@a3 Introduction

'If the test of civilisation lies in its arts, then medieval civilisation remains among the greatest there have ever been, comparable with . . . Periclean Athens. The carvings, the stained glass windows, the book-making, the architecture, the hymns, even the tapestries were informed with divinity. Belief in Christ made them artists.'[1] This permeation of art with divinity is nowhere more clearly seen than in the baptismal fonts of the early Middle Ages, not least because their scale and prime position in the church made their message much more easy to grasp than similar carvings placed elsewhere in the building, on tympana and capitals, high up and often poorly lit.

In the early Middle Ages the establishment of font-producing workshops required a supply of suitable stone, a body of craftsmen with the appropriate skills and access to transport, preferably by water. These factors coincided in various places and resulted in the creation of four major schools of font manufacture: around Bentheim close to the modern border between Germany and Holland, on the Scheldt at Tournai, on the Meuse near Namur and on the island of Gotland. They were prolific and their products can now be found hundreds of miles from their places of origin. There were also lesser but highly productive schools, for example at the Marquise quarries near Boulogne, in the area known as the Isle of Purbeck, in southern Sweden and astride the southern section of the modern border between Norway and Sweden.

@c The Font as Physical Object

Fonts are found in a wide variety of shapes and several nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars have set out their ideas for a systematic analysis of the different types.[2]

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[1] Robert Payne, *The Fathers of the Western Church*, Kingwood, 1952, p. xiv.

[2] Arcisse de Caumont, *Cours d'antiquités monumentales de France*, pt VI, *Le Moyen Âge – fonts baptismaux etc.*, Paris, 1841. Paul Saintenoy, 'Prolégomènes à l'étude de la filiation des fonts baptismaux des baptistères jusqu'au 16ième siècle', *Annales de la Société archéologique de Bruxelles*, V and VI, 1891/2. Virgile Brandicourt, 'Fonts baptismaux Picards', *Bulletin des Antiquaires de Picardie*, XXV, 1911–12. Camille Enlart, *Manuel de l'archéologie française*, vol. I, *Architecture religieuse*, Paris, 2nd edn, 1920. Georg Pudelko, *Romanische Taufsteine*, Berlin Lankowitz, 1932. Francis Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers*, London, New York, Oxford and Toronto, 1908 and 2nd edn, London, 1985, and E. Tyrrell-Green, *Baptismal Fonts Classified and Illustrated*, London, 1928, have also set out their views, though in less detail.

There are many ways in which such an analysis can be approached but the simplest division is between those fonts of which the container for the baptismal water stands directly on the ground and those in which it is raised clear of the floor by some form of supporting structure. In other words, Pudelko's separation of the load and the load-bearer.[3] There seems little doubt that the move from the one form to the other took place because of the change from adult to infant baptism, once the process of conversion was largely complete, and thus occurred at different times in different countries, as Christianity spread out from the Middle East. Grown men and women could stand in a large low tub and have water poured over their heads, much as was the practice in baptisteries; few baptistery pools are either deep or wide enough for immersion, in the sense of submersion, to have been possible [1].[4] Indeed total immersion was perhaps only practised in rivers or lakes, but it must be remembered that the cradle of Christianity was in the Middle East and the depth of water would have been very low for much of the year. From a very early stage the most common method of administering baptism must have been a combination of partial immersion and affusion and, especially in the warmer climes of southern Europe, it persisted well past the twelfth century. After the sunken pools of the Early Christian era, baptisteries adopted *piscinae* which stood upon the floor [2] which, in the great churches, were large enough to accommodate several candidates at a time. Finally, before the advent of purpose-made fonts as we know them today, domestic vessels, both iron cauldrons and wooden casks [3], were taken into use for the baptism of individuals.

Tub fonts may be round, oval, four-sided or (more rarely) polygonal, usually with vertical sides, though some may flare to the top. It is unusual for a font to be narrower at the top than at the bottom and those fashioned from reused cross-shafts at Melbury Bubb and Dolton [69] were inverted in order to allow for the excavation of a basin of sufficient size. In Denmark[5] there are also tubs which are multilobed but they are not found elsewhere. Four-sided fonts frequently have engaged columns defining the vertical edges at the corners; these may be purely decorative, in low relief, but there are examples where they are carved in high relief and are clear attempts to articulate the basic block. Tubs are sometimes placed on a plinth but this should not cause them to be identified as supported or pedestal fonts. It is an attempt to

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[3] G. Pudelko, *Romanische Taufsteine*, Berlin and Lankwitz, 1932, pp. 45 and 52.

[4] The baptistery of the basilica of St John at Celçuk shows how impossible it would have been for an adult to wet any more of his body than the lower legs and feet, other than by the pouring of water over his head.

[5] The Slagelse group on Sjælland.

recognise the aesthetic element in a piece of church furniture and is used to enhance the design. In some cases it is no more than a relatively thin plate, usually of the same shape as the bowl itself, as at Gernrode **[197]** or it may be more ambitious, like Castle Frome, Freudenstadt and Furnaux with their crouching beasts and human figures **[26**, **198** and **123]**. Supported fonts are either bipartite and consist of a bowl and base alone **[fig. 1]**, or are multipartite pedestals, with the insertion of one or more shafts between bowl and base **[figs. 2**, **3]**. The fact that base and shaft of single-support fonts are occasionally in one piece does not alter the distinction.[6] It will almost invariably be quite clear at the first glance whether a font is a tub, bipartite or in three parts. There are some fonts, for example Ochtrup **[157]** of the Bentheim group, which are monolithic but which are ostensibly 'supported' because the difference in cross-section of the upper and lower parts make them essentially bipartite in concept. There are also examples such as Cheriton **[fig. 4]**, where a reduction in diameter at mid-height, usually with some form of decorative girdle, makes it easy to distinguish the two parts, the water container and the support.[7] The fonts genuinely in two pieces are most common in Scandinavia, with very few examples in other countries. They have bases which are much taller than when there is a shaft, so that the height of the rim is much the same in all types of supported font, at a level convenient for the priest, standing with a baby held in the crook of his arm.

Pedestal fonts have bowls in the same variety of shapes as tubs, though multilobed examples are more common when there are supporting shafts. The majority are round, though square, quatrefoil and polygonal examples do exist, and the base may be round or square. With the exception of the Mosan School, round pedestal fonts are almost invariably supported on a single shaft, though there are a few thirteenth century Transitional examples where a ring of small colonnettes follows the line of the lower circumference of the bowl.[8] In the case of square bowls however (and rectangles are almost unknown in supported fonts), there may be single or multiple supports. Multilobed bowls, usually quatrefoils, may have cylindrical shafts but the most common form is what Hallbäck called the 'clustered column', where a single piece of stone is carved to give the appearance of a cluster of engaged shafts, one for each lobe.[9] Clustered columns also occur with round bowls, as at North Newbald **[64]**.

Fonts with square bowls may be described as either 'box' or 'table'. The former have bowls which are nearer in proportions to a cube than a slab and are flat-bottomed. Because the bowl itself is higher at the sides, the supports need only be short and there may be either four, one at each corner, or five with another of the same size beneath the centre; they are complete

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[6] For example some of the so-called 'Paradise' or chalice fonts of Gotland.

[7] For this shape Kate M. Clarke coined the term 'girdled'. 'The Baptismal Fonts of Devon', pt II, *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, XLVI, 1914, p. 428.

[8] There is an example at Lustleigh, Devon, but these are rare.

[9] S. A. Hallbäck, *Medeltida dopfuntar i Bohuslän*, 1961. Examples are also found at Verden Cathedral and Achim **[178]** in Germany.

with base and capital.[10] **[40–3]** With the table font the sides of the bowl are much longer relative to its height and there is usually a rounded section or 'belly' below the vertical sides **[109]**. In the multisupport version the capitals for the colonnettes are normally carved out of the underside of the curved section as their bases are carved out of the upper surface of the main base of the font, so that all the shafts are separate pieces. Indeed, as inspection of many Mosan and a few Tournai fonts will show, the shafts have often been lost and the weight of the bowl is borne only on the massive central column, very much greater in diameter than the corner colonnettes which are thus seen to be purely decorative and with no structural role. Where a table font is carried on a single support there is often a large water-leaf on the underside of each corner. With multisupport fonts the normal complement is 1 + 4, a central column and four corner colonnettes, but there are examples, such as St Séverin-en-Condroz **[79]**, where the colonnettes are more numerous; St Séverin has 1 + 12, three at each corner. It is likely that the multisupport arrangement developed from a desire for articulation of the basic block and there are numerous examples which allow this line of evolution to be followed. Stage 1 is the square block with engaged columns in low relief at the corners, such as Reighton **[4]**. Stage 2 has developed the corner columns into high relief so that they begin to emerge from the surface of the block as at Airaines **[130]**. With Stage 3, the cutting away of stone around the corner column and the application of curvature to the vertical face (thus emphasising its role as a container) still leaves the columns attached throughout their height, as at Breuil-le-Vert **[131]**. In Stage 4 the degree of undercutting is increased so that the shaft is separated from the block for at least part of its height, if only by the thickness of a hand, but leaving capital and base fully engaged, as at Coleby **[6]**. The final stage freed the colonnette shafts entirely from the block for their full length, either as at Verlincthuin **[148]** while still integral with the block, or more usually, as with all Mosan and Tournai examples, turning them into separate elements of the font. Thus the Winchester Cathedral font **[103]** is in seven pieces, bowl, base, central shaft and four colonnettes.

A variant on multisupport arrangements is what may be called the 'suspended' fonts, of which there are only two groups, one in south-west England and the other in the Eifel, south of Cologne, between the Rhine and the border with France. The bowls are shaped like kettle-drums and appear to hang from the colonnettes which rise to the full height of the bowl. In fact, without exception, the bowl may actually touch the ground tangentially or, more commonly, be underpinned by a stubby shaft, but this does not destroy the illusion. The Bodmin group **[47]** have just four colonnettes and the capitals are integral with a plate which extends beyond the circumference of the top of the bowl. The German suspended fonts, however, have six or sometimes more colonnettes with the capitals integral with the side of the bowl close to the top, as at Franken **[180]** and, in its most fully developed form, at Limburg Cathedral. Viollet-le-Duc saw the pattern for all types of multisupport font as a bowl for the water held in a wooden or metal frame, like a camp wash-bowl,[11] but his model is truly only the forerunner of the suspended type. Unlike the multisupport table fonts, the colonnettes of suspended fonts are structural; the bowl would not stand up on its stubby central support alone.

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[10] Box fonts are less common and the best examples are found in Norfolk (Shernborne, Toftrees) and in the Irish Ossory group. The Launceston group have bowls of similar proportions but they are supported on a short single shaft and give a different impression.

[11] E. Viollet le Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture*, V, 1870–3, p. 536.

Irrespective of the overall form of the font, the basin, that is the excavated part of the bowl in which the water is contained, is most commonly round, either a cylinder or, more often, rounded at the bottom. Rectangular bowls usually have basins of the same shape as the exterior, though in some French examples the corners are cut off to make an octagon, and at Lenton the basin is a quatrefoil. Square fonts normally have round basins though a significant number are square and the basins of multilobed fonts reflect the external profile.

@c The Decoration

Fonts could also be categorised by reference to the presence or absence of ornament and then subdivided by type of decoration, but in the same way that any shape of font may be entirely devoid of ornament, so there is no form of decoration that is to be found purely on one shape of font. As will become apparent from the actual descriptions of individual fonts throughout the chapters which follow, the decoration of baptismal fonts is of great diversity, but a very large number of surviving Romanesque fonts are without any form of decoration, except perhaps for a roll- or cable-moulding on the shaft. There is, however, interesting evidence from Denmark that one font at least, though unsculpted, had painted on its surface the same types of ornament which were carved on others. Certainly there are plenty of traces of paint remaining to show that fonts, like other church furniture in the Middle Ages, and the buildings themselves, were brightly coloured. Most decoration is to be found on the vertical face of the bowl though, especially in Sweden, it may sometimes continue onto the lower section which curves or slopes to the support. It is rare to find ornament on the upper surface, except on pieces of the highest quality of design and execution, and not always on those. It is however a feature of the Tournai and, to a lesser extent, Mosan Schools, where the rim of the basin is encircled by a band of formal ornament and where the spandrels are occupied by various devices, foliate motifs, human or animal masks and pairs of birds drinking from a bowl; in a very few cases the corners contain the symbols of the Evangelists [85]. The shaft of a pedestal font was seldom decorated, though some Norwegian fonts have chain-link ornament around the shaft [278], and the low base or plinth of a tripartite font is also normally plain, except for corner spurs, masks or leaf-ornaments, and some examples, mainly in Norway, where the upper surface is carved with formal ornament to emulate fish-scales [268]. Where there is no shaft the base is taller, often half the overall height, and bears the same type of decoration as the bowl. On Danish fonts, where this type of base is common, it is often shaped like an inverted cushion capital and the demilunes on each side carry single motifs, foliage, animals and human figures [203].

Font bowls display a variety of ornament, formal geometrical motifs, foliate designs, arcading and other architectural forms, real and imaginary beasts, statuesque figures and figures in narrative scenes. The formal geometrical designs common in architectural decoration of the period also occur on fonts, cable, plait, chevron, saw-tooth, zigzag, billets, diaperwork and Nordic interlace. The commonly occurring discs containing whorls, spokes or petals, are often dismissed as no more than a repetition of shapes convenient to the voids to be filled. However, as Patrick Reutersvärd has shown,[12] they have a real and important relevance and what may not be obvious is the extent to which the inherent symbolism of all forms of font decoration is almost exclusively related to the sacrament which the vessel serves and of which it is the central element. One of the most common forms of ornament is the arcade, plain or interlaced, used in its own right and as a frame for formal ornaments, figures or animals. Where the figures are purely displayed as statues, not involved in the telling of a story, the arches are either complete with supports or may be no more than a Lombard frieze without columns, so that it becomes in effect a row of canopies. Where the arcade is used with historiation, either style may be adopted, or even a combination of supported arches and Lombard frieze. In this last case supports are inserted to divide one event from another so that, at Skredsvik **[340]** for example, the martyrdoms of St Margaret and St Lawrence occupy five and four arches respectively, with supporting columns framing the complete scenes, while elsewhere on the bowl figures stand singly or in pairs within individual arches complete with columns. Where arches are supported on columns throughout, two methods are used. In one approach, as at Freckenhorst **[194–5]**, each arch is made of sufficient width to accommodate the whole event and in the other the action may be carried on across the intervening column, as with the Baptism of Christ at Wansford, where the Baptist leans across the shaft of the column to reach Christ's head. Arcades may be tectonic, that is complete with a base and capital for each column, with capital alone or both may be absent. Columns may also be used without arches, reaching up to the rim or to an ornamental band as if supporting an architrave.

Foliate ornament is common and may be freely carved, in which case it usually spreads across all or most of the available surface, or it may be strictly formalised into repeated fleur-de-lis and palmette motifs to form a frieze or decorative band. Probably the most common is the vine tendril which undulates continuously around the surface of a round bowl or spreads horizontally across the face of a square vessel, with side shoots of leaves and bunches of grapes **[303]**. These recall Christ's words: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' and, linking through the grape to wine, recalls the blood of the Eucharist to which the adult catechumen went direct from baptism. The palm is the symbol both of sacrifice and of victory, or rather of victorious sacrifice **[87]**. Palm fronds were spread before Christ on His way into Jerusalem before His Passion and are carried by martyrs. Except where the lily grows in a pot beside the Virgin of the Annunciation, it only occurs as a formal fleur-de-lis, normally with three leaves but sometimes with five or even seven, when it usually represents the Tree of Life.

Animals and birds are both frequently depicted but usually formalised and rarely in recognisable form. The lion has a complex symbolism, representing both good and evil. Christ was the Lion of Judah yet medieval monks on retiring for the night prayed that they

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[12] P. Reutersvärd, 'The Forgotten Symbols of God', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, LI, 1982, and LIV, 1985.

might be saved *de ore leonis*[13] and around the bowl at Stafford (St Mary) is the inscription 'Discretus non es si non fugis ecce leones'.[14] The deer, the 'hart that pants for cooling streams' is often shown swallowing a serpent, symbol of the Devil. Dogs accompany soldiers or huntsmen,[15] pigs appear in the Labours of the Months and there are ridden horses and donkeys in relevant stories. Birds are frequently included as nondescript creatures feeding on the grapes of the vine, but only the dove and the eagle are regularly distinguishable, as at Winchester **[108]** and Ars-sur-le-Né; the phoenix and the peacock are rare visitors, symbols respectively of incorruptibility and renewal. The three animals of the Tetramorph symbolising Mark, Luke and John are almost invariably easy to identify because they are commonly nimbed and often carry books; they are seen at Southampton (St Michael), at Castle Frome, at Barlingbo **[306]** and many other places. The Agnus Dei is doubly suitable for baptismal decoration. The Lamb is always shown with the flag, representative of victory over sin through baptism and it is also the attribute of the Baptist himself.

Apart from real animals, many mythical beasts are portrayed, as symbols of the evil which threatens man but which he may avoid through the grace acquired at baptism. Dragons are the most common, at this period always bipeds, and their long curling tails often terminate in a second, smaller, head.[16] The dragon is interchangeable with the serpent as a symbol of the Devil and there are many examples of snakes with a dragon's head, for example in scenes of the Temptation. Other beasts are entirely fanciful and not even to be found within the pages of a Bestiary, except for one or two such as the basilisk, whose features are clear to see, eagle's head, winged lion's body, pointed tail and dragon's feet. They all symbolise evil and, in the cases where they are seen in combat with armed men or with a centaur, represent Psychomachia, the struggle for man's soul between good and evil. This conflict is also represented by fights between centaurs, between men armed with swords and shields, and by Virtues overcoming the Vices, as at Southrop **[24]**. On one side at Zedelgem **[114]** four knights in chain mail battle with two enormous lions.

A number of fonts depict martyrdoms or legends of certain saints, though the number of those who are featured as early as the twelfth century is small. St Lawrence is one of the most common though he is usually shown holding his grid rather than roasting on it, a type of iconographic shorthand. Other saints who appear are Margaret of Antioch, Nicholas, Stephen and Thomas à Beckett, the last, somewhat surprisingly, being found on two Swedish fonts, at Lyngsjö and Nora. St Michael may be depicted weighing souls or battling with the dragon which represents the Devil. St Peter is occasionally seen receiving the keys from Christ but is more common as one of the apostles, among whom he is often the only one shown with a recognisable attribute.

Relatively little of the Old Testament is featured, hardly more than the story of the Garden of Eden. The Creation is not easy to portray, given the limited space available, but certain Swedish sculptors have shown Eve's birth from Adam's rib. The Fall only occasionally includes God's warning to Adam not to eat of the Tree but the Temptation and subsequent

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[13] '. . . from the mouth of the lion'.

[14] 'You are unwise if you do not flee; see these lions.'

[15] This is seen at Zedelgem and Lihme.

[16] The distinction between wyverns (two legs) and dragons (four) arrived later, as heraldry became more developed.

Expulsion are quite common, while at East Meon, for example, we see the labours of Adam and Eve as they learn to dig and spin. Jonah and the whale appear only a couple of times, despite the obvious relevance of someone apparently dead in the water being reborn; another surprise is that the story of Noah is only known once.[17] The crossings of the Red Sea and the Jordan are further obvious candidates for inclusion but the sheer number of figures required to depict these events militates against their use, except on the piscina at San Freddiano, Lucca [2], and on the cast metal font of the thirteenth century at Hildesheim.[18]

The New Testament is a frequent source of inspiration for baptismal iconography, beginning with the Annunciation by Gabriel to Mary and ending with the Resurrection and the Ascension, though the latter is very rare. The Visitation is almost as common as the Annunciation and in Sweden they are often portrayed side by side [336–7]. The most complete cycles are the Nativity and the Passion, and between the two a few episodes from the Childhood and Life of Christ are also portrayed. The most complete cycles are found on the fonts from Gotland, many of them flavoured with the style of the Eastern Church. The Annunciation to the shepherds is rare, and confined to a few Swedish fonts, but from the Nativity we find the familiar scene of the Child in His crib, watched over by ox and ass, while Mary is in bed recovering from the birth and Joseph sleeps in a chair with his head on his hands. In some scenes the Child's first bath is also shown, with Christ being washed by the two midwives in a vessel shaped exactly like a goblet font. The Magi feature on many fonts, not only in the Adoration but also on their journey, on foot and on horseback [298–9], appearing before Herod and being warned by the angel in a dream to return home by another route. They are almost always crowned and their gifts are usually the same, very much like the pots of ointment carried by the women at the tomb of Christ, but at Grötlingbo [301] the gold, frankincense and myrrh are plain to see in their symbolism, a bag of money, a crown and the embalming ointment. From the Childhood of Christ we see the Presentation in the Temple at Vall [292] and (rarely) the Circumcision, the Massacre of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt. While on some fonts a few or single events are portrayed in considerable detail, others are the work of more ambitious masons or were perhaps commissioned by more demanding sponsors whose craftsmen were forced to illustrate some complex action or sequence of events with a single statement. For example, the Massacre of the Innocents is represented at Cowlam in just one bay of the arcade which contains no more than a single soldier with naked sword standing before Herod on his throne, receiving his orders.

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[17] I Peter 3: 20–1 refers to 'the ark wherein few . . . were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even Baptism doth also now save us'. Such references in scripture tended to encourage sponsors to include certain subjects and the depiction of the Ark on a Gislebertus capital at Autun shows how simple the scene would be to accommodate on a font.

[18] Geographically outside the scope of this work but of great interest for its uniqueness, David is shown slaying Goliath on the Catalonian font of St Joan les Fonts. M. Delcor, 'Les Cuves romanes et leur figuration en Roussillon, Cerdagne et Conflent,' *Les Cahiers de St Michel-de-Cuxa*, IV, 1991, n. 32.

Scenes from the adult life of Christ are rare and, apart from Christ's own baptism, only the Raising of Lazarus is reasonably common, for example at Lenton.[19] The Temptation of Christ by the Devil appears at Stenkyrka in two scenes, the tempting and Christ's rejection, and the washing of the Disciples' feet is seen at Simris; both are rare. Christ's Baptism is usually depicted taking place in Jordan [26], the water heaped up in a form of whirlpool about His waist, the Baptist on one side and on the other an angel holding a cloth or with hands veiled in respect; at West Haddon the angel holds up Christ's robe so that the arms form a 'T'. The Dove of the Holy Spirit flies down from above and often the *dextera Dei* emerges from a cloud, reinforcing the tradition of the presence of the whole Trinity. The Saviour is less commonly shown being baptised in a font, as at Bjäresjö [300], where He is depicted from the waist up, immersed in a vessel shaped just like a goblet-font.

The Passion sequence begins with the Entry into Jerusalem, also rare but found at West Haddon [22] and perhaps at Walton (Liverpool). More common is the Last Supper which occurs in England at Brighton [34] and North Grimston [30], in Belgium at Dendermonde [113] and in Sweden at Simris.[20] The Kiss of Judas, Arrest of Christ and Scourging before Pilate are all seen, but infrequently. The Crucifixion appears in slightly different variations of the composition: at Lenton [8] Christ is shown between the thieves and in other places He may be alone or flanked by the standing figures of Longinus and Stephaton, or of His Mother and John, as at Coleshill [21]. Sun and Moon may be included above the horizontal arm on either side of His head. The Deposition is very uncommon but there is a fine version at North Grimston and it was indicated in 'shorthand' at St Venant [fig. 10], where two men carry the dead Saviour towards His tomb, still nailed to the cross. Christ's actual Resurrection is never shown; it is usually portrayed by the empty tomb, with or without attendant angels, and with the three sorrowing women carrying their pots of ointment. On occasions, as at Freckenhorst [195], this scene is conflated with the Harrowing of Hell, when Christ descended into Hades to rescue the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. The Saviour is usually shown striding through a doorway, a long-staff cross in one hand and leading Adam by the other, while the chained or bound Devil lies at His feet. At Freckenhorst, to one side of this scene, an angel sits on the tomb. The only possible known example of the Ascension on a font is at Lenton, where Christ appears at the top of the scene, with the heads of His disciples around His feet.[21]

From Revelation the Last Judgement appears in two forms. Neerhespen [95] and Chalons-sur-Marne [115] offer almost identical portrayals of the resurrection of the dead as, wakened by angel trumpeters at each corner, small figures leave their sarcophagi. The same scene appears on all four sides of both fonts but Christ as Judge does not appear. In the more

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[19] The Draught of Fishes is carved on the shaft at Bisley but it appears that this may be a modern addition.

[20] It was also depicted on the Tournai font at St Venant, sadly lost during the 1914–18 war, which displayed the most complete Passion cycle of any baptismal font: Last Supper, Kiss of Judas, Arrest of Christ, His Scourging, the Crucifixion, the Deposition and the Resurrection.

[21] But G. Zarnecki, 'The Romanesque Font at Lenton', *British Archaeological Association Transactions*, XXI, 1998, believes this scene in fact forms part of the Raising of Lazarus shown in the adjacent panel.

common version Christ sits enthroned on a rainbow as Judge of the World, framed in a mandorla **[290**, **295]**. His feet are on a smaller rainbow and He holds a book in His left hand while blessing with the right. His nimbus is cruciferous but there are a few fonts, e.g. Kirkburn, where only the cross is shown behind His head, the disc being absent. The mandorla is often held by angels and framed by the symbols of the Evangelists. Alternatively, one angel (on the right side to the viewer) swings a censer while opposite a second angel carries a tiny head in his veiled hands, the resurrected soul to be judged. At Östra Hoby the angel carries three heads, all crowned, and these must represent the Magi who symbolise the three parts of the world being brought to judgement.[22]

Less well known than the canonical Gospels are the books of the Apocrypha and these supply detail for the Bible stories which recount events but lack verisimilitude. An example already mentioned is the First Bath of the Infant Jesus. We also see the disbelieving midwife and her withered hand, the Miracle of the Roasted Cock which crowed, the Miraculous Harvest and the story of Peter and Paul and their struggle to overcome the magician Simon Magus **[294]**. These are all to be found on the Gotland fonts and on none other. The island, from its central position in the Baltic, was open to streams of influence from all directions and it seems that the Apocryphal Gospels were a popular source of iconography for the Byzantine church and that this interest followed the trade routes from Constantinople northwards along the Russian rivers and through Kiev. This influence of the Eastern Church is also to be seen in the way in which certain of the common New Testament episodes are portrayed, how, in the Adoration of the Magi, the Virgin and Child enthroned sit, not *en face*, but facing the approaching donors, the portrayal of the Virgin in bed after giving birth and the presence of Joseph, asleep, in the Nativity.

The relevance of these Biblical events to the rite of baptism is usually clear, symbolic as it is of the concept of death with Christ and rebirth in the waters of the font. Similarly it is not hard to explain the inclusion of St Peter; he held the keys of Heaven and was thus the doorman who admitted the saved and excluded the damned, while Michael helped in the judgement process by weighing the souls of the dead. He was also God's champion and did combat with the Devil for the souls of men. Less clear is the reason for the appearance of all twelve apostles as statues standing in the niches of an arcade around the circumference of the bowl.[23] The explanation lies in the Apostles' Creed, the basis of Christian belief. The articles of the Creed are said to have been spoken in turn, a paragraph at a time, by each of the apostles, so that their portrayal in this manner symbolises the acquired belief of the newly admitted Christian or that of the godparents making promises on his behalf.

Given the richness of baptismal symbolism and its fundamental importance to the system of Christian beliefs, it is surprising that the subject has not been considered by any of the

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[22] The fourth part of the world was not, of course, discovered until 1492.

[23] This is relatively common and two good examples in England are the fonts at Dorchester Abbey and Stoneleigh, where the names are inscribed around the arches. The betrayal by Judas was a problem for the iconographers; should he be shown or not? At Newnham no figure was ever carved in the twelfth arch, apparently a late decision, because the feet of the apostles are carried over onto the flared section below the inward curve of the bowl; and a pair of feet is included below the empty bay.

leading writers on iconography. Only Folke Nordström has attempted a book specifically on the subject and, by his own admission, his study was by no means complete. The index of Emile Mâle's great work on the twelfth century includes only a single entry under 'baptism', a specific reference to that of Christ by John the Baptist and how it is portrayed, either in Jordan or in a font. It is well worth beginning with Nordström and then turning to a main-line iconographer like Mâle or Schiller for comparative material.[24]

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[24] F. Nordström, *Medieval Baptismal Fonts: An iconographical Study*, Umeå, 1984. E. Mâle, *Religious Art in France, the Twelfth Century: A Study of the Origins of Iconography*, Guildford (Princeton University Press), 1978. Gertrud Schiller, *The Iconography of Christian Art*, 1968, English edn 1972.