Copyright Notice

This Digital Copy should not be downloaded or printed by anyone other than a student enrolled on the named course or the course tutor(s).

Staff and students of this University are reminded that copyright subsists in this extract and the work from which it was taken. This Digital Copy has been made under the terms of a CLA licence which allows you to:

• access and download a copy;
• print out a copy;

This Digital Copy and any digital or printed copy supplied to or made by you under the terms of this Licence are for use in connection with this Course of Study. You may retain such copies after the end of the course, but strictly for your own personal use.

All copies (including electronic copies) shall include this Copyright Notice and shall be destroyed and/or deleted if and when required by the University.

Except as provided for by copyright law, no further copying, storage or distribution (including by e-mail) is permitted without the consent of the copyright holder.

The author (which term includes artists and other visual creators) has moral rights in the work and neither staff nor students may cause, or permit, the distortion, mutilation or other modification of the work, or any other derogatory treatment of it, which would be prejudicial to the honour or reputation of the author.

Course Code: HA1B3
Course of Study: Altarpiece
Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Christine Shipman
Title: The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany
Name of Author: Baxandall, M
Name of Publisher: Yale University Press
Name of Visual Creator (as appropriate):

Functions III

The distinction between manifest and latent *functions*—in effect often a distinction between conscious motives and actual consequences—does not work particularly well for the history of art. It may be that the material is too indeterminate, but it is difficult to be sure that either an intention or an effect is unwitting, however undeclared and secondary. Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel expounds a piece of biblical and theological matter, enriches and articulates the vault of a particularly featureless building, demonstrates the enlightened magnificence of Pope Julius II, provides a fine exhibition of skill and talent, and does other things too: all these functions would surely have been acknowledged by some of the people who saw it at the time. The finer points of unwitting intention and use seem better left in the modest form of *circumstances*, which may indeed modify avowed functions. Not as a point of theory but simply for clarity, function here will mean no more than the at least sometimes conscious purpose and effect of the work of art.

One reason for difficulty in drawing a line between the manifest and the latent is the existence of *genres*. By genre one means no more than an established institution of works of art recognizable, then and now, as a class. They have in common some of such things as subject-matter, a format, a site, a medium: heroic landscape, kitcat portraits, portals with Last Judgment reliefs above them, small bronze statuettes of satyrs, and wooden retable altarpieces were all genres in their time. The point about the genre is that it has responded to and conventionalizes within itself, however tacitly, much about the purpose and effect of the work of art it subsumes: it divides the spectrum of function and circumstance into convenient bands. Genres develop their own local histories and internal dialogues. A consequence is that the functions of the Sistine ceiling might have been so assumed into the genre of church vault decoration in 1512 that the beholder need not have agitated his knowledge of them to the point of conscious articulation in the particular case; on the other hand, he might have done precisely that, perhaps because it struck him as novel in relation to the genre, or because he was provoked by it to question the genre, or for some other reason.

Most Florid sculpture was religious art and so had a clear function within the orthodox theory of images. But it seems too that some genres of religious image are transparent through to a less orthodox piety; and this was a matter for explicit comment at the time. Yet further, the most conspicuous genre, the retable altarpiece, was satisfying certain interests extraneous to religion. At least

Fig. 26. Commandments I, II and III–IV: Three from a series of six panels of the Decalogue. Nuremberg sculptor, 1524. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (Inv. MA 1898–1900).

obliquely this was both recognized and deplored, and some carving can be seen as purging itself of them in a return to something of the primitive functions of the image. Florid sculpture registers the problems and complexities of pre-Reformation piety[1] directly.

1 The Image

The Second Commandment (fig. 26)—or, by some late medieval reckoning, the First—says:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God . . .' (Exodus XX, 4–5).

It is open to various kinds of interpretation. In fifteenth-century Germany and indeed pre-Reformation Europe in general the favoured exegesis was of the kind offered by the *Praeceptorium* then attributed to Nicholas of Lyra, a fourteenth-century Franciscan, which was orthodox and firm. From the theological point of view the Church's use of images was not in disharmony with the Second Commandment because the Commandments were of the Old Law:

If it is said that under the Old Law God had no image and that this was a sign for the New Law, the answer is that, if God had not afterwards become Man, then indeed he should not have had images.

[. . . sprechen sie mee, das got in der alten ee kein bild hette, die doch ein zeichen was der

Passionis ihū xpī via contēplationis

et meditatiōis est Quadruplex· scз

Omī genere hominum· Quia a	Discipulo proprio Cunctis apostolis Pōtificib; sacri· et ppli Rege· Preside Turba Militib;
Omī genere elemētorum Quia	Ad ignem Aq̄ saline In aere Terra
Generalissima Omī genere dolorum· Quia	Sudor· Fletus· Clamor Pauor· Tristis pro cūctis Gemens pro suis
Omni drā sensuū· qz	Visus eius nimium Fletus continuus Auditus clamorib; Olfactus fetoribus Tactus vulneribus Gustus aceto et felle
Ignomiosissia Omī genē infamie qz	Illusus Derisus Confusus Eductus Adiūctus Adductus
Oī genē tormē torū q̄a	Cesus·Ligatus·Iudicatus Flagellatus corōatus irrisus Clauatus·suspēsus·lāceatus
Acerbissima Omī genere accidentium Propter	Cōplexionis Etatis Neruorum Clauorum Extensionis Suspensionis Consolatiōis
Vtilissima Omī genere proficuitatū Quia ppter	Peccatorū nrōrū Mortis nostre Humane ruine Eterne ĩnitatis

Venditus·
derelictus·
Traditus·
Iudicatus·
Flagellatus
Condēnatus
Crucifixus

Negatus·
Consputus
Suspensus
Coopertus

Sanguineus
Vberrimus
Validissimus
Horrendissimus
Peccatis nris
Penis infinitis

Caligauit
Extuit
Intenebruit
Obstupuit
Doluit
Inhorruit

Colaphisatione
Genuflexione
Expoliatione
Infami loco
Improbo osortio
Enormi supplitio

Fuit

Nobilitatem
Viuacitatem
Subtilitatem
Asperitatem
Immanitatem
Continuitatem
Paucitatem

Deletionem
Destructionē
Restaurationē
Glorificationē

Fig. 27. *Passionis Jesu Christi via contemplationis et meditationis quadruplex*. Broadsheet, Augsburg (Ludwig Hohenwang), about 1477 (Schr. XXIII, 479).

nuwen ee. Hie ist zu antworten: Soverre das got dennach nit mensche was worden, darumb solt er auch nit bildunge haben.][2]

That is to say, the prohibition belonged to a period when God himself had not yet become Man and so could have no image: after the Incarnation, however, and under the New Law, the image was not forbidden. And from the pastoral point of view the image was desirable because it countered three obstacles to faith—*ruditas simplicium, tarditas affectus, labilitas memoriae*:

There are three reasons for the institution of images. The first is on account of uneducated people: if they cannot read writing, yet they can read an image on the wall. The second is on account of the sluggishness of our emotions, not easily moved to devotion, but yet moved by things seen. The third is on account of forgetfulness, because we forget what we hear but remember what we see.

[Diß bildunge geschicht umb dry sache. Ein sach ist von der ungelerten menschen wegen, so verre das sy nicht kennen die geschrifft, das sie doch lesen an der wend. Die ander das die trackeit der begirde, die vor trackeit nit in andacht bewegt wirt, doch mit der geschicht der bild bewegt werd. Die drit umb vergessenheit, ob wir vergessen, das wir gehort haben, das wider gedencken mit der gesicht.][3]

This triad of functions, often attributed at the time to Thomas Aquinas, was a commonplace of the period.

It was no licence to idolatry. There was a clear distinction between honouring (*colere*) and worshipping (*adorare*) an image, and tract after tract expounded it to the people. For instance, Stephan von Landskron's *Die hymel strasz* (The Road to Heaven) written in the 1460s and printed in Augsburg in 1484:

. . . it is against the Commandment to *worship* carved, engraved, painted or other images, either for their own sake or for them to give one assistance, since they cannot give one more assistance than any other piece of wood or pigment can. We should only be reminded by images to think of our Lord or his Holy Passion, or also of the Saints whose images we see, and to *honour* them and appeal to them in our needs that they be our helpers before God the Almighty, who alone can help us, and no-one else can help us except through him.

[Zuo dem zehenden mal thuond darwider die geschniczte, grabne unnd gemalte oder sunst gemachte bilder anbeten, als für sich selber oder als jm die helffen solten, wenn sie mügen jm nit mer helffen, denn als ein ander holcz oder ein andere varb. Wir soellen nur durch die pilder ermant werden, das wir gedencken an unsern herren oder sein heiliges leiden, oder auch an die heiligen, der pilder wir sehen, unnd die eren unnd anrueffen in unsern notturfften, das sy unser helffer seyen vor got dem almaechtigen der unß allein gehelffen mag von jm selber und nyemand anderß uns nichcz helfen nur durch in.][4]

Particularly important was not to prefer the Saints to God himself, and not to confuse the image with its subject. An anonymous tract, *Der Spiegel des sünders* (The Sinner's Looking-glass), printed in Augsburg in about 1475:

Honour the images [of God and the Saints] not for the images themselves but for that of which they are the images . . . If you do otherwise—if you worship the images of Christ

and the Saints, and if you honour a beautiful new image more than an old ungarnished one — you are committing the sin of idolatry.

Or if you believe that the image has some divine power, virtue or ability to succour contained within it, and for that reason particularly honour the images of the Saints, that is quite against the first Commandment and is idolatry, for it is written in the fourth chapter of Matthew: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' You should appeal to the Saints that they pray to God for you, and honour them and their images in His name.

[Ire bildnuß, nit für sich selbs, sunder von der wegen, der bildnuß sy seind . . . eren. Wann taetest du anders, als das du anbettest die bildnuß christi und der heiligen oder ein schoener und new bild mer eretest, dann ein ungeschaffen oder alt bildnuß, du begiengest die sunde der abgoeterei.

Oder aber du gelaubtest, das die bildnuß ettwas goettlicher kraft, tugent oder hilff hette, und in verschlossen waer, darumb du die bildnuß der heiligen sunderlich eretest, das ist alles wider diß gebott und abgoeterei, dann got deinen herren solt du anbetten und dem allein dienen, ist geschriben Mathei am vierden capitel. Die heiligen gotes soltu anrueffen, das sy got für dich bitten, und die und ir bildnuß in irem namen eren etc.][5]

This was the decent and rational theory of images recommended to the people.[6]

There is no reason to suppose that many did not conform with it, and it goes with a certain classic range of subjects—centred on the Crucifix and the Virgin and Child—represented in a modest manner. An exposition of the Mass written in Augsburg around 1484 conveys quite subtly the role of the image in such piety; it compares preparation of the mind for Mass with the building and decoration of a church, in which there are to be three pictures:

Once the church has been cleaned we must decorate it with pictures. First, the Holy Cross, with Mary and John, for the first thing to draw or to paint in the soul is the Lord Jesus on the Cross, the Passion of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, never to be forgotten. Secondly, we must paint in our church the noble and beautiful Virgin Mary and learn with her willing poverty of spirit, for she was poor in temporal goods; St Jerome says in a sermon on her that Mary was so poor that she kept herself and her son Jesus in life and food with her needle and thread, and shared out whatever she had left over with the poor. Thirdly, we must paint in our church the picture of the dear and holy St John the Evangelist, who stands for the virtue of chastity.

[Darnach müssen wir den tempel, so er gereinigt ist, zieren mit gemälde. Des ersten das heylig kreucz mariam und johannem. des ersten müssen wir den herren ihesum an dem kreücz in unser sele zeychnen oder malen. das ist das leyden unsers lieben herren Jhesu christi und des nymmer vergessen. zu dem andern müß wir die edeln schönen junckfrauen maria in unsern tempel malen und bey ir lernen willig armut des geystes, wan sy was arm in zeytlichem gut. des spricht s. Jeronymus in seiner bredig von ihr, das maria so arm gewesen sey daz sie sich und irem sun Jhesum mit der nadel und mit dem faden hinbracht und erneret hab und was ir übrig ward daz teylet sy auß armen leuten. zu dem dritten müssen wir in unsern tempel malen das bild des lieben heiligen sant Johannsen des evangelisten der bedeut die tugent der keüscheyt.][7]

There are many sculptures quite in character with this restricted use of images as a

focus for meditation, austere groups of the Crucifixion or of the Virgin with the Dead Christ, using clear traditional formulas of emotion, figures of Mary quite without frippery, a central and restricted canon of Saints plainly exemplifying virtues to be aspired to[8], and there are engravings (fig. 27) laying out in the clearest way how to use such images for devotion.

But one can hardly evade the fact that much of the best Florid sculpture is associated with less austere modes of devotion, that indeed it sometimes manifests a luxuriant underside of pre-Reformation piety. Most obviously of all it is implicated in hagiolatry of precisely the kind *The Road to Heaven* and *The Sinner's Looking-glass* warned people against. A hostile account from the radical reformer Sebastian Franck pointed to the association of the unorthodox cult of the Saints with secular preoccupations:

> There is much that could be told of the singular Brotherhoods, Saints and altars of the craftsmen, how each craft has its own Saint, Brotherhood and altar, good against any misfortune; or how on their high days they have a great banquet and celebrate the feast with much ceremony. But who can describe this buffoonery in all its detail? There is no misfortune, need or disease that does not have a specific Saint for it . . . For fire, flood, confinement, toothache, the falling sickness and every evil they have not only specific spells but specific Patrons and Saints . . .

STVLTICIAE LAVS.

farinae, qui miraculis ac prodigiosis gaudent mendaciis, uel audiendis, uel narrandis. Nec ulla satietas talium fabularū, cū portentuosa quaedam de spectris, de lemurib⁹, de laruis, de inferis, de id genus milibus miraculoꝝ cōmemorant. Quae quo longius absunt a uerō, hoc & credūtur lubentius, & iucundiore pruritu titillant aures. Atq; haec quidem nō modo ad leuandum horarum tedium mire cōducūt, uerumetiā ad quaestum pertinēt, praecipue sacrificis & concionatoribus.
His rursum adfines sunt, ij, q sibi stultam quidem, sed tamen iucundam persuasionem induerunt, futurum, si ligneum, aut pictum aliquem Polyphemū, Christophoꝝ aspexerint, eo die nō sint perituri,

(strae farinae).i. nostrae cōditiōis. Persi⁹. Nostrae paulo ante farinae. Laruae & lemures.) Laruae noxiae inferorū umbrae sūt, quas uulgo spiritus uocamus, a laribus dictae. Qui miraculis ac prodigiis.) Hac de re, libellum cōscripsit Lucianus, quē Morus, cui libellus hic dicatus, elegantissime uertit in sermonem latinum. Hoc genus hominum execratur & diuus Hieronymus in epistolis, qui pugnat cum daemōibus, atq; huiusmodi portenta confingunt. Sacrificis & concionatoribus.) Palam est, hic non reprehendi miracula, sed conficta, & cōficta ad quaestum, quo plus extorqueant a mulierculis & senib⁹, stultisq; credulis. Nā his difficillime credūt, q maxime credūt Euāgelio. Et fere uidem⁹, ut q huiusmodi fabulamētis, maxime fidem habent, apud hos Euangelij, leuissima sit autoritas. Videt aūt taxare genus hoim illaudatū, quos uulgo quaestuarios uocant, q circūferentes sanctoꝝ reliquias, magna impudentia, solēt apud populū huiusmodi portenta narrare, quae post ipsi inter pocula rident. Polyphemū Christophorum.) Polyphemū uocat, quod hunc immani, & plusq̄ gigantea magnitudine fingant pictores & sculptores, & malum, baculi loco tenentē ingressum undas qualis Polyphemus apud Vergiliū, quē tertio Aeneidos sic describit, Monstrum horrendū ingens, cui lumē ademptū. Trunca manu pinus regit, & uestigia firmat. Et paulopost, Graditurq; p aequor Iam mediū, necdū fluctus latera ardua tinxit. Quē & Homerus Odysseae .I. describit. Aspexerit in die.) Quaeso quid dici potuit stultius aut superstitiosius? & tamē mirū, q̄ id uulgo plurimum habeat. Quis istiusmodi plusq̄ haereticas opiniones inserit in animos Christianoꝝ? Bene morieē, quisquis uixerit in Christō, nō q

Confictea miracula

Superstitiosus imaginum cultus.

K ligneum

Fig. 28. The cult of St Christopher. Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium*, Basle, 1515, p. K 1 a., with marginal drawing by Hans Holbein the Younger, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basle.

Fig. 29. The Ottobeuren Master, St Christopher, about 1520. Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf (Inv. 1936).

[Hie wer vil zusagen von den eygen bruderschafften, heyligen vnd altarn der handtwercker, wie ein yeder sein eygen heyligen, bruderschafft vnd altar hat, für all unglück gut, an des hochzeitlichen tagen sy grosse bancket haben, vnnd mit vil Ceremoni das fest begehen. Aber wer kan diß narrenwerck alles stuckweiß beschreiben, es ist kein vnglück, not oder kranckheit die nit yren eygen heyligen darfür hab ... So haben sy für feür, wasser, kindtsnot, zanwee, fallend sucht vnnd alles übel nit alleyn yhr eygen segen, sunder yhr eygen Patronen vnd heyligen ...][9]

Franck is speaking from a fixed hostile position, but it is the same practice that Erasmus in the *Praise of Folly* (fig. 28)[10] and many others had deplored: the Saints were being used not as examples of virtues but as a departmentalized social security agency. Indeed it was possible to code one's predicaments in the selection of Saints of whom one made particular cult, a Saint for one's name, one's city, one's profession, one's afflictions, actual or impending. It is difficult to gauge, and probably easy to over-estimate, the proportions of this kind of cult in pre-Reformation devotion; apart from anything else, it was an easy stick for Reformers to beat Rome with and so is prominently described. But it was undeniably part of religious life and certainly the immediate occasion of much sculpture. The many figures of St Roche, for instance, were part of a whole apparatus of intercession against plague, and their proper commentary is the text of the plague masses to St Roche;[11] Hans Leinberger's retable at Moosburg (Plate 91) was made as a physical centre for pilgrimage to relics of St Castulus, a third-century martyr who had evolved into a local guardian against lightning, dysentery, erysipelas and horse-thieves.

As for the brotherhoods, Franck is speaking particularly of the craftsmen's brotherhoods, trade associations, which existed for purposes of mutual insurance and protection, but which endowed altars both as a physical centre for the group and as a spiritual amenity; services were held there, fees in the form of candles were burned there, and Mass was said for members. The painters and sculptors of Ulm themselves had had a well-documented Brotherhood of St Luke[12] since 1402, supplementary to the town guild, with an altar in the Wengenkirche. But there was another class of brotherhoods detached from craft divisions, often composed of relatively prosperous people joining together for the purpose of devotion to a popular Saint like St Anne (Plate 102) or St Sebastian and having social and charitable functions within itself; many people belonged to several of these.[13]. They had their own altars and often their own priests. To a social historian the brotherhoods are an index of the progressing fragmentation of the urban communities, a closing of ranks by comfortable people for motives that were at least partly prudential ones of reciprocal reassurance. To a historian of religion they reflect, as does the endowment of independent preachers, the will of the laymen to supply for themselves the warmer devotional framework that the clergy, who limited themselves very much to the Mass, did not offer. In the sculpture they manifest themselves in several ways: in the endowment of altarpieces, of course, but also in a newly intimate and even familiar tone in the representation of saints. In the case of the exceptional Brotherhood of the

In mir ist alle hoffnung des lebens. Gett zu mir alle dye mich begeren/vnd von meynen geperungen werdt yr erfullet.

O maria selige porten des hymels sey vnser fursprecherin vor deynem sun das er vns durch dich in gnad neme der vns durch dich geben ist.

O fraw sprich/bitten wir dich/das du vnser schwester bist/vnd wol vnß sey/von wegen deyn/vnd leben vnser sell/auß deyner gnaden.

1 4 9 2

Ein andechtig beschewlich betrachtung dy ein ytlich andechtig mensch mag haben/so er den Rosenkrantz betten ist/vnd Mariã die kunigin der barmhertzigkeyt ermanen/funff stuck dar durch sye sunder on allen zweyfel bewecht wirt/sich vber in zuerbarmen so er auch ym seynen letzten noeten ist/vnd mag der mensch sy haben noch ordenũg der funff Pater noster die er im Rosenkrantz petten ist also. Das erst.

Nach dẽ ersten Pr noster/O kunigin der barmhertzigkeyt ich bedenck dein grosse erwirdigkeyt so du võ got vber alle creatur erlanget hast/das du auch erhocht pist vber alle koer der engel/vnd schem mich fur dein angesicht zu tretten/Aber wider vermag ich dich deiner mẽscheyt nach der du vber die koer der engel erhoher bist/aller mẽschen in dem tal der zeherñ nit vergessen magst/vnd bit dich also hertziglich du wollest sprechen zu deynem lieben sun iesu vnd seinem hymlischen vater du seyst meyn schwester auff das mir armen ellenden todsund wol sey/vmb deines willñ aller liebste mutter. Amẽ. Das and.

Nach dem andern Pater noster/O hertze liebe mutter gottes Ich bit dich also inickglich du wollest ingedenck seyn der vrsach war vmb du seyst erweler zu einer mutter des eingeporñen sunns gottes des aller hochsten/Auß dem vnd durch den du alle dein erwyrdigkeyt erlanget hast/Ist das nicht geschehen vmb aller todsunder vnd todsunderin willen der einer pyn ich/des erman ich vnd ruff an vnnd schrey zu dir bewey8 heut barmhertzigkeyt mir. Amen. Das dritt.

Nach dem dritten Pater noster. Ach hertzeliebe mutter aller gnadñ Ich verm ĩ dich des wortes das der engel gottes sprach zu dir, du hast gefundñ gnad pey got/hastu nũ sie gefunden/so hat sye freilich ymãt verloren. Ob nun der koem vnd sie wider foderet. Ach gutige mutter wol stu die im nit wider gebñ/wollen das nit alle recht/was mã vinder sol mã wider keren. O freuntliche mutter der gerechtigkeyt. Ich pin der aller ellendiste todsunder einer der do hat verlorñ die gnade gottes durch die eygene posheyt/vnd bit dich so fleyssiglich du wollest mir wider erwerben/das ich hab durch mein eygenne schuld verloren. Amen. Das vierd.

Nach dez vierden Pater noster. Mein aller liebste aller barmhertzigste mutter Marie/Ich erman dich der wort des heyligen engels gottes do er sprach/du seyst vol der gnaden Auß dem ich nym/dir nymmer zerrinnẽ mag/vnd yemer du gibst/yemer du hast/das laß mich gnadenreyche kunigin genyessen/vnd laß mich nit also durst sterbñ pey dem brunnen da getrenckt werdñ alle dy da dursten nach der seligkeyt. Amen.

Nach dem funfften Pater noster. O Maria ein mutter Jesu/ich bedenck das Jesus dein hertze liebs kind zu dyr sprach do er dich an dem heyligen creutz ansahe/In dem er dir auch seynem letzten willen veriach/weyb sich an das ist dein sun/zaiget er nit do den menschẽ/mainet er nit do den todsunder. O kungin der barmhertzigkeyt/Erful das testament deines lieben suns/do er leid den vnschuldigen pitterñ tod zu erfullen fur vns armen ellenden sund das vrteil der gerechtigkeyt/vnd beweyß mir armen sunder gnad/In meynem allergrosten hertzelaid. Amẽ. Item es mag ein ytlich andechtig hertz dye obgesetztñ stuck weitter auß breitten bedencken vnd betrachten nach dem im die kunigin der barmhertzigkeyt ir gnad vnd andacht mit teylet ꝛc. Das funfft

Fig. 30. Devotion of the Rosary. Broadsheet, Nuremberg (Anton Koberger), 1492 (Schr. XVII, 407).

Rosary,[14] which spread from the Rhineland through Germany with great rapidity in the 1470s, there is even a characteristic iconography of Mariolatrous motifs—the Virgin of the Rosary (Plates 41–2), the Virgin of the Apocalypse (Plates 43–5), the Virgin of Mercy (Plate 68)—with handbooks and broadsheets (fig. 30) that contain forms of prayer proper to them. The sculpture registers the brotherhoods and the preoccupations involved in them unusually directly.

Sculpture was also implicated in the problematic institution of indulgences, in several ways. There were often indulgences attached to the relics enshrined in the altar the sculptor was decorating; a few individual statues which had become the objects of pilgrimage might themselves carry indulgences, though this is not so of any one of the pieces of sculpture discussed in this book. Indulgences also went with certain subjects: there was an indulgence of 11,000 years for reading the prayer *Ave, Sanctissima Virgo Maria, mater dei, regina coeli, porta paradisi . . .* before the type of image called *Maria in Sole* (fig. 31).[15] Again there is a danger of overstating the role of indulgences; the later great scandal of Tetzel's sales of indulgences, which is a quite different matter, and the Reformers' anger about this, interpose themselves between us and 1500. The indulgence theorists took pains to point out that indulgence was attached not to an image or a relic but rather to the act of devotion made before it, and this act was incomplete without full confession and penitence.[16] On this basis many churchmen were willing to defend it mainly as a stimulus to penitence. In practice sculpture seems involved with indulgences not so much directly as by association, either with relics or with a body like the Brotherhood of the Rosary, membership of which carried an indulgence.

It was naturally a recurrent worry of the popular devotional books that simple people were unable to sustain the finer points of distinction in the use of images, the cult of the Saints, and the doctrine of indulgences, and it is likely that many did distort and oversimplify.[17] The images were compromised in many ways and when the Reformers launched their attack there was much they could mock. Sebastian Franck describes an institution that produced much fine sculpture, the *Palmesel* (fig. 32):[18]

Palm Sunday comes . . . A wooden ass on a trolley is pulled around the town with the image of their God on it; they sing, throw palms before it, and do much idolatry with this wooden God of theirs. The parish priest prostrates himself before this image, and a second priest also creeps up. The children sing and point with their fingers. Two Bacchantes prostrate themselves before it with outlandish ceremony and song, and then everyone throws palms at it: whoever catches the first makes big magic with it.

[Auff diß kumpt der Palmtag . . . Vnd füret [man] ein hültzin Esel auff einem wägelin, mit einem darauff gemachten bild yhres Gots, in der statt herumb, singen, werffen palmen für yhn, vnd treiben vil abgötterei mit disem yhrem hültzinen Gott. Der Pfarrer legt sich vor disem bild nider, den schlecht ein ander pfaff. Die schüler singen vnd deütten mit fingern darauff. Zwen Bachanten legen sich auch mit seltzamer Ceremoni vnd gesang vor dem bild nider, da wirfft jedermann mit palmen zu, der den ersten erwischt, treibt vil zauberei damit.][19].

He also describes the fund-raising activities of the image:

Whenever there is an important feast-day, the church is decorated with hangings and great garlands; the altarpieces are opened up and the saints dusted and prinked, especially the Patron of the feast. They set him dressed up under the church door in order to beg, and a man sits by him to say the words for him, because the statue cannot speak. He says: 'Give St George (or St Leonard, or whoever it may be) something, for God's sake' . . .

[So oft ein groß fest ist, ziert man den tempel mit teppichen, grossen meyen, thut die altär auff, butzt vnd mutzt die heyligen auff, sunderlich den Patron dises fests, setzt yhn gekleydet vnder die kirch thür zu betlen, da sitzt ein mann bei ym der im das wort thut, weil das bild nit reden kan, der spricht, Gebt sant Jörgen, Leonarden etc. etwas vmb Gots willen . . .][20]

Even apart from Reformers' mockery there had been cases of outright fraud, rare but publicized. In a famous affair at Bern in 1508, four Dominicans plotted a complex series of false miracles with a view to bringing credit and pilgrims to their own house and discredit both to the Franciscans and to the Franciscan doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. A carving of the Virgin played an important part in the campaign, as the Franciscan publicist Thomas Murner described in his rhymed chronicle of the affair:

> The scheme was fraudulent and deep:
> To make the Virgin's image weep
> With varnish drops beneath her eyes
> In place of tears, and gull the pious ...

Fig. 31. *Babst Sixtus Gebet vor unser frowen bild* ... Broadsheet, Strassburg (Johann Prüss), n.d., (Schr. XX, 1677).

Fig. 32. Christ on the Ass. Swabian sculptor, about 1510–20. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Inv. A 1030–1910).

And Doctor Steffan from behind
Had guilefully contrived a kind
Of pipe, through which he then intoned
So credibly to all around
That many afterwards averred
Every syllable they'd heard
Came from the lips of the Queen of Heaven
Though really it was just Doctor Steffan.

[Sye hetten böẞlich sich bedacht,
Ein bild Marie weinen gmacht
Mit fürniß tropffen vnder augen,
Das yederman das möchte schawen ...
Doctor Steffan, der brucht ein list
Vnd hett ein rörlin zugerist
Hinder dem bild, durch welches ror
Redt er, das mans wol hort dar vor,
Das mancher hett ein eydt geschworen,
In bducht nit anders in sein oren,
Dann wie das bild solchs selber thett,
So es doch doctor Steffan redt.][21]

Dr Steffan Boltzhurst, who was burnt with his three colleagues in 1509, can just be seen lurking behind the altar on the left in the woodcut (fig. 33). It is difficult to believe this sort of behaviour was common, but the notoriety of those cases that were revealed did the cause of the image no good among the fastidious devout.

It would be tendentious to pause on such a lurid note. One is less likely to misrepresent pre-Reformation piety if one refers back to the range of the many small devotional handbooks, usually illustrated with woodcuts, that were pouring out of the German presses in these years. The range is very wide: there are such anecdotal collections of legends about the Saints as the *Prosapassional* (fig. 131),[22] a German adaptation of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, but there are also genuine guides to testing meditation on the inner meanings of Christ's Passion, like Stephan Fridolin's *Schatzbehalter der wahren Reichtümer des Heils* (*Treasury of the True Riches of Salvation*, figs. 34–5).[23] Anton Koberger of Nuremberg, Dürer's godfather, printed the one in 1488 and the other in 1491.[24] Somewhere between these two lies the *Hortulus animae*[25] a book that went through eighty or more editions between 1500 and 1520—Koberger offered it in both Latin and German by 1513—and must surely register some reality in German piety. It consists of prayers, many of them to the full late-gothic battery of guardian saints, but many also on the stages of Christ's Passion; there is some Mariolatry in it, and some promise of indulgence, but neither is overwhelming. It points to a style of devotion in which the role of the image could be varied,[26] and in the course of the fifteenth century a genre had evolved in Germany that responded to many of these demands in an expansive and grand manner, the winged retable altarpiece.

Fig. 33. (left) The fraudulent miracle at Bern. Woodcut from Thomas Murner, *History von den fier Ketzren*, [Strassburg?] 1509, p. j 5 a.

Figs. 34–5. (below) Two woodcuts from *Schatzbehalter oder schrein der waren reichtumer des heils* . . . , Nuremberg (Anton Koberger), 1491: (34) the three elements of Old Testament sacrifice, and (35) the Last Supper (Schr. XVII, 328 and 363).

2 The Winged Retable

In 1488 the Dominican Felix Fabri wrote a book in praise of Ulm, *Tractatus de Civitate Ulmensi*, in which he makes much of the city's great Minster. He distinguished ten special glories of the church, and the third of these was the number of its altars—fifty-one of them, all endowed and maintained by burghers, some with as many as five prebends.[27] In the priesthood these altars went with the proliferation of an under-educated and wretchedly underpaid class of *Altaristen*, chaplains attached to the altars for the saying of the Masses they existed for, a notorious proletariat within the church. In society at large they are the correlative of the same fragmentation of social sense as the Brotherhoods expressed: to force the point a little, the retables on these side-altars seem a concrete projection of the will among well-to-do people to secure their own souls, in groups of fraternity or family. The obvious contrast is with the gothic cathedral, at least formally an object of the community as a whole, but there is a discrimination to be made between side-altars and high altars, which

Fig. 36. Some Altarpiece Commissions.

Contract (and/or completion)	Sculptor	Place (H: High Altar, S: Side Altar)	Client	Price in Florins (S: Sculpture)	Notes
1471(–81)	Michael Pacher, Bruneck	St Wolfgang, Abersee (H)	Abbot of Mondsee	Up to 1200 Fl. Hungarian	See Note on Pl. 13.
1477(–89)	Veit Stoss, Cracow	Cracow, St Mary (H)	Parish	2808 Fl. Hungarian	See Note on Pl. 35.
1484(–98)	Michael Pacher, Bruneck	Salzburg, U.L.Frau (H)	Council	3300/3500	Contribution of 1000 Fl. from Virgil Hofer. Removed in 1710. N. Rasmo, *Michael Pacher*, 1971, p. 249.
1485	Michel Erhart, Ulm	Augsburg, Sts Ulrich and Afra (S)	Ulrich Fugger	190–300 (S 40–100)	Lost. Painted by Gumpold Gültlinger, 1490, for 150–200 Fl. A. Broschek, *Michel Erhart*, 1973, pp. 205 and 214.
1486(–90)	Hans Klocker, Brixen	Passeier, St Leonard (H)	Parish	500	Dispersed. G. Scheffler, *Hans Klocker*, 1967, p. 119.
1486(–92)	Jakob Russ, Ravensburg	Chur, Cathedral (H)	Chapter	500	Arbitrated by Bishop. Paintings by another. L. Volkmann, *Der Überlinger Rathaussaal . . .*, 1934, p. 22. See fig. 63.
1490(–92)	Riemenschneider, Würzburg	Münnerstadt, St Mary Magdalen (H)	Council	145	Painted by Veit Stoss, 1502–04, for 200 Fl. See Note on Pl. 23.
1495	Martin Kriechbaum, Passau	Passau, St Paul (H)	—	950	Burnt 1512. W. Schmid, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Kunst*, I, 1924, p. 94.
(1501)	Nikolaus Hagenower, Strassburg	Strassburg, Cathedral Corpus Christi Altar	Chapter	400	Lost. The contractors were Nikolaus's brothers, Veit and Paul. Rott, *Quellen und Forschungen*, III Quellen I, p. 262. See Note on Pl. 55.
(1503)	Veit Stoss, Nuremberg	Schwaz, St Mary (H)	Master of Works	1166	Lost. S. Dettloff, *Wit Stosz*, I, 1961, p. 257.

were not usually open to individual patronage in the same way. Most high altarpiece retables were commissions from communities, in town churches of a parish or town council—as with Veit Stoss at Cracow or Riemenschneider at Rothenburg (figs. 53 and 106)—and in abbey churches of the house itself—as with Pacher at St Wolfgang or Erhart at Blaubeuren (Plates 13 and 19); of course, in both cases the initiatives were often from identifiable individuals, local worthies or heads of houses, but the religious function was collective. High altarpiece retables stood to side-altarpiece retables rather as cathedrals or parish churches stood to chantries.

In the first thousand years of the church the altar had been the true *mensa* or table around which the Mass took place: on it lay movable accessories, chalice, paten, sacred books, pyx with host; round it stood the celebrants, priests, deacons, and subdeacons. Sometimes the celebrating priest stood on the further or east side of the altar and faced the people, but more usually it was a sub-deacon: as some Orders of the Mass stated it as late as the twelfth century, *Subdiaconi retro altare locantur*, which ruled out any altarpiece. But between the tenth and thirteenth centuries it became more and more standard practice for sub-deacons to join the

Fig. 36. (cont.)

Contract (and/or completion)	Sculptor	Place (H: High Altar, S: Side Altar)	Client	Price in Florins (S: Sculpture)	Notes
1501(–05)	Riemenschneider, Würzburg	Rothenburg, St Jakobskirche, Heiligblutaltar	Council	110 (S 60)	Monochrome. Shrinework by Erhart Harschner, 1499–1502, for 50 Fl. See Note on Pl. 24.
1502(–05)	Erasmus Grasser, Munich	Reichersdorf, St Leonard (H)	Parish	60	Fragmentary. P. M. Halm, *Grasser*, 1928, p. 109.
1502(–07)	Gregor Erhart, Augsburg	Augsburg, St Maurice, Lady altar	Parish	114 (S 54)	Lost. J. Baum, *Ulmer Plastik um 1500*, 1911, p. 161.
1507	Michael Wolgemut, Nuremberg	Schwabach St John (H)	Council	Up to 600	H. Thode, *Die Malerschule von Nürnberg, . . .*, 1891, p. 245. See fig. 39.
(1510)	Daniel Mauch, Ulm	Ulm, Franciscans' Church (S)	Marner Brotherhood	86 (S 36)	Lost. Corpus and its figures by Mauch. Painted by Martin Schaffner for 50 Fl. Baum, op. cit., p. 163.
1510(–18)	Peter Trünklin, Nördlingen	Heilsbronn, Cistercian Abbey (S)	Abbot	110 (S 35)	Painted in 1518 for 75 Fl. Rott, op. cit., II, p. 199.
1515(–21)	Wolf Huber, Passau	Feldkirch, St Nicholas (S)	Brotherhood of St Anne	230	Huber, a painter, contracted to supply retable complete with carvings. E. Heinzle, *Der Sankt-Annen-Altar des Hubers*, 1959.
1518	Hans Bongart, Colmar	Kaysersberg, St George's (H)	Council	180	Monochrome. Rott, op. cit., III Quellen I, p. 358.
1520(–24)	Veit Stoss, Nuremberg	Nuremberg, Carmelite Church (H)	Prior Andreas Stoss	[400]	Monochrome. Unfinished and unpaid. See Note on Pls. 48–9.
1522(–24)	Hans Sixt von Staufen, Freiburg	Freiburg, Minster (S)	Minster Works	35	The retable in the Locherer Chapel. Monochrome. See Note on Plate 58.
1526(–28)	Hans Leinberger, Landshut	Polling, U.L.Frau (H)	Prior of Austin Canonry	'quasi bei' 150 (S 25)	Fragmentary. Shrinework and painting by others. See Note on Pl. 101.

Fig. 37. Mass and Altar. Woodcut by Hans Baldung Grien, from [Marcus von Lindau,] *Die zehe gebot erclert und uszgelegt*, Strassburg (Johann Grüninger), 1516, p. 14 d.

other celebrants on the west side of the altar, and the east side became available for a 'panel behind', a *retro-tabularium* or retable.[28] Retables never became part of the prescribed equipment of a church, but they were one permissible way of doing a prescribed thing. For every altar must be identified: in 1310, for instance, the Synod of Trier ruled that over and behind each altar must be an inscription, picture or statue clearly showing to which Saint the altar was dedicated.[29] The primary justification of a retable was as a label, and just as narrative paintings were, in St Gregory's formulation, the bible of the illiterate, a picture or a statue could be an inscription for them. The retable altarpiece therefore combined several purposes. It was a label and must be clear. It was also a glorification of the altar and therefore of the mystery of the Eucharist renewed upon it, and as such was fine. In addition, it was a religious image and thus had the general obligations of the image. With such a complex function, many different types of retable had evolved in the Middle Ages, and the pre-history of the south German variety is far from clear.[30] By the time Hans Multscher was making his retable for Sterzing in the 1450s, however, it had acquired all the main characteristics of the mature version made in south Germany up to the Reformation. It was a majestic and flexible form (figs. 38–41).

It was consistently thought of as an assembly of four elements, and because this way of thinking is involved in its design and making, it is helpful to name parts. In a short contract of 1518 Hans Bongart of Colmar engaged to make a retable in the parish church at Kaysersberg:

The Masters and Council at Kaysersberg have engaged master Hans the sculptor to make a retable on the Corpus Christi altar with the whole Passion, according to the drawing he has provided and as it shows: and namely the *Corpus* with a complete Crucifixion and four subjects from the Passion next to it with figures in full relief, most seemly in all and as high and as wide as necessity demands and the drawing shows; also the two *Flügel* or

Fig. 38. (above left) Michael Pacher, Altarpiece, 1471–81. St Wolfgang (cf. Plates 13–15).
Fig. 39. (above right) Michael Wolgemut, Altarpiece, 1506–8. Schwabach (cf. fig. 36).
Fig. 40. (below left) The Master H.L., Altarpiece, about 1523–6. Breisach (cf. Plates 76–7).
Fig. 41. (below right) Veit Stoss, Altarpiece design, about 1520–2. Cracow, University Museum (cf. Plates 48–9).

wings, in each wing four stories taken from the Passion, in good measure, carved flatly most skilfully; and below in the *Sarg* the Saviour with twelve Apostles, carved as busts in full relief, in the best way: and above, an *Auszug* as appears in the drawing, with three standing figures, Saint Helen with the Cross, Saint Christopher and Saint Margaret, as the drawing exactly shows, with its vaultings, finials and foliate work, inside and outside the retable, as good and skilful as can be, and thus to make good value for the good both of his own honour and of the church.

[Min herrn meister und rat zu Keisersperg, meister Hansen, dem bildhouwer, verdingt ein tafel uff den fronvasten mit dem gantzen paßion, lut der visierung, als das die visierung anzoigt, und namlich das corpus mit einem gantzen crucefix und vier materien darneben des paßions mit gantzen bilden, zum aller schicklichesten und zumlicher hochen und große, als das die notturft erhoischt, ouch die visierung der tafel anzeigt; so denn die zwey figel oder fettich, in jedem figel IIII materien des paßions ußgeteilt, noch zimlicher moß, flach geschnitten zum aller werklichesten, und unden im sarch den salvator mit XII appostelen und gantzer brustbilder geschnitten, noch dem besten, und oben uff einem ußzug, noch ußwisung der visirung, mit dryen steenden bilden, sant Helenen mit dem crutz, sant Cristoffel und sant Margreth, alls das die visirung eigentlich anzoigt, mit sinen gesprengen, vigolen und lobwercken, inn und ußwendig der tafel, zum aller besten und werklichesten das sin mag, und deßhalb gut wertschaft machen noch sinen eren und der kilchen nutz.][31]

The four parts of the retable are *Corpus*, *Flügel*, *Sarg* and *Auszug*.

The *Corpus* was the central body of the structure. In sculptors' retables it is basically a shallow box holding the narrative centre, the personage or mystery to which the altar was dedicated. Often it has quite elaborate interior architecture, particularly of tabernacles in which figures may stand. It is characteristic of most south German retables that these figures are consistently few and large, as the size of the box allows, whereas in the north and particularly the Netherlands larger numbers of smaller figures were often used. The *Corpus* figures are the most important and elaborate in most retables.

Flügel, meaning 'wings', is a better because more evocative word than doors for the pair of panels attached to the sides of the *Corpus*. Winged retables were a north European preference, not found in Italy and only rarely in Spain: their origins in the late thirteenth century are obscure and perhaps lay in northern France, but the form was exploited most fully in the Netherlands and Germany. There were two practical justifications for wings. They served the liturgical purpose of giving the altarpiece two faces: open it had an elaborate face and monstrance-like profile for festivals, closed it had a plainer character adapted both to workdays and fasts. The fact that the inner part of the retable was more often closed up than not also conserved the work within, the gilding that was liable to dull and later the wood that was vulnerable to candle-smoke and dust. The wings were usually decorated inside and out with paintings or low-relief sculpture; a common combination is relief carving on the inside and paintings on the outside. The matter varies: sometimes there are flanking figures for those in the *Corpus*, sometimes narrative scenes. Their subordination to the *Corpus* figures is likely to be registered by their lower relief and also by simpler polychromy.

The *Sarg* or sarcophagus was the predella. It was a relatively new addition, for retables do not have a *Sarg* before the fifteenth century; it had the physical merit of raising the *Corpus* rather above the altar table, so that it was visible and the wings could move freely, and it was normally the width of the table and narrower than the *Corpus*. As with the wings, its subject was subsidiary to that of the *Corpus*. Sometimes it was painted, but if it was carved, busts of Evangelists (fig. 40) or of Apostles (Plate 19) or the Tree of Jesse (fig. 53)—which lent itself to decorative extension—were common subjects.

The *Auszug*, also called *Aufzug* or *Aufsatz*, is the crowning superstructure above the *Corpus*. Its decorative basis is summed up well in the Kaysersberg contract: *gesprengen, vigolen und lobwerken*—vaultings, finials and foliage. But amongst all this there were often also figures in precarious tabernacles, figures in full relief but smaller in scale than those of the *Corpus*; sometimes these were saints marginal to the central subject, but quite often there was a Crucifix flanked by figures of the Virgin and St John. Probably because they were further away from the beholder, these figures are often noticeably lower in quality than the rest of the sculpture of a retable.

The winged retable was an institution directly responsive to the needs of devotion. It proclaimed the identity of the saint or mystery to which the altar was dedicated and dignified the station of the Eucharist. It gave the individual sculptures a stage from which to exercise the image's duties of narrating, impressing and reminding. The consequences of the genre for the craft of sculpture were very great. Retables came in all sizes: some were small domestic or travelling shrines, and here the carvers came into touch with the goldsmiths, who made miniature retables in precious metals;[32] some were exceedingly large, an example being Veit Stoss's retable at Cracow, which is something like forty feet high (fig. 56). In full-size altarpieces the carvers had often to work with joiners, who made the framework, and painters, who painted panels and gave the sculpture its polychromy. These contacts with other crafts were important for sculpture, both for encouraging a degree of cross-fertilization and exchange of design ideas, and for setting up tensions and rivalries between crafts; these tensions, we shall see presently, played their own part in the growth of the Florid style.

Indeed the fact of the retable genre and the conditions and opportunities it offered the carvers are something one must continually refer back to; they are involved in the detailed character of the sculpture. For instance, the shrinework frame of the retables was a condition of the statues' emphatic poses and highly diversified draperies; it insulated the sculptor from any need to conform in manner with other art in a church, it provided elaborate ornamental structures with or against which sculpture could and did play subtle echoing and contrapuntal games, and it was a striking arrangement of forms by which the sculpture must not let itself be overshadowed. The shrinework was the orchestra the figure must play both with and above. Again, the wings of the altarpiece were the stimulus to sculpture in low relief, for any sculptor would want to supplant

Fig. 42. Michel Erhart, Sts Benedict and John the Baptist, the Virgin and Child, Sts John the Evangelist and Scholastica. High Altar, Abbey Church, Blaubeuren, 1493–4 (see Plate 19).

the painters and their panels here; it is largely due to the wings and their exigencies that low-relief sculpture—'carved flatly, most skilfully', as they demanded at Kaysersberg—was so highly evolved among the Florid sculptors (Colour Plate II and Plate 49).

Or yet again, the cult of many saints went with the representation of many saints in the altarpieces, and these often appeared in rows; a *Corpus* usually held either a more or less narrative scene, as at St Wolfgang (Plate 13), or a line of standing saints, as at Blaubeuren (Plate 19), three or five being the normal number.[33] In the second case the sculptor noticeably varied the attitudes and general design of the figures so as to make a diversified series of figures, each with a degree of what is almost, but not quite, *contrapposto*; there are hundreds of isolated figures in museums which hint at their origins with an impression of incompleteness, for this comes from the absence of the figures with which they might balance and interact in some retable's celestial array. And this disposition to the intricately counterbalanced figure became so much a part of Florid sculpture that the carvers often persist with a self-sufficient version of it in figures designed to stand on their own. On the one hand, the cult of many saints in altarpieces was one circumstance of the sculptors developing their characteristic counterbalanced figure; on the other, the counterbalancing manifests the cult of many saints. Such figures are, to stretch a point, a little polytheistic; it is a nearly hagiolatrous *contrapposto* (fig. 42).

3 Iconoclasm

The reaction against images in the 1520s is not directly a circumstance of the making of Florid sculpture, and is not a central matter of this account. On the other hand it does constitute a retrospective comment that is the very practical criticism of the time; like all back-lighting, it simplifies and distorts the sculpture quite violently, but it also brings out characteristics one might otherwise neglect. So the events of the iconoclast years are to be looked at here not for themselves so much as for what they imply about the status of the image before reformation.

The theoretical basis for the Reformers' hostility to the use of religious images is undistinguished. There are no striking iconoclastic themes in the Reformation that had not been stated long before in the classic patristic arguments on the subject, and many of them had been invoked intermittently in the centuries between whenever reformers within the Church had turned their attention to the problem of images. Indeed, most of the iconoclastic themes are simply modulations of themes already common in pre-Reformation devotional handbooks: a recommendation that one should avoid the trap of confusing images of God with God himself, for instance, becomes a recommendation that one should get rid of images of God because they trap one into confusing them with God himself. The underlying proposition remains the same: images of God are things we are liable to confuse with God himself. What has changed is the

drawing up of the total balance sheet for the image, a conclusion that overall it shows a loss; and what is likely to follow is a rehearsal of the old themes with negative emphasis.

When one looks at a rounded iconoclast treatise—Andreas Karlstadt's *Von abtuhung der Bylder*[34] (Wittenberg, 1522) and Martin Bucer's *Das einigerlei Bild bei den Gotgläubigen*[35] (Strassburg, 1530) are central and convenient texts—what one finds is a range of the classical topics selected and redeployed in the light of a particular reforming conviction. The main topics are: evasion of the Second Commandment in the manner of Nicholas of Lyra is patently sophistical, and also ignores texts in the New Testament; St Gregory's description of images as the illiterate's Bible is wrong because material images can show no more than the physical form; there is a lack of propriety in registering the godly in materials which, like wood, have such vulgar uses; yet if the material is precious, like gold, it diverts to itself the respect proper to the personage it is representing, and indeed we conflate the two; our lavish decoration and elaboration of images shows how much it is the images themselves we are honouring; they encourage and are contaminated by the cult of the saints and of relics, which we are giving up; their magnificence is a disgraceful extension into the temple, God's house, of the general decadence of our times; the craftsmen who make them are not theologians and so are not competent to impart the sort of knowledge of the divine that theologians impart through the Word; there is something quite comic and irrational, and indeed tasteless, about the spectacle of a human being abasing himself before a piece of wood and pigment; the very fact that we are so powerfully attracted to them shows how dangerous they are.[36] The *gravamina*, in fact, are theological, ethical, social and even aesthetic.

The pivotal figures in the reform of the 1520s were Luther, to the north in Wittenberg, and Zwingli, to the south in Zürich.[37] For Luther the issue of images was a peripheral one, for Zwingli it was more important; but both men rather shifted ground during the 1520s, Luther becoming less, Zwingli more hostile to the image. Karlstadt's treatise was part of the radical programme he attempted at Wittenberg in 1522 while Luther was away in the Wartburg, and it stimulated Luther into a qualified defence of the image, notably in *Wider die hymelischen Propheten* of 1524.[38] Bucer's on the other hand, represents the mature Zwinglian line of the later 1520s. It is not too gross a simplification to see three broad denominational zones emerging in High Germany in the 1520s.

The north, including Nuremberg, leaned to Luther. The south-west, meaning the upper Rhine and southern Swabia, was sympathetic to Zwingli. The south-east often remained Catholic: Bavaria, in spite of local restlessness, held firm in these years and the loyal affirmations of the Convention of Regensburg in 1524 stood for a time. Indeed much of Bavaria stands on the margin of the whole iconoclast episode. In the rest of the region the fate of the sculpture registers a kind of operational reality of the various movements in reforming opinion, a shift from opinion to action in which some men hostile to images and other things went and broke or removed them whereas others were indifferent or uncertain

enough not to do so. A fourth element, the various shades of radical opinion that pass under the label of Anabaptism, erupted here and there in all three zones: it was violently iconoclast.

In spite of the Catholic redoubts in Würzburg and Bamberg, where Prince-Bishops were well placed to resist the Lutheranism among their burghers, the Franconian towns and particularly Nuremberg responded early to Luther. At Nuremberg[39] the critical years were 1524–5, as the fortunes of much fine sculpture show. In August of 1524 Hans Lamparter von Greiffenstein wrote from Augsburg to a business friend in Nuremberg to say that the monument he had had carved in Augsburg in memory of his father—Dr Gregorius Lamparter, a councillor of the Duke of Württemberg and one of the minor villains of Friedrich Engels's *The Peasant War in Germany*—was now ready, that he had intended erecting it in Nuremberg, but that he has heard that the Council have in mind doing away with images and sees no point in sending it there if hooligans,

Fig. 43. Hans Daucher, St John the Evangelist and the arms of Lamparter of Greiffenstein. Limestone, about 1522. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Inv. 49–1864).

Fig. 44. Veit Stoss, Annunciation of the Rosary, 1517–18 (cf. Plate 41) with Adam Kraft's Tabernacle in the background. Nuremberg, St Lorenzkirche.

mutwillig leut, are likely to destroy it. In fact, he seems not to have sent it and only one fragment of the monument has survived (fig. 43).[40] Meanwhile Veit Stoss's last great work, the altarpiece now at Bamberg (Plates 48–9), was also running into representative trouble.[41] It had been commissioned as early as 1520 by his son Andreas, when newly Prior of the Carmelites, but by 1524 Andreas was deeply involved in the crisis as a prominent anti-Lutheran and in 1525 he was banished from Nuremberg; he went north to friends in Würzburg and Bamberg. The funds of the Carmelite house were diverted to the city chest; Stoss, in spite of his complaints, was not paid what he demanded, and the altarpiece stood unfinished in the Carmelite church. Yet it was not destroyed, and it seems that in the later 1520s there was a certain relaxation of feeling in Nuremberg. In 1529 the Council decided that Veit Stoss's own Virgin of the Rosary which hung conspicuously in the St Lorenzkirche (fig. 44) and represented a Mariolatrous cult particularly offensive to many Reformers, should no longer be unveiled on feast-days but remain shrouded; they did not order its removal, as they did with an anonymous image of the Virgin in another church that seemed the object of idolatrous abuse, *mißbrauch und abgötterei*.[42] But Stoss's Virgin of the Rosary had been donated by the patrician grandee Anton Tucher as recently as 1518. By the later 1520s Dürer's view of the image seems not untypical of government opinion in Nuremberg: the image is neutral, no more responsible for superstitious abuse than a weapon is responsible for a murder.[43]

The sequence in Nuremberg registers more than one movement of opinion. The first is the growing moderation of Luther's own position on images and such other adiaphora as religious ceremony.[44] His statements of the earlier 1520s approving the removal of images were immediate responses to particular events, not a consequence of a clearly worked-out position; he had, after all, more important problems to think about in these years. Luther rejected Karlstadt's iconoclasm and the specifically Lutheran solution that emerged piecemeal over the years seems increasingly close to many pre-Reformation voices.[45] The institution of images is clearly riddled with abuse, and there are obvious excesses of magnificence, hagiolatry and profanity; but if properly used, images are a permissible pastoral device. Apart from anything else there is the fact, which Luther recognized in his own devotions, that human beings insist on visualizing and forming images in the mind. The answer to the problem is not iconoclasm but to purge the images of their abuses: in particular, the positive things to do are to replace devotional figures by narrative representations of the holy stories, and to relocate images from within to outside the church, and not least into the home.

The other movement was a response by Lutheran governments to political reality. A city like Nuremberg realized that it existed by trade and finance and should not alienate by violent action in inessential matters the powers with which it lived in economic symbiosis; in Nuremberg this was fully argued out around 1525 in terms particularly of the need to avoid a final break with Charles V, on whom the city depended for protection in its trading and for entrepreneurial privileges in such matters as mining. On the cities' other flank were the

Anabaptists, often violent folk threatening political as well as religious reconstruction: all city councils were preoccupied with reining in the radical element, particularly after the bad fright of the Peasants' War of 1524–5, a coarse rural projection of what were also urban tensions. Nuremberg kept its head down, therefore, avoided entanglement with Lutherans elsewhere and had no taste for unproductive and noticeable violence about marginal things like images. Augsburg, further south and even more dependent on Charles V's custom, compromised even more; the city bankers contrived to keep the population calm and inoffensive to the Emperor into the 1530s, in spite of evangelical feeling from below.[46]

In the Zwinglianizing south the development was entirely unlike this and must be traced along a C-shaped trail of iconoclasms—in the sense of not necessarily rough removal of images—originating in Zürich in 1524 and tapering off for the moment in Swabia in 1531. The Zürich iconoclasm of 1524, the critical year when Hans Lamparter was worried about Nuremberg, was the archetype, and was part of a rapid general dismantling of the ecclesiastical apparatus in the city.[47] In 1527 there was iconoclasm in Constance, the centre of the see in which Zürich itself stood, and one of the casualties was Nikolaus Gerhaert's high altarpiece in the Cathedral. Early in 1529 there was violent iconoclasm in Basle, sourly commented on by Erasmus[48] who left in April, and it is now impossible to gain any clear impression of what the city's sculpture had been like. In 1529–30 there was more removal of images in Strassburg, but this was only a final stage of a process that had been going on since 1524, though less abruptly than at Zürich. The Council at Strassburg had determined on the removal of images in October 1524 but it was to be done discreetly, *in der still und mit besloßenen türen*, and the objects to be stored, *in die cruft oder sonst an ein heimlichen ort*.[49] Over the years more and more were removed; 1530 marks the last campaign of clearing the Cathedral, and Bucer's treatise was its justification. Strassburg too was exercised by the need not to offend unnecessarily outside opinion, particularly the Lutheran princes on whom it depended for support: Charles V was entirely a lost cause for Strassburg. In 1531 the line of iconoclasm moves back eastward into Swabia: images were removed in Michel Erhart's Ulm and the Ottobeuren Master's Memmingen among other cities.

The trail of iconoclasm, its curiously slow pace and persistence, expresses as mixed a set of circumstances as the indecisive Lutheran treatment of images. In this case too the development of Zwingli's own views[50] is at the centre, and it was in the opposite direction from Luther's. In the early 1520s they were not far apart on the issue; it is only in 1523 that Zwingli first begins to speak of images and only in 1524 and 1525, partly in response to critics of the hasty iconoclasm at Zürich, that his position becomes one of general condemnation of the devotional image. At this stage he was still prepared to admit religious images of the narrative kind, representing the holy stories *in Geschichteswyß*;[51] as argument proceeded into the later 1520s, Zwingli's line hardened into outright rejection: *Non licet imagine velut scriptura doceri*. What had happened was that the image had been drawn into just

the same distrust of the senses, Zwingli's acute sense of the contradiction between the material and the spiritual, that made it impossible for him to yield to Luther on the issue of the real presence in the Eucharist, the issue that led to the final rift at Marburg in 1529. The stamina of the iconoclastic drive between 1524 and 1531 must be partly related to the increasing emphasis of Zwingli's personal position. With his death at the Battle of Kappel in 1531, and his successor Bullinger's preoccupation with first putting Zürich in order, the episode trails off for the moment.

By iconoclasm, in fact, one means quite a confused social event. The dynamics of groups within the cities where the argument was being worked out one way or the other are in no case quite clear.[52] The most articulate and documented group were the reforming clergy, men of the type of Bucer, and these were waging a campaign to establish their authority with the city councils in matters pertaining to religion and morality, of which the image was one; thus when, after seven years' controversy within Ulm, Bucer was invited in 1531 to draft a reformed *Ordnung* to regulate devotion in the Council's name, he included a section on images that is a summary of his Strassburg treatise of the year before.[53] The most discussed and feared group were the Anabaptists and urban radicals;[54] they were noisily iconoclast, politically as well as religiously radical, and a general threat to the image-buying classes. They are extremely difficult to identify and gauge. It is likely that their strength in the towns lay particularly among small craftsmen, but not exclusively so; their numbers seem impossible to assess except through the scale of their success. There was no success in south Germany comparable with the strange and violently iconoclast Anabaptist regime at Münster in Westphalia in 1534–5.[55] Yet they were clearly an element in the violent shifts of mood in the cities and an important fact in the balance city governments sought to maintain: they are, for instance, one reason why it was preferred to remove images as discreetly as possible, behind closed doors. The most enigmatic group, however, is the city council itself, the governing group of merchants and large craftsmen. These were the same men and the same families who had bought the images before 1520, and the effective argument was among them, between 1523 and 1530. It was, clearly, an argument not between two blocs of opinion but within individuals, pulled by conflicting appeals in which the political and the devotional, the idea and the habit, expediency and authentic principle, fears and ambitions, were painfully tangled: it is the kind of historical shift of mind least possible to reconstruct. What the fate of the sculpture registers is, on the whole, a sequence of initial polarization between conservatism and reform, with some individual uncoordinated acts against the image, a revulsion against violent radicalism outside and a closing of ranks, consideration in detail of the various measures of reform and distinction between the necessary and the indifferent, a bringing in and a taking over of the less extreme professional reformers to codify and normalize. In each city the phasing was rather different and in some the process halted early: Zürich almost completed the sequence in 1525, Strassburg and even more Ulm stretched it over the whole period 1524–30, Nuremberg and

even more Augsburg never reached the point of summoning a Bucer. But in all the cities the active groups were mainly three: upper classes with their councils, lower classes with their threat of general disorder, theologians with the Word.

Florid sculpture was an urban thing, and though the brutal Peasants' War of 1524–5 bulks large in the general history of the period it affected the sculpture less directly. The rural radicals destroyed many images, but not in the towns so much as in the rural monasteries. It was these monasteries, not the city churches, that they hated for being privileged, closed gardens of the nobility; as one sympathetic chronicler put their position, *die clauster sind der junkhern und edlen spital*[56]—the cloisters are knights' and nobles' refuges. And indeed they plundered and burned many, destroying incidentally sculpture; but the rationale of destruction was less focused on the theory of the image. While the peasants often established a relation with radical groups in the cities, particularly in Franconia,[57] these did not last very long or fundamentally affect the urban man's behaviour in the churches. Indeed, as is notoriously clear in the expressed views of Luther, Dürer and many others, the violence and destruction of the Peasants' War repelled many reformers in the cities into more restrained attitudes than they had originally held. The horrors of 1525 are one of the circumstances for the later 1520s being a time of less radical application of reform in detail than the early 1520s, and so paradoxically for the survival of images in Nuremberg or Augsburg into the 1530s.

Yet the scale of the general disaster to the craft of sculpture is immeasurable. Goldsmiths, engravers and even painters could find secular work, but the sculptors had been almost exclusively dependent on the trade in images of one kind or another; only glass-painters, one would think, were more exposed. In more or less Zwinglian towns the craft was simply extinguished. An appeal addressed as early as 1525 by the painters and sculptors of Strassburg to their Council can stand for the general distress:

Because your Lordships with all diligence further and provide for the good and well-being of the whole citizenry, we are encouraged humbly to report to you our pressing need and appeal for help, as your poor obedient citizens, since veneration of images has, through the word of God, now sharply fallen away and every day falls away still more, at which we are well content, inasmuch as they were indeed misused and still are misused; but as we have learned to do nothing else but paint, carve and the like, by which means we have until now fed our wives and children through our own labour, as is proper to good citizens, we will sorely lack even this scanty provision for us and ours, so that we await nothing more sure than final ruin and the beggar's staff. As we can do nothing but what we were trained to do and this will have no value any more, and as, if only we could and might, we would like to work in order to bring us and ours out of this with honour, it is our humble, needy and urgent request that you should be willing to look graciously to us as your poor submissive citizens and provide us with some sort of jobs we might be capable of; for we understand that craftsmen like us in other cities where the Gospel has been brought in have been thus provided for . . . May your Lordships consider our poor wives and children and let us meet a gracious answer.

Your Lordships' humble, submissive citizens.

[Nach dem E. gn. mit allem flyß gemeiner burgerschaft frummen und wolfart bedenckt und furdert, sind wir getröst E. gn. ouch unser notturft underteniger meinung furzutragen und umb hilf antzurufen, als E. gn. gehorsame armen burger, als nunmer durch das wort gottes die achtung der bilder mercklich abgefallen und noch täglich abfellet, des wir, dwyl sie ye mißbrucht worden sint und noch werden, wol zufriden sint; seitenmal aber wir nichts anders dann malen, bildhowen und derglichen gelernet haben, domit bishere unser weib und kind mit unser erbeit, als fromen burgern zustöt, erneret, wil uns an solicher notturftiger narung und der unsern mercklich abgon, das wir nichts gewißers dann entlichs verderbens und des bettelstabs warten sint. So wir dann nun nichts können, dan do zu wir zogen sint und dasselb nichts mer gelten will, und wir aber, wes wir kunten und vermöchten, gern arbeyten wolten, das wir uns und die unsern wie bisher mit eeren hinuß bringen, ist unser demutig, nötig, hochfleyssig bitt, Ewer gn. wöllen uns gnediglich als ir armen gehorsamen burger bedencken und etwan mit emptern, zu denen wir toglich sein möchten, versehen, wie wir dann vernemen, das solche hantwercker ouch in andern stetten, do das evangelion statt hat, versehen werden . . . E. gn. wölle unser armen weib und kind gnediglich bedencken und uns ein gnedige antwurt widerfaren laßen.

E.G. underthenige gehorsame burger.][58]

The problem, of course, was not just one of specialized skill; guild demarcation rules prevented a sculptor from using his wood-working skill as a joiner.[59]

In Lutheran towns the case was less clear but little better. Images were not forbidden, but demand for them had disappeared for a time: Lutherans were not commissioning retables in the later 1520s. The whole direction of early Lutheran piety was away from the image, indeed away from the altar, and towards the

Fig. 45. Hans Daucher, Virgin and Child with Angels. Limestone, 1520, Städtische Kunstsammlungen, Augsburg (Inv. 5703).

Fig. 46. Portrait of a Merchant, South German, about 1530. Staatliche Museen, Skulpturengalerie, Berlin–Dahlem (Inv. 824).

word and the pulpit. In due course Lutheranism was to develop its own distinctive art,[60] even its own retable altarpieces, but in 1525 this was some way off. There were even reasons for many Catholics to hold back: the uncertainties that had worried Hans Lamparter, a shift of attention and taste to endowments for charitable purposes rather than display, a new austerity in the Catholic theory of images arising out of the very defence of the institution,[61] all restrained Catholic patrons from large gestures, certainly if they were living in Nuremberg and Augsburg, but probably also for some in Bavaria: there are exceptions, but commissions of sculpture seem to fall off in the later 1520s in Bavaria.

The one religious genre that kept a little continuity was the small domestic devotional image. Some sculptors persevered with this, making small fine reliefs of the Virgin in limestone or wood: this was the genre which Hans Daucher of Augsburg had worked in around 1520 (fig. 45). But if one looks for new genres in the period 1520–50, new functions for sculpture developed to fill the great void left by the old, then there are mainly three, none of them at all comparable in importance with pre-Reformation art. One is the small portrait relief:[62] most of these are associated with a new fashion for portrait medals and are pearwood, boxwood or limewood models for casting in bronze, but some are small independent reliefs (fig. 46) not in the medal format. Another is probably the fountain (fig. 47), often with sculpture on it, certainly not a new genre, but a growth genre of the period.[63] The third is the small statuette or relief in pearwood, boxwood or limestone and also bronze, but of a new range of intimate subjects difficult to categorize (fig. 48);[64] the Judgement of Paris, Adam and Eve,

Fig. 47. Market fountain, Rottweil, mid-sixteenth-century. After A. Heubach, *Monumentalbrunnen*, Leipzig, 1903, Plate 33.

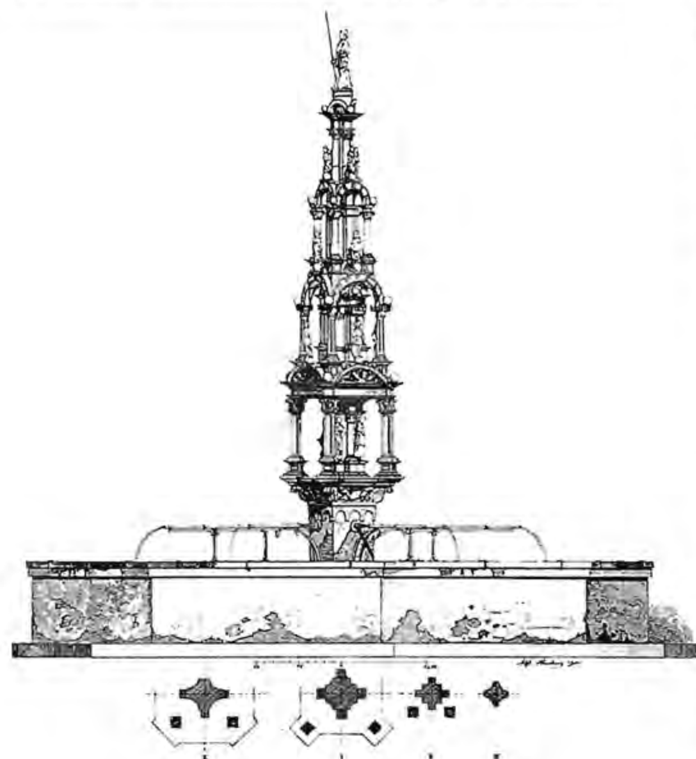


Fig. 48. The Judgement of Paris, Bavarian, about 1530. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Inv. 4528–1858).

Susannah and the Elders (Plate 84) are three of the most common, but there are also skeletal figures of Death.[65] It would be a simplification to call these erotic, but they seem to aim at some sort of sensuous kick while also offering themselves as objects of art. They are a genre of, so to speak, fleshly cabinet-piece.

4 Secular Satisfactions

The present interest of these three genres—the portrait, the public fountain, and the fleshly cabinet-piece—is that they prompt us now to look back again to the age of the retable with a surmise about lesser and secular functions, for all three appear to be providing satisfactions unlikely to be altogether new. The portrait, anticipated in Italian sculpture and in German painting, is an assertion of individual identity in a fairly obvious way. The public fountain, ceremoniously delivering water to the community, is an emblem of local well-being and collective identity. The fleshly cabinet-piece offers sensuous interest of an elusive kind. It seems almost as if the Reformation decade may have concretely analysed out a mixture of functions within pre-Reformation sculpture: the major devotional function having been extracted, minor residual functions are being precipitated as separate minor genres.

This is difficult to think about because it must be very much a question about the eye of the beholder, about whether people were disposed to look for and see certain extrinsic qualities in the image. However, this in itself is almost a period question: a broadsheet printed in Nuremberg in the years of the iconoclasm, 'Complaint of the poor persecuted idols and church images on their so unfair condemnation and punishment' (fig. 49),[66] puts it quite aggressively. The woodcut shows the removal and burning of images directed by a man, upper right, who is accompanied by women and money, and has in his right eye a massive beam, much bigger than any mote there could be in the images' eyes. It admits the fact of abuse:

As we are in such distress,
The whole world takes a tilt at us,
And we must stand in such danger,
We publicly confess hereby;
We poor mean church images
And corner idols big and small
Admit our misdeeds
Which have enraged God and the world:
That we have stood in church
As if we were in heaven
And put on as good a show
As if we were God himself.
To us every man has cried

Klagrede der armen verfolgten Götzen vnd Tempelbilder/über so vngleich vrtayl vnd straffe.

Fig. 49. Erhard Schoen, Complaint of the Persecuted Images. Broadsheet, Nuremberg, about 1530 (G. 1145).

Of what was close to his heart.
For flood and fire,
For every dread and prodigy,
For every illness, everywhere
They called on us without measure . . .

[So wir in solcher nodt gestelt
An uns wirdt Ritter alle welt
Vnd müssen sten in solcher far
Bekennen uns hie offenbar
Wir armen tempel bilder gmain
Vnd winckel götzen groß und klain
Verjehen unser missethat
Die Gott und dwelt erzürnet hat
Das wir im tempel gstanden sind
Gleich wie des hymels hauß gesind
Vnd haben gfürt so guoten schein
Als weren wir Gott selber gsein
Zu uns hat gschryen yeder man
Dem etwas was gelegen an
Für wassers nodt oder für fewr
Für alle angst und all unghewr
Für all kranckhaiten überal
Rüfft man uns an on maß und zal . . .]

But it is not images so much as men who are at fault in misusing the institution.

You yourselves started this with us,
Who are lifeless
And yet now must bear
The blame and punishment for others.
That is surely an unjust reward,
You yourselves made us into idols
And now you deride us for it . . .
It is you who have brought us to a point
We never dreamed of reaching,
The guilty one is he who makes
And raises us up into such splendour.

[Das habt ir selber gfangen an
Mit uns die wir kain leben hond
Vnd dannoch yetzund tragen sond
Die schuld und straff für ander leut
Das ist doch ein ungleiche peut
Ir selb habt uns zu götzen gmacht
Von denen wir yetz sind verlacht . . .
Drümb habt ir unsselb dahin bracht
Darnach wir haben nie gedacht
Daran ist schuldig der uns macht
Vnd auffgericht ein solchen pracht.]

As their farewell, then, the images are going to tell us some home-truths.

> So listen now with all your ears
> And heed a different path . . .
> The idols are so many without number
> Among almost all men everywhere:
> Much greed, arrogance and harlotry,
> Much infamy, depravity and villainy,
> Guzzling, boozing and blasphemy
> Are common now with young and old . . .
>
> [So höret doch mit gantzem fleiß
> Vnd nemet war auch anders gleiß . . .
> Der götzen sind so vil on zal
> Schier alle menschen überal
> Vil geitz hochfart und huorerey
> Vil schand laster und büberey
> Fressen sauffen und gots lestrung
> Ist yetz gemain bey alt und jung . . .]

The second half of the poem is given up to a denunciation of the wickedness at large in the world. The point that we project into the stone, wood and pigment what is inherent not in it but in us has been broadly made. One can begin with *hoffart* or *arrogantia*.[67]

Before the Reformation it was exceptional for individuals to have portraits carved by sculptors:[68] some great men, Bishops and Princes, had effigies of themselves carved for funeral monuments (Plate 60), and a few lesser men had themselves carved for their epitaphs in attitudes of devotion to Christ or the Virgin, but this is comparatively rare and almost specific to memorials of the dead. In fact, a groundwork of intellectual justification was being laid in these years, particularly by people sensitive to Italian precedents. For example, the Nuremberg humanist Hieronymus Münzer was moving towards this as early as 1493; Münzer mixes together a secular adaptation of Gregorian image theory and Ciceronian mnemonics:

> I have often pondered how we mortals, subject as we are in these calamitous times to various dangers, diseases and misfortunes, might render our memory almost immortal, and four resources have suggested themselves to me, among others: letters, eloquence, history and the images of figures and things . . .
>
> The fourth resource is images, figures and portrayals of distinguished men and other things, which are as useful to uneducated and illiterate people as writing is to the learned. For when one sees painted images, statues and panels, action is set before one's eyes and appears actually to be being done, as if at that moment. When we read history, on the other hand, an action is recalled to our memory as if through hearing. But as we believe vision, by means of which we learn the various differences between things, to be a nobler sense than hearing, so we show greater respect to pictures and images than to books. Vision is moved by painting and portrayal, hearing by the book and reading. It is for the same reason that Cicero thought to fortify his memory, the treasury of all things, by

means of images and figures, by which the mind is kindled as if by a torch and is strongly moved to noble accomplishment. We have the examples of the triumphal arches, the palaces of kings, and churches dedicated to Almighty God and decorated with the images of Saints and the statues of famous men, figures and panels. When we see them, as if in a mirror, we are spurred on to follow in our ancestors' footsteps and attain fame and glory equal to theirs.[69]

But before the 1520s this kind of attitude had not been generally realized, as a genre, in sculpture.

On the other hand, it is clear that the buyers of side-altarpieces were seen as promoting themselves in them. It is a period when altarpieces came to be referred to as often by the name of the donor as by the name of the saint who was dedicatee.[70] The donor appears to have retained a proprietorial sense about his altarpiece and this is commonly recognized even at the moment of iconoclasm; the Council at Strassburg is not unusual in accepting this:

So that no-one has reason to complain that his [property]—given to churches whether by him or his ancestors—is being taken away or debased, let it be made known and told to anyone who kept altarpieces in the churches that he is to take them away within the next eight days; otherwise they will be removed.

[Damit sich aber nyemands zu beclagen hab, das ime das syn, so von ime oder sinen voreltern in die kirchen geben worden, genomen oder entwert werde, das man dann eim yeden, so tafeln in den kirchen stan hatte . . ., verkunden und sagen laßen soll, dieselben in acht tagen den nehsten hinweg zu nemen; dann wo nit, werde man im sonst abwegnemen.][71]

The donor was able to register himself in his altarpiece through the choice of representations manifesting his personal devotion; in particular, the choice of saints gave obvious opportunities for references to one's name and activities. But the proprietorial labelling of altars that seemed most offensive at the time was through the use of heraldic arms, and it is interesting that this should be so, because there is here a direct continuity with the later portrait medal, which commonly had arms on the reverse. The period was sensitive about the use of arms: the nuns of St Catherine's at Augsburg, when a woman of the Fugger family offered one thousand Florins in return for her arms being painted up in their church, complained that people would come to think that she had donated the whole church.[72] In 1496 the Council at Nuremberg was already worrying about the prominent use of arms and arrived at the general principle that arms must, at least, not be represented in relief: 'Es sol auch nymant keynerlei erhabenß noch geschnittens an keinem schillt lassen machen, sunder allein die wappen daran zu malen in laut des gesetz, deßhalben ufgericht.'[73] By 1498 they had decided that the general problem of arms in and on churches must be reconsidered generally: 'Es ist erteylt der bild halb in den kirchen, an die schildt gemacht werden, eygentlich zu erkunden und dasselb alles, auch des Schreyers schildt und wappen halb, allenthalben in unnd an der kirchen auffgericht, in eynem gesametten rat wider furzelegen.'[74] In spite of which, when Veit Stoss signed his mark in 1499 on

a monument endowed in St Sebald by Paul Volckamer, it was on a console bearing Volckamer arms in full relief (fig. 51 and Plate 38). All this deliberation at Nuremberg points to the personally endowed retable being at any rate potentially an instrument for ostentatious self-registration by the patron, and open to criticism as a disagreeable expression of *superbia*, *Hoffart* or pride.

The greatest retables, however, were on the high altars and were usually the offering of a community; it is here that sculpture could serve as a vehicle for the secular collective sense invoked by public fountains. In abnormal circumstances the role of the image approached the totemistic, the extreme case being where it was indeed religion that differentiated the community from an offensive group outside itself, the Christian from the Jew. Early in 1519, on 21 February, the city of Regensburg expelled its large and prosperous community of Jews.[75] The Council had been trying to do this for some time because, as it said, the Jews undercut the prices of its own guild craftsmen and merchants; the Emperor Maximilian, a debtor and protector of the Jews, had prevented it, and Maximilian's death and the interregnum was the opportunity for settling accounts. The synagogue was razed to the ground and the Jewish cemetery was destroyed. A workman engaged in pulling down the synagogue was badly injured but recovered miraculously; the wonder encouraged contributions for a chapel on the site dedicated to the Virgin, called the chapel of *Schöne Maria*. Inside

Fig. 50. Foundation book of the Keyper Endowment: Arms of Keyper (top), Schreyer, Gärtner, Ingram, and Münzmeister. Miniature on parchment, Nuremberg, 1485. Stadtarchiv, Nuremberg.

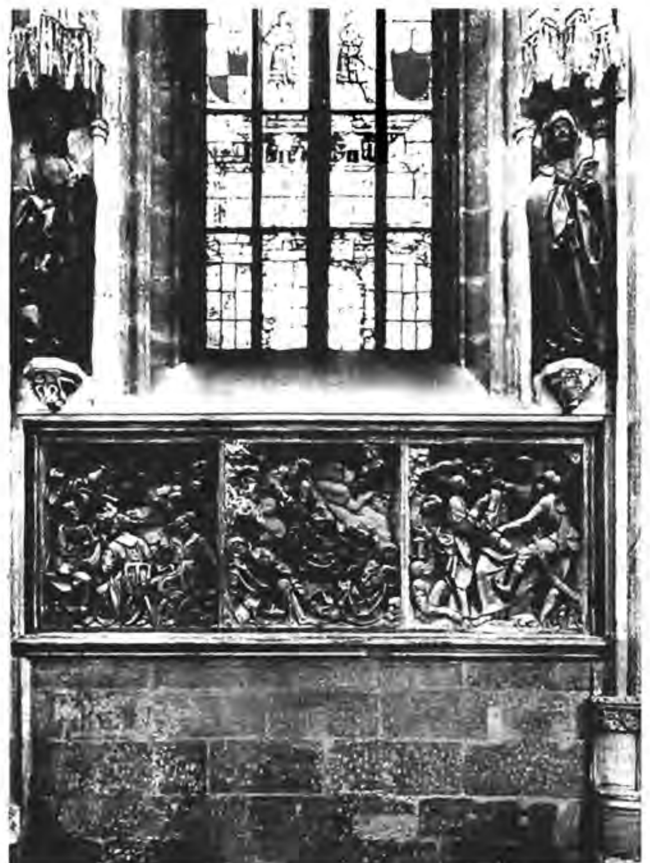
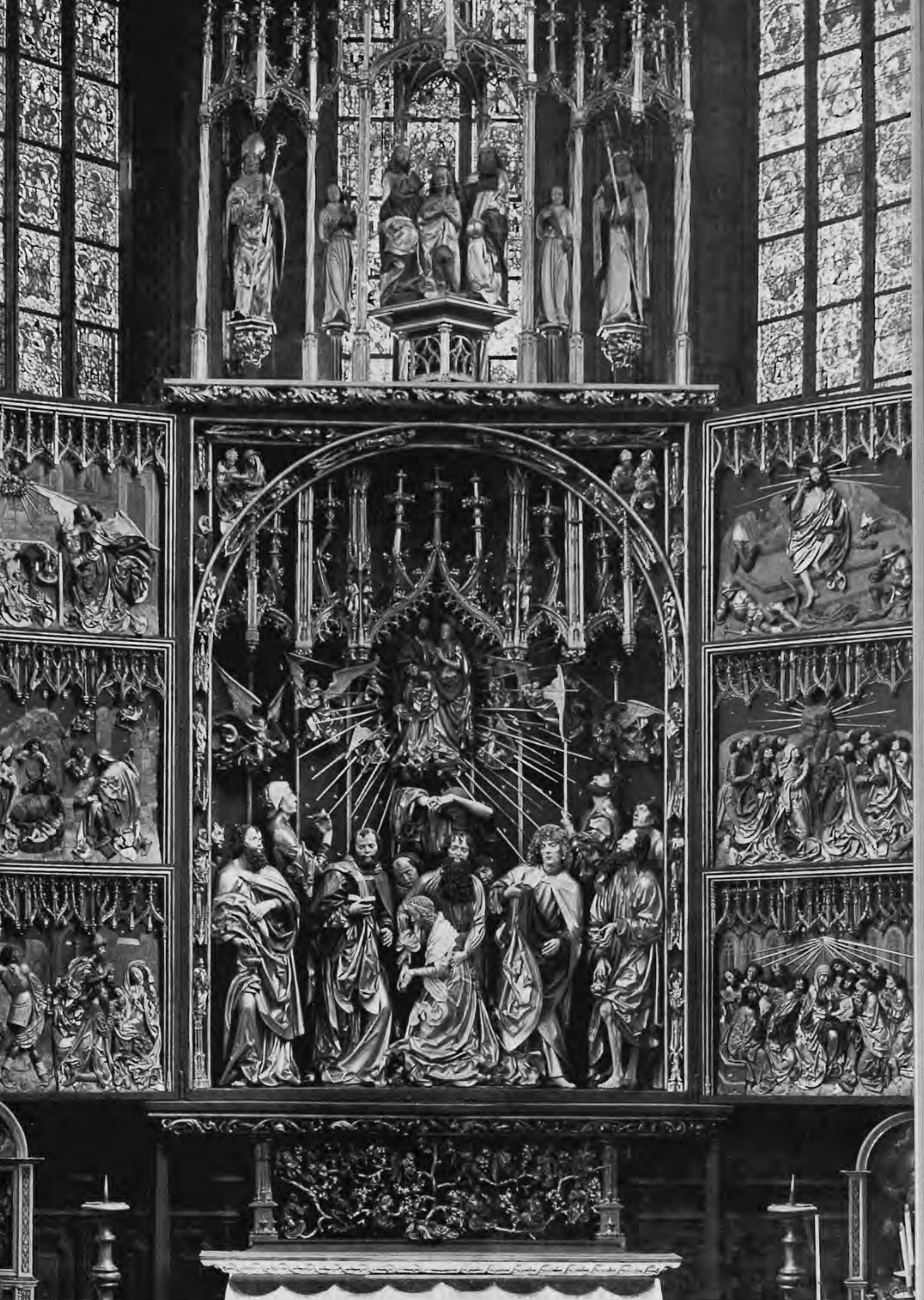


Fig. 51. Veit Stoss, The Volckamer Monument, 1499 (cf. Plate 38). Nuremberg, St Sebalduskirche.

Fig. 52. (left) Michael Ostendorfer, The Regensburg Pilgrimage. Woodcut, Regensburg, about 1520 (G. 967).
Fig. 53. (right) Veit Stoss, Altarpiece, 1477–89 (cf. Plates 35–7). St Mary's, Cracow.

it was a painting of the Virgin (fig. 137) and outside it on a column was put a stone statue of her, carved some years before by the Master of Works at the Cathedral, Erhard Heydenreich (fig. 52).[76] More miracles occurred, associated with both images: for instance, clothes that had touched the statue were particularly good for curing sick cattle. What had become a local event soon became the centre of mass pilgrimage from all over south-east Germany. On 1 June Pope Leo X issued a Bull attaching indulgence of a hundred days to properly conducted pilgrimage to the chapel. In 1520 it became more and more the irrational and uncontrolled kind of movement that worried contemporary churchmen a great deal. The pilgrims came in thousands, often whole villages together; some elected to come naked, others on their knees; visions and wonders increased out of all credible bounds; crowds danced howling round the statue. The Regensburg pilgrimage was in many ways a manipulated affair, initiated by an anti-semitic priest at the Cathedral—Balthasar Hubmaier, a strange figure who became a leading Anabaptist five years later—and systematically advertised and exploited by the Council. The episode grew out of a conflict of social groups, Jews and Christians, and the images were a rallying point and a confirmation of deeds done.

The episode was morbid and is no basis for simple interpretation of the retables



in such a sense. Yet quite a number of the most magnificent high altarpieces were subscribed for by communities in some need of emblems of identity and unity. If one takes the five most expensive retables in the table on p. 62, three are best explicable in this sense. The two that are not are Pacher's at St Wolfgang, which was part of a general policy of development for the estates of the Abbey of Mondsee, and Veit Stoss's at Schwaz, which registered the exuberance of a boom mining town. Pacher's great retable at Salzburg and Kriechbaum's at Passau were both financed by town councillors in the principal town churches of cities which were the seats of great Bishops: both seem part of the continuous struggle of the burghers in such cities to maintain a kind of balance of authority with the Bishops,[77] here manifested as a parity of magnificence between *Pfarrkirche* and *Dom.* Veit Stoss's retable at Cracow (fig. 53 and Plates 35–7), on the other hand, was a work of German art in the church of the German community in the capital of Poland, at a time when the German community was increasingly under pressure from the growing power and success of the Jagiello kings.[78] It was noted at the time by the Pomeranian town clerk of Cracow, one of the fund-raisers, that the retable was paid for not out of public funds but by subscription and bequests from Germans, not scoffing Poles: 'No Pole offered help or alms, but many of them mocked, thinking the work would halt without being finished—for which many of them were vexed by the Blessed Virgin with many adversities' (Nullus tamen Polonus subsidia aut eleemosynas praebuerat, sed multi deridebant, putantes sine fine desistere, de quibus multi sunt etiam per Beatissimam Virginem turbati multis adversitatibus).[79] The altarpiece still registers this kind of aggressiveness in a quite disturbing way: it is the largest of all the surviving retables, and is distinguished by a stridently opulent polychromy.

Cracow too is an extreme case. Yet, if less acutely than the Germans in Cracow, the free cities of southern Germany also had an urgent need for asserting collective character:[80] often they were small enclaves in large territorial states and had an intermittent history of struggle to maintain their independence. One thinks of Nuremberg, for example, as secure enough in the period, but it was in fact periodically in open conflict with the Margraves of Brandenburg-Ansbach, among others, who resented and violently fought the evasion of feudal duty the city's rights and activities stood for. In 1502 Margrave Kasimir with six thousand infantry and six hundred cavalry defeated Nuremberg's forces in Nuremberg's own suburbs, and this event was the subject of lament and recrimination within the town for many years after. At the same time there was always the problem of restlessness among the lower orders of the city itself, the danger of their alienation from the aims of the merchants and large craftsmen in government. The suppression of revolt at Nuremberg in 1349 had not removed the problem; in 1475 there were still 420 stations in the town where great chains wound on drums were ready for unwinding in order to close off streets to rioters.[81] A sense of unity, of common goals and the need to stand and work together, was something every city needed if it was to survive. Therefore cities made use of ceremonies and such distinguished public hardware as great bells—a positive, psychological

inversion of chains on drums—to realize their identity. Churches, altars and their furniture fitted into this framework, not least through the cult of municipal patron saints. At Nuremberg the patron was St Sebald (fig. 3),[82] a legendary local hermit promoted by official circles in the second half of the fourteenth century and canonized in 1425. By the later fifteenth century Sebald was presenting rather a problem, for his cult had indeed become thoroughly popular and vulgar and for this very reason distasteful to the governing classes themselves. A programme was put in hand to smarten up the cult: in 1481 the towers of his church were raised, in 1483 the Benedictine Sigismund Meisterlin was charged with producing a more critical history of the hermit, in 1484 Hartmann Schedel, the city chronicler, was instructed by the city to gather all the available historical materials about him, in 1493 the humanist Conrad Celtis wrote a new Latin hymn of revised biographical character in twenty-eight stanzas, and already in 1488 Peter Vischer had been commissioned to produce a new and more worthy bronze tomb, though it was only in 1519 that this was completed (Plate 64). Sebald had become an instrument of social control and any image of him was in part a political object. In many other towns it was the Virgin who played this part.

On the level of the parish, a smaller and more intimate unit, the altarpiece seems to stand for something rather different. In a big town like Augsburg (fig. 71),

Fig. 54. The parish priest with his nine tormentors. *Epistola de miseria curatorum*, Nuremberg (Peter Wagner), n.d. Frontispiece, with numbers and date added in ink (Schr. XVIII, 537).

Fig. 55. The Parish Church at Creglingen, with Pre-Reformation altarpieces (cf. Plate 27).

which had six parishes—Cathedral, St Ulrich, St Maurice, St Stephen, St George, and Holy Cross, the first three being richer—the competition between parishes was less noticeable than the self-assertion of the layman against the priests. The laymen had come to participate importantly in the parish through their administration of the *Zech* or parish chest, which received, invested and spent pious funds: the laymen's purchase on the religious foundations which gave the parishes their names and physical centres depended partly on the weight of these funds.[83] They were used mainly for the upkeep of the church fabric and improvement of its furniture, but they could also give the laymen who were their officers authority in such important matters as the running of the parish schools in the religious houses. The *Zech* was the layman's arm in the conduct of the parish, and if it had money to spare it expressed itself in altarpieces. St Maurice's spent as much as 1250 Florins between 1503 and 1514 on a fine new retable and other furniture for which most of the best Augsburg artists did work, including the sculptor Gregor Erhart.[84] It involved the prestige of the parish as against the Cathedral and St Ulrich's, of course, but also the authority of the laymen with the canons of St Maurice's. In village churches too the deployment of lay funds on church furniture was a means for laymen to assert in a quite concrete way (fig. 55) their part in the parish, for the relation between priest and parishioners was often tense. In the *Epistola de miseria curatorum seu plebanorum*,[85] a short treatise on the worries of the parish priest, there are listed nine *Diaboli* (fig. 54) who torment him, and one of the nine is the lay parish council, who are troublesome and arrogant about the physical structure and fittings of the church; the other *Diaboli*, it is fair to note, are the patron, the bishop, the diocesan fiscal, the sexton, the chaplain, the resident monk, the peasants and the clergy-house cook. The altarpiece endowed by a parish had much in common with the town-preachers endowed by the citizens to preach on the level they wanted, a gesture of independence and diminishing confidence in the clergy.[86]

About the fleshliness of the retable images the reformers had no doubts at all. It was not only that—as both Savonarola in Florence and Luther in Wittenberg had remarked—the Virgin was too richly dressed, but that she and the Saints were made to look actually whorish. For instance, in the dialogue *Neu-Karsthans* published in Strassburg around 1520, the Lutheran peasant Karsthans wonders at the profane elaboration of church furnishings in general and describes his responses:

Truly when I was young and they piped away on the organ in church, I longed to dance, and when I heard the singing there I was moved in the flesh but not in the spirit. Also I often had base thoughts when I looked at the female images on the altars. For no courtesan can dress or adorn herself more sumptuously and shamelessly than they nowadays fashion the Mother of God, Saint Barbara, Katherine and other saints.

[Fürwar, do ich ein jüngling was, wann man in kirchen uff den orgelen pfiff, gelustet mich zu dantzen. Und wann ich hort singen, ward ich im fleisch aber nit im geist bewegt. Hett auch offt böse gedancken in anschauwung der fräwlichen bildungen auff den altaren. Dann kein bulerin mag sich üppigklicher oder unschamhafftigklicher becleiden oder

Fig. 56. Albrecht Dürer, A Girl Going to the Dance. Water colour, 1501. Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basle (Inv. 1959/105).

Fig. 57. Albrecht Dürer, The Arms of Death. Copper engraving, 1503. (B. 101).

zieren, dann sie yetzund die mutter gottes, sant Barbaram, Katherinam und andere heiligen formieren.][87]

Zwingli later made the same point:

The holy women are represented as so whorish, insinuating and groomed, you would think they are placed there to arouse one to voluptuousness.

[Die säligen wyber gstaltet man so hürisch, so glat und ußgestrichen, sam sy darumb dahyn gestelt syind, das die mann an inen gereitzt werdind zu uppigheit.][88]

More specifically:

Here stands a Magdalen painted as so whorish that even the priests have all said again and again: How could a man take mass devoutly here? . . . There stands a Sebastian, a Maurice and the gentle John the Evangelist, so cavalier, soldier-like and pimp-ish that the women have had to make confession about them.

[Hie stat ein Magdalena so hürisch gemaalet, das ouch alle pfaffen ye und ye

gesprochen habend: Wie könd einer hie andächtig sin, mäß ze haben? . . . Dört stat ein Sebastion, Mauritius und der fromm Johanns evangelist so jünckerisch, kriegisch, kuplig, daß die wyber davon habend ze bychten ghebt.][89]

How might the images we now see have been susceptible to such extreme misuse? Probably it was a matter of decorum. Pre-Reformation German cities were very normative societies and not least in dress, which was often a matter of regulation. In 1480, for instance, the government at Nuremberg issued a series of rules, and these went into detail such as that a girl's neckline was not to be lower than two finger-breadths below the points of the collar bone.[90] Above all one dressed to status and occasion.

There is a series of detailed drawings made by Dürer in 1500–1 of upper-middle-class Nuremberg women's dress: they show a woman dressed for the house, for church, and for the dance, and a young girl also in dance-dress—*Also gand dy Junckfrawen zum dantz In Nörmerck* 15[0]1 (fig. 56).[91] Each of these represents the decorous uniform for an occasion. Yet when a sculptor made an image two kinds of decorum might come into conflict; on the one hand there was a narrative decorum of status, which could inoffensively show St Anne or other matronly Saints in modest matronly house-dress, but on the other hand there was a decorum of immediate occasion. Dürer himself used this fact in a satiric engraving of 1503 on the theme of *Vanitas* (fig. 57);[92] a girl and a wild man are the supporters of an escutcheon bearing a skull. The girl is an exact copy of his drawing of the well-bred maiden in her dance-dress, but the tone is altered by giving her a crown, moving one hand away from the conventionally modest position of hands clasped in lap, and particularly by extracting her from the originally defined context of respectable social engagement. She becomes questionable and a little louche, the downward glance now not so much modest as coquettish and sly. Context determines decorum. The Barbaras and the Katherines made by the sculptors were maiden princesses and dressed the part, which was precisely Dürer's party dress, but this meant that they were appearing in church in quite the wrong clothes: decorum of status contradicted decorum of occasion. This need not be offensive in a St Anne dressed for the house, which was modest, or even so much in a Barbara or Katherine involved in a fully narrative representation that justified her costume with a context. But when the isolated figure appeared in a retable, just loitering in a tabernacle, then there was a real problem.

For the materiality of human bodies was, relatively, more and more present in the progressive figure style of the period. If one compares a figure of about 1460, for example one by Multscher (fig. 58), with a figure of about 1520 (fig. 59), the second is likely to have a more mobile and internally diversified attitude, more suggestive of a human body under the cloth: the cloth too may be more responsive to the fact of limbs beneath. We have seen that this is related partly to craft matters, the chiromancy of limewood and the differentiated rhythmic series of the retable, but it may well be that the new manner lent itself more than the old to the projection of fleshly as well as spiritual feeling by the beholder. For

ig. 58. Hans Multscher, Mary Magdalen (?), about 460. Liebieghaus, Frankfurt (Inv. 1039).

Fig. 59. Hans Leinberger, Mary Magdalen, about 1520. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (Inv. 13/303).

someone as susceptible to impure thoughts as Karsthans or for anyone else with a beam in their eye, such figures might be distracting.

Between them, pre-Reformation criticism, the Reformers' rejection, and by implication the post-Reformation genres combine into a quite powerful moral attack on Florid sculpture. It is an inherent part of its vulnerable charm that there were people who wanted to destroy it even while it was being made. This being so, one might expect to find carvings in which some of the grievances were being met; an image had to be an image, but it could go some way towards disarming criticism by avoiding as many as possible of the characteristics that made it offensive to the fastidious Christian. What would a chastened image look like?

It would not be very magnificent in its material, nor *hurisch* or *kupplig* in its characterization, nor distractingly elaborate in its ornament and detail: these negatives are clear. It might well be impersonally or collectively endowed, thus not redolent of individual display or *Hoffart*, typically on a high altar rather than a side-altar, if on an altar at all. It would avoid hagiolatry by representing not magical marginal saints out of the *Golden Legend* but the central corporeal matter of Christianity—above all Christ, his Life and Passion. To discourage devotional abuse it might be more narrative than devotional in its manner, telling a story to those who cannot read rather than offering itself for veneration. For the same reason it might also ward off any disposition in the beholder to confuse it with its divine original: one means to this kind of dissociation was monochromy. A good formulation of the general status of such images might be this:

Church images can be kept in the church, but only if they are not superfluous in number and not wantonly or falsely adorned in such a way as to seduce the eyes of communicants from respect for the Lord's body, or as to distract the mind, or as otherwise to be an impediment. Further, they cannot be given adoration or cult in any way, by sacrifice of candles, or kneeling, or other forms of cult that belong rather to the Divine Body. But they may be cultivated only for their bare signification of deeds done in Christ, or by Christ, that the simple people may be able more readily to see such deeds through the images and so be furthered in their devotion.[93]

This is the twentieth of the twenty-three articles of the Synod of St Wenceslas in 1418 and was the moderate Hussite view, but it would hold good for the chastened image even a hundred years later.

The sculptor who came nearest to conciliating first-class Florid sculpture with such a pattern of piety was Riemenschneider of Würzburg, and the particular circumstances in which he did so will be discussed later. But the two were not entirely conciliable, and for a reason that has been a problem to the makers and users of religious art in many other periods too. When Karsthans was complaining about the decoration of churches he distinguished two distinct kinds of objectionable opulence in the altarpieces:

What is now to be said . . . of the costly paintings in the churches, of the sculpture and altarpieces which, *in part for their materials, in part for their skill and labour*, have cost indescribably much?

[Was sol man dann alhie sagen ... von den kostlichen gemälts darinnen, von bildung und tafeln, die zum teyl der materien, zum teyl kunst und arbeit halber unsprächlich vil gekost haben?][94]

The distinction between the value of matter and the value of the skill and effort with which it is worked was an obsessional one in Renaissance Europe and had roots in the commercial style of the period, the everyday practice of costing manufactures. It meant that there was a contradiction between the religious image and the most accomplished art that was very difficult to evade: the greater the skill, the greater the distraction from devotion. Noticeable art draws attention to itself quite as much as noticeable material: the more modest the material, the more the skill by which it is dignified stands out. Very few artists have evaded the dilemma. *Kunst*, skill or art, was not only a recognizable quality to Karsthans and others of the period, it was what the best sculptors were offering as their special commodity, sometimes embodying it in their products in obtrusive and distracting ways. The circumstances in which this was so are partly matters of their market.