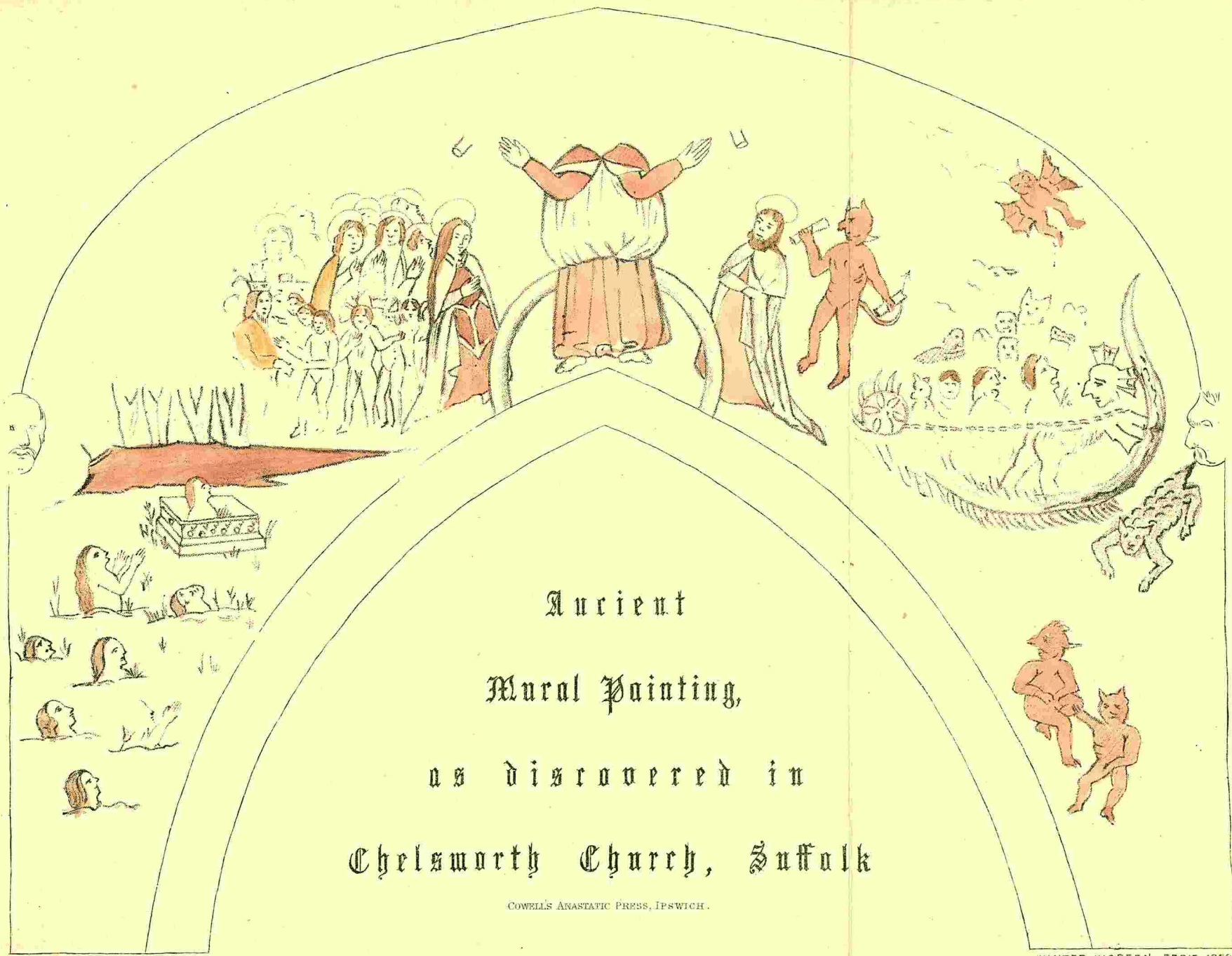


## MURAL PAINTINGS, CHELSWORTH CHURCH.

[READ DEC. 20, 1849.]

In September, 1849, the workmen in cleaning the walls of Chelsworth Church, in Suffolk, discovered a curious fresco painting on the arch dividing the Nave from the chancel. (Plate I) It represents our Saviour sitting on the throne of Judgment, with his hands extended, and with a crown of glory. The throne is a rainbow, which, as consisting of three colours, might be intended to symbolize the Trinity. On the Redeemer's right is the Virgin Mary, in an attitude imploring pardon: close to, and at her back, is a group of the Apostles, eleven in number, and below them are various personages, many of distinction, as the crowns they wear evidently indicate, thus showing that God is no *respector of persons*; and again below them, intermediately placed, is the sea of blood—that of the Atonement, through which several persons are necessarily made to pass, who are seen rising from their tombs and the water, summoned thence by two angels with trumpets, who surmount the picture close to the figure of the Saviour. On the north side is a serpent depicted as escaping from the Supreme Judge, with his head concealed behind a corbell, clearly denoting his defeat and reluctance to face the Saviour of the world. On the left stands St. Peter in an attitude of admiration, with the keys of Heaven in his hands turned *against* Satan, who appears to taunt the apostle with his success at the number of victims assigned to his final charge by the Great Judge. He holds in each hand a scroll, containing as may be imagined, the names and offences of his followers, who are involved in flames encircled by a serpent, surrounded on all sides by evil spirits of most grotesque shapes, and confined by chains of iron worked by a windlass, designating thereby the number and magnitude of their crimes.

It is impossible to pronounce at what period prior to the reformation in 1538, this very curious painting was designed, but as the church till *then* belonged to the Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's, it was probably the production of some monks, who were constantly employed in making such



Ancient  
Mural Painting,  
as discovered in  
Chelsworth Church, Suffolk

·COWELL'S ANASTATIC PRESS, IPSWICH.



MASON DEL.

WALTER HAGREEN FECIT 1850.

Ancient Moral Painting, as discovered in  
Chelmsworth Church, Suffolk.

COWELL'S ANASTATIC PRESS, IPSWICH.

representations tending to instruct those who could *not* read in the mysteries and the truths of Scripture; and a more useful method could not have been devised to improve the ignorant laity in those days; but even in *our own*, no one will contend that some good effect may, and will not, be produced in the minds of all those who seriously read, or hear preached, the awful denunciations of Holy Writ, so well exemplified in this fresco, and in which nothing is represented that is not warranted by the precise words of Inspiration.

Over the great western arch were the figures shewn in Plate II. They may probably have reference to King Ahab's coveting the vineyard of Naboth. The king is looking down from the top of his palace on a garden below; and Jezabel his queen appears to be telling him that he shall possess the object of his wishes. An indistinct figure of St. Christopher was also discovered in its accustomed place on the South Aisle; and fragments of painting on all the walls.

Æthelfreda, daughter of Alfgar, the Earl, held this church of gift from Edgar the King, in the 10th century, and at the request of her father gave it to the Benedictine Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's; she likewise was a considerable benefactress to the monastery at Stoke, near Nayland, in this county.

From the period of the Reformation the advowson has been vested in the Crown, under the patronage of the Lord Chancellor.

An ingenious artist, Mr. Mason, of Ipswich, restored the painting in October, 1849, at my request.

HENRY E. AUSTEN.