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THE VENERATION OF SAINTS AT NORWICH CATHEDRAL IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

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SUMMARY

Norwich Cathedral was never a major pilgrimage centre. The cult of St. William (d. 1144) fluctuated in the 14th century with a marked revival in the 1370s and 1380s following his adoption by the Norwich peltiers' guild. The cults of Bishop Walter Suffield (d. 1257) and Bishop John Salmon (d. 1325) were equally sporadic, declining from peaks in 1305 and 1328 respectively. The additions of new icons or chapels or the acquisition of new relics accounted for sudden but usually short-lived increases in the offerings to other saints and the late 14th-century cult of the French saints Laud and Leger may be related to the return of soldiers from Normandy. Amounts offered to assorted relics at the 'Reliquary Arch', of great popularity early in the century, declined as new cults became fashionable. The monks strove to provide a rich pantheon of saints but their popularity depended largely on novelty and fashion.

I

Like the custodians of scores of other churches scattered throughout Christendom, the monks of the cathedral of the Holy Trinity at Norwich endeavoured to build a collection of the relics of worthy saints whose fame and miracles would attract pilgrims, thus enriching both the cathedral's spiritual prestige and its treasury.¹ Their success at this enterprise, however, was equivocal; for though the diocese of Norwich boasted two of the most popular fourteenth-century pilgrim shrines in England — the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and the Holy Rood of Bromholm — the cathedral church of Norwich itself apparently was never an immensely popular pilgrim centre. Unlike other cathedrals that held the shrines of great founders or eminently holy and efficacious saints, Norwich cathedral boasted as its main devotional attraction only the relics of the dubious child-saint William of Norwich whose cult, since its twelfth-century origin, seems always to have been sporadic. Nevertheless, cathedral records spanning the fourteenth century allow us to study the efforts of the cathedral's monks to assemble an impressive display of votive relics and images. Moreover, the rise and fall of pious offerings at the various shrines of the cathedral offer interesting insights into the often ephemeral celebrity bestowed by the medieval public on their saints.

William of Norwich, a twelve-year-old apprentice skinner, was allegedly ritually murdered by Norwich Jews during the Passover of 1144; his body was later taken to the cathedral for burial.² He achieved holy fame only through the concerted effort of his sole biographer and main champion, Thomas of Monmouth, a monk of the Cathedral Priory, who recorded the life and miracles of the boy some thirty years after his purported martyrdom.³

William's final resting place was as intermittent as his cult. During the ten years after his death he was translated to various spots in the cathedral precinct four times. A full month after the discovery of his apparently crucified body, hastily buried in Thorpe Wood outside the city walls, his remains were transferred (24 April 1144) to the priory cemetery. There they remained, attracting a sprinkling of local admirers, until April 1150 when Thomas of Monmouth (who had been in Norwich only since 1146 at the earliest⁴), prompted by several dream-visions from Bishop Herbert de Losinga and William himself, persuaded his fellow monks to move the body

to the cathedral chapter house. William's cult had obviously begun to grow by the time of this translation; for shortly afterwards, in 1151, his body was again moved since the crowds of pilgrims visiting his tomb were disturbing chapter services. This time the monks moved William to the south side of the high altar within the cathedral. But the cathedral's apse, dominated by the centrally-placed, raised episcopal *cathedra*, was ill-suited to handle the flow of pilgrim traffic. The growing throngs disrupted celebrations within the presbytery forcing the monks to move the body once again, on 5 April 1154, to a special chapel in the north apse previously dedicated to St. Stephen and All Martyrs (now the Jesus Chapel⁵). It remained there — undoubtedly to the relief of the monks and the oft-exhumed William — until about 1436 when it may have been moved to an altar north of the rood-loft at the entrance to the choir. This side altar has since disappeared and the final whereabouts of William's relics is unknown.⁶

From its earliest decades, the progress of William's cult was unsteady. Ronald Finucane, after studying the geographical origins of twelfth-century pilgrims reporting miracles at the shrine, concluded that interest in the cult varied over both time and distance. The frequency of miracles recorded at the shrine fell sharply between 1150 and 1172 — from one every ten days to one every five months.⁷ More importantly, local interest in William's cult waned. In the twenty years after 1150, most of those reporting miracles at the shrine lived within a fifty-mile radius of Norwich, and the majority of them (57%) lived within ten miles of the city. At the peak of interest in his cult (1150-51) two-thirds of the pilgrims reporting miracles at his shrine were citizens of Norwich. But twenty years later in 1172 only one-third of pilgrims who experienced William's miracles were from the city. In fact, the average distance travelled by pilgrims to the shrine between 1150 and 1172 rose from twenty-three miles to forty-five.⁸ The decline in the frequency of his miracles and the drop in numbers of local people visiting his shrine indicate how dramatically local interest in William's cult fell in only twenty years. 'Perhaps', Finucane concluded, 'after a few years the new saint, having ceased to be a novelty, no longer excited Norwich citizens in whose midst he resided in his easily accessible shrine and therefore no longer worked wonders for them'.⁹ Thus, in its first decades the cult was clearly locally oriented around the diocese, and by the latter years of the twelfth century its fortunes were already evidently in decline.

Few records survive that allow us to assess the activity at William's shrine during the thirteenth century;¹⁰ of the fourteenth-century cult we are somewhat better informed. Although by this time records of the miracles at the tomb were no longer kept (or at least none now exist) we may indirectly measure the popularity of William's cult — along with that of other saints whose relics or images were venerated at the cathedral during the fourteenth century — with the aid of surviving sacrist's rolls of the Cathedral Priory.

The cathedral's sacrist oversaw all the paraphernalia that related to the divine services of the cathedral. He was responsible, as well, for collecting and tallying all the pious offerings left at the various altars, shrines, and images in the cathedral precinct.¹¹ A fairly complete series of rolls containing the sacrist's annual accounts survives from 1272 onward.¹² For the period 1296 to 1406 thirty-six rolls survive (excluding duplicates). Some gaps occur within the series — most annoyingly from 1344 to 1362 so that nothing can be said about the possible fluctuations occurring immediately before and after the Black Death when one would expect to see changes in donations as people sought divine intervention to cope with the socially and psychologically traumatic effects of large-scale mortality. But in spite of these occasional *lacunae*, the rolls provide a revealing perspective on the patterns of pious offerings left at the cathedral's shrines throughout the century.

Accounts of the offerings at William's tomb (at this period located in a side chapel north of the apse — the so-called 'Martyrs' Chapel'¹³) appear consistently throughout the rolls. The earliest fourteenth-century reference to donations at his tomb occurs in 1305 when nine pence were collected there.¹⁴ In this same year the tomb was refurbished. The sacrist paid £1 0s 2d for gold and silver leaf and paint, and supported a painter and his assistant for nine weeks at a cost of 25s 6d.¹⁵ Renovations must have been extensive if it took nine weeks to accomplish them, and they perhaps indicate the state of neglect into which the cult had fallen. If they were intended to spark renewed interest in William's cult they succeeded to a degree. There is a seven-year gap in the rolls between 1306 and 1313, but when receipts are again recorded at the shrine in 1314, they total £1 1s 8½d — quite a substantial increase from the 1305 account. Undoubtedly the redecoration of the tomb explains the sudden recrudescence of William's cult, but it roused only a fleeting interest. His fortunes soon fell again.

Another gap of six years occurs in the rolls and then, in 1320 when they resume, William's receipts have dropped by over half a pound down to 12s 1d. In this interim the great famine of 1315-1317 occurred which, while its effect on population was comparatively small, drove grain prices up by five or six times their normal level.¹⁶ Prices fell to normal ranges by 1319, but the recent memory of such terribly-inflated food prices may have made people more careful, for the moment, with any extra money they may have had. Of course given the important role of saints in medieval people's lives, offerings to their shrines could be considered as a staple commodity — like bread or salt — which must be bought for the sake of divine insurance against misfortune no matter what its price. But we must not assume that offerings to saints' shrines did not fluctuate in the face of severe economic pressures. Devotion to saints, after all, is not food on the table. So the price instability caused by the famine is perhaps a reasonable explanation for the sudden drop in offerings at William's tomb.

Whatever the cause, William's fortunes continued to decline. In 1323, the next year the rolls mention his shrine, his offerings were tallied jointly with those made at the 'new cross' of St. Stephen¹⁷ and at the tomb of bishop Walter Suffield (d.1257). Together these totalled only £1 6s 2d. From 1325 until the mid-1330s, William's receipts were added to those donations made to SS Stephen, Hippolytus, and (intermittently) Anne — probably the other saints venerated in or near the Martyrs' Chapel — so there is no way to break down the offerings made specifically to William. Nevertheless, throughout this period the total annual offerings collected from these sites never rose above 19s. so we can assume that William's popularity remained relatively low. The very fact that he did not merit separate mention in the rolls suggests that he was hardly the saint of choice among the devout visiting the cathedral. In 1340 the rolls again record donations specifically at William's tomb. His popularity was still at a low ebb: he took in only 5¾d. In 1342 his offerings fell even lower to a mere four pence. There is a twenty-year gap in the rolls between 1342 and 1363; when they resume in 1363 donations to William have reached their fourteenth-century nadir: only two pence.

Five years later in 1368 William's offerings made a substantial recovery up to 4s¾d — about equal to their level in the 1320s. This would suggest that popular interest in William's cult was suddenly on the upswing. Once again there is a large gap in the rolls — eighteen years — and when they resume in 1386 this upswing is confirmed: William's donations have made an astounding, one might say miraculous, recovery. In fact offerings at the tomb reached their highest level for the fourteenth century: the substantial sum of £19 13s 5½d. This figure, the second largest income collected from any shrine or altar that year, was only a third less than the offerings left at the High Altar (£31 0s 18d) which throughout the century always received the largest donations per year.¹⁸ Far behind in third place were the £6 1s 6¾d left at the '*sancta crucis*'

— apparently a collection box near the main cross in the rood loft between the chancel and presbytery.¹⁹ It is also noteworthy that William's total donations this year were much larger than all the offerings left at the three Marian shrines in the cathedral which were consistently popular spots for offerings.²⁰ Although several scholars have noted the marked decline in William's cult in the early fourteenth century, none of them noticed this sudden revival.²¹

How do we account for the dramatic increase in offerings at William's tomb between 1368 and 1386? Unfortunately, the *lacunae* in the rolls in this period prevent us from precisely dating the renewal of interest in William's cult to which the sudden rise in donations clearly points. However there is some evidence that does much to explain his cult's abrupt turn of fortune. For instance, the last will of Katerina Rokeland allows us to set the *terminus a quo* of the renewal of the cult.

Katerina, a woman almost Chaucerian in her enthusiasm for pilgrimages, left instructions in her last will for posthumous donations to be made on her behalf at the pilgrim shrines of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Holy Rood of Bromholm, the shrine of St. Edmund at Bury, and the Canterbury shrines of St. Thomas and St. Augustine. She also left a general bequest to Norwich cathedral. Excluding the cathedral, all these shrines were at the time well-known and popular pilgrimage centres. Considering that she included the major shrines of her own diocese in her bequests, and that she lived in the parish of Heigham which bordered the city of Norwich, one would expect her to have included William's shrine in her bequests if it were a popular spot for devotional offerings at the time her will was drawn up. But she did not. Since her will was dated 18 August 1377, it appears that, based on this slim evidence, the revival of William's cult occurred some time after 1377.²²

A second source substantiates this conjecture by offering a compelling reason why William's cult suddenly flourished after its long decline. In 1388 Parliament ordered all guilds and fraternities in England to send certificates to Chancery describing their purpose, regulations, and membership. In these guild certificates submitted in 1389 we find that the 'peltiers' (peltiers, i.e. furriers) of Norwich and 'othere god men' established a guild in 1376 in honour of the Trinity, the Virgin, and 'seynt William ye holy Innocent and digne (worthy) marter'.²³ William was the natural choice as the patron saint of the Norwich peltiers. Not only was he a local boy, but, as an apprentice skinner, he also spent his brief life dealing with animal skins, as did the peltiers. Every year on the Saturday following the feast of SS Peter and Paul (29 June) all the members of this fraternity were expected to offer two candles decorated with flowers at William's tomb and to hear a mass there at which each was to offer a halfpenny. The guild regulations also called for a procession of the members led by 'a knave chyld (i.e. a boy), innocent . . . tokenynge of the glorious marter' — a nicely theatrical touch. The day after this celebration, every member was bound to be present at a requiem mass celebrated for the departed guild brethren at St. William's altar.²⁴ Here each member was obliged to offer a farthing.

In the ceremonies of the peltiers' guild we find the cause for the substantial revival of William's cult. Not only did the annual offerings from the guild's members (whose total number is unknown) ensure a steady flow of income to his shrine, but the devotion of its members undoubtedly sparked renewed enthusiasm for his cult among the people of Norwich in general.²⁵ The public procession of the guild members led by a young boy through the streets of Norwich was a spectacle that focused the attention of other citizens on the destination of the peltiers: William's tomb. Obviously other people must have followed the lead of the peltiers, who seemed to have discovered a worthy patron saint.

In fact, six years after the peltiers founded their guild, the renewed attention they brought

to William's shrine, spread outside the city. In 1386 at King's Lynn some young scholars of that town established a fraternity dedicated to the 'holy martir Seynt Wiliam' among whose purposes was 'to mayntene and kepen an ymage of Seynt Wylyam'.²⁶ These students' choice of William as a patron may indicate that they knew the details of William's *vita*. Thomas of Monmouth's hagiography of William noted that the boy learned at an early age 'letters, psalms and prayers'.²⁷ Such youthful studiousness was certainly a good example for the members of the fraternity who described themselves as 'children in yonge age, hoping in tyme comyng to have been encresyd be (i.e. by) help and counseyl of wyse men'.²⁸

II

The course of William of Norwich's cult indicates that people were influenced in their devotions by public trends. The spectacular revival of interest in William was triggered by the example of the peltiers' guild. Their choice of William for a patron, and, more importantly, their devotions at his shrine focused public attention on him. There was definitely a large element of chance at work here; had the Norwich peltiers chosen another patron, it is unlikely that William's shrine would have ever enjoyed more than the minimal attention it garnered in the early fourteenth century: even the sacrist's expensive renovations caused no more than a flicker of renewed interest in the cult.

Moreover, William's accidental celebrity underscores an important point: in the Middle Ages the fame of sainthood could be fickle and ephemeral. The point is borne out by the example of other saints whose cults at Norwich were just as erratically observed as William's. For instance, Matthew Paris described how Bishop Walter Suffield of Norwich piously liquidated all his possessions to aid the poor during a famine. After his death in 1257 he was popularly elevated to sainthood (though never formally canonised) and 'miracles were said to pour forth at his tomb'.²⁹ In 1296 almost forty years after his death his cult still flourished; that year the respectable sum of £3 2s 0d was collected at his tomb. From 1300 to 1304 close to two and a half pounds were offered there yearly. The roll for 1305 records the largest donation collected at the shrine during the century — £3 3s 3d — and specifically notes that this was left 'at the tomb of *Saint* Walter', confirming his status as a local saint. But thereafter donations to his shrine steadily declined. In 1325 his shrine collected just under a pound; five years later his offerings were down to a little over 10s. In 1339 they had fallen further to 5s 10¾d, and by 1363 the sacrist recorded a tally of only 9¾d. By 1391 this amount was down again by half. The slump in offerings to Walter seems not to have gone unnoticed by the sacrist; in 1401 he reported that he had no account for offerings left at the box near Suffield's tomb 'because I have not looked in it'.³⁰ Perhaps he felt it was not worth the effort. By 1404 only a penny was collected at the tomb. Thus, Suffield's cult remained fairly popular at his cathedral shrine through the first years of the fourteenth century, but subsequently his renown gradually declined. Clearly as the memory of Walter Suffield faded so did the enthusiasm for his cult.

The brief cult of Bishop John Salmon even better illustrates the ephemeral nature of the cult of a locally-venerated saint. A monk from Ely, he was elected to the see of Norwich in 1299, serving briefly as Chancellor of England from 1319 until 1323 when illness forced his retirement. When he died in 1325 he was buried in the cathedral.³¹ That same year people offered 11s 5d at his tomb. Three years later his celebrity increased, for £2 7s 8d was collected at the box next to his tomb. But by 1330 this amount fell to a little less than two pounds, and thereafter his cult went into a swift decline. Between 1332 and 1340 offerings left at his tomb fell from 17s 3½d to under 4s. Consistently declining, by 1342 they were down to only 2s 9½d. The rolls break off here for twenty-one years so we can only conjecture about the continuing decline

of his cult, but when they resume in 1363 offerings to Salmon were down to three pence. Thereafter the sacrist recorded no further donations at his tomb. We may assume that a generation after his death, when most of those who had known him and who may have sustained his cult were themselves dead, his memory and his cult passed on.

So ready were people to seek the aid of saints that sometimes the mere addition of a new icon to the cathedral attracted a following of devotees. For instance, a chapel in the cathedral's south transept was built and dedicated to Saint Catherine in c. 1280.³² But no offerings were recorded there until 1363 when the sacrist spent 20s 'for making and painting an image of St. Catherine' (presumably for display in her chapel).³³ In that year 1¾d accumulated at the chapel. Five years later 2s 5¼d — a significant increase — accumulated at Catherine's image. Subsequent offerings there dwindled to only a few pence yearly, but we should credit the newly-installed image as the reason for the sudden increase in devotion to St. Catherine whose chapel, before the new image focused their attention, apparently did not attract the interest of the devout.

Similarly, around 1330 a chapel was constructed in the north presbytery aisle and dedicated to St. Anne.³⁴ In that same year her name appears with those of SS William, Hippolytus, and Stephen, who all together received a total of 15s 2½d at their altars and shrines.³⁵ By 1340 her offerings were recorded separately. That year donations at her chapel amounted to 1s 7d; two years after they rose to 2s. But twenty years later donations were down to a penny, and for the rest of the century offerings to her generally totalled only a few pence a year³⁶ — an indication that the novelty of her chapel had worn off.

Some time between 1343 and 1363 the sacrist must have erected new images or acquired new relics of several saints, for in the rolls of 1363 offerings were recorded at the images or altars of St. Sitha of Lucca (who received the tidy sum of £2 6s 4½d at her image), and Saint Laud (9s 8d).³⁷ Twenty-three years later in 1386, the rolls first mention St. Petronilla's name whose offerings (together with St. Hippolytus³⁸) totalled 3s 7d. From then on donations to Petronilla appear intermittently in the rolls.³⁹ In this year, offerings also begin appearing at an image of the Trinity located at the 'Red Door' (*hostea rubea*).

Shrines to the Virgin Mary were likewise added to the cathedral sometime between 1368 and 1386. Before this time the only recorded shrine to Mary was located in the Lady Chapel built by Bishop Suffield in the mid-thirteenth century. But the roll for 1386 mentions two new shrines dedicated to Mary: an image of Mary at the Precentor's Altar (just south of the nave altar) which collected 14d, and the 'new St. Mary' which received 2s 6½d. The roll for 1391 identifies this 'new' Mary as 'St. Mary of Pity' (*sancta maria de compassione*) which establishes the site of the shrine as the present-day Bauchon Chapel built in the early fourteenth century by William Bauchon.⁴⁰ Between 1386-90 the sacrist erected a new image of the Virgin in Suffield's Lady Chapel. This new image, however, did not stimulate renewed devotions in the Chapel. In fact donations there — which since the 1320s had hovered between one to four pounds — fell below a pound by 1391. At the same time, donations to Our Lady of Pity in the Bauchon Chapel rose dramatically: from about 2s 6d in 1386 to £5 6s 11½d in 1391. From then until the end of the century, the image of Mary in the Bauchon Chapel never received less than two pounds annually; the image in the Lady Chapel never more than fourteen shillings. By comparison, the image of Mary at the Precentor's altar annually took in between one to seven shillings during this same period. Just why it took so long for the Bauchon shrine to gain celebrity cannot be explained, but clearly the popular eye was attracted to the chapel which profited at the expense of the two other Marian shrines. Given the immense popularity of the Virgin as a cult figure in the Middle Ages, one would have expected any shrine dedicated to her to attract attention.

By 1390 several more saints appear in the sacrist's rolls: Anthony, Theobald,⁴¹ Laud, and the early Frankish martyr Leger. The cult of the French saint Laud, venerated in Normandy, especially at Coutances but also at Angers, appeared at the cathedral some time between 1343 and 1363. Perhaps local soldiers returning from the Normandy campaigns of 1356 introduced it.⁴² It is also possible that Henry Dispenser, who while bishop of Norwich had crusaded briefly in northern France and Flanders in 1383, may have established the cult of the French saint Leger of Autun, which first appeared in the cathedral between 1390 and 1394.⁴³ Some of the new images of these French saints may have been the spoils of war.

The so-called 'Reliquary Arch' was built in 1278 in the north aisle of the presbytery. It juts out over the ambulatory aisle and from it unnamed relics were displayed over the heads of pilgrims. Later, in 1398, a relic chapel was built to the north of this arch.⁴⁴ Yearly records of offerings made 'to the relics' (*ad reliquias*) occur consistently throughout the sacrist's rolls. Presumably, then, offerings 'to the relics' were those left at this Reliquary Arch, but whose relics these were is unknown. They might have been various saints whose fame or relics were too inconsequential to merit separate chapels or shrines; however, early fourteenth-century wall paintings on the ceiling of the Arch depict SS Andrew, Peter, Paul, Edmund, Lawrence, Margaret, Catherine, Martin, Nicholas and Richard of Chichester, so the relics may be associated with these saints.⁴⁵ In any event, the site was popular among the devout. Oblations to the relics were generally the second largest amount collected annually by the sacrist. Only the offerings to the High Altar, and occasionally to the altar of the Virgin in the Lady Chapel, exceeded them. Between 1296 and 1315 donations to the relics hovered between six and fourteen pounds. By 1320 the relics took in £24 2s 0d. From 1322 until 1333 offerings fluctuated from a low of about twelve pounds to a high of almost nineteen. Thereafter the donations gradually declined: about nine pounds in 1340, close to seven and a half pounds in 1363, about four pounds in 1390. From 1391 to 1405 they tapered off from about three pounds to one or two pounds annually.

This fall in offerings to the relics by the end of the century does not necessarily mean that people had grown tired of saints. As we saw, many new saints were introduced into the cathedral from 1363 onward — at the same time that donations to the relics began to fall. The installation of these new cults undoubtedly accounts for the fall in donations to the relics. The variety of new saints probably attracted the devout public away from the apparently anonymous relics, absorbing the money that previously would have been offered at the Reliquary Arch. In other words, popular devotions were simply spread over a wider variety of saints. In fact, the total donations made to all the altars and images recorded annually in the sacrist's rolls rose throughout the century. All donations collected in 1296 totalled £63 15s 1d; by 1406 this figure had increased to £98 8s 4d.⁴⁶ The greater number of images and shrines available in the cathedral for popular veneration after the mid-century probably accounts for much of this increase.⁴⁷

III

The yearly accounts of the sacrist tell us only about the fluctuations in offerings left to the cathedral's saints; they are silent about the causes of these fluctuations. Only the case of William of Norwich offers compelling evidence for the renewal of a cult in the cathedral through the devotions of the peltiers. However several elements come together to help explain the ebb and flow of offerings to the other shrines in Norwich cathedral. Over some of these the sacrist and his fellow monks had no control.

For instance, the erection of new shrines throughout the cathedral in the fourteenth century can probably be traced to the results of the destructive Tombland riot of 1272.⁴⁸ In August of that year the bad blood that had long coursed between the monks of the cathedral and the citizens

over rights in the city spilled over into outright violence. A band of citizens, provoked by unruly mercenaries the monks had hired from Yarmouth, attacked the cathedral precinct and set it on fire. Witnesses dispute the extent of the damage caused by the fire; certainly most of the wooden buildings in the precinct burned, as did a parish church, a bell tower and the gate into the precinct. Pope Gregory X's bull denouncing the destruction claimed that the cathedral itself was burned, but Bartholomew Cotton, who was a monk of the cathedral priory, reported that only the Lady Chapel in the apse was damaged. The London chronicler John of Oxnead said that only the cathedral's woodwork was burned.⁴⁹ But, even if the cathedral substantially escaped the flames, it probably did not escape the plundering that followed once the rioters entered the cathedral precinct. Cotton reported that 'all the sacred vessels, books, gold and silver, vestments, and everything left unburned' were carried off by the pillaging rioters. Gregory's bull agreed with this list, adding that 'the venerable relics' were also looted.⁵⁰ Certainly the damage to the cathedral and the bloodshed within its precincts were severe enough to warrant its reconsecration in 1278.⁵¹ Since many of the cathedral's relics and images were either lost or damaged in the riot, the cathedral's sacrists undoubtedly were preoccupied with rebuilding the collection throughout the fourteenth century. We know, for instance, that in the funds spent on repairing damages to the cathedral after the riot, a certain 'Master William' received £4 6s 8d for making an unspecified image.⁵²

The Tombland fire was not the only calamity to befall the cathedral. Another reason why the sacrists were so busy installing shrines in the later years of the fourteenth century probably comes from the damage sustained to the fabric in 1361 when a gale blew the cathedral's spire down into the presbytery.⁵³ No precise tally of the damage caused to the interior of the cathedral by this gale exists, but the chapels of William, Stephen, Anne and Sitha were all built just off the north presbytery aisle as was the Reliquary Arch; some or all of these may have suffered damage when the spire fell through the roof. The shrines of Petronilla, Theobald, Anthony and Leger were all added to the cathedral at least twenty-five years after the gale, and all of these shrines were probably located in the aisles and side chapels of the north presbytery. They may have been introduced as part of the general repair and refurbishment that followed the gale. The Pope offered an indulgence in 1363 for those contributing to the restoration of the presbytery;⁵⁴ the addition of new saints to the cathedral would certainly have been another way to collect pious donations to defray the costs of the repairs.

These two accidents temporarily impeded the progress of the cathedral's cults. Undoubtedly, in both cases the sacrist of the time, in the wake of these disasters, renewed his efforts to build up the relics and images in his cathedral. But there was another less tangible variable that affected the growth of cults in the cathedral. This, of course, was the extent to which a saint could capture the popular imagination. To attempt to categorise what exactly made any particular saint popular at any particular time to any particular group of people is to attempt to solve an almost insoluble equation. Lately several scholars have taken up this task with varying degrees of success.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the example of Norwich would seem to offer several rather impressionistic (if not downright obvious) insights.

The progress of the cult of William of Norwich suggests that a critical nucleus of interested people was necessary for focusing attention on a cult. We cannot say finally why the Norwich peltiers chose William as their guild patron. Perhaps, as I have earlier suggested, he was a logical choice for people whose livelihood depended on animal skins since he himself had trained as a skinner. Or perhaps some member of the peltiers thought he had experienced a miracle by William's intercession. But for whatever reason, the peltiers' devotion to William piqued the interest of other people in Norwich. One can easily imagine how word of William's renewed

fame spread from person to person until a large devotional following grew, however fleeting it may have been. A similar process must have sparked interest in Walter Suffield's and John Salmon's cults, but here something else was added. The evidence of the sacrist rolls suggests that these men's cults endured only for a generation or so after their deaths. We should conclude that in these instances personal acquaintance with the reputations of these two bishops must have sustained the cults for as long as those who knew them — or knew of them — lived. Once their memories had faded, the critical nucleus of interest no longer held.

In Suffield's case miracles had been reported at his tomb. It is probably safe to guess that Salmon — possessing the sanctified aura of the episcopacy — likewise produced a miracle or two after his death. The power to work wonders was surely the most compelling reason for the celebrity of a saint. This point has been made so often it hardly bears repeating.

Miracles were, of course, a relatively easy commodity to procure in the Middle Ages. More elusive is what quality initially drew people to a particular saint. The patterns of offerings at Norwich shrines suggest that novelty played a significant part in stimulating interest in a cult. Whether the sacrist introduced images of new saints to the cathedral pantheon (as with SS Sitha or Laud, Leger and Theobald) or new images of saints already venerated in the cathedral (SS Catherine, Anne, or Our Lady of Compassion) in each instance these novelties attracted a group of devotees. Once these images had been in place awhile, once the novelty wore thin, offerings to them either declined or levelled off. Such popular behaviour should not surprise us. Our own age is thoroughly inured to fleeting celebrity and fads.

What the fourteenth-century sacrist rolls finally reveal is the concerted effort of the Norwich monks throughout the century to create a rich pantheon of saints that would glorify their cathedral. Their motives may have been mixed: on one hand they sought to stimulate the devotions of the faithful; on the other, they surely recognized the financial rewards that would accrue to the cathedral from the donations left by the faithful at the shrines. The people of Norwich, however, were essential in sustaining these cults. Though the popular reaction to these saints may have been extremely fickle, it underscores the peculiar partnership that existed between the monks and the people. The monks may have offered a variety of images and relics as objects of veneration, but the people decided whether they were fitting for their devotions. Thus, the fortunes of the cathedral's shrines waxed and waned — subject to inexorable laws of saintly supply and demand.

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1. See, for instance, D. Bethell, 'The Making of a Twelfth Century Relic Collection', in G. J. Cuming and D. Baker (ed.), *Popular Belief and Practice, Studies in Ecclesiastical History* 8 (Cambridge, 1972), 61-72. For relic cults in general see Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, (London, 1977) and Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage, An Image of Medieval Religion* (London, 1975).
2. For his life see Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*, ed. Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge, 1896) — hereafter called *Life* — and M. D. Anderson, *A Saint at Stake, the Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144* (London, 1964). William's cult is important chiefly in that it revived in Europe the scurrilous old legend of the Jewish ritual murder of Christians. More famous than William was the boy St. Hugh of Lincoln, allegedly crucified by Jews in 1255. Chaucer preserves a version of the story in his 'Prioress's Tale'.
3. Gavin I. Langmuir offers a critical assessment of the likelihood of the story in 'Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder', *Speculum* 59 (1984), 820-846.
4. Langmuir, 'Thomas of Monmouth', 827.
5. James and Jessopp agreed that the Martyrs' Chapel and the Jesus Chapel were identical, but could not pinpoint the date when the Martyrs' Chapel was renamed (*Life*, lxxxii). But Bartholomew Cotton — a monk of the Cathedral Priory — records the renaming of the chapel when the cathedral was re-dedicated in 1278 after the Tombland riot (see below, p. 139). He says that 'John, bishop of London, dedicated the altar where the body of William

lay buried in honor of the Holy Saviour and All Saints' ('*Eodem die Johannes Londoniensis dedicavit altare, ubi corpus Willelmi jacet humatum, in honore Sancti Salvatoris et Omnium Sanctorum*') *Historia Anglicana*, Rolls Series 16 (1859), 157. Thus, by the late thirteenth century, the Martyrs' Chapel already was associated with Jesus and All Saints generally. There had been an earlier Norman St. Saviour's Chapel which was re-dedicated to Our Lady between 1245-57. The Lady's Chapel fell into ruin in the late 1500s; it was rebuilt and dedicated to St. Saviour in 1930. (See Gilbert Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral* (Norwich, 1972) 7, 8, 17).

6. James summarises the movement of the tomb in *Life*, lxxxix-xc and lxxx-lxxxv. See below, note 24.
7. Finucane, *Miracles*, 162.
8. Finucane, *Miracles*, 161.
9. Finucane, *Miracles*, 162.
10. According to James, in 1277, £21 3s 4d were collected at the High Altar and at William's altar (*Life*, lxxxii).
11. H. W. Saunders, *An Introduction to the Obedientary and Manor Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory* (Norwich, 1930), 102.
12. The Rolls are in the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich and are classed DCN 1/4/1-126, Obedientary Rolls, Sacrist. Earlier rolls were presumably destroyed in the cathedral fire of 1272.
13. For the location of this chapel see *Life*, lxxxiii. For the location of many of the medieval shrines of the cathedral, I rely on the plan of John Adey Repton in *Norwich Cathedral at the End of the Eighteenth Century with Descriptive Notes* by William Wilkins, ed. S. Rowland Pierce (rpt. Farnborough, 1965).
14. Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, DCN 1/4, Obedientary Rolls, Sacrist, Roll 224. To avoid constant repetition of the roll numbers, I list here all the relevant Sacrist Rolls and their dates. In subsequent references the rolls will be identified by their dates. Since the rolls commenced at Michaelmas (29 September) each year, they cross over two calendar years in modern dating. In my citations the relevant roll corresponds to the earlier year given here. An asterisk indicates that the roll is out of order and should chronologically succeed the following roll.

ROLL	YEAR	ROLL	YEAR
220	1296-97	240	1339-40
221	1300-01	241	1340-41
222	1301-02	242	1342-43
223	1304-05	243	1363-64
224	1305-06	244	1368-69
225	1306-07	245	REMOVED (not a Roll)
226	1320-21	246	1386-87
227	1322-23	247	1390-91
228	1324-25	248	1391-92
229	1322-23	249	1394-95
230	1323-24	250	1396-97
231	1325-26	251	Copy of 252
232	1329 (expenses of a trip to Rome)	252	1399-1400
		253	1400-01
233	1328-29	253a	1401-02 (written on dorse of 253)
234	1330-31		Copy of 253a
235	1332-33	254	1403-04
236	Copy of 235	255	1404-05
237	1333-34	256	1405-06
238	*1335-36	257	
239	1334-35		

15. *Life*, lxxxiii; William Page (ed.) *The Victoria County History of Norfolk* (London, 1906), Vol. II, 322.
16. See M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society* (Harmondsworth, 1975), 263, 265. A graph of Norwich grain prices throughout this period appears in Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Crime in East Anglia in the Fourteenth Century*, Norfolk Record Society 44 (1976), 15.
17. The rolls describe this site in several ways: the '*nova crux*' (Roll 224), the '*parvus truncus*' (Roll 229), the '*novus truncus*' (Roll 228). Roll 243 explains its location as being '*de cruce ad altare sancti stephani*' which places it — according to Repton — in the north presbytery aisle in St. Stephen's Chapel, just west of the Martyr's Chapel. See *Life*, lxxxiii.
18. The large totals at the high altar were probably from the accumulations of the death duty known as the 'mortuary'. It was meant to compensate the Church for unpaid tithes and was generally bequeathed to the main altar of a church.
19. The site is called variously the 'box at the cross' (e.g. Roll 220), the 'cross in the chancel' (Roll 223), the 'old cross' (Roll 225), the 'old cross in the presbytery' (Roll 224), the 'holy cross' (e.g. Roll 246), the 'great cross' or simply 'at the cross (*ad crucem*)' (e.g. Roll 243). The designation 'old cross' is to distinguish it from the 'new cross' at St. Stephen's Chapel. See above, note 17.
20. The Lady Chapel built by Bishop Walter Suffield (now St. Saviour's Regimental Chapel), the chapel of the BVM of Pity (now the Bauchon Chapel), and the image of Mary at the Precentor's Altar (next to William's altar on the south side of the nave altar).

21. See for instance *Life*, p. lxxxiii: 'it is interesting to see how the offerings to St. William declined in amount'; Saunders, *An Introduction to the Obedientary and Manor Rolls*, 111 and *Victoria County History*, 322.
22. Her will is in the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, Register Heydon, f. 144r.
23. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *English Guilds*, Early English Text Society, o.s. 40 (1870; rpt. 1965), 28-32.
24. Smith, *English Guilds*, 30. It would seem that in the early fourteenth century a separate altar, not at the tomb itself, was dedicated to William. In 1323 the sacrist noted an expenditure of £1 3d 'in dedicatione altaris sancti Willelmi'. The rolls also refer once, in 1386, to offerings made at an image of the Trinity 'ad altare sancti willelmi' (Roll 246). Later, in 1394, there is a unique reference in the rolls (Roll 249) to 16d collected from a box 'extra claustram ante altari sancti Willelmi'. This presumably was the altar to the north of the central altar in the nave, situated in front of the monks' choir (hence 'extra claustram'). This would also explain a reference in the peltiers' guild certificate which seems to make a distinction between 'seynt Wilyams toumbe' and 'seynt Williams auter'. This was probably the same altar to which William's relics were finally translated in c.1426. Presumably then, by the early fourteenth century there were two focuses for William's cult: one at his tomb in the Martyrs' chapel, one at his altar in the nave. Since the Martyrs' had been re-dedicated in 1278 to the Holy Saviour and All Saints (see above, note 5), the monks probably thought it fitting to set up a special, separate altar to William in the nave. If the altar was in fact consecrated as early as 1323 one would expect the extra publicity it would have focused on William's cult to result in increased offerings either at his altar (in the nave) or his tomb (in the Martyrs' Chapel). This, however, was not the case. In fact, it was in the period 1323 to 1368 that donations to William reached their lowest level. The erection of the altar 'extra claustram', therefore, may be of a later date — perhaps closer to the founding of the peltiers' guild dedicated to William — and the reference in 1323 to the dedication of an altar may instead refer to the altar actually at his tomb in the northwest chapel of the apse.
25. I am aware that there is an apparent inconsistency in my argument since the peltiers' guild was founded in 1376 and Katerina Rockland's will was dated 1377. If the guild had stimulated new devotions to William in the city, why doesn't her will mention him? I would suggest that after the guild's renewed interest in William, it would take a year or two for his cult to gain wider recognition. Although it might be further argued that the large sums collected at his shrine after 1386 were due solely to the mandatory offerings of the guild members, this is most unlikely. The total annual offering of each peltier was ¾d. If only one pound had been contributed to the shrine annually by the entire guild, this would mean that there would have to be 320 peltiers in Norwich. Since the lowest amount left at the shrine after 1386 was about £4 10s, if only the guild members contributed this amount from their yearly dues there would have to be 1,440 of them in the city. Clearly, non-members were also contributing offerings to the shrine.
26. Smith, *English Guilds*, 51.
27. 'Ecclesiam quoque libentissime frequentabat; litteras, psalmos et orationes discebat et quecunque dei erant summa venerabatur reverentia'. *Life*, 14.
28. Smith, *English Guilds*, 51.
29. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Rolls Series, 57 (1880) Vol. 5, 638. See also the account in Bartholomew Cotton's 'Liber de Archiepiscopis et Episcopis Anglia', Rolls Series 16 (1859), 394. Suffield's career is summarized in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 19, 151.
30. 'De trunco sancti walteri, nihil quia non respexi . . .' (Roll 253 dorset).
31. For Salmon's career see *Dictionary of National Biography*, 27, 694. The site of his tomb is unknown, but possibly it was in the Canary Chapel (later made into a school) that he had built c. 1316. However, since the sacrist generally distinguished between offerings made to Salmon and offerings at his chapel, it is more likely that he was buried in the cathedral itself.
32. Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 24.
33. 'Item, pro factura et pictura ymaginis sancte Katerine, xx. sol.' (Roll 243).
34. Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 16. The chapel, now destroyed, was entered from the third bay up from the north transept in the presbytery. For St. Anne's chapel see Barbara Dodwell's comments in 'William Bauchon and his connection with the Cathedral Priory at Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXVI, pt. 2 (1975), 111-112.
35. Offerings at the shrines were tallied in common.
36. Rolls 240-244, 247-250, 253a-257.
37. It is possible, though highly unlikely, that all the saints mentioned in the rolls after 1363 already had shrines in the cathedral that suddenly became popular.
38. The altar of St. Hippolytus, an apocryphal early martyr, seems to have been one of the older shrines in the cathedral. Offerings left there are recorded throughout the century and generally total between one-half pound to a pound. The site of the altar is unknown, but it was probably near the other saints' chapels in the north of the presbytery.
39. Rolls 246-250, 252-257.
40. Dodwell, 'William Bauchon', 111-118.

41. Whether Theobald of Provins, Theobald the thirteenth-century monk of Vaux-de-Cernay or a mistake for Theobald the early archbishop of Canterbury is unspecified. A panel at Hempstead, Norf. depicts a St. Theobald represented as a bishop. See R. L. P. Milburn, *Saints and Their Emblems* (London, 1949), 238.
42. For St. Laud see Milburn, *Saints*, 155. The Norman campaign of 1356 ended with the battle of Poitiers.
43. For his crusade see May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (Oxford, 1959), 429-33. If the St. Theobald who appears in the rolls was Theobald of Provins, Dispenser also may have established his cult at Norwich.
44. Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 16.
45. Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 16. Relics were also housed in a niche underneath the platform that supports the episcopal *cathedra*. There is no specific mention of these relics in the rolls. (See Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 9).
46. My totals are based on the offerings collected at the High Altar; the altar of the BVM and the two other Marian shrines mentioned after mid-century (Our Lady of Pity and St. Mary at the Precentor's Altar); the relics; the chests before the rood loft cross in the nave of the church and before the '*hostea rubea*'; the Canary Chapel of St. John built outside the west door of the cathedral in 1316; and the shrines, altars, and images of the various saints: William, Stephen, Anne, Catherine, Petronilla, Leger, Eligius, Hippolytus, Anthony, Theobald, Nicholas, Laud, Sitha, 'St.' Walter Suffield and 'St.' John Salmon.
47. Inflation during the course of the century does not explain the rise in offerings since prices — excluding some severe annual fluctuations — remained relatively stable throughout the century. More pertinent to the rise in offerings to the shrines may be the rise in wages which was continuous throughout the century. For the figures see Postan, *Medieval Economy and Society*, 253-65, and *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Vol. I, *The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan (2nd ed. Cambridge, 1966), 660-694.
48. For this episode see *Victoria County History of Norfolk*, II, 319-20.
49. Accounts of the fire are in Bartholomew of Cotton, *Historia Anglicana*, 147, 157, 422-23 (Gregory X's description of the extent of the destruction); The *Flores historiarum* attributed to Matthew of Westminster: '*Incensa sunt vestimenta, libri, cappa, et omnia ornamenta*'. Everything left was carried off by the townspeople. Rolls Series 95 (1890) v. 3, 25; and John of Oxnead's *Chronica*, Rolls Series 13 (1859), 241.
50. Bartholomew of Cotton, 147, 422-423.
51. Bartholomew of Cotton, 157.
52. Saunders, *Introduction to the Obedientary and Manor Rolls*, 109. The total for the repair work in 1274 and 1275 was £143 4s 11d.
53. Thurlow, *Norwich Cathedral*, 12, 26; Saunders, *Introduction to the Obedientary and Manor Rolls*, 109.
54. W. H. Bliss, *Calendar of Papal Petitions* (London, 1896), vol. I, 418. The indulgence was to remain in effect for ten years.
55. See Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints & Society, The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700*, (Chicago, 1982); Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind, Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia, 1982); and Jennifer R. Bray, 'Concepts of Sainthood in Fourteenth-Century England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 66 (Spring, 1984), 40-77.

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