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**CATHEDRALS AND CASTLES OF THE SEA:  
SHIPS, ALLEGORY AND TECHNOLOGICAL  
CHANGE IN PRE-REFORMATION  
NORTHERN EUROPE**

*And shippes by the brynke comen and gon,  
And in swich forme enduren a wowke or two.*  
(Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*:  
*The Franklin's Tale*, v. 1160-1; c. 1387–1400)<sup>1</sup>

In an engraving probably produced in Cádiz around 1730 two ships can be seen sailing from right to left, parallel to both one another and the pictorial surface (Fig. 1). Even though most of its main mast is obscured by a huge crowned Madonna holding the Christ Child and a rosary, the large vessel at the top can clearly be recognised as a fully-rigged Spanish man-of-war armed with fifty-four guns, perhaps a double-decked frigate or a third rate ship-of-the-line. The smaller ship below appears to be a ceremonial or state barge, the single mast of which is the Cross of Golgotha. Its hull contains a large altar supporting the Lamb of God, the consecrated host and chalice,

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Fred Norris Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); available online at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/CT/1:5.5?rgn=div2;view=fulltext> (accessed 4 April 2019).



FIG. 1. ANONYMOUS, COPY OF THE IMAGE OF THE BLESSED MARY OF THE ROSARY, CAPTAIN AND PROTECTOR OF THE FLEETS OF SPAIN, ENGRAVING, PROBABLY CÁDIZ, C. 1730. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

as well as a sacramental tabernacle in the shape of a small *tempietto*. The good wind that fills the sails of both vessels also animates the fluttering banner extending between them and held on either side of the smaller boat by the personifications of Europe and America supporting the arms of Spain. The banner's inscription partially quotes Proverbs 31:14: 'Navis institoris de longa portans panem' ('[She is like] the merchant's ship, she bringeth [her] bread from afar'). Two further captions in Spanish below a busy port scene at the bottom of the composition flesh out the meaning of the image. On the left we read: 'Hieroglyphic in which is Pictured the allegorical Title of Maria Selma Ship of the Divine Merchant JESUS CHRIST who brought to the World from afar the True Bread of Life.'<sup>2</sup> The text on the right informs us that we are looking at a 'Copy of the Image of the Blessed Mary of the Rosary, Captain and Protector of the Fleets of Spain.'<sup>3</sup>

This dense image, in which two ships – one Marian, the other Eucharistic – sail forth to advance the spiritual, commercial and colonial interests of the Crown of Spain, almost marks the end of a long line of nautical allegories devised to represent complicated religious or political concepts and agendas in textual or visual form. Certain chapters in the history of this type of allegory have been well explored, especially its origins in late Antiquity<sup>4</sup> and its later use in the service of Reformation and Counter-Reformation propaganda,<sup>5</sup> while other chapters remain obscure and little understood.

2 'Gerogclifico en que se Figura el alegorico Titulo de Maria Selma Nave del Divino Negociante JESU CHRISTO que de lexos Conduxos al Mundo el Verdadero Pan de Vida.'

3 'Copia de la Imagen de Maria Santissima de Rosario Capitana y Protectora de las Flotas de Espana [sic].'

4 See note 12 below.

5 See most recently Dario Barbera, 'Eversio Europae in imaginari: la nave della *Christianitas*', *Visual History*, 3 (2017), 57–82; Didier Jagan and Joël Raskin, 'Du navire de la patience au triomphe de l'Église: Iconographie du bateau chrétien face à la mort, au péché et à l'hérésie (XVIIe – XVIIIe siècle)', *Mort suit l'homme pas à pas: Représentations iconographiques, variations littéraires, diffusion des thèmes; Actes du XVIIe Congrès international Danses macabres d'Europe, Troyes, 25–28 mai 2016*, ed. by Alessandro Benucci et al. (Reims: Université Champagne-Ardenne, 2016), 113–139; Stephan Leibfried, Wolfgang Winter, *Kirchen- und Staatsschiffe zwischen Reformation und Gegenreformation im 16. Jahrhundert: Segel hissen für die moderne Staatlichkeit* (Bremen: TranState, 2013), available online at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260980318\\_Kirchen-\\_und\\_Staatsschiffe\\_zwischen\\_Reformation\\_und\\_Gegenreformation\\_im\\_16\\_Jahrhundert\\_Segel\\_hissen\\_fur\\_die\\_moderne\\_Staatlichkeit\\_Ships\\_of\\_Church\\_and\\_State\\_in\\_the\\_16th\\_Century\\_Reformation\\_Setting\\_Sail](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260980318_Kirchen-_und_Staatsschiffe_zwischen_Reformation_und_Gegenreformation_im_16_Jahrhundert_Segel_hissen_fur_die_moderne_Staatlichkeit_Ships_of_Church_and_State_in_the_16th_Century_Reformation_Setting_Sail) (accessed 4 April 2019); the relevant essays in *Vom Anker zum Krähennest: Nautische Bildwelten von der Renaissance bis zum Zeitalter der Fotografie*, ed. by Nicole Hegener, Deutsche Maritime Studien, 17 (Bremen: Hauschild, 2011); and Burkhardt Wolf, 'Das Schiff, eine Peripetie des Regierens: Nautische Hintergründe von Kybernetik und Gouvernementalität', *Modern Language Notes*, 123 (2008), 444–468.

The kind of complex visual nautical allegory exemplified by the aforementioned engraving – deployed to great effect a century and a half before on both sides of the confessional divide – had its roots in the fifteenth century, even though its conceptual ancestry was at least a millennium older. The ‘long fifteenth century’ was an ideal catalyst or incubator for visually thinking with and through allegorical ships. The crisis, temporary recovery, and renewed crisis of the papal Church between the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) and the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation (c. 1517 ff.) was often described by contemporaries in maritime terms, as a perilous sea crossing that threatened the very integrity of the Ship of Christianity and endangered the millions of souls it carried in its hold. The keenness, indeed enthusiasm, of fifteenth-century writers and artists to explore this changing world through nautical allegory was in part fuelled by contemporaneous developments in shipbuilding, which saw the introduction of new types of vessels. Capable of making long-distance voyages and of carrying heavy ordnance, they accelerated transcontinental expansion – especially in the cases of Portugal and Spain – while also leading to the adaptation of new naval policies and tactics, notably in England, France and the cities of the Hanseatic League. Moreover, the fifteenth century was an age of discovery not just in a geographical sense, but also in the ways in which it pushed the boundaries of visual theological thinking. In the century that saw the caravels of Prince Henry of Portugal (‘the Navigator’) charting the west coast of Africa and the *naus* of Vasco da Gama exploring the southern sea route to India, artists on both sides of the Alps embarked on their own voyages of discovery. These artists eventually advanced to the very heart of nautical allegory, to a visual and semantic device that I will call the crucifix-mast or the *antenna crucifixi*. This device can still be seen surmounting the smaller of the two ships on the eighteenth-century engraving with which this article began.

Before retracing this journey, we need to briefly acquaint ourselves with two of the ship types that recur throughout the following discussion. Medieval sources contain a wide range of appellations for the ships that sailed the Mediterranean, along the north-eastern littoral of the Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, but only a

few of these vessels are actually archaeologically verifiable.<sup>6</sup> The two best documented, the cog and the carrack, are also the types of vessels we will mostly be concerned with. Not only were they depicted on numerous civic seals, murals, altarpieces and in manuscript illuminations,<sup>7</sup> but advances in underwater archaeology have also enabled the recovery of three such substantially surviving ships: the *Bremen Cog* of c. 1380 (Bremerhaven, Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum);<sup>8</sup> the *Newport Ship* of c. 1450–1460 (Newport, Wales, Riverfront Arts Centre);<sup>9</sup> and the *Mary Rose* of 1509–1512, a carrack in the service of the Tudor navy that sank in the Battle of the Solent in 1545 (Portsmouth, Mary Rose Museum).<sup>10</sup> Cogs were so-called clinker-built vessels. Their hull shells were constructed from overlapping planks before the

6 Studies on medieval shipbuilding and maritime archaeology include, but are not limited to, the following: Jonathan Adams, *A Maritime Archaeology of Ships: Innovation and Social Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Oxford; Oakville: Oxbow, 2013); Susan Rose, *England's Medieval Navy 1066–1509: Ships, Men and Warfare* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Lillian Ray Martin, *The Art and Archaeology of Venetian Ships and Boats* (Rochester: Chatham, 2001); Ian Friel, *The Good Ship: Ships, Shipbuilding, and Technology in England, 1200–1520* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Gillian Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships and Shipping* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994); *Cogs, Caravels and Galleons: The Sailing Ship 1000–1650*, ed. by Robert Gardiner, *Conway History of the Ship* (London: Conway, 1994); Richard W. Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600–1600* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), esp. chapter 5; Heinrich Winter, *Das Hanseschiff im ausgehenden 15. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld: Delius und Klasing, 1978); Walter Ried, *Deutsche Segelschiffahrt seit 1470* (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns, 1974). See also the relevant essays in Richard W. Unger, *Ships and Shipping in the North Sea and Atlantic, 1400–1800*, *Variorum Collected Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

7 On ships in medieval and Renaissance visual culture, see Richard W. Unger, *Ships on Maps: Pictures of Power in Renaissance Europe*, *Early Modern History: Society and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Joe Flatman, *Ships and Shipping in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2009); Joe Flatman, *The Illuminated Ark: Interrogating Evidence from Manuscript Illuminations and Archaeological Remains for Medieval Vessels*, *BAR International Series*, 1616 (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, 2007); David Arduini, Chiara Grassi, *Graffiti di navi medievali sulle chiese di Pisa e di Lucca* (Ospedaletto: Felici, 2002); *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, Birgitte Munch-Thye (Copenhagen: PNM, 1995); Ennio Concina, *Navis: L'umanesimo sul mare (1470–1740)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990); Christiane Villain-Gandossi, *Le navire médiéval à travers les miniatures* (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1985); and Heino Wiechell, *Das Schiff auf Siegeln des Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit: Eine Sammlung von bildlichen Quellen zur Schiffstypenkunde* (Lübeck: Kultusverwaltung, 1969).

8 See in particular the essays in *Die Hanse-Kogge von 1380*, ed. by Klaus-Peter Kiedel and Uwe Schall (Bremerhaven: Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum [sic!], 1982).

9 See the essays in *The World of the Newport Medieval Ship: Trade, Politics and Shipping in the Mid-Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Evan T. Jones and Richard Stone (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).

10 See the essays in *Your Noblest Shippe: Anatomy of a Tudor Warship*, ed. by Peter Marsden, *The Archaeology of the Mary Rose 2* (Portsmouth: Mary Rose Trust, 2009); see also David Childs, *The Warship Mary Rose: The Life and Times of King Henry VIII's Flagship* (London: Chatham, 2007).

insertion of the internal frame. This technique was first developed by Nordic shipbuilders during the Scandinavian Iron Age and later used in the construction of the Viking longships of the eighth to eleventh centuries. The carrack, on the other hand, was a ship type that used the frame-first method, the hull of which was carvel-built, meaning that its plank edges were butted smoothly seam to seam. Capable of carrying up to 200 tuns burthen (roughly the same amount of barrels of Bordeaux wine), the single-masted cogs were a common sight in northern waters from the twelfth to the early fifteenth centuries. The carrack, by contrast, represented a Mediterranean adaptation and refinement of the northern cog that made its first appearance in British and French ports in the early 1400s. Equipped with up to four masts, a sophisticated rig and sailage, and capable of carrying cargoes of up to 1,000 tuns burthen, carracks (or *Kraweels*, as they were known in the Baltic Sea) markedly contributed toward changing the economic landscape of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe. Their seaworthiness made them ideal for the kinds of long-range voyages that eventually ushered in the first age of globalisation, and their versatility made them attractive not only for commercial use, but also for effective deployment in the expanding theatre of naval warfare.<sup>11</sup> While much of what follows centres on the age of the carrack, we begin our investigation in the Mediterranean of the late antique Church.

### FROM NAVIS ECCLESIAE TO THE NAVICELLA

The allegorical ships we will examine in the course of this article owed much of their conceptual workings to the Patristic authors. As Hugo Rahner has shown in his monumental study *Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* ('Ecclesiology of the Fathers'), Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Ambrose of Milan (337–397) were at the forefront of this nautical allegoresis, though he also acknowledges the important contributions of earlier writers, such as Tertullian (160–220), Clement

11 See Rose, *England's Medieval Navy*, esp. chapter 1; and Angus Konstam, *Sovereigns of the Sea: The Quest to Build the Perfect Renaissance Battleship* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008); and the relevant essays in *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by John B. Hattendorf, Richard W. Unger (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003).

of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) and Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235).<sup>12</sup> The operative terms employed by these authors varied of course from text to text, though all of these writers compared life to a vicious and deadly ocean replete with temptations and moral corruption, the *saeculum*, and all admonished their readers that the only safe way across this vast and dangerous expanse was to board the Ship of the Church, the *navis ecclesiae*.<sup>13</sup> This vessel could take on various shapes and sizes, but it was always constructed from the wood of the Cross (*lignum crucis*) and steered toward the harbour of Salvation (*portus salutis*) by either Christ Himself, or by the Holy Spirit (*sanctus spiritus*). The latter also blew into the sometimes cross-inscribed sail, the *velum crucis*, that was suspended from the *antenna crucis*, the single cruciform mast and yard that rose over the decks of the majority of late antique ships. This thinking with and through ships is illustrated, for instance, in a passage by St. Augustine on Noah's Ark, which symbolises for him 'the City of God on pilgrimage in this world, of the Church which is saved through the wood on which was suspended the mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ';<sup>14</sup> elsewhere he speaks of a 'tree by which we may cross the sea.'<sup>15</sup> His contemporary St. Ambrose likewise excels in the use of nautical-xylological metaphors, calling 'that wood of the cross [...]

12 Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1964), esp. the chapter entitled 'Antenna crucis', 239–564. On ship imagery in late antique writings and visual culture, see, in addition to Rahner, Kurt Goldammer, 'Das Schiff der Kirche: Ein antiker Symbolbegriff aus der politischen Metaphorik in eschatologischer und ekklesiologischer Umdeutung', *Theologische Zeitschrift der Universität Basel*, 6 (1950), 232–237; Georg Stuhlfauth, 'Das Schiff als Symbol der altchristlichen Kunst', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 19 (1942), 111–141; Kurt Goldammer, 'Navis Ecclesiae: Eine unbekannte altchristliche Darstellung der Schiffsallegorie', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*, 40 (1941), 76–86; and Franz Joseph Dölger, 'Das Schiff der Kirche auf der Fahrt gen Sonnenaufgang: Die Fahrt der Seele zum Hafen des ewigen Friedens', *Liturgiegeschichtliche Forschungen*, 4–5 (1920), 272–285.

13 On the etymology of the term and metaphor *navis ecclesiae*, see, in addition to the discussion in Rahner, Friedrich Möbius, 'Navis Ecclesiae: Sinnschichten des zeitgenössischen Sprachgebrauchs', *Marburger Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, 22 (1989), 15–22, which also sounds out the applicability of the appellation to medieval church architecture.

14 Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, XV.26: 'Arca procul dubio figura est peregrinantis in hoc saeculo civitatis Dei, hoc est Ecclesiae, quae fit salva per lignum, in quo pependit mediator Dei et hominum, homo Christi Jesus' (*Patrologia Latina* 41: 473).

15 Augustinus, *Tractatus in Joannem*, II.2.3: 'Instituit lignum quo mare transeamus. Nemo enim potest transire mare huius saeculi nisi cruce Christi portatus' (*Patrologia Latina* 35: 1389–90).

a kind of ship of our salvation,<sup>16</sup> reassuring his readers that as long as the Ship of the Church has the crucified Christ affixed to its mast it cannot suffer shipwreck amidst the turbulent waves of life's high seas.<sup>17</sup> As Rahner has convincingly demonstrated, the notion that the *navis ecclesiae* was made impervious and shielded from all storms by the firm and strong *antenna crucis* had its ultimate conceptual origins in the Homeric story of Ulysses, bound to the mast of his ship so as not to succumb to the beckoning song of the sirens.<sup>18</sup> Expanding on this typology, Clement of Alexandria in his *Exhortation to the Greeks* calls upon his audience to 'sail past the song; it works death. Only resolve, and thou hast vanquished destruction; bound to the wood of the cross thou shalt live freed from all corruption. The Word of God shall be thy pilot and the Holy Spirit shall bring thee to anchor in the harbors of heaven.'<sup>19</sup> Clement's slightly younger contemporary, Hippolytus of Rome, equally advised his readers to 'smear their ears with wax, and sail straight on through the tenets of the heretics,' and bind themselves 'to the Cross of Christ' to escape 'the luscious lay of the Sirens.'<sup>20</sup> It is also in Hippolytus that we find one of the most elaborate ecclesiastical readings of the ship from the late antique period, with many of the same ideas later recurring in medieval nautical allegory:

*But we who hope for the Son of God are persecuted and trodden down by those unbelievers. For the wings of the vessels are the churches; and the sea is the world, in which the Church is set, like a ship tossed in the deep, but not destroyed; for she has with her the skilled Pilot, Christ. And she bears*

16 Ambrosius, *De spiritu sancto*, I.9.110: 'Lignum igitur illud crucis velut quaedam nostrae navis salutis vectura nostra est, non poena. Alia enim salus non est nisi vectura salutis aeternae' (*Patrologia Latina* 13: 730C).

17 Ambrosius (or Pseudo-Ambrosius), *Sermo de Salomone*, 4: 'Navem adque Ecclesiam debemus accipere in salo mundi istius constitutam [...] nunquam potest sustinere naufragium; quia in arbore ejus, id est in cruce, Christus erigitur [...]' (*Patrologia Latina* 17: 697).

18 Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche*, 239–271; on the typological reading of the mast-bound Ulysses as a prefiguration of the crucified Christ, see also Henrike Maria Zilling, *Jesus als Held: Odysseus und Herakles als Vorbilder christlicher Heldentypologie* (Paderborn: Schönigh, 2011), 79–101.

19 Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks and the Rich Man's Salvation to the Newly Baptized*, transl. G. W. Butterworth, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003; first edition 1919), 252–253, with parallel Greek text.

20 Hippolytus of Rome, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, transl. J. H. MacMahon (Pickerington, OH: Beloved Publishing, 2016; first published 1886), 130–131 (chapter VII.1). For the original Greek version, see Hippolytus, *Werke, dritter Band: Refutatio omnium haeresium*, ed. by Paul Wendland, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 26 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), 191.

*in her midst also the trophy [which is erected] over death; for she carries with her the cross of the Lord. For her prow is the east, and her stern is the west, and her hold is the south, and her tillers are the two Testaments; and the ropes that stretch around her are the love of Christ, which binds the Church; and the net which she bears with her is the layer of the regeneration which renews the believing, whence too are these glories. As the wind the Spirit from heaven is present, by whom those who believe are sealed: she has also anchors of iron accompanying her, viz., the holy commandments of Christ Himself, which are strong as iron. She has also mariners on the right and on the left [i.e. oarsmen], assessors like the holy angels, by whom the Church is always governed and defended. The ladder in her leading up to the sailyard [i.e. the shroud] is an emblem of the passion of Christ, which brings the faithful to the ascent of heaven. And the top-sails aloft upon the yard are the company of prophets, martyrs, and apostles, who have entered into their rest in the kingdom of Christ.'*<sup>21</sup>

Late antique artists soon caught on to these kinds of sophisticated nautical metaphors, producing a wide range of images for catacombs and house churches, and luxury articles such as naviform bronze lamps and seal rings with ship emblems for their new Christian audiences. One of the most remarkable of such objects from this period is a late Roman ring created in the late fourth or early fifth century (Dresden, Skulpturensammlung; Fig. 2).<sup>22</sup> Its intaglio carnelian gem shows a miniature galley whose single mast is decorated with the *labarum* in the form of a vertical banner bearing the monogram of Christ. The ship's bow is dove-shaped, no doubt signifying the *sanctus spiritus*, while twelve oars symbolising the apostles propel it through the high seas, populated by a dolphin or swordfish. Kurt Goldammer, who published the ring in 1941, believed it to be one of a kind,<sup>23</sup> though recently a similar such piece was uncovered during archaeological excavations at Kaiseraugst in the Aargau (Switzerland).<sup>24</sup> Of slightly simpler manufacture and entirely

21 Hippolytus of Rome, *On Christ and Antichrist*, transl. J. H. MacMahon (Philadelphia: Dalcassian Publishing, 2017; first published 1886), 26 (chapter 59). For the Greek original text, see Hippolytus, *Werke, erster Band: De Antichristo*, ed. by Paul Wendland, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 15 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), 39–40.

22 For a detailed analysis, see Goldammer, 'Navis Ecclesiae'.

23 *Ibidem*, 85–86.

24 Karin Kob, 'Christen in Augusta Raurica: Ein weiterer Nachweis aus Kaiseraugst und eine Bestandsaufnahme', *Jahresberichte aus Augst und Kaiseraugst*, 21 (2000), 119–125.



FIG. 2. ANONYMOUS, *NAVIS ECCLESIAE*, CARNELIAN SEAL RING, LATE ROMAN, EARLY 5TH C. DRESDEN, SKULPTURENSAMMLUNG.

made from bronze, this ring depicts a war galley from the starboard side with six oars (twelve, if one counts those on the invisible port side) and a mast-like Chi-Rho monogram. It stands to reason that other such rings with comparable representations of the Ship of the Church await future discovery in the magazines of museums or in the remains of an as yet unexcavated early Christian villa.

During the centuries that followed, Patristic ship allegoresis was subsumed into the corpus of medieval religious literature, where it helped shape the powerful ecclesiology of works such as the early Middle High German *Ezzolied* (c. 1060),<sup>25</sup> the *Scala coeli*

25 ‘O crux Salvatoris / du unser segelgerte bist. / disiu werlt elliu ist das meri, / mîn trehtîn segel unte vere, / diu rehten werch unser segelseil, / diu rihtent uns dî vahrt heim [...]’ (Friedrich-Wilhelm Wentzlaff-Eggebert, *Kreuzzugsdichtung des Mittelalters: Studien zur ihrer geschichtlichen und dichterischen Wirklichkeit* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1960], 37–38).

*minor* of Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1120–1130),<sup>26</sup> and Johannes Tauler’s hauntingly memorable *Es kumt ein schiff geladen* (mid-fourteenth century).<sup>27</sup> The latter is still sung as an advent season chorale in churches across Germany today. However, it was not until the century that preceded the Protestant Reformation that artists and their iconographical advisors were to rediscover and further explore the full visual-rhetorical potential of the complex nautical allegorical thinking first developed by Hippolytus or St. Ambrose and intricately visualised by late Roman gem-cutters and metalsmiths. There were two minor exceptions to this. The first was the representation of ships, particularly in the Mediterranean world, whose sails were decorated with the sign of the cross or the monogram of Christ. Thus adorned, these vessels were literally propelled by the *velum crucis* and the *labarum crucis* invoked by the Church Fathers. A good case in point is Paolo Veneziano’s “Translation of St Mark” in the bottom row of his *Pala feriale* for San Marco in Venice (1345; *in situ*), which shows a lateen-rigged round ship from the starboard stern whose main mast bears a large triangular sail adorned with an embroidered Golgotha cross.<sup>28</sup> The second exception comprised depictions of ships whose masts were surmounted by a small cross, either to signal the saintly status of the crew or passengers, or to indicate that the ship’s voyage – whether actual or emblematic – was divinely sanctioned and protected. The evidence for this comes mostly from manuscripts and civic seals produced in northern Europe between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. One example of many is the town seal of Elbag/Elbing in Warmia (c. 1350), which shows a high-boarded cog, similar to that found at Bremen, with stern-rudder, fore- and aftercastles, and a central yard-less mast both ending in a cruciform

26 ‘Mare est hoc saeculum multis amaritudinibus turbidum; navis est Christiana religio, velum fides, arbor crux, funes opera, gubernaculum discretio, ventus Spiritus sanctus, portus aeterna requies; hujusmodi nave pelagus saeculi hujus transitur; et ad patriam aeternae vitae reditur’ (*Patrologia Latina* 172: 1230C).

27 ‘Es kumt ein Schiff geladen / Recht uf sin hoechstes Bord. / Es bringt uns den Sun des Vaters, / Das ewig wahre Wort. / Uf einem stillen Wage / Kumt uns das Schiffelin, / Es bringt uns rîche Gabe / Die hehre Kunigin [...] / Das Schifflin das gaht stille, und bringt uns rîchen Last, / Der Segel ist die Minne, / Der heilig Geist der Mast’ (quoted after *Der geistliche Marienlieder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* [Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913], 18).

28 Martin, *The Art and Archaeology*, 108–109, with fig.; for other Venetian examples, see the same publication, 55, 76, 110–117, with figs.



FIG. 3. ANONYMOUS, SEAL OF THE CITY OF ELBLAG / ELBING, C. 1350. MODERN REDRAWING.

and sporting a cross-inscribed triple-tailed pennon (Fig. 3).<sup>29</sup> It is likely that more prestigious vessels were at least on occasion

29 Heino Wiechell, *Das Schiff auf Siegeln des Mittelalters und der beginnenden Neuzeit: Eine Sammlung von bildlichen Quellen zur Schiffstypenkunde* (Lübeck: Kultusverwaltung, 1969), no. 90. See also the same publication for similarly appointed ships on the seals of Damme (1226; no. 14), Nieuport (1236; no. 21), Wismar (1236; no. 29), Romney (1238; no. 22–3), Lübeck (1226, 1256, 1280; nos. 16–8), Dublin (1267; no. 29), Stralsund (1278; no. 35), Pevensey (late thirteenth-century; nos. 37–8), Hythe in Kent (1275; no. 40), Gdańsk/Danzig (1290; no. 48, and 1371; no. 109), Newtown on the Isle of Wight (c. 1350; no. 89), Kiel (1367; no. 97), and Tenby (c. 1430; no. 147). For cross-topped masts in medieval manuscripts, see for instance Flatman, *Ships and Shipping*, 23, 29, 99, 144, with figs. See also the English two examples discussed in the section on the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* in the main text below.

fitted with cross-embroidered sails or streamers, though there is no archaeological evidence suggesting that the masts of medieval ships ever terminated in miniature crosses, let alone the kinds of crucifixes we will encounter in our next section.

While the artistic deployment of more complex nautical allegory experienced a near-hiatus for almost a millennium, ships and boats – whether as actual products of the yards that built them or as objects of the artistic imagination – were otherwise omnipresent in medieval life and culture. In an age of predominantly poor roads they were a common sight not just in coastal areas, but also on the hundreds of inland waterways that traverse the length and width of Europe, and on the untold lakes that nestle in the shadow of the soaring Alps or pockmark the glaciated lowlands of Germany, Poland, the Baltic states and Scandinavia. In an age when spiritual life revolved around the interiorisation and interpretation of the Scriptures and other religious writings – replete with stories of floods and storms, shipwrecks, sea monsters, and divine intervention – ships of all shapes and sizes were likewise ubiquitous in the innumerable retellings of these stories, whether through theological exegesis, sermons, literary adaptations, theatrical performances, or visual art. Among the pictorial subjects drawn from the Old Testament pride of place no doubt belonged to Noah's Ark (Genesis 6–9),<sup>30</sup> with the vessel from which Jonah was cast into the belly of the whale (Jonah; and Matthew 12:38–41, Luke 11:29–32)

30 On the imagery of Noah and his Ark, see Manuel Aneiros, 'La iconografía del arca de Noé en las miniaturas de los Beatos', *Románico*, 25 (2017), 16–25; Luca Avellis, 'Note sull'iconografia di Noè nell'arca (III – VI sec.)', *Vetera christianorum*, 45 (2009), 193–219; Andreina Contessa, 'Noah's Ark on the Two Mountains of Ararat: The Iconography of the Cycle of Noah in the Ripoll and Roda Bibles', *Word & Image*, 20 (2004), 257–270; Sylvie Wuhrmann, 'Une étude en gris: Le triptyque du Déluge de Jérôme Bosch', *Artibus et historiae*, 19 (1998), 61–136; Mira Friedman, 'L'arche de Noé de Saint-Savin', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 40 (1997), 123–143; Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1996); Nouredine Mezoughi, 'Notes sur le Beatus de Saint-Sever H. B. N. Lat. 8878', *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, 10 (1979), 131–137; Hartmut Boblitz, 'Die Allegorese der Arche Noahs in der frühen Bibelauslegung', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 6 (1972), 159–170; Ludwig Budde, 'Die rettende Arche Noes', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 32 (1956), 41–58; and Albert Schramm, 'Die Arche Noah in den Inkunabeldrucken', *Maso Finiguerra*, 1 (1936), 38–43. For a discussion of Noah's Ark as a work of nautical architecture, see esp. Richard W. Unger, *The Art of Medieval Technology: Images of Noah the Shipbuilder* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

coming in a close second.<sup>31</sup> Ship imagery inspired by the New Testament mainly came from the accounts of Christ's ministry and miracles at the Sea of Galilee, most significantly his calming of the storm, described in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25); the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5:1-11); the miraculous catch of 153 fish, which is related to have taken place after his Resurrection (John 21:1-14); and, his walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-36, Mark 6:45-56, John 6:16-24), which in the version given in Matthew also comprises the miraculous rescue of St. Peter.<sup>32</sup> The most acclaimed rendition of the last miracle was undoubtedly the so-called *Navicella* ('Little Ship') by Giotto di Bondone, a giant mosaic commissioned in 1298 by Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, in preparation for the holy year in 1300, placed on the west wall of the oratory of Santa Maria in Turri, in the atrium of Old St. Peter's in Rome. Though almost completely destroyed during the total reconstruction of the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the appearance of the *Navicella* is known through numerous antiquarian copies and later adaptations, including those of St-Pierre-le-Jeune in Strasbourg (1320s); the Strozzi Altarpiece and a mural in the Spanish Chapel, both in Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Andrea Orcagna,

31 On the story of Jonah in late antique and medieval art, see most recently Anne-Sophie Traineau-Durozoy, 'Jonas et le poisson', *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, 48 (2017), 115–127, 264; Elisabetta Scirocco, 'Jonah, the Whale and the Ambo: Image and Liturgy in Medieval Campania', in *The Antique Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Ivan Foletti and Zuzana Frantová, *Studia artium medievalium brunensia* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 87–123; Nicoletta Bonansea, *Simbolo e narrazione: Linee di sviluppo formali e ideologiche dell'iconografia di Giona tra III e VI secolo*, Istituzioni e società 18 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2013); *Der problematische Prophet: Die biblische Jona-Figur in Exegese, Theologie, Literatur und bildender Kunst*, ed. by Johann Anselm Steiger, *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte*, 118 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011); Peter Dronke, 'Jonah in Early Medieval Thought: Some Literary and Artistic Testimonies', *Studi medievali*, 3 ser. 50 (2009), 559–581; and Nenad Cambi, 'Il motivo di Giona gettato nel mare', *Historiam pictura refert: Miscellanea in onore di Padre Alejandro Recio Veganzones O.F.M.*, *Studi di antichità Cristiana*, 51 (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1994), 81–96; but see also J. Richard Judson, 'Marine Symbols of Salvation in the Sixteenth Century', *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann*, ed. by Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York: Institute of Fine Arts, 1964), 136–152.

32 For the nautical ecclesiology of these miracles and its impact on the visual arts, see generally Arvid Göttlicher, *Die Schiffe im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Mann, 1999); Rainer Gruenter, 'Das Schiff, ein Beitrag zur historischen Metaphorik', *Tradition und Ursprünglichkeit: Akten des III. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses in Amsterdam*, ed. by Werner Kohlschmidt, Hermann Meyer (Bern; Munich: Francke, 1966), 86–101; Earle Hilgert, *The Ship and Related Symbols in the New Testament* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1962); see also Gotthold Prausnitz, *Die Ereignisse auf dem See Genezareth in den Miniaturen von Handschriften und auf älteren Bildwerken*, *Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, 196 (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1917). For the treatment of individual miracles in medieval art, see Wolfgang Augustyn, 'Fischzug, wunderbarer, und die Berufung der Apostel Petrus, Andreas, Jakobus und Johannes', *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1990), 9: 305–396 (available online at <http://www.rdklabor.de/w/?oldid=88759>); Molly Teasdale Smith, 'Conrad Witz's Miraculous Draught of Fishes and the Council of Basel', *Art Bulletin*, 52 (1970), 150–156.

1354–1357; and Andrea di Bonaiuto, c. 1365); and, a fresco in Santa Maria in Campis in Foligno (1454–1460).<sup>33</sup> Although differing in some details, all of the versions of the 'Little Ship' show a heavily pitching lateen-rigged barque from which the fearful apostles witness the drama of Christ rescuing Peter from the turbid waters. Giotto's composition is often alternatively referred to as the *navicula Petri*, though this creates some confusion with a group of other medieval images in which Peter is actually inside the ship, either as the steersman or hauling in a rich catch of fish, in reference to Luke 5:10 ('Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men'). The latter scene is famously represented on a mural from Sant Pere de Sorpe in the central Pyrenees (*ex situ* in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona).<sup>34</sup> Dating to c. 1123, the fresco depicts Peter reaching for his net over the side of a boat oared by Saints Andrew and John, featuring on its single mast a fluttering banner with the double Chi-Rho Alpha-Omega monogram. As Rahner has shown, the ecclesiology behind this imagery also has late antique roots, which he traces back to a lengthy paragraph from the metric *Actibus Apostolorum*

33 On Giotto's *Navicella* and its later versions, see esp. Helmtrud Köhren-Jansen, *Giottos Navicella: Bildtradition, Deutung, Rezeptionsgeschichte*, *Römische Studien der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 8 (Worms: Werner, 1993). But see also Serena Romano, 'Il male del mondo: Giotto, Dante, e la Navicella', *Dante und die bildenden Künste: Dialoge – Spiegelungen – Transformationen*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli, Sebastian Schütze, *Refigurationen I* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 185–203; Esther Moench-Scherer, 'L'œuvre et son double: le modèle répété', *Primitifs italiens: le vrai, le faux, la fortune critique*, exh. cat. (Milan: Silvana, 2012), 133–137; Gabriele Köster, 'Aequae multae – populi multi: Zu Giottos Navicella und dem Meerwandel Petri als Metapher päpstlicher Herrschaft', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 33 (2003), 7–30; Avigdor W. G. Posëq, 'On Left-to-Right Reversals in Giotto's Imagery', *Source*, 22 (2002), 1–13; Tobias Leuker, 'Der Titulus von Giottos "Navicella" als maßgeblicher Baustein für die Deutung und Datierung des Mosaiks', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 28 (2001), 101–108; Michael Viktor Schwarz, 'Giottos Navicella zwischen "Renovatio" und "Trecento": Ein genealogischer Versuch', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 48 (1995), 129–163; Margit Lisner, 'Giotto und die Aufträge des Kardinals Jacopo Stefaneschi für Alt-St. Peter, I: Das Mosaik der Navicella in der Kopie des Francesco Beretta', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 29 (1994), 45–95; Albert Châtelet, 'Première approche des peintures murales de Saint-Pierre-le-Jeune', *Cahiers alsaciens d'archéologie, d'art et d'histoire*, 24 (1981), 95–108; Wolfgang Kemp, 'Zum Programm von Stefaneschi-Altar und Navicella', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 30 (1967), 309–320; Jacques Choux, 'Une réplique de la "Navicella" de Giotto à la cathédrale de Toul', *Le pays lorrain*, 43 (1962), 123–137; Werner Körte, 'Die früheste Wiederholung nach Giottos Navicella', *Oberrheinische Kunst*, 10 (1942), 97–104; Wilhelm Paeseler, 'Giottos Navicella und ihr spätantikes Vorbild', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 5 (1941), 49–162; and Werner Körte, 'Die "Navicella" des Giotto', *Festschrift Wilhelm Pinder: Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag 25. Juni 1938 überreicht von Freunden und Schülern* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1938), 223–263. See also the relevant essays in *Frammenti di memoria: Giotto, Roma e Bonifacio VIII*, ed. by Maria Andaloro et al., *Bonifaciana*, 5 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2009).

34 On the church and its murals, see most recently Charles Mancho, 'Oltri i muri della Chiesa: La decorazione di San Pietro a Sorpe (Catalogna) come imposizione sul territorio', *Hortus artium medievalium*, 21 (2015), 246–260, with further bibliography; for the *navicula Petri*, see Vetter, 'Sant Peters Schifflin', 7–9.

by the sixth-century Ligurian poet Arator, and similar such writings penned by Patristic authors.<sup>35</sup>

### MARITIME MIRACLES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Medieval men and women could draw inspiration from the marine miracles of Christ. However, when they were themselves faced with the dangers of a sea voyage they would offer their fervent prayers to a whole pantheon of saints credited with special powers to calm storms, repair broken masts and rigging, and save sailors, merchants and pilgrims from drowning. Depending on their religio-cultural background, travellers called upon Cainech (Kenneth) of Aghaboe, Brendan of Clonfert (also known as ‘the Navigator’), Erasmus (or Elmo) of Formia, Gertrude of Nivelles, Anthony of Padua, Francis of Paola, and Nicholas of Tolentino. But, above all, they would implore the help of that other Nicholas, of Myra or Bari, whose supernatural feats were celebrated across the surfaces of countless altarpieces and mural cycles, and amidst the pages of numerous illuminated manuscripts and illustrated incunabula.<sup>36</sup> In images of Mediterranean facture he would appear above the shattered masts of round ships: *cochas*, *nãos*, carracks, caravels and galleys. In those produced for audiences in the north he would intercede on behalf of the crews of cogs, *Kraweels*, crayers, hoys and picards. In a wall painting of c. 1300 in the Church of Sanda on the Baltic Sea island of Gotland we can

35 Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche*, 473–503. The passage from Arator reads in part: ‘Primus apostolico, parva de puppe vocatus, / agmine Petrus erat, quo piscatore solebat / squamea turba capi: subito de littore visus, / dum trahit, ipse trahi meruit; piscatio Christi / discipulum dignata rapit, qui retia laxet / humanorum captura genus: quae gesserat hamum / ad clavum est translate manus [...]’ (*Patrologia Latina* 68: 97). For artistic renderings and versions of the ‘Ship of St. Peter’, see Maria Grazia Bianco, ‘Temi patristici in Caterina: la navicella di Pietro’, *La figura di San Pietro nelle fonti del medioevo: Atti del convegno tenutosi in occasione dello Studiorum Universitatum Docentium Congressus: Viterbo e Roma, 5–8 settembre 2000*, ed. by Loredana Lazzari, *Textes et études du Moyen Âge*, 17 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, 2001), 605–625; see also the contribution by Diega Giunta in the same publication (‘La “navicella di Pietro” e gli eventi del soggiorno romano di Caterina da Siena nell’arte figurative’, 569–604); for the post-medieval material, see Gabriel Llompart, ‘La Nave de San Pedro y sus afines en la Corona de Aragón’, *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares*, 32 (1976), 281–300.

36 For the Mediterranean material, see Julian Gardner, ‘Sea-Fearing Saints and Landlubber Painters: Maritime Miracles and Italian Mediaeval [sic!] Painters’, *I santi venuti dal mare: Atti del V Convegno internazionale di studio; Bari - Brindisi, 14–18 dicembre 2005*, ed. by Maria Stella Calò Mariani, *Rotte mediterranee della cultura*, 4 (Bari: Adda, 2009), 15–34; see also the relevant essays in *Ein Meer und seine Heiligen: Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Mittelmeer*, ed. by Nikolas Jaspert et al., *Mittelmeerstudien*, 18 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2018).

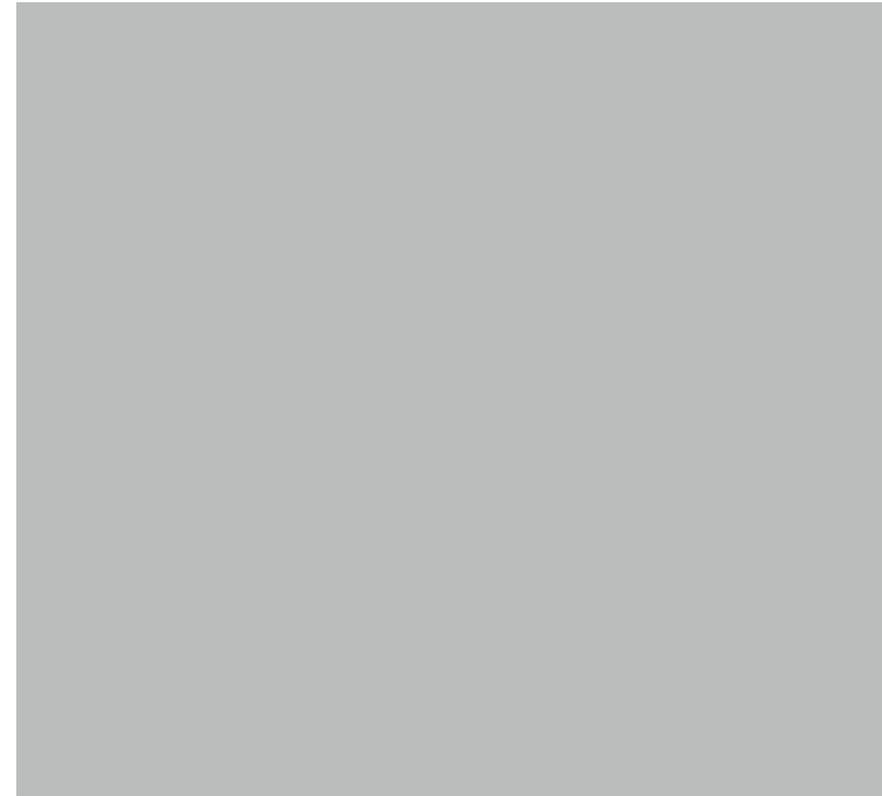


FIG. 4. ANONYMOUS, MATARÓ VOTIVE SHIP, CATALAN, C. 1450. ROTTERDAM, MARITIEM MUSEUM PRINS HENDRIK.

admire what must be one of St. Nicholas’ greatest nautical miracles: his fight with a giant mermaid attacking a cog from below. While the sailors are clearly beguiled by this creature, the saint has taken up battle station on the crenellated aftercastle. Ahab-like, he hurls his long crozier at the aquatic *femme fatale*.<sup>37</sup>

37 Gabriele Hoffmann, ‘Kostbare Koggen: Seltene Bilder aus illuminierten Manuskripten und gotischen Kirchen’, *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv*, 27 (2004), 7–33, 9, 18, with fig. p. 19. For other miraculous appearances of St Nicholas in Scandinavian murals of near-shipwrecks, see Niels M. Saxtorph, *Jeg ser på kalkmalerier: Alt hvad der findes i danske kirker* (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag, 1979), 90, 131, 295, with figs.

Having survived the onslaught of mermaids and other dangers of the deep, travellers would often make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the saint who had come to their rescue, and gift *ex-voto* paintings depicting their harrowing ordeals,<sup>38</sup> or offer thanks for their delivery in the form of (often quite accurate) models of the ships in which they had voyaged. The *nau* from Mataró in Catalonia from c. 1450 (Rotterdam, Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik; Fig. 4)<sup>39</sup> and the cog from the collegiate church of Ebersdorf near Chemnitz in landlocked Saxony from the early fifteenth century (*in situ*)<sup>40</sup> are particularly prominent examples. While visiting these shrines the same seafarers-turned-pilgrims might have participated in Mass involving the use of silver-gilt incense boats, known as *naviculae*,<sup>41</sup> and they might have returned home wearing pewter pilgrim badges showing the Virgin

38 For *ex-voto* ship imagery in a variety of medieval cultural contexts, see Thomas Thomov, 'Maritime *ex-voto* graffito from the church of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople', *Byzantinoslavica*, 73 (2015), 57–74; Anna Maria Tripputi, 'Gli *ex voto* marinari dell'Italia meridionale e insulare', *I santuari e il mare: Atti del III Convegno internazionale, Santuario Santa Maria di Monte Berico, Vicenza, 15–17 aprile 2013*, ed. by Immacolata Aulisa, Associazione Internazionale per le Ricerche sui Santuari, 2 (Bari: Edipuglia, 2014), 235–253; Dominique de Coupelles, 'Les *ex-voto* marins au Moyen Âge', *Artistes, artisans et production artistique en Bretagne au Moyen Âge: Colloque Rennes, Université de Haute Bretagne, 2–6 mai 1983*, ed. by Xavier Barral i Altet (Rennes, Université de Haute Bretagne, 1983), 345–348; Pierre-André Sigal, 'L'*ex-voto* au Moyen Âge dans les régions du Nord-Ouest de la Méditerranée (XII–XV siècles)', *Provence historique*, 33 (1983), 15–31. See also more generally, Maria Teresa Lazzarini, *Salvati dale acque: Naufragi antichi e moderni; Ex voto marinara del Santuario di Montenero* (Viterbo: Novamusa-Vip Travel, 2001); François Boulet, *Ex-voto marins* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1996).

39 See Sjoerd de Meer, 'La coca de Mataró: Modelo de embarcación medieval', *Mediterraneum: El esplendor del Mediterráneo medieval s. XIII–XV*, ed. by David Abulafia and Joan Alemany (Barcelona: Lunewerg, 2004), 572–579; Joan Noe i Pedragosa, 'La nau de Mataró', *Fulls del Museu Arxiu de Santa Maria*, 32 (1988), 37–42; and Heinrich Winter, *Die katalanische Nao von 1450 nach dem Modell im Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik in Rotterdam* (Burg: Robert Loef, 1956).

40 See Arne Emil Christensen and Wolfgang Steusloff, *Das Ebersdorfer Schiffsmodell von 1400: Ein authentisches Sachzeugnis des spätmittelalterlichen Schiffbaus in Nordeuropa* (Wiefelstede: Oceanum, 2012); Maik-Jens Springmann, Sebastian Schreier, 'The Ebersdorfer Cog Model as a Basis for a Reconstruction of a Late Medieval Sailing Vessel', *Historical Boat and Ship Replicas: Conference Proceedings on the Scientific Perspectives and the Limits of Boat and Ship Replicas, Torgelow 2007*, ed. by Maik-Jens Springmann and Sebastian Schreier (Friedland: LAGOMAR, 2008), 105–115; Wolfgang Steusloff, 'Das Ebersdorfer Koggenmodell von 1400', *Deutsches Schiffsarchiv*, 6 (1983), 189–208.

41 See Jeffrey Laird Collins and Meredith Martin, 'Early Modern Incense Boats: Commerce, Christianity, and Cultural Exchange', *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, ed. by Christine Gottler and Mia M. Mochizuki, Intersections, 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 513–546; Ràquel Cilla López, Jesús Muñoz Petralanda, 'Navis Ecclesiae: Las navetas litúrgicas en Bizkaia; la Iglesia como navío de salvación', *Itsas Memoria: Revista de Estudios Marítimos del País Vasco*, 6 (2009), 403–411; David Dawson, 'An Incense-Boat Cover from Leicester Abbey', *Leicester Abbey: Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies*, ed. by Joanna E. Story et al. (Leicester: Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2006), 69–74; Cyril G. E. Bunt, 'The Ramsey Thurible and Incense-Boat', *Apollò* (1926), 151–154.

Mary in (and as) a symbolic ship,<sup>42</sup> or saints like Thomas Becket on his portentous last crossing of the Channel, navigating the high seas in a rickety barque.<sup>43</sup>

Pilgrims belonging to the upper echelons of society might eventually have been invited to tell the tale of their nautical adventures at banquets in which salt was served and conspicuously displayed in naviform salt cellars, also known as *nefs*. As with some of the later *ex-voto* ship models, from the fifteenth century onward the design of these *nefs* increasingly replicated the predominant ship types of the day, as exemplified most famously by the carrack-shaped so-called *Schlüsselfelder Schiff* of 1503 (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum).<sup>44</sup> Finally, as the pilgrims-turned-guests were relating their encounters with storms and sirens – and perhaps generously partaking of the precious culinary commodity offered to them – they might at least hypothetically have gazed at tapestries hung on the walls, depicting the marine exploits of Ulysses and his companions;<sup>45</sup> Jason and the Argonauts;<sup>46</sup> Alexander the Great's journey to the bottom of the sea;<sup>47</sup> and other nautical narratives from the *matière d'antiquité*. In addition, they might have been entertained by *entremets* depicting fleet operations of a more recent (less mythical)

42 For examples representing Our Lady of Boulogne, see Isabelle Clauzel-Delannoy, 'La dévotion à Notre-Dame de Boulogne au Moyen Âge', *Sentiments religieux et piété populaire de l'an mil à nos jours: Actes du Colloque Valenciennes, 27 et 28 mars 2009*, ed. by Jean Heuclin and Christophe Leduc (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Revue du Nord, 2011), 27–42; Claude Faye, 'À propos de Notre-Dame de Boulogne et de son pèlerinage', *Les cahiers du vieux Boulogne*, 56 (2005), 14–17; and Jules Rouyer, 'Notice historique sur quelques médailles de Notre-Dame de Boulogne', *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de la Morinie*, 9 (1851), 231–247.

43 For a variety of ship-shaped pilgrim badges showing the so-called *regressio sancti Thomae*, see Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London*, 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 79–81, with figs.

44 For a range of works, see Charles Oman, *Medieval Silver Nefs* (London: HMSO, 1963).

45 On the medieval reception of the Homeric epics, see Zilling, *Jesus als Held*, esp. 79–118.

46 On the evocation of the *Argonautica* in a fifteenth-century banquetting context, see Arie Johan Vanderjagt, 'Ritualizing Heritage: Jason and the Argonauts at the Burgundian Feast of the Pheasant (1454)', *Negotiating Heritage: Memories of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mette Birkedal Bruun and Stéphanie Glaser (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 173–190.

47 On the various sea voyages of Alexander the Great (including his proto-bathyscaphe adventure), see now Thomas Noll, 'The Visual Imagery of Alexander the Great: Transformations from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period', *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Transcultural Perspectives*, ed. by Markus Stock (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 244–264; and the essays in *Les voyages d'Alexandre au paradis: Orient et Occident, regards croisés*, ed. by Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, *Alexander redivivus*, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

past, such as the crusaders' conquest of the Holy Land,<sup>48</sup> or an amphibious invasion like that shown on the Bayeux Tapestry of c. 1070–1080 (Bayeux, Centre Guillaume le Conquérant).<sup>49</sup>

### THE NEF DE LA RELIGION AND ITS VISUAL TRANSLATION

Let us return to the allegorical use of ships. Before we can explore new ways of visually thinking with ships in the fifteenth century, we must briefly examine a nautical allegory that was almost uniquely the product of the later medieval imagination. The allegory in question is the *Nef de la Religion*, or Ship of Religion, which appears near the end of the poem *Le Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, composed in 1331/55 by the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguileville (or Diguleville); translated into Middle English prose as the *Pilgrimage of þe Lyfe of þe Manhode* in c. 1400, with a second translation by John Lydgate in 1426.<sup>50</sup> *Le Pèlerinage* is a complex moralizing dream vision that describes the allegorical journey of its principal protagonist – simply called *Pèlerin*, or the Pilgrim – through a fantastic landscape populated with all manner of personifications of virtues and vices, among them his guide, Grace-Dieu or Grace, who eventually leads him to the Sea of the World, a hallucinatory ocean replete with dangers. Here *Pèlerin* meets Heresy running backward; Syrtes, the shoal of Self-Will; Scylla, the reef of Adversity; Charybdis, the maelstrom of Worldliness; Bithalassus, the quicksand of Prosperity; and, the siren of Pleasure, before being taken by Grace to the redemptory *Nef de la*

48 As depicted on fol. 473v of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* of Charles V, illuminated 1370–1379 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 2813). On *entremets* and their various banqueting contexts, see now Christina Normore, *A Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance and the Late Medieval Banquet* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

49 The bibliography on this famous embroidered textile (not a tapestry in a technical sense) is of course massive; for a recent study that focuses on the representation of Duke William's longships in particular, see Giovanni Coppola, 'I Normanni e il mare: Notazioni sulla flotta, sugli arsenali e sulle battaglie', *Il potere dell'arte nel Medioevo: Studi in onore di Mario D'Onofrio*, ed. by Manuela Gianandrea et al., *Saggi di storia dell'arte*, 40 (Rome: Campisano editore, 2015), 445–464.

50 On the poem and its sophisticated use of allegory, see now the essays in Marco Nievergelt and Stephanie A. Viereck Gibbs Kamath (eds.), *The Pèlerinage Allegories of Guillaume de Deguileville: Tradition, Authority and Influence*, Gallica, 32 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013); but see also Susan K. Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of the 'Pilgrimage of the Life of Man' as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering* (Athens; London: University of Georgia Press, 1990); and Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), esp. 145–218.

*Religion*, which is unlike any of the allegorical ships that came before it. In the words of the Pilgrim in Deguileville's 1355 recension,

*En ce point une nef tresgrant / Vi dedens la mer bien avant / Qui sembloit que tout droit venist / Vers moi, dont grant joie me fist. / Sus le haut bout du mas avoit / Un coulon qui tout blanc estoit, / E y avoit voile croisié / Tendue au vent et bien drecié. / Si y avoit tours et chastiaus [representing the Cluniac, Cistercian, Carthusian, Dominican, Hospitaller, and Franciscan orders, A. T.] / Murs a archieres et carniaus, / Grans alees et grans maisons, / Et pluseurs habitacions / Qui de maisons de roi sembloient [...] (v. 14,738–52).<sup>51</sup>*

In this description we recognise of course the fickle and dangerous high seas of the *saeculum*, the salvific *velum crucis*, and the protective *spiritus sanctus* from the Patristic sources. However, in every other respect, Deguileville's *Nef* is a truly strange piece of nautical-allegorical engineering *sui generis*, part armoured dreadnought *avant la lettre*, part monastic compound with 'a chapter house, church, refectory, guest houses, [and] infirmary' (v. 15,120–1). Furthermore, as the Pilgrim soon discovers, it is part residence of more assorted virtues, including Charity, Purity and Obedience, as well as part labyrinthine hospice, haunted by the spectres of Infirmary, Old Age and Death.

To visually capture this complex ship in a single image is virtually impossible, yet try medieval artists did. These pictorial representations of the Ship of Religion do not appear to have been consistently analysed. To do so fully would require a separate study of its own.<sup>52</sup> The following remarks are based on a small sampling of illuminated versions of Deguileville's original text and its Middle English translations. In general, it appears that miniatures of the *entire* ship exclusively depict the exterior of the vessel. Within this corpus of images we can distinguish between two principal approaches. In the manuscripts containing the Middle French text, illustrators strove to create ships with 'towers and castles, and walls with arrowslits and

51 Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le Livre du pèlerin de vie humaine (1355)*, ed. by Graham Robert Edwards and Philippe Maupeu, *Lettres gothiques* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2015), 1058 ('And I saw before me in the sea a very large ship, which seemed to come straight at me, to my very great joy. On top of the mast was perched a dove, all white; a sail adorned with a cross was hoisted before the wind. There were towers and castles, and walls with arrowslits and crenellations, wide avenues, great mansions, and many dwelling places that seemed to mansions of kings [...].') My translation.)

52 For two very brief discussions, see Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance*, 125, and Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 212.

battlements,' signifying the four monastic orders listed by Grace. In a copy illuminated by the Master of the Book of Hours of Jehannette Ravenelle in c. 1404, Grace explains to the Pilgrim the workings of a ship with a tub-like wooden hull, of which the bow or stern curves upward to support a small fore- or aftercastle. Rising above the freeboard are two clusters of cone-topped towers – reminiscent of the Tour César of the Parisian Palais de la Cité – that enframe in their midst a larger building (perhaps a chapel) along with an atrophied yard-less and sail-less mast, surmounted by the *sanctus spiritus* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS français 829 fol. 116r; Fig. 5). There are similar such castellated ships – often without any masts or rigging – in six other manuscripts with Deguileville's poem.<sup>53</sup>

Working within a different textual and artistic tradition, English illuminators by contrast appear to have been more concerned with getting their ships right. We can see this in a copy of Lydgate's translation, produced in West Suffolk around 1430–1450, in which the Ship of Religion is fashioned like a cog-carrack hybrid, depicted complete with projecting fore- and sterncastles, median rudder, bowsprit, main-mast with crow's nest, billowing square sail and some of the requisite rigging (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius MS A. VII fol. 81r). John Flatman even noticed a 'hull port' near the stern,<sup>54</sup> a landmark innovation in shipbuilding used for easier access to the cargo hold that became the forerunner of the gunports of the Tudor carracks and Elizabethan galleons in the following century. The artist's only concession to the religious character of the ship, as specified by Deguileville and his translators, are the two chapel-like structures rising from the battlemented castles over the bow and stern, and a small cross with triple-lobed terminals above the main mast, crowned by the Dove of the Holy Spirit. In another version of the *Lyfe of þe Manhode* illuminated around the same time (perhaps in the East Midlands), the painter has done away with the architectural superstructure altogether (Oxford, Bodleian Library,

53 Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 141 fol. 86r; London, British Library, Add MS 38120 fol. 100v, and Harley MS 4399 fol. 81v; New York, Morgan Library, MS M.772 fol. 92r, and M.1038 fol. 104v; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS français 376 fol. 80v.

54 Flatman, *Ships and Shipping*, 99.

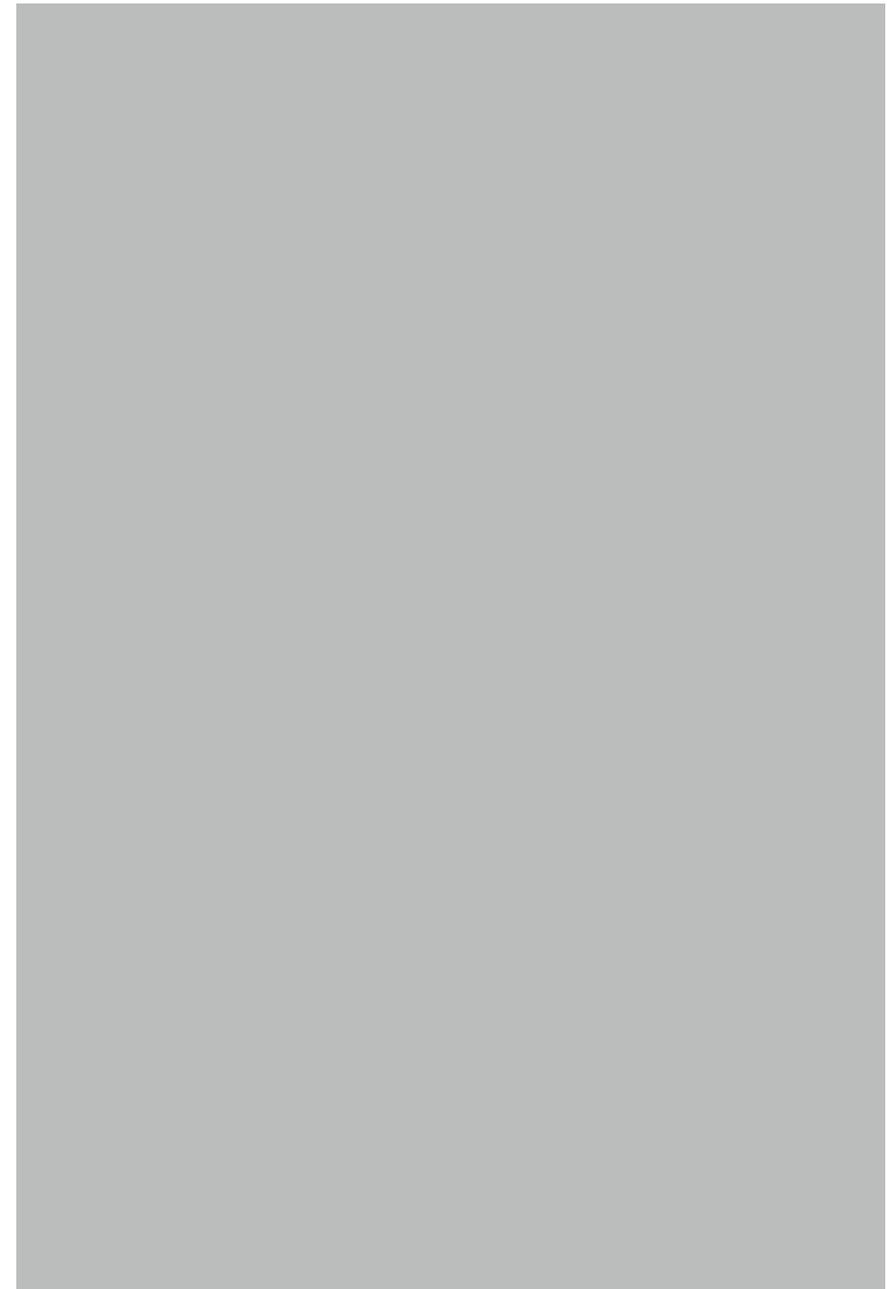


FIG. 5. MASTER OF THE HOURS OF JOHANETTE RAVENELLE, *NEF DE LA RELIGION*, FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF GUILLAUME DE DEGUILEVILLE'S *PÈLERINAGE DE LA VIE HUMAINE*, C. 1404. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, MS FRANÇAIS 829 FOL. 116R.



FIG. 6. ANONYMOUS, *SHIP OF RELIGION*, FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF JOHN LYDGATE'S *LYFE OF þE MANHODE*, C. 1430–50, PROBABLY EAST MIDLANDS. OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, MS LAUD MISC. 740 FOL. 118V.

MS Laud Misc. 740 fol. 118v; Fig. 6).<sup>55</sup> Instead a credible miniature cog is represented that comes complete with a jointed and dowelled clinker hull, a stern rudder with iron hinge straps, and a view of the internal frame. The latter detail normally remained invisible as cogs were fairly large ships with continuous decks. The main mast looks likewise plausible, though here the religious dimension of the ship is revealed in the use of this feature as a central fixture for no fewer than three crosses. Two, a larger one represented in outlines and a smaller black cross fitchy, are the 'voile croisié', (i.e. embroidered upon the sail), while the third rises above the crow's nest, its lower stem supporting a long fluttering streamer. A curious and seemingly extra-textual detail are the six lances, of which four converge on the main mast like an X and two stand on the fore- and sterncastles, likewise sporting banners. Whether the artist has added them in reference to the *lancea Christi*, or in order to make the ship appear more formidable, or both, is open to conjecture.

While ambiguously alluring enough to engender these two separate iconographical strands, the iconography of the Ship of Religion appears to have been largely relegated to the confines of its particular manuscript context, though later in this study we will encounter two examples suggesting that this imagery was not entirely without extra-codical issue. For now though, we must leave these lumbering and awkward-looking *nefs* behind and investigate what can only be called a momentous breakthrough in allegorical thinking that temporally coincided with the English prose translations of Deguileville's poem. This breakthrough occurred though not in France or England, but in the German-speaking lands. The Council of Constance (1414–1418) had only just ended the nearly four-decade-long Great Western Schism, while also scoring a first victory against the Bohemian Hussites by banning the lay chalice altogether and burning the leader of the movement, Jan Hus, at the stake.

#### **ANTENNA CRUCIFIXI: ORIGINS AND DISPERSAL**

One of the Council's participants was the canon and jurist Winand Ort von Steeg (1371–1453), who had been appointed secretary to King

<sup>55</sup> For the manuscript and its imagery, see Avril Henry, 'The Illuminations in the Two Illustrated Middle English Manuscripts of the Prose "Pilgrimage of þe Lyfe of þe Manhode"', *Scriptorium*, 37 (1983), 264–273.

Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1417. A prodigious writer, iconographical *concepteur*, and possibly also an amateur illuminator, Winand was the author of numerous treatises on contemporary legal, political, and religious matters,<sup>56</sup> including perhaps most famously the richly illuminated and intriguingly entitled *Adamas colluctancium aquilarum* ('Diamond of the Fighting Eagles'), completed in 1419 and now preserved in the Vatican Library (Pal. lat. 412).<sup>57</sup> Essentially a mystical-allegorical discourse on the ongoing struggle between *Ecclesia militans* and her numerous enemies, including the Hussites, the *Adamas* contains a central section (Part III) in which Winand provides a heavily allegorised outline of the history of the Church from the *primorum parentum lapsus* to his own times. To illustrate this trajectory, both metaphorically and visually, Winand invents an entire armada of allegorical ships with a variety of symbolical riggings and crews, some satanic, some divine. In the design of his penultimate vessel, the Ship of the Church, he critically replaces the *antenna crucis* with the entire crucifix, impaling the Christ of Calvary on the mast of the ship and thus producing the 'antenna crucifixi'. No longer just sailing under the *signum crucis*, this ship is now powered by Christ's bloody sacrifice, and in some ways becomes a floating, metahistorical iteration of Golgotha itself. As we have already seen, the interpretative possibilities of this shift had already been explored by some of the Church Fathers, but until now they had never been sounded out visually. Before considering this game-changing allegory

56 For Winand's life and work, see now Enno Bünz, *Die mittelalterliche Pfarrei: Ausgewählte Studien zum 13.–16. Jahrhundert*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 96 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 694–716.

57 There is as yet no modern edition of the manuscript, but it has been digitized at [http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav\\_pal\\_lat\\_412](http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_pal_lat_412). For discussions of its imagery in particular, see Agnes Graf, 'Hildegard von Bingen bei Winand von Steeg, *Adamas colluctancium aquilarum* (Vat. Pal. lat. 412): Ecclesia und Synagoge', *Palatina-Studien: 13 Arbeiten zu Codices Vaticanici Palatini latini und anderen Handschriften aus der alten Heidelberger Sammlung*, ed. by Walter Berschin, *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, 5; *Studi e testi*, 365 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1997), 61–83; Agnes Graf, 'Winand von Steeg: *Adamas Colluctancium Aquilarum*: Ein Aufruf zum Kreuzzug gegen die Hussiten', *Umění*, 40 (1992), 344–351; Barbara Obrist, 'Der illustrierte "Adamas colluctancium aquilarum" (1418–1419) von Winand von Steeg als Zeitdokument', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 40 (1983), 136–143; Ewald M. Vetter, *Die Kupferstiche zur Psalmodia Eucaristica des Melchor Prieto von 1622*, *Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft*, II.15 (Münster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1972), 132–133; Vetter, 'Sant Peters Schifflin', 13–14; Aloys Schmidt, 'Winand von Steeg, ein unbekannter mittelrheinischer Künstler', *Festschrift für Alois Thomas: Archäologische, kirchen- und kunsthistorische Beiträge* (Trier: Selbstverlag des Bistumsarchivs, 1967), 363–372; see also Dušan Buran, 'König Sigismund als *Advocatus Ecclesiae*: Ein Bildkommentar', *Bonum et Pulchrum: Essays in Art History in Honour of Ernő Marosi on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Livia Vargas et al. (Budapest: Argumentum, 2010), 251–258.



FIG. 7. WINAND VON STEEG?, *SHIP OF SYNAGOGA*, C. 1419, FROM WINAND VON STEEG'S *ADAMAS COLLUCTANCIUM AQUILARUM*. ROME, VATICAN LIBRARY, PAL. LAT. 412, FOL. 60R.

and its later pictorial transmutations in more detail, we will briefly sketch the nautical-ecclesiological context in which Winand first developed and deployed his crucifix-masted Ship of the Church.

The first in Winand's allegorical flotilla is the 'navis innocencie et culpe,' in which Adam and Eve can be seen plucking the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which rises mast-like from the centre of the hull. The ship itself is poised between the closed Gates of Paradise and the gaping Maw of Hell (fol. 57r). Captured by the 'antiquus pirata crudelissimus', the vessel then undergoes a remarkable metamorphosis: the *parentibus primis* are replaced by a crew of three devils, who steer the ship into the Mouth of Hell. Paradise itself has become the tempestuous 'seculum' which visibly turns into brown slurry before our eyes (fol. 58v). In the subsequent miniature, the illuminator (perhaps Winand himself) depicts the Vessel of Synagoga (fol. 60r; Fig. 7). Somewhat reminiscent of a *drakkar* longship, with two dragon's heads accentuating both its bow and stern, its mast is broken and adorned with a goat's head. Occupied by blindfolded Synagoga and her deceived followers,



FIG. 8. WINAND VON STEEG?, *SHIP OF THE CHURCH*, C. 1419, FROM WINAND VON STEEG'S *ADAMAS COLLUCTANCIUM AQUILARUM*. ROME, VATICAN LIBRARY, PAL. LAT. 412, FOL. 65R.

some wearing conical hats, and captained by a devil, it sails straight for another Hellmouth. As it does so, it slides down the back of a crocodilian creature (perhaps alluding to the Psalmic Leviathan) lurking underneath its hull. Humanity's tide finally turns when the Ship of *Ecclesia navigans* comes into sight; steered by St. Peter, its mast is the cross-staff with the *vexillum crucis* (fols. 62r and 63v). Sailing in its wake is the fully-fledged Ship of the Church (fol. 65r; Fig. 8), which has its origin in the side wound of Christ ('hanc nauim de suo latere fabricat'). Steered by God himself (here *sub specie Christi*) and oared by two angels, it is surmounted by a crucifix-mast topped by the *sanctus spiritus* and the bannered cross staff, sporting a sail bearing the *agnus Dei* and the symbols of the Four Evangelists. The text opposite (fol. 64v) merely calls this mast the 'arbor crucis salutem'



FIG. 9. WINAND VON STEEG?, *SHIP OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS*, C. 1419, FROM WINAND VON STEEG'S *ADAMAS COLLUCTANCIUM AQUILARUM*. ROME, VATICAN LIBRARY, PAL. LAT. 412, FOL. 67R.

– adding that it is made from the fragrant cedars of Lebanon – so it is possible that the momentous shift to *antenna crucifixi* only occurred when Winand (or an artist working under his guidance) set about visualising the allegorical mast. As Christ dies his salvific death, his crimson blood drips down from the mast and yard arm onto the voyagers below, among them a pope, two bishops, a monk or friar, a king and several women. Significantly, the waters have cleared and the Trinitarian vessel with its cargo of humanity is sailing back to Paradise, depicted here (as in the first two miniatures) as a crenellated gatehouse. But even then, as the last image in this series demonstrates, without Christ at the helm and his Passion the central guiding idea, humankind is lost and doomed to be swallowed whole by the 'abyssus tormentorum', here represented as yet another Hellmouth (fol. 67r; Fig. 9). Save for a woman wearing a robe with suspiciously long and fur-lined sleeves, the ship's passengers appear to be the same as those in the previous miniature, except that their ship is now propelled by a seven-branched tree of the Deadly Sins, and its ferrymen are two bovine-faced devils. While the hulls of Winand's vessels change



FIG. 10. MARIANO DEL BUONO DI JACOPO AND WORKSHOP, *SHIP OF THE CHURCH*, C. 1468–1479, FROM *THE BREVIARY OF CARDINAL JACOPO AMMANNATI PICCOLOMINI*. NEW YORK, MORGAN LIBRARY, M.799, FOL. 799.

as they sail through the folios of the *Adamas*, from walnut-shell to dragon boat to stately ‘cog’, it is clearly their shape-shifting masts that determine the outcome of their voyages to perdition or Paradise. As Synagoga’s *antenna idolatriae* changes into the cross-staff of Ecclesia and the Tree of Knowledge is replaced by the Crucifix, the ships reach calmer waters and their passengers can be saved. Potentially that is of course, as the Crucifix is still far from being firmly implanted in the ship of humanity, as the last miniature cautions the viewer. Looking ahead, it appears that the Ships of Synagoga and Ecclesia were singular inventions, while Winand’s crucifix-ship (or at least one like it) became the blueprint for a fleet of ever more complex Calvary-masted vessels that set sail during the century that followed. The ship with the Tree of Knowledge that brought Adam and Eve before the closed gates of Paradise was likewise re-launched, but not before the early sixteenth century, and not before the symbolic potential of the ‘mast-as-tree’ had been explored in several other ways.

As we will see, the majority of the crucifix-masted ships that followed in the wake of Winand’s vessel with the *Christus patiens* – never in a straight line, one might add – were products of the artistic imaginary of allegorical shipyards in central Europe, though the iconography also gained some traction in the very north of the Italian peninsula, as the two Lombard examples we now turn to suggest. The first of these cisalpine *naves ecclesiae* is found on fol. 234v of the Breviary of Cardinal Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini, illuminated sometime during the later third or very early fourth quarter of the fifteenth century for the cardinal’s possible use in the Augustinian monastery of San Pietro in Ciel d’Oro at Pavia (New York, Morgan Library, M.799; Fig. 10).<sup>58</sup> Attributed like the other images in the codex to Mariano del Buono di Jacopo and members of his workshop, the full-page miniature is dominated by a bulky cog-like vessel that in addition to having been fitted with the *antenna crucifixi* is also powered by oars, like a Mediterranean galley. Underscoring the allegorical dimension of the mast as the cross of Calvary is the self-immolating Pelican in the crow’s nest, that ancient zoomorphic emblem of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. In contrast to Winand’s

58 On this miniature, see previously Meta Harssen and George K. Boyce, *Italian Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1953), 32 no. 58; but see also Martin Kemp, ‘*Navis ecclesiae*: An Ambrosian Metaphor in Leonardo’s Allegory of the Nautical Wolf and Imperious Eagle’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 43 (1981), 257–268, at 261; and Vetter, ‘Sant Peters Schifflin’, 15.

Ship of the Church, which is the salvific vessel for all humankind, with God/Christ at the tiller, this later Lombard *navis* fulfils a rather different function: it is the Ship of the Church as represented by the community of saints and as steered by *Petrus primus papa*. The most prominent figure in the ship, except for Christ Himself, the 'Prince of the Apostles' can be seen helming the vessel on the poop, while his fellow apostles operate the oars. The Dove of the Holy Spirit in the bow and the Four Evangelist symbols framing the sail help steady the ship's course as it conveys its cargo of haloed saints (among them a cardinal, perhaps an allusion to Ammannati himself) to the port of Salvation. Somewhat puzzling are the two clusters of figures that observe the vessel from the shore. On the left is a group of clerics (including, on the extreme left, an Augustinian friar)<sup>59</sup> and two men wearing hats, perhaps *magistri*, of whom one, holding an open book, gestures toward the ship. On the right is grouped a platoon of soldiers, most holding spears, one brandishing a crossbow, and one displaying a shield with the arms of Ferdinand I of Aragon-Trastámara, King of Naples from 1458 to 1494. As Meta Harsen and George Boyce have suggested, the inclusion of the two groups may allude to a contemporary ecclesiastical dispute (known as the Conspiracy of the Roman Academy) that erupted in 1468 and implicated both Ammannati and his private secretary, who was imprisoned on the orders of Pope Pius II.<sup>60</sup> Both were eventually cleared, but not before King Ferdinand I had intervened on their behalf before the Pope. If this scenario is correct, the Ship of the Church and the other images of the manuscript were probably produced between 1468 and 1479, the year of Ammannati's death.

If an Augustinian context can be assumed for the *navis ecclesiae* portrayed on parchment for Cardinal Jacopo Ammannati, the second Lombard Ship of the Church was definitely commissioned by the Augustinian order itself. Once again reconfigured to suit the needs and agenda of its patron, here the Convento di San Barnaba in Brescia, it is by far the largest of the allegorical ships with crucifix-masts examined in this article, and the only one encountered on a mural

59 Further members of the Augustinian order – both friars and nuns – are depicted in some of the medallions in the margins of the miniature.

60 Harsen and Boyce, *Italian Manuscripts*, 32. On the Conspiracy itself, see Amadeo de Vincentiis, *Battaglie di memoria: Gruppi, intellettuali, testi e la discontinuità del potere papale alla metà del Quattrocento*, Rinendita, saggi, 25 (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2002).



FIG. 11. GIOVANNI PIETRO DA CEMMA, *SHIP OF THE CHURCH*, 1490, IN THE LIBRARY OF THE CONVENTO DI SAN BARNABA AT BRESCIA.

(Fig. 11).<sup>61</sup> Established in 1299, San Barnaba was initially affiliated with the Augustinian Hermits. When they were expelled from the city in 1457, the convent was taken over by another Augustinian community belonging to the Lombard division of Regular Observants, who some three decades later initiated and bankrolled the construction of a magnificent new library. Completed in 1490 and adjacent to the convent's church, the library was decorated with an extensive cycle of murals. These include scenes from the history of the Comunità dell'Osservanza and, on its eastern wall, a panoramic depiction of the Ship of the Church. Various ascribed to Giovanni Pietro da Cemmo and Paolo da Caylina the Elder – and executed like the paintings on

61 On this image, see previously, Valerio Terraroli, 'Un grande cantiere pittorico di fine Quattrocento: La libreria, le allegorie agostiniane e due pittori', *Il Salone 'Da Cemmo' a Brescia: Dalla Libreria agostiniana alla sala concerti del Conservatorio*, ed. by Valerio Terraroli (Brescia: Grafo, 2015), 101–126, with a discussion of the Ship of the Church at 116–121; and Gaetano Panazza, *Il Convento Agostiniano di San Barnaba a Brescia e gli affreschi della libreria* (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1990), 120–126.

the adjacent two walls in a kind of demi-grisaille – the allegory now lacks much of its central section, but enough of it survives as to be legible. Centred by the *antenna crucifixi* with a large sail billowing behind it, the composition comprises, on the right, an expansive port ringed by mountains and containing a number of smaller vessels and, on the left, an altar-like quay supporting a multitude of saints and layfolk. The *navis ecclesiae* has just put into harbour and changed its course toward the pier so that its port side is flush with the mural surface itself. While of a round-hulled type, similar to the ship in Jacopo Ammannati's Breviary, this vessel is different from its slightly older counterpart in two principal respects. Not only is its hold still empty so as to take on the human cargo that waits on the quay, the ship is also steered by St. Augustine (rather than by St. Peter) and piloted from the bow not by the Holy Spirit, but by the Church Father's exceedingly pious and virtuous mother, St. Monica. Guiding the vessel to its final moorings is God the Father, who appears in a cloud above the throng of people and holds a banderole inscribed with the words of Matthew 11:28 ('Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you').<sup>62</sup> Further texts in the right half of the mural flesh out the allegory. Just below the right yard arm an angel unfurls a large parchment addressed to the St. Augustine manning the helm: 'You who write the holy rule of the life of the friars – those who love and follow the way they believe to be right, and [who] led by your holy guidance return to the [celestial] fatherland.'<sup>63</sup> To which the Church Father replies with a banderole of his own: 'I will carry out your words, Lord Jesus, [which have] pierced my heart like sharp arrows.'<sup>64</sup> The fourth inscription, displayed by an angel above the busy harbour, is a bit perplexing, but its general gist seems clear: 'These are the thirty-four religions which solemnly profess to the rule of St. Augustine: they are saved by a fortuitous embarkation and under his guidance.'<sup>65</sup> A fitting tribute to one of the masterminds of nautical ecclesiology, the mural allegorically exalts both the Rule of St. Augustine, especially as understood by

62 'Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et honerati estis et ego reficiam vos.'

63 'Tu de vita clericorum sanctam scribis regulam, quam qui amant et sequuntur viam tenant regiam, atque sanctu ductu redeunt at patriam.'

64 'Gestabam verba tua Domine Ihesu transfixa in corde mea quam sagittas acutas.'

65 'Haec sunt triginta quattuor religiones: quae solemni professione [sunt] sequentes regulam Beati Augustini: felici navigio ipso gubernante salvantur.'

the Regular Observants, and its author, who steers the ship of those who follow its lead toward *patria*. At the same time, the vessel, with its empty cargo hold and its course set for the people-thronged pier, might be on a greater mission, saving the souls of those who live outside the walls of the convent. Kinetically driven by the *antenna crucifixi*, the ship is on a double journey, its course set for a passage both through the microcosm of the friars' minds and compound, and into the macrocosm of the world beyond.

### THE URSULA-SCHIFFCHEN AND NORMATIVE CENTRING

The evidence reviewed so far suggests that Ships of the Church with crucifix-masts were created solely for the eyes of elite religious audiences, but as we will see, during the last quarter of the fifteenth century this imagery was being introduced to a much wider community, especially as it was gradually being grafted onto the iconography of another vessel, the Ship of St. Ursula.<sup>66</sup> Initially *Ursula-Schifflein*, *Ursula-Schiffchen*, or *naviculae ursulanae* were mere products of the saint's visual narrative, a means of physical transport that conveyed the Breton princess and her 11,000 virginal companions back from Rome to Cologne, where all met their brutal martyrdom at the hands of Hunnish soldiers. However, from about 1470 onward, Ursula's ship was progressively reconfigured to become a universal Ship of Salvation, picking up drowning souls as it sailed along the Rhine and being watched from above by all manner of heavenly hosts. When it was finally fused with the imagery of the Ship of the Church it was transformed so thoroughly that Ursula was all but displaced by the Virgin Mary and the 11,000 Virgins moved into a dinghy or omitted altogether. The creation of this new type of Ship of St. Ursula

66 For a sampling of images of the Ship of St. Ursula, see Gabriella Zari, 'La nave di sant'Orsola', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 19 (1993), 277–303; see also the many examples in Moll, *Das Schiff*, sections O.a–O.d. For the cult of St. Ursula in northern and central Europe, see now the essays in *The Cult of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*, ed. by Jane Cartwright (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016). For the veneration of the relics of the saint and her companions and its impact on the late medieval visual arts, especially on the production of reliquaries, see Scott B. Montgomery, *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne: Relics, Reliquaries and the Visual Culture of Group Sanctity in Late Medieval Europe* (Bern: Lang, 2010), with an exhaustive bibliography on the saint's legend and cult on p. 9–10 no. 1. For a more general account, see Frank Günter Zehnder, *Sankt Ursula: Legende, Verehrung, Bilderwelt* (Cologne: Wienand, 1985). Still useful as a source especially for the painted imagery of St. Ursula is Guy de Tervarent, *La Légende de sainte Ursule*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions G. Van Oest, 1931).

occurred within the context of a particular form of confraternal devotion, promoted by the growing number of Ursula brotherhoods, which were likewise named after the vessel of the saint.<sup>67</sup> By far the earliest of these was the *Navicula ursulana* of Kraków (1227), though it was especially in the Rhineland where these brotherhoods were to flourish. Cologne ultimately boasted five of these confraternities, including the *Patrizierbruderschaft* (founded 1345), which was the most prestigious and only open to members of the ruling urban elite, and the *Schiffchen der Heiligen Ursula* (established 1445), which had no membership restrictions, accepting both men and women, clergy and layfolk, the rich and the poor. The devotional practices of these confraternities rallied both around the relics of the saint and her companions – which were of course in ample supply in Cologne – and around a growing number of narrative and emblematic images that took the form of murals, altarpieces, luxury objects (such as intricate models of Ursula’s ship)<sup>68</sup> and, increasingly from the later fifteenth century on, woodcuts produced with the new technology of the printing press. It is particularly within the context of these prints, which either came to adorn the confraternal statutes or were distributed to the brotherhood members, that we can observe what can only be described as a significant shift in the development of late medieval nautical allegory.

If we examine the visual renderings of the *Ursula-Schifflein* produced in the half-century before the Reformation in chronological succession, we can see how what was at first simply the ship’s cross-inscribed sail was progressively recalibrated, eventually evolving into the full-blown *antenna crucifixi*. We can also see how the ship itself – rather than being merely adorned with the sign of the cross – gradually became a function of Christ’s sacrificed body. The very beginnings of this process are illustrated by two single-leaf prints created around 1470–1480 and published by Schreiber in his monumental corpus of fifteenth-century woodcuts. In the first,

67 For the textual culture of the late medieval Ursula confraternities, see André Schnyder, *Die Ursulabruderschaften des Spätmittelalters: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der deutschsprachigen religiösen Literatur des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Sprache und Dichtung, 34 (Bern and Stuttgart: Paul Haupt, 1986); see also Zehnder, *Sankt Ursula*, 73–78. A comprehensive study of the brotherhoods’ artistic patronage remains to be written.

68 A spectacular example is the ‘petite navire d’or et d’argent [...] pour mectre les unze mil verges’ executed in 1500 by Raymond Guyonnet for Anne de Bretagne, and now on show in the treasury of Reims Cathedral; on which see, Charles Oman, ‘Trésor de la Cathédrale de Reims: La Nef d’Anne de Bretagne’, *Les monuments historiques de France* (1966), 123–125.

Ursula’s ship is shown before the skyline of Cologne, its billowing sail decorated with a simple Greek cross.<sup>69</sup> In the second (created a few years later), the ship, in addition to featuring a cross-inscribed pennant above its crow’s nest, is powered by a triangular sail embroidered with the image of a Crucifixion group, showing the Crucified amidst his mother Mary and favourite disciple John the Evangelist. Equally significant is the fact that the ship’s mast is now aligned with the vertical axis of the composition.<sup>70</sup> The next stage of this iconographical (r)evolution is exemplified by a three-masted – but strangely yard- and sail-less – *Ursula-Schiffchen* on an altarpiece wing, painted in 1496 by an anonymous master for the Cistercian monastery of Lichtenthal at Baden-Baden in the Black Forest.<sup>71</sup> The Crucified appears here twice as a fully polychromed figure, first on a cross held by St. Ursula above her companions, to prepare them for their imminent martyrdom – the detail recalling the crosses priests and confraternal comforters used in contemporary execution rituals<sup>72</sup> – and, second and more importantly, on top of the pillar-like main mast, where his body is additionally being animated by the flag-like loin cloth wildly fluttering in the breeze. The transformation from *velum crucis* to *antenna crucifixi* is completed in at least four woodcuts produced between c. 1500 and 1513 (see below), and in a slightly later altarpiece by Jörg Breu dedicated to the martyrdom of St. Ursula and her companions, painted during the 1520s (Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Fig. 12).<sup>73</sup> In these representations, we are no longer looking at a merely ancillary *signum crucis* or *imago crucifixi*; instead, we are being confronted with the real-present Christ, who dies his redemptive death in the here and now, above

69 Wilhelm Ludwig Schreiber, *Holzschnitte mit Darstellungen der männlichen und weiblichen Heiligen*, Handbuch der Holz- und Metallschnitte des XV. Jahrhunderts, 3 (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1969), 195 no. 1710; see also Zarri, ‘La nave’, 284.

70 Schreiber, *Holzschnitte*, 195 no. 1709; see also Zarri, ‘La nave’, 285; and Montgomery, *St. Ursula*, 43–44.

71 Zehnder, *Sankt Ursula*, 142, pl. 1.

72 See, Achim Timmermann, ‘Locus calvariae: Walking and Hanging with Christ and the Good Thief, c. 1350–c. 1700’, *Artibus et Historiae*, 35 (2014), 137–162.

73 For Breu’s altarpiece, see most recently, Melanie Kraft, ‘“also ward ihr das Martyrium zuteil”: Überlegungen zu Datierung, Ikonographie und Erzählstruktur des Ursula-Altars von Jörg-Breu d. Ä. in der Dresdner Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister’, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, 67 (2013), 64–91; Andrew Morrall, *Jörg Breu the Elder: Art, Culture and Belief in Reformation Augsburg*, Histories of Vision (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 189–195 *passim*, with further bibliography.



FIG. 12. JÖRG BREU THE ELDER, *SHIP OF ST. URSULA*, 1520S, FROM THE CENTRAL SECTION OF THE ALTARPIECE OF ST. URSULA. DRESDEN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE ALTE MEISTER.

the heads of the ship's crew and passengers assembled on the deck below. While the woodcuts in question all dazzle through their high visual and semantic complexity, in Breu's altarpiece – created for an as yet unknown 'orthodox Catholic institution'<sup>74</sup> – it is the momentum of sheer theatricality that makes this particular Ship of St. Ursula so effectively memorable. Heavily laden and deep in the water, the Swabian painter's vessel is the first in a flotilla of the veritable Charon's barges that convey their saintly cargo to their doom. As more and more of Ursula's companions disembark, only to be butchered by the waiting Hunnish army on the right bank of the Rhine, Christ quietly expires high upon the ship's mast and, as he does so, generates an aureolic burst of light, a communal halo for all those steadfast female martyrs massacred below.

While Breu was still concerned with the pictorial dramatisation of a particular episode from the saint's *vita*, the woodcuts we will now examine were made with an entirely different purpose in mind. All still depict the *Ursula-Schiffchen*, or at least a form thereof, but the ship's hull, mast and yard are now largely treated as dichotomal armatures that determine the position of a range of subsidiary scenes and figures assimilated from a variety of different iconographical contexts. While the hull ostensibly still floats on a body of water near a riverbank, the axially positioned mast and the horizontal sail yard generate their own ontologies and, charged as they are with the promise of Salvation, they act like visual magnets or attractors for a series of similarly charged complementary and expository images. In many ways, this final incarnation of the Ship of St. Ursula was the ultimate *machina mentis* for the late medieval artist.

The oldest woodcut of this group is also by far the least known. Teeming with a riot of visual detail, it probably dates to the very end of the fifteenth century and survives in a single impression in the Royal Library in Brussels (Fig. 13).<sup>75</sup> Clearly a confraternal image for it shows potential members entering the Ship of St. Ursula in the foreground, the print is a masterpiece of artistic economy. Measuring just 24 by 18 cm, it features nearly ninety individual figures that cover almost all the available space of the pictorial surface. Judging by the fact that women and children are boarding

74 Morrall, *Jörg Breu*, 189.

75 Schreiber, *Holzschritte*, 195–196 no. 1711.



FIG. 13. ANONYMOUS, *SHIP OF ST. URSULA*, WOODCUT, SOUTH GERMAN?, C. 1490–1500. BRUSSELS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE.

the vessel on the *dexter* side of the crucified Christ and men on his *sinister* side – an almost unthinkable inversion of the traditional male/right-female/left dichotomy – it seems that the woodcut is a mirror-reversed copy of a no longer extant older representation, in which only certain details such as the position of the body of Christ and the attendant scene of Mass were corrected to conform to the imprint of the original image. The composition is ultimately Eyckian: it is axially arranged around three manifestations of the Corpus Christi (as the Crucified, the Christ Child held by the Virgin Mary, and as the Eucharistic host and chalice), but it also generates a strong X in the form of four diagonally positioned groups of figures, all poised to enter the vessel (future female and male brotherhood members in the foreground, ten *doppelgänger*s of the Man of Sorrows plus a small procession of cloistered nuns in the background). The inscription ‘S. Vrsule Schiff’ to the contrary, this is only Ursula’s ship in name. The saint has clearly been sidelined by the Virgin Mary, who now holds centre stage at the large altar mensa that fills the hull, and who *as priest* appears to offer her son to the male brotherhood members *in spe*.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile the 11,000 companions have been forced out of the ‘S. Vrsule Schiff’ altogether and now have to make do with a puny – albeit angel-powered – skiff. Steered by a Dominican and sailing to the sound of heavenly music – one notes David the harpist in the prow and about a dozen angelic musicians drifting about – this St. Ursula’s Ship has morphed into Ship not just of the Church, but of the Eucharist. The latter has a double sense, for it is laden not only with the Corpus Christi and its numerous metahistorical avatars – including the relics of the *arma Passionis* and, on the upper left (Christ’s right) the soul-releasing elevation of the host and below, the (again Eyckian) *fons vitae* – but also carries the *corpus mysticum* in the form of the congregation of all saints (the Apostles, Church Fathers and assorted martyrs) and the confraternal hopeful. What made this remarkable transmutation from *navicula ursulana* to *navicula eucharistiae* possible was the rendering of the ship’s mast as the instrument of Christ’s martyrdom: affixed to the Cross, his tortured body produces two principal ‘semantic vectors’, which

<sup>76</sup> On this imagery, see Paul Julius Cardile, ‘Mary as Priest: Mary’s Sacerdotal Position in the Visual Arts’, *Arte Cristiana*, 72 (1984), 199–208.

are conducted both downward through the *stipes*/mast toward the *communio sanctorum* in the hull and onto the assembly of congregants still standing on dry land, and outward through the wood of the *patibulum*/sail yard toward the processions of cloistered nuns and Man of Sorrows lookalikes.

The configuration and essential iconographical elements of this print (or one similar to it) were adapted and variously modified in at least three other woodcuts created during the early second decade of the sixteenth century. One, dated 1512, which slightly simplifies the overall design and reproduces the image with its original right-left orientation, came to adorn the frontispiece of *Die bruderschaft sancte Ursule*, a small booklet for members of the Cologne *Schiffchen der Heiligen Ursula* (founded 1445) printed by Ulrich Pinder in Nuremberg in 1513.<sup>77</sup> What stands out in this spin-off is the greater emphasis on the scene of the elevation of the Eucharist<sup>78</sup> and its attendant salvation of the purgatorial dead, which now occupy almost the entire upper right quadrant of the composition. An again mirror-reversed version of the woodcut used by Pinder was then created for the *Tractatus super naviculam sancte Ursule*, which likewise came out in Nuremberg in 1513. The principal iconographical difference to its putative prototype is that the central cruciform is fashioned from two roughly-hewn tree branches, so that the ship's mast (*malum*) is both cross (*crux*) and tree (*arbor*), a play on visual semantics that recalls some of the allegorical ship-masts invented by Winand von Steeg a century or so before (see above).<sup>79</sup>

The most radical transformation of the ideas first explored in the Brussels print can be found in a woodcut attributed to Albrecht Dürer's erstwhile student Hans Süß von Kulmbach and made for the frontispiece of a pamphlet celebrating the founding of the Brotherhood of St. Ursula in Braunau (Upper Austria) and also

77 Previously discussed in Kraft, 'also ward ihr das Martyrium zuteil', 82; Zarri, 'La nave', 290–291; Schnyder, *Die Ursulabruderschaften*, 181, 286; and Zehnder, *Sankt Ursula*, 72–73, 139–144.

78 Falsely identified as the Mass of St. Gregory by Zarri, 'La nave', 291.

79 Schnyder, *Die Ursulabruderschaften*, 181 no. 26; and Hildegard Kronenberger, 'Das Kapuzinerkloster Wesemlin in Luzern und seine Bibliothek', *Librarium: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft*, 9 (1966), fig. p. 18. For another version of the Ship of St. Ursula in which the mast is depicted as a verdant tree (without cross or crucifix), see Schreiber, *Holzschritte*, 197 no. 1716a.



FIG. 14. HANS SÜSS VON KULMBACH?, *SHIP OF ST. URSULA*, WOODCUT, 1513. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

published by Pinder in 1513 (Fig. 14).<sup>80</sup> Three things distinguish this image from its peers. First, the artist has done away with the detail of the male and female confraternity members entering the ship. Instead, the viewer is directly prompted on board by the Elector of Saxony, Friedrich III, 'the Wise' (reg. 1486–1525), and by Jörg Ranshofer, a vicar at Trostberg in Upper Bavaria, who had

80 For a detailed theological reading of the print, see Thomas Lentz, 'Die Barke zur Ewigkeit: Der Mastbaum und die Waage des Kreuzes', *Glaube Hoffnung Liebe Tod*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Albertina, 1996), 194–197; but see also the discussions in Kraft, "also ward ihr das Martyrium zuteil", 81–82; Berndt Hamm, *Religiosität im späten Mittelalter: Spannungspole, Neuaufbrüche, Normierungen*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, 54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 26–28; Morrall, *Jörg Breu*, 191–192; Zarri, 'La nave', 286–288; Vetter, 'Sant Peters Schifflin', 15–16.

established the confraternity of 1497.<sup>81</sup> Second, even though still rather busy, the composition has been ‘decluttered’, so that all of its elements are clearly legible, including the text of the hymn ‘O crux ave spes unica’.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, two of the material manifestations of Christ’s sacrifice, the *arma Christi* and the elevation of the host, are now contained within their own rectangular frames. Third (and most importantly), the axial cruciate has undergone yet another stunning transmutation, so that what was initially the *malus* now not only reads as *crux* and *arbor* (note the cracked tree bark on the yard-*patibulum*), but also as a scale or balance (*libra/bilanx*), whose pans on Christ’s *dexter* and *sinister* side determine the ultimate fate of the souls that are being weighed.<sup>83</sup> No doubt this last allegorical dimension of the ship’s mast was meant to add a sense of eschatological urgency to the act of boarding the ship on its way to the *portus salutis*. In his triple visual-semantic translation of the *malus navis* the artist certainly went much further than the explanatory 120-line letterpress text below the image, which merely interprets ‘the sail yard of this little ship’ as ‘the bitter suffering of Jesus Christ with his five holy wounds’ (‘Der segelbawn diß Schifleyns ist das pitter leyden Jhesu Christi mit sein heiligen funff wunden’).

The use of a central cruciform grid that generates the other elements of the composition and infuses them with meaning links these Ships of St. Ursula to a number of other allegorical representations that fully came into their own during the course of the fifteenth century. Of particular note are the so-called ‘Living Cross’ and the ‘Good and Bad Prayer’, which I have treated on several separate occasions in more detail.<sup>84</sup> In both allegories, a pivotally positioned crucifix produces a dense collage of largely non-biblical motifs around itself,

81 For an edition of the texts produced by the brotherhood, see Schnyder, *Die Ursulabruderschaften*, 285–375.

82 For a transcription of the entire text, see Lentens, ‘Die Barke’, 196.

83 On the image of the cross-scales, see Francis Wormald, ‘The Crucifix and the Balance’, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1 (1937–1938), 276–280.

84 For the Living Cross, see Achim Timmermann, ‘Frau Venus, the Eucharist, and the Jews of Landshut’, *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, ed. by David Nirenberg and Herbert Kessler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 183–202; Timmermann, ‘The Avenging Crucifix: Some Observations on the Iconography of the Living Cross’, *Gesta*, 40 (2001), 141–160, with further bibliography; for the imagery of the Good and Bad Prayer, see Timmermann, ‘Vain Labor (?): Things, Strings, and the Human Condition in the Art of Giovanni Baleison’, *RES*, 65–66 (2014–2015), 224–241; and Timmermann, ‘Good and Bad Prayers, Before Albertus Pictor: Prolegomena to the History of a Late Medieval Image’, *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 5 (2013), 131–177.



FIG. 15. ANONYMOUS, *LIVING CROSS*, C. 1452, FROM THE WEST PORTAL TYMPANUM OF ST. MARTIN'S IN LANDSHUT. PHOTO: AUTHOR.

and then uses its own cross-shaped armature to create both polarised oppositions and symmetrical inversions between the individual details, and to suggest physical, temporal and moral space-flows from left to right and from bottom to top. The Living Cross with its four acting hands thus metes out reward and punishment to Ecclesia and Synagoga, personifications of the New and Old Dispensation as well as of Christians and Jews, which are respectively arranged on the *dexter* and *sinister* side of the Crucified, while also effectively playing off Heaven against Hell on either end of the vertical cross stem. By contrast, in the image of the Good and Prayer the *axis crucis* is used as an antithetical mirror for two praying men. While both ‘labour with their tongue’, only the poorly dressed man on Christ’s right also labours with his heart, which is visualised through lines that extend from his mouth to the Saviour’s five stigmata;



FIG. 16. ANONYMOUS, ALTARPIECE OF SIGMUND AND ELISABETH GRANER, PROBABLY REGENSBURG, 1488. REGENSBURG, HISTORISCHES MUSEUM; NOTE: THE GOOD AND BAD PRAYER IS SHOWN ON THE UPPER RIGHT. PHOTO: AUTHOR.

the thought-lines of his foppishly garbed opposite number are by contrast bent backward by a demon and attached to a representation of his house and worldly treasures. What is more, in addition to their cruciform visual logic, several versions of both the Living Cross and the Good and Bad Prayer feature subsidiary images that are identical to those encountered on the four woodcuts of the *Ursula-Schifflein* just discussed. Consider, for instance, the carving of the Living Cross over the west portal of St. Martin's in Landshut (Lower Bavaria), created around 1452, in which the traditional figure of Ecclesia has been replaced by that of a priest celebrating the Eucharist, thereby releasing the souls of the dead trapped in Purgatory below the vertical cross arm (Fig. 15).<sup>85</sup> Just as in the two hyper-charged woodcuts of the Ship of St. Ursula (Figs. 13–14), Mass takes place here at an altar on the *dexter* side of Christ, pierced by *dulce vulnus laterale*, and just

85 The image and its social and cultural context are explored in detail in Timmermann, 'Frau Venus'.

as there its instantaneous salvific effects are shown for all to see. A similar iconographical pairing occurs on the compendium-like Altarpiece of Sigmund and Elisabeth Graner of 1488 (Regensburg, Historisches Museum; Fig. 16), where the Good and Bad Prayer, the elevation of the Eucharist, the liberation of souls from Purgatory, and a number of related scenes communicate with one another across a central Deësis.<sup>86</sup> Just below the Virgin, interceding before Christ on behalf of humanity, can be seen a small *fons vitae*, which is also present on all four of the complexified *Ursula-Schifflein*, though here its salvific elixir is dispensed not to living communicants, but to the purgatorial dead.

In the previous paragraphs we have observed what was essentially a three-fold iconographical operation: the implementation of a powerful axial and symmetrical form, or armature, in the centre of the allegory; a visual and semantic unfolding out from this armature producing a series of ancillary images; and, an eventual enfolding or subsumption of the complementary content back into the central armature. The mechanism described here formed part of a wider cultural process that Berndt Hamm, an eminent historian of late medieval religiosity, has called 'normative centring' ('normative Zentrierung'), by which he means the convergence of much of religious, social, and artistic life upon central symbols or norms, especially in the century or so preceding the Protestant Reformation.<sup>87</sup> The all-encompassing Eucharist, climactically elevated during Mass, would be one such normative central symbol or figure, the Christ of the Passion – in the words of the fifteenth-century Franciscan Stephan Fridolin 'the point, the center [...] of our hope' ('der punct, das centrum [...] unßer hoffnung') – another.<sup>88</sup> For Hamm, these powerful, fulcral historical and metahistorical dimensions of the body of Christ were capable of producing a whole panoply of seeable and tangible variants and multiples of themselves. These included bleeding hosts, stigmatisations, Passion relics, but also the increased presentification of the sorrows of the compassionate Virgin and the countless martyrs striving

86 Timmermann, 'Good and Bad Prayers', 170–171 no. 27; and Timmermann, 'Vain Labor (?)', 236–237.

87 Hamm, *Religiosität*, esp. the chapter entitled 'Normative Zentrierung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert' at 3–40.

88 Hamm, *Religiosität*, 12.

for *Christofornitas*.<sup>89</sup> To illustrate this two-way process of semantic emanation and reduction, Hamm briefly discusses three pictorial works with strict axial symmetries established by the centred figure of Christ or God the Father, including Jan van Eyck's Gent Altarpiece (1432) and one of the complex woodcuts of the *Ursula-Schifflein* examined above (Fig. 14), noting that in the latter St. Ursula is dislodged by the pivotal mast-crucifix.<sup>90</sup> Though widely venerated during the late Middle Ages, the saint was hardly a 'normative Zentralgestalt', and for her ship to function as a vessel of universal Salvation she had to be demoted and replaced by a new captain, and her *Schifflein* rebuilt almost beyond recognition.

### THE MIGHTY CARRACK AND 'NAUTICAL REALISM'

While the result of this conversion was a highly effective allegory, at least from the point of view of some modern maritime historians subscribing to teleologies of technological progress and mining medieval images of ships for their 'accuracy', the total refit of Ursula's *Schiffchen* would probably appear to be a total failure. Ostensibly built and rigged to carry all of humanity to the *portus salutis*, by the time Hans Süß von Kulmbach (or a close associate) was done with redesigning it, the saint's vessel was so low in the water as to be almost unrecognisable as a ship, especially as one of its own time; it had become a mere cypher, a theatrical stage that was kept afloat through the sheer power of the allegory it supported. One could of course argue that for allegory to properly work, artists had to take certain liberties with the representation of material culture, but at least for the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries this was not always true, as the credible depiction of wine presses and mills in some of the other Eucharistic allegories from this period indicates.<sup>91</sup> So, did pre-Reformation nautical allegories ever portray the kinds of ships that conveyed the likes of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama to their new faraway destinations; that were just beginning to

<sup>89</sup> Hamm, *Religiosität*, 16.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 26.

<sup>91</sup> On late medieval mechanical allegories of the Eucharist, see Achim Timmermann, 'A View of the Eucharist on the Eve of the Protestant Reformation', *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. by Lee Palmer Wandel, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 56 (Leiden; Boston: Brill 2014), 365–398, with further bibliography.

bring back spices from the East Indies; and, that were increasingly being used by western Europe's fledgling navies? The short answer is yes, but very rarely, and when they did, their allegorical operations were rather different from those of the *Ursula-Schifflein* just explored.

Around the time when the first Ships of St. Ursula began to sport cross- or crucifix-inscribed sails on the woodcuts produced for the saint's confraternities (i.e. 1470–1480), different groups of printmakers, both north and south of the Alps, were embarking on the production of a wide range of images that represented the latest developments in shipbuilding and nautical technology. Though primarily made by masters based around the seaports of the Netherlands and the northern Italian peninsula, these prints – engravings for the most part – soon achieved a wider circulation, and as the undermentioned case of Michael Wolgemuth and Hanns Pleydenwurff suggests, at least some of them were known in Nuremberg. Therefore, at least in theory, they would also have been available to Hans Süß von Kulmbach (or a member of his circle) and Ulrich Pinder, who, as we have seen, were both instrumental in overhauling the Ship of St. Ursula in the early sixteenth century. Among those driving the trend toward the more factual representation of ships one artist stands out in particular: Monogrammist WA (sometimes referred to as the Master with the Key), who was active in the eastern Netherlands between c. 1465 and 1490 and who may have been associated with the court of Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy (*reg.* 1467–1477).<sup>92</sup> Sometime between 1475 and 1485 this master published a series of eight engravings representing a variety of ships of which seven are shown at anchor or under full sail and one as having foundered on a rocky shore. What distinguishes these prints especially is the attention the artist has lavished on the depiction of the ships' physical anatomy, i.e. their hull construction and decoration, rigging and sailage. In addition, each ship is shown from a different angle, so that the cycle as a whole represents a kaleidoscope of alternating starboard-, port-, bow- and stern-views. In an age when ship imagery usually came with a narrative, or an allegorical superstructure, the artist's decision to completely eliminate the human figure from this series must have caused a small sensation. Particularly celebrated

<sup>92</sup> For a recent brief discussion of this still very much understudied artist, see the catalogue *Mit den Gezeiten: Frühe Druckgraphik der Niederlande: Katalog der niederländischen Druckgraphik von den Anfängen bis um 1540/50 in der Sammlung des Dresdner Kupferstich-Kabinetts*, ed. by Tobias Pfeifer-Helke (Petersberg: Imhof, 2013), 122–123, with further literature.



FIG. 17. MASTER WA, CARRACK (KRAECK), ENGRAVING, C. 1475–1485. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

among maritime historians is his depiction of a three-masted, carvel-built carrack (here inscribed ‘kraeck’) – then still a relatively new ship type in northern European waters – which is shown here at anchor and with all her sails furled up so as to allow a better view of the intricate standing and running rigging that supports the masts and operates the massive square and lateen sail yards (Fig. 17).<sup>93</sup> Nothing could be further from the *Ursula-Schiffchen* just discussed than this late medieval technological marvel, this ultimate navigational machine. While such ‘nautical realism’ was of no concern to Ulrich Pinder and the artists who helped launch his Ships of St. Ursula, some two decades earlier its *accuratesse* appears to have been readily appreciated by two fellow

<sup>93</sup> For discussions of this ship as a plausible work of nautical engineering, see for instance Ried, *Deutsche Segelschiffahrt*, 23.



FIG. 18. MICHAEL WOLGEMUTH AND HANNS PLEYDENWURFF, *CHRIST CALMING THE STORM*, 1491, FROM STEPHAN FRIDOLIN’S *SCHATZBEHALTER*, FIG. 48. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

Nuremberg masters, Michael Wolgemuth and Hanns Pleydenwurff, who drew on some of the Netherlandish ship prints in two of their woodcuts for Stephan Fridolin’s hugely popular *Schatzbehalter*, or ‘Treasure Chest’, published by Anton Koberger in 1491.<sup>94</sup> Given the overwhelmingly Christological focus of the book, it is probably not too surprising to find that the images in question depict Christ’s calming of the storm on Lake Galilee and his subsequent miracle of walking on

<sup>94</sup> On Fridolin’s *Schatzbehalter* and its imagery see the introduction by Dominik Bartl in *Der Mainzer Schatzbehalter: Ein koloriertes Andachtsbuch von 1491*, ed. by Dominik Bartl and Miriam Gepp-Labusiak (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012), 9–52; Ulrike Heinrichs, ‘Sehen als Anwendung von Wissen: Aussage und Wirkung der Bilder in Stephan Fridolins “Schatzbehalter” und bei Albrecht Dürer’, *Die Gleichzeitigkeit von Handschrift und Buchdruck*, ed. by Gerd Dicke and Klaus Grubmüller, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien, 16 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 49–104; but see also Petra Seegets, *Passionstheologie und Passionsfrömmigkeit im ausgehenden Mittelalter: Der Nürnberger Franziskaner Stephan Fridolin († 1498) zwischen Kloster und Stadt*, Spätmittelalter und Reformation, n. s. 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

the water and rescuing the drowning St. Peter (pages 192–193, figures 48–49). Both representations offer somewhat reduced (but otherwise plausible) versions of the kinds of ships portrayed by Master WA, a three-masted carrack in the first case (Fig. 18) and a smaller two-masted cog-carrack hybrid in the second.<sup>95</sup> Though primarily illustrative of the specific miracles they depict, the two woodcuts and the episodes they represent were given a slight ecclesiological charge through their deliberate insertion into the Passion story and Fridolin's exposition thereof, and through the repeated marking of the ships' sails with the *signum crucis*, which here takes the shape of a Jerusalem cross. To call these vessels allegorical (especially in the sense we have investigated above) would of course take things too far.

At present, there are only two other known late medieval images – both dating from the last decade of the fifteenth century – in which more concerted attempts were made to use the new form of nautical realism in support of visual allegory. The first of these is a little known drawing now in the British Museum and created by an artist who had some knowledge of the œuvre of Hieronymus Bosch (Fig. 19).<sup>96</sup> Effectively amalgamating three of the principal iconographical strands explored in this article, this master has created nothing less than a triple crossbreed between the mighty carrack, the *Nef de la Religion*, and the *antenna crucifixi*. In particular, his ship comprises a high-boarded, capacious hull with stern rudder and projecting, escutcheoned fore- and aftercastles; a single-towered cathedral or church in contemporary Flamboyant Gothic forms which replaces here the fortified monastic superstructure of Deguileville's *Nef*; and a *flèche*-like mast-crucifix (with a rather faintly drawn corpus) and a large, billowing sail. The combination of vessel and church building is particularly remarkable. Not only does it play on the double meaning of *navis*, signifying both ship and nave,<sup>97</sup> but the church is also positioned in such a way that

95 The individual features of both ships are described in Ried, *Deutsche Segelschiffahrt*, 31–33, *passim*.

96 John Rowlands, *Drawings by German Artists and Artists from German-Speaking Regions of Europe in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: The Fifteenth Century, and the Sixteenth Century by Artists Born before 1530*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 1993), no. 5, with further bibliography. On the putative identity of the master and his alleged corpus of works, see Michael Roth, 'Die Zeichnungen des Meisters der "Coburger Rundbätter"', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Berlin: Freie Universität, 1988; see also Friedrich Winkler, 'Skizzenbücher eines unbekanntenen rheinischen Meisters um 1500', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, n. s. 1 (1930), 123–152.

97 For the double use and etymology of the term, see Möbius, 'Navis Ecclesiae'.



FIG. 19. ANONYMOUS, *SHIP OF THE CHURCH*, NETHERLANDISH?, C. 1490. LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM.

its towered west end is aligned with the ship's stern and its polygonal choir facing the vessel's bow. The ship is thus sailing eastward, toward (the Heavenly) Jerusalem, the harbour of Salvation, which is rendered here as an open tent inscribed *gratia Dei* and occupied by a crowned female figure (presumably Grace or Grace-Dieu herself) who receives a company of four kneeling clergymen, consisting of a friar, a bishop, a cardinal, and a pope. Just below are the purgatorial dead, praying for delivery from their fiery prison. Banderoles unfurling between these two groups and inscribed with the words of *gratia Dei* promise just this, ultimate release from the tribulations of the world and conveyance to the 'house of my father' ('venite ad me o[mne]s [?] estis mat[er] [?] huius mundi / [e]t ego po[r]tabo vos i[n] domum p[at]ris mei / per trib[ul]atione multi dirigu[n]tur ad gratia dei'). To make the ship's passage across the turbid waters of the *saeculum* more compelling, the artist has invented a whole menagerie of these tribulations, all

carefully labelled, which encroach upon the vessel from all sides. These include both the Seven Deadly Sins and an army of airborne satanic beings that appear to have sprung straight from the pages of a Kabbalistic catalogue of demonology, such as Asmodaeus, Ast[a]roth, Belial, Berith and Belphegor. As we have seen, the notion that the ocean of life was in actuality a sirenic cesspool of moral corruption has its roots in late Antiquity. Guillaume de Deguileville then transformed this ocean into his Sea of the World and filled its churning tides with a multitude of striking and therefore memorable allegorical landmarks and personifications. Using his own range of sources and figures, the master of the London drawing effectively reimagined this hellish expanse of water and gave it a concrete visual form, perhaps for the very first time. By doing so he anticipated an entirely new class of allegorical ships, launched in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. These were no longer the kinds of vessels that merely rescued souls from the dark waters they sailed. They were a new line of battleships that fired broadsides at their enemies who came at them from across the waves, and whose names had changed from Asmodaeus and Belphegor to Luther and Calvin.

This refit of the Ship of the Church from a non-combative vessel carrying a cargo of souls to a man-of-war (or at least an armed merchantman) representing *Ecclesia militans* is prefigured in the second and final example, a painting commissioned in about 1495–1500 for the Artus Court (Dwór Artusa/Artushof) in the Hanseatic city of Gdańsk/Danzig (Fig. 20), where it was paired with a slightly earlier panel depicting the ‘Siege of Malbork Castle’ until World War II, when both paintings perished.<sup>98</sup> In contradistinction to the Boschian ship just discussed, which only features a carrack’s hull, Gdańsk’s very own Ship of the Church (“*Okręt Kościoła*” in Polish) was fashioned as a fully-fledged Hanseatic *Kraweel*, with hulking fore- and sterncastles, four masts (including a bonaventure above

98 The paintings are now replaced *in situ* by modern computer-generated copies. That of the Ship of the Church incorporates a small sliver of the destroyed original. For the latter image, see in particular Adam S. Labuda, *Malarstwo tablicowe w Gdańsku w. 2 pol. XV w.* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978), 114–132, 205–206 no. 14, with further bibliography; Jerzy Litwin, ‘Próba rekonstrukcji okrętu przedstawionego na obrazie ‘Okręt Kościoła z Dworu Artusa w Gdańsku’, *Gdańskie Studia Muzealne*, 2 (1978), 185–195; and Ried, *Deutsche Segelschiffahrt*, 56. Both paintings also receive treatment in Teresa Grzybkowska, *Złoty wiek malarstwa gdańskiego na tle kultury artystycznej miasta, 1520–1620* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 43, 47–51; and Zygmunt Kruselnicki, *Historyzm i kult przeszłości w sztuce pomorskiej XVI–XVIII wieku*, *Prace Wydziału Filologiczno-Filozoficznego*, 29.3 (Toruń: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 16–21.



ANONYMOUS, *SHIP OF THE CHURCH*, c. 1495–1500, PROBABLY GDAŃSK/DANZIG, FROM THE DWÓR ARTUSA/ARTUSHOF IN GDAŃSK. MODERN COMPUTER-GENERATED COPY.

the transom), and armed to the teeth with culverins and a range of smaller guns. Also contrasting with the previous image (and for that matter, with all of the other allegories explored in this section), the ship’s main mast is really only that, a main mast. The vessel’s complex rigging was probably deemed too obfuscatory to serve the purpose of a clearly legible visual armature, so instead the ship’s crew – all civic saints – are distributed among the various decks and two of the sails. While the forecastle is manned by Saints George and Christopher, the main deck is occupied by *Anna Selbdritt*, Gregory the Great, and the patron of seafarers Nicholas of Myra. On the sloping poop, we recognise Saints Olaf, Anthony, Florian, and Giles, who were highly revered in both Gdańsk and other towns along the eastern Baltic littoral. Pride of place in this *navis sanctorum* was granted to the figures of the Virgin Mary and St. James of Compostela, which respectively adorn the square foresail, used for motive power, and

the lateen bonaventure, utilised to increase maneuverability and stabilize the ship's course. Of course, what truly transforms this carrack into a supernatural one, into a floating City of God, is the angelic Trinity that hovers like a mirage between the fore- and main-mast, its pulsating, nimbic mandorla tinged with orange and purple. As the already-reefed sails of the main and mizzen masts indicate, the ship has reached the end of its voyage and is putting into port. In sync with the nautical realism of the ship is the depiction of its destination, which contemporary viewers would have instantaneously recognised as the city of Gdańsk itself. Rather than having sailed toward the distant *portus salutis* of the Heavenly Jerusalem, this vessel has taken a different course. As the looming tower of the Marienkirche in the upper left background indicates, the ship is back in home waters with a cargo of saints, ready to open its holds to bestow its spiritual riches upon the city whose flag it carries. Indeed, as Adam Labuda has argued, this credibly rendered Hanseatic *Kraweel* performs a double-allegorical purpose: it is at once *navis ecclesiae* and *navis civitatis*,<sup>99</sup> and as such, even more so than the ship seals of old, a powerful emblem of civic identity, hopes and aspirations. Alluring in its life-likeness and near-tangibility, and portrayed in the final phase of its kinetic momentum, this is a ship that, rather than bringing Gdańsk to Heaven, brings Heaven to Gdańsk.

#### OUTLOOK: TROUBLED WATERS AHEAD!

The late medieval Ship of the Church was a constant work in progress. Never fixed, it shifted its shape and meaning from context to context. We have come across cogs, carracks, cathedral carriers, and mere naviform *rostra*, variously laden with all of humanity and/or the community of saints, or with as yet empty holds, and alternately navigated by the Apostle Peter, St. Augustine of Hippo and the Christ-Creator Himself. We have investigated cases in which the *navis ecclesiae* became amalgamated with other allegorical vessels, in particular the Ship of St. Ursula, and in the process became a mystical proscenium for the ritual celebration and visual-theological *mise-en-scène* of the Eucharist, a soul-saving machine equipped to mass-redeem all of humankind. We have also considered a ship that

<sup>99</sup> Labuda, *Malarstwo tablicowe*, 114–132, *passim*.

rejected these kinds of trappings in favour of credible seaworthiness, and that no longer solely relied on divine mechanics and protective armour, but that was rigged like the great merchantmen of its day, its looming fore- and aftercastles bristling with heavy guns. Despite their different methods of construction, however, all of these ships ultimately undertook the same voyage: centred, except in the last case, by the triumphant *antenna crucifixi*, they sailed straight through the whirlpools and rocks of moral contamination and past the beckoning but dissonant calls of sirens and other monstrous sea-creatures, to eventually arrive at the Port of Salvation, where they could safely dock and unload their cargo of human souls. Of course, as Winand von Steeg in particular warned his audience, it was all too easy for the ship's passengers to supplant the redemptory cruciate with a mast of their own design, a drastic re-rigging that would alter the course of the vessel and doom it to shipwreck. Yet, it could be argued that the allegory of the Ship of the Church, especially as pictorialised during the course of the fifteenth century, was one of cautious optimism, which gave visual expression to the belief that the post-schismatic Roman Church had victoriously prevailed over its enemies and was once more 'on course' to fulfil its salvific destiny.

However, this belief was not universally shared, so much so that just as the Ship of the Church was gaining iconographical momentum, sceptics, pessimists and realists began busying themselves with the construction of a new flotilla of allegorical ships specifically designed to reflect more accurately the actual religious and political situation, or place a satirical spin on new insights into the anthropology of the human condition. Sometime around 1460–1470 Italian printmakers thus published a nautical cartoon that poked fun at the contemporary power struggle between the Pope and the Emperor by showing both of them wrestling in a *cocha*, ostensibly bound for Jerusalem, but actually caught in its own self-generated doldrums.<sup>100</sup> In an engraving produced about the same time in the Netherlands, the so-called Master of the Banderoles depicted another kind of doomed vessel. Its mast is replaced by a tree whose branches contain all of humanity (including very prominently both Pope and Emperor). On the shore, next to a Boethian *rota fortunae*, stands Death, wielding a large crossbow,

<sup>100</sup> Barbera, 'Eversio Europae', 59–65, with figs. and further literature.

and using the tree's crown for target practice.<sup>101</sup> In addition to such vessels of death and contemporary affairs, late medieval allegorists – now in the full throes of maritime exploration and experimentation – tinkered with the Ship of Fortune<sup>102</sup> and the Ship of Marriage,<sup>103</sup> the latter with its sail fraying in the wind, before embarking on the conception of what at least in retrospect became the most famous nautical allegory of its age, the Ship of Fools.

Authored by the humanist Sebastian Brant, and first published in 1494 by Johann Bergmann von Olpe in Basel, the *Narrenschiff* is a satirical allegory of human society.<sup>104</sup> It takes the form of a prologue and 112 typological 'character portraits' of the passengers of a ship –

101 Jugan and Raskin, 'Du navire de la patience', 116; Didier Jugan, 'L'arbre de la vie au péril de la mort (iconographie de l'arbre au miel, arbre sans fruit, arbre du pécheur, arbre vain)', *Memento mori, il genere macabre in Europa dal Medioevo a oggi*, ed. by Marco Piccat and Laura Ramello (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2014), 351–386, *passim*.

102 As represented in a Florentine engraving of c. 1460–1470 that survives in two impressions in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence and the British Museum in London; see Mark Zucker, *Early Italian Masters*, The Illustrated Bartsch, Commentary, 24.2 (New York: Abaris Books, 1993), 131 no. 009.

103 As depicted in an illustration to a copy of Albrecht von Eyb's *Ehebüchlein* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 5185, fol. 60r), an early humanist treatise on the joys and sorrows of married life first published in 1472; see Matthias Thumser, 'Albrecht von Eyb und seine Eheschriften: Humanistische Wissenstransformation', *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch*, 44 (2009), 485–517.

104 The bibliography on the *Narrenschiff* and its reception in literature and art is enormous. Recent publications on the text in particular include Annika Rockenberger, *Produktion und Drucküberlieferung der editio princeps von Sebastian Brants Narrenschiff* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2011); Anne-Laure Metzger-Rambach, *Le texte emprunté: étude comparée du Narrenschiff de Sebastian Brant et de ses adaptations, 1494–1509* (Paris: Champion, 2008); the essays in *Sebastian Brant (1457–1521)*, ed. by Hans-Gert Roloff et al. (Berlin: Weidler, 2008); *Sebastian Brant: Forschungsbeiträge zu seinem Leben, zum 'Narrenschiff' und zum übrigen Werk*, ed. by Thomas Wilhelmi (Basel: Schwabe, 2002); Michael J. Rupp, 'Narrenschiff' und 'Stultifera navis': *Deutsche und lateinische Moralsatire von Sebastian Brant und Jakob Locher in Basel, 1494–1498* (Münster and New York: Waxmann, 2002); Albrecht Classen, "'Von erfahrung aller land'" – Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*: A Document of Social, Intellectual and Mental History', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 26 (2001), 52–65; Stephan Fuchs, "'... und netzen das babyren Schiff'": Schiffsmetapher, Buchmetapher und Autodiskurs im *Narrenschiff* Sebastian Brants', *Neophilologus*, 1 (1998), 83–95; Raimund Kemper, *Il était un petit navire: Zur Archäologie der Narrenschiff-Phantasien Michel Foucaults* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1996); and John Walter Van Cleve, *Sebastian Brant's The Ship of Fools in Critical Perspective, 1800–1991* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993). On the imagery of the *Narrenschiff* and its later copies and adaptations, see now Jacob Haubenreich, 'The Press, the Mirror, and the Window: The Intermedial Construction of Brant's Ship of Fools', *Word & Image*, 32 (2016), 375–392; Frédéric Barbier, 'La "mise en livre" ("mettere in libro"): Il *Narrenschiff*, 1494–1500', *La Bibliofilia*, 116 (2015), 83–85; Katrin Graf, 'Klerikersatiren in Bild und Text: Zur Kompilationstechnik im "Narrenschiff"', *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, ed. by Karin Krause and Barbara Schellewald, *Sensus*, 2 (Cologne; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2011), 205–227; Blandine Landau, 'Sins of the Flesh and Human Folly: A Study in the Ship of Fools by Jheronimus Bosch', *Jheronimus Bosch: His Sources; 2<sup>nd</sup> International Jheronimus Bosch Conference, May 22–25, 2007*, ed. by Jo Timmermans ('s-Hertogenbosch: Jheronimus Bosch Art Center, 2010), 210–231; Yona Pinson, 'Deniers of God: "Inspiens/stultus" on Board the Ship of Fools (1494)', *Acta historiae atrium*, 44 (2003), 97–108; and William A. Coupe, 'The Illustrations of Brant's "Narrenschiff" and the Limitations of the Satiric Image', *Ridiculous*, 6 (1999), 73–83.



FIG. 21. ALBRECHT DÜRER, *SHIP OF COCKAIGNE*, WOODCUT, 1494, FROM SEBASTIAN BRANT'S *NARRENSCHIFF*. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

representing all of humankind – on a sea voyage to Narragonia, the Land of Fools. In contrast to the travellers on the Ship of the Church, the navigators on the Ship of Fools are beyond redemption. No matter their social standing, they are all incorrigible fools, ridden by vices, blinded by their hopes and ambitions, and inevitably unmasked by their comportment and discourse. As the woodcuts accompanying the text reveal in particular, each class of fool travels in its own type of ship, such as the Ship of Apprentices (chapter 48), or the Ship of Cockaigne (chapter 108; Fig. 21). All of these vessels are invariably either rudder-, oar-, or mast-less (frontispiece and chapter 108), or they sail aimlessly hither and thither (chapter 48), or break apart amidst the waves (chapters 103, 109). Incapacitated and without a set course, this fleet of folly actually sails nowhere, because as it turns

out, it never has to leave port, since Narragonia is not some faraway destination, but the here and now. While the Ship of the Church, with its portrayal of humanity adrift, yet securely guided, moves forward through both time and space toward the safe haven of eschatological futurity, the Ship of Fools is caught in a kind of temporal loop, an endless hellish present from which there is no escape.

A bleak antithesis to the Ship of the Church, the *Narrenschiff* was an instant success. It went through several more editions before the end of the fifteenth century – a Latin one, the *Stultifera navis*, appeared in 1497 – and its narrative was enthusiastically excerpted and adapted, most famously perhaps by Sebastian Brant’s friend, the pulpiteer Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg. Geiler devoted an entire cycle of sermons to the book and its characters, preached in Strasbourg Cathedral from 1498 to 1499 and eventually published as the *Navicula sive speculum fatuorum* in 1510, the year of his death. Shortly after delivering his homilies on Brant’s rather grim and doom-laden Ship of Fools, Geiler set about developing another sequence of sermons which revolved around a more positively connoted allegorical vessel largely of his own invention, the Ship of Penitence, which was once more bound for the Port of Salvation. The Latin edition of this series of sermons, which appeared posthumously as the *Navicula poenitentiae* in 1511, in turn inspired the Ingolstadt theologian Johannes Eck–Luther’s later nemesis–to write a short treatise on the Ship of Salvation, which came out in German in 1512.<sup>105</sup> Recalling Winand von Steeg’s *Adamas*, humankind’s journey from the earthly to the heavenly Paradise is imagined here as a series of voyages in different ships that successively supersede one another. Three of these vessels, the tree-masted *navis lapsus* of Adam and Eve, the Ship of Baptism, and the *Schiff des Heils* itself, appear in the frontispiece woodcut of the publication (Fig. 22). Not only was the latter built by the shipwright Christ himself – we can see him cutting

105 For a detailed look at Geiler’s and Eck’s allegorical ships, see Mateusz Kapustka, ‘Retoryka homiletyczna w obrazie: Ilustracje do ‘Das Schiff des Heils’ Johannes Geilera von Kaysersberg (wyd. 1512)’, *Marmur dziejowy: Studia z historii sztuki; Pani profesor Zofii Ostrowskiej-Kęblowskiej z wyrazami szacunku, uznania i wdzięczności uczniowie, przyjaciele i współpracownicy*, ed. by Ewa Chojecka et al., *Prace Komisji Historii Sztuki*, 32 (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2002), 81–92; see also Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, *Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture*, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 108–109. For an easily accessible edition of Eck’s *Schiff*, see Gustave Otto Arlt, ‘Das Schiff des Heils’, *Indiana University Studies*, 98–99 (1932–1933), 1–116.

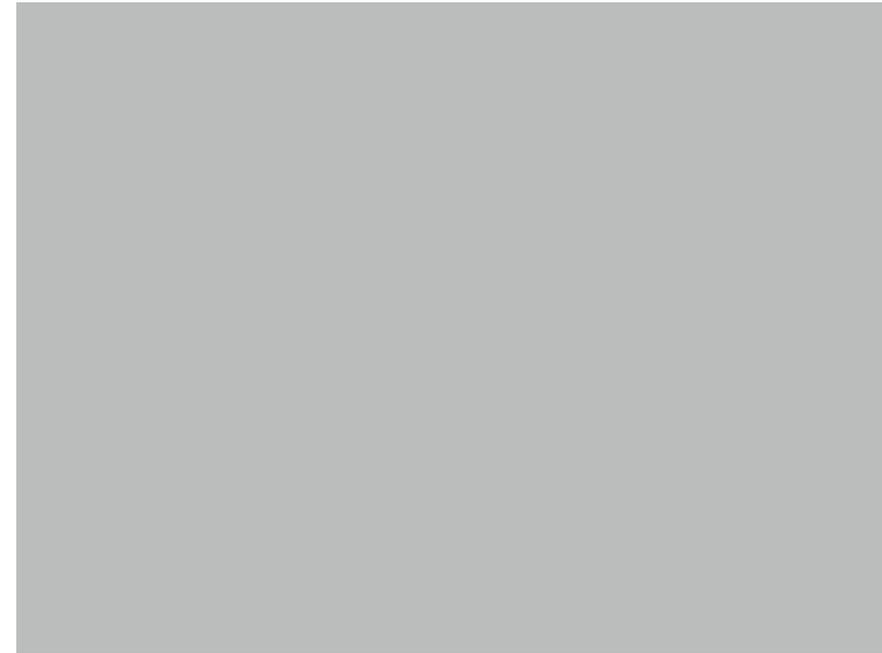


FIG. 22. ANONYMOUS, *SHIP OF SALVATION*, WOODCUT, 1512, FROM JOHANNES ECK’S *SCHIFF DES HEILS*. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS; NOTE: THE ANTENNA CRUCIFIXI IS NOT VISIBLE HERE, IT IS HIDDEN IN THE SEAM BETWEEN THE PAGES.

two wooden planks on the upper right – but it is also semantically and visually centred by the *antenna crucifixi*, which is merged with an exceptionally long yard arm with the as yet furled Sail of Free Will. Propelled by the Oars of the Laws of God, the ship is gathering speed, but even so it still takes on passengers that clamber on board via ladders or are brought to its side by shuttle boats, including one, the Boat of Intercession, helmed by the Virgin Mary herself. Any pretense of nautical realism was clearly dropped here in favour of ‘super-enriching’ the allegory, so much so that it remains uncertain as to where the ship’s bow and stern are located, or indeed whether the vessel is sailing to the right or to the left. Notwithstanding that the Ship of Fools had been conceived as a satirical *riposte* to the allegory of the Ship of the Church, Geiler, and after him Eck, responded to Brant’s



FIG. 23. HANS HESSE, *SHIP OF ST. PETER IN A STORM*, WOODCUT, 1488, FROM JOHANNES LICHTENBERGER'S *PRONOSTICATIO*. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

dystopian vision with yet another Ship of the Church, complete with *antenna crucifixi* and upgraded with the latest allegorical gadgetry!

What Brant had only hinted at, some of his more outspokenly anticlerical contemporaries expressed in more direct terms: there was something rather wrong with the Ship of the Church, whatever its configuration. It was heading straight into a gathering storm, and whether it was able to ride it out or not only time would tell. As early as 1488 Johannes Lichtenberger, erstwhile court astrologer to

Emperor Fredrick III, presaged in his hugely influential astrological-prophetical treatise *Pronosticatio* that 'the Little Ship of St. Peter will be much thrown about in many storms and blowings of the sea and the winds' ('das schyfflin sant Peters [...] in vielen stormen vnd slegen des meres vnd der wind dicke wider vnnnd fure geworffen wirt').<sup>106</sup> The caption that accompanies Hans Hesse's illustration to this passage (Fig. 23) speaks of 'the Church in [her] ship with her oars tilted and dancing up and down' ('Die Kyrche ym schiff mit ire[n] rieme[n] geneickt vn[d] vff vn[d] abe zü da[n]tzen').<sup>107</sup> The image itself shows a heavily pitching ship *cum* Gothic church building reminiscent of Deguileville's *Nef de la Religion* amidst huge waves and swirling eddies, its two visible oars clearly unable to stabilise the vessel's rocking motion on the ocean's furious surface.<sup>108</sup> Even more dramatic is a woodcut of 1508 attributed to Hans Süß von Kulmbach – the putative author of the (slightly later) *Ursula-Schifflein* with the scales of Judgment (Fig. 14) – which portrays the Ship of St. Peter containing the highest-ranking members of both Church and State foundering on the shallows of a rocky shore, its bow sinking beneath the waves, its passengers tumbling overboard (Fig. 24). What is truly remarkable in this image is that as the vessel is being submerged, its single sail embroidered with the crucified Christ is still billowing in the wind, thus driving the ship and its navigators even more quickly into their watery grave. As Dario Barbera has observed, rather than protecting the vessel and its passengers, the *velum crucis* has become their epitaph,<sup>109</sup> a flaring monument to their perdition. The woodcut was one of thirteen commissioned to illustrate another notorious classic of astrological prognostication, the *Spiegel der naturlichen, himlischen vnd prophetischen sehungen* (Mirror of Natural, Celestial

<sup>106</sup> Quoted after Heike Talkenberger, *Sintflut: Prophetie und Zeitgeschehen in Texten und Holzschnitten astrologischer Flugschriften 1488–1528*, Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, 26 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990), 64. For a detailed discussion of the *Pronosticatio*, see the same publication, 55–143, *passim*. On Lichtenberger's treatise, see also Dietrich Kurze, 'Popular Astrology and Prophecy in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Johannes Lichtenberger', in *Hastrologi hallucinati – Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time*, ed. by Paola Zambelli (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1986), 177–193; and Dietrich Kurze, *Johannes Lichtenberger († 1503): Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Prophetie und Astrologie* (Lübeck; Hamburg: Matthiesen, 1960).

<sup>107</sup> Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, 91.

<sup>108</sup> On this image and its later adaptation by Jan Swart van Groningen, see also Barbera, *Eversio Europae*, 67–68; and Leibfried and Winter, *Kirchen- und Staatsschiffe*, 16.

<sup>109</sup> Barbera, *Eversio Europae*, 71–72; see also Leibfried and Winter, *Kirchen- und Staatsschiffe*, 14; and Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, 110.



FIG. 24. HANS SÜSS VON KULMBACH?, *THE SHIP OF ST. PETER SINKING*, WOODCUT, 1508, FROM JOSEPH GRÜNPECK'S *SPIEGEL DER NATURLICHEN, HIMLISCHEN VND PROPHETISCHEN SEHUNGEN*. VARIOUS COLLECTIONS.

and Prophetical Auguries), authored by the Bavarian humanist and historiographer Joseph Grünpeck, first published by Georg Stuchs in Nuremberg in 1508.<sup>110</sup> Predicting not only that 'St. Peter's Little Ship shall founder in these years on the many rocks of misfortune,'<sup>111</sup> but also prophesying a coming crisis and upheaval in Europe's political landscape (all correctly, as it turned out), Grünpeck's *Spiegel* went through several more editions before being condemned as heretical and placed on the Pauline Index of Prohibited Books during the Council of Trent (held between 1545 and 1563).

Rather ironically, while the Reformation drove a permanent wedge into (already existing fissures in) western Christendom and, in the

<sup>110</sup> For Grünpeck's life and work, including the *Spiegel*, see Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, 55–153, *passim*.

<sup>111</sup> 'Sant Peters schifflein sol zu disen iaren an vil fels der vngefel zerstoßen' (Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, 130).

process, came close to scuttling the Roman Church, the same process of religious and political fragmentation gave the allegory of the Ship of the Church new meaning, pertinence and buoyancy. Recalibrated, re-rigged and rearmed, the *navis ecclesiae* (while never an especially stable image to begin with) now became truly diversified, generating ever more specialised and fine-tuned flotillas of religious ships. Some were pious, other polemical. Some sailed proudly through the storms of heresy and picked up drowning souls, others watched on as their enemies sank beneath the waves. For a little while, some even fired broadsides at each other from across the confessional divide, though by the early seventeenth century the Roman Church was once again their sole operator. As sleek Lepantine galleys, as galleons laden with spiritual treasure, and as immense, multi-decked ships-of-the-line, these castles and cathedrals of the sea sailed on into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On the surfaces of engravings (like that with which this investigation began) they eventually crossed the Atlantic, stopping over at the Canaries before heading for the distant lands of the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. We will explore this last voyage elsewhere.

ACHIM TIMMERMANN: CATHEDRALS AND CASTLES OF THE SEA:  
SHIPS, ALLEGORY AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE IN PRE-REFORMATION  
NORTHERN EUROPE

**KEYWORDS:** VISUAL ALLEGORY; NAUTICAL ALLEGORY; SHIP OF  
SAINT URSULA; SHIP OF FOOLS; CIVIC SEALS; GUILLAUME DE  
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JOHANNES LICHTENBERGER; JOSEPH GRÜNPECK; ANTICLERICALISM;  
ASTROLOGICAL PROGNOSTICATION

### SUMMARY

Revolving around the image of the Ship of the Church (*navis ecclesiae*), this article explores the making of visual allegory in the century between the end of the Great Schism (1378–1417) and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (1517 ff.). Of particular interest here are those images in which the crucifix has been grafted onto the mast and sail-yard of a ship (*antenna crucifixi*). The material is placed in conversation with contemporary trends in the crafting of complex allegories and new developments in both ship design (most notably the introduction of the carrack into northern European waters) and the visual representation of ships. The focus is mostly on the German-speaking sphere, though select images originating in the Italian peninsula are also taken into consideration.

One of the very first ships bearing the *antenna crucifixi* is described in both text and image in Winand Ort von Steeg's mystical-allegorical treatise *Adamas colluctancium aquilarum* (1419). However, it was not until the last decades before the Protestant Reformation that the imagery was introduced to a much wider audience, particularly in the context of the iconography of another vessel, the Ship of Saint Ursula, with which it was amalgamated to produce compound allegories of the ritual celebration and visual-theological staging of the eucharist. Though it could be argued that these visual allegories were never especially stable, as they shifted their shape and specific meaning from context to context, it is also true that the ships at the centre of these complex configurations ultimately all undertake the same voyage across the tempestuous and dangerous waters of the Ocean of Life: centred as they are by

the victorious crucifix mast, these vessels sail straight through the whirlpools of moral contamination to eventually arrive at the Port of Salvation, where they can safely dock and unload their cargo of human souls. It could be contended that this particular fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century iteration of the *navis ecclesiae* was one of cautious optimism, which gave visual expression to the belief that the post-schismatic Roman Church had victoriously prevailed over its enemies and was once more 'on course' to fulfil its salvific destiny.

However, this belief was not universally shared, so much so that just as the Ship of the Church was gaining iconographical momentum in the decades around 1500, sceptics, pessimists, and realists – often fuelled by anticlerical sentiment – began busying themselves with the construction of a new flotilla of allegorical ships specifically designed to reflect more accurately the actual religious and political situation or else put a satirical spin on new insights into the anthropology of the human condition. Chief among these new allegorical vessels is Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* or Ship of Fools (1494), which takes its human cargo not to the Port of Salvation, but to Narragonia, the Land of Fools. In another bleak antithesis to the triumphalism of the nautical allegories at the heart of this article, encountered in two treatises of astrological prognostication, the Ship of the Church is either on the verge of sinking amidst huge waves or foundering on a rocky shore, throwing its passengers – all high-ranking members of Church and State – overboard. Visually striking and semantically malleable, the ships explored in this contribution anticipate the next class of allegorical ships developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and expressing the hopes and aspirations of a new generation of viewers, now looking on from both sides of the confessional divide.

### CV

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