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„Descartes”

Compassion and Co-redemption:

**Carthusian Cell Paintings in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Burgundian
Netherlands**

Table of contents

Introduction	2
Chapter I.	8
Chapter II.	19
Conclusion	30
Appendix	32
Illustrations	34
References	42

Introduction

In the *Rules of the Carthusian Order* Guigo I.¹ (died c. 1136) explains how “*the greatest value of physical things consists in their use as signs. Many signs necessary for our salvation come from physical things, as crosses from wood and baptism from water.*”²

The following discussion sets out to investigate Carthusian cell paintings created in the Burgundian Netherlands during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and show how these private devotional images served as signs of the glory of the heavenly community towards which the monks’ worship tended.

The connections I seek to trace between Carthusian cell paintings and the order’s private devotional practices emerge from the design and iconography of two fourteenth century panel paintings presenting Calvary with a Carthusian monk. Both panels originate from the Charterhouse of Champmol near Dijon³, founded by Philip the Bold (died 1404), the Duke of Burgundy in 1385⁴, and are now in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Louvre. Furthermore, in order to research similar images produced over a wider period of time I will include a small group of fifteenth century paintings in my discussion. These panels, with relatively similar measurements as the Champmol paintings, based on their size and subject matter, can also be referred to as cell paintings. Since these paintings do not only depict the most iconic scene of the Passion, Christ’s crucifixion, but also the monks who contemplate

¹ Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984.

² Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984, p. 198, translated in Brantley, J.: *Reading in the Wilderness, Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, London, 2007, p. 76.

³ Key works on the history and visual program of the Chartreuse de Champmol are Prochno, R.: *Die Kartause von Champmol: Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge 1364-1477*, Berlin, 2002; Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004; and Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008; The fullest survey of the history of the Chartreuse of Champmol, including transcripts of the original documents is Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d’après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905.

⁴ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d’après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., pp. 393-394.

it, the panels show both the meditative subjects and the performative mechanisms of such devotional practices.

Extensive scholarship relates the Cleveland (Fig. 1) and Louvre (Fig. 2) panels with the visual program of the Charterhouse of Champmol, the first and most influential being an article by Charles Sterling⁵, which aimed to establish their provenance. These panels, convincingly identified by Sterling with works made in the late fourteenth century for the Charterhouse,⁶ can be referred to as archetypes in the study of cell paintings. They are very close in size, 56.5 x 45.5 cm for the Cleveland panel and 60 x 48.5 cm for the Louvre panel⁷, painted on oak boards in an oil medium and high quality gold⁸. Each panel depicts Christ on the cross, flanked by the Virgin, the two Marys and St John the Evangelist, with a monk dressed in a white scapular fitted with a cowl – the habit of the Carthusian order – kneeling in prayer at the foot of the cross. As showed by Sterling, the panels are documented works made between 1389 and 1395 in the workshop and under the supervision of Jean de Beaumetz, who, from 1375 until his death in 1396 served as the court painter, *varlet de chambre de Monseigneur*⁹ to Philip the Bold. As far as we know, these are the only surviving pieces of a twenty-six panel series of paintings commissioned by the Duke for each of the monks' cells. Since the charterhouse housed twenty-four monks, two paintings may have been made for the prior's cell.¹⁰ When identifying the panels with the commission received by Beaumetz to paint cell paintings, Sterling notes that not one of the contemporary documents found in Dijon mentions subject matter in relation to

⁵ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, pp. 56-82.

⁶ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, pp. 56-82.

⁷ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 202.

⁸ Nash, S.: 'Pour couleurs et autres choses prise de lui ...': The Supply, Acquisition, Cost and Employment of Painters' Materials at the Burgundian Court, c.1375–1419 In: Cannon, J., Kirby, J., Nash, S. (eds.): *Trade in Artists' Materials. Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, London, 2010, p.137.

⁹ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 115.

¹⁰ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, p. 69.

the panels. Thus only by persuasively deducting from the visual program of the charterhouse can it be assumed that these paintings were meant to adorn the *pre-dieux* of the monastic cells.¹¹

The materials used for the paintings, and their documented sources in the accounts, date the steps in the completion of the series and are crucial for the identification of the panels. The oak boards, recorded in the documents measuring 2638 cm square, close to the actual size of the paintings, were delivered in 1388 by Jehan de Fenain, master carpenter in Dijon.¹² The canvas, *fine toile de lin*, in order to be stretched over the panels before the application of the priming was purchased in 1389 from Gilotte, wife of Philippe Arnaut.¹³ The high quality gold leaf, mentioned in the accounts as *or fin doubles*, used for the gilding of the panels was purchased from the Dijon merchant Thevenin Lorfèvre dit de Sens in 1389.¹⁴

Further accounts documenting materials purchased for the completion of the cell paintings date as follows: 1391 for the chalk used for priming and baskets of parchment cuttings bought in order to make size for sizing the panels, both supplied from Hugh la Vicaire. As accounted for by the receipts dating 1392 vermilion, red lake, verdigris, *blank de puille*, a local type of white pigment, ochre, and walnut oil are registered in several payments made to the Brussels merchant Perrenot Berbisey.¹⁵

A further panel depicting the Crucifixion with the Virgin, St John and a Carthusian monk (Fig.3) amidst the act of devotion, currently in the collection of the Musée des Beaux Arts in Dijon,¹⁶ is closely linked in its size and iconography to the

¹¹ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, p. 71.

¹² Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 175.

¹³ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 175.

¹⁴ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 175.

¹⁵ Nash, S.: 'Pour couleurs et autres choses prise de lui ...': The Supply, Acquisition, Cost and Employment of Painters' Materials at the Burgundian Court, c.1375–1419 In: Cannon, J., Kirby, J., Nash, S. (eds.): *Trade in Artists' Materials. Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, London, 2010, pp. 116 – 158.

¹⁶ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 259.

Beaumetz cell paintings. Completed in an oil medium and gold, measuring 57 x 47 cm¹⁷, this painting may have been commissioned at the founding of two new cells added to the large cloister at Champmol, donated by Isabella of Portugal on the occasion of the birth of Charles the Bold in 1433¹⁸ and created in reference to the previous panels. The question of its authorship has not been convincingly answered yet. Sterling attributed it on stylistic grounds to an anonymous Burgundian artist who also painted a portrait of cardinal Jean Rolin, now in the Musée Rolin in Autun,¹⁹ while Renate Prochno suggested the person of Jean de Maisoncelles, who had been commissioned to paint a portrait of Philip the Good in 1436 in the Charterhouse' choir.²⁰ This suggestion is confirmed neither by sources nor on stylistic grounds.

A fifteenth century Calvary panel (Fig. 4) created in the style of Roger van der Weyden, also in the Cleveland Museum of Art presents a Carthusian monk kneeling in prayer at the foot of Christ's cross, accompanying the Virgin and St John in their contemplation. Based on its dimensions of 38,4 x 29,2 cm²¹ and iconography it can almost certainly be categorized as a cell painting. Completed on an oak panel in an oil medium and gold, it was created by an anonymous painter trained in the Netherlandish tradition.²² Though its provenance is unknown, the museum's catalogue proposes a French artist for the panel.²³ This suggestion will not be disputed here, but given the paintings dating for the 1470s, which is in accordance with its close reminiscence to works originating from the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, and given that there are no cited documents certifying it, nor elements in the

¹⁷ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 259.

¹⁸ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, pp. 259-260.

¹⁹ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, p. 65

²⁰ Prochno, R.: *Die Kartause von Champmol: Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge 1364-1477*, Berlin, 2002, p. 203.

²¹ Chong, A. (ed.): *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art*, Cleveland, 1993, p. 274.

²² Chong, A. (ed.): *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art*, Cleveland, 1993, p. 274.

²³ Chong, A. (ed.): *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art*, Cleveland, 1993, p. 274.

composition proposing it, this statement will be treated circumspectly. In the following discussion it will be referred to as the Rogerian Calvary.

The collection of the Courtauld Gallery houses a painting illustrating the Crucifixion with the Virgin, St John and two donors (Fig. 5) kneeling in prayer: a secular figure and a monk wearing the white habit of the Carthusian Order. Attributed to Quinten Massys,²⁴ the image was painted on an oak panel in oil and measures 37,5 x 25,37 cm²⁵. The dress and haircut of the secular donor serve to give the work an approximate date, the last decades of the fifteenth century, as his features are consistent with the fashion of this period.²⁶ This corresponds to the date given by art historians on stylistic grounds²⁷ comparing it with further depictions of the Crucifixion by Massys. The composition raises some inevitable questions. Most striking is the presence of the secular donor, a quite unusual feature on a cell painting that might be due to strong family relations or the monk's desire to perpetuate a family member in the act of devotion. It also raises the possibility that the panel was meant to commemorate the vocation of the monk by a member of his family and designed for domestic use, instead of adorning a monastic cell. Apart from the presence of the secular donor the painting bears all the physical and iconographical features needed for it to be referred to as a cell painting. Furthermore, the fact that Massys died and was buried in the Charterhouse of Kiel in 1530²⁸ also supports the panel's Carthusian provenance.

So far, when writing about these panels, scholars either focused on the individual qualities of these paintings or, in the case of the Champmol panels, compared them in order to draw conclusions about their attribution²⁹, but no extensive

²⁴ De Bosque, A.: *Quinten Metsys*, Brussels, 1975, pp. 127-128.

²⁵ Schwedersky, E.: *A technical study of two paintings attributed to Quinten Massys (1466 – 1530)*, Postgraduate Diploma in the Conservation of Easel Paintings Final Year Research Project, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2006, pp. 17–19.

²⁶ S Scott, M.: *A Visual History of the Costume. The Fourteen and Fifteen Centuries*, London, 1986, p. 120.

²⁷ De Bosque, A.: *Quinten Metsys*, Brussels, 1975, pp. 127-128.

²⁸ Silver, L.: *The painting of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, Oxford, 1984, p. 97.

²⁹ Further articles on the Champmol panles are: Meiss, M., Eisler, C.: A New French Primitive, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 102, 1960, pp. 232-240; Laclotte, M.: Peinture en Bourgogne au XVe siècle, *Art de France*, vol. 1, 1961, pp. 287-288; Chatelet, A.: *French painting from Fouguet to Poussin*, Geneva, 1963, p. 15; Francis, H.: Jean de Beaumetz: Calvary with a Carthusian Monk,

study has been carried out that would investigate the genre of Carthusian cell painting in its relative entirety. Furthermore, in the case of the Rogerian Calvary and the panel attributed to Massys no detailed description or visual analysis has been published up to now.

On the following pages I will research cell paintings as a coherent group and tackle the various artistic choices made in the depiction of Calvary in accordance with Carthusian monasticism. In order to discuss how the Carthusian context of these panels matters for the performing of the devotional practices they encourage, the first chapter will examine two aspects of Carthusian life: the habits of the order based on Guigo I's *Rules of the Carthusian Order*; and the monks' cells, which housed these paintings. The latter will be reconstructed primarily from the financial accounts of the Charterhouse of Champmol³⁰, extant in the archives in Dijon³¹. The financial accounts allow grounded comparisons to be made between the material aspects of life in the monastery and what was laid down in the rules.

The second chapter aims to compare the compositional features of the cell paintings and analyzes their connections with contemporary meditative writings. This part will focus on the widely circulated fourteenth century *Vita Christi*³² by the Carthusian writer Ludolph of Saxony (died 1387), as well as the *Opera Omnia*³³ by his fifteenth century monastic brother Denis the Carthusian (died 1471). Furthermore, this chapter will investigate the role of the figures portrayed on these panels, and the possible meanings of their presence in the light of the Carthusian monastic literature of the period.

Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin Vol. 53, 1966, pp. 329-338; Troescher, G.: *Bürgundische Malerei, Maler und Malwerke um 1400 in Burgund, dem Berry mit der Auvergne und im Savoyen mit ihren Quellen und Ausstrahlungen*, Berlin, 1966, pp. 37-59; Wixom, W.: *Treasures from medieval France*, Cleveland, 1967, pp. 238-239, 374 – 375; De Winter, P.: Art from the Duchy of Burgundy, *Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin* Vol. 74, 1987, pp. 405-412.

³⁰ For transcriptions of the original documents including the contemporary accounts of the Charterhouse of Champmol see Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905.

³¹ Archives Départementales de la Côte d'Or (ADCO), Dijon.

³² Bodenstedt, S.M.I.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian*, Washington DC, 1944.

³³ Dionysii Cartusiani: *Opera Omnia*, Tournai, 1912.

Chapter I.

*Among the worthy deeds pleasing to God especially fruitful and profitable for the salvation of souls are the sacrifices and devout prayers of the religious and pious who, for the love of God have voluntarily chosen poverty (...) and are determined on serving only Him. Among whom, we consider that the brothers of the Order of the Carthusians persistently work and employ themselves in the contemplative life, who never cease to pray to God, day and night, for the salvation of souls, for the prosperity and the welfare of the country and of the princes who govern it under God.*³⁴

Inspired by the particularly effective nature of the Carthusians' prayers, as referred to in the above quoted foundation document granted by pope Clement VII in Avignon³⁵, Philip the Bold founded the Chartreuse of Champmol³⁶ as a means to the salvation of his soul.³⁷ As a reflection of his piety the Duke commissioned the building of the charterhouse as his burial place and symbolized his incorporation into the charterhouse community by choosing to be buried in the habit of Carthusian monks.³⁸ To house the community of monks praying for his redemption he planned two cloisters. A small cloister served for the lay brethren, a large cloister, lined with cells, was defined for the monks' private contemplation while the chapel was meant to accommodate the Burgundian mausoleum.³⁹

³⁴ Fragment of the Foundation Charter of the Chartreuse de Champmol In: Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., pp. 37 – 38. Translated by Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 19. For original text see Appendix 1.

³⁵ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., pp. 393–94

³⁶ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, pp. 19 – 24.

³⁷ Nash, S.: "The Lord's Crucifix of Costly Workmanship": Colour, Collaboration and the Making of Meaning on the Well of Moses' In: Brinkmann, V., Primavesi, O., Hollein, M. (eds.): *Circumlitio. The Polychromy of Antique and Late Medieval Sculpture*, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, p. 356.

³⁸ Francis, H.: Jean de Beaumetz: Calvary with a Carthusian Monk, *Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin* Vol. 53, 1966, p. 330.

³⁹ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 27.

The deeply religious Duke chose to entrust his pious endowment to Carthusian monks motivated by the Order's strong focus on scrupulous observance in the form of regular private devotional practices, a resilient emphasis on ascetic purity and a spotless and unsullied history as proven by their motto: "[*religio*] *Cartusianorum nunquam reformata, quia nunquam deformata*"⁴⁰.

The ideological basis for Carthusian devotional practices was laid down in the strict rules codified by Guigo I, the fifth prior of the Grande Chartreuse, in his *Rules of the Carthusian Order* written around 1127.⁴¹ An illuminated copy of the *Rules* was made especially for Champmol in 1389.⁴² Although, like the statutes of other monastic orders, the Carthusian *Rules* promoted poverty and discipline, its defining characteristic was a powerful theological and practical appeal to solitude.⁴³ Carthusian monks were hermits in religious life, leading a completely solitary existence in the privacy of their individual cells, where they engaged in the contemplative activities that were at the heart of Carthusian identity.⁴⁴ In his letter on solitary life, whose original addressee remains unknown, Guigo I. describes solitude as:

*Sober in food, simple in habit, modest in words, chaste in demeanor. The most keenly sought, as the least ambitious. Devoted to God, kind to his fellow, restrained to the world. The servant of God, the companion of man, the lord of the world.*⁴⁵

⁴⁰ The motto "Never reformed, because never deformed" is derived from language repeated in several papal commendations, the first issued in 1257. As cited in Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p.24.

⁴¹ Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984.

⁴² Monget, C.: La _____, Vol. 1. p. 411

⁴³ Hogg, J.: Everyday life In: *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1980, p.144.

⁴⁴ _____, J.: *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, London, 2007, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Guigo I., Letter on Solitude, In: Mursell, G.: *The theology of the Carthusian life in the writings of St Bruno and Guigo I.*, Salzburg, 1988, p. 62. See original text in Appendix 2.

and he concludes that the followers of the poor Christ alone will share the riches of his kingdom.⁴⁶

Though in his work, Guigo I prescribed poverty as a means of minimizing the monks' inappropriate focus on the world, as he also repeatedly condemned vagrancy or beggary, poverty took a second place to protecting the monks' isolation. Guigo himself explains that equipping the monks with various seemingly extravagant items is necessary in order for them not to leave their cells.⁴⁷ Though he allowed costly items including books, writing materials and kitchen utensils, he forbade precious adornments explicitly and almost absolutely:

*We do not have any ornaments of gold or silver in the church, with the exception of the chalice and the reed by which the blood of the Savior is taken, nor do we have hangings or carpets.*⁴⁸

Guigo I also gave a precise list of the furniture of the cells, and the monks' bedding and clothing. According to his *Rules* the bed was to be made of straw covered with a linen cloth, a pillow and a blanket made of sheepskins, covered with a wool fabric.⁴⁹ Feather beds were expressly prohibited even for the sick, as it was forbidden to sleep between sheets as well, even on a voyage.⁵⁰ On the list of clothes granted by him there were two furs, almost certainly sheepskin, "*unam deteriore, altera meliorem*", one in poor, the other in a better condition, that could be worn in the monks' cells and

⁴⁶ Mursell, G.: *The theology of the Carthusian life in the writings of St Bruno and Guigo I.*, Salzburg, 1988, p. 62.

⁴⁷ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Guigo, *Consuetudines XL. I.*, as translated by Brantley, J.: *Reading in the Wilderness, Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, London, 2007, p. 348. See original text in Appendix 3.

⁴⁹ Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984, p. 223.

⁵⁰ Hogg, J.: Everyday life In: *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1980, p.139.

in such places where silence was prescribed.⁵¹ Later this could be worn everywhere as long as it was covered by the habit.⁵²

Although these rules remained virtually unchanged throughout the medieval period,⁵³ the sources from Champmol show a quite different practice. Forming a chain of two-storied cottages around the large cloister, the monks' chambers can be described as well equipped small houses with private gardens, rather than ascetic cells. The ground floor of these cottages housed the necessities of material existence such as the wood-store, the kitchen, furnished with a fireplace, copper cookware, benches, a table and the atelier with tools for maintaining the fireplace and the garden.⁵⁴ The upper chamber of the cell, referred to in the accounts as *l'estude*, the study, functioned as oratory, library and bedroom.⁵⁵ The *l'estude* was luxuriously furnished with a bed, feather pillows, lamps, chairs, armoires and a prayer stool.⁵⁶ In some cases monks were outfitted to do various specialized tasks, as copying or binding books; in such cases, they were provided with writing desks and other necessary supplies.⁵⁷ An entry dating from 1386 records the purchase of seventeen copper basins, "*seaulz de cuivre, (...) pour mettre eau benoite en leurs chambres*"⁵⁸, for keeping holy water in the monks' cells. The special emphasis placed on the comfort and individual needs of the monks can be traced through the surviving documents. One of the cells was furnished with a "wooden stool on which to rest the

⁵¹ Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984, p.222.

⁵² Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984, p. 224.

⁵³ Hogg, J.: Everyday life In: *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1980, p.139.

⁵⁴ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., pp. 162-164, 335.

⁵⁵ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 293.

⁵⁸ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 121.

feet of the brother living in the said cell when he dines.”⁵⁹ Another of the monks had his chair replaced “because the one that was there before was too narrow”⁶⁰. Additionally, the garden walls and some of the furniture seem to have displayed coats of arms, presumably the ducal arms or the arms of Chartreuse of Champmol. Sherry Lindquist does not exclude the possibility that they were the family arms of the individual monks who lived in the cells,⁶¹ but based on the charterhouse’s strong visual emphasis on its ducal patronage, this seems unlikely.

The prior’s residence was even more lavishly fitted, possibly housing more than one of the cell paintings produced by the workshop of Jean de Beaumetz, or as Sterling suggests, even a diptych.⁶² It had two staircases and three levels,⁶³ and in addition to the usual prayer stool in the upper chambers, the prior had an altar located on the ground floor, which allowed him to celebrate Mass there.⁶⁴

As is clear from the case of Champmol’s abundance in luxurious fittings, Guigo I’s *Rules* served more as a guideline rather than a strict prescription. Interestingly, despite these obvious divergences the Carthusian order managed to maintain its reputation as an ascetic community as proved by their motto. The Carthusian specialist, James Hogg placed the saying, *never reformed, because never deformed*, in its appropriate context, namely, the rigid observance of daily life in the charterhouse, which has remained unchanged throughout the centuries. Furthermore, Hogg credits the order’s vitality and success in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to the effective protection of their reputation for purity by the vigilance of the visitors

⁵⁹ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 81.

⁶⁰ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 81.

⁶¹ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 53.

⁶² Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, p. 69.

⁶³ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 53.

⁶⁴ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d’après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 143.

sent by the Grande Chartreuse, who were charged with the duty of correcting any infractions and abuses among the sister houses.⁶⁵

Besides defining the guidelines for conduct and laying down the style of the fittings of the cloisters, churches and cells, Carthusian statutes prescribed the manner of performing prayer and mass. For Carthusian monks private devotional performances substituted the sights and sounds of communal worship⁶⁶ and precisely because of the unique primacy of silence and solitude in the Carthusian order, visibility attained central importance. Guillelme d'Ivrée, author of the *De origine et veritate perfectae religionis* written around 1313 clarifies the purpose of images in the cell, but also explains why Carthusians limited their imagery mainly to the Crucifixion:

*The Carthusians have in all their churches one image of the Crucifixion in a solemn and eminent place (...). In the oratory of their cells they have generally had a crucifix and an image of the Virgin Mary, and also sometimes of other saints. (...) Carthusians in their cells do not refuse nor reject devotional pictures, (...) because they excite devotion and imagination, and augment devotional ideas.*⁶⁷

The individual devotional experiences depicted on cell paintings were at the same time the aspired goal of devotional practices performed in the cells. The monks' self-representation in perpetual prayer on devotional panels with the depiction of their divine visions increased their access to the heavenly by representing it repeatedly on the pictures.⁶⁸ In the *Vita Christi*, a meditative work intended for slow spiritual reading in the solitude of the cell, the Carthusian writer Ludolph of Saxony defined

⁶⁵ Hogg, J.: Everyday life In: *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1980, p. 144.

⁶⁶ Barrier, S. B.: Les a : Hogg, J. (ed.): *Analecta Cartusiana* 87, Salzburg, 1981, p. 122.

⁶⁷ Le Couteulx, *Annales ordinis Cartusiensis*, Vol.I, pp. 276 – 277. Translated by Brantley, J.: *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, London, 2007, p. 68.

⁶⁸ Brantley, J.: *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*, London, 2007, p. 67.

his attraction to the suffering Christ. Furthermore, he expressed the Carthusian approach to Christ's humanity and agony, consequently describing the appeal of Christ's tormented body depicted on the order's private devotional images.

*I know not for sure ... how it is that you are sweeter in the heart of one who loves you in the form of flesh than as the word ... It is sweeter to view you as dying before the Jews on the tree, than as holding sway over the angels in Heaven, to see you as a man bearing every aspect of human nature to the end, than as God manifesting divine nature, to see you as the dying Redeemer than as the invisible Creator.*⁶⁹

The *Vita Christi*, a comprehensive narrative treatise concerning the gospel accounts of the life of Christ, was one of the most influential devotional writings of the late Middle Ages and perhaps the first of its kind.⁷⁰ Its most original feature is to be found in the prayers, which conclude each chapter, compressing the quintessence of the author's devout meditations on the life of the Savior.⁷¹ This work also allows insight into the Carthusian piety of the fourteenth century. According to its description of private devotional practices Carthusian monks performed the act of solitary prayer and simultaneously re-enacted in the communal prayer of the Mass through the presence of the image of the Crucifixion in their cells.⁷²

Their life was thus defined by meditation on Christ and contemplation or even imitation of his suffering. When contemplating His sacrifice the monks' were encouraged to place their hands on their chest in the form of a cross – gesture

⁶⁹ Ludolphus de Saxonia: *Vita Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, as translated in Duffy, E.: *The stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England 1400 – 1580*, London, 1992, p. 237.

⁷⁰ Sister Immaculate Bodenstedt says that the only work that can claim priority is the *De Gestis Domini Salvatoris* by Simone Fidati da Cascia, but this work Ludolphus seems not to have known. In: Bodenstedt, S. M. I.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolph the Carthusian: The Quintessence of His Devout Meditations on the Life of Christ* In: James Hogg, (ed.): *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol.15, Salzburg, 1973, p. 7.

⁷¹ Bodenstedt, S. M. I.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolph the Carthusian: The Quintessence of His Devout Meditations on the Life of Christ* In: James Hogg, (ed.): *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol.15, Salzburg, 1973, preface, p.v.

⁷² Hedeman, A. D.: *Roger van der Weyden's Escorial Crucifixion and Carthusian Devotional Practices* In: Ousterhout R., Brubaker, L. (eds.): *Sacred Image East and West*, Urbana, 1994, p. 195.

illustrated in the Cleveland panel by Beaumetz - in order to express their desire to acquire grace by the merits of the Christ's sufferings on the cross.⁷³ This gesture also forged a link between the monks' private devotional practices and the celebration of communal Mass, since it was prescribed for blessing after the consecration during the common celebration of the liturgy.⁷⁴ Concerning the posture of empathy, Ludolph of Saxony encourages monks to emulate the Passion in order to fully experience the torments of Christ and thus be worthy of redemption and grace:

*Strike the rock twice, that is, excite thyself to devotion not merely by inward contemplation but by bodily exertion, stretching out thy hands, raising thine eyes to the Crucifix, striking thy breast, making genuflections, or even taking the discipline, persevering in these or similar pious exercises till a plenteous stream of tears flows forth, so that thy understanding may drink in the waters of devotion and thy body refreshed by it may become a dwelling-place more fit for grace.*⁷⁵

As shown by the above quotation, the most intense form of compassion was the actual participation in the suffering of the Redeemer and self-identification with Christ's Passion.

As illustrated by Ludolph's words, as well as by cell paintings, Carthusian devotional practices frequently referred to the sufferings of Christ and focused veneration on the image of the Crucifixion. Since the Carthusians understood the Crucifixion not merely as a prelude to the Resurrection of Christ interpreted in the light of the final triumph that confirmed his divinity,⁷⁶ but as the central image of their devotion, depictions of Calvary had become the focus of compassion for the suffering Savior. Unfortunately in the case of the panels commissioned for the Charterhouse of Champmol, the archival documents do not mention subject matter.

⁷³ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 202.

⁷⁴ Hedeman, A. D.: Roger van der Weyden's Escorial Crucifixion and Carthusian Devotional Practices In: Ousterhout R., Brubaker, L. (eds.): *Sacred Image East and West*, Urbana, 1994, p. 194.

⁷⁵ Coleridge, H.J.: The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p.10.

⁷⁶ Gabriele Finaldi: *The Image of Christ*, London, 2000, p. 105.

When attributing the paintings to Beaumetz and establishing their origins in Champmol Sterling suggests that there can hardly be any more appropriate imagery for the cells, than the images of monks in prayer at the foot of the Cross.⁷⁷ A thorough overview of the images present at Champmol during the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that shows how the charterhouse's visual program was built around the image of the crucified Christ supports this argument. Alternating with depictions of the Christ child as an adored infant, it is indeed the figure of the dead and suffering Saviour that was the most prominent image at Champmol. There is only little imagery showing the adult Christ with his body intact⁷⁸ and since the charterhouse was dedicated primarily to the Trinity⁷⁹ and in the second place to the Virgin,⁸⁰ it is plausible that its entire visual program was built around the wounded body of the crucified Saviour.

Besides the twenty-six cell paintings presenting Calvary, the stained glass windows of the cells are believed to have depicted holy scenes, some possibly showing the image of the Crucifixion.⁸¹ The Polyptych of the Passion of Christ by Simone Martini, based on its influence on the works of Beaumetz and Jaquemart de Hesdin⁸², court painter for Jean de Berry, is presumed to have been at Champmol by the late fourteenth century. The central relief of the Crucifixion Altarpiece executed by Jacques de Baerze and confirmed by documentation to have been a ducal commission⁸³ presents the scenes of the Passion and the Entombment. The Antwerp and Baltimore quadriptych, recorded in the documents of the charterhouse before 1772-1774 also

⁷⁷ Sterling, Charles: Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, *Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, pp. 60-62.

⁷⁸ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 161.

⁷⁹ Monget, C.: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d'après les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., pp. 393-94.

⁸⁰ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 28.

⁸¹ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 53.

⁸² Prochno, R.: *Die Kartause von Champmol: Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge 1364-1477*, Berlin, 2002, pp. 195 - 197

⁸³ Jacobs, L.: *Early Netherlandish carved altarpieces, 1380-1550: medieval tastes and mass marketing*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 183.

contains scenes of the Passion.⁸⁴ Considered to have served as a portable altar to Philip the Bold⁸⁵ it may have joined the group of panels at Champmol at a later date. Further portrayals of Christ's dead body include the images of the Holy Trinity on the small triptych with the four evangelists now in Berlin, the Grande Pietà tondo attributed to Jean Malouel, *varlet de chambre* at Philip's court after the death of Beaumetz, and the panel featuring the Martyrdom of St Denis associated with Malouel and Henry Bellechose.⁸⁶ The Berlin altarpiece, first mentioned in the inventories compiled after the French Revolution, resembles late fourteenth century Dutch production and it could have entered the charterhouse either as a ducal commission or a gift from Philip's entourage.⁸⁷ Additionally, the Grande Pietà tondo with Philip's coat of arms depicted on its reverse and the strong emphasis on the wounds and blood on Christ's dead body, suggest its association with the Carthusian monastery. The St Denis panel, started by Malouel and completed by Henry Bellechose is also documented as commissioned for the charterhouse and intended for installation on an altar in the lay choir.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the twenty glazed lancets adorning the passage near the church were painted with scenes of the Passion.⁸⁹ Without doubt the most prominent image of the Crucifixion at Champmol was the Great Cross, now best known as the Well of Moses, an extraordinary sculpted Calvary by Claus Sluter. Placed in the center of the courtyard in the large cloister, this gigantic Cross bore the life-size figure of the dead

⁸⁴ Prochno, R.: *Die Kartause von Champmol: Grablege der burgundischen Herzöge 1364-1477*, Berlin, 2002, pp. 198 – 199.

⁸⁵ Nieuwdrop, H.: The Antwerp-Baltimore Polyptych: A Portable Altarpiece Belonging to Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy In: (ed.) Van Os, H.: *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300 – 1500*, Princeton, 1994, pp. 136 – 150.

⁸⁶ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 198.

⁸⁷ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 202.

⁸⁸ Fliegel, S., Jugie, S. (eds.): *Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419*, Paris, 2004, p. 198.

⁸⁹ Lindquist, S. C. M.: *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, London, 2008, p. 50.

Christ with the Magdalene mourning at its feet.⁹⁰ Its placement in the middle of the large cloister allowed monks to be in a constant association with the Redeemers torment and thus constantly profess faith and gratitude. Consequently, as showed both by the words of Ludolph and by the visual program of the Charterhouse, the Passion of Christ, and thus the image of the Crucifixion, was at the heart of Carthusian devotion. Therefore the depiction of Calvary with a monk shown in prayer at the foot of the Cross was the most suitable imagery for the monks' contemplation in the privacy of the cells.

According to Carthusian ideals self-identification with the compassion of the Virgin was another suitable path to Redemption. Ludolph, when writing about the relative merits of the active and contemplative life shows how Mary participated in both during her early life, thus becoming an ideal model for meditation.⁹¹ Furthermore, the figure of the Virgin lamenting over the dead Christ, who felt the pain of her Son's suffering more deeply than anyone else, like "*a sword piercing her soul*" (Luke: 2:35) became a perfect model for compassion. Prayers to the Virgin, who often was the first and principal patron of charterhouses,⁹² included a *Mass de Beata*, prescribed by the general chapter in 1337, to be said every day after the conventual Mass and indulgence in the form of three Ave Marias said four times a day recited in the evening since 1393.⁹³ By the likening of Mary's martyrdom to that of Christ, the Virgin qualified as Co-Redeemer, or even Salvatrix Mundi, as Denis the Carthusian called her.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Nash, S.: Claus Sluter's 'Well of Moses' for the Chartreuse de Champmol Reconsidered, part I, *The Burlington Magazine*, December 2005, pp.798 – 799.

⁹¹ Bodenstein, S. M. I.: The Vita Christi of Ludolph the Carthusian: The Quintessence of His Devout Meditations on the Life of Christ In: James Hogg, (ed.): *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol.15, Salzburg, 1973, p. 124.

⁹² Guigo I.: *Consuetudines Cartusiae/Coutumes de Chartreuse*, (ed.) Laporte, D. M., Paris: Cerf, 1984, p. 223., 276.

⁹³ King, A.: *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, London, 1955, pp. 31 – 35.

⁹⁴ Denis, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 35, p. 303, p. 563.

Chapter II.

*Now consider carefully the attitude of the Body of Christ hanging on the Cross, (...) See His Head bent to kiss us, His Arms outstretched to embrace us, his hands pierced to bestow blessings on us, His Side open to love thee, His Feet fixed to the Cross in order to abide with us, His Body extended in order that it might be entirely devoted to us.*⁹⁵

This eloquent portrayal of Christ on the cross, quoted from the *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony gives insight into the way in which the Carthusian writer interpreted the features of the crucified Christ. As attested by the text, emphasis on Christ's tormented body was of outstanding significance for the Carthusians and accordingly it is a key feature of Carthusian cell paintings.

Each cell painting presented in the introduction focuses attention on the figure of Christ hanging on the Cross with His dead body depicted according to the Gospel: *"He bowed his head and gave up the ghost."* (John 19:30) and *"His side was pierced after he was dead."* (John 19:33)

The two fourteenth century panels originating from Champmol, made by two different members of the Beaumetz workshop, depict the figure of the crucified Christ differently both in position and detail. On the Louvre panel, Christ is calm and simple,⁹⁶ with his head surrounded by a circular halo, wearing a prominent crown of thorns. His face is depicted in a three-quarter view, with his hair mingled with streams of blood waving down the line of his neck. Bulging nails stretch His body onto the Cross inflicting wounds on his palms and feet which give way to streams of blood. The side wound is the most dramatic feature of his figure. An abundant flow of blood running down his body soaks the cross and flows onto the foreground of the image. The prominence of blood is depicted even more dramatically on the Cleveland version. Not only is Christ's side wound and the stream of blood flowing from it more prominent, the marks of the flagellation are also visible on his tortured body. Ludolph gives an account of this event, emphasising the dramatic moment so ingeniously inherent on the Cleveland painting. *"His royal and precious Blood flows in streams*

⁹⁵ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon, Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 382.

⁹⁶ Sterling, Charles: *Oeuvres retrouvées de Jean de Beaumetz, peintre de Philippe le Hardi, Bulletin Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 4, 1959, p. 62.

from all His veins, and all of His spotless body is dyed red by the crimson tyde."⁹⁷ On this panel Christ is depicted in a more gothic manner, with his head and feet bent to the right. His halo is a combination of disc and ray emphasising his head by separating it from the wood of the cross. His transparent loincloth is veiling but not covering the abundant stream of blood flowing down his body onto the ground. The flood of blood reaches the edge of the panel in four streams on both paintings and thus it might also bear reference to the rivers of Paradise. "*A river rises in Eden (...); beyond there it divides and becomes four branches.*" (Genesis 2:10) Since on cell paintings the dead Christ symbolises the promise of Redemption, the Lamb of God who died on the hill of Golgotha, contemplating his blood, depicted as '*Rivers of living water flow(ing) from within him*'" (John 7:37) can also be referred to as a way to Salvation. Ludolph mentions the Holy Blood in various chapters of the *Vita Christi*⁹⁸ but at greatest length in the meditation on the Five Wounds. He emphasises the infinite value of a single drop of the Precious Blood, and speaks of its redemptive power in the Eucharist, a memorial of the Passion.⁹⁹ He calls the sacrament of the Eucharist the sacrament of redemption that has its source in the side wound of Christ, the Blood that flowed from it being the symbol of the Eucharist itself.¹⁰⁰ Regarding the five principle wounds of Christ Ludolph sees in them the remedy for the five senses of the fallen man. His prayer that the wounds of Christ be imprinted upon his heart "*with the sword of charity and imprint on it the Wounds of Thy Body*"¹⁰¹ shows the special importance of self-identification with Christ's Passion in Carthusian devotional practices.

The depiction of the crucified Christ on the fifteenth century Calvary now in Dijon clearly derives from the Beaumetz panels, though his figure is somewhat smaller compared to its proportions on the two fourteenth century paintings. His

⁹⁷ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 190.

⁹⁸ Bodenstein, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, p. 139.

⁹⁹ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 374.

¹⁰⁰ Bodenstein, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, p. 139.

¹⁰¹ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 383.

crown of thorns is more thickly braided and the halo surrounding his head clearly resembles the one on the Louvre panel. Furthermore, the flood of blood from his side wound and head is more amply depicted than on the other panels. In the *Vita Christi* the flow of blood springing from Christ's cleaved heart is presented as the price of salvation flowing abundantly: "*We obtain perfect cleansing (...) from our sins through the Blood, which is the price of our plentiful redemption.*"¹⁰² When referring to Christ's blood Ludolph quotes the Psalm "*copiosa apud eum redemptio*"¹⁰³ (Psalm 170:3) and interprets redemption as freedom from sin and union with God. He also believes that forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with the Father are the effects of the shedding of Christ's Blood.¹⁰⁴

On the Rogerian Calvary the fragile body of the dead Christ on the cross claims sole attention. Though the composition of the panel is derived from the central image of the Crucifixion triptych (Fig. 6) produced by the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden for Alessandro Sforza during his stay in the Netherlands,¹⁰⁵ the motif of the crucified Christ originates from Rogier's Vienna Crucifixion (Fig. 7). Christ's head is bowed and his body is turned to the left. His bearded face is shown from a more frontal angle than on the panel's Rogerian source. He wears a prominent crown of thorns and a halo of three sets of rays emanating from his head. The emphasis on the depiction of the holy Blood is neither as strong as on the cell paintings examined previously, nor as significant as on the Rogerian originals. Streams of blood spring from Christ's palms and flow dripping from his arms. Blood flows from his fresh side wound, running down on the outer side of his thighs. Only four small streams arise from the wounds on his feet. An important alteration from the Rogerian original is the omission of a blood stream flowing down Christ's inner thigh, visible under the transparent loincloth.

On the Courtauld panel the body of the dead Christ is presented frontally, with his head slightly bowed to the left and depicted in foreshortening. His flesh tones,

¹⁰² Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 371, p. 377.

¹⁰³ "and with him plentiful redemption." (Psalm 170:3)

¹⁰⁴ Bodenstein, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, 1944, p. 140.

¹⁰⁵ Campbell, L., Stock, J.: *Rogier van der Weyden, 1400-1464: Master of Passions*, Louvain, 2009, p. 122.

along with the Virgin's skin colour are paler than those of the other characters. His torments are most visible on his head and face. His face is brownish, his hair and beard hazy, and he is wearing a crown of thorns of remarkable proportions painted with particular attention. All his wounds are displayed and emphasised by his frontal depiction, and thus made available for contemplation, though the accentuation of blood streaming from his wounds is not as strong as on any of the paintings discussed earlier.

Together with contemplating the dead body of Christ, Carthusian monks were also contemplating the wood of the cross. According to Ludolph the cross is the gateway to paradise: "*If the gate of Paradise is closed against thee, take the staff of the holy Cross, and knock, and it shall be opened unto thee.*"¹⁰⁶ Not only the wood, but also the title of the cross had miraculous powers referred to in Carthusian devotional practices. The inscription above Christ's head *Jesus Nazaretus Rex Judaeorum* was recommended as remedy against attacks of the devil. The inscription was regarded as a standard of victory, with Christ reigning on the cross, acquiring a kingdom of those confessing him in heart, in word and in deed.¹⁰⁷ Since all the cell paintings studied here, except for the Dijon panel, retain this title on Christ's T shaped cross, it must have been an important feature in the depiction of Calvary.

On the Cleveland panel the cross, rising out of a small mound of earth, is placed almost in the foreground of the picture thus bringing the body of Christ in graspable distance. In contrast, on the Louvre panel the Cross is placed slightly back in the composition, with the ground reaching upward and inward in depth. This element creates a clear space for the scene, but at the same time, by introducing a middle space for the rest of the figures, it divorces the body of Christ from the monk contemplating it in the privacy of his cell. On the fifteenth century depictions of Calvary the cross is clearly placed in a wider space defined by the ground and the background as well. On the Dijon panel a pile of rocks depicted on the right side of the image, inserted between the picture plane of the figures and the viewer of the panel serves the purpose of creating depth in the image.

¹⁰⁶ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 439.

¹⁰⁷ Bodenstedt, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, p. 134.

Rendered either in gold, presenting a landscape, or including both elements, the backgrounds of these panels serve to focus all attention on the central scene of the composition, underlining the iconic character of the images. On the Beaumetz panels the background is conceived in gold. While the background of the Louvre painting reveals only moderate decoration, the Cleveland panel is adorned by the incised design of the Trees of Life and Knowledge springing from the cross. According to the *Legend of the Wood of the Cross*, Christ's cross was fashioned from the *Lignum Crucis*, that originated from the Tree of Life, *Arbor Vitae*. The *Arbor Vitae*, in its turn sprang from the seeds planted in the dead Adam's mouth before his burial.¹⁰⁸ The Tree of Life was thus directly connected with the death of Christ through the cross of the Crucifixion and with the Salvation of Mankind through His sacrifice. On the Dijon panel a landscape with a fortress and slender trees are rendered before a golden background. This artistic choice may be assigned to the panel's reference to the Beaumetz cell paintings. Interestingly, the Rogerian Calvary, painted a few decades after the Dijon cell painting and almost a century after the Beaumetz panels, keeps to the tradition of backgrounds painted in gold on iconic images. Although it clearly sets the scene on the greenish hill of Golgotha as shown by the skull and bone at the foot of the Cross, it presents Calvary reduced to its essence, focusing all attention on the figures and the meditations related to them. In contrast the Courtauld Calvary presents the scene set in a hilly landscape, with a bay filled with ships, trees, a town with turrets and a cloudy sky depicted in the background and a skull and bones in the foreground suggesting the location. Though the painting is an iconic depiction of Calvary, several of its elements refer to the narrative of the Crucifixion. The clouds closing in on the background illustrate the Gospel's account and set the exact time of the day: "*At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.*" (Mark 15:33), "*From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land.*" (Matthew 24:45)

Ludolph of Saxony, in his narrative of the Passion describes Christ's death in the presence of the Virgin and her two sisters, Mary Magdalene and St John the Evangelist. When describing the Crucifixion he also defines the most prominent figures present on Calvary.

¹⁰⁸ Baert, B.: *A Heritage of Holy Wood: Legend of the True Cross*, Boston, 2004, p. 74.

*Behold, our Lord hangs on the Cross, the whole multitude departs, His sorrowful Mother remains with John and Magdalene, and with her two sisters.*¹⁰⁹

Though both Ludolph and St John's gospel mention the two Marys present at Christ's execution, they are only present on the Beaumetz depictions of the Crucifixion. Supporting the body of the swooning Virgin and accompanying her in her sorrow they are, on both panels, looking up in grief to the figure of the dead Christ.

The figures of the Virgin and St John are the main characters witnessing the Passion on all cell paintings studied in this group, accompanied by the prayer of the monks. This corresponds with the fact that in the biblical account of the Crucifixion only one Gospel text places Mary close to the Cross, the Gospel of St John. He assigns the Virgin's place clearly and concisely, recording her stance in a single sentence: *"And there stood beside the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen."* (John 19:25) Though the apostle's account defines the key figures of Calvary imagery, it does not describe any of their inner movements. These emerge only in meditational writings that focus on the life of Christ.

Ludolph recounts how the Virgin suffered with her son after Longinus had pierced Christ's side. In her compassion, Mary suffered pain, even fainted away death-like on Calvary, thus sharing in Christ's Passion. This literally is her compassion. *"She fainted away and then fell as if dead in the arms of Magdalene on to the ground."*¹¹⁰ Though both panels illustrate the iconic moment of Christ's death and the Virgin's swoon, it is not this version of the scene that is depicted on the Beaumetz panels. Furthermore the figure of the Magdalene is not included in any of the five images, and the two Marys supporting the Virgin's body take her place on the Beaumetz panels. These two panels, by the different movements of the characters, present two different motions in the co-suffering of the Virgin and the sorrow of St John. According to Ludolph the dead Christ could not feel the wound, when the spear

¹⁰⁹ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon, Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 366.

¹¹⁰ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon, Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 376.

was driven into his side, thus the spear stabbed the Virgin's soul. This was the moment when she fainted undergoing in her compassion.¹¹¹

On the Cleveland panel the Virgin is shown as almost dead, with her head bent backwards, her left arm hanging down and her right arm folded back to her womb. The two Marys support her from behind from under her left shoulder and by holding her bent right arm. The Virgin's hands emphasize the area of the womb, while her feet are slightly bent as to parallel the bent legs of Christ. Her head is dropped back, suggesting that she was looking upwards to the cross, and fainted away as she saw the death of her son. Christ's head is bent to the right, towards the Virgin, and as Ludolph accounted, just before he died, he began “ ... *to drop his Head toward his Mother, giving her as it were a last salutation (...) which he could not express in words...* ”¹¹² Though represented in the same iconic moment, the posture of the Virgin on the Louvre panel is quite different. Both of her arms hang down limp besides her body and her knees are slightly spread. One of the two Marys holds her under the shoulders, taking the role of the Magdalen who was supporting her according to the Gospel's account. On these paintings, based on the visual emphasis placed on her womb, the Virgin, as part of her compassion in Christ's suffering, experiences the pain of labour. At this point, as Amy Neff points out in her article on Mary's labour at the foot of the cross, there is no agreement on what this labour signifies. It may be viewed as a second birth or rebirth of Christ, or the birth of all mankind saved in Christ, or merely a postponement of the labour pains she was spared at the Nativity. Regardless of this, the fact that the Virgin was said to suffer the pains of childbirth on Calvary was closely associated with her roles as mother and intercessor to all the faithful.¹¹³

¹¹¹ “*And although Christ, since he was dead, did not feel this wound on His Side, it was keenly felt by His holy Virgin Mother, whose blessed soul was then pierced by that cruel spear. She fainted away, and fell as if dead in the arms of Magdalene on to the ground. Thou seest how often she dies now-a-days, certainly as she sees anything fresh done against her Son*”. In: Ludolphus, IV, translated by Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the “Life of Christ” by Ludolph the Saxon, Quarterly Series 59*, London, 1887, p. 376.

¹¹² Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the “Life of Christ” by Ludolph the Saxon, Quarterly Series 59*, London, 1887, p. 346.

¹¹³ Neff, A.: *The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross, Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, 1998, p. 257.

In his *Vita Christi* Ludolph of Saxony provides a full and thorough description of the Virgin's compassion, accounting for her grief:

What did his Mother then do?

From the desire in her heart she raised her hands, longing to touch her Beloved, as if thus she would be able better to indulge her love and grief. And since she had no other comfort, she pressed her lips with intense eagerness to the warm Blood, which was continuously dropping from the Wounds of her Son to the ground, so that her face was dyed red by the Blood of that slain Son. She wished to embrace Christ, and because she could not touch Him she fell heavily to the ground. The paleness of death had overspread her face, nevertheless her cheeks and mouth were crimson with the Blood of Christ. She pressed kisses over the earth watered by streams of Blood. Alas! How ill did then fare with her.¹¹⁴

Medieval images of the Crucifixion from before the thirteenth century typically show Mary standing upright at the foot of the cross.¹¹⁵ It was only in the second half of the thirteenth century that the imagery of the Swoon began to flourish, and although it became an immensely popular image, it never replaced the picture of Mary stoically standing upright at the Crucifixion.¹¹⁶ The Virgin on the Rogerian Calvary is depicted as *Stabat Mater*. She gives vent to her grief in restrained gestures, with tears visible on her face. She is depicted frontally, turned to the viewer to fully present her facial features that express sadness rather than deep sorrow. A prominent halo surrounds her head, emphasizing her figure and contributing to the iconic nature of the image. Her presence at the foot of the cross placed in symmetry with that of St John, and their gesture of prayer, accentuate both the iconic nature of Christ's dead body and the meditational character of the panel. On this depiction the Virgin fulfils the role of intercessor, mother of all the pious, and a model for prayer.

¹¹⁴ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 366.

¹¹⁵ Neff, A.: *The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross*, *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, 1998, p. 254.

¹¹⁶ Neff, A.: *The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross*, *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, 1998, p. 254.

On the Courtauld Calvary the Virgin is also presented standing erect at the foot of the cross. She holds her right hand on her chest and her gesture can also be interpreted as an action of prayer. Cloaked in her blue robe, stoically standing upright at the Cross, she is depicted as covered in deep contemplation, and thus represented as an illustration for devotional practices. Standing in prayer under the Cross, her attitude bespeaks her priestly dignity, and her heroic and humble consent to the divine plan of Salvation. She suffered terribly and yet she agreed to the Crucifixion.¹¹⁷

Having agreed to offer up the fruit of her womb for Man's Redemption, a model for prayer and sorrowed for her grief by Christ himself, devotion to the Virgin's compassion was encouraged as a form of *imitatio Christi*, comprising of an exercise in emphatic meditation. As Ludolph instructed his readers:

*... let us also reflect how great was the sympathizing grief of the Son for the Mother suffering with Him. (...) if we wish in this point to conform ourselves as far as possible to Christ, let us compassionate also his sorrowing mother, for he also compassionated her.*¹¹⁸

Ludolph uses the phrase “compassion of Mary”¹¹⁹ to show that identification with the sorrow of the Virgin and contemplation of her grief are ways of partaking in the Passion and achieving Redemption.

*In order to conform ourselves to this point of compassion for the sorrow of Chris's Mother, let us consider how great would be the grief of a loving mother, and such a mother for such a Son Whom she saw so cruelly treated and dying in such affliction.*¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Simon, O.: Co-Redemptio in Roger van der Weyden's Descent from the Cross, *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 35, 1953, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ Coleridge, H.J.: The Hours of the Passion Taken from the “Life of Christ” by Ludolph the Saxon, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, 317.

¹¹⁹ Bodenstedt, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, pp.140 - 145.

¹²⁰ Coleridge, H.J.: The Hours of the Passion Taken from the “Life of Christ” by Ludolph the Saxon, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 311

In his view of the Virgin, the fifteenth century writer Denis the Carthusian called Mary Salvatrix Mundi¹²¹ because of her compassion under the Cross by which she helped achieve the work of Redemption. Subsequently, Denis devoted a chapter to "*the most vehement and overwhelming compassion of Mary with the Passion of her Son*" emphasizing her role gained under the Cross.¹²²

The relevance of the figure of St John the Evangelist, who was meant to assist Carthusian monks in their private contemplation is also referred to in the *Vita Christi*. Ludolph interprets the establishment of the relation between Christ's mother and St John at the foot of the cross as a commendation of the Church and its members to the Virgin.¹²³ He concludes that as the passion of Christ was necessary for man's salvation, so his bequest of his loving mother to all Christians was necessary for their aid and counsel.¹²⁴ This commendation is sanctified by Christ himself as accounted for in the *Vita Christi*: "*He commended that Mother, bereft of all comfort, plunged in grief and almost dying to the disciple and the disciple to his Mother.*"¹²⁵

The figure of St John is depicted as deepened in contemplation on all five cell paintings studied in the present discussion. Represented as performing different prayer gestures, he can also be considered as a model for devotion, an intercessor pleading for the spiritual welfare of the praying monk, and also the symbol of all Christians commended by Christ to the Virgin. On the Louvre and Courtauld panels St John's crying face, red cheeks and nose, and the frown lines on his forehead make his figure the most dramatic character in the composition. On the Courtauld panel the rendering of his figure in a theatrical gesture of prayer can also be linked to the prayer of the Carthusian monk, showed with his hands clasped at his chin on the Louvre Calvary. The St John depicted on the Rogerian Calvary, in a characteristic pose, with his arms raised and hands clenched before his breast also alludes to the pose of the

¹²¹ Dionyssos Cartusianus: *De Dignitate et Laudibus B. V. Mariae*, 11, 23 In: *Opera Omnia*, xxxvi, Tournai, 1908, p. 99.

¹²² Simon, O.: Co-Redemptio in Roger van der Weyden's Descent from the Cross, *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 35, 1953, p. 14.

¹²³ Bodenstedt, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, p. 142.

¹²⁴ Bodenstedt, S. M.: *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian: A dissertation*, Washington, , 1944, pp.140 - 145.

¹²⁵ Coleridge, H.J.: The Hours of the Passion Taken from the "Life of Christ" by Ludolph the Saxon, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 311.

Magdalene in the image of the *Descent from the Cross* by Rogier van der Weyden, now in the Prado (Fig. 8)

Besides the figures of Christ and the Virgin, the depictions of Carthusian monks in prayer are of key importance in the present discussion. Their presence on these images underlines the significance of the devotional practices they performed and documents their relations with the image of the dead Christ and his sorrowing mother. Due to the positioning of the monks' figures on the right side of the Cross, at Christ's feet, their figures bear strong allusions to the figure of the Magdalene, often depicted at the foot of the cross¹²⁶ in her role as mediatrix and co-redemptrix, embodying penitence and the hope of salvation.¹²⁷ Furthermore, her faithfulness, compassion and perseverance both at the Cross and at the Tomb, where she stood and wept after the disciples have gone away¹²⁸ makes her a perfect role model for Carthusian monks.¹²⁹ Her repentance and conversion in Cana, manifested in her act of washing Christ's feet with her tears, drying them with her hair and anointing them with precious ointment, led to Christ forgiving all her sins. Furthermore, the Magdalene's retirement to the wilderness after Christ's ascension and her becoming a solitary who dedicated her life to heavenly contemplation, as accounted for by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*, must also have been substantial motivation for monks' identification with her figure.¹³⁰

The reason for representing the monks on the right side of the cross, the side designated for sinners, can be found in the special division of the four sides of the cross. As Ludolph mentions: "*One wing may be understood as protection in*

¹²⁶ Jansen, K.L.: *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Late Middle Ages*, Princeton, 2000, p. 241.

¹²⁷ Jansen, K.L.: *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Late Middle Ages*, Princeton, 2000, p. 241.

¹²⁸ John, 20:10 – 20:11

¹²⁹ For further discussion of the role of the Magdalen as a model for Carthusian devotion see Nash, S.: Claus Sluter's 'Well of Moses' for the Chartreuse de Champmol Reconsidered: Part III, *Burlington Magazine*, 2008, pp. 724-741.

¹³⁰ Further description of the Magdalen's legend in Ryan, W.G.(ed.): Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend, Reading on the Saints*, Princeton, 1993, Vol. I., pp. 374-382.

prosperity, the other, protection in adversity; one wing against the evils of sin, the other against the evil of suffering.”¹³¹

Portrayed in contemplation on each of the cell paintings studied in this group, the monks are echoing the prayer gesture of the figure of St John, who is depicted as their intercessor at the foot of the Cross. In the case of the Louvre panel the gaze of the monk is clearly directed at Christ’s body, along with his prayer. On the rest of the panels it seems like the monks are receiving the holy vision of the Passion, and contemplate the vision in the solitude of their cells. Thus, it can be concluded that by initiating and supporting meditational practices for monks, cell paintings depicting the monks themselves meditating before the iconic image of Christ on the cross must have been among the most efficient devotional aids.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be stated that despite the small number of works remaining or available for study, the genre of Carthusian cell painting can be considered a coherent group of images. Due to the unchanged rules guiding the private devotional practices of the Carthusian order, the effort to produce iconic images of the Crucifixion of Christ, which at the same time emphasized the meditational role of the Virgin and of St John the Evangelist, stretched over the artistic production of a period of several decades in the Burgundian Netherlands.

It can also be concluded that meditational writings, though widespread and extensively used, cannot be considered as direct sources in the production of images. This process is better described as an interaction between visual representational traditions and written texts constantly influencing one another.

The study also shows how the contemplative practices represented on the panels depict the ways in which Carthusian monks performed their meditative rituals and how these rituals referred primarily to the Passion of Christ. As demonstrated by the examination of the panels in the light of the meditational writings of the period, the study also concludes that the Virgin, undergoing her deep compassion for the loss

¹³¹ Coleridge, H.J.: *The Hours of the Passion Taken from the “Life of Christ” by Ludolph the Saxon*, *Quarterly Series* 59, London, 1887, p. 300.

of her divine Son, was the primary model for compassion and qualified for the title of Co-redemptrix in Carthusian private devotional imagery.

Appendix

1. Fragment from the Foundation Charter of the Chartreuse of Champmol
“... entre les autres Oeuvres à dieu acceptables c’est en special fructueux te prouffitable au salut des ames les sacrifices et devotes oroisons des religieuses et dévotes personnes qui, pour amour de Dieu, ont eslu volumpairement pauvreté (...) singulièrement entendre à luy servir, Entre lesqueulz nous réputons les frères de l’Ordre de Chartreuse continuellement labourer et soy exerciter en vie contemplative, qui de jour et de nuict ne cessent de Dieu prier pour le salut des âmes, pour la prospérité et le bon estat du bien publique et des princes qui en ont le gouvernement, soubz dieu, ...” Transcribed by Monget, C: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d’apres les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., p. 393 – 395.
2. Fragment from Guigo I’s Letter on Solitude
“Sobria in victu, simplex in habitu, pudica in verbis, casta in moribus. Maxime ambienda, quia minime est ambitiosa. Devotus erit ad Deum, benignus ad proximum, sobrius ad mundum. Dei servus, hominis socius, mundi dominus.” Transcribed in Hogg, J.: *Everyday life In: Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1980, p.144.
3. Guigo I. Coutudines Cartusiae XL.I.
“Ornamenta aurea vel argentea preter calicem et calamum qui sanguis domini sumitur, in ecclesia non habemus, pallia tapetiaque reliquimus.”
4. Fragment of the Foundation Charter of the Charterhouse of Champmol
“Confirmatio foundationis Cartusiae S^{tae} Trinitatis prope Divionem ad Instantiam Philippi Ducis fundatoris, Concessa a Clemente VII qui Avenione Sedens, Verus Romanae et Catholicae Ecclesiae Papa cis Alpes a plerisque habebatur.” (décembre 1385) Transcribed by Monget, C: *La Chartreuse de Dijon d’apres les documents des archives de Bourgogne*, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1898-1905, Vol. I., N° 12, p. 393.

5. The account of the Flagellation: *Fuit undique regius et pretionissimus sanguis de omnibus partibus corporis, et ejus corpus candidissimum cruore ejus roseo rubricatur per totum. ...*” Ludolphus de Saxonia: *Vita Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*. II, 62, 638b.

Illustrations



Figure 1.

Workshop of Jean de Beaumetz: Calvary with a Carthusian Monk

c. 1389-95

Oil on oak panel

56.5x45.5 cm

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

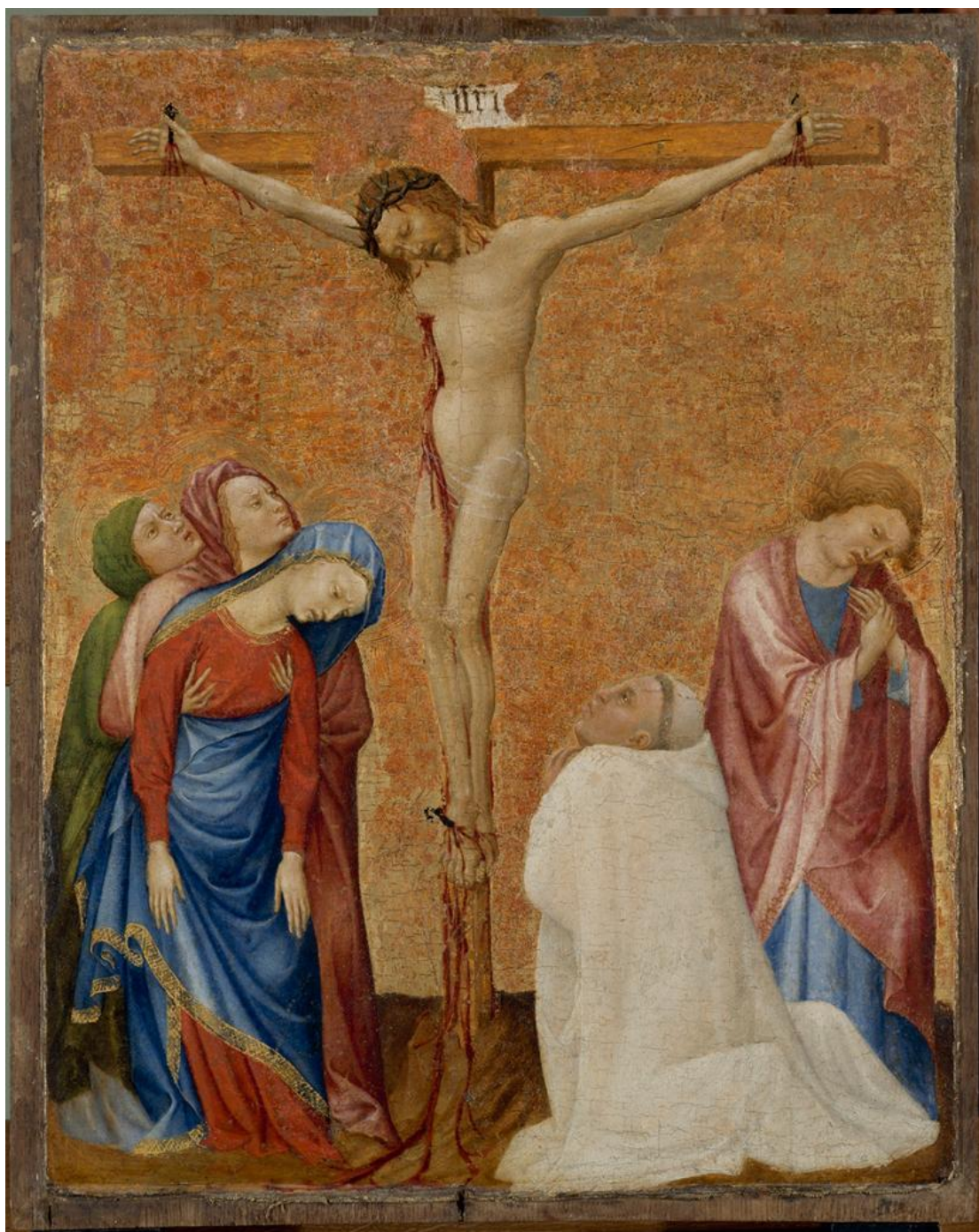


Figure 2.
Workshop of Jean de Beaumetz: Calvary with Carthusian Monk
c. 1389-95
oil on oak panel
60x48.5 cm
Musee de Louvre, Paris



Figure 3.
Anonymous: Calvary with a Carthusian Monk
c. 1430-40
oil on wood
57x47 cm
Musee des Beaux-Arts, Dijon

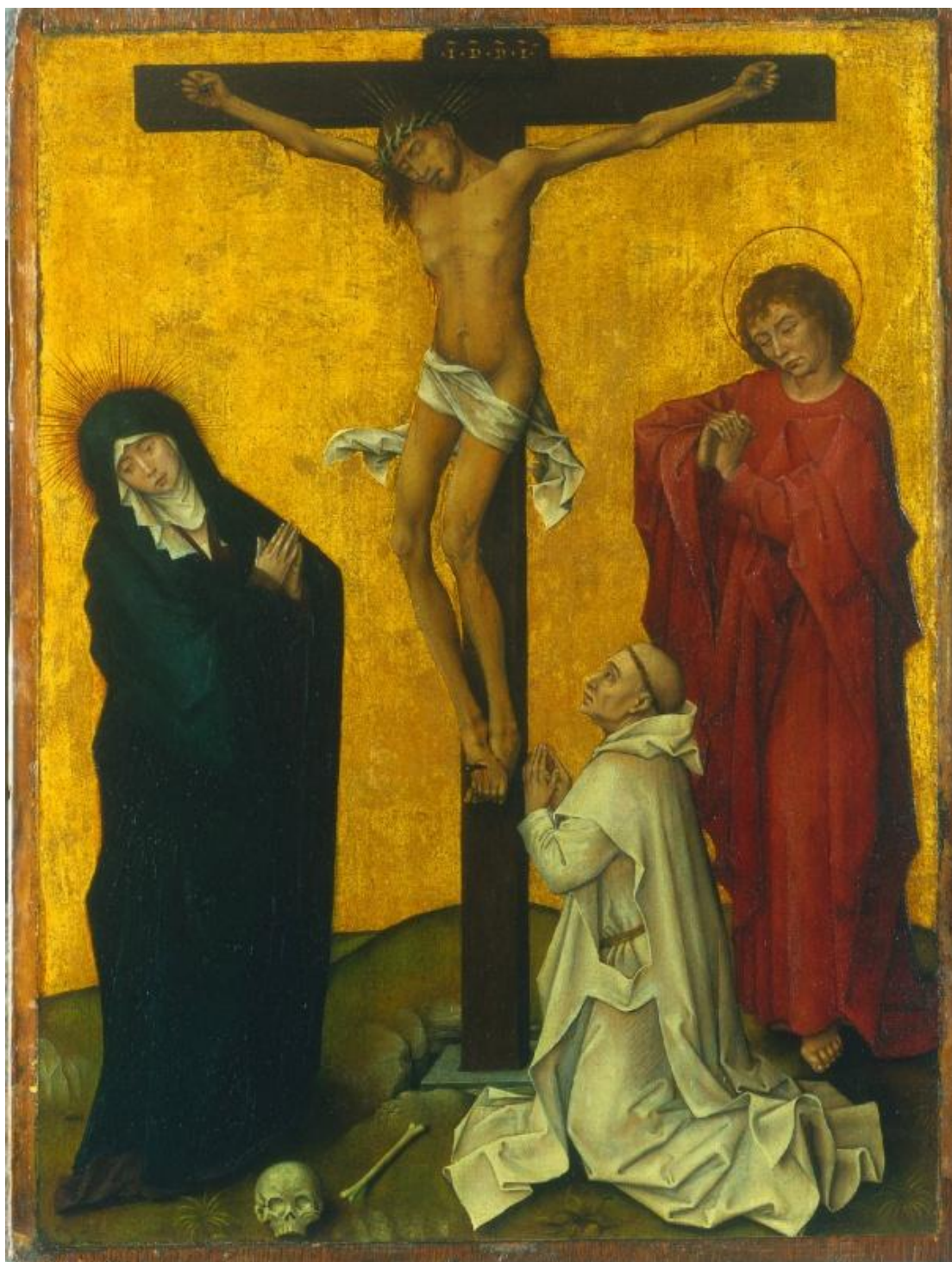


Figure 4.

Anonymous: Calvary with a Carthusian Monk

c. 1470

Oil on oak panel

38.4x29.2 cm

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

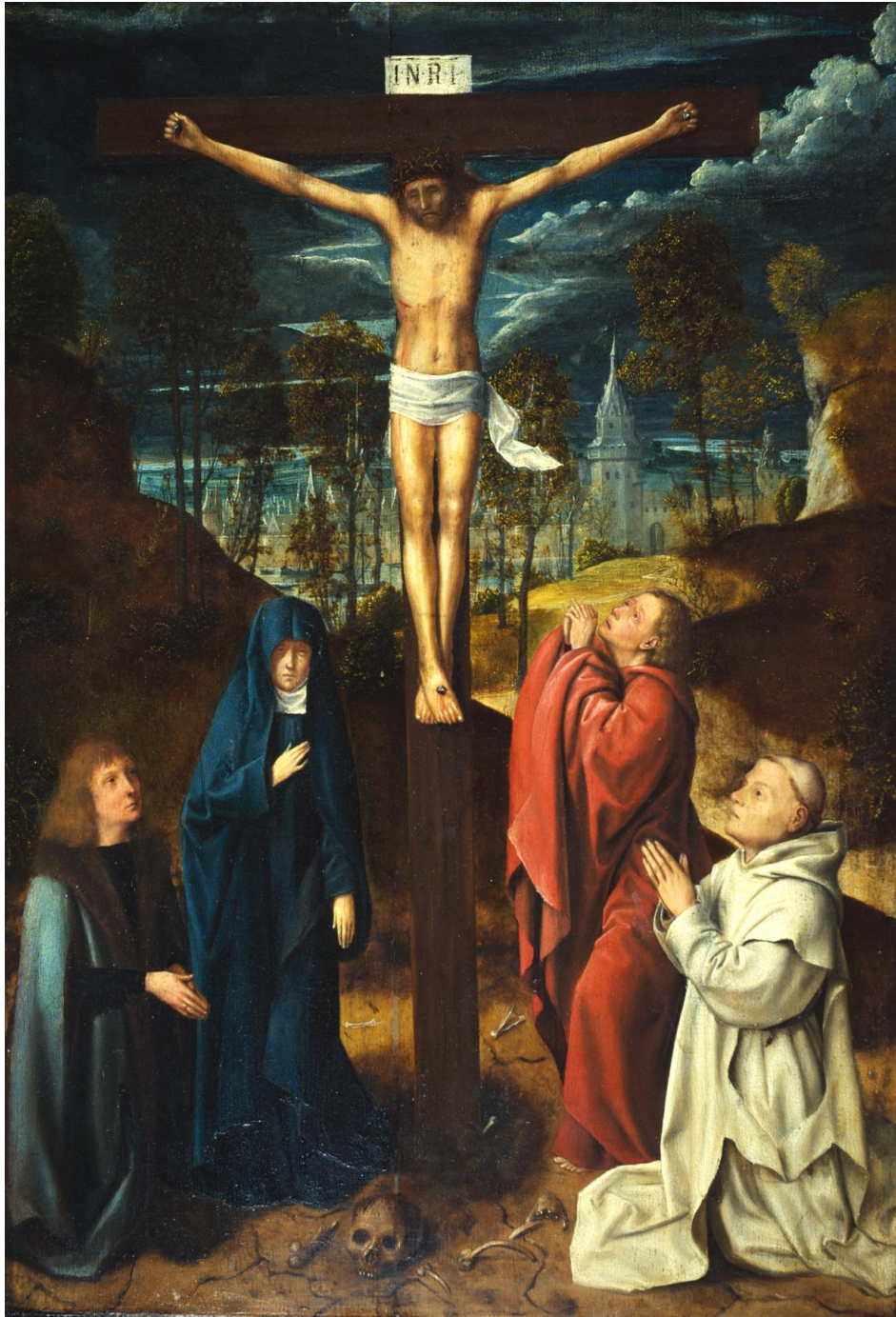


Figure 5.

Quitten Massys: Calvary with Two Donors

c. 1480

Oil on oak panel

37.5x25.37 cm

The Courtauld Gallery, London



Figure 6.

Workshop of Rogier van der Weyden: Sforza Triptych

c. 1460

Oil on oak panel

53,7 x 44,8 cm (central panel)

Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels



Figure 7.

Rogier van der Weyden: Crucifixion Triptych

c. 1445

Oil on oak panel,

101 x 70 cm (central panel)

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Figure 8.
Rogier van der Weyden: Descent from the Cross
c. 1435
oil on oak panel
220x262 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid

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