THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST IN
MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, c. 1300-1550

Annamieke Kaper

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
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The Iconography of St John the Baptist in Medieval England, c. 1300-1550

Annamieke Kaper

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MPhil at the University of St Andrews

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ABSTRACT

The Iconography of St John the Baptist in Medieval England, c. 1300-1550

Annamieke Kaper

This thesis shows the importance of St John the Baptist in medieval England, especially in relation to the veneration of him through imagery. Noticeably absent from modern academic work, St John was a highly important saint in the church of the later Middle Ages. Focusing primarily on imagery from the years 1300 to 1550, or the late medieval period, I examine a collection of works of art which best highlight the devotional, didactic and intercessory roles that St John played in the lives of the medieval people.

This thesis is broken down into three main chapters. The first two chapters will look at both contemporary literary and documentary sources, helping to form a context within which the images of St John were viewed in the later Middle Ages. A collection of sources ranging from Scriptural to hagiographic, last wills and testaments to churchwardens’ accounts are used to help us understand the devotional feelings and practices of the people towards the saint. The third chapter focuses on the iconographical representation of the Baptist in English imagery of the later Middle Ages. Broken down by medium, I examine the representations of the Baptist in manuscript illuminations, monumental paintings, stained glass, sculpture, metalwork and textiles.
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Introduction

“John the Baptist beheaded is become master of the school of virtues and of life, the form of holiness, the rule of justice, the mirror of virginity, the ensample of chastity, the way of penance, pardon of sin, and discipline of faith.”¹ This high praise of the cousin of Christ recorded in a medieval hagiography brings to light the great reverence in which the Baptist was once held. Such compliment hints at the substantial following the cult of St John had in medieval England. Before his death St John had lived a pious life. His life narrative and intercessory powers became influential in the lives of many of the medieval devout.

This thesis was begun as a way to understand the importance of John the Baptist in the later Middle Ages, especially in relation to the veneration of him through imagery. Noticeably important in both medieval documentary sources and imagery, there is undeniably a great shortfall in modern academic work published on St John the Baptist. With the current trend now pointing towards the study of the cult of saints,² many of the more recent monographs and collections of essays provide a model upon which to base this study.

Several medieval saints have been more extensively researched and written upon. The patron saint of England, St George, has re-emerged of late with two recent monographs focusing on his cult in England. Jonathan Good’s The Cult of Saint George in Medieval England addresses the manner in which the cult of St George became an important part of the English identity, following his adoption as the patron saint of the country.³ Samantha Riches’ St George: Hero, Martyr, Myth also looks at the historical and fantastical aspects of the saint, exploring the rich imagery of him in the later Middle Ages.⁴ Anthony Bale’s collection of essays, St Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint, is an anthology of works addressing the many facets of the saint’s medieval cult, especially in relation to his portrayal in both literature and

⁴ Samantha Riches, St George: Hero, Martyr and Myth, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2005).
imagery.⁵ Researching the development of St Katharine’s cult is Christine Walsh’s *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval England*. Walsh uses numerous liturgical, hagiographical and iconographical sources to map out the history and development of the cult of St Katharine, moving from the Eastern Mediterranean countries before eventually ending up and becoming quite popular in England.⁶ More recently, Barbara Baert’s *Caput Johannis in Disco* explores the head of John the Baptist as an object of veneration and the iconographic scheme that emerged from this veneration in the Middle Ages.⁷

Mention must also be made of the work done by Eleanor Pridgeon in her research on the medieval wall paintings of St Christopher.⁸ Her thesis looks at the function of imagery within the church and discusses the many examples of images of St Christopher. She scrutinizes the role the saint played in these images, as well as understanding the importance of placement of the images with the church, before looking at patronage and its implications for the cult of St Christopher.

Additionally, there is a visible lack of information on St John in material published on the wider aspect of religion in medieval England. Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars* is one of the most widely used books in understanding the lives of the medieval English and the liturgy that shaped their prayers. Focusing primarily on contemporary documents related to parish churches, Duffy falls short when it comes to considering the role played by the Baptist in the lives and devotion of these people. He is, however, quick to illustrate the importance of the Virgin Mary, dedicating an entire section to the devotions to the mother of Christ.⁹ *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages*, by Kathleen Kamerick, examines the Lollard ideals of image idolatry, researching the relationship between religious imagery and the people. This monograph focuses heavily on the holy imagery of the later Middle Ages, exploring the benefits of

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⁸ Eleanor Pridgeon, *Saint Christopher Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches, c.1250-c.1500*, (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2010).
imagery, how people could identify with images, and how imagery played an important role in a person’s transition from life to death. Again, very little mention is made of the Baptist within her book. Richard Marks’ influential *Image and Devotion in Medieval England* explores the communities and people and their relationship to devotional images, giving context to the way in which images were used and viewed. In a monograph focused entirely on imagery, C.M. Kauffmann’s *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England, 700-1550,* lacks detailed mention of the baptizer saint. Greatly focusing on manuscript illuminations, images of Christ and the Virgin, as well as other saints, are the main focus of this monograph.

This thesis will be broken down into three sections. The first two chapters will look at both contemporary literary and documentary sources, helping us to form a context within which the images of St John were viewed in the later Middle Ages. Liturgical and hagiographic sources will be explored, giving us an idea of medieval interpretations of Baptist narratives. I will then look at medieval documentary records, helping to highlight the frequency with which the saint appears in these documents, indicative of the high esteem in which he was held and belief in his intercessory powers. Statistics from my two compiled databases will also be addressed in relation to documentary evidence.

In the third chapter, focus will be placed on the iconographical representation of the Baptist in images c. 1300-1550. Both single saint and narrative representations of St John have been found in media ranging from illuminated manuscripts, monumental paintings and stained glass, to sculpture, metalwork and textiles. The material reflection of the cult of St John is what will be the major focus of this chapter as I look at surviving images to discuss their iconographical significance and the function they played in the lives of the devout.

Images were, quite obviously, an important part of the religious and secular lives of the medieval people. Representations of sacred personages, like the Baptist, provided

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the medieval population with objects for veneration, a focus for contemplation, a didactic tool, and a vehicle for intercession.\textsuperscript{13}

Belief in St John’s intercessory powers played an important role. Consumed with the idea of reaching Heaven, everyday prayers and good deeds together with confession and absolution sought from a priest, would have worked towards this goal. After a soul was released from its body, with the exception of those condemned to Hell, it would travel through Purgatory before finally reaching Heaven. While in Purgatory a person was to be ‘purged of the stain of sin’ a process that could have been started in life with the help of the celebration of Mass and intercession by saints such as John.\textsuperscript{14}

Great works of art and architecture were being funded and completed right up until the Reformation of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} The English Reformation forever changed the history of images in England; it altered the equilibrium between art and religion\textsuperscript{16} that had exited for centuries. Most, if not all, the events leading up to the official ascendancy of Protestantism in England gave license to the destruction, or partial destruction, of many important works of art.

The Henrician Reformation began in 1534 when Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy making King Henry VIII the Supreme Head of the Church of England.\textsuperscript{17} Amidst a context of political unease Henry and Thomas Cromwell set about to suppress wealthy and influential monastic houses throughout the country. After Cromwell’s Visitation of 1535-6,\textsuperscript{18} the Suppression of Religious Houses Act (Dissolution of the Monasteries) came into effect.\textsuperscript{19} Liquidating the assets of these monastic foundations had a disastrous effect on their accumulated collections of art.

Another majorly decisive moment in the destruction of imagery came with the execution in 1535 of Thomas More, the ‘great champion of the cult of saints and the

\textsuperscript{13} Marks, Image and Devotion, 11-8.
\textsuperscript{14} Clive Burgess, “‘By Quick and By Dead’: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol,’ English Historical Review, 102 (1987), 838.
\textsuperscript{18} David Knowles, Bare Ruined Choirs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 153-79.
doctrine of Purgatory.'\textsuperscript{20} Veneration of images at this time was already under attack by groups such as the Lollards, but the First Henrician Injunctions of 1536 further strengthened the reformer’s opposition to the cult of saints.\textsuperscript{21} One clause of the Injunction stated that the clergy must ‘exhort their people against such superstitions as images, relics, and priestly miracles.’\textsuperscript{22} The 1538 Second Henrician Injunction also warned against the idolatrous use of holy imagery.\textsuperscript{23} Images suffered greatly in this Reformation period, sculptures were torn down, bench ends removed, and panels burnt.

The eradication of images continued after the death of Henry VIII. The reign of his son, Edward VI (1547-1553) was especially detrimental in terms of the loss of artwork. Duffy highlights this damage: ‘the images came down in the wake of the royal visitation of 1547/8, the Mass was abolished and the Mass-books and breviaries surrendered in 1549 and 1550...the altars were drawn down and the walls whitened, windows broken... In 1553 veils and vestments, chalices and chests and hangings...were surrendered to the King’s commissioners, to be unstitched, broken up, or melted down.’\textsuperscript{24} The first half of the sixteenth century amounted to an unimaginable loss of art. We will never know the full extent of this destruction of images, however, records do tell us of a small number of images fully or partially damaged during this era of iconoclasm. The defacement of saintly images was common during this period; iconoclasts removed the faces and attributes of the saints, with the purpose of obscuring their identity. An example of this defacement can be seen on the Baptist’s head in an early fourteenth-century wall painting of St Mary, Heacham (Norfolk).\textsuperscript{25} The whitewashing of images was also common, as we can see from the rediscovered Doom painting, c. 1330-40, of St Peter and St Mary, South Newington (Oxon.).\textsuperscript{26} Despite this destruction many works do survive and they can tell us a great deal about the devotional attitudes of the people of the Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{20} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}, 381.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 379 and 398.
\textsuperscript{22} Thomas M. Lindsay. \textit{A History of the Reformation, Vol. II.} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 334-5.
\textsuperscript{23} Bray, \textit{Documents of the English Reformation}, 179-221.
\textsuperscript{24} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}, 478.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 226-9.
Forerunner, prophet, lantern, Elias, baptizer and voice in the wilderness are all names by which St John has been identified and by which he has been iconographically celebrated.
Chapter One:

John the Baptist in Medieval Literature

Before diving into the heart of this paper, the imagery of St John the Baptist in late medieval England, the transmission of the story of the Baptist must first be investigated. In this chapter I wish to briefly explore the later medieval sources available to the people and how they helped to shape their knowledge of the life of St John. It must be noted however, to study all resources available to the medieval clergy and laity, and the peoples understanding of this literature, is beyond the scope of this paper. As such, the discussion herein will be a cursory look at the texts, orations and other sources from which the people would have received their lessons on the life of the Baptizer saint. Attempting to understand the scale of lay religious education can be a daunting, and often times an almost impossible undertaking. We must be aware that although we may never fully comprehend the scope of what an average lay person did and did not know of the Bible, church fathers and other important religious texts, we do know that many of these texts played a role in the religious imagery of the later middle ages, and in turn affected the religious knowledge of those people.

To appreciate the relationship between medieval imagery and its literary inspiration, one must take into consideration both the written and oral transmission of religious texts. Although literacy is important in understanding the dissemination of medieval texts on a larger scale, the illiterate were in no way disadvantaged in their education of biblical and hagiographic texts. All those who attended church would, in theory, have been familiar with the stories and narratives attached to the lives of Christ and the saints, helped greatly by the role the parish priest played in orally transmitting such accounts.

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I begin by first looking at the genesis of John the Baptist in Christian literature - the New Testament. As the cornerstone of the Christian faith, all medieval followers would have held some familiarity with the Scriptures and the story of St John’s life as told in the Gospels. By the later Middle Ages, we know a considerable amount of the Scriptures had been translated into Anglo-Saxon and medieval English, and by the fourteenth century the Bible, in its entirety, had been translated into English. Furthermore, by the sixteenth century, the Bible was, in theory, to become much more accessible to the wider public when, in 1536, an injunction was issued requiring all parish churches to provide Bibles in both Latin and English and for them to be placed in the quire available for anyone to read.

Through the gospels the people were taught of the Baptist’s infancy, alongside that of Christ’s, his time spent living in the wilderness, baptizing the people and preaching of repentance for sins. They also learnt of his meeting and baptizing Christ, and his arrest and martyrdom at the hands of King Herod. All these narrative events, we will see, find their way into the iconographic collection of St John imagery of the later Middle Ages, indicating the familiarity most people felt with these biblical stories. Perhaps one of the most important events, in terms of his iconography, stems from the moment, as witnessed by John the Evangelist and recorded in his gospel, in which the Baptist meets Christ and proclaims him the Lamb of God. The attribute of the Lamb, as we know, was to become the most important and symbolic attribute of the saint in medieval imagery.

The gospels represent the beginning of the story of John the Baptist, and these gospel narratives were included in the single most important source of religious education according to G.W. Bernard - the liturgy. Heard at least once a week (on Sundays) by the entire parish, the liturgy for any given day often contained passages from the gospels. As

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29 Ibid., 116.
31 Mark 1.4.
32 Matt. 3.16-17; Mark 1.10-11; Luke 3.22.
34 John 1.29.
35 Bernard, *The Late Medieval English Church*, 90.
many people did not own or have access to physical copies of the gospels, the public orations of the liturgy would have been the best means of spreading the gospel narratives to the people. By the later Middle Ages most parish churches were in possession of liturgical manuscripts, dictating the correct devotions to be said for any given day. Missals, breviaries and *manuale*, all contained the liturgy for the celebrations of the saint’s feasts days and the rite of baptism (a rite heavily influenced by the saint himself.) Gospel passages referencing the Baptist would have been recited during several of the services; Luke 1 (recounting the nativity of the Baptist) was quoted on the first three of the saint’s feast days (23 June, the Vigil of St John; 24 June, the Nativity; 1 July, the last day of the Octave), and Mark’s account of his martyrdom was recited during his Decollation Mass (29 August). *Manuales* included the service for baptism, a monumental rite in the Catholic Church. Although the gospels tell the story of John’s baptism of Christ, the importance of this sacramental rite and its connection to both Christ and St. John are further impressed upon the people in the actual service of baptism- the priest informs those gathered that this child is being baptized in the same manner as Christ was baptized by St John. At the closing of the ceremony the prologue from the Gospel of John was recited, highlighting the message that without St John there would be no sacrament of baptism.

Alongside the liturgy we must also look to the role sermons and homilies played in the transmission of his narrative. Also given by the clergy during church service, sermons were instructional orations concerned with faith and morals and often relating to the themes of that day’s mass. They helped to supplement the liturgy and make the day’s service more interesting and accessible for the laity. Considered in the Middle Ages as a very important means of moral and historical instruction, any theme involving St John would have educated on the importance of living a virtuous and devotional life, emulating the saint who was viewed as an exemplar of the ascetic lifestyle, and a model

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38 Ibid., 38; John 1.1-14.
40 Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, 3-4.
41 Ibid., 5.
Christian. Often based on sacred texts, the Scriptures were the primary starting point for the composition of many sermons, followed by other liturgical and patristic sources. According to Beverly Mayne Kienzle, among the early church fathers, Augustine and Gregory the Great, both of whom used John the Baptist as a model of high moral character in their own sermons, were two of the most highly influential sources used for the composition of many later medieval sermons.

Most importantly, hagiographies, also greatly contributed material for these feast day sermons. Romanticized accounts of the lives, legends and miracles of the saints, medieval hagiographies often contained events not found in the scriptures. They played a very important role in the dissemination of the narratives of the saints, making the stories entertaining and sometimes relatable to their audiences, hence the reason they were often consulted for use in contemporary sermons. Aron Gurevich notes, the society that was depicted within these hagiographies consisted of normal, everyday people. In so doing, the authors created a relationship, an interaction between the heavenly saints and the earthly humans, one in which the saints actively participated in the individual lives of the people, further solidify the importance of the personal relationships many people felt with particular saints.

Some of the greatest collections of contemporary sermons in medieval England include both John Mirk’s Festival, written in the late fourteenth century, and the fifteenth-century Speculum sacerdotale a collection of homilies in which there were

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43 Ibid., 157.
44 Ibid., 158; In a survey of church inventories for Norfolk churches conducted in 1368, we find that a great majority of churches owned a lesson book or legendary containing both readings from the Bible as well as sermons of the church fathers, showing us that although the people may not have been specifically aware of the source material, they were in some way being exposed to the works of the church fathers. See Bernard, The Late Medieval English Church, 96.
entries for the celebration of the Baptist’s nativity and decollation. However, without a doubt the most well known hagiographic work of the later Middle Ages was Jacobus de Voragine’s thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea*, (later translated to become both the *Gilte Legend* and the *Golden Legend*.) Uniquely popular among the laity of this time, Voragine’s book chronicled the narratives of both the Baptist’s nativity and decollation, and is responsible for supplementing narrative elements that do not appear in the earlier Scriptures. Little doubt can be had as to the large influence this book played in the religious education of the people- we know that Voragine’s work was the most widely read book in the Middle Ages.

Hugely significant in our understanding of the use of popular culture in the religious education of laity, the *Legenda*, in its original Latin form, survives in close to one thousand copies today, with hundreds more in other vernacular European languages. Encompassing numerous pre-medieval texts, Voragine made use of many liturgical sources in his accounts of the saints’ lives. The Gospels, as well as other books from the Old and New Testaments, provided inspiration for his narratives, highlighting the important role the early biblical sources played even in the late medieval period. Additionally, Voragine also used the works of many church fathers, the apocrypha and Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum Historiale* in his accounts of the lives of the saints. Unlike the early gospel narratives where St John plays a role important only in the context of the life of Christ, the self-contained narratives of the medieval hagiographies illustrate the importance of the saint as a religious figure in his own right.

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By the fifteenth century, two English translations of this text were to be published. The *Gilte Legende* translated from French in 1438\(^{55}\) was the first full English translation of the *Legenda* (by way of the *Légende Dorée*, another translation of the *Legenda*).\(^{56}\) Similar to the *Legenda* in its account of the birth of the Baptist, the *Gilte Legend* condensed both nativity and decollation into one chapter. The second translation, by William Caxton, related more closely to the format of Voragine’s original work. Published in 1483 under the English title, the *Golden Legend*,\(^{57}\) Mary Jeremy notes, Caxton augmented a significant portion of Voragine’s work, using other translations, both English and French\(^{58}\) to flesh out the story of the Forerunner.

These three versions of the *Legenda aurea*, along with the *Festial* and *Speculum sacerdotale*, were by no means the only hagiographic sources available in the Middle Ages. Also popular, the *Old English Martyrology* and the *Early South-English Legendary* both gave succinct descriptions of the ‘lives and sufferings of the saints’,\(^{59}\) again offering source material for sermons to be given on feast days. More or less similar to the accounts given in the *Legenda* these collections were much briefer in manner. The Anglo-Saxon *OEM*,\(^{60}\) written in a calendrical form similar to the *Legenda*, included entries for the birth and death of St John, as well as the conception, celebrated 24 September, and the discovery of the saint’s head which took place in February.\(^{61}\) The *ES-EL* was almost contemporaneous with the *Legenda*.\(^{62}\) Summarizing the later years of St John’s life, the author notes that John is known to have performed no ante mortem miracles.\(^{63}\)

There can be little doubt that all these source materials would have greatly affected the collective knowledge of the people on the life and death of the Baptist.

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56 Ibid., vol. 1, xi.
61 Ibid., 59, 123, 171, 189.
63 Ibid., 29.
Events such as the burning of his bones, the burial of his head, the finding of his head and finger, and the death of Salome, all of which were recounted in the hagiographies, would have never appeared in illustrated form had it not been for these medieval texts. The life and death narratives found in both Scriptural, patristic and hagiographic sources helped to influence the imagery of the saint, which in turn helped to inspire the devotion of the saint by those who were familiar with his narratives and images. As we shall later see, not all narratives were illustrated equally- some events in the life of St John appear more frequently than others, (the Baptism of Christ and the martyrdom of the saint, for example) but this only serves to aid us in the understanding of the significance these events played in the religious lives of the people. In this same way some of the more rare images help to prove the importance of the hagiographic sources as inspiration for these narratives. We know that St John’s most important and recognizable attributes stems from biblical tradition, but many of his life and death narratives have some basis in the highly influential medieval hagiographies.
Chapter Two:

John the Baptist in Medieval Documentary Sources

Having briefly examined the literary sources influential in shaping the devotional practices of the people towards John the Baptist in medieval England, we now must look to the evidence of this devotion as documented in medieval records. Surviving documentary records such as wills, churchwardens’ accounts, inventories, relic-lists, and guild records are amongst a number of contemporary records that present us with information about devotion to, and images of, St John. Used to help understand the actions and attitudes of the people, they give us a glimpse into the religious practices of both individuals and communities in relation to the cult of St John and have all played a part in the formation of two important databases linked to this research.

Before looking into the data as presented in these documentary records, a note must be made of the two databases that have been compiled in conjunction with my research. Database One (DB1) consists of all references (that I have currently found) to St John the Baptist, and all those to an ambiguous St John (discounting all obvious references to John the Evangelist), made within medieval documents dated c. 1300-1550. These include a large range of references; everything from bequests in a will to the light of St John the Baptist, to the dedication of a church or altar in the name of the saint, or even the documentation of an alabaster St John’s head in a personal inventory. In the compilation of this database I have consulted countless published collections of wills, churchwardens’ accounts, surveys of chantries and chapels, guild registers and inventories, all allowing for the production of an easy and accessible collection of medieval references to St John the Baptist. Unfortunately, my research for this database has also faced many limitations. I have often been prohibited by both distance of source location and lack of time and funds needed to undertake such a journey. However, this does allow for the further expansion of the database in the future.

Furthermore, Database Two (DB2) consists of all examples of extent medieval images of St John the Baptist of which I am currently aware. Everything from a manuscript illumination in the British Library to an alabaster panel in a private collection
have been included, also incorporating images that are known to have been lost within modern history. Consulting everything from museum catalogues to published church histories, I have also been in communication with numerous churchwardens and art enthusiasts/collectors, who have generously provided both information and photographic evidence of surviving imagery. Of course, as with the first database, this database is still a work in progress. Regardless, both databases provided a starting off point in the analysis of the cult of St John the Baptist in medieval England.

Returning to our study of the cult of St John as evidenced by medieval documentary sources, we know intercession by a saint was an integral element of the liturgical agenda of the church, inspiring many people to pray to a specific saint for help both during a person’s life and posthumously. Bequests made in wills, we know, ultimately also served an intercessory purpose. The Church had long been teaching the people that penitential activity, which included leaving money to an image of John the Baptist (or other saint,) was an important part of intercession.64

A person’s last will and testament, a document which we have now come to view as a means of providing for family and disposing of property, was during the Middle Ages generally acknowledged as a religious document.65 Consumed with the idea of lessening their time in Purgatory, it was urged that a person should, in life, perform penance, pray, give alms and secure Masses for their soul and others predeceased.66 This would benefit not only themselves but others that had gone before them. Although the use of wills in helping to understand medieval religious devotion to the saint has both its advantages and disadvantages, for the purpose of this research, we will investigate solely what it is that they can tell us of the devotion to the medieval cult of St John the Baptist. As the most commonly surviving document from this period67, there is little wonder as to why so many look to this source in their understanding of religious provisions. From my own research (DB1) I have found that over 87 percent of all documented mentions of the

name John the Baptist came from wills alone, with lights, guilds and church dedications in the name of the saint making up the majority of these references.

We know that it was the ultimate goal of many people to secure the salvation of one’s soul after death. To achieve this salvation, many left money in their wills for lights before altars or images of St John the Baptist, to chantries and chapels dedicated to St John, for prayers to be sung or said in honour of the deceased, and often times also leaving money to a guild in their parish named after the saint. According to Richard Marks, ‘testamentary bequests expressed a persons lifetime veneration of the saintly recipients and their continued desire for their intercessory aid after their death’. 68 Records of these monetary bequests abound, with a large collection of wills from Kent helping to illustrate this fact. 69 Broken down by county, in DB1, Kent accounts for more than 47 percent of the individual documentary references. Further analysis of these Kent wills shows evidence of the proliferation of bequests to lights, with more than 60 percent of individuals leaving money to a saint’s light. In comparing data from all other regions, light bequests still outnumber the other endowments; over 32 percent of bequests went to a light of St John or St John the Baptist.

It was commonplace for people to leave money or wax for lights to be placed before images of their favoured saint[s] at altars and chapels. Thomas Afforde of St Mary’s, Brabourne (Kent) left 4d. to the light of St John the Baptist, 70 as did William Jorden in his parish church of Frome (Somerset). 71 John Trevelyan of Netilcombe (Somerset), left 3s. 4d. to the light of the Baptist, 72 while John Elmer left a bushel of

68 Marks, Image and Devotion, p. 13.
69 It could be argued that a large selection of medieval documents survive from this area due to its flourishing economy during the later Middle Ages. Situated between London and the passageway to France, it’s economy would have been booming in the years leading up to the Reformation. In an economy such as this they would have wanted not only to keep better records, as people would have owned more property of value, but also stored such records in a safer, more protected manner. I, however, believe the reason Kent makes up the largest percentage of wills in DB1, is due in large part to the work of Hussey and Duncan in collecting and publishing, in two volumes, all said wills and testaments from this area. See A. Hussey (ed.) Testamenta Cantiana: A Series of Extracts from Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Wills Relating to Church Building and Topography, East Kent, (London: Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, 1907) and Leland L. Duncan (ed.) Testamenta Cantiana: A Series of Extracts from Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Wills Relating to Church Building and Topography, West Kent, (London: Mitchell Hughes and Clarke, 1906).
70 Hussey, Testamenta Cantiana, 32.
72 Weaver, Somerset Medieval Wills, 197.
barley to the saint’s light in the church of St Anthony, Alkham (East Kent).73 Lights were sacred in the church. Symbolizing Christ’s salvation, lights placed before a saint were viewed as ‘beacons of believers’ worship, of their hopes of salvation and their supplication.’74 Lights would also have been considered as a type of proxy for the presence of the donor before the saint, bringing themselves into close contact with their patron saint75 and signifying a perceived personal relationship between the devout and the saintly figure. Even the most modest endowment could be made for the maintenance of a saint’s light,76 allowing for those of even the humblest means to reach out to the saints by means of light,77 hence the reason we should see such large a number of bequests of this kind.

Before progressing further, mention must be made of the often-encountered problem of ambiguity of the two saints John within these documents. As both John the Baptist and John the Evangelist were highly influential and popular saints in this period, it raises the question as to which saint was the recipient of the many bequests left to an un-specified ‘St John’, as we find in the case of a collection of wills from the parish church of Our Lady, Elham (Kent). Five wills leave a bequest to the light of St John, a problematic dedication for our research purposes. A further five wills from this same parish leave bequests to the light of St John the Baptist while an additional four leave bequests to the light of the Evangelist.78 In a situation such as this, it becomes entirely impossible (today) to ascertain the individual’s originally intended ambiguous recipient-the Baptist or the Evangelist, and therefore leaves us unable to account for which saint, if either, was more popular within this parish.

This problem of ambiguity between the two saints adds a distinct level of complication to the interpretation of medieval sources, as we have just seen. Both the Baptist and the Evangelist held special intercessory powers in the church, and both were frequently appealed to by the devout. The most important phrase associated with the

73 Hussey, Testamenta Cantiana, 3.
75 Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, 96.
78 Hussey, Testamenta Cantiana, 112
Baptist is the one uttered in the presence of the Evangelist, “Behold the Lamb of God”, and henceforth the Lamb became the most recognizable attribute of the Baptist. Jeffery Hamburger explains, the saints had a unique relationship from the very beginning, one that was both contrasting and complementary- complementary as the saints figured as the bridge between the Testaments, but contrasting as the Baptist ‘did not see beyond the threshold of the promised land,’ while the Evangelist was ‘granted insight into the mysteries of first and last things.’

These two saints were shown paired together quite frequently in the iconography of the Middle Ages, commonly framing the central figures of the Virgin Mary and Christ child. Most often, John the Baptist was placed to the Virgin’s right while the Evangelist was to her left. Both Johns look inwards to the Virgin and Child, showing their undivided attention to the Son of God and his mother. It can be said this composition signifies the Baptist looking forward at the life ahead of Christ, while the Evangelist looks back upon the same. The roodscreen of St Mary, Attleborough (Norfolk) highlights this iconographical construction, as do the three sculptures above the south porch of the church of St John the Baptist, Burford, (Oxon) (plate 73). These two saints were not only commonly depicted together, but their symbols, the lamb and the eagle, were often featured together as well. Despite their importance to the people of the Middle Ages, unfortunately our knowledge of devotion to these two saints will also always be faced with the problem of unknown attribution and ambiguity in documentary records.

Returning back to the evidence of the cult of the Baptist in medieval wills, we see that lights before images were not the sole recipients of medieval bequests in honour of the saint’s cult. Many people also left money or goods for the foundation or upkeep of altars, images, chapels and perpetual chantries in the name of the Baptist. Bequests to altars, such as William Hubbert’s will of 1532, in which he left money to the maintenance of the altar in the St John chapel of All Saints, Wainflett (Lincs.) makes up less than five percent of all bequests that I have found (DB1). The same can be said of

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79 John 1.29 and 1.36; This idea originates from Jeffrey F. Hamburger, St John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 69.
80 Hamburger, St John the Divine, 65.
money left to chapels for maintenance, burial requests, etc. which also make up around five percent of the calculated total (DB1). Bequests made to a chantry are even more rare—most chantry documentation coming from foundation notices like that of Thomas and Joan Halleway. The Halleways founded a chantry in 1449, at the altar of St John the Baptist, St John the Evangelist and St Dunstan in the church of All Saints’, Bristol, requiring a chaplain to celebrate divine service every day in perpetuity in their honour.\footnote{82 Clive Burgess, The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints’ Church, Bristol: Wills, The Halleway Chantry Records and Deeds, (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd., 2004), 89.}

There is also evidence to be found of people leaving money for the continuation and upkeep of previously founded family chantries. In 1334, John de Neubery left five marks to a chantry once founded by his mother in the parish of St John, Walbrook (London).\footnote{83 Reginald R. 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), 404.}

Burial requests are also frequently found in wills, with over 90 requests (DB1) having been made by testators for burial ‘before’ an altar or image, or in a chapel dedicated to the saint. It was a commonly held belief that burial in, or near, a chapel of St John the Baptist would bring a person closer to the saint, allowing John to look over the person’s body after their soul had departed,\footnote{84 Aston, “Death”, 217.} providing extra assurance of intercession. The same can be said of burial before an image. John Bykyrston requested his body be buried in the chapel of St John the Baptist within the church of All Saints, Northampton. He also left 6s. 8d. to the maintenance of the chapel,\footnote{85 Dorothy Edwards and Margaret Forrest, et al. (transcribed, translated, and edited), Early Northampton Wills: Preserved in Northamptonshire Record Office. (Northamptonshire Record Society, 2005), 43.} a comparatively large sum indicating that he wanted the surrounding in which his body was laid to rest to have been well-kept for both himself and St John.

Evidence of money left for prayers are found far less frequently than burial requests. I have found only twelve such requests (DB1) yet they nonetheless show the importance placed on intercessory prayers. In 1518, we know that Davy Powell of Faversham (Kent) left money for a priest to ‘sing for my soul’ at the altar of St John the Baptist in the parish church.\footnote{86 Hussey, Testimenta Cantiana, 124.} In Graveney (Kent), a John Marten left £6 13s. 4d. to have a priest sing for him for a year in the chapel of St John the Baptist,\footnote{87 Ibid., 142.} while John Brown of
Sandwich wished for a priest to sing for his soul at the altar of St John for a period of three years.\textsuperscript{88} Even less frequently, we find a testator taking a more direct approach, asking for the prayers of their beloved St John. In the preamble of his will Sir Godfrey Foijambe asks directly for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist,\textsuperscript{89} making it known that above all other saints, these are the two that he appealed to directly for the salvation of his soul. Cecily, Duchess of York (1415-1495), mother of Edward IV, also looked to John the Baptist for intercession, appealing to him in her will for suffrage for her soul.\textsuperscript{90}

We have seen just how medieval wills help to illustrate the large cult following the Baptist had in England and they are hugely important in forming an understanding of religious provisions and attitudes towards the saint. We must, however, be careful not to place too much emphasis on the information contained within. As Clive Burgess warns, medieval wills fail to tell us anything of the day-to-day piety of these medieval people.\textsuperscript{91} It becomes almost impossible to tell if an individual, who in death appeared to hold a strong personal connection with the Baptist (a highly important intercessory saint), felt this way in life. Marks reminds us that although these were the last desires of a dying man, the element that features prominently in these documents was their thoughts of preservation of their own soul,\textsuperscript{92} a plight that could be greatly aided by the Baptizer saint himself (as we will later see in the Last Judgement paintings.)

At a total of only three percent in DB1, inventories and relic-lists are a much less common but equally significant resource. Relics of the Baptist were a sought after commodity in the Middle Ages. Representing several important functions, holy relics acted as intercessor between the sinners on Earth and God above, offering spiritual comfort to devout people, as well as acting as an object through which a miracle could be

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 283.
\textsuperscript{90} John Nichols and John Bruce (eds.) \textit{Wills From Doctors’ Commons: A Selection From the Wills of Eminent Persons Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1495-169}, (Westminster: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1863), 1-8. We also know she bequeathed to family members a tapestry of the Baptist as well as cloth of “sarcenett” painted with the image of the saint, supporting the fact that she held St John as one of her favoured saints, and one that would help her in the afterlife.
\textsuperscript{91} Burgess, “‘By Quick and By Dead’”, 840.
\textsuperscript{92} Marks, \textit{Image and Devotion}, p. 7.
The power of saintly relics was renowned in the Middle Ages. Accounts include the use of relics to repel enemy armies, drive away the plague, protect against fire, and alleviate droughts. Reports of miraculous cures abound within contemporary documents as well. Pilgrims often travelled to relic sites, holding the belief that touching a relic, or merely being in the presence of one, was believed to cure people of their ailments. Furthermore, relics not only helped individuals, but also the church community as a whole, highlighting the importance of any institution which acquired such a relic, and creating an identity for the given foundation by making it a site for medieval pilgrimage.

Considering that most of John’s body was allegedly burnt after his death, there were a remarkable number of his relics in the collections of English monasteries and cathedrals. Many of these larger foundations contained extensive relic-lists, cataloguing the relics in its possession. The order in which a relic is listed or its placement within the church can often tell us of the status it held - the higher up the list, the more status it held. The relic-list of Salisbury Cathedral lists ‘the heris of seynt Joh’n baptist’ below only the relics of Christ himself, signifying its great importance within the Cathedral community. Christchurch, Canterbury is known to have had no less than five relics of the Baptist, Abingdon Monastery owned ‘De ossibus sancti Johannis Baptistæ,’ and the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Mary in Lincoln owned both a bone from his foot and

98 Ibid., 338.
his skull. Furthermore, Westminster Abbey, Carlisle Cathedral, Selborne Priory and Glastonbury Abbey all claimed to have owned relics of the saint.

Much like relic-lists, inventories of personal estates, although mostly from the wealthier classes, give us an indication of personal piety within a secular setting. The inventory of John Asserby, of Lincolnshire, included one ‘saynt John hede off Alibaster’ located in the ‘littill parler’ while the inventory of Elizabeth Sywardby, included not only an ‘ymagine’ of the saint, but also a head of the Baptist, probably made of alabaster. Found within a personal setting, these items signify, in the same way books of hours do, that devotion to saints expressed in images also found its way into the home.

Documentation left by religious guilds and fraternities (especially the Guild Returns of 1388-89) give us a picture of groups formed under the auspices of devotion to a particular saint. Associated with a parish church or chapel, these guilds offered the laity a chance to honour a special saint as their patron alongside a group of like-minded people. From the guild returns, we know that those dedicated to the Baptist made up ten percent in total of all documented parish guilds, fourth in popularity behind only the Virgin Mary, Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi. Upon foundation, the purpose of an organization was often stated in the foundation document, a number of which still survive. Foundation purposes often varied but the most common function of a medieval guild was to maintain a light before the image of their patron saint, much like the guild of St John the Baptist, All Saints, Hertford whose foundation document states that they were to ‘find 12 candles before the image of the Saint on festivals.’ The guild of St John the Baptist of St Peter, Wisbech (Cambs.), on the other hand, was formed with the

102 Christopher Wordsworth (ed.) “Inventories of Plate, Vestments, &c., belonging to the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Mary of Lincoln,” Archaeologia 53 (1892), 4.
107 Kamerick, Popular Piety and Art, 95.
intent of finding a ‘chaplain in the church in honour of St John the Baptist.’

Many bequests in wills (just over nine percent of those in DB1) were directed at these guilds who would have in turn used the donated funds for their purposes as stated in the foundation notes. John Watlock of Clare (Suffolk), we can assume, was a member of just such a guild. He left in his will 20d. to the guild of St John the Baptist in his parish church. The important role the guilds played in the religious life of the people should be greatly stressed. Guilds helped to popularize private masses, pilgrimages and religious processions as well as helping the churches and chapels to invest in imagery and ornamentation to decorate their establishments and educate their parishioners on the lives and narratives of their chosen saints. With such a high number of guilds dedicated to the Baptist (10 percent) we can infer that he was a highly important figure in the devotional practices of the medieval church.

Lastly, we look to churchwardens’ accounts which also survive from a number of medieval parishes. Produced starting in the mid-fourteenth century and being fairly abundant during the fifteenth, several hundred of these records still survive. Some parishes, we must note, kept better records than others, often the greatest number of surviving accounts coming from the busier merchant towns like Bristol, who saw a boom in trade in the later Middle Ages. Foremost, these accounts are perhaps the best illustration we have of the upkeep of the fabric of the churches and can often tell us of such imagery, vestments and other religious objects that might once have been held in the confines of the individual parish churches. Detailing the incomes and expenditures of the parish, their value, for our research purposes, lies in both the accounts made of repair and replacement of images and items relating to John the Baptist, as well as the incomes by the donations and bequests of the parishioners themselves. Within these churchwardens’ accounts I have only found around 35 mentions of the Baptist, either relating to imagery,

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109 Ibid., 147.
113 For more information on the churchwardens’ account of Bristol see; Burgess, The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints’ Church, Bristol.
altars or chapels, a comparatively small number when considering them in relation to the wills. The accounts from St Laurence, Reading (Berks.), for instance, informs us that the church, at one time, housed an image or statue of St John the Baptist. In 1523, we also know they paid ‘an Alabast’ man for ‘makeying clene the table at Saynt Johns Autr’. As an account like this may list the repair or restoration of an image relating to St John, they still do not take into consideration the other Baptist imagery that did not require maintenance at the time of the record keeping. Burgess and Kümin remind us that although there may be no record of an item, image or bequest, it does not mean one such item did not exist. Furthermore, Charles Cox notes, often the chief images of the church were of an earlier date than the fifteenth century, when the majority of these records were kept, and were therefore rarely noted in the accounts, unless they were in need of repair or embellishment.

The church of St Laurence, Ludlow (Shropshire) presents us with a unique example of a churchwardens’ account in which several mentions are made of St John, in particular St John’s chapel, which can still be linked to existing imagery of this church today. Found within the records spanning from 1541-1562, St John’s ‘chauncelle’ and ‘chapelle’ is mentioned no less than eleven times, referencing work undertaken for the paving of a grave, to the mending of a lock and bolt for the chapel door. More importantly, however, in 1562, we find evidence of the repair of windows in both the St John and St Catharine chapels, windows that still exist today. Although the dedication of the chapel to St John is somewhat ambiguous in its identification, the very existence of a window within this same chapel containing the image of the Baptist (plate

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114 Although the references to the Baptist are smaller in number within churchwardens’ accounts, we must also remember that the total number of surviving accounts is much smaller than total number of surviving wills.
116 Cox, Churchwardens’ Accounts, 142.
117 Cox, Churchwardens’ Accounts, 142.
118 In the churchwardens’ accounts for Ludow the chapel of St John, as it is now known, was more specifically referred to as the ‘saynt John chauncelle’. Thomas Wright (ed.) Churchwardens’ Accounts of the Town of Ludlow, in Shropshire From 1540 to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, (Westminster: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1869).
119 Wright, Churchwardens’ Accounts, 7.
120 Ibid., 69.
121 Ibid., 109.
67) alongside Sts Catharine and Christopher, can leave one to assume that the chapel was indeed dedicated to St John the Baptist.

As much value as churchwardens’ accounts have for our research, much like all others previously discussed, they do not come without their limitations— even though the post of churchwarden was elected, by the people,\textsuperscript{123} and their main duty was to document the financial aspects of their parish, we know it was quite common for all but the largest incomes or bequest to the fabric of the church to go unnoted.\textsuperscript{124}

Having looked at the major sources of contemporary documentation—wills, inventories, relic-lists, guild registers and churchwardens’ accounts, we can start to piece together a picture of the devotion to the cult of John the Baptist in medieval England. With such a large number of bequests to lights, images, altars, chapel and chantries in honour of the Baptist we can now begin to understand the importance of not only the cult of the Baptist as a whole, but also his importance as a saintly figure in the artwork of the churches and chapels in England. People left whatever they could to help guide their soul into the afterlife, especially with the aid of an intercessory saint like John. The Baptist was a very influential intercessory figure and, crucially, from these documents we gather a sense of the popularity of the saint within the medieval Catholic Church.

\textsuperscript{123} Cox, \textit{Churchwardens’ Accounts}, 5.
\textsuperscript{124} Burgess and Kümin, “Penitential Bequests”, 619.
Chapter Three:

John the Baptist in Late Medieval Imagery

A shift in English devotional patterns of the later Middle Ages has been noted by Eamon Duffy. Early medieval devotion, he says, focused more on saintly relics, in contrast to the later Middle Ages which saw an eventual shift towards a devotion to images.\(^\text{125}\) This imagery and its multivalent function is what I will address in this chapter as it deals with the iconography of St John the Baptist. Saintly images would have been found in a number of media, both those designed for public display and personal use. To carry out an examination of all surviving medieval insular images of St John would be a huge undertaking, and one I cannot attempt here. There are simply too many images. I have therefore chosen a select group to help illustrate Baptist iconography in various media. However, one can obtain a fuller sense of the scope of works by consulting Database 2 in the appendix, which aims to give a fuller account.

Rather than organizing these works in a chronological manner, I have chosen to discuss them in relation to medium. Divided into six categories, I will look at both single saint images and narrative cycles of the saint in each medium.

Baptist Imagery Prior to 1300

Imagery of St John was in no way limited to the time period that I have chosen to focus on. Before looking at images c. 1300-1550, a brief examination of earlier works will be undertaken. Studying the origins and evolution of St John imagery has helped to further my understanding of the progression of St John iconography up to the late medieval period. A consistent feature of this iconography is the inclusion of attributes with a scriptural origin or justification, as we shall see.

Our review of early images of St John begins with the seventh or eighth-century Ruthwell Cross\(^\text{126}\) (plate 1) and its contemporary, the cross from Bewcastle\(^\text{127}\) (plate 2). The image of a single standing figure of St John is nearly identical on both crosses,\(^\text{128}\) showing the saint with the Agnus Dei. As St John’s most familiar and important attribute, this motif never alters. Symbolizing Christ as the sacrificial lamb who takes away the sin of the world,\(^\text{129}\) focus is placed upon the Lamb which the saint holds in his hands. To give a sense of the breadth of this specific symbol, additional images featuring the saint with the Agnus Dei can be found in the mid thirteenth-century Missal of Henry of Chichester, (Manchester, Rylands Collection, Latin MS 24, f. 147v)\(^\text{130}\) (plate 3), the almost contemporary (c. 1270) Cuerden Psalter, (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 756, f. 9v.)\(^\text{131}\) (plate 4), a late twelfth-century seal matrix of the Hospital of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, Northampton,\(^\text{132}\) and the seal matrix of the Bishop of Norwich, William Middleton (1278-88).\(^\text{133}\)

The Baptist’s camel hair robe has been another attribute traditionally associated with the saint. Signifying his time spent living in the wilderness and his eremitic lifestyle, the garment can be found illustrated in the Baptism image of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictional of St Æthelwold, (London, BL, Add MS 49598, f. 25r) (plate 5), a manuscript from the mid to late tenth century.\(^\text{134}\) The camel hair robe also appears in a number of other pre-1300 images, including, the early thirteenth-century Huntingfield Psalter (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 43, f. 20r)\(^\text{135}\) (plate 6), and the thirteenth-century wall painting of St John the Baptist at Cold Overton, (Leics.) (plate


\(^\text{129}\) John 1.29.


\(^\text{131}\) Ibid., 157.


\(^\text{133}\) Ibid., 312.


But the Benedictional illumination possibly marks, as Robert Deshman believes, one of the first images to feature the element of the leather girdle. Knotted in a similar fashion to Christ’s loincloth in early Crucifixion images, the girdle was used to liken the Baptist’s garment to that of Christ. John’s knotted girdle became a symbol for the loincloth of the Crucified Christ. Any person who had shared in Christ’s death and resurrection by the sacrament of baptism was in essence clothing himself in this garment of purity.

These familiar attributes of St John played a large part in his iconography. So too did the depiction of narrative events associated with his life. Baptism scenes were often portrayed in the images of the early Middle Ages. Showing not only the most important event in the life of the Baptist, images such as these served to remind their audience that the rite of baptism was an important rite undertaken by all Christians if they were to lead an upstanding Christian life. An eleventh-century carved Norman capital in the chancel arch of St John the Baptist, Adel, (Yorks.), illustrates this Baptism (plate 8). The same iconography also appears in at least three twelfth-century fonts of Bridekirk (Cumbria) (plate 9), Castle Frome (Heref.) (plate 10), and West Haddon (Northants), and an illuminated roundel, c. 1265-70, in the Oscott Psalter (London, BL, MS Add. 50000, f. 14v) (plate 11). Although various elements differ in each of these images, the core imagery of St John remains consistent as we shall see, changing most in stylistic terms over the next few centuries.

A small number of other narrative examples survive from the early Middle Ages. Once part of a narrative cycle, a wall painting in St Gabriel’s Chapel, Canterbury

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138 For an in-depth explanation of the symbolism and iconography of this leather girdle, see Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, 48-50.
139 Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, 49.
Cathedral, c. 1130, shows the naming of St John (plate 12). The saint’s martyrdom can be found in a late thirteenth-century historiated initial at the Hour of Sext in the Salvin Hours (London, BL, MS Add. 48985, f. 77v) and in an early thirteenth-century miniature of a Psalter and Hours of the Virgin (London, BL, MS Arundel 157, f. 7r) (plate 13).

By quickly looking at early examples of St John imagery, it is clear that the imagery of the saint remained relatively unchanged in the centuries leading up to the later Middle Ages. This observation should be borne in mind as we turn from this admittedly brief, impressionistic survey of earlier images to the late medieval imagery that lies at the heart of this thesis.

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147 Ibid., (I), 72.
Baptist Imagery, c. 1300-1550

**Manuscript Illumination**

Depictions of St John can be separated into two types, narrative and single standing imagery, both of which are represented in manuscript illuminations more than any other medium. Because of their often small size and ease of transport, medieval manuscripts faired comparatively well in the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century. These devotional books help us to understand the private devotional attitudes and actions of their owners. The prayer intentions of a book’s patron are often easy to interpret, as Nigel Morgan highlights, due to the personal nature of these books and the images included within. More than any other medium of art, illuminated manuscripts could have been, and often were, intended for private viewing both in secular or liturgical settings. Depictions of the Baptist occur relatively frequently in the corpus of surviving medieval manuscripts, but as I cannot address all examples here, I have chosen a select number to illustrate the scope of Baptist iconography.

Narrative cycles featuring St John appear often in manuscripts. Importantly, patrons were frequently able to take responsibility for the overall iconographical program of their manuscripts, deciding which saints and narratives to include. They were so freely able to make such decisions that the appearance of a narrative cycle or single image of St John can tell a great deal about the devotional penchant of a manuscript’s owner.

A good place to start, the so-called Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, BL, Additional MS 47682) contains a vivid program of imagery, presenting us with an unusually extensive collection of narrative cycles that help us to form a basic understanding of narrative imagery of the Baptist throughout the corpus of medieval works. Produced in London in the first half of the fourteenth century, it references episodes from the Gospels, containing many well-known episodes of the Baptist’s life.

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149 Ibid., 96.
151 Brown places the artist in London during the early fourteenth century, working near St Paul’s Cathedral. Not only was this area a major publishing centre, but the artist also placed some of his biblical scenes
Patronage and viewership plays an important role in the production of any illuminated manuscript. Our understanding of both the patronage and function of this book, whether as a devotional tool or an educational one, helps us to comprehend the important iconographical role of St John. Depicting the events in his life we can assume that whoever the patron was, they were, or wished to be, highly educated in the life narrative of the Forerunner. In looking to uncover clues in this question of patronage and viewership, we find illustrated on the first page a Dominican friar standing behind the artist, who himself is working on a portrait of a man and woman. It would be easy to assume that the friar was the patron of this work. Michelle Brown, however, points out, this might not necessarily be the case. She explains, showing a Dominican friar could have been a tool for acknowledging support of the use of images in educating the people on religious matters as was advocated by St Dominic himself.\(^\text{153}\) It could also be that this friar commissioned the work to be done with the intended recipient a wealthy benefactor, perhaps the couple shown in the drawing on the easel of the artist.\(^\text{154}\) However, it is Brown’s conclusion that this manuscript was most likely a work developed by the artist himself as a portfolio for future projects and one which he could show to perspective clients.\(^\text{155}\) Regardless of the original commission, there is a great possibility that a number of people would have seen this book, whether using it as a reference tool for a wall painting or embroidery, or as a focus of devotional contemplation.

The narrative of St John, which plays a large role here,\(^\text{156}\) has iconographical details taken from both hagiographic and scriptural sources. Each page is divided into two sections of imagery, starting on f. 18r with the narrative of the Annunciation to Zacharias (plate 14). Continuing in f. 18v, we encounter the narratives of the birth, naming and circumcision of the Baptist, all of Scriptural origins (plate 15). Interestingly, this event of the circumcision is not often shown in narrative cycles. The rarity of this illustrated narrative event was most likely intended to impress upon the audience the similarities between the nativities of both Christ and John the Baptist. The circumcision within the landscape of London, with recognizable landmarks such as the spire of St Paul’s included in f. 19v. Brown, Holkham Bible Picture Book, 17.

\(^{152}\) Brown, Holkham Bible Picture Book, 1.
\(^{153}\) Ibid., 16.
\(^{154}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{155}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{156}\) Ibid., 22.
of Christ is shown in this manuscript as well, in almost the same manner\(^\text{157}\) (plate 16). The parallel of John’s nativity with that of Christ, as was highlighted in the Gospel of Luke, is made visible in this manuscript in a slightly different manner than the Vernon Manuscript, itself highlighting the same parallel.

The *Estorie del Evangelie*\(^\text{158}\) (Story of the Gospels) within the fourteenth-century Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet.a.1)\(^\text{159}\) illustrates the nativities of both Christ and St John, side by side, rather than separately, as they are shown in the Holkham Bible Picture Book. Unlike the Holkham Bible which was almost certainly intended to be viewed by many, most of the Vernon Manuscript’s contents relate to private devotions.\(^\text{160}\) The sequence of column miniatures, f. 105, shows the annunciation to the Virgin, the annunciation to Zacharias, the visitation, the nativity of John, the naming of John, the angel appearing to Joseph, the nativity of Christ, the holy mothers holding their infants, and the annunciation to the shepherds. Significantly, Alison Stones notes, the pairing of the two nativities on the same pages is unparalleled in manuscript illuminations of the Middle Ages, and she believes it suggests a patron with a particular devotion to St John the Baptist.\(^\text{161}\)

Returning to the Holkham Bible Picture Book, the narrative continues with the Baptist as an adult. The lower register of f. 18v illustrates John living in the wilderness and baptising in the Jordan. On the right of the miniature we are shown John baptizing the people, four of whom are participating in the baptism in the waters of the Jordan while more wait upon the banks. This baptism by the hands of the Baptist himself would have been viewed by the people as a precursor for the very own baptism that each individual underwent during their lives. Folio 19r shows John preaching to two groups of people, possibly representing the Pharisees and Sadducees who were known to have


\(^{161}\) Stones, “The Miniatures in the Vernon Manuscript”, 150.
questioned the saint on whether he was the Messiah (plate 17). As the people witnessing his preaching and baptism are dressed in contemporary clothing, Brown points out, this would have helped the audience to relate to the events being shown. By illustrating these people in contemporary dress the English laity would have seen themselves reflected in the people and events connected to John the Baptist.

The most important episode of the life of the Baptist is illustrated in the bottom register of f. 19r; John greets Christ and then performs his baptism. Christ stands in the River Jordan as John performs what would become a holy sacrament of the Church. On the following folio, 19v, the artist has illustrated a rather unusual scene, the Baptist proclaiming the Lamb of God (plate 18). This event was familiar to the people, being found in the Gospel of John, as well as in the popular medieval cycle plays, however, it was not often illustrated in the artwork of the Middle Ages. In the right hand side of the lower register we see Christ having retreated to the wilderness, and at his feet stands the Agnus Dei. John approaches and cries, ‘Voyez la le aniel deu: ecce agnus de.’ Highlighting the very moment that the Lamb of God became the defining attribute of John the Baptist, its importance lies in the establishment of the icon of the Agnus Dei as both the symbol of Christ’s sacrifice as well as the defining attribute of the baptizer and cousin of Christ.

The final events of John’s life are also told in this Picture Bible. Folio 21r shows John reproving Herod for taking his brother’s wife in marriage followed by his imprisonment. Folio 21v illustrates the dance of Salome where the girl is instructed by her mother to ask for the head of St John as a reward for her entertainment. Finally, the narrative shows John’s beheading upon the order of Herod (plate 19). This construction of the scene appears very similar to the same event in the Taymouth Hours. In both instances John leans out of the door of his prison, hands forward in supplication as the executioner attempts to remove his head. The final scene of St John’s narrative in the Holkham Bible Picture Book shows Salome carrying the head of the saint on a charger, presenting it to her mother as Herod looks away in disgust. This sequence illustrating his

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163 John 1.29 and 1.36.
martyrdom would have helped to highlight to the viewer the virtue of the Baptist, as one willing to sacrifice his life for his faith.

A manuscript comparable to the Holkham Bible Picture Book in its richness of Baptist imagery, the Taymouth Hours (London, BL, Yates Thompson MS 13) provides us with further valuable examples of narrative imagery.\textsuperscript{165} This mid fourteenth-century book of hours, with its numerous bas-de-page illuminations, would have played a devotional role for its presumably royal owners,\textsuperscript{166} the illuminations accompanied by Scriptural texts relating to the images. John’s story begins in the section for Vespers of the Trinity, the birth of the Baptist accompanies Psalm 112:9, ‘\textit{Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo: m(at)rem filior(um) letante(m).}’\textsuperscript{167} Furthermore, the depiction of the naming of St John is paired with Psalm 146:6, referencing the act of naming, as Zacharias is shown here doing.\textsuperscript{168}

St John’s story continues again in bas-de-page illuminations of the Hours of the Virgin with the Baptism of Christ, f. 104r. Folio 104v sees John preaching to the people, the lamb not held in his hand but rather standing on the ground before him, looking upon the group of assembled followers, interacting with the people and establishing a connection between the word the Baptist preaches and the animate representation of the Son of God. Beneath reads a caption, ‘\textit{Cy s(eint) iohan bapt(ist) prechoit au poeple et dit. ecce agnus dei.}’\textsuperscript{169} Folios 105r-107v continue with John reproving Herod, his imprisonment, John brought before the king and his wife, the dance of Salome, his beheading, and finally, Salome bringing the head of the saint to her mother, again, reminders of the sacrifice made by the saint.

The final five bas-de-page illuminations are iconographically important as very few examples survive in the corpus of medieval English art. The artist would have no doubt been familiar with the life of the Baptist as told in the \textit{Golden Legend}.  

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\item \textsuperscript{165} Kathryn A. Smith, \textit{The Taymouth Hours}, (London: The British Library, 2012), 298. This manuscript is dated c. 1331.
\item \textsuperscript{166} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Ibid.}, 127 and f. 54v; ‘Who maketh a barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of children.’
\item \textsuperscript{168} Smith notes this as Psalm 146:6, but the Douay-Rheims Bible considers it 146:4. See \textit{Taymouth Hours}, 127 and f. 55r.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Smith, \textit{Taymouth Hours}, 309 and f. 104v; “Here St John Baptist preaches to the people, ‘Behold the Lamb of God’”.
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illuminations in the Vespers of the Virgin,\textsuperscript{170} f. 108r-110r, show scenes that were derived from these hagiographic sources (plates 20-24). The narrative of these post-mortem events begins with the burial of his head by Salome and Herodias. An unusual depiction, this no doubt relates to the belief by Herodias that the saint would come back to life if his head and body were not buried separately.\textsuperscript{171} Folio 108v, depicts the burial of his shrouded body in a marble tomb. The post-mortem narrative of St John comes to a close with the last three illustrations. Taking inspiration from the order given by Julian the Apostate to have the Baptist’s body exhumed,\textsuperscript{172} his skeletal remains are taken from his tomb by two men. It was Julian’s belief that to prevent further miracles being performed at the saint’s tomb, his bones should be burnt and scattered in the wind.\textsuperscript{173} The same two men are shown stirring a bonfire made of the saint’s bones where they ‘burnt hem into powder and winnowed them in the fields.’\textsuperscript{174} Relating perhaps to the tradition of lighting bonfires on the feast of St John, as recalled in the \textit{Golden Legend}, this final image is linked with the psalm above via a bilingual pun.\textsuperscript{175}

In looking at further examples of surviving English medieval art only six cases of this post-mortem narrative come to mind, five in alabaster\textsuperscript{176} and one manuscript illumination. Of the three examples of the burial, we find one late fifteenth-century English alabaster, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London\textsuperscript{177} showing the lowering of the saint’s shrouded body into the tomb (plate 25). Interestingly, the body of the saint still appears to have its head, an unusual occurrence as it was commonly

\textsuperscript{170} The earlier liturgical hours of the day were typically reserved for illustrations of the Infancy of Christ. The final three hours, including Vespers in which St John’s story is shown, was used for scenes from Christ’s adult life, as they are the closing hours of the day. Following the scene of the Baptism, the imagery is diverted to the narrative of St John. It is fitting that the narrative of such an important saint is placed alongside that of Christ. See Smith, \textit{Taymouth Hours}, 179-81.

\textsuperscript{171} Smith, \textit{Taymouth Hours}, 182; Ellis, \textit{The Golden Legend, Vol. Five}, 73.

\textsuperscript{172} Ellis, \textit{The Golden Legend, Vol. Five}, 72.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{175} Smith, \textit{Taymouth Hours}, 183. Smith explains, this image is perhaps based on a pun of the word \textit{os}, a word meaning both ‘mouth’ and ‘bone’ in Latin.

\textsuperscript{176} I realize that alabaster carvings will be discussed in a later section, however, I believe it important to discuss these few examples here as they directly relate to the unique iconography of Taymouth Hours illuminations.

believed that Herodias ordered his head buried separate from his body for fear of his resurrection.\textsuperscript{178}

This same inconsistent depiction of the Baptist appears in a historiated initial fragment from the Sanctorale of the late fourteenth-century Carmelite Missal (London, BL, Additional MS 44892, f. 136v)\textsuperscript{179} (plate 27). Within the initial ‘G’\textsuperscript{180} are illustrated four events in the decollation narrative of the saint taken from the Gospel of Mark.\textsuperscript{181} Shown are St John reproving Herod; the dance of Salome, again as in the Holkham Bible Picture Book with the young woman tumbling before the seated guests; his beheading; and the burial of his body. Again, this burial scene contradicts the \textit{Golden Legend},\textsuperscript{182} John’s head is buried with the body, a line of blood around his neck the only acknowledgement of his method of martyrdom. Furthermore, there is a fifth scene, in the bottom left-hand loop of the initial, related to the narrative, but not obviously part of it. This small scene is unparalleled in its iconography, at least in surviving images that I am aware of. It shows the death of Salome; ‘the earth [having] swallowed her in, all quick.’\textsuperscript{183} Standing up to her waist in a hole dug in the earth, Salome holds up her hands to the sky, asking forgiveness for the great sin she has committed. Placed before her upon the ground, the head of St John on a charger indicates not only her identity but also reinforces the sinful act of unjustified execution. Her gaze is directed upwards at the narrative cycle making it appear as if she too is reliving the events of John’s death before her own life ends. The Carmelite friar shown at the bottom right of the initial, and the historiated initial of the Baptist’s nativity and naming also found in this missal (f. 113r) add significant devotional elements to the narrative. Kneeling with his hands clasped as if in prayer, the friar offers both the girl and the viewer solace in the idea of repentance of sin. The presence of the friar before images of John also offers another significant detail; the Carmelite order, originally an eremitic order, held John the Baptist, himself once a

\textsuperscript{178} Ellis, \textit{The Golden Legend, Vol. Five}, 73.
\textsuperscript{180} Margaret Rickert, \textit{The Reconstructed Carmelite Missal: An English Manuscript of the Late XIV Century in the British Museum}, (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 117.
\textsuperscript{181} Mark 6.17-29.
\textsuperscript{182} Ellis, \textit{The Golden Legend, Vol. Five}, 73.
\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid.}, 76. I am not aware that anyone else has noted the peculiarity of this scene.
hermit, in particular devotional esteem. John was traditionally identified with Elijah, the supposed founder of the order, and the reason why the friars held him in high regard.

One further alabaster shows the burial of the saint’s head. Part of the St John altarpiece now in the Marienkirche, Gdansk, Poland (plate 26) this late fourteenth/early fifteenth-century panel shows the sole remaining example of this imagery outside the Taymouth Hours. Herodias and Salome face each other as if deciding where the head, evidence of the horrible sin they have committed, should be buried. Two attendants stand behind them; one holds an axe and the other the saint’s head.

A further three images, the burning of his bones (two panels) and the quenching of the fire, are also rare iconographical motifs. Treated as the saint’s second martyrdom in the Golden Legend, Voragine demonstrates that the feast of his decollation ‘was established and hallowed for the burning of his bones’ which were then ‘gathered up of good christian men.’ The Burning of his Bones, a mid to late fourteenth-century Nottingham alabaster is believed to be the only surviving alabaster example of this iconographic type, different from the other scene by the same name (plate 28). Two men stand before a bonfire of the saint’s bones. Behind, Herod stands next to the executioner, Salome and Herodias. Again, the appearance of this alabaster is quite similar to the Taymouth image of the same event with the additional figures of Herod and his family. The other panel, also known as the Burning of the Bones, is part of the Marienkirche altarpiece (plate 29). Taking a different iconographical approach to this episode, the headless body of the saint lies on a pyre, a man stokes the flames as another

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185 Rickert, The Reconstructed Carmelite Missal, 53.
186 The presence of this St John altarpiece in Gdansk, Poland, in its original wooden frame would seem to indicate that alabaster panels were being exported to the Continent even in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See Philip Nelson, ‘English Alabasters of the Embattled Type,’ The Archaeological Journal, 75 (1918), 311.
188 Nelson, ‘English Alabasters of the Embattled Type,’ pl. XX.
190 Personal correspondence with Peter Nahum of the Leicester Galleries.
pokes at the body with a pitchfork. Contradicting the legend that Julian wanted the saint’s bones exhumed and burnt, this panel shows the burning of both the flesh and bones of the saint, as if taking place just after his death. The final alabaster panel, the *Quenching of the Fire* dates from roughly the late fifteenth century\(^{192}\) (plate 30). Although showing no recognizable characters, four figures use buckets of water to stop the fire of the saint’s bones. According to Voragine, upon the occasion of the burning of his bones a few monks travelled from Jerusalem and secretly obtained a number of his bones which they then took back to Philip, Bishop of Jerusalem.\(^{193}\) These three alabaster panels must have once been part of an alabaster narrative sequence belonging to a retable\([s]\) devoted to the life of St John.

Having explored these examples of rare iconographical depictions, we return to the topic of manuscript illuminations and explore one final model. The early fourteenth-century Queen Mary Psalter (London, BL, Royal MS. 2 B VII)\(^{194}\) presents us with a stylistically refined example of Baptist imagery, one including both narrative and single saint images\(^{195}\) of St John. Before investigating the narrative sequences, we must briefly look at the single saint image of the Baptist contained within the Nativity of Christ, f. 85r (plate 31). Marking the beginning of the Psalms,\(^{196}\) the scene shows the Virgin Mary nursing the baby Christ enclosed on either side by three saints standing in architectural niches. The two Sts John appear in the upper, more elaborate niches— to the left, the Baptist, to the right, the Evangelist both with their recognizable attributes. Placing these two saints in a higher position of importance, signifying perhaps a hierarchy of saints, the two Johns play a significant visual role, one superseded only by that of the main scene of the nativity. This fashion of illustrating figures in architectural niches echoes sculptural images found in churches and cathedrals.

\(^{192}\) Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 120.


\(^{195}\) I use the terms single saint, or single standing images to refer to images of St John shown on his own with only his attribute\([s]\) to identify him.

This same feature is found twice again in the Psalter, however, in both cases, the
Baptism, f. 190v, and the Baptist preaching in the wilderness, f. 213v (plate 32), John
plays a central role rather than observatorial one. In the architectural niches a number of
angels witness the Baptism while four gentlemen, possibly representing the Pharisees and
Sadducees, similar to the same scene in a Norwich Cathedral roof boss, listen to the
Baptist’s preaching. These same men who witness his preaching appear again to listen to
St John in a historiated initial on f. 295v (plate 33). Both common iconographical
depictions, these scenes would have once provided its medieval owner with a focus for
devotional contemplation. The richness of the two miniatures is juxtaposed with the
plain, yet still finely detailed, line drawings of the marginal illustrations of this
manuscript. Each folio of the Psalter, Canticles and Litany include *bas-de-page*
illuminations, many illustrating the lives and martyrdoms of the saints.197 Two such *bas-
de-page* illuminations show the dance of Salome, representing sin, f. 264v, and St John’s
martyrdom, representing sacrifice and triumph over sin, f. 265r. Used not in the
devotional capacity of the miniatures, these *bas-de-page* illustrations would have
educated the owner on the saints’ lives and deaths, acting in much the same way as the
contemporary hagiographies while instead illustrating the Psalms.

Bridging the gap between narrative and single saint images we find the depictions
of the Baptism of Christ. Used in both capacities, as narrative and stand-alone image, the
Baptism was the most important event in the life of St John. Shown as part of the
narrative cycles of the Holkham Bible Picture Book, Taymouth Hours and Queen Mary
Psalter, an important example of the Baptism as a stand-alone image can be found in the
Sherborne Missal (London, BL, Additional MS 74236) an early fifteenth-century
Benedictine service book.198 During the service on the Eve of Epiphany in the
Temporale, gospel passages from Luke 3 were recited, referencing the Baptism of Christ.
Placed within a historiated initial for this service, the image quite obviously relates to the
gospel passage. Baptism scenes, in both liturgical and personal manuscripts, would have
served a devotional function for the viewer. Contemplating this scene, one would
therefore be contemplating both Christ’s baptism by John as well as the significance of

197 Sandler, A Survey of Manuscripts; Vol. 5 (II), 65.
Manuscripts, Vol. 6, (II), 45-60.
their own baptism. This imagery would have made visible the important relationship between Christ and St John.

The very nature of illuminated manuscripts places them mostly in the realm of private devotional use. The relatively small size of their images (and texts), in comparison to monumental paintings and stained glass for instance, made them more suited for use by individuals. It is not as common to find narrative cycles in books for monastic use, with the exception of some such as the Carmelite and Sherborne Missals previously discussed. Books of a liturgical nature, although used in a public setting, were also commonly used for private contemplation. As a book used for public services, they were better served by the single saint images which often played the role of page marker, denoting certain passages and allowing for the celebrant to quickly identify the required section. Single saint images are by far the most common across all media. Differing both stylistically and in terms of artistic skill, depictions of the Baptist, nevertheless, have the same iconographical characteristics throughout.

When shown without a narrative context certain attributes were commonly associated with the saint to help the viewer identify the image. St John’s attributes followed the scriptural tradition, allowing for his easy identification. Thanks to the Gospel of Matthew, we know he was believed to have worn a ‘garment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins.’ With this distinctive scriptural identification, John was most often shown in this camel hair robe unlike the more generic gowns and mantles used in images of other saints. Always barefoot, reflecting his solitary life in the wilderness (and also his humility), he is occasionally shown accompanied by animals, in addition to the lamb, who themselves provide symbolic representations of characteristics that he himself possessed. By far the most recognizable attribute of the Baptizer, however, was the Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God, which he is shown holding in

199 Matthew 3.4
200 Mentioned in the Gospels as camel hair, St John is often, as we shall see, shown in a robe of camel skin.
201 Matthew 3.1; Mark 1.4; Luke 3.2; John 1.23
202 Examples of animals in St John images can be found in Queen Mary Psalter, f. 213v; Royal 10 B XIV, f. 3v; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS G.39, see John Plummer, The Glazier Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts, (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1968), 38; and London, BL, Royal 2 B XIII, f. 27v, includes a hedgehog which is similarly found in Royal 10 B XIV. See Scot McKendrick, John Lowden and Kathleen Doyle, Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination, (London: The British Library, 2011), 182-3.
his hand, evoking the passage of the Gospel of John where the Baptist exclaims, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world.’203 As it was he who uttered the words, the Lamb became his most recognizable attribute, symbolising the death and Passion of the Lord.204 With such frank attributes St John presents a uniquely recognizable iconographical figure.

Single standing images of St John in illuminated manuscripts functioned mostly in a devotional role, providing an image for a person to focus on as he or she offered up prayers to Christ and the saints. Single images of saints usually came in three different settings within manuscripts; historiated initials; border and bas-de-page; and miniatures. Historiated initials, often the smallest illuminated images in a manuscript and inserted to mark the beginning of passages, frequently contained images of saints or small narrative cycles. Even some of the most basic liturgical books contained historiated initials.

The historiated initial of f. 27r, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.255, (plate 34), a c. 1450 book of hours205, is a typical example of the most basic initial. Showing the Baptist illustrated within the initial ‘P’ and the Evangelist the initial ‘E’, both mark the beginning of their respective suffrages. The Baptist, dressed in an orange robe with yellow highlights, representative of the camel hair robe, holds in his right hand the Agnus Dei. Very little detail is visible in this image (this is also true of the Evangelist initial), however the context of the saints’ suffrages allows us to identify them with certainty. As one were to read through the suffrage to the saint thy could also gaze upon their image, forming a relationship between the words and images.

Progressing to full figure depictions in historiated initials we find several liturgical examples. A Devonshire breviary, (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.329, f. 157r), c. 1325-30, contains a St John initial illuminating the passage for the first lesson for Matins on the feast of the Nativity of John Baptist206 (plate 35). A nimbed St John wears a brown robe, in his left hand he holds a disk containing the Agnus Dei and a

203 John 1.29.
bannered cross (itself symbolizing the resurrection of Jesus), pointing to the lamb with his right hand, acknowledging the symbol of Christ that he holds. Likewise, another fourteenth-century breviary of Norwich, the Stowe Breviary, (London, BL, Stowe MS 12, f. 257r) also contains an initial ‘D’ with the figure of the Baptist. The nimbed saint wears a brown camel hair robe, again he holds the Agnus Dei with the bannered cross in his left hand and points with his right. An additional example, c. 1320, can be found in the Tiptoft Missal, (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 107, f. 240v) (plate 36). Found in the Sanctorale on the page of the feast of the Nativity of St John, this initial ‘D’ shows a more skilled depiction of the saint. Here John stands on a small patch of grass, referencing his time spent in the wilderness, dressed in a brown hooded mantle over his camel skin robe and holding the Agnus Dei with a bannered cross upon a roundel. In addition to the initial’s role as page marker, they also functioned in a devotional manner, creating a focal point for one’s prayers when reading or listening to the service of St John’s feast days.

Border and bas-de-page illuminations were another location for single images of St John. Differing from the narrative margins, an important example showing both the devotional and intercessory role played by the Baptist can be seen again in the Tiptoft Missal. This decorated initial of f. 142r (plate 37) shows the ritual of Mass, performed by three tonsured priests who elevate the Host. The Elevation during Mass is accompanied by the passage from John 1:29, ‘Ecce Agnus Dei’. In the left hand margin are painted the portraits of the two donors, believed to be John Clavering and Hawyne Tiptoft, who had the book commissioned c. 1311-32, kneeling with upraised hands. In the right-hand margins are painted the two Sts John, the Evangelist holding a palm frond and the Baptist a nimbed Agnus Dei. Other than the small scene of Christ on the cross, flanked by the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, these two Johns are the only other saints portrayed on this folio with the donors. It is believed that this missal belonged

208 Sandler, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated, Vol. 5 (I), 86.
209 Ibid., 84.
210 Ibid., 84.
211 Katherine A. Smith and Scott Wells (eds.) Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009), 178.
personally to Clavering’s wife,\textsuperscript{212} therefore the inclusion of both Sts John could be indicative of a commission by Clavering himself who included his patron saints as a way of reminding his wife of his own devotional attitudes. St John holding the Agnus Dei appears again, placed in an architectural niche within the border illumination of f. 181r, just to serve as a reminder in their daily devotions. Unlike smaller and more portable manuscripts, this missal would have most likely been used in the family’s private chapel\textsuperscript{213} and therefore would have been regularly viewed by Hawyse and John Clavering, and perhaps numerous other people: it was, after all, an object for its patrons to be proud of.

The Luttrell Psalter (London, BL, Additional MS 42130),\textsuperscript{214} too, contains a bas-de-page image of the Baptist, f. 40v (plate 38). Famous for its depictions of daily life in medieval England,\textsuperscript{215} this manuscript, c. 1325-1335, is also an important specimen of religious imagery. In this illumination St John wears a purple robe, perhaps a reference to his status and authority as the cousin of Christ, and holds the Agnus Dei. He is surrounded by vines of oak leaves and acorns, perhaps indicative of his eremitic lifestyle, similar in style to the oak leaves found in the desert rustic miniature of the Baptist in MS Royal 10 B XIV.\textsuperscript{216} Placed between the end of Psalm 19 and the beginning of Psalm 20, St John serves here in a decorative and devotional function; needing a subject to fill the space on the page, the artist or patron chose John, a saint that could be appealed to for help and guidance with their prayers.

Miniatures in both liturgical and devotional manuscripts provide an excellent source of intercessory and devotional imagery. Frequently filling a full page before the suffrage of St John, depictions of the Baptist are often quite elaborate and executed with care, highlighting not only the ability of the artist but the importance of the image as a devotional tool. The Entwistle Hours (London, BL, Sloane 2321) is a mid fifteenth-

\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Ibid.}, 65.
\textsuperscript{214} Sandler, \textit{A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated, Vol. 5 (I)}, 118-21.
century Latin manuscript of either English or French origins (plate 39). This image shows St John in the wilderness, standing barefoot in the grass, alluding to the years he spent living as a hermit. A gaunt looking John, indicating his sparse diet of locusts and wild honey, wears his camel hair robe. In his left hand he holds a book with the Agnus Dei, pointing to the Lamb with his right hand. London, BL, Royal 2 A XVIII, f. 3v, provides another example of a full-page miniature. Contemporary with the Entwistle Hours, St John appears in the first miniature of this small book of prayers to the saints indicating his prime place within the prayers of the owner. The saint is placed within an architectural frame resembling a medieval palace, placing this biblical saint within a relatable and somewhat familiar environment to the medieval viewer. Around the saint is a very detailed landscape and beneath his feet runs a small river, signifying the baptisms that would take place in the River Jordan. Unusually, to his right upon a pile of rocks stands the Agnus Dei with a bannered cross looking up at the saint as he points down to it, showing an interaction between the two rather than the more common acknowledgement of the symbol of Christ by the Baptizer saint. On the opposite folio is the text for a prayer to the saint. Those reading this prayer would gaze at the saint, asking the ‘precusor’ and ‘martir’ for prayers on their behalf and intercession for their souls upon the day of their death.

One further unique and iconographically significant example of a St John devotional miniature can be found in London, BL, MS Royal 10 B XIV, f. 3v (plate 40). Illustrating that St John images were not limited to devotional texts, this drawing appears in the mid-fourteenth-century university work, the Summa logicae et philosophiae naturalis of John of Dumbleton. Unrelated to the text but bound within the manuscript, Julian Luxford believes it is likely that the book’s original documented

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219 Royal 2 A XVIII, f. 4r.
220 For a detailed examination of this illumination, see Luxford, “Out of the Wilderness”, 137.
owner, John of Lingfield, wished the illustration to be included as both a symbol of ownership as well as a devotional patronal image.\textsuperscript{223} This figure of St John as the desert rustic emulates the near contemporary illumination, c. 1310-20, of him preaching in the wilderness of the Queen Mary Psalter (plate 32), suggesting, Luxford believes, that both artists would have had access to near similar models.\textsuperscript{224} In addition to the oak tree iconography,\textsuperscript{225} the small axe man removing a leaf from the tree,\textsuperscript{226} and the collection of wild animals,\textsuperscript{227} the most notable motif is the recumbent woman St John stands upon, bent backwards in a tumbling position.\textsuperscript{228} Representing Salome and alluding to her dance, the iconography of her being trampled beneath John’s feet is very rare, symbolizing the lust and sexuality of the young woman being overcome, or trampled, by the virtuous chastity of the saint.\textsuperscript{229} A similar trampled figure beneath the feet of the saint in found in a late-thirteenth/early fourteenth-century sculpture above the prior’s door of the cloister of Norwich Cathedral (plate 41). Believed to represent either Herod or Salome, here St John again triumphs over evil.\textsuperscript{230} This strong saintly figure of Royal 10 B XIV makes a bold statement to its Benedictine audience- to emulate properly the strong St John, reputed founder of monasticism, they must overcome temptations and evil to live a dutiful and devotional life.\textsuperscript{231}

This medium of manuscript illumination, unlike all other media, divided its viewers by accessibility. Not until the fifteenth century did anyone other than the clergy and wealthy laity have access to private devotional manuscripts. Liturgical manuscripts, too, were largely the domain of the clergy. While these books were used to direct religious services, their illuminations would have helped to aid in their private devotions.

\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Ibid.}, 139.
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Ibid.}, 143.
\textsuperscript{225} Oak tree/leaf symbolism is found on a bench end at Yarcombe (Devon), and an illumination in the Luttrell Psalter, f. 40v.
\textsuperscript{226} Luxford notes that axe men feature in the Gorleston Psalter, although not in conjunction with Baptist imagery. “Out of the Wilderness”, 143.
\textsuperscript{227} The symbolism of this collection of animals surrounding the saint would have been understood by its original audience. Owned and used by the monks of the Benedictine St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury, these men would have also had access to Bestiary manuscripts, used to interpret the allegorical meaning of such beasts. See Luxford, “Out of the Wilderness”, 137, 141.
\textsuperscript{228} Images of the dance of Salome are common in St John imagery. However, almost identical depictions of Salome in this tumbling position can be found in at least three fourteenth-century examples- the Carmelite Missal, Add MS 44892, and two wall paintings at Chalfont (Bucks.) and Kingston Lisle (Berks.).
\textsuperscript{229} Luxford, “Out of the Wilderness”, 141.
\textsuperscript{230} \textit{Ibid.}, 143.
\textsuperscript{231} \textit{Ibid.}, 141.
Monumental Painting

The fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries saw the height of production for painted religious imagery in England. More paintings were produced in the fifteenth century than had been previously.\textsuperscript{232} St John became an increasingly popular saint. Medieval paintings of the Baptist follow the same iconographical construction as the illuminated manuscripts. Essentially similar to the function of manuscript illuminations, most painted images functioned in a devotional manner, assisting people with their daily prayers by providing them with a focus for their contemplation. Monumental paintings also performed a didactic function, teaching people the narratives and events associated with a particular figure. Painted images such as the Last Judgement also played an intercessory role, illustrating the two most important intercessory saints for the veneration of the people. Here the iconography and function of St John will be reviewed in both panel and wall paintings of the later Middle Ages.

As with all other media, I must state that I have chosen a small selection of images to best highlight the iconography of St John in medieval monumental paintings. A larger view of St John imagery may be obtained by consulting DB2 of the appendix.

Having survived the English Reformation, we find several hundred whole and fragmentary rood screens and retables, the greatest concentration in both Devonshire and East Anglian churches, a number of which still retain their original dados with painted panels.\textsuperscript{233} Made usually of wood and often painted with images of the saints, the majority of surviving screens date from the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{234} Duffy emphasizes the importance of these painted panels as, he says, they were the single most important focal point of the parishioners in their churches.\textsuperscript{235} As such, any imagery upon these panels would have held particular influence in both the devotional lives of the individual people and

\textsuperscript{235} Duffy, “The Parish, Piety and Patronage”, 136.
community as a whole. Rood screens in particular played an important role—dividing the sacred chancel from the public nave, the clergy from the laity, they offered a window through which the congregation could view the Mass, further providing a visual centrepiece for the attention of the worshippers.\textsuperscript{236} The saints on the screens were situated in a prime place, below the cross highlighting their roles as intercessors for the people.\textsuperscript{237} As the screens faced the worshippers and were part of their religious realm, it was these parishioners who were charged with their care, often raising funds for, and overseeing, their commissioning and upkeep.\textsuperscript{238} Evidence from medieval wills shows how common it was for a parishioner to leave a bequest to the rood or screen of their parish church; in 1528, Richard Moysse left xijd. to the new rood loft of Brenchley church in Kent\textsuperscript{239} as did Elizabeth Smythes who left liij. iiild. to ‘the payntyng of the Rode beem’ in Cuxton church in the same county.\textsuperscript{240} It is unknown who made the decisions regarding the iconographical program of these screens, however, we are occasionally able to uncover examples of personal devotion to one or more particular saints and its influence on the images of the rood. The screen of St Andrew, North Burlingham (Norfolk), as a particular documented example, was known to have had at least two donors—John and Cecilia Black. It is of little surprise therefore to find the images of both St John the Baptist and St Cecilia portrayed next to each other on this rood screen.\textsuperscript{241}

Survivals of rood screens appears to be mostly contained to the south of England. Within the concentration of surviving painted screens in East Anglia, we find no less than thirteen examples of images of the Baptist, plus an additional depiction of St Elizabeth with a young St John. Devon, too, is home to as many medieval rood screens with images of the saint.\textsuperscript{242} Shown in his customary iconographic manner St John holds in his hand the Lamb, usually placed upon a book, with the occasional accompaniment of the scroll bearing the words ‘Ecce Agnus Dei.’ The Norfolk churches of Attleborough, Alysham

\begin{footnotes}
\item[237] Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}, 158.
\item[238] Watney, forward to \textit{English Panel Paintings}, vii.
\item[239] Hussey, \textit{Testimenta Cantiana}, 6.
\item[240] \textit{Ibid.}, 17.
\item[241] Baker, \textit{English Panel Paintings}, 58
\end{footnotes}
(plate 43), North Burlingham, Belaugh, East Dereham, Elsing, Horsham St Faith, Norwich St John Sepulchre, and Worstead (plate 44); Suffolk’s Thornham Parva; and Plymtree and Ashton of Devon all contain quite similar images of the Baptist, differing only in artistic merit. The saint is shown standing, as if in a sculptural niche with a cusped arch, against a plain or very lightly detailed background, at times positioned upon a plinth. Barefoot and often wearing what appears to be the camel hair robe, over which all show an elaborately draped, brightly coloured cloak or mantle. In his hand he holds the Agnus Dei, resting upon a book, a scroll pronouncing ‘Ecce Agnus Dei’ accompany the panels from Worstead and North Burlingham. Although some panels have been heavily damaged, due to over painting or defacement during the iconoclasm, (as is clearly evident in Belaugh (plate 42), Elsing and North Burlingham), there are no elements about these panels that are particularly remarkable in iconographical terms; they all follow the set program of a single standing image of the Baptist.

Although the majority of these surviving panels represent the saint in the typical fifteenth century manner, a few exceptions must be noted. The panel works of both St Mary, Thornham Parva (Suffolk) and St Helen’s, Ranworth (Norfolk) offer these exceptions to the rule. Looking at the panel of the Thornham Parva altarpiece (plate 45), these differences are probably attributable to its earlier date. Unlike the fifteenth-century rood screen panels above, this altarpiece panel can be dated to around 1330-40. Here St John bears more similarities to the desert rustic of Royal 10 B XIV (also dated to 1335-40) than with the other East Anglian panels. He wears his camel hair robe- absent is the contemporary style robe of other panels- and holds the Agnus Dei, appearing in a disk.

243 This contemporary style mantle in which he is always shown on rood screens, in addition to his placement closer to the viewers at ground level, shows St John in a role of ‘friend’, personally relatable through his contemporary clothing, rather than the Last Judgement or other monumental paintings which depict him as a saint to be supplicated, high above the eye line of the laity who have to direct their gaze upwards.


245 Here the camel hair robe extends to include a hood pulled over the saint’s head, unique to this image. See David Park, ‘Form and Content’, Dominican Painting in East Anglia: The Thornham Parva Retable and the Musée de Cluny Frontal, Christopher Norton, David Park and Paul Binski (eds.) (Suffolk and New Hampshire: The Boydell Press, 1987), 41.
rather than upon a book, as was traditional of fifteenth-century images. The Baptist balances the figure of St Edmund on this panel, in what David Park calls a ‘forced’ pairing. Unlike the other saints, such as Peter and Paul, who are naturally paired together, Sts John and Edmund had nothing beside their martyrdom to generally account for this paring. This distinctive inclusion of St Edmund, and his pairing with the Baptist, Park believes, suggests rather the panel’s original location and patronage of the Thetford Dominican Priory (Norfolk), it being no coincidence that the two men responsible for this foundation were named John and Edmund.

Circling back to the fifteenth century, the reredos of Ranworth also provides a different image St John (plates 46, 47). Appearing in two separate panels of the reredos, (one unfinished), the completed image uncharacteristically shows him as a much younger man than is commonly seen. The two images of the Baptist, placed side by side, show both an older original, unfinished panel, and a newer image painted over a previous figure, believed to have once represented an archbishop. Situated at the altar of the chapel dedicated to the Baptist, this north reredos also included St Etheldreda and St Barbara. Seated in their niches, unlike the standing figures in the rood screen of the same church, the original St John, had he been completed, would have held upon his knee the traditional Agnus Dei. Over his right shoulder is a scroll, also unfinished. Pictured to his left is the other depiction of the Baptist, showing him as a younger man. With such youthful and feminine features it is easy to understand the earlier misattribution of St

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247 Park, “Form and Content”, 41.
248 The Baptist and Evangelist are often paired together, but as the Evangelist is part of the Crucifixion scene, he could not be paired with the Baptist. Park, “Form and Content”, 41.
249 Park, “Form and Content”, 42, 91.
250 Baker, English Panel Paintings, 176. Infrared photography has uncovered the original position of his right hand, pointing up, as well as crosses on the original garment and the beginnings of mitre, all suggesting an original intention of depicting an archbishop.
251 John is also placed next to St Etheldreda in the East Dereham screen. St Etheldreda may possibly be shown next to St John as her feast day was celebrated on 23 June, the same as the Vigil of St John. We can see evidence of this in the Sarum Missal Sanctorale, see Pearson, The Sarum Missal, 380-81.
252 John is placed next to or near Barbara in two further screens, Wickenhall St Mary and St Wilfred, Manaton. I believe the connection between St John and Barbara is two-fold; first, Barbara lived in a bath-house having been baptized there, ‘taking only for her refection honeysuckle and locusts, following the holy precursor of our Lord, St John Baptist.’ Secondly, she met her death at the hands of a sword; beheaded by her own father. See Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater (eds.) Butler’s Lives of the Saints: Complete Edition, Vol. IV (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), 487-88.
Upon closer inspection, one finds faded remnants of unruly hair and a beard, as well as brushstrokes representing animal hair on his golden robes. Together with the book, Agnus Dei and bannered cross, the attribution of this saint becomes clear, although this iconography conflicts with his customary portrayal as an older, bearded man, and it is unknown why he should be shown as a young man.

Despite these differences, each of these panels placed St John within an architectural niche, echoing the sculptural images also found throughout these churches. Following a shift from this normal niche type of image, the early sixteenth-century panel of Wiggenhall St Mary (Norfolk), shows a move towards the narrative. The artist has placed St John, situated next to the Virgin and Child, in a more natural setting, moving away from the usual stiff sculptural appearance (plate 48). This ‘natural’ setting as well as the figure of the saint himself provides evidence, as Baker highlights, of foreign Flemish influence. The facial and figural influence of St John resemble the more detailed and vibrant representations of him in Flemish art, for instance Gerard David’s *Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1485-90 (plate 49), or Hans Memling’s depiction of the saint on the outer wing of the *Triptych of the Family Moreel*, dated 1484, now in the Groeninge Museum, Bruges (plate 50).

Further narrative type panels can be found in St Peter, Ugborough (Devon). Across the south aisle are two fifteenth-century panels forming part of the martyrdom of the Baptist; a panel with an executioner and next to it a panel with the figure of Salome holding a dish, emphasizing the means and manner of the saint’s sacrifice. Although St John does not appear in these images, a single standing figure of him is placed on the north of the screen, between the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the martyrdom of St Sebastian. St Mary, Wolborough (Devon) also houses another screen rich in imagery. Decorating the screen of the south transept three late fifteenth/early sixteenth-century panels illustrate the Annunciation; St Gabriel, the lily pot and the Virgin Mary. In the remaining two panels we find the figures of St Elizabeth and St

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254 Ibid., 47-8.
255 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 32.100.40bc.
John. Together these five panels represent the beginning of the relationship between Christ and his Forerunner, similar to the cycles of the Holkham Bible Picture Book and the Vernon Manuscripts.

As iconographical programs change with each church, dependent upon the wishes of the patrons, parish and popularity of regional saints, we find no discernable pattern of placement of St John within the screens. As we know, the Baptist had an iconographical relationship with both the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary; the Virgin was the most important intercessory saint, behind which the Baptist followed, and as the Baptist marked the beginning of Christ’s life, the Evangelist marked its end, both bookending the life of the Son of God. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Baptist should be placed next to each of these saints on several different screens. He appears next to the Evangelist on five occasions- Attleborough, Elsing, Horsham St Faith, Holne, and Manaton; and the Virgin Mary (and child) four times- Attleborough, Wiggenhall St Mary, Ashton and Exeter St Marys Steps. Furthermore, he appears next to a very random selection of saints including Stephen (two), Sebastian (two), Peter (two), Paul (two), and several others, highlighting that there really was no set iconographical program associated with the screens.

Stepping away from the traditional representation of St John as an adult, the fourteenth or fifteenth-century panel of Houghton St Giles (Norfolk) should be noted. In total there are twelve panels, the six on the north side illustrating a unique collection of saints. Each of the women, Sts Emeria, Mary Salome, Mary (BVM), Mary Cleophas, Elizabeth and Anne, is shown with her young children or descendants. The iconography of the group is of note as these women were commonly depicted together in the Rhineland and called the ‘Holy Kindred.’ The only other insular surviving example of this group can be found on the screen at Ranworth. In her panel at Houghton, St Elizabeth holds her right hand against her breast, looking down and holding the hand of her young son, a nimbed John the Baptist (plate 51). The close bond between these holy mothers and their saintly children, echoing the relationship between the Virgin Mary and

257 Ibid., 364.
258 Baker, English Panel Paintings, 150.
Christ, is conveyed to the viewer, making this a devotional focal point for women praying for fertility help or a safe delivery. Older mothers, too, would have been drawn to these images, identifying with both Sts Elizabeth and Anne, elder mothers themselves.\(^{260}\) The focal point of this image is on John’s mother, Elizabeth, shown by the inscription above her head, *Sca elysabeth*. John, therefore, is not the central figure, but is nonetheless crucial as the ultimate reason for his mother’s sanctity. He has none of his identifying attributes, and as such only appears as a young boy gazing up at his mother, focusing the attention of the viewer on the miracle of the Forerunner’s birth to an elderly mother. A depiction of St John as a young child is a rarity in English medieval art.

Importantly, these many examples of painted rood screens and retables are some of the best indicators we now have of lay devotional attitudes, providing a guide, Duffy says, to the saints regarded with the most affection and adoration by the people of the parish.\(^ {261}\) St John would not have been present on so many individual screens if he were not pervasively important.

Private painted panels are far more rare than those intended for public use and ones containing images of John the Baptist even more so. One such example, the Wilton Diptych (plate 52), is a great legacy to the reign of King Richard II (1377-1399.) Lisa Monnas calls the Wilton Diptych a ‘lone survivor’ in the category of medieval English painted portable devotional panels.\(^ {262}\) The left panel of the diptych shows Richard II facing inwards (towards the right panel) kneeling with his hands raised in reverence. Directly behind him stands the Baptist, draped in his camel skin robe, the hoof and head of the animal still visible, holding the Agnus Dei (his two most recognizable attributes), as he places his right hand gently on the back of the King. To the left of John stands St Edward the Confessor, king of England (1042-1066,) and further to the left is St


\(^{261}\) Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 159.

Edmund.\textsuperscript{263} The right-hand panel shows the Virgin holding the Christ Child, surrounded by eleven angels, the Child either handing over or receiving from the King the banner of resurrection (the banner that the Agnus Dei is also often shown holding).

Scholars’ opinions differ as to the dating, function and iconographical significance of this panel. Dillian Gordon, as well as many others, believes the panel was commissioned and completed during the reign of Richard II.\textsuperscript{264} Francis Wormald, conversely, argues that the significance of its devotional value and its iconographical interpretation rest on it being a memorial picture, commissioned by an unknown patron after the death of Richard II in 1400.\textsuperscript{265}

We are well aware of the high reverence held by Richard II for John the Baptist - evidence of this abounds. Richard was born on the feast of the Baptism of Christ, 6 January (1367), and succeeded to the throne on the eve of the Vigil of St John the Baptist, 22 June (1377).\textsuperscript{266} He considered the Baptist his patron saint\textsuperscript{267} seeking his intercession as evidenced by the inscription of his tomb- ‘Oh merciful Christ to whom he was devoted; Oh Baptist, whom he venerated, may you by your prayers save him.’\textsuperscript{268} Records show that Richard also obtained two relics of the saint and gave a set of vestments to Westminster Abbey, the orphrey showing embroidered images of the King and Queen, the Trinity, the Virgin, St Edmund, St Edward the Confessor and St John the Baptist.\textsuperscript{269} Furthermore, in c. 1393, a stained glass window was commissioned for the east window of Winchester College chapel showing Richard II keeling before the Baptist.\textsuperscript{270} Also of note, we see the composition of the Diptych mirrored in the layout of three chapels in Westminster Abbey - from north to south were the chapels of St John the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{265} Wormald, “The Wilton Diptych”, 197, 201.
\bibitem{266} Monnas, “The Furnishing of Royal Closets”, 203, n. 75.
\bibitem{267} \textit{Ibid.}, 203.
\bibitem{270} Alexander and Binski, \textit{Age of Chivalry}, 475.
\end{thebibliography}
Baptist, St Edward the Confessor and St Edmund, these chapels in fact close to where the King’s tomb would eventually lie.\textsuperscript{271}

The enigmatic nature of this panel has dominated discussions of its function and imagery for many years. The question of its dating, pre- or post-1400, is the determining factor in its iconography. If this panel had been commissioned and completed during the life of the King, its iconography and function are quite clear. Knowing the Baptist was Richard’s patron saint makes it easy to understand why he was placed in such a prominent position, directly behind the King with his hand upon him, presenting him to the Virgin and Child. The Baptist’s placement next to the Confessor also points to a rather deliberate arrangement. Shelagh Mitchell points out, as the Confessor was usually shown with John the Evangelist this placement shows, in effect, that Richard was making a very bold statement about his personal devotional inclinations.\textsuperscript{272}

The portable nature of the Wilton Diptych would have allowed for Richard to take it with him as he moved about. Using it not only as a focal point for his daily devotions, Pamela Tudor-Craig also believes it would have served as part of a temporary altar used for pre-battle prayers.\textsuperscript{273} Although most scholars now agree that the personal nature of this panel points to the date of commission being during the last years of Richard’s reign,\textsuperscript{274} Wormald argues the reverse; this panel functioned as a memorial to the king. If that were the case, changes to the function and iconography would need to be addressed. Wormald points out that if the Diptych was commissioned after his death, the event taking place can be interpreted as the Baptist handing over Richard ‘from his earthly kingdom to a place in the heavenly one.’\textsuperscript{275} Richard, having sought intercession, is helped on his way by the Baptist, being received into Heaven. Although both sides make valid iconographical arguments, I agree with Gordan that Richard himself commissioned this

\textsuperscript{271} Wormald, “The Wilton Diptych”, 200.
\textsuperscript{272} Mitchell, “Richard II”, 120.
\textsuperscript{275} Wormald, “The Wilton Diptych”, 201.
work, using it not only in a private devotional manner but also as a public statement of his devotional interests.

Panel paintings intended for public viewing would have been placed before altars and chapels. Scant evidence remains of these panels, although ‘images’ appear quite frequently in medieval wills. The definition of an ‘image’ in these wills may be unclear where, as often, we lack greater documentary detail. Frequently, references are brief, deficient in details above the words ‘image’ or ‘tablet’. One example, likely relating to a personal panel painting (but could also possibly represent an alabaster), is found in the 1380 will of Edmond, Earl of March and Ulster. He left to Sir Hugh de Boraston a ‘tablet with the images of St John and St Katharine.’

Another rare example, in the inventory of Westminster Abbey of 1388, describes a diptych given by Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton containing the images of the Virgin and Child surrounded by St John the Baptist and St Katharine.

Wall paintings decorated the insides of most churches in medieval England. Bright and colourfully painted, the inside of these buildings would have provided a very different visual experience from what we see today. Many examples are in poor condition, the majority do not survive at all, frequently white washed over or outright destroyed during the Reformation and iconoclasm. As Roger Rosewell explains, wall paintings could have performed a multitude of functions within the churches— not only did they perform a decorative function, but they also acted as an aid to devotion, they were both educational and instructional— providing exemplars for the preachers and occasionally offered statements of patronage.

Narrative images, more than the single saint figures, fulfilled not only a devotional role but also functioned in a didactic manner, educating the laity and

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278 Rosewell, Medieval Wall Paintings, 5.
280 Ibid., 14.
communicating doctrinal messages to their audience.\textsuperscript{281} By creating a visual guide, the parishioners were better able to picture and understand these biblical events.\textsuperscript{282}

At least eight narrative cycles of the life of the Baptist survive on the walls of medieval churches. The church of Sts Peter and Paul, Pickering, (N. Yorks) is a prime example of these narrative cycles (plate 53). Painted on the north and south walls of the nave this collection of mid-fifteenth century narrative cycles\textsuperscript{283} follow a pictorial program that adheres to the outline of the liturgical calendar. Starting on the south wall, bays 1-2, we find the first point of the calendar, illustrating the representations of Passion and Resurrection, celebrated in late March to mid-April. Moving across to bays 1-2 of the north wall we next find St George, whose feast was celebrated 23 April. Moving in this pattern, bays 2-3 south wall, 2-3 north wall, etc., we find the Corporal Acts of Mercy, St Christopher (25 July), the Funeral and Assumption of the Virgin (15 August), Coronation of the BVM (15 August), St John the Baptist (29 August), St Catherine (25 November), St Edmund (20 November) and St Thomas a Beckett (29 December).\textsuperscript{284} A few of the paintings are solely iconographical representations of saints, however, most feature the narratives of important scriptural events and the lives and deaths of favoured saints. The cycle of St John’s martyrdom is placed directly below the Coronation of the Virgin, itself important as both held a close relationship with Christ and were thought of as the ultimate intercessory figures. Rather than the story being read left to right, this narrative contains numerous events compacted into one scene, read in a cyclical manner, piecing together the story based on a person's assumed knowledge of the events. The same characters are often illustrated more than once. In the centre, John is shown reproving Herod. To the right, Salome dances at the feast, before the viewer moves their gaze back to the left, where St John has been executed. Back in the centre again Salome presents the head to her mother and Herod. This image format almost demands that the viewer had previous knowledge of the narrative of St John. We can assume that this painting served

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{282} A fourteenth-century treatise written by Walter Hilton ‘in defence of images’ declares- what a cleric learns from the Scriptures, a layman learns from a picture. Hilton believed that by looking at images the layperson was better able to recall events in biblical history. See G.R. Owst, \textit{Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 137-38.
\textsuperscript{283} Giles, “Marking Time?” 45.
\textsuperscript{284} \textit{Ibid.}, 49-50.
\end{quote}
not in a didactic manner but as a focus of devotion chiefly by exemplifying John’s own piety.

Another complex narrative is found in St Hubert, Idsworth, (Hants.) (plate 54). Painted c. 1330, this narrative cycle, which can be read from left to right, appears on the north wall of the chancel, consisting of three images broken into two tiers. The upper tier shows the arrest of the Baptist. Heavily damaged, the faces of John and the two men are now indistinguishable, however the intention of the scene is obvious. The lower tier shows two further scenes of the saint. To the left is his imprisonment, followed by the feast of Herod with the dance of Salome. Interestingly, the presentation of the saint’s head is shown twice at the feast. Two men, backs to each other, present the saint’s head to Salome and Herodias on the left and Herod on the right, emphasizing the great tragedy that has occurred at the hands of evil.

Similar to Pickering and Idsworth in many of their iconographical matters, four additional fourteenth-century narrative cycles of the life of the Baptist can be found in St Giles, Chalfont, (Bucks); St John the Baptist, Kingston Lisle, (Berks.); St Mary, Cerne Abbas, (Dorset); and St Peter and St Paul, Heydon, (Norfolk). Both Chalfont (found on the wall of the south aisle) and Kingston Lisle (on the eastern end of the north wall of the chancel, including the window splay) contain quite similar iconographical schemes of the feast of Herod and decollation. In the upper tier of both images, Salome, the central figure, is shown in the traditional portrayal of her dance- relating to the medieval sermons which recalled that she was a ‘tumbestere and tumblede byfore him [Herod.]’ At the table are seated the King and Queen. Chalfont’s image differs slightly from Kingston Lisle as the presentation of the head to Herodias is also included within the scene. Below, in the second tier of both cycles is the decollation. At Chalfont, St John is bent forward in the doorway of the prison as the executioner raises his sword, Salome ready to receive the saint’s head. The same format appears at Kingston Lisle, the executioner raises his sword as with the remainder of the image (Salome presenting the head) flows over into the window splay.

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286 Ibid., 87; Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, 118.
The narrative cycle of Cerne Abbas, c. 1360, also contain illustrations of Herod’s feast and the decollation, however unlike the previous two examples, we are also shown the Baptism of Christ and the Baptist before Herod (plate 55). Organized in three tiers, the images of the first tier are all but indecipherable. Within the window splay of the second tier we can see both the Baptism and St John reproving Herod. The Baptism image, now badly damaged, would have reminded the parishioner of the importance of baptism and the repentance of sin and further cemented the link, in their minds, between Christ and his baptizer, St John. Both images are typical of the iconographical scheme: nothing is of greater note here than the fact that they still survive in this cycle.

Evidence of lost narratives of St John in this medium survive in small number. Tristram recounts at least two lost cycles in English churches. The fourteenth-century paintings on the south wall of the nave in St Mary, Elsing (Norfolk) once included the dance of Salome, St John preaching before Herod, the imprisonment, and his beheading. Discovered in 1860, the paintings were again plastered over and lost. St Mary, Stiffords (Essex) is once known to have contained a painting of Gabriel appearing before Zacharias, dating from c.1300. This, now lost, black and red illustration was found on the east wall of the chantry chapel.

Unlike the narrative wall paintings that played a versatile role of education and devotion, single saint wall paintings of the Baptist functioned in a devotional and intercessory capacity, important in the lives of the parishioners in the same way as the rood screens and retables. Placement of single saint paintings of the Baptist often varied within the church. Unlike depictions of St Christopher, who was frequently positioned in, or near, the main entrance of the church, depictions of St John had no predetermined plan. A position within the window splay, such as those at Chalgrove and Fritton, seemed to be a popular place for the depiction of single saints, however, they were in no way limited to that space. The will of David Knowesley, 1525, informs us that the church of Our Lady, Crundale (Kent), once had an image of the Baptist in the chancel,

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287 Tristram, *English Wall Painting*, 150.
290 Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, 32.
now lost. There are still over a dozen extant examples of fourteenth and fifteenth century single saint images of the Baptist. All quite similar in their iconographic scheme and placed within easy view of the congregation, these images would have provided a focal point for the parishioners listening to the Mass. Focus on an image of a saint helped to create a bond, possibly even a friendship, between the person and their favoured saints.

Chalgrove and Weston Longville offer us probably the best surviving single saint images of the Baptist. In the church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Chalgrove (Oxon.) we find a wide array of surviving wall paintings. Illustrating everything from the life of Christ, in fifteen scenes, to the Tree of Jesse and the life of the Virgin, many of the window splays contain single standing images of saints. On the opposite splays of one window is found both the Baptist (eastern side) (plate 56) and the Evangelist (western side), c. 1350. The Baptist stands barefoot upon a plinth in a statue-like manner holding the Agnus Dei in his hand. Opposite him a much younger John the Evangelist is shown holding a palm frond. No longer was the Baptist shown lower down, in a relatable, friendly manner, as we find him on the rood screens, but now he is shown above the eye line of the people as a figure to be supplicated.

The wall painting of All Saints, Weston Longville (Norfolk) follows this same iconographical program. Flanking the north and south sides of the chancel arch we find two fourteenth-century depictions of the paired Sts John (plates 57, 58). Placed in the most prominent position, above which would have most likely been a Last Judgement, the medieval parishioner would have been familiar with both saints and their lives. Standing within painted architectural niches, the image of the Baptist (on the north side, symbolizing he was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the Forerunner of Christ) is in far better condition than the Evangelist (to the south). Swathed in his camel hair robe beneath a mantle, he clutches the Lamb in his arm, holding him up to shoulder height as he gazes down at the symbol of Christ’s death and Passion. By representing these two saints together, the Baptist to the north and the Evangelist to the south, it again symbolizes both the beginning and end of Christ’s life.

292 Hussey, Testimenta Cantiana, 92.
293 Tristram, English Wall Painting, 153-54.
A number of fragmentary remains of Baptist imagery in wall painting also still survive. The church of St Mary, North Stoke (Oxon.) contains a partial image of the Baptist, c. 1300. Painted in the central window of the south wall of the nave, all that remains of St John is his head and the disk that carries the Agnus Dei.294 The same is true of St Mary and St Peter, South Newington (Oxon.). Positioned on the north side of the chancel arch, all that remains of the Baptist (c. 1330-40,) is the lower half of his body, below which is a painted niche containing traces of what was possibly the Virgin and Child.295 The south-eastern window splay of the nave, St Edmund, Fritton (Norfolk) houses a fourteenth-century fragment of a St John painting296 (plate 59). The yellow hair and blue and red dress of a man are visible and what is almost certainly the Agnus Dei is just discernable in his hands. Similarly, St Margaret, Seething (Norfolk) also contains the remains of a fourteenth-century single standing image of the Baptist297 (plate 60). Much faded now, high on the north wall of the nave, can be seen a man with long hair and a beard, pointing with his right hand to something once held in his left, now lost. Although no attribute survives, the action of pointing in such a manner indicates that he would have held an object like the Agnus Dei. There is also barely visible evidence of the camel skin robe he would have worn. All these images show how important the Baptist’s two attributes were in the identification of the saint, both in the Middle Ages and today.

Along with narrative and single saint images, Last Judgement paintings were also commonly found in medieval churches. With their own distinctive iconographical program, Last Judgement, or Doom paintings, were usually placed above the chancel arch,298 looming and clearly visible to the congregation as they stood or sat in the nave.

The iconographical program of the Last Judgment is based in part on the interpretation of the event as told in the Gospel of Matthew- Christ separating the sheep from the goats, the Blessed (sheep) on his right-hand side, the Damned (goats) to his left.299 Generally the largest painting in the church, Christ is often shown sitting upon a rainbow, baring his wounds. To the right of Christ (the north side) the Virgin Mary

294 Ibid., 254.
295 Ibid., 226.
297 Tristram, English Wall Painting, 245.
298 Rosewell, Medieval Wall Paintings, 5.
299 Matthew 25.31-46.
kneels, as does John the Baptist on the left (south side),\textsuperscript{300} the two most important intercessor saints at the side of Christ. This composition echoes that of the Deësis, an iconographic program originating in Byzantine art also showing Christ flanked by the Virgin to his right and the Baptist to his left.\textsuperscript{301} Below Christ and his intercessory saints, the souls of the people await judgement. At the bottom right usually stands St Peter waiting at the gates of Heavenly Jerusalem to receive the Blessed as the Damned are sent off to Hell (on the left).\textsuperscript{302}

The pictorial scheme that we see in the later Middle Ages had evolved over the centuries reaching in the fourteenth century the iconographical form described above. By this period Doom paintings almost invariably included the kneeling figures of the Virgin and the Baptist before Christ the Judge; though very occasionally the Baptist was substituted with John the Evangelist.\textsuperscript{303} There has been some confusion on the part of E.W. Tristram regarding the identity of St John. He notes that in the fourteenth century the Baptist begins to take the place of John the Evangelist in these paintings\textsuperscript{304} a statement I find puzzling. His confusion perhaps stems from the juxtaposition of the Rood group, showing the Crucifixion surrounded by the Virgin and John the Evangelist, usually placed atop the rood loft within the chancel, with that of the Doom paintings above. As Doom paintings were often placed in or above the tympanum of the chancel arch, surmounting the Rood group, the appearance of the Baptist in Doom paintings and the Evangelist in Rood groups may be the root of his confusion.

Not all Doom paintings and Rood groups were presented as different paintings however. A distinctive example of this amalgamation of both images can be found at St Peter, Wenhaston (Suffolk) (plate 61). Although painted upon panels,\textsuperscript{305} rather than the wall, as were most Doom scenes, this early sixteenth-century panel was fixed within the

\textsuperscript{300} Rosewell, Medieval Wall Paintings, 41.
\textsuperscript{302} Rouse, Medieval Wall Paintings, 57.
\textsuperscript{303} A. Caiger-Smith, English Medieval Mural Painting, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 34.
\textsuperscript{304} Tristram, English Wall Painting, 19.
\textsuperscript{305} Three further Last Judgement panels showing the Baptist survive- Holy Trinity, Penn (Bucks.), St Michael and All Saints, Micheldean (Glos.), and St James, Dauntsey (Wilt.). Rosewell, Medieval Wall Painting, 79-81.
tympanum of the chancel arch. Seated in the upper left corner upon a rainbow is Christ. To the right of the panel, contrary to the usual iconographic programs of this scene, kneel both the Virgin and the Baptist. Below, St Peter welcomes the Blessed, and St Michael weighs the souls. Although the paintings of the Rood group itself do not survive, a noticeable unpainted cross shape is apparent within the scene of the Last Judgement. Here would have once been affixed a sculpted cross holding the crucified Christ along with the Virgin and John the Evangelist, together making up the Rood group against the backdrop of the Last Judgement.\footnote{Carl Watkins, \textit{The Undiscovered Country: Journeys Among the Dead}, (London: The Bodley Head, 2013), 23; For a detailed look at this Doom, see Kathleen Whale, “The Wenhaston Doom: A Biography of a Sixteenth-Century Panel Painting,” \textit{The Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History}, 39:3 (1999), 299-316.}

Doom paintings survive is fairly large number. According to Kauffmann, at least 182 remain in the parish churches of England.\footnote{Kauffmann, \textit{Biblical Imagery}, 257.} One of the most complete and best-preserved examples is found in the parish church of St Thomas of Canterbury at Salisbury (Wilts.). This fifteenth-century Doom, as usual, was placed above the chancel arch.\footnote{Caiger-Smith, \textit{English Medieval Mural Painting}, 181.} Offering a focus of contemplation for literate and illiterate alike, these paintings served as a warning for all Christians that they would be judged for their sins: ‘that day will come when our deeds will be visible as in a painted picture.’\footnote{Voragine, \textit{The Golden Legend}, 12.} Salisbury’s Doom illustrates this pictorial judgement of sins (plate 62). Christ sits upon a rainbow, the Virgin and Baptist to his side. Both saints have their hands raised in supplication, beseeching Christ for the salvation of the souls below them. The Baptist appears, as usual, as an older bearded man, unlike the more youthful, clean-shaven Evangelist in some Doom images.\footnote{St Mary, Newington (Kent), and All Saints, Great Harrowden (Northants.) both include the figure of the Evangelist in place of the Baptist.} He wears his recognizable camel hair robe. Below the Virgin, the Blessed souls are welcomed into Heaven, as beneath the Baptist the damned are chained together and lead to Hell. Similar fifteenth-century Doom paintings can also be found in Holy Trinity in Coventry (Warks.) and St Mary the Virgin, Great Shelford (Cambs.). The gravity of the image would have been felt by everyone, and its exemplification of the process of intercession correspondingly clear.
These representations of St John are clear, but a more vague example of what I believe to be the Baptist can be found in the Doom of St James and St Paul, Marton (Cheshire) (plate 63). Placed above the west door in the nave of this fourteenth-century timber-framed church, the Doom is divided into segments by the original timber beams. In the top right plasterwork segment sits Christ in Judgement, his body divided in half by the timber beam of the structure. In the lower segment stands a figure representing, I believe, the Baptist. It could be argued that this man represents an angel holding one of the instruments of the Crucifixion, as a long pole is painted at his left side. However, because of his placement and other features—long hair and beard, brown robe and clearly visible bare feet, it is reasonable to identify him as St John, playing his customary part as intercessory saint.

These Doom paintings help illustrate the importance St John held as an intercessory saint in the later Middle Ages, but we must not forget the devotional role he played in other monumental wall paintings as well. It is interesting to note that in the corpus of later medieval wall paintings we find missing a number of key events in his life, all of which had previously been illustrated in manuscript illuminations. The only surviving example of his birth and naming in English art that I am aware of dates from the twelfth century, while I know of no surviving wall paintings of his burial, burning of his bones, or post-mortem miracles. Although works such as the Golden Legend were frequently used as source material, it has become apparent that the majority of inspiration for medieval wall painting originated from the New Testament, and very rarely the Apocrypha. Furthermore, this also leads me to believe that the purpose of many of these paintings, especially the scenes of martyrdom and Baptism, was to function in a didactic manner, educating its viewers on the right and wrong way to live ones life.

312 Very little research has been done on this Doom painting. Glynne makes no mention of the painting and Pevsner only mentions a wall painting on the west wall. Stephen R. Glynne, Notes of the Churches of Cheshire, (Printed for the Chetham Society, 1894), 92-3; Clare Hartwell, Matthew Hyde, Edward Hubbard and Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cheshire (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 477.
Stained Glass

Medieval stained glass survives in relatively large quantities from the fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries. Found in churches of all sizes and designations, stained glass also decorated secular settings like guildhalls and private homes. Similar to the images of St John in wall paintings, stained glass images of the saint, both single figures and narrative scenes, had no obvious predetermined placement with the church setting. Patronage was presumably the main determinant of location.

Beginning with single standing images of the Baptist, many windows of insular origins followed the same iconographic scheme familiar to us from manuscript illuminations and monumental paintings. The mid fifteenth-century stained glass of St Bartholomew, Yarnton (Oxon.) (plate 64) provides a great example of this standard iconography in medieval glass.313 St John stands within an architectural niche, echoing the settings of sculpted figures of the same period, as he holds the Agnus Dei and banner upon a book pointing to it with his other hand. This standardized design shows very little variation from those seen in other medieval windows. Many examples of this iconography survives; the fifteenth-century window at St Mary, Cartmel (Lancs.),314 the window, c. 1334, of St Wilfrid, Grappenhall (Cheshire)315 (plate 65), a c.1475 window of Browne’s Hospital, Stamford (Lincs.),316 and fifteenth-century window of the Guildhall at Norwich.317 The principal variation one notices about St John is the liberties taken with his dress. While many artists and glaziers depict John in his standard robe of camel hair (the windows in Grappenhall and All Saints, North Street, York, c. 1412-28, provide excellent examples), others took this interpretation further and included other anatomical elements of the animal. The camel’s head and legs appear in the mid to late fifteenth-

century windows at Holy Trinity, Finningley (Notts.), St Peter, Ringland (Norfolk), Yarton (Oxon.) and the Norwich Guildhall (plate 66). The head and legs are also common in manuscript paintings/drawings and sculpture (not least alabasters), but they appear first in stained glass, at St Denys Walmgate, York (c. 1350).  

Fulfilling a devotional role analogous to that of manuscripts and paintings, it is easy to understand how an image in glass, especially when viewed high up and in bright sunlight, could have inspired and awoken a deep sense of devotional piety towards a saint. Patronage of these windows increased in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. With the growing wealth of the merchant class parish churches began to benefit greatly from this new sort of patronage. Financial donors would have wanted to publically to assert their new-found wealth as well as visually immortalize themselves, or their heraldic symbols, and pay tribute to their patron saints.

Images in glass of individual patrons asserting some connection to St John were becoming more familiar in parish churches and cathedrals. Still surviving in St Laurence, Ludlow (Shrops.) a fifteenth-century window of St John’s Chapel shows three panes containing the images of Sts Catherine, John the Baptist and Christopher (plate 67). Both Sts Catherine and John are sitting or kneeling, an unusual pose for single images of these saints, but one probably designed to allow space for the patron images or heraldry below.

As an aside, unrelated to the patron images, we find an unusual iconographic feature of this St John window. Placed within his familiar wilderness setting, behind the saint we see a small man- a hermit, carrying a lantern before him. This small figure is steeped in iconographical importance and is very rare in surviving medieval imagery of the Baptist. St John’s eremitic lifestyle was hugely important to some monastic orders, the Carmelites and the Carthusians in particular. Dressed in what appears to be a monastic robe, this man holds a lantern, symbolizing the duty of the Baptist to bear witness to the Light, ‘the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the

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321 I know of no other instances where a figure like this appears in an image of the Baptist.
world.\footnote{John 1.9} Lacking the knowledge of the family’s surname, as we shall see, we therefore have no way of ascertaining whether they wished to commemorate a monastic order with which they associated. It is also possible that this man with a lantern was used as a symbol of the Precursor of Christ. The association of John the Baptist with the lantern, illuminating the path of the Lord, has long found a place in the literature of the Middle Ages but is seemingly rare in iconographic interpretations of the saint. J. Marrow has written on this iconographic element, firstly directing his studies to the few examples found in Netherlandish art before broadening his study to those found in manuscripts produced for the English market.\footnote{J. Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: New attributes for the Baptist from the Northern Netherlands.” \textit{Oud Holland} 83 (1968), 3-12; J. Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement.” \textit{Oud Holland} 85 (1970),188-193.} As with two of the three known English illuminations, the Baptist himself is not shown holding the lantern,\footnote{In one of the manuscript illuminations, the lantern is shown resting on the ground while the other shows the lantern hung from a tree.} but rather a hermit, symbolizing John’s eremitic past, holds the light. The Gospel of John tells us that the Baptist was not the light but was witness to the light, as we see illustrated in this window.\footnote{John 1.8; Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement.”, 193.} Furthermore, Marrow explains, there is no reason to believe that this rare iconographic element had its foundations in English art, as he points out, the English manuscripts known to have contained this image all have Netherlandish ties or origins.\footnote{Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement,” 191-93.} As is such, the presence of this hermit carrying the lantern hints to the influence of Netherlandish art on the design of this fifteenth-century window.

Returning to the larger patronal image of this window, we find kneeling below the figures of St Catherine and St John a husband and wife and their two children. Each figure kneels before a stand holding an open book, suggestive of their prayers to these saints. A partial inscription still remains under the image of St Christopher commemorating an unnamed man ‘et Katerine uxoris ejus, hanc fenestram fieri fecerunt’ .\footnote{‘...and Katherine his wife, they have had this window made.’} As we know the wife was named Katherine, this would suggest the husband was probably called John, indicating that what we have here is the representation of the personal patron saints of the window’s benefactors.

\footnotetext{323}{John 1.9\footnote{John 1.8; Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement.”, 193.}}\footnotetext{324}{J. Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: New attributes for the Baptist from the Northern Netherlands.” \textit{Oud Holland} 83 (1968), 3-12; J. Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement.” \textit{Oud Holland} 85 (1970),188-193.}\footnotetext{325}{In one of the manuscript illuminations, the lantern is shown resting on the ground while the other shows the lantern hung from a tree.}\footnotetext{326}{John 1.8; Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement.”, 193.}\footnotetext{327}{Marrow, “John the Baptist, Lantern for the Lord: A Supplement,” 191-93.}\footnotetext{328}{‘...and Katherine his wife, they have had this window made.’}
An interesting image of a monastic patron is found in a small tracery window of Holy Trinity, Meldreth (Cambs.) (panel 68). This early fourteenth-century panel in the chancel north window shows the figure of St John standing in his typical contraposto pose against a ruby background. The saint holds in his left hand the Agnus Dei in a roundel, a symbol which will be discussed in greater detail below. To his left a small monk kneels, hands upraised almost touching the Agnus Dei. This monk, Richard Marks believes, would most likely have been a member of the community at Ely Cathedral Priory which owned the advowson to the parish church. Furthermore, the Cathedral Priory also held the advowson for the Hospital of St John the Baptist in Ely. This image of a monk therefore functions as a representation of the community of the Priory as a whole, exemplifying their dedication to the Baptist and the fact that they held him in special reverence.

As with single images of the Baptist, narrative subjects of the life also find their way into English stained glass. One must be careful in one’s assessment of the provenance of these images, however, as many of the extant examples now in English churches, homes, and museums have continental rather than English origins. According to Marks, foreign glaziers dominated the market for stained glass in the last half-century before the Reformation. Unlike the thirteenth to late fifteenth centuries, which saw only a small number of foreign glaziers practice in England, the last half century saw a remarkable take-over of the market, particularly by Netherlandish glaziers. The birth of the Baptist, possibly the only surviving example of this narrative in glass, is an exemplar of this trend. Of Netherlandish origins, this roundel (c. 1520-40), which is painted in white and yellow stain, can be found in St Peter and St Paul, Belton (Lincs.).

Although many late medieval stained glass windows show this foreign influence, some wholly English examples also survive. The decollation window of St Andrew, Wickhambreaux (Kent) (plate 69) provides an example of the translation of this narrative into the medium of glass. Dated c. 1360, St John kneels out of his prison cell, hands

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331 Marks, *Stained Glass*, 205.
held up in prayer. The executioner bends over the saint, sword ready to strike. Behind
him stands a much smaller Salome, indicting that good (the large St John) shall triumph
over evil (the small Salome). Similarly, a small fragment of St John’s head on a charger
survives in a window, c. 1330-50, of St Nicholas, Stanford on Avon (Northants.) (plate
70), indicating that there was at least once a depiction of his decollation, possibly a larger
cycle of the life of the Baptist, in this church as well.\(^{334}\)

As with any category of medieval works of art, the number of destroyed or lost
works far outnumbers those still surviving. Evidence of a lost window can be found
within an extant sister window of St Leonard’s church at Leverington (Cambs.). Two late
fourteenth/early fifteenth-century windows survive with the images of Sir Laurence
Everard, his wife, Margaret Colvile, and two further members of the Everard family.
They bear the inscriptions; ‘Jesu from sinne make us fre(e) for Johns love that baptised
the(e)’ and ‘...alle from(m) harm to hym that lay ded in thi barm.’\(^{335}\) As Nigel Morgan
notes, these two patron windows would have been paired with windows depicting saints.
The first window would have undoubtedly shown the Baptist, as the saint is invoked in
the first inscription. The two patrons, Everard and Colvile, would have knelt before him,
while the second couple probably knelt before a depiction of the Pietà.\(^{336}\)

Another, now lost, example of stained glass was once found in the Norwich house
of Sir John Fastolf. Seen as an indication of personal wealth and status, Fastolf’s home
once included windows which contained several ‘effigies’ of St John the Baptist along
with the Virgin Mary, St Catherine, St Margaret and St Blase.\(^{337}\) Furthermore, documents
from the 1920s, tell us that the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ewelme (Oxfordshire)
is recorded as having a window depicting the questioning of the Baptist by the Pharisees,
a rarely represented narrative scene, now lost.\(^{338}\) References to stained glass windows are
numerous in medieval wills, many people leaving money to the production or upkeep of
such windows. However, it is often the case that testator did not enumerate on the
imagery of the windows. It is common to find such bequests as the one left by a

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\(^{334}\) Marks, \textit{Corpus Vitrearum: Northamptonshire}, 181 n. 29, 245.

\(^{335}\) Morgan, “Patrons and Devotional Images”, 102.

\(^{336}\) Morgan, “Patrons and Devotional Images”, 102 n. 45.

\(^{337}\) Francis Blomefield, \textit{An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 11},

parishioner of Smallhythe (Kent) who left 20s. ‘to the glasing of one window in the Chapel of St John the Baptist.’ \(^{339}\) No indication is given of the subject of the window, but it would suggest that as it was to be placed within the chapel dedicated to the Baptist it would have contained related subject matter.

We have seen that many more single standing images of St John survive within this medium than narrative cycles. Much like monumental paintings, these windows provided a focal point for the devotions of the people. However, unlike the majority of monumental wall paintings these windows also provided a medium for the public declarations of patronage and perceived relationships between the saint and monastic houses or individual patrons, like we have seen with the examples from above.

\(^{339}\) Hussey, *Testamenta Cantiana*, 310.
Sculpture

Christ proclaimed himself a metaphorical a door- ‘I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.’ Entering a medieval church symbolized a transition from secular to sacred. Sculptures on the outside of the church, including those depicting St John, were therefore symbolic in intent; shepherding the laity into the house of the sacred. Beginning this section with these architectural stone sculptures, both those meant for exterior and interior presentation, we will further survey other surviving stone sculptures and carvings; roof bosses, baptismal fonts and tomb sculptures, before moving on to alabaster carvings and finishing with carvings of wood.

Noted by Francis Bond, in the later Middle Ages, over five hundred English churches were dedicated to the Baptist, not including the monastic houses which saw at least another twenty foundations under his patronage, making him the sixth most popular saint in terms of church dedications. As church towers commonly held the sculpted image of their patron saints, it is no surprise that we should still find adorning the exterior of churches dedicated to St John a small number of surviving stone sculptures representing the saint. The churches of St John the Baptist, Axbridge (Somerset) and Burford (Oxon.) each still contain a sculpted figure of their patron saint on the exterior of their buildings, as does Thornton Abbey (Lincs.) and Crawley (W. Sussex). External sculpted figures tended to be less finely detailed in comparison to those designed for interior display. They were designed, as Arthur Gardner emphasized, for an overall pictorial effect rather than an item made for close inspection. Such is the case with each of these following examples.

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340 John 10.9
341 Simon Watney, forward to English Panel Paintings, vii.
342 I realize that alabaster carvings could easily be grouped with the other stone carvings. However, as these alabasters present such a large and unique group in themselves, I believe they should be considered as separate.
343 Bond, Dedications and Patron Saints, 17; Alison Binns, Dedications of Monastic Houses in England and Wales: 1066-1216, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 34, 35, 36, 38, 176. John the Baptist had six Benedictine houses dedicated to him, one Cluniac house, nine Augustinian houses, four Premonstratensian houses, and one Carthusian house.
344 Marks, Image and Devotion, 71.
345 Gardner, English Medieval Sculpture, 226.
Situated within an elaborate, although weathered, architectural niche on the east side of the tower of Axbridge stands a sculpted figure of St John (plate 71). Opposite him on the west wall is another contemporary statue believed to depict King Henry VI,\(^\text{346}\) giving these two sculptures a possible date of mid to late fifteenth century. St John’s upper face has been purposefully vandalized, probably during the Reformation, however, with the exception of a little weathering, the remainder of his figure stands in remarkably good condition. The saint is shown with dishevelled hair and a forked beard, bearing many similarities with the mid-fifteenth-century statue of the saint now at Muchelney Abbey (Somerset)\(^\text{347}\) (plate 72). Also comparable between these two figures is the drapery of the garment both statues wear, the Axbridge St John additionally showing traces of a camel hair robe with a repeating ‘V’ shaped design to signify the camel hair robe he is known to have worn. It is possible the Muchelney St John once had a similar depiction of his camel hair robe, however, because of its severe damage it is impossible ascertain.\(^\text{348}\) The Agnus Dei, too, bears a marked resemblance. Both lambs sit upon a book, legs bent under itself in the traditional contemporary iconographic manner.\(^\text{349}\) In representations of the Agnus Dei with St John, we begin to notice a transition in the fifteenth century from the lamb placed upon a roundel, or Eucharistic paten, to it seated upon a book.\(^\text{350}\) This transition, while possibly symbolic in nature also helps to date a work of art pre- and post-c.1400. Although one sculpture was intended for exterior display while the other interior, one cannot help but notice the parallels between these two Somerset sculptures.

The sculpture of Burford presents us with an exceptional example of the pairing of the two Sts John with the Virgin Mary (plate 73). Decorating the two-tiered south porch of the church, the fifteenth-century\(^\text{351}\) Virgin Mary takes central position in the top tier framed on either side by the two Sts John placed in the lower tier- the Baptist to the Virgin’s right, the Evangelist to the left. Although the bodies of each figure are original,

\(^{347}\) Luxford, “A Sculpture of John the Baptist at Muchelney Abbey”, 105.
\(^{348}\) For a discussion on the garment worn by the Muchelney Abbey St John see Luxford, “A Sculpture of John the Baptist at Muchelney Abbey”, 107-08.
new heads were added in 1962, replacing ones lost centuries earlier. Any iconographical attribute that was once depicted with the Baptist has now been lost. The juxtaposition of these three figures makes it clear, however, that the older bearded man and the younger man at the feet of the Virgin were both intended to represent the two Johns.

The layout of the Burford façade, gives us an indication of what the gatehouse of St John’s Abbey, Colchester (Essex) must have once looked like with its three, now empty, sculptural niches (plate 74). The gatehouse at Thornton Abbey (Lincs.) also echoes this arrangement of three sculpted figures guarding the entrance to the Abbey (plate 75). In this case, however, the Evangelist has been replaced with St Augustine, an appropriate image for an Augustinian house. Built in the late fourteenth century, it is believed that the three sculptural niches lay empty until the addition, in the sixteenth century, of the three present sculptures, installed not long before the Reformation.

Differing only slightly from the classic iconography of the saint, this sculpture of St John holds the Agnus Dei in its arms, close to its body as if protecting the Lamb and further strengthening his relationship with Christ.

Where interior sculpture is concerned, we find a number of sculpted examples presented within the church. An abundance of carved roof bosses still survive in English churches, most left untouched by the iconoclasm due to their remote locations. Holding together the ribs of the vaults these roundels played a role analogous to the historiated initials of illuminated manuscripts- illustrating in small spaces the narratives and single figures of the Baptist. Although small and often hard to see in anything but bright light, these bosses would have provided the viewers with a place to direct their prayers and devotions, also serving as a reminder of the saint’s heavenly abode, won through proper religious observance. St John is found depicted in a range of bosses, from the early

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fourteenth-century boss decorating the vault of the chapel of St John the Baptist in Exeter Cathedral, to the narratives of the life of the Baptist, found in Norwich Cathedral.

Considerable prominence has been given to these bosses in the transepts of Norwich Cathedral. Of the 150 sixteenth-century bosses decorating the transept many represent events in the life of both Christ and the Baptist. Those bosses containing images relating to the life of the Baptist include scenes of Zacharias in the temple, John’s birth and circumcision, preaching in the wilderness, the Baptism of Christ, reproaching Herod, imprisonment, beheading and burial. Comparisons may be made between the events depicted on these bosses and the Holkham Bible Picture Book. The circumcision of the Baptist is a rare image, found in both the Cathedral and the Holkham Picture Bible, as is the image of John preaching to the Pharisees and Sadducees. In the Norwich vault boss, John stands on a pulpit addressing six men, representing these men who have questioned John’s authority. Four of the men hold open books before them, searching for John’s words in the sacred texts, much like the men in niches surrounding St John preaching in the Queen Mary Psalter. John stands with his right hand across his chest, index finger pointing to the one he has foreseen, a gesture that usually accompanies his attribute of the Lamb. In the iconography of St John preaching to the people it is relatively unusual to find him preaching from a pulpit; rather, he is most often shown preaching in the wilderness, a reference to the Gospel of Matthew.

With the popularity of John’s decollation imagery flourishing in the later Middle Ages it is not surprising that we should find images depicting the saint’s severed head upon a plate or charger as images in their own right. The circular shape of these bosses

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355 C.J.P Cave, *Medieval Carvings in Exeter Cathedral*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953), 27, 38. One notices that the features of the Baptist are slightly over exaggerated- his hands are slightly larger than normal, the camel hair of his robe is magnified and the Agnus Dei is prominently carved. This would have allowed the parishioners a better view of this boss placed high above in the ceiling.


358 Matthew 3.7


361 I know of one other example where he preaches from the pulpit, however, in this case he preaches to his followers, not the Pharisees and Sadducees. In this other image there are also present three beasts, a unicorn, lion and one unidentifiable creature. See Cheetham, *Alabaster Images of Medieval England*, 48 and image 56.

362 Matthew 3.1
leant themselves very well to image of the saint’s head upon a plate. One such example can be found on a boss in All Saints, Wighton (Norfolk) (plate 76).

This imagery of St John’s head upon a charger, made popular by the alabaster carvings that will be discussed below, became a favourite iconographical representation in the later Middle Ages, according to W.H. St John Hope. These St John’s heads were quite similar to the representations of the head of Christ, itself a common decorative motif throughout this period. Images of the Holy Face are most commonly recognized by the cruciform nimbus, an example of which can be found on the baptismai font in Irstead (Norfolk) (plate 79). On the other hand, the Baptist’s head is usually found upon a round disk or plate, his eyes closed in death- also shown on the same font (plate 78). A good comparison can be made between the boss at Wighton and the image on the Irstead font. With long hair and forked beard, both men appear to have their eyes closed. The outline of the dish’s outer edge, clearly visible on the Irstead font, is also faintly visible on the Wighton boss.

Acting as an image for veneration, reminding people of the ultimate sacrifice made by this man, St John’s heads provided a focus when praying to him for intercession. Looking at other examples of St John’s heads, we encounter a large assortment in various media. One example I believe to represent a St John’s head is found on the exterior of the south aisle of St Mary, Rougham (Suffolk) (plate 77) A carved panel of castellated tracery shows a man’s head upon a disk placed against a quatrefoil frame. The outline of a plate is clearly defined with no trace of a cruciform nimbus. This simple carving I am quite certain shows the head of the Baptist. Furthermore, a confidently identified example

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364 Cave, Roof Bosses, 61.
365 Cave, Roof Bosses, 61; A further example of the Holy Face is found in London, BL, Stowe MS 12, f. 32r.
366 Mortlock and Roberts claim that this font shows the Head of Christ on two panels, however, I believe the panels show the heads of both Christ and John the Baptist. D.P. Mortlock, and C.V. Roberts, The Guide to Norfolk Churches, (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2007), 157.
367 According to Luxford, this forked beard became common in art around the end of the fourteenth century. Therefore it can be assumed that both the font and the roof boss date to at least the later fourteenth century, possibly the fifteenth century. “A Sculpture of John the Baptist at Muchelney Abbey”, 105
368 Images of St John’s heads have been studied in more depth in recent years. See A.W. Carr, “The Face Relics of John the Baptist in Byzantium and the West”; Baert, Caput Johannis in Disco.
369 The south aisle of the church is fourteenth century. Wills dating from the 1460s and 70s give the dedication of this church as St John, adding to my conclusion that the carving shows John the Baptist. See Nikolaus Pevsner and Enid Radcliffe, The Buildings of England: Suffolk, (London: Penguin Group, 2000), 407. This example, I believe, is unpublished.
of St John’s head is found in the church of St John the Baptist, Trimingham (Norfolk). Once the sight of pilgrimage for the saint’s relic, people that could not, or chose not to, travel to Amiens had the option to worship the saint’s head locally. Within this church there is a small carving of the Baptist’s head, probably c. 1500, found on the rood screen, placed above the panel of St James the Great, the patron saint of pilgrims. The severed head of a man is placed on a charger, leaving no doubt that this references the patron saint of this church and its history of medieval pilgrimage.

Numerous other examples of images of St John’s head have survived - a 1302 seal used by William de Tottehale of St John's, Hospitallers' House, Clerkenwell (Middlesex) shows this familiar image, as does a fifteenth or sixteenth-century silver gilt pendant now belonging to the British Museum. The majority of St John pilgrim badges, which will be examined below, also display the head of the Baptist. Evidence in documentary sources record further examples of St John’s heads, although the items themselves have now been lost. In 1527, John Gerves left to his son ‘vj silver spones with Sancte John heddes of them’, while the inventory of Christ Church, Canterbury, (dated 1540) shows that they owned two gilt chalices with the head of St John in the paten.

Returning to the carved stone images of St John, baptismal fonts were another popular place to find the likeness of the saint. Unlike most carvings within the church these fonts played a liturgical role. Used as the major baptismal furnishing, images carved on the sides of the fonts would have been viewed in conjunction with its role in the liturgy. Fonts often included an image of either the Baptism of Christ or a single image of the Baptist himself.

A small number of Norman fonts survive depicting the Baptism of Christ. Interestingly, figural designs fell out of fashion and for a period of almost two centuries fonts were decorated almost entirely with arcading, mouldings and foliage. In the second

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370 Although probably not an actual body part relic, the church is believed to have at least housed an image, such as an alabaster head, that was used in the same manner. See Walter Rye, A History of Norfolk, (London: Elliot Stock, 1887), 249.
375 Legg and St John Hope, Inventories of Christchurch Canterbury, 182.
half of the fourteenth century figures came back into use and we still have a number of surviving examples.\textsuperscript{376} Most often St John was shown in his role of Baptizer, conferring the rite upon the Saviour. Several examples of this can be found in the so-called Seven Sacrament fonts of East Anglia, a characteristic fifteenth and early sixteenth-century font design popular in the region.\textsuperscript{377} These octagonal fonts, as the name suggests, show an image in each of the panels corresponding to the seven sacraments, often including the Baptism of Christ in the eighth panel. Examples of this can be found in All Saints, Gresham (Norfolk), St Margaret and St Remigius, Seething (Norfolk) (plate 80), St Bartholomew, Sloley (Norfolk) (plate 81), St Andrew, Westhall (Suffolk) and St Peter, Weston (Suffolk).\textsuperscript{378}

The Baptism was not the only context for the representation of St John on the fonts. Single standing images, although less common, appear in a few cases. One Seven Sacrament font, in the church of All Saints at Walsoken (Norfolk), includes the Baptist not in his traditional role as Baptiser but rather standing on the shaft of the font (plate 82). Encircling this sixteenth-century font,\textsuperscript{379} eight saints are placed within architectural niches; John the Baptist, Dorothy, Peter, Catherine, Paul, Margaret, Stephen and Mary Magdalen, all recognizable by their individual attributes and the names carved below their feet. The donor inscription around the bottom of the font helps to explain a portion of the chosen saints- S. Honyter (possibly Stephen?), his wife Margaret and chaplain John Beforth, it says, would have wanted to be remembered by their name saints, hoping for the intercession for their souls by their patron saints.\textsuperscript{380} Another font, of early fifteenth century date, is currently found in St Julian, Norwich (Norfolk), having been moved from the now redundant All Saints church of the same city.\textsuperscript{381} This font, too, shows an array of saints; here they decorate both the bowl and stem. Paired in twos along the eight panels of the bowl, we find the traditionally paired Sts John (plate 83). The Baptist holds the Agnus Dei upon a book and the Evangelist his palm frond and book. All the figures of

\textsuperscript{376} Gardner, \textit{English Medieval Sculpture}, 266.
\textsuperscript{378} Nichols, \textit{Seeable Signs}, 339, 346, 347, 350, 351.
\textsuperscript{379} Nichols, \textit{Seeable Signs}, 339, 346, 347, 350, 351.
\textsuperscript{379} An inscription on the base of the font dates it to 1544, making it one of the last pre-Reformation fonts of England. Mortlock and Roberts, \textit{The Guide to Norfolk Churches}, 302.
\textsuperscript{380} Nichols, \textit{Seeable Signs}, 74, 349.
\textsuperscript{381} Mortlock and Roberts, \textit{The Guide to Norfolk Churches}, 214.
this font bear similar appearances, both Johns have short hair and youthful faces, as do the remainder of the saints. Lacking in detail and rather clumsily executed, little besides the basic attributes separate each of these stiff figures. When considering representations of the Baptist on fonts, too much emphasis cannot be placed on the importance of baptism in the Middle Ages. Through this sacrament, adults, as well as godparents acting on behalf of their infant godchild, were to reject the Devil and profess their faith in God. These images of St John helped to further reinforce the importance of this holy sacrament— as John baptized Christ in the River Jordan, so too shall this person be baptized with holy water, overlooked by the Baptist saint himself. Thus all shared in the saving ritual experienced by Christ himself.

Sculptural imagery on tombs also played an intercessory role, both in providing a physical embodiment of a saint, or saints, requested by the deceased to help guide his or her soul though the afterlife, as well as providing an image or object to which the living could direct their prayers and requests for intercession. By their very nature as a final resting place for the dead, those who commissioned sculpted tombs saw them not only as a memorial to themselves and their families but also as a tool for garnering prayers, by both passers-by and their patron saints. These tomb figures of saints were a way of publically stating devotional preferences and hope in intercession by these saints.

A stone sculpture of John the Baptist in Tewkesbury Abbey (Glos.) (plate 84), although now heavily damaged, is believed to have once been part of the tomb of Hugh II Despenser (d. 1326). Tombs for many of the Despenser family members still decorate the choir. Hugh Despenser the Younger is commemorated in a remarkable wall-tomb in the ambulatory. Dated no earlier that 1330, the empty niches surrounding his effigy would have once housed numerous sculpted figures of the saints. Rediscovered in 1875, the monumental sculpture of the Baptist matches the dimensions of one of the larger upper niches. Although the sculpture is now missing its head and principle attribute, there is no doubt as to its identity. Wavy lines carved onto his robe suggest animal hair.

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383 Collins, Manuale, 34.
385 Ibid., 163.
386 Ibid., 163.
and the camel head hanging between his legs declares that this represents the Baptist. The sculpture would have once held the Agnus Dei in his hand, which has since been destroyed. St John was one of the featured sculptures (there were six large niches in the upper tier of the tomb), being prominently represented because of his intercessory powers. As Lord Despenser died a ‘dishonoured’ man, those who commissioned the tomb would have sought the most effective intercession to be summoned for his soul.

The church of All Saints, Harewood (Yorks.) is home to many medieval monuments for the Redman and Gascoigne families. Two of these tombs show a figure of the Baptist on the tomb-chest. The Gascoigne-Percy monument, c. 1480-90, includes numerous architectural niches decorating the tomb-chest (plate 85). Alongside several other saints, the Baptist is shown in his traditional iconographical manner. Located on the west side of the tomb next to an angel and St Anthony, himself a hermit saint, St John carries his Lamb upon a book and wears a shaggy camel skin robe with the addition of the animal’s head and legs. Filling the remaining niches are ‘weepers’, figures of knights and women with their hands held together in prayer, mourning for the deceased. This image of St John is similar to his portrayal on the tomb-chest of Sir Walter Griffith (d. 1481) in St Martin, Burton Agnes (Yorkshire).

The Harewood Redman-Huddlestone monument, c. 1510, also shows saints and weepers within architectural niches. Carved, again, on the west end the figures of the Baptist and St Edmund appear in the niches. These saints previously appeared together in the Wilton Diptych and the Thornham Parva retable. Ultimately, the choice of saints placed on a tomb serves to represent the personal inclinations of those buried within. Placing these saints so close to one’s own earthly remains suggested that they would offer one help in the afterlife.

This category of tomb carvings helps to transition from the wider grouping of stone sculpture to the much more concentrated group of independent alabaster carvings.

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387 Ibid., 163-64.
391 Ibid., 33-4; Cheetham, Alabaster Images of Medieval England, 48.
Although a form of stone carving itself, I have chosen to separate alabaster carvings into a category of its own. This is evidently how the people in medieval England also felt—many specific references to ‘alabast[er]’ can be found in contemporary wills and inventories.394 Produced in England, with noted workshops in and around Nottingham,395 these often mass-produced and relatively inexpensive396 items helped introduce a new iconographic scheme into the imagery of John the Baptist—the St John’s heads with a wound above his eye.397 Before looking into this iconographic peculiarity however, we must first address carved alabaster narrative cycles and panels of single saint figures.

Similar to manuscript illuminations and monumental wall paintings these panels would have told the story of St John’s life from his birth to death, including post-mortem events. Fragments of fifteenth-century panels showing both his nativity and naming are in the collection of the Museum of London. Probably once part of the same panel, the remains of the nativity show Elizabeth in her bed, a young John held in the arms of her midwife. The smaller naming fragment is even more damaged. Zacharias, the top of his head missing, sits on a chair as he holds in his hand a stylus and scroll.398 These panels would have shown its audience the importance of the nativity of the Baptist, mirroring in many ways the nativity of Christ himself. In far better condition we find further panels depicting his nativity and naming (four in total), St John preaching (six examples), the Baptism (also six), John reproving Herod (one panel), his imprisonment (three panels), one dance of Salome and seven panels of his decollation.399 Most of these panels would have once been part of an altarpiece illustrating the narrative of his life and are made up of iconographical schemes that, as noted above, were broadly familiar to their viewers.

Familiar too are the single standing figures of the saint in alabaster. Cheetham has catalogued at least thirty-eight surviving examples of alabaster standing figures of St John, excluding those found on tomb-chests. At least fifteen of the panels were intended

397 Baert, Caput Johannis in Disco, 95.
399 Ibid., 48-50.
In several cases, the Baptist is paired with the Evangelist, acting as ‘bookends’ for an altarpiece narrative like that of the late fifteenth-century Altarpiece of the Joys of the Virgin (Swansea Altarpiece)\textsuperscript{401} (plate 86). The iconography of the Baptist in these panels remains quite consistent—he wears a long cloak over his camel hair robe, some panels show the head of the animal while others only small bits of animal hair. In his left hand he holds the Agnus Dei upon a book while pointing to it with his right. A small number of panels also show hints of original paintwork.

While most alabaster carvings typify the majority of medieval imagery of St John, a very distinctive motif was also found in this medium—St John’s heads with a large gash above his eye (plate 87). Not only was a new iconographic scheme introduced in these carvings but these heads created a popular new devotional item amongst the people of England. As Eamon Duffy notes, these alabaster heads were almost certainly the most common devotional object in the fifteenth century, surpassing even images of the Virgin Mary and the crucifix.\textsuperscript{402} Made for both public and private settings,\textsuperscript{403} these alabaster carvings should be looked at as separate from the other St John’s heads as they are solely responsible for creating a new iconographical type.

There is no doubt that this facial marking apparent on many alabaster St John’s heads made reference to the saint’s relic in Amiens. The front part of the reputed skull, or face relic of the Baptist, is still found in the Cathedral of Amiens, France, where it has resided since 1206 when it was brought over from the East.\textsuperscript{404} Above the left eye of the skull a noticeable piercing has been made, referring to the account that Herodias, upon being presented with John’s head on a charger, struck out at the head with her knife piercing his skull in an act of hatred. Ripon Cathedral (N. Yorks.) has a small fifteenth-
century fragment of a rare alabaster illustrating this event (plate 88). Once part of a
reredos, the panel fragment shows Herod and Herodias with the saint’s head.405 Herodias
thrusts her knife into the forehead of the Baptist’s severed head creating the iconic wound
above his left eye.406 Although this iconographic element was rare outside of alabaster
carvings, it can still be found in medieval imagery. A manuscript illumination, the
sixteenth-century Dunstable Guild Register for the Fraternity of St John the Baptist, now
in the Luton Museum,407 shows this very same injury. The register’s folio for 1534 (17v.)
shows the feast of Herod. On the table sits the head of the Baptist, Herodias leaning over
to stab the head with her knife in an act of utter hatred. Furthermore, f. 65 of this
manuscript shows two images of the heads on chargers, both with red wounds on their
foreheads symbolising this post-mortem wound.408

St John Hope must be credited with his influential research on alabaster St John’s
heads. These head panels, he recognizes, also include a unique iconographic scheme in
addition to the head wound; the central figure of the Baptist’s head on a charger was
often accompanied by an ‘accessory’- either a figure of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, or
the Lamb of God.409 St John Hope explains, the meaning of this unusual pairing of motifs
can be found within the pages of a breviary of the Use of York. Contained in the fourth
lesson for the feast of the Baptist’s decollation, St John Hope found this explanation- “St
John’s head on the dish signifies the body of Christ which feeds us on the holy altar.”410
This Eucharistic interpretation found only in service books of York Use perhaps explains
why their production was centred around the workshops of Nottingham, itself located
within the diocese of York.411

Along with the Eucharistic association noted by St John Hope, Miri Ruben looks
at this ‘peculiarly English development’ of the alabaster carvings of the saint’s head and

(1919), 133.
407 Richard Marks, “Two Illuminated Guild Register from Bedfordshire,” *Illuminating the Book: Makers
and Interpreters, Essays in Honour of Janet Backhouse*, Michelle Brown and Scot McKendrick (eds.)
408 Marks, “Two Illuminated Guild Register”, 124-7.
410 Ibid., 705; English translation taken from Carr, “The Face Relics”, 172.
411 St. John Hope, “On the Sculpted Alabaster Tablets”, 705; Baert does not consult St John Hope’s article
in her book on St John’s heads, a noticeable omission in her work.
one of its possible interpretations within the iconography of the ‘eucharistic sphere’. The offering up of the Baptist’s head on a plate, the removal of the saint’s bloody head from the unholy hands of Salome,⁴¹² Rubin explains, can be viewed as a metaphor for the offering of the host on a paten,⁴¹³ presented during the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the same way that John is the precursor of Christ, A.A. Barb explains, his head on the plate prefigures the body of the crucified Christ.⁴¹⁴ This ‘pre-figuration...of the Eucharistic sacrifice’⁴¹⁵ by the Baptist saint himself would have been apparent to many viewers especially should they be gazing upon just such image on the walls or windows of the church as they hear the celebration of Mass.⁴¹⁶

Still exploring the possibilities of a eucharistic connection, Barb switches direction and looks to the words famously associated with the Baptist himself- “Ecce agnus Dei qui tollit peccata mundi.”⁴¹⁷ Said by the priest during mass as he shows the congregation the eucharistic bread, this statement helps provide an interpretation for the iconographic placement not of the saint’s head on a plate, but the Lamb of God on a roundel,⁴¹⁸ as seen in countless medieval images prior to the fifteenth century. Having previously encountered a number of examples of this iconography, Barb believes that this circular disc upon which the lamb is situated represents not simply a halo or roundel but rather alludes to plate or paten upon which the Eucharist is placed.⁴¹⁹

Returning back to the pairing of St John’s head with the Man of Sorrows or the Lamb of God, like the panel found in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford⁴²⁰ (plate 89), far more commonly we find panels showing the saint’s head surrounded by angels and other

⁴¹⁷ John 1.29.
saints. Above the saint’s head is often included a number of angels, two of which periodically hold a mandorla containing a small naked kneeling figure representing a soul, as we can see from a fifteenth-century panel in the Victoria and Albert Museum\(^\text{421}\) (plate 90). As St John Hope believes, this soul was meant to signify that of the owner of the tablet.\(^\text{422}\) In placing their soul near the saint they were showing that they placed themselves under his protection.

Abundant examples of alabaster St John’s heads survive, possibly in large part because the panels were so often privately owned.\(^\text{423}\) The people were far better able to hide or put away portable items such as these, sparing them from the iconoclasm.

Before concluding this examination of medieval sculpture we must address the small category of woodcarving. Imagery of St John in this medium, however, is quite sparse. Throughout my research I have found only one surviving misericord depicting the Baptist. Providing seats for the clergymen during the long services, these carvings were located in the heart of the liturgical sphere of the church. Although St John was seen as the ultimate intercessory figure, it appears that the majority of iconographic scenes represent all ‘aspects of God’s rich creation,’\(^\text{424}\) rather than traditional biblical themes. Francis Bond emphasizes, scenes from the New Testament were relatively rare in the corpus of medieval misericord carvings.\(^\text{425}\) Found in Ely Cathedral (Cambs.) this only remaining image of the Baptist shows the narrative of his death (plate 91). Harkening back to the narrative cycles of manuscript illuminations and wall paintings,\(^\text{426}\) this carved seat c. 1340-1,\(^\text{427}\) depicts three scenes of the popular martyrdom narrative. On the far left the feast of Herod is shown, Salome tumbling before a crowd of spectators. The central image shows the Baptist as he is wrenched from his prison cell, the gaoler taking hold of his hair, as he does in the Wichambreaux stained glass, raising the sword above his head.

\(^{421}\) Ibid., 158; Cheetham, English Medieval Alabasters, 330; Baert, Caput Johannis in Disco, 92-4.
\(^{423}\) St. John Hope lists numerous examples of St John’s heads, both in alabaster and other media, from inventories, wills and other records which acknowledge that these items were often found in private homes and chapels. See “On the Sculpted Alabaster Tablets.”
\(^{426}\) This method of condensing multiple events into one scene recalls the Decollations scenes of the Holkham Bible Picture Book as well as the wall paintings of Iddsworth.
Salome kneels before the saint, holding the charger for his severed head. The final scene, on the right, shows Salome presenting her mother with the saint’s head. Highlighting the saint’s personal sacrificial triumph over evil, this would have served as a reminder to the clergy to live a righteous life.

No example of a narrative scene of the life of St John survives in medieval stall or bench ends. Rather, the few surviving carved bench ends depict solely single saint images of the Baptist. It was not until the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when benches became widely available within churches, that we see the production of carved bench ends. With the growing prosperity associated with the wool trade, churches began adding to their fabric and carved benches began to appear. Bench ends in the church would have provided a tactile experience for parishioners who could reach out and touch the figure in a small gesture of devotion. Evidence of thousands of hands touching the early fifteenth-century bench end at St Laurence, Ludlow (Shrops.)428 is quite visible; many features have been worn away or broken off. Against an elaborate poppyhead finial St John stands on a plinth supported by two angels (plate 92). In his hands he holds the Lamb upon a book, his only identifying attribute. The draped robe he wears shows no indication of camel hair, unlike the two bench ends of the churches dedicated to St John the Baptist at Hatch Beauchamp (Somerset) and Yarcombe (Devon).

Honouring the patron saint of both the churches of Hatch Beauchamp (plate 93) and Yarcombe (plate 94) these unspoiled bench ends mark a rare survival from the later Middle Ages.429 Both examples are very similar in style- a stiff St John stands on a plinth beneath an arch. Under a long mantle, his camel skin robe is visible, leather girdle, a reminder of the loincloth of the Crucified Christ tied at his waist. Both garments show a very stylized rendering of the camel’s head. In his left hand he holds the Agnus Dei seated on a book, pointing to it with his right. The border of the Yarcombe bench end brings to mind the arch above St John in the illumination of Royal 10 B XIV. Consisting of branches and vines with two intertwining oak trees meeting at the pinnacle of the arch, this not only suggests a setting in the wilderness but also alludes to the saint’s own

The border decorations at Hatch Beauchamp are quite dissimilar, consisting of two columns made of geometric patterns, referring back to stone archways seen in so many other Baptist sculptures.

This section serves not only to highlight both the common and unique elements of Baptist iconography within the corpus of sculpture but also helps to highlight the multifaceted functions of a diverse medium. Sculptures helped to shepherd the people into the church, they served as a focus for contemplation, a personage that could be applied to for intercession and protection, and even as a reminder to live a pious, devoted life.

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Metalwork

Medieval metalwork, like sculpture, came in many shapes and sizes, from the valuable to the mass-produced. Some items, pilgrim badges for instance, survive in the hundreds. Others such as jewellery and monumental brasses, have fared much worse over the centuries. Many items were destroyed through iconoclasm, but further destruction was caused when these items were simply melted down; jewellery went out of fashion or metals were needed for other purposes and these items provided those needed materials.

Pilgrim badges and personal seals survive in the greatest number, therefore they provide an excellent starting point for an exploration in the medium of metalwork. Pilgrimages to saints’ shrines, both in England and on the continent, flourished between the late twelfth and early sixteenth centuries. Believing in the potent healing powers of saintly relics, people were driven to journey to places far and wide to make physical contact with these objects. Those visiting major pilgrim centres wished for tokens or souvenirs to bring home with them, providing proof of the pilgrimage undertaken and as reminder of the powers of the saints. These mass–produced badges were often worn stitched to an article of clothing and many have been rediscovered through archaeology and metal detection.

The cite most often associated with the Baptist was found in Amiens, although another lesser-known English site should also be taken into consideration. Pilgrim badges frequently featured an image of the venerated item itself – the head of the Baptist in the case of Amiens. The church of Sts Peter and Paul, Charing (Kent), part of the ‘Pilgrim’s Way’ on the road to Canterbury, held a lesser-known relic, the purported stone on which the Baptist’s head was removed. Brought to England by Richard I (d. 1199),

432 Brian Spencer, Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 1-16.
433 Ronald W. Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, (Published by the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1992), 192.
435 Thomas Philipott, Villare Cantianum; or, Kent Surveyed and Illustrated, (Printed by W. Whittingham, etc., 1776), 100.
436 Mitchiner, Medieval Pilgrim and Secular Badges, 83.
this shrine was represented by badges depicting either the head of the Baptist upon a decorative stone (plate 95), or alternatively the head of Richard I. The frame surrounding the head was often inscribed ‘Ian – covl – mase,’ or ‘Block of John’s neck.’ Both king and saint badges bear noticeable similarities in design; Richard I only distinguishable by the crown on his head. At least three examples of the Richard I badge and ten of the Baptist’s head survive.

As the focus of this survey is Baptist iconography of medieval England, an exception to this rule can be made for the pilgrim badges from Amiens- of which numerous have been found on English soil. Home to the most widely credited head relic of the Baptist, Amiens was a popular pilgrimage destination for the English. Featuring the image of the saint’s head upon a sometimes jewelled plate, today, many of these tokens of pilgrimage have been found along the banks of the Thames.

A brief look at badges predating 1300 shows us the evolution of the designs over the years. A number of badges, c. 1206-30, demonstrate a very primitive interpretation of the head of John the Baptist. These circular badges show a round disk upon which the saint’s almond shaped head is placed, large eyes and prominent upside-down ‘V’ shaped marks carved to indicate his beard (plate 96). Some examples include hints of stitching loops and engravings, but all are done in a very basic, easy to produce fashion. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the design had changed significantly. Still a circular badge, a priest stands at the top holding before him an oversized head of St John on a charger. Two more figures, acolytes or angels depending on the badge, stand in profile looking at the head and holding torches (plate 97). This scene, it is believed, represented the ceremony held in the cathedral on the feast day of the Decollation, 29 August, when the head was shown to the pilgrims. On this day pilgrims were allowed to touch the head with their badges, imbuing the virtue of the Baptist into these small items.

437 Ibid., 83.
438 Ibid., 83-4.
439 Baert, Caput Johannis in Disco, 36.
440 Spencer, Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges, 1.
441 Ibid., 218-19.
442 Ibid., 219, 221.
443 Ibid., 219.
The basic thirteenth-century badge design did not fall completely out of fashion however. Growing from the primitive facial type, the newer badges contained much more detail and skill. One lead alloy badge, owned by the British Museum and probably of fifteenth or early sixteenth century date, shows the Baptist’s head looking slightly off to the left upon a star-patterned charger, possibly representative of his heavenly abode (plate 98). A number of other badges show similar designs, some with scalloped edges, others with simple inscriptions, but all quite clearly represent the common iconographic depiction of the saint’s head upon a charger.

One final badge from Amiens shows the saint as a standing figure (plate 99). Clearly referencing his time living in the wilderness, this late fifteenth-century badge shows the figure of the saint, wearing his camel hair robe and pointing to the, now missing, Agnus Dei. The Baptist’s head is missing as well, but two decorative trees beside the saint still survive. Given the amount of detail in this small badge, the iconography is quite similar to images of him in manuscript illuminations, especially the desert rustic figure in Royal 10 B XIV. Both figures show robes with the same open neck, the head of the camel hanging between the saint’s legs, and both are positioned within a similar wilderness environment, reminiscent of his eremitic lifestyle. In essence pilgrim badges not only reminded the people of the relic itself, and of the journey undertaken, but also of the actions of the saint, serving as a reminder to follow in the footsteps of the holy Baptist.

While pilgrim badges served as a personal protection device and indicator of a person’s devotional habits, seals served as both an identifier of its owner as well as a public manifestation of their devotional propensity. Serving as a statement of personal saintly veneration, seals were usually made to personal specifications, and were used by royals, priests, merchants, guilds, hospitals, towns, and other individuals and corporations.

The iconography of these seals has been borrowed from other monumental works, whence it is miniaturized. The wavy animal hair of the Baptist’s robe is often


445 Spencer, Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges, 221.
exaggerated or the Agnus Dei made slightly larger in relation to the saint so that his identity will be clear. Often St John was used on these seals as a reference to the name of their owners, (the Hospital of St John in Abingdon [Oxon.],\textsuperscript{446} c. 1400, for instance), or as an indication of a person’s name-saint (as on the seal of John de Hatfield).\textsuperscript{447}

Shown on seals as both a single figure and alongside other saints, the Austin Priory of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, Caldwell (Beds)\textsuperscript{448} has a fourteenth-century seal showing a very familiar image (plate 100). Positioned within three architectural niches the two Sts John surround the Virgin and Child echoing a design familiar from monastic gatehouses, like that of Colchester Abbey. Unusually, the Evangelist stands to the left and the Baptist to the right. The Baptist is depicted with a primitive style of garment; meant to show his camel hair robe, the artist’s interpretation gives the saint’s cloak a curious bubble-like appearance. A more skilful impression of a monastic seal of similar design originates from the Augustinian Abbey of Notley (Bucks), c. 1394.\textsuperscript{449} Suggesting the layout of the gatehouse facade of Thornton Abbey this seal shows the Virgin and Child surrounded by the Baptist and a bishop (plate 101). The figures of these monastic seals usually represent the patron saints of the establishment.

Individual patron images also appear in medieval seals. The priory seal of the Augustinian Priory of Launde (Leics), c. 1534, shows two patrons, the priory’s founder, Richard Basset and his wife Maud,\textsuperscript{450} kneeling before their beloved saint (plate 102). Standing beneath a vaulted canopy, St John and his over-sized Agnus Dei form the focal point. The presences of the patrons symbolize both their personal piety, and that of the foundation as a whole, dedicated, as it was, to St John the Baptist. The institution thus authenticated its documents in a solemn, unimpeachable way. A prior named Robert from the Augustinian priory of Sandleford, (Berks),\textsuperscript{451} also used a seal decorated with the


\textsuperscript{449} Ellis, \textit{Catalogue of Seals: Monastic Seals, Volume I}, 68.

\textsuperscript{450} \textit{Ibid.}, 49.

\textsuperscript{451} Dedicated to St John the Baptist.
image of the Baptist, c. 1348. Again, standing in the center with his Lamb on a
roundel, at St John’s feet kneels a representation of a clerk of the order (plate 103),
signifying the devotional interests of the priory as a whole.

An iconographic scheme found mostly in medieval seals was the profile portrait
of St John’s head on a charger. The private seal of John de Middleton and a fourteenth-
century seal of unknown origins both show this image. In the former, c. 1306, St John’s
head lies in a bowl-like charger, looking upwards at the hand of God blessing him for
his sacrifice (plate 104). The latter shows the saint’s head in a bowl upon a field of
foliage, probably alluding to his time spent in the wilderness. Next to John’s head lies a
sword, referring to his martyrdom. In the Middle Ages seals were used on an
assortment of documents, both personal correspondence and documents of a more official
nature. As these seals became, in a way, the signature of their owners, expressing their
personal beliefs, it becomes clear that many wished themselves to be associated with
saintly figures. Furthermore, the seals functioned by showing authority- not only the
authority of the seal’s owner, but more importantly that of the saintly figure, in this case
the cousin of Christ and a great protector of souls after death.

In contrast to the public declaration we have seen in seals, jewellery presents us
with a much more personal reflection of a person’s devotional piety. Devotional
jewellery, items such as rings, pendants, broaches, girdles and rosaries were worn by
many classes of society and for many different purposes.

Presented to people as gifts or tokens of affection, or purchased as a sign of
devotional piety, iconographic rings were produced in large numbers in England.
Decorated around the cabled hoop with patterns of foliage, the bezel depicted engraved

452 Ellis, Catalogue of Seals: Monastic Seals, Volume I, 80.
454 I know of no other instance where the Hand of God appears before, or above, the head of the Baptist.
456 Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 217.
457 For a very comprehensive examination of medieval jewellery both in England and on the Continent, see Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery.
458 This term is used to denote rings decorated with religious subjects and figures of saints. O.M. Dalton, Catalogue of the Finger Rings Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, Medieval and Later, (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees of the British Museum, 1912), 111.
images of the saints.\textsuperscript{459} Often portrayed alone, holding the Agnus Dei, St John plays a devotional and protective role on each of these pieces. Many items of jewellery were believed to possess prophylactic properties, protecting the wearer against such ills as the ‘falling sickness’\textsuperscript{460} or ‘the pest’.\textsuperscript{461} On items of jewellery St John would have played the role of protector of the living, in addition to that of intercessor on behalf of souls. Now in the collection of the British Museum, four gold and silver rings of the fifteenth century show the Baptist in this role, providing a small personal image for the devotional focus of the rings wearer. On two rings St John is shown as the sole figure, while the two other rings show him alongside another saint. A fifteenth-century silver engraved ring shows St John on the left, a barely discernable Agnus Dei held in his hand, alongside an unidentified bearded male saint.\textsuperscript{462} A further late fifteenth-century gold ring shows St John and St Anthony engraved around the band of the ring (plate 105), similar to the same paring of the saints on the tomb-chest of the Gascoigne-Percy monument of Harewood. Both eremitic saints stand upon the calyx of a flower, the Baptist holding the Lamb, St Anthony with his tau cross and pig.\textsuperscript{463} It is quite possible that a person belonging to an eremitic religious order, or someone with particular devotional preference for hermit saints once owned this ring.

Pendants and reliquary pendants also became popular items in the later Middle Ages. Worn around the neck on chains these small, private pieces were most often used as a means of protection, imbued by its imagery, or relics, with symbolic significance for its owner.\textsuperscript{464} One such item is a circular gold pendant of the fifteenth century, found near Reculver Castle (Kent) and now part of the collection of the British Museum\textsuperscript{465} (plate 106). Engraved on one side with the image of the Baptist and the other with St Catherine,\textsuperscript{466} this delicate pendant would have invoked the help of both the popular

\textsuperscript{460} Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 217.
\textsuperscript{461} Dalton, Catalogue of the Finger Rings, 111.
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., 116, entry 751.
\textsuperscript{463} Ibid., 110, entry 721.
\textsuperscript{464} Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 202.
\textsuperscript{466} It should be noted that the supposed body of St Catherine was taken to Mount Sinai in the eighth or ninth century and buried in a monastery built for hermits. This association with eremites could be the
patron saint of young women and an ultimate intercessory figure. Far less delicate is an early sixteenth-century rare precious-metal pendant featuring the head of John the Baptist (plate 107). The face of the saint, now greatly damaged, lies sunken on dish, surrounded by beaded ornament. This iconography, recalling his martyrdom, is already familiar from the pilgrim badges discussed above, and would have been worn because of its perceived protective powers.

Reliquary pendants, as the names suggest, would have often held particles of saints, or objects associated with saints. Varying from the simple to the ornate, one such gold reliquary pendant, now in the British Museum, survives from the late fifteenth century. A small hinged box, it shows on one side an engraving of a saintly archbishop (possibly St Thomas Becket), and on the other an image of St John (plate 108). Both the saint and the Lamb are nimbed, each looking towards the other in acknowledgment. A small inscription survives below the image of the Baptist - A MON DERREYNE. Invoking the help of the saints at the owner’s death this inscription roughly translates to ‘At my latter end.’ The purpose of this item could not be more clear; in wearing it and praying to the saints the owner was asking for intercessory assistance when his, or her, time should come. The powers of saintly relics relied on their close proximity to a person; by wearing a pendant containing a saint’s relic a person was always close to the healing and protective powers of that relic.

The Castle Museum of Norwich owns another medieval reliquary pendant. Known as the Matlaske Cross this gold pendant was made in England c. 1475-1500. The front is engraved with the image of the crucifixion surrounded by the Baptist and a bishop saint (possibly St Nicholas). The iconography of this pendant is unusual - the Baptist stands to the left pointing not only to the Lamb of God, symbol of Christ’s

reason she is paired with the Baptist on this pendent. See Thurston, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Vol. IV, 420.

467 Dalton, Catalogue of the Finger Rings, 111.
470 Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 227.
471 Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 227.
472 Lightbown, Masterpieces: Medieval Art, 78.
473 Lightbown, Masterpieces: Medieval Art, 78.
474 Lightbown, Medieval European Jewellery, 204.
475 Lightbown believes that the bishop saint could possibly represent St Nicholas, and that this pendant was based on the badge of a confraternity. Ibid., 204.
sacrifice, but also to Christ on the cross, the physical embodiment of this sacrifice.\textsuperscript{476} Again this pendant would have contained a relic, held close to the body of its owner, protecting the person in both this life and the afterlife.

Items of jewellery were often considered some of the most valuable possessions in an individual’s personal collection. Provisions were made for the distribution of such valued items after a person’s death; handing these items down to family members or leaving as offerings to the church. Records allow us an insight into the ownership of such objects. A will dated July 1509, sees its testator, Alison Sothill of Dewsbury (Yorks.), leave some of her most treasured possessions to her son. Along with silver goblets and spoons, she left him ‘a ryng of gold havyng Sent John Baptist greaven in it,’\textsuperscript{477} most likely one of the iconographic rings that were so popular. Eating and drinking vessels were also common family heirlooms. Ones of great value, like the ‘vj silver spones with Sancte John heddes of them’ left by John Gerves of Hornsea-Beck to his son\textsuperscript{478} were documented in wills illustrating what high personal and financial value were associated with such items.

In much the same way as jewellery and badges were meant to convey one’s personal piety, so too were the monumental, or memorial brasses of the churches. Commissioned by people of varying wealth and social status, these brasses were to be displayed within a church to commemorate a family’s dead. Less costly than the monumental carved tombs, brasses were popular on the continent from the thirteenth century and quickly spread over to England.\textsuperscript{479} According to Nigel Saul, over 7,600 brasses have survived, but there could have perhaps been as many as 50,000 in the later Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{480} Brasses functioned in a number of ways- they provided a focus for the commemoration of the deceased and its associated rituals, they were considered a link

\textsuperscript{476}This same iconography can also be found in Continental art, especially, Grünewald’s \textit{Isenheim Altarpiece}, c. 1512-16, now in the Musée Unterlinden, Colmar, France. See John Dillenberger, \textit{Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe}, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27-32.
\textsuperscript{478}Ibid., 237-38.
\textsuperscript{479}Robinson, \textit{Masterpieces: Medieval Art}, 163.
between the world of the living and the dead, but most importantly, they were a means by which a person could secure intercession for his or her soul.\textsuperscript{481}

Morgan states that the presence of a saint or saints on monumental brasses indicates the desire of the patron for the prayers of the living and intercession by said saints. \textsuperscript{482} The laity frequently wished to be portrayed with those they held most dear; husbands and wives are seen together with their children, and many wished to include their favoured saints alongside themselves. Engraved in 1400, a brass commemorating Sir John Cassey and his wife, Alice, is found in the church of St Mary, Deerhurst (Glos).\textsuperscript{483} The effigies of Cassey and his wife stand beneath a double canopy. To the left, above Alice, St Anne stands reading to the young Virgin Mary. Above Cassey we would have once seen the Baptist holding the Agnus Dei.\textsuperscript{484} The prominent positioning of these saints would seem to imply that they represented the patron saints of Sir John and his wife. Devoted to Sts Anne, Mary and John in life, they too would have prayed for their assistance in the afterlife.

Devotional preference can be no more explicit than in the case of a monumental brass in the church of St Botolph, Aspley Guise (Beds). Dated c. 1450, this brass shows a priest kneeling before a standing figure of St John the Baptist\textsuperscript{485} (plate 109). Presumably, this priest’s name was John and by kneeling before St John in perpetuity he was petitioning for eternal prayers for his soul.

Unlike this figure kneeling before St John, it was far more common to find brasses of ecclesiastical figures showing the saints illustrated on their copes or other garments. The brass of John Sleford (d. 1401) located in Holy Trinity, Balsham (Cambs)\textsuperscript{486} shows just such a design (plate 110). Sleford is shown in the typical ecclesiastical garment, the cope with ornamented orphries. Engraved down each side of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{481} \textit{Ibid.}, 171.
\bibitem{482} Morgan, “Patrons and Devotional Images”, 97.
\bibitem{484} This figure of the Baptist was stolen from the church c. 1860. See John Page-Phillips, \textit{Macklin’s Monumental Brasses}, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 57.
\end{thebibliography}
the elaborate orphery are the depictions of ten saints, headed by the Virgin and Child on the left and the Baptist on the right. Both the Virgin and Child and St John, we can assume, took precedence over all the other illustrated saints in the devotions of this man, playing the fundamental roles as intercessors. In the same church is found another brass commemorating Dr John Blodwell (d. 1462) rector of Balsham. Along the orphrey of his cope are engraved a number of angels and bishop saints, probably symbolizing his long history with the church. Within the columns of the canopy encircling Blodwell are niches containing the images of eight further saints, lead by the Baptist on the top left and the Evangelist on the right. This placement, at the eye-level of Blodwell, suggests that he looked to these saints not only as his name saints but also as his patron saints, praying to those two, above all, for the salvation of his soul.

In a sense, these clergymen wore their hearts on their sleeves (or at least on their breasts) so to speak- wearing upon their bodies the images of the saints they felt a personal devotional connection to. In this way these brasses introduce the liturgical garments and other textiles that will next be addressed.

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487 Ibid., 4.
Textiles

Like effigial brasses, which tended to show an individual’s devotional preferences, ecclesiastical embroidery reflected the partiality of those that had them made, whether individual patrons or institutions. Sought after by the wealthy, the delicate and refined techniques of the professional workshops\textsuperscript{488} survive today in small number. Although textiles were made for various purposes – used as altar cloths, bed hangings, heraldic banners, etc.- it is the vestments and other items (eg. burses) connected with the liturgy that have survived in largest numbers.\textsuperscript{489} Importantly, we still have documentary evidence of many of the lost textiles. Medieval monastic chronicles contain many references, as do wills. Tapestries and other hangings feature largely in the documents. Margaret Hancok left in her will (d. 1480) ‘One hallyng (wall hanging) painted with pictures of these saints, namely St John the Baptist, St Christopher, and John the Evangelist,’\textsuperscript{490} and in 1495, Cecily, Duchess of York, left to Lord Henry ‘three tappettes of arres, oon of them of the life of Saint John Baptist,’ and a further ‘cloth of Saint John Baptist of sarcenett painted’ to John Walter.\textsuperscript{491}

The embroidery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries helped to build the reputation of the craft, but according to Jane Hayward, the vestments of the fifteenth century are where the art form reached its perfection.\textsuperscript{492} Within the corpus of surviving opus anglicanum one notices that single figure depictions of St John far outnumber narrative depictions.

We start with two of the most widely known ecclesiastical vestments, the Butler-Bowden Cope (plate 111) and the Chichester-Constable Chasuble (plate 112). Both made around 1330-50, it is believed the two items may have belonged to the same set of vestments, iconographically similar as they are.\textsuperscript{493} The cope was once broken up into

\textsuperscript{488} A majority of workshops were located in London. See Donald King (ed). Opus Anglicanum: English Medieval Embroidery, (London: The Arts Council, 1963), 5.
\textsuperscript{490} Edwards, Margaret Forrest, et al. Early Northampton Wills, 86-8.
\textsuperscript{491} Nichols and Bruce, Wills From Doctors’ Commons, 2, 5.
\textsuperscript{493} King, Opus Anglicanum, 38-9.
pieces providing material for numerous other vestments. It and the chasuble, (also damaged) have been carefully restored to their original form.494

The cope is fashioned in the typical fourteenth century arcaded design, featuring three concentric zones of arches containing the images of saints and sacred scenes.495 Down the centre of the red velvet cope lies, from top to bottom, scenes of the Coronation of the Virgin, the Adoration, and the Annunciation. Emanating from the sides of each scene we see a number of saints showing their emblems.496 The Baptist takes a prominent place among the twenty-four saints. Both he and the Evangelist enclose the central scene of the Adoration, the Baptist on the right, the Evangelist to the left, like they have been shown countless times before. They look inwards watching the Christ child, bringing the focus back to the central image of the Saviour as an infant. Both saints also appear in a similar manner on the chasuble. Again placed within arches, the back panel reads the same as the cope- three panels showing the Coronation, Adoration and Annunciation. The front panel show six seated saints, the two Sts John at the very top. The heads of the two saints have been cut off and used to make an additional maniple and stole.497 The Baptist holds an almost identical Agnus Dei to the one shown on the cope and camel hair robe appears quite similar as well. The use of these six saints shows that they were considered of great importance in relation to Christ as well as to the patron who had it commissioned.

Almost contemporary with the cope and chasuble, the Grandisson Orphreys provide a glimpse into the private devotional preferences of John Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (1327-69).498 This patron also owned an ivory diptych and triptych on which John was represented, and the orphreys are further evidence of his devotion to the saint.499 Decorating the length of the linen orphrey, quatrefoil frames contain the saintly images. The back orphrey shows the images of Christ blessing, the Virgin and Child and four half-figure female saints, while the front orphrey illustrates Grandisson’s shield of arms and four half-figure male saints- St Andrew, the two Sts John and St Paul (plate 113).

495 King, Opus Anglicanum, 38.
496 Ibid., 38; Christie, English Medieval Embroidery, 167-70.
497 King, Opus Anglicanum, 39.
498 Ibid., 42-3.
499 Alexander and Binski, Age of Chivalry, 465-6, cat. 595, 596.
Within these small frames the saints hold their attributes. The iconography of these orphreys takes on additional importance because we know the identity of the original owner. Having commissioned a work of such fine and expensive embroidery, he would have wanted illustrated only the saints most important to him.

St John also appears in narrative form on the two Palls of the Merchant Taylors. The first pall (plate 114) c. 1490-1512,\textsuperscript{500} consists of two long panels, each having an identical image of the Baptism at the centre. Radiating outwards, on each side we see the Lamb in Glory, a symbol of the fraternity, followed by the Baptist holding the Lamb. Again the symbol of the Lamb in Glory appears, followed by an image of an angel holding the Baptist’s head on a charger and the fraternity’s other symbol - a pair of sheers. One of the short panels shows the executioner placing the saint’s head on a platter held by Salome, whereas the other illustrates the burial of the headless saint.\textsuperscript{501} All these Baptist related images served to remind people of the sacrifices the Baptist made and of his, and their own, mortality. The side panels of the second pall, c. 1512-38,\textsuperscript{502} again, show the Baptism, the other images replaced by the fraternities coat of arms and a large ornamental inscription, ‘Ecce Agnus Dei.’ The two end panels show the same decollation scene as the previous pall.\textsuperscript{503}

Similarly, the Fayrey Pall, c. 1490-1538, also shows narrative events in the Baptist’s life, as well as patron images (plate 115). Thought to have been presented to the guild of John the Baptist at Dunstable (Beds.) by Henry Fayrey, this pall shows four images of the Baptist preaching to the people.\textsuperscript{504} The two short panels include the Baptist preaching to two kneeling figures, identified on inscribed scrolls as \textit{john ffayrey} and \textit{mary ffayrey}, while the long panels show him preaching to larger groups of standing figures. This pall illustrates the Baptist in his role as Forerunner, preaching the coming of Christ.

Michelle Brown points out that embroidered textiles of the later Middle Ages hold many stylistic similarities with the Holkham Bible Picture Book.\textsuperscript{505} Similar in their

\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Ibid.}, 20; King, \textit{Opus Anglicanum}, 57.
\textsuperscript{502} King, \textit{Opus Anglicanum}, 58.
\textsuperscript{503} Fry, \textit{A Historical Catalogue of the Pictures, etc.}, 23; King, \textit{Opus Anglicanum}, 58.
\textsuperscript{505} Brown, \textit{Holkham Bible Picture Book}, 4-5.
figural narratives, the colouring and treatment of drapery also show a close relationship between illumination of the Holkham Picture Book and late medieval embroidered textiles. Whether or not she is right to think that this manuscript functioned as an artist’s exemplar, this coincidence of manner brings this survey of the imagery of St John neatly back to the manuscript with which it started.
Conclusion

Any image of St John, in whatever medium or context, provided a focus for proper, moral behaviour though emulation of the example they provided and elicitation of prayer which, as well as benefitting the individual in salvational terms, was considered to be a ‘good work’ of Christian charity in its own right. In examining an extensive collection of Baptist imagery dating from c. 1300-1550, and the documentary evidence associated with it, I hope to have given some indication of the role John played in the religious life of the period, and also to have suggested the richness and usefulness of a strikingly under-investigated theme in English medieval art.

Scriptural literature provided authoritative accounts of the life of the Baptist, while medieval hagiographies furnished further liturgical and devotional material by fleshing out the scriptural narrative. These sources all played an influential role in the iconography of the saint: imagery of the Baptism of Christ, for instance, derived from the Bible, while post-mortem events, like the burning of the saint’s bones, were to be found in the *Legenda aurea*. These sources were embodied within and reiterated by the liturgy, sermons and private devotional readings and the meditation based on them. They brought the Baptist to life for medieval people in ways that demanded an iconographic response and, as I hope to have shown, received it in copious degree. With different emphasis, surviving documentary sources including wills, inventories, churchwardens’ accounts and so on provide us with a source to help understand the individual and corporate devotional practices of the people in relation to St John. Through them we can see things such as the altars and images bequests were made and get a sense of the saint’s importance as an intercessor for the souls of the dead. This sort of documentation helps to bring the surviving imagery to life, as well as reminding us of the vast amount that has been lost.

In concluding this thesis I hope I have shown the similarities and differences present in representation of St John throughout the imagery of manuscript illumination, monumental painting, stained glass, sculpture, metalwork, and textiles, as well as the multivalent functions of both single standing saint and narrative images. As noted, I have sampled: in a thesis of this length I have had no opportunity to mention everything. But I have still tried to give a sense of the variety and iconographic richness of surviving
imagery, principally by presenting a healthy selection of examples in each category (with the admitted exception of devotional panel painting, where the admittedly extraordinary Wilton Diptych has had to do duty for what is lost). I have also tried to emphasise the generic functional attributes of these works as images that provided foci for devotion and the relevant rituals of the liturgy. The importance of these images in a culture which valued saintly intercession very highly has to be stressed. I have also tried to give a sense of the commonness (e.g. nativity, preaching, Baptism and martyrdom) and scarcity (e.g. burning of his bones, burial of his head, and variations in the iconography of the St John’s heads) of given iconographic themes, and also to indicate the importance of John as a patron saint of individuals and institutions. In fact, the wide range of iconography associated with the saint deserves far more attention than I have been able to provide here.

This large and diverse corpus of imagery indicates how important St John was in medieval devotional life. Given the richness and attractiveness of the imagery, it is rather surprising that it has been overlooked in research on medieval English art. In light of recent research on the cult of saints in medieval England (by Duffy, Marks and others), and also the stimulus of Barbara Baert’s book *Caput Johannis in Disco*, which focuses in depth on one aspect of the imagery and its associated iconography, it is to be hoped that more comprehensive studies will be forthcoming. In short, John permeated most avenues of ecclesiastical imagery and also some secular domains, and this, with the relatively generous survival of documentation associated with devotion to the saint, leaves one questioning why the iconography of an individual so close to Christ has been so little studied. In closing, I hope my thesis has shown why this corpus of imagery deserves substantially more attention in the future.
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