St. Stephen with three stones;

The subjects on the orphrey reading from right to left are as follows: 28) A crowned King with sceptre; 29) A Bishop with a long crook; 30) A crowned King with sceptre; 31) An Archbishop with a cross; 32) A King with crown and sceptre; 33) A Bishop with a long crook; 34) A King with crown and sceptre; 35) Unidentifiable, only two small fragments remain of this panel.

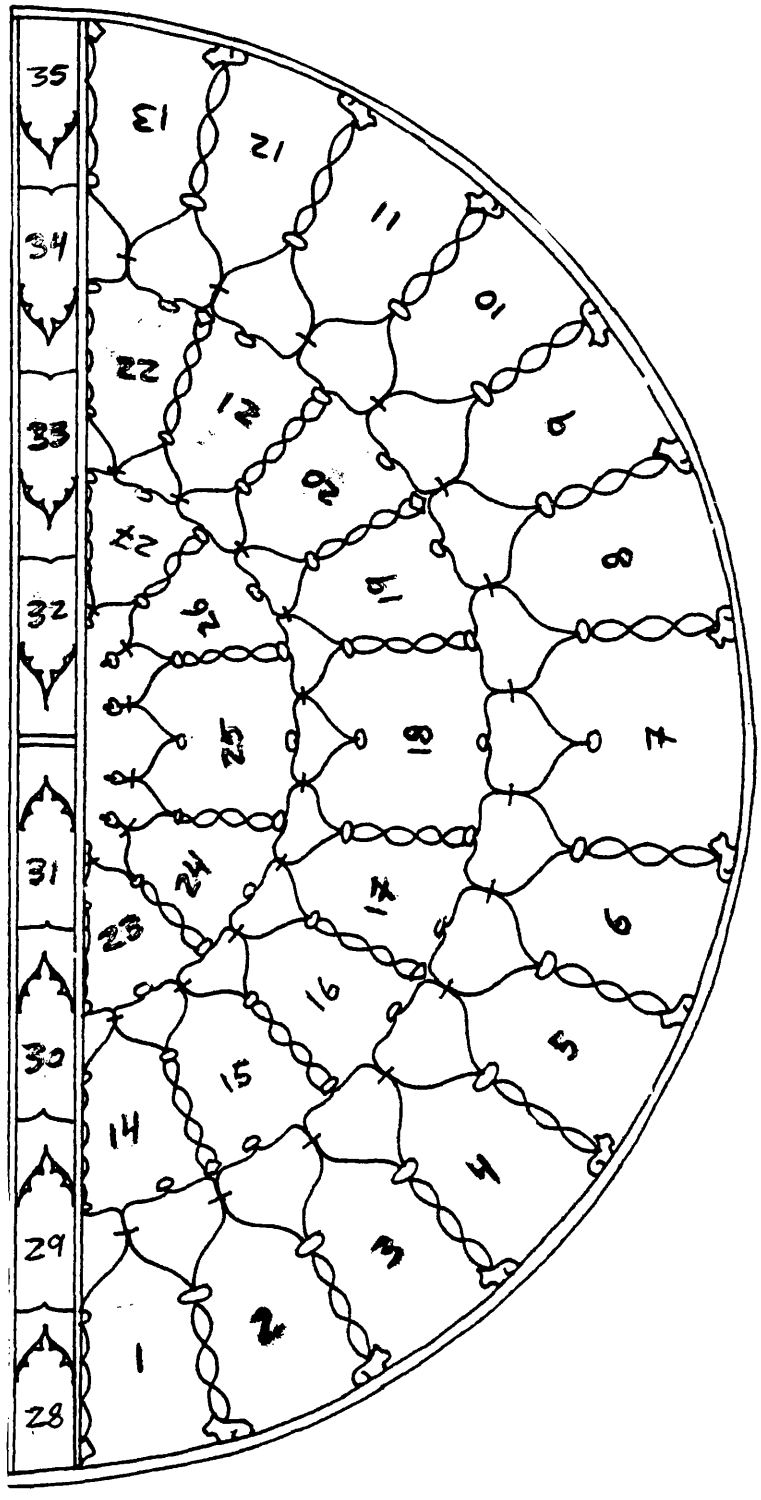
In the uppermost band of decoration, on the main body of the cope, two parakeets are perched in the spandrels facing each other, one on either side of the Coronation of the Virgin (No. 25) The vestigial hood outlined with modern braiding depicts two censing angels.

This cope is very similar in design, iconography and execution to the Chichester- Constable chasuble and accompanying stole and maniple currently in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The orphrey panel is akin to that on the Toledo cope.

Provenance: The cope was acquired by the V&A in 1955, it had previously been in the possession of the Butler- Bowden family and their ancestors. At one point in its history it was cut into several pieces in order to make a chasuble, stole, maniple and altar frontal or dossal. During the nineteenth century it was

reassembled but has since been taken apart and assembled again into its present form.

Literature: Christie 1938, No. 90; Arts Council, London 1963 No.77; Staniland pp.47,65,67; Roberts p.236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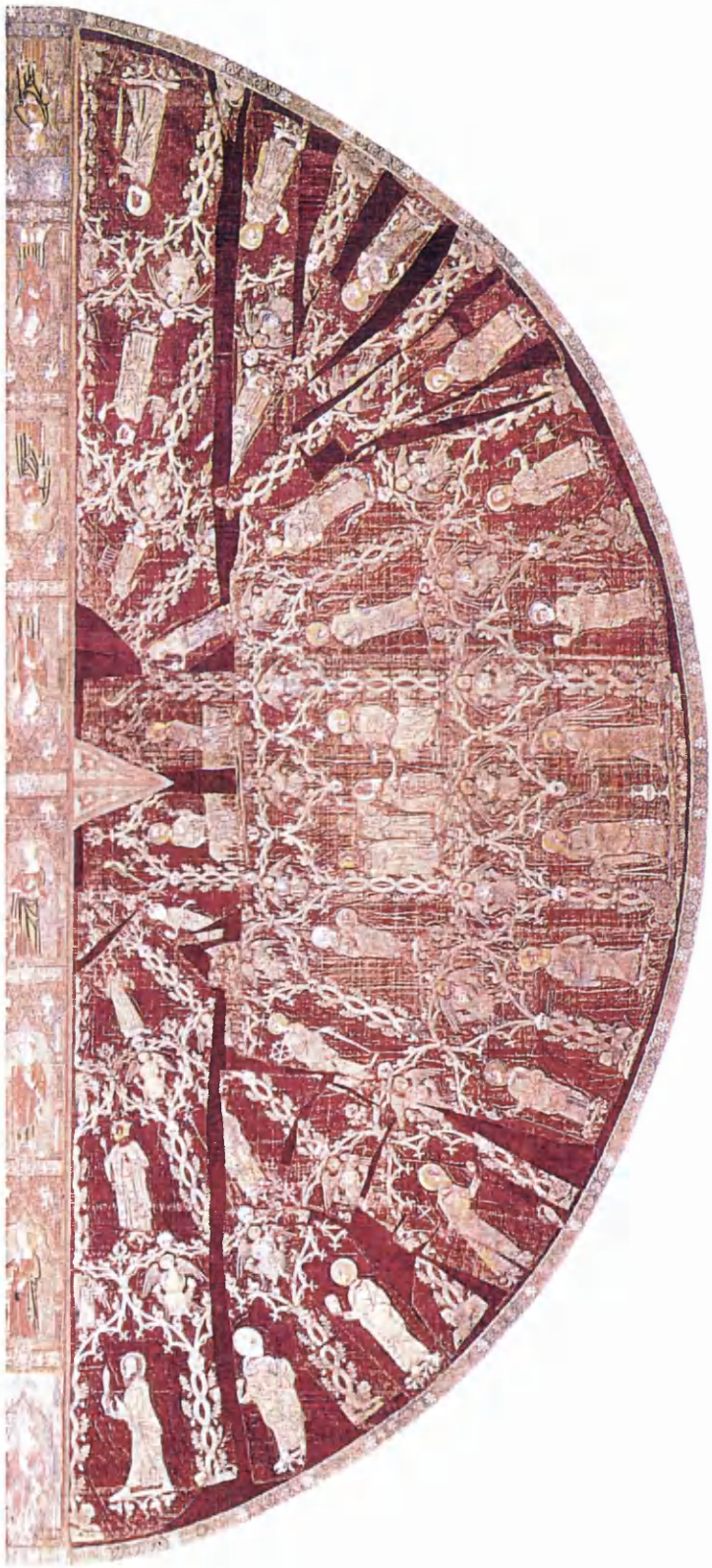


CAT. 1

2) The Chichester- Constable Chasuble

English 1330-50

Front 3 ft. 3"; top scene 2 ft. 5" wide, back 3 ft. 10 ½"

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1927. I62.I

Hand embroidered chasuble worked in fine coloured silk thread, silver and silver-gilt thread on a red velvet ground. The techniques of underside couching, split stitch, raised work, French knots, satin stitch, and laid and couched work have been employed. Pearls have been used to adorn the lion-masks, stars, acorns and crowns. Many of the pearls have been lost, leaving only traces of where they would have been attached.

There are three bands of scenes, delineated by elaborate cinquefoil and squat trefoil, crocketed ogee arches. The intertwined coiled columns supporting the arches have been embellished with oak sprigs and lion- masks. Within the spandrels are angels seated on faldstools, holding stars representing the cosmos.

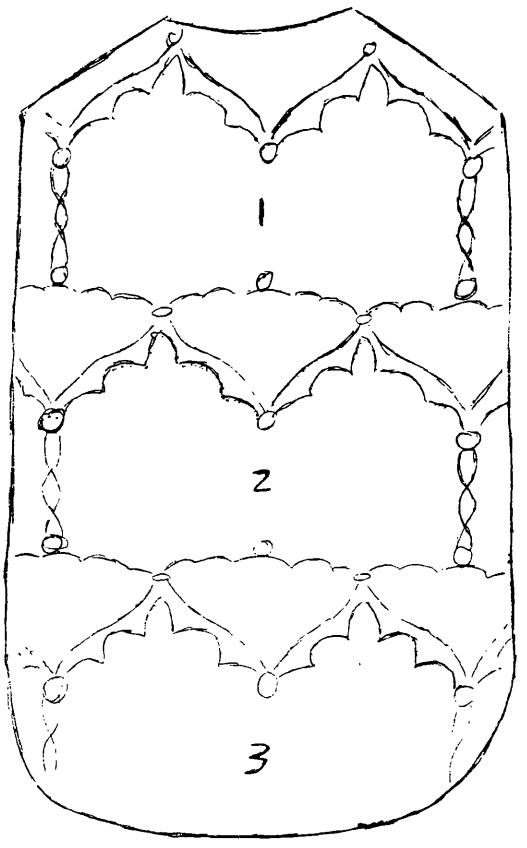
On the back reading from top to bottom are the following scenes (refer to key plan): 1) The Coronation of the Virgin; 2) The Adoration of the Magi; 3) The Annunciation. In the spandrels on either side of the Coronation of the Virgin remain the legs and elongated tails of two parakeets. By the position of the tails it is clear that they are facing each other.

On the front, reading from top to bottom, are: 4) St. John the Evangelist with palm branch and book; 5) St. John the Baptist with gold disc containing the Agnus Dei; 6) St. Peter with keys; 7) St. Paul with a sword; 8) St. Andrew with a cross; 9) St. James with a pilgrim's hat, staff and wallet. All of the Saints are seated on faldstools, their bodies turned to face each other. Along the outer edges of the chasuble, fragments of saints are visible; they were dismembered when the chasuble was cut into its current shape.

This chasuble is very similar in design, iconography and execution to the Butler- Bowdon cope.

Provenance: The chasuble was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1927; it had previously been in the possession of the Chichester-Constable family and their ancestors. The chasuble was, at some point in its history cut to create a more modern shape of vestment. The left over fragments were used to create a stole and maniple.

Literature: Christie 1938 No. 92, Arts Council London 1963, No. 78, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, March 1971.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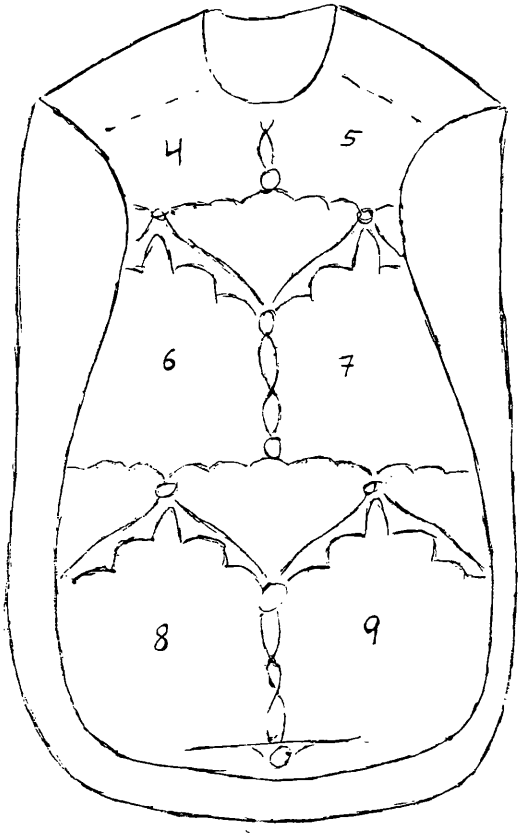
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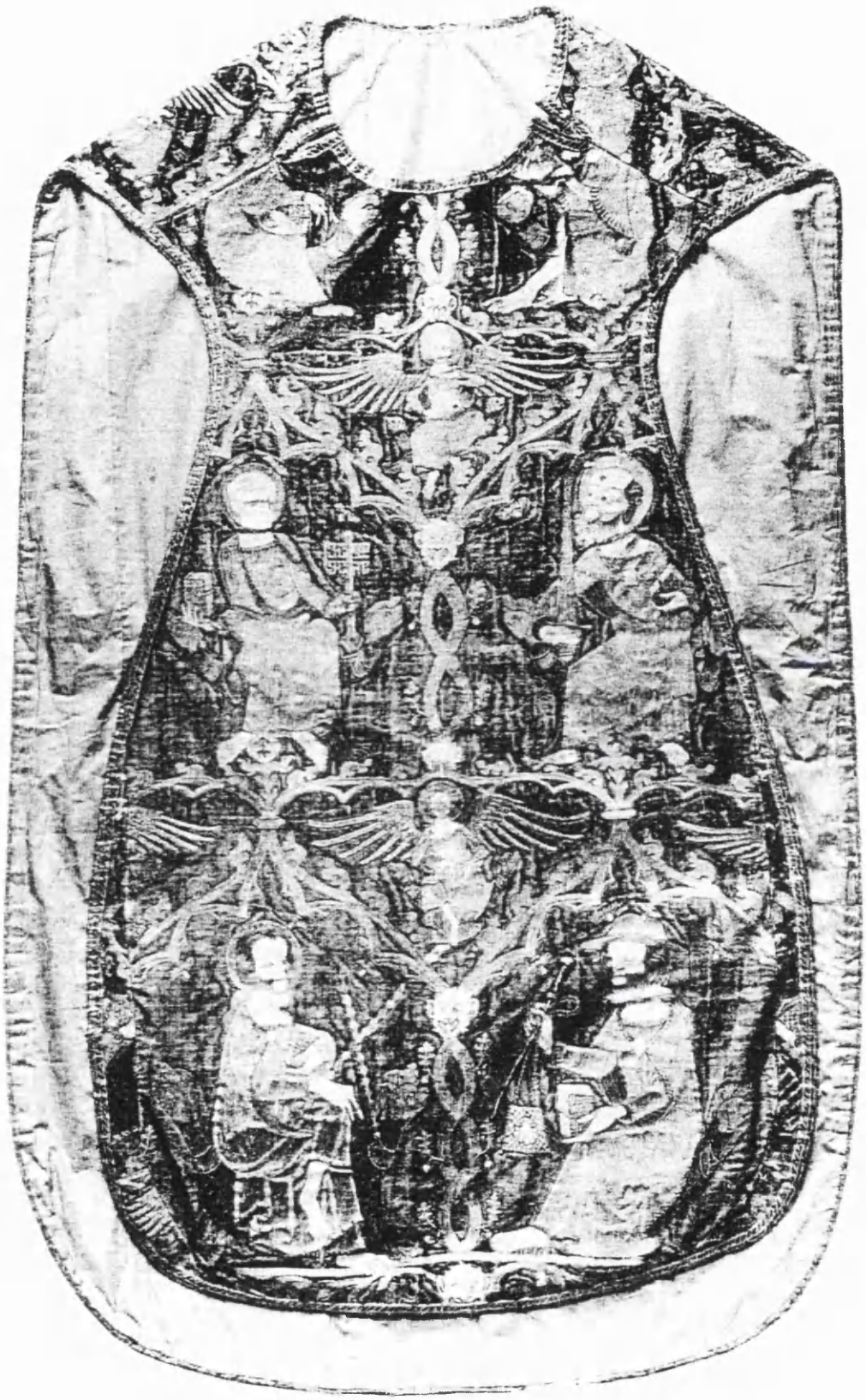
CAT. 2 - BACK



CAT. 2 - FRONT

3) Stole and Maniple

English 1330-50

stole: 8 ft. 1" in length, maniple: 3 ft. 4¾" in length

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1927. I62.I

Stole: This stole was created from the scraps of material left over from the re-shaping of the Chichester-Constable chasuble. The cuttings used to make up this stole have been hand embroidered in fine coloured silk thread, silver and silver-gilt thread on a red velvet ground. The techniques of underside couching, split stitch, raised work, French knots, satin stitch, and laid and couched work have been employed. As in the Chichester-Constable chasuble, pearls would have been used to adorn the lion-masks and stars which appear on the stole.

Among the fragmentary figures in the stole are two kings, a seated Saint, and a Bishop. There are also angels, one of which is almost complete and sitting on a faldstool, holding a star.

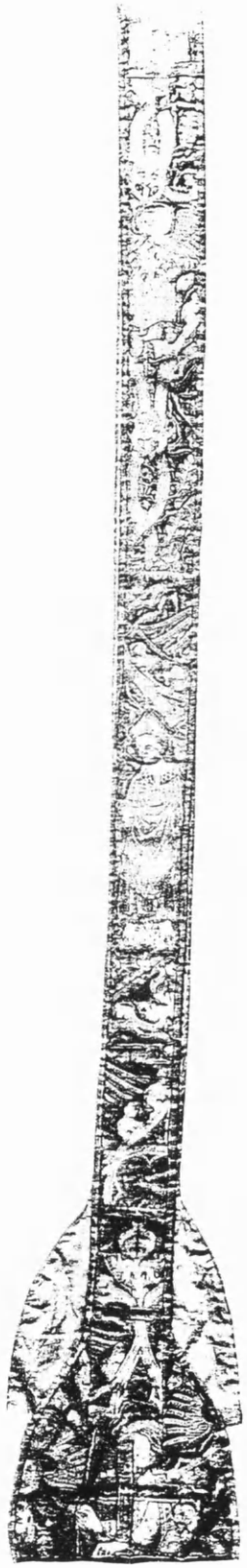
Maniple: This maniple was patched together using the left over scraps of material created in the re-shaping of the Chichester-Constable chasuble. The cuttings used to make up this stole have been hand embroidered in fine coloured silk thread, silver and silver-gilt thread on a red velvet ground. The techniques of underside couching, split stitch, raised work, French knots, satin stitch, and laid and couched work have been employed. As in the Chichester-Constable chasuble, pearls would have been used to adorn the lion-masks, which appear on the maniple.

The fragmentary figures on the maniple consist of a head of a Saint and several partial angels. The embroidered crosses, in the centre and at either end

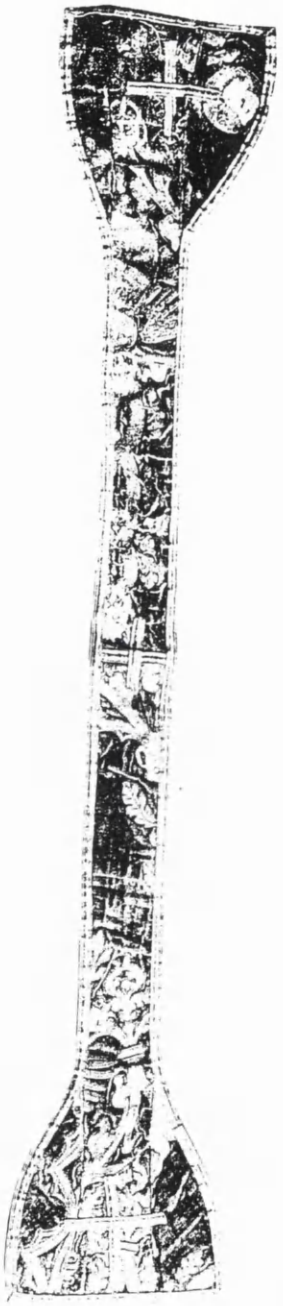
of the maniple, have been added later, as evidenced by the fact that they have been stitched over the pre-existing embroidery.

Provenance: Both the stole and maniple were acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1927, along with the Chichester-Constable chasuble. They had previously been in the possession of the Chichester-Constable family and their ancestors. The stole and maniple have been created using the cuttings left over from when the chasuble was re-shaped in order to create a more modern style of vestment.

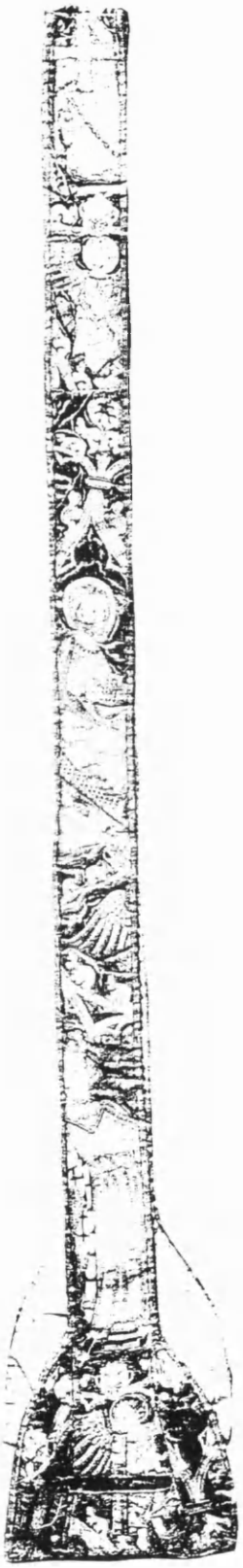
Literature: Christie 1938, No. 92, Arts Council London 1963, No. 78, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, March 1971



CAT. 3 -- STOLE



CAT. 3 -- MANIPLE



CAT. 3 -- STOLE

4) Couchant Lion

South Italian (Apulia?) c. 1200

59cm x 75cm

V&A (324A-1889)

This carved marble lion is one-half of a pair. It is the remains of the support for a column. The lower portion of the column has been integrally carved, positioned upon the back of the couchant lion. The pattern of the weathering on the lion, (particular damage has occurred to the head area) suggests that it was originally used externally, perhaps on either side of a doorway.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Italian motifs like this couchant lion made their way to England through itinerant artists, the distribution of artists' sketchbooks, and the trade in textiles and other products from the continent. By the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, couchant lion motifs had become very popular and frequently appear in illuminated manuscripts and embroidered vestments, such as the Butler-Bowdon cope (cat.1).

CAT. 4

5) The Cambridge Censer

English c. 1350

27cm x 18.5cm

V&A (M.123-1978)

The censer has been made of copper alloy, which has been hammered cast and gilded. Along the top of the main body there is a band containing an inscription engraved in black letter, *"Gloria Tibi Dne"* (Glory be to thee O' God). Three cast leopard/lion heads have been attached to the censer. They have been placed at intervals, alternating between the words of the inscription.

The Cambridge censer is a rare example of a gothic censer made from base metal. A great percentage of English base metal church plate has long since deteriorated beyond recognition due to the unstable composition of the metal used. In design this censer is in keeping with the gothic fashion of elaborate micro-architecture. Perched atop of the main body of the censer is a hexagonal spire reminiscent of contemporary chapter houses and other gothic structures, such as the spires adorning the east end of Lincoln Cathedral. The leopard/lion heads are also a favourite gothic motif and can be seen in many contemporary illuminated manuscripts, stained glass panels and *opus Anglicanum.*

Provenance: Unkown

CAT. 5

6) The Kingston Lacy Screen

England, London c. 1320-30

73 cm x 71 cm

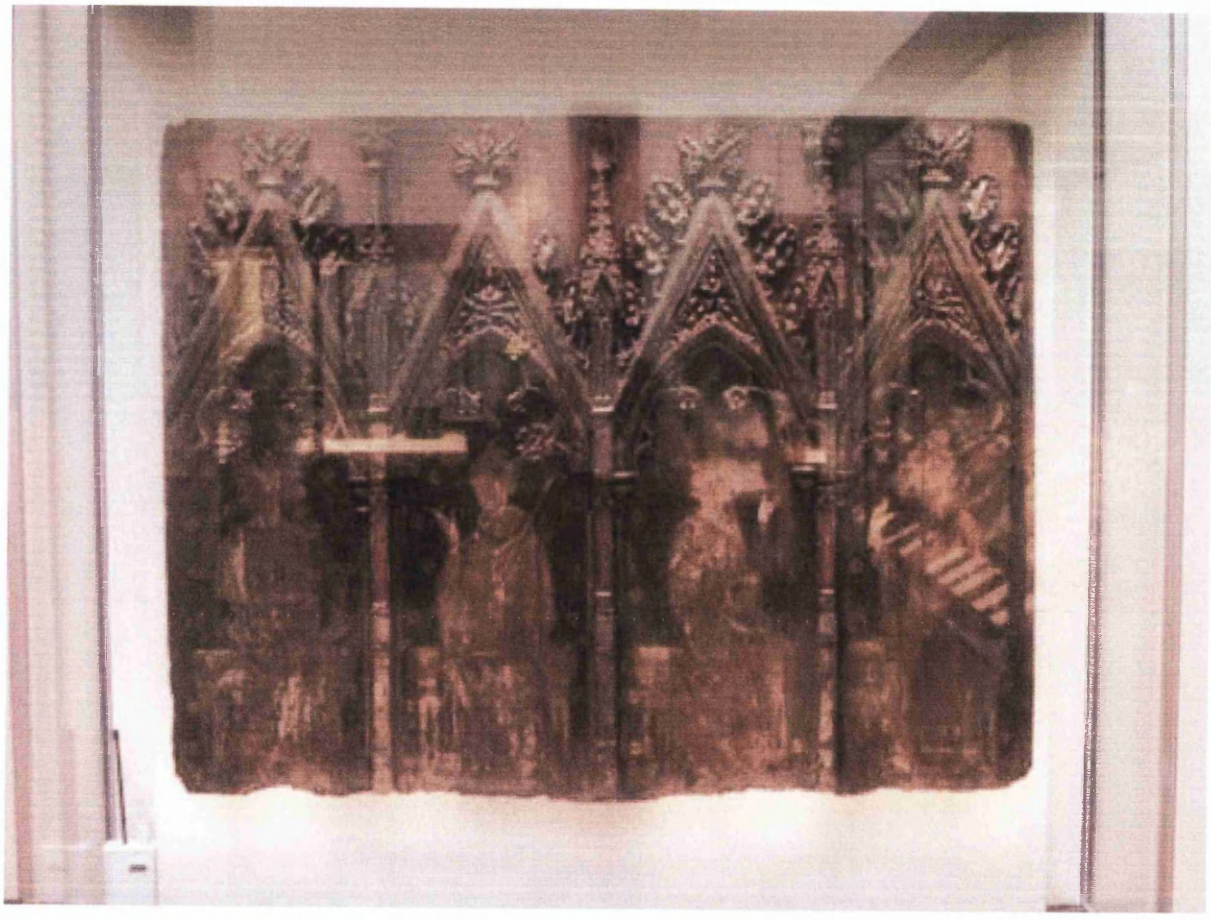
British Museum (on loan from the National Trust)

It is thought that this painted screen might have originally formed the right-hand wing of a three-part altarpiece. The panels consist of four intricately carved cinquefoil crocketed ogee arches that have been attached to a base of flat oak planks. Underneath each arch is a seated figure. The figures, reading from right to left, are: St. Edmund with an arrow; an Archbishop (perhaps St. Thomas Becket); St. Edward the Confessor holding a ring; and a mitred Bishop.

On the back of the screen there is the name Heyford, a village in Northamptonshire. However, the panels were found in Kingston Lacy in Dorset, at the Bankes House. The representation of kings and ecclesiastics on the panel suggests that it was not originally intended for a church in Heyford, as such a scheme would not have been appropriate for a parish church. It would be reasonable to assume that it was intended for a wealthier religious foundation, perhaps even a royal one.

It is a rare surviving example of high quality English panel painting of the mid-fourteenth century. The high quality of the painting also supports the theory that it was intended for a religious foundation of great importance.

Provenance: Found in the Bankes House, Kingston Lacy, Dorset



CAT. 6

7) Thornham Parva Retable

English c.1335

94 cm x 3.81 m

Thornham Parva Church, Suffolk

This is a rare surviving example of high quality English panel painting of the fourteenth century. There are eight carved trefoil arches with supporting columns. The larger central scene is placed under a carved cinquefoil arch and trios of carved leaves adorn the spandrels. The background motifs alternate between an intricate, repeated, stamped pastiglia motif and a checkerboard pattern compromised of the stamped pastiglia motif and stenciled fleur-de-lis.

The scenes, reading from right to left, are as follows: St. Dominic with staff and book; St. Catherine with a wheel; St. John the Baptist with disc containing the Agnus Dei; St. Peter with keys; The Crucifixion; St. Paul with sword; St. Edmund with arrow; St. Margaret with book, spearing dragon; St. Peter Martyr with staff and book.

The inclusion of the two Dominican Saints at either end of the retable strongly suggest that it was originally intended for a Dominican foundation, possibly the Dominican priory at Thetford. This supposition is based upon the fact that after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Howards received a portion of the Thetford Priory site. It is known that in 1778 the retable was in the possession of a family that was associated with the Howards.

This panel has been linked to an altar frontal currently in the Musèe de Cluny, Paris. It is thought they were originally part of the same set of altar furniture.

Provenance: Thornham Parva Church, Suffolk

Literature: Age of Chivalry Catalogue, No. 564, Royal Academy 6th November 1987-6th March 1988; Coldstream pp. 107, 108

CAT. 7

ALTAR FRONTAL (PARIS, MUSÉE NATIONAL DES THERMES ET DE L'HÔTEL DE CLUNY)

8) Two Cope Chests

English 12th & 13th Centuries

6 ft 6 in length along each straight side, 2ft 8in high.

York Cathedral

These two quadrant shaped cope chests were used specifically for the preservation and storage of highly valuable hand embroidered copes. The first is mid-late twelfth century, made entirely of oak and has iron strap hinges on each door with stamped decoration. The sides are mahogany red, possibly painted. The second chest is similar, but dating from c.1250 with thinner and more delicate decoration. The top was probably covered with leather between the wood and the ironwork.

Through innovations in technology and technique, ironwork in the thirteenth century became increasingly decorative, often covering the entire surface of a chest or door with naturalistic scrollwork.

There are other medieval cope chests of varying dates at Westminster Abbey, Gloucester (2), Wells and Salisbury cathedrals. The design of the cope chest varied little over the centuries; the fifteenth century cope chest at Westminster Abbey is plainer in decoration than the thirteenth century cope chest at York Minster, but virtually identical to it in its shape and construction.

Provenance: York Minster Cathedral

Literature: E.A. Gee in the 50th Annual Report of the Friends of York Minster, 1979; 'Thread of Gold: The Embroideries and Textiles in York Minster', ed. Elizabeth Ingram, Aldershot: Pitkin, 1987.

CAT. 8

DETAIL OF CHEST
ON RIGHT

9) Two apostles

French, Rouen; c. 1330

26 cm x 21.6 cm

The Cloisters Collection (69.236.1)

Each apostle stands under a canopy of painted architecture consisting of a crocketed arch, flanked by piers. This stained glass panel would have been part of a much larger scheme, creating a grand architectural setting for a larger figure. The new technique of silver-stain was used to create the detailing and the two coloured effects on the glass. This new technique of painting the colours on cut down on the use of lead and increased the size of the individual pieces of glass, creating a smoother, less fragmented surface area. The introduction of a more painterly element to the glaziers' craft meant that they were now able to make their figures more linear in style, closer to those found in contemporary manuscript illumination.

Provenance: Unknown

Literature: Medieval Images No.48.

CAT. 9

CAT. 11

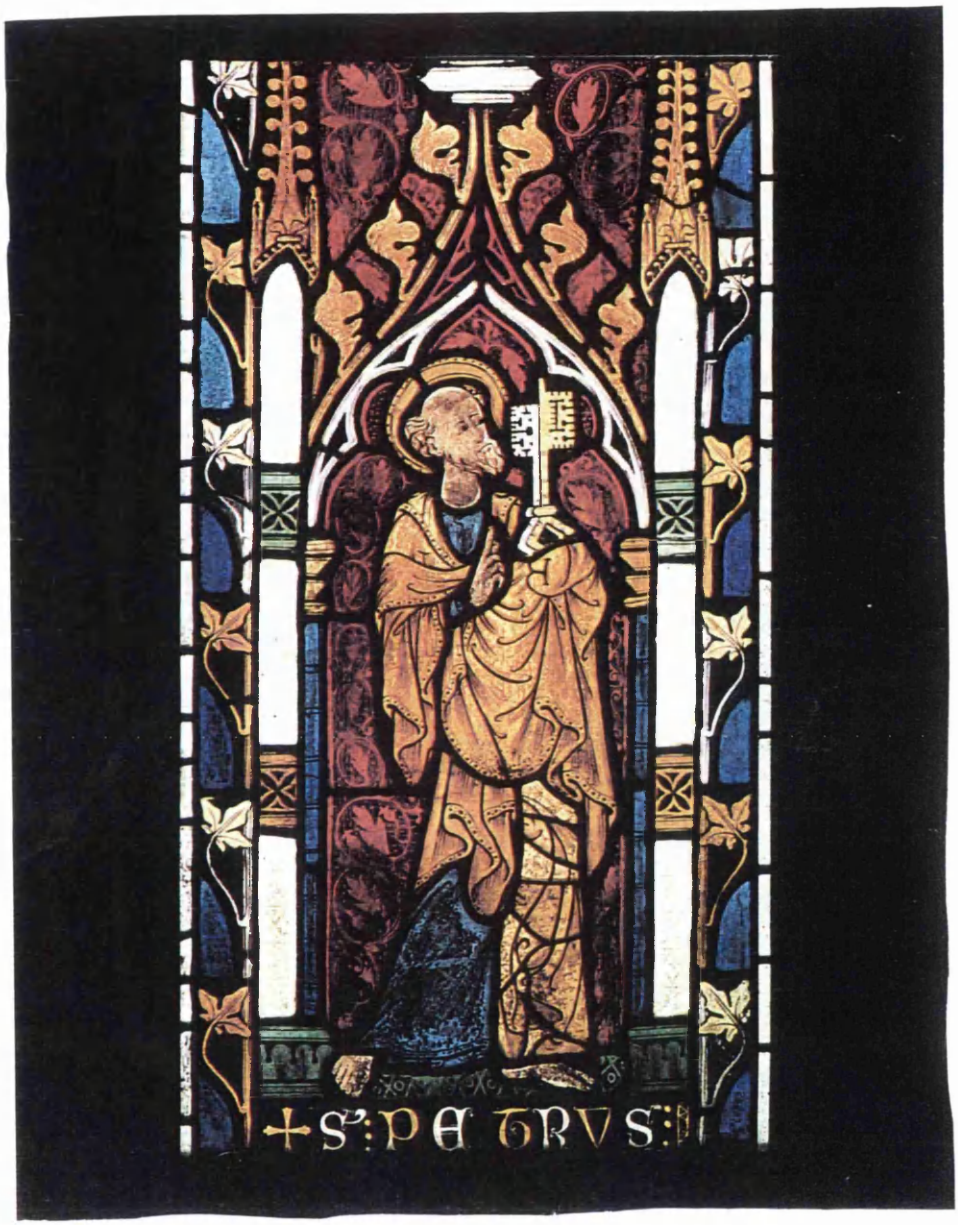
10) St. Peter

English c. 1315-26

The Vicar and Parochial Church Council, Stanford, Northamptonshire, (Window n.11)

This panel of stained glass is still *in situ* and is part of a larger programme of stained glass at Stanford on Avon Parish Church. St. Peter is depicted beneath an ornate architectural canopy consisting of a cinquefoil crocketed arch, supported by thin columns topped with capitals. Flanking the arch and columns are long side shafts, topped by crocketed pinnacles. A trail of ivy makes up the border pattern on either side of the shafts. The central background has been decorated with swirling trails of foliage. The inscription in Lombardic letters reads: S: PETRUS. The technique of silver-staining has been used to paint most of the details of the composition.

Literature: Age of Chivalry Catalogue, No. 560, Royal Academy 6th November 1987–6th March 1988.



CAT. 10

11) Theological Miscellany

English c. 1310-25

ff. 53: 20.5 x 13 cm

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms fr. 13342

The introductory rubric of this manuscript reads: *Ceo qe vous devez fere & penser a chascon point de la messe* (What you should do and think at each stage of the Mass). The text has been written in Anglo-French, an indication that it was intended for a lay audience.

There are thirteen illustrations in the manuscript, showing the priest, server and congregation at various stages in the celebration of the Mass. Unlike the modern celebration of the Mass, in the Medieval observance the priest has his back to the congregation. The manuscript also contains a Catechism on Baptism, the *Speculum Ecclesie* of Edmund Rich, as well as the Latin Psalter of St. Jerome. The missing portions of text from this manuscript are housed in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 79. The secondary illustrations and decoration in this manuscript; the borders, bas-de-pages scenes, historiated and non-historiated initials, are all done by the same artist who was responsible for parts of the Queen Mary Psalter (London, British Library Royal MS 2 B VII)

Provenance: In France by 1740

Literature: Age of Chivalry Catalogue, No. 110, Royal Academy 6th November 1987-6th March 1988,

12) Psalter

English c. 1370

Courtauld Institute

This Psalter was made for a member of the powerful and wealthy de Bohun family. The de Bohun family commissioned several manuscripts to be made for them between the years 1360 and 1370. Other de Bohun manuscripts include: A Psalter in Oxford, Exeter College ms.47., a Psalter and Hours in Oxford Bodleian Library ms.auct.d.4.4., a Psalter in Vienna Osterreichische National bibliothek.cod.1826*, a Book of Hours in Copenhagen Royal Library, Thott 547, and a Psalter in Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum ms.38-1950.

All of the manuscripts were done by a cohesive group of artists who seem to have worked exclusively for the de Bohun family. This system of patronage, keeping illuminators on retainer, is the same system that was used at the Royal Court in France during the same period. That is why these manuscripts represent the closest thing to a courtly style in England. They all share the same border style, influenced by Italian and Flemish designs, consisting of leaves and tendrils springing directly from bar borders or from the cusping set at intervals along these bar borders. Often the borders are punctuated by coats of arms.

There are two figure styles in this group of manuscripts, the Italianate figure style and the Flemish figure style. This manuscript is in the Flemish figure style. The figures have coarse featured faces and thick curly hair, the drapery is heavily outlined and the background is heavily diapered, giving no impression of depth.

The central scene on this page, Salome being presented with the head of St. John the Baptist, has been framed by an elaborate architectural precineum, complete with flying buttresses, cinquefoil arches and crocketed spires.

Provenance: Unknown

CAT. 12

13) Chalice and paten of Archbishop de Melton

English c.1320-40

Height of chalice 14 cm, diameter of paten 13.5 cm

Dean and Chapter of York

This silver and parcel-gilt chalice differs from earlier chalices in the fact that its bowl is conical in shape, like an inverted bell. The rounded foot has been decorated with an engraved crucifixion. The stem has been embellished with a knop consisting of eight tripartite lobes.

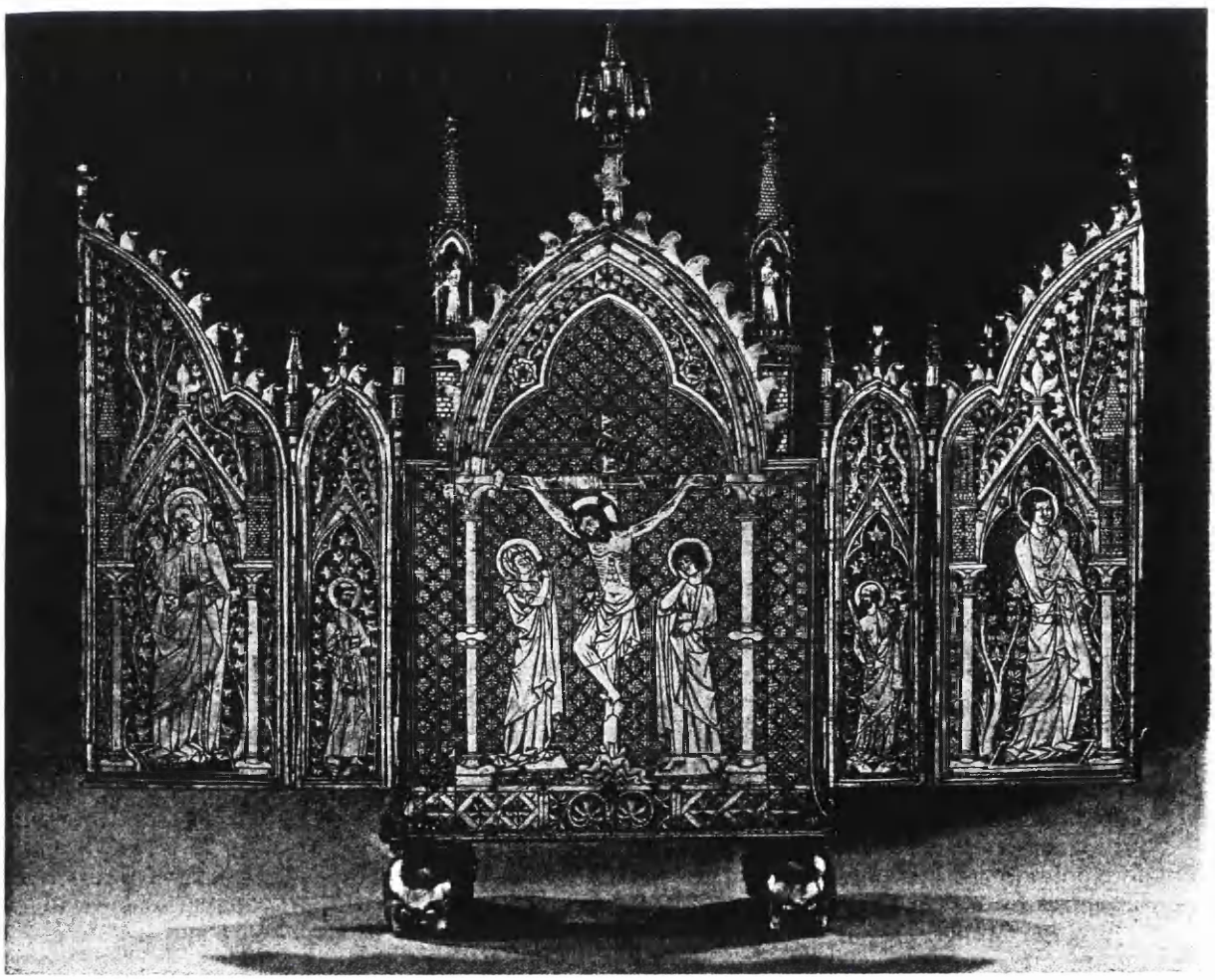
The silver paten has a sexfoil depression in the middle of which is a *Manus Dei.* The sexfoil motif on the Melton paten is reminiscent of the multi-lobed roundels found on the Ascoli Piceno cope c. 1275-80.

The chalice and paten were found in the grave of Archbishop William de Melton in York Minster. It was common practice in the Middle Ages to bury such items along with a priest, as they were symbols of his office (fig. 16).

Provenance: Found 29th , May 1732 in the grave of Archbishop William de Melton in York Minster.

Literature: Age of Chivalry Catalogue, No. 112, Royal Academy 6th November 1987–6th March 1988

CAT. 13



CAT. 14

14) Polyptych-Reliquary of the True Cross

French, Paris (?) c.after 1254

Height 79 cm; length (open) 92; (closed) 22 cm

Musée du Louvre, department of "Objets d'art", OA 5552

This extravagant polyptych-reliquary was made for Floreffe Abbey, in France. In 1204 Philip le Noble, Count of Namur, gave the Abbey a fragment of the True Cross. His brother, Baudouin IX Count of Flanders and Hainaut, had brought the fragment back with him from the fourth crusade. Upon its arrival at the abbey, a miracle occurred, the fragment of the True Cross began to bleed. Fifty years later on 3rd of October 1254, the day of the Festival of the Invention of the Holy Cross, the miracle occurred again. This polyptych-reliquary was made to commemorate event, and to provide a suitable home for the precious fragment. A Latin inscription in niello on the base reads: *hec Crux que voluxit nobis bis sanguine fluxit.*

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was increased interest in the relics of Saints and relics from the New Testament. Such objects could bring the religious foundation that owned them an added source of income through pilgrimage. Eventually, elaborate reliquaries were commissioned to house and protect these precious objects. They often took the form of a shrine, but could also be made in a shape appropriate to the relic; a hand to house the finger bone of St. Andrew for example. These reliquaries could also be fashioned in the form of a polyptych. The central inner panel that contained the relic would remain hidden for much of the year; the outer wings of the polyptych would only be opened on special Festival and Feast days. Not all polyptychs served a dual function of being a reliquary, most simply had a holy image in the centre panel.

This gold polyptych-reliquary has been adorned with typically gothic micro-architectural features such as crocketed ogee arches, gabled spires, and thin decorative columns. All of the scenes and figures are depicted within architectural niches. When the polyptych-reliquary is open, it reveals a central niello panel with two gold angels in ronde bosse presenting a large ornately decorated cross. Each wing contains seven niello panels with gold semi-ronde bosse figures set on three- dimensional architectural daises. These figures compromise four episodes from The Passion. On the upper left wing is the Crucifixion, below which is the Flagellation. On the upper right wing is The Descent from the Cross, below which is the Holy Women at the Tomb. The angels in the spandrels hold the instruments of The Passion.

The outside of the polyptych-reliquary is composed of five panels of decoration. The central panel on the reverse depicts the crucifixion on a niello background. All of the figures on the outside are in flat gilt with engraved detailing. The left wing depicts St. Pierre and the Virgin. The right wing depicts St. Paul and the Angel of the Annunciation. When the two wings are closed these scenes combine to show the Annunciation.

Provenance: 1824, Baron de Snoy; 1880, collection of Baron Adolphe de Rothschild; legs, 1901.

Literature: "Un Trésor Gothique, La Châsse de Nivelles," Musée National du Moyen Âge - Thermes de Cluny: Paris 12 Mars-10 Juin 1996, No.13

15) The Pepysian Model book

English c.1370-90 with later additions

ff. 24: 240 x 205 cm

Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys MS 1916

This is one of the most well known model books of the middle ages. Many of the designs contained in it can be found in a wide range of contemporary crafts including metalwork, embroidery and manuscript illumination. It contains drawings and paintings executed over a range of time.

The seated figures of Apostles and Prophets in folios 2v.-9, 14-15v. , are the earliest drawings probably done c.1370-90. Also included in the manuscript are paintings of birds and animals, textile patterns and architectural drawings (fig. 10). The painted studies of birds on folios 10-13v, and 19, are very close to those found in the Sherborne Missal c.1396-1407.

Some of the drawings are clearly meant to be templates for adaptation and use in various workshops, others are more finished and are more like nature studies. They are similar to the birds painted in the Vienna Dioscurides c. 512-13 (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, cod. Med. gr.1folio 483v).

Other sketchbooks do exist but are not as extant and varied as this one. Many small-scale sketches have been found in the back pages or fly leaves of manuscripts. The Canterbury copy of the Sentences at Christ College Cambridge (MS. I) contains high quality sketches of figures on its flyleaf. To have such a large compilation of English sketches and paintings is rare at this date.

Provenance: Bequeathed by Samuel Pepys (1653-1703)

Literature: James 1924-5; Age of Chivalry Catalogue, No. 466, Royal Academy 6th November 1987-6th March 1988

CAT. 15

Glossary

Alb – A long ankle- length vestment with loose sleeves, usually made of white linen, worn under a chasuble. It often has an applied panel of decoration on the bottom called an apparel

Altar Frontal – A rectangular covering, made of wood, metal or embroidered cloth, placed over the front of an altar.

Altar Dossal - A rectangular covering, made of wood, metal or embroidered cloth, placed above and behind the altar.

Amice – A rectangular piece of white linen worn by priests around the shoulders and neck under the alb. Sometimes it is decorated with embroidery.

Apparel - A decorative panel often embroidered that is applied to the bottom, sides or cuffs of an alb. Also found applied to amices.

Chasuble – The main vestment worn by priests, Bishops or Archbishops during the celebration of Mass. The chasuble is worn over the alb and amice and is the last vestment put on. Apart from the cope it is the vestment that contains the most embroidered decoration and is often made of rich material. It usually has decorated orphreys applied onto it. Originally a large circular garment similar to a poncho, it has undergone changes in shape. In the late Middle Ages it was cut in at the sides, creating greater mobility for the arms of the wearer.

Chlamys – A Roman cloak worn over one shoulder and pinned together, over the other, with a brooch.

Colobium - A Roman, short-sleeved, loose fitting garment

Cope – A large semi-circular cloak worn over the shoulders and fastened across the chest by a brooch or a strip of material called a morse. Worn by priests and privileged clergy such as a Bishop, Archbishop or Pope, the cope was a processional garment. It was worn at special occasions including incensing the altar, at Lauds and Evensong, Weddings and all ceremonies not directly connected to the Mass. It was often elaborately embroidered with Biblical and Saintly scenes. Like the chasuble it was usually made of rich material.

Crocket - A small carved ornament on the inclined side of a pinnacle or on the outer arc of a circle.

Faldstool – A backless seat, sometimes capable of being folded, used by Kings, Bishops and certain other prelates.

French knots – A stitch used in *Opus Anglicanum* to create a single knot of colour. Often used to create the eyes in the face of a figure.

Maniple – A narrow strip of material often decorated with embroidery including three crosses, one in the middle, and one at either end. It is worn over the left wrist or forearm of the priest.

Misterie – A Medieval word meaning guild.

Mitre – A double pointed cap worn by Bishops, Archbishops and some Abbots. Two narrow strips of cloth called lappets hang from the back. During the Middle Ages it went through several changes in shape, starting more rounded and gradually becoming the pointed caps we are used to seeing today.

Ogee – A pointed arch, having various numbers of s-shaped curves all the way around the inside.

Orans – Arms upraised on either side of the body in prayer.

Orphrey – A decorative band of cloth, often embroidered, applied to chasubles and copes. Pillar-shaped orphreys were usually applied to the front of a chasuble and cross-shaped ones on the back. Originally a strip of material used to cover the seams created in the manufacture of these vestments. As weaving technology progressed in the Middle Ages, cloth could be woven in longer lengths, meaning less seams were created when sewing together a vestment. The Orphrey bands lost their practical use, but were kept, because of their symbolic significance.

Paenula – A large Roman cloak also called a *casula* (little house) worn as protection against the weather, much like the modern poncho.

Paten – A small silver or silver and parcel-gilt platter used to proffer the wafer representing the corporeal body of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is used in conjunction with the chalice, which was used to proffer the red wine representing the blood of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Raised Work – Embroidery stitches worked over either a knapped fabric such as velvet, or worked over a piece of fabric inserted on top of a silk or linen ground to create a slightly three dimensional raised area of embroidery.

Satin Stitch – A stitch used in later phases of embroidered *Opus Anglicanum.* Long stitches were laid side by side across a delineated area (fig.24). This stitch replaced the split stitch and in some instances surface and underside couching, making the production of embroidered vestments faster.

Split Stitch – A stitch used in the embroidery of *Opus Anglicanum.* The needle is brought up through the middle of the last stitch, splitting the stitch in two (fig.25). Tightly packed rows of this stitch were used to create the intricately detailed faces of the figures adorning Medieval religious vestments.

Stole - Worn under the chasuble, the stole is a very long strip of cloth reaching to the ankles. It is worn in various ways depending upon the office of the person. Deacons drape it over the left shoulder and Bishops wear it hung around the back of the neck, the strips of cloth falling from either shoulder. Priests wear it around their neck and crossed at the front, held in place by the girdle or sash worn.

Surface Couching – A type of stitch used in the embroidery of *Opus Anglicanum.* The thread would be laid down in the appropriate areas and a secondary thread would be used to secure the laid threads to the ground fabric at intervals (fig.26). The securing threads are visible on the front of the embroidery. This stitch was used when working with silver and silver-gilt

thread, giving the embroidery more flexibility than if the metal threads were worked directly into to the fabric.

Tunica Alba – A Roman loose fitting garment worn under either a paenula or a chlamys. Occasionally they were decorated with embroidery.

Tunica Dalmatica – A Roman, long-sleeved, close fitting garment.

Underside Couching – A type of stitch used in the embroidery of *Opus Anglicanum*. Like surface couching the main threads are laid down in the appropriate areas and a secondary thread is used to secure the laid threads to the ground fabric at intervals. Unlike surface couching the securing thread in underside couching is pulled down through the ground fabric creating a loop on the underside of the embroidery (fig.27). This stitch was used mainly when working with silver and silver-gilt thread to give the vestment more flexibility than if the metal threads were worked directly into to the fabric.

Vestigial Hood - Initially the cope was equipped with a hood; an essential part of its original use as a garment worn as protection against the weather. By the fourteenth century this hood had been reduced to a small triangle of fabric attached to the outside back neck of the cope. This vestigial hood was kept because it had become an identifying feature of the vestment and provided another area to apply decoration.

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