THE ANNUNCIATION THEME:
A CASE STUDY IN THE UNCHANGING
ART OF ILLUSTRATION

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis investigates the nature of illustration through a study of how the Roman Catholic Church illustrated the Annunciation theme and its underlying dogmatic significance over a period of fifteen hundred years. The nature of illustration and the Church's teaching on the use of art are first described and are seen to be closely related. Generally a patron has a message he wants conveyed; the artist gives it suitable visual form by using a style and iconography its intended audience finds attractive and understandable. The artist, whether the illustration is religious or not, works for his patron (usually) and his public. His art is expected to fulfill a specific need. The nature of the subject matter also influences the artist's approach to illustration. In the case of official Catholic art the primary duty of the illustrator is to depict clearly the doctrinal significance of gospel events in a way that his audience will find relevant and comprehensible. As Church art has the secondary persuasive function of strengthening belief and overcoming disbelief, it is important that an attractive style, related to the contemporary situation, be used.

The main dogmatic significance of the gospel events portrayed in the five Annunciations and one Nativity studied in this thesis is the doctrine of the Incarnation which

remains virtually unchanged over the period of this study. The patronage and content thus remain constant; the main variables are style, iconography and the social-religious context.

The first four examples in this study indicate how the Church's actual practise conformed to her teachings on art and how both style and iconography were manipulated to relate an unchanging theme to very different religious and social situations. The artist consistently worked for his patron and public and chose an acceptable style and iconography (usually standardized) that presented his subject matter in a way that would be easily understood and found attractive as well as relevant.

The last two examples are less successful illustrations. Rossetti was more concerned with realism than the traditional approach to illustration. He used a style that primarily reflected his views on art, a style that happened to be unpopular, and he insisted on depicting the gospel event as it might have occurred. The public found his work neither attractive nor edifying. Although his Annunciation also has some doctrinal ambiguity, its main flaw is its unpopular style which does not fulfill the secondary persuasive function of Catholic illustration. Beardy's Nativity fails for the opposite reason. It presents doctrine ambiguously and thus violates the primary criterion of good Catholic illustration. Rossetti's realistic approach was a new attitude to art in his day, an attitude that has since come

to influence much modern art including Beardy's work, to its detriment as a religious illustration. This approach has also placed a tremendous strain on the traditional artist-patron relationship and has frequently alienated artists from the public.

Although this thesis focusses on one particular teaching illustrated by one particular patron, its conclusions also indicate how successful illustration in general should be done, with special reference to the role of the artist in modern society. The nature of illustration has remained unchanged from our earliest to our latest example; the formula for success still applies and might help restore the traditional artist-public relationship without any sacrifice of artistic quality. If successful illustrations like the S. Maria Maggiore mosaics or the Reims sculptures can also be impressive works of art in their own right, perhaps the same could be true of modern illustrations.

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Introduction

The new Sunday Mass Book for Canada, published in 1976, is unique in two ways. It is the first Mass book to be published in Canada; and it contains a collection of religious art, done by Canadian artists, representing almost every region of our country. Twenty artists were commissioned to do the illustrations for this missal in a "relevant, contemporary visual language" to consist of nineteen colour plates and seven pencil drawings. Rather than describe an event or teaching in documentary terms, the artists were asked to tell us about the inner meaning of that event.[1] They were not to reconstruct events or persons as they appeared in their own times; instead they were to speak "of the presence of God in the world as we know it and to share their deepest insights and talents with us."[2] At first glance we seem to be presented with a revolutionary as well as uniquely Canadian book. For here we have an official Catholic presentation, sponsored by the Canadian Catholic Conference under the direction of the Archbishop of Halifax, using a style very different from traditional Catholic art--furthermore, not only is the style to be "relevant", but so also is the interpretation of the content illustrated. Surely the art in this missal has very little in common with Catholic art of the past.

Nonetheless, as we hope to demonstrate in this thesis,

the use of art in this Mass book is actually not as novel as it first appears. The patrons of the missal themselves claim that in commissioning the art work they hoped to reestablish the "traditional relationship between artists and Church."[3] But neither is it fully orthodox.

Six different works of art will be studied in this thesis, all directly related to the doctrine of the Incarnation (five Annunciations and one Nativity), with a view to understanding how well they succeed as illustrations of Catholic teaching. Although this study, with the exception of one painting, deals only with Catholic art and with only one theme, it attempts to explain and exemplify the characteristics of successful illustration. Therefore, in the broad sense, this is a thesis on the function of illustration in and for society.

The purpose of illustration is to "cast light upon" a teaching or event. In the case of successful book illustration, the text plus its illustrations are more intelligible than the text would be on its own. Thus visual forms should be used that the illustrator's audience can understand.[4] Furthermore, an attractive style should enhance the reader's interest in the work and therefore, should indirectly help to convey a message. Again, if illustrative arts are to be used to persuade and/or bolster convictions rather than just explain, it is crucial that an attractive style be used. Nonetheless, content is the

understand and find attractive. Thus we can see that Catholic art has a persuasive as well as an explanatory function.

This leads us to posit two criteria art works should fulfill if they are to succeed as Catholic illustrations. The first criterion is the most important - good Catholic illustrations should express orthodox Church doctrine clearly and unambiguously. The second is that the artist should use a style that his audience will find attractive. In most cases this will entail the adoption of an accepted contemporary style. But during times of social transformation when new beliefs and values are being accepted, new artistic styles, suited to these new conditions, are more appropriate. Whatever style is used however, the first criterion must never be violated. Thus an understandable iconography which clearly conveys Catholic doctrine should always be employed.

These criteria are in accordance with Catholic teachings on art as has been expressed by the most orthodox declarations of Catholic belief: the Seventh General Council (Second Council of Nicaea, 787) and the Nineteenth General Council (Council of Trent, 1545-63):

> In 787, the Fathers assembled for the second council of Nicaea, expressed themselves as follows: 'The composition of religious imagery is not left to the initiative of artists, but is formed upon principles laid down by the Catholic Church and by religious traditions.' And again 'The execution alone belongs to the painter, the selection and arrangement of subjects belong to the Fathers.'[6]

primary concern of the illustrator, as the essence of illustration is to convey a message.

This concern is evident in the Sunday Mass Book. The patrons assigned the subject matter and asked their artists "to probe behind the words for meanings."[5] Not only were the artists told what to illustrate, but also the attitude they were to take. The concern for content is further exhibited in the brief description of the work of art found on the reverse side of each colour plate and in the placement of each illustration in the appropriate section of the missal so that the text corresponds to the subject matter of the illustration. We will discuss the latter in greater detail in relation to Jackson Beardy's Nativity in Chapter VI.

In encouraging the use of a modern art style, the Sunday Mass Book again showed a concern for content. The point of illustrating a religious event, such as the Annunciation, was to convey the Church's position on it and to show its continuing relevance. The Church's whole reason for being is that the events that happened in Jerusalem two thousand years ago are relevant today. Therefore, it is entirely reasonable that the patrons of the missal should have asked their artists not to reconstruct gospel events as they might have happened but instead to tell us about the inner meaning of the event. The very use of modern art forms indirectly supports this belief that past events are still important, as well as provides visual forms that a contemporary audience can

Nicaea II was called in response to the Iconoclastic Controversy and dealt with the question of the rightful use of images. The same question arose again in the sixteenth century during the Reformation crisis. The Council of Trent declared that images should be used to instruct and continually remind the people of the articles of faith:

> No images, (suggestive) of false doctrine, and furnishing occasion of dangerous error to the uneducated, may be set up . . . In fine, let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecoming or confusedly arranged . . . the Holy Synod ordains that no one be allowed to place, or cause to be placed, an unusual image, in any place or church, howsoever exempted, except that image have been approved by the bishop.[7]

Cardinal Gabriel Paleotti, Bishop of Bologna, edited a book on religious art which was the collective work of a commission on the subject, titled Discorso inforno alle imagini sacre e profane (1582). Paleotti declared that the main task of the painter was to explain his ideas clearly so that even a lofty and difficult subject is made plain and intelligible to all, "all the more because his works are used most as books for the illiterate, to whom we must always speak openly and clearly."[8] The relationship between patron and painter closely parallels that expressed at Nicaea:

> Painters . . . only represent what is proposed by holy doctors and accepted unanimously by the Church, without adding, removing, or changing anything, either in content, or as to the way of expression or other particulars ... Obscurity can also come from ignorance; but we do not intend to discuss here the skill of art, because . . . we treat the subjects and not the norms of design, presupposing that the painter has learnt them as necessary.[9]

Both Paleotti and the Council of Trent also maintained that religious art should do more than instruct people in the articles of faith; it should inspire devotion and encourage people to cultivate piety as well.

It might be argued that the historicity of the gospel events is an article of faith and therefore a literal, historical approach is suitable for religious art. Clearly, such an approach was ruled out in the case of the Sunday Mass Book and indirectly rejected in earlier Church statements on art. Nowhere do the documents say that artists should depict episodes as they might have happened; rather the emphasis is on art that "continually reawakens and re-embodies the believer's understanding of the articles of his faith."[10] The stress in Catholic art is on the underlying docrinal significance or inner meaning of the events portrayed. This thesis will try to demonstrate that the interpretative approach of the Sunday Mass Book, as well as its use of a contemporary art style and control of subject matter, are all traditional characteristics of Catholic art.

This thesis will study six works of art, all but one of which are Annunciations. One chapter will be devoted to each of the following works:

1. The Annunciation, The Adoration of the Magi, triumphal arch mosaics, S. Maria Maggiore, A.D. 432-40;
2. The Annunciation, bronze doors, Hildeshaim Cathedral, A.D. 1015-22;
3. The Annunciation, stone sculpture, west side, central portal, Reims Cathedral, A.D. 1230-55;

4. The Annunciation, Tintoretto, oil painting, Scuola di San Rocco, Venice, A.D. 1583-7;
5. The Annunciation, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, oil painting, Tate Gallery, London, A.D. 1850;
6. Nativity, Jackson Beardy, acrylic on canvas, Sunday Mass Book for Canada, A.D. 1976.

All of these works were chosen because they were major public commissions by Catholic patrons with the exception of Rossetti's painting, a private project characterized by a very different approach to illustration from the other examples. Also, the earlier works are all considered to be artistic creations important in the history of art and are generally well known.

These works of art all deal with the Annunciation-Nativity theme. Since this thesis deals with illustration, or how art is used to convey and make clear a message, it is important for us to know the subject matter being illustrated:

> The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin bethrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in, and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured: The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High' . . . Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy, and will be called Son of God' . . . 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me' . . . So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to . . . Bethlehem . . . with Mary . . . While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid

> him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.[11]

As has been mentioned above, the illustrator is not just concerned with illustrating a biblical event. Its doctrinal significance must also be considered. In the case of the Annunciation-Nativity story, obviously as far as the Church is concerned the importance of the event is not the historical fact that a Jewish virgin gave birth to a boy in the town of Bethlehem -- what really matters is the teaching that God became man. Thus the doctrine of the Incarnation, which was first formulated at the Council of Ephesus (431) and conclusively worked out by the Third Council of Constantinople (680-1), is of crucial significance to such illustrations.[12] The doctrine was expounded at the Council of Ephesus in twelve articles proposed by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, but these articles were not regarded as infallible decisions.[13] The first infallible formulation was at the Council of Chalcedon (451):

> Following therefore the holy Fathers we unanimously teach that the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is one and the same, the same perfect in divinity, the same perfect in humanity, true God and true man, consisting of a rational soul and a body, consubstantial with the Father in Divinity and consubstantial with us in humanity, 'in all things like as we are, without sin' (Heb. 4:15), born of the Father before all time as to his divinity, born in recent times for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, as to his humanity. We confess one and the same Christ, the Son, the Lord, the Only-Begotten, in two natures unconfused, unchangeable, undivided and inseparable. The difference of natures will never be abolished by their being united, but rather the properties of each remain unimpaired, both coming together in one person and substance, not parted or divided among two persons.[14]

The Christological controversies continued for centuries after Chalcedon in which the Chalcedon formula was expanded and refined, but these developments go far beyond the concerns of this paper.[15] Art could be used to show that Christ was both human and divine, getting his divine nature from God (symbolized by the angel, the dove of the Holy Spirit), and his human nature from Mary. The very term, Mary Mother of God, signifies Christ's dual nature. Theology more subtle than this is beyond the concern of the public mind and hence public art. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the doctrine of the Incarnation remains virtually constant from the earliest work to our last example.

Our examples span a period of over fifteen hundred years. The same teaching is presented in very different social contexts and very different artistic styles. Except in Rossetti's case, the patronage also remains constant, for all the other works are public, official Catholic commisions. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate why styles were changed and iconography was modified in order to present the same message, although the emphasis given to different aspects of the doctrine varied, and that the same approach to art, except in the case of our last two examples, motivated the choice of these very different art forms. Some conclusions about the nature of illustration in general will also be drawn from our understanding of how one particular patron illustrated one particular message.

Footnotes Introduction

1. Sunday Mass Book for Canada, ed. National Office for Liturgy (Ottawa: 1976), p. 29.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

3. Ibid., p. 29.

4. From the earliest times, artists illustrating Christian teachings used the accepted images (iconography, style) of the day; see André Grabar, Christian Iconography, A Study of its Origins (Princton: 1968), p. xlii:

> The images seemed to be direct transpositions or copies of such transpositions of the words of Scripture into painting or sculpture, in terms that had naturally been invented by the artist . . . But to presuppose such a use of the Scriptures, and a considerable creative gift, in the obscure makers of images at any aesthetic level is to accord them tacitly what nobody would think of admitting for a theological or literary work, whatever the talent of its author. It would never occur to anybody to suppose that a writer invents the words and locutions he uses.

5. Sunday Mass Book, p. 31.

6. Émile Mâle, The Gothic Image, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: 1958), pp. 391-2.

7. J. Waterworth, trans., The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent (London: 1848), p. 236.

8. Gabriele Paleotti, Discorso inforno alle imagini sacre e profane (Bologna: 1582), quoted in Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, Italian Art 1500-1600 Sources and Documents (New Jersey: 1966), p. 125.

9. Ibid., pp. 126-7.

10. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich: 1971), II, p. ix. Cf. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, p. xlv:

> The pictures that accompany treatises on mathematics, astronomy, or medicine are essentially informative. They serve to make the text more comprehensible. But the illustrations of books of the Bible . . . rarely confine themselves to this function. They are parallel to the text and almost necessarily interpret it.

See also Émile Mâle, Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century (The Noonday Press: 1965), p. 23, who

in describing the Oriental Christian art of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries says that "the Gospel was no longer a touching story; it had already become a series of dogmas defined by the Councils."

11. Luke 1: 26-38, 2: 4-8; The Jerusalem Bible (New York: 1966).

12. Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, trans. John Bowden (London and Oxford: 1975), I, p. 443:

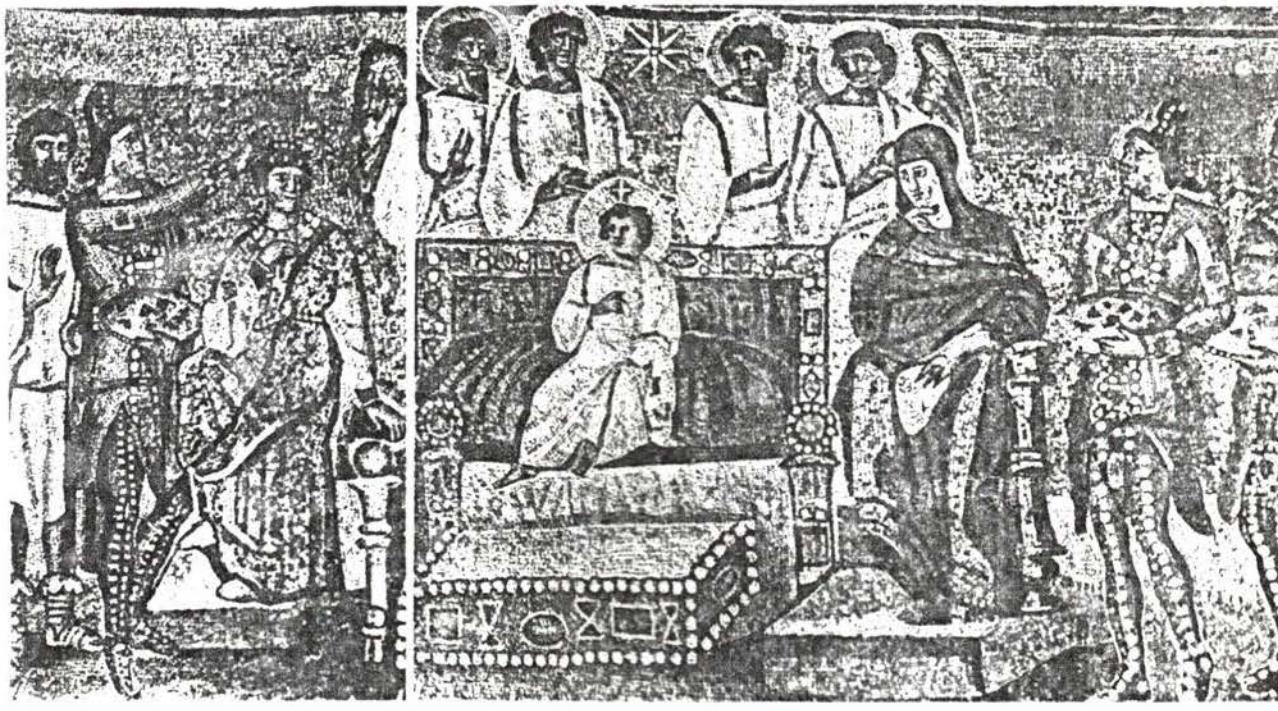
> We are now at the beginning of the conciliar epoch of patristic christology . . . This epoch begins with the Council of Ephesus (431) and ends with the Third Council of Constantinople . . . one could put the beginning of the conciliar epoch of christology as early as Nicaea . . . however, Nicaea, because of the pressure of the Arian struggles, was considered with reference to trinitarian doctrine. Its significance for the doctrine of the incarnation only begins with the dispute over Nestorius.

13. Karl Rahner, ed., The teaching of the Catholic Church (New York: 1966), p. 147.

14. "The General Council of Chalcedon (451)," Ibid., pp. 153-4.

15. Chalcedon decided that Christ has two distinct natures, the divine and the human. The later councils declared that Christ had twofold knowledge, will, and action; see Ibid., pp. 143-5, 155-71.

Chapter I: The Annunciation, The Adoration of the Magi,
S. Maria Maggiore, A.D. 432-40



The fifth was a troubled century, a century of ruin and political turbulence. The political unity of the Roman Empire was lost in 476 with the final overthrow of the western emperor. This collapse was caused more by internal weakness than by foreign conquest; if the empire survived in the East it was because it had not been seriously attacked. The Church might have lent her aid in overcoming the forces of disintegration, but she too suffered much inner turmoil.

The fourth century had witnessed a dramatic change in the status of the Church. At the beginning of the century Christianity was a persecuted religion; at its end it was the official religion of the State. In the early 390's, Theodosius I issued edicts which closed all the pagan temples once and for all and forbade household rites and the use of domestic shrines. The Church now had the political and economic support of the government; but with the benefits also came disadvantages, such as State interference in ecclesiastical matters and pastoral problems about the moral guidance and instruction of the mass of new converts, many of whom had only the most superficial faith.

Even more serious were the doctrinal controversies that raged at the time. These controversies dealt with the nature of Christ and thus were of highest importance to the Church. The ensuing theological debates unleashed powerful religious passions leading to rivalries between ecclesiastical potentates, deprivations, noisy councils, sentences of exile, tumults and schisms. It was within this context that the

Church used her new resourses to patronize art and architecture; one of the richest and finest examples of this new art was the mosaic cycle in S. Maria Maggiore.

This chapter will be restricted to the mosaics on the triumphal arch, which illustrate the life of Christ. The Annunciation and Adoration of the Magi will be given special attention. Sixtus III (432-40) rebuilt S. Maria Maggiore and provided its mosaics, as is indicated by the dedicatory inscription on the chancel-arch.[1] The importance of this church, the first to be dedicated to Mary in Rome[2], can be seen in the money spent on it, for S. Maria Maggiore received a papal donation that rivaled Old St. Peter's.[3]

The triumphal arch mosaics are arranged in four horizontal registers (Pl. 1). The scenes tell the story of Christ's birth and childhood, but not chronologically as in a narrative sequence. The top register depicts the Annunciation, Joseph with the Angel, the Apocalyptic Throne with SS. Peter and Paul on either side, the Presentation in the Temple, and Joseph's second dream.[4] The next register shows the Adoration of the Magi and a scene from the Flight into Egypt. The Magi before Herod and the Women of Bethlehem before Herod are in the third register. The bottom register depicts two metaphorical city-scapes identified as Bethlehem and Jerusalem; "the six lambs in front of each building symbolize the congregations and are an allusion to the churches of the Jews and the heathen."[5]

The use of registers and their arrangement is based upon contemporary triumphal art of the Roman Empire. This can be seen by comparing the mosaics to the base of the triumphal column of Arcadius (401-21), set up in Constantinople. Arcadius's column in turn imitates earlier columns set up by Trajan and Aurelius.[6] The base of the column is arranged in horizontal registers; the topmost register shows abstract signs of supreme power, the next shows the Emperor and his dignitaries, below that follows representations of foreigners who recognize the power of the Roman monarch either by acclamation or offerings, while at the very bottom of the panel are the enemies of the State:

> The great mosaic of the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore is a counterpart to a composition of this kind: the throne above (top, centre) is the symbol of the power of God in heaven; in the same register is shown the recognition of the royalty of Christ by his people . . . in the second register the foreign kings do homage or present their offerings to the infant Christ; and, still lower, one sees the image of the hostility . . . of the enemy king, Herod.[7]

The style of the mosaics also follows that of the column of Arcadius, which is in the tradition of Roman triumphal art. However, the column's prototypes have been translated into a hieratic, symbolic mode. Most figures occupy the foreground plane, are depicted in strict frontality and are uniformly shown with all their heads at the same level. The mosaics are in the same abstract, hieratic style as the column, although the weightiness of the figures and the rich colouring follow older traditions in Roman art.[8]

The figures of the mosaics indicate other close stylistic similarities to the art of the Roman Empire, similarities that are characteristic of early Christian art in general:

> Christian imagery, at its birth, borrowed, and kept the Greco-Latin iconographic language as commonly practiced at the beginning of our era everywhere around the Mediterranean. That this is undeniable can easily be verified by observation of certain of the most general and frequent features of Christian images: the presentation of the human figure, its posture, physical type, costume, and habitual gestures and attitudes, its common accessories, and the architecture or furnishing that surround the figure.[9]

If we compare The Adoration of the Magi (p. 12) to the silver plate of Theodosius I (388) (Pl. 2), we can see these borrowings. The figures have similar physique and attire; Christ's gesture of greeting is like that of the figure on Theodosius's left. The use of columns and arches as a background to frame the main personages is found both on the silver relief and in The Presentation in the Temple.

Other motifs were borrowed from contemporary art of the Roman Empire. In The Annunciation, the angel derives from the Nike, or winged goddess of victory.[10] In The Adoration of the Magi, the artistic prototype of the Magi paying their homage is, "the late Antique composition which shows deputations of vanquished barbarians bringing golden wreaths . . . to the victorious general and emperor."[11]

Thus we can see the general style and motifs of classical art in the mosaics, as well as the compositional arrangement of late Imperial art (official art of the Empire

dedicated to the Emperor). The visual language and style of the day has here been adopted by the Church enabling her to express her teachings in a way the general populace would find acceptable and comprehensible:

> The use commonly made of means of expression and diffusion by the Christian authors or by the Christian image-makers of late antiquity was the same: they expressed themselves in the language--visual or verbal--that was used around them . . . Almost everything in their work was dictated by the models they followed; and it was actually because of this that the new, Christian images they created were understandable to their contemporaries, and therefore effectively achieved the ends intended.[12]

The iconography of the art of the late Roman Empire has been used to illustrate the gospel events. However, to understand exactly what is being illuatrated, we have to study the mosaics in the context of other early Christian art and the theological situation; for they are quite unusual, and this fact suggests they had a special message to convey. In The Annunciation, for example, Mary is shown for the first time wearing a luxurious costume and seated on a throne like a Byzantine princess.[13] The angel hovers over her like a winged victory from late Imperial art; earlier and later representations of the angel show the angel standing.[14] Four other angels are situated around Mary like a guard of honour. Equally unusual is the overshadowing of Mary by the Holy Spirit (dove) which is not found in other early Christian art.[15] It is clear that the artist has moved far from a literal depiction of the gospel event. All these motifs increase Mary's majesty and

importance; a status that derives from that of her Son--it is as Mother of God (Theotokos) that she receives these honours.[16]

The unique character of The Annunciation suggests that there was a special effort to exalt Mary and indirectly, her Son. This interpretation is born out in the way The Adoration of the Magi is depicted. Like The Annunciation, it has a unique character, "foreshadowed by no previous, imitated by no subsequent work."[17] The motif of the Child sitting alone on an imperial throne makes this composition unique.[18] Other representations show Mary seated with Christ while the Magi approach. Here the Child sits solemnly on the throne, not portrayed as a child just a few days old but as a young man, and he is surrounded by four angels acting as royal guards. This compositional arrangement derives from official portraits of Roman emperors.[19] The infant Christ's regal stature is also expressed by the purple cushion he sits on (purple being a royal colour) and his gesture of speech. On either side of him is a seated woman. This motif is found in Imperial art of the time wherein the Emperor sat between personifications of Rome and Constantinople.[20]

The main theme of Roman triumphal art was the supreme power of the Emperor. Its iconography was admirably suited to indicate the power and authority of God:

> Christian images of triumphal inspiration . . . always succeed in expressing the idea of the power

> of God: since Imperial iconography furnished a range of subjects and motifs evoking the idea of power, adaptation to each of these conventional subjects to the Christian frame, to make them play the desired role, that is, to proclaim the power of God, was relatively easy.[21]

In the case of the triumphal arch mosaics, an iconography denoting the power of God is applied to the infant Christ; in fact, special emphasis is given to this as can be seen by the unique composition of the Adoration and Annunciation. By doing this the artists of the mosaics were indirectly expressing the divinity of the Child.

These divine connotations were contained in the official art of the Empire itself, which was largely linked to the cult of the Emperor's divine majesty. This concept lived on in classical culture after the christianization of the Empire and would still have been remembered at the time the mosaics were completed.[22] The star above the Child, which led the Magi to Bethlehem, was used in late Imperial art as a sign of the divine quality of the Emperor.[23] The infant Christ has a small golden cross above his forehead; the throne at the apex of the triumphal arch also has a cross. The empty throne is a symbol of the supreme power of God; the cross on the throne represents Christ as having that authority, as well as symbolozing the unity of Christ and God.[24]

Furthermore, within the context of early Christian art, the Adoration of the Magi was not thought of as one of the scenes of the childhood of Christ but as the heathens'

recognition of and homage to God revealed in the Child born of a virgin.[25] The Adoration is the oldest image-sign of the Incarnation; thus early artists often produced only this scene of Christ's infancy.[26] The uniquely regal presentation of Christ in the S. Maria Maggiore mosaics would only strengthen this interpretation. The depiction of Mary in such unparalleled royal splendour emphasizes the fact that she from whom Christ received his human nature also was the Mother of God. In other words, the mosaics illustrate the doctrine of the Incarnation--that the person Christ had a human and a divine nature--and this doctrine is illustrated by uniquely emphasizing the divinity of the Child and the status of Mary as Mother of God. This interpretation of the mosaics will be more understandable once they are placed in the context of the theological controversies of the time.

These mosaics were put up almost immediately after the Council of Ephesus by Sixtus III. This council had been called after a long, confused and often violent struggle to assert the orthodox teaching about the nature of Christ. In the end, the solution proposed by Rome was accepted, and the Roman See came through this crisis with greater prestige than before. Sixtus, indeed, had reason to celebrate when he commissioned the mosaics; he also had cause for concern, since the solutions of Ephesus were not clearly understood or accepted by all.[27] The special character of the mosaics was determined by this situation.[28]

The Council of Nicaea (325) had defined Christ's true divinity; the Council of Rome (382) had defined his perfect humanity. But neither of them had declared explicitly the nature of the union between Christ's divinity and humanity.[29] There were two main schools of theologians debating this issue--the Alexandrians and the Antiochians. Antioch stressed the real distinction between the human and the divine to such an extreme that some theologians came to see two realities united by a union that was no more than moral. The human person Christ had first to merit his relationship with the divine person; this view in turn was based on the belief that if Christ had a human and a divine nature he must also have a human and a divine personality. This position will be discussed in greater detail below. The Alexandrians were so concerned to safeguard the divinity of Christ that they expressed this union in such a way that his humanity ceased to be real.[30] The issue was complicated by the use of a terminology that had different meanings in the contending schools of thought and by the traditional rivalry between the sees of Antioch and Alexandria.

Little would have come of this theological debate had not Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, translated an extreme version of the Antiochian position into everyday language and attempted to impose it as the true tradition of faith upon his clergy and people:

> And so it came about that one of the bishop's intimates, the monk Anastasius, announced the "new theology" of the Incarnation . . . "Mother of God" . . . was a title

> consecrated by long usage and it expressed succinctly the traditional belief that He whose mother she was, was not merely man but also truly God. But the monk, Anastasius, explained that this title "Mother of God", Theotokos, should only be used with the greatest care, had better in fact not be used at all. Mary was "Mother of Christ" rather than "Mother of God". The ambiguity of the teaching, its implication that somehow Christ was not fully divine, was not lost on the audience. A tumult began, a noisy appeal to depose the preacher.[31]

The people appealed to the bishop, Nestorius, and discovered that he agreed with the monk.

Nestorius believed that the two natures in Christ stood for two distinct personalities which are united in one moral person. God dwelt in the man Jesus, the Son of Mary, as in a temple.[32] Christ was not born divine; he never was divine. As a man he was only worthy of honour when he attained to a moral union with God:

> Nestorius's teaching is based on the conception that a complete human nature must also necessarily be a human personality. Thus if Christ were wholly man, he must also be a human person, so that human nature in Christ is not united to God to make one person, but is in a relationship of grace to him; the things that are said about the divine and the human in Christ, such as are found in Holy Scripture, apply to two persons; Christ had first to merit this promotion to the relationship of grace with the divine Word.[33]

The Council of Ephesus reaffirmed the orthodoxy of the term Theotokos and condemned the teachings of Nestorius.[34] The mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore give visual form to these conclusions. As mentioned earlier, this controversy only caught the public attention when Nestorius rejected the term Theotokos, which succinctly conveyed to the average mind the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation. Hence, in visually reaffirming the status of Mary by giving her stately

attire and placing her on a throne, the mosaics reaffirmed the traditional doctrine in a way the public could easily understand. Mary was not just the mother of a very special child in whom God dwelt, but she was the mother of an infant who truly was God. As the art glorified Mary as the Mother of God, so also it glorified the Child as God Incarnate. Nestorius had denied that Christ truly was God; the mosaics, in response to this position, used every device of contemporary art to show the power, authority, and divinity of the infant Christ.

Later on, Annunciations were the normal means to depict the dogma of the Incarnation.[35] At S. Maria Maggiore, The Annunciation was given special emphasis by the rare motifs of the flying angel and dove as well as Mary's attire. However, this scene could still be interpreted in a Nestorian sense as merely showing how God came to dwell in Christ without there being a union of both natures in one person. The Adoration of the Magi, by showing that the infant Christ was divine, argued against a Nestorian interpretation. Once this heresy ceased to bother the Church, as was the case by the end of the fifth century, an Annunciation scene could be safely used alone to depict the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The use of the classical style at S. Maria Maggiore may have been related to the political as well as the theological situation:

In Rome . . . classical culture was carried largely

> by an aristocracy which was intensely pagan and thus remained linked to a pagan heritage. Christian leaders during the first half of the fourth century remained aloof from the world of the classics . . . classical art sponsored by Christian aristocrats was cut short about 380 by a recrudescence of paganism in Rome . . . Only with the final defeat of paganism in the West in 395 was the dilemma resolved. The bond between classical culture and paganism was severed.[36]

Theodosius I had passed edicts signalling the victory of Christianity over the pagan cults. With the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410, the pagan aristocracy was gone as a political force leaving the papacy as the only power. The Church could accept the classical heritage furthermore, the Eastern Emperor was distant and disinterested and the Emperor in Ravenna weak. Thus the political power of the pope increased and with it the prestige of papal Rome:

> The traditions, the plans, and the vocabulary of official civic architecture, alive throughout the fourth century but unusuable for Christian building in the West because of their pagan overtones, could be employed by Sixtus III in the church buildings close to his heart because these overtones had become meaningless. Indeed, he had to seek models in official civic architecture since his buildings were designed to reflect the new claims of the papacy to the cultural and to some degree the political heritage of Rome.[37]

The use of models from late Imperial art would similarly reflect these political aspirations.

We can now see how the Church has used art to defend and spread her teachings. This visual language and style of the day has been used to ensure that the measure would be understandable and attractive to the populace. Furthermore, the iconography has been specially arranged to show the relevance of the biblical events to the contemporpary

theological situation. There has been no attempt to portray these events in a literal sense; rather their inner meaning, as determined by the Church, has been depicted. In brief, the mosaics succeed as illustrations--they effectively conveyed their patron's message to those who viewed them and, as a bonus, may have helped the pope's political plans.

Footnotes I

1. W.F. Volbach, Early Christian Art (London: 1961), p. 336. It has been debated whether or not this dedicatory inscription was installed during Sixtus III's time. The controversy has been resolved recently--the Sixtus III dating is correct; see Beat Brenk, Die fruhchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom (Wiesbaden: 1975), p. 15.

2. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich: 1971), I, p. 27.

3. Richard Krautheimer, "The Architecture of Sixtus III: A Fifth-Century Renaissance?", Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky, ed. M. Meiss (New York: 1961), I, p. 295.

4. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 27.

5. Ibid., p. 27.

6. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, A Study of its Origins (Princeton: 1968), p. 46.

7. Ibid., p. 48.

8. Irmgard Hutter, Early Christian and Byzantine Art (New York: 1971), pp. 32, 50.

9. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, pp. xlv-xlvi. Cf. I. Hutter, Ibid., p. 12; W.F. Volbach, Early Christian Art, pp. 12-3; Kurt Weitzman, Illustrations in Roll and Codex (Princeton: 1970), p. 10; Pierre du Bourquet, Early Christian Art, trans. Thomas Burton (New York: 1971), pp. 12-5.

10. Irmgard Hutter, Early Christian, p. 12. Cf. W.F. Volbach, Early Christian Art, p. 25.

11. G. Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 100. An example of this is seen on the Obelisk of Theodosius (c. 390) in Istanbul.

12. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, p. xlix.

13. Émile Mâle, The Early Churches of Rome, trans. David Buxton (London: 1960), p. 65. Mâle considered Mary's attire to be that of a Byzantine Empress, actually she is dressed in the costume of the femina clarissima, one of the chief attendants to the queen; see Beat Brenk, Die fruhchrist-Mosaiken, p. 50.

14. André Grabar, L'empeur dans l'art byzantin (London: 1971), p. 226. Some earlier examples of The Annunciation are on the Pigratta Sarcophagus (c. 400) and in the catacomb of Priscilla (e 4th c).

15. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 35.

16. Ibid., p. 35.

17. Émile Mâle, Early Churches of Rome, p.65.

18. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 103.

19. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, pp. 41,42, 79, pls. 199-203. Cf. Gertrud Schiller, Ibid., p. 102.

20. André Grabar, L'empereur, p. 228, pl.3.

21. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, p.47.

22. Richard Krautheimer, "The Architecture of Sixtus III," pp. 298-301.

23. André Grabar, L'empereur, p. 227. Cf. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p.102.

24. Andre Grabar, Christian Iconography, pp. 48, 115. Cf. Gertrud Schiller, Ibid., pp. 102,27:
This element of the eternal, exalted Kryios, his presence and his power, forms the culmination of these scenes of the Incarnation of the Logos and the salvation which God works through it and in which all peoples may participate.

25. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 103.

26. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, p.12:
The image of the Adoration of the Magi replaces the whole christological cycle. It is the iconographic sign that indicates the principal argument in favour of the salvation of each believer: the fact of the Saviour's Incarnation and his work on Earth.
See also Gertrud Schiller, Ibid., p. 60.

27. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church (London: 1947), I,pp. 246-8.

28. This interpretation of the mosaics has been adopted by Émile Mâle, The Early Churches of Rome, pp. 63-6; Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, pp.26, 103; Walter Oakeshott, The Mosaics of Rome (London: 1967), p.74.

29. H.J. Schroeder, Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils (St. Louis: 1937), p.69.

30. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, I, p.237.

31. Ibid., p. 240.

32. H.J. Schroeder, Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils, p.70:

> The incarnation is nothing more than the indwelling of the Word in a man. The Word was not born of a virgin, nor did the Word suffer, but he suffered in whom the Word dwelt. God cannot be born, neither can He suffer and die. Accordingly, Mary is not the Mother of God (Theotokos), but of a man, of Christ (Christotokos).

33. Karl Rahner, ed., The teaching of the Catholic Church (Staten Island: 1967), pp. 147-8.

34. Ibid., pp. 147-51.

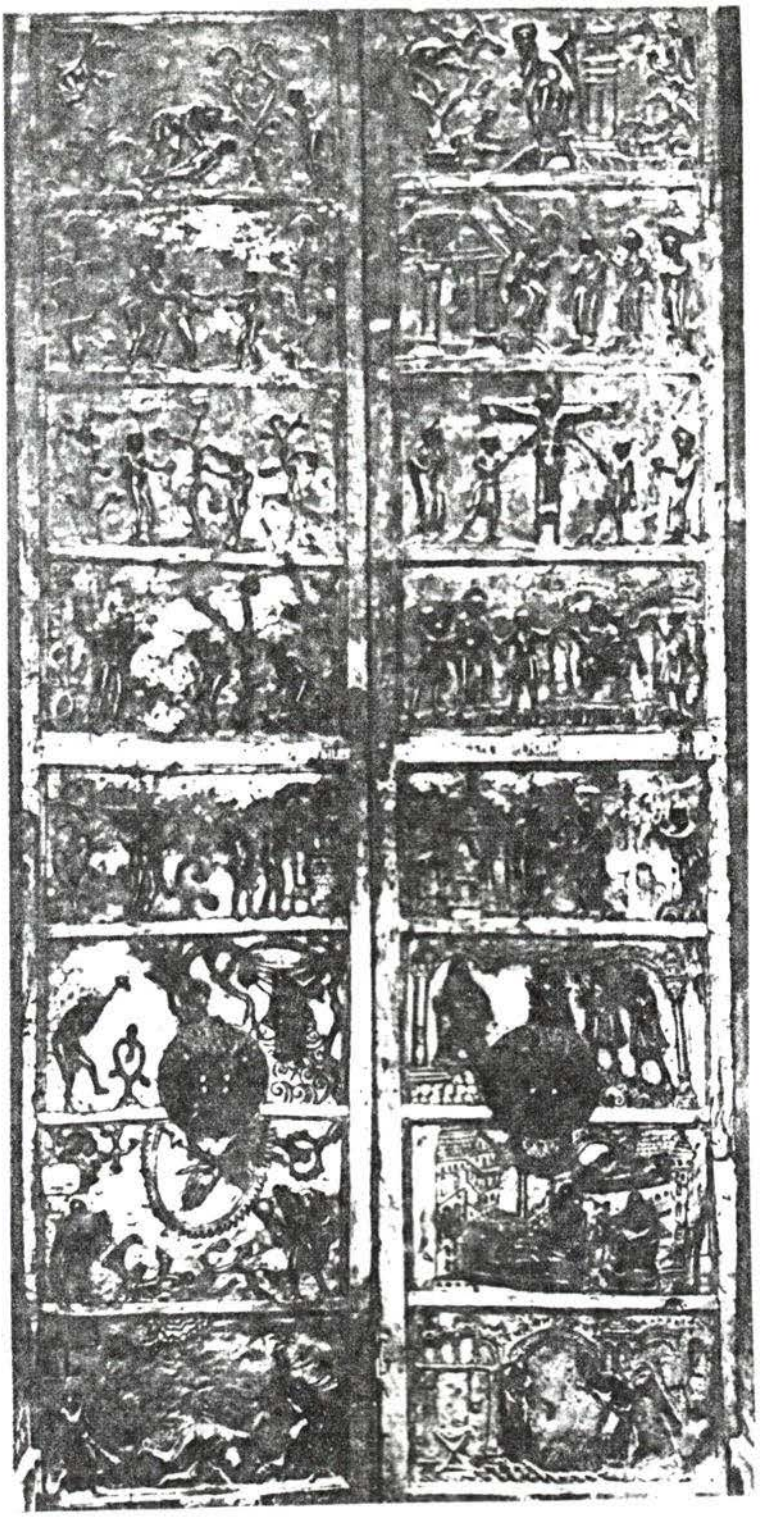
35. André Grabar, Christian Iconography, p. 128:

> To show the reality of the incarnation of the Word in the person of Jesus Christ, the image-makers undertook to represent the moment when the pre-natal life of Jesus began in the womb of his mother Mary.

36. Richard Krautheimer, "The Architecture of Sixtus III," pp. 300-1.

37. Ibid., p. 302.

Chapter II: The Annunciation, Bernward's Doors, Hildesheim Cathedral, A.D. 1008-15



The mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore were commissioned in the last days of the Roman Empire; the world had changed considerably by the time Bernward's doors were built. With the collapse of the Empire, the frontiers broke down under the onslaught of barbarian attacks. Wholesale material destruction followed--towns were sacked and burnt, the countryside was ravaged. Communication and travel became difficult and hazardous. Ordered, centralized government broke down and with this came a loss in peace and stability as well as a marked lowering in the material and cultural standards of living. Although the Empire ceased to exist as a political entity, it survived as a powerfully attractive political ideal, one which served as a stabilizing model for the next thousand years.

First came Charlemagne's revival of the Christianized Roman Empire established by Constantine. Its success was short-lived; after his death civil war and fresh barbarian invasions led to a century of ruin and destruction enough to reduce, "Charlemagne's reign of order to a chaos such as Europe had never before known."[1]

The situation started to improve in Germany with the reign of Otto I (936-73). With the founding of the Ottonian dynasty, Germany had the advantage of a strong, purposeful government; once again a revived Christian Empire was the ideal, with works of art to be built to support it. Amongst the most famous of these were the bronze doors at Hildesheim--the first decorated bronze doors cast in one

piece since Roman times (p. 29).[2]

The doors were commissioned and designed by Bernward, the bishop of Hildesheim, between 1008 and 1015.[3] Originally intended for the abbey church of St. Michael, they were moved to Hildesheim Cathedral around 1030 by Bernward's successor, Gothard, where they still remain.[4] They formed part of an artistic and theological program at St. Michael's which included Bernward's Column (1015-22), set up behind the main altar. The sixteen scenes on the bronze doors portray the history of man from his creation to the slaying of Abel, and the birth and passion of Christ. The twenty-four reliefs on the column recount the life of Christ from his baptism to his entry into Jerusalem and thus complete the theological sense of the doors.

The illustrations on the doors are arranged vertically in eight panels per door. In strict thesis and antithesis, the left door portrays the Fall of Man in eight Old Testament scenes; the right shows man's deliverance from the Fall in eight corresponding New Testament scenes. The top panels, left and right door respectively, depict the Creation of Adam and Mary Magdalene before the Ascending Christ.[5] Both show the state God intended for man--Adam before the Fall and man restored to grace, symbolized by the repentant Magdalene and the resurrected Christ. Christ was commonly referred to as the new Adam, here shown victorious over sin and death:

The typology of Adam derives from Romans 5, 12-19 and

> I Corinthians 15, 21 ff., 45-7: 'Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life'; and: 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' . . . Theologians began at an early date to expound the antithesis between the old and new Adam.[6]

His mother, Mary, was similarly considered as the new Eve.[7] This typology is an important unifying element in the illustrations; on the left door we see the life of Adam and Eve and, on the right, the life of the new Adam and Eve.

The next pair of illustrations represent the Presentation of Eve to Adam and the Three Marys at the Tomb of Christ. Both are scenes of greeting and show man in a state of harmony with God. The angel informs the women that Christ has risen from the dead. God has fulfilled his promise and mankind has been restored to its condition before the Fall. Also, as Eve was the first to listen to the voice of the Tempter, so now the new Eve is the first to hear of the risen Christ.

Below this are shown the Temptation and Fall and Crucifixion, in Christian doctrine the two most crucial events in human history. The themes of these panels are paired opposites; the Old Testament scene shows man's fall from grace, the New Testament one shows his return to grace. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was sin and death; that of the Cross was redemption from sin and eternal life.

The subjects of the next panels are the Judgement of Adam and Eve and Christ before Pilate. In one episode a just judge condemns the guilty; in the other an unjust

judge condemns the innocent. The contrast is brought out in the depiction of the figures. The first sinners try to escape punishment; Christ humbly submits to the judgement. The Expulsion and Presentation in the Temple that follow contrast Eve's reluctant departure with Mary's obedient conduct. The Expulsion deals with the theme of separation from God as a result of breaking his law; The Presentation shows man's reunion with God as a result of keeping his law.

The bottom three panels portray life outside paradise. Topmost is Adam Tilling, Eve with Child and opposite it is The Adoration of the Magi. Eve is holding Cain, the murderer who took life; Mary is holding Christ, the Saviour who gives life. Then the Offerings of Cain and Nativity are shown. The theme of sacrifice dominates both panels. Cain offers an unacceptable sacrifice, Abel offer a lamb; Christ is the Lamb of God, the perfectly acceptable sacrifice. The last pair of illustrations is The Murder of Abel and The Annunciation. On the one hand we see the consumation of sin and judgement; on the other, mercy and the beginning of deliverance from sin.

This type of theological program, wherein the themes of the Fall and the Incarnation-Redemption are combined, was not unusual at the time. From the ninth century onwards, the Incarnation was increasingly viewed in the context of the Fall and the death of Christ on the cross.[8] The emphasis on Christ's role as Redeemer suggests that his role as God Incarnate could be taken for granted. A look

at the theological situation at the time bears this out.

The doctrine of the Incarnation was a hotly contended issue when the mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore were commissioned. However, by Bernward's time the Christological controversies had been long settled; the last major council to deal with this issue was the Third General Council at Constantinople (680-1).[9] The main concern of the Church and political leaders in northern Europe was reform: ecclesiastical discipline had broken down, religious life was in decay, and simony was rife.[10] Considering the need for reform, it was quite appropriate for Bernward to stress the redemptive aspect of Christ's life.

The iconography of The Annunciation and The Adoration of the Magi, the two scenes most closely related to the Incarnation dogma, also suggest that Bernward felt little need to defend that doctrine. In The Annunciation, Mary is shown standing, having just risen from her stool, while the angel walks toward her from her left. The angel is easily recognized by his large wings. Mary's head is covered with a mantel, symbolizing her virginity. Her left hand is raised in the standard form of greeting. Emphasis is given to the arrival of the angel, his greeting, and Mary's reaction by the arch that connects them and the empty space between them. All these iconographic motifs are normal for this time.[11] In fact, the format for representing The Annunciation differs very little from that of early Christian times; the main difference being that Mary is now standing

instead of sitting.[12]

An architectural background frames the figures in The Adoration of the Magi, as was the case in The Annunciation (Pl. 3). It was a common compositional device at the time.[13] The standard iconographic motifs of the Child sitting on Mary's lap and the star, which the Magi followed, are used. The three Magi, approaching from her left, wear crowns and are portrayed as kings. From the tenth century onwards they ceased to wear Persian dress.[14] The importance of Mother and Child is expressed by the halos, their position on a throne, which is above the level of the Magi, and the enframing arch.[15] Aside from that they are dressed normally; the Child's gestures and size are those of an ordinary child. In all its elements, the Adoration conforms to contemporary iconography, which in turn differs little from that of early Christian art.[16] The normal iconography in these examples was suitable for a time when the orthodox teaching about the nature of Christ was accepted; Bernward seems to have chosen a visual language that was both easily understandable, because it was so traditional, and well suited to the theological context.

The arrangement of the panels gave preference to Christ's role as Redeemer over that as God Incarnate, an interpretation of the gospel events in accordance with the prevailing theological climate. It was also especially appropriate considering the location of the doors. In both St. Michael's and Hildesheim Cathedral they were used as

doors for the paradisus:

> In the early days of the Church, when to sin involved one in rigorous and long drawn-out penances, the offenders were not admitted to the worship of the faithful. They heard Mass in a place formerly occupied by the catechumens, aptly called the paradisus. It was in a paradise that Adam and Eve sinned. Thence they went out into a world not too pleasant because of all the work and trials and sorrow there were in it. Nevertheless, the world was not entirely hopeless. God had promised them a Redeemer. Christ referred to Himself as a door--a door opening into eternal bliss, in earthly terms the door leading from the paradisus into the nave of the church, where was the divine presence, the solace of those who had tasted the bitterness of their sins.[17]

Having a paradisus in mind, Bernward thus knew that the theme he had chosen for the doors would have a special relevance for many viewers.[18]

The reliefs on the bronze doors were, therefore, much more than decorations arbitrarily chosen. A standardized iconography was used to convey a message within a specific context. Instead of restricting himself to a literal, historical depiction of the biblical events, Bernward has shown their significance to the people of his day. As we shall now see, to further ensure that the message was conveyed, he used the accepted style of the time, a style which served more than his illustrative needs because of its political connotations.

Bernward's doors and column represent a continuation of Carolingian attempts to perpetuate the forms of Roman art in order to proclaim the continuity of Christendom (the Holy Roman Empire) with the Christianized Roman Empire founded by Constantine.[19] Revival of classical

Roman art is evident in the column, inspired by Roman triumphal art such as the columns of Trajan (137 A.D.) or Marcus Aurelius (187 A.D.) in Rome. Just as the Roman works glorify the deeds of the Roman Emperors, Bernward's column glorified the redeeming power of the True Emperor. The doors, however, revived art of the later Christian Empire.

Bernward had gone to Rome in 1001 A.D. in the service of Otto III.[20] He thus had first-hand experience of classical art and the Christian art of late antiquity such as the wooden doors of S. Sabina (c. 432 A.D.). Bernward's doors have the same format as the S. Sabina doors; scenes from the Old and New Testaments are illustrated in separate panels, and the Old Testament episodes are selected by reason of some symbolic parallel with those of the New.[21] The lettering on the bronze doors indicates classical influence and, while the decoration is not classical, classical inspiration provided the motivation to create a work on such a large scale.[22]

As it was part of Ottonian policy to affirm the Carolingian heritage, Ottonian art had a Carolingian as well as classical basis. This can be seen in the similarity between Bernward's doors and the bronze doors at Aachen at the entrance to the Palatine Chapel.[23] Both were large-scale works in bronze cast in a single piece; both have their surfaces arranged in rectangular coffers and have lion's heads as handles. Thus far we can see that the very

commissioning of such a major project, as well as its general format, was appropriate to and supportive of contemporary political aspirations.

The style of the reliefs on the doors also conform to the general pattern of Ottonian art in being based on Carolingian models. A Carolingian work such as the Vivian Bible (844-51) was a source for the Adam and Eve scenes on the doors (Pl. 3).[24] This bible was presented to Charles the Bald at Tours and later brought to Saint Denis where it was copied.[25] Bernward frequently visited Tours and Saint Denis--it is likely that he procured at the latter spot an illustrated bible whose iconography derived from the Vivian Bible.[26] In the Vivian Bible, the illustrations are divided into framed rectangular compartments and the figures are interspersed with trees in a way similar to the Bernward reliefs. The use of the bower to enframe Eve with her child, the depiction of Adam working, and the presentation of Eve to Adam in the reliefs are quite close to the Vivian Bible. Both works show the same progression of scenes from The Creation of Adam to Adam Working, Eve with Child.

The architectural background in Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration, and Presentation scenes reveals another Carolingian influence, the Ada style, which was popular in Ottonian times (Pl. 4).[27] The Ada style was closely connected with Charlemagne and derives from classical representations of authors sitting under arches.[28] The

architectural background balances the composition, gives emphasis to the main figures and adds a degree of monumentality to the composition as can be seen in The Adoration of the Magi. The two columns frame and balance the scene while the arch over Mary emphasizes her importance.

The use of open space, the lively gestures, and dramatic action on the doors indicate still another Carolingian source, the Reims style, exemplified by the Utrecht Psalter (Pl. 4).[29] One of Bernward's predecessors at Hildesheim was Ebbo, the bishop of Reims. As a major patron of art at Reims, he would have been very capable of introducing the artists at Hildesheim to the Reims manner.[30] The elongated figures of the Magi, the way the draperies are blown back against the body, the unexpected twist of Mary's body projecting her head into the round are characteristics of the Reims style which give a sense of drama to The Adoration of the Magi. This style has been admirably adapted to increase the impact of the illustrations on the viewer:

> As in all Ottonian copies of late antique and Carolingian models the forms have become more compact, springy, elongated, harsher in outline . . . the tension between the protagonists has become more acute: as in the scene after the Fall, with its chain of accusatory gestures, of in Christ's meeting with Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection, where the falling movement of Mary before the feet of Christ stresses the ascending movement of Christ.[31]

Bernward's choice of style for his doors did more than

vividly depict biblical events in a format his audience was familiar with, it also indirectly supported Ottonian policy since the use of classical and Carolingian models was related to the political aspirations of the Ottonians. It was quite normal for a bishop to support government policy at this time:

> Thus for the period covered in this work, the role of king was as grand advocate; the bishops served him, and he utilized their resources without being accused of despoiling with secular hands the things of the Lord . . . The bond between throne and altar persisted as the principal tool for giving men peace of earth and salvation after death, until the reforms of the Gregorians in the late eleventh century.[32]

The monarch received the support of the bishops and in return enforced needed ecclesiastical reforms. This alliance was necessary, for without the help of ecclesiastics, both as civil administrators and army commanders, the king might well have succumbed to the frequent rebellions of his feudal vassals.[33]

Bernward was closely connected to the court. He had been court chaplain and tutor to Otto III. When Otto's father died, he supported Otto in his fight against the rebellion that followed.[34] After he became bishop he remained a favourite at court and secured more grants from the crown than had all his predecessors.[35]

The reliefs thus not only work well as Catholic illustrations by expressing the relevance of Church teachings in an objective way through using a visual language everyone could understand, but also fulfill other functions.

Indirectly, through their style, they support the contemporary political ideology and thereby enhance the Church-State relationship so beneficial to both king and bishop.

Footnotes II

1. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church (London: 1947), II, p. 155.

2. John Beckwith, Early Medieval Art (London: 1964), p. 145.

3. Francis J. Tschan, Saint Bernward of Hildesheim (Indiana: 1951), II, p. 179. Cf. Magnus Backes, Art of the Dark Ages (New York: 1969), p. 211.

4. Ibid., p. 178.

5. The top left panel shows the creation of Adam; Eve is not the central figure. See Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward, II, pp. 182-3:

> Comparison of this figure with other female nudes on the doors establishes it as that of a male . . . this panel . . . resolves itself into two pictures, one showing Adam come to life, the other representing him alive and adoring his Creator.

6. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (London: 1972), II, p. 130. Schiller mentions Origen (185-254), Tractatus XXXV in Matthaum XXVII, 33; Athanasius (296-373), De passione et cruce Domini, c. 5; Epiphanius (315-403), Adversus haereses, Haer. 46, contra Tatianos, c. 5; Augustine (354-430), Sermo de tempore LXXI as examples of early theological works expounding the antithesis theory. Cf. Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward, II, p. 226.

7. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (London: 1971), I, pp. 39-43.

8. Ibid., pp. 39-40, pls. 76-8. Some examples are the Harrach Diptych (e. 9th c.) and the front cover of the Gospel Book of the Abbess Theophano (e. 11th c.). Schiller also mentions a new type of Annunciation which contains references to the redemption of man such as a western German ivory relief of the late tenth century, now in Berlin. Mary and the angel are separated by a tree which has nothing to do with the events of the Annunciation; it points back to the tree of the temptation and, "contains an allusion to the relationship between Eve and Mary, between the Fall and the Redemption."

9. Karl Rahner, ed., The teachings of the Catholic Church (Staten Island: 1966), pp. 144, 169-72. Aside from a brief revival of adoptionism in Spain in the late eighth century, attacks on the traditional teaching about nature of Christ ceased after the Third General Council (p.170).

10. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, II, pp. 199-201.

11. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, pp. 38-40, pls. 77-82. Similar iconography can be seen in the St. Gereon Sacramentary (l. 10th c.) and the Gospels of Otto II (l. 10th c.).

12. Ibid., pp. 34-7, pls. 67-76. The sitting motif can be seen in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome (e. 4th c.) and the Harrach Diptych (e. 9th c.).

13. Ibid., p. 37.

14. Ibid., p. 105.

15. Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward, II, p. 208
Little now remains of the Child's halo, either because of an accident or because of vandalism.

16. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, pp. 100-6, pls. 245-67. Some examples are the Clipeus Sarcophagus, Rome (c. 315), the Lorsch Diptych (c. 810) and the Codex Egberti (c. 980).

17. Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward, II, p. 179.

18. Ibid., pp. 179-80:
A paradisus was in Bernward's mind when he determined the door reliefs. On the left wing Adam and Eve are shown in debt to God for their very being and all its joys. Yet they yielded to Satan's guile. Having sinned, they were told to depart into the world, a world of work and trials and sorrow. Even their sons added to their grief. But in the midst of their travail God promised them a Redeemer. And in the right wing Bernward showed how God kept His promise.

19. George Henderson, Early Medieval (Middlesex: 1972), p. 132. Cf. Charles Rufus Morey, Mediaeval Art (New York: 1942), p. 196; Adolph Goldschmidt, German Illumination (New York: 1970), II, p. 21; Ernst Kitzinger, Early Medieval Art (London: 1966), pp. 36, 45, 67-8.

20. Charles Morey, Medieval Art, p. 215.

21. Ibid., p. 77. Cf. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, II, p. 241.

22. Walter Oakeshott, Classical Inspiration in Medieval Art (London: 1959), p. 68.

23. On the political connotations of the Aachen doors, see Magnus Backes, Art of the Dark Ages, p. 74:

> Profiled frames, inset with classical ornaments and arranged in four rows, organized the surface into rectangular coffers; lions' heads serve as handles . . . Just as the Imperial coronation sealed the entrance of the Empire into the political heritage of the Roman Empire, so it may be said that the relatively high stylistic and technical assurance of the Aachen bronze works marked the resumption of an imperial art in a way that contemporaries saw as only fitting in the city they already considered the new Rome.

24. Charles Morey, Medieval Art, p. 215. Cf. Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward, II, p. 249; Magnus Backes, Art of the Dark Ages, p. 212; Walter Oakeshott, Classical Inspiration, p. 67.

25. Ibid., p. 206.

26. Ibid., p. 215. Cf. Hans Swarzenski, Monuments of Romanesque Art (London: 1967), p. 22.

27. Ernst Kitzinger, Early Medieval Art, pp. 67-8. Cf. Adolph Goldschmidt, German Illumination, II, p. 21; Hans Swarzenski, Monuments of Romanesque Art, pp. 19-21.

28. Adolph Goldschmidt, German Illumination, I, pp. 5, 12. Cf. Magnus Backes, Art of the Dark Ages, p. 101; E. Kitzinger, Early Medieval Art, pp. 67-8.

29. Hans Swarzenski, Monuments of Romanesque Art, p. 22. Cf. Charles Morey, Medieval Art, p. 215.

30. Ibid., p. 22.

31. John Beckwith, Early Medieval Art, p. 146.

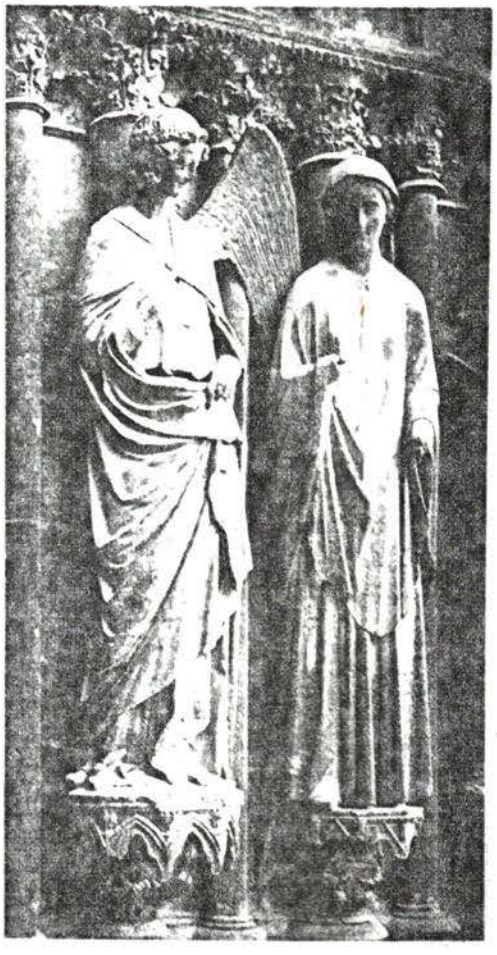
32. Boyd H. Hill Jr., Medieval Monarchy in Action (London: 1972), p. 32. Cf. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, II, pp. 209-10.

33. Ibid., pp. 66-8. Cf. Norris Kelly Smith, Medieval Art (Dubuque: 1967), pp. 70-1.

34. Francis Tschan, Saint Bernward of Hildesheim (Indiana: 1942), I, p. 48.

35. Ibid., p. 72.

Chapter III: The Annunciation, west facade, Reims Cathedral, A.D. 1230-55



The Hildesheim doors were made possible by and responded to a new political situation in Germany which saw the chaos and destruction of the ninth century replaced by stable government and relative prosperity. Bernward's artistic achievement was remarkable for its time; yet it appears almost crude when compared with the sculptured portals of the High Gothic era, one of the finest examples of which is our next illustration of The Annunciation at Reims Cathedral. The external format has changed, as has the theological context, but the basic message is the same; the new style was at once instrument and reflection of a transformed political and religious situation which saw the Capetian kings rival and surpass in power the German emperors.

The importance of Reims, the coronation church of the French kings, goes back to 496 when Clovis, the first Frank king to accept Catholicism, was baptised there by Bishop St. Remy.[1] Its old cathedral was burnt to the ground in 1210 and reconstruction started the next year; indulgences were issued in support of the project in 1246 and 1251 by Innocent IV.[2] Most of the cathedral was finished, and the bulk of sculptures were in place by the end of Bernard de Soissons's time as master mason (1255-90), although the entire structure was not complete until the fifteenth century.[3]

Statues decorate the gable and surround the doorways of the three portals on the west front of Reims Cathedral

(Pl. 5).[4] Since Reims was dedicated to the Virgin, the central porch was devoted to her: the Coronation of the Virgin is depicted in the gable, the Annunciation and Visitation on the right jamb and Presentation in the Temple on the left jamb, and on the central trumeau, a Virgin and Child. The left portal cycle illustrates the Crucifixion in the gable, with saints and angels on the jambs. The right portal gable depicts the Last Judgement while its jambs portray Simeon, John the Baptist, Isaiah and Moses on the right, and Pope Calixtus with unidentified figures on the left.

The sculptures for The Annunciation were installed between 1245 and 1255, although they were not both made at that time (pl. 6). The Virgin was carved c. 1230-33, the angel c. 1245-55.[5] The angel of the Annunciation was originally intended to be placed on the left side of St. Nicaisse in the left portal cycle; in its place is the angel initially designed to stand opposite Mary.[6] This explains the difference in style between Mary and the angel addressing her. Both Mary and the angel now beside St. Nicaisse have the same quiet, solemn demeanour, large heads, and simple drapery falling in smooth folds. The angel of the Annunciation and St. Nicaisse have slighter builds, longer legs, more delicate facial features and smaller heads. They are more lively and less austere than the earlier pair and thus were more likely to appeal to the emotions of the viewer; actually this style became so

popular that it set the fashion for the next century.[7]

This increased liveliness is consistent with the general development of Gothic sculpture which becomes more human, natural, and appealing to the emotions as its style evolves.[8] The human figure is depicted in more natural poses; the statues get more substantial and detach themselves from the background to produce more animated human groupings.[9] This development can be seen by comparing the jamb statues in the west portal of Chartres Cathedral (1145-55) with The Annunciation at Reims (Pl. 6). The Chartres statues are stiff and columnar; the sculptures at Reims are more rounded, the play of limbs is less restricted and the draperies hang more naturalistically. The figures at Chartres stare straight ahead while those at Reims react with each other; therefore, in style and arrangement the Reims statues present a more life-like human scene.

The naturalistic style and solemn demeanour of some of the statues at Reims such as the Mary in The Annunciation and the figures in The Presentation have led to speculations about their antique character.[10] However, this does not mean there was an attempt to revive classical art as was the case at Hildesheim:

> Thus the antique is not here an ideal to be revived for the sake of its canonical validity; study of the antique, like the study of nature, is an auxiliary tool, whose function is to promote more life-like representation, and to free sculpture from traditional formulas.[11]

The Reims portals, so decorated, were well suited to welcome people into the church. They presented the gospel stories in a realistic style that most people could easily understand and empathize with. Although the style has changed from earlier times, the underlying doctrines and iconography remain constant. The iconography used was by no means a matter for the artist's imagination. Art was a mode of instruction and to ensure that the dogmas of the Church were clearly understood, the iconography was precisely defined.[12] The sculptors worked under a master mason who was in turn supervised, either directly or indirectly, by bishops, clergy and theologians who determined the subjects and arrangement of the sculptural programs.[13] If the sculptor was not directly supervised, he followed a pattern book which contained figure types and models for illustrating biblical texts and cycles.[14]

This control of iconography can be seen if we compare Annunciations at Reims, Amiens and Chartres (Pl. 7). All have the same composition. An angel, identified by his wings,is on Mary's right. His right hand is raised in greeting; his right foot is placed forward. Mary raises her right hand in response to his address and holds a book in her left hand. Her obedient willingness to accept God in good faith is suggested by the inclination of her head, which is covered by a maphorion, symbolic of her virginity.[15]

The iconography used in the Gothic period differed

little from earlier times; but there were some variations. Mary is usually seated in the earliest representations of the Annunciation, while an angel approaches her from the left. By the Ottonian period she is shown standing, and the emphasis is on the arrival of the angel, his greeting and Mary's reaction, as we saw in Bernward's doors. More emphasis was given to their conversation in the Gothic period; it becomes commonplace to show the two figures standing quietly facing one another. The distance between them is small and their poses, gestures and looks often bring them into a more intense relationship than in the case of greeting.[16] This is the stage reached by the Reims Annunciation. Secondary motifs vary as well: the basket of wool and the spindle, described in the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James of the late second century, found in Carolingian Annunciations are replaced by the book in Gothic examples.[17]

Although the iconographic details, as well as the emphasis on the various parts of the Annunciation story, may vary over time, the overall forms are so standardized as to avoid any confusion about what is being portrayed. This use of an accepted visual language enabled sculptural programs to provide an education for the illiterate; programs that would be easily understood even by the most illiterate as indicated by the words Francois Villon placed on the lips of his mother:

I am a poor woman who knows nothing and never read a

> word. I see at the church of my parish a painted paradise with harps and lutes, and a hell where the damned are boiled. The one makes me afraid, the other happy and glad.[18]

The normalcy of the iconography used in the Reims Annunciation indicates that there was no special need to stress the underlying doctrine of the Incarnation as happened at S. Maria Maggiore. As we mentioned earlier in regards to Bernward's doors, the controversies about the nature of Christ virtually ceased after the seventh century. The main problems the Church had to contend with in France were some popular religious movements such as the Waldenses and Albigenses which rejected the hierarchical structure of the Church and the sacramental system. The Albigenses, in particular, were a serious threat in southern France.[19]

Although it was not a major part of their theology, the Albigensians also rejected the humanity of Christ because of their revival of the old Manichaean doctrine that matter is evil. This aspect of their teaching, however, was more than amply countered by the new type of spirituality developing at the time in which the human element in the life of Christ and the saints was focused upon in order to cultivate the spiritual life of the ordinary man. Thus, for example, the hardships of Mary and Joseph as, in the last hours before the Divine Child was born, they sought a home; or the sorrows and agonies of the Passion, of Mary at the foot of the Cross and of

Jesus looking down upon her suffering innocence, all became subjects of popular devotion and preaching:

> These and a thousand like moving considerations, which, moving the will through an over-whelming stirring of the emotions . . . are the means by which a whole-hearted devotion conveys itself from the preacher--all this spirituality has in St. Bernard its first great founder.[20]

The emotional mysticism whereby the individual reflected upon and associated himself with the events of Christ's life and sufferings was combined with an increasingly popular devotion to Mary. Bernard of Clairvaux, Norbert of Premontre, the Franciscans and Dominicans did much to promote Mary's cult and lay religious fervour.[21] This stress on Mary, the woman from whom Christ received his human nature, also argued against the Albigensian Christology.

This new "personalized" spirituality and the ardent devotion to Mary, with their implicit rejection of any teaching denying Christ's humanity, was supported and reflected in the arrangement of the facade, the choice of themes, and the style of the sculptures of the Gothic cathedral. The Gothic style originated in the French royal domain during the reign of Louis VII (1137-80), and its first monument was the abbey church of Saint-Denis, designed by Abbot Suger.[22] It was at Saint-Denis that the idea of affixing statues to each of the columns of the doorway originated.[23] The great monumental sculpture of northern France such as the statues and bas-reliefs of the

portals at Chartres, Etampes, Provins, Le Mans, Anger--to mention only some of the better known churches--all follow the pattern set by Suger's sculptors.[24] The use of monumental sculpture itself was also quite novel at the time; it had been over five centuries since large-scale sculpture had been produced in France.[25]

In Romanesque architecture the entrance was often treated as a point of maximum tension; the Gothic church, with its monumental sculpture arranged around the portals, removed that tension and in so doing created a new type of doorway.[26] At Saint-Denis the porch statues of Old Testament kings and queens, prophets and priests form a numerous congregation standing within the portals of the church:

> But where the Romanesque statue is, more often than not, confined within an architectural frame, the portal figures of the Gothic cathedrals are not separated by the architecture but seem, instead, to form a warmly human group and to occupy the portal space in much the same way as do members of the congregation who contemplate them from the pavement below.[27]

The triple west portals at Reims adopt this format and combine it with statues carved in a naturalistic style to present biblical stories in a naturalistic way well suited to contemporary religious interest in the human dimension of the Christian faith. The central position here accorded to scenes from the Infancy of Christ is itself indicative of the increased desire to describe a closer relationship between God and man, based on a

personal experience of the events mentioned in scripture.[28] Instead of portraying kings and queens who are unified by their membership in a privileged class, as at Saint-Denis, the figures at Reims show the bringing of good news, the meeting of two expectant mothers, and the handing of a baby into the hands of an old priest--all familiar human actions and relationships.

The dedication of the central portal at Reims to The Coronation of the Virgin responded to the popularity of Marian thinking. Until the late twelfth century there were three types of portals which dealt with the following subjects: the Christ of the Apocalypse, the Ascension, and Christ as Judge.[29] Portals dedicated to the Virgin started to appear toward the end of the twelfth century; the first Gothic example where The Coronation of the Virgin occupied the central portal was Senlis (c. 1170).[30] The situation changed so dramatically that Mary was sculptured in the porches of all the cathedrals in the thirteenth century.[31] The figure of the Virgin with Child was combined with scenes from the Infancy of Christ at Chartres, Paris, Amiens and here at Reims; a combination most appropriate to the popular devotion to Mary:

> How glorify her better than by showing that she was essential to the work of salvation, that through her lived and grew the frail infant on whom rested the hope of the world.[32]

The contemporary religious context is not only reflected in the general arrangement of the facade at Reims, the style

of the statues and in the choice of themes, but even in the composition of The Annunciation:

> Christological and Marian thinking . . . converge in the scene of the Annunciation as it appears in cathedral sculpture . . . Thus the angel's smile on the central portal at the Cathedral at Reims awakens the humble devotion to Mary, the loving servant of God. In her, according to mystical theology, God and his creation approach one another most nearly, come closest to union. She is the model for spiritual rebirth and for the mystical union of the faithful with Christ.[33]

The Annunciation is part of a large, orderly sculptural program which decorates the whole facade of the cathedral. This complicated theological and artistic composition, like that on other Gothic cathedrals, parallels the encyclopaedic works of theologians such as those by Thomas Aquinas, Honorius of Autun, and Vincent of Beauvais. The very orderliness of the Gothic facade is a characteristic of scholastic thought which liked to make the orderliness and logic of their thought palpably explicit.[34] Everything is classified and organized according to a rational system; the composition and execution of every scene are carefully worked out in advance:

> This certainty of knowledge that dominates the summa and the specula endows the sculpture it inspires with a suggestion of gaity . . . Scenes of great drama . . . are all steeped in the ideal calm and peace of an atmosphere where all excess of suffering, even suffering itself, is banished, where faith and reason rule equally.[35]

The scholastic attitude to life may have conflicted with popular devotions on the sufferings of Christ, but it was quite compatible with devotions on the joyful mysteries

of Christ's life and art illustrating such subjects as our Annunciation.

The cavernous portals are a characteristic of Gothic architecture initiated by Abbot Suger. The statues placed in the portals were arranged in such a way as to look like a natural human group--they describe biblical personages who have descended into the world of man. The life-like style used on the statues aided this arrangement and the image it created. All the attributes initiated at Saint-Denis have been used and improved at Reims to depict the Incarnation within the context of contemporary Marian thinking and the new spirituality advocated by St. Bernard. Scenes from the Infancy of Christ replace the Old Testament figures at Saint-Denis and the style and relationship of the figures to each other at Reims has become more naturalistic compared to the early Gothic style used at Saint-Denis or the west portal of Chartres.[36] These stylistic and compositional developments are used in conjunction with the standard iconography to ensure that the basic message is conveyed.

In other words, the visual language of the day is used, and, furthermore, by placing The Annunciation within the Coronation portal the relevance of the Incarnation is suggested. The Annunciation, through its naturalistic style and context shows that God truly did become man and that it is by modelling our life on Mary that we receive the full benefits of Christ's redemption.

The life-like arrangement of the Infancy cycle vividly portrays the human side of Christ's life so that we may be moved to greater devotion; Mary, crowned Queen of Heaven because of her perfect obedience to the will of God, is the ideal example of the devout life given for us to follow.

The development of the Gothic style, especially the new type of doorway, was based on political as well as religious considerations. It originated in the French royal domain at Saint-Denis, designed by Suger who had close ties with the monarchy.[37] As the rule and authority of the Capetian kings spread, so did Gothic architecture.[38] During that time the French kings were involved in a constant struggle to assert their authority over the rebellious burghers and feudal aristocracy in their territories:

> Plainly a policy was needed . . . that would strengthen the hand of the king against the separatist tendencies of the aristocracy, that would reaffirm the sacred and priestly nature of kingship and would win the favour of the rebellious burghers.[39]

An alliance was worked out between the Church, particularly the French episcopacy, and the crown for their mutual benefit. The Capetian kings became the traditional defenders of the papacy during the Gothic period, supporting the popes in their struggle with the German emperors over the rights of investiture and in the campaign against the Albigenses in southern France.[40] In return the French bishops used their secular powers to support Capetian rule, and their spiritual powers to affirm the divine nature of kingship.

In gaining the support of the Church, the king also won the favour of the popular religious movements within the Church.

The Gothic cathedral was closely related to this historical situation.[41] This relationship can be seen in the design of Gothic portals--starting with Saint-Denis, Gothic portals frequently had statues of biblical kings and queens arranged in such a way as to create a popular image of royalty that alluded to the sacred nature of kingship.[42] Christian kings were rarely portrayed on cathedrals, but Reims, being the coronation church, was an exception to the rule. There the divine nature of kingship was more directly expressed in the clerestory windows where the kings are each accompanied by the bishop who anointed him:

> Nothing distinguishes one of these solemn figures of twenty monarches from the rest, for they are in the church to remind the people that kingship is in its essence divine, and that the king anointed with sacred oil is more than man. The lesson is continued in the curious statuettes carved round the exterior of the great rose-window of the facade, where one sees David anointed by Samuel, and Solomon anointed by Nathan . . . Above them all is a figure of God giving His blessing to the kings.[43]

The style of the statues and their arrangement around the entrance portals at Reims derive from Suger's facade with its political connotations. This popular format has been admirably used, in conjunction with a standardized iconography, to illustrate clearly and attractively The Annunciation and show the relevance of its underlying doctrine to the people of the day.

Footnotes III

1. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church (London: 1947), II, p. 56.

2. Willibald Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270, trans. Janet Sondheimer (London: 1972), p. 474.

3. Arthur Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France (New York: 1969), p. 289. Cf. Marcel Aubert, The Art of the High Gothic Era (New York: 1965), p. 40.

4. In the third quarter of the twelfth century a new design for the western portals was adopted: windows were inserted instead of the usual tympanum reliefs in order to light the nave better, and thus the subjects which would have occupied the tympana were relegated to the gables; see Arthur Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, p. 290.

5. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, pp. 474-6.

6. Arthur Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, p. 298.

7. Andrew Martindale, Gothic Art (London: 1967), pp. 48-51. Cf. Arthur Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, p. 301.

8. Henri Focillon, The Art of the West, trans. Donald King (London: 1963), pp. 72-3. Cf. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 56; Paul Vitry, French Sculpture during the Reign of St. Louis 1226-70 (New York: 1973), p. 44.

9. M. Aubert, The Art of the High Gothic Era, p. 56.

10. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, pp. 54-6. Cf. P. Vitry, French Sculpture, p. 44.

11. Ibid., p. 56.

12. M. Aubert, The Art of the High Gothic Era, p. 57.

13. Arthur Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, p. 239. Cf. Emile Mâle, The Gothic Image, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: 1958), pp. 392-6.

14. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 26.

15. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich: 1971), I, p. 36:

> The maphorion, a symbol of her continuing virginity is probably borrowed from Syrian art; it appears in Byzantine art from the sixth century onwards . . . This

head covering from the east was taken over by the west during the Middle Ages; but it was later replaced by heavy mantling enveloping the head which stems from Early Christian art of Rome.

16. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 39.

17. Ibid., p. 38.

18. Geoffrey Atkinson, ed. and trans., Works of Francois Villon (London: 1930, p. 129.

19. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, II, pp. 334-53.

20. Ibid., p. 277.

21. Ibid., pp. 277, 335. Cf. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 32.

22. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 11. Cf. Norris Kelly Smith, Medieval Art (Dubuque: 1967), p. 85.

23. Émile Mâle, Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century (The Noonday Press: 1965), p. 51.

24. Ibid., p. 29.

25. A. Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, p. 3.

26. N. K. Smith, Medieval Art, p. 90.

27. Ibid., p. 91.

28. Ibid., p. 98.

29. Émile Mâle, Religious Art, p. 51.

30. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 33.

31. Émile Mâle, The Gothic Image, p. 232.

32. Ibid., p. 184.

33. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 39.

34. Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (New York: 1966), pp. 34-5.

35. M. Aubert, The Art of the High Gothic Era, p. 58.

36. Most of the portal statues at Saint-Denis were

destroyed during the French Revolution; but those at Chartres were probably modelled on them. Cf. H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York: 1968), p. 248.

37. W. Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p. 11. Cf. N.K. Smith, Medieval Art, p. 85.

38. M. Aubert, The Art of the High Gothic Era, p. 20. Cf. P. Vitry, French Sculpture, p. 4; N.K. Smith, Medieval Art, pp. 85-91; W.Sauerlander, Gothic Sculpture in France, p.11;

> In Normandy building in the gothic style started only after Philip Augustus (1180-1222) had captured the duchy from the English. In the south of France the appearance of Gothic cathedrals followed the expansion of the royal domain under Louis VII (1223-26) and still more under Louis IX (St. Louis; 1226-70).

39. N.K. Smith, Medieval Art, p. 88.

40. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, II, pp. 303-13, 345-53.

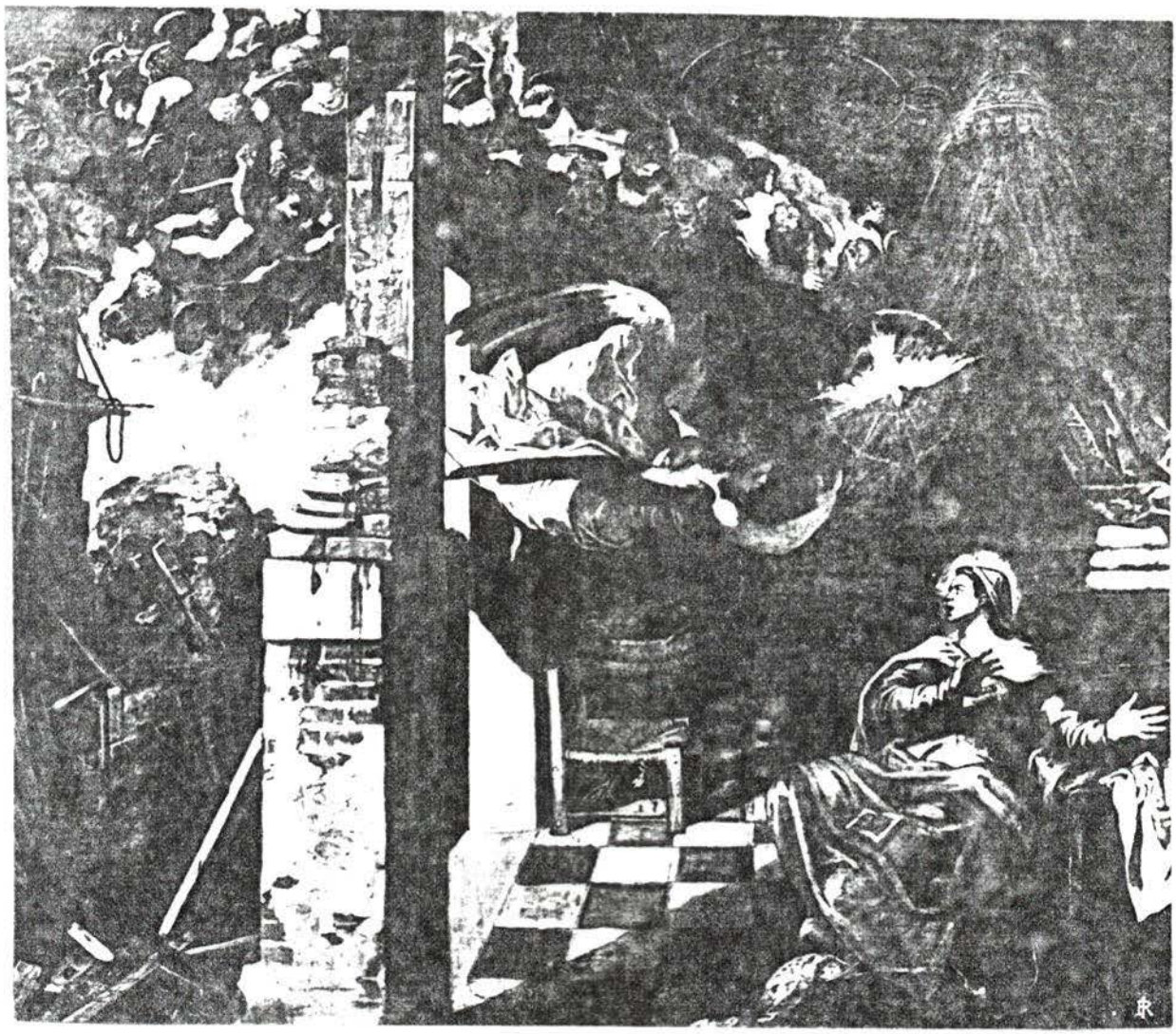
41. N.K. Smith, Medieval Art, p. 85.

42. Ibid., p. 91:

> The kingly figures of Byzantine and Romanesque art typically seated upon thrones, in images that are normally located in distant or lofty regions of the church. Suger's image of royalty is popular in form, location, grouping, and address.

43. Émile Mâle, The Gothic Image, p. 431. Cf. A. Gardner, Medieval Sculpture in France, pp. 290-1.

Chapter IV: The Annunciation, Tintoretto, Scuola di San Rocco, Venice, A.D. 1583-7



In a very different style and in the context of a very different world from that of the Reims sculptures is Tintoretto's presentation of the Incarnation in The Annunciation, located in the Lower Room of the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice. The days of papal supremacy, when popes had enough power to depose kings and emperors were no more than their vicars for temporal affairs, were long over. New political theories, beginning with the thirteenth and fourteenth century writings of Dante, John of Paris and Marsiglio of Padua, argued against papal theories of ecclesiastical supremacy. Secular power had grown steadily since the Gothic age and with it , the State's ambition and ability to dominate the Church. The papacy was forced to surrender temporal power; even its rights to administer its properties and direct religious life were lost in some countries.[1]

The attack on Church authority did not end in the temporal sphere, however. In the sixteenth century came religious theories which challenged the very structure of the Church. The rights of the magisterium to teach Christians in matters of doctrine and morality were denied as well as the rights of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to govern the Church proper.[2] Thus the reformers rejected the whole corpus of canon law as well as the teaching office of the Church and on this basis set up new types of Christian communities and propounded new doctrines which challenged traditional Catholic teaching. Christian unity was lost in

Europe and the Church's struggle with Protestantism was to engage most of her energy and affect her art for at least the next century.

The new political theories and secular outlook of the fourteenth century were accompanied by a new style in art, the Renaissance, and it in due course became the Baroque of which Tintoretto was an early exemplar and formulator.

The stylistic and iconographic affinity between Baroque and Renaissance art can be seen in comparing Tintoretto's Annunciation (p. 62) with Fra Angelico's in the Diocesan Museum, Cortona, which was painted in 1428 (Pl. 8). In both paintings we find an interest in portraying nature, linear perspective, chiaroscuro and naturalistic space. They also share a similar compositional format; the left side opens out into nature while the right has an architectural setting. Both paintings depict the personal encounter between Mary and the angel in all its humanness. Mary's reaction to the appearance of the angel varies; nonetheless, the response is natural in both and calculated to appeal to the viewer's human interest in an extraordinary event.

As regards iconography, again there are similarities. In both Mary is seated with a book on her lap while an angel with wings approaches from the left. Behind Mary is her bedchamber and above her is the dove of the Holy Spirit. This combination of motifs symbolize Mary's dual role as mother of Christ and mother of all Christians

(Mediatrix of Grace):

> Ivo of Chartres in a commentary on Psalm 19, 4-6, where the rising sun is likened to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, referred to the Annunciation and described the Virgin as the bridal chamber of the sun, Christ. The idea of the virgin conception is here combined with the old image (Ephesians 5) of Christ as the husband of the Church.[3]

Both Marys are similarly dressed in full-length garments, mantles,and maphorions. These iconographic details were all quite common at this time. The motif of Mary sitting in an interior derives from Giotto and is frequently found in Annunciations from the fifteenth century on.[4] The book which Mary holds was used from the eleventh century onward as we noticed in our Gothic examples. The dove is found in the S. Maria Maggiore mosaics but actually was uncommon until after the thirteenth century; it does not appear in French Gothic cathedral sculpture.[5]

Although the basic iconographic motifs, the approach to space and form, and concern for the individual observer are the same; there are also considerable differences between the two works of art. Fra Angelico presents an orderly, balanced and calm world "in which every shape is clear and every color bright and sparkling."[6] Tintoretto presents a dramatic scene full of movement in which his use of lighting obscures his forms and the use of sharp contours to delineate each shape is abandoned. In short, Tintoretto's style is typically Baroque, Fra Angelico's typically Renaissance:

> The baroque uses the same system of forms, but in

> place of the perfect, the completed, gives the restless, the becoming, in place of the limited, the conceivable, gives the limitless, the colossal. The ideal of beautiful proportion vanishes, interest concentrates not on being, but on happening. The masses, heavy and thickset, come into movement.[7]

If we look at the two works more closely we can see other characteristic Renaissance-Baroque differences. Fra Angelico's painting is composed as a self-contained entity, pointing everywhere back to itself through a careful balancing of horizontals and verticals, stable figures and arrangement of forms that either balance each other or move toward the centre of the picture. Tintoretto avoids a static, balanced composition; the action expands beyond the picture itself. His work does not look like a self-existing piece of the world, but like a passing show which the spectator may only briefly glimpse. In the encounter between Fra Angelico's Mary and angel it looks like time has stopped; Tintoretto has portrayed only the moment.

Tintoretto's painterly style, which sees objects in masses rather than clearly outlined forms, combines with the movement of his figures and open form composition (the action expands beyond the picture) to produce a very dramatic scene. This sense of drama is one of the main characteristics of Baroque art. The second characteristic is a new type of compositional unity. Renaissance art had unified its compositions through a balanced, harmonious and often static arrangement of independent parts. Tintoretto

rejected this approach. The parts of his composition merge because of his painterly style and use of lighting;[8] even colour loses "its separate existence and it is lighting which now moulds the masses of the composition."[9] These elements combine with the dramatic presentation of his figures to convey one dominant theme, the moment of the angel's arrival; one scarcely notices Joseph working in the background. On the other hand, Fra Angelico's angel seems to be having a nice quiet chat with Mary and the viewer has plenty of time to survey the rest of the painting. Tintoretto's work is perceived as a whole; unity is achieved by the subordination of all elements to one dominant theme.[10]

In the light of our knowledge about Baroque art we can see that Tintoretto was turning away from the Renaissance toward the Baroque format. In his own day his stylistic changes were not clearly understood. Venetian critics like Dolce found fault with his paintings because they departed from Titian's principles; Guisconi and Aretino criticized his hasty execution.[11] Vasari praised his painting speed and extravagance, but was also critical:

> Indeed, he has surpassed even the limits of extravagance with the new and fanciful inventions and strange vagaries of his intellect, working at haphazard and without design, as if to prove that art is but a jest. This master at times has left as finished works sketches still so rough that the brush-strokes may be seen, done more by chance and vehemence than with judgment and design.[12]

This criticism is understandable because Tintoretto's

works come at the end of the Renaissance tradition in Venice before the art critics could become familiar with the new principles behind Baroque art. By the standards of Renaissance art, his lack of careful draftsmanship and unbalanced, disorderly composition would indeed be faults. But once one realizes that Tintoretto is following Baroque principles which prefer a painterly style to clear contours and a dramatic to a balanced, static composition, one can see that his work was quite successful. How apt his choice of style was can be seen in the development of art after Tintoretto's time; the Baroque became the accepted style throughout Europe in the seventeenth century and in the Veneto Tintoretto's work became the dominant model, displacing even the authority of Titian.[13]

As mentioned earlier, the two main characteristics of Baroque art are its dramatic quality and its tendency to subordinate all parts under one dominant theme. Tintoretto combines these attributes with a passion for natural details which heightens the drama and enhances the spiritual sense in his works. In The Annunciation he combined an everyday scene of Joseph working amid his tools and lumber with the sudden arrival of the angel and heavenly beings. The combination of naturalistic background and spiritual event support each other; "both terms are heightened in effect by their conjunction, and the drama takes on an intense force."[14] The spiritual sense is further highlighted by his dramatic use of light, which follows no natural laws

and in places has no visible source; "it is a paraphrase of the mystery taking place."[15] By such means Tintoretto transforms the narration of a historical event which takes in the realm of the spirit.[16]

Tintoretto's painting appears to be a great success to our eyes. He has used the new Baroque style in conjunction with a standard iconography to depict the Annunciation in an original, dramatic and spiritual way. The question now to be considered is how appropriate his approach was in his time, given his social and religious milieu and what was expected of him as an artist.

The role of the artist in Tintoretto's time had actually changed little since the Middle Ages, even though the artist had become far more important as an individual and enjoyed a much higher social status.[17] Painting had become a respectable profession and was considered one of the best ways to rise in society.[18] From Renaissance times on artists associated with the most cultured men in their society and were often accepted on equal terms by the nobility. Artists also came to have greater freedom; over the course of the fifteenth century they increasingly freed themselves from the protective rules of the guilds, but in doing so they became dependent upon patrons.[19] The artist might choose to exhibit paintings with no particular destination in mind, "but artists usually disliked the freedom of working for unknown admirers, and with a few notable exceptions exhibitions were assumed to

be the last resort of the unemployed."[20]

Artists usually had studios and accepted commissions. The size of the picture and the subject, in varying degrees of exactness, were determined by the patron.[21] Pictures commissioned for galleries, on moveable canvases, had a far greater scope and artists frequently had no set theme. But with official Church of State art the situation was quite different:

> With the growing prestige of art, the most important patrons--the Church and sovereigns--stopped following the tone set by the collector-man of letters, and began to demand more specific and supposedly effective service from art in exchange for the commissions they distributed.

This was particularly true for the Church because of the Reformation crisis. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England and parts of Germany and Switzerland had all broken away from the Church. The Virgin was defamed in Protestant countries, her statues destroyed and the recitation of the Ave Maria was considered idolatrous. Catholic teaching on the sacraments was attacked, the Holy Mass derided, and the Real Presence denied. To make matters worse, Rome was ravaged and plundered by roving bands of Lutherans during Clement VII's reign (1523-34) and the Ottoman Turks invaded Hungary, advancing as far as Vienna. The struggle with Protestantism affected art as well as theology--both defend all the dogmas that came under attack.[23]

The Council of Trent (1545-63) itself outlined the attitude that was to be adopted in Catholic art. No

pictures suggestive of false doctrine or furnishing occasions of error to the uneducated are to be set up.[24] Images should constantly remind the people of the articles of faith; but they should also edify:

> Great profit is derived from all sacred images, not only because the people are thereby admonished of the benefits and gifts bestowed upon them by Christ . . . the miracles which God has performed by means of the saints, and their salutary examples are set before the eyes of the faithful: that so they may give God thanks for those things; may order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints; and may be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety.[25]

Trent entrusted the application of the decree on sacred art to the bishops. This led to the Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images (1582), written by a commission set up by Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, bishop of Bologna, to study how art should be used. It concluded that art was to be didactic and devoid of all obscurity:

> One of the main praises that we give to a writer or a practitioner of any liberal art is that he knows how to explain his ideas clearly . . . We can state the same of the painter in general, all the more because his works are used mostly as books for the illiterate, to whom we must always speak openly and clearly . . .painters only represent what is proposed by holy doctors and accepted unanimously by the Church, without adding, removing, of changing anything, either in content, or as to the way of expression or other particulars.[26]

The same concern for purity of content led to the publication in Rome of the Tractatio de Poesi et Pictura ethica (1593) by the Mantuan scholar, Antonio Posserino:

> All questions of the religious admissibility of works of art, which had to serve in the ecclesiastical domain and were possibly compromised by virtuosity, were brought under official control by the

> establishment of an ecclesiastical censor. On 13 November, 1603, Cardinal Camillo Borghese issued an edict that every ecclesiastical work must be submitted to him or his representative for appraisal.[27]

The decisions to ensure the orthodoxy of art expressed at Trent were no idle threats. This was one of the tasks of the papal Inquisition, admitted to Venetian territory in 1524, as can be seen in the examination of Paolo Veronese for a picture he painted in the convent of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in 1573.[28] Because of the political rivalry between Venice and the Papal States, Venice was very concerned about maintaining its independence and resented anything that looked like an extension of papal jurisdiction in its territory. But in religious matters Venice was thoroughly conservative and proud of its Catholic heritage.[29] The conflict between Venice and the papacy involved papal jurisdiction and not matters of Church doctrine--there was no real toleration of heresy, no abandonment of orthodoxy.[30]

This was particularly true of the scuoli in Venice which were dedicated to the serious practice of Catholic life. They were established to provide religious discipline for the lay population and to distribute benefits, both material and spiritual, among their members and, to a lesser extent, among the needy outside. Rich or poor might join, at different rates of subscription, but those denounced for sinful behaviour were fined or expelled.[31] They were independent foundations and were ruled by elected citizen members; nonetheless, they were loyal to Venice

and could be counted on to provide men and money in times of crisis.[32] It was to one of these scuoli, the Scuola di San Rocco, that Tintoretto belonged and for which he did many paintings, including The Annunciation. Therefore, we can expect that both he and his patron held to orthodox teaching about doctrine and the use of art.

Tintoretto was given a yearly stipend in return for painting the pictures in the Upper Hall (1577-81) and Lower Hall (1583-7) of the scuola. This arrangement meant that for a period of ten years he had no competitors and was less restricted by prescribed rules than if he would have had to compete for each painting. Furthermore, as a member of the Confraternity (from 1565) he was spiritually akin to the community and could be trusted to work with a fair amount of independence. These favourable working conditions were probably an important factor in his being allowed to use such a daring new style in his works there. Nonetheless, he was supervised by a small committee and did follow theological advice:

> This does not mean that the choice of subjects was left entirely to him. In their subject-matter these wall and ceiling paintings represent such a thoughtful renovation of the typological system linking the events of the Old and New Testaments and such an original adaptation to the charitable purposes of the Confraternity . . . that the programme can scarcely have been conceived without the collaboration of learned advisers. The programme presupposes not only a thorough knowledge of the Bible, but also a very subtle theological education, such as we can hardly believe Tintoretto possessed. What he himself contributed was the artistic moulding of the train of thought.[33]

The paintings in the Upper Hall, consisting of twenty-three interrelated works dealing in part with the life of Christ, involved a far more complicated iconographic scheme than the eight paintings of the Lower Hall, including our Annunciation, which illustrate the life of Mary.[34] Opposite the entrance of the Lower Hall is The Annunciation; then follow The Adoration of the Magi, The Flight into Egypt, The Massacre of the Innocents, The Presentation in the Temple, and The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Interspersed between the Massacre and Presentation panels are two narrow vertical paintings illustrating Magdalen in the Desert and St. Mary of Egypt.

The dramatic juxtaposition of natural details and the heavy figure of Mary with the heavenly beings and dove of the Holy Spirit vividly depicts the Incarnation. The iconography of The Annunciation was quite normal, except for the motif of the flying angel, which was in keeping with the religious context. The traditional teachings about the nature of Christ were not among the Catholic doctrines attacked by the reformers.[35] The flying angel motif later became normal in Baroque Annunciations and seems to be related to the Protestant diminution of Mary's importance in the plan of salvation:

> The Annunciation of the seventeenth century contrasts sharply with that of preceding centuries. Heaven suddenly invades the cell where the Virgin is praying . . . Almost always other angels escort the heavenly messenger. Art strove to effect the union of heaven and earth. The Virgin of earlier days, isolated in her cell, was not deemed sufficiently majestic or

> mysterious. The idea to be conveyed was that the angels and God Himself waited upon a maiden's answer.[38]

As at Reims, The Annunciation is placed in the context of the life of Mary which also enhances her importance. The redemptive aspect of the Incarnation is expressed; God became man through the consent of Mary in order that mankind may be restored to the state of grace it had before the Fall. Mary, the model of Christian life, is the example of how we should live so that we might receive the full benefits of Christ's redemption. The bridal chamber symbolism in The Annunciation heightens still further Mary's significance. It was through Mary that Christ and therefore grace came into the world; it is still through her that men receive the grace to become God's adopted sons. Mary is the mother of Christ and, through the grace won by Christ, the mother of all Christians (Mediatrix of Grace). Hence Ivo's description of her as the bridal chamber of Christ.

The naturalistic style and interest in the reactions of the individual viewer can be found in Renaissance as well as Baroque art. This style was suited to an emotionalistic type of mysticism which developed toward the end of the fourteenth century and was primarily interested "to see the Incarnation as God's entry into the world of personal experience."[37] The new consciousness of personal religious experience was greatly encouraged during the Reformation crisis both by reformers and

Catholics such as St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Teresa of Avila. Thus we can see that the dramatic style used by Tintoretto not only gave strong emphasis to the underlying Incarnation dogma in The Annunciation, but was also closely related to contemporary spirituality.[38]

The new type of compositional unity used in Tintoretto's work whereby all the parts of the painting are subordinated to one dominant element also fits the political and religious context. The parts of his composition had no independent existence but rather worked together in support of one dominant theme. This format well suited contemporary Catholic religious life. The Reformation had stressed an independent, personal approach to religion; the Counter-Reformation restated the traditional approach which emphasized the need to develop one's spirituality within the context of the sacramental life and doctrinal guidance of the Church. Correspondingly, the rights and authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, especially of the pope, were stressed at this time.

Politically this was a turbulent age with strong assumptions about the need for central authority and the belief "that there ought to be one supreme will in every state, to which all others are subject."[39] States grew in strength and self-consciousness; a large part of the activity of statesmen was directed "to bringing recalcitrant elements under control."[40] The Papal States paralleled these political developments.[41] Thus a style

in which the individual parts lost independent existence and were caught up in and supported a central, dominating theme was very appropriate to this age in which such effort was made to overcome individualism and increase centralized authority in both the religious and political sphere.

It would seem that Tintoretto's Annunciation meets all the requirements for good Catholic art. It used a standard iconography and fashionable, even avant-garde, style to depict the biblical event in a clear and edifying fashion. Tintoretto, working with theological advisers, has gone far beyond a documentary account of the Annunciation to portray its inner meaning and relate it to his world. The outward form used to portray the Annunciation has changed considerably since Sixtus III's time but the underlying doctrine and attitude to art have not.

Footnotes IV

1. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church (London: 1960), III, pp. 435-50. On August 18 Leo X signed the Concordat of 1516 which gave Francis I and the French kings the right to present to the pope for his confirmation the future bishops, abbots and priors of France, "so there passed into the hands of the king, the all but absolute control of nomination to posts whose total income was almost equal to the state itself." (p. 448)

2. The magisterium is the teaching office of the Church. The pope and the bishops constitute the ordinary magisterium whose teaching is received with obedience. When the pope formally defines a truth in faith or morals, there is a solemn declaration of the magisterium to be received with assent by all, see C. M. Davidson, A Simple Catholic Dictionary (London: 1973), pp. 10,12.

3. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich: 1971), I, p. 51. Cf. Karl Rahner, ed., The teachings of the Catholic Church, trans. Geoffrey Stevens (Staten Island: 1967), pp. 181-2, 186-91.

4. Ibid., p. 48.

5. Ibid., p. 44.

6. Frederick Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art (New York: 1973), pp. 178-9.

7. Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, trans. M.D. Hoffinger (New York: 1950), p. 10. See pp. 13-6 for Wolfflin's summary of the five main stylistic developments by which Renaissance art changes into Baroque. In brief they are the following:

1. linear to painterly style--Baroque art abandons clear contours; it sees objects in masses rather than clearly outlined volumes (p. 30);

2. planar to recessional composition--Renaissance art orders the picture in strata parallel to the picture plane; Baroque art withdraws the plane from the eye while emphasizing forward and backward relations (p. 73);

3. closed to open form--Baroque pictures are not self-contained entities pointing everywhere back to themselves like Renaissance works, but rather point out beyond themselves and purposely look limitless (p. 124);

4. multiple unity to unifies unity--unity is achieved in Renaissance art by a balanced harmony of independent parts, in Baroque art by the subordination of all elements to one dominant element (p. 156);

5. absolute to relative clarity of subject--Baroque art is not concerned with an explicit presentation of the subject; composition, light and colour no longer serve only to define form but have their own life (pp. 196-7).

8. Hans Tietze, Tintoretto (New York: 1948), p. 21: The way in which the figures are related with one another and withdrawn into themselves, in which the picture is so filled with rhythmic life that each separate figure, however ostentatious its gestures, yet forfeits its right to separate existence, all that is already the perfected style of Tintoretto.

9. Ibid., p. 43.

10. H. Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, p. 126.

11. Hans Tietze, Tintoretto, pp. 11-2. Cf. F. Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art, p. 554.

12. Vasari, "Life of Battista Franco," Lives of the Artists, cited in Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, Italian Art 1500-1600 Sources and Documents (New Jersey: 1966), p. 91.

13. S.J. Freedberg, Painting in Italy 1500-1600 (Middlesex: 1971), p. 362. Cf. Eric Newton, Tintoretto (London: 1952). pp. 207-8.

14. Ibid., p. 361.

15. Hans Tietze, Tintoretto, p. 18.

16. This is characteristic of Tintoretto's painting in general, see S.J. Freedberg, Painting in Italy, p. 360: The paintings are pregnant vehicles of religious experience, not just from their quality as illustration but from the presence in them of a power that infuses what is illustrated with spirituality.

17. Franzsepp Würtenberger, Mannerism, the European style of the sixteenth century, trans. Michael Heron (London: 1963), p. 33: The act of painting attained to a hitherto unimagined dignity and became almost a religious activity.

18. Francis Haskell, Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque (London: 1963), p. 20.

19. Robert Klein, Italian Art, p. xiii.

20. Francis Haskell, Patrons and Painters, p. 6.

21. Francis Haskell, Patrons and Painters, p. 9: Usually the outlines of the subject would be indicated, and it was left to the artist to add to it those elements which he found necessary for its representation. Often the request for further iconographical details came from the painter.

22. Robert Klein, Italian Art, p. xv.

23. Émile Mâle, Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century (The Noonday Press: 1949), p. 168.

24. J. Waterworth, trans., The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent (London: 1848), p. 236:

In fine, let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecoming or confusedly arranged . . . the Holy Synod ordains that no one be allowed to place . . . any unusual image, in any place or church, howsoever exempted, except that image have been approved by the bishop.

25. Ibid., p. 235.

26. Gabriele Paleotti, Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images (Bologna: 1582), cited in R. Klein, Italian Art, pp. 125-6.

27. F. Würtenberger, Mannerism, p. 36.

28. Robert Klein, Italian Art, pp. 129-32.

29. William McNeil, Venice the Hinge of Europe (Chicago: 1974), p. 192. Cf. Charles Wilson, The Transformation of Europe 1558-1648 (London: 1976), pp. 47-8.

30. D.S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580 (London: 1970), pp. 120-1.

31. Ibid., pp. 116-7.

32. Eric Newton, Tintoretto, p. 112.

33. Hans Tietze, Tintoretto, p. 47. Cf. F. Wurtenberger, Mannerism, pp. 114, 118; Eric Newton, Tintoretto, p. 53; Frederick Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art, p. 557.

34. Eric Newton, Tintoretto, pp. 126, 151.

35. See Karl Rahner, ed., The teaching of the Catholic Church, pp. 57-61, 250-2, 259-62, 382-402.

36. Émile Mâle, Religious Art, p. 184.

37. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography, I, p. 46. Cf. Philip Hughes, A History of the Church, III, pp. 489-90:
It was not to the depths of the mysteries that men now turned for food for their souls, but to the mysteries as they had been shown to the senses. There is, from now on, an increasing familiarity in tone of men's commerce with the supernatural world, and they make greater use of their imagination in their effort to make a contact with that world. Their meditation on it is more colourful, the emotions play a greater part in their spiritual life than ever before.

38. Hans Tietze, Tintoretto, p. 49
Its special qualities . . . are derived from the new consciousness of personal religious experience. Those who are familiar with the religious history of the sixteenth century know the importance which this attitude possessed for the leading personalities of the time--St. Ignatius of Loyola or St. Theresa--and how deep was its influence on all subsequent developments. Various modern writers have attempted to investigate these analogies drawn from religious history in their relationship to Tintoretto's art; we may content ourselves with the statement that the incomparable freshness and wealth of experience in his pictorial visions found their counterparts in the features of the religious innovators.

39. George Clark, Early Modern Europe (London: 1966), p. 82. Cf. Charles Wilson, The Transformation of Europe, p. 46.

40. Ibid., p. 153.

41. Charles Wilson, The Transformation of Europe, p. 48:
The Papal States, for example, certainly illustrate the theme of political centralization of the age . . . frontiers were extended . . . the Roman nobility were reduced to abject submission.

Chapter V: The Annunciation, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Tate Gallery, London, A.D. 1850

Almost three centuries separate Tintoretto's Annunciation from the work we are about to consider. We now enter a stormy age in which revolutionary political changes were being advocated and violence was often used in attempts to reform the established social order. In February, 1848 Louis Philippe was overthrown, and a new republic established in France. There was a great Chartist demonstration in London in April which worried the authorities so much that the Duke of Wellington secretly fortified the capital, hiding his soldiers in cellars, and behind sand-bags on house-tops. That same year the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was founded; two years later the public exhibition of paintings by three of its members caused an uproar.[1] It had become general knowledge by 1850 that these painters belonged to a secret brotherhood, which at a time of social unrest was considered by critics to have subversive undertones.[2] This, combined with their new painting style which rejected contemporary canons of British taste, led to a severe criticism of their work which was virtually unprecedented in the history of English art.[3]

One of these criticized paintings, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Annunciation (originally titled Ecce Ancilla Domini), is the subject of this chapter (p. 82). Tintoretto's style was new, but not revolutionary; his painting represented a development of the High Renaissance style in the direction of the Baroque. Rossetti's painting

was in a new style, dramatically different from the established style of his day. Furthermore, as we shall see, it was the product of a new attitude about art.

Rossetti's picture is similar to earlier Annunciations in several ways. As usual, an angel approaches Mary from the left. She is in her bedchamber, a common setting for Annunciation scenes since Renaissance times. Standard iconographic motifs such as the dove, angel holding a lily (symbolic of Mary's purity), and haloes for Mary and the angel are present. Rossetti deviates from normal iconography somewhat in not giving his angel wings; nonetheless, the figure still looks like an angel and the scene can be easily recognized as an Annunciation. Behind Mary, a single candle is lit, even though it is daytime--a traditional symbol of the divine presence.[4] Like most High Victorian painting, this work is naturalistic in technique and anecdotal in content. Rossetti's decision to commission his own work and sell it via public exhibition, so unusual in Tintoretto's day, was quite normal mid-nineteenth century practice. At first sight it is hard to see why it caused such a disturbance--why critics such as Frank Stone of the Athenaeum complained that it defied " the principles of beauty and the recognized axioms of taste."[5]

John Ruskin identified the problem in his description of the work:

Rossetti's 'Annunciation' differs from every previous

> conception of the scene known to me, in representing the angel as waking the Virgin from sleep to give her his message . . . consider . . . how the pious persons who had always been accustomed to see their Madonnas dressed in scrupulously folded and exquisitely falling robes of blue, with edges embroidered in gold . . . and reverently to observe them receive the angel's message with their hands folded on their breasts in the most graceful positions, and the missals they had been previously studying laid open on their knees--consider, I repeat, the shock to the feelings of all these delicately minded persons, on being asked to conceive a Virgin waking from her sleep on a pallet bed, in a plain room, startled by sudden words and a ghostly presence which she does not comprehend, and casting in her mind what manner of Salutation this should be.[6]

Realism, as here emphasized, is one of the main characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite work. In choosing to avoid the graceful, but artificial, poses and elaborate settings of earlier Annunciations, exemplified by Ignaz Günther's version (Pl. 9) in which Mary has almost exactly the same clothing and gesture described by Ruskin above, in favour of natural gestures and a plain room, Rossetti followed the Pre-Raphaelite theory that painting should portray "an event exactly as it might have occurred."[7] This realistic approach not only led him to paint his Annunciation in a way that offended public religious sentiment as Ruskin described, but also offended generally accepted artistic standards of idealization, as seen in the art of the Royal Academy.

Academy art was characterized by a theatrical "grand manner," free, open brushwork and spot-lighting effects.[8] The PRB wanted art to be realistic; which they interpreted at this time to mean fidelity to nature, historical

accuracy and emotional sincerity. In pursuit of emotional sincerity they eschewed the "clutter and stage-props" and theatrical gestures of Academy painting as can be seen in the stark interior of Rossetti's work and the reserved demeanour of his angel and Virgin. A linear style and bright colours on a white background seemed more faithful to nature than the painterly style and brownish tones of the Academy. Related to this was the Pre-Raphaelite tendency to work evenly over the canvas so that everything was equally detailed and lighted (as things were in nature) in place of the conventional manner of having a light centre of "principal light."[9] The Academy had used this principal light in conjunction with its painterly style and theatrical gestures to produce dramatic scenes which violated the Pre-Raphaelite dictum of emotional sincerity, a further reason to avoid these stylistic devices. Rossetti's Annunciation contained all these Pre-Raphaelite characteristics, as well as a striking and unusual use of colour whereby most of the composition was in varying tones of white except for two forms in contrasting blue and red.[10] The result was an arresting work that shocked both public and Academy.[11]

What the PRB did, in effect, was reject the late Baroque style, as adopted by the Royal Academy, in favour of the Renaissance style.[12] The Baroque painterliness, sense of drama and focused composition in which all the elements of the painting are caught up into one

predominating experience are manifested in the Academy's free brushwork, spot-lighting and theatrical manner. The formula developed by Tintoretto and seen in Günther's work was still valid into the nineteenth century, therefore Rossetti's Annunciation was not well received--it did not appeal to any popular spirituality, nor was its style admired.[13] Instead it received bad reviews in many newspapers and was considered to have been done in bad taste.[14] Ruskin came to the defense of the PRB, but he did not deny that they were breaking the established principles of beauty and thus not painting what the public wanted to see:

> They intend to return to the early days in this one point--that, as far as in them lies, they will draw either what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene they desire to represent, irrespective of any conventional rules of picture-making.[15]

Later that year he published a pamphlet, Pre-Raphaelitism, which approved this approach. He praised the PRB for refusing to produce works "enriched by plagiarism, polished by convention, invested with all the attractiveness of artificial grace, and recommended to our respect by established authority."[16]

What Ruskin, in effect, claims is that the artist's first duty is to reality--to portray nature as it really is, to paint events as they really happened--and this duty comes above the wishes of patrons and public and any conventional standards of taste.[17] It is this attitude to

art that is at back of Rossetti's work and its failure to win public acceptance.[18] This was an attitude very different from that followed by Tintoretto and Günther and from that taught in the Academy:

> The importance of the antique was that it was held to provide access to the best style, the purest forms. A Venus or an Apollo was not just a figure; it was human form translated and elevated according to canons of beauty and taste. What students were required to undergo was not simply technical instruction leading to expert draftsmanship, but indoctrination in a mode of thought, a pattern of formal ideas.[19]

Rossetti did not restrict realism to "truth to nature," as can be seen in his later works. In these works, such as The tune of seven towers (1857) we enter the dream-world of the painter, and as in a dream, "the improbable, even the impossible is real."[20] Rossetti had actually developed the theory behind this type of art in his Hand and Soul (1850). There he argued that the first duty of the artist is not fidelity to external nature, but fidelity to one's inner experience.[21] This is in essence the modern attitude to art--the artist's primary concern is reality and reality is what the artist says is real.[22]

One unfortunate side-effect of the modern approach to art adopted by the PRB was that such art lost public support. This should not be surprising considering its disregard for accepted standards of taste:

> Perhaps it is not unfair to say that their most important contribution was to the spirit in which painting was undertaken . . . The attitude of the cloistered and devoted aesthete is healthier for art than that of the rank commercial populariser; and if the English people after this date were again to regard

> art with indifference--sometimes with hostility, at least they were never again to regard it as the comfortable apotheosis of their own commonest tastes and sentiments.[23]

A cloistered aestheticism may or may not be healthy for art; the point here is that it is very unhealthy for the traditional artist-public relationship. Once artists cease to produce what patrons and public want, their art ceases to be valued and they tend not to be supported by the public (however much they may, for political reasons, enjoy government subsidies).

This fact is born out by the different fates of modern and traditional artists. The Royal Academy was to continue providing the English people with paintings they found acceptable for several years after the advent of Pre-Raphaelitism. Millais himself abandoned his Pre-Raphaelite principles in the late 1850's and began to paint genre scenes, portraits of society ladies and popular historical subjects. His works were no longer "avant-garde", but they were appreciated by the Academy and the public at large. He became President of the Royal Academy, was honoured with a baronetcy and accumulated a considerable fortune through the sale of his paintings. Rossetti, on the other hand, never exhibited again in public after the showing of his Annunciation and earned a living by selling his paintings to a small circle of cultivated patrons.[24]

The later paintings of Millais were not regarded with indifference or hostility. The situation was much different

for those artists who accepted the new attitude about art and were not fortunate enough to find enlightened patrons "as the litter of impoverished artists whose lives are such a familiar feature of the history of art after the mid-nineteenth century bears witness."[25] This problem faced the PRB at the 1850 exhibitions: Millais had to cut his price, Hunt and Rossetti could not sell their paintings. It was three years before Rossetti's work had a buyer. The traditional painters fared much better as can be seen in the high proportion of Academy paintings that ended up in noble and royal collections in relation to "avant-garde" works.[26]

If we consider Rossetti's painting as an illustration intended to convey a religious teaching to the general public in an attractive and acceptable manner, we can see that it is far less successful than the Baroque format developed by Tintoretto. Tintoretto's formula evolved from the Renaissance style in response to a new religious and social context. The result was a painting in the latest visual vocabulary, a vocabulary so successful that it is still being used, that attractively and persuasively depicted Catholic doctrine. Furthermore, in being related to recent social and religious changes his style indirectly argued for the relevance of the gospel message. Rossetti's choice of style, on the other hand, was not popular; nor was it related to the contemporary religious-social situation. Even his original Latin title, Ecce Ancilla Domini, was unsuitable because of its unpopular

connotations of "popery" in England at the time.[27] The title had to be changed before Francis MacCracken, a Protestant shipping agent from Belfast, would buy it. Even then it is unlikely that MacCracken bought it for devotional purposes. It seems that he bought paintings as investments and later resold them for a profit.[28]

Further faults with Rossetti's work, only partly related to his realism, involve technical insufficiencies. All his life he suffered from poor technique. This can be seen in the rigid forms and weak perspective in his Annunciation.[29] In his attempt to achieve a literal naturalism he relied on models (usually friends and relatives) for his figures, rather than his imagination. This led to technical problems in his work, as it did in PRB painting in general, much of which is "just painted charades or dumb crambo by friends."[30] For example, Rossetti had great trouble with the angel's head because of the model's (his brother William) "malevolent expression."[31] He only resolved this difficulty by giving the angel an almost expressionless face. Mary, modelled by his sister Christina, looks like a "frightened Victorian girl in a shift."[32] Rossetti's weak technique only makes his unpopular style more unattractive and results in a work that is hardly edifying.

The edifying value of his painting is further lowered by his documentary approach. As mentioned in my Introduction, such an approach, in attempting to portray gospel events as they might have happened, suggests that they are little more

than interesting history with little significance for us nowadays. It was precisely this attitude to religious art that was rejected in the Sunday Mass Book and in an encyclical by Pius XII as we shall see in my next chapter. In sum this approach, adopted by Rossetti and the PRB, fails to relate biblical events to personal experience, and therefore produces works that are unlikely to be edifying:

> All dealt with the religious subject matter in a new 'realistic' way. In practice, this meant ignoring theology as a useless complication, defining 'realism' as a physical, material, literal fact . . . since we don't and can't know what the historical Christ was really like, any attempt to paint that subject can only involve us in archaeological scene construction in the Hollywood sense, which will have nothing to do with Christian or any other religious experience.[33]

The main problem with Rossetti's illustration is his use of an unpopular style, a style which does not function to persuade a wide audience to accept or help it to understand the message he was illustrating. As mentioned earlier, Rossetti used the standard iconography in his painting, so there is little problem in recognizing his subject matter. But he deviated from the usual iconography in the expression he gave to Mary,and this leads to some doctrinal ambiguity. According to Marian doctrine Mary is the "most perfect handmaid " of God.[34] The normal way to depict this artistically is to show her as the willing receptacle of the Holy Spirit, as can be seen in Günther's Annunciation. The expression Rossetti gave Mary,however, could and has been interpreted as "frightened"--which conveys quite a different impreeeion. Such a depiction of Mary may be more realistic, as Ruskin

suggested in describing Mary as "startled by sudden words and a ghostly presence"; but the main point of Catholic illustration is doctrinal clarity, not realism.

It is interesting to note that Rossetti's approach to art, which places the expression of reality above all else, is quite different from that used in the popular arts. Fred Schroeder, in his Outlaw Aesthetics, concluded that successful popular illustrators respond to the needs of many people by building upon the assured appeals of a popular aesthetic and never place art above audience, but rather fit the form to the society.[35] He also mentions that traditionally styles in art do not change rapidly and arbitrarily as was the case in Rossetti's work:

> We find that great art is often popular art . . . and that it is designed to correspond to formulas and prototypes. It changes . . . probably not in the office of a progressive leader for the culture, but as follower of the changing ethos.[36]

Schroeder's conclusions correspond with the Church's teaching on art and her actual practise, as can be seen in our first four examples. Rossetti adopted a different approach with very different results. His work may be admired as an avant-garde work; but whatever its importance in the history of art, it fails as a popular religious illustration--a failure that seems closely related to a new attitude to art, which differs greatly from the approach officially advocated by the Church and actually practised by popular illustrators.

Footnotes V

1. Two of these paintings, Christ in the House of his Parents by John Everett Millais and A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Druids by William Holman Hunt had been shown at the annual Royal Academy Exhibition; the third, Ecce Ancilla Domini by Dante Gabriel Rossetti at the Free Exhibition at Hyde Park Corner.

2. Oswald Doughty, A Victorian Romantic (London: 1960), p. 99:

> The secret meaning of 'P.R.B.' confined . . . to a journalist and by the journalist to the British public had aroused bitter hostility against those who would overthrow Raphael and the tradition of contemporary British art. Such men were felt to be subversive, capable of attacking even the British Constition itself.

Cf. William Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy (London: 1975), p. 29.

3. G.H. Fleming, Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (London: 1967), p. 142:

> Here, the critics felt, was a group of insurgent fledglings trying to uproot the foundation of contemporary British painting. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, then, could be no less than an organized conspiracy to overthrow the conventions and traditions to which the officialdom of English art swore allegiance. Furthermore, if these rebels would subvert their country's art, might not they try to tear down the proprieties in other areas of national life, such as morality and religion.

4. H.W. Janson, History of Art (New York: 1968), p. 292.

5. Frank Stone, The Athenaeum, June 1, 1850; quoted in G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, p. 139.

6. John Ruskin, "The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism," Nineteenth Century, November 1878, pp. 926, 928-9; quoted in G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, p. 116.

7. G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, p. 132:

> This painting is Rossetti's only truly Pre-Raphaelite painting because for once he worked in complete fidelity to nature . . . and because he made his greatest effort to portray an event exactly as it might have occurred.

8. James Sambrook, Pre-Raphaelitism, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. James Sambrook (Chicago: 1974), p. 1:
English painting called for a thorough reformation. The conventional pyramidic composition of so many Academy pictures, their emphatic stylized chiaroscuro light-effects, the superficial bravura of their free, open brushwork, were dismissed by these three young rebels as 'slosh' . . . Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais despised alike the theatrical 'grand manner' of most historical painting and the inane triviality of most genre painting.

9. Timothy Hilton, The Pre-Raphaelites (London: 1970), p. 57.

10. Raymond Watkinson, Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design (London: 1970), pp. 8-9:
One of the marks of the finest Pre-Raphaelite work was, and still is, the exciting and disturbing power of its colour . . . It was not of course simply the colours, but their combination that compelled attention and provoked these effects. It was a decisive move towards modern painting, where we expect art to disturb, to remake and extend experience, rather than to recapitulate perfected systems of form.

11. Oswald Doughty, A Victorian Romantic, pp. 69-70:
Thus, the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, in its inception, however disappointing to the modern historian of art seeking unity of ideas and a definite aesthetic theory, appealed to its founders at the time, chiefly because it lacked all unity save the common principle of revolt against contemporary fashion in painting.
Cf. R. Watkinson, Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design, p. 7:
When we consider the Pre-Raphaelites, we are considering one of the fountain-heads of the art of our own time, not just another manifestation of English eccentricity . . . this essentially anti-academic spirit is a part of the whole story of modern art.

12. Hunt, Millais and Rossetti thought that the forms used by painters after Raphael lacked sincerity, simplicity, and were not true to nature; but that the forms before Raphael were more in accordance with their ideals. Hence the choice of the title of their group, see William Gaunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy, pp. 22-3.

13. For a discussion of the suitability of Günther's style to his age, see Arno Schönberger and Halldor Soehner, The Rococo Age, trans. Daphne Woodward (London: 1969), pp. 105-6; and Eberhard Hempel, Baroque Art and Architecture in Central Europe, trans. Elisabeth Hempel and Marguerite Kay (Middlesex: 1965), p. 239.

14. For several quotes about Rossetti's painting from the newspapers of the time, see G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, pp. 133-40.

15. John Ruskin, "Letter to the Times," (13 May, 1851); quoted in G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, p. 163.

16. John Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism (1851); quoted in Ibid., p. 171.

17. Alan Gowans, The Restless Art (Philadelphia: 1966), pp. 141-2:

> The changed forms of advance-guard painting after 1860 only manifested what had already been long underway, a shift in the fundamental goals and concepts of the art of painting itself. This shift was effected by the generation before, the generation of the Pre-Raphaelites in England, the Barbizon school and Courbet in France . . . All, in one way or another reject the principle of seeking for Beauty according to artificially set principles or ideal formulae; all propose instead to base their art on something more tangible, more 'real' . . . Only Courbet seems to have been at all consciously aware that art cannot really be concerned with both Beauty and Reality at the same time . . . and when you choose Reality you have fundamently changed the nature of art.

18. This realism was in contrast to the approach taken by the Academy; a fact recognized by the Pre-Raphaelites themselves as seen in the writings of Holman Hunt; see W. Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (New York: 1905), I, p. 176:

> Antiquarianism in its historic sense was being instructively pursued in connection with art . . . It made thus a radical distinction between all illustrations by the old masters and those of modern art; to the former the costume, the type of features, and the architecture were the same whether the subject were in ancient Egypt or in imperial Rome. When a modern artist, influenced by the new learning, had settled upon a subject and had made his rough design, his further consideration was what character of costume and accessories it would require.

19. R. Watkinson, Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design, p. 31.

20. Ibid., p. 154. Cf. Stephen Spender, "The Pre-Raphaelite Literary Painters" (1945), in James Sambrook, ed., Pre-Raphaelitism, p. 123.

21. Graham Hough, "The Aesthetic of Pre-Raphaelitism"

(1949), Pre-Raphaelitism, ed. James Sambrook, p. 142:

> This is a new kind of Pre-Raphaelite creed--not fidelity to external nature, but fidelity to one's own inner experience, which is to be followed even if it contradicts the precepts of Sir Joshua Reynolds. This fidelity to experience is all that God demands of the artist, it is acceptable to him as a formal religious faith, and an art carried on in this spirit is itself a worship and service of God.

Cf. John Nicoll, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (London: 1975), p. 23:

> Rossetti's artistic creed was to become one not of fidelity to an external nature but to his own inner experience. It was ultimately to reject reality and sublimate it by giving priority to his own fantasies and self-expression.

22. Alan Gowans, The Restless Art, pp. 178-9, 196-202, 248-9. Cf. R. Watkinson, Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design, p. 7.

23. Timothy Hilton, The Pre-Raphaelites (London: 1970), p. 83.

24. Francis L. Fennell Jr., ed., The Rossetti-Leyland Letters: The Correspondence of an Artist and his Patron (Athens, Ohio: 1978), passim. Frederick R. Leyland, a Liverpool shipowner, and William Graham, a M.P. from Glasgow each paid Rossetti between £8,000 and £10,000 over the last sixteen years of his life, income he relied upon heavily (pp. xi-xii). He was given great freedom as to what he painted except that Leyland wanted his commissions to be a particular size with a specified number of figures so that they would fit into his gallery. The commissions were rarely carried out on time, the money having been given in advance. But Rossetti found even this arrangement too restrictive and quite often promised his patrons one thing and ended up giving them something else. The patron could refuse the painting, but then Rossetti "would begin painting for someone else, and the down payment would float in limbo, destined to be applied toward unspecified future commissions." (pp. xix-xx)

25. John Nicoll, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, p. 96.

26. Ibid., p. 36.

27. Oswald Doughty, A Victorian Romantic, p. 102.

28. John Nicoll, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, p. 84.

29. James Sambrook, Pre-Raphaelitism, p. 9. Cf. G.H. Fleming, Rossetti, p. 131; Robin Ironside, Pre-Raphaelite

Painters (New York: 1948), p. 31:

> In spite of the extreme imaginative intensity and beauty of his best work, he always suffered from his ignorance of technical methods; this was sometimes disastrous, as for example the Oxford Union frescoes.

30. Stephen Spender, "The Pre-Raphaelite Painters," Pre-Raphaelitism, ed. James Sambrook, p. 122.

31. Oswald Doughty and John Wahl, ed., Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Oxford: 1965), I, p. 124.

32. Cf. Alan Gowans, The Restless Art, p. 153:

> Rossetti paints a frightened Victorian girl in a shift, obviously (and understandably) dismayed at the news just brought her.

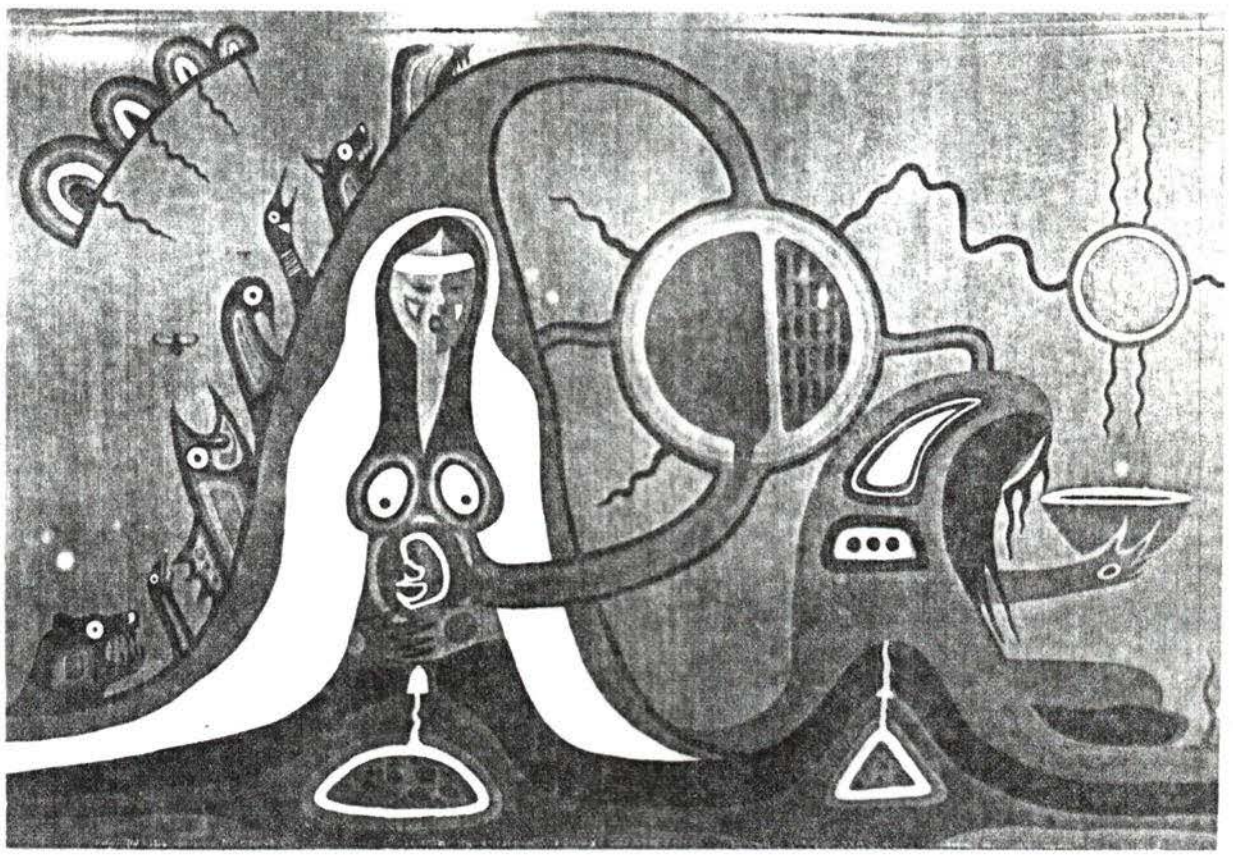
33. Ibid., pp. 152-3.

34. Karl Rahner, ed., The teaching of the Catholic Church (Staten Island: 1966), p. 182. See also pp. 186-9.

35. Fred Schroeder, Outlaw Aesthetics, Arts and the Public Mind (Ohio: 1977), p. 15.

36. Ibid., p. 146.

Chapter VI: Nativity, Jackson Beardy, Sunday Mass Book for Canada, A.D. 1976



The Reformation crisis had witnessed an attack on the structure of the Church, but the basic Christian message was still accepted and formed the basis of European political thought. In the late seventeenth century, a more radical assault on Christendom began which concerned itself with man's intrinsic nature and his need for a Redeemer. Original sin was rejected and replaced by the doctrine that man's nature is good. Political thought was no longer to be founded on Christian premises--the host of ills man now suffers are not the result of man's inability to curb his natural tendency to do evil but rather they are caused by civilization which perverts man's natural tendency to do good. These theories are still with us in the form of the twentieth century cult of primitivism and faith in the natural goodness of mankind. Furthermore, the tremendous advances in technology during the last few generations have produced a world very different from all earlier times with the result that traditional Christian ways of life, beliefs and values have often seemed inappropriate. Thus the main task of the Church nowadays is to show the relevance of the basic Christian message to the modern world--man still does and always will need a Redeemer.

It was within this context that Jackson Beardy's Nativity (p. 99), painted in 1976 for the Sunday Mass Book for Canada, was commissioned. Beardy's style is quite unusual because it uses the symbolic language of the Ojibway-Cree people instead of the naturalistic style

typical of Catholic art since the Renaissance. Outward appearances should not deceive us, however; although Beardy's style is unusual and modern, the underlying attitudes about how art is used to convey a religious message and the artist-patron relationship, as well as the doctrine illustrated, are all thoroughly traditional.

This traditional approach to art, and the concern to show the relevance of Catholic teaching, can be seen in the commissioning of Beardy's work. It, like all the others in the missal, was sponsored by the Canadian Catholic Conference under the direction of the Archbishop of Halifax, James Hayes, and thus is an example of official, public religious art. Beardy was given the subject matter to be illustrated and instructed about the manner of execution--events were not to be reconstructed as they might have happened, and a relevant, contemporary visual language was to be used. In other words, the patrons of the missal wanted their artists "to speak of the presence of God in the world as we know it."[1] The contemporary visual forms were used not only to express the relevance of the message, but also to present the gospel story to Canadians in a way they would find attractive.[2] The artists were given no specific instructions about the visual forms they were to use; anything was acceptable provided it contributed to the primary task of conveying Church teachings. We can already see that the approach to art behind Beardy's work was quite different from that adopted by Rossetti who

assigned his own content and painted it in the way he saw fit, using a style that was unpopular at the time.

The use of the modern art style by the Church had already been advocated some thirty years earlier:

> Modern pictures and statues . . . are not to be condemned out of hand. On condition that these modern arts steer a middle course between an excessive realism on the one hand and an exaggerated symbolism on the other and take into account more the needs of the Christian community than the personal taste and judgment of the artist, they should be allowed full scope if with due reverence and honour they put themselves at the service of our churches and sacred rites.[3]

It is interesting to note that Pius XII warned against an "excessive realism" or documentary approach as did the patrons of the Sunday Mass Book. Vatican II also admitted the use of modern art and praised the fine arts as among the noblest activities of man's genius; especially the sacred arts which are dedicated to the increase of God's praise and glory and turn men's minds devoutly to God:

> In fact the Church has . . . always claimed the right to pass judgment on the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are . . . suitable for sacred use . . . The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her own. She has admitted styles from every period in keeping with the natural characteristics and conditions of peoples and the needs of the various rites . . . The art of our own times from every race and country, shall also be given free scope in the Church provided it bring to the task the reverence and honor due to the sacred buildings and rites.[4]

In using modern art, the Canadian Catholic Conference thus acted in accordance with the most recent decrees on art and maintained the traditional artist-patron relationship--the Church, as patron, determines the content

and judges the suitability of the style used in her art. The artist is not a free agent expressing himself as he wishes; the needs of the Christian community, as defined by his patron, take precedence over his personal taste and judgement. Therefore,the attitude to art adopted by Rossetti and the PRB--the artist's primary concern is to express his understanding of reality--is rejected.

In stressing her traditional rights as patron, the Church has shown a marked concern for content and style. This same concern has been expressed by the patrons of the missal and can be seen in the use of Beardy's painting. By using the symbolic language of the Indian people he has avoided painting a Nativity as it might have actually happened. Yet, in avoiding an excessive literalism, Beardy has not become overly symbolic. The sun symbol can be quite easily recognized as God, the fetus as Christ, and the abstract Indian woman as Mary. To further clarify the meaning of the picture, there is a text on the back of the colour plate:

> We see the virgin mother-to-be holding onto an embryo connected to the sun symbol (the Great Spirit) who has deemed it necessary to send his messenger to his people. The mother is also connected to Mother Earth who is nursing her. She too is connected by a lifeline to the sun symbol. Around her are all the orders of creatures who come to see the messenger. He is born to explain their existence, (to restore) harmony between humanity and the elements, physically, mentally, and spiritually. On the other side of the sun symbol we see an elder in prayer, ritually offering a bowl filled with sacred things. He does this in anticipation of enlightenment. Without realizing it, his back is (turned) to the very miracle for which he prays.[5]

Furthermore, the painting is placed in the appropriate section of the missal--the Christmas Vigil Mass. The gospel reading opposite the illustration specifically deals with the birth of Christ.[6]

Beardy has used the vocabulary of the Ojibway-Cree in his attempt to portray the significance of the Nativity:

> At the vanguard of their vocabulary is the divided circle. Morrisseau explains: 'I made circles because they represent something with no beginning and no ending, and I divided them in half because there are two sides to everything, good and bad, short and tall, love and hate, man and woman.' Lines of power or 'power projections' are also found in most Woodland art, often seen emanating from representations of shamans and gods to show their power . . . Painters of the Morrisseau school also use silhouette and x-ray techniques.[7]

The circle, representing something with no beginning or end, and the power projections are appropriate symbols for God who is all-powerful and eternal. The x-ray technique clearly shows the doctrinal significance of the Nativity, that God truly became man, by showing the connection between embryo, sun, and woman. Thus Beardy has given us a visual depiction of the Incarnation dogma which was formulated over fifteen hundred years ago at Chalcedon:

> The Son, our Lord Jesus Christ is . . . true God and true man . . . consubstantial with us in humanity . . . born of the Father before all time as to his divinity, born in recent times for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, as to his humanity.[8]

The divided circle, however, does cause some ambiguity since it symbolically suggests that Christ did not possess the full divine nature by showing the embryo only united to a part of the sun. Furthermore, the divided circle, with

the connotations mentioned above, does not work well as a symbol of an all-good God. This symbolism for God is not likely to be a serious problem since most viewers, although they could understand Beardy's basic symbolism, especially with the help of the text on the back of his picture, probably are not familiar enough with Woodland art to be aware of these connotations. The ambiguity in the Incarnation symbolism is more noticeable; both problems could have been avoided by the use of a solid circle. But a solid circle would not have been consistent with the Woodland style, thus the personal taste of the artist, who preferred stylistic purity over doctrinal clarity, took precedence over the needs of the Christian community. It could be that the patrons of the missal were influenced by the pervasive belief in our culture the the artist should be completely free to express himself and thereby neglected to supervise their illustrators adequately.

Beardy is not content merely to show us the doctrinal significance of the Nativity; he also shows the impact of the Incarnation on our world. As the text on the back of his colour plate states, all the orders of creation have come to see Christ who has been born to restore "harmony between humanity and the elements." Thus Christ is shown as the Redeemer of all creation as well as God Incarnate, it is his birth that brings harmony and enlightenment to man and not the religion of primitive man as symbolized by the elder whose back is turned from Christ. The importance

of this symbolism will be discussed below in relation to modern theories about the natural goodness of man and the cult of primitivism.

Beardy has avoided a literal depiction of the Nativity to such a degree that his painting could quite easily be considered to represent the Annunciation, especially since he shows Christ as an embryo. The underlying doctrines of Christ as God Incarnate and as Redeemer would apply equally well. Hence there is a close relatiohship between this work and the Annunciations already studied in this thesis. Beardy's is less successful than the earlier works we studied in indicating which gospel event is being portrayed; but, on the other hand, never has the doctrinal significance of the Nativity been so directly illustrated.

The fact that Beardy's painting is so abstract compared to earlier Catholic illustrations may not be a disadvantage. Most Counter-Reformation art was intended to instruct the faithful, who were often illiterate, about the articles of faith in the midst of much confusion and heresy. Its iconography had to be clear and easily understood in order to avoid erroneous interpretations. Since these conditions no longer prevail, the Church can use a less familiar and more abstract style. Furthermore, Beardy's audience is literate; the faithful can now read about their religion and the illustrations help to bring out the meaning of the readings. Therefore, although Beardy's art still instructs, his approach can be far more interpretative than was

possible at the time of Trent--believers no longer need to learn the basic aspects of Christ's life from pictures.

The illustrations were also intended to be another means, visual rather than written, of perceiving the truths contained in scripture. The visual form is not just a substitute for the written word to be used by the illiterate, or an aid to clarifying the text, but rather another mode altogether of understanding the truths behind the words. The patrons of Beardy's painting considered the symbolic native style admirably suited to this task as well as attractive:

> Both the Indian and Inuit artists come from traditions that are deeply spiritual and beautiful . . . For many centuries our civilization has been dependent upon the written word; we are just now beginning to develop an awareness of the richness and power of visual and oral traditions. Because of their great sensitivity, reverence for life, and involvement with the world of spirit, we have much to learn from them in the future.[9]

If we consider native Indian art as part of the general category of primitive art, we can trace an interest in this type of art back to the third quarter of the nineteenth century when many collections of primitive art were begun. The aesthetic interest in primitive art started to manifest itself in museums in the 1930's with the change from a purely documentary format to special installations where the best pieces could be emphasized by position and lighting. This process escalated after the Second World War which saw the formation of many new museums and private collections, dedicated to primitive arts.[10] The high

appreciation of native Canadian arts can be estimated somewhat by the sales figures of Eskimo soapstone carving and by the number of galleries across Canada that sell native art. The catalogue for Dorset prints lists thirty-four dealers that sell its prints, a small fraction of the businesses dealing in native arts since Dorset only deals with galleries that specialize in the field.[11] It is very hard to discover the total income derived from native arts, but we do know that soapstone carving alone earned well over two million dollars a year in the mid 1960's.[12] Indian art, until recently, has not done as well as Eskimo art.[13] But since the mid 1970's business has been booming:

> The value of the Canadian Indian art market as an industry is estimated at somewhere between $1.5 million and $2 million . . . Lynne Wynick at Toronto's Aggregation Gallery reports that sales of native art are up six to nine times her 1974 total . . . The Wah-sa Gallery in Winnipeg . . . grossed $85,000 in 1976 and by the end of 1978 had doubled that.[14]

The Canadian government has also supported native art. It has sponsored travelling exhibitions such as Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada which toured many countries and was highly praised wherever it went, as well as books on native art like Olive Dickason's Indian Arts in Canada and W.T. Larmour's The Art of the Canadian Eskimo (which came out in 1966 and by 1974 had already been reprinted five times).[15]

Although native art has government support and has been widely acclaimed by art critics, it is still unclear how much it is appreciated by the general public. Art gallery

sales figures are good, but that only indicates support by the small number of Canadians who deal with fine art.[16] It is quite possible that the popularity of native art is a fad largely supported by an art gallery clientele which may disappear in a few years.[17] If such is the case, the Sunday Mass Book illustrations may soon look dated, neither appreciated by dilettantes nor average Canadians. Nonetheless, in using this style the Church can capitalize on its present prestige in the cultural-intellectual world and many of the users of the missal, if they do not like the native art, will think they ought to.

As was mentioned in my Introduction, the mass book is unique in that it is the first missal to be published in Canada and the first to be exclusively illustrated by and for Canadians. The art was deliberately intended to represent almost every region in Canada. Canada's native cultures are represented by three other works in the Indian style (pp. 384, 1008, 1104) and two in the Inuit style (pp. 48, 672). All the other works use a naturalistic style which derives from the Renaissance tradition or combine various degrees of naturalism with later trends in Western art such as Impressionism (p. 528), Primitivism (pp. 240, 288, 576, 864) and Abstract Expressionism (p. 432). The artists came from almost every region of Canada. The patrons of the missal were thereby trying to use art to state that the Roman Catholic Church is an institution for all Canadians as well as symbolize a

unified Canada:

> For more than three hundred years, French Canada has enriched the lives of Canadians with art of excellence and integrity. Apart from the native peoples, French Canada was for many years the only producer of religious art. Hopefully, English-speaking users of this book will seek out more examples from this long, proud tradition, and rejoice that the faith in this tradition now belongs to the country as a whole.[18]

It should be noted that the current popularity of native art derives from beliefs quite hostile to Church teachings. Around the end of the seventeenth century, as Paul Hazard has documented in The European Mind (1680-1715), traditional theories about man's nature and eschatology came under strong attack.[19] The ideal became popular among intellectuals that men in the state of nature were good, free and equal, and that society was originally formed on the basis of a contract in which the power of government was minimal.[20] The inequality and other ills man now suffers have been brought about by civilization which has perverted man's natural goodness--here derive the premises behind the modern adulation of primitive societies and "primitive" life-styles. Rousseau, and many writers after him, took these ideas and presented them in a format that attracted wide public interest.[21] Unfortunately, these theories were not in accord with the Catholic doctrine of original sin, as Rousseau himself realized. In a letter to Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, which was printed in 1763, he declared "that man is naturally good and that there is no original perversity or sin in human nature."[22]

Before we can understand Rousseau's position, we should know the doctrine itself:

> The Church has always had to stress two fundamental truths in her doctrine of original sin. First, the fact of original sin, the loss of supernatural life and man's consequent total inability to attain by his own powers the supernatural goal assigned him by God . . . The second basic truth is the goodness of human nature (as such) in spite of original sin. Man has indeed, by the loss of his supernatural elevation, been robbed of his orientation to direct, personal community of life with the triune God, and on account of his preternatural gifts also achieves the perfecting of his natural gifts only with much greater difficulty than in Paradise. But the inner goodness of his pure nature as such remains.[23]

The preternatural gifts that Rahner refers to are the gifts of immortality and integrity. That is, fallen man suffers physical death and is inclined to sin (concupiscence). Concupiscence is, in itself, not sin. Man also has a weakened understanding and will compared to his original state. Thus he can only develop his natural gifts with much difficulty, but still is in a position to do good and know truth.[24] This is the sense in which the Church can agree with those who argue for the natural goodness of man.

Rousseau, in rejecting the doctrine of original sin, seems mainly to have objected to the teaching that man in his natural state suffers from concupiscence. He did not reject the other aspects of Christian teaching and, in fact, defended religion against the atheism and deism of the Enlightenment.[25] Later philosophers, such as August Comte and Karl Marx, went on to reject Christianity itself. Not only is man naturally good, but he has no need for a

Redeemer. Heaven is no longer a state of happiness enjoyed in the next life, attained through the grace won for us by Christ; but rather heaven is to be enjoyed here and now via implementation of the proper social reforms. The historian Lawrence Brown has noted that these premises underlie many modern reform movements:

> This imagined life resembles nothing that has ever been lived but of old forseen beyond the grave. In later times, it has been proclained but never approached and its principles are at variance with everything that we know or can estimate about the behavour of men on this earth. Its perfect form, which is supposed to be the ultimate goal, is complete sinlessness . . . complete lack of personal responsibility in the beneficent embrace of the state.[27]

From the late eighteenth century onwards, the belief in the natural goodness of man with its subsequent idealization of primitive societies wherein men live close to nature has been associated with primitivism in the arts. Rousseau's admiration for ancient societies because they were closer to the state of nature than the society of his day and thus further removed from the evils of civilization was ridiculed. The publicity resulting from these attacks only helped to stimulate "a strain of primitivism in avant-garde art, which at times was to have strong social implications."[28] The association of modern theories about the nature of man and primitive life with the admiration of primitive art can be seen in books on primitive art:

> It will be seen that Vatter's opinion coincides with that of Von Sydow which we have given above; a mixture of admiration for the qualities of the work produced by the primitives with a nostalgia for the supposedly

> simple and comforting psychological character of the savage world, a world in which the conflicts of the individual with nature and with society were not yet realized.[29]

Vatter and Von Sydow wrote in the 1920's, fifty years later we find similar ideas in contemporary books on the native arts of Canada:

> Stone Age Indians had a lively appreciation of the universe to which it was necessary to keep attuned . . . most of these people did not make sharp distinctions between men and animals, or even between men and trees or stone . . . Indians were not concerned, as Europeans were, about dominating nature . . . Adaptation has always been of paramount importance to the Indian, who today can take a wry satisfaction in seeing our complex society, based on the idea of dominating nature, being forced to come to terms with it.[30]

A similar admiration of primitive life and deprecation of civilization can be seen in the life and works of Paul Gauguin who "has been made a symbol for the throwing off of the stifling superfluities of the hothouse culture of Europe in favour of return to that more natural way of life of which Rousseau is the generally accepted advocate."[31] Gauguin was born in 1848 in Orleans and lived the life of a prosperous stockbroker between 1871 and 1883. He then decided to become a painter and eventually abandoned job, security, wife and family for art. He sailed to the South Seas in 1891. In his journals he compared the barbarian life of his choice to the civilization he had left behind, always in favour of the former:

> Each point that he makes, is a kind of parable that contains in itself and explains all the wrongs of the insincere and complicated society that he had left,

> contrasting them with the simplicity and naturalness of the people of the South Seas.[32]

While there he advocated his naturalistic philosophy, preaching the uninhibited enjoyment of life to the natives and trying "to undermine their respect for established authority and urging them not to pay taxes and to withdraw their children from the mission school."[33]

Gauguin used the people and scenery of Tahiti in his paintings. He avoided perspective, symmetrical compositions and used poses that looked unstudied as can be seen in his Tahitian Women Bathing (Pl. 10). By these means he gave his works a "natural" look; a quality that is enhanced by his use of large areas of flat, contrasting colours.[34] Although his works have a simple, natural, primitive appearance, there is actually very little direct copying of primitive art in his work. He did not know, or rather did not want to know, that it had rules far more rigid than any Academy's; he could not recognize that primitive life, so far from being free, was a maze of taboos. Gauguin did not move to the South Seas in order to be closer to the sources of primitive art but because of his idealization of the primitive life which was closely related to the style he was using; in fact, there was "an identification of the barbarian in art and the barbarian in living . . . in Gauguin's mind."[36]

The closely associated admiration of primitive art and of primitive life has not disappeared since Gauguin's time

as can be seen in some of the books recently written on native art in Canada, and in the life of Norval Morrisseau, the leading painter in the Indian style. He was largely raised by his grandparents; his grandfather educated him in Ojibway ways, while his grandmother tried to raise him a Catholic:

> The inevitable conflict between his grandparents' beliefs is still being fought by Morrisseau . . . Three years ago, he joined Eckankar, a doctrine he finds compatible with Ojibway belief. 'I was often guilty when I was a Christian,' he says, 'but as soon as I came back to my Indian beliefs there was no fear, there was no sin or guilt.' (No word for 'guilt' exists in Algonkian, the Ojibway language.)[37]

Once again we come across the belief in the natural goodness of man--primitive cultures did not even have a word for guilt! Morrisseau feels that he has been chosen to preserve his heritage through his paintings; thus there is a connection between his style and Indian beliefs, one of which seems to be the natural goodness of man.

As we have seen, beliefs incompatible with Catholic doctrine were associated with primitivism in the arts in the early use of the style. This relationship still exists for some modern artists and art critics. Even though a primitivistic style is associated with a belief in the natural goodness of man and an admiration for a way of life that is close to nature, these beliefs need no longer have the revolutionary, anti-Christian implications they had in Rousseau's time. Nowadays it is quite possible to admire a naturalistic way of life without holding radical beliefs.

This can be seen in the general practice of all types of people who have adopted "natural" clothing styles and grooming, and engage in such back-to-nature activities as hiking, gardening and camping. As we mentioned earlier, there is an interpretation of the belief in man's natural goodness that is compatible with Catholic doctrine. In its most extreme form, this style supported an ideology that denied the need for a Redeemer, but now that need not be the case.

Such an ideology is symbolically rejected in Beardy's painting. This can be seen in his depiction of the elder in prayer whose back is turned from Christ. The elder represents the best element in primitive society. If anyone is wise and in harmony with nature it should be he according to the expreme version of the natural goodness of man theory. But Beardy shows him as needing enlightenment and not truly in harmony with nature--all this comes through Christ. Therefore, the Church in using this painting not only capitalizes on the fashionableness of this style but also indirectly criticizes one of the major ideologies of our time with the very style this ideology used in the past to advocate its premises.

The alternatives to using the native style would have been either a continued use of the traditional Renaissance format, or a use of modern art, exclusive of native art. At a time of radical doubt of Church teachings and dwindling church attendance, it is understandable that the patrons of

the missal would want to use a modern style to show the relevance of the gospel message to the modern world. They also wanted the illustrations to represent all Canadians which encouraged the use of native art. Furthermore, in using native art they could capitalize on its current cultural prestige as well as criticize the natural-goodness-of-man heresy with its own style.

Aside from these considerations, however, there are flaws in Beardy's Nativity which limit its effectiveness as a Catholic illustration. The popularity of the Indian style may be short-lived and limited to the art gallery public. Successful popular religious illustrations should use an aesthetic a wide audience will find attractive. Although this is doubtful in Beardy's case, it seems that his patrons had no intention of violating this dictum. As mentioned earlier (p. 107) they considered the native style "deeply spiritual and beautiful." If there was an error in choice of style it was not an error of principle, but of judgement.

The most serious flaw in Beardy's work is his ambiguous divided circle symbolism. The main criterion of successful Catholic illustration is that it clearly and unambiguously express orthodox Catholic doctrine. It appears that the patrons of the missal have forgotten the salutary advice of Trent on religious art in commissioning this work which really is not adequate as an official Catholic illustration because of its doctrinal ambiguity. During the Renaissance, personal artistic expression had too often

hampered doctrinal clarity in art works sponsored by the Church. Among other things the Council dealt with this abuse and reminded bishops of their duty. It might be instructive to recall here the case of Veronese before the Inquisition who had,like Beardy, allowed his personal artistic taste to take precedence over doctrinal clarity. The painting in question was his Last Supper, executed for the Refectory of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice (1573):

> Q. Did any one commission you to paint Germans, buffoons, and similar things in that picture?
> A. No, milords, but I received the commission to decorate the picture as I saw fit. It is large and, it seemed to me, it could hold many figures.
> Q. Are not the decorations which you painters are accustomed to add to paintings or pictures supposed to be suitable and proper to the subject and the principal figures or are they for pleasure--simply what comes to your imagination without any discretion or judiciousness?
> A. I paint pictures as I see fit and as well as my talent permits.
> Q. Does it seem fitting at the Last Supper of the Lord to paint buffoons, drunkards, Germans, dwarfs and similar vulgarities?
> A. No, milords.
> Q. Do you not know that in Germany and in other places infected with heresy it is customary with various pictures full of scurrilousness and similar inventions to mock, vituperate, and scorn the things of the Holy Catholic Church in order to teach bad doctrines to foolish and ignorant people?[38]

The application to Beardy is obvious:

> Q. Does it seem fitting to paint a divided circle in your Nativity with its ambiguous symbolism?
> A. . . .

Footnotes VI

1. Sunday Mass Book for Canada (Ottawa: 1976), p. 31.

2. Ibid., p. 31:
Each artist was asked to make a visual statement that would be both strong and beautiful. Each was asked to think of all the people across this vast country and to speak directly to them.

3. Pius XII, Christian Worship (Mediator Dei) (London: 1947), pp. 75-6.

4. Austin Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Minnesota: 1975), pp. 34-5.

5. Sunday Mass Book, pp. 96-7.

6. Matthew 1: 18-25, Ibid., p. 96:
This is how Jesus came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit . . . Mary . . . has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.

7. Christopher Hume, "Rush to Indian Art," Macleans, Jan. 22, 1979, p. 27. Norval Morrisseau is the leader of the Woodland movement of which Jackson Beardy is a member.

8. Karl Rahner, ed., "The General Council of Chalcedon," quoted in The teaching of the Catholic Church (Staten Island: 1966), pp. 153-4.

9. Sunday Mass Book, p. 30.

10. Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art (New York: 1967), pp. 9-16.

11. Dorset (M.F. Feheley: 1976), p. 81. The curator of the Gallery of the Arctic assured me that the galleries listed in Dorset represented only a small fraction of those dealing in native art.

12. Nelson H.H. Graburn, Ethnic and Tourist Arts (Berkeley: 1976), p. 41.

13. Olive Patricia Dickason, Indian Arts in Canada (Canadian Government: 1976), p. 112.

14. Christopher Hume, "Rush to Indian Art," Ibid., p. 26.

14. (cont.) The dealers who specialize in native art in Victoria were very reluctant to give out general sales figures, but Stewart Cummings, curator of the Longhouse Gallery, admitted that the Macleans article was fairly accurate.

15. George Elliot, "Foreward," Sculpture/Inuit (Toronto: 1971), p. 11.

16. I talked to Terry Guernsey about the popularity of native art (March 26, 1979). She teaches courses in Canadian art and has worked at the Vancouver Art Gallery where she dealt with native art. On the basis of her experience, she doubts whether it has much general appeal. Much native art seems to be sold outside Canada, or to galleries and collectors; but little to average Canadians.

17. The tone and title of Christopher Hume's article suggest that Indian art is a fad. Mr. Cummings agrees with this interpretation and predicts that the current boom in Indian art will pass in the next four to five years.

18. Sunday Mass Book, p. 30.

19. Paul Hazard, The European Mind (1680-1715), trans. J. Lewis May (New Haven: 1950), pp. 12-5, 259-300, p. xviii:

> Five and thirty years of the intellectual life of Europe . . . a tribunal before which Man himself is arraigned in order that he may declare whether he was born innocent or stained with sin; whether his hopes of happiness were centred mainly on this world, or on the world to come.

20. Ibid., pp. 259-91. Cf. Donald Drew Egbert, Social Radicalism and the Arts (New York: 1970), p. 33.

21. Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy (New York: 1960). VI, pt. 1, p. 76. Those who opposed Rousseau and his followers clearly recognized the new premises about human nature, see Frederick Heer, Europe, Mother of Revolutions, trans. Charles Kessler and Jennetta Adcock (London: 1971), pp. 9-10:

> It was the philosophers, those intellectuals with their fatal belief in the goodness of man, who had paved the way to the revolution. De Maistre, convinced of the basic evil in men, believed in ruthless subjugation and control.

22. Ibid., p. 83.

23. Karl Rahner, "Original Sin," The teaching of the Catholic Church, pp. 131-2.

24. Karl Rahner, ed., The teaching of the Catholic Church, p. 132.

25. Donald Drew Egbert, Social Radicalism, p. 159.

26. Frederick Heer, Europe, p. 83.

27. Lawrence Brown, The Might of the West (New York: 9163), p. 531.

28. Donald Drew Egbert, Social Radicalism, p. 33.

29. Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art, pp. 39-40. Cf. Owen Jones, Grammar of Ornament (London: 1868), pp. 15-6, quoted in Ibid., p. 19.

30. O. P. Dickason, Indian Arts in Canada, pp. 67, 113. Cf. James Houston, "To find life in the stone," Sculpture/ Inuit, p. 53:

> I believe that the Eskimos do not have a satisfactory word for art because they have never felt the need for such a term. Like most other hunting societies, they have thought of the whole act of living in harmony with nature as their art.

31. Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art, p. 63.

32. Ibid., p. 65.

33. Daniel Wildenstein and Raymond Cogniat, Gauguin (London: 1973), pp. 69-70.

34. His bright colours and sweeping patterns, supposedly manifesting "primitive" sensibilities actually derived from the sophistications of Art Nouveau, see Alan Gowans, The Restless Art (Philadelphia: 1966), p. 286.

35. Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art, pp. 70-1.

36. Ibid., p. 67.

37. Christopher Hume, "Rush to Indian Art," p. 24.

38. Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, Italian Art 1500-1600 Sources and Documents (New Jersey: 1966), pp. 131-2.

Conclusion

Our survey of official Catholic art and patronage indicates that the approach to art expressed in the Sunday Mass Book and as early as Nicaea II was, in fact, traditional practice, especially as seen in our first four examples. The composition of religious imagery was not left to the initiative of artists; their concern was execution while the concern of the Church was the selection and arrangement of the subject. The primary interest of Church, as patron, was that her artists give the public clear and unambiguous illustrations of orthodox Catholic teaching. In order to convey the message given them the artists usually adopted a standardized iconography and an accepted (or soon to be accepted) contemporary style, suited to the religious and political context, to present their subject matter in a way the public would find understandable, relevant and attractive. The normal iconography was not used at S. Maria Maggiore because it would not have clearly expressed the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation in the context of the then troublesome Nestorian heresy. The artist worked for the Church and his public; he was not allowed to invent his own subject matter or visual language--private choice of content might lead to doctrinal error and a private artistic vocabulary might not be clearly understood.

Rossetti's Annunciation is less in accord with Catholic teaching on art mainly because of his theory that the primary goal of the artist is to express his understanding of reality.

In his desire to be "realistic" he adopted a literalistic approach and style which did not try to express the continuing relevance of the gospel message and rejected the popular aesthetic of his time. The result was a religious painting that failed to show the importance of the Annunciation to the people of its day and was considered unattractive and unedifying by its audience.

There is no evidence until Rossetti's time, either in Catholic documents on art or in Catholic art, that the artist's primary concern is to give a historically correct depiction of biblical events. Rather the historicity of these events was assumed; the important thing was to show the doctrine underlying the events and relate it to contemporary situations. On the other hand, once this realistic approach to religious art became known by the Church it was rejected as could be seen in Pius XII's statement on art and in the Sunday Mass Book.

Although this realistic attitude to art was rare in Rossetti's time, it has since become quite common among modern "avant-garde" artists. When this theory of art is consistently followed, its adherents claim to be free agents with the right to paint whatever they want in the way they want regardless of public reaction. This freedom of artistic expression does not necessarily lead to the rejection of a visual language and subject matter the public find understandable, interesting and attractive; but in actual practice this has frequently happened.[1]

Consequently many modern artists have tended to alienate themselves from the public at large.

As we have seen, official Church teachings on art have never accepted such an attitude to art. The Catholic artist is to be concerned with objective communication and the accepted standards of taste. The Catholic patron, instead of allowing his artists complete freedom of self-expression as demanded by the "avant-garde", is to take into account, to quote Pius XII, "more the needs of the Christian community than the personal taste and judgment of the artist."

Nonetheless, the patrons of our last example, Jackson Beardy's Nativity, seem to have been influenced by the modern approach to art. The Church's teaching on art was generally followed--Beardy's content and approach were assigned, he avoided a literal depiction of the gospel text and the basic symbolism of his visual language was explained. Thus he did portray the doctrinal significance of the Nativity in a way his audience could understand. But problems arise in his use of the Indian style and its symbolism. The Indian style may be little more than an art gallery fad with little genuine popular appeal or appropriateness to our religious and social context even though it does have the advantage of representing an important segment of Canadian culture as well as a certain intellectual prestige. The main problem is the divided circle symbolism. It seems that the patrons were influenced

here by the modern premise that the artist should have complete freedom of artistic expression with the result that Beardy was allowed to use the divided circle symbol. His painting thus conforms to the precepts of good Woodland art at the expense of doctrinal clarity.

Our study of how the Church used very different styles of art to convey the same message in very different social contexts may have some pertinence to illustrative arts in general. The primary concern of the illustrator, religious or otherwise, is to convey a message clearly, unambiguously and attractively by means of his choice of his visual forms. Like the Catholic artist, he should use a visual language his public can understand and an artistic style they find attractive. This is fully in accordance with Fred Schroeder's conclusions that successful popular illustrators accept the popular aesthetic and never place art above audience, "but rather fit the form to the society."[2] Furthermore, the nature of the subject matter determines the approach of the artist. For example, in Catholic art a literal, historical approach is avoided since the point of the art is to teach and show the continuing relevance of Church beliefs; but a literalistic style would be quite acceptable in illustrations for a history textbook.

The artist-patron relationship may also vary among illustrators. Because of the need to ensure orthodoxy of content, artists doing official Church art will usually have their content assigned. The essence of illustration

is to convey a message, where that message comes from is secondary. Thus a successful illustrator could be self-employed, but his art would still exist to serve the public by giving visual form to subject matter potential patrons want illustrated. The end results are the same--successful popular illustrators accept the popular aesthetic and use an understandable visual language, their art serves the public by meeting needs defined by patrons either actual or potential. There are disadvantages in being self-employed as can be seen in Beardy's case. If he would have had some theological guidance he could have avoided his ambiguous symbolism and thus presented the underlying doctrine of the Nativity less ambiguously. In working for a patron the artist can find out more precisely what his subject matter is than would be the case if he were self-employed.

Although artistic self-expression is restricted when it detracts from the main purpose of illustration, it should be noted that this restriction in no way detracts from artistic quality:

> We do no violence to a work of Christian art nor do we diminish its artistic value by indicating the close connection between image and biblical text or dogma and its interpretation at a given time. Artistic value may be measured by the degree to which full mastery of the artistic means of a given period and the intellectual content of the pictorial theme harmonize.[3]

Works such as the S. Maria Maggiore mosaics, Reims sculptures and Tintoretto's <u>Annunciation</u> are impressive works of art in their own right as well as successful

illustrations. It is in trying to combine artistic expression with visual forms that do something in and for society that the patrons of the Sunday Mass Book hoped to restore the "traditional relationship between artists and the Church." The difficulties they encountered indicate that this will be no easy task since the role of the artist has changed so dramatically since Rossetti's day. But, perhaps it is in remembering one of the traditional functions of the artist, illustration, that the patrons of the missal have intimated how the alienation of modern art from society may be overcome without any loss of artistic excellence.

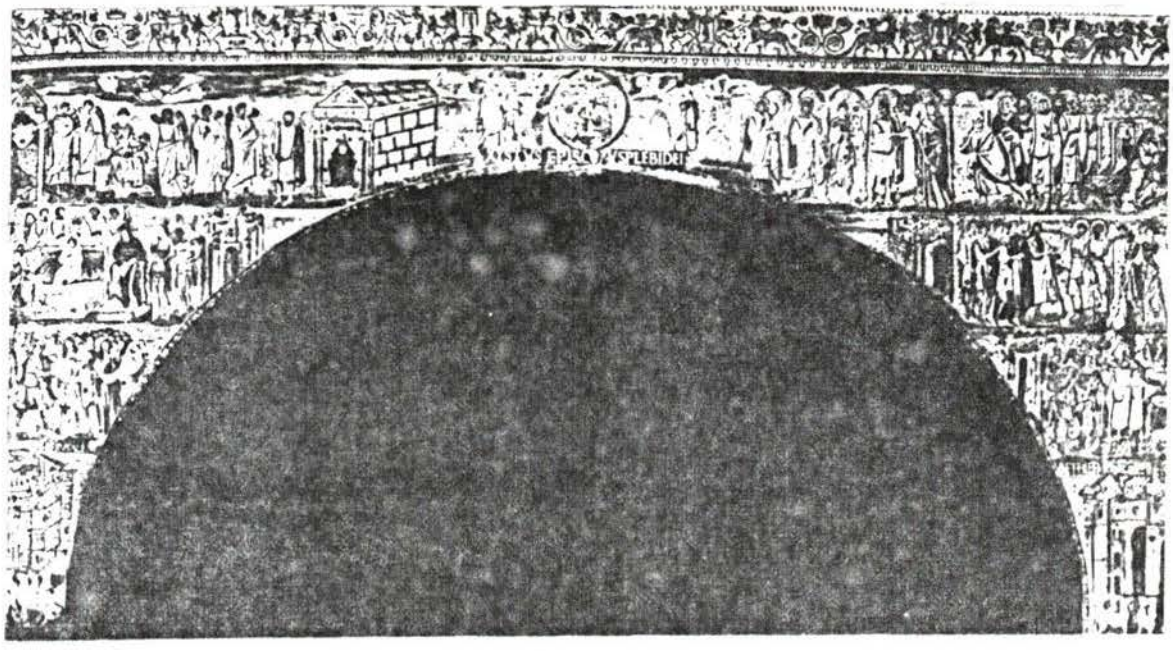
Footnotes Conclusion

1. Alan Gowans, The Restless Art (Philadelphia: 1966), pp. 189-90:

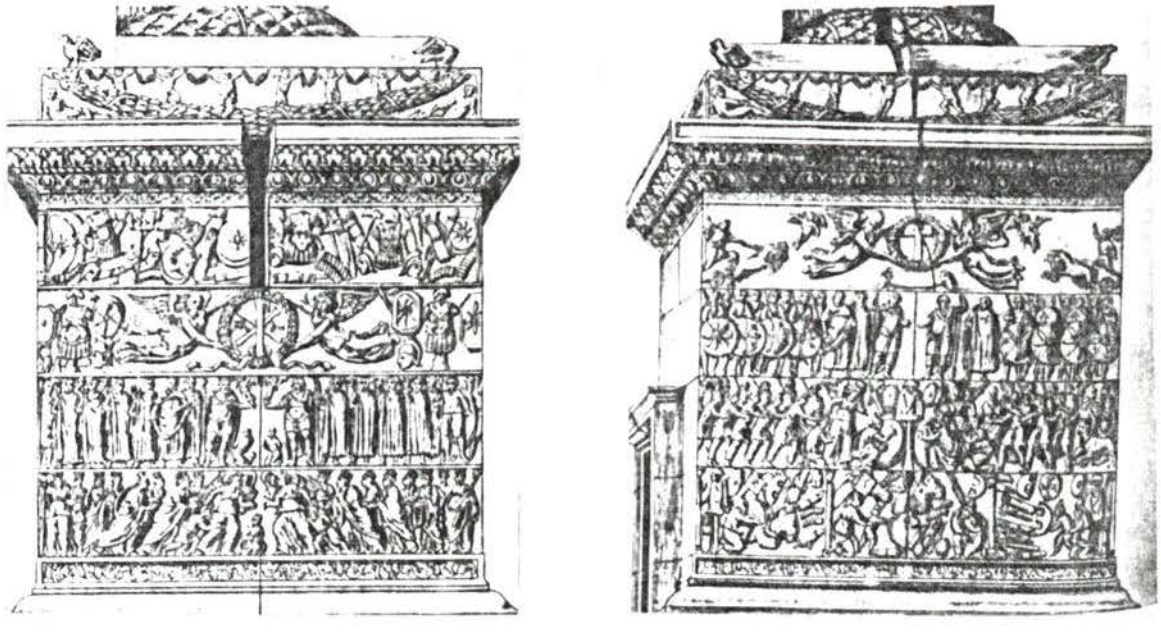
> Once you knew what the Impressionists were trying to do, it was clear why their pictures looked the way they did. But if you failed to grasp the principle, you could make nothing of the product . . . For the Impressionists were trying to investigate the nature of Reality . . . contemporary critics . . . sensed . . . the beginnings of an entirely new relationship between painters and their public. Ever since . . . cavemen decorated grotto shrines, it had been taken for granted that art existed in some way to serve the public. But beginning with Manet . . . for the first time artists began addressing themselves primarily to other painters rather than to the public . . . If the public understands, well and good; if not the, public be damned.

2. Fred Schroeder, Outlaw Aesthetics, Art and the Public Mind (Ohio: 1977), pp. 15, 146.

3. Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art, trans., Janet Seligman (Greenwich: 1971), I, p. 1.



Triumphal arch mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (432-40)



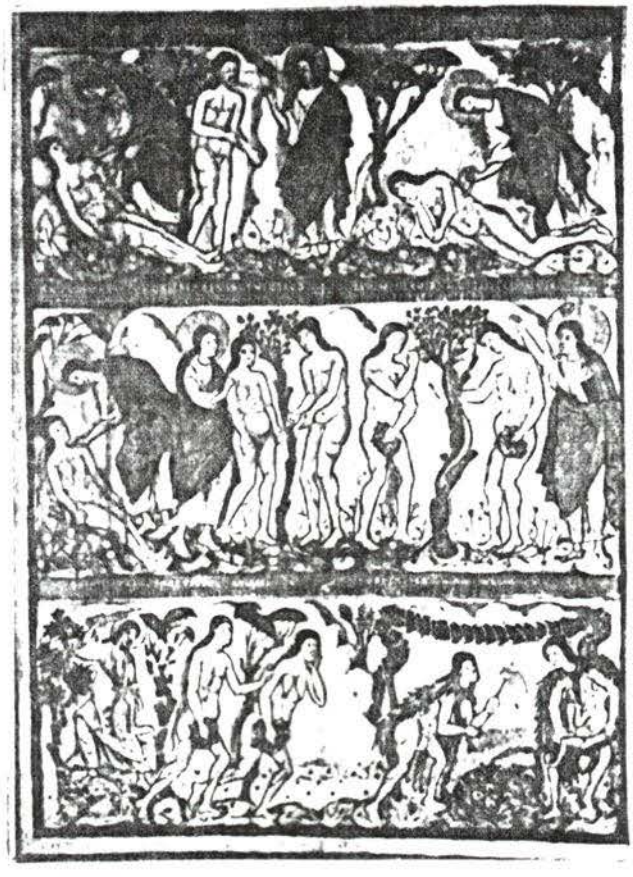
Column of Arcadius, south and west side of base, Istanbul (401-21, now destroyed)

PLATE 1

Theodosius I, silver plate, Academia de la Historia, Madrid (388)

PLATE 2

Adoration of the Magi



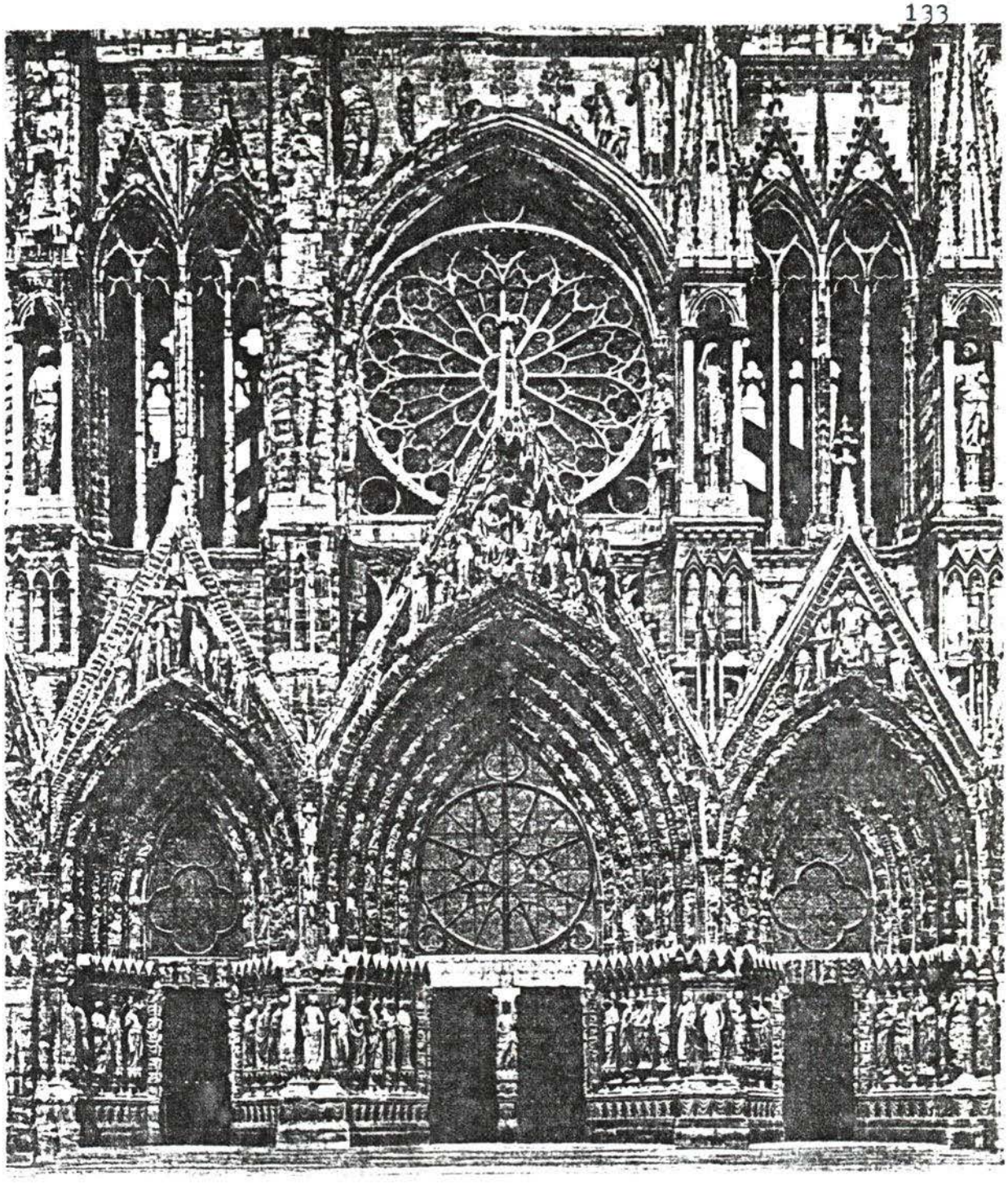
Vivian Bible (844-51)

PLATE 3

St. Matthew, Lorsch Gospels, Ada Style (c. 825)

Utrecht Psalter, detail, Reims Style (c. 830)

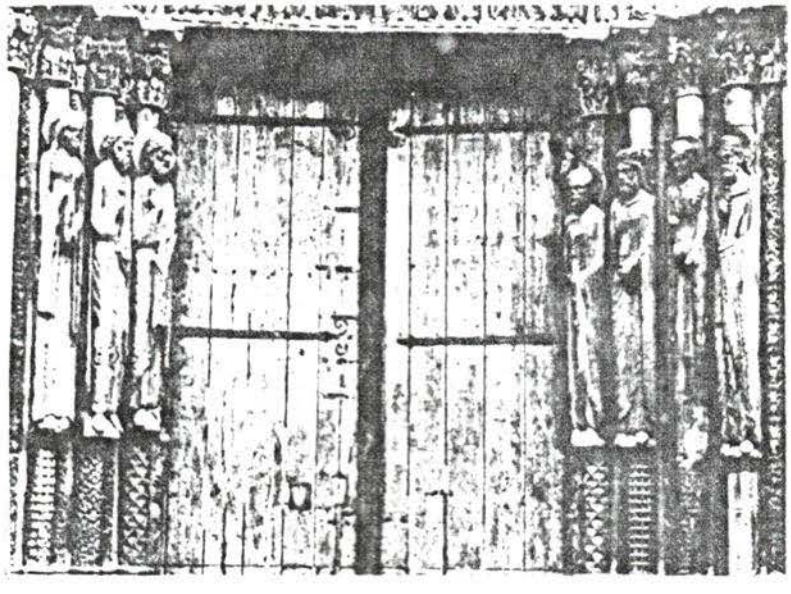
PLATE 4



West facade, Reims Cathedral

PLATE 5

Annunciation, right jamb, central portal, west facade, Reims Cathedral (1230-55)



Jamb figures, west portal, Chartres Cathedral (1145-55)

PLATE 6

Annunciation, left jamb, left portal, north transept, Chartres Cathedral (c. 1220)

Annunciation, right jamb, right portal, west facade, Amiens Cathedral (1220-30)

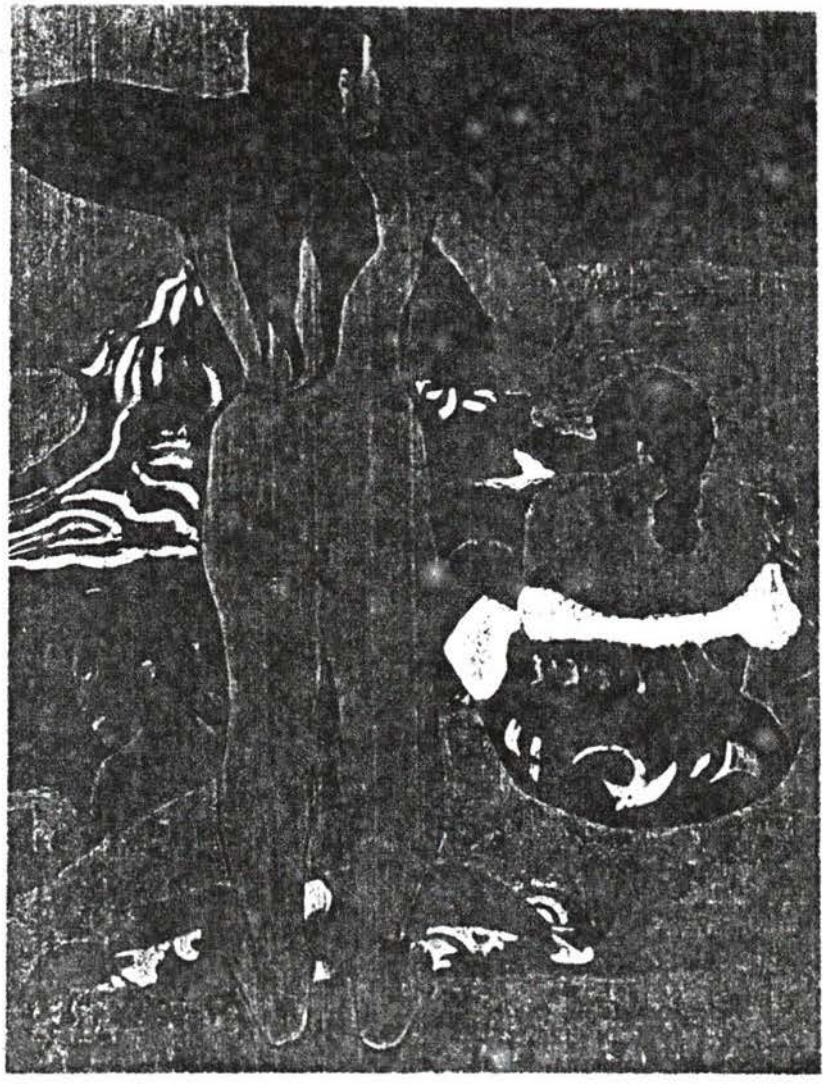
PLATE 7

Annunciation, Fra Angelico, Diocesan Museum, Cortona c.1428

PLATE 8

The Annunciation, Ignaz Günther, Weyarn, Bavaria (1764)

PLATE 9



Tahitian Women Bathing, Paul Gauguin, Collection Robert E. Lehmann, New York (1892-3)

PLATE 10

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