TOWARDS AN ART HISTORY OF THE PARISH CHURCH, 1200–1399

Edited by Meg Bernstein

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The Courtauld

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Estimated at numbering between eight and nine thousand, parish churches containing at least some medieval building fabric are ubiquitous in the English landscape. Yet, despite their quotidian familiarity, parish churches have not, by and large, been treated consistently or systematically as deserving of the attention of art historical study.

This collection of essays comes out of a conference held at the Courtauld Institute of Art in June 2017 and focuses on the two centuries between 1200 and 1399. This period represents the most notable lacuna in scholarship, even though the parish church was fully solidified as an administrative category and arguably as a building type. Compared with the smaller corpus of the Romanesque period or the late medieval church after 1400, which draws on greater availability of documentary evidence in the form of churchwarden accounts, these two centuries have been historically understudied.

The ten diverse essays contained within this volume explore the art and architecture of parish churches through a variety of lenses, methodologies, and perspectives, ranging from (re)considerations of the very definition of the parish church to phenomenological explorations of their component parts, as well as case studies of their decorative schemes. An Afterword by Paul Binski reflects upon his 1999 essay, 'The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem' and considers the place of anthropology in our developed study of the parish church.

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Preface

MEG BERNSTEIN

*Move forward, run my hand around the font.
 From where I stand, the roof looks almost new
 Cleaned or restored? Someone would know: I don't.
 Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
 Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
 'Here endeth' much more loudly than I'd meant.
 The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
 I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
 Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.*

Larkin, 'Church Going'¹

The verses of Philip Larkin's 'Church Going' reflect the ambiguity of the parish church for contemporary visitors. The narrator has been curious enough to stop for a visit, and knowledgeable enough to identify the font and the lectern. Yet, he betrays a lack of comprehension, a wall where his knowledge ends, leaving him to note that he cannot accurately assess the age of the roof. Although interested at first, it seems to be his lack of understanding that leads him to conclude 'the place was not worth stopping for'.

Estimated at numbering between eight and nine thousand, parish churches containing at least some medieval building fabric are ubiquitous in the English landscape. Looking out the window on a short train journey may yield views of a dozen towers: some stumpy, some tall, and others topped with a leaded spire. Yet, despite their quotidian familiarity, the parish church has received little consideration outside certain pockets, namely: historians of lay piety and amateur 'church crawlers'. Despite the amount of surviving fabric, parish churches have been challenging to parse due to the iconoclasm of the Reformation and persistent rebuilding over time. Dwindling congregations and lack of regular, institutional funding from the Church of England have rendered these buildings difficult to maintain.² Unlike many monastic sites or castles, parish churches have remained in use, and modernisation has been necessary to meet the needs of congregations with additions of sacristies, kitchens, toilets, and other facilities. With a focus on providing sacraments and community for ordinary laypeople, both in the Middle Ages and today, parish churches have been perceived as less important, institutionally, economically, and artistically than those churches which served high-level prelates and nobility, namely cathedrals and monasteries. For these and other reasons, parish churches have not, by and large, been treated consistently or systematically as deserving of the attention of art historical study.

This collection of essays comes from 'Towards an Art History of the Parish Church', a conference held at the Courtauld Institute of Art on 2–3 June 2017. The essays focus on the two centuries between 1200 and 1399. This period represents the most notable lacuna in scholarship, even though the parish church was fully solidified as an administrative category and arguably as a building type. The thirteenth and

fourteenth centuries have historically been understudied, in comparison with the smaller corpus of the Romanesque period or the late medieval church after 1400, which draws on greater availability of documentary evidence in the form of churchwarden accounts.

The conference took direct inspiration from Paul Binski's 1999 article 'The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem', seeking to answer Binski's important question: 'how, and in what ways, we might place the imagery of the parish church at the centre of the study of medieval visual culture rather than seeing it as some unfathomable, and perhaps embarrassing, epiphenomenon of something that was 'really' going on elsewhere'.³ In response to this question, the papers delivered at the conference took the form of both overarching analyses and case studies, considering such issues as the category of the parish church as object of study, furnishings and decoration, the parish church in relation to other categories of buildings, and issues of funding and patronage. Big data, economic analysis, and phenomenology are some of the methodologies employed in examining these buildings. This volume presents ten of the papers delivered at the conference and concludes with an Afterword by Paul Binski based on his closing remarks and reflection some two decades after his influential essay on the 'parish church problem'. Rather than presenting a single unified approach or a final word on the topic, it is the editor's hope that this collection of essays will inspire further questions and enduring attention to these buildings and their contents.

The editor has incurred many debts in the course of organising this volume. I wish to thank the speakers whose papers do not appear in this volume for their contributions to the discussion in 2017 and the 'parish church turn'. The Courtauld's Research Forum sponsored and organised our event. I am in their debt, particularly to Alixe Bovey, Ingrid Guiot, Jessica Akerman, Lara Frentrop, and Fern Insh. I also wish to thank the Paul Mellon Centre for funding travel to London for our participants. Series editor Alixe Bovey offered to publish these transactions under the auspices of Courtauld Books Online, and managing editor Maria Mileeva has shepherded it to fruition. Grace Williams offered a much-needed steady hand in the design and publication of this book. In our New Haven sessions, Jamin An sharpened my focus and clarified the way forward. Jules Hynes's unconditional confidence in my abilities and constant encouragement helped me overcome unanticipated hurdles in the completion of this project. James Alexander Cameron initially proposed a conference on parish churches to me in 2015 and was an able co-organiser and inspiring conversation partner in its development. Although he isn't a formal contributor to this volume, his influence in it is deeply felt throughout. A small army of peer reviewers generously contributed their time and expertise to improving the essays in this volume. Julian Luxford, John McNeill, and Tom Nickson's advice and aid were invaluable to this first-time editor. Finally, I am grateful to all of the authors whose stimulating writing on parish church art and architecture is contained herein; I am honoured to be in conversation with them.

1. Philip Larkin, *The Complete Poems of Philip Larkin*, (ed.) Archie Burnett (London: Faber & Faber, 1955).
2. James A. Cameron, 'What Can Be Done to Save England's Neglected Parish Churches?', *Apollo: The International Art Magazine* (December 2019).
3. Paul Binski, 'The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem', *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): pp. 1–25.

The English Parish Church as an Object and Category of Study

JULIAN LUXFORD

In the Middle Ages, and indeed until relatively recently, the parish was the basic unit of ecclesiastical and secular administration in England. Originally, it was a domain of episcopal governance, but in the High and later Middle Ages, *parochia* referred to an area of indeterminate size centred for official purposes on a village or town. This area was served by a priest appointed to oversee the religious affairs of its inhabitants. The priest had his administrative seat in the town or village church. Said church was often the largest building in a parish, and in most cases it was the only one of functional significance to all parishioners regardless of age, sex or wealth. With the exception of extreme unction, it was normally the only place in which parishioners could receive the sacraments and in whose environs they could be buried. By extension, it tended to become a focus of cultural activity for the laity. The parish also served Church and Crown alike as a unit of taxation. For these and other reasons, it forms a coherent and obvious basis for investigation, and has been used as such in county histories of England since the sixteenth century.¹

In the context of art and architectural history, the choice of the parish in the form of its church is more a matter of convenience than historical logic. At its most flexible, ‘the parish church’ has been employed by scholars simply to corral object or image categories that would otherwise seem unmanageably open-ended.² More commonly, the intention is to investigate something that is considered intrinsically parochial. For scholarly and popular authors alike, some concept of the parish church as a distinctive artistic domain is usually involved in this. The concept has proven durable and enabled some highly useful work, whose ultimate significance is its stake in decision-making about the future of buildings and their contents.³ It is nevertheless worth asking how this generic concept serves the broader aims of scholarship, particularly in light of some of the difficulties it entails. This question is the business of the current essay. It should be acknowledged at the outset that what follows is neither exhaustive nor surprising in its propositions. The ideas discussed here will be recognisable to most readers. The essay’s main purpose is to critique something of basic relevance to this volume on the assumption that any self-respecting study should cross-examine the validity of its terms of reference, and further that doing so can produce healthier premises.

With this in mind, the proposal that the parish church as a category is by nature ambiguous, and has been (for the positivist at least) unhelpfully sentimentalised, is to play devil’s advocate in a constructive way. The key concept here is that of inclusive classification or, if one prefers, universality. Naturally, there is nothing the matter with the phrase ‘parish church’ when used of a particular building or group of buildings. It is clear enough what ‘Farnham parish church’ or ‘the parish churches of Exeter’ refers to. Moreover, it is hard to doubt that certain inclusive terms should not be interrogated, or at any rate not too severely, but rather left alone to do a usefully vague job. ‘The Middle Ages’ is one of these terms; ‘culture’ another. However, ‘the parish church’ does not

appear to deserve this sort of licence, not least because its historical connotations are too specific. Those who use it intend it to do a specific job.

Before reviewing the matter further, it is worth noting that the present moment is a good one for thinking about how scholars conceptualise the later medieval English parish church. This is because the parish as both cultural and material phenomenon is becoming popular with scholars again after a period of eclipse by the study of monastic and collegiate churches, chantry chapels, and anchorages. Parish studies, and notably their material dimensions, have an impetus not seen for fifteen or twenty years. The current volume is only one manifestation of this. Others include Nigel Saul’s recent book on the relationship between the gentry and the parish church and Gabriel Byng’s study of the parochial economics of building. More popularly, there is John Goodall’s recent collection of mini-essays on individual churches, and Matthew Byrne’s book on parish churches and chapels.⁴ Online, one can turn to the Norwich churches project based at the University of East Anglia and the Corpus of Scottish medieval parish churches based at the University of St. Andrews.⁵ While the latter is not English, it is geographically the nearest thing to a wide-ranging northern study that scholars have (or are likely to get any time soon). This is to name only a few examples: the industry of medieval historians who are sensitive to the value of material culture is adding much more.⁶

In England, one must look back two decades for such collective enthusiasm. This was the first period in which parish studies were professionalised by academic historians and art historians.⁷ Indeed, in 1988, David Palliser could write that little attention had hitherto been paid to the religion of English medieval parishioners, although Colin Platt had produced an accessible and perceptive synthesis on the development of parish churches as early as 1981.⁸ Throughout the 1990s, historians of documents and objects including Eamon Duffy, Katherine French, Norman Pounds, Carol Davidson Cragoe, Beat Kümin, and Robert Whiting prepared or published a large number of books, articles, and theses on, or heavily involving, parish churches in medieval England.⁹ Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars*, published in 1992, was the single most significant stimulus.¹⁰ Duffy was not solely concerned with the parish, but he certainly identified it and its church as the best proving ground for ideas about what he called ‘traditional’ religion. He followed up *Stripping* with *The Voices of Morebath*, ostensibly a micro-history, but one intended to reflect both the vigour and locally-rooted nature of late pre-Reformation Catholicism.¹¹ Historiographically, this was an interesting moment: a leading Church historian turning to parishes and their material culture as vehicles of revisionist history where previous scholars—going back almost to the Reformation—had used monasteries and cathedrals.¹² (If Duffy’s choice seems obvious today, given the vast amounts of data available for the parish, it would have been unthinkable before the rise of social history as an academic subject in the first half of the twentieth century.) Yet for all the success of Duffy’s work, academic attention

was shifting by the year 2000 towards monasteries and colleges, whose history then looked ripe for revision a quarter-century after David Knowles's death. Thus it is that Paul Binski's article of 1999 on the art history of the English parish church, which properly identified its subject as a 'problem', has functioned as a sort of place-holder for about twenty years, staking out ground which is only now being substantially occupied.¹³ A volume arising from a Harlaxton symposium on the English medieval parish held in 2002 was effectively an epilogue that proceeded from and summed up twenty years of work.¹⁴ It is possible to view the parochial emphasis of *Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547*—the major exhibition of late-medieval art held at the V&A in 2003—in the same light.¹⁵

It is reasonable to think that those involved in the current second-wave parochial turn will seek to build on this past work by discovering previously unknown facts and generating new approaches to interpretation. As suggested, this process might healthily include a more searching scrutiny of operating assumptions than past scholars have thought necessary. To substantiate this proposal, it is necessary to say a little more about historiography. While cathedrals and monasteries (particularly abbeys and cathedral priories) attracted scholarly enthusiasm from the sixteenth century onwards, the parish and its church had to wait until the late-nineteenth century, and particularly the early-to-mid twentieth century, to find champions. Studies of parochial buildings and furnishings emerged primarily from antiquarian work on churches in particular regions, and ultimately from the county histories mentioned above. Much was done on furnishings and images using wills and inventories.¹⁶ Two influential publications were Alexander Hamilton Thompson's companion primers *The Ground-Plan of the English Parish Church* and *The Historical Growth of the English Parish Church* published in 1911 and 1913 by Cambridge University Press. Their influence was presumably due to the high reputation of their author, the lucidity of their organisation and argument, and their affordability. The significance of these short, pocket-sized volumes for the subject in hand is hard to exaggerate, although their effects have become submerged in recent publications. Through them, Thompson helped to justify the material aspects of the parish as fit for systematic, rigorous scholarly attention in their own right.¹⁷ He did this in spite of the fact that his personal interests were overwhelmingly documentary as opposed to formal and material. By comparison, the most influential object-focused antiquaries of the time, including William St John Hope, produced little influential work on parish churches. Perhaps this is unsurprising in an age so hospitable to the excavation of monasteries and castles.

This is not to say that Thompson's books emerged from a vacuum. His peers included David Herbert Somerset Cranage, John Charles Cox, Edmund Arnold Greening Lamborn, and Albert Reginald Powys, as well as writers more squarely focused on parochial history.¹⁸ Much of the output was effectively a sort of superior hackwork produced for a lay readership: this was the way, of course, with a great deal

of writing on English art and architecture before these subjects were colonised by academics. Without any obvious lull, the parish church baton passed subsequently to the likes of George Henry Cook, Graham Hutton, and Hugh Braun. The publishers entering the field, including Thames & Hudson and Faber & Faber, were such as catered to the self-consciously 'educated amateur' with aesthetic leanings.¹⁹ The cloud of authors and books gathered steadily in the wake of the Second World War, peaking in terms of popular influence with Simon Jenkins and his *England's Thousand Best Churches*, which, as its introduction explains, includes only buildings 'in some sense parochial'.²⁰

Publications on parish churches of the last century share three important ideas about their subject. The first is that the parish church constitutes a self-defining category in its own right, whose nature does not need to be investigated. No author ever seems to question what sort of historical or material or spatial sense it makes to consider (say) St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol (which Elizabeth I is said to have called 'the fairest, goodliest, and most famous parish church in England') and Culbone church in Somerset (supposedly England's smallest parish church) as the same kind of thing. Neither does anyone ask how the medieval parish church located in a surviving monastic nave—as for example at Crowland, Rochester, and Sherborne—fits into the picture.²¹ The assumption of some shared, defining property of 'parish church-ness' is expressed in the commonly-stated belief that the real importance of England's medieval parish churches lies in their collectivity. Hamilton Thompson was frank about this: 'the parish churches of this country form, as a body, one of the most remarkable historical monuments which any European nation possesses'.²² John Betjeman was too: 'Their *profusion* is their greatness'.²³ The matter is just as roundly stated in Simon Jenkins's and John Goodall's recent public-facing books. In fact, what is normally under discussion is the south of England and Midlands counties including Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.²⁴ Contrarily, but at the same time intelligibly in light of one of the most familiar clichés of Englishness, it is the idiosyncratic character of the parts which helps to define the whole.²⁵ Some big, some small; some Romanesque, some Gothic; some thatched, others tiled; a stump or a spire; a clerestory or not; here town, there country: each one a loveable eccentric couched in an inimitable setting.

The second idea shared by much of the existing literature is that the parish church is a manifestation of 'the people' and 'the soil'. Predominantly, its patrons and users were ordinary lay-folk, and its materials were local, wrought by local hands and traditional craftsmanship. It is an honest thing, and a frank expression of common and traditional values. Here the medieval life-course played out, from baptism to burial.²⁶ This is not just a popular matter. Paul Crossley has suggested that John Harvey's great biographical register of English medieval architects is an intellectually-superior product of this impulse, albeit with a reach that transcends the parish.²⁷ As such, the parish church is implicitly and favourably contrasted to the cathedral and the monastery, which (one assumes) are remote, cerebral, and perhaps morally suspect in their size,

exclusiveness, regulated customs and other things. ‘Parish/great’ is a core dichotomy for historians of the pre-Reformation Church and its art. Where one is positively demotic, the other is narrowly and latently grammatical. While the great church smacks of fealty to Rome, the parish church, in its pervasiveness as well as its production and use, expresses healthy nationalism. Thus Greening Lamborn: ‘No Englishman can take a just pride in his race and country who has not learned to appreciate and love them’.²⁸

The third idea, closely related to the second, is that the parish church is somehow—for want of a better word—romantic, or, if one prefers, neo-romantic (romantic with a small ‘r’ anyway). A wider scholarly context for it, which tends to oppose Betjeman and Nikolaus Pevsner, can be found in various recent publications.²⁹ In existing work, this idea usually manifests as a sort of authorial impulse rather than an assertion. Accordingly, writing on the topic is frequently seasoned with poetic sentiment, which ranges from the genuinely gratifying to the painfully innocent.³⁰ The non-architectural sites and broader regionality of churches is often part and parcel of the romance, something the introductions to county surveys of parish churches makes clear. (‘The Churches of Suffolk ... stand cresting the gentle hills, or beside the slow moving streams beloved of Constable and Gainsborough’: thus Henry Munro Cautley.)³¹ Here, Englishness per se has a fundamental agency. This romantic impulse is part of a pervasive habit of sentimentalising the parish church, something relatively few authors writing on the churches specifically, as opposed to parish history in general, have been able to resist. With no intention to do so (or indeed awareness of the issue), this brand of sentimentalising nearly always functions as a substitute for querying the choice and parameters of the subject. Jonathan Glanchey, writing on Betjeman, encapsulates the point with an access of optimistic enthusiasm:

These churches, this almost infinite variety of architectural prayer and rejoicing, these stone musical boxes, these national roots, are part of our common heritage, whatever our personal backgrounds and religious beliefs, or lack of them, and remain things of beauty, a joy forever and ever. Amen.³²

Pevsner’s economy and frankness—‘big but also unrewarding’, and the like—can seem genuinely refreshing in light of this sort of thing.³³ Such idealism routinely overrides acknowledgement of the neglectful and destructive treatment medieval parish churches have had at the hands of their custodians. This treatment, too, is familiar territory to the medievalist. In fact, as with the romantic enthusiasms stirred by the churches and their settings, the sentimentalists capture it best. For example, the Victorian Rambler Louis Jennings looks back on the restoration of Westham (Kent) as though he had witnessed a man being broken on the wheel, or—a better analogy in view of the building’s size and form—the gutting of a great whale. As he ‘fled in horror from the scene’, he might have been escaping any one of hundreds of later nineteenth-century work-sites. The laconic attitude of the workmen—presumably honest local folk

who had grown up in the shadow of the church—struck him as squarely at odds with the barbarity of their task.³⁴

These comments on the drift of medieval parish church studies suggest why any querying of the classification would appear both strange and unnecessary to most people. As a category firmly rooted in both the popular and scholarly imagination, ‘the parish church’ seems just the sort of thing that should not be placed under the microscope, but rather, allowed to exert its influence unmolested by nit-pickers. However, as already noted, it is problematic in ways the self-conscious scholar should not ignore. The core difficulties arise from classifying art and architecture according to an administrative category (the parish). Intrinsically, this is a problem for any marriage of form and function. Pragmatically, however, it hardly matters with reference to (say) cathedrals, or the monasteries or friaries of a given religious order. Although the art and architecture of a religious order or college may bear no inherent denominational stamp (typically it does not), one can normally get a synoptic view of both the historical and material domain when attempting to study it. With this, one can aspire to a coverage that deals evenly with the major aspects of the subject. One cannot do this for the parish church. This is the fundamental problem with the category for scholars. It is worth setting out a few of its practical and theoretical corollaries.

To start with, nobody seems to know how many parish churches the medievalist should count. Estimates of surviving numbers typically range from eight to nine thousand. People were, incidentally, more certain and more wrong about this in the later Middle Ages. Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon*, the most popular universal history in the century and a half before the Reformation, reported 45,002 *ecclesiae parochiales* in England at the time of the Norman Conquest.³⁵ This number was widely accepted: Edward III’s bureaucrats used it to estimate the sums they could raise from their parish tax of 1371, and it is found copied into monastic manuscripts as one of England’s vital statistics (sometimes with slight variation).³⁶ While this optimistic total was presumably based on some sort of guess—a fact that the suffixal ‘2’ was perhaps intended to disguise—the modern vagueness about numbers stems partially from the fact that it is hard to judge where a building starts and stops being medieval. It may have only a modicum of medieval fabric, and no medieval fittings, left to it. Is an original tower enough to constitute a medieval parish church? While Crondall (Hampshire), which lacks only a medieval tower, is incontestably a medieval parish church, is this true of Dundry (Somerset), whose only old element is its tower?³⁷ Such questions make precise counting hard or impossible.

A simpler cause of ambiguity is the *terminus ante quem* given to the Middle Ages. In recent studies of the English parish, there has been a tendency to prefer what is in effect a ‘long Middle Ages’, extending into Elizabeth’s reign or beyond.³⁸ (This follows a broader trend in historical scholarship.) An admirable booklet on Norfolk’s country churches, in which the words ‘country’ and ‘parish’ are used interchangeably, counts

precisely 659 whole medieval buildings and 245 ruined or dilapidated ones based on a *terminus ante* of 1700.³⁹ This is to give the period a much longer afterlife than normal. It may seem unnecessary to query such a terminus on the grounds that the vast majority of churches standing in 1700 were built before the Reformation. This would be to suppose that 1700 (or whenever) and 1547 are effectively the same for accounting purposes. However, it is well to remember that many chapels and monastic churches were converted to parochial use at the Reformation or later. Tewkesbury Abbey and Holy Trinity at Hull, the later made parochial in 1661, are examples which suggest how the assumption of a long Middle Ages complicates the task of envisioning the whole.

Here is a conceptually-related problem. Even if he or she could count precisely, the conscientious scholar would still face the problem of deciding whether a church that was reconstructed during the Middle Ages—as they nearly all were, and many more than once—constituted a single medieval building or two (or more) such. It is frequently unclear what church one is talking about before its Decorated or Perpendicular Gothic iteration emerged near the end of the Middle Ages. Little or nothing that would help decide this question can be offered of many pre-Black Death churches. Scholars can mitigate the problem when working on the parish churches of particular periods or regions with a little smart phrasing like ‘the Decorated parish churches of Leicestershire’ or ‘fifteenth-century parish churches in Norfolk’. But this does not solve the essential problem of what materially the medieval parish church can be said to be or have been. People who discuss artistic integration in medieval buildings face essentially the same issue. No single point in the long development of a church interior seems more valid than another. Even if one were to decide that it was, then one would have no more than an imaginary picture of the dominant integrated interior. Willibald Sauerländer has pointed up this question with reference to great churches.⁴⁰ It may be adapted to the problem of interpreting a large body of widely dispersed buildings rather than a single interior. The simple fact is that from a distance, the defining forms and components of these buildings, and thus their identity for art-historical purposes, looks fluid rather than fixed.⁴¹

The definition project also involves a basic choice about whether one counts or excludes ecclesiastical buildings that served communal purposes but lacked independent rectors and baptismal and burial rights. This means, of course, dependent chapels, or ‘chapels of ease’ (as distinct from oratories, which were private). To separate churches and chapels as parochial buildings is not to invent a problem, as most work on parish churches in the later Middle Ages either ignores chapels or pays sufficiently little attention to them to imply authorial belief in the distinction.⁴² Many such buildings were parochial to the extent that they met regular religious needs parishioners had and were served by parish priests.⁴³ Documents often suggest that they were more popular in certain periods than the main parish churches to which they were hierarchically subordinate. According to Hamilton Thompson, the ratio of chapels to parish churches

in medieval Leicestershire was one to two, and that county’s parishes are not especially large (a large parish was a normal reason for building a chapel of ease).⁴⁴ Large parishes in northern counties like Cumbria had numerous chapels, whose relationship to the parish church is not always clear: some were evidently quasi-independent.⁴⁵ In some cases, chapels of ease were practically as grand as their mother churches: St. Nicholas’s at King’s Lynn is a familiar example of this, and Holy Trinity at Hull was a chapel of ease to the parish church of Hessle (some two miles to the east). There were also cemetery chapels, located in parish churchyards and often popular with parishioners but structurally independent of parish churches. An example to hand is the (vanished) cemetery chapel of St. Mary at Bures in Suffolk, which apparently contained more than one altar and received copious documented gifts in the thirteenth century.⁴⁶ To exclude such buildings would significantly alter the art and architectural history of the parochial landscape, and seems hardly justifiable on either material or cultural grounds. Yet these buildings cannot be included according to the ‘administrative’ definition of parish church. The term ‘local church’ adopted by historians of the Anglo-Saxon period is one way of getting around the problem, although it would be no less vague for the later Middle Ages than ‘town’, ‘urban’ and ‘country’ church, all of which have some currency.⁴⁷

To study parish churches as if they were a unified corpus involves a practical problem which is hidden in plain sight. This problem is influential and indeed inevitable in many survey books and catalogues dealing with late-medieval art and architecture. Simply put, the vast number of individual churches available for analysis leads to cherry-picking, and thence to questionable inferences (or outright generalisations) about buildings whose structure, embellishment and materials were in fact always different from one another. The most obvious product of this cherry-picking is exceptionalism, or false standardisation, according to which brilliant churches like Long Melford (Suffolk) and Northleach (Gloucestershire) are effectively represented as ‘typical’ of the parish church class.⁴⁸ In fact, as whole structures, Long Melford and Northleach are unusual: a combination of force of habit, regional bias, and old-fashioned aesthetic validity conditions the choice of them and/or others belonging to ‘the best of the bunch’.⁴⁹ Such cherry-picking is perfectly understandable, of course, and is even beneficial if one’s goal is to court public engagement. However, it represents a shying away from the big picture study which the current volume and the conference from which it emerged have identified as a desideratum. Ironically, regional bias also means that exceptional things like the fourteenth-century evidence for internal arrangements at Brigham parish church (Cumbria) and the fifteenth-century Grey tomb at Chillingham (Northumberland) are not factored into even the selective account of the material parish church, let alone broader narratives of later medieval English art.⁵⁰

Turning to theoretical problems involves some blunt spelling out, and reiteration of things already said. Fundamentally, the parish church category seems resistant to

theoretical speculation. At least, it is challenging to think of a current of cultural theory hospitable to it. Theories of materiality, aesthetics, economics and so forth naturally cut across such administrative categories. No traditional art historical theory is neatly compatible with it. Approaches through form, iconography and style are blind to administrative categories like ‘parish’, ‘cathedral’, ‘monastery’, and ‘friary’. So, by and large, are ideas about human agency, including those that involve making, patronage, and interpretation. Style criticism alone will not show whether a given tracery pattern or moulding profile is in one administrative category of building or another. A knowledge of iconography does not help to situate a sculpture or painting of obscure origin. It has never been argued that the intention and reception of an image included a distinctively parochial quality. While everyone realises this, some readers might think that a broadly-based study of the parish church can sidestep such approaches on the assumption that art history is rapidly collapsing into a form of cultural inquiry which can do without technical knowledge. However, at the risk of stating the obvious, the parish church is no more compatible with the currents of anthropology, sociology, linguistics and so on which feed cultural history. No more compatible, and evidently of no greater interest, for very few parish churches are noticed at the cutting edge of recent and current scholarship. The reason for this is probably that the domain is thought to be intellectually flat, in part (at least) because it is ‘local’.⁵¹ It is certainly the case that much that is captivating about late-medieval parish churches—the porches of East Anglia, the towers of Somerset, the spires of the East Midlands—is also philosophically unstimulating. (Beauty is affective but not necessarily intellective.) If this claim seems unjustified, then it will nevertheless be admitted that such architecture has inspired extremely little theoretical speculation to date.

This implies that ‘parish church’ is a term of convenience which encourages, or anyway facilitates, intellectual complacency by masquerading as a respectable premise from which to advance. Once chosen, scholars can get on with studying the few outstanding or well-documented examples that motivate them or support their case without considering the validity of the parameters they have set themselves. Like it or not, this is the attitude reflected in the introductions to almost all general books on parish churches. It leads immediately to a matter that is basic and important to how art historians work. This is simply that, however materially and geographically broad it seems, the concept ‘parish church’ is too exclusive for scholarly ambitions. If scholars could reconcile themselves to the indistinctness already discussed, and confine themselves to the parish domain, they would miss the chance to contribute broadly to art and architectural history. Not only might they do odd things like leaving out St. Nicholas’s at King’s Lynn, they would also disqualify any relationships between art and architecture that happens to be parochial and non-parochial. Even if they took account of such relationships, they would help to perpetuate a category they could not clearly define: a ‘soft’, romantic, flabby category, speciously justified by medieval

legal terminology but intractable both in practice or theory. Moreover—in effect if not intention—a chauvinistic category, which tacitly rejects the possibility that other European countries could show anything like the collective glory of England. There are, in any case, very few transnational studies of the material parish church.⁵²

This is supposed to read as a provocation, not so much in order to repudiate a calumny as to recognise soft spots in a working assumption that is both common and deep-rooted. It is no evasion to conclude by insisting that this is all the current essay has been intended to do. Indeed, it is easy to admit that the idea of a unified domain has a dignity against which both practical and theoretical objections seem irrelevant. Before all else, this idea embodies an even respect for all of the parts that denies judgements about their aesthetic or historical worth relative to one another. That respect is manifested in the claim of Peter Lasko and Richard Fawcett that ‘the loss of any part ... would have inevitable repercussions for the whole of English architectural history, and disastrously diminish the value of the evidence of surviving structures’.⁵³ Theirs is simply a job-conditioned way of saying that individual parish churches are elements of a big, incalculably-valuable thing which is compounded of history, materials, and affects, is intensely meaningful to many people, and will go on being so. To crib from John Steinbeck, ‘none of it is important or all of it is’.⁵⁴ There can only be one response to that proposal.

It need hardly be added that the category ‘parish church’ is useful where adopted with open eyes and a flexible approach to shape. This is indeed the way it is often approached. For example, to study the parish churches of a single town or city that had a lot of them—Lincoln or London, Norwich or York—surely promises the art and architectural historian cogent and useful results, particularly if they are regarded as components of a broader ecclesiastical environment that included religious houses, chapels, anchor-holds and other things. Sampling across a broad range can help clarify larger matters of architectural history. Thus, for instance, by demonstrating a radical decline of stone vaulting in parish churches from the later thirteenth century, Larry Hoey helped to confirm a general hunch about the priority that builders in the Decorated and Perpendicular periods gave to window tracery.⁵⁵ That is, once complex tracery was invented, the money available in the parish for making a splash went to windows, which could be seen from outside as well as within, rather than vaults. This seems a thoroughly useful conclusion, generated by studying a small sample of parish churches. These are only two of many ways in which the virtue of studying samples made coherent by the label ‘parish church’ could be expressed.

On the whole, however, art and architectural historians will better maintain their distinctiveness as a scholarly cadre, and thus serve their compromised, unstable discipline, by studying phenomena which transcend socio-historical categories like ‘parish church’. It can, at least, do no harm to think about what such categories could mean in the context of a distinctively art-historical discourse.

1. See David M. Palliser, 'The English Parish in Perspective', in David M. Palliser, *Towns and Communities in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 2–3.
2. Self-aware examples of this include C. Michael Kauffmann, *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England 700–1500* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2003), pp. 243–70; Richard Marks, 'Picturing Word and Image in the Late Medieval Parish Church', in Linda Clark, Maureen Jurkowski, and Colin Richmond (eds.), *Image, Text and Church 1380-1600: Essays for Margaret Aston* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009), pp. 162–202. Less so is Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2015), a sociological study in which the idea of the parish church has a central role.
3. An example of this, cited again below, is Simon Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches* (London: Penguin Books, 1999; revised edition 2009). This beautifully-produced, sympathetically-written volume has done an incalculable amount of good in terms of stimulating public interest in historic churches. Ideally, a new, high-quality popular book of this sort would appear each twenty years or so.
4. Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); John Goodall, *Parish Church Treasures: The Nation's Greatest Art Collection* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Matthew Byrne, *English Parish Churches and Chapels: Art, Architecture and People* (London: Bloomsbury Shire Publications, 2017).
5. University of East Anglia Medieval Churches, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://www.uea.ac.uk/research/explore/medieval-churches>; A Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/corpusofscottishchurches/>.
6. See, inter alia, Clive Burgess, 'The Right Ordering of Souls': *The Parish of 'All Saints' Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), especially pp. 331–82; Joanna Mattingly, *Stratton Churchwardens' Accounts 1512–1578* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018). Professor Robert Swanson of the University of Birmingham is currently working on an extensive analysis of the later medieval English parish, motivated in part by the realisation that 'at the moment our approach to pre-Reformation parishes is far too simplistic, and creates a distorted understanding' (personal communication, May 2019).
7. Archaeologists, too. This paper's referee helpfully remarks a rise of interest in parish churches after the publication of Warwick Rodwell and Kirsty Rodwell, *Historic Churches—A Wasting Asset* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1977), a report which demonstrated the untapped archaeological potential of parish churches through case studies. This potential is exemplified by Warwick Rodwell, Tony Waldron et al., *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire: A Parish Church and Its Community*, two volumes (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007–11).
8. Palliser, 'English Parish', p. 1; Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1981).
9. Thus, for example: Carol Foote Davidson, 'Architecture, Liturgy and the Laity in English Parish Churches c.1125–c.1250' (PhD diss., University of London, 1998); Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin (eds.), *The Parish in English Life, 1400–1600* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Beat A. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400–1560* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996); Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity, Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370–1547* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001); Norman J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: The Culture of Religion from Augustine to*
- Victoria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
10. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996; second edition 2005).
11. Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
12. Duffy's insights about the vitality of parochial religion are subverted (ineffectually in my view) by Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). They are also downplayed in Saul, *Lordship and Faith*.
13. Paul Binski, 'The English Parish Church and Its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem', *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): pp. 1–25.
14. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds.), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006).
15. For an impression of this, see the catalogue edited by the principal curators: Richard Marks and Paul Williamson (eds.), *Gothic: Art for England, 1400–1547*, (London: V&A, 2003). The exhibition also paid much attention to colleges and chantries.
16. In journals as well as monographic books, for example: Robert M. Serjeantson and H. Isham Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights', *Archaeological Journal* 70 (1913): pp. 217–452, which is practically all on parish churches.
17. *The Ground-Plan of the English Parish Church* was surely influenced by the remarkable work of Raphael and Joshua A. Brandon, *Parish Churches: Being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastical Structures* (London: George Bell, 1848), a book containing meticulously-drawn plans (the Brandons were architects) of sixty-three buildings in the south of England, but not attempting any sort of historical synthesis.
18. For example, David H. S. Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire*, two volumes (Wellington: Honson, 1901–12) (county-focused, but broadly influential); John C. Cox, *The English Parish Church* (London: Batsford, 1914); John C. Cox, *English Church Fittings, Furniture and Accessories* (London: Batsford, 1922); Edmund Arnold Greening Lamborn, *The Parish Church: Its Architecture and Antiquities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929); Albert. R. Powys, *The English Parish Church* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930). Among the historians were Edward L. Cutts, *Parish Priests and their People in the Middle Ages in England* (London: S.P.C.K., 1898) and Francis A. C. Gasquet, *Parish Life in Mediaeval England* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906). Most of these books were periodically updated and reissued (e.g. Gasquet's six times by 1929).
19. George H. Cook, *The English Mediaeval Parish Church* (London: Readers Union, 1956); Graham. Hutton, *English Parish Churches* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1952; revised edition 1957); Hugh Braun, *Parish Churches: Their Architectural Development in England* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970; revised edition 1974).
20. Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches*, p. xxx. This criterion led Jenkins to seemingly ludicrous policies of inclusion and exclusion, so that he excludes the likes of Southwell and Ripon minsters but includes Beverley Minster and Selby Abbey.
21. Martin R. V. Heale, 'Monastic-Parochial Churches in England and Wales, 1066–1540', *Monastic Research Bulletin* 9 (2003): pp. 1–19. The editors of the Corpus of Scottish medieval parish churches included the likes of Dunblane and Dunkeld Cathedrals on the grounds that they either incorporated or supplanted parish churches.
22. Alexander Hamilton Thompson, *The Historical Growth of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 132.
23. Wilhelmine Harrod (ed.), *Norfolk Country Churches and*

- the Future* (Woodbridge: The Norfolk Society, 1972), p. 7 (written of Norfolk in particular).
24. York and its hinterland are also commonly discussed.
25. Thus, for example, Jenkins, *England's Thousand Best Churches*, p. ix.
26. Compare Goodall, *Parish Church Treasures*, p. 13: 'there remains a deep-seated determination, born of romantic sensibility, to present these buildings as expressions of rustic culture and piety'.
27. Paul Crossley, 'Anglia Perdita: English Medieval Architecture and Neo-Romanticism', in Susan L'Engle and Gerald B. Guest (eds.), *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts, Art and Architecture* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2006), p. 475; John H. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary down to 1550* (London: Batsford, 1954; revised edition 1987).
28. Greening Lamborn, *English Parish Church*, p. 5.
29. See Crossley, 'Anglia Perdita', and the sources cited in its notes; also Richard Marks, 'The Englishness of English Gothic Art?', in Colum Hourihane (ed.), *Gothic: Art and Thought in the Later Medieval Period* (Princeton: The Index of Christian Art and Archaeology, 2011), pp. 64–89; James A. Cameron, 'The Englishness of English Sedilia', *British Art Studies* 6 (2017), accessed 1 June 2021, <http://britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-6/english-sedilia>.
30. For real gratification read John Betjeman (ed.), *Collins Guide to Parish Churches of England and Wales, including the Isle of Man*, fourth edition (London: Collins, 1980), pp. 13–76.
31. Henry Munro Cautley, *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures*, fifth edition (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1982), p. xi.
32. Jonathan Glancey, *John Betjeman on Churches* (London: Methuen, 2007), p. xxiv.
33. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Nottinghamshire*, Buildings of England (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 63.
34. Louis J. Jennings, *Field Paths and Green Lanes*, fourth edition (London: John Murray, 1884), p. 43. Writing at the same time, John Charles Cox (*Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire*, four volumes (Chesterfield, 1875–9), volume one, p. 9) had this to say of the candid and local workman: 'The saw of the village carpenter and the pot of the whitewasher, under the direction of the petty parochial whitewasher who dearly loved to find jobs for their relatives, have, in the time of peace [i.e. the Hanoverian and Victorian eras], brought about a considerable share of that disfigurement of ecclesiastical buildings, which the popular mind of the present day always attributes to the civil wars, if not to the very arm of Cromwell himself'.
35. Churchill Babington and J. Rawson Lumby (eds.), *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, nine volumes (London, 1865–86), volume two, p. 90.
36. W. Mark Ormrod, 'An Experiment in Taxation: The English Parish Subsidy of 1371', *Speculum* 63 (1988): pp. 58–82. For inscriptions in manuscripts see, for example, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 189 (from St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury); Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 293 (provenance unknown); University Library, MS Additional 3468 (from Ely Priory); London, Lambeth Palace Library, MSS 371 (from Reading Abbey), 448 (from Ely Priory).
37. A pedant might insist here that the east chancel window at Crondall was remodelled in the nineteenth century, or that Dundry retains its medieval solum and a relief sculpture of St. Antony with his pig.
38. See, for example, notes 6 and 8 above.
39. Harrod (ed.), *Norfolk Country Churches and the Future*, p. 8.
40. Willibald Sauerländer, 'Integration: An Open or Closed Proposal?', in Virginia C. Raguin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper (eds.), *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 12.
41. For meditations on the issue at stake here see Marvin Trachtenberg, *Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
42. This paper's referee, whom I thank for useful advice, sees no meaningful distinction here. I tend to agree, but the

- distinction is nonetheless present in the literature.
43. Alexander Hamilton Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 123–8. On the taxonomy of chapels, and medieval chapels in general, see Nicholas Orme, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996): pp. 75–102.
44. Thompson, *English Clergy*, p. 123.
45. See, for example, Richard Asquith, 'Serving the Needs of a Lakeland Parish: Kendal in the Later Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 3:17 (2017): p. 88 and passim.
46. See Christopher Harper-Bill and Richard Mortimer (eds.), *Stoke by Clare Cartulary*, three volumes (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1982–4), volume three, pp. 22, 263–86 (nos. 391–428).
47. See, for example, John Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950–1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988).
48. This problem arises, *mutatis mutandis*, in the study of any copiously-populated but traditionally-downplayed phenomenon. Women's studies feel it particularly keenly. See, for example, Heather J. Tanner (ed.), *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. vii: 'The goal of this book is to change the discourse, promote new analysis and interpretation, and encourage the routine inclusion of medieval women into [the] main narrative of medieval history'. I am not proposing anything this political for the parish church, but the problem is essentially similar.
49. Harrod (ed.), *Norfolk Country Churches and the Future*, pp. 10–11, where the 'best of the bunch' are proposed in a series of lists like the outcome of some art-historical pub quiz.
50. See Isaac Fletcher, 'Brigham Church', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 4 (1878–9): pp. 173–7; Charles Henry Hunter Blair, *Northumbrian Monuments* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle upon Tyne Records Committee, 1924), pp. 116–9; David Heslop and Barbara Harbottle, 'Chillingham Church: The South Chapel and the Grey Tomb', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5:27 (1999): pp. 123–34. (Brigham has had a recent architectural study: Mary Markus, 'The South Aisle and Chantry in the Parish Church of St Bridget, Brigham', *Architectural History* 39 (1996): pp. 19–35).
51. The local (that is, 'parochial') tends to be ignored or disdained by cultural theorists.
52. A prominent exception is Justin Kroesen and Regnerus Steensma, *The Interior of the Medieval Village Church*, second edition (Leuven: Peeters, 2012). More circumscribed studies include Sarah E. Thomas, *The Parish and the Chapel in Medieval Britain and Norway* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018). The enduring efforts of Professor Beat Kümin to buck this trend through the Warwick Network for Parish Research (established in 2003) must be acknowledged here (accessed 1 June 2021, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/research/parishnetwork/>).
53. Harrod (ed.), *Norfolk Country Churches and the Future*, p. 8.
54. John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath and Other Writings 1936–1941* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), p. 753 (from the introduction to *Log from the Sea of Cortez*, 1941).
55. Lawrence Hoey, 'Stone Vaults in English Parish Churches in the Early Gothic and Decorated Periods', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 147 (1994): pp. 36–51.

The Parish Church in 1200

JOHN MCNEILL

By 1200, the overwhelming majority of English parish churches had been established on sites they were to occupy until the Reformation and beyond, and a raft of papal decretals, episcopal ordinances, and dispute settlements had significantly circumscribed their character.¹ Moreover, if documentary evidence for the division of responsibilities for the fabric of the church is lacking before the 1220s, evidence from elsewhere in Europe suggests that by the end of the twelfth century the principle that in default it was the rector's duty to maintain the chancel while the parish should maintain the tower and nave was gaining acceptance.² Certainly, it is possible to talk of the parish church in 1200 and distinguish it from other types of church, even if there is a blurring at the margins between secular minsters that continued as small-scale collegiate churches and single-priest parish churches *per se*.³ One might also add that in the course of the twelfth century many local churches had been conveyed to ecclesiastical proprietors and were no longer held by the founder's family or local landlord.⁴ As this had the effect of sharpening distinctions between renders owed to the parish and those owed to the manor, it seems likely that it heightened consciousness of the parish as an entity and a community. The pastoral chaos implied in the story of Stori—an English layman who owned land in Derbyshire under Edward the Confessor and is recorded in Domesday as being able to 'make himself a church on his land and in his jurisdiction without anyone's permission, and dispose of his tithe where he wished'—would have been unthinkable one hundred and fifty years later.⁵

The following paper explores how the parish church of c.1200 differed from its predecessors and seeks to evaluate its architectural repertoire in relation to other types

Fig. 1
North nave arcade
from nave, St.
Mary, Long Sutton
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: Author

of building. Were the choices exercised as to materials, plans, elevations, and surface detailing conditioned by an appreciation that the parish church called for a certain type of architecture? One that created clear divisions between the area set aside for the priest and that occupied by the laity, for instance, or which sought to shape the architecture to contrive distinctive and recognisable silhouettes? Secondly, on the understanding that the period under review wasn't so constrained by restrictions on finance and expertise as to make the question irrelevant, did the norms of suitability change in the course of the twelfth century?

Long Sutton (Lincolnshire) is a good starting point, given the survival of a celebrated and unusually-informative charter dated to around 1180. By this, William, son of Ernisius, transferred his church at Sutton together with a site for the new building to Castle Acre Priory, giving them 'three acres of land in Sutton in the field called Healdefen next the road to build a parish church there. And my wish is that the earlier wooden church in the same vill, in place of which the new church will be built, shall be taken away and the bodies buried in it shall be taken to the new church'.⁶ This transfer of proprietorship and site—and change of material from wood to stone—lies towards the end of a period which saw masonry parish churches come into being and lay owners transfer ownership to ecclesiastical institutions.⁷ It is also notable that the charter specifies that burials 'in the church' should be transferred to the new site (as might have happened in other contexts, but for which we do not have documentary confirmation).⁸

The church which emerged from this—with a seven-bay nave, two-storey elevation, and elaborate arcade—is a good example of a type of parish church that emerged over the second half of the twelfth century (Figs. 1 and 2). It is one that specifically singled out the nave for development, both its arcade and its exterior clerestory, though when Long Sutton was first built on its new site the aisles themselves would have been relatively narrow and dark, hence the subsequent overbuilding of the

Fig. 2
North nave
arcade from aisle
showing former
clerestory, St.
Mary, Long Sutton
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: Author

late-twelfth-century clerestory so as to roof the usual tall and wide late-medieval aisles.⁹

The date at which Long Sutton was built—the last quarter of the twelfth century—is a date by which an understanding of parishes and their churches had solidified.¹⁰ Parochialisation as a process had largely happened by 1180, even if there remained plenty of anomalies, of what might be regarded as leftovers from a minster-based system of pastoral care. At one extreme, there were still superior churches, whether collegiate or not, which administered pastoral care centrally through the thirteenth century. At Beverley Minster, for example, David Palliser has shown how a large *parochia* was administered from the minster into the late Middle Ages, with four town chapelries and three chapelries outside the town (all with dependent chapel buildings but reliant for baptism and the provision of priests on the Minster).¹¹ Or Pocklington (East Riding, Yorkshire), which to all intents and purposes functioned like an Anglo-Saxon minster without formalised collegiate status: a super-parish with a *parochia* consisting of ten dependent chapels until 1252, when Archbishop Walter de Gray ordained a vicarage at Pocklington and amalgamated the dependencies into four parishes, though the ultimate supremacy of Pocklington was maintained.¹² All but three of those chapels retain evidence of twelfth-century work. Many of them are quite substantial buildings, though none, significantly, is larger than Pocklington.¹³ Bampton (Oxfordshire) was not dissimilar. Described by John Blair as ‘crypto-collegiate’, Bampton claimed jurisdiction over a large number of chapels and in addition to a rector enjoyed the services of three beneficed clergy, variously described as a ‘prebend-farmer’ and two ‘prebend-portioners’.¹⁴ Yet another variation is the post-Conquest prebendal church where more than one parish was served from a single principal building—a twin-rector, twin-parish church—as was the case at Grantham (Lincolnshire).¹⁵ William Rufus had granted the churches of Grantham to Osmund, bishop of Sarum, in 1092 and Bishop Jocelyn turned these into two prebends around 1150: Grantham Australis (with dependent chapels at Gonerby, Harlaxton, Cotsworth, Stoke, and Welby) and Grantham Borealis.¹⁶ Each prebend held a respective rectory and appointed a vicar, though the two parishes shared a single church—St. Wulfram—a church that, as it happens, was rebuilt from a probably late-eleventh-century core around 1200 and given a vast new elongated late-twelfth-century chancel of a sort encountered below.¹⁷ The period between the Conquest and c.1160 does seem to have been one in which the institutional and architectural status of churches was particularly mutable.¹⁸

Given these variables, the extent to which status, ownership or history is embodied in the architecture of parish churches by 1200 isn’t easy to assess, though the question merits a different answer to what one might say of the situation at the beginning of the twelfth century. Then, at least as far as we can judge, the wealthiest post-Conquest parish churches were former minster churches that re-emerged as parish churches (rather than as monastic or Augustinian re-foundations of minsters), and churches established by bishops on their manors.¹⁹ Sometimes these overlap, as at East

Fig. 3
Exterior from
south, St.
Mary, Bampton
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Meon (Hampshire), but good examples of the former would be the churches at Shifnal (Shropshire) or Castor (Northamptonshire) and good examples of the latter would be North Newbald (East Riding, Yorkshire), or the church that Roger of Sarum or his successor established in the new town of Devizes (Wiltshire).²⁰

All of the above were initially built or reconstructed as aisleless cruciform churches. It is a form that frequently leaves ghosts or residues when it comes to later medieval development. Take Bampton (Fig. 3). This clearly shows signs of its twelfth-century configuration as an aisleless cruciform church. The exterior silhouette remains strikingly cruciform, while on the interior it is evident that the crossing tower stair turret was an external feature, and that the later medieval transformation began with the construction of a vestry off the north side of the chancel c.1200.²¹

Needless to say, looking at parish churches from a plan-form perspective—with aisleless cruciform churches at the top of the pecking order—has its limitations. In part this is because we don’t have a sensitive grasp of the nuances of parish church design, of what meanings, if any, may be associated with linear plans nor, more importantly, as to the speed with which such meanings may have been diluted. There are also concrete objections. The rebuilding of former minsters to cruciform plans was not invariable.²² The church at Ledbury (Herefordshire) had minster status before the Conquest but was incorporated into a fluidly-developing parochial system at some point thereafter and was reconstructed to a two-cell design with a partly-aisled chancel.²³ Bibury (Gloucestershire) shows no evidence of having been through a cruciform phase, though Bibury was an important Anglo-Saxon minster.²⁴ Norham (Northumberland) is a particularly grand example of a twelfth-century parish church in an episcopal town that didn’t conform to a cruciform plan.²⁵ Turning the relationship around, parish churches with no evidence

of minster status could be built to aisleless cruciform designs, as with the ambitious de Braose financed parish church at Old Shoreham (Sussex).²⁶ The plan was also widely endorsed by smaller-scale collegiate churches and, most conspicuously, was used in early Augustinian and Cistercian churches.²⁷ Nonetheless some level of prestige does seem to have been attached to the aisleless cruciform plan that could be endorsed by high-status post-Conquest parish churches. The question is: when does this start to break down? It may be significant that Ledbury's impressive part-aisled chancel, and the surviving south nave arcade and chancel at Norham, are works of the third quarter of the twelfth century. John Blair's date of 1160 as the high-water mark of the cruciform plan surely puts this a little late.²⁸ Among grander parish churches, the alternatives were proliferating by then, and the most important of the new alternatives involved aisles; aisles and what goes with them, namely arcades (obligatory) and clerestories (optional). However, before moving on to consider aisles it would be as well to examine another desideratum that had already made an appearance in the eleventh century: the parish church tower.

Towers in aisleless cruciform churches are sited over the crossing, as long as there is a four-arched crossing, which is to say in the overwhelming majority of cases.²⁹ As this is immediately west of the chancel, it is questionable whether the tower belongs with the lay or the rector's portion of the church.³⁰ Towers attached to the west end of the church are unambiguously associated with the nave, though it does not follow that their introduction was a lay initiative. David Stocker and Paul Everson have argued that the proliferation of west towers in Lincolnshire between c.1075 and c.1125 was 'an expression of the new doctrinal order', one that reflected the introduction of 'the new, dramatic, symbolic liturgy of the reforming Roman papacy' to the parish church.³¹ They claim that Bishop Remigius instituted a new form of burial service at Lincoln Cathedral that laid emphasis on a liturgical performance and vigil over the deceased body prior to burial, as Archbishop Lanfranc had done before him at Canterbury.³² This was to take place in a separate space adjacent to the cemetery and was accompanied by the ringing of bells.³³ The result, they argue, was the addition of western bell-towers to a large number of pre-existing churches over a period of around fifty years. All of these have an upper bell-stage and can be entered from the nave, while virtually all have, or had, a west portal (Fig. 4).³⁴

There is no denying that the sixty towers identified by Stocker and Everson are sufficiently consistent to be considered a group, nor that they are post-Conquest in date and were built over two or three generations at most. Their social and economic context is notably varied, with around a third of the sample attached to churches built on public open spaces, and therefore likely to have been financed by groups of parishioners and local sokemen.³⁵ Others may have been built at the expense of the manorial tenant. Their distribution is also remarkable, consisting of local clusters with very few outliers. The overwhelming majority are in Lincoln and the north of the county, with a small group in the south-east.³⁶

Fig. 4
West tower from
south-west, All
Saints, Branston
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: Author

This regional, or sub-regional, quality to the distribution of parish church towers in Lincolnshire can be found elsewhere. In the diocese of Exeter, for example, there are a significant number of churches with towers attached to their north or south sides.³⁷ They are scattered throughout Cornwall, but in Devon they are overwhelmingly concentrated in the north.³⁸ In East Anglia, a majority of eleventh- and twelfth-century parish church towers are attached to the west end of the nave, but differ from those of Lincolnshire in being round and having no external entry.³⁹ Most are in Norfolk, and even there, there are far more in the east than in the west of the county, with a notable concentration in the Waveney valley. The buildings of England estimated there is evidence for one hundred and forty round towers attached to the west end of parish churches in Norfolk, forty-two in Suffolk, and thirteen in Cambridgeshire and Essex combined.⁴⁰ The Round Tower Churches Society confine themselves to surviving examples and use post-1974 county boundaries, but they list one hundred and twenty-six in Norfolk, forty-two in Suffolk, six in Essex and two in Cambridgeshire.⁴¹ A cogent and detailed argument has been advanced by Stephen Heywood to date the East-Anglian round towers to between c.1070 and c.1200 and relate them to broader patterns of building around the North Sea.⁴² This seems reasonable, as does the assertion that the peculiar mixing of Norman geometric ornament with so-called ‘Overlap’ forms is so ubiquitous that it might be regarded as ‘an autonomous cultural signature for the region’.⁴³ However, although studies of the East-Anglian round towers examine their form, date, position, and the materials from which they are built, none address how they were used. Unlike the Lincolnshire towers, East Anglia’s round towers lack west portals and can only be accessed from the nave. Thus, if one accepts the argument that the Lincolnshire towers are organised so as to facilitate the procession of the corpse directly to the cemetery, the East-Anglian towers either have nothing to do with funerals, or the burial rite, as presumably introduced to the diocese of Norwich along with the customs of Fécamp by Bishop Herbert de Losinga, was in practice different to that prescribed by Lanfranc for Canterbury.⁴⁴ If form and function were related, and it is the positioning of portals and, by extension, processional use that is at issue, there must have been significant variations in regional practice.

There are other examples of regional groupings of parish church towers, though these are less concentrated than those of Norfolk or Lincolnshire. In the East Riding of Yorkshire, square west towers seem preferred. In the south midlands there are a significant number of parish churches without transepts but with a tower bay between the chancel and nave, as at Iffley (Oxfordshire) or Stewkley (Buckinghamshire, Fig. 5). In the decades to either side of 1200, the Fens witnessed substantial investment in the construction of freestanding bell towers.⁴⁵ The one constant is that parish church towers carried bells. But even here a tower was not a *sine qua non*. A bell-cote would suffice, even in such expensively finished parish churches as Kilpeck (Herefordshire).

Aisles are less susceptible to regional variation. The date at which these first

Fig. 5
Exterior from
south, St.
Michael and All
Angels, Stewkley
(Buckinghamshire)
Photo: Author

appear in parish churches is unclear. There are numerous examples of narrow aisles known from excavation, though they are notoriously difficult to date unless there is evidence of the corresponding arcade. In most cases the suppressed aisle walls have been reduced to footings and, as their recovery is usually the result of nineteenth-century restoration, they tend to be poorly recorded.⁴⁶ Standing examples suggest aisles become popular from around 1140, though there are a handful of earlier examples. There is, for instance, a group of three churches in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire whose institutional status at the time their naves were aisled is uncertain, but whose arcades appear eleventh-century. These include Wing (Buckinghamshire), St. Albans (Hertfordshire) and Walkern (Hertfordshire).⁴⁷ All are pre-Conquest foundations and retain elements of Anglo-Saxon fabric. At St. Albans and Walkern these are single aisles. At Wing, aisles were added to both sides of the nave. If they were parish churches at the time aisles were added, then aisles were a feature of English parish churches before the Conquest. Otherwise, the parish church at Ickleton (Cambridgeshire) is probably the earliest standing example of an aisled English medieval parish church, dating from the last quarter of the eleventh century.⁴⁸ Ickleton formed part of the honour of Boulogne when the church was constructed, eventually passing via Eustace III of Boulogne’s daughter, Maud, to King Stephen, so it’s reasonable to assume high-level patronage.⁴⁹ But although the status and wealth of the patron may have facilitated the building, they don’t explain it, and if the counts of Boulogne had intended the church at Ickleton to do no more than serve the parish it would seem to have been exceptional.

By 1140–50, there is no mistaking the popularity of aisles. Former minster churches might be rebuilt on cruciform plans with integral nave aisles, witness Hemel

Hempstead (Hertfordshire) (Fig. 6).⁵⁰ And there is a particular type of clerestory, designed on the half-beat and sunk into the spandrels of the nave arcade, that may have parochial associations. It is popular in the west midlands, as at Clun (Shropshire), and is the form used in the nave at Ewenny Priory, where a wooden roofed nave with a single north aisle was juxtaposed with a vaulted chancel and transepts (Fig. 7). Since there were parochial rights over Ewenny's nave, the design highlights the different uses to which the two parts of the church were put.⁵¹ It is even possible this was a contrast in the service of architectural decorum, deliberated and understood in terms of acoustics and lighting, at least at Ewenny. Otherwise, the syncopated clerestory seems confined to west midlands parish churches. Ripple (Worcestershire) is a thirteenth-century example of the design type.

Though there are other desiderata—as with the towers discussed above—the aisle seems to be the critical area of development in the late-twelfth-century parish church. With aisles and lateral arcades, the highly-articulated longitudinal sequencing of space that characterises most late-eleventh- and early-twelfth-century parish churches starts to dissolve. Romanesque parish churches are almost by definition cellular. They consist of discrete spatial compartments in which the chancel is separated from the nave by an arch, or intermediate bay.⁵² In most cases these are staggered, so the chancel is narrower than the nave. Where roof lines survive, chancels or apses are invariably lower than naves and are frequently vaulted. Kilpeck (Herefordshire) is a nice example (Fig. 8), or Kempley (Gloucestershire).⁵³ Lesser churches and chapels continued to be built to aisleless linear designs through the second half of the twelfth century. Indeed, there are instances of former minsters being rebuilt to relatively large two or three-cell linear plans as late as c.1180, like Blockley (Gloucestershire).⁵⁴ However, the half century

Fig. 6
Nave to east, St
Mary, Hemel
Hempstead
(Hertfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 7
North nave
elevation, Ewenny
priory (Glamorgan)
Photo: Author

between c.1130 and c.1180 saw a move away from the simple and the smaller-scale, and it is notable that the generation of parish churches that invests in aisles, like Hemel Hempstead, coincides with the generation that invests in large unvaulted chancels. Among early examples of the latter are at Cliffe (Kent) and Norham (Northumberland), both with aisled naves and twelve-metre aisleless chancels, and both likely built between c.1150 and c.1170 (Fig. 9).⁵⁵

Fig. 8
Exterior from
north, St. Mary and
St. David, Kilpeck
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 9
South wall of
chancel, St.
Margaret, St.
Margaret at Cliffe
(Kent)
Photo: Author

Our first intimation that the parish church was not necessarily cellular comes at a similar date—around 1140–50, to judge by the style of the sculpture—in St. Peter's at Northampton.⁵⁶ This is the earliest example known to me of an aisled parish church without structural division. The church originally consisted of nine bays, with a rectangular east end that projects beyond the aisles (rebuilt in 1850–51) and an axial west tower that cut into the westernmost bay of the nave when it was reconstructed in the seventeenth century. The aisles were refenestrated in the late Middle Ages, though the clerestory remains substantially as originally built. Scott's restoration respected the twelfth-century forms, reusing many of the original exterior clerestory capitals and corbels.⁵⁷ Notwithstanding slight variations in the distance between windows, this clerestory takes the form of a continuous arcade on the exterior, while the internal openings are cleverly arranged to both play against the rhythm of the arcade bays and maintain the autonomy of the clerestory (Figs. 10 and 11). In other words, there is an aesthetic dimension to St. Peter's, a concern to create a correspondence of parts that draws on an established Romanesque tradition of grouping supporting elements in twos and threes and integrating these with the elevation. It is an aesthetic hitherto unexplored in the English medieval parish church, precisely because it requires arcades and multi-storey elevations and prior to c.1140 these were largely confined to Anglo-Norman great churches.⁵⁸ Needless to say, the level of architectural detailing at St. Peter's is outstanding and is lavished across tower, nave, and chancel alike. Many of the columns are three-part monoliths with moulded annulets, the arcade voussoirs mix limestone with ironstone, and the capitals are the work of one of the most distinguished groups of sculptors active in the midlands during the twelfth century.⁵⁹ Even the arch that leads into the tower is like a chancel arch, displaced and exiled westwards. This not only points to high-level patronage, it also points to the involvement of an architect with previous experience of the recondite world of Anglo-Norman pier design.⁶⁰

Fig. 10
North elevation
to north-east,
St. Peter,
Northampton
(Northamp-
tonshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 11
Exterior from
north, St. Peter,
Northampton
(Northamp-
tonshire)
Photo: Author

Despite the emphasis on open vistas at Northampton, the internal divisions are easy to read. The nave consists of three double bays, outlined by half-columns that rise to the top of the wall from quadrilobe piers (which in turn alternate with columns). The chancel is marked by three bays supported on columns and an absence of vertical articulation.⁶¹ Whether the chancel and nave were originally separated by a timber screen is unknown.⁶² There is no evidence either way. But if not, the subtle guidance provided by the elevation will have been reinforced by orientation and liturgical furnishing alone, for the steps that now lead into the chancel are post-medieval and the nave pavement has been lowered. The mid-twelfth-century floor was level throughout.

Quite what is driving this—why a hall-like building was created for St. Peter's at Northampton—remains an unanswered question. The church was unquestionably of high status. It was the successor to a minster known to have had a large *parochia* before the Conquest, with an advowson that swung between the Cluniac priory of St. Andrew at Northampton (founded by Simon I of Senlis, Earl of Northampton) and the king in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁶³ It was also built immediately to the west of what may have been a Mercian royal palace.⁶⁴ However, despite the pointers to elite patronage and an understandable tendency to ascribe the church to the second earl of Northampton, Simon II de Senlis (d. 1153), neither the immediate circumstances of its construction nor the intentions of its patron are known. Nor have its architectural sources been satisfactorily explained. It is unlike an antique basilica in that there is a western tower and the apse has been squared off. It is unlike a secular hall in that the aisles are low and there is a clerestory. It may be like a monastic building, or hospital, but none survive from the eleventh or early-twelfth century in this particular format.

Northampton has many of the features one associates with the most precocious late-twelfth-century parish churches—particularly those in the Fens—with a clerestory,

Fig. 12
North nave
elevation to
east, All Saints,
Tilney All Saints
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

varied pier designs, a long nave, and sculptural enrichment. Tilney All Saints (Norfolk) of perhaps 1180–90 comes closest, and like Northampton it dispenses with a chancel arch in favour of uninterrupted rooflines and continuous volumes (Fig. 12).⁶⁵ Tilney also has the virtue of retaining evidence for the original arrangement of windows at the east end of the chancel.

Where the central vessel projected beyond the ends of the aisles, the clerestory continued and was joined by two additional windows at the level of the arcade (Fig. 13).⁶⁶ The arrangement compares with that found in East-Anglian Perpendicular churches such as Blythburgh or Southwold (both Suffolk), and as with these ensured that the eastern projection was the most brightly-lit area within the church.

However, in assessing the origins of the aisled parish church without structural division we may be missing a step. If one subtracts the bell tower, the prototype for at least one type of Fenland parish church, the type which retains

Fig. 13
South-East bays
of chancel, All
Saints, Tilney
All Saints
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

Fig. 14
Nave to east, All
Saints, Walsoken
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

Fig. 15
North elevation of
Infirmary hall to
east, Ely Cathedral
priory (Cam-
bridgeshire)
Photo: Author

a chancel arch, seems to be the monastic infirmary. The relationship is clearest at Walsoken (Norfolk), built in perhaps the 1170s with an aisled chancel, seven-bay nave, columnar and octagonal piers which alternate both along and across the nave, and a stupendous arch marking the chancel entry (Fig. 14).⁶⁷ The original twelfth-century clerestory even survives in the chancel, albeit now blocked. It relates directly to the new monastic infirmary at Ely, for which there is a *terminus ante quem* of 1169 thanks to Nicholas Karn's publication of an episcopal charter granting the monks timber for work on their infirmary (Fig. 15).⁶⁸ Walsoken even quotes the Ely sanctuary piers (Figs. 16 and 17). This relationship between the late-twelfth-century parish church and monastic

Fig. 16
North side
of Infirmary
chancel arch,
Ely Cathedral
priory (Cam-
bridgeshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 17
South side of
chancel arch, All
Saints, Walsoken
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

infirmaries is one that merits further exploration. Current understanding is that there was a boom in English monastic infirmary construction over the 1150s and 1160s, and that the linear three-part monastic infirmary, with a two-storey aisled hall, chapel, and sanctuary was a new building type, one that displaced earlier cloister or courtyard-based

monastic infirmaries.⁶⁹ However, there may have been examples of in-line hall-chapel infirmaries before the middle of the century. The infirmary built at St. Albans by Abbot Geoffrey de Gorron (1119–46) was described as an *aula* ‘cum capella versus orientem’ and may have been influential.⁷⁰ Hospitals and monastic guesthouses may similarly have been built as aisled halls with eastern chapels in the second half of the twelfth century, though the evidence is poor and points in too many directions to suggest there was a preference for any one plan type.⁷¹

Notwithstanding the origins of the building type, the reason for labouring Northampton, Tilney All Saints, and Walsoken—and one can extend this to Long Sutton—is that despite differences in their treatment of the relationship between chancel and nave, all four can be described in ways one might describe thirteenth- and fourteenth-century parish churches. They are over thirty metres long, with relatively thin walls, slender piers, aisles, two-storey elevations, and wooden roofs. Their nave arcades are perfectly adaptable and simply served as a platform for new clerestories and roofs. The difference between the parish church in 1200 and the same in 1400 strikes home when one looks at their exteriors, and is largely down to the status accorded to the aisles and the size of the windows.⁷²

These two features—that is, aisles and large windows—are, I believe, unrelated. At least, they don’t arrive together. Large windows are a rare feature in twelfth-century parish churches. The surviving Romanesque window opening at, say, Thornham Parva (Suffolk) is reasonably representative of a twelfth-century parish church window (Figs. 18 and 19).⁷³ And on the few occasions when large Romanesque windows survive they are invariably applied to aisleless spaces. The surviving examples at Iffley (Oxfordshire) or Stewkley (Buckinghamshire) are about as big as they come (Fig. 5).⁷⁴ The stunning aisleless chancel at Cliffe (Kent) would be another example. One certainly never finds original large window openings in twelfth-century parish church aisles. Romanesque parish church aisle windows are always small, as in the case of Compton (Surrey).⁷⁵ They are also low-set, because the aisles are low; so low, in fact, that where original aisle walls are retained from pre-thirteenth-century arrangements the aisles are frequently heightened. Compton rather nicely captures the difference, where the south aisle was heightened but the north was not (Fig. 20). The classic demonstration of this is the development of Castor (Soke of Peterborough) from a post-Conquest aisleless cruciform church (Fig. 21).⁷⁶ When the nave was aisled, probably around 1220–30, the upper nave wall was retained, but it was necessary to take out the lower masonry and cut through the twelfth-century transept west window, leaving a trace of the earlier roof line. By the fourteenth century, the desire for tall traceried windows was irresistible and the aisle was heightened.

So common was the practice of expanding aisles that exceptionally few late-twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century aisles survive in their original state as simple lean-tos with low parapets. Where they do, as at Little Faringdon (Oxfordshire), they tend to

Fig. 18
South nave interior
wall, St. Mary,
Thornham Parva
(Suffolk)
Photo: Author

Fig. 19
South nave exterior
wall, St. Mary,
Thornham Parva
(Suffolk)
Photo: Author

be narrow, though it's clear that not all were (Fig. 22).⁷⁷ The important parish church at Redbourn (Hertfordshire) was rebuilt in the middle of the twelfth century with wide aisles, which retain a characteristically low-set Romanesque window head.⁷⁸ Width is much less of an issue than height.

So, what motivates the proliferation of aisles in English parish churches from around 1140 onwards? When looking into this question, scholars tend to return to the same potential wellsprings: altars, burials, chantries, population growth, great church envy, architectural grandeur.⁷⁹ Population growth must have been a factor, although

Fig. 20
Nave to east,
St. Nicholas,
Compton (Surrey),
showing the disparity in
aisle heights.
Photo: Author

Fig. 21
South nave
aisle to east, St.
Kyneburgha,
Castor (Soke
of Peterbo-
rough. Note
the roofline
indicating the
height of the
aisle when first
built in the
early thirteenth
century.
Photo: Author

Fig. 22
North nave aisle to
east, St. Margaret,
Little Faringdon
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

a related phenomenon—the increased use of parish churches by parishioners for purposes other than attendance at the Mass—may also have been significant. In a case study based on parish churches in Warwickshire, Lindsay Proudfoot drew attention to a correlation between ‘the pattern of nave and aisle extension in parish churches and

known national and regional population trends’.⁸⁰ The greatest growth in the combined floor area provided by nave and aisles took place between c.1250 and c.1340, when parochial (non-chancel) floor space increased by 48.6 percent.⁸¹ The increase between c.1200 and c.1250 was 8.7 percent. The appearance of aisles in parish churches from c.1140 onwards may therefore have been an early, and initially limited, response to the upswing in population. By c.1250, when a new type of aisle had been developed—one that was both taller and wider than twelfth-century aisles—it was easier to effect significant relative expansion in floor area. It may also reflect the hardening-up of the parochial map. Far fewer new parish churches were created between 1250 and 1340 than had been created in the twelfth century, so increased populations had to be accommodated in existing churches.

There obviously is a practical advantage to the addition of aisles, though there are significant qualifications to the statistical method.⁸² Differences of spatial provision in churches in adjoining parishes of comparable size and economic potential imply there will be examples of both the over- and under-provision of space. And surplus wealth in the hands of individual parishioners, if channelled into the parish church, could lead to the large-scale expansion of a church, regardless of population size. There are examples of this in the later Middle Ages.⁸³ It may similarly have been a feature of the largely undocumented addition of aisles to parish churches in the decades around 1200.

In addition to the simple provision of space, aisles accommodated a variety of functions by the fourteenth century. Were these considerations in the adoption of aisles in parish churches in the second half of the twelfth century? Chantries one can rule out, at least as an instigator of the fashion. Chantries were often established in aisles in the later Middle Ages, but aisles come into being before there is evidence for chantries in parish churches, which on existing knowledge is around 1200.⁸⁴ As for burials, their impact is arguably best understood from Warwick Rodwell’s excavations of St. Peter’s at Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire). These encompassed the most comprehensive examination of parish church burials ever undertaken in England and enable one to compare the incidence and location of burials between the tenth and nineteenth centuries on a century-by-century basis.⁸⁵ If one examines the situation with regard to the addition of narrow aisles over the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there is a small group of burials in the first south nave aisle, but in comparison to the situation prior to the creation of the nave aisles it is hardly a step change.⁸⁶ As Rodwell remarks, ‘the incidence of indoor burial was low before the mid-thirteenth century’.⁸⁷ The later thirteenth-century widening of the south nave aisle resulted in many more south aisle burials than was prompted by the initial twelfth-century expansion. This suggests that burials certainly colonised aisles once they had been built, but that before the later thirteenth century the overall number of burials within the church remained roughly constant, with or without aisles.

Altars are more promising, and aisles are often equipped with them. It is clear

that at Little Faringdon, there was an altar with accompanying piscina at the east end of the north aisle, where a vestry door was subsequently inserted (Fig. 23). It is equally clear that there was not an altar at the east end of the south aisle at Castor.⁸⁸ Aisles will certainly provide an altar emplacement that faces in the same direction as the chancel altar and doesn't hinder movement by sitting west of the chancel arch, though technically there is no reason why an altar could not have been set against an aisleless nave wall.

Among formal, allusive, and symbolic criteria, great church emulation is, I think, a non-starter. Notwithstanding such oddities as New Shoreham or Hythe with their three-storey chancels, one mostly searches in vain for late-twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century vaulted nave aisles.⁸⁹ Parish church builders, or lay parishioners, do not seem to have been looking at great church aisles, or great church elevations for that matter. Indeed, the dialogue with great church architecture exists at a wholly different level of

Fig. 23
East end of north
aisle showing pis-
cina, St. Margaret,
Little Faringdon
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

detail, and is seen in moulding profiles, pier designs, and sculptural embellishment. The c.1200 nave piers at Grantham are variations on Lincoln Cathedral designs. Its section or elevation emphatically is not.⁹⁰ The same can be said for many early-thirteenth-century parish churches in Nottinghamshire.⁹¹

Symbolic explanations, along with considerations of changes in liturgical practice, tend to founder on particularism, or the lack of it. There are both too many and too few parish churches that had adopted aisles by the first quarter of the thirteenth century for them to be the result of multiple individual patronal desires to create a church as an image of some other paradigm—like the Constantinian basilica—or a universal perception that a church without aisles was metaphysically deficient.

Finally, looked at from a formal and visual perspective, what is striking is not the aisle as seen from the aisle, but the aisle as seen from the nave. Aisles introduce arcades, and arcades introduce a level of architectural complexity. There may have been many reasons behind the burgeoning popularity of aisles in the run-up to 1200, but their capacity to reformulate an elevation by delivering an architecturally-distinguished backdrop must count high among them. One sees any number of examples of this: Kelmscott (Oxfordshire), Little Faringdon (Oxfordshire), the north nave arcade of St. Mary at Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire), St.-Nicholas-at-Wade (Kent) (Fig. 24).⁹² As an approach to architectural renewal, a new aisle lies between refenestration and the significantly greater expense that would be involved in the complete replacement of the nave, but can still achieve a lot in visual and spatial terms.

None of the considerations aired above is exclusive, and it is highly unlikely that there was a single overriding reason behind the introduction of aisles. That may seem an unsatisfactory conclusion, but in the context of ecclesiastical architecture more

Fig. 24
North nave ele-
vation to west,
St. George,
Kelmscott
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

generally it is hardly surprising. From as early as the fourth century one can see different functions allotted to aisles: the separation of the sexes; the provision of processional routes, particularly in funerary contexts; the enhancement of the central vessel with an arcaded frame, in turn enriched with or without textile hangings. Though the uses change over time, aisles never seem to have been reduced to a single primary purpose.

The aim of this paper was to evaluate the architectural repertoire of the parish church in 1200, particularly in relation to other types of building, and the evidence suggests that, by the end, a distance from the great church had opened. In part this was by default. The parish church espoused forms that great churches had left behind. Clerical communities no longer entertained aisleless and multi-cellular churches, while once prestigious forms—such as axial western towers—became the sole preserve of the parish.⁹³ More radically, the adoption of aisles brought new permutations into play. That this was an independent initiative is clear from the types of aisles that were introduced—lightweight, wooden-roofed, lean-to structures with low outer walls-aisles—which cannot be understood on great church terms. It is easy to overlook this last point, since it is rare for the outer walls of aisles to survive in their twelfth-century state. Their external elevations, the architectural potential of the aisle, was only realised in the thirteenth century with the arrival of tall windows. The status accorded to the aisle is the crucial difference between the parish church in 1200 and its late-medieval offspring. Nonetheless, as aisles brought a new spatial definition to the nave in the middle decades of the twelfth century, so a possible avenue for architectural development was opened, an avenue that seems to have been most enthusiastically explored in eastern England. With thin walls, slender piers, two-storey elevations, and wooden roofs, the late-twelfth-century churches of the economically-vibrant Fens might be regarded as the late-medieval parish church in embryo.

1. See, inter alia, the various contributions in John Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950–1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988); John Blair and Carol Pyrah (eds.), *Church Archaeology: Research Directions for the Future* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 1996), especially pp. 1–18; Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: J.M. Dent, 1989), especially chapters 5–7.

2. See Frederick Maurice Powicke and Christopher Robert Cheney (eds.), *Councils and Synods and Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Vol. II, part I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 128, for Bishop Peter des Roches's 1224 statutes governing chancel repair in the diocese of Winchester. For the continent, Michel Parisse cites a late-twelfth-century dispute regarding parish churches dependent on the priory of Saint-Vincent at Chaligny in the diocese of Toul. The bishop found that the restoration of the chancel was the responsibility

of the parish priest, while the tower belonged to the parishioners. *Cancelli restauratio sub cura sacerdotis erit. Turris vero ad parrochianos pertineat*. Michel Parisse, 'Recherches sur les paroisses du diocese de Toul au XIIe siècle : l'église paroissale et son desservant', in *Le istituzione ecclesiastiche della 'Societas Christiana' dei secoli XI e XII : diocesi, pieve e parrocchie* (Milan: Miscellanea del centro di studi medioevali, 8, 1977), p. 567. See, most recently, Carol Davidson Cragoe, 'The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance Before 1300', *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010): pp. 20–38, especially pp. 29–30.

3. John Blair, 'Clerical Communities and Parochial Space: The Planning of Urban Mother Churches in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in T. R. Slater and Gervase Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 272–94.

4. For an account of the process of the alienation of advowsons and the ownership of parish churches see George William Outram Addleshaw, *The Development of the Parochial System* (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954)

and *Rectors, Vicars and Patrons in Twelfth- and early Thirteenth-Century Canon Law* (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1956). Both studies were conveniently reprinted as paperback pamphlets by the Ecclesiological Society in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

5. *Domesday Book*, I, 280b. See Philip Morgan, Susan Wood, and John Morris (eds.), *Domesday Book. 27, Derbyshire* (Chichester 1978), 280b at 16. Quoted in Wood, *Proprietary Church*, p. 598.

6. London, British Library, MS Harley 2110, folio 70v. Dorothy Owen dates the conveyance to 'before 1180'. Dorothy Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1990), p. 5.

7. Richard Morris identifies the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the 'one period during which the construction of [churches] in stone was practiced as a general national activity', and although the numbers of new buildings and precise chronology will have varied across the country there is no doubt that the incidence of new churches went into sharp decline throughout England after 1200. Richard K. Morris, 'Churches in York and its Hinterland: Building Patterns and Stone Sources in the 11th and 12th Centuries', in Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches*, p. 191.

8. See, for example, the suite of three tombs in the north chancel aisle of the late-thirteenth-century church at Winchelsea (Sussex), which possibly commemorates members of a family originally buried in the church on its earlier site.

9. Both the chancel arch and the pilaster buttresses at the west end of the nave form part of the late-twelfth-century church, though the chancel arch was heightened in the fourteenth century to accommodate the new clerestory and extended chancel. Nikolaus Pevsner, John Harris, and Nicholas Antram, *Lincolnshire*, second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 534–6.

10. John Blair describes the period between the Conquest and the 1150s as 'the incubation period of the modern parochial system'. John Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', in Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches*, p. 10.

11. David Palliser, 'The "Minster Hypothesis": A Case Study', *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1996): pp. 211–14. The late survival of this type of superior church with a large *parochia* and lots of chapelries seems to have been particularly common in Yorkshire. See also Aleksandra McClain, 'Patronage in Transition: Lordship, Churches, and Funerary Monuments in Anglo-Norman England', in J. Sánchez-Pardo and M. Shapland (eds.), *Churches and Social Power in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 185–225.

12. James Raine (ed.), *The Register, or Rolls, of Walter Gray* (York: Surtees Society 56, 1872), pp. 211–13.

13. The chapels are at Fangfoss, Yapham, Great Givendale, Millington, Barmby Moor, Allerthorpe, Thornton, Bielby, Hayton, and Burnby. Barmby Moor and Allerthorpe were completely rebuilt in the nineteenth century. Of the others only Thornton does not retain any stonework which predates 1200. Discussed in Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: Orion Books, 1997), pp. 135–6.

14. Blair, 'Clerical Communities and Parochial Space', pp. 275–6; A. P. Baggs et al (eds.), *Victoria County History: Oxfordshire; Vol. 13* (Oxford: Institute of Historical Research, 1996), pp. 48–53. In 1220 the prebends were transformed into three perpetual vicarages served by resident vicars.

15. Parish churches with more than one rector are usually constituted as a single parish and are either former minsters, like Bampton, or are the result of a division of lay *dominium* over a church between co-heirs. See Addleshaw, *Rectors, Vicars and Patrons*, p. 11.

16. D. Greenaway (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300: Volume 4 Salisbury* (London, 1991), accessed 1 June 2021, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/fasti-ecclesiae/1066-1300/vol4>. Grantham Australis is listed at pp. 68–70 and Grantham Borealis at pp. 70–2.

17. Philip Dixon, 'The Church of St Wulfram 1: The Development of the Church', in David Start and David Stocker (eds.), *The Making of Grantham: The Medieval Town* (Heckington: Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire, 2011), pp. 51–70; and John McNeill, 'The Church of St Wulfram 3: Architecture, Patronage and Context', in Start and Stocker (eds.), *The Making of Grantham*, pp. 95–108. See especially the plan at figure 25 on p. 58.

18. A celebrated example at local church level is Shobdon (Herefordshire). Here, Oliver de Merlimond replaced a wooden chapel subject to the neighbouring parish church at Aymestry with a masonry church, having arranged for Shobdon's independence on payment of an annual pension. With the help of the local bishop, Oliver then upgraded his church to a Victorine priory by recruiting two canons from the abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris, before a dispute led to the eventual removal of the Victorine abbey to Wigmore and the settling of simple parochial status on the church at Shobdon: a status it continues to enjoy. For a full account see John C. Dickinson and Peter T. Ricketts (eds.), 'The Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 39 (1967–69): pp. 413–45.

19. Blair, 'Clerical Communities and Parochial Space', passim; Malcolm Thurby, 'Minor Cruciform Churches in Norman England and Wales', *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXIV (2002): pp. 239–76. Clear associations between 'old minster' churches and twelfth-century reconstructions on aisleless cruciform plans in the diocese of Canterbury are discussed in Tim Tatton-Brown, 'The Churches of Canterbury Diocese in the Eleventh Century', in Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches*, pp. 109–11.

20. For East Meon see William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Hampshire; Vol. 3* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), pp. 64–75; for Shifnal see John Newman and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Shropshire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 502–5. For North Newbald see John Bilson, 'Newbald Church', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 21 (1911): pp. 1–42; for Devizes see Roger Stalley, 'A Twelfth-Century Patron of Architecture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 124 (1971): pp. 81–3, where Stalley argues both churches in Devizes post-date Roger's death in 1139.

21. On Bampton, see John Blair, 'St Beornwald of Bampton', *Oxoniensia* 49 (1984): pp. 47–55; Blair, 'Bampton: An Anglo-Saxon Minster', *Current Archaeology* 160 (1998): pp. 124–30; Baggs et al (eds.), *Victoria County History*, pp. 48–53.

22. For a cautionary warning against assuming cruciform churches had enjoyed minster status, or that minsters were necessarily reconstructed to a cruciform plan, see Michael Franklin, 'The Identification of Minsters in the Midlands', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 7 (1984): pp. 69–88.

23. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Herefordshire; Volume 2, East* (London: HMSO, 1932), pp. 100–3. I am grateful to the anonymous reader for the rewording of this sentence.

24. The earliest standing masonry at Bibury is eleventh-century and seems to belong to an aisleless two-cell church. On Bibury's parochia see Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', pp. 11–12. For an architectural description see David Verrey and Alan Brooks, *Gloucestershire 1: The Cotswolds* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 167–9.

25. John Grundy, Nikolaus Pevsner et al, *Northumberland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 523–4.

26. Richard Gem, 'The Church of St Nicholas Old Shoreham: The Church of St Mary de Haura New Shoreham', *Archaeological Journal* 142 (1985): pp. 21–3.

27. Blair, 'Clerical Communities and Parochial Space', figure 12.4. See also Jill A. Franklin, 'Iconic Architecture and the Medieval Reformation: Ambrose of Milan, Peter Damian, Stephen Harding and the Aisleless Cruciform Church', in John McNeill and Richard Plant (eds.), *Romanesque and the Past* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2013), pp. 77–94. Franklin

- argues that until the middle of the twelfth century, churches built for regular canons were purposefully and specifically designed to an aisleless cruciform plan and that the plan was imbued with a set of meanings associated with the early Church that were given ‘renewed currency’ in the late-eleventh-century remodelling of the Basilica Apostolorum (San Nazaro Maggiore) in Milan.
28. ‘A stereotyped plan—the ‘right’ way to rebuild an ex-minster if one had sufficient funds—had gained wide currency by the 1160s’. Blair, ‘Clerical Communities and Parochial Space’, p. 279.
 29. White Ladies Priory (Shropshire) is an example of an aisleless cruciform church where the nave ran through to the chancel without a western crossing arch (and therefore with no central tower). This type of plan tends to be associated with monastic churches, however, and as far as I am aware is not a feature of parish churches, at least not as primary builds. There are, of course, numerous examples of parish churches which arrive at cruciform plans without central towers as a result of piecemeal expansion. See, for instance, Polebrook (Northamptonshire), or Kelmscott (Oxfordshire).
 30. On the position of and respective ‘ownership’ of the internal spaces within Romanesque parish churches and the position of altars, see Paul S. Barnwell, ‘The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: The Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004): pp. 41–60. Barnwell does not include aisleless cruciform parish churches in his analysis, but the question of the position of their principal altar is the same as in the case with three-cell linear plans.
 31. David Stocker and Paul Everson, *Summoning St Michael: Early Romanesque Towers in Lincolnshire* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), p. 92.
 32. Stocker and Everson, *Summoning St Michael*, pp. 85–91.
 33. For Canterbury, see Dom David Knowles and Christopher Brooke (eds.), *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc* (Oxford: Oxford Medieval Texts, 2002), pp. 185–93. Following the washing of the body of the deceased, the corpse is set on a hearse, covered with a pall and ‘placed in the usual position in the church’ at which point the bells cease to toll (*positoque corpore in loco ubi poni solet, cessant signa*). The bells are again tolled when the procession leaves the church and continue to be rung until the body is in the grave. Unfortunately, neither the position of the corpse in the church, nor the portal by which the funeral procession exits the church are specified.
 34. Stocker and Everson, *Summoning St Michael*, pp. 23–6, 34–43, figures 2.44 and 2.29. The west towers at St Peter Stanthakert in Lincoln and Great Hale were initially built forward of the nave, though the nave was subsequently extended west to meet them. See figure 2.12.
 35. Knowles and Brooke (eds.), *Monastic Constitutions*, pp. 60–70.
 36. Knowles and Brooke (eds.), *Monastic Constitutions*, p. 10, figure 2.7.
 37. Attempts have been made to relate these to the use of transept towers at Exeter Cathedral in the early-twelfth century. See Malcolm Thurlby, ‘The Romanesque Cathedral of St Mary and St Peter at Exeter’, in Francis Kelly (ed.), *Medieval Art and Architecture at Exeter Cathedral* (Leeds: W. S. Maney and Son, 1991), p. 29.
 38. Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Devon*, Buildings of England, second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 39.
 39. Stephen Heywood, ‘The Round Towers of East Anglia’, in Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches*, pp. 169–77.
 40. Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk I: Norwich and the North-East*, Buildings of England, second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 43.
 41. The Round Tower Churches Society website, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://www.roundtowers.org.uk/about-round-tower-churches>
 42. Stephen Heywood, ‘Stone Building in Romanesque East Anglia’, in David Bates and Robert Liddiard (eds.),

East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), pp. 262–5, 268–9. The contention that the parochial round towers are modelled on the ambulatory chapels at Norwich Cathedral and Bury St Edmunds is, however, unconvincing. See also

- Heywood, ‘The Round Towers of East Anglia’, passim.
43. Heywood, ‘Stone Building’, p. 263.
44. For the Norwich customary, see John Basil Tolhurst, *The Customary of the Cathedral Priory Church of Norwich: MS 465 in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (London, Henry Bradshaw Society 82, 1948)., folio 159v. The only surviving copy of the customary dates from the mid-thirteenth century, to which additions were made after 1277. The section dealing with the burial of a monk is among the later additions, entitled ‘*Observancie in sepulture monachi?*’. This would appear to be highly abbreviated; indeed it is partly written in note form. It does not describe the burial, while the only bell mentioned is that rung before the commendation of the body to God. The corpse is left at the door to the cloister (*ad hostiam claustr*), though which door is not specified. The assumption here, as at Canterbury, is that the deceased was a monk. As death was most likely to have taken place in the monastic infirmary, the cloister door was probably at one or the other end of the east cloister walk. For the relationship between the Norwich customary and that of Fécamp, see Richard Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 203–7.
45. J. Philip McAleer, ‘Surviving Medieval Free-Standing Bell Towers at Parish Churches in England and Wales’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 156 (2003): pp. 79–103.
46. The church of St. Benet at Cambridge is not untypical. Foundations for aisles were discovered during restoration work in 1853 (north aisle) and 1872 (south aisle), but were it not for the plan and measurements published by Willis and Clark little would be known of this. Robert Willis and John Willia Clark, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge and of the Colleges of Cambridge and Eton*, volume one (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886), pp. 275–6, 281. The plan (noted as figure 1 in the text) is separately published in volume four, under Corpus Christi College. St. Benet was built in the mid-eleventh century as an aisleless three-cell church with tower, nave, and chancel. The aisle foundations discovered in the nineteenth century were ten feet wide and were probably built contemporaneously as a pair. As the advowson was given to the abbey of St. Albans during the abbacy of Paul of Caen (1077–93) it may be that the aisles were early additions.
47. For Wing see Richard Gem’s church guide. R. Gem, *All Saints Church Wing* (Much Wenlock: R. J. L. Smith, 2002). See also Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), tables 7 and 8, pp. 228, 230.
48. In the course of a visit to Ickleton during the British Archaeological Association’s 2018 Cambridge conference, Frank Woodman raised the possibility of a date as early as c.1060 for the primary building phase of the church. The paired half-columns supporting the western arch of the tower counsel against a pre-Conquest date, but the parallels between the capitals and bases of the west portal and Gundulf’s crypt at Rochester Cathedral suggest a date of c.1080 is probable.
49. William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Cambridgeshire; Vol. 6* (Oxford: Institute of Historical Research, 1978), pp. 230–46. For the wall paintings see David Park, ‘Romanesque Wall Paintings at Ickleton’, in Neil Stratford (ed.), *Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1987), pp. 159–69.
50. For Hemel Hempstead see William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Hertfordshire; Vol. 2* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), pp. 215–30, and Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire* (London: HMSO,

- 1910), pp. 109–11, with a good plan. I exempt Holy Trinity, Great Paxton (Huntingdonshire) from this discussion, for although it is a small cruciform church with integral aisles dating from the middle of the eleventh century, it is most unlikely that it was built as a parish church. At the presumed date of its construction the surrounding estate was held by Edward the Confessor, and a charter issued by King David I of Scotland between 1124 and 1128 refers to a prior and canons regular serving the church. William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Huntingdonshire; Vol. 2* (London: St. Catherine Press, 1932), pp. 328–32.
51. Malcolm Thurlby, ‘The Romanesque Priory Church of St Michael at Ewenny’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 47 (1988): pp. 281–94; David Park and Sophie Stewart, ‘The Painted Decoraion of Ewenny Priory and the Development of Romanesque Altar Imagery’, in John Kenyon and Diane Williams (eds.), *Cardiff: Architecture and Archaeology in the Medieval Diocese of Llandaff* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2006), pp. 42–59. Thurlby’s is the fuller account of the architecture and convincingly argues for a single unitary build, though his preferred date of c.1111x16–1126 is discounted by Park and Stewart in favour of a date in the 1140s.
52. See the discussion of plan types in C. J. Bond, ‘Church and Parish in Norman Worcestershire’, in Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches*, pp. 138–41, especially the selection of plans illustrated in figure 34.
53. For Kilpeck, see Malcolm Thurlby, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture* (Logaston: Logaston Press, 2nd ed., 2013), pp. 95–132; for Kempley, see Eric Gethyn-Jones, *The Dymock School of Sculpture* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1979), pp. 31–7; on the status of Kempley’s roofs see Beric M. Morley and Daniel Miles, ‘Nave Roof, Chest and Door of the Church of St Mary, Kempley, Gloucestershire: Dendrochronological Dating’, *Antiquaries Journal* 80 (2000): pp. 294–6.
54. Until 1931 Blockley was a detached portion of Worcestershire. See William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Worcestershire; Vol. 3* (London: Archibald Constable, 1913), pp. 265–76.
55. For Cliffe see Mary Berg and Howard Jones, *Norman Churches in the Canterbury Diocese* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp. 90–5; G. M. Livett, ‘Notes on the Church of St Margaret-at-Cliffe’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 24 (1900): pp. 175–80. G.M. Livett’s measurements make it clear that the chancel at Cliffe is twelve metres (forty feet) long and, if measured from wall-centre to wall-centre, is a double square. Tim Tatton-Brown points out that Cliffe had a fine natural harbour in a circular bay (now largely eroded), and good access to fresh water. Despite being ‘overshadowed’ by Dover it is likely to have been a significant population centre in the twelfth century. Tatton-Brown, personal communication. See Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of Kent*, second edition, (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1800), volume nine, pp. 412–13 and map. For Norham see John Grundy, Nikolaus Pevsner et al, *Northumberland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp. 523–4. The surviving Romanesque fabric at Norham makes it clear its chancel was in excess of twelve metres long.
56. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Northamptonshire: Volume 5 Archaeology and Churches in Northampton* (London: HMSO, 1985), pp. 371–8; Henry Maguire, ‘A Twelfth-Century Workshop in Northampton’, *Gesta* 9 (1970): pp. 11–25; J. H. Williams, ‘Northampton’s Medieval Parishes’, *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 17 (1982): pp. 74–84; See also Ron Baxter’s entry on The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland, accessed 29 June 2021, <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/view-item?i=13446>
57. See, in particular, Ron Baxter’s CRSBI entry on <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/view-item?i=13446> for a description of the original corbels and capitals.
58. For Wing, St. Michael at St. Albans, and Walkern see above.

59. See Ron Baxter’s CRSBI entry on <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/view-item?i=13446> for an appraisal of the sculpture. The workshop seems to have had a significant business in equipping Northamptonshire parish churches with fonts.
60. For reflections on the importance of varied pier design in Anglo-Norman architecture see Lawrence Hoey, ‘Pier Form and Vertical Wall Articulation in English Romanesque Architecture’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48 (1989): pp. 258–83.
61. Paul Barnwell argues this eastern area (chancel) should be subdivided into two spaces which he defines as a ‘central area’, which contained the altar, and an ‘apse’. The church is thus a type of three-cell building. See Paul Barnwell, ‘The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: The Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004): pp. 51–2.
62. The incidence of screens in twelfth-century parish churches is contested. There is some evidence in some churches for their use but how widespread this may have been remains uncertain. For a recent review see Carol Davidson Cragoe, ‘Belief and Patronage in the English Parish before 1300: Some Evidence from Roods’, *Architectural History* 48 (2005): pp. 21–48, especially pp. 30–1, 35–7. Paul Barnwell implies they were common currency. Barnwell, ‘The Laity, Clergy and Divine Presence’, pp. 46, 51–2.
63. RCHME, *Northamptonshire: Volume 5*, pp. 57–9, 371–2. Its pre-Conquest past may also be reflected in its possession of the detached chapelries of Kingsthorpe and Upton.
64. John H. Williams, Michael Shaw, and Varian Denham, *Middle Saxon Palaces at Northampton* (Northampton: Northampton Development Corporation, 1985). In excavations ahead of development in the late 1970s a large hall was discovered to the east of St. Peter’s. The first structure was built of timber and consisted of a central rectangular space flanked by annexes which was dated to the mid-eighth century. This was then replaced by a larger rectangular masonry hall in the early-ninth century, to which western chambers were added in the middle of the ninth century. The relationship between the hall(s) and St. Peter’s church to the west is unclear. Richard Gem followed the excavators in interpreting church and hall as a palace group. See Richard Gem, ‘Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church 735–870: From Archbishop Egberht to Archbishop Ceolnoth’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 146 (1993): pp. 39–40. John Blair interprets the hall as a monastic building—a refectory—set between a royal minster (St. Peter’s) and the lesser church of St. Gregory which stood to the south-east. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 205.
65. *Norfolk Archaeology*, 25 Part I (1932), pp. xxvii–xxix; Francis Blomefield and Charles Parkin, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 9* (London: W. Miller, 1808), pp. 72–84.
66. There is good evidence on the exterior that the easternmost fifteenth-century clerestory window replaced a late-twelfth-century window.
67. For an account of the estate holders and the relationship with Ramsey Abbey see Blomefield and Parkin, *Topographical History of Norfolk*, pp. 121–31. Walsoken was owned by the abbey of Ramsey (Huntingdonshire) in which respect it is worth drawing attention to the parish church of St. Thomas Becket at Ramsey. See note 71 below. See also Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk 2: North-West and South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 748–50. The survival of a two-bay aisled chancel that predates 1200 is worth underling.
68. The charter is dateable to between 1158 and 1169. By this, Nigel, bishop of Ely, granted the monks of Ely one tree-trunk each week for work on their infirmary from the bishop’s wood at Somersham. Nicholas Karn, *English Episcopal Acta 31: Ely 1109–1197* (Oxford: British Academy, 2005), no. 46. For a detailed appraisal of the

- Ely infirmary see A. Holton-Krayenbuhl, 'The Infirmary Complex at Ely', *Archaeological Journal* 154 (1997): pp. 118–72.
69. For reflections on this see Stuart Harrison and John McNeill, 'The Romanesque Monastic Buildings at Westminster Abbey', in Warwick Rodwell and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds.), *Westminster: I The Art, Architecture and Archaeology of the Royal Abbey* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2015), pp. 74–9.
 70. Thomas of Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, H. T. Riley (ed.) (London: Longman, Rolls Series, XXVIII, v. 4, 1867), I, p. 76.
 71. The evidence is perhaps best for Canterbury. Lanfranc's hospital of St. John the Baptist was arranged as a partitioned rectangular dormitory block with detached service buildings, while the two relevant late-twelfth-century buildings—the Eastbridge hospital and the new domus hospitium at Christ Church Cathedral—were respectively arranged as a hall flanked by a single side aisle with a rectangular chapel to the east (all above vaulted cellars), and as a vaulted two-storey twin-aisled hall with internal ramped stairs. See Paul Bennet, 'St John's Hospital and St John's Nursery', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 108 (1990): pp. 226–31; Peter Fergusson, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory in the Age of Becket* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 59–79. Fergusson includes an extended discussion of monastic and cathedral guesthouses, particularly in East Anglia. The parish church of St. Thomas Becket at Ramsey (Huntingdonshire) has been claimed as a converted monastic guesthouse or hospital on the grounds there is no evidence for a church tower before 1538, though this seems a flimsy reason to reassign a building whose surrounds haven't been fully excavated and which houses an early-thirteenth-century font. See RCHME, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Huntingdonshire* (London: HMSO, 1926), pp. 204–7, and Ron Baxter's entry for the CRSBI - <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/603/>. Baxter favours a date of c.1180 for the surviving arcade, though a date of c.1190–1200 seems more likely to me. I am grateful to Richard Halsey for discussing Ramsey with me.
 72. One would not know from the exterior that Walsoken is still, fundamentally, a late-twelfth-century church. Nor Long Sutton. The expansion has taken place around the edges. Both have been widened and heightened.
 73. Nikolaus Pevsner and Enid Radcliffe, *Suffolk*, second edition (London: Penguin, 1974), pp. 463–4; see also Ron Baxter's CRSBI entry at <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/758/>
 74. On the date of Iffley see Mark Phythian-Adams, 'The Patronage of Iffley church—A New Line of Enquiry', *Ecclesiology Today* 36 (2006): pp. 7–24.
 75. For Compton see H. E. Malden (ed.), *Victoria County History: Surrey; Vol. 3* (London: Archibald Constable, 1911), pp. 21–4.
 76. The church at Castor deserves a monograph. For the moment, the best general account is Charles O'Brien and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 454–6. The best account of the twelfth-century phases of the church is the CRSBI entry at <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/371/>
 77. Simon Townley (ed.), *Victoria County History: Oxfordshire; Vol. 17*, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), pp. 209–33. The assumption has been that Little Faringdon church was given a north aisle after King John transferred the manor of Little Faringdon to his new Cistercian foundation at Great Faringdon (Berkshire) in 1203 (moved to Beaulieu in Hampshire in 1204), though there is no reason to link the two. Little Faringdon was a chapel-of-ease of the parish church of Langford, and that tie was unaffected by the change of manorial tenant. Nevertheless, a date at the beginning of the thirteenth century for the aisle does seem probable. The aisle is comparable to neighbouring Kelmscott (see below) though given the rich mouldings and confident handling

of the stiff leaf capitals Little Faringdon is likely to postdate Kelmscott.

78. William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History: Hertfordshire; Vol. 2* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), pp. 368–71. The arcade at Redbourn is similar to that at Hemel Hempstead but is more likely to have been built c.1160, rather than 1140 as suggested by the VCH. The manor and parish church at Redbourn were possessions of St. Albans Abbey.
79. See, for example, Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 287–95; Fernie, *Architecture of Norman England*, pp. 227–32; Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 183–5.
80. L. J. Proudfoot, 'The Extension of Parish Churches in Medieval Warwickshire', *Journal of Historical Geography* 9 (1983): p. 244.
81. Proudfoot, 'The Extension of Parish Churches', table 1, p. 234.
82. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 289–92.
83. See T. A. Heslop, 'Size Matters: Norwich Churches and Their Parishioners before the Reformation', in David Harry and Christian Steer (eds.), *The Urban Church in Late Medieval England* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2019), pp. 63–81.
84. For a summary, see John McNeill, 'A Prehistory of the Chantry', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 164 (2011): pp. 12–14.
85. Warwick Rodwell, *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire: A Parish Church and its Community, History, Archaeology and Architecture; Volume 1, Part 2* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), pp. 619–20 and figure 698. The pathology and dating are discussed in Tony Waldren, *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire: A Parish Church and its Community, The Human Remains; Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007).
86. Rodwell dated the first north nave aisle to c.1180–1200, and the first south nave aisle to slightly later. Rodwell, *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Volume 1, Part 1*, pp. 383–5.
87. Rodwell, *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Volume 1, Part 1*, p. 385.
88. An arch connecting the south aisle with the south transept was constructed when the south aisle at Castor was built. See figure 21.
89. For New Shoreham see Sally Woodcock, 'The Building History of St Mary de Haura, New Shoreham', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 145 (1992): pp. 89–103.
90. McNeill, 'St Wulfram: 3', p. 97.
91. Lawrence Hoey, 'The Early Gothic Parish Church Architecture of Nottinghamshire', in Jennifer S. Alexander (ed.), *Southwell and Nottinghamshire: Medieval Art, Architecture and Industry* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 1998), pp. 73–82.
92. For Kelmscott see Carol Davidson Cragoe, 'Kelmscott Church: Context and History', in Alan Crossley, Tom Hassall, and Peter Salway (eds.), *William Morris's Kelmscott: Landscape and History* (Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2007), pp. 56–67. For St. Mary at Barton-upon-Humber see Rodwell, *St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber, Volume 1, Part 1*, pp. 97–102. For St.-Nicholas-at-Wade, see Berg and Jones, *Norman Churches in the Canterbury Diocese*, pp. 103–4.
93. For reflections on high-status axial western towers in the tenth and early-eleventh centuries see Richard Gem, 'Staged Timber Spires in Carolingian North-East France and Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 148 (1995): pp. 29–54, especially pp. 44–50.

Big Data: Some Brief Observations on the Application of the Concept to the Medieval Architecture of Parish Churches

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Big Data is not a concept commonly deployed in the discipline of architectural history. The material collected for my own doctoral research on the sixty-six collegiate churches founded in England and Wales in the fourteenth century was extensive but did not constitute Big Data. It included information on the colleges’ statutes, rules and regulations; their patrons, size and funding; and data on the stylistic motifs deployed in the main fabric of the buildings associated with each college together with analysis of all their extant micro-architecture. Such an array of information, common not just to my own endeavour but to the great majority of projects researching medieval architecture, might more reasonably be termed Big(ish) Data; a not inconsiderable dataset but one that an individual can still keep track of, know its little idiosyncrasies, adjust for its lacunae, and account for its anomalies.¹

Big Data, by contrast, goes beyond the purview of any one researcher in two respects. The first is simply the volume of data collected. The second, more subtle difference lies in the objectives of study. Big(ish) Data, as described above, is most often collected with the aim of answering or addressing a specific question, or a limited number of questions. Big Data, on the other hand, should be capable of being used to answer any number of questions. It therefore demands structure and the collection, collation, and presentation of information such that it can be available for many disparate uses. It requires a different and more exacting approach.

This paper aims to use the experience gained in recording and analysing the fourteenth-century colleges to provide insights into the benefits to be gained from treating aspects of medieval architecture as a defined dataset and also the challenges and potential pitfalls of recording information on medieval parish churches on a scale, and to a specification, that is Big Data.

The Potential Benefits

Comprehensive and consistent information on a large number of medieval parish churches would, at minimum, greatly extend our knowledge. But the availability of large volumes of data also facilitates novel and insightful forms of analysis. For example, in the investigation of the causes of architectural change it enables the use of a different way of defining and examining change itself.

The so-called ‘population-level’ approach, developed in the late 1950s and used extensively in the natural sciences, utilises information on the whole of the population under study, not just a selected sample. It defines change as the differential persistence of variants or traits within a population over time, as measured by their frequency distribution.² This is very different from the approaches usually adopted in architectural history. The typological method for analysing change, for example, tracks the instances of a particular feature or motif, such as double-ogee mouldings or four-centred arches,

over time and space, while paying particular attention to precedents and antecedents. An alternative, which might be termed a ‘dialectical’ approach, determines two groups of buildings from different time periods and then compares and contrasts the formal elements within each: a method most clearly articulated by Heinrich Wölfflin in his comparative analysis of Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture.³

Examples of the potential benefits of a ‘population-level’ approach are warranted here: the first relates to the foundation of colleges rather than their architecture. It is often stated that there was a strong connection between the setting up of the Order of the Garter by Edward III in 1348, the king’s coincident conversion to collegiate status of both St. Stephen’s, Westminster and St. George’s, Windsor, and the subsequent foundation of collegiate churches by Garter Knights.⁴ This common proposition is based on such noteworthy examples as the colleges of Newarke (converted from a hospital by Henry Grosmont, then Earl of Lancaster), Pleshey (founded by Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester), and Fotheringhay (by Edmund, Duke of York). All were Garter Knights. But taking a population-level view, it is difficult to sustain such a generalisation. Of all the Garter Knights, from the Order’s inception to the death of Richard II in 1399, fewer than eight percent (those shown in red in Fig. 1) went on to found a college.⁵ Even after excluding foreign Knights and those whose family had already founded a college, the figure only rises to ten percent. And many of those that did go on to create a new institution did so many decades after 1348. Thomas Woodstock, for instance, did not found his college until 1394 and Edmund, Duke of York not until the fifteenth century.⁶

Garter Knights: 1348-99							
1348	Edward (Black Prince)	1348-61	Robert Ufford	1372-77	Guichard d'Angle	1387-99	Edward Plantagenet
	Henry Grosmont		William de Bohun		Alan Buxhill		Henry Percy
	Thomas Beauchamp		Reginald Cobham		Thomas Beauchamp		John Devereux
	Jean de Grailly		Richard la Vache		Jean IV de Montfort		Peter Courtenay
	Ralph Stafford		Thomas Ughtred		Thomas Banastre		Thomas le Despenser
	William Montagu		Walter Mauny		William Ufford		Wilhelm I – Guelders
	Roger Mortimer		Franc van Valen		Hugh Stafford		William VI – Holland
	John de Lisle		Thomas Ufford		Thomas Holland		John Bouchier
	Barth. Burghersh		Lionel of Antwerp		Thomas Percy		John Beaumont
	John Beauchamp		John of Gaunt		William Beauchamp		William le Scrope
	John Mohun		Edmund of York		Richard Plantagenet		William Arundel
	Hugh Courtenay		Edward le Despenser		Henry Plantagenet		John Beaufort
	Thomas Holland		John Sully				Thomas Holland
	John Grey		William Latimer13				John Montagu
1364-69	Richard FitzSimon	1364-69	Humphrey de Bohun	1377-86	John Burley	1387-99	Albrecht I – Bavaria
	Miles Stapleton		Enguerrand de Courci		Lewis Clifford		Simon Felbrigg
	Thomas Wake		Henry Percy		Arnaud de Preissac		Philip de la Vache
	Hugh Wrottesley		Ralph Basset – Drayton		Thomas of Woodstock		
	Nele Loryng		Richard Pembridge		Thomas Felton		
	John Chandos		John Neville		John Holland		
	James Audley		Robert de Naumur		Simon Burley		
	Otho Holland		John Hastings		Thomas Mowbray		
	Henry d'Em		Thomas de Granson		Robert de Vere		
	Sanchet d'Aubrecicourt		Guy Bryan		Richard Fitzalan		
	Walter Paveley				Nicholas Sarnesfeld		
	William FitzWaryn						

Fig. 1
Individuals made
Garter Knights
between 1348 and
1399 who went on
to found collegiate
churches

The illumination of ecclesiastical spaces through the period of Gothic architecture provides another example. It is often assumed that this is characterised by a gradual but steady increase in illumination, through more of the surface area of church elevations being given over to glass. For college church buildings of the middle and latter parts of the fourteenth century, the proposition can be illustrated with reference to the well-illuminated St. Mary the Less in Cambridge, the college of St. Mary's at St Davids (Pembrokeshire), or at the chapel of New College, Oxford. But taking the wider view raises some legitimate questions, notwithstanding the difficulties caused by our lack of definitive knowledge of the original glazing of these windows. There are many well-illuminated chancels in the early part of the century: to take just two examples, those at the Canary Chapel in Norwich, and at Sibthorpe in Nottinghamshire. Conversely, there are many rather dark spaces towards the end of the century. Cobham (Kent), where work on converting the church to collegiate status began in the 1360s, retained its narrow thirteenth-century windows. At Bunbury (Cheshire) the chancel was extended in the 1380s, but no attempt was made to increase the level of illumination; the old windows were re-used.⁷ Examples are not limited to conversions of earlier churches. The side windows of the newly built chancel at St. Mary's, Warwick, from the 1380s, have remarkably high sills and blocked lower sections making the area particularly dark.⁸ The windows of Winchester College chapel are also characterised by high sills that, in combination with deep recesses and extensive external buttresses, work to reduce the lighting level within.⁹ In the latter part of the century patrons were apparently content to retain comparatively ill-lit chancels from earlier periods or erect new buildings whose design decisions indicate that illumination was not a critical factor.

These examples could, of course, simply be characterised as ensuring that any evidence is placed in its correct context. But the population-level approach, and its corresponding definition of change, can provide new insights that go beyond the benefit of simply having more data and taking the appropriate perspective. Foremost among these is the ability to construct frequency distribution graphs. By way of explanation, the occurrences of a particular motif among collegiate church building work within a period of time (say between 1300 and 1324, 1325 and 1349, and so on) can be recorded and then expressed as a percentage of all the collegiate building campaigns taking place in that quarter. Each quarter's percentage is then plotted on a graph. Figure 2 illustrates the prevalence or otherwise of a single motif—octagonal window splay shaft bases—in collegiate church building campaigns throughout the fourteenth century. From this one can conclude that there was little or no use of the motif in the first quarter, and then a very quick take up in the middle of the century until it was ubiquitous by the second half.

There are numerous uses to which this form of analysis can be put, but three may briefly be mentioned. The technique enables a succinct way of presenting the

Fig. 2
Frequency
distribution graph
for octagonal
window splay shaft
bases in fourteenth-
century collegiate
churches

Fig. 3
Frequency
distribution graph
for a number of
architectural motifs
often associated
with the term
'Perpendicular'

introduction of various motifs and the timing and pace of their subsequent diffusion. Further, if several motifs are combined, as in Figure 3 which presents a number of features often associated with the term 'Perpendicular', then the degree to which the motifs were taken up as a total package or introduced on a more piecemeal basis can be ascertained. A close alignment of the graphs of the motifs would suggest introduction en bloc: the further apart the lines, the more sporadic the adoption of the individual motifs. Thirdly, the emerging shape of the frequency graphs illustrated here is, potentially, instructive. To put it descriptively, the rate of introduction of motifs starts slowly, accelerates, and then levels off. More technically, the graphs describe a sigmoidal or S-shaped curve. The critical point in such an observation is that sigmoidal curves of adoption are extremely common in studies of the diffusion of innovation. Since the 1930s, there have been over five thousand such studies, ranging from the introduction of new forms of maize, through to new medical treatments, and domestic technologies.¹⁰ The adoption of almost all these innovations exhibited an S-shaped curve. It is perhaps therefore what one should expect for the introduction of new architectural motifs. Awareness of the applicability of sigmoidal adoption curves might aid the analysis of architectural change. The important point for this paper is that this form of analysis, whilst possible with Big(ish) Data, becomes more readily available, and more convincing, with access to Big Data.

Fig. 4a
Frequency
distribution graphs
for the tombs
of founders of
collegiate churches
in the fourteenth
century. Positions
of tombs - by
quarter from 1325

Fig. 4b
Frequency
distribution graphs
for the tombs
of founders of
collegiate churches
in the fourteenth
century. Designs of
tomb chests - by
quarter from 1325

Fig. 4c
Frequency
distribution graphs
for the tombs
of founders of
collegiate churches
in the fourteenth
century. Types
of memorial - by
quarter from 1325

The capabilities of using such a technique should not be overstated: it supplements rather than replaces more traditional methods of analysis. In an analysis of the tombs of founders of fourteenth-century colleges, for example, the frequency distribution graph clearly shows that there was a marked reduction in the use of wall tombs through the century (Fig. 4a), but in most other respects the picture was one of continuity rather than change. The proportion situated on the north of the chancel or at its centre did not alter much, nor did the form of the surviving tomb chests, these being fairly evenly distributed between those with weeper figures and those with a mix of panels and heraldry (Fig. 4b).¹¹ Similarly, the division between effigies and brasses was

remarkably consistent throughout the period (Fig. 4c). The population-level approach is, however, particularly adept at identifying anomalies. The tomb of William Trussell at Shottesbrooke (Berkshire) is the only example of a patron choosing to be buried in the north transept of his church when the chancel was available. Adam Houghton's tomb at the college of St. Mary's at St. Davids is also unusual in several respects. Not only is it a wall tomb from the latter part of the century, but it was significantly larger than all its surviving contemporaries (this regrettably now only indicated by the mutilation of the north wall of the chapel). Moreover, of the eleven bishops to found colleges in the century, only Adam Houghton was buried in his collegiate foundation. All the others chose their cathedrals, though it should be noted that Houghton's college was adjacent to his cathedral. There is a clear sense, in this instance, that the great churches were thought to provide a more effective salvific location.

The population-level approach, together with the use of frequency distribution graphs, is not a panacea for the study of change in medieval ecclesiastical architecture, but it can be a powerful tool when Big (or even Big-ish) Data are available. There are difficulties, however, in obtaining such data on the architecture of parish churches.

Issues to be Addressed

The primary issues reside in three broad categories, each with their own particular set of challenges. The first, and perhaps the more straightforward, is to determine what should, ideally, be collected. As discussed above, much of the information gathered on the architecture of parish churches has been part of exercises with their own specific purposes and objectives. The data needed for doctoral research—in terms of structure and, potentially, detail—vary from that obtained for broader amalgamations such as the information collected and presented for the official listing of buildings. Big Data cannot allow such variation in data collection. Such datasets need to be capable of being used in multiple ways. In particular, they should be additive so that information on one parish church can be readily compared with that of another. This requirement spawns several important questions: precisely what data should be collected; how should they be defined, delineated, and categorised; how detailed ought the dataset to be; how might new technological methods of recording data, such as photogrammetry and three-dimensional modelling, be incorporated?

As an example of the sorts of decisions that must be made if data are to be capable of being additive or cumulative, the research undertaken into the architecture of the sixty-six collegiate churches founded in the fourteenth century required a hierarchical framework of architectural features to be determined. General information was collected on the location and geographical setting of each church along with its plan and dimensions. The recording of the architectural features then had three levels:

Fig. 5
Hierarchical
structure deployed
for data recording
of architectural
motifs in
fourteenth-century
collegiate churches

‘architectural elements’ (such as arcades, windows, sedilia and so on) were broken down into ‘component parts’ (thus, as an example, arcades comprised the components of arch shape, arch decoration, pier shape, capital type, and base type) and then each component part was categorised according to its ‘traits’. So, for the component ‘pier shape’ the trait categories were round, square, octagonal, hexagonal, two-shafted, four-shafted, moulded and so on. For the component ‘arch shape’ they were two-centred, four-centred, segmental etc. This provided a structure for data collection, and for subsequent analysis. A skeleton example of the hierarchy is shown in Figure 5.

The key point here is that the structure devised was appropriate for the questions being asked of the material: in this case, what was changing in terms of architectural style. The scale of individual features was noted, but detailed measurements, for example of the diameters of the piers, were not taken. The key elements of individual mouldings were recorded, but moulding profiles were not. In order to address different questions, such detailed measurements and profiles might be necessary, or indeed a different hierarchy for data collection might be appropriate.

A useful dataset for parish church architecture over two or three centuries moves away from the realm of Big(ish) Data, where one person can decide the structure, to that of Big Data where the information collected needs to meet multiple needs and requirements. Too loose a structure and the data are of little practical use, other than as a broad indication or a swift introduction. Conversely, an overly-prescriptive structure rather dampens the enthusiasm of those recording the information. Some of these problems can be resolved by using relational databases, as opposed to the databases

of twenty or thirty years ago that required a strict and unmovable structure in order to proceed. But if research into parish churches is to be well-grounded and cumulative, rather than an ever-increasing set of disparate descriptions of buildings, then some discipline is required.

The second challenge is a central concern for all historians of medieval architecture: the dating of the material evidence. One of the benefits of choosing fourteenth-century collegiate churches to form the basis of an analysis of architectural change was that there is documentary evidence, if not for actual building campaigns, then for the dates of foundation, of key endowments, of college statutes and charters, of the necessary inquiries into transfers of ownership, and of the wills of their founders. This information enables reasonably confident timelines to be established for the various building campaigns of the sixty-six collegiate churches. In fact, it is probably not overstating the case to say that more is known about the dating of many collegiate churches than of the relatively few great church building campaigns in the latter part of the century. The dating of important developments such as the west front of Winchester Cathedral and the cloisters at Gloucester Abbey remain matters of on-going debate.¹²

So while the dating of collegiate building campaigns can be estimated with some confidence, one suspects that such analysis for parish churches as a whole will be more circumscribed. The common responses to this comparative lack of evidence are twofold. One is to fall back on the broad classification of architectural styles in medieval England, consolidated, now more than two hundred years ago, by Thomas Rickman.¹³ The simplicity of Rickman’s categories, together with the didactic nature of many of the early publications that used them, contributed to their popularity.¹⁴ The pervasive use of ‘Dec’ and ‘Perp’ in the Buildings of England series provides ample testament. The second response is to use stylistic evidence as a guide to dating. But not only does this produce somewhat circular arguments, the evidence from the fourteenth century suggests that it reinforces a somewhat linear narrative for stylistic change and is therefore open to error. The elevations of Ottery St Mary (Devon), for example, have, at various times, been thought to be from the thirteenth century, rather than from the 1340s, due to their retention of lancet windows.¹⁵ The chapel of Queen’s College, Oxford is firmly dated, through the college accounts, to the 1370s, yet its east window—if the detail of David Loggan’s seventeenth-century drawing is accurate—had a curvilinear design more common decades earlier.¹⁶ The innovative conoidal vaults and traceried wall surfaces of William Trussell’s tomb at Shottesbrooke would not normally be placed to the early 1340s without its exterior relieving arches and good documentation for the church’s construction providing ample evidence for such a date.¹⁷ To further compound the problem, there is often insufficient clarity as to whether the term Perpendicular is now being used to reference various motifs consistent with Rickman’s classification (and Rickman was quite forensic in this regard), or whether

the term is being used to specify a particular time period for construction. For Big(ish) Data, the individual researcher can be aware of the problems that indeterminate dating or imprecise definition of terms might bring. Such a luxury is not available for Big Data.

The third challenge may prove to be the most intractable. Data structures and, at least to an extent, the dating of material can be addressed. They require coordinated effort resulting in clear, but perhaps not over-prescriptive, guidance. But in order to deliver a comprehensive dataset for medieval parish churches these ‘technical’ problems need to be placed alongside the less tangible issue of organising the necessary data collection. Big Data presents problems of scale. The data-gathering for sixty-six collegiate churches, of which about forty-five had substantive extant fabric, consumed about half the time allowed for the doctoral research. And, as noted above, the data collected would not address the multitude of questions that might be asked. No individual can encompass all of the medieval parish churches of England and Wales to the required detail. It is unlikely that a small group can do so within a reasonable timeframe. Such an endeavour will require a collaborative effort on the part of a sizable number of people, and such an effort requires structure and organisation.

Experience suggests that success depends on three organisational constructs working well together. The first is an established body or organisation, one recognised as having an interest in parish church architecture and willing and able to act as the focal point for the endeavour. Its status should ensure that any funding applications are well received and that it is capable of being a repository for the information collected. The second is some form of coordinating group that would be responsible for the resolution of the technical issues outlined above. It would set up the necessary communication and education and could play a role in troubleshooting, quality verification, and monitoring. It would be the focal point for liaising with other interested parties. The understanding and insights gained in developing the Corpus of Scottish Medieval Churches would clearly be of considerable importance here.

The last, and in many ways most important element is the not-inconsiderable number of engaged, energised, and enthusiastic volunteers actually undertaking the collection of the information on the parish churches themselves. There are many different models for how this might be achieved and ‘one size does not fit all’. Tradition, however, suggests that a county-based system would be most appropriate: the Buildings of England series and Victoria County Histories provide good examples. The county retains a local focus, it breaks the problem into more manageable pieces, and opens the possibility of engaging fully with existing organisations that have an interest in parish church architecture.

There are considerable benefits to be gained from applying the principles of Big Data to the study of medieval architectural history. Over and above the simple advantages of having a greater repository of information, it can expand the ways in which the material can be examined. There are, however, significant challenges involved

in gathering the necessary information, and these will not just, or even primarily, be technical in nature. The biggest challenge will be to encourage the necessary wider engagement and establish the momentum required to sustain the endeavour over time.

- Recent exceptions to this general proposition of a lack of Big Data in research into medieval architecture include James A. Cameron, ‘Sedilia in Medieval England’ (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2015) and Lucy Wrapson, ‘Patterns of Production: A Technical Art Historical Study of East Anglia’s Late Medieval Screens’ (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2014).
- This definition of change is derived from biology and has recently been used in archaeology to provide quantified and mathematically-testable analyses of change in the archaeological record. See Ernst Mayr, ‘Typological Versus Population Thinking’, in Elliott Sober (ed.), *Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology*, third edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 325–8, and, for useful introductions and commentary, Elliot Sober, ‘Evolution, Population Thinking, and Essentialism’, in Sober, *Conceptual Issues*, pp. 329–59, and Elliot Sober, ‘Models of Cultural Evolution’, in Sober, *Conceptual Issues*, pp. 535–51. For the early methodological discussions within archaeology, see George T. Jones, Robert D. Leonard, and Alysia L. Abbott, ‘The Structure of Selectionist Explanations in Archaeology’, in Patrice A. Teltser (ed.), *Evolutionary Archaeology: Methodological Issues* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), pp. 13–32, and Patrice A. Teltser, ‘The Methodological Challenge of Evolutionary Theory in Archaeology’, in Teltser, *Evolutionary Archaeology*, pp. 1–11.
- Wölfflin acknowledged that ‘everything is transition’ but his method for examining the causes of change between the Renaissance and Baroque clearly relies upon grouping buildings and artworks before making comparisons. See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: the Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, (trans.) M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950), particularly p. 227.
- This assertion is common. See, for example, Clive Burgess, ‘St George’s College, Windsor: Context and Consequence’, in Nigel Saul (ed.), *St George’s Chapel, Windsor, in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), pp. 89, 92; Sally Badham, “‘Beautiful Remains of Antiquity’”: The Medieval Monuments in the Former Trinitarian Priory Church at Ingham, Norfolk. Part 1: The Lost Brasses’, *Church Monuments* 21 (2006): p. 11; Linda Monckton, ‘The Collegiate Church of All Saints, Maidstone’, in Tim Ayers and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds.), *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Rochester* (Leeds: Maney, 2006), p. 301; and John Richards, ‘Sir Oliver de Ingham (d.1344) and the Foundation of the Trinitarian Priory at Ingham, Norfolk’, *Church Monuments* 21 (2006): p. 37.
- The information on the Garter Knights is taken from Hugh Collins, *The Order of the Garter, 1348–1461: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). In this analysis Thomas Beauchamp is taken as having refounded his college at Warwick in the 1360s, see Andrew Budge, ‘The 14th-Century Rebuilding of the Collegiate Church of St Mary’s, Warwick’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 170 (2017): p. 82.
- For a more detailed analysis, see Andrew Budge, ‘Collegiate Churches founded in the Fourteenth Century: Change in Architectural Style as a Social Process’, in John Munns (ed.), *Decorated Revisited: English Architectural Style in Context, 1250–1400* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 40–1. For the changes at Bunbury see Maurice H. Ridgway, ‘The Sanctuary of Bunbury Church: Excavated 1952–53’, in Maurice H. Ridgway (ed.), *The Bunbury Papers*, nine volumes (Private subscription: 1949–60), vol. V (1954), accessed 1 June 2021, https://4e083a16-4603-4511-bc68-0e3c843b15b7.filesusr.com/ugd/2ae44a_59f84b87051340bba2969ae48fdc07cc.pdf
- For the dating of the Warwick chancel see Budge, ‘St Mary’s, Warwick’, pp. 94–5.
- The thick walls and narrow windows of the Winchester College chapel might be due to the nature of the ground on which the chapel was built. St. Elizabeth’s College, only 200m to the east of the chapel and erected in the first years of the fourteenth century, was built on a thick raft of chalk to counteract the soft ground. It is therefore possible that precautions were also taken for the later chapel. The taller elevations at New College, also designed by William Wynford and of a similar date, are both thinner and less prominently buttressed. For what is published on the construction of St. Elizabeth’s College, see Richard Whinney, ‘Excavations at St Elizabeth’s College, Winchester, 2011’, *Hampshire Field Club Newsletter* 57 (2012): pp. 13–15.
- The history of innovation diffusion research is set out in Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, fifth edition (New York: The Free Press, 2003).
- This mix of figured and panelled tomb chests was also seen in the fourteenth-century royal tombs. Mark Duffy’s analysis does, however, indicate a preference for ‘dynastic’ tomb chests in the fourteenth century with a shift to ‘panelled heraldic’ in the fifteenth. See Mark Duffy, *Royal Tombs of Medieval England* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), particularly Fig. 75.
- For the various dates proposed for the Gloucester cloisters, see Walter C. Leedy, *Fan Vaulting: A Study of Form, Technology, and Meaning* (London: Scolar, 1980), p. 168; John H. Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style, 1330–1485* (London: Batsford, 1978), p. 92; and Christopher Wilson, ‘The Origins of the Perpendicular Style and Its Development to Circa 1360’ (PhD diss., University of London, 1980), p. 260. For Winchester west front, see Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style*, p. 90 and Wilson, ‘Origins’, p. 300.
- Rickman, Thomas, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture, From the Conquest to the Reformation* (London: Longman, 1817).
- Rickman’s descriptive terminology was swiftly adopted by early-nineteenth-century writers. See, for example, Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, *The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture* [1829], fourth edition (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1841); William Whewell, *Architectural Notes on German Churches; With Remarks on the Origin of Gothic Architecture* [1830] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and John Henry Parker, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Grecian, Roman, Italian, and Gothic Architecture* [1836], fifth edition (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1850).
- See, for example, John Neale Dalton, *The Collegiate Church of Ottery St Mary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1917), p. 11; John Coleridge, ‘Restoration of the Church of S. Mary the Virgin, at Ottery S. Mary’, *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* IV /1 (1850): pp. 214–15; and Paul Jeffery *The Collegiate Churches of England and Wales* (London: Robert Hale, 2004), p. 146.
- The construction date of the chapel is well-attested through its building accounts. See John R. Magrath, *The Queen’s College* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), particularly pp. 69–73. The chapel was taken down in 1719 but its east window is shown in Loggan’s 1675 engraving of the college, reproduced in Magrath, *The Queen’s College*, Plate XXXI.
- For detailed discussion of the Trussell tomb, see Budge ‘Social Process’, pp. 46–7.

Models, Copies,
and Mendicants:
The Origins
of the Late-
Medieval English
Parish Church in
Historiographical
Perspective

ZACHARY STEWART

Fig. 1
Nave and choir,
St. Peter Mancroft,
Norwich
Photo: Author

Dazzled by what Paul Binski has described as ‘the glamour of the great churches’, architectural historians have long struggled to appreciate the merits of the parish churches of late-medieval England, viewing even the most impressive examples, such as the stately market church of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich, as products of architectural imitation versus architectural innovation (Fig. 1).¹ Underlying this view is the idea that, for a relatively brief period during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, there existed a strong model-copy relationship between mendicant churches and parish churches that radically altered the way in which lay-oriented ecclesiastical space was conceptualised, planned, and constructed. The present paper, which adopts a sceptical attitude towards this all-encompassing ‘mendicant thesis’, offers a preliminary re-evaluation of the topic from several complementary perspectives. Its aims are threefold: to clarify the chronology of the relevant art-historical literature, to consider the limits of the architectural evidence, and to contemplate the advantages and disadvantages of deploying such a deterministic interpretive model. Only by engaging each of these issues, I would argue, can we begin to move—in keeping with the laudable objective of the present volume—towards a subtler, richer, and more comprehensive architectural history of the parish church.

The origins of the mendicant thesis: Clapham and Gerstenberg

Over a century ago, Alfred Clapham, then a young architectural historian working on behalf of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, published an essay titled ‘The Friars as Builders’, which articulated for the first time in a coherent

Fig. 2
Site plan of the
London Blackfriars
by Alfred Clapham
(1913).

fashion a ‘mendicant thesis’ regarding the origins of parish church architecture in late-medieval England.² Clapham’s essay, enriched by his pioneering research on the London Whitefriars and the London Blackfriars, appeared during a period of renewed scholarly interest in the capital’s former mendicant priories: sites at which few traces of medieval

buildings remained visible above ground due to the ravages of the Reformation and the Great Fire.³ It employed information gleaned from textual sources, visual sources, and past piecemeal excavations, along with supplementary evidence obtained from other mendicant sites throughout the country, to reconstruct what was argued were the three salient features of mendicant church architecture: wide naves frequently equipped with aisles, narrow chancels rarely equipped with aisles, and intermediary ‘walking spaces’ capped, in many cases, by polygonal bell towers (Fig. 2).⁴

Clapham further contended that, because they maximised lay space and minimised clerical space, mendicant churches constituted purpose-built preaching halls that facilitated the popular evangelising mission of the orders occupying them. Curiously, however, he also believed that the monument that most perfectly embodied the mendicant ideal was one deviating to some degree from the aforementioned formula, at least to the extent that it granted equal space to the nave and the choir. This was the second London Greyfriars, begun around 1300, which constituted the largest mendicant church in England.⁵ The building featured a simple rectangular floor plan defined at the west end by an aisled nave and at the east end by an aisled choir as well as a skeletal elevation distinguished by tall piers and large windows (Fig. 3). Clapham believed that this cavernous structure was nothing less than the ‘final expression’ of ‘what a congregational church should be’.⁶ Moreover, he speculated that it was this congregational character that made the building a convenient prototype for parish church design throughout England. In order to bolster this proposal, he pointed out that the construction of the Greyfriars coincided with a transitional period in the development of the parochial system, one involving a shift in foundation patterns in new urban centres from large numbers of smaller churches to small numbers of

Fig. 3
Floor plan of the
second London
Greyfriars by E. B.
S. Shepherd (1902).

Fig. 4
Choir, Holy Trinity,
Hull (East Riding,
Yorkshire)
Photo: Author

larger churches. Trendsetting in this regard, he contended, were the churches of new royal towns founded by Edward I.⁷ One example, located in the north, was the chapel of the Holy Trinity in Kingston-on-Hull (East Riding, Yorkshire) (Fig. 4).⁸ Another example, located in the south, was the parish church in Winchelsea (Sussex) (Fig. 5).⁹ These buildings then paved the way for later iterations in the old merchant cities of intermediate regions such as Lincolnshire and East Anglia (Fig. 1). Clapham drew special attention to what he considered the first major lay church derived from mendicant prototypes: the large chapel-of-ease in Hull. He suggested that the building had much in common with the London Greyfriars—large aisled vessels, attenuated piers, massive windows—because it, like the priory church, was a quasi-royal project (Figs. 3 and 4). Hull Holy Trinity enjoyed the patronage of Edward I and Edward II. The London Greyfriars enjoyed the patronage of Queen Margaret (Edward I's second wife and Edward II's stepmother). It was this instrumental royal connection, according to Clapham, that expedited the creation of a new kind of spacious parish church that would dominate architectural production in England until the end of the Middle Ages. Thus, in his assessment, 'the great Perpendicular parish church' was nothing other than 'the direct outcome and lineal descendant of the friars' buildings'.¹⁰

In the same year that Clapham published 'The Friars as Builders', Kurt Gerstenberg, then a young art historian teaching at the University of Munich, published a book titled *Deutsche Sondergotik*, which articulated for the first time in a coherent fashion a 'mendicant thesis' regarding the origins of parish church architecture in late-medieval Germany.¹¹ Gerstenberg's polemic, because it revolved around the bipartite idea that High Gothic architecture had been invented in France and that Late Gothic architecture had been invented in Germany, emphasised the difference between these two styles by deploying a series of highly charged oppositions.¹² High Gothic, as a purportedly rational aesthetic, was discussed in terms of linear forms and hierarchical spaces. Late Gothic, as a purportedly irrational aesthetic, was discussed in terms of painterly forms and non-hierarchical spaces. Each of the two styles, according to Gerstenberg, found its quintessential expression in a specific architectural type: High Gothic in the basilican church format and Late Gothic in the hall church format. The High Gothic basilican church, because it featured three parallel volumes of unequal height, fostered single-axial movement that created a clear division between the primary space of the main vessel and the secondary spaces of the side aisles. The Late Gothic hall church, because it featured three parallel volumes of more or less equal height, fostered multi-axial movement that eroded and elided such distinctions. Few buildings were thought to better represent the inferiority of the former and the superiority of the latter than the early-sixteenth-century Annenkirche in Annaberg (Saxony), a photograph of which functioned as the frontispiece to *Deutsche Sondergotik* (Fig. 6).

Gerstenberg believed that the hall church type was initially employed in mendicant churches for the pragmatic objective of facilitating preaching but was

Fig. 5
Choir, St. Thomas,
Winchelsea (Sussex)
Photo: Paul
Carstairs

Fig. 6
Frontispiece to
Kurt Gerstenberg,
*Deutsche
Sondergotik*,
featuring a view
of the choir of
the Annenkirche,
Annaberg (1913).

subsequently employed in parish churches for the ideological objective of fostering anti-ecclesiastical lay identity.¹³ The former claim regarding mendicant hall churches had little precedent in previous scholarship.¹⁴ The latter claim regarding parish hall churches, however, had strong antecedents in the work of earlier German scholars like Wilhelm Lübke and Cornelius Gurlitt.¹⁵ Lübke, the first scholar to formally employ the designation ‘hall church’ as a stand-alone art-historical category, had interpreted the configuration in secular terms by associating it with what he claimed were the egalitarian values of the urban middle classes.¹⁶ Gurlitt, in a different vein, had interpreted the configuration in religious terms by contrasting what he argued were the highly divergent

functions of High Gothic basilican churches and Late Gothic hall churches, the former being Catholic ceremonial and the latter being as proto-Protestant preaching.¹⁷ For both nineteenth-century authors, then, the hall church represented a transitional type that indexed large-scale social change between the late-medieval and early-modern eras.¹⁸ Gerstenberg’s contribution was to incorporate these ambitious accounts into a larger etiological narrative involving the mendicant orders by means of a working method that prioritised the central role of space in the creation of architectural form, an approach deeply indebted to the work of August Schmarsow.¹⁹ The result was a multifaceted paradigm that conflated, in a highly suggestive manner, issues of form and issues of meaning in the study of medieval ecclesiastical architecture.

The popularisation of the mendicant thesis: Pevsner and his contemporaries

A crucial link between these two versions of the mendicant thesis, English and German, was the work of the prolific émigré architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner.²⁰ Nowhere, perhaps, were his attitudes on the subject made clearer than in his survey text, *An Outline of European Architecture*, published in a first edition in 1942 and in a second—and heavily revised—edition in 1945.²¹ Paul Crossley, in an essay contextualising Pevsner’s highly contested views on the hall choir of St. Augustine’s Abbey in Bristol (now Bristol Cathedral),²² argued that three major concepts guided Pevsner’s interpretation of medieval architectural history: a programmatic emphasis on ‘space’ and ‘spatial expression’ derived from his doctoral adviser Wilhelm Pinder (himself a former student of Schmarsow); an art-historical attention to ‘style’ as an active force guided by fundamental principles inspired by the work of Heinrich Wölfflin; and an attention to the ‘spirit of the age’ inspired, in a general way, by the work of Georg Hegel and, in a specific way, by the work of Max Dvořák.²³ Crossley noted that the second concept of ‘style’ allowed Pevsner to superimpose hitherto discrete models of stylistic periodisation employed by medieval architectural historians in England and in Germany: ‘Early English’, ‘Decorated’, and ‘Perpendicular’ for insular material and ‘Early Gothic’, ‘High Gothic’, and ‘Late Gothic’ for continental material. Crossley also noted that the third concept relating to the ‘spirit of the age’ allowed Pevsner to apply Gerstenberg’s concept of *Sondergotik* to buildings erected in a wide variety of regions located outside the confines of Germany, most notably to the hall church choir at Bristol (Fig. 7). With these observations in mind, then, it is less than surprising to find that Pevsner, in a chapter dedicated to ‘The Late Gothic Style’ in the second edition of *Outline*, attributed to the mendicant orders the dissemination of architectural ensembles marked by ‘spatial openness’ throughout Europe.²⁴ He later articulated this view, with special respect to England, in *The Englishness of English Art*; there he advocated that the ‘large, easily surveyable, wide open spaces’ of Perpendicular parish churches in England, like those

Fig. 7
Choir, St.
Augustine's Abbey,
Bristol (now Bristol
Cathedral)
Photo: Stephen
Murray

of Late Gothic parish churches in many other parts of Europe, had their origin in the 'large preaching spaces' of mendicant churches.²⁵

Pevsner's influence on the reception of the mendicant thesis was profound to the extent that many, if not most, scholars who subsequently examined the relationship between mendicant church architecture and parish church architecture followed his lead by relating the two in terms of 'openness', a tactic that quietly elided the form-and-function approach of Clapham and the space-and-society approach of Gerstenberg. Geoffrey Webb endorsed the bulk of the mendicant thesis in what remains, to date, the most comprehensive history of medieval architecture in Britain; he described both mendicant 'originals' and parochial 'copies' in terms of 'openness', 'lightness', and 'unity of space effect'.²⁶ Jean Bony, in his monograph on the Decorated style, examined the mendicant side of the equation; he interpreted the spatial integration of mendicant churches as evidence of the 'new freedom in the handling of interior space' that defined architectural production during the later thirteenth and earlier fourteenth centuries.²⁷ John Harvey, in his monograph on the Perpendicular style, examined the parochial side of the equation; he interpreted the spatial integration of parish churches as evidence of the 'internal unity' that defined architectural production during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁸

All three scholars—Webb, Bony, and Harvey—agreed that a desire for preaching space drove the creation of the open configurations in question but disagreed on what constituted a preaching church in concrete terms. This confusion went back, in large part, to Clapham since his theory suggested that the same architectural class encompassed buildings as divergent as the choir at Hull and the choir at Winchelsea: the former having a two-storey interior elevation (an arcade with a clerestory), a flat east end, and a shallowly pitched panelled roof and the latter having a one-storey interior elevation (an arcade without a clerestory), a staggered east end, and a steeply pitched tie-beam-and-crown-post roof (Figs. 4 and 5). Webb, on the one hand, accepted the idea of a single mendicant-inspired architectural tradition anchored by the example of the London Greyfriars. However, unlike Clapham, he confronted head-on the contradiction in equating Hull and Winchelsea. Hull, as a basilican church, looked more like the assumed form of the Greyfriars and was thus included in the mendicant series. Winchelsea, as a hall church, looked less like the assumed form of the Greyfriars and was thus excluded from the mendicant series. Bony, on the other hand, rejected the idea of a single mendicant-inspired architectural tradition issuing from the London Greyfriars. He posited, instead, the existence of not one but two different families of buildings. The first, comprising two-storey aisled structures, was derived from lost, and hence undocumented, mendicant churches in the north. The second, comprising one-storey aisled structures, was derived from extant or partially extant, and hence documented, mendicant churches in the south. Both accounts, despite their admirable intent to improve the mendicant thesis, suffered serious flaws. Webb's model neglected

to grapple with the diversity of church types employed by the mendicants. Bony's model, in attempting to address this very issue, imposed an artificial order on the archaeological record: it not only invented a 'northern group' of basilican churches for which there was no architectural evidence but also ignored, within a 'southern group' of hall churches, what were believed to be two-storey outliers (most notably the London Greyfriars). In light of these shortcomings, it comes as little surprise that Harvey, when he waded into the subject at all, took a very different approach, focusing not on the relationship between basilican churches and hall churches but on architectural motifs such as moulding profiles, arch types, and tracery patterns.

The limits of the evidence: the London Austin Friars and the Norwich Blackfriars

That there should exist a persistent ambiguity concerning hall churches and basilican churches in the literature associated with the mendicant thesis is less than surprising given the fact that too few monuments remain standing to provide a clear sense of the fundamental characteristics of mendicant architecture in medieval Britain. Indeed, in the case of aisled friary churches, only two out of what may have been dozens of pertinent examples survived into the modern era. The first, destroyed in the Second World War, was the nave of the Austin Friars in London (Fig. 8). The second, still standing, is the nave of the Blackfriars in Norwich (Fig. 9). Other aisled mendicant churches, many of which were either Dominican or Franciscan, are known only from fragmentary evidence gleaned from above-ground observation or below-ground excavation. To the Dominicans belonged examples in Bristol, Cardiff, Ipswich, London, and Oxford.²⁹ To the Franciscans belonged examples in Cardiff, Coventry, Lichfield, London, Norwich, Reading, Walsingham, and Winchelsea.³⁰ (Other known examples include the Canterbury Austin Friars, the Coventry Whitefriars, the Lincoln Whitefriars, the London Whitefriars, and the Norwich Whitefriars.)³¹ These buildings provide much information regarding the various plan layouts employed by the orders in their priory complexes but little information regarding the architectural features of the churches built on those sites.³² Thus, for concrete information, one must return to the two aforementioned churches in London and Norwich.

Less complicated, on the one hand, is the case of the nave of the London Austin Friars: a nine-bay structure, measuring 45.4 metres by 27.1 metres internally, which took the form of a hall church (Fig. 8).³³ (The clerestory-like windows installed in the six eastern bays of the roof were inserted in a post-fire renovation of 1863–5.) Documentary evidence indicates that the building, which replaced a later thirteenth-century church located on a separate site within the priory, was constructed between the 1340s and the 1370s.³⁴ Stylistic evidence, most notably the consistency of the

Fig. 8
Nave looking west,
Austin Friars,
London.
Photo: Historic
England

tracery patterns employed in the aisle windows and in the west gable wall, demonstrates that it was completed in one more or less cohesive campaign.³⁵ Significant, from an architectural perspective, is the fact that the edifice was begun well after the expansion of the London Blackfriars and the London Greyfriars.³⁶ Whether its hall church format was similar to or different from those of the two earlier buildings is impossible to determine.³⁷ But the utilisation of such a configuration suggests that a single-storey interior was seen as a perfectly viable choice for an ambitious mendicant community a century after the arrival of the friars in England.

More complicated, on the other hand, is the case of the nave of the Norwich Blackfriars: a seven-bay structure, measuring 36.9 metres by 21.3 metres internally, which takes the form of a basilican church (Fig. 9).³⁸ Documentary evidence indicates

Fig. 9
Nave looking
west, Blackfriars,
Norwich.
Photo: Author

that the edifice was built between the 1320s and the 1340s and, following a devastating fire in 1413, rebuilt between the 1420s and 1440s.³⁹ The nature of the changes made between these two phases of construction remains unclear. Tracery patterns in five of the south aisle windows are of fourteenth-century date. This confirms that a significant portion of the walling—and, hence, the configuration of the plan—belongs to the same period. But the rest of the architectural details, including the whole of the interior elevations in the central vessel, are of fifteenth-century date. This demonstrates the difficulty of determining whether the introduction of a clerestory level was an idea that originated in the earlier or the later campaign. Either solution is possible. The fact that the clerestory-as-built features the only heraldic decoration to be found anywhere on the exterior of the building—a series of escutcheons containing the arms of Sir Thomas Erpingham (d. 1428), former chamberlain and steward under Henry IV, who was one of the major patrons of the project—lends support to the notion that the upper storey may have been a conspicuous fifteenth-century addition.⁴⁰ It does not, however, fully resolve the matter. Thus, not unlike its now-destroyed counterpart in the capital, the building conveys rather limited information concerning the hallmarks of mendicant church design in England during the decades preceding the Black Death.

It certainly cannot be denied that the London Austin Friars and the Norwich Blackfriars, viewed as they survived into the modern era, exhibit many architectural features that also define roughly contemporaneous parish churches. What remains an open question, however, is whether they deserve to be interpreted as reverberations of lost originals that should, in turn, be credited as prototypes for a long tradition of church planning in late-medieval England.

Model, copy, or experiment? The case of the London Greyfriars

A striking case in point concerning this interpretive dilemma is the pivotal example of the London Greyfriars (Fig. 3).⁴¹ Scholars have long assumed, exclusively on the basis of textual and visual versus physical evidence, that the demolished church was, in its original state, a basilican structure. That the plan of the building featured an aisled seven-bay nave and an aisled seven-bay choir, as well as an intermediary walking space, is certain. E. B. S. Shepherd, utilising a series of antiquarian descriptions of the building as well as a limited amount of topographical data from the site itself, provided a more-or-less authoritative reconstruction of the arrangement in 1902.⁴² That the elevation of the building featured a clerestory range from the fourteenth century onward is, by contrast, much less certain. The only evidence for its existence comes from an ambiguous early-seventeenth-century map of the former priory site, made in conjunction with a series of survey drawings, now bound into a single volume, drawn up for nearby St. Bartholomew's Hospital (London, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, HC 19).⁴³

Fig. 10a
Ye Plat of ye Graye
Friars (London,
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 59). Full view
with the church
visible at lower
right.

Fig. 10b
Ye Plat of ye Graye
Friars (London,
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 59). Detail
view of the church
(slightly rotated
with north at top).

Deciphering the map is difficult because it employs an idiosyncratic graphic convention combining plan and elevation in the same isometric field (Fig. 10).⁴⁴ Shepherd, noting that the textual evidence of the convent's register—a source compiled from various earlier materials in the later 1520s—contained much information on the glazing of the ground-level windows but no information on the glazing of the putative clerestory windows, argued that the upper storey was a later addition to the building; he thus suggested that the first design was similar to the one-storey scheme of the nave at the London Austin Friars and that the second design was similar to the two-storey scheme

Fig. 11
The inside of litle
St Bartholmews
Church in Anno
1617 (London,
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 51). The
drawing depicts the
nave at top and the
chancel at bottom.

of the nave at the Norwich Blackfriars.⁴⁵ Clapham, accepting the visual evidence of the map at face value, argued that the upper storey was an original feature; he therefore suggested that the design, which he believed was nothing less than 'a new and original idea in church building', set a standard to which later mendicant structures either did or

did not conform.⁴⁶

My own analysis of the map to which both scholars made reference, undertaken in conjunction with an examination of all the urban topographical drawings contained in SBH HC 19, indicates that many of its architectural details should not be taken literally. Very telling in this regard is a series of three depictions of the church of St. Bartholomew-the-Less, the chapel-cum-parish church associated with St. Bartholomew's Hospital, on folios 51, 52, and 58 (all of which, on the basis of various graphic affinities, appear to have been completed by the same draughtsman). The first, folio 51, illustrates the interior of the church in considerable detail with its elevations folded outward (Fig. 11). The second, folio 52, depicts the hospital site at a smaller scale (Fig. 12). The third, folio 58, depicts the hospital site at a larger scale (Fig. 13). The purpose of each of these maps was, first and foremost, to document existing property boundaries. Thus, despite their flair for architectural detail, they do not attempt to capture the physical appearance of the church in a consistent manner. The southwest tower is omitted in all three views: an understandable convention, made for clarity, that is also deployed in the map of the former mendicant site. The number of windows is inconsistent from drawing to drawing. And, most tellingly, a notional clerestory is absent from the smaller-scale exterior view on folio 52 and present in the larger-scale exterior view on folio 58 (Figs. 12b and 13b). Later views of the south side of the church make clear that, before its radical transformation in 1793 and 1823, St. Bartholomew-the-Less was a single-storey structure.⁴⁷ It would seem, then, that the draughtsman responsible for the maps made the decision to include or exclude an upper storey for purely ornamental reasons: he added it at a larger scale where space was more abundant and subtracted it at a smaller scale where space was less abundant. Thus, in the case of the map of the Greyfriars, it would be unwise to assign too much weight to the presence of a clerestory since the feature may simply have been included in order to emphasise the general size, scale, or importance of the former mendicant establishment.

Returning, then, to the divergent views of Shepherd and Clapham, it becomes clear that one of the major problems in determining the architectural layout of a demolished building is that scholars are forced to work their way backward from surviving 'replicas' to lost 'prototypes', thereby opening themselves up to the possibility of incorrectly attributing any number of elements from the former to the latter. This problem was particularly acute in the case of assessing the relationship between the London Greyfriars and Hull Holly Trinity (Figs. 3 and 4). Clapham, intent on demonstrating a causal link between mendicant church architecture and parish church architecture, sought a convincing point of contact between the two traditions; he found it, he believed, in the form of common royal patrons. He thus assumed that the earlier 'original' in London, like the later 'copy' in Hull, possessed not only a large rectangular plan (for which there was much evidence) but also lean arcade piers and luminous clerestory windows (for which, at least at the time, there was little evidence). Clapham's

Fig. 12a
Smaller scale map
of the precinct of
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, London
(London, St.
Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 52). Full
view with St.
Bartholomew-
the-Less visible at
bottom.

Fig. 12b
Smaller scale map
of the precinct of
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, London
(London, St.
Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 52). Detail
view of St.
Bartholomew-the-
Less (rotated with
east at top).

Fig. 13a
Larger scale map
of the precinct of
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, London
(London, St.
Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 58). Full
view with St.
Bartholomew-
the-Less visible at
bottom.

Fig. 13b
Larger scale map
of the precinct of
St. Bartholomew's
Hospital, London
(London, St.
Bartholomew's
Hospital, HC/19,
fol. 58). Detail
view of St.
Bartholomew-
the-Less (east at top).

successors, following the same logic, highlighted another possible point of contact between the two buildings in the form of a common architect: Walter of Hereford (fl. 1277, d. 1309). Harvey, citing royal documents collated in the 1950s, observed that Hereford, a leading mason in the King's Works, had occupied a central role in the design of the London Greyfriars; he therefore speculated, in line with Clapham, that the same architect, who was known to have completed work on behalf of the crown at various locations in northern England and in southern Scotland, also might have designed the chapel-of-ease for Edward's new town at Hull.⁴⁸ Christopher Wilson, citing stone fragments recovered during archaeological excavations at the Greyfriars site during the 1970s, further observed that the churches in London and Hull possessed arcade piers whose similar sections—quatrefoils with sunken diagonal chamfers—pointed to the authorship of a single architect; he therefore seconded the hypothesis concerning Hereford.⁴⁹ The findings of both scholars represented an undeniable step forward in the analysis of possible modes of exchange between mendicant church planners and parish church planners; however, they obscured a possible point of difference between the Greyfriars and Holy Trinity, namely their upper elevations. This divergence calls into question, I would suggest, any simple explanation of the connection between the two monuments. It also undermines the claims of the mendicant thesis itself by casting doubt on what has long been prized as the crucial link between mendicant church architecture and parish church architecture.

This is not to say that there did not exist any kind of relationship between these two architectural traditions. But it is likely that, whatever the connection may have been, it was a much more complex one involving simultaneous experiments at a variety of sites across the country. Crossley, in an insightful article on the parish church at Stone near Dartford (Kent), suggested this very idea when he observed that, from the mid-thirteenth century, the multifaceted demands of building patrons encouraged the cross-fertilisation of previously disparate architectural genres.⁵⁰ He argued that a select number of parish hall church structures such as the earlier nave at Stone and the later choir at Winchelsea, themselves based on great hall prototypes inflected by ecclesiastical models, constituted 'a notional point of departure for the rich experiments in hall or hall-like structures undertaken by London and royal masons in the reign of Edward I' (most notably the London Greyfriars).⁵¹ Congruent with this hypothesis is Mark Samuel's recent contention that the architecture of the London friaries should be seen as the work of masons who engaged in a kind of 'localism' akin to that discernible at other mendicant sites in Norwich, Ipswich, and Canterbury.⁵² Such a model, in contrast to the mendicant thesis, highlights the notable diversity of architectural production during the period, thereby leaving open the possibility that those involved in building matters, whether architects or patrons, experimented with different kinds of building configurations in ways that confound modern notions of architectural typology.

My goal in this essay has been neither to prove nor to disprove the tenets of

14. Gerstenberg's ingenuity in this regard is asserted in Nussbaum, *German Gothic Church Architecture*, p. 93.
15. Lübke's influence is discussed in Nussbaum, *German Gothic Church Architecture*, pp. 93, 238, note 284. Gurlitt's influence is discussed in Bialostocki, 'Late Gothic', pp. 82–3. Gerstenberg, who cites both authors in his text, includes their major works in his bibliography. See Gerstenberg, *Deutsche Sondergotik*, pp. 188–90.
16. See Wilhelm Lübke, *Die mittelalterliche Kunst in Westfalen* (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1853).
17. See Cornelius Gurlitt, *Kunst und Künstler am Vorabend der Reformation* (Halle: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 1890).
18. Many similar interpretations of the hall church configuration continued to circulate in art-historical scholarship until the late-twentieth century. See, for critical investigations of major themes, Hans-Joachim Kunst, 'Zur Ideologie der deutschen Hallenkirche als Einheitsraum', *Architectura* 1 (1971): pp. 38–53; Wolfgang Schenkluhn, 'Die Erfindung der Hallenkirche in der Kunstgeschichte', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 22 (1989): pp. 193–202; Pierre Sesmat, 'Les "églises-halles": histoire d'un espace sacré (XIIe–XVIIIe siècle)', *Bulletin monumental* 163:1 (2005): pp. 3–78; Klaus Jan Philipp, 'Hallenkirche "reloaded." Die Halle als ideale Kirchenbauform des Spätmittelalters', in Norbert Nussbaum (ed.), *Die gebrauchte Kirche: Symposium und Vortragsreihe anlässlich des Jubiläums der Hochaltarweihe der Stadtkirche Unserer Lieben Frau in Friedberg (Hessen) 1306–2006* (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2010), pp. 13–22.
19. Nussbaum, *German Gothic Church Architecture*, p. 12; Bialostocki, 'Late Gothic', pp. 83–4. Gerstenberg, who cites all three authors, includes their major works in his bibliography. See Gerstenberg, *Deutsche Sondergotik*, pp. 188–90. Schmarsow's formative place in modern architectural historiography is expounded in Mitchell W. Schwarzer, 'The Emergence of Architectural Space: August Schmarsow's Theory of "Raumgestaltung"', *Assemblage* 15 (1991): pp. 48–61.
20. See, for an overview, Paul Crossley, 'Introduction', in Peter Draper (ed.), *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1–25. Also see, in the same volume, Nicola Coldstream, 'Nikolaus Pevsner and Medieval Studies in Britain', pp. 113–27; Andrew Causey, 'Pevsner and Englishness', pp. 161–74.
21. A useful survey of the many revisions that this now-classic text has undergone is the preface to Nikolaus Pevsner and Michael Forsyth, *An Outline of European Architecture*, revised edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), pp. 6–7.
22. Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Bristol, Troyes, Gloucester: The Character of the Early Fourteenth Century in Architecture' *Architectural Review* 113 (1953): pp. 89–98. Two more recent essays have taken strongly divergent views of Pevsner's contention that, at the time of its construction, the choir was one of the most innovative buildings in Europe. See, for a negative response, Richard K. Morris, 'European Prodigy or Regional Eccentric? The Rebuilding of St Augustine's Abbey Church, Bristol', in Laurence Keen (ed.), *Almost the Richest City: Bristol in the Middle Ages* (Leeds: British Archaeological Association, 1997), pp. 41–56. See, for a positive response, Christopher Wilson, 'Gothic Metamorphosed: The Choir of St Augustine's Abbey in Bristol and the Renewal of European Architecture around 1300', in Jon Cannon and Beth Williamson (eds.), *The Medieval Art, Architecture and History of Bristol Cathedral: An Enigma Explored* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 69–147.
23. Paul Crossley, 'Bristol Cathedral and Nikolaus Pevsner: Sondergotik in the West Country', in Cannon and Williamson, *Bristol Cathedral*, pp. 190–2.
24. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1945), pp. 70–1.
25. Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Perpendicular England', in *The Englishness of English Art: An Expanded and Annotated Version of the Reith Lectures Broadcast in October and November 1955* (London: Architectural Press, 1956), p. 94.
26. Geoffrey Webb, *Architecture in Britain: The Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956), pp. 170–3.
27. Jean Bony, *The English Decorated Style: Gothic Architecture Transformed, 1250–1350* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 33–4.
28. John Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style, 1330–1485* (London: Batsford, 1978), p. 67.
29. See Hinnebusch, *Early English Friars Preachers*, pp. 135–48; Schenkluhn, *Architektur der Bettelorden*, pp. 145–9; O'Sullivan, *Company of the Preachers*, pp. 67–71, 94–6, 175–8, 220–5, 277–80.
30. See Martin, *Franciscan Architecture in England*, pp. 13–29; Schenkluhn, *Architektur der Bettelorden*, pp. 149–53; O'Sullivan, *Company of the Preachers*, pp. 96–8, 123–5, 203–6, 225–30, 265–9, 291–3, 328–31, and 338–41.
31. See O'Sullivan, *Company of the Preachers*, pp. 85–6, 118–22, 206–8, 216–19, 257–60.
32. One notable exception is the London Blackfriars. Among numerous architectural fragments excavated from the site during the early twentieth century were pieces of the nave arcade piers, made of Purbeck, which featured a quatrefoil section measuring 86 cm, moulded bases, and moulded capitals. See William Martin and Sidney Toy, 'The Black Friars in London: A Chapter in National History', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 5:4 (1928): pp. 353–79.
33. The best account of the priory is now Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, pp. 119–41. Still invaluable, however, is the pre-demolition survey published by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London: Vol. IV, The City* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), pp. 32–4. The nave underwent considerable restoration following a major fire in 1862. See, for a pre-restoration account of the fabric, Thomas Hugo, 'Austin Friars', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 2:4 (1864): pp. 1–15. See, for a post-restoration account of the fabric, Edward P'Anson, 'Account of the Restoration of the Dutch Church, Austin Friars', *Sessional Papers of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (1865–66): pp. 67–75.
34. See Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, p. 126.
35. See Hugo, 'Austin Friars', plates inset between pp. 18–19.
36. The expansion of the former began c.1280. The reconstruction of the latter began c.1290. See, for further analysis of the role of the two buildings in popularising a 'new abbatial form of friary church' from the late-thirteenth century, Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, pp. 178–9, 182.
37. The curious theory that the arcades were of late-fifteenth-century date and that the roof was of early-seventeenth-century date is advanced, without corroborating documentary evidence, in Hugo, 'Austin Friars', pp. 18–19; P'Anson, 'Restoration of the Dutch Church', p. 67.
38. The best account of the priory is still Helen Sutermeister, *The Norwich Blackfriars: An Historical Guide to the Friary and Its Buildings up to the Present Day* (Norwich: City of Norwich, 1977). Additional sources include T. J. Pettigrew, 'Convent of Black Friars, Norwich', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 14 (1858): pp. 110–23; C. F. R. Palmer, 'The Friar-Preachers, or Black Friars, of Norwich', *The Reliquary* 2:3 (July 1888): pp. 151–70, 2:4 (October 1888), pp. 210–14, 3:1 (January 1889), pp. 42–9, 3:2 (April 1889), pp. 98–103; Ernest A. Kent, 'Notes on the Blackfriars' Hall, or Dutch Church, Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* 22 (1926): pp. 86–108; Percy A. Nash, 'The Sackfriars' and Blackfriars' Conventual Buildings in the Parishes of St Andrew and St Peter Hungate, Norwich: Excavations in the Winter of 1910–11', *Norfolk Archaeology* 22 (1926): pp. 370–82; F. C. Elliston Erwood, 'The Norwich Blackfriars', *Archaeological Journal* 106 (1949): pp. 90–4; Francis Woodman, 'The Blackfriars, Norwich', *Archaeological Journal* 137 (1980): pp. 316–17.
39. Sutermeister, *Norwich Blackfriars*, pp. 1–7.
40. See, concerning the career of Thomas Erpingham, Anne Curry et al, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', in Anne Curry (ed.), *Agin-court, 1415: Henry V, Sir Thomas Erpingham and the Triumph of the English Archers* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), pp. 53–110. The matter of his involvement at the Blackfriars is discussed at pp. 82–3. There is a long antiquarian tradition, cited as fact by Sutermeister, that the individual responsible

- for this act of architectural patronage was a putative son of Sir Thomas. See Sutermeister, *Norwich Blackfriars*, p. 21. Scholars now agree, however, that the famous knight died without issue. See, on the complex genealogy, Curry, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', pp. 56–7.
41. See, for relevant bibliography, notes 3 and 5.
 42. Shepherd, 'Church of the Friars Minors', pp. 247–54.
 43. The map was first reproduced in John Edward Price, 'On Recent Discoveries in Newgate Street', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 5 (1881): pp. 403–24. The drawing has been attributed to either Edward Mansell or Martin Llewellyn. See, for a brief discussion, Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, p. 78, note 30.
 44. Earlier visualisations of the church are maddeningly contradictory. Wyngaerde's panorama of c.1544 depicts a taller nave and a shorter choir, both lacking recognisable aisles, and a large central tower. The so-called 'copperplate' map of the 1550s depicts a nave and a choir of equal height, each with a continuous two-part roof over a notional aisle and a main vessel (without clerestory walls), and a small central tower. See, for reproductions, Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, p. 80, figures 23, 24.
 45. Shepherd, 'Church of the Friars Minors', p. 254.
 46. Clapham, 'Friars as Builders', p. 250.
 47. See, for instance, an etching of the south flank of the building by Robert West and William Henry Toms printed in 1739: London Picture Archive, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/view-item?i=320865>.
 48. John Harvey and Arthur Oswald, *English Mediaeval Architectures: A Biographical Dictionary down to 1550* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1954), pp. 126–7.
 49. Christopher Wilson, 'The Origins of the Perpendicular Style and Its Development to circa 1360' (Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1979), p. 370, note 64. The fragments in question are held at the Guildhall Museum, Museum of London (GF 73<51>). The earliest known piers to feature sunken diagonal mouldings are those in the nave at the former collegiate church of St. Peter, Howden (East Riding, Yorkshire), which have been dated to the 1260s. They feature sunken hollow mouldings versus sunken chamfers (like those at the London Greyfriars and Hull Holy Trinity). See Nicola Coldstream, 'St Peter's Church, Howden', in Christopher Wilson (ed.), *Medieval Art and Architecture in the East Riding of Yorkshire* (London: British Archaeological Association, 1989), pp. 109–20.
 50. Paul Crossley, 'The Nave of Stone Church in Kent', *Architectural History* 44 (2001): pp. 195–211.
 51. Crossley, 'Nave of Stone Church in Kent', pp. 207–8.
 52. Mark Samuel, 'Architecture and Architectural Fragments of the London Friaries', in Holder, *Friaries of Medieval London*, pp. 223–6.
 53. See, for instance, Thomas Coomans, 'L'architecture médiévale des ordres mendiants (Franciscains, Dominicains, Carmes et Augustins) en Belgique et aux Pays-Bas', *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 70 (2001): pp. 3–111; Panayota Volti, *Les couvents des ordres mendiants et leur environnement à la fin du Moyen Âge: Le nord de la France et les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 2003); Achim Todenhöfer, *Kirchen der Bettelorden: Die Baukunst der Dominikaner und Franziskaner in Sachsen-Anhalt* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2010); Donal Cooper, 'Access All Areas? Spatial Divides in the Mendicant Churches of Late Medieval Tuscany', in Frances Andrews (ed.), *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Harlaxton Symposium 2009* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011), pp. 90–107; Caroline Bruzelius, *Preaching, Building, and Burying: Friars and the Medieval City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
 54. See, for instance, C. Pamela Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief: An Archaeology of the Lay Experience of Religion in Medieval Norfolk and Devon*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 311 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000); T. A. Heslop, 'Swaffham Parish Church: Community Building in Fifteenth Century Norfolk', in Christopher Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 246–71; Simon Roffey, *The Medieval*

Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007); Katherine French, 'Rebuilding St. Margaret's: Parish Involvement and Community Action in Late Medieval Westminster', *Journal of Social History* 45:1 (2011): pp. 148–71; Linda Monckton, "'The beste and fairest of al Lincolnshire": The Parish Church of St Botolph, Boston', in Sally Badham and Paul Cockerham (eds.), *The best and fairest of al Lincolnshire: The Church of St Botolph, Boston, Lincolnshire, and its Medieval Monuments*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 554 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012), pp. 29–48; Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Nigel Saul, *Lordship and Faith: The English Gentry and the Parish Church in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

55. Christopher Wilson, "'Excellent, New and Uniforme": Perpendicular Architecture c.1400–1547', in Richard Marks and Paul Williamson (eds.), *Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547* (London: V&A, 2003), p. 104.
56. Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290–1350* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 93.

Shared Space: Templars, Hospitallers, and the English Parish Church

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Shared spaces are often difficult to identify in the medieval English church due to the loss of building fabric, devotional objects, and textual evidence. As a result, many churches are associated with the long history of one worshipping community when in fact, two or more types of audiences used the building at various points in its history. Pilgrims may have visited a shrine within a parish or monastic church; members of the public may have conducted regular business in a private chapel; or a resident monastic community may have shared its church with a lay congregation.¹ In the latter instance, monks or nuns could have gained the advowson or appropriation of a local church and shared their worship space with a long-established parish. In other cases, a monastic community may have built a chapel for its own use but eventually welcomed a growing population of local laity. It is well known that orders such as the Benedictines and Augustinians sometimes shared their worship space with a parish or extra-parochial congregation.² However, churches shared by the laity and the Knights Templar and Hospitaller have received comparatively little study.³

While evidence for a shared space can sometimes be found in the textual record, the building fabric itself can also reveal the presence of multiple worshipping communities. Close analysis of standing structures, phased building plans, and iconographic clues can confirm documentary assertions or reveal the presence of communities who do not appear in the surviving textual record. The following case studies examine churches whose shared status is not described clearly in the documentary record, though the local presence of laity and military monks—and the absence of a second church to serve an exclusively lay or monastic community—strongly suggests that both groups shared one church or chapel. Though focused upon structures shared by the Templars or Hospitallers and local laity, the following analysis offers a method for confirming or discovering forgotten communities of worshippers throughout medieval England.

Identifying spaces shared by military monks and the laity

Although the uneven survival rates of textual and architectural evidence pose a challenge to the study of many monastic churches in England, assumptions about an order's standard operating procedures can also cause modern scholars to overlook the presence of laity in a presumably-closed space. The Knights Templar (and, by extension, the Knights Hospitaller) have a reputation for secrecy that dates as far back as the dissolution of the Templar order: the Templar trials emphasised their allegedly 'secret rituals'.⁴ Moreover, Templar chapels were built explicitly to provide a separate place for the military monks to worship. In an 1145 bull regarding Templar chapels and clergy, Pope Eugenius III argued: 'It is not fitting and indeed is almost fatal to the souls of religious brothers to mingle with crowds of men and to meet women on the occasion

of going to church'.⁵ And yet, some communities of English Templars did just that.

Though the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller typically worshipped in chapels built specifically for their resident communities, some English Templars and Hospitallers shared a worship space with local laity.⁶ And while Pope Eugenius III expressly advised the Knights Templar against sharing worship space with those outside the Order, his predecessor authorised the Knights Hospitaller to build parish churches as early as 1137.⁷ Despite papal decree, the Knights Templar also shared space with parishioners or extra-parochial laity when practicality demanded it. These shared spaces took one of two forms. In some cases, the parish church hosted a combined congregation of parishioners and military monks. When a military order appropriated a local parish church but did not construct its own chapel, the established parish and the resident community of Templars or Hospitallers would need to share the same church. Sometimes the parish church was built anew; at other times, the church was expanded or renovated to serve the dual congregation.

In other cases, the monks received a grant of land in a largely uninhabited area and built a chapel for their own use. As the military order settlement grew, it attracted lay residents in search of economic opportunities. These non-monastic residents needed a place to worship, and the military order chapel was the most logical place for them to do so. The preceptory at Temple Bruer (Lincolnshire), for example, was built in a sparsely-settled area but quickly drew a community of laborers to its robust farming enterprise.⁸ Without a local parish church, Temple Bruer's lay residents must have worshipped in the Templar chapel's large, round nave.⁹ A Templar priest-brother was in residence at Temple Bruer in 1308; under Hospitaller management in 1338, the community included two secular chaplains.¹⁰ Though the limited textual evidence does not confirm that the Templar priest celebrated Mass for both monastic and lay members of the community, the appointment of two chaplains thirty years later suggests that religious duties may have been divided between the two groups at Temple Bruer.

Similarly, the Templars built a preceptory and chapel in a sparsely-populated area across the River Avon from Bristol.¹¹ As the lay population in the neighbourhood grew, so did the lay congregation of Temple Church, Bristol, until the original round-naved church was replaced by a larger, rectilinear church later in the Hospitaller era.¹² In this way, the chapels of the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller sometimes served as extra-parochial or pre-parochial spaces. By studying their shared churches, it is possible to understand the ways in which the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller influenced the architecture and community life of selected English parishes.

In order to compile a list of potentially shared churches, it is helpful to begin with the 1338 Inventory of Hospitaller properties.¹³ This document contains information about parish churches and military order chapels held by the Knights Hospitaller as well as properties acquired from the recently disbanded Templar order.¹⁴ Entries for former Templar properties vary in their level of detail, though a number

of entries do offer information on the continued use of worship spaces during the time of the Hospitaller transition. Detailed entries in the Inventory list assets, such as appropriated parish churches, and expenses, such as oil, wine, and wax for a chapel or maintenance of one or more chaplains. Some settlements have both a parish church and expenses for a chapel; other sites have one but not the other. When only a church or chapel is mentioned, further investigation is required to determine if the worship space was shared by the laity and the military monks. In one very helpful instance, the 1338 Inventory listing for Maltby (Lincolnshire) notes that ‘the chapel there is a small parish church’.¹⁵ This entry confirms that the military orders did share a worship space with non-members when it was necessary. The former Templar chapel at Temple Bruer is described in the Hospitaller Inventory as a ‘free chapel’, or extra-parochial space appropriated to the Hospitallers (formerly Templars), supporting the presence of a lay congregation in the chapel.¹⁶ The Inventory describes the former Temple Church at Bristol as ‘a small appropriated church’ even though the structure began its life as a military order chapel.¹⁷ These examples reveal a complex understanding of the purposes a parish church or monastic chapel could serve.

But what if the Inventory entry for a particular location mentions chapel expenses without an appropriated church? First, it is necessary to determine if a contemporary parish church nearby was held by another monastic order or individual. In this case, local parishioners must have worshipped in their own church while the military monks worshipped in their own chapel. If evidence for a nearby parish church cannot be found—in standing fabric, excavated building remains, or the textual record—then it is probable that laity were welcomed into the military order chapel by necessity. In this case, the military order chapel was an extra-parochial space that served as a *de facto* parish church. Conversely, if the Inventory lists an appropriated parish church without expenses for a chapel, then the parish church was probably shared by both communities, as long as architectural, archaeological, and additional textual evidence cannot corroborate the existence of a separate chapel.

The military orders also acquired parish churches that simply served as revenue streams; without a documented military order house in the neighbourhood, there is no reason to believe that the Templars or Hospitallers were regular worshippers in their advowsons or appropriated churches. But when the parish church was located near a Templar or Hospitaller settlement, sometimes the lay and monastic communities worshipped in one church. The substantial loss of monastic building fabric makes it difficult to determine whether a Templar or Hospitaller house contained a separate chapel space, but parish churches can reveal valuable traces of past worshipping communities.¹⁸

While the probability of a shared worship space can be partially assessed through the textual record, it is sometimes possible to establish the presence of multiple worshipping communities through analysis of the fabric of the building itself. Multiple

communities can be revealed in the existing plan of the building, the phasing of the building, or in the decorative programme of the church. When analysing an existing plan, church-spotters are accustomed to noting the length of a parish church chancel in order to determine the likelihood that a residential monastic community once shared the worship space, but Templars and Hospitallers are often left out of these analyses unless their presence has remained an important part of the parish history. Nave aisles or chapels can also provide evidence of new worshippers. While countless congregations added aisles to their parish churches in the later Middle Ages, their reasons for doing so differ: from the chance to beautify the church with newly available funds, to the desire to create a new space for a distinctive use or worshipping community. Similarly, a chapel can offer evidence of a specific devotional community whose presence might otherwise be forgotten. Of course, the size or addition of a chancel, aisle, or chapel might simply reflect a patron’s wealth and conspicuous piety rather than serve as evidence of an additional worshipping community. However, when the presence of a Templar or Hospitaller community is confirmed in a parish, it is important to take a closer look at the surviving, excavated, and documented fabric of the parish church in order to determine the likelihood that the military monks shared the worship space. Due to the widespread demolition of Templar and Hospitaller preceptories, the local parish church may provide the only surviving evidence for shared worship life.

The notion that some parish churches were shared with the Knights Templar or Knights Hospitaller is not new, though recent work by Helen Nicholson has done much to illuminate the religious life of the military monks in England. Nicholson notes that most English houses of the Knights Templar or Hospitaller were fairly small: in the early-fourteenth century, a rural house could have as few as two professed brothers managing a large roster of farm workers and other staff.¹⁹ These small communities of military monks were often forced to look beyond their order for priestly assistance, and priests employed by Templars could also serve the laity: a priest serving Garway church during the Templar era received a corrody from the Order for his services.²⁰

Although the Templars and Hospitallers in England spent much of their time managing income-generating estates, they did observe the monastic hours throughout the day.²¹ Recent studies have shown that the Templars and Hospitallers in the Holy Land hewed closely to the liturgy of the Augustinian Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, but the liturgies of Templars in Western Europe often conformed to local use.²² Whether following the customs of Jerusalem or the local diocese, Templar or Hospitaller services could be held in the choir, as at Temple Bruer, Bristol, Little Maplestead, Ansty, or Burham; or they could be held in a separate chapel within the church, as in the south chapel at Garway or perhaps in one of the flanking east end chapels at Burham (discussed below). The presence of an architecturally-distinct east end in a shared church would therefore allow the Templars to maintain the letter (if not the spirit) of Eugenius III’s commandment. The Hospitallers would have assumed the same

practice, even though they were not forbidden from attending church with the laity. This arrangement sufficed for shared services, including daily or weekly Mass, feast days, and other dual-community services.

Evidence of shared space in standing building fabric

The presence of an architecturally-distinct choir enabled the Knights Hospitaller to participate in monastic or shared services in the parish churches of Ansty (Wiltshire) (Fig. 1) and Little Maplestead (Essex) (Fig. 2). These well-known examples of shared space bring the terse verbiage of the 1338 Inventory to life. The listing for Ansty (*Anesty*) notes the presence of a small, appropriated church and a parochial chaplain but does not list expenses for a separate chapel on site.²³ In contrast, the Hospitallers at Little Maplestead (*Mapeltrestede*) held one tenth of the church there but, like their brethren at Ansty, they listed expenses for a chaplain but not for a separate chapel.²⁴ While the Inventory entries for both sites strongly suggest that the Hospitallers worshipped in the local parish church, evidence for such sharing can also be found in the building fabric of the churches themselves.

The small churches of St James, Ansty and St John the Baptist, Little Maplestead both feature proportionally large chancels which could have accommodated a resident Hospitaller community (Figs. 3 and 4).²⁵ In both cases, an existing parish church was given to the Knights Hospitaller and later rebuilt; the nature of the rebuilding argues that the structure was designed specifically to serve the needs of a dual congregation.²⁶ However, the loss of the Hospitaller residential complex in both villages makes it impossible to verify that the military monks did not have a separate chapel reserved for their own use.²⁷ Both houses were located just steps from their respective parish churches, but proximity of the monastic house to the parish church was not necessarily a deciding factor in sharing a church. For example, the Templar preceptory at Aslackby (Lincolnshire) featured a round-naved chapel directly across the street from the parish church. Could the monks at Little Maplestead or Ansty have constructed their own chapel near the existing parish? The textual and archaeological record are silent. But the extended chancels in the rebuilt parish churches indicate that the new worshipping community found a way to share worship space with an established congregation.²⁸ By rebuilding the parish churches at Ansty and Little Maplestead, the Hospitallers worshipped with members of their own Order while fulfilling their responsibilities to the parish. Like their Benedictine and Augustinian peers, the Hospitallers and Templars could share a parish church by the simple addition of an architecturally-distinct choir.²⁹

Fig. 1
View from the
north, St. James,
Ansty (Wiltshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 2
View from the
south, St. John
the Baptist, Little
Maplestead (Essex)
Photo: Author

Fig. 3
View looking east,
St. James, Antsty
(Wiltshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 4
View looking east,
St. John the Baptist,
Little Maplestead
(Essex)
Photo: Author

Evidence of shared space in a phased plan

Similarly, the growth or shrinkage of a building can proclaim the arrival or departure of an additional worshipping community. While a building's renovation history could simply correspond to rising or falling financial resources—or societal cataclysms such as the Black Death—changes in building fabric can also reflect changes in the types of local worshippers. By analysing a phased building plan, it is possible to determine if and when more than one community shared one church. When the textual record affirms the involvement of the Knights Templar or Knights Hospitaller in a parish, a close investigation of the building fabric can reveal the approximate date range of their presence in the congregation.

The church of St Mary the Virgin, Burham (Kent) is now redundant but its history is evident in the surviving building fabric (Fig. 5). In the nave, high, round-headed windows (now blocked) confirm an initial construction phase in the late-eleventh or early-twelfth century, while blocked pointed arcades and inserted windows

Fig. 5
View from the south, St. Mary the Virgin, Burham (Kent). The current porch is on the approximate site of the south aisle.
Photo: Author

Fig. 6
North nave wall featuring blocked Norman window, blocked pointed arcades, and inserted windows, St. Mary the Virgin, Burham (Kent)
Photo: Author

tell the story of an expanded and contracted church (Fig. 6). The advowson of the parish church at Burham and nearby lands were granted to the Hospitallers in 1205; this advowson was upgraded to an appropriation in 1300.³⁰ In 1302, Thomas, Bishop of Rochester, confirmed the responsibilities of the military monks: ‘repairs to the body of the chancel, whether in foundations, walls, windows, glass or iron, and the roofing of the same, shall be done, whenever necessary, by the Hospitallers; and, if any of it

falls down, they shall build it up and maintain it forever’.³¹ The 1338 Inventory does not note the extent of the Hospitallers’ lands at Burham, but it does count the church as an asset and it lists expenses for three brother chaplains and multiple secular chaplains on site; no mention is made of a separate Hospitaller chapel.³² The Hospitallers provided a priest for the church and maintained control of the vicarage lands until the Dissolution, though the remainder of their property at Burham was ‘let to farm’ by 1509.³³

While the textual record offers glimpses of Hospitaller gains and losses at Burham, the changing levels of military order involvement can also be traced through the building fabric of the church. The simple, pointed arcades on the north and south sides of the Norman nave probably postdate the 1205 acquisition of the church by the Hospitallers, perhaps reflecting Burham’s increased status as a military order church.³⁴ Alternatively, the arcades could provide evidence for the growth of a third community at the church. Local tradition remembers that pilgrims and travellers stopped frequently at Burham and in neighbouring churches on their way to Canterbury or London.³⁵ If this tradition is accurate, then the aisles at Burham may have been constructed in the thirteenth century to accommodate growing numbers of Becket pilgrims. The presence of three brother chaplains and an unspecified number of secular chaplains in 1338 could indicate a proliferation of altars in the chancel aisles, nave aisles, or both.³⁶

Although the nave aisles could have served parishioners and / or pilgrims, the chancel at Burham certainly represents a Hospitaller building campaign (Fig. 7). The present chancel features blocked, pointed arcades on the north and south walls; moulded column capitals and bases are partially exposed in the walls, and the well-preserved north capital would fit within a late-thirteenth-century or early-fourteenth-century date (Fig. 8).³⁷ The chancel addition initially extended further east, reinforcing the presence of distinctive worshipping communities in the nave and east end.³⁸ The western tower reflects a certain degree of financial stability in the parish, though it does not serve as evidence for the arrival or departure of a particular group. However, the large-scale demolition at Burham indicates significant changes to the building’s use, and the events of the sixteenth century offer clear motivation for a reduction in the church’s size.³⁹ The small community of Hospitallers had vacated the property by 1509; the dissolution of the Hospitaller order in 1540 ended their involvement in the site altogether.⁴⁰ The departure of the military monks would eliminate the need for a large chancel, and their inability to ‘maintain it forever’ may have pushed the new church holder to cut the building fabric down to a more economical size. Similarly, the loss of nave aisles suggests a Reformation-era change. If the church at Burham did host a significant population of regional travellers, their numbers would have dropped sharply with the cessation of English pilgrimage in 1538.⁴¹ The church of St. Mary the Virgin reveals the changing worship needs of two and possibly three communities along the banks of the River Medway.

Fig. 7
View looking east,
St. Mary the Virgin,
Burham (Kent).
Blocked nave
arcades and blocked
chancel arcades are
visible to the north
and south; the
chancel has been
shortened from its
maximum length.
Photo: Author

Iconographic evidence of shared space

While the analysis of a surviving or phased building plan can offer important clues for the arrival and departure of particular worshipping groups, iconographic evidence can provide more direct confirmation of a group's presence. The loss of wall paintings, stone carvings, woodwork, and portable objects in the English Reformation make it difficult to conduct detailed iconographic analysis in many churches. Unusually, the church of St. Michael in Garway (Herefordshire) contains iconographic references to three distinct communities (Fig. 9).⁴²

Surviving relief sculpture and incised carvings at the church of St. Michael speak to the presence of parishioners, Knights Templar, and Knights Hospitaller. A lay congregation in the Garway area may date to as early as the sixth century.⁴³ The Knights Templar gained land at Garway and built a preceptory and parish church in the late-twelfth century and they replaced their original, round-naved church with the current rectangular nave, south chapel, and tower by the late-thirteenth century.⁴⁴ After the dissolution of the Templar order, the Knights Hospitaller assumed control of the property by at least 1316.⁴⁵

While the Templar records for Garway are skeletal, Hospitaller records are more illuminating, though they do not answer the question of shared worship space.⁴⁶ The Templar (later, Hospitaller) residential complex was located immediately downhill from the parish church, and it would have been convenient for the military monks to share space with their lay neighbours. But like Ansty and Little Maplestead, the presence or absence of a chapel within the residential block cannot be verified: the medieval dovecote survives but the residential buildings have been replaced by later structures.⁴⁷

Fig. 8
North chancel wall
featuring blocked
arcades with
surviving column
capital, St. Mary
the Virgin, Burham
(Kent)
Photo: Author

Fig. 9
View from
the north, St.
Michael, Garway
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

Despite an incomplete documentary record and a largely demolished residential precinct, iconographic evidence supports the presence of parishioners and military monks at St. Michael's. Relief carvings at Garway include a dragon, a Manus Dei, an Agnus Dei, and a Maltese cross, while incised carvings include a variety of cross forms and other designs.⁴⁸

The dragon, depicted above the west window, is the most prominent of the relief carvings (Figs. 10a and 10b). The presence of a dragon is perhaps unsurprising on

Fig. 10a
The dragon relief carving above the west nave window and the Agnus Dei relief carving above the west window of the south chapel are highlighted, St. Michael, Garway (Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 10b
Dragon above the west entrance, St. Michael, Garway (Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

a church dedicated to St. Michael, and he provides a distinctive symbol of the parish's identity, apart from any military order iconography. The dragon's placement emphasises the primacy of the longstanding parish community, even though their church was under the management of the Templars and later, the Hospitallers.

A church dedicated to St. Michael could be expected to portray the dragon alongside his vanquisher, though this dragon stands alone. However, St. Michael himself may be depicted on a very weathered stone to the lower right of the middle north

Fig. 11a
View from the north, St. Michael, Garway (Herefordshire). The angel relief carving on the lower west side of the middle north chancel window and the Manus Dei relief carving above the blocked north door are highlighted.
Photo: Author

Fig. 11b
Weathered angel on the lower west side of the middle north chancel window, St. Michael, Garway (Herefordshire).
Photo: Author

chancel window (Figs. 11a and 11b).⁴⁹ The damaged carving depicts a figure facing left with one striated wing pointed up and to the right and one wing pointed down. Very faint facial features, including two eye sockets and the bridge of a nose, are visible on the head.

Fig. 12
Manus Dei above
the blocked north
nave door, St.
Michael, Garway
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

The Manus Dei, or Hand of God, can also be found on the north side of the church, high above the blocked north door (Figs. 11a and 12). Like St. Michael (with or without the dragon), the Manus Dei was used by artists across Christian communities. The symbol is not linked with the Templars or Hospitallers, and it could represent God's dominion over the dual community of parishioners and military monks.

The Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God, is perched atop a later square-headed window on the west side of the south chapel (Figs. 10a and 13). Although often associated with the Templars, the Agnus Dei was popular with a wide range of Christian communities, including the parishioners of the nearby church at Kilpeck.⁵⁰ Jaroslav Folda has noted that both the Templars and Hospitallers employed the Agnus Dei symbol, but it was particularly popular with the Templars in England.⁵¹ Though the original purpose of the south chapel is unconfirmed, it is colloquially known as the Templar chapel today.⁵² The chapel's location on the side of the church closest to the preceptory buildings, coupled with the Agnus Dei symbol over a separate entrance, indicate that the chapel was built as a dedicated worship space for the Templars. The small community of Templars could have observed the monastic hours in this chapel but used the chancel during shared services with the laity.

In its late-thirteenth-century form, the church of St. Michael made iconographic provision for the Knights Templar and the parish community. But a final relief carving of a Maltese cross—a well-known symbol of the Knights Hospitaller—reminds viewers that a second community of military monks lived at Garway (Figs. 14a and 14b). While the other relief panels at Garway are placed high above ground level, the stone with the Maltese cross is very close to the ground, providing easy access for a Hospitaller-era carver.⁵³ Although it is impossible to confirm the carving date of the Maltese cross,

Fig. 13
Agnus Dei above
the west entrance
to the south chapel,
St. Michael, Garway
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

it appears to be a belated addition to the building fabric and may have served as a Hospitaller stamp on a newly acquired architectural asset.

The relief panels work together to reveal the presence of three worshipping communities at Garway over at least two different eras: Templars and parishioners from the late-twelfth to early-fourteenth centuries, followed by Hospitallers and parishioners from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. While the Knights Hospitaller inherited the rectangular-naved church with its remodelled chancel, south chapel, and freestanding tower, they did not hesitate to literally make their mark on the building in the form of a Maltese cross.

Shared space revealed: Templars, Hospitallers, and the laity

Although the Knights Templar and Hospitaller usually worshipped in chapels reserved for their own use, practical considerations could require them to share worship space with local laity. Sometimes, this sharing is explicitly stated in the documentary record; at other times, it is suggested. These suggestions can be verified by close investigation of the surviving plan, phased plan, or decorative programme. Analysis of standing and phased plans, as well as surviving iconography, can help to determine the date range of specific elements in a church's building fabric. But chronological assessment is only the first step in writing the art history of the parish church. After asking 'when?' it is vital to ask, 'who?' Monks, parishioners, pilgrims, and others left their traces in the architectural

Fig. 14a
East wall of
south chapel and
chancel, from
the southeast, St.
Michael, Garway
(Herefordshire).
The Maltese cross
carving on the
lower wall near the
drainpipe has been
highlighted.
Photo: Author

Fig. 14b
Maltese cross
on the lower
east wall of the
south chapel, St.
Michael, Garway
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Author

fabric, even in churches where they were not members of the primary worshipping community.

By analysing often fragmentary evidence, it is possible to understand the complex and sometimes transitory nature of shared worship spaces in churches held by the Knights Templar and Hospitaller. Rather than being aloof from their lay neighbours, military monks sometimes became important participants in the worship life of the medieval English parish. Within the larger context of the English church, this research offers a model for investigating shared parish churches affiliated with a variety of worshipping communities. By confirming this method in churches with a recognised Templar or Hospitaller history, it is possible to identify forgotten alliances through architectural analysis, even if supporting documentation no longer exists. This approach provides a new perspective on the medieval English parish, and it emphasises the interconnectedness of small monastic and lay congregations throughout England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

1. For example: pilgrims in the parish church of Madley (Herefordshire); royal business conducted in the private chapel of the bishop of Lincoln at the Old Temple in London; and countless churches shared by monastic and lay congregations, from cathedrals to small, rural churches.
2. Francis Bond, *An Introduction to English Church Architecture from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), pp. 45–58; Anthea Jones, *A Thousand Years of the English Parish: Medieval Patterns and Modern Interpretations* (Moreton-in-Marsh: Windrush, 2000), pp. 115–19; Norman J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: The Culture of Religion from Augustine to Queen Victoria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 48–57.
3. Recent research by Helen Nicholson has shown that Templars welcomed non-members into their precincts at least some of the time, and Roberta Gilchrist has identified a few military order churches or chapels which were specifically shared with laity. Helen J. Nicholson, 'Relations Between Houses of the Order of the Temple in Britain and their Local Communities, as Indicated During the Trial of the Templars, 1307–12', in Norman Housley (ed.), *Knighthoods of Christ: Essays on the History of the Crusades and the Knights Templar Presented to Malcolm Barber* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 195–207; Helen J. Nicholson, *The Everyday Life of the Templars: The Knights Templar at Home* (Fonthill: 2017), pp. 65, 76–7; Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 77, 96, 103. For more detailed analysis of selected English Templar and Hospitaller worship spaces, including churches at Little Maplestead, Temple Bruer, Bristol, Aslackby, and Garway (mentioned below) see Catherine E. Hundley, *The Round Church Movement in Twelfth-Century England: Crusaders, Pilgrims, and the Holy Sepulchre* (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2017).
4. Thomas William Parker, *The Knights Templars in England* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1963), p. 106; Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); John Walker, 'Sources for the Templar Myth', in Karl Borchardt, Karoline Döring, Philippe Josserand, and Helen J. Nicholson (eds.), *The Templars and their Sources* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 361–2.
5. Eugenius III, *Militia Dei*, in Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (eds.), *The Templars: Selected Sources* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 65–6.
6. Gilchrist argues that Templars or Hospitallers in 'larger' preceptories either shared their chapels with local laity or worshipped in the local parish church, while those in 'smaller' preceptories worshipped in dedicated chapels (which may have been part of a hall). However, the picture was more complex. Shared worship space was more a matter of necessity and opportunity than preceptory size. Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, pp. 77, 87.
7. Helen J. Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), pp. 6–7, citing Innocent II's bull *Christianae fidei religio*.
8. Beatrice A. Lees (ed.), *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century: The Inquest of 1185 with Illustrative Charters and Documents* (London: British Academy, 1935), pp. clxxxvii–clxxxviii; Gary James Taylor, *Temple Farm, Temple Bruer, Lincolnshire: A Study of the Archaeological Landscape of a Knights Templar Preceptory* (MSc. diss., University of Oxford, 2008), p. 47; Marjorie Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1166* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 145. Lees follows the traditional assumption that the heathland around Temple Bruer was previously uninhabited, but Taylor found some evidence of site occupation over time.
9. Mills comes to a similar conclusion. Note that today, only one tower of the church survives. Dennis Mills, *The Knights Templar in Kesteven*, revised edition, Penny Ward (ed.) (Lincolnshire County Council, 2009), p. 13; William St. John Hope, 'The Round Church of the Knights Templars at Temple Bruer, Lincolnshire', *Archaeologia* 61 (1908): pp. 177–98.
10. Helen J. Nicholson (ed.), *The Proceedings Against the Templars in the British Isles* (London: Routledge, 2016), volume one, p. 250 and volume two, p. 254; Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, pp. 155–6.
11. Archaeological investigations at the site have not uncovered evidence of pre-Templar residents. B. Williams, 'The Excavation of Medieval and Post-medieval Tenements at 94–102 Temple Street, Bristol, 1975', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 106 (1988): p. 108.

12. For more on parishioners in Temple Church, Bristol see Catherine E. Hundley, 'The English Round Church Movement', in Robin Griffith-Jones and Eric Fernie (eds.), *Tomb and Temple: Re-imagining the Sacred Buildings of Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), pp. 363–5.
13. The 1338 Inventory is fairly comprehensive but not exhaustive. Lambert B. Larking (ed.), *The Knights Hospitallers in England: Being the Report of Prior Philip de Thame to the Grand Master Eljan de Villanova for A.D. 1338* (London: Camden Society, 1857).
14. The Knights Templar were arrested in France in late 1307 and in England in early 1308; their trial ran from 1308–12. In the immediate aftermath of the order's dissolution, many properties in England were claimed by close associates of the crown before they eventually passed to the Knights Hospitaller. This transition was not swift. Even as late 1338, the Hospitallers did not possess all of the former Templar properties in England that they had been promised. However, the contemporary inventory provides an important snapshot of Hospitaller and recent Templar worship spaces in the early-fourteenth century. Barber, *Trial of the Templars*, p. 237; Parker, *Knights Templar in England*, p. 104.
15. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 57.
16. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 154.
17. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 184.
18. The true number of private military order chapels remains unclear due to the limited number of archaeological investigations that have been carried out in former Templar or Hospitaller settlements. Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, pp. 1, 62.
19. Nicholson, *Everyday Life of the Templars*, pp. 50–1; Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, p. 84; Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*. Nicholson's analysis of the Templars is based upon unpublished inventories drawn up during their trial, 1308–12; Larking's publication of the 1338 Inquest reveals similarly small communities of Hospitallers. Records of English Templar and Hospitaller houses in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries do not survive in sufficient numbers to allow a broad analysis of changes in community size over time.
20. Nicholson, *Everyday Life of the Templars*, pp. 52 (citing National Archives E. 358/18 rot 2) and pp. 76–7.
21. Nicholson, *Everyday Life of the Templars*, p. 40; Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, p. 92.
22. Nicholson, *Everyday Life of the Templars*, pp. 40, 71–2; Jochen Schenk, 'The Documentary Evidence for Templar Religion', in Borchardt et al (eds.), *The Templars and their Sources*, p. 200; Sebastián Salvadó, 'Commemorating the Rotunda in the Round: The Medieval Latin Liturgy of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and its Performance in the West', in Griffith-Jones and Fernie (eds.), *Tomb and Temple*, pp. 414–15.
23. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, pp. 7–8.
24. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, pp. 87–8.
25. At Ansty, W. Goodchild suggested that the chancel's proportions indicated a shared use; Patricia Fletcher assumes at similar use at Little Maplestead. 'Wiltshire Books, Pamphlets, and Articles', *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 42 (1922–4): p. 128; Patricia Fletcher, *Little Maplestead: A Millennium History* (Little Maplestead: The Little Maplestead Millennium History Project, 2000), p. 33.
26. In the twelfth year of King John's reign (1210–11), Walter de Turbeville gave the manor of Ansty and its appurtenances to the Hospitallers. The presence of a church is not enumerated in the grant, though it was probably included among the 'appurtenances'. A priest is documented at Ansty shortly before 1210; in 1338, the community included one chaplain and three clerics. Though heavily renovated, the surviving church is consistent with an early-thirteenth-century construction date. Evidence for an earlier church may have been seen in the original south chapel arch, which was described in 1829 as 'an ancient Norman arch'. The church underwent a series of renovations in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and the south chapel was replaced by a south transept and new arch in the nineteenth century. The church and manor at Maplestead were given to the Hospitallers by Juliana, daughter of Robert Doisel, in 1185–86. The present round-naved church of St. John the Baptist at Little Maplestead has been erroneously dated to the 1340s, perhaps based upon its mid-fourteenth century replacement windows. Michael Gervers has argued that documentary evidence points to a probable construction date in the 1240s. Close analysis of the building fabric and pre-restoration engravings confirm that the present church would fit comfortably with a c.1240s construction date. John Stillingflete, 'De Nominibus Fundatorum Hosp. S. Johannis Jerusalem in Anglia', in William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, revised edition, John Caley, Henry Ellis, and the Rev. Bulkeley Bandinel (eds.) (London: Bohn, 1846), VI:ii:835; D. A. Crowley (ed.), *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 13, South-West Wiltshire: Chalke and Dunworth Hundreds*, Victoria County History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 98; Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 8; Richard Colt Hoare and James Everard, *Modern Wilts: Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* (London: John Bower Nichols & Son, 1829), p. 64; Michael Gervers (ed.), *The Cartulary of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in England: Pt. 1 Secunda Camera, Essex* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. xlv, 90–4.
27. Later structures have been built on the site of the monastic houses at Ansty and Little Maplestead, though it is possible that some original building fabric has been incorporated into the current structures. 'Ansty Hospitallers Preceptory', Historic England Research Records, *Heritage Gateway*, accessed 1 July 2021, https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=4716110d-2e76-438e-b8a2-f130ab95a80c&resourceID=19191; 'Little Maplestead Hall (Preceptory)', Essex Historic Environment Record, *Heritage Gateway*, accessed 1 July, 2021, https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MEX29961&resourceID=1001.
28. The chancel at St. James, Ansty measures 7.3 metres from the east face of the chancel arch to the eastern wall, while the nave and crossing together measure 11.5 metres from the west face of the chancel arch to the western wall of the rectangular nave. The chancel at St. John the Baptist, Little Maplestead measures 10.7 metres in length; the round nave measures just under 9 metres in diameter. (The measurements are my own.)
29. In contrast, Gilchrist argues that Templars and Hospitallers who shared space with a lay congregation initially sat in the nave rather than in an extended chancel. She cites Garway as an example of this practice. Nicholson argues that Templar chapels were 'not necessarily' divided into exclusively Templar and non-Templar spaces. Gilchrist, *Contemplation in Action*, p. 71; Nicholson, *Everyday Life of the Templars*, p. 65.
30. *Pedes Finium* (Feet of Fines) 6 October 1205 (7 John), *Archaeologia Cantiana* 4 (1861): p. 290; Charles Cotton (ed.), *A Kentish Cartulary of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem* (Ashford: Kent Archaeological Society, 1930), pp. 5, 134.
31. Cotton, *Kentish Cartulary*, p. 135.
32. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 124.
33. Cotton, *Kentish Cartulary*, p. 5.

34. Livett is vague in his dating estimate, describing first an 'early Norman church' with a north aisle and then a south aisle added 'a century later'. Historic England suggests that the 'early C12th church' received a north aisle in the 'late C12th or early C13th', with the south aisle following shortly thereafter. Writing in the official church guide, Vigar notes an early-thirteenth-century date for the north aisle and mid-thirteenth-century date for the south aisle. Vigar points out that the reset windows in the blocked arcades have been moved from the former aisle walls. The small lancets in the two westernmost arches on the north side could fall on either side of c.1200. On the south side, only the easternmost nave window looks like it could have come from a mid-thirteenth century aisle. The westernmost arch on the south side surrounds the current door, and the middle arch contains a mid-fourteenth-century window like those in the chancel (also reset). Window evidence should be treated with caution when assigning construction dates for the lost aisles. Greville Livett, 'Early-Norman Churches in and Near the Medway Valley', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 20 (1893): p. 154; 'Church of St. Mary the Virgin', Historic England Research Records, *Heritage Gateway*, accessed 1 July, 2021, https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=58ce984e-a63e-42a9-9100-64a7b0889c39&resourceID=19191; John E. Vigar, *Church of St Mary the Virgin Burham, Kent* (Churches Conservation Trust, 2009), p. 7.
35. Though he does not mention the Hospitallers, Vigar points out the presence of pilgrims and travellers in this part of Kent and the likelihood that the nave aisles contained altars to serve them. Vigar, *Church of St Mary the Virgin*, pp. 1, 7.
36. Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, p. 124.
37. Kent Historic Environment Record, 'St Mary the Virgin, Burham', *Exploring Kent's Past*, accessed 1 July, 2021, <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MKE2496>; Vigar, *Church of St Mary the Virgin*, p. 7.
38. Livett, 'Early-Norman Churches', p. 154; Kent Historic Environment Record, 'St Mary the Virgin, Burham'.
39. The exact demolition date of the nave and chancel aisles and extended chancel are controversial. Livett suggests that the demolition occurred in the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century, at the same time as the construction of the tower. Vigar dates the loss of the aisles to the early-fifteenth century, perhaps as a result of structural instability or loss of population due to the Black Death. Historic England and Kent Historic Environment Record both date the demolition of the aisles to the sixteenth century, and I concur. Livett, 'Early-Norman Churches', p. 154; Vigar, *Church of St Mary the Virgin*, p. 7; Historic England, 'Church of St Mary the Virgin'; Kent Historic Environment Record, 'St Mary the Virgin, Burham'.
40. Cotton, *Kentish Cartulary*, p. 5.
41. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 407, citing Cromwell's 1538 Injunctions.
42. Thanks to Audrey Tapper and Janet Pullen for providing access to St. Michael's, Garway and for discussing this fascinating building with me. Thanks, too, to Esther Moir for wide-ranging conversations about Herefordshire churches, including those at Garway and Kilpeck.
43. Local historians have often identified Garway with *Llangarwei* in the Book of Llandaff, though a better link may be found with the church of *Lann Mibaegel supra Mingui*. W. J. Rees (ed. & trans.), *Liber Landavensis* (Llandover: The Welsh Mss. Society, 1840), pp. 263, 454, 502–4, 547; John Hobson Matthews, *Collections Towards the History and Antiquities of the County of Hereford in Continuation of Duncumb's History: Hundred of Wormelow (Lower Division, Part 1)*, (Hereford: Jakeman & Carver, 1913), p. 38–41; George Marshall, 'The Church of the Knights Templars at Garway, Herefordshire', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* 1927–29, part one (December 1929): pp. 91–2; William Rees, *A History of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Wales and on the Welsh Border* (Cardiff: Western Mail and Echo Ltd., 1947), p. 51.
44. The original land grant to the Templars does not survive, but a confirmatory grant of c.1189 does. For the most comprehensive building chronology, see the Royal Commission. P.R.O. Cartae Antiquae, R.R. 41, no. 12 in Lees, *Records of the Templars in England*, p. 141; RCHME, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Herefordshire, Volume 1: South West* (London: HMSO, 1931), pp. 69–72.
45. Matthews, *Collections ... Wormelow (Upper Division)*, p. 15.
46. As with Ansty and Little Maplestead, local historians have assumed that the church at Garway was shared by military monks and parishioners. Audrey Tapper, *Knights Templar and Hospitaller in Herefordshire* (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2005), pp. 57–8; Larking, *Knights Hospitallers in England*, pp. 196–7.
47. RCHME, *Herefordshire I*: p. 72.
48. Alfred Watkins, 'Garway Church', *Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club 1918–20* (December 1921): pp. 206–8; Marshall, 'The Church of the Knights Templars at Garway', pp. 100–1; RCHME *Herefordshire I*: p. 70; Tapper, *Knights Templar and Hospitaller in Herefordshire*, pp. 68–9. Watkins, Marshall, and the RCHME all misidentified the dragon as either an eagle or a phoenix, though its flicked tongue and ribbed wings are unmistakably those of a dragon. Tapper identifies the figure as a dragon or wyvern.
49. Earlier writers have not identified the angel.
50. Kilpeck has no known association with the military orders, though it boasts two corbels carved with the Lamb of God.
51. Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 316. Folda traces the symbol to sixth-century Ravenna, often in relation to John the Baptist. He notes that the symbol was used in crusader coins as well as seals of both the Templars and Hospitallers, though 'the imagery of the Agnus Dei is the most prevalent' symbol of surviving Templar seals: nineteen are known.
52. Joan Fleming-Yates, *The Church of St Michael, Garway: A Short Account* (not dated, unpaginated); Kathleen A. Whittaker, *A Short Account of St Michael, Garway* (not dated, unpaginated).
53. There is no indication that the stone with the Maltese cross has been reset; the Manus Dei has probably also remained in its original location, above the north door. Though the dragon and Agnus Dei could have been moved slightly to accommodate replacement windows, their consistent placement above entrances suggests that they have not moved far. The angel is in an unusual position, and its poor state of preservation could indicate that it came from an earlier building.

Show Some Decorum: Against an Imitative Model in the English Parish Church

MEG BERNSTEIN

As a building type, the parish church has frustrated scholars largely because the tools that we have been given for their analysis have been derived from the study of great churches: in particular, a monographic approach driven by documentary evidence, biographies of great patrons, or the study of a complex set of intertwined buildings. These points of entry fail to help us understand parish churches, which number in the thousands, and are the most ubiquitous part of the built environment of the Middle Ages.

The parish church is not merely derivative of the great church and needs to be acknowledged as having its own history and internal logic. However, while parish churches are not derivative of great churches, they do exist in a network with them. As I shall demonstrate, the frustrated relationship between the genre of the parish church and that of the great church is mediated by *decorum*, a concept originated by the ancient Greeks, but most memorably developed by the Roman author-architect Vitruvius in his treatise *De architectura*.¹ Paul Crossley has defined decorum as ‘the suitability of forms to the aims and ideals of the institution’.⁵⁶ Suitability, in this case, does not entail functional appropriateness, but rather an awareness of which stylistic elements befit the *status* of a given building. Following this logic, a parish church would express, through its architecture, deference to a cathedral, in much the way a subject would express deference to the king through comportment.²

Art historians have associated the architecture of the early-thirteenth century with a contemporary atmosphere of reform within the church. High-level prelates sought to improve the church and the pastoral care it delivered, particularly to laypeople. Though the statutes of Lateran IV and the diocesan synods that followed it contribute few specific pronouncements about art and architecture, the overall spirit of the English episcopate was invested in making the experiences of laypeople within the church more consistent and effective. Peter Draper writes that the reduction of ornament in parish churches between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is evidence of a ‘change in demeanour [that is] a reflection of the wider reform movement in the Church ... it indicates a different view as to the appropriate appearance of a parish church within the wider context or a broad hierarchy of building types’.³

This essay begins by establishing the relationship between parish churches and great churches within the scholarly literature. It then goes on to address the development of a sense of decorum that builders and patrons of parish churches obey, which I argue was almost universally observed (though never explicitly legislated) after the conclusion of an experimental phase by the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The prevalence of this sense of decorum is conveyed through analysis of the ‘cathedral-like’ exceptions that survive in extant parish churches from the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. I argue that this transition towards a codified parochial decorum coincides with a contemporary reform movement within the English church and the final stages of the consolidation of the parish system, wherein local

communities had access to their own church building, resident priest to administer the sacraments, particularly the rites of baptism and burial which had previously required traveling to a more regional minster church. Though I do not wish to pose a causal relationship between parochial decorum and these other factors, I believe that ecclesiastical reform and the definition of the parish system formed fertile ground in which parochial decorum could ferment. This decorum, I argue, is ideological, and should not be necessarily mistaken for austerity or economic constraint. Parish churches continued to be built in a range of budgets, from humble to lavish, for the remainder of the Middle Ages. Although a dearth of documents regarding parish church finances before the fifteenth century prevents the elaboration of specifics regarding spending, the standing fabric reveals ostentation in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century building that exceeds the ‘cathedral-like’ motifs that are abandoned within parochial contexts early in the thirteenth century.⁴

Coming to terms with the great church

The parish church has been the subject of a troubled historiography, with what Peter Draper has described as a ‘tacit assumption that parish churches are simplified versions of larger, more ambitious churches with the vocabulary not well understood or well executed’.⁵ Numerous studies, ostensibly of parish churches, have focused not on this building type precisely, but on the ways that they conform, or attempt to conform, with ‘greater’ churches.⁶

The so-called ‘greater church’ or, more commonly, ‘great church’ is a term that appears in scholarly literature throughout the twentieth century. It was likely coined by the prolific architectural historian Francis Bond (1852–1918), who defines the greater church as ‘a convenient term for churches of monks and canons, cathedrals, and collegiate churches, excluding small ones, and also excluding parish churches’.⁷ The term is further taken up by Harry Batsford and Charles Fry in their *The Greater English Church* of 1940, who, in spite of the title, use ‘greater’ and ‘great’ interchangeably in the text. Batsford and Fry write that ‘the greater churches, as they are called in this book, for want of a better collective name, were almost invariably constructed on a larger and grander scale than their workaday parochial relations’.⁸ They distinguish great churches from their counterparts as places where ‘a community of men or women, largely withdrawn from the world, could offer in the seclusion of their choir a continual round of worship and intercession undisturbed by the duties and distractions of secular life’.⁹ By this definition, one is led to believe that a great church can be understood as any church with a pulpitum, or stone screen, blocking access to the liturgical choir where a religious community (cloistered or uncloistered) could worship unfettered by the laity.

Christopher Wilson refined the term in his *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of*

Fig. 1
North arcade, St.
Clement, Fiskerton
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: James
Alexander Cameron

Fig. 2
North nave arcade,
Lincoln Cathedral
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: Stephen
Murray. ©
Mapping
Gothic France,
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the Great Church 1130–1530 (first published in 1990). In spite of its title, the monuments discussed are best described as cathedral-scale and include monastic and collegiate churches. He writes that ‘since the buildings which form this uppermost stratum of Gothic architecture include hardly any features specific to their different institutional functions, and since influences passed freely between them, it is logical and appropriate that they be considered as a single category, namely the “great church”’.⁹ According to Wilson, great churches mostly possess a cruciform plan, a basilican form with a three-storey central vessel with aisles, stone vaults, and either a central tower or a twin-tower facade, often with an ambulatory.¹⁰ Wilson’s characterisation helps us to establish definition of the architecture of a parish church in negative. The parish church does not have a three-storey elevation, vaults, an ambulatory or radiating chapels. We add to this the fact that unlike great churches, which typically have western entrances, parish churches are generally entered through a southern doorway or porch. Scale does not have a place in Wilson’s definition, which also excludes any mention of form or function, and thus does not consider any differences in liturgical or social need between great churches and parish churches.

Batsford and Fry’s dichotomy between great and parish churches suggests the great church is a self-evident category, while Wilson identifies constituent elements in order to construct a definition. In practice, however, the most fundamental quality of great churches is institutional rather than architectural: they are staffed by a religious corporation—whether monastic or priestly—and may serve more than one purpose or community, whereas parish churches are staffed by a rector and serve the local laity.

Parishioners and clergy did not attempt to make their parishes look like little cathedrals. They were eager to show a familiarity with the latest fashions in tracery or sculptural details; the two-bay north arcade at Fiskerton (Lincolnshire), for example, pays homage to its diocesan cathedral of Lincoln with its shafted column and foliate capital and responds (Figs. 1 and 2).¹¹ However, the desire to express distinct parochial identity is everywhere evident in the parish church. One example of this involves Elias of Dereham, a canon of Salisbury Cathedral who was in charge of the building works for the new cathedral from 1220 until his death in 1245.¹² Tim Tatton-Brown writes that his prebend,¹³ Potterne (Wiltshire) must have been built by Elias of Dereham himself ‘as one can see instantly that it resembles a miniature Salisbury Cathedral, with its crossing tower, large transepts, pairs and triplets of lancet windows and shafts of Purbeck marble’.¹⁴ Although there are some Salisbury-esque characteristics at Potterne, I question the description of it as a ‘miniature Salisbury’. Potterne is in every way a parish church, albeit one that borrows decorative elements from the cathedral, similarly to how Fiskerton resembles Lincoln in ornament only. It is unvaulted and has an un-aisled elevation (Figs. 3 and 4). Even for Elias, the impresario behind Salisbury Cathedral, as well as the figure associated with high-status works including the shrine of St. Thomas Becket and building projects at Winchester Castle and Clarendon Palace, the

Fig. 3
Nave facing east,
St. Mary, Potterne
(Wiltshire)
Photo: James
Alexander Cameron

Fig. 4
Nave facing
southwest,
Salisbury Cathedral
(Wiltshire)
Photo: Stephen
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parish church occupies a very different register—one that is governed by architectural decorum—and shares more in common with ordinary parish churches than with Salisbury Cathedral.¹⁵

The parish church of Skelton near York (North Riding, Yorkshire) is attributed to cathedral masons from York Minster under the patronage of the treasurer of the Minster, Richard Haget (Fig. 5). While there is no explicit evidence that the treasurer paid for the church to be built, he established a stipend for the first priest at Skelton, a Robert of Leeds.¹⁶ The transepts of York Minster were built during the episcopacy of Archbishop Walter de Gray in the period c.1220–50 (Fig. 6).¹⁷ Compelling similarities between the transepts at the Minster and Skelton have caused scholars to accept that the same masons were responsible for both.¹⁸ Among these are the moulding profiles of the arches and capitals of the west wall, which are nearly identical to the north transept of the Minster.¹⁹ The church is a *bijou* building of unusual quality and completeness. Despite Skelton's formal resemblances to the architecture of York Minster's transepts, it is built in line with parochial decorum. Unlike the Minster transepts, which have three-storey elevations and are richly moulded and polychromatic with the use of Purbeck marble, Skelton has only a single-storey elevation, is entered through the south porch rather than a west facade, and it is unvaulted. Eschewing the foliate ornament in the Minster, the predominant decorative motif of the church interior is the comparatively austere nailhead motif. Despite these conventions that separate the parish church from the related cathedral, it is clear from visual observation that it is of the highest quality.²⁰ The masons were obviously capable of building in great church scale and mode, but they have not done that at Skelton, either by their own choice, or at the behest of their patron.

Fig. 5
Nave facing east,
St. Giles, Skelton
(North Riding,
Yorkshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 6
North transept
elevation, York
Minster (North
Riding, Yorkshire)
Photo: Stephen
Murray. ©
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The parish church is not merely derivative of the great church; it is a group of buildings that should be considered a genre with its own history and internal logic. The relationship of this genre to the great church is not one of imitation but is mediated by the notion of decorum I will discuss in the remainder of this chapter.

Characterising the parish church: norms and innovations

By the second quarter of the thirteenth century, the genre of the parish church had developed to include expectations about what was necessary and appropriate for this type of building. As mentioned above, the distinction is not primarily related to finances, as a great many parish churches were built significantly larger than necessary to fulfil their needs, and with expensive and elaborate decoration. Rather than stemming from financial limitations, the model of the parish church is primarily related to the perceived sense of ‘appropriateness’ for this type of building. In what follows, I will address the exceptional presence of great-church attributes in parish churches: vaults, three-storey elevations, and western entrances. I will show that each of these exceptional examples occurs in an early period of the existence of the parish church as a distinct building type, prior to the solidification of a grammar of parochial appropriateness, or decorum, which formed within and among the group.

The resistance to both vaulting and three-storey elevations in English parish churches is particularly curious given that parish churches in France frequently have both. French Gothic architecture loomed large in England, where ideas were imported, though usually not deployed in precisely the same ways. Many English parish churches were owned by monasteries located in France or in the Duchy of Normandy, and communication, material exchange, and conflict between the two countries was frequent. There is a different, and perhaps more imitative, relationship between great churches and parish churches in France than in England, though French parish churches still appear to be more austere and smaller in scale than the cathedrals. But as we see at Notre-Dame, Auxonne (Fig. 7) a three-part elevation with vaults is possible, and indeed frequent. Even in Saint-Martin, Etampes, where the east end and first nave bay have a three-storey elevation, significant space in the middle zone is maintained even when the triforium is unarticulated (Fig. 8).²¹

Though more comparative research needs to be done on the role and form of parish churches in the two countries, I pose the initial theory that the divergence between French and English parochial architecture has a lot to do with the difference between triforia—the thin passageways typical in French great churches—and the wide galleries more frequently built in England, spaces large enough for people to use for reasons both spiritual and banal.²² Gallery altars existed in English monastic and cathedral churches, but upper level chapels were infrequent in English parish churches,

Fig. 7
Nave facing north
east, Notre-Dame,
Auxonne (Côte-
d'Or)
Photo: Stephen
Murray. ©
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Fig. 8
Nave facing east,
Saint-Martin,
Étampes (Essonne)
Photo: Stephen
Murray. ©
Mapping
Gothic France,
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with exceptions like the tower chapel at the Romanesque church at Brook (Kent), and porch chambers in the fourteenth century and later.²³ These upper spaces would also be used for storage, for singing during the liturgy, treasuries, and maintenance.²⁴ This extra space was probably not necessary within the parish church, where relatively simple liturgy was used and spaces like treasuries were unnecessary. Three-storey elevations may have been eschewed because they posed unnecessary expense.

Entrances

One primary difference between the normative parish church and the great church strikes visitors immediately: the parish church is nearly always entered from a lateral door. Parish churches typically favour a south entrance as the primary point of ingress into the church, although evidence of a blocked door on one side of the nave is common, for example at Acton Burnell (Shropshire) where the northern porch is used for entrance and a southern doorway has been blocked. The general dispensation for a southern main entrance rather than one on the north seems to be a matter of preference, rather than of liturgical necessity. A minority of parish churches are accessed from a western portal, whereas the vast majority of great churches have their primary entrance in the west.²⁵

The placement of towers within the parish church structure affects the location of parochial entrances and thus necessitates comment here. The parochial preference for a south entrance has to do with the frequent location of single towers centred at the extreme west of the church, as opposed to great churches, which generally opted for a twin-tower western composition after the Norman Conquest. In the eleventh century, as Carol Davidson Cragoe notes, only churches with minster status had towers; there is no evidence of towers in tenth-century wooden churches, and stone local churches also lacked them.²⁶ Minster churches typically had towers positioned over the crossing, so central towers only occurred in cruciform churches that served to buttress them on all sides. This arrangement was ideal, because it meant that the tower emphasised the altar. Churches originally built with central towers in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries are typically the only ones that retain them later on, even if they are rebuilt. Western towers began to appear in local churches in the second half of the eleventh century,²⁷ and became, by a wide margin, the norm for English parish churches. Gerald Randall estimates well over seventy-five percent of churches to have them, and Cragoe's rethinking of his statistics, which include all churches in current parochial use, suggests that if only purpose-built parish churches were accounted for, the percentage could be significantly higher than eighty-five percent.²⁸ Some west towers have doors, but they are fairly uncommon.

In his study of Romanesque facades, Philip McAleer notes that most parish

Fig. 9
West front,
St. Michael,
Melbourne
(Derbyshire)
Photo: Author

churches conform to a limited number of west-front formulae: a 'simple west wall' or a western tower. McAleer has designated the type of western tower utilised by parish churches as a 'tower-facade'.²⁹ A tower-facade is a separate block appended to the western part of the nave, accessible from the nave by a wide arch known as a 'tower arch'. Rather than being set atop the nave, tower-facades are discrete volumes to the nave, and McAleer points out that they can easily be read as such because they are typically much narrower than the nave. According to McAleer, these are unique to parish churches, and probably existed at a large percent of parish churches as a continuation of a 'Saxon habit, as west towers in the identical position were common during the pre-Conquest period'.³⁰

Melbourne (Derbyshire) has a Romanesque west front with an unusual feature: a twin-tower facade, which, although it was never finished, communicates ambition and grandeur (Fig. 9). It has often been suggested that Melbourne was not originally intended to be a parish church due to its ambitious qualities, like the twin-tower facade, clerestory wall passage, and west gallery above a vaulted ground storey occupying the interior of the west facade. However, Richard Gem, conceding that Melbourne has many unusual features, concludes that 'there is nothing to indicate it was ever intended to house a religious community' as the fantastic nave is 'the precise converse of what we should expect to find in a typical monastic church (e.g. the simple unaisled nave of Kirkham priory)'.³¹ Instead, he recommends that Melbourne's showiness 'probably reflect[s] an intention to impress and declare the status of the patron'.³² It should be noted that Melbourne is early: though it is not securely dated, it can be placed stylistically in the first half of the twelfth century, prior to the development of the parish church mode. Hence, while writers have sought to show that its anomalies prove it was not intended as a parish church, I argue that it was built before a parish church

Fig. 10
Exterior, view from
the south west,
St. Mary, Iffley
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: John
McNeill

Fig. 11
Exterior, view from
the south, St. Mary,
Iffley (Oxfordshire)
Photo: John
McNeill

decorum had been established and thus that there is no reason for it to be dismissed as un-parochial.

As Cragoe has suggested, the rare parish churches that did have decorated west fronts, such as Iffley (Oxfordshire), had patrons with significant architectural pretensions and a desire to imitate great churches (Fig. 10).³³ Iffley, of the late-twelfth century, has long been thought to have been the donation of minor aristocrat Robert de St. Remy or his daughter, Juliana, but recently has been reattributed to an even more powerful family, the Clintons.³⁴ In spite of its showpiece west front, Iffley's patron did not dispense with the parochial custom of including a south door, which Jennifer Sherwood calls 'even more exuberant' than the west doorway's decoration (Fig. 11).³⁵ The south door at Iffley is finely carved with roses, chevron, and some figural sculpture

Fig. 12
West front, St.
Mary the Virgin,
Felmersham
(Bedfordshire)
Photo: Author

on the capitals. This door, which faced the manor house, was likely retained as the door for primary lay use.³⁶

West fronts are comparatively less frequent in the periods during which the Early Gothic and Early English styles were in use. One exceptional example is the magnificent west front at Felmersham (Bedfordshire) from about 1220 or 1230, a neat Early English riff on blind-arcaded Romanesque west fronts like Iffley (Fig. 12). The doorway is flanked by blank arches containing subarches and quatrefoils at the top. Above the door are seven dogtooth-decorated blind arches, and atop that a window zone with a larger central window (replaced with Perpendicular tracery) with a lancet on either side. Felmersham was hospitable to a west front since it has an Early English central tower and therefore did not need a tower in the western location. As the church was built in one go, however, the central tower was a thirteenth-century decision, rather than maintenance of earlier fabric as it often is elsewhere.

Humbler than Felmersham is Boldre (Hampshire), which has a west front that corresponds with the western three nave arcade bays added to the eastern three nave bays excavated from the wall of the earliest, un-aisled iteration of the church (Fig. 13). The *Victoria County History* gives the date of the earlier arcade to c.1130, while Nikolaus Pevsner considers it to be from c.1175.³⁷ Boldre has only a south aisle at the west front, as a mid-thirteenth-century north chapel is just the length of the earlier nave bays. An arch at the west of the north chapel now leads to a modern vestry; the *Victoria County History* establishes the possibility of a previously-existing north aisle.³⁸ This is plausible due to the fifteenth-century north wall, which could have replaced an earlier

Fig. 13
West front, St.
John, Boldre
(Hampshire)
Photo: Author

arcade. The church is of the single-gable style, the south aisle roof descending almost directly from the nave roof rather than having its own gable or lean-to roof. Hence, the arrangement is that of a single central doorway headed with a pointed arch, with a string course above, followed by a bar-tracery. The south door is far east in the twelfth-century work. This was probably judged sufficient for continued daily use when the church was extended west, as it was not replaced with a door in the newer work. Instead, it gained the western door. Boldre likely did not have a tower until the early-fourteenth-century one on the south of the chancel was built; its unusual location is due to the fact that the church lacked a crossing tower and has a west front. The normative presence of western

towers in parish churches can be posited as the primary reason for a lack of western portals.

Vaults

Prior to the Conquest, vaults were used in England primarily in crypt spaces.³⁹ The Normans were architecturally ambitious, however, and used vaults in both ecclesiastical and secular contexts.⁴⁰ Although vaults became *de rigueur* in cathedrals and are frequently

Fig 14
Chancel vault,
St. Mary, Iffley
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 15
Chancel vault, St.
Peter, Tickencote
(Rutland)
Photo: Author

used in monastic churches, only a minority of parish churches have any sort of vault. Romanesque parish churches are more likely than Gothic ones to have a vault, and while a majority of the forty-nine surviving apsidal parish churches have east-end vaults, some have square-ended chancels like Iffley and Tickencote (Rutland) (Figs. 14 and 15).

Of the many thousands of parish churches ‘retaining work of the Early English and Decorated periods’, Larry Hoey identified only about sixty that were in any part vaulted, or which showed evidence of former vaults or even an intention to vault.⁴¹

Fig. 16
Chancel with
view of vault, St.
John the Baptist,
Bishopstone
(Wiltshire)
Photo: Stephen
Dunn

Fig. 17
West tower
vault, All Saints,
Sherburn-in-Elmet
(North Riding,
Yorkshire)
Photo: Rita
Wood, *Corpus
of Romanesque
Sculpture in Britain
and Ireland*

Most frequently, the parochial vaults that Hoey identifies (thirty-four of sixty) are placed over chancels. Other possible locations are a transept (Bishopstone, Wiltshire), west tower (Sherburn-in-Elmet, North Riding, Yorkshire), or the east bay of an aisle (Aldingbourne, Sussex) (Figs. 16–18).

Very few English parish churches had vaults throughout, unlike in the Channel Islands or in many French examples. In English parish churches, vaults are used only to punctuate space, not as a consistent ceiling strategy. In many of these placements, the vault goes over an altar, as in Aldingbourne, where the eastern

bay of the south aisle has a miniature copy of the vaults in the south transept of nearby Chichester Cathedral and Boxgrove Priory (Figs. 19–21). The thirteenth-century vault at Aldingbourne is later than the late-twelfth-century aisle that it is in. The addition of the miniature vault to an otherwise unvaulted building serves to demarcate the space to house an altar. In 1227, the church, which was a prebend of Chichester Cathedral, was assigned by the Chapter to the Dean of Chichester; it was held by the deans of Chichester until the nineteenth century.⁴² Ian Nairn suggests that the rib vault was ‘probably done by the masons from Chichester, as the cathedral held the advowson’.⁴³ Although the advowson was simply the cathedral’s right to choose the rector and thus cannot be considered definitive evidence of masons from Chichester, in this case it seems plausible, as the cathedral, priory, and parish are all within less than five miles of one another. The presence of a distinctive rib vault over one bay of the aisle at Aldingbourne seems to be a rare example of intervention from cathedral prelates who opted for a visual motif characteristic of great church, not parish church, architecture. No matter how unusual it is, however, it is only one bay; to vault the entire aisle would have been quite expensive, not to mention uncouth.

Parish church vaults were by no means widespread, and Hoey’s study of Early Gothic and Decorated examples shows that the greatest distribution is in southern England, particularly the southern counties of Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire.⁴⁴ He asserts that there are fewer Early English and Decorated style parochial vaults than Romanesque, and that they seem to be more common from c.1180–1230 than later

Fig. 18
East bay of south
aisle, St. Mary,
Aldingbourne
(Sussex)
Photo: James
Alexander Cameron

Fig. 19
Vault detail, east
bay of south
aisle, St. Mary,
Aldingbourne
(Sussex),
Photo: Historic
England Archive

Fig. 20
South transept
vault, Chichester
Cathedral (Sussex)
Photo: Author

Fig. 21
South transept
vault, Boxgrove
Priory (Sussex)
Photo: Author

where and when they occur.⁴⁵

Elevation

Three-storey elevations in English parish churches are even scarcer than vaults, and the corpus of parochial three-storey elevations is small enough to discuss in its totality here. Virtually all English great churches possessed three-storey elevations by the twelfth century, so the contrast between parish and great churches in this regard is quite stark. These are isolated experiments, rather than indicative of a greater trend. Parochial three-storey elevations are virtually non-existent after the first quarter of the thirteenth century as customs and decorum for parochial architecture come to be normalised in practice.

The parish church of New Shoreham (Sussex) has both vaulting and a three-storey elevation in its massive chancel, making it a particularly interesting case study (Figs. 22–24). Its dedication to St. Mary de Haura is unique and refers to its seaside location, as ‘de Haura’ is a derivation of ‘*de havre*’ or ‘of the harbour’. The six-bay, aisled nave was mostly lost in the eighteenth century. Since its loss, the only remnants of the nave are masonry fragments of the west wall. As demonstrated by these fragments, the nave was aisled, with thick piers; a clerestory window remaining on the south side shows that it had at least a two-storey elevation, though blank space between the arcade and clerestory window provides the possibility that it might have had a three-storey elevation like the choir.

In contrast to its ruined nave, New Shoreham’s five-bay, aisled chancel remains intact. Notably, the piers on the north and south sides are of dramatically different

Fig. 22
Chancel facing east,
St. Mary de Haura,
New Shoreham
(Sussex)
Photo: Author

designs: on the north side are alternating round and octagonal piers with stiff leaf capitals, and on the south, compound piers. Despite the diverse appearances of the

Fig. 23
North elevation,
St. Mary de Haura,
New Shoreham
(Sussex)
Photo: Author

north and south arcades, they are close in date to one another.⁴⁶ While Ian Nairn attributes this to 'a change in the direction of the masons' lodge', Peter Draper argues that it is a reflection of 'an inventive and exploratory period' prior to 1200.⁴⁷ The differences at New Shoreham continue in the second storey; on the north gallery there are paired openings in the three western bays, and later, single trefoil openings in the two eastern ones; the south side has large, single openings.

Scholars have debated who was responsible for the building of New Shoreham's impressive, vaulted, three-storey chancel. It has been conventionally thought that it

was built by a member of the Briouze family and that the choir was intended to be given to the monks at Sele, with the nave for parochial use. Sally Woodcock argues that there is no positive evidence for this, nor is there any mention of St. Mary de Haura being anything other than a parish church. Irrespective of Woodcock's assertion, a three-storey elevation in a parish church is exceptionally rare in England. It is worth mentioning that many middle-rank monastic structures have two-storey elevations, like Boxgrove, also in Sussex. Although it is tempting to believe that New Shoreham is simply an extraordinarily fancy, exciting, and experimental parish church, the stylistic evidence and comparanda suggest that it was perhaps intended for monastic or mixed parochial and monastic use.

Another example of a three-storey elevation occurs at Hythe (Kent). Though technically a dependent chapel of the parish church of Saltwood, Hythe functioned as a normal parish with its parishioners able to receive all sacraments associated with traditional parishes; the major functional difference was that the priest was referred to as the 'parish chaplain'.⁴⁸ Because it was used in every way as a parish church, it is included in this study. Hythe's Early English chancel is of three stories (arcade, gallery, clerestory), and was intended to have both aisle and high vaults, though it was not completed with a stone high vault until J. L. Pearson's restoration of the 1880s (Fig. 25).⁴⁹ Likewise, Pearson finished the north chancel elevation to match the south side. Though at this time pre-restoration images have not been located, in an 1889 essay on the church by Scott Robertson, a canon of Canterbury Cathedral and frequent contributor of 'descriptions of buildings' to the pages of *Archaeologia Cantiana*, it is noted that 'the architect who designed its magnificent chancel', in addition to the

Fig. 24
South elevation,
St. Mary de Haura,
New Shoreham
(Sussex)
Photo: Author

Fig. 25
Chancel north
elevation, St.
Leonard, Hythe
(Kent)
Photo: James
Alexander Cameron

unfinished vaulting plan, 'was not able even to complete the north wall of St. Leonard's so fully as he did the south wall'.⁵⁰

Why was Hythe's chancel built with such unusual features within the realm of parish church architecture? Geographic and economic context provide some clues. Hythe was one of the original prosperous Cinque Ports in the Middle Ages.⁵¹ These towns on the southeast coast of England were responsible for discharging royal ships, acting both defensively as well as providing cross-Channel transit. In return for their service to the Crown, they were granted significant freedoms of self-governance, ability to levy and evade taxes, and independent jurisdiction. In the context of these freedoms, it is unsurprising that the church is unusually fine and that the designers or patron experimented with an unusual elevation when a similarly-experimental elevation in a similarly-prosperous place even a decade later probably would have been deemed unacceptable. One might look at the church of Hull, built in the 1290s, also in a major port city, where the size and scale are impressive, but the designers chose a conservative two-storey elevation.

The chancel elevation at Hythe has been compared to the choir elevation at Canterbury Cathedral from the 1170s and 80s, though stylistically it can be dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century.⁵² The archbishop of Canterbury was the patron of Saltwood and therefore its dependent chapel Hythe, which is the basis of Hoey's assertion that 'it was quite likely the archbishop who paid for the reconstructed chancel and who may have inspired, directly or indirectly, the connection with Canterbury'.⁵³ As early as 1889, Canon Robertson noted in print the Hythe connection with Canterbury.⁵⁴ The major similarity between Hythe and the Canterbury choir is the middle storey,

Fig. 26
Exterior south
elevation, St. Mary
the Virgin, Stone
(Kent)
Photo: John
McNeill

Fig. 27
Nave facing west,
St. Mary the Virgin,
Stone (Kent)
Photo: John
McNeill

Fig. 28
Nave facing
east, St. Mary
and All Saints,
Great Budworth
(Cheshire)
Photo:
Joopercoopers
(Wikimedia
Commons, CC
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which in both locations features a pair of openings, each with two arches.⁵⁵ The three storey elevation and (aborted) plan to vault the chancel places Hythe in a unusually high-status category for parish churches, made all the more unusual considering it was technically not even of parochial status.

The prosperity of Hythe and its Canterbury connection can be levied as explanations for its quirks, but many churches had ecclesiastical patronage and resisted these ‘great church’ markers. One example of that is Stone-next-Dartford (Kent), which in the 1260s was built by masons from or inspired by Westminster Abbey likely under the patronage of the bishop of Rochester, Laurence de Santo, who also had a manor to the west of the church (Figs. 26 and 27).⁵⁶ Despite the bishop’s patronage, which encouraged the use of metropolitan decorative motifs, the church had neither three-storey elevation nor vault.

The three-storey elevations at New Shoreham and Hythe seem to be isolated

Fig. 29
Nave facing east,
St. Mary, Astbury
(Cheshire)
Photo: Historic
England Archive

experiments, not indicative of any larger trend. Both are in the south-east, unsurprising given the much higher number of parochial vaults in southern England.⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that these experiments are all early; I have found no examples after about the 1230s. Considerably later, Perpendicular churches at Great Budworth and Astbury (Cheshire) share similar two-and-a-half storey elevations (Figs. 28-29). At Astbury, a small blank middle storey with traces of a painting of St. George and the Dragon suggests that a painted programme for the middle level was either planned or fully

executed there. This zone gestures to the *idea* of a triforium rather than a true middle storey. These later examples reflect an awareness of what is expected for parochial elevations by the time the parish church as building type was solidified, and a self-conscious subversion of that expectation.

As this chapter has demonstrated, parish churches, with their characteristic decorum, emerged in response to the demands of pastoral care that demanded a move away from the dispersed minster system. This led to the establishment of a discrete building type with meaningful differences to other church types, namely ‘great churches’. This shift eventually resulted in the ‘parish church mode’: a set of formal characteristics understood as acceptable for parish churches regardless of how grand or lavish a building was intended to be. This mode is repeated *ad infinitum*, at least until the Reformation. While tracery and ornament change, the shape that the parish church of 1240 or 1250 does not. The late-medieval parish church is almost without exception composed of an aisled nave with a one or two-storey elevation, square-ended chancel, and southern entrance, all surmounted with wooden roofs. Parish churches can be supersized—made to hold a much larger volume of space, like Boston (Lincolnshire) or Hull (East Riding, Yorkshire)—but it is only the size, not the features, that can be called cathedral-like. Parish church architecture is part of the overall parochial identity. Many parish communities were quite wealthy in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, but they channelled their money into decorative features like beautifully-painted rood screens, elaborately-carved wooden angel roofs, and stained-glass windows, rather than building fabric: things that unfortunately have been more subject to the whims of reformers and the environment than stone buildings.

We return to Draper’s insights that tell us that the ‘change in demeanour’ of parish churches in the thirteenth century is ‘a reflection of the wider reform movement in the Church’.⁵⁸ With the emergence of the parish system over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries came the reality that many parish priests, often poorly educated, were left to their own devices in administering pastoral care to villages. Manuals for pastoral care, termed ‘pastoralia’ by Leonard Boyle, were one of several means by which the church sought to remedy this isolation and convey information to these priests.⁵⁹ Although in 1179 at the time of the Third Lateran Council there were hardly any pastoral manuals available, by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), there were about a dozen, with even more written after the council.⁶⁰ Pastoral literature did not make prescriptions to clergy about how their churches should look, but it spoke the parish church as a total environment that increasingly became codified by its agents, lay and ecclesiastical. For parish churches, perhaps the most direct impact of the various reforms happening in the thirteenth century was the gradual acquisition for parochial clergy of a special class and identity, and with it the resources to help them perform their function.⁶¹

The architecture of the late-twelfth-century parish church was not yet fully

codified; its combination of characteristics was still emerging. The quirks I have shown in this chapter, including vaults and three-storey parochial elevations—both great church motifs anomalously imported into local churches—demonstrate a tentative transgression of boundaries between parish and great-church modes. However, the expanding role of the laity, which began to be codified around the time of Fourth Lateran in 1215, indisputably altered the parochial landscape in terms of patronage and the maintenance of buildings. The notion of decorum enables us to see how parish churches fit into the broader landscape of ecclesiastical architecture, and the ways in which they were built to deliberately reflect their identification as churches for and by laypeople.

1. Vitruvius, *Vitruvius on Architecture*, Thomas Gordon Smith (ed.) (New York: Monacelli Press, 2003), chapters 1, 2, and 5; Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols, *Author and Audience in Vitruvius’ De Architectura* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 156.

2. Paul Frankl and Paul Crossley, *Gothic Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 28.

3. This idea of a building’s style fitting its status is found in numerous examples. Kimpel and Suckale have argued that the abbey church of Mouzon was deliberately conservative (referencing the older cathedral of Laon) so as not to compete with the more local and more recent work at Reims Cathedral. Dieter Kimpel and Robert Suckale, *L’Architecture Gothique En France 1130–1270*, (trans.) Françoise Neu (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), p. 293; Michael Davis argues that the parish church of Notre-Dame-des-Menus in Boulogne-Billancourt exemplifies architectural decorum fitting to its station even though it was the subject of the elite patronage of Philip IV. Though Davis suggests that the task of designing the church was given to a mason of status perhaps exceeding that of a typical parochial commission, even in the hands of an elite mason, the parish is ‘stripped of exactly those signs—four-light tracery compositions, exterior gables, and statue niches—that mark episcopal and royal buildings’. Michael T. Davis, ‘Splendor and Peril: The Cathedral of Paris, 1290–1350’, *The Art Bulletin* 80:1 (1998): p. 55.

4. Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 227.

5. On parochial financing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the likely involvement of parishioners, see Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1989), pp. 284–5; For the later Middle Ages and the dearth of documentation for parochial finances in the High Middle Ages, see Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

6. Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, p. 175.

7. Lawrence Hoey, ‘Style, Patronage and Artistic Creativity in Kent Parish Church Architecture: c.1180–c.1260’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 115 (1995): pp. 45–70; Carol Foote Davidson, ‘Written in Stone: Architecture, Liturgy, and the Laity in English Parish Churches, c.1125–c.1250’ (Ph.D. diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 1998), pp. 64–5; Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, p. 175.

8. Francis Bond, *An Introduction to English Church Architecture from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), p. xxiii.

9. Harry Batsford and Charles Fry, *The Greater English Church of the Middle Ages*, The British Heritage Series, second edition (London: B. T. Batsford, 1940), p. 1.

10. Batsford and Fry, *The Greater English Church*, p. 1.

11. Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral: The Architecture of the Great Church 1130–1530* (London: Thames and

Hudson, 1990), p. 7.

12. Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, p. 7.

13. Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, *Lincolnshire*, Buildings of England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 279.

14. John Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550*, second edition (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1954), p. 81.

15. A prebend is a cathedral benefice, the endowments of which are given to support a member of the cathedral chapter. See Stephen Friar, *A Companion to the English Parish Church* (Godalming: Bramley Books, 1996), p. 358.

16. Tim Tatton-Brown and John Crook, *The English Church* (London: New Holland, 2005), pp. 58–9.

17. Adrian Hastings, *Elias of Dereham: Architect of Salisbury Cathedral* (Much Wenlock: RJL Smith & Associates, 1997); Nicholas Vincent, ‘Dereham, Elias of (d. 1245), Ecclesiastical Administrator’, in *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

18. Christopher Wilson, David E. O’Connor, and Michael A. J. Thompson, *St Giles Skelton, a Brief Guide* (York: Borodin, 1978), p. 1.

19. On the chronology of the transepts at York Minster, see Lawrence Hoey, ‘The 13th-Century Transepts of York Minster’, *Gesta* 25 (1986): p. 227; Sarah Brown, ‘Our Magnificent Fabrick’: *York Minster An Architectural History c.1220–1500* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2003), pp. 11–45.

20. Early commentators made the romantic suggestion that Skelton was built using leftover materials from the Minster, but given an absence of evidence to prove this theory, it has been rejected. Wilson, O’Connor, and Thompson, *St Giles Skelton, a Brief Guide*, p. 1; Christopher Norton, *St. William of York* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), p. 58.

21. Wilson, O’Connor, and Thompson, *St Giles Skelton*, p. 2.

22. In particular, Wilson has pointed to the quality of the magnesian limestone ashlar which is of ‘a quality normally found only in the greater medieval churches’. Wilson, O’Connor, and Thompson, *St Giles Skelton*, p. 2.

23. Not all French parish churches have three-storey elevations, and in fact there are regions in France where three-part elevations are not the norm: southern and western France are quite different from northern France, and as Robert Branner shows, there is a strain of churches with two-story panels with ‘large panels of solid wall between the arcades and the clerestory’. *Burgundian Gothic Architecture* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1960), p. 72.

24. True triforia in English churches are found somewhat infrequently. Even Westminster Abbey, touted for its Frenchness, has a gallery so wide that it was recently renovated to house a museum. Examples of English triforia include the choir of St. Mary Overie (now Southwark Cathedral), and Malmesbury Abbey.

25. On upper levels in parish church porches in the fourteenth century and beyond, see Helen Lunnnon,

East Anglian Church Porches and Their Medieval Context (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 81–8.

26. Toby Huitson, *Stairway to Heaven: The Functions of Medieval Upper Spaces* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), passim.

27. An exception to this is Durham Cathedral as it now stands: the original west front is now enshrined within the Galilee Porch at the west end, and due to the cathedral's location, the main entrance is now on the north side; given the cathedral's monastic status, it could also be accessed via the cloisters located on the south. The church of Buildwas Abbey also lacks a western entrance due to the topography of the site; a drop to the west of the church would have made this impossible.

28. Davidson, 'Written in Stone', p. 244.

29. Eric Cambridge, 'Early Romanesque Architecture in North-East England: A Style and Its Patrons', in David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich (eds.), *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093–1193* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1994), p. 145.

30. Gerald Randall, *The English Parish Church* (London: Spring Books, 1982), p. 65; Davidson, 'Written in Stone', p. 244.

31. J. Philip McAleer, *The Romanesque Church Facade in Britain* (New York: Garland, 1984), p. 382.

32. McAleer, *The Romanesque Church Façade*, p. 382.

33. Philip Dixon, Christopher J. Brooke, and Richard Gem, 'Romanesque Churches', *Archaeological Journal* 146:1 *The Nottingham Area* (1989): p. 28.

34. Dixon, Brooke, and Gem, 'Romanesque Churches', p. 28.

35. Davidson, 'Written in Stone', p. 211.

36. Mark Phythian-Adams, 'The Patronage of Iffley Church—a New Line of Enquiry', *Ecclesiology Today* 36 (June 2006): p. 8 and passim.

37. Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire, Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 659.

38. Sherwood and Pevsner, *Oxfordshire*, p. 659.

39. 'Parishes: Boldre', *British History Online*, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol4/pp616-623#h3-0003>; Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, *Buildings of England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 113.

40. 'Parishes: Boldre', *British History Online*.

41. Gerard Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England: Ecclesiastical Architecture in England from the Conversion of the Saxons to the Norman Conquest* (London: J. Murray, 1903), p. 127.

42. Hoey and Thurlby, 'A Survey of Romanesque Vaulting in Great Britain and Ireland', pp. 117–18.

43. Lawrence Hoey, 'Stone Vaults in English Parish Churches in the Early Gothic and Decorated Periods', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 167 (1994): p. 36.

44. L. F. Salzman (ed.), 'Aldingbourne', in *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 4, the Rape of Chichester* (London: Victoria County History, 1953), pp. 134–8, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol4/pp134-138>.

45. Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Sussex*, *Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 77.

46. Hoey, 'Stone Vaults in English Parish Churches', p. 39.

47. Hoey, 'Stone Vaults in English Parish Churches', p. 48.

48. The chancel is difficult to accurately phase, largely due to the aisle walls, which have Late Norman (c.1160) blind arcading as well as arcades that appear to date to the last decades of the twelfth century. Sally Woodcock has argued that the extant aisle walls reuse material from a previous, aborted build, which she believes simplifies the overcomplicated proposed building chronology. While her argument for reuse is plausible, it seems to complicate, rather than simplify, the phasing. The large nave had been completed and was standing by the point Woodcock is discussing, so while access to the liturgical east end would be desirable, the church could have certainly been used throughout a protracted building period. When building with aisles, rather than adding them later, it makes sense for the earliest fabric to be the aisle walls, followed by arcades. Sally Woodcock, 'The Building History of St Mary De Haura, New Shoreham', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 145 (1992): p. 100; Yoshio Kusaba's proposed building chronology runs from about 1165 to 1210–15, and appears to be the most sensible approach. He argues that the outer aisle walls came first (north around 1165, and south to follow around 1170), and were connected with the eastern wall of the transepts. Following this, the arcades (south and then north, both up to string level below the triforium) were built. A third phase in the sequence was completed by a master mason familiar with the post-1187 building at Chichester Cathedral, and includes the high vaults, clerestory, and flying buttresses. 'On the Choir of the Church of St. Mary at New Shoreham: Its Chronology and Stylistic Sources' (unpublished paper presented at the Fifth Annual Canadian Conference of Medieval Art Historians, Université Laval, Quebec City, 1985).

49. Nairn and Pevsner, *Sussex*, 280; Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, p. 97.

50. Scott Robertson, 'St. Leonard's Church, Hythe', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 18 (1889): p. 403.

51. Robertson, 'St. Leonard's Church, Hythe', p. 404.

52. Robertson, 'St. Leonard's Church, Hythe', p. 404.

53. Katherine Maud Elisabeth Murray, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935).

54. Hoey, 'Style, Patronage and Artistic Creativity', p. 48.

55. Hoey, 'Style, Patronage and Artistic Creativity', p. 48.

56. Robertson, 'St. Leonard's Church, Hythe', p. 409.

57. Hoey, 'Style, Patronage and Artistic Creativity', p. 48.

58. Paul Crossley, 'The Nave of Stone Church in Kent', *Architectural History* 44 (2001): p. 203.

59. Hoey, 'Stone Vaults in English Parish Churches', p. 39.

60. Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, p. 227.

61. Leonard Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period 1179–1215 and the Beginnings of Pastoral Manuals', in Filippo Liotta (ed.), *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli Papa Alessandro III* (Siena: Nella Sede Dell'Accademia, 1986), p. 45–56.

62. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period', p. 46.

63. Boyle, 'The Inter-Conciliar Period', p. 48.

The Parish Church Illuminated

TOM NICKSON

Blue sky. A rising tower; sunlit stone. A lush churchyard; trees in blossom. The cover of the HarperCollins edition of *Sir John Betjeman's Guide to English Parish Churches* (1993) offers a familiar vision of the English parish church, endlessly reproduced on modern, glossy book covers.¹ That vision is nurtured by cherished notions of an English pastoral, by summer church crawls, and—for architectural historians—by the memory of Nikolaus Pevsner's heroic road trips as he prepared the *Buildings of England*, visiting southern counties over Easter, northern ones in the summer.² And those trips, in turn, recall the regular church visitations of the Middle Ages, invariably conducted during summer months.

This vision of a church drenched in light often extends to the interior too, and has venerable roots. The Temple of Venus, 'ymad of glas', in Chaucer's *House of Fame* (1374x1385) has been described as the 'literary descendant of ornately glazed buildings like the Sainte-Chapelle', but its 'ryche tabernacles', 'pynacles', 'curious portreytures', 'figures / Of olde werk' and 'ful eke of wyndowes, / as flakes falle in great snowes' must also refer to contemporary architecture.³ But would we think differently about parish churches if we only visited them during winter? Or if electric lighting had never been installed? Or if John Piper's elegant line drawings or new printing technologies made it possible to picture the church from Betjeman's *Lincolnshire Tale*, where:

The candles ensconced on each high panelled pew
Brought the caverns of brass-studded baize into view,
But the roof and its rafters were lost to the sight
As they soared to the dark of the Lincolnshire night.⁴

Studious church visitors are now more likely to reach for Pevsner's 'complex deductions drawn from the evidence of masonry breaks and small changes in style' than for Betjeman's 'poetic and personal evocation of the church', but is something lost in this parochial positivism?⁵ Such questions cannot be answered satisfactorily in this or any other essay. My aim instead is to approach the parish church from the perspective of its lighting, both in terms of production (which encompasses architectural design, as well as decoration and furnishings) and reception (how were these buildings experienced?), and especially the relationship between the two.⁶ In addressing this I wish to make two wider points. First, it is often said that there exist few written sources on the English medieval parish church of relevance to historians of art and architecture: we have 'only' the buildings themselves, as well as occasional archaeological traces of lighting devices that are otherwise lost. It is certainly true that historians of the period 1200 to 1400 cannot draw on the rich written sources available to those working on parish churches in the fifteenth century or later. Yet as I will show, the thousands of surviving wills, visitation records and churchwardens' accounts from the earlier period—as well as numerous other written sources—reveal a profound and consistent concern for light, both artificial (lamps, candles, torches and other devices) and natural (usually in relation

to windows).

Secondly, I wish to draw attention to the significant role of light and darkness in determining how buildings were designed and decorated, and the ways that this is disguised by our practices as scholarly producers and consumers.⁷ Despite significant qualification by John Gage, Andreas Speer, Nicholas Reveyron and others, Erwin Panofsky's identification of 'an orgy of neo-Platonic light metaphysics' in Abbot Suger's writings on Saint-Denis have helped to establish the centrality of (natural) light to the historiography of medieval architecture, partly because Panofsky's vision of a luminous gothic architecture so effectively dispels Romantic celebration of 'gothic gloom' or enduring myths of a 'Dark Ages'.⁸ But can this discourse on architecture and light be extended to consider the phenomenological, climatological, liturgical, and social significance of light in the Middle Ages? To what extent can theories of aesthetics or optics developed in universities or other intellectual centres be applied to the study of modest parish churches?⁹ Has recent scholarship on visibility overlooked questions of visibility?¹⁰ And are we all complicit in privileging generously-lit photographs and reproductions of buildings, at times misrepresenting the experience of those spaces? Not all these questions can be answered properly in this short paper, but to recognise the latter, for example, we need only consider the photograph of Chartres Cathedral with its coloured glass removed during the Second World War, reproduced in Jean Bony's great study of *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (1983).¹¹ In light of this, and whether amateur or professional, should we re-examine our own ways of curating the photographs that we take, edit, and archive?

The written evidence

In 1883, the crypto-Catholic cleric, Frederick Lee, provided remarkably precise descriptions of the various chandeliers, lamps, tapers, and candles in Thame church (Oxfordshire), based on the extensive churchwardens' accounts that survive from 1442 onwards.¹² His evocative account nonetheless poses a familiar problem: in the absence of evidence from earlier periods, is it safe to assume that artificial lighting in Thame had changed little since 1400, 1300, or even 1200?¹³ Certainly not. Norman Tanner's analysis of 289 wills from medieval Norwich shows that the proportion of testators leaving money for lights rose steadily in the period 1370 to 1532, and this confirms the strong but unquantifiable impression from other sources that artificial lighting in churches increased considerably from the twelfth to the sixteenth century and beyond, notwithstanding changing practices of churchwardens or record keeping.¹⁴

For these reasons—and partly to make the evidence more manageable—in this essay I have drawn evidence almost exclusively from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though occasionally also from the first decade of the fifteenth. The definition

of the parish church is a further issue, and I have largely followed Richard Pfaff's helpful rule-of-thumb:

a parish church is one that serves a community defined more by locality (e.g., "the church of Burford") than by adherence to a rule ("Tewkesbury abbey") or a set of statutes (Salisbury cathedral).¹⁵

This allows me to include grand churches such as Tideswell in Derbyshire or St. Augustine's, Hedon (East Riding, Yorkshire), but excludes evidence from monastic foundations, cathedrals and minsters, and even from grand collegiate foundations such as Ottery St Mary, whose founding statutes (1339) provide very detailed instructions about lighting.¹⁶ I also exclude cases where parishioners used the nave of churches belonging to larger foundations.¹⁷ Of course, such boundaries are partly artificial: laity, clergy, and craftsmen moved regularly between different categories of building, and in almost all cases the lighting types, traditions, and trends that can be identified in parish churches developed at earlier dates in the context of 'great churches'.¹⁸ It is nonetheless broadly the case that there was less artificial lighting in parish churches than in great churches, that their liturgical rituals were more modest (notably with fewer night-time vigils or Masses and offices at Matins and Vespers), and that the educational levels of most priests and parishioners meant that they could understand light in a very different way from friars, monks or canons.¹⁹

Even with the limits sketched above, lighting in parish churches is exceedingly well-documented, whether in the buildings and archaeological record, or in the numerous written sources, notably visitation records and churchwardens' accounts. Visitation records attracted the attention of nineteenth-century clergy and antiquarians and so most are now easily available online.²⁰ They have been published for the dioceses of Salisbury (1220–6, 1300, 1405–17),²¹ St. Paul's (1138, 1160x81, 1249x52, 1297),²² Exeter (1281, 1294, 1301, 1328–31, 1342),²³ Ely (1278–1390),²⁴ Canterbury (1293–4, 1327–8),²⁵ Bath and Wells (1335),²⁶ York (1362, 1407),²⁷ Hereford (1397),²⁸ and Norwich (1368, 1400).²⁹ James Malcolm also published partial visitation returns for St. Martin's, Ludgate (1410),³⁰ while those of Bakewell and Tideswell in Derbyshire (1270 and 1345–7 respectively) have been overlooked.³¹ These visitation records and the inventories they contain by no means offer a complete snapshot of churches and their furnishings, and they typically record only those objects mandated by local diocesan statutes. Pamela Graves's warning about 'an eclectic use of decontextualised local data, made to pad out a normative picture derived from centralised ecclesiastical contexts' must be borne in mind.³² But notwithstanding these cautionary remarks, visitation records provide a wealth of useful but little-exploited information about lighting, images, and altars, albeit often buried amongst tales of negligent priests and adulterous parishioners.³³

Churchwardens' accounts represent another key source, although again it must be remembered that churchwardens had very specific roles and their accounts only

provide partial evidence.³⁴ Happily, the provision and management of lights was a key responsibility of churchwardens, and central to the economy of the parish church.³⁵ Accounts have survived from Bridgwater, Somerset (1318 onwards);³⁶ St. Michael's, Bath (1349 and frequently thereafter);³⁷ St. James, St. Augustine, and St. Nicholas, Hedon, in the East Riding of Yorkshire (beginning in 1350, 1371, and 1379 respectively);³⁸ St. John the Baptist, Glastonbury (1366–1404, 1405–28);³⁹ St. Cuthbert's, Wells (1393, 1404 and several thereafter);⁴⁰ St. Margaret's, Walmgate, York (1394);⁴¹ All Saints, Bristol (wardens' inventory of 1395, accounts from 1401x8, 1408–9 and frequently thereafter);⁴² St. Mary Magdalen in Launceston, Cornwall (1405);⁴³ St. Lawrence, Reading (1410);⁴⁴ and St. Michael, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Aldate's, Oxford (1403, 1404, and 1410 respectively), though of these only St. Michael's have been published.⁴⁵ Supplemented with evidence from charters, testamentary bequests, diocesan statutes and other sources, these records offer rich insights into the lighting of parish churches in medieval England.

Natural light

Only rarely can written sources be cross-referenced with other types of documentary evidence, or with surviving buildings. For example, the 'seemly and suitable window' that, following a visitation in 1294, was ordered to be made for the church at Wingham (Kent), was destroyed in the sixteenth century.⁴⁶ One rare case where text and fabric both survive is St. Mary's (now All Saints), at Sandon in Hertfordshire, its chancel condemned as needing repair and being 'too dark' (*nimis obscurum*) in a visitation of 1297.⁴⁷ After some delay it was decided that the chancel should be rebuilt, and an agreement with a stone mason from 1348 stipulates that the eastern window should have three lights ('dayes'), with two lights for two sets of windows in the north and south walls.⁴⁸ The east window was replaced in the nineteenth century, but otherwise the chancel survives intact (Fig. 1).⁴⁹ Sandon is the only one of twenty churches in the St. Paul's visitations of 1297 where lighting conditions in general were recorded, but the provision of lamps commonly merited comment in these visitations: in most cases it was considered 'sufficiens', 'decens' or 'competens', but at Pelham Arsa (Hertfordshire) it was judged 'insufficiens'.⁵⁰

Elsewhere, natural lighting was a particular concern. Nestled on a leafy stretch of the river Wye, Dixon church (Monmouthshire, formerly Herefordshire) was said to be so 'dark and gloomy' in May 1397 that the clergy could not read.⁵¹ A visitation of 1278x1303 records that the church at Horningsea (Cambridgeshire) was missing various lights, an altar veil, and altarpiece, and that the altar was poorly lit.⁵² It is no coincidence that a new window was made in 1305–6 for the chancel in Hambleton (Rutland) at the same time as a new altarpiece or altar frontal (*tabula depicta*), sedilia, and piscina.⁵³ In

Fig. 1
East end, St
Mary, Sandon
(Hertfordshire).
Photo: Author

Fig. 2
Chancel, St.
Mary, Thame
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Devon, where many churches may have been thatched, a series of visitations in 1301, 1314, and 1330 found that the churches were too dark. In July 1301, the church of Coffinsville was condemned because ‘all the windows of the chancel are without glass, and too small’.⁵⁴ During the same summer visits, the nave of Ashburton church was found to be ‘too dark’, and thirteen years later things were no better.⁵⁵

The windows in the chancel are of wood, except one, which is too small. The chancel is badly roofed ... There is no glass in the windows of the nave of the church. The south aisle of the nave of the church is badly roofed. The north aisle of the church is ruinous and is being rebuilt. Therefore the Lord Bishop ordered that windows of sufficient size of stone should be made in the chancel, and that one of good size should be made in the [east] front of the chancel.⁵⁶

A damning report on Staverton church in the same year prompted the construction of a new church that still survives (albeit heavily restored), replacing one that was too dark and narrow.⁵⁷ These critiques have to do with architectural design, including the size of windows, but in their visitation of the church of Salcombe Regis (Devon) in July 1330, Bishop Grandisson’s commissioners also criticised the glass, reporting that ‘the glass windows in the chancel, as well as in the nave, are too dark’.⁵⁸ Such comments are remarkable only because they are unusual: elsewhere commissioners occasionally commented on broken or missing windows or ruined walls, but largely focused their reports on moveable goods.

These sources confirm what is patently obvious from the visual evidence, namely that lighting was an important consideration in the design of buildings and of glass. In some cases extra light seems to have been directed specifically at the high altar:

Warwick Rodwell suggested, for example, that the window splays of the Romanesque church at Rivenhall (Essex) might have directed a shaft of light onto the altar at specific moments.⁵⁹ Concern for the visibility of the high altar (and by extension, the Eucharist) may partly explain why chancels were commonly the brightest part of the church, lit by generously-sized windows on three sides.⁶⁰ While there is no single factor that explains the increase in window size from the twelfth to the fifteenth century (a phenomenon that was not restricted to parish churches), it was presumably related to the decreasing costs of glass and recognition of its potential for patronal display, the ability of bar tracery to fill large window openings, concerns with visibility (and thus visibility), and changing religious sensibilities and aesthetic tastes.⁶¹ It has even been linked to the

Fig. 3
Nave, All Saints,
Walsoken
(Lincolnshire)
Photo: Author

beginnings of the Little Ice Age around the year 1300, which may have contributed to increasing cloud cover.⁶²

Piecemeal changes of the kind found at Thame speak to the undocumented history of light in the English parish church: built c.1220, its chancel still preserves its original lancet windows on the north side, but in the late-thirteenth century a magnificent five-light window was installed in the east wall, and thereafter large Decorated windows were inserted to the south (Fig. 2). Shortly afterwards the aisles were widened, and at the end of the fourteenth century the nave walls were raised to make a clerestory.⁶³ In each case, the provision of extra light seems to have been a significant motivating factor. The addition or enlargement of aisles—as at Thame—was very common in English medieval parish churches, and invariably allowed more natural light to flood the interior thanks to extra windows at the aisles' east and west ends, and larger windows to the north or south (where their height was not constrained by a single gable roof over the whole church). Construction of new 'lantern' clearstories in the nave was also common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as in several churches in eastern England that still preserve Norman or Early English arcades below, including St. Mary's at Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire), and Long Sutton (Lincolnshire), Walsoken (Norfolk), and Wisbech (Cambridgeshire) (Fig. 3).⁶⁴ Yet light was only one of many factors that motivated construction and expansion in this period, and such alterations have also been explained in relation to growing populations and wealth, competition, the increasing emphasis on visibility in church rituals (above all the elevation of the Host at Mass), the multiplication of altars, and funerary concerns.⁶⁵

Fig. 4
East window,
St. Michael
and All Angels,
Eaton Bishop
(Herefordshire)
Photo: Gordon
Plumb

Fig. 5
East window,
St. Mary, Selling
(Kent)
Photo: Chris
Parkinson

Light was not only regulated through window size: as at Salcombe Regis, it was also recognised that stained glass played a significant role. Surviving glass at Madley (c.1250 and c.1350) and Eaton Bishop (c.1330–5), both in Herefordshire, show that magnificent coloured glass was sometimes installed in parish churches, especially those with access to glaziers from major cathedral workshops (Fig. 4).⁶⁶ This is confirmed by the scattered fragments of glass that survive in hundreds of parish churches from before 1400. From what survives, and with some exceptions, grisaille—with patterns formed either from painted glass or just from the leading—seems to have been especially common in the late-twelfth century and first half of the thirteenth, in part perhaps because it was cheaper than coloured glass.⁶⁷ Any coloured glass most commonly took the form of heraldry or single, standing figures of saints or prophets, though more complex narratives were sometimes included in the great banded windows that became more popular in the early-fourteenth century.⁶⁸ Windows in the fourteenth century were also likely to be larger and lighter (especially thanks to the growing popularity of silver stain), though such magnificent banded windows as those at Selling in Kent (c.1314–7) or Bere Ferrers, in Devon (c.1330) are probably more elaborate than what was found in most parish churches – except perhaps in their east windows (Fig. 5).⁶⁹

What is clear is that lay benefactors with significant connections could transform their local parish church into something exceptional, as in the chantry chapel of Sir Miles Stapleton in North Moreton (Oxfordshire). The chapel's eastern window, which probably dates to the second decade of the fourteenth century, is filled with dark, saturated glass with heraldry and scenes from the life of St. Nicholas, to whom the chapel is dedicated (Fig. 6).⁷⁰ It serves as a useful reminder that larger windows do not necessarily create lighter interiors, though fragments of grisaille in the nave windows suggest that only the east window was so dark. Fifteen miles away, Waterperry (Oxfordshire) preserves thirteenth-century grisaille windows in its chancel, whilst in the nave small, colourful donor figures float on a bed of fourteenth-century grisaille (Figs. 7 and 8).⁷¹ This kind of scheme was probably common in parish churches across medieval England, but is inevitably the subject of fewer scholarly studies.

Visitation records imply that glass was often missing, anyway.⁷² Scattered evidence shows that some windows were covered simply by linen cloth, iron grilles, and shutters.⁷³ Internal screens, curtains, and furnishings might block or filter the light further. But natural light could also be regulated or enhanced by other means: when Thomas Grey provided a five-light window for the Lady Chapel at Haddenham (Buckinghamshire) in 1395, he not only provided money for the glass, but also for shiny new floor tiles.⁷⁴ Internal whitewashing was quite common (even if it has attracted little scholarly interest), and must have also helped to brighten a gloomy interior, especially important if there were extensive murals or sculpture.⁷⁵ Indeed, Anya Heilpern has suggested that the wall paintings at Selling (Kent) formed part of the same decorative

Fig. 6
East window of
the Stapleton
chantry, All Saints,
North Moreton
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 7 (Left)
Chancel window,
St. Mary,
Waterperry
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: John
McNeill

Fig. 8 (Right)
Donor figure from
an aisle window, St
Mary, Waterperry
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Fr. Lawrence
Lew, O.P.

scheme as its east window, while a sculpture of St. Nicholas presumably stood on one of the corbels that flank the east window in Stapleton's chantry chapel (Fig. 6).⁷⁶ Even where the original glass has been lost, as at Great Canfield (Essex) or Harlington (Bedfordshire), it is clear that windows—and hence light—played an integral role in the staging of paintings or sculpture above the main altar.⁷⁷

The profusion of glass in fourteenth-century England attracted moral commentaries. The glass temples in Chaucer's *House of Fame* (1374x1385) and John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* (late 1420s) are described in overwhelmingly positive terms, and in his 1398 translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, John Trevisa, vicar of Berkely (Gloucestershire), explained that 'glas ... is ycleped *vitrum* for by his vertu he is bright and cleere, and light schyneþ þerþorugh'.⁷⁸ Not everyone was so keen, however. In the C version of *Piers Plowman* (c.1382x1387), William Langland criticised the pride of those who would 'glase þe gable and graue ther name', and a long-standing critique of extravagant building surfaces in the condemnation of 'curious windows' in the dialogue between *Dives and Pauper*, penned sometime between 1405 and 1410.⁷⁹ But the most compelling document of changing sensibilities and the anxieties they provoked is found in the anonymous *Roman de Perceforest*, a vast mythical history of Britain, completed c.1340. Written in French for Guillaume I, count of Hainault and father-in-law of Edward III, the *Roman* was certainly known in fourteenth-century England, though of course it cannot be read as a 'reflection' of contemporary attitudes.⁸⁰ In the third part, the Temple of the Supreme God is compared with ancient churches:

And there are no windows [in the Temple of the Supreme God] except as are necessary to give enough light to see to move around the temple, and also that the image of the God might be seen and recognised. For the wise men used to say that a place for devotion ought not to have light or wall paintings so that those who are there to worship the gods are not distracted by them, for then their devotion would be less valuable.

This is contrasted with modern churches, built by men of vanity, who

by creating a view of the countryside hindered devotion and concentration [*simplese*]. Moreover, now temples are so opened up and well lit that vanity has got what she wanted, for it is her nature to want to be seen and be looked at, and to see and look at [others] ... when you go into a temple you have to look up like other people, and say, 'Look at the beautiful stained glass, the beautiful painting, the beautiful vault, the beautiful statue!' That is what some people say when they come into a temple.⁸¹

Darkness concentrates the mind, it might be said.⁸² But it also has other advantages. In a study of a group of exceptionally-dark pilgrimage churches in Italy, Paul Davies suggested that 'the interiors of these shrines were intended to be dark so as to enhance

the radiance of the honorific lights that burned before the miraculous image'.⁸³ The same might be said of dark crypts. And although few parish churches in medieval England could boast of a crypt or miraculous images, all contained lights of some kind that would be near-invisible in bright, natural light. As I will show, however, the introduction of more and more natural light in England's parish churches by no means discouraged the provision of extra artificial lights, more than matching the proliferation of devotional images in the same period.⁸⁴

Artificial lights

Diocesan statutes from across thirteenth-century England—developed, for the most part, independently from the new legislation of the universal Church—imply that in every parish church a lamp was supposed to burn continuously day and night.⁸⁵ At Mass at least one candle was to burn on the altar, accompanied either by a lantern or another candle. Statutes for the diocese of Winchester (1247?) stipulate what size, form, and position those candles should take, and those of Bishop Quinel of Exeter (1287) specified that churches should also have hearses (multi-branched triangular candleholders for Holy Week), a Paschal candle and candlestick, a lantern, and two processional candles, round or square.⁸⁶ 'Without fire, that is without light, celebration should not take place', summarised William de Pagula in his hugely-popular *Oculus sacerdotis*, from the 1320s.⁸⁷ That this mentality encouraged the accumulation of candles on parish church altars is suggested by bishop Grandisson's statutes for Ottery St Mary (1339), in which he stipulated that the priest was 'not to allow odd images or candles to be placed or festooned around the altar in a disorderly fashion, as happens in country chapels'.⁸⁸

Many churches had several lights, their variety especially clear from the visitation records of churches belonging to St Paul's Cathedral in 1297, or in the records of over three hundred and fifty churches visited in the archdeaconry of Norwich in 1368.⁸⁹ These describe oil lamps, usually burning before the high altar or the Host (reserved in a hanging pyx or aumbry), and considered less susceptible to drafts than candles;⁹⁰ candlesticks of pewter, bronze, iron, wood, latten, silver, copper, and lead (in decreasing order of popularity); paschal candlesticks, lit by a long taper or *serpens* from Holy Saturday till Ascension Day; hearses, which could be the triangular multi-branched candlesticks of Easter Week or iron structures (also *feretra*) that supported candles for funerals;⁹¹ rowel lights (*rotundale* or *rota*), wheel-shaped chandeliers suspended from the roof; candles and tapers, usually round, sometimes square, and occasionally painted or perfumed; torches (made of wax mixed with resin, hence slow burning but smoky), as well as lanterns, used when carrying the Host to visit the sick.⁹² The '*ij trostel' cum candelabris*' recorded in 1368 in St Peter Hungate, Norwich, are probably equivalent

to trendells (or trendles/trendals): coiled tapers, sometimes attached to the outer rim of a wheel and suspended.⁹³ They are only recorded in significant numbers in parish churches from the 1430s onwards.⁹⁴ Rushlights—made from rushes dipped in fat—were reserved for domestic contexts (except perhaps for the poorest churches), while cresset stones of various sizes, which held lamps with floating wicks, seem to have been used almost exclusively in monastic contexts and especially dormitories, though many were moved to parish churches during the Reformation.⁹⁵

Before considering how, where and when these lights were used, it is important to understand their intimate relationship with the parish economy. The Canons of Edgar (1005x1008) stipulated that ‘there is always to be a light burning in the church when mass is being sung’ and that this should be funded by the lightscot, a tax provided by parishioners three times a year.⁹⁶ This practice continued in many places into the fifteenth century and beyond, but other methods of raising funds were also increasingly employed.⁹⁷ For example, visitations of churches in the gift of St. Paul’s of c.1249x1252 record that the church at Alderbury (Hertfordshire) had three lamps before the high altar, one of which was maintained by parishioners. Levies on houses and households helped to provide wax for lights at Easter and for the rowel light, but other lights depended on offerings.⁹⁸ At the other end of the period under study, the churchwardens’ accounts of St. Michael’s, Oxford, record that an annual collection for oil was still taking place in 1404–5.⁹⁹ Indeed, responsibility for managing lights was commonly delegated to churchwardens or lightwardens (first documented in 1260), partly in order to ensure that donations were not diverted elsewhere, a practice regularly forbidden in thirteenth-century diocesan statutes.¹⁰⁰ In the diocese of Salisbury (1228x1256), clergy were responsible for the lantern and candlesticks for the altar, but parishioners had to provide wax for Easter, candles in the chancel, and sufficient light for the whole year, ‘for Matins, Vespers and for mass’.¹⁰¹ In most parish churches that wax probably came from local hives, but bigger institutions commonly imported wax, especially from the Baltic, though occasionally from Portugal too.¹⁰²

If parishioners paid for the fuel, what of the candlesticks and lamps in which it burned? Visitation records for the diocese of Ely (1278x1390) record the donors of numerous liturgical books, vestments and occasionally chalices, but only rarely of candlesticks and other devices. One exception is recorded at the church at Linton (Cambridgeshire), where a visitation of 1365x1390 records ‘*ii candelabra enea ex dono parochianorum*’.¹⁰³ The same hand records that the church at Shingay (Cambridgeshire) had a rowell with ten lamps hanging in the chancel, donated by the former vicar, and that Elm (Cambridgeshire) had been given two brass and two wooden candlesticks.¹⁰⁴ Candles or lamps for the high altar were normally the responsibility of the rector or vicar, and are hence only recorded in visitation records if missing.¹⁰⁵ For example, at a visitation to the now-ruined Well chapel in Kent (1327x1329) it was reported that:

The Rectors in times past, and the present Rector, were wont to find two wax

lights with their candlesticks on the high altar, and the present Rector has taken them away, and does not find lights at celebrations on week days in church. On the 19th March the Rector appeared as above, and said that he does and provides, as his predecessors have done, and as he by law is bound to do.¹⁰⁶

At Erdesely (Herefordshire) in 1397, the shortcomings of the deeply-unpopular vicar included his failure to provide a lamp burning night and day.¹⁰⁷ The vicar of Worley was equally disliked: the two candles he provided to burn during Mass on Sundays and feast days were apparently too small.¹⁰⁸

Maintaining income for lights was a constant preoccupation. In the dioceses of Winchester and Wells, gifts for lighting were supported by indulgences of ten days.¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere, reliable income was ensured by leasing out livestock to local parishioners.¹¹⁰ For example, at Kirby-le-Soken (Essex), the lease of no less than 121 sheep provided wax or oil for multiple lights in the church in the mid-thirteenth century.¹¹¹ More common—and affordable even for lesser benefactors—was the assignment of rental income.¹¹² In his valuable study of lighting before the Black Death, David Postles describes an unusually-generous donation by Matthew de Columbariis, who in the mid-thirteenth century attorned service and rent to the parish church of Tytherley (Hampshire) to pay for twelve candles, each of one pound, to burn every day at Mass.¹¹³ Their residue was to be divided and burnt before the Cross and before the Lady altar for the antiphony after Mass. Donations in the fourteenth century were more commonly made post-mortem, however, as in the 1335 testament of Richard Gubb, fishmonger, in which he gave two tenements and a brewhouse to maintain a lamp burning from sunset to sunrise in the parish church of St. Mary Somerset in the City of London.¹¹⁴

The establishment of guilds and fraternities meant that lesser benefactors could also contribute via collective donations.¹¹⁵ Detailed and extensive guild returns from 1389 suggest that in many merchant communities guilds had assumed significant responsibilities for providing extra candles on altars, for funerals, and before images.¹¹⁶ Thus in a will proved in London in 1332, John Potyn, girdler, left money to the fraternity that provided wax tapers before the cross in St. Lawrence, Jewry. He further stipulated that one large taper be placed near the Easter Sepulchre on Good Friday and that it should be lit from after the antiphon *Caro mea requiescet in spe* until the end of the Easter octave; any leftover wax could be used to make other tapers.¹¹⁷ Some years later (1368), the fraternity of St. Stephen was founded to provide the thirty-one lbs of wax required to maintain five candles burning before an image of the Virgin in St. Stephen’s, Coleman Street in London.¹¹⁸ Members paid five shillings and one pound of wax to enter the guild of St. Mary, founded in Beverley (East Riding, Yorkshire) in 1355, and for Candlemas each year dressed up for a procession through the town with Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and angels, accompanied by a candlestick with twenty-four thick wax lights ‘and other great lights’.¹¹⁹ Other guild members marched in pairs to the church,

where they presented a half-pound wax light at the altar: a version of the Candlemas ceremonies that took place in every church and village.¹²⁰

These donations and institutions formed part of a much larger economy of wax in both ecclesiastical and domestic contexts.¹²¹ Wax was often used for payments in kind, and in 1297 a London tailor, Gilbert de Chippestede, left a tenement to John Fader, chandler, on condition that he provide a wax torch each year in the church of St. Nicholas Acon at the elevation of the Host.¹²² Huge quantities of wax from Poland and Lubeck (214 and 252 lbs respectively) were recorded as pledges in London in 1353, while the wardens of the chantry of St. Mary in Bridgwater (Somerset) kept seventy-two lbs of wax in storage, and made extra money from the sale of candles for various burials.¹²³ An inventory from 1373 of the house of Emma Hatfield, a London chandler's daughter, includes multiple tubs of 'Seville oil' (olive oil), wax, fat, cords, and 'green candles'.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, the London waxchandlers' ordinances of 1358 and 1371 forbade them from mixing wax with resin or fat when making 'cierges, torchyes, priketz, great candles or any other manner of wax-chandlery'.¹²⁵ Tallow candles, sometimes known as Paris candles, were easily made at home with reduced animal fat, and were significantly cheaper than wax candles, but were more susceptible to guttering, sagging, and dripping, and burnt with a greasy odour.¹²⁶ Torches—made of wax mixed with resin—were slow burning and were especially used for funerary processions, although their tendency to sputter and smoke meant they were best avoided according to John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, probably written in the late 1380s.¹²⁷ Archaeological evidence from domestic contexts in Winchester and London suggests that between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, candles, tapers, and torches increasingly displaced lamps as the preferred method of lighting, probably because wax was becoming cheaper.¹²⁸ This seems to be corroborated by the visitation records: although they often merely record payments '*ad luminare*' or '*ad lumen*', the St. Paul's visitations of 1249x1252 describe several churches with multiple lamps, whilst those of 1297 and 1458 usually record just one.¹²⁹ Only fourteen of over three hundred and fifty churches in the archdeaconry of Norwich had more than one lamp in 1368; at All Saint's, Bristol, churchwardens spent twenty-four shillings and five and a half pence on wax in 1408–9, but just twenty-one and a half pence on oil.¹³⁰

Where were these lights? Lamps burned perpetually before the high altar or the reserved Host, and were renewed at Easter.¹³¹ At Kirby-le-Soken (Essex) in 1249x52, lights are recorded on the altars (or before the images) of the Virgin, St. Peter and St. Michael, before the cross, in the chancel, and on the rowel.¹³² They were especially common on the Rood, and on the Easter sepulchre.¹³³ Additional lighting—usually in the form of torches—was common during special moments of the liturgy, especially at the elevation of the Host, but also for the Mary Mass, and during the Salve Regina or other antiphons sung in the Marian offices.¹³⁴ Then there were extra lights for Sundays and great feast days (especially Christmas, Candlemas, and Easter), and candles and

tapers played a significant role in church consecrations, for penitential ceremonies, at the blessing of the font, at baptism, and for lighting funerals and marriage services.¹³⁵ Lamps were sometimes lit in cemeteries, while a large stone monument in the graveyard of All Saints, Bisley (Gloucs) may have housed funerary lights, and probably dates to the thirteenth century.¹³⁶ The most spectacular light of all was the Paschal candle, sometimes painted, and of impressive size. Charles Cox estimated that these commonly weighed as much as fifteen pounds, though this applies better to the fifteenth century than the thirteenth or fourteenth; in the 1380s the Paschal candle in wealthy Bridgwater, Somerset, weighed eight and a half pounds.¹³⁷ In any case, the candle was made to look more impressive by being placed on a 'Judas' or candlestock, painted to resemble a candle; fourteenth-century examples survive in the British Museum and in Jesus College, Cambridge (Fig. 9).¹³⁸ Paschal candles were theoretically paid for by parishioners and occasionally appear in testamentary provisions, hence any wax that still remained after Trinity Sunday could be fashioned into candles for funerals for the poor.¹³⁹

All this confirms that artificial lights played an important role in parish

Fig. 9
Candlestock or
'Judas', now in the
British Museum,
inv. 1965,0403.1.
Painted wax,
first half of the
fourteenth century
Photo: © Trustees
of the British
Museum (CC BY-
NC-SA 4.0)

economies and in the experience of parish church interiors, but it is important not to over emphasise their effects. Except when the sun was out, medieval churches would almost certainly look dark to modern eyes, so accustomed are we to electric light. Just one traditional sixty-watt light bulb gives approximately seventy times more light than a candle, and in most cases lamps and candles probably provided little more than localised glimmer, even on the best-lit feast days.¹⁴⁰ Yet the significance of artificial lights depended on much more than their effects on vision. Light has always played an important role in Christian commemoration, and was specifically emphasised in the Office for the Dead.¹⁴¹ ‘Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them’, implored participants in the funerary Mass, grant them ‘a place of relief, the blessing of rest, and the brightness of your light’, they repeated during anniversaries.¹⁴²

Numerous fourteenth-century wills show that lesser benefactors aped the lavish lighting provisions of the aristocracy. For example, between 1330 and 1361 testators gave between two and twenty-four pounds of wax to the church of Ludlow (Shropshire), to burn around their bodies during their funerals.¹⁴³ In 1335 John of Clevedon left one hundred lbs of wax, to be fashioned into five candles to burn on the day of his burial in Clevedon (Somerset).¹⁴⁴ In 1345 Master John de Woodhouse left thirty shillings for lights at his funeral in Sutton (East Riding, Yorkshire).¹⁴⁵ In London, provision for torches to burn during funerals became markedly more popular from March 1348 onwards, symptomatic, perhaps, of a kind of commemorative competitiveness as funerals multiplied in the wake of the Black Death.¹⁴⁶ Funerary torches were also commonly put to other uses.¹⁴⁷ For example, in 1376 Sir Marmaduke Constable left money for fifteen candles to burn around his body on the day of his burial in Flamborough (East Riding, Yorkshire), together with twelve torches, borne by twelve paupers. After the funeral four torches were to be left at the high altar ‘*pro reverencia corpore christi*’, with two each at the altars of the Virgin and St. Katherine, with the other four distributed in the nearby church of Holme.¹⁴⁸ Such lights were also displayed around tombs, and hearses for candles survive at the tombs of St. John Swinfield (d. 1371) in Spratton (Northamptonshire) and of Sir John Marmion (d. 1387) and his wife Elizabeth (d. 1400), in West Tanfield (North Riding, Yorkshire) (Fig. 10).

The striking effects of such torches and tapers are partly captured in several contemporary Books of Hours.¹⁴⁹ An initial in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS B. 11. 7, folio 80 (England, c.1415–20) shows two mourners carrying torches next to a draped coffin (Fig. 11), whilst an early-fourteenth-century English Book of Hours from the Huntington Library in San Marino, California (MS HM 1346, folio 119), shows candles on a hearse (Fig. 12).¹⁵⁰ A taper lights the elevation of the Host in a full page miniature in the Butler Hours (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 105, folio 15) of c.1350, opposite an excerpt from Psalm 4:7 in the Office of the Holy Face, ‘*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*’ (‘The light of thy countenance is signed upon us, Lord’) (Fig. 13).¹⁵¹ The slender taper is shown raised perilously close to the Host, a reminder that

Fig. 10
Tomb and hearse of
Sir John Marmion
(d. 1387) and his
wife, Elizabeth (d.
1400), St. Nicholas,
West Tanfield
(North Riding,
Yorkshire)
Photo: Author

candlelight is not directed, and only illuminates objects in very close proximity.

Albeit refracted through the lens of manuscript conventions, these images provide valuable evidence for the use of torches and tapers, long since burned to nothing. Lighting devices from English parish churches from this period have survived little better: if not destroyed at the Reformation, many were replaced by gas or electric lights in the last two centuries, or have been lost, stolen or stored away.¹⁵² For example, in 1908 Charles Cox recorded that the church of Weston (Norfolk) preserved a Limoges enamel candlestick, but this cannot now be located.¹⁵³ He also mentioned examples of pulleys for rowels in the churches of Ubbeston and Wissett in Suffolk, but the latter has since disappeared, whilst the ‘squirrel-cage’ pulley in Warsop church (Nottinghamshire), was replaced with a replica in 1957.¹⁵⁴ A double pulley—presumably for a rowel and lamp below it—remains attached to the easternmost beam in the nave of Tideswell church (Derbyshire), and was probably installed not long after the mid-fourteenth-century wooden roof (Fig. 14). Medieval roof pulleys for lights (rather than font covers, which commonly survive) can also be found at Trunch (Norfolk), Kirkby Malham (West Riding), and Sandford-on-Avon (Northamptonshire): one for the rood and one for the rowel (Fig. 15). Overlooked by Pevsner and others, such objects urgently need to be recorded and catalogued before they disappear entirely. Only the lead plugs for a light fixing survive below a fourteenth-century image niche in Edlesborough (Buckinghamshire) (Fig. 16).¹⁵⁵ A pair and two single Limoges candlesticks, probably donated to the church of St. Thomas the Martyr in Bristol (dedicated 1232), survive in the Bristol City Museum, but otherwise few remaining examples have secure parish

Fig. 11
Torches at a funeral. Detail of an initial from a Book of Hours. Trinity College, Cambridge, MS B. 11. 7, fol. 80. England, late fourteen or early fifteenth century. Image: © Trinity College, Cambridge (CC BY-NC 4.0)

Fig. 12
Tapers and hearse at a funeral. Detail of an initial from a Book of Hours. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, MS HM 1346, fol. 119. England, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Image: © Huntington Library, San Marino (CC by 1.0)

Fig. 13
Tapers at the Elevation of the Host. Full page miniature from the Butler Hours. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 105, fol. 15. England, c. 1350. Image: © The Walters Museum (CC0).

provenances (Fig. 17).¹⁵⁶ Medieval lamps, pricket candlesticks, and rushlight holders have survived better in archaeological contexts, however, and have been excavated in London and Winchester (largely in domestic contexts): the Museum of London holds a particularly fine copper-alloy lantern punctured by trefoils, for example (Fig. 18).¹⁵⁷ It also preserves an exceptional twelfth-century bronze chandelier excavated near St Martin-le-Grand, London. Thirty-one centimetres tall and eighteen centimetres across, the chandelier resembles Jewish ‘Sabbath lamps’, but whether it comes from a Jewish or Christian context, it offers a glimpse of the elaboration of the lighting devices known otherwise only through the written record (Fig. 19).¹⁵⁸

Fortunately, one spectacular testimony to lighting objects and their significance came onto the market in the early 1970s. Bought by Francis Wormald, after whom it takes its name, this Processional of c.1400 was later given to the British Library (Additional MS. 57534), and offers a striking vision of candles and other devices in the

Fig. 14
Detail of a rowel pulley over the rood screen, St. John the Baptist, Tideswell (Derbyshire)
Photo: © Bernard O’Sullivan

Fig. 15 (Left)
Rowel pulleys, St. Nicholas, Sandford-on-Avon. One for the rood, and one for the centre of the nave
Photo: Author

Fig. 16 (Right)
Image niche with plug holes for a light below in the nave north aisle, St. Mary, Edlesborough (Buckinghamshire)
Photo: Richard Marks

Fig. 17
Limoges candlesticks, from the church of St. Thomas the Martyr in Bristol, inv. CP37.1-4
Photo: ©Bristol City Museum

liturgy. Perhaps made for the church of the Hospital of St. Giles in Norwich, the nave of which was reserved for parochial use, the Wormald Processional’s unique diagrams show in abbreviated form the correct disposition of clergy, acolytes, candles, and other liturgical objects for particular rituals or feasts according to the Sarum rite (in most cases at least).¹⁵⁹ Folio 54v, for example, shows the Blessing of the Paschal Fire on Easter Saturday, outside the church: a deeply symbolic moment that marked the renewal of lights and hearths throughout the parish (Fig. 20).¹⁶⁰ At the top, a candle and candlestick represent the acolyte or taperer who leads the procession. Next comes the deacon

Fig. 18 (Left)
Lantern, found in
Smithfield. Height:
29.2cm. Museum
of London, inv.
A1366.
Photo: © Museum
of London

Fig. 19 (Right)
Brass lamp,
resembling a
'Sabbath Lamp',
found near St
Martin-le-Grand,
London. Height:
310cm, width
180cm. Museum
of London, inv.
1374, probably late
twelfth century.
Photo: © Museum
of London

(represented by the open gospels), followed by the celebrant (with a grey tonsured head and green cope). He is flanked by two deacons to the left (with brown tonsures); to his right two acolytes are represented by an aspergillum and a thurible, and beyond is the Paschal fire. At the procession's rear a candle and candlestick stand in for another acolyte or taperer, and at the bottom is the Paschal or Lenten candle, formed with twisted green and yellow strands and supported by a *basta* or candlestick, around which a dragon or *serpens* is coiled.¹⁶¹ Other folios show an array of candles, tapers, altarpieces and other liturgical objects disposed on or before altars, fonts, and chancel steps. As Aden Kumler has recently argued, these diagrams underline the special significance of *sacra* and *ornamenta* in the medieval church, and their intimate connection with the ecclesiastical orders, exemplified by the ordination rites for acolytes:¹⁶²

And then from the bishop let them receive the candlestick with a candle [*cerofarium cum cereo*], one in one hand, the other in the other hand, with the bishop saying to them, in the manner as above: "Receive the candlestick with the candle, so that you should know yourselves to be dedicated to the kindling of the church's lights [*ad accenda ecclesiae luminaria mancipari*]"¹⁶³

Sacred office and sacred object were thus collapsed together, a phenomenon of special significance at a time when Wycliffites and Lollards challenged the status of such objects.¹⁶⁴

Beyond the rejoinder to a dissenting minority, what kind of symbolic freight did these lighting objects carry? Of course, light has long been the subject of symbolic

Fig. 20
The Blessing of
the Paschal Fire on
Easter Saturday,
full page miniature
from the Wormald
Processional, British
Library Additional
MS. 57534, fol. 54,
c. 1400.
Photo: © British
Library Board,
Additional MS.
57534

and scientific speculation, but how much of this trickled down to parishioners in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England?¹⁶⁵ A sense of this can be glimpsed in John Mirk's *Festial*. Written in Shropshire in the late 1380s and closely modelled on the *Golden Legend*, it contains a series of sermons for parish priests and was widely disseminated.¹⁶⁶ As might be expected, sermons for Candlemas and Easter Week are particularly rich in light imagery. Opening with a pseudo-Roman pre-history for the feast, the sermon for Candlemas describes a series of miracles involving candles, and offers pick-and-mix

symbolic interpretations of the candles borne by participants:

a candel brenyng bytokeneth oure Lady and hure Sone [and] a monvs self. For
a candel ys mad of weke and of wax brenny[ng] wyth fere. Þus Crystes swete
soule was hude wyth hys monhed and [brende] wyth þe fyre of hys Godhed.
Hyt bytokeneth also oure Ladyes modurhed and maydonhed lyghtod wyth þe
fyre of loue. Hyt bytokeneth also vch god mon and womon þat doth dedus wyth
good entent and in ful loue and charyte.¹⁶⁷

Sermons for the dramatic, darkened *tenebrae* services of Holy Week—attended in silence,
and without the ringing of bells—cite the precedent of night-time Passion events: the
Agony in the Garden, Betrayal of Judas, and darkening of the sky at Christ’s death.¹⁶⁸
On Good Friday, when a ‘herce wyth candulles brennyng’ was brought into the church,
all but one candle was extinguished,

þe whyche betokeneth þe wymmen þat madon waymentac[i]on t Crystus
sepulcur. Þan aftur þis, þe candul is browte aȝeyne, and alle oþur at hit bene
lyȝte, þe whyche betokenyth Crist, þat was for a qwyle dede and hyd in hys
sepulcur, but sone aftur he ros frome deth to lyue and ȝaff lyȝte of lyue to alle
of hem þat weron quenched be dispayre.¹⁶⁹

Mirk’s explanation of the Paschal candle and Easter tapers was similarly straightforward:

On Astur Eve þe paschal is makud, þat betokenyth Cryste. For as þe paschal
is c[h]e[f]e ta[pu]r þat is in þe chirche, so is Criste þe chef seynte þat is in
Haly Chirche. Also þis paschal betokyneth þe pyler of fure þat ȝode before þe
schildron of Israel ... Þus is þe paskal holowd and lyȝte with ne[w]e fure, and of
hit alle oþur taperers bene lyȝte. For all holynesse and lyȝte of goode worchinge
cometh of Crystes lore, and Holy Chirche is lyȝte wyth brennynge charite of his
behestus.¹⁷⁰

Similar tropes could be found in other sermons, homilies, and pastoral manuals, and
suggest that the symbolic potential of light was widely recognised in the medieval parish
church, but also that it was fairly conventional.¹⁷¹

Towards a conclusion

I have shown, I hope, that light was of central importance to the design and use of
medieval parish churches, and its provision, regulation, and absence are surely significant
for anyone concerned with changing artistic, religious, and social sensibilities in this
or any period. That said, no technology could measure the ever-changing lighting
conditions in a modern church, and it would be foolhardy to imagine that we could
recover them in medieval parish churches. Nor is it wise to make generalisations about
parish churches in medieval England when the written evidence is so significantly
skewed towards parish churches in the South and East, especially from the 1320s
onwards. It can nonetheless be concluded with some certainty that parish churches
between 1200 and 1400 were, on the whole, considerably darker than we experience
them today, but that many were lighter in 1400 than they had been in 1300 or 1200.
On the whole, they had larger and lighter windows, and more artificial lights, clustered
before a greater number of images. The same is almost certainly true of ‘great
churches’, and of parish churches outside England, although this is yet to be tested.
More specific observations on lighting in individual churches could be offered through
re-appraisal of the written evidence, much of it published in the nineteenth century
and now readily available online. But we also need to re-examine the churches and their
contents: evidence of roof pulleys, light fittings, scorch marks, and smoke damage;
the contents of parish church treasuries and the provenance of museum objects; the
position, size, and glazing of windows, and changing light effects throughout the day
and the year. This kind of study could extend ‘the factual and objective discipline of
the catalogue’, associated with Pevsner, but it also helps to understand ‘the poetics of
place and the aesthetics of religious experience’, evoked so memorably by Betjeman.¹⁷²
In short, investigating light offers stimulating new ways to re-examine and reconcile
material and written histories, and to bring together positivistic and experiential
approaches to the study of parish churches. Light is good to think with.

I am immensely grateful to Richard Marks, Nigel Morgan and the anonymous reviewers
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offered insightful advice on an early version of this paper, and I dedicate it to his
memory, with warm affection and in recognition of his inspirational scholarship.

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44. Charles Kerry, *A History of the Municipal Church of St. Lawrence, Reading* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne Press, 1883).
45. H. E. Salter, 'The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's Church, Oxford', *Transactions of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society* 78 (1933). For St. Mary Magdalen see County Record Office Par Oxford St. Mary Magdalen, c. 64, d. 8. For St Aldate's see Oxford History Centre, Par St. Aldate c. 15.
46. Woodruff, 'Early visitation rolls', p. 167.
47. Sparrow Simpson, 'Visitations in 1297 and 1458', p. 48.
48. Rose Graham, 'A Contract to Rebuild the Chancel of Sandon Church, Hertfordshire', *Archaeological Journal* 87:1 (1930): pp. 21–3.
49. William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Hertford* (London: Constable, 1912), volume three, pp. 270–6; Nikolaus Pevsner, *Hertfordshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), pp. 230–1.
50. Sparrow Simpson, 'Visitations in 1297 and 1458', pp. 5, 17, 22, 25–7, 29, 34–5, 37, 40, 41, 43–8, 55–6.
51. Bannister, 'Visitation', volume forty-four, p. 288 : 'cancellus est obscurus et tenebrosus, ita quod clerici non possunt legere propter defectum luminis, in defectu Rectoris'. At a nearby church the chancel was said to be so dark that Mass could not be celebrated without a candle, a problem exacerbated by the failure to provide torches for the elevation of the Host: Bannister, 'Visitation', vol. 44, pp. 288 and 447.
52. Feltoe and Minns, *Vetus liber*, pp. 40–1: 'defic. candelabra process[ionalia] et lanterna et celatura ultra altare et tabula retro altar[e] nec est ibi lumen competens'.
53. I am grateful to Nigel Morgan, who pointed out to me that 'tabula' could also refer to a frontal. The chancel was replaced in the nineteenth century, but the fourteenth-century sedilia and piscina survive: William Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Rutland* (London: Archibald Constable, 1935), volume two, pp. 66–72. Payments for the window and altarpiece are recorded in the archives of Lincoln Cathedral, Dean & Chapter, Common Fund, Bj.2.4, folio 15v. I am grateful to Lesley Milner for drawing my attention to these accounts.
54. Whitley, 'Visitations', p. 457; Hingeston-Randolph, *Stapeldon Register*, p. 338.
55. Whitley, 'Visitations', p. 453.
56. Whitley, 'Visitations', p. 465; Hingeston-Randolph, *Stapeldon Register*, p. 34.
57. Whitley, 'Visitations', p. 454; Nikolaus Pevsner, *South Devon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952), pp. 269–70.
58. Whitley, 'Visitations', p. 471; Pevsner, *South Devon*, pp. 253–4.
59. Warwick Rodwell and Kirsty Rodwell, *Rivenhall: Investigations of a Villa, Church, and Village, 1950–1977* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1985–1993), 1986, p. 133; Richard Keith Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: Dent and Sons, 1989), p. 297. Assuming that this is more than fortuitous, it is hard to believe that it was planned from the beginning: it seems more likely that internal furnishings were moved or extant openings modified so as to capitalise on effects that were already partially visible. See the cautionary remarks in Ian Hinton, 'Church Alignment and Patronal Saint's Days', *The Antiquaries Journal* 86 (2006): pp. 206–26; Anne Sassin Allen, 'Church Orientation in the Landscape: a Perspective from Medieval Wales', *Archaeological Journal* 173:1 (2016): pp. 154–87.
60. See, for example, Alixe Bovey, 'Communion and Community: Eucharistic Narratives and their Audience in the Smithfield Decretals (BL, Royal MS 10 E IV)', in Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn Smith (eds.), *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images and Communities in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

61. Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 191; Morris, *Churches*, pp. 296–8.
62. Christopher T. Simmons, ‘Fiat Lux: Climatic Considerations in Medieval Stained Glass Aesthetics’ (PhD diss., McGill University, Montréal, 2008).
63. Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 806–7; Mary Lobel (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 7, Dorchester and Thame Hundreds* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 199–219.
64. Nikolaus Pevsner and John F. Harris, *Lincolnshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 182–3, 597–9; Nikolaus Pevsner, *North-west and South Norfolk* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 364–6; Nikolaus Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954), pp. 406–8.
65. Morris, *Churches*, p. 293; V. L. Kennedy, ‘The Moment of Consecration and the Elevation of the Host’, *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944): pp. 121–50; Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 103–38.
66. Alan Brooks and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Herefordshire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 497–501; Sarah Brown, ‘The Fourteenth-Century Stained Glass of Madley’, in David Whitehead (ed.), *Hereford: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 1995); Heather Gilderdale, ‘Panel of the Month’, *Vidimus* 4, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://vidimus.org/issues/issue-04/panel-of-the-month/>.
67. Richard Marks, *Stained Glass in England During the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 127–9; Nigel J. Morgan, *The Medieval Painted Glass of Lincoln cathedral* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 27, 38–40.
68. Examples include glass in St. Peter’s, East Tytherley, Hampshire (c.1230–50), or the prophets in All Saint’s, Bale, in Norfolk (c.1360–80). See ‘Medieval Glass at Salisbury Cathedral’, *Vidimus* 23, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://vidimus.org/issues/issue-23/feature/>; ‘Norfolk: Bale, Parish Church of All Saints’, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi*, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/bale/history.html>.
69. Anya Heilpern, ‘The East Window of St Mary’s Church, Selling, Kent: A Royal Window in the Shadow of Canterbury’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 165:1 (2012), p. 149, note 48. More broadly, see Ayers, *Merton*, pp. 27–9; Marks, *Stained Glass*, pp. 137–8, 141–53; Morgan, *Lincoln Cathedral*, pp. 27, 38–40; Christopher T. Simmons and Lawrence A. Mysak, ‘Transmissive Properties of Medieval and Renaissance Stained Glass in European Churches’, *Architectural Science Review* 53:2 (2010), pp. 263–5.
70. See John McNeill, ‘A Prehistory of the Chantry’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 164:1 (2011): p. 36, note 106; Anna Eavis, ‘St Nicholas, Charles Winston and Conservation at North Moreton’, *Vidimus* 25, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://vidimus.org/issues/issue-25/panel-of-the-month/>.
71. Peter A. Newton and Jill Kerr, *The County of Oxford: A Catalogue of Medieval Stained Glass* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 201–7.
72. For example, in 1220 the chancel of St. James at Ruscombe was missing glass in its windows; eighty years later the glass was recorded as broken: Jones, *Vetus Registrum*, volume one, p. 279; Rich-Jones and Macray, *Charters*, p. 369.
73. L. F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540: A Documentary History* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1979), pp. 173–4; John Charles Cox, *Churchwardens’ Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co., 1913), p. 87.
74. Richard Marks, ‘Wills and Windows: Documentary Evidence for the Commissioning of Stained Glass Windows in Late Medieval England’, in Richard Marks (ed.), *Studies in the Art and Imagery of the Middle Ages* (London: Pindar Press, 2012), pp. 201–2, citing the Register of Bishop Braybrooke: London, Guildhall MS 9531/3, folios 447r-v.
75. It is recorded internally and externally at St. Michael’s, Bath, in 1394, for example: Pearson, ‘Churchwardens’ Accounts’, volume twenty-three, p. 15.
76. Heilpern, ‘The East Window’, p. 137.
77. See Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), figures 33, 34, 51, and especially 29 and 57.
78. Coley, ‘Withyn a temple’, pp. 60–4; Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, p. 346; M. C. Seymour, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus’ “De proprietatibus rerum”, a Critical Text* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), volume two, pp. 878–80.
79. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), pp. 245–6; Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 348–51; Priscilla Heath Barnum, *Dives and Pauper. Vol. 1, part 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 189–90.
80. Julian Munby, Richard W. Barber, and Richard Brown, *Edward III’s Round Table at Windsor: The House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), chapter eight; Sylvia Huot, *Postcolonial Fictions in the Roman de Perceforest: Cultural Identities and Hybridities* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 180.
81. Gilles Roussineau (ed.), *Perceforest. Troisième partie* (Geneva: Droz, 1988–93), volume three, pp. 26–7 (translation kindly provided by Mark Spurrell).
82. See especially Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 69.
83. Paul Davies, ‘The Lighting of Pilgrimage Shrines in Renaissance Italy’, in Erik Thuno and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Rome: ‘L’Erma’ di Bretschneider, 2004), p. 68.
84. See Marks, *Image and Devotion*, pp. 87–91, 161–9.
85. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 99; Vincent, *Fiat Lux*, pp. 48–59.
86. Frederick M. Powicke and Christopher R. Cheney, *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church: 2: A.D. 1205–1313* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 404, 1006.
87. ‘Sine igne, id est sine lumine, celebrare non licet’: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 62, citing Dendy, *Use*, p. 38. See Leonard E. Boyle, ‘The “Oculus Sacerdotis” and Some Other Works of William of Pagula: The Alexander Prize Essay’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5 (1955).
88. ‘qui etiam non permittat varias ymagines nec cereos apponi nec affigi circa altaria incomposite, ut fit in ecclesiis ruralibus’: Dendy, *Use*, p. 54; Dalton, *Ottery*, pp. 170–1.
89. Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1297 and 1458’, pp. xxxiii–xxxvii; Watkins, ‘Archdeaconry’, part two, pp. lxxxv–lxxxvi, xcii. There is no space here to consider other countries, but lights are also recorded in detail in visitation records of Icelandic churches between 1315 and 1397, for example: Jón Thorkelsson (ed.), *Diplomatariuð islandicuð* (Kaupmannahöfn: Möller & Thomson, 1893–7), volumes 2–4.
90. Powicke and Cheney, *Councils & Synods* 2, p. 592 (statutes of Bath and Wells, ?1258).
91. Powicke and Cheney, *Councils & Synods* 2, p. 296.
92. The relative value of some of these objects can be gleaned from the 1307–8 inventory of Temple Church, London: Harrod, ‘Goods’, pp. 90–1, note 2. For perfumed candles see Carole Rawcliffe, ‘“Gret Crynyge and Joly Chauntynge”: Life, Death, and Liturgy at St. Giles’s Hospital, Norwich, in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, in Carole Rawcliffe, Roger Virgoe, and Richard Wilson (eds.), *Counties and Communities: Essays on East Anglian History Presented to Hassell Smith* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1996), p. 41.
93. Watkins, ‘Archdeaconry’, part two, p. lxxxvi; Vincent, *Fiat lux*, p. 447.
94. Cox, *Churchwardens’ Accounts*, pp. 165–6.

95. John Charles Cox, *English Church Fittings, Furniture and Accessories* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1933), pp. 230–2; F. W. Robins, *The Story of the Lamp (and the Candle)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 89; Martin Biddle (ed.), *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester: Artefacts From Medieval Winchester* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 985. See, however, Dalton, *Ottery*, pp. 231–2.
96. Christopher N. L. Brooke, M. Brett, and Dorothy Whitelock, *Councils & Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church. 1, A.D. 871–1204* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 328, 332.
97. Postles, ‘Lamps’, pp. 99, 104.
98. Postles, ‘Lamps’, pp. 109–10; Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1249–52’, pp. 17–18.
99. Salter, ‘St. Michael’s Church, Oxford’, p. 2.
100. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 104; John Moorman, *Church life in England in the thirteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 143; Carol Davidson Cragoe, ‘The custom of the English Church: parish church maintenance in England before 1300’, *Journal of Medieval History* 36:1 (2010), especially p. 37.
101. Powicke and Cheney, *Councils & Synods* 2, p. 513.
102. Alexandra Sapoznik, ‘Bees in the Medieval Economy: Religious Observance and the Production, Trade, and Consumption of Wax in England, c.1300–1555’, *The Economic History Review* 72:4 (2019): p. 16.
103. Feltoe and Minns, *Vetus Liber*, pp. 62–3.
104. Feltoe and Minns, *Vetus Liber*, pp. 106–7, 116–17.
105. Watkins, ‘Archdeaconry’, part two, p. lxxxv.
106. Woodruff, ‘Early visitation rolls’, volume thirty-three, p. 74.
107. Bannister, ‘Visitation’, volume forty-five, p. 447 (and again at Aure, p. 450).
108. Bannister, ‘Visitation’, volume forty-four, p. 286.
109. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 105, citing Powicke and Cheney, *Councils & Synods* 2, pp. 404, 592–3, 704.
110. Postles, ‘Lamps’, pp. 109–10; Woodruff, ‘Early visitation rolls’, volume thirty-two, p. 178; volume thirty-three, p. 84; C. Eveleigh Woodruff, ‘Some Early Kentish Wills’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 46 (1934): pp. 28–9; Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury, 1250–1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 105.
111. Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1249–52’, pp. 32–3.
112. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 105.
113. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 105.
114. Postles, ‘Lamps’, pp. 113–14; Reginald Robinson Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Wills: Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688* (London: John C. Francis, 1889), volume one, p. 404.
115. See also Carol Davidson Cragoe, ‘Belief and Patronage in the English Parish before 1300: Some Evidence from Roods’, *Architectural History* 48 (2005): pp. 21–48.
116. Ben R. McRee, ‘Religious Gilds and Civil Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 67:1 (1992): pp. 69–97; B. A. Hanawalt, ‘Keepers of the Lights: Late Medieval English Parish Gilds’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14 (1984): p. 28; David J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 30–1.
117. Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, volume one, p. 384.
118. John Mottley and John Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster: Borough of Southwark, and Parts Adjacent* (London: T. Read, 1733), volume one, p. 567.
119. Joshua Toulmin Smith and Lucy Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds. The Original Ordinances of More than One Hundred Early English Gilds* (London: Oxford University Press, 1870), pp. 149–50.
120. For Candlemas see Gail McMurray Gibson, ‘Blessing from Sun and Moon. Churching as Women’s Theater’, in Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace (eds.), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
121. For this economy, see for example, Salter, ‘St. Michael’s Church, Oxford’, p. 3. For lighting in domestic contexts see Jean Verdon, *Night in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), pp. 71–9.
122. Postles, ‘Lamps’, p. 102; Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, volume one, p. 133.
123. A. H. Thomas, *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London, at the Guildhall, 1323–64* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), pp. 162, 244; Dilks, *Bridgwater, 1377–1399*, pp. 24–5.
124. A. H. Thomas, *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved Among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London, at the Guildhall, 1364–1381* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), pp. 158–9. For green torches at St. James’s, Hedon, in 1409–10, see Boyle, *Early History*, p. clxiv.
125. Thomas Riley, *Memorials of London and London Life in the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868), pp. 162, 358–60; John Dummelow, *The Wax Chandlers of London: A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, London* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1973), pp. 12–14.
126. Approximately four times cheaper than wax candles in fourteenth-century Winchester (Biddle, *Object*, p. 984), and six times cheaper in Tavistock and Bridgwater in the 1380s: Richard Nicholls Worth, *Calendar of the Tavistock Parish Record* (Plymouth: William Brendon and Son, 1887), pp. 1–5; Dilks, *Bridgwater, 1377–1399*, p. 192.
127. John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1902), p. 55; Cox, *Churchwardens’ Accounts*, p. 160.
128. Sapoznik, ‘Bees’, p. 13. For the archaeological evidence, see Biddle, *Object*, pp. 990–1; Geoff Egan, *The Medieval Household: Daily Living c.1150–c.1450* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), p. 126.
129. Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1249–52’; Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1297 and 1458’.
130. Watkins, ‘Archdeaconry’, part two, p. xcii; Burgess, *All Saints, Bristol*, volume forty-six, p. 51.
131. Cox, ‘Lights’, p. 58.
132. Sparrow Simpson, ‘Visitations in 1249–52’, pp. 31–3. Compare Bannister, ‘Visitation’, vol. 44, pp. 449–50 and vol. 45, pp. 92, 93, 97, 98 and 100.
133. For example, Pearson, ‘Churchwardens’ Accounts’, volume twenty-three, p. 14; Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1987), pp. 52–60.
134. Cox, *Churchwardens’ Accounts*, p. 161. See, for example, Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, volume one, p. 538; Dilks, *Bridgwater, 1377–1399*, pp. 216–20; Lewis Baker, James Raine, and John William Clay, *Testamenta Eboracensia* (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1836), p. 269; Feltoe and Minns, *Vetus Liber*, p. 125.
135. Cox, ‘Lights’, p. 52; Cox, *Churchwardens’ Accounts*, pp. 160–1; Andrew Spicer, ‘“To show that the place is divine”: Consecration Crosses Revisited’, in Krista Kodres and Anu Mänd (eds.), *Images and Objects in Ritual Practices in Medieval and Early Modern Northern and Central Europe* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013), pp. 41–2.
136. Bannister, ‘Visitation’, vol. 45, 96; John Goodall, *Parish Church Treasures* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 69.
137. Cox, ‘Lights’, p. 59; Vincent, *Fiat Lux*, pp. 141–4; Dilks, *Bridgwater, 1377–1399*, p. 192.
138. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (eds.), *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), pp. 243–4. In 1408–9, the churchwardens of All Saints, Bristol, spent 8½ pence on a Judas: Burgess, *All Saints, Bristol*, volume forty-five, p. 51.
139. David Lloyd, Margaret Clark, and Chris Potter, *St. Laurence’s Church, Ludlow: The Parish Church and People, 1199–2009* (Little Logaston: Logaston, 2010), p. 23; Powicke and Cheney, *Councils & Synods* 2, pp. 56, 513, 178, 715–16.
140. Roughly 850 lumens, as opposed to twelve.
141. Vincent, *Fiat Lux*, pp. 33–5, 295–303.

142. Matthew Cheung Salisbury (ed.), *Medieval Latin Liturgy in English Translation* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017), pp. 85–6. These translations are taken from the Use of Sarum, but the Office varied little between different uses: Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Use of York: Characteristics of the Medieval Liturgical Office in York* (York: Borthwick Institute, University of York, 2008), p. 20; Sarah Schell, ‘The Office of the Dead in England: Image and Music in the Book of Hours and Related Texts, c.1250–c.1500’ (PhD diss., University of St Andrew’s, 2011), p. 51.

143. Lloyd, Clark, and Potter, *St. Laurence’s*, p. 23.

144. Scott Holmes, *Ralph of Shrewsbury*, volume one, p. 269.

145. Baker, Raine, and Clay, *Testamenta*, volume one, p. 14.

146. The earliest of these is the will of William de Bernes, a wealthy fishmonger: Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills*, volume one, p. 611. See also Robert Wood, ‘Life and Death: A Study of the Wills and Testaments of Men and Women in London and Bury St. Edmunds in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries’ (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2014), pp. 62–96.

147. For example, Baker, Raine, and Clay, *Testamenta*, volume one, pp. 133, 174, 176, 206, 209; Brown, *Popular Piety*, p. 105.

148. Baker, Raine, and Clay, *Testamenta*, volume one, pp. 93–4.

149. Schell, ‘Office’, pp. 81–95.

150. For these manuscripts see Paul Binski and Stella Panayotova (eds.), *The Cambridge Illuminations: Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West* (London: Harvey Miller, 2005), pp. 196–98; C. W. Dutschke and Richard H. Rouse, *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1989), volume two, pp. 580–2.

151. See Nigel J. Morgan, ‘The Holy Face as Icon and Vision in Fourteenth-Century England’, in Golden and Patton (eds.), *Tributes to Adelaide Bennett Hagens: Manuscripts, Iconography, and the Late Medieval Viewer* (Brepols: Brill, 2017), p. 153.

152. Cox, ‘Lights’, pp. 61–2.

153. John Charles Cox, *English Church Furniture* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908), p. 327.

154. Cox, *English Church Furniture*, p. 328; A. Du Boulay Hill, ‘Summer Excursion 1914: Warsop Church’, *Transactions of the Thorton Society* 18 (1914): p. 5. I am grateful to Keith Clayton, Denis Burrell, and Nick Evans for their advice on these churches.

155. Marks, *Image and Devotion*, p. 162.

156. Nos. CP37.1–4. Alexander and Binski (eds.), *Age of Chivalry*, pp. 242–3. Two parish churches in Uppland (Sweden) also preserve lighting devices of a type commonly recorded in English written records: a bronze candlestick from the parish church of Balingsta, and three chandeliers from Vendel-Tegelsmora church, all exhibited in the *Heaven is Here* exhibition in Uppsala Cathedral in 2014. *Heaven is Here*, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://himlenarhar.se/foremal/bronze-candlesticks/?lang=en> and <http://himlenarhar.se/foremal/chandeliers/?lang=en>.

157. Egan, *The Medieval Household*, pp. 126–31; Biddle, *Object*, pp. 980–1000.

158. George Zarnecki, Janet Holt, and Tristram Holland (eds.), *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 253.

159. See Francis Wormald, ‘A Medieval Processional and its Diagrams’, in Artur Rosenauer and Gerold Weber (eds.), *Kunsthistorische Forschungen Otto Pächt zu seinem 70 Geburtstag* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1972).

160. See Cox, ‘Lights’, p. 58.

161. For this image in the early printed Sarum books see Christopher Wordsworth, *Ceremonies and Processions of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury* (Cambridge: University Press, 1901), pp. 81–2.

162. Aden Kumler, ‘Imitatio Rerum: Sacred Objects in the St. Giles’s Hospital Processional’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44:3 (2014): pp. 469–502.

163. Kumler, ‘Imitatio’, p. 478, citing William Maskell, *Monumenta ritualia ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London: W. Pickering, 1846–7), volume three, p. 173.

164. Kumler, ‘Imitatio’, p. 474.

165. See especially Vincent, *Fiat Lux*, pp. 191–370; K. P. Clarke and Sarah Baccianti, *On Light* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literatures, 2013). Compare Miri Rubin, ‘What did the Eucharist Mean to Thirteenth-Century Villagers?’, *Thirteenth-Century England* 4 (1992): pp. 47–55.

166. Susan Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial, Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A.II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009–11), volume one, pp. xvi–xvii, xxxii, l.

167. Powell, *Festial*, volume one, pp. xlii, 57–9.

168. Powell, *Festial*, volume one, p. 103.

169. Powell, *Festial*, volume one, p. 104.

170. Powell, *Festial*, volume one, pp. 112–13.

171. See, for example, Richard Morris (ed.), *Dan Michel’s Avenbite of Innyt, or Remorse of Conscience. In the Kentish Dialect, 1340 A.D.* (London: Early English Text Society, 1965), p. 200; Anne B. Thompson (ed.), *The Northern Homily Cycle* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), pp. 73, 77–8. For sermons in parish churches see Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 229–52.

172. Crossley, ‘*Anglia Perdita*’, p. 479. The changing effects of parish churches could also be fruitfully explored with something equivalent to T. J. Clark, *Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

A Phenomenological Study of the English Parish Church Porch, c.1200–1399

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For a moment, engage with where you are: slow your thoughts and address your situation. Is the air cool, warm or hot, dry or moist, still or moving? Where is the light source? Is it natural or artificial, subtle or stark, static or varying, diffuse or directed? Is your seat soft or hard, does it respond when you move? If so, in what way? Can you see beyond your immediate surroundings; is there sound within your space or filtering in from elsewhere? What impact does such environmental detail have on you? In what way does it affect your mood, the extent to which you feel relaxed, anxious, excited or calm and, perhaps most importantly, how might the architecturally-constructed environment containing you affect your engagement with this paper?

This brief paper attempts to articulate the relationship between the form and lived experience of parish church porches built in England between c.1200 and c.1399, by adopting a method which brings together formalism and phenomenology. It is not necessary to provide a detailed critique or summary of the trajectory of philosophical phenomenology as expounded by theorists including Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Heidegger.¹ It is, however, worth setting out an appropriate conceptual framework. Human-inhabited built environments are defined by bodily experience; buildings exist, and exist in particular ways, wholly through human experience of them. According to Juhani Pallasmaa, ‘the defenders of the humanisation of architecture today are completely mistaken when they claim that buildings should be designed for the needs of real people. I would like them to name a single great building in the history of architecture that was not built for the idealised man’.² Regardless of the concern given to ‘real people’ in the design process, the formal nature of all structures once built, including church porches, exist in the service of actual experience: how they are occupied or used and what effect form has on the people who use them. Through observation of church porch form it is possible to gain some insight into their purpose and importance. This paper is therefore offered as an alternative, perhaps a corrective, to architectural histories which give methodological primacy to semiotic readings of buildings and make claims to explain architectural meaning.

In this paper I seek to think around a building type by exploring variations and consistencies with the aim of understanding how lived experience can be affected by formal attributes. The result is the observation that from persistent architectural traits emerges the cultural significance of form and structure. The paper is built on a small corpus of English parish church porches built between c.1200 and c.1399, each selected as an early, confident exponent of specific architectural characteristics. As a specimen collection these porches permit two approaches to their study: typological incidence and diachronic development. Widespread proliferation of integrally-built parish church porches can be observed in England from the early-thirteenth century. Although church porches are rarely architecturally dramatic, their existence indicates the nature of how sacramental and liturgical acts happened at the parish church.

The provision of space within which a person can place themselves differentiates

the church porch from elaborated doorframes, which act as heralds for the entrance. J. C. Wall divided porches into broadly chronological stylistic categories, including ‘Romanesque Porches’ and ‘Early Pointed Porches, Thirteenth Century’.³ In the latter section, Barnack in Cambridgeshire, built c.1200–10 (Fig. 1), and Skelton in Yorkshire, built c.1247 (Fig. 2), are two parochial examples mentioned. Wall’s text overlooks the fundamental experiential contrast between these two ‘porches’. Despite the shallow projecting walls and high gable of the deeply-recessed doorway, the experience of standing before the church door at Skelton is to remain outside, looking at but physically separated from the building. The stone arch of nine shafts frames and accentuates the timber church door and at the same time emphasises our exclusion from the building’s interior. By contrast, the porch at Barnack is a building within which a human can be. When standing before the church door, one is within—not beyond—the structure, although remaining separated from the principal building beyond. In England, during the first half of the thirteenth century, the form and experience of English parish church porches was explored and tested (as exemplified at Barnack and Skelton) until emerging as a distinct building type: a semi-interior space for people.

From around 1200, porches rapidly became an accepted new building type in England, recognised as one of the component spaces constituting a parish church. However, in the thirteenth century church porches were designed and understood as architectural preambles, not fully integrated into the rest of the building. Their status remained in flux and was not settled until around the turn of the fifteenth century. Through visual experience and bodily engagement, church porches introduce the house of God,

Fig. 1 (Left)
Exterior of the
south porch,
St. John the
Baptist, Barnack
(Cambridgeshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 2
Exterior of the
church door, St.
Giles, Skelton
(North Riding,
Yorkshire), from
J.C Wall *Porches
and Fonts*.

they are architectural versions of introits, overtures, prologues; they shape our sense of what the church within is like, either through similarity or difference; they guide our thoughts and shape behaviour in preparation for entry. Their near ubiquity makes implicit that they became de rigueur; but to what effect? Attending to the historical circumstances of their inception is instructive.

Whilst this paper is not an attempt to *explain* their invention, a few words on the topic are expedient for subsequent discussion of their phenomenological effect. The development of porches from elaborate doorframes to semi-interior buildings was a significant shift in what appropriately comprised a well-provisioned parish church in England. Two coeval and influential religio-political events should be noted: the General Interdict imposed by Pope Innocent III on King John's England in 1208, and the papal canons resulting from the council which Innocent III convoked in 1213 and gathered at Rome's Lateran Palace in 1215. I do not wish to suggest that either event was the cause and porches the effect, but both necessitated a cultural shift in parishioners' engagement with the interior of their church.

During the period of excommunication, access to the church was restricted and worshippers suffered enforced exclusion from liturgical performance. During this time, for the people of England the very terms of the parochial contract with the Roman Church were fractured, and events would have instilled a nervous fear of repetition in subsequent years.⁴ Confirmation seven years later of the central importance of the Seven Sacraments for orthodox piety further exacerbated the situation and it is perhaps to be expected that parishioners subsequently sought ways to sustain sacramental engagement during times of religious crisis. The implications of the Interdict presumably lived on in the collective memory of England's parishes.⁵

These two internationally-significant events broadly coincide with the invention of the English parish church porch as a new building type. The combination of the General Interdict imposed on the country and the sacramental conviction of canon law following the Fourth Lateran Council apparently created a climate in which porches as semi-interior, conveniently-liminal spaces became relevant to people's lived experience and therefore desirable. A closer look at the detail of international religio-political diktat helps make visible their impact on individual experience.

With the enhanced authority given to the Sacraments by Innocent's council, excommunication was understood as a personal reality as much as creating a state of national crisis. Failure to make confession of sin annually to one's parish priest risked individual excommunication, exclusion from the Mass and denial of Christian burial. As stated in Canon 21, ratified at the Fourth Lateran Council:

All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have reached the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own [parish] priest and perform to the best of their ability the penance imposed, receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist, unless perchance at the advice of

their own priest they may for a good reason abstain for a time from its reception; otherwise they shall be cut off from the Church [excommunicated] during life and deprived of Christian burial in death. Wherefore, let this salutary decree be published frequently in the churches, that no one may find in the plea of ignorance a shadow of excuse. But if anyone for a good reason should wish to confess his sins to another priest, let him first seek and obtain permission from his own [parish] priest, since otherwise he [the other priest] cannot loose or bind him.⁶

Rather than instigating something radically new, Innocent's council secured the terms of existing practice and tightened up performance. Evidence for this includes the varied treatment of sacramental performance in the circumstances of the 1208 Interdict: baptism and extreme unction were allowed; marriages might be celebrated at the church door; but no Masses were publicly said, and the ordinary course of the sacraments was intermitted; the dead were buried in consecrated ground, and the churches were closed except to those who wished to make offerings.⁷ As a response, Canon 58 from the Fourth Lateran Council stated:

The privilege that has been granted to some religious we concede also to bishops, that, when the entire territory is under Interdict, those excommunicated and interdicted being excluded, they may sometimes with the doors closed, in a low voice and without the ringing of bells, celebrate the divine offices, unless this is expressly covered by the interdict. But we grant this to those only who in no way shared in the cause of the interdict or injected treachery or fraud, drawing out such a brief period to iniquitous loss.⁸

Renewed emphasis on correct and regular adherence to sacramental performance and the very real risk of being denied participation in the Eucharist coincided with the advent of porches becoming constituents of the English medieval parish church.

It is also worth noting that, by the end of the thirteenth century, parishioners formally held responsibility for upkeep of the nave, essentially everything west of the chancel arch. Some responsibility for building and maintaining part of their parish church, overseen, organised, and exacted by the 'guardians of the church' (*gardiani ecclesiae*)—those who would later come to be termed churchwardens—was first clearly defined in canon law in the twelfth century. In England, it was stated unequivocally in the statutes for Winchester diocese in 1224, and synodal statutes of Exeter in 1287.⁹ Financial levies paid by individual parishioners were amalgamated and collectively underpinned corporate concerns with the form, decoration, and architectural appropriateness of the church fabric, working to enhance the building that was the earthly focus of a good Christian life. Enhanced lay engagement with the experience of going to church permeates the period with which this volume is concerned.¹⁰ It is more than coincidental that porches as a true building type start to proliferate in such circumstances.

So far, the ground covered in this paper has sought to offer a context in which to set the apparent burgeoning enthusiasm for church porches in English parishes in the first half of the thirteenth century. An ambition of this volume of essays is to generate discussion around and about the parish church as an object of art-historical study. The remainder of the paper will therefore map out *how* church porches functioned in England c.1200–1399, rather than state what they were used for.¹¹ In doing so it will exemplify the issues at hand and demonstrate something of what can be gained from the direct study of buildings through a lens of human bodily experience.

The south porch at Barnack, designed and constructed in the opening years of the thirteenth century, comprises the four key formal components of this building type as it manifested in England during that century (Fig. 1). The primary formal attributes of Barnack's porch are (1) a large, open entrance arch; (2) an absence of exterior decoration or any provision for sculptural imagery; (3) solid side walls without apertures; and (4) internal benches. This porch, and others like it, exist beyond the church door and thus beyond the bounds of the sacred envelope of the church. There is nothing in their architectural iconography to suggest they protect or are part of the main vessel. The stonework is essentially undecorated, unlike either Romanesque portals or late-medieval church porches. In the thirteenth century, the device guarding the parochial interior was still the solid church door, a surface which for centuries had held images or symbols of divine protection.¹² 'By the thirteenth century, the concept of an iron picture door in England had nearly run its course'.¹³ Ironwork continued to enhance the conceptual as well as the physical strength of the church door and to protect the threshold. Through a process of abstraction, representational imagery was converted into stylised foliate designs arranged geometrically. However, the ongoing apotropaic significance of these ferrous designs is suggested by the presence of a cross motif. Thirteenth-century examples include Great Paxton (Cambridgeshire), and Eaton Bray (Bedfordshire).

Being built to surround and enclose a doorway, whether iconographically decorated or not, emphasises the exterior placement of church porches. Whilst their architectural form (essentially two flanking side walls supporting a roof) constructs them as inhabited spaces, the unguarded open entrance of all porches increases the perception of segregation and thus liminality. In the thirteenth century, porch interiors were places of exclusion and were at risk from malign forces. This is well demonstrated by the two-storey porch at Uffington (Oxfordshire), built c.1220–50. The church retains eleven of its original twelve exterior consecration crosses, projecting stone roundels stationed around the building. Importantly, a consecration cross was not situated on the porch. By implication, this building projected from the defended, sanctified church. If the proposal that parochial experiences of the General Interdict encouraged more porches to be built in England after 1208 than had been before, their definition as externalised spaces would have been crucial to ensure that access to porch space would not be denied should excommunication recur.

The distinction between porch and church was confirmed through witnessing the performance of consecration. According to both William Durandus and Jacobus de Voragine, the ceremony of consecration dramatises the sense of exteriority and the importance of access to the church interior:

Having seen how the altar is consecrated, we must now treat of the manner of consecrating the church building; and in this too, several actions are included. The bishop first goes round the church three times, and each time, when he comes to the door, he strikes it with his crosier and says: "*Attollite portas principes vestras ...*" (Lift up your gates, O princes, and be lifted up, O eternal gates; and the king of glory shall enter in!).¹⁴

The church is sprinkled inside and out with blessed water, which comprises water, wine, salt and ash. Subsequently, these ingredients and their significance would be mnemonically recalled during the preparation of catechumens for baptism, every Christian infant's initiation rite enacted in the church porch.

An architectural component that defines the English parish church porch from its inception through to the Reformation is an open entrance arch set centrally in the facade. Medieval church porches were not fitted with external doors; they never became fully internalised. The open entrance is *the* defining formal characteristic of English medieval parish church porches, and the point is made more emphatically before c.1400 than afterwards. By design, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, stress is placed on the openness of the facade and its facilitation of entry. The walling that surrounds the negative space is often minimised, as seen at Great Massingham (Norfolk), where open-arcaded side elevations generate a rhythmic progression from exterior to church door (Fig. 3). An alternative way of maintaining emphasis on the church door is seen at Chacombe (Northamptonshire), where the large open entrance acutely contrasts with the solidity of the side elevations (Fig. 4). The open front and enclosed flanks work in partnership to create a chiaroscuro effect, which maximises the brightness of daylight falling upon the church door in an otherwise unilluminated interior. Great Massingham and Chacombe show two approaches taken to ensuring that porches framed and enhanced the church door, rather than dominating it. Almost ubiquitously throughout the medieval period, the entrance aperture of a church porch is greater in height and width than the church door within. The effect is a sense of enhanced perspectival depth as well as layering; by architectural and visual manipulation one is drawn towards the main event. The effective play with perspective and light heightens the sense of preparation, contemplation, and anticipation involved in entering the church. When considered as phenomenological experience, the act of entry is enriched by the presence of a porch.

As places where liminal states were experienced—including the opening stages of the sacraments of baptism and marriage—as well as architectural overtures to the main church building, extending the length of time spent in a porch from a

Fig. 3 (Left)
Exterior of the
south porch,
St. Mary, Great
Massingham
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

Fig. 4 (Right)
Exterior of the
south porch, St.
Peter and St.
Paul, Chacombe
(Northamp-
tonshire), from J.C
Wall *Porches and
Fonts*.

few seconds to perhaps many hours draws attention to interior elements and their phenomenological effect. As exteriorised places, porch architecture confuses the senses and phenomenologically problematises where one is: protected but still able to sense the natural elements, sheltered but excluded. They thus dilute the binary distinctions of being outside and inside, and compromise the boundary between two existences. Many church porches built in England have vaulted ceilings, including the earliest parochial examples. The idiosyncratic vault that serves as a canopy over the interior of Barnack's porch might be described as exceeding the engineering abilities of its masons, but their achievement is nonetheless profound. The sense of sanctuary implicitly proffered by the vault acts as compensation for expulsion and exclusion, an architectural version of God's salvific promise to all who repent.

The timber north porch at Boxford (Suffolk), displays a more immediately convincing achievement (Fig. 5). Boxford's porch possesses every attribute of a fully-fledged Decorated stone porch, but has a remarkable sense of structural lightness owing to the manner of the timber frame. Two pairs of large florid apertures construct the side walls, and the entrance arch is framed by shallow niches and blind reticulated panelling above open-cusped lancets. Internally, a vault of moulded ribs appears as though a web cast effortlessly over the space. With more negative space than physical structure making up each elevation, the body's sensory awareness of the exterior environment is retained. Covering the small interior space, the vault provides physical protection (as would any other form of ceiling), but its lightness encourages visual recession, further reduces the building's physicality, and gives primacy to its sensory effect.

Fig. 5
Interior of the
north porch, St.
Mary, Boxford
(Suffolk)
Photo: Author

Boxford's timber porch is a remarkably accomplished architectural set-piece regardless of its material (Fig. 6). Widely appreciated as the highest quality timber porch in Suffolk, its exceptional qualities only really become apparent when compared with East Anglia's stone porches of similar date. Unlike the flint and stone boxes built in Norfolk in the half-century before the Black Death, Suffolk's fourteenth-century porches are timberwork enclosures within which the sensation and perception of the exterior environment are retained. Boxford porch offers a template for changes which would gradually be seen in lithic porches built from the mid-century, reaching maturity around 1400. Precedents for Boxford porch are difficult to find. Choir stalls with vaulted canopies share some formal similarities but lack the porch's truly architectural attitude. It is tempting to think that the timber octagon at Ely, erected after the fall of the Romanesque tower in 1322, might have provided inspiration for the inventive approach taken at Boxford.

Many English medieval parish church porches also have integral, low-level stone seating along the interior of each side wall. Although porch seats are constructed as continuous benches, some thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century examples are accompanied by wall articulation which creates individualised compartments imitative of furniture. The inclusion of integral seating in church porches continued throughout the medieval period, eventually becoming a commonplace convenience rather than anything more powerfully mnemonic. However, early instances of porches with pierced rather than solid side walls display a specific relationship between the seating and the apertures. At Great Massingham, c.1280 (Fig. 7) and Hunstanton, c.1320 (Fig. 8), both in Norfolk, the configuration of these two attributes (benches and wall apertures) forms layers of

Fig. 6
Exterior of the
north porch, St.
Mary, Boxford
(Suffolk)
Photo: Author

enclosure and exposure. Seated on the bench with knees tucked within the perceived thickness of the wall (that is, within the return of the entrance arch), one can lean back against a solid wall. The paired openings in the east and west walls (through which sun, wind, and rain might come) have sills above head height. Sitting on these benches, one is enclosed and shielded; by design the buildings protect those within but do not exclude visual association with the churchyard.

Fig. 7
Eastern elevation,
south porch,
St Mary, Great
Massingham
(Norfolk)
Photo: Author

Fig. 8
Interior of the
south porch, St.
Mary, Hunstanton,
(‘Old St Mary’s’),
Norfolk
Photo: Author

The composition of openings in the side walls and internal benches indicates that the provision of seating was directly stimulated by notions of humility and the performance of penitence. One is invited to sit, rest awhile, linger, wait. Porch benches are, however, very low, on average about forty-five centimetres above ground level, and their horizontal planes are never divided into singular seats. The effect is humbling, a feeling of being small (perhaps insignificant) within a cavernous space and before the ultimate judge: Christ the door (John 10:9). The penitential associations of time spent in a church porch are numerous, including penitential confinement and exclusion from the church following annual confession to one's parish priest.¹⁵ Experiencing a sense of fear and awe at the church entrance derives from Genesis 28:17, '*Quam terribilis est, inquit, locus iste! non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei, et porta caeli*' (And trembling he said: How terrible is this

place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven’).

Similarly, the experiences of women awaiting purification following childbirth associate penitence with porches as preparatory antechambers. Theologians writing across several centuries established the phenomenon. Pope Gregory the Great (540–604), while citing the Old Testament proscription that required women to wait thirty-three days after the birth of a son and sixty-six days after the birth of a daughter before entering the temple, argued that this was to be ‘understood as an allegory, for were a woman to enter church and return thanks in the very hours of her delivery, she would do nothing wrong’.¹⁶ The Penitential of Theodore of Tarsus (Archbishop of Canterbury 668–690) is more restrictive in its warning. Women who enter a church before purification after childbirth (a ritual done forty days after childbirth), shall do penance.¹⁷ Honorius Augustodunensis (1080–c.1154), citing Leviticus 15, also observes that after the birth of a child, women were not to enter the church because they were designated unclean and excluded from the heavenly temple. Because of this, Honorius explains, it was customary that women, joined by men, stand as penitents at the *foris*: a word which might be translated as porch area, atrium or door of the church.¹⁸ By implication, in the English parish context women awaiting purification did so in the porch.

Amongst the most celebrated early-fourteenth century parish churches is at Heckington (Lincolnshire) (Fig. 9).¹⁹ Despite Heckington’s fame, the south porch (built c.1320) has received little attention. It is the primary architectural focus of the

Fig. 9
Exterior of the
south porch,
St Andrew,
Heckington
(Lincolnshire),
from J.C Wall
Porches and Fonts.

church’s facade, confidently projecting further into the churchyard than the adjacent south transept. Despite its heavy restoration, sufficient fabric of medieval date survives to imply something of its iconographic and phenomenological import. At Heckington, the essential form of church porches as a distinct building type established in the early-thirteenth century is retained: the large open archway, low wall plate, no side windows, and low stone benches within. But important differences can be observed. The interior is not sheltered by a vault, shafts do not divide the walling into individualised seats, and the space is more easily relatable to human scale than earlier examples discussed.

The most dramatic difference is the building’s exterior decoration: sinuous, tendril-like cusped scroll work, heraldic shields (the royal arms, plus those of St. Edmund, and Edward the Confessor) and high-relief figurative imagery (a pair of angels and plausibly genuflecting donor figures) set against foliate (almost seaweed-like) backgrounds. This porch exterior is inhabited, brought visually alive through sculpture, and marked as belonging to Christ (although at least the upper part of the figure of Christ blessing, which now occupies the gable image niche, is a modern replacement). One’s phenomenological experience of stepping into this porch is affected by this imagery and its location. Whilst structurally, the building conforms to the standard composition, the exterior treatment construes it to be a shelter beneath the walls of God’s kingdom on earth as opposed to beyond them.

Location actively formulates the nature of events. The significant events in individual and community life cycles which take place at the entrance to the church, in a practical sense, facilitate the presence of one’s earthly peers but also places the real-life drama symbolically before Christ the door. The nature and social value of these Christian sacraments can be equated with the notion of what anthropologist Arnold van Gennep terms ‘territorial passage’.²⁰ He expounds this as fundamental to the construction of rites of passage and as experientially enforcing the societal significance of the event. Transition is both notional and actual, with actual transition (‘territorial passage’) being made apparent by means of differentiated places distinguished at a threshold. Although written nearly sixty years ago, van Gennep’s observation is pertinent to English parish church porches in that they located preparatory sections of Christian sacramental rites. Porches such as that at Heckington—and it is an important early example—imply that the significant limen of the church, the sacred threshold, was relocated from the church door to the porch entrance. In accordance with van Gennep’s model for marking points of transition, the sculptural treatment of porch facades implicitly confirms this shift.

The porch at Over (Cambridgeshire), also built c.1320, contrasts with Heckington in its formal attributes and phenomenological effect. Externally, a considerable area of blank walling surmounts the entrance arch and a crenellated parapet, shafted pinnacles, and sculpted ball-flower frieze inhabited by animals, including dogs, create an exterior emphatic in its lack of niches to house *sacred* imagery (Fig. 10). The porch at Over deviates from the previously regarded form in having a combination of a relatively diminutive

Fig. 10
Exterior of the
south porch,
St Mary, Over
(Cambridgeshire)
Photo: Author

entrance arch and open—or pierced—side walls. These window-like apertures, set low in the wall, were unglazed and there is no evidence for shutters. Light floods the lower part of the porch interior, specifically the space populated by parishioners participating in rites including baptism and marriage.²¹ Light directed through the entrance arch towards the

church door, as at Barnack, or the global illumination of a porch such as Great Massingham contrast the way in which the architectural form at Over gives primacy to the sensory experience of being in the porch.

The internal ground plan measures 3.7 metres square, the internal doorway measures 2.75 by 1.75 metres, the exterior arch 3.2 by 1.9 metres. Yet these restrained dimensions belie the cavernous interior space. The height from floor to ceiling is approximately 7.6 metres, far beyond human scale and twice as high as the building's plan is wide or deep. Geometrically, therefore, the porch is a double cube stacked vertically. Part of the architectural reasoning for this height might have been exterior appearance and a desire for the porch to be scaled appropriately to the rest of the church. Whatever the reason for designing such a tall

porch, the result is a building within which a human figure can only occupy approximately twenty to twenty-five per cent of the vertical space, and the void above one's head is considerable (Fig. 11). The phenomenological effect of diminution resulting from the building's disproportionate height compared with its plan is further intensified when seated on the low stone bench.

During the period 1200–1399 the church porch flourished as a component of the English parish church. The very earliest examples established their essential form, but two significant developments occurred during this period: the introduction of exterior imagery to adorn the facade; and window-like apertures pierced through the flanking walls to illuminate human engagement in the space. In terms of their evidential function, porches were locations in which lived experience was largely defined as either preparatory or contemplative.

Much of this paper has been descriptive rather than analytical, and by way of conclusion I will very briefly summarise what I believe becomes knowable through the adoption of a phenomenological enquiry of architectural forms. Rarely can we

Fig. 11
Interior of the
south porch,
St Mary, Over
(Cambridgeshire)
Photo: Author

medievalists hear the voices of those who inhabited the cultures we study expressing their worldly experience. Although not unproblematic, risking ahistoricism and anachronism at every turn, the phenomenological study of built environments can permit the historian a fractional and fragmentary glimpse of the medieval lived experience. Discovering rewarding ways to think through the circumstances and implications of parish churches—how they function in relation to bodily experience—requires a methodology that enables buildings not simply to become better known but to be better understood. In return, this knowledge will shape how historical relationships between people and things are considered and recognised.

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2. Juhani Pallasmaa, 'The Geometry of Feeling: A Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture', in Kate Nesbitt (ed.), *Theorizing A New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 452.
3. J. C. Wall, *Porches and Fonts* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 1912).
4. For discussion of the contemporary confusion and hurried attempts to establish protocol see Stephen D. Church, 'King John's Books and the Interdict in England and Wales', in Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm (eds.), *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), pp. 149–65.
5. Helen Lunnon, *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 98–9.
6. *Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215*. Medieval Sourcebook (Fordham University), accessed 1 June 2021, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp>
7. T. M. Parker, 'The Terms of the Interdict of Innocent III', *Speculum* 11:2 (1936): pp. 258–60.
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10. Catherine Rider, 'Lay Religion and Pastoral Care in Thirteenth Century England: The Evidence of a Group of Short Confession Manuals', *Journal of Medieval History* 36:4 (2010): pp. 327–9.
11. For further discussion of porch functions see Lunnon, *Church Porches*, pp. 55–100.
12. Jane Geddes, *Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England*. (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1999), pp. 37–48.
13. Geddes, *Decorative Ironwork*, p. 41.
14. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints, Volume II*, (trans.) William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 390.
15. For more detailed discussion see Lunnon, *Church Porches*.
16. Pope Gregory's reply to the eighth question posed by St. Augustine, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a letter written to the Pope in 597 AD, and as recorded in Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, book 1, chapter 27. Medieval Sourcebook (Fordham University), accessed 1 June 2021, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/bede-book1.asp>.
17. Penitential of Theodore of Tarsus, no. 17, as cited in Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, Ca. 500–1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 479, note 15.
18. Honorius of Autun, *Gemma Animae*, PL 172, bk 1, cap 146, p. 589. See also Burchard of Worms *Decretorum Libri XX*, PL 140, lib.19 cap 141, p. 1010, as cited in Schulenburg, *Forgetful*, p. 479 note 15.
19. For detailed and enlightening discussion of the sculptural programmes at Heckington see Veronica Sekules, 'Beauty and the Beast: Ridicule and Orthodoxy in Architectural Marginalia in Early-Fourteenth Century Lincolnshire', *Art History* 18:1 (1998): pp. 37–62.
20. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (trans.) Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 15–25.
21. Lunnon, *Church Porches*, pp. 65–8, 74–7.

The Case of Arbogast: Image and Identity in a Swiss Gothic Parish Church

D. LYLE DECHANT

Fig. 1
Church of
St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zürich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Roland
zh (Wikimedia
Commons, CC
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Gregory the Great's belief that images in churches should serve as surrogate texts for the edification of illiterate viewers permeated late-medieval culture, and if art historians still invoke Gregory to explain wall paintings in parish churches, this is largely because medieval observers did too.¹ Bishops and abbots used his famous dictum to justify their acts of patronage, while preachers and vernacular authors transmitted it to lay audiences, who in turn adopted its terminology to express their own reactions to pictures they saw in churches. So frequently do our sources echo this notion of images as 'books for the illiterate' that alternative explanations for medieval wall paintings rarely appeared before the twenty-first century, and remain atypical today.²

Images in parish churches, often far removed from the bustling urban and courtly centres of literacy, would seem to offer an ideal demonstration of Gregory's dictum. Thus it comes as no surprise to learn that the extensive fourteenth-century murals inside the late-medieval church of St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur, Switzerland, have been almost universally interpreted in Gregorian terms (Fig. 1).³ Johann Rudolf Rahn, the first to publish on the paintings after their rediscovery in 1877, argued that 'their main purpose was to educate the faithful and to delight the eye with a pleasing interplay of forms and colors'.⁴ Hans-Friedrich Reske, applying language that could have come straight from the thirteenth century, labelled the paintings in 1972 a '*Bilderpredigt*' (sermon in pictures) that offered an 'independent form of proclamation alongside proclamation through the word',⁵ and Albert Knoepfli's precise and thorough 1981 study explicitly aligned the Oberwinterthur *Bilderpredigt* with 'people who were unable to read'.⁶ Knoepfli's account is cited with approval in the most recent study of the church.⁷

Despite this apparent consensus, however, Gregory's line of thinking leaves a great deal unexplained about these paintings. Why do they focus—uniquely in medieval art—on the obscure figure of St. Arbogast? Why are portions of the Arbogast cycle suffused with imagery drawn from secular media? Why does Arbogast himself not even appear in the most prominent scene? What is the relationship between the scenes that apparently derive from specific textual sources (the tenth-century *Vita arbogasti* and its fourteenth-century German adaptation) and the immediately adjacent pictures that do not appear in these texts? Ultimately, what messages would a medieval viewer have perceived beneath the surface of this alleged 'sermon in paint'? Without wholly discounting claims of pastoral functions for parish church art, this essay argues instead that regional politics, internal power struggles, and the need to fashion a distinctive institutional identity all played a larger role than previously suspected in the patronage, design, and purpose of the St. Arbogast picture cycle.

The late-medieval town of Oberwinterthur, still bearing visible traces of its origins as a Roman outpost along the transalpine route into Gaul, lay on the eastern edge of a hill overlooking the Eulach river in rural northern Switzerland.⁸ It neighboured the city of Niederwinterthur (eventually known as Winterthur proper), a younger settlement that had, thanks to the patronage of the local nobility, gradually eclipsed Oberwinterthur in size and regional importance.⁹ The church at Niederwinterthur—originally an offshoot of the central parish church at Oberwinterthur—had expanded alongside the city, and jurisdiction disputes between the two led to a convocation of secular and ecclesiastical authorities in 1180, headed by the Bishop of Constance, that essentially granted the younger church autonomy within the parish.¹⁰ This contributed to a competitive spirit between the two institutions that would shape the appearance of both churches for generations. Beyond the bounds of its own parish, Oberwinterthur was situated almost precisely between two major regional hubs, each an afternoon's journey away by horse: the free Imperial city of Zurich to the south-

west, and Constance, seat of the diocese, to the north-east (Fig. 2).

Local tradition traced the foundation of the parish church at Oberwinterthur to the great seventh-century Merovingian king Dagobert, who, according to legend, had befriended a wise and holy hermit named Arbogast who resided in the Alsatian forest. Over the holy man's protests, the king appointed Arbogast bishop of the diocese of Strasbourg. Sometime later, the king's son Siegbert was hunting with companions in the woods, when his horse, startled by a boar, threw him from the saddle. Tangled in the reins, the boy was trampled to death. The desperate king implored Arbogast for supernatural aid. Arbogast spent a night praying over the boy's lifeless body, and the following morning Siegbert rose from his bier, alive again. In gratitude for this miracle Dagobert offered material riches, which Arbogast of course rejected, so the king instead donated rich tracts of land to the Strasbourg bishopric and proceeded to found churches and monasteries in Arbogast's name. By the late Middle Ages, the parish community at Oberwinterthur believed its own church to be among these foundations, tied to Dagobert's munificence and his personal devotion to the bishop and miracle-worker Arbogast.¹¹

Modern historians find the church's origins less clear-cut. First, little information on the historical Arbogast exists; our knowledge of his life (including his relationship with Dagobert and the miraculous restoration of Dagobert's son) rests mainly on a short *vita* composed by the tenth-century Strasbourg bishop Utho.¹² Utho himself, as he freely admits, had little to work with, and his account of Arbogast aims more at

Fig. 2
Detail from Jos
Murer's 1566
woodcut map of the
region of Zurich
(Kantonskarte Jos
Murer). Zurich is
the sprawling city
at the bottom.
Winterthur is
the largest town
appearing along
the upper edge of
this detail, while
Oberwinterthur
appears
immediately to
its north, with
the spire of the
erstwhile parish
church of St.
Arbogast visible
among the small
cluster of buildings.
Photo: Wikimedia
Commons

legitimising Dagobert's land grants to the Strasbourg bishopric than providing concrete details about the saint himself. The historical Arbogast was perhaps an Irish missionary, but probably a native Frank, working to convert the local Alsatian population to Christianity and safeguard Merovingian control of the region. Most likely he lived in the century preceding Dagobert's time; nevertheless, some historians have tried to preserve Oberwinterthur's royal ties by supposing Dagobert issued grants in the deceased saint's memory, including the parish of Oberwinterthur.¹³ Others, however, consider the entire Dagobertian connection a pious fiction of the later Middle Ages.¹⁴

Archaeology sheds more substantial light on the early history of the Oberwinterthur church. Excavations beneath the present structure unearthed remnants of a wooden building of the seventh or eighth century, presumably the earliest phase of construction, which was rebuilt in stone sometime around the tenth century. Expansions followed gradually, including the addition of southern and northern annexes, a sacristy, and a bell tower in the late 1100s. Notably, each of these expansions seems to have been a reaction to a comparable renovation at the neighbouring church in Niederwinterthur, each seemingly striving to out-build the other.¹⁵

During the second half of the thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth, the church at Oberwinterthur undertook a major reconstruction, practically a total rebuilding, which gave the church the basic structure and appearance it retains today. During this phase, the whole building was lengthened to the west, and the inner walls separating the church proper from its earlier annexes were broken open and converted into a pillared arcade, transforming the entire structure into a three-aisled, five-bayed basilica: an extraordinarily ambitious design for a rural parish church. The eastern end was expanded into a large, rectangular apse with a steep, vaulted choir, and the bell tower was enlarged and refurbished. Finally, the interior was fully repainted with the extensive narrative and decorative pictorial programme visible on the walls today. Fortunately, we have two precise dates that bookend this period of building activity: dendrochronology provides a date of 1257–8 for the ceiling beams used in the nave reconstruction, and a bell cast for the refurbished bell tower, which survived into the modern era only to be melted down in 1910, bore a dedication to Arbogast along with a date of 1336.¹⁶

The church's interior decoration, easily among the grandest and most lavish cycles surviving from Gothic Switzerland, comprises a sprawling, interlocking network of devotional figures, cinematic narratives, and lively ornamentation, all rendered in bold, clear outlines and bright colours to promote legibility from the nave below.¹⁷ Undoubtedly the murals would have been completed near the end of the church's decades-long renovation, an assumption that fits well with the general style of the paintings and specific details of clothing depicted therein, which all point to the 1320s or 1330s.¹⁸ Whitewashed during the Swiss Reformation, the murals were first discovered as part of a renovation in 1835, but they generated little interest, suffered damage

Fig 3.
Interior looking
east, St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zürich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Roland
zh (Wikimedia
Commons, CC
BY-SA 3.0)

during construction, and were ultimately re-covered. They were exposed again in 1877 to the more welcoming eyes of the *Historisch-antiquarische Verein Winterthur* (Winterthur Historical and Antiquarian Society) and the art historian Johann Rudolf Rahn, who made watercolour copies of the paintings and initiated preservation efforts. A faulty restoration attempt in 1932 caused further damage, obliterating the paintings adorning the choir and west wall. A more scientific and careful restoration of 1976–81 stabilised the paintings, removed earlier retouchings, and exposed to view the surviving medieval surface, now mostly shorn of its upper layers of colour and detail.¹⁹

The centrepiece of the original programme would have been the monumental Christ in Majesty in the apse overlooking the main altar, now lost. Opposite this on the interior of the west wall are fragmentary traces of several devotional scenes and saints, including the popular saints George and Christopher. In the Middle Ages as today, however, the nave walls were surely the main attraction (Fig. 3). Each wall is divided horizontally by long, continuous floral borders into three unequal registers. In the uppermost and widest zone, pairs of standing, life-size saints (men on the north wall, women on the south) fill the spaces between the narrow rounded windows of the clerestory.²⁰ Willowy specimens of the elegant, spatially-flat courtly style seeping into the German lands from Paris, each gesticulating duo hovers under a fictive Gothic architectural frame against a background of alternating red and blue. On both walls, the central figures in this register are visually set apart: an enthroned, frontally-facing Arbogast presides over the north wall, clad in a flowing red mantle and bearing the episcopal signs of mitre and crozier, while opposite him at the centre of the south wall, a scene of Christ's Coronation of Mary breaks up the otherwise orderly sequence of standing female saints.

Fig 4.
Life of St. Arbogast.
South wall, Church
of St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zürich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Author

Below this upper zone with its looming, static, heavenly entities, stretches a narrower middle register filled with smaller-scale, earthly narratives: Christ's life and Passion on the south wall, and on the north, unprecedented in medieval art, a cycle dedicated to the church's patron, St. Arbogast. The Christ cycle occupies fifteen roughly-uniform scenes, from the Annunciation to the Three Marys at the Tomb (the cycle would have culminated with now-destroyed Ascension and Pentecost scenes on the west wall, and of course the Christ in Majesty in the apse). On the opposite wall, Arbogast's adventures comprise only six unequal scenes (Fig. 4). Degradation of the first two Arbogast scenes makes identification difficult, but they probably represent his establishment of a hermitage at Surburg and his consecration as bishop of Strasbourg.²¹ The next four episodes are Siegbert's hunting accident, Arbogast's miraculous resuscitation of Siegbert, Dagobert's granting of the city of Rufenach to the Strasbourg bishopric, and finally, Arbogast's burial, all of which feature prominently in Utho's *vita*.

Even with the noticeable horizontal expansion of three of its scenes, the Arbogast cycle occupies only three-fourths of the north wall's length. Two seemingly-unrelated images fill the remaining space, the *Schutzmantelmadonna*—the Madonna of Mercy who faces the viewer with her cloak held open, providing shelter to the figures huddled within—and the Adoration of the Magi, displaced from the Christ cycle on the opposite wall. While occasionally decried as illogical add-ons, these two scenes in fact resonate narratively and thematically with the preceding Arbogast cycle.²² Utho's *vita* specifically reports that Arbogast 'committed himself to the protection of the blessed Mary' in his efforts to revive Siegbert, so the image of Mary as protectress gives visual form to this prayer while affirming its efficacy.²³ Furthermore, as a devotional image, it also provides the viewer an opportunity to emulate Arbogast by appealing to the same

Fig. 5.
Saint Arbogast
(left). Stained
glass window
from Strasbourg
Cathedral, 1260s.
Photo: Denis
Krieger

supernatural power invoked so fruitfully by him, thereby forging a bond across the centuries between the church's revered patron and later medieval parishioners standing in the nave (it is surely no coincidence that the patron's arms cluster around this figure of Mary). As we shall see below, the Adoration scene, too, is thematically and visually linked to the Arbogast cycle.

Finally, below these middle registers, the lowest zone on the north and south walls consists of a series of holy figures and saints adorning the spandrels between the arches of the arcade pillars. While these generally have no immediate bearing on the narratives above, Albert Knoepfli has convincingly argued that the first two pictures in the lower zone of the north wall, both badly damaged and impossible to identify securely, constitute a kind of preface to the Arbogast cycle directly above. The first may depict the young Arbogast's rejection of his family home to pursue his higher calling, and the second, his leavetaking from an early companion before venturing into the woods alone.²⁴ Bolstering Knoepfli's speculation is the fact that these scenes, though not

present in Utho's Latin *vita*, occur in an early-fourteenth-century German adaptation of Arbogast's life produced in a nearby Dominican convent (likely Töss, just three miles away) around the same time as the Oberwinterthur paintings.²⁵ This text, part of a compilation of saint's lives known today as the Solothurn Legendary, remains unedited and, despite its historical and geographical proximity to the church at Oberwinterthur, has been ignored in the published literature on the Arbogast cycle.

The Arbogast paintings at Oberwinterthur are the first and only known medieval narrative cycle dedicated to this little-known saint. Isolated earlier images of Arbogast, such as a stained-glass window of the 1260s in the north clerestory of Strasbourg Cathedral, portray him as a generic bishop; the inscription alone ensures identification (Fig. 5).²⁶ By contrast, the designer of the Oberwinterthur sequence—likely a cleric who would have relayed instructions orally to the painters—faced the challenge of adapting, for presumably the first time, Arbogast's short and largely uneventful recorded life into a large-scale, public narrative cycle. This provides a remarkable opportunity to witness medieval creativity in action.

Unlike the well-rehearsed iconography of the Christological cycle on the south wall (similar examples of which appear in nearby churches at Landschlacht, Oberstammheim, and elsewhere), the Arbogast cycle betrays signs of ad hoc invention both in the individual compositions and overall design.²⁷ Where the scenes from the Christ cycle are uniform in size, evenly spaced, and confine themselves with a practiced deftness to the essential actors in each episode, the Arbogast panels vary wildly in size, show little visual relationship to each other, and are stylistically much looser and freer in conception. There is also a greater build-up of inessential background elements like trees, buildings, and secondary figures depicted at a smaller scale. Lacking pictorial precedents, the episodes adhere closely to the textual accounts found in Utho's *vita* or the Solothurn Legendary, though oral versions of these stories could have played a role in their conception as well. Ultimately, of course, as we will explore, the artist's visual storytelling in many ways transcends any received source material to generate new meanings for a new audience in this unique context.

The lengthiest and most arresting scene both in the textual versions and in the painted cycle at Oberwinterthur is Siegbert's hunting accident (Fig. 6). Over four metres long on the wall, it bursts with drama and formal dynamism. In every other scene of the cycle, figures pose, kneel, and converse with a quiet, elegant composure, subtly reflecting the graceful composure of the saints above, but here, everything is movement and noise: a tempest of leaping horses, fluttering birds, swaying trees, blowing horns, barking dogs, and of course, Siegbert's sprawling, doomed body, flailing helplessly as his horse's hooves strike his head and chest. Big, looping outlines render this violence starkly against a vibrant reddish-orange background, and the viewer, absorbed in this cinematic spectacle, forgets for a moment how odd it is that the most lavish and memorable scene from the life of St. Arbogast does not even feature Arbogast.

Fig. 6
Siegbert's Hunting
Accident. South
wall, Church
of St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zürich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Author

In this, though, the designer has merely followed Utho, who devotes eight of his ten short chapters to this hunting expedition and its aftermath. Utho describes the moment of Siegbert's fall in trenchant, novelistic detail: "At the sight [of the boar] the horse he rode took fright, changing its course and twisting around to flee. The boy tried to hold it back by its harness, pulling the reins more tightly to the other side, but—alas!—he leaned over too far and slipped off the saddle. But since he had become entangled in the reins he held, he was dragged to the ground, and trampled piteously by the horse's hooves."²⁸

The anonymous German paraphraser dampens the emotionality but hews closely to Utho's account: "Thus it happened that the horse became frightened and wild, and the boy, unable to hold on, fell from the saddle and was tangled in the horse's reins, such that the horse battered and trampled [him]".²⁹

To depict this episode on the church wall, the Oberwinterthur artist went beyond both texts, deploying established visual rhetoric to conjure an adventure worthy of Tristan or Iwein. Siegbert and his two companions enter a fantasy forest of swaying trees whose stylised, club-shaped canopies house a lively entourage of birds, squirrels, and even a monkey. Though degradation has left little besides their silhouettes, Siegbert's two mounted companions, entering from the left, convey the main narrative through precise gestures. The first rider immediately establishes the scene's context by blowing a hunting horn, signalling to the dogs that race ahead, while the second rider initiates the drama by turning his head back to his partner and gesturing to the right, drawing his and the viewer's eye toward the unfolding tragedy. Farther to the right comes the harrowing

climax. Siegbert has just tumbled from his saddle, his arms and legs jumbling together with the onrushing hooves of his panicked horse, while the massive boar lunges at the horse from the right, oblivious to the two hunting dogs already snapping at its flanks.

Fantastical forests like this were a staple of popular romances and secular art generally in the Gothic period.³⁰ The famous Carmina Burana songbook from southern Germany contains among its miniatures a forest similarly awash with life and vegetation, and parallels also appear in contemporary romance-inspired tapestries and manuscripts (Fig. 7). The particular motif of horsemen riding to the hunt also immediately evokes widespread secular iconography. Boar hunts were a particular favourite: they could appear as a 'labour of the month' for December in lay prayer books but also as standalone compositions, such as the (more successful) boar hunt appearing in the Manesse songbook, painted in nearby Zürich at around this same time (Fig. 8).³¹ Imagery like this would have particularly resonated with the elite patrons whose heraldic crests adorn the north wall, but it would also have bestowed a sense of familiarity and topical relevance upon observers of more moderate standing.

Fig. 7.
Frontispiece for
spring songs with
inhabited forest,
from the Carmina
Burana (Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek,
Clm 4660), fol.
64v. Southern
Germany, c. 1230.
Photo: Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek

Fig. 8. Frontispiece to the poems of Herr Heinrich Hetzbold von Weifensee, from the Codex Manesse (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848), fol. 228r. Zürich, c. 1330. Photo: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg

The artist has also ‘modernised’ the story by updating particular details of hunting paraphernalia: for example, while both the Latin and German accounts speak of Siegbert getting tangled in the horse’s *reins* (Latin ‘*habenae*’, Middle High German ‘*Zöme*’), the artist has depicted him instead with his foot trapped in the *stirrups*, an invention unknown in Arbogast’s time but indispensable to later medieval knights. Likewise, Siegbert wears modern, circular rowel spurs, which had only replaced traditional prick spurs during the later thirteenth century.³² The single-handed arming

sword strapped to his side and his coiffed, à la mode haircut also mark Siegbert as a recognisably-modern knight. By drawing from a familiar visual lexicon, the artist casts a legendary (perhaps initially unfamiliar) story into a popular, contemporary idiom, thereby encouraging parishioners to see its relevance to their own daily lives and forge a personal relationship to the church’s patron saint. Here personal identity begins to mingle with institutional or corporate identity.

However tailored the images might be for lay tastes, though, parishioners would also discover a more subversive aspect to this composition. After all, it was Siegbert’s hunting excursion—that favourite pursuit of the secular nobility and iconic motif of secular visual culture—that caused his injury and death. At least, that is, until the church stepped in to offer salvation, in the form of Arbogast. The artist presents a world of sensual delight and aristocratic leisure, but, as Siegbert learns, its pleasures are untrustworthy and impermanent, and lead to death. Like a modern Christian metal band, the Oberwinterthur designer has bent a secular mode of discourse into a vessel for religious messages. This theme is subtly reinforced by another element drawn from popular visual culture, the monkey in the tree above Siegbert’s horse. A characteristic bit of Gothic parody, monkeys exposed the folly and sin of humankind by emulating (‘aping’) their behaviour and gestures from the margins.³³ With its bent legs and extended arms, the monkey’s body closely mimics the position of Siegbert’s own flailing limbs, as if mocking his plight. The message is clear: pursuit of worldly pleasures is foolish and brings doom, but salvation is at hand through the church, and specifically through *this* church, through Arbogast. Secular iconography is here redirected toward religious, institutional ends.

The theme of ecclesiastical precedence over secular authority runs like a thread through Arbogast’s *vita*, and the Oberwinterthur cycle highlights and expands upon these moments. After all, for all his worldly power, Dagobert was helpless to save his son. Only the church could answer his prayers and bring Siegbert back to life, as we see in the following scene (Fig. 9). Clad in full episcopal regalia, Arbogast extends a hand over the boy’s body, and he rises from his funeral bier to meet the saint’s gaze. Departing again from Utho’s text, the artist includes the boy’s parents in the scene, the queen standing behind Arbogast and the king at the opposite end. Between these two contrary poles of authority, the boy gazes rapturously at Arbogast, not his royal father. And, of course, the resolution of the story involves Dagobert ceding a wealthy piece of land to the church, as depicted in the next scene, though here too the artist has added the extra-textual detail of Dagobert dropping to one knee, like a vassal before a lord.

The Adoration scene that closes the entire sequence should be read in this light as well (Fig. 10). The picture opens with two crowned riders moving from left to right against a white, tree-lined background toward Mary, baby Christ, and a third figure plausibly interpreted as the prophet Isaiah.³⁴ The holy company lifts their arms to greet the third king, who has already dismounted in Mary’s presence and offers her a golden

Fig. 9
Arbogast's
Miraculous
Resurrection of
Siegbert. South
wall, Church
of St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zurich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Author

Fig. 10
Adoration of
the Magi. South
wall, Church
of St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zurich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Author

vessel. Hans-Friedrich Reske analysed this scene as a paradigm of gift-giving, a scriptural precedent for the kneeling Dagobert offering his own gift, and a pastoral model for contemporary parishioners to emulate.³⁵ No doubt this is true, but the Adoration picture should also be read in light of its visual and thematic parallels to the hunting scene. Both feature a procession of three secular horsemen, the foremost of whom falls to the ground. But where Siegbert is brought low by his pursuit of worldly pleasures, the kneeling magus willingly submits to God's commandments and thus chooses the path of salvation. The Adoration riders thus provide a counter-example to the secular riders: once again the sacred and the profane are set against each other, to the detriment of the latter.

The visual design of the wall undergirds and enhances this conceptual contrast between sacred and secular authority. Both sets of riders move left to right. This is more than a concession to the customary direction of reading and viewing, however: the beholder standing in the nave would perceive that both sets of riders move eastward toward the church's choir, but of course, only one reaches their destination. Siegbert's death and subsequent revival under the church's auspices serve as a lesson and a foil to the noble riders in the Adoration scene, neither of which can thus be fully appreciated without the other. It is easy to imagine this contrast being folded into a sermon condemning worldly pleasures and the vagaries of temporal authority, perhaps accompanied by a sweeping gesture to the painted walls above the parishioners' heads. In this light, the cycle conveys a broader message from the clergy at Oberwinterthur to the elite nobles who funded the cycle and whose arms trumpet their wealth and status to the viewer. If the cycle showcases secular prestige on its surface, a deeper message insistently undercuts that status to glorify the church as an institution and to assert its ultimate authority over the world outside.

What do we know of these lay noble patrons? The arms arrayed in two rows on the north wall represent the Meier von Neuburg-Mörsburg and the von Hegi families, both members of the lesser nobility whose castles were located within the Oberwinterthur parish.³⁶ Ten of the twelve extant crests belong to the von Hegis; they cluster around the *Schutzmantelmadonna* and, interestingly, the scene of Arbogast's burial. Given that a certain Recke von Hegi left funds to the church in 1327 for the purpose of providing burials for parishioners, we are probably justified in seeing a 'portrait' of this benefactor in the handsome, conspicuous knight standing immediately to the right of Arbogast's burial, inserting himself into the sacred past (Fig. 11).³⁷

Fig. 11
Burial of Arbogast.
South wall, Church
of St. Arbogast,
Oberwinterthur,
Canton Zurich,
Switzerland.
Photo: Author

These patrons' insistence on self-promotion ran counter to the clergy's own mission and message, and the paintings, in their design and execution, allow us to glimpse these tensions within the parish community. On the one hand, the lay noble patrons who funded the paintings sought to magnify their reputations and assert their own status within the community, while on the other hand, the clergy who designed and implemented the paintings made choices that gently suppressed those ambitions with unmistakable reminders of their own ecclesiastical authority.

Already, then, we have moved far beyond Gregory. Can we probe further? If these paintings chart tensions between different social factions within the church itself, what messages might they have conveyed to neighbouring churches in a wider regional context? And how does this relate to the church's unusual focus on Arbogast himself, a figure with little name recognition, no iconographic tradition, and whose historical ties to the church were questionable at best?

In a 2004 study of ecclesiastical and civic patronage in medieval Zurich, Joan Holladay demonstrated how a series of architectural renovations and artistic commissions undertaken by Zurich's two dominant churches, Grossmünster and Fraumünster, were conceived and executed in direct competition to each other.³⁸ So, for instance, when Fraumünster honoured its founder Louis the German with a series of relief sculptures, Grossmünster commissioned a sculpture of Louis's predecessor Charlemagne, claiming him as their own founder and thereby 'enriching [itself] with a past that established its historical priority over the Fraumünster'.³⁹ Fraumünster retaliated by commissioning a mural depicting the removal of the relics of the important local saints Felix and Regula from Grossmünster to Fraumünster, bolstering their own claims to priority. The city government even got involved when an entirely new saint, Exuperantius, began appearing on the city seal alongside the venerable Felix and Regula, a controversial gesture that Holladay believes marked the burghers' increasing independence from the two great churches in their midst.

Did smaller parish churches wield images and saints with similar intent? We have already seen how over the course of three centuries, the architectural development of the church at Oberwinterthur responded to renovations undertaken by its closest neighbour at Niederwinterthur, especially after their formal political split in 1180. As multiple writers have noted, the likeliest explanation for this is an institutional rivalry that expressed itself in architectural patronage, mirroring the situation in Zurich.⁴⁰ In fact, architectural developments in Zurich filtered into the two churches' competition: Winterthur's reconstruction in the 1250s was modelled after Grossmünster's newly-built choir from the 1220s–30s, and this design was subsequently appropriated by planners at Oberwinterthur.⁴¹ We recall too that in the lower zone of the south wall at Oberwinterthur we find the local saints of Zurich: not only Felix and Regula, but even the newly-minted Exuperantius, whose cult in Zurich was scarcely a generation old. Clearly the designers at both churches were keen to remain 'modern'.

Holladay's study thus provides a framework to understand the architecture of smaller churches outside the urban hubs, but it also opens a new line of inquiry into the origins of Arbogast's cult at Oberwinterthur. For decades, scholars have noted the remarkable fact that, though they overtly affirm the church's dedication to a sanctified figure from the past, the paintings themselves are in fact the earliest evidence of building's dedication to Arbogast (together with the roughly contemporaneous bell of 1336). Written documents naming Arbogast as the church's patron do not occur until later, first in 1369, then 1373, and 1413.⁴² So when and why exactly did the church at Oberwinterthur become associated with the name Arbogast? We simply do not know. Earlier scholarship assumed without evidence that the grandiose mural cycle must imply a pre-existing dedication to Arbogast.⁴³ At work here is the false belief, rooted in Gregory's widely accepted dictum, that images serve only didactic or aesthetic purposes and cannot or do not carry political weight. Freed of this assumption, it is possible to argue that Arbogast, whom no other church in the region had yet claimed as patron, might have offered a small but expanding parish church the perfect blank slate onto which to project its own ambitions and desire for prestige.

The choice of Arbogast was not random but fits rather nicely with the premise of a regional 'competition for saints'. In the thirteenth century, one of the most important and prominent dedicatees of this region was another early Strasbourg bishop named Florentius.⁴⁴ Florentius's cult was based around his tomb at Niederhaslach, just west of Strasbourg, whose parish church also undertook a major renovation in the late 1200s and early 1300s, which included a new sculpted tympanum celebrating Florentius's life and miracles.⁴⁵ Despite belonging to the diocese of Constance, Oberwinterthur and its community had strong ties to Alsace and the Strasbourg bishopric, especially through the influential thirteenth-century counts of Kyburg and the local Dominican convent of Töss.⁴⁶ The patrons and clerics at Oberwinterthur would likely have been aware of the renovations at Niederhaslach and the wider cult of Florentius.

So what was the appeal of Arbogast? Simply put, he came first. Arbogast was Florentius's immediate predecessor as bishop of Strasbourg, and devotees of Arbogast could derive from his historical priority a claim of institutional precedence over the more popular Florentius and the churches honouring him as patron. Just as Arbogast was less well known, but historically pre-dated other saints in the region, so too Oberwinterthur saw itself as smaller and less renowned, but older, than its neighbouring church at Niederwinterthur. This parallel could have encouraged the adoption of Arbogast as its institutional patron. Just as the Zurich burghers embraced their independence by promoting the obscure Exuperantius, so too might Oberwinterthur have embraced the little-known Arbogast to raise its own regional profile. In other words, the church's dramatic renovation during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries may have been more than physical: the cult of St. Arbogast at Oberwinterthur could itself be an artefact of the Gothic period, part of an institutional rebranding

that re-shaped the collective memory and situated the church squarely in a prestigious, sanctified lineage.

While the new artistic programme would have been the chief means of propagating this new identity to parishioners, the bell cast in 1336, which probably marked the completion of the physical renovation, would also have complemented and punctuated this less tangible act of redefinition.⁴⁷ Interestingly, in contrast to Utho’s Latin text, bells feature prominently in the German life of Arbogast preserved in the Solothurn Legendary. In response to the divinely-ordained selection of Arbogast as Bishop of Strasburg, the clergy and laity alike celebrated by ringing bells throughout the city.⁴⁸ On another occasion, after Arbogast’s death when his name and reputation had been forgotten, a woman whose sons had been hanged called on him to resurrect them. He did so, and when the woman spread news of this miracle, the townspeople once again celebrated his name by ringing bells.⁴⁹ Noteworthy here is that both stories pertain to moments when Arbogast was chosen or called upon after a period of obscurity, precisely as the parish church of Oberwinterthur did. As Michelle Garceau explains, medieval parishioners believed that bells symbolically broadcast the messages inscribed on them over vast distances as a form of collective prayer.⁵⁰ Inscribed with an invocation to Arbogast, every peal of the bell would have symbolically proclaimed news of the church’s patron across the surrounding countryside (and especially, perhaps, to their closest ‘competitor’ at Niederwinterthur).

Medieval viewers may have cited Gregory, but the people who planned and executed paintings on church walls knew that pictures did much more than tell sermons in paint. They expressed relationships. They invited personal immersion by appropriating popular visual idioms, while also appealing to a legendary past to help solidify a public, institutional identity. They negotiated tensions within the parish community itself, while also articulating relationships with a wider circle of neighbouring churches, cities, and dioceses. They jockeyed for status by manipulating the cult of saints, thereby shaping a community’s understanding of its own history. While much has been made of the role played by memory in medieval art, there are cases, as at Oberwinterthur, where images encourage *forgetting*. In the final analysis, the designer and artists responsible for the Arbogast cycle painted over one version of the past with another, more prestigious version, supplanting the church’s earlier history so thoroughly that its original dedicatee remains unknown today. And this coat, unlike a layer of material paint, does not so easily fleck or fall away.

1. See Celia M. Chazelle, ‘Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I’s letters to Serenus of Marseilles’, *Word & Image* 6:2 (1990): pp. 138–53; Herbert L. Kessler, ‘Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries’, in Conrad Rudolph (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, second edition (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2019), pp. 221–44.

2. Cf. Anna Nilsén, ‘Man and Picture: On the Function of Wall Paintings in Medieval Churches’, in Axel Bolvig and Philip Lindley (eds.), *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 323–40; Athene Reiss, ‘Beyond “Books for the Illiterate”: Understanding English Medieval Wall Paintings’, *British Art Journal* 9:1 (2008): pp. 4–14.

3. On this church generally see Emanuel Dejung and Richard Zürcher, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Zürich, Bd. VI: Die Stadt Winterthur und die Stadt Zürich* (Die Kunstdenkmäler der Schweiz, Bd. 27) (Basel: Verlag Birkhäuser, 1952), pp. 285–312; Hans Kläui, Walter Drack, Karl Keller et al, *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Festschrift zur Restaurierung 1976 bis 1981* (Oberwinterthur: Evangelischreformierte Kirchgemeinde, 1981); Felicia Schmaedecke, *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Neuanswertung der Ausgrabungen und Bauuntersuchungen, 1976–1979* (Zurich: Neue Medien Verlag, 2006); Peter Niederhäuser, *Oberwinterthurer Kirchengeschichten* (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2015).

4. ‘Ihr Hauptzweck war es, die Gläubigen zu erbauen und das Auge durch einen angenehmen Wechsel von Formen und Farben zu ergötzen’. Johann Rudolf Rahn, ‘Die Kirche von Oberwinterthur und ihre Wandgemälde’, *Mitteilungen der antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 21:4 (1883): p. 108.

5. ‘eigenständige Form der Verkündigung neben die Verkündigung durch das Wort’. Hans-Friedrich Reske, ‘Typus und Postfiguration: Zu der mittelalterlichen Bilderpredigt von St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur’, *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 29 (1972): p. 36.

6. ‘das des Lesens unkündige Volk’. Albert Knoepfli, ‘Die Bilderpredigt im Gotteshaus St. Arbogast’, in *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Festschrift zur Restaurierung 1976 bis 1981* (Oberwinterthur: Evangelischreformierte Kirchgemeinde, 1981), p. 90.

7. Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 25; Niederhäuser subsequently emphasises another purpose of the paintings, the self-promotion of their lay noble patrons through a public display of piety.

8. For the geography and early history of Oberwinterthur, see Hans Kläui, *Geschichte von Oberwinterthur im Mittelalter* (Winterthur: Ernst Jäggi AG, 1968/69), pp. 1-52, and Kläui, ‘Geschichtliche Hintergründe’, in *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Festschrift zur Restaurierung 1976 bis 1981* (Oberwinterthur: Evangelischreformierte Kirchgemeinde, 1981), pp. 9–22. Today Oberwinterthur and Niedervinterthur are both incorporated into the modern city of Winterthur in Canton Zurich.

9. Renata Windler and Werner Wild, ‘Früh- bis hochmittelalterliche Siedlungsentwicklung und Stadtwerdungsprozesse im archäologischen Befund: Das Beispiel Winterthur’, in Matthias Untermann and Alfred Falk (eds.), *Die vermessene Stadt: Mittelalterliche Stadtplanung zwischen Mythos und Befund* (Heidelberg: Neumann Druck, 2004), pp. 36–40.

10. Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, p. 148; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, pp. 9–17.

11. Kläui, *Geschichte*, pp. 29–33; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 12.

12. Published with German translation in Alois Postina, *Sankt Arbogast, Bischof von Strassburg und Schutzpatron des Bistums*, second edition (Strassburg: F.X. Le Roux & Co., 1928), pp. 10–20; cf. Migne, PL 134:1003–1008. On Arbogast see above all Medard Barth, *Der Heilige Arbogast, Bischof von Strassburg: seine Persönlichkeit und sein Kult* (Kolmar im Elsass: Alsatia Verlag, 1940).

13. Kläui, *Geschichte*, pp. 29–33; Kläui, ‘Hintergründe’, pp. 10–14.

14. For example, Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, p. 130.

15. Walter Drack, ‘Zur Baugeschichte der Kirche von den Anfängen bis ins 13. Jahrhundert’, in *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Festschrift zur Restaurierung 1976 bis 1981* (Oberwinterthur: Evangelischreformierte Kirchgemeinde, 1981), pp. 23–60; Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, pp. 128–47; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, pp. 13–14.

16. Karl Keller, ‘Baugeschichte vom 13. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart’, in *Die reformierte Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur: Festschrift zur Restaurierung 1976 bis 1981* (Oberwinterthur: Evangelischreformierte Kirchgemeinde, 1981), pp. 61–75; Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, pp. 148–73; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 14.

17. For the pictorial programme generally, see Rahn, ‘Die Kirche von Oberwinterthur’, pp. 98–110; Dejung and Zürcher, *Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 296–308; Knoepfli, ‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 76–97; Jürgen Michler, *Gotische Wandmalerei am Bodensee* (Friedrichshafen: Verlag Robert Gessler, 1992), pp. 34–5, 190–1; and Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, pp. 24–9. I was unable to consult the unpublished *Lizenzierungsarbeit* by Kathrin Schöb, ‘Die Wandmalereien der reformierten Kirche St. Arbogast in Oberwinterthur’ (University of Basel, 1996).

18. Rahn (‘Die Kirche von Oberwinterthur’, pp. 107–8) initially proposed a date in 1330s; Dejung and Zürcher (*Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 296) date the frescoes to c.1340; Knoepfli (‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 93–4) prefers an earlier date of c.1310–20; Michler, *Wandmalerei*, pp. 34–5, assigns them to the 1320s.

19. For early recovery and restoration efforts see Rahn, ‘Die neu entdeckten Wandgemälde’, pp. 787–8, and Knoepfli, ‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 94–7.

20. Knoepfli, ‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 81–3; the division of male and female saints on the walls may reflect expectations placed upon the medieval congregants below; cf. Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 167–8.

21. Rahn (‘Die Kirche von Oberwinterthur’, pp. 102–4) conflates the first two scenes into one and does not attempt identification; Dejung and Zürcher (*Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 300–1) separate the first two scenes, leaving the first unidentified and suggesting Arbogast’s consecration as bishop as the subject of the second; Knoepfli (‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 86–7) offers the identifications given here.

22. Joseph Gantner, *Kunstgeschichte der Schweiz, Bd 2: Die Gotische Kunst* (Frauenfeld: Verlag von Huber & Co. Aktiengesellschaft, 1947), p. 287.

23. ‘committit se beatae Mariae patrocinii’. Postina, *Sankt Arbogast*, p. 15.

24. Knoepfli, ‘Bilderpredigt’, pp. 86–7. Cf. Rahn, ‘Die Kirche von Oberwinterthur’, p. 101; Dejung and Zürcher, *Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 304; and Michler, *Wandmalerei*, p. 110.

25. Solothurn, Zentralbibliothek Cod. S 451 [hereafter SL]; the Life of St. Arbogast appears on folios 101r-108v. For an online overview, facsimile and bibliography see *E-Codices: Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland*, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/searchresult/list/one/zbs/S-0451>

26. On medieval images of Arbogast see Barth, *Der heilige Arbogast*, pp. 116–25, and Wolfgang Braunfels (ed.), *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie, vol. 5: Ikonographie der Heiligen Aaron bis Crescentianus von Rom* (Rome, Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 1973), columns 240–1.

27. Michler, *Gotische Wandmalerei*, pp. 40–1.

28. ‘Quo viso sinopes, in quo sedit, pavefactus, cursum retorquens, in fugam vertitur. Puer vero cum freno eum retinere conaretur et in alteram partem habenam strictius traheret, heu! Nimium pronus a sella est perlapsus. Adhuc autem habenae, quam in manu tenebat, inhaerens, per terram tractus, calcibus equi miserabiliter est protritus’, Cited from Postina, *Sankt Arbogast*, pp. 11–2; my translation.

29. ‘das ros wart schüggig un[d] unguüsteime, un[d] kam d[er] iungeling sines ungewaltes us dem sattel un[d] geba[n]get an dem zöme des rosses, also das das ros d[a]c iu[n]geling des köninges sun zersties

- un[d] z'ertral'*, SL folio 105v; my transcription and translation.
30. Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993); Albrecht Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).
 31. For boar hunts in late-medieval art see Rebekah Pratt-Sturges, 'Illuminating the Medieval Hunt: Power and Performance in Gaston Fébus' *Le livre de chasse*' (PhD diss, Arizona State University, 2017), pp. 122–30.
 32. See John Clark (ed.), *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment, c.1150–c.1450* (London: HMSO, 1995), pp. 71–4 (stirrups) and 124–30 (spurs); for examples from Gothic Switzerland, see Claudia Brinker and Dione Flühler-Kreis, *Edele frouwen—schoene man. Die Manessische Liederhandschrift in Zürich* (Zurich: Schweizerisches Landesmuseum, 1991), pp. 224–25.
 33. See Kelly Midgley, 'Salacious and Sinful Simians in the Macclesfield Psalter: An Iconographic Study', *Limina* 20:3 (2015): pp. 1–16.
 34. Knoepfli, 'Bilderpredigt', p. 89.
 35. Reske, 'Typus und Postfiguration', pp. 31–33.
 36. For issues of patronage see Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, pp. 158–61, and Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, pp. 27–8.
 37. Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, pp. 160–1; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, pp. 27.
 38. Joan A. Holladay, 'The Competition for Saints in Medieval Zurich', *Gesta* 43:1 (2004): pp. 41–59.
 39. Holladay, 'Competition', p. 49.
 40. Windler and Wild, 'Siedlungsentwicklung', p. 39; Drack, 'Baugeschichte', pp. 38–51; Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, p. 19. Unfortunately, the total obliteration of Winterthur's medieval wall paintings prevents any comparison between the two church's interior decoration. See Carola Jäggi, Hans-Rudolf Meier et al, *Die Stadtkirche St. Laurentius in Winterthur: Ergebnisse der archäologischen und historischen Forschungen* (Zurich: Fotorotar AG, 1993), pp. 110–1.
 41. Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, p. 148.
 42. Kläui, *Geschichte*, pp. 29–30; Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, p. 161; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 19.
 43. Knoepfli, 'Bilderpredigt', p. 85; cf. Dejung and Zürcher, *Kunstdenkmäler*, p. 289; Schmaedecke, *Kirche*, pp. 161–3; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 12.
 44. Medard Barth, *Der Heilige Florentius, Bischof von Strassburg* (Strasbourg-Paris: F.-X. Le Roux, 1952), especially pp. 5–35.
 45. See Barth, *Florentius*, pp. 285–6.
 46. Knoepfli, 'Bilderpredigt', p. 85; Niederhäuser, *Kirchengeschichten*, p. 12.
 47. See Kläui, *Geschichte*, pp. 29–30; Schmaedecke, *Die reformierte Kirche*, pp. 157–8. The inscription on the bell read 'O REX GLORIE CHRISTE CUM PACE / S. ARBOGAST ORA PRO NOBIS'.
 48. SL, folio 104r.
 49. SL, folio 107v.
 50. Michelle E. Garceau, "'I Call the People': Church Bells in Fourteenth-Century Catalunya", *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011): pp. 197–214.

Monumental Marginalia: The Sculptured Frieze at Cogges (Oxfordshire)

NICOLA LOWE

Considerable remains of a lavish programme of sculpture survive in the north chancel chapel at St. Mary's parish church, Cogges (Oxfordshire). Around the exterior hood of the east window are three finely-carved, bearded, male heads including a haloed Head of Christ at the apex.¹ Fragments to either side and a shaft and ballflower frieze above indicate that the ensemble was originally more elaborate (Fig. 1). Inside, along the top of the north and south walls runs a sculptured frieze (Fig. 2).² Inhabited by grotesques and interspersed by corbels representing animals playing instruments, it recalls the illustrated margins typical of fourteenth-century books of hours.³ The male heads outside and on the frieze inside have full beards, short fringes, and wavy hair reaching to below the ears, a style prevalent from the end of the thirteenth- to the mid-fourteenth century (Fig. 3).⁴ The frieze figures are densely-packed, each holding the tail or limb of its neighbour. Their mouths are open, grinning or snarling, their tongues lolling. The result is remarkable, at once threatening and humorous—not to say noisy—the effect intensified by the confines of the architectural space. The chapel was evidently the location of a chantry furnished for memorial Masses, indicated by an ornate corner piscina with an ogee, finialled canopy, and a tomb monument with recumbent female effigy in early-fourteenth-century dress.⁵ No identifying marks remain but an extensive scheme of heraldic stained glass recorded in the seventeenth century included the arms of Oddingsell and de Grey in the east window.⁶ John Blair and John Steane's analysis of this glazing shows convincingly that the monument commemorated Margaret Oddingsell (fl. 1330), widow of John de Grey of Rotherfield, Oxfordshire (d. 1311), who held the manor of Cogges in dower.⁷ The arms of Margaret's two de Grey sons, John and Ralph, appeared alongside hers in the east window.⁸ Those of her sister Ida Clinton, her great-aunt Ela Bassett, countess of Warwick, and her second husband, Robert Moreby (d. 1336), by whom she had a third son, William, were in the north wall windows.⁹

The east window has a shallow, triangular head enclosing elegant, curvilinear drop tracery. Part of an abstract composition in stained glass of between 1325–50 survives in a striking palette of yellow, orange, black and red (Fig. 4). The design is composed of roundels, some of which contain suns or stars and other radiating figures, possibly representing heaven.¹⁰ A single, red roundel in the central, north wall window implies that the scheme extended here as well. All three north windows have reticulated tracery and are embellished with ballflower and quatrefoil motifs on the internal soffits (Fig. 5). A mural was discovered on the east wall in 1883, described as richly coloured but not otherwise described.¹¹ The plaster has since been stripped.

Although fairly widespread as exterior corbel tables, grotesques in the form of a continuous frieze framing interior space are uncommon at this date.¹² The Cogges frieze is not recorded before 1870 but appears to be in situ. The eaves beam of the roof rests on top of the frieze, while the intermediate rafters are located over the heads of figures that are lowered to accommodate them (Fig. 6).¹³ It should therefore be considered as an

Fig. 1
East window
of north chapel
(exterior), St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 2
Grotesque frieze
and animal
musician corbels,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Nicola Lowe

Fig. 3
Male and female
dancers holding
hands, north wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 4
East window
of north chapel
(interior), St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 5
Middle window
with ballflower and
stained glass roun-
del (restored), north
wall of north cha-
pel, St. Mary, Cog-
ges (Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 6
North wall of north
chapel, showing
association between
roof timbers and
frieze, St. Mary, Co-
gges (Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

integral part of the chapel's decoration.

The sculpture has been noted for its quality and unusual character before but has not been the subject of close attention.¹⁴ Yet there are several ways in which its study can contribute to medieval art history, in particular the cross-disciplinary debate surrounding marginalia.¹⁵ The field was reopened in 2014 by Paul Binski in *Gothic Wonder*, where he questions the usefulness of the very term 'marginalia' over the Bakhtinian opposition it implies between a 'lively' margin of 'low art' and a 'dead' centre of 'high art'.¹⁶ He prefers instead to see the margin in a legitimate, balanced relationship with the centre, as an aspect of it rather than an alternative, and with *hilaritas*, a beneficial, virtuous kind of humour, as one of its properties.¹⁷ Such an approach fits well with the antics of the Cogges grotesques, several of which appear to address the viewer directly, demanding a response from those looking up from their devotions in the central space (Fig. 7).

Further contributions have come from Betsy Chunko-Dominquez, writing about marginalia on late-medieval English misericords, and from Jonathan Foyle, writing about the painted ceiling of c.1240s at Peterborough Cathedral.¹⁸ While exploring marginalia in widely different contexts these writers all acknowledge the layers of meaning carried by such imagery and the wide range of sources from which it emerged, including political and legal texts as well as religious material, actual events, and oral culture.¹⁹ Take, for example, the miscellany of grotesques on the Peterborough ceiling. High over the chancel arch is the motif of the three unclean animals: the ape preaching to an owl,

Fig. 7
Prowling creatures
with linked tails,
looking down.
Figure to right
with prominent
genitalia. North
wall of north
chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

riding backwards on an ass. This might, as Binski has suggested, be a mocking reference to disorder in the nave and monastic choir beneath, or an example of ‘Roman salt’: an array of witticisms, satirical comments, and madcap imagery that, according to William of Malmesbury, alleviated tedium through variety, an effect that did not rely on learned interpretation.²⁰ Foyle discerns a further layer of meaning which is both more learned and more localised, seeing the entire ceiling as ‘one of the great cultural manifestos of medieval Britain’, its pictorial programme embodying the abbey’s tense relationship with the monarchy in the early-thirteenth century.²¹ In this context, the three-beasts motif, a recognised metaphor for idiocy and sin, becomes the counterpoint to good governance represented by the preceding sequence of wise kings and archbishops.²² At Cogges, we find a mouth-puller, an acrobat, and an exhibitionist, motifs that are common enough from other marginal contexts (Figs. 8, 9, and 10). Individually they no doubt carried connotations of sin and excess in a general sense, and perhaps of ‘Roman salt’, but their close integration with the other sculpture and their proximity to the devotions taking place in the chapel space implies another layer of meaning, as at Peterborough, in this case pertinent to the interests of Margaret Oddingsell and her circle.

The field of manuscript studies also offers insights that can be usefully applied at Cogges. Kathryn Smith’s recent work on female book ownership has shown how the interrelated visual and textual programmes of books of hours—so popular with elite laywomen—contributed to the construction of the book-owner’s sense of self.²³ The intimate, personalised surroundings of a chantry chapel performed something of the same function for the deceased, and Smith’s work on manuscripts provides a

Fig. 8
Mouthpuller,
south wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 9
Acrobat, south wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 10
Hybrid showing
testicles, south wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

model of how this might apply to Margaret’s chapel. Writing in the related area of music and manuscripts, Emma Dillon notes that texts accompanied by images of lay worshippers attending church ritual enabled the reader to envisage herself witnessing the public event while praying in private: a situation that applied most closely to the Office of the Dead, where the lay text in the book of hours was the same as that

in the Breviary, chanted by the priest at the altar.²⁴ This virtual parallel between the devotional environment provided by a book and by architectural space extends fruitfully to Margaret's chantry chapel in which the Office of the Dead was celebrated in a space defined by manuscript-like imagery.

The prevalence of animals in the sculpture evokes the complex human-animal relationship at the centre of late-medieval culture, explored in a recent volume edited by Brigitte Resl.²⁵ Only humans possessed a fully developed soul yet the boundary between human and non-human was not always clear cut, blurred by the sinful behaviour of humans and the ability of some animals to exhibit intelligence or loyalty or to perform human-like actions.²⁶ The beast musicians at Cogges perhaps visualise this unsettling relativism, expressed thus in the *Physiologus*, a second-century, Christian collection of moralised beast fables, still influential in the bestiaries of the later Middle Ages: 'There are some in the church who have the form of piety but deny its force and though they are in church as men, when they depart from the church they become beasts'.²⁷ The dissonance embodied by the corbel beast musicians is continued by other creatures in the frieze who bray and bang gongs. The implied disharmony invites reference to the emerging field of sound studies, typified by the work of Emma Dillon, Susan Boynton and others exploring the representation of sound in medieval art, music, and poetry.²⁸ In one theme, identified by Susan Kay in the troubadour poetry of Marcabru (fl. 1129–48), sound is a metaphor for the danger posed by the unintelligible cacophony of everyday life drowning out the sound of sacred song, a plausible interpretation for the sounding sculpture at Cogges.²⁹

The approaches outlined above demonstrate the variety of physical forms taken by marginalia, the different contexts in which they occur, their polyvalent character and the need for a broad, cross-disciplinary approach to interpretation. With this in mind, the following article explores the sculpture in the small, enclosed chantry chapel at Cogges and proposes a new way of understanding this unusual space.

The church and chapel

The church is one of three, high-status medieval buildings to have survived from the ancient settlement of Cogges. It is flanked to the north by what was once a small, alien priory belonging to Fécamp in Normandy and to the east by the manor house, now a museum of rural life. Together they evoke the nucleus of the medieval village and the close relationship that existed between parish, priory, and patron. Cogges was once a thriving manorial and administrative centre, as these buildings suggest. However, over the course of the thirteenth century it was gradually eclipsed by the expansion of the neighbouring borough of Witney under the patronage of the bishops of Winchester. From the mid-thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century the major landowners in

Fig. 11
Plan of St. Mary
Church, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
© 1978, Blair and
Steane

Fig. 12
Female head stop,
central arcade
pier, facing into
chancel, St. Mary
Church, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

the area were the Greys of Rotherfield.³⁰

The Oddingsell chapel is situated north of the chancel and, at seven by four metres, is a little shorter and narrower than the chancel itself (Fig. 11). It opens to the north aisle through a narrow archway, and to the chancel through a moulded two-bay arcade under which sits the monument to Margaret Oddingsell. The two bays are differentiated, the east bay having more elaborate mouldings on both inner and outer faces and four head-stops: an unremarkable male pair at the east end and a more

distinctive female pair at the west end with expressive faces and different headdresses (Fig. 12). The monument currently stands under the west bay but has been moved, evidently from the more honorific east bay where it was recorded in 1870, attached to the central pier.³¹ With the tomb in this position, the characterful female head-stops would be over the head of Margaret's effigy. The plainer west bay suggests that it was not intended for a second monument and that the chapel commemorated Margaret alone.

The monument

The monument comprises the finely-carved effigy of a laywoman in early-fourteenth-century dress, with angels at her head and a lion at her feet, lying on top of a chest edged with ballflower (Fig. 13). There are six equally-sized panels with moulded frames on the chest: four containing the symbols of the Evangelists with blank scrolls; two with grotesques carrying heraldic shields, also blank but perhaps originally painted. Flecks of yellow, black, and red polychromy on the effigy and the angels suggest it was once richly-coloured, perhaps reflecting the palette in the east window glass. The panels were originally arranged symmetrically along the two long sides of the chest with an Evangelist panel on either side of a central coat of arms. On the north side of the tomb this arrangement remains undisturbed, confirmed by unbroken mouldings along the top and bottom edge (Fig. 14). However, when the monument was moved, the three panels from the south side of the chest were wrongly re-assembled.³² The St. Mark panel was placed against the short end of the tomb under the effigy's feet. The heraldic panel was placed against the other short end, under the head. Neither panel belongs in these positions as there is inadequate room for the frame mouldings and, with the monument in its original location abutting the east return of the east bay, the foot end would be invisible. The St. John panel was placed in the centre of the south side with blank spaces to left and right (Fig. 13). Several small round holes appear on the slab perimeter, irregularly arranged, one containing the remains of a wooden peg which may be medieval. If so, it suggests that the monument was surmounted by a wooden tester or other covering, another possible support for imagery. Two image brackets, now lost, at the head of the effigy were noted in 1870.³³

The monument was clearly more elaborate than its current appearance suggests. The design of the base is unusual in featuring the Evangelists so prominently. They often appear as subsidiary details in commemorative sculpture but not as the main focus.³⁴ Contemporary examples include the tomb chest of Elizabeth Montacute (d. 1356) in the Latin chapel at Christ Church, Oxford. Panels with relief figures, probably members of Elizabeth's family, line the long sides of the chest.³⁵ The symbols of the Evangelists appear in pairs on the short ends as supporters of the Virgin and another

Fig. 13
Monument
of Margaret
Oddingsell
from the south,
second quarter of
fourteenth century,
oolitic limestone.
2.38 x 0.8 x 0.81
m. St. Mary
Church, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 14
Monument
of Margaret
Oddingsell from
the north. St. Mary
Church, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

female saint. Small-scale Evangelists appear twice on the base of the Harington Tomb, c.1340, at Cartmel Priory, at the bottom corners of the chest and on its ends, and a third time painted on the underside of the tester surrounding Christ in Majesty.³⁶ These examples suggest that lost elements of Margaret Oddingsell's monument may likewise have supported imagery that related to the Evangelists in some way, perhaps on the underside of the putative tester or on the lost image brackets. An appropriate image does survive in the Head of Christ although this is sculptured into the exterior of the east window frame. Nonetheless, Margaret's effigy was oriented towards this window—looking at it, as it were—and it seems probable that the stained glass it once contained continued the heavenly theme, connecting the two elements.³⁷

Margaret was closely associated with Cogges throughout her married life. In 1304 her husband obtained licence to have Mass said in an oratory there for himself, his wife and family, suggesting that Margaret was in residence.³⁸ Her son John, aged four at the time, is likely to have been with her and perhaps her younger son, Ralph, too although his date of birth is not recorded.³⁹ Cogges was her principal dower property for at least twenty years after her husband's death in 1311 and she had relatives at nearby Broadwell in Kelmscott.⁴⁰ A sense of connection would explain her lavish commemoration in this somewhat out-of-the-way location rather than at Rotherfield (Oxfordshire) or Sculcoates (East Riding, Yorkshire), the main seats of the de Greys; at Stillingfleet (North Riding, Yorkshire) where her second husband Robert Moreby owned land and was commemorated; or at Solihull (Warwickshire), which she part-owned and where her Oddingsell family had an impressive chantry chapel.⁴¹ The sculptural programme, the elaborate stained-glass design, and the prominent display of Margaret's personal connections in the heraldry are all highly individual, not to mention expensive, features. Together with the choice of location, they are, I think, indicative of personal choice and strongly suggest that the chapel not only commemorated Margaret but that she was its patron. Assuming she survived Moreby, her second widowhood in the years after his death in 1336 would have provided her with the means, motivation, and opportunity for establishing and furnishing a chantry.

The marginalia

The stately tetramorph on the monument and the refined heads round the east window are in stark contrast to the profusion of marvellous grotesques in human, animal, and monstrous forms populating the frieze. The 'babewynes' are closely packed, engaging animatedly with one another and with the viewer below, the effect magnified by the confines of the architectural space which the frieze delineates (Figs. 15 and 16).

The creatures are interrupted along the north wall by a series of corbels depicting musicians, three of which are beasts wearing wry expressions that seem to

Fig. 15
Braying
horse-headed
amphisbaena
with coiled tail,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 16
Figures holding
tail and limb,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

acknowledge the racket they are making. A man in hood and cape plays the hand-bells and double pipes. He is accompanied by a bear playing a zither laid across his lap, a monkey plucking a harp, and a lion strumming a citole (Figs. 17–20).

In the adjoining aisle west of the chapel is a second series of slightly smaller corbels also depicting one human and three animal musicians. They are not apparently in situ. The cow in the north-east corner does not marry up with the wall-post above and the horn-blower has been taken out of the series altogether and placed in the

Fig. 17
Corbel with man
playing pipes
and hand bells,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 18
Corbel with
zither-playing
bear, north wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 19
Corbel with
monkey playing
harp, north wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 20
Corbel with lion
playing citole,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 21
Corbel with
playing pipes and
drum, north wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 22
Corbel with
hornblower,
north aisle, south-
east corner, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

corner opposite on the wrong side of the wall, exposing a flat, unfinished surface (Figs. 21 and 22). This set seems to belong stylistically and iconographically to the chapel where, lined up along the south wall, they would have faced their counterparts on the

north wall in a series of matched pairs, contributing to the atmosphere of noise and misrule in the confined space of the chapel.⁴²

Considerable traces of polychromy remain on the aisle corbels and it is probable that the other carvings were similarly coloured. However, even in their present, damaged, dingy, and dusty condition, these grinning, leering figures demand attention. Their slinking poses and downward-facing gazes give the impression they are prowling along the top of a wall or ledge, peering down at activity below. They form a continuous, close-linked chain, rubbing shoulders with one another, biting or grasping part of the figure to either side or holding what might be their tails or lengths of cord between them, suggesting a ghastly circle dance.⁴³ Other figures stick out their tongues, expose their genitals or brandish weapons; they grin, growl and hiss, bang gongs and blow horns (Figs. 7, 10, 15, 16, 23 and 24).

Much has been written about the apparently incongruous use of grotesques in sacred spaces where they appear perched along roof lines, round the edges of shrines, under misericords, and as architectural punctuation marks.⁴⁴ Contemporary scholarship agrees that such category-breaking creatures, whether carved in three dimensions or painted in two, cannot all be whimsy on the part of an inventive image-maker nor the remnants of a not-quite-forgotten pagan past.⁴⁵ They have been variously described as ‘the other’; ludic ambiguities; warnings of the wages of sin; examples of a topsy-turvy world; references to folk tales or clever riddles; apotropaic figures deterring thieves or warding off the devils that, according to a contemporary sermon, were believed to ‘fly above in the eyer as thycke as motis in the sunne’.⁴⁶ After provoking an initial, visceral response of perhaps laughter or shock, such images were probably fluid in meaning with a range of connotations. Binski warns against a too-literal pursuit of meaning for marginalia, an approach which assumes they are to be ‘read’ rather than savoured.⁴⁷ Yet it may be possible to identify an organising theme at Cogges based less on an interpretation of isolated figures than on the visual impact of the whole programme, which here acts as a framing device for devotional activities taking place in a chantry chapel. The carvings are not stationed like lookouts at particular vantage points or around entrances like, for example, apotropaic and guardian figures. Instead, they define the interior contours of a small, intimate space which related very specifically to one individual, Margaret Oddingsell. Following Kathryn Smith’s insightful account of three fourteenth-century English women and their books of hours, the Cogges chapel seems to me to echo elements of these specially-commissioned, luxury items.⁴⁸ The personalised collections of texts and images in a book of hours served the spiritual and social interests of a living patron rather than a deceased one but otherwise shared many of the same functions as a chantry chapel, reflecting the owner’s devotional preferences and aiding her path to salvation while performing a range of other related functions as well that might include visualising dynastic connections, commemorating events in family, political or religious history, and facilitating literacy: in a sense, embodying the

Fig. 23
Dog with lolling
tongue and buckler,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 24
Creatures banging
a gong and blowing
a horn, north wall
of north chapel,
St. Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

owner's social self. In one of these, the de Bois Hours which was made for Hawisia de Bois in 1320–25, probably in Oxford, Hawisia and her kin are integrated as petitioners into four, full-page, prefatory miniatures focusing on intercession and judgement, implying a confident hope of salvation.⁴⁹ Coats of arms are liberally sprinkled throughout, displaying the status of the de Bois family and their connections. Hawisia's

own literacy and piety are implied by her ownership of the book and specifically by a cross written in above her name in a personalised prayer, indicating both that she could read and that she understood the prompt to sign herself with the cross.⁵⁰ Smith elucidates other less obvious ways in which the pictorial programme was oriented to Hawisia's interests. For example, an image sequence of the history of the True Cross is accompanied by marginal coats of arms identifying Hawisia's long dead crusader ancestors. The story provides her with a powerful role model in the empress St. Helena, but its inclusion also highlights her family's historic connection to the crusades, the True Cross being central to crusader ideology.⁵¹ The sequence is one of several carefully-chosen themes threaded throughout the book that helped Hawisia envision herself both in society and in respect of salvation.

Margaret Oddingsell's chapel was similarly personalised by the choice and design of its imagery. The layout of the grotesque frieze replicates the form of margins and encourages the comparison between this architectural space and a bespoke book of hours. The carvings may repeat the visual motifs of a book that Margaret knew or owned herself, something like MS W 102, for example, a beautifully-illustrated, female-owned book of hours made in England around 1300, now held at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.⁵² It contains several initials depicting a woman at prayer, including one of mother and son, and is decorated throughout with wrestlers, monsters, and animals, some of whom play instruments.⁵³ Margaret is likely to have undertaken the early education of her sons herself when they were living at Cogges, and probably used a book of hours to teach them their letters, their first prayers, and to understand their family heritage.⁵⁴ A book that was full of animals and monsters would certainly have held a small child's attention. The re-use of the same figures on the chapel walls would prompt memories in her offspring and, more importantly, their dutiful, intercessory prayers for her soul. The use of manuscript illustrations as direct models for sculptural motifs has been noted before, including in memorial contexts.⁵⁵ I would like to push the analogy further in this case and propose that one way of understanding Margaret's chapel is to see the whole thing as a monumental version of an illustrated page in a book of hours and thus subject to some of the same analytical approaches.

There can be little doubt that a woman of Margaret's social standing was a book owner. Perhaps she even commissioned her own. She lived near Oxford, a noted centre of book production, and can be placed within a milieu of female book patronage. Among her near neighbours in Warwickshire where she grew up, and Oxfordshire where she lived after marriage, were the de Bois family.⁵⁶ Hawisia de Bois's lavishly illustrated book of hours, mentioned above, included Margaret's family arms of Oddingsell seven times, one of them apparently marking the marriage of an Oddingsell daughter to one of the Revel family, overlords in Warwickshire (Fig. 25).⁵⁷ It is likely that Margaret and Hawisia were acquainted and that they would develop similar tastes for fashionable forms of religious/artistic patronage. An interesting comparison can be

Fig. 25
De Bois Hours,
England, probably
Oxford, c.1325-30.
MS M. 700. f. 37v.
Parchment, 318 x
216 mm.
The Morgan
Library and
Museum.

Fig. 26
North chapel,
looking east, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

made between Margaret's chapel and a page in Hawisia's book (Fig. 26). The sculptured frieze, which runs along the long walls of the chapel, is like the painted frame running round the page. It is punctuated by the corbels, which approximate to the historiated initials, and the heraldic imagery in stained glass and on Margaret's tomb equates to the armorial shields in the borders on the page. The east wall of the chapel with its striking window and altar beneath would have provided a similar visual focus to the painted miniature at the top of the page (Figs. 25 and 26). The liturgy offered for Margaret's soul in the physical space defined by the frieze recalls the sacred text in the centre of the page within the confines of the painted border.

The analogy between chapel and book is further demonstrated by a page from another contemporary example, the De Lisle Hours, also discussed by Smith, on which the owner herself is depicted. A large roundel forming the initial O shows a woman under the central bay of a triple arcade, at prayer before an image of Christ and the Virgin Enthroned (Fig. 27). She is Margaret de Beauchamp, wife of Robert de Lisle, a third Warwickshire heiress whose family had property interests in Oxfordshire, and another of Margaret Oddingsell's neighbours.⁵⁸ The top and right-hand borders of the page contain biomorphic figures playing the fife and drum and blowing a trumpet

Fig. 27
De Lisle Hours,
England, possibly
York, c.1316-31.
MS G. 50, f.19r.
Parchment, 169 x
111 mm.
The Morgan
Library and
Museum. Gift of
the Trustees of the
William S. Glazier
Collection, 1984.

from which flutters a banner with the de Lisle arms. A rabbit, a dog, and some birds also appear, benign cousins of the more menacing creatures in the Cogges frieze. Here again, the painted margins frame the prayer space they create in a similar way to the frieze, heightening its significance. The text within is from the opening of Matins of the Virgin: 'and my mouth shall tell forth thy praise. God, come to my assistance'. The woman kneeling at the top of the page can be taken as praying these same words, the Little Hours of the Virgin being a key component of the book of hours. It was also very probably part of the liturgical cycle offered at Cogges where Margaret Oddingsell is likewise presented at prayer, hands folded and eyes open.⁵⁹ However, unlike the living Margaret de Beauchamp, who is shown as a kneeling supplicant, the deceased Margaret Oddingsell lies in serene repose in a state of perpetual adoration as if already gazing on the divine presence. Those praying around the effigy, perhaps with their own books of hours in hand, might be expected to see this as affirmation of their intercessory efforts.

Marginal figures present a challenge in prayerful contexts. Some may be there as attention grabbers, for mnemonic, comic or decorative effect, but others comment in quite specific terms on the devotions they accompany. For example, in the Macclesfield Psalter, a bristle-backed hog with a curly tail blows enthusiastically into an enormous trumpet, accompanying Psalm 46. The text reads: 'with the voice of the trumpet, Sing psalms to our God, sing psalms ... For God is the King of all the earth. Sing psalms wisely' (Fig. 28). Later on, beneath Psalm 100, a donkey-headed hybrid with a face for a backside has its mouth open and head thrown back. The text here reads: 'I will sing psalms ... And I will have understanding within the immaculate way, when you will draw near to me' (Fig. 29). The animal musician and the hybrid are absurd impossibilities and the juxtapositions of image and text suggest a metaphor for the difficulties men and women have grasping ineffable truth. This was a problem for contemporary preachers who complained about parishioners gossiping, fighting, playing dice, needleworking, and sleeping during services.⁶⁰ As the ass with the lyre, it was an established trope, going back to Boethius and beyond and was used by both secular storytellers such as Chaucer and sermon writers.⁶¹ One medieval preacher used the image of an ass raising its head from the manger at the sound of pipe or trumpet as a metaphor for the sinful man for whom 'holy prechyng ... commeth in at the one ere, and goyth oute at the othere'.⁶² A similar idea may be behind the foolish, zither-playing bear and harp-strumming monkey at Cogges, going through the motions but deaf to the significance of the sacred ritual being enacted at their feet.

Margaret's liturgical requirements are not known but they would have included at least the Requiem Mass and Office of the Dead, consisting largely of extracts from the psalms, partly sung, partly spoken. Could the disharmony of the beast musicians be an admonitory reminder to her chaplain to voice these properly and, just as importantly, not to show off? Both were matters of concern regarding the performers of polyphony.⁶³ Perhaps it extended to Margaret too or members of her household

Fig. 28
Macclesfield
Psalter, c.1320-
30. Cambridge,
Fitzwilliam
Museum MS
1-2005, f.69, detail.
Parchment, 170 x
108 mm.
© The Fitzwilliam
Museum,
Cambridge.

Fig. 29
Macclesfield Psalter,
f.141v, detail.
© The Fitzwilliam
Museum,
Cambridge.

Fig. 30 (Left)
Book of Hours,
c.1300. Parchment,
267 x 187 mm.
Baltimore, Walters
Art Museum, MS
W.102, f.81v.

Fig. 31 (Right)
MS W. 102. f.74r,
detail. Baltimore,
Walters Art
Museum.

if, like the female owner of the Walters book of hours, they were accustomed to sing the Hours themselves.⁶⁴ Chaucer's description of Madame Eglyantyne, his worldly prioress, suggests her efforts at singing were more for show than genuine praise: 'Ful wel she song the service divine, Entuned in her nose ful seemly'.⁶⁵ Equally, the use of sophisticated stringed instruments, while part of the traditional iconography of praise, could be censured, as, by the fourteenth century, practitioners were likely to be skilled laypeople, the *jongleurs* of dubious reputation whose skills crossed over into the temptation-ridden world of popular entertainment and carnival.⁶⁶ Beast musicians seem to reflect this conflicted view, recalling the stern words of St. Paul: 'If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but have not love, I am a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal'.⁶⁷ In the Walters text, the last page of the Office for the Dead and the whole of the Hours of Jesus Crucified are accompanied by illustrations of the Funeral of Reynard the Fox, where animals process, playing instruments (Figs. 30–35)

This resonates with the sculpture in Margaret's chapel where animal musicians preside over her memorial services, a similar juxtaposition of image and circumstance. In both cases, animals mock human pious behaviour, rendering it ridiculous, implying the participants' incomprehension, lack of reverence or expertise, or worse, their insincerity. The discordant music sounds out a warning, both to the false priest and the inattentive parishioner, stock characters from popular culture and no doubt known to Margaret and her circle.⁶⁸ The jeering, capering figures in the frieze, some of them masked or banging gongs, suggest other reprehensible activities such as the tradition of 'charivari', the cacophonous serenading of newly-weds by the community.⁶⁹ Others

Fig. 32 (Left)
MS W. 102. f.74v,
detail. Baltimore,
Walters Art
Museum.

Fig. 33 (Right)
MS W. 102. f.75r,
detail. Baltimore,
Walters Art
Museum.

Fig. 34 (Left)
MS W. 102. f.75v,
detail. Baltimore,
Walters Art
Museum.

Fig. 35 (Right)
MS W. 102. f.78v.
Baltimore, Walters
Art Museum.

Fig. 36
Acrobatic dancers
and hybrid with
wildman mask,
north wall of
north chapel, St.
Mary, Cogges
(Oxfordshire)
Photo: Author

Fig. 37
Wooden misericord,
Christchurch Priory
(Dorset)
© 2018, www.
misericords.co.uk.

represent acrobats and dancers, linked together (Figs. 16 and 36, and, for comparison, Fig. 37). Their antics suggest the world of misrule or carnival and the dangerous distraction from religious devotion offered by worldly entertainments: the singing, dancing, acrobatic shows, miracle-plays, and tavern life railed against by commentators. John Bromyard (d. c. 1352) for example bemoaned the lure of the 'strumpetis dance' that kept people from hearing God's word.⁷⁰ Robert Mannyng (d. c. 1338) recounted the story of the sacrilegious dancers of Colbeck who carolled round the churchyard

on Christmas Eve instead of attending Mass and were consequently cursed to continue their dance for the rest of the year.⁷¹

In conclusion, I propose that in terms of layout and function, Margaret’s chapel represents an architectural version of a page in a book of hours, using visual imagery to individualise, add interest and intensify its effect. The sculpture contains all the elements found on a personalised page in such a book, combined in like fashion with similar effect, creating a physical space for devotion where the page creates a mind-space, and mediating the patron’s image, presenting her amidst her dynastic connections, so important for the success of her family, but also close to God and the saints, establishing her as both materially and spiritually privileged and hinting at her eventual salvation. The grotesques draw on recognisable tropes such as the animal musician, the world-upside-down and carnival, all acceptable material despite, or perhaps because of, their subversive character which works to encourage devout attention, ward off evil spirits, deter thieves and warn of the perils of sin. The unhappy restlessness of the belligerent crowd of monsters and deviants—jeering down from the balcony, as it were—presents a preposterous counterpoint to the ordered ritual of the sacred liturgies taking place beside the monument below. Banished to the sidelines and immobilised in stone, they point up the power of these rituals, thus contributing to Margaret’s salvation and that of those praying for her. The innovative decorative programme of her chapel evokes for today’s viewer not just the sight but the sounds and actions that characterised a medieval chantry, offering a glimpse of the sensory, imaginative world in which Margaret Oddingsell, her family, and wider community lived, inside and outside the church walls.

- John Goodall, ‘A Study of the Grotesque 14th-Century Sculpture at Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell in its Architectural Context’, *Oxoniensia* 60 (1995): pp. 318–9.
- A stone lintel with a roughened front face hints that it may have continued along the west wall too.
- For example, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MS W 120, discussed below.
- Compare with the effigy of Henry III at Westminster, 1293, and that of Edward II at Gloucester, early 1340s.
- For chantries, see Julian Luxford and John McNeill (eds.), *The Medieval Chantry in England* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- Richard Lee, Oxford, Bodleian Library (hereafter Bodl.) MS Wood D 14, 1574, ff. 56v-8; Nicholas Charles, London, British Library (hereafter BL) MS Cotton Lansdowne 874, 1610, f. 141v; Anthony Wood, Bodl. MS Wood B 15, 1652, f. 56; Bodl. MS Wood E 1, May 1658, f. 46; BL MS Harl. 4170, 1660, f. 48; Richard Rawlinson (1690–1755), Bodl. MS Rawl. B 400c.
- John Blair and John M. Steane, ‘Investigations at Cogges, Oxfordshire, 1978–81: The Priory and Parish Church’, *Oxoniensia* 37 (1982): p. 109. Margaret’s date of death is not recorded. Blair and Steane suggest she may have died by October 1330 but the evidence is not definitive.
- Robert W. Mitchell, *The Carlisle Roll 1334*, 32 (Edinburgh: Heraldry Society of Scotland, 1983), p. 453.
- Calendar of the patent rolls preserved in the Public record office / prepared under the superintendence of the deputy keeper of the records* [hereafter *Cal. Pat. Rolls*], 1334–38, Edward III, 3 (London: HMSO, 1891), p. 270.
- About half the glass is medieval; the rest was restored in 1965. Peter Newton, *The County of Oxford: A Catalogue of Medieval Stained Glass* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 69.
- Witney Deanery Magazine*, January 1883.
- Goodall, ‘Grotesque Sculpture’, pp. 323–30. Most internal friezes are composed of simple ballflower or other floral motifs, for example at Ducklington (Oxfordshire) and Icklingham (Suffolk). A figurative frieze surrounding the north aisle at Kersey (Suffolk) is not original to the building. It was installed as part of a sixteenth-century programme of refurbishment, perhaps salvaged from Kersey priory. Joanna Caruth and David Gill, ‘Archaeology in Suffolk, 1990’, *Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History* 37:3 (1991): pp. 255–82. Thanks to James Cameron for bringing this example to my attention. The closest parallel is with the south aisle at Gaddesby (Lincolnshire) although on a very much smaller and less concentrated scale. A narrow string carved with floral motifs and occasional grotesques runs along the top of the south aisle wall inside, an echo of the more elaborate version outside which lines the eaves and west gable of the fabulously-sculptured exterior.
- Proceedings and Excursions of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society. Michaelmas Term 1869 to Trinity Term 1870* (Oxford: 1870), p. 142.
- Blair, ‘Investigations at Cogges’, pp. 86–105; ‘Cogges: Church’, in A. P. Baggs et al. *A History of the County of Oxford: 12, Wootton Hundred (South) Including Woodstock*

- (London: Victoria County History, 1990), pp. 69–72, accessed 1 June 2021, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol12/pp69-72>; Alan Brooks and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire North and West*, Buildings of England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 271–2.
- The literature is extensive. See for example Alixe Bovey and John Lowden (eds.), *Under the Influence: the Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992); Lucy Freeman Sandler, ‘The Study of Marginal Imagery, Past, Present and Future’, *Studies in Iconography* 18 (1997): pp. 1–49; John Block Friedman, ‘Monsters and monstrous races’, in Graeme Dunphy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Paul Hardwick, *English Medieval Miseriords: the Margins of Meaning* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011).
 - Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Gothic Style, 1290–1350* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 263–4, 286.
 - Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 292, 289.
 - Betsy Chunko-Dominguez, *English Gothic Miseriord Carvings: History from the Bottom Up*. (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Jonathan Foyle, *Peterborough Cathedral: A Glimpse of Heaven* (London: Scala, 2018), pp. 70–84.
 - Chunko-Dominguez, *Miseriords*, p. 6; Foyle, *Peterborough*, p. 72; Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 302–5. See also Alixe Bovey, ‘The Smithfield Decretals’, in John Lowden et al (eds.), *Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination* (London: The British Library, 2011).
 - Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, pp. 302, 309.
 - Jonathan Foyle, personal comment, 10 September 2018; Foyle, *Peterborough*, p. 70.
 - Foyle, *Peterborough*, pp. 72–84.
 - Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Late-Medieval England: Three Women and their Books of Hours* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
 - Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260–1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 214.
 - Brigitte Resl (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007). See also Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012).
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Towards an Art History of the Parish Church: An Afterword on Explanation, Meaning, and Experience

PAUL BINSKI

When I was invited to deliver the concluding remarks at the end of the conference on which this book is based, I took as my starting point an article cited in the headline publicity for the conference, which I had published in 1999.¹ It had been commissioned as a ‘bully pulpit’, a platform to promote the idea that the parish church was a worthy object of attention to a greater extent than the published art-historical literature at the time suggested, and that in order to develop this attention we might need to adopt a more integrated or holistic approach, one more synthetic than the generally analytical, media-based methods then dominant. The proposed approach, I freely admit, owed much to anthropology and cultural studies, and I would not exactly disown it now. But all writing is of its time, and here I want to develop a few further thoughts.

Whether or not what was outlined in that paper was acceptable or realisable, the papers gathered here indicate that the field has widened even further: big data analysis, performativity, the history of the senses, ‘emotionology’, gender and identity, and ‘materiality’ studies, to name but a few, have now entered the scene. It is still recognised that the sheer extent of the data is forbidding, that comprehensive political solutions to the future of the parish church heritage are as yet unforthcoming, and that the academy needs to think hard about how to reward professionally the study of these monuments. The study of the parish church is not, nor will it ever be, separable from wider social and intellectual trends, and will always be tugged hither and thither by forces at work in humanities at large.

Certainly in the 1990s, amidst the various upheavals of the so-called New Art History, there was a sense that the art history of the parish church had been overtaken by new agendas set by social and religious historians.² Anthropologically-minded historians were now restoring life to these buildings, and it was up to those of us engaged in the study of ‘visual culture’ to respond. The notion of the restoration of life in the face of the decline of the central belief system seems, to me, to matter. Academic concern has become more social and psychological, more orientated towards the instrumentality of images and their reception; in defining art as imagery, indeed, it has tended to follow paths set by anthropology and cultural studies. The visual ‘equipment’ of the parish church (its *ornamenta*) is now understood within the inherited community life of the parish, a life which provided the soil into which such equipment sank its roots. Some church historians sought, and seek, a radical view of imagery whose depth was communitarian, embedded and traditional. In this they owe much to anthropology and sociology, notably to Émile Durkheim’s thinking about religion and the ‘moral community’: ‘A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things ... things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them’.³ Thus rooted, religion grew out of tradition in the same way that Greek drama grew out of ancient ritual. The narrative is an old one and was not invented by medievalists.

In this act of recovery, of guaranteeing a certain (typically collective) life and authenticity, the metaphor of depth is both important and characteristic. The deep structures consist of common things, liturgy, the public expression of faith on which ‘interiority’ is based, the working of parish and economy, and (importantly) the non-elite character of that faith. Artefacts are but an aspect of life lived. These are the structures of meaning sought by anthropology, in which, to cite Eamon Duffy, tradition is invoked in order to show how the general character of religious culture is ‘rooted in a repertory of inherited and shared beliefs and symbols’.⁴ The emphasis on function, communication, symbolism, and socio-religious embedding enables images to be located meaningfully in the totality of human experience. This totality has a grand narrative. One of the most influential of these concerning larger patterns of psychological change

was Richard Southern’s chapter ‘From Epic to Romance’ in his 1953 study *The Making of the Middle Ages*, a title which consciously or unconsciously echoes Jesse Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), which applied the methods of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* to the legend of the Grail.⁵ Anthropology was hardly a discovery of the 1990s.

It had, however, been greatly energised in recent decades by the approach to meaning called ‘thick description’, articulated especially by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*: that artefacts should be integrated and understood symbolically, psychologically, ideologically, conflictually, charismatically, and ritualistically.⁶ In the image anthropology of Hans Belting and Alfred Gell we encounter the notion that function or ‘operative context’ (*Kull*) and social agency should prevail in the history of the image. Images (not ‘works of art’) are valuable in demonstrating the use-value of things.⁷ According to this view, things work primarily within certain contexts. Because what matters in this form of description is precisely function itself (not, note, purpose or experience), artefacts may be exchanged willy-nilly if they satisfy the minimal data needed for functional efficiency. But this instrumentalisation is insufficient: what artefacts look like, what their makers intended, what their agency was, and what indeed their purpose or ‘final cause’ was, can and should be separated from their instrumentality. Yet in this mindset, function and purpose (which are not the same thing) are elided. And the result is that artifice, and the human agency enabling it, simply vanishes, and artefacts inhabit, or are obliged to inhabit, an entirely instrumentalised world in which their end or purpose remains unclear, unrevealed.

I have argued elsewhere that the flattening effect of these essentially ideological decisions to marginalise aesthetics is proving unhelpful; if images function simply to transmit doctrine or sustain ritual, one image will stand in for another regardless of its look.⁸ By its means, the non-elitist, communitarian stance is kept intact: we don’t have to worry about categories like ‘art’ or ‘quality’ because those things are secondary to the true narrative of meaning-function. The critique of ‘empty’ aestheticism originated, after all, in anthropology and some forms of cultural and ideological critique. Nor need we necessarily uncover the conventions of discourse that frame human artifice. In this way, a great deal of real interest to medieval contemporaries (and to us) is lost and the critical options narrowed. The flattening effect of much contextual study is capable only of explaining similarity but not the differences between things that were mentioned (because they mattered) in medieval discourse. It is hard to see how such an account of the variety, ingenuity, beauty, splendour, and above all persuasiveness of the art of the parish church could be humanly satisfying or even historical. Indeed, it seems to me self-evident that the makers of images (which I will persist in calling ‘artists’ and ‘works of art’) calculated and discriminated about their handiwork; that differences mattered to them; and that they had a language with which to articulate these differences aside from actual praxis. If these things mattered to them, they should matter to us. To understand this, we need to think a little more about explanation, meaning and experience, and contemplate the objective of ‘depth’ as offering a full critical account of what we see in the art of the Middle Ages. We may need to accept that cultures illuminate, but do not explain, and that surfaces, not depths, are more important than the now-dominant archaeological and cultural models allow.

In my 1999 paper I had the temerity (in the face of the anti-aesthetic critique which grew directly out of Geertz’s work as well as the New Art History) to suggest that the ‘gestalt’ or whole effect of parish churches—the object, surely, of holistic enquiry—might matter: that we should consider style, and therefore surface broadly construed. By that I did not mean style analysis, the tried and tested method of scientifically-based empiricism. Such analysis seems to me as important in getting a grip on form and

change as the understanding of poetic metre and literary genre. Without style, which pinpoints difference, we are potentially doomed to a semi-articulate discourse of eternal exchangeability in which the facts concerning any one artefact are not of overwhelming importance relative to its use and framing discourse. Because of this, art history simply fades into cultural studies. But such style analysis had been targeted in the 1980s because its deficiencies were also evident. Formalist approaches were under attack in many branches of the humanities, not least literary study. When we worry about chronology and the style of artefacts it is because we are thinking causally. A chain of events leads the object to look 'like that'. We seek *explanations*: these might be intentional (the reasons that might be given by artists for the decisions they took) or the operation of larger invisible forces like the economy (or causes) which transcend will and intention. These explanations are usually and rightly framed in terms of chronology, cause and effect, the retrospective tracing of sources which are in some way held to explain later decisions, and so on. Their character is essentially scientific, not critical.

Accounts that are preoccupied with origins, reasons, and causes in this way tend to say much less about outcomes. Such explanation works by understanding prior genres and stylistic decisions—*this* building leading to *that* building and so on—in a process of reasoning. But what drops out of this account is the much harder concept to grasp: purpose. We say that this building or image is explained not in terms of the intentions of its maker (and here it is as well to recall that 'intention' carries with it the idea of 'aim', pointing ahead), but in terms of the antecedent conditions for its manufacture. Source-tracing masquerades as explanation. The trajectory of intention drops out of the picture, and the teleological relation to function to purpose, or means to ends, is avoided. What Aristotle, in the philosophically most influential account of causality in the Middle Ages (in his *Physics* (II.3) and *Metaphysics* (V.2)), called the final cause—the thing 'for the sake of which' something came into being—becomes confused with the formal, efficient, and material causes which he also identified. This means-ends confusion seems to me typical of much image-anthropology in which, as I said above, an artefact's end is not clearly differentiated from its function, and it is to its function that an image's purpose is in effect reduced without there being a clear criterion for how, exactly, we pinpoint functional success. The fact is that works of art are more effective, and—to make a point about category—more *unbounded* than their functions alone. That is why they are interesting.

It is not that anthropology actively seeks reductive explanation. On the contrary, at its best, it actively seeks out something richer (or deeper-seeming): the understanding of things by means of a sort of inner sympathy or *Verstehen*.⁹ Anthropology becomes a search for the meaningfulness of things in a way that, to cite Geertz, is 'essentially semiotic', signs working within the 'imaginative universe' which thick description promises.¹⁰ This cannot be wholly wrong. And yet something is missing, or at least assumed, in such thinking about meaning. This is that each and every artwork not only promises—a meaning to be grasped and debated and even produced within the public and social realm—but also possesses agency. Artefacts don't just illustrate or symbolise: they create experience. The communitarian account of the parish church developed in the 1980s and 1990s, which stressed the embedding of personal experience and habit within the collective, seems to me justified in the sense that it grasps the fact, true of the Middle Ages certainly, that art and textuality operated socially, and that the discourse of the individual was not readily separable from the public domain. But as with all theories of meaningfulness, what drops out is an account of experience, of how the differences and similarities of things actively produced experiences—I mean especially sense-based or aesthetic experiences—in that social body: in short, how they looked forward, had a

'design', on the beholder.

If images are there simply to transmit information, to convey doctrine, they become a medium as it is often, and wrongly, understood: an undifferentiated transparent vehicle, like plate glass, without its own agency. This is in large measure because the instrumental outlook of historians of religion is indifferent to artifice; artifice takes account of and works in a medium, and that medium has agency. Materiality study, based ultimately on the thinking about medium and the senses explored by Walter J. Ong and Marshall McLuhan, has had the virtue of reminding us that artworks not only have an ostensive form (shape, style) but power as materially-constituted things.¹¹ The medium is (partly) the message: metaphorically and aesthetically, it incarnates. Materiality study also has deficiencies which we need not explore now.¹² But what it stresses is that things are not solely apprehended as objects functioning within a deeper context; they are, first, surfaces whose material and idiomatic form, whose shape, profile, surface patterning, colour, and 'look' create an experience *within* their beholders as thinking feeling subjects. These surfaces, unlike the hidden depths, are open, contextual (or occasional), complex, social yet also individual, but above all knowable through the senses and sense-based experience. They provoke thought. They are matters of aesthetic attention in the pre-modern sense of knowledge, sensation, and experience gained through the senses. So, when in 1999 I wrote about such surfaces as *constitutive* elements in the creation of experience, I was not only challenging the anti-aestheticism of the New Art History: I had anticipated the new style of rhetorical analysis which has been more systematically explored by others in recent years.¹³

As Mary Carruthers and C. Stephen Jaeger have since shown in their different ways, non-transcendental—that is, worldly—aesthetics are concerned with surfaces, appearances, sense perceptions, experiences: Christian art inevitably has a 'sensual, surface-bound aspect'.¹⁴ The rhetorical language and practices of the ancient and medieval worlds preserve for us a large and articulate body of discourse about such experiences which possesses real critical value. It reminds us that some of the earliest and greatest theologians (and aestheticians) such as St. Augustine were also trained rhetoricians, and that theology itself was cast in rhetorical terms. Mary Carruthers says of St. Bonaventure and the incarnational aspect of art that 'the joy he describes is not in some meaning he finds in the object, but rather the pleasures of the craftsman in making it and our sensory pleasures in perceiving it. Artists do not imitate the doctrine of Incarnation by expressing it directly but in the ways their art assumes and demonstrates some of its process'.¹⁵

In their assumption and demonstrative power, in their colour, sheen, and finish, line and calculation, all visual artefacts, whether buildings or images, have a powerful latency. We experience the coloured marble columns at the east end of Canterbury Cathedral as magnificent, and that magnificence, that 'making great', is made yet deeper when we see that the columns have a human dimension, that as complex metaphors they allude to current hagiography, embody an elevating aesthetic of martyrdom, but also rely on conventional architectural exegesis which is beyond personal understanding.¹⁶ They act as forms of figurative understanding which are not literally mimetic or just 'symbolic'. They do not transmit information, nor do they imitate; they are, and they instil in us, what martyrdom *is*. And it is in the realisation of that nexus, created by the context or, better, 'occasion', of the artefact, that we take both inspiration and pleasure. Meaning, inner sympathy, *Verstehen* are not separable from such experience because experience is in part a vehicle for meaning. And yet it is exactly the discourse of experience, of pleasure (as of other sensations) that has dropped out of our critical

language.

If an art history of the parish church is to realise this fully, it must, in my view, understand that artworks cannot just be folded or dissolved into their contexts, as if a context were a clearly-understood ‘given’ that could shape experience (I prefer the rhetorical, and more active or processual idea of ‘occasion’). Artefacts are *ornamenta*, equipment, but *persuasive* equipment which produces experience which is always occasional.¹⁷ It might be asked how experience can be a proper object of historical enquiry. Surely it is evanescent, fleeting, personal, and ‘occasional’ in the sense of not being governed by norms? Correct, and yet experience is also framed within and perpetuated by identifiable social and linguistic conventions. The recent movement to consider in greater depth the language of ancient and medieval rhetorical practice and theory, to consider the public language of persuasion, has aimed consciously to retrieve the study of medieval art making and experience from the intellectualist domains of Platonic (and modernist) thought. For rhetoric is far more than oratory: it is a body of practice which has actively directed aesthetic activity more widely. In particular, it restores sensory perceptions, the complex bodily and affective components of experience, to the standing they had in the Middle Ages, not in the Early Modern period or under the dispensations of Romanticism and modernism. Because these components were social and open to all—contrary to the usual dismissal of rhetorical analysis as ‘elitist’—issues of quality, which seem to haunt medievalists, can be set aside. Anyone can ‘get’ the rules. Finally, in a world in which scholarship seems to have split between historicists and phenomenologists, rhetorical study offers an historically-informed route into the nature and language of experience as a public thing which is distinguishable from the trans-historicising tendencies of phenomenology. Far from being elitist, this essentially socialised scheme attempts instead to free the understanding of medieval objects from post-medieval, individualistic notions of the self.

It follows that such sense perceptions are never entirely free of mindfulness. For example, the trajectory of intention, the aim of a work of art (or artist), is captured by the process of locating and travelling through a work of art or a building, a journey which has attracted the rhetorical term *ductus*.¹⁸ The notion of *ductus* implies the possibility of divergent paths. Such paths do not sit well with the common notion of determinate meaning. But they do imply some sort of initial orientation captured, in medieval compositional theory, by the idea of mapping, what Geoffrey of Vinsauf calls the ‘Cadiz’ or starting point for all compositional activity verbal or visual.¹⁹ This notion of cognitive mapping was strikingly anticipated in one of the more stimulating (if anti-communitarian) general essays on the social space of the parish church: that by Pamela Graves (1989).²⁰ In Graves’s essay, Frances Yates’s ideas about memory and Pierre Bordieu’s idea of the *habitus* are coupled with rhetorical learning and the memorisation of sequential information in such a way that ‘space, fabric and action become recursively implicated in facilitating and defining practice and knowledge’ and in which the iconography of the church becomes a ‘powerful cognitive map’.²¹ However, the rhetorical art of memory was not solely recollective but prospective, productive; the cognitive map is not static, but rather actively guides the spectator through the pathways of understanding, what Carruthers calls ‘the routes of prayer’, by means of persuasive experience.²²

It is not difficult to sketch out the object domains of such routes, because they are common to all complex works of art. There is a way in, and a way through. Since English parish churches (with rare exceptions) tend not to have elaborate carved portals, their often highly-decorated porches become the occasion for the opening statement, the *exordium* which gets the audience into the right frame of mind (well-

disposed, attentive, and teachable).²³ Within, the cognitive map is established by a familiar distribution of sacramental furniture, the font, the altars, the specially-furnished places for the priests. The painted rood screen, as it developed in the fifteenth century at any rate, offers a second occasion for engagement, and for continuing the essentially dynamic process begun at entry.²⁴

This process is not, however, solely nor essentially cognitive. It is moved on, energised, by aesthetic experience itself, by pleasure, by the powers of attraction (or repulsion) which moved the activity of affective engagement, and by affect. Fullness or amplification (*copia*)—for example, of nave and chancel wall paintings—are occasions for absorption and admiration: the murals should be thorough but also executed ‘loud and clear’ in their miscellany. The pleasure taken in them may be aroused by their scale and splendour but also by their internal variety and complexity, especially if they consist of skilled narrative mixture or pleasurable medley, their ‘copious chaos’ being a spur to thought.²⁵ Such fullness might concern narrative, or it might concern the amplification and reiteration of magnificently-executed but minute micro-architectural detailing, as on many screens, tombs and chancel furnishings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁶

Such effects, aimed at winning the attention and benevolence of those experiencing them, have a strongly affective as well as cognitive order. The illumination of churches by adequate natural light and by the splendour of artificial lights on and around the altar was, we know, a concern of the pastoral church in the period from the thirteenth century, as ‘obscurity’ became the target of opprobrium. Perhaps the concern was sacramental, that the ‘need to see’ the Host required adequate and symbolically rich illumination.²⁷ But that it was also social and affective is undeniable. Throughout Western Europe, the language of light was connected unashamedly to the language of joy or exhilaration. For instance, when a great Mass was said for Eleanor of Castile at Westminster Abbey in 1307, candles were placed on the abbey’s encircling beams and distributed to the congregation in such a way that ‘the splendour of shining lights, like a starry sky, gladdened (*exhilaravit*) with great enjoyment (*iocunditas*) the hearts of those beholding it’.²⁸ Such language of joy, pleasure, and the quickening of sensibility was far from subjective: it was coupled conventionally with notions of nobility and magnificence. And, by the same socio-aesthetic logic, artifice recognised too the powers of repulsion, the beneficial aspect of fear; that while artefacts could generate delight in beauty, they could also work by a sort of disgust. Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1.1448b4) pondered the experience of the painful by arguing that we can take pleasure in the unpleasant: ‘Though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies’. His concern was essentially fascination, the powerful, even compulsive form of attention that connects attraction and repulsion. Of this the late-medieval realist macabre arts are perfect instances, at once serving orthodox doctrine and yet demonstrating the persuasion of the unpleasurable, the ugly, the fearful.

On other occasions, I have also tried to argue that visual practices often conceived in ideological and epistemological terms may better be understood as means whereby certain experiences were created. I would cite especially the zone of the marginal, of what I have called the ‘pleasures of unruling’, in which the polymorphous, the discordant, the grotesque, did not directly serve the endless textualising pursuit of meaning at all, but rather the creation of experience in the onlooker.²⁹ Ideology, I suggest, constantly forces us back to meaning and away from the social domain of experience and engagement and delight governed not by givens such as ‘context’, but rather by the more fluid notion of occasion. Artefacts very often work against as well as with their contexts, but they tend to work within the looser guidelines of occasion.

It is difficult not to remark, finally, on the way that the humanist inclinations of rhetorical analysis harmonise (to an extent) with that enjoyment of complexity and contradiction which Robert Venturi foregrounded in his manifesto of postmodernism.³⁰ Yet the intentions of persuasion, and complexity for its own sake, were not really the same. In writing earlier about the teleological relation of means and ends, function and purpose, I sought to distinguish these terms not in order to deny the functionality of art but in order to retain the specialness of its intentions and purposes, its outcomes. For the arts of the parish church and its ‘routes of prayer’ served ends—confident belief and virtuous action—which on another occasion I have called a ‘conviction purpose’.³¹ Such ends are no more reducible to function than are the aesthetic, experiential devices of artifice, or art. They consist of something which involves meaning but which is also deeper, more heartfelt, based in a true persuasion of both heart and mind: *fides*, confidence, faith. Jean de Joinville in his mid thirteenth-century *Romans as Ymages* called this state *ferme creance*.³² For this reason, purposes are revealed to us in a way that functions are not. An art history of the parish church, as perhaps of medieval arts more generally, should to my mind try to understand how such arts created and sustained *ferme creance* through style, pleasure, humour, artifice, difficulty, and even illusion.

1. Paul Binski, ‘The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem’, *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): pp. 1–25.

2. Three characteristic studies of the period are Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin (eds.), *The Parish in English Life 1400–1600* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), and for further (though not comprehensive) bibliography to 1999, see Binski, ‘Parish Church’.

3. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (trans.) Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), cited p. 44.

4. Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 3.

5. Richard W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson, 1953); Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920); James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, two volumes (London: Macmillan, 1890).

6. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.

7. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, (trans.) Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1994); Alfred Gell, ‘The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology’, in Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 40–63.

8. See my study *Gothic Sculpture* (London: Paul Mellon Centre and Yale University Press, 2019), p. 129.

9. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, Hans P. Rickman (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

10. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 6, 13.

11. Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 1964).

12. Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, pp. 171–91.

13. Binski, ‘Parish Church’, p. 19.

14. Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 181–7; C.

Stephen Jaeger (ed.), *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 12–13.

15. Carruthers, *Experience*, pp. 203–4.

16. I give this instance in Paul Binski, *Becket’s Crown, Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170–1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 9.

17. For a fuller exposition of this see Binski, *Gothic Sculpture* and Carruthers, *Experience*, pp. 13–14.

18. For *ductus* see Mary Carruthers (ed.), *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 190–213.

19. Carruthers, *Rhetoric Beyond Words*, pp. 190–1.

20. Pamela Graves, ‘Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church’, *Economy and Society* 18 (1989): pp. 297–322.

21. Graves, ‘Social Space’, pp. 305, 309.

22. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 222, 261.

23. For a recent study see Helen Lunnon, *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020).

24. Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 110–12. See most recently Spike Bucklow, Richard Marks, and Lucy Wrapson (eds.) *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017).

25. Binski, ‘Parish Church’, p. 15.

26. For *copia* (fulness, amplification), see Carruthers, *Craft*, pp. 61, 63, and for amplification and diminution in microarchitecture, see Paul Binski, ‘Magnificentia in Parvis: microarchitecture et esthetique médiévale’, in Jean-Marie Guilloüet and Ambre Vilain (eds.), *Microarchitecture et figures du bâti: l’échelle à l’épreuve de la matière* (Paris: Picard, 2018), pp. 13–24.

27. An interest established by Edouard Dumoutet, *Le désir de voir l’hostie et les origines de la dévotion au saint sacrement* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1926); for lights, see David R. Dendy, *The Use of Lights in Christian Worship*, Alcuin Club Collections 41 (London: SPCK, 1959).

28. Otto Lehmann-Brockhaus (ed.), *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307*, five volumes (Munich: Prestel, 1955–60), no. 2987: ‘unde fulgor radiantium luminarium quasi caelum stellatum animos insipientium iocunditate

pervalida exhillaravit’. On this see my study ‘Aesthetic Attitudes in Gothic Art: thoughts on Girona Cathedral’, *Codex Aquilarensis* 35 (2019): pp. 179–200.

29. I have expanded on this point in my study *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290–1350* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 283–305.

30. As proposed in Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), pp. 18–23.

31. Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, pp. 39–49.

32. Lionel J. Friedman, *Text and Iconography for Joinville’s Credo* (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America Publications, 1958); Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 75; for confident belief, see Carruthers, *Experience*, pp. 38, 42, 102.