Art History 330
Painting & Graphic Arts of Germany, 1350-1530
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Course Website: http://arthistory.wisc.edu/330
Course Outline:

I. Charles IV (1316-1378), Holy Roman Emperor
II. Painting in Austria and Franconia, c1400
III. Master Francke, Conrad von Soest, and the Master of the Ortenberg Altarpiece
IV. Swabia and the Upper Rhine: Lucas Moser
V. Hans Multscher
VI. Konrad Witz
VII. Painting in Cologne
   Master of St. Veronica
   Stefan Lochner
VIII. The Late 15th Century

I. - CHARLES IV (1316-1378), HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR (1355-78)
   (Kaiser Karl IV)

1316- Born, son of John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, and Elizabeth of Bohemia, grandson of the Emperor Henry VII. Christened Wenzel. Educated at the French court, beginning 1324, taking name Charles; engaged (age 7) to French Princess Blanche of Valois (1316-48). Marries her 1334; two daughters.

1331-33- In Italy as Governor. Returns to Prague 1333, renovates the royal palace. Is named Margrave of Moravia.

1343- Ernst von Pardubitz (Pardubice) becomes Bishop of Prague; Charles travels to the Papal court in Avignon (his old tutor had been elected Pope Clement VI in 1342). Obtains Clement's backing for his candidacy as Emperor, and has the Prague bishopric elevated to an archbishopric. Ernst von Pardubitz, the first archbishop in central Europe, commissions THE GLATZ (or Kladzko ) MADONNA. Ca. 1350 . (Berlin)

1344- The French architect Matthew of Arras begins work on the new Prague Cathedral.

THE GLATZ (Kladzko) MADONNA
The Glatz Madonna (Madonna of Kladzko), (ca. 1350, Berlin), a Madonna and Child in Majesty (compare earlier Italian examples by Giotto, Duccio or Cimabue). The painter is anonymous and probably of Bohemian or possibly French origin. Unusual features found in Italian examples are the characterization of Mary as Queen (with crown, sceptre and orb); the inclusion of tiny portrait of the Archbishop kneeling at foot of her throne; the exotic Near Eastern textiles; the beautiful but not strictly symbolic color choices (particularly the combination of rose red and orange for Mary's drapery). Her throne is identified as the Throne of Solomon by its two lions. Note also the influence of French Gothic in the figure proportions, and of antique Byzantine painting technique in the flesh areas, which have darkened over time.

1346- Charles elected King of the Romans, at Rhense. His father, John of Luxembourg, now blind, killed by the English in Battle of Crecy. Coronation of Charles as King of the Romans in Bonn.

1347- Death of the Emperor Ludwig the Bavarian. Charles crowned in Prague.
1348- The Black Death strikes western Europe. Charles founds University in Prague (the Carolinum); lays cornerstone for the country fortress at Karlstein (Karlsteyn). Queen Blanche dies.

1349- Charles marries Anna of the Palatinate, at Bacharach (on the Rhine). Is crowned in Aachen.

1350- Formal display of the Imperial coronation regalia in Prague (possession of these automatically confers Imperial status on the owner). Founds Augustinian monastery in Prague, in honor of Charlemagne (who has now been declared a saint.) Donates golden bust of St. Charlemagne to Aachen.

THE "FIRST BOHEMIAN STYLE": THE HOHENFURTH (Vyssi Brod) CYCLE

This group of paintings (ca. 1350-55) was a private commission from a member of the powerful and at times rebellious Rosemberck family, one of whom is seen kneeling in the corner of the Nativity scene, holding a model of the monastery chapel to which it was presented. Thus the commission is not directly relate to the Emperor himself, but the style of the anonymous painter clearly shows the influence of the court. The Madonna of the Annunciation wears a crown and is enthroned, while Gabriel, outranked, kneels in her presence. The Mary of the Nativity reclines under a card-table shaped stable reminiscent of Giotto's Arena Chapel, but the landscape elements throughout the series are extremely ornamental, with an almost jigsaw puzzle-like configuration that is an exaggeration of Byzantine style. Joseph and the Midwife prepare the bath--a prefiguration of the future baptismal rite--and an angel dangles a banderole saying "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy" before the dazzled eyes of a shepherd. The same cycle includes an Adoration of the Magi, an Agony in the Garden--very interesting, featuring formulaic, gumdrop-shaped trees with large, actual oak leaves and acorns, and huge, identifiable birds--a goldfinch, thought to live on thistles and thorns, and a hoopoe (German Eichelhähler--acorn-eater); a Lamentation centering on a Pieta group obviously inspired by a sculptural Vesperbild (Mary holding the dead Christ in her lap), a particularly popular theme in 14th c. sculpture. The Resurrection shows the influence of Duccio's scene of the Holy Women at the Tomb (Siena, Maesta). An Ascension and Pentecost complete the group. The only related work in an American museum is Boston's Death of the Virgin.

1351- Charles begins correspondence with Petrarch.

1352- Death of the cathedral architect Matthew of Arras.

1353- Death of Anna of the Palatinate. Engagement of Charles' daughter Katharina to Rudolf of Hapsburg. Charles himself marries Anna of Schweidnitz. Holds Christmas court session in Mainz. Chooses as his Chancellor Johann of Neumarkt, the creator of
standard "office German" writing style. (Johann also has been in correspondence with Petrarch).

1354- Charles and Petrarch meet. First trip to Rome. Also visits the court in Mantua.

1355- Coronation with the Crown of the Lombards in Milan; coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in Rome. Triumphal return to Prague. Construction of Karlstein castle completed; ready to be decorated. Meeting of the Reichstag in Nuremberg; the Frauenkirche is the Imperial Chapel. Promulgation of the Golden Bull (1355-56), establishing system of Imperial Electors.

1356- Obtains (from the French Dauphin) two thorns from Christ's crown of thorns. Summons the architect/sculptor Peter Parler from Gmunden to finish the Cathedral. Parler settles with his family in a house on the Hradschin hill near the cathedral, and will be the most important figure in the art world during Charles's reign. Petrarch visits Prague.

1357- Construction of the Charles Bridge over the Moldau river in Prague. Beginning of painted decorations at Karlstein, by Nicolaus Wurmser, the Master of the Genealogy, and Theodoric of Prague (a Slovak, and master in the Prague painters' guild.) Artist received farms in the Karlstein area as their pay; the income from each farm would be paid to the artist rather than directly to the Emperor.

**HOLY CROSS CHAPEL, KARLSTEJN**

The Holy Cross Chapel, located in the Bohemian countryside above the small village at Karlstein, occupies the top of the castle’s tallest tower. It served as the treasury for the Imperial crown, sceptre, orb and other coronation regalia, as well as for the Emperor's most precious holy relics, including a piece of the True Cross. These were kept in the "safe-deposit box" covered by a golden grille, over the altar. The entire vaulted ceiling is covered in gold leaf and inset with hundreds of regularly-spaced crystals representing the sun, moon and stars. A "fire-proof" dado of gold leaf inset with semi-precious stones in a continuous pattern of crosses forms a backing for the hundreds of votive candles at waist height. This technique of working in large slices of carnelian bound in gold is a Bohemian specialty. The two zones are separated by row upon row of painted "portraits" of Apostles, Evangelists, Latin Fathers of the Church, and various saints including Mark, Jerome (as Cardinal), Pope Gregory the Great, St. Moritz (Maurice) the Moor (a black man dressed as a soldier; patron saint of the militant Order of Teutonic Knights, who were forcibly converting the Slavs to Christianity--or else); St. Catherine; a youthful St. Veit (Vitus) in ermine; a mysterious bishop holding a dragon in one hand, who may be St. Hilary of Poitiers--in which case the dragon would simply be a symbol of the Aryan Heresy--or else St. Romanus of Rouen, who saved the city from both a flood and an actual (?) dragon by the engaging name of Gargouille (He hired a condemned murderer as exterminator.) The general effect is that of St. Augustine's City of God, where the
Blessed congregate in the New Jerusalem. These imagined portraits are by Theodoric of Prague and his workshop, and are distinctive for their heavy features, big hands and space-displacing bulk. Painted over a generation after the death of Giotto, they come closer to his realistic style than to that of previous Bohemian masters such as the Master of Hohenfurth (Vyssi Brod).


1361- Birth of Prince Wenzel (Wenceslas), in Nuremberg. (Charles, as soon as the court physician had "prophesied" the birth of a son, had the Empress Anna packed up and carted to the Imperial fortress at Nuremberg for the birth, so that the crown prince would had some political standing in western Europe, not just Bohemia.)

1362- Death of the Empress Anna. Parler finishes the Chapel of St. Sigismund in the Cathedral.

1363- Charles marries Elizabeth of Pomerania-Wolgast, in Cracow; gets Brandenburg in the deal. Has Wenzel crowned King of Bohemia.

1364- Death of Archbishop Ernst von Pardubitz; new Archbishop is Jan Ocko of Vlasim.

**Madonna of Jan Ocko of Vlasim (1370)**
: Very large picture in two registers, showing Charles IV and Wenzel, with patron saints, kneeling on either side of the enthroned Virgin and Child (top); Archbishop Jan Ocko (kneeling), with St. Procopius, Adelbert, and Ludmilla below. (Ludmilla a noblewoman strangled with her own scarf--mostly for political reasons--is the woman with white scarf.) Procopius, dressed as Benedictine, was the author who advised that it is not good to try to serve two masters, "for you will love the one and hate the other." The point here is that Christ is the master, and even the archbishop Crown Prince and Emperor are his vassals. Stylistically the work, which is by an anonymous painter, presumably Bohemian, is one of very few showing influence of Theodoric of Prague, the principal painter of the Holy Cross Chapel at Karlstein.

1365- Charles pays another visit to Avignon (current Pope is Urban V, who will return to Rome briefly 1367-70). Is crowned all over again. Birth of another daughter, Anna (who later will marry Richard II of England, importing Prague manuscript style when she goes). The decorations at Karlstein by Master Theodoric are finished.

1368- Birth of Prince Sigmund (future Emperor). Charles returns to Rome, for coronation of Elizabeth of Pomerania as Empress. They visit Mantua, Udine (where Chas. meets Petarch again), Modena, Siena, Lucca, returning to Prague 1369. (Possibly he may have placed the commission for Karlstein's diptych by Tommaso da Modena, in Treviso on this trip.)

1370- Birth of Prince Johann. Completion of the choir arcade and Golden Portal of the Cathedral.
1373- Death of Princess Elizabeth; birth of Princess Margarethe (later married to Johann III of Hohenzollern.) Beginning of the Gallery of portrait busts by Peter Parler in the triforium gallery of the Cathedral: including Charles, Anna of Schweidnitz, Wenzel, Ernst von Pardubitz, Matthew of Arras, and Self Portrait of Peter Parler. These lifelike portrait busts, high above the chancel and facing away from the nave, were never meant to be seen by the public. They are remarkable for their facial expressions.

1375- Travels to Lübeck via Brandenburg. (See notes on Master Bertram, who helped create the decorations for his triumphal entry.)

1376- Prince Wenzel elected King of the Romans, in Frankfurt/Main, with coronation in Aachen.

1377- Charles and Wenzel travel to France; Christmas in Cambrai.

1378- Meeting with the French King Charles V (Paris. Good description of the festivities on Barbara Tuchman's A Distant Mirror.) Jan Ocko f Vlasim makes Cardinal. Charles IV dies.

IMPORTANT RECENT WORK ON CHARLES IV AND HIS COURT IS ENTIRELY IN GERMAN and/or Czech. Major authors include Beat Frey, Gerhard Loscher, Peter Moraw, Karel Neubert, Anton Legner, Jiri Spevacek, Ferdinand Seibt, Frantisek Kavka. Particularly useful is the substantial catalogue of the exhibition held on the 500th anniversary of the Emperor's death in 1978 (Nuremberg).

On art in Bohemia during this period, there is *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia* (exhib.cat)

**THE MASTER OF WITTINGAU (TREBON)**

After the death of the old Emperor in 1378, the most interesting Bohemian painter is the unknown who, with his workshop, painted the Trebon Altarpiece, now in Prague's National Gallery. Originally commissioned for the Augustinian monastery chapel of St. Gilles at Wittingau (modern Trebon), it consists of three wooden panels covered on both sides with linen, each panel 132 cm. high, 92 wide. A fourth panel may once have existed. The style is more delicate, and seemingly more closely related to Franco-Flemish painting the the art of Theodoric and his circle:

**The Agony in the Garden:**
A graceful but oddly-proportioned Christ (note the abnormally long area from shoulder to knee, with the lower leg almost an afterthought), kneels in prayer in a garden dissolving in twilight. The three sleeping apostles are in their own space, separated from the main scene by a lava-like flow of pale rock. A few overly-large birds, some of them asleep in their own nests can be seen in the formulaic trees, as Judas and the soldiers appear in upper left corner.
The Entombment of Christ: Lack of a systematic perspective causes the tomb to appear to be standing on one corner, as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea try to fit the body of Christ into it—the halo is too wide to go in. A daring depiction of the nearly-nude body draped in an opaque loincloth and transparent shroud. In attendance are the Virgin—with drops of Christ's blood on her veil; John, and two holy women.

The Resurrection: The most interesting of the paintings. Christ arises, German-style, from the sealed tomb (assumption being that, if he could be born of a virgin he could also arise from a tomb without breaking the seals.) A very tall, slender figure, dressed now in red and carrying a processional cross with banner, he seems to float over the tomb. The soldiers, beginning to wake up but powerless to interfere, are wearing the latest 14th-century armor. A scarlet sky studded with gold stars forms the backdrop for the twilight landscape with its small trees and large birds.

The general effect is more mystical and insubstantial than the works produced during Charles's lifetime—and less influenced by the art of Italy.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

What really happened in Charles IV's Prague? Some people would say that it was a Renaissance. Both portraiture and autobiography (Charles's own) were created; a university was founded; great public works were constructed, and the Emperor himself was the friend of Petrarch, who actually came to town. He practiced Realpolitik rather than making decisions on the basis of superstition or sheer idealism. The people who think of the reign of Charlemagne, and of the twelfth century also as Renaissances of a sort, are inclined to think that a case can be made. More important, however, seems the fact that CHARLES HAD NOTHING MUCH TO REVIVE: most of what he commissioned was entirely new in his native Bohemia, where there had been no panel painting, no portrait sculpture, no archbishop and no cathedral before. While he was creating "a second Rome north of the Alps", he was thinking dynastically. He pushed the frontier of the Empire much further to the east than it had ever been before, turning his back on the old Imperial mausoleum of the Hohenstaufen in vault of Speyer Cathedral, and choosing not to occupy Charlemagne's old capital at Aachen, he built new monuments to the honor of his Bohemian ancestors—even having the most illustrious ones dug up and reinterred in the new cathedral of Prague. He was well aware that the Hapsburg family, who had viewed the Empire as their birthright, considered him an interloper. But in the end, it was a Hapsburg who married one of his daughters, and who began to spend some money to build up Vienna in competition with Prague.
II. - PAINTING IN AUSTRIA AND FRANCONIA CA. 1400

After the death of the Emperor Charles IV, and the failed reign of his eldest son and successor, Wenzel, the Hussite Wars in Bohemia created a climate unfavorable to the arts, while the growing political ambitions of Charles's Hapsburg son-in-law Rudolf IV made Vienna a more and more attractive destination for artists and art works. Rudolf had already founded a university there (1365), in imitation of the older one in Prague, and had commissioned a painted portrait of himself, crowned (Anonymous, 1365 or earlier, Vienna, Archiepiscopal Museum). This portrait, and subsequent late 14th-century Viennese paintings show the influence of the fleshy, naturalistic style of the Slovak painter from Prague and Karlstein, Master Theodoric.

French Influence - The Master of Heiligenkreuz

The Heiligenkreuz Diptych (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ca.1410) (Annunciation + Marriage of St Catherine)

This diptych, a single oak panel divided vertically into two halves, each 72 x 43.5 cm. depicts The Annunciation (left), and the Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine (right). Although the Virgin wears no crown, the influence of court culture is seen as Gabriel kneels before her throne and lectern as a proper courier should, and rather than dangle a banderole or scroll with the words "Ave Maria gratia plena" (Hail Mary, full of grace) for all the world to see, he carries instead a very private communication indeed--an envelope sealed with red sealing-wax, its contents meant for her eyes only. The importance of his message from God is demonstrated by the angelic masons at work above the Virgin's head, carefully setting a block of stone into place on the cornice above and behind her, which caps a wall ornamented with a statue of Moses, who represents the Old Law. The knowing viewer of this work would have recalled the various biblical metaphors involving structural stone--"The stone rejected by the builders has become the head of the corner," often quoted in the prayer offered at the laying of a church cornerstone; Christ's own reference to St. Peter as the foundation stone of the church; or possibly Psalm 127 ("Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it....Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.") According to St. Paul, stone symbolizes Christ (I Corinthians 10:4). In fact, Sts. Paul and James are the two male figures seen over the edge of the wall in this panel, as Sts. Dorothy and Barbara occupy the corresponding positions as witnesses to the Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine. In this composition the Christ Child, properly chaperoned by his Mother, places a ring on St. Catherine's finger, thus rescuing her from the arranged marriage that her father had in mind for her.
The identity of this painter may never be known, but his personal style is distinctive: very slender, almost brittle figures with high, bulging foreheads and long, very thin fingers. Two other panel paintings attributed to him are *The Death of the Virgin* (Cleveland Museum) and *The Death of St. Clare* (Washington, National Gallery). While both show some resemblance to the style of the Vienna diptych, it is clear that the two panels in America, possibly part of the same commission, are by two different artists.

**NUREMBERG CA. 1400**

The influence of Bohemian painting spread quickly to Nuremberg by means of the frequent visits of the Emperor and his family to that important city that lay at the very center of the Empire, where meetings of the Imperial Diet were frequently held. The city itself had grown up on the hillside below the old fortress, and was a so-called Imperial city, paying its taxes and owing allegiance directly to the Emperor and not to the bishop or duke who might own the surrounding countryside. Like other Imperial cities, it was governed almost entirely by its city council, consisting in this case of the wealthiest of its merchants. Though it had several wealthy parish churches, its bishop was in Bamberg.

*The Virgin Mary and St. Elizabeth with their Children, Spinning*  
(*Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, ca. 1400, panel, 95 x 138.5 cm*)

This charming horizontal composition once formed part of an altarpiece from the Frauenkirche, the church on the Market Square favored by Charles IV in the previous century. Bohemian influence is seen in the three-dimensional modeling and use of light and shadow. The exterior panels depicted scenes from the life of Christ, while the interior ones, with gold backgrounds like this one, were scenes from the life of Mary.

Peculiar to Nuremberg and its middle class population is the depiction of the Virgin and her cousin, the mother of John the Baptist, as housewives and mothers, Mary with a distaff and spindle, and Elizabeth with a woolwinder. Even the infant Christ and his playmate John have the air of real children, as John complains to Elizabeth, "See, Mother, what Jesus did to me."

**THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE; PAINTING IN HAMBURG**

**MASTER BERTRAM FROM MINDEN**

The names of a fair number of late medieval German artists are known from guild or court records; it is extremely rare, however, to know both the name and the work of any German artist of the 14th century --Theodoric of Prague and Master Bertram are two exceptions. While Theodoric's reputation rests entirely upon his work for Charles IV at Karlstein, Master Bertram is known from several surviving altarpieces made for various locations, as well as from a relatively large number of written references to civic commissions undertaken by himself and his workshop in Hamburg and Lübeck, and from
his two notarized wills (1390 and 1410.) He was active both as a painter and as a sculptor.

The economy of the north German port city of Hamburg was very different from that of Imperial Bohemia. Both Hamburg and Lübeck were founding members of the Hanseatic League--a voluntary organization of northern port cities that had banded together in the earlier Middle Ages for purposes of mutual protection against the pirates that regularly preyed on their trading ships in the Baltic and North Seas and certain of the great rivers. This organization was a commercial success, and the individual cities took turns in hosting annual conventions, which prefigured modern trade fairs (and, incidentally, were soon able to hire their own pirates, but that is another story.) The trade fairs helped to spread artistic influences between the Hanseatic ports of north Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and parts of Scandinavia. Contact with the Imperial court was established at least temporarily during the visit of Charles IV to Lübeck in 1375--which Master Bertram apparently witnessed at Hamburg's expense.

The audience for Master Bertram's art, unlike that of the major Bohemian painters, was comprised largely of clergy (Hamburg had recently lost its archbishopric to Bremen, however) and middle class businessmen-- brewers of beer (there were 500 breweries among its 8,000 people) and dealers in salt and herring. Beer was the city's major export, much of it shipped to Flanders, Denmark and England. As a major port with overseas trade, Hamburg was particularly vulnerable to the Black Death (bubonic plague), spread by ship's rats infested with fleas: every decade saw a new outbreak (1350, 1358, 1367, 1375/6, 1387/8), the city's population being reduced by a third.

Master Bertram: CV.

1367- Bertram first mentioned in Hamburg. Makes an image of the Virgin Mary for one of the city gates (the Milderntor); restores the angel atop the City Hall; paints a briefcase.

1372- Payment for a chandelier.
1373- Payment for varnishing a briefcase and a saddlebag.
1375- The City Council pays him for a trip to Lübeck. (Probably in connection with decorations for the visit of the Emperor Charles IV.)
1376- Is admitted to Hamburg citizenship and becomes a Master (implying that he may open his own workshop.) Payments for painting another briefcase and a Roland statue. (Quite a few north German cities once had these gigantic, totem-pole-like statues of the Carolingian hero Roland, generally facing the marketplace. The one in nearby Bremen has survived.)

1377- Makes an image of the Virgin for the Lübecker Tor (in Hamburg, the gate to the road leading to Lübeck). Both images of the Virgin were probably polychromed wooden sculptures--neither has survived.

1383- Commission for the high altar of the church of St. Peter (Hamburg), also known as the Grabow Altarpiece. Noted in the Hamburger Chronik:
"Anno 1383 wort de tafel des hogen altares tho S. Peter tho Hamborch gemaket. De se makede, hetede mester Bartram van Mynden."

This altarpiece is now in the Hamburg Kunsthalle (see below).

First mention of Bertram as a property-owner.

1385- Three wood sculptures and six coats of arms for the City Council.

A wooden image of St. Christopher with the Christ Child.

1387- Payment for a chandelier. Apprentices mentioned.

1390- The first of his wills, witnessed by the barrelmaker Johan Bremer and his son:

"In nomine Domini amen. I Bertram the painter intend to travel to Rome to comfort my Soul...." He goes on to say that, in the event that he should die on the way, he makes bequests to his nephew and namesake Bertramme Snellen consisting of 4 marks and his silver belt and chain. Other bequests are made to his wife, Grete; his sister and brother-in-law; a brother, apparently of unsound mind; and friends, as well as to various charitable and religious causes, foremost being the church of St. Peter and the Brotherhood of Corpus Domini ("heilige Leichnam"). No children are mentioned.

This is the first document mentioning a German painter as traveling to Rome. Note that Bertram was going there as a religious pilgrim, and that there is no indication that he was at all affected by Italian art after his return.

1410- The second will, witnessed by three men whose professions are not mentioned:

"In nomine Domini amen. I Bertram the painter, citizen of Hamburg, realizing that nothing is more certain than death nor less certain than the hour of death, do set my testament and my last will by the power of God's grace...." In this will the religious donations are listed first, including bequests to St. Peter's church, the Holy Spirit Hospital and to the convent of Harvestehude. Then he provides for a namesake, Bertramme Westersteden (his sister seems to have married a second time) and sets up a trust for a young daughter, Ghescken, and gives the full name of his brother as Corde van Byrde (indicating that the original family home must have been in the village of Bierde, near Minden.) Making provision for Corde's daughter, he names his executor (his sister's husband), and signs it "in the tenth year of the year of our Lord fourteen hundred, on Jubilate Sunday."

In the twenty years since his first will, his wife seems to have died and a young daughter has appeared--perhaps adopted?

When was the artist born? We don't know, but probably around 1340, in or near Minden. In 1390 he was a married man. The fact that he was about to go on pilgrimage to Rome
"to comfort his soul", and that he could afford to do this, and had completed THE VERY LARGEST north German altarpiece of its day, suggests that he was a mature man, perhaps in his late forties at the time. The fact that he was still active, with a young daughter (only 3 marks per year were to be set aside for her care until she was old enough to marry, at which time her stipend would be raised to 10 marks) could mean that he may have been nearly 70 when he wrote the second will. He is mentioned in guild records (1400) as an old man.

1414/15- Mention of both Master Bertram and his wife Grete as deceased members of the Holy Cross Brotherhood of St. John's (Dominican) church.

The principal scholarship on Master Bertram and his work is entirely in German, and begins with his "discovery" in the late 19th century by Alfred Lichtwark, the director of the Hamburg Kunsthalle, who traced the altarpiece made for Hamburg's church of St. Peter to the church in Grabow (Mecklenberg) that had acquired it when it had grown too "old fashioned" for Hamburg. The best modern monograph on this altarpiece in the small but very scholarly paperback by Christian Beutler, Meister Bertram Der Hochaltar von Sankt Petri. Christliche Allegorie als protestantische Aergernis. Frankfurt, Fischer, 1984.

Master Bertram's Major Works:

The Altarpiece for St. Peter's Church (Hamburg)

(7.26 meters wide by 2.77 high: HUGE)

| Painting | CR: Bertram von Minden ("Meister Bertram") (German, ca. 1345-ca. 1415), painter |
| CN: German, 14th Century |
| LO: Hamburg |
| CO: Church of Saint Peter |
| TI: Grabow Altar, 1383 |

(1) The three viewing stages of the altar (AccNo: 191782)
Painting
CR: Bertram von Minden ("Meister Bertram") (German, ca. 1345-ca. 1415), painter
CN: German, 14th Century
LO: Hamburg
CO: Church of Saint Peter
TI: Grabow Altar, 1383
MD: Oil on wood: 277 x 726 cm
OW: Hamburg: Kunsthalle

General view (AccNo: 21186)
General view (AccNo: 191775)
Detail: First panel (AccNo: 191778)
Detail: Second panel (AccNo: 191779)
Detail: Third panel (AccNo: 191780)
Detail: Fourth panel (AccNo: 191781)
Detail: First panel: Creation of Heaven (AccNo: 21181)
Detail: Second panel: Creation of the Animals (AccNo: 258076)
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<td>CN: German, 14th Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO: Hamburg</td>
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<td>CO: Church of Saint Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>TI: Grabow Altar, Open, 1383</td>
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<tr>
<td>MD: Oil on wood: 277 x 726 cm</td>
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<td>OW: Hamburg: Kunsthalle</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Detail: Annunciation" /></td>
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**THE BUXTEHUDE ALTAR**
| Painting | CR: Bertram von Minden ("Meister Bertram") (German, ca. 1345-ca. 1415), painter | TI: Buxtehude Altar, ca. 1390-1410  
OW: Hamburg: Kunsthalle |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

- **(1)** Detail: Visit of the Angels (AccNo: 164144)
- **(2)** Detail: Marriage at Cana (AccNo: 21183)
- **(3)** Detail: Coronation of the Virgin (AccNo: 21185)
- **(4)** Detail: Annunciation to Shepherds (AccNo: 6121)

The brick hall church of St. Peter, built 1310-20 on the site of an 11th-century structure--is the oldest of Hamburg's parish churches, located strategically near the marketplace and City Hall and attended mainly by craftsmen and their families--among them Master Bertram. A Lutheran church after the Reformation, it was damaged in World War II; restored 1949-59.

Master Bertram's altarpiece, now in the Kunsthalle, is the most important late Gothic altar made in north Germany. A transforming altar (*Wandelaltar*), it once had three different views, only two of which have survived (the paintings on the outer wings, which would have formed the "everyday" and Lenten view, have been lost and their subjects are not known.)

View #1- (fully open): The core of the altarpiece, which would have been completed first, consists entirely of carved and polychromed wooden sculpture. This would have been on view on the most important feast days of the liturgical year. As Christian Beutler has shown, the present centerpiece, a Crucifixion, was not part of the original design but is an earlier 14th-century relief inserted into the altarpiece in 1596, almost certainly to replace a depiction of the Virgin and Christ enthroned together--a subject frowned upon after the Reformation but still preserved in a few other altarpieces such as those in
Oberwesel and Marienstatt (Westphalia). With its original center, Beutler argues, the double row of standing saints in gothic niches form a gala wedding party in a gilded, heavenly palace, as Christ, the Bridegroom, marries The Church (Mary). Present on the top row are Sts. Dorothy, Margaret, Catherine, Barbara, Gertrude, Elizabeth (right); Christine, Cecilia, Agnes, Agatha, Apollonia, Mary Magdalene. The male saints on the row beneath include Michael, Stephen, Erasmus, Lawrence, the Three Magi, St. Gereon, the Apostles, St. Paul, and various prophets.

In the Romanesque arcade on the socle (Staffel, or predella) supporting the altarpiece, a carved Annunciation, featuring Mary seated on an altar, is flanked by figures of the Four Latin Fathers of the Church (Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory), plus Origen, John the Baptist, John Chrysostom, and Sts. Denis, Bernard of Clairvaux and Benedict.

The cornice at the top of the altar, pierced by windows like a clerestory, features the heads of ten old men (over the wings), and over the center, the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins.

The choice of Origen (ca. 185-254 A.D.) is a most unusual one, for although he was an important Early Christian scholar and teacher, not all of his writings were any longer approved by the Church. Beutler notes, however, that he was the author of a commentary on The Song of Songs, in which he identified the Bride as the human soul, and Christ the Bridegroom. St. Jerome had translated it from the original Greek into Latin. St. Augustine had offered a different interpretation of the Song of Songs--the Bride is the Church, Ecclesia, an explanation accepted also by St. Ambrose. St. Gregory also wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs.

View #2: The Painted Section

When the first pair of wings was closed, fully concealing all of the sculpture except for the cornice and socle, two orderly rows of narrative paintings were seen. (The altarpiece has been partially disassembled by the museum in order to display both the paintings and sculpture at once.) The subject matter of three quarters of the paintings is taken directly from the medieval conception of world history--e.g., the 13th-century Sächsische Weltchronik--which began with the fall of the rebel angels, and from the book of Genesis, from the Creation through the story of Jacob and Esau; the rest deals with the infancy of Christ.

It is highly unusual to find such an extensive treatment of the book of Genesis, displayed in chronological order, on a Christian altarpiece.

While the life of Christ and/or the Virgin were customarily handled in sequence, events from the Old Testament were generally chosen for use only as they were thought to prefigure or parallel New Testament material: e.g., the sacrifice of Isaac as a prefiguration of the Crucifixion. Master Bertram's altarpiece devotes the first twelve of its twenty-four painted scenes to the Creation, fall of Adam and Eve and their life after leaving Eden. In the lower register the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah building the Ark,
Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob and Esau are treated in order, before the Annunciation introduces the New Testament material, which ends with the simultaneous events of the Massacre of the Innocents and Flight to Egypt.

Upper register: 1) Fall of the Rebel Angels: Evil is introduced immediately, as God the Father gestures both toward a bright cloud containing the face of Christ, and toward the dark orb that Lucifer (wearing a crown) is claiming for his own, as he and six other dark creatures plunge head downward. Lucifer carries a banderole with a quotation from Isaiah 14 (the full passage begins" How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!", and Lucifer states his intention to "exalt [his] throne above the stars of God") The theology of Origen puts in another appearance here and in Scene 2, which parallels his treatise on Christ as the Logos (Word) that existed from the beginning of time.

(Scene 3) God creates the Firmament; Scene 4) The Third Day of Creation: God creates plants. Scene 5) The Fifth Day of Creation: God creates fish, birds and animals. This is the most frequently-reproduced of the paintings by Master Bertram. A sturdy, big-footed God the Father, somewhat uncomfortably tangled in his toga, stand surrounded by a great variety of creatures, including birds, flying squirrels, foxes, rabbits, reindeer, cattle, a lobster, a walrus and five kinds of fish. Evil asserts itself here as well, as a wolf kills a sheep.

Scene 6) The Creation of Adam, "from the dust of the ground".

Scene 7) The Creation of Eve, from Adam's rib. Note that Adam has apparently been anesthetized by heavenly music. Scene 8) God's instructions regarding the Tree of Knowledge. God has constructed a wall around Eden, as well as the fountain (fons) specified in St Jerome's Latin translation of this passage. Scene 9) The Fall. Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. Scene 10) God rebukes Adam and Eve, and curses the serpent. Adam and Eve, realizing that they are naked, cover themselves with leaves, while Eve pointedly blames the serpent. Scene 11) The Expulsion from Paradise. Scene 12) Adam delves and Eve spins. They are now mortal, and clothed, and condemned to provide for themselves.

Lower register:

Things go from bad to worse now that Sin has been invented.

Scene 13) Cain and Abel present their offerings. Cain's offering--a sheaf of wheat--of course was rejected and Abel's, a lamb, accepted. Scene 14) Cain kills his brother Abel. Scene 15) Noah builds the Ark.

Scene 16) Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son Isaac, but is prevented from doing so by an angel. Scene 17) Isaac and his son Esau. Isaac, now blind, speaks with his more macho of his twin sons, Esau, who is preparing to go hunting. Scene 18) Jacob, disguised as Esau, secures his father's blessing, thus cheating his brother out of his inheritance.
Jacob, who was the homebody of the two sons, was his mother's favorite, and it was she who put him up to this despicable transaction. Clearly, a plan for Salvation is called for--hence the story leaps forward to the New Testament and the birth of Christ:

Scene 19) The Annunciation. Note here the arrival of the tiny Christ Child, carrying a cross over his shoulder, who slides into the room on a beam of light. This follows the common convention of portraying the soul (of anyone) in the form of a small child, and is introduced here in order to portray the Incarnation. (A late variant of this idea will be used in the 1420's by the Flemish Master of the Merode Altarpiece.)

Scene 20) The Nativity. Mary is seated on her mattress in the stable, reaching out to Joseph, who hands her the Christ Child. Scene 21) Adoration of the Magi. Scene 22) Presentation in the Temple. Scene 23) Massacre of the Innocents. Scene 24) The Rest on the Flight to Egypt. This is the most famous of Bertram's New Testament scenes. Mary nurses her son (she seems to have a "mono-bosom"), the ass takes a drink of water, and Joseph eats a bite of bread, handing the wine canteen to Mary.

STYLE:
Since the recorded date of this altarpiece (1383) is five years earlier than any documented reference to apprentices, and in light of his earliest works apparently having been pieces of sculpture, Master Bertram is presumed to have created all or most of this enormous work himself. This may or may not be true, but there is a close relationship between the short, stubby figures of the sculpted view, whose drapery is wound rather tightly around the body, and the similarly draped and shaped figures of the painted sections. There is also a tendency to place the figures in landscapes or interiors that are no more elaborate than absolutely necessary--a trait that we associate, whether rightly or wrongly, with the modus operandi of a sculptor.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Can you think of some reasons why a parish church in Hamburg would spend the money for such an elaborate altarpiece in 1383? And why they would later perform major surgery on the middle of the sculptural program, and finally sell the work to a smaller church in eastern Germany?

III. - MASTER FRANCKE

This artist, probably born about 1380, was active at least until 1436, and his work shows no influence from Master Bertram. He is now believed to have been a Dominican monk from the city of Zutphen in the central Netherlands--a document refers to him as "Fratre Francone Zutphanico". Thought to have been trained as a miniature painter, perhaps in Paris or Flanders, he later worked in Muenster (Westphalia) and finally in Hamburg.

Mr. Francke's art is notable for its very sophisticated use of color, as well as for strong facial expressions and "illusionistic" use of space, with care to establish several distinct planes, between which characters can move as though they were between pieces of stage scenery. In several of his paintings the foreground space is established by a large, plain
surface resembling a sand dune or flow of lava; in others a large piece of drapery is held up by angels to mask the bottom of the picture.

The St. Barbara Altarpiece. (Helsinki, Kansallismuseo).
Oak relief sculpture (by another artist: we didn't see it); oak wings with 8-part narrative of St. Barbara.
The story comes from the Byzantine Menologion (10th c.), newly reissued in 1300 by the Teutonic Knights.

This work is an early one—perhaps as early as 1415-20, though some have dated it as late as 1425. It may very well have been painted for export to Finland originally—perhaps for the former Cathedral of Turku, which had a St. Barbara Altar beginning in 1412 and from which it would have been removed during the Reformation. Helsinki's museum acquired it from a small church in Nykyrko (S.W. Finland) in 1908, and were told that, according to local legend, it had washed ashore from the sea by a miracle.

The panels:
Dispute of St. Barbara with her Father
St. B., dressed in an elegant salmon-colored brocade, had been immured by her father in a tower. She now demands three windows built into her new bathroom, thus revealing that she has been converted to Christianity by means of correspondence with Origen. She counts her debating points on her fingers, medieval-style. The father is characterized as a villain—dark and swarthy, armed with a scimitar, and turning his back to us. He realizes that his political career is in the dumper unless he can get her to reconvert. (She runs away)

The Miracle of the Wall
As Barbara's father pursues her, a big white wall miraculously springs up in front of him, allowing her to escape on the other side.

St. Barbara Betrayed by a Shepherd
The most drastic of Mr. Francke's spatial arrangements, The father and his men are huge, outranking the two little shepherds in the foreground as they ride between two pieces of stagelike scenery. One shepherd keeps quiet; the other tells which way St. Barbara has gone. As punishment, his sheep are turned into grasshoppers. (Or maybe those are locusts).

Other scenes: St. Barbara is captured and accused by the Emperor, tortured with torches, has one of her breasts cut off, and finally is beheaded.

The Altarpiece of St. Thomas a Becket. (Hamburg, Kunsthalle).

The original contract for this altarpiece is dated 1424, "the Monday before St. Nicholas" (although the paintings were not completed until the mid-1430's.) The painter's name is given as "Mester Franckenn," and the commission was signed by two elders of
the English Trading Company ("England-Travelers"; Englandfahrer Gesellschaft) for the company's altar on the south side of the Johanniskirche (Dominican church of St. John, Hamburg). The price is set at an "ungeheurlich" (immense) sum of 100 Lubeck marks.

The altarpiece has not survived intact: at some point it was dismantled and shipped to Schwerin, where it was discovered and reassembled. Missing are the two fixed wings (Standflügel), and the Staffel, or predella, as well as most of the large Calvary picture that once formed the center of the shrine.

Exterior wings

The Nativity (upper left)

This unusual Nativity is one of the earliest to follow the visionary description of St. Bridget of Sweden (newly canonized in 1391.) St. Bridget declared that the Madonna gave birth instantly and painlessly, in a kneeling position, and clothed in white. She further declared that the newborn Infant glowed with divine light as He lay on the bare ground, and that the Virgin immediately began to pray to Him: "Welcome, my God, my Lord, and my Son." The virgin's banderole says "Dominus meus, Deus meus" (my Lord, my God). Another unusual feature is the fact that the Nativity is not set in a stable, but in a cave, according to the Byzantine tradition (the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem does include a grotto, which is said to be the actual place where Christ was born.) Scarlet skies with regularly-spaced gold stars are depicted in all four of these exterior wing paintings.

The Adoration of the Magi (upper right)

Three Caucasian kings of differing ages have followed the one star singled out by a dark blue cloud. Madonna and Child are seated at the entrance to the stable; Joseph, still a low-genre character, turns his back to the viewer in order to reach out for the gift of gold, which he proposes to place on the table in the left foreground.

The Mocking of St. Thomas a Becket

This altar is dedicated to the English martyr, Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (not to the Apostle Thomas.) Becket was to be assassinated by order of the King of England, Henry II (see following panel), but this represents an earlier and unsuccessful attempt on his life. Becket and his companion ride away between two pieces of stage-like scenery as the assassins are left behind, cursing and holding the severed tail of Becket's white horse.

The Martyrdom of Becket

This event actually took place inside the cathedral of Canterbury, Becket's own church, in 1170. It was a political murder, and the papacy made sure that he was canonized almost immediately (1173), which led to Canterbury's becoming THE most popular English place of pilgrimage (this is where Chaucer's pilgrims were going.) In modern times, poets and dramatists have been fascinated by the story, from Tennyson (Becket) to T.S. Eliot (Murder in the Cathedral) and Jean Anouilh (Becket). Master Francke depicts the saint kneeling, already mortally wounded (that's the top of his skull stuck to the inside of his
episcopal mitre on the floor), as he forgives his assassins and predicts that the church will endure.

Interior view: Scenes from the Passion of Christ
The center shrine survives only in a fragment from the lower lefthand corner, showing the Holy Women and St. John.
This is flanked by a pair of wings with two scenes each, one above the other:

- The Flagellation
- Christ Bearing the Cross
- The Entombment
- The Resurrection
The Resurrection is particularly notable as non-Germanic: Christ climbs physically out of the open tomb, turning his back to the viewer. (thus, not mystically rising through the lid of the tomb with the seals in place.)

Other Paintings by Mr. Francke

The Man of Sorrows (Leipzig)
Oak panel: 42.5 x 31.3 cm (small).

This painting has its original frame of dark blue with gold, five-petalled roses (probably representing St. Bernard's rosa mystica (one petal for each of Christ's wounds). It is an Andachtsbild (picture to meditate on): thus not a picture of a historical action, but an image that is completed by the viewer's own meditation. Christ has been crucified, but not fully resurrected. He holds a scourge in each hand, perhaps an invitation to self-flagellation on the part of the viewer, who may well have been a monk. . This is an early painting by Mr. Francke, probably around the time of the St. Barbara altarpiece, for the body of Christ is still very slim and simplified, with no reference to musculature.
The panel is painted on the reverse side with a Sudarium (Veronica veil), which we didn't see. Both of these images were indulgenced.

Biblical inspiration for such pictures and meditations is found in several of the New Testament books written by St. Paul:
Romans 8:17: "We are...joint heirs with Christ if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together."
Philippians 3:10f.: "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..."

Man of Sorrows as the Judex Mundi (Judge of the World) (Hamburg, Kunsthalle)
Oak panel: 92.5 x 67 cm

Twice as large as the Leipzig picture (almost life-size), and much later, perhaps 1435 or - 6. This seems to have been painted for the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, which maintained an altar in the Johanniskirche from 1423 on, and may have been painted around the same time as the St. Thomas altarpiece for the same Dominican church.
body of Christ is much more powerful and well defined than in the Leipzig painting, and the foreground in masked by the piece of brocade held by the two angels, indicating that this is a vision.

The iconography of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, with elements from the Last Judgment (the lily of mercy and flaming sword of justice) is very unusual–this is the earliest example of it.

**CONRAD VON SOEST (ca.1360-1422)**

**The Niederwildungen Altarpiece (Bad Wildungen, Stadtkirche). 1403**

24 1/2 ft. wide when opened

Bad Wildungen is a spa in southern Westphalia (near Burg Friedrichstein.), and this immense altarpiece was painted for the parish church of St. Nicholas (built in the early 14th century). The Latin inscription on the outside of the right wing says:
"In the year of our Lord MCCCIIt (I?) (1403 or 4: the last digit is unclear, on St. Aegidius's Day (i.e. Sept. 1) this work by Conrad the Painter from Soest was finished, in the time of the Rector of the altar, the priest Conrad Stollen."

Conrad Stollen the parish priest probably served as the iconographer for the altarpiece, which seems to have been funded by the Order of St. John.

Conrad von Soest's workshop was in the free Imperial city of Dortmund, where he was a man of considerable wealth and social standing. He was a member of the confraternities of the Marienkirche and of the Nikolaikirche in Dortmund, and was thus associated with the wealthy Hanseatic merchants of the city, six of whom signed his marriage contract in 1396.

The Niederwildungen Altarpiece is his earliest known work–a large Calvary flanked by twelve smaller paintings in two rows, six on each side. The Calvary painting is of particular interest to us, since it is of the same general type as Master Francke's damaged one, commissioned in Hamburg in 1424. The full cast of historical characters are represented: Christ, the two thieves (note the angel receiving the soul of the Good Thief, while a demon torments the Bad Thief). The Believing Centurion, the soldiers, the Pharisees, the men casting dice for Christ's clothes, and St. John with the Holy Women. The Pharisees and Roman government officials are particularly elegant in fashions reminiscent of the Burgundian court at Dijon. There also seems to be Parisian influence in his jewellike colors and red/blue balance. Non-French, however, is his comparatively raw application of real gold.

Also notable is the scene of the Nativity–old-style, with the Virgin in bed, but with a crouching Joseph blowing into the fire to heat a bowl of food for mother and child.

**MASTER OF THE ORTENBERG ALTARPIECE**
The Ortenberg Altarpiece (Darmstadt, Hessische Landesmuseum) ca. 1410-20?
Tempera, 1 meter high
Probably painted either for the convent of Konradsdorf, or for the private chapel of Gottfried VIII von Muenzenberg-Eppstein. It was "discovered" in the 19th century in the parish church in Ortenberg.

This anonymous work is of interest for its highly unusual technique, which suggests the influence of metal or enamel work with its great areas of gold and silver. The painter seems to have been Middle Rhenish—perhaps from around Mainz, where goldsmith work was much more important than painting. The same artist seems also to have done stained glass. The golden garments are made by applying yellow varnish over silver foil; the shadows are cross-hatched rather than painted. The work has its original red frame, with gold ornaments.

Center panel: The Virgin and Child with Saints
Mary and Christ are surrounded by Sts. Anne, Elizabeth, Mary Cleophae, Mary Salome, Agnes, Dorothy Barbara and Ismeria (St. Anne's sister), and Ismeria's grandson, St. Servatius appears in the upper right corner. The children include Christ's cousins Simon, Joseph the Just, James Minor, Judas Thaddeus, James the Great, John the Evangelist and John the Baptist.

Dexter wing: The Nativity
Also featuring much gold and silver, and having a kneeling, Bridget-type Madonna.

IV. - Swabia and the Upper Rhine

The great Church Councils of the early 15th century were a stimulus to "modern art" in south Germany. The Council of Constance (1414-18), called by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to end the great schism of the West, resulted in the election of a new Pope, Martin V, to supercede the 3 rivals, John XXIII, Benedict XIII and Gregory XII. This was the greatest international gathering prior to the United Nations.. Popes, cardinals, princes, ambassadors noblemen, clerks and artisans from Italy, Spain, France, England and the Germanies came together. Later in 1431 a similar council was held in Basel, with more foreign bigwigs, including Robert Campin's client, Canon Heinrich von
Werl of Cologne and Konrad Witz's patron, Cardinal Francois de Mies. (Witz himself moved to Basel in 1430.)

By the 1430's there began to be a new concern for three-dimensional effects (this is the generation of Masaccio, Jan van Eyck and the Flemalle Master.) Painters begin to create shorter, stubbier figures with large heads, who stand spraddle-legged with both feet firmly planted on the ground. The colors of their clothing are more subdued: more earth colors, less expensive blues. German poetry takes a plebian turn: e.g. the poet "Rosenblut", who state that the cackle of a hen laying her egg is more beautiful than the song of the nightingale, and the happy farmer's song behind the plow, or the bleating of a sheep are preferable to the church choir.

There are three major south German artists of this period: LUCAS MOSER, HANS MULTSCHER, and KONRAD WITZ, all of whom began to SIGN THEIR WORK.

**LUCAS MOSER (active ca.1430/31)**

**The Tiefenbronn Altarpiece, signed and dated 1431 (Tiefenbronn, parish church)**

*3 meters high x 2.38 wide*

Painted on a panel covered with mule-skin vellum, primed with a mixture of chalk and glue
Tempera colors plus gold and silver foil

Tiefenbronn, still a tiny village south of Pforzheim, in the 15th century had a pilgrimage chapel (belonging to the Abbot of Hirsau) dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This is NOT the high altar, but is located on a wall to the right of the chancel.

We know virtually nothing about Lucas Moser other than the inscription on this altarpiece:
"Schri kunst schri und klag dich se[h]r
dein begert jetz[t] niemer mehr
so o we 1431
Lukas moser maler von wil
meister des werx bit got vir in."

(Cry, art and bewail yourself, because nobody cares about you any more, so Oh Woe, 1431. Lukas Moser, painter from [Rottweil? Or Weil-der-Stadt?] , the master [who made this work, Pray God for him]."

What are we to make of this? Had he been to one of the church councils, feeling let down after returning home to the same old clientele? Had he been to Burgundy–Dijon maybe and seen the work of Claus Sluter and Jean Malouel? Or was he trained as a stained glass painter, and thinks "modern art" is ugly? We may never know.

In 1969 it was suggested (by a German scholar who is an expert on watermarked paper, not painting) that the inscription is a 19th-century addition, and the painting not German
at all but French. This caused a huge reaction, resulting in lab work on the altarpiece and a symposium and several publications to report the results. It is now proven that this is a German painting, made for the very location where it now stands (it is covering up an older medieval wall painting of the same subject.) The silver lettering of the inscription is strange but the wording is original. The altarpiece has been repainted at least five times, however-----twice in the nineteenth century (1859-61, and 1899). It was cleaned of its 17th and 19th-century overpaint in 1938, and was carefully reexamined in 1970.

The technique of painting on panels covered in vellum is not modern but very old indeed: it is described in full by both Theophilus Presbyter and Heraclius. Theophilus also describes the basic method for "translucent" painting on a base of metallic foil, which is essentially the technique that Moser has used here.

Iconography of the Tiefenbronn Altar:
Top lunette: Christ at dinner with Lazarus, Simon the Pharisee, Mary and Martha
The subject matter of the altarpiece is predicated on the medieval confusion of Mary of Bethany (Lazarus' sister) and Mary Magdalene popularized by Jacobus de Voragine in The Golden Legend. The event depicted here is described in Luke VII: 36-50 and John XII:1-5. The table is set up in a (eucharistic) grape arbor. Martha waits on the diners while Mary anoints Christ's feet with perfume and wipes them with her long golden hair.

Body of the altarpiece: The Voyage of Mary, Martha, Lazarus, their Confessor Maximinus, and Cedonius (the blind man whom Christ had healed)
The party had been set adrift in the Mediterranean in a ship without a rudder, which eventually came to rest at Marseille
The boat sails on a magical gold-and-silver sea. In the central panel, which is demarcated from the other two by vertical bands bearing the inscription with the painter's name and date, Martha and the male travelers are seen asleep on the pier in Marseille, while in an upstairs window Mary [Magdalene] appears in a dream to the French queen, to explain the reason for her childlessness. (If anybody would know the answer to this, it would certainly be Mary Magdalene.) The building abuts the local cathedral, complete with flying buttresses, inside which we see Mary Magdalene, now appearing as a "wild woman" clad only in her own copious body hair, receiving her last communion from the bishop., as she is elevated slightly off the floor by a group of angels. (This type of "Magdalene in Ecstasy"--she was elevated daily to be nourished on heavenly music--is particularly popular in Germany as a theme for sculpture and engravings). Notable are the landscape on the horizon, the treatment of water, the modern, big-headed figures, the use of cast shadows and the attempt at illusionistic perspective.

The Staffel (predella): Christ with the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins
Christ appears here in the role of the Bridegroom, shutting the Foolish Virgins out from the wedding feast as he turns to welcome the Wise ones who have trimmed their lamps. (A parable that Christ told in reference to the means of salvation.) Medieval theologians, forgetting that the whole thing was originally a parable, identified Martha and Mary Magdalene (!) As two of the Wise Virgins.
Inside wings: Martha, and Lazarus as standing figures
Center shrine: sculpture of the Magdalene in Ecstasy (not by Moser)

The literature on this altarpiece includes a report by Rainer Hausherr in Kunstchronik (1971), as well as the technical report by Rolf Straub in Jahrbuch der staatl. Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Wuerttemberg, 7 (1970), pp. 31-56.

V. - HANS MULTSCHER (ca.1400-1467)

Sculptor, and painter(?) From Reichenhofen (Allgaeu)): More Germans than Flemish artists seem to have been faced with commissions involving both painted and carved sections. The head of the workshop might be someone more like a producer, who would be responsible for assigning certain tasks within the shop, and contracting others out. We know for a fact that Multscher made sculpture both in stone and in wood, and that at least two of his altarpieces had painted wings. Unfortunately the painted wings in those two cases are not by the same painter. Was one of those painters Multscher, and the other one somebody else? Or did Multscher farm out both sets of wings to two different painters? We don't know.

The documents:

1427 - Multscher becomes a tax-free citizen of Ulm. Marries Adelheid Kitzin, daughter of a local sculptor.

1429 - The stone Man of Sorrows (life-sized) above the west door to the Ulm cathedral

1433- His name is inscribed on the Karg Altar, also in Ulm's cathedral. Virtually nothing remains of this altar except the inscription, the sculpture (which would have been stone) having been destroyed by iconoclasts in 1531.

1437 The WURZACH ALTARPIECE, signed by Multscher and dated 1437 on one of the painted wings (Berlin, Gemaeldegalerie).

1456- The contract for the Sterzing Altar. (Multscher did only the sculpture for this., which was the high altar for the parish church in Sterzing (Vipiteno, South Tyrol). The altar was dismantled in 1779. Pieces of it are in the Museo Multscher, Sterzing; the Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck; the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.
1467 - Dies, before March 13.

**The Wurzach Altarpiece, 1437 (Berlin)**

Only the painted parts remain (Berlin), although it seems probable that the stone Landsberg Madonna and Child may have formed part of the missing central shrine. The sinister wing (on right, at bottom) is signed: "Bitte Gott fuer Hansen Mulstcher von Reichenhofen, buerger zu Ulm, hat das werk gemacht, da man zaeht 1437."

The paintings consist of 4 Passion scenes and 4 scenes from the life of Mary, and are characterized by a new sense of realism—large, peasant-like muscular figures with big hands and feet, broad chests, low foreheads, arms having joints from which slow movement comes. The emphasis is on plastic form, rather than on contour and rhythm. Garments don’t swing into curves any more, but fall stiffly from the body. Strenuous attempts at foreshortening are made. Colors now imply volume and weight, and are not decorative: much use of earth colors (cheap). Unrelenting ugliness, and in some cases violent action

**The Nativity**
The Madonna kneels, facing the manger, with her back to Joseph and the shepherds, in the posture of a priest at the altar. Joseph kneels behind her, like an acolyte. In a niche on the stable wall are a basket of bread and a pitcher, presumably containing wine—the elements of the eucharist. Also furthering the reference to the Christian church service is the wooden fence that separates the Holy Family from a large crowd of spectators who seem to kneel like parishioners at the altar rail who are waiting to receive the consecrated bread of the Mass.

**Adoration of the Magi**
The Madonnas in both of the Adoration and Nativity are singularly unbeautiful, with large features and prominent ears—physically resembling the Landsberg Madonna.

**Christ on the Mount of Olives**
An ungainly Judas leads the soldiers into the fenced Garden of Gethsemane, where a huge and greatly troubled Christ is kneeling in prayer.

**Christ before Pilate**
Despite the advice of his wife, who attempts to interfere on Christ's behalf, Pilate washed his hands of the case, thus allowing the crucifixion of Christ to proceed. A singularly ugly High Priest stands snarling at one side as a short, rude Roman soldier in a tin-pot helmet has charge of the prisoner.

**Christ Bearing the Cross**
Memorable features of this public humiliation of Christ include the small boys picking up stones to heave at Him; the rude soldier elbowing the Holy Women out of the way, and the workman at the head of the procession carrying a basket containing a hammer and nails.
The Resurrection
By all odds the most memorable of the paintings. An enormous, muscular Christ has been resurrected, all but one leg. It is the Germanic "mystic osmosis" whereby the tomb remains sealed, but the fact that such a substantial Christ could have de-materialized Himself to pass through solid stone seems somehow even more miraculous that it appeared to be in Bohemian painting, where Christ was so slender and weightless that He simply floated out of the sarcophagus.

The Pentecost
Mary is seated in the center of the group of Apostles as they receive the gift of "speaking in tongues" from the Holy Spirit, who appears as usual in the form of a white dove. The Apostles seated in the foreground with their backs to us are tonsured, indicating their priestly status as they prepare to become Christian missionaries in foreign lands.

The Death of Mary
The inscription with the artist's name and date appear beneath this painting. A strenuous attempt to foreshorten the Virgin's room has resulted in a triangular space behind the bed. Solicitous Apostles attend the dying woman, who is receiving the Last Rites.

VI. - KONRAD WITZ (CA.1400-1445/6)

Probably born between 1400 and 1410, in Rottweil (S.W. Germany), Witz came to Basel when he was already about 30 years old, probably attracted by the great Church Council of Basel (1431-37) convened by order of Pope Martin V, with its visiting foreign dignitaries and increased opportunities for commissions. We have no idea where he was originally trained. Although his handling of painted drapery suggests the influence of the Netherlandish sculptor, Claus Sluter, whose work could still be seen in nearby Dijon, Sluter himself had died in 1404. The Master of Flemalle and/or Robert Campin, who is also sometimes suggested as Witz's teacher, cannot have been, since Witz painted exclusively in tempera (the Netherlandish master, whose studio was in Tournai, was one of the pioneers in the use of oil-based pigment, and would surely have taught his apprentices to use the same.)

Witz's earliest paintings are done on oak panels –also used by Netherlandish painters–but his later ones are on pine or fir. His paintings were attributed variously to such painters as "Giotto", "Guido da Siena", "Franco-Burgundian School", and "Follower of Geertgen tot Sint Jans", until 1896. In that year the Curator of the Basel Museum, Daniel Burckhardt grouped paintings by the same hand, some of which were in museums and others still in private collections. He recognized the Geneva Altarpiece as a work by the same person, and noted its prominent inscription "Magister Conradus de Basilea". Returning home to Basel he searched the archives, finding documents that referred to "Konrad Witz von Rotwil, der Moler, Buerger zu Basel", who was a member of the Basel Painters' Guild. ("Konrad Witz", or "Smart Conrad", means the same thing as the Latin "Conradus
Sapientis." So, having established this identification, Burckhardt was able to come up with the following documents relating to Witz:

1434- Is named a Master Painter in the Basel guild.

1435- A document reveals his place of origin, Rottweil. He marries Urselin von Wangen, the niece of the Dean of the Painters' Guild.

[ The Heilsspiegel Altar must have been painted shortly after he joined the Guild]

1443- He buys a house, "zum Pflug", in the Freien Strasse

1444- The date inscribed on the Geneva Altarpiece, which was painted on location in Geneva

1447, August 5, Urselin Witz is mentioned as a widow, and the painter's father, Hans Witz of Rottweil is made the guardian of her and of the five minor children of the couple—an indication that Konrad cannot have been very old when he died.

1448 - Urselin and the children go to her brother, who subsequently dies
The new guardian, Jakob von Wangen, sells the house for the benefit of the children— Jakob, Kathrinli, Jonatan, Ennelin (Anna), and Konrad.

1454 - Witz's daughter Kathrinli enters a convent, where she lives until her death in 1471.

All of the works by Witz that we know were painted within a period of about ten years (1434-44), which is really his "mature" style after coming to Basel. We have no clue as to his earliest manner.

The Heilsspiegel Altarpiece (Mirror of Human Salvation). Ca. 1434/5
Painted in tempera and gold leaf on oak panels
No longer intact, only 13 painted panels from the original wings have survived. The central shrine is missing: was it carved? We don't know.

Exterior wings: Five of the original 8 panels survive
Ecclesia (upper left); The Angel Gabriel; [blank:undoubtedly a Virgin Mary facing Gabriel]; Synagoga (upper right)
Ecclesia (the Christian Church) stands erect and carrying a processional cross and chalice, a conscious contrast to Synagoga, who is shown blindfolded, leaning to one side, and carrying a banner with a broken staff. The anti-semitic implications are clear.

St. Augustine
St. Bartholomew
These two saints indicate that the altarpiece was made for the Augustinian church in Basel. The church was dedicated to St. Leonard (who was probably depicted on one of
the two missing panels on the bottom register). St. Bartholomew was the second patron saint of this Augustinian church.

**Interior wings**
Two registers of four panels each. [Only one missing panel]
The subjects of these panels, all of which have gold backgrounds, All are taken from the book of exegesis called The Mirror of Human Salvation (Heilsspiegel, in German). This medieval book draws typological parallels between events in the Old and New Testaments.

**Caesar and Antipater**
Abraham and Melchisidek
Esther and King Ahasuerus
Solomon and the Queen of Sheba
David and the "Three Strong Men"- Sabobai, Abishai and Benaija
Augustus Caesar and the Sibyl of the Tiber

The theme of Caesar and Antipater comes from the historian Flavius Josephus, who tells of the emperor Julian's general who bared his breast to show his battle scars in order to counteract slander spread by his enemies. He is mentioned in the Speculum Humanae Salvationis as prefiguring Christ, who goes before God the Father to show his wounds, acquired on behalf of mankind.

Esther, from the Old Testament book of the same name, interceded with her husband, King Ahasuerus, on behalf of her people. Ahasuerus had not known that she was a Jew, and was about to persecute the Jews on the advice of his wicked prime minister, Hamaan. Esther is seen as a prototype of the Virgin Mary, who also pleads for her people on the day of Judgment.

Melchisidek, who was "both priest and King" in Salem, is considered a prefiguration of Christ, who also combines these two professions, and Melchisidek also welcomed Abraham by giving him bread and wine, the two elements of the eucharist.

The Queen of Sheba, who brought presents to Solomon, is seen as a prefiguration of the Magi and their gifts to Christ, as is the double scene with David and the three "Strong Men" bearing three reliquaries full of the water of the well in Bethlehem.

The Sibyl of the Tiber, on the day of Christ's birth, is said to have shown Augustus Caesar a vision of a golden ring around the sun, encircling a beautiful maiden and her child, "who would become a mighty king." The Speculum puts this event in the Nativity section of the book.

**The Geneva Altarpiece, 1444. (Geneva, Musee d'Art et d'Histoire)**
Signed and dated: "Hoc opus pinxit Magister Conradus Sapientis de Basilea 1444"
Once attributed to Giotto, then Margaritone, then Geertgen tot Sint Jans (!)
As with the Heilsspiegel Altar, only the wings remain.
Interior:
**Adoration of the Magi**
Takes place outside a stable with shattered pieces of stucco, suggesting decay of the Old Covenant. Through the open doorway a second building is visible. Over the doorway, a statue of David playing his harp (Bethlehem was David's native city, and David is said to have been an ancestor of both Mary and Joseph.) The youngest king stands in the new spraddle-legged posture favored by German painters in the ‘30s and 40's. Prominent use of cast shadow.

**Cardinal Francois de Mies (de Mez) Presented to the Virgin and Child**
It is quite likely that Witz met his client, the newly elevated (1440) Cardinal de Mies, then a bishop, at the Council of Basel, which De Mies is known to have attended. The Geneva Altar was his gift to the Church of St. Peter in Geneva. The Cardinal kneels as St. Peter introduces him to the Virgin and Child, who are seated on a throne capped with four angels. A pair of disembodied hands presents the Cardinal's ceremonial hat—the huge model that will not be worn, but hung on the wall in his church.

Exterior: Scenes from the life of St. Peter
**St. Peter's Release from Prison**
St. Peter appears twice: once asleep, manacled in his prison cell, and again as an angel leads him gently away by the wrist.
Again, dramatic use of cast shadows, and much attention to "cubist" architectural forms.

**The Miraculous Draft of Fishes**
This is Witz's most famous work, with its accurate landscape of the territory around one end of Lake Geneva, near the present bridge that connects the two halves of the modern city. In the background Mont Blanc can be seen, with the Savoy Alps, as seen from Les Paques in midsummer. Swiss lake-dwellers' huts are seen in the background at right, and bleaching fields and well-kept farms on the opposite shore. Real lake water, with slimy stuff on the bottom and gas bubbles rising to the surface, is well rendered, and reflections in the water obey the laws of optics not yet discovered by scientists.

Witz has kaleidoscoped the story, combining Christ's calling of Peter and Andrew (on Lake Genesareth) with Christ's appearance on the Sea of Galilee when, during a storm, He walked on the water. In the boat are Peter, Andrew and others, pulling up a net filled with fish after Christ has told them "I will make you fishers of men..." In the foreground, Christ has called Peter to Him, but Peter is unable to walk on the water ("O Thou of little faith...") While the disciples in the boat are seen reflected upside down in the water, Peter, who is submerged to the waist, is shown with his legs distorted by the optical effect of the water.

Other panels by Witz: perhaps for a lost altar for Basel's Dominican convent

**The Annunciation (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum)**
Of particular interest, as it shows Mary seated humbly on the floor in a totally bare chamber, as Gabriel has entered by the closed door at left.

Sts. Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate (Basel Museum)
Mary's parents, looking a little gnome-like, exchange the news of her impending birth. Much more impressive is the gate itself—a real city gate for pedestrian traffic, with a movable bar that almost punctures the plane of the picture.

VII. – PAINTING IN COLOGNE [KÖLN]

Cologne (Roman. Colonia) is the oldest city in Germany, originally settled in 38 B.C. as a city rather than as an army camp. It was the capital of the Roman province of "Lower Germany" ("lower" meaning northern). The Empress Agrippina was born there (A.D. 15), and the Batavian revolutionary Claudius Civilis failed to reconvert the city to barbarianism in 70 A.D. It had a bishop as early as the 4th century, and was raised to an archbishopric by Charlemagne in 800. Its 10th century archbishop was Bruno (953-965), the younger brother of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II. Bruno, together with Otto's wife, the Byzantine princess Theophanu, spent a great deal of money on Cologne's Romanesque churches, as did subsequent 11th century archbishops Heribert and Anno. The acquisition of the relics of the Three Magi (1164) made the city still more popular as a place of pilgrimage., becoming a Dominican stronghold by 1248, and by the early 1300's the mysticism of the Dominican preachers Tauler, Suso and Meister Eckhardt became influential. Cologne's university, founded in 1388, is the third oldest in the Empire (after Prague and Vienna). The city had 80 charitable brotherhoods and confraternities, and with a population of 40,000, was the largest city in Germany. By the late 1300's the local painters' guild register contained 14 names (unfortunately, none can be connected with certainty to any of the many anonymous paintings made in the city.)
The painters all lived in their own street—the Schildergasse.

THE MASTER OF ST. VERONICA

St. Veronica with the Sudarium (Munich, Alte Pinakothek). Ca. 1410?
This small painting, which originally came from the church of St. Severin in Cologne, was much admired by Goethe, who saw it in 1814 in the Boisseree collection. St. Veronica holds her veil, on which the features of Christ were imprinted when she handed it to Him to wipe His face. THE actual alleged veil itself had been indulgenced, and had been kept in St. Peter's (Rome) since the 8th century. Typical of Cologne is the large amount of gold leaf, and the pastel colors chosen for their beauty rather than for their symbolism. The small cherubs with golden curls and snubbed noses are also a frequent feature of art from this city.

The Small Calvary (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum)
1'8" x 1' 2 3/4"
Reminiscent of the contemporary art of Conrad von Soest, in Dortmund (q.v.) The Calvarienberg ("crowded" Calvary) is replete with the two thieves, Longinus and the Centurion, the dicing soldiers, the Holy Women, and the typically Cologne-style blue angels with tadpole-like drapery tails, who collect Christ's blood in gold chalices. The Centurion's scroll is inscribed with the words "Vere filius Dei erat iste" (Truly this was the Son of God).

**Crucifixion with Mary, John and a Carthusian Donor (Washington, National Gallery)**

A smaller and simpler Crucifixion of the basic canon-page type. Note the changeable colors of John's drapery, totally without symbolic meaning but very sophisticated as to color choice and application.

**The Madonna and Child with the Flowering Bean (Pea?) (Cologne, W-R. Museum)**

This famous Madonna has been attributed variously to "Meister Wilhelm" (one of the names from the painters' guild register); the Master of the Golden Panel (Cuttler); and the Veronica Master (W.-R. Museum) It is a house-altar, allegedly from the former rectory of St. Mary's church. On the two wings are full-length depictions of Sts. Catherine and Barbara. The center panel is a half-length Madonna and Child of the basic Byzantine type. The bean blossom held by the Madonna has two seed pods attached, which seem to refer to Mary's motherhood (Strieder), to the material human body as a "hull" for the soul (early commercial product) Note also the Christ Child's string of prayer beads, and Lippert), or. more probably, to the portion of the Ave Maria prayer which says. "Blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus" (fructus ventris tui, Jesu). The image of Mary as a flower is highly appropriate for Cologne, where "cologne" (light perfume) was a major product, and where Roman glass to bottle it in had been an the silk purse in which He normally keeps them when not in use.

**Stefan Lochner**

As we have seen, it was typical of Cologne painters not to sign their work, and Stefan Lochner was no exception. Indeed, it is only thanks to Albrecht Dürer's travel diary (1520-21) that we know his name. Dürer paid 3 "white pennies" to have the wings of Lochner's Altarpiece of the Patron Saints opened, noting that "Meister Stefan" had painted it. A check with the painters' guild records showed that Stefan Lochner was the only possible candidate of the right age. To have painted this work, which was then still in the City Hall.

Lochner was not a native of Cologne, but was born at Meersburg, on Lake Canstance, not earlier than 1410-15, the son of Georg and Alhet Lochner, and was probably apprenticed there. His work in some ways resembles that of the anonymous artist who painted the Madonna and Child with Saints in a Paradise Garden:
Anonymous: The Frankfurt Paradise Garden. (Frankfurt, Staedelsches Kunstinstitut.) ca. 1410-20

This painter worked in the south of Germany near Lake Constance, and may have influenced young Lochner. The scene is set in a walled flower garden—the "garden enclosed" of the Song of Songs, which medieval theologians believed to be symbolic of Mary's virginity. The Madonna herself sits on a cushion, reading, with a table with a basket of apples at her side. St. Dorothy picks fruit from a tree; a second lady saint draws water from a spring; and a third—St. Cecilia—teaches the Christ Child to play the zither. Three male saints—George, Michael and Sebastian are clustered at the foot of another tree (right), as St. George's small, parakeet-colored dragon lies dead nearby, and a monkey, representing the sinful aspects of humanity, is chained near them.

Flower gardens, purely for pleasure as this one is, were unknown in Europe until the Crusades, when European knights discovered them in Islamic lands. They recall the feminine, courtly world of the Minnesingers and the Romance of the Rose. This garden is filled with flowers and other plants which are symbolic of Mary and/or Christ—irises (the sword-lily in German), referring to Mary's sorrows; white lilies for her purity, violets for her humility, etc. The apples refer to the roles of Mary and Christ as "the new Eve" and "the new Adam".

It has also been suggested that Lochner may have traveled or worked as a journeyman in the Netherlands after his initial training in the south. If so, however, he was never taught to work in oils, for all of his known works are in tempera.

He is documented as a resident of Cologne between 1442 and his death in 1451:

June, 1442 - commission from the City Council of Cologne for decorations for the entry of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III.

October 1442 - Lochner and his wife Lisbeth buy a house

October 1444- and September 1448 - notes of indebtedness

1447 and 1450 - elected to the City Council (as alderman)

Dies, probably of the plague, sometime between September 22, 1451 and January 7, 1452. Both parents had also died in 1451, in Meersburg. Also ominous is the fact that a new cemetery for plague victims was opened next door to Lochner's house in Cologne.

Unfortunately there are no records dealing with his monumental works, other than Dürer's remark: "Item: hab 3 weiss Pfennig, item, hab 2 weiss pfennig geben von der taffel auffzusperren geben, die Meister Steffan zu Coeln gemacht hat." (October 1520).

Dürer regarded this as the most important panel painting in Cologne: the Altarpiece of the Patron Saints (commonly known today as the "Dombild" because it has been kept in the Cathedral since 1810.
Goethe, who erroneously dated the Dombild 1410 when he saw it in the Boisserée Collection praised Lochner's work highly, as did Friedrich Schlegel, who compared him to Raphael.

**The Altarpiece of the Last Judgment**

ca. 4' x 5 1/2'

Exterior wings: The Martyrdoms of the Twelve Apostles (Munich, Alte Pinakothek; Frankfurt, Staedel.)

Center panel: The Last Judgment (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Mus.)

This rather large altarpiece, which came from the church of St. Lorenz in Cologne, is thought to be Lochner's earliest surviving work. In many ways, however, it is also his most "modern" in its concern for naturalism: note the treatment of naked bodies, strong handling of space and light that link Lochner with such contemporaries as Moser and Witz. The angels (at left, around the gothic palace that represents Heaven) are playing the newfangled instrumental music approved by the Council of Constance ca. 1414. His "democratic" inclusion of popes, bishops and kings in Hell is also reminiscent of the populist tone of the great church Councils at Constance and Basel.

On the exterior wings (now each in a different museum), the martyrdom of each of the 12 Apostles is depicted in 15" individual squares. Most notable perhaps are the martyrdoms of St. Andrew (crucified sidewise, and giving a sermon as he dies), and St. Bartholomew (a well-constructed male nude being flayed alive.) There was a considerable cult of the Apostles in Cologne, where one of the city's Romanesque churches was dedicated to all twelve of them (the original eleven, plus St. Matthias, the replacement chosen for Judas Iscariot after the Crucifixion.)

**The Madonna with the Violet (Cologne, Erzbischofliches Museum).**

Before 1443

Oak panel 212 x 102 cm (approx. 6 feet tall) Tempera

A huge standing Madonna in a rose-red cloak, holding the Christ Child on her right arm, and a violet (for humility) in her left hand—a type based on the Byzantine Hodegetria-icon, in which she "shows" the Infant to the public. At the top of the painting, God the Father appears, saying "In caritate perpetua dilexi te" (In perpetual love, or charity, I have chosen you). The Holy Spirit appears as a white dove, saying "Here I rest myself". A kneeling female donor, whose coat-of-arms identifies her as Elizabeth von Reichenstein, kneels at the Virgin's feet. In 1443, we know that this woman was named Abbess of St. Cecilia's convent in Cologne; she is dressed here in the latest fashions, however, indicating that the painting must have been done before she took office. Perhaps it may have been done as her gift to St. Cecilia's.
Jan van Eyck's Madonna by the Fountain (Antwerp, 1439) is sometimes mentioned as a possible prototype for this painting. However, the Van Eyck is one of his smallest pictures, displaying a Madonna dressed in blue and a "fountain sealed" (symbol of the Virgin from the Song of Songs.) Moreover, it is painted in oil, unlike this work.

**Altarpiece of the Patron Saints (Stadtspatronen). Also known as the "Dombild".**

Height 7' x 16' wide. Tempera on oak

Lochner's most important work, this huge altarpiece was done, not for the Cathedral where it has been displayed since 1810, but for the chapel in the old City Hall (destroyed by bombs in 1945). Authorities differ as to its probable date: 1435-40 seems most likely, however.

The patron saints of Cologne are many, and include the Virgin, as well as the Three Holy Kings (Magi) whose alleged remains were obtained from Milan in 1164, to be enclosed in the huge gold shrine by Nicholas of Verdun that rests in the Cathedral chancel; St. Ursula a supposed 6th-century martyr whose remains and those of her 11,000 martyred companions were found in a mass grave in the 7th century by St. Cunibert, then Bishop of Cologne. (St. Ursula has her own church in the city, where an elaborate arrangement of human bones and skulls decorates the sacristy). Another local martyr, St. Gereon, was slain at Cologne with his companions from the Theban Legion. Ursula, her companions, St. Cunibert, and Ursula's bridegroom appear on the dexter wing of the altarpiece; St. Gereon and his men on the sinister wing; and the Adoration of the Magi in the central panel.

The altarpiece, easily the most splendid work of 15th century painting in Germany, is remarkable for its fine figures, textures and sophisticated color choices. The influence of Jan van Eyck is often suggested, but it should be noted that Lochner, unlike Jan van Eyck, does not paint in oils, and has both a compulsion for symmetry and formality, and a greater idealism than his Flemish contemporary.

He shares with the Van Eycks an elaborate use of botanical symbolism, however. The St. Ursula panel contains the heart-shaped leaves and blue blossoms of the plant known in English as pennyroyal (*Gundermann*), an herb recommended by Hildegard of Bingen as an antidote for pain in the breast (St. U., it will be remembered, was shot to death by an archer). The same panel contains the speckled, lung-shaped leaves of lungwort (*Lungenkraut*), good for treating lung disease. St. Gereon's panel has purple columbines, popularly supposed to be good for treating bleeding head wounds, as well as being a well-known symbol of the 7 sorrows of the Virgin Mary. Gereon's foot is also sinking into a wild strawberry patch—a plant thought to grow in Paradise. The central panel, near the Virgin, contains several "Mary flowers", including the plant known in English as cowslip, but in German by the more romantic name of "keys of Heaven"
(Himmelschlüssel). Konrad of Mengenberg thought that this flower might be the one identified in the Bible as "flos campi".

**Wings of a lost Altarpiece:**
SS. Matthew, Catherine and John the Evangelist (London, National Gallery)
SS. Mark, Barbara and Luke (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Mus.)

These two panels form the inside wings of a dismembered altarpiece. On the reverse side of the London panel two Knights of Malta appear as donors; on the reverse of Cologne's panel is the coat-of-arms of Andreas von Dallem, who died in 1439.

(Was this altarpiece a memorial for him? Or did he commission it himself well before he died?? We don't know. The London panel has been cut down and the gold background totally renewed; Cologne's panel still has its original tracery at top and bottom and its tooled gold work.

What we have here, basically, is a depiction of the Four Evangelists (Matthew, with his angel; John, with his eagle; Mark with his lion, and Luke with his winged ox.), plus Catherine and Barbara, the two most popular female saints of the 15th century. St. Luke also holds a small painting of the Virgin and Child–quite similar to a Byzantine icon–in deference to his position as the patron saint of painters (he was actually a doctor, but supposedly had artistic gifts and is credited with having painted or drawn a portrait of the Virgin Mary "from life")

The altarpiece originally seems to have been done for the church of SS John and Cordula in Cologne—the church of the Order of the Knights of Malta (or of St. John of Jerusalem, as the Order was formally called.) The London wing can be traced to the Boisserée Collection (1814) to that of Prince Albert (1848). His wife, Queen Victoria donated it to the new National Gallery in 1863.

**The Rose Arbor Madonna (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz) ca. 1440-50**
19" x 17"

This is a small panel for private devotion. An "Andachtsbild" (picture to meditate on), it does not represent a historic event. Christ is forever a child in his Mother's lap, the two of them as the New Adam and the New Eve, in a paradise garden where young angels offer them apples and flowers. The rose trellis behind the Virgin may allude to her name as "the Rose without thorns", as well as to its usual love symbolism. The garden has a golden sky, and is clearly a vision shown to us temporarily—more infant angels pull back curtains in order that we may see it. The entire Trinity is present—God the Father as a head and shoulders at the top, and the white dove of the Holy Spirit just below. The gold background shows several elaborate patterns of punch work.

**The Presentation in the Temple (Darmstadt, Hessische Landesmuseum).**
**Dated 1447**
Tempera on oak; 139 cm x 126 cm (slightly more than 4 feet square)

This altarpiece was made for the church of St. Catherine in Cologne, which owned an important relic of St. Simeon, the old man who was in the temple on the day of Christ's
presentation to the high priest, as required by Old Testament law, and who recognized
Him as the Messiah. Simeon's words, "Now lettest Thou They servant depart in peace, for
mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"...are those of the Nunc Dimittis that are recited by the
priest at the close of the Vesper service. In this same passage, Simeon refers to Christ as
"the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel.", for which reason
the Feast of Candlemas (Lichtnis) is also celebrated on this day (Feb. 2), the day on
which church candles are blessed for the coming year.

Cologne's church of St. Catherine was the home church of the militant Order of Teutonic
Knights (who forcibly converted the Slavs to Christianity "or else"), and the choirmaster
in this painting is dressed in the robes of the order. The boys' choir, graduated in height
and abnormally well-behaved, are standing in front of him. He holds a document in his
hands which bears the date 1447 and a German inscription asking Christ and the Virgin
to "reward us with the righteous Simeon".

The Presentation is a most unusual subject for the central part of an altarpiece; more
normally it is found as one of the wings of a triptych featuring the Nativity or the
Adoration of the Magi as the central panel. Its prominence here is due to the Simeon
relic, and it permits a much more elaborate composition than usual. This "temple" has a
huge altar with an image of Moses on it in relief sculpture (a most unlikely object for a
Jewish place of worship), as well as a large cast of "extras" in addition to the usual Mary,
Joseph, the godparents, the widow Hannah, and Simeon and/or the High Priest.

The date 1447 is of particular interest since it is the ONLY definite date that we have for
any of Lochner's works. It shows him becoming more idealizing and less naturalistic
than he was when he painted the Dombild–more like the style of the Rose Arbor
Madonna and the illuminated manuscripts that he worked on at the end of his life.

Copies of this work indicate that it once had wings showing the Annunciation and the
Madonna Enthroned.

The Nativity (Munich, Alte Pinakothek). 1445
A very small panel for private devotion, in which the newborn Christ Child lies on an
altar cloth decorated with tiny embroidered crosses in each corner. The Virgin kneels to
adore him and the shepherds, standing in the spraddle-legged stance of the '30's and
'40's, have a flock of interesting sheep that become mere balls of white wool as they
approach the horizon.

VIII. - LATE 15TH CENTURY

COLOGNE: The Master of the Life of Mary (Marienleben Meisterl)
After the death of Stefan Lochner at mid-century, painting in Cologne—never on the cutting edge of modernity—went into a decline for about ten years, until the arrival of the Master of the Life of Mary, who brought fresh influence from Netherlandish painting, in particular from the style of Rogier van der Weyden (Brussels) and his follower, the Dutch-born Dirk Bouts, Sr., whose workshop was in the university city of Louvain.

The Master of the Life of Mary seems to have worked in Cologne for only about five years. His name is inspired by the series of 8 oak panel paintings, originally done for Cologne's Church of St. Ursula in the early 1460s. Seven of the panels are in Munich today; the eighth in London's National Gallery. The iconography of the series is based in part on the Golden Legend and in part on the Gospel of St. Luke.

**The Birth of Mary**
Like his near contemporary the Florentine painter Ghirlandaio (whose work he could never have seen), the Marienleben Master's work is treasured for its natural details of costume and furnishings rather than for its power of expression. Here the birth takes place in a space modeled on a middle class home, with a tiled floor and carved Gothic furniture, including a cedar chest in which the expectant mother has stored swaddling clothes, baby blankets and such. A large number of midwives and/or neighbor women have arrived to care for St. Anne and to prepare the bath for her new daughter—surely a prefiguration of the impending Christian rite of baptism, if not also of the Immaculate Conception (the idea that St. Anne had also conceived by divine means. The series begins with a painting that we did not see—the Meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate, when they inform one another that angels have foretold Anne's miraculous pregnancy.)

**The Annunciation**
Like the following painting, The Visitation, the Annunciation involves only two figures and normally is treated in vertical format. For reasons probably specified by his client, the Marienleben Master chose to cast the entire series in matching horizontal compositions. Consequently, here a great deal of "dead air" between Mary and Gabriel is filled up with artfully constructed furnishings.

**The Visitation**
This painting deals with Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, who is about to become the mother of John the Baptist. It is of particular interest to us because the portrait and coat-of-arms of the donor appear here on the left—Dr. Johann Schwarz von Hirtz, who is known to have donated the series to St. Ursula's in 1463—apparently in the form of a single altarpiece. Dr. Schwarz-Hirtz (d.1481) had been knighted in 1458, and was a member of the City Council from 1440 until 1474. He was also elected Mayor on four occasions (1443, 1453, 1461, 1467.)

**The Presentation in the Temple**
Here the influence of Van der Weyden (from his altarpiece in Cologne's Church of St. Columba) is mixed with that of Stefan Lochner's altarpiece (Darmstadt, q.v.). Though the
figures have the taller and more slender proportions of Flemish painting, the altar itself is shown broadside and ornate, as in the Lochner.

**The Master of the Lyversberg Passion**

This anonymous painter, like the Marienleben Master, was also greatly influenced by Netherlandish painting, but uses shorter, slightly stockier figures and bolder colors, and is also more interested in dramatic action and crowd scenes. His name is taken from the 19th-century collector, Jakob Johannes Lyversberg, the Cologne merchant who acquired the Passion Altarpiece from the Carthusian church of St. Barbara in 1794 and had it sawed apart into individual panels. The center is lost, but both wings have survived: One of the panels bears the house mark of the Rinck family of Cologne, and a document from the church archives pinpoints the donor as Dr. Peter Rinck, who donated the altar in 1464.

**The Last Supper**

If the painter ever visited the Bouts workshop in Louvain, he did so before 1464, for he seems to have had no knowledge of the Netherlandish painter's most important altarpiece, which centers around a Last Supper in perfect perspective, with seating arrangements around a square table. This Last Supper is the old fashioned type, with the people on the far side of the table having haloes, and with a St. John who has fallen asleep "on the Lord's bosom"—right in the middle of the round table.

**The Resurrection**

This panel is strongly influenced the Bouts painting of the Resurrection that was in Cologne's Church of St. Lorenz (Lawrence) in the late 15th century. The angular postures of the soldiers, and the physical appearance of Christ himself come very close to the Bouts style, but the sky here remains an old-fashioned gold surface.

**The Master of the St. Bartholomew Altarpiece**

A major painter in Cologne around 1500, he has been described as "the best painter about whom we know nothing." Very possibly a Carthusian monk, he seems to have been trained in the Dutch cathedral city of Utrecht as a miniaturist: his oeuvre includes the illuminated Prayerbook of Sophie van Bylant, which is dated 1475 and was illustrated in Utrecht. By 1480, however, he had settled in Cologne, where he was still living until the presumed time of his death, somewhere between 1510 and 1520. In his anonymity he is one of the last of the Gothic painters, but the vigor of his modeling and his complicated way with tracery and drapery reveal that he was an older contemporary of Albrecht Dürer.

His painted figures are easily recognizable by their crescent-shaped eyes, curly hair, and spoon-shaped fingers.
**Portrait of an Unknown Man, ca. 1480/85?**
Thought to have been one of the artist's earliest paintings after coming to Cologne, this seems to represent a Dutch client, for the carillon tower of the Utrecht Cathedral can be seen outside the window in the background. The man, who is evidently middle-aged, holds a columbine blossom in his hand—a most unusual attribute indicating that this is not a wedding or engagement painting. It may perhaps once have had a pendant Madonna and Child, since small angels are holding a piece of tapestry behind the sitter. The man may perhaps be a widower, as the purple columbine would suggest.

**The Holy Family**
A somewhat gnomelike Holy Family, with a naked Infant Jesus seated on the bottom of the picture frame, next to a bowl of gruel. An indulgent Joseph supports him to prevent his falling off. If the suggested (by Rainer Budde) date is correct, this would be one of the earliest depictions of the child Christ with a bowl of solid food, rather than nursing, and the food itself would be here in a spiritual sense, as nourishment for the Christian viewer of the picture. Paintings of this general type will be much more common in the early 16th century (Joos van Cleve, Gerard David et al.)

**The St. Thomas Altarpiece (The Incredulity of St. Thomas) ca. 1495**
This painting was donated by Dr. Peter Rinck to the Carthusian church of St. Barbara in Cologne, and seems to have been commissioned as early as 1481, but left unfinished until later. It is an unusual, visionary staging of the subject. Christ and the Apostle Thomas are centered on a stone pedestal, almost live living sculpture, as Christ displays his wounds to Thomas to prove his identity as the same person who was crucified and buried. (Thomas had declared his unwillingness to believe that Christ had returned to life unless he could see and touch the wounds made during the crucifixion.) More unusual yet is the half-circle of fractional figures above and behind Christ and Thomas—all of whom had testified to the truth of the resurrection: Mary Magdalene, who was the first to see Christ after the Resurrection; St. Helena, mother of Constantine, who led the expedition to Jerusalem to find the True Cross; and the great theologians St. Jerome, translator of the Bible into Latin from its original Hebrew and Greek sources, and St. Ambrose, who defeated the Aryan Heresy.

**The Madonna and Child with Sts. Augustine and Adrian, ca. 1490/-1500**
Half-length figures, in a gold "shadow-box" setting. Augustine, dressed in his episcopal gear, presents the Christ Child with his "wounded heart" (a reference to a passage in the Confessions: "You have wounded my heart with the arrow of your love.") St. Adrian is dressed in full armor and is accompanied by the hammer and anvil that were some of the equipment used in his martyrdom.

**The Mystic Betrothal of St. Agnes, ca. 1495/1500**
This painting, in the Nuremberg Museum, is based on the "biography" of St. Agnes found in the Golden Legend, where the story is told of St. Agnes' allegation that she had become engaged to Christ, in order to ward off the unwanted attentions of the son of the local Roman prefect. This could easily be mistaken for a mystic marriage of St. Catherine, except for the presence of Agnes's trademark lamb (*agnus*) in the foreground,
and the great basilica seen outside the window, with a young woman standing in front of it. This would be Constantine's daughter Constantia, who ordered a church to be built over Agnes's tomb when she had been cured of leprosy by the saint.

**The Madonna with the Nut, ca. 1505/10?**
This small, very odd painting (30 x 20 cm.), also known as the Dormagen Madonna (from a 19th-century owner), gets its most common name from the walnut on the window sill—a reference to St. Augustine's Sermon for the Sunday after Christmas, in which he used a walnut as a metaphor for Christ: the green outer skin, which "bleeds" when ruptured, is compared to Christ's human flesh, while the nut shell represents the wood of the Cross, and the nutmeat inside Christ's divinity. The strange anatomy of the Madonna, who has a mono-bosom, and the awkward treatment of the nude Christ Child's body are certainly strong arguments in favor of the artist's having been a cloistered monk.

**The St. Bartholomew Altarpiece, 1503**
This large (128 x 160 cm.) painting, (Munich, ex coll. Boisserée, and King Ludwig I of Bavaria) was donated to the Church of St. Columba in Cologne by the local merchant of textiles and metals Arnt von Westerburg, whose coat-of-arms appears in the upper left corner of the frame. (The other escutcheon on the opposite side is that of his wife's family.) However, when the painting was cleaned just after World War II, the kneeling Carthusian beside St. Bartholomew came to light. He was apparently the person who originally commissioned the altarpiece, and who may have been painted out because he had not been able to pay for it in full—possibly because he died too soon. Von Westerburg, a City Council member (1481-1513), wishing to make a gift to a different church, seems to have picked up the check for the painting in the long run. It is one of the master's largest and most important paintings, and the one from which his nickname is derived.

**AUSTRIA:**

**MICHAEL PACHER, d. 1498**
(Active ca.1465 –d.1489)
Michael Pacher, who would have an Italian passport if he were alive today, is the first German-speaking artist who seems thoroughly to have understood both one-point and two-point perspective—still an Italian monopoly during his lifetime. His workshop (still preserved) was in Bruneck (Brunico today), in the Pustertal (Val di Pusteria), south Tyrol, and he seems to have been familiar with some of the art of Andrea Mantegna, most notably the Ovetari Chapel frescoes in the Church of the Eremitani, Padua (bombed in World War II), and some of the Madonna paintings as well.

Much of Pacher's own work has been destroyed or badly damaged, some of it during the hostilities in the late 1600's, others in 1709 (his altarpiece for the Franciscan church in Salzburg). His most important remaining works are the **St. Wolfgang Altarpiece** and the **Altarpiece of the Church Fathers**.
The St. Wolfgang Altarpiece
St. Wolfgang am Abersee, 1471-81

This is a double-transforming altarpiece (Wandelaltar) with two pairs of movable wings, making three distinctly different views for use on various different occasions—every day, Sunday, high holy days. The core of it is an elaborate piece of lindenwood sculpture, depicting the Coronation of the Virgin, which is flanked by four scenes from the life of Mary. When these painted wings are closed, two rows of paintings concerned with Christ's public life and ministry appear—four over four. When the altarpiece is completely closed, four scenes from the life of St. Wolfgang appear, flanked by the carved figures of two saints in armor—George and Florian. A carved Crucifix with Mary, John, the Archangel Michael, and the Magdalene are in the elaborate Gesprengle at the top, and are visible at all times, while the Adoration of the Magi, a relief carving, appears at the foot of the altarpiece (the Staffel). The village of St. Wolfgang is on the shore of the Abersee, east of Salzburg, in the Salzkammergut.

St. Wolfgang himself was a real and well-documented bishop, but is only locally honored with a feast day—his works were sensible, solid administrative ones, as missionary to the Magyars (Hungary), bishop of Regensburg (972); tutor to the Emperor Henry II; restorer of abbeys (esp. St. Emmeran, Regensburg); benefactor to the poor; founder of the pilgrimage church for which this altarpiece was painted. (though the present building dates only from 1460.) He was canonized by Pope Leo IX in 1052, at which time his biography was written by Othlo, whose account is the source for the iconography of the Wolfgang scenes here.

The altarpiece fully open:
The Coronation of the Virgin Mary (sculpture, gilded and polychromed)
The Mary paintings: The Nativity; the Circumcision; the Presentation in the Temple; the Death of Mary

The second opening: (all paintings)
Christ's public life and ministry. Very unusual subjects, because few feast days of the Church are involved.
Christ's Baptism; The Temptation of Christ; The Wedding at Cana: The Miracle of Loaves and Fishes

The Attempt to Stone Christ; the Cleansing of the Temple; Christ and the Adulteress; The Raising of Lazarus
These subjects all have important implications for the future of Christian theology and ritual., but are not normally seen together except in manuscripts. This part of the altarpiece seems directly related to the fact that the artist's client was the Benedictine Abbot of Mondsee.

The altarpiece completely closed:
St. Wolfgang Building a Church
St. Wolfgang Preaching
St. Wolfgang Giving Charity (grain from the episcopal granary)
St. Wolfgang Driving Out a Demon from a Woman Possessed

The lindenwood guardian figures: St. George (L.), St. Florian (R.)

**ALTARPIECE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS**

**Munich, Alte Pinakotheek, dedicated 1485**
Commissioned ca. 1483, probably by Provost Friedrich Pacher (uncle?) for the Augustinian monastery church at Neustift bei Brixen; removed to Munich in 1812 by Bavarian troops when the Tyrol was seized. A former bishop of Brixen (until 1460) had been Nicolas of Cusa.

**Exterior wings:** Four legends of St. Wolfgang:
- St. Wolf. healing a sick man
- “compelling the Devil to hold his prayerbook
- “disputation
- “prays for a sign from God

**Interior:**

The Four Latin Fathers of the Church
- St. Jerome and the Lion
- St. Augustine and the Child on the Seashore
- St. (Pope) Gregory the Great
- St. Ambrose (with infant in cradle)

This altarpiece was apparently made without sculpture (although it probably once had a carved top), but is important for its spectacularly sophisticated command of TWO-point perspective, which gave Pacher the possibility not only to create spatial niches to contain the figures, but also to “puncture” the plane of the picture with ornamental tracery that seems to protrude into the viewer’s own space.

**Some Questions to Ponder:**

Can you name some artists active in Italy or the Netherlands who were active at the same time as the German-speaking painters whose works we have been studying? In what ways do their works differ from these?

Can you locate on a map the cities where the German artists lived and worked? Who were their patrons, and where did the money come from?

What museums or other institutions would you need to visit in order to see their works in the original?
PRINTMAKING IN 15TH-CENTURY GERMANY

The art of woodcut, which requires no special printing equipment is the oldest and was the least expensive print medium. Invented in China much earlier, it was produced in quantity in Europe in the closing years of the 14th century, as soon as paper began to be made there (In earlier days woodcuts had been printed on silk or parchment.) Woodcuts were almost exclusively anonymous until the age of Albrecht Durer, who began to initial his blocks shortly before 1500.

Earlier woodcuts were usually done by two different people—one(hopefully, a painter) who made a drawing on the plank grain of a wood block, while a second person (the Formschneider) did the laborious work of cutting away both sides of each line in the design. (In the workshop of Michael Wolgemut in Nuremberg where young Durer was apprenticed, some of the cutters were women of the master’s own family.)

Prior to Durer, woodcuts were relatively small, inexpensive, and strictly utilitarian—thus not “fine art.” They were frequently worn out and discarded when their purpose had been served. This is why they are extremely rare today. The best collection of such woodcuts in the U.S. today is in the Print Room of the U.S. National Gallery in Washington. Larger collections are found in Europe, mainly in Munich’s Staatliche Graphische Sammlung and in Vienna’s Albertina Museum.

Uses for early woodcuts included prayer sheets—especially those illustrating one or more of the “14 Holy Helpers”—i.e. auxiliary saints), each of whom “specialized” in a particular type of emergency, usually medical. They were also used as indulgence sheets (e.g., the Sudarium, Man of Sorrows, Sacred Heart, the Rosary, etc.); were collected as pilgrimage souvenirs or educational devices. More worldly uses included maps, playing cards; caricatures; greeting cards; good-luck charms; burglar insurance, or book plates. By mounting them inside the lid of one’s traveling trunk or strongbox they could serve as portable “altarpieces” for travel. After the invention of printing from moveable type at mid-15th century, they were increasingly used as book illustrations, since the finished blocks could be locked into the bed of the printing press at type height, and inked and printed as an integral part of the text. Engraved illustrations were not often used except at paste-ins after the book had been acquired by an owner, because engravings and etchings required inking and printing in a separate and more complicated process.

INDULGENCES
Prints depicting devotional subjects—mostly arising from Rhenish or south German mystical visions, etc. of 14th century origin—for contemplation by the buyer and including a text advertising a papal indulgence (the promise of the remission of temporal
punishment for sins committed either by the purchaser or by a deceased friend or relative began to multiply exponentially during the late 15th century. Pope Boniface IX (1389-1404) had introduced the practice of granting indulgences at religious centers other than Rome. The indulgences spurred an increase in pilgrimage traffic to miraculous shrines, as well as attracting funds to support architectural projects, or simply, as in the case of Albrecht von Brandenburg to line the pockets of the local bishop. Naturally, it was not long before the designers of woodcuts began to indulge in what we should call free enterprise—writing up spurious indulgence letters promising huge numbers of years out of Purgatory, and simply pocketing the entire purchase price themselves.

An “authorized” indulgence sheet, as opposed to a bogus one, should reveal the name of the pope who authorized it, plus the amount of time out of Purgatory promised (to be obtained from the: “Treasury of Grace” – i.e., the “excess” of mercy earned but not needed by the saints.) The sheet should also repeat the instructions for how to procure the indulgence. This could be by contemplation only; by contemplation plus prayer, or, in the case of “free enterprise” prints, simply by purchase.

One of the primary issues addressed by Martin Luther was the sale of indulgences. In his Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (1520), he declared:

“When they (the Pope and Rome) pretend that they are about to fight against the Turks, they send out emissaries to gather money. Often times they issue an indulgence on this same pretext of fighting the Turks, for they think the mad Germans are forever to remain utter and arrant fools, give them money without end, and satisfy their unspeakable greed.”

On selling prints:

“There is a little word ‘commend’, by which the Pope entrusts the keeping of a rich, fat monastery or church to a cardinal or to another of his people...he is to drive out the incumbent, to receive the goods and revenues, and to install some apostate, renegade monk who accepts five or six gulden a year and sits in the church all day selling pictures and images to the pilgrims, so that henceforth neither prayers nor Masses are said there.”

Stylistic development

Some general changes in woodcut style were noted by Arthur M. Hind, the director of the print collection at the British Museum in the early 20th century. Images from the first quarter of the 15th century tend to have “soft style” curvilinear drapery folds, rather little spatial depth, and fairly thick line work.—all lines having roughly the same width, or weight.

By the second quarter of the century, outlines had become thinner, and secondary lines indicating extra drapery folds or even shading began to appear. The folds themselves became angular, and figure proportions more “normal” (heads bigger in relation to the height of the body—comparable to the style of Witz and his contemporaries) In some cases a passepartout border, cut from a separate block surrounds the picture.

By the third quarter of the century there are many illustrations for blockbooks and printed books, and the introduction of the “dancing” placement of the feet. By the end of
the century, in the late 1490’s, Albrecht Durer revolutionized the art of woodcut, raising it from a purely utilitarian and “disposable” craft to the final status of “fine art”—and the expense that went with it.

Some notable 15th-century woodcuts:

**Death of the Virgin Mary**  
[Parshall & Schoch #84]  
(South German, before 1422; hand colored) Nuremberg, Germanisches Nat. Mus.  
The strong influence in Germany of Byzantine liturgy, with its ritual devotion to the Dormition (“falling asleep” or Koimesis) of the Virgin, meant that the subject of the Virgin Mary’s death, surrounded by the Apostles, was more popular there than in areas outside the Empire. By the 15th century, St. Peter, as head of the Church was usually depicted as having taken charge of the rite of extreme unction. Christ appears in a mandorla, to receive his mother’s soul in the form of a small child who wears a crown. The various objects—aspergillum, processional cross, candles, prayerbook associated with the last rites for the dying are depicted here. Due to its unusually large size (263 x 375 mm) this impression has been somewhat damaged by folding. The fact that it must have been reprinted many times is suggested by the breaks in the linework of the frame.

**St. Dorothy and the Christ Child**  
[Parshall/Schoch 27]  
Bavarian or Austrian. (Salzburg), ca, 1410-20. hand colored. Munich, Graphische Sammlung.’ 270 x 197 mm.  
One of the handsomest designs of the early fifteenth century, and one of the earliest depictions of St. Dorothy herself, who is much more popular in German-speaking lands than elsewhere, it represents the legend of the saint, who was mocked by the prosecuting attorney for her Christian belief as she was on her way to the place of execution. Rudely he is said to have suggested that she send him some fruit and flowers from Paradise. She agreed to do so, and was presented with the necessary produce by the infant Christ Himself.

The commanding placement of the image against a rose tree reminiscent of a common motif in Bavarian sculpture as well as in some of the backgrounds of pages in the Codex Manesse takes full advantage of the page. The carving of the woven basket with its simple chisel marks, and the slashed tufts of grass are well suited to the wood medium, as is the powerful but graceful tree trunk. The grommets on St. Dorothy’s belt appear to have been made with a punch.

Dorothy, whose name means “gift of God”, is a saint who can be invoked against poverty, can also protect against fire and theft, according to a manuscript of 1430. One of the quartet of lady virgin martyrs (with the more popular Catherine, Barbara, and Margaret) she is the patron saint of a nun’s cloister in Vienna, but has few churches and no cities under her protection.

**The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian**  
[Parshall & Schoch 26]  
Bavaria or Salzburg, ca. 1410-1430 hand colored. Munich. 287 x 206  
Paper has a south German watermark.
This image depicts the most popular of the 14 Holy Helpers, St. Sebastian, who recovered from multiple arrow wounds only to be martyred all over again by order of the Roman Emperor Maximian. Since arrows were a familiar symbol of plague, he had become a favorite saint for hospitals, and for general protection against epidemic disease. The two marksmen, one armed with a crossbow and the other with the older longbow, are dressed in contemporary knee-length tunics rather than in Roman armor.

**Christ in the Winepress.** [Parshall/Schoch 76]
South German, or Rhenish 1400-1420; hand colored.) Nuremberg, Germanisches Nat. Mus.
289 x 204mm
Left edge badly torn. Breaks in the linework indicate that it was printed many times in a touching allegory of the Eucharist, Christ is about to be crushed in the wine press, which is positioned above a tiny spout leading directly to a golden chalice of the type used to hold the wine of the Mass.
A passage from the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah (63:2-4) was perhaps the inspiration for the image: “…I have trodden the winepress alone: and of the people there was none with me. I have trampled them…in my wrath.”
The image, however, does not depict the wrathful divinity of the Old Testament at all, and there are no grapes involved, as is usually the case with other depictions of this image. The words of St. Gregory the Great are perhaps more to the point: “He has trodden the winepress alone in which he himself was pressed, for with his own strength he patiently overcame suffering.”
St. John Damascene, too speaks of Jesus as “the grape of life,” who was “squeezed in the winepress as the grape of the true vine.” All of this would have been of intense interest in the man wine-making areas of Germany and Austria.

**A Crucifix with the Arms of Tegernsee.** [Parshall/Schoch 38]
South German, ca. 1480 (reproducing an original of ca. 1420-39). Hand colored. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, (sheet 410 x 273. mm)
The coat-of-arms of the Benedictine monastery at Tegernsee, Bavaria—entwined waterlilies appear on either side of the crucified Christ. Two impressions of this print have survived, both of which had been inserted into books in the monastery’s library. It seems likely, though not proven, that they may have been printed there. It is worth noting that the coats-of-arms were printed separately from the main image of Christ.

**The Mass of St. Gregory** [Parshall/Schoch 32]
South German ca 1420-30. Hand colored./ Berlin. 269 x 197 mm.
This is both the earliest and the largest print depicting the dogma of transubstantiation, or “real presence” of elements of Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine of the Mass. It was believed by all orthodox Christians in the 15th century that Christ himself once had appeared in bodily form on the altar during the consecration of the Host by Pope Gregory the Great (540-604), reaffirming the truth of the dogma, which had
recently been challenged by the Bohemian martyr Jan Hus., who was burned at the stake in 1415. The Pope is the tiny figure in the lower left corner of the print, while the towering figure of Christ, accompanied by the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist (both of whom were present at the crucifixion) are surrounded by the so-called instruments of the Passion, together with a small chalice and paten, and pair of altar candlesticks. The image has been pricked for transfer.

“Rest on the Flight to Egypt “(The Holy Family). [Parshall/Schoch 29]
(Austrian or Bohemian, circa 1430, hand colored). Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina.
Provenance: Vienna’s Dorotheenkloster. Watermark: Bull’s head with staff and flower. Traditionally titled “Rest on the Flight to Egypt”, presumably in honor of Joseph’s culinary efforts, this image has none of the usual iconography of the flight to Egypt:-- no donkey, for one thing. For another, the Virgin Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven, and is seated on an altar/tomb nursing the Christ Child. (Maria lactans). Joseph, not yet a saint but an object of some sympathy as the movement for his canonization was underway, has been provided with a halo to which he was not officially entitled. The impression has been damaged, and the heavy black background applied to disguise its flaws.

The Vesperbild (Pieta) [UW slide]
South German, ca. 1430? Ex coll. Oettingen-Wallerstein Vienna, Albertina.

A rare example of the “reversed” Pieta—copied from a sculptural group by a printmaker who forgot to account for the reversal of the image that would take place in printing. (Christ’s head should rest on Mary’s right hand, rather than left.) From Lambach (Parshall/Schoch 31] which is oriented in the proper direction. Such prints as these were popular only in northern Europe, and would have been the inspiration for the French cardinal’s commission from the young Michelangelo for the marble sculpture in St. Peter’s, Rome at the century’s end.

The Buxheim St. Christopher [Parshall/Schoch 35]
South German, ca.1450 –but with the date “1423” cut into the block. Hand colored.
Manchester (UK), Rylands Library.
Provenance: Carthusian monastery in Buxheim.
Latin verse (also cut into the original block): “Whenever you look at the face of Christopher, in truth you will not die a terrible death that day.” (N.B.: A “terrible” or evil death meant simply dying without the opportunity to confess one’s sins an receive absolution from a priest. It was one of the dangers of going on pilgrimage, which led to Christopher’s popularity as the patron saint of travelers.) For many years “1423” was accepted as the actual date of the woodcut. However, the sophistication of the cutting—note the differences in line weights and the use of
shading lines in the saint’s drapery folds—has no parallel before the middle of the 15th century.

**Christ as Man of Sorrows (Imago pietatis;Schmerzensmann)**

*Parshall/Schoch 72*

German (Ulm), ca. 1465-80; hand colored. (Art Institute of Chicago)

400 x 261 mm. Excellent condition

Mounted on the cover of a lost book.

The “ribbon” convention at the bottom identifies this half-length image of the eternally suffering Christ as a vision. surrounded by the instruments of the Passion: (the cross, crown of thorns, holy lance, scourges, nails, inscription “INRI”). In addition to the nail and spear wounds, the painter has added numerous blood drops that were not part of the original design. The care with which the pine grain of the cross is depicted, and the handling of Christ’s features and torso, as well as the “perspective” of the frame, point to a date well after mid-century.

**New Year’s Greeting Card : The Christ Child**

*Parshall/Schoch 53*

Rhenish (region of Cologne and Trier): 1460-70, hand colored. 178x129mm

Munich, Graphische Sammlung

Inscribed “vhs” (monogram of Christ); “und e lange leben” (and a long life); “vil god iar” (a very good year).

The Infant Jesus was the original Baby New Year, and his image survives on many of the earliest greeting cards, including two other impressions (Berlin, Dresden) of this very image. The new year, rather than Christmas or Epiphany was the usual occasion for sending greeting cards in the 15th century, although the actual date on which the year began was not yet standardized across Europe, with March being a more popular choice than January. The holy child in the present case wears coral charms to ward off evil; holds a small parrot in his hands, and is seated on a brocaded cushion. At his feet are a basket of flowers and a pair of rabbits—surely harbingers of Spring. Next to him is the imperial orb surmounted by a cross and resurrection banner, while on his left a dove representing the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—is perched on the open lid of a box filled with further good wishes.

**Satire on Kaiser Friedrich III and Pope Paul II**

*Parshall/Schoch 57*

German, 1469-1480, hand colored. 390x260mm

Washington DC, Nat. Gallery, Rosenwald collection

Inscribed: on the oars, Duke of Bavaria; King of Poland; King of Hungary

On rungs of the pope’s ladder: Sicily, Bosnia, Venice, Ragusa

On the anchor: Imperial electors

This political satire on the attempt of Pope Paul II to inveigle the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III into going on crusade seems to have been immensely popular, to judge from the number of free copies that have survived. The Pope (wearing the papal tiara of three crowns) and the Emperor (wearing the imperial crown) are
both clad only in wrestlers’ trunks, and are precariously balanced atop the crow’s nest of a ship of state whose oars, stays and rope ladder are inscribed with the names of their respective allies and their territories. In the pope’s right hand are the French fleur-des-lis and the Roman scales of justice, while Friedrich, burdened by the bag of money dangling from his neck, holds only the broken scepter of Bohemia, and balances one foot on the back of the Burgundian lion. A denuded tree labeled “Jerusalem” is on the lower right. The comet (upper right) may refer to the appearance in 1468 of Halley’s comet, which caused great consternation at the time. Friedrich and Paul II had met in Rome in 1468 to discuss the position of Bohemia (broken scepter= King George Podiebrad, excommunicated by the pope.) Pope Pius II, Paul’s predecessor had been about to set out on a crusade before his death, and it was Paul’s hope (in vain) that Friedrich could be persuaded to take up the cross himself.