

A RENAISSANCE RELIQUARY COLLECTION IN HALLE, AND ITS ILLUSTRATED INVENTORIES

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The National Gallery of Victoria owns a small, yet important, collection of incunabula and early printed books dating from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹ These books were acquired for the Gallery's Department of Prints and Drawings because they demonstrate so well the involvement of contemporary artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Wolf Traut in the design and illustration of the printed book. The present article looks at the so-called *Hallesches Heiltumsbuch* (Halle Relic Book), a richly decorated printed guide to the former relic collection of the church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene in Halle, Saxony. This illustrated text was printed for Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg in December 1520² to publicize the extensive collection of relics and precious Renaissance reliquaries in his collegiate church. The spiritual value attached to the treasures in Halle was expressed at the end of the text, in the excessive number of indulgences promised to the devout visitor.³ Thus the relic book also served the purpose of actively promoting the annual presentation of the relics, intended for the Sunday and Monday after the feast of the Immaculate Conception in September.⁴ Only five to six years after the publication of this printed version, Albrecht commissioned an extraordinarily lavish guide to the Halle relic collection. In this second relic book, each reliquary was accurately reproduced in a full-page illuminated pen drawing, accompanied by a brief handwritten description. The existence of these two illustrated relic books – one printed, the other handwritten and illuminated – has meant that Halle's collection of highly artistic reliquaries is one of the best documented and most meticulously reproduced of its kind. This paper will investigate the relationship between the two books and will comment on what a comparison between them reveals about the different approaches to

their making, as well as about the collecting activities of an eminent prince of the Church.

As woodcuts in early printed books frequently show neither a signature nor the initials of the responsible draughtsman, the question of their authorship often remains a matter of attribution. Of the 237 images in the Halle relic book, only the representation of the silver statue of St Peter (K3v) bears the combined initials WT, indicating that the Nuremberg artist Wolf Traut created this particular print (fig. 1a).⁵ On the basis of stylistic similarities it can be assumed that Traut provided a considerable number of designs for the decoration of the relic book. His prints are of particularly high quality and he succeeds convincingly in portraying the three-dimensional character of the reliquaries depicted. The artistic quality of the printed relic book was further enhanced, as we shall see, by the insertion of a very fine engraved portrait of Albrecht von Brandenburg by the leading German printmaker Albrecht Dürer, also from Nuremberg. The involvement in the project of other, at times less gifted, artists is evident in a number of weaker depictions of full- and half-length relic containers, such as the gilded silver statue of St Victor (P2v) or the bust of St Gereon (I5v).

The sale of printed guides to relic collections in a large number of German cities reflects the widespread practice of relic worship towards the end of the Middle Ages – a practice that was strongly supported by the Catholic Church in order to reinforce existing patterns of belief. The illustrated book in the Melbourne collection forms part of a larger group of printed relic books and broadsheets (for example, from Maastricht and Aachen (1468);⁶ and from Augsburg (1520)) that emerged in the second half of the fifteenth century. These illustrated inventories, of which the version

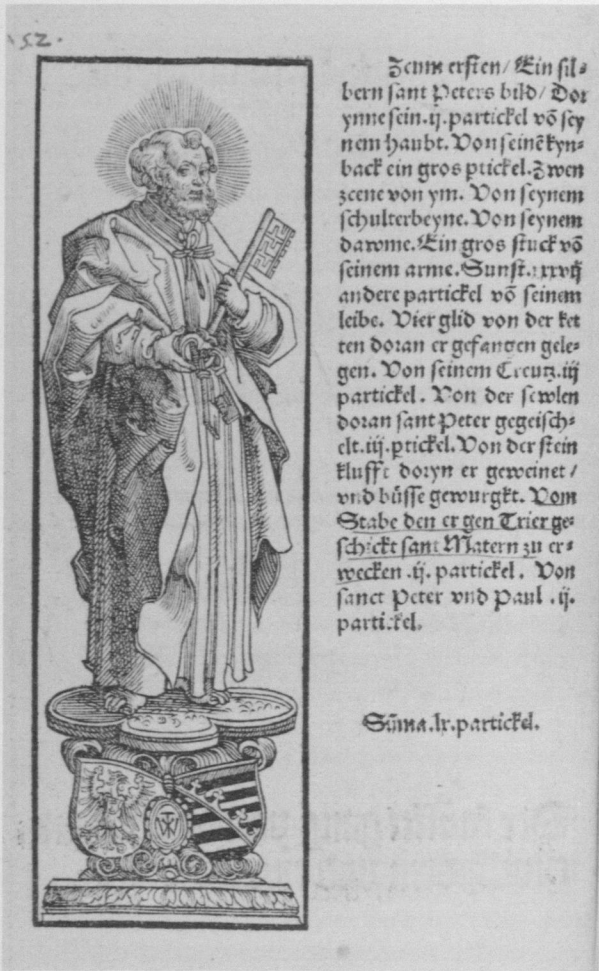


Fig. 1a Wolf Traut (German, c.1486–1520), *Silver Statue of St Peter*, fol. K3v of the *Hallesches Heiltumsbuch* (Halle Relic Book), 1520. Woodcut. National Gallery of Victoria; Felton Bequest 1957.

Fig. 1b *Silver Statue of St Peter*, fol. 196v of the *Hallesches Heiltumsbuch* (Halle Relic Book), c.1526 (Aschaffenburg MS. 14). Illumination on vellum. Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg.

commissioned for the collegiate church of Halle is one of the most elaborate, generally allowed room for a depiction of each reliquary and a short description of its overall form. In addition, the text would enumerate the individual relics contained in each receptacle⁷ and would list the indulgences that attached to these relics.⁸ The various cities and pilgrimage centres began to publish these pamphlets and illustrated books soon after the

discovery of printing with movable type, in the middle of the fifteenth century – using these publications to advertise their most valuable relics and to promote the annual feastdays on which their treasures were to be displayed.⁹ Smaller printed guides to relic collections have survived for the cities of Würzburg, Nuremberg¹⁰ and Bamberg, all three booklets being published by the same printer in Nuremberg in 1493. The illustrations in

these earlier guides are, however, much simpler and much more schematic than those in the Halle relic book, and the occasional repetition of the same woodblock for different reliquaries calls into question the reliability of some of the illustrations.¹¹ In the first two decades of the sixteenth century, printed relic books became increasingly more ornate, as can be seen for instance in the two editions of the relic book produced for the cathedral of St Stephen in Vienna (1502, 1514).¹² A relic book from Wittenberg (1509) also demonstrates that in the later books more attention was given to the artistic quality of the images. In this case Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, engaged his court painter and printmaker, Lucas Cranach the Elder, in the decoration of his book.

In the early sixteenth century a few members of the high nobility, such as Frederick the Wise¹³ and Florian Waldauf von Waldenstein,¹⁴ senior official to Emperor Maximilian I in Hall (Tyrol), emulated Church practice by themselves amassing large collections of relics. Often associated with these private endowments were a wide range of papal indulgences and privileges, similar to those attaching to the relics owned by the Catholic Church. Papal indulgences were believed to offer the pious visitor remission from sin. They were generally described in the introduction to the catalogue of a relic collection and could also be alluded to in its illustrations.¹⁵ A woodcut of c.1510 depicting the annual presentation of the Waldauf collection to the public, for example, presents the banners of Pope Alexander VI and Pope Julius II, both of whom had supported Florian Waldauf's project (fig. 2). Printed relic books clearly contributed in new ways to the reputations of both privately and publicly owned relic collections, and this explains why individual patrons such as Frederick the Wise and Florian Waldauf increasingly published their own books and took a personal interest in their design.

Though the relic collection in Halle had a different status to the private endowments in Hall and Wittenberg, its situation with respect to indulgences was similar. The general introduction to the Halle relic book (A2v) explains in great detail that the current Pope, Leo X, together with a number of cardinals, archbishops and



Fig. 2 Hans Burgkmair (German, 1473–1531), *Display of the Relics at Hall, Tyrol*, in the *Haller Heiltumsbuch* (Hall Relic Book), c.1510. Woodcut.

bishops, would provide special benefits (indulgences) to those who looked at the relics, prayed before them, and gave alms to the church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene. In addition, the Pope had authorized the chapter of the church to erect a cross with miraculous powers (*gnadenreiches Creutz*), and for ten days every year to hear confession and give absolution with full papal authority. In connection with the foundation of the Brotherhood of St Erasmus in Halle, reference is also

made to the bull that had been issued by the Pope.

The display of relics for veneration on certain feastdays, and the use of relics in annual processions, had a long and well-established tradition in the life of the western Church, and both rituals were firmly integrated into the liturgical year.¹⁶ In accordance with these long-standing Church practices, relics belonging to a city, a noble family or a particular church also became the focal point of an annual ritual called the *Festum Reliquiarum* (Feast of the Relics) or *Heiltumsschau*. The highlight of this event was the public display (*Zeigung*) and proclamation (*Weisung*) of the relics, which took place in conjunction with the celebration of the mass, the hearing of confession, and the giving of alms. All of these steps were seen as necessary requirements for achieving the desired absolution from sin and the remission of punishment in purgatory. Relic books could be acquired by pilgrims, as a memento of their visit, during these annual presentations of relics, and were probably also available for purchase at fairs and similar public events.¹⁷

It has often been pointed out that the annual relic displays served several purposes. Apart from enriching the spiritual life of the community, they helped to fill the coffers of the organizing body, as the issuing of indulgences was closely tied to monetary transactions. It is also no coincidence that the date of the festive display often coincided with that of a major fair, so that the benefits for the city, family or church hosting the event were effectively doubled.¹⁸

As a son of the influential von Brandenburg family, Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg (1490–1545) was a leading member of the German high nobility. His strong interest in fostering a relic collection in Halle in many ways parallels Frederick the Wise's activities in Wittenberg. However, while Albrecht can be credited with having brought to fruition the endowment in Halle, he could not have done so without the decisive steps that had been taken by his predecessor, Ernst of Saxony, Archbishop of Magdeburg (1464–1513), a brother of Frederick the Wise – a factor that further strengthens the links with Wittenberg. In the second half of the fifteenth century Ernst had chosen the city of Halle for his main

residence and had initiated the construction there of an impressive Renaissance fortress, the so-called Moritzburg (St Maurice's Castle).¹⁹ Within the walls of this castle lies the chapel of St Mary Magdalene, which Ernst had destined to become the home of his collection of relics, reliquaries and liturgical ornaments.²⁰ To this end he had planned to turn his court chapel into a more prestigious collegiate church,²¹ with twenty separate altars and a chapter of twenty-nine canons. However, he did not live long enough to act upon the papal assent to his request²² and once he was gone Albrecht von Brandenburg took over his project.²³ All of what was already in place in Halle – the relics and reliquaries, the various privileges and the canons associated with the collegiate church – was passed on to Albrecht, and on 13 April 1519 Pope Leo signed the official erection and confirmation bull.²⁴ In taking over Ernst's position, Albrecht also chose the Moritzburg as his main residence, despite the fact that Mainz and Magdeburg were the administrative centres of the two bishoprics he held.

For lack of space and adequate security, Albrecht soon decided to give up the St Mary Magdalene chapel as a keeping place for Halle's ever-growing collection of relics and religious artefacts. With the backing of the Pope, he turned the former Dominican church of Halle into a collegiate church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene, also to be known as the Neues Stift, or 'new collegiate church'. The foundation of the new church was publicized by Albrecht on 28 June 1520, and on 15 July that year the canons moved into their new quarters. Over the next two decades Albrecht pursued his plan to turn this modest church into a fitting repository for his religious art objects and for the Halle reliquary treasures.²⁵

All in all, Albrecht's project cannot be described as being very original, especially as far as the endowment and the relic collection are concerned. He did, however, add another facet to the enterprise by turning the church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene into his personal burial place, thus making a concern for his own salvation into a focal point of the program. To this end he commissioned a large bronze funerary monument from the Nuremberg artist Peter Vischer the Younger in

1522; it was partly completed by 1530, but remained unfinished.²⁶ In this instance, too, Albrecht was following the example of his predecessor, who had commissioned a bronze tomb from Peter Vischer the Elder and had had it installed at the western end of Magdeburg cathedral in 1497. However, whereas Ernst had chosen to be buried in a lavishly furnished chapel in the most significant church in his diocese,²⁷ Albrecht opted for a different, more personal, burial site far from the two cathedrals he was in charge of during his lifetime. One reason for this move away from the centre of ecclesiastical power may have been that he had considerably more freedom in furnishing the church in Halle according to his own wishes.²⁸ Another reason for Albrecht's strong commitment to Halle was that he intended to found a new Catholic university in the vicinity of the Neues Stift, partly with a view to counterbalancing the nearby University of Wittenberg – which was becoming the centre of Protestant theology, with Martin Luther as one of Albrecht's harshest critics.²⁹ For a number of reasons the university at Halle never became operational, and its construction did not go far beyond the planning stages.³⁰

The introductory illustrations to the Halle relic book, together with a related woodcut by Lucas Cranach the Elder, clearly reflect the historical circumstances that led to the foundation of the Neues Stift. In about 1514, Cranach designed a woodcut that has been identified as the prospective frontispiece to an earlier design for the relic book (fig. 3). The print depicts Ernst on the left and Albrecht von Brandenburg on the right, jointly presenting a model of the chapel of St Mary Magdalene to its patron saint. This work – which was executed at a time when the Halle treasury was still destined to be housed in Archbishop Ernst's court chapel, and must have been commissioned by Albrecht shortly after he took over the position of archbishop from his predecessor – gives Ernst the place of honour on the left side of the central image.³¹ In the final design for the frontispiece of the Halle relic book, however, the positions of the two protagonists have been reversed and Albrecht now appears as the principal founder of the new collegiate church of SS Maurice and Mary

Magdalene (A2r; fig. 4b).³² Nevertheless, the design stresses the continuity between Albrecht's and Ernst of Saxony's foundation in more than one way. Albrecht had clearly paid tribute to his predecessor by selecting St Mary Magdalene as one of the patron saints of the Neues Stift, together with St Maurice and, in a less prominent role, St Erasmus. In the new frontispiece he also makes use of the shield that had initially been devised for the chapel of St Mary Magdalene at the Moritzburg. The six ointment jars in that shield were a reference to the main attribute of Mary Magdalene, while six salt-baskets alluded to the production of salt in the city of Halle.³³ The shield that appears underneath the model of the new collegiate church in the final frontispiece is therefore a modified version of the earlier coat of arms. The new shield, which was officially conferred upon Albrecht's church by Emperor Charles V



Fig. 3 Lucas Cranach the Elder (German, 1472–1553), *Ernst of Saxony and Albrecht von Brandenburg as Founders of the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene, Halle*, c.1514. Woodcut, 15.7 x 10.1 cm.

on 14 May 1521, combines the ointment jars and salt-baskets with a depiction of the Brandenburg eagle, a motif that refers directly to the family of the collegiate church's principal patron.³⁴

The shared responsibility for the foundation is expressed most explicitly in the inclusion of the coats of arms of both Albrecht and Ernst at the end of the relic book. Again, Albrecht's coat of arms appears on the left (Y4v; fig. 5a), whereas Ernst's takes up the right side (Y5r; fig. 5b). By including Ernst's coat of arms, as well as his portrait, Albrecht publicly acknowledges that a large number of the relics in the Halle collection were acquired by Ernst and not by himself. As the relic book was printed, and thus intended to address a wide public, these subtle references are particularly significant for the interpretation of the foundation. Nevertheless, Albrecht's intention of asserting a more dominant position in the final project is clear from his insertion of a full-page portrait engraving of himself (A1v; fig. 4a) opposite the frontispiece.³⁵ The engraving, by Albrecht Dürer (B. 102), stands out for its fine quality and for the attention it draws to Albrecht von Brandenburg both as an individual and as a political figure.³⁶ Combining an engraving with a series of woodcuts required careful planning on the part of the designer of the book, due to the different printing techniques involved. For technical reasons, it has to be assumed that the book title (A1r), a woodcut,³⁷ was printed onto the back of the portrait engraving not long after it had been completed by Dürer.³⁸ Similar experiments had already been undertaken by Frederick the Wise in about 1510 when he added a new woodcut title page with an engraved portrait of himself and his brother, and a woodcut illustration of his church (as frontispiece), to the 1509 edition of the Wittenberg relic book.³⁹

The Halle relic book is in many ways an important document, giving us insights into how the Halle relics were organized and displayed at the time of the consecration of the Neues Stift. In the introductory paragraph (A2v–A3r), the annual display of the relics is announced to the public, and further information on the foundation is provided for the visitor. The main body of the text is subdivided into *Gänge* or sections that

correspond to the strictly sequential order in which the individual relics and reliquaries were presented to the public on special feastdays. (For practical reasons the relics were not all shown at the same time, but were taken to and from the place where they were exhibited in a sequence of festive processions.)⁴⁰ Each *Gang* is equated with a single category of relic, an ordering system that reflects the medieval concept of a heavenly hierarchy and recalls the grouping of saints in fifteenth-century all-saints pictures. The collection in Halle distinguished, for instance, between relics pertaining to Christ and the Passion, the Virgin Mary, patriarchs and prophets, Apostles and evangelists, martyrs, bishops and confessors, holy virgins, and last but not least holy women and widows.⁴¹ Surprisingly, however, the most important relics, namely those relating to Christ and the Passion, do not constitute the first category in the printed book. This initial *Gang*, which looks rather unassuming at first sight, is described as: 'The first section, which displays the beloved saints whose relics have been mixed together and whose names have faded or are indecipherable. Equally [objects] from the Holy Land, Agnus Dei and things which His Holiness blesses and gives away each year' (A3r).⁴²

When we look at the first two objects listed and illustrated in the Halle relic book, it becomes obvious that Albrecht also followed another guiding principle, and one that seems to have been more important to him than the notion of the heavenly hierarchies that rules the rest of the manuscript. The catalogue starts with a depiction of the papal Golden Rose, which Pope Leo had awarded to Albrecht in recognition of the foundation of the Neues Stift (A3r; fig. 6a).⁴³ The second object illustrated is a gilded silver sword, which was given to Albrecht by Emperor Maximilian I on the occasion of his promotion to the position of cardinal (A3v; fig. 6b).⁴⁴ Albrecht clearly chose to begin both the printed book and the annual display of relics with two objects that attested to his close alliance with the leading figures of the Christian world: the Pope and the Emperor.

A close comparison between the printed guide and the slightly later hand-illuminated relic book (c.1526) in the Hofbibliothek Aschaffenburg reveals that the



Fig. 4a Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528), Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg (*The Small Cardinal*), 1519, fol. A1v of the Halle Relic Book. Engraving.

Fig. 4b Albrecht von Brandenburg and Ernst of Saxony as Founders of the Church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene, Halle, fol. A2r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

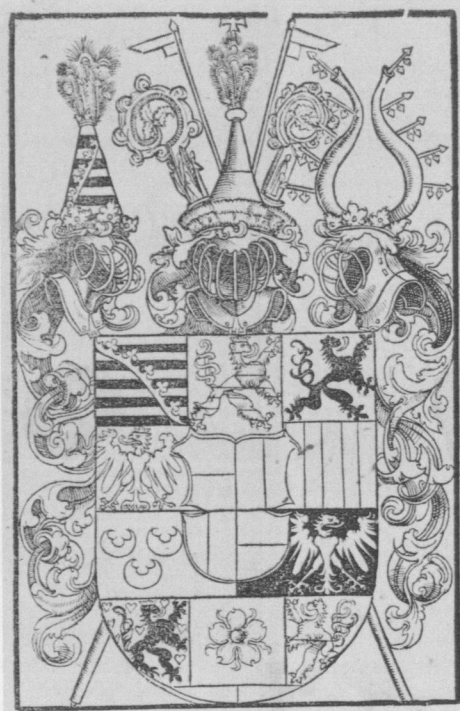


Fig. 5a Coat of Arms of Albrecht von Brandenburg, fol. Y4v of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Fig. 5b Coat of Arms of Ernst of Saxony, fol. Y5r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Halle reliquary treasure was not in any sense a static one. Although Albrecht took over a considerable number of relics from Ernst of Saxony, he also actively contributed to the growth of the collection by adding some of the most magnificent pieces of late medieval jewellery. While it is difficult to assess exactly how many new relics he acquired between 1520 and c.1526, an examination of the two inventories yields interesting information on the number of reliquaries that entered the collection during this period. Of the 235 reliquaries listed in the printed guide, only 199 reappear in the illuminated manuscript.⁴⁵ In the few years lying between the execution of the two inventories, however, Albrecht had purchased, commissioned, and received as gifts another 152 reliquaries, thereby enlarging the collection by more than fifty per cent. Thus, while one might expect that he would first and foremost have extended the collection, he in fact shaped it by adding, removing and rearranging⁴⁶

objects in the treasury of the Neues Stift.

In the existing literature on the reliquary treasure of Halle it has often been stated that the Aschaffenburg codex contains the more accurate reproductions of the individual objects,⁴⁷ as the artists involved in this project prepared their illuminations with the reliquaries in front of them. That this was their method of working would appear to be confirmed by the accuracy of the individual images – which we indeed find to be astounding when we juxtapose the few surviving pieces from the Halle collection with their corresponding illuminations.⁴⁸ Previous research has shown, moreover, that the illuminators not only portrayed every detail of the overall shape of a reliquary – as well as its intricate ornamentation and its colours – but that they even depicted, on occasion, the reflection of a window on the highly polished surface of a precious object.⁴⁹ This kind of visual information could be obtained and incorporated

only if the illuminator were working in front of the original over a long period of time.

The woodcuts in the printed relic book, on the other hand, are much freer interpretations of the same models. Many details of the ornamentation have been omitted, and the posture of the figures, the position of their limbs, as well as details of their dress, have frequently been changed. In further contrast to the illuminated relic book, virtually no attempt has been made to be accurate in depicting the material from which a reliquary was made; information of this kind is provided only in the accompanying text. It seems as though the artists making the designs for the printed book must generally have prepared rough rather than precise drawings from the original reliquaries – capturing the basic shape of the objects but not always providing much detailed information. Moreover, it has to be assumed that the draughtsman given the task of making preparatory drawings in front of the original was not necessarily the same artist who cut the wooden block for printing. As a

consequence of this division of labour, there may have been some delays between the execution of the first sketch and the cutting of the block. It is easy to imagine that information could get lost during this process and that the cutter occasionally had to interpret the design handed to him by the draughtsman.

Our interest in the printed relic book should not, however, stop at this point. The woodcut illustrations can still provide us with valuable insights into the Halle collection and the way in which it was presented to the public, while the availability of illuminations of the same objects gives us quite an exceptional opportunity for comparison, allowing us to see the extent to which the woodcuts were intended to be accurate or otherwise in relation to the original reliquaries. As the following discussion will show, the designers of the woodcuts were not concerned with authenticity above all; they cared equally about the artistic quality of the prints, as well as that of the finished book.

In contrast to the folios in the Aschaffenburg



Fig. 6a Golden Rose Awarded to Albrecht von Brandenburg by Pope Leo X, fol. A3r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

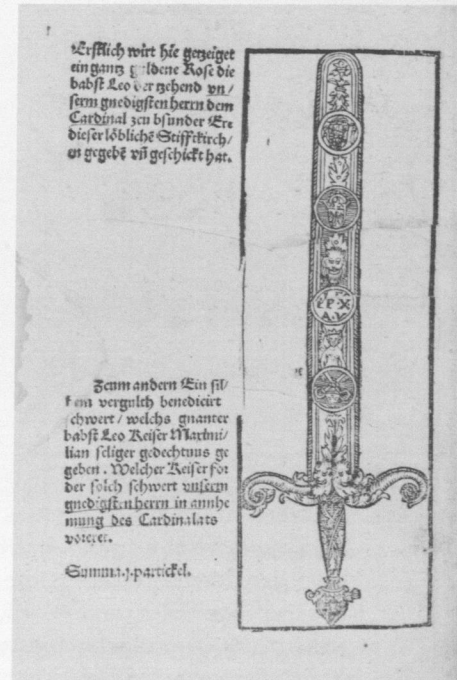


Fig. 6b Sword Received by Albrecht von Brandenburg from Emperor Maximilian I, fol. A3v of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

manuscript, most folios in the printed book show text and image on one and the same page. This factor had to be taken into account both in the design of the individual woodblocks and in the layout of the book as a whole, and has meant that there is much more variety in the sizes and shapes of the woodcuts than there is in the illuminations, many of which take up a whole folio page. In addition, in some cases the depiction of an 'old-fashioned' reliquary has been adjusted – perhaps to match the expectations of an early-sixteenth-century audience.

The woodcuts in the Halle relic book thus strike a compromise between accurately documenting a collection and providing suitable illustrations for a book prepared for general use.

I would now like to investigate in some detail how the artists who designed the woodcuts for the printed relic book responded to the task they were given.

Only in one case does a woodcut (E3r; fig. 7a) bear no resemblance at all to the object depicted in the Aschaffenburg manuscript (fig. 7b). The reliquary in question is described in both books as 'an angel, embroidered with very fine precious stones and pearls'.⁵⁰ While the woodcut shows a kneeling angel holding the Instruments of the Passion, the designer obviously had no access to a sketch made after the original but had to come up with a free interpretation of the subject. Essential elements such as the cloth of the angel's gown, the date 1518, the coat of arms of Albrecht von Brandenburg, and his symbols of power – the mitre and the cardinal's hat – are all missing in the woodcut but are represented in the illuminated manuscript.

The two images of the silver statue of St Peter (figs 1a & 1b), on the other hand, are more typical of the relationship between the original artefacts and their depictions in the manuscript and the printed guide. The statue of St Peter formed part of a larger group of full-length silver statues depicting the twelve Apostles, the majority of which pieces had been given to Ernst of Saxony by various members of his family. In his analysis of a small number of these statues, some of which survive today in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Rasmussen comes to the conclusion that they were

probably produced in Nuremberg between 1490 and 1515.⁵¹ While the St Peter statue has not survived in the original, the style of other, similar statues suggests that both the geometric socle and the lettered halo, with its circle of pointed rays, are essential features of contemporary metalwork of this kind. We therefore have to assume that the illustration in the Aschaffenburg codex, since it contains these elements, comes much closer to the original than does the woodcut of 1520 (K3v). Obviously the designer of the woodcut, the Nuremberg artist Wolf Traut, has made no attempt to present a faithful rendition of the silver statue, accurate in all its details. Not only has he neglected the metal halo, which identified St Peter by name, but he has also altered the socle from a geometric to a more florid style, and ignored the saint's second attribute, the book. The two illustrations of St Peter in fact share only the essential features: the key and the facial type. In the woodcut version, as we noted earlier, Traut has also added his own initials, WT, to the two coats of arms on the socle, which were part of the original sculpture. The woodcut illustrations of St Bartholomew, St James the Lesser, St Paul and St Thomas are further examples of the original reliquaries apparently having been reproduced in a comparatively free manner.

Frequently, parts of a reliquary have been depicted in reverse in the printed relic book. This is true for instance of the sculptural group portraying the Transfiguration of Christ, a group that included three Apostles lying on the ground and the busts of the prophets Moses and Elijah to the left and the right of Christ (fig. 8b). While the overall representation of the scene is accurate in the woodcut version, the orientation of the group of Apostles has been reversed, and the figures of the two prophets have been transposed (E6r; fig. 8a). In addition, the woodcut does not show that the silver figures were mounted on a large piece of iron ore, a detail that would become fashionable in the curiosity cabinets of the late sixteenth century.

In other cases the illustrators were more observant in recording the reliquaries properly. They seem to have been particularly scrupulous, for instance, in preparing the woodcuts of the portrait busts and statues of the three

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Zum
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Fig. 7a Reliquary of Angel with the Arma Christi (Instruments of the Passion), fol. E3r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Fig. 7b Reliquary of Angel with the Arma Christi, fol. 87v of Aschaffenburg MS. Illumination on vellum. Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg.

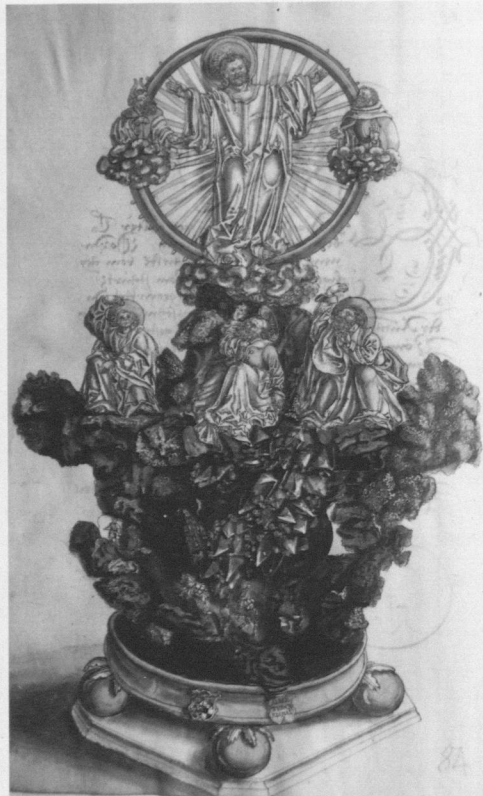


Fig. 8a Silver Reliquary of the Transfiguration of Christ, fol. E6r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Fig. 8b Silver Reliquary of the Transfiguration of Christ, fol. 95v of Aschaffenburg MS. Illumination on vellum. Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg.

major saints, Maurice, Mary Magdalene and Erasmus. The significance of these saints within the collection of the collegiate church in Halle is expressed by the placement of their reliquaries at the beginning of the chapters in which they appear.⁵² The woodcut of the silver bust of St Erasmus (M1v; fig. 9a) shows that particular care was taken to capture the identifying features of this highly appreciated martyr, who appears as the third patron saint in the frontispiece of the printed relic book (fig. 4b).⁵³ While the woodcut is much cruder than the illumination in the Aschaffenburg manuscript (fig. 9b), it shows the windlass and the bishop's staff in the correct positions, and even the narrative scene on the mitre – the Annunciation – has been copied.

Occasionally, the artists who designed the woodcuts for the printed relic book even tried to 'improve on'

their models by ignoring the fact that the original reliquaries were three-dimensional sculptural objects, instead treating their subjects as narrative scenes taking place in open pictorial space. This happens for instance in the case of the reliquary representing the Resurrection of Christ (figs 10a & 10b).⁵⁴ In the woodcut version (F4r), the artist ignores the aesthetic shortcomings of the silver statue and depicts the soldier to the left of the tomb in a much more realistic, foreshortened pose, as though the scene were taking place in an open landscape. In addition, the cover of the tomb has now been placed within a more accurate spatial framework, and one seemingly informed by the rules of constructed perspective.

The few examples that have been discussed in this article clearly demonstrate that the woodcuts in the Halle relic book were produced especially for it and were



Fig. 9a Silver Bust of St Erasmus, fol. M1v of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Fig. 9b Silver Bust of St Erasmus, fol. 230v of Aschaffenburg MS. Illumination on vellum. Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg.

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 auff Jesus gestande als er zu hymel gefarn. ij. pücket. Vñ der
 stade do Maria den todten Jesum gefalbet. Si. xxvi. pti.

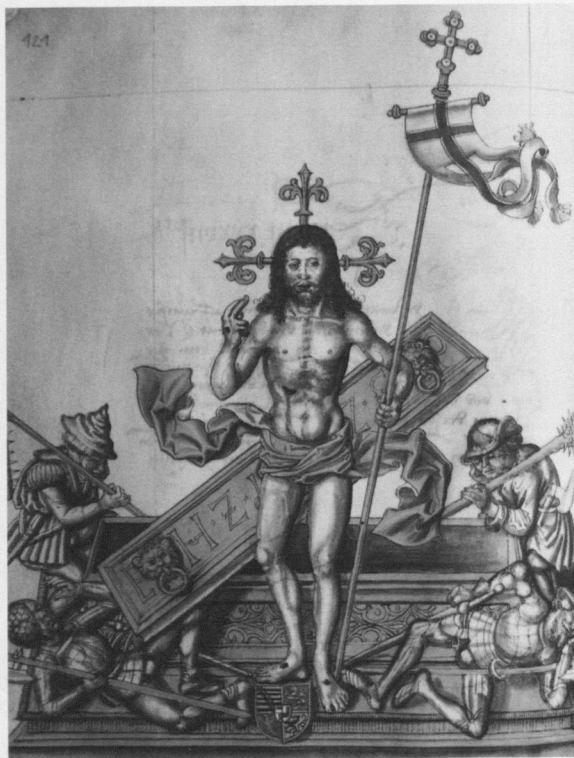


Fig. 10a Silver Reliquary of the Resurrection of Christ, fol. F4r of the Halle Relic Book. Woodcut.

Fig. 10b Silver Reliquary of the Resurrection of Christ, fol. 121v of Aschaffenburg MS. Illumination on vellum. Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg.

not stock images like those used in some of the simpler relic books printed in Nuremberg at the end of the fifteenth century. Apart from the depiction of the embroidered angel (fig. 7a), most of the woodcuts show a basic resemblance to their counterparts in the Aschaffenburg manuscript, which no doubt, as we have seen, provided very faithful representations of the original reliquaries. Yet although the woodcuts reflect the overall shapes of the reliquaries, and the arrangement of figures in individual scenes, they were obviously never intended to be 'photographic' images. This difference between the two relic books can be explained in various ways, some of which relate to technique. Cutting a design into a wooden block and then printing from the block using black ink on white paper is a very different procedure from drawing in ink and colour on ivory-coloured vellum.

It was much harder to reproduce fine detail in the woodcuts, and intricate ornament was frequently simplified – or even omitted. While the designer of the woodcut showing St Erasmus (fig. 9a) obviously made a special effort to prepare an accurate image of the original reliquary, minor figures are quite often reversed in the woodcuts as a result of the printing process.

Economic factors may equally have played a role in the design of the printed relic book, with its good, but not superb, illustrations. It has to be stressed, however, that the relic book is in no way a cheap production, and that it compares well with other printed books of this kind. The number of woodcuts it contains, the inclusion of a fine engraving at the beginning of the text, and the well-balanced layout of the book all speak in its favour.

Technical and economic considerations, however,

appear to provide only part of the explanation for the differences between the images in the two relic books. One of the most important reasons for these variations may be that the two books had quite different functions. The hand-illuminated version in Aschaffenburg was intended for the Archbishop himself, and it meets the taste of this well-known bibliophile, who took great delight in the valuable and highly artistic objects he had acquired for the Halle relic collection over the years. His manuscript was designed to be a personal luxury inventory, which could be used not only to identify objects in the Halle treasury but also to assist with the maintenance of the collection. Space had been reserved, for instance, for recording further purchases: the insertion of several empty pages after each chapter suggests that in c.1526 Albrecht was still hoping to enlarge the collection and have the new acquisitions appear in his relic book.⁵⁵ Occasionally Albrecht himself updated his inventory by adding handwritten information on individual relics or reliquaries.⁵⁶

The printed relic book, on the other hand, was designed as a memento for the occasional visitor to the Halle treasury. It is very unlikely that the owner of a guide of this kind would ever have been in a position to compare, at close range, the original reliquary and the illustration on the page. It was probably important to the devout reader that he be able to recognize the reliquary statues of St Maurice and St Erasmus seen on his last trip to Halle, but would he really pay attention to whether a socle had a geometric or a florid shape? This was more likely to be a question for a connoisseur like Albrecht von Brandenburg than for the general visitor.

The differences in purpose between the two relic books can also be seen in the way in which the printed guide 'packaged' the relic collection for the public. While neither Albrecht's portrait nor his coat of arms is found in the Aschaffenburg manuscript, the printed version is fitted with four extra images (three additional woodcuts and the Dürer engraving (figs 4a–5b)) to give prominence to the patrons of the foundation and the relic collection.

When the printed relic book was first conceived, Albrecht von Brandenburg could already see that

matters would not develop according to his plans. While he would oversee the collecting of relics and the commissioning of elaborate reliquaries for the church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene for a period of more than twenty-five years, confrontations with Martin Luther and his reform movement would obstruct the regular exposition of the relics,⁵⁷ finally forcing him to abandon the whole project in 1541.⁵⁸ The severe financial problems faced by Albrecht also took their toll on the collegiate church, which was formally dissolved as a religious institution on 9 February that year.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the two relic books from Halle are a living testimony to Albrecht's ambitious endeavour to establish and promote a new centre of relic worship at a time when the emerging Protestant movement was fundamentally questioning this Catholic practice.⁶⁰

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Irena Zdanowicz for drawing my attention to the printed relic book, and to express my gratitude to Dame Elisabeth Murdoch for providing the visiting fellowship that enabled me to undertake further research on this subject. I am also grateful to Charles Zika and to Dana Rowan for their thoughtful suggestions and helpful comments on this article. Angela Hass kindly provided relevant material on the relic book by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

Notes

- 1 See D. Eichberger, 'Dürer and the Printed Book', in *Albrecht Dürer in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria*, The Robert Raynor Publications in Prints and Drawings, no. 5, ed. I. Zdanowicz, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 63–82.
- 2 The date of printing appears in the colophon of the relic book (Y4r). However, as there is no evidence of printing activities in Halle at that time, the printer is generally identified – on the basis of the font used and the calligraphy-like decoration employed to embellish blank spaces – as Wolfgang Stöckel from Leipzig (see H. L. Nickel, *Die Marienbibliothek zu Halle: Kostbarkeiten und Raritäten einer alten Büchersammlung*, Halle a.d. Saale, 1995, p. 11).
- 3 *Hallesches Heiltumsbuch* (Halle Relic Book), 1520, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, fol. Y4r: 'Summa Summaru[m] alles hochlob- | wirdigen heiligthu[m]bs obangezeigter Neun Genge ist acht- | tausent/ hundert/ dreyunddreissig partickel und zweiund | viertzig gantzer

- heylicher Coerper/ Macht der Ablas Neunun[d]- |
 dreys sick thauesntmal thauesnt/ tzeihundertmal thauesnt/ |
 funffundvierztzig thauesnt/ hundert unnd tzentzick Jhar
 zweyhu[n]dertztwentzig tage/ Dartzu Sechsthauesntmalthau- |
 sent/ Funffhundertmal thauesnt/ unnd vierztzig thauesnt |
 Quadragen So hat auch Eyn itzlicher gang yn sunder- |
 vierthausent Achthundert Jhar/ tztweyhundert Acht- |
 undztwentzig tage/ und Achthu[n]dert Quadragen. Selig |
 seindt/ dye/ sich des teylhafftick machen’.
- 4 The first celebration of the relics took place on 11 September 1519, while they were housed in the chapel of St Mary Magdalene in the Moritzburg; on 13 April that year, Pope Leo X had declared that a comprehensive indulgence attached to the relic collection (see P. Redlich, *Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg und das neue Stift zu Halle, 1520–1541: Eine kirchen- und kunstgeschichtliche Studie*, Mainz, 1900, pp. 228–32). As we shall see, however, growing opposition to relic worship would bring these annual presentations to a premature end.
 - 5 Wolf Traut has been associated with the circle of Albrecht Dürer (see *Meister um Albrecht Dürer* (exh. cat.), Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 1961, cat. no. 393).
 - 6 Guide to the *Heiltum* of Maastricht and Aachen for 1468, Graphische Sammlung, Munich (see G. F. Koch, *Die Kunstausstellung*, Berlin, 1967, pp. 35–6, fig. 14). This woodcut broadsheet, which promotes the seven-yearly display of relics in Maastricht and Aachen, is one of the earliest printed guides of this kind.
 - 7 See Koch, pp. 30–43.
 - 8 *Wittenberger Heiltumsbuch* (Wittenberg Relic Book), 1509, Herzog Anton-August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, cod. 154, 2 Theol., fol. 14r: ‘Summa des letzten ganges. CCC.xxxj. partickel | suma summaru aller ptickel v. Tausent und v. ptickel. | Von itzlichem ptickel hundert tag aplas. Sint viij. genge hat itzli/ | cher gangk in sunderheit hundert tag/ und ein Caren ablas Selig sindt die sich des teilhaftig machen’.
 - 9 Models for these publications were provided by handwritten inventories, which were occasionally decorated with drawings (see D. Koeplin & T. Falk, *Lukas Cranach: Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik* (exh. cat.), vol. 1, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1976, cat. no. 95).
 - 10 ‘Wye das hochwirdigst auch keiserlich heilighum Und die grossenn Romischen genad dar zu gehen ist und alle Jare auß gerufft und geweist wirt zu der loblichen Stat Nuremberg’ (‘How the Very Worthy and Imperial Relic Collection and the Notable Roman Indulgence That Is Attached to It is Hailed and Shown Every Year in the Commendable City of Nuremberg’), 1493, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (see Koch, fig. 17e).
 - 11 See Koch, p. 38.
 - 12 The printing of the 1502 and 1514 guides to the relics in Vienna was paid for by Matthäus Heuperger from Hall, Tyrol (see E. Egg & W. Pfaundler, *Kaiser Maximilian I und Tirol*, Innsbruck, 1969, p. 132; F. Ritter (ed.), *Faksimileausgabe des Wiener Heiltumsbuches von 1502 mit Nachtrag von 1514*, Vienna, 1882).
 - 13 See P. Flemming, ‘Zur Geschichte der Reliquiensammlung der Wittenberger Schloßkirche unter Friedrich dem Weisen’, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Kirchengeschichte der Provinz Sachsen*, vol. XIV, 1917, pp. 87–92; E. Schulte-Strathaus, ‘Die Wittenberger Heiltumsbücher vom Jahre 1509 mit Holzschnitten von Lukas Cranach’, *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, vol. V, 1930, pp. 175–86; Koeplin & Falk, vol. 1, cat. no. 95.
 - 14 See H. Erlemann & T. Stangier, ‘Festum Reliquiarum’, in *Reliquien: Verehrung und Verklärung* (exh. cat.), ed. A. Legner, Schnütgenmuseum, Cologne, 1989, pp. 25–31; Egg & Pfaundler, pp. 130–3.
 - 15 See Erlemann & Stangier, p. 26.
 - 16 See F. Ronig, ‘Die Schatz- und Heiltumskammern’, in *Rhein und Maas: Kunst und Kultur 800–1400* (exh. cat.), ed. A. Legner, Schnütgenmuseum, Cologne, 1972, pp. 134–41; Erlemann & Stangier, pp. 25–6.
 - 17 See *Haller Heiltumsbuch* (Hall Relic Book), c.1510, fol. 123v, cited in Erlemann & Stangier, p. 27: ‘Welcher oder welche aber wissen wolten alles heilthumb von stuck zu stuck, das in allen pildern, monstranzen und anderen gefessen ist, dieselben mugen das lesen in den gedruckten heilthumpuechlein, die man hie in Hall am markt und andern enden umb ain gleichen phenning zu kaufen vinder’ (All those, however, who want to know the relic collection piece by piece, that is, all images, monstrances and other receptacles, should read the printed relic book, which can be bought in the Hall marketplace, and at the other end, for the equivalent of a penny (my translation)); see also Erlemann & Stangier, pp. 25–31.
 - 18 For the indulgences associated with the Waldauf relic collection, see Erlemann & Stangier, p. 26; for those associated with the Wittenberg relics, see *Wittenberg Relic Book*, fols a3r–a4v.
 - 19 The construction of the Moritzburg began in 1479 and Ernst moved into the stronghold on 25 May 1503 (see U. Dräger, *Moritzburg, Halle/Saale*, Regensburg, 1995, p. 5).

- 20 See testament of Ernst of Saxony, 1505, in Redlich, Appendix 1, pp. 6*-7*.
- 21 The term 'collegiate' is used to describe a church that is formally a bishopric church but is not located in the seat of the bishopric (in this case, the city of Magdeburg).
- 22 See Redlich, p. 6.
- 23 Albrecht was ordained Archbishop of Magdeburg on 2 July 1514. The consecration of the chapel of St Mary Magdalene as a collegiate church took place on 22 July.
- 24 See Redlich, p. 8. See also note 4 above.
- 25 See U. Steinmann, 'Der Bilderschmuck der Stiftskirche zu Halle: Cranachs Passionszyklus und Grünewalds Erasmus-Mauritius-Tafel', *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Forschungen und Berichte, Kunsthistorische Beiträge*, vol. 11, 1968, pp. 69-104; H. L. Nickel, *Der Dom zu Halle*, Munich, 1991, pp. 7-20; A. Tacke, *Der katholische Cranach: Zu zwei Großaufträgen von Lucas Cranach d.Ä., Simon Franck und der Cranach-Werkstatt (1520-1540)*, Mainz, 1992; J. C. Smith, *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance, c.1520-1580*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994.
- 26 See H. Reber (ed.), *Albrecht von Brandenburg: Kurfürst, Erzkanzler, Kardinal 1490-1545* (exh. cat.), Landesmuseum Mainz, 1990, pp. 14-16.
- 27 See G. Quast, *Der Dom zu Magdeburg*, Munich, 1993, pp. 55-6; E. Schubert, *Der Dom zu Magdeburg: Architektur und Bildwerke*, Berlin, 1993, pp. 30-1. See also Redlich, p. 3.
- 28 This freedom extended to choosing a prominent location for his tomb: in the church of SS Maurice and Mary Magdalene he could be buried in the centre of the choir, next to the high altar.
- 29 See Redlich, pp. 233-6, 353.
- 30 *ibid.*, pp. 54-82.
- 31 While Albrecht's contribution to the foundation of the collegiate church of St Mary Magdalene was comparatively small, a dedicatory panel with his coat of arms and his favourite saints, made by Peter Stroh, suggests to the uninformed visitor that he was in fact the church's founder (see Dräger, p. 8; see also Koepplin & Falk, vol. 1, cat. no. 5, fig. 7).
- 32 The two bishops are characterized in the frontispiece by their coats of arms and by their personal patrons: St John the Evangelist (Albrecht) and St Thomas (Ernst).
- 33 This coat of arms, which occurs beneath the model of the chapel in the earlier design for the frontispiece, also appears on the western wall of the St Mary Magdalene chapel.
- 34 See Redlich, p. 43.
- 35 This engraving, the so-called 'Small Cardinal', is the earlier of two portrait engravings that Dürer produced for Albrecht von Brandenburg in 1519 and 1523 (see Reber, cat. no. 38).
- 36 See Reber, cat. no. 38. The upper part of the Latin inscription on the engraving reads: 'Albrecht, by Grace of God Cardinal-Priest of the Holy Roman Church with the titular church of Saint Chrysogonus, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg, Elector, Primate of the Empire, Administrator of the [Bishopric] of Halberstadt, Margrave of Brandenburg'.
- 37 *Halle Relic Book*, 1520, Herzog Anton-August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, cod. T 724 Helmst., fol. A1r: 'VERTZEICHNUS und zceigung des hochlobwirdigen heilighthumbs der Stiffkirchen der heiligen Sanct Moritz und Marien Magdalenen zu Halle'. The National Gallery of Victoria's copy of the Halle relic book has lost its original title page, which has been replaced by a facsimile print. For this reason, a complete copy of the relic book was studied in Wolfenbüttel.
- 38 This sequence of events would also make more sense in terms of overall chronology, as the Dürer print is dated 1519, and the relic book was definitely printed in 1520.
- 39 *Wittenberg Relic Book*, fol. a1r: *Portrait of Frederick the Wise and John the Steadfast* (engraving) plus book title 'Dye zaiung des hochlobwirdigen hailighthums der Stiffkirchen aller hailigen zu wittenburg' (woodcut); fol. a1v: *The All Saints Church in Wittenberg* (woodcut).
- 40 See Erlemann & Stangier, p. 26. The German word *Gang* can be read as the short form of *Umgang*, an expression that can mean *procession*.
- 41 *Gang 2*: thirty-three objects, *Gang 3*: nine objects, *Gang 4*: twelve objects, *Gang 5*: seventeen objects, *Gang 6*: fifty-three objects, *Gang 7*: thirty-one objects, *Gang 8*: forty objects, *Gang 9*: eleven objects (for *Gang 1*, see note 42 below). In the Wittenberg relic book, by contrast, one can clearly observe the intention, on the part of those who organized the exhibition of the relics, to keep each *Gang* similar in size. Following the notion of the heavenly hierarchy of saints, the reliquaries in Wittenberg were classified in five categories, according to their association with (1) holy virgins and widows, (2) confessors, (3) martyrs, (4) Apostles and evangelists, and (5) Christ. In order to keep each of the processions similar in size during the course of the presentation, however, the reliquaries belonging to categories 1, 3 and 5 had to be subdivided, and each of these groups is therefore listed in two separate sections. Each *Gang* thus contained between twelve and sixteen reliquaries. A similar situation

- seems to have occurred in Hall, where Florian Waldauf's reliquaries were shown in twenty-one processions or *Gänge*, but represented only nine different categories of saints.
- 42 'Der erste | gang in | welche[m] antzeigt wirt | vo[n] den lieben heiligen welcher heiligthumb vermenget durchein/ | ander leyt/ auch welch | er namen verbliche[n] un[d] | unleselich sein. Des | gleichen vom heiligen | land/ von Agnus dei | und was gewonlich | Bebstliche heilickeyt | Jerlich benedicirt un[d] | hinwegk gibt'.
- 43 The Pope rewarded loyal members of the Catholic Church by giving them a rose made from gold, with a relic in it.
- 44 This sword, which Maximilian had in turn received from Pope Leo, no longer appears in the illuminated version of the relic book.
- 45 This calculation is based on the tables in P. M. Halm & R. Berliner, *Das Hallesche Heiltum. Man. Aschaffemb. 14*, Berlin, 1931, pp. 69–72.
- 46 The Aschaffenburg codex reflects, for example, a shift of the first item in *Gang 2* to *Gang 9*, and of the tenth item in *Gang 6* to *Gang 2*.
- 47 Halm & Berliner, p. 257; G. von Térey, *Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg und das Halle'sche Heilighumbuch von 1520*, Straßburg, 1892, p. 23.
- 48 See Reber, pp. 157–77; Redlich, pp. 252–7. For a comparison between surviving original reliquaries and their matching illuminations, see Reber, cat. nos 61–9; Halm & Berliner, pp. 14–20. See especially Reber's comments on the golden chalice now in Uppsala cathedral, by the Halle artist Hans Huiuff, and on the gold-enamel cross now at the Statens Sjöhistoriska Museum, Stockholm (Reber, cat. no. 61). For a most detailed analysis of the illuminated manuscript with reference to the various local schools of gold- and silversmithing, see J. Rasmussen, 'Untersuchungen zum Halleschen Heiltum des Kardinals Albrecht von Brandenburg [part II]', *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 3rd series, vol. XXVII, 1976, pp. 59–118; [part III], *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 3rd series, vol. XXVIII, 1977, pp. 91–132.
- 49 See Halm & Berliner, figs 4, 37, 71d.
- 50 *Halle Relic Book*, 1520, fols E3r–E3v; *Hallesches Heiltumbuch* (Halle Relic Book), c.1526, Hofbibliothek, Aschaffenburg, MS. 14, fols 87v–88r; Halm & Berliner, p. 32, no. 76.
- 51 Rasmussen (1976), pp. 81–9.
- 52 The relics of St Maurice are listed first, in *Gang 6* (martyrs), followed by those of St Erasmus. St Mary Magdalene heads the group of holy women and widows in *Gang 9*.
- 53 Erasmus is even described as the 'co-patron of this honourable collegiate church' (*Halle Relic Book*, 1520, fol. M2r).
- 54 See Halm & Berliner, p. 37, no. 110; the original reliquary belonged to Ernst of Saxony and carried the date 1492.
- 55 The wording of the introductory paragraph suggests that this hand-illuminated version may in fact have been conceived initially as a model for a new, updated printed relic book, as it gives the prospective visitor very detailed instructions on appropriate behaviour: 'Stand still and don't push into one another and if there should be uproar, shouting because of a fire, or other interferences, which shall not happen with God's grace, then just ignore them until you are told to depart. Because everything has been considered with diligent foresight and providence and taken care of by our most gracious Lord, the Archbishop, by his administrators and also by the honourable city council. Should anybody, however, cause uproar and screaming and ignore these words of warning, order has been given to punish this person severely' (my translation) (Aschaffenburg MS., fols 2v–3r, cited in Halm & Berliner, p. 21).
- 56 See Halm & Berliner, p. 7. Illustrated relic books on parchment are very rare; the only examples known to me are the manuscripts produced for the relic collection in Vienna (see Erlemann & Stangier, p. 27).
- 57 See Redlich, pp. 232–8, 343–5. For discussion of Albrecht's confrontations with Luther, see W. Borth, *Die Luthersache (Causa Lutheri) 1517–1524: Die Anfänge der Reformation als Frage von Politik und Recht*, PhD thesis, University of Tübingen, 1970. For the rising criticism of and opposition to the ritual practices of the Catholic Church, see also R. Scribner, 'Ritual and Reformation', in *The German People and the Reformation*, ed. R. Po-chia Hsia, Ithaca, New York, 1988.
- 58 See Redlich, pp. 317–24; R. Decot, 'Zwischen Beharrung und Aufbruch: Kirche, Reich und Reformation zur Zeit Albrecht von Brandenburg (1490–1545)', in Reber, pp. 42–64.
- 59 See Redlich, p. 339.
- 60 After this essay was in press, I learnt of an article on the relationship between the printed relic books from Wittenberg and Halle (see K. Merkel, 'Die Reliquien von Halle und Wittenberg: Ihre Heiltumbücher und Inszenierung', in *Cranach auf Vorrat: Die Erlanger Handzeichnungen der Universitätsbibliothek* (exh. cat.), Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, ed. A. Tacke, Munich, 1994, pp. 37–50).