

CHAPTER 4

Failure and Invention: King Henry III, the Holy Blood and Gothic Art at Westminster Abbey

Emily Guerry

In the early morning of 13 October 1247, the king of England removed his crown and walked barefoot through the streets of London. This extraordinary display of royal humility served a singular purpose: Henry III (r. 1217–72) had received a relic of the Holy Blood and he intended to establish a new cult in Westminster Abbey. Putatively collected from the wound in Christ's right side, the relic had issued from the opening produced by the pierce of the Holy Lance (John 19: 31–7). To celebrate his acquisition, Henry carried the relic in a pious procession from the Cathedral of St Paul's to Westminster. Despite the spectacle of ceremonies staged in honour of the relic's arrival, the cult of the Holy Blood immediately encountered scepticism and failed to attract devotion. It was found to be an extremely problematic relic and, ultimately, a coalescence of historical, financial and theological concerns irrevocably undermined its status. This chapter cannot enumerate every possible factor that led to the collapse of the Westminster cult; the recent monograph by Nicholas Vincent provides a detailed discussion of this subject.¹ However, it will explore how the supporters of the king's relic attempted to defend the relic's authenticity and aggrandise its significance. In light of the erudite but ineffective rhetoric of the contemporary supporters of Holy Blood, artists working at

Westminster invented new devotional images in an attempt to promote the waning cult.

Matthew Paris (c.1200–59), a Benedictine monk from the monastery of St Alban's and author of a number of historical chronicles, provides an enthralling eyewitness account of the relic's arrival. Six consecutive entries in his *Chronica Majora* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16 II, ff. 216r–217r) describe the events surrounding its reception in London.² Despite Matthew's apparent endorsement of the Holy Blood, he hints at widespread doubt in its authenticity. At the time, Westminster Abbey was transforming into a Gothic building; it would be consecrated near the end of Henry's reign on 13 October 1269, exactly 22 years after the arrival of the Holy Blood. Although the Abbey's reliquaries were destroyed during Reformation iconoclasm, some original Gothic art works have survived. The unusual iconographic elements of the *Last Judgment* in the north porch and *Doubting Thomas* in the south transept represent the Holy Blood relic cult as a central devotional theme. This chapter will reconsider the translation of the Holy Blood in light of its inventive influence on Gothic visual culture.

ACQUISITION AND PROCESSION

King Henry III received the Holy Blood as a gift from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Robert de Nantes (r. 1240–54). In his seminal study of the Holy Blood, Nicholas Vincent provides a transcription of the Patriarch's original letter of concession, discovered in the Westminster Archives.³ The letter begins with a standard *salutatio* for Henry, the 'illustrious king of the English'.⁴ Robert then clarifies the provenance of this relic: the item in question is 'most certainly and without any doubt' blood that issued from Christ's side.⁵ Despite this claim, the blood relic delivered to England probably was the product of recent invention.⁶ After lamenting the presence of the Saracens in the Holy Land, Robert reminds Henry of their long-lasting alliance and explains the value of his gift, 'a portion of the most precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed at the place of Calvary, located within the Church of Jerusalem, while hanging on the Cross for the salvation and redemption of all Christians'.⁷ He also claims that Henry will now have 'the memory of Christ's Passion always before his eyes'.⁸ The motivations behind the Patriarch's donation were

diplomatic; Robert hoped to obtain financial and military support in the waning Latin Empire.⁹ Although Henry could not fulfil the Patriarch's wishes, he accepted the relic with great excitement.

To create interest in his Holy Blood cult, King Henry III staged an *adventus*, an urban procession rich with ritualistic motifs, to welcome the presence of the relic in the Plantagenet kingdom.¹⁰ On the night before this civic parade, the king fasted and held a vigil, 'preparing himself for the solemnities of the following day with candles alight and devout prayers'.¹¹ The procession began at dawn; out of respect for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Henry followed behind the members of the church, who were 'tearfully singing and exulting in the Holy Spirit'.¹² All the while, Henry elected to walk without shoes, wearing 'a humble dress consisting of a simple cloak without a hood'.¹³ He held the relic 'with both hands' and 'when he came to any rugged or uneven part of the road, he always kept his eyes fixed on heaven or on the vessel itself'.¹⁴ Matthew notes that the relic, 'which [Christ] shed on the Cross for the salvation of the world', had arrived in 'the most charming crystalline container'.¹⁵ The ruler and the reliquary were shielded by a 'pall [that] was borne on four spears and two assistants supported the king's arms to insure that his strength would not fail in such a great effort'.¹⁶

According to Matthew Paris, King Henry III behaved like a 'most Christian prince' (*princeps Christianissimus*) throughout the *adventus*. He also compares his patron with other examples of renowned *princeps* or *rex christianissimi*, elevating his patron's reputation by association with past and present models of sacral kingship.¹⁷ Matthew wrote that the English ruler had followed in the footsteps of 'the most pious and most victorious' Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41), who had carried the True Cross back to the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁸ Matthew also refers to the more recent *adventus* of a contemporary ruler, King Louis IX of France (r. 1234–70), who 'had commanded all honour at Paris' when he carried the True Cross into Paris on 29 March 1241.¹⁹ Matthew claims that he had witnessed this occasion, which is described in an earlier chapter of the *Chronica Majora*.²⁰ By addressing Henry as a *princeps Christianissimus* and comparing him to Heraclius and Louis, Matthew implies that the *adventus* in London was an impressive performance of both royal and sacred power. Nevertheless, the civic appeal of the ceremony would not be enough to ensure lasting interest in a problematic relic.

In the lower margin accompanying his account of the procession, Matthew included a drawing of King Henry III carrying the Holy Blood (Plate 4.1). As the king lifts the relic, which is contained in an oval phial, he fixes his gaze on the precious item. Four pall-bears surround the king with a decorative canopy, painted at an impossibly twisted angle. Because the parade stretched from St Paul's Cathedral to Westminster Abbey, Henry had retraced the path of his own coronation. However, in this instance, his actions resembled that of a priest, not a monarch.²¹ The sacerdotal manner in which Henry is shown elevating the reliquary mirrors the liturgical gesture of a Eucharistic celebrant, aligning the motion of benediction with that of the king's processional performance.²² The royal cortège would be joined by more prelates as they passed the house of the Bishop of Durham, Nicholas Farnham (r. 1241–9), a close friend and physician to the king. There, an assembly of bishops, abbots and monks joined the final stage of the procession, 'singing songs with a devoted spirit'.²³ Matthew's drawing probably represents Henry's encounter with Bishop Farnham. In the image, a bishop animatedly gestures towards the king's arrival, another bishop peers over his shoulder, and a third tonsured figure expresses his delight. This marginal illustration emphasises Henry's piety through his attire, actions and gaze; it also visually testifies to the support of ecclesiastical participants.

RECEPTION

When the king reached Westminster, he 'indefatigably continued, carrying the container around the church, his palace, and his chambers'.²⁴ At the parade's end inside the Abbey, Henry presented the Holy Blood to the Benedictine monks and the Abbey's patron saints, Peter and Edward the Confessor. Then, the Bishop of Norwich, Walter Suffield (r. 1245–57), delivered a sermon to the large crowd that had gathered inside the Abbey.²⁵ The Bishop of Norwich began with an audacious claim, stating that the Holy Blood was the supreme token of Christ's Passion: 'Of all things held sacred amongst men, the most sacred is the blood of Christ for it was the price of the world's redemption, and its effusion was the salvation of the human race.'²⁶ Employing Aristotelian logic, he intuited that because 'every end is more elevated than its means',

then 'in truth, the Cross is a most holy thing but only because of the sacred shedding of Christ's blood upon it; nor is the blood holy because of the Cross'.²⁷ Suffield thus placed the Holy Blood into a superlative category of Passion relics. As such, the esteemed status of the relic, ruler and *adventus* ceremony in London would have eclipsed the recent translation event in Paris. Having proclaimed the superiority of the Holy Blood and praised Henry as a *princeps Christianissimus*, Suffield granted indulgences to all who were present.²⁸

After Suffield's sermon, a dramatic shift in the tone occurred as the solemnities of the morning gave way to an evening of majestic decadence. The king put on a garland-crown and, dressed in cloth of gold made of the finest silk, sat on his throne as he bestowed knighthoods upon nobles in his inner circle. The jarring contrast between the sacred and secular rituals caused Nicholas Vincent to ask, 'Why were two such spectacles combined in this way?'²⁹ It was only after Suffield's sermon that a wave of cynical speculation emerged from the congregation. Matthew Paris gently alludes to an uprising of opposition by citing the Gospels: 'When this affair was discussed, some "slow to believe" (Luke 24:25) still doubted.'³⁰ Dissenting audience members expressed their concerns about the relic's authenticity and the nature of its acquisition. The negative reactions seem to have been directed at the king while he sat on his throne, clothed in gold. Perhaps in an attempt to undermine the antagonism, Matthew records only one side of the conversation, citing the reaction of the king and his supporters. Thierry, who was Prior of the Hospitallers in Jerusalem, confronted the sceptics saying 'Dear lords, why do you hesitate?'³¹ He said that neither he, nor any Templar nor Hospitaller had asked for any 'remuneration in gold or silver from the King' before Henry interjected 'certainly not'.³²

In addition to the political and pecuniary suspicions expressed by the congregation, theological inquiries concerning the nature of the Holy Blood posed a far greater threat to the new royal cult. The cynics asked, 'how could the Lord have left his blood on the earth when he rose again – full and entire in body – on the third day after his Passion?'³³ This question appears to have caused tension amongst English prelates. Concomitantly effluvial and Eucharistic, simultaneously corporeal and symbolic, the Holy Blood occupies an unusual place on the devotional spectrum. For many medieval

sceptics and modern historians, including Charles Rohault de Fleury, the Holy Blood is not only spurious in provenance and problematic in its essence; it has no place in the esteemed category of Passion relics.³⁴

According to Matthew Paris, 'this question was at once fully dealt with by the Bishop of Lincoln', Robert Grosseteste (r. 1235–53), who was one of the most formidable scholars and statesmen of thirteenth-century England.³⁵ Like Suffield, Grosseteste endorsed the king's cult with unequivocal support. The articulate defence he presented in Westminster Abbey was purportedly recorded in a tract entitled *De Sanguine Christi*. Matthew equips his chronicle with an appendix containing this treatise: he writes, 'the answer [by Grosseteste] is set out ... word for word as the writer of this page heard it and carefully wrote it down, at this sign'.³⁶ Immediately following this statement in the *Chronica Majora*, Matthew inserts a drawing of a chalice in red ink (Plate 4.2). Any reader could find its counterpart by searching for the same pictorial symbol.³⁷

In *De Sanguine Christi*, Grosseteste addresses those who opposed the cult: 'Because the slow and the sceptical are accustomed to object that since Christ rose again on the third day with his body whole and not drained of blood, how can it be that he left his blood behind him on earth?'³⁸ He then offered a thoughtful reply:

There are two types of blood. The one type is the blood produced by nutrition and, on occasion, there is too much of this, such as when it bursts forth spontaneously from the nostrils or finds some other outlet, there being so much of it that it must be diminished. And it is this type of Christ's blood that we have on earth, except that really it was not blood-like because God willed that there should be a later commemoration of the Passion of the Lord.³⁹

For Grosseteste, the Holy Blood relic in London belongs to the secondary and more superfluous category. The other type is that which is 'essential to the human body' and 'of this sort of Christ's blood we perhaps have none on earth – but I say perhaps because the Lord "does whatever he pleases" [Ps 115: 3]'.⁴⁰ Above all, *De Sanguine Christi* is an eristic tract designed to admonish sceptics and encourage devotion.⁴¹

Grosseteste argues that Christ, who had died of his own will, retained his vital blood throughout the Passion and exuded only superfluous blood.⁴² He then describes Christ's bloodied body after

the Deposition, when those 'sacred wounds' were 'still dripping wet'.⁴³ Even the perforation of the nails in his hands and his feet were 'stained' and 'dripping'.⁴⁴ The soldier's spear, he claims, had caused the greatest wound; 'a large and wide chasm' remained in Christ's side.⁴⁵ The surplus blood gathered from the wounds – including the blood from the incisions in his head, hands, feet and side – would have been collected and preserved in vases when Joseph washed the body of Christ.⁴⁶ These vases, he explains, remained in Joseph's family for generations before they were enshrined in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Grosseteste then divides the blood various relics collected by Joseph into four distinct categories, placing the 'formidable, tremendous and most revered pre-cordial blood' that 'flowed from the very heart in Christ's side' in the highest position.⁴⁸ Moreover, the blood collected from the wound in Christ's side had the most splendid vase.⁴⁹ The *reverendissimus* relic in question is the Holy Blood in Westminster. *De Sanguine Christi* presents a compelling response to each of the theological, historical and political suspicions levelled against the Holy Blood relic. Grosseteste repeatedly emphasised the significance of the Holy Blood's purported origins – the wound in Christ's side.

There is evidence that Henry III requested the reproduction and circulation of *De Sanguine Christi*.⁵⁰ He also commanded Matthew Paris to write an account of the translation of the Holy Blood and a miracle that occurred when it arrived in London.⁵¹ His entries on the Holy Blood in the *Chronica Majora* provide the most detailed record of the translation event. Oddly, however, Matthew never elaborates or even addresses the specific miracle mentioned by Henry. In fact, there is only one record of a miracle related to the Holy Blood in Henry's lifetime. The account is discussed by Nicholas Vincent and noted in a seventeenth-century transcription by Elias Ashmole.⁵² Ashmole's notation—concerning the revivification of a boy who drowned in Hyde Park in the c.1260s – inadvertently reveals the short radius and extremely limited local interest in the king's cult.⁵³

WESTMINSTER ABBEY AS *LOCUS SANCTUS*

In the years following the relic's arrival, Henry spearheaded spiritual incentives to attract popular devotion to the Holy Blood in conjunction with the feast of St Edward. In 1248, public criers throughout London announced a new fortnightly fair at Westminster

in which the people could venerate the Holy Blood.⁵⁴ St Edward's Fair would be celebrated again at Westminster in 1249 and, according to Matthew Paris, many attended 'out of love and devotion for the saint' to 'venerate the recently obtained Holy Blood of Christ and obtain the remission granted thereby'.⁵⁵ However, no known miracles occurred during the fairs of 1248 and 1249. For at least three years, the king vainly tried to attract believers to his cult through his sponsorship of festivals.

Henry's investment in the Holy Blood can be situated in the wider context of his benefaction of cults and building projects at Westminster Abbey, especially that of Edward the Confessor (r.1042–66). The Anglo-Saxon saint-king served as Henry's personal model of Christian kingship.⁵⁶ Westminster Abbey was not only the *locus sanctus* of Edward; the confessor-king was also the primary patron of the Abbey in the eleventh century.⁵⁷ For this reason, Matthew implies that Henry's role as an architectural patron was yet another aspect of the emulative love for his patron saint: Henry decided to rebuild Westminster because he was 'inspired by the devotion he felt toward Edward'.⁵⁸ Since his canonisation in 1161, the relics of Edward housed in Westminster had yet to excite the popular imagination, unlike other twelfth-century English cults, such as the cult of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. In 1241, Henry commissioned the construction of a resplendent Gothic shrine made of gold and precious stones to house the body of his patron saint.⁵⁹ Then, in 1245, he hired architects to create an entirely new abbey.⁶⁰

For three decades, Henry financed the Gothic redesign of Westminster in an ambitious attempt to transform the Benedictine abbey into the supreme religious centre of the Plantagenet kingdom. In addition to the orchestration of an *adventus*, declamation of persuasive sermons, circulation of eloquent treatises and chronicles, and celebration of festivals, the creation of new art works would also support the foundation of this new royal cult. However, unlike rituals and texts, medieval images do not rely on an intercessor to perform or express their meaning. A close examination of the extant artistic projects executed under the aegis of Henry III reveals the depth to which the cult of relics at Westminster would be integrated into the decorative programme. Moreover, the monumental Gothic images preserved at Westminster, which include its wall paintings and Retable, testify to the presence of ambitious and inventive artists.

However, in any study of Westminster, the art historian is often bewildered by the extent of post-thirteenth-century destruction, addition and restoration. Because the Abbey remained unfinished (and underfunded) at the time of Henry's death in 1272, the layers of subsequent construction and decoration conceal the majority of the first phase of Gothic patronage. The remainder of this chapter will examine two Gothic art works that placed significant visual evidence on the wound carved into Christ's chest by the Holy Lance. In each instance, these images will be analysed in light of their connection to the cult of the Holy Blood.

THE LOST *LAST JUDGMENT* SCULPTURE OF THE NORTH PORTAL

In 1984, M.E. Roberts first suggested that the design of the north porch at Westminster incorporates visual references to the cult of the Holy Blood.⁶¹ Positioned at the entrance to the Abbey, the central tympanum showed the *Last Judgment*. Given what is known of the original portal design, which would have been the first figural image encountered by any thirteenth-century visitor, its atypical iconography suggests a site-specific agenda. However, the present-day appearance of the north porch has changed substantially since its creation in c.1250–60s.⁶² In addition to the eighteenth-century removal of the medieval elements, the current design is the result of the nineteenth-century work of Sir Gilbert Scott and J.L. Pearson.⁶³ However, art historians have assumed that the well-preserved c.1260–70s portal in the south transept at Lincoln cathedral was modelled on the lost north porch of Westminster Abbey.⁶⁴ Moreover, there is evidence that the north porch programme at Westminster was similar to and possibly based on the c.1230s central portal of the west facade at Amiens cathedral.⁶⁵ Situated between its reputed antecedent and copy, the portrayal of the *Last Judgment* at Westminster emerges as an innovative composition.

Like the original design at Westminster, Christ sits enthroned within a quatrefoil frame in the south portal tympanum at Lincoln cathedral (Plate 4.3). Angels hover around the judge, censuring him and praising his return. Another pair of angels kneels to the side of his throne, which is situated firmly within the liminal frame. Despite the dynamic energy of the angels encircling him, Christ's facial

expression remains calm as he gazes outwards. With the fingertips of his left hand, Christ gently pulls back his garment to reveal a horizontal wound incised across his right side. He offers a blessing with his right hand, lifting up two of his fingers above the scar. Here, we find a particularly empathetic portrayal of the glorious Son of Man described in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 16: 26–8). The Lincoln judge, affixed to the cathedral of the great defender of the Holy Blood relic, Bishop Grosseteste, emphasises the largest wound of the Passion.

The most striking visual difference between the Judgment portal at Amiens when compared with those at Westminster and Lincoln is Christ's agency in the display of his wounds. At Amiens, Christ is bare-chested – his garment has fallen down from his shoulders and rests in the creases of his elbows. Both his arms are raised exposing the holes his hands and side.⁶⁶ In contrast, at Lincoln – and, presumably, at Westminster – Christ appears actively engaged in revealing the wound in his side. Because his mantle remains draped over his torso, Christ is compelled to pull back the fabric of his dress to show his bloodied scar. In so doing, the holes in his hands are less evident and the cut in his side becomes the focal point. In the *Last Judgment* at Westminster and Lincoln, the side wound – the place of origin of the Holy Blood relic – has transformed into the catalysing site of an inventive eschatological vision.

If the Lincoln judge reflects a lost archetype from Westminster, then its composition not only responds to a growing High Medieval interest in blood piety, it also signals the centrality of the Holy Blood throughout Christological time. In *De Sanguine Christi*, the wounds in the body of Christ are said to be 'marks of the past' that remained 'still gaping after the Resurrection'.⁶⁷ Grosseteste claimed that when Christ returns his wounds will still appear.⁶⁸ Here, in the *Last Judgment* portal, the words of Grosseteste could take form in stone. The scar in Christ's side plays a central role in the Christian past, present and future. It appears simultaneously as an imprint of the Passion, an integral aspect of instilling faith in his Resurrection – indeed, it was the offer to touch this wound that caused the Apostle Thomas to believe – and it remains on his chest until the end of time. Positioned above the entrance to the Abbey, this *Last Judgment* encouraged visitors to contemplate the salvific importance of Christ's bloodshed by showcasing the wounds. This particular iconography

also served as a devotional signpost for a sacred space imbued with the presence of the Holy Blood, preparing the viewer for their imminent interaction with the relic. In this way, the Gothic design of the *Last Judgment* at Westminster simultaneously represented the relic's esteemed in salvation history while guiding the viewer to understand its potential role in their personal experience of redemption.

THE DOUBTING THOMAS MURAL IN THE SOUTH TRANSEPT

The visual culture of the Holy Blood at Westminster also extends to its Gothic wall paintings. Monumental murals survive in the south transept and the adjoining chapel dedicated to St Faith. The south transept depictions of *Christopher Carrying the Christ Child* and *Doubting Thomas* highlight the physical connection between the saint and Christ.⁶⁹ Because Christ pulls the left arm of the Apostle into the wound in his right side and the Christ Child wraps his arm around the head of his helper, these murals effectively indicate that two relics in the Abbey's possession – the arm of St Thomas and the head of St Christopher – are also contact relics of Christ. In addition to the aforementioned Christological relics, Henry III donated portions of Christopher's head to the collection and added a new ring to the arm reliquary of Thomas, which was originally given to the Abbey by his spiritual patron, St Edward.⁷⁰ Executed by the time of consecration in 1269, these Gothic paintings elevate the status of the cult of relics at Westminster through their atypical composition.⁷¹

Recently, Paul Binski and I have argued that the Westminster Christopher image, which is the earliest surviving mural of its kind in England, stands at the ignition point of a fast-flourishing and far-reaching image cult.⁷² *Doubting Thomas* (Plate 4.4) has also been exposed as an ambitious example of an iconographic break with a long-standing history of representation.⁷³ By showing the Apostle's arm wedged deeply into the wound, the painter indisputably indicates that Thomas had touched the resurrected body of Christ. The extraordinary design choices of the south transept wall paintings would have enhanced the status of royal relic cults by boldly breaking with conventional iconography.

This image of *Doubting Thomas* is totally unique in Western medieval art in its emphasis on Christ's bloodshed. For Grosseteste,

the appearance of the wounds on Christ's resurrected body had 'strengthened the faith of the doubters', including the disciples.⁷⁴ He states explicitly that it was the sight of the wounds that caused them to believe.⁷⁵ Here, in the south transept, Grosseteste's words again spring into pictorial action. Before the Westminster painting, there had never been such a blatant demonstration of touch in a portrayal of *Doubting Thomas*; in fact, artists tended to shy away from representing physical contact between the figures in an attempt to avoid controversy.⁷⁶ Perhaps for the first time in medieval Europe, the Gothic painter in Westminster interpreted the Gospel account of the Incredulity with literal precision: Christ commanded Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe' (John 20:27).

In the wall painting at Westminster, the precise moment when Thomas overcomes his doubt is re-imagined through a physical encounter: the Apostle is transformed as he touches the blood of Christ. With a background of blood-red paint and the placement of the bleeding wound of the Holy Nail at the centre of the composition, the Gothic artist embraces an interest in the appearance of the wounds after the Resurrection. In fact, the Apostle's hand is fitted so deeply into Christ's side that the viewer is unable to see his fingertips. As his fingers enter the wound, blood pours out in energetic, waving lines. Thus, the body of Christ appears to bleed after his Resurrection, just as Grosseteste said. Produced near the end of Henry's reign around 1270, this remarkable image has emerged from a community unafraid of blood piety. Using audacious iconography, the mural offers an authoritative visual response to those who questioned the potency of the Holy Blood. The artist has used the Apostle's doubt as a symbolic precedent for those who need to find faith in that which is difficult to accept. As such, the image of *Doubting Thomas* in Westminster could act as an emblem for encouraging devotion to the *in situ* cults, especially the Holy Blood.

CONCLUSION

In the Gothic sculpture of the north portal and the painting in the south transept, the portrayal of Christ's pierced side becomes central to the viewer's comprehension of Christian salvation. By breaking with iconographic tradition to position the side wound at the focal point of

each image, the site-specific design of the Westminster judge and *Doubting Thomas* reflects a calculated interest in cult of the Holy Blood. At the time, the cult still needed to attract pilgrims and establish authenticity. Designed and executed in the decades following the arrival of the relic, Gothic artists were charged with the task of using their compositions to cultivate interest in a collapsing royal cult. In each instance, the words of Robert Grosseteste in *De Sanguine Christi* take form in the pictorial design. The portal and painting serve a devotional function developed under a zealous patron. Behind their production, we find the legacy of Henry III; a wealthy and devout protagonist committed to the endorsement of the cults at Westminster Abbey.

Despite the calculated presentations of piety and authenticity, the arrival of the Holy Blood in London caused alarming questions about the nature of Christ's Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. As Caroline Walker Bynum explained in her study of blood piety, 'for a successful pilgrimage, it was not enough to produce authenticating documents, arrange lavish processions and translations, garner ecclesiastical support, or secure indulgences'.⁷⁷ Even the persuasive panegyric of the Bishop of Norwich and the erudite defence of the Bishop of Lincoln could not sway unbelievers. For Paul Binski, the failure of the Holy Blood cult stemmed from both its 'inherently political character' and the 'problematical character of the relic itself'.⁷⁸ This chapter has attempted to show how an adversarial situation spurred creative invention. In the depiction of the *Last Judgment* and *Doubting Thomas*, the unprecedented emphasis on the wound in Christ's side reflects a local and site-specific interest in the Holy Blood. Viewed within the wider context of the visual culture of Westminster, these Gothic art works display decisive iconographic choices linked closely with pressing theological concerns.

The tenuous presence of the Holy Blood provided artists with the liberty to create new designs that redefined the relic's significance. The weakness of the cult revealed its need for authoritative images to defend and strengthen its reputation. By focusing on the wound from the incision of the Holy Lance, the portal sculpture and south transept mural employ a site-specific visual vocabulary that encourages devotion to the Holy Blood. The bleeding scar on the body of the crucified Christ has transformed into an emblematic sign of the victory of his Passion. Although the cult never flourished, it

succeeded in inspiring innovative iconographic designs and, in this instance, the failure of the Holy Blood has exposed the catalysing role of visual culture in the Gothic devotional imagination.

NOTES

1. N. Vincent, *The Holy Blood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
2. The *Chronica Majora* is preserved at Cambridge University, Corpus Christi College (hereafter CCCC) MS 16 II, ff. 216r–v and the six chapters are *De sanguine Christi allato Londonias*, *Prosecutio*, *Prosecutio facti sancti et memorandi*, *De semone domini episcopo Norwicensis eadem die*, *De tirocinio Willelmi de Walentia fratris domini regis uterini*, and *De assertione domini regis super praedictis*. See the transcription in *Matthaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard, 7 vols, The Rolls Series (London: 1872–84), vol. IV, p. 640–5 (henceforth CM). For a detailed discussion of the making of this manuscript, see also S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
3. Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, appendix 1, pp. 202–4. This letter was originally signed in Acre and dated 31 May 1247. Copied from the lost original document, the text survives in a transcription kept in Westminster Abbey MS Domesday, f. 394v–395r.
4. 'Excellenti et egregio viro domino Henrico Dei gratia illustri regi Angl(ie), Robertus eadem gratia sancte Ierosolimitane ecclesie patriarcham apostolice sedis legatus, et eiusdem ecclesie capitulum salutem et felices ad vota successus' *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4 at 202. All translations are my own.
5. 'Gloriantes in cruce ipsius in qua gloriari oportet, scituri certissime et sine dubitatione quacumque quod nos eiusdem preciosi sanguinis quantitatem extraximus de thesauris ecclesie nostre ibidem ab antiquissimis temporibus conservatam cum summa reverentia et honore, et veraciter est sanguis ille qui de latere domini Ihesu Cristi in loco predicto manavit.' *Ibid.*, p. 204.
6. The record of the cult's previous existence is dubious at best: There is no trace of its presence in the Holy Sepulchre or in any of the myriad treasures of Levantine collections. Unlike other popular blood relics in the High Middle Ages, such as the Fécamp Blood relic, the Reichenau Blood relic and the *Volto Santo*, there is no trace of the Westminster Holy Blood relic before the thirteenth century. See the discussion in Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 39 and 71. It has been suggested that the Holy Blood could have belonged to the Templars in Acre. See J. Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land: From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 207–8.

7. 'Aliquam particulam de preciosissimo sanguine domini Ihesu Cristi quem in loco Calvarie sito intra Ierosolimit' ecclesiam, pendens in crucis patibulo, pro salute et redemptione vestra et omnium Cristianorum habundanter effudit ...' Ibid., pp. 203–4.
8. 'Ut ipsam sanguinem nostre redemptionis preciosum habentes pre oculis, passionem eius semper in memoriam habeatis', Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, pp. 203–4.
9. When Henry eventually took his crusading vows in Westminster Abbey in 1250, he did little to offer assistance to his eastern ally. He also never ventured to the Holy Land. See D.A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 112. See also A.J. Forey, 'The Crusading Vows of the English King Henry III', *Durham University Journal*, 65 (1973), pp. 229–47.
10. In medieval ceremonial culture, the desired outcome of an *adventus* would be the conversion of the collective group of celebrants into a more sacred community through the experience of this shared ritual. For the Christian ruler, the Roman *adventus* could be adopted as a model for religious celebrations associated with the cult of relics. Instead of the joyous entry of the visibly victorious emperor – who would have passed beneath the transformative liminal space of a triumphal arch into his city with a decedent display of the spoils of war – the archetypal Christian *adventus* relied upon the humility of its protagonist to convey the sanctity of the object he carried. On the meaning and significance of the *adventus* ritual in the Middle Ages, see Margot Fassler, 'Adventus at Châtres: Ritual Models for Major Processions', in N. Howe (ed.), *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2007), pp. 13–62.
11. 'Devoto spiritu ac contrito in vigilia sancti Ae[wardii] in pane et aqua jejunans, et nocte vigilans, cum ingenti lumine et devotis orationibus se ad crastinam sollempnitatem prudenter praeparavit.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r; CM, IV: p. 640.
12. 'Nec praetermittendum, quod amababus manibus illud deferens, cum per stratam salebrosam et inaequalem pereget, semper vel in caelum vel in ipsum vas lumina tenebat defixa. Supportatur autem palla per quatuor hastas. Supportabantque duo coadjutores brachia sua, ne in tanto forte labore deficeret.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: pp. 641–2.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. 'Magistri enim Templi [Guillaume de Sounae] et Hospitalis [Guillaume de Châteauneuf] cum testimonio quamplurium sigollorum, videlicet patriarchae Jerosolimitani, archiepiscoporum quoque et episcoporum, abbatum et aliorum praelatorum et magnatum de Terra Sancta, miserat quandam portionem sanguinis Dominici, quem pro salute mundi fudit in cruce, in quodam vase cristallino venustissimo, per quendam fratrem Templarium bene notum.' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: pp. 640–1.

16. Ibid.
17. 'Dominus autem rex, utpote princeps Christianissimus ab Augusto Eraclio victoriosissimo ac piissimo imperatore, crucem sanctam exaltante ...' CCCC Ms. 16 II, f. 216r, CM: IV, p. 641.
18. Heraclius retrieved the True Cross from its Persian captors and returned the relic to the Holy Sepulchre in 630. Observed annually on 14 September, the liturgy for the *Exaltatio* had remained essentially unchanged throughout the Middle Ages. For an introduction to the history and cultural transmission of both the *Inventio* and *Exaltatio Sanctae Crucis* in medieval England, particularly in Old English texts, see M.C. Bodden, *The Old English Finding of the True Cross* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 24–7 and, more generally, the recent publication of B. Beart, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Although its compilation around 1260 postdates the *Chronica Majora*, the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine reflects the contemporary understanding of Heraclius' procession in the thirteenth century. See the modern translation of the 'Exaltation of the Holy Cross' in *The Golden Legend*, ed. and trans. W.G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 168–73.
19. 'Et a rege Francorum tunc superstite, crucem eandem, ut praescribitur, Parisius honorante, sumens exemplum' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: 641.
20. CCCC Ms. 16, f. 140v–142v; CM, IV: pp. 90–2.
21. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*, p. 143.
22. Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, p. 208.
23. 'Conventus autem Westmonasterii, cum omnibus qui convenerant, episcopais, abbatibus, et monachis, qui plus quam centum aestimabantur, canentes et exultantes in spiritu sancto et lacrimis, occurrebant eidem domino regi sic adventatni, usque ad portam curiae episcopi Dunelmensis.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: p. 642.
24. 'Nec adhuc cessabat dominus rex, quin indefensus ferens illud vas, ut prius, circuire[t] ecclesiam, regiam, et thalamos suos. Demum illud quasi donum impretiabile, et quod totam Angliam ditando illustraverat, donavit, et optulit Deo et ecclesiae Sancti Petri Westmonasterii, et caro suo Ae[dwardo] et sacro conventui, qui ibidem Deo et sanctis suis ministrant.'
25. Matthew Paris recalls that the size of the audience was so great that the Romanesque walls could hardly contain them. 'Tunc autem reversi sicut ierant, videlicet processionaliter ad ecclesiam Westmonasterii, vix in ea prae copiosa turbae multitudine continebatur.' Ibid.
26. 'Dominus episcopus Norwicensis, qui et Missam eadem die sollempniter celebravit, populo predicando asseruit, quod inter sacra quae inter mortales habentur, sacratissimum quid est sanguis Christi.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM, IV: p. 642.

27. 'Est enim pretium mundi, et ejus effusio salus generis humani; et ut condigne illud magni caret amplius, addidit illud philosophi, "Omne propter quod, dignius quam illud quod." Revera crux sancta sanctissimum quid est. Sed ipsa sacra fuit propter sacratoris sanguinis aspersionem, non sanguis sacer propter crucem.' Ibid.
28. Et addidit, quod pro maxima domini regis Angliae, qui dinoscitur domini regis Anglias, qui dinoscitur esse inter omnes Christianitatis principes Christianissimus ... ' Ibid. In the final lines of his summary this sermon, Matthew reports that 'exultant worshippers' would receive 'six years and one hundred and sixteen days' with free remission from the penances imposed upon them According to Nicolas Vincent, this exorbitant number probably alludes to the total number of indulgences offered since the twelfth century plus the additional indulgences from the present-day ceremony. Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 159.
29. Ibid., p. 17.
30. 'Cum autem examinaretur, doubt, et alii tardicordes ad credendum adhuc hesitent.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM IV: p. 643.
31. 'Ait dominus Theodoricus, prior Hospitalis Jerosolimitani, episcopis et aliis circumsedentibus; 'Domini carissimi, quid adhuc fluctuatis? Exigitne ob hoc beneficium aliquis nostrum, vel Templarius vel Hospitalarius, vel etiam frater qui portavit, vel de domino rege, vel alio aliquo, aliquam in auro vel argento retributionem, vel quantulumcunque premium?' Et rex; 'Nequaquam.' Et frater; 'Quare ergo in dampnationem animae suae tot et tanti viri tali assertioni perhiberent testimonium, apponentes signa sua, quae sunt fidei pignora manifesta?' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM, IV: p. 643.
32. Ibid.
33. 'Quaestionem hanc moverent: "Quomodo cum plene et integraliter tertia die post passionem resurrexit Dominus, sanguinem in terra reliquit?"' Ibid.
34. Charles Rohault de Fleury, *Mémoire sur les Instruments de la Passion* (Paris: 1870).
35. 'Quae quaestio ab episcopo Lincolnensi ad unguem tunc determinabatur, prout habetur scriptum in libro Additamentorum; prout hujus paginae [scriptor] audivit, et verbo ad verbum satis dilucide scripsit, ad tale signum.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM IV: pp. 643–4.
36. Ibid.
37. London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 91r–92v. CM, VI: pp. 138–44.
38. 'Sed quia tardicordes et oblocutores solent sic obicere et dicere, quod cum Christus terio die resurrexisset cum coporis intergritate, et non exanguis, qualiter esse posset quod sanguinem Suum post Se reliquerit in terra.' *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92r, reproduced in CM, VI: 143.
39. 'Responsum fuit sufficienter: Duo sunt sanguines vel genera sanguinum. Unus enim sanguis est qui ex nutrimentis generatur, qui aliquando ita

- superfluit, ut a naribus sponte prorumpat, vel aliquem alium exitum [habeat], ut minutione indigeat sic repletus. Et de tali sanguine Christi habemus in terra licet, sane non fuisset sanguinolentus, Deo sic volente, ut videlicet habeatur recentior memoria Dominicae Passionis.' Ibid.
40. 'De quo dicitur, quod tysis est consumptio substantialis humiditatis, id est sanguinis vitae necessarii ... De illo Chriſti sanguine, non habemus forte in terris. Forte dico quia omnia quoecumque voluit Dominus fecit.' Ibid.
41. 'Ut scilicet sic scrietur quod Omnipotens fuit, ut contra consuetum usum et naturalem foret corpus Eius, Qui fuit Dominus naturae ad Suum nutum et beneplacitum monstrabile et palpabile et saucium cerneretur, Qui tamen as discipulos intravit foribus obseratis. Et sic omnium cessare debent detractorum.' Ibid.
42. For a general but thorough discussion of Grosseteste's conception of the nature of Christ's blood, see J. McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 131–2.
43. 'Crucifixo ergo Jesu et mortuo, postulavit Joseph corpus Jesu, ingrediens ad eum audacter, per quod creditur fuisse potena; et concessum est ei. Ipse igitur ... cum omni honore et reverentia ipsum corpus sanctissimum deposuit de cruce saucium et multiformiter cruentatum; habensque lintheamen subtile dependens a collo et humeris, ne indigne tam dignum corpus nudis manibus contrectaret, ipsa sacra vulnera adhuc madida ac distillantia sedulo ac devoto deterſit officio.' London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 91r; CM, VI: p. 139.
44. 'Immo etiam loca clavorum extractorum tincta cruore in ipso crucis patibulo exhaustit abstergendo.' Ibid.
45. 'Tum propter militis lanceas qua ipse latus Jesu non tantum vulneravit sed aperuit; amplum enim fecit et hiatum patulum, forte saepius vel saltem semel fecit impingendo.' Ibid.
46. Lavit, quia sane arbitrabatur et religiose dignum censuit sanguinem ipsum sibi prorsus vendicandum, et ut thesaurum vel medicamen preciosissimum reservandum. Ibid.
47. This claim could have been rooted in an interpolation of the apocryphal texts in the *Acti Pilati*, the influence of Arthurian Romance on the significance of Joseph to the history of Christian Britain or perhaps from an encounter with lost *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* by William of Malmesbury. For the role of Joseph in the cleansing of Christ's body at the tomb, see *The Gospel of Nichodemus* (Acti Pilati) in M.R. James (ed.), *The Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924) Part XV: 5. Joseph's desire to collect and preserve the blood could be linked to a developing tradition in Arthurian romances (e.g. Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie* and Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*, and the *Perlesvaus*) or the lost *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, wherein Joseph is said to have founded Glastonbury Abbey and endowed it with relics collected from the tomb. See V.M. Lagorio, 'The evolving legend of St

- Joseph of Glastonbury', in J.P. Carley (ed.), *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), pp. 55–82.
48. 'Quarto: Ille formidabilis tremendae et reverendissimae recordationis cruor precordialis, qui ex ipso corde Christi vel saltem latere constat effluxisse.' *CM*, VI: p. 140.
49. 'Maximo autem timore et honore ipsum sanguinem cum aqua quein censuit praecordiale, a latere dextro feliciter eliquatum et expressum, in vase recepti nobilissimo tanquam thesaurum imprecabilem, sibi et successoribus suis specialiter reservandum.' *CM*, VI: p. 140.
50. It is likely that Henry commissioned Grosseteste to convert his impassioned declamation on 13 October 1247 into a polished text. Evidence exists for the circulation of *De Sanguine Christi* in the thirteenth century. For instance, Grosseteste's statements about the blood of Christ resurface in the works of Thomas Aquinas, who disagrees entirely with the concept of surplus blood. See Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, pp. 87–8.
51. CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v; *CM*, IV: p. 644.
52. Preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 842, f. 80v. See the transcription of the miracle text in Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 205.
53. See Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 166.
54. 'Quamplurimis praelatis magnatibusque sub optentu amicitiae et devotionis significavit, ut praesentialiter cum ipso apud Westmonasterium beati Aedwardi festum solempniter ac devote concelebrent ... Unde factum est, ut ibidem illuc innumerabilis populus, velut ad celeberrimas nundinas, confluerent, ibidemque translatio beati Aedwardi et sanguis Christi a populo illuc tracto et ibi congregato inopinabiliter.' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 221v, *CM* V: pp. 28–9.
55. 'Congregati sunt igitur ibidem qui antea dispersi fuerunt magnates quamplurimi, tum pro devotione et amore sancti, tum pro veneratione sancti sanguinis Christi nuper adepti et venia concessa ibidem optinenda, tum pro domini regis ipsos vocantis reverentia ...' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 224r, *CM* V: pp. 47–8.
56. For an overview of the development of Henry's interest in Edward in the years leading up to his patronage of Gothic Westminster, see D. Carpenter, 'King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor: The Origins of the Cult', *English Historical Review*, CXXII (2007), pp. 865–91.
57. See the discussion in Binski, *Westminster and the Plantagenets*, p. 143.
58. 'Eodem vero anno [1245], dominus rex, devotione, quam habuit adversus sanctam Aedwardum, submonente, ecclesiam Sancti Petri Westmonasterii jussit ampliari. Et diruitis antiquis muris partis orientalis cum turri, praecepit novos, videlicet decentiores, suis sumptibus subtilibus artificibus construi convocatis, et residuo videlicet occidentali, operi coaptari.' *CM*, IV: p. 427. See also the discussion of Matthew's observations of the Gothic rebuilding projects at Westminster in Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 224–6.

59. Because of both its material splendor and craftsmanship, Matthew Paris cited a 'poetic saying' (from Ovid) and claimed that its 'workmanship surpassed the material.' 'Eodem anno [1241], dominus rex Henricus III unum feretrum ex auro purissimo et gemmis preciosis fecit ab electis aurifabis apud Londoniam, ut in ipso reliquiae beati Aedwardi reponerentur, ex sumptibus propriis artificiose fabricari. In qua fabrica, licet materia fuisset preciosissima, tamen secundum illud poeticum, "Materiam superabat opus" [Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, II: 3].' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 151r–v; *CM* IV: pp. 156–7.
60. First, the Romanesque fabric would be demolished in the Abbey's east end; this enlarged the ambulatory space surrounding the new shrine. Soon after, new towers appeared in the west end and the Gothic abbey began to take form. *Ibid.*
61. M.E. Roberts, 'The Relic of the Holy Blood and the Iconography of the Thirteenth-Century North Transept Portal of Westminster Abbey', in W.M. Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986), pp. 129–42.
62. By the early eighteenth century, the sculpture of the central portal, which contained a figure of Christ surrounded by a quatrefoil frame, was said to have been entirely 'time-eaten'. The two greatest hindrances to our understanding of Gothic Westminster are the sixteenth-century Reformation and the overzealous restoration of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See W.R. Lethaby, *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen: A Study of Medieval Building* (London: Duckworth, 1906), pp. 78–85.
63. Today, we see Christ as judge, crowned, enthroned and surrounded by angels. He raises his right arm in a gesture of benediction while his left hand clutches the *orbis mundi*.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
65. See the discussion in P. Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture, 1140–1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 206.
66. See D. Verret and D. Steyaert, *La couleur et la pierre: Polychromie des portails gothiques, Actes du Colloque, Amiens, 12–14 octobre 2000* (Picard, 2002), at 87–8. For a general study of polychromy in the Amiens portals, see C. Weeks, 'The Portail de la Mere Dieu of Amiens Cathedral: Its Polychromy and Conservation', *Studies in Conservation*, 43:2 (1998), pp. 101–8. An in depth analysis of colours in Last Judgment Gothic portals is found in L. Lenormand, J. Devillard et al., 'Observations sur le portail central et sur la façade occidentale de Notre-Dame de Paris', *Bulletin Monumental*, 149 (1991), pp. 341–432.
67. 'Re vera in corpore Christi, Suorum vulnerum stigmata post resurrectionem Suam recentium et adhuc hiantium, quod apparuerunt, et quod Se Christus post resurrectionem et corporis glorificationem se palpabilem prae buit et ad Suum beneplacitum visibilem, vel vulneratum monstravit,

- miraculosum et obstupendum'. *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92r–v and *CM*, VI: p. 144.
68. *Ibid.*
69. See P. Binski and E. Guerry, 'Seats, Relics, and the Rationale of Images in Westminster Abbey, Henry III to Edward II', in Warwick Rodwell and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds), *Westminster: The Art, Architecture and Archaeology of the Royal Abbey* (The British Archeological Association, Conference Transactions XXXIX, Part 1, 2015), pp. 180–204.
70. For evidence of the relic cults of each item at Westminster, see Flete, *The History of Westminster Abbey*, pp. 70–1.
71. E.W. Tristram, *English Medieval Wall Painting: The Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols (Oxford: 1950), pp. 85, 121–7, 560–1. This date differs from that first proposed (c. 1300) in idem, 'A Recent Discovery of Wall-Paintings in Westminster Abbey', *The Burlington Magazine*, 70 (1937), pp. 228–33.
72. See above n. 71.
73. *Ibid.*
74. 'Ut sic videlicet dubitantium fides roboraretur, quia tam duri et tardi fuerunt quidam discipulorum ad credendum resurrectionem, quod postquam viderant, non crediderunt, et ut benedictio non visuris et tamen credituris largius donaretur.' *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92v and *CM*, VI: p. 144.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Because Christ told Mary Magdalene, 'Do not touch me for I have not yet ascended to my Father' (John 20: 17, NIV), many Christian authors, scholars and artists assumed that Thomas could not have touched Christ; instead, he believed when Christ offered his body to be touched. In general, see A. Murray, 'Doubting Thomas in medieval exegesis and art', *Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma*, Conferenze 22 (Rome, 2006).
77. C.W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 47–8.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

PART II

VISIONS OF A HOLY CITY



PLATE 3.3 Abraham Hondius, *A Frost Fair on the Thames at Temple Stairs*, 1684. Oil on canvas. 66.9 × 111.9 cm. The upper portion of the Temple Church rotunda is visible in the background, to the right.



PLATE 3.4 St John's, Clerkenwell. The outline of the Hospitallers' round nave is marked in St John's Square.



PLATE 4.1 King Henry III carrying the Holy Blood, Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 II, f.216r.

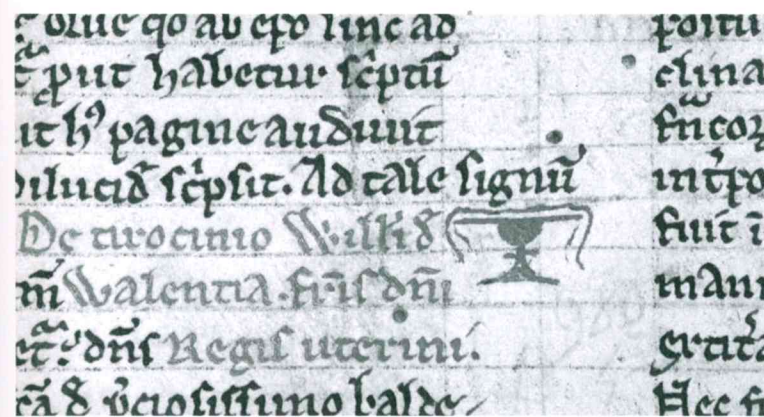


PLATE 4.2 Red chalice, Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 II, f. 216v.

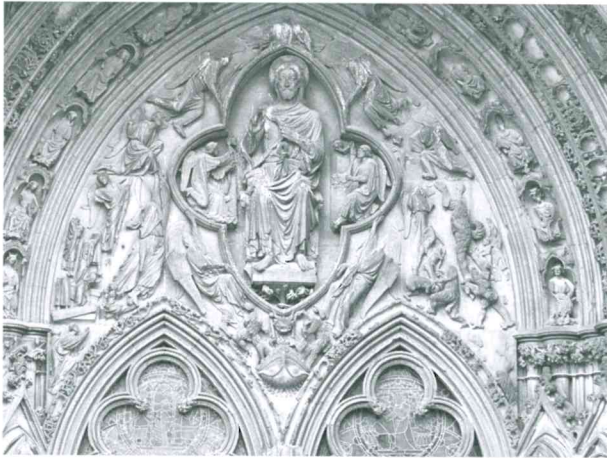


PLATE 4.3 Last Judgment, tympanum sculpture of the south portal of Lincoln Cathedral.

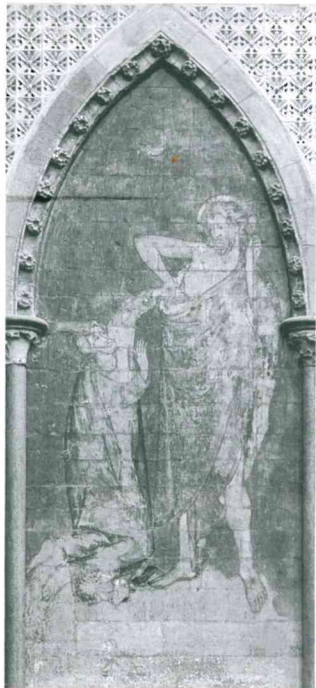


PLATE 4.4 *Doubting Thomas*, wall painting in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, c.1270s.



PLATE 5.1 William Blake, *Christ Baptizing*, 1805. Pen and ink and watercolour over graphite on ivory wove paper. 31.8 × 38.3 cm.



PLATE 5.2 William Blake, *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, c.1805. Pen and watercolour over graphite pencil on paper. 35.6 × 36.8 cm.

diplomatic; Robert hoped to obtain financial and military support in the waning Latin Empire.⁹ Although Henry could not fulfil the Patriarch's wishes, he accepted the relic with great excitement.

To create interest in his Holy Blood cult, King Henry III staged an *adventus*, an urban procession rich with ritualistic motifs, to welcome the presence of the relic in the Plantagenet kingdom.¹⁰ On the night before this civic parade, the king fasted and held a vigil, 'preparing himself for the solemnities of the following day with candles alight and devout prayers'.¹¹ The procession began at dawn; out of respect for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Henry followed behind the members of the church, who were 'tearfully singing and exulting in the Holy Spirit'.¹² All the while, Henry elected to walk without shoes, wearing 'a humble dress consisting of a simple cloak without a hood'.¹³ He held the relic 'with both hands' and 'when he came to any rugged or uneven part of the road, he always kept his eyes fixed on heaven or on the vessel itself'.¹⁴ Matthew notes that the relic, 'which [Christ] shed on the Cross for the salvation of the world', had arrived in 'the most charming crystalline container'.¹⁵ The ruler and the reliquary were shielded by a 'pall [that] was borne on four spears and two assistants supported the king's arms to insure that his strength would not fail in such a great effort'.¹⁶

According to Matthew Paris, King Henry III behaved like a 'most Christian prince' (*princeps Christianissimus*) throughout the *adventus*. He also compares his patron with other examples of renowned *princeps* or *rex christianissimi*, elevating his patron's reputation by association with past and present models of sacral kingship.¹⁷ Matthew wrote that the English ruler had followed in the footsteps of 'the most pious and most victorious' Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41), who had carried the True Cross back to the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁸ Matthew also refers to the more recent *adventus* of a contemporary ruler, King Louis IX of France (r. 1234–70), who 'had commanded all honour at Paris' when he carried the True Cross into Paris on 29 March 1241.¹⁹ Matthew claims that he had witnessed this occasion, which is described in an earlier chapter of the *Chronica Majora*.²⁰ By addressing Henry as a *princeps Christianissimus* and comparing him to Heraclius and Louis, Matthew implies that the *adventus* in London was an impressive performance of both royal and sacred power. Nevertheless, the civic appeal of the ceremony would not be enough to ensure lasting interest in a problematic relic.

In the lower margin accompanying his account of the procession, Matthew included a drawing of King Henry III carrying the Holy Blood (Plate 4.1). As the king lifts the relic, which is contained in an oval phial, he fixes his gaze on the precious item. Four pall-bears surround the king with a decorative canopy, painted at an impossibly twisted angle. Because the parade stretched from St Paul's Cathedral to Westminster Abbey, Henry had retraced the path of his own coronation. However, in this instance, his actions resembled that of a priest, not a monarch.²¹ The sacerdotal manner in which Henry is shown elevating the reliquary mirrors the liturgical gesture of a Eucharistic celebrant, aligning the motion of benediction with that of the king's processional performance.²² The royal cortège would be joined by more prelates as they passed the house of the Bishop of Durham, Nicholas Farnham (r. 1241–9), a close friend and physician to the king. There, an assembly of bishops, abbots and monks joined the final stage of the procession, 'singing songs with a devoted spirit'.²³ Matthew's drawing probably represents Henry's encounter with Bishop Farnham. In the image, a bishop animatedly gestures towards the king's arrival, another bishop peers over his shoulder, and a third tonsured figure expresses his delight. This marginal illustration emphasises Henry's piety through his attire, actions and gaze; it also visually testifies to the support of ecclesiastical participants.

RECEPTION

When the king reached Westminster, he 'indefatigably continued, carrying the container around the church, his palace, and his chambers'.²⁴ At the parade's end inside the Abbey, Henry presented the Holy Blood to the Benedictine monks and the Abbey's patron saints, Peter and Edward the Confessor. Then, the Bishop of Norwich, Walter Suffield (r. 1245–57), delivered a sermon to the large crowd that had gathered inside the Abbey.²⁵ The Bishop of Norwich began with an audacious claim, stating that the Holy Blood was the supreme token of Christ's Passion: 'Of all things held sacred amongst men, the most sacred is the blood of Christ for it was the price of the world's redemption, and its effusion was the salvation of the human race.'²⁶ Employing Aristotelian logic, he intuited that because 'every end is more elevated than its means',

then 'in truth, the Cross is a most holy thing but only because of the sacred shedding of Christ's blood upon it; nor is the blood holy because of the Cross'.²⁷ Suffield thus placed the Holy Blood into a superlative category of Passion relics. As such, the esteemed status of the relic, ruler and *adventus* ceremony in London would have eclipsed the recent translation event in Paris. Having proclaimed the superiority of the Holy Blood and praised Henry as a *princeps Christianissimus*, Suffield granted indulgences to all who were present.²⁸

After Suffield's sermon, a dramatic shift in the tone occurred as the solemnities of the morning gave way to an evening of majestic decadence. The king put on a garland-crown and, dressed in cloth of gold made of the finest silk, sat on his throne as he bestowed knighthoods upon nobles in his inner circle. The jarring contrast between the sacred and secular rituals caused Nicholas Vincent to ask, 'Why were two such spectacles combined in this way?'²⁹ It was only after Suffield's sermon that a wave of cynical speculation emerged from the congregation. Matthew Paris gently alludes to an uprising of opposition by citing the Gospels: 'When this affair was discussed, some "slow to believe" (Luke 24:25) still doubted.'³⁰ Dissenting audience members expressed their concerns about the relic's authenticity and the nature of its acquisition. The negative reactions seem to have been directed at the king while he sat on his throne, clothed in gold. Perhaps in an attempt to undermine the antagonism, Matthew records only one side of the conversation, citing the reaction of the king and his supporters. Thierry, who was Prior of the Hospitallers in Jerusalem, confronted the sceptics saying 'Dear lords, why do you hesitate?'³¹ He said that neither he, nor any Templar nor Hospitaller had asked for any 'remuneration in gold or silver from the King' before Henry interjected 'certainly not'.³²

In addition to the political and pecuniary suspicions expressed by the congregation, theological inquiries concerning the nature of the Holy Blood posed a far greater threat to the new royal cult. The cynics asked, 'how could the Lord have left his blood on the earth when he rose again – full and entire in body – on the third day after his Passion?'³³ This question appears to have caused tension amongst English prelates. Concomitantly effluvial and Eucharistic, simultaneously corporeal and symbolic, the Holy Blood occupies an unusual place on the devotional spectrum. For many medieval

sceptics and modern historians, including Charles Rohault de Fleury, the Holy Blood is not only spurious in provenance and problematic in its essence; it has no place in the esteemed category of Passion relics.³⁴

According to Matthew Paris, 'this question was at once fully dealt with by the Bishop of Lincoln', Robert Grosseteste (r. 1235–53), who was one of the most formidable scholars and statesmen of thirteenth-century England.³⁵ Like Suffield, Grosseteste endorsed the king's cult with unequivocal support. The articulate defence he presented in Westminster Abbey was purportedly recorded in a tract entitled *De Sanguine Christi*. Matthew equips his chronicle with an appendix containing this treatise: he writes, 'the answer [by Grosseteste] is set out ... word for word as the writer of this page heard it and carefully wrote it down, at this sign'.³⁶ Immediately following this statement in the *Chronica Majora*, Matthew inserts a drawing of a chalice in red ink (Plate 4.2). Any reader could find its counterpart by searching for the same pictorial symbol.³⁷

In *De Sanguine Christi*, Grosseteste addresses those who opposed the cult: 'Because the slow and the sceptical are accustomed to object that since Christ rose again on the third day with his body whole and not drained of blood, how can it be that he left his blood behind him on earth?'³⁸ He then offered a thoughtful reply:

There are two types of blood. The one type is the blood produced by nutrition and, on occasion, there is too much of this, such as when it bursts forth spontaneously from the nostrils or finds some other outlet, there being so much of it that it must be diminished. And it is this type of Christ's blood that we have on earth, except that really it was not blood-like because God willed that there should be a later commemoration of the Passion of the Lord.³⁹

For Grosseteste, the Holy Blood relic in London belongs to the secondary and more superfluous category. The other type is that which is 'essential to the human body' and 'of this sort of Christ's blood we perhaps have none on earth – but I say perhaps because the Lord "does whatever he pleases" [Ps 115: 3]'.⁴⁰ Above all, *De Sanguine Christi* is an eristic tract designed to admonish sceptics and encourage devotion.⁴¹

Grosseteste argues that Christ, who had died of his own will, retained his vital blood throughout the Passion and exuded only superfluous blood.⁴² He then describes Christ's bloodied body after

the Deposition, when those 'sacred wounds' were 'still dripping wet'.⁴³ Even the perforation of the nails in his hands and his feet were 'stained' and 'dripping'.⁴⁴ The soldier's spear, he claims, had caused the greatest wound; 'a large and wide chasm' remained in Christ's side.⁴⁵ The surplus blood gathered from the wounds – including the blood from the incisions in his head, hands, feet and side – would have been collected and preserved in vases when Joseph washed the body of Christ.⁴⁶ These vases, he explains, remained in Joseph's family for generations before they were enshrined in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Grosseteste then divides the blood various relics collected by Joseph into four distinct categories, placing the 'formidable, tremendous and most revered pre-cordial blood' that 'flowed from the very heart in Christ's side' in the highest position.⁴⁸ Moreover, the blood collected from the wound in Christ's side had the most splendid vase.⁴⁹ The *reverendissimus* relic in question is the Holy Blood in Westminster. *De Sanguine Christi* presents a compelling response to each of the theological, historical and political suspicions levelled against the Holy Blood relic. Grosseteste repeatedly emphasised the significance of the Holy Blood's purported origins – the wound in Christ's side.

There is evidence that Henry III requested the reproduction and circulation of *De Sanguine Christi*.⁵⁰ He also commanded Matthew Paris to write an account of the translation of the Holy Blood and a miracle that occurred when it arrived in London.⁵¹ His entries on the Holy Blood in the *Chronica Majora* provide the most detailed record of the translation event. Oddly, however, Matthew never elaborates or even addresses the specific miracle mentioned by Henry. In fact, there is only one record of a miracle related to the Holy Blood in Henry's lifetime. The account is discussed by Nicholas Vincent and noted in a seventeenth-century transcription by Elias Ashmole.⁵² Ashmole's notation—concerning the revivification of a boy who drowned in Hyde Park in the c.1260s – inadvertently reveals the short radius and extremely limited local interest in the king's cult.⁵³

WESTMINSTER ABBEY AS *LOCUS SANCTUS*

In the years following the relic's arrival, Henry spearheaded spiritual incentives to attract popular devotion to the Holy Blood in conjunction with the feast of St Edward. In 1248, public criers throughout London announced a new fortnightly fair at Westminster

in which the people could venerate the Holy Blood.⁵⁴ St Edward's Fair would be celebrated again at Westminster in 1249 and, according to Matthew Paris, many attended 'out of love and devotion for the saint' to 'venerate the recently obtained Holy Blood of Christ and obtain the remission granted thereby'.⁵⁵ However, no known miracles occurred during the fairs of 1248 and 1249. For at least three years, the king vainly tried to attract believers to his cult through his sponsorship of festivals.

Henry's investment in the Holy Blood can be situated in the wider context of his benefaction of cults and building projects at Westminster Abbey, especially that of Edward the Confessor (r.1042–66). The Anglo-Saxon saint-king served as Henry's personal model of Christian kingship.⁵⁶ Westminster Abbey was not only the *locus sanctus* of Edward; the confessor-king was also the primary patron of the Abbey in the eleventh century.⁵⁷ For this reason, Matthew implies that Henry's role as an architectural patron was yet another aspect of the emulative love for his patron saint: Henry decided to rebuild Westminster because he was 'inspired by the devotion he felt toward Edward'.⁵⁸ Since his canonisation in 1161, the relics of Edward housed in Westminster had yet to excite the popular imagination, unlike other twelfth-century English cults, such as the cult of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. In 1241, Henry commissioned the construction of a resplendent Gothic shrine made of gold and precious stones to house the body of his patron saint.⁵⁹ Then, in 1245, he hired architects to create an entirely new abbey.⁶⁰

For three decades, Henry financed the Gothic redesign of Westminster in an ambitious attempt to transform the Benedictine abbey into the supreme religious centre of the Plantagenet kingdom. In addition to the orchestration of an *adventus*, declamation of persuasive sermons, circulation of eloquent treatises and chronicles, and celebration of festivals, the creation of new art works would also support the foundation of this new royal cult. However, unlike rituals and texts, medieval images do not rely on an intercessor to perform or express their meaning. A close examination of the extant artistic projects executed under the aegis of Henry III reveals the depth to which the cult of relics at Westminster would be integrated into the decorative programme. Moreover, the monumental Gothic images preserved at Westminster, which include its wall paintings and Retable, testify to the presence of ambitious and inventive artists.

However, in any study of Westminster, the art historian is often bewildered by the extent of post-thirteenth-century destruction, addition and restoration. Because the Abbey remained unfinished (and underfunded) at the time of Henry's death in 1272, the layers of subsequent construction and decoration conceal the majority of the first phase of Gothic patronage. The remainder of this chapter will examine two Gothic art works that placed significant visual evidence on the wound carved into Christ's chest by the Holy Lance. In each instance, these images will be analysed in light of their connection to the cult of the Holy Blood.

THE LOST *LAST JUDGMENT* SCULPTURE OF THE NORTH PORTAL

In 1984, M.E. Roberts first suggested that the design of the north porch at Westminster incorporates visual references to the cult of the Holy Blood.⁶¹ Positioned at the entrance to the Abbey, the central tympanum showed the *Last Judgment*. Given what is known of the original portal design, which would have been the first figural image encountered by any thirteenth-century visitor, its atypical iconography suggests a site-specific agenda. However, the present-day appearance of the north porch has changed substantially since its creation in c.1250–60s.⁶² In addition to the eighteenth-century removal of the medieval elements, the current design is the result of the nineteenth-century work of Sir Gilbert Scott and J.L. Pearson.⁶³ However, art historians have assumed that the well-preserved c.1260–70s portal in the south transept at Lincoln cathedral was modelled on the lost north porch of Westminster Abbey.⁶⁴ Moreover, there is evidence that the north porch programme at Westminster was similar to and possibly based on the c.1230s central portal of the west facade at Amiens cathedral.⁶⁵ Situated between its reputed antecedent and copy, the portrayal of the *Last Judgment* at Westminster emerges as an innovative composition.

Like the original design at Westminster, Christ sits enthroned within a quatrefoil frame in the south portal tympanum at Lincoln cathedral (Plate 4.3). Angels hover around the judge, censuring him and praising his return. Another pair of angels kneels to the side of his throne, which is situated firmly within the liminal frame. Despite the dynamic energy of the angels encircling him, Christ's facial

expression remains calm as he gazes outwards. With the fingertips of his left hand, Christ gently pulls back his garment to reveal a horizontal wound incised across his right side. He offers a blessing with his right hand, lifting up two of his fingers above the scar. Here, we find a particularly empathetic portrayal of the glorious Son of Man described in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 16: 26–8). The Lincoln judge, affixed to the cathedral of the great defender of the Holy Blood relic, Bishop Grosseteste, emphasises the largest wound of the Passion.

The most striking visual difference between the Judgment portal at Amiens when compared with those at Westminster and Lincoln is Christ's agency in the display of his wounds. At Amiens, Christ is bare-chested – his garment has fallen down from his shoulders and rests in the creases of his elbows. Both his arms are raised exposing the holes his hands and side.⁶⁶ In contrast, at Lincoln – and, presumably, at Westminster – Christ appears actively engaged in revealing the wound in his side. Because his mantle remains draped over his torso, Christ is compelled to pull back the fabric of his dress to show his bloodied scar. In so doing, the holes in his hands are less evident and the cut in his side becomes the focal point. In the *Last Judgment* at Westminster and Lincoln, the side wound – the place of origin of the Holy Blood relic – has transformed into the catalysing site of an inventive eschatological vision.

If the Lincoln judge reflects a lost archetype from Westminster, then its composition not only responds to a growing High Medieval interest in blood piety, it also signals the centrality of the Holy Blood throughout Christological time. In *De Sanguine Christi*, the wounds in the body of Christ are said to be 'marks of the past' that remained 'still gaping after the Resurrection'.⁶⁷ Grosseteste claimed that when Christ returns his wounds will still appear.⁶⁸ Here, in the *Last Judgment* portal, the words of Grosseteste could take form in stone. The scar in Christ's side plays a central role in the Christian past, present and future. It appears simultaneously as an imprint of the Passion, an integral aspect of instilling faith in his Resurrection – indeed, it was the offer to touch this wound that caused the Apostle Thomas to believe – and it remains on his chest until the end of time. Positioned above the entrance to the Abbey, this *Last Judgment* encouraged visitors to contemplate the salvific importance of Christ's bloodshed by showcasing the wounds. This particular iconography

also served as a devotional signpost for a sacred space imbued with the presence of the Holy Blood, preparing the viewer for their imminent interaction with the relic. In this way, the Gothic design of the *Last Judgment* at Westminster simultaneously represented the relic's esteemed in salvation history while guiding the viewer to understand its potential role in their personal experience of redemption.

THE DOUBTING THOMAS MURAL IN THE SOUTH TRANSEPT

The visual culture of the Holy Blood at Westminster also extends to its Gothic wall paintings. Monumental murals survive in the south transept and the adjoining chapel dedicated to St Faith. The south transept depictions of *Christopher Carrying the Christ Child* and *Doubting Thomas* highlight the physical connection between the saint and Christ.⁶⁹ Because Christ pulls the left arm of the Apostle into the wound in his right side and the Christ Child wraps his arm around the head of his helper, these murals effectively indicate that two relics in the Abbey's possession – the arm of St Thomas and the head of St Christopher – are also contact relics of Christ. In addition to the aforementioned Christological relics, Henry III donated portions of Christopher's head to the collection and added a new ring to the arm reliquary of Thomas, which was originally given to the Abbey by his spiritual patron, St Edward.⁷⁰ Executed by the time of consecration in 1269, these Gothic paintings elevate the status of the cult of relics at Westminster through their atypical composition.⁷¹

Recently, Paul Binski and I have argued that the Westminster Christopher image, which is the earliest surviving mural of its kind in England, stands at the ignition point of a fast-flourishing and far-reaching image cult.⁷² *Doubting Thomas* (Plate 4.4) has also been exposed as an ambitious example of an iconographic break with a long-standing history of representation.⁷³ By showing the Apostle's arm wedged deeply into the wound, the painter indisputably indicates that Thomas had touched the resurrected body of Christ. The extraordinary design choices of the south transept wall paintings would have enhanced the status of royal relic cults by boldly breaking with conventional iconography.

This image of *Doubting Thomas* is totally unique in Western medieval art in its emphasis on Christ's bloodshed. For Grosseteste,

the appearance of the wounds on Christ's resurrected body had 'strengthened the faith of the doubters', including the disciples.⁷⁴ He states explicitly that it was the sight of the wounds that caused them to believe.⁷⁵ Here, in the south transept, Grosseteste's words again spring into pictorial action. Before the Westminster painting, there had never been such a blatant demonstration of touch in a portrayal of *Doubting Thomas*; in fact, artists tended to shy away from representing physical contact between the figures in an attempt to avoid controversy.⁷⁶ Perhaps for the first time in medieval Europe, the Gothic painter in Westminster interpreted the Gospel account of the Incredulity with literal precision: Christ commanded Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe' (John 20:27).

In the wall painting at Westminster, the precise moment when Thomas overcomes his doubt is re-imagined through a physical encounter: the Apostle is transformed as he touches the blood of Christ. With a background of blood-red paint and the placement of the bleeding wound of the Holy Nail at the centre of the composition, the Gothic artist embraces an interest in the appearance of the wounds after the Resurrection. In fact, the Apostle's hand is fitted so deeply into Christ's side that the viewer is unable to see his fingertips. As his fingers enter the wound, blood pours out in energetic, waving lines. Thus, the body of Christ appears to bleed after his Resurrection, just as Grosseteste said. Produced near the end of Henry's reign around 1270, this remarkable image has emerged from a community unafraid of blood piety. Using audacious iconography, the mural offers an authoritative visual response to those who questioned the potency of the Holy Blood. The artist has used the Apostle's doubt as a symbolic precedent for those who need to find faith in that which is difficult to accept. As such, the image of *Doubting Thomas* in Westminster could act as an emblem for encouraging devotion to the *in situ* cults, especially the Holy Blood.

CONCLUSION

In the Gothic sculpture of the north portal and the painting in the south transept, the portrayal of Christ's pierced side becomes central to the viewer's comprehension of Christian salvation. By breaking with iconographic tradition to position the side wound at the focal point of

each image, the site-specific design of the Westminster judge and *Doubting Thomas* reflects a calculated interest in cult of the Holy Blood. At the time, the cult still needed to attract pilgrims and establish authenticity. Designed and executed in the decades following the arrival of the relic, Gothic artists were charged with the task of using their compositions to cultivate interest in a collapsing royal cult. In each instance, the words of Robert Grosseteste in *De Sanguine Christi* take form in the pictorial design. The portal and painting serve a devotional function developed under a zealous patron. Behind their production, we find the legacy of Henry III; a wealthy and devout protagonist committed to the endorsement of the cults at Westminster Abbey.

Despite the calculated presentations of piety and authenticity, the arrival of the Holy Blood in London caused alarming questions about the nature of Christ's Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. As Caroline Walker Bynum explained in her study of blood piety, 'for a successful pilgrimage, it was not enough to produce authenticating documents, arrange lavish processions and translations, garner ecclesiastical support, or secure indulgences'.⁷⁷ Even the persuasive panegyric of the Bishop of Norwich and the erudite defence of the Bishop of Lincoln could not sway unbelievers. For Paul Binski, the failure of the Holy Blood cult stemmed from both its 'inherently political character' and the 'problematical character of the relic itself'.⁷⁸ This chapter has attempted to show how an adversarial situation spurred creative invention. In the depiction of the *Last Judgment* and *Doubting Thomas*, the unprecedented emphasis on the wound in Christ's side reflects a local and site-specific interest in the Holy Blood. Viewed within the wider context of the visual culture of Westminster, these Gothic art works display decisive iconographic choices linked closely with pressing theological concerns.

The tenuous presence of the Holy Blood provided artists with the liberty to create new designs that redefined the relic's significance. The weakness of the cult revealed its need for authoritative images to defend and strengthen its reputation. By focusing on the wound from the incision of the Holy Lance, the portal sculpture and south transept mural employ a site-specific visual vocabulary that encourages devotion to the Holy Blood. The bleeding scar on the body of the crucified Christ has transformed into an emblematic sign of the victory of his Passion. Although the cult never flourished, it

succeeded in inspiring innovative iconographic designs and, in this instance, the failure of the Holy Blood has exposed the catalysing role of visual culture in the Gothic devotional imagination.

NOTES

1. N. Vincent, *The Holy Blood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
2. The *Chronica Majora* is preserved at Cambridge University, Corpus Christi College (hereafter CCCC) MS 16 II, ff. 216r–v and the six chapters are *De sanguine Christi allato Londonias*, *Prosecutio*, *Prosecutio facti sancti et memorandi*, *De semone domini episcopo Norwicensis eadem die*, *De tirocinio Willelmi de Walentia fratris domini regis uterini*, and *De assertione domini regis super praedictis*. See the transcription in *Matthaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard, 7 vols, The Rolls Series (London: 1872–84), vol. IV, p. 640–5 (henceforth CM). For a detailed discussion of the making of this manuscript, see also S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
3. Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, appendix 1, pp. 202–4. This letter was originally signed in Acre and dated 31 May 1247. Copied from the lost original document, the text survives in a transcription kept in Westminster Abbey MS Domesday, f. 394v–395r.
4. 'Excellenti et egregio viro domino Henrico Dei gratia illustri regi Angl(ie), Robertus eadem gratia sancte Ierosolimitane ecclesie patriarcham apostolice sedis legatus, et eiusdem ecclesie capitulum salutem et felices ad vota successus' *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4 at 202. All translations are my own.
5. 'Gloriantes in cruce ipsius in qua gloriari oportet, scituri certissime et sine dubitatione quacumque quod nos eiusdem preciosi sanguinis quantitatem extraximus de thesauris ecclesie nostre ibidem ab antiquissimis temporibus conservatam cum summa reverentia et honore, et veraciter est sanguis ille qui de latere domini Ihesu Cristi in loco predicto manavit.' *Ibid.*, p. 204.
6. The record of the cult's previous existence is dubious at best: There is no trace of its presence in the Holy Sepulchre or in any of the myriad treasures of Levantine collections. Unlike other popular blood relics in the High Middle Ages, such as the Fécamp Blood relic, the Reichenau Blood relic and the *Volto Santo*, there is no trace of the Westminster Holy Blood relic before the thirteenth century. See the discussion in Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 39 and 71. It has been suggested that the Holy Blood could have belonged to the Templars in Acre. See J. Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land: From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 207–8.

7. 'Aliquam particulam de preciosissimo sanguine domini Ihesu Cristi quem in loco Calvarie sito intra Ierosolimit' ecclesiam, pendens in crucis patibulo, pro salute et redemptione vestra et omnium Cristianorum habundanter effudit ...' Ibid., pp. 203–4.
8. 'Ut ipsam sanguinem nostre redemptionis preciosum habentes pre oculis, passionem eius semper in memoriam habeatis', Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, pp. 203–4.
9. When Henry eventually took his crusading vows in Westminster Abbey in 1250, he did little to offer assistance to his eastern ally. He also never ventured to the Holy Land. See D.A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 112. See also A.J. Forey, 'The Crusading Vows of the English King Henry III', *Durham University Journal*, 65 (1973), pp. 229–47.
10. In medieval ceremonial culture, the desired outcome of an *adventus* would be the conversion of the collective group of celebrants into a more sacred community through the experience of this shared ritual. For the Christian ruler, the Roman *adventus* could be adopted as a model for religious celebrations associated with the cult of relics. Instead of the joyous entry of the visibly victorious emperor – who would have passed beneath the transformative liminal space of a triumphal arch into his city with a decedent display of the spoils of war – the archetypal Christian *adventus* relied upon the humility of its protagonist to convey the sanctity of the object he carried. On the meaning and significance of the *adventus* ritual in the Middle Ages, see Margot Fassler, 'Adventus at Châtres: Ritual Models for Major Processions', in N. Howe (ed.), *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2007), pp. 13–62.
11. 'Devoto spiritu ac contrito in vigilia sancti Ae[wardii] in pane et aqua jejunans, et nocte vigilans, cum ingenti lumine et devotis orationibus se ad crastinam sollempnitatem prudenter praeparavit.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r; CM, IV: p. 640.
12. 'Nec praetermittendum, quod amababus manibus illud deferens, cum per stratam salebrosam et inaequalem pereget, semper vel in caelum vel in ipsum vas lumina tenebat defixa. Supportatur autem palla per quatuor hastas. Supportabantque duo coadjutores brachia sua, ne in tanto forte labore deficeret.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: pp. 641–2.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. 'Magistri enim Templi [Guillaume de Sounae] et Hospitalis [Guillaume de Châteauneuf] cum testimonio quamplurium sigollorum, videlicet patriarchae Jerosolimitani, archiepiscoporum quoque et episcoporum, abbatum et aliorum praelatorum et magnatum de Terra Sancta, miserat quandam portionem sanguinis Dominici, quem pro salute mundi fudit in cruce, in quodam vase cristallino venustissimo, per quendam fratrem Templarium bene notum.' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: pp. 640–1.

16. Ibid.
17. 'Dominus autem rex, utpote princeps Christianissimus ab Augusto Eraclio victoriosissimo ac piissimo imperatore, crucem sanctam exaltante ...' CCCC Ms. 16 II, f. 216r, CM: IV, p. 641.
18. Heraclius retrieved the True Cross from its Persian captors and returned the relic to the Holy Sepulchre in 630. Observed annually on 14 September, the liturgy for the *Exaltatio* had remained essentially unchanged throughout the Middle Ages. For an introduction to the history and cultural transmission of both the *Inventio* and *Exaltatio Sanctae Crucis* in medieval England, particularly in Old English texts, see M.C. Bodden, *The Old English Finding of the True Cross* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 24–7 and, more generally, the recent publication of B. Beart, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Although its compilation around 1260 postdates the *Chronica Majora*, the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine reflects the contemporary understanding of Heraclius' procession in the thirteenth century. See the modern translation of the 'Exaltation of the Holy Cross' in *The Golden Legend*, ed. and trans. W.G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 168–73.
19. 'Et a rege Francorum tunc superstite, crucem eandem, ut praescribitur, Parisius honorante, sumens exemplum' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: 641.
20. CCCC Ms. 16, f. 140v–142v; CM, IV: pp. 90–2.
21. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*, p. 143.
22. Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, p. 208.
23. 'Conventus autem Westmonasterii, cum omnibus qui convenerant, episcopais, abbatibus, et monachis, qui plus quam centum aestimabantur, canentes et exultantes in spiritu sancto et lacrimis, occurrebant eidem domino regi sic adventatni, usque ad portam curiae episcopi Dunelmensis.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216r, CM, IV: p. 642.
24. 'Nec adhuc cessabat dominus rex, quin indefensus ferens illud vas, ut prius, circuire[t] ecclesiam, regiam, et thalamos suos. Demum illud quasi donum impretiabile, et quod totam Angliam ditando illustraverat, donavit, et optulit Deo et ecclesiae Sancti Petri Westmonasterii, et caro suo Ae[dwardo] et sacro conventui, qui ibidem Deo et sanctis suis ministrant.'
25. Matthew Paris recalls that the size of the audience was so great that the Romanesque walls could hardly contain them. 'Tunc autem reversi sicut ierant, videlicet processionaliter ad ecclesiam Westmonasterii, vix in ea prae copiosa turbae multitudine continebatur.' Ibid.
26. 'Dominus episcopus Norwicensis, qui et Missam eadem die sollempniter celebravit, populo predicando asseruit, quod inter sacra quae inter mortales habentur, sacratissimum quid est sanguis Christi.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM, IV: p. 642.

27. 'Est enim pretium mundi, et ejus effusio salus generis humani; et ut condigne illud magni caret amplius, addidit illud philosophi, "Omne propter quod, dignius quam illud quod." Revera crux sancta sanctissimum quid est. Sed ipsa sacra fuit propter sacratoris sanguinis aspersionem, non sanguis sacer propter crucem.' Ibid.
28. Et addidit, quod pro maxima domini regis Angliae, qui dinoscitur domini regis Anglias, qui dinoscitur esse inter omnes Christianitatis principes Christianissimus ... ' Ibid. In the final lines of his summary this sermon, Matthew reports that 'exultant worshippers' would receive 'six years and one hundred and sixteen days' with free remission from the penances imposed upon them According to Nicolas Vincent, this exorbitant number probably alludes to the total number of indulgences offered since the twelfth century plus the additional indulgences from the present-day ceremony. Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 159.
29. Ibid., p. 17.
30. 'Cum autem examinaretur, doubt, et alii tardicordes ad credendum adhuc hesitent.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM IV: p. 643.
31. 'Ait dominus Theodoricus, prior Hospitalis Jerosolimitani, episcopis et aliis circumsedentibus; 'Domini carissimi, quid adhuc fluctuatis? Exigitne ob hoc beneficium aliquis nostrum, vel Templarius vel Hospitalarius, vel etiam frater qui portavit, vel de domino rege, vel alio aliquo, aliquam in auro vel argento retributionem, vel quantulumcunque premium?' Et rex; 'Nequaquam.' Et frater; 'Quare ergo in dampnationem animae suae tot et tanti viri tali assertioni perhiberent testimonium, apponentes signa sua, quae sunt fidei pignora manifesta?' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM, IV: p. 643.
32. Ibid.
33. 'Quaestionem hanc moverent: "Quomodo cum plene et integraliter tertia die post passionem resurrexit Dominus, sanguinem in terra reliquerit?"' Ibid.
34. Charles Rohault de Fleury, *Mémoire sur les Instruments de la Passion* (Paris: 1870).
35. 'Quae quaestio ab episcopo Lincolnensi ad unguem tunc determinabatur, prout habetur scriptum in libro Additamentorum; prout hujus paginae [scriptor] audivit, et verbo ad verbum satis dilucide scripsit, ad tale signum.' CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v, CM IV: pp. 643–4.
36. Ibid.
37. London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 91r–92v. CM, VI: pp. 138–44.
38. 'Sed quia tardicordes et oblocutores solent sic obicere et dicere, quod cum Christus terio die resurrexisset cum coporis intergritate, et non exanguis, qualiter esse posset quod sanguinem Suum post Se reliquerit in terra.' *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92r, reproduced in CM, VI: 143.
39. 'Responsum fuit sufficienter: Duo sunt sanguines vel genera sanguinum. Unus enim sanguis est qui ex nutrimentis generatur, qui aliquando ita

- superfluit, ut a naribus sponte prorumpat, vel aliquem alium exitum [habeat], ut minutione indigeat sic repletus. Et de tali sanguine Christi habemus in terra licet, sane non fuisset sanguinolentus, Deo sic volente, ut videlicet habeatur recentior memoria Dominicae Passionis.' Ibid.
40. 'De quo dicitur, quod tysis est consumptio substantialis humiditatis, id est sanguinis vitae necessarii ... De illo Chrsi sanguine, non habemus forte in terris. Forte dico quia omnia quoecunque voluit Dominus fecit.' Ibid.
41. 'Ut scilicet sic scrietur quod Omnipotens fuit, ut contra consuetum usum et naturalem foret corpus Eius, Qui fuit Dominus naturae ad Suum nutum et beneplacitum monstrabile et palpabile et saucium cerneretur, Qui tamen as discipulos intravit foribus obseratis. Et sic omnium cessare debent detractorum.' Ibid.
42. For a general but thorough discussion of Grosseteste's conception of the nature of Christ's blood, see J. McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 131–2.
43. 'Crucifixo ergo Jesu et mortuo, postulavit Joseph corpus Jesu, ingrediens ad eum audacter, per quod creditur fuisse potena; et concessum est ei. Ipse igitur ... cum omni honore et reverentia ipsum corpus sanctissimum deposuit de cruce saucium et multiformiter cruentatum; habensque lintheamen subtile dependens a collo et humeris, ne indigne tam dignum corpus nudis manibus contrectaret, ipsa sacra vulnera adhuc madida ac distillantia sedulo ac devoto deterisit officio.' London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 91r; CM, VI: p. 139.
44. 'Immo etiam loca clavorum extractorum tincta cruore in ipso crucis patibulo exhaustit abstergendo.' Ibid.
45. 'Tum propter militis lanceas qua ipse latus Jesu non tantum vulneravit sed aperuit; amplum enim fecit et hiatum patulum, forte saepius vel saltem semel fecit impingendo.' Ibid.
46. Lavit, quia sane arbitrabatur et religiose dignum censuit sanguinem ipsum sibi prorsus vendicandum, et ut thesaurum vel medicamen preciosissimum reservandum. Ibid.
47. This claim could have been rooted in an interpolation of the apocryphal texts in the *Acti Pilati*, the influence of Arthurian Romance on the significance of Joseph to the history of Christian Britain or perhaps from an encounter with lost *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* by William of Malmesbury. For the role of Joseph in the cleansing of Christ's body at the tomb, see *The Gospel of Nichodemus* (Acti Pilati) in M.R. James (ed.), *The Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924) Part XV: 5. Joseph's desire to collect and preserve the blood could be linked to a developing tradition in Arthurian romances (e.g. Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie* and Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*, and the *Perlesvaus*) or the lost *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, wherein Joseph is said to have founded Glastonbury Abbey and endowed it with relics collected from the tomb. See V.M. Lagorio, 'The evolving legend of St

- Joseph of Glastonbury', in J.P. Carley (ed.), *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), pp. 55–82.
48. 'Quarto: Ille formidabilis tremendae et reverendissimae recordationis cruor precordialis, qui ex ipso corde Christi vel saltem latere constat effluxisse.' *CM*, VI: p. 140.
49. 'Maximo autem timore et honore ipsum sanguinem cum aqua quein censuit praecordiale, a latere dextro feliciter eliquatum et expressum, in vase recepti nobilissimo tanquam thesaurum impreciabilem, sibi et successoribus suis specialiter reservandum.' *CM*, VI: p. 140.
50. It is likely that Henry commissioned Grosseteste to convert his impassioned declamation on 13 October 1247 into a polished text. Evidence exists for the circulation of *De Sanguine Christi* in the thirteenth century. For instance, Grosseteste's statements about the blood of Christ resurface in the works of Thomas Aquinas, who disagrees entirely with the concept of surplus blood. See Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, pp. 87–8.
51. CCCC Ms 16 II, f. 216v; *CM*, IV: p. 644.
52. Preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 842, f. 80v. See the transcription of the miracle text in Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 205.
53. See Vincent, *The Holy Blood*, p. 166.
54. 'Quamplurimis praelatis magnatibusque sub optentu amicitiae et devotionis significavit, ut praesentialiter cum ipso apud Westmonasterium beati Aedwardi festum solempniter ac devote concelebrent ... Unde factum est, ut ibidem illuc innumerabilis populus, velut ad celeberrimas nundinas, confluerent, ibidemque translatio beati Aedwardi et sanguis Christi a populo illuc tracto et ibi congregato inopinabiliter.' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 221v, *CM* V: pp. 28–9.
55. 'Congregati sunt igitur ibidem qui antea dispersi fuerunt magnates quamplurimi, tum pro devotione et amore sancti, tum pro veneratione sancti sanguinis Christi nuper adepti et venia concessa ibidem optinenda, tum pro domini regis ipsos vocantis reverentia ...' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 224r, *CM* V: pp. 47–8.
56. For an overview of the development of Henry's interest in Edward in the years leading up to his patronage of Gothic Westminster, see D. Carpenter, 'King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor: The Origins of the Cult', *English Historical Review*, CXXII (2007), pp. 865–91.
57. See the discussion in Binski, *Westminster and the Plantagenets*, p. 143.
58. 'Eodem vero anno [1245], dominus rex, devotione, quam habuit adversus sanctam Aedwardum, submonente, ecclesiam Sancti Petri Westmonasterii jussit ampliari. Et diruitis antiquis muris partis orientalis cum turri, praecepit novos, videlicet decentiores, suis sumptibus subtilibus artificibus construi convocatis, et residuo videlicet occidentali, operi coaptari.' *CM*, IV: p. 427. See also the discussion of Matthew's observations of the Gothic rebuilding projects at Westminster in Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 224–6.

59. Because of both its material splendor and craftsmanship, Matthew Paris cited a 'poetic saying' (from Ovid) and claimed that its 'workmanship surpassed the material.' 'Eodem anno [1241], dominus rex Henricus III unum feretrum ex auro purissimo et gemmis preciosis fecit ab electis aurifabis apud Londoniam, ut in ipso reliquiae beati Aedwardi reponerentur, ex sumptibus propriis artificiose fabricari. In qua fabrica, licet materia fuisset preciosissima, tamen secundum illud poeticum, "Materiam superabat opus" [Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, II: 3].' CCCC MS 16 II, f. 151r–v; *CM* IV: pp. 156–7.
60. First, the Romanesque fabric would be demolished in the Abbey's east end; this enlarged the ambulatory space surrounding the new shrine. Soon after, new towers appeared in the west end and the Gothic abbey began to take form. *Ibid.*
61. M.E. Roberts, 'The Relic of the Holy Blood and the Iconography of the Thirteenth-Century North Transept Portal of Westminster Abbey', in W.M. Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986), pp. 129–42.
62. By the early eighteenth century, the sculpture of the central portal, which contained a figure of Christ surrounded by a quatrefoil frame, was said to have been entirely 'time-eaten'. The two greatest hindrances to our understanding of Gothic Westminster are the sixteenth-century Reformation and the overzealous restoration of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See W.R. Lethaby, *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen: A Study of Medieval Building* (London: Duckworth, 1906), pp. 78–85.
63. Today, we see Christ as judge, crowned, enthroned and surrounded by angels. He raises his right arm in a gesture of benediction while his left hand clutches the *orbis mundi*.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
65. See the discussion in P. Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture, 1140–1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 206.
66. See D. Verret and D. Steyaert, *La couleur et la pierre: Polychromie des portails gothiques, Actes du Colloque, Amiens, 12–14 octobre 2000* (Picard, 2002), at 87–8. For a general study of polychromy in the Amiens portals, see C. Weeks, 'The Portail de la Mere Dieu of Amiens Cathedral: Its Polychromy and Conservation', *Studies in Conservation*, 43:2 (1998), pp. 101–8. An in depth analysis of colours in Last Judgment Gothic portals is found in L. Lenormand, J. Devillard et al., 'Observations sur le portail central et sur la façade occidentale de Notre-Dame de Paris', *Bulletin Monumental*, 149 (1991), pp. 341–432.
67. 'Re vera in corpore Christi, Suorum vulnerum stigmata post resurrectionem Suam recentium et adhuc hiantium, quod apparuerunt, et quod Se Christus post resurrectionem et corporis glorificationem se palpabilem prae buit et ad Suum beneplacitum visibilem, vel vulneratum monstravit,

- miraculosum et obstupendum'. *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92r–v and *CM*, VI: p. 144.
68. *Ibid.*
69. See P. Binski and E. Guerry, 'Seats, Relics, and the Rationale of Images in Westminster Abbey, Henry III to Edward II', in Warwick Rodwell and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds), *Westminster: The Art, Architecture and Archaeology of the Royal Abbey* (The British Archeological Association, Conference Transactions XXXIX, Part 1, 2015), pp. 180–204.
70. For evidence of the relic cults of each item at Westminster, see Flete, *The History of Westminster Abbey*, pp. 70–1.
71. E.W. Tristram, *English Medieval Wall Painting: The Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols (Oxford: 1950), pp. 85, 121–7, 560–1. This date differs from that first proposed (c. 1300) in idem, 'A Recent Discovery of Wall-Paintings in Westminster Abbey', *The Burlington Magazine*, 70 (1937), pp. 228–33.
72. See above n. 71.
73. *Ibid.*
74. 'Ut sic videlicet dubitantium fides roboraretur, quia tam duri et tardi fuerunt quidam discipulorum ad credendum resurrectionem, quod postquam viderant, non crediderunt, et ut benedictio non visuris et tamen credituris largius donaretur.' *De Sanguine Christi* in London, BL Cotton MS Nero D I, f. 92v and *CM*, VI: p. 144.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Because Christ told Mary Magdalene, 'Do not touch me for I have not yet ascended to my Father' (John 20: 17, NIV), many Christian authors, scholars and artists assumed that Thomas could not have touched Christ; instead, he believed when Christ offered his body to be touched. In general, see A. Murray, 'Doubting Thomas in medieval exegesis and art', *Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma*, Conferenze 22 (Rome, 2006).
77. C.W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 47–8.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

PART II

VISIONS OF A HOLY CITY



PLATE 3.3 Abraham Hondius, *A Frost Fair on the Thames at Temple Stairs*, 1684. Oil on canvas. 66.9 × 111.9 cm. The upper portion of the Temple Church rotunda is visible in the background, to the right.



PLATE 3.4 St John's, Clerkenwell. The outline of the Hospitallers' round nave is marked in St John's Square.



PLATE 4.1 King Henry III carrying the Holy Blood, Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 II, f.216r.

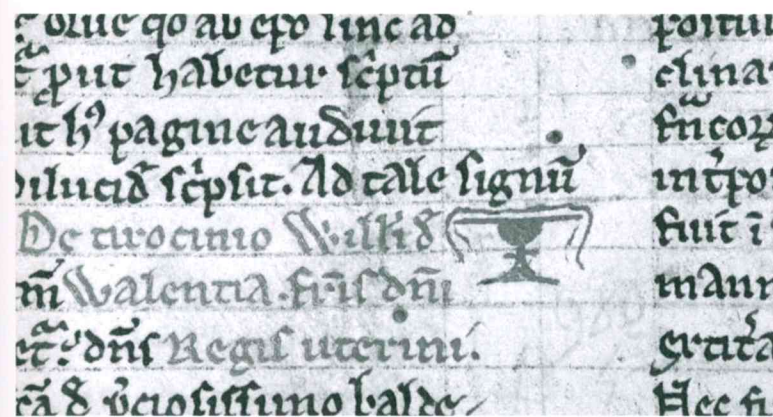


PLATE 4.2 Red chalice, Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 II, f. 216v.

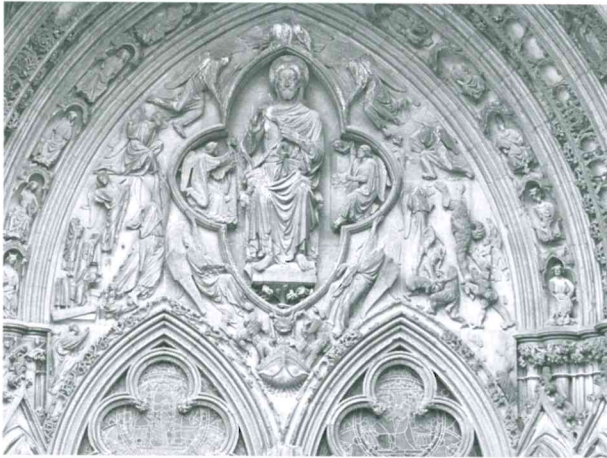


PLATE 4.3 Last Judgment, tympanum sculpture of the south portal of Lincoln Cathedral.



PLATE 4.4 *Doubting Thomas*, wall painting in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, c.1270s.



PLATE 5.1 William Blake, *Christ Baptizing*, 1805. Pen and ink and watercolour over graphite on ivory wove paper. 31.8 × 38.3 cm.



PLATE 5.2 William Blake, *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, c.1805. Pen and watercolour over graphite pencil on paper. 35.6 × 36.8 cm.