

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THE CHURCH SCREEN
IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THE CHURCH SCREEN IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE



MAKING, MEANING,
PRESERVING



Edited by Spike Bucklow, Richard Marks
and Lucy Wrapson

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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5

SACRED KINGSHIP, GENEALOGY AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL ROOD SCREEN: CATFIELD AND BEYOND

JULIAN LUXFORD

While the breadth of analysis which medieval church screens invite is undeniably appealing, it is also problematic. Anyone conjuring with the topic faces issues of environment, structure, function, meaning, artistry, iconography and patronage, and has to negotiate familiar dichotomies, for example between case study and synthesis, greater churches and parochial ones, and rood screens and parcloses. Scientific analysis is also a consideration, as judgements about dating, artistic practice, iconoclastic erasures and the original colouring of screens can be improved or corrected by specialized tools which do what old-fashioned looking and ratiocination cannot. Of course, the reflective scholar feels that such reduction of a complex entity into its parts neglects some original state of holism, in which the entity's physical attributes and historical condition were somehow conflated. But if this *je ne sais quoi* is not an illusion, then it is at least something which cognition struggles to process. In art history, the normal way of responding to the challenge has been to build consideration of spatial and material integration into one's work. Indeed, such considerations have been present in writing on screens for the best part of two centuries, and have even come to be regarded as problems in their own right.¹ A large difficulty in all this is naturally a

¹ See e.g. R. Hart, 'Description of the Engraving from the Ranworth Screen', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 1 (1847), p. 325: 'In our churches, *as they were*, architecture and tinted glass, panel-painting, sculpture, and embroidery, harmonised most beautifully with each other

deficit of information about the Middle Ages. Wherever the medievalist turns, history fails him or her miserably, and scholars should only work with what they have.

This essay is neither a theoretical reflection on the study of screens nor an attempt to dissolve them back into the culture from which they emerged. Rather, these preliminary remarks are offered as an apology for turning to a single screen in a rural parish church, something I find reflexively unsettling, especially in the context of a volume which ranges so widely over its theme. In support of my approach, the reasons for choosing the rood screen at Catfield in Norfolk are not all local in character. It is true that this screen merits attention in its own right and will receive it here. Its surviving imagery, a series of sixteen kings, is both typologically striking and contextually unique, and displays an iconographic logic rare on screens apart from apostle sets and orders of angels. But study of this imagery inevitably leads one into the domain of cathedral and monastic screens, and sheds light on the contemporary enthusiasm for English royal saints, a distinctive but understudied aspect of late medieval devotion. The kings at Catfield also help to clarify an instinct about the historical understanding of rood screen imagery which, if sound, has a transcendent relevance. This is that screens with saints on them presented their beholders with an illustration of the conferment of grace, which according to *The Golden Legend* was one of the three main fruits of Christ's passion.² Explanation of this idea involves an analogy with the layout of the manuscript genealogies that were popular at the end of the Middle Ages. Like the imagery of figured screens, this layout was formally diagrammatic, gave precedence to a founding figure and was read from top to bottom. For this analogy to work, one has to accept that such genealogies were sufficiently familiar to have induced a sequential, top-down reading of screens. I hope this is simple enough to do in light of the plentiful evidence for their manufacture and distribution. Of equal significance for the argument is the genealogical contextualization of Christ, the common manifestations of which are perfectly familiar and will also be touched on here.

For present purposes, the screen's local setting can only be briefly explained. Catfield is a Broadland village some 12 miles north-east of Norwich. In the late Middle Ages, other prosperous villages with handsome churches of their own surrounded it, and surviving Catfield wills suggest a high degree of social interaction with these places. Catfield's church, dedicated to All Saints, has the rectilinear form and

... The eye was not arrested by the beauty of *detached parts*, but by the general effect of *the whole*, to which these parts were made subservient.' Compare W. Sauerländer, 'Integration: An Open or Closed Proposal?', in V. C. Raguin, K. Brush and P. Draper (eds), *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings* (Toronto, 1995), pp. 3–18.

² F. S. Ellis (ed.), *The Golden Legend, or Lives of the Saints, as Englished by William Caxton* (London, 1900), I, pp. 74–5.



FIG. 5.1. CATFIELD (NORFOLK): THE NAVE, LOOKING EAST TOWARDS THE SCREEN AND CHANCEL.

flint and stone construction normal in the area. There is a west tower, nave of five bays and a proportionately large two-bay chancel. With regard to the screen, the salient architectural points are these. First, the chancel arch in which the screen is fitted is of the same date as the nave, which was built in the second half of the fourteenth century (Fig. 5.1). It is high and wide, and there is no physical evidence that it ever had a wooden tympanum. The Rood, which stood on the screen, presumably always had the east window for its backdrop. Second, the chancel itself is of later date, rebuilt for a rector named John Walters and completed in 1471. This information, from an inscription on Walters's tomb, was recorded in the early seventeenth century and is reliable.³ Third, the helical rood stair common in late medieval parish churches is absent here, but steps built into the window-jambs in the eastern bays of the aisles suggest that access to the loft was along the connecting lofts of parclose screens which caged these bays (such screens survive at Beeston-next-Mileham in Norfolk and Dennington in Suffolk). The final relevant point is that the aisle windows are large enough to compensate for the lack of a nave clerestory. Even assuming some coloured glass, the screen must have been well enough lit by day to make its images clearly visible.

A detailed picture of the screen's artistic setting is impossible. Wills

³ J. Luxford, 'Catfield Church, Norfolk: A Lost Rectorial Brass and an Early Case of Brass-Preservation', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 167 (2014), pp. 205–12.

are the only useful archival source, and little imagery survives. Besides a record of a few coats of arms, nothing is known about the glass. Above the nave arcades are various wall paintings of the later fourteenth century, displaying a medley of subjects including scenes from the life of Christ interspersed with saints' martyrdoms and moral diagrams. These are now practically invisible, and although recorded in the mid-nineteenth century, not all of the subject matter is clear.⁴ The most interesting in relation to the screen is a wheel of fortune at the west end on the north side, with its four kings crying 'regnabo', 'regno', 'regnavi' and 'non regno' in agreement with their positions. In the fifteenth century the church hosted guilds dedicated to the Virgin Mary, All Saints and Thomas of Canterbury, and images of all three are mentioned independently in wills, along with a panel painting of the apostle Thomas. Tabernacles are specified for sculpted images of All Saints and the Virgin, both of which seem to have been in the chancel (that of the Virgin certainly was). These were apparently the images required by ecclesiastical statute, but others representing the same subjects probably existed in the nave as focal points for the guilds.⁵ There was a 'canopy about the sacrament' on the high altar, and lights to the Virgin, St Nicholas, All Souls, the sepulchre and what testators variously called 'crucifixus', 'sancte crucis', 'the high rode' and 'the blisside Rode on the perke': as usual in the parochial arena, the Rood light attracted the most generous gifts. Otherwise, there is evidence only for a handful of brass epitaphs, none of them apart from Walters's inscription remotely suggestive of involvement with the screen. What the wills do evoke, through their various requests for trentals and short-term chantries, is the church's general busyness and commemorative hum.⁶

What remains of the screen are its vertical elements up to the top of the fenestration, which is closed off by a moulded head-beam (Pl. XV). The loft and its supporting apparatus have vanished, and there are no traces on the jambs of the chancel arch or east nave wall to indicate its height or lateral

⁴ D. Turner, 'Mural Paintings in Catfield Church', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 1 (1847), pp. 133–9.

⁵ R. Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 61, 73 (statutory images).

⁶ Wills recording images, guilds, lights and/or commemoration are Norfolk Record Office, Norwich Consistory Court (hereafter NRO, NCC) registers Harsyk, f. 242r (1390s); Doke, f. 98r (1439); Wylbey, f. 95r–v (1447); Brosyard, ff. 44r–v (1457), 192v–193r (1460), 261v, 272r–v (both 1461); Gelour, f. 211r–v (John Walters, 1478: image and tabernacle of the Virgin; missal, vestment and chalice); Paynot, f. 44r (1473); Caston, ff. 144v (1482), 169r (1483: requesting chancel burial; image and tabernacle of All Saints); Normande, ff. 19v (1486), 47v–48r (1493); Wight, f. 69r (1499); Popy, f. 386r (1503); Ryxe, f. 245v (1505); Spyltymbre, f. 309r–v (1510); Robynson, ff. 105v–107r (1520: 'blisside Rode'); Herman, ff. 27r, 33r–v (both 1523, the latter mentioning the image of Thomas of Canterbury); Alpe, ff. 63v–65r (1528); Hyll, ff. 53v–54r (1537); Daynes, ff. 21v–23r, 41r (both 1538), 133r–v (1541); NRO, MS Rye 3, vol. 2, p. 410 (1476: high altar canopy); F. Blomefield and C. Parkin, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* (London, 1808), pp. 292–3 (1510: 'table of St Thomas of Ynde').

projection, although it presumably connected at right angles with the lofts of the chapel screens. In its present state the screen is 5m wide and 3.84m high. It is divided into six bays of nearly equal width, and has elaborate tracery with ogee arches, copious panelling and a great deal of cusping. The doorway is ostentatiously large, occupying the two central bays of the screen to a little under two-thirds of their height. There is no evidence to suggest that it was ever equipped with doors, a characteristic shared with other screens in the region. The effect is evocative – and must have been even more so originally. This open arch not only enabled a generous view of the high altar, it drew the gaze into the chancel, and whatever the worshipper in the nave observed through it was framed by animated, meaningful images.⁷ Here the biblical metaphor of Christ as the door to salvation, embellished in vernacular treatises circulating in the fifteenth century, was conspicuous by design, together with the concomitant notion that the screen itself was a point of transition from a mundane to a higher state.⁸ At Catfield, the wide and permanent void under the rood makes the screen seem less a physical barrier to unauthorized entry than a force field, whose penetration was legitimate – even encouraged – but at the same time a test of personal conscience. According to one's state of mind, the janitor-figures to left and right of the doorway might be understood as guardians or a welcoming committee.

As noted, Catfield has sixteen such figures, which is a large but certainly not unparalleled number (Pls XVI and XVII). The four bays that contain them are logically subdivided, so that each has two 'windows' composed of two cusped, lancet-shaped panels. These windows are alternately red and green, the normal colour scheme for East Anglian screens and symbolically appropriate to the saintly classes of martyrs (whose blood was shed) and confessors (the roots of whose faith were 'alive and quick in the earth').⁹ The kings are arranged in pairs and associated by their *actio* – gestures, facial expressions and body language – with images of prophets and apostles.¹⁰ None of them looks out at the viewer, which is usual in painted screen imagery. The three ages of adulthood counted by medieval encyclopaedists are suggested by the nature of the figures' hair: beardlessness identifies youth (seven figures), a brown beard and hair implies maturity (six figures) and a white-grey beard and hair signifies old age (three figures).¹¹ The kings wear fluttering mantles over either

⁷ For the framing of ritual by the imagery of monumental screens see the excellent discussion in J. E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200–1400* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 71–103.

⁸ John 10:7, 9; compare London, BL Add. MS 35298, ff. 168v, 169r; H. N. MacCracken, 'Magnificencia Ecclesie', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 24 (1909), p. 695.

⁹ Compare W. H. St J. Hope and E. G. C. F. Atchley, *An Introduction to English Liturgical Colours* (London, 1920), pp. 27–9, 31–3, 35, 58–9; Ellis (ed.), *Golden Legend*, 6, pp. 103–4 (quotation).

¹⁰ See e.g. J. Hanson, 'The Prophets in Discussion', *Florilegium*, 17 (2000), pp. 73–97.

¹¹ See R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012),

loose tunics with horizontal belts or tighter fitting garments apparently intended for armour, with pinched waists and golden baldrics. Their costume is red or green, accented here and there by blue or mauve; and it hardly needs saying that figures clad in red occupy green panels and vice versa. All but one have broad ermine tippets fastened with gold clasps, and all without exception wear decorative open crowns of the sort used during the fifteenth century to embellish votive statues, and common in contemporary manuscript painting and stained glass.¹² Their boots have pointy toes, and they stand upon a semblance of grassy ground. For all this, their present state gives only a cloudy impression of what they must have looked like before they were defaced and painted out.¹³ They were clearly designed to enchant viewers aesthetically, through the mobile duct of their draperies, sweet intensity of their expressions and shimmering brilliance of their ornaments (Pl. XVIII).

Dating these figures closely is difficult. Previous estimates have ranged between the 1420s and the late fifteenth century, and my own instinct is to place them at or near the end of this period.¹⁴ An early date is sometimes suggested because the architecture of Catfield's screen is a simplified version of the extant screen at Happisburgh, and a screen at Happisburgh is mentioned in a will of 1422.¹⁵ But this is not much to go on: construction of the documented screen at Happisburgh could have been delayed (money was not necessarily spent when it was given), and the designer of Catfield's screen may anyway have followed an older exemplar recommended by its patron. Such cases are documented, and churchwardens or their agents sometimes travelled around in search of suitable models.¹⁶ The date of the screen's architecture matters here, because it is very unlikely that the dado would have been left

pp. 32–7.

¹² See e.g. R. Marks and P. Williamson (eds), *Gothic: Art for England, 1400–1540* (exhib. cat., London, 2003), pp.154–5; K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390–1490*, 2 vols (London, 1996), 1, Ills 345, 368, 370–2, 397–8; R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England During the Middle Ages* (London, 1993), Figs 81, 142–4, 163, 169; Pls XIX, XXIII.

¹³ They were not rediscovered until 1873, which explains the paucity of antiquarian sources for them. Work on the screen in 1985 by Pauline Plummer was left incomplete for want of money.

¹⁴ For a late fifteenth-century dating see e.g. A. E. Nichols, *The Early Art of Norfolk: A Subject List of Extant and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002), pp. 167, 187, 189, 224; N. Pevsner and B. Wilson, *The Buildings of England. Norfolk 1: Norwich and North-East* (London, 2002), p. 428.

¹⁵ A. Baker, *English Panel Paintings 1400–1558: A Survey of Figure Paintings on East Anglian Rood Screens*, ed. and updated A. Ballantyne and P. Plummer (London, 2011), p. 130; S. Cotton, 'Mediaeval Roodscreens in Norfolk: Their Construction and Painting Dates', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 40 (1987–89), p. 48. See also L. J. Wrapson, 'Patterns of Production: A Technical Art Historical Study of East Anglia's Late Medieval Screens' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2013), p. 556 (suggesting 'c.1430–60').

¹⁶ E. Duffy, 'The Parish, Piety and Patronage in Late Medieval East Anglia: The Evidence of Rood Screens', in K. French, G. Gibbs and B. Kümin (eds), *The Parish in English Life 1400–1600* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 141, 146–8.

unpainted for long, and even less so that the current figures replace an earlier scheme. But it is no easier to tie the painting in with the rebuilding of the chancel around 1471, for the chancel arch, as noted above, is of a piece with the nave. And the style and iconography of the painting, including the costumes and ornaments, are similarly unhelpful, particularly in their abraded state. The figures' suave, rhythmic, delicate handling is recognizably that of the International Style, but this was a style that hung on in English panel painting well into the second half of the fifteenth century. Their hair is arranged in corkscrew curls of a sort found in manuscript painting of the early 1400s, but present in panel painting, stained glass and sculpture for a century after this.¹⁷ Finally, the historical chronology of these kings cannot help, as the latest of them died centuries before the screen was made. Thus, saving some technical discovery or *deus ex archivo*, a broad dating between c.1430 and c.1475 is all it is reasonable to suggest.

As noted previously, the iconography at Catfield is unique. To my knowledge, no other surviving screen in a parish church has more than four kings on it, and while these may be paired up, as at Barton Turf and Ludham, they are combined with non-royal saints in what looks to modern eyes an unsystematic arrangement. The Catfield kings are an ensemble, and this all but proves that a persuasive individual such as a rector or local gentleman with a taste for such imagery was responsible for them: they look like the product of a personal enthusiasm.¹⁸ In most cases, popular helper saints, whose variety in terms of gender and special efficacy reflected parish demographics, occupied the west faces of screens. The processes by which screen imagery was determined are unclear, but must normally have involved official, collective sanction of some kind.¹⁹ If such a decision does underlie the choice of kings at Catfield, then it was evidently taken in response to some now-lost ensemble elsewhere (which would still not explain why this imagery was thought appropriate for a parish rood screen), or else a desire to do something novel and patriotic that would mark the church out; but the latter suggestion hardly rings true as a basis for excluding the apostles and other trusted advocates.²⁰ There are no obvious grounds for suspecting the intervention of a more elevated patron than a rector like John Walters, and one is obliged to accept that the parish was both willing to take what it was offered and content to

¹⁷ For an early example see Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, 1, ill. 103 (the Wyndham-Payne leaf, made c.1410). The Ranworth group of painters reproduced this feature, as did the sculptor of the kings on York Minster's pulpitum and various alabasterers.

¹⁸ The lost fifteenth-century screen at Poringland, just south of Norwich, also had an inclusive programme of images and was certainly built by a rector: Blomefield and Parkin, *Topographical History*, 5, pp. 440–1.

¹⁹ Compare E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580*, 2nd edn (London, 2005), pp. 159–60.

²⁰ It is unlikely that the images marked some extraordinary event like a royal visit which occurred when the screen was being installed.

keep it once it was *in situ*. Devotional patriotism is probably as good an explanation for this willingness as apathy or lack of agency on the part of the churchwardens.

In any case, the screen does include a few familiar saints, and at least one – Edmund – who was ubiquitous in late medieval East Anglia. Little has been said to this point about the identities of the kings; it is time to address the matter. The first task is to classify them. As the genealogy given at the beginning of the Gospel of St Matthew includes sixteen kings, and as Christ himself topped the screen in martyred glory, it should be asked whether the Catfield panels represent Christ's ancestors.²¹ The answer is no – as indicated, they include Anglo-Saxon kings identifiable by attribute – but the agreement of number relates to what is said later on and should be held in mind. Neither was the aim to present a succession of kings culminating in a current one, as it often was in English Gothic art. There is a correspondence, inexact but immediately felt, between Catfield's figures and the main image programmes of transverse screens in English cathedrals and monasteries at the time, which seems to have consisted almost exclusively of kings. Examples are known from the cathedrals of Canterbury, Durham, Old St Paul's, Salisbury, Wells and York, the first and last of which survive. Chester Abbey's pulpitum also displayed images of kings from William I to Henry VII.²² Sanctity was never necessary for inclusion in these schemes and, indeed, saintly kings seldom seem to have appeared in them (Canterbury and Durham are exceptions): in most cases – as with series of kings depicted in other contexts and media – the beholder was offered an unbroken line which emphasized institutional prestige, loyalty and an expectation of royal favour, as well as the monarch's role as defender of religion and the superior status conveyed by his anointment. Knowledge of one or more of these schemes probably does help to explain the choice of imagery at Catfield, which would have gained prestige by association with great and solemn institutions.²³ But parish churches had their own image-logic, according to which the rood screen was reserved for either saints or prophecy. In this regard, at least, Catfield is surely conventional: its kings look saintly in their location, the objects they hold and their general attitudes (the kings of the surviving great screens do not converse with one another but stare outwards), and the comparative evidence offered below establishes a clear context for

²¹ Matthew 1:1–17.

²² C. Wilson, 'Rulers, Artificers and Shoppers: Richard II's Remodelling of Westminster Hall, 1393–99', in D. Gordon, L. Monnas and C. Elam (eds), *The Regal Image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych* (London, 1997), pp. 33–59, 274–88 (at p. 283 n. 74): 'there appears to be no evidence that the major niches of choir-screens in the greater English churches ever contained anything other than images of royal rulers'. See also L. Slater, 'Visual Reflections on History and Kingship in the Medieval English Great Church', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 167 (2014), pp. 83–108; A. Vallance, *Greater English Church Screens* (London, 1947), p. 97 (Chester).

²³ No evidence survives for the iconography of such monumental screens in East Anglia.

identifying them as such.²⁴ If there is an ordering principle here, then it is evidently devotional hierarchy rather than chronology, with the two most prestigious saints out of date order but flanking the chancel entrance. The absence of conventional haloes, noted in past assessments of the figures' status, is actually irrelevant, for the brow of each is already girt with the *coronam vitae* that scripture promises to those who endure trials for Christ's sake.²⁵ Enough of the figures are identifiable to show that they do not follow any strict sequence. The glue that holds them together is royalty and sanctity.

Only three of the kings can be safely identified by their attributes, while the identities of three more seem probable. In other cases, separate figures hold an object that would be appropriate to a particular royal saint, making it likely that this saint is included but unclear which figure represents him. In some cases they hold only swords or sceptres, which were generic attributes of kings in art. Originally, it was intended to identify the figures with labels, and white banderols were painted for the purpose on the sloping face of the transom above them (Pl. XVII, top left). This at least shows that viewers were not expected to recognize them on the basis of attributes or spiritual insight alone; but the names were never inscribed, and the failure to do so means that at least half of the figures will remain unidentifiable. Nevertheless, it is clear enough that all were supposed to represent English kings who had lived and died before the Norman Conquest, in that misty period when, as the chroniclers had it, violence and sanctity were the motive powers of history, and beautiful, Christian princes were strewn and cut down like flowers of the field. The main basis for this classification is by analogy with other sources in which English royal saints are grouped together. These sources, which never seem to have been collected or studied together, illustrate the dominant, essentially genealogical model of medieval history writing in their isolation of a special class of saint and presentation of its members in sequences defined by discrete listing, or, in art, pictorial isolation (one to a panel, pane or roundel).

Current assumptions about later medieval history encourage the view that this marshalling of indigenous, saintly kings originally responded to royal interests and had a political dimension. That may well be true: while the kings involved had long been individually worshipped by the custodians and devotees of their cults, collective interest in them first emerges clearly in the personal religion of Henry III, who believed that eleven pre-Conquest monarchs had been canonized – he could remember their names – and trusted his sister Isabella's soul to the

²⁴ It is usually assumed that all of the figures are saintly, but the case has never been made.

²⁵ James 1:12; Revelation 2:10. Round haloes would also have obscured the crowns which were so aesthetically important at Catfield.

special guardianship of four of them when she married the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II (Henry had images of them put onto her crown).²⁶ The idea is encouraged by an early pictorial example. When the vestibule of the chapter house at York Minster was glazed around 1300, a window displaying royal genealogy was juxtaposed with another showing saintly kings in a manifestation of the familiar idea that royal prerogative was communicated metaphysically, via sacred history, as well as through blood and anointment.²⁷ It is also supported by later evidence. When Henry V returned to London after Agincourt, one of the honorific pageants included a *tableau vivant* featuring twelve English kings, both martyrs and confessors, identified by their costumes and attributes. They, or others present, chanted Psalm 44: ‘I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me; thou hast saved us from them that afflict us, and hast put them to shame that hate us.’²⁸ Here history thanked its champion as the psalmist had thanked God, and simultaneously made the same point as the windows at York. Shortly after this, John Capgrave’s *Liber de Illustribus Henricis*, written to flatter Henry VI, named eight Anglo-Saxon kings – four martyrs, four confessors – as ‘first among all the holy kings of this, our country.’ Capgrave evidently knew of others besides those he mentioned.²⁹ Around 1441, a window was put into the Old Library at All Souls College at Oxford which had among its fifteen figures ten ancestor kings of Henry VI who were known or reputed to be saints, including nine out of the ten who had lived before the Conquest.³⁰ Only those found in the Sarum rite seem to have had name-labels including the word ‘sanctus’, but a reputation for sanctity may have influenced the choices all the same. And when the chantry chapel of Arthur, Prince of Wales (d. 1502) went up at Worcester Cathedral in the early sixteenth century, it included a set of eleven sculpted royal saints. In this case, two of the figures (Edward II and Henry VI) post-dated the Conquest, but the others were Anglo-Saxon.³¹

²⁶ H. R. Luard (ed.), *Chronica maiora Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi S. Albani*, 5 (London, 1880), p. 617; O. Lehmann-Brockhaus (ed.), *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307* (Munich, 1956), p. 275 (no. 6169). For individual reverence of Anglo-Saxon royal saints see J. Hughes, ‘The Monarch as an Object of Liturgical Veneration’, in A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993), pp. 375–424 (particularly pp. 382–7); S. J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988).

²⁷ Marks, *Stained Glass*, p. 88.

²⁸ Psalm 44:7–8. N. Coldstream, ‘“Pavilion’d in Splendour”: Henry V’s Agincourt Pageants’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 165 (2012), pp. 162, 167.

²⁹ F. C. Hingeston (ed.), *Johannis Capgrave, Liber de Illustribus Henricis* (London, 1858), p. 185; D. King, *The Medieval Stained Glass of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich* (Oxford, 2006), p. cxcii.

³⁰ R. Marks, ‘Yorkist–Lancastrian Political and Genealogical Propaganda in the Visual Arts’, *Family History*, 12 (1982), p. 152. The most detailed study is F. E. Hutchinson, *Medieval Glass at All Souls College* (London, 1949), pp. 37–61.

³¹ P. G. Lindley, ‘Worcester and Westminster: The Figure-Sculpture of Prince Arthur’s

Naturally, it would be futile to try to separate out the political and devotional elements in these cycles. The imagery of Isabella's crown or Henry V's pageant only got into diplomacy because it was grounded in religious conviction. But other manifestations of the theme not connected with royal patronage or prince-pleasing are found tucked away in private books or displayed in situations never likely to attract royal notice and approval. Catfield's paintings are one example. Another, from the 1450s, was formerly in the east window of the north aisle at the parish church of St Peter Mancroft in Norwich (nine of its figures survive, though displaced).³² This was one of several series of figures employed to fill the minor lights of windows in the same church (the others included sainted archbishops, prophets and ancestors of Christ), and although it is possible to connect it with contemporary politics, the evidence for doing so is very slight.³³ With the other series of figures, it looks like a tidy-minded response to the conundrum of filling the minor, regular fields created by complex tracery. This does not unduly downplay its significance, because in order to be selected it had to represent a contemporary devotional current. The parallels for it, not least at Catfield, show that it was no isolated quirk of patronage. As suggested, these parallels extend to privately owned books. There is a carefully written and embellished 'Nomina Regum Sanctorum Anglie' in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 596 (f. 43r-v), which dates from around 1400 and may come from Westminster Abbey. This includes fifteen kings, fourteen Anglo-Saxon ones plus Edward II, with cross-references to Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*. This popular chronicle is not, however, the only authority for the list, as Higden does not refer to most of its members as saints. Some other source informed it: of 'Alfwoldus', king of Northumbria, its compiler notes that 'I believe that this king is also called Alwynus', suggesting a broader field of reference.³⁴ This list evidently circulated widely, as an early sixteenth-century copy of it was included in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 177 (f. 136r), a theological miscellany probably also from some religious house.³⁵ A handsome psalter of the 1450s or 1460s, now Oxford, Trinity College MS 46 (ff. 166v-167v), has a different list, containing sixteen pre-Conquest

Chapel', in S. Gunn and L. Monckton (eds), *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 145, 147, 149. Eight of these can be certainly identified, and two others have saint-attributes.

³² King, *Mancroft*, pp. clxxxviii-cxcvii, 83, 88-91, 95-6, 99-100, 103.

³³ It includes St Alban as a king, which has been tentatively linked to the devotion of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (King, *Mancroft*, p. cxcv). However, this has earlier, mundane parallels, e.g. in Oxford, Bodleian Library (hereafter OBL), MS Rawlinson D 939, a single-sheet almanac of c.1400 including a crowned figure holding a sceptre and book or charter labelled 'Albanus rex'.

³⁴ This means Alfwald I (d. 788), whom Higden also calls 'Sanctus Alfwoldus'.

³⁵ M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1912), I, pp. 411-12.

English kings grouped together as martyrs (seven) and confessors (nine). This seems to have been compiled and written in London.³⁶ And a monk of St Augustine's abbey at Canterbury named Clement, active at the same time, recorded in a memorandum that of the 140 English kings between the birth of Christ and Edward the Confessor, six were martyrs and six ended their days as monks. He listed the names, stating that he got the information from a chronicle of Dunstable priory.³⁷ No foreign ruler is included in any of these sources: there is no Charlemagne, no Olaf, no Sigismund. Englishness is a condition of inclusion, as is representation in the annals of national history (there are no Walstans of Bawburgh, either). Combined with the secular imagery of Catfield and Mancroft, the date and monastic provenance of these manuscripts suggest the social reach of the phenomenon. While professional religious may have been the first to put such lists together, the sainted kings of England were public devotional property by the late Middle Ages.

Where known, the membership of these series and lists varies to the extent that no one example can reliably serve as a basis for identifying the Catfield kings. Some saints – Oswald, Edmund, Edward the Confessor – are standard and others usual, but each case has its peculiarities: for instance, the psalter list includes Lucius, Alfred and Edgar among the confessors, Alban is represented at Mancroft, and Ethelbald, Ethelbright and Edmund Ironside are among the names in Bodley 596 and Corpus Christi 177. A more or less symmetrical distinction of martyrs and confessors evidently mattered to their compilers, and this, at least, is accommodated at Catfield by the red and green colour scheme, although at an individual level it is doubtful that martyrs always stand against red backgrounds and confessors green ones. There is a similar ambiguity about attributes, which vary in the pictorial cycles mentioned here and the iconography of kingship generally. While the attributes included at Catfield were evidently supposed to be appropriate to the figures that hold them, only Edmund's arrow and Edward the Confessor's ring are familiar enough for them to be identified at first sight. For present purposes, the clearest way of dealing with individual identifications is by listing the figures by number (N[orth]1–8 [Pl. XVI] and S[outh]1–8 [Pl. XVII]) according to the panel they occupy, and starting on either side with the panel furthest from the doorway:

³⁶ On the manuscript see A. I. Doyle, 'Stephen Dodesham of Witham and Sheen', in P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (eds), *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers: Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 95–6.

³⁷ Although not the *Annales de Dunstaplia* published among the *Annales Monastici* in the Rolls Series. OBL, MS Rawlinson B150, f. 1*r (a singleton, tipped in after the first leaf): illustrated in B. C. Barker-Benfield (ed.), *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury*, I (London, 2008), Pl. 7c.

N1. A middle-aged king holding a sceptre and pointing at it with his free hand. He is the only figure without an ermine tippet. The anomaly is deliberate and a chasuble seems intended. Although not in a monk's habit, the gesture may suggest Sigebert (d. 664), a king of the East Saxons who according to the *Polychronicon* was dragged out of the monastery he had retired to and murdered 'bearing only a sceptre [*virga*] in his hand'.³⁸ Sigebert is in the Trinity College psalter list (f. 166v).

N2. A young king holding a sword and pointing at it. If, as assumed with N1, the gesture has narrative significance, then he is surely a martyr. This king has the pinched waist and baldric that suggest armour.

N3. A middle-aged king, holding a sceptre and small cruciform church. Ann Nichols suggested Athelstan (d. 939), because he is shown with a church in the glass at St Peter Mancroft.³⁹ But the Mancroft sequence is not a reliable template for Catfield, and there is another figure on the screen with a church (N5). Moreover, several other pre-Conquest kings with saintly reputations are shown in art with model buildings (Constantine, Ethelbert of Kent, Offa, Edgar). In support of Nichols's identification is a contemporary image of Athelstan holding a church at Milton Abbey in Dorset (which, however, he founded), and an independent record of 'sanctus Athelstanus, quondam rex Anglorum' in a late fourteenth-century relic list. Conversely, Ethelbert of Kent, who Higden represented as a church builder and the first Christian king of Britain, is at least as strong a candidate for identification here (if he is not shown at N5: see below).⁴⁰

N4. A young king with a sceptre, wearing the pinched waist, armour-like costume. The left hand clasps the baldric.

N5. An old king holding a cruciform church, here with a spire terminating in a gold cross (Pl. XVIII). This suggests St Paul's Cathedral, which was known for its prodigious spire topped with a golden cross and ball with relics in it.⁴¹ Sebert (d. 694), king of the East Saxons, is a candidate, as the *Polychronicon* credits him with construction of the first St Paul's. Sebert is in

³⁸ C. Babington and J. R. Lumby (eds), *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, 6 (London, 1876), p. 6.

³⁹ Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 167.

⁴⁰ London, Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter LPL), MS 99, f. 194r (relic list); Babington and Lumby (eds), *Polychronicon*, 5, 1874, pp. 396–400, 424–6.

⁴¹ LPL, MS 1106, f. 96r; see also C. Louis (ed.), *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle: An Edition of Tanner MS 407* (New York, 1980), pp. 227, 438.

the Bodley 596 (f. 43r) and Corpus Christi 177 lists. Lucius and (following Bede) Ethelbert of Kent were also considered founders of St Paul's: both are among the confessors in the Trinity College psalter list (f. 167r). Ethelbert is shown with a church on the pulpitum at Canterbury Cathedral and Lucius appears to have been represented on the Lady chapel reredos at St Peter's abbey at Gloucester.⁴² See also N3.

N6. A middle-aged king holding a gold lily in one hand and a halberd in the other (Pl. XVIII). This is St Kenelm (d. 812 or 821), a Sarum saint (17 July), who was beheaded. He is also shown crowned and holding a halberd in the Sherborne Missal (BL, Add. MS 74236, p. 492). The lily flower is a recognized attribute of his.⁴³ This figure is usually called St Olaf, but it lacks the loaves appropriate to that king in a cycle whose artist or patron was intent on including such attributes.

N7. An old man, holding a spear and pointing at his interlocutor. Possibly St Oswin, king of Bernicia (d. 651), whose relics were kept at Tynemouth and St Albans. According to tradition, he was stabbed in the side with a spear: he is shown with this weapon in Matthew Paris's *Abbreviatio Chronicorum* (BL, MS Cotton Claudius D.VI, f. 7r) on the brass of Abbot Thomas de la Mare at St Albans and on the fourteenth-century seal of Tynemouth priory.⁴⁴

N8. A young king holding a ring and sceptre, meant for Edward the Confessor, who is also depicted as a young man on screens at Eye in Suffolk, Plymtree in Devon and the fourteenth-century panels now at Kingston Lacy.⁴⁵ He was a Sarum saint (13 October; the feast of his translation).

⁴² Babington and Lumby (eds), *Polychronicon*, 5, p. 410. Westminster's monks claimed Sebert as their founder, and he thus appears holding a church on Henry V's chapel in the abbey: W. H. St J. Hope, 'The Funeral, Monument, and Chantry Chapel of King Henry the Fifth', *Archaeologia*, 65 (1914), p. 161. D. J. Knight, *King Lucius of Britain* (Stroud, 2008), pp. 82–3; R. D. Short, 'Graffiti on the Reredos of the Lady Chapel at Gloucester Cathedral', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society*, 67 (1946–48), pp. 35–6; B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds and trans), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), p. 142.

⁴³ Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, 2, p. 50 (no. 9); for the blossoming lily, see F. C. Husenbeth, *Emblems of Saints by Which They Are Distinguished in Works of Art*, 3rd edn (Norwich, 1882), p. 125; S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Aldershot, 1987), p. 151; M. Gill, "'Kenelm Cunebearn ... Haudes Bereafed': A Reconstructed Cycle of Wall Paintings from St Kenelm's Chapel, Romsley', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 149 (1996), p. 30.

⁴⁴ Lewis, *Matthew Paris*, p. 151; J. Luxford, 'Manuscripts, History and Aesthetic Interests at Tynemouth Priory', in J. Ashbee and J. Luxford (eds), *Newcastle and Northumberland: Roman and Medieval Art and Architecture*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 36 (Leeds, 2013), pp. 196, 198.

⁴⁵ Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 74; F. Bond and B. Camm, *Roodscreens and Roodlofts*,

S8. A young king with golden, shoulder-length hair, sometimes identified as a queen. He holds a sceptre, points to his partner figure and wears the pinched waist, armour-like costume.

S7. An old king, holding a spear and pointing at it. He may have been intended for Oswin: see N7.

S6. A young king, holding a halberd and pointing at his interlocutor. He must be some such martyr *decapitatus* as Ethelbert II of the East Angles (d. 794), who was a popular saint, or Fremund (d. 886), paired by John Lydgate with St Edmund, but there is nothing to show which one.⁴⁶

S5. A sceptred, middle-aged king, holding an object reverently in a fold of his mantle. The object has been erased, but one can see that it was a gold cross (hence its erasure), mounted on a book or base of some sort. This is thus probably St Oswald (d. 642), a king of Bernicia and a Sarum saint (5 August): the attribute commemorates his planting of a cross on the battle site at 'Heavenfield', near Hexham. Matthew Paris showed him with the cross, as did two windows at Durham Cathedral. He is on the screens at Horsham St Faith (Norfolk), Woodbridge (Suffolk), and also in the Mancroft window, but with different attributes.⁴⁷

S4. A middle-aged king with sceptre and gesticulating hand. He wears the pinched-waist costume resembling armour, and is unique at Catfield in wearing a short dagger in a red sheath. This might suggest Edward the Martyr if S2 were not a more likely candidate for that saint.

S3. A young king, holding a sword to which he points. This probably indicates a martyr.

S2. Again, a young king, pointing at an erased object held in his left hand. This object was evidently a large knife, suggesting St Edward the Martyr (d. 978), king of the English and a Sarum saint (18 March), who was murdered with such an object. He holds a knife in the painting of him on the Woodbridge screen

2 vols (London, 1909), 2, p. 229; C. Tracy, 'An English Painted Screen at Kingston Lacy', *Apollo*, 146 (1997), pp. 21, 24.

⁴⁶ There is a fragmentary figure of St Fremund in a chancel window at Dauntsey (Wilts.): according to a seventeenth-century description, this represented 'a King holding the head of a young King in his hand'. See R. Marks, *Windows and Wills: Fenestration and Glazing Bequests in England and Wales 1277-1583* (forthcoming).

⁴⁷ Husenbeth, *Emblems*, p. 160; Lewis, *Matthew Paris*, p. 149; J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Rites of Durham*, Surtees Society, 107 (1902), pp. 115, 117; Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, pp. 149, 209.

(an accurate copy of a lost original), on Prince Arthur's chapel at Worcester and elsewhere.⁴⁸

SI. A middle-aged king with a gold-tipped arrow in his right hand. His left hand points to his pendant figure. This is St Edmund (d. 869), king of the East Angles and also a Sarum saint (20 November).

This accounts for the figures individually, although the impact of the ensemble was clearly intended to transcend that of the parts, as it was with the statues on any cathedral pulpitum. The Rood with its attendant figures of Mary and John has of course to be factored into this whole, and this brings me to the hypothetical matters outlined in the introduction.⁴⁹ To begin with, it needs to be acknowledged that wherever it existed, the relationship of Rood group to subordinate imagery is likely to have generated specific devotional coherences in the minds of viewers. A sense of this arises where donors are represented on a screen or there is evidence that panels were commissioned by different people at different times. But this situational rapport was bound up with a generic semiotics rooted in scripture and theology, according to which the overriding example of humility and sacrifice set by the crucified Christ was reflected in the saints positioned beneath him. In practice, appreciation of this example must have been substantially a product of how rood screen imagery was read, from top to bottom (the eye being drawn first to the Crucifixion, if not the altar beyond) and then laterally, across the loft (if it had imagery) and dado. It also had to do with spatial and physical proximity: the dado figures were set directly under the Rood on the same north-south axis, and occupied the same piece of furniture. In this way, any viewer of a screen with saints on it was presented with a sacred hierarchy expressed in terms of size and elevation as well as iconography. In the context of this hierarchy, the status of Christ validated that of his saints. Where these saints are apostles, the validation was recorded in the Bible – 'I am the vine, you the branches' – while for most others it was illustrated in sermons, the legendary and the collects and sequences of the missal.⁵⁰ Standing at the level of the people, and turned bodily towards them, the saints then functioned to convey this spiritual authority outward, into the community of the parish, through a combination of model holiness, promise of intercession and friendly good will. The legendary explained their intermediary status in various ways: the saints, it says, are the 'heirs of God and our dukes and leaders', 'leaders of grace and all human lineage' and so on.⁵¹ The directness

⁴⁸ Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 209; Lindley, 'Worcester and Westminster', pp. 147, 149.

⁴⁹ Compare Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 157–9.

⁵⁰ John 15:5; see also Matthew 10; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 9:1–17; John 17.

⁵¹ Ellis (ed.), *Golden Legend*, 6, pp. 97–8.

of communication at this mundane level – as the legendary also pointed out – is evoked in the Bible: ‘[A]s many as received him, he empowered to be made the sons of God.’⁵² As Eamon Duffy has explained, ‘affectionate dependence’ on the saints played a large part in this reception.⁵³ Catfield’s screen illustrates the concept in a special way, by emphasizing the status of Christ as *rex regum*, born of royal blood and ruler over the earthly kings whose chief occupation was to serve their people.⁵⁴

This idea about the perception of rood screens and their imagery is perfectly compatible with others, according to which such screens were complex microcosms of the heavenly hierarchy (Duffy), or representatives *in nuce* of the churches they stood in (Jacqueline Jung), or thresholds of physical and spiritual translation.⁵⁵ In essence, what I am proposing is similar to Duffy’s idea: the screen epitomized the heavenly hierarchy and implied by its iconographic arrangement how pious beholders were related to this. Although this hypothesis can hardly be developed at length here, the genealogical analogy promised at the outset will serve to illustrate a possible route into the process. Genealogical manuscripts and the interpretation of screen imagery have been brought together before, and with reference to Catfield too. Specifically, Ann Nichols suggests that familiarity with royal pedigrees explains the choice of imagery and also furnishes a model for understanding the figures as a chronological sequence.⁵⁶ While this essay has argued against a chronological reading, Nichols’s instinct is sound to the extent that such pedigrees must have been largely responsible for the mental images fifteenth-century people had of sequences of rulers: a suitably informed viewer’s ideas about the Catfield screen may well have been influenced by this association. However, I also think that the connection with genealogy helps to justify the reading of screen imagery offered above in broader terms, for genealogy was a pervasive phenomenon which illustrated the same top-down transfer of power and embodied the same idea of spiritual legitimization. The reasoning here is only partially dependent on artistic comparisons, although word imagery is consistently influential, not least because the biblical language of vines and branches is also that of pedigree. In fact, rood screen iconography can be said to have expressed both historical and spiritual genealogy, the two types embodied in the Gospel accounts of Christ’s ancestors (Matthew’s the kingly, consanguineous descent, Luke’s the priestly and spiritual). In historical terms, a screen’s iconography summarized the

⁵² John 1:12; Ellis (ed.), *Golden Legend*, 6, p. 98.

⁵³ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 155–205 (p. 161 for quotation).

⁵⁴ I Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5, 17:14, 19:16; Ellis (ed.), *Golden Legend*, I, p. 69; G. L. Harriss, ‘The King and His Subjects’, in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 13–28.

⁵⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 158; Jung, *The Gothic Screen*, p. 200.

⁵⁶ Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 317.

development of Christianity from its author down through the apostles or generations of holy men and women described in hagiographies and chronicles to the present time. In a spiritual sense, it exhibited the descent of grace through the sanctified agents of Christ and into the community of believers. This community was temporarily present in the nave on Sundays and permanently represented by the graves and monuments lying there. In both cases, Christ *in extremis* represented a founder figure, the point of origin of true, so-called religion. As such, he was a counterpart of the king, nobleman or other figure situated at the beginning of a genealogical roll or book as the *fons et origo* of some strain of blood and entitlement.

Comparisons with visual culture become useful here. To begin with, it may be noted that a figured rood screen represents a sort of diagram, with clearly defined, populated compartments and levels at different heights connected by vertical lines.⁵⁷ It shares this layout with various types of schema, of which the manuscript genealogy was only the most popular in England in the late Middle Ages.⁵⁸ In these manuscripts, descent is traced along stemmata which are regularly interrupted by horizontal registers of images or names, standing for individual generations and their members (Fig. 5.2). Thus, while the dominant impetus is vertical, the reader is also induced at stages to read horizontally, across space, as one would scan the panels of a rood loft or dado. Hand in hand with this analogy goes a stress on the commonness and breadth of knowledge of such genealogies. This is partially indicated by the number of surviving rolls. No complete census of surviving manuscripts and fragments exists: of those in roll form devoted to English kings, Oliver de Laborderie counts forty-one made before 1422, and production increased greatly in the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV.⁵⁹ It is anyway safe to conclude that the surviving corpus amounts to only a fraction of the original total, and the rolls were matched by genealogies in books which were vertically read from page to page, a model found early on in Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16, f. iii recto-verso). The pedigrees of individual families also have to be taken into account.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ This observation also applies to windows with complex tracery and sequences of imagery.

⁵⁸ On the late medieval tendency to represent things diagrammatically, see M. Evans, 'The Geometry of the Mind', *Architectural Association Quarterly*, 12 (1980), pp. 31–55.

⁵⁹ O. de Laborderie, *Histoire, mémoire et pouvoir: les genealogies en rouleau des rois d'Angleterre (1250–1422)* (Paris, 2013), p. 26 *et passim*; S. Anglo, 'The British History in Early Tudor Propaganda, with an Appendix of Manuscript Pedigrees of the Kings of England, Henry VI to Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44 (1961–62), pp. 17–48.

⁶⁰ For these, see in general J. Spence, 'Genealogies of Noble Families in Anglo-Norman' and J. Denton, 'Genealogy and Gentility: Social Status in Provincial England', in R. L. Radulescu and E. D. Kennedy (eds), *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 63–77 and 143–58; C. Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres: essai sur l'imaginaire médiéval de la parenté* (Paris, 2000).

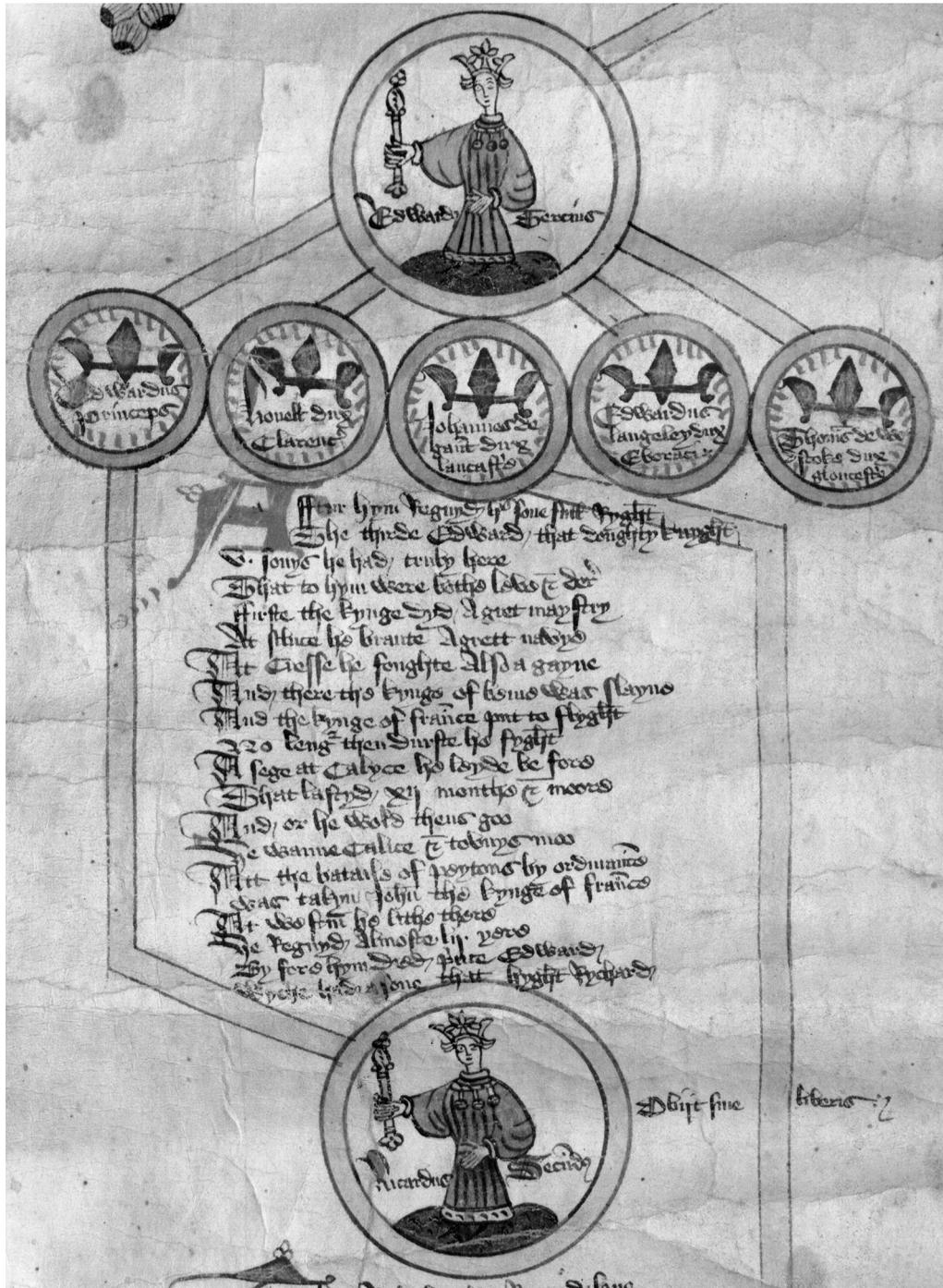


FIG. 5.2. UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS LIBRARY, MS 38660, M. 2 (FRONT): DETAIL OF A LATER FIFTEENTH-CENTURY GENEALOGICAL ROLL OF ENGLISH KINGS, PARTLY IN ENGLISH.

Their use is sometimes mentioned in surviving Norfolk records in ways that suggest a far-reaching currency. They were, for example, produced in court cases, and it is obvious that prosperous people, at least, were familiar with them as a matter of education as well as curiosity.⁶¹ Their simplest and surely commonest manifestation is represented by the descent of Sir William of Witchingham drawn on a spare leaf in the Jennys commonplace book, an East Anglian manuscript of the late fifteenth century now in Cambridge (Cambridge, University Library, Add. MS 7912, f. 4r). The usership of genealogies in the fifteenth century has been characterized as ‘an ever widening literate public of nobles, gentry, civil servants, lawyers and merchants’, to which the priesthood can naturally be added.⁶² By the late Middle Ages they were increasingly written in English (e.g. Fig. 5.2), and their structure duly influenced the layout of suites of tombs on church pavements and the iconography of individual monuments.⁶³ All of this suggests that the visual presentation of genealogy was familiar and stimulated analogies.

Christ had his own place in this genealogical model. For one thing, he had a historically contextualized pedigree of great popularity – Peter of Poitiers’s *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi* – which was typically designed according to the circle-and-line format normal in manuscript genealogies.⁶⁴ He also had a place in pedigrees of English kings, with the calculated suggestion of a blood relationship: England’s rulers traced their origins via the kings of Wessex to Noah, and Noah is named in the Lucan genealogy as an ancestor of Christ.⁶⁵ In fact, the whole model was authorized and promoted by the sacred genealogies of the Gospels, which were rehearsed in chronicles and put Christ into the same sort of relationship as that described in the pedigrees of kings and noblemen.⁶⁶ A vivid sense of this exists in the crowded stemmata showing the lineage of Christ and the Holy Family that were produced in the fifteenth century (Fig. 5.3).⁶⁷ Conversely, the language of the Gospel

⁶¹ London, College of Arms, MS PCM, I, pp. 56–7, 257, 411–12, 436–7; II, pp. 5–8, 33 (pedigrees cited in an early fifteenth-century trial in the Court of Chivalry). Nothing is recorded here of manuscript form, but ‘lines of descent’ are mentioned (PCM, I, pp. 411–12).

⁶² *The Scroll Considerans (Magdalene MS 248) Giving the Descent from Adam to Henry VI*, trans. J. E. T. Brown, intro. G. L. Harriss (Oxford, 1999), p. 5.

⁶³ N. Saul, ‘Bold as Brass: Secular Display in English Medieval Brasses’, in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 187–94; Denton, ‘Genealogy and Gentility’, *passim*; Fowler, *Rites of Durham*, p. 15. The brass of Sir Roger Le Strange (d. 1506) at Hunstanton is a Norfolk example.

⁶⁴ W. H. Monroe, ‘13th and Early 14th Century Illustrated Genealogical Manuscripts in Roll and Codex: Peter of Poitiers’ *Compendium*, Universal Histories and Chronicles of the Kings of England’ (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1989), pp. 79–218, 403–510.

⁶⁵ R. A. B. Mynors, M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson (eds and trans), *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum* (Oxford, 1998–99), I, p. 176.

⁶⁶ See e.g. H. R. Luard (ed.), *Flores Historiarum* (London, 1890), I, pp. 83–4.

⁶⁷ See e.g. K. L. Scott, ‘The Genealogical Genre: BL Royal MS I.B.X’, in Scott, *Tradition*

genealogies was appropriated to dignify the pedigrees of particular, mundane individuals: an example local to Catfield is in a chronicle from St Benet of Holm (the abbey was one of Catfield's rectors), where links in King Alfred's lineage are given in the serial *qui fuit* form used in the third chapter of Luke.⁶⁸ These Gospel genealogies were read out in parish churches at matins on the feasts of the Nativity (Matthew) and Epiphany (Luke).⁶⁹ At Catfield, where they will have been included in the manual that a chaplain named William Steyngale gave to the church in 1482, the sixteen kings listed by Matthew were perhaps associated with the sixteen crowned figures beneath Christ on the dado of the screen.⁷⁰ The biblical pedigrees were of course associated with the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 11, whose arboreal metaphor was the basis of an entire iconographic tradition. The Tree of Jesse was read inversely, from bottom to top, but it resembled the arrangement of a rood screen in presenting Christ at the summit of a populated structure with lateral ramification. A parallel between the Tree of Jesse and the structuration of rood screens was recognized and occasionally realized in Norfolk. At East Rudham, the panels of the now-destroyed rood screen displayed a series of Christ's ancestors, while at East Harling, a surviving dado panel encapsulates the East Rudham ensemble by presenting a Jesse Tree with a Crucifixion at its centre (Fig. 5.4).⁷¹ This enlightened synthesis was not new: it is also found in the early fourteenth century, in the Psalm 1 miniatures of some important English psalters, for example BL, Add. MS 49622, f. 8r (Gorleston Psalter); LPL, MS 233, f. 15r (Bardolf-Vaux Psalter); OBL, MS Barlow 22, f. 15r (Barlow Psalter). At Southwold (Suffolk) and Chudleigh (Devon), the presence of King David on the rood screen dados provides a fainter echo of the same concept.⁷²

Whatever the common validity of this idea, its historical purchase – like that of practically all such ideas – can only have been occasional and circumstantial. People did not always understand rood screens in this way. My attempt to recover an aspect of the devotional valency of these screens will, I hope, be assessed with this in mind. Their manifestation of the descent of grace was perhaps most readily appreciated by those who sought permanent representation before them, as Nicholas Croydy did

and Innovation in Later Medieval English Manuscripts (London, 2007), pp. 87–117; Eton College, MS 213, f. 106v.

⁶⁸ H. Ellis (ed.), *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes* (London, 1859), p. 3; compare Luard (ed.), *Flores Historiarum*, I, p. 444.

⁶⁹ F. Procter and C. Wordsworth (eds), *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Sarum*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1882–86), I [1882], cols clxxxvi–clxxxvii, cccxxviii–cccxxix; A. J. Collins (ed.), *Manuale ad vsum percelebris ecclesie Sarisburiensis* (Chichester, 1960), pp. 5, 7.

⁷⁰ NRO, NCC register Caston, f. 116r.

⁷¹ Nichols, *Early Art*, p. 45; NRO, MS Rye 17, vol. 3, p. 157 (East Rudham).

⁷² Baker, *English Panel Paintings*, p. 188; Bond and Camm, *Roodscreens*, 2, p. 260.

FIG. 5.4. EAST HARLING (NORFOLK): PANEL FROM THE DADO OF A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY SCREEN SHOWING A TREE OF JESSE CONTAINING A CRUCIFIXION.



when requesting burial ‘in ecclesia de Catfeld ante crucifixum’.⁷³ What I can hope to have demonstrated, rather than suggested, is the interest of the Catfield screen in and of itself, which embodies a contemporary but acquired devotional taste and gains in terms of semantic complexity by its association with sacred and profane genealogy, the image regimen of great churches and the general prestige of kingship. It seems reasonable, at least, to think that these aspects of the screen’s iconography informed and enriched medieval experience of it.⁷⁴

⁷³ NRO, NCC, register Wylbey, f. 95r.

⁷⁴ I thank in particular Keith Bacon for access to All Saints Catfield, David King for advice about the church’s glass and Lucy Wrapson for discussing the screen on site and lending me her PhD thesis.