THE ARCH AS A SYMBOL FOR MARY AS THE CHURCH IN THE ART OF ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN

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ABSTRACT

THE ARCH AS A SYMBOL FOR MARY AS THE CHURCH
IN THE ART OF ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN

By

Jean A. Macchiaroli

Within the context of the known paintings by Roger van der Weyden, it is possible to discern a segment of four works which lend themselves to consideration as a unit. These works are: the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula, the Vienna Madonna Standing, the Prado Madonna in Red, and the Altarpiece of the Virgin, all executed within the decade of the 1430's. They may be viewed together because they exhibit certain common physical characteristics--the Virgin is shown holding the Christ child, she is enclosed within an ecclesiastical architectural setting, and she either wears a crown or is being crowned by an angel--and because they treat the common theme of Mary as the Church.

This study examines these paintings in their relation to this Christian doctrine of Mary as the Church, with careful attention to the borrowing and expanding of motifs from the Madonna paintings, in order to produce the complex Altarpiece of the Virgin. For this reason, the Altarpiece of the Virgin may rightly be regarded as the culmination of Roger's work in this specific area.

Jean A. Macchiaroli

This thesis attempts to determine the extent to which certain influences acted upon the fertile imagination of Roger van der Weyden, and led to the creation of these paintings. These encompass Gothic architecture and sculpture, Church doctrine, contemporary mystical writings, and the dominant artistic trends of the period, embodied in the art of Robert Campin and Jan van Eyck.

In studying these arched paintings by Roger, it is imperative to investigate another altarpiece which employs a triple arch format similar to that in the Altarpiece of the Virgin. This painting, the Saint John Altarpiece, conveys a theme relating to the Church, yet not to the concept of Mary as the Church, owing mostly to the nature of the commission itself. I have further contrasted the circumstances of patronage of the Saint John Altarpiece with those of the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

It is hoped that this study will provide a viable basis for the interpretation of many of Roger van der Weyden's later works.

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By

Jean A. Macchiaroli

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DEDICATION

To my parents,

Kathryn and Salvatore Macchiaroli

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I would like to express my extreme gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Molly Teasdale Smith for her many hours of aid and guidance in the preparation of this thesis. She has been an endless source of inspiration and untiring enthusiasm. Her willingness to share her ideas on this topic has led to many a stimulating discussion, and ultimately to the conception of this thesis as it now stands. I shall always be indebted to her.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the paintings by Roger van der Weyden, there is a group of four, executed within the decade of the 1430's, that lend themselves to consideration as a unit. These four paintings are: the Thyssen *Madonna in an Aedicula*, the Vienna *Madonna Standing*, the Prado *Madonna in Red*, and the *Altarpiece of the Virgin*. They may be viewed together because they exhibit certain common physical characteristics: in all four, the Virgin holds the Christ child, she is enclosed within an ecclesiastical architectural setting, and she either wears a crown or is being crowned by an angel. These works also indicate a common theological basis in the Christian doctrine of Mary as the Church.

Apparently borrowing and expanding on motifs developed in the earlier three Madonna paintings--the motif of the arch, the crown, and the relationship of Mary to Christ as both mother and spouse--the *Altarpiece of the Virgin* may rightly be regarded as the culmination of Roger's work on this theme. It is hoped that this study will eschew the common pitfall of analyzing the three earlier paintings in the light of the *Altarpiece of the Virgin*, rather than vice versa.

This study will examine these works in their relationship to the Christian doctrine of Mary as the Church, and thereby attempt to determine certain influences under which Roger van der Weyden may have worked. I shall inquire first into his knowledge of Gothic architecture, which will be particularly important to an understanding of the arch motif. In the effort to illuminate the circumstance under which these works were created, further inquiry will be made into the influences of general Church doctrine, contemporary Church writings--specifically those of the mystics--and exposure to the art of Robert Campin and Jan Van Eyck. This should aid in an interpretation of the symbolic elements of these arched paintings in their relation to the concept of Mary as the Church.

An additional work of Roger's is not to be ignored in a study of the arched paintings and their relationship to the theme of the Church. This painting, the Saint John Altarpiece, makes use of a triple arch format, similar to that in the Altarpiece of the Virgin, and expresses a theme relating to the mission of the Church. Yet, as will be seen, the individual requirements of the commission, as well as Roger's awareness of the destination of the altarpiece for a parish Church, contribute to the essentially more narrative-representational nature of the altarpiece, when compared to the symbolic images of the three Madonna paintings and the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

This raises the question of the role of the commission in the determination of forms and style in the paintings of Roger van der Weyden. In the light of a comprehensive study of early Netherlandish commissions begun by Shirley Neilsen Blum, I shall attempt to determine the extent to which the patronage may have governed the stylistic and thematic framework of the paintings.

Due to the limitations on time and availability of research materials, this thesis will not attempt to solve any problems, but merely to suggest reasonable answers to questions which may be raised concerning this group of paintings by Roger van der Weyden.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY MADONNA PAINTINGS

The popularity of the subject of the Virgin Mary in Roger van der Weyden's works was no accident. By the Fifteenth Century the cult of Mary had risen to its greatest height, placing her on a level almost equal with that of Christ. When the Church Council at Nicaea determined in 325 that the Son was of the same nature as the Father, Mary was often referred to as the theotokos, the Mother of God.[1] It was not until the Council at Ephesus in 431 that the official point of departure for the cult of Mary was designated. Not only did this council finally and officially determine the relationship of Mary to the Trinity, as the Mother of God,[2] but it also designated her the mystical spouse of Christ, and established that she was the personification of the Church.[3]

By the time of the Council at Basle, from 1431 to 1443, the fathers of the Church seriously discussed including the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary within the cycle of feasts in the Church year,[4] representing a considerable growth of the cult of the Virgin in western Christendom. By this time, many aspects of the Virgin Mary had become popularized in Western art.

Some of these aspects include the life of the Virgin before the birth of Christ, the Virgin and Child motif, the Virgin enthroned, the Virgin of Sorrows, and the Virgin as Holy Wisdom. Certain motifs have achieved greater importance in various areas of the Christian west.

Despite the proliferation of Madonna figures in Netherlandish art of the Fifteenth Century, Roger van der Weyden, in the group of works which we are about to study, has chosen a means of portraying the Virgin Mary that is uncharacteristic of the medium of painting. Max J. Friedländer has made the astute observation that Roger's particular brand of religious piety expressed in his works is not only traditional, but it is orthodox, in the sense that he views his subjects with the mind of a theologian. He is therefore more abstract, and ultimately more medieval in outlook and form than his contemporary Jan van Eyck.[5] Friedländer has said: "Jan van Eyck proceeded from the visible, individual case, Rogier from the idea. Jan van Eyck grasped the natural context, Rogier the spiritual context of doctrine and hierarchy."[6] This medievalism in Roger manifests itself in his early work most strongly in an affinity for images that may be associated with Gothic cathedral architecture in both its forms and its purport. He is more interested in doctrine than narrative, and in the eternal, rather than the historical.

This essentially medieval outlook is discernible in what is probably the earliest of the known works by Roger, the Madonna in an Aedicula, in the Thyssen Collection, Lugano.[7] Executed circa 1430-32, while Roger was still a member of Robert Campin's workshop in Tournai,[8] the Thyssen Madonna[9] demonstrates a considerable influence of this master on Roger,[10] both stylistically and conceptually. The face of the Thyssen Madonna is particularly Flémallesque in its wide, round shape and its frontality.[11] In that respect it may be compared to Campin's Madonna Before a Fire Screen, in the Salting Collection, the National Gallery, London.

K. M. Birkmeyer has noted the great amount of ecclesiastical sculpture in the city of Tournai, and has observed that this must have had a decided influence on the paintings of Robert Campin and the members of his workshop.[12] In fact, it is known that, prior to 1423, Campin had been a member in Tournai of the mutual guild of painters and sculptors. In 1423, the guilds were reorganized, and the painters became associated with manuscript illuminators and stained glass workers. We may surmise that Campin, in such close proximity to sculptors until 1423, came into contact with much contemporary sculpture.[13]

Robert Campin was probably strongly influenced by the Burgundian sculptures of Claus Sluter, which he

either viewed directly himself, or whose influence reached him through contemporary Tournaisian sculpture. Birkmeyer feels that Campin is interested in the use of combined architectural and sculptural motifs--a fundamental Gothic idea--to express a given concept in Christian doctrine. He may have been interested in a work such as the Chartreuse de Champmol,[14] which combines a sculpture of the Madonna and Child with its facade portal, to indicate Mary as the gateway to Heaven.[15] Indeed a similar statue of the Madonna and Child--and a type which is common in Gothic sculpture--appears on the trumeau of the portal of Tournai Cathedral.[16] One may look at Campin's Betrothal of the Virgin in this light, and in terms of the influence it may have exerted over Roger in the Thyssen Madonna. In the righthand portion of the Betrothal of the Virgin there is a Gothic arched portal decorated with sculptural motifs, beneath and before which is depicted the betrothal of Mary to Joseph. The true subject of the painting is the founding of the New Church, represented both by the Virgin Mary at its threshold and by the Gothic portal which is in the process of being erected. Just as the physical building process of the church is incomplete in this painting, so is its spiritual fulfillment unfinished: it awaits the birth of Christ. As Shirley Neilsen Blum has pointed out, Mary, who wears the crown of the Queen of Heaven,

does not stand directly beneath the arch, but slightly in front of it, to denote that the founding of the Church has not been completed.[17]

In the Thyssen Madonna Roger has depicted the fulfillment of the founding of the Church as it is seen in its inception in Robert Campin's Betrothal of the Virgin. There are two important developments here: Christ has been born, and Mary is situated seated within an aedicula which imitates a Gothic portal. Mary now truly appears as the personification of the Church; she is depicted as both Mother of God and his mystical spouse. The latter interpretation is assured by her appearance as the Queen of Heaven, wearing the crown and seemingly enthroned beneath the arch.

Wedded to Mary in this symbolic sense, Christ is mystically wedded to his Church, a concept based on the Lover and the Beloved in the Song of Songs.[18] This mystical marriage was a favorite topic for the mystics of the Late Middle Ages. The Spiritual Espousals, written near Brussels by Jan van Ruysbroek in the Fourteenth Century, establishes the mystical basis for the union of Christ and his Church, and serves to illuminate the trends in mystical thought of this period on that subject. Basing this writing entirely on the phrase, "See, the Bridegroom comes: go out and meet him," from Matthew 25:6, Ruysbroek clarifies that Christ is the Bridegroom, and

that the Bride is man's nature, created in the image of God. Man's nature, he says, was lured into sin by the serpent at the Fall; subsequently, God sent Christ to be sacrificed and to redeem humanity.[19] At the Incarnation it was established that man's nature was intended to be united with God, for Christ, who is God, was born of the flesh of woman, that is, Mary: he was sent "into a glorious temple, which was the body of the glorious maiden Mary. There he espoused the bride, our nature, and united her with His Person by the noble Virgin's most pure blood."[20] Mary's womb, therefore, can be regarded as a bridal chamber, in which God and mankind were united.[21] She is the foremost Bride of Christ, by virtue of the fact that her flesh was fused with Christ's divinity at the moment of Incarnation, i.e. the Annunciation. Along similar lines, the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula depicts a Virgin who has just recently given birth, yet who is already enthroned as the Queen of Heaven. Essential to the concept of Mary as the Church is the idea that she is both Christ's Mother, and personifies the Church as his spouse.

It is highly significant that Roger, so early in his career as an independent painter, is already producing a work of such symbolical complexity. His art seems to presuppose an already highly refined feeling for both the Gothic cathedral tradition and the dominant theological trends of his period, as well as an extraordinary

ability to assimilate and transform the ideas of his master, Robert Campin.

Birkmeyer further ties Roger's Thyssen Madonna to another work by Claus Sluter, the Moses Well, executed for the Chartreuse de Champmol. This association is made through the presence in Roger's painting of six figures, presumably Old Testament prophets, flanking the Madonna; three are placed on either side of the arch. According to Birkmeyer, the Moses Well is the only other known work of art that employs six prophets in subordination to another main theme, in Sluter's case the Crucifixion, and in Roger's the Madonna.[22] Admitting that it was possible that Roger had seen the Sluter Well, Birkmeyer attempts to establish a bond between the six figures in Roger's Madonna in an Aedicula and those in the Sluter work. Although the identification of the prophets in the Moses Well is made easy by inscriptions, this seems to be a more difficult task in Roger's painting. However, Birkmeyer concludes that the identification and order of the prophets in both compositions are identical.[23] If this is true, Roger is compounding his complex theme to refer directly to the act of redemption itself. That is, if the prophets on the Moses Well serve as a reminder of the justification of the Passion and death of Christ in order to redeem mankind--as Birkmeyer would maintain[24]--then is one not confronted in Roger's painting with a further statement on

the subject of salvation? The inference is that Christ has been born to redeem mankind, that he will come again in judgment, and that Mary will serve as mediatress for each faithful person at that judgment. Significantly, Mary's position directly beneath the arch, and in symbolic relation to it, shows again that she is the gateway to Heaven.

Also manifest in this painting is the theme of a nursing Madonna. This refers to the notion that just as Christ received nourishment from the Virgin Mary, so do all believers receive spiritual amplification from the Church. The source for this may be found in I Peter 2:2: "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation."[25] This idea further reinforces the element of redemption implicit in the painting.

The painted relief sculptures in the tiny niches across the top of the painting depict seven scenes from the life of the Virgin: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Resurrection, Pentecost,[26] and the Coronation of the Virgin in the dominant position above the keystone of the arch. It is significant that Roger has eliminated the scenes of the Passion of Christ. It is nevertheless implied in the painting. The flowers on either side of the aedicula can be identified as the iris on the right, the symbol of the

Passion of Christ and sorrow of the Virgin, and the columbine on the left, another symbol of Mary's sorrow.[27] And of course the Resurrection presupposes the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. But it appears that Roger has deliberately chosen the most joyful and glorious aspects of Christian doctrine to express the joyous message of salvation through the Virgin Mary and the Church.

This is very much an optimistic and promising image of redemption for the faithful person. The event of Pentecost marks the official beginning of the Church as a corporate body, for a large group of the faithful were present at that event.[28] By portraying this scene, Roger has established the legitimacy of the viewer for salvation, as a member of the Church on earth.

The Madonna Standing, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna,[29] represents a departure from Roger's earlier composition. The elaborate aedicula has been reduced to a somewhat simplified niche; and the sculptural decoration has likewise been greatly reduced. The Madonna--again crowned, and again nursing the Christ child--is now standing, and appears generally more monumental in conception than in the previous painting. The work was probably executed circa 1432-33, as it seems evident that Roger must have left Campin's workshop by the time he worked on it.

There are several motifs in the painting which have appeared in Robert Campin's works, but it appears that Roger must have come into contact with a number of Eyckian works, and this composition reflects an interest in this style which is uniquely different from the familiar Flémallesque style of the shop in which he was apprenticed. The lions on the arms of the seat behind the standing Madonna are a familiar motif, for they have appeared in Robert Campin's Mérode Altarpiece and Salting Madonna. This throne motif refers to Mary as the "Sedes Sapientiae," the "throne of wisdom," by paralleling her with King Solomon. This motif finds its source in I Kings 10:19: "The throne had six steps, and at the back of the throne was a calf's head, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests." The reference is to the throne of King Solomon, the Old Testament seat of wisdom.[30] Mary, as the bearer of Christ, is the New Testament throne of wisdom, the Church. In Roger's painting, the image of the nursing Madonna may be a metaphor for the transmission of the wisdom of the Church to each individual believer.

The use of a cloth of honor, indicating Mary's status as Queen of Heaven, is also a familiar motif employed by Robert Campin. He used this motif, displayed behind a nursing Madonna, in the Virgin and Child, in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfort.[31] However,

the Campin painting shows no trace of the architectural setting which is so important thematically in Roger's painting.

The Madonna herself bears a resemblance to the Berlin Madonna in a Church, by Jan van Eyck: both Madonnas are standing as they hold the child, and both are crowned; the setting of both is ecclesiastical architecture, although typically more elaborate in the Van Eyck painting. Additional Eyckian stylistic elements in Roger's painting may be seen in the subtle handling of light and dark, the greater fullness and agitation of the drapery, and the position in which the child is held by Mary, again recalling the Madonna in a Church,[32] as well as Gothic sculpture.

Harry B. Wehle and Margaretta Salinger have called attention to an Eyckian Madonna in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which is very similar to Jan van Eyck's Madonna at the Fountain of 1439, though probably executed later.[33] Since both of the above-mentioned Madonnas are very close in type to Roger's Vienna Madonna Standing, one might speculate as to the possibility of there having been a prototype, either in sculpture or painting, which these artists used in their conceptions.[34] Of particular interest in the Madonna painting discussed by Wehle and Salinger is the inscription on the canopy: "DOMUS DEI EST ET PORTA C[O]ELI" ("This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of

Heaven." Genesis 28:17).[35] It is possible that the concept of Mary as the gate of Heaven was probably an integral part of this specific Madonna type--always set within an arcuated framework--and of course may be applied to Roger's painting as well, thus augmenting the metaphor of Mary as the Church.

Further Eyckian influence on the Vienna Madonna Standing has been suggested by K. M. Birkmeyer. He notes that the grisaille figures of Adam and Eve which flank the Madonna in this painting recall the same figures on the Ghent Altarpiece. In neither work is the artist trying to tell a story by putting the figures in a narrative setting. In Roger's painting, Eve holds the forbidden fruit, indicating the moment of the Fall, but Adam is shown being expelled from paradise by the avenging angel. Birkmeyer remarks that Roger has intentionally reversed the sequence of the two scenes in order to assure that the viewer understands them as symbols for Christ as the New Adam and Mary as the New Eve. In this respect, the redemptive quality of the image is stressed: according to Birkmeyer, the figures of Adam and Eve, and of God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit are all rendered in grisaille by Roger so that their complex role in the redemptive process may be emphasized as a unit.[36]

According to Birkmeyer, the presence of God the Father in painted sculpture above the architectural niche

within which the Madonna stands serves the purpose of setting up a vertical reading of the composition as a Trinity. This may raise the question as to whether this painting was perhaps executed for the Chartreuse de Champmol. There is no documentation for this opinion, but the charter of that house explicitly states that the church was dedicated to God, the Trinity, and the Madonna.[37] If this is true, then perhaps Roger created this painting in consultation with a Carthusian monk from the Chartreuse de Champmol.[38] Even if this speculation is not true, it seems that perhaps an awareness of the dedication of this famous building, coupled with an understanding of the manifold doctrine of redemption, may have had a profound effect on Roger's conception of the Madonna and Child motif at this point in his career.

The Madonna in Red (or Madonna Duran), in the Prado, Madrid,[39] represents another variation on the Madonna and Child motif from Roger's two earlier Madonna paintings. Panofsky has suggested that the basic formal motifs were borrowed from the Ince Hall Madonna by Jan van Eyck,[40] again pointing to the strong possibility that Roger came into contact with the works of that master very early in his career as an independent artist. Like the Ince Hall Madonna, Roger's Madonna is dressed in red, and the child leafs through the pages of a book. But unlike Jan, Roger has placed his Madonna in an

ecclesiastical niche, rather than in a domestic interior. In addition, the crown held over Mary's head by an angel is similar to the same motif in Jan van Eyck's Madonna of Chancellor Rolin, which Roger may have seen in progress.

Dated by Panofsky circa 1436-37,[41] the Madonna in Red in fact bears little resemblance to either of the previously discussed Madonnas by Roger. The niche has been greatly simplified from the Vienna Madonna Standing, and is now devoid of any sculptural decoration. Concurrent with the simplification of the niche setting, Roger has also made the Madonna somewhat plainer by removing the crown from her head and introducing a veil in its place. It seems, as a consequence of this reduction, that what Roger has achieved in this painting is a unique result, different from his earlier works: the stark quality of the image with which the spectator is confronted represents a heightened spirituality, an almost ascetic sense of piety. It is a style which has come to be distinguished as uniquely Rogerian, demonstrating at once a synthesis and a transcendence of the elements of both Robert Campin and Jan van Eyck of which Roger had previously made use. It is interesting to note that he has eliminated any hint of the opulence and wealth of tangible detail so common to the paintings of Jan van Eyck, in favor of visual and physical simplicity, which is more akin to the Flémallesque style.

By removing all sculptural decoration, and by situating the figures in a niche intended to hold sculpture--there is no visible chair upon which the Madonna sits, nor is there a cloth of honor behind her--the figures themselves take the place of and become the sculpture. We see "a woman of flesh and blood presented to us under the guise of a statue."[42] Roger has transformed the image of the Madonna and Child into a symbol, and an obvious symbol at that. Mary is the Church, as she is intimately tied to the ecclesiastical architecture within which she sits. Christ is the logos--the Word of God, presented to man--in the sense that he is equated with the book which he handles. The starkness of the image--like that of an icon--reminds us of Mary's humility and faithful piety; and she is shown being crowned as the Queen of Heaven, by virtue of this humility.

The original location and purpose of the Madonna in Red are unknown. Martin Davies notes that in the Prado Catálogo of 1963 it is confirmed that no evidences of landscape or further architectural structure exist under the black space within the niche.[43] This indicates that Roger had originally intended the painting to be as it stands today. It has been suggested by Professor Molly Teasdale Smith that the niche within which the Madonna sits, reminiscent of those on the lower portions of the exterior of the Ghent Altarpiece, perhaps indicates that

Roger's painting was originally part of the exterior of an altarpiece; in that context it would take on a penitential aspect, for meditation during the Lenten season, when the altarpiece would have been closed.[44] This would certainly be in keeping with the ascetic quality of the piece.

What is most important in the Madonna in Red in terms of the development of the theme of the Church in Roger's oeuvre is the integration of the concept of Mary's humility with her status as the Queen of Heaven. The Virgin is truly the intercessor for all the faithful here, for she is a model of human behavior, and through imitation of this perfect individual, the soul of each person may be accepted into Heaven by her in her capacity as the divine queen. This role of Mary is heightened by the presence of Christ as the divine logos, bringing the Word of God to mankind, that each person might learn how he will be judged.[45] The image in this painting is therefore a far more intimate one than the previous Madonnas studied, in its personal value to each individual worshipper.

In retrospect, it is seen that in those formative years leading up to the production of his Altarpiece of the Virgin Roger developed many of the crucial elements which would go into the creation of that altarpiece. These include: (1) the identification of the Virgin Mary in a symbolic way with an ecclesiastical architectural setting to indicate her role as the Church in Christian

thought; (2) the dual motif of Mary as Mother of God and Queen of Heaven; (3) Mary as the mystical bride of Christ; (4) Mary's humility as the paragon of human behavior; (5) Mary as the "throne of wisdom" nourishing the *logos* of God; and (6) the notion that Mary does contribute in some way to the redemptive process. It is with the creation of the *Altarpiece of the Virgin*, that Roger was able to fuse these diverse motifs into a coherent doctrinal statement.

NOTES--CHAPTER I

[1]Yrjö Hirn, The Sacred Shrine (First English ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 187. Hirn states that many Eastern fathers of the Church made use of this epithet: Athanasius, Ephraim Syrus, Eusebius, and Chrysostomus.

[2]Ibid., p. 188.

[3]Louis Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II, Part Two (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 58.

[4]Rev. Edward H. Landon, A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church (New and rev. ed.; Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), p. 88.

[5]Max J. Friedländer, Early Netherlandish Painting, trans. by Heinz Norden, Comments and notes by Nicole Veronee-Verhaegen, Vol. II: Rogier van der Weyden and the Master of Flémalle (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1967), p. 29.

[6]Ibid., p. 29.

[7]For the purposes of this study, the writer assumes that Roger van der Weyden was a unique artistic personality. We shall assume that he was not identical with the Master of Flémalle, nor with other Flemish artists by the name of "Roger." (See Erwin Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting. Its Origins and Character, Vol. I [Icon ed.; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971], pp. 153-58.)

[8]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, Vol. I, p. 251. See page 247 for a discussion of Roger's stay in Campin's workshop.

[9]Martin Davies (Rogier van der Weyden [London: Phaidon, 1972], p. 222) notes that Beenken (Rogier van der Weyden, 1951, p. 29) has suggested, on the basis of almost identical dimensions, that the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula may have formed a diptych with a Saint George panel. (The Madonna panel is 14 x 10.5 cm, the Saint George panel is 14.3 x 10.5 cm.) Davies agrees with this opinion. However true or false this claim may be, the study of this possibility is outside the range of this work, and I shall confine the present study to the significance of the Madonna painting in the development of Roger's work.

[10]The writer assumes the identity of the Master of Flémalle as Robert Campin, according to Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, Vol. I, pp. 154-58, and shall use these two names interchangeably.

[11]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 251.

[12]K. M. Birkmeyer, "Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings by Rogier van der Weyden," Art Bulletin, XLIV (Dec., 1962), 329.

[13]See Molly Teasdale Smith, "Grisailles in Early Fifteenth Century Flemish Painting," Master of Arts thesis, New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1957, pp. 41-42 and note 93. Dr. Smith cites La Grange and Cloquet (Études sur l'Art de Tournai in Mémoires de la société historique et archéologique de Tournai, XX [1887], p. 97 and XXI [1888], pp. 65-66) and Paul Rolland ("La Double Ecole de Tournai, peinture et sculpture," in Mélanges Hulin de Loo, Brussels and Paris, 1931, p. 304).

[14]K. M. Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif in Netherlandish Painting of the Fifteenth Century," Art Bulletin, XLIII (March, 1961), 10, and note 54.

[15]This same theme of Mary as the gateway to Heaven is expressed in a familiar hymn, which is at least as old as the Ninth Century. It calls Mary, "Mother, Ever-Virgin, / Heaven's Portal fairest" ("Atque semper Virgo, / Felix coeli porta"). (Mathew Britt, The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal [New York, 1936], pp. 317-18.)

[16]Dr. Molly Teasdale Smith has brought this particular portal to my attention. This type of portal seems to have been a common type.

[17]Shirley Neilsen Blum, Early Netherlandish Triptychs (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 10.

[18]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 440.

[19]Jan van Ruysbroek, The Spiritual Espousals, trans. and introduction by Eric Colledge (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 43.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 347.

[22]Birkmeyer, "Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings," 329.

[23]For a discussion of this, see Birkmeyer, "Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings," p. 329.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Dr. Molly Teasdale Smith has brought this passage to my attention in relation to the motif of the nursing Madonna.

[26]Birkmeyer ("Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings," p. 330) suggests that the red robe on this Christ child may refer to the Church feast day of Pentecost, as no other Madonna by Roger shows the child in red.

[27]Birkmeyer, "Notes," p. 329.

[28]Ibid., p. 330.

[29]The painting was probably half of a diptych with a Saint Catherine in a Landscape, also in Vienna, but it seems questionable whether the Saint Catherine panel was actually by Roger's own hand. Both panels are 18.5 x 12 cm, and both are documented in the Austrian Imperial Collection in 1772. (Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 240.)

[30]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 143, and p. 415, note 1 to p. 143, where he refers the reader to W. Molsdorf, Christliche Symbolik der mittelalterlichen Kunst, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1926), p. 138ff. See also Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 456.

[31]See Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, Plate 124.

[32]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 251, and Hermann Beenken, "Rogier van der Weyden und Jan van Eyck," Pantheon, XXV (1940), 130.

[33]Harry B. Wehle and Margaretta Salinger, A Catalogue of Early Flemish, Dutch and German Painting (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1947), p. 20.

[34]Cf. Note 16. Refer again to the sculptured Madonna and Child figures on the facades of Gothic cathedrals.

[35]Wehle and Salinger, A Catalogue of Early Flemish Painting, p. 21.

[36]Birkmeyer, "Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings," p. 331. For this reason, and for the reason that he sees the grisaille figure of the prophet Micah on the exterior of the Ghent Altarpiece as the one prototype for the figure of God the Father on the Vienna Madonna Standing, Birkmeyer believes that Roger's painting must post-date the Ghent Altarpiece, dedicated May 6, 1432 (see Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 207).

[37]Birkmeyer, "Notes," pp. 330-31 and note 14 to p. 331, where the reader is referred to Henri David, Claus Sluter, Paris, 1951, p. 27. This picture had previously been connected with a "nostra Donna sola cun el puttino in brazzo, in piedi, in un tempio Ponentino, cun la corona in testa," seen by Marcantonio Michiel, and believed to have been painted by "Rugerio da Brugiis." However, Panofsky believes that the word "tempio" must be translated "church," rather than "niche," so the painting in question was probably one of the numerous copies of Jan van Eyck's Madonna in a Church. (Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 458, note 2 to p. 251.)

[38]We shall recall that Dieric Bouts was assigned two theologians to aid in setting up the program of the Louvain Holy Sacrament Altarpiece. See Wolfgang Stechow, Northern Renaissance Art 1400-1600, Sources and Documents, in the History of Art Series, H. W. Janson, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 11.

[39]See Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 226.

[40]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 259.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 226.

[44]Molly Teasdale Smith, "The Use of Grisaille as a Lenten Observance," Marsyas, VIII (1957-59), 53. Dr. Smith notes in note 56, page 53, that Walter Ueberwasser, Rogier van der Weyden, Paintings from the Escorial and Prado, New York, 1946, p. 9, has suggested the possibility that this panel may have been on the exterior of an altarpiece. For the development of the use of grisaille during the Lenten season, see Dr. Smith's article, p. 43ff.

[45]The Gospel of John refers to the following words of Christ: "You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you / . . . If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:3, 7).

CHAPTER II

THE ALTARPIECE OF THE VIRGIN

Doubtless the direct successors of the Prado Madonna in Red in terms of both style and iconography are two altarpieces of the Virgin that are almost exact duplicates, and are both associated with Roger van der Weyden. Although more elaborate in presentation and more complex in scope than the three Madonna paintings previously discussed, the theme of these altarpieces is again the Virgin Mary. And it seems that these works not only represent a development of the arch motif and the theme of Mary as Queen of Heaven, but also make a statement on the entire doctrine of redemption in relation to the Virgin.

Within the identical schemes of the altarpieces, each panel comprises a main scene involving the Virgin and Christ, placed beneath a painted stone archway, around which are arranged grisaille scenes comprising the lives of the Virgin and Christ from the Annunciation through the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin. In each panel the grisaille scenes follow chronologically not from lower left over the arch to lower right, as might be expected, but rather counterclockwise beginning in the upper left.

On the left, the Adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Virgin Mary is surrounded by the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Adoration of the Shepherds, Adoration of the Magi, and Presentation in the Temple. The center scene of the Lamentation is surrounded by Christ Taking Leave of Mary Before his Arrest, Mary Receiving the News of Christ's Arrest, the Road to Calvary, the Erection of the Cross, the Crucifixion, and the Entombment. On the right is the Appearance of Christ to the Virgin Mary after the Resurrection, surmounted by the Three Maries Taking Leave of the Virgin to Go to the Tomb, the Ascension, the Pentecost, the Annunciation to the Virgin of her Imminent Death, the Death of the Virgin, and the Coronation of the Virgin. In the background of the right-hand panel can also be seen the Resurrection, witnessed only by the angel at the tomb, and the approach of the Three Maries to the tomb. The presence on the arched framework of grisaille scenes from Mary's life, and Christ's, is not new in Roger's work: we shall recall the use of similar scenes in the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula.

From the keystone of each arch descends an angel holding a crown, similar to that in the Prado Madonna in Red; a scroll accompanies each angel, on which are inscribed words adapted to relate to Mary from biblical texts in the epistle of James (over the Adoration panel), and from the Book of Revelation (above the Lamentation and

Appearance scenes). In addition, the sculptured scenes on the capitals in each panel--as Old Testament prefigurations of New Testament events--depict the Sacrifice of Isaac and Death of Absalom (in the Adoration panel), the Expulsion from Paradise (in the Lamentation panel), and David and Goliath, Samson and the Lion, and Samson with the Gates of Gaza (in the Appearance panel).[1] The four Evangelists and Saints Peter and Paul--identifiable by their respective attributes--stand at the jambs of the arches.

The authorship and dating of these altarpieces have presented some perplexing questions for scholars. This is not surprising, considering the complex histories behind the paintings. One of the altarpieces is divided between the Capilla Real at Granada, Spain, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It was presented to the Granada Cathedral by Isabella the Catholic (d. 1504) sometime after 1492. The panels depicting the Adoration and Lamentation were separated in 1632 and cut off at the top to be fitted into the frames of doors to a reliquary constructed for Philip IV.[2] The third panel found its way to New York through a series of private owners.

The other altarpiece, now located in the Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin-Dahlem, arrived there from the Charterhouse of Miraflores, near Burgos, Spain.[3] The "Miraflores" altarpiece is almost identical stylistically with the "Granada-New York" group; in size

it is 71 x 43 cm, compared to the slightly smaller "Granada-New York" triptych of 63.5 x 38 cm.[4] The color of Mary's robe in the Lamentation panel appears blue in the "Granada-New York" altarpiece, but red in the "Miraflores" triptych.[5] Both altarpieces, although triptychs, are nonclosing. It is believed that the altarpiece now located in Berlin is the one mentioned by Antonio Ponz in his Viaje de España, written in 1788. Evidently, Ponz saw an altarpiece of the Virgin in the Miraflores chapel which fit the description of a painting documented in the record of the Charterhouse of Miraflores. Ponz quotes this record:

> Anno 1445 donavit predictus rex [Juan II of Castile] pretiosissimum, et devotum oratorium, tres historias habens; Nativitatem scilicet Jesu Christi, Descensionem ipsius de cruce, quod alias Quinta Angustia nuncupatur, et Apparitionem ejusdem ad matrem post Resurrectionem. Hoc oratorium a Magistro Rogel, magno et famoso Flandresco fuit depictum.[6]

Ponz mentions that it is a tradition that Juan II had received the altarpiece from Pope Martin V.[7]

Much of the controversy surrounding the dating of the Altarpiece of the Virgin is a result of various interpretations of the Ponz account. It has generally been accepted that the "Granada-New York" triptych was the original by the hand of the Master, Roger van der Weyden, and that the "Miraflores" triptych is a copy by Roger's workshop, completed relatively soon after the original.[8] The main problem involves the relation of the altarpieces

to each other, and, in turn, to the Charterhouse of Miraflores. The idea of a papal gift to King Juan II is rejected by most critics on the grounds that, since Martin V died in 1431, Roger would not have qualified as an independent master at such an early date. In fact, Roger would have still have been a member of Robert Campin's shop at that time.[9] Destrée adds that since the record of the Miraflores Charterhouse relates nothing of such a papal gift, it is highly unlikely that it ever existed; a gift from such an honorable donor--even if not directly given by the Pope to the convent--would probably have been recorded.[10]

We are left, then, with a terminus ante quem, for the original painting, of 1445, the date of Juan II's gift to the Charterhouse. A variety of dates has been proposed for the "Granada-New York" altarpiece--the original by Roger--on both stylistic and iconographical grounds. The most popular argument places this work just slightly earlier than the Werl Altarpiece, suggesting the dependence of the painter of this altarpiece on Roger's pose and gesture of Christ for the figure of John the Baptist.[11] Judging from the development of Roger's previous Madonna paintings in an architectonic setting, which culminates in the Prado Madonna in Red of 1436-37, and from the known date of the Werl Altarpiece, 1438,[12] we may conclude that the "Granada-New York" altarpiece was executed circa

1437-38.[13] Panofsky suggests that the two altarpieces were relatively contemporaneous. That is, no "appreciable" interval of time could have elapsed between their respective creations.[14] It seems that this assumption is correct.

The situation is further complicated by the history of the Charterhouse of Miraflores. Enriquez III of Castile had a home built in the country near Burgos which he called "Miraflores."[15] Upon Enriquez III's death in 1406, Juan II acceded to the Castilian throne at the age of two. The area was ruled peacefully by the King's regent and uncle, Don Ferdinand el de Antequera, until 1413, when Don Ferdinand became Ferdinand I of Aragon. The regency was then less successfully continued by the Queen-mother, Catherine, until the King attained major status in 1419. More interested in the arts and leisure pastimes and courtly spectacles than in his governmental duties, Juan II happily turned over the affairs of state to Don Alvero de Luño, Archbishop of Toledo.[16]

Juan II was responsible for dedicating "Miraflores" to the Carthusian order, as both a monastery and a seat of learning.[17] For the latter purpose, Juan imported several religious and lay teachers. At the time of receipt of its Carthusian charter in 1442, the convent's chapel was named for Saint Francis. It was, in fact, not until the year 1453 that it was renamed "Santa Maria de Miraflores," apparently upon its rededication following a

fire which devastated the Charterhouse in 1452. Juan II died and was buried in the convent's chapel in 1454.[18]

It appears certain that Juan II commissioned the Altarpiece of the Virgin with its ultimate monastic audience in mind. Had this been a personal commission, rather than one for a monastic community, Roger surely would have included a donor portrait of Juan II within the framework of the painting, as he included the donor in later compositions, such as the Bladelin Altarpiece and the Vienna Crucifixion triptych. The Altarpiece of the Virgin also favors an abstract presentation of Church doctrine, suitable for the meditation of a religious order versed in the subtleties of the Christian religion. A stipulation of the original commission, therefore, was undoubtedly that it be suitable for use by the Carthusian monastic order nascent at Miraflores.

From this point on, there is little known concerning the presence of the Altarpiece of the Virgin in the chapel of the Charterhouse of Miraflores. It is known that the copy remained at Miraflores until the early Nineteenth Century, when it appeared in the catalogue of General d'Armagnac.[19] The original remained in the possession of the royal family, through the period of ownership by Isabella the Catholic, who bequeathed the panels to the city of Granada.[20]

Two hypotheses present themselves in view of the above discussion. One possibility is that Juan II commissioned the original altarpiece, circa 1437-38, with its destination in the Miraflores chapel and its orientation toward a monastic community in mind. When the painting finally arrived from Flanders, the King may have been so pleased with it that he retained the original for himself, and then commissioned an exact duplicate for the convent's chapel. This replica would then be the painting documented by Ponz as donated by Juan II to the Charterhouse in 1445. This would account for the presence of the copy at Miraflores until the early Nineteenth Century, and also for the original panels remaining in royal hands.[21]

On the other hand, it might be argued that it was the original "Granada-New York" triptych which was given by Juan II to the Charterhouse at the somewhat late date of 1445.[22] It follows that at some point the "Miraflores" replica might have replaced the original painting on the altar of the convent's chapel. It is tempting to hypothesize that a copy had replaced the original at Miraflores by 1454, the year of Juan's death, yet the fact remains that there is no direct evidence to support such a hypothesis. Scholars have been unable to document either the date when the "Granada-New York" triptych could have left the convent, or the date of reinstatement of the chapel's altarpiece in the form of the "Miraflores" altarpiece.[23]

It could be suggested, on the basis of the above information, that the fire of 1452 may be the turning point which we seek to establish the replacement of the original altarpiece with the copy. Is it not possible that Juan II, having commissioned the original altarpiece from Roger and presented it to the Charterhouse of Miraflores in 1445, reclaimed the original after it was saved in the fire of 1452, and retained it thereafter? The copy could have arrived for the reopening of the Charterhouse. Perhaps even the fame of the painting was enough to encourage a rededication of the convent to the Virgin Mary in 1453. It is interesting to note that the present-day tympanum of the chapel portal is decorated with a sculpture of the Pietà, again perhaps reflecting the position of high esteem held by Roger's altarpiece.

Owing to the popularity of Flemish works of art in Spain, and to Juan II's interest in worldly pleasures, the monarch in either case no doubt chose to withhold the original painting, and commissioned a duplicate from Roger's workshop. In any event, the most important feature of the commissions is the implicit purpose of the altarpiece as the major devotional picture in a monastic chapel.

Having placed the Altarpiece of the Virgin in its historical setting, it shall be seen how its message unfolds in relation to the Charterhouse of Miraflores

and its members. The Carthusian order was a contemplative, monastic sect founded around the area of Grenoble, France, by Saint Bruno in 1084, and based on the ideal of a solitary, austere life spent in meditation to attain an eternal union with God.[24] It is accepted that the Virgin Mary is the foremost patron of each Carthusian monastery.[25] It is therefore not surprising, in light of this fact, that the chapel of the Charterhouse of Miraflores, although originally named for Saint Francis, had for its altarpiece a triptych of the Virgin, or that it was rededicated to the Virgin Mary.

The most distinctive feature of the composition of the Altarpiece of the Virgin is the use of the arch motif in each of the panels. Birkmeyer, in his study of the arch motif in Fifteenth Century Netherlandish painting, has fully traced the development of this motif from its devotional-symbolic form to a narrative-representational purpose. He concludes that the arches in the Altarpiece of the Virgin, typifying the first category, simulate a Gothic cathedral portal, and frame their respective scenes. Far from being mere frames, however, the arches aid in defining certain spatial and compositional relationships. For example, each scene takes place not only directly under the arch, but also partially beneath the barrel vault covering the space immediately behind the arched portal, thus delineating an area receding into the space beyond

the frame of the picture. This is most explicit in the Lamentation and Appearance panels, where a landscape vista is visible. It is apparent that the arches serve to open up a sacred realm to the viewer, one of a spiritual time and space.[26] This concept directly relates to the intent of actual Gothic church portal architecture and sculpture: a line of demarcation between the secular world outside the building and the suspended spiritual realm of the interior, recalling the association of the Virgin Mary with the architectural setting in the three earlier Madonna paintings. In those paintings, the architecture was a metaphor for Mary as the Church, and the gateway to Heaven. Roger's triple arch in the Altarpiece of the Virgin is more explicit yet, as the architecture becomes an obvious symbol for a Gothic portal.

According to Birkmeyer, the ultimate prototype for Roger's arcuated Altarpiece of the Virgin is the portal of the Chartreuse de Champmol, sculpted by Claus Sluter.[27] Founded by Philip the Bold to serve as a mausoleum for the Dukes of Burgundy, this Carthusian monastery--an order so chosen by Philip for its concern for the Office of the Dead--is of course the same building that has been suggested as the possible original location for the Vienna Madonna Standing. At the entrance to this ecclesiastical mortuary, the Madonna and Child are represented on the trumeau, flanked by the donors with their patron saints,

on the jambs. The portal is therefore a meaningful expression of the transition from the secular world of the living to an eternal kingdom beyond. The Duke and Duchess are presented to the Virgin Mary in her capacity as mediatress for each person at the time of judgment.[28] There is thus a "correlation of facade as entrance to the church, church as mausoleum, mortal death to eternal life with one monumental sculptural group"[29]: it therefore expresses the doctrine of the reward of the faithful.

Significantly, Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin was commissioned, probably by Juan II, for the chapel of a Carthusian monastery, the Charterhouse of Miraflores, which Juan had designated to hold his tomb upon his death. It seems that Miraflores was not Roger's only documented association with the Carthusians. In 1449, Roger's son Corneille entered the Charterhouse of Hérinnes, near Enghien, where he lived as a monk until his death in 1473.[30] Moreover, it is known that Roger himself was a benefactor of the Carthusian monastery of Scheut, near Brussels,[31] which was founded in 1454 under the name of Scheut-lez-Bruxelles.[32] With an awareness of the proliferation of Carthusian ideas on spirituality, and the rapid growth of the order in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, notably in Flanders and Holland, we may assume Roger's association with this order during his career. He could very well have been familiar with the major

theological ideas of the order prior to the commission of the Altarpiece of the Virgin, if indeed it is true that the Vienna Madonna Standing was executed for the Chartreuse de Champmol. If we regard the Chartreuse de Champmol as the paragon of the Carthusian mortuary chapel, it may be that the same innovative idea which is behind the conception of the portal of that well-known building at least partially inspired Roger's use of such an arch motif for his own purpose.

Although he sees architecture and church portal sculpture as Roger's primary inspiration, in the manner outlined above, Birkmeyer does cite the Betrothal of the Virgin by Robert Campin as a parallel to the use of the arch motif in Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin.[33] In contrast to Campin's incorporation of the arch with its imitated sculptural decoration depicting Old Testament prefigurations of New Testament events into an overall scene of a more narrative quality, Roger has placed the arches parallel to the picture plane and decorated each with scenes immediately relating to the main scene in the panel. In this way he has heightened the importance of the subsidiary scenes in relation to the entire altarpiece. In so doing, Birkmeyer states, Roger has taken an intentional step backwards in Flemish painting, from the more disguised symbolism of the Campin type to a decidedly obvious symbolism.[34] "He realizes that increasing

naturalism will convert religious events into historical narratives, and answers it, therefore, by monumentalizing the devotional image."[35]

Although some basic compositional devices bind the three panels of the Altarpiece of the Virgin together--a consistent light source from the left, and a symmetrical overall composition (V-shaped in the left and right panels, X-shaped in the center panel)--it is apparent that the frank frontality of the three main scenes is intended to heighten the isolation and individuality of each.[36] This lends a hieratic quality to the altarpiece, further stressing its devotional elements and the presence of a sacred realm within its confines. The earlier Madonnas by Roger had achieved a similar, iconic intent.

In borrowing the motif of the Gothic portal and its use in the Betrothal of the Virgin by Campin, Roger is doing more than synthesizing the diverse elements of architecture, sculpture, and painting into a coherent pictorial and devotional unit. He is combining the essential Christian theme of the Last Judgment with the doctrine of Mary as the Church. The latter notion is expressed in the Betrothal by Mary's position in relation to the Gothic arch, and by the idea that at the betrothal are the beginnings of the Church, and a way opened up for each believer to enter God's kingdom. These

themes, it shall be seen, are crucial to an understanding of the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

The arch motif remains, however, merely a form of introduction to the painting, as the principal function of the triptych is as an altarpiece. This fundamental purpose necessitates an investigation of the entire iconographical program, so as to underscore those themes which are essential to an eventual "horizontal" interpretation of the altarpiece as an entity. To this end, one must first analyze each panel in a "vertical" manner, delineating the several levels of meaning which are presented in each. The first is the historical level, presented as sculptured scenes in grisaille on the archivolt and jambs of each arch. The main scenes provide the focal point for these scenes. The historical level serves as a preparation, almost a mental exercise, before entrance into the sacred realm. The second level of meaning consists of the doctrinal significance of the painting, combining the Old Testament prefigurations and the inscriptions with the archivolt grisailles and the major scenes. The third level involves the liturgical meaning of the altarpiece and its relation to the liturgical enactment on the altar. In all these aims, Roger has drawn, as in most of his works, from the major well-known sources for the life of Christ and the lives of the saints at the end of the Middle Ages: the Speculum humanae salvationis, the Meditatationes

Vitae Christi of Pseudo-Bonaventura, the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, and the Biblia Pauperum.

The major scene on the left panel, the Virgin Mary Adoring the Infant Jesus, takes its source primarily from Pseudo-Bonaventura's account. In the Meditationes, Mary worships the child following the untraumatic birth. Joseph, too, according to this narrative, worships the child, then proceeds to make a cushion for Mary to sit upon.[37] The scene Roger depicts occurs somewhat after this latter incident, as Mary appears seated, worshipping the child, while Joseph sits sleeping nearby, in a moment of poignant intimacy for the Holy Family. What is disturbing, however, is the unconventional setting for this scene--an ecclesiastical interior, a sacred location--which contrasts sharply with the historical narrative of sorts, displayed on the archivolt, which establishes the cycle of the Birth of Christ: the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Adoration of the Shepherds, Adoration of the Magi, and Presentation in the Temple. This contrast is especially worthy of note if one regards the grisaille depiction of the Nativity, which is in fact not a Nativity at all, but another Adoration of the Infant Jesus. The devotional quality of the main scene is replaced on the archivolt by a purely historical inclination. Mary is shown kneeling in adoration, while Joseph stands, in an equivalent pose of adoration. The original historical setting is restored: the presence of the ox and the ass

indicates the stable.[38] On the right jamb of the portal stands Saint Luke, the only Evangelist to concentrate an appreciable portion of his gospel on the Virgin. Luke stands as a representative of his historical narrative, certain scenes from which are presented around the arch.[39]

It is recognizable, of course, that this is not merely a historical representation of the events surrounding the birth of Christ, but also the illustration of the Incarnation of the Word. The Incarnation traditionally begins with the Annunciation, as do the archivolt scenes in Roger's panel. This Annunciation is the first in a series of annunciations of important Church doctrines on this altarpiece. The theme of the Annunciation is carried through the Adoration of the Child scene by the appearance of the following segment from the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) on the border of Mary's robe: "[DO] MINUM ET EXALTAVIT SPIRITUS MEUS IN DE SALUTARI [MEO] QUIA [RESPE] XIT HUMILITATEM ANCILLE SUE E."[40] According to Pseudo-Bonaventura, Mary, in all humility, thanks God for giving her his son, as she adores the infant. The writer then gives an exhortation to the faithful to follow the double examples set by Mary and Jesus at his birth: to live in meekness, humility, and love of poverty.[41]

The inscription on the scroll above the scene verbalizes the example set by Mary: "This woman was found most worthy and free from all blemish, therefore

she shall receive the crown of life; from the First Letter of James."[42] Within this panel, Mary appears robed in white, the color of purity.[43] Purity, of course, is the specific attribute of Mary, as she is both physically and spiritually clean, the model for all Christians.[44] Many of these same ideas were expressed by Roger in the earlier Prado Madonna in Red. In that panel, Mary was depicted as pure and humble; the angel similarly descends with the crown which she merits on the basis of that humility and purity. Both paintings also refer to the coming of Christ as the Word of God.

The theme of humility and purity is reiterated by the slight filtering of light through the two glass windows in the back of the room. It is known from Millard Meiss's study that the Virgin was originally conceived of as a window through which the spirit of God passed to earth; this was transformed into the image of sunlight through glass, the unique emblem which symbolizes both the conception and birth of Christ.[45] As light penetrates the glass but does not violate it, so Mary remains yet a Virgin.[46] In this theme, then, there is an intimate relationship between Mary's humility and purity, and the Incarnation. The implicit idea that God was enclosed in Mary's body as daylight in a church[47] gives rise to one of many associations in this altarpiece of Mary as the Church. This idea is furthered by the little jamb figure

of Saint Peter who oversees this scene, serving as a reminder to the spectator not only that the birth of Christ means the founding of the Church to come, but also that Mary is that Church, and acts as the protectress for its faithful members. The drape of honor--similar to the one in the Vienna Madonna Standing--suggests Mary's true place of honor as the Church and Queen of Heaven.

In this panel, the viewer is constantly aware that the birth of Christ inevitably leads to his Passion and death. The death of Christ is foreshadowed in the pose of the infant Christ on Mary's lap, a traditional grouping reminiscent of the Pietà scene, which shall become the subject of the center panel of the Altarpiece of the Virgin. The capitals of the two columns in the left panel are decorated with Old Testament scenes: the Sacrifice of Abraham and the Death of Absalom. These scenes can be said to prefigure the death of Christ by the focus of each on the death of a son: Abraham's sacrifice of his son, and David's lamentation over the death of his rebellious son, Absalom. Indeed, both of these Old Testament scenes appear in the Speculum humanae salvationis and the Biblia Pauperum in their prefigurative capacities. Both sources treat the sacrifice of Isaac in general as a prefiguration for the Crucifixion.[48] The Biblia Pauperum mentions the biblical tradition that Isaac carried the wood by which his own sacrifice was to

be consummated; the event is seen as a prefiguration for the carrying of the Cross by Christ.[49] The Death of Absalom serves the identical former end as a reference to the Crucifixion. The Biblia Pauperum states that the conspiracy of Absalom against his father is a prefiguration for the betrayal of Christ by Judas.[50] The scene of the Presentation, which chronologically completes the archivolt cycle in the panel, has always carried with it a presentiment both of Christ's demise and the Virgin's sorrow, in the prophecy of Simeon.[51]

The doctrine of the Incarnation is an integral part of the liturgy of the Church, firstly because it comprises the Christmas season of the Church, the major portion of the Church year. Although the year begins officially with the season of Advent, that season is characterized by anticipation of, and preparation for the coming of Christ. This attention to the birth of Christ serves further to help explain the counterclockwise reading of the archivolt scenes, as they describe a circle when read in such a manner, alluding both to the individual cycle of the Christmas season, and to the cyclical nature of the Church year in general. In specific reference to the rite of the Mass, this scene of the Adoration of the Infant--who is the incarnate Word--stands, when the triptych is situated on the altar, in direct relation to the position of the Gospel as it is read. This emphasizes our awareness

of Christ as the living Word, about whom the Gospels are written. It also makes a liturgical Church doctrine of the notion of Christ as logos which Roger was developing in the earlier Madonna paintings.

The center panel in the Altarpiece of the Virgin reveals the Virgin Mary seated, grieving over the dead body of Christ which is draped across her lap. Present at the event are John, the beloved apostle, and Joseph of Arimathea. The now-vacant Cross looms in the middle ground, behind which opens up a broad landscape vista, with the view of a medieval town in the distance, to indicate Jerusalem. The sacred-devotional realm, thus delineated, contrasts, as in the Adoration panel, with the historical narrative displayed on the archivolt. This time the Passion of Christ is the subject, consisting of Christ Taking Leave of Mary, the Announcement of Christ's Arrest to the Virgin, the Road to Calvary, the Erection of the Cross, the Crucifixion, and the Entombment. Again arranged counterclockwise chronologically, the scenes serve to establish a historical framework. It is significant that the archivolt does not relate the traditional scenes of Christ's Passion--such a significant incident as the Betrayal is omitted, for example--but rather is a compendium of events, during the period of the Passion, directly related to the suffering of both Christ and Mary. Wherever possible, Mary is shown in a posture of reciprocal

suffering with Christ, as can be evidenced in the grisailles of the Road to Calvary and the Erection of the Cross.[52]

Originating in the vesperbild--the Northern devotional image of Mary holding the dead Christ on her lap--this form of Lamentation, or Pietà, scene is the tragic counterpart to the Madonna and Child motif, seen in Roger's Adoration panel.[53] In contrast to the traditional German iconography, wherein the dead Christ is usually proportionately smaller than Mary, the Italian version presents a fusion of the Byzantine "Threnos," or last kiss motif, with a Madonna of Humility, showing the Virgin holding the life-size dead body of Christ.[54] Roger's scene cannot unequivocally be called a Pietà, since the Pietà scene usually shows Mary alone with the dead Christ,[55] yet it is not rightfully a Lamentation at the tomb: the Cross in the background indicates that the body has just recently been deposed, and has not been removed to the tomb. What Roger depicts, therefore, is a suspended moment in time, partaking neither of corporal time--it is specifically singled out from the historical narrative of the archivolt--nor of earthly space. The Gothic portico just materializes in the area between the arch and Golgotha, implied by the Cross.

Inherent in the Lamentation scene is the compassionate nature of the Virgin Mary. The emotive quality of the scene is emphasized by its juxtaposition with the

serene flanking scenes of the Adoration and the Appearance of Christ to his mother,[56] and by its stark frontality. Mary's personal grief is central to this scene. By Roger's time it had become an accepted theological tradition to consider the Passion of Christ to be paralleled by the compassion of the Virgin. As early as the Twelfth Century, there was increased emphasis in Christian writings on Mary's own suffering at the Cross, due in part to the more important role played by Mary in the Christian religion.[57] This is especially evident in the appearance of the motif of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin, which correspond to seven of Christ's Stations of the Cross. These sorrows have traditionally been likened to thrusts of a sword into Mary's heart.[58] Thus, Mary herself came to be regarded as an active participant in the act of redemption.[59] According to Otto von Simson, the term co-redemptio had been employed in relation to Mary in the early Fourteenth Century, but the formulation of a single concept combining compassio and co-redemptio arises contemporaneous with Roger, in the writings of Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444) and Denis the Carthusian, who stresses Mary's active role in the act of redemption, through her compassion, that is, her suffering at the foot of the Cross, and spoke of her with the epithet, Salvatrix Mundi.[60]

The Speculum humanae salvationis was probably Roger's immediate source for the expression of the notion of compassion in reference to Mary, yet he undoubtedly drew also from a long tradition of mystical writings on the topic.[61] It is precisely in the scene of the Lamentation where the Speculum first elaborates on the theme of compassion:

> The last chapitle tofore / told cristis passionne
> Heres now his moderes doel / and rewthfulle compassionne.[62]

Later, the Speculum speaks of Mary's heart pierced by her compassion, of her head compassionately pierced by the crown of thorns, and of a "swerde of sharpest tongues" piercing her soul.[63]

The Speculum humanae salvationis also refers to the role of Mary parallel to that of Christ, in the redemptive work. Following Christ's descent into Limbo the Speculum says:

> Herd nowey crist ouercome / the feende be his passionne
> Heres how our ladye ouercome / hym be compassionne.[64]

But especially in the Lamentation chapter the author of the Speculum requests an eternal life for all the faithful together with Christ, following the example of Mary.[65] Otto von Simson has, it seems accurately, characterized

the relationship of the theological doctrine of co-redemption to the Fifteenth Century Christian in the following words:

> If Mary was believed to have partaken of Christ's sacrifice because of her poignant share in his sufferings, it was not the abstract theological doctrine that moved the late Middle Ages but its meaning in terms of human experience. Or rather, the doctrine had to be lived to become effective. In order to earn the fruits of Passion and Compassion, the faithful must be able to relive them empathically.[66]

Roger expressed the very same sentiment in his Escorial Deposition, executed at roughly the same time as the Altarpiece of the Virgin.[67]

This, then, is Roger's instructive message in the center panel of the Altarpiece of the Virgin: imitate Mary[68] in her humility, suffering, and compassion, and she will, with her power as protectress of and mediatress for men at the Judgment, lead men to eternal life with God. This theme, as the corresponding one in the Adoration panel, is reiterated in the inscription on the scroll held by the angel: "This woman was most faithful in the Passion of Christ, therefore there is given to her the crown of life; from the Second Chapter of Revelation."[69]

Saint Matthew stands on the left jamb of the arch, indicating that the historical and doctrinal pivotal event, the death of Christ, occurs within, and that the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled. (Matthew, it

is to be remembered, wrote for the Jews and makes frequent reference in his Gospel to the Old Testament prophecies.) In contrast, John the Evangelist appears on the left jamb. The one Evangelist believed to have witnessed the actual events of the Passion of Christ, he steps outside of himself, from the scene within the arch, to record the events and their significance for history. This further emphasizes the historicity of the grisaille scenes on the arches. Yet if one recalls the tendency to regard John the Evangelist and John, author of the Book of Revelation, as one and the same, this figure also points to the pivotal importance of the death of Christ, in its forward-looking significance as a prelude to the Resurrection and ultimately the Second Coming of Christ. On the one hand, Matthew represents the old order of the Old Testament, and on the other, John represents the eternal new order to come. This theme is embellished by the background motifs. A capital depicts the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, a scene which looks back to the original sin necessitating the sacrifice of Christ,[70] looks to the present as a prefiguration of the Lamentation (referring to the grief of Adam and Eve over the death of Abel),[71] and looks to the future when Christ and Mary will be enthroned as the new Adam and Eve. Perhaps, too, the medieval town in the distant landscape background hints at the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem proposed by John in the Book of

Revelation. The vision of the New Jerusalem, equated with the Church, would denote another reference to Mary in her capacity as the personification of the Church.

In terms of liturgical significance, the scenes of the center panel comprise the second great portion of the Church year--the Passion cycle--stopping short of the Resurrection. The Lamentation is an obvious allusion to the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrament of the Eucharist. As no coincidence, this portion of the altarpiece would be situated in direct relation to the position of the Eucharistic comestibles on the altar, and in turn to the act of consecration--the most sacred part of the Mass--which occurs before the altar. The stark Cross in the center of the panel could almost act as the Cross at the back of the altar, by its frontal position. The Passion of Christ, then, not only occupies a period of time in the cycle of the entire Church year, but also occurs continually on a daily basis, in the sacrifice of the Mass. The single stylized vegetal capital with a pattern of grapes which appears in each of the three panels in the altarpiece alludes to the Passion of Christ as it is celebrated in the daily cyclical ritual of the Mass, in the sacrament of communion.

Expectedly, the Eucharistic symbolism of the panel includes the Virgin Mary. In mariological thought, the Virgin was likened not only to the tabernacle of the

Eucharist, but also to the altar table itself, upon which the Eucharistic elements were placed.[72] As the holy receptacle of the divine Christ in human form at the Incarnation, Mary was also viewed as the mystical vessel which housed the body and blood of Christ.[73] Thomas à Kempis, in the Imitation of Christ, likens the faithful person partaking of the sacrament to the Virgin Mary at the moment she conceived--or received Christ--in her body:

> O Lord my God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I do desire to receive Thee this day, with such affection, reverence, praise and honour, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when . . . the Angel . . . declared unto her glad tidings of the mystery of the Incarnation. . . .[74]

Therefore, our imitation of Mary's humility and purity may be extended to include our participation in the celebration of the Mass. It must be remembered, also, that it is through the communion of the faithful that the principal work of redemption is carried out on a continuing basis. One must again regard the Virgin Mary in her capacity as a redemptress almost equal in significance to Christ as a redemptor.[75]

The Passion and death of Christ lead invariably to his Resurrection, a scene greatly elaborated in the right-hand panel of Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin. The main scene is instantaneously recognizable as

atypical in Christian iconography: the Appearance of Christ to Mary following the Resurrection. Equally unusual is the relegation of the Resurrection itself to the middle distant landscape background. The Appearance takes place in an ecclesiastical setting almost identical to the setting of the Adoration in the left-hand panel. Again, the scene is juxtaposed with the archivolt scenes, where Roger attempts to historicize the miraculous events from the Resurrection through the death of the Virgin: the Three Maries Taking Leave of the Virgin to go to the Tomb, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Annunciation of the Virgin's Death, the Death of the Virgin, and the Coronation of the Virgin.

The viewer is introduced, via Saint Mark on the left jamb, to the sacred realm beneath the arch. Mark's gospel, we shall recall, ends abruptly at the tomb, when the angel announces to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome that Christ has risen from the dead (Mark 16:1-8). The scenes of the Resurrection and the Appearance of Christ to his Mother on Roger's panel form a completion to Mark's Gospel. Doctrinally, of course, these scenes mark a new beginning--a rebirth, as it were--and one is reminded of the, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end," of Revelation 21:6. The Resurrection marks the actual fulfillment of the promise

of redemption, and for this reason the theme of the third panel is theologically the most important of the three presented on the altarpiece.

The question is, however, why did Roger choose the unconventional scene of the Appearance to illustrate so crucial a concept in Christian doctrine as redemption? James D. Breckenridge has studied extensively the iconographical sources for the scene, and has concluded that Roger's unusual presentation of the Resurrection and Appearance scenes possibly indicates that he combined two iconographical sources: the Meditationes of Pseudo-Bonaventura, and a Spanish type specifically of Catalan origin.[76]

Although the scene is not related in any canonical or apocryphal gospel, the early Church had found ambiguous gaps in scripture where it was possible to assume at least Mary's passive presence at certain events in the life of Christ. In fact, as the Virgin Mary's cult grew in importance in the Church, it became increasingly more objectionable for her to be omitted from the major gospel events.[77] One of these events was the Resurrection. Jacobus de Voragine states in the Golden Legend that "it is the common belief that Our Lord appeared first of all to the Virgin Mary."[78] The legend related by Pseudo-Bonaventura represents this tradition that Christ appeared first to Mary, following the Resurrection, and

it is generally accepted that Roger used this immediate literary source for his painting.[79] In this account, Mary remains at home while Mary Magdalene, Jacob, and Salome take leave of her to go bearing ointments to the tomb of Christ. Mary is mournfully praying to God, asking that her son Jesus be restored alive, when he appears to her in "alther whiteft [sic] clothes" and greets her. Mary spontaneously kneels, asking if it is really Jesus. He kneels also, and they embrace and kiss, after which they sit together and Jesus tells his mother of his descent into hell to deliver the righteous after the Crucifixion.[80] Roger obviously does not adhere strictly to this source. His setting is more ecclesiastical than domestic. And Christ approaches cautiously, perhaps representing a slight conflation of this event with the Noli me tangere scene.[81] Christ wears red in Roger's scene, instead of white. This is probably a reference to medieval mystery plays in which Jesus would be dressed in a violet tunic during his life, but would always wear a red cloth following the Resurrection. Since the mystery plays were presented with the same costumes everywhere,[82] it is likely that Roger was familiar with this tradition, and indeed Christ appears dressed in red both in the Resurrection scene itself and in the Appearance scene.

Despite these differences, it seems unmistakable that Roger's main source for his composition was the

Pseudo-Bonaventura account.[83] In the upper left grisaille group on the archivolt, the Three Maries take leave of Christ's mother, and they reappear in the distant background of the landscape as they approach the tomb. They have left Mary alone to pray, unaware of the fact that by the time they are to reach the tomb, it will have already been vacated. Meanwhile, Mary has noticeably been surprised while praying, and tears are still fresh on her face.

Curiously, though, the actual scene of the Resurrection is shown in the background. Its presence there may be explained by Roger's attempt to make it explicit that Christ appeared first to the Virgin Mary, as he is shown in the Virgin's dwelling. The tomb in the background has been recently vacated, before the Three Maries reach it. But more precisely, it seems, the Resurrection is there to accommodate the uniquely Spanish variant of the scene, probably upon the donor's request, or in consultation with theologians helping Roger with the project.[84] This Spanish type seems to bear no relation to that of Pseudo-Bonaventura. Instead, it adds Mary to the Resurrection scene itself, by depicting her looking through a window or doorway adjacent to the garden of the Resurrection.[85] In regard to Roger's composition, the Spanish viewer may conclude that Mary had witnessed the Resurrection through the open doorway at the back of the room, prior to Christ's appearance to her. But, to be consistent with the spirit

of the other two major scenes on the altarpiece, and with the quality of surprise on the face of the Virgin, the Appearance of Christ to Mary was probably intended by Roger to remain suspended in space and time: it is a single instant existing independently of the Resurrection scene in the background of the picture, and only dependent on it in a symbolic way.

This use of the Appearance, rather than the Resurrection, as the main focus of attention in this panel, is for the purpose of presenting the Virgin Mary again as the focal point for contemplation and to emphasize her compassionate role, this time specifically in redemption. Roger, we recall, presents his complex theme on three levels: (1) the exemplary life of the Virgin Mary; (2) Mary's role as mediatress and protectress for each man at his own individual moment of judgment; and (3) the role of the Church--where Mary is seen as the Church--in the redemptive process and eternal life. Each of these levels has been dealt with in one way or another already in the thematic study of the left and center panels of the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

The first category, the exemplary life of the Virgin, has been anticipated in the two previous panels by emphasis on Mary's humility and endurance. The end result, here shown in the scene of the Appearance, is the answer to Mary's prayers and hopes--the resurrected Christ.

The ultimate result of her perseverance is seen in the upper right archivolt scene, where she is shown enthroned for eternity by the side of her son. The inscription on the scroll held by the angel also indicates the worthiness of Mary to be invested with life eternal: "This woman persevered, conquering everything, therefore has been given to her a crown; from the Sixth Chapter of Revelation."[86] This is a reminder to the faithful that in imitating Mary's example they, too, can earn a place in eternal life with Christ, that their prayers will be answered and their hopes fulfilled.

The second category--Mary's redemptive role for each individual--is intimately connected to the first. That is, by leading a life of faith and humility, the faithful person will merit Mary's protection and mediation in his favor at the moment of his death. In Roger's panel the idea of co-redemption is expressed by Mary's reciprocal response to Christ's gesture of raised hands. Here we are again reminded of Denis the Carthusian's epithet for Mary as the Salvatrix Mundi, to refer to her compassionate role in the redemption of the righteous.

The third level of meaning, encompassing the role of the Church in the redemptive process and in eternal life, is introduced by the use of the symbol of the ecclesiastical architectural setting to indicate not only that Mary is in the Church, but that she is the Church.

The ecclesiastical setting is only now fully revealed to the viewer--the cloth of honor in the Adoration panel has been removed--just as the founding of the Church occurred in the days after Christ's Resurrection. This theme is embellished by the presence on the jamb of the figure of Saint Paul, in his capacity as an original father of the Church. The empty pedestal above the doorway leading into the landscape is also a reference to the Church. As it is likewise used in the Friedsam Annunciation, this niche waits for Christ.[87] Unborn in the Annunciation painting, Christ is risen in Roger's panel, to take his place as the "keystone," or founder and head of the Church.

The Old Testament scenes on the capitals of the columns, in turn, serve to stress the power of the Church over the forces of the devil. They are types presented in the Speculum humanae salvationis and the Biblia Pauperum as prefigurations for New Testament events. David's victory over Goliath is a prefiguration for the temptation of Christ, according to the Speculum,[88] and for Christ's victorious descent into Limbo, in the Biblia Pauperum.[89] In both sources the story of Samson and the Lion prefigures Christ's descent into Limbo and his triumph there over the devil in order to free the righteous.[90] Again in both sources, the tale of Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza serves to prefigure Christ's Resurrection, and in the Speculum it is made clear that the Resurrection of

Christ is equated with man's redemption.[91] Each one of these themes, however, may also be applied to the Church. It shall endure, victorious over evil, and its faithful members shall partake of eternal life: they shall be resurrected, or born anew, at baptism first of all, and after death at the Last Judgment. The viewer is reminded again of the inscription on the scroll held by the angel, which may now be read as the Church having "persevered, conquering everything." In Christian thought, the Church will always endure; it will never turn to dust, just as Mary was assumed bodily into Heaven and never turned to dust. Christ has conquered the flesh in his Resurrection and his Ascension; Mary has conquered the flesh in her Assumption; and the Church, at the Second Coming, will be established to reign eternally as the New Jerusalem.

In the Carthusian rite of the Mass, the participant is asked, after the Communion, to re-contemplate the Incarnation, when the celebrant reads the prologue to the Gospel of John:[92] "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," etc. With this, the Mass participant is reminded that Christ is born as the Word, sacrificed each day in the Mass, and born anew to be sacrificed the next day. Thus, the Mass is the active reliving of the redemptive process.

As a whole, the scenes depicted on this panel complete the cycle of the Church year proposed in the

previous two. As much as they indicate a completion, they also signify a new beginning, consistent with the theme of the Resurrection. The faithful viewer will think once again of the Incarnation. It had been suggested, in the Fourth Century, by Saint Ambrose of Milan, that Christ's resurrection from his tomb symbolically repeats his birth.[93] Saint Jerome has written of a similar concept and elaborated it to say that both Mary's womb and the tomb of Christ were the purest of containers for the body of Christ; neither were used either before or after Christ.[94] In subtle reference to this point of view, there are two annunciations on this panel: the angel at the tomb in the background of the main scene will very shortly announce the resurrection of Christ to the approaching figures of the Three Maries, while on the archivolt Mary is notified of her imminent death. It is interesting to note that the angel in this latter scene is not Gabriel, who announced the Incarnation, but rather Michael, traditionally the archangel of judgment and triumph over the devil. Mary is therefore being given her eternal role, as the Church, in judgment and conquering of evil.

As we have seen, all three panels of Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin strongly emphasize Mary's role in each of the major series of events presented: the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Resurrection. Significantly, the last scene chronologically on the

altarpiece--the Coronation of the Virgin which appears on the upper right archivolt of the right-hand panel--holds a crucial place in mariological cult doctrine, and within this doctrine is almost equal in importance to the Resurrection itself. The scene of Mary's glorious Coronation, though not in the canonical biblical texts, is recounted in an apocryphal source, which has been popularized in the Golden Legend.[95] Roger depicts Mary crowned by the Trinity, a motif which appeared when the Virgin Mary reached the height of her theological importance.[96] This motif is symbolically repeated in the triple crowns held by the angels in the three arches.

The Coronation expresses again the value of Mary's central role in the redemptive process. It is essential to this doctrine to remember that Mary shares equally in the glory, as well as the suffering of Christ. The faithful, in turn, are exhorted to share in Christ's suffering through contemplation of his Passion and through active participation in the Mass, and to emulate and imitate the exemplary life of the Virgin Mary. Only in doing this will they be able to attain eternal glory, through the intercession of the Virgin. This theme is visually expressed by the upward movement of the viewer's eyes as he contemplates the three final scenes of the archivolt, those relating to Mary's Assumption.[97] This theme is

particularly appropriate for the members of the Carthusian order, as those members generally spent their lives in silent contemplation of union with the divine.

The Altarpiece of the Virgin assumes a broader interpretation when considered in terms of the mystical-religious feeling of the time. Although the chief vehicles of religious experience in the Carthusian community were silent meditation and the celebration of daily Mass in the solitude of the monk's cell, it was not contrary to the aims of the order for the monastic community to perform works of a more public type.[98] It is equally not unusual, then, for an altarpiece in a Carthusian monastery to bear a theme relating to the universal Church and to the mission of that Church.

The relationship of Roger van der Weyden to the Carthusian writers and to the mystics of the Late Middle Ages may seem tenuous and at best hypothetical, yet it is highly likely that Roger was aware of the currents of religious thought circulating in the North of Europe during the Fifteenth Century. Denis the Carthusian, Roger's almost exact contemporary (1402-03 - 1471), was a theologian and prolific mystical writer who lived in both Belgium and Holland. Seeking a union with God through eternal love and wisdom, Denis's writings can be associated with earlier mystical trends of thought.[99]

He was probably most influenced by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysus, but was also attentive to the writings of Jan van Ruysbroek and the German mystics, advocating the contemplative life in search of divine illumination.[100] It is interesting to note that the group known as the Brethren of the Common Life seem to have been equally attentive to both the teachings of the Carthusians and those of Ruysbroek. Gerhard Groote, the founder of the Brethren, made a special pilgrimage to visit Ruysbroek. And several of the leaders of the Brethren--including Groote--spent some time at a Carthusian monastery.[101] It appears that these mystical--and quite ascetic--religious attitudes were probably well known throughout the Netherlands by the Fifteenth Century.[102] Moreover, the ideas of Ruysbroek and the Carthusians seem to be mutually compatible.

The type of spiritual contemplation advocated by Ruysbroek leads to rebirth for the soul of the holy person. In The Sparkling Stone, he says: "For we must die to sin and be born of God into a life of virtue, and we must renounce ourselves and die in God into an eternal life."[103] The drama of the Resurrection, then, is an integral part of the theological basis of his mysticism. Ruysbroek speaks not only in terms of an exemplary life for each man so that he will merit life after death, but also in an apocalyptic sense of being reborn at the Last Judgment

into an eternal life as one with God. Ruysbroek suggests that the faithful person do this by pious meditation. And, if the person goes about this in the most humble way, he may be able to achieve the unity of his soul with God, even during his life, which is the ultimate reward for his faith:

> But when we transcend ourselves, and become, in our ascent toward God, so simple that the naked love in the heights can lay hold of us, where love enfolds love, above every exercise of virtue--that is, in our Origin of which we are spiritually born--then we cease, and we and all our selfhood die in God . . . and find a new life within us: and that is eternal life.[104]

In The Spiritual Espousals, Ruysbroek speaks of three comings of Christ: first, his historical coming, in order to redeem mankind; second, the daily coming of Christ "in every loving heart"; and third, his coming in judgment at the hour of death.[105] If we bear in mind that Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin is conceived as a spiritual exercise of sorts, comprising the salient points of Church doctrine, we are able to read into Roger's altarpiece the three comings of Christ. The first panel, depicting the Adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Virgin Mary, refers to the event known as the Nativity, or Christ's historical birth, and therefore alludes to Ruysbroek's notion of the first coming of Christ.

Roger's second panel, we shall recall, deals with the Passion and death of Christ, and the Eucharistic

significance of his act of suffering. Ruysbroek emphasizes Christ's inner "humility, charity and suffering in patience,"[106] as a call for compassion on the part of the faithful in order to attain union with God. Indeed, for Ruysbroek compassion is one of the highest virtues,[107] corresponding to much of the Marian mysticism of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. The interrelated concepts of Passion and Compassion which Roger has expressed in the center panel of the Altarpiece of the Virgin correspond to the second coming of Christ which occurs every day in the hearts of the faithful in the Eucharistic celebration of the Mass, which is the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

Roger's right-hand panel alludes to the Parousia in its focus on the events surrounding the Resurrection of Christ. In the emphasis on judgment in both Roger's panel and in Ruysbroek's notion of the third coming of Christ, there is an apocalyptic quality: Christ will come again as judge, and Mary--as his Bride--will intercede for the faithful. It must be remembered that through all three of Roger's panels Mary shares the principal role with Christ.[108] Ultimately--on the upper right archivolt--she appears in a Coronation scene which is also a mystical marriage uniting human flesh--Mary was assumed bodily into Heaven--with the triple Godhead. Mary's identification with the Church in the altarpiece is assured by the

obvious symbolism of the ecclesiastical architecture, repeating the same general imagery he had used thrice before in the earlier Madonna pictures of the 1430's. It is part of Roger's genius that, although we are able to relate each of his panels to one of the three comings of Christ expressed by Ruysbroek, Roger is still able to infuse each panel with an eternal quality, which lends itself to a wide scope of interpretation.

The concept of Mary as the Church has a specific meaning in relation to the Book of Revelation and, in turn, in regard to Roger's Altarpiece of the Virgin. It is apparent that Roger intended the viewer to contemplate the meaning of this book of the New Testament, as he carefully chose passages from Revelation to be adapted to the Virgin Mary and placed on the scrolls borne by the angels above the scenes of the Lamentation and the Appearance of Christ to his mother. It is likely, in fact, that Roger expected the viewers of the altarpiece to be familiar with the original texts of all three inscriptions on the triptych, and that they should be able to extrapolate a deeper message from the work as a whole, on the basis of these. This seems highly probable, considering that the audience for the altarpiece was a monastic community, educated in theology. One recalls that the inscription over the Adoration panel reads: "This woman was found most worthy and free from all

blemish, therefore she shall receive the crown of life."[109] Adapted from James 1:12, the original text reads: "Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him." Those who "endure trial" recall the Christian martyrs so greatly praised in the Book of Revelation, as the faithful person is asked to withstand all tests in order to merit the reward of eternal life.

The inscription over the Lamentation scene serves to expound upon this apocalyptic theme. It is from Revelation 2:10. Roger's inscription reads: "This woman was most faithful in the Passion of Christ, therefore there is given to her the crown of life";[110] yet the Revelation passage states: "Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life." The passage directly refers to Christ, and also to Mary, her perseverance and ultimate union with God. The "test" for Mary was the death of her Son; but she endured the trial, and, as seen in the right panel of the altarpiece, her hopes were fulfilled and her faith rewarded by the visit of the resurrected Christ. This inscription, too, asks that the faithful imitate Mary's perseverance so that they might be rewarded with eternal life. But this time,

the urgency and seriousness of the message is stressed. The faithful person is told to "be faithful unto death," thus emphasizing that the time for judgment to come is approaching.

The most perplexing of the inscriptions--that over the Appearance scene--when deciphered serves to illuminate the apocalyptic role of Mary as the Church, and as the Bride of Christ. Roger's inscription reads: "This woman persevered, conquering everything, therefore there has been given to her a crown."[111] Yet the original biblical text, Revelation 6:2, is enigmatic when placed in the context of the altarpiece: "And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." The mysterious motif of the rider of the white horse appears once again in the Book of Revelation, in Chapter 19:11-13:

> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. / His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. / He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the Word of God.

It appears that the identity of the rider of the white horse, in both Revelation 19 and 6 is Jesus Christ.[112] The title of the rider is "The Word of God," which is a reference to Christ. Further, the passage encompasses

both the Incarnation and Passion, the latter by the allusion to Christ's death in the image of the "robe dipped in blood." Christ himself also deserves the titles, "Faithful and True," in regard to his faithfulness to God, his Father. What Roger is saying by changing this apocalyptic vision of Christ to Mary in his inscription, is that both Christ and Mary will conquer together at the end of the era.

The role played by the faithful is also illuminated by further investigation of Roger's inscription from Revelation 6:2. The second appearance of the rider of the white horse is prefaced by an extraordinary set of nuptials. In Revelation 19:7-8, the multitudes glorify the Lamb with the following words:

> "Let us rejoice and exult and give him
> the glory,
> for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
> and his Bride has made herself ready; /
> it was granted her to be clothed with
> fine linen, bright and pure"--
> for the fine linen is the righteous deeds
> of the saints.

Deciphered, this scene represents the mystical marriage of Christ to his Church, symbolized in Roger's altarpiece by none other than the Virgin Mary. The "righteous deeds of the saints" signifies, in contemporary terms, the continued faith of the members of the Church,[113] and in this case of the Charterhouse of Miraflores.

The certainty of Roger's apocalyptic message to the faithful is intensified in light of the Speculum humanae salvationis and the Biblia Pauperum. Both sources end with a discussion of the Last Judgment. The Biblia Pauperum, in its final section on the Reward of the Righteous, refers the reader to the all-important Chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation.[114] There, the reader finds a discussion of the New Jerusalem. John writes:

> And / he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. / He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son." (Revelation 21:6-7)

And the angel says to John, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:9), referring to the Holy City Jerusalem, that is, the Church. This notion of the "water of life" and the theme of conquering[115] relate directly to Roger's inscription above the Appearance panel. An order may now be established, according to which it can be understood that Christ has suffered, endured trial, and attained eternal life with his Father, followed in imitation by Mary, and, finally, by the faithful members of the Church. This last idea is ultimately stated in the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament passages cited in the Biblia Pauperum

as prefigurations for the Reward of the Righteous. In an excerpt from the Song of Songs (4:7), the bridegroom addresses his spouse, saying that she will be crowned. The passage from Isaiah (6:10) similarly alludes to a bridegroom and a coronation. The Biblia Pauperum interprets this for the reader, that Christ is the Bridegroom, and the bride is the soul of the righteous person.[116] There is an obvious reference here to the trend in religious thinking of which Ruysbroek was but one exponent.

NOTES--CHAPTER II

[1]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 261, 262, and 263.

[2]Wehle and Salinger, A Catalogue of Early Flemish Paintings, p. 30.

[3]Davies states that this triptych is said to have left Miraflores during the Napoleonic Wars, and that it fell into the possession of General d'Armagnac. (See Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 214.)

[4]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 461, note 3 to p. 259.

[5]Roger van Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, Vol. VI of Les Primitifs Flamands. I. Corpus de la Peinture des Anciens Pays-Bas Méridionaux au Quinzième Siècle (Brussels: Publications du Centre National de Recherches "Primitifs Flamands," 1963), p. 92.

[6]Antonio Ponz, Viaje de España, Vol. XII (1788), pp. 57ff, cited by Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 214.

[7]Jules Destrée, Roger de la Pasture van der Weyden, Vol. I (Paris: Les Éditions G. van Oest, 1930), p. 95. Panofsky (Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 461, note 3 to p. 259) discusses Ponz's careful discrimination between the actual Church record and the "belief" that it had originally been a papal gift to Juan II.

[8]Panofsky prefers to call the altarpieces "genuine duplicates"; that is, both were made in Roger's workshop, and not separated by a great interval of time, the "Granada-New York" work being the first of the two, and by Roger himself. (Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 461, note 3 to p. 259.) Friedländer (Early Netherlandish Painting, II, p. 13) speaks of the two altarpieces as being exact and contemporaneous duplicates: "Whatever date is assigned to the Miraflores altarpiece . . . applies to the Granada altarpiece as well." And Leo van Puyvelde

makes a stylistic case for calling the altarpieces "replicas" rather than "original" and "copy." ("Les Primitifs Flamands a l'Exposition de Bruxelles," Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art, V [October, 1935], 312.) See also J. Taubert, "Die Beiden Marienaltäre des Rogier van der Weyden," Pantheon, II (1960), 67ff.

[9]This theory is corroborated by Panofsky (Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 247) who states that Roger left Campin's workshop on August 1, 1432. See also Paul Lafond, Roger van der Weyden, Collection des Grands Artistes des Pays-Bas (Brussels and Paris: Librairie Nationale d'Art et d'Histoire G. Van Oest et Cie, 1912), p. 18. Nevertheless, some scholars have insisted on an early date for the altarpiece, to accommodate such a papal gift. But few recent writers would agree with this. (Cf. A. J. Wauters, "Roger van der Weyden - I," Burlington Magazine, XXII [October, 1912 - March, 1913], 76.)

[10]Destrée, Roger de la Pasture, I, p. 96.

[11]Van Schoute (Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, p. 93) designates Winkler, Friedländer (originally), Beenken, and Panofsky as among those scholars who have held this opinion concerning the approximate date of the original.

[12]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 173.

[13]Ibid., p. 258.

[14]Ibid., p. 461, note 3 to p. 259.

[15]"Miraflores (Cartuja de Nuestra Señora de)," Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana, n.d., Vol. XXXV, p. 789.

[16]C. W. Previté-Orton and Z. N. Brooke, eds., The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. VIII: The Close of the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 479.

[17]It would not be unusual, in light of Huizinga's treatise, for a king so given to worldly enjoyments to dedicate a monastery to such a world-denying order as the Carthusians. (See J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle

Ages (Second ed.; Doubleday Anchor Books; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 9-31 (Chapter I, "The Violent Tenor of Life").

[18]"Miraflores," Enciclopedia Universal, XXXV, p. 789.

[19]Cf. Note 3 (Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 214).

[20]A. J. Wauters ("Roger van der Weyden - I," p. 82) states that the "Granada-New York" triptych passed, upon the death of Juan II in 1454, to Enriquez IV, then ultimately to Enriquez's daughter, Isabella.

[21]Davies (Rogier van der Weyden, p. 215) corroborates the notion that it was the copy which was given to the convent in 1445. However, Davies insists Juan II never owned the original at all, which seems highly unlikely.

[22]Destrée, Roger de la Pasture, I, p. 96, and Van Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, p. 93.

[23]Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert (Histoire de la peinture flamande des origines à la fin du XVe siècle, Vol. 2: Les Continuateurs des Van Eyck [Paris and Brussels: Les Éditions G. van Oest, 1927-29], p. 36) makes the statement that the Miraflores convent received the replica of the altarpiece in the year 1455, but unfortunately gives no source for this assertion. I know of no other scholar to support this.

[24]B. DuMoustier, "Carthusian Spirituality," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, Prepared by an editorial staff at The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), Vol. III, pp. 161-62.

[25]Archdale A. King, Liturgies of the Religious Orders (Second ed.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 31.

[26]Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," p. 3.

[27]For a discussion of church portals Roger was probably most familiar with, see Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," p. 13, note 78, and the bibliography mentioned therein.

[28]Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," p. 12.

[29]Ibid., p. 13.

[30]Theodore H. Feder, "A Reexamination Through Documents of the First Fifty Years of Roger van der Weyden's Life," Art Bulletin, XLVIII (September-December, 1966), 430.

[31]Otto G. von Simson, "'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio' in Rogier van der Weyden's 'Descent from the Cross,'" Art Bulletin, XXXV (1953), 14-15, and note 40, where the reader is referred to Destrée, Roger de la Pasture, I, p. 68.

[32]É. de Moreau, S. J., Histoire de l'Église en Belgique, Vol. IV: L'Église aux Pays-Bas sous les ducs de Bourgogne et Charles-quint 1378-1559 (Brussels: L'Édition Universelle, S.A., 1949), p. 277.

[33]Birkmeyer ("The Arch Motif," p. 10, note 54) states that Winkler (Die Altniederländische Malerei, Berlin, 1924, p. 75) was the first to take note of this source. Panofsky (Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 155) states that Roger entered the workshop of Robert Campin in 1427. We must remember that the Betrothal of the Virgin was executed some years before that date, according to Panofsky prior to the Dijon Nativity (p. 160), which he dates 1420-25 (p. 159).

[34]Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," pp. 10-11.

[35]Ibid., p. 15.

[36]Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, p. 90.

[37](Pseudo-)Bonaventura, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf, trans. Nicholas Love before 1410, ed. by Lawrence F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 47.

[38]Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, p. 90.

[39]Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," p. 4.

[40]Schoute, La Chapelle Royale de Grenade, p. 93. The words of the Magnificat continue on Mary's robe through the three panels of the altarpiece.

[41](Pseudo-) Bonaventura, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf, p. 47. Many Church writers have felt that, after the birth of Christ, Mary would not first be concerned with the child's physical welfare, but would rather want to worship him as God. For example, the Fourth Century Ephraim Syrus speaks of Mary humbly praising the child before offering him milk. (See Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 358 and p. 533, note 17, where Ephraim Syrus is cited: Opera, ed. Assemani, Syriace et latine, ii, p. 416, quoted in Augusti, Denkwürdigkeiten, i, p. 256.)

[42]Translated by Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 259-60.

[43]Ibid., p. 261.

[44]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 436.

[45]Millard Meiss, "Light as Form and Symbol in Some Fifteenth-Century Paintings," Art Bulletin, XXVII (1945), 177 and note 7 where he refers to Saint Fulgentius, quoted by Livius, The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries, London, 1893, p. 138.

[46]See Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 144, and Meiss, "Light as Form and Symbol," p. 176 and note 4.

[47]Hirn (Sacred Shrine, p. 343) cites the Seventh Century Venantius Fortunatus, who compared Mary to a Church with daylight shining through its windows: "Lumine plena micans, imitata est aula Mariam. / Illa utero lucem, clausit et ista diem." (Quoted by Hirn from Fortunatus, De Leontio episcopo, Patr. Lat. lxxxviii, col. 79, in Sacred Shrine, p. 532, note 24. In addition, Saint Brigitte (Revelations [Uppenbarelser], i, p. 3) gives a detailed description of God entering "the body of the Virgin just as the sun shines through the purest stone or glass" (Hirn, p. 344 and p. 532, note 27).

[48]See text of the Biblia Pauperum, as presented in its entirety in an appendix of A. N. Didron, Christian Iconography, trans. E. J. Millington, appendices by Margaret Stokes (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965), Vol. II, p. 419, and Speculum Humanae Salvationis (London: Privately printed from a manuscript in the possession of Alfred Henry Huth, 1888), Chapter XXII, p. 80.

[49]Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, Vol. II, pp. 418-19.

[50]Ibid., p. 419.

[51]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 381, where this event is discussed as the beginning of the type for Mary known as the "mater dolorosa." According to Hirn, the sorrow of Simeon's prophecy was a "first station on the way of her suffering."

[52]The scenes of the Road to Calvary and the Erection of the Cross are both recounted in the Pseudo-Bonaventura account.

[53]Millard Meiss, "The Madonna of Humility," Art Bulletin, XVIII (December, 1936), 253.

[54]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 261-62.

[55]Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II Part Two, p. 103.

[56]Destrée, Roger de la Pasture, I, p. 97.

[57]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 392.

[58]Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II Part Two, p. 58. The Speculum humanae salvationis also includes the Seven Sorrows.

[59]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 393.

[60]Simson, ("'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" p. 14, note 36) refers to De Dignitate et Laudibus B. V. Mariae, II, 23 (Opera Omnia, XXXVI, Tournai, 1908, p. 99). Pseudo-Bonaventura had made use of this notion, when in the scene of the Crucifixion, Christ speaks to God the Father about his mother: "My fader/ȝe knowth how my moder is turmentid for me: I fchulde [sic] onely be crucified and nouȝt fche but loo now fche hongeth on the croff with me." ([Pseudo-] Bonaventura, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf, p. 240).

[61]For a discussion of this tradition, see Otto G. von Simson, "'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" pp. 9-16.

[62]Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Chapter XXVI, p. 92.

[63]Ibid., Chapter XXX, p. 105.

[64]Ibid., Chapter XXX, p. 105.

[65]Ibid., Chapter XXVI, p. 95.

[66]Simson, "'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" p. 15.

[67]Ibid., p. 9ff. See also Blum, Early Netherlandish Triptychs, for chapter on the Edelheer Altarpiece, by a follower of Roger van der Weyden.

[68]In terms of "imitating," Otto von Simson draws attention to the writings of Thomas à Kempis in relation to the art of Roger van der Weyden. (Simson, "'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" p. 14 and note 39.) See Thomas à Kempis, Of the Imitation of Christ, Vol. XLIX of The World's Classics (London: Oxford University Press, 1903).

[69]Translated by Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 260.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Chapter XXVI, p. 93.

[72]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 460.

[73]In a similar way, Jan van Eyck conceives of Mary as the altar, by placing her, in the Madonna of Canon van der Paele and the Dresden Triptych, at the position in the church where the altar should be located.

[74]It is quite likely that Roger was familiar with the ideas expressed in Thomas à Kempis's book. His book seems to have been a compendium of ideas of many thinkers of the time. (Albert Hyma, The Christian Renaissance [Second ed.; Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965], pp. 50-51.) Although Thomas à Kempis was a member of the group known as the Brethren of the Common Life, it is possible that Roger was aware of their intellectual output. A house of the Brethren was founded in 1422 in Brussels, one in Ghent in 1429, and one in Louvain in 1433. (Moreau, L'Église en Belgique, Vol. IV, p. 284.) Their members often joined Augustinian monasteries (Hyma, p. 47), and worked at copying manuscripts and editing books to earn their means of subsistance (Moreau, p. 285). Roger may have come into contact with their ideas through any of these means.

[75]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 73.

[76]James D. Breckenridge, "'Et Prima Vidit': The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to His Mother," Art Bulletin, XXXIX (1957), 24.

[77]Ibid., p. 10.

[78]Ibid., p. 16 and note 44: see Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, trans. and adapted from Latin by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), p. 221.

[79]Breckenridge, "'Et Prima Vidit,'" p. 9 and Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 262-63. For a discussion of the early proponents of this tradition, see Breckenridge, p. 9ff.

[80](Pseudo-) Bonaventura, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf, pp. 261-64.

[81]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 263.

[82]Émile Mâle, L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age en France (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1922), p. 68.

[83]According to Breckenridge ("'Et Prima Vidit,'" p. 17) Saint Brigitte mentions this scene of Pseudo-Bonaventura's in her Revelations, and Ludolf the Carthusian of Saxony (Vita Jesu Christi) says basically the same thing.

[84]This is the general opinion held by Breckenridge, Ibid., p. 24.

[85]Ibid., p. 21.

[86]Translated by Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 260.

[87]Erwin Panofsky, "The Friedsam Annunciation and the Problem of the Ghent Altarpiece," Art Bulletin, XVII (1935), 450, and Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 134.

[88]Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Chapter XIII, p. 52.

[89]Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, II, p. 421.

[90]Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Chapter XXIX, p. 103, and Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, II, p. 421.

[91]Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Chapter XXXII, pp. 111-13, and Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, II, p. 421.

[92]King, Liturgies of the Religious Orders, p. 57. This particular part of the Mass would only be practiced in the common Mass celebrated in the main chapel, but not by the single monk celebrating Mass in the privacy of his cell.

[93]Breckenridge, "'Et Prima Vidit,'" p. 15.

[94]Hirn, Sacred Shrine, p. 337 and p. 531, note 8, where Saint Jerome is quoted from Epistola 48, Ad Pammachium, pro libris contra Jovinianum (Patr. Lat. xxii, col. 510).

[95]Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II Part Two, p. 621.

[96]Réau (Ibid., p. 623) states that the development within the cult of Mary, of her role in the Coronation began with her being crowned simply by an angel; she rose in importance to being crowned by Christ, then by God the Father alone, and finally by the entire Trinity.

[97]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 261.

[98]B. DuMoustier, "Carthusian Spirituality," New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 161.

[99]"Denis the Carthusian," New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, pp. 764-65. Otto von Simson generally agrees that Roger must have had some contact with Denis's writings ("'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" p. 9ff).

[100]Moreau, L'Église en Belgique, IV, p. 350.

[101]Hyma, Christian Renaissance, pp. 91-92.

[102]For a point of view similar to mine, see Simson, "'Compassio' and 'Co-redemptio,'" p. 9ff.

[103]Ray C. Petry, Late Medieval Mysticism, Vol. XIII in The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 306.

[104]Ibid., p. 307.

[105]Ruysbroek, Spiritual Espousals, p. 52.

[106]Ibid., p. 57.

[107]Ibid., p. 68.

[108]Réau suggests that the legend of Mary's life has little, if any, historicity to it. He says that it is conceived of as an imitation of the life of Christ. She was conceived free from original sin, like Christ; she was taken bodily into heaven, just as Christ; and Thomas doubted her Assumption, just as he had doubted Christ's Resurrection. Also, both Christ and Mary preside at the Last Judgment to intercede for sinners. (Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II Part Two, p. 57.) The idea is that men should emulate the exemplary, sin-free life of Mary.

[109]Translated by Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 259-60.

[110]Ibid., p. 260.

[111]Ibid. Cf. Wehle and Salinger, A Catalogue of Early Flemish Painting, p. 32, where they propose a different reading of the Latin inscription, thus translating the passage in the following way: "This woman fulfilled all things triumphantly; therefore a crown was given unto her."

[112]The Oxford Annotated Bible, Revised Standard Version, ed. by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (College ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1496, note to Rev. 6:2.

[113]Ibid., p. 1508, notes to Rev. 19:7-8.

[114]Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, II, pp. 429-30.

[115]Pseudo-Bonaventura related the same idea of conquering in his scene of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel says that Christ will be the "grete conquerour in myȝtily the deuel ouercomynge" (The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf, p. 28).

[116]Biblia Pauperum, in appendix of Didron, Christian Iconography, II, pp. 429-30.

CHAPTER III

PATRONAGE AND THE SAINT JOHN ALTARPIECE

In order to bring the Altarpiece of the Virgin into correct perspective in relation to Roger's complete oeuvre, it is necessary to search his known works for other examples of an arched framework. One such work is the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece in Antwerp.[1] Although Mary is present in the center panel, and is shown fainting--in compassionate suffering--at the foot of the Cross, the emphasis of this painting is quite different from the previously discussed paintings. The theme of the Church has expanded beyond the symbol of Mary, and the theological doctrines for which she stands, to include the sacraments and their execution. This altarpiece, specifically dealing with the seven sacraments, is conceived within an arched format to indicate that the sacraments are the basis upon which has developed the Church as a congregation.

That Roger is focusing on different elements in Church doctrine from those expressed in the three Madonna paintings of the 1430's and the Altarpiece of the Virgin is evident by the nature of an altarpiece depicting scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist. The scenes on this triptych are contained within a triple arch format,

similar to that of the Altarpiece of the Virgin. For a long time, this work was thought to post-date the Altarpiece of the Virgin by only a short time, with some scholars even going so far as to say that the Saint John Altarpiece also came out of the convent of Miraflores.[2] It was not until G. Hulin de Loo noted in 1938 that the costumes on the figures in the Saint John Altarpiece preclude a date of earlier than 1445,[3] that scholars began to focus on a date significantly later than that of the Altarpiece of the Virgin, the original of which has been dated circa 1437-38.[4] Panofsky has suggested a date of between 1452 and 1455,[5] subsequent to Roger's trip to Italy in 1450, which is documented by Bartolomeo Fazio in his biography of Gentile de Fabriano.[6] It seems, according to Theodore H. Feder, that Roger travelled to Rome in the Jubilee Year of 1450 in order to obtain indulgences for the soul of his daughter who died in 1449 at the age of eighteen.[7] While in Italy, it is assumed that Roger journeyed to several important centers of artistic production, notably Florence, and that, while there, he came under the influence of certain compositional innovations of the early Italian Renaissance which are evident in his works after that date.[8] Although Panofsky implies that it is solely this contact with Italian art which dictates the forms and style in Roger's Saint John Altarpiece,[9] it seems that this is only partially true. It appears that the patronage of

the altarpiece played a far greater role in determining subject matter and style of the altarpiece than has been previously suggested.

The three panels of the altarpiece--a nonclosing triptych now located in the Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin-Dahlem--depict three major scenes in the life of John the Baptist, each set before, and partially under, a Gothic arched portal displaying grisaille archivolt scenes of subsidiary events in the Baptist's life, in conjunction with selected scenes from the life of Christ. Each panel measures 77 x 48 cm.[10]

The left panel depicts the Birth, or more precisely the Naming of John the Baptist. Zacharias is shown writing the name of the child, having been rendered dumb at the annunciation of John's birth. The Virgin Mary--the only haloed figure in the altarpiece--is shown holding the newly named child. The middle ground reveals a Flemish domestic interior, where Saint Elizabeth is in bed, attended by a maid-servant. Through a narrow doorway in the background can be seen two ladies, seemingly discussing the joyous birth. The center panel illustrates the Baptism of Christ by John, assisted by a single angel. In the sky, an image of God the Father appears, holding a scroll-like inscription based on Matthew 3:17[11] ("And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.'"). The dove of the Holy Spirit hovers

in the sky between God the Father and Jesus. The background opens up on a broad landscape vista. The main scene in the third panel depicts the Decapitation of Saint John and the receiving of the head of the saint by the daughter of Herodias. Two court attendants appear in a hallway in the middle ground, which leads to the banquet hall where Herod and Herodias are shown feasting, as Salome kneels and presents the head to them. Throughout the three panels, the archivolt scenes can be read chronologically in a clockwise fashion from lower left to lower right; this is in strict contrast to the counterclockwise arrangement chosen by Roger for the archivolt scenes in the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

The choice of subject matter in Roger's altarpiece--that is, scenes from the life of John the Baptist--seems to have been determined by the work's patron. A number of scholars have identified the patron as one Baptiste (or Battista) del Agnelli, who is said to have given an altarpiece painted by Roger van der Weyden and depicting the life of John the Baptist to the church of St-Jacques in Bruges in the year 1476. He is designated as a merchant of Pisa.[12] Duclos, writing in 1910 on the history and character of the city of Bruges, confirms that Roger's Saint John Altarpiece had stood on Baptiste del Agnelli's altar in that church.[13] In the year 1521, Dürer recorded a work by Roger in St-Jacques, but did not specify its

subject.[14] This information, however, leaves little doubt that Baptiste del Agnelli was the donor of the altarpiece.

Although the donor himself--due to lack of documentation--may not appear to have been highly renowned in international circles, he seems to have come from a family of well-known wool merchants in Pisa. We know of a Giovanni dell'Agnello (d. 1378), head of this mercantile family, who became doge of Pisa, and was banished from the city in the 1360's by its citizens for his despotic rule. In 1370, he was allowed tentatively to return to Pisa. He spent the remainder of his life in Genoa.[15] If Baptiste was a descendant of Giovanni dell'Agnello, there are two obvious reasons for his having commissioned an altarpiece of Saint John the Baptist: (1) the saint is his personal name saint; and (2) John the Baptist is stipulated as the patron saint of wool merchants.[16] It seems, then, that the commission was made on the part of the donor, independent of any organization.

As regards the donation of Roger's Saint John Altarpiece to the church of St-Jacques in Bruges, an interval of approximately twenty years elapsed between the suggested date of execution of the altarpiece in the 1450's and the alleged date of its appearance in the church in 1476. It is known that during a twenty-year period roughly paralleling the above interval, the church of St-Jacques was being renovated and enlarged.[17] It is

difficult indeed, without documentation, to determine the original purpose of the commission, but it is possible that Baptiste del Agnelli had the donation of an altar or chapel in mind when he ordered the altarpiece, but retained it instead in his home in Bruges until reconstruction of the church was completed.

It is evident, from the above information, that the circumstances under which the Saint John Altarpiece was commissioned are distinctly different from those surrounding the execution of the Altarpiece of the Virgin. And although both altarpieces share the triple arch format, they are quite different in general conception. First, Birkmeyer has remarked that in the Saint John Altarpiece Roger has expanded the arch motif to represent a believable church facade.[18] This is consistent with the expansion of this motif in the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece to represent a believable church interior. In the Saint John Altarpiece Roger has also arranged the archivolt scenes, as previously mentioned, in chronological order in a clockwise fashion. They are to be read from left to right, across the entire altarpiece, as one would read a book, thus attaching a certain rationality and element of worldly logic to their arrangement. The increased movement of the figures within the panels, and the amplification of space into multiple interiors likewise adds a certain element of a narrative approach to the work, which was absent in the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

The principal factor determining these differences between the two works, which tend toward increased naturalism and rationality of presentation in the Saint John Altarpiece, has previously been said to be the influences of Roger's Italian trip and consequent encounter with the southern Renaissance.[19] This may have been one influence on Roger, but it seems that one must look to the commission for the chief determinant. Roger had executed the Altarpiece of the Virgin in a purely devotional-symbolic manner. The significance of the main event in each panel was embellished by means of the typological parallels on the capitals within the scene, and by its relation to the historical framework of the archivolt scenes. In these respects, the altarpiece was able to make a direct appeal to the Carthusian monastic community for which it was commissioned, as has been seen. This world-denying sect would naturally relate most easily to the restrained forms and esoteric message of this altarpiece.

Contrarily, the Saint John Altarpiece was executed for a private lay individual, an international wool merchant. He would seemingly have been a man of worldly character and material interests, rather than the ascetic orientation of the Carthusian community at Miraflores. With the increased naturalism and attention to a more realistic portrayal of the natural world in the Saint

John Altarpiece, Roger is appealing to the world-accepting nature of the donor, Baptiste del Agnelli. He has placed his message in the guise of pictorial naturalism, rather than devotional symbolism.

Despite this fundamental difference in representation in the two altarpieces, the fact remains that Roger has chosen in both to use the motif of the arch, which he had developed in the three earlier Madonna paintings cited above. There appears to be no doubt that in both of these triptychs the arch serves as a compositional device used to isolate the main scene in each panel as an image for devotional worship and contemplation. The arch also serves in both as a symbol for the Church.

Yet in the Saint John Altarpiece, Roger treats the theme of the Church on three levels: (1) the founding of the Church, and the transition from Old Law to New Law; (2) the mission of the Church, and the overcoming of evil and temptation; and (3) the sacraments and liturgy. The theme of the founding of the Church is present in the figure of John the Baptist, who is both the last of the prophets and the precursor of the Messiah, Christ. The mission of the Church is proclaimed in scripture when Jesus sends the Apostles to various parts of the world to preach the Word of God, at the Pentecost. The Apostles are pictured on the jambs of the arched frame; they are depicted literally within the framework of the Church.

Roger is stressing in this altarpiece the idea that the Church will prevail in the end by resisting the temptations of the devil, and ultimately destroying his power. Half of the archivolt scenes in the center panel are devoted to the temptations of Christ by the devil, and the right panel stresses the fact that, although bodily dead, John lives eternally, having resisted the forces of evil, embodied in Herod and his family. The altarpiece is replete with symbols referring to the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and through these--particularly the Eucharist--relates to Church liturgy.[20] The theme of the sacraments in this painting is an outgrowth of the ideas presented in the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece. In the Saint John Altarpiece, Roger is involved with the message of each man's active role in fulfilling the purpose of the Church on earth, as well as his passive, inner life of mystical contemplation of union with God to achieve salvation and eternal life.

The concept of Mary as a metaphor of the Church, so prominent in the earlier works studied in this paper, has now been relegated to the position of a subordinate theme in the painting. The Virgin stands in the scene of the Naming of John the Baptist--and it is unusual for her to be portrayed in this event[21]--seemingly representing the Church, which is given a graphic symbol in the simulated architecture. It is consistent with Roger's mode

of presentation in the Saint John Altarpiece that he has chosen to present the idea of Mary as the Church in the disguise of an event in John's life. The concept is no longer presented as an obvious symbol, as it had been in the Altarpiece of the Virgin.

One may therefore conclude that although Roger is dealing with the theme of the Church in the Saint John Altarpiece, he is not particularly working with the concept of Mary as the Church. The abstract doctrine of Mary as the Church had been especially appropriate as the subject for an altarpiece to be contemplated daily by the community of Carthusian monks at Miraflores. But the private commission of the Saint John Altarpiece deals not only with an individual donor, but also with the individual believer as a faithful member of the community in a parish church, and the sacramental means to attain the rewards of eternal life.

Further, it is to be noted that in the Saint John Altarpiece Roger has dropped the familiar formula which assures the viewer's association of the visual symbols with Mary as the Church. This formula is the presence of the Virgin Mary within an ecclesiastical architectural setting, depicted with the adult or infant Christ, and shown with her attribute of the crown, indicating that she is the Queen of Heaven. It is therefore not the ecclesiastical architectural setting alone which marks

the work as a reference to Mary as the Church, but a familiar combination of certain specific symbols.

As far as can be seen, then, the Gothic approach to the Altarpiece of the Virgin contrasts with the more naturalistic approach in the Saint John Altarpiece insofar as each is a function of its particular circumstances of commission. It is an indication of Roger's imagination and ability that he dealt with complicated doctrines and complex symbols so as to make each commission unique and infinitely meaningful.

NOTES--CHAPTER III

[1]See Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, pp. 195-96, and Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, pp. 282-84.

[2]Destrée (Roger de la Pasture, I, p. 98), Lafond (Roger van der Weyden, p. 22), and Friedländer (Early Netherlandish Painting, II, p. 60) are all of the opinion that the Saint John Altarpiece was executed in close temporal proximity to the Altarpiece of the Virgin. The theory that it came from Miraflores is discussed again by both Destrée (pp. 100-01) and Lafond (p. 24), and both mention the lack of documentation to support such a theory. Most recently, Martin Davies (Rogier van der Weyden, p. 200) refers his reader to Valerian von Loga in Prussian Jahrbuch, XXXI, 1910, p. 56, for a presentation of this theory, but it is apparent that no evidence has been discovered to sustain such a theory.

[3]G. Hulin de Loo, "Roger van der Weyden," Biographie Nationale . . . de Belgique, Brussels, XXVII (1938), col. 236.

[4]Dated by Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 264.

[5]Ibid., p. 282.

[6]Quoted by Panofsky (Ibid., p. 272). On page 467, note 2 to page 272, Panofsky refers the reader to Fazio's Latin text as printed in Winkler, p. 189.

[7]Feder, "A Reexamination Through Documents," p. 430.

[8]For discussions of Italian influences on Roger in the Saint John Altarpiece, see Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 273 and Heribert Meurer, "Zwei antike vorbilder und die rückenfigur im Johannes-altar des Rogier van der Weyden," Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch (Westdeutsches Jahrbuch fur Kunstgeschichte), XXXI (1969), p. 235ff.

[9]Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 281.

[10]Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 200. There is an almost exact duplicate of the altarpiece in the Städelaches Kunstinstitut in Frankfort, but this copy is, according to Panofsky, one-third smaller than the original. (Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 278.)

[11]Davies (Rogier van der Weyden, p. 200) tells us that the inscription is based on Matthew 3:17, but does not tell us Roger's specific words. I have not as yet been able to determine the exact inscription on the panel.

[12]Panofsky (Early Netherlandish Painting, I, p. 471, note 2 to p. 278) refers to Winkler, 1913, p. 183, who in turn has taken the information concerning the alleged donation from Weale. Unfortunately, according to Panofsky, Weale gives no source for his information.

[13]Ad. Duclos (Bruges. Histoire et Souvenirs, Bruges, 1910, p. 482) also unhappily mentions no source for his information, but it possibly could have been Weale, writing in 1908. Therefore, we still have no evidence that Duclos was writing from a primary source, although it seems that way since he cites no secondary source.

[14]Davies, Rogier van der Weyden, p. 200.

[15]"Giovanni dell'Agnello, doge de Pisa," Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano, Rome, 1956, V, pp. 411-12.

[16]Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, Vol. II Part Two, p. 436.

[17]Meurer gives the dates of this renovation as 1457 to 1479 (Meurer, "Zwei antike vorbilder," p. 233), whereas Duclos (Bruges, p. 480) states that it occurred between 1459 and 1477.

[18]Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif," p. 16.

[19]Cf. Notes 7 and 8.

[20]This symbolism is most obvious in the scene of the decapitation, or sacrifice of John the Baptist, where his head is placed on a paten-shaped plate.

[21]For a study of this scene, see Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Giovannino Battista: A Study in Renaissance Religious Symbolism," Art Bulletin, XXXVII (June, 1955), p. 87ff.

CONCLUSION

The history of the several works under scrutiny in this thesis demonstrates the dependence of the *Altarpiece of the Virgin* upon certain elements which were worked out by Roger van der Weyden in the Thyssen *Madonna in an Aedicula*, the Vienna *Madonna Standing*, and the Prado *Madonna in Red*. I shall maintain that, from the earliest stages of his work as an independent artist, Roger van der Weyden was incorporating complex concepts involving the role of the Church in the redemptive process into his Madonna paintings, and that, in fact, all four of these works were specifically conceived with the notion of Mary as the Church in mind.

There seems to be a sort of "formula" at work, according to which Roger has indicated to his viewer that the theme of each of his paintings is Mary as the Church. The first element of this formula is that Mary be shown as both the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven, or the mystical spouse of Christ. She must also be enclosed within a painted ecclesiastical architectural framework, which is related to her in a direct way through simulated sculptural decoration depicting episodes in her life, or indirectly by the situation of the Madonna within a niche,

as a living statue. In either case, the identification of the architecture with the Virgin Mary represents her identity as the eternal Church.

It is evident, from the similar themes of the paintings discussed, that Roger's principal intent was to give visual reality to the doctrine of Mary as the Church. But we must realize that this doctrine takes on a broader aspect in the Altarpiece of the Virgin, the latest of the works in question. In this painting, Roger has first expanded on the elements presented in the earlier Madonna paintings. The architectural motif has become more complex visually, with the appearance of the triple arch and the multiplicity of archivolt scenes which elaborate on the themes of the main scenes in each panel. It has also become more complex conceptually, representing the passage from temporal and spatial reality into a sacred realm.

Roger has also expanded upon the themes of Mary as Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. A separate panel is given over to the Nativity of Christ, with special emphasis on the doctrine of the Incarnation. Christ's Passion is now explicitly included in the altarpiece, in the presence of the Lamentation scene as the event of primary importance in the center panel. And the theme of Mary as the mystical bride of Christ is treated in the right-hand panel, through emphasis on Mary's role in the

Resurrection of Christ, and her coronation as the Queen of Heaven. The crown motif which was present in the three earlier Madonna paintings, is elaborated upon in the Altarpiece of the Virgin. Retaining the angel holding the crown which descends from the keystone of the arch in the Prado Madonna in Red, Roger has multiplied this motif threefold, and has placed an inscription with each, indicating qualities of the Virgin which illustrate her worthiness to merit the "crown of life." This carries through a further notion first seen in the Madonna in Red: there are certain characteristics of Mary which qualify her for the honor of receiving this crown, and that if one wishes to gain eternal life, as did Mary, one must learn to imitate these characteristics and live one's life accordingly.

The significant difference from the other three paintings which appears in the Altarpiece of the Virgin is the introduction of the dominant theme of the compassion--and, by implication, the co-redemptive power--of the Virgin Mary. The Altarpiece of the Virgin and the Escorial Deposition, executed in close temporal proximity, both strongly express this notion of Mary's compassion, yet it is the Altarpiece of the Virgin alone which incorporates this idea into a painting which focuses specifically on Mary as the Church.

An understanding of the basic themes shared by the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula, the Vienna Madonna

Standing, and the Prado Madonna in Red inevitably leads to the raising of certain questions concerning his sources and influences. It has been seen that Gothic architecture and architectural sculpture have exerted a strong influence on Roger, both due to the preponderance of its forms in the North of Europe, and to the presence of Roger in the workshop of Robert Campin, himself a painter whose plastic conception of figures and use of grisaille indicate an affinity for contemporary sculpture.

The appearance of a number of Eyckian motifs in these paintings raises the question, however, as to whether Roger may have had the opportunity to visit the workshop of Jan van Eyck, perhaps soon after he left the workshop of Robert Campin on, according to Panofsky, August 1, 1432. The Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula, painted, presumably, while Roger was still a member of Campin's workshop, shows a close association stylistically and conceptually with the art of that master. However, the Eyckian features which appear in the Vienna Madonna Standing--which was probably painted after Roger's departure from Campin's workshop--suggest an acquaintance with the art of Jan van Eyck that surpasses exposure to only one work by that artist: in other words, it seems that Roger had come into contact with several of Jan van Eyck's works in the short time following his departure from Campin's studio and the creation of the Vienna Madonna Standing.

Roger may have had a strong desire to visit the shop of that well-known artist, and could have fulfilled that desire, perhaps after seeing the Ghent Altarpiece in situ. As we have seen, the occurrence of Eyckian motifs in Roger's works is not limited to the Madonna Standing, in Vienna. The Prado Madonna in Red also demonstrates Eyckian influence. In addition, we might note that there is little doubt of the Eyckian influence on two intermediary paintings by Roger, the Louvre Annunciation and the Saint Luke Painting the Virgin, in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, both executed approximately 1434-35.[1]

The segment of works studied in this thesis indicates a strong theological influence. Roger's early familiarity with the subtleties of Church doctrine, and the compounding of those basic Church themes in the Altarpiece of the Virgin indicate that he was well-educated in contemporary theology. The theme of the mystical marriage of Christ to his Church was so predominant in the mystical thinking of the writers of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, that to consider Roger's insistent employment of this theme in his paintings a parallel development would be a mistake. He must have been versed in many of these writings, and through his contemporaries, perhaps, had learned of the ideas of earlier mystics. This was probably facilitated by a relatively close association with the Carthusian order, in his work and

life, and perhaps by some contact with the Brethren of the Common Life, whose organizations were omnipresent in Flanders in the Fifteenth Century, and who themselves were in close contact with the Carthusians. Roger could very likely have worked with theologians on the creation of the Altarpiece of the Virgin, and perhaps one or two were assigned to the project.

A further question raised by these four paintings is that of patronage. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that the significant discrepancy between the patronage of the Altarpiece of the Virgin and that of the Saint John Altarpiece was the single most important factor to determine the subject, forms, and composition of the paintings. Although ultimately the themes of both altarpieces relate to the Church, it is significant that for the world-denying sect of the Carthusians at Miraflores the triptych displays an abstract theme in an essentially Gothic mode of presentation to appeal to the inner necessities and contemplative life-style of that group. In like fidelity to the commission, the subject matter of the Saint John Altarpiece was chosen to suit the donor, Baptiste del Agnelli, whose name saint is John the Baptist. The increased naturalism in forms and composition within this altarpiece, and the employment of a more disguised symbolism conform to the secular nature

of the patron and to his worldly temporal and spatial orientation, while all the time retaining the message of the Church.

The fact of the suitability of the Altarpiece of the Virgin for use in a monastic community and the absence of the dominant theme of Mary as the Church in the Saint John Altarpiece may cause us to speculate on the possibility that the patronage of the three earlier Madonna paintings, which have been discussed, may bear something in common with that of the Altarpiece of the Virgin, to which they are closely related in form, content, and date. It is interesting, in this respect, to note K. M. Birkmeyer's suggestion that the Vienna Madonna Standing may have been executed for the Chartreuse de Champmol.[2] If this is indeed true, is it possible that the Thyssen Madonna in an Aedicula and the Prado Madonna in Red could have been created for monastic patrons? This question, of course, may never be answered, but owing to the significant role played by the patron in Roger's works, it is an interesting suggestion to consider, and one certainly within the realm of possibility.

The four works by Roger van der Weyden which have been studied in this thesis have proved themselves to be of great value, when considered as a unit, in a study of the development of that artist. These four works have pointed to certain influences on the evolution of the

artist's style and content which may be seen to operate in subsequent works by Roger. They further contribute to an eventual understanding of the role of patronage in the other masterpieces of intimate spirituality created by Roger van der Weyden. That study is yet in its early stages.

NOTES--CONCLUSION

[1]See Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, I, p. 253, where he suggests Roger's presence in Bruges between 1432 and 1436.

[2]Birkmeyer, "Notes on the Two Earliest Paintings," p. 331. Birkmeyer also raises the somewhat shakier possibility that the Thyssen *Madonna in an Aedicula* was also perhaps created for the Chartreuse de Champmol.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1: Roger van der Weyden. Madonna in an Aedicula. Thyssen Collection, Lugano.

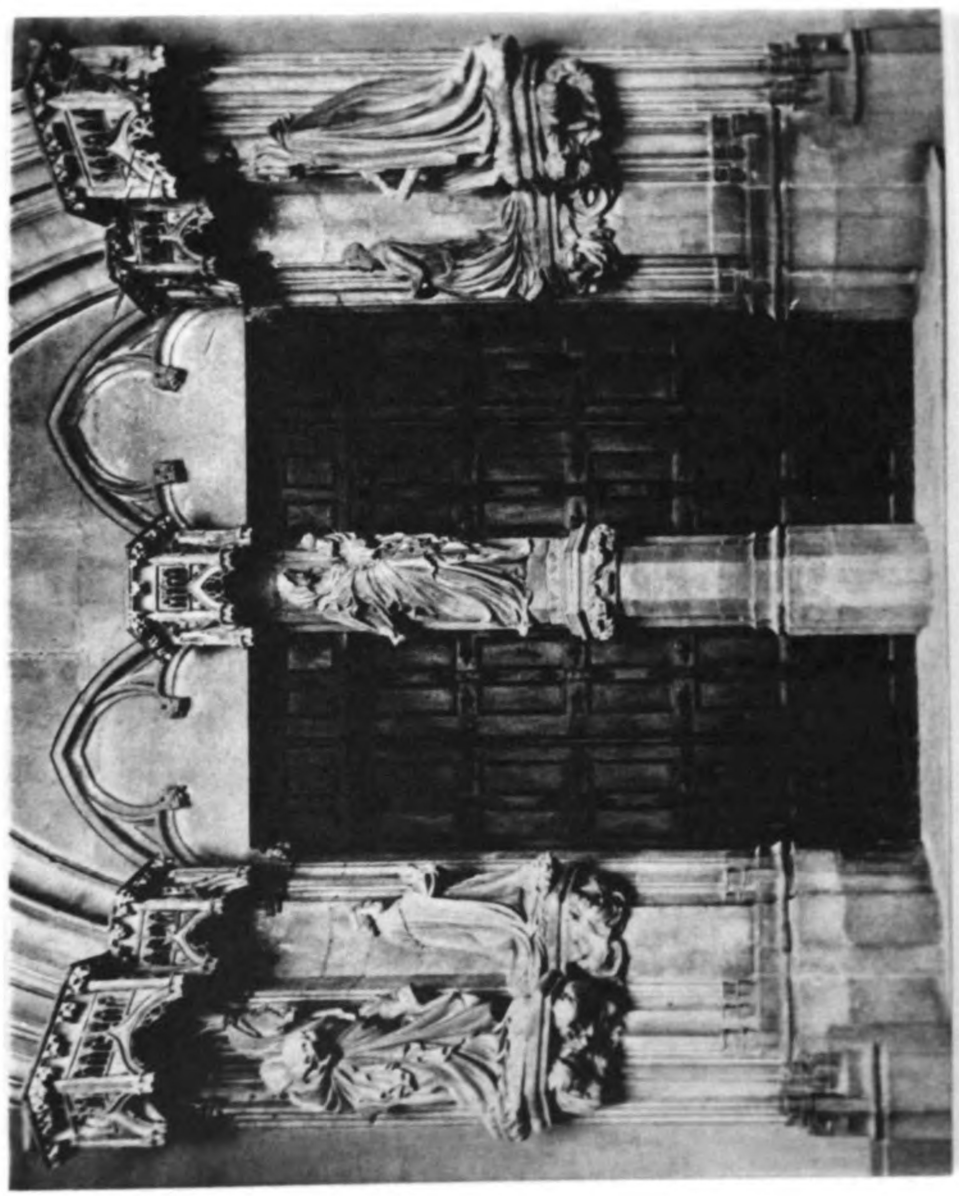

Illustration 2: Claus Sluter. Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon.

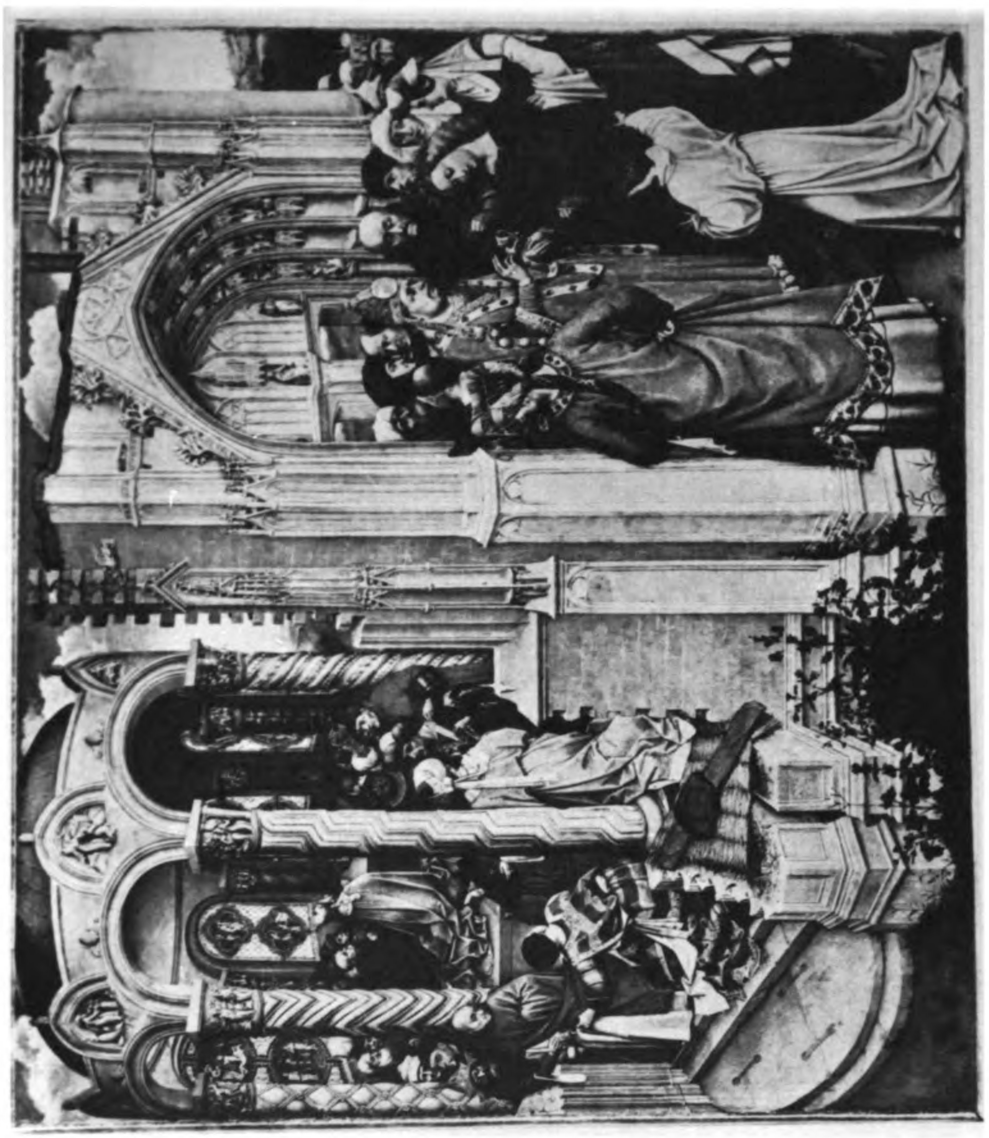

Illustration 3: Robert Campin. Betrothal of the Virgin. Prado, Madrid.

Illustration 4: Roger van der Weyden. Madonna Standing. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Illustration 5: Jan van Eyck. Madonna in a Church. Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

Illustration 6: Roger van der Weyden. Madonna in Red. Prado, Madrid.

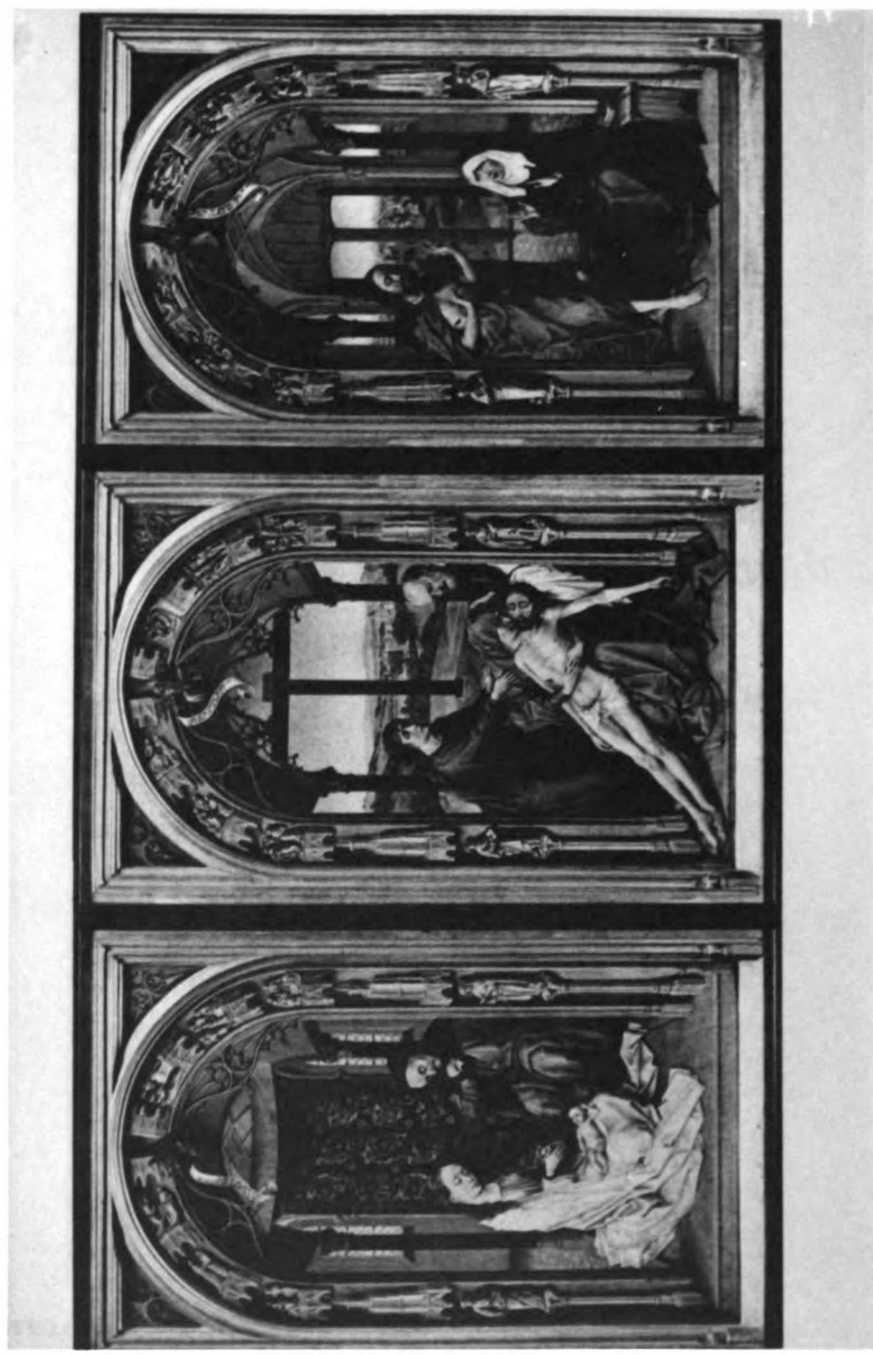

Illustration 7: Roger van der Weyden. "Miraflores" Altarpiece. Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.

Illustration 8: Roger van der Weyden. Appearance of Christ to his Mother. Right panel of "Miraflores" Altarpiece.

Illustration 9: Roger van der Weyden. Seven Sacraments Altarpiece. Musée Royal, Antwerp.

Illustration 10: Roger van der Weyden. Saint John Altarpiece. Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin-Dahlem.