Baldung Grien’s Grünen Wörth Altarpiece and Devotion to the Two St. Johns

CHRISTIAN HECK
Associate Professor, Department of the History of Art, University of Strasbourg

Within the framework of the 1986 exhibition on the art of Nuremberg,¹ Guy Bauman was able to present together, for the first time in two centuries, the three panels of the altarpiece that Hans Baldung Grien painted in 1511 for the commandery of Grünen Wörth in Strasbourg (Figure 1). Surrounding The Mass of St. Gregory from the Cleveland Museum (Figure 3),² the left wing, now at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,³ depicts St. Anne with the Christ Child, the Virgin, and St. John the Baptist (Figure 2), and the right wing, a recent acquisition of the Metropolitan Museum (1983), pictures John the Evangelist on Patmos (Figure 4).⁴

The history of Grünen Wörth explains the dismantling of the altarpiece and the difficulties of its reconstruction. In 1571 the Hospitalers of St. John of Jerusalem, or Johannites, established themselves in the old monastery of the Trinity at Grünen Wörth, also called l’Ile-Verte, Viridis Insulae, where they developed a prestigious commandery. They were expelled, however, in 1633, as it became necessary to strengthen city fortifications at that site. In 1687 they finally found a new home in the old monastery of St. Mark; in 1789 the Revolution put an end to their community and brought about the dispersion of their wealth.⁵

The reconstruction of the Baldung altarpiece—which was dismantled for the first time in 1633, put into storage for half a century, and then dismantled after the end of the eighteenth century—is a result of recent research. The two lateral panels were published in 1934 by Pariset,⁶ who dated them to about 1510–11. In 1951 Carl Koch dated The Mass of St. Gregory to 1511 and identified the Johannite represented on the right as Erhart Küng (or Kienig), Commander of Grünen Wörth from 1504 until his death on November 3, 1511.⁷ The three panels were shown as two separate entities at the 1959 Baldung exhibition in Karlsruhe; the two St. Johns were thought to be the wings of a triptych with a missing, probably sculpted, central piece.⁸

In 1977 Gert von der Osten revealed that the three panels were mentioned consecutively, without any possibility of error, in the 1741 inventory of the commandery’s possessions.⁹ He thus demonstrated that together they constituted the altarpiece for which Baldung received two payments from Grünen Wörth in 1511; elements of style, the general coherence of the composition, the use of identical support and vertical height for the three panels, and analogies in the gilding further confirmed the reconstruction suggested by archival documents.¹⁰ The combined width of the two lateral panels actually greatly exceeds that of The Mass of St. Gregory and makes it impossible to fold them back over the central panel, but we know that the backs of these panels were not painted; thus, it was not a triptych with movable wings. It has been thought to be either an antependium, with its two wings placed against the sides of the altar, or more probably a triptych with stationary wings.¹¹ The four personages represented at the left in The Mass of St. Gregory have also been identified as most likely Raymundus Perault, cardinal legate for all Germany; Wilhelm III von Honstein, bishop of Strasbourg; and more hypothetically Hieronymus Baldung, protonotary apostolic, and, behind him, his brother Hans Baldung, episcopal procurator of Strasbourg. The last two were actually members of the artist’s family.¹²

Certain elements are still unknown. For example, the exact location of this altarpiece in the commandery could not be determined.¹³ The iconography of the ensemble also raises questions, and comparisons with similar compositions clarify only some aspects. We must recognize that on the left wing, the group of Anna Selbdritt does not truly relate to the two woodcuts that Baldung executed at the same time.¹⁴ The composition used on the right wing was

©The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1992
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 27

The notes for this article begin on page 97.
repeated in a woodcut dated to 1513. In *The Mass of St. Gregory* the composition is very different from that of the woodcuts made by Baldung in 1511 and 1519, even if the detail of the *Man of Sorrows* is close in the work of 1511. No comparison can help explain the general composition of the altarpiece, which appears to be unique in associating the two St. Johns with *The Mass of St. Gregory*.

Nevertheless, a general eucharistic meaning is clearly conveyed, as well as an emphasis on the role of the Virgin Mary, who is also represented on the altar of the central panel, in the story of the Redemption. But until now the parallel between the two St. Johns has not been considered as a major aspect of the altarpiece’s iconography. In each lateral panel the determinating element has been thought to be their relation to the Virgin and Child. The presence of the two St. Johns seems justified by the fact that the Evangelist would normally accompany John the Baptist, patron of the order, or else because one of the people depicted, such as Hans Baldung, had one of the two St. Johns as his patron.

Without questioning the previous statements regarding the iconographic unity of the altarpiece and its eucharistic symbolism, I would like to demonstrate that the theme of the two St. Johns is an absolutely essential element in this work, one that allows us to locate the altarpiece within an old iconographic tradition. This tradition was not only strongly felt in the Rhineland at the end of the Middle Ages, but it also constituted one of the major axes of religious life in the commandery of Grünener Wörth. As a whole, the texts used for the devotional and mystical life of this institution at Ille-Verte have allowed us to ascribe a central position within the commandery to the Baldung altarpiece.

I can only briefly mention in this article the history of the theme of the two St. Johns in the art and thought of the Middle Ages. It appeared very precisely in the Roman pontifical milieu, at the Lateran and in the Constantinian Basilica of the Vatican from the fifth to the seventh century. During the following years, it survived only in lesser examples, such as the well-known plan of St. Gall. Finally, it was greatly revived in the twelfth century, particularly in the illustration of the Speculum Virginum. The major development of this iconography took place between the middle of the thirteenth and the middle of the fourteenth century. While the two St. Johns were most often placed on both sides of a central element that they surrounded symmetrically according to a formula still in use in the Renaissance, two new aspects were introduced: the parallel lives and the Crucifixions with the two St. Johns in attendance. Numerous parallel cycles dedicated to the
two saints' legends abound in French stained glass of the thirteenth century, but I can also mention Giotto's frescoes at the Peruzzi Chapel at Santa Croce in Florence, about 1310–16, or those of the St. John Chapel in the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, by Matteo Giovannetti, about 1346–48. Crucifixions with the two St. Johns appeared only at the beginning of the fourteenth century, but were found in great numbers until the end of the Middle Ages.

Works combining the two St. Johns by themselves existed at a later date, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The traditional and more frequent version of the theme did not present a double image but a triple one: the two St. Johns added to a third element that they surround. Even in the case of the Peruzzi Chapel, one of the key elements of the general composition is the medallion painted on top of the arch on the east wall, combining but also separating the walls dedicated to each of the two saints and representing the sacrifice of the Lamb on the altar. On the stained-glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, the same can be said of the Passion, which forms the symmetrical axis of the parallel lives.

Multiple forms were used to convey the symbolism of the theme of the two St. Johns, although it developed in two major directions. When we consider the most frequent central element of this triple iconography across time, either Christ or the Virgin and Child, the texts and works combined reveal a symbolism that one could call "pseudotypologic" or of the two Testaments. Opposite John the Baptist, the last of the prophets at the close of the Old Testament, stands John the Evangelist, the most beloved disciple, the man to whom Christ entrusted his mother, as Rupert de Deutz, among others, described in a masterly fashion: "Ecce quomodo sibi consonant maximae tubae duorum Testamentorum: Hic Joannes praecipuus Evangelistarum; et ille alius Joannes maximus prophetarum.... Hic Evangelista in novi Testamenti capite; ille consistens velut in extremo veteris instrumentis margine."23 The general composition of the Grünem Wörth altarpiece also played on this opposition: at both ends, John the Baptist, kneeling, and John the Evangelist, seated, were meant to introduce and conclude the composition. Through their body alignment, two symmetrical diagonals were created, which in turn emphasized the central, dominant figure—Christ on the altar.

When we no longer consider the central element grouped with the two St. Johns across time, but focus instead on Christ's nature as a sacrificed being, the theme then reaches a eucharistic meaning. The two St. Johns can be seen as the two witnesses of the Lamb. The Baptist, who announced the Lamb of the Gospel, finds his counterpart in the Evangelist, who revealed the Lamb of the Apocalypse. In the images, the two saints are often positioned symmetrically vis-à-vis the figure of the Lamb, and the texts are clear in stating that the Lamb presented by John the Baptist is the same as the one described by the Evangelist in the Apocalypse.24 We can note that a woodcut illustrating an incunabulum from Cologne dated to 1498 presents the two St. Johns surrounding Anna Selbdritt in an association analogous to that of the Grünem Wörth altarpiece (Figure 5). In fact, this woodcut illustrates a book of sermons published by Albert le Grand on the Eucharist.25 This insistence on the eucharistic symbolism of the two St. Johns is a further confirmation of our interpretation of the altarpiece.

The importance given to the theme of the two St. Johns in the art and religious life of the Rhine Valley can help us understand the role it played at Grünem Wörth. This theme can be found in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on the St. Gall portal of the Basel Cathedral, on the stained-glass windows of the north side of the Strasbourg Cathedral, and in the sculptures of the Lamb portal and the porch
of the Freiburg im Breisgau Cathedral. It was developed in the fourteenth century on the Bern antependium and on the stained-glass windows of Niederhaslach. In the fifteenth century, the two St. Johns were associated on the nearby altarpieces of Oberweier, Lautenbach, and Blaubeuren, among other works, but they also played an important part in devotional life. A chapel dedicated to John the Baptist and John the Evangelist has been documented in Strasbourg in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The important role of these two saints in the Dominican devotion resulted in an extreme case that was geographically close: the Dominican nunnery of Katharinenthal in Thurgau. In the fourteenth century the nuns gave the two saints a prominent position in their art, before the convent was torn apart by a violent internal conflict opposing the “Baptisterinnen” and the “Evangelistinnen,” with each camp defending its favorite St. John, an event known to the Alsatian monasteries.

With which faction can we put the commandery of the Hospitalers of St. John at Grünen Wörth vis-à-vis the themes that prevailed in the Upper Rhine area? At the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was a very prestigious place, often visited by the aristocratic and intellectual elite of Strasbourg. The emperor Maximilian, who confirmed the privileges of Grünen Wörth in 1495, stayed there seven times between 1496 and 1507. During the years 1524 to 1529, when the city slowly embraced the Reformation, an unbreakable bond with the Catholic faith characterized Grünen Wörth. But the religious life of the commandery can be best understood in the light of its particular history.

This institution was not founded by the Hospitalers in their usual manner, but it was given to them at the end of the fourteenth century by Rulman Merswin, a Strasbourg patrician, who based the religious life at Grünen Wörth on the devotional and mystical themes developed by the Friends of God. Rulman Merswin, born in 1307 into a powerful and ambitious family, became an important banker before turning to a spiritual life between 1347 and 1352. Although Tauler was his confessor for a time,
Figure 3. Central section of Figure 1: The Mass of St. Gregory. Tempera and oil on wood, 89.2 × 124.8 cm. Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the Hanna Fund (photo: Cleveland Museum of Art)

Merswin’s association was mostly with the mystical groups of the Friends of God, which were very active in the Rhineland in the fourteenth century. Besides his own texts, Merswin considered his correspondence with the Friend of God of the Oberland essential, as well as the works that he attributed to this mysterious character. Today it is more or less agreed that the Friend of God of the Oberland is a literary creation, invented either by Merswin or by his secretary, Nicolas de Louvain, and that there is a lack of originality in the religious thinking offered as a whole in those texts. However, they constitute an extensive ensemble on which the religious life of the commandery of Grünen Wörth was founded.

Merswin himself founded the commandery, and he organized it on very precise grounds, designed to prevent all deviations from the spiritual choices of the founder. In 1366, in order to carry out his wish to retire from the world, Merswin bought (from the Benedictines of Altorf) the old and almost ruined monastery of the Trinity on the site of Grünen Wörth. His first attempt to establish secular priests there did not prove satisfactory, and in 1371 Merswin entrusted the monastery to the Hospitalers of St. John of Jerusalem, who thus added this commandery to the other institutions that they already possessed in Alsace. But Merswin did not let them manage Grünen Wörth. The contract stipulated that three secular administrators or trustees (Pfleger), invested with important powers in all areas, would have a role to play. Rulman and his brother Jean Merswin were two of the first three trustees, and their successors were chosen mostly from influential Strasbourg patricians, who were concerned with keeping alive the memory of the founder and his ideals.

Following the death of his wife in 1371, Rulman Merswin lived at Grünen Wörth. He built a new church parallel to the old church of the Trinity in 1378, and from 1380 until his death in 1382 he retired to his cell, after rewriting the texts he wanted left to the community. This inheritance was not lost: Nicolas de Louvain, Merswin’s former secretary, became a Johannite and took care of the writings until his own death in 1402, while the Johannites continued to collect books for their library and thus formed the most important collection in Strasbourg specializing in ascetic and mystical literature.

In fact, we find that the devotion to the two St. Johns was central in the texts left by Merswin and later handed down to us through the Hospitalers of Grünen Wörth. In a short treatise, for example, a prayer is addressed to “Maria gnoderiche . . . muter . . . und lieber min getruwer gnediger vatter sant Johans Baptist, lieber herre sancte Johans Ewangelist, und liebe . . . Maria Magdalena und alle engele und heiligen.” The expression...
“the two St. Johns” is even used in a letter dated 1377: “der zweier loblichen heilgen sante Johansen.”35 But most often the two St. Johns are called “princes of the sky” and are associated with the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and all angels. We find such an example in the Second mémorial latin: “die almehtige ewige heilige trivaltkeit, Maria die wurdige muter gottes, die hohen himelfursten sancte Johans Baptist und sancte Johans Evangelist und alle lieben engele, die loblichen gnodenrichen patronen und erlichen husherren...”36 An identical formula also appears in the Livre épistolaire, in the Mémorial augmenté, and twice in the Mémorial des tuateurs.37 The two St. Johns, the “lofty and beloved princes of the sky,” are thus included in the small group of the commandery’s patrons: “Die patronen zu dem Grünenwerde sint och dre: die heilge driivaltkeit, das heilge sacramente und die zwene sancte Johannse, der Baptist und der Ewangelist.”38 This patronage was of miraculous origin since, in regard to the commandery, we read: “domus est renovata... in honore sanctae Trinitatis et individuae Unitatis et sanctae Mariae, coelestis reginae, sancti Johannis Baptistae et sancti Johannis Evangelistae, sancti Michaelis et omnium angelorum, qui in magnis miraculis et... testimoniis et signis huius templi patroni facti sunt.”39

While the proper manner to carry out an enlargement of the church was investigated and discussed at the commandery,40 a letter from the Friend of God to Merswin dated August 1, 1377, reported a dream of his, which occurred on the night of July 25. In this dream a heavenly apparition would have pointed out to him the respect due to the old church of the Trinity and the central position that the two St. Johns should have in the new building: “der lieben grossen heiligen den beden sante Johansenes, und den selben nuwen fronalter, den man do mache ende wurt, und den kor und daz nuwe gebuweze alles miteinander when in ere der lieben grossen heiligen, der bede sancte Johannese.”41

The texts of Grünen Wörth insist on the angel’s revelation regarding the importance of the two St. Johns in the new close choir that was to be built:

Die visione
Der engel dem gottes frunde tut offenbor,
Wie man buwen sol den beslossen kor
und wihen in beder sant Johans er
Noch der heilgen trivaltkeit lere...42

The text describing the consecration of the new church, on October 28, 1378, seven years after the establishment of the Hospitalers, is also very explicit: “Item post hoc annis septem revolutis aedificabatur chorus cum arcbus et ecclesia ante chorum, quae etiam cum choro est consecrata in laude et honore sanctorum patronorum praeceptorum scilicet s. Johannis Baptistae et sancti Johannis Evangelistae...”43 An identical version also appears in the Livre épistolaire, in the Mémorial augmenté, and twice in the Mémorial des tuateurs.44

Jean Rott’s recent and essential contributions on the ancient topography of the commandery45 help us to understand these texts. In the patronage mentioned, the reference to “St. Michael and all angels” corresponds to the sacristy that contained an altar of the angels, which was also called St. Michael’s church.46 If we leave out the chapel of the hospital founded in 1381 by Conrad zu der Megede, dedicated to the Holy Sacrament and to St. Elizabeth of Hungary,47 the churches form two parallel naves: the old one, on the south side, dedicated to the Trinity and the new one, dedicated in 1378, with the two St. Johns, the high and beloved princes of the sky, as patrons.

In a document from Grünen Wörth such as this one, for example:

Die Patronen
Die heilg trivaltkeit und Maria gottes muter
Sant Johans Baptist und Ewangelist vil guter
Sint dez Grünenwerde oberste patronen48

If we refer the evocation of the Trinity to the old nave, as is indeed necessary, we find in the text an exact definition of both the major devotions of the new church and the iconographic program of the Baldung altarpiece. In fact, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, John the Baptist, and John the Evangelist are precisely the essential figures of this altarpiece, in which the St. Johns are painted on the wings, whereas the Virgin Mary appears with her Child three times: on each of the lateral panels and on the central panel, where she is at last dominated by the adult Christ as the Man of Sorrows.

In another location the altarpiece that von der Osten reconstructed would be perfectly coherent and would possess the iconographic unity and the eucharistic meaning already mentioned. However, its Grünen Wörth provenance further strengthens its unity, as its program is literally dedicated to the major patrons of the commandery. The presence of
the two St. Johns corresponds to the texts in such a way that it further confirms the provenance of both lateral panels, whereas that of the central panel was already established by the sole figure of the Johannite.

Considering that in 1378 the new church of the commandery was explicitly dedicated to the two St. Johns, and that they were the patrons of Grünen Wörth, along with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, could we go further and hypothesize that the Baldung altarpiece was executed for the high altar? This would not be contradicted by documents, since the 1495 and 1686 listings for the altars (the document of 1686 describing the condition in 1693) suggest that the new high altar for the 1378 church was dedicated to John the Evangelist, who would certainly accompany the Baptist, who, although not mentioned himself, had a right to be represented in the choir as a patron of the order.48 However, von der Osten has pointed out that the small dimensions of the Baldung altarpiece make it improbable that it was placed on the altar of a church, and thus it was more likely placed on the altar of a sacristy or a private chapel within the commandery.49 This hypothesis is in complete agreement with the iconography of the altarpiece, which emphasizes both the major patron saints of the institution, the celebration of the Mass, and the elite members of Strasbourg society who came to share instances of liturgical life at Grünen Wörth with the commander represented on the altarpiece.

We could also ask whether Merswin alone was responsible for choosing the patronage of the two St. Johns at Grünen Wörth or if we should link it to the Hospitalers’ fundamental interest in John the Baptist. It may be that Merswin’s predilection for these two saints was naturally encouraged by the newcomers. However, it is difficult to determine, because we cannot know which part of the texts was written before 1371, the date of the installation of the Johannites. In either case, this devotion was well integrated within the influences of its time. Chiquot underlined the importance of works by Thomas de Chantimpré, Jacobus de Voragine, and César de Heisterbach in Merswin’s spiritual training.50 The story of the two theologians fighting to decide which of the two St. Johns was superior to the other, before the saints intervened and led them to agree, is edifyingly developed in those authors’ works.51 We know beyond doubt that Merswin was in contact with the Alsatian Dominican nunnerys, which were well aware of the conflict tearing Katharinenthal apart in the name of the two St. Johns52; two of Merswin’s sisters were prioresses at St.-Mark in Strasbourg.53 Another element, albeit indirect, reveals a contemporary tendency: several manuscripts from the early fifteenth century, including the Belles Heures de Jean, Duc de Berry (Figure 6), organized the heavenly court around the dominant figures of the two St. Johns, the angels, the Trinity, and the Virgin Mary,54 which is exactly the association that we have noted in the texts left by Merswin and the Friend of God of the Oberland. Even the expression of the two princes of the sky, constantly used by Merswin to describe the two St. Johns, is, beyond the idea of a simple parallel, highly revealing of the movement that brought the two saints together and finally made them become companions. In the fifteenth century many works abandoned the rigid structure of the two symmetrical saints surrounding a third element and reunited them as two brothers, in an atmosphere of intimate friendship.55

It may be that the strongly asserted devotion to the Virgin Mary and Child and to the two St. Johns that characterized Grünen Wörth at the end of the fourteenth century was still in force around 1510. Two series of events confirm that it was. First, the structure established by Merswin proved efficacious because the Hospitalers carefully kept the bulk of his founding texts throughout their history while at the same time developing the library along the lines of its initial intent. Second, we have the evidence found by Jean Rott regarding the state of Grünen Wörth at the beginning of the seventeenth century. We also have information from the year 1686 that four stone statues executed about 1455 remained, until 1693, in the choir of the church built by Merswin.56 These were statues of Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and John the Evangelist. That four statues corresponding exactly to the patronage already mentioned were placed in the choir in the middle of the fifteenth century and were left there as long as the Hospitalers stayed at Grünen Wörth is a proof that this patronage had not been questioned after Merswin’s death. Other works bring further evidence of it, such as the cycle of mural paintings in the main room dedicated to the life of John the Evangelist in 1505,57 and the painting representing the Virgin Mary and the two St. Johns documented and briefly described in the 1741 inventory.58

After Merswin’s death, the commandery not only remained faithful to the patronage of the two St. Johns but at times also contributed to its propagation, as is the case for the Tempelhof of Bergheim. In 1312, when their order was suppressed, this Al-
satian institution of Knights Templars became a commandery of the Hospitalers of St. John under the commandery in Sélestat. In 1388 it came into the possession of the commandery at Grünen Wörth, and its ties of dependence were still confirmed in 1521.59 But of the three altarpieces originating from the Tempelhof of Bergheim and now in the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, one, painted by Jost Haller about 1445–50,60 associates John the Baptist with St. George, patron of this institution; the other two present the two St. Johns together. The so-called ornaments of Bergheim (Figures 7, 8), major works in the art of Alsace dated about 1420, form two narrow panels painted with black outlines against a gold background.61 They tie the two St. Johns to ten scenes of a christological cycle in which the figure of John the Baptist concludes the left wing after the Crucifixion, while that of John the Evangelist introduces the right wing, from the Resurrection to the Last Judgment. The composition

Figure 6. Pol de Limbourg, *The Heavenly Court*, 1405–8, *The Belles Heures of Jean, Duc de Berry*, fol. 218. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1954. 54.1.1
thus links the Baptist to the earthly life of Christ and the Evangelist to his glorious life—a symbolism that emphasizes the shifting of the world into a new age. The two saints are symmetrically bent toward a now-missing central element (Figure 9), and their position suggests that these two panels were surrounding a lost piece, possibly a Virgin with Child. The third altarpiece, when open, presents an ensemble of bas-reliefs sculpted by Veit Wagner about 151569 and, when closed, a painting from the first half of the sixteenth century in which the two St. Johns are joined (Figure 10).69 The importance given by the Hospitalers of Grünen Wörth to the devotion to the two St. Johns can explain their presence on these altarpieces, which were among the Hospitalers' possessions at Bergheim.

I also believe that, under the influence of Grünen Wörth, Geiler de Kaysersberg (the famous preacher at the Strasbourg Cathedral who died in 1510) developed a strong personal devotion to the two St.
Johns. We know that Geiler was a very good friend of the commandery. He often visited Grünen Wörth and preached there in 1505 before the emperor Maximilian. The Hospitalers considered him an “intimus amicus, promotor et pater huius domus,” and erected a funerary monument to his memory on their premises. In a poem written by his friend Pierre Schott, we learn that the patron saints of Geiler were John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and John Chrysostom. And Hans Hammer had planned to integrate the related statues of the two St. Johns into the cathedral pulpit that he had made for Geiler in 1485.

Let us consider if the author of the Grünen Wörth altarpiece, Baldung, had other contacts with the theme of the two St. Johns or if he was limited to the execution of this particular work. We know for certain that Baldung kept lasting relations with Grünen Wörth. He first portrayed the sixth commander, Erhart Kienig, on the 1511 altarpiece, and
then painted the portraits of the seventh commander, Balthasar Gerhardi, in 1528\textsuperscript{67} and of the eighth commander, Gregorius Beit, in 1534.\textsuperscript{68} The Rhodes drawings, dated shortly after 1522, are very likely another commission from the Hospitalers.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, Baldung kept in constant contact with the Johannites. Of course, the two St. Johns on the wings of the Schnewlin altarpiece, executed about 1515–16 in Freiburg im Breisgau by Baldung’s workshop,\textsuperscript{70} were partly repeating the composition of the Grünen Wörth panels. But the presence of the two St. Johns in the Crucifixion that Baldung painted in 1512 is not truly specific,\textsuperscript{71} and the saints are not really placed in parallel positions comparable to those in the Isenheim Altarpiece painted by Grünewald about 1512–16.

However, another drawing by Baldung reveals a direct influence from Grünen Wörth. A stained-glass window project (Figure 11) carried out by Baldung about 1517–19 and then dated 1520 by the master glasmaker associated the two St. Johns.\textsuperscript{72} The arms represented are not, as it has been said before, those of the Bock family but the very closely related arms of the Böcklin or Böcklin of Böcklinsau family, another important name in the Strasbourg aristocracy.\textsuperscript{73} Indeed, the Böcklin family played a prominent role among the trustees of Grünen Wörth at the beginning of the sixteenth century: they provided three successive trustees—Wilhelm Böcklin in 1492 and 1500, Balthasar Böcklin in 1507, and Ludwig Böcklin in 1511 and 1525—which constitutes a unique case in history.\textsuperscript{74} This drawing by Baldung must be either the model of a small stained-glass window to be donated to the commandery or, more likely, a stained-glass window project designed for a member of the Böcklin family for his own house and alluding to the major devotion of a prestigious religious institution that he was proud to administer.\textsuperscript{75}

In conclusion, the presence of the two St. Johns on the altarpiece painted by Baldung for the commandery of Grünen Wörth in 1511 cannot be ex-

---

plained simply because John the Evangelist would normally accompany John the Baptist as a complement or an annex, or because one of the personages reproduced on the altarpiece was named John. Their presence can be understood only in the light of the devotional movement started by the founder, Merswin, and kept alive by both the Hospitalers and the secular patricians who were the trustees of this institution. The central position thus given to the two high and beloved princes of the sky, the two St. Johns, was reaffirmed in the new church dedicated to them in 1378. Further, they were linked to the Trinity, which reigned over the old monastery, and to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, together all general patrons of the institution. While historical, material, and stylistic data, as well as dating and provenance from a prestigious religious institution, combine to make possible the reconstruction of this altarpiece, the analysis of the devotions further confirms it. In turn, this allows us to place the altarpiece within the religious life of the commandery and gives a new resonance to the iconographic unity and the eucharistic symbolism it displays.

Translated from the French by Chantal Combes

NOTES

AdBR—Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin at Strasbourg
AMS—Archives Municipales of Strasbourg
BNUS—Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg

1. MMA, Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300–1550, exh. cat. (New York, 1986) no. 179, pp. 375–379, notice by Guy Bauman. The idea of this article originated in conversations with Guy Bauman at the time of the exhibition about the possibilities of extending to Grün en Wörth my previous research on the theme of the two St. Johns.

2. The Cleveland Museum of Art, 52.112; 89.2 × 124.7 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art catalogue of Paintings. III. European Paintings of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries (Cleveland, 1982) no. 65, pp. 160–162; Gert von der Osten, Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente (Berlin, 1983) no. 13, pp. 70–74.


4. New York, MMA, 1983.451; 89.5 × 76.8 cm; von der Osten, Hans Baldung Grien, no. 12, pp. 66–69.


97
his name in 1633, it is precisely because it is the same as the high altar mentioned in the first place, just before the Trinity of the old choir. This is further confirmed by the presence of four statues mentioned below.

49. Von der Osten, Hans Baldung Grien, p. 72.
50. chicot, Histoire ou légende, pp. 173–175.
51. The theme is developed in César de Hesterbach's Dialogus Miraculorum, Thomas de Chamtimpère's De Apibus, Voragine's Légende Durtô, and Guillaume Durant's Rational des divins Offices; Heck, "Rapprochement, antagonisme," p. 237.
56. Rott, "La commanderie Saint-Jean," pp. 242, 244.
57. ADBR, H 1408, p. 28, in Rott, "La commanderie Saint-Jean," pp. 242, 244.
58. Inventory by Goetzmann, ADBR, H 2352, p. 147, no. 13: "Item ein gross taffel worauf B.V.S. Johann Baptist. und Evang. unter dem lettrer mit einer schwarzem ram ohne zierad." This description is too vague to determine the date of the painting, located under the rood-screen in the new installation of the Hospitals.
61. Heck and Moench-Scherer, Catalogue général, no. 537.
63. Heck and Moench-Scherer, Catalogue général, no. 543.
64. Léon Dacheux, Un réformateur catholique à la fin du XVI siècle: Jean Geiler de Kayserberg (Paris/Strasbourg, 1876) pp. 506–507; Granddidier, Nouvelles oueures inédites, V, pp. 31, 33; Rapp, Réformes et Réformation, p. 157; Rott, "La commanderie Saint-Jean," p. 242; this monument to Geiler was transferred to the cathedral in 1633.
66. On the poem by Schott and the pulpit, see Recht, Nicolas de Leyde, p. 228.
67. Munich, Alte Pinakothek. Koch, "Über drei Bildnisse Bal-

72. Feather on paper, 315 × 248 mm, England, private coll. It remained unknown until the Baldung exhibition in Karlsruhe in 1959, cat. no. 236, p. 102, fig. 58. It was also shown at the exhibition German Drawings from a Private Collection (London, British Museum; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; and Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum) 1984, cat. by John Rowlands, no. 23. I am grateful to John Rowlands and Giulia Bartrum for drawing this recent publication to my attention and for obtaining reproduction rights from the owner.
73. Ernest Lehr, L'Alsace noble (Paris, 1870) II, pl. 11, pp. 89, 99. The he-goat depicted on the arms of the Bocks (curvilinear horns with characteristic double curve) is replaced by an ibex on the arms of the Böcklins von Bocklinsau (curvilinear horns forming a great single and concave curve). Lehrs adds on p. 99 that even if there has been some confusion in a few cases, "usage almost constantly maintained a difference between the two animals selected by the Bocks and Böcklins, respectively."
74. Grandidier, Nouvelles oueures inédites, V, p. 67. Let us also note that Sophie Böcklin (or Bock?), who died in 1510 and had donated most of her fortune to Grünen Wörth, is sometimes hypothetically identified as the spouse of the count of Löwenstein, whose portrait was painted by Baldung in 1515. Further, a deed dated to 1545 links Baldung to several members of the Böcklin family; von der Osten, Hans Baldung Grien, pp. 93–94 and doc. 95, pp. 296, 315. Another drawing by Baldung dated to 1534 depicts the arms of the Bock family; Koch, Die Zeichnungen Hans Baldung Gries, no. 159.
75. The Bock family, close to the Böcklins, is also linked to Grünen Wörth. The family endowed the most anniversaries (Masses said for the soul of a deceased person), and Jean Bock was tutor of the commandery in 1525 and 1527; Grandidier, Nouvelles oueures inédites, V, p. 66; Jouanny, Les Hospitaliers en Basse-Alsace, p. 126.
76. However, such a case can be found. For example, the Vierge de Miséricorde, painted by Enguerrand Quarton in 1452 and now at the Musée Condé, Chantilly, reunites the two St. Johns because of the names of the donors, Jean Cadard and Jeanne des Moulins. But in this case, the two donors are specifically presented by their holy patrons and no other figures are shown. See Michel Laclotte and Dominique Thiébaut, L'Ecole d'Avignon (Paris, 1983) p. 226.