

**El Paular:  
Anatomy of a Charterhouse**

by

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Phillip Jeffrey Guilbeau, esteemed colleague in the Department of History of Art at the University of Michigan, died, of cancer, on December 21, 2011. His dissertation was substantially complete before his death. With his knowledge and consent, members of his dissertation committee oversaw the final preparation of the dissertation for submission. Phillip will be greatly missed.

Phillip Jeffrey Guilbeau

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## **Dedication**

For my mother, who understood with patience and love.

In memory of Fr. Ildefonso Gómez, O.S.B.,  
who unknowingly steered me to the mother of Castilian charterhouses.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## List of Abbreviations

AC	Analecta Cartusiana
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid)
BN	Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid)
CMR	<i>La Cartuja de Miraflores. 3. Las vidrieras</i> (Funcación Iberdrola, 2007)
CMS	<i>La Cartuja de Miraflores. 1. Los sepulcros</i> (Funcación Iberdrola, 2007)
CMV	<i>La Cartuja de Miraflores. 3. El retablo</i> (Funcación Iberdrola, 2007)
LB	<i>Libro Becerro</i>
MC4:2	<i>Monasticon Cartusiense, Tomus IV, España: Pars II. Provinica Castellae.</i> Salzburg, 2006.
RM	<i>Retablo Mayor de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular</i> (Madrid: Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Esp, 2007)
RVC	<i>Retablo de la vida de Christo</i> by Juan de Padilla
VC	<i>Vita Christi</i> by Ludolph of Saxony

## Chapter One

### Introduction

*I the King. In order to do good and to give grace and alms to you the Prior and to the monks and to the convent of my monastery of Santa María de El Paular, of the Order of Carthusians, which is in the Valley of Lozoya near Rascafría, to those who are there now as well as to those who may come from here on out, and for the prayers that you may make for my soul and my life and for the Queen my wife and for the Prince and the Infanta my children, and for the souls of the other Kings from whom I come, that you may be helped more by these alms that I give to you ...*<sup>1</sup>

King Enrique III of Castile, Privilege granted  
February 4, 1406.

The three words that open the above passage evoke, by their very brevity, royal power and power enveloped within a pious wish. Indeed, a royal imprint marked the pristine Valley of Lozoya even before establishment of the Charterhouse of El Paular in 1390 (Fig. 1.1). The monastery, or charterhouse as Carthusian foundations are called,<sup>2</sup> was established on royal lands on the anniversary of the Beheading of John the Baptist, the saint most closely embraced—after the Virgin—by members of the Carthusian Order

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from privilege given to the Charterhouse of Santa María de El Paular, dated February 10, 1406; redacted on October 22, 1572, in Valladolid, for an executive determination by the Real Chancillería in favor of the Charterhouse of El Paular and against the Valley of Lozoya, allowing the monastery to buy properties and other “immovable goods” [*bienes raíces*] in and outside the area. AHN, Códices, Códice 1327. “Yo el Rey. Por fazer bien y merçed y limosna a vos el Prior y monjes y convento del mi monesterio de sancta Maria del Paular, de la Orden Cartuja, que es en el Valle de Loçoya çerca de Rrascafría, assi a los que agora sodes como a los que seredes de qui adelante, e porque la oraçion que fizieredes por la mi salud y vida y de la Reyna mi mujer y del Príncipe y de la Infante mis fijos, y de las animas de los Reyes de la otras personas donde yo vengo, sea mas ayudada por esta limosna que vos yo fago . . .”

<sup>2</sup> Spanish *cartuja*, Latin *cartusia*, Italian *certosa*, German *Kartause*, etc.

(*Ordo Cartusiensis*).<sup>3</sup> The spot had formerly been the site of a hunting-lodge for the Trastámara kings, whose dynasty spanned the period 1369–1474. The variegated terrain is ringed by great mountain ranges and nourished by the slender but well-stocked River Lozoya, with abundant game in the valley. These natural features enhanced that chief royal diversion, the chase. Various generations of Trastámara kings including Enrique III (d. 1406), Juan II (d. 1454), and Enrique IV (d. 1474) referred to the Charterhouse of El Paular as “my monastery,” a designation that emphasized continuing royal prerogative. The establishment of the Charterhouse of El Paular, contemporary with other royal foundations of the Hieronymite and Benedictine orders, coincided with the political ascendancy of the Trastámara family, a dynastic branch founded by Enrique II, illegitimate offspring of Alfonso XI, who seized the throne from his legitimate sibling in 1369.<sup>4</sup> The royal character of El Paular could not be missed, since a royal palace is, as it were, folded within the complex. The palace figures as one of the earliest buildings erected at the site and constitutes an extreme rarity in Carthusian monastery design.

Indeed many rare features—inside and out—characterize the Charterhouse of El Paular. One might even say that the immediate provision for a royal palace represented the first of many bizarre—if not completely wrong-headed—design choices espoused during the first century of growth. Indeed, the architectural and decorative features adopted in the later fifteenth century routinely struck a nerve, occasioning disapproval

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<sup>3</sup> The charterhouse has been known by several names, including these: C. Segoviensis (Lozoyensis) – C. Segoviensis del Paular – C. Ste. Seu Beatae Mariae de Paular (Paulary) – C. Paularensis (D.) – Chartreuse de N.-D. del Paular – Chartreuse de Segovia – Chartreuse de la Bienheureuse Marie dite de Paulary (D.). The designation “C.” stands for “Cartusia” and “D.” for “Domus.” Gustave Vallier, *Sigillographie de l'Ordre des Chartreux et Numismatique de Saint-Bruno* (Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1891), 230. The double dedication to the Virgin and the Precursor is contained in the profession of the Carthusian novice, “to the honor of God and to Holy Mary Ever Virgin and to Saint John the Baptist. . . .” [ad honorem dei et beatae semper virginis mariae et beati iohannis baptistae. . . .]. Guigo, I, Custom 23, “Professio novicii,” in Un Chartreux (ed. and trans.), *Coutûmes de Chartreuse*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), 215.

<sup>4</sup> Teofilo F. Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis 1300–1474* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 57–63.

from the administrative body of the Carthusian Order, governed from the mother-house in Grenoble, familiarly called the Grande Chartreuse. Added to this, the Carthusians of El Paular seem to have been dedicated to a recurrent pattern of demolition and reconstruction that may have been considered imprudent if not wasteful. Scholars have noted a certain irony in the fact that the strictest of all religious communities, the Order of Carthusians, generally commissioned the most lavish paintings and sculptures for equally lavish built environments. El Paular was certainly no exception to this generalization, which nevertheless overlooks the fact that some charterhouses in Europe struggled with poverty or failed entirely.<sup>5</sup>

Of the hundreds of Carthusian monasteries that sprang up in the Middle Ages in Europe, most have suffered considerable alteration in their building fabric if not complete ruin. The Grande Chartreuse, rebuilt after a fire in 1676, is perhaps the prime example of a charterhouse almost completely modified in architectural disposition and appearance. By contrast, though the complex of El Paular has experienced numerous wars, occupational transformations, and natural disasters, it has remained remarkably intact. Aside from the royal palace and nearby royal chapel, the charterhouse contains a primitive cloister from the early fifteenth century, the contemporary monastic church and several contiguous chapels, various “public” areas such as chapterhouses and refectory, and additional cloisters built, respectively, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These spaces were erected, ostensibly, according to specifications related to the peculiar

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<sup>5</sup> In the province of Catalonia, the Charterhouses of Valparaíso (1345–1415) and San Pablo del Mar (1269–1433) failed individually but were successfully transferred to the Charterhouse of Montalegre (founded 1413); the Charterhouse of L’Anunciada (1442–45) failed entirely. Within the province of Castile, the Charterhouse of Aniago (founded 1441) remained poor throughout much of its history. For a full list of failed European charterhouses and their dates of closure, see Dom Augustin Devaux and Gabriel van Dijk (eds.), *Nouvelle bibliographie cartusienne* CD Rom (Charterhouse of Sélignac, 2001 ff.).



Carthusian religious mission and attendant mode of living, which required a special architectural model for the housing of its monks. Not surprisingly, the Carthusians of El Paular employed architects associated almost exclusively with royal building projects.

For all these reasons, El Paular presents exceptional conditions for the study of fifteenth-century Carthusian corporate identity within Spain and elsewhere in Europe. An engraving from a volume on Carthusian houses published in the early nineteenth century (Fig. 1.2) gives remarkable visual information about the charterhouse and its disposition during the period of its making.<sup>6</sup> The complex, in fact, looks today much as it did then. The Charterhouse of El Paular remained a Carthusian establishment until its closure or exclaustation in 1835 during the period of Spanish liberal reform (the so-called *desamortización de Mendizábal*). Following a century of neglect, the former charterhouse became home to a male Benedictine community in 1954.

El Paular's architectural complex was meant to ensure functional circulation and communal segregation within the complex, a requisite for the separate housing of two distinct monastic groups, generally called choir monks and laybrothers (*conversi*). Within the walls of the charterhouse, an astonishing survival is the massive retable in the monastic church. Scholars of late medieval sculpture may be thankful that this carved, polychromed alabaster altarpiece remains *in situ*, having escaped the process of substitution so uniformly followed by Carthusian houses in Castile and elsewhere in Europe, especially during the Baroque period. This gem of late medieval sculpture features sixteen separate narrative episodes related to the lives of Christ and his mother, with the scenes arranged unevenly in number across four registers (Fig. 1.3), the whole set atop an enormous base cut by two sculpted doorways. Exquisite—indeed,

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<sup>6</sup> *Maisons de l'Ordre des Chartreux. Vues et notices*, 4 vols. (Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1913–19), III: 217.

ostentatious—microarchitectural elements choreograph the narrative sequence, which reads from bottom to top. The narrative scenes of the altarpiece contain unusual iconography that invites renewed art-historical attention, one of the aims of this study. In particular, the retable has never been studied in the light of Carthusian devotional currents and liturgical practice, an exploration that raises questions about format, visuality, and materiality.

El Paular enjoyed royal favor for centuries, even while its monks endeavored to respect the ideals and aspirations of the *Ordo Cartusiensis*. At various points in its history, the charterhouse would commit certain extravagances in its building and artistic appointments in many ways exceptional in the history of the Order. These transgressions occurred almost quarterly in the first century of architectural expansion. The Charterhouse of El Paular qualifies thus as typical and atypical, qualities that make it an important historical monument in the context of other European establishments. If it is occasionally difficult to follow the money trail, to determine the timing of labor among the various architects and artists who worked there, and to isolate the successive layers of structural accretion that describe the complex, the visual evidence nevertheless speaks volumes about the domestic and devotional wishes of the monks who resided there, and the royal patrons who financed much of the construction. Therefore, this study throws light on tensions between patronal extravagance and religious austerity.

It likewise allows consideration of architectural and artistic tendencies in the Iberian peninsula within wider European—and specifically Carthusian—religious, political, and artistic development, underlining a highly cosmopolitan awareness of trends in Flanders, the Brabant, and the Rhineland, as well as in Italy. Indeed, some of greatest

surviving works of northern art were imported to Carthusian establishments in Castile, notably paintings by Roger van der Weyden donated to the Charterhouse of Miraflores. Records also indicate the employment of Northern architects working on site, achieving architectural solutions reminiscent of their training at home and adapted to particularly Spanish requirements and specifications. These artisans may have seen Spanish patronage as a particular opportunity for economic advantage, with the Carthusians representing but one avenue among many episcopal, parochial, and monastic commissions. Nevertheless, Carthusian commissions, owing to their expansive nature, perhaps qualified as some of the most important, as comparison with other works and monuments in Castile will show.

This study tries to sort out the structural and decorative beginnings and modifications to the charterhouse, and to read those changes in relation to Carthusian devotional patterns and liturgical requirements. It seeks to examine religious iconography in the light of Carthusian spirituality, highly orthodox in its particulars. It also considers the various design choices within the context of the ambitions of royal patrons and the spiritual life of the monks of El Paular. Theirs was not always an easy road to tread. In 1476, the Carthusian governing body, called the Chapter General, first attacked building and decorating excesses at El Paular. In 1503, the Chapter General renewed its disapproval, this time leveling criticism specifically at the enormous painted alabaster altarpiece in the monks' choir of the main church on the basis of an undefined quality of *indecentia*, best translated as "indecorum." As with all Chapter remonstrations, which tend to be laconic, this one is brief, and so I try to unravel the text in order to probe

why the Chapter singled out El Paular for severe criticism, rather than pointing to establishments elsewhere in Europe.

The Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular was the first of all Carthusian foundations in Castile, and the sixth of all foundations on the Iberian peninsula. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries marked a heyday for the Order of Carthusians, a pan-European community of contemplative brothers founded by Bruno of Cologne in 1084 during a time of stringent reform efforts throughout the Western Church. Bruno, born to the influential Hartenfaust family, studied first at the collegial school of Saint Cunibert in Cologne, then went to Reims to study the arts. After holding substantial offices there, Bruno sought the austere religious life, and he and six brothers applied to the bishop of Grenoble, Hugh of Châteauneuf, who directed them to the spot of the future Grande Chartreuse. Bruno was called away from the Grande Chartreuse in 1090 by Pope Urban II, his former pupil at Reims, who was involved in a struggle with the antipope Guibert of Ravenna. With the antipope victorious in Rome, Urban II and Bruno fled to southern Italy, where Bruno established the Charterhouse of Saint Stephen in Calabria in 1095. Bruno died there in 1101. Given that Bruno was never officially canonized,<sup>7</sup> but informally achieved saintly status in the early sixteenth century, pictures or statues depicting him—much less full pictorial cycles of his life—are extremely rare before that time.<sup>8</sup> All the better that the earliest known depiction of Bruno on the Iberian peninsula should come from El Paular, where the founder, dressed in Carthusian habit notable for its distinctive sidebands, appears within a niche on the magnificent sculpted church portal

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<sup>7</sup> Although Bruno never received a formal canonization, Pope Leo X gave an oral approval of the Order in 1514; Gregory XV authorized a semidouble feast for the whole church in 1623, and Clement X elevated the feast to the class of double in 1674. Ambrose Mougel, “St. Bruno,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

<sup>8</sup> See most recently, Juan Mayo Escudero, *Iconografía de São Bruno*, AC 237 (Salzburg, 2006).

amid twenty-three statuettes of prophets and saints. Bruno appropriately holds a skull, his principal attribute (Fig. 1.4).<sup>9</sup> The portal may once have been painted, which would certainly have made the saint stand out from his surroundings.<sup>10</sup>

The Carthusians constituted a “modern order of hermits” (*modernus ordo heremitarum*), as described by the chronicler Peter the Venerable, a Benedictine monk, in the early twelfth century. The Order was considered modern for its unusual mix of solitary and communal living patterns.<sup>11</sup> It arrived in the Iberian peninsula in 1194 with the foundation of the Charterhouse of Scala Dei, near Tarragona, a powerful foundation now only a ruin. Expansion of the Order westward from the Grande Chartreuse, the mother-house near Grenoble, necessitated the division of colonized areas into provinces (sometimes called nations) for the purposes of internal administration and external surveillance. The religious territories on the Iberian peninsula were created by subdividing the religious province of Provincia (Provence), home of the Grande Chartreuse: the province of Catalonia was created in 1336, and then, through a further subdivision of Catalonia, the province of Castella in 1442.<sup>12</sup> Thus, at the time of its erection and for about fifty years thereafter, the Charterhouse of El Paular belonged to the province of Catalonia, with Scala Dei as its mother-house.

El Paular was an exceptionally rich foundation almost from its inception in 1390. Carthusian documents identify it as a “new plantation,” an expression that gives some idea of its nascent agricultural economic expanse and power. That expression was

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<sup>9</sup> Mayo Escudero, *Iconografía de São Bruno*, 76–77.

<sup>10</sup> For painted architecture in medieval Spain, see Melissa R. Katz, “Architectural Polychromy and the Painters’ Trade in Medieval Spain,” *Gesta* 41.1 (2002): 3–14.

<sup>11</sup> Peter the Venerable used this expression in 1136 when describing the concession of vast lands to the Carthusians of the Charterhouse of Meyriat. Jacques Dubois, “Quelques problèmes de l’histoire de l’Ordre des chartreux à propos des livres récents,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 63 (1968): 27–54, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Santiago Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos en la religiosidad y la sociedad españolas 1390–1563*, 2 vols., AC 166 (Salzburg, 2000), 7–9.

routinely used by Carthusians to describe the spawning of daughter-houses from a mother-house. El Paular's rapid acquisition of wealth would enable it to make several attempts to establish a daughter-house during the fifteenth century, efforts that, for various reasons, were unsuccessful until the establishment of a fully-funded daughter foundation, the Charterhouse of Granada, in 1516. El Paular also intervened directly in the foundation of three other Castilian monasteries of the Carthusian Order, the Charterhouses of Las Cuevas (Seville, 1400), Aniago (Valladolid, 1441), and Miraflores (Burgos, 1442).

Iberian charterhouses generally reflected the highest level of royal patronage. By contrast, Flemish and Netherlandish foundations increasingly relied on the patronage of lesser aristocratic houses and the ever more prominent bourgeois class.<sup>13</sup> The northern charterhouses, relative latecomers to the Order, are far better known and more intensely studied than their Iberian counterparts. Indeed, the outstanding part played by Spaniards in the development and spread of the Carthusian Order has hardly been considered in the scholarly literature outside Spain, especially in art-historical and devotional-liturgical contexts.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Noble patronage of charterhouses jumped from thirty-seven percent in the first half of the fourteenth century to fifty-seven percent in the first half of the fifteenth; this accompanied a rise in patronage by urban elites, whose representation likewise increased from about twenty-five to thirty percent over the same period. Nevertheless, this increase by bourgeois founders represented the replacement of episcopal rather than noble patronage. See Dennis Martin, "The Honeymoon was over: Carthusians between Aristocracy and Bourgeoisie," in *Die Kartäuser und ihre Welt: Kontakte und gegenseitige Einflüsse*, ed. James Hogg, 3 vols., AC 62 (Salzburg, 1993), 1: 63–71, 69.

<sup>14</sup> One early contribution may stand for many. Well before the establishment of the Charterhouse of Scala Dei in 1194, it was a Spaniard who established the female branch of the Carthusian Order. "Blessed Juan of Spain" was born in Almanza (León) in the early twelfth century and went to Arles in 1137 to pursue the arts. Two years later he professed the eremitic life in a monastery of unknown location called "Saint Basil," but because of ill health moved to the Charterhouse of Montrieux, where he fulfilled the duties of sacristan and prior. The Reverend Prior of the Carthusian Order, Saint Anthelm (d. 1178), called on Juan to adapt the "Customs" to serve the needs of the nuns of the monastery of Prébayon (Provincia Provinciae). This female religious community had opted to be incorporated into the Carthusian Order. Although the female Carthusians, called Chartreusines, never had many houses, and these were almost exclusively in French

The establishment of the Charterhouse of El Paular was shrouded in myth from its beginnings. According to a long-held but now challenged legend, its foundation was an expiation for the sin of its testamentary founder, King Enrique II, who had ostensibly destroyed a Carthusian foundation in France during a war campaign.<sup>15</sup> Scholars are now inclined to suggest alternative accounts. Research by a great scholar of the Carthusian Order in Spain, Ildefonso Gómez, suggests that the foundation of the Charterhouse of El Paular lay rather in religious reform efforts promoted vigorously by the son of Enrique II, Juan I.<sup>16</sup>

To place El Paular among its contemporaries, it is useful to chart the expansion of the Carthusian Order throughout continental Europe in the late fourteenth century.

Almost simultaneously with its establishment, important charterhouses were founded at Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (1356), Liège (1357), Amsterdam (1362), Pisa (1367), London (1370), Rome (1370), Capri (1371), Erfurt (1372), Tournai (1377), Coventry (1381), Nuremberg (1382), Danzig (1382), Dijon (1383), Rouen (1384), Hildesheim (1387), Frankfurt (1390), Pavia (1396), Lübeck (1398), Mallorca (1399), and Seville (1400).<sup>17</sup>

The founding of these urban charterhouses, erected as part of the explosive growth of the

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lands, exploration of their artistic patronage remains wide-open territory for scholars. Ironically, although a Spaniard had instituted the religious life of the Chartreusines, no female foundation took root in the Iberian peninsula until the mid-twentieth century.

<sup>15</sup> This story surfaces in a document of 1432 given in Valladolid by Juan II: “El Rey D. Enrique mi bisabuelo, que Dios dé santo paraíso, por cargo que tenía de un Monasterio de la dicha Orden de Cartuxa, que ovo quemado andando en las campañas de Francia, é por descargo de su conciencia, mandó al Rey D. Juan mi abuelo, que Dios dé santo paraíso, que ficiese un Monasterio cumplido en los sus Reynos de Castilla, segun Orden de Cartuxa.” [King Don Enrique, my great-grandfather, may God keep him in holy paradise, for the sake of a Monastery of said Order of Carthusians that he had burned while pursuing his campaigns in France, and for the ease of his conscience, ordered King Don Juan, my grandfather, may God keep him in holy paradise, to establish a Monastery in his Kingdom of Castile, according to the Order of Carthusians.] Cited in Antonio Ponz, *Viaje de España*, 18 vols. (Madrid, 1772–94), X, Carta Quarta, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Ildefonso Gómez, *La cartuja en España*, AC 114 (Salzburg, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> François A. Lefebvre, *Saint Bruno et l'ordre des Chartreux*, 2 vols. (Paris, Librairie catholique internationale de l'oeuvre de Saint Paul, 1883), II, part 6 (foundations described in chronological order, 11<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century).

Order during the late fourteenth century, marked a new trend away from locating monasteries in solitary rural locations. The Charterhouse of El Paular, distant from any city center, held tight to the early monastic ideals of the Order: utterly remote and secluded, this monastery was sited in a landscape notable for its harsh climatic conditions, especially its brutal winters.<sup>18</sup>

Some understanding of the composition, mode of living, and religious mission of the Carthusian Order is helpful for grasping the choice of site for El Paular. Saint Bruno founded the Order according to the ideal of the Desert Fathers, and Carthusian charterhouses, following his own preferred language, were often called deserts or hermitages, regardless of their location, urban or rural.<sup>19</sup> The rhythm of daily life is distinctive. Carthusians to this day live out, by perpetual vow, a novel pattern of solitary (eremitic) and communal (cenobitic) behavior, according to which four-fifths of their day, including meals, study, work, sleep, and devotion, is spent in isolation and silence in a private cell—actually a rather large apartment with garden—and one-fifth is devoted to joint prayer and psalmody in the church. This degree of physical withdrawal marks the Carthusians as distinct from other orders of contemplative monks such as the Benedictines or Cistercians. Like these last two religious orders, Carthusians brothers are divided into two main ranks, priestly and lay: the division into two groups was maintained through distinct religious vows, separate housing arrangements, and differing liturgical requirements. This split is noticeable in the architectural disposition of

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Le Couteulx, *Annales Ordinis Cartusiensis ab anno 1084 ad annum 1429*, 8 vols. (Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1887–91), described the untoward climatic conditions in this way: “Coeli aerisque temperies horrida et inclemens; rigescunt namque montes continua niva argentes. . . .”

<sup>19</sup> Nathalie Nabert, “Le cas du mot cellule,” in *Das Erbe der Kartäuser. Internationaler Kongress für Kartäuserforschung, 1.–5. Dezember 1999, Kartause Ittingen*, ed. Jürg Ganz and Margrit Früh, AC 160 (Salzburg, 2000), 147–59, 149.



Carthusian monasteries, including El Paular, which incorporates separate cloisters, separate church spaces, separate eating areas, and separate chapterhouses for the priestly and lay ranks. As we shall see, the Carthusians of El Paular did not always maintain such strict segregation, to the dismay of the Chapter General.

Almost all Spanish Carthusian establishments were fully or partially demolished in the early nineteenth century during the Napoleonic invasions, or fell into neglect after governmental expropriation of church properties as part of the Spanish Liberal Reform (c. 1820–35). Monastic libraries and furnishings were scattered and landed in private and public collections. The situation at the Charterhouse of El Paular, where buildings survive but, with exception of the main retable, few of its fittings or possessions do, is neatly opposed to that of an establishment such as the contemporary Chartreuse de Champmol, founded in 1383 by the Philip the Bold Duke of Burgundy and his wife Margaret Countess of Flanders. In this much studied charterhouse, almost no structures remain, but works in various media by Claus Sluter, Claus de Werve, Jean Malouel, Henri Bellechose, and Jean de Beaumetz more than compensate for such loss. Likewise, copious documentation regarding artisans of many social levels have made it possible for scholars to consider notions of artistic agency at Champmol in the light of Carthusian and royal patronage.<sup>20</sup>

The complex of El Paular today is not nearly so vibrantly embellished as it was in earlier centuries when it was in the hands of the Carthusians. Then the charterhouse was a

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<sup>20</sup> Sherry Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Susie Nash, "Claus Sluter's 'Well of Moses' for the Chartreuse de Champmol reconsidered: Part I," "Part II," "Part III," *The Burlington Magazine* 147 (December 2005): 798–809; 148 (July 2006): 456–67; 150 (November 2008): 724–41.

highly decorated and colorful place, indeed, to judge from records at the time of exclaustation, positively encrusted with pictures and statues. The inventories of 1821 are selective: they detail only pictures and books, not statues: the compilers apparently did not consider polychromed sculptures to have any artistic value, but to be simply cult objects. The inventories also exclude, significantly, objects placed in individual cells “for being the property of the monks that inhabit them” (*por ser propiedad del Monje que les havita*). But they list, if tersely, a good many pictures, mostly dating from the Baroque period, and provide information on (1) the subject of each picture, (2) its author, if known, (3) its artistic merit, and (4) its state of conservation. The records describe, in the main cloister, the fifty-two seventeenth-century pictures, still extant, by Vicente Carducho depicting scenes from the life of Saint Bruno. The recorder notes that the main altar contained “no painting whatsoever” (*El Altar Mayor no tiene pintura alguna*), but this is because the great sculpted retable dominated the entire space. In the *Capilla de Ildefonso*, a chapel founded in the fifteenth century and located at the northwest end of the church, the records describe a “retable of the Flemish school” composed of six panels, with Ildefonso at the center; and in the Chapel of San Miguel, copper panels of the Resurrection, the Calvary, and the Flight into Egypt. In the sacristy, there was an image of Mary Magdalene on canvas, “very old and of a very good hand.”<sup>21</sup> These early nineteenth-century connoisseurial judgments, only a few among hundreds of entries, show that the images and books were being assessed for commercial dispersion. Today some late medieval statuary survives: examples include a *Lamentation* (Fig. 1.5) in the

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<sup>21</sup> *El Paular. Inventario de pinturas existentes en este Ex-Monasterio*. Madrid, AHN, Legajos, Consejo, 51570, nos. 123 and 124.

chapel now used by the Benedictines and a Crucifixion group in the refectory set against a background painted in the style of Titian. But a great many works have been lost.

Cayetano Enríquez de Salamanca in particular has lamented the dispersal of artistic goods, observing that “nothing but nothing remains of this fabulous pinacoteca.”<sup>22</sup> He collected references from earlier sources to show the range of artists at work in the later centuries of the charterhouse, including a monk of El Paular, Fray Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560–1627). The author notes that, in addition to the cycle of paintings by Vicente Carducho, there were works by artists including Antonio Van-Pere, Palomino, Van der Hame, Lancharés, Mateo Cerezo, Herrera el Vieja, Francisco Camilo, Eugenio Orozco, Alonso Cano, Donoso, and Conrado Jaquinto, among others.

The scarcity of records presents challenges to those studying most of the charterhouses in Europe. There are exceptions, notably Philip of Burgundy’s Chartreuse de Champmol, where documents survive in abundance.<sup>23</sup> In other cases buildings do survive, but it is hard to reconstitute the phases of construction for more than half of the charterhouses of Europe. The earliest Carthusian houses have often been rebuilt—most notably the Grande Chartreuse itself in the early seventeenth century—and many of the surviving houses were not founded before the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> El Paular is better served than most: an array of buildings survive and documents are available. Indeed, despite some gaps in the records, El Paular stands as one of the most neatly documented of all the charterhouses in Europe.

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<sup>22</sup> Cayetano Enríquez de Salamanca, *Santa María de El Paular* (Monasterio de Santa María de El Paular, 1974), 111: “Nada, absolutamente nada, queda de esta fabulosa pinacoteca...”

<sup>23</sup> Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, passim.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Pierre Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux des origines à la chartreuse de Pavie* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1983), 55.

Any study of El Paular requires a gathering of evidence from disparate places and fragmentary sources. Highly frustrating is the effort to assemble manuscripts and books from the once splendid library at El Paular, either looted or sold off at auction in the early nineteenth century. Through a happy circumstance, the foundation book of El Paular, called the *Libro Becerro*,<sup>25</sup> survived the exclaustation and remained safe in the temporary custody of an “intelligent family,” according to one chronicler. This book of institutional memory was compiled from earlier documents by Bernardo de Castro, professed monk of El Paular, in 1565, and officially entitled *Memoria de la Fundación y Dotación de El Paular, llamado generalmente Libro Becerro*.<sup>26</sup> The literary language of the work, often moralizing in tone, occasionally reaches moments of beauty and poignancy and ever reveals scriptural inspiration:

And so with things that are recounted in our times: they will never come to the notice of persons born later, since the memory of these things will be lost in silence, as though they had never happened in life: so they will be hidden from the notice of men, because in the end all is vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A *becerro* is a book that records gifts, privileges, concessions, and other important information of a church or monastery, compiled for the current use of its members. *Diccionario de la lengua española*. Electronic source (Madrid: Real Academia Española): *becerro*: 3. m. Libro en que las iglesias y monasterios antiguos copiaban sus privilegios para el uso manual y corriente.

<sup>26</sup> Don Bernardo de Castro, *Memoria de la Fundación y Dotación de El Paular, llamado generalmente Libro Becerro* (1565), 372 fols., original and facsimile housed at the Real Monasterio de Santa María de El Paular. I am grateful to the guest-master, Fray Martín, for making this work available to me on several occasions.

<sup>27</sup> “Asi tambien las cosas, que agora acontecen en nuestros tiempos, nunca vendrán a noticia, de los que despues han de nacer, porque la memoria dellas se perderà con el silencio; y como si nunca hubieran acontecido en la vida, asi seràn ocultas a la noticia de los hombres, porque al fin es todo vanidad de vanidades, y todo es vanidad.” *LB* fol. 1r.

The book is laced with references to classical authorities such as Plato and Plutarch, and of course biblical metaphors, notably encountered in a description of the exquisite landscape of the charterhouse, which draws on imagery from the Cantic of Canticles.<sup>28</sup>

Along with an account of progress in the building of the charterhouse in the mid-fifteenth-century, the book provides the economic history of El Paular, its earliest donations of monies and lands, its system of monastic tithes (called *tercias reales*, or royal thirds),<sup>29</sup> and its vast network of administrative centers or *haciendas*. The book is divided into two parts: the first part, as we know from a table of contents, recorded information from the time of the foundation of the charterhouse up to 1474, “according to the succession of the Five Kings of Castile [who were] the Principal Founders of El Paular.”<sup>30</sup> The second half, according to its stated intention, should have covered the state of the monastery up to the time of the book’s compilation.<sup>31</sup> The narrative in fact stops about a century short of the author’s time. Significantly, Bernardo de Castro suggested the book’s contents should be updated at least every ten years,<sup>32</sup> although apparently his wishes were never fulfilled.

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<sup>28</sup> *LB* fol. 29.

<sup>29</sup> In principle, the “royal third” was drawn from mandatory ecclesiastical tithes called tenths or *diezmos* (which might derive from a variety of goods, animal or vegetable). A papal bull issued by Pope Benedict XIII in the year 1407 indicates that El Paular was to receive two-thirds of the tithes of the archpresbytery of Talamanca, in the diocese of Toledo, in perpetuity. *LB* fols. 133r–136r.

<sup>30</sup> *LB* fols. 3r–3v. “segùn la subcesión delos Cinco Reyes de Castilla Principales Fundadores del Paulâr....” [according to the succession of the Five Kings of Castile and Principal Founders of El Paular....]

<sup>31</sup> *LB* fols. 3r–3v. “La Segunda Parte deste Libro trata del estado presente, en que agora vemos a la Casa del Paulâr: Dios lo establezca, y prospere: và repartido en nueve Registros.” [The Second Part of this Book treats the present state in which we now see the House of El Paular: May God establish and make it prosper: and it is divided into nine Registers.]

<sup>32</sup> *LB* fol. 4r. “y aun conviene mucho, que de diez à diez años se trasladasse de nuevo este Libro del Becerro, y se renovasse à lo menos cada, y quando que se hiciessen nuevos Apeos de Las Granjas.” [And it would be quite fitting if this Libro del Becerro were transcribed anew every ten years, and whenever new Inventories of the Granges might be made.]

Bernardo de Castro wanted to document for contemporary and future readers the possessions and rights of the house.<sup>33</sup> The author or authors whose work he relied upon had made some mistakes that he was at pains to correct in glosses in the margins of his own work. Given the fact that the book was compiled almost two hundred years after the foundation of the charterhouse, that it drew on materials at second hand, and that it was biased toward the institution it treats, the information it preserves must always be treated with caution. Nevertheless, the book is by far the most useful surviving source of information about the history of El Paular.

The *Libro Becerro* recounts that King Enrique III paid 10,000 *maravedís* for the purchase and transfer of eighty-two books from Scala Dei to El Paular, adding that, beyond these eighty-two books, there were “many others, and of much value” (*otros muchos, y de mucho valor*).<sup>34</sup> Carthusian legislation from the year 1397 shows that El Paular had received books from Aragonese foundations, for which it had not paid fairly, if at all.<sup>35</sup> Even before the gift by King Enrique III, King Juan I had provided for the supply of books and other items necessary for religious life:

We earnestly entreat that your Religion be established in the first [Carthusian] monastery founded in [Castile], according to the great and clear devotion we have and always have had for that Order, and that such religious persons be transferred to the said monastery with all the books and other things necessary for the Divine Office ...<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Elena Barlés Báguena and Eduardo Barceló, “Cartuja de El Paular,” in *Monasticon Cartusiense*, 4 vols., AC 185: 4 (Salzburg, 2006), 515.

<sup>34</sup> *LB* fol. 82.

<sup>35</sup> “Praecipimus Priori et conventui d<sup>s</sup> novae foundationis Castellae, quod reddant quam cito poterint libros quod habeant accomodatos de domibus Aragoniae, vel emant eos suo justo pretio ab illis domibus quae ipsos vendere potuerint.” [We advise the Prior and the convent of the house of the new foundation in Castile to return as soon as possible the books received from the Aragonese houses, or to send to deliver to those houses the just price by which they might sell them.] John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1217–1437. A Supplement (MS. Grande Chartreuse 1 Cart. 16)*, AC 100: 44 (Salzburg, 2009), 43.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from King Juan I of Castile to the Reverend Prior of the Order of Carthusians in the Grande Chartreuse, Grenoble, dated September 12, 1390, in Segovia. “Quocirca Religionem vestram attente rogamus quatenus, tum quia monasterium hoc primum in Hispania sit fundatum, tum etiam propter

It is regularly assumed in scholarship that no manuscripts from the period before 1500 have survived from El Paular.<sup>37</sup> Many were likely looted as early as May 1809, a year that spelled trouble for the monks of El Paular, who had to accommodate French troops in their charterhouse. Inventories of 1820 list no books made before 1500 and none with illuminations. Of the total documented, only about one-third date from the sixteenth century. The range of languages represented—including French, Castilian, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Italian, and Portuguese—provides evidence of the erudition of the library’s users.<sup>38</sup>

In the course of my research I have come upon five manuscripts from the period before 1500, none of which—unfortunately for the art historian—contains miniatures but which provide, however obliquely, indications of Carthusian reading practice, both private and public.<sup>39</sup> Two of these books are missals according to the Carthusian rite, one at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid and the other at the Hispanic Society of America

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grandem et claram devotionem nostram quam semper tenuimus ad ipsum Ordinem et tenemus, tales personas religiosas cum libris atque necessariis ad divinum [*sic*] Officium, nobis vestri Ordininis pro dicto monasterio transmittatis . . .” Cited in Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 594, and Gómez, *La cartuja en España*, 86–87; see also Le Couteulx, *Annales*, 6: 430–31; Nicolas Molin, *Historia Cartusiana ab origine ordinis usque ad tempus auctoris anno 1638 defuncti*, 3 vols. (Tournai, 1903–6), 2: 320–21; and Gil González Dávila, *Historia de la Vida y Hechos del Rey Henrico III. de Castilla* (Madrid, 1638).

<sup>37</sup> Ildefonso Gómez has brought to light an interesting lawsuit brought in 1443 for retention of property—books—by the Hieronymite monastery of Guadalupe against the Charterhouse of El Paular. Gómez de Cuéllar entered the Hieronymite Order in 1432 and brought with him numerous books of theology, canon law and other arts and sciences. Later, he sought a more austere religious life and transferred to the Order of Carthusians. When he entered the Charterhouse of El Paular, his books stayed behind at Guadalupe. The suit was adjudicated in 1443 in favor of El Paular for a restitution of about half the books. Cuéllar’s “library” included works as diverse as the *Rethorica antica* of Buoncompagno de Florencia (1215), the *Ars magna predicationis* of Ramón Llull (1304), and *De claris mulieribus* of Giovanni Boccaccio (1375). Gómez, *La cartuja en España*, 103–5. Gómez qualifies this suit as an “aberrant case” in the otherwise harmonious relations between the two houses.

<sup>38</sup> María Jesus Bielza-Díaz, “El monasterio de El Paular: su biblioteca y su archivo,” *Cuadernos para investigación de literatura hispánica* 17 (1993): 187–332, 189–93. Records indicate a total of 1,875 books, with 582 from the sixteenth century; 745 from the seventeenth; 181 of the eighteenth; and 367 of unknown date.

<sup>39</sup> AHN, Libro 20265, *Constitutions of the Order of Carthusians* (fourteenth century). Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 2: 499.

(New York).<sup>40</sup> Two others are copies of the *Consuetudines* or Customs of the Carthusian Order, one held in the Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), and the other in the Hispanic Society of America.<sup>41</sup> This second book is especially interesting since it is an excerpt concerned with customs affecting the laybrothers; its handwritten translation into Castilian reflects the level of Latinity for that group and suggests it was meant for reading in the chapterhouse.

The most perplexing of my finds is a small-format Bible produced c. 1300, now in the Newberry Library in Chicago.<sup>42</sup> Given the date of the Bible, produced almost one hundred years before the foundation of El Paular, it is possible that it may have been one of the works provided to the charterhouse by King Juan I at the time of its foundation or one of the eighty-two books purchased by King Enrique III from Scala Dei for El Paular in 1406.

This Bible, standard in form except for the placement of Colossians after 2 Thessalonians,<sup>43</sup> was adapted for Carthusian use by a lettering system in which chapters are first divided by the letters “a” through “g,” and then further subdivided by the letters “p,” “s,” and “t” (*prima, secunda, tertia*). The tiny script suggests that this copy was meant for private use by a monk. It is not clear to which Biblical commentary these designations refer, but the system has been recognized as peculiarly Carthusian, and has

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<sup>40</sup> BN MS 11539: *Missale Mixtum secundum Ordinem Cartusiensum*.

<sup>41</sup> AHN, Libro 20265, *Constitutions of the Order of Carthusians* (fourteenth century). Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 2: 499; Hispanic Society of America, *Costumbres de la orden de Cartuxa, tercera parte; Estatutos antiguos [de la orden de Cartuxa], segunda parte [fragm.]*, HC411/415.

<sup>42</sup> Newberry MS 22. See Paul Henry Saenger, *A Catalogue of Pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 38–39, who recognized the ownership mark. I have seen no discussion of this manuscript in the Spanish literature concerning the Charterhouse of El Paular. I am especially grateful to Paul Saenger for bringing the Bible to my attention and for introducing to me the sophisticated system of Carthusian notation.

<sup>43</sup> Saenger, *Catalogue*, 38.



been noted in a manuscript from the early thirteenth century in Cambridge.<sup>44</sup> Further investigation into this system of letter notation presents an exciting opportunity for Biblical scholars.

The Bible in the Newberry Library contains no decoration aside from some pointing hands and fingers that call attention to significant passages in, for instance, the Book of Isaiah (Fig. 1.6, top). This page demonstrates the lettering system described above as well. Especially interesting, and indicative of religious tenor, is a reduced and austere image of the cross pierced by three nails that appears on the last page of the Bible (Fig. 1.6, bottom), probably a device for contemplation added in the early modern period.<sup>45</sup> It is tempting to construe this crude picture, stripped to its barest elements, as a visual metaphor for Carthusian austerity and Christ-centered piety. The Bible is identified as having belonged to the El Paular through an inscription on the paste-down on the back cover, now erased and visible only under ultraviolet light. The erasure of that identifying mark may be said to represent the reality of dispersal and purchase, and the subsequent treatment of a highly functional religious book reconfigured as a luxury object. In some ways, the handling and movement over time of this Bible may stand for the vicissitudes of the Charterhouse of El Paular.

The charterhouse of El Paular has excited much commentary over time. The monastery received generous treatment by Spain's beloved chronicler, the painter

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<sup>44</sup> The same system was used in Cambridge University Library, MS Ee. 2.23, an elaborately illustrated Bible likely from Oxford c. 1230–40. Significantly, the text contains numerous corrections, indicating that the Carthusians were concerned with Biblical accuracy. As with the El Paular Bible, the text of MS Ee 2.23 is “too small for easy public reading.” See Christopher de Hamel, “Bible,” in *The Medieval Imagination: Illuminated Manuscripts from Cambridge, Australia, and New Zealand*, exh. Cat., ed. Bronwyn Stocks and Nigel Morgan (Melbourne: The State Library of Victoria, 2008), 33.

<sup>45</sup> Saenger, *Catalogue*, 39.

Antonio Ponz, in his *Viaje de España* (1772). It has been treated not only in travel narratives but also, especially more recently, in artistic guides. Not surprisingly, many studies have concentrated on the later furnishings of the charterhouse, especially the magnificent cycle of paintings of the life of Saint Bruno produced by Vicente Carducho in the period 1626–32 for the monks' cloister, the largest such series of paintings ever made for a Carthusian built environment.<sup>46</sup>

Santiago Cantera Montenegro, O.S.B., has authored the most comprehensive historical study of Spanish Carthusians and their houses, *Los cartujos en la religiosidad y la sociedad españolas: 1390–1563* (2000), a work that describes archival sources in exhaustive detail, primarily for charterhouses in Castile. Likewise, a former prior of El Paular, the Benedictine Ildefonso Gómez, author of *La Cartuja en España* (1989) and *Escritores cartujanos españoles* (1988), has provided a comprehensive introduction to available sources for prominent Spanish Carthusian writers. An unpublished three-volume manuscript on El Paular and its daughter-house Granada was compiled c. 1920 by Baltasar Cuartero y Huerta, *Historia de Santa María de El Paular y de su filial de Granada*. The book is listed as having been represented in the collection of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, but its whereabouts are now unknown.

The art historian Elena Barlés Báguena has provided the most significant account of Carthusian art across the Iberian peninsula; she has published numerous notices on Spanish charterhouses in that essential source for general Carthusian history, the *Analecta*

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<sup>46</sup> Carducho's works coincided with an increasingly self-conscious "Carthusianization" of European charterhouses through pictorial cycles of the saint's life. For the iconography of Bruno's life, see Elena Sainz Magaña, "La voz de las imágenes en el silencio de la Cartuja. La imagen de Bruno de Colonia en el panorama de la iconografía de los santos," in *Del silencio de la cartuja al fragor de la orden militar*, ed. José Angel García de Cortázar and Ruiz de Aguirre (Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2010), 101–26; Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1958), 3.1: 249–52; and Mayo Escudero, *Iconografía de San Bruno*.

*Cartusiana*. This monograph series, inaugurated in 1970 by James Hogg, provides authoritative information concerning almost all Carthusian foundations in Europe. The series includes two short studies on El Paular, a pictorial survey by Ildefonso Gomez and James Hogg called *La Cartuja de El Paular* (1982) and a brief but thorough summary of all historical phases of the monastery by Barlés Báguena, “Cartuja de El Paular,” the latter appearing in *Monasticon Cartusiense IV* (2006). Barlés Báguena usefully concentrates on aspects of the building and institutional history of the charterhouse from its foundation until its closure.<sup>47</sup> She has likewise authored a book chapter on the functions of architectural space in Spanish charterhouses.<sup>48</sup>

Art-historical interest in this physically isolated charterhouse has been relatively slight, perhaps because El Paular did not become a royal pantheon like its sister-house, the Charterhouse of Miraflores, or because of the absence of artistic contracts or other documents relating to its early decoration. The exquisite alabaster retable has received some laconic commentary, but many of the early assessments were based upon the mistaken notion, put forward by Antonio Ponz, that the retable was a work of the early Italian Renaissance, an issue to which we shall return in a subsequent chapter.

In 1994, Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Ansón Martín published an article dealing primarily with the iconography of the altarpiece (including the minor sculptural figures), and also addressing the issue of authorship, naming an array of

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<sup>47</sup> The *Plan Director de la Cartuja de El Paular*, an internal document produced by the architectural firm B.A.B. Madrid for the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural Español, mentions an unpublished work on fifteenth-century El Paular written in 1987 by Juan Carlos Marín Romero and five other students of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. The work is entitled “La Cartuja de El Paular desde su fundación hasta la época isabelina”; unfortunately, I have been unable to locate this work, although I consulted with a librarian of the university and with a member of the Department of History and Theory of Art.

<sup>48</sup> Elena Barlés Báguena, “La arquitectura de la cartuja: espacios y funciones,” in *Del silencio de las cartujas al fragor de la orden militar* (as n. 46), 61–100.

possible sculptors but without drawing definite conclusions.<sup>49</sup> In 1995, María Rodríguez Velasco published a scene-by-scene iconographical description of the retablo as part of a brief history of El Paular;<sup>50</sup> she was apparently unaware of the previous scholarship by Abad Castro and Ansón Martín treating similar matters.

Restoration of the altarpiece took place in January to November 2004 under the auspices of the Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Nacional (Madrid). This work generated detailed technical studies of the altarpiece and its polychromy; the retablo was also documented in a series of high-quality photographs before, during, and after its cleaning. Dovetailing with these studies, Abad Castro and Martín Ansón reworked their earlier article of 1994 for inclusion in a publication making available the new technical data.<sup>51</sup> The restoration, as they indicate, made visible several important features that they had been unable to see earlier, and on this basis they revised some of their earlier iconographical identifications—e.g. they recognized a figure in the Harrowing of Hell as John the Baptist rather than the Virgin. In the expanded study, these scholars reconsidered the altarpiece in the light of the various building stages of the church during the whole of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth, suggesting various scenarios regarding the changing format of the altarpiece. Again, they stopped short of drawing firm conclusions about the dating of the work or its likely authors. The team has likewise conducted document-based research on one of the principal chapels of the main church

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<sup>49</sup> Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Ansón Martín, “El Retablo de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.), 6 (1994): 61–100.

<sup>50</sup> María Rodríguez Velasco, “El Retablo de del Monasterio de Santa María del Paular,” in *Monjes y Monasterios Españoles. Arte, Arquitectura, Restauraciones, Iconografía, Música, Hospitales y Enfermerías, Medicina, Farmacia, Mecenazgo, Estudiantes* (San Lorenzo del Escorial: R.C.U. Escorial-Ma. Cristina, Servicio de Publ., 1995), 247–74.

<sup>51</sup> Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Ansón Martín, “Estudio histórico-artístico,” in *Retablo Mayor de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular. Restauración e Investigación*, Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2007), 15–65.

and its extensive patronage by the powerful Herrera family, providing extensive genealogies.<sup>52</sup> In their revised article of 2007, Abad Castro and Ansón Martín drew upon extensive portions of the *Libro Becerro*, providing able (if uncritical) narrative summaries, particularly relating to the building of the church.

In light of the recent restoration, conditions seem highly propitious for undertaking this study. My purpose will be to build on these preliminary investigations and to consider the retable and its iconography expressly in the light of Carthusian spiritual practice, drawing on an array of religious texts and suggesting new connections with artists in Spain and Flanders, even while considering the retable in relation to patronal ambitions. I place the style of both the retable and its architectural surroundings within broader European developments, and throw light on issues of artistic exchange in contemporary Castile and beyond. I reconsider the entire iconographical program, drawing on texts that reveal an increasingly self-conscious notion among Carthusians of the interrelation of religious text and image.

I examine the architectural plan of El Paular as both typical and atypical with respect to Carthusian norms. A pivotal concern throughout the dissertation is the tension in the Carthusian Order regarding El Paular's design choices. As such, my study diverges from others insofar as it both places the charterhouse among Carthusian houses in Europe and argues for the unusual position of El Paular in local as well as continental contexts—indeed, suggests that it was something of renegade house within the Order.

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<sup>52</sup> Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Martín Ansón, “Los Herrera y su Capilla funeraria de San Ildefonso en la Cartuja de El Paular,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.), 18 (2006): 31–47; and “Nuevas aportaciones documentales sobre la capilla de los Herrera, conocida como capilla de los Frías, y otros linajes vinculados a la Cartuja de El Paular,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.), 19 (2007): 9–35.

The work of many scholars has informed my study, particularly with regard to the spiritual, social, and corporate perquisites of the Carthusian Order. As noted, the corpus that provides the general framework for any study of Carthusian history of the later Middle Ages (although not confined exclusively to this period) is the *Analecta Cartusiana*, a series that encompasses many disciplines. I draw heavily upon the studies published in this collection when trying to situate the religious practices at El Paular within the larger framework of the Order and when gathering comparative evidence on the plans and furnishings of charterhouses. Particularly useful for studying the changing attitudes toward the outward appearance and inward life of monasteries are the records of that administrative and regulatory agency of the Order known as the Chapter General, a kind of internal review committee and a body that conducted close surveillance of its members. The architectural history of European charterhouses has been covered in works by Jean Aniel, Dom Augustin Devaux, and most recently and with particular attention to foundations in Spain, Elena Barlés Báguena.<sup>53</sup> The thesis of Dom Devaux, who devotes an entire chapter of his study to an “exuberant” style of Castilian charterhouses anomalous in relation to foundations elsewhere in Europe, is that royal pressure for ornamentation and display trumped monastic sobriety. I believe a careful review of the records may show otherwise, or at least present a complicated understanding of the intersections of royal and monastic patronage.

A number of art-historical works have provided a springboard for my study. With regard to late medieval devotional patterns and their relevance to the study of sacred—if

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<sup>53</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*; Augustin Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 2 vols., AC 146 (Salzburg, 1998); Barlés Báguena, “La arquitectura de la Cartuja” (as n. 48).

not specifically Carthusian—art, the work of Jeffrey Hamburger has been very useful.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, James Marrow’s study of late medieval passion iconography<sup>55</sup> has been always present in my understanding of works produced for a Carthusian visual environment, especially the author’s analysis of the importance of the “how” rather than the “what” of devotional practice, specifically in its application to sacred objects.<sup>56</sup> As for the meaning and function of altarpieces in a variety of settings, my work draws on the foundational studies by Joseph Braun, Erwin Panofsky, Barbara Lane, and Eamon Duffy.<sup>57</sup> Even though these do not touch upon sacred objects or their reception in the Iberian peninsula, they have colored my reading of the relation of the El Paular altarpiece to Carthusian piety in its private and public guises.

The work of Judith Berg Sobré has been indispensable for my own reading of Spanish altarpieces and their morphological features, even though her foundation study concentrates generally on painted rather than sculpted altarpieces.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, María Pilar Silva Maroto’s comprehensive work, *Pintura castellana hispano-flamenca*, has been critical to my analysis of the give-and-take among sculptors and painters in late

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<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998).

<sup>55</sup> James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979).

<sup>56</sup> James H. Marrow, “Symbol and Meaning in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance,” *Simiolus* 16. 2/3 (1986): 150–69.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Munich: Alte Meister Guenther Koch, 1924); Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380–1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> Judith Berg Sobré, *Behind the Altar Table: The Development of the Painted Retable in Spain, 1350–1500* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989).

medieval northern Castile.<sup>59</sup> There has yet to be written a comprehensive art-historical study of late Gothic sculpted altarpieces in Spain, and hopefully that gap will soon be filled. Given the vast array of religious art surviving from the former Spanish kingdoms, scholarship is still at a phase understandably concerned with taxonomic issues. With regard to late medieval and early modern Castilian sculpture, Beatrice Proske's authoritative work is highly useful.<sup>60</sup> A recent work, *Staging the Liturgy: The Medieval Altarpiece in the Iberian Peninsula* by Justin E. A. Kroesen, tries to comprehend formal characteristics of both painted and sculpted altarpieces within a study devoted principally to their liturgical and devotional import.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, two recent works, though not strictly in line with my own study, have been influential to it all the same. These include Sherry Lindquist's social reading of art, patronage, and visuality at the Charterhouse of Champmol.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Jessica Brantley's *Reading in the Wilderness* provides a sensitive analysis regarding the complementarity of text and image in the English Carthusian setting.<sup>63</sup> Her study has helped me in my analysis of the relationship of a late medieval verse meditation, the *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, to altarpieces extant in the Charterhouses of El Paular and Miraflores.

Overall, my aim is to offer an analysis of the fifteenth-century retable surviving at El Paular within its architectural context, drawing upon evidence of Carthusian spirituality, and considering the contemporary official view of buildings and furnishings

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<sup>59</sup> María Pilar Silva Maroto, *Pintura castellana hispano-flamenca: Burgos y Palencia* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1990).

<sup>60</sup> Beatrice Irene Gilman Proske, *Castilian Sculpture: Gothic to Renaissance* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1951).

<sup>61</sup> Justin E. A. Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy: The Medieval Altarpiece in the Iberian Peninsula* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society*.

<sup>63</sup> Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).



in this monastery. A key goal of this study is to understand just why the charterhouse was so sternly and repeatedly rebuked by the Chapter General of the Order. To use a biological metaphor, my interest throughout is to record the temperature and pulse of life at the charterhouse, and to understand why this monastery came in for special criticism whenever it attempted to make something big, especially when its sister-houses throughout Europe had the same objective but nevertheless escaped censure. This, I believe, will throw significant light on the perceived purposes of creating and enhancing the physical environment in which the Carthusians of El Paular dwelt, and the spiritual threats and dangers looming thereupon.

This study commences, in Chapter Two, with a brief historical treatment of the current of religious reform in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and calls attention to the power of the Spanish charterhouses throughout that period. It considers the contemporary trend of religious piety known as the *devotio moderna*, and offers a brief review of developments in Carthusian art during the era. Chapter Three considers the built environment of El Paular and other Carthusian houses in the light of Carthusian architectural custom and practice. A summary of building trends throughout Europe sets the stage for a particular examination of architectural features of El Paular, with emphasis on the intersections of patronal and artisanal contributions. I trace the architectural scheme of the original cloister (c. 1390) and its material enhancement through the fifteenth century, which culminated in the extensive refurbishment completed between 1484 and 1486 by a team under the direction of Juan Guas.

Chapter Four examines the exquisite—and enormous—alabaster altarpiece that fills the east wall of the Gothic church. Close iconographical analysis is undertaken in

relation to a consideration of its overall appearance, materiality, and disposition. My approach emphasizes the performative aspect of the work, and the relation of iconography to the monks' devotional patterns. The colossal altarpiece is studied in relation to a contemporary literary production by a prior of El Paular, Juan de Padilla, whose *Retablo de la vida de Christo (Retable of the Life of Christ)*, a work hugely popular in its time, offers a highly self-conscious rendering of the role of prayer in the scheme of salvation history. Analysis of the text yields a subtle understanding of the give-and-take between text and image in the charterhouse, a highly fluid exchange with profound implications for Carthusian spirituality. I also try to unravel the reasons why the General Chapter so strongly disapproved of this particular retable and even suggested its removal.

Chapter Five seeks to throw light on the rather confounding issue of the makers of the retable. Although authorship may ultimately be impossible to prove, I argue that structural and stylistic oddities suggest at least two separate teams of sculptors working over the course of at least fifteen to twenty years. A close comparison with the other extant Carthusian altarpiece from late medieval Castile, that in the Charterhouse of Miraflores, allows me to treat issues including the unusual choice of alabaster over wood. Since the rarified design qualities of the El Paular and Miraflores retables distinguish them from others in the region, I consider features that might qualify them as particularly Carthusian in construction, material, design, and iconography. Meanwhile, I examine the working patterns and social standing of the principal sculptors, painters, and polychromists at workshops in contemporary Castile. A thorough review of existing documentation regarding these workers illuminates issues of style, cost, size, and other

practical concerns of the various high-end artistic workshops in Burgos and Toledo, and the division of labor according to sculpture and painting. I compare the El Paular retablo to northern works and offer new theories regarding the origins of the Spanish makers and their places of training.

This dissertation emphasizes that, despite the rigorous enclosure dictated by the Carthusian Customs, there was increasing communication from inside to outside, and considerable movement of brothers from one Carthusian house to another. It likewise underscores the increasing penetration of these houses by persons of high social distinction—including women—for private devotional purposes, including the construction of family chapels and burial monuments. This reassessment of the altarpiece at El Paular, an enormous stone work that serves as a barometer of changing style in fifteenth-century Iberia, highlights the dynamism of artistic exchange and collaboration within, and even beyond, a highly cosmopolitan Europe.

El Paular maintained a lingering interest in Flemish-Rhenish design and decoration throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth, at the time the artistic style known as the *Spätgotik* was losing currency elsewhere in Europe. A surviving seal from El Paular, dating from 1559, perhaps best exemplifies this persistent tendency in late medieval Castile (Fig. 1.8).<sup>64</sup> The seal features the haloed Virgin and Child seated upon a throne whose microarchitectural design, complete with gables, pinnacles, and crockets, places it firmly in the tradition of the Late Gothic embraced so firmly in the

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<sup>64</sup> Gustave Vallier, *Sigillographie de l'ordre des Chartreux et numismatique de Saint-Bruno* (Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1891), plate XXV, no. 4. See also Em. Pilot de Thorey, *Inventaire des sceaux relatifs au Dauphiné, conservés dans les Archives départementales de l'Isère* (Grenoble, 1879), 134, n. 277. The pointed oval seal carries this inscription: ✠ SIGILUM : SANTE : MARIE : PAULARIS : ORDINIS : CARTUSIENSIS. It measures approximately 64 x 40 mm. The impression appears on a document of 1559 during the priorate of Rodrigo Vallejo. Seals used by the Grande Chartreuse often employ images of the Crucifixion, frequently showing the Virgin and St. John, and portray images of the *arma Christi* as early as 1404. Vallier, *Sigillographie*, 1–26.

ornamental qualities of El Paular's retable and in the Carthusian complex that housed it. The diminutive supplicant kneeling in prayer to the left of Mother and Son, without Carthusian habit, represents perhaps a royal donor.

The royal connections of El Paular did more than ensure its survival and enhance its growth: they ensured that the charterhouse would be embellished with sacred objects, large and small, that aided the monks in the spiritual combat that took place in the cell.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see, Carthusian corporate integrity suffered no small upset during the turbulent era of the Schism and its long resolution in the great Church Councils.

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<sup>65</sup> In his *De vita et fine solitarii* of c. 1440, Denis compared the Carthusian cell to Jacob's ladder, that is, a place where monks would wrestle with angels as they partook of a spiritual ascent. Cited in Nabert, "Le cas du mot cellule," 154. Nabert draws a relationship between the existence in the cell and the desire for salvation as "the densest possible metonymic rapport."

## Chapter Two

### Carthusians in Spain: Religious Reform

*Carthusians make saints but do not make them known.*<sup>1</sup>

Anonymous

Throughout its first century of growth, El Paular was part of an expanding religious organization increasingly powerful in its political, ecclesial, and social reach. The expansion occurred in a period of tempestuous Church reform that worked, ironically, as an economic boon for El Paular and other Castilian charterhouses. The Order, essentially stable in its internal structure since its beginnings in the late eleventh century, nevertheless responded to many of the radical reforms in Church and society. Since it was governed from the Grande Chartreuse, the priors from all houses met yearly in a General Chapter for business purposes, and the documents generated by this governing body can be seen to reflect, if not a relaxation, at least an adaptation to historical events not always easily endured by a highly conservative order. Although Carthusian houses had considerable autonomy in their self-governance, a series of

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<sup>1</sup> “Cartusia sanctos facit sed non patefacit.” An epithet of unknown origin although it appears to have been in wide currency by the time Nicholas Kempf wrote his *De conformacione ordinis Carthusianorum*. I am grateful to Dennis Martin for clarifying this point. See his *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

*chartae* or letters issued from the Chapter General established norms and correctives for all houses to follow.<sup>2</sup>

Before we examine some notions of Carthusian corporate organization and issues around Carthusian identity, it will be useful to consider the historical circumstances behind the foundation and expansion of El Paular, a period of about half a century during which Spaniards positively dominated the Carthusian Order. This investigation will shed light on artistic tendencies in the Iberian peninsula, especially in relation to the contemporary religious movement known as the *devotio moderna*. As always, the Carthusians commissioned some of the most innovative—and expensive—pictures and sculptures of the time for their houses. In the case of El Paular, these choices threatened, apparently, the internal harmony of the Order and its reputation for austerity. Whether El Paular was simply experiencing growing pains, or whether it was disregarding the spirit of its own Order, or whether some other factors were at play, the vital question for this investigation is whether a visual reform coincided with efforts for political and ecclesial reform in the peninsula and in late medieval Europe.

### **Historical Perspectives: Schism and Reform**

El Paular was founded under a very particular set of historical conditions highly conducive to its subsequent economic expansion. The Western Schism (1378–1417), characterized by the Church today as a “temporary misunderstanding”<sup>3</sup> of approximately forty years, serves as the backdrop for the creation of the charterhouse. At this time, the

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<sup>2</sup> The first chapter general was held in 1142 under the auspices of Saint Anthelm. The earliest *chartae* preserved are dated 1217. See John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1217–1437. A Supplement. (MS. Grande Chartreuse I. Cart. 16)*. AC 100:44 (Salzburg, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Louis Salembier, “Western Schism,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912); and online.

papacy was split principally between the rival obediences of Rome and Avignon. A woodblock print from the *Nuremberg Chronicles* nicely illustrates the early division of the two successions, with Urban VI and Bonifacio IX of the Romanist line at left, and Clement VII and Benedict XIII of the Avignese line at right (Fig. 2.1).

Despite the decimation of religious communities through recurrences of the plague and a severe decline among other contemplative orders, the later Middle Ages was a period of dramatic growth for the Carthusian Order, making it arguably the most influential of all religious orders at the time. Both Clement VII and Benedict XIII issued bulls in generous support of El Paular.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, the *Libro Becerro* treats at length this turbulent period when the “little bark of Saint Peter rocked amid the tempests.”<sup>5</sup> The text provides a moralizing account of the thriving state of the monastery during the whole period of the Schism and beyond,<sup>6</sup> and prudently offers thanks both the Church and the Castilian monarchs, “the other pillars supporting the temporal state of Our House.”<sup>7</sup>

During and after the Schism, when efforts were made to remedy the volatile situation through repeated Church councils, two Spaniards, Bonifacio Ferrer (d. 1417) and Francesco Maresme (d. 1463), governed the entire Carthusian Order from Grenoble.

Indeed, Spanish Carthusians never again achieved such a prominent profile within the

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<sup>4</sup> Bulls bestowing *tercias* and outright cash (16,000 maravedís) by the Avignese Pope Clemente VII are recorded in Chapter 3 of the *LB* at fol. 55r; bulls authorized by Benedict XIII are given in Chapter 4 at fol. 177r; and the conclusion of the Schism is recounted at the end of Chapter 4, fols. 170r–194v.

<sup>5</sup> *LB*, fol. 126v. “En estas tempestades anduvo fluctuando la Barquilla de Sant Pedro...”

<sup>6</sup> *LB*, fol. 126v–127r. “En tales calamidades, y desventuras andaba en esos tiempos la Iglesia Militante, quando nuestro Monasterio se comencò, à fundàr, à la qual Nuestro Señòr tubo de su mano, para que no se perdiere, cumpliendo, como siempre cumplirà, lo que nos tiene prometido, deque no prevalescan contra ella las puertas del Infierno.” [The Church Militant went forward despite such calamities and misadventures, just as our Monastery was being founded, and Our Lord took it by the hand so that the fulfillment would not be lost, since it is always fulfilled according to what He has promised us, that the Gates of Hell would not prevail against it.]

<sup>7</sup> *LB*, fol. 192v. “...nuestros Reyes de Castilla, los otros pilares, sobre que se sustenta el estado temporal de nuestra Casa.”

Order. One wonders whether a parallel sense of self-importance at odds with the austerity—and authority—of the Order informed the extravagant design choices made throughout the century at El Paular and its sister-houses in Castile and Catalonia.<sup>8</sup>

### **Bonifacio Ferrer**

Bonifacio's personal history throws light on the complexity of ecclesial politics in the years in which El Paular was founded and began to prosper. A widower at the time of profession, Bonifacio had forged a lengthy and successful career in law, following study in Lérida and Perugia, where he may have come to appreciate Italian pictures. He left an important literary legacy in France and Spain, including commission of the first translation of the Bible into Catalán.<sup>9</sup> No stranger to adversity, by the time of Carthusian profession, Bonifacio had lost most of his family and exhausted his wealth in a lawsuit that went against him, resulting in six years of imprisonment on false charges.<sup>10</sup>

Bonifacio played a vital role during the papacy of Benedict XIII, familiarly called Papa Luna. The charismatic preacher Vincent Ferrer, brother of Bonifacio and later saint (1455), had originally preached for Papa Luna's legitimacy. Benedict XIII first resided in the papal palace at Avignon, which became at that time a lively artistic, intellectual, and commercial center whose Italian population, including the painter Simone Martini, was

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<sup>8</sup> A highly peculiar occurrence at the Charterhouse of Portaceli supports this notion in a roundabout way. In 1464, the Chapter General rebuked the charterhouse for performing an "enthronement" of the new prior, an act that clearly was contrary to the spirit of the Order. "Et graüter ferimus illas nouitates in intronizatione noui Priortis (*sic*) domus contra formam Ordinis factas." [And we take gravely the news of the enthronement of the Prior of said house, against the form of the Order.] Michael Sargent and James Hogg (eds.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Latin 10888, Part II: 1466-1474 (Ff. 159-307)*. AC 100:6 (Salzburg, 1985), 187.

<sup>9</sup> The Bible was first disseminated in manuscript form, and finally printed in Valencia in 1477-78, in Gothic type arranged in two columns.

<sup>10</sup> Eric P. Baker, "The Sacraments and the Passion in Medieval Art," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 66, no. 383 (February 1935): 80-85+89, 82; and "The Sacraments and the Passion in Medieval Art," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 89, no. 528 (March 1947): 80-81.



progressively replaced by French and Spanish artists loyal to the pope.<sup>11</sup> By the time of Papa Luna's reign many of the ornamental goods in the papal palace had been pawned for much needed cash,<sup>12</sup> making it hard to trace commissions made either by this pope or Clement VII, his predecessor in Avignon.

This was a fraught period in the Carthusian Order, which suffered its own schism parallel to that of the Church at large. Individual members of the Order followed separate papal obediences. The Avignese Reverend Prior reigned from the Grande Chartreuse, whereas the Romanist Reverend Prior governed from seats as remote as Florence and Seitz, reflecting a general division of Spanish-French and German-Italian charterhouses according to the papal faction with which they were aligned (Fig. 2.2). Carthusians developed a novel solution to the problem by omitting during prayer the particular name of the pope to whom they adhered.<sup>13</sup>

Based upon proven academic ability, administrative skill, personal sanctity, and, not least, the influence of Papa Luna, Bonifacio was elected Reverend Prior of the Carthusian Order from 1402 to 1410. Under pressure from Papa Luna, Bonifacio was required to leave the Grande Chartreuse for long periods of time, and he often resided at the Charterhouse of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, a stone's throw from the papal palace situated just across the river. He assisted during extended periods of papal negotiations among Papa Luna and the Romanist pontiffs Boniface IX and Romanist successors Innocent VII and Gregory XII. In response to a decision taken at a church council held in Pisa in 1409 that named a third pope, Alexander V, illegal from both the French and

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<sup>11</sup> María Carmen Lacarra Ducay, "Benedicto XIII y el arte," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* 80 (1995): 213–33, 216–23 (Edición digital de la Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes).

<sup>12</sup> The chief broker was Juan de Heredia. Lacarra Ducay, "Benedicto XIII," 223–34.

<sup>13</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 10–11.

Romanist points of view, Bonifacio Ferrer penned *De schismate pisano*.<sup>14</sup> The author of the *Libro Becerro* can hardly conceal his contempt as he describes Papa Luna's obstinacy following the unrecognized Council of Pisa, which spawned the "three-headed Hydra and Serpent of the Schism,"<sup>15</sup> and the pope's ambitious tenacity following the rightful Council of Constance (1414–18).

Carthusian union was nominally achieved at a private Chapter meeting at the Charterhouse of Strasbourg, held in 1410, when Bonifacio Ferrer and his Carthusian rival from the Romanist camp, Stephen Maconi, both abdicated in favor of Jean de Griffenberg, a German by birth but prior of the Charterhouse of Paris. After Griffenberg's election, the Carthusian world entered a period of Teutonic dominance. German priors who visited the Grande Chartreuse now held the first places in church, and at dinnertime German Priors invited the Reverend Prior to their own hall to signal their "at-homeness" at the Grande Chartreuse.<sup>16</sup>

The election of Griffenberg had a catch. The Carthusians now agreed to follow the Pisan obedience. In response, Papa Luna nullified the abdication of Bonifacio Ferrer and reinstated him as Reverend Prior, this time governing from the Charterhouse of Val-de-Cristo near Valencia, thus isolating anew Spanish Carthusians from their continental brothers. In 1415, Emperor Sigismund, called to a council in Perpignan by Benedict XIII, pressured Bonifacio and his brother to convince the antipope, now 88 years old, to step down. This occasion marked the last meeting between Bonifacio and Papa Luna, after which the pope withdrew to the island of Peñíscola until his death in 1423.

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<sup>14</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 114.

<sup>15</sup> *LB*, fol. 147r.

<sup>16</sup> Cyprien Marie Boutrais, *The History of the Great Chartreuse*, trans. E. Hassid (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1934), 55.

It was Papa Luna's predecessor, Clement VII, who had in 1380 signed a bull allowing the creation of three unspecified charterhouses in Castile. This act, infusing local religious—and political—might into the schismatic equation, expressly contradicted the Carthusian determination not to erect new houses anywhere in Europe until the Schism had healed.<sup>17</sup> The establishment of El Paular guaranteed continued strength in the Avignese line of papal succession, and it certainly represented an economic bonanza for the charterhouse and others in what was still the religious province of Catalonia. Indeed, it is hard not to see the erection of new charterhouses during the Schism as an overtly political act on either side of the religious divide, Avignese or Romanist.

In considering the critical activities of Carthusians during the Schism and after, the case may be made that a visual reform was undertaken that paralleled hopes for religious renewal throughout the peninsular kingdoms. If the Schism introduced fractures and lesions in the Church and the Order, it also prompted healthy artistic cross-fertilization in an increasingly cosmopolitan Iberian peninsula.<sup>18</sup> At any rate, there is evidence of dramatic transformation in preferred artistic content, style, and format in commissions intended for parochial, episcopal, and monastic environments.

The *Retable of Bonifacio Ferrer* (Fig. 2.3),<sup>19</sup> dating to the end of the fourteenth century, provides an apt starting point for any investigation into Spanish Carthusian patronage during the schismatic era. It was prepared for Bonifacio during his tenure as

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<sup>17</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 10–17.

<sup>18</sup> Portuguese foundations date from the period of Spanish domination from the reigns Felipe I to Felipe IV (1580–1640). Scala Coeli (Evora) was founded in 1587, and Valle de la Misericordia (Lisbon) in 1593.

<sup>19</sup> Ramón Rodríguez Culebras, "El retablo de Bonifacio Ferrer, pieza clave en la iconografía sacramentaria del arte valenciano," *Archivo de arte valenciano* 49 (1978): 12–17; Carmen Rorigo Zarzosa, "En torno al retablo de fray Bonifacio Ferrer," *Archivo de arte valenciano* 66 (1985): 30–33; Ximo García Borrás, "En torno al retablo de Bonifacio Ferrer," *Archivo de arte valenciano* 69 (1988): 27–31; Albert Ferrer Orts, "Espldor de Portaceli y Valldecríst en el siglo XV: unas notas sobre Bonifacio Ferrer," in Santiago Cantera Montenegro et al., *La Cartuja de Valldecríst (1405-2005). VI centenario del inicio de la obra mayor*, AC 233 (Segorbe: Fundacion Mutua Segorbina, 2008), 123–40.

Prior of the Charterhouse of Portaceli, where he professed late in life. It demonstrates a taste for radical artistic innovation in style and format alike; it also preserves the earliest extant example of Carthusian portraiture in the Iberian peninsula, showing Ferrer dressed in Carthusian habit and, paradoxically, accompanied by his family, most of whom were dead by this time. Bonifacio is in the far left panel of the predella accompanied by his sons; his wife Jacquemar, noted in her lifetime for her beauty, is represented on the far right panel kneeling in prayer along with her daughters.

The retable, which measures 2.84 x 1.91 meters, is decorated with a series of painted panels.<sup>20</sup> Attention focuses on the Crucifixion at center, with the distribution of seven jewel-like images in quadrilobed squares depicting the Seven Sacraments of the Church, each compartment connected to Christ's side wound by a thin blood-red line. Stylistically, the retable is an example of the so-called International Gothic in the Italianizing variant then preferred among patrons in Valencia. (At the time, Valencia had political and commercial control over much of southern Italy, as well as Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily.) The retable is tentatively assigned to the Florentine painter Gherardo Starnina, who lived in Valencia during the period 1395–1401, and whose career later excited attention from Vasari.<sup>21</sup>

Iconographically, the retable is important as the earliest known instance of the Seven Sacraments presented in serial format on a painted altarpiece. This alone demonstrates Carthusian innovation in programmatic religious content. The Seven Sacraments—baptism, communion, reconciliation, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and extreme unction—had been defined explicitly by quantity and quality two centuries

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>21</sup> Baker, "The Sacraments and the Passion," 1935, 83 n. 8.

before, but their visualization was to a degree a response to ecclesial division during the Schism.<sup>22</sup> The sacramental scenes embodied orthodox teaching—crucial in this time of religious discord—even as they provided models for sanctioned social and religious behavior.

Above the Crucifixion there is a Last Judgment and, at a slightly lower level, the Annunciation is disposed in two gabled compartments to either side. Flanking the Crucifixion are the Baptism of Christ at right and the Conversion of Paul at left, and in the *banco* or predella below, five scenes: Christ as Man of Sorrows at center, on axis with the Crucifixion and the Last Judgment, flanked by images of prototypical martyrdoms including the Stoning of St. Stephen and the Beheading of John the Baptist, this last scene furnishing another indication of the Carthusian Order's embrace of the Precursor. The focus is on the life of Christ and witnesses to the faith, firmly accentuated by the sacraments administered by the Church. Christ's own sacrifice relates visually—indeed physically, through his side wound—to these sacraments. The devotional cycle unfolds within a context specifically Carthusian, even as it blends historical and transhistorical time. Crucially, it features elements of Bonifacio's life before and after solemn profession in the Order, with his very charterhouse acting as a character.

The *Libro Becerro* gives no information about the first retable of El Paular, but one wonders whether, like Bonifacio's contemporary retable, it too blended sacramental themes with Carthusian portraiture—thereby offering a double message of human salvation and monastic exemplarity as a pathway to it. Such a visual representation could

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<sup>22</sup> At the Legatine Council of London in 1237 and the Council of Lyon in 1274. Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments 1350–1544* (Bury St Edmunds: St Edmundsbury Press, 1994), 138. As Nichols notes, the enumeration and qualification of the Sacraments is often mistakenly believed to have occurred at Council of Florence by means of the decree *Pro Armenis* in 1439.

have conveyed a message of model comportment on the part of a prior who was expected to “contribute to the progress of all by his word and by his life,”<sup>23</sup> and might have soothed the agitation afflicting the Spanish charterhouses during the Schism.

El Paular’s first retable may have resembled one that survives from the nearby Benedictine monastery of San Benito el Real, a foundation contemporary with El Paular, and one whose creation affirmed the religious reform promulgated by King Juan I of Castille. The *Retable of Archbishop Don Sancho de Rojas* (Fig 2.4), c. 1415–20, now in the collection of the Museo Nacional del Prado, measures 5.32 x 6.18 meters, and reflects stylistically the diffusion within Castile of the Italo-Gothic style notable in works painted by Gherardo Starnina and Nicolo di Antonio for the Cathedral of Toledo in the last years of the fifteenth century, as well as frescos painted by Juan Rodríguez de Toledo for the Chapel of San Blas, also in the cathedral.<sup>24</sup> Like the later altarpiece of El Paular, its iconographical program encompasses the full sweep of salvation history.

The retable, if a somewhat crude translation of Italo-Gothic tendencies notable in the East, provides an interesting comment on political and ecclesial reform during this period, and loops back, if obliquely, to the astonishing career of Bonifacio Ferrer. The central panel reflects the intersection of figures both political and religious. An enthroned Virgin places the chasuble on the archbishop, who is presented by Saint Benedict; and the Christ Child crowns Fernando de Antequera, who is presented by Saint Bernard.

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<sup>23</sup> Guigo I, *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 15.2: De ordinatione prioris.XV. (*Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313, 198): “Qui quanvis omnibus verbo et vita prodesse debeat....”

<sup>24</sup> Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, “El retablo viejo de San Benito El Real de Valladolid en el Museo del Prado,” *Archivo español de arte* 14 (1940–41): 272–78, 274. See also Josep Gudiol Ricart, “Pintura gótica,” *Ars Hispaniae* (Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1955), 9: 205–11; Museo del Prado, *Catálogo de las pinturas* (Madrid, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1996), 323; María A. Blanca Piquero López, *La pintura gótica de los siglos XIII y XIV* (Barcelona: Vicens Vives, 1989), 69; Joaquín Yarza Luaces, “La pintura española medieval: el mundo gótico,” *La pintura en Europa. La pintura española* (Milán: Electa, 1995), 1: 95, 134.

Significantly, the brothers Bonifacio and Vincent Ferrer were two of a total of nine jurists in the Compromiso de Caspe in 1412, a convocation that decided on the accession of Ferdinand of Antequera, Regent of Castile, to the throne of Aragon.<sup>25</sup>

### **Francesco Maresme**

Well after the Schism had been resolved, another Spaniard resident in France dominated the Carthusian Order. The principal Carthusian player in the concluding act of this drama was Francesco Maresme, protégé of Bonifacio Ferrer at the Charterhouse of Portaceli. Francesco was called to attend the Council of Basel (1431–39) by interim Reverend Prior Guillaume de Lamotte of the Grande Chartreuse, also a partisan of the Spanish Pope Benedict XIII.

The Council of Basel, when called by Pope Martin V (who died before it convened), had some heady issues to resolve. The Council first asserted its right to make decisions against the call for adjournment made by Pope Eugenius IV by fiat in December 1431. In 1432, the Council considered the so-called Four Articles of Prague (named in 1420) of the moderate Hussites or Utraquists: communion by either species; secular castigation of priests living in plain sin; free preaching of scripture; and clerical return of secular property. Pope Eugenius granted the first privilege according to certain conditions, and “watched with understandable dismay as the council negotiated points of church doctrine with heretics.”<sup>26</sup> Under the guise of seeking reunion with the Eastern church, Pope Eugenius dissolved the Council and ordered it removed to Ferrara in 1437;

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<sup>25</sup> The event was solemnized by a sermon preached by Vincent Ferrer, of the Order of Preachers. Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 15–28.

<sup>26</sup> Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 173.

the Council struck back by deposing Eugenius and electing the antipope Felix V. Significantly, Francesco Maresme had won ten of the thirty-three votes for the papal office. In the end, the schismatic council tolled the death-knell of the conciliar movement: its effort to gain supremacy was soundly condemned in the *Execrabilis* of Pope Pius II, promulgated in 1459, wherein appeals beyond the authority of the pope were deemed “erroneous and abominable.”<sup>27</sup>

Francesco governed the Order from the Grande Chartreuse for a remarkable twenty-one years, from 1442 to 1463. During his priorate, he oversaw creation in 1442 of the discrete Carthusian province of Castile. Thereafter, El Paular took an active role in the creation of new foundations including the charterhouses of Aniago (1441, near Valladolid) and Miraflores (1442, near Burgos), this last becoming a royal pantheon and the burial place for King Juan II of Castile and his wife Isabel of Portugal, parents of Isabel the Catholic.

Francesco’s most significant act—for the art historian, at least—was restoration of a revered hermitage at the Grande Chartreuse called Notre-Dame de Casalibus (Our Lady of the Little Houses), destroyed by fire in 1444 (Fig. 2.5).<sup>28</sup> This modest building, heavily altered over the centuries, was taken to signify above all else Carthusian self-understanding. The new Casalibus, erected in 1453, marked the spot where the first individual huts had been raised by Saint Bruno and his six founding brothers, the titular little houses destroyed by avalanche in 1132. Priors of all Carthusians houses, including the relatively new El Paular, would have known the Casalibus well, since they met routinely at the Grande Chartreuse for administrative purposes. With that in mind, we

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<sup>27</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 175–76.

<sup>28</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 31.



should consider some key aspects of Carthusian organization and administration that bear directly on this study.

### **Carthusian Organization**

The Carthusians had, on local and Order-wide levels, a system of government with numerous safety catches meant to maintain the division among choir monks and laybrothers, and, by allowing each rank its separate duties, to pay homage to God and to neighbor. Tight internal organization may have ensured or at least enhanced the Carthusian reputation for sanctity, since there were mechanisms for targeting problems and rooting them out quickly, if the Order sometimes had to repeat injunctions before achieving the expected results.

A prior headed each house for an undefined period determined either by the immediate community, by visitors to the province, or by the Chapter General, as need be. (The principal of the Grande Chartreuse held the unique title Reverend Prior.) A prior could come from within or without the house, with two witnesses from outside observing the process. Appointment of the prior had to be ratified by the Chapter General the following year, and that body could exercise its ultimate authority to nullify the appointment if any problems or contests arose, as occasionally happened. At El Paular and other Castilian houses, one notices a continuing round of priors moving from house to house within the province, a fact that may have had much to do with the circulation of artists and architects working at a given site.

The prior had far-reaching powers and duties and could even mitigate the rigor of the statutes of the order. But his power was not absolute and he had to yield to the Chapter

General, to the Reverend Prior, and to the provincial visitors. A prior generally stepped down for one of only a few important reasons, including extreme age, poor administration, or negative notices by visitors.<sup>29</sup> A vicar acted as substitute and representative for the prior during his absence or after death. Finally, a sacristan was charged with taking care of all the ornaments and utensils for saying mass and the divine office, and a novice-master instructed and provided spiritual care for those newly come.

In the lay rank, a procurator held the prime governing position. His two main functions included administration of the monastery's goods and the spiritual direction of the laybrothers and *donati*. He was thus a priestly laybrother. The procurator required the consent of the prior for implementation of major decisions such as selling of properties. The procurator said daily mass for the laybrothers in their choir, and during the conventual mass of the choir monks the procurator sang the epistle. He likewise served food in the refectory to the choir monks on days when they ate together.<sup>30</sup> Occasionally two procurators shared duties, suggesting that dealings with the outside world and the running of the physical plant by the laybrothers must have been a time-consuming endeavor. An influential scholar has noted that El Paular, during the fifteenth century, divided duties among three procurators, certainly an indication of its bustling economy.

### **System of Visitations**

With the creation of the religious province of Catalonia in 1336, and the subdivision of Castile in 1442, the system of inter-provincial visitations, initially

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<sup>29</sup> In case of approach death, a rector was named to take his duties. Likewise, before a new house was incorporated into the order—when it was still a “new plantation”—a rector held the prime spot. Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 165.

<sup>30</sup> In some cases, a coadjutor was charged with receiving lay visitors to the monastery; this person also confessed servants and any other seculars among the visitors. Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 166.

implemented order-wide in 1217, commenced in the Iberian peninsula. So that the system could function optimally, the Chapter General named two priors of diverse monasteries within the province as principal visitor and co-visitor. The system was implemented so as to assess the spiritual and material welfare of each house of the Order in any given year. Significantly, the visitors consulted each monk in private as to the life at and the management of the house, and later notified the Chapter of any untoward goings-on. Thereafter, the Chapter took appropriate measures for each charterhouse or for the province in general, depending upon the gravity of any issues raised. If the visitors encountered serious problems they could intervene directly, even to the point of deposing a prior and appointing a new one. El Paular did not fill the position of co-visitor until 1438–41, but after creation of the Province of Castile in 1442, it had both a principal visitor and a co-visitor.<sup>31</sup>

The rotation of priors and visitors suggests that any discrepancy or incompatibility must have been noted on the local level before it could reach the Chapter General. This interesting fact has not so far been noted in the vast historiography on the Carthusian order. It means that any criticisms of El Paular, its building, or its decor likely originated locally. We shall have time to investigate more fully this question in subsequent chapters, but first we need to consider whether there was a general relaxation in the Castilian charterhouse, particularly with regard to structures, fittings, and furnishings in the built environment. As we shall see, Castilian monarchs showed increasing frustration in the fifteenth century with El Paular's vast expenditures and sluggish progress, suggesting that royal pressure alone did not account for its lavish decoration.

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<sup>31</sup> Cantara Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 167–69.

A somewhat curious statement from the end of century by the Chapter General of 1487 points to quarrels “old and new” among houses in the province of Castile. Its exasperated tone clearly suggests the Chapter General was tired of being bothered by these disputes. The situation was apparently so hostile that the Chapter insisted on bringing in foreign visitors for surveillance of the Castilian province:

And since there have been various complaints among various Priors who have come to the Chapter General, and also in the letters we have read, so we are sending our venerable brothers Dom Jacob, Prior of Bologna, and Peter of Capello, professed monk of the Grande Chartreuse, for a visitation of the said Province [of Castile], so that they may settle complaints both old and new.<sup>32</sup>

One wonders whether such quarrels related to earlier and subsequent criticisms of the building and ornamental schemes at El Paular, and whether the complaints represented personal grudges, artistic rivalries, or sincere demonstrations of disapproval regarding liberties taken against the spirit of the Order. The overriding concern of provincial visitors was the maintenance of strict religious observance and it is critical to this study to consider the role images played in this regard.

### **The Nature and Purpose of the Chapter General and its *Chartae***

The *chartae* or letters issued after the congregation of the Chapter General represent a rich if complicated source for our understanding of the Order's motives and

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<sup>32</sup> “Et quoniam diuersas querelas a diuersis Prioribus qui uenerunt ad Capitulum Generale et etiam per literas audiuiimus, Ideo mittimus venerabiles fratres nostros domnos Jacobum Priorem Bononiae et Petrum de Capello monachum professum Cartusiae, ad visitandum dictam Prouinciaie (*Castellae*), ad sedandum tam querelas nouiter ortas quam ueteres.” John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1475–1503 (MS. Grande Chartreuse 1 Cart. 14. AC 100: 31 (Salzburg, 1999), 49.*

self-understanding.<sup>33</sup> This changing body of administrators was an entity charged with the surveillance of the Order from within and without. The most tantalizing and problematic feature of the *chartae* is their brevity: it is as though they were cryptic missives delivered to persons or corporate bodies who were expecting them and who alone might have understood them. Put another way, the *chartae* give evidence—in brief by pointed distillations—that specific topics had been fully hashed out at the meetings, with prescribed solutions already verbally given, and consent to them promised.

Extant *chartae* are of two kinds, those produced by scribes at the mother-house for diffusion to the daughter-houses, generally executed with a high degree of care, and those produced by daughter-houses for their own foundations. The first set preserves mandates or *ordinationes* delivered to all houses of the Order. The second generally omits ordinations delivered to the entire Order and records only those applicable to its own house. Thus, there are considerable differences in *formulae* used in locally produced documents and those produced by the Grande Chartreuse for dissemination to the entire Order. Those made by scribes at the Grande Chartreuse, interestingly, are sometimes transcribed in several hands, possibly implying a desire for speed in their preparation and diffusion.

Official copies of the proceedings, sent out from the Grande Chartreuse to the provincial charterhouses, always specified the attendees. Seven priors and the representative of the Grande Chartreuse were listed as “diffinitors,” along with the scribe of the Chapter and two “referendaries” for handling of the Order’s legal affairs. Then followed obituaries according to a strict hierarchy: first, the pope and other eminent

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<sup>33</sup> The *chartae* of the Carthusian General Chapter have been made available by James Hogg, Michael Sargeant, John Clark, and others, in a series of publications offering transcriptions from manuscripts: AC 100: 1–53 (Salzburg, 1982–2011).

prelates who benefited the Order in various ways; second, the high nobility and their families, also as benefactors; third, Carthusian priors and choir monks; fourth, Carthusian laybrothers and nuns; and finally secular men and women. A *pro bono* list of masses and psalms followed, as well as prayers for the pope, the reverend prior of the Grande Chartreuse, and all living benefactors.

It was at this point that the *ordinationes* were given, first those that applied to the Order as a whole, then those pertaining to the various provinces and their constituent houses. These last were, on rare occasions, mildly laudatory, silent if there was no offence involved, and frequently highly critical. Every prior of every house was addressed as though he had begged to resign from his post and return to the humility of his cell. Thus, the formula expressed either that "Mercy be given to such-and-such prior," or "Mercy be not given to such-and-such prior" (*Priori domus N. fit misericordia*, etc.) Only the old or infirm were generally shown the mercy of being allowed to abdicate the important administrative responsibilities attaching to the prior's office.

The *chartae* concluded with information about visitors for the coming year, a list of priors summoned to private chapter meetings in the future, and, interestingly, the name of the prior who would give the introductory sermon for the next Chapter General. Although priors of all houses were required to attend the Chapter General each year, distant foundations were permitted to send their priors only on the leap-year.<sup>34</sup>

During the fifteenth century, the *chartae* betray increasing anxiety over the divulging of secrets (*secreta*) of the Order by individual members. The Chapter General

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<sup>34</sup> James Hogg and Michael Sargent (eds.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Latin 10887, AC 100: 3 (Salzburg, 1984), 4–7.

apparently found it difficult to control this information.<sup>35</sup> It is never made clear to what kinds of secrets the Chapter refers, nor whether the revelations by insiders concerned business dealings, religious observance and attendant laxity in prescribed behaviors, or excessive spending. The letters express frequent concern about the movement or release of prisoners, noting especially an increasing incidence of monks leaving without permission, called variously *fugitivi*, *apostati*, and *girovagi* (wandering). Ultimately, there is no telling what kinds of secrets the Chapter wished to conceal, but clearly, by the fifteenth century, they were causing tumult in this most conservative religious order.

Like all houses, El Paular is regularly mentioned in the *chartae*, but except for a few important flare-ups and disputes among Castilian houses, El Paular generally kept a low profile, as any charterhouse should. Among the most interesting issues that affect this study is that, by the end of the century, the Chapter General made accusations against El Paular with strong language directed at its buildings and devotional objects. This is highly unusual, as the *chartae* generally concern themselves with behaviors rather than things. Thus, the *chartae* allow glimpses—if only very occasionally—of monasteries’ internal workings as they affected Carthusian corporate identity and self-perception.

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<sup>35</sup> In 1469, the Chapter General warned, under pain of suspension, against divulging secrets of the Order or of its spiritual and temporal regimen or about the defects or conditions of persons of the Order, such that those hearing [these things] might have a bad impression (“secretis Ordinis seu de Regimine domorum spirituali uel temporali aut de defectibus seu condicionibus personarum Ordinis per quod audientes possent male edificari...”). This was reiterated in the following year in this way: “Under no circumstances is it to be tolerated that outsiders may know the secrets of the Order” (Quia nullo modo tolerandum est quod extranei sciant secreta Ordinis...). Michael Sargent and James Hogg (eds.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Latin 10888, Part II, 1466–74* (Ff. 159–307), AC 100: 6 (Salzburg, 1985), 116.

## Domestic and Devotional Routine in the Charterhouse

Bruno of Cologne and his successors organized the charterhouse to facilitate individual progress toward monastic perfection. They urged that the appropriate disposition of space—and chiefly the individual cell—was as necessary for Carthusians as water for fish or pasture for sheep.<sup>36</sup> Over time changes inevitably occurred, especially as charterhouses came to be built closer to city walls or indeed within them. Commentators in the patristic era had played with the notion of the cloister as being analogous to paradise (*paradisus claustris*) and they enhanced the symbolic notion with biblical analogies referring both to the paradise of Genesis and to the eschatological paradise of the Apocalypse. They saw the cloister not as a “place or a moment in time, an historical situation of human beings, but as a certain theological state of man.”<sup>37</sup>

Just as the metaphor of paradise extended to the monastic cell, so, too, did the notion of prison.<sup>38</sup> According to Honorius Augustodunensis, who wrote his *De vita claustrali* in the early twelfth century, God gives the gift of charity, but only for fervent believers does charity produce a surfeit of joy, a true paradise; for those less fervent, the cloister becomes a prison.<sup>39</sup> Adam Scot, a late twelfth-century Carthusian, explicated the four occupations—reading, meditation, prayer, and work<sup>40</sup>—in his *De quadripertito exercitio cellae* (On the Fourfold Exercises proper to the Cell) and suggested that the garden of the cloister had to be properly irrigated: just as the river of paradise divided into four branches, in the same way true charity might nourish reading, meditation,

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<sup>36</sup> Guigo I, *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 31: Item de cella. XXXI. (*Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313, 232): “sicut aquas piscibus, et caulas ovibus.”

<sup>37</sup> Jean LeClercq, “Le cloître est-il un paradis?” *Le message des moines à notre temps* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1958), 141–99, 141.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Leclercq, “Le cloître est-il une prison?” *Revue d’ascétisme mystique* 47 (1971): 407–20, 412.

<sup>39</sup> *De vita claustrali* (PL 172, 1247–48).

<sup>40</sup> The “work” should be understood chiefly as copying texts, thereby directly related to the first exercise, reading.



prayer, and virtue.<sup>41</sup> Ideally, Carthusians nourished their roles as “earthly intercessors”<sup>42</sup> through liturgical practice enhanced by private meditation, all within their distinct form of “shared solitude.”<sup>43</sup> It was the cenobitic and eremitic split that defined the Order. If it is somewhat dangerous to speak strictly of a Carthusian spirituality, one may nevertheless trace certain singularities that mark it as its distinctive within the Western Church.<sup>44</sup>

Carthusians lived a highly ordered existence, one meant to promote, indeed enforce, the spiritual practices that would bring them closer to perfection. With some allowance for variation at the discretion of individuals, the general schedule, more than military in its precision, accounted for almost every waking and sleeping moment of Carthusian existence. Above all, monastic vocation required obedience, a primary feature of the novice’s induction, especially because it involved voluntary servitude to one’s superior—the prior.<sup>45</sup>

Denis the Carthusian, one of the most influential Carthusian writers of the fifteenth century, left an extensive oeuvre concerned with, among many matters, the

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<sup>41</sup> LcClercq, “Le cloître est-il un paradis?” 142–47. See also Francesco Palleschi, *Les derniers écrits d'Adam Scot: Analyse linguistique et stylistique du “De quadripertito exercitio cellae,”* AC 168 (Salzburg, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 107.

<sup>43</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 107.

<sup>44</sup> These peculiarities stand out in the writings of various Carthusians over time, including the *Meditaciones* of Guigo II, the *Theologia mystica* of Hugh of Balma, the *Tractatus de mystica theologia* of Nicholas Kempf, the massive written output of Denis the Carthusian, the *Fasciculus temporum* of Werner Rolevinck, and the *Chronicum Cartusiense* of Peter Dorland. In Spain, writings included those of Dom Bonifacio Ferrer, including *De passione domini*, the *Contemplaciones sobre el Rosario de Nuestra Señora* of Dom Gaspar Gorricio, and the *Retablo de la vida de Christo* and *Los doze triumphos de los doze Apóstoles* of Juan de Padilla. Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 107–115.

<sup>45</sup> “Ex hoc tempore, qui susceptus est ita se ab omnibus quae mundi sunt intelligit alienum, ut nullius prorsus rei, nec sui quidem ipsius sine prioris licentia habeat potestatem.” [From this moment, he who has been received considers himself as a stranger to everything in the world, to the point that he has absolutely no power over anything, not even his own person, without the permission of the prior.] The language of obedience was taken from I Samuel 15: 22–23: “Hic enim samuhel, melior est inquit obedientia quam victimae, et auscultare magis quam offerre adipem arietum quoniam quasi peccatum ariolandi est repugnare, et quasi scelus ydolatriae, nolle acquiescere.” [For obedience is better than sacrifices; and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel; and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey.” Guigo I, *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 25: Oratio super novitium. XXV. (*Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313, 218–21).

monastic profession.<sup>46</sup> Above all, he relies on scripture (the *Vulgate* of Saint Jerome); the writings of the Church Fathers (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory); monastic writings from before the twelfth century (Bede and Eriugena); the work of Thomas Aquinas, his primary authority in matters substantive; and the texts of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite.<sup>47</sup> Denis' works were published by the Carthusians of Cologne in 1520, suggesting no reluctance to disseminate Carthusian writings, despite the Order's penchant for withdrawal. Public reception of the works soon gave rise to the saying *Qui Dionysium legit, nihil non legit* (Whoever reads Denis, reads everything).<sup>48</sup>

Denis emphasized a sense of spiritual and social discrimination both within and without the Order: "Since we are in the public eye, we should be careful to edify others, and we should be aware of injuring their virtue by our own vices."<sup>49</sup> In comparing the Carthusian to other orders, Denis noted the special distinction of unconditional obedience that bound the brothers (and sisters) to lifelong vows: "In this matter [of obedience] the Carthusians seem to go a step further than other Religious..."<sup>50</sup> It was precisely that one step further that marked the religious tenor of the Carthusians, setting a special stamp on the Order and distinguishing it from others. It was likewise the prestige attaching to the asceticism of these Christian "athletes" and "soldiers" that made their communities the beneficiaries of extraordinary largesse on the part of noble and bourgeois benefactors.

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<sup>46</sup> It is no accident that the Carthusian patron of Vicente Carducho's cycle of paintings for the main cloister of El Paular, Prior Juan de Baeza (d. 1641), devoted an entire picture of the cycle to Denis the Carthusian, the "ecstatic doctor." For a reproduction of the painting and an iconographical analysis, see Werner Beutler, *Vicente Carducho: der grosse Kartäuserzyklus in El Paular*, AC 130: 12 (Salzburg, 1997), 230–33.

<sup>47</sup> Although this Greek author is now believed to have lived in the sixth century, in Denis' time the Areopagite was held to be the convert of Saint Paul mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* (17:34).

<sup>48</sup> Denis the Carthusian, *Spiritual Writings: Contemplation, Meditation, Prayer; The Fountain of Light and the Paths of Life; Monastic Profession; Exhortation to Novices*, trans. Íde M. Ní Riain (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005), xi–xii.

<sup>49</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 9 (trans. Riain, 372).

<sup>50</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 21 (trans. Riain, 392).

Perhaps because social harmony was essential to the functioning of the charterhouse, and certainly necessary to the pursuit of its spiritual aims, Denis stressed in his writings the Christian virtue of charity above all others, as had Bruno and other orthodox commentators. Without charity—that is, the maintenance of a right relationship with God and neighbor—the community was imperiled: “Without charity, monasteries are hell, and their inhabitants demons.”<sup>51</sup> Speaking of the monks in the feminine, Denis insisted that, without charity, the religious are not “brides of Christ ... but adulteresses of the devil ... [who] spiritually fornicate by conformity of their unholy will.”<sup>52</sup> The liminal step—that Carthusian step further—required a thorough conversion in one’s manner of life. Denis clarified the before-and-after status of the successful Carthusian monk:

If, in the world, they were haughty; wrathful; impatient; lazy; gluttonous; impure; vain; unstable; envious; over talkative; mean; quick to start trouble; ever ready to contradict; they should, now that they are in the cloister, earnestly and efficaciously endeavour to be humble; gentle; patient; fervent; sober; pure; thoughtful; stable; charitable; silent; poor; peace-makers; people who speak kindly about their neighbors.<sup>53</sup>

Conversion required vigilance such that outward behavior matched inward disposition. In short, Denis insisted upon the necessity of a reformation of manners and modesty.

### **Carthusians and the *Devotio Moderna***

Ecclesial rupture and reform provoked new devotional modes, both public and private. The movement known as the *devotio moderna* (or modern devotion) had profound repercussions in the Spanish kingdoms, as elsewhere in Europe, both within and

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<sup>51</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 2 (trans. Riaian, 356).

<sup>52</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 2 (trans. Riaian, 357).

<sup>53</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 6 (trans. Riaian, 363).

without the Carthusian milieu. Any analysis of late medieval Carthusian artistic patronage must take this movement into account, because from its inception it carried, as it were, the Carthusian stamp of approval. In 1375, Geert Groote of Deventer, exponent of the *devotio moderna*, began a three-year period in retreat with the Carthusians at Monnikhuizen, where he “came to revere them ever afterward as the most exemplary of religious orders.”<sup>54</sup> Groote followed the Carthusian example in his pursuit of spiritual life in the outside world amid followers, among them poor religious women, of the New Devout.<sup>55</sup>

Though called by late medieval contemporaries a modern devotion, this religious phenomenon is perhaps better understood as renewed spirituality, since it was essentially orthodox in its particular forms. The movement pursued some novel strategies in its devotional practices but always maintained a respect for and use of images. The dual roles assigned to text and image played themselves out in the Carthusian context in liturgical rites peculiar to the Order, as well as in private devotional practice enhanced by silent reading.

Historians of the *devotio moderna*, rejecting older monolithic characterizations, today stress the importance of understanding the movement in its variety over time since it spanned approximately 150 years.<sup>56</sup> Modern devotion had roots traceable to the twelfth-century emphasis on the humanity of Christ promoted by Saint Bernard and a spirituality centered on love, also rooted in the twelfth century. In the fifteenth century,

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<sup>54</sup> John van Engen, *Devotio moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 37. Groote’s three-year retreat offers undeniable evidence of increasing penetration by seculars into charterhouses.

<sup>55</sup> Van Engen, *Devotio moderna*, 37–38.

<sup>56</sup> Considering the inheritance of saints such as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, whose written works reflect the absorption of key ideals of the *devotio moderna*, not to mention its influence on Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the period of the movement’s impact may be deemed considerably longer.

the New Devout inherited a Christ-centered theology derived from Carthusian, Cistercian, and Franciscan devotional trends and practices that had extended, by the late Middle Ages, through all “orders and levels of Western Christendom.”<sup>57</sup> Chief among the readings of the New Devout were the sermons of Saint Bernard, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* of Pseudo-Bonaventure, the meditations of Pseudo-Anselm, the mystical *Book on Divine Wisdom* by the Dominican Henry Suso, and the *Vita Christi* of the Carthusian, Ludolph of Saxony, a work printed at least sixty-nine times and translated into many vernaculars, especially Romance languages.<sup>58</sup>

The most important reform movements in Spanish lands sprang up with the founding of two monasteries by King Juan I, the Hieronymite foundation of Guadalupe in 1389 and the Benedictine monastery of San Benito el Real in 1390 (whose retablo we have already considered), as well as houses of the Franciscan observance in Valencia and Galicia.<sup>59</sup> Reforms followed in short order in both the Dominican and Augustinian orders. Later in the century, the Franciscan Observants achieved their reform ends largely in convents established by the Catholic Kings and the powerful Cardinal Cisneros; the Catholic Kings codified their aims in petitions to the pope in 1478 and 1493 for reform of religious houses.<sup>60</sup> Although, as we shall see, the Carthusians were touched by the air of reform circulating throughout Europe, they were distinctive in their devotional and liturgical practices and constraints.

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<sup>57</sup> Van Engen, *Devotio moderna*, 25.

<sup>58</sup> The work had a profound effect on the spirituality of both Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross. Walter Baier, “*Die Spiritualität der Kartäuser dargestellt an der ‘Vita Christi’ des Ludolf von Sachsen*,” ed. Marijan Zadnikar and Adam Wienand *Die Kartäuser. Der Orden der schweigenden Mönche* (Köln, 1983), 21–25, 21. It was first translated into Portuguese in 1495, in Valenciano beginning in the same year, and Castilian in 1502–03.

<sup>59</sup> Melquiades Andrés Martín, *Historia de la mística de la Edad de Oro en España y América* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1994), 211.

<sup>60</sup> Andrés Martín, 214–25.

The founder of the *devotio moderna*, Geert Groote, and his followers Florens Radewijns (who established the house at Windesheim shortly after Groote's death),<sup>61</sup> Zerbolt of Zutphen, and Thomas à Kempis, all stressed the usefulness and indeed necessity of sacred images as a means to mystical union. "Sensible representations are necessary to us,"<sup>62</sup> Groote emphasized in his early writings. He urged his followers "almost to live in the same house as Christ and Mary," and we may deduce from the occasional mention of imagery in his writings that he had in mind paintings and sculpture as aids to such mental habitation. By contemplating images, pious persons could make their prayers more vivid. Groote spoke specifically of taking up "wooden objects" to further devotions. But he also wrote tellingly about *looking* as he advised his followers to keep in their minds the image of Christ's visage: "We are always in a position to construe His holy face and the figure and stature of saints." He emphasized that the mental apprehension of these attributes furnished a way of grasping the resurrection and the promise of spiritual enjoyment of the *communio sanctorum* in the Heavenly Jerusalem. These images furnish the beginning of a meditative practice that leads to an imageless and wordless spiritual end. The stress of the *devotio moderna*, particularly in the writings of Groote and Zerbolt, lies increasingly on a kind of mental pilgrimage that may be seen as a replacement for actual pilgrimage. Writings of figures from Groote to Zerbolt to Thomas à Kempis to Hendrik Herp consistently introduce visual metaphors

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<sup>61</sup> The house at Windesheim was responsible for the reform of at least forty-three communities of canons, Franciscans, and Benedictines. Reform was voluntary and did not necessarily apply to already-professed persons.

<sup>62</sup> "...necessaria sunt phantasmata et sensibilia nobis..." Kees Waaijman, "Image and Imagelessness: A Challenge to [the Modern] Devotion," in *Spirituality Renewed: Studies on Significant Representatives of the Modern Devotion*, ed. Hein Blommestijn, Charles Caspers, and Rijcklof Hofman (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 29–40, 31; Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 60–63.

and language: *videre, ecce, aspicere, intueri, respicere*.<sup>63</sup> Thomas à Kempis, who stressed the inward life and death to the outside world through the imitation of Christ, provided hard advice regarding reverence of an image of the Savior's mother: "When you see an image of Mary, bare your head and bow as though you saw her in bodily form."

And yet conflicting attitudes toward imagery in the context of the Modern Devotion are visible at all stages of the movement's activity. Contemplation of images could lead the mind higher, but images could also be an impediment insofar as they distracted the mind. In that case their purgation was fundamental to commencement of the spiritual journey upward. Groote wrote of "pernicious" images that might include money and jewels or the recollection of a beautiful face or body. This debate around images has relevance to the analysis of the image-rich retable at the heart of this study owing to the significant censure from Carthusian authorities that it provoked even during its making, suggesting a persistent ambivalence about images "curiously" worked—or overworked.

### **"Never Reformed Because Never Deformed"**

The very phrase "Carthusian reform" rings as a *non sequitur* in light of the centuries of laudatory assessment by high prelates from outside the Order. The Carthusians had what was perceived to be a well-deserved reputation for sanctity and conservative adherence to its Customs. We do well to keep in mind the high praise given to the Order and its founder by influential commentators of diverse temperaments and

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<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Th. M. van Dijk, "Toward Imageless Contemplation – Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen as Guide for *Lectio Divina*," in *Spirituality Renewed* (as n. 62), 3–28.

from diverse periods—including, to name two of the most illustrious, Saint Bernard and Jean Gerson.<sup>64</sup>

There is a centuries-old adage coined to honor the strict religious observance of Bruno and his followers, and, most significantly for this study, the place and manner in which the Carthusians lived: *Cartusia numquam reformata quia numquam deformata* (The charterhouse was never reformed because it was never deformed). These sparkling words were taken from a eulogy of the Order in the *Thesaurus virtutum* by Alexander IV (1257), and repeated in the *Romani Pontifices* of Pius II (1460).<sup>65</sup> However suspiciously we may approach the monolithic claims of this slogan, its repetition through the centuries suggests that the Carthusian Order liked to think of itself—and its observers viewed it—as highly orthodox and conservative in purpose and mission. Awareness of the rigors and rewards of Carthusian asceticism shines forth in yet another Carthusian slogan: *Cartusia sanctos facit, sed non patefacit* (Carthusians make saints, but do not make them known),<sup>66</sup> which relies on biblical prophecy, chiefly Isaiah 24:16 (“I keep things to myself.”).<sup>67</sup> The principal Carthusian saint, besides Bruno, is Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1200). There has never been a Carthusian pope, although about seventy Carthusians have been elected bishops.<sup>68</sup> A notion of unchanging and rigorous Christ-centered behavior amid the tumult of the world comes across most clearly in the motto of the Order: *Stat crux dum*

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<sup>64</sup> In Letter XLVI (c. 1125), Saint Bernard rhapsodizes about the *Meditationes* composed by the prior, and about the holy silence in which the monks lived. Francis A. Gasquet (ed.), *Some Letters of Saint Bernard Abbot of Clairvaux*, trans. Dr. Eales (London: J. Hodges, 1904), 192–205. Jean Gerson’s admiration for the Carthusian Order is well documented. See Brian Patrick McGuire, “Shining Forth Like the Dawn: Jean Gerson’s Sermon to the Carthusians,” in Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Medieval Monastic Preaching* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 37–52.

<sup>65</sup> Archdale A. King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1955), 1.

<sup>66</sup> Gómez, “La Cartuja en España.” *Studia Monastica* 4 (1962): 139–75, 163.

<sup>67</sup> Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Urban Butler, “St. Hugh,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).



*volvitur orbis* (Stands the cross as the world turns round). Denis the Carthusian argued for a higher standard of religious behavior for the members of the Order—the Carthusian step further. He relied on scripture for that injunction: “More is required from him to whom more has been given” (Luke 12:48).<sup>69</sup>

The Carthusians’ sterling reputation appears always to have been bestowed from without, even if privately enjoyed from within.<sup>70</sup> Despite the admiration from outside, perhaps a more nuanced model will yield a better understanding of the Order’s self-perception. One influential scholar of Carthusian history, Dennis Martin, has argued that the Carthusians maintained their reputation for sanctity through constant trials, “muddling through, via *discretio* at properly discerned moments, rather than maintaining a spotless and unsullied history.”<sup>71</sup> Adherence to the Customs and to the dictates of the Chapter General were the external means of achieving the fruits of such inward *discretio*. As the warnings of the Chapter General will show with regard to El Paular, the charterhouse sometimes exhibited wayward behavior, as did many of its sister establishments.

Indeed, a certain reform, however slight, did take place in the charterhouse, as is reflected in the modifications of the Customs. The *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, written by Guigo I, saw continuing changes through updated versions appearing in the *Statuta antiqua* (1259), the *Statuta nova* (1368), and the *Tertia compilatio* (1509).<sup>72</sup> By the time

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<sup>69</sup> Cited in *Monastic Profession*, section 7 (trans. Riain, 366). The high standard was attained—and maintained—through various “helps” and “crutches,” to use Denis’ own words, embedded within the monastic rule: “abstinence, fasting, use of the discipline, lying on hard beds, wearing shabby clothing, separation from the world, and enclosure.” *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>70</sup> Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, 24.

<sup>71</sup> Dennis Martin, “Reform without Revolution: *Discretio* as the Legacy of the Carthusians,” in *Das Erbe der Kartäuser. Internationaler Kongress für Kartäuserforschung, 1–5. Dezember 1999, Kartause Ittingen*, ed. Jürg Ganz and Margrit Früh, AC 160 (Salzburg, 2000), 170–84, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 59.

of this last publication, the Carthusians were no longer “small groups of semi-hermits...inhabiting at first wooden huts in high Alpine valleys.”<sup>73</sup> Their domestic environments, as we shall see, reflected increasingly urban—and urbane—evolution and amplification.

Certain prohibitions relaxed over time. Grooming restrictions changed. Private chapels proliferated and with them images. After the thirteenth century, Carthusians no longer cooked their own food in the cell. One thing that did not change was strict avoidance of meat.<sup>74</sup> Oddly, this variety of abstinence came to be identified almost exclusively with the Carthusians, even though it was embraced by other religious orders.<sup>75</sup> One could recite a long list of modifications of major and minor consequence expressed over the centuries in the *ordinationes* of the Carthusian *chartae*; what concerns us here principally is the Order’s attitude toward images.

### **Visual Reform in the Charterhouse**

The earliest prohibitions against ornaments in the charterhouse come from the *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, written by Guigo I and approved by Innocent II in 1133. Oddly, he speaks strictly of the church and does not mention pictures or statues, but only

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<sup>73</sup> James Hogg, “Everyday Life in the Charterhouse in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 367 (Vienna, 1980), 113–46, 120.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholas Kempf’s *De confirmatione et regula approbata ordinis cartusiensis*, which ostensibly sought to protect the Order against unfounded allegations that it had never received papal confirmation, likewise attempted to disprove criticism of the Order’s dietary restrictions and their supposedly unhealthful consequences, particularly with regard to the abstention from flesh meats. Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform*, 293.

<sup>75</sup> Dianne M. Bazell, “The Genres of Carthusian Abstinence,” in *Scala Dei. Primera cartoixa de la Península Ibèrica i l’Orde Cartoixa. Actes del Congrés Internacional, setembre 1996*, AC 139 (Salzburg, 1999), 571–86.

objects of gold and silver and draperies and tapestries, items he apparently finds superfluous for the dressing of the church altar

In the church we do not have ornaments of gold or silver, except for the chalice and the reed that serves for the taking of Our Lord's Blood. We have neither *pallia* nor tapestries.<sup>76</sup>

Two centuries later, we get a better glimpse of the use of images, this time in the Carthusian cell. Guillaume d'Ivrée (c. 1313), in *De origine et veritate perfectae religionis*, admitted their use even as he expressed a certain ambivalence about them.

Guillaume duly cited Saint John Damascene's pronouncement in favor of the use of images as scripture for the semi-literate laity, but noted that they could not perform this didactic function in the Carthusian setting. Rather, he spoke of their utility for devotion:

Yet, as was said before, the Carthusians in their cells do not refuse nor reject devotional pictures, but accept and seek them freely and eagerly because they excite devotion and imagination, and augment devotional ideas.<sup>77</sup>

By 1367, the Carthusian Chapter General had become worried about the multitude of images decorating charterhouses, particularly those that introduced what were considered to be dangerous emblems from the outside world:

Because in many establishments of our Order in the provinces panels painted with curious images [*tabulae curiosis imaginibus depictae*] are multiplying on altars, along with other diverse pictures with escutcheons and coats-of-arms of laymen and with female figures, in glass

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<sup>76</sup> "Ornamenta aurea vel argentea, preter calicem et calamum quo sanguis domini sumitur, in ecclesia non habemus, pallia tapetiaque reliquimus." The *pallia* may refer here to the finely wrought altarcloths placed beneath the chalice during communion; or it may refer generally to draperies in the church, especially those meant to cover the altarpiece. Guigo I, *Consuetudines Cartusiae*, 40: De ornamentis.XL. (*Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313, 244-45).

<sup>77</sup> Cited after Jessica Brantley, "The Visual Environment of Carthusian Texts: Decoration and Illustration in Notre Dame 67," in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors and Readers*, ed. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 173–215, 181— who in turn cites E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), 106, who paraphrased after MS Bodley 549 (fols. 25–85v).

windows and other places, against the holy simplicity and humility of the order and against the statutes, by which notable men are not a little scandalized; we ordain that all such painted tablets and other curious pictures [*curiosae picturae*] be removed, as instructed.<sup>78</sup>

A mandate expressed in the *Statuta nova* of 1368 likewise stressed the need for simplicity in the Order:

Let us not use any kind of tapestry, or cushions decorated with pictures or other extravagances; but decorative pictures, too, should be scraped away from our churches and houses, if it can be done without causing scandal; and new ones should not be allowed to be made.<sup>79</sup>

We shall explore more fully in a later chapter the notice of scandal attaching to the removal of contested images.

A Flemish manuscript depicting a Carthusian in church and cell (Fig. 2.6) is especially telling with respect to Carthusian devotional modes in discrete environments.<sup>80</sup> The picture is divided architecturally into three neat parts described by two sculptures set above long ornate corbels. At the far left we see the Carthusian kneeling before the altar in the church (or perhaps in the private oratory connected to his bedroom). We see him again, this time embracing the Virgin, in a second room that, notwithstanding the division of the arcade at the front of the picture plane, appears to be connected to the far-right section by the repetition of both floor tiles and ceiling beams. Significantly, the Carthusian's holy conversation takes place not in the church, but in the space connected

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<sup>78</sup> Alain Girard, "Les Chartreux, l'art et la spiritualité autour d'Avignon," in *Les Chartreux et l'art, XIV-XVIII siècle. Actes du Xe colloque international d'histoire et de spiritualité cartusiennes*, ed. Alain Girard and Daniel Le Blévec (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 19–37, 28 n. 20.

<sup>79</sup> "Tapetia universa et cussini picturati vel alias curiosi in usu apud nos non habeant; sed et picture curiose ubi sine scandalo fieri poterit de nostris ecclesiis et domibus eradantur: et nove de cetero fieri non permittant." (*Statuta Nova*, Part 2, 1.7). See the facsimile of the 1510 edition of the Carthusian statutes printed in Basel: James Hogg, *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio*, AC 99: 2 (Salzburg, 1989).

<sup>80</sup> Bodleian Library, MS Douce 374, f. 19.

to his bedroom, suggesting the domestic portion of the cell as the locus of spiritual perfection. On a more prosaic level, judging from the artist's rendition, the elegant *cubiculum* is dressed with the very kinds of cushions the injunction of 1368 sought to forbid.

By the fifteenth century, Carthusian houses made significant use of images in various media and in various spaces. We may assume that the majority of such images, whether in paint, stone, or print, were meant to enhance devotional aims. But if the Order showed considerable ambivalence to images, it never saw them in an explicitly negative light, as the above excerpts demonstrate. In spite of basic Carthusian asceticism expressed most directly in the religious observance of choir monks, decorative extravagance was admissible insofar as it might be construed to do honor to God, rather than to reinforce the pride of man.<sup>81</sup>

El Paular was not alone in its acquisition of pictures and statutes. The rich decorations from the Charterhouse of Champmol (Dijon) are well known, including surviving panels by Jean de Beaumetz prepared c. 1398 for the twenty-four choir monks' private cells, each showing a Carthusian praying before the crucified Christ (Fig 2.7).<sup>82</sup> The serial nature of the imagery speaks for a uniformity in the spiritual aims expected of the monks. These images likewise "provided a constant companion" in the isolation of

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<sup>81</sup> Brantley, "The Visual Environment of Carthusian Texts," 175.

<sup>82</sup> One panel is in the Cleveland Museum of Art, the other in the Louvre. See Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society at the Chartreuse de Champmol*, 53. A small painting (possibly one of a series) by Mariotto di Nardo may have served the same purpose in the Charterhouse of Florence. That picture, about half the size of those that hung in the cells at the Charterhouse of Champmol, is his *Crucifixion with Saint John the Baptist, the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist, and a Carthusian Saint* (probably Saint Hugh of Lincoln), c. 1385-90. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 33 x 25.1 cm. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. For Mariotto's place in Florentine art, see Miklos Boskovits, "Mariotto di Nardo e la formazione del linguaggio tardo-gotico a Firenze negli anni intorno al 1400," *Antichità viva* 7, no. 6 (1968): 21-31.

the cell.<sup>83</sup> Otherwise, monks' cells were meant to be austere. Religious pictures in cell, chapterhouse, and church would have been the chief markers of artistic luxury in any religious compound. Also at Champmol, but in a funerary chapel, images of the Carthusian *pleurants* on the tomb of Philip the Bold, for all their variety, connote the pious efforts of the choir monks on behalf of the welfare of the duke's soul.<sup>84</sup>

A painting of the *Coronation of the Virgin* produced in 1453 for the Charterhouse of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon by Enguerrand Quarton speaks to such efforts for redemption from purgatory (Fig. 2.8). The picture plainly emphasizes the Virgin's evolving role as Co-Parent, Co-Redeemer, and even Savior of the World, a role emphasized by Denis the Carthusian, one of the Order's most prominent theological exponents. This shift finds a parallel in the pictorial emphasis on the Virgin's powers of intercession in Quarton's painting, in which a diminutive Carthusian kneels before the crucifixion below.<sup>85</sup> The notion of Mary as mirror of God took hold firmly in the Spanish kingdoms, home to some of the most avid proponents of rosary devotion. This fervor is reflected in the widely read *Gozos del Rosario* (*Joys of the Rosary*), variously attributed to Bonifacio Ferrer or his brother Vincent.

Early in this chapter we considered an example of Carthusian portraiture in the *Retable of Bonifacio Ferrer* (Fig. 2.3). The taste for portraiture among the Carthusians of the fifteenth century may be observed in a variety of paintings produced throughout Europe. Indeed, it was a genre widely exploited by Carthusians during the period. It is not

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<sup>83</sup> Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998), 430.

<sup>84</sup> Sophie Jugie, *The Mourners: Tomb Sculptures from the Court of Burgundy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010).

<sup>85</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 145. See Charles Sterling, *Enguerrand Quarton: le peintre de la Pietà d'Avignon* (Paris: Paris : Ministère de la culture, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1983).

clear where such portraits were placed or whether they served strictly for devotion or for the commemoration of an important person, or a combination of the two. The chapterhouse, the only place where sermons were preached, may have been a suitable place for such likenesses. Jan de Vos, prior of the Charterhouse of Genadedal (near Bruges), caused his own picture to be made not once but twice. The first portrait, by Jan van Eyck, represents the donor kneeling before the Virgin and Child and flanked by Saints Barbara and Elizabeth of Thuringia (Fig. 2.9). The second, the so-called *Exeter Madonna* by Petrus Christus (Fig. 2.10), represents the prior in the company of the Virgin and Child and Saint Barbara. Given the tiny dimensions of this picture, it seems possible that it hung in the oratory of his cell.<sup>86</sup> Apparently, the prior prepared for the sitting by having his face shaved to a “porcelainlike” smoothness.<sup>87</sup> By contrast, another painting by Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Carthusian* of 1446 (Fig. 2.11), shows a bearded Carthusian staring out into the viewer’s space, his only company a fly.<sup>88</sup> The picture may represent an important Carthusian laybrother, perhaps the procurator of a charterhouse.

Contemporary comments may help us to assess the importance of images in the charterhouse. As to aesthetic matters, Denis the Carthusian encouraged the “good use of

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<sup>86</sup> Considering the small size of this picture, one scholar has suggested that it served as the prior’s “talisman,” an unlikely possibility in my view. Joel M. Upton, *Petrus Christus: his Place in Fifteenth-century Flemish Painting* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 17.

<sup>87</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 187. The *Consuetudines* forbade shaving of the head and face more often than six times a year. Two extra times were conceded in 1173, and by 1260 shaving was permitted once monthly. Two centuries later, when the prior of Genadedal, Jan Vos, had his likeness recorded on two separate occasions, he was presumably following the rule of 1442, conceded somewhat grudgingly, that allowed priors to shave once a week when they had to venture from the monastery for the sake of business. Abuses of the shaving rule are suggested by fulminations of the Chapter General of 1454, which threatened to return to the once-monthly shaving routine. Hogg, “Everyday Life in the Charterhouse,” 138.

<sup>88</sup> The inclusion of the fly has generated various art-historical interpretations, theological and mundane. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, 488 n. 5.

sensible beauty”<sup>89</sup> as entirely appropriate to and compatible with the asceticism of Carthusian life and the “conversion of manners” that entailed a long and difficult ascent from animal to spiritual sensibility. Denis based his conception of beauty on ideas expressed by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Pseudo-Areopagite; to these, he added the important dimensions of elegance and appropriateness. However modern such notions may appear to us now, Denis relied prudently upon aesthetic notions enunciated by a religious authority, Albertus Magnus.

The problem of charterhouse decoration cannot be easily resolved without considering relaxation or reform. It is hard indeed to reconcile the accumulation of things—however sacred—with the fervor of religious persons who professed “to be content with the bare minimum.”<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, it is important not to ascribe too easily the quality of luxury to sacred objects fashioned for the charterhouse, even as we admit the elite nature of the Carthusian Order itself. Nor should articles now considered luxury goods be considered the private property of their Carthusian custodians. Severe punishments were meted out repeatedly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for any Carthusian monk “*suspectus . . . de proprietate*,” even after death.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Kent Emery, Jr., “Fondements théoriques de la réception de la beauté sensible dans les écrits de Denys le Chartreux (1402-1471),” in *Les Chartreux et l’art* (as n. 77), 308.

<sup>90</sup> Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform*, 367.

<sup>91</sup> See John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1475–1503 (MS. Grande Chartreuse I Cart. 14)*, AC 100: 31 (Salzburg, 1999), 36, for a deceased choir monk of the Charterhouse of Vaucluse suspected in 1484 of having had property [may the deceased be exhumed . . . and buried in profane ground] [defunctus . . . exhumetur et in terra prophana subterretur]; *ibid.*, 67 (year 1493), a deceased monk of Ferrar was suspected of holding property and exhumation from sacred ground was threatened; *ibid.*, 97 (year 1501) a choir monk and laybrother from the Charterhouse of Venice were ordered dug up and flung into a dungheap in secret so as not to reach the ears of seculars. To cite one Spanish example among many continental ones, in 1512, a monk of the Charterhouse of Cazalla was exhumed from the cemetery and tossed into a dungheap on similar grounds: this act was meant to exercise “terror for other” who might be tempted to hold property, whether found out before death or after. John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1504–1515 (MS Grande Chartreuse I Cart. 14), A Supplement to MS. Parkminster B 62*, AC 100: 30 (Salzburg, 1998), 48. “Et nichilominus Priori dicte domus iniungimus ut, constito sibi sufficienter per testes ydoneos quod domnus Illefonus de Virera ibidem hospes fuerit in morte



Throughout this chapter we have considered the notion of reform as it applies to ecclesial, devotional, and artistic ends. The question as to whether a visual reform was effected in response to Schism and Conciliarism may ultimately be impossible to answer, though, in light of what I have argued, this may seem likely. Nor can Carthusian commissions, of course, be expected to account for the artistic sea change in the Iberian peninsula. But it is conceivable, indeed likely, that Spanish taste turned northward quite early. This may be so because Spaniards who commissioned art increasingly turned against an Italianate style and to the French-Burgundian style favored at the Avignese papal court. The situation was also affected by travel to and from the prolonged Councils of Constance and Basel, the tight economic bond between the Iberian peninsula and Flemish-Rhenish territories, and increasing anxiety about various heresies in Europe.

By the end of the fifteenth century, native and foreign artists in the Spanish kingdoms created works of art unusual for their combined qualities of rare materials, singular design, enormous size, and formidable expense. With regard to Carthusian commissions, these were objects usually intended for a severely restricted audience. Architectural renewal in Iberia paralleled active reception of foreign styles in the Castilian carved retable, fully witnessed in the two surviving examples from Carthusian foundations in Castile, those in the Charterhouses of El Paular (Fig 1.2) and Miraflores (Fig 5.1). In these sculptural leviathans, carvers emulated courtly formulae successful in Flanders, but meanwhile developed a form for the monumental retable deemed suitable for Spanish devotional purposes in diverse religious settings.

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*propriarius prout fertur inuentus, ipsum tanquam sepultura ecclesiastica indignum a cimetario extrahat, & in sterquilinio sepeliat, ad terrorem aliorum.”*

One scholar has noted about the Carthusians that “[n]o other order seems to have imposed its own image so confidently, to have been so insistent upon the representation of itself and upon its artistic translation.”<sup>92</sup> We have already considered some examples of how Carthusians may have used both text and image in the cell. Indeed, many Carthusian cells had writing on the wall—inside and outside the door—that may have fostered or enhanced spiritual goals. If we look more broadly at the role of print within the Order, however, we can see how texts and accompanying images offered the Carthusians a means of speaking to a large audience outside the charterhouse and provided a blueprint for devotional reform among lay people. Key to charting the reception of some of the main proponents of the *devotio moderna* is the work of the Andalusian religious writer Juan de Padilla, prior of several Carthusian establishments including El Paular in the early sixteenth century. The Spanish monk, heir to the thought of the Church Fathers, the scholastic authors, and more recent figures such as Ludolph of Saxony and Denis the Carthusian, produced a long poetic text dealing with the life of the Savior, an extremely popular work astonishing for its beauty and originality. The text is appropriately titled *Retablo de la vida de Christo*.

The epic poem, finished on Christmas Eve in 1500 and first printed in Seville in 1512 when Juan de Padilla was a professed monk at the charterhouse in that city, offers a rare glimpse into Carthusian self-perception.<sup>93</sup> The author apparently based his poem upon a retable, now lost, once in the church of the Sevillian charterhouse, itself a daughter-house of El Paular. Though the text will be more fully examined in a subsequent chapter, one of the illustrations—a woodblock print—stands out as being

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<sup>92</sup> Yvette Carbonell-Lamothe, “Conclusions,” in *Les Chartreux et l’art* (as n. 77), 395–402, 400–1.

<sup>93</sup> See Appendix.

particularly revealing of Carthusian ideals pertinent to this study. The picture appears at the beginning of the poem, at the first canticle (Fig 2.12). It shows a choir monk in Carthusian habit standing opposite a well-dressed layperson. Behind them is a heavy iron doorway. We might use the metaphor of the locked door to consider the architectural ramifications of Carthusian life in the cloistered compound, even as the poetic retablo alludes to the life of Christ and to its continual artistic rehearsal in church altarpieces. Significantly, the Carthusian carries a book, which may refer to sacred theology, a *sacro thesoro* (sacred treasure) meant to be unlocked. Therefore, each man holds a key, the layman an ornate golden key and the Carthusian a plain wooden one, for entry into an architectural space leading to the treasure of salvation. Both pictorially and theologically, the Carthusian raises his key high as though he might strike his opponent: there can be no disputing the best means of penetrating the locked realm of the sacred beyond.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> For an interesting summary of the physical and symbolic place of the key in Carthusian life, particularly with regard to the cell, see Juan Mayo Escudero, “La llave y cerradura cartujana. Un arte cartujano durante siglos,” *Ars et sapientia: Revista de la asociación de amigos de la Real Academia de Extremadura de las letras y las artes* 12 (2003): 93–128. The study treats primarily the centuries following those covered in this dissertation.

## Chapter Three

### El Paular: A Beautiful House

*If the outer man is busy with the exercises of religious life, while the inner man is careless about checking the passions, he is like to someone who builds a house that is outwardly beautiful, but inside is crawling with serpents and scorpions.*<sup>1</sup>

Denis the Carthusian, *Monastic Profession*

A woodcut entitled *Origin of the Carthusian Order* in a printed edition of the statutes and privileges of the Carthusian Order printed in Basel in 1510 is a visual retelling of the life of Bruno of Cologne (Fig. 3.1).<sup>2</sup> The nine episodes, moralizing in character, present the saint's legend as a serial progression. The last two episodes in particular shed light on Carthusian self-perception in terms of the contemplative requirements for—and architectural disposition of—the charterhouse and its constituent parts. This is true especially with respect to the monastic cell, meant to be the lifelong home, after profession, for Carthusian choir monks. In the penultimate image, a monk engages in physical labor in the construction of an ideal cell in the ideal charterhouse—the Grande Chartreuse. This charming fiction belies the reality that the construction of a charterhouse entailed a vast sum of time, money, and toil, and all for the accommodation of a tiny population of choir monks and laybrothers—always a fluctuating number, but

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<sup>1</sup> *Monastic Profession*, section 7 (trans. Ní Riain, 367).

<sup>2</sup> Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, 31, fig. 2.2.

about forty at El Paular during the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> A charterhouse verily constituted a small “city unto itself.”<sup>4</sup>

In many respects, as we have seen, El Paular was a monastery with strong noble connections. Fitting its status as a royal monastery, its earliest building campaigns employed some of the most noteworthy architects active in fifteenth-century Spain. The study of the complex offers an occasion to review the careers of some of these builders in late medieval Castile and gives rise to a number of critical questions: Which architects were employed during the various building phases? Where did they come from and with what previous projects had they been involved? How did they solve problems associated with the distribution of the public and private zones of the charterhouse? We will also try to discover the extent to which the royal patrons subsidized the building and influenced the monastery’s original design and its later amplifications. It may well be that the royal pressure asserted by the patrons has been overstated in the scholarly literature to date.<sup>5</sup> These questions are far from easy to answer given the incomplete historical records for the first century of El Paular’s existence. By examining carefully data from surviving documents, however, we may come to a firmer idea of the kinds of problems faced by a monastic establishment whose vast wealth later gained it the moniker “Exchequer of the Carthusians” (*ministerio de hacienda de los cartujos*).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the construction of the monastery of Montalgre in Spain, for instance, the records of workers (casual laborers, for the most part) indicate immense effort and expenditure. The extent of the building operations may be judged from the fact that some of the walls are five feet thick in places. Astonishingly, that charterhouse even bought a sea-going ship for the transport of materials to be assembled on the construction site. The Carthusians resold the vessel once building operations were completed. James Hogg, “Everyday Life in the Charterhouse,” 117.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Hubertus Blüm, “Wie lebt der Kartäuser?” in: *Die Kartäuser: Der Orden der schweigenden Mönche*, ed. Marijan Zadnikar and Adam Wienand (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 1983), 29–37, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Augustin Devaux specifically related design choices at El Paular more to the wishes of the founding kings than to the decisions of the monks. Devaux, *L’architecture dans l’ordre des Chartreux*, 173.

<sup>6</sup> Gómez, “La Cartuja en España,” *Studia Monastica* 4 (1962): 139–75, 155.

Ultimately, the architectural disposition of El Paular was determined—or should have been—by inherited conventions within the Carthusian Order. So what features were specifically Carthusian? And did the complex meet the building features recommended in the *Consuetudines* or later revisions, and if not, what deviations were introduced and why? How did the first and later communities of El Paular perceive building requirements in the light of local and foreign architectural practice? To this end, it will be instructive to consider El Paular in relation to its sister foundations in the area, in particular Aniago and Miraflores, comparing design choices made by monks, patrons, and architects. Just as monastic filiation—the relation of mother-house to daughter-house—influenced the choice of priors, the movement of monks, and the hospitality extended to visitors in the charterhouses of El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores, it may also have had a bearing upon the employment of artists and architects who worked at them. The contemporary remodeling of all three charterhouses in the later fifteenth century offers interesting insights into the design choices made at each.

The case of El Paular, in particular, reveals certain tensions regarding notions of religious decorum with respect to the built environment. This house, it seems, was too beautiful for its own good. Specifically, the charterhouse incurred negative comments from the Chapter General of 1476 for potential “superfluosness,” “excess,” and “curiosity” in its architecture and artistic furnishings.<sup>7</sup> El Paular is the only Carthusian foundation in Europe to have received such an admonition during this period. Even the

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<sup>7</sup> “Et hortamur eum (*Priorem domus de Paulari*), quod amodo in corrigendis excessibus et disciplinis imponendis contra offendentes se conformet Statutis Ordinis; quod nisi fecerit, Ordo prouidebit. Insuper iniungimus eidem quatinus in aedificiis domus et claustrum ac cellarum, quae separatae distractaeque debent esse ab inuicem, conformet se consuetudini et formae Ordinis; et superfluas, excessiuas ac curiosas structuras et picturas eidem interdiciamus sub poena absolutionis.” John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1475-1503 (MS. Grande Chartreuse I Cart. 14)*, AC100: 31 (Salzburg, 1999), 8.

extravagantly decorated charterhouses of Champmol (founded 1383), Pavia (1396), and Sheen (1414) escaped such criticism.<sup>8</sup> Astoundingly, the admonition was echoed some thirty years later, in 1503, when the Chapter General turned its attention to the painted and carved alabaster altarpiece that adorns the high altar in the monks' choir.

This raises an interesting question: Did El Paular misunderstand the spirit of its own Order, as the Chapter General charged, by supporting the construction and decoration of this extravagant monastic complex? The double admonition by the Order calls attention not only to the wealth of this particular charterhouse—indeed the wealthiest in all Castile—but also to the monks' own, possibly troubled, understanding of the appropriateness of the form of the complex, both with respect to its royal status and to the requirements of the Order. But outside pressure from royal patrons cannot alone account for the perceived excesses in El Paular's building and decorating. Risking almost renegade status, El Paular embraced a protracted, seemingly unending building campaign throughout the fifteenth century that appears to have annoyed even its royal patrons.<sup>9</sup> I will argue that the architectural fabric of El Paular reflected conflicting interests on the part of the Carthusians and their patrons. It is significant that one of the principal scholars of Carthusian architecture, Dom Augustin Devaux, has spoken of a “confrontation”<sup>10</sup> between Carthusian building and Carthusian spirituality. When considering the architecture of El Paular, it will be useful first to place the charterhouse in the company

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<sup>8</sup> James Hogg has noted, however, that building efforts spanning centuries at Pavia were “scarcely favourable to the regular observance.” James Hogg (ed.), *The Charterhouse of Pavia as Seen in the Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter*, AC 100: 51 (Salzburg, 2010), v.

<sup>9</sup> Devaux likewise notes the “extreme slowness” marking building programs among Castilian charterhouses as opposed to the speedy erection of buildings at wealthy charterhouses elsewhere in Europe. Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 6.

of its European sister foundations in order to better appreciate precisely how conventions were overturned.

### **The Late Medieval Charterhouse in Europe**

Although Bruno of Cologne left no writings that prescribed the daily rounds or habits of Carthusian monks or the ideal layout of a monastery, early accounts supply information about both of these aspects of Carthusian monasticism. Guibert de Nogent (d. 1124) describes in simple terms the mode of living instituted by Bruno, including the character of the architecture in which the monks lived: “They have individual cells distributed along a cloister in which they work, eat, and sleep.”<sup>11</sup> This points to a feature characteristic of all subsequent Carthusian complexes: separate habitations, with garden attached to the back of each apartment, and those apartments facing onto a central cloister. Information about devotional and liturgical practices is available in the *Consuetudines Cartusiae* written by Guigo I. Interestingly, Guigo devotes almost half of his text to the role of the laybrothers, who occupied single-room cells in a separate compound and lived a less taxing devotional life, for which they compensated by means of physical labor.<sup>12</sup>

This division into priestly brothers and laybrothers had a significant impact on early building typology, for it required the creation of strictly separate domestic and

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<sup>11</sup> *De vita sua*, 1.11 (PL 156, col. 854 ff.). Cited in Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 10. “Habent quippe singuli cellulas per gyrum claustrum proprias in quibus operantur dormant ac vescuntur.” Trans. C.C. Swinton Bland, *The Autobiography of Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy* (London: Routledge, 1925), 36 [revised by George F. Benton as *Self and Society in Medieval France* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970)]. Guibert described the church, the cloister, and even the plumbing system at the contemporary Grande Chartreuse: “And the church there is not far from the foot of the mountain, in a little fold on its sloping side, and in it are thirteen monks having a cloister quite suitable for common use, but not living together in cloister fashion like other orders.... Water they have both for drinking and for other purposes from a conduit, which traverses all their cells and flows into each through certain holes in the party walls.”

<sup>12</sup> Guigo I, *Consuetudines Cartusiae* (*Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313).



liturgical zones for each rank, called respectively the *domus superior* and *domus inferior*, or high and low houses. The priestly, or choir, monks occupied the high house, the lay brothers the low house, familiarly called the *corrérie* in French and *conrería* in Spanish.<sup>13</sup> This division is clear in a drawing of the eldest daughter of the Grande Chartreuse, the Charterhouse of Portes (founded 1115), which shows the *domus superior* (*couvent*) separated from the *domus inferior* (*corrérie*) (Fig. 3.2).<sup>14</sup>

There was a clear social distinction between the members of the two houses. The priestly brothers might be seen as spiritual and social superiors, as demonstrated in their devotional activities, literary erudition, and physical housing, even if the importance of the laybrothers to the operation of the monastery is clear. The architectural historian Jean Aniel has emphasized that the presence of the two groups ensured “the autonomy of the monastery.”<sup>15</sup> While it has been tempting to see the segregation of monastic ranks simply as an example of post-feudal class division, the chief historian of Spanish Carthusians, Santiago Cantera Montenegro, has warned against such a reductive view, citing instances of persons crossing from one group to the other.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, such movement was likely the exception rather than the rule. In 1309, the Order specifically legislated against

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<sup>13</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 11. Dom Augustin Devaux notes that it is almost impossible to reconstruct the architectural histories of these “lower houses.” Devaux, *L’architecture dans l’ordre des Chartreux*, 6. For information about architecture of early charterhouses, see also Marijan Zadnikar, “Die frühe Baukunst der Kartäuser,” in *Die Kartäuser* (as n. 4), 51–138.

<sup>14</sup> The Charterhouse of Portes represents perhaps the earliest example of the choir monks’ primitive dwelling area being converted for use by the laybrothers. See Dom Augustin Devaux, “Portes,” *Nouvelle bibliographie cartusienne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 3: 153. In the Iberian peninsula, a like situation obtained at the Charterhouse of Portaceli (Valencia), where the primitive habitations of the choir monks were taken over for use in the mid-fourteenth century by the laybrothers, once a new priestly compound had been built. See Barlés Báguena, “La arquitectura de la cartuja: espacios y funciones,” 72.

<sup>15</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 164. “Ambas comunidades se complementaban entre sí, y pretender ver en esta organización una forma de clasismo, no es sino una distorsión de la realidad. Existen numerosos casos de personas de la nobleza y de clases altas que han ingresado en la Orden como conversos, por humildad, y otros que, procediendo de grupos modestos, han sido monjes de coro.”

the practice except by “special application,”<sup>17</sup> since it was apparently awkward to place well-bred young men in rough work to which they were unaccustomed by genteel social formation. At El Paular, choir monks seem to have come primarily from the class of rural small landowners, although there are likewise instances of members who were from the middle and high nobility.<sup>18</sup>

The very year El Paular was founded, 1390, marked the beginning of the suppression of the lower house of the laybrothers in many European Carthusian monasteries. The first official prohibition was directed at the Charterhouse of Mauerbach, whose *domus inferior* was converted to agricultural use in that same year:

And in the disposition of the house of the *conversi* [laybrothers] in the Charterhouse of Mauerbach, which is also called the *domus inferior* in the *Antiquis Statutis*, because of various inconveniences and extreme danger to persons of the Order, it should be vacated and turned into a farm.<sup>19</sup>

The danger seems to have been the perceived risk of increased mixing with the laity, a liability of the externally oriented commercial activities of the lower house. El Paular was duly built on the new model, which absorbed both the *domus superior* and *domus inferior* into one conjoined but nevertheless segregated compound.

The Carthusian formula as a whole met with great strategic success. Over the centuries the Order gained strength even as the influence of other contemplative orders waned. If in the early period there was open struggle with the Cistercians for religious recruits,<sup>20</sup> the Carthusians ultimately fared better. Other orders, including the

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<sup>17</sup> Hogg, “Everyday Life in the Charterhouse,” 141.

<sup>18</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 455–56. Given its cosmopolitan setting, the Charterhouse of Seville attracted a higher percentage of noble postulants, and likewise more foreigners, particularly members of Italian families, with a preponderance coming from Genova.

<sup>19</sup> “Et in dispositione cartusiae Maurbacensis Domus Conversorum quae etiam inferior in *Antiquis Statutis* dicitur propter varia incommoda et maxime animarum pericula personis Ordinis vacatur et in vilulam convertitur.” Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 50, citing Le Couteulx, *Annales*, 6: 423–24.

<sup>20</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 18.

Benedictines and the Grandmontains, had to contend occasionally with the revolts of laybrothers,<sup>21</sup> probably owing to their large numbers and attendant problems with effective social control. From the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, the Carthusians pursued slow but steady expansion. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they underwent significant growth, with many new foundations.

The Order attracted the wealthiest of patrons, who increasingly wished to be buried in charterhouses noted for the rigor of their daily devotions. The Charterhouse of El Paular fit neatly within the long line of royal and aristocratic foundations of Carthusian establishments across Europe. These included charterhouses sponsored by Frederick III of Austria (Mauerbach); Albert II, Duke of Austria (Gaming); John the Blind, King of Bohemia (Prague); Louis the Great, King of Hungary (Val-Saint-Michel de Leweld); Charles of Valois (Bourfontaine); Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (Champmol); the Orsini (Rome); the Visconti (Milan and Pavia); Charles, Duke of Calabria (Naples); Martín, King of Aragon (Valdecristo); and Juan I, King of Castile (El Paular).

Carthusian expansion coincided with an ever-greater desire to build new foundations within city walls, perhaps in response to pressure from patrons. One such urban charterhouse was constructed in Cologne, the birthplace of the Order's founder, Bruno.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, El Paular, situated some twenty miles from Segovia in the "wilderness" or "desert" of Lozoya (to borrow common Carthusian metaphors), was a throwback to an earlier era. By contrast, its sister foundations were located in or near important city centers: Seville (1400), Aniago (1441, near Valladolid), and Miraflores (1442, near Burgos).

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<sup>21</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 48.

There are common characteristics in the plans and buildings in all these complexes. The Chapter General was critical of any building features that departed from Carthusian norms, or more specifically from the “spirit of the Order,” even though it admitted adaptations over time (the architectural melding of the *domus superior* and the *domus inferior* into one compound is perhaps the most obvious example). In all cases, the most important building in the charterhouse was the church; foundations throughout Europe almost exclusively favored a single-nave plan, with the exception of the late-fifteenth-century church in Pavia, which had three aisles (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4). It is hard to understand why the Chapter General tolerated such an anomaly, which represented, according to one architectural historian, “an abandonment of traditions.”<sup>23</sup>

In the late medieval period, the preferred building material was generally stone, as seen at El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores. Wood, however, was used at Valsainte, Erfurt, and Amsterdam. Brick was used in regions where it was plentiful or preferred, as in Flanders and Italy, notably at Pavia and Calci. The churches were built in the prevailing regional styles. Rose windows, characteristic features of the Gothic, were common; Aniel cites as the first Spanish example Scala Dei, near Tarragona, the mother-house of El Paular.<sup>24</sup> Almost all churches were topped by a belfry.<sup>25</sup>

Carthusians eschewed ceremonial processions, a further reason for making the single-nave option the norm. Within this nave it was essential that there be a separation between the monks’ choir and that of the laybrothers. (In the days of the *domus inferior* and *domus superior*, the physically distant compounds had separate churches.) This separation seems initially to have been accomplished by a plain wall, set generally

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<sup>23</sup> Devaux, *L’architecture dans l’ordre des Chartreux*, 141.

<sup>24</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 58.

<sup>25</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 59.

halfway from the apse, as at El Paular, Miraflores, and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. In some churches, a true *jubé* was installed, as at Cologne and Nördlingen.<sup>26</sup> This suggests a preaching tendency incompatible with the Order's Customs. Though El Paular has lost its original barrier between the choir monks' and laybrothers' sections, it retains a magnificent choir screen separating the laybrothers' section from a third area restricted to servants or visitors.

The apsidal space of the medieval Carthusian church—the termination of the monks' choir—was often richly elaborated with stained glass; Miraflores is the only Carthusian church in Spain to retain its original fifteenth-century stained-glass windows. Jean Aniel believes the elaborated apsidal space of the typical Carthusian church may have had a symbolic significance, recalling the Tabernacle of Moses (Exodus 27: 9–13), the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6: 37), or the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40: 44, 47). It is significant that the extravagance in apsidal terminations is evident in a graded way in the surviving charterhouses of Spain: from El Paular (three-sided), to Aniago (essentially three-sided, unless one takes into account its provision of a reliquary chapel, making it five), to Miraflores (seven-sided). A special feature of Spanish charterhouses is the placement of a *sagrario*, or tabernacle-room, behind the altarpiece, a critical architectural feature that will be considered more fully in the chapter dealing with the retable of El Paular.<sup>27</sup>

Typical of Carthusian churches was the proliferation of chapels around the perimeter of the church. These served as places of prayer for monks or laybrothers, or

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<sup>26</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 59.

<sup>27</sup> The physical removal of the tabernacle-room—its quality of “hiddenness”—thus distinguishes it from the monumental sacrament houses used in cathedrals and large parish churches elsewhere in Europe, notably in the Holy Roman Empire. See Achim Timmermann, *Real Presence: Sacrament Houses and the Body of Christ, c. 1270–1600* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009).

more rarely as burial chapels, and were not spatially integrated into the church.<sup>28</sup>

Legislation of 1276 refers to altars, although it is not specific as to their disposition:

“Item, it is permitted that any House may have three altars and one may be made between the choirs of the monks and the *conversi* [laybrothers].”<sup>29</sup> This suggests that a barrier with one chapel could connect the architectural spaces of the choir monks and that of the laybrothers.

El Paular seems to have resisted for the most part, in its early years, the accommodation of funerary monuments near its monastic zone, with the exception of the Capilla de San Ildefonso for the Herrera family, generous donors to El Paular, located near the northwestern end of the church, and a full-fledged funerary chapel by the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Significantly, this chapel, although adjacent to the church, did not communicate with it.<sup>30</sup> Carthusian churches had sacristies generally located near the apse. The sacristy sometimes had a three-sided apsidal termination, as at Cologne, and could include an altar. At Champmol, a second story above the sacristy housed the treasury or the archive.<sup>31</sup>

The segregation of the two communities, witnessed in the most common plan of the Carthusian church, extended through to the cloisters and to shared but segregated areas. This necessitated discrete passageways and corridors for the two groups. Each choir monk occupied a cell off of the cloister, with a garden in the back. Laybrothers occupied very small apartments, generally of one room, in their own cloister compound.

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<sup>28</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 57.

<sup>29</sup> “Item conceditur cuilibet Domui ut possit habere tria alteria et unum facere inter chorum Monachorum et Conversarum.” Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 44, citing Le Couteulx, *Annales*, 4: 324.

<sup>30</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, “Los Herrera y su Capilla funeraria de San Ildefonso en la Cartuja de El Paular,” 31–47.

<sup>31</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 59–61.

The division between the two communal ranks was also found in Carthusian refectories; sometimes completely separate architectural structures were built, but often the space was simply divided in two by a wall, as it likely was at El Paular to judge by its enormous size. At common meals, held only on Sundays and feast days, the Carthusians never spoke, but instead listened to pious readings.<sup>32</sup> Refectory pulpits dating to the medieval or Renaissance periods are extremely rare, most having been replaced at some later point; the exquisite Gothic stone pulpit at El Paular, installed in the mid-fifteenth century, is thus a remarkable survival (Fig. 3.32).

Even Carthusian prisons were divided to allow segregation according to the communal ranks. In 1285 the Order made it mandatory for all establishments to have a prison, a provision that paralleled those of monastic and mendicant orders as diverse as the Benedictines, Cistercians, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Brigittines.<sup>33</sup> Almost all foundations erected prisons at some stage, despite some hostility to this feature expressed by individual houses. In those early charterhouses where it is possible to reconstruct the original disposition of the buildings, such as Mont-Dieu, Porte-Sainte-Marie, and Chercq, prisons were situated to the northwest of the church, perhaps so that mass could be said conveniently for the incarcerated.<sup>34</sup> The documents, especially from the fifteenth century,

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<sup>32</sup> As a measure of consolation upon the death of one of their own, the brothers were allowed to gather for meals twice in one day, unless the occasion coincided with a day of fasting: “Eo autem die quo defunctus sepelitur, cellas fratres tenere non coguntur, et consolationis gratia, bis nisi precipuum fuerit ieiunium, simul vescuntur”. [On the day when the deceased is buried, the brothers are not confined to the cell, and as an aid to consolation, they may twice take their meals together, unless it be a principal day of fasting.] Guigo, *Consuetudines*, 14.2, “Item de cura mortuorum. XIII,” *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313, 194.

<sup>33</sup> “Statutum de faciendis carceribus approbatur quibus includuntur falsarii incendiarii homicidae vel minantes mortem vel ignem et vagantes per mundum et caeteri de quibus scriptum est et statutum. Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 56, citing PL 153, cols. 1146–47, and cols. 1135, 1149; see also Megan Cassidy-Welch, “Incarceration and Liberation: Prisons in the Cistercian Monastery,” *Viator* 32 (2001): 23–42.

<sup>34</sup> Cassidy-Welch notes that, insofar as the spotty evidence reveals, Cistercian prisons tended to be sited on the eastern side of the cloister, near the infirmary, suggesting that “the sick soul and the sinning soul inhabited the same place.” Cassidy-Welch, “Incarceration and Liberation,” 41.

are full of references to prisoners, where to put them, when to let them out, and what punishments recalcitrants should undergo short of incarceration—for instance, eating on the floor of the refectory for fifteen days.<sup>35</sup> It is not clear where the prison at El Paular once lay, but the confinement of many of its wayward members is noted throughout the records of the Chapter General in the fifteenth century.

It is rare for secular living quarters to be built in Carthusian monastic complexes. Pope Innocent III built a palace for Trisulti, and Béatrix de la Tour erected one at Sainte-Crois-en-Arez; other examples include the ducal oratory at Champmol, and the residence of Philippe VI of Valois at Bourfontaine.<sup>36</sup> El Paular is thus unusual for having made provision for a palace from its inception. That royal complex, and the influence of royal patrons upon the architectural elaboration of El Paular, will be examined more fully below. As we shall see, royal patronage alone cannot account for the prolonged building activity at the charterhouse, which points rather to many peculiar design choices having been made by the monks themselves.

### **The Charterhouse: State of Conservation**

Although the core of this study concerns the early building phases of the charterhouse, it would be imprudent to attempt to reconstruct these without attention to later architectural additions, modifications, and deletions. During its 445 years as a Carthusian foundation, the Charterhouse of El Paular experienced significant physical transformation. Some of the fifteenth-century buildings, notably church and

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<sup>35</sup> “comedendo ad terram super asserem nudum in refectorio.” Michael Sargent and James Hogg (eds.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Latin 10888, Part II, 1466–74 (Ff. 159–307)*, AC 100: 6 (Salzburg, 1985), 17.

<sup>36</sup> Aniel, *Les maisons de Chartreux*, 63.



chapterhouse, were first subject to Baroque and Neoclassical structural and decorative remodeling, then to partial destruction during the Napoleonic occupation in the early nineteenth century. Further deterioration occurred after the forced expropriation of religious holdings during the Spanish Liberal Reform (1820–35). The complex was subsequently home to various lay dwellers, including a painting school opened in 1918 under the auspices of the Dirección General de Bellas Artes. The structure was damaged during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and the occupation by Republican forces. The monastic compound was subsequently recovered for use by the Benedictine Order in 1954. The laybrothers' cloister and palace compound were transformed into a luxury hotel and the eastern length of the choir monks' cloister now houses a museum.<sup>37</sup> Work is ongoing at the monastery.

In Chapter 1 we considered briefly an engraving of the complex of El Paular from the early nineteenth century (Fig. 1.2). The drawing was published in a work entitled *Maisons de l'Ordre des Chartreux: vue et notices* (1913–19), compiled anonymously by Carthusian monks at the Charterhouse of Montreuil-sur-Mer.<sup>38</sup> This four-volume work provides engravings of almost all Carthusian houses, both active and defunct, at the time of its compilation. It likewise contains brief descriptions of basic architectural and artistic features (where known), of notable persons who resided in the houses, and of any untoward actions taken against foundations during the various wars of religion. The engravings are, of course, artistic constructions, but they reveal, to some degree, the

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<sup>37</sup> The compound was declared a national monument as early as 1883, but it continued to deteriorate physically. As for its use by the Benedictine Order beginning in 1954, the charterhouse had first been offered by the Franco government to the Carthusian Order, who declined to take it, probably because the Charterhouse of Miraflores was thriving, and still architecturally intact.

<sup>38</sup> Four Carthusians—Ludolph Jacquemart, Pacome de Falconnet, Bernard-Marie Dubosquet, and Gerard Hulsbosch—undertook the project, published in four volumes, at Montreuil-sur-Mer, Tournai, and completed in Parkminster.

actual appearance of the compounds in the early 1800s. They also give insight into prominent features considered important in Carthusian compounds over the centuries, and thus changing notions of artistic and architectural taste. However warily we must approach them, these depictions—and their written descriptions—help us to understand the state of the Charterhouse of El Paular up to the time of the creation of the engraving. Given its quality of observation, the engraving of El Paular is also quite useful for understanding the scale and interrelationship of its various built spaces and offers perhaps the best introduction to this vast complex

The engraving presents the complex from a bird's-eye view from the south. The eye travels up from the River Lozoya, over the wall and the gardens, to the buildings around the cloisters at the south, which remain in very good shape today. The main cloister on the north side, including the cells that surround it on three sides, have not fared so well, although the cloister interior is in excellent repair, with the central sixteenth-century fountain *in situ*. The areas to the west and north of the main cloister are completely in ruins. Recent excavations have unearthed a sophisticated hydraulic system in the area adjacent to the large terminal building at the far north, which gave on to grounds for conducting various activities. Appropriately, the engraving shows a person and a vehicle traversing these areas, and, in the northeast, laborers performing various chores. The anonymous engraver, apparently having to reconstruct the monks' cells and gardens in his imagination, drew a simple wall between each and showed each garden punctuated by a single tree, a formulaic means of suggesting the separation of the dwellings and the abundance of plants in the connecting gardens.

Modern scholars and architects have likewise created plans useful to this study. Eduardo Barceló, one of the chief architects to undertake repair of the dilapidated areas of the charterhouse, has produced two plans, one showing the complex as it exists today (Fig. 3.5), and another reconstructing its appearance at the time of the creation of the Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving or before (Fig. 3.6). This second plan shows the gardens to be smaller than the nineteenth-century engraver imagined them, but depicts the dwellings themselves as being substantially the same in size and disposition. A ground plan published by Santiago Cantera Montenegro in 2000 (Fig. 3.7), elaborating upon earlier plans, is especially useful since it identifies the various buildings and spaces in light of their medieval and later functions in an accompanying legend.<sup>39</sup>

It will be worthwhile to keep in mind all these plans when considering the importance of the proper arrangement of space for religious life at late medieval El Poular. We have already noted the changing nature of the charterhouse compound from the time of Bruno, when an upper house for choir monks was completely separate—and often rather distant—from a lower house for the laybrothers. The new disposition of a given charterhouse, following the mandate of 1390, necessarily included four main zones:

- (1) The eremitic zone of the choir monks, which comprised a main cloister with individual cells and attached gardens. In monastic parlance this zone was often called the *Galilea Maior*;
- (2) A cenobitic zone of a “quasi-liturgical”<sup>40</sup> nature, which comprehended separate but conjoined areas for choir monks and laybrother, including church, refectory, library, and chapterhouses, generally grouped around a small cloister. The small cloister was called the *Galilea Minor*;

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<sup>39</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 2: 686–87.

<sup>40</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 84.

- (3) A zone for the laybrothers that comprised another cloister. In the case of El Paular, it included the main entrance to the compound, as well as the royal palace;
- (4) A commercial area with buildings called variously dependencies or obediences.

El Paular successfully folded all these areas into one compound, albeit somewhat irregularly, given its physical situation near the River Lozoya and little opportunity for expansion southeastward. The Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving conveys this general disposition, although its viewpoint conceals the cenobitic area, situated just north of the church and south of the choir monks' cloister. Otherwise, one may clearly see the general outlines of the distinct areas of the charterhouse.

### **Circulation in the Charterhouse**

The Monastery of Santa María de El Paular, in its modern configuration, is truly a hybrid ensemble, with elements old and new, sacred and profane. As such, it betrays current as well as late medieval economic conditions, since fully one-half of the complex has now been converted into a four-star hotel, the site of weekend getaways and elegant weddings. Beyond this, the western length of the choir monks' cloister is being prepared for use as a museum for rotating exhibitions.

It is useful for this study to appreciate how the choir monks, laybrothers, and visitors to the site originally circulated within the complex in the late Medieval and Early Modern periods. Using Cantera Montenegro's plan (Fig. 3.7), and making reference to the Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving (Fig. 1.2), we will walk through the compound and survey the extant structures. This will serve as an introduction to the architectural complex and set the stage for a document-based study of the early building history of El

Paular. We will begin at the presumed traditional point of entry through the sixteenth-through seventeenth-century laybrothers compound, across the garden called the *Patio de la Cadena*, punctuated by a fountain and monumental cross of the seventeenth century (Fig. 3.8). One enters the laybrothers compound from the southwest through an elaborate sixteenth-century arch. Though in the eighteenth century another conduit was opened at the eastern side of the complex, just north of the primitive cloister, it was most likely only for internal movement of provisions rather than a standard point of entry.

Across our way to the west lies the *Capilla de los Reyes*, or Chapel of the Kings.<sup>41</sup> This building is a fourteenth-century square single-nave church with no bay divisions. It is simple and severe in style, with one window each in the right and left sides, and one each in front flanking the central door. The large buttresses supporting each corner were added in the fifteenth century. One scholar has suggested that the royal chapel originally comprised a three-sided flat apsidal termination of a church known as the Hermitage of Santa María del Pobolar. The *Libro Becerro* insists, however, that the hermitage lay an “arrow shot in the direction of Rascafría”<sup>42</sup> from the charterhouse, which would contradict the current physical situation of the royal chapel. Furthermore, although the church is small, were it the apse of a larger structure it would be enormous, making it unlikely it was originally a hermitage. But the author of the *Becerro* counters that, according to other authorities, the hermitage may have lain next to the garden of one of

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<sup>41</sup> It is now called the Chapel of the Virgin of Monserrat, after an antique statue that once adorned it. That statue was later moved to the entrance portal of the monastic closure, and later went missing. Above the door to the enclosure, a fifteenth-century alabaster statue of the Virgin and Child ornaments the tympanum.

<sup>42</sup> *LB* fol. 20v : “como un tiro de ballesta hacia Rascafría.” It is difficult to translate this unspecified distance in modern measures. It is interesting, though, that similar language [“two arrow shots”] is used in a document contemporary with the *Libro Becerro* to describe the physical situation of the Charterhouse of Champmol in relation to the city gate of Dijon. See Lindquist, *Agency, Visuality and Society*, 208, citing Guillaume Paradin, *Annales de Bourgognes* (Lyon, 1566), 396.

the cells on the western length of the cloister.<sup>43</sup> One enters the royal chapel through a portal dressed by a fifteenth-century curved molding with elaborate foliate decoration. (Fig. 3.9) Within, the church has ornate early-sixteenth-century tracery on its ceiling that betrays no structural purpose. As the Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving demonstrates, a galleried arcade constructed in the seventeenth century once connected the Chapel of the Kings to the laybrothers' cloister; this arcade appears in photographs from 1926.<sup>44</sup>

Steps away from the chapel, an elegant, classicizing coffered archway, large in scale, frames a recessed doorway, topped by a round arch (Fig. 3.10). Above this doorway, decorative niches containing statues of Saint John the Baptist, the Virgin and Child, and Saint Bruno are set into the wall. This ensemble, which leads to the *Patio del Ave María* or reconstructed laybrothers' cloister (Fig. 3.11), was built by the famed architect Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup> The *Patio del Ave María* was erected during the priorate of Dom Juan Chéverri in the period 1660–67; it is not clear whether the current laybrothers' cloister replaced an earlier one of similar physical and architectural disposition. In any case, the original structure—which housed a noisy commercial area—would have been situated at a distinct physical remove from the monastic enclosure. The fashioning of such an impressive entryway would have enhanced the liminal point of access to the charterhouse (the gatehouse or *portería*), always situated in the laybrothers' zone, and would have spoken as much to those persons not permitted to enter as to those who were. The cloister to which it led is an

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<sup>43</sup> *LB* fol. 20v: “ Otros afirman, que la dicha Hermita esta Capilla, que oy permanece apegada con el muro del huerto de una cela, questà en el quarto del ocidente. [Others affirm that the said Chapel of this Hermitage lies next to a wall of the garden of one of the cells situated in the western length.] *LB* fol. 20v.

<sup>44</sup> See *Arquitectura española*, 13 (1925) and 14 (1926), n. p.

<sup>45</sup> See John D. Hoag, *Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón: Gótico y Renacimiento en la arquitectura española del siglo XVI* (Madrid: Xarait Ediciones, 1985).

open space surrounded by seventeenth-century buildings that contained habitations for the laybrothers. It also gives, via discrete paths, access to the dependencies—the palace complex, the entry patio leading to the porch of the main church, and the monastic enclosure at the north of the entire laybrothers' zone.

To the east of the laybrothers' cloister lies the royal palace, or *palacete*, a reasonably modest affair (Fig. 3.12). Built under Enrique III in 1406, it served as the resting-spot for royal visitors and replaced the earlier palace used for hunting. The palace appears to have originally comprised only one story; a second story built of brick was probably added in the sixteenth century. The palace contains several rooms, including a great hall, distributed around an elegant rectangular cloister featuring basket arches atop slender octagonal columns. Its rooms, now used as a dining area for guests of the hotel, are in a highly altered state of preservation.

Leaving the laybrothers' and palace complexes, a corridor would have led to an open patio giving onto the main church, with the cenobitic and eremitic zones located to the north. An ogival doorway, matched at right by a window of the same shape (Fig. 3.13), opens on to the roofed porch, often mistakenly called the atrium. On the western wall, a sixteenth-century relief of Bruno and his six brothers is set just above the string-course (Fig. 3.14). The porch has a late-fifteenth century ceiling comprised of two bays of stellar vaulting, enhanced by large bosses, replete with heraldic emblems of Castile and León (Fig. 3.15). These repeated emblems of the Trastámara Kings, as seen in a relief of angels carrying the family arms (Fig. 3.16), would have provided constant reminders of royal presence and influence, even as they pointed to the prayers being said on behalf of the royals in the church situated steps away. The heraldic imagery further

resonates with an inscription on the north wall, of uncertain date, that explains the royal origins of the charterhouse.<sup>46</sup>

The covered porch gives access northward to the monastic enclosure and eastward to the church. East of the patio lies the original cloister of the Carthusian monks (Fig. 3.17), which may have been given to the laybrothers when the new choir monks' cloister was built at the end of the fifteenth century. It was on the site of this primitive cloister that the transference of possession to the Carthusians took place. Bishop Juan Serrano of Sigüenza, acting for Bishop Pedro Tenorio of Toledo, presented the property to Dom Lope Martínez, first prior of El Paular, along with six other monks from the Charterhouse of Scala Dei.

It has been suggested by one scholar that the primitive cloister may have been taken over from the royal hunting lodge of Enrique II and adapted to new purposes.<sup>47</sup> Though it may be hard to imagine a simple hunting-lodge functioning as a place for religious life, especially for Carthusian choir monks, the typologies are not all that dissimilar, given the distribution of the palace of 1406, with chambers constructed around a cloistered patio. On the one hand, the *Libro Becerro* makes reference to the “palaces of the Poblal” and not a rude lodge. On the other hand, it makes sense that the Carthusian brothers—and especially the choir monks—would immediately have needed stable accommodation and shelter while the charterhouse was under construction.

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<sup>46</sup> The inscription reads: “Caenobium hoc Beatae Mariae de Paular erexere Castellae Reges, Enricus II. sacro voto, Joannes I. aedificii exordio, & dote, Henricus III. amplificatione & Palatio, Joannes II. perfectione atque ornamento, pares magnificentia in illud, religione in Deum.”

<sup>47</sup> Fernando Chueca Goitia *Casas reales en monasterios y conventos españoles* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1966), 123–49. A similar reconfiguration of palatine structures into buildings suited for monastic use occurred at Miraflores in the first half of the fifteenth century, until a fire of 1452 necessitated complete rebuilding. At Miraflores, the stables were adapted for use as a refectory. Isidro Bango Torviso, “Arquitectura gótica,” *Historia de la arquitectura española*, 7 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1985–1987), 2: 640.



In any case, the primitive cloister, given its severity in style, appears to belong to a period just before the foundation of the charterhouse in 1390. It is built around a nearly square garden. The doorways, one on each length of the cloister, and their flanking windows, two on each side, are of a simple post-and-lintel construction topped by pointed arches. The rooms are currently sealed off for use as storage by the hotel. Both the Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving (Fig. 1.2) and the Barceló plan (Fig. 3.6) indicate that three of the apartments on the eastern side were cells with adjacent gardens facing to the east. Thus, this primitive cloister may have functioned originally as a hunting lodge, after which it was modified for use as the first monastic cloister, with individual small cells for the choir monks, and then finally turned over for use as a cloister for the laybrothers until the reconstruction of the whole architectural complex in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided a new, and ultimately comprehensive, area for the laybrothers and their mundane activities. Some of the irregularly placed diagonal buildings along the extreme southern edge of this primitive cloister still remain, although the three gardens and their attached cells no longer exist. Though now demolished, these cells and their gardens can nevertheless be extrapolated from the scars still visible on the eastern exterior, which clearly show wall divisions for three cells. Owing to their size and antiquity, there is a good chance that these cells probably belonged, after the time of the cloister's transfer to the laybrothers' obedience, to the procurator(s) or to other laybrothers charged with important offices. Presumably the common laybrothers lived in simple cells situated around the cloister, not nearly as grand as those of their monastic counterparts and lacking their gardens.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The Charterhouse of Raamsdonk (1336–1573), for instance, had single-room cells for laybrothers. Jan Sanders, "Kartäuserarchitektur in den Niederlanden ca. 1300–ca. 1600: Die Kartause "Das Holländische

Returning to the church patio from the primitive cloister, one reenters the covered porch leading to the monastic enclosure to the north through an elaborate doorway that leads to a long hallway with a trough-shaped roof (Fig. 3.18). Its rusticity contrasts sharply with the elegant portal that dresses the interior of the cloister on the other side, thus creating two neatly differentiated zones. The porch and the cloister, it is generally agreed, were erected in the late fifteenth century by Juan Guas, architect of the Catholic Kings, who likewise may have remodeled the church.<sup>49</sup> As for the cloister, all the pictures and plans we have been using are somewhat misleading since they give no clear idea of the number of cells it housed at a given time. It appears that originally eighteen cells were situated around the main cloister, including those of the prior and the sacristan. These last two persons were housed in the southern arm, which contained two cells; the eastern arm, five; the northern arm, six; and the western arm, five. One may clearly see from the engraving and the ground plans that the Carthusians later added five more cells at the northeast corner; three at the northwest; and three at the southwest. The number of Carthusian residents must always have fluctuated according to new vocations, forced or voluntary visits to other houses, and deaths among the members of the community.

The entire block of cells along the eastern side of the cloister has been refurbished for use by the current Benedictine community of El Paular. The cells along the western side have been reconstituted as the future museum; those along the northern side now comprise offices for use by the Benedictines; on the southern side, the prior's cell adjoins the library, with doorways to the prior's garden. The sacristan's cell, situated just east of

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Hause: Vergleichender Perspektive," in *Akten des II. Internationalen Kongresses für Kartäuserforschung*, 1.-5. Dezember 1993, *Kartause Ittingen*, ed. Jürg Ganz and Margrit Früh ([Ittingen]: Verlag Stiftung Kartause Ittingen, 1995), 151–70, 160.

<sup>49</sup> The church was remodeled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which may have had an impact. Barlés Báguena and Barceló, "Cartuja de El Paular," 517.

the corridor leading to the monastic cloister, has been sealed off. The library, constructed between 1688 and 1690, with barrel vaulting and lunette-shaped formerets, features a ceiling painted with founding saints of the Order along with allegories of the liberal arts (Fig. 3.19). The library also displays on one of its walls a Roman funereal stone from the second century A.D.<sup>50</sup>

Despite their condition, the ruins of the monastic enclosure are informative. The cells are about fifteen feet in width by eighteen in length, with windows distributed irregularly on the rear walls facing the garden, as can be seen in a photograph of a cell on the western arm before its conversion into a museum space (Fig. 3.20). At El Paular, an individual cell shares a wall with adjacent cells, a feature that will be critical to our assessment of El Paular's building peculiarities and their administrative repercussions. Each door is six feet high, with a small *guichet* situated to the right for the delivery of food to the monks (Fig. 3.21). As modern photographs indicate, each cell was formerly—indeed, probably always—marked by an alphabetical designation (“AA,” “BB,” etc.), along with a pious slogan. El Paular's cells reached, at some point (perhaps during alterations of the eighteenth century), three floors in height, an architectural extravagance almost unheard of in charterhouses elsewhere in Europe. Existing remains indicate full floors on the first and third levels and a half-floor at the second level. If it is ultimately impossible to reconstruct their original appearance, we can imagine these cells as reasonably spare in furnishings, with each containing one or more sacred images, as attested in documents such as those from another royal establishment, the Charterhouse de Champmol. A drawing of an ideal cell gives a good idea of the distribution of space

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<sup>50</sup> Enríquez de Salamanca, *Santa María de El Paular*, 116.

across the two floors that are typical in Iberian charterhouses, with workspace below and domestic/devotional space above (Fig. 3.22).

The monks' cloister at El Paular is distinctive for having a substantially different vaulting scheme in three of its four arms. Each length contains fourteen bays including those at the corners. All vaulting rests upon distinctive corbels decorated with a variety of plant motifs. Because of strong similarities between the northern and eastern lengths, these two areas have been judged to be the earliest constructed.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, it would have made sense to build the cloister to accommodate the cells of the prior and sacristan first. In the eastern length (Fig. 3.23), quadripartite rib vaults in each bay are matched by ogee-shaped formerets inset with beadwork, echoing visually patterns running along the string-course in the cloister exterior and likewise along the cornice of the church. The transverse arches of the eastern bay alternate, every other arch, with a bare ogee arch followed by an ogee arch inscribed with vegetal motifs. The southern length has a similar pattern of quadripartite ogee-shaped arches, but after four bays extending westward, the decoration stops and all vaults and transverse arches are completely without decoration, though they maintain the same shape; the formerets are dressed with billet moldings in the shape of lozenges rather than beads. Each bay in the northern length (Fig. 3.25) has at its center a triangular lierne with tiercerons radiating outward. The western length (Fig. 3.26) is the simplest. The vaulting consists of undecorated formerets and undressed sexpartite ribbing, formed by quadripartite vaults cut by a longitudinal ridge rib that runs the length of the arm, with the exception of the two terminal bays at the south and north ends.

The highly variegated design of the cloister interior may have been a product of staggered phases in the building, reflecting the predilections of different designers or

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<sup>51</sup> Barlés Báguena, "Cartuja de El Paular," 516.

their Carthusian patrons. Certainly the effect is one of visual variety and an undeniable sense of opulence.<sup>52</sup> All four corner bays of the cloister have distinctive vaulting designs that depart generally from the main vaulting scheme of each arm. An exception is the southeast corner bay, which has multiple intersecting ogee arches evocative of all other bays of the southern and eastern lengths. From within the cloister garth, one may note a slight disharmony in the placement of eleven windows in each cloister length, with the openings set unequally, five and six, around each central door. This irregularity is harmonized somewhat by the placement of the sixteenth-century fountain-temple at the center of the burial yard (Fig. 3.27). Despite its later building date, the openings of the temple recall forms used in the cloister proper and throughout the charterhouse, including the church, in the decoration of doors and windows.

In the early seventeenth century, the monks employed the Italian artist Vicente Carducho (1568–1638) to adorn the cloister with paintings. Carducho provided fifty-four scenes of the life of Saint Bruno (fifty-two of which survive), in addition to painting royal escutcheons and the arms of the Carthusian Order. Carducho's paintings comprise one of the most extensive mural cycles ever made in Europe of a saint's life. These enormous oil paintings, each 3.45 by 3.15 meters, were originally hung just beneath the formeret of each cloister bay. They would have provided monks with edifying examples for life according to the ideal represented by their founder, Saint Bruno, as well as the disciples and martyrs who followed him. Recently some of the paintings have been reinstalled in

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<sup>52</sup> Taste changes, of course: in 1915, Francisco Villegas noted nothing of “extraordinary merit” in the “new” monastic enclosure [“no puede considerarse como obra de extraordinario mérito el nuevo claustro de El Paular...”]. Francisco F. Villegas, *La Cartuja del Paular* (Madrid, Renacimiento, 1915), 85.

the former monks' cloister, and there are plans underway to return the rest to the Charterhouse of El Paular (Fig. 3.28).

Even before the hanging of the Carducho pictures in the seventeenth century, the cloister may have been a highly colorful place. Now rather austere with its nude white stone, the vaulting elements may have featured brilliant polychrome. This painted decoration would have resonated with similar ornament applied to the structural elements in the church, where remnants of paint appear on the door from the monk's choir of the church to the *Galilea Minor*. Thus, what we see today is probably misleading. If we have no information about any pictures that dressed the wall, we have already noted the provision of painted statues above each portal in the cloister interior, although it is not clear at what date these statues took their places or if they comprised a cohesive visual group from the start.

Rooms for the various cenobitic areas were probably always grouped around a small cloister, as was usual in Carthusian foundations. We have already noted that the diverse spaces were referred to as the *Galilea Maior* and the *Galilea Minor*. Choir monks entered the *claustrillo* through a sculpted portal on the north side (Fig. 3.29). The ornamental elements of this door collide with the structural elements of the vaulting above. Inside the *claustrillo*, only one narrow conduit leading from the monastic enclosure contains the original three-bay, sexpartite vaulting with longitudinal rib (Fig. 3.30). Spaces giving off the *claustrillo* included the refectory (Fig. 3.31), almost certainly of four quadripartite bays originally, with the far western bay sealed off in the seventeenth century as a chapterhouse for the laybrothers. This room is now used by the

Benedictines as a chapel, the *Capilla de la Piedad*, so named for a late-fifteenth- or early-sixteenth-century statue of the Lamentation that we considered earlier (Fig. 1.5).<sup>53</sup>

The refectory, dating from the mid-fifteenth century, is so large that it runs almost three-fourths the length of the church. It has seats with delicate Gothic tracery at top. The space is presided over by an exquisite Gothic stone pulpit (Fig. 3.32) and a painted Crucifixion scene fronted by sculptures of Christ, Mary, and John the Evangelist. The kitchen remains in a good state of conservation; it led directly to the refectory (Fig. 3.33). Heavy cooking was likely done, for safety purposes, at a site farther away.

The sacristy, entirely redecorated in the eighteenth century, was located at the northeast side of the church and also was accessed via the *claustrillo*. Given its vital function, the sacristy was located steps away from the sacristan's cell.

The heart of any monastic complex, of course, was the church. The original structure of the church at El Paular is today captured in two reconstructions made by Abad Castro and Martín Ansón (Figs. 3.34 and 3.35). Suitably, it was situated off the *claustrillo*, allowing the choir monks to enter from its north side. A door on the south side accommodated the laybrothers. Secular persons used the main entrance on the western side and entered from the porch and through what is now called the “atrium” and a sculpted doorway. An escutcheon of the Trastámara kings dresses the western façade of the church, with the arms largely invisible now because of the lateral buildings that hug it. From the outset this church was the site of continued building campaigns that are difficult to reconstruct with any precision. It is possible that it was originally three-

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<sup>53</sup> This may have been one of four statues that adorned the window-tympana of the four portals giving access to the cloister yard. A photograph published in 1927 by the architect Pedro Muguruza shows one such figural group representing Saint John the Baptist with the Infant Christ. See *Arquitectura española*, 17 (1927), n.p. According to Villegas, the other sculptures included those of Saint Bruno and Saint Hugh of Lincoln. Villegas, *La Cartuja del Paular*, 88–89.

aisled, contrary to all Carthusian norms. The *Libro Becerro* provides evidence against the possibility of a three-aisled church, insisting that from its beginnings in 1406, the “temple [would be] in the form used in the Carthusian Order.”<sup>54</sup> It further relates that the monks of El Paular informed King Enrique III “of the design [*traza*] required for churches in the Carthusian Order.”<sup>55</sup> We shall revisit this problematic issue when we review the financial records of El Paular as they relate to the earliest buildings efforts in church and cloister.

The famous Lisbon earthquake that occurred in 1755 apparently necessitated rebuilding and allowed neoclassical reworking, although some scholars doubt that such a distant quake could have had a great impact on the area and look for other motivations for this later campaign. In any case, one enters the church through the “atrium,” passes through the main portal of the single-nave church, proceeds first through the secular zone, then into the laybrothers’ zone, and finally into the choir monks’ zone. The area of the church occupied by the choir monks faced east and was dominated by the image-rich retablo at the heart of this study, rising up twelve meters in height and spanning eight-and-a-half meters in width. The retablo takes up the entire space of the east end, where the three-sided extension of the choir area may still be seen, though now heavily obscured. The retablo was situated before a sacred space used for the reservation of the consecrated host, called the *sagrario*. The original *sagrario* was replaced first in the seventeenth century, and then again in the eighteenth century (Fig. 3.36). The space consists of an enormous fixed transparency or monstrance-room. East of this room lies a large chapel in the shape of a Greek cross with four smaller chapels within the space of

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<sup>54</sup> *LB* fol. 120v: “un Templo à la forma usada en la Horden de Cartuja.”

<sup>55</sup> *LB* fol. 121r: “informàronle de la traza que requieren las Iglesias en su Horden Cartusiense.”



the cross. The plan of Santiago Cantera Montenegro is most useful for grasping the peculiar plan and enormous size of these two camouflaged spaces (Fig. 3.7).

The current choir stalls date from the sixteenth century, and replaced earlier stalls from the fifteenth century. The stalls, like the charterhouse itself, have had a tumultuous history, having been moved to Madrid in the late nineteenth century and then returned to El Paular only a few years ago. Along with the retablo, the most remarkable furnishing to survive intact in the church is the splendid choir screen that separates the secular zone from the laybrothers' section (Fig. 3.37). The screen was made by Francisco de Salamanca, a *converso* monk of Miraflores, and one of the most prolific metalworkers in Castile.<sup>56</sup> This rood screen is almost identical to one of two that the Carthusian ironworker fashioned for the Cathedral of Segovia.<sup>57</sup> The grill, or *reja*, much of it painted, features extensive heraldry of the Catholic kings (Fig. 3.38) and an image of John the Baptist, reminders of the chief affiliations at El Paular, royal and religious. One of the most peculiar characteristics of the screen is the inclusion of eleven painted metal plates (the twelfth is missing), each featuring the face of the devil, sometimes depicted sticking his tongue out in a lascivious way (Fig. 3.39). This threatening imagery would have enhanced the liminal separation—and connection—between and among the various zones of the church, and would surely have spoken to the evils tempting sinners in the

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<sup>56</sup> María López Díez, *Los Trastámara en Segovia: Juan Guas, maestro de obras reales* (Segovia: Caja Segovia, Obra Social y Cultural, 2006), 68. With his helpers, Fray Juan de Ávila and Bartolomé de Salamanca, he worked in the cathedrals of Segovia, Palencia, and Zamora, as well as in monasteries.

<sup>57</sup> Besides those for Segovia Cathedral, he also forged the chancel rail of the Monastery of Guadalupe, and two grills for Seville Cathedral. Ildefonso Gomez and James Hogg, *Real monasterio de Santa Maria de El Paular*, AC 77 (Salzburg, 1982), 15. See also Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez, *Diccionario Histórico de los más ilustres profesores de la Bellas Artes en España* (Madrid Impr. de la Viuda de Ibarra 1800), 1800, 5: 158, 298, who identifies Fray Francisco de Salamanca as a Hieronymite; Filemón Arribas, "Simón de Colonia en Valladolid," *Boletín del Seminario de arqueología y arte, Universidad de Valladolid* 2 (1933–34): 153–66, 157; Félix Sagredo Fernández, *La Cartuja de Miraflores* (León: Everest, 1973), 1981; and María L. Herrero, *Rejería en Segovia* (Segovia: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Segovia, 1993), 119–29. López Díez describes Fray Francisco as "without doubt of the Order of Preachers," in *Los Trastámara en Segovia*, 68.

outside world and within the monastic complex. These hellish images correlate visually and spatially with marginal images situated on the edges of countless Gothic buildings or the *bas-de-page* of illuminated manuscripts.<sup>58</sup> In a Carthusian monastery they still may cause surprise.

Before analyzing the complex relationship to sister-houses at Aniago and Miraflores, it will serve us well to set out documentary evidence relevant to the earliest building at the charterhouse. The records show alternately brisk and sluggish periods of architectural activity over the fifteenth century, according to financial gifts made over successive decades by the Trastámara monarchs. Good to their word, the royals continued to embellish the Charterhouse of El Paular even after it had grown rich enough to spawn its own fully-funded daughter-house. With this in mind, we should consider the building history of the charterhouse and its constituent parts, chiefly made known to us through the lens of its foundation book. A serious drawback for architectural reconstruction is that the author of the *Libro Becerro* drew upon limited information available at the time of its writing. Thus, all description relates to the watershed year of 1432, with reference to works completed by this date and works projected beyond it. It is divided according to “Expense of Finished Works” (*Gasto de las obras fechas*) and “Works That Remain To Be Done in the Monastery” (*Las obras que restan de hacer en el Monasterio*).<sup>59</sup> In spite of this limitation, the *Libro Becerro* is an invaluable source for the building history of the monastery during the half-century following its foundation.

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> *LB* fols. 252 ff. and 257 ff.

## Planning, Financing, and Building the Charterhouse of El Paular

The year 1432 saw Don Pedro Jordán as Prior (1432–38) and Don Juan de Fuentes as Procurator (1432). In fact, it is probably the careful records of Don Juan de Fuentes that allowed the author of the *Libro Becerro* to give such a detailed account of past building plans.<sup>60</sup> This Procurator, it is fascinating to note, later served at least a brief tenure as the Prior of El Paular (1438–40), and one must wonder whether his administrative zeal and efficacy accounted for this rare ascendancy.<sup>61</sup> The *Libro Becerro* often speaks by silences that call further attention to the extravagant architectural activity that took place during the fifteenth century.

As we have seen, it is difficult to reconstruct the building history of the charterhouse based on the existing architectural fabric. The *Libro Becerro* also presents challenges to anyone trying to establish a strict chronology over the course of the fifteenth century. Yet it provides most telling evidence about Carthusian priorities, specifically through the sequence in the building of domestic and liturgical spaces. The book gives a picture of choppy, irregular bursts of construction fraught with all manner of problems, including popular resistance on the part of the laborers in nearby Rascafría, litigation with high-placed officials in Toledo, and on-going financial disputes—if not outright suspicion—on the part of the monks, their hand-picked architects,<sup>62</sup> and their royal patrons.

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<sup>60</sup> We may glean something about the dietary habits of the Carthusians in the Iberian peninsula from the records of Montalegre recorded by a simple laybrother, John of Enea; the documents extend from 1423 to 1459 and even include evidence of what construction workers ate (they consumed over 700 kilograms of meat, mainly mutton, over a twenty-month period) and what special provisions were made for the brothers, who maintained a strict no-meat diet and whose food intake consisted primarily of seafood, vegetables, cereals, and eggs. Hogg, “Everyday Life in the Charterhouse,” 118.

<sup>61</sup> The dates are given in Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 2: 549.

<sup>62</sup> Workers, shared, seem have been paid “fair and reasonable daily rates.” [qualesquière Maestros, queles vos nombrades, pagandoles sus justos è razonables jornales por los dias...] *LB* fol. 249r.

The rhythm of building over the century reveals prolonged activity in the earliest phase (1406–32), then slowdowns and stoppages at mid-century, and then a renewed burst of activity in the second half of the century. As the book bears witness, political unrest surely affected the pace of efforts to erect a complex in good time and in harmony with the spirit of the Carthusian Order. A constant theme in the *Libro Becerro* account of the fifteenth-century building history is the need to construct the complex “perfectly,”<sup>63</sup> in accord with the religious tenor of the Order. This expectation appears to have been difficult, if not impossible, to attain for El Paular, judging by the documentary evidence from the Order and the charterhouse itself.

Planning began shortly after the foundation of El Paular, in 1390. A place was needed for the seven monks from Scala Dei, and, as noted above, they may have resided first in the buildings of the royal hunting lodge. Since Juan I, son of Enrique II, died in the very year of the foundation, the earliest building efforts devolved to his heir, Enrique III. A pattern of lesser aristocratic patronage had likewise been established with a large donation made by Pedro Fernández de Castro, a resident of Madrid, who set a trend in 1393 for rich “*aficionados* of the Holy Religion of the Charterhouse.”<sup>64</sup>

The building sequence of the initial structures tells us much about the rhythm of Carthusian life and its liturgical requirements. The *Libro Becerro* notes that construction in the monastic zone began in 1392, more than a decade before the church went up, suggesting that the balance of in-cell prayer outweighed that of in-church congregation, consistent with the normative Carthusian split between the eremitical life (80 percent), and the cenobitical life (20 percent). In 1392, the prior summoned from nearby Segovia

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<sup>63</sup> *LB* fols. 247v and 257r, for instance.

<sup>64</sup> *LB* fol. 80r: “*persona rica, y mui aficionada à la Sancta Religiòn de Cartuja.*”

“the famous Moorish architect by the name of Abdurramen,”<sup>65</sup> the qualifying adjectives suggesting a certain self-consciousness about the high-quality work and elegant design expected by the choir monks for their complex, as well as a certain delight in its foreignness.

Abdurramen delivered a *traza* (design) of the cloister constituting four lengths or *galileas*. One’s first inclination is to connect this with the existing primitive cloister, but the author of the *Libro Becerro* notes a cloister “rather longer than squared” (*mas prolongada que quadrada*), specifically 210 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 9 feet deep. By contrast, the extant primitive cloister is almost precisely square, its evenness marked even further by matched doors and flanking windows, as well as the intersection of two flagstone pathways that cross at nearly perfect right angles. Despite a lack of directional orientation offered by the *Libro Becerro*, the remains suggest that the first proper monks’ cloister was rectangular; its footprint is now buried underneath the current monks’ cloister, which dates to the later part of the fifteenth century and is generally attributed to the architect Juan Guas during his documented period overseeing work at the charterhouse, c. 1484–86. The *Libro Becerro* notes that surrounding the cloister were twenty-two doorways for as many cells, enclosing a cemetery measuring 190 feet by 70, with the graveyard set within the cloister garth,<sup>66</sup> so that the monks might perpetually dwell in the monastery.

Church and palace went up around 1406, the book relates, during the tenure of a prior Don Pedro, possibly Don Pedro Ponce de Toledo, who fulfilled three separate

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<sup>65</sup> *LB* fol. 78r.

<sup>66</sup> *LB* fols. 78r–78v: “con veinte, y dos portadas de canteria para otra tantas celas, que se habian de hacèr àl derredòr de las galileas, y quel patio desta claustra, donde es el cimenterio tubiese por la una hacera de largo à largo ciento, y noventa pies, y por la otra àl ancho setenta pies.”

priorships at El Paular (1398, 1400, 1410). The prior worked in conjunction with his procurator in the construction of church and palace. King Enrique III released, in the presence of his servant (*criado*) Fernán Martínez de Padilla, citizen of the city of Segovia, and the prior, 160,000 *maravedís* to lay the foundation of both structures.<sup>67</sup> At that time a design for the first church was provided by Gil Fernández. The materials to be used were stone and mortar (*cal y canto*) and the size was to be 150 by 50 feet (41.85 by 13.95 meters), more or less the measurements of the current church. The walls were to be 90 palms in height and 7 in width (18.81 by 1.95 meters).<sup>68</sup> A royal mandate likewise spelled out in clear terms the labor conditions: all the councils, and “all the officials of the kingdom,”<sup>69</sup> were ordered to supply the men and the materials necessary for erection of these buildings. The order was given to Rodrigo Alfonso, master of works (*maestro mayor*) of the Cathedral of Toledo, which gives some indication of the royal interest in and ecclesial importance of the project. Interestingly, the stone was to be imported from Toledo with the help of Alonso de Cartagena, the influential Spanish bishop (and Jewish convert) who later attended the Council of Basel and ordered the erection of the great spires of Burgos Cathedral.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *LB* fol. 121v ff.

<sup>68</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, “Nuevas aportaciones documentales,” 17.

<sup>69</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, citing *LB* fols. 123 and 124.

<sup>70</sup> These were the first openwork spires constructed on the Iberian peninsula. The spires apparently function as “descendants of Cologne’s Plan F” known from the extant fifteenth-century parchment designs. (These designs, in turn, are the basis for the openwork spires added to Cologne Cathedral in the nineteenth century.) All the same, the Burgos spires demonstrate individual and original qualities and do not rely on the inscribed circles notable in Plan F. Rather, they show examples of design qualities seen at Freiburg and Ulm. Robert Bork, *Great Spires: Skyscrapers of the New Jerusalem* (Cologne: Kunsthistorisches Institut der Universität Köln, 2003), 340–41.

The death of the Carthusians' great patron, Enrique III, in 1406, was all the more distressing since it occurred on Christmas Day.<sup>71</sup> His untimely passing seems to have slowed down the work on the charterhouse, especially since his heir, Juan II, was still in minority and was protected by the Regent of Castile, Fernando de Antequera, whose liaisons with Carthusians during the Schism we reviewed earlier. The monastic administrator of the works appears to have had problems with both *maestros* Gil Fernández and Rodrigo Alfonso and requested royal intervention. The prior applied pressure to the uncle and tutor of Juan II—only six years old at the time—so that the “works of the church and the palace that the King, his brother, had mandated not cease.”<sup>72</sup> The prior likewise asked for an additional 300,000 *maravedís*, in order to reach the total projected costs of 560,000. In 1407, payout was authorized for a period over four years at 75,000 *maravedís* per annum.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, there seems to have been no uncertain pressure applied to the charterhouse workers, ordered to labor “under pain of his [the King’s] mercy.”<sup>74</sup>

The *Libro Becerro* records that during the second priorship of Don Juan Fernández, 1407–11, who had filled the post in 1396–1401, diverse donations were effected and the “plantation” continued to be built. In 1407 new alms and “favors” (*mercedes*) were extended to the charterhouse to make it self-sufficient and to continue construction on the site. King Juan II left his minority in 1419, during the priorship of Don Sancho Martínez (1410?–22), and confirmed all the charterhouse’s privileges. The

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<sup>71</sup> The *Libro Becerro* mistakenly reports that Enrique III was buried at the Charterhouse of Miraflores—not founded until 1442!—and a note in the margin indicates that “the mistake continues” [continúa la equivocación]. *LB* fol. 125.

<sup>72</sup> *LB* fols. 130–132.

<sup>73</sup> *LB* fols. 130–132.

<sup>74</sup> *LB* fol. 123.

*Libro Becerro* indicates, however, that work stopped for a significant period of time, between the years 1407 and 1424. On January 20, 1429, Juan II issued an order granting the use of the royal arms on mule-wagons (*reposteros* with *armas reales* on the *acémilas*).<sup>75</sup> He likewise ordained an additional payment of 149,000 *maravedís* to be divided into five parts and distributed annually over the period of five years, the first four payments amounting to 30,000, and the final payment, 29,000 *maravedís*.

Royal and monastic haggling over finances continued. Once the 149,000 *maravedís* had been exhausted, the prior applied for an allowance of 30,000 *maravedís* per year until accomplishment of all the works, with no end specifically in sight. A meeting was held involving certain of the builders, eight Carthusians,<sup>76</sup> and numerous scribes and other sworn laypersons. It was the task of the chamber scribe to determine how the money had been spent and what remained to be done. The prior took sworn depositions of Juan García, *cantero* and citizen of Segovia, Alonso Estéban, *maestro albañil* and citizen of Toledo, and the *master carpinteros* of Segovia, the Moorish architects Abderráman and Gabriel Galí. Clearly the King was frustrated with the pace of the work and the mounting expenses since he demanded a detailed account of work performed for the money spent, “all in writing in the manner of good faith” (*todo por*

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<sup>75</sup> Aniago later enjoyed these same privileges, including the right of its oxen to wear bells like those used in the *casa real*. *Licencia concedida por el rey Juan II de Castilla para que el monasterio de Santa Mariade Aniago adopte las armas reales como escudo propio y que sus acémilas puedan llevar sonajas igual que las de los oficiales de la casa real. Ante el doctor Fernando Díaz de Toledo, oidor y referendario del Rey y su secretari*. June 20, 1445. AHN, Clero, Legajo 7510. Cited in Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, Document 48, 2: 620.

<sup>76</sup> Don Pedro Jordàn (Prior), Fray Rodrigo de Quintana, Fray Juan de Fuentes (Procurator or *conrer*), Fray Hernando de Cañizál, Fray Juan de Sevilla, Fray Pedro de Burgos (Vicar), Fray Juan de Portugal, and Fray Diego Calderòn (these last two professed monks of El Paular). *LB* fol. 249v.



*scripto, en manera que hiciese ffeè*).<sup>77</sup> The monks obliged by offering a notebook with a list of expenses for works done once again “according to the Rule of their Order.”<sup>78</sup>

There is fascinating evidence of the cross-cultural, inter-confessional composition of the workforce. All stoneworkers were forced to swear that the expenses were true, with Christians making the sign of the cross and Moors swearing according to “their law.”<sup>79</sup> After such oaths were taken, the scribe, with notebook in hand, accompanied by the *maestros*, undertook a thorough tour of the complex in order to verify what had already been done and what yet remained to be finished.<sup>80</sup>

The *Libro Becerro* provides information not only about finances but also about the construction of the charterhouse, notably about the second building phase, under Juan II. If the monastic choir went up somewhat hurriedly in the early 1390s, it comes as little surprise that works continued through the early decades or that repairs were needed some forty years later, when the *Libro Becerro* resumes sustained commentary upon the architecture. The book shifts gears at the pivotal point of 1432. It is worth reviewing the precisely detailed items and related payments in order to assess construction costs, given in *maravedis*, prior to 1432 and after this date.

Work completed before 1432:

1. Works on the church (4,666);
2. Main entryway (749);
3. Monks' cloister (81,295 + 2,733);
4. Reception hall for the church, including corridors for access to the monks' cloister, the church, and the King's rooms (50,531);
5. The King's apartments (7,530 + 17,139 + 8,214 + 800).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *LB* fol. 250r.

<sup>78</sup> *LB* fol. 251r.

<sup>79</sup> *LB* fol. 251v.

<sup>80</sup> *LB* fols. 249r–252v.

<sup>81</sup> *LB* fols. 252r–257r.

Work to be undertaken, continued, or repaired, and foreseen expenses after 1432:

1. Works on the church (52,000 + 15,000 + 47,000 + 1,200 + 2,500);
2. Choir stalls for the monks' choir (8,000);
3. Choir stalls for the laybrothers' choir (1,000);
4. Doorways in the church (2,000);
5. Laybrothers' chapterhouse (2,250 + 1,000 + 2,500 + 400 + 200);
6. "Cloister of Recordation" (small cloister or *claustrillo*) (6,800 + 10,000 + 900 + 800);
7. Chapels (4,800 + 4,000 + 300 + 500 + 400 + 500 + 6,200);
8. Cells of the laybrothers (56,240 + 42,600);
9. Laybrothers' cloister (6,400 + 10,000 + 1,200 + 950 + 2,000 + 3,000);
10. Gardens (3,600 + 7,000);
11. *Casa de Refitor* (although its use is not explained, apparently an office for financial administration) (9,920 + 400 + 3,000 + 15,000 + 2,000 + 800);
12. *Colloquio* (a *casa* in which monks and laybrothers might speak openly and treat issues associated with the Order) (2,880 + 5,700 + 700 + 1,000 + 1,000).<sup>82</sup>

Among the most interesting evidence for the art historian is the provision for two *retablos* in the Reception Hall or *Sala de Recibimiento de la Iglesia*, one portraying the Virgin Mary and the other the King's arms.<sup>83</sup> Such paired images would have linked prominently the temporal and spiritual kingdoms—and of course stressed their intersection at the charterhouse.

Because of modifications implemented almost as early as it went up, the church offers particular difficulties for reconstruction. As mentioned earlier, the *Libro Becerro* gives a somewhat perplexing description, saying that by 1432 the structure was a three-aisled church, divided by ten octagonal stone columns, five along each aisle.<sup>84</sup> The text

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<sup>82</sup> *LB* fols. 257r–273r.

<sup>83</sup> It is not entirely clear where the pictures were to be placed, either in the king's apartments or in a corridor leading thereto: "y con dos retablos, que ende eràn fechos, el uno con la Imagen de Sancta Maria, y el otro con las Armas del Rey... [and with two retablos which were made for that place, one with the image of Saint Mary, and the other with the Arms of the King]. *LB* fol. 255r.

<sup>84</sup> "Otrosi: Dijeron los dichos Priòr è Monges, que para quel Monasterio sea perfectamente acabada segùn Orden de Cartuja, es necesario de se hacèr estas obras. . . . Primeramente Dijèron que, por quanto la Iglesia, que tienen, es mui pequeña, è baja è fondo el suelo, tanto que hay en ella grande humedàd, loqual dicen, que requiere de se facèr è alargar en esta manera, segùn Regla de la dicha Orden." [Item: The Prior and the Mongs have said that in order for the Monastery to be finished perfectly according to the Order of

describes the sunken quality of the church as one of the main reasons it had to be expanded: “the church is very small and low and the floor deep, for which there is a great humidity in it, all of which requires it to be made and enlarged according to the Rule of the said Order.”<sup>85</sup> If this statement is to be believed, the church the first inhabitants of El Paular used from the 1390s until the new church was ready, was constructed as a three-aisled space, in stark contrast to the liturgical requirements of the Order, upon whose perfection the author of the *Libro Becerro* insists frequently, as we have seen. Further, such a disposition would have worked against the mandate that choir monks and laybrothers be separated. Indeed, whose benefit would the side aisles have served? Perhaps the prior and six monks who came from Scala Dei, without laybrothers accompanying them, may have had a modest church built, or adapted one of the buildings of the royal hunting lodge, while waiting for the construction of an appropriate liturgical space, or they may have used the Chapel of the Kings. Indeed, as was later the case at Miraflores, the monks of El Paular may have used the refectory as a provisional church.<sup>86</sup>

In any case, the *Libro Becerro* stresses that a single-nave church was indeed projected to replace the old one with “side naves” (*naos costeros*).<sup>87</sup> The new dimensions were to be 80 feet in length, including the apse, and twenty-two in width, a bit smaller than the earlier church, or indeed than the existing one. But if the church was small to begin with, as the monks complained, why did they make it even smaller? Perhaps the

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Carthusians, it is necessary to do these works.... Firstly they said that, inasmuch as the Church they have is very small, and the low and deep, for which there is a great humidity in it, so they say it must be made and enlarged in this way, according to the Rule of said Order.] *LB* fols. 257r–v.

<sup>85</sup> *LB* fols. 259–260.

<sup>86</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 164.

<sup>87</sup> “Que sea el Cuerpo de la dicha Igelesia de una nao sin la capilla frontera, en que hà de estar el Altàr Mayòr, en que hà de avèr en la dicha nao ochenta pies en lengo, y veinte y ocho pies en ancho.” [And that the Body of the Church be of one nave without the front chapel for the Main Altar, and that the said nave be eighty feet in length and twenty-two feet in width.] *LB* fols. 257v–258r.

elimination of the side aisles sufficed to create a larger space. The book suggests, not too convincingly, that what was really necessary was to lengthen and elevate the already existing walls.<sup>88</sup> In the projected works, the author the *Libro Becerro* spends a wealth of time describing the gilded silver wooden ceiling of the church, a “rich and costly work.”<sup>89</sup>

The *Libro Becerro* indicates that there was to be a new, larger door at the west end as well as two more doors that would give entry to a new sacristy or *revestuario* to be built on the northern side near the apse, along with a *Claustro de la Recordación* projected for the south side but never built. (Instead, the *claustrillo* was later erected to the north.) A chapterhouse for the laybrothers was also to be built on the south side, adjacent to the already existing chapterhouse for the choir monks, though it would not, of course, have been connected. This shows that the desire to create fully parallel spaces for the two ranks of brothers was ongoing. The *Libro Becerro* also informs us that choir stalls were to be provided for both the priestly brothers and the laybrothers at this time. This offers valuable information about the size of the community: the monk’s stalls numbered twenty-six, thirteen on each side, while those of the laybrothers number sixteen, eight on each side. The former were to be of walnut, whereas the latter were to be of pine, and were, in fact, reused items from the former monks’ choir.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Although I see this as another of the book’s irregularities, Abad Castro and Ansón Martín appear to accept the author’s conclusion. Abad Castro and Ansón Martín, “Nuevas aportaciones documentales,” 19.

<sup>89</sup> *LB* fol. 260r

<sup>90</sup> *LB* fol. 261r-v. “Otro: Dijeron los dichos Maestros sò cargo de el dicho Juramento cada uno, segùn lo que requiere à su officio, que costaràn facèr las Sillas del Choro de los Monges, que hân de ser veinte y seis Sillas trece de cada parte sencillas, è fechas de madera de noguera.... Otro: Dijeron los dichos Maestros sò cargo del dicho Juramento, que costarà facèr el Choro de los Frailes de diez, y seis Sillas cada parte ocho Sillas, è que sean fechas de las Sillas, que agora estàn en el Choro de los Monges fechas de pino, que costaràn mudâr y asentâr mill maravedis poco màs o menos.” [Item: The said Masters said under sworn testimony each one, according to requirements of his office, that there will be a cost for the Stalls in the Choir of the Monks, which have to be twenty-two Stalls, thirteen in each discrete part, and made of walnut.... Item: The said Masters said under sworn testimony that there will be a cost for the sixteen Stalls in the Choir of the Laybrothers, eight stalls in each part, and that they be made of the Stalls that are now in the Choir of the Monks made of pine, and that the cost for moving and installing these will be one thousand

Juan II, as noted above, ordered an allowance of 31,298 *maravedís*, which was necessary to pay off the works already completed. For new construction he promised 149,000 *maravedís*, to be paid over five years. Thus the king was involved in financing both church and complex, although it is not clear whether the monastery was contributing some of its own income from investments. The book indicates that the monastery was having a hard time finding the funds to construct domestic buildings and speaks of “various disturbances” (*diversos estorvos*) and much “excess” or “disorder” (*muchos desmanes*). Apparently the people of the Valley de Lozoya were either ignoring or purposely failing to obey the royal letters and edicts, thereby denying the provision of carts, barrows, and beasts, as well as the all-important day-workers they were obligated to hire out at a reasonable price, slowing down the work on the domestic buildings.<sup>91</sup> It further appears that workers were delivering “unscrupulously” fabricated items but collecting moneys anyway. During this period the charterhouse also had problems with income from rents, and a flood of lawsuits mounted by “bad Christians” resulted in

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maravedís, a bit more or less.] New choir stalls were installed in the second half of the sixteenth century. Their curious history, including their translation to the church of San Francisco el Grande in Madrid, and then their ultimate return to the Charterhouse of El Paular, is related by José Antonio Buces Aguado in “Las sillerías de la Real Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular,” *Bienes culturales* 6 (June 2006): 99–108.

<sup>91</sup> “Pues à la revuelta destas guerras civiles, y disensiones, que subcedièron à su Fundadòr, y Devotissimo Patròn el Rey D. Juan, no pudièron dejàr de padescèr los Padres del Paular, y assi fuè, que siempre padecièron grandes trabajos, y perdidas en todo lo temporàl. Primeramente en la prosecuciòn de sus domesticos hedificios les ocurrían grandes dificultades, diversos estorvos, muchos desmanes, à las veces los Pueblos del Valle, no se dando nada de las Cartas, è Mandamientos Reales, conque heran requeridos neganbanles carros, y bestias, y jornaleros, que heran obligados à alquilàrles por su precio convenable. ...” [So with the return of these civil wars and dissensions which happened to the Founder and Most Devote Patron King Don Juan, the Fathers of El Paular did not cease suffering, and so it was, that they endured great trials and losses throughout the season. Firstly in the prosecution of their domestic buildings they had great difficulties, various disturbances, and many disorders. At times the People of the Valley paid no heed to the letters and royal orders, with which they were required to comply, denying carts, beasts and dayworkers, which they were obliged to hire out at a reasonable price....] *LB* fols. 283v–284r.

violence directed against the Carthusians.<sup>92</sup> A papal bull was issued in an attempt to force compliance with the royal edicts.

Just how difficult the situation was in these first decades in the history of El Paular is indicated by a passage in the *Libro Becerro* to the effect that the monks petitioned the prior for an order to dismantle the monastery in 1436. This was during the priorship of Don Juan Jordán, who died that year, yielding the seat to Don Juan de Fuentes, who, as we have seen, had moved upward from the office of procurator. It is doubtful, however, that a royal monastery could then have been pulled down or abandoned given all the money that had been poured into it, despite the hardships, including climatic, that the monks continued to endure. Indeed, the *mudéjar* design of the refectory stalls and the exquisite carved pulpit in the space indicate that the furnishings of this room probably date from the period of construction of the second church, c. 1432, likely executed by Abdurramen or another Moor. The author of the *Libro Becerro* adds a gloss and a footnote disputing the timeframe of the supposed abandonment.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the *chartae* of 1436 contain no indication that the monks wished to vacate the charterhouse.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> "...y como Nuestro Rey hera à las vezes màl obedecido aùn de su propios vasallos,\* vino la persecuciòn de algunos malos Christianos vecinos de la Villa de Talamanca à tanto rompimiento contra los Cartujos, que les aprisionaban los Religios, y aùn apedreàron une vez a un Donado, y aùn le mataran, sino se les escapara màl herido." [And as Our King was during these times poorly obeyed by his vassals, persecution ensued by some bad Christians who were citizens of the Villa de Talamanca, and in such an outburst against the Carthusians, that they detained the Religious and even stoned a *donado* and would have killed him, except that he escaped badly wounded.] *LB* fols. 290v–291r.

<sup>93</sup> The author casts doubt on the authenticity of an attempt to dismantle the house by the Carthusians in the year 1436. "El haber querido desamparàr àl Paulàr sus Monges fue el año de 1421, ò 1422, porque en estos años fuèron las Guerras Civiles con el Infante Don Enrique de Aragòn." [The Monks wished to abandon El Paular during the years 1421 or 1422, because the Civil Wars were happening with the Infante Don Enrique of Aragon at that time.] *LB* fol. 392r. The *chartae* of the General Chapter are not extant for the year 1421, but I see no reflection in the *chartae* of 1422 of any wish to abandon the monastery. There are two cryptic entries for El Paular for the years 1425 and 1426 in which the Chapter General indicates that El Paular's "requests will be answered by correspondence" [de his quae petit respondetur in littera.] James Hogg (ed.), *MS. Grande Chartreuse 1. Cart. 15: Cartae Capituli Generalis 1411–1436, Vol. 2: 1420, 1422–1427*, AC 100: 8 (Salzburg, 1986), 88 (year 1425) and 118 (year 1426).

<sup>94</sup> James Hogg (ed.), *MS. Grande Chartreuse 1. Cart. 15: Cartae Capituli Generalis 1411–1436, Vol. 3: 1428, 1429, 1431, 1432, 1434–1436*, AC 100: 9 (Salzburg, 1986), 138 (year 1436).

In any case, a flush of rents saved the threatened charterhouse, and this included protection by the Toledan council or *cabildo*, a civic organization with which the charterhouse had had trouble before.

Pope Eugenius IV published a bull in 1440 confirming all the privileges of the charterhouse, royal and private, and the right to enjoy all indulgences conceded to other houses of the Order, although it is not clear what these indulgences entailed. The favors enjoyed by the charterhouse during the reign of Enrique IV (1454–74), though not spelled out in detail in the *Libro Beccero*, must have represented a significant boon for the charterhouse, at least in the early period of royal tenure, given the king's intimate connection with it. The king had been named Lord of Segovia by his father in 1440 and had taken the monastery under his wing in 1454. That same year he confirmed all the privileges earlier given, as well as mandating the charterhouse's right to conduct business freely in the Valley of Lozoya and other parts of the kingdom. In 1443 he made clear his desire to be buried in the monastery, and this, according to the *Libro Beccero*, would have involved converting the chapterhouse of the monks into a funerary chapel for himself. This is one of two instances in which the *Libro Becerro* mentions any work of art for the charterhouse—in this case the King planned to erect a *retablo* with the image of the Virgin, before whom he would be pictured kneeling. He gave 800 florins for this painting and promised 100 florins yearly for the sake of the monks who would be saying mass daily for his soul.<sup>95</sup> Although the *Libro Becerro* states that the Prior and the Visitor

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<sup>95</sup> “Manifestò especialmente el Serenisimo Principe D. Enrique en vida de su Padre su mui afetuosa devociòn para con este su Monasterio del Paular, en que por este tiempo de su juventud tratò con el Priòr, è Convento, le diesen el Capitulo de los Monges, quese acabada de hacèr entonces, para Capilla suia propria, y quele hedificasen alli un Altar con un Retablo de la Imagen de Nuestra Señora, ante cuios pies le pintasen à el de rodillas; y en aquèl Altàr le dijesen cada dia una Misa de Nuestra Señora por su Salùd y vida, y conservaciòn de su Estado, y que el de su parte prometia dàr ochocientos florines para la fabrica del dicho Capitulo su Capilla, y cient florines de renta perpetua para sustentaciòn del Monge que oviese de sèr

and the Chapter General approved the plan, and some scholars accept that it happened, I have found no indication in the *chartae* of the Chapter General to suggest that such a plan was ever initiated.

The author of the *Libro Becerro* insists that the situation was looking good financially by 1458, during the priorate of Don Fernando de Villafranca (1458–62), formerly procurator and vicar of Las Cuevas and prior of Aniago and Miraflores and El Paular. By this time, El Paular was suitably fit financially to support a new daughter foundation on its own in Zamora. The project of founding a daughter-house was never realized, however, possibly because the prior passed away only four years after taking up the office. But this ambitious, even aggressive attempt to spread the prestige of the Order throughout Castile should nevertheless be taken as an indicator of the economic strength of the monastery.

As noted earlier, the period during which Enrique IV's half-sister, Isabel the Catholic, fought to succeed him was a turbulent one. Enrique had been stationed in the Charterhouse of El Paular during the month of October 1470, during which time the Treaty of the Toros of Guisando was overturned. The Treaty had declared Isabel the inheritor of the throne of Castile. During the interregnum, Enrique's daughter, known as Juana la Beltraneja on account of alleged paternity by Count Beltrán de la Cueva, was

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instituido, è asignado, para decir le cada dia aquella Misa.” [The Most Serene Prince Don Enrique manifested especially during the life of his Father his very affectionate devotion for his Monastery of El Paular, and during this time of his youth he treated with the Prior and the Convent so that they might give him the Monks' Chapterhouse, which had been finished by then, as his own Chapel, and that they might build for him there an Altar with a Retable of the Image of Our Lady, before whose feet he would be painted kneeling; and that in the Altar they would give him daily a Mass of Our Lady for his Health and life, and for the conservation of his State, and that he for his part would promise to give eight hundred florins for the making of the said Chapterhouse into his Chapel, and one hundred florins of perpetual rent for the sustenance of the Monk would be instituted for and assigned to the saying of that daily Mass.] *LB* fol. 315r-v.



recognized as the inheritor and celebrated her nuptials with the Duke of Guiena, brother of Louis XI of France.<sup>96</sup>

Once Isabel had recovered the crown of Castile, the fortunes of El Paular seem to have improved further and the Catholic Kings may have become steady patrons, even if the money trail cannot be documented. We know that Juan Guas, favored architect of the Catholic Kings, was active at El Paular in the years 1484–86. Documentary evidence and stylistic features allow us to assign significant building to Isabel’s reign, all in a flamboyant Gothic style often called Isabeline.

1. The Church of 1432 was expanded and the walls elevated, probably so as to accommodate the massive alabaster altarpiece at the center of this study.
2. The approach to the 1432 church was reimagined, made more grand: an atrium was raised and the magnificent portal installed.
3. A carved portal was added to the royal chapel.
4. Numerous doorways, some harmoniously paired, were installed for various thresholds of the monks’ cloister.
5. The monks’ cloister received a glorious reconstitution.

Along with these, all economic indicators suggest that El Paular was thriving, and extremely wealthy, in the later fifteenth century. There is, however, one curious document that challenges this assessment of the fortunes of El Paular at the time. Though the *Libro Becerro* does not mention it, a certain Franciscan brother, Fray Antonio de Córdoba, swore in 1515 that the Carthusians of El Paular had sought once again in 1480

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<sup>96</sup> “Esta es la famosa Beltraneja, por quien tantos males vinièron à España; Por este tãn infame caso, y porque el Rey D. Enrique comenzò à sèr mui flojo, y descuidado, y mui demasiadamente prodigo, vino de poco en poco à ponèr sus vasallos, y Reynos en grandes trabajos de guerras, y disensiones civiles, y à su propria persona en grande pobreza, y mengua, y aun en menosprecio y aborrecimiento...” [This is the famous Beltraneja, through whom so many evils came to Spain: Because of this infamous case, and because King Don Enrique began to be very weak and disordered and much too prodigious, slowly his vassals came to place his Kingdoms in great works of war and civil dissensions, and to place his own person in a state of great poverty, dishonor, and even spurn and hatred.] *LB* fol. 331v.

to move out of their complex, this time to the Franciscan convent of Saint Anthony in Segovia.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the bias and late date of the testimony makes it suspect.

El Paular did, as mentioned, intervene expressly in the foundation of the Charterhouses of Aniago (1441) and Miraflores (1442), with gifts of money and personnel. Nevertheless, the long-standing wish to establish a fully-equipped subsidiary charterhouse did not come about until 1516, with the establishment of the Charterhouse of Granada, a true daughter-house in every sense of the word.

Before concluding, it is worth reviewing the monies spent on the charterhouse in the first part of the fifteenth century. Overall, the general distribution of monies, all in *maravedís*, occurred in various reigns: in the regency era during Juan II's minority, the sum of 300,000 was paid out; during the reign of Juan II, the sum of 1,045,000 was disbursed; and during the reign of Enrique IV, the project received a sum of 830,000. This yields a total of 2,175,000 *maravedís* for the period from 1390 until the completion of work in 1443. Gloria Esparraguera Calvo, who assembled this data, has suggested that the total sum constituted approximately 3.6% of the income of the *Hacienda Real* in 1429 and thus represented no "great sacrifice" on the part of the crown;<sup>98</sup> nevertheless, the amount does seem considerable for a lone monastic foundation.

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<sup>97</sup> A.G.S., Casas y Sitios Reales, Legajo 46, Declaración de Fray Antonio de Córdoba, 8-X-1515 (legajo 48-258), cited in López Díez, *Los Trastámara en Segovias*, 184–85. "...la dicha casa de Santo Antonyo estaba a la sazón muy bien labrada y edificada que era una de las mejores de la orden que avya en Castilla en aquel tiempo el rey don Enrique desde la primera piedra e oyo desir entre los frayles del dicho monasterio que los de El Paular daban quatro quentos para el caso del dicho monasterio para se pasar a el e quo los prometia que mudando el tiempo pactaria bien con los dichos fraires en haselles buenas lismosnas." [The said house of Saint Anthony was at that time very well worked and built, from the very first stone [placed], and was one of the best of the Order in Castile during the period of King Don Enrique [IV], who heard that those [Carthusian monks] of El Paular were going to give four million [*maravedís*?] for said monastery so as to translate themselves to it, and they promised that, once the move was accomplished, they would make a pact with the said [Franciscan] brothers to render them very good alms.]

<sup>98</sup> Gloria Esparraguera Calvo, "Datos históricos sobre La Cartuja de El Paular," *Madrid en el contexto de lo hispánico desde la época de los descubrimientos: congreso nacional* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense 1994), 959–69, 967.

The author of the *Libro Becerro* looks back from a position of considerable economic prestige in the mid-sixteenth century, reflecting strong economic girdings for the charterhouse. But despite the problems we have witnessed, alongside the original donation of *tercias reales* and royal lands for the charterhouse El Paular began an aggressive campaign of real estate acquisitions and sales that it built upon from its earliest days. These included, by 1394, certain mills and urban properties in Segovia, then lands in Getafe in Talamanca-Uceda within a couple of decades, and by mid-century properties in Fontanar-Yunquera de Henares-Málaga del Fresno, as well as Tórtola de Henares. These investments must have resulted from increasingly astute business administration on the part of El Paular's rotating procurators. The situation speaks for a complicated intersection of economic drives on the part of the Carthusians, the Church, and the royal patrons. As we have seen, there was considerable opposition on the part of laypeople in these various zones, who probably derived very little economic benefit from the growth of the charterhouse given that its religious mission was neither apostolic nor overtly charitable.<sup>99</sup>

Despite gaps, the *Libro Beccero*, which traces the life of the monastery in collected documents covering the period up to the mid-fifteenth century, is witness to a long but successful struggle. By the end of the period it covers, despite uncertain patronage, an unreliable workforce, legal troubles, and the vicissitudes of weather, the monastery was well established, wealthy, and possessed of impressive buildings richly

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<sup>99</sup> For instance, the Chapter General of 1445 blocked administration by the charterhouse of a hospital founded by one of its monks, Don Gómez de Cuéllar (d. 1444–45). Michael Sargent and James Hogg (eds.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Latin 10887, Part I, 1438–46 (Ff. 1–144)*, AC 100: 3 (Salzburg, 1984), 169. Charitable motives on the part of the charterhouse are documented, however, from the early sixteenth century. Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 409–20.

outfitted. The documents, suggesting the importance of royal patronage, have also pointed to dependence on various important towns—Toledo and Segovia, of course, as well as Valladolid and Burgos—for materials and men to build and decorate the monastic complex. It is necessary to turn our attention now to some of the key architects and artists working in these cities.

### **Late Medieval Building in Castile**

According to Sebald Ilsung, a German who left a record of his travels to Spain in the fifteenth century, when the Spanish bishop and Jewish *converso* Alonso de Cartagena returned from the Council of Basel in 1439, he emulated all things German, to the extent of returning to Burgos with a German cook.<sup>100</sup> In the built environment of Castile, foreign ornamental motifs were likewise enthusiastically absorbed. From the middle of the fifteenth century, these importations took shape mainly as additions to existing buildings that had been constructed in a Gothic style with roots in thirteenth-century Île-de-France, and with a notable persistence of Romanesque ground plans and the use of Islamic or *mudéjar* decorative elements.<sup>101</sup> By the late fifteenth century, with the aggressive expansion of Spanish building programs by the Catholic Kings, Spanish architects actively utilized foreign modes, even as they experimented with homegrown features that later commentators described as “bizarre.”<sup>102</sup> It has been tempting to view the mid- and late-fifteenth-century products in terms of two or more separate waves of outside

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<sup>100</sup> Silva Maroto, *Pintura hispano-flamenca castellana*, 69.

<sup>101</sup> The Castillo El Real de Manzanares, begun 1435 and rebuilt after 1473, probably by Juan Guas, features Moorish arches finished with Flamboyant decorative elements. See Barbara Borngässer, “Late Gothic Architecture in Spain and Portugal,” in *The Art of Gothic: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting*, ed. Rolf Toman (Cologne: Könemann, 1998), 266–99, 266.

<sup>102</sup> Fray G. de Arriaga, cited in María Lozano de Vilatela, “Simbolismo de la portada de San Gregorio de Valladolid,” *Traza y baza: cuadernos hispanos de simbología, arte y literatura* 4 (1974): 7–158.

influence, but the pattern of working relationships in Castile reflects instead a complex intergenerational network of building cohorts in which local and immigrant artists appropriated motifs and worked them into new Spanish architectural syntheses. Any study of Late Gothic architectural modes in the Iberian peninsula is complicated by a noticeable gap in the scholarly literature, itself comprised mainly of short studies of monuments or their makers.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, these studies have tended to be descriptive and documentary rather than interpretive. In any case, the phenomenon of Spanish Late Gothic style reaches far into the sixteenth century, notably in the work of the Rasines family from Cantabria. Architects working at El Paular and other Castilian charterhouses achieved results that one architectural historian qualifies as an “exuberant” style anomalous for charterhouses elsewhere in Europe.<sup>104</sup>

Given its equidistant location from the important cathedral workshops of Burgos and Toledo, the Charterhouse of El Paular probably drew on talent from both centers as well as from nearby Segovia. Careers of the early builders of El Paular, such as the Moorish Abdurramen and Gabriel Galí, are reasonably well documented, even if those of later architects, particularly Juan Guas of Toledo and (possibly) Simón de Colonia of Burgos, are not to be found in the pages of the *Libro Becerro*.

Burgos in the fifteenth century, because of its location in the north of Spain near the important shipping town of Santander, functioned as something of a clearing-house for the importation of Flemish-Rhenish-Burgundian art into Castile. Political and religious power in Burgos was owed to several crucial factors. Traditionally designated

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<sup>103</sup> A recent study situates developments in the Spanish Late Gothic within larger peninsular and continental building trends. See Begoña Alonso Ruíz, *Arquitectura tardogótica en Castilla: los Rasines* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 2003), 25–37.

<sup>104</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 142–73.

as the *caput Castellae* or “head of Castile,” it was located on the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela. Burgos operated as the centralized commercial home to the Castilian wool business, close to the Cantabrian ports, the chief means of importation and exportation for the kingdom of Castile. The kingdom then extended to Andalusia, as did the Carthusian province or nation of Castile, founded 1442. Burgos, highly favored by royal patronage, was a powerful and autonomous episcopal seat free from the jurisdiction of the archbishopric of Toledo. It operated as an archbishopric in deed if not by right (*de hecho aunque no de derecho*),<sup>105</sup> since it was under the direct authority of the Holy See in Rome. Burgos Cathedral, begun in 1221, specifically shares design features with the French cathedrals of Bourges, Reims, and Coutances. Exterior sculpture was probably in the making around 1240, and sculpture at Amiens and Burgos is strikingly similar in style—so close, in fact, that Paul Williamson has recognized the “stylistic features of one man, an exact correspondence in form and detail which cannot be explained by model books or a distant general inspiration.”<sup>106</sup> Juan de Colonia designed the spires of the cathedral as part of additions he made between 1442 and 1458.<sup>107</sup>

Toledo’s archiepiscopal supremacy dated from the conversion of the Visigothic King Reccared (r. 586–601), a ceremony attended by at least sixty bishops. It continued through the early eighth century with the tradition of the Toledo church councils, was interrupted during four centuries of Muslim occupation, and was revived after the re-Christianization of Toledo in 1085.<sup>108</sup> The long task of regaining Toledo, conquered by

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<sup>105</sup> Luciano Serrano, O.S.B., *Los Reyes católicos y la ciudad de Burgos* (Madrid : Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Instituto Jerónimo Zurita, 1943), 23.

<sup>106</sup> Paul Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture 1140–1300* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 225.

<sup>107</sup> Bork, *Great Spires*, 340.

<sup>108</sup> Isabel del Río de la Hoz, *The Cathedral and City of Toledo* (London: Scala, 2001), 15.

the Moors in 711, provoked a reassertion of Christian identity in the area. The Visigothic church, which had been converted to a mosque, was retaken by force.<sup>109</sup> In the south of the city, the site of Moorish occupation, a new cathedral was begun in 1226 and its distinctly northern European, Gothic style would demonstrate, “a great protest against Mohammedan architecture.”<sup>110</sup> By contrast, lesser buildings of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, both Christian and Jewish, retained prominent features of Moorish design.

The names of a number of fifteenth-century Flemish, Rhenish, and Burgundian architects who traveled to work in Spain are known and it is useful to follow their careers before considering later Carthusian church compounds and their built features. At Toledo, where work on the cathedral had begun long before (1226), the principal master was Hanequin of Brussels, who, according to documentary evidence, arrived with a troop of stonemasons, bricklayers, and sculptors sometime before 1448.<sup>111</sup> Along with Hanequin, this group consisted of the masters Egas Cueman and Antón Martínez, as well as Pedro Guas, the father of Juan Guas, and his brother-in-law Alfonso.<sup>112</sup> These artisans favored forms that had little to do with local style, offering a profusion of canopied arches and elaborate Flamboyant tracery, all worked in “minute decoration of a naturalist

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<sup>109</sup> Although it had been agreed at the capitulation that the Moors should continue to use the structure, this agreement was revoked after a few months. “Rex et Archiepiscopus Rodericus in fundamento ecclesiae Toletanae, quae in forma mexquithae a tempore Arabum adhuc stabat...” Cited in George Edmund Street, *Some Account of Gothic Architecture in Spain*, ed. G. G. King, 2 vols. (New York, B. Blom, 1969), 324.

<sup>110</sup> Street, *Some Account of Gothic Architecture*, 327.

<sup>111</sup> Johannes Röhl, “Burgos und Burgund – Zu Werken des Gil de Siloé,” in *Gotische Architektur in Spanien: Akten des Kolloquiums der Carl Justi-Vereinigung und des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars der Universität Göttingen, Göttingen, 4.-6. Februar 1994*, ed. Christian Freigang (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1999), 289–300, 290.

<sup>112</sup> José María Azcárate y Ristori, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV* (Madrid: Instituto Diego Velázquez, 1958), 13.

character of a dynamism unknown to that point.”<sup>113</sup> Among Hanequin’s most important commissions was the so-called *Puerta de los Leones*—the portal on the south side of Toledo Cathedral—executed between 1452 and 1465. The portal is in the Flamboyant style, with three archivolts, jamb figures and a trumeau, and delicate tracery beneath two arches in place of a tympanum relief. The peculiar tympanum design, with no local precedent or *mudéjar* influence,<sup>114</sup> resembles such works as a portal at Notre-Dame-au-Lac in Tierlemont, erected by Jean d’Orsy between 1350 and 1362, and the Bethlehem portal of Notre-Dame in Huy from the late thirteenth or earlier fourteenth century, as well as two portals in Bruges at the Cathedral Saint-Sauveur and the Johannes-Hospital.<sup>115</sup>

In Burgos, Juan de Colonia—who had emigrated from Cologne—worked with Simón, his son by a Spanish mother, and the two led their band of builders. Simón, like Juan Guas, turns up in documents in lawsuits leveling accusations of poor work, which are in their way highly revealing. The family enterprise adapted itself increasingly to Spanish preferences with respect to architectural forms. After completing the western towers at Burgos Cathedral, Juan undertook the raising of a great lantern tower over the cathedral crossing. The project was finished by his son in 1502. (The tower collapsed in 1539 and was later re-erected, apparently by Simón’s student, Juan de Vallejo.) Thus, by the generation of Simón, immigrant architects had forged a German-Spanish syncretism similar to the Burgundian-Spanish hybridity that marked the work of Juan Guas.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*, 9.

<sup>114</sup> Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Röhl, “Burgos und Burgund – Zu Werken des Gil de Siloé,” 291.

<sup>116</sup> For the work of Simón de Colonia, see Isidro Gonzalo Bango Torviso, “Simón de Colonia y la ciudad de Burgos,” in *Actas del Congreso internacional sobre Gil Siloe y la escultura de su época* (Burgos: Institución Fernán González, 2001), 51–69; Alberto C. Ibáñez Pérez and René Jesús Payo Hernanz, *Del Gótico al Renacimiento: Artistas burgaleses entre 1450 y 1600* (Burgos: Cajacírculo, 2008); Teófilo López Mata, *La catedral de Burgos*, nueva ed. (Burgos: Instituto Municipal de Cultura y Turismo, 2008); and



Simón blended German and Spanish elements in the Constable's Chapel at the east end of Burgos Cathedral around 1500 with the inclusion of so-called wild men in the design.

Fifteenth-century church architecture in Spain, drawing on diverse architectural heritages, is distinguished by a number of features. German-inspired steeples are built atop existing thirteenth-century cathedrals, while in the body of the church there is an emphasis on horizontality rather than verticality. There was a tendency toward the multiplication of decorative elements, including egg, diamond, and shell motifs. These designs were evenly distributed across building exteriors, especially in the decoration of palace exteriors, but also on religious structures, as, for example, on the cornice at El Paular. Church interiors often exhibited unified spaces in the form of single-nave churches, with barred chapels disposed at the lateral ends, elaborate filigreed vaulting patterns, and complicated, *mudéjar*-inspired tracery atop arches, niches, tombs, chapels, and the like. Giant carved or painted retables were set up in the east choir, when funds permitted. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, architects developed the all-important altarpiece façade, whereby the chief entrance began to imitate the colossal retable in terms of iconographical complexity and spatial distribution. Spanish buildings were often characterized by fairly fast and cheap brick-and-mortar construction.

One complex erected in the last quarter of the fifteenth century is interesting above all for its originality in design as well as for the diverse origins of artists and architects documented as working there; the same teams have been associated with the Charterhouse of El Paular and its nearby daughter-foundations. The Dominican compound at Valladolid, comprising church, convent, and college (Fig. 3.40), gives

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Manuel Martínez y Sanz, *Historia del Templo Catedral de Burgos* (rpt. of 1866 ed.) (Burgos: Fundación para el Apoyo de la Cultura, 1997).

insight in important ways into Spanish building aspirations and provides crucial evidence of the manner in which a patron might become involved in a major project. Documents and architectural evidence have allowed scholars to recognize at least three separate phases and three separate workshops involved in the construction of this sumptuous array of buildings of various uses.<sup>117</sup>

In the period 1484-90, Fray Alonso de Burgos (d. 1499), bishop *in absentia* of Palencia,<sup>118</sup> confessor and principal chaplain to Isabel the Catholic, ordered improvements to the crumbling patch of thirteenth-century edifices.<sup>119</sup> This Alonso, it should be emphasized, grew up and received religious formation in the same circle of Jewish *conversos* as the Bishop Alonso de Cartagena, who had ordered the erection of the spires at Burgos after his return from Basel. Fray Alonso first gained Isabel's esteem for his part in the conflict of succession between herself and her niece Juana la Beltraneja; he likewise preached on the occasion of the betrothal of Isabel and Fernando. He held, somewhat incongruously in view of his religious vows, important governmental posts in the kingdom including president of the *Consejo de Castilla* and Chief Chancellor of the realm. He played an active and important role in the work of the Inquisition, and confiscations of properties from Jews and Moors supplied him with a great fortune that allowed him to transform the old Dominican convent in Valladolid into one of the most magnificent complexes in the entire kingdom. He was evidently proud of this

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<sup>117</sup> Arribas, "Simón de Colonia en Valladolid," 154.

<sup>118</sup> Isabel had likewise advanced him to the bishoprics of Córdoba and Cuenca. See Jesús María Palomares Ibáñez, O.P., "Aspectos de la historia del convento de San Pablo de Valladolid," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 42 (1972): 90-135, 116.

<sup>119</sup> Other Dominican foundations of the thirteenth century include Santa Cruz de Segovia (1218), San Pablo de Palencia (1219), Santo Domingo de Zamora (1219), San Pablo de Burgos (1224), San Esteban de Salamanca (1230), and Santo Domingo de Leon (1261). See Palomares, "Aspectos," 92.

accomplishment: he had his likeness placed on the façades of both the church of San Pablo and the contiguous Colegio de San Gregorio (Fig. 3.42).

In the last third of the century, the full-fledged Hispano-Flemish Gothic style became the norm. Despite a reductive quality inherent in this nomenclature, it is widely used by default. A chief representative of the style was Juan Guas, trained in the workshop of the cathedral at Toledo under Hanequin. Juan's parents apparently came from the city of Saint-Pol-de-León in Brittany. Juan is first recorded as having worked as "official assistant" to Hanequin on the *Puerta de los Leones*.<sup>120</sup> Participating in the trend toward the Hispanicization of forms and design elements, Juan's mature work wedded locally predominant decorative forms to fundamental Gothic ones, and adapted these to Spanish conventions and requirements. Spanish building exteriors of this period were generally sparer than their counterparts in northern regions, where exterior ornament sometimes disguised or at least complicated architectural articulation in general.<sup>121</sup>

Juan Guas had a very busy career during his documented period of activity. The praise accorded his work was "constant and unanimous,"<sup>122</sup> even in his own day, although, as we shall see, his patrons occasionally found cause for complaint. Guas was the *maestro de obras* (master of works) at Segovia Cathedral during the period 1473–91, but he worked also at Valladolid in 1476 and in 1486–87; at the Charterhouse of El

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<sup>120</sup> Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*, 17. Juan earned fifteen *maravedís* daily for his contribution. By the time of his mature work at the cathedral of Avila, he was given 3,000 per year and "20 measures of wheat" (the "*pan de maestro*") as well as a house and 50 *maravedís* for every day he actually worked on site. *Ibid.*, 18-19. For Guas's work in general, see López Díez, *Los Trastámara en Segovia*; A. Hernández, "Juan Guas, maestro de obras de la catedral de Segovia (1472–1491)," *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología de Valladolid* 13 (1947): 57–100; José María Martínez Frías, *La huella de Juan Guas en la Catedral de Ávila* (Ávila: Fundación Cultural Santa Teresa, 1998); Concepción Abad Castro, "Juan Guas y la capilla de 'La Piedad' en el convento de San Francisco de Ávila," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.) 15 (2003): 29–45; and María Teresa Pérez Higuera, "El foco toledano y su entorno," in *Actas del Congreso internacional sobre Gil Siloe* (as n. 117), 263–86.

<sup>121</sup> Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*, 22.

Paular in 1486–89; at Ávila in 1486; at the Hieronymite monastery of El Parral; at the Franciscan convent of San Juan de Los Reyes, Toledo, in 1489–91; at the palaces of the Mendoza family in Guadalajara in 1480–83, and for the Alba family at Alba de Tormes, in 1493–94. A quick scan of these overlapping dates suggests that unless Juan had the ability to be in two or more places at one time, he must necessarily have directed an extensive amount of work to assistants, who very likely worked from his designs, as was the common practice.<sup>123</sup> A similar situation had occurred formerly at El Paular, with work overseen by Abdurramen. Despite his lengthy association with the charterhouse (first mention in 1406, last in 1432), by the end of the period the *maestro* and *carpintero* of Segovia appears to have visited the charterhouse infrequently, and then collecting only nominal pay “for certain times that he came to the said Monastery to give counsel and order as to the said works.”<sup>124</sup>

The program of rebuilding at Valladolid began in 1484 when Fray Alonso contracted the services of Juan Guas as master and Juan de Talavera as assistant to reconstruct the church of San Pablo and the Colegio de San Gregorio, as well as a funerary chapel for himself in the church of San Pablo.<sup>125</sup> By 1490 the two architects had

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<sup>123</sup> Master Hanequin from Brussels was known as *maestro de la obra* of the Cathedral of Toledo. In general the working hierarchy functioned, top down, with the *maestro mayor* or *maestro de la obra*, who drew designs and performed general supervision; the second official was called the *aparejador*, who oversaw work when *maestro* was out. Workmen fell to categories below: the lowest were the “servants” of architects (*mozos* or *criados*) and unskilled workers (*peones*). Stonemasons (*canteros* or *pedreros*) worked at quarries under supervision of an *asentador*. *Entalladores* carved moldings, niches, crockets, and corbels; an *imaginario* carved figures. Servants could aspire to be masons, and among the most talented the *asentadores* and the *aparejadores* were chosen. There was not always a great distinction between masons and carvers; Juan Guas himself was included in a group of *entalladores* or *pedreros* working on Door of the Lions at Toledo Cathedral. Proske, *Castilian Sculpture*, 113.

<sup>124</sup> “...àl Maestro Adurramen (*sic*) Carpintero de Segovia por ciertas vezes, que vino àl dicho Monesterio, à dar consejo, è orden, como se hiciesen las dichas obras...” *LB* fol. 256v.

<sup>125</sup> Julia Ara Gil, “Las fachadas de San Gregorio y San Pablo de Valladolid en el contexto de la arquitectura europea,” in *Gotische Architektur in Spanien: Akten des Kolloquiums der Carl Justi-Vereinigung und des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars der Universität Göttingen, Göttingen, 4.-6. Februar 1994*, ed. Christian Freigang (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1999), 317–34.

completed this chapel and Fray Alonso was ready to install a retable. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz were contracted for the altarpiece. Work performed by Juan Guas had been deemed insufficient, *mala y falsa* (bad and false), and perhaps the bishop was looking for an alternative. Finally, the workshop of Simón de Colonia, son of the spire-builder Juan, was called in sometime before 1499–1501 to perform work in the complex. Eight days before Fray Alonso died on October 29, 1499, he contracted Simón and company to construct a sacristy for his chapel and a corridor to link the Dominican college with his funerary chapel. Some of Simón’s activities may be documented through the records of two lawsuits in which he was embroiled in 1501. These give interesting evidence of an assumption that the deceased’s wishes would be respected. First Simón was charged with placing Fray Alonso’s sepulcher in the center of the chapel and likewise obligated to execute the principal façade of the church itself.<sup>126</sup> In the second lawsuit he was charged with executing both the portal and the sepulcher in a “vulgar and bastardized” way.<sup>127</sup> A representative of yet a third generation of the family, Simón’s son Francisco, was also implicated and was sued for monetary damages.

Simón de Colonia has been named as author of the façade, which takes a characteristically Spanish form and is an impressive achievement. The rectangular façade rises above the general height of the building like a great tapestry or standard; for this reason, it and its progeny, including the *portada* of the church of Santa María de Duero, have been called canvas or standard facades (Fig. 3.41).<sup>128</sup> One of the most curious features of this exterior retable is the utter discrepancy between it and the architectural

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<sup>126</sup> Ara Gil, “Las fachadas de San Gregorio y San Pablo de Valladolid,” 330–32.

<sup>127</sup> “*hizo labrar la dha portada y aun el dho sepulcro muy groseramente y de obra bastarda...*” Cited in Arribas, “Simón de Colonia en Valladolid,” 158. The suit was ultimately judged in favor of Simón, with the immediate payment of 70,000 *maravedís*.

<sup>128</sup> Ara Gil, “Las fachadas de San Gregorio y San Pablo de Valladolid,” 323.

structure it fronts. Functioning as a “unity in itself,”<sup>129</sup> it has been seen to demonstrate a tendency on the part of the master-masons to “dissociate elements”<sup>130</sup> and to allow for disjunction in the logical disposition of architectural parts. The attribution of the design to Simón is based upon stylistic similarities with his Chapel of the Constables in Burgos Cathedral: again there is a notable link in the abundance of statues of “wild men” surrounded by thick foliage, something of a signature motif for him (Fig. 3.43).<sup>131</sup>

We know Juan Guas worked at El Paular, and Juan and his son Simón de Colonia at Miraflores.<sup>132</sup> Of course, what was considered appropriate for a Dominican *studium* to educate future preachers, whether resident or itinerant, would not have suited the mission of strictly cloistered Carthusian choir monks or the laybrothers who served them. Nor, indeed, would the typology of cathedral, college, or palace have made sense for the housing of contemplative brothers. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the interpenetration of interior and exterior design elements, with interior microarchitectural elements citing those of exterior structural or decorative features, and *vice versa*, occurs at El Paular. Despite the strictures prescribed by the Carthusian Order as to embellishment of charterhouses, brothers and builders found ways to inject visual elegance into the buildings of their complexes, whether at El Paular, Aniago, or Miraflores, with varying structural and ornamental solutions considered appropriate—or not—for each monastic compound.

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<sup>129</sup> Ara Gil, “Las fachadas de San Gregorio y San Pablo de Valladolid,” 322–23.

<sup>130</sup> Ara Gil, “Las fachadas de San Gregorio y San Pablo de Valladolid,” 322–23.

<sup>131</sup> Arribas, “Simón de Colonia en Valladolid,” 153.

<sup>132</sup> For his work at Miraflores and elsewhere in Burgos, see Bango Torviso, “Simón de Colonia,” 51–70.

## Architecture of the Charterhouses of El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores

The geographical proximity of El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores presents a special opportunity for comparative analysis of the architectural forms and features adopted by each.<sup>133</sup> Such an analysis may, by extension, be taken to relate particularly to notions of Carthusian identity and self-perception. It is important to recognize that the disapproval of El Paular articulated in the deliberations of the General Chapter of the Order must have been generated initially on a local, provincial level—otherwise the complaint would never have reached *the* Carthusian mother-house in Grenoble. Thus, internal visitations must have made the architecture at El Paular visible to the wider Carthusian community, first within the province of Castile, thereby inciting negative attention from the Chapter General. El Paular was subsequently made an example for the sake of other houses of the Order. Beyond this, there is evidence in the *chartae* of considerable commotion at El Paular in the year 1475, to the extent that the Chapter General summoned a visitor from the Province of Catalonia (along with an intra-provincial visitor from the Charterhouse of Seville, in the Province of Castile), to remedy the situation of a suspended prior. The comparison of El Paular, Miraflores, and Aniago will help us understand what was typical and what was exceptional in the built environment of El Paular.

Given the highly centralized governance of the international Order of Carthusians, and the precision of its Customs, it comes as little surprise that Carthusian built spaces in late medieval Europe were characterized by striking typological similarities, as we considered early on. But if a conservative Carthusian strain promoted uniformity,

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<sup>133</sup> Because of its geographical distance, and the fact that it was almost finished by 1454, the Charterhouse of Seville is largely excluded from this discussion. Nevertheless, in Seville an elegant conventual cloister (*claustrillo*) was erected in the later fifteenth century.

extra-monastic factors fostered novelty in visual and spatial appointments, as admonitions in Chapter proceedings amply demonstrate. A good degree of architectural variation and innovation, keeping pace with broader developments in northern Castile, can be seen in the three Castilian charterhouses—El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores, all erected during a period of Spanish administrative preeminence within the Order, and all bound by close filial ties.

Monastic filiation, in its strictest sense, implies an administrative connection: provision of both personnel and capital from the mother-house to daughter-houses, as well as continued supervision by a central house of all the daughter-houses. The concept of filiation has been adopted by some art historians, beginning with Carl Schnaase in the nineteenth century, to describe and explain the migration of architectural style from one region to another. Specifically, it has been applied in discussions of the Cistercian Order as “missionaries of Gothic.”<sup>134</sup> Although this model cannot be applied in any watertight sense to El Paular and its sisters, it can help us to discern similarities and differences in manifestations of late Gothic architectural style among charterhouses in northern Castile, and then to consider their relative appropriateness for the Iberian Carthusian family.

In contradiction to the rule of stability prescribed by the Order, in the fifteenth century there was considerable movement—sometimes free, sometimes forced—of brothers from one house to another and even one province to another. The Carthusians seem to have used such mobility as a kind of safety valve for the avoidance of social

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<sup>134</sup> Christopher Wilson and David Park (eds.), *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Wilson points to Carl Schnaase as the originator of the missionary notion. See Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Kuenste im Mittelalter*, 3 (Düsseldorf, 1856), 439; and G. Dehio and G. von Bezold, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1892–1901), 1: 537, who gave the concept a somewhat different interpretation; and Robert Branner, *Burgundian Gothic Architecture* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1960), 17, who rejected the construct. See also, generally, Matthias Untermann, *Forma Ordinis: Die mittelalterliche Baukunst der Zisterzienser* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001).



problems. A surveillance scheme in place throughout the Order required on an annual basis provincial inspection by visitors specially appointed during each meeting of the Chapter General. All these factors may have encouraged conformity and may help to account for spatial and visual similarities among the houses. At the same time, a desire for difference may indeed have sparked variety in ornament. It might also have sparked rivalries among the houses.

El Paular, Aniago, and Miraflores, when looked at comparatively, demonstrate a complex series of design choices made by a cross-generational network of royal and monastic patrons and the artists and architects who worked for them. All three charterhouses have suffered varying degrees of destruction over the centuries, especially during the periods of French occupation and Spanish exclaustation, when most of their contents, including libraries, were dispersed. El Paular and Miraflores have survived reasonably well, with many of their interior fittings and furnishings intact, notably their late medieval retables; Aniago survives only in ruins, and almost none its former fittings can be identified, with the exception of a painted and carved alabaster *Lamentation* from the early fifteenth century.

The foundation histories of all three Castilian charterhouses show the interest of royal patrons in the Order.<sup>135</sup> El Paular, as noted earlier, was founded in 1390 by Juan I of Castile according to the pious wishes of his father, Enrique II. Aniago was founded in 1441 by Maria of Aragon, first wife of Juan II of Castile, while Miraflores was established in 1442, by Juan II himself. All three foundations received generous endowments at their inception, including large cash awards delivered in perpetuity along

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<sup>135</sup> The Charterhouse of Seville departs from this pattern insofar as its founder was the Archbishop Gonzalo de Mena.

with extensive land holdings with grazing rights for cattle and portions of tithes from parish churches, the so-called *tercias reales*. The history of the Charterhouse of Aniago shows what could happen when an institution was dependent on a single patron, in this case a female royal. After the death of its foundress, the Charterhouse of Aniago suffered extreme poverty for much of its existence, hanging on by the charity of other charterhouses, a form of generosity mildly lauded—but nevertheless strictly enforced—in Chapter pronouncements.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, as late as 1476–80, Aniago was compelled to make a rather pathetic plea for the handing over of monies, jewels, vestments, and other sacred luxury items that had been promised but never given to them by María of Aragon. At that time, Aniago still lacked buildings essential to the devotional activities and basic subsistence of the monks and mandated by the Carthusian Order, including the chapterhouse, sacristy, and refectory. The monks further aspired to a church constructed according to the form of those at El Paular and Seville. The language of the petition made to Enrique IV on behalf of Aniago is revealing of Carthusian requirements as well as of the problems monks faced, problems that contrast neatly with the situation of a wealthy foundation such as El Paular.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Diccionario de Historia Ecclesiástica de España*, 3 (Madrid: Instituto Enrique Flórez, 1973), 1515; James Hogg, “The Carthusian General Chapter and Spanish Charterhouses (1410–1535),” in *Scala Dei: Primera cartoixa de la península ibèrica i l’orde cartoixà. Actes congrés internacional 21, 22 i 23 de setembre de 1996* (Scala Dei, 1999), 365–81, 374–75. The Chapter advisements were made in 1468, 1469, 1471, and 1472.

<sup>137</sup> “Petition of the Prior and the community of the monastery of Santa María de Aniago to the deputies named by King Enrique IV of Castile (already deceased) for the fulfillment of the obligation that Queen Doña María of Aragon had made to found this charterhouse,” AHN, Clero, Leg. 7510, cited in Santiago Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 624–25. “Para la cual fundación primeramente se requiere una iglesia que se faga de nuevo por la forma dela de Rascafria o delas Cuevas de Sevilla. Iten un capitulo, e una sacristania e un refectorio. Iten veynte e quatro çeldas para los monges e una conrteria con doze çeldas para los frayles barbudos, e mas otras ofeçinas bien nesçesarias, mayormente el circuito de todo el monesterio. E por quanto es muy nesçesario que se fagan los dichos hedeçiõs para que los dichos monges e frayles puedan estar apartados cada uno en su çelda como la Regla dela dicha Orden manda, e por aumentaçion del cultu [*sic*] divino... Otrosi señores la dicha señora Rena tomo e rreçibio en si muchas joyas e ornamentos de muy grand valor de aquellos que don Iohan de Segovia dio e doto al dicho monesterio, especialmente

While Aniago suffered financial problems that caused interruptions in its plans, El Paular and Miraflores were well off financially in the later fifteenth century. These circumstances generated highly desirable commissions for the circle of architects active in the Province of Castile at the time. This was a period that followed years of political strife culminating in the marriage of Isabel and Fernando, the unification of the kingdoms, and continued purging of non-Christians.<sup>138</sup> We have already reviewed the prolonged building activity at El Paular throughout much of the fifteenth century. Construction at Miraflores had begun with a series of waterways and the conversion of the hunting-lodge into a convent and church, with work starting shortly after the incorporation of the charterhouse into the Province of Castile in 1443. A serious fire in 1452 necessitated complete rebuilding. After the death of founder Juan II two years later, his children undertook to finance this since the church was destined to be his burial site. In 1454 Juan de Colonia began work, which slowed to a halt in 1464 because of political strife. The architect then died in 1466. Queen Isabel contributed funds for completion in 1477 and named Garci Fernández Matienzo master of works. With the death of that architect, Simón de Colonia was called in to complete the vaulting and roofing of the

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tomo e rresçibio en sy una mitra muy rica guarnecida de muchas piedras asy diamantes como rrubis e çafires e esmeraldas e balajes e camafeos e otras muchas piedras de grandes valores guarnida con pasta de oro fino.”[For which foundation first of all a church is required to be made anew in the form of that of Rascafría (El Paular) or Las Cuevas of Seville. Item, a chapterhouse, a sacristy, and a refectory. Item, twenty-four cells for the monks and a cloister (*conrería*) for the bearded brothers, and furthermore other offices fully necessary for movement in the monastery. And for which reason it is very necessary that these buildings be made so that said monks and laybrothers can each be kept apart from the other in individual cells, as the Order mandates, and for the increase of the divine cult.... Item, sirs, the said Queen took and received for herself many jewels and ornaments of very great value from those that Don Juan of Segovia gave at the foundation of said monastery; she took and received for herself a mitre very richly garnished with many stones such as diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, dark rubies (*balajes*), cameos, and many other stones of great value garnished with fine gold paste.]

<sup>138</sup> The importance of efforts at religious reform as an historical backdrop for the changing morphological characteristics of the monumental retablo in the Spanish kingdoms is a major thesis of Justin E.A. Kroesen, *Staging the Liturgy: The Medieval Altarpiece in the Iberian Peninsula* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 373–97.

church in 1488, approximately four years after he had worked at El Paular.<sup>139</sup> We are fortunate to have, like the *Libro Becerro* of El Paular, a text documenting early work at the charterhouse of Miraflores, entitled *Memorial del plan y obras para levantar de nuevo la fábrica de la iglesia y convento de Miraflores* (*Memorial of the plan and works for starting anew construction of the church and convent of Miraflores*).

Aniago, because of its ruined condition, prevents nuanced architectural analysis, and its architects are undocumented. Still, the architectural form can help us establish a certain Spanish Carthusian typology. We should therefore consider some shared elements of all three Castilian charterhouses, with the aim of establishing commonalities, keeping in mind issues of filiation and relative opulence.

Castilian charterhouses, perhaps more than other Carthusian compounds, demonstrate a rigid grid scheme overall. One historian has observed about the Castilian foundations, “[t]here is not one angle that is not right,”<sup>140</sup> although he made exception for apsidal terminations that are three-sided at El Paular, essentially three-sided at Aniago, and seven-sided at Miraflores. At least according to the rendition in the Montreuil-sur-Mer engravings (Fig. 3.44), Aniago was perhaps the best example of this right-angle precision, with even outbuildings conforming to a severely perpendicular layout, although a ground plan of the ruins as they exist today shows some deviation (3.45). Topographical demands could trump the desire for regularity: at the Charterhouse of Seville, the circumscription by the River Guadalquivir necessitated a peculiar disposition whereby the church intruded into an uneven, kite-shaped quadrilateral cloister. This kind of intrusion reflected an older pattern of cloister construction in European charterhouses.

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<sup>139</sup> Diego de Mendieta made repairs to the roof in 1538. Pedro Navascués Palacio, *Monasterios de España*, (Madrid : Espasa-Calpe, 1985), 80.

<sup>140</sup> Devaux, *L’architecture dans l’ordre des Chartreux*, 149

The three churches are similar in form. All have a single nave with no side aisles, and are somewhat smaller than their counterparts in the rest of Europe. El Paular and Miraflores (Fig. 3.48 and 3.49) are approximately ten meters in width, and their height beneath the vaulting measures just a bit more.<sup>141</sup> Aniago is smaller, around just six meters wide. The naves of the three churches are long, in order to accommodate three distinct groups in residence: choir monks, laybrothers, and servants. There is little evidence regarding the barriers that were set up or what kind of altars or other adornment the churches had in the late medieval period. Only in Miraflores is the original nave vaulting to be seen. The polygonal apse contains filigreed arches of the most ornate Flamboyant Gothic style. At El Paular, again, the space was altered in the Baroque era, a sign of its continuing wealth through the centuries.

The exteriors of the churches of El Paular and Miraflores (Fig. 3.50) are smoothly finished in ashlar masonry of local stone. Heavy buttresses support walls, with thin lancet windows between. At Miraflores, buttresses are topped by crocketed pinnacles five meters high. In between the major structural supports at Miraflores, smaller pinnacles top sculpted gargoyles, with spouts for water drainage; these gargoyles are also seen at El Paular in the monks' cloister (Fig. 3.51). A belfry at Miraflores rises near the south side of the apse, and the balustrade was added in the early sixteenth century, indicating continued royal patronage and prestige. The ruins of Aniago show the typical single-aisled church with belltower (Fig. 3.46). El Paular likewise incorporated a belltower, like Aniago and Miraflores, but only its base remains<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 151.

<sup>142</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 153.

At Miraflores the royal arms of Juan II and Castile and León are on either side of the portal's ogee arch, providing reminders of royal patronage (Fig. 3.52). Aniago seems to have had the simplest facade of the three: its portal is now missing, but an oculus is situated above (Fig. 3.47). At both El Paular and Miraflores, the tympanum was carved with a scene of the Lamentation (Figs. 3.52 and 3.54). At Miraflores, Mary holds the crucified body of Christ below a cross in high relief (Fig. 3.53). The Lamentation is more expansive at El Paular, with John the Evangelist and the Magdalene at either side, in low relief, and a painted inscription Lamentations 1:12: *Videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus* (See if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow). The passage and its visual representation, now heavily polychromed, fill the tympanum (Fig. 3.55). The choice of theme, beloved by Carthusians, demonstrates the filial relation between the two churches and houses; it is possible that Simón de Colonia sculpted both reliefs.

All three churches originally had stained glass in the windows that were situated on three sides of the church, high in the walls so that they would not be hidden by the choir stalls. Only at Miraflores is the late medieval glass preserved, in the church and, in a few fragments, in the smaller cloister (Figs. 3.56–3.68). This surviving stained glass gives some idea of what may have existed at El Paular and provides insight into the tastes of the monks and the patrons. It was imported from Flanders in 1484,<sup>143</sup> with the installation occasionally overseen by Isabel the Catholic herself, a monarch known for her taste for Flemish culture. Three windows in the apse present scenes of the Incarnation (Fig. 3.56–3.58), five windows on the north side depict the Passion of Christ (Figs. 3.59–

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<sup>143</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 161. The Charterhouse of Seville also imported its windows, constructed in 1475 in Flanders, as well as stalls for the monks' choir. Juan Mayo Escudero, "Construction del patrimonio artístico del monasterio," in James Hogg, Alain Girard, and Daniel Le Blévec (eds.), *Libro Becerro de la Cartuja de Santa María de Las Cuevas*, 2 vols., AC 202 (Salzburg, 2003), 18.

3.63), and five on the right side depict the Resurrection and its aftermath (Figs. 3.64–3.68), an almost complete rosary of salvation history.<sup>144</sup> The images have a pronounced three-dimensional quality, with figures set in a landscape, in a broad single composition extending over three lancet windows. Three signatures discovered in the windows attest to their having been made by Nicolas Rombouts, one of the most famous glassworkers active in Spain in the fifteenth century.<sup>145</sup> It is possible, considering the extent of sharing among the charterhouses, that Rombouts worked on the original windows for El Paular and Aniago as well.

The architectural mode of the three more or less contemporary Castilian Carthusian churches is Gothic adapted to local taste and Carthusian requirements. The long and narrow churches employed a vocabulary found in sacred buildings of various uses in Burgos and Toledo and shared architects. This filled Carthusian needs but also demonstrated the wealth of the patrons, whose insignia appeared in many places in the complexes.

If the church was the main focus of patronage, the monks' cloister was also well outfitted, and to a greater extent, of course, than the laybrothers' cloister. We have already noted the elaborate vaulting scheme of the monks' cloister at El Paular. The cloisters at Aniago and Miraflores are considerably more sober (Figs. 3.69 and 3.70). These cloisters are modest in size compared to those in Carthusian charterhouses elsewhere in Europe, and give evidence of a restricted population. At Miraflores, for

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<sup>144</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 162.

<sup>145</sup> N. Carmona, M. García-Heras, M. A. Villegas, M. I. Vázquez, A. Gallo, and A. Velasco, "Estudio analítico de vidrios procedentes de las vidrieras del s. XV de la Cartuja de Miraflores (Burgos), *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional "Restaurar la Memoria": arqueología, arte y restauración, Valladolid 2004* (Valladolid : Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 2006), 709–721, 709. Restoration of the windows was begun in 2003 and extensive technical studies were performed.

example, the great cloister measures about 60 meters square, about half the size of the cloister of the Charterhouse of London.<sup>146</sup> At Miraflores, each gallery of the main cloister contains twelve bays, while there are fifteen at El Paular. Three sides of the cloisters were ringed by cells. In Castile, the cells usually consisted of four rooms distributed across two floors. Existing remains indicate full floors on the first and third levels, a half-floor at the second level at Aniago and Miraflores. Perhaps as an expression of its wealth and power, and its priority in the filial scheme, El Paular's cells were composed of three floors, an architectural extravagance almost unheard of for a charterhouse anywhere in Europe. The cloister galleries at both Aniago and Miraflores have markedly similar four-part groin-vaults without transverse arches (Figs. 3.71 and 3.72). Both Aniago and Miraflores, given their simplicity, speak for the "rigorous principles of the Order."<sup>147</sup> At El Paular, the cloister exterior is pierced by slender windows with ogee arches, corresponding to the cusped arch with a central ogee over the portal within each length (Fig. 3.73); significantly, these forms repeat on the interior cloister walk, offering visual repetition and interpenetration between inside and outside (Figs. 3.23 and 3.25). The cloister exterior likewise displays a double cornice, with the upper zone composed of bead-work, and the lower of a double-row of *mudéjar*-inspired honeycomb-work (*mocárabes*) in the form of staggered parabolas, a signature of Juan Guas.<sup>148</sup> Cloister windows at Aniago are slightly pointed but squat and recessed, like those at Miraflores. Shared stylistic features

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<sup>146</sup> Devaux, *L'architecture dans l'ordre des Chartreux*, 168.

<sup>147</sup> Isidro Gonzalo Bango Torviso, *Edificios e imágenes medievales: historia y significado de las formas* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1995), 86.

<sup>148</sup> Juas Guas likewise employed this visual device in the castle of the Mendoza family, Manzanares el Real, as well as in the Palacio del Infantado in Guadalajara, with work concluded in both in the year 1483, the year before his intervention at El Paular. The Mendoza family, it should be remembered, were great patrons of El Paular. See José Manuel González Valcarcel, "Revitalización del Castillo de Manzanares el Real," in *Conservation, Réhabilitation, Recyclage. Congrès international organisé a Québec du 28 au 31 mai 1980* (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 563–84, 564–66.



in the cloister and its vaulting suggest the same architect worked from similar plans at both Aniago and Miraflores. The architecture of the three foundations thus demonstrates influence transmitted through both monastic filiation and the employment of the same architects and masons.

The architectural remains of Iberian charterhouses demonstrate the imprint of royal ambition. Following the initial honeymoon period, which saw large foundation gifts, varying financial conditions, favorable or adverse, affected the form and outfitting of the Carthusian establishments. Nevertheless, the constellation of factors that included the relative seniority of the foundation, the degree of wealth generated by rents and tithes, and the wishes and prerogatives of the founders, was subsumed within the needs of the Order—at least in theory. Though an uneasy relationship existed between convention and innovation in the design and decoration of Carthusian domestic, capitular, and liturgical spaces, there is evidence of a self-defining Iberian tradition of new forms and elements among Carthusian sister-houses in Northern Castile. Just as the business of building, painting, and sculpting ran in the family, so filial ties underlay matters of artistic and architectural choice and exchange in the Carthusian Order in Castile.

As we have seen, each charterhouse, with the exception of the rather poor Aniago, opted for elaborate design schemes in its buildings and appointments, chiefly in the church and cloister. This choice was necessarily influenced by the motives and demands of the royal patrons, who may have perceived material splendor as an expression of divine order.<sup>149</sup> Receipt of royal benefits entailed obligations, of course.

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<sup>149</sup>In response to a letter sent by the Carthusian Francisco de Aranda to Martin I of Aragon, in which the monk criticized the king for the luxury and pomp he had shown in his coronation at Zaragoza, Martin noted that by divine will the king dwelt at the height of the social hierarchy, that ostentation and pomp were appropriate to his royal condition and a means of achieving the respect of the people, and that rejection of

Isabel the Catholic applied for and received papal bulls on two separate occasions (1477 and 1478) authorizing her entrance with numerous female attendants into charterhouses in her realm,<sup>150</sup> contrary to all rules of the Order, and indicating a not always easy balance between religious and secular obligations. Such accommodation, authorized by the papacy, may have been tolerated rather than enthusiastically embraced by the Carthusians. This kind of tension between the needs of the Carthusians and those of their patrons may have been at the heart of the conflict expressed in written legislation in 1476. During the annual visitation to El Paular that year, the Carthusian authorities clearly saw something they did not appreciate in the architectural and ornamental display, and the Chapter General promptly responded with appropriate censure. Did officiating members of the Order fear, after centuries of changing notions of artistic propriety in charterhouses, that there was a potential, to use the words of Denis the Carthusian quoted at the beginning of this chapter, for “scorpions” in the “beautiful house” of El Paular?

### **El Paular Admonished**

Trouble was brewing in the beautiful house, perhaps the result of concern on the part of a contingent of inter-provincial visitors in 1475. The following year, Order-wide anxieties arose from the building practices underway at the Charterhouse of El Paular. Considering the hyperbolic architectural and artistic programs at sister charterhouses

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royal magnificence would thus constitute a rebellion against divine law. Matilde Miquel Juan and Amadeo Serra Desfilis, “La Capilla de San Martín en la Cartuja de Valdecris: arquitectura, símbolo y devoción,” in *La Cartuja de Valdecris (1405–2005). VI Centenario del inicio de la Obra Mayor* (La Vilavella: Instituto de Cultura del Alto Palancia, 2008), 319–35, 322. An expanded version of the essay appears in *Ars Longa* 18 (2009), 65–80.

<sup>150</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, 1: 199–200.

elsewhere in Europe—notably Champmol, London, and Pavia, to cite just a few cases—the severity of the reproof is all the more astonishing.

In 1476 El Paular received the following admonition from the Chapter

General:

And we urge the Prior of the House of El Paular to correct excesses and disciplines imposed against offenders, and to conform to the Statutes of the Order, and that if this be not done, the Order will provide [its own measures]. Further, we add that, whereas the buildings of the House and the cloister and the cells are not separate and distinct one from the other, that they conform to the customs and forms of the Order, and we forbid superfluous, excessive, and curious structures and pictures under pain of absolution.<sup>151</sup>

The Chapter General was not only severe about the laxity of the prior's behavior but about lapses in judgment with respect to the planning and decoration of the charterhouse. Indeed, one wonders whether opulence wasn't the main concern. Along with criticism of the Prior of El Paular—probably Dom Payo de Riber—the Chapter General specifically took aim at defiance of Carthusian norms and at various kinds of excesses they encountered in the outfitting of the monastic buildings. Still, the charges were specific. If we take the criticism of the house point by point, we find first that it leveled the charge that the cells and cloisters of the house were neither “separate” nor “distinct” from one another, suggesting that El Paular, while it awaited its handsome new cloister by Juan Guas, was allowing mixing of laybrothers and choir monks and was thereby not properly segregated during building slowdowns or stoppages.

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<sup>151</sup> “Et hortamur Priorem domus de Paulari quod amodo in corrigendis excessibus et disciplinis imponendis contra offendentes se conformet Statutis Ordinis, quod nisi fecerit, Ordo providebit. Insuper injungimus eidem quatenus in aedificiis Domus et claustro ac cellarum quae separatae distinctaeque debent esse invicim, conformet se consuetudini et formae Ordinis et superfluas, excessivas ac curiosas structuras et picturas eidem interdiciamus sub poena absolutione.” James Hogg, “The Charterhouse of El Paular,” in Ildefonso M. Gómez and James Hogg, *La Cartuja de El Paular*, AC 77 (Salzburg, 1982), xi–xxxii, xvii.

Most interesting is the injunction against not only the superfluous and excessive, but the “curious.” *Curiositas* is a trope in early, high, and late medieval monastic and mendicant admonitions. The term generally denoted an attitude characterized by a “willful and even perverse intelligence.”<sup>152</sup> In artistic terms this would mean the presence in the Charterhouse of imagery and ornament that brought undue attention to form and craft, and of objects and images with the potential to distract spiritual attention.<sup>153</sup> The notion had ancient antecedents. “Curious arts” could refer to black magic, as in Acts 19:19.<sup>154</sup> The word *curiosus* was used by Plautus, Terence, and Catullus, and the substantive *curiositas* was apparently coined by Cicero.<sup>155</sup> It was often equated with sensual appetite. Saint Augustine defined curiosity in Book X of the *Confessions* as a “lust of the eyes.”<sup>156</sup> The Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony held up as a model the ideal comportment of the Virgin, who avoided *curiositas* on the Flight to Egypt: “Did she have anything superfluous? Did she have anything curious? These things are against poverty, and if she had had them, she would not have been a lover of poverty.”<sup>157</sup>

Critics of *curiositas* were concerned about the pride of owners and the potential for “invidious social competition.”<sup>158</sup> The later erection of monumental altarpieces at the Charterhouse of El Paular and Miraflores may have caused such unwitting competition.

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<sup>152</sup> Christopher S. Wood, “‘Curious Pictures’ and the Art of Description,” *Word & Image* 11.4 (1995): 332–52, 334.

<sup>153</sup> Wood, “‘Curious Pictures,’” 332–52.

<sup>154</sup> Acts 19:19: “Multi autem ex eis, qui fuerant curiosa sectati, contulerunt libros, et combusserunt coram omnibus : et computatis pretiis illorum, invenerunt pecuniam denariorum quinquaginta millium.” [And many of them who had followed curious arts brought together their books and burnt them before all. And, counting the price of them, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.]

<sup>155</sup> André Labhardt, “*Curiositas*: Notes sur l’histoire d’un mot et d’une notion,” *Museum Helveticum* 17 (1960), 206–24, 206.

<sup>156</sup> Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.35.

<sup>157</sup> *Vita Christi*, 1.13.69a. “Numquid superflua? Numquid curiosa habebat? Haec contra paupertatem sunt, et haec si habere posset, nollet ea paupertatis amatrix,” Cited in Sister Mary Immaculate Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi of Ludolphus the Carthusian* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1944), 111.

<sup>158</sup> Wood, “‘Curious Pictures,’” 338.

Curious images or objects operated on vision, according to the medieval notion. Saint Bernard gave a wrenchingly physical description when he noted “curious depictions that twist the gaze during prayer and entangle the mind.”<sup>159</sup> If Bernard disdained the “restless curiosity to build, to tear down, to turn squares into circles,”<sup>160</sup> Aquinas defined *curiositas* as a “straying of the mind toward illicit things (*vagatio mentis circa illicitas*).”<sup>161</sup> According to the medieval notion, seeing was not simply a matter of passive reception; “the eye pursues the world,”<sup>162</sup> and, ever at peril, runs the risk of “getting” whatever it looks at. According to this model, vision was understood as an “extension or prosthesis of the sense of touch...”<sup>163</sup> Women, with their curious supplements of hair, dress, and cosmetic extravagance, came under particular scrutiny.<sup>164</sup>

It is perhaps a mark of the importance of El Paular that it was held out as an example, criticized in such a way as to provide a lesson and clarify Carthusian ideals. Its massive painted stone altarpiece would again occasion such criticism. But a beautiful house needed a beautiful retable to punctuate the most sacred space in its church—the high altar—and to stand before the *sagrario*, a small back area reserved for the consecrated Body of Christ. This retable will be the subject of the next two chapters.

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<sup>159</sup> “Curiosas depiciones... quae dum orantium in se retorquent aspectum, impediunt et affectum.” Bruyne, *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*, 2: 3, ch. 4.

<sup>160</sup> PL 192, col. 985, cited in Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: the Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 27.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, ii, q. 35, art. 4.

<sup>162</sup> Wood, ““Curious Pictures,”” 342.

<sup>163</sup> Wood, ““Curious Pictures,”” 341.

## Chapter Four

### The Retable

*Your divine stories  
Rightly order what I say:  
My eyes [address] the mental  
And illuminate the corporal  
When I look at this retable  
And You free me from the devil.<sup>1</sup>*

Juan de Padilla, *Retablo de la vida de Christo*  
(Christmas Eve, 1500)

The separate faculties of sight, sound, and touch are seen to fuse with memory in these verses by a former prior of El Paular, the poet Juan de Padilla. Nevertheless, in the complex psychological, spiritual, and physical processes he articulates, the sense of sight predominates. This excerpt from the poem gives us one idea of contemporary notions of visuality with respect to sacred objects, their place in the charterhouse, and the intersection of various senses for fulfillment of devotional and liturgical ends—that is, the longing for deliverance from sin and the achievement of eternal salvation. Nor is the date of completion of the poem, on Christmas Eve, an accident; it throws light on the significance of Advent and the Nativity among the Carthusians, and on the continual mental exercises involved in reviewing the stories of the lives of Christ and the Virgin. It

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<sup>1</sup> “...tus hystorias divinales / enderezen lo que hablo / y mis ojos los mentales / alumbren los corporales / en mirar este retable / y me libres del diablo.” *LB*, Tabla primera, Argumento de la primera tabla, Oracion.

is not for nothing that Juan de Padilla sets out the Passion as though it were a rehearsal of the liturgical hours. Such a system urges a back and-forth movement through historical and transhistorical time, potentially strengthening the efficacy of prayer. The massive altarpiece at El Paular (Fig. 4.1), with its comprehensive coverage of salvation history, acts on one level as a visual aid to the moral program espoused so stringently by the Carthusian Order.

The altarpiece, executed in the style generally called Hispano-Flemish, is the jewel of the church. No records or contracts document its patrons or makers, but its high-quality carving and painting suggest creation by an extremely capable sculpture-and-polychromy team from an important episcopal center, either Burgos or Toledo. The retable is unique in Castile for its combined qualities of size, weight, and material, features that may have ensured its survival. It measures 8.85 x 12 meters and is composed entirely of alabaster—a rarity in Castile apart from its use in funerary monuments, although more common in altarpieces adorning churches in Aragon.<sup>2</sup> The distribution of its narratives and the typology of its overall form are likewise unusual, since the retable lacks the central column or *calle* that characterizes most altarpieces on the Iberian peninsula.

The retable presents a compact and highly readable narrative program equally Mariological and Christological in content, consistent with Christian spirituality as manifest in Carthusian literary sources, notably the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony

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<sup>2</sup> Enrique Serrano Fatigati, *Retablos españoles ojivales y de la transición al Renacimiento* (Madrid: San Francisco de Sales, 1902).

(d. 1377),<sup>3</sup> and the *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, a verse meditation of 1,289 lines by the Castilian Juan de Padilla (d. 1520), also known as *el cartujano*, or “the Carthusian.”

Works by these writers suggest a highly self-reflexive understanding of the importance of images in worship, a sometimes conflicted notion present in writings emanating from members of the religious movement known as the *devotio moderna*, a movement owing much to Carthusian spirituality from its beginnings in the late fourteenth century.

If the retablo comprises a strong narratological unity suggesting a “blueprint” organized by a learned Carthusian patron, formally and stylistically it presents divergent qualities, harmonized in part by its polychromy. The retablo appears to have been constructed in at least two if not three separate phases, more or less contemporary with the reign of Isabel the Catholic (1474–1504). Since it lacks any obvious heraldic devices, it is tempting to infer that the Carthusians of El Paular—an extremely wealthy foundation during the period of the altarpiece’s creation—paid for the altarpiece themselves and were responsible for deciding its narrative content. Anomalies in the retablo, great and small, shed light on its appropriateness—or lack of—in relation to Carthusian religious imperatives, both in the cell and in the church. Significantly, the retablo provoked an admonition from the Chapter General in 1503 for an undefined *indecentia* in form, content, or expense, a witness to tensions that will be examined in this chapter. The altarpiece abounds in references to liturgical performance and its physical implements, features that will be considered in the context of its visuality, materiality, and liturgicity.

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<sup>3</sup> The reverence owed to the Sacred Heart “came logically to Ludolf of Saxony in his contemplation of the inexhaustible riches” flowing from Christ’s side wound. Archdale A. King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1955), 7.



This large and complicated piece of church furniture contains formal and iconographical peculiarities that repay close art-historical attention, particularly in light of the function of the retable within a highly private and restricted Carthusian liturgical setting.

### **Form and Content of the Retable**

Disposed in colorful compartments like a gigantic stone dollhouse, the altarpiece is of a type known as a *batea* or tray-type retable.<sup>4</sup> A huge sculpted alabaster base, pierced at either end by trilobed doorways surmounted by broken ogee forms, offers entry to and exit from the *sagrario*, a small room abutting the altar for reservation of the host (Fig. 3.36). This architectural provision is peculiar to Spanish charterhouses, including those of Las Cuevas and Scala Dei.<sup>5</sup> The base supports the altarpiece proper, which is composed of four horizontal zones. A large stone carving of the Virgin and the Infant Christ in the midst of six musical angels ornaments the base. Two more angels appear in each of the spandrels of the doors, for a total of ten. Cuts in the stone within the spandrels indicate that these four angels were inserted after preliminary construction. As we shall see, the altarpiece itself was altered at numerous places after the original installation.

The retable reads left to right and bottom to top, presenting a narrative sequence of sixteen scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin. Movement from one scene to the next is choreographed by sculpted canopies that set off the individual scenes like

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<sup>4</sup> Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Ansón Martín, “El Retablo de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.) 6 (1994): 61–100.

<sup>5</sup> The feature is unknown in Italian charterhouses. See Giovanni Leoncini, “Le certose dell’Italia meridionale e le certose di Spagna: Architettura e decorazione di ambito “Mediterráneo,” *Scala Dei. Primera cartoixa de la península ibèrica i l’Orde Cartoixa. Actes del Congrés internacional, setembre 1996*, AC 139 (Salzburg, 1999), 389–406, 390.

auratic stage curtains; in the lower zone they exceed in size the scenes they are meant to enhance. The portals and structural supports are positively encrusted with a total of forty-one statuettes of virgins, confessors, martyrs, and prophets.<sup>6</sup> These further enhance visual movement from the floor upward. The lower register is distinguished from the upper three not only by distinction in the number and size of scenes represented, but also by the use of different design elements in the canopies across the registers. There is, moreover, a distinct departure in artistic style in the third register that breaks the overall visual flow of the pictorial fields. This third register, at first glance, seems to be composed for maximum readability, with an emphasis on the human and divine actors rather than on anecdotal details or accessories not strictly related to the narratives.

The individual registers are filled as follows: six scenes in the lower register, four in the middle registers, and two in the uppermost, creating the outline of an inverted T-shape seen in reduced size in Flemish and Brabantine retables. Thematically, each register is organized quite neatly as to content, beginning with an Infancy Cycle and ending with the Resurrection. To facilitate the discussion below, I supply here, in the notes, references to passages in the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and the *Retablo de la vida de Christo* of Juan de Padilla that correspond to the narrative scenes in the retable.

The compartments are arranged in ascending order as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> It is tempting to think that all the saints were pulled from the Carthusian liturgical calendar. Jacques Hourlier and Benoit du Moustier, "Le calendrier cartusien," *Etudes grégoriennes* 2 (1957): 151–61. The statuettes, more numerous at the bottom than the top, are described in the comprehensive studies by Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "El Retablo" (1994), and, more recently, "Estudio histórico-artístico," in *Retablo Mayor de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular: Restauración e Investigación* (Madrid: Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Español, 2007), 15–67.

Row 1: Presentation of the Virgin<sup>7</sup>; Annunciation<sup>8</sup>; Visitation<sup>9</sup>; Birth and Naming of the Baptist<sup>10</sup>; Nativity of Christ<sup>11</sup>; Epiphany<sup>12</sup>;

Row 2: Presentation, Purification, and Candlemas<sup>13</sup> (a Spanish conflation<sup>14</sup>); Baptism of Christ<sup>15</sup>; Last Supper<sup>16</sup>; Arrest of Christ<sup>17</sup>;

Row 3: Flagellation<sup>18</sup>; Bearing of the Cross<sup>19</sup>; Crucifixion<sup>20</sup>; Lamentation<sup>21</sup>;

Row 4: Harrowing of Hell and Christ's Appearance to the Virgin<sup>22</sup>; Resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most interesting features of the arrangement of visual content is that the makers allowed for narrative flow across registers. Row 1, the Infancy sequence, continues from the Epiphany into Row 2 with the Presentation in the Temple; Row 2, which begins the Passion Cycle, continues from the Arrest of Christ to the Flagellation in Row 3; and the Passion cycle itself continues from Row 3 with the Lamentation to Row 4

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<sup>7</sup> The following citations signal relevant passages in Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* (*VC*) and Juan de Padilla's *Retablo de la vida de Christo* (*RVC*). *VC*, I.iii; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico IV.

<sup>8</sup> *VC*, I.v; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico VIII.

<sup>9</sup> *VC*, I.vi; *RVC* Tabla I, cántico IX.

<sup>10</sup> *VC*, I.vi; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico X.

<sup>11</sup> *VC*, I.ix; *RVC*, Tabla I, cánticos XIII-XVI.

<sup>12</sup> *VC*, I.xi; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico XIX.

<sup>13</sup> *VC*, I.xii; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico XXI.

<sup>14</sup> As Abad Castro and Martín Ansón note ("Estudio histórico-artístico," 54), this scene is a conflation of three distinct episodes common in handling of this narrative and used with special emphasis in Spanish iconography: *Presentación*, *Purificación*, *Candelaria*. This distinction was overlooked in an iconographical analysis by María Ródriguez Velasco ("El Retablo del Monasterio de Santa María del Paular"), who identified the scene as the *Circumcision*, possibly because the relief was not yet conserved and key details—candle, basket with turtledoves, etc.—were scarcely visible. I am grateful to Achim Timmermann for suggesting to me that the scene of *Candelaria* may relate to the *elevationis candela* performed in the mass.

<sup>15</sup> *VC*, I.xxi; *RVC*, Tabla II, cántico I.

<sup>16</sup> *VC*, II.liii-lvii; *RVC*, Tabla III, cánticos VII-X.

<sup>17</sup> *VC*, II.liii-lvii; *RVC*, Tabla III, cánticos VII-X.

<sup>18</sup> *VC*, II.lxii; *RVC* Tabla III, lamentación II.

<sup>19</sup> *VC*, II.lxii; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación III.

<sup>20</sup> *VC*, II.lxiii; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación IV.

<sup>21</sup> *VC*, II.lxiv; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación VI.

<sup>22</sup> Harrowing, *VC*, II.lxviii, Appearance to Virgin, *VC*, II.lxx; Harrowing, *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación V, Appearance to Virgin, *RVC* Tabla III, cántico II.

<sup>23</sup> *VC*, II.lxix; *RVC*, Tabla IV, cántico I.

with the Harrowing of Hell and Christ's Appearance to His Mother. The Harrowing is, properly speaking, out of place, since it occurs immediately after Christ's death and before the Lamentation. In the following analysis of each scene, formal and narratological subtleties will be examined with reference to Carthusian visual culture. This descriptive survey of the panels in the four registers of the retablo provides material on which to base the analysis of program that follows and the discussion of the makers that will occupy the next and final chapter.

### **Formal and Iconographical Analysis of the Main Sculpted Scenes**

#### *The Virgin of El Paular* (Fig. 4.2)

The scene of the Virgin in the company of angels has been the object of much reworking over the centuries. Indeed, since the figures have little in common stylistically with those in registers one, two and four, it seems likely that the original sculpture of Mary was removed in order to make a place for the current one. The incised figures of musical angels in the spandrels of the flanking doorways may originally have surrounded the older sculpture of the Virgin, which itself may have been placed atop the first register of narrative scenes, as Abad Castro and Martín Ansón suggested in their 1994 article.<sup>24</sup>

The elegant serenity of the Virgin is without parallel elsewhere in the altarpiece. Clearly the sculptors have paid special attention to finish in this ensemble carved almost wholly in the round, creating an effect very different from that in the crowded scenes of the narrative cycle immediately above (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6). This is another reason to suggest that the Virgin was added later. The message here is symbolic rather than

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<sup>24</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "El retablo de la Cartuja de Santa María de El Paular," 63, 84–86. In their amplified study of 2007, "Estudio histórico-artístico," they omitted this possibility.

narrative. The Virgin and Child are large-scale and near to the ground, giving the ensemble a devotional presence. As the primary dedication of the church is to the Virgin, this carving (like the one it likely replaced) effectively unites the altarpiece by providing a clear incarnational message that finds its narrative fulfillment in the reliefs above it.

The sculptural handling of the Virgin differs from that in other Marian depictions in the altarpiece. She stands holding the Child in her left arm and a cluster of grapes in her right hand. Her hair, in color and coiffure, is distinct from that of her counterparts in the first and second registers (Figs. 4.5 and 4.7). It is arranged in soft waves that cover her ears and descend to her breast, although for the most part the tresses are tucked into her blue mantle with pink lining. Indeed, she bears a striking family resemblance to the Magdalene of the Lamentation in the third register (Fig. 4.16), suggesting she was carved at about the same time and by the same maker, possibly Felipe Bigarny.

The Virgin wears a white tunic embossed with gold designs, with a V-shaped neckline decorated with orphreys and ornamented with floral motifs, whereas those of her mantle have pomegranates and vegetal patterns. Her gown, pulled up sharply from the left elbow, creates a neat diagonal that emphasizes the locking V-shapes in the draperies descending from her waist. The Child holds a nightingale in his left hand and touches it with his right, and the soft outlines of his draperies echo those of the Virgin's mantle. These rounded shapes are heightened by his extended left arm and left foot, which complete a neat oval form in the upper part of the sculpture.

The Virgin's face has a courtly beauty enhanced by her rich robes. Her face, more oval than it is the lower registers of the altarpiece, is accentuated by a high forehead, which causes her eyebrows to appear arched. Her soft, gentle glance is directed

downward, toward the bird held in Christ's hand and, by extension, toward viewers below. Her half-lidded eyes make her gaze seem exceptionally quiet, even pensive.

The Virgin and Child stand in the midst of six kneeling musical angels, each holding a different instrument. Their sharply pointed wings are picked out in a variety of colors including gold, crimson, and vermilion.<sup>25</sup> The *putti* in the upper part are later additions (Fig. 4.22): in 1657 Manuel Pereira added the reliefs at the Virgin's feet and above her head, concealing an even earlier intervention of a painted mural of *putti*, now very degraded; the restorers have left a small square visible in the upper left side. The seventeenth-century sculptor likewise raised and brought forward the sculpture of the Virgin. In the 1950s a gilded wooden canopy designed by Fernando Cruz Solís was installed; this was removed in the most recent restoration.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Presentation of the Virgin* (Fig. 4.3)<sup>27</sup>

The young Mary, distinguished as such by her diminutive size, strides upward to the temple.<sup>28</sup> Although her right arm is missing, the position of her left hand indicates that she once made a prayerful gesture. She is depicted in strict profile, wearing a red tunic topped by a dark blue mantle with gold brocade at the edges. The dark outer

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<sup>25</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón believe the Virgin may once have stood atop a half-moon surrounded by stars, a configuration whose removal they relate to Franciscan-Dominican disputes around the Immaculate Conception. I am not convinced by this possibility.

<sup>26</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico," 30–31. During the eighteenth century a silver "adornment" [*adorno*], now gone, likewise dressed the ensemble. *Ibid.*, 30, citing Dom M. Laport, *Ex Chartis Capitulum Generalium ab initio usque ad annum 1951* (In Domo Cartusiae, Admonition 2051). Hogg, "The Charterhouse of El Paular," xviii.

<sup>27</sup> *VC*, I.iii; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico iv.

<sup>28</sup> Ludolph probably drew upon the *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium* or the *Evangelium de nativitate Mariae* for the account of Mary's parents and the time she spent at the temple school. Constantius von Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha* (Leipzig: H. Mendelssohn, 1876), 55–61, 113–16.

garment emphasizes the radiance of her golden tresses, twisted into five neat spirals that descend along her back and right shoulder.

The witnessing company includes seven persons. A grey-bearded Jewish priest stands at the top of the staircase with right and (missing) left hand extended to receive Mary. He wears a variation of a bishop's mitre, decorated with gilded, embroidered medallions and a red runic, white chasuble, and a golden mantle with a brocade at the hem similar to the Virgin's. His rather stooped posture creates an unusual effect; he seems smaller than the rest of the adult company—indeed, his height equals, more or less, Mary's. Nevertheless, he towers above the entrance to the temple, marked by an ogee arch with floral decoration, a motif that resonates with such forms in the microarchitecture of the retable and the architecture of the Charterhouse of El Paular.

Saints Joachim and Anna, parents of the Virgin, stand in front of the temple before a gilded landscape—the only one in the retable—whose elevated horizon is accentuated by highly stylized alternating trees and towers. Anna, head and neck demurely covered by a white veil and wimple, is dressed in a green tunic surmounted by a red toga-like mantle that cuts across her waist and descends to the floor. She gently presses the Virgin forward as Joachim looks upon the scene approvingly, hands crossed. His jutting grey beard accentuates a prominent nose and signals his advanced age. His rich costume has several layers of clothing including a white tunic edged with golden brocade at the hem, sleeves dressed at the edge with what appears to be ermine, and a blue mantle decorated with yet more gold.

In the background two ladies and two gentlemen witness the Presentation. Both have rounded faces and wear headdresses that cup the head and exaggerate their rotund

features, short noses, and widely set eyes; their mouths are placed well up from the chin. The blue-clad lady at right is stocky in appearance; her full neck protrudes from a golden collar. Of the male attendants, the leftmost is depicted in profile, a bearded and moustached character who wears a brocaded garment and who has a gold amulet about his neck, matching the color of his peculiar turban-like headgear. He stares away from the scene, and indeed appears to be slipping off the ground, to judge by the position of his red-shod feet. The brown-bearded male witness directly behind Joachim is presented frontally, dressed in a blue mantle that complements the color of his brimmed hat with an embossed gold square decoration at center.

In comparison to the main figures, those within the temple—like the structure itself—are tiny. The building is composed of two main tiers, with an ascending triple rounded-arch arcade beneath the steps. Another rounded arch supports the base of the landing, set atop variegated columns, one marked by a spiral motif, the other by thin ribs, with similar socles and Corinthian capitals on each. The edifice itself allows much of the pure alabaster to show through the rich decoration of green and gold paint. In the arch that supports the landing, beneath the priest, a gilded lion decorates the top of the stone railing; below, a (now headless) dog sits with a bone beneath its paws. To the right, in the building proper, a small figure dressed in a red tunic and green brocaded mantle sits on the banquette with his right hand between his legs; he rests his head against his left hand in a posture of rest or sleep. A small arbor of diminutive trees is in front of the temple, whose lower arcade is composed of four arches with alternating columns decorated with small golden balls or slim ribs, each topped by a Corinthian capital. Windows are set



within the space of the arcade. In the spandrel above, three musical figures are set within roundels separated by vegetal motifs.

The gallery above is marked by squat spiral-shaped columns topped by shallow rounded arches that recall those set within the cloister of the royal palace contiguous to the charterhouse. Two figures lean out in opposite directions from the first two, and each clasps the sill with his right hand. The figures differ in age, the leftmost old, the rightmost young. The red and blue hats further differentiate them. To the left of the spandrel area above the arches, a nude figure is set within a niche. This figure is complemented by another figure set within a niche in the attic on the façade of the building. These figures—possibly representing Adam—cover their nakedness with their hands.

*Annunciation* (Fig. 4.4)<sup>29</sup>

As in the scene before it, here the visual field is neatly divided almost in half, suggesting a heavenly area at the left occupied by God the Father, Gabriel, and the Holy Spirit, and an earthly one at the right, with the bedchamber of the Virgin, whose richly brocaded pillows sit atop a bed with white sheets and red bedspread. The chamber walls are decorated with pinecone and floral motifs that recall almost exactly the brocade of the *Virgin of El Paular* at the base of the retable.<sup>30</sup> The bed is set within a red-and-gold curtained alcove. An elderly God the Father presides over the scene, holding an orb of the world in his left hand, symbol of the future victory of the Son, and raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing. His truncated figure floats above a gathering of clouds. Like the other figures, he is dressed in a red tunic surmounted by a white mantle.

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<sup>29</sup> *VC*, I.v; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico VIII.

<sup>30</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, “Estudio histórico-artístico,” 25.

Gabriel, whose blond locks with central part echo the hairstyle of the Virgin, gestures in salutation with his right hand. His wings are painted vermillion, crimson, and gold, the pigment laid atop an intricate carved pattern suggesting feathers, evidence of a give-and-take on the part of sculptor and polychromist. A diadem punctuated by an ornament at center dresses his wavy hair, and his rich vestments include a tunic, dalmatic, other outer garments, and a blue collar. In his left hand he holds a scepter encircled by a serpentine banderole, now unreadable, that probably held the words of the Hail Mary. Atop his scepter, a blue wheel recalls the cloud formation supporting God the Father. The wheel circumscribes a sunburst against which the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove moves toward the Virgin, whose gesture indicates anticipation, resignation, and submission, a range of emotions also evident in her facial expression.

A richly gilded vase containing lilies and profuse greenery further divides the scene into two halves, even if the tiled floor unites it spatially. The plumpish form of the Virgin is cut somewhat by the simple vertical lines of her red tunic, gathered at the waist by a silver belt and cut by a brocaded V-shaped neckline. Brocade also lines her blue mantle, whose interior can be seen within the folds that descend from her left and right elbows. The folds of the Virgin's garments contrast with the sharper folds of Gabriel's dress, which suggest a ruffling consistent with his sudden descent. Most of the figures' fingers are missing.

At right, Mary's book stands upon a lectern with a trefoil arch in its base and a kind of figure-eight decoration that recalls the looping forms on the vase. These Late Gothic features harmonize with the decoration at the top of Mary's bedchamber, whose floriated ogee forms likewise resonate with others in the microarchitectural ensemble. All

these undulating forms distinguish the rather dull background from which God the Father emerges.

*Visitation* (Fig. 4.5)<sup>31</sup>

The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth takes place alongside a crenellated tower whose window resembles a tabernacle. Next to the aperture, a small nude figure is set within a curtained baldachin. He stands in the position of extreme *contrapposto* also seen in the figure of Christ in the Baptism and Resurrection scenes (Figs. 4.10 and 4.18). Gothic tracery occupies the mid-level between this lower story and the tiled roof, where there is a dormer window with tracery. In the background stands a walled city with an ogee-shaped entrance gate, which fronts a city with numerous buildings topped by pointed and rounded towers of various kinds. The leftmost tower is topped by crocketed pinnacles such as those that adorn the altarpiece and likewise the main closer of the charterhouse. The crenellated walls of the city are cut by keyhole or upside-down horseshoe shapes. In the walled tower near the Marian group, a small, seated child sits in profile atop one of the towers. In the background on the right, a flag hangs from a small building with an A-frame roof, from the door of which a figure appears to emerge carrying a large jar.

The mothers-to-be clasp each other by the arm to the general approval of the one male and four female attendants: the male figure is most likely Zacharias, presented as a young man, and Elizabeth's female attendants would be Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. The features of the women are pleasant, with rounded faces and full necks. The

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<sup>31</sup> *VC*, I.vi; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico IX.

hand gestures of the two Marys add narrative excitement to the scene, and both raise their dresses in a courtly manner.

The Virgin goes without head covering, thus focusing attention on her vivid golden waves of hair, which contribute to the effect of an overall gilding in the scene. Elizabeth wears a matronly veil that suggests old age even if her youngish face belies it; this veil contrasts with the spiral-shaped head covering on the female attendant behind her. From the left, the first and third of the female attendants wear bejeweled turbans. Mary is clothed in the same red tunic with blue brocaded mantle and white lining as in the previous scene. At the hem of her mantle AVE MARIE is spelled out in relief. Zacharias wears a hat with brim folded back and a rich white outer garment with exquisite embroidered orphreys. The posture and grouping of the figures, especially the visitors, create a scene of rather lively movement enhanced by the pyramidal arrangement.

*Birth and Naming of the Baptist* (Fig. 4.6)<sup>32</sup>

This scene offers a plainly readable narrative rich in anecdotal elements consistent with Flemish and Brabantine traditions. Given its neat spatial figuration, it stands out as the most structurally coherent of the scenes in the lower register.

At the left, Elizabeth's bed is bounded by a tasseled velvet curtain of red, green, gold, and white; quatrefoil designs on the canopy and pinecone-floral motifs in the background repeat almost precisely those of the bed in the Annunciation (Fig. 4.4). Elizabeth rests following the birth, partially covered with bedclothes that nevertheless allow her cushioned upper body and sleeping gown, gathered at the neck, to show

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<sup>32</sup> *VC*, I.vi; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico X.

through. Touchingly, Zacharias caresses with his left arm the sleeping figure of his wife. He wears a richly-brocaded white outer garment with his name in Spanish, *ZAC.ARIAS*, inscribed at the hem. He sits upon a highly ornamented throne-like chair with a trefoil design on its base. Near his clad feet and red stockings, a dog (now headless) crouches and witnesses the important event.

The Virgin, coiffed in the same style as in the previous scene (Fig. 4.5), sits on an elegant stool across from Zacharias, with whom she appears to be in conversation, given the gesture she makes with her extended right and (missing) left hands. Between the two figures a draped table supports two plates with food and a golden drinking glass. The drapery covering the table falls in folds remarkably like those atop the altar in the scene of the Presentation, Purification, and Candlemas located in the register above (Fig. 4.9).

The Virgin lifts her right hand and motions to Elizabeth as though to stress the need for nourishment following the birth. The tightly contained group, which forms a pyramid accentuated by the position of the hands, provides visual closure to this first scene; the beholder's eye moves next to the scene of the care of the infant Precursor. The child sits on the lap of his wet-nurse, who pulls her awkwardly high left breast to suckle the child. At the far right, another nurse stands ready to offer a fresh towel. The Baptist holds in his lap the Lamb of God, who sits atop a red gospel book. The figure of the lamb is repeated in a relief on the chimney chute, with an indication of flames arising below that heat the interior. John's name, *IOA.NES*, adorns the canopy of the chimney, itself inscribed with graceful flamboyant bar tracery. Dividing the two scenes is a wall shelf holding household items including two beakers that flank a gilded plate and two drinking vessels— anecdotal details with analogies in Flemish or Brabantine works.

Although Elizabeth's bedcover and the standing nurse's robe have simple, regular vertical folds, those of the seated figures are more complicated and have angular breaks.

*Nativity of Christ* (Fig. 4.7)<sup>33</sup>

The scene takes place against a verdant background wherein a walled city resembles that featured in the *Visitation* (Fig. 4.5). In form, the city wall resonates with the stone dwelling that serves as the backdrop for the Savior's birth, here depicted as a richly sculpted castle complete with tower. The peculiar formation of this one-story building creates some visual confusion, as the sculptor provided a rather two-dimensional rendering of exterior and interior space. Outside the building, the tower rests upon a base inscribed with two small rounded arches. The ashlar construction of the tower body likewise incorporates a rounded-arch window, which supports a small crenellated balcony in two levels. Access to the balcony is provided by an arched doorway whose form is seen repeated throughout the Charterhouse. The façade of the structure features a shallow rounded arch (*arco carpanel*) that rests upon simple capitals at left and right; this form repeats the arch design of the cloister of the royal palace adjacent to the charterhouse. In the spandrel above, two angels grasp an intertwined vegetal motif that connects at center to an ogee-arched niche featuring what appears to be the resurrected Savior, presented as a nude man covered by a simple drapery and seeming to point to his side wound. Interestingly, this Christ features the same exaggerated *contrapposto* seen elsewhere in the altarpiece (e.g. Fig. 4.10). The niche breaks the string-coursing in the crenellated roof, which recedes to form an odd trapezoidal shape. The design of the structural supports of the tower is contrasted at left with a slender column that supports

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<sup>33</sup> *VC*, I.ix; *RVC*, Tabla I, cánticos XIII–XVI.

yet another ogee-shaped niche that displays a nude male warrior with a shield and sword. The interior of the building features three rounded doorways whose configuration offers a strange triangulated view inward.

The Holy Family is set just before the building in a garden bounded by an irregularly bricked wall that partially encloses them; the ox and ass look on from beyond a trough. The Virgin, with undulating golden locks accented by her richly carved golden tunic and a dark blue mantle with embroidered edges and an over-all pattern of gold stars, kneels with hands clasped in prayer. The nude Child, whose horizontal placement links the figures of Mary and Joseph to form the base of a triangular composition, lies upon a sunburst rather than in a cradle. His golden curls echo the Virgin's hair. Joseph, holding a wax taper in both hands, and Mary look down at the Child. Whereas the Virgin's tunic is picked out in red, Joseph's is highlighted by green, topped by a white mantle with red lining.

Outside the walled garden—a reference to the garden contiguous with the cells of the priestly brothers?—the Annunciation to the Shepherds takes place. An angel with wavy gold-blond hair similar to Gabriel's in the *Annunciation* (Fig. 4.4), holds a banderole that announces the event. The triangular arrangement of the three figures repeats visually that of the Holy Family to the right. The angel's facial features, bodily configuration, and wing formation echo those of the musical angels surrounding the *Virgin of El Paular* (Fig. 4.2) and the angels set within the spandrels above the altarpiece doorways (Fig. 4.1).

The angel looks down at a shepherd garbed in a white tunic wearing a red hooded garment. To his left, a shepherd similarly garbed, though with bright red boots, sits

looking directly out of the picture plane. In his right hand, he holds a staff for pasturing the sheep that stand before him.

*Epiphany* (Fig. 4.8)<sup>34</sup>

The Adoration of the Magi takes place before a rather nondescript rectangular house with one window on its right side, the whole fronted by a large porch whose gable is incised with a cut-out design of slender gilded beams, below which a shallow rounded arch frames the Holy Family and a nursemaid. The sculptor and polychromist here allude to the guiding star through a sculptural adornment on the building. Two walled cities appear in the background, probably to suggest the long journey the Magi have taken to see the Savior. Highly stylized trees with a geometrical, almost quartz-like configuration dot the landscape between and before the walled cities.

The figures are arranged in a pyramidal formation emphasized by the pitched roof of the porch. The Virgin sits upon two velvet cushions embroidered in gold at the edges. She wears a gold tunic and blue mantle whose brocade contains rubies and emeralds, and these colors likewise appear in an embroidered piece at her breast. Joseph, dressed and coifed much as he was in the *Nativity* (Fig. 4.7), stands behind the Virgin and defers to the royal personages paying homage to the Christ Child. Mary's attendant, wearing an elegant turban with a gold band and emerald brooch, stands behind, clutching a handkerchief.

Mary supports the infant Christ on her knees, and wraps him in a cloth as he reaches forth to accept the slightly open cup offered by the kneeling king. The other two kings stand witnessing the presentation of the first gift. The second king, somewhat

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<sup>34</sup> *VC*, I.xi; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico XIX.



younger, stands just behind the kneeling monarch, his hand held against a hat with an upturned visor adorned by a brooch. A sash with pinecone decoration—a motif seen elsewhere in the register—extends from his right shoulder and across his waist, and his mantle is likewise embossed with floral and beaded decorations.

The third king and his page are both presented as Africans. Only this king wears a crown. Although his gaze is directed toward the scene, his body turns in an elegant *contrapposto* as he reaches down to his page, who looks up at him. The page wears a mini-version of the king's outfit, richly adorned with floral motifs and ermine. Their standing posture allows a full view of their hosiery and footwear, shoes on the boy and knee-length boots on the king. A cloth is draped over the arms of the page, a motif that accentuates the liturgical significance of the scene. The sculptor demonstrates strong visual variety in the presentation of these cups, which probably mimic, in many respects, the chalices used in the liturgical services at El Paular.

*Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple* (Fig. 4.9)<sup>35</sup>

The figures appear within a temple interior, whose space is marked by an elaborate embossed golden wall hanging adorned with floral motifs. They are arranged in three distinct groups of male, then female, then male figures, possibly suggesting a segregation of the sexes appropriate to the temple space.<sup>36</sup>

At the center, the Virgin kneels with hands joined in prayer before the Christ Child, who sits atop the altar on a cloth set out by the priest, another clear reference to the

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<sup>35</sup> *VC*, I.xii; *RVC*, Tabla I, cántico XXI.

<sup>36</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón have noted that the male group at far right were added at a later date, in order to increase the size of the compartment. Indeed, the sculptural revision is evident from a close vantage point.

offering of the mass. The Virgin is dressed as she is in earlier scenes (Figs. 4.6 and 4.7), the brocade on her mantle again spelling out *Ave Marie*. She wears a red tunic beneath her mantle, brocaded at the neck. Her hair, in contrast to earlier depictions, is tucked into the mantle rather than spilling out in twisted strands over her shoulders. Her drapery is treated with sculptural bravado, as is the priest's.

Mary is attended by five women, all richly dressed. The woman in the center holds a candle, a reference to Candlemas, while the woman behind her, dressed in white, clutches the arm of a woman in green dress and white overgarment, the color white also alluding to this celebration. The basket with three turtledoves signifies the purification of the Virgin according to Old Testament religious practice.

In the group of male figures at the left, Joseph, dressed in a white stole with gold patterns, stands behind the Christ Child. Behind him, a turbaned figure with brooch lays a hand on his left shoulder. Two other figures look on as the priest performs the liturgical service. The altar itself is adorned with a gold-hemmed cloth that falls in neat vertical folds from the edges of the table, itself incised with quatrefoil and key-shaped tracery patterns. At the far right, two male figures complete the scene. The one at the rear extends a cupped hand as though in expectation of alms. The figure before him strides forward and a small dog sits looking up at him.

Following this scene, the narrative sequence of the altarpiece advances rapidly to Christ's adulthood, skipping over his childhood and the miracles of his early adulthood, which were the subjects of extensive chapters in the work of both Ludolph of Saxony and Juan de Padilla. Likewise, after this the scenes are generally less crowded, partly due to

the larger size of the visual fields. They lack the anecdotal detail of the scenes in the lower register, most of which take place in interiors rather than in open landscapes.

*Baptism of Christ* (Fig. 4.10)<sup>37</sup>

Christ is presented frontally at the center of the main grouping. In the distance stand two distinct walled cities, their exteriors pierced by the same upside-down keyhole windows, bulbous towers, and wall crenellations that appear in renditions of cities in registers one, two, and four. Likewise, the landscape is marked by the abstractly rendered groves of trees seen elsewhere. This goes to support the idea that the same sculptural team worked on all of these scenes.

Christ lifts his left hand in a gesture of blessing, his elbow gently supported by John the Baptist to the right. With his right hand, Christ covers his genital area, itself concealed by a gilt-hemmed girdle tied in an elegant knot at his waist. This gesture of modesty, which also calls attention to Christ's physical incarnation, complements that made by Christ's mother in the *Lamentation* in the third register (Fig. 4.16).<sup>38</sup>

Christ stands in a contorted *contrapposto* that causes his legs to bow severely at the knees. He is immersed calf-length in a highly stylized wading pool signifying the River Jordan. The undulations in the water resonate visually with the long wavy cascades of water pouring from John's hand.<sup>39</sup> The Baptist is clothed in a golden camel hide cut in a highly regular pattern; the camel's neck and head snake down and outward from

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<sup>37</sup> *VC*, I.xxi; *RVC*, Tabla II, cántico I.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, Leo Steinberg's study of such gestures and their meanings. *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> John's using his palm to cup the water is consistent with Northern iconography, while the motif of water flowing from a cup or shell is more usual in Italian iconography. Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico," 49.

between his legs. The gilding of the hide is repeated visually in the brocade of his red mantle. John, presented as more or less equal in age to Christ, stands in a similarly extreme posture, his right leg splayed awkwardly outward and left leg buckled beneath his gown. His suntanned skin contrasts sharply with Christ's luminous flesh, where the alabaster, with some slight rouging, is allowed to stand on its own.

At the far lower right, the haloed Lamb of God sits upon a large red book locked at the side with two clasps, beneath a standard of victory in the form of a cross with a billowing flag. The Lamb appeared earlier in the scene of the Birth and Naming of the Baptist (Fig. 4.6), a visual motif tying together these two episodes from John's life. The lamb's gaze is, in effect, met by that of the camel's head on the Baptist's garment, as though the two are in visual communion.

To the left of Christ, two angels witness the scene. Both are clothed in heavily decorated dalmatics, emphasizing the liturgical aspect of the scene. The angel at left wears a diadem with a central brooch; he holds a garment in readiness for Christ. The angel to his right holds a cloth to dry Christ's body. The pattern of feathers on the angels' wings provides a visual echo of the camel hide that covers the body of the Baptist.

*Last Supper* (Fig. 4.11)<sup>40</sup>

The Last Supper takes place in a shallow interior whose visual compression is accentuated by a gold wall hanging with a vegetal motif similar to that seen in the *Presentation in the Temple* (Fig. 4.9), although here the hanging appears to sag at intervals as would a suspended cloth. The grouping is arranged to give maximum attention to the varied facial types of the characters, from the young John to the elderly

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<sup>40</sup> *VC*, II.liii-lvii; *RVC*, Tabla III, cánticos VII–X.

Peter. Significantly, only Judas's face is hidden from view, all the better to draw the viewer's attention to the gilded moneybag he holds behind his back in his left hand.

This tightly organized group, in which the figures, with the exception of John, are almost perfectly equidistant from one another and placed in three neat rows of nearly identical height, nevertheless stands out for its variety of facial types, hairstyles, and dress. The Savior is the only figure in the group dressed in royal purple, with gold at the borders of his sleeves and the neck of his garment. His halo is inscribed with a cross that recalls the *fleur-de-lys* motif of the Dominican coat of arms. Jesus bends his right arm to support the head of John, who appears to be sitting on his lap rather than at his right. With his left hand, Christ blesses the sleeping apostle as well as the food on the table, which includes loaves of bread and a suckling pig, an Iberian twist on the usual roast or rack of lamb. Five of the twelve apostles hold pieces of pork or bread to their mouths, and two others raise drinking vessels. Their bare feet may allude to the washing that has taken place immediately before.

Despite the quiet order in the scene's spatial disposition, the variety of costumes, bodily postures, and hand gestures, along with the suggestion of eating, make this a somewhat lively scene, visually enhanced by the variety of chair designs in the foreground. The folds in the tablecloth are quite regular in their hard verticality, as we have seen earlier in the table draperies in the *Birth and Naming of the Baptist* (Fig. 4.6) and the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (Fig. 4.9), features that further unite stylistically registers one, two, and four.

*Arrest of Christ* (Fig. 4.12)<sup>41</sup>

The two principal figures in this narrative, Christ and Judas, stand at center, their outlines forming an oval that divides the groups flanking them. The division is further enhanced by the strict verticals of the raised halberds that cut the visual field into neat thirds. The action in general takes place in a landscape described by a level row of regularly placed olive trees of the same abstract geometrical design seen elsewhere (Fig. 4.10), amongst which stands a tiled rectangular building of basilica form with one tower at the southeast end.

The figure farthest to the left, an elderly man using his sword as a cane, steps forward in an extreme gesture. Next to him a helmeted soldier dressed in mail and other protective gear seems to be in dialogue with him. The two figures in the background of this scene are distinguished by their different facial types and headwear. One raises a lantern and the other, dressed in bright red and green, holds a halberd with a crescent-shaped blade.

Judas is distinguished again by his moneybag, held behind him in a bizarre double-jointed fashion. He touches Christ's left shoulder. Although Judas stands immediately behind Christ, their bodies mirror each other uncannily: Judas lunges forward with weight on his right leg, whereas Christ leans forward on his right. Christ is standing in the familiar *contrapposto* shifting up his left thigh, causing his draperies to descend in a neat leftward curve. He holds the ear of Malchus in his right hand, and the fallen victim, left leg crossed over the extended right, touches his head in agony. Responding to Christ's admonition, a fairly corpulent Peter, like Christ open-mouthed as though in conversation, withdraws his sword. Only Peter and Judas gaze at Christ. The

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<sup>41</sup> *VC*, II.lix; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación I.

sleeping figure to the right is recognizable as John by his short pageboy cut and youthful facial features, identical to those in the *Last Supper* (Fig. 4.11). The differences in details might be attributable to changing polychromy over the years. The positioning of an outsized chalice on the hilltop behind John, a vessel as big as some of the trees near which it stands, likewise confirms his identity; the contour of the mountain visually links John to the chalice. The scene is bounded to the right by the mountain and to the left by a wooden structure, a kind of shed.

*Flagellation* (Fig. 4.13)<sup>42</sup>

The visually confusing architecture of this scene divides the panel into four equal parts. The left portion, featuring Pilate and a guard, was added after the creation of the main section centering on Christ and his tormentors.<sup>43</sup>

At left a rounded arch set within an ashlar wall is topped by a gilded ogee with an ornamental crest as its apex. Pilate, seated in a simple gold chair whose right side is concealed by his ample red and gold robe, wears a turban, giving him a Moorish air. Behind him stands a guard wearing a green tunic highlighted by a red belt and a golden brooch. With his right hand, he motions toward the violent scene taking place, and with the left he holds a halberd upright, taking the place of a column that was probably concealed or omitted when the addition was made; in any case, the reddish roof above the three arches framing the action of Christ and his tormenters blends into the greenish ashlar construction of Pilate's chamber. The remaining three columns, the middle one concealed by two tormenters, differ in the ornamentation of their capitals and bases. Two

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<sup>42</sup> *VC*, II.lxii; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación II.

<sup>43</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico," 50–51.

of the columns are polychromed to suggest the appearance of marble. Each is topped by a shallow rounded arch seen in many of the other scenes in the retable. Spatial recession is suggested by the placement of two pilasters topped by triangulated ribs joined at their apex by a boss. The bases of these columns are concealed by the figures in front of them. The vertical position of the halberds gives order to the scene, providing an architectural division emphasized even further by the columns.

Christ stands beside a polygonal column, his hands bound tightly by a gold tasseled rope. He has a look of quiet shock, especially evident in his hollowed cheeks. This depiction of Christ bears a strong resemblance to the others in this register (Figs. 4.9–4.12). The body is handled with a lack of anatomical precision, characterized by a somewhat lumpy musculature. His hands and feet are more anatomically precise than is his nearly nude body, whose corpulence is emphasized by the voluminous gilt-edged girdle. The arms and shoulders are particularly awkward. The sculptor clearly has a formula for handling knees, since Christ's are carved in a manner identical to the right knee of the tormenter at his right.

Within the greenish-bluish interior, Christ is assaulted by two soldiers. The figure at left wears a gold tunic trimmed in gold, a red skullcap that covers his ears, and a red belt with purse attached. The attacker wears hosiery and boots, their leather creases handled skillfully by the sculptor. The tormentor at left raises a whip to beat Christ: part of the handle has disappeared. The unusual twist of the tormentor's *contrapposto*, where all pressure descends to the right leg, creates a sense of extreme movement when viewed from the ground, emphasized by the upraised arms. This suggests that the carver took into account the spectator's view from below.



At the right, the other attacker stands in a similar pose, although his hands are lowered as if to gather momentum for another swing of his whip. This attacker is dressed in a much richer costume. Indeed, the embossed gilded stamps on the puffed sleeves recall similar designs in the robes of the angels in the *Baptism of Christ* (Fig. 4.10). His green- and gold-striped outer garment matches the colors of his cap. Behind him a figure in strict profile wears a red costume and matching hat with gold plume; the vertical position of his halberd recalls that of the soldier-page standing behind Pilate. The red-and-white checked floor heightens the demarcation of these figures and recession into shallow space; it likewise unifies the entire space, including the figures added later.

*Way to Calvary* (Fig. 4.14)<sup>44</sup>

The *Way to Calvary* takes place in a shallow exterior marked by a mountainous landscape sculpted in low relief and lightly polychromed. As the character with the greatest physical presence, both in height and volume, Christ dominates the scene, directing his gaze toward the viewer. A severe pyramidal configuration is created by the diagonal orientation of the vertical and transverse beams of the cross. These lines are further emphasized by the directional push of the bodies of Christ and the two tormentors who flank him. The crush to the right is further emphasized by the direction of the sword of the soldier at Christ's left, as well as by the bugle held by the figure at Christ's right. The harsh, contorted, and sunburned facial features of these tormentors stand out. The stooped posture of the figure at right and the crumpling of his white tunic create the impression of extreme physical exertion. Suspended from the red rope that encircles his waist is a golden hammer, anticipating the Crucifixion.

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<sup>44</sup> *VC*, II.lxii; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación III.

If there is a certain compositional stasis in the rendering, the directional pull of the sculptural ensemble nevertheless causes an effective tension, sandwiching Christ in a crushing, claustrophobic scene of masculine violence, the Marys and Veronica being notably absent.

The laurel wreath<sup>45</sup> on the tormentor before Christ seems to mark him as Roman rather than Jewish—although the figures with the ugly twisted faces are outfitted as soldiers. Otherwise, the majority of figures wear late medieval dress or, in the case of Pilate, Moorish. Only Christ wears a gown of ancient style.

If the passive, blanched, gaunt, and weary face of Christ, with its sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, relay to the viewer in a very moving way the extreme physical distress of his ordeal, his regal purple garment masks the effects of torture. He is crowned with thorns, suggesting the Mocking that has already taken place. The sole specks of blood to be seen are those dripping lightly from this crown. His facial features repeat those of the *Flagellation* (Fig. 4.13), though more skillfully handled; we are far from the youthful Christ of the *Last Supper* or the *Arrest* (Figs. 4.11 and 4.12). Christ's body under the weight of the cross is emphasized by the regular tubular folds of the draperies on his purple gown—the same he was wearing during the events of the evening before. At his feet, the folds become more sharply crumpled. Christ and the tormentor to his right are the only figures shown barefooted.

In contrast to the brutal sets of the faces of the figures immediately surrounding Christ, others appear more tranquil, even handsome, especially those depicted in the company of Pilate. Likewise, the figure and dress of Simon of Cyrene announce an

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<sup>45</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, “Estudio histórico-artístico,” see this as a “classicizing” feature, together with the rope-bearer’s “coin-style” profile.

aristocratic elegance that departs sharply from the garb of the figures who tow Christ by a golden rope cinched about his waist, or those who pull his hair and beard.<sup>46</sup> Pilate and his page have had a costume change since the last scene, although their facial features and physical bearing remain the same. Both are shown on horseback, their elegantly bridled animals distinguished by their rich polychromy.<sup>47</sup>

*Crucifixion* (Fig. 4.15)<sup>48</sup>

The distribution of figures in this scene into two discrete and symmetrical groupings focuses maximum attention on the crucified Christ, whose cross stands against a flat mural painting, one of two scenes—this one and the next—in which relief sculpture is not employed at all for the background. The mural painting features numerous edifices with towers and rocks and trees. The Savior, still wearing the crown of thorns, appears to be just at the moment of expiration, eyes still open, thus causing his mother to swoon.<sup>49</sup> Attention is focused on the blood emanating from Christ's five wounds, particularly that on the side, which drips onto his girdle, the same gold-trimmed cloth of modesty that he wears in the *Flagellation* and the *Lamentation* (4.13 and 4.16). Though the girdle, extending from his waist to his left knee, is knotted as it is in the *Flagellation*, Christ's

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<sup>46</sup> For these and other artistic and narrative motifs related to the violence of Christ's passion, see James Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*.

<sup>47</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico," have related the scene of the *Crucifixion* to boilerplate originals of Schongauer, and, less convincingly, Albrecht Dürer, and have noted the consistency with a like scene by Felipe Bigarny for the *trasaltar* of Burgos Cathedral, even if the latter shows greater visual variety and extravagance. Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico," 51. They believe the same engraving or engravings inspired the imported Flemish Passion altarpiece in the Salamanca chapel of the Church of San Lesmes in Burgos, or the scene of the *Way to Calvary* on the "retable façade" of Santa María de Aranda de Duero. Ibid. 51, n. 106.

<sup>48</sup> *VC*, II.lxiii; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación IV.

<sup>49</sup> Reindert Falkenberg, "The Decorum of Grief: Notes on the Representation of Mary at the Cross in Late Medieval Netherlandish Literature and Painting," in *From Icon to Cartoon: A Tribute to Sixten Ringbom* (Helsinki: Taidehistorian Seura, 1995), 65–89; Amy Neff, "The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *Art Bulletin* 80.2 (June 1998): 254–73.

body is sculpted with greater skill, as seen in the clearly articulated muscles of the arms, chest, legs, and abdomen, and the bumpy terminations of his ribs and prominent veins in his feet. The barely polychromed alabaster of the body is again luminous.

The witnesses are grouped into two tight sculptural configurations set within a shallow space. To the left, the two Marys stand behind John. The woman to the right surely represents the Magdalene, given the attention to her long hair and beautiful facial features; she resembles in both the *Virgin of El Paular* (Fig. 4.2), suggesting both were carved by the same artist. The *Virgin of the Crucifixion*, whose downcast expression yields a three-quarter view that obscures her features, has just fallen to the ground. The position of her arms and rather large veined hands (with fingers missing from the left hand) emphasize the pyramidal configuration of her sculptural outline, and countered only by the sharp V-shape of her draperies. In this scene, the Virgin wears the royal purple, topped by a gold-trimmed blue mantle with veil pulled over her head; the other Marys also wear veils, and the Magdalene is given a richly wrought gown. The Evangelist appears to have advanced in age; in previous scenes his boyishness was accentuated (e.g. Fig. 4.11). He wears a white gown embossed with golden *fleur-de-lys* patterns and topped with an overcoat buttoned at the neck; the brilliant crimson lining is visible since the gown is swept backward over his right shoulder.

The group at right seems to pull away from Christ physically, this movement accentuated by the direction of the halberds. The gazes of the executioners go in opposite directions, contrasting sharply with those of the mourners. The tight group at right presents three soldiers, one in helmet and armor clutching a sheathed sword, echoed in the gesture of his left hand pointing to Christ. This rather spare group forces the viewer's

gaze to travel downward from Christ's own, then left to the mourners, then downward to the group of executioners, and then once more to Christ, whereupon the visual sequence begins anew. The absence of a sculpted landscape makes the group stand out in an especially compelling way.

*Lamentation* (Fig. 4.16)<sup>50</sup>

This scene of the Fifth Anguish or *quinta angustia*, as it is known in Spanish, also takes place against a painted rather than sculpted background. Just below the transverse beam of the cross, a walled city rises up from the horizon, notable for various towers and set within alternating trees. The landscape is handled with a *sfumato* technique, seen especially in the cityscape in the background.

The gilded cross has lost its tip, visible in the two earlier scenes, and now is configured as a *Tau*. The visual field has been widened at the right edge, like the scene of the *Flagellation* (Fig. 4.13), so that Christ and Mary are no longer at the center of the composition. Since the added figure—presumably a third Mary—bears a strong resemblance to the others, it is likely that she was added at about the same time and by the same sculptor.<sup>51</sup> She wears the same dress as the other two Marys, a white mantle over a red gown, the mantle skillfully carved in crisp interlocking V-patterns that descend almost to the ground, echoing the pattern of the gown of the Virgin in the *Crucifixion* (Fig. 4.15). This figure holds her hands in prayer but is nevertheless isolated spatially from the primary group, which fits neatly under the transverse beam of the gilded cross.

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<sup>50</sup> *VC*, II.lxv; *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación VI.

<sup>51</sup> As observed by Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, “Estudio histórico-artístico.”

At the base of the cross, the Virgin, dressed as she is in the previous scene, holds the dead Christ, his body seemingly locked in *rigor mortis* and his right arm dropping to the floor, where it rests palm up. His facial features and expression are identical to those of the previous Passion scenes (Figs. 4.11–4.14). Likewise, he wears the same gold-trimmed girdle, although the drooping sash at his left hip is concealed from view. His left hand stretches down across the girdle, as though lifted up by the Virgin, whose right arm circles his lower waist. His legs and slightly crossed feet echo their position on the cross. To the left of the Virgin, Mary Magdalene kneels, richly dressed in a gold gown that opens at the neck to reveal a bodice. She wears a white apron. Her long hair is now neatly pulled back and largely hidden by a cap. Her right hand is inserted in a jar she holds with her left, as though she is about to apply the ointment to Christ's body. It is noteworthy that all portions of Christ's body touching the ground, that is his right hand and both feet, rest on the gowns of either the Virgin or the Magdalene. The kneeling Evangelist supports Christ's head with (presumably) both hands, and he wears the same gown as in the previous scene.

Behind the main group, two Marys flank the centrally located figures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. The two male helpers, richly garbed in gold gowns with fancy dyed-ermine collars, hold articles associated with the deposition of Christ from the cross. Joseph has a pair of pincers in his left hand and motions as though in conversation with Nicodemus, who likewise holds something—likely the nails—in both hands. The woman at left, Mary or perhaps Veronica, holds, in an odd iconographical instance, the crown of thorns, which is of the same shape and color as in the two previous

Passion scenes. Christ's white skin is equaled in fairness only by that of the Virgin, whose face is nevertheless largely hidden by her head covering.

*Harrowing of Hell and Christ's Appearance to the Virgin* (Fig. 4.17)<sup>52</sup>

Two distinct scenes are carved in this panel in two separate zones. The upper zone, neatly separated from the lower by a horizon line, features a walled city with the same architectural features as those in the first and second registers of the retable, notably the upside-down keyhole windows in the city walls (Figs. 4.5 and 4.7). Christ, dressed simply in a rather small and tight-fitting girdle, stands in a position of extreme *contrapposto*, whereby all weight is placed on his left leg, thus causing a severe inflection at the waist. He raises his hands to show his wounds; others are visible on his side and on his right foot. All these marks have a visual echo in the bright crimson lining of his white gown, cinched at the neck with a brooch.

The Virgin sits in a curved ribbed chair in front of the building, dressed likewise in a red gown with white headdress. Mother and Son are somewhat crudely carved, their bodies squat and thickset, suggesting, perhaps, execution by workshop assistants entrusted with marginal work. To the right of the middle building, a dense arbor of trees is carved in the same abstract manner as those in scenes in the two lowest registers of the retable (Figs. 4.10 and 4.12).

A thin stretch of green lawn extends from the left of the visual field all the way to the right, where it ascends to top a simple architectural structure from which a man emerges through a round-arched doorway. The figure, dressed in rustic clothes, has the

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<sup>52</sup> Harrowing, *VC*, II.lxviii, Appearance to Virgin, *VC*, II.lxx; Harrowing, *RVC*, Tabla III, lamentación V, Appearance to Virgin, *RVC*, Tabla III, cántico II.

ears of an ass and carries a large drinking container, suggesting that he is leaving a tavern.<sup>53</sup> To his immediate right a seated figure almost blends into the landscape. It is probably significant that these figures are situated between earth and hell; indeed, the artistic handling of the horizon line places them more firmly in the lower realm, just above the bright red ear of the monster below.

Below this second horizon line, a rocky landscape, dotted with the same geometrical trees, acts as backdrop for the lower realm. It is dominated by a gaping, bluish-green Mouth of Hell that opens in a huge circle from which emerge the first parents as well as holy persons of the Old Dispensation. The face has a short stubby nose, red eyes picked out in silver, and a line of highly regular and pointed white teeth, some missing. The persons exiting seem to be somewhat mired in the gooey lower part of the mouth, which looks like a kind of vast cesspool. A tiny nude figure appears in the *contrapposto* pose familiar in scenes in registers one, two, and four appears in the Hellmouth's left ear. This soul, with his hands joined and legs crossed, appears in a pose resembling a curtsy.

Christ, robed in a white gown with generous drapery folds, his wounds visible on right hand and leg, extends his hand to the emerging Adam, a grizzled figure (who has lost a section of his left arm). Adam and Christ form a sharp pyramid, and the position of Christ's staff, sticking through the body of a fallen devil lying between them, serves both to join and to separate the figures. The staff points axially to the resurrected Christ above.

Directly behind Adam, a lovely, youthful Eve steps forth. Her facial features recall those of the Virgin and other female figures in the two lower registers (Figs. 4.4–

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<sup>53</sup>Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Estudio histórico-artístico."



4.7 and 4.9). Eve is accompanied by two male figures and one female.<sup>54</sup> Genitalia are given prominent display in the figures of the two standing males and the female at far right. Although Eve's nudity is concealed by Adam's left buttock, her left breast and rouged nipple are nevertheless visible. The figures of the two females likewise have much in common in hairstyle, body type, and physical posture with other carved figures from the two lowest registers of the retable. The fair complexion of the female figures contrasts with the darker skin of the male figures other than Christ.

An assortment of gruesome figures, some with wings and others with tails and animal heads, swirl around and below Christ and the mouth of Hell. The figure at upper left appears to have a pair of eyes set in his lower abdomen, from which a large phallus juts out. The legs of the figure at lower left are twisted into a violent pose. Another face peers out from the breast of the prone figure of the devil pierced by the staff of Christ. At his feet what appears to be an ox head is squashed by the weight of the mouth of Hell. At far right, a diminutive red figure has the appearance of a grotesque baby with a sinister smile. Anatomically, the figure appears to be female: she has small breasts, and her widely-spread legs reveal her pudenda. The licentious depiction and muddy coloring of these hellish figures is surely meant as a counterpoint to the innocent nudity of those redeemed from hell.

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<sup>54</sup> Ludolph of Saxony mentions two deceased sons of the prophet Simeon, Carinus and Leucius, and they may figure among those in limbo. Ludolph recounts that the two wrote on tablets in the temple how those in limbo rejoiced when Christ descended into hell and how sad the demons were. Here Ludolph appears to quote from the *Evangelium Nazaraeorum*.

*Resurrection* (Fig. 4.18)<sup>55</sup>

The Resurrection takes place amid two fortified cities separated by the familiar trees marked by quartz-like abstract forms. As in the scene before it and others of the first and second registers, the sculptor has created two stacked visual zones suggesting the near and the far-off. Otherwise, the orderly distribution of this scene contrasts distinctly with the visual cacophony of the *Harrowing of Hell*. Christ, his right hand raised in blessing, wears yet again the gold-trimmed girdle, indicating that the sculptor of this scene was interested in maintaining visual continuity with the work of the sculptor of register three (Figs. 4.10, 4.13, 4.15, 4.16).

As in the upper part of the scene of the *Harrowing of Hell* (Fig. 4.17), Christ wears a white cape with gold trim, clasped at the neck with a gold brooch. The rich red of his gown, caught at the right elbow, emphasizes in its lines the severe imbalance of his bodily pose, with the right foot slightly raised from the ground and all weight falling on the left leg. The left hip is considerably higher than the right. Christ's facial features bear a remarkable resemblance to renditions of his face in the second register (Figs. 4.10–4.12), but not with those of the third register (Figs. 4.13–4.16).

Christ holds a standard with a cross and flag similar to those of the Lamb of God in the scenes below (Fig. 4.10). Four sleeping soldiers surround him and he is adored by a diminutive kneeling angel atop the raised slab of the sarcophagus. The tomb has a distinctly antique appearance not present in the majority of architectural forms in the altarpiece, although it repeats, in some particulars—notably the roundels—architectural features in the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* (Fig. 4.3). The two soldiers in the plane nearest to the viewer wear similar armor, although a shield falls from the back of

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<sup>55</sup> *VC*, II.lxix; *RVC*, Tabla IV, cántico I.

the figure at left. In the second plane, the figures bear similar helmets and hold their halberds in like positions.

### **The El Paular Retable: State of the Question**

The altarpiece has been the subject of continuous if laconic commentary since its installation. Early mentions include those in the records of the Carthusian Chapter General, inventories of the charterhouse related to repairs and cleaning, and travel accounts, notably the *Viaje de España* by Antonio Ponz (1772). The account of El Paular given by Ponz is still highly instructive for its description of the setting, architectural disposition, and artistic embellishment of the charterhouse. Ponz described the various paintings and sculptures in the monastery and referred to them as a *remedio* for the solitude and silence embedded in the *Consuetudines* of the Carthusian Order.<sup>56</sup> He described the retable and its house in this way:

The amplitude of the Church is fitting for use in Monasteries of the Carthusian Fathers, with a main retable of marble, very praiseworthy, of the style closest to the time of the restoration of the Fine Arts. All that is known is that it is a work of the fifteenth century, and was a gift of King Don Juan II, who had it brought over from Genoa at a cost of eight thousand ducats.<sup>57</sup>

From this account it seems that Ponz believed the sculpted retable to be a work of the early Italian Renaissance produced in Genoa at some time before the passing of Juan II (d. 1454). His observation would shape much early commentary of the modern period

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<sup>56</sup> Ponz reserved his harshest criticism for the baroque *transparente* that abuts the former sacristy. He recommended neoclassical statutes of the founders for the cloister and suggested a different planting scheme for the garden.

<sup>57</sup> Antonio Ponz, *Viaje de España*, tomo X, carta IV (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1947), 875. “La amplitud de la iglesia es competente y como se usa en los monasterios de padres Cartujos, con un retablo mayor de mármol, muy estimable, en aquel estilo más cercano a la restauración de las bellas artes. Sólo consta ser obra del siglo XV y haberla costado el rey don Juan II, quien la hizo traer de Génova, habiendo costado su conducción ocho mil ducados.”

concerning the retable's date and authorship.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, this notion has been passed on even into the twenty-first century.<sup>59</sup>

The debate on authorship has primarily homed in on the artistic centers of Burgos and Toledo. Among those scholars who have opted for the Burgalese school of Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, four authorities stand out: August Mayer (1923 and 1928), Antonio González (1947), María Elena Gómez Moreno (1951), José María de Azcárate (1990), and Cruz Valdovinos (1995).<sup>60</sup> Also a supporter of a Burgos origin, Rafael Domínguez Casas (1993) connected the retable with the work of architect Simón de Colonia.<sup>61</sup> Of those scholars who have attributed the work to Toledan makers, and particularly to the workshop of architect Juan Guas, two scholars are especially noteworthy: Beatrice Gilman Proske (1951) and J. V. L. Brans (1952).<sup>62</sup>

In their recent study, Abad Castro and Martín Ansón entertained all these possibilities—that is, Gil Siloe, Simón de Colonia, and Juan Guas—and further suggested potential intervention by the elusive sculptor Sebastián de Almonacid, whose name

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<sup>58</sup> Abad Castro and Ansón Martín, “Estudios histórico-artístico,” 16.

<sup>59</sup> See, for instance, López Díez, *Los Trastámara en Segovia*, who cites the study by Abad Castro and Ansón Martín but nevertheless repeats the information from Ponz. See also Jacques Heers, “El Mediterráneo como área de tránsito,” in *El Renacimiento Mediterráneo: Viajes de artistas e itinerarios de obras entre Italia, Francia y España en el siglo XV* (Madrid: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2001), 133–45, 145.

<sup>60</sup> August Mayer, “El retablo mayor de la iglesia de la Cartuja del Paular,” *Buletín de la Sociedad de Excursiones Españolas* 31 (1923): 257-59; Antonio González, *Estampas Cartujanas* (Bilbao: Vizcaina, 1947), n.p.; María Elena Gómez Moreno, *Breve historia de la escultura española* (Madrid: Editorial Dossat, 1951); José María de Azcárate, *Arte gótico en España* (Madrid: Cátedra 1990), 257; and José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos (1995).

<sup>61</sup> Rafael Domínguez Casas, *Arte y etiqueta de los Reyes Católicos : artistas, residencias, jardines y bisques* (Madrid: Alpuerto, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> Beatrice Gilman Proske, *Castilian Sculpture Gothic to Renaissance* (New York: Hispanic Society of America 1951), 194; J. V. L. Brans, *Isabel la Católica y el arte hispano flamenco* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1952), 61; Brans, *Le monastère royal de Sainte Marie de El Paular* (Madrid: Gráficas González, 1954), 48-55; and Brans, “Juan Guas escultor,” *Goya* 36 (1960): 362–67.

appears frequently in documents,<sup>63</sup> who was called to work by Juan Guas in 1485 as lone sculptor for the Puerta del Álamo at the later-destroyed Segovia Cathedral.<sup>64</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón likewise offered convincing evidence to suggest the participation of Felipe Bigarny in the third register of the retablo, based upon stylistic similarities with Bigarny's work on a *Bearing of the Cross* for the *trasaltar* at Burgos Cathedral.<sup>65</sup>

Abad Castro and Martín Ansón did especially compelling work on the various stages of creation of the retablo, offering several possibilities for staggered construction phases (Fig. 4.19). Their earliest thoughts as to the original form of the retablo (Fig. 4.20), put forward in the 1994 article, seems most plausible. The scholars were able to determine that there was a clear change of plan, or perhaps an error in the execution of a preliminary design.<sup>66</sup> They noted that the second and third registers contain additional scenes incised and joined to the existing ones. These amplified the scenes to satisfy the requirements of a new design, possibly when a stepped altarpiece was altered to conform to the line of the wall. Abad Castro notes that in register two, additions were made to the interior sides of the *Presentation, Purification and Candlemas*, and likewise to the *Arrest*

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<sup>63</sup> Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, "Éstudio histórico-artístico" (2007). On Sebastián de Toledo, José Maria Azcárate Ristori, *The Dictionary of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 28: 330–31; A. Durán Sanpere y J. Ainaud de Lasarte, *Escultura gótica*, *Ars Hispaniae*, 8 (Madrid: Editorial Plus-Ultra, 1956), 336.

<sup>64</sup> Joaquín Yarza Luaces, *Los Reyes Católicos: Paisaje Artístico de una monarquía* (Madrid: Nerea, 1993), 363; and "Artistes-Artisans de la Couronne de Castille au temps des Rois Catholiques.:Aspects économiques et professionnels," *Razo* 14 (1993): 143–56.

<sup>65</sup> The relief shows at Christ's feet a depiction of the torture instrument known as the "spikeblock," and has been cited as an example of Flemish visual currency in the peninsula. The motif is also seen in a Flemish triptych at the Charterhouse of Miraflores. Phillip Jeffrey Guilbeau, "Iuxta Iter Scandalum: The 'Wayside Stumbling-Block' in Late Medieval Passion Imagery," *Studies in Iconography* 27 (2006), 77–102. I am not aware of any examples of "spikeblock" imagery at El Paular.

<sup>66</sup> Abad Castro and Ansón Martín, "Estudio histórico-artístico," 46.

of Christ, and, in register three, to the outermost portions of the *Flagellation* and *Lamentation*.<sup>67</sup>

Further fill-ins took the form of decorative ornamental motifs, vegetal, serpentine, human—in these two zones only. Although Abad Castro and Martín Ansón see the serpents and seven human heads as heraldic devices belonging to the Lara family (Fig. 4.21), this seems unlikely. I would prefer to see them as generic heads. To introduce a family emblem, rather than royal heraldic insignia, would have demanded collusion among the Carthusians of El Paular and the artists who worked for them, and required conspiratorial concealment from the Chapter General and Queen Isabel, their royal benefactress. It is worth recalling the charge made by Isabel against the merchant Martín de Soria with respect to the purchase of windows for the church of the Charterhouse of Miraflores. The merchant made a gift of one window and included therein an image of his family's escutcheon. When Isabel visited the monastery, she promptly had it removed because "there should only be the arms of her father" (*solo debían estar las armas de su padre*).<sup>68</sup>

Abad Castro's and Martín Ansón's observations raise many issues. For instance, why does register three differ in style and size from the others? Why does it contain painted rather than sculpted landscape in its two central panels? One answer would be that the original scheme, as envisioned by one artistic team, was to include only three zones: one, two, and four. Yet this would have resulted in an unlikely sequence in which the Arrest of Christ led directly to the Harrowing of Hell. Four scenes dealing with the Passion of Christ, episodes critical to the arrangement of the narrative and to its

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. See drawing by Abad Castro.

<sup>68</sup> Isabel del Río de la Hoz, *El escultor Felipe Bigarny* (Valladolid : Junta de Castilla y León, 2000), 28.

emotional impact, would have been excluded. It seems more likely that contingencies led to inclusion of more than one team in the operation.

The involvement of various artistic teams in a single altarpiece was nothing unusual in Castile. These great and labor-intensive projects benefited from multiple hands.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes it happened that artists died in the course of the manufacture of the work. Could this have happened to the sculptural team of Gil Siloe? Was the workshop left without a master? Gil is not documented later than 1505, and, stylistically, register three appears to date at least ten years after this, if not more. The successive application of polychromy over the centuries complicates analysis, and even among those authorities who have considered the retable a sculptural production by Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, it has been common to leave the painterly part played by Diego out of the equation,

The careers of each of the “contenders” will be considered in the following chapter and the work of the sculptors will be viewed within the context of artistic exchange in Castile c. 1500. I will maintain that registers one, two, and four were carved and painted by the team of Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz c. 1500, and that register three, along with the *Virgin of El Paular*, was carved by Felipe Bigarny some ten or fifteen years later. Since Bigarny, who styled himself in Latin as Philipus de Bergonia, hailed from Burgundy and had spent some time in Italy before his arrival in Burgos, his participation in the artistic commission, I will argue, complicates any qualification of the altarpiece as being strictly Hispano-Flemish in style.

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<sup>69</sup> It took eighteen years, for instance, to complete the retable for the Cathedral of Oviedo. Judith Berg Sobré, “The Sculpted Retable in Spain, 1550–1700,” in *Spanish Polychrome Sculpture 1500–1800 in United States Collections*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton (New York: The Spanish Institute, 1993), 55–67, 56.

## Sartorial Display

The makers of the El Paular altarpiece offered splendid descriptions of dress both in relief and in paint. It is not within the scope of this study to consider in detail the relation of sartorial display in the retable to contemporary fashion trends in Castile or in Europe more broadly, although some attention must be paid to the hyperbolic attention to dress in the altarpiece, especially considering its Carthusian setting and use, where one might expect sobriety and understatement to obtain.

The scene of the *Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple* (Fig. 4.9), to cite a prime example, provides an extensive company of men and women garbed in sumptuous dress: gowns, mantles, belts, collars, sashes, kerchiefs, bags, veils, wimples, turbans, hats, and a mitre—most of these items encrusted with jewels—and all displayed against a gold-embossed wall. It appears that the fashions correspond, in general outline, with modes current at the turn of the fifteenth century on the Iberian peninsula, and of course it is tempting to consider these artistic portrayals to be solid evidence of noble dress in contemporary Castile.<sup>70</sup> It is more likely, though, to consider these garments and accessories to be constructions on the part of the artists for a particular audience.

One question demands an answer, however partial. How were style and fashion configured for a religious *mise-en-scène* for the benefit of a restricted religious community? One might consider the privileged social background of many priestly brothers and think of clothes for the elite as suggestive of their backgrounds, as garments with which these elite monks would presumably have been familiar in their secular lives. Yet this is perhaps too easy a solution. It is true that the division within the church

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<sup>70</sup> The subject of late medieval dress in Spain has received ample treatment in the scholarly literature, as noted by Abad Castro and Antón Martín, “Estudio histórico-artístico,” with bibliography.



reflects a differentiation among the various ranks and their vows, but it bears repeating that the separate ranks were composed of members at different social levels, with no one social group destined for a particular form of religious life.<sup>71</sup> Thus it is inappropriate to assume opulence was confined to the space of the choir monks—after all, Rogier van der Weyden’s *Saint John the Baptist Altarpiece* and *Miraflores Altarpiece* occupied a site in the laybrothers’ choir at the Charterhouse of Miraflores.

The retable, conversely, also speaks the language of simplicity. In the *Lamentation*, for instance, only stamped gilding marks the gowns of Saint John and the Marys (excluding the Magdalene). Indeed, the stamp on a gown is often the only mark that gives decorative distinction to a costume with simple outline and color.<sup>72</sup> There is furthermore, on the retable, a distinction between ancient and modern dress, although it is generally blurred by the elaborate dress of the angels, priests, and other religious figures. Even for events set in biblical times, artists show a variety of costumes, generally contemporary on the part of the tormentors of Christ, as though biblical stories were naturally rooted in contemporary events.<sup>73</sup> Supporting the idea that the third register of the retable was by an artist other than the team that sculpted the first, second, and fourth registers, certain details of military costume—particularly the soldier’s helmet with a snail-shell design—indicate a rendering in the early part of the sixteenth century.

The artistic obsession with the rendering of costly and colorful dress contrasts sharply, of course, with principles of religious austerity, and notably the lack of color and the formless outline of the Carthusian habit. Here the use of one color, it has been

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<sup>71</sup> Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*.

<sup>72</sup> Odile Blanc, *Parades et parures: l’invention du corps de mode à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 5.

<sup>73</sup> Blanc, *Parades et parures*, 20.

suggested, may be a “metaphorical figure of the change of state” among the religious, who, at least in theory, buried their lives upon entry into the order.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the expression used by Roland Barthes, *vêtement-linceuil* (shroud-garb), is particularly apt, suggesting the symbolic import of the Carthusian habit.<sup>75</sup>

If clothing must be considered for its social implications, flesh and the body demands treatment for its power to communicate. Christ and the Virgin appear always as the most luminous of figures, to the point that their alabaster skin speaks and paint is not needed. If a courtly manner prevails throughout the retable, certain episodes called forth bodily contortions and exaggerated movement, particularly among the soldiers or Jews in the scenes of the Passion. The holy persons, in graceful postures, might be said to gesture rather than to gesticulate. Certainly these distinctions would not have been lost on the Carthusian beholders in the priestly choir, whose religious formation would have included comportment and emphasized composure in form and movement.<sup>76</sup>

It may ultimately be unnecessary to look for a governing internal logic in the fashion choices made by artists, or to apply those choices by extension to demands by their patrons. As for seeking out legislative documents such as sumptuary laws or moralizing instruments such as sermons or teaching manuals, or even secular sources such as chronicles and romances, this would lead to predictable conclusions: many if not most of these sources are negative, not to say hostile, with respect to the adornment and display of the body.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps it is most prudent simply to consider fashion and its artistic construction—as seen in the retable—as elements in “constant resonance” with

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<sup>74</sup> Blanc, *Parades et parures*, 138.

<sup>75</sup> Blanc, *Parades et parures*, 138.

<sup>76</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 144 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Blanc, *Parades et parures*, 11–12.

contemporary modes, if not an actual reflection or promotion of such trends.<sup>78</sup> Still one should always, when considering El Paular, remember its status as a royal foundation whose royal guests were housed in royal palaces. Most likely the fashions would have resonated with these august persons. Certainly Isabel the Catholic was known to favor elaborate dress.

### **Image and Text**

Now that we have considered how the retable is configured visually and narratologically, it makes sense to ask how the assemblage of scenes may have communicated a theological message appropriate—or not—to its Carthusian setting. The altarpiece presents a tight and, with its emphasis on the Birth of the Baptist, a somewhat unusual narrative sequence, suggesting learned consultation in its preparation, probably by one of the Carthusians at El Paular. The secondary dedication of El Paular is to the Precursor. The storyline for the narrative sequence follows closely the pattern set forth by Ludolph of Saxony in his *Vita Christi*. All the events depicted find a parallel in that work. At the Charterhouse of Basel, the *Vita Christi* was prescribed reading in the refectory, and likely the same was true at El Paular.<sup>79</sup>

Ludolph's *Vita* is not a strict biography of Christ but rather a Gospel-based meditation upon the life of Jesus,<sup>80</sup> resting on the authority of the Church Fathers and various sacred and profane authors and saints.<sup>81</sup> Ludolph's work draws upon the *Meditationes vitae Christi* of the Pseudo-Bonaventure in its preface and the main text,

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<sup>78</sup> Blanc, *Parades et parures*, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 53.

<sup>80</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 16.

<sup>81</sup> For an *Indiculus auctorum*, see Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 51 n. 152.

although it is estimated that only about five percent of the text is based on that work.<sup>82</sup> If the *Meditationes* has more narrative and exhortatory power, consistent with its creation in a Franciscan milieu, the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph, written by a Carthusian, better answered the spiritual needs of Carthusian brothers. Ludolph's work gives considerably more attention to events such as the Conception, Birth, and Life of the Precursor: this merits a full chapter in the *Vita Christi* while merely a mention was made by the Pseudo-Bonaventure in his retelling of the Visitation. Still, the retable of El Paular fully omits the public life of Christ, an immense narrative span to which two-thirds of the *Vita Christi* is dedicated.<sup>83</sup>

Ludolph was familiar with the method of textual analysis that sees four levels of meaning—historical, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical<sup>84</sup>—and this implies an understanding of scriptural and apocryphal text would have added delicate layers of meaning to a Carthusian's reflection upon visual renditions or retellings of events from the lives of Jesus, Mary, John the Baptist, or other personages in the retable. Back in the cell, the monk may have had a heightened understanding through reading or remembering the text. If the Gospels are the foundation of Ludolph's text, prayer is the spirit.<sup>85</sup> For instance, when Ludolph relates the prayer at the Last Supper, he takes the opportunity to treat the position of the body during prayer, something that may have been emulated by Carthusian readers.<sup>86</sup>

Ludolph draws out meanings, making extensive use of numerology and natural history. In his treatment of the evangelical counsels, he uses a lapidary, introducing the

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<sup>82</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 31.

<sup>83</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 97.

<sup>84</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 101.

<sup>85</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 117.

<sup>86</sup> Bodensedt, *The Vita Christi*, 119, citing *VC* II, 57, 595b.

lore of stones. The twelve counsels are poverty, obedience, chastity, charity, meekness, mercy, simplicity of speech, avoiding the occasion of sin, right intention, conformity of deeds and doctrine, freedom from inordinate anxiety, and fraternal correction. The twelve stones that complement these counsels are sapphire, topaz, emerald, carbuncle, onyx, jasper, chrysolite, beryl, ligure, achate, and sardius.<sup>87</sup> The emphasis on these precious and semi-precious gems and their various cuts and colors may make us think about Carthusian sensitivity to the scenes represented in the retable, especially the extravagant clothes and gems worn by many of the characters depicted therein.

Even more closely contemporary with the retable of El Paular is a text based on the conceit of the description of a painted retable: Juan de Padilla's *Retablo de la vida de Christo*. Ever the meticulous theologian as well as Providence-driven poet of the painted retable, Juan cites profusely from the Fathers, doctors, and other authorities of the Church. But his debt is greatest to his Carthusian predecessor Ludolph of Saxony, whose *Vita Christi* he cites an astonishing eighty-three times.

Juan, a professed monk of the Charterhouse of Seville, who later served as Prior of both Aniago and El Paular, published under the pseudonym "the Carthusian" (*El cartujano*), but nevertheless called attention to his name by a clever poetical conceit in the form of an acrostic.

**D**ON religioso la regla me puso  
**J**Urado con voto canonico puro:  
**A**Nte su vista me hallo seguro  
**D**Ela tormenta del mundo confuso,  
**P**Adece por ende mi nombre recluso  
**D**Igno lector si lo vas inquirendo:  
**L**Lama si quieres mi nombre diziendo

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<sup>87</sup> Bodenstedt, *The Vita Christi*, 104–5.

**MONJE CARTUXO** la obra compuso.<sup>88</sup>

He finished the *Retablo* at the age of 32, on Christmas Eve 1500, during the Jubilee of Rome.<sup>89</sup>

Juan confesses in the *Retablo* that he himself had lived a life of worldly pleasures when young,<sup>90</sup> and he says he speaks equally to “any woman who has strayed” and to “any man [consumed by] vice.”<sup>91</sup> Juan appeals directly to Christ; he spurns the pagan gods, Athena and Mars included, and likewise figures who shaped the history of Spain, although he cannot help offering breathless admiration for the “most serene Doña Isabel, most high queen of the Castilians.”<sup>92</sup> The author constructs his poem according to the model of an “excellent” framed retable (Fig. 4.22), divided and worked into four panels with paint and gilded carpentry (*mazonería*). The written work itself is divided into numerous canticles within each panel and a lone lamentation treating the Passion of Christ. (See Appendix A.) The author gradually builds up to the finale, wherein he strips away the veil hanging before the retable, so that it might be seen by the learned and the simple alike. The veil may have recalled the painted curtain that likely covered the retable of the Church of El Paular.

Aside from the fact that all scenes represented in the El Paular retable—including the appearance of Christ to his mother during the Harrowing of Hell—are alluded to in

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<sup>88</sup> Tabla IV, cántico xii. (The Rule made me Don Religious / Sworn with a pure canonical vow: / In its sight I feel secure / From the torment of the confused world. / My reclusive name, in sum, is missing / But, worthy reader, if you care to inquire / Utter, if you wish, my name by saying / A Carthusian monk composed this work.) [Emphasis mine.]

<sup>89</sup> “Acabóse de componer el Retablo del cartuxo sobre la vida de nuestro redemptor Jesu Christo jueves a xxiv días de deziembre : vigilia de la natiuidad de nuestro Señor : cumplidos los años de mill y quinientos. Año del jubileo de Roma.” *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, 244. Juan was also author of a text called *The Twelve Triumphs of the Twelve Apostles*.

<sup>90</sup> *RVC*, 243 (*de fontibus*),

<sup>91</sup> *RVC*, 247.

<sup>92</sup> *RVC*, 244.

the *Retablo*, the connection is manifest in the fact that the author makes special mention of John the Baptist. In the preamble, Juan de Padilla clarifies: “Note that [this work] describes not only the life of Christ but also of Our Lady and Saint John the Baptist, happy father of the Carthusians.”<sup>93</sup> The parallels offer evidence that the retablo of El Paular was constructed according to specifically Carthusian requirements and that it conformed to visual expectations consistent with the *Consuetudines* of the Order. John the Baptist’s disembodied head appears as a portrait on a silver charger at the end of the printed version of the text (Fig. 4.23), where Juan discloses that his “divine work” has been “diligently examined” by numerous religious.

Juan uses the concept of picture-painter throughout the work. He shows extraordinary sensitivity to the function of color as he produces his literary creation, describing, for example, the banderole held by Gabriel in the Annunciation as “written in golden letters.” Although he clearly has in mind a painted rather than a sculpted work, his notions may easily be extended to a polychromed sculpted retablo such as that from El Paular, which he would have beheld daily as Prior of the Charterhouse. The nature of Juan’s poetic work, written in relation to the experience of seeing great retables, strengthens the notion that Carthusian beholders approached such altarpieces in an increasingly self-conscious way, both as an object of artifice as well as places of contemplation.

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<sup>93</sup> “Nota que no tan solamente aquí se describe la vida de Christo, pero la de nuestra Señora y de sant Juan baptista, padre grazioso de los cartuxos.” *RVC, Argumento de toda la obra.*

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Makers**

The identity of the authors of the El Paular retable has been the subject of considerable speculation and disagreement, and one must approach the altarpiece as an object of ongoing detective work. Its morphological characteristics present some puzzles with respect to chronology, sequence, style, and finish. Despite the unifying visual device of baldachins setting off each narrative scene, as well as the harmonizing effect achieved by the imposition of successive layers of polychromy over the centuries, there is considerable visual disjunction within the ensemble. In particular, upon close examination, register three of the retable, which represents scenes of the Passion of Christ, clearly does not accord with the appearance of the other three registers (one, two, and four), as I have tried to show in the previous chapter. Considering the size and likely cost of the retable, the elaborate carving of the scenes, and the destination of the work for the priestly choir of a Carthusian church in a royal foundation, we might conclude, even without documentary support, that the retable entailed considerable planning on the part of both patrons and artists, and that its uneven appearance must be owed to some accident of circumstance in the period of its creation, c. 1500–20. The Chapter General's admonition of 1503 indicated that "excessive" artistic work was underway during that year and there is every reason to believe that it continued well beyond that date.



So how does one come to terms with the timeline suggested by the stylistic peculiarities of the altarpiece? Assuming that one team of artists—namely Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz—were responsible for zones one, two, and four, it stretches credibility to believe that they executed a fluid narrative sequence but left out almost entirely the episodes dealing with Christ's Passion. No retable, and certainly not one made for such a prominent location in an elite religious institution, would jump in sequence from the Arrest of Christ to the Harrowing of Hell. One solution to the problem might be that the entire sequence of the Passion of Christ was made by the original team and somehow suffered damage, resulting in its replacement twenty years later. Another, more plausible, is that a second team was made responsible for it.

The participation of separate teams of makers in a huge piece of church furniture was nothing unusual. The mingling of talents in this monumental retable offers us interesting evidence, however imprecise, of the composition of workshops responsible for stone carving and polychromy. In this chapter, I will discuss the careers of the likely candidates for the execution of the El Paular retable, and I will present visual analysis to support the view that Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz—artists working a northern manner, active in Burgos—collaborated on it, as they did on others, including the retable at Miraflores. And I will credit the suggestion of the later participation of Felipe Bigarny (Vigarny), who may have trained in the workshop of Gil Siloe. The retable has consistently been identified as Hispano-Flemish in style. I will deal below with this unwieldy term—which uncomfortably lumps together works made in many different regions in the Iberian peninsula—in the context of a treatment of artistic

exchange within the Carthusian nation of Castile, bustling with artistic activity of the end of the fifteenth century.

Short of the discovery of new documents, it may never be possible to name definitively the makers of the stupendous retable at El Paular. In support of the attribution to Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, it will be well to keep in mind an array of salient facts. First, the Charterhouses of El Paular and Miraflores, and probably Aniago as well, employed in at least in one building phase the same architect, Simón de Colonia, indicating that Carthusians and their royal patrons appreciated and shared talented artisans. Second, the Charterhouse of El Paular is almost equidistant from the artistic centers of Burgos (where Gil and Diego were active) and Toledo, and could and did employ artisans from both cities. Third, technical studies of the original polychromy of the El Paular retable indicate a technique often used in northern cities but not in Spain (suggesting a painter trained in or familiar with northern modes). Fourth, Gil was an expert carver of both wood and alabaster (used at Miraflores and El Paular) but is not associated with architectural projects. This becomes important since the other candidates for the sculptural work at El Paular seem to have worked primarily on architecture and related sculptural adornment but not on polychromed retables. Acceptance of the Burgos team of Gil and Diego as authors will allow an inquiry into the independent activities of Diego as a painter of pictures as well as sculptures, and of Gil as a maker of sculptures both painted and unpainted.

Artistic collaboration between sculptors and polychromists is well attested. We

know, for instance, that Robert Campin painted statues carved by Jean Delemer in 1428 in a commission by Agnes Pietarde for the church of Saint-Pierre in Tournai (church destroyed, statues now in Tournai Cathedral, south ambulatory). Likewise, we know that Rogier van der Weyden headed the polychromy team for sculpture ordered by Philip the Good for the Brussels Recollets Church in the period 1439–40. And there is abundant evidence for such teamwork in German and Bohemian lands. But the partnership of sculptor Gil and painter Diego is especially well documented—a circumstance all the more remarkable given the poor habits of record keeping in Castile during the later Middle Ages. Moreover, the sculptural cycles that they produced in various Castilian cities are unusually extensive and offer a wealth of stylistic evidence in the form of painted figural sculpture, flora and fauna, and gilded microarchitectural elements.<sup>1</sup>

The survival *in situ* of the great retables of Miraflores (Fig. 5.1) and El Paular (Fig. 1.3) offer tantalizing if not always satisfying clues as to the state of artistic exchange in late medieval Castile—and by extension, the rest of Europe—at the end of the fifteenth century, as well as the changing status of artists involved in various large-scale church commissions, whether episcopal, parochial, or monastic. Oddly, despite their contemporaneous execution for houses of the same religious order, these retables have only rarely been treated together in the scholarly literature. August Mayer in the 1920s did call attention to the strong stylistic bond between them and suggested that the

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<sup>1</sup> See the essays in *Actas del Congreso internacional sobre Gil Siloe y la Escultura de su época. Burgos 12 – 15 octubre de 1999* (Burgos, 2001). For bibliography, Marta Cuadrado, “Gil de Siloé,” *The Dictionary of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 28: 724-25; A. M. Menchaca, “Diego de la Cruz,” *ibid.*, 8: 872. For an older treatment, Harold E. Wethey, *Gil de Siloe and his School: a Study of Late Gothic Sculpture in Burgos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).

link was owed to close and frequent communication between the two houses.<sup>2</sup> He described the bond in terms of a family relationship—*parentesco* or kinship—akin to the concept of filiation I introduced earlier.

### **Hispano-Flemish Painting and Sculpture**

The impact of Flemish-Rhenish artists upon the visual language of Spanish artistic and architectural production of the fifteenth century has been reasonably well established, but the intricacies of the transfer of artistic ideas remain to be charted. The designation awkwardly places in a single category work produced in a northern manner for export to the south, work produced by northern masters to suit Spanish specifications, work produced by northern emigrant artists resident in Spain, and work produced by local Spanish masters trained in northern styles and techniques.

Perhaps the neatest explication of visual qualities characteristic of Hispano-Flemish art and of the attendant “process of hispanicization”—an expression coined by José Gudiol in 1955<sup>3</sup>—has been provided by María Pilar Silva Maroto, though in connection with painting rather than sculpture. She notes (1) the heterogeneous character of Hispano-Flemish work, marked by stylistic instability; (2) a variability owed to type of commission, associated market conditions, and the role played by patron and artist; and (3) a predilection for the format of the monumental retablo.<sup>4</sup> The large

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<sup>2</sup> A. L. Mayer, “El escultor Gil de Siloé,” *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones* 31(1923): 252–57.

<sup>3</sup> José Gudiol Ricart, *Pintura gótica*, *Ars Hispaniae*, 9 (Madrid: Editorial Plus-Ultra, 1955), 238.

<sup>4</sup> Silva Maroto, *Pintura castellana hispano-flamenca*.

altarpieces in question do sometimes show a disparity in artistic quality, which is to be accounted for by the constraints of size, material, time, and cost. Less prominent portions of the retable were often meted out to workshop artists. But even in signature works by the hand of a master, technique might vary according to situation. Diego, for instance, used a technique characterized by highly finished and controlled underdrawings, with careful cross-hatching, in single-panel works such as a *Saint John the Baptist with Donor*, but he was satisfied with a much looser, cursory underdrawing for paintings intended for inclusion in a large-scale altarpiece, such as his *Assumption of the Virgin*. As we shall see, this variation is encountered in portions of the sculpted retables of El Paular and Miraflores.

Ultimately the use of the term Hispano-Flemish requires caution, since it implies a monolithic development throughout the Iberian peninsula and may suggest the artistic domination of the Low Countries over the Iberian peninsula. On the other hand it may betray a kind of nationalistic wish-fulfillment, much like the earlier term Franco-Flemish, introduced to characterize diverse artworks produced in the Burgundian Netherlands during the period 1380–1430. Certainly the use of the designation Hispano-Flemish has served to enforce the art-historical canon,<sup>5</sup> heavily biased toward northern and Italian production, and to marginalize work produced in Spain. Perhaps most damaging of all, it has contributed to obscuring the subtleties of artistic production and the movement of artists and ideas across large parts of Europe. .And yet, despite its deficiencies, the term

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Didier, “L’art hispano-flamand. Reflexions critiques. Considerations concernant des sculptures espagnoles et brabanconnes,” in *Actas* (as n. 1), 113–44, 115.

has some use in the analysis of work produced by Gil and Diego. The term Flemish (*flamenco*) was generally applied to all the Low Countries in the late fifteenth century, and German (*alemán*) was used to describe both the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire. We shall see that the so-called Flemish work of Gil and Diego relates more closely to sculpture and painting produced in Brabant than in Flanders.

Certainly, stylistic tendencies developed independently in the various kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula, a subject vast in itself and not one that can easily be accommodated within this otherwise focused study. Even within the Carthusian houses of Castile, stylistic plurality was the norm. Sculpture varied in appearance, technique, material, and form. Still, owing to the vagaries of survival (e.g. none of the Late Gothic sculpture from the Charterhouse of Las Cuevas in Seville can be traced, and only one piece from the Charterhouse of Aniago near Valladolid), comparative analysis of visual languages adopted in a specific locale, by a specific religious community, by a specific teams of makers, or by specific royal patrons, is rendered difficult.

To be sure, the lack of documentation for work at the Charterhouse of El Paular thwarts any clear understanding of the intersection of various points of agency among patrons, makers, and beholders. Aside from the monumental retable and the exterior sculpture on church and cloister portals, the only other remaining sculptural pieces are a Calvary group now located in the refectory and a *Lamentation* in a chapel now used by the Benedictine community for the *lectio divina*. (This last sculptural ensemble may be one mentioned in records as dating from January 1534.) Finally, even by focusing on

individual charterhouses with strict filial bonds and geographical proximity, we cannot point to a consistent visual language for even a short period, given the numerous teams at work decorating—profusely—spaces variously public and private in their use. In the case of Miraflores, the presence of works by artists including Rogier van der Weyden (Fig. 5.2), Pedro Berruguete (Fig. 5.3), Juan de Flandes (Fig. 5.4), the “Master of Miraflores,” (Fig. 5.5) and, of course, Gil and Diego, demonstrates this diversity. To this might be added another factor: changes in style by a single artist over the course his career. In Gil’s works in Burgos, Alejo de Vahía’s in Valladolid and Palencia, and Pedro de Millán’s in Seville, a conspicuous range in sculptural qualities is evident.

In order to begin to place Gil’s work it is useful to consider distinctions within the corpus of sculpture produced in the Low Countries and the Rhineland. Late Gothic sculpture is generally understood to represent a departure from the International Style, a mode prevalent during the period 1370–1420 that favored, pliant bodily poses, pleasant facial expressions, and soft drapery folds—best exemplified, perhaps, by the Beautiful Madonna type. Late Gothic works, by contrast, emphasized active movement in pose and gesture, more naturalistic facial expressions, and drapery folds characterized often by hard angular breaks, variously called splinter or hairpin folds. An early proponent of the new style was Jean Delemer, responsible for the dynamic Annunciation figures at Tournai Cathedral, whose sculpted work had an impact on the painted work of Rogier van der Weyden. Variants of the Tournaisian language quickly spread to artistic centers in Brabant (Brussels and Antwerp), Flanders (Bruges and Ghent), northern France

(Picardy and Artois), the Meuse valley (Liège), and present-day southern Netherlands (Utrecht). Significantly, the lively artistic centers based especially in Brabant and Flanders exported sculptures widely to other parts of Europe including England, Germany, Scandinavia, and Spain.

We have already noted divergent visual forms in the various kingdoms of mid-fifteenth-century Spain. Likewise in northern cities, despite gaps in the sculptural record, scholars have found diversity and have struggled to identify regional characteristics. Some have found it prudent to avoid parochial divisions and have concentrated instead on the give-and-take between painting and sculpture. This model will be useful for the analysis of late medieval Castilian sculpture, also a subject of lively and not always conclusive debate. Spanish art-historical studies have tended to concentrate separately on painting and sculpture. An opening up of a dialogue between these artistic forms is essential for understanding the work of Gil and Diego, since their collaboration is well documented, and since sculptures by Gil often resemble paintings by Diego. Some of the recent work by Joaquín Yarza Luaces reflects this important shift: he has noted painterly characteristics of Diego in the polychromy of sculptural ensembles carved by Gil.<sup>6</sup>

Netherlandish altarpieces, as Lynn Jacobs has demonstrated, are characterized by three main features: extensive narrative cycles, a combination of painted and sculpted elements, and an abundance of precious microarchitectural elements in the form of niches, baldachins, and tracery<sup>7</sup>. In later stages of development the altarpieces

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<sup>6</sup> Joaquín Yarza Luaces, "El retablo mayor de la Cartuja de Miraflores," in *Actas* (as n. 1), 207-38.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380-1550*.



demonstrate a marked proclivity for the inverted T-shape, with the central panel elevated above the lateral components. The marketability of the altarpieces, she maintains, was enhanced by a certain stasis in design and execution, a sort of branding that is evident from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. South German altarpieces, by contrast, show a marked preference for sculpted elements in both corpus and wings, an increasing avoidance of polychromy, and, perhaps most distinctive of all, a monumental crown of tracery atop the corpus—a microarchitectural element called an *Aufsatz* or *Auszug*. Still Jacobs resists hard and fast categorization, except for the quite different retables produced in Italy. The tendency in German carved altarpieces to feature polychromed carved figures of near life-size proportions corresponds to later Spanish developments in retable design, display, and function—as witnessed by the elaborate retables at the cathedrals of Burgos, Toledo, Valladolid, Oviedo, and Ávila, with their large sculptural figures set within carved canopies, pinnacles, and gables.

The monumental retable developed in Castile along lines distinct from smaller altarpieces in the north. Generally, with a few notable exceptions such as El Paular, all were executed in wood with polychromy. Castilian retables were marked most conspicuously by the trend toward increasing monumentality and the elaborate wood- or stonework of the framing elements. Multi-winged altarpieces were never favored; rather, the preferred format was the fixed retable set within an elaborate microarchitectural structure and a surrounding *guardapolvo* or dust protector. The fourteenth-century model of paintings of saints situated around vertically arranged images of the Virgin and Child,

generally topped by an Annunciation, and then a Crucifixion (which usually crowned the piece), gave way in the fifteenth century to a scheme in which narrative scenes replaced single images of saints. Sometimes carved elements such as figures of saints were grouped in the lateral architectural structures, or at the top or bottom of the entire work. Some of these retables were enormous indeed: the El Paular retablo measures approximately nine by twelve meters, the Miraflores altarpiece roughly ten by ten. In any case, the Castilian Late Gothic retablo usually filled the entire height and width of the apse, however large that might be. This was the case for the retables of both El Paular and Miraflores, and it should be recalled that these are small Carthusian churches meant for an extremely restricted population, not large parish churches, much less cathedrals. And although Gil and Diego cannot be credited with introduction of the monumental retablo in Castile, no example can be identified in the region before their documented work together in the 1480s.

Among the chief reasons proposed for the movement of northern artists to the Iberian peninsula is the high demand for these large church furnishings and an inadequate supply of artistic manpower. A relaxation in guild restrictions during the time of Isabel the Catholic likewise encouraged an influx of artists to the region. Sculptures were imported as well. Certainly, as in the case of the *Passion Altarpiece* for the Church of San Lesmes in Burgos, whole altarpieces, often stamped with the mark of their workshop or place or origin, arrived intact from the north, generally adapted to the immovable, wingless format preferred in Spain. The Salamanca altarpiece at San Lesmes is

especially telling, since it was a commission for a parish church (and even more significantly, the Burgos artists' church). Other northern works that traveled to Castile include the retable for the church of Santa María in Laredo; the triptych of Covarrubias; the retable of the Chapel of Saint John the Baptist in the Church of the Savior, Valladolid; and the retable of the Convent of San Antonio El Real, Segovia. At times these altarpieces, such as one at Santa Clara, in Tordesillas, contained both painted and sculpted elements.

Among the many painted and sculpted altarpieces imported from the north, a few examples will suffice to establish their high favor in the peninsula. First, the Retable of the Virgin of Belén from the church of Santa María in Laredo (Fig. 5.6) —with its obvious Rogerian motifs in the fictive microarchitectural elements—has been considered by some scholars a kind of missing link for the reconstruction of artistic development in Flanders and Brabant. It is unique in Europe for its age and sculptural disposition. But no less important are the painted imports in Castilian charterhouses and other nearby monasteries. The examples of the *Miraflores Altarpiece* (Fig. 5.2) and the *Saint John Altarpiece* by Rogier van der Weyden donated by Juan II to the Charterhouse of Miraflores are the most salient examples. Indeed, the example of the sculpted altarpiece at Laredo has numerous points of contact with the Rogerian piece and may even be based on a drawing by the painter. The *Fountain of Grace* recently attributed to Van Eyck, given to the Hieronymite monastery of El Parral in Segovia, is another precious survival of a northern work in Spain. Both these pictures were royal donations.

Preference on the part of patrons likewise drew artists to the region. Migration was common even before Fernando and Isabel achieved alliances with Burgundy, Flanders, and Austria through the arrangement of propitious marriages for their children. (The brilliant Flemish-Spanish imperial constellation had been celebrated with the arrival of the princess Juana “la Loca” in Antwerp on 21 October 1496 for her marriage with Philip the Fair; and also the birth of their second child Carlos in the city of Ghent—the same Charles who would be the arch sovereign of Europe, the Atlantic, and the New World.) Isabel the Catholic, her father Juan II and her half-brother Enrique IV, great proponents of literary and artistic culture, had a predilection for Flemish painting and avidly collected works by masters such as Rogier van der Weyden and Dirk Bouts. Isabel was an astute collector of small paintings made in Bruges and Antwerp and had smaller copies of Rogier’s *Miraflores Altarpiece* and *Saint John Altarpiece* made for her funerary chapel in Granada Cathedral. The Catholic Kings and other patrons in Castile welcomed and even insisted on Flemish style in their retables, and contracts specified paintings with the color and brushwork of the “new art” that depicted “graceful foreign faces.” Nevertheless, in local production, as we have seen, artists adapted these models, made either by Flemish masters or emulated by Flemish-inspired Spanish masters, to a peculiarly Castilian form of retable.

The monumental retables produced in Spain accentuate both narrative and symbolic elements. Their size allowed an extensive pictorial cycle, often encapsulating episodes covering all of salvation history, from the Fall of the First Parents to the

Resurrection and Last Judgment, and the inclusion of an enormous company of smaller sculpted objects, generally statues of saints (forty-one in the El Paular retable, for instance). Apart from the examples of El Paular and Miraflores, among the most important—and largest—are the main retable of the Cathedral of Toledo (1497–1504) and the main retable of Seville Cathedral (1482–1526). It cannot be overemphasized that most Castilian retables follow the Aragonese format of a large central column or *calle*—usually raised in height above the more slender lateral components, thus forming the T-shape characteristic of northern altarpieces. In general, then, Castilian retables, despite divergence in scale, followed in many particulars some of the elements preferred in the northern format, with a more extensive visual field for the incorporation of narrative cycles and single-image devotional figures, whether painted or sculpted.

### **The Attribution of the Retable of El Paular**

Scholars have weighed in with various opinions as to the authors of the El Paular retable. As stated earlier, Antonio Ponz, in his *Viaje de España* (1772), stated that the altarpiece was donated by Juan II in 1440 to the Charterhouse of El Paular, and made from alabaster brought over from Genoa at a cost of 8,000 ducats. This unsupported observation gave shape to much early scholarship on the date and authorship of the retable; indeed the idea has been repeated even into the twenty-first century. The search for authorship has focused primarily on the artistic centers of Burgos and Toledo. Among those scholars who have seen Gil and Diego as belonging to the Burgalese

school, four stand out: August Mayer, Antonio González, María Elena Gómez Moreno, and José María de Azcárate. Also assuming a Burgos origin, Rafael Domínguez Casas connected the retable with the work of architect Simón de Colonia. Among those scholars who have attributed the work to Toledan makers, and particularly to the workshop of the architect Juan Guas, are Beatrice Gilman Proske and J.V.L. Brans. The most recent of the serious investigators, Concepción Abad Castro and María Luisa Ansón Martín, have entertained all these possibilities and have further suggested potential intervention by the elusive sculptor Sebastián de Almonacid. This sculptor's name appears frequently in documents but his identity is difficult to establish: it is known that he was called to work by Juan Guas in 1485 as sole sculptor for the Puerta del Alamo at Segovia Cathedral. Abad Castro and Ansón Martín have convincingly proposed the participation of Felipe Bigarny in the upper register of the retable, based upon stylistic similarities with his work on a *Bearing of the Cross* for the *trasaltar* at Burgos Cathedral. Almost all the scholars, except the very earliest who accepted Ponz's misinformation, have designated the retable Flemish and described it as being of the highest quality. For those authorities who considered the retable a sculptural production by Gil and workshop, the painterly intervention of Diego has generally been left out of the equation, probably in part because of the problem presented by successive applications of polychromy over the centuries.

## **Artistic Careers and Possible Artists**

In order to approach the issue of who was involved in making the El Paular altarpiece, it is important to establish the context in which sculptors worked in the regions of Toledo and Burgos. Of the great teams working in Toledo in the second half of the fifteenth century, two stand out: those of the brothers Cueman and Hannequin Egas of Brussels, active, according to documentation, from 1454–83; and the workshop of Juan Guas.

Cueman's work in a Calvary group at the monastery of Guadalupe has been related to pictures by Rogier van der Weyden. But the date of the activity of the Egas brothers precludes the possibility that they were the sculptors of the El Paular altarpiece. Juan Guas is more tempting as a possibility since he worked as an architect at the El Paular complex during the period 1486–89. He had a breathlessly busy career during his documented period of activity. Besides working at Toledo Cathedral, he was Master of Works at Segovia Cathedral 1473–91; he also worked at Valladolid in 1476 and 1486–87; at El Paular, 1486–89; at Avila, 1486; at the Franciscan convent of San Juan de Los Reyes, Toledo 1489–91; and at the palaces of the Mendoza family in Guadalajara, 1480–83, and the Alba family at Alba de Tormes, 1493–94. A quick scan of these overlapping dates suggests that, unless Juan had the ability to be in two or more places at one time, he must necessarily have meted out an extensive amount of work to assistants, who may nevertheless have worked from his designs.

Although Juan Guas's career as a sculptor has been increasingly the subject of scholarly interest, most investigators admit the slippery nature of attributions. The scholarly literature has long known a signed architectural drawing rendered by Guas, a design for the sanctuary and retablo of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo (Fig. 5.7). It is a large drawing—1.94 by .96 m. The interior of the choir is shown, with transept and lantern tower, as well an iconographical program for a retablo, heraldic schemes numerous beyond belief, and monumental sculpture of saints, wild men, and inscriptions. Datable to 1479–80, it is ingenious in its use of perspective. No signature is now visible. And if there is no reason to doubt the testimony that once existed, its loss further complicates the study of Guas's career as a sculptor of retables. In any case, the drawing bears little resemblance to the eventual design of the apse vaulting or the retablo at San Juan de los Reyes, and even less to the physical format, visual language, or narrative content of the El Paular altarpiece.

Simón de Colonia, who worked as an architect at El Paular and Miraflores as well as other important sites in Burgos, stands out as another prime contender for maker of the retablo. His *Lamentation* in the tympanum of the portal of the church at Miraflores (Fig. 3.53) resembles somewhat the handling of the same subject in the tympanum of the portal at El Paular (Fig. 3.55), and also the *Lamentation* in the retablo of El Paular (Fig. 4.16). But the replacement of the main retablo at Burgos Cathedral and the tomb of Alfonso de Burgos, two of his documented works, makes it difficult to undertake any nuanced study of his work as a sculptor.



The sculptors most likely to have been involved in the making of the massive alabaster retable deserve separate treatment. The study of the careers of Felipe Bigarny and the sculptural team of Gil and Diego throws light on working methods in late medieval Castile, the changing status of the artist, questions of artistic exchange, and the character of the Hispano-Flemish style.

### **Felipe Bigarny**

On his departure from Burgundy, Felipe passed through Italy, staying there for an unknown amount of time. This left him with an artistic style and aptitudes more complicated than many of his contemporaries. Felipe may have read Latin, since he called himself Philipus de Bergonia. Kings and bishops referred to the artist as *maestre*, a title indicating the mastery he had attained.

The artist was probably born around 1473; he died in 1542 at sixty-nine years of age. That he spent time in Rome is known through a declaration he made a few months before he died. He seems previously to have worked in Dijon and in Langres (his birthplace), Troyes, Autun, and Auxerre. His decision to leave the region of his birth may have been related to diminishing ducal patronage in Burgundy, which had been annexed by the crown of France in 1477. He most likely worked at the side of the great sculptor Antoine de le Moiturier, established in Dijon in the period 1465–1494. It is probable that Felipe knew the sculptural and other artistic works at the Charterhouse of

Champmol; most certainly, after his move to Spain he visited Miraflores. He may have gone to Burgos in search of commissions.

Among the skills that set Bigarny apart from others was his ability to dispose a great quantity of sculpted figures in one plane, a technique he probably learned in Italy, as evident in the third register of the El Paular retablo, which may be by his hand. It has been argued convincingly that Felipe Bigarny worked alongside Gil Siloe during his first year in Burgos. They may both have worshiped in the church of Santiago de la Fuente, located at the foot of Burgos Cathedral (now the Chapel of San Tecla), increasingly the artists' church in Burgos at the end of the fifteenth century. They probably worked together on the sepulchers of Juan II and Isabel of Portugal commissioned by their daughter, Isabel the Catholic. In any case, Felipe started accepting personal commissions in July 1498.

The most convincing proof that Felipe worked with Gil Siloe is that Diego de la Cruz acted as guarantor for Felipe's contract for the *trasaltar* in Burgos Cathedral. His connection with the sculptor Simón de Colonia is attested in a contract dated 1498, for which Simón may have contributed the design. He probably crossed paths with the court artist Juan de Flandes in Burgos, who was working during the period 1496–99 on the retablo of the Life of John the Baptist for the Charterhouse of Miraflores. There are sculptures by Bigarny alongside paintings by Juan de Flandes in the retables of Salamanca and Palencia, executed in the years 1505–7.

Bigarny succeeded in advancing himself socially. He contracted a highly advantageous marriage with the Mari Sáez Pardo, daughter of Juan Pardo el Grande—*grande* signifying rich. Family members of Juan Pardo held administrative jobs with the court. Thereby, Felipe Bigarny's own daughters became court ladies, and his granddaughter actually became the *señora* of a palace through her marriage to José López de Lazárraga.

### **Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz**

Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz worked collaboratively on documented projects including the *Tree of Jesse Retable* in the Chapel of Luis de Acuña (Burgos Cathedral, 1486–92) (Fig. 5.8); the retable for the church of San Gregorio (Valladolid, 1488–89), now destroyed; and the retable of the Charterhouse of Miraflores (1496–99) (Fig. 5.1). In contracts, Gil is repeatedly and distinctly called sculptor (*entallador* or *escultor*), whereas Diego is most commonly referred to as painter (*pintor*), though he is described once as a sculptor (probably by mistake, in the plural *escultores*, in a contract that mentions Gil). Diego appears as witness to the contract for Felipe Bigarny's relief sculpture of the Way to Calvary, made for the altar crossing in the Cathedral of Burgos, and as guarantor for Bigarny (July 17 and 18, 1498, respectively) for the same work. Less concretely, *Diego pintor* is identified as guarantor in several local contracts.

Individually, Gil is documented as having worked on designs, now lost, for the tombs of Juan II and Isabel of Portugal, parents of Isabel the Catholic (Miraflores, May

1486); as having carved their tombs (Fig. 5.9), as well as that of their son, the Infante Alfonso (Miraflores, 1489–93) (Fig. 5.10); as having sculpted two angels in the *reja* (choir screen) of the Charterhouse of Miraflores, c. 1493, now lost; as having sculpted a *Saint Andrew* for the Church of San Esteban, c. 1500; and having carved part of a small retable on the right sight of the Chapel of the Condestable (Burgos Cathedral, c. 1500). Gil is generally believed to have sculpted the effigy of Alonso de Cartagena, Bishop of Burgos (1435–56), Cathedral of Burgos, Chapel of the Visitation. Likewise, based upon remarkable visual similarities, scholars overwhelmingly agree that Gil sculpted the tomb of Isabel’s much-esteemed page, Juan de Padilla, for the Hieronymite monastery of Fresdelval, c. 1500 (Fig. 5.11). In the 1990s several sculptures were removed from the bosses in the vaulting of the Chapel of the Conception in the Cathedral of Burgos, and these polychromed wooden statues, believed to have adorned the original retable for the chapel, have likewise been attributed to Gil. Not least, Gil has been proposed as sculptor of the portal conducting from the south transept to the cloister at Burgos; this attribution is especially important in the present study, since Gil’s rendition of the Harrowing of Hell is in many particulars identical to the handling of the same narrative episode in the El Paular retable.

Aside from records that indicate Gil rented houses from the “Doctor of Miranda” (May 1496) and likewise bought a residence (November 1498) “and a pair of hens,” little is known about him except that he was a sculptor called *maestre* in contracts. It has been suggested that both Gil and Diego were converted Jews, but there is no evidence to

confirm this, except for Gil's unusual last name, which occurs three times in the New Testament (John 9:7, 11), but which has also been construed to suggest a possible origin in Silos (Castile).

In general, it appears that major retable commissions in Burgos at the end of the fifteenth century increasingly called for sculpted rather than painted panels, but it is not clear whether Diego assisted Gil in sculpting; alternatively, he may have kept to painting or gilding or both. There was obviously a premium placed on polychromy; the contract for the *Tree of Jesse Retable* insisted that the carving be "richly painted and gilded." That joint commission appears both to have ignited a vogue for sculpted retables and made the artists famous. Alonso de Burgos, bishop of Palencia (1486–99), commissioned a sculpted retable from Diego and Gil for the chapel at San Gregorio precisely because of "the fame that they enjoyed, and especially for the retable that they had realized for the cathedral church at Burgos ..." Their fame was manifested not only in praise in contracts but also in the high fees they earned. For instance, the altarpiece for Miraflores garnered the team 1,015,613 *maravedís*, approximately ten times the cost of a house Gil bought in Burgos in 1498.

Diego and Gil are referred to in documents as *vecinos* of Burgos: that is, residents of the city enjoying civil rights and protections. (The status of *vecino* did not apply to all persons living in, much less passing through, Burgos, an important way-station on the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela.) Their royal commissions, their renting and buying of houses, and their receipt of certain work-related perks (provision with

household goods, including a cook, during work stints away from Burgos), suggest that Gil and Diego enjoyed a secure economic place in a commercial and episcopal town bustling with opportunity for native or foreign makers of sacred art.

As for Diego's independent career as a painter, little more is known about him than Gil. Although his name suggests a Spanish origin, it was common for foreign artists to take a Spanish name. Nor does Diego's presumed role as painter or gilder suggest a lesser status than Gil's as carver. As noted earlier, contemporary documents, first published in 1866, attest to Diego's principal title as *pintor*, though this fact was often overlooked or suppressed until the middle of the twentieth century. Mayer (1922) initially considered Diego primarily a sculptor, but later suggested that he was mainly responsible for polychromy and gilding. Gómez Moreno (1934) suggested the same, and wondered—since the working relationship between Gil and Diego was so sustained—whether the latter might have been the godfather and namesake of Gil's son, the renowned Renaissance sculptor and architect Diego Siloe. Harold Wethey (1936), author of the first monograph on Gil, maintained, against scholarly trends, that Diego was expressly a sculptor, and tried to distinguish between the hands of Diego and Gil, making poor Diego responsible for all inferior sculpture—"weak phlegmatic productions"—in the work jointly produced. Finally, in 1946, López Mata published records of the church of San Esteban that banished all doubt that Diego was a picture painter, plain and simple, in addition to any other hats he may have worn—polychromist, gilder, or even sculptor.

The documented *Stigmatization of San Francisco* that Diego painted in 1489 is still conserved in the church of San Esteben in Burgos.

The discovery by José Gudiol in 1966 of a signed work by Diego further confirmed López Mata's evidence of Diego's independent activity as a painter. In this picture, *Man of Sorrows with Virgin and Saint John* (Fig. 5.12), the artist "carved" his name in paint (DIEGODELA†) on Christ's sarcophagus. Placement of the signature between Christ's feet suggests a formulaic measure of humility, but the strategy likewise indicates familiarity with similar conceits in other parts of Europe. Since Gudiol's discovery of the signed painting, Diego's *oeuvre* has been extended to include, notably, a *Mass of Saint Gregory* (c. 1475–80) (Fig. 5.13); a *Saint John the Baptist with Donor* (ca.1480–85) (Fig. 5.14); a *Maria Misericordiae with the Family of the Catholic Kings* (c. 1485) (Fig. 5.15); a *Man of Sorrows between Angels* (c. 1480–85) (Fig. 5.16); a *Man of Sorrows between David and Jeremiah* (c. 1500) (Fig. 5.17); an *Assumption of the Virgin* (c. 1495) (Fig. 5.18); and a *Triptych of the Adoration of the Magi* (c. 1495) (5.19). In all these examples, one notes a recurrence of distinct facial features among Diego's male figures, with their sunken eyes and jowl, rather frenetic bodily contortions, and bifurcated neck muscles that resemble nothing so much as a wishbone. Angels and female figures, on the other hand, generally demonstrate much more suave facial features and restful postures; their oval faces are marked by small mouths and rounded brows set high above the eyes. Interestingly, the chief historian of Diego's work, María Pilar Silva Maroto, has related Diego's paintings to those of a variety of artists including Rogier van

der Weyden, Dirk Bouts, Hugo van der Goes, and Hans Memling. I see strong parallels also between Diego's work and that of the so-called Master of Sainte-Gudule.

Likewise, many works have been assigned to Diego's workshop or to followers. Silva distinguished Diego's hand from that of the Master of the Catholic Kings, a designation created by Chandler Post. Nevertheless, I see striking visual parallels among works by Diego and certain works attributed to that master. I believe, on stylistic grounds, that at least four panels of a retable ascribed to the Master of the Catholic Kings should be connected with the oeuvre of Diego. These include an *Annunciation* (Fig. 5.20), *Nativity*, *Epiphany*, and *Visitation*, in all of which the Virgin's hairstyle, facial features, bodily postures, and dress are remarkably consistent.

Gudiol recognized a peculiarity in the *bombé* forehead and M-shaped hairstyle of the Virgin and related it to her image in the *Adoration* by Diego in Burgos Cathedral (Fig. 5.19). It is true that the hairstyle was quite widespread at the time, a reflection of contemporary coiffure, and that of Virgin in the *Adoration* from Burgos Cathedral is slightly different: the widow's peak is actually a garland of jewels that descends from the hair parted at center. Still it is unlikely, in my view, that two artists could develop separately and simultaneously such striking formal similarities.

Judith Berg Sobré has characterized Gil as a sculptor who "pushes the art of ... carving to its limits." Harold Wethey, often severe in his art-historical assessments, nevertheless praised Gil: "Fascinating, inexhaustible in decorative invention, a consummate technician, stimulating, and entertaining, he is a Florid Gothic sculptor who



has no exact counterpart in any land.” But from what land did he come? Wethey, following August Mayer’s lead, located Gil’s training and subsequent sculptural activity in the Lower Rhine, which he assimilated to the Low Countries generally as “racially and historically integral.” He offered, roughly, the district of Cleves-Limbourg as a possible place of origin, but his comparative examples are not especially compelling or convincing. Based upon the visual evidence I have reviewed, I believe it is more likely that Gil and Diego were both Brabantine in origin.<sup>8</sup>

In documents, Gil is referred to both as Gil de Enberres (Antwerp) and Gil de Urliones (Orléans), a “gran entallador y ymaginador.”<sup>9</sup> We can effectively rule out the second place since Gil’s style is intimately connected with artistic developments in Antwerp in the second half of the fifteenth century. A comparison of the Saint Catherine in the Miraflores retable (Fig. 5.21) with the few similar sculptural works surviving in Antwerp suggests a thorough training in the preferred style of the city on the Scheldt. The high rounded forehead of Saint Catherine, her semi-circular eyebrows, and the full, long, almost cylindrical neck, accentuated in its supple rotundity by the sharp contrast of the jeweled brocade at the breast, accord well with examples from north Brabant. It suffices to compare two nearly identical figures, one of Saint Catherine (Fig. 5.22) and another of Saint Barbara (Fig. 5.23), both produced for a Bridgettine convent by the so-called Meester van Koudewater. The statues share ovoid facial features and pursed,

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<sup>8</sup> Although some Spanish scholars have observed Italianizing elements in the El Paular retable, I see no evidence of this.

<sup>9</sup> Juan de Salazar, “El origen flamenco de Gil Siloe,” *Archivo Espanol de Arte* 18 (1946): 228–42.

bee-stung lips and feature a cascade of locking V-shapes in the draperies, which terminate in a point between the Virgin's feet, a hallmark of Antwerp sculpture in the third quarter of the fifteenth century (though with antecedents in Brussels.). The Miraflores Saint Catherine has the relaxed hairstyle that corresponds to a later fashion, as would befit a statue executed some twenty years later.

The qualities of the Miraflores Saint Catherine and Koudewater saints recur in the *Virgin of El Paular* (Fig. 4.1), whose drapery folds recall Antwerp features of some twenty years before, although they show a certain development. Indeed, the facial features of the *Virgin of El Paular* has more in common with those in the painting of the *Assumption* by Diego now in the collection of the Prado—the two might almost be considered twins despite their different media (Fig. 5.24). This is yet another reason to suggest that Gil and Diego shared training and later collaborated across media. If both came from Antwerp, they would have belonged to the same Guild of Saint Luke, although Gil would necessarily have maintained membership in another guild devoted to stone carvers. The survival of numerous works by Gil thus helps to fill in gaps in our “as yet only dimly perceived understanding of the developments (of Flemish sculpture).”

The statues attributed to the Meester of Koudewater belonged to the Bridgettine convent of Marie Refugie, having been inherited from their mother-house, Marienwater, a compound closed after the Reformation; the statues were acquired by the Rijksmuseum in the late nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> As with the Carthusian Order, the Bridgettine Rule

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<sup>10</sup> It is said that the Bridgettine sisters were happy to hand off their “moldy” Late Gothic sculptures in order to acquire new ones for their convent.

mandated a specific architectural disposition to accommodate segregated communities.

The Order of Saint Bridget was composed of double communities; it was founded principally for women but incorporated priests for their spiritual care. The Bridgettine Order, like the Carthusian, had a reputation for spotless sanctity. Marienwater was a wealthy community of the strictest enclosure, it is not surprising, then, that an important sculptor would have been assigned the job of providing sacred sculptures for the churches and the enclosures for men and women.

The statues made for this convent are so similar to later works by Gil on the Miraflores retable that if they were not carved by the same sculptor, they reveal common training. There is no reason to believe that the Meester van Koudewater came from the region of s'Hertogenbosch, where the rich Bridgettine convent of Marienwater was located, since the works could easily have been commissioned from Antwerp. The pinched waist, the delicate, courtly features, and pronounced V-patterns of the drapery, and the high, broad foreheads, accord well with sculptural language current in Antwerp at the time. Gil drew on this tradition in his work on the Miraflores retable and, I will argue, the retable of El Paular.

### **The Miraflores Retable**

The Miraflores retable is dominated by a massive crucifix set within a wreath-like circle of angels supported by the figures of God the Father and the Holy Spirit (Fig. 5.25). The progenitors of the Roman church, Saints Peter and Paul, flank the aureole at

left and right. The Church Fathers, Saints Gregory, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, occupy the corners outside the aureole. A small globe of the world is placed just below the crucifix. Four scenes of the Passion and its aftermath (Agony in the Garden, Flagellation, Road to Calvary, and a Lamentation) surround the cross in the mandorla. Carvings of the evangelists Matthew (Fig. 5.26a), Mark (Fig. 5.26b), Luke (Fig. 5.27), and John (Fig. 5.28) appear in roundels. Infancy scenes similarly bound by circular frames are seen at the top of the predella (Fig. 5.29), and at the bottom, there are carved scenes of the Last Supper (Fig. 5.30) and the Arrest of Christ (Fig. 5.31) set in square frames. Also in the predella, squared devices enclose the escutcheons of Castilla-León and Portugal (Fig. 5.32) above images of the donors, Juan II and Isabel of Portugal (Fig. 5.33 and 5.34), which are in turn flanked by carvings of Saint Catherine and Saint James the Apostle (Fig. 5.35).

In the top register, four narrow rectangular niches on each side contain carvings of saints or prophets. The saints comprise a varied company of martyrs, virgins, confessors, and prophets, mostly ancient but others near contemporary, such as Saints Dominic and (possibly) Thomas Aquinas. Two saints in particular—a “holy hermit” and a “holy monk” at the lower side registers—relate specifically to the eremitic beginnings and spiritual models and aspirations of the Carthusian Order.

In its layout, the whole altarpiece is inward-looking, the composition forcing attention on the great central crucifix, even to the crescents that press in at the lateral margins. These flank the central circle of angels surrounding the crucifix, and emphasize

the Trinitarian content of the altarpiece, more prosaically expressed in the sculptured figures of God the Father (Fig. 5.36) and the Holy Spirit (Fig. 5.37) and complemented by the Infancy and Passion scenes. Of all the carved figures in the ensemble, only the distressed body of Christ is truly luminous; his pale flesh and bright white girdle create a central field of light accentuated by the gilded haze of figures around him.

Just below the crucifix, the retable features a clever and novel mechanical device (Fig. 5.25)—not otherwise encountered in Late Gothic retable design—by which six carved scenes could be caused to rotate according to feast days throughout the year: *Nativity* (Fig. 5.38), *Baptism of Christ* (Fig. 5.39), *Ascension* (Fig. 5.40), *Resurrection* (Fig. 5.41), *Pentecost* (Fig. 5.42), and *Assumption of the Virgin* (Fig. 5.43). The moveable compartments are set within a box-like frame that connects the altarpiece to the huge *banco* or predella below. This division is not obvious at first sight because of the visual elision caused by the profusion of circles and squares and religious scenes depicted within, not to mention lesser figures that fill up almost every corner of the work.

The all-over design of the retable with its “repetition of geometric forms in a tapestry-like scheme” has consistently invited interpretations of *mudéjar* influence. But the central portion recalls contemporary *Rosenkranz* crucifixes in the Holy Roman Empire and probably finds an older antecedent in a thirteenth-century triumphal cross from the Church of Öja, Gotland (Sweden) (Fig. 5.44) and other *Ringkreuze* on Gotland (Froejel) and in the *Kirche unserer Lieben Frau zur Höhe* in Soest, Westphalia.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Achim Timmermann for pointing out these parallels.

Contemporary tapestries provide striking parallels: the *Fall and Redemption of Mankind* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated c. 1480–90 (Fig. 5.45), shows similarities in iconography and design.

### **The El Paular and Miraflores Retables Compared**

Although we considered in detail the narrative scheme of the El Paular retable in previous chapters, it will be useful to review some structural elements before turning to a visual comparison of the El Paular and Miraflores retables. Scholars have called attention to a disparity between the lower and upper registers of the El Paular altarpiece; most obviously, the bottom register consists of six compartments, whereas the second and third contain four each, and the fourth only two. Thus, in its totality the retable emulates the T-shape favored in northern altarpieces. Abad Castro and Ansón Martín have made an attempt to relate structural and stylistic variations to staggered building phases of the El Paular church, and they have offered several hypothetical reconstructions of the retable according to these proposed developmental stages (Fig. 4.19).

The disparity between the registers is likewise evident in the tracery of the canopies across them and the structural supports for the compartments. Curiously, the tracery scheme in the baldachins of both the Miraflores and El Paular retables have much in common in terms of broken ogee forms, which likewise resonate with other similar designs in the El Paular sacristy doors as well as the ornament for doors of the main cloister (Fig. 5.46). The tracery of the upper compartments of the El Paular retable, with

its red background, likewise has complements in painted retables of the period, including those traceried canopies that top panels in the works by the Master of the Catholic Kings that I have attributed to Diego (Fig. 5.20). In both the El Paular and Miraflores retables, the canopies intrude upon rather than set off the narrative scenes they crown. Indeed, at El Paular the canopies are larger than the narrative scenes they are meant to choreograph.

No one, of course, would suggest that Gil carved the entire altarpieces of El Paular or Miraflores by himself, but I would argue that Gil was the principal sculptor of both. For El Paular scholars have generally suggested divergent teams of sculptors at work. They note especially a difference in the treatment of the figures in the first register with the soft, rounded faces of the female figures, and the equally rounded if somewhat harsher features of the males, a hallmark of both Gil's and Diego's work. There is, however, a strong visual continuity in movement from the first register to the second, particularly if one considers the appearance of the central character, Mary, whose hairstyle, garment, and draperies in the *Presentation* of the second register repeat those of the figures in the register below (Figs. 4.9 and 4.5–4.8). Of course, if different teams did contribute separately to the two lowest registers, this kind of internal copying to ensure harmonious visual and narrative movement from bottom to top would be just what we might expect.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Similarities from work to work are also to be accounted for by the widespread practice of copying from prints (a practice alluded to in contracts). At least four of the panels comprising the life of Christ in the Retable of the Relics (*Retablo de las reliquias*) at Burgos Cathedral interpret engravings by Schongauer: The Arrest, the Crowning with Thorns, and Ecce Homo, and the Way to Calvary.) have been considered reinterpretations of engravings by Schongauer. The Evangelists on the retable of Miraflores are virtually identical to those in the Chapel of the Conception at Burgos, but even so, there is considerable ingenuity and variety in treatment.

But to test the idea that Gil was the principal sculptor of all the registers, it is worthwhile to take into consideration parallel scenes crowded with figures in the El Paular and Miraflores retables. In both, the carver always shows greater skill and care in his treatment of monumental devotional figures than he does in carving smaller figures or in the handling of narrative scenes with multiple actors. This visual disparity suggests that a different technique was deemed appropriate for carving figures in congested narrative compositions in variously low and high relief, and for sculpting single-figure devotional or symbolic figures carved almost wholly in the round.<sup>13</sup> In the Miraflores retable, the elegant treatment of figures such as Saint Catherine and Saint James the Great (Fig. 5.35), Saint Barbara (Fig. 5.47), Saint John the Baptist (Fig. 5.48) and Saint Peter (Fig. 5.49), and Saint Mary Magdalene (Fig. 5.50) demonstrates such a distinction. The handling of the *Last Supper* (Fig. 5.30) in the Miraflores retable, to cite just one example, makes this distinction plain. There, the figures, viewed head-on, are rather short and stumpy, awkwardly placed around the table, and the figure of John sleeping at the breast of Christ appears almost as a disembodied head and torso resting on the table. The sculptor was evidently taking into account the view of the beholder from the ground. In other words, this treatment was a conscious decision, not a fumbling handling by workshop artists.

The El Paular retable differs fundamentally from the Miraflores altarpiece in that its large-scale decoration consists almost exclusively of narrative scenes. Only the *Virgin*

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<sup>13</sup> See Suckale for his discussion of Stillagen.



*of El Paular* can be said to correspond to the single-figure devotional images in the Miraflores altarpiece. That this figure is handled with particular finesse makes sense considering her titular importance for the church and in view of the fact that the narrative cycle commences with episodes from her life. Here, too, there are practical reasons to account for apparent stylistic discrepancies. Such delicacy would have been unnecessary for small-scale narrative sequences that would have been seen from a distance and that were carved in the knowledge that they would subsequently be painted.

At El Paular, the thirty-three statuettes placed in the framing elements of the retable and eight more placed within the cusps of the sacristy portals, display an enormous range of style in carving. One need only compare the squat, rather crude figure of Saint Sebastian or Saint John the Evangelist with other, more capable carvings in the round and in the narrative scenes, or for that matter, with the *Virgin of El Paular*, to see this. Variations seem due to function. At El Paular, the statuettes take the form of small incrustations within the precious microarchitectural forms that help to structure and move the narratives. Thus, they play a secondary but important role in relation to the large narrative scenes they set off. There is meaningful variation in the narrative scenes in the upper register as well. These have fewer actors, heightening the drama and rendering the emotional impact more compelling while making them more legible from a distance. We should always keep in mind the obvious, that these compartments were never—indeed, could never—be seen frontally, as we view them now in photographs. Only the makers themselves, or persons on scaffolds for cleaning or retouching, could have seen them as

we do. Ideal anatomy was never a concern for sculptors like Gil or for others formed in his artistic environment. Rather the artists considered impact and effect: elegance and luxury were important, but vitality and movement even more.

A series of comparisons between reliefs sharing subjects in the two retables brings home significant similarities and helps support the attribution to Gil and Diego. The carver and polychromist achieve different effects through the use of brilliant gold-blue background in Miraflores, and muted painted reliefs in El Paular. The scenes represented in the rotating mechanical wheel at Miraflores are notable for the inclusion of landscape depicted in relief with polychromy, and thus offer a parallel to scenes in the compartments in the El Paular retable. The body type of Christ in the Miraflores *Baptism* and *Resurrection* (Figs. 5.39 and 5.41) is similar in style to the El Paular figures, and the Virgin of the *Nativity* and *Pentecost* (Figs. 5.38 and 5.40) likewise shows strong visual similarities with her counterpart in the El Paular retable.

We have already called attention to the differences in carving style in the lower and upper registers of the El Paular retable, with the figures more corpulent in the scenes of the first zone. Nevertheless, there are clear similarities between the Miraflores and El Paular renditions of the Annunciation (Fig. 5.51), especially in the carving of the hair—note the forms of the two angels of Miraflores and that of the figure of Gabriel of El Paular. Likewise, the brocades on the robes, the feathers on the angel's wings, and the sharp folds on the robes of Gabriel repeat, a feature notable in the robes of the Virgin, particularly in the lower creases of her blue mantle in the El Paular *Annunciation*. God

the Father has a similar countenance in each scene, although the Incarnation at Miraflores is effected by a notably chunky Christ Child, whereas at El Paular it is produced by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. A cloth of honor gives distinction to the action in both scenes and very similar tracery and blue ground ornaments the stands, although the El Paular narrative takes in Mary's bed chamber and there are fewer objects in the Miraflores version,.

The figures in the scene of the *Epiphany* (Fig. 5.52) are varied in age and ethnicity in each of the retables, though they are more numerous in the El Paular version. In each, the Christ Child—remarkably similar in the description of the body and the golden curls on his head—reaches forward to accept the gift from a kneeling Magus, represented as an aged king in the El Paular scene and a young monarch in the Miraflores. The outer garments of each, clasped at the waist with a large gem, are strikingly similar in both scenes.

The carvings of the *Last Supper* (Fig. 5.53) also present significant visual parallels. In each, the figures are disposed around an oval table. The chief difference is the presence of the Magdalene in the Miraflores retable, with the penitent Mary prostrate on the floor at Christ's feet. Christ looks remarkably similar in both scenes, as do the facial features of other figures, and in both scenes the typical roast or rack of lamb is replaced by the Iberian suckling pig or *cochinillo*. A novel feature of the El Paular *Last Supper* is the depiction of three of the apostles from behind, a disposition with precedents in Flemish-Rhenish depictions of the biblical event. A clear family resemblance exists

among all the figures of the Miraflores *Last Supper*, whereas at El Paular the group of disciples is highly varied. The simple chairs of the apostles, seen from behind at El Paular, contrast with the Gothic-traceried seats of the two apostles in the Miraflores scene, although, it should be noted, the El Paular Judas, money-bag behind his back, rests on a chair with a simple trefoil form at base. In both scenes a cloth of honor is used to signal the importance of the event commemorated. Perhaps the most important difference between the two is that at El Paular the Communion of Judas is shown, while at Miraflores Christ blesses both the Magdalene and the food on the table. But in matters of form the two show significant similarities.

The carvings of the *Arrest of Christ* (Fig. 5.54) display greater visual variety in the El Paular scene with respect to disposition of figures of varying height, gesture, body type, dress, and landscape. The presumably earless Malchus of the Miraflores scene has fallen to Christ's left, while the same actor sits in an almost identical cross-legged pose to Christ's right at El Paular. Christ holds the severed ear at El Paular, and it is not clear whether the appendage has disappeared from the Miraflores version. The figures are notably more slender and the draperies more angular in the Miraflores version – but this a quality attributable to carving in wood rather than alabaster.

In the two renditions of the Flagellation (Fig. 5.55), the description of the human body, especially that of Christ, is similar. In the Miraflores scene, the posture of Christ at the column mimics that of the tormentor of the El Paular scene, with an exaggerated *contrapposto* for the lunging figure at right, who pulls Christ's hair as two others scourge

him. In both, Christ's body is rendered somewhat unnaturally—his arms and legs, though muscular, are somewhat lumpy. The wide feet repeat in both carvings (and, also, in the *Arrest of Christ*). In both, the tormentors are depicted in late medieval dress, and Pilate is distinguished by his ancient dress. The arms of Pilate's simple throne look alike in both scenes. Even Christ's face and beard, despite the color difference caused by polychromy, are similar. The contortion of the bodies, again, was probably intended to suggest violent motion when viewed from below. Since the El Paular carver had a greater capacity for description of the interior of the scene of torture, he suggests depth by means of painted-sculpted recessed columns with simple capitals, set back from those in Christ's picture plane, where floriated capitals rest upon rounded arches.

The *Way to Calvary* scenes (Fig. 5.55) in the two retables differ fundamentally, and El Paular's might in fact be of later date. In the Miraflores scene, Christ has fallen, whereas at El Paular he is on foot in the company of soldiers, trumpeters, revelers and other witnesses, including Pilate. Christ wears the crown of thorns and registers great distress in the El Paular scene, whereas he appears almost insouciant in the Miraflores scene, despite averting his face from the hair-pulling centurion. The scale of the bodies in the Miraflores version is oddly expressed, with the fallen Christ almost double the size of the tormenter to his right, whose waist he grabs for stability. Christ's left foot extends improbably from his robe, causing a curious double-jointed effect at the knee. Figures range in size, creating a sense of depth, whereas they are presented in a planar fashion against a painted landscape sculpted in low relief at El Paular. The differences here are

greater than in the other scenes.

Differences and similarities are balanced in the *Lamentation* scenes (Fig. 5.57), both are set in a shallow space with attention focused on Christ's dead body, his mouth slightly open. This muscular body, although differently posed, is found in both scenes. Still, at Miraflores the crowned Christ appears almost to levitate away from the surrounding figures. John supports Christ's head with his right hand, and the Magdalene supports Christ's left hand with both of her own as she bends to kiss it. The Virgin lifts both hands in shock, and it is only this gesture, along with John's, that betrays emotional impact—the faces are quite blank. At El Paular, the figure of Christ is weightier. Those around him likewise appear calm, as if in quiet sorrowful dialogue, although the downcast faces of the Virgin and the other Marys, whose veils obscure their features, heighten the impact of the Savior's death. Likewise, the three Marys are present in the El Paular retablo, along with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, whereas only two Marys appear among the principal actors in the Miraflores version of the *Quinta Angustia* or Fifth Anguish. The omission of the third Mary may simply be due to lack of space.

Some significant visual similarities are seen in the two treatments of the Crucifixion (Figs. 5.58 and 5.59), although the scenes vary greatly in scale. Among the anatomical features that inform Gil's—and by extension, Diego's—rendition of the human body, one that stands out is the parabola-shaped crest formed by the rounded, even bumpy terminations on Christ's ribs. This feature, which Gil may have picked up from Diego's painting, suggests an intensive give-and-take between the artists, forged in

their frequent collaborations. These two images of the crucified Christ show other compositional similarities: even if the position of the arms differs, the positions of the feet and legs show an analogous splaying between thighs and calves, and a bowing at the knees. The crucifixes, despite their polychromy, find analogues in numerous crucifixes produced more or less contemporaneously in the Brabant. Perhaps the most striking feature of Diego's work, which appears also in work by Gil, is the bizarre *contrapposto* of Christ in several paintings, a feature that is found in both the El Paular and Miraflores retables. For instance, the rather strained *contrapposto* of the *Christ between the Virgin and Saint John* (Fig. 5.12) is found in certain figures on both retables.

### **Alabaster as a Medium**

Gil's work carving the royal tombs at Miraflores had repercussions for his involvement in the production of the retable of El Paular, since the two monuments were carved from alabaster. The eight-pointed star formation he adopted is unique in the history of European tomb sculpture, although alabaster itself was very commonly used for funerary commissions. Gypsum does not occur in abundance in natural deposits in Castile, and the material was never widely used for the construction of retables in the kingdom, as it was in Aragon, where alabaster is found in great supply. I know of only two examples of Castilian altarpieces sculpted from alabaster—the retable of the church of Ciudad Real and that of the parish Church of San Nicolás, Burgos. Alabaster was reserved ordinarily in fifteenth-century Castile for burial monuments. Sculptors would

usually forego polychromy, at least in the effigies, although it appears that most tombs had some color.

In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, alabaster statues produced mainly in England were imported extensively into Castile, and their presence is especially notable in churches along the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. The fact that alabaster altarpieces appear profusely in the kingdom of Aragon—notably in retables at the cathedrals of Vich, Tarragona, and Zaragoza—might suggest some wish on the part of the Castilian charterhouses to emulate church furnishings from the eastern Iberian peninsula.<sup>14</sup> Another feature of the El Paular retable that links it to Aragonese and Catalanian design is the provision of stone doorways cut into the ensemble. This type of portal is common especially in altarpieces in Barcelona, the location of Scala Dei, mother of El Paular and thus of all the Castilian charterhouses.<sup>15</sup>

The expense and rarity of alabaster, as well the immensity of the El Paular altarpiece and the high quality of much of the sculptural work, all point to a team of the most outstanding talent who would command significant fees. Of course, Gil's contract for the tombs of Isabel's parents and brother at Miraflores represents a royal artistic commission of the highest order. The use of alabaster in the El Paular altarpiece may constitute some kind of answer to the complicated and novel scheme achieved in the wooden Miraflores retable and the alabaster tombs that fronted it. Certainly, artistic

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<sup>14</sup> Considering the wide use of alabaster for retables in Aragon and tombs in Castile, there is no reason to look to Genoa, as Ponz suggested in the eighteenth century, as a source.

<sup>15</sup> It is also found at the Cathedral of Tarragona.



results would have varied according to carving done in wood and alabaster, respectively, with the soft stone less capable of achieving sharp points and hard, precise angles, although, consistent with Gil's obsessive sculptural style, he did his best to attain this effect, as in the sleeve of the rabbi in the scene of *Christ's Presentation in the Temple* at El Paular (Fig. 5.60).

In the Miraflores tombs, Gil carved the effigies of Isabel of Portugal (Fig. 5.61), Juan II, and the Infante Alfonso (Fig. 5.62) in the elegant, elongated manner he reserved for devotional figures of saints in the wooden retable. The style recurs in the standing figures of the retable of Miraflores and the *Virgin of El Paular*, but not in the satellite figures of the Prophets and the Virtues (a complete set of seven, including both cardinal and theological), which show a squatter style. Facial features of the apostles on the tomb of the Infante Alfonso (Figs. 5.63 and 5.64) and apostles from Miraflores bear similarities to others in the El Paular retable. This is true, too, of the figures of the seated Carthusians pondering pious texts (Fig. 5.65), which show a somewhat thick carving style at odds with Gil's treatment of symbolic figures, including large-scale single-figure saints. The Infante Alfonso at Miraflores bears the almost feminine face of his mother Isabel of Portugal—perhaps the sculptor's way of indicating the king's extreme youth, since Alfonso died at the age of fourteen.

Gil thus employs two visual languages in his tomb sculpture at Miraflores, as he does in large-scale wooden retables. The effigy with Isabel, with its idealized, soft features, has been compared to the carving of the *Virgin of El Paular*. A quick

comparison of the sculpture of Isabel with figures such as the Virtues likewise reflects a variety of sculptural preoccupations for significant figures—here, the royal dead—and the Virtues whose good works represent the presumed qualities of the rulers. As in the lower registers at El Paular, the insistence on the splendid recreation of jewels, beads, brocades, and other fine materials is equally (if not more) important than anatomical description or correctness.

The polychromy on the El Paular altarpiece may present more of a hindrance than help in the detection of Diego's painterly style in Gil's sculptural work. The conservators who performed the restoration in 2004 were pressed by circumstances to preserve an eighteenth-century repainting; polychromies are not reversible without potential damage to the painted layers beneath. In its long life, the retable has suffered numerous cracks, replacements, and losses in the third register of the *chambrana* and the *guardapolvo*, as well as incisions in the lower elements. (There is a considerable amount of graffiti made with a sharp instrument indicating names and dates.) Likewise, metallic additions such as hooks inserted into the stone, presumably for the hanging of curtains or the suspension of candles, have caused other damage including cracks. Numerous washings with aggressive materials have also compromised the layers of polychromy, obscuring the retable's original aesthetic language. For instance, in the angel wings of various figures at El Paular, the sculptor imitates the texture of feathers, and the polychromist completes the work with the application of various pigments. (The same situation obtains with the rendition of the pelican atop the crucifix in the Miraflores altarpiece.) Likewise, although

the Virgin's hair in scenes from her life in the El Paular retable is completely golden, it may once have been adorned with painted veils, possibly removed in later cleanings because they were believed to be dirt or other accretions. Sometimes the alabaster was covered with a later repainting even when the stone was originally intended to show through, as with Christ's body.

Technical studies have indicated at least two complete repainting campaigns. The studies offered the restorers comparative evidence with other restorations undertaken by the Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico Nacional (Madrid), with examples of alabaster both English and Spanish. The El Paular retable is unique in Spain and the only one in Castile to keep its *guardapolvo* and its *marco* (spot). Its polychromy differs notably from earlier English examples (where much of the stone was allowed to speak for itself) because the El Paular retable is almost entirely covered with paint. The most important evidence in support of the use of a northern polychroming technique is the peculiar fact that the restorers found a similar ground for applied gold leaf, called a *sisá*, in only one other Spanish work—the *Retable of the Virgen de Belén* in the church of Santa María de Laredo (Fig. 5.6), the missing link noted earlier for its Rogierian design. These studies yield useful information for visual analysis of both the El Paular and Miraflores retables and the collaboration of sculptor and polychromist in the Iberian peninsula.

In the final analysis, there can be no definitive answer to the question of which sculpture-and-polychrome team was responsible for the El Paular retable, given the lack

of documentation and the diversity in visual language within the altarpiece. If the assignment had been an easy one, certainly earlier scholars would have settled on a solution. Nevertheless, I hope to have presented evidence that will suggest the team of Gil and Diego as the most likely among the current contenders.

## Chapter Six

### Epilogue: The Liturgicity of the El Paular Retable

How can we understand the El Paular retable's fixed position at the most important axial point of connection within the holiest of church spaces, the apse? Some consideration must be paid to the kinds of pious reactions—among many, or, conversely, if any—that the retable may have inspired in its Carthusian beholders. The scholarship of the past decades has made much of iconographical and attendant liturgical and paraliturgical uses of altarpieces, and the question is fittingly writ large for the enormous artistic productions favored in the Iberian peninsula.

Panofsky and followers have looked to iconography, as well as stylistic developments and biographical concerns, for an understanding of the meaning and function of the altarpiece in its sacred setting.<sup>1</sup> Barbara Lane has likewise employed iconographical investigation successfully in her studies concerning primarily Flemish altarpieces.<sup>2</sup> Lynn Jacobs has studied mass-produced “Netherlandish” altarpieces from a variety of angles, including the iconographical.<sup>3</sup> But iconography alone cannot explain the liturgicity—or lack of it—in the quintessential piece of church furnishing, the

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<sup>1</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380–1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

altarpiece. Applied rigidly, the approach can yield a somewhat airtight entity that presumes a high degree of theological sophistication on the part of beholders, all of whom are expected to have understood a retable's sacramental themes. One would expect, of course, a pointed theological and liturgical erudition on the part of Carthusian choir monks.

Craig Harbison criticized Barbara Lane for insisting upon "monkish exegesis"<sup>4</sup> and ignoring the radical unrest of a lay populace no longer receptive to the sacraments; he attempted to supply evidence that the Church had to resort to step-by-step enforcements of ecclesiastically administered and controlled sacramentality. Eamon Duffy provided a revisionist corrective to this strain of proto-Reformational thinking by calling attention to the multitude of devotional practices intimately bound up with lay sacramentality.<sup>5</sup> Of course, in the case of the Carthusian brothers, monkish exegesis is precisely what one would expect to apply to the retable's form, function, and meaning.

In his essay, "How Liturgical Is a Medieval Altarpiece?," Kees van der Ploeg equivocated and then declared that there is no single gauge of liturgicity by which we may assess the altarpiece, considering its variety of themes, settings, recipients, and so on.<sup>6</sup> Willibald Sauerländer, in an essay on the altars, reliquaries, and portals of Amiens Cathedral,<sup>7</sup> astutely suggested that these ensembles were meant perhaps more "to astound than to narrate," an assessment that places iconography in a position of secondary importance.

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<sup>4</sup> Craig Harbison, "Barbara Lane, The Altar and the Altarpiece," *Simiolus* 15. 3/4 (1985): 221–25.

<sup>5</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England. c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Kees van der Ploeg, "How Liturgical is a Medieval Altarpiece?" in *Italian Panel Painting off the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. Victor M. Schmidt (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 103–21.

<sup>7</sup> Willibald Sauerländer, "Reliquien, Altäre und Portale," in *Kunst und Liturgie im Mittelalter. Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Bibliotheca Hertziana und des Nederlands Instituut te Rome, Rom, 28.–30. September 1997*, ed. Nicolas Bock et al. (Munich: Hirmer, 2000), 121–34.

Scholarly studies have to date focused less on the response before monastic altarpieces than on the popular piety displayed before episcopal or parochial altarpieces. Thus, the conventional approach to retables has been to understand their amalgam of images as a kind of visual-theological compendium or “book of the illiterate.” This notion, based on august authorities ranging from Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) to Saint John Damascene (d. c. 1775), might conceivably apply to the El Paular retable and its impressions upon the *conversi*, *redditi*, or *donati*—though these had at best a highly restricted view of the altar. But how can we apply the notion of a book of the illiterate to the choir monks, persons well steeped in Scripture and Christian and secular literature?

It is worthwhile to consider the Carthusian liturgical calendar and its particular place in the Order. We have noted an unchanging quality attributed to the Order and its religious customs in the familiar adage, *Religio Cartusianorum nunquam reformata quia nunquam deformata* (The charterhouse was never reformed because it was never deformed), words taken from a eulogy of the Order incorporated in the *Thesaurus virtutum* by Alexander IV (1257), and repeated in the *Romani Pontifices* of Pius II (1460).<sup>8</sup> The motto of the Order, *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis* (Stands the cross as the world turns round), likewise suggests the stability of the Order. But, as we noted early on, the Customs of the Order and indeed its liturgical practice changed in response to pressure from within and without. The Carthusian liturgy was based, as was Bruno’s understanding of a monastic ideal, on earlier monastic experiments, notably those of Saint Benedict and Saint Bernard, if adapted to Carthusian spiritual inclinations and peculiarities. The Carthusian Mass-Liturgy is the same as the Cistercian, which in turn

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<sup>8</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 1.

evolved from the eleventh-century *Ordo Missae* of the Benedictines at Cluny.<sup>9</sup> The earliest known Carthusian liturgical calendar dates from 1134 and initially was like the Roman calendar.<sup>10</sup> The first General Chapter of 1132 mandated that all houses celebrate the Divine Office in the same rite.<sup>11</sup>

The Mass was infrequent in the early days of the Order. Guigo himself defined it as *raro*, and the same was echoed by Peter of Blois around 1200: *Raro sacrificat Cartusienis ordo*.<sup>12</sup> *Raro* must be understood in relative terms, since it meant approximately two hundred liturgical performances per year.<sup>13</sup> Multiplication of altars around 1250 resulted in a further expansion of private masses.<sup>14</sup> Feast days proliferated in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and Guigo's original restriction against accepting anniversaries of "strangers" was likewise abandoned. By the thirteenth century, two conventual masses per day were celebrated, although typically the second was a dry mass (*missa sicca*, also known as the *nudum officium*), meaning the "secret" or mystery was not celebrated.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the Conception of Our Lady (December 8) was celebrated as a solemnity by the Charterhouse of Val-Sainte-Aldegonde (Arras) in 1334, and in the year following all houses were granted the celebration; it was called the *Sanctificatio* by the Chapter General in 1341, but the name *Conceptio* was reapplied in

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<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Nissen, "Signum Contemplationis: History and Revision of the Carthusian Liturgy," in *Die Kartäuser und das Heilige Römische Reich: Internationaler Kongress vom 9.–11. September 1997*, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Hourlier and Moustier, "Le calendrier cartusien," 153; King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 21. The Charterhouse of Paris, for instance, had six altars in the year 1340.

<sup>15</sup> The *missa sicca* was also called the *missa nautica*, since it was performed on ship, where celebration of the mass was deemed impossible. It was also said for the sick and at funerals taking place after midday. King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 58–59.



1470, suggesting that the Carthusians favored the Franciscan rather than Dominican side of an ongoing Marian debate.<sup>16</sup>

Archdale King notes a “tendency to innovate” throughout the fifteenth century, though observing, as well, the counter-tendency of prescribing certain activities, including processions, as being against the statutes.<sup>17</sup> Other innovations were introduced, notably the display of the monstrance, an article of recent use but one mentioned at the Council of Cologne in 1452—which was attended by Denis the Carthusian.<sup>18</sup> As to the proper, the origin is a medley of the chant used in the Diocese of Grenoble, or a mixture of Order-rite and local district rite.<sup>19</sup> Within a short time, the monks had adapted the local rite to monastic use, notable especially for its appropriation from scripture, what has been called its “biblicism”<sup>20</sup> or its “principe de l’exclusivité scripturaire.”<sup>21</sup> The readings of the divine office constituted a *lectio continua*, read from a large choir bible, divided over a three-year cycle, so that almost all the books of Scripture would be read in their entirety; this was done most likely to replace refectory readings as performed by other religious orders, since the Carthusians met for meals only on Sundays and feast days.<sup>22</sup> Hymns were likewise introduced over the centuries, especially those of the Church Father, Ambrose of Milan, but generally the repertory of hymns remained highly limited.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 24–25.

<sup>17</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 25–26. For instance, a procession was introduced at Mainz, and the Chapter General of 1469 insisted on its removal.

<sup>18</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Nissen, “Signum Contemplationis,” 93.

<sup>20</sup> Nissen, “Signum Contemplationis,” 94.

<sup>21</sup> Dom Benoît Lambres, “Le chant des chartreux,” *Revue belge de musicologie* 24.1 (1970): 17–41, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Nissen, “Signum Contemplationis,” 99.

<sup>23</sup> Nissen, “Signum Contemplationis,” 95; King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 34.

The major parts of the divine office, except on feasts, were spoken by the monk at a *prie-dieu* in his cell, called an *oratorium*. There, the monk employed “full choir ceremonial”<sup>24</sup> with attention given to covering, uncovering, and bowing. In choir, the office was revered for its simplicity, as there were only two cantors to lead each half of the choir monks.<sup>25</sup> The repertory was learned by heart and the Carthusians had obligatory singing lessons called the *recordatio*.<sup>26</sup> Carthusians were sparing in the number of liturgical celebrants, and never used subdeacons. Thus, there were few people on the liturgical stage; for most of the mass, the priest stood alone in the sanctuary, with arms raised and stretched sideways *in modum crucifixi*.<sup>27</sup> Before the collects, the priest faced the altar and said the *Dominus vobiscum*; he turned to the choir after he faced the altar and said *Dominus*, then he turned to the choir to say *vobiscum*.<sup>28</sup> The epistle was read by one of the monks who walked up to the ambo, usually the Prior or the Procurator. Likewise, the deacon, who sat in the choir, moved past the celebrant to read the Gospel, and wore only the white cowl but not a dalmatic; when he moved forward to read, the celebrant clothed him with a stole. On Sundays and Feast Days, candle bearers were allowed to stand in formation around the celebrants at the altar.

Liturgical movements before the retable may have called attention to it.

Carthusians have always used genuflection sparingly. They followed an old tradition, dating from the time of the Council of Nicaea (325), that stressed that one should not kneel on Sundays, the time of the Ascension, when “bodies must be upraised.” Other

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<sup>24</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Christ had commended the Carthusian chant to Saint Bridget in her *Revelations*. King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Nissen, “Signum Contemplationis,” 95.

<sup>27</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 41.

postures included stretching the arms upward and outward in the manner of the crucified Christ, which the priest maintained almost all the way through the canon. But the monks did prostrate at the moment of consecration and again from the moment of the *Agnus Dei* to the communion chant.<sup>29</sup> They would stretch out on the ground, with the head sticking forth from the cowl, leaning on one arm or elbow. This position was called *lateraliter et honeste*, “sideways and fittingly.”<sup>30</sup> It is not clear what kind of practiced formation they would have had to maintain so as not to knock against one another.

What about the lines of sight that the priestly fathers, from their privileged seats within the choirs that enclose the main altar, would presumably have enjoyed? Does proximity increase liturgicity?<sup>31</sup> Monks’ eyes and gazes would most likely have been cast forward and downward. The twelfth-century Carthusian *De institutione novitiarum* prescribes certain behaviors for religious persons in formation, and wandering eyes are among the most severely criticized. The only private moments for gazing at an altarpiece would have been during elevation, and then from the ground. Lingering looks at the altarpiece and its parts would have been restricted to private prayer—which would then give the altarpiece the quality of an *Andachtsbild* and not the backdrop for liturgy at all, although it might have called up express liturgical and Eucharistic associations. During the mass and at the elevation, monastic eyes would have followed the directional movement of the celebrant’s hands as he consecrated and lifted, singly, the host and chalice. Significantly, Carthusians did not preach in the church; sermons were restricted to the chapterhouse.

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<sup>29</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 51.

<sup>30</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Jacqueline Jung has argued convincingly that barriers such as choir screens likewise connect disparate spaces and may indeed have heightened devotional experience. “Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches,” *Art Bulletin* 82.4 (December 2000): 622–57.

Perhaps the condensation of the Eucharistic moment, and all attendant bodily movement, would have intensified the liturgical mystery, as it appears to have done for laypersons in other contexts. But aside from the pronounced moments of celebration and prostration, visibility of the altarpiece would otherwise have been small in duration, if concentrated in impact. Indeed, placement of stalls, with partitions, would have placed the line of sight, at least along south and north walls, at an angle perpendicular to that of a normal beholder viewing the retable frontally.

For any others in the two separate compartments to the west of the priestly choir, visibility would have been even more restricted. The *Statuta nova* of 1276 did allow for a *guichet* to be opened at the moment of the elevation of the host, but otherwise the gaze of those monks, and the lay people in the compartment behind them, would have been limited to the devotional objects placed in their own sections. Although Guigo did not mention host elevation in his *Consuetudines*, it is prescribed in the *Statuta antiqua* of 1259, along with the ringing of a bell.<sup>32</sup> Thus visual and aural stimuli, and, in the case of the choir monks, the highly tactile experience of the body prostrate on the floor, probably enhanced liturgical meaning and its reception.

But aside from any excitement of private devotional zeal or enhancement of communal liturgical performance, the altarpiece played a strictly physical—even architectural—role, insofar as it provided a historiated façade for the most important room in the building, the *sagrario* or tabernacle room. In its physical placement at the east end of the priestly choir, the El Paular retable provided visual and spatial continuity with the *sanctum sanctorum* situated just behind it. This sculpted image-wall not only

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<sup>32</sup> King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders*, 50.

demarcated but also protected and connected with the space reserved for the sacred species central to the liturgical mystery.

If the retable rendered more vivid the choir monks' devotional imagination, whether when beholding it in the church or remembering it in the cell, something about its physical qualities raised suspicions among members of the Chapter General of 1503, resulting in a rebuke that echoed the one leveled against excesses of the building campaign at El Paular some thirty years earlier. The terse admonition concerning the altarpiece, directed to the Prior, yields little information about what specifically constituted the indecorum of the object in the Chapter's collective eyes:

Prior nouus de Paulari cum conuentu habeat bene uidere  
indecentiam imaginum nouarum factarum in altare maiori,  
et illas tollat si non conueniant Ordini, alias Captitulum  
mittet commissarios qui hoc facient.<sup>33</sup>

We may never be able to glean from the Chapter's tight-lipped admonition what incited the warning—whether it was the cost of the work, or its large and lavish construction, or its visual content that so moved the retable's critics. It is significant that the Chapter called attention to an “inappropriateness”—the most likely meaning of *indecentia* in this context. The tone and currency of the language used was changing in this period. The term *indecentia* made an appearance in Franciscan legislation of 1500 promoted by Pope Alexander VI, which updated the *Statuta Farineriana* published at the Chapter General at Assisi in 1354. It clearly echoes Carthusian concerns about content in imagery. But what is interesting is that it was extended to public areas of Franciscan churches and their contents. In the updated version, images were to avoid theological error in content or any “indecenty” that could cause “distraction from pious mediation.”

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<sup>33</sup> John Clark (ed.), *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter 1475-1503 (MS. Grande Chartreuse 1 Cart. 14)*, AC 100: 31 (Salzburg, 1999), 101.

Visitors had the authority to remove such images. One author has noted that these new statutes had less to do with “opulence” or superfluous and “overwrought” imagery and more to do with modes of representation and actual content. The use of the same term for widely different liturgical milieus is all the more striking: a large open preaching church is far indeed from the small, highly segregated plans we have noted for Carthusian churches. Nevertheless, the legislation speaks—if obliquely—to the discerning role of religious persons in the mediation of sacred images for the populations they were intended to serve.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Roberto Cobianchi, “Franciscan Legislation, Patronage Practice, and New Iconography in Sassetta’s Commission at Borgo San Sepolcro,” in *Sassetta: The Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece*, ed. Machtelt Israëls (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2009), 1: 107–20, 108.



Figure 1.1. Charterhouse of El Paular, view from south.

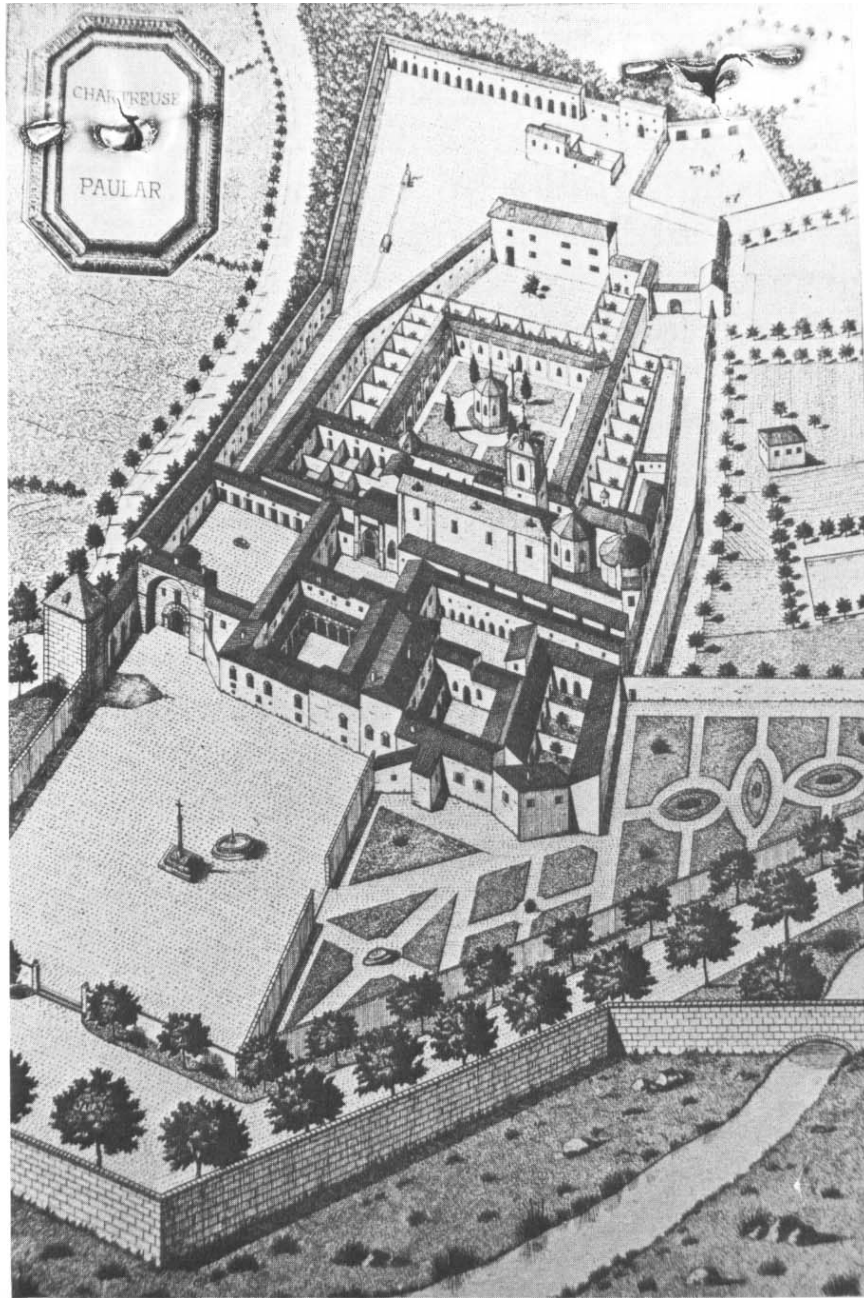


Figure 1.2. Engraving of the Charterhouse of El Paular, early nineteenth century. Photo: *Maisons de l'Ordre des Chartreux*, vol. III, 217.



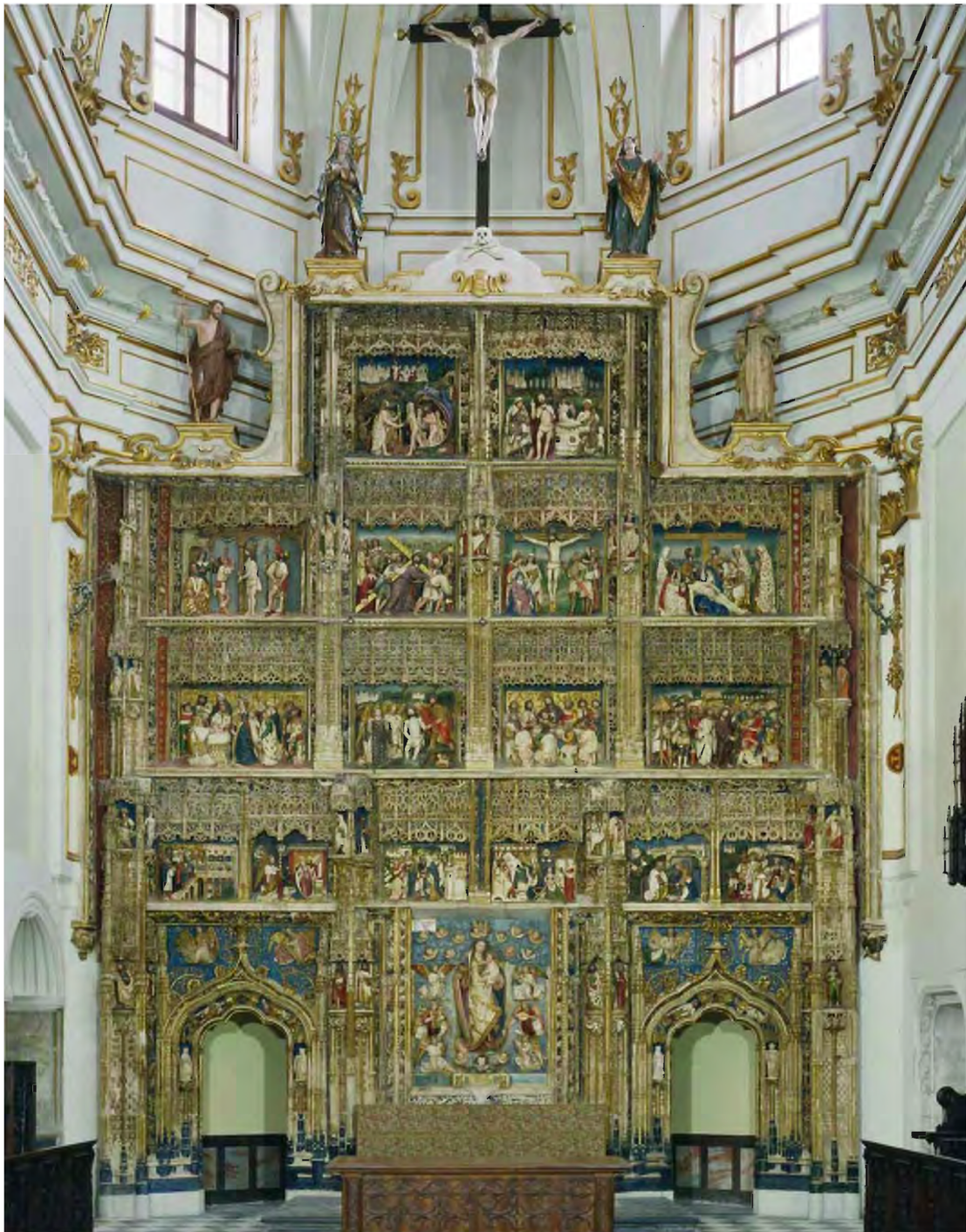


Figure 1.3. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 121.





Figure 1.4. *Lamentation*, wood with polychromy. Charterhouse of El Paular.





Figure 1.5. Juan Guas (?), *Bruno of Cologne*, limestone, c. 1485. Church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, main portal

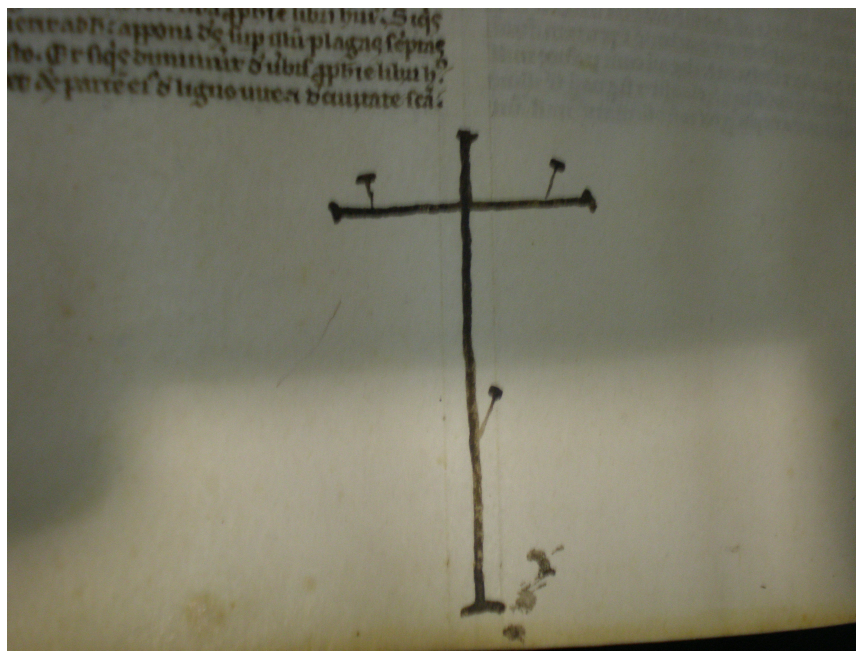
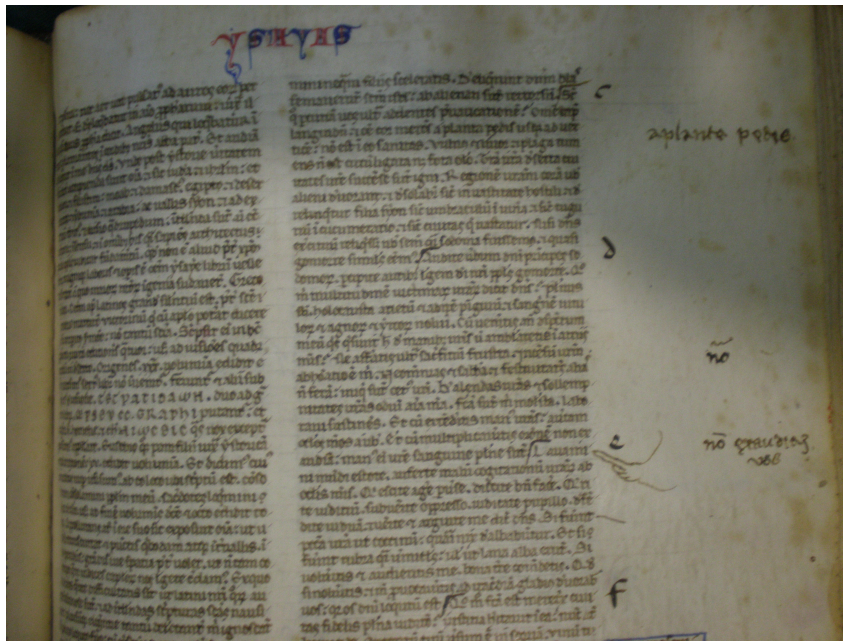


Figure 1.6. Bible, c.1300. Newberry Library MS 22, fols. 154r (top) and 281v (bottom), Chicago.





Figure 1.7. Seal of El Paular, 1559. Photo: Gustave Vallier, *Sigillographie*, plate XXV, no. 4.



Figure 2.1. *The Nuremberg Chronicle*, Urbanist-Clementine succession. Nuremberg, 1493, fol. 232v.

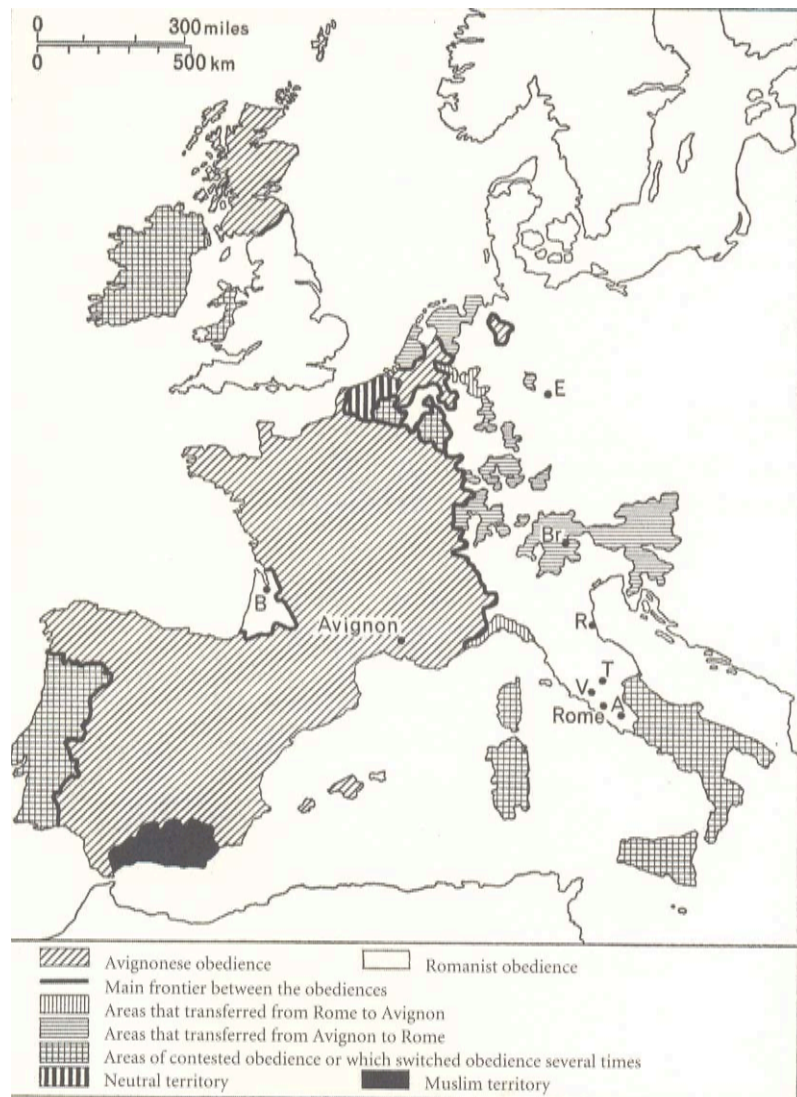


Figure 2.2. Avignese and Roman obediences, 1378–1409.



Figure 2.3. Gherardo Starnina (attr.), *Retablo of Fray Bonifacio Ferrer*, c. 1396–98. Museo de Belle s Artes, Valencia. Photo: <http://www.cult.gva.es>.





Figure 2.4. *Retable of Archbishop Don Sancho de Rojas*, c. 1415–20. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo: <http://museodelprado.es>.



Figure 2.5. Grande Chartreuse, Notre-Dame de Casalibus, 1453.



Figure 2.6. Carthusian in Church and Cell, 15<sup>th</sup> century. Bodleian Library, MS Douce 374, f. 19.



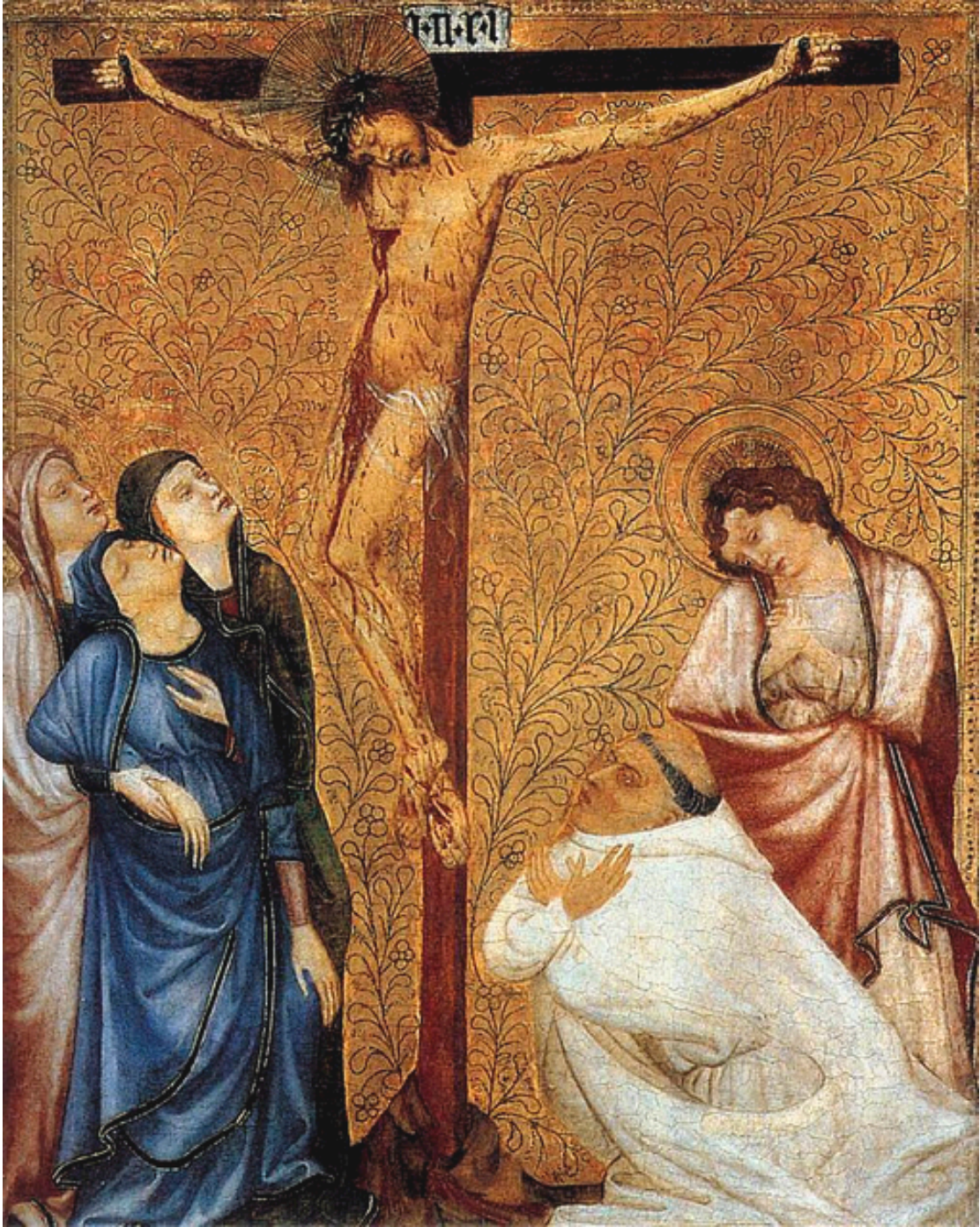


Figure 2.7. Jean de Beaufort, *Calvary with a Carthusian Monk*, 1389–95. The Cleveland Museum of Art.



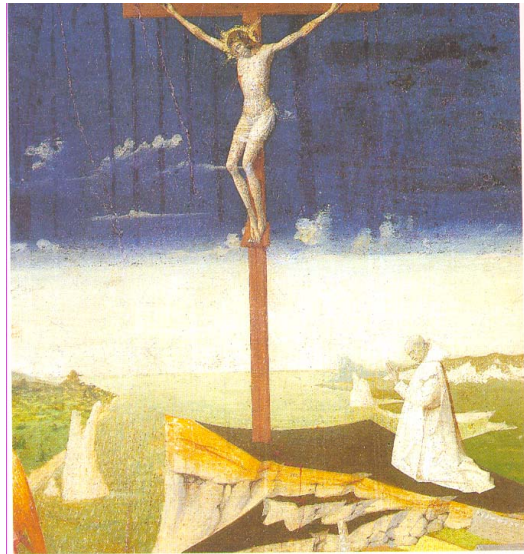
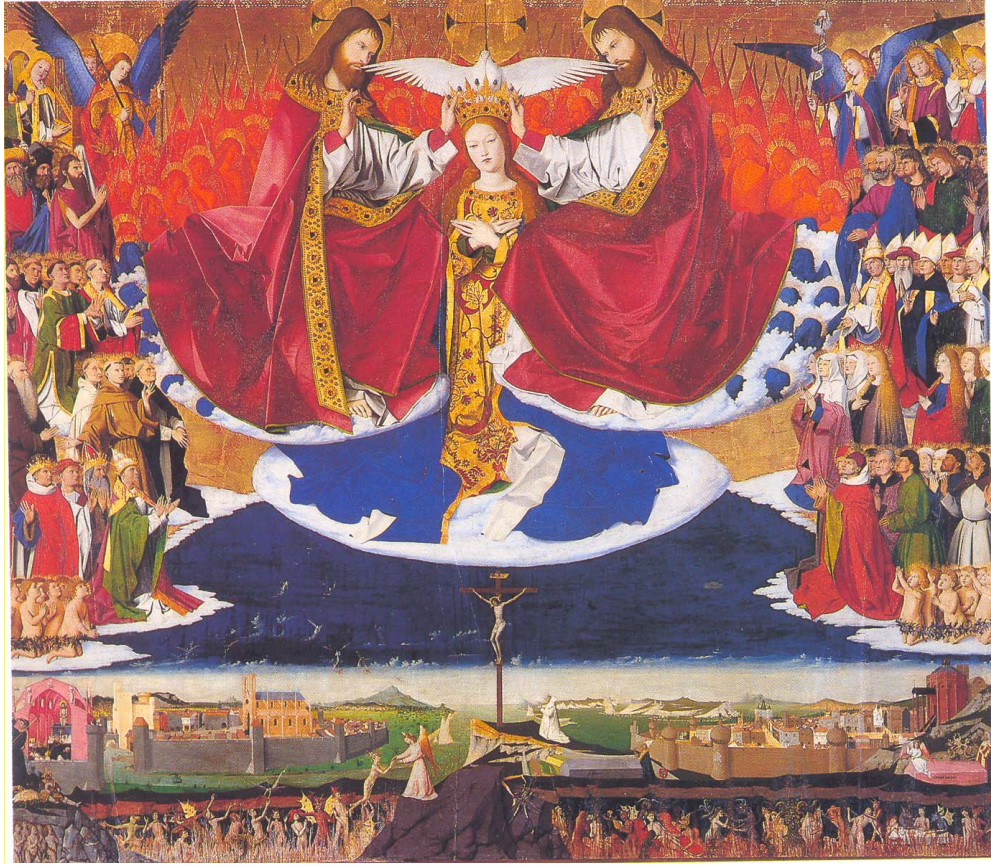


Figure 2.8. Enguerrand Quarton, *Coronation of the Virgin* (top) and detail of a carthusian praying at the foot of the cross (bottom), 1453. Musée Pierre-de-Luxembourg de Villeneuve-les-Avignon. Photo: The Yorck Project.



Figure 2.9. Jan van Eyck and workshop, *Virgin and Child with Saints and Donor*, c. early 1440s. Frick Collection, New York. Photos: ARTstor.





Figure 2.10. Petrus Christus, *Madonna and Child with Saint Barbara and a Carthusian Monk (Exeter Madonna)*, c. 1450. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.





Figure 2.11. Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Carthusian*, 1446. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/49.7.19>.





Figure 2.12. Juan de Padilla, *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, illustration preceding first canticle.



Figure 3.1. *Origin of the Carthusian Order*, frontispiece, woodcut, Basel, 1510, British Library. Photo: Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*, fig. 2.2.

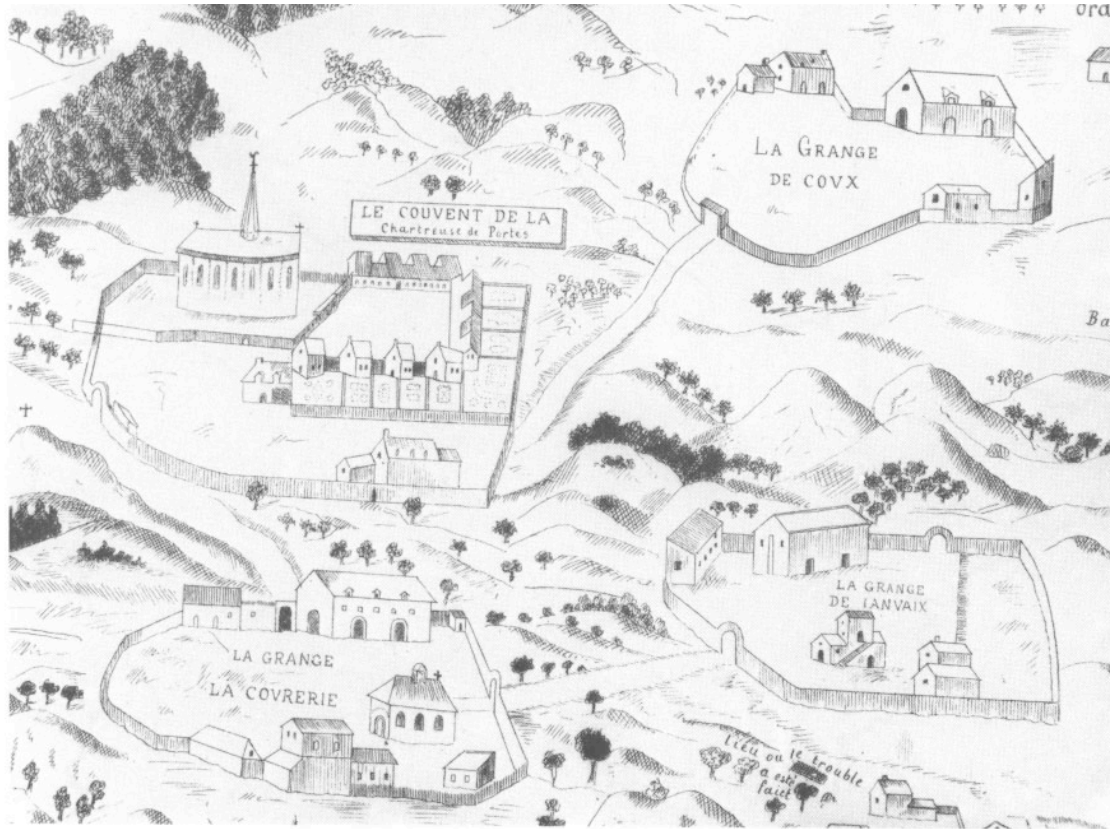


Figure 3.2. Drawing of Charterhouse of Portes showing *couvent* separated from *correrie*.

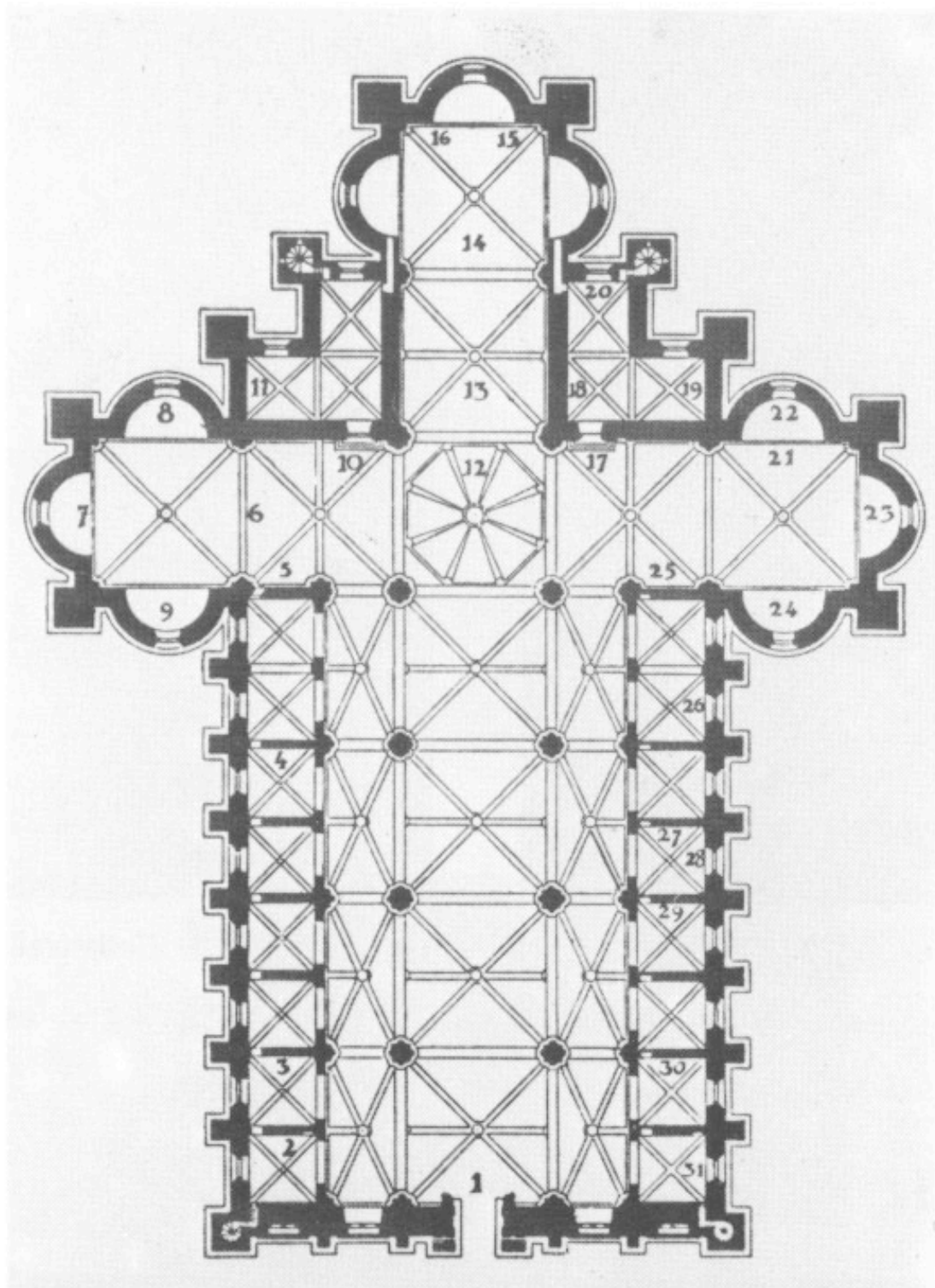


Figure 3.3. Plan of the three-aisled church of Charterhouse of Pavia.



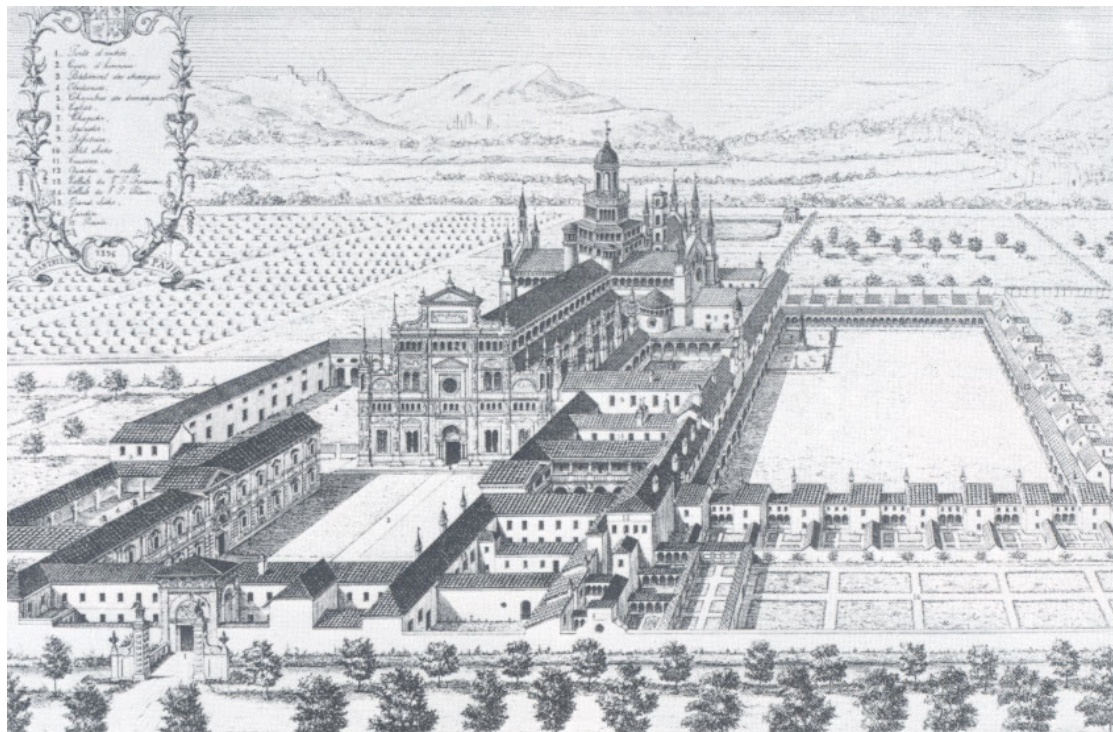


Figure 3.4. Engraving of Charterhouse of Pavia showing three-aisled church.



Figure 3.5. Eduardo Barceló, Plan of Charterhouse of El Paula as it exists today. Photo: MC4:2, fig. 23.



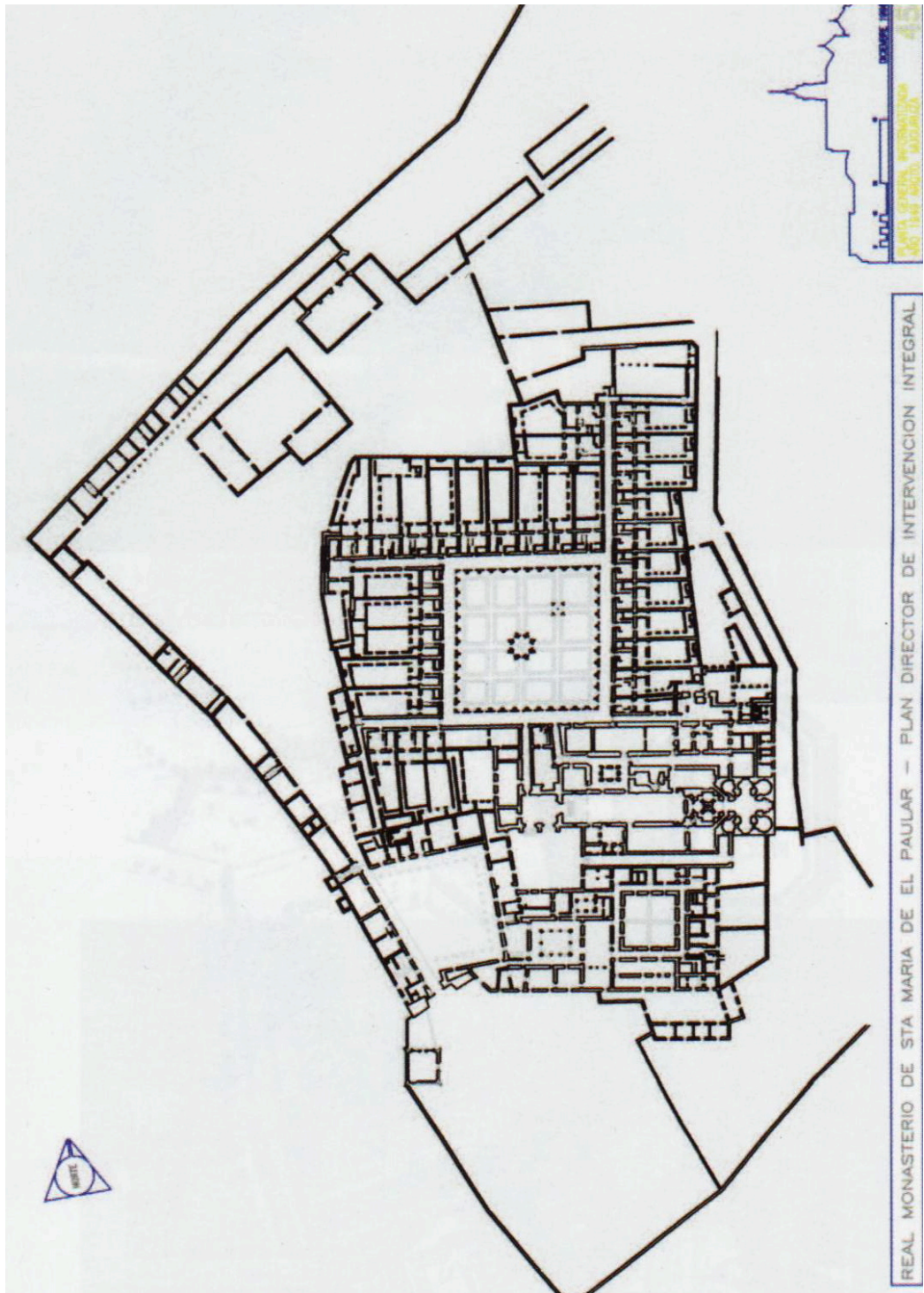


Figure 3.6. Eduardo Barceló, Plan of Charterhouse of El Paular at the time of the Montreuil-sur-Mer engraving. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 22.



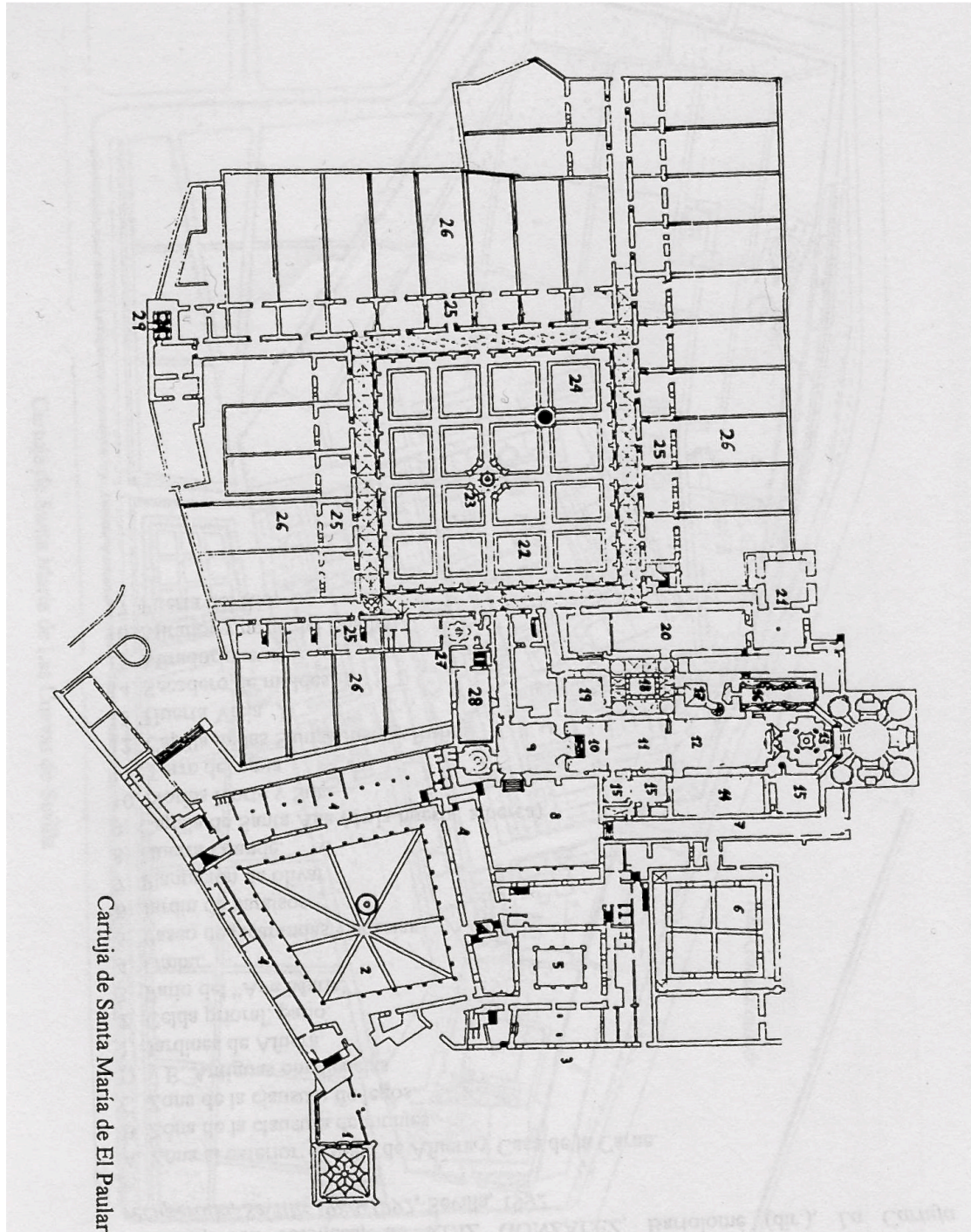


Figure 3.7. Santiago Cantera Montenegro, Plan of Charterhouse of El Paular, 2000.  
Photo: Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, p. 687.



1. Capilla de los Reyes.
2. Patio del "Ave María" (conversos).
3. Patio de la Cadena.
4. Zona de conversos
5. Patio del palacio de Enrique III.
6. Claustro primitivo.
7. Corredor de entrada a la iglesia.
8. Patio de entrada a la iglesia.
9. Atrio de la iglesia.
10. Iglesia, parte de los fieles.
11. Iglesia, coro de conversos.
12. Iglesia, coro de Padres.
13. Tabernáculo o transparente (S. XVIII).
14. Sala capitular de Padres.
15. Capillas.
16. Sacristía.
17. Torre de la iglesia.
18. Claustro.
19. Capilla de conversos.
20. Refectorio.
21. Cocina.
22. Claustro grande (Padres).
23. Edículo y fuente.
24. Cementerio.
25. Celdas de Padres.
26. Jardines de las celdas de Padres.
27. Celda prioral y jardín.
28. Biblioteca.
29. Torre-archivo (S. XVII-XVIII).

Figure 3.7a. Legend to Cantera Montenegro plan of Charterhouse of El Paular.



Figure 3.8. Charterhouse of El Paular, Patio de la Cadena, Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 23.





Figure 3.9. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to palace chapel. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 30.

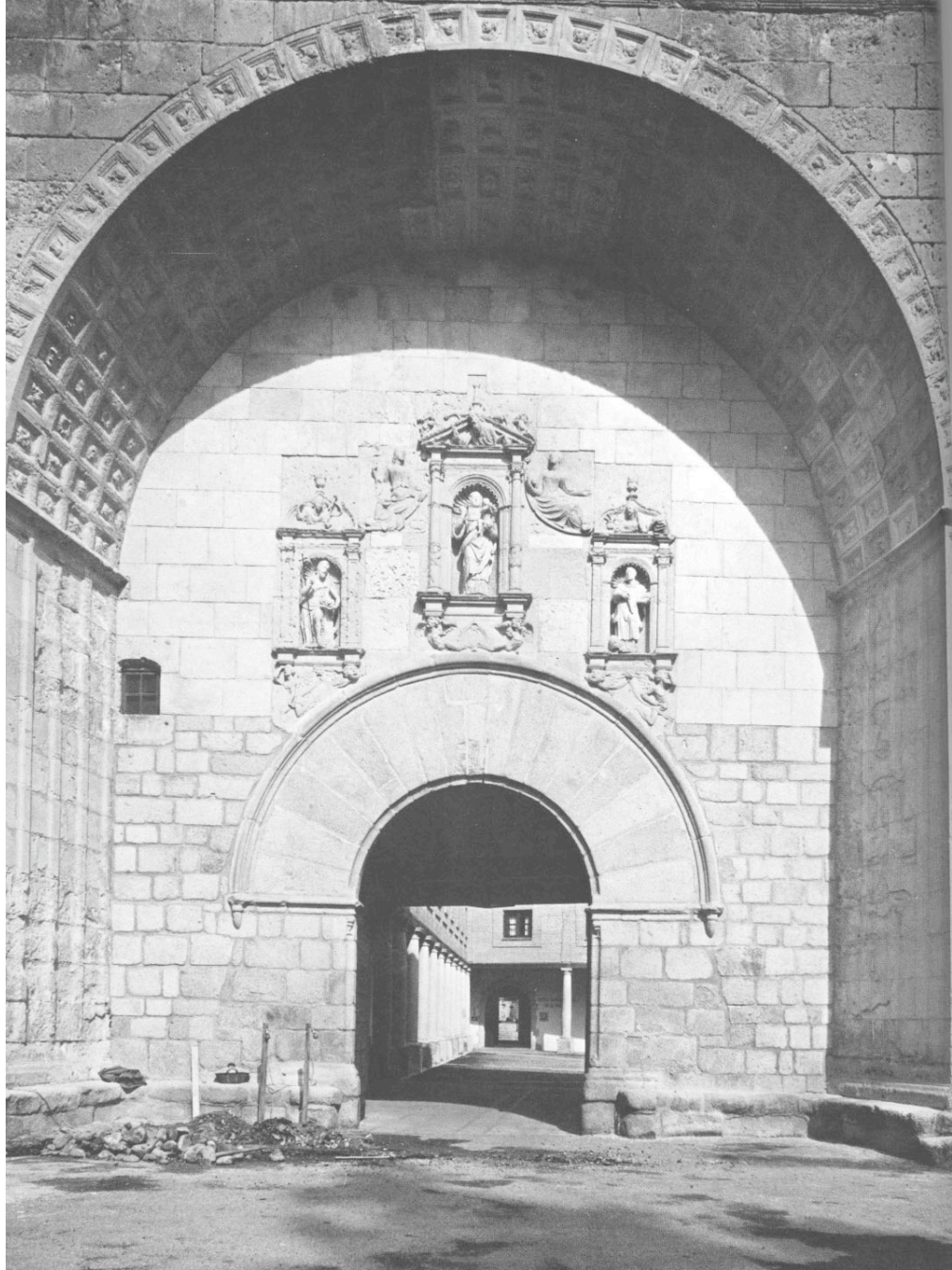


Figure 3.10. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to the laybrothers's compound. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 24.



Figure 3.11. Charterhouse of El Paular, Patio del Ave Maria (reconstructed laybrothers' cloister). Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 26.





Figure 3.12. Charterhouse of El Paular, royal palace or *palacete*.



Figure 3.13. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to roofed porch leading to church.  
Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 14.





Figure 3.14. Church of Charterhouse of El Paular, relief sculpture of Bruno and his six brothers, 16<sup>th</sup> century. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 18.





Figure 3.15. Charterhouse of El Paular, covered porch before church, detail, vaulting showing heraldic emblems of Castile and León. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 17.



Figure 3.16. Charterhouse of El Paular, covered porch before church, detail, angels carrying the family arms of the Trastámara kings.





Figure 3.17. Charterhouse of El Paular, original cloister of the Carthusian monks. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 20.



Figure 3.18. Charterhouse of El Paular, hallway between covered porch and monks' cloister.





Figure 3.19. Charterhouse of El Paular, library with ceiling paintings of founding saints of the Carthusian Order and allegories of the liberal arts. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 71.



Figure 3.20. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, ruins of a cell in the western arm before conversion into a museum.





Figure 3.21. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, door to former cell and *guichet*.

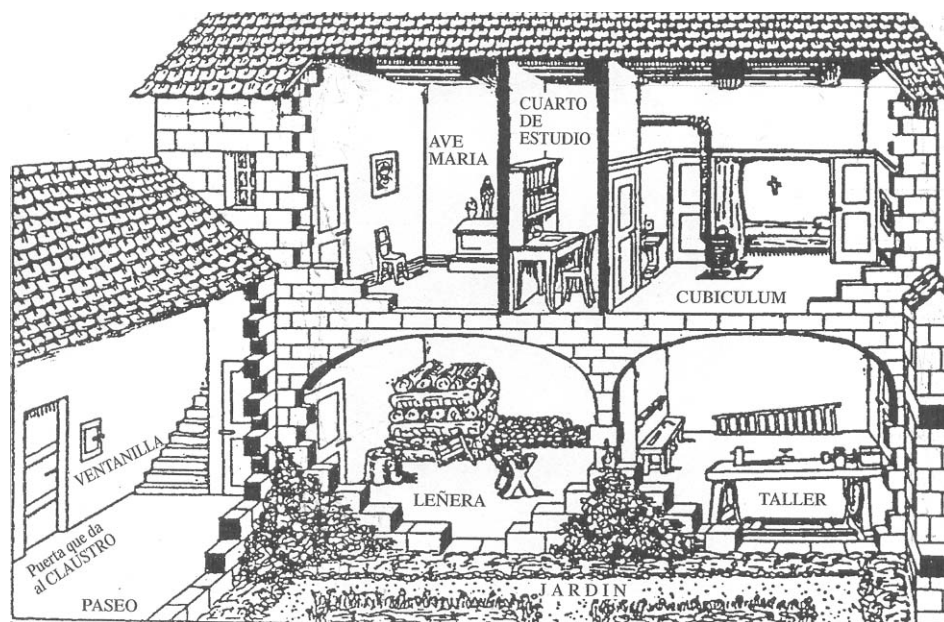


Figure 3.22. Drawing of an ideal Carthusian cell in an Iberian charterhouse, showing workspace below and domestic/devotional space above.





Figure 3.23. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, east alley. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 36.

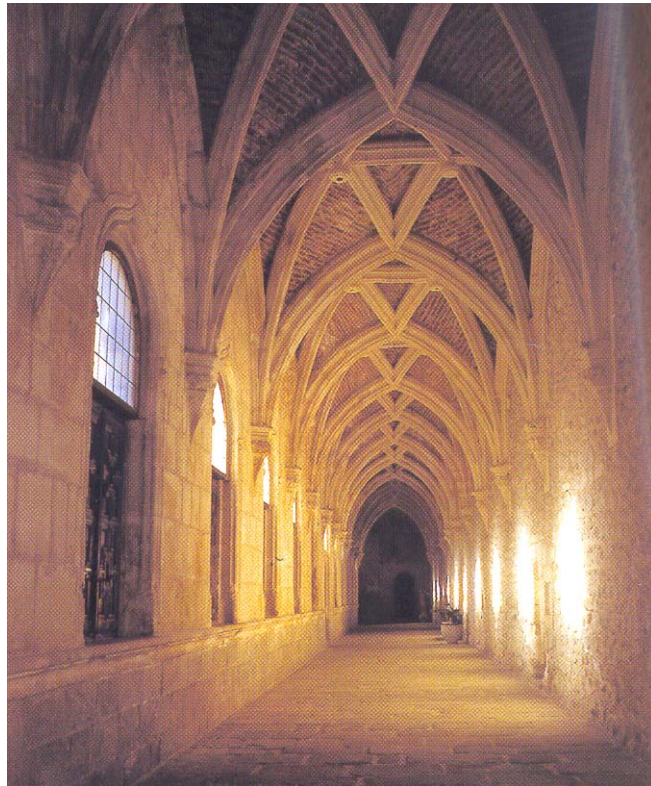


Figure 3.24. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, south alley.

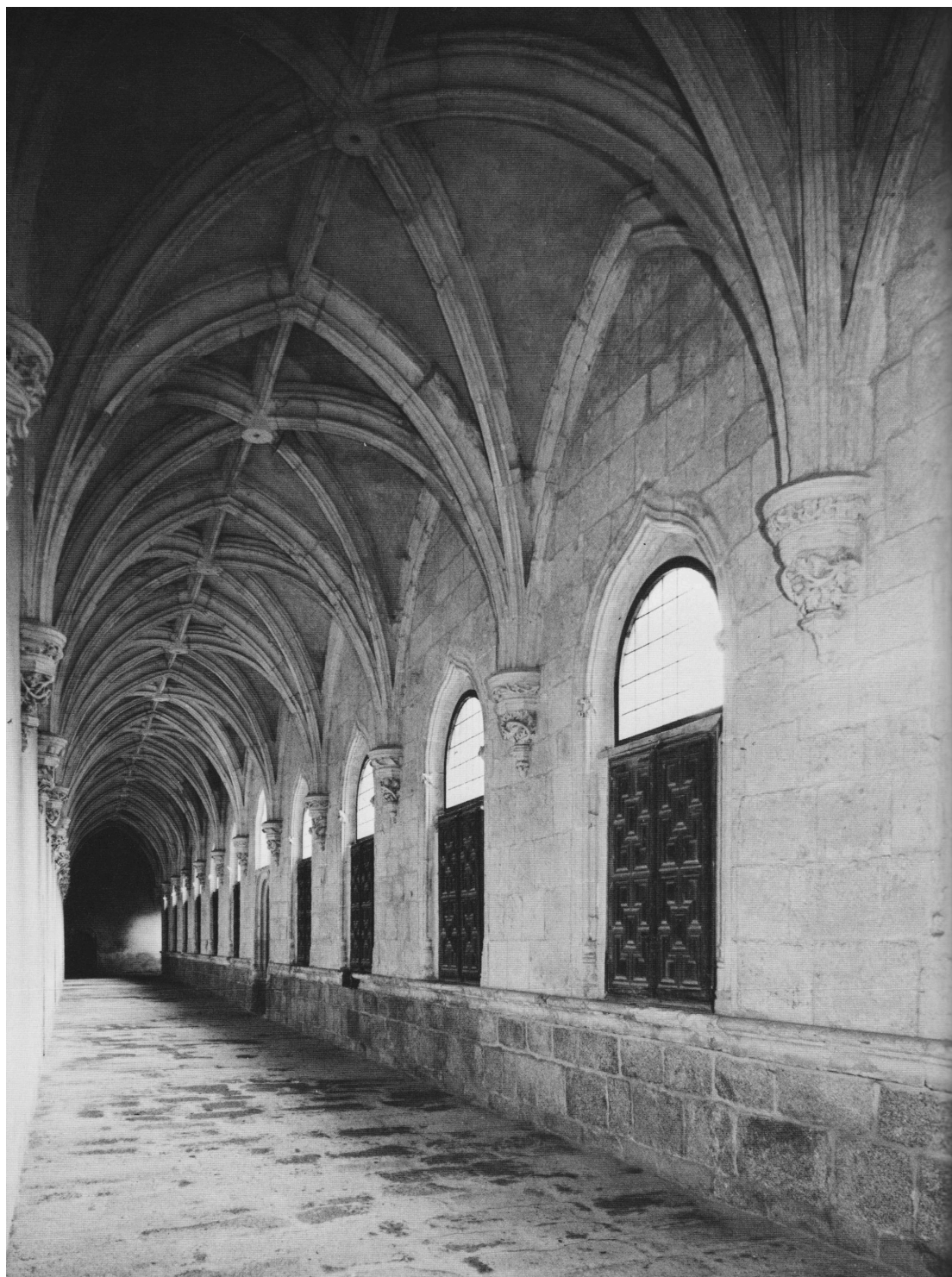


Figure 3.25. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, west alley. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 34.



Figure 3.26. Charterhouse of El Paular, monks' cloister, west alley. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 35.



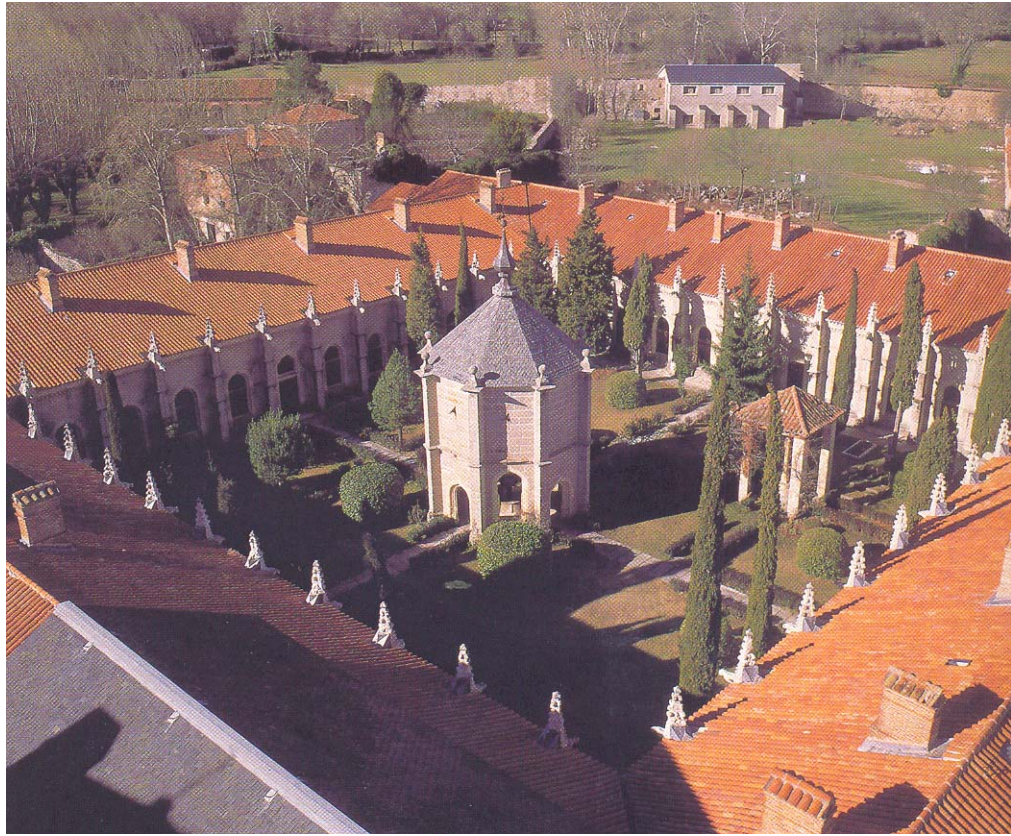


Figure 3.27. Charterhouse of El Paular, fountain-temple in monks' cloister. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 19.



Figure 3.28. Charterhouse of El Paular, north arm of monks' choir with reinstalled paintings of scenes from the life of St. Bruno, Vicente Carducho, early 17<sup>th</sup> century.





Figure 3.29. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to the *claustrillo*. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 46.



Figure 3.30. Charterhouse of El Paular, *claustro*.





Figure 3.31. Charterhouse of El Paular, refectory (present chapel of the Benedictine monks). Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 69.



Figure 3.32. Charterhouse of El Paular, refectory, gothic stone pulpit.





Figure 3.33. Charterhouse of El Paular, kitchen. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 70.

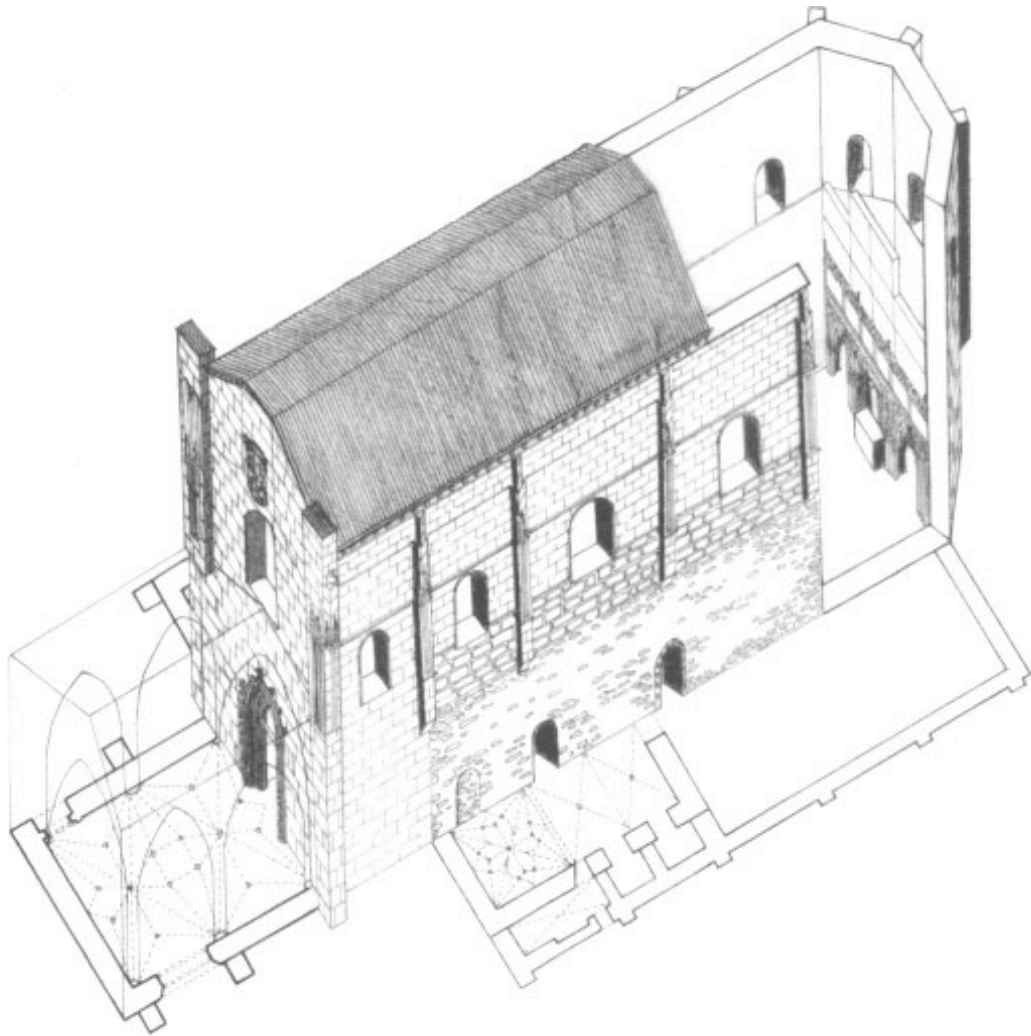


Figure 3.34. Abad Castro and Martin Ansón, Reconstruction of elevation of original church of Charterhouse of El Paular. Photo: *RM*, fig. 3.

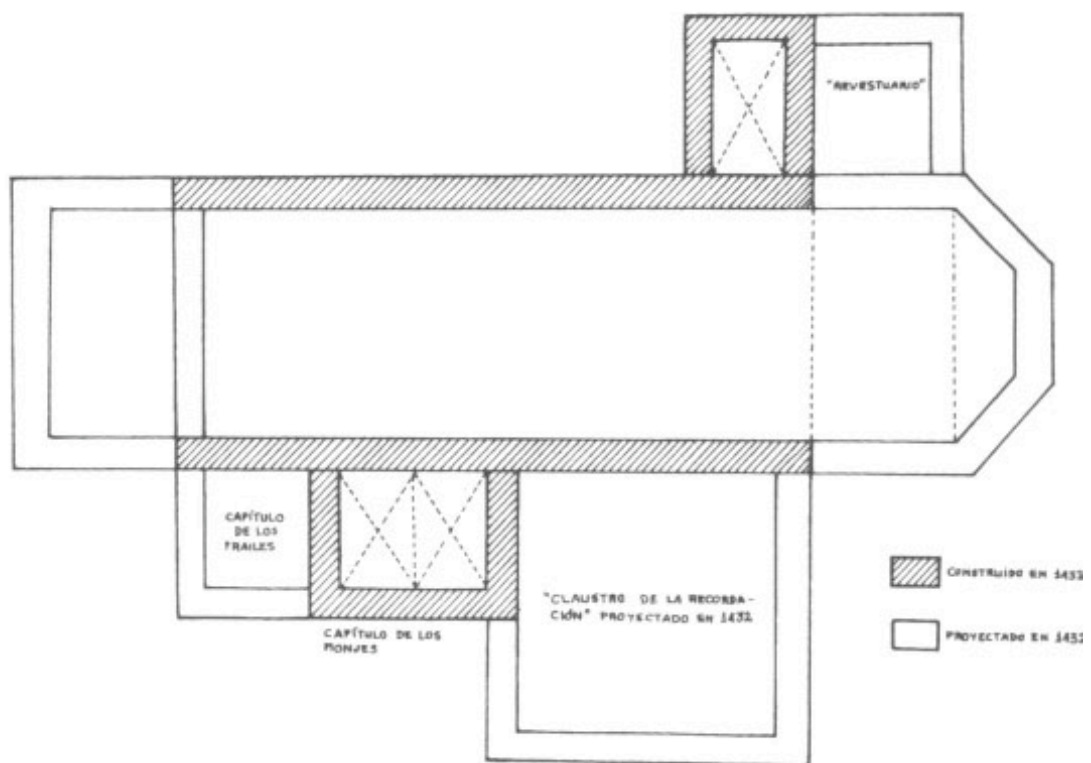


Figure 3.35. Abad Castro and Martin Ansón, Reconstruction of plan of original church of Charterhouse of El Paular. Photo: *RM*, fig. 2.





Figure 3.36. Church of Charterhouse of El Paular, *sagrario*.

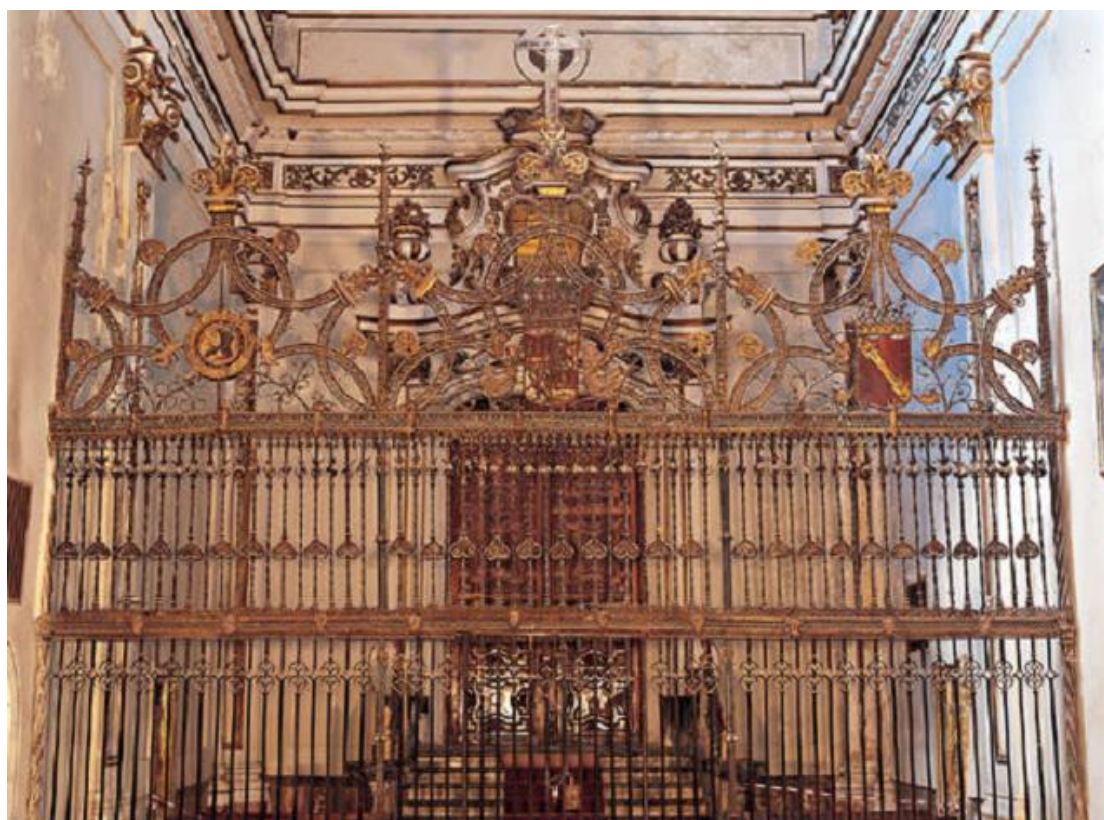


Figure 3.37. Church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, *reja* or choir screen separating laybrothers' section from secular section.





Figure 3.38. Church of Charterhouse of El Paular, *reja*, detail, heraldry of the Catholic Kings. Photo: Gómez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 13.





Figure 3.39. Church of Charterhouse of El Paular, *reja*, detail, devil's faces.

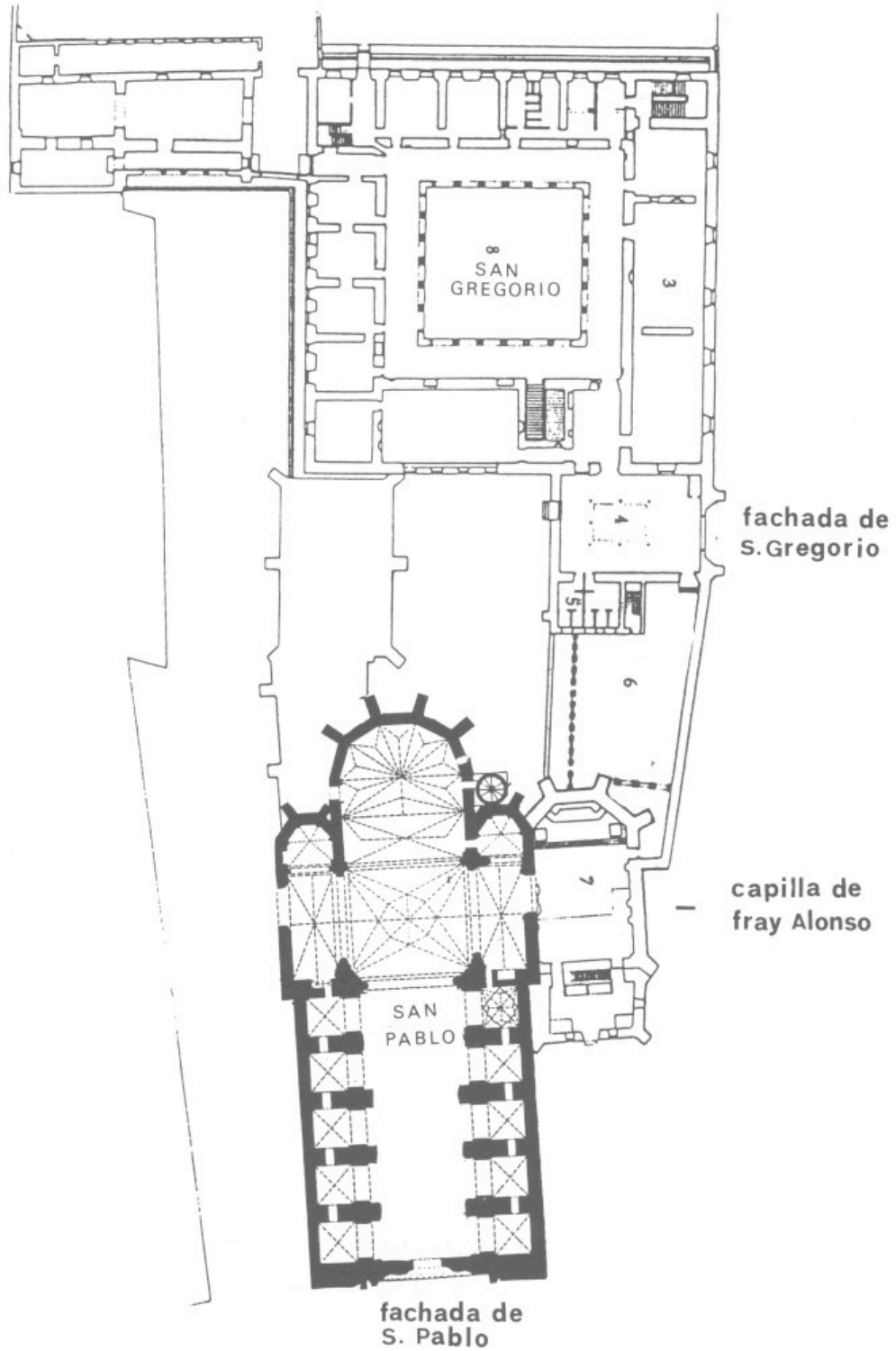


Figure 3.40. Valladolid, Plan of Dominican compound comprising church, convent and college. Photo: Ara Gil, "Las fachadas," fig. 1.





Figure 3.41. Valladolid, Colegio de San Gregorio, façade.

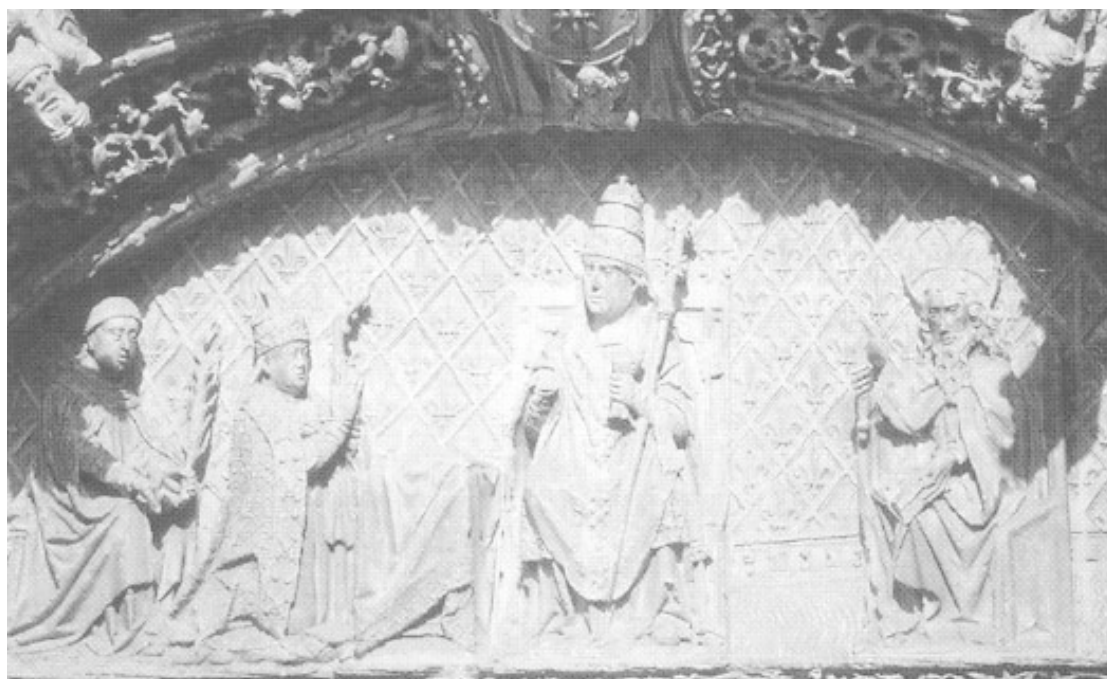


Figure 3.42. Valladolid, Colegio de San Gregorio, façade, detail, tympanum with sculpture of Fray Alonso de Burgos. Photo: Ara Gil, "Las fachadas," *Làm. 2*, p. 422.

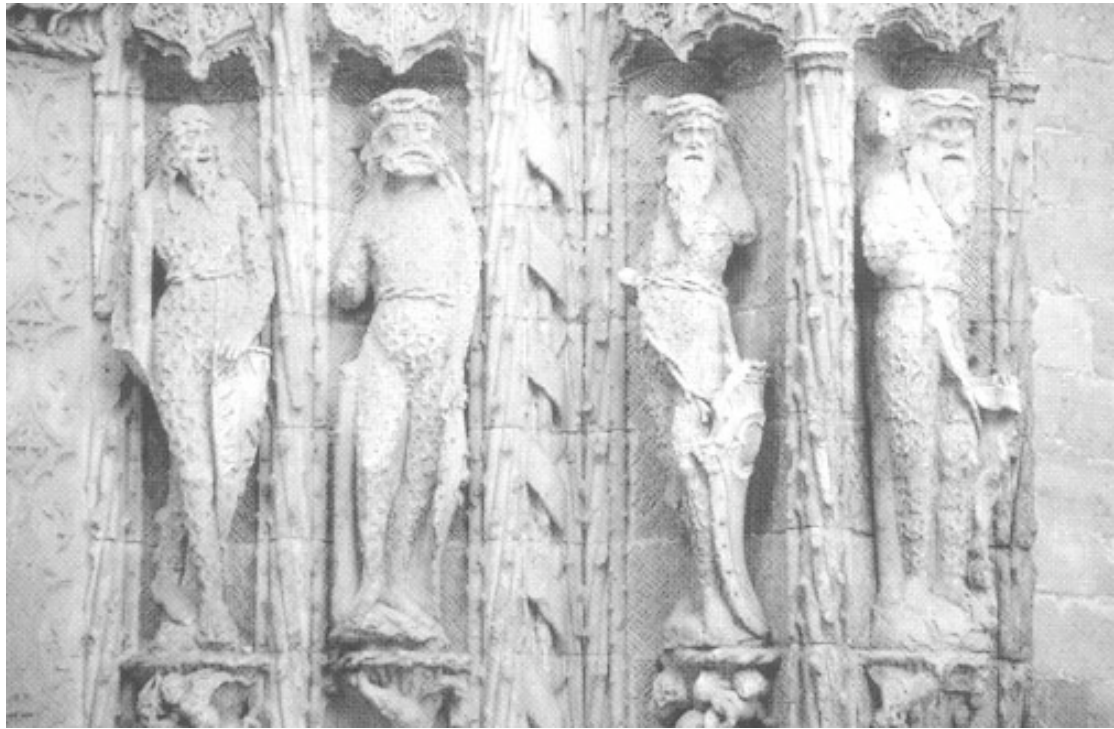


Figure 3.43. Valladolid, Colegio de San Gregorio, façade, detail, wild men flanking entrance. Photo: Ara Gil, "Las fachadas," *Làm.* 4, p. 423.



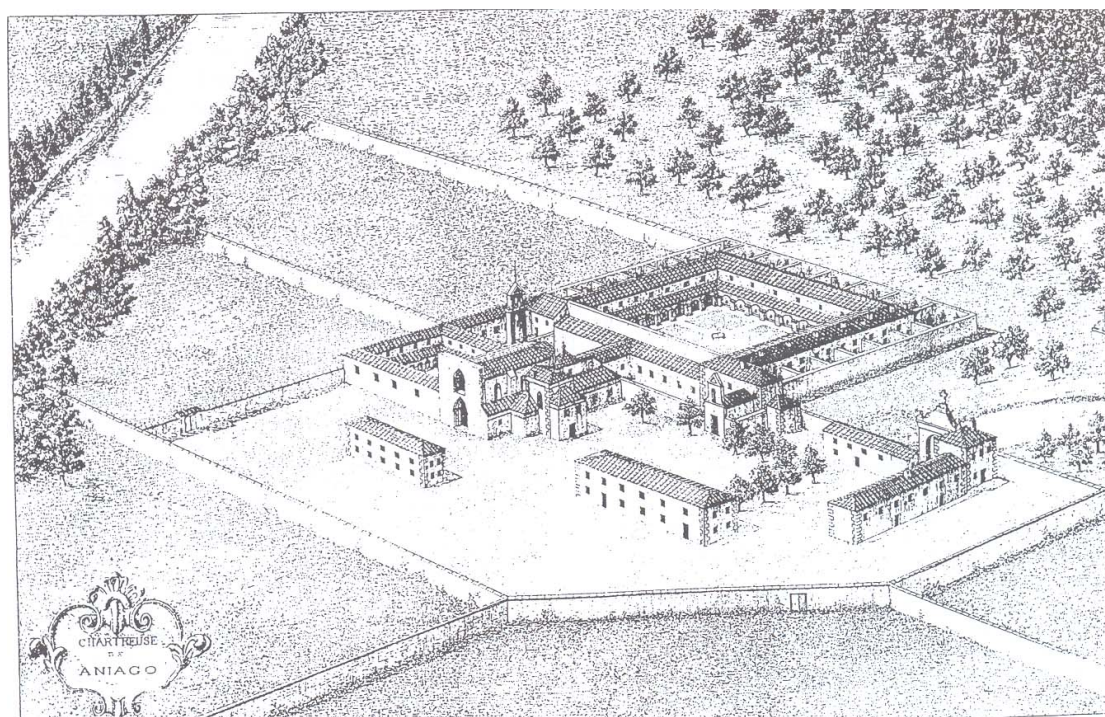


Figure 3.44. Engraving of Charterhouse of Aniago. *Maisons de l'Ordre des Chartreux*, 3 vols., Montreuil-Parkminster, 1913–19. Photo: *MC4*:2, 55.

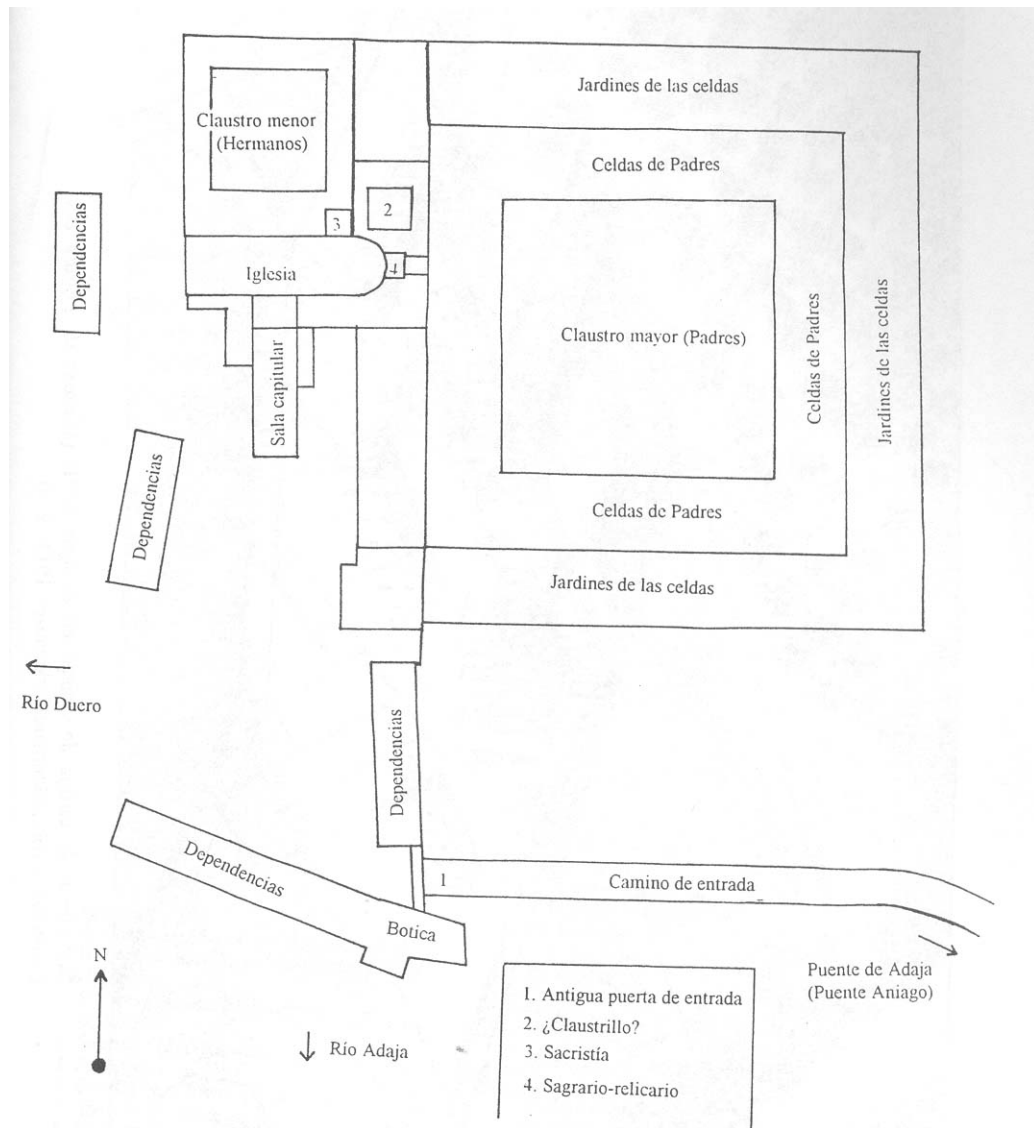


Figure 3.45. Ground plan of Chaterhouses of Aniago. Photo: *MC4:2*, 53.



Figure 3.46. Charterhouse of Aniago, ruins of church and belfry.





Figure 3.47. Charterhouse of Aniago, ruins of the church showing oculus.



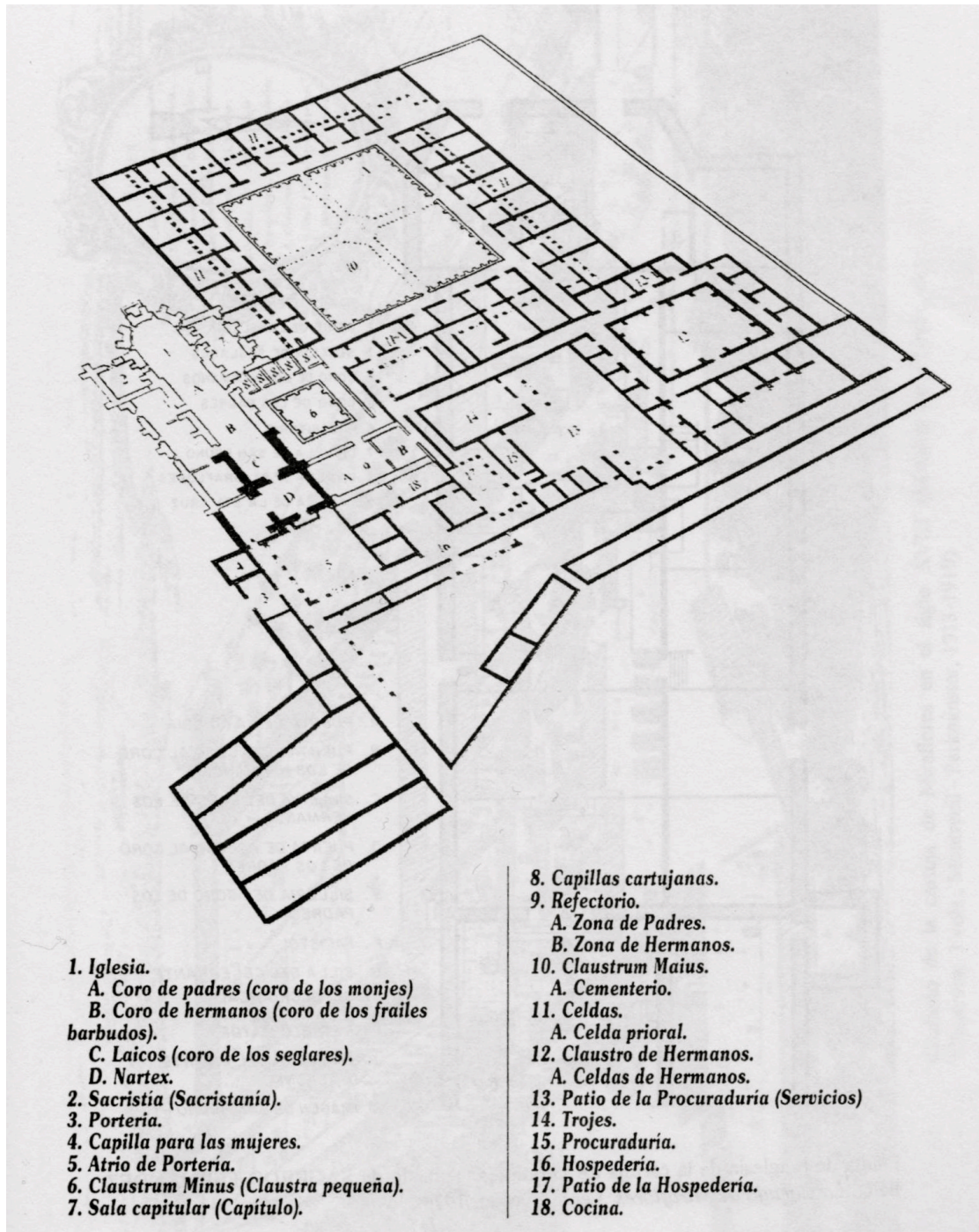


Figure 3.49. Charterhouse of Miraflores, groundplan. Photo: Cantera Montenegro, *Los cartujos*, p. 695.





Figure 3.50. Charterhouse of Miraflores, exterior of church showing ashlar masonry and pinnacles. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 58.



Figure 3.51. Charterhouse of El Pualar, monks' cloister, detail, gargoyle and pinnacles.





Figure 3.52. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, tympanum with royal insignia and *Lamentation*. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 59.



Figure 3.53. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, tympanum, detail, *Lamentation*.





Figure 3.54. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to church. Photo: *MC4:2*, fig. 16.





Figure 3.55. Charterhouse of El Paular, entrance to church, detail, tympanum with *Lamentation*.



Figure 3.56. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, apse, *Coronation of the Virgin*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 11.



Figure 3.57. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, apse, *Presentation in the Temple*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 12.





Figure 3.58. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, apse, *Epiphany*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 13.



Figure 3.59. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, north side, *Agony in the Garden*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 1.





Figure 3.60. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, north side, *Flagellation*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 2.





Figure 3.61. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, north side, *Crowning with Thorns*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 3.





Figure 3.62. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, north side, *Way to Calvary*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 4.





Figure 3.63. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, north side, *Crucifixion*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 5.





Figure 3.64. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, south side, *Descent from the Cross*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 6.





Figure 3.65. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, south side, *Resurrection*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 7.

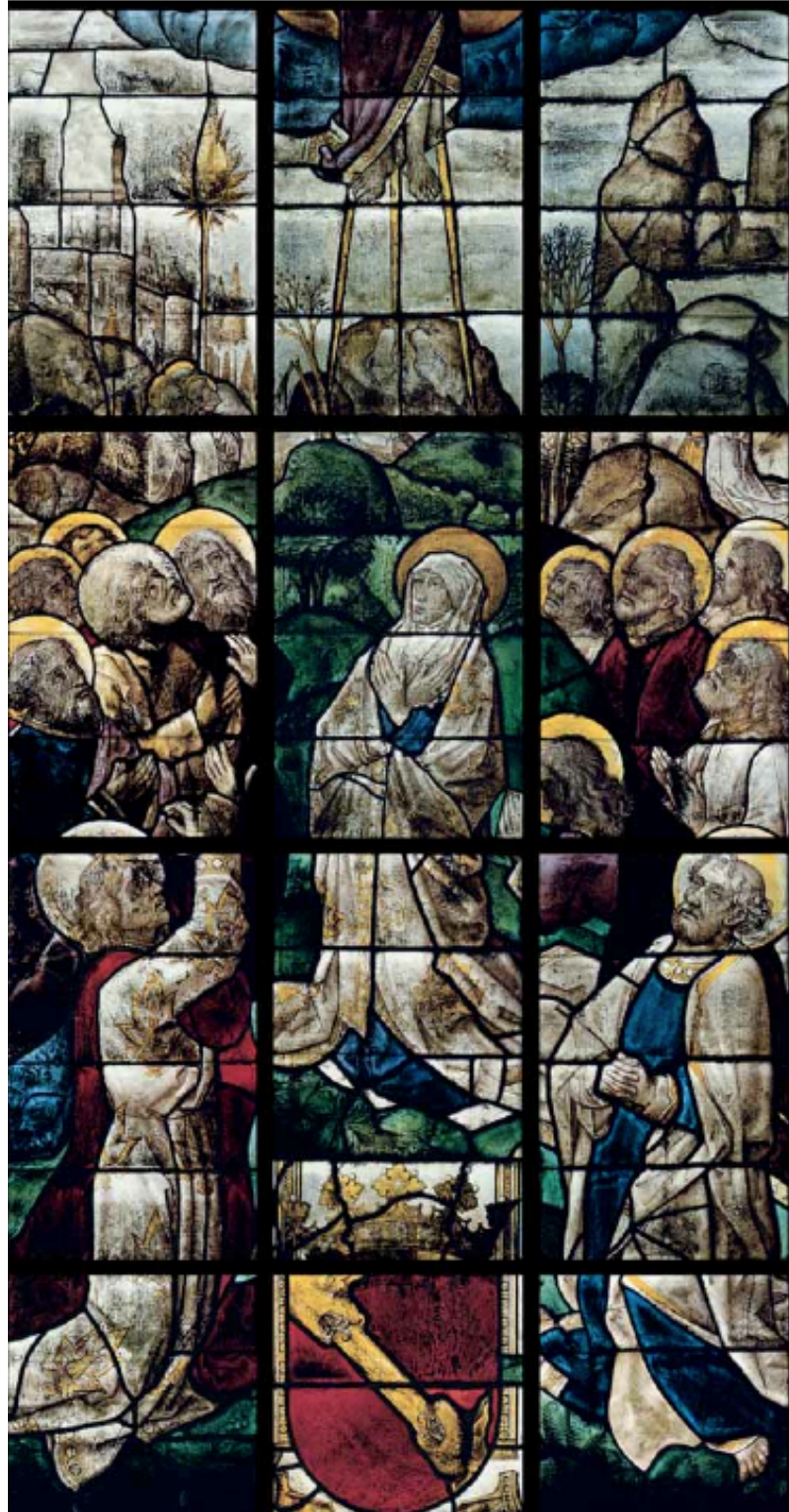


Figure 3.66. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, south side, *Ascension*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, illf. 8.





Figure 3.67. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, south side, *Pentecost*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 9.





Figure 3.68. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, stained-glass window, south side, *Last Judgment*, Flanders, 1484. Photo: *CMV*, ill. 10.





Figure 3.69. Charterhouse of Aniago, cloister.



Figure 3.70. Charterhouse of Miraflores, cloister.



Figure 3.71. Charterhouse of Aniago, cloister gallery. *MC4:2*, fig. 50.





Figure 3.72. Charterhouse of Miraflores, cloister gallery.



Figure 3.73. Charterhouse of El Paular, exterior of monks' cloister.



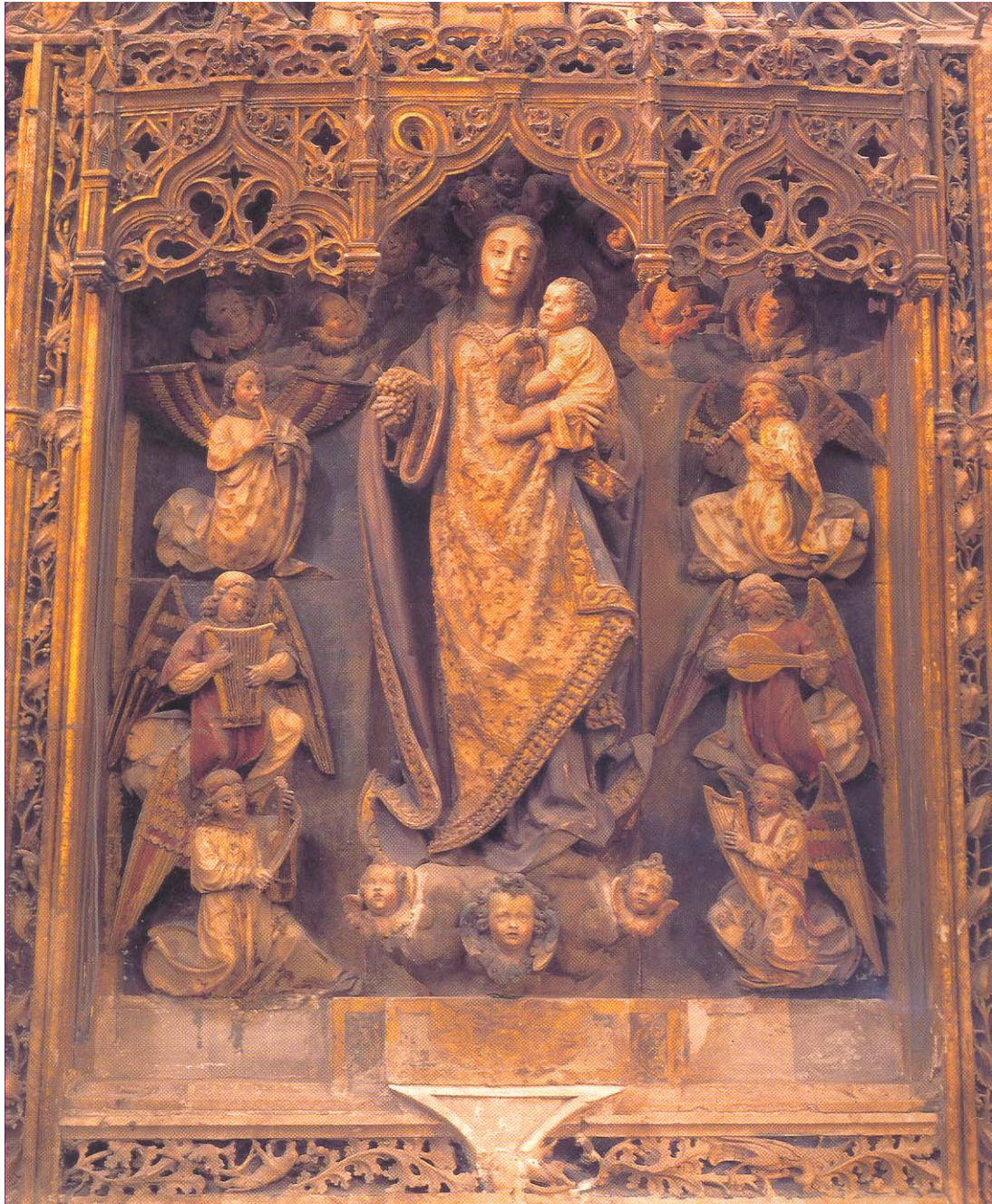


Figure 4.1. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Virgin of El Paular*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: Gomez, *La Cartuja*, fig. 9.



Figure 4.2. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, putti surrounding *Virgin of El Paular*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, fig. 14.





Figure 4.3. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, detail, *Presentation of the Virgin*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: RM, p. 89.



Figure 4.4. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Annunciation*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 91.





Figure 4.5. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Visitation*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 93.



Figure 4.6. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Birth and Naming of John the Baptist*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: RM, p. 95.





Figure 4.7. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, detail, *Nativity*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 97.





Figure 4.8. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Epiphany*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 99.





Figure 4.9. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Presentation, Purification, and Candlemas*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 101.



Figure 4.10. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Baptism of Christ*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 103.





Figure 4.11. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Last Supper*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 105.



Figure 4.12. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Arrest of Christ*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 107.



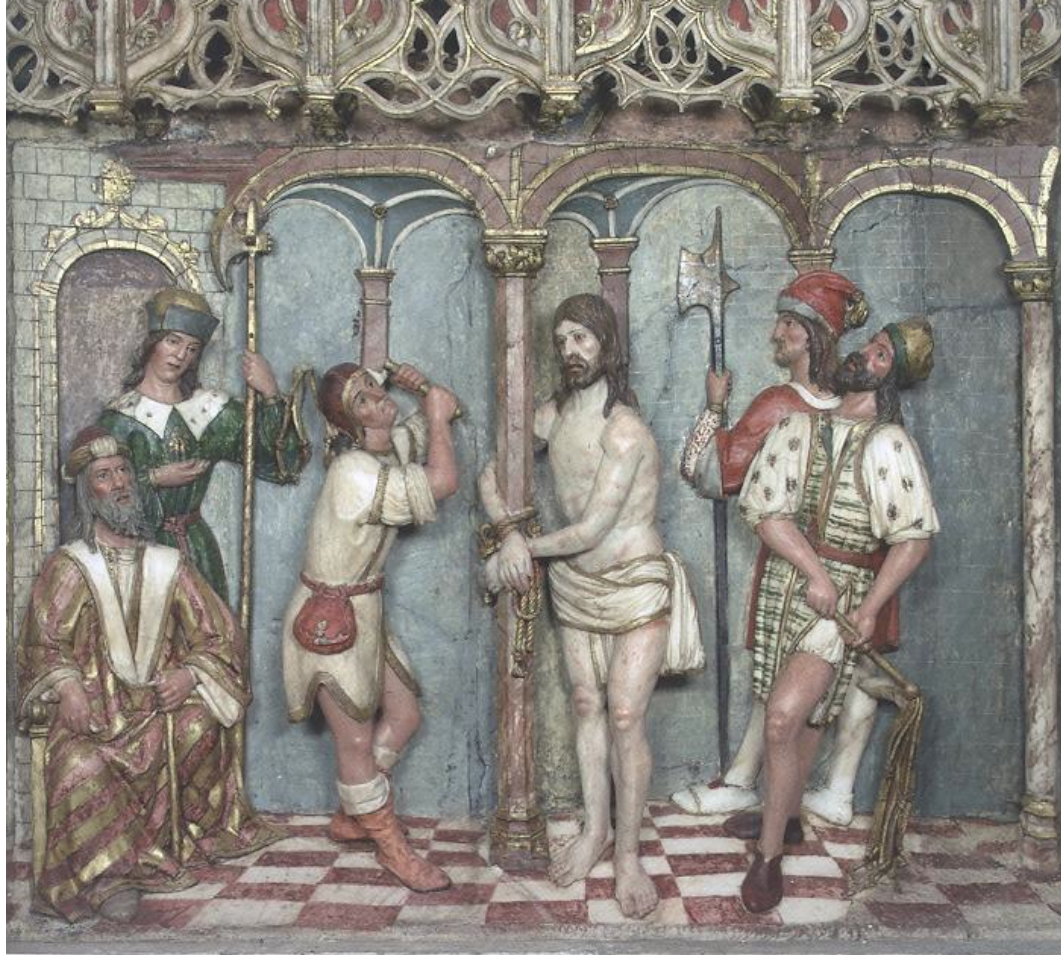


Figure 4.13. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Flagellation*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 109.





Figure 4.14. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Way to Calvary*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 111.

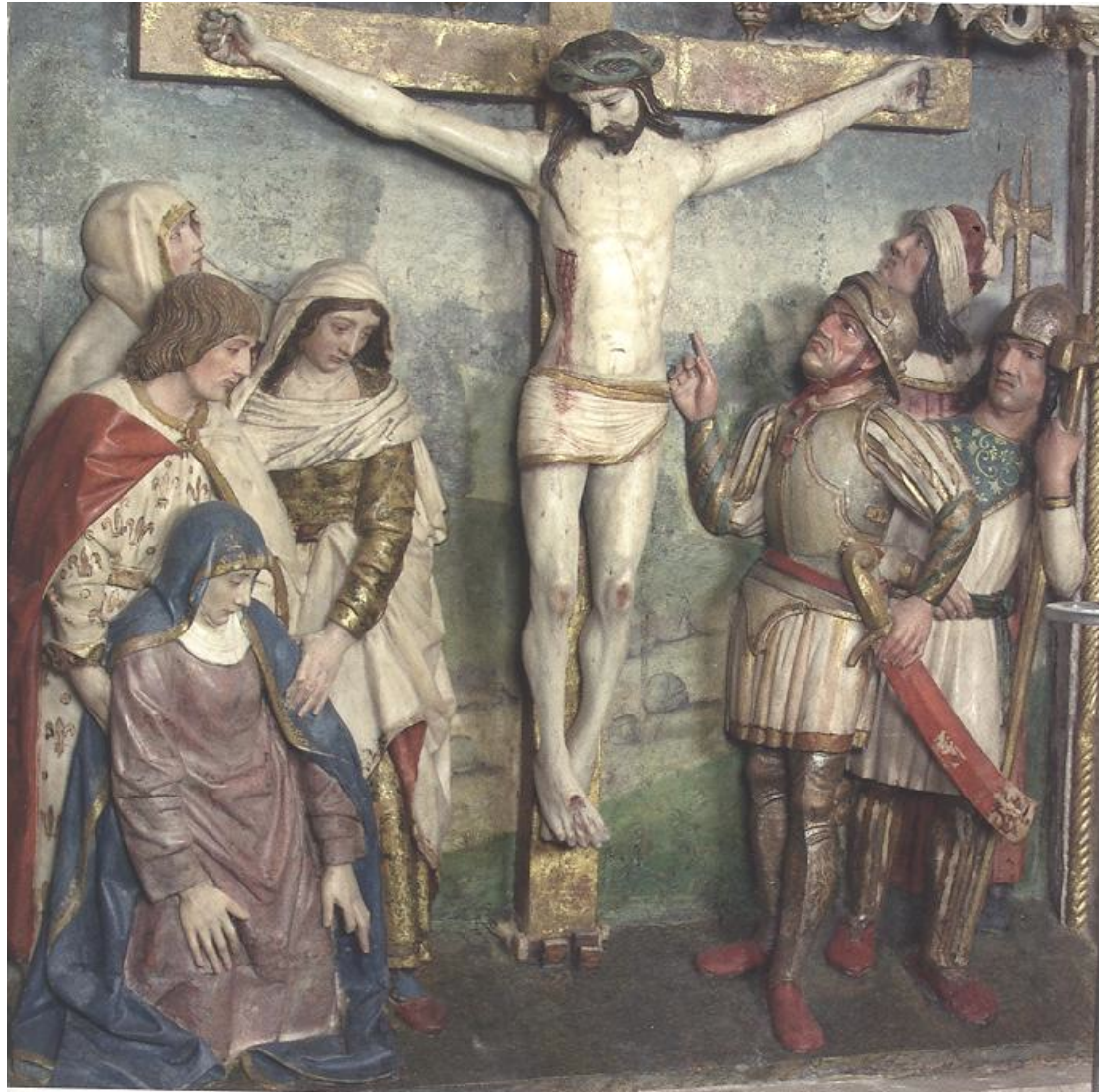


Figure 4.15. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Crucifixion*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 113.





Figure 4.16. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Lamentation*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 115.



Figure 4.17. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Harrowing of Hell*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: RM, p. 117.





Figure 4.18. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Resurrection*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 119.

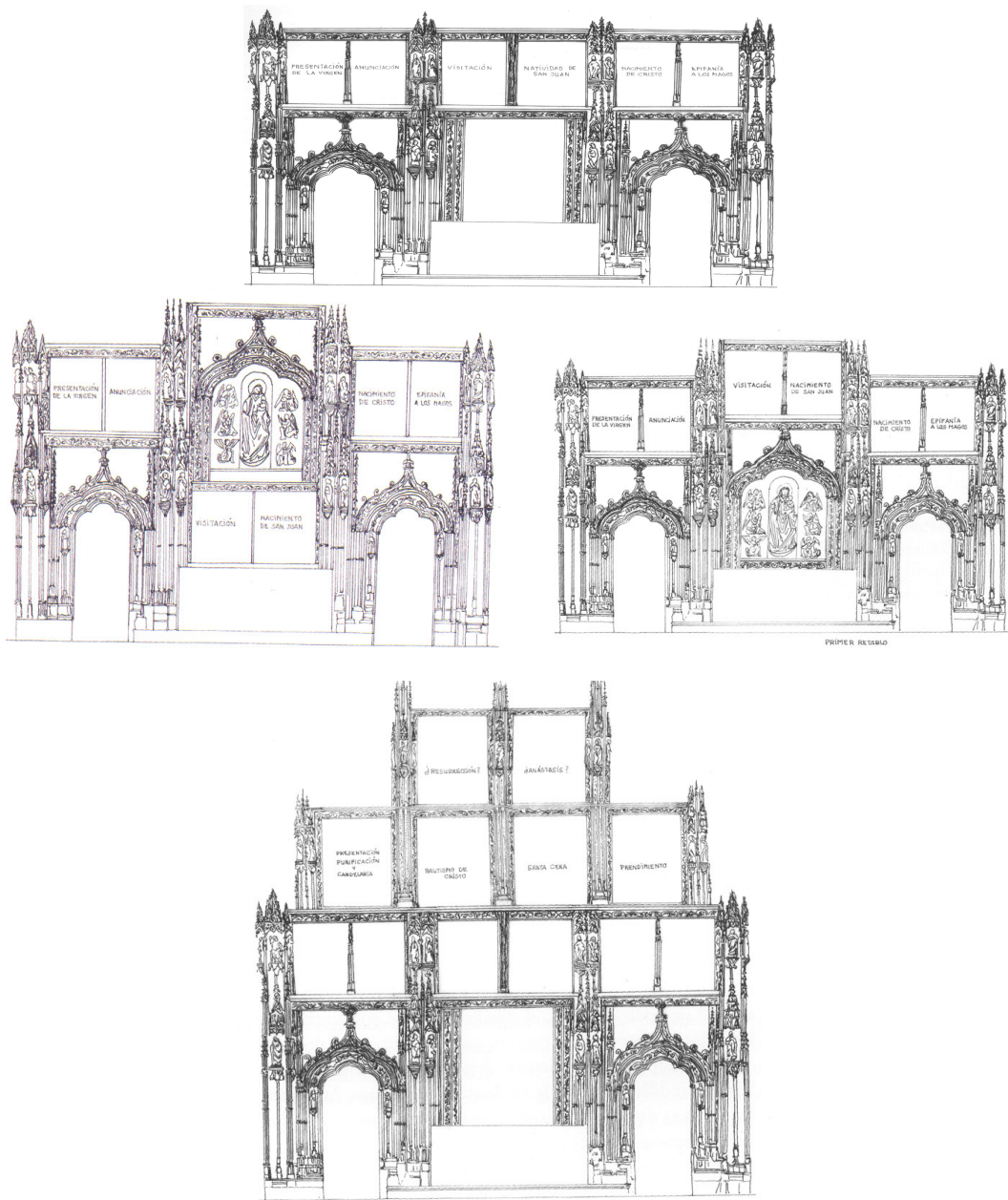


Figure 4.19. Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, Hypothetical reconstructions of retable of church of Charterhouse of El Paular, 2005. Photo: *RM*, Figs. 4, 35, 32, and 45.

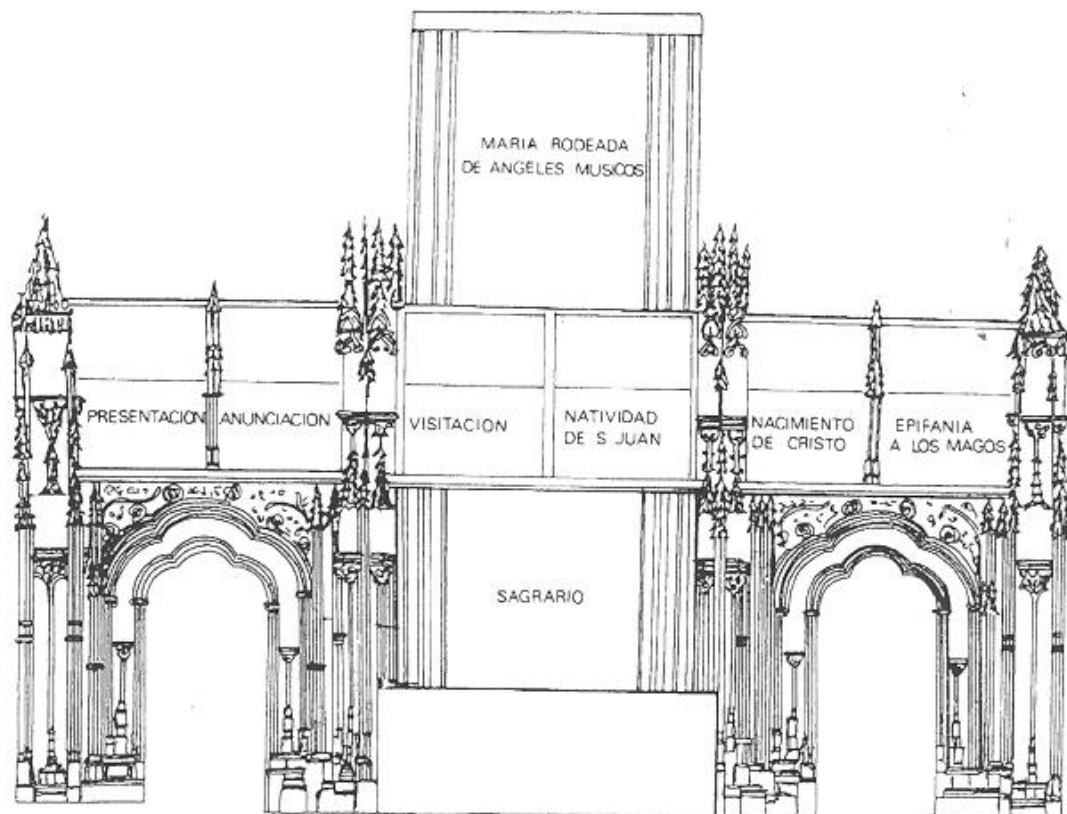


Figure 4.20. Abad Castro and Martín Ansón, Hypothetical reconstruction of first phase of construction of retablo of church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, 1994.





Figure 4.21. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Pualar, detail, seven human heads on right side of register three, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, fig. 44

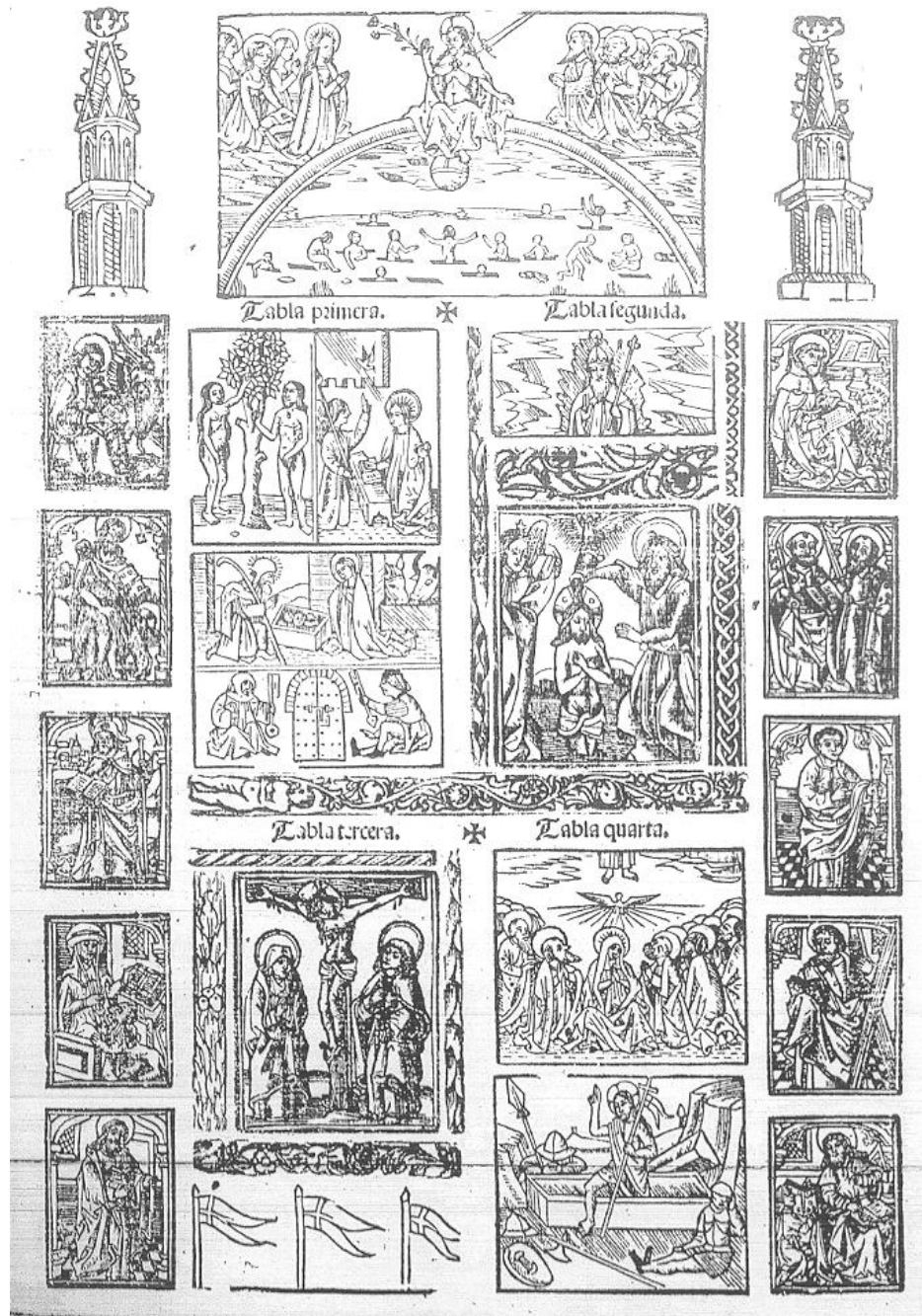


Figure 4.22. Juan de Padilla, *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, frontispiece.



**E**sta divina obra fue muy diligente mente exami-  
 nada z aprouada por los reuerendos señores  
 don Fernando dela torre dean dela sancta ygle-  
 sia de Sevilla: z maestre Rodrigo de sancta ella  
 canonigo en la dicha yglesia z arcediano de rey-  
 na: z maestre francisco frayle dela orden delos me-  
 nores: z otros doctos religiosos en presencia del  
 auctor dela obra.

Figure 4.23. Juan de Padilla, *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, end page, head of John the Baptist.



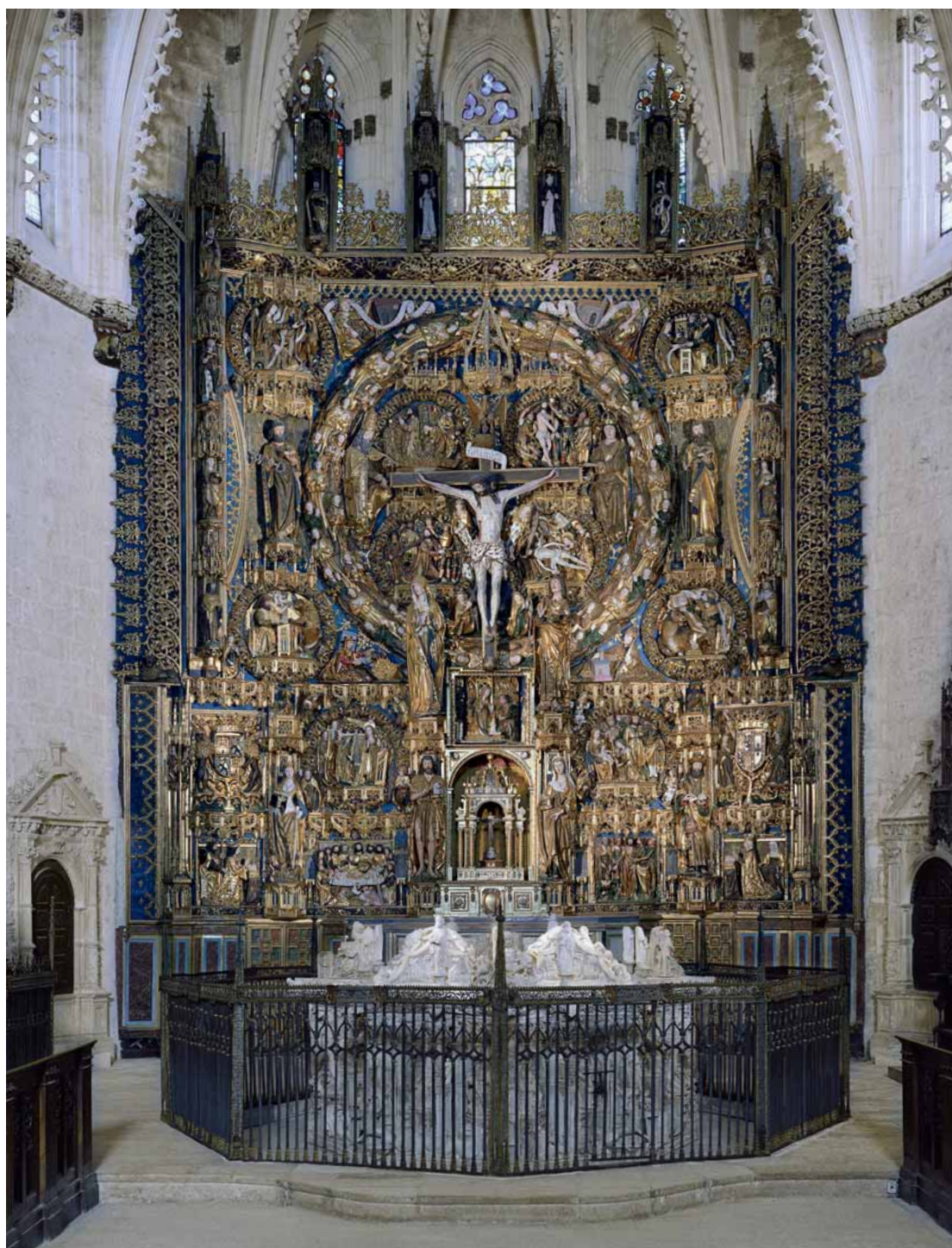


Figure 5.1. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 1.

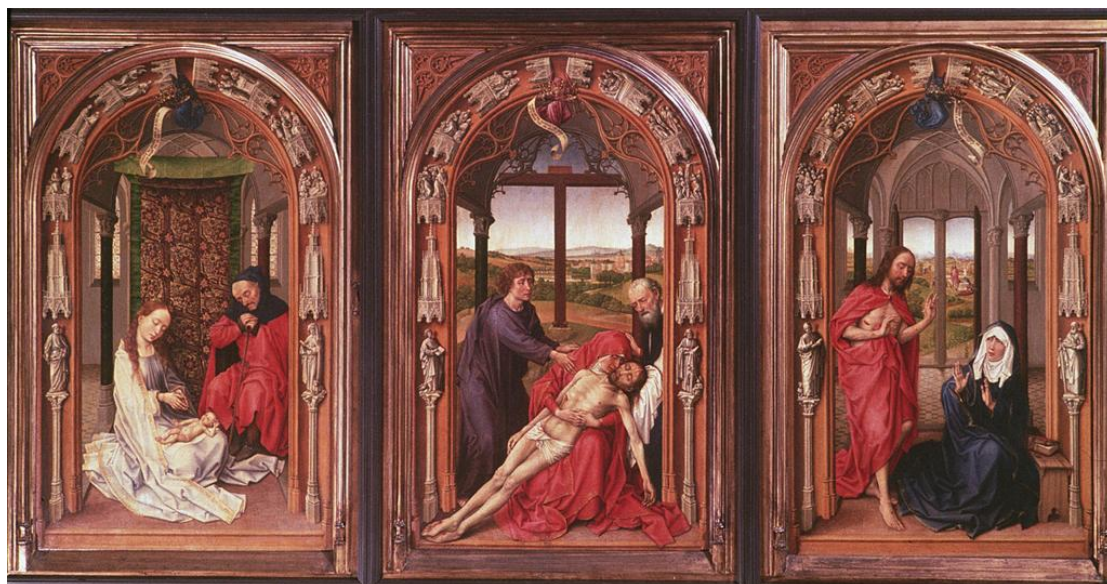


Figure 5.2. Rogier van der Weyden, *Miraflores Altarpiece*, c. 1440. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: ARTstor.





Figure 5.3. Pedro Berruguete, *Annunciation*, c. 1500. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores.



Figure 5.4. Juan de Flandes, *The Birth and Naming of John the Baptist*, c. 1500. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Photo: ARTstor.



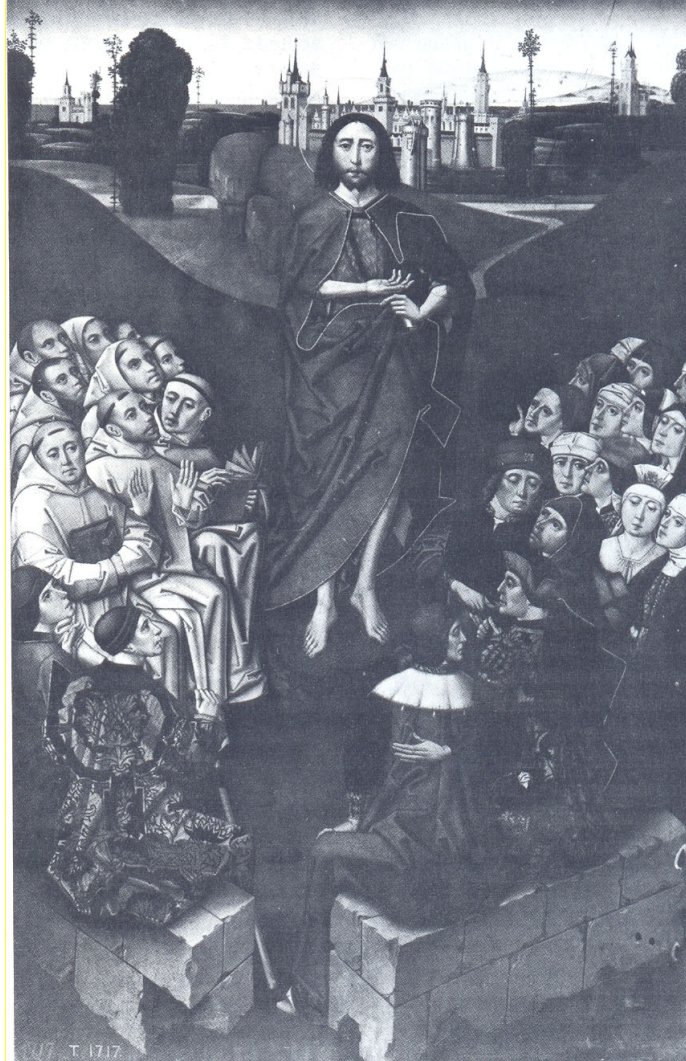


Figure 5.5. Master of Miraflores, Fragment of a retable, c. 1490. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 5.6. Retable of the Virgin of Belén, painted and sculpted elements c. 1440, baroque framing elements. Church of Santa María de la Asunción, Laredo.



Figure 5.7. Juan Guas (?), Architectural drawing for apse and retablo of church of San Juan de los Reyes, Toledo, before 1492. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



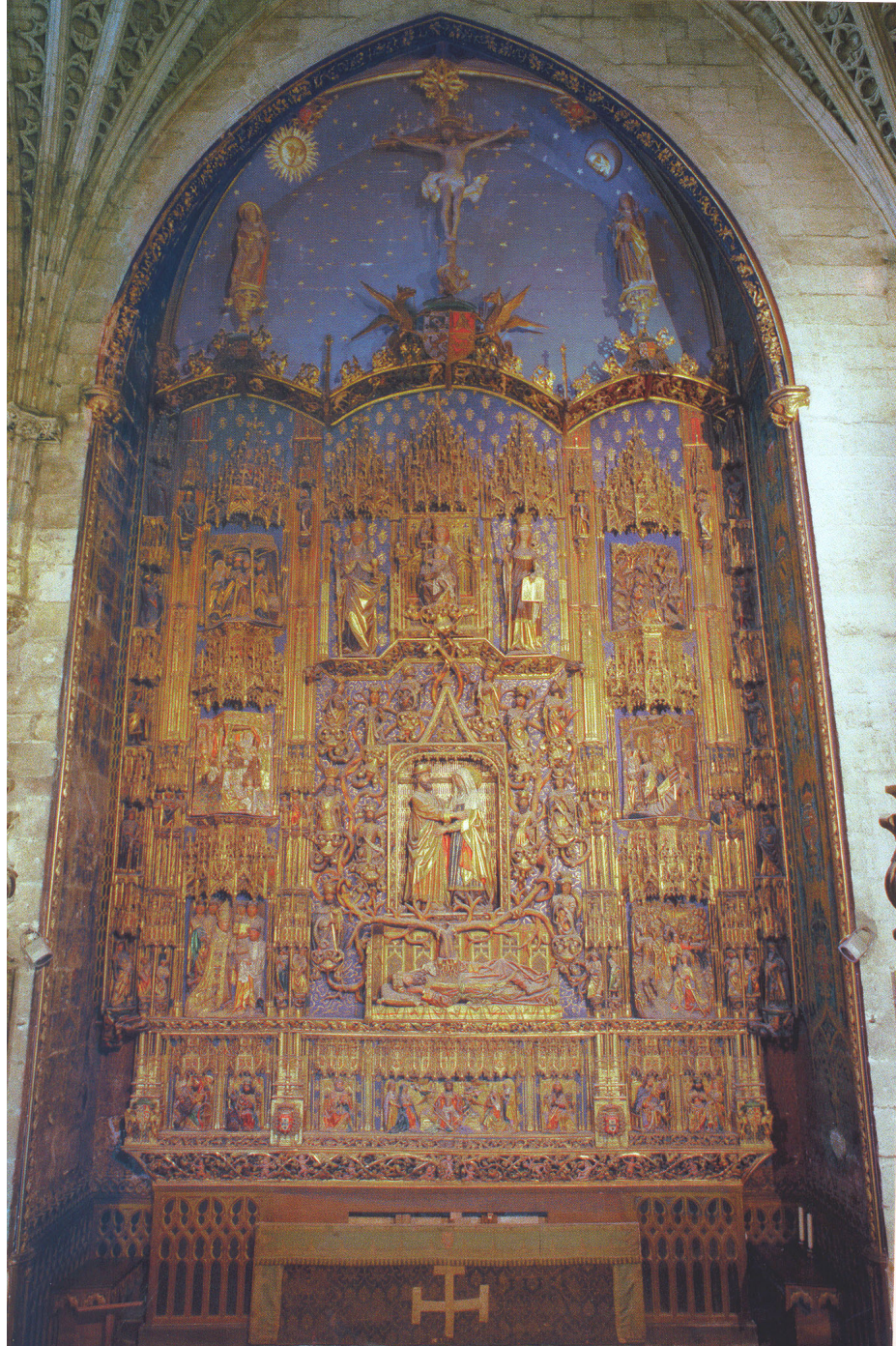


Figure 5.8. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, *Tree of Jesse Retable*, 1486–92. Chapel of Luis de Acuña, Burgos Cathedral.



Figure 5.9. Gil Siloe, Tombs of Juan II and Isabel of Portugal, alabaster, 1489–93. Church of the Charterhouse of Miraflores.





Figure 5.10. Gil Siloe, Tomb of the Infante Alonso, alabaster, 1489–93. Church of Charterhouse of Miraflores. Photo: *CMS*, p. 14.





Figure 5.11. Gil Siloe, Tomb of Juan de Padilla, alabaster, c. 1500. Museo de Burgos.





Figure 5.12. Diego de la Cruz, *Man of Sorrows between Virgin and Saint John*, c. 1475–80. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 5.13. Diego de la Cruz, *Mass of Saint Gregory*, c. 1475–80. Museo Nacional del Arte de Cataluña, Barcelona.





Figure 5.14. Diego de la Cruz, *Saint John the Baptist with Donor*, c. 1480–85. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 5.15. Diego de la Cruz, *Maria Misericordiae with the Family of the Catholic Kings*, c. 1485. Monastery of Las Huelgas, Burgos.



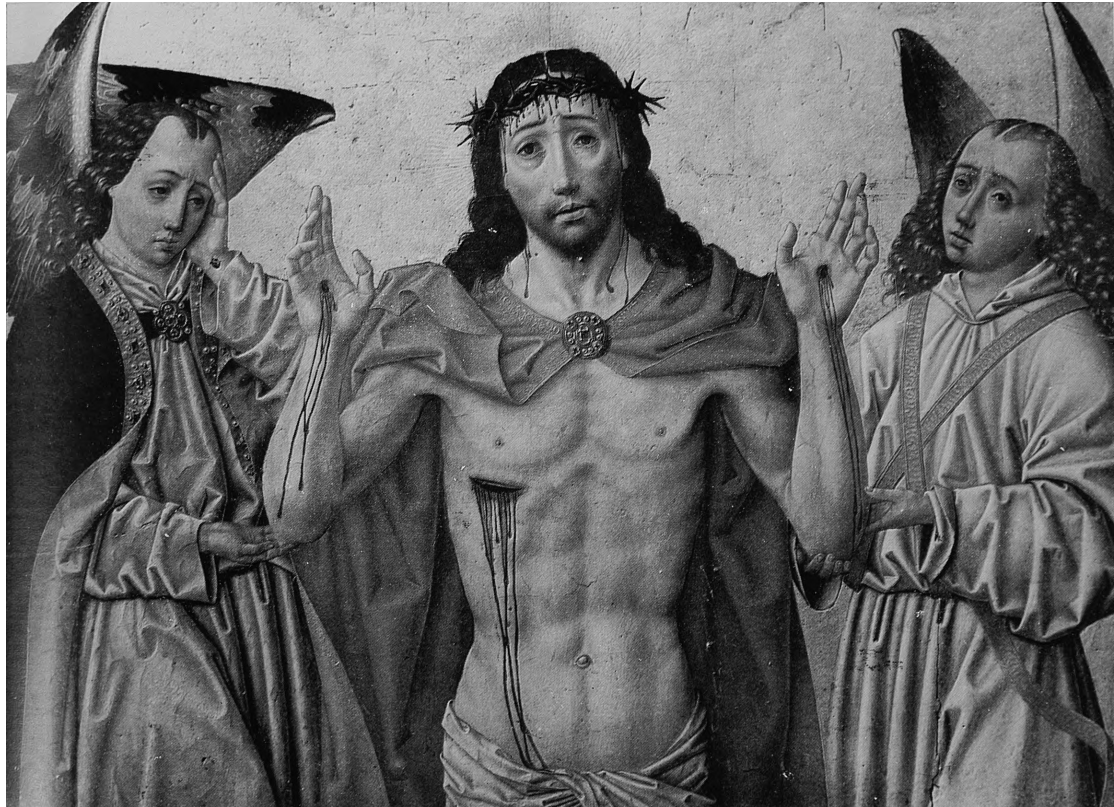


Figure 5.16. Diego de la Cruz, *Man of Sorrows between Angels*, c. 1480–85. Museo de la Colegiata de San Cosme y San Damián, Covarrubias, Burgos.



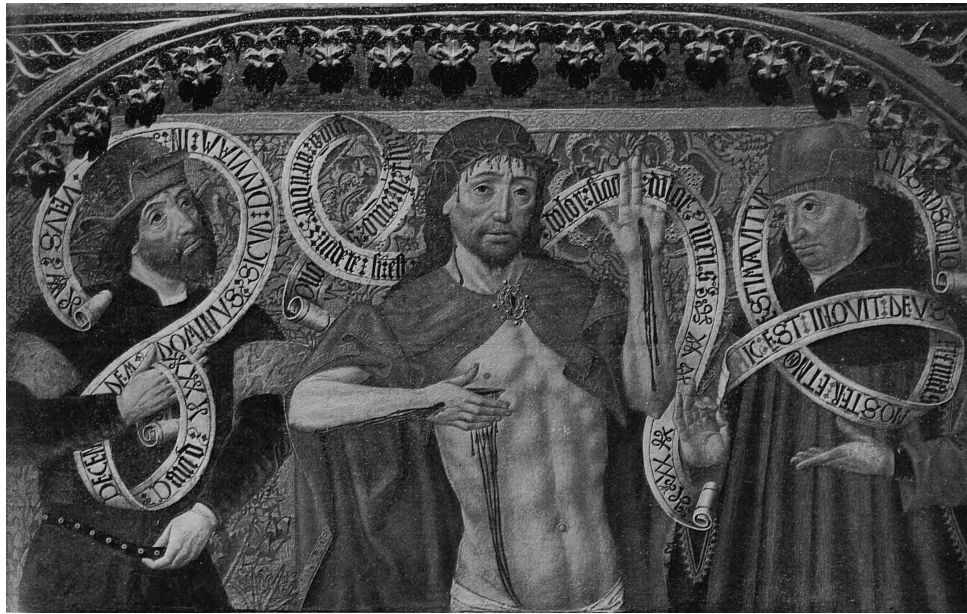


Figure 5.17. Diego de la Cruz, *Man of Sorrows between David and Jeremiah*, c. 1500. Private collection, Barcelona.



Figure 5.18. Diego de la Cruz, *Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1490–95. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 5.19. Diego de la Cruz, *Triptych of the Adoration of the Magi*, detail, center panel, 1500. Burgos Cathedral.



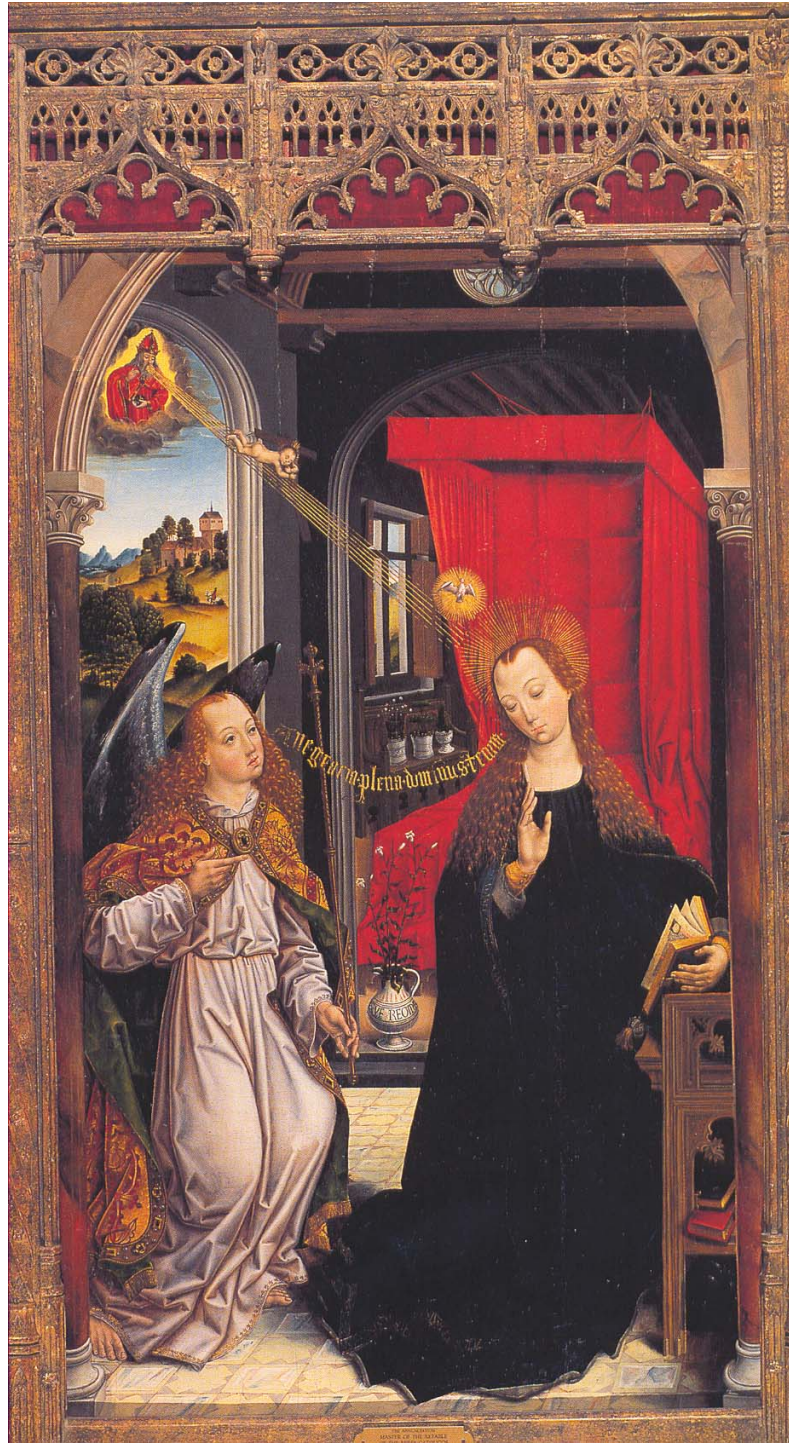


Figure 5.20. Master of the Retable of the Catholic Kings (Diego de la Cruz?), *Annunciation*, late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco.





Figure 5.21. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, St. Catherine of Alexandria, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 33.



Figure 5.22. Meester van Koudewater, St. Catherine of Alexandria, wood with polychromy, 1470. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.





Figure 5.23. Meester van Koudewater, Saint Barbara, wood with polychromy, 1470. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photo: [http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/aria/aria\\_assets/BK-NM-1195](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/aria/aria_assets/BK-NM-1195).



Figure 5.24. *Virgin of El Paular*, detail (top) and Diego de la Cruz, *Assumption of the Virgin*, detail (bottom).



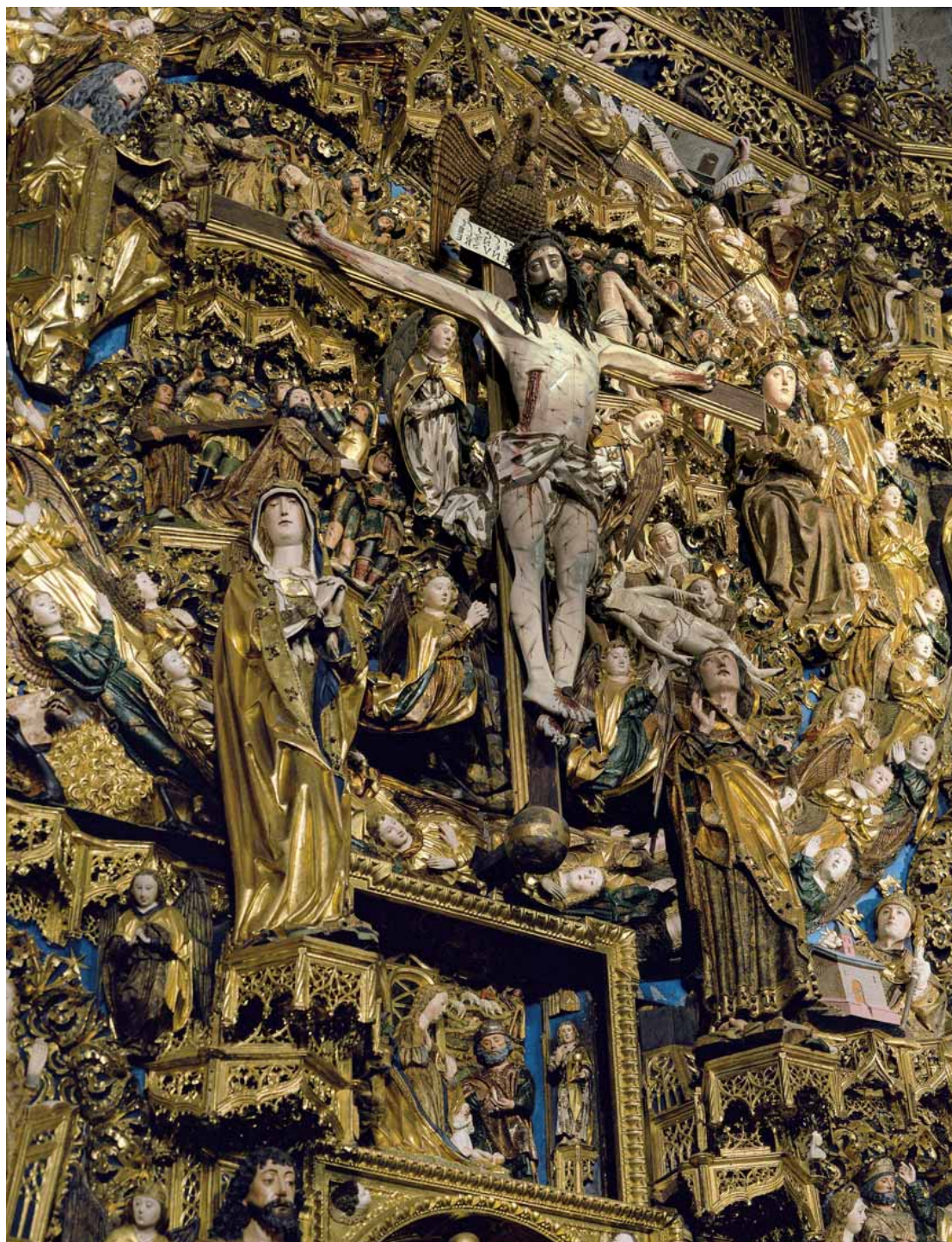


Figure 5.25. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, *Crucifixion*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 2.





Figure 5.26. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, details, Saint Mathew (top) and Saint Mark (bottom), wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photos: *CMR*, figs. 17 and 18.



Figure 5.27. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Luke, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 19.





Figure 5.28. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, St. John, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 16.





Figure 5.29. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, details, *Annunciation* (top) and *Adoration* (bottom), wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photos: *CMR*, figs. 22 and 23.



Figure 5.30. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, *Last Supper*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 26.





Figure 5.31. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, *Arrest of Christ*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 24.



Figure 5.32. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, details, Escutcheons of Castilla-León (top) and Portugal (bottom), wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photos: *CMR*, figs. 39 and 40.





Figure 5.33. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Juan II of Portugal, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 41.



Figure 5.34. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Isabel of Portugal, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 42.





Figure 5.35. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of charterhouse of Miraflores, details, Saint Catherine of Alexandria (left) and Saint James the Great (right), wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, figs. 37 and 38.



Figure 5.36. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, God the Father, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 11.





Figure 5.37. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Holy Spirit, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 12.





Figure 5.38. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Nativity*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 27.



Figure 5.39. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Baptism of Christ*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 28.





Figure 5.40. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Ascension*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 29.





Figure 5.41. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Resurrection*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 30.



Figure 5.42. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Pentecost*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 31.





Figure 5.43. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, rotating mechanism, detail, *Assumption of the Virgin*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 32.



Figure 5.44. Triumphal cross, wood with polychromy, late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Church of Öja, Gotland, Sweden. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 5.

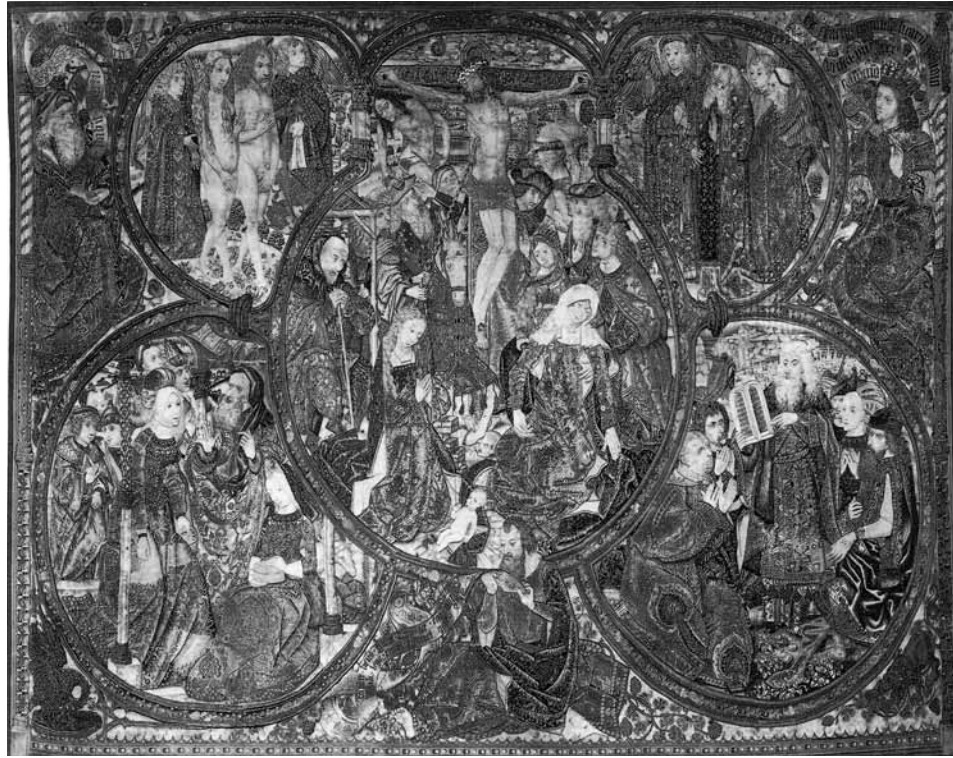


Figure 5.45. Fall and Redemption of Man, tapestry of wool, silk, and silver, 1489–90. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 3.



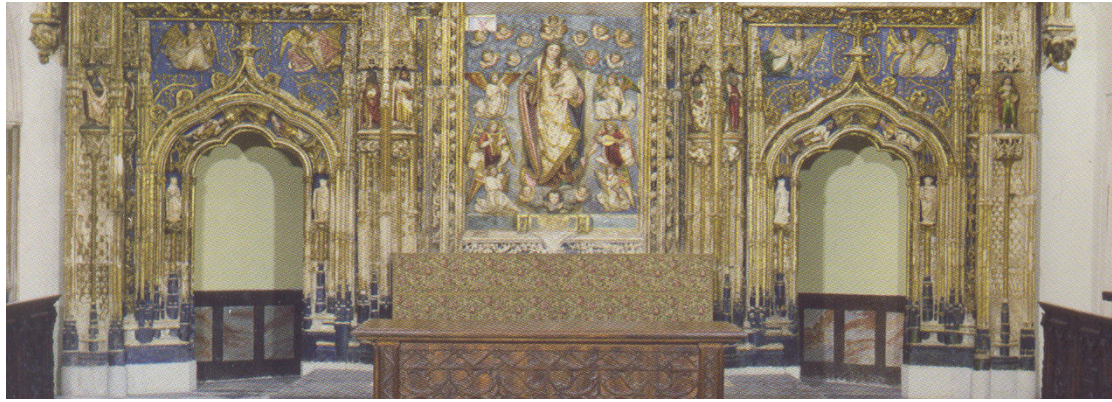


Figure 5.46. Retablo of church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, sacristy doors (above) and Charterhouse of El Paular, exterior of cloister (below).





Figure 5.47. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Barbara, wood with polychromy, 1489–90. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 43.



Figure 5.48. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint John the Baptist, wood with polychromy, 1489–90. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 34.



Figure 5.49. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Peter, wood with polychromy, 1489–90. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 49.





Figure 5.50. Gil Siloe and Diego de la Cruz, Retable of church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Mary Magdalene, wood with polychromy, 1489–90. Photo: *CMR*, fig. 35

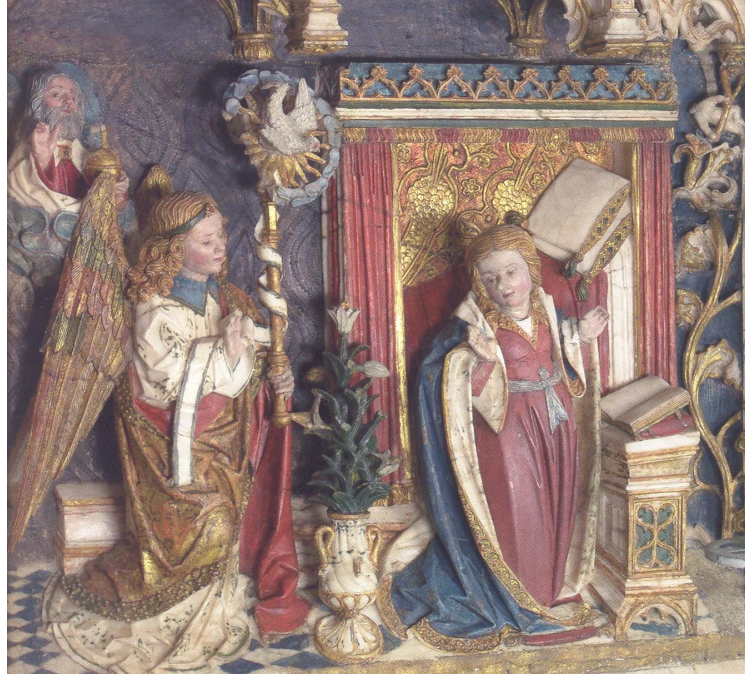


Figure 5.51. *Annunciation* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 91 and *CMR*, fig. 22.





Figure 5.52. *Epiphany* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 99 and *CMR*, fig. 23.



Figure 5.53. *Last Supper* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 105 and *CMR*, fig. 26.





Figure 5.54. *Arrest of Christ* from the retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 107 and *CMR*, fig. 24

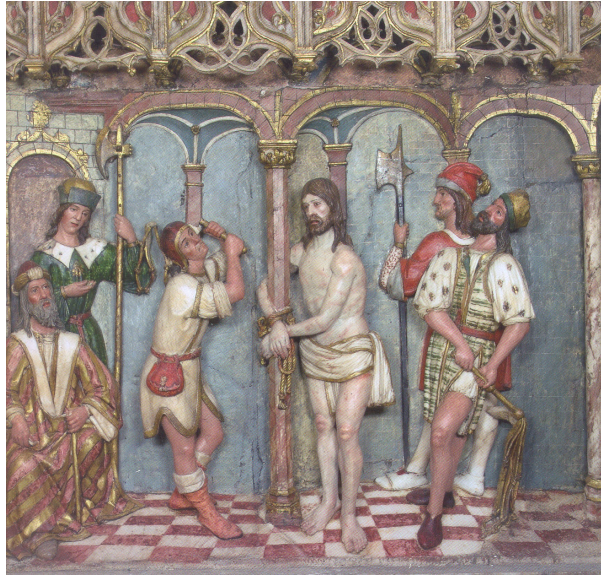


Figure 5.55. *Flagellation* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 109 and *CMR*, fig. 13.





Figure 5.56. *Way to Calvary* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 111 and *CMR*, fig. 14.



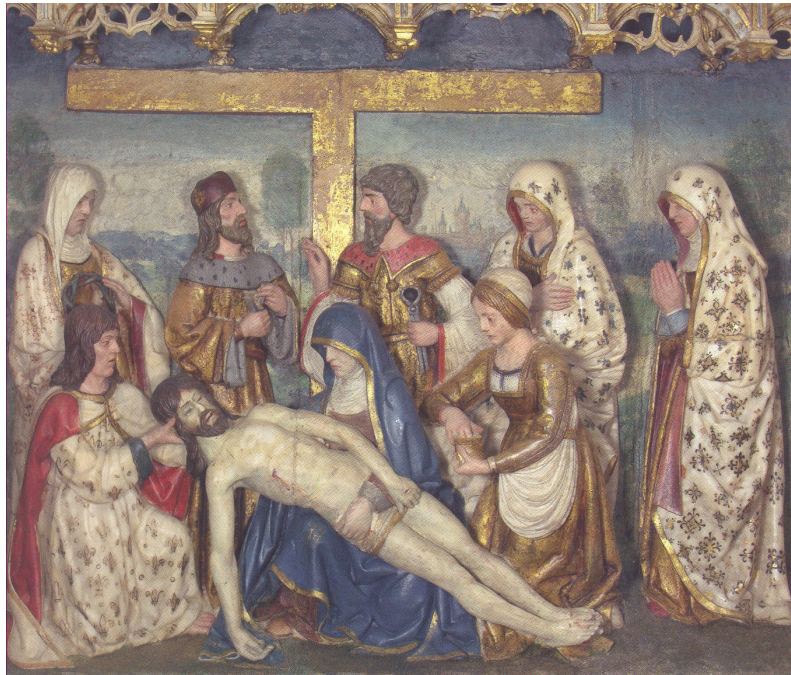


Figure 5.57. *Lamentation* from retables of churches of the charterhouses of El Paular (top) and Miraflores (bottom). Photos: *RM*, p. 115 and *CMR*, fig. 15.



Figure 5.58. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Crucifixion*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: *RM*, p. 113.



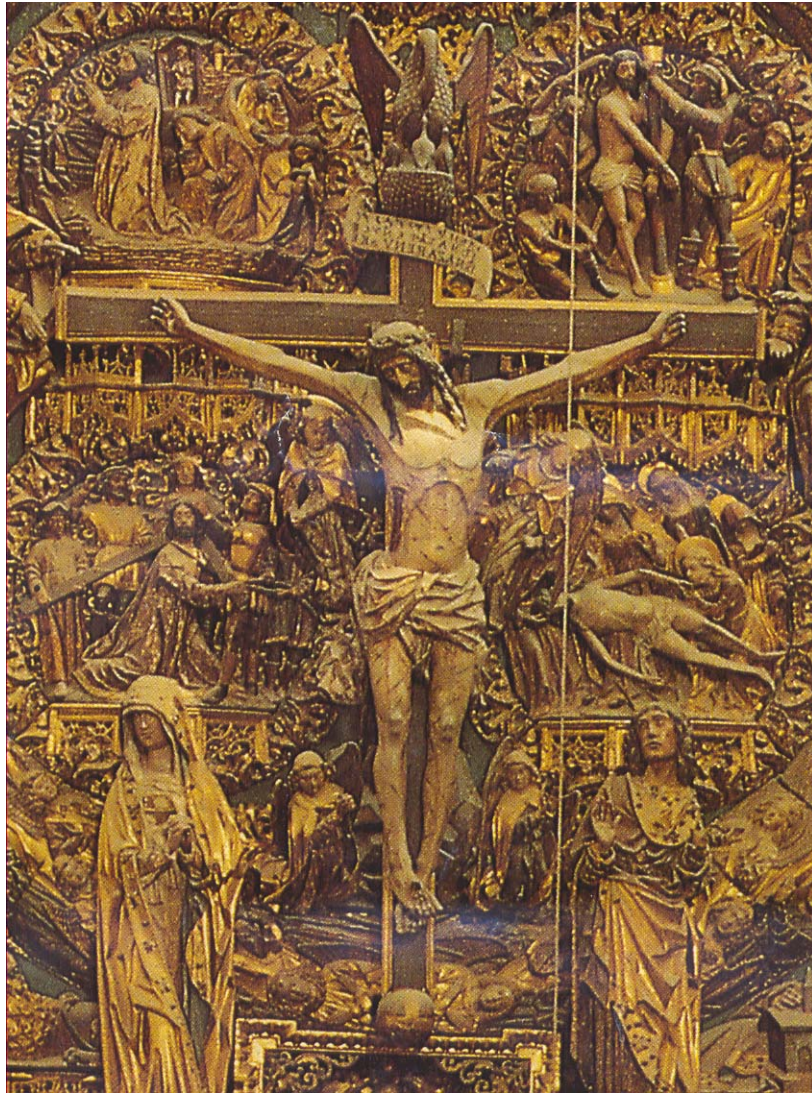


Figure 5.59. Retable, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, *Crucifixion*, wood with polychromy, 1469–99.





Figure 5.60. Retable, church of Charterhouse of El Paular, detail, *Presentation in the Temple*, alabaster with polychromy, c. 1500–20. Photo: RM, front cover.



Figure 5.61. Tombs of Juan II and Isabel of Portugal, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, effigy of Isabel of Portugal, alabaster, 1489–93. Photo: *CMS*, fig. 6.





Figure 5.62. Tomb of Infante Alonso, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, effigy of Infante Alonso, alabaster, 1489–93. Photo: *CMS*, fig. 30.



Figure 5.63. Tomb of Infante Alfonso, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Thomas, alabaster, 1489–93. Photo: *CMS*, fig. 34.



Figure 5.64. Tomb of Infante Alfonso, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, Saint Bartholomew, alabaster, 1489–93. Photo: *CMS*, fig. 35.



Figure 5.65. Tombs of Juan II and Isabel of Portugal, church of Charterhouse of Miraflores, detail, seated Carthusian reading, alabaster, 1489–93. Photo: *CMS*, frontispiece.

## Appendix

### EXCERPTS FROM THE *RETABLO DE LA VIDA DE CRISTO*, BY JUAN DE PADILLA, “EL CARTUJANO,” c. 1500

Juan de Padillo’s *Retablo de la vida de Christo*, a poem of 1,289 lines written c. 1500, was published in Seville by Jacob Cromberger in 1518. I transcribe and translate below the topics of the canticles (*Tabla delos canticos*) and the “Argument of the Entire Work” (*Argumento de toda la obra*). These shed much light on the author’s literary and spiritual motives. In transcribing the passages I have retained contemporary spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, but filled out abbreviations. Translations are printed in bold.

### RETABLO DE LA VIDA DE CRISTO FECHO EN METRO POR VN DEUOTO FRAYLE DE LA CARTUJA

(Seville, Jacobus Cromberger, November 26, 1518)

#### Tabla delos canticos **Panel of the Canticles**

Cánticos dela primera tabla del retablo de la vida de christo.

#### **Canticles of the first panel of the Retable of the Life of Christ.**

Primeramente el prologo en el que el autor prouoca a todo fiel christiano ala contemplacion dela vida de christo: y reprueua las musas poeticas: y inuoca la prouidencia diuina.

**Firstly, the Prologue, in which the author calls every faithful Christian to the contemplation of the life of Christ, and rejects the Poetic Muses; and invokes Divine Providence.**

Cantico primero como la vida de christo se deue escriuir simple y deuotamente sin los alto estilos delos oradores y vanos poetas los que les ponen mas escuridad que declaracion: y error mas que prouecho.

**First Cantic, on how the life of Christ must be written simply and devoutly without the style of orators and vain poets, who write with obscurity rather than clarity; and with error rather than advantage.**

Cantico.ii.de como el auctor da forma ala obra y diuide el retablo en quatro tablas y haze argumento dela primera.

**Canticle ii. On how the author gives form to the work and divides the Retable into four Panels; and makes the argument of the first one.**



Cantico.iiij.dela eterna y diuina generacion de christo: y prueua buenamente como christo es hijo de dios ab eterno: y de aqui comiença principalmente la obra.

**Canticle iii. On the eternal and divine generation of Christ; and good proof of how Christ is the Son of the Eternal God; and principally from here forward this work begins.**

Cantico.iiij.dela cayda delos primeros padres y del remedio della y dela concepcion de nuestra señora y de su nacimiento: y como fue ofrecida en el templo.

**Canticle iv. Of the Fall of the First Parents and its remedy; and of the Conception of Our Lady and her birth; and how she was offered in the Temple.**

Cantico.v.de como nuestra señora fue des posada con joseph: y pone la causa por que quiso dios que fuesse desposada.

**Canticle v. On how Our Lady was espoused to Joseph; and the reason for which God wanted her to be espoused.**

Cantico.vj.dela concepcion de sant juan baptista precursor de christo y delos milagros que ocurrieron en su concepcion.

**Canticle vi. Of the conception of Saint John the Baptist, Precursor of Christ, and of the miracles that occurred in his conception.**

Cantico.vij.del tiempo dela encarnacion del hijo de dios y quanto auia que el mundo era formado y porque no encarno en el principio del mundo.

**Canticle vii. On the time of the Incarnation of the Son of God; and when the world was formed; and why He was not incarnated in the beginning of the world.**

Cantico.viiij.de como el angel gabriel sa ludo a nuestra señora y concibio al fijo de dios y delos marauillosos misterios que ocurriero en su concepcion y como nuestra señora concibio virgen.

**Canticle viii. How the angel Gabriel saluted Our Lady; how she conceived the Son of God; and of the marvelous mysteries that occurred in the Conception; and how Our Lady conceived as virgin.**

Cantico.ix.de como nuestra señora fue a visitar a sancta helisabeth su prima: y como prophetizo helisabeth fablando y su hijo enel vientre saltando.

**Canticle ix. How Our Lady went to visit Saint Elizabeth her cousin; and how Elizabeth prophesied; and how, as she was speaking, the child jumped in her womb.**

Cantico.x.del nascimiento de sant juan baptista y del alegria de su dia: y delos misterios que fueron quando nascio.

**Canticle x. Of the birth of Saint John the Baptist and of the happiness of that day; and of the mysteries that occurred when he was born.**

Cantico.xj.dela humana generacion de christo y como sucedio en los tres esta dos que tuuo el pueblo judayco: es asa saber juezes y reyes y sacerdotes.

**Canticle xi. On the human generation of Christ and how it took place during the three stages of the Jewish people: that is, judges, kings, and priests.**

Cantico.xij.de como joseph quiso dexar a nuestra señora viendo la preñada: y como le fue reuelado del angel que lo que auia de nacer de maria era por virtud del spiritu sancto.

**Canticle xii. How Joseph wanted to leave Our Lady when he saw her with child; and how it was revealed to him by the angel Gabriel that Mary must give birth by virtue of the Holy Spirit.**

Cantico.xijj.de como nuestra señora y joseph fueron de nazareth a bethlehem a pagar el tributo: y como llegaron al portalejo do pario a su hijo.

**Canticle xiii. How Our Lady and Joseph left Nazareth for Bethlehem to pay the tribute; and how they arrived at the little porch where she gave birth.] little porch where she gave birth.**

Cantico.xiiij.dela natiuidad de nuestro maestro y redemptor jesu christo: y de los altos misterios y marauillas que le obraron en su nacimiento.

**Canticle xiiii. On the Nativity of Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ; and of the high mysteries and marvels that were worked in His birth.**

Cantico.xv.de como nuestra señora fue vir en en el parto y despues del parto y para siempre jamas virgen.

**Canticle xv. How Our Lady was virgin both during and after the birth and how she remained ever virgin.**

Cantico.xvj.dela reuelacion del angel a los pastores y como fueron a bethlehem y fallaron al fijo de dios en el pesebre con su madre y joseph.

**Canticle xvi. On the revelation of the angel to the shepherds and how they went to Bethlehem and found the Son of God in the manger with His Mother and Joseph.**

Cantico.xvj.dela reuelacion del angel a los pastores y como fueron a bethlehem y fallaron al fijo de dios en el pesebre con su madre y joseph.

**Canticle xvi. On the revelation of the angel to the shepherds and how they went to Bethlehem and found the Son of God in the manger with His Mother and Joseph.**

Cantico.xvij.dela circuncision de christo: y porque quiso ser circunciso: y como en lugar dela circuncision sucede el sancto baptismo.

**Canticle xvii. On the Circumcision of Christ; and why He was circumcised; and how Holy Baptism took the place of circumcision.**

Cantico.xvijj.delas virtudes y excelencias deste nombre Jesus.

**Canticle xviii. On the virtues and excellencies of this name Jesus.**

Cantico.xix.como los tres reyes magos orientales vinieron a buscar a christo regidos por el estrella: y como lo fallaron y adoraron.

**Canticle xix. How the Three Oriental Kings, guided by the star, came to find Christ; and how they found Him and adored Him.**

Cantico.xx.de como nuestra señora con su hijo y joseph boluieron de bethlenen a jerusalem: y como nuestra señora no era obligada ala ley dela purificacion.

**Canticle xx. How Our Lady with her Son and Joseph returned from Bethlehem to Jerusalem; and how Our Lady was not obligated by the law of purification.**

Cantico.xxj.dela purificacion de nuestra señora y de como offrecio a su hijo en el templo: y como el sancto propheta simeon lo tomo en sus braços.

**Canticle xxi. On the Purification of Our Lady and how she offered her Son in the temple; and how the holy prophet Simeon took Him in his arms.**

Cantico.xxij.dela fuyda de christo en egypto y como con su presencia cayeron los ydolos delos templos egyptianos y como nuesta [sic] señora y jo eph biuieron alli pobremente siete años.

**Canticle xxii. On the Flight to Egypt of Christ and how the idols of the Egyptian temples fell in His presence; and how Our Lady and Joseph lived there in poverty for seven years.**

Cantico.xxijj.de como herodes por matar a christo mando matar a los sanctos innocentes.

**Canticle xxiii. How Herod ordered the Holy Innocents killed so that he could kill Christ.**

Cantico.xxiiij.dela muerte de herodes y dela crueldad que mostro ante que muriese y como christo boluio de egypto a tierra de israel.

**Canticle xxiiii. On the death of Herod and of the cruelty he demonstrated before he died; and how Christ returned from Egypt to the land of Israel.**

Cantico.xxv.de como joseph y nuestra señora con su hijo allegaron a nazareth ciu dad de galilea.

**Canticle xxv. How Joseph and Our Lady arrived with their Son in Nazareth, a city in Galilee.**

Cantico.xxvj.de como christo de.xij.años quedo en jerusalen y lo fallaron despues de tres dias enel templo hablando entre los doctores.

**Canticle xxvi. How Christ, at twelve years old, was found after three days in the temple speaking with the doctors.**

Cantico.xxvij.de como christo boluio subjecto a su madre y a joseph a nazareth despues que lo fallaron: y dela excellencia dela subjeccion y humildad.

**Canticle xxvii. How Christ obediently returned to his Mother and Joseph in Nazareth after they found Him; and of the excellence of obedience and humility.**

Cantico.xxviii.delo que nuestro redemptor fizo dende los doze años fasta el principio delos treynta que fue al baptismo de sant juan.

**Canticle xxviii. On what Our Redeemer did for twelve years until he turned thirty and went to the Baptism of Saint John.**

Canticos dela.ii.tabla.

Primeramente el prologo en el que el auctor confiessa a su poco saber para pintar las cosas marauillosas y misterios que christo fizo.

**Canticles of the Second Panel.**

**Firstly, the Prologue, in which the author confesses his little knowledge about painting the marvelous things and mysteries that Christ did.**

Cantico primero dela penitencia y baptismo de sant juan: y que cosa es penitencia y como los judios se gozan en tener por padre a abraham.

**First Canticle. On the penitence and baptism of Saint John; and what penitence is; and how the Jews delighted in having Abraham as father.**

Cantico.ij.de como Christo complidos.xxix. años se partio de Galilea y de su madre bendita y fue al baptismo de sant Juan.

**Canticle ii. How Christ, having reached twenty-nine years, left Galilee and His Holy Mother, and went to the Baptism of Saint John.**

Cantico.iiij.de como christo fue baptizado enel rio jordan dela mano de sant Juan y dela gran dignidad del sancto baptismo.

**Canticle iii. How Christ was baptized in the River Jordan by the hand of Saint John, and of the dignity of Holy Baptism.**

Cantico.iiij.delos tres mysterios que aparecieron sobre christo baptizado.conuiene a saber el abertura delos cielos: el spiritu sancto en forma de paloma y la boz de dios padre.

**Canticle iiij. Of the three mysteries that appeared over the baptized Christ; that is, the opening of the skies, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father.**

Cantico.v.de como christo despues de baptizado fue lleuado del spiritu sancto al desierto donde ayuno quarenta dias y noches y sin comer y dela vtilidad y virtud del ayuno.

**Canticle v. How Christ, after baptism, was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, where he fasted for forty days and nights without eating; and of the utility and virtue of fasting.**

Cantico.vj.como christo despues que ouo ayunado.los.xl.dias fue tentado del diablo en tres cosas:en gula:en vanagloria y auaricia y como deuemos resistir las tentaciones y de la excelencia dela sancta [*sic*] soledad y contemplacion.

**Canticle vi. How Christ, after fasting for forty days, was tempted by the devil in three things: gluttony, vainglory, and avarice; and how we must resist temptation; and of the excellence of holy solitude and contemplation.**

Cantico.vij.de como Christo depues que fue tentado del diablo boluio para el jordan a galilea y dela elecion delos doze apostoles y porque no fueron mas o menos.

**Canticle vii. How Christ, after being tempted by the devil, returned by the Jordan to Galilee; and on the election of the twelve apostles; and why they were neither more nor fewer.**

Cantico.vijj.de como Christo lleugo a galilea y fue a nazareth a visitar a su madre preciosa: y como alli se començo a manifestar predicando enla sinagoga.

**Canticle viii. How Christ arrived at Galilee and went to Nazareth to visit his precious Mother; and how He began to preach in the synagogue.**

Cantico.ix.delos miraglos y marauillas que nuestro redemptor hizo: y que cosa es miraglo: y silas cosas que obra natura si se pueden llamar miraglos.

**Canticle ix. On the miracles and marvels that Our Redeemer did; and what a miracle is; and whether things worked by nature may be called miracles.**

Cantico.x.del sermon que hizo christo sobre el monte a sus discipulos delas ocho bienauenturanças: y como se refrenan con la razon las inclinaciones naturales que prouocan a los hombres a pecar.

**Canticle x. On the sermon that Christ made to His disciples on the Mount concerning the eight beatitudes; and how one may curb by reason the natural inclinations that provoke men to sin.**

Cantico.xj.dela transfiguracion de christo por la que el quiso mostrar su gloria diuina y delos testigos que alli vinieron que fueron los tres discipulos y moyses y elias y la boz del padre del nuue.

**Canticle xi. On the Transfiguration of Christ, in which He showed His divine glory; and of the witnesses that came, including the three disciples and Moses and Elijah; and the voice of God the Father in the cloud.**

Cantico.xij.del martyrio de sant juan baptista: el que el mando herodes antipa degollar porque le reprehendia el adulterio con la muger de philip su hermano.

**Canticle xii. On the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist, ordered to be beheaded by Herod Antipas because John reproached him for adultery with the wife of Herod's brother Philip.**

Cantico.xijj.de algunos exemplos y comparaciones que ponia christo en las cosas terrenales para que mejor la gente entendiese las celestiales.

**Canticle xiii. On some examples and comparisons that Christ made concerning terrestrial things so that people might understand celestial ones.**



Cantico.xiiij.dela conuersion dela magda lena: y como nos auemos de conuertir delas cosas mundana al amor de dios: y como el amor es en dos maneras: sensual y racional.es a saber malo y bueno.

**Canticle xiiii. On the conversion of the Magdalene; and how we must convert from mundane things to the love of God; and how love appears in two ways, sensual and rational; that is, bad and good.**

Cantico.xv.dela resurrecion de lazaro y como nos deuemos de resuscitar delos pecados y dela sancta memoria dela muerte.

**Canticle xv. On the resurrection of Lazarus; and how we must resuscitate from sin; and on the holy remembrance of death.**

Canticos y lamentaciones dela tercera tabla.Primeramente el prologo: enel qual el auctor breuemente pone la substancia detoda la tabla haziendo argumento della.

**Canticles and Lamentations of the Third Panel. Firstly, the Prologue, in which the author briefly sets forth the substance of the entire Panel and its argument.**

Cantico primero de como los pontifices y fariseos vista la resurrecion de lazaro ordenaron por su consejo de matar a christo: y como su muerte fue conueniente y necessaria para nuestra salud: y comiença por el humno de vexilla regis.

**First Canticle, on how the priests and Pharisees, having seen the resurrection of Lazarus, ordered Christ to death by their counsel; and how His death was appropriate and necessary for our salvation; and it begins with the hymn *Vexilla Regis*.**

Cantico.ij.de como el consejo diuulgado huyo christo de sus perseguidores: y pone la causa porque el quiso huyr.

**Canticle ii. On how, once the counsel was divulged, Christ fled his persecutors; and the reason for which He wished to flee.**

Cantico.iiij.de como christo boluio dela ciudad de effren a bethania ante de.vj.dias dela pascua: y como alli le fizieron vna gran cena.

**Canticle iii. On how Christ returned from the city of Ephraim to Bethany six days before Easter; and how a great dinner was prepared for Him.**

Cantico.iiij.dela vultima venida que vino christo en jerusalen: y como fue muy honrada mente rescibido: la qual representa la sancta madre yglesia el domingo de ramos.

**Canticle iiii. On the last return that Christ made to Jerusalem; and how He was received with much honor: which represents the Holy Mother Church and Palm Sunday.**

Cantico.v.de donde se ponen algunas cosas delas que christo hizo desde el domingo de ramos hasta el jueues dela cena.

**Canticle v. In which are set forth some things that Christ did from the time of Palm Sunday to the Thursday of the Supper.**

Cantico.vj.como judas vendio a christo por.xxx.dineros y como ay muchos judas que cada dia lo venden por menosprecio.

**Canticle vi. How Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver; and how there are many Judases that sell Him every day through disdain.**

Cantico.vij.dela vultima cena que christo ceno con sus discipulos en jerusalen y de como cesso la figura del cordero y del pan cenceño y nos dio su cuerpo por cordero diuino y pan spiritual.

**Canticle vii. On the Last Supper that Christ spent with his disciples in Jerusalem; and of how the simple figure of the Lamb and the bread ceased to be: and how He gave us His Body as the Divine Lamb and spiritual bread.**

Cantico.viij.del mandato es asaber de quando lauo los pies asus discipulos defuesublimada la humildad y abatida la soberuia.

**Canticle viii. Of the command: that is, when He washed the feet of His disciples, humility was sublimated and pride was made abject.**

Cantico.ix.dela institucion del sacramento del verdadero cuerpo de jesu christo: y como fue figurado por la ley vieja.

**Canticle ix. On the institution of the Sacrament of the True Body of Jesus Christ; and how it was prefigured by the Old Law.**

Cantico.x.del dulce y marauilloso sermon que hizo christo a sus discipulos despues dela cena.

**Canticle x. On the sweet and marvelous sermon that Christ made to His disciples after the Supper.**

Aqui comiença la dolorosa passion de nuestro redemptor jesu christo y dexa el auctor los canticos y procede por lamentaciones fasta en fin dela tercera tabla. va diuidida la passion por las horas canonicas del viernes dela cruz.

**Here commences the sorrowful Passion of Our Redeemer Jesus Christ; the author lays asides the Canticles and proceeds with Lamentations until the end of the Third Panel; and the Passion is divided by the canonical hours of the Friday of the Cross.**

Lamentacion primera enla hora de maytines: do se pone la oracion del huerto y el prendimiento: y como fue lleuado a casa de annas y cayphas.

**First Lamentation. In the hour of Matins, in which occur the Agony in the Garden and the Arrest; and how He was brought to the house of Annas and Caiphas.]**

Lamentacion.ij.enla hora de prima como fue lleuado delante de pilato y examinado y açotado y coronado de espinas y vituperado.

**Lamentation ii. In the hour of Prime, how He was led before Pilate and examined and whipped and crowned with thorns and cursed.**

Lamentacion.iiij.enla hora de tercia como pilato lo saco vituperosamente ante los phariseos y juezes y lo sentencio a muerte y lo lleuauan a crucificar: y como lo seguia su bendita madre.

**Lamentation iii. In the hour of Terce, how Pilate pulled Him vituperously before the Pharisees and the judges and sentenced Him to death and brought him to be crucified; and how His Blessed Mother followed Him.]**

Lamentacion.iiij.enla hora de sexta como fue nuestro redemptor crucificado enel monte caluario presente su madre: y de otras cosas muy dolorosas que alli acontecieron.

**Lamentation iiiij. In the hour of Sext: how our Redeemer was crucified on Mount Calvary in the presence of His mother: and of other very sorrowful things that happened there.**

Lamentacion.v.enla hora de nona de co mo nuestro redemptor espiro enla cruz. Aqui dexa el auctor el verso y entra enla prosa en señal de mayor dolor: haziendo vna lamentacion por manera de sermon.

**Lamentation v. In the hour of None, how Our Redeemer expired on the cross. Here the author leaves behind verse and enters into prose as an indication of the greatest sorrow: making a Lamentation by way of a sermon.**

Lamentacion.vj.enla hora de visperas de como quitaron dela cruz a nuestro redemptor: y del doloroso llanto que fizo sobre el nuestra senora.

**Lamentation vi. In the hour of Vespers, how they took Our Redeemer down from the cross; and of the sorrowful pain that it caused Our Lady.**

Lamentacion.vij.enla hora de completas: como nuestro redemptor fuy muy honradamente sepultado y del doloroso llanto que alli hizo sobre el: y como nuestra señora boluio a su casal monte sion con gran amargura.

**Lamentation vii. In the hour of Compline, how Our Redeemer was laid with much dignity in the sepulcher; and of the sorrowful laments made over Him; and how Our Lady returned to her house on Mount Zion with great bitterness.**

Canticos de la.iiij.tabla.

Primeramente el prologo: enel que el auctor pone la substancia de toda la tabla breuemente haziendo argumento della.

**Canticles of the Fourth Panel.**

**Firstly, the Prologue, in which the author notes the substance of the Panel and briefly sets forth its argument.**

Cantico primero de como nuestro redemptor jesu christo resuscito muy glorioso del se pulchro cerrado: y se reprueua la falsedad delos que dixeron que fue su cuerpo delos discipulos hurtado.

**First Canticle, on how Our Redeemer Jesus Christ resurrected very gloriously from the closed sepulcher; and in which is disputed the falseness of those who said His Body was stolen by the disciples.**

Cantico.ij.delas cinco apariciones que nuestro redemptor aparecio el dia que resuscito: y dela excellencia del domingo.

**Canticle ii. Of the five apparitions that Our Redeemer made on the day of Resurrection; and of the excellence of that Sunday.**

Cantico.iiij [*sic*].delas otras cinco apariciones que aparecio en diuersos dias hasta que subio a los cielos.

**Canticle iiiii. Of the five other apparitions in which He appeared on diverse days until He ascended into Heaven.**

Cantico.iiij [*sic*].dela maravillosa ascension de nuestro redemptor jesu christo: prueua como subio por su propria virtud y potencia.

**Canticle iii. On the marvelous Ascension of Our Redeemer Jesus Christ; and a proof of how He ascended by reason of His own virtue and power.**

Cantico.v.como los dos angeles vinieron en vestiduras blancas a los discipulos: y como los angeles despedidos boluieron los discipulos en jersusalem: y dela gran virtud dela oracion.

**Canticle v. On how the angels came in white garments to the disciples; how the disciples, having taken leave of the angels, returned to Jerusalem; and of the the great virtue of prayer.**

Cantico.vj.como el spiritu sancto vino sobre los discipulos en lenguas de fuego: y delas grandes maravillas acontecidas eñste dia.

**Canticle vi. How the Holy Spirit came over the disciples in tongues of fire; and of the great marvels told on that day.**

Cantico.vij.como los discipulos fueron dispersos por e mundo a predicar la fe catolica y delos grandes miraglos que hizieron.

**Canticle vii. How the disciples were dispersed into the world to preach the Catholic Faith; and of the great miracles they performed.**

Cantico.viiij.delo que nuestra señora hizo despues que su hijo subio a los cielos: y de su muerte y assumpcion y coronacion: y prueua benignamente como subio en cuerpo y anima a los cielos.

**Canticle viii. On what Our Lady did after her Son ascended into Heaven; and of her Death and Assumption and Coronation; and a pious proof of how she ascended body and soul into Heaven.]**

Cantico.ix.delas quinze señales que han de preceder al dia del guyzio: y dela venida del antichristo.

**Canticle ix. Of the fifteen signs that will precede the Day of Judgment; and of the coming of the Antichrist.**

Cantico.x.del dia del juyzio: y delos con denados y penas cruales del enfierno.

**Canticle x. Of the Day of Judgment, and the cruel punishments of the damned in Hell.**

Cantico.xj.de como subiran los que fueren saluos al cielo:y dela bienauenturança y en que consiste.

**Canticle xi. On how the saved will ascend into Heaven; and of the blessing in which it consists.**

Cantico.xij.como el auctor quita el velo delante del retablo para que lo vean assi los doctos como los simples sometiendo se siempre ala correccion delos entendidos.

**Canticle xii. How the author removes the veil before the Retable so that it may be seen by the learned and the simple alike, always submitting to correction by the learned.**

Fenescen los canticos dela quarta tabla y de todo el retablo.

**Here end the Canticles of the Fourth Panel and of the entire Retable.**

Argumento de toda la obra

En gloria y alabança del hijo de dios eterno nuestro maestro y redemptor Jesu christo y de su bendita madre y consolacion y prouecho delos fieles christianos comiença la vida de christo compuesta por vn religioso monje dela orden dela cartuxa en versos castellanos: o coplas de arte mayor a causa que mejor sea leyda. Porque segun la sentencia de Aristotiles: naturalmente se deleyta el hombre enel verso y musica. El qual diuide toda la obra en quatro tablas: por que su intencion es segun parece enel segundo cantico dela primera tabla hazer vn retablo dela vida de christo. Las quales quatro tablas corresponden alos quatro evangelios. E assi por orden va poniendo las historias:no apocriphas ni falsas:saluo como la sancta madre yglesia las tiene y los sanctos prophetas y doctores que van por los margines puestos. Van diuididas las tablas no por capitulos: saluo por canticos por cumplir el dicho del propheta dauid. Cantate domino canticum nouum: quiere dezir. Cantad al señor cantar nueuo. Es a saber la vida de christo: que es el testamento nueuo segun lo canta continuo la sancta madre yglesia. Y por tanto el auctor comiença. Canta christiano conmigo la vida yc. La primera tabla comiença del principio hasta el baptismo de christo. La segunda de alli fasta el domingo de lazaro: que se llama dominica in passione. La tercera de alli faste que espiro enla cruz y lo pusieron enel monumento. La quarta desde la resurreccion fasta que subio alos cielos y ha de venir a juzgar los biuos y los muertos. Los lectores paren mientes quando vieren el euangelista o propheta o doctor señalado enel margen: por que en derecho del verso do esta señalado comiença a dezir su dicho fasta que viene el otro siguiente: assi van todos por orden. Quando quiera que algunos doctores no tuuieron en señalados sus originales o libros:ha se de entender que lo dizen sobre el testo euangelico: en exposiciones: homelias sermones:o postillas: assi como haze sancto Thomas en su cathena aurea: y Ludolpho cartuxano:el qual mas que otro ninguno copilo muy altamente la vida de christo: segun fue aprouado enel concilio de basilea. Estos dos doctores han sido muy familiares al



auctor en esta obra: allende de otros muchos segun parece por la obra. quando el pusiere conellos el cornadillo de su pobreza: no pone su nombre: saluo este nombre (Auctor) el qual con toda la obre se somete ala correccion delos discretos doctores de la sancta madre yglesia. E si en alguno parte ha procedido bien: den se las gracias a dios que las reparte como a el le plaze: y si por e contrario: reputa se a su ignorancia y poco saber. y protesta de no poner historias de gentiles y paganos: saluo algunas qu mucho hizieren al caso y fuerden verda deras. Cosa temORIZADA es poner entre las historias de christo historias reprobadas y falsas: saluo las verdaderas y aprouadas que tiene el testamento viejo y nuevo. Y nota que no tan solamente aqui se descriue la vida de christo pero la de nuestra señora y de sant Juan baptista padre gracioso delos cartuxos. Esta obra a ninguna persona señalada va dirigida: porque el auctor dela no yua buscando intereses ni faouores humanos. Puede quel quier deuoto christiano que la lee y tractare endereçar la asi mismo: y dezir por si las oraciones que van en fin de los canticos.

**In glory and praise of the Son of God Eternal, Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Mother, and for the consolation and benefit of the Christian faithful, here begins the Life of Christ composed by a monk of the Order of Carthusians in Castilian verse; in *coplas de arte mayor*, so that it might be better read. Because, according to the *Sentences* of Aristotle, man naturally delights in verse and music. For which reason the work is divided into four Panels: because [the author's] intention is, according to that stated in the second canticle of the First Panel, to make a retable of the life of Christ. The four Panels correspond to the four Scriptures. So the stories are arranged in that order, not apocryphal or false, except where held [true] by the Holy Mother Church and the holy prophets and the doctors, whose [names] are placed in the margins. The Panels are divided not by chapters, but by canticles, so as to fulfill the saying of the prophet David: *Cantate dño canticum nouum*. Which means: Sing to the Lord a new song. That is to say, the life of Christ, which is the New Testament according to the song held within the Holy Mother Church. And so the author begins: Sing with me, Christian, the Life, etc. The First Panel starts at the beginning up until the Baptism of Christ. The second from there to the Sunday of Lazarus: which is called *dominica in passione*. The third from there until Christ expires on the cross and they put Him in the monument. The fourth from the Resurrection until He ascends into Heaven and comes to judge the living and the dead. The readers may stop when they see the evangelist or prophet or doctor signaled in the margin: because to the right of the verse is indicated how the citation goes until another follows it. And so everything in that order. When it happens that some doctors are not mentioned in their original [words] or in their books, it is to be understood that they are saying [such things] in expositions on Scripture: in commentaries, homilies, sermons, and postillas: as, for instance, those Saint Thomas makes in his *Catena aurea*; and Ludolph the Carthusian, who more than anyone else compiled very loftily the Life of Christ, as it was approved in the Council of Basle. These two doctors have been very familiar to the author in this work. And moreover, many others that appear in the work. When [the author] adds his own poor means to this effort, he does not put down his name, except this name (Auctor), so that the work may be submitted to correction by the discreet doctors of the Holy Mother Church. And if in some part he has proceeded well, then grace be**

**given to God, Who shapes it as He pleases: and if to the contrary, may it be imputed to [the author's] ignorance and little knowledge. And he insists he has not included stories of Gentiles or pagans, except some that have been put to the test and are true. It is a fearful thing to place between the stories of the Life of Christ stories [that are] contested and false, except those that are true and approved and contained within the New and Old Testaments. And note that this work treats not only the Life of Christ but also that of Our Lady and Saint John the Baptist, happy father of the Carthusians. This work is not dedicated or directed to any person: because its author is not seeking human interests or favors. Any devout Christian may read it and apply it and address it to himself: and say for himself the prayers that come at the end of the canticles.**

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