

**ON A PAINTING
DISCOVERED IN CHALDON
CHURCH, SURREY, 1870**

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On a painting discovered in Chaldon Church, Surrey, 1870 by J. G. Waller

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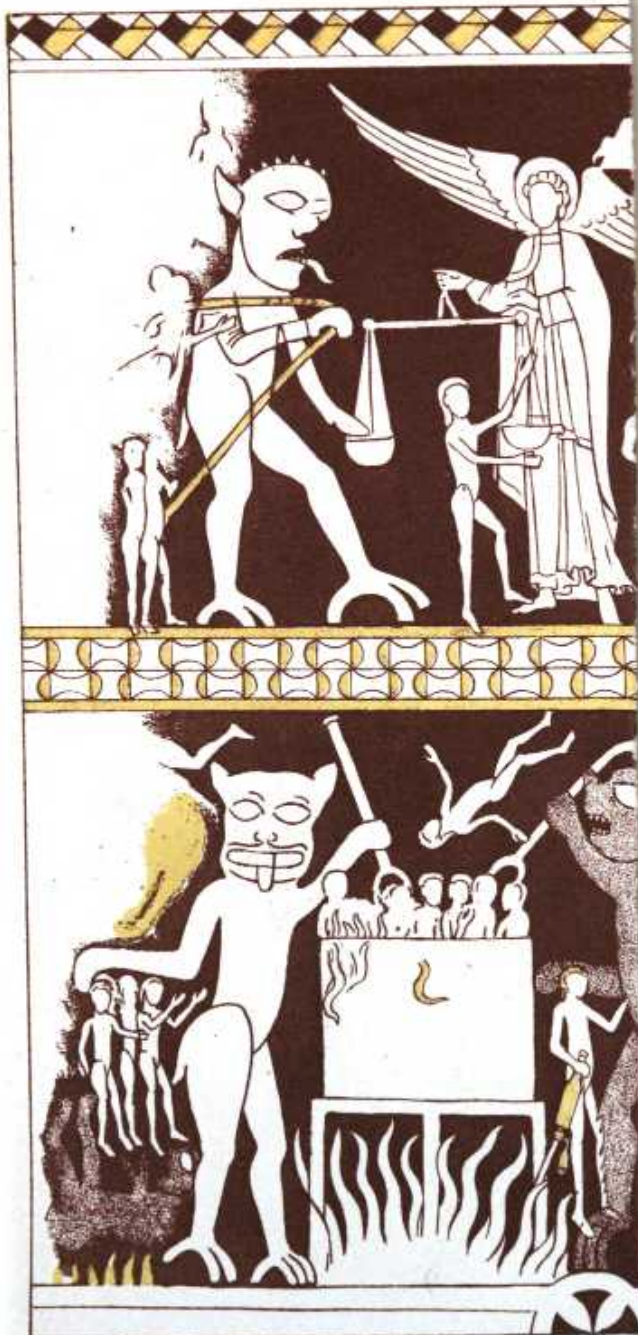
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J. G. WALLER

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W. R. Tynans, Lith.

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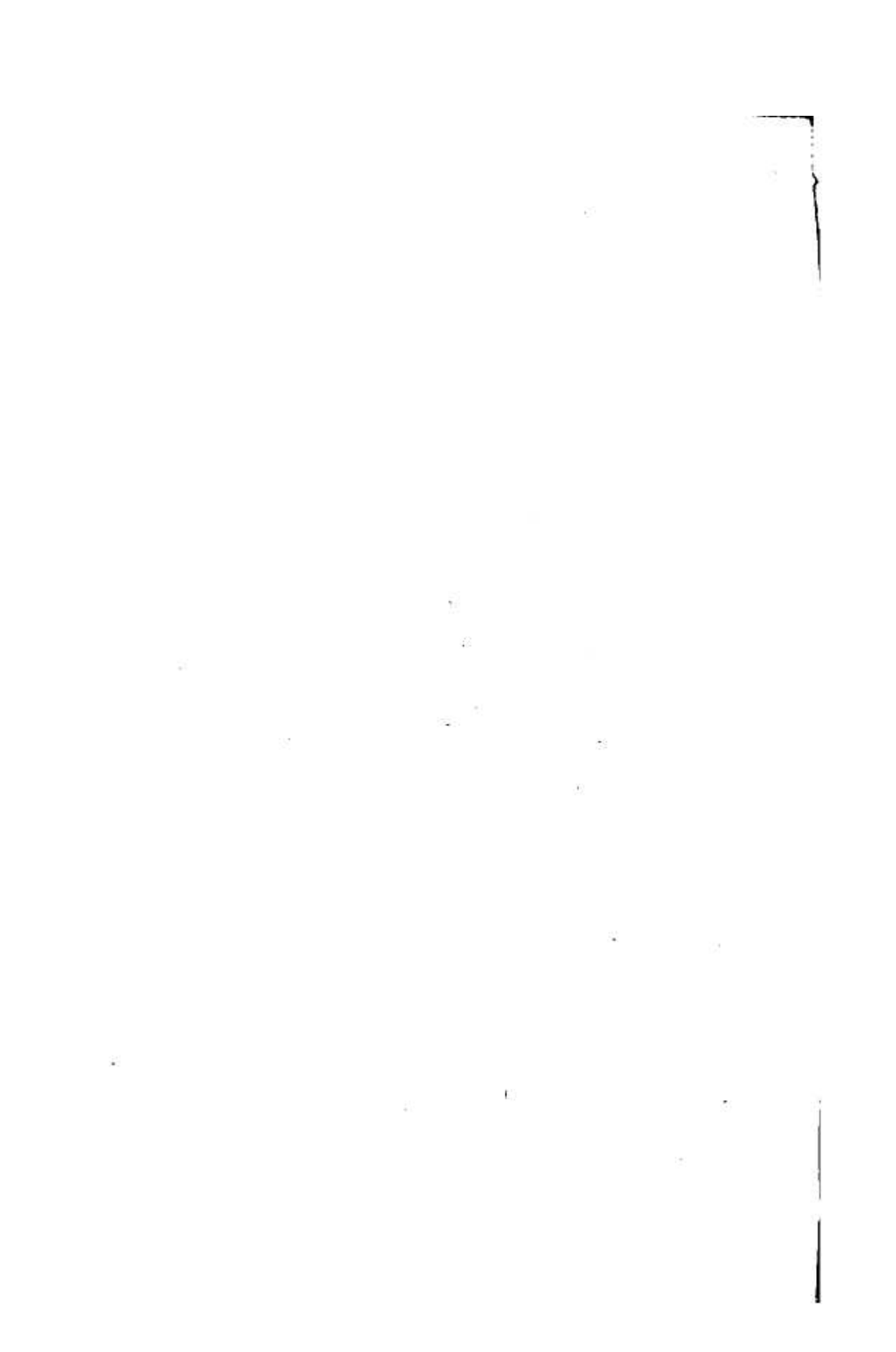
BY
J. G. WALLER.



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ON A PAINTING DISCOVERED IN CHALDON CHURCH, SURREY, 1870.

CHALDON is situated on the chalk elevation midway between Merstham and Caterham. The church, the parsonage, four farmhouses, four villa residences, and some labourers' cottages, without a shop or public-house, constitute the parish.

The population, according to the last Census, is 165 souls. Chaldon Court, one of the four farmhouses, was formerly the Manor House; and the style of construction bears evidence of its having been erected in the sixteenth century.

Chaldon is mentioned in Domesday Book, being there spelt Chalvedone.* In a charter of Frithewald, "Subregulus Provinciæ Surrianorum,"† dated in 727, V mansas, "apud Chepestedde cum Chalvedune," were granted to the monastery of Chertsey. This grant was confirmed by King Eadgar‡ in 967, the names of places being spelt as above. In 1062 the grant was again confirmed by King Eadweard; XX mansas being mentioned, "cum Cudredesdune, et cum Cealfadune."§

* The late E. V. Austin, Hon. Secretary of the Surrey Archaeological Society, derived Chaldon as *Cealfadune*, Calf-down. But I must now object to that as not in accord with the usual meaning of a prefix, which generally refers to natural characters, and also because he had taken the latest and not the earliest Saxon form. My own opinion is that it is more likely the prefix came from *Cealwa*, *i.e.* bald or bare. The form Chalvedon still occurs in Essex, near Pitsea; and Kelvedon, in same county, seems to be but a variation in etymology.

† *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. v., p. 19.

‡ *Ib.*, vol. iii., p. 8.

§ *Ib.*, vol. iv., p. 152.

The place is so retired, it is difficult to believe you are within twenty miles of London; and it belongs to a part of Surrey renowned for its scenery, yet nevertheless not so well known to the dwellers in the metropolis as it deserves to be. There were no made roads leading from the adjoining parishes to Chaldon, until about fifteen years ago (1870); nothing but tracks across the downs and commons led the stranger to the spot; and if in our time so secluded, what must have been the case when the early church was erected?

The Pilgrim's Way, which passed through Chaldon from Merstham on the west, to Godstone on the east, is easily traced along the edge of the downs. The Roman road is said to have passed from Godstone to Woodcote through the parish; but no traces of it are now visible. From the fact that in old deeds the "Ancient Stansted" is referred to, and that *Stansted Heath* is in the adjoining parish of Caterham, the inference is reasonable, notwithstanding the obliteration of the landmarks. The discovery of the remains of a Roman villa in the valley south of Chaldon corroborates this opinion.

The Covert family, whose ancestor came to England with William the Conqueror, appears to have originally held the larger part of the manor, comprising nearly the whole of the parish: it was subsequently divided and sold to various persons; among whom were John Elmebrige of Merstham, the prior and canons of Merton, and Sir Thomas Cawarden of Blechingley. The present proprietors are Lord Hylton, Sir William Clayton, and Mr. Hewitson.

The parish register, which commences A.D. 1564, does not, however, contain the name of one of the early occupants of the land.

The church, under forty feet in length, consists of nave, chancel, and two aisles; a chapel on the south of the chancel, and a south porch. It is probable that originally a nave and chancel only constituted the whole church; and from the early character of

the small window in the gable of the west wall, this may be a part of that structure; that the aisles were added about the end of the twelfth century, and that when these additions were made, the painting on the west wall was executed. The foundations of what appeared to be outer walls were discovered, extending between the arches of the south aisle, beneath the pavement, during the repairs. The chapel is somewhat later. Some of the windows in the north and south walls are Early English in style; others belong to the Decorated period; but most of those now existing are modern insertions. The tower and spire are modern, as in 1808 "there were neither tower or spire."*

There is some anomaly about its dedication. In the inventory† of church goods taken in the reign of King Edward VI., anno 1552, it is styled Saint Peter, Chaldon. By the will of Isabel,‡ widow of Baldwin Covert, dated September 8th, 1440, her body was ordered "to be buried in the church of *St. Peter and St. Paul*, Chalvedon, next the tomb of her husband." In the inventory before mentioned is "Item ii belles in the steeple." There is now but one bell, having on it the inscription "Ca~pana beati Pauli," but the floor is pierced for two bells. In some churchwardens' accounts in the parish chest, dated 1782, one bell only is named. In all modern writings it is called Saint Paul. From this it may be inferred that the church was dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, and that there were originally two bells, one of which disappeared at some time between 1552 and 1782.

The preservation of this painting, which is 17 ft. 2 in. in length and 11 ft. 2 in. in height, is entirely due to the care of the late Rector, the Rev. H. Shepherd, who, instead of leaving, as is too commonly the case, everything to the architect and his clerk of the

* Manning and Bray, vol. ii., p. 444.

† J. R. Daniel-Tyssen, Esq., F.S.A., in *Surrey Collections*, vol. iv., pp. 62 and 140.

‡ Brayley's *History of Surrey*, vol. iv., p. 33.

works, kept a watchful eye upon the proceedings, and catching sight of some colour peeping out beneath the whitewash, warned those employed in removing the latter, and thus preserved the painting from being destroyed, a fate that perhaps would otherwise have befallen it. Under the auspices and at the cost of the SURREY ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY it was rendered yet more distinct, and the reward for these labours has been the recovery of the most complete, as well as the most interesting example of ecclesiastical art that has come down to us. As far as the researches of the writer go, the subject is unique, never having been previously discovered in England; nor is such a discovery recorded in France, as it certainly would have been by the indefatigable editor of the "Annales Archæologiques."

The subject of the painting which is on the western wall of the nave of Chaldon Church may be called the "Ladder of the Salvation of the Human Soul, and the Road to Heaven," such being the title given to it in the "Guide to Painting of the Greek Church," in which ancient formulæ are preserved for the use of the present time, rendering it thereby a valuable manual of reference for all who study mediæval art.* In the Greek Church nothing changes, and its art in the present day is, in its traditions, that of the twelfth century.

The "Ladder" is a metaphor, and a very natural one. The vision of Jacob is the first on record. But the expression often occurs. In the "Sequentiæ" of St. Gregory "Scala Cœli" is applied to the wood of the cross.† It is here used poetically. But we have

* This volume is a translation into French from a manuscript in modern Greek, used by the monk-painters of the monasteries of Mount Athos, published and edited by M. Didron. Paris, 1844.

† Mediæval writers considered the vision of Jacob to be a prefigure of the cross of Christ as the road to heaven. *Vide* "Sermo de Exaltatione Sanctæ Crucis," among the collection entitled "Dormi securè."