

News, Notes and Queries

SS. COSMAS AND DAMIAN— PATRON SAINTS OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY

THEIR CULT IN ENGLAND

by

LESLIE G. MATTHEWS

AMONG the many saints associated with the healing arts, the twin brothers SS. Cosmas and Damian have long been revered and adopted as patrons. Their practice of medicine and surgery in Asia Minor without fee—hence called ‘Anagyroi,’ without silver—and their martyrdom in Aegea, in Cilicia, in the time of Diocletian, and according to tradition by Lysis, Roman Governor of the Province, made a lasting impression upon the early Church. Aegea became an important place of pilgrimage.

The grafting by these physician-surgeons of a Moor’s leg in replacement of a patient’s diseased leg, and his surprise at finding himself possessed of two sound legs, his own white, and the other black, has been the subject of numerous paintings by artists of many countries, the majority of whom depict the brothers in long robes, holding surgical instruments, boxes of salves, gallipots, or other medical appliances.¹

The cult of martyrs may be said to have started in Milan in the fourth century when the tombs of SS. Proteas and Gervais were transferred to the Ambrosius Basilica there. Remains of saints were parted, even after cremation; ashes, bones and parts of sarcophaguses were eagerly sought, despite the well-established Roman law which forbade such interference in cemeteries; Greek law was not so severe.² Early martyrs were celebrated on the anniversary of their martyrdom and not on the anniversary of their birth as had been the custom with Roman families. Later the date of the deposition of the relics became the honoured anniversary date.³ That of SS. Cosmas and Damian appears in the Calendar of Saints as 27 September. It quickly became the custom for perfume and ointments to be poured on the tombs of saints. Holes were made in the cover stones for this purpose and part of the perfume or ointment was carried away as a relic.

The cult of the two martyrs, SS. Cosmas and Damian, grew rapidly: it began as early as the fourth century when churches were dedicated to them in Jerusalem, in Egypt and in Mesopotamia. Saints’ names were adopted from a desire to venerate and emulate their achievements. According to Theoderet, quoted by Delehaye, the trivial remains of St. Cosmas were dispersed and divided in the fourth century.³ Both Proclus (A.D. 443–447) and Justinian (Emperor, A.D. 527–565) erected churches to the saints.

¹ See illustration.

² Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Origines du Culte des Martyrs*, 2nd ed., Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1933, p. 75.

³ Delehaye, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

News, Notes and Queries

Justinian brought the relics to Byzantium.⁴ They were next heard of in Rome where in the Via dei Foro Imperiali, St. Felix (Pope A.D. 526–530), utilizing a hall of the Forum of Vespasian and adding an apse, established a church in honour of the two saints: this still contains brilliant sixth-century mosaics in which the saints figure.

Since 1581 the skulls of the two saints have reposed in the Convent of the St. Claire Nuns of Madrid, where they have been objects of veneration. They had been removed from Rome to Bremen in the tenth century, then to Bamberg, and finally to Madrid by order of the Empress Maria, daughter of the Emperor Charles V. In 1935 scientific examination of the skulls showed that their martyrdom must have taken place late in life, i.e. above the age of fifty, as shown by the state of obliteration of the sutures.⁵

Numerous books and articles have been written about the lives of the saints and their adoption as patrons by many societies and groups of physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, etc., but little has appeared relating to any manifestation of a cult in England. Although the cult extended throughout Christendom, for some unexplained reason it made little headway in this country. Such evidence as exists is extremely limited. As far as can be traced only five churches are known to have been dedicated to them, viz., Blean, and Challock in Kent, Keymer in Sussex, Sherrington in Wiltshire and Stretford in Herefordshire.⁶ There were relics in Canterbury Cathedral, in Salisbury Cathedral and elsewhere; statues (late) on the west front of Salisbury Cathedral; they are pictured on the rood screen of Wolborough Church, Devonshire; one of them appears in a window of the church of Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire: they figured as supporters in the cognizance or arms of the Company of Surgeons of London in 1492; the Company of Barbers of London known as early as 1308, had been dedicated to them; and they appear in many lists of martyrs in the Canon of Saints in England. Details of these are given below.

Arnold-Foster, in remarking that various foreign towns were the fortunate possessors of relics of these saints adds: ‘. . . it is doubtless through the channel of some Proprietor that three of our churches [he refers to Blean, Challock, and Keymer but makes no mention of Sherrington] in the South of England came to be placed under

⁴ The cult was long continued in Byzantium, as evidenced by two examples in London Museums: (1) The Dormitian Ivory, in which the two saints figure in two of the lower panels. (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 296/1869, Byzantine, 2nd half of tenth century); (2) An Octagonal Gold Reliquary, apparently to contain relics of the two saints whose names in Greek are engraved upon it. (British Museum, *Catalogue of Christian Art*, 1901, No. 284, Franks Collection, bought in Constantinople; 10th century.)

⁵ Sanchez De Riviera, *Boletín de Medicina*, Madrid, 1935, No. 51. A photograph shows the skulls wrapped at the base in red silk, kept in position by silver bands bearing Greek inscriptions by which they were identified. De Riviera stated (in translation): ‘Thinking that detailed investigation would be possible Dr. Grinda and myself requested the co-operation of Dr. Barradas, the anthropologist, but although he came with his instruments, he deemed it wise, in view of the fragile state of the bones, not to go further than a visual examination. He agreed that the skulls are of males, adults of advanced age, because of the marked bony reliefs at the muscle insertion points’. Dr. Peres de Barradas, who also examined the skulls reported: ‘It is beyond doubt that the skulls are of males, from the development, especially noticeable in that of St. Cosmas, of the zygomata and of the external temporal line. The state of obliteration of the sutures shows the subjects were above 50 years of age. The state of the bones speaks of the great antiquity of the skulls but from this alone it would not be possible to date the skulls, not even approximately.’

⁶ Although C. J. S. Thompson states in *The Mystery and Art of the Apothecary* (London, 1929, p. 79) ‘Several churches were dedicated to the Saints in England, including one still existing in the Forest of Blean, in Kent’, nowhere does he specify the names of the ‘several churches’ or give reasons for his statement.

the invocation of these twin brothers . . .⁷

While references late in time to the churches named are frequent, possibly because of the unusualness of the dedications, details of the original reasons for the dedications are not readily available.

I. CHURCH DEDICATIONS IN ENGLAND.

(a) BLEAN, KENT.

Hasted stated: 'The church. . . is but small and mean. It consists of only one aisle and a chancel having a low pointed turret at the West End. . . Anciently an appendage of the manor and remained so till Hamo le Crevequer called in the Charter. Hamo de Blen, son of Etardus le Crevequer, gave the church to the Master & Brethren of the Hospital of Eastbridge, Canterbury. The gift was confirmed to the Hospital by Archbishop Stephen Langton between 1206 and 1228.⁸ Blean was known as Cossemasblene in a document of 1548 by which the Master and co-Brethren of the Eastbridge Hospital confirmed their gift of about one virgate of land, subject to a rental of 3s. a year, to William Harter and his wife.⁹ This piece of land 'and a lytell tenement besyde the churche of Cosmes Bleane' was referred to in a survey of the houses and lands of the Manor of Hothe and Blean (calendared 'late 16th century'), and 'gyven by the Masters of the Hospitall longe tyme past to the Auncesters of the wiff of one William Harter yet lyvinge and her heirs. . .'¹⁰

(b) CHALLOCK, KENT.

This church stands within Eastwell Park, isolated from the village. It dates mainly from the thirteenth century though there is evidence of earlier work. It contains a rood and parclose screens of the fifteenth century and has a tower of the same period. Hasted reported that it was 'esteemed only a chapel of ease to that of Godmersham', a neighbouring village.¹¹ The modern window picturing the saints shows St. Cosmas holding a box of pills and St. Damian with a pestle and mortar.

(c) KEYMER, SUSSEX (FORMERLY KNOWN AS CHEMERE)

A church at Keymer (then Chemere) was noted in Domesday—'There [is] a church and 3 serfs and 40 acres of meadow and 2 mills yielding 12 shillings.' The church was given to Lewes Priory, Sussex, by Ralph de Caisned, who seems to have succeeded William de Waterville (who held of William de Warenne) in most if not all of his manors.¹² Keymer church has an apsidal chancel with flint wall, of the twelfth century. The east window of the chancel has ancient angle-dressings to the inner splays and a chamfered segmental rear-arch with old vousoirs.¹³ Otherwise all stone dressings were renewed when the church was almost rebuilt in 1866 from the designs of Edmund Scott. A drawing in the Burrell Collection, c. 1780, shows the church long before the restoration was

⁷ F. Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, Vol. I, 164–5; Vol. II, 515; Vol. III. App. II, 55.

⁸ Edward Hasted, *History of the County of Kent*, Canterbury, 1782, vol. 3, p. 568.

⁹ MS., Lambeth Library, CM. II, 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, MS. CM. XIII, 9.

¹¹ Hasted, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 167.

¹² *Victoria County History, Sussex*, vol. 1, 441.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 179, 180.

proposed.¹⁴ Poole states that, bearing in mind the church was mentioned in Domesday, the chancel almost certainly must have been standing in 1086, and if so, more likely before 1066, on the ground that there is no evidence of apsidal churches in the 1066–86 period in Sussex, with the possible exception of Stopham.¹⁵

(d) SHERRINGTON NEAR WYLYE, WILTSHIRE—FORMERLY KNOWN AS SHARNTON.

Land at Sherrington was granted by King Edgar in 968 to the Abbey of Wilton but by 1086 it had been lost to the Abbey.¹⁶ In the late medieval period Sherrington was a poor parish. It paid 52s. in fifteenths and tenths in 1334 and in 1377 there were only 37 poll tax payers. By 1428 it was listed as a 'poor' parish of fewer than ten householders and therefore exempt from the levy on parishes.¹⁷ The manor was held by the Giffards, with occasional interruptions, from the time of the Conqueror until almost the end of the reign of Edward II (1327) and was in the hands of collaterals until 1562 when Henry, last Earl of Arundel sold it to Richard Lambert of London.¹⁸

The church is on raised ground: close by is a Norman motte, with moat, and on the motte the first Giffard built his great Norman castle. The church dates from the late thirteenth century and was most likely built as a thank-offering by Sir Alexander Giffard for his safe return from the sixth Crusade and from Egypt.¹⁹ Little remains of the original decorations of the church which was much restored in 1624. The nave and chancel together are some 58 ft. in length and there is a south porch. Although the early dedication was to the Saints Cosmas and Damian, there was for a time a rededication to St. Michael but there has been a reversion to the original dedication.

(e) STRETFORD, NEAR LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE.

This church, containing some Norman work, of early to mid-twelfth century date, was reconstructed and added to during the first half of the thirteenth century. For long under the invocation of St. Peter, it was originally dedicated to SS. Cosmas and Damian, according to Dingley, quoted by Marshall.²⁰ There is a square recess in stone about 8 ft. high with an embattled top, built between the two chancels of the church and against the respond of the dividing wall; a sill to this, about 2 ft. 6 in. from the ground and about one foot deep is made of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, facing p. 180.

¹⁵ H. Poole, 'The Domesday Book of Churches of Sussex', *Sussex Arch. Colln.*, 1948, 87, 51–2.

¹⁶ *Victoria County History*, Wiltshire, vol. 3, 232–3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4, 297, 307, 314.

¹⁸ R. Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire*, London, 1822, vol. 1, pp. 234–9.

¹⁹ Personal communication from Rev. Dr. R. D. Richardson, Rector of Boyton and Sherrington. Alexander Giffard was the fourth son of Hugh Giffard, of Boyton, Wilts., Constable of the Tower in 1216, and Sibyl, daughter of Walter de Corneille, and who was at one time in attendance upon Queen Eleanor. Alexander, a Knight Templar and a gallant Crusader, was the sole English survivor of the onslaught by Turmanshah and his Muslim host against King Louis's army outside Mansourah in 1250. (*Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Major*, ed. H. R. Luard. Rolls Series 57, London, 1872–83. 5, 155–6, 168; 6, 196.) He is not mentioned in *The Knights of Edward I*, Harl. Soc. LXXXI (II) or in Sir Stephen Runciman's *History of the Crusades*. Alexander's acquaintance with the cult of SS. Cosmas and Damian in the Near East may have induced him to stipulate such a dedication for a church of his founding.

²⁰ George Marshall, 'Stretford Church, co. Hereford', *Trans. Woolhope Nat. Field Club*, 1930–2, pp. 11–20, illus. *Royal Comm. Hist. Monmts. Herefordshire*, vol. 3, 1934, describes it as 'The parish church of St. Peter or St. Cosmas and St. Damian'.

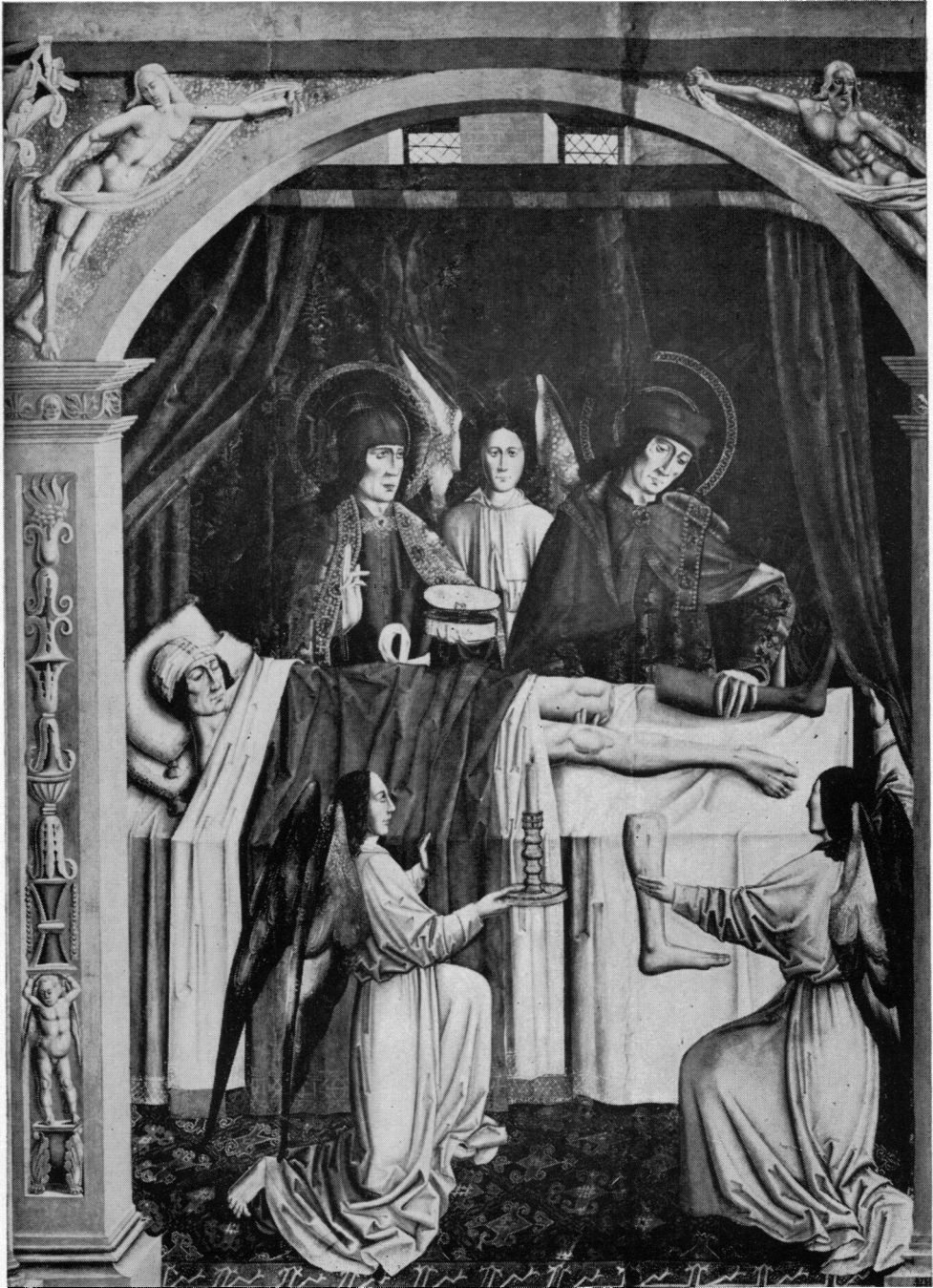


Figure 1

The legend of SS. Cosmas and Damian, A.D. 290. From a painting by Alonso de Sedano (active 1496 in Burgos Cathedral), in the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine.



Figure 2
SS. Cosmas and Damian—statues in Salisbury Cathedral.

News, Notes and Queries

a thirteenth-century incised slab which may have been the cover of a reliquary containing relics of the saints. There is a possibility, suggested by Marshall, that this stone was part of an Easter Sepulchre, though the fact that earlier writers—Dingley and Silas Taylor²¹ say that there was a St. Cosmian's well in the parish, famous for its cures, points to the dedication of the church to the two saints. In 1930 neither the Rector of the parish nor the oldest inhabitant could identify the existence of the well.

II. OTHER CHURCH MONUMENTS, RELICS, ETC.

(a) CANTERBURY—CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL

This, the mother church of England, was begun in 1070 by Lanfranc, the first Norman Archbishop. Reconstruction went on from 1096 to 1107 and it was consecrated in 1130. Amongst the many relics deposited in movable feretra (iron relic chests), listed in the inventory of A.D. 1315, were those of many saints, including bones of SS. Cosmas and Damian. 'In feretro cum Crucifixio eburneo continentur de ossibus Sanctorum Cosme et Damiani martyrurum.' A further mention of relics of these saints reads: 'In cistula eburnea quadrata cum serura de Cupro continentur [square ivory box with copper lock] maxille Sanctorum Cosme et Damiani cum ix dentibus.'²² Thus it was claimed that not only were there bones of the two saints but also their jawbones and nine teeth.

(b) SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

There is no evidence that the statues of the two saints, Cosmas and Damian, Nos. 8 and 9 in the fourth row—Confessors of the Faith and Martyrs—over the central doors of the west front of Salisbury Cathedral are in any way to be associated with a cult of the saints in England. The original statues which adorned the west front, probably of the fourteenth century to judge by the ball-flower type of ornament, were much decayed, even before the majority of them were ' . . . doubtless destroyed by iconoclasts in the reign of Edward VI and during the Civil War of the seventeenth century, so that when, about 1863, their restoration was contemplated, only nine statues were left, and they were mutilated beyond recognition.'²³ Most of the statues now to be seen were the work of the sculptor, Redfern, and were placed in the years following 1863. In Fletcher's opinion the groups and individual subjects were suggested by Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, the first edition of which had appeared in 1848, and which contained notes and figures of the two saints, Cosmas styled 'Cosmo', and Damian.²⁴ The two youthful figures are finely carved: St. Cosmas in the dress of a physician, holds a box of ointment containing a

²¹ B. M. Harl. MS 6726 (7), fo. 125. This contains a marginal note: 'view'd May: 15: 1657' and the line: 'St. Cosmana's well famous for cures there is below the church eastward.'

²² J. Wickham Legg and W. H. St. John Hope, *Inventories of Christchurch, Canterbury*, London, 1902, pp. 89, 84.

²³ Canon J. M. J. Fletcher, *The Statues on the West Front of Salisbury Cathedral*, 3rd. ed., Salisbury, 1930, pp. 3-4 and f.n. p. 4.

²⁴ Mrs. Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, 5th ed., London, 1866, vol. 2, pp. 433-9. Mrs. Jameson points out that statues of the saints, designed by Michelangelo, stand on each side of the Madonna in the Medici Chapel in Florence and that the saints were the patron saints of the Medici family.

News, Notes and Queries

spatula in one hand and a surgical instrument in the other, while St. Damian has a pestle and mortar.

Salisbury Cathedral possesses an Altar of Relics in the south side of the nave.

(c) **THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, WOLBOROUGH, DEVON.**

The advowson of this church, the fabric of which is mainly of the fourteenth century but with much work of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was in the hands of the neighbouring Abbey of Torre and was served by the Abbey Canons. Its beautiful screens, of early sixteenth-century date, to judge by the character of the woodwork, span the nave and the aisles. In all probability it was the Abbey Canons who were responsible for their erection. Amongst the sixty-six painted wainscot panels of the screens are the two named figures of SS. Cosmas and Damian.²⁵ St. Cosmas is a crowned figure with flowing robes, holding a pestle and mortar, while St. Damian, in an elaborate cap, appears to be holding up a urine flask. Hoskins described the figures as richly coloured; on the other hand, Pevsner refers to the paintings as 'mediocre'.²⁶ The representation of the two saints here appears to be the latest in English churches, apart from the Salisbury Cathedral west front and the modern window in Challock church.

(d) **MINSTER LOVELL CHURCH, OXFORDSHIRE.**

From Norman times the manor of Minster Lovell was owned by the Lovell family. The church, rebuilt by William, Lord Lovell, d. 1455, has in the south window of the nave the figure wearing the robes of a doctor, pointed pileus and scarlet gown, and bearing a staff (? of Aesculapius) and a glass phial. Lambourn suggests that there is ample evidence in the Patent Rolls that William Lovell was a sick man during his last years, being granted exemption from attendance at Councils and Parliament for this reason. He is of opinion that, preoccupied with his health as Lovell was, it is not too fanciful to suppose that the patron saints of healing, SS. Cosmas and Damian, would have been objects of special veneration by Lovell and that the figure representing either St. Cosmas or St. Damian would have been inserted in the window at his instigation.²⁷ Lovell's fine tomb is in the south transept of the church.

(e) **MARTYROLOGIES.**

The names of SS. Cosmas and Damian have appeared in many of the early lists of martyrs whose anniversary dates were to be observed.²⁸

III OTHER REFERENCES.

- (a) The Barber's Company of the City of London was originally of a distinctly religious character. The craft supported a priest, had a votive altar, provided funds for masses, and attended at obits and funerals. The gild was dedicated to

²⁵ Illustrated by Francis Bond in *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches*, Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 116.

²⁶ W. G. Hoskins, *Devon*, London, 1954, p. 442; and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: South Devon*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1952.

²⁷ E. A. Greening Lambourn, 'The Lovell Tomb at Minster', *Oxfordshire Archaeol. Soc.*, 1937, 83, 13-20.

²⁸ Examples: The Sarum Canon; the Canterbury Psalter, mid-twelfth century; the St. Alban's Psalter, first half of twelfth century; and the Calendar of Barnwell Priory Church, Cambs., c 1220.

News, Notes and Queries

SS. Cosmas and Damian and observed their Day in the Calendar—27 September. Their earliest extant records date from 1308, when Richard le Barbour was admitted before the Mayor and Aldermen of the City ‘to have supervision over the trade of Barbers, etc.’²⁹

- (b) Side by side with the Barbers for many years there existed a Surgeons’ Company which in 1492 received from Henry VII before his departure to France a cognizance or ‘possibly an informal grant of arms’.³⁰ This was a shield with St. Cosmas holding a urine flask and St. Damian with a box of unguent and a spatula both habited as physicians, as supporters. The Surgeons later joined the Barbers to form the Barber-Surgeons’ Company.
- (c) The Catholic Association of Doctors of Medicine in Great Britain bears the title—The Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian.
- (d) The two saints figure as supporters in the arms of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, granted 1907, when thirteen other Societies amalgamated with the former Medical and Chirurgical Society (1805) under the present name. The physician, St. Cosmas (dexter) is depicted holding an albarello and the surgeon, St. Damian (sinister), a surgical instrument.

The saints are not included in the vast number of saints and martyrs in the great stained glass windows of our major cathedrals nor so far as I can find in any of the windows of the lesser cathedrals, monasteries and churches of England, with the exception of Challock and Minster Lovell—see above. Surprisingly, they are absent from the very window in which they could well have figured—that of Trinity Chapel Aisle, No. 12, Canterbury Cathedral, which is dated by Rackham as c. 1210–20, and which is a composite window with many medical scenes, e.g. cure of hernia, healing the lame, treating a leprous monk, etc.³¹

Although included in many martyrologies of abbeys and cathedrals, the two saints were not highly placed among the saints and martyrs that were to the fore in the minds of ordinary English people of the fourteenth century. Otherwise they would have been introduced into some of the scenes depicted in the hundreds of English medieval alabaster panels: these include seventy or more saints, many of whom are not familiar names in most churches. Hildburgh, who must have examined more of these panels than anyone else, does not record SS. Cosmas and Damian. He said that the carving of alabaster panels was ‘. . . essentially a folk art, created by humble craftsmen mainly for the contemplation and edification of persons as humble as themselves . . . Their notions [derived] almost entirely from beliefs current amongst the Roman Catholics of

²⁹ R. J. Blackham, *London’s Livery Companies*, London, n.d. (after 1930), pp. 163–64.

³⁰ Sidney Young, *The Annals of the Barber Surgeons of London*, London, 1890, p. 433. Illustration of Arms faces p. 68. ‘In the grant to the Barber-Surgeons (1569) it is recited that Henry VIII [in fact, Henry VII] granted the Company of Surgeons a cognizance “which is a spatter thereon a rose gules crowned golde for their warrant in fielde but no authoritie by warrant for the bearing of the same in shilde as armes”’ (Young, *op. cit.*, p. 433). A spatter may be a spatula or an instrument for splashing or scattering. Randle Holme in *The Academy of Armory*, Chester, 1688, figures two types of spatulas, fig. 25, p. 423, but not the kind displayed in the cognizance.

³¹ Bernard Rackham, *The Ancient Glass of Canterbury Cathedral*, London, 1949, pp. 106–10.

the time'²²—mainly the second half of the fourteenth century.

Why these two 'medical' saints were so little regarded in England is a mystery, especially when one considers their widespread cult almost throughout Europe and Asia Minor, particularly during the Middle Ages. The Surgeons of Paris, for example, dedicated their College to St. Côme on its foundation in the twelfth century but no similar dedication associated with the healing arts is heard of in England even when medicine began to be taught at Oxford, with the exception of the Barbers' Company and the Surgeons' Company in London.

The few dedications of churches may be connected with a returned crusader or with the abbeys or monasteries possessing relics, e.g. Canterbury, where two of the churches, Blean and Challock, are within a few miles of the city and were possibly served originally by monks from Canterbury. There may have been other churches with an original dedication to the two saints, in addition to those listed, but their rededication may have soon taken place, due perhaps to the unfamiliar names and the lack of knowledge of the lives of these two devoted physicians and surgeons.

²² W. L. Hildburgh, 'Representation of the saints in medieval English alabaster carvings', *Folklore*, 1950, 61, 68–87; and 'Iconographical peculiarities in English medieval alabaster carvings', *Folklore*, 1933, 44, 32–150.

BLACK BILE. A REVIEW OF RECENT ATTEMPTS TO TRACE THE ORIGIN OF THE TEACHINGS ON MELANCHOLIA TO MEDICAL OBSERVATIONS

MELANCHOLIA, the black bile, was first discussed by the Hippocratics nearly 2,400 years ago. For more than 2,000 years the majority of the learned world accepted without question the existence of a black bile as well as of the three other humours, blood, yellow bile and phlegm. Melancholia became a key word not only of the humoral theory, but of philosophy, psychology, astrology, art and poetry. It survived the findings of a more advanced, empirical physiology and at an early stage acquired the significance of a psychological state or a mental illness, as well as the property inducing such a state of mind. Its role in the literature of relatively modern times, of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages up to that of German Romanticism, remained important; the works of Shakespeare and Robert Burton would be severely mutilated if a puristical, scientific censor were to eliminate the words melancholy and melancholic. Nevertheless, until recently no one has sought to indicate which physiological phenomena may have led the ancient Greek physiologists to hypothecate the existence of a black bile.

Since this evasive fluid is closely connected with the doctrine of the four humours, it may be permitted to recapitulate briefly the genesis of this doctrine as traced in the scholarly and illuminating work of Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*.¹ There the origin of the theory is traced from the Pythagoreans' veneration of numbers, particularly of the number four 'which holds