

50. Standing Saints in a Limestone Retable



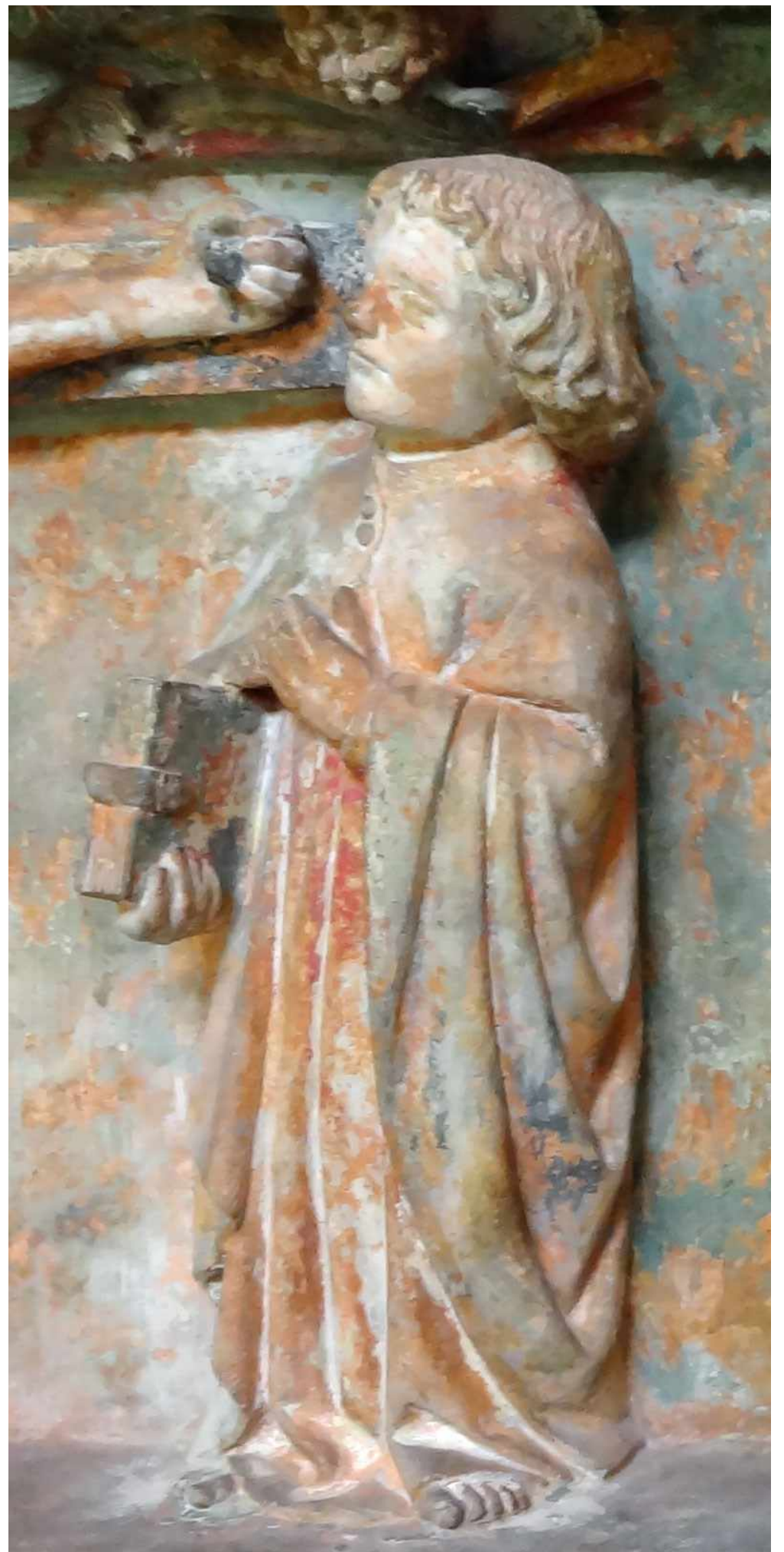
LIMESTONE ALTAR RETABLE FROM BURGUNDY, FRANCE

C1450 TO 1500

Images of saints were an important devotional aid in the medieval period, and were found throughout churches, not just in the stained glass, like the Boppard panels, but also paintings, sculpture and other art forms. They were popular in public and private worship as a tangible connection to the saints during prayer. A good example of standing saints in other art forms in the Burrell is the retable, below.

A retable is a framed altarpiece that is placed just behind and perhaps slightly raised from the altar. This retable is from Burgundy in France and dates to around 1450 to 1500. It shows Christ on the cross (a direct link to the Eucharist, the central focus of the medieval mass) with the Virgin Mary on his left and John the Evangelist on his right, with four other saints. Each saint is shown with their attribute, to illustrate who they are. The retable would originally have been beautifully painted, only traces of which are now left.

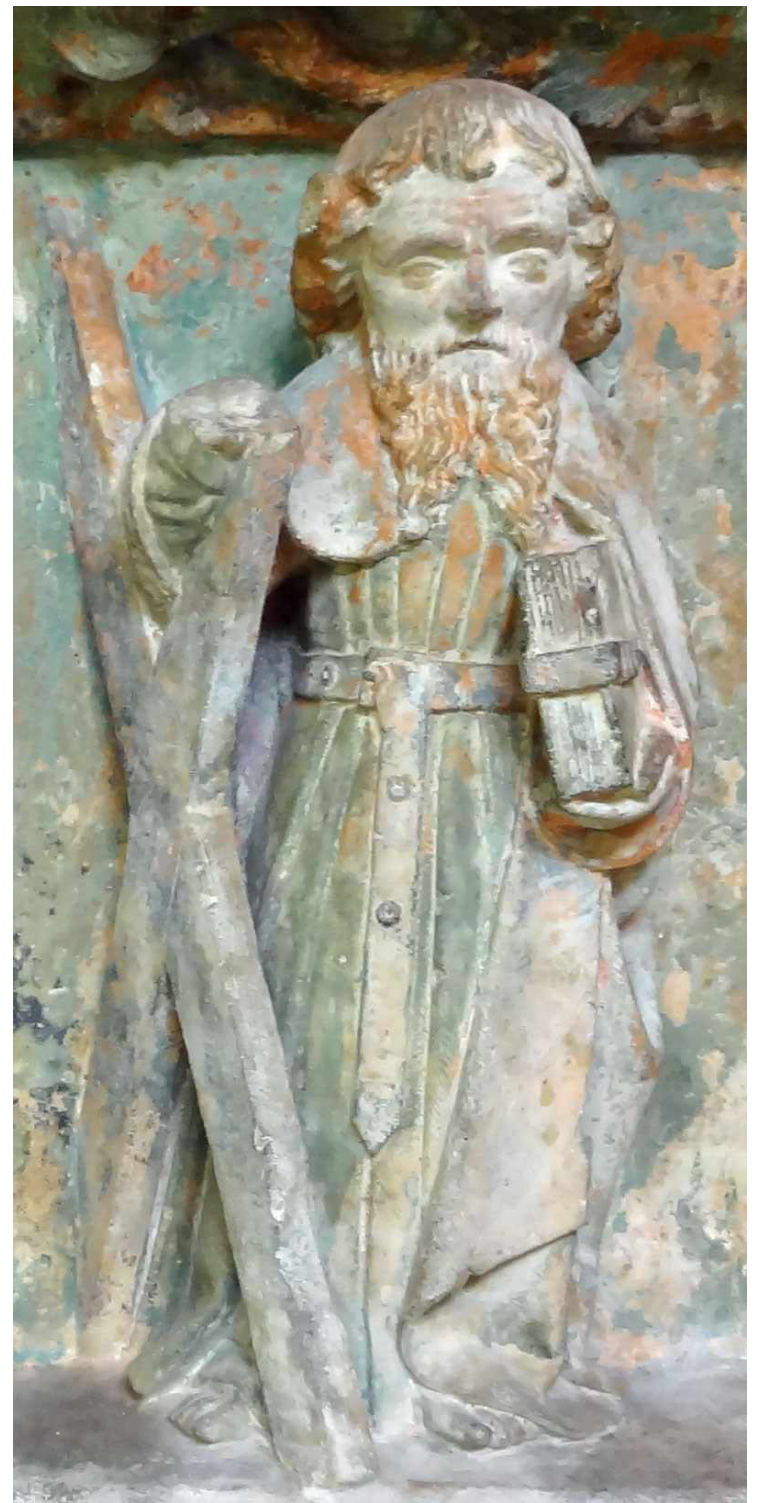
John the Evangelist, first saint to the right of Jesus in the centre, is usually regarded as the same person as John the Apostle and John of Patmos, who wrote the Gospel according to John in the New Testament. He is seen here holding his book. A detail of him is shown in the image on the right.





On the retable, St. Peter is next on the right. He is in the image on the left, where he holds what is left of a key (the key to heaven) in his left hand and an open book in his right hand. It is generally agreed by scholars that Peter told his memoirs to John Mark of Rome, who then wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Last on the right of the retable is St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter. According to tradition, when crucified, he asked to be put on a Crux decussate, an X-shaped cross, or "saltire", as he was unworthy of being crucified on a similar cross to that of Jesus. He is shown in the image on the right.



To the left of Mary and in the detail on the lower left, stands John the Baptist, holding his attribute, a lamb, and wearing the camel-skin coat of the Gospels.



Lastly, on the far left of the retable more than likely the Archangel St Michael fighting the devil.



Saint Michael the Archangel by Hans Holbein – image from <http://mylightsaints.blogspot.co.uk/>

