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TABERNACLES OF THE SACRAMENT:
EUCHARISTIC IMAGERY AND CLASSICISM
IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Tabernacles of the Sacrament:
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Early Renaissance

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The inception, iconographic origins and early development of large-scale, classicizing receptacles for the Host are examined in this dissertation. In order to provide a basis for understanding these monuments in the context of the Quattrocento, the history of eucharistic worship and Host reservation in Italy are analyzed. In addition, Host tabernacles are among the earliest monuments in the fifteenth century created in a classical mode and are related iconographically to other early classicizing monuments; thus the classical formula of the new tabernacles is treated in relation to eucharistic and eschatological iconography.

This study finds that the early Renaissance style was specifically spiritual in nature and was part of a widespread, diverse effort to promote a new uniformity of worship based on the central philosophical concept of the Roman Catholic Church, the Corpus Domini. Contemporary theological and civic beliefs are analyzed in relation to eucharistic tabernacles to provide a context for the new imagery. A number of iconographies were ideologically and visually related to the this concentration on the Corpus

verum. In particular, the Trinity, Baptism, and the Annunciation were mystically allied to the Eucharist and could serve to center the attention of the faithful on the body of Christ. These various forms of eucharistic devotion could function to unify worship while serving the needs of different patrons and settings.

Images and reservation had a symbolic equivalency in the fifteenth century that was based on the ability to take communion by visualization as well as ingestion. Host tabernacles were created in part to facilitate spiritual communion; other monuments with eucharistic imagery could serve a related purpose. This study demonstrates that the new imaging of the central Sacrament was readily understood in the fifteenth century, and was later assimilated into larger altar-retables. Classical tabernacles became an ideal method to stimulate the contemplation of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

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INTRODUCTION

Let them make Me a House that I may dwell
in the midst of them.¹

This study, despite the fact that it started out to be something quite different, evolved into an exploration of the impetus behind the sudden development of larger, visually enriched Italian Host tabernacles in the fifteenth century. As work progressed, a surprising fact caught my attention; the rebirth of classicism precisely coincided with the development of Renaissance Host tabernacles and seemed to be an integral part of their conception. Thus my study further evolved to incorporate an investigation of the meaning and motivations underlying the equally sudden utilization of classical forms.

When I first started looking at fifteenth-century Italian Sacrament tabernacles, it was mainly to understand Donatello's oeuvre more fully, because so little had been written regarding the sculptor's beautiful and iconographically rich tabernacle for St. Peter's in Rome. With a few notable exceptions, I looked at the monuments made to contain the consecrated Host in the Quattrocento as rather dull church furnishings of varying quality. However, the more I saw - and there are many extant

¹ This verse from Exodus 25: 8 is quoted by William Durandus, Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, Book 1, Chapter 1, Article 12, in his discussion of the significance of the tabernacle of Moses to the material church.

fifteenth-century tabernacles and dismantled remains - the more I realized that by studying these monuments only within the oeuvre of a given artist or school, scholars have bypassed important insights that can be provided by a study of Sacrament tabernacles. Even Hans Caspary, whose seminal 1964 study finally categorized these monuments into visual types and established their general iconographic character,² focused largely on their later development. So many Quattrocento Sacrament tabernacles were lost, dismantled, or moved from their original locations after the edicts of the Council of Trent, that the picture of these monuments we have today is distorted.

A recognition of the complex role eucharistic iconography played in the classical forms of fifteenth-century Italian sculpture is one of the results of this investigation. As I will demonstrate, Host tabernacles have a profound significance for the historian of Italian art when viewed in the context of the remarkable intellectual and spiritual expression of the fifteenth century.

The methodology traditionally used in the scholarship of the ars sacra is inadequate for the task of understanding Sacrament tabernacles as the fifteenth-century Florentine understood them. It is my contention that these tabernacles must be seen in the context of a

² Hans Caspary, Das Sakramentstabernakel bis zum Konzil von Trient, Munich, 1969.

fervent devotion to the Host that had no historical precedent and that was eventually transformed and visually codified by sixteenth-century artists and theologians. In addition, their coming-of-age as prominent sculpted objects within Tuscan churches coincided precisely with the revolution in visual style termed the "Renaissance". In other words, because of a complex set of circumstances these monuments came into existence at a unique historical moment; they were created by fifteenth-century artists and seen by fifteenth-century viewers in specific and transitory circumstances.

Moreover, the tabernacles of the Quattrocento were not simply a visual response to the growing concern with a devotion to the Body of Christ; instead, because of their relationship to other similar monuments, eucharistic tabernacles should be seen in the context of a new civic iconography in Florence. A number of different types of images participated in the enriched symbolic associations concerning the Corpus Domini; thus this study will investigate several other monuments that incorporate eucharistic iconography.

Scholars have been increasingly interested in the phenomenon of Florentine patriotism and have suggested the existence of an intentional nationalism in the architecture of the period, particularly exemplified by Brunelleschi and his circle. As numerous scholars have pointed out, this civic effort can be clearly seen early

in the century in the elaborate scheme for the dome of the cathedral, and is equally apparent in the domestic architecture of Florence.³ John Onians, for instance, has proposed that Brunelleschi's classicism was part of the creation of a national Tuscan-Florentine architectural style, an assertion of civic pride, with attendant implications of ancient origins.⁴

The tendency to link civic and religious interests was logical, whether consciously or unconsciously applied, because there was little distinction in Quattrocento Florence and elsewhere between civic aims and religious feeling, even if motivations varied.⁵ In fact, the assertion of a new standard in civic life associated with all that was good from the glorious ancient past, melded perfectly with either a personal or a communal assertion of divine protection and favor.⁶

³ For example, see Richard A. Goldthwaite, The Building of Renaissance Florence, Baltimore and London, 1980, pp.4ff., 13-16 and passim.

⁴ John Onians, "Brunelleschi: Humanist or Nationalist," Art History, V, 1982, 259-272. See also idem., Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, Princeton, 1988, 130-157.

⁵ For a thought-provoking study of the connections between civic and religious life see Richard Trexler, Public Life in Renaissance Florence, New York, 1981.

⁶ Roman, Greek, and Etruscan associations were asserted at various times by different sources. The desire to exalt by association with the antique past is an idea that finds repeated assertion in any number of Florentine humanists. See for example Leonardo Bruni's, Historia Florentini populi as well as his Panegirico della città di Firenze, ed. G. De Toffol, Florence, 1974. For the political implications of the

This study will contend that Florentines were concerned with the conscious creation of a new, purposefully designed image, linked not only to ideas such as Leonardo Bruni's pronouncement of the "new Athens", but also extending beyond secular imagery.⁷ Insofar as this civic iconography relates to church furnishings, secular considerations were not a primary motivation, but part of an intricate and dynamic structure. The relationship between secular humanism and Christianity in the Renaissance, as it affected artistic production, has been traditionally viewed as one in which religious imagery increasingly adopted humanist concerns. In this bias,

connections to antiquity in Florence see N. Rubenstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, V, 1942, 198-227. Artists and theologians were not as articulate about their use of antiquity in the visual arts and, as is typical of the documents concerning works of art in the Quattrocento, style is not generally mentioned.

⁷ Florentine parallels to antiquity have been increasingly interpreted in the context of a Christian model. See for example: A. Chastel, "Un épisode de la symbolique urbaine au XVe siècle: Florence et Rome Cité de Dieu," Urbanisme et architecture, études, écrites et publiées en l'honneur de Pierre Lavedan, Paris, 1954, 75-79; L. Green, Chronicle into History, An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles, Cambridge, 1972, 137ff; C. Trinkaus, "The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists and Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?" The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, ed. C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman, Leiden, 1974, 341f.; P. Simons, "Patronage in the Tornabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence," Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy, ed. F.W. Kent and P. Simons, Canberra and Oxford, 1987, 245-246; C.T. Davis, "Topographical and Historical Propaganda in Early Florentine Chronicles and in Villani," Medioevo e Rinascimento, II, 1988, 33-51.

humanist concerns were represented in the revival of the artistic forms of antiquity. The modern equation of classical literature with classical art has been instrumental in creating this fallacy; in the quattrocento, a different viewpoint prevailed. As this study will confirm, the early fifteenth-century appropriation of ancient Roman classicism was not dependent on humanist impetus or approval. The reverse of the convention is more accurate - humanists absorbed and utilized a style that was embraced first by religious image-makers for specific iconographic purposes.

A complex set of circumstances, unique to the time and place, provided the catalyst for Tuscan artists. Chiefly resurrected for the purposes of eschatological and eucharistic imagery, as I will demonstrate, classicism was utilized to augment the spiritual content of Quattrocento monuments. In addition, the expansion of eucharistic iconography was a significant factor in the sustained effects of the early Quattrocento revival.

In the fifteenth century, images of the Real Presence were widespread and they continued to grow in number and variety. Northern and Italian artists had similar sacramental concerns, but the specific forms utilized were based on their respective visual traditions; the artists of Italy dug deep into their own visual heritage to find new and more potent means of expression. This study will explore these extraordinary circumstances and, further,

show that monuments with the most profound impact on the tide of classicism can be linked to the presence of the Corpus Domini.

In Italy, the fashioning of all types of sacred images to conform to the classicizing model suited not only the commune of Florence, but other regions as well; clearly the formulation of objects for Christian ritual usage had a complex motivation. Thus, the acceptability of the new classicism must have been linked to ideas that transcended purely regional interests. Indeed, the revival of classicism had a number of incentives that have not been acknowledged in the literature and which will be explored in this dissertation. In addition, the initial impetus for the use of classical models in liturgical furnishings was not limited to, or even predicated on, large-scale architecture. Instead, this study will show that small-scale funerary monuments played an essential role in the formulation of Renaissance style and meaning. The dissemination and widespread acceptance of classicism was dependent on the Christian interpretation of the style.

A number of monuments will be examined, but it is not the intention of this study to present a catalogue of Sacrament tabernacles in the fifteenth century. The incentives for the creation of this new category of monument, as well as the relationship to other church furnishings in the Renaissance, will be explored.

sacrament tabernacles in the early fifteenth century were not minor monuments, nor were they merely adjunct to an overall antique revival. Instead, it will demonstrate that receptacles for eucharistic reservation were pivotal monuments in Quattrocento Italy, far more momentous and influential in the larger scheme of artistic production than has been acknowledged.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF HOST RESERVATION AND THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF EUCHARISTIC DEVOTION

Most of the major sculptors of Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century, including Donatello, designed at least one wall tabernacle of the Sacrament (Figure 1). The standard form these receptacles took was that of an antique aedicula, framed by pilasters and decorated with various motifs from a classical vocabulary.⁸ Even the rarer free-standing ciboria in Italy used the same basic language. Although there was a steady visual and iconographic evolution of Host receptacles throughout the Quattrocento, their format continued to include a classicizing architectural framework with a sculptural program explicating the eucharistic theme. Despite some pivotal studies, in particular those of Caspary,⁹ the importance of these

⁸ See especially Chapter Three of this study for a discussion of the specific category of monuments from which these motifs were taken and a discussion of contemporary attitudes toward ancient monuments. Although this study will deal with the revival of ancient Roman sculptural and architectural styles in central Italy, the specific vocabulary accepted in modern-day scholarship is not always applicable. Not only are categories such as Antique, Classical, and Early Christian problematic because they are modern historical and stylistic designations, but they also represent concepts foreign to western European thought of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁹ Fundamental to any study of Host tabernacles is Caspary's, Das Sakramentstabernakel bis zum Konzil von Trient of 1969 (a publication of his 1964 Ph.D. dissertation, see note 2 above). By the same author see

monuments in the broader picture of fifteenth-century art has been largely overlooked by scholars.

The fully evolved tabernacle of the Sacrament in the quattrocento is the end-product of a visual tradition with roots that can be traced to earlier notions of the protection of the Host.¹⁰ Consecrated Hosts were intended in early Christianity to be kept in a way that emphasized their fundamental difference from any other artifact.¹¹ They were to be consumed by priests, servers and, on such special occasions as Easter, by the communicating laity, and were occasionally taken out on visitations of the

also "Tabernacoli quattrocento meno note," Antichità viva, II, 1963, 39-47 and "Ancora sui tabernacoli eucaristici del Quattrocento," Antichità viva, III, 1964, 26-35. In addition, Jack Freiberg's unpublished master's thesis ("The Tabernaculum Dei: Masaccio and the 'Perspective' Tabernacle," Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1974) makes an important contribution to the understanding of the symbolic use of perspective in fifteenth-century wall tabernacles. Indispensable studies also include Felix Raible, Der Tabernakel einst und jetzt, Freiberg im Breisgau, 1908; E. Maffei, La réserve eucharistique jusqu'à la Renaissance, Brussels, 1942; and Joseph Braun, Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung, 2 vols., Munich, 1924.

¹⁰ See Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 3f, 101f and Yrjö Hirn, The Sacred Shrine: A Study of the Poetry and Art of the Catholic Church, London, 1958 (first published in Swedish in 1909; first English edition, 1912), 111-168.

¹¹ The earliest reference to reservation is in the Apostolic Constitution of Hippolytus (c. 215 C.E.): "Omnis autem festinet ut non infidelis gustet de eucharistia, aut ne sorix aut animal aliud, aut ne quid cadeat et pereat deo eo," (Bernard Botte, ed., Sources chrétiennes, 11, 2nd ed., Paris, 1968, 120). On the reservation of the species in the Middle Ages see especially Lawrence Koster, De custodia sanctissimae eucharistiae, Rome, 1940, 3-96 and Daniel Cahill, The Custody of the Holy Eucharist, Washington, D.C., 1950, 3-18.

sick, for some healing and blessing rituals, and for use in the Easter sepulchre.¹² Treatises on the mass and synodal legislation limited the period of reservation of a consecrated Host to seven days; on the eighth day it was to be replaced by fresh Hosts.¹³ It is incumbent on any study of these monuments to trace their intellectual and visual heritage and to examine the essential place of eucharistic ideas in Renaissance culture as well as in sacrament tabernacles.

Early Reservation and the Theology of the Corpus Christi

The True Presence is a central concept in Catholic teaching, but the reservation of the Body of Christ achieved artistic prominence relatively late in the

¹² The issue of lay communion has caused considerable controversy. There is conflicting evidence regarding its frequency, and the subject should be dealt with cautiously. What is evident is that customs regarding the frequency of communion were determined by a number of factors such as geographic location, epoch, and individual piety. In addition, social standing may have helped to determine the frequency of communion and access to the Host. On these issues see, see Peter Browe, De frequentia communione in ecclesia occidentali usque ad annum c. 1000, Rome, 1932. For the devotion to the Eucharist outside of the liturgy see Nathan Mitchell, Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist Outside the Mass, New York, 1982. The call for frequent communion was common in the fifteenth century. Such diverse figures as the German mystic, Meister Eckhart, Bernardino da Siena, and Nicholas of Cusa were advocates of regular lay communion; relevant writing and sermons will be examined in conjunction with tabernacles in this study.

¹³ See also Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, who discusses the issue of the purity of the Host and the acceptable duration of storage.

history of Christianity.¹⁴ Portability characterized many Medieval eucharistic vessels, and indeed even when monumental tabernacles finally came to be utilized, small containers continued to hold the Host within the larger receptacle. The containers that made direct contact with the Host generally took the form of small boxes or "pyxes" and, by the fourteenth century, so-called "ciboria," footed pyxes that resemble lidded chalices (Figures 2 and 3).¹⁵

¹⁴ Medieval eucharistic vessels of various types were sumptuously crafted, but monumental forms of reservation were not standard in Italy until the fifteenth century. Receptacles were created to prepare, serve, convey, and reserve the bread and wine of the Sacrament. The vessels that held the sacred species took a number of forms according to these specific functions; pyxes (of various types), chalices, cruets, patens, eucharistic doves, and monstrances were all important in the focus on the Sacrament. Among the most useful studies of these receptacles, in addition to the sources already cited, see Joseph Braun, Das christliche Altargerät in seinem Sein und in seiner Entwicklung, Munich, 1932 and Archdale A. King, Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church, New York, 1965. See S.J.P. van Dijk and J. Hazelden Walker, The Myth of the Aumbry: Notes on Medieval Reservation, Practice and Eucharistic Devotion, London, 1957, 23ff for an excellent discussion of the scholarly disagreement about the reservation of the Host.

¹⁵ There were many types of vessels to contain, serve, and display the Eucharist including those cited above in note 14. When discussing the eucharistic receptacles of the Middle Ages, the terms "pyx" and "ciborium", are inherently confusing since they both served the same function. Both types were used to store the Host before and after the mass. As Thomas D. Kaufman notes in his essay on "Pyxes and Ciboria" in the exhibition catalogue, Eucharistic Vessels of the Middle Ages (Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1975, 65-71, note 1), even Braun's terminology is misleading (Altargerät, 280-285) since he uses the word "Ziborium" for all types of Host receptacles. Tracing references to them in the west only to the ninth century, Kaufman discusses the term pyx, or pyxis as the Latin transliteration of the Greek word for a boxwood receptacle, or box. Pyxes had a number of uses, both secular and sacred, and

While early Medieval customs dictated that Hosts were to be kept on a paten in the vestry,¹⁶ the ninth century saw a series of directives concerning boxes meant to contain the Eucharist, among other sacred objects. From the late twelfth and early thirteenth century it is clear that the accepted mode of reservation was in lockable vessels, both before and after consecration.¹⁷ The decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 regarding reservation probably echo what had become an accepted idea; the Host should be kept safe, clean, and reflecting the honor it deserved. Extant pyxes clearly demonstrate that they were meant to be closed and locked (see Figure 2). However, documents mention a number of forms for the containers of the Eucharist, sub-types of pyxes. These include the very early references to a capsa, a box used

were not confined to eucharistic usage in churches. They functioned as reliquaries, holy oil receptacles, and incense containers. Other names for eucharistic containers include columba (eucharistic dove), arca, canistrum vimincum, christmal, repositorium, theca, custodia, cuppa, bustia, and tabernaculum. By the fifteenth century, tabernaculum came to be the most widely used term in Italy for a large receptacle.

¹⁶ According to Hirn (Sacred Shrine, 151-152), although the custom was adopted of consecrating more Host wafers than were needed at one time during the first centuries of Christianity, there is no proof that these were actually kept in the church during this period. Both priests and laity took consecrated the Host home with them, "that they might make a last communion if they were surprised by enemies" (p.15, note 1). During times of persecution, the Host was hidden. However, at least as far back as Constantine's official recognition of Christianity, the Host was kept in containers in the church.

¹⁷ Van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 23ff.

to transport the Host to the altar, as well as reservation in a turris or tower.

Manuscript illuminations often display the tower variety, which looks like a tall cylinder. The shape of this type of pyx was particularly connected to the form of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and, in addition, was identified with the Virgin, the "tower of Ivory."¹⁸ The shutters of an unusual reliquary, attributed to Guido da siena, represents a tower pyx held by St. Clare, who repelled the Saracens with the power of the Host (Figure 4 and 4a). This reliquary tabernacle was made to hold the turris used by St. Clare for the miraculous event and can

¹⁸ Archdale A. King, Liturgies of the Past, Milwaukee, 1959, 148-149. Van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 27-31) discuss the turris as one of the earliest types, used generally from the sixth century onwards. they were often made of metal or ivory. The symbolic link to the Holy Sepulchre derives from the Explanation of the Gallican Mass, which states, "The Body of the Lord is carried in towers because the tomb of the Lord was cut out of the rock in the shape of a tower." (The reference is actually to the chapel built over the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, but the shape was common knowledge in the Middle Ages.) In regard to this similarity, Van Dijk and Walker (Myth, 30) state that "Even the peculiar change in the conical form of the lid is often to be found in the petal-like roofs on the ivories.... The simpler and purely conical shape of the lid is abundantly testified in pyxes and caskets of later centuries....the purity and whiteness of ivory was much favoured...this preference is preserved in the litany of the blessed Virgin, who is invoked as the Tower of Ivory." The symbolic links among eucharistic vessels, the Virgin, and the tomb of Christ will be explored throughout this study.

thus be considered one of the first tabernacles made to preserve the relic of a Host miracle.¹⁹

Hosts were generally kept in a pyx or "ciborium" and frequently made of precious metal,²⁰ often with an inner section made of ivory or copper in which holy substances

¹⁹ For a discussion of the shutters see James Stubblebine, Guido da Siena, Princeton, 1969. Tabernacles for Host miracles will be discussed in chapters three and four of this study. It is important here to establish a working vocabulary for Host receptacles. There has been much confusion in the literature not only because of the variety of names given to receptacles of the Sacrament, but also because these names tend to overlap one another when applied to different types of monuments, even when those monuments were not designed to hold the consecrated Host. The term "ciborium" before the fourteenth century had two related meanings. First, it is the designation for a cloth canopy or permanent architectural baldachin over the altar and, second, it also refers to a portable covering for a pyx meant to be placed on the altar or suspended above the altar (see discussion p. 16-17 below). Van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 38-39) point out that by the thirteenth century the term appears in the eucharistic ceremonial of the Augustinians and refers to the outer casing enshrining the pyx with the Sacrament. After the Dugento its meaning is more ambiguous; it has been used to designate footed pyxes of the late Middle Ages and in the fifteenth century to refer to monumental free-standing containers for the Host. This study will designate the differing Quattrocento Host containers such as "wall tabernacles for the Sacrament" and "free-standing ciboria" according to visual type. Any other types will be clearly delineated.

²⁰ Although Church authority in the thirteenth century finally attempted to regularize the materials of the containers, citing precious metal as particularly appropriate, other types continued to be used. See Maffei, Réservation eucharistique, 38-40 and Braun, Altargerät, 294-296. Kaufman ("Pyxes and Ciboria," 67, note 13) citing E. Martene, Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum (Paris, 1717, vol. IV, col. 893), on the decrees of the Synod of Meaux, shows that while Odo of Paris made the first such injunction c.1200, it was later repeated by synodal statutes in 1245.

such as oil and chrism were also reserved.²¹ Small containers were placed on or near the altar.²² Like St. Clare's turris, the Host could also be placed in a larger box or movable "tabernacle", an aumbry or wall cupboard, or could even be placed in an opening in the stem of the altar (Figure 5).²³

²¹ There are, however, a number of references to pyxes made of various materials including wood, ivory, onyx, tin, silver, and occasionally gold. For these vessels see King, Eucharistic Reservation, *passim*. See also Bernhard Bischoff, ed., Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse, I, Munich, 1967, *passim*. Kaufman, ("Pyxes and Ciboria", 65, note 4) mentions other substances in addition to those frequently used. Van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 39) cite provincial statutes, including those of Bergamo and Ravenna in 1311, that insist on the Eucharist and holy oils being kept in a vessel or place which could not easily be removed. There is also evidence in northern Europe of cupboards in the wall that could be closed and locked, used as a sacrarium for holding the Eucharist, the holy oils, and other vessels (Myth, 42). Moreover, individual Medieval churches were not limited to reservation of only one type; records indicated that the Eucharist could be contained in different vessels for separate purposes, such as viatic pyxes to take the Host to the sick.

²² Another important type in northern Europe, in the late Middle Ages, was the Sacrament house fixed to the ground and usually built at the side of the altar. As van Dijk and Walker have shown (Myth of the Aumbry, 22ff.) Innocent III's decree, Sane, regarding the reservation of the Sacrament, does not necessarily imply reservation exclusively in wall cupboards or by suspension, as was previously believed to be the case in Italy (see for example Raible, Tabernakel, 68ff and Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, Westminster, 1945, 35). See also Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 153.

²³ See Braun, Christliche Altar, 624-626 and van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 38-39. Kaufman ("Pyxes and Ciboria," 66-67, note 15) cites the Synod of Meaux in regard to pyxes placed within the altar: "In pulchriori loco vel parte altaris cum summa diligentia et honestate sub clavi, si possit fieri, sacrosanctum corpus domini custodiatur." The imagery on this kind of altar relates specifically to the Eucharist, although its forms are derived from antique funerary monuments. See Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this study for a more extensive discussion of the iconography

In churches where the altar was crowned by a ciborium roof - an architectural baldachin - the shrine for the holy reserve was suspended over the Mass-table as a "suspensorium" (Figure 6 and 6a), inaccessible to any blasphemous approach.²⁴ William Durandus, Bishop of Mende, established for posterity the typological significance of this kind of reservation and, by extension, other types of ciboria. In his late thirteenth-century treatise on the symbolism of church furnishings, the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, Durandus not only discusses the multiple meanings of the altar, but also the meaning of objects associated with it, particularly the written Law, the Word of God. According to Exodus, he explains in his chapter on altars, the stone tablets of the written Law were preserved in the "Ark of the Testament."²⁵ Durandus compares the Ark of the Old

of eucharistic reservation and antique funerary monuments.

²⁴ Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 153. For a discussion of the various placement of containers see Braun, Der Christliche Altar, I, 624ff.

²⁵ Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, Chapter 2 (the translation of Durandus for this section is from the The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments (A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divorum Officiorum), London, 1843, reprinted New York, 1973). Durandus begins this chapter on the Christian altar with a discussion of its origins, in Section 1 he states:

The Altar hath a place in the church on three accounts, as shall be said in speaking of its dedication. We are to know that Noe first, then Isaac and Abraham and Jacob made as we read, Altars: which is only to be understood of stones set upright, on which they offered and slew the victims and burnt them with fire laid beneath them....From these of the ancient fathers, the Altars of

Testament which held the Law, to the container for the Host, stating that in imitation of the "mercy-seat" over the Ark or Tabernacle of the Testimony some churches, "have over the Altar an Ark or Tabernacle, in which the Body of the Lord and relics are preserved."²⁶

Further, Durandus records the articles believed at that time to have been placed in the Old Testament Ark during the Early Christian epoch. Stating that in the time of St. Sylvester the emperor Constantine built the Lateran in which he placed the Ark of the Testament and the gold menorah, "which the Emperor Titus had brought from Jerusalem," he lists the precious items in the Ark of the Covenant, including: the Tables of the Testimony, the rod of Aaron, manna, barley loaves, the golden pot, the seamless garment, a garment of St. John the Baptist, and the scissors with which the hair of St. John the

the moderns have their origin.

Durandus subsequently notes the manifold types and symbolic meanings of the altar and then proceeds to discuss the Christian altar in relation to the Old and New Covenants.

²⁶ Ibid., Section 5. Durandus is explicit about the fact that the Host was reserved along with other sacred objects. (This issue of multiple reservation will be discussed in regard to Quattrocento receptacles and Host iconography in the succeeding chapters of this study.) He likens the reservation of the Host and relics to the Old Testament ark; stored with the tablets was the golden pot full of manna, as testimony to the fact that God had "given the Children of Israel bread from Heaven." Moreover, he also includes the rod of Aaron, as testimony that "all power is from God," as well as the Second Tables of the Law, as "testimony of the covenant in which they had said, ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO." (For the text of Section 5, see note 27 below.)

Evangelist was shorn.²⁷ The Bishop's list is particularly noteworthy for its combination of items representing the old and New Testaments. This union of objects demonstrates the relationship between the original Old Testament covenant with God and the New Covenant.

In addition, Durandus clarifies the relationship among the altar, the Gospel, and the Host saying that man

²⁷ Ibid.

Section 5:

It is written in Exodus, that in the Ark of the Testament or of the Testimony the Witness was laid up: that is, the Tables [tablets] on which the Law was written: and it is said that the Testimony was there laid up, because it was a bearing witness that the law imprinted on our hearts by nature God had re-imprinted by writing. Also, there was laid up the golden pot full of manna, for a testimony that He had given the Children of Israel bread from Heaven. And the rod of Aaron, for a testimony that all power is from God. And the Second Tables of the Law, in testimony of the covenant in which they had said, ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO. And on these accounts it is called the Ark of the Testimony or Testament; and also the Tabernacle of the Testimony thence deriveth its title. But over the Ark was made a Mercy seat: of which we shall speak in the proeme of the fourth Book. In imitation whereof some churches have over the Altar an Ark or Tabernacle, in which the Body of the Lord and relics are preserved. The Lord also commanded that a candlestick should be made of beaten pure gold. It is written in the third Book of Kings, that in the Ark of the Covenant was nothing else than the two Tables of stone which Moses put therein in Horeb: when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel in the day that they came out of the Land of Egypt.

Section 6:

And note that in the time of S. Silvester, Pope, Constantine the Emperor built the Lateran church, in which he placed the Ark of the Testament, which the Emperor Titus had brought from Jerusalem, and the golden candlestick with his seven branches. In which Ark are these things: the rings and staves of gold: the Tables of the Testimony: the rod of Aaron: manna: the reed: a garment of S. John Baptist, and the scissors with which the hair of S. John the Evangelist was shorn.

"must have an Altar, whereon rightly to offer and rightly to distribute....It behoveth also man to have a table, when he may take the bread of the Word of God...."²⁸ This equation of the New Testament gospel and the Eucharist was clearly manifested in the visual arts as well. For example, an early fourteenth-century manuscript illumination shows Christ in majesty seated between two altars (Figure 7): the altar with the tablets of the Old Law is paralleled to an altar holding a eucharistic

²⁸ Ibid., Sections 7 and 8.

Man, if he hath an Altar, a Table, a candlestick, and an Ark, he is the Temple of God. He must have an Altar, whereon rightly to offer and rightly to distribute. The Altar is our heart, on which we ought to offer. When the Lord commandeth in Exodus: THOU SHALT OFFER BURNT OFFERINGS ON MINE ALTAR. Since from the heart words, set on fire of charity ought to proceed....

It behoveth also man to have a table, when he may take the bread of the Word of God. By the table we understand Holy Scripture, concerning which the Psalm, THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES. That is, Thou has given me Scripture against the temptations of the devil. This table then we must have, that is, must lay up in our minds, that thence we may take the Word of God. Of the deficiency of this bread saith Jeremiah: THE LITTLE ONES SOUGHT BREAD, AND THERE WAS NONE TO BREAK IT UNTO THEM. It behoveth man likewise to have a candlestick, that he may shine with good works.

In written communication Dr. Gary Macy has reminded me that the "bread of the Word of God" in Durandus' usage means the gospel (the New Law) and that the Bishop makes a parallel to the tablets of the Old Law (see discussion below); "breaking the bread" often was used as a metaphor for reading the gospel in the Middle Ages. However, the close association between the Host, the "Word made Flesh" and the gospel, the "bread of the Word of God," makes more than one level of meaning probable.

chalice with a Host wafer, clearly representing the New Law.

Durandus also compares the material altar of the church to the symbolic altar within the virtuous Christian. Further, regarding the ability to commune with God, he establishes a metaphorical connection among the believer, the altar table, and the "table" or tablet of the Testament. The prerequisite for partaking of the New covenant, according to Durandus, is the knowledge and acceptance of the Old Covenant. Humankind must become themselves the keeper or tabernacle of the faith:

This table then we must have, that is, must lay up in our minds, that thence we may take the Word of God....Man must also have an Ark....For in the Tables of the Law were written the commands which pertain to the Love of God. Therein must also be the manna of Divine Sweetness: that we may TASTE AND SEE HOW GRACIOUS THE LORD IS: FOR IT IS GOOD TO HAVE TO DO WITH HIM. According to that proverb of the prudent woman, SHE TASTED AND SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD."²⁹

²⁹ Ibid., Verse 10.

Man must also have an Ark. Now arca is derived from arcendo: discipline therefore, and regular life may be called the Ark; by which crimes are driven away (arcentur) from us. Now in the Ark were the Rod, the Tables, and the Manna: because in the regular life there must be the Rod of Correction, that the flesh may be chastised; and the Table of Love, that God may be loved. For in the Tables of the Law were written the commands which pertain to the Love of God. Therein must also be the manna of Divine Sweetness: that we may TASTE AND SEE HOW GRACIOUS THE LORD IS: FOR IT IS GOOD TO HAVE TO DO WITH HIM. According to that proverb of the prudent woman, SHE TASTED AND SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. Therefore, that we may be the Temple of God let us have in ourselves and Altar of Oblation, lest we appear empty in His Presence, according to that saying, THOU SHALT NOT APPEAR EMPTY BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF THY GOD: let us have a table for refectio lest we faint, through hunger, in the way:

Durandus' emphasis on the manna cannot be seen in any light except that of the prefiguration of the Host, the sacrifice of the New Covenant. The New Ark, or tabernacle, would hold the consecrated eucharistic bread, the Body of the Lord, the Word of God made Flesh, just as the Ark of the Old Testament held the Word of God on the "tables". Significantly, Durandus remarks that the Christian altar can symbolize Christ himself, with the clear linguistic implication that the Word of God received by Moses and inscribed on the stone tablets, is parallel to the body of Christ - the Word made Flesh of the New Testament (see Figure 7). Thus the tabernacle suspended over the altar, containing the Host and relics of the saints, functioned as a visual reminder of the New Covenant with the Lord that is sustained by the ritual sacrifice of the mass and by partaking of the Sacrament.

The doctrinally central position of the Eucharist in the Church is crucial to our understanding of the growing

as saith the Evangelist, IF I SEND THEM AWAY EMPTY, THEY WILL FAINT IN THE WAY: a candlestick by good works that we be not idle, as he saith in Ecclesiasticus, IDLENESS HATH TAUGHT MUCH MISCHIEF: let us have an Ark that we be not as sons of Belial, that is, undisciplined, and without the yoke: for discipline is necessary, as the Psalmist teacheth, saying, BE INSTRUCTED, LEST HE BE ANGRY. Concerning which, and other ornaments, we shall speak in the following chapter.

With a typical mingling of lofty and mundane meanings, Durandus discusses the steps up to the altar, citing Job, the Psalms, and Exodus, "NEITHER SHALT THOU GO UP BY STEPS TO MY ALTAR, THAT THY NAKEDNESS BE NOT DISCOVERED THEREON. For perhaps the ancients did not as yet use trowsers."

visual emphasis on its containers. For many centuries, the Host was generally understood to mean solely the spiritual and symbolic body of Christ.³⁰ However, an important shift in emphasis, which had been under theological discussion since the ninth century, radically enhanced the meaning of the Eucharist. The Host was no longer seen merely as representative of the symbolic body. Instead, the actual physical presence of the incarnate God was believed to reside in the wafer.³¹ The Catholic church edifice thus not only contained the spirit of God during ritual reenactment, but also accommodated him continuously in corporeal form. It is this fact that forms a foundation for understanding the specific meanings of the new Quattrocento tabernacles.

By the time of the 1215 Lateran Council, concern over the form of receptacles was prevalent enough for Pope Innocent III to make a special call for protection of the Host.³² Hans Caspary, in the first study to categorize Renaissance Sacrament tabernacles, reasons that their

³⁰ For a further discussion of the history of eucharistic theology, see below, this chapter.

³¹ See Macy, "The Dogma of Transubstantiation in the Middle Ages," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XXXV, 1994 (forthcoming). Dr. Macy generously provided me with the manuscript of this article. See also Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," 27 and Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 101.

³² See Raymond Foreville, Latran I, II, III, et Latran IV, Paris, 1965, 357. Many subsequent councils repeated this demand. See Braun, Der christliche Altar, who also cites the synodal rules concerning the Host. See also Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 10f.

eventual immurement within the fabric of the church wall was in response to this frequently voiced concern.³³ However, it should be noted that this form of recessed tabernacle may be considerably older than the 1215 Lateran Council. Aumbries, both in the form of open recesses in church walls used to display the consecrated Host in a pyx, and in the form of cupboards with doors that could be locked with the pyx inside.³⁴ The cupboards eventually replaced a decorative outer cover for the pyx holding the Eucharist. In Italy, Cosmatesque forms are found in some early Roman wall tabernacles (Figure 8).³⁵ Northern European wooden aumbries in the late Middle Ages included Gothic tracery (Figure 9). Toward the end of the Trecento, decorative elaboration in Host tabernacles became increasingly more common.

The original meaning of a "tabernacle," as Durandus tells us, lies in its origins with the Israelites. Citing Psalm 11, he explains:

God, said the Prophet, is in His Tabernacle....the tabernacle is, however, more especially symbolical of the Church Militant, which hath here no continuing city, but seeketh one to come. Therefore is it called a tabernacle, for tabernacles or tents belong to soldiers: and this saying, God is in His Tabernacle,

³³ Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 3.

³⁴ Van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 40 and Raible, Das Tabernakel, 172ff. See also Barbara Lane, The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish painting, New York, 1984, 32 and notes 59 & 60.

³⁵ See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, II, 192 and 589f., for a list of thirteenth-century wall tabernacles.

meaneth, God is among the Faithful collected together in His Name.³⁶

This statement helps to explain why monumental receptacles for the Host, in particular, came to be designated "tabernacles", although other enclosures shared in the imagery of the Church Militant.

In Durandus' time, not only had eucharistic worship attained predominance, but the feast of the Corpus Christi was about to come to the forefront of Church festivals. Indeed, the Bishop had expressed his knowledge of the feast and its origins in the Rationale. In this new devotional climate, the body of the Lord was seen as not only spiritually present in the church edifice but, among the faithful, "God is in His Tabernacle" could be taken quite literally to signify the Sacrament, reserved in a special receptacle.

Two common definitions prevailed in the late Middle Ages: the tabernaculum could refer to the veil that provided a tent over the pyx (including the dove or casket types), or to the container itself. In Italy, portable eucharistic vessels, intended to hold the pyx, were called tabernacles from at least the thirteenth century.³⁷

³⁶ Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, 20-21. Part of Durandus' explanation is based on Hebrews 13:14.

³⁷ Van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 37) cite inventories that list the vessels as such. For example, a contemporary inventory lists the items given by Pope Nicholas III to St. Peter's, "a silver tabernacle with a gold pyx for the reservation of the Body of Christ," and "a silver casket [cassula] for keeping hosts."

Earlier studies have not addressed the reasons behind the lack of monumental containers in Italy, or the sudden ostentatious presentation in the Quattrocento.³⁸

Certainly concern for the Eucharist was no less a factor in Italy than in the North. However, answers to the questions regarding Host reservation lie not only in rapidly changing and more explicit devotional concepts, but also in the challenges to Roman authority that eventually led to the Reformation.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist;³⁹ it is central to the redemptive process and essential to Catholic belief in man's ability to commune with God. Tabernacles can take a number of forms, from church edifice to symbolic container, but they are all a type of sanctuary. Like the Church itself, tabernacles enclose, safeguard, and enshrine the body of Christ in any form, symbolic or corporeal. Thus tabernacles can denote the enclosure for a symbolic visual image of Christ in the form of a painting or sculpture, as well as for the corporeal presence of Christ, in the form of the Host.

³⁸ Braun (Christliche Altar, II, 588), notes that in Italy there was an interest in Sacrament houses from the fourteenth century and cites an example from Santa Maria di Ara near Chieti. However, this seems to have been a rare manifestation.

³⁹ The word Eucharist, meaning a thanksgiving, is an important concept in Christianity. It came to be used almost interchangeably with Host, derived from ostia, the Sacrifice.

Like so many Christian monuments, these receptacles have been discussed in relation to Old Testament types, as exemplified by Durandus' treatise. The New Covenant, achieved through the sacrifice of Christ, is perpetually celebrated in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, just as the Old Testament Ark contained objects symbolic of the Old Covenant, the Christian tabernacle containing the Host signifies the New Covenant with God.⁴⁰ This study will take the argument a step further, showing that the tabernacle itself tended to adopt an integral symbolic association with its contents, and the form it took signified the process by which man could achieve an ideal accord with God. Central to this concept was a change of great significance in the decorative program of fifteenth-century Italian wall tabernacles after the 1420s; artists adopted classicizing imagery, profoundly transforming the iconographic character of the monuments.

History of the Corpus Christi

It is necessary to look back on the development and defining of the Eucharist as well as its function and significance within the western Church, in order to gain an understanding of the receptacles for the Host in their

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the typology of the Ark see Charles Rohault de Fleury, La Messe; études archéologie sur ses monuments, Paris, 1883-1889, vol. 2, 65. See Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei", 2-3 for a discussion of this kind of typology in relation to both the Trinity fresco and perspectivized tabernacles.

fifteenth-century manifestation. Among all forms of Christian worship, the Eucharist stands out as a consistent factor in Christian theology. Despite differences of opinion through the ages, this fact was clearly, if implicitly, acknowledged by fifteenth-century religious authority and manifested in a number of ways which this study will explore in the succeeding chapters.

The theology of the Eucharist changed in the ninth century and became an even more fervent point of discussion and debate from the eleventh century.⁴¹ Gary Macy, in his study of the Scholastic philosophies regarding the Eucharist, discusses the belief in the ritual of the Lord's Supper as a participation in the Mystery of Christ and in salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. The original meaning of "Eucharist", a thanksgiving, eventually gave way to the tendency to view it as a "ritual mediating the risen

⁴¹ For an overview of medieval eucharistic teachings and practices see J. R. Geiselmann, Die Eucharistielehre der Vorscholastik, Paderborn, 1926, and J.J. Megivern, Concomitance and Communion. A Study in Eucharistic Doctrine and Practice, Studia Friburgiensia, 33 (new series), Freiburg, 1963. The most thorough study of late medieval eucharistic theology is that by Gary Macy, The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period. A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c.1080-c.1220, Oxford, 1984. His study aims to "uncover what purpose the theologians of that period themselves saw in the Eucharist and, hence disclose the major metaphors used by those theologians in speaking of the Eucharist." (p. 16) For an exploration of eucharistic history from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries, particularly emphasizing the interrelationships of social usage, see Miri Rubin, Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture, Cambridge and New York, 1991.

presence of the Christ".⁴² A variety of approaches characterized eucharistic worship in earlier centuries and, as Macy says, "These different approaches continued to exist, albeit uneasily, throughout the ninth, tenth, and into the eleventh centuries."⁴³ Crisis came when Berengar of Tours objected to what had come to be the primary theology, developed in the ninth century by Paschasius,⁴⁴ which concerned the salvific action achieved by receiving the Eucharist; Jesus Christ, born of Mary, both human and divine, incarnate and risen, was physically unified with the recipient. In this view, the spiritual

⁴² Macy (Theologies, 18-20) While this devotional focus was adopted earlier in the East, as Macy states, St. Ambrose "argued that the creative Word of God caused the living and vivifying body and blood of the Lord to become present in the ritual elements of bread and wine."

⁴³ Macy, Theologies, 35.

⁴⁴ Paschasius Radbertus wrote the first theological treatise devoted to a doctrinal treatment of the Eucharist. De corpore et sanguine domini was written c.831-833. For an extensive study of the eleventh-century debate see M. Cristiani, "La Controversia eucaristica nella cultura del secolo XI," Studi medievali, 9 (3rd series), 269-292. For a very good discussion of the earlier Paschasius/Ratramnus debate see the recent article by Celia Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body in the Carolingian Eucharistic Controversy," Traditio, vol. 47, 1992, 1-36. I am grateful to Professor Gary Macy for bringing this article to my attention.

Rubin, Corpus Christi, 16-17, discusses the scholars of the diocese of Liège who tended to the "realist" view of the Eucharist. She says that, "Although never very public, nor sharply polemical, the discussion systematized the opposing positions which followed from Paschasius and Ratramnus, and examined them with the tools of dialectic....On the realist side Paschasius's writings formed a core, together with miracle tales and recent writings; on the other side, there emerged Berengar with Augustine, logic and grammar."

union, symbolized by the reception of the Eucharist, was overshadowed by the Real Presence of Christ, as human and divine, in the Eucharist.⁴⁵ Berengar took the opposite stance, claiming that only a spiritual presence was present in the bread and wine.⁴⁶ However, the Paschasian view prevailed, and after the beginning of the twelfth century it was a dominant part of Scholastic theological discussion as well as the center of the less complex

⁴⁵ Macy, ibid., 23-35. He further states (p.70) that, "The essential function of the Eucharist in a Paschasian understanding is to mediate the presence of the risen Lord to the believer so that the believer might be united to the Lord and hence saved. The image used here is biological. Just as the food we eat becomes part of ourselves, so we, in a sort of divine reversal, become part of Christ when we receive the Eucharist. Paschasius made this perfectly clear, 'we become part of Christ because we eat him.'"

⁴⁶ See Macy, Theologies, esp. pp.38-40, who says that in Berengar's view "To say that the body and blood of Christ were physically present after the consecration was nonsense, because it was apparent to the senses that no such change in the bread and wine had taken place." Rubin, Corpus Christi, 17-20, discusses the evolution of Scholastic views of the Eucharist with a focus on the linguistic context of sacramental theology. Both Berengar and his most vocal opponent, Lanfranc of Bec, were grammarians, and both used grammar in their analyses of the words of consecration, the same eucharistic words used by Christ in the gospel account of Last Supper, "Hoc est corpus meum." See R.W. Southern, "Lanfranc of Bec and Berengar of Tours," Studies in Medieval History Presented to F.M. Powicke, ed. R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin and R.W. Southern, Oxford, 1948, 27-48, as well as J. de Monclos, Lanfranc et Bérengar: la controvers eucharistique du XIe siècle (Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense. Etudes et documents 37), Louvain, 1971, 195-198, 249-325.

Berengar argued for the incorruptibility of Christ's body and its presence in heaven to the right of God the Father, and believed that "accidents" and substance could not exist separately. Lanfranc contested this view that the Eucharist was merely a visible sign of Christ's body. Even in the eleventh century, there were the beginnings of, as Rubin (Corpus, 18) states, "an insistence that what the church had to offer was something real (verum)."

didacticism of popular religious movements. Even so, there were numerous heresies into the thirteenth century that rejected orthodox teachings to varying degrees.⁴⁷ These challenges created a need for more explicit answers to questions regarding the Eucharist; questions were answered in many forms, including the compelling medium of the visual arts. The traditional language of the nature of the Eucharist was firmly grounded in material terms; a master in a cathedral school of the mid-twelfth century could thus link baptism, the word of God, and the Church itself with the corpus Christi, and answer questions regarding the substance of the eucharistic bread by making analogies to the corporeal world:

What is consumed in this form? Just as one bread is made of many grains which are first sprinkled with water, ground, baked so as to become bread, just so Christ's mystical body, that is the Church, is assembled of many persons, or grains, is cleansed by the water of baptism, ground between the two mill-stones of the two testaments, that is the new and the old, or between the two mill-stones, of hope and of fear.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the continuing challenge to Paschasian theology, see Macy, Theologies, esp. pp. 53-60, regarding the Waldensians who were concerned with unworthy clergy administering the Sacrament, and the more serious challenge of the "Cathars." The latter refers to various heretical groups influential in Southern France and Northern Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who rejected the real presence and the efficacy of the Eucharist for salvation.

⁴⁸ Master Simon, De sacramentis. Maitre Simon et son groupe. De sacramentis, ed. H. Weisweiler, Louvain, 1937, 27-28, as translated by Rubin, Corpus, 23, note 63. Dr. Gary Macy (in written communication) has advised me that the symbolism of the grain goes back to the Didache (Teaching), a Christian handbook written c.100 C.E.; he believes that the

This material terminology was particularly adaptable to visual language and, significantly, a number of eucharistic images that come to fruition in early Renaissance art have their foundation in the theological discussions and dialectic of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

Any discussion of the Eucharist should also include the related concept of the Trinity. From the time of the early defining of the Eucharist, Hilary of Poitiers in his De trinitate argued that it created a perfect unity among the believer, the Father, and the Son: "Accordingly, this is the cause of our life, that we, who are carnal, have Christ dwelling in us through His flesh, and through Him we shall live in that state in which He lives in the Father."⁴⁹ Writing about the Trinity, Paschasius expanded on Hilary's ideas and irrevocably linked the incarnate Christ of the Eucharist with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and made it clear that this connection was vital to the union of humankind with God. Extremely influential to later writers, the correlation between the Eucharist and the Trinity was firmly established.⁵⁰ In the visual

example of the millstone originates with Augustine.

⁴⁹ As cited by Macy, Theologies, 20.

⁵⁰ Macy (Theologies, 27) writes that "...despite his heavy reliance on Hilary and Ambrose, his approach goes far beyond any previous explanation of the role of the sacrament. ...the conclusions drawn from Hilary's work were Paschasius's own. The following paraphrase of chapter eight of the De trinitate demonstrates how Paschasius would make use of Hilary's

arts, this correlation would come to have crucial repercussions.

Mystical theologies, not necessarily antithetical to the Paschasian model, further modified eucharistic understanding. Most important of these is Hugh of St. Victor, who discussed the mystical union of faith and love between the believer and Christ. In his view the sacraments, especially those of baptism and the Eucharist are "signs and carriers of the graces" bestowed by the Holy Spirit and lead the faithful toward the final spiritual union with the Father. Moreover, "the outward physical presence of the Eucharist, like the presence of Jesus on earth leads us by his physical appearance to his

thought:

...If the Word had become flesh, and we truly consume the Word as flesh in the Lord's food, how can it not be justly judged that He dwells in us by His nature, who being God born man, has assumed the inseparable nature of our flesh, and has mingled the nature of His flesh to His eternal nature in the sacrament (sub sacramento) of the flesh that was to be communicated to us? And therefore in this way, we all are one in God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, because it has been shown that the Father is in Christ and Christ is in us. On this account it is that we are made one body naturally with Christ."

There is also evidence that in this period, despite the fact that there were disagreements regarding the nature of the Sacrament, that there was no particular "controversy" as came to be the case in later centuries. (See Jean-Paul Bouhot, Ratramne de Corbie. Histoire littéraire et controverses doctrinales, Paris, 1976, esp. pp. 77-99, 117-138, as cited by Macy, ibid., 21, note 14.)

spiritual existence and hence to a mystical union in faith and love."⁵¹

It should be noted that the Papacy was concerned with establishing its primacy and universality against regionalism of various types.⁵² The power of the papacy could be reinforced through conformity in eucharistic practice - specifically through the clergy as the sole source of the redemptive ritual. Thus the parochial system, mediated by a centralized authority, took the place of territorial churches which tended to maintain local traditions in liturgy as well as provincial cults.⁵³

The Eucharist became the most important means by which authority could be maintained. Two major devotional cults, that of the Virgin and that of the Corpus Christi,

⁵¹ From Hugh of St. Victor's De sacramentis, as cited by Macy, Theologies, 83.

⁵² Rubin, Corpus Christi, 12f. For a specifically fifteenth-century effort see Gerald Christianson, Cesarini: The Conciliar Cardinal: the Basel Years, 1431-1438, (Kirchengeschichtliche Quellen und Studien, vol.10), Sankt Ottilien, 1979.

⁵³ C. Violante, "Le strutture organizzative della cura d'anime nelle campagne dell'Italia centro-settentrionale (secoli V-X)," in Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo: espansione e resistenze II, Settimane di studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo 28, Spoleto, 1982, 963-1158. To a certain extent regional characteristics survived in the form of special devotion to individual saints. There is an intelligence about the allowance for these devotional foci, since the larger liturgical issues were fairly uniform in western Europe. In fact, Durandus addressed this issue (Rationale, Book 1, Preface, Sections 13 and 14), stating that notice must be taken of the variety of rites and that nearly every church has its own observances.

helped to achieve relative uniformity, despite minor variations in local worship. In fact, the cults had much in common and came to overlap in the liturgy and in visual representation, a factor which will be explored in this study.

The public adoration of Christ present in the Sacrament had its origins in popular culture. It is a more readily understood veneration and, as such, was extremely influential in artistic production. Its appearance coincided with the more academic theologies and had, to a certain extent, a parallel development. This new, popular devotion was expressed in various stories of contemporary miracles and visions that arose fairly suddenly in the twelfth century.⁵⁴ Graphically told, these tales concentrate on the transformation of the bread and wine of the mass into the corporeal flesh and blood of Christ (Figure 10). The products of Host miracles came to be revered as relics, preserved in rich reliquaries and recorded frequently in the visual arts by the fourteenth century. Concurrently, due to the liturgical changes brought about by this new devotional focus, church furnishings were altered and new types developed.

⁵⁴ The most important studies of popular eucharistic devotion are those of Peter Browe, Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter, Munich, 1933; idem., Die eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters, Breslau, 1938; Édouard Dumoutet, Le Désir de voir l'hostie et les origines de la dévotion au saint-sacrement, Paris, 1926.

Praying in front of the reserved Host is first recorded in the twelfth century, and became increasingly more common in the Dugento.⁵⁵ The Sacrament itself was evolving into the most significant of all relics, and the desire to see it became an important factor in both the liturgy and in art.⁵⁶ Monstrances were one of the most important new liturgical objects developed in response to the worship of the Host (Figure 11).⁵⁷ The elevation of the Host during the words of consecration of the mass was part of this movement and was standard practice by the

⁵⁵ Browe, Verehrung, 11-25. See also Macy, Theologies, 88.

⁵⁶ Demoutet, Le Désir de voir l'hostie, passim.

⁵⁷ See Braun, Altargerät, passim. With the emphasis on the real presence of the Lord in the Host, came a new need to exhibit the wafer publically. The elevation at mass could achieve a public viewing, but less transitory viewing could be attained by means of a monstrance which could both expose and protect a single large Host. At first, reliquaries were used for this purpose. See Braun, Altargerät, figs. 200, 231, 234, 236, and 276, and idem., Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1940, 379, for extant examples of reliquaries converted into monstrances. The relics were often maintained in the same vessel and placed in a separate compartment. In fact, early monstrances were still termed reliquaries in inventories, indicating the parallel of the Host as a relic. This is demonstrated by Braun (Die Reliquiare, 1ff.), who distinguishes between the relic worthy of veneration (dulia) and the True Presence to be worshiped (latria). See also Charles C. Kovacs in his essay on monstrances in Eucharistic Vessels of the Middle Ages, 99, notes 18-20. The oldest monstrance using elaborate architectural forms and made for the exposition of the Host is a hexagonal pyx with glazed windows. See E. Maffei, La Réserve eucharistique jusqu'à la Renaissance, Brussels, 1942, fig. 5. Beginning in the early fifteenth century, monstrances became iconographically enriched with incarnational themes, the Passion, Last Supper, the Man of Sorrows, and the Resurrection.

middle of the Dugento (Figure 12).⁵⁸ The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, particularly represented by Innocent III, sought to reassert the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, and in this effort toward a broader theological uniformity,⁵⁹ the central power of the Church was aided by the popular devotional focus on the Body of Christ.

Mendicants and the Eucharist

Coinciding with the Dugento expansion of interest in the Eucharist (and the notion of Transubstantiation given greater authority with papal approval), was the growth of the era's extraordinary mendicant orders. These radical

⁵⁸ See Braun, Die Verehrung der Eucharistie, 33ff and Dumoutet, Le désir de voir l'hostie, 37. Elevation became the rule after the Parisian Synod of 1205-1208, where it was proclaimed that the Host was to be raised after the priest, in imitation of Christ at the Last Supper, spoke the words of consecration, "hoc est corpus meum."

⁵⁹ This desire for uniformity in the fundamental understanding of the nature of the Eucharist, does not suggest that specific issues regarding the Sacrament were resolved. Gary Macy (Theologies, 140-141) contends that the Fourth Lateran Council was not concerned with repressing discussion of eucharistic theology, but the spread of the heresy of the Cathars. Indeed, he says that the use of the word transsubstantiatio in the creed promulgated by the Council of 1215 did not offer a definition of the term, as is so often asserted, but "merely included what was common terminology to assert the real presence against the claims of the Cathars." Macy's point is borne out, even through the fifteenth century. One has only to look at Pius II's arbitration of a heated discussion regarding the precise substance of the species to realize that theological debate was tolerated. It seems likely that the legacy of diversity of approach was an important factor in the continuing viability of the Church and as such, was encouraged rather than suppressed. As long as the larger framework was uniform, more intricate debate could exist within it.

groups of the Dugento appear to have been utilized by the papacy effectively during that period to promote eucharistic worship.⁶⁰ While Dominicans are most often associated with eucharistic devotion because of the writings on the subject by Thomas Aquinas and the attribution of the office for the Feast of the Corpus Domini, Franciscans were equally active in its theological development. The order of the Friars Minor seem to have been particularly instrumental in the deepening worship of the Corpus verum. The Franciscans were devoted to the idea of the Real Presence, and Francis' own words regarding the Eucharist and the priesthood in his Testament are of profound significance: "...in this world I cannot see the most high Son of God with my own eyes, except for the most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others."⁶¹ When we consider the imitatio Christi of Francis, particularly as expressed in the writings of the legend builder, Bonaventura, the most potent and most prestige-conferring form of this

⁶⁰ Particularly in regard to the Franciscans, the tolerance of diversity can be demonstrated (see above, note 59). So long as an overall structure was maintained, specific ideas could provide important means of captivating the imagination of the faithful.

⁶¹ Marion A. Habig, ed. St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis, Chicago, 1973, 67. In addition, Francis was particularly interested in the profound devotion to the Eucharist demonstrated in France and the Low Countries, and Franciscans were present in Liège from at least 1230. (See Rubin, Corpus Christi, 173.)

imitation was the miraculous appearance of the stigmata.⁶²

No Dominican claim in the Dugento could equal Francis' tangible piety.⁶³ The physical signs of the wounds of Christ - which came to be represented in the visual arts as having been wrought by a seraphic Christ on the Cross - were a version of martyrdom, as exemplified by Giotto's Stigmatization in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence of the 1330s (Figure 13).⁶⁴ These signs of Francis' ennobling imitation of the Savior were represented in art as a proof of Francis' overwhelming sanctity and resemblance to Christ. Moreover, this

⁶² Francis' emphasis on poverty, as well as his personal struggle and eventual victory of spirit regarding lepers is apparent in his Testament, but there was very little political hay to be made from these issues. Instead, the stigmata was claimed to be a unique assertion, and its emphasis central to Francis' canonization. In fact, the miracles of Francis that came to the forefront tended to be those that paralleled the eucharistic miracles of the day. For instance, the miracle recorded by St. Bonaventura of the Cross of San Damiano, which spoke to Francis while he was fervently praying, is similar to the Eucharistic miracles in which the Host spoke, felt, bled, and so on. (See Browe, Die Verehrung, passim.) The image of the San Damiano cross, as visualized in the frescoes in the Upper Church in Assisi, appears suspended above the altar, paralleling the image of Christ standing on the altar that appears in later illustrations of the miraculous mass of St. Gregory.

⁶³ A number of Dominicans tried, however; the most important example is Catherine of Siena, for whom the marks of the stigmata were also claimed. However, Francis was the only saint accorded the official right to be represented in art with the signs of the cross. See the discussion of the Franciscan claim in Rona Goffen, Spirituality in Conflict. Saint Francis and Giotto's Bardi Chapel, University Park and London, 1988, esp. 21, note 46 and passim.

⁶⁴ See Goffen, ibid., esp. 61-63 for a discussion of the origins and development of this image.

likeness to Christ was exploited in many ways in addition to the episode of the Stigmatization. In the Trecento narrative sequence of Francis's life, scenes of the saint's death are very similar to those of Christ's Lamentation and Entombment. This is apparent in a comparison of Giotto's Arena Chapel to the Franciscan cycle in the Upper Church in Assisi. In Assisi, the friars and Poor Clares (Figure 14) are analogous to the mourners in the Lamentation in the Arena Chapel (Figure 15). In the Proof of the Stigmata (Figure 16), Franciscan iconography also exhibits parallels to Thomas the Apostle's doubt and subsequent proof of Christ's wounds (Figure 17),⁶⁵ which in Byzantine Christological cycles could represent a visual stand-in for the Resurrection. The Order's claims for Francis were demonstrated in the consistent display of Francis' mystically attained wounds.

⁶⁵ In the sermons of Bernardino da Siena, a Franciscan, those on the subject of the Sacrament are immediately followed by those on the Stigmata of St. Francis (Opera Omnia, Florence, Vol. 5, Sermons LIV-LIX). See below for a discussion of Bernardino's preacher's sermons.

Goffen (Spirituality in Conflict, 19) also discusses the parallels between the doubters of the stigmatization and the doubting Thomas. In her chapter "Franciscus Alter Christus", regarding the frescoes in Assisi she states that "The first scene is based upon Bonaventure's account of Francis's obsequies, in particular the actions of the Franciscan "Doubting Thomas," the knight Jerome, who felt the stigmata in view of other witnesses and who himself later testified to the actuality of the wounds." Moreover, she cites an account (p.20) by Bonaventure regarding a cleric who doubted the stigmata and who received, consequently, graphic physical proof. The latter story echoes the many contemporary stories of the doubt of the real presence in the Host. See the Epilogue of this study for an extensive discussion of the issue of doubt and the Host.

This emphasis on the stigmata underscores the parallel iconographic tradition of the body of Christ and establishes St. Francis' close association with that essential symbolism in a unique and purely visual way.

Indeed the visual tradition of the Franciscans from the time of Francis' canonization in 1226, was derived from images of the body of Christ. One has only to look at the oldest extant image, executed by Bonaventura Berlinghieri in 1235, of the newly canonized Francis (Figure 18),⁶⁶ to note that it was inspired by the painted wood representations of the crucified Christ, both those of Lucca and those of the Pisan School (Figure 19).

Visualization of the Corpus Verum in the Dugento and the Trecento

In fact, the early Dugento is the time when crucifixes became a standard fixture and increasingly represented complex ideas in the churches of Italy - their rise to prominence is as rapid as that of classical Sacrament tabernacles in the Quattrocento. In a sense, one can attribute the ascendancy of both to a common source: the theological shift concerning the matter of transubstantiation. The liturgical focus on the Corpus

⁶⁶ The oldest extant image of Francis of Assisi is that in Subiaco, but is a pre-canonization representation. The image of the canonized Francis is the one first developed by Bonaventura Berlinghieri. See Elizabeth Ayer, Thirteenth-Century Imagery in Transition: The Berlinghieri Family of Lucca, Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1991 and Goffen, Spirituality in Conflict, 10.

verum achieved even greater prominence in the thirteenth century; it was in this century that the cult of the corpus Domini was initiated alongside that of the Virgin.⁶⁷ The large crucifixes, as I will argue, were another direct result of this new liturgical emphasis. One could view the body of Christ on the cross suspended from the rafters in a church, on an iconostases, in processions, hanging in the apse, and significantly, on or over the altar. One of the most important miracles attributed to Francis by St. Bonaventura was that of the Cross of San Damiano, who spoke to him from the altar (Figure 20).⁶⁸

In the quest for understanding the reasons behind such a slow development of monumental Sacrament

⁶⁷ In Florence the earliest celebration of the feast has been attributed to the nuns of the cloister of Sant'Ambrogio. See Eve Borsook, "Cults and Imagery in Sant'Ambrogio," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institute in Florenz, XXV, 1981, 147-202. For the origins of the feast see F. Callaey, "Origine e sviluppo delle festa del 'Corpus Domini,'" in Eucaristia: il mistero dell'altare nel pensiero e nella vita della chiesa, ed. A. Piolanti, Rome and New York, 1957, 916. See also V. Fineschi, Della festa e della processione del Corpus Domini di Firenze, Florence, 1768.

⁶⁸ The church of San Damiano was also the owner of a miraculous Host container, the tower shaped pyx which had been used by St. Clare to repel the invading Saracens, which it prominently displayed. See pp. 13-14 and note 19 above for a brief discussion of the Dugento reliquary door with its narrative by the school of Guido da Siena. In addition, the episode of the speaking cross was directly related to St. Damian, since the earlier saint had been the beneficiary of this honor as well. For the San Damiano cross see Evelyn Sandburg-Vavalà, La Croce Dipinta, Florence, 1929 and Edward Garrison, Italian Romanesque Panel Painting. An Illustrated Index, Florence, 1939, 174.

receptacles in Italy,⁶⁹ it has been necessary to reach back to see what visual forms developed concurrent with the concern expressed by Pope Innocent III (the same Pope who approved the Franciscan Order) at the Lateran Council of 1215. The most conspicuous illustrations of the Body of Christ in churches were those large painted crucifixes, as we have seen, sometimes hanging above or attached to the altar and sometimes suspended from a roodscreen as in Figure 21. In this regard, Durandus states:

In many places a triumphal Cross is placed in the midst of the church; to teach us, that from the midst of our hearts we must love the Redeemer. ...and that all, seeing the sign of victory might exclaim, Hail, thou Salvation of the whole world, Tree of our Redemption: and that we should never forget the Love of God, who, to redeem His servants, gave His Only Son that we might imitate Him Crucified. But the Cross is exalted on high, to signify the victory of Christ.⁷⁰

These crucifixes were often seen in conjunction with the hanging type of Sacrament receptacle - either a box-shaped pyx with a small canopy or a pyx in the form of a dove (Figure 22a-b).⁷¹ Thus the reservation of the Host and the visualization of the body of the Lord were displayed in close relationship. Moreover, crucifix-shaped

⁶⁹ Elaborate Sacrament houses in the north predate the monumental Sacrament receptacle in Italy. See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, 118.

⁷⁰ Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, Ch. 1, Section 1.

⁷¹ See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, 609-626.

monstrances were one of the standard types developed in the late Middle Ages.⁷²

One of the most persistent problems for Dugento scholars has been the search for a more specific precedent for these monumental painted crosses.⁷³ But the outstanding need for an easily legible image of the Instrument of redemption, in both the visual and the iconographic sense, goes a long way to explaining these unprecedented and nearly spontaneously generated images, and their proximity to Host reservation helps to explain the delay in formulating a more elaborate container explicating the Corpus Domini.

Ironically, the very impetus that propelled the figure of the crucified Christ into one that the faithful could identify with in human terms, the Christus patiens (Figure 23), was responsible in part for alternative images that were needed to replace the expression of the miraculous living death of the old Christus triumphans (Figure 24). The emphasis on the passion and suffering of

⁷² Included in the four basic types of monstrances generally discussed are the tower, disk, figural, and cross. See Braun, Altargerät, 369ff. and Lotte Perpeet-Frech, Die gotischen Monstranzen im Rheinland, Düsseldorf, 1964, 26ff.

⁷³ See Sandberg-Vavalà, La Croce dipinta, 80. For a discussion of the question of artistic precedent in Lucchese crosses, see Ayer, Thirteenth-Century Imagery in Transition. Painted crosses were sometimes used as reliquaries, especially for relics of the true cross. Significantly, Ayer (pp. 4-6, note 25) discusses the Volto Santo of Lucca in conjunction with these crosses; this sculptural image was long associated with eucharistic reservation and also functioned as a reliquary.

Christ, especially promoted by the Franciscans,⁷⁴ was an important part of the new understanding of Christ as both human and divine, and essential to the comprehension of the Real Presence. However, the image of the suffering Christ on the cross created the need for clarified images of the living and the risen Christ.⁷⁵

Increasingly by the third quarter of the Dugento the flesh and blood of Christ on these crosses is depicted with extraordinarily realism.⁷⁶ The human nature of Christ could thus be contemplated and his suffering brought home to the faithful. However, it seems likely that additional visual information was needed in order to make the dual nature of Christ explicit; too much sophisticated knowledge and imaginative ability was necessary for the contemplation of the future miracle of Christ's resurrection. In order to satisfy the growing focus on the eucharistic Christ, divine and human,

⁷⁴ See Rona Goffen, Spirituality in Crisis, 21.

⁷⁵ By the late Dugento, most crosses no longer represented narrative scenes on the apron (see Sandberg-Vavalà, La Croce dipinta, and Garrison, Panel Painting, 204ff. who explains this phenomenon as a result of the demand for crucifixes to be hung at a height). Thus the image of the Crucified had to stand for the whole sequence.

⁷⁶ In fact, the ever-growing emphasis on the body of Christ may be responsible, at least in part, for the tender rendering of the flesh of the crucified Christ in these images. Both Cimabue and Giotto, in their different manner, not only elicit an emotional response to the suffering of Christ by the realism of the painful weight of the body sagging from the nails, but also by the careful rendering of the delicate and transparently vulnerable quality of the flesh.

supplementary images were required that could explicate and summarize the miracle of transubstantiation.⁷⁷

The proliferation of imago pietatis in the later Trecento, commonly included in tomb imagery as well as some altarpieces, is related to the desire to view the Host.⁷⁸ An excellent example of this devotional focus in the exquisite painting by Giovanni da Milano (Figure 25). The flesh of the figure of Christ appears tender and soft, easily damaged; this kind of vulnerability was ideal for the contemplation of the Body of Christ. In addition, the position of the figure, held upright and displayed by the Virgin and John the Evangelist, establishes its eucharistic character. A simpler but related image can be found sculpted on the tombs of the Trecento (Figure 26). Subsumed into Sacrament tabernacles, the half-length figure symbolizing the miracle of the death and resurrection of Christ, quickly mutated into a number of images that expressed subtle variations on the theme by the second decade of the fifteenth century.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The enlarged altarpieces and fresco cycles of the Trecento emphasize the need for more graphic presentation.

⁷⁸ See Erwin Panofsky, "'Imago Pietatis,' Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des 'Schmerzensmanns' und der 'Maria Mediatrix,'" in Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag, Leipzig, 1927, 261-308.

⁷⁹ In a sense, the standing Christ holding a cross sculpted by Michelangelo in the early Cinquecento, represents the culmination of the conflated image of the large Crucifixes and the bleeding Redeemer image on so many late Quattrocento Sacrament tabernacles.

In the thirteenth century, both Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas further developed more subtle eucharistic theologies that refined the grosser aspects of the Real presence.⁸⁰ The Franciscan, Bonaventura, emphasized the physical, cum spiritual, nourishment offered by the Bread, as well as the union with and love of Christ promised by the Eucharist.⁸¹ Bonaventura's sermons were better suited to a pastoral program, however, while Aquinas' view, especially the fine point "that the species realized Christ's physical presence, but only in an invisible spiritual, and non-materialist way," was not expected to be understood by all and sundry.⁸² In the exegesis of the visual arts, the pastoral formula came to dominate, since the material language could be reproduced visibly, or as visible accidents. The issue of transubstantiation, then, for the visual arts, was very much a matter of the transformation of the invisible substance into visual reality.

⁸⁰ However, among others, Bonaventure was still prone to graphic metaphorical and allegorical explanations, particularly in his discussion of substance and accidents. See P.-M. Gy, "La Relation au Christ dans l'eucharistie selon S. Bonaventure et S. Thomas d'Aquin," Sacrements de Jesus-Christ, ed. J. Doré, Jesus et Jesus-Christ, 12, Paris, 1983, 69-106, esp. p. 77.

⁸¹ Gy, ibid., 94.

⁸² Rubin, Corpus Christi, 25.

sacramental Theology, Priestly Power, and the Quattrocento

A new ordering of the liturgy materialized in the late Middle Ages that was based on standardized procedures and mediation, part of an increasingly well-defined mystery placed at the center of religious belief.

Sacramental routines became an important part of living in all strata of Christian society, and the Eucharist increasingly became the focus of sacramental ritual and the focus of this study, the ars sacra. As Miri Rubin states, "The priest was endowed with the power to effect a singular transformation in the world, one which was vital and necessary, so the claim of mediation was developed in the twelfth century into a robust theology of sacramentality."⁸³

St. Francis' Testament forcefully expresses the power of the priesthood based on its unique association with the Body and Blood of the Savior.⁸⁴ The power claimed exclusively for priests as far back as the fourth century was overwhelming in its implications. Mediation was essential in this order of things, thus the Church as an institution could not be bypassed if redemption were to be obtained. Of course changing the material of ordinary

⁸³ Corpus Christi, 13. Rubin cites William Durandus' exposition on the functions of instruction and intercession: "Mediatores enim sunt sacerdotes inter Deum et homines, dum et percepta Dei populo deferunt predicando, et vota Deo porrigunt supplicando," Rationale, Book 2, Ch. 11, no. 14, p.97.

⁸⁴ For Francis' Testament see Habig, ed. St. Francis of Assisi, Writings, 67.

bread into the Body of Christ - symbol into reality - was not just an enormously powerful right, but also fraught with theological and theocratic problems.

Notions concerning the relationship among the material world, symbolic ideas, and the sacred were open to interpretation and thus challenge. Its sacramental characterization developed to help formulate the symbolic system under which Christians lived and could obtain salvation;⁸⁵ the meaning of the Host could be defined and reenacted publicly during the mass ritual. Both philosophical and allegorical means were used to help define the Eucharist, though they were generally at cross purposes, each took part in the development of eucharistic thought.⁸⁶

Issues regarding the nature of the eucharistic mystery were examined and debated consistently from the

⁸⁵ In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas speaks of the distinction between the ingestion of temporal sustenance and spiritual sustenance; he categorizes the ingestion of the miraculous body of Christ as the Host separately from either a symbolic or a natural act. Aquinas wrote specifically about the sacramental nature of the Corpus Christi: "Whatever is eaten as under its natural form, is broken and chewed as under its natural form. But the body of Christ is not eaten as under its natural form, but under the sacramental species. ("...illud quod manducatur in propria specie, ipsum et frangitur et masticatur in sua specie. Corpus autem Christi non manducatur in sua specie, sed in specie sacramentali," Summa Theologica, III, q.77 ad. 3, p. 153. See Rubin, Corpus Christi, 14.

⁸⁶ For a specific contrast between the mystical and ecclesiastical understandings of the Eucharist see Macy, Theologies, 73-132. Rubin's discussion (Corpus Christi, 12-35) gives an overview of the theological discussion on the nature of the Eucharist.

ninth century on, but were more concretely defined in the thirteenth century. Dominican theologians, particularly Thomas Aquinas, as well as the Franciscan Bonaventura, were instrumental in this effort. Disagreements also surfaced in regard to the exact nature of the miracle of the Corpus Christi, pitting the notion of transubstantiation against that of consubstantiation.⁸⁷

Thomas Aquinas claimed that:

All the substance of the bread is transmuted into the body of Christ...therefore, this is not a formal conversion but a substantial one. Nor does it belong to the species of natural mutations; but, with its own definition, it is called transubstantiation.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Rubin (Corpus Christi, 29-31) discusses the development of Eucharistic theology between 1150 and 1350 included an Aristotelian philosophy of matter, given moderate expression of Thomas Aquinas and then fully expressed by Duns Scotus. In this view bodies were constituted by two metaphysical principles: matter and form. A body was extended from matter, in a form which governed its particular appearance, in quantity and shape. The substance exists within these two principles, which are nonetheless separate. So the substance of Christ's body in the Eucharist could exist in the appearance of bread, as in the extension of the substance of Christ's body in heaven. Aquinas' theology posited that the whole substance was changed; his is a formulation of transubstantiation, the claim relying on God's intervention in the miracle of transubstantiation. This approach, to which Bonaventura and others subscribed in the second half of the thirteenth century, was rejected by Duns Scotus, who believed God's will was exercised to work a specific change, that of annihilation of the bread at consecration - substitution, rather than change. See also D. Burr, "Scotus and Transubstantiation," MS, 34, 1972 pp.336-50 and ibid., Eucharistic presence and conversion in late fifteenth-century Franciscan thought, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 74, 3, Philadelphia, 1984.

⁸⁸ Summa Theologiae, (III q.75 a.4) as cited by Rubin, Corpus Christi, 30.

Increasingly the Eucharist was seen in light of Aquinas' explanations, but the threatening views of intellectuals and reformers, forced theologians and ecclesiastical administrators to reiterate the efficacy of the Eucharist and the clerical role in salvation.⁸⁹ The sacraments gave the clergy enormous influence over salvation, and the Eucharist, because it alone could be administered only by priests, was the basis for sacerdotal power. With centuries of construction, the power base was bound to be defended zealously by those it benefitted.

⁸⁹ Jean Gerson in the early fifteenth century insisted that the Eucharist was granted as a sign of God, to demonstrate His omnipotence, lack of limitation, and freedom from the laws of nature. See D.C. Brown, Pastor and laity in the theology of Jean Gerson, Cambridge, 1987, 87. See Rubin, Corpus Christi, 34-35 for her discussion of the various disagreements, who states that even by the end of the fifteenth century, some theologians still found sacramental theology, particularly the Eucharist, difficult to accept. Eucharistic theology adhering to the idea of transubstantiation, as formulated by Aquinas and others, seemed to some to constrain God's free will through sacraments which were effective automatically and were thus resented in an intellectual mood of reform. See also J.L. Farthing, Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel: Interpretations of St. Thomas Aquinas in German Nominalism on the Eve of the Reformation, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 9, Duke University, 1988, pp.87-91, 96-109, 112-31, and 191-96. The practice of Utraquism, communion to the laity in both species (bread and wine), provoked a strong reaction, ultimately leading to Hus' condemnation and execution at the Council of Constance in 1415. See J. Catto, "John Wyclif and the cult of the eucharist," in The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley, ed. K. Walsh and D. Wood, SCH Subsidia 4, Oxford, 1985, 269-86; and H. Kaminsky, A History of the Hussite Revolution, Berkeley, 1967, pp.96-104.

The matter of communion with the Lord's body, however, was not simply a matter of sacerdotal mediation.⁹⁰ Instead, eucharistic theology had consistently emphasized the spiritual nature of reception. Two types of eucharistic reception had been discussed since the eleventh century, both of which assumed that the recipient actually consumed the consecrated species: worthy reception, which was described as spiritual reception, and unworthy reception, which was described as corporeal or sacramental reception.⁹¹ However, a third

⁹⁰ Professor Gary Macy has stated (in personal communication) his disagreement with Rubin's picture of an imposed and intentional clericalization of Christianity (see note 83 above). He believes that the process took longer and started earlier than Rubin's picture accounts for and that she also assumes a Church more monolithic than that of the Middle Ages. Neither the technology nor the continuity in policy was available to construct the kind of totalitarian structure necessary to impose a long-term project like clericalization. However, although I agree with Professor Macy that clerical power over the Eucharist was not necessarily intentional in origin nor constructed by a policy consistent from one Pope to another, the implications of the control over the physical sign could not have escaped the attention of powerful clerical figures; the potency of eucharistic worship was capitalized on by different popes and theologians in various eras. In the fifteenth century, the power of the central Sacrament appears to have been exploited quite intentionally by Pope Pius II. This promotion, however, was aided by a number of other religious factors, particularly the visual power of the images of the Eucharist.

⁹¹ Macy, Theologies of the Eucharist, 47 and idem., "Reception of the Eucharist According to the Theologians: A Case of Theological Diversity in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," Theology and the University, ed. John Apaczynski, vol. 33, 1987, 15-16.

mode of reception was introduced in the twelfth century - spiritual reception alone.⁹² As Macy has demonstrated:

One could receive the full benefits of the Eucharist by devotional acts which demonstrated a union with God in faith and love. Thus three forms of reception were imperfectly associated with the three elements of the Eucharist. Sacramental reception entailed reception of both the sacramentum (the species alone) and of the sacramentum et res (the Body and Blood of Christ), while spiritual communion entailed reception of the res only (a union of faith working in love or according to some writers, the Church as mystical Body). Of course, one could also receive both sacramentally and spiritually when one consumed the species in worthy reception.⁹³

Although a number of theological details remained variable, the efficacy of the Sacrament was believed to be dependent on the recipient's spiritual intentions and ability to understand its meaning.⁹⁴

In the Trecento, discussion of the visible signs of the Eucharist - the bread and wine - reached greater theological accord. Franciscan thought, exemplified by Bonaventura and John Duns Scotus, was synthesized with Dominican thought, exemplified by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Two essential ideas that had been part of most earlier discussions and frequent points of

⁹² Macy, "Reception of the Eucharist," 16.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ As Macy says ("Reception of the Eucharist," 15): "Ever since Paul admonished the Corinthians for their overly enthusiastic celebration of the breaking of the bread, Christian writers have distinguished between worthy and unworthy reception." See below for a lengthier discussion of unworthy reception.

disagreement were reiterated and integrated.⁹⁵ First, the relationship between the risen Lord and the recipient was determined by intention and faith. Second, the metaphysical relationship between the accidents of the bread and wine and the substance of the Body and Blood was not determined by intention and faith, but exists regardless of the identity or intention of the recipient.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Macy ("Reception of the Eucharist," 15-36) has traced the threads of the complex arguments involving reception. Reception of the Eucharist by non-Christians, unworthy or underage Christians, and animals (mice play a particularly stellar role), are all topics for theological discussion. In addition, the concepts of substance, visible signs, and accidents play a part in the lack of a standard belief. Ideas regarding the visible signs are especially important to this study because of the new emphasis on the Eucharist in the form of the Renaissance Sacrament tabernacle.

⁹⁶ In the Trecento, Nicholas of Lyra (d.1349), the Franciscan exegete, wrote a short work regarding the conditions necessary for worthy reception of the Eucharist, mainly relying on the discussion of his Franciscan predecessors. (See Macy, *ibid.*, 33-35.) Nicholas enumerated twelve requirements for a worthy reception: one must be human, still living, a believer, an adult, mentally competent, fasting devotedly, without awareness of mortal sin, not guilty of notorious crimes, have a clean body, not prohibited by the appearance of a miracle, have a proper minister, and have the right intention. However, Nicholas diverges from the Franciscan authority Bonaventura's assertion that the presence ceases when animals receive and argues for the endurance of the real presence of the Body and Blood, despite the fate of the species. Nicholas incorporates this Dominican theological point of view, formulated by Aquinas, into his otherwise Franciscan exposition. Macy further discusses a similar integration of Franciscan eucharistic ideas into the theology of the Dominican, Durand of Saint-Pourçian. According to Macy (p. 35) Durand believed that "only humans have the capacity and necessity of using temporal signs to reveal veiled spiritual realities, and as the Eucharist functions in just such a way, only humans are capable of reception....Only humans who understand this sign are able to receive it as it is meant to be received. Others receive only the accidents of

Although the metaphysical presence of the Lord in the signs was viewed as unconditional, in order to effect the saving power it was necessary for the recipient to understand and have faith in the Sacrament. Thus the sacramental character of the Eucharist - its nature as a sign - was essential to the theology of the Eucharist and the most important ingredient in salvation. To take the Eucharist without the required faith would be equivalent only to eating the accidents of bread and wine.

The theological consensus regarding the salvific effects of the Eucharist achieved only through faith and understanding of the sacrament, corresponds to an important method enabling the faithful to bypass the clergy in their union with the risen Christ. "Spiritual reception" as Macy has shown, was an important form of communion throughout the Middle Ages, and is significant for Quattrocento Italy as well.⁹⁷ Not only do the origins of this mode of communion correspond with the development of painted crosses, monstrances and the popularization of the feast of the Corpus Christi, Macy's discussion also helps to clarify the growing emphasis on eucharistic reservation.

the bread and wine." Like Aquinas, Durand also argued the Body and Blood remain under the accidents as long as they are recognizable as bread and wine.

⁹⁷ Dating back to the Victorines, the practice grew up of performing some devotional act in the place of actually receiving the Host. For the practice in the twelfth century, see Macy, Theologies of the Eucharist, 93-95.

The feast of the Corpus Christi had come to the forefront of Church festivals by the fourteenth century and, even earlier, eucharistic piety had rapidly attained predominant status (Figure 27). The Corpus Christi, or Corpus Domini as it was generally called, was promoted as a feast by the Abbess Juliana of the convent of Mount Cornillon in Liège by 1240; it was established as a feast in the diocese of Liège in 1246.⁹⁸ It gained approval in the form of a Papal Bull issued by Urban IV in 1264, Transiturus, and in September of that year the pope celebrated the new feast at Orvieto Cathedral; although many copies of the Bull were made, its universal widespread dissemination was delayed by Urban's death soon

⁹⁸ It should be noted that as early as the 1230s there was a ritual at Lüttich that corresponds to the later feast, as established by Urban IV. (See Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 141.) However, the origination of the devotion is most often attributed to the efforts of the Augustinian nun, Juliana of Liège. She finally reported to her confessor a vision which she interpreted to mean that the Church was in need of a feast in honor of the blessed Sacrament. The vision was communicated to the the Dominicans and to the Bishop of Liège, Robert of Turotte, who in turn reported the idea of a feast to the chancellor of the University of Paris, who did not object to the idea. The Bishop issued a pastoral letter, Inter alia mira, to establish the feast in his diocese in October of 1246. For a synopsis of the origins of the feast in France and for further bibliography see Rubin, Corpus Christi, 164-185. The presence of Jacques Pantaléon (a long-time associate of Robert of Turotte), the archdeacon of Campines in the diocese of Liège from 1243-1248, should also be noted; the archdeacon of Campines was the Pope Urban IV in 1261. For a study of the foundations in Italy see Callaey, "Origine e sviluppo delle festa del 'Corpus Domini,'" 916.

after.⁹⁹ A moveable feast day, it was normally meant to be celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday and, as Durandus tells us, by the end of the century indulgences were granted for its observance.¹⁰⁰ The mendicants were especially instrumental in its spread: Franciscans rigorously promoted eucharistic worship and, in the 1320s, the Dominicans emerged as the dominant promoters of the Feast.¹⁰¹ Eucharistic processions for the Feast also

⁹⁹ For the papal bull see E. Franceschini, "Origine e stile della bolla 'Transiturus,'" Aevum, XXXIX, 218-243.

¹⁰⁰ Rationale, Book 6, Chapter 115, Section 6. In this chapter, "De dominica I post pentecosten," Durandus writes: "Et est sciendum quod Urbanus papa IV statuit fieri festum de Corpore Christi quinta feria post hanc dominicam, et concedens magnam indulgentiam tam clericis officiantibus quam populis convenientibus ad divina, prout in officio super hoc ordinato habetur." In Italy, the first documented civic celebration of the feast took place in Venice in 1295. See E. Muir, Civic Celebration in Renaissance Venice, Princeton, 1981, 223f. For the location of other early civic celebrations see Rubin, Corpus Christi, 180f.

¹⁰¹ For an examination of the delay in the universal observance of the feast see Rubin, Corpus Christi, 177-181. Regarding the Office of the Corpus Domini, which was traditionally ascribed to Thomas Aquinas, and reportedly initiated by the miraculous Mass of Bolsena, see the discussion in Rubin, 185-195. Although the official Vita of Thomas Aquinas (canonized 1323) attributes the Office of the feast to him, there is no consensus on its authorship, or on its date. See A. Walz, "La presenza di San Tommaso a Orvieto e l'ufficiatura del Corpus Domini," Studi eucaristici, 1966, 321-355. See also P.-M. Gy, "L'Office du Corpus Christi et S. Thomas d'Aquin: état d'une recherche," Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, 64, 1980, 491-507. Dominicans, on the instigation of Pope John XXII, were adamant in attributing the liturgy to their new saint who, they said, had written it "ad petitionem Urbani." In the 1320s, the liturgy was distributed and included a mass, an office for the feast and its octave (see Rubin, 188); the legends regarding the origins of the feast, its liturgy, and the Mass at Bolsena can be traced to that era.

became an important feature of the ritual and the laity came to participate in the new Feast of the Church, often including those who had formed confraternities dedicated to the Body of Christ. Beginning in 1320, synodal decrees also began to promote processions as part of the ritual.¹⁰² In civic processions, the Eucharist was carried in a monstrance under an elaborate canopy, either on a bier or carried by a priest, a cross was carried before it, bells were rung, candles illuminated it, and flowers were strewn on the ground and worn by the participants. Sometimes children, dressed as angels, accompanied the Eucharist in procession. In Florence, not only were children a prominent part of the procession, but the relic of a Host miracle which had taken place in Sant'Ambrogio became the central part of the earliest manifestation of the ritual, as did the relic of Bolsena in Orvieto.¹⁰³

A monstrance on the altar had been the primary means of exposition of the Eucharist in churches and in processions of the feast of Corpus Christi, and a

¹⁰² Rubin, Corpus Christi, 243, 245ff. She also discusses the origins of the Corpus Christi processions in relation to Palm Sunday processions, in which the Eucharist was also carried. For an early procession in Italy, see A. Tamborini, Il Corpus Domini a Milano, Rome, 1935.

¹⁰³ For the origination of the Florentine procession in 1340 see Giovanni Villani, Cronica, XI, 114. See also Borsook, "Cults and Imagery in Sant'Ambrogio," 147-202 and Fineschi, Della festa e della processione del Corpus Domini di Firenze.

spiritual communion could surely be performed before these reliquaries for the Host.¹⁰⁴ However, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, enlarged tabernacles with explicit imagery enabled the faithful to make a spiritual communion at any time without the priest and without attendance at the altar proper and even without the Host wafer per se.

Moving out of the sacristy into the area surrounding the altar, the receptacles could serve two purposes: first, that of reservation and second, that of ostension in the form of unambiguous symbolism. Constant display in monstrances could devalue the Host and put it at risk. By the early fifteenth century, the need for explicit and orthodox eucharistic imagery was already manifest; the focusing of attention on the place of reservation was part of a complex desire to behold, comprehend, and commune with the Body of the Lord - to truly perceive the Eucharist.

¹⁰⁴ In his essay on monstrances, Kovacs (Eucharistic Vessels of the Middle Ages, 101) cites a hymn of the Corpus Christi procession that demonstrates the emphasis on the act of faith in viewing the Host and the emphasis on the words of consecration:

Word made flesh, the bread of nature
by his word to flesh he turns,
Wine into his blood he changes:
What through sense no change discerns?
Only be the heart in earnest,
Faith her lesson quickly learns

Tabernacles and Popular Piety in Quattrocento Florence

There are a number of important questions that seem never to have been posed in regard to the extraordinary sacrament tabernacles of the fifteenth century in Italy. perhaps the most fundamental of these questions regards the genesis of the tabernacles. There were compelling reasons for tabernacles of the Sacrament to have become the recipients, within a relatively brief time period, of a highly developed visualization of a complex symbolism. It is helpful in this context to turn to a more specific examination of the social and religious concerns of fifteenth-century Tuscany.

The importance of the consecrated Host in Catholic belief, not as a mere symbol but as the palpable presence of God within the church, has already been demonstrated. In addition, the desire to view the the Body of the Lord had increased in intensity with the explication of transubstantiation and focus on the efficacy of worthy communion. In the fifteenth century new eucharistic issues emerged to the occupy the attention of clergy and laity and the central Sacrament played an increasingly important role in both local and international theology. Its particular significance in Quattrocento Italy can be illustrated tangibly by examining the sermons of the enormously influential preachers of the early years of the century. Most important among these figures was Bernardino da Siena, a Franciscan who preached extensively

throughout Tuscany (most often in Florence and Siena) in the 1420s and 1430s (Figure 28). Not only did Bernardino preach frequently on the Eucharist, but the Body of Christ was also featured prominently in his sermons on other subjects.

In a sermon delivered in 1424 at Santa Croce, Florence,¹⁰⁵ Bernardino lists seven reasons to be reverent in church. The first two are particularly notable; first, the "tempio e la chiesa" is the "place of God and the dwelling of God," and second, the true presence of the body of Jesus Christ, is always in the church and consecrated at the high altar.¹⁰⁶ The sermon's

¹⁰⁵ This sermon took place only two years before Brunelleschi was commissioned to create what was surely the first Renaissance sacrament tabernacle (see Chapter Two of this study). While I do not mean to suggest a direct connection between the tabernacle and Bernardino's sermon, it seems likely that the influence of the Franciscan preacher, among other factors, created the conditions under which the first Renaissance tabernacles were commissioned. In sermons on the Sacrament and Holy Communion, Bernardino cites essential authorities, carefully provides evidence of the Corpus Christi present in the holy species and discusses the nature and efficacy of the Eucharist. See Bernardino da Siena, Opera Omnia, vol. 5, Sermons LIV and LV.

¹⁰⁶ Bernardino of Siena, St., Le Prediche Volgari, ed. C. Cannarozzi, Florentine Sermons, 4 vols., Pistoia, 1934, I, 211-214. It should be noted that Bernardino's statement also echoes the words of St. Francis's Testament regarding the presence of the Body of Christ in the church. (See above, page 18 and note 30.) In this sermon (XIV, "Del Sacrilegio") Bernardino states:

La prima èsso Iddio, chè 'l tempio e la chiesa è luogo di Dio e albergo di Dio. Altrimenti el debbi pensare e contemplare in casa sua che in sulla piazza o in camera tua. L'arme di Dio è la chiesa. Daviti profeta in molti luoghi (c) el dice: 'Iddio abita nel suo tempio'. Nel tempio per grazia e nel cielo per grolia.

subject is sacrilegious behavior and, although the preacher includes some sharp and characteristic references to the "adornamento disonesto delle donne,"¹⁰⁷ the majority of reasons given for proper behavior in church are consistently linked to the Holy Sacrament.

E ancora Davit: 'Iddio è nel luogo suo santo'. E perchè Iddio sia in ogni luogo, è più nella chiesa che altrove, e peròvi debbi avere riverenza grande e non debbi in chiesa se none contemplare e orare, e buoni pensieri avere. E contro a quelli che stanno a mercatare nelle chiese e a vagheggiare, e a cianciare, e altre disoneste cose fare e pensare, non è lecito, e ogni volta si pecca mortalmente.

Non dico dello adoramento disonesto delle donne per essere vagheggiate e vagheggiare. Tutti a casa calda se ne vanno, se non se ne confessano. Dimmi del ballare e del sonare e altri giuochi fare nelle chiese. Tutti sono peccati mortali.

La seconda ragione si è per la presenza del corpo di Gesù Cristo. Sempre in chiesa v'è o debbe essere consagrato all'altare maggiore.

Va' a l'altare maggiore quando entri in chiesa, e quello adora, e non ti porre alle figure dipinte. Fatto prima la debita riverenza al Corpo di Gesù, poi a altre figure che ti rappresentano altri santi divoti, fa' la tua divozione, ma sempre prima a Dio e poi a loro per l'amore di Dio. Non si debba innanzi a quello santissimo sagramento del Corpo di Gesù Cristo niuna delle cose sopra dette fare, e chi le fa, in gravissimo peccato cade. Isaya profeta: "L'asino e 'l bue conobbono el loro Signore nella mangiatoia" (n) e fecioli riverenza.

See also Trexler, Public Life in Renaissance Florence, New York, 1980, who cites and translates parts of the passage from Bernardino's sermon in relation to the Florentine attitude toward sacred space. Trexler shows that the sacral was attached to objects within the church rather than to the edifice itself. Conversely, any space occupied by sacred objects could take on the qualities of holy ground. The latter can be demonstrated most conspicuously in art by paintings such as Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Wedding, where the space of the domestic bedchamber and its appurtenances take on aspects of sacrality.

¹⁰⁷ Bernardino da Siena, Prediche Volgari, I, 211.

Despite the immense value of the Host as the Real Presence, Bernardino complained that many people, "...went first to some figure dear to them and nowhere else. In the presence of the consecrated body of Christ they leave the Lord to visit the servant."¹⁰⁸ This is a very direct statement expressing the need to keep the central doctrine of Catholicism in the forefront of the popular imagination.

While the first two reasons given by Bernardino are the most obvious references to the presence of God within the church, that Presence, in the form of the Sacrament, figures consistently throughout this sermon. He not only cites the fact that the angels and the archangels inhabit the church, but also that: "Quanti angeli credi che ci sieno al presente in questa chiesa? Risponderai: 'Tanti quanti uomini e persone ci sono, e dirai el vero, che ognumo à il suo angiolo che lo guarda.' Ma oltre a quelli ce ne sono parochi milioni per lo sacramento del Corpo di Cristo che c'è consegtrato."¹⁰⁹ Bernardino's fourth reason for reverence - that the grace of God is received in the church - discusses the remission of sin and exclaims that, "Il sacramento del corpo di Cristo, terribile cosa e di timore e riverenza! Che se noi

¹⁰⁸ Bernardino da Siena, *ibid.*, 212. See also Trexler, *Public Life*, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche Volgari*, I, 211.

avessimo al tempio di Dio fede e riverenza, ogni grazia giusta che ivi chiedessi ogni cosa aresti."¹¹⁰

It is in this atmosphere of worship for the Corpus Christi that the receptacles for the Host were enlarged and an explicit iconography developed. Bernardino recognized that the worshipper responded more readily to a visual image than to a purely conceptual notion. He directs that one should go the high altar when entering the church and adore it and not stand only before painted figures. "First give due reverence to the Body of Jesus, then make your devotions to the other figures which represent to you other devout saints, but always go first to God and then to the others for the love of God."¹¹¹ By stating his instructions in this way, Bernardino assigns the figures of the saints to their proper place - as mediators between God and humankind, and as beings who, through extraordinary faith, have earned a place of special proximity to divinity. He concludes this reason for reverence with the statement "Non si debba innazi a quello santissimo sacrament del Corpo di Gesù Cristo niuna delle cose sopra dette fare, e chi le fa, in gravissimo peccato cade. Isaya profeta: 'L'asino e 'l bue conobbono

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 213.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

el loro Signore nella mangiatoia' e fecioli riverenza."¹¹²

The Franciscan preacher made it plain to his listeners that it was Christ himself who leads the way to salvation and thus, in worshipping the Body, no other adoration was imperative for the faithful.¹¹³ The saints and the relics were put firmly in their subordinate position. The art of the Quattrocento increasingly reflects this emphasis, not only in the extraordinary Host tabernacles, but also in the imagery of fifteenth-century altarpieces.

Moreover, civic and religious concerns intersected. The commune was under the protection of God, and the various saints acted as mediators. Increasingly the real presence of the Corpus Christi dominated as a communal

¹¹² Ibid., Florence, 1, I, 212. Bernardino does not make clear, perhaps intentionally, the precise form in which one should revere the "Body of Christ." Although there are a number of possibilities depending on the church (the Host of the Mass exhibited in a monstrance on the high altar, a large crucifix, or a nearby tabernacle), Bernardino's insistence on the Body of Christ must have been, for his contemporaries, an obvious reference to the Host. However, the preacher may have been referring not only to the Host in a monstrance, but to artistic images of Christ connected to Host reservation.

¹¹³ As Gary Macy has suggested (in written communication), the passage from Isaiah regarding the ass and the ox may also have had overtones for Bernardino's listeners of the miracle of the ass who recognized the real presence when offered a Host by Anthony of Padua.

protector.¹¹⁴ A Florentine law of 1425 illustrates the pervasiveness of the belief in the power of the Host:

All those things pertaining to the cult of God are revered in this world not for themselves, but rather refer figuratively to God. The exception is the most precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is in truth our God, without reference to anything else.¹¹⁵

This attitude was a powerful force in Florence during the precise period when monuments like Masaccio's Trinity fresco and Brunelleschi's tabernacle for San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini were commissioned.

It seems a logical outcome of this concern that artists, religious leaders, and patrons should attempt to imbue the containers of the consecrated body of Christ with a new visual potency. With the contemporary theological emphasis on the Body, there was a need for an

¹¹⁴ From the earliest times the eucharistic ritual had symbolized the unity of the Christian community. Ordinary members of the laity in previous centuries received communion only on the feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost; in twelfth-century France, reception was customarily only on Easter. See Peter Browe, Die Pflichtkommunion im Mittelalter, Münster and Regensburg, 1940, 34-42. Important public events in the life of the upper classes were also marked by receiving the Sacrament. Weekly or daily reception was very unusual in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. Macy discusses the reception of the Sacrament as a "solemn and public declaration of faith in good standing, and like most public acts, required the payment of a fee." (See Theologies, 118-120.) However, in the fifteenth century many preachers and theologians encouraged frequent reception, not least among them was Bernardino da Siena. It would have been especially potent in Florence, because in the late Trecento the commune had been under interdict (see Trexler, The Spiritual Power. Republican Florence under Interdict, Leiden, 1974, passim), and the sight and reception of the Eucharist had been denied the whole community.

¹¹⁵ As cited by Richard C. Trexler, Public Life, 55, note 45.

imagery which could vie with the popular saints for the attention of the worshipper, as well as illustrate the rudiments of the Eucharist. The evolution of the iconography of the Corpus Domini is clearly related to this prominent concern in Quattrocento Tuscany.

San Bernardino's instruction that the devout should kneel before the only "real presence" coupled with the new decorative elaboration of that theme, served as constant reminders to the faithful of the corporeal reality of God within the church edifice.¹¹⁶ The need and purpose is clear: the worship of the Body of God in the church could be accomplished more easily by providing the faithful with an unambiguous visual image of the continual presence of the miracle of the Host.

¹¹⁶ Trexler (ibid., 55-57) discusses the power of the real presence on the fifteenth-century Florentine imagination. He states that people spoke of "going to see the body of Christ" and that moralists suggested that citizens "go see God" before starting their business day. See also Richard Trexler, The Spiritual Power, 126.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RENAISSANCE TABERNACLE: PROTOTYPES AND SYMBOLISM

The concept of a tabernacle to contain the consecrated Host had a long-standing tradition. However, in Italy that tradition was not significant in artistic terms until the Quattrocento. By the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries churches in Tuscany began to commission more elaborate Host tabernacles, as distinct from the reliquaries of Host miracles. In the sacristy of the Cathedral of Siena for example, one finds a wall tabernacle enhanced by its resemblance to a church portal; its iconography is enriched by the inclusion of saints Peter and Paul to either side of the sportello (Figure 29).¹¹⁷ The Gothic architectural features are characteristic of the era and can be found in a number of examples.¹¹⁸ While this Sienese tabernacle is not explicit in terms of its eucharistic iconography, sacristy reservation may possess a special significance.

¹¹⁷ The sportello of this tabernacle has been removed and it is used now as a Holy Oil receptacle, as were so many tabernacles after the edicts of the sixteenth-century councils. (For a discussion of the changes made by the Councils, see Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 10ff.) No documents exist referring to the tabernacle, nor can it be dated with any precision. Anne Markham Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 53, dates this tabernacle to "shortly after 1400." It is in good condition; each console is inscribed with the letters OPA.

¹¹⁸ See Schulz, ibid., 53, note 7, who mentions early wall tabernacles in Feltre, Florence, Vicenza, Castiglione d'Olona, Treviso, Rome, and Fiesole.

It can be demonstrated that the sacristy was equated with the womb of the Virgin. According to Durandus, "Christ put on His robes of humanity" within the body of the Virgin. The priest, who robes himself in the sacristy and then emerges to public view, is compared with Christ who came forth from the womb of the Virgin and emerged into the world in fleshly form.¹¹⁹ While the Virgin's womb was associated with the idea of Host tabernacles, graphically presented in Northern art,¹²⁰ there are also specific instances in Sienese tabernacles that explicitly refer to the womb of the Virgin. These wall receptacles depict the Annunciation on either side of the sportello (Figures 30 and 31).¹²¹ In both of these tabernacles the figures stand under cusped arches, the Archangel in semi-profile facing the Virgin, who we see clasping her mantle and clutching her book. Tabernacles of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century in Italy had an expanded iconography with a number of important newly

¹¹⁹ Durandus, op.cit., Book 1, Articles 37-38. The interpretation of the Virgin's womb as a tabernacle will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapters.

¹²⁰ See Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 162f, for a discussion of this iconography.

¹²¹ These two tabernacles are casts of marble tabernacles from the late Trecento in the church of S. Eugenio, Villa di Monastero, Siena. One has a later inscription designating it as a container for Holy oil. See also Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 53, note 7.

visualized associations; one of the most potent of these concerned the motherhood of the Virgin Mary.¹²²

In addition to the important concepts regarding the portal and the Madonna, certain features found on these early examples were to become standard in the development of fifteenth-century wall tabernacles. In particular, the half-length representation of the Man of Sorrows prominently featured over the doorway became a highly developed feature of most Quattrocento tabernacles, as in Figure 30.¹²³ In Figure 31, the steeply pointed Gothic gable contains a half-length figure of God the Father, holding a book in his left hand and blessing with his right hand. The figure of God the Father is represented very frequently in the upper storys of fifteenth-century wall tabernacles. Increasingly, Host tabernacles were

¹²² Mary's consanguinity with Christ can be seen as an important concept in eucharistic iconography. This and other Mariological ideas will be explored in Chapter Six of this study.

¹²³ There is a similar marble wall tabernacle in the Duomo in Montepulciano, currently in the wall to the right of the high altar. Although there are empty niches to either side of the doorway (there are marks where the figures were originally attached), a recessed half-length Man of Sorrows remains above the sportello. (The sportello is later, of gilded wood, and is inscribed "sacra olea".) See Figure 34, below. Beck (Jacopo della Quercia, 199) mentions the Sienese tabernacle from Sant'Eugenio a Monastero (the church currently owns only a gesso cast; the original was sold earlier in this century). After examining the original tabernacle, Beck dated it to the second decade of the fifteenth century. He believes that the half-length Man of Sorrows is essentially Quattrocento in form; it does indeed appear commonly on Renaissance tabernacles. However, the image can be found on Trecento tombs and its resurrectional iconography was appropriated for use on tabernacles.

coming to have a more complex set of visual and conceptual associations.

Tabernacles for the Sacrament in fifteenth-century Italy are indebted, in part, to reliquaries for their visual formula. Just as early monstrances were derived from reliquaries, the enlarged tabernacles of the Sacrament were are conceptually linked to large reliquaries altars. In particular, the miracles of the Eucharist, used so frequently for didactic purposes, were encased in rich containers. In Orvieto, especially, the corporal from the miraculous Mass of Bolsena had a long history of preservation in a large reliquary.¹²⁴ The miracle, in which a Host wafer had bled on its corporal during the Mass, was the most significant of thirteenth century Italy. The bloody corporal had been taken from the church of Santa Christina in Bolsena by the pope to the Cathedral in Orvieto. The miracle reportedly occurred in 1264 and was credited with the instigation of Thomas Aquinas' Office for the Feast of the Corpus Domini. Thus the huge historiated reliquary for the bloody corporal in Orvieto, inscribed with the date of 1337, was an important focus of eucharistic worship in Italy.¹²⁵ It is free-

¹²⁴ See L. Fumi, Il Santuario del SS. Corporale nel Duomo di Orvieto, (Ricordo del XV Congresso Eucaristico di Orvieto), Rome, 1896 and Enzo Carli, Il Duomo di Orvieto, Rome, 1937.

¹²⁵ The Orvieto program will be discussed in greater detail in this study in regard to specific monuments of the Quattrocento.

standing and enriched with a complex melding of sculpture and enamelled narrative (Figure 32). Its three-part facade imitates a portal; included among the elaborate decoration of its facade is an Annunciation. Sienese artists were responsible for the iconographic program in the Cathedral of Orvieto and its reliquary. It is likely that the Host receptacles of Siena, particularly those with an Annunciation on their tripartite facades, were influenced by the iconography of this monument. Moreover, a large tabernacle of the Sacrament on an altar, was created in the later Trecento for the newly built Chapel of the Corporal. The program of the chapel unites the tabernacle with a fresco cycle relating the history of the bloody corporal and the legendary writing of the feast of the Corpus Domini by Thomas Aquinas. The tabernacle is slightly smaller than the reliquary for the corporal and has a more simplified architectural structure (Figure 33). The artist reduced the tripartite portal to a single gable, paving the way for the classical pediment of fifteenth-century tabernacles. It is likely that the new containers for the consecrated Host were influenced by the form and iconography of these elaborate structures created in response to a eucharistic miracle.

Visualization of the Corpus Verum in the Fifteenth Century

While the Sienese receptacles, conceived in an International Gothic style, were an early effort to make

Host reservation more visually significant, tabernacles were soon completely transformed in Italy. The use of more specific eucharistic imagery was combined with the innovative use of classical forms to enhance the iconography of the Host. Moreover, the size of the new classical tabernacles, dating from the 1420s, transcends previous Italian receptacles for the express purpose of reserving the Host. This new, enlarged type of receptacle was inaugurated during an extraordinary period in the history of art and the history of eucharistic worship. Not only were the 1420s a time of intensive eucharistic emphasis in Tuscany, but the date of their appearance corresponds to the monuments we most often think of as representing the first flowering of the Renaissance.

In the 1420s and 1430s, the Sacrament tabernacle was one of the first, as well as one of the most appropriate and convenient types of monument to which a new all'antica style was applied. In practical terms for artists, the Sacrament tabernacle was a newly important category of commission, since the receptacles were transformed from small, generally visually insignificant cupboards to larger, emphatically sculptural, architectonic, and symbolically rich monuments.

The new tabernacles deemphasized the prosaic cupboard aspects of Host reservation and instead concentrated on the symbols that identified its contents as the central miracle of the Christian faith - the Real Presence. These

monuments were appropriate too in the sense that they could be considered smaller versions of the church edifice itself.¹²⁶ Indeed, the most important late Trecento and early Quattrocento Sacrament tabernacles had been formed to resemble church portals (Figure 34). Combining the ideas of reservation and ostension, Sacrament tabernacles came to include an imagery that could exhibit the meaning of the Sacrament at the same time it protected the consecrated Host wafers.

The Florentine classicizing tabernacle took this idea to its ultimate extension; by the end of the century tabernacles continued to resemble portals, but they also consolidated and synthesized the imagery of the Church and its contents into a unified, easily read image of salvation - a lofty aim for the previously small containers (see for example Figure 35). The liveliness of presentation and the enormous beauty of the carving of some of these monuments, aimed to convince the viewer of the tangibility and efficacy of the Host as the agent of salvation. Cupboard and monstrance were united to form a new category of monument. The inaugural classical tabernacles are essential to the larger scheme of the ars sacra in the Renaissance.

¹²⁶ As Rona Goffen ("Icon and Vision: The Madonna Paintings of Giovanni Bellini," Art Bulletin, 1975) has pointed out, the frames of Trecento and Quattrocento polyptychs carry a similar symbolism.

Both their air of convincing reality and their classicism set the Quattrocento Italian tabernacles apart from earlier monuments, so that the resemblance to a church portal became a synthetic part of an ecstatic vision of the Body. Rather than an inexplicit miniature reproduction of the exterior of a church, without reference to specific theological ideas about the eucharistic contents, the new tabernacles established a special link between eschatological and eucharistic imagery. With the addition of more elaborate and specific spiritual images, coupled with the use of antique funerary symbols, the new tabernacles were able effectively to communicate the idea of the corpus verum and its meaning to the faithful. While Florence led the way in the development of a new, more distinguished imagery for Host tabernacles, there was widespread devotion to the Body in the Quattrocento and the dissemination of the new classical tabernacle was rapidly accomplished in central Italy.

Brunelleschi and the Classical Sacrament Tabernacle

Turning to the origins of the development of this new type of tabernacle, one finds that Brunelleschi's oeuvre accounts for the first classical eucharistic vessel. A wall tabernacle for the reserved Sacrament was designed by Brunelleschi at the behest of Fra Giuliano Bennini for the church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini in 1426-1427.

The documents for the commission, published by Alessandro Parronchi,¹²⁷ call for a "tabernacle of the Body of Christ," the most common way of referring to Host receptacles in the Quattrocento.¹²⁸ A 1426 document records that in November of that year the Opera had purchased a white marble slab on the recommendation of Filippo Brunelleschi in order to make a tabernacle of the sacrament for the church. The same document also specifies the location of the tabernacle in the "colonna del pilastro" near the high altar. According to subsequent documents, the tabernacle, designed by

¹²⁷ Parronchi, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano," Filippo Brunelleschi - La sua opera e il suo tempo (Covegno Internazionale di studi, Florence, October, 1977), Florence, 1980, 240-241. These documents were previously published only in part by C. von Fabrizzy, Filippo Brunelleschi, sein Leben und seine Werke, Stuttgart, 1892, 23, note 2. See also W. and E. Paatz, Die Kirchen von Florenz, Frankfurt a.M., 1941, II, 406; and Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 17.

¹²⁸ Parronchi (*ibid.*, p.240) reproduces three documents relating to the commission, one written in 1426 and two in 1427. The tabernacle is first specified in the 1426 document:

Ricordo che questo dì V di novembre 1426 comprai dal' Opera Opera [sic] di Santa Liperata una tavola di marmo bianco, che pesò libre settecento venti, per soldi XXVIII il cento montò lire otto soldi XII denari X piccioli. E detto dì la paghai a' loro camarlingho, la detta tavola comperai chome mi consigliò Filippo di ser Brunellescho, per fare uno tabernacholo da Corpo di Christo per la chiesa di Santo Iacopo di Firenze, nela colonna del pilastro del'altare maggiore verso 'l (a sagrest) cimitero e l'altare maggiore di Santo Bernardo. E deto di lasciai al deto Filippo che lo mandassi a Santo Lorenzo, dielli soldi II denari VIII piccioli, presente Batista, capomaestro. In tutto L. VIII s. 15 d. 6. Andò al'Opera di Santo Lorenzo e puosela al coperto. Cominiciossi a lavorare adì 13 di magio 1427. (Archivio di Stato. C. 72v)

Brunelleschi, was executed by Giusto di Francesco da Settignano, a stonemason in the service of the church.¹²⁹ Unfortunately, the tabernacle is no longer extant, and little is known about its precise appearance, although we also have numerous documents which refer to the tabernacle, as well as to the extant base (originally 138 cm. wide) with three engraved stemmi.¹³⁰ Parronchi attempts to prove that it looked very much like the elaborate tabernacle of 1461 in San Lorenzo by Desiderio da Settignano.¹³¹

Although Parronchi's assessment is open to question and essentially unprovable, what can be asserted without hesitation is that Brunelleschi's design must have been the first tabernacle in the new classicizing architectural style. By 1426 Brunelleschi's interests in antiquity were firmly established, as is illustrated particularly by his designs for the contemporary Barbadori Chapel and the Sacristy of San Lorenzo (Figure 36). Moreover, another church furnishing designed, but not carved, by

¹²⁹ The first document of 1427 states: "Tolgliemo per scarpelatore Giusto di Francesco da Settignano avemo dalip Operai di Santa Liperata per diliberatione fatta tra loro." (*Ibid.*, 241.)

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ The San Lorenzo tabernacle will be discussed in Chapter Seven of this study. While it is possible that Parronchi is correct in his analysis, many of his conclusions are conjectural. See below for a different proposal regarding the appearance of the Campo Corbellini tabernacle.

Brunelleschi may shed some light on the style of the 1426-1427 tabernacle. The sculptor Buggiano was responsible for executing a classicizing lavabo designed in 1432 by Brunelleschi for the North Sacristy of the Duomo (Figure 37). Pope-Hennessy believes that "Brunelleschi was probably responsible for the planning of the figure sculpture as well as of the frame...."¹³²

Placed in the sacristy where the priest prepares for the mass, the lavabo is the ritual container for the water used by the Celebrant to wash his hands before the rite. This type of church furnishing has important connections to the remission of sin as well as to the worthiness of the priest to handle the body of Christ. Durandus, again, elucidates the meaning of this furnishing:

Near to the Altar which signifieth Christ, is placed the Piscina, or Lavacrum, that is, the Pity of Christ, in which the Priest washeth his hands, thereby denoting, that by Baptism and Penitence we are purged from the filth of sin: which is drawn from the Old Testament. For he saith in Exodus, and Moses made a laver of brass, with his basin, in which Aaron the Priest and his sons should wash, before they went up to the altar, that they might offer an offering.¹³³

Brunelleschi's architecture for the lavabo is similar to that of the niche on Orsanmichele commissioned by the Parte Guelfa for Donatello's St. Louis (Figure 38). It

¹³² John Pope-Hennessy, Italian Renaissance Sculpture, New York, 1985, 28. He further states that "...the equation between sculpture and architecture set up in this work was fundamental for the sculptors of the middle of the century, above all for Bernardo Rossellino (1409-64)."

¹³³ Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 39.

has an architectural frame, with composite pilasters cum wall ends, an entablature with decoration all'antica, capped by a classical pediment containing a winged putto head. Due to its function, it differs from the niche in the inclusion of a basin and relief putti on the back interior wall of the monument. In addition, the classicizing architecture corresponds more to the broader proportions of Masaccio's Trinity fresco (Figure 39),¹³⁴ than to Donatello's niche. This monument is the only extant example of Brunelleschi's small-scale architectural design. However, its early date and its status as a church furnishing redesigned in the new style are important indications of Brunelleschi's design for his Sacrament tabernacle. Moreover, its meaning within the sacristy, its similarity to known eucharistic monuments, and its size, all point toward a significant visual connection to the Campo Corbellini tabernacle. Brunelleschi's small-scale architecture would appear to be derived from the same category of monument used by Donatello for the Orsanmichele niche.

Spiritual Communion and Brunelleschi's Tabernacle

Significantly, among the objects referred to in the documents for Brunelleschi's lost tabernacle in Campo

¹³⁴ In addition, the lavabo's architecture resembles the proportions of Bernardo Rossellino's Sacrament tabernacle completed in 1449, discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

Corbellini are two slabs for kneeling.¹³⁵ The repeated pronouncements of theologians, as well as Bernardino da Siena's directive regarding the worship of the Body of the Lord - preached a year before the commission of the tabernacle - were taken literally. Much can be discerned from the the document that refers to the kneeling slabs. It is unusual and reveals the regard this tabernacle was accorded in the fifteenth century. Moreover, we can extrapolate the new, vital role of subsequent Quattrocento tabernacles from the Campo Corbellini documents.

Rather than merely an embellished receptacle, Brunelleschi's tabernacle was an object of veneration - intentionally positioned on an accessible pier and especially equipped to encourage devotion and prayer. The well-worn slabs are testimony to the veneration it excited. Brunelleschi's tabernacle represents a drastic change for Host receptacles, in both visual formula and in function. In Campo Corbellini, the new tabernacle to contain the consecrated Host was clearly used for acts of piety in particular, perhaps, the practice of spiritual communion.¹³⁶ Sacramental reception of the Eucharist, as

¹³⁵ Parronchi, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano," 240-241.

¹³⁶ See Chapter One for a discussion of spiritual communion. For a discussion of the origins of this practice, see Macy, Theologies of the Eucharist, 93-95 and idem., "Reception of the Eucharist," 15-36. I am grateful to Professor Macy for his valuable insight regarding the issue of spiritual communion and tabernacles (communicated by letter). He says that "One could make an act of spiritual communion in front of the tabernacle or at the elevation (the most frequent

we have seen, was not necessary for communion. Spiritual reception was the essential ingredient in the salvific effects of the Eucharist.

Impressive changes marked the creation of this tabernacle: its location facilitated contemplation of the body of the Lord, the imposing size called attention to it, and the new classicism would have been truly remarkable. Further, the tabernacle's proximity to the high altar, coupled with contemporary preaching directives, indicate an unmistakable call to the faithful. This new kind of tabernacle aided in the worship of the miraculous transformation of the bread and called attention to the efficacious role of communion in salvation. The constant visual reminder of the True Presence enhanced awareness of the reverence due the reserved Sacrament and would have encouraged frequent spiritual reception.

When reviewing the rather tangled threads of the commission and appearance of the tabernacle for San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini, it seems obvious that by 1426-1427 any sculpted monument designed by Brunelleschi, executed

place) or even on the battlefield or gibbet (both places mentioned by theologians). The Franciscans were particularly enamored of the theology behind the practice, and I believe in any case, that this theology would certainly support, if not lead to, the theology of the sixteenth-century reformers....I think the implications for your own work are very interesting. Brunelleschi and company were building (among other things) elaborate shrines at which spiritual communion could take place."

by him or not, would have been conceived in the new classical style. Moreover, Buggiano's Lavabo may reflect the design for the frame of the Campo Corbellini monument. There is no other record of any previous classicizing tabernacle, nor indeed, any other completed classicizing monument incorporating architectural and sculptural features, except Donatello's Orsanmichele niche, prior to the 1426 commission in Florence.¹³⁷ It is highly probable that Brunelleschi's 1427 wall tabernacle was the first of its kind, and further, that it helped to inaugurate a whole new type of Sacrament receptacle.

It is difficult to tell how decoratively and iconographically elaborate this monument might have been, but Brunelleschi was surely one of the most important artists at the time, having received some of the biggest commissions in the commune. Not only was he renowned for solving the engineering problem of the Cathedral dome and providing a design that would make Florence's Duomo the most distinctive in Italy, but his private commissions included the Barbadori Chapel in Santa Felicità and the so-called "Sagrestia Vecchia" for the Medici family in the

¹³⁷ This excludes Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital of 1419, which has an arcade based on a classical model, but no other feature which would lend itself to translation in church furnishings. While monuments like Jacopo della Quercia's tomb for Ilaria del Caretto in Lucca are important for their early use of classical motifs, more clearly architectural monuments do not utilize an antique formula until Donatello's niche for Orsanmichele. For example, the other niches on Orsanmichele all retain, more or less, the Gothic mode.

church of San Lorenzo. In fact, it appears that the San Jacopo Host tabernacle was actually sculpted in Brunelleschi's work yard at San Lorenzo.¹³⁸ It is clear that the church of San Jacopo considered the tabernacle to be an important addition, especially since it was to be part of a whole program of renovations to the east end of the church. The size of the base and the apparent low position on the wall both speak to a fairly large marble and pietra serena cabinet. Accordingly, the initiative to create a more visually significant receptacle for the reservation of the consecrated Host appears to have been intentional on the part of Fra Giuliano. Perhaps the most suggestive factor in the selection of Brunelleschi is that Fra Giuliano must have known he was commissioning a tabernacle that would be designed with the radically new classical format.

The Eucharist and the Council of Florence

The need for a more explicit visualization was established by the early fifteenth century, but an acceptable and standardized iconography for Host tabernacles was still required. Specific concerns regarding eucharistic issues were an important part of the

¹³⁸ See Parrocchi, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano," 240-241 for the transcription of the document.

theological character of the fifteenth century and as this study will demonstrate, affected the formulation of an iconography for the reservation of the Host.

Among the most extraordinary characteristics of the Quattrocento were the almost continuous councils convened to solve a range of difficult problems. The ecumenical councils were engaged, among other issues, in arguments regarding the substance of the holy species, the form of the eucharistic bread, and the effect of the mass liturgy on the miracle of transubstantiation. All of these concerns of unification in practice can be seen under a general heading of the papal effort to establish authority under difficult conditions.¹³⁹

The matter of the substance of the sacred species was perhaps the most serious in terms of its potential heretical powers of persuasion. Utraquism, communion in both species, was one of the causes of the condemnation and execution of Jan Hus at the Council of Constance. However, despite this public example, the issue of lay communion was by no means resolved at that time. The Bohemian heresy continued to be a problem for much of the fifteenth century.

¹³⁹ See Antony Black, Council and Commune. The Conciliar Movement and the Fifteenth-Century Heritage, London, 1979, 13. Black states that the conciliar movement was a reaction by some clergy against papal centralization and helped those who wished to assert the autonomy of the secular state in ecclesiastical matters.

While the Council of Constance finally resolved the Great Schism, electing Martin V in 1417 as the sole pope,¹⁴⁰ the essential questions regarding the Sacrament acquired greater urgency during the next twenty years. Many of the major players at the ill-fated (at least in terms of papal power) Councils of Basel and Pavia-Siena, were present at the Council of Constance. Perhaps most important was Cardinal Cesarini who became the papal legate to the Council of Basel and who "preached the Cross" against the Bohemian heretics.¹⁴¹ Perhaps the extent of the anxiety regarding that particular heresy is evident in the radical action of calling for a military crusade against its perpetrators, despite their status as Christians. Moreover, the rebellion of the Utraquists was not confined to Prague. In fact, one of the reasons for the crusade against them concerned their distribution of propaganda, especially within Germany.¹⁴²

It is important to note that orthodox northern European iconography of the early fifteenth century is particularly rich in images of the Body of Christ represented as the standing Man of Sorrows bleeding into a

¹⁴⁰ It should be remembered that Martin V spent time in Florence, entering in 1419 after leaving Constance, on his journey to Rome. See Gene Brucker, The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence, Princeton, 1977, 425.

¹⁴¹ Christianson, Cesarini, 11-27, 45-48.

¹⁴² Ibid.

chalice (Figure 40).¹⁴³ These images make a clear point regarding the substance of the Eucharist as complete under both species. Not only were stories of eucharistic miracles illustrated consistently north of the Alps, but Northern artists also established explicitly sacramental altars earlier than their appearance in Italy.¹⁴⁴

The other problems of eucharistic uniformity under papal authority were relatively less potent, but important nonetheless. Both were "Greek" variations on the Roman ritual and were taken up at the council held in Florence and Ferrara in the 1430s, in the effort to create a single Catholic Church.¹⁴⁵

In the Council of Florence, there was great difficulty in getting the Greeks to address issues of dogma; Cesarini represented the Roman Church in the discussions, while Bessarion represented the Greek position.¹⁴⁶ Joseph

¹⁴³ See Colin Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows in Italy," Art Bulletin, LI, 1969, 107-118, 233-246.

¹⁴⁴ For a discussion of Man of Sorrows imagery see ibid., and Marita Hörster, "Mantuae Sanguis Preciosus," Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch, XXV, 1963, 151-181. See also Barbara Lane (The Altar and Altarpiece. Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting, New York, 1984, passim), who discusses the essential connections among the image of the Madonna and Child, the Sacrament, and the altar.

¹⁴⁵ See Joseph Gill, The Council of Florence, Cambridge, 1959, esp. 100ff.

¹⁴⁶ Gill, Council, 115. Gill states, "Cesarini was the Latin speaker throughout. His eloquence, polish and urbanity impressed the Greeks very deeply and made them expostulate with Mark of Ephesus whose first reply was rough and lacking in the niceties of courtesy, because, so he said, that style

Gill demonstrates that Cesarini had to use all his powers of persuasion to get the Greeks to agree to discuss dogma. The participants believed that the lack of interchange in the past had exaggerated their differences and that these discrepancies would prove to be less important than had been thought.¹⁴⁷

Cesarini finally had to enumerate the chief differences that divided the Churches - the Procession of the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice in leavened or unleavened bread, Purgatory, the position of the Pope in the church - and left it to the Greeks to decide which of these should be the subject of debate. Nobody seems to have had insurmountable problems regarding the subject of leavened or unleavened bread, as long as it was "wheaten". East and West were left to follow their own customs. But the substance of the Eucharist caused more controversy.

One of the most important points pertaining to the Eucharist had to do with the "form" of the prayer that the Greeks said after the consecration. The issue concerned the "dominical words," the words spoken by Christ at the

was more in keeping with his character as a monk. It needed all Bessarion's charm and command of language, when he followed Eugenius in the debate, to efface the unhappy impression made by his colleague without at the same time yielding any point of the Greek position."

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. As Gill says: "To these persuasions of Cardinal Cesarini the Greeks returned always the same answer, that the agreement precluded discussion of dogma, and when they reported to the Emperor after each session he confirmed them in their refusal."

Last Supper and repeated by the priest during the mass, considered the words that effected the consecration.¹⁴⁸

In their liturgy the Greeks added a statement after the dominical words of consecration. They appeared to believe that the mystery was effected by the prayer of the epiclesis:

Moreover we offer to Thee this reasonable and unbloody sacrifice and we entreat and pray and beseech, send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts set before Thee, and make this bread the precious Body of Thy Christ and that which is in this chalice the precious Blood of thy Christ, transmuting them by Thy Holy Spirit, so that they may be to those that receive them for purification of the soul, for remission of sins, for fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for fulfillment of the Kingdom of heaven, for confidence before Thee, not unto judgement nor unto condemnation.¹⁴⁹

The Greeks replied that the dominical words effected the Sacrament and that the prayer of the epiclesis was similar to the way the Latin mass prays after the consecration:

"Bid that these offerings be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ See Miri Rubin, Corpus Christi, esp. Ch.1. The power of the Lord's words to consecrate was important in medieval discussions of the liturgy. Commentators often went out of their way to explain why other words were added to the liturgy since the Lord's words should suffice. The point that Christ's words at the Last Supper had the power to change the bread and wine was first made by Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century. On the importance of the power of the Lord's words, especially for the Waldensians, see Macy, Theologies of the Eucharist, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Gill, Council, 266.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

The issue was finally discussed after the death of the Patriarch Joseph II in June 1439, in a session with pope Eugenius, the Emperor, his brother Demetrius and the Greek synod. The person designated to explain the Latin doctrine on the Holy Eucharist was that powerful personality, John of Torquemada,¹⁵¹ who stated:

[We define] also that the body of the Lord is truly effectuated in unfermented or in fermented bread, which the words of the Saviour pronounced in the effectuating of it [bring about], and also that priests should effectuate the very Body of the Lord in one of these according to the custom of his Church, whether Latin or Oriental.¹⁵²

Torquemada passed over the issue of the type of bread to be used, although he did discuss the suitability of unleavened bread, going into some detail to demonstrate through the Gospels that it was the type Christ used at the Last Supper when the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was instituted.¹⁵³ This emphasis of the Roman Church can be seen in the many images pertaining to the Sacrament in western Europe, where the small unleavened wafer is often an important feature, see in some representations of the Institution of the Eucharist (Figure 41 and 42).

¹⁵¹ John of Montenero, the Latin orator at all the public sessions in Florence was appointed to discourse on the primacy of the Roman Pontiff which was the other important issue at hand. Both John of Montenero and John of Torquemada were Dominicans. See Gill, Council, 274.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 275.

However, Torquemada eventually reasserted his views on the awkward issue of the epiclesis, leaving no stone unturned in his argument. He cited the authority of St. John Chrysostom, St. John Damascene, the Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, "and added a number of theological reasons, among them that Christ and His Apostles used not the words of St. Basil but the dominical words, and that as the unity of the Church is founded in unity of faith and unity of sacraments, of which this Sacrament is the greatest, should there be a substantial change in the 'form' of a sacrament, that unity would be lost, and so for the sake of the simple it should be made clear where the substance of the rite lies, in the words of Our Saviour, that is, and not in the words of any Saint however much to be revered."¹⁵⁴

One of the most obvious reasons for the exertion of so much effort on the argument concerns the desire to make all Christians conform to a dominant papal authority. The unity of faith and unity of sacraments were essential to that power. In The Vision of God, Nicholas of Cusa discusses the issue of unity precisely in terms of the relation of the faithful to the Holy Sacrament: "The love of your neighbor is not enough, unless it is also in God,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. It should be noted that this standard citation of authority appears analogous to the growing place of the saints in altarpieces, surrounding a central eucharistic image. In the visual arts, the "citation" of authority plays as crucial a role as it did for Torquemada and other theologians and preachers.

and the existence of the sacrament is necessary for salvation, so that you may be incorporated in the unity of the body of Christ [the Church] and the head of Christ, for otherwise you cannot live."¹⁵⁵

Further, the issue of the words of the Saviour effecting the transubstantiation is also, I believe, an important clue in Torquemada's persuasive argument to the Greeks. The Word exuded the ultimate power, its supernatural, mystical nature extending not only to God the Father as the first person of the Trinity, but to the Son as God, whose words mandate the authority of the new covenant in the gospels. The dominical words of the rite of transubstantiation are connected in Christian iconography with the moment of Incarnation, the "Word made

¹⁵⁵ E.G. Salter, trans. Nicholas of Cusa: The Vision of God, London, 1928, 92-130. Cusa says that "...I perceive how thy Son mediateth the union of all things, that all may find rest in thee by the mediation of thy Son. And I see that blessed Jesus, Son of Man, is most closely united unto thy Son, and that the son of man could not be united unto thee, God the Father, save by mediation of thy Son, the absolute mediator." The Vision of God was finished in 1453.

Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) was an important personality to the papal court during this period. Admitted to the Conciliar college in 1432 in Basel, he participated in the negotiations with the Hussites. (He wrote his Catholic Concordance there in 1433.) He continued in an increasingly important role through the 1430s and 1440s, and was part of the legation to Constantinople in 1437 to seek a union between the eastern and western churches; in 1438 he became a member of the papal party, serving until 1448 as the envoy of Eugenius IV in the Imperial Diet. See Ray C. Petry, ed., "Nicholas of Cusa," Late Medieval Mysticism, (Library of Christian Classics), Vol. XIII, 352-388.

flesh."¹⁵⁶ For example, in book III, chapter 11, of his work On Learned Ignorance (1440), Nicholas of Cusa states:

The apostle John says that faith in the incarnation of the Word of God leads us to truth, in order that we may become sons of God...he comes finally to this conclusion, saying: 'These things were written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.' ...The words are represented in the Scriptures, the heavens are sustained by the Word of God. ...Christ is the incarnate reason of all reasons, because the Word was made flesh....The divine efficacy of this faith is inexplicable for, if it is great, it unites the believer to Jesus, so that he is above all that is not in unity with Jesus himself.¹⁵⁷

Thus in Torquemada's statement to the Greeks, "it should be made clear where the substance of the rite lies, in the words of Our Saviour, that is, and not in the words of any Saint however much to be revered",¹⁵⁸ one can also discern a similarity to Bernardino of Siena's thoughts regarding the worship of the Eucharist as opposed to images of specially revered saints in churches.¹⁵⁹ For Torquemada, as well as Cusa, the actual words of Christ stand above all other authority. Just as Bernardino directed the faithful to first go to the body of Christ as

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter Six of this study for a discussion of the ideas concerning the Incarnation.

¹⁵⁷ Petry, ed., "Nicolas of Cusa," 364.

¹⁵⁸ See above, p.90, note 154.

¹⁵⁹ As in note 70 above. Nicholas of Cusa (The Vision of God, 127) is more specific on the nature of images. He says, "The image of the Crucified, for example, doth not inspire devotion, but kindleth the memory that devotion may be inspired. Since the intellectual spirit is not constrained by the influence of the heavens, but is absolutely free, it cometh not to perfection unless it submit itself through faith unto the Word of God."

the true, unmediated presence in the church, rather than to saints, Torquemada instructs that the rite of transubstantiation can only be validated by the supremacy of Christ's Words. The notion of the true words of Christ holding particular supernatural power during the ritual of transubstantiation can be equated with the mystical power of the Corpus verum of the Incarnation, the Word made Flesh.

It is clear that the climate of the Roman Church was suffused with eucharistic awareness, and a need to make both practice and theology uniform was plainly articulated in both Constance and Florence. Not only were the 1420s full of legislation and preaching on the subject, but the eucharistic atmosphere was intensified in Florence of the 1430s, as well as in the papal court. The visual formulae for expressing the presence of Christ's body in the church was understandably expanded at this time and place. In sacred art, the Corpus verum was manifested in a number of ways, including the Annunciation, the Child, the Crucified, and the risen Christ, bleeding into a chalice. Tabernacles for the Body of Christ were fashioned in the fifteenth century to demonstrate the theology of the Eucharist and the meaning of the True Presence.

In fact, the fundamental form for asserting the authority of transubstantiation was already in place; in Italy, it came to be visualized differently than in the North, profoundly influencing the course of artistic

production. The eucharistic miracle and its salvific effects could be articulated, as I will demonstrate, in the choice of classical architectural and sculptural motifs, as expressive, in part, of the link with the patriarchal authority of early Christianity.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN MEANING AND THE ALL'ANTICA STYLE

Liturgical sculpture in Tuscany was transformed in the third decade of the fifteenth century and, as this study will demonstrate, their iconography was also irrevocably altered. Essential to eucharistic worship, Host tabernacles were also among the monuments that paved the way for the burgeoning classicism. Further, as we have seen, the first classical Host tabernacle, Brunelleschi's, was not produced under the auspices of a secular patron, but a member of the clergy. Apparently Fra Giuliano sanctioned a tabernacle in the new style deliberately, since he engaged Brunelleschi for the design, the preeminent artist working all'antica.¹⁶⁰ In addition, by the 1420s Brunelleschi was more than an established master, he was arguably the most prominent artist in Florence, commissioned to create a newly emphasized furnishing. One fact stands out: clerics must have seen his classicizing style as especially appropriate to religious purposes and, more explicitly, appropriate for the display of the Corpus Christi, in its several manifestations.

Roman monuments, both pagan and early Christian, inspired Quattrocento liturgical furnishings. It is

¹⁶⁰ The tabernacle and its designer were first mentioned in a 1426 document. See Parronchi, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano, 240.

difficult, however, to judge the precise Renaissance understanding of these monuments. Large-scale Roman monuments were impressive and influential to Renaissance architecture, but scholars studying the sources of motifs consistently illustrate that sculptors and painters turned to the formal example of smaller Roman monuments. To be more precise, for early fifteenth-century artists creating new liturgical furnishings, ancient Roman tomb furnishings provided the most frequent models. The tomb furnishings of the ancient Romans took several different forms and those have numerous variations. Sarcophagi, cippe, cinerary urns, and tomb altars¹⁶¹ inspired the visual formulae for the creation of early Renaissance Christian

¹⁶¹ Altmann (Die römischen Grabaltäre der Kaiserzeit, passim) discusses the variations in funerary altars, including commemorative cippi or bases on which libations could be poured (Grabaltäre) and others for ashes or vessels holding ashes (Aschenaltäre). The various types of tomb altars often have similar iconographic motifs. Tomb altars, according to Toynbee (Death and Burial in the Roman World, Ithaca, New York, 1971, 254), range in height from 1 to 1.20 meters while those containing ashes are frequently as small as .80 to .70 meters. Cineraria, whether intended as altars or as simple containers, intended for columbaria and house-tombs are rectangular, polygonal, and round. (These containers are generally called cinerary urns, ash urns, or ash chests.) For cinerary urns see Cumont, Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains, passim; F. Sinn-Henninger, Stadtrömische Marmorurnen, Mainz, 1987; and Arias, Composito Monumentale di Pisa. Le Antichità, passim. The rectangular type have the same basic iconographic vocabulary as the funerary altars, but round cineraria sometimes appear to counterfeit wicker baskets (see Altmann, 253, Fig. 198). Toynbee (Death and Burial, 255) hypothesizes that the basket motif may represent panaria, "symbolizing provisions for the journey to the next world or after-life banquets."

furnishings.¹⁶² Preserved in the sacred precincts of churches, these monuments were abundant and accessible artistic sources in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

In attempting to comprehend the extraordinary new sacrament tabernacles of the fifteenth century one must first discern the connection between antique funerary monuments and Renaissance liturgical furnishings. Thus the motivations for the revival of classical forms will help to illuminate the development of this new category of monument. This study will contend that it was not merely the formal structure, but more complex motivations that attracted early fifteenth-century artists to classical monuments and, indeed, that Quattrocento artists and patrons perceived enormous symbolic potential in their classical models.

Antiquity and Early Renaissance Christians

Liturgical concentration on the Eucharist, fully developed by the fifteenth century, necessitated new visual explication and rapidly, beginning in the 1420s,

¹⁶² See Toynbee, Death and Burial, 245-281, for a concise discussion of the variations in gravestones and tomb furniture. Toynbee (p. 271) points out that sarcophagi illustrate the whole evolution of pictorial relief-work from the early-second century to the period of the early Christian Empire of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. The early Christian sarcophagi of the third to the sixth centuries were generally modelled on their pagan predecessors, although with a change in narrative subject matter. Particular features of the Christian sarcophagi of antiquity include the two superimposed friezes, and the columned sarcophagi (based on Asiatic prototypes) with a single row or two tiers of figures in aediculae.

adopted classical forms. In fact, eucharistic iconography and classicism are inseparable factors in early Quattrocento Tuscan art. Integral to the eucharistic focus of churches, Renaissance Sacrament tabernacles were an important factor in establishing the preeminence of classicism. A unique type of Sacrament receptacle developed in the 1420s that combined sculpture and a classical architectural structure with a cupboard for the Host. In order to interpret the symbolic meaning of the new Host receptacles, an investigation of the meaning behind the revival of classical forms is essential. In this quest, several factors should be reiterated regarding the first classicizing sculptural monuments of Quattrocento Italy: they were liturgical in nature, they were commissioned by a variety of patrons, and their forms and motifs were derived almost exclusively from ancient funerary sculpture.

Why was the new classicism seen as appropriate and why was it chosen by so many diverse patrons at exactly the same moment?¹⁶³ The orthodox explanation regarding humanist fascination with the antique world (formulated in the nineteenth century) fails to take the larger cultural context into account. While secular humanists surely

¹⁶³ Among the patrons were Fra Giuliano for Campo Corbellini, the Medici in the Barbadori Chapel and the Sacristy of San Lorenzo, the Dominicans and Lenzi at Santa Maria Novella, the tombs for the Trenta and Coscia, and the Parte Guelfa for the niche on Orsanmichele.

established an interest in antique art in the Quattrocento, they were not vital to its early manifestation. Nor is it likely that the new classicizing style was seen solely within the context of humanist culture. Recently, scholars have begun to reexamine these conceptual origins and have observed that secular taste was different than that manifested in early Renaissance churches. For example, in regard to Goro Dati's c.1423-24 chronicle which includes some comments on Florentine architecture, Creighton Gilbert observes:

No qualities are more conspicuous in Dati's taste than his preference for the trecento and for the secular. His guide is thus a new support for the analysis of the early quattrocento Renaissance in Florence, which observes that the modern art is chiefly religious, and the secular art is retardataire. Thus church buildings are in advance of all private palazzi in Brunelleschi's time, and are matched by just a few public buildings. Likewise Masaccio and Donatello work almost entirely for churches.¹⁶⁴

Gilbert goes on to remark that Florentine humanists' rare commentaries on art "show an old-fashioned taste, while humanists elsewhere happily praise Pisanello."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Gilbert, "Earliest Guide to Florentine Architecture, 1423," 42. In his chronicle, probably written in 1423-24, Istoria di Firenze dal 1380 al 1405, Goro Dati devoted several pages to the secular buildings of Florence. Gilbert finds the guide useful in understanding contemporary attitudes concerning architectural style.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Gilbert goes on to say that, "These observations are contrary, to be sure, to the handbook view of the origins of the Renaissance, in which art and humanism go hand in hand, but which tends to stay with generalities and owes much to a nineteenth century progressivism, where the anti-clerical, the scientific and the classical were linked by what seemed axiomatic harmony."

Gilberts' study of Goro Dati's guide to Florentine architecture before 1424 is an important contribution to our understanding of the differences between sacred and secular taste in the early Quattrocento. It should be underscored that in the 1420s when the new style was conceived no secular example of classicism can be found. Moreover, taste was determined by the needs of the commission. As Gilbert points out, despite the fact that Goro Dati displays a decided preference for the Gothic in Florentine secular architecture, he and other members of his family were on the committees for important religious commissions which utilized the new classical style at its inception.¹⁶⁶ However, his use of the words "modern" and "retardataire", as well as the term "humanist," should be examined more closely.

The notions of modern and retardataire art, like the equation of classicism with secular humanism, were

For an analysis of the humanist discussion of art in the Trecento and Quattrocento, see Michael Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators. Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350-1450, Oxford, 1971.

¹⁶⁶ "The Earliest Guide," 38. Goro himself was an operaio (the opera consisted of directors of the Arte della Seta) of the Spedale degli Innocenti and had been in charge of buying the land for it. In addition, the same group probably appointed Brunelleschi as the architect. As Gilbert states, "Goro Dati was in an admirable position to know churchly building and modern building. Therefore the emphasis in his 'guide' on secular building and on old building (not just in the choice of buildings, but an aesthetic embrace of them) should be considered not casual, but a choice following upon broader experiences."

formulated as part of a methodological emphasis on the linear development of Italian art with classicism as its aesthetic climax.¹⁶⁷ Thus the perception of secular taste as "trecento" and "old-fashioned" (i.e. Gothic) should be questioned in regard to the early Quattrocento, since the International Style was quite innovative in terms of its naturalism and Gothic architecture was not static, but maintained its viability in much of Europe (even in centers of humanistic learning), well into the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁸ In addition, any implied dichotomy between

¹⁶⁷ Among other scholars, Svetlana Alpers ("Art History and Its Exclusions: The Example of Dutch Art," in Feminism and Art History. Questioning the Litany, ed. N. Broude and M.D. Garrard, New York, 1982) has questioned the standard Italian bias of art historical inquiry. While Alpers' essay is somewhat diffuse, she makes thought-provoking points regarding traditional art historical scholarship, asserting that it follows the prejudicial assumptions established by Vasari. While classicism came to predominate in Italian art, the unshakable impression that artists inexorably moved toward classicism as a humanist goal is essentially based on Cinquecento hindsight and inapplicable not only to Northern art, but also to the cultural reality of early Quattrocento Italy.

¹⁶⁸ Not only did the Gothic style remain the norm in Northern Europe for more than a century after Brunelleschi introduced classicism in church architecture, but its spiritual symbolism remained viable, as demonstrated in numerous paintings in which it represents the New Order. Rather than "old-fashioned," the International Style in painting was enormously innovative in the early fifteenth century, exploring the expressive potential of the natural world in conjunction with narrative. In Quattrocento Italy, the importation of the International Style had important cultural implications that could effectively express social and/or political ideas. Thus the concept of retardataire artistic style is inapplicable in fifteenth-century northern art. Artists and patrons of the early Quattrocento in Tuscany had no foreknowledge that the exclusive revival of classicism in liturgical art would come to be included in as well in secular commissions.

humanism and religion does not accurately characterize the intellectual life of the early fifteenth century. And as has been noted, humanism as a philosophical movement was not part of the social structure.

Michael Baxandall's exploration of the origins of the word "humanist" is particularly illuminating in this regard:

'Humanist' is not a word the early Italian humanists themselves knew; neither is 'humanism'. It seems that the term humanistia grew out of late fifteenth-century university slang, where it was used of a professional teacher of the studia humanitatis. ...it referred to a specific syllabus: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and usually ethics, studied in the best classical authors. 'Humanism' is a nineteenth-century abstraction from all this; it quickly acquired [in the nineteenth century] various humanitarian and even agnostic connotations.¹⁶⁹

Those who studied the classical curriculum of the early Quattrocento were not employed exclusively in secular occupations. The studia humanitatis was part of an educational system in which the very universities that promoted this curriculum were led by theologians. Thus not only is the indiscriminate use of the term "humanist" misleading, but an artificial division is created when humanism is treated as a synonym for secularism. Humanism of the early fifteenth century was not separated from

¹⁶⁹ Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, 1ff. Baxandall is mainly concerned with the linguistic component of visual taste in humanist commentary on art and with Alberti's development of the concept of pictorial composition. However, his study is also valuable in placing fifteenth-century humanist notions of style in their proper context.

religion, but was part of the education of the privileged classes and was not constrained by occupational parameters.

Although in early fifteenth-century Florence the Dominican Preacher Giovanni Dominici spoke against the educational leaning toward classical texts, his was a losing battle.¹⁷⁰ In his treatise Lucula noctis, as well as in his sermons, he particularly objects to the study of nature in the new learning.¹⁷¹ However, it was not anti-intellectualism or classical learning per se that drove Dominici to oppose this educational program, but rather its worldly themes. Nature represents the temporal world and, in Dominici's view, knowledge stems from God and should be based on the Gospels and Scripture.¹⁷² It

¹⁷⁰ Dominici held numerous important positions in the Order, including Prior of Santa Maria Novella and head of the observant Dominicans in Fiesole.

¹⁷¹ Giovanni Dominici, Lucula noctis, ed. E. Hunt, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1940. (Dominici's treatise was finished in 1405.) The preacher's educational program was fully recounted in another treatise, Regola del governo di cura familiare, ed. P. Bargellini, Florence, 1927.

¹⁷² Daniel R. Lesnick, "Civic Preaching in the Early Renaissance. Giovanni Dominici's Florentine Sermons," Christianity and the Renaissance. Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento, ed. T. Verdon and J. Henderson, Syracuse, New York, 1990, 209-210. Lesnick's essay focusses on the seeming contradiction between Dominici's civic attitudes and his educational program. According to Lesnick, to Dominici, "Writings of the poets and writings about nature are dangerous; they lead you into the pit; they are the smoke of darkness and of stinking manure. Studying worldly writings and learning about the beasts of nature, we become like the beasts. But studying sacred Scripture, we discover our own sacred nature."

should be remembered that not only did pagan authors form the basis for the early Christian theology of the Fathers of the Church, but Thomas Aquinas was known to have relied heavily on Aristotle. The spiritual meaning of classical authors was not under attack by Dominici, but rather the study of their additional, more secular, emphases.¹⁷³ His objections have nothing to do with classical funerary art, but with worldly vanity in the written word of either pagan or Christian authors. Nor do preachers like Dominici represent all clerics in the Quattrocento. Among the clergy factionalism was a consistent fact of life.

Thus in the search for the motivation and meaning of the revival of antique forms, one should not postulate a clear-cut separation between "humanism" and religion or Gothic and Renaissance, but rather, examine the type and interpretation of the monuments that first revived classicism in the visual arts. I contend that liturgical furnishings, especially those with a sacramental theme, were integral to the origins and spread of the early Renaissance style in Italy.

¹⁷³ Lesnick (*ibid.*, 209) states that "...the Dominican friar criticized the new learning, with its focus on classical pagan authors, the world of nature, and rhetorical eloquence. According to Dominici, the classical authors - Cicero and Plato, of course, but the Dominican Thomas Aquinas's beloved Aristotle as well - use the art of poetry and their eloquence to make white appear black and black appear white. The books of fables, of philosophy, of wisdom are used to gain worldly pomp and to learn to lie and deceive your 'compagno.'"

questions regarding the Christian iconographic significance of the Italian Renaissance style have been slow to emerge, perhaps because liturgical furnishings in the early Quattrocento traditionally have been seen as lesser reflections of the new architectural classicism. Although scholars have usually examined the monuments of the 1420s in Tuscany in the light of Brunelleschi's innovative church design, liturgical furnishings had an evolution distinct, if not wholly independent, from large-scale architecture. That influential Florentines, particularly the Medici and their allies, were among the first patrons of artists working in the classicizing style does not warrant the conclusion that their religious patronage was mainly secular in intent.¹⁷⁴ In fact, their private taste and patronage for domestic settings was decidedly courtly in tone during the early fifteenth

¹⁷⁴ As Michael Baxandall (Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, XXVIII, 1965, 193) has stated in regard to Quattrocento painting, "More laudatory poems were addressed by the humanists to Pisanello than to any other artist of the fifteenth century, though this has not inhibited very much the art-historians' equations between 'humanist' values on the one hand and the painter's austere application, on the other, to perspective and proportion." Gilbert ("Earliest Guide," 42, note 28) notes that the poetry of humanists must be seen in the context of the ducal courts to which they belonged. He states that "Florentine humanists and artists worked for the same civic commissions of merchants, and the humanists wrote much about civic glory, but were silent on the artists. The occasional ties of humanists to works by the major artists tend to be their church works." A number of visual sources, confirm that secular taste was partial to the International Style.

century.¹⁷⁵ As this study will demonstrate, the growing emphasis on the sacramental nature of Christian iconography not only found a new means of expression in the forms and motifs of antique funerary sculpture, but helped to establish classicism as the predominant style in Italy.

The Revival of Classicism for Christian Usage
in the Dugento and Trecento

The consistency of this all'antica derivation engenders important questions concerning the "rebirth" of the classical style which must be divided into separate issues. First, why did artists employ classical forms in sculpture from the 1420s on and why did this phenomenon occur mainly in Tuscany, as opposed to elsewhere in Italy? Further, what was the Quattrocento understanding of all'antica architecture and motifs? In addition, why were classical forms not only utilized but suddenly, and startlingly, dominant at this particular moment in history?

After all, antique prototypes had been available throughout the Middle Ages, and had at different times inspired a wide variety of artists in both northern Europe

¹⁷⁵ See Ernst H. Gombrich, ("Apollonio di Giovanni," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 18, 1955, 23ff.) for an example of humanist praise for later fifteenth-century International Style cassoni with classical themes. Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes in the Medici palace are another example of this taste.

and in Italy.¹⁷⁶ This is apparent in looking at monuments such as the thirteenth-century sculpture of the visitation on the exterior of Reims Cathedral, the sculpture of Nicola Pisano, and the charming figure guarding the common good in the Lorenzetti Good Government fresco of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena of the fourteenth century. However, the use remained selective and did not inform the overall architectural structure of liturgical furnishings. In other regions of Italy this selective utilization of classical forms was retained well into the Quattrocento.¹⁷⁷

Liturgical furnishings represent the most consistent use of the antique prior to the fifteenth century. Nicola Pisano was motivated in his revival of antique forms by a specific category of funerary monument - sarcophagi. In the late Dugento, Nicola had already utilized funerary monuments as prototypes for his extraordinary liturgical furnishings and his style has been regularly pointed to as having found inspiration in classical sculpture. Antique

¹⁷⁶ Another question arises in regard to Northern Europe: why didn't the same classicizing stylistic phenomenon occur in the fifteenth century? Adjunct to this question is the problem of meaning; the vital Quattrocento topic of the Eucharist was explicated differently according to separate visual traditions in Europe. Nevertheless, most of the same iconographic emphases were present in the two cultures. Predominant among these was the overwhelming emphasis on the Eucharist.

¹⁷⁷ For example, the lower register of Venetian tombs had used a round-headed arch with shell niche, but had preserved the Gothic pointed arch in the upper registers.

sarcophagi provided inspiration for the Arca of San Domenico, a monument with explicit Christian funerary significance.¹⁷⁸

Nicola's workshop was in Pisa, a location with a cemetery extraordinarily rich in pagan and early Christian sculpture. The monumental pulpit in the Baptistery of Pisa (Figure 43) also demonstrates his fascination with the sarcophagus reliefs of antiquity.¹⁷⁹ Not only are the format and figural style of the reliefs of Nicola's pulpit an important example of this derivation, but details

¹⁷⁸ According to John Pope-Hennessy's reconstruction ("The Arca of Saint Dominic: A Hypothesis," Burlington Magazine, 93, 1951, 347-51), the tomb for St. Dominic was designed by Nicola as a free-standing, historiated sarcophagus supported by eight telamones. See also Anita Moscovitz, "On the Sources and meaning of Nicola Pisano's Arca di San Domenico in Bologna," Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture, Florence, 1992, 271-281, who emphasizes the uniqueness of the design and structure. Moscovitz particularly underscores the unprecedented supporting figures, that it was meant to be seen in the round, and that the all'antica reliefs allude to the deeds and accomplishments of the deceased during his lifetime. See also S. Bottari, L'Arca di San Domenico in Bologna, Bologna, 1964; C. Gnudi, Niccolò dell'Arca, Turin, 1942; G. Zucchini, La cappella dell'Arca nella chiesa di S. Domenico di Bologna dal 1317 al 1597, Bologna, 1937; and Barbara Dodsworth, "Dominican Patronage and the Arca di San Domenico," Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture, Florence, 1992, 283-90.

¹⁷⁹ Charles Seymour ("Invention and Revival in Nicola Pisano's 'Heroic Style,'" Studies in Western Art. Acts of the XX International Congress of the History of Art, I, Princeton, 1963, 217-18) has shown that Nicola used his ancient sources for both specific motifs and for the composition of the narrative panels. See also E. M. Angiola, "Nicola Pisano, Federico Visconti, and the Classical Style in Pisa," Art Bulletin, LVIII, 1977, 1-27 and M. Seidel, "Studien zur Antikenrezeption Nicola Pisanos," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institut in Florenz, 1975, 300-390.

within the narrative reveal his a deeper symbolic understanding of antiquity. Unlike the Arca of San Domenico, pulpits have no overt eschatological meaning, however, the context of the imagery provides an important connection to his funerary sources. One of the most interesting examples of Nicola's use of the antique is the manger holding the infant Christ, in the narrative panel that includes the Nativity (Figure 44). The bed takes the form of an antique sarcophagus with strigillated decoration (Figure 45), creating a visual analogy between the sleeping Infant and the entombed Christ.¹⁸⁰ Even more explicit is the use of this motif in the Nativity scene on the exterior of Orvieto Cathedral of a century later (Figure 46). Not only is the Christ Child contained in an antique sarcophagus, but even more extraordinary, in the Last Judgement the artist also depicts the resurrected emerging from a variety of beautifully detailed antique sarcophagi.

In Nicola Pisano's pulpit, the deliberate use of this precognitive symbol of the Sacrifice of Christ is underscored by the architecture that provides the backdrop

¹⁸⁰ The casket or manger in which the infant Christ rests, not coincidentally, also resembles an elongated wicker basket. The canistrum or wicker basket was common to both Jewish and pagan sacrificial cults and its use was continued by Christians for holding the Eucharist until at least the sixth century (in addition to simple boxes). See van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 27. In addition, as Toynbee (see note 156) hypothesizes, in pagan burial practices the basket-like decoration may have symbolized the panaria.

for the Annunciation in the same relief (see Figure 45). The small temple-like facade closely resembles that found in the relief of an antique sarcophagus in the Villa Borghese, showing King Minos preparing to make a sacrifice to Neptune (Figure 47). In addition, the pedimented temple facade could be found in numerous tomb altars in the Camposanto. Altars and sacrifice were a frequent emphasis in the funerary monuments of antiquity and Nicola Pisano provides an early example of an artist who used that symbolism to enrich the Christian meaning of his liturgical furnishings.¹⁸¹ Although Nicola Pisano's use of the funerary motifs derived from monuments in the Camposanto did not instigate a widespread renewal of classicism, it provides important evidence of a Christian interpretation of antique monuments.

There were many more antique funerary monuments during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance than remain today in museums, as is obvious from the descriptions.¹⁸² In more recent centuries the type of object of greatest value has changed from funereal

¹⁸¹ The symbolism of a pulpit, however, had important implications that should be investigated in terms of eucharistic meaning. Emphasis on the lectern, with the eagle of St. John, refers, of course, to the Word of God spoken in the church. It also refers more specifically to the first words of John's gospel regarding the Word made Flesh. The Pisa Baptistery pulpit will also be discussed in regard to the Siena Baptistery font in Chapter Four of this study.

¹⁸² See Michael Greenhalgh, The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages, London, 1989, 201.

monuments to free-standing statuary, and thus many of the former have been lost. However, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the most abundant and meaningful antiquities were funerary in nature.

Antique forms appear throughout the Middle Ages, but it was not to become an established style until the 1420s. During this decade most liturgical furnishings focussed on sacramental imagery with a greater emphasis on the concepts that had been expounded regarding the Corpus verum. However, the origins of theological sanction of classical motifs and eucharistic meaning in church furnishings should be examined.

Not only were antique funerary monuments frequently reused for Christian commemorative purposes, with inscriptions added, but Roman sarcophagi were utilized for Christian altars, as in Sant'Agnese fuori le mura, Rome (Figure 48).¹⁸³ Moreover, funerary containers were perceived in the context of reliquary pyxes. In the Rationale, immediately after discussing receptacles for the Host, Durandus differentiates between the words phylacterium and phylacteria. Citing Matthew 23:5, "They

¹⁸³ The third-century sarcophagus was converted to a Christian monument in the fourth century and was later used as the antependium for the Cosmatesque high altar complex in Sant'Agnese. The imago clipeatus represents a St. Agnes which was added in the fourth century. See Bober and Rubenstein, 128, who discuss the sarcophagus in terms of the formal influence of its imagery, which includes flying amoretti holding the clipeus, Ocenaus, Tellus, and Amor and Psyche.

make broad their phylacteries", he states that the word is derived from philare, to keep and teras, the law and that:

... phylacteria, (a reliquary) is a vessel of silver or gold, or crystal, or ivory, or some substance of the same kind, in which the ashes and relics of the Saints are kept. For when Vigilantius called the Faithful Cinercii, because they preserved the ashes themselves, to testify contempt of his decision, it was ordered by the Church that they should be honourably preserved in precious vessels.¹⁸⁴

Although style does not enter into Durandus' discussion, there are several important implications in his statement. First, it is particularly pertinent because it expresses an awareness of ancient vessels and their suitability to Christian iconography. Moreover, Durandus' allusion to Vigilantius represents a deliberate reference to an historical era. He cites a specific type of early Christian vessel; in the Late Antique/Early Christian period to which Durandus refers, they would have been crafted in the classical mode. The Church, represented by the chronicler of its symbolism, must have accepted the style of antiquity as that of early Christianity. The dividing line between pagan and Early Christian funerary monuments was hazy; even the usual differentiation between inhumation and cremation is dubious. In addition, Durandus' statement demonstrates the clear connection between physical remains and relics. The association among vessels of ancient origin - cinerary urns, sarcophagi, and reliquaries - and a special, distinctly

¹⁸⁴ Durandus, Rationale, Chapter 3, sect. 26.

religious use was explicitly accepted by the Church in the late Dugento.

Durandus correctly, if implicitly, distinguished monuments of Early Christian antiquity, calling them "precious vessels" because of their association with the remains of Christians. Although art historians have not previously noted the relevance of Durandus' statement, it can be seen as part of a pattern in late medieval Christian symbolism. The Bishop of Mende's discussion of funerary reliquary vessels helps explain the frequent manifestation and tolerance of antique funerary motifs in the late Middle Ages.

In fact, an awareness of the correlation between pagan and Early Christian style can be found in an early twelfth-century manuscript by Guilbert de Nogent. Regarding the discovery of an ancient Gallo-Roman cemetery Guilbert observes that it "was not disposed as we arrange tombs, but in a circle...and in them are found vases the use of which is unknown to Christian times; from which we can believe that these are either pagan, or from the earliest Christian times, but made in the pagan fashion."¹⁸⁵ This correlation of the style and function of pagan and Early Christian under a single category, would have still held currency in the fifteenth century

¹⁸⁵ Greenhalgh, Survival of Roman Antiquities, 185, cites Mortet, 1911, 318 and note 3.

and was most likely enhanced by a greater knowledge of antiquity.¹⁸⁶

In the thirteenth century, Nicola Pisano was particularly interested in the imagery of classical sarcophagi. Viewed in isolation, this influence on Dugento sculpture might logically be considered an uncomplicated formal derivation. However, classical funerary motifs were utilized in a wider range of images. Giotto, in the early Trecento scenes of the life of the virgin in the upper register of the Arena Chapel, exhibits an understanding of the symbolic potential of antique devices. The edifice in which St. Anne receives her divine annunciation, for example, takes the form of a temple (Figure 49); its pediment displays a God the Father in the form of an imago clipeatus, resembling those on antique funerary monuments. Giotto's thus associates the Roman temple architecture, with the abundant funerary containers of antiquity. The architecture is clearly intended to be seen as an historical reference to the pre-Christian era, but the annunciation is a precursor to the events that lead to Christian redemption; the motif from funerary sculpture enhances the attendant implications of rebirth.

¹⁸⁶ There was a consistent vogue through medieval and early Renaissance times for the reuse of sarcophagi, which as Greenhalgh, Survival, 201, states, "ended when they became collectors' items; this was the case by the early sixteenth century in Italy, and a little later in France."

A more explicit example of this Trecento derivation directly connects antique motifs with the Body of the Lord. In the Franciscan cycle of the Upper Church in Assisi, the scene of St. Francis and the Christmas Crib at Greccio employs an architectural canopy (a ciborium) over the altar (Figure 50). Its gable contains a pair of winged putti bearing a wreath, clearly derived from antique sculpture with triumphal and/or funerary connotations (Figure 51).¹⁸⁷ The infant Christ in his crib explicitly becomes the offering on the altar and, similar to the way Nicola Pisano employed a strigillated sarcophagus as the model for the manger of the infant Christ in the Pisa Baptistery pulpit, the artist in Assisi utilized the funerary implications of the antique device to enhance the symbolic meaning. With the inclusion of an antique funerary motif, the significance of tomb, sacrifice, and Christian altar merge to form a single, cohesive iconographic statement.

The image of the Child as the sacrifice on the altar was well-known by the Trecento, in both visual and

¹⁸⁷ In his book on the survival of Roman antiquities in the Middle Ages, Greenhalgh (Survival, 186) is not concerned with the reservation of the Eucharist nor the reasons for the rebirth of classicism. However, his statement concerning the survival of funerary monuments reflects the complex association of Eucharist, pagan or Old Testament offering, tomb, and altar: "There is no great difference between Christians meeting at the grave, with a sacrificial table for the burial offering (sometimes combined with a Eucharistic offering), and the pagan traditions of the memorial banquet at the grave of the loved one, for the environment and materials required are similar."

literary form.¹⁸⁸ Even in the early Middle Ages, artists had tacitly acknowledged this connection to tombs by creating altars that incorporated the imagery of Early Christian funerary monuments. Like the sarcophagi that were reused as altars in the Middle Ages, altar stems (Figure 52) illustrate the traditional connection between the ritual of the Christian Sacrifice and symbols of the Roman tomb. Not only did they incorporate funerary motifs, but some altar stems were also intended as cupboards for eucharistic reservation (Figure 53), as in the sixth century altar of the baptistry of Parenzo Cathedral (Istria).¹⁸⁹ Certainly, in the Quattrocento, patrons and artists were acutely aware of that similarity.

Funerary Monuments and Quattrocento Liturgical Furnishings

The revival, spread, and enduring use of antique forms in liturgical furnishings is rooted first of all in their derivation from funerary monuments. This can be demonstrated by examining the earliest examples of

¹⁸⁸ See for example, Vloberg, Eucharistie, Vol. 1, 51, for an image of the Child on the paten.

¹⁸⁹ Braun (Christliche Altar, vol. 2, 142-147) asserts that there is no certain case of altars being used in any way as the place of permanent reservation before the ninth century. This is repeated by Dix (Detection of Aumbries, 28), but contradicted by van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 46) who cite the Parenzo altar, in which only the central, hollow stem of the altar is extant. The fesestra confessionis "is indicated by the symbols of the doves and the cross in the typanum of the door opening and the fishes at either side just above it."

classicism in the Quattrocento, as well as in the Dugento and Trecento. The fundamental difference between quattrocento and earlier classicism can be defined. Rather than combining motifs with the contemporary Gothic architectural style, the austere architectural structure and decorative details of antique funerary monuments were fully exploited in the early Renaissance.

The monument that art historians have pointed to as the first to use a classical Renaissance style is Jacopo della Quercia's c.1406-1408 tomb for Ilaria del Caretto in Lucca (Figure 54).¹⁹⁰ While the recumbent figure of the deceased is conceived as a delicate, courtly lady, related more to the female figures of the contemporary Limbourg brothers than to any classical Roman matron, the heavy marble tomb and its decoration contrast with this courtly conception. However, on the sarcophagus, Jacopo chose to transfer motifs directly from antique funerary monuments. The winged putti and the swags of garlands on the sides can be found particularly on Roman sarcophagi. They appear as well on numerous cinerary urns, altars, and other monuments of a commemorative nature. Sarcophagi from the Camposanto in Pisa illustrate Jacopo's direct translation of motifs, eliminating the secondary

¹⁹⁰ See James Beck, *Jacopo della Quercia*, New York, 1991, 56-57 for a discussion of the original appearance (including some type of canopy) and location of the tomb in the Guinigi family chapel, dedicated to Santa Lucia, in the cloister of San Francesco in Lucca.

figurative imagery in favor of isolating the winged infants supporting garlands in various poses (Figures 55 and 56).

Thus the first artist to create a "Renaissance" monument did so by deliberately utilizing antique funerary imagery for a contemporary tomb, enlarging and isolating particular motifs. The thematic relevance of the decoration to the category of monument is incontestable, but the question of Jacopo's specific motivation remains unanswered. A solution may lie in the inherited understanding of the classical monuments; the sculptor certainly had ample precedent in the sense that many antique funerary monuments had been reused for Christian commemoration.¹⁹¹ For example, one finds medieval inscriptions added to classical funerary monuments, notably converting their context from pagan to Christian (Figure 57). Moreover, in Rome, the reuse of sarcophagi for Christian burial had taken a very elaborate turn in the form of a Cosmati tomb monument (Figure 58). Despite this time-honored tradition, it is difficult to judge the depth of meaning in the sculptor's use of winged infants and garland motifs for Ilaria's tomb in the first decade

¹⁹¹ Beck (*ibid.*, 57) states that there was a strong local tradition of using ancient sarcophagi and that Ilaria's husband, Paolo Guinigi, had this tradition in mind. "...Instead of reusing a pre-existing Roman sarcophagus as was often done, an entirely new sarcophagus was constructed...presumably because no fine antique one could be located." He cites a Romanesque tomb located in the Camposanto as a precedent.

of the century. However, Jacopo's choice of motifs contains a decided bias toward the Christian implications of a resurrectional symbolism, with the swags of living blooms and ripe fruit taking precedence over more complex pagan imagery. This suggests that Jacopo's use was knowledgeable and intentional and that the symbolic elements of antique funerary monuments became an essential component in the formulation of the new style.

Until the Quattrocento there are only isolated instances of the use of antique forms and iconography, however, the comprehension of and motivation for a classicizing funerary theme is unmistakable. This funerary background is essential to discerning the meaning of and motivation for the antique revival of the early Quattrocento. The lasting impact of classicism must be seen in the context of the strong emphasis on sacramental theology and its effect on the liturgy and liturgical furnishings.

Sacramental Meaning and the Antique in the Quattrocento

The revival of classicism, the "Renaissance" style that came to dominate for centuries has been most closely associated with humanism. Nevertheless, it is, in fact, a concept that was used exclusively at first in an appropriately religious context. Moreover, the first monuments to use classicism were liturgical in nature. As far back as the Dugento, artists exploited antique

of the Madonna who holds the foot of the upright infant as if it were the foot of a monstrance. The throne they inhabit is narrow and insignificant in comparison with the monumental figures. However, Masaccio's 1426 polyptych for the Carmelites in Pisa provides corroborating evidence of the eucharistic meaning of the new all'antica style (Figure 61). The central panel displays the same emphasis on the Eucharist as the San Giovenale altar of four years earlier, with the Child now greedily stuffing the grapes into his mouth from the bunch held by his mother. Further, not only is the physical relationship between mother and child more natural, but the symbolism of the grapes is enriched with the Virgin acting again as priest, but in a newly subtle role. Mary also functions as a tabernacle, protecting the child-Host in a thoroughly integrated symbolism.

The apex of the Pisa Polyptych originally held an expressive Crucifixion, linking the incarnation and sacrifice with the womb, altar, and tomb. The Madonna and Child of the altarpiece are enclosed, momentarily, in the remarkable all'antica throne conceived as a piece of classical funerary architecture. This is made explicit not only by the clusters of columns and rosettes found on many classical funerary monuments, but more importantly, by the inclusion of the strigillated base, like that of an

antique sarcophagus.¹⁹² It should come as no surprise that this image of the Madonna and Child Enthroned was undertaken in the same year as Brunelleschi's Sacrament tabernacle for San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini.

The intense contemporary need to explicate the central mystery of Christianity motivated artists and patrons to look for a new, more meaningful imagery. They found that imagery in the funerary monuments of antiquity, which had been long identified with Christian martyrs and their cults. Artists of the 1420s and 1430s used the antique funerary monuments for commemorative purposes that encompassed the Christian symbolism of everlasting life. More particularly, the iconography of rebirth was used to enhance the new focus on the Eucharist. The new all'antica style could clarify the current liturgical emphasis on the sacrifice and resurrection of the Christ of the Eucharist, by the multi-faceted symbolism of relics, rebirth, and the afterlife. With this heritage in mind, the early Renaissance attitude toward and acceptance of classical style is more understandable.

Eucharistic repositories and tombs were not the only church furnishings to adopt the all'antica style in the first third of the fifteenth century, and it is useful to turn to an examination of the other monuments of the 1420s

¹⁹² Nicola Pisano had utilized this strigillated ornamentation to define the manger holding the Child in the Nativity of the Pisa Pulpit of 1260 (see Figure 43).

which established this antique renewal to comprehend its motivations and growing meaning. Significantly, these monuments all have an important liturgical concept in common; each is a sacred shelter connected to death and entombment.

Prototypes for Quattrocento Sacrament Tabernacles

Although it is important to discuss the first monuments sculpted in the new classical mode, it is essential to first note the artistic interactions among Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio and their circle.¹⁹³ Extant monuments executed in the first part of the fifteenth century must be examined in conjunction with classical wall tabernacles in order to understand this inventive type. Although the exact role of Brunelleschi in the formulation of these different monuments is uncertain, it is clear that he exerted a powerful force on the whole pioneering generation of classical

¹⁹³ Easiest to cite in the latter regard are the two monuments that were small enough to be completed in a short span of time, Masaccio's Trinity fresco and Donatello's niche for the Parte Guelfa. More difficult to fit into this artistic equation, though ironically one of the most important components, is Brunelleschi's architecture for the Sagrestia Vecchia. Parronchi ("Un tabernacolo", 241) tries to make a case for the stone carver of the Sagrestia Vecchia and the tabernacle of Campo Corbellini as being one and the same. He cites a document of 1427 naming Giusto di Francesco da Settignano as working in the Sagrestia.

revivalists.¹⁹⁴ Concurrent with his use of monumental architectural sources, he appears to have been concerned with the use and meaning of smaller scale funerary monuments.¹⁹⁵

The Parte Guelfa Niche

With the exception of Brunelleschi's tabernacle for

¹⁹⁴ In addition to Masaccio's Trinity fresco in Santa Maria Novella and the Parte Guelfa niche, another monument was intimately connected with Brunelleschi's tabernacle of the 1420s: the Siena Font tabernacle of the late 1420s. All of these early classicizing monuments will be examined in turn.

¹⁹⁵ It should be kept in mind that only the external elements of the architectural frame of the Campo Corbellini tabernacle can be extrapolated from contemporary monuments. My hesitation concerns Parronchi's belief that Brunelleschi's tabernacle had a perspectivized format because it shared a common theme of the Corpus Domini with the Trinity fresco. While I agree that the fresco in Santa Maria Novella is iconographically related to Host tabernacles, and even that Brunelleschi was intimately involved in its architectural and perspectival construction, it does not follow that Brunelleschi's tabernacle had the same elaborate perspective recession. (See also note below.) Indeed, even though Desiderio's 1461 tabernacle uses the perspective format, it does not otherwise closely resemble the fresco. Although Parronchi demonstrates that Brunelleschi's tabernacle was not executed by the master, but by an otherwise little known stonemason in his shop, he fails to note that there was no other contemporary example of relief sculpture executed with such a sophisticated perspective in 1426. Donatello's relief of the Feast of Herod, almost precisely contemporary, utilizes a type of perspective unlike the Trinity fresco. The bronze relief on the Siena Font employed the perspective, with its several vanishing points, to underscore the narrative. It seems unlikely that the stonemason employed to carve the tabernacle would have the necessary skill to carve such an innovative and intricate design, at the forefront of the new mathematical theories. It is important to note that a classical architectural format, though innovative for sacrament tabernacles, would not have posed technical problems for a stone carver of average skill.

San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini, it has become clear to me that the most pivotal monument in the use of classicizing architectural forms, is the niche on the exterior of Orsanmichele, Florence, which originally contained Donatello's bronze sculpture of St. Louis of Toulouse (Figure 62).¹⁹⁶ The niche created by Donatello for the Parte Guelfa is essential to the study of Sacrament tabernacles and to the understanding of the early Renaissance use of classicism. This study will trace the ways in which the niche was explicitly contributory to both the form and the iconography of Host containers.

It has been noted in passing that Donatello's Parte Guelfa "tabernacle" is similar in form to eucharistic receptacles and, as well, may have provided an architectural prototype for Masaccio's Trinity fresco in Santa Maria Novella (Figure 63).¹⁹⁷ Freiberg has

¹⁹⁶ Janson, Donatello, 50-51, has demonstrated that the documents regarding the Orsanmichele niche prove that the work was begun after 1420 and finished by late 1425. See Janson for his discussion of the scholarly literature regarding the niche. For a more recent study of the niche and the literature since 1963 see Diane Zervas, The Parte Guelfa, Brunelleschi, and Donatello, New York, 1988, who believes that the niche was completed by 1422.

¹⁹⁷ For allusions to the visual relationship between the monuments see P. Schubring, Die Italienische Plastik des Quattrocento, Berlin, 1919, 120; Charles de Tolnay, "Renaissance d'une fresque," L'Oeil, 1958, 29; Ursula Schlegel, "Observations on Masaccio's Trinity Fresco in Santa Maria Novella," Art Bulletin, XLV, 1963, 31; Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 40. The scholars who have noted this visual connection between Host containers and the Orsanmichele niche also include Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 13, who connects its visual formula to a number of different tabernacles. See also Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 33,

discussed the iconographic connection between Sacrament tabernacles and the fresco in terms of its Old Testament typology.¹⁹⁸ Despite this close linkage, an iconographic interconnection among the whole group of monuments - niche, fresco, and tabernacles - has never been explored.

The connection is far more significant than has been previously implied. First and foremost, it is probable that the architectural design for Donatello's niche for the Parte Guelfa was very similar to the Campo Corbellini tabernacle, especially since the early extant tabernacles of the 1430s and 1440s resemble Buggiano's lavabo and the niche on Orsanmichele.¹⁹⁹ There is an obvious visual connection between the niche and Host tabernacles. Moreover, the superficial resemblance between the niche

who briefly states that the architecture of Luca's marble tabernacle at Peretola had two precedents, the Parte Guelfa niche and the painted surround of Masaccio's Trinity fresco.

¹⁹⁸ The fresco itself has been visually associated with the perspectivized type of wall tabernacle established by the second half of the century. See Schlegel, "Masaccio's Trinity Fresco," 31. Freiberg's thesis, ("Tabernaculum Dei," passim) is the most extensive iconographic discussion regarding the fresco and Sacrament tabernacles. For further discussion of Desiderio da Settignano's perspective tabernacle in San Lorenzo, Florence, see Chapter Seven of this study. See also Rona Goffen, "Masaccio's Trinity and the Letter to Hebrews," Memorie domenicane, n.s. II, 1980, 489-504 for a specific discussion of the Trinity fresco iconography.

¹⁹⁹ These include Luca della Robbia's 1441 tabernacle for Sant'Egidio, now in Peretola, Bernardo Rossellino's 1449-50 tabernacle, now in Sant'Egidio, and the architectural housing for the miraculous Madonna of Impruneta. For a discussion of these tabernacles see Chapter Five of this study.

and the Campo Corbellini tabernacle must have been great since both were classically inspired and both were built into a wall - even though one was an enclosed cupboard and the other an open niche. Even the designation has similarities, since both types of monument were repeatedly referred to as "tabernacles".²⁰⁰

One of the strengths of the comparison between the architectural surround for the Parte Guelfa's sculpture and Sacrament receptacles lies in the fact that the niche was probably the earliest monument actually completed in Florence in a classical style.²⁰¹ Not only does it

²⁰⁰ See Chapter One of this study for a discussion of the origins of the designation "tabernacle." The term was used frequently to denote a receptacle for the Host in Italy, although it was not widely used elsewhere in Europe in this regard.

²⁰¹ Zervas (Parte Guelfa, 99) notes that the tabernacle on Orsanmichele "...was one of the most impressive works of monumental sculpture and architectural decoration created in Florence during the first quarter of the Quattrocento". Further, in regard to its status as the first all'antica monument completed in Florence, my own investigation confirms her assertion: "By 1422, however, when the tabernacle was finished, possibly only the Barbadori Chapel and parts of the Ospedale degli Innocenti loggia had been executed. The framing tabernacle was thus the first public work in Florence to be completed in the new, all'antica style offered by Brunelleschi and Donatello. This fact has not been sufficiently emphasized in the literature about it, yet the tabernacle, perhaps more than any other work, raises the fundamental problem of the reasons for the introduction of this all'antica style in the years around 1420" (p.101).

This study will address that question and provide evidence for the reasons behind the use of classical forms at this time. It should be noted, however, that Zervas does not, in fact, go on to prove the date of completion. She accepts the evidence of the 1460 document that mentions this date (the Parte Guelfa sale proceedings of January 1460 state that the tabernacle had been made "insino nel MCCCCXXII", see Zervas, 113 and Poggi, 1949, 18), but later

predate Brunelleschi's tabernacle, but it was certainly the first and only niche on Orsanmichele that was not designed in the Gothic manner.²⁰² Furthermore, and of far greater significance for the future development of sacrament tabernacles, Donatello utilized a type of classicism that emulated small-scale architectural forms - most notably the antique funerary monuments found throughout Italy and particularly abundant in Tuscany.²⁰³

While Brunelleschi had already devised his own classically-inspired architectural style probably based on a variety of monumental prototypes, including Roman, Early

in the chapter she the cites a document from the Opera del Duomo archives, dated 22 May 1422, and states that it may be related to the "framing tabernacle." The document concerns a sculptor by the name of Andrea Fruschetta of Settignano who was given leave to work for the captains of the Parte Guelfa. While the specific work he was to perform is not made explicit, he worked for the Opera "as a subcontractor of white marble." Zervas states that "the only other known Parte project in white marble during the general period under study is the door-frame in the small audience room of the party's palace. This doorframe was probably executed earlier, in 1419" (pp. 114-115, note 83, *Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo*, II.I. 80, fol. 32v; and Zervas Appendix A no.3.).

²⁰² While there is some disagreement about precisely when the other niches filled with Quattrocento statuary were executed, it is clear that many were created in the fifteenth century. Zervas (*The Parte Guelfa*, 108 and 118) states that in 1406 the confraternity of Orsanmichele again stimulated interest in the external tabernacle. The Signoria passed legislation requiring the niches to be ordered within ten years or risk forfeiture. Ghiberti was working on the St. Matthew for the Arte del Cambio in 1419, the document of July 21 makes it clear that he was also commissioned to design the tabernacle.

²⁰³ Lucca, Pisa, and Florence all had numerous antique shrines of several different types, many that could be classified as Early Christian. See Greenhalgh, *The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages*, London, 1989.

christian, and Tuscan Romanesque, it cannot be questioned that he, like all contemporary artists, was familiar also with small-scale antiquities and may have derived certain motifs from them for the Campo Corbellini tabernacle as he later did for the Duomo lavabo.

However, the details of Brunelleschi's architecture are more austere than the variety and specificity of funerary motifs found on the niche at Orsanmichele, as well as those of Donatello's productions of the following decade in which the classical Sacrament tabernacle was developed. Donatello was clearly fascinated with the potential presented for synthesizing a variety of motifs into specially formulated settings for his figural sculpture.

Unique and inventive, Donatello's enclosure for the Parte Guelfa's patron saint must have been a provocative, eye-catching monument in Florence at the time of its completion, no later than August 1425 for the occasion of the feast day of Saint Louis, and perhaps as early as 1422.²⁰⁴ It had not only a startlingly new classical format, but also a conspicuous place on the exterior of the church of Orsanmichele, on the Via Calzaiuoli, the

²⁰⁴ Janson, Donatello, 50-51, has demonstrated that the documents regarding the Orsanmichele niche provide evidence that the work was begun after 1420 and finished by late 1425. See Janson for a complete discussion of the literature concerning the niche up to the year of his study. See also Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 99-117.

main thoroughfare between the Piazza del Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria (Figure 64).²⁰⁵

Furthermore, the corollary to the innovative design of the Parte Guelfa niche is the fact that it is unquestionably related to Sacrament tabernacles in its function as a shrine, its overall visual aspect, its details, and in the fact that it is immured in the wall. Renaissance wall tabernacles increasingly became a rich new category of monument, blending architectural and sculptural forms, and thus should be dealt with in a way that takes into account the innovative developments of both during the era of their configuration.

The Architecture of the Niche

The architecture of the niche has been the subject of some scholarly controversy in this century. First (and perhaps an insoluble problem) is the issue of attribution. Most scholars believe that the design of the niche may have involved the collaboration of Donatello,

²⁰⁵ The statue was executed in gilded bronze, the first monumental example of this technique since antiquity and one of the earliest in bronze. On the central niche of Orsanmichele on the Via Calzaiuoli, the sun would have caught the statue to create a magnificent, radiant effect, brilliantly recalling Angevin regality and power in the garb of a the Bishop saint. I am grateful to Professor Sarah Blake McHam for pointing out this special visual effect. Zervas (Parte Guelfa, 137) points out that the magnificent trappings proclaim Saint Louis' special role in the commune and the Parte Guelfa, as well as the processional viewpoint of the placement in the tabernacle. In addition, Zervas observes that the gold underscored the prestige and wealth of the party.

In addition, as noted above, it has been suggested that the niche may have provided an architectural prototype for Masaccio's Trinity fresco in Santa Maria Novella, however, there are a number of discrepancies that most scholars have not pointed out. Zervas discusses the proportional similarities between Brunelleschi's architecture and the niche, but also observes that Donatello utilized features that were never used by the architect.²⁰⁸ Most important, the type of architecture from which the forms are derived, though related, has some essential differences.

The Orsanmichele niche, like the Trinity fresco, implies a triumphal archway, but does so in a way that bears a closer relationship to the type found on small-scale antique funerary monuments,²⁰⁹ than to the triumphal

Saalman, "Filippo Brunelleschi: Capital Studies," 115-117. Discussing the stylistic unanimity among the major figures in Florence (in architectural forms) in the early 1420s, Saalman states that Brunelleschi's capitals differ considerably from both antique and Florentine proto-Renaissance prototypes. See also Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 109-152.

²⁰⁸ Zervas, Parte Guelfa, esp. 145-152.

²⁰⁹ Janson (Donatello, 50) addresses the issue of the antique sources of the niche, although he does not suggest specific antique monuments. See also idem., "The Revival of Antiquity in Early Renaissance Sculpture," Medieval and Renaissance Studies, V, 1969, 80-102 which includes a discussion of the categories of monuments, including triumphal arches and sarcophagi, used by fifteenth-century artists. See Antonio Minto, "Il sarcophago romano del Duomo di Cortona," Rivista d'arte XXVI, 1950, 1-22, who published the Roman Dionysian sarcophagus of the second-century that Vasari referred to as a source of inspiration for Donatello and Brunelleschi. A number of scholars have suggested

arches of Rome. From these monuments Donatello conflated pedimented doorways and round-headed niches with full-length standing figures, as in Figures 65a-65c from the Camposanto of Pisa. Both types employed spiral colonettes with ionic impost blocks as support members, sometimes set between a colossal order of pilasters. Most significant, the iconographic concepts of the sculptural decoration, as well as the specific motifs, are derived from funerary commemoration rather than monumental-scale antique architecture.

Moreover, the sculpture originally placed in this niche, Donatello's St. Louis of Toulouse, was designed so that the architecture created a kind of close-fitting background, the figure large in proportion to the aedicula and surrounding motifs (Figure 66). Indeed, the figure of St. Louis is so large in proportion to the niche that some scholars were led to question the original form of the aedicula.²¹⁰ However, when the St. Louis was briefly placed in the niche in the 1940s (see Figure 62), it was found that the floor of the aedicula still contained the

sources for the architectural elements of the niche. See the pivotal studies of Bernardo Marrai, Donatello nelle opere di decorazione architettonica, Florence, 1903; Margrit Lisner, "Zur frühen Bildhauerarchitektur Donatellos," Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst, IX-X, 1958-59, 72-127; and Meinolf Trudzinski, Beobachtungen zu Donatellos Antikenrezeption, Berlin, 1986. See Zervas (Parte Guelfa, 138-143) for a recent discussion of the derivation of the architectural motifs, including the Romanesque sources of Donatello's unusual archivolt molding.

²¹⁰ Janson, Donatello, 56.

aperture to hold the lower tip of the saint's staff.²¹¹

The meaning of the figure itself provides one explanation for the conflicting proportions: the youthful saint, dressed in ecclesiastical garments that appear far too large, enveloping him in their folds, seems as awkward in his niche as in his garments. The dual royal and Franciscan hagiography of St. Louis, particularly his unwillingness to take on the mantle of earthly power, is expressed with great effectiveness through Donatello's juxtaposition of these discordant elements.²¹²

Another motivation for the unusual proportions is apparent when we turn to antique monuments that utilize a shell niche to display standing figures. The prototypes demonstrate that these figures were commonly juxtaposed to a tightly fitted niche (Figures 67 and 68). Donatello's use of a figure seemingly disproportionate to the space was surely intentional, and directly linked to his classical funerary prototypes.

The standard formula for most antique monuments of this type involved, in various combinations, a panelled

²¹¹ Ibid. In 1945, the figure was briefly replaced in the niche and, as Janson states, a socket was found that corresponds with the placement of the tip of the crozier of the saint. See Donatello Studien, for a recent hypothesis concerning the placement of the figure in the niche.

²¹² See John White (1967, 78) who addresses Donatello's use of drapery as a parallel to the psychological burden of office. See also Goffen, Spirituality in Conflict, Appendix, for a discussion of Donatello's St. Louis in this context.

doorway, a pediment, framing colonettes and pilasters, garlands, and assorted putti or winged genii. These motifs could be found on numerous monuments available to Donatello, all of which emphasized the victory over death. A Roman sarcophagus that was in the Baptistery in Florence during the Quattrocento, for example, shows Mercury psychopompos emerging from a panelled doorway that represents the Gate of Hades (Figure 69).²¹³ Again, the portal is enclosed by pilasters and surmounted by a triangular pediment. Symbols of the triumph over death are consistently used in the spaces surrounding the portal and aedicula containing the deceased in antique funerary sculpture. Other Roman sarcophagi portrayed the Seasons as winged amorette or genii and symbolized the constant renewal of time and of life (Figure 70). Easily identified, the genii hold baskets of flowers, fruit, or game and were also used on monumental triumphal arches.²¹⁴ On the Orsanmichele niche, cherubim heads punctuating the garlands on the entablature, the wings of an eagle behind the image of the Trinity, and the spandrel figures are all

²¹³ See Bober and Rubenstein, Antique Sculpture, 58-59. This sarcophagus of the third century C.E., was among the Roman relics that Boccaccio noted in the Baptistery. It was moved in the nineteenth century, restored briefly to the Baptistery, and is now in the courtyard of the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence. See also Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 142.

²¹⁴ For a discussion of the Seasons and other motifs in Roman funerary iconography see Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World, 245-281; Bober and Rubenstein, Antique Sculpture, 93.

derived from antique eschatological symbols. Donatello not only used the architectural framework, but also transformed several motifs found on antique sarcophagi - gorgoneia, Bacchic masks, and amorette holding garlands - into the relief sculpture of the Orsanmichele niche.

The decorative program of the niche includes numerous motifs drawn from Donatello's antique sources. Only one is specifically Christian in meaning and origin; included in the classical pediment is an image of the Trinity in relief, represented as a three-headed God.²¹⁵ This image establishes an important iconographic connection between Masaccio's fresco and Donatello's niche and, further, links them both to the iconography of Host receptacles.²¹⁶

A small door to a Host tabernacle, attributed to Filarete, demonstrates this connection between the niche and Sacrament tabernacles (Figure 71).²¹⁷ The

²¹⁵ Martin Wackernagel (Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der florentinischen Renaissance, Leipzig, 1938, 217) connects the image to that of Prudence and then asserts that the Trinity was included as a Parte Guelfa emblem. Janson (Donatello, 53, note 6) refutes this and demonstrates that other representations of the image, such as that on the portal of the Sala dei Capitani in the Palazzo di Parte Guelfa, postdate the niche and thus are based on the Orsanmichele niche Trinity.

²¹⁶ See M. Schmaus, "La Trinité et l' Eucharistie," in Eucaristia, 699-707, for a discussion of the Eucharist as the glorification of the Trinity.

²¹⁷ The door, 36.3 X 26.2 cm., has traces of polychrome and gilding. For a brief discussion, provenance and bibliography, see Donatello e i Suoi. Scultura Fiorentina del primo Rinascimento, ed. Alan Phipps Darr and Giorgio Bonsanti, Detroit, 1986, 211-212. From W. von Bode (Denkmäler der Renaissance-Sculptur Toscanas, Munich 1892-

correspondence to Donatello's niche on Orsanmichele is found particularly in the lunette which contains a three-headed image of the Trinity. Resembling a church portal, it includes a standing Man of Sorrows, under an arch, on the doorway within a classicizing architectural structure. An Annunciation in the upper tier also links its imagery to the earlier Sienese tabernacles. Moreover, the monument provides a further tie between the niche and eucharistic tabernacles; in addition to the images of God the Father and Christ, classicizing Sacrament tabernacles frequently include an image of the dove of the Holy Spirit. In the theology of the central Sacrament of the Church, the Trinity functions vitally in the union of humankind with God and was the subject of special veneration for both St. Francis and St. Louis of Toulouse.²¹⁸

As we have seen in Chapter One of this study, Paschasius established the theological link regarding the

1905, 178) on, the tabernacle door has been consistently attributed to Filarete or a follower, c.1438-47, due to its resemblances to the doors of St. Peter's. However, while it bears a resemblance to Filarete's work, some features, such as the floriate design on the pilasters, indicate that it may be a work of the second half of the fifteenth century.

²¹⁸ Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 142 discusses the visual formula of the Trinity and cites the biographies of St. Louis for his special devotion to the Trinity. See Bartolomeo di Pisa, De Conformitate Vitae Beati Francisci ad Vitam Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, 1906, vol. I, 112, 425, 449 and vol. II, 455-57 (written in 1399), as well as Giovanni d'Orta, Vita S. Lodovici, 1890, 310-321 (written c.1319-34).

Eucharist and the Trinity, saying that Christ, as "God born man" had mingled his human flesh with his Divine nature and thus under the Sacrament "we are all one in God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" because "the Father is in Christ and Christ is in us" through communion. "On this account it is that we are made one body naturally with Christ."²¹⁹ Thus the unusual incorporation of an image of the Trinity on the shrine for Donatello's St. Louis not only demonstrates its symbolic link to the Trinity fresco, but also explains in part the reason later sculptors of Sacrament receptacles found the forms of the niche so appropriate to their own purposes.

In order to understand this classical initiative in the context of the early Quattrocento Florentine ambience, it is necessary to further explore the contemporary example of Masaccio's Trinity, commissioned for the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella.²²⁰ By the fifteenth century, Santa Maria Novella was the most important center for Corpus Domini worship in Florence,

²¹⁹ See Macy, Theologies, 27, who paraphrases Paschasius' De trinitate.

²²⁰ The bibliography on Masaccio's fresco is extensive. The most significant iconographic studies include: Schubring, Italienische Plastik, 120; Tolnay, "Renaissance d'une fresque," 29; Ursula Schlegel, "Observations on Masaccio's Trinity Fresco," 31; and Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," passim. For the sacramental imagery of the painting see especially Goffen, "Masaccio's Trinity and the Letter to Hebrews," 489-504.

superseding the earlier focal point of Sant'Ambrogio with its relic of a miraculous Host.²²¹

The fresco was the largest display of the Corpus Christi of the time and, of particular significance to this study, classical architecture enframes the body of Christ.²²² One of the most notable visual factors in Masaccio's Trinity is its perspectival recession, coinciding with the body of Christ displayed in the center (Figure 72).²²³ This perspective chamber was based on monumental scale architecture, rather than an antique funerary precedent. Conversely, the aedicula of Donatello's niche contains decorative panels culminating in a shell motif delineating the back wall, for which Donatello combined two primary antique funerary archetypes (Figures 73a-b and 74). The Trinity fresco, far more than Donatello's niche, foreshadows the type of church that Brunelleschi was to develop, despite differences in some of the architectural details used by Masaccio. The fresco

²²¹ See Eve Borsook, "Cults and Imagery in Sant'Ambrogio, Florence," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, XXV, 1981, 147-202.

²²² Members of the Lenzi family are generally accepted as the patrons depicted in the fresco; the tomb of the Lenzi gonfaloniere is the basis for that assumption. (See Goffen "Masaccio's Trinity Fresco," 489ff.) It is also interesting to note that Lenzi was an officer of the Parte Guelfa.

²²³ Schubring, Italienische Plastik, 120, was the first to note that Masaccio's Trinity fresco was used as a source for the perspective tabernacle. See also Tolnay, "Renaissance d'une fresque," 29; Ursula Schlegel, "Observations on Masaccio's Trinity Fresco," 31; and Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," passim.

appears as a fictive chapel and was clearly meant to look monumental in scale. The scene opens to the viewer through the means of a triumphal arch, with the figures of the donors, John the Evangelist, and the Virgin all suggesting that the architecture is of normal dimensions.

In Masaccio's fresco, the origins of the image of God the Father supporting the crucified Christ have been traced to a northern motif known as the "Gnadenstuhl" or Throne of Grace (Figure 75).²²⁴ In addition, the type was known in Italy; images appear in works attributed to a follower of Nardo di Cione (Figure 76) and to Luca di Tommè (Figure 77). This specifically eucharistic image developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, focused on the equation of the Sacrament with the Crucifixion and the complete acceptance of both by God the Father. As Rona Goffen has shown, the Trinity fresco can be associated with Paul's letter to the Hebrews, especially in terms of the spatial organization of the sanctuary. Moreover, among the offertory prayers of the fifteenth century is one that specifically invokes the Trinity.²²⁵

The image of the Crucified would have been especially compelling to fifteenth-century viewers because Host wafers were embossed on one side with the Crucifixion. Further, the transubstantiated Host seen as the Man of

²²⁴ Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei", 20-27. See also Goffen, "Masaccio's Trinity", 489ff.

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sorrows is an image of the corporeal Christ which asserts the Sacrifice and is in a miraculous state of living death.²²⁶ Thus the imagery of the Trinity fresco, with God the Father displaying the Body, is logically associated with tabernacles of the Sacrament. If we accept that Brunelleschi's Campo Corbellini tabernacle was executed in the classical manner, probably resembling the niche as well as the fictive outer structure of Masaccio's Trinity fresco and precisely contemporary with the latter monument, it is probable that the equation of the two was brought to mind by later tabernacle sculptors.²²⁷

²²⁶ Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," 26. See also the exhibition catalogue, Die Messe Gregors des Grossen. Vision. Kunst. Realität, Köln, 1982.

²²⁷ Jack Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei", 11, supports the theory of Brunelleschi's direct participation in the Trinity fresco and believes that there is some indication that the San Jacopo Host tabernacle was related to Masaccio's work. The fresco was quite obviously used by sculptors of later wall tabernacles, and Freiberg effectively addresses the question of why Masaccio's work was understood by later sculptors as possessing special affinity with containers of the Eucharist. Further, Freiberg states that Brunelleschi's position as inventor of linear perspective makes it possible that it was he who first used it in the context of a sacrament tabernacle. He implies (p.10) that the Campo Corbellini tabernacle may have been the first to use a perspective space since Brunelleschi invented linear perspective and probably the classicizing tabernacle, he was likely to have been the inventor of the combination of the two.

However, since there is no evidence of what Brunelleschi's tabernacle looked like, it is futile to project specific details. Moreover, if Brunelleschi used the perspectivized format it seems peculiar that other sculptors did not imitate it sooner. The limited perspective in Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacle for Sant'Egidio of 1449-1450 does not really depend on the Trinity fresco. The first true reflection of the perspective space does not appear until Desiderio da

civic Religion and the Niche of the Parte Guelfa

Several other points need to be examined in regard to the context of Donatello's niche on Orsanmichele. First, the Parte Guelfa niche and sculpture were commissioned by a civic organization for one of the most emphatically spiritual places of the commune. Second, the fundamental basis of Quattrocento Christianity was a central emphasis on the salvific nature of the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, any funerary motifs found on Christian monuments must be viewed in the context of death and resurrection, salvation or damnation. Finally, the models of classical style employed by Donatello for the Parte Guelfa niche were specifically funereal. Antique monuments utilized a variety of images that symbolized the triumph over death, not only in the more elaborate

Settignano utilizes it in the central area of the San Lorenzo tabernacle of 1461, after which it became a very common element. There is a possibility that Bernardo Rossellino might have used it for one or both of his tabernacles for the Badia of Florence and Arezzo in the 1430s, but the same objections apply. Although Parronchi (op.cit.) does not cite Freiberg, his ideas regarding the origin of the perspective tabernacle coincide.

Other objections should also be noted here. Extant Sacrament tabernacles of the first half of the fifteenth focus on the sportello area, which was seen as part of a portal. There was no precedent for creating a Sacrament tabernacle as a fictive chapel and it is unlikely that it would have been an effective device since the size of the Campo Corbellini tabernacle, though apparently relatively large, was no where near that of the Trinity fresco. Desiderio's San Lorenzo tabernacle is far larger than any previous receptacle, and the illusion was thus more effective. Moreover, Brunelleschi's tabernacle, as stated in the documents, was placed on a pier in the choir area, a location that would mitigate against the establishment of an illusion of deep space.

figurative scenes of Orphic journeys and battles, but also in eschatological motifs integrated with the architectural features. These motifs were adapted by Donatello for his niche for the Parte Guelfa.

In Tuscany in general and Florence in particular, the visual symbolism of the antique world and its potential for Christian meaning possessed an unprecedented power in the early Quattrocento. However, although Florentine literati had been formulating cultural and literary parallels to antiquity for political purposes, up to the 1420s there had been little consistent exploitation of the visual traditions of antiquity.²²⁸

Zervas has discussed the political import of the antique for Florence and believes that the niche on Orsanmichele was created in a classical mode as the Parte Guelfa's assertion of kinship with Roman Republicanism. She connects Florentine propagandistic aims, particularly associated with Leonardo Bruni, with the formulation of the new architectural style.²²⁹ Pointing out that the

²²⁸ See Gombrich, "From the Revival of letters to the Reform of the Arts," Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower, London, 1967, 71-82. Although certainly not the first reference to the Roman origins of Florence, Leonardo Bruni's treatise, Historiarum Florentini populi (written c.1415-1421), was extremely influential.

²²⁹ Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 119, cites Book I of Bruni's Florentine history, in which he asserts that the Florence Baptistry was constructed by Roman troops as a temple, rather than during Imperial times. (See Historiarum florentinini populi libri XII, ed. E. Santini, in Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, XIX, III, Città di Castello, 1926.) Zervas states that, "Given the Guelf party's identification

parte Guelfa had numerous connections to humanists and humanist concepts, Zervas asserts that the origins of classicism in the visual arts was connected mainly to republican ideals. However, Zervas fails to note that every classicizing monument created in the early Renaissance had a religious context. Nor does she note the suggestions of architectural historians regarding the intrinsically spiritual implications of fifteenth-century classical architecture.²³⁰ While I believe that Zervas is

with its Roman republican ancestors at precisely the time of the Saint Louis commission, its operai and captains may well have requested that the Parte tabernacle incorporate certain architectural features from the "antique" Baptistery, and this in fact was done." Bennett and Wilkins (Donatello, 72-74) have also discussed the import of the Parte Guelfa monument, calling it "Perhaps the politically most complicated commission undertaken by Donatello...meant to convey, or strengthen, the power of the Parte." They cite Bruni's Laudatio Florentinae Urbis which says of the Parte Guelfa, "But of all the magistracies and there are many in this city, none is more illustrious, nor founded on loftier principles, than that called the heads of the Parte Guelfa," as well as his history of Florence in which Bruni claims that the Parte had started in ancient Florence.

²³⁰ See the ground-breaking discussion of the ideal of the central plan in Renaissance churches by Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism, New York, 1971 (first published in 1949). Wittkower says, "Alberti was consciously linking his own ideas with those of the early Christians. Emperor Constantine's Rome had a particular attraction for him and other men of his time, because it was then, and only then, that pagan antiquity was blended with the spirit of faith and purity of the early Church" (p. 5). Scholars have also noted the iconographic parallel between Renaissance forms and the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. See for example E. Battisti, Brunelleschi, London, 1981, 97 and Heydenreich and Lotz, Architecture in Italy 1400-1600, Baltimore, 1974, 329, note 29. See also S. Sinding-Larsen, "Some Functional and Iconographical Aspects of the Centralized Church in the Renaissance," Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia, II, 1965, 203-252; P. W. Lehmann, "Alberti and Antiquity: Additional

correct in stating that the patrons of artists working all'antica used the style with an eye to civic promotion, her simplification of the significance of the formal influences, as well as the concept of a purely secular propaganda, is open to question.

On the contrary, the ideas of humanism and Christianity were not mutually exclusive in the Renaissance.²³¹ A wealthy Florentine official like Goro Dati, as an operaio, was involved in important religious commissions, but also acted as Gonfaloniere. It should also be remembered that the elite educated class, those with a "humanist" background, were in many cases also members of the clergy; close family ties of "humanists" to the upper clergy were also very common. For example, Goro Dati's brother was the General of the Dominican Order and was responsible for some of the building projects of Santa Maria Novella.²³² Humanists functioned in multiple roles:

Observations, Art Bulletin, LXX, 1988, 388-400; R. Krautheimer, "Alberti's Templum Etruscum," Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art, ed. J. Ackerman, et al., New York and London, 1969, 333-344; M. Horster, "Brunelleschi und Alberti in ihrer Stellung zur römischen Antike," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, XVII, 1973, 29-64.

²³¹ See C. Stinger, Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439) and Christian Antiquity, Albany, New York, 1977. Significantly, Bennett and Wilkins (Donatello, 73) state that, "It is not surprising that Bruni, who was with the Curia in Rome, thought well of the Parte Guelfa...." See below for more discussion regarding the notions of the antique in Florence.

²³² Gilbert, "Earliest Guide," 36.

merchants, public officials, secretaries in the papal curia, influential clerics, and so on. And just as social roles were determined by differing circumstances, different artistic styles were appropriate to different settings.²³³

The meaning of the antique in the Parte Guelfa's public statement on Orsanmichele is far more likely to have been part of this intricate structure of civic and

²³³ Gilbert, "Earliest Guide," 28 takes a view that seems to deny any significant humanist influence in early Renaissance monuments. Accurately observing that the earliest classicizing monuments were for churches, he also notes that the International Style was praised by secular figures. In addition, he briefly urges that Alberti not be taken as an example of the taste of the humanists, but the exception. Gilbert seems to draw the conclusion that because classicism was a style used exclusively for church art and International Style monuments were praised by humanists, then early humanists must not have had a part in the formulation of the Renaissance style. It is true that Alberti, writing in Florence in the 1430s, was a learned humanist who obviously promoted a classical visual style and that his dual role as a humanist and artist was unique at the time. Nevertheless, Gilbert's contention that he represents an aberration is unfounded. Alberti did play a unique role in the fifteenth century, with one foot in both worlds; as an artist-writer of an elite class he published a treatise first in Latin, all'antica, not for other artists per se, but for his own educated class and thus paved the way to the endorsement of classicism as a visual as well as a literary style, aiding in its promotion in a broader arena. (See Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, for a discussion of the original audience for Alberti's Latin treatise.) In addition, Alberti understood the reciprocal relationship between humanism and theology and he was well aware of the typological connotations of all'antica architecture. See the discussion regarding the meaning of Alberti's architecture by Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles, 1-13. It should also be emphasized that Alberti's architectural treatise (written between 1443 and 1452) was not published until well after the revival of classical forms in church architecture and furnishing had been established by Brunelleschi, Donatello, and their contemporaries.

religious interests. To acknowledge the degree to which religious considerations were interrelated with secular interests is essential for our understanding of this pivotal monument. The maintenance of secular power in quattrocento Florence was aided by the tolerance and sanction of religious authority; in addition, the assertion of the sanction of God formed an important part in public behavior and promotion.²³⁴

Florentine civic pride was surely enhanced by the belief in its Roman heritage.²³⁵ However, that heritage

²³⁴ Trexler (Public Life, 101-102) demonstrates that the young Florentine churchgoer learned basic principles that were applied to every situation and that the rituals of everyday life were connected to a "language of gesture" taught from early childhood in church. Appropriate prayers and gestures performed at the proper moment helped to determine the way a Florentine functioned in an overarching social context. Preachers and lay moralists were intent on emphasizing that good church behavior was as important as secular behavior: "Moralists presumed with their audiences that there was an elemental unity between church and street behavior, based on one principle of order and utilitarianism." Trexler uses the example of Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, whose Ricordi demonstrates the link between the secular and the religious. Morelli mentions a person who was "always intent on acquiring the love of God his creator by his alms and good works, and also the friendship of good men of power and good name."

²³⁵ Onians ("Brunelleschi: Humanist or Nationalist," 259-272 and idem., Bearers of Meaning, 130-157) discusses early Renaissance architecture and Florentine nationalism in relation to the revival of Tuscan forms. However, it seems likely that these ideas are complementary. Tuscan Romanesque architecture may have been an important influence on Brunelleschi's revival of classical architectural forms, and it seems that Masaccio's Trinity fresco is equally related to this movement as to Donatello's interest in the more intricate types of classical funerary architecture. This interest is evident in other monuments created by Donatello: the Cavalcanti Altar is the most obvious example, but the Cantoria is another monument of the early 1430s that

was perceived in spiritual as well as secular terms, as a number of scholars have demonstrated.²³⁶ Early in the fifteenth century, the connection between Florence and the antique world was also promoted in the sermons of Giovanni Dominici.²³⁷ In his Ash Wednesday sermon of 1406, the Dominican exhorted his fellow citizens of Florence to flourish through greater virtue; in the same sermon he castigates his Florentine brethren to choose wise and experienced leaders who act for the "common good" and reviles those members of the council as children whose

partakes of Donatello's imaginative use of the antique.

²³⁶ Chastel ("Un épisode de la symbolique urbaine au XVe siècle: Florence et Rome Cité de Dieu," 75-79) argued for the comparison of Florence to ancient Rome, not as an unbridled admiration for pagan antiquity, but as a parallel in the model of a Christian ideal city. In addition, fifteenth-century Florentine illustrations of Augustine's text, show Florence rather than Rome as the City of God. Trinkaus ("The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists and Reformers" 341) also discusses this issue as does Simons ("Patronage in the Tornabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence" 245-246). Simons (citing Busignani and Bencini, Quartiere di Santa Maria Novella, 105-107) states that, "Local legend, dating at least from Villani's time, encouraged the transfer of location, since it claimed that Florence's own Santa Maria Maggiore was built, 'as at Rome', during the city's reconstruction, and it was also believed to have been directed by the pope." See also Davis ("Topographical and Historical Propaganda in Early Florentine Chronicles and in Villani," 33-51) who discusses Florence as the new Christian Rome.

²³⁷ Lesnick, ("Civic Preaching," 210-214) demonstrates that Dominici's sermons were in a long tradition of Dominican civic involvement in Florence. From the end of the thirteenth century, Dominicans preached civic harmony, especially in regard to the Guelphs and Ghibellines who had been in conflict for some time.

lack of maturity or sins lead to bad governance.²³⁸

Dominici equates civic pride with spiritual values and encourages his listeners to recall their glorious Roman heritage and their status as Florentines:

Remember...that you are a Florentine! And if you don't want to be a hypocrite, look at your origin; etymology teaches it. If you look at your origin, you'll see that you've descended from higher to lower. Oh, thinking of this, how much you would humble yourself! Descended from the Romans, so noble, so flourishing [fioriti] in virtue! If you are Florentine, then make sure that you blossom [fiorischa] and that everything doesn't spoil. Think where flowers are. And know that one of the reasons Florence got its name was because this land was superabundant with flowers and lilies. Where are your blossomed [fiorite] works?

...If you are a Florentine you must fight for the patria, not steal from the commune, not practice usury, not sodomize....

Now you have understood what hypocrisy is and if you fit that name. And if you do not feel yourself a true man, a true Christian, a true Florentine, return, return! Listen: Tonight Christ in Glory will teach you....Be truly faithful, good men, good Christians, good Florentines.²³⁹

Furthermore, Giovanni Dominici's vision of Florence relates to the concept of the New Jerusalem in a Christian state. Historians have always pointed to Savonarola's promotion of a Florentine theocracy, a new order of civic

²³⁸ Ibid., 220. It should be noted that this reference to unsatisfactory leaders as immature appears to be related to Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 5:11-14 which states that "...you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word....for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil."

²³⁹ Ibid., 219-220.

life in the ideological context of a New Jerusalem.²⁴⁰

But Lesnick demonstrates that Dominican civic concerns led to this concept long before the tumultuous events in Florence at the end of the century. He states that much of Dominican civicism depended on the Thomistic-Aristotelian idea of the "secular bene commune" as the basis of the Christian community and points out that Dominici makes a clear connection between being a Christian and being a Florentine.²⁴¹

Dominici's reference to Jerusalem in the Palm Sunday sermon of 1406 is enlightening. Discussing Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the preacher makes it apparent that salvation cannot be achieved through a pro forma adherence to religious ritual, but rather by means of sincere faith and in the "temple of grace" of the new Jerusalem:

Sanna filio Davit beneditti qui venit in nomine domini." The crowd cried out these words at the top of their voices. "Health to you, son of blessed David, and may he who comes in the name of the Lord be well." And as events turned out, it appears it

²⁴⁰ See for example, Donald Weinstein, Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance, Princeton, 1970, 27-66. The ideal of the New Jerusalem, however, was not limited to Florence. Lotte Brand Phillip, (The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck, Princeton, 1971, 180ff) discusses the connections of Philip the Good of Burgundy with the Holy Land and the ideas regarding the earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem of that court. She also suggests ("Raum und Zeit in der Verkündigung des Genter Altares," Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch, XXIX, 1967, 62-104) that Jan van Eyck's depiction of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Ghent Altarpiece, particularly bound to eucharistic symbolism, may have been inspired in part by Italian art in its knowledge of Early Christian forms and iconography.

²⁴¹ Lesnick, "Civic Preaching," 220-222.

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²⁴¹ Lesnick, "Civic Preaching," 220-222.

wasn't enough to cry out with these voices to be saved; this good thought wasn't enough, for shortly you could hear these same ones cry, "Crucify him, crucify him." And you should note that this shouting of the people occurred in these places: first, outside Jerusalem; second, inside Jerusalem; third, inside the temple. Neither those who cried out outside Jerusalem nor those who cried out inside were saved. Jerusalem is a vision of peace. Christians cry out within the vision of peace. But the temple of grace is necessary, for without that you would cry out in vain.²⁴²

The Florentine civic ideal of peace, prosperity, and good government, can thus be seen in the context of two interconnecting concepts. First, exploiting the tradition of Christian typology, Florence could be seen as the New Jerusalem, an old and new order of communal statehood under the grace of God and, second, a visual historicism referring to the earliest days of Christianity. The perfection of antiquity, its greatest glory, was in its reordering under Christ.

The Niche in the Context of the New Jerusalem

In the extraordinary Parte Guelfa tabernacle on Orsanmichele, vital aspects of the unification of niche and figure have been overlooked in the effort to connect its iconography to civic interests. However, the classicizing architectural setting, with motifs derived from small-scale antique funerary monuments, was surely used intentionally to reinforce the spiritual virtue, patriarchal authority, and divine sanction of the patrons,

²⁴² Ibid., 220-221.

by reminding Florentines of their heritage. Saint Louis of Toulouse had not only rejected the worldly mantle of power in the form of his bishopric, but also his hereditary kingdoms. Significantly, as successor to the Angevin throne, he not only was heir to Naples and Sicily, but to Jerusalem. Thus Louis himself, a Guelph and Florentine patron, could be seen as presiding over the new Christian order in Florence. In this monument, there is an unprecedented integration of form and meaning with its classicism bound to its spiritual ideals.

Politics, Religion, and All'Antica Forms

In order to demonstrate the inextricable combination of form and meaning inherent in early Renaissance classicism, it is necessary to reevaluate Donatello's monument in terms of its specific all'antica style. First, it provided the earliest example in Tuscany of a shrine that fully utilized the format and motifs of antique funerary sculpture; the niche for St. Louis on Orsanmichele provided artists with a model that used all'antica resurrectional motifs for Christian meaning. As we have seen, Donatello transformed full-scale putti into cherubim heads in the entablature, but retained the beribboned, blossoming, fruit-filled garlands of antiquity of the same type that Jacopo had used more than a decade earlier for the Caretto tomb. On the base of the niche, not only did Donatello use masks similar to those on

sarcophagus lids (Figures 78 and 79), but also directly transferred flying amoretti bearing a commemorative wreath or clipeus (Figure 80). In fact when viewed from the ends, the masks on antique sarcophagi sometimes flank a commemorative wreath (Figure 81). Donatello used the various motifs on diverse architectural members, rather than adopting the more rigid usage of Roman funerary monuments. However, the funerary meanings, as well as the designs, are transferred intact to the Christian context.

Although secular interests eventually exploited the associations with antiquity that religious commissions pioneered,²⁴³ classicism in liturgical art in the Renaissance functioned in a Christian iconographic tradition. As we have seen, the knowledge of the uses of antique funerary monuments had not been lost; sarcophagi, cinerary urns, and tomb altars (Figure 82) were preserved and frequently reused, providing a significant visual and iconographic example for artists. The equation of tomb and altar can be demonstrated repeatedly in Christian symbolism; even Durandus had equated the two explicitly. Donatello's classical tabernacle for the Parte Guelfa makes reference to both tomb and altar, an ideal setting

²⁴³ With the appearance in the 1440s of the humanist tomb, created expressly for Leonardo Bruni within the specific context of a Christian commemorative monument, civic and religious interests in antiquity united in a more obvious synthesis. Even in the later Renaissance, however, secularism still must be seen in the context of a powerful spiritual subtext.

for the Franciscan saint.²⁴⁴ Indeed, Louis' status as a priest-bishop is emphatic;²⁴⁵ he is surrounded by the rich, gilded mantle and mitre and holds the superlative crozier, to which a crook must have been attached. The classicizing hexagonal ornament on the staff, with its small winged victories holding heraldic shields, resembles a small reliquary shrine.²⁴⁶ Donatello's tempietto-like crozier terminal, in addition, relates to a particular type of antique cinerary urn, such as the one found in the Capitoline Museum, Rome (see Figure 82). This six-sided ash urn displays a winged eros dancing on each facade, and

²⁴⁴ Zervas (Parte Guelfa, 133) relates the circumstances surrounding the demise of Louis on August 19, 1297, less than a year after becoming Bishop of Toulouse. She emphasizes his deathbed confession of the burden of the bishopric, taken from the vita of Giovanni d'Orta:

May I die and be greatly freed, for the burden of the bishopric which was placed on my shoulders is grievously burdensome to me, and because of excessive worldly business I was not able to be free for prayer and devotion, as I would have wished.

²⁴⁵ In order to receive the bishopric of Toulouse, Boniface VIII granted a special dispensation to receive the priestly orders. Louis became a full member of the Franciscan order in a secret ceremony at Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome in December 1296 and a few days later became Bishop of Toulouse. See M.N. Toynbee, Saint Louis of Toulouse and the Process of Canonisation in the Fourteenth Century, Manchester, 1929, 97-99. See also Zervas, Parte Guelfa, 132.

²⁴⁶ It is difficult to be certain of the extent of the association, but it should be noted that a type of reservation of the Host has a direct visual relationship with a bishop's staff. A tall crozier-like hook was occasionally used in churches to suspend a canopied pyx containing the Eucharist. See Braun, Christliche Altar, vol. 2, 146, 605-608, 621.

masks with long, flowing beards occupy each upper corner of the cinerarium.²⁴⁷

The implications of a triumphal arch, frequently noted, are important to the royal connotations. Donatello, in using antique monuments as a source for creating a tabernacle for St. Louis could not have failed to recognize their multiple implications.

Used in a Christian context, the antique commemorative features worked together with Donatello's unusual depiction of St. Louis to form a unified whole. True to the spirituality of the Franciscan saint, the artist equipped him with a setting that expressed the triumph of the soul over earthly existence and worldly possessions. Adapting the rich classical funerary vocabulary in order to illustrate an exemplary Christian victory over death, the saint and the commune assert their virtue.

The enclosure is meant as a tabernacle to honor the Guelph patron, St. Louis of Toulouse, but Donatello went far beyond an ordinary shrine, just as St. Louis was far from an ordinary patron saint. The guilds of Florence all had traditional patrons, and the statues created for Orsanmichele reflect this fact. The Parte Guelfa's adoption of the Franciscan saint, with French royal

²⁴⁷ For a brief discussion of this ash urn of Lucius Lucilius Felix see Altmann, Römanischen Grabältere, 110-111.

associations was extraordinary in Florence.²⁴⁸ Louis of Toulouse's royalty, his status as the rightful heir to the Angevin throne and bishop priest, as well as his mendicant connections are all significant factors in the architecture of the Parte Guelfa's niche and sculpture.²⁴⁹

Moreover, the communal position of the Guelph party should also be considered in determining the visual formula of the niche. Political assertions in visual form were an important custom, but the potent link between political entities and the Church were an essential component of the era. Traditionally associated with the papal party, the Guelphs in Florence had also managed to ally themselves to the crown of France. Thus, at least in theory, they had the sanction of both worldly and spiritual authority. In using the architecture and motifs from late Antique and Early Christian funerary monuments, Donatello was able to provide the Guelph party and their patron saint, Louis, with an iconography that utilized both civic and religious typology.

The architecture and the sculptural motifs provided unsurpassed resurrectional imagery. The point to be emphasized in the use of this commemorative and funerary classicism, is not the incorporation of death imagery per

²⁴⁸ See Zervas, Parte Guelfa, for a history of the adoption of Louis as a city patron.

²⁴⁹ The St. Louis was, after all, eventually removed to the facade of Santa Croce, underscoring the Franciscan implications.

se, but the incorporation of images of Christian triumph over death - rebirth, and everlasting life. Thus the innovative niche not only enshrines the saint and emphasizes his special status, but also provides specifically Christian meaning.

The all'antica forms of the architectural framework of the Parte Guelfa's Saint Louis of Toulouse incorporated religious and civic life into one framework. The fundamental role of religion in daily life and, as we have seen, an increasing emphasis on the central rite of the mass that embodied the pivotal concept of death and resurrection, was a potent combination. Purely civic organizations did not exist in fifteenth century Italy; alliance with, or at least the tolerance of, religious power was fundamental to secular power. The claim of God's grace or the sanction of the Almighty were essential bases for temporal authority. In Medieval or Renaissance Florence any public organization would have lacked validity without a connection to its religious institutions; civic propaganda naturally involved the use of religious imagery.²⁵⁰ The Parte Guelfa's use of antique formulae for self-aggrandizement would have been impotent without the references to Christian meaning,

²⁵⁰ This tradition can be seen in a number of forms; perhaps most obvious is the dual dedication of the communes of Italy to the Virgin and to a patron saint.

because of this delicately balanced political and spiritual structure of the Florentine community.

Donatello's use of a classical architectural-sculptural combination created an ensemble at Orsanmichele that was startling in its effect and that explicitly contrasted with the existing niches on the same building. The form and motifs of the niche intentionally provided an iconographic focus more effective than that of the familiar and more generalized spirituality of the gothic architecture of the surrounding niches.²⁵¹ However, that focus was not seen purely in terms of temporal power, but in the special context of a union with spiritual authority. Roman forms expressed the Early Christian ideal, associating Florence and the Parte Guelfa with the authority of the patriarchal foundations of Christianity. Creating the civic ideal of a new Christian order, Donatello's monument asserted the virtue and power of the Florentine commune and the Parte Guelfa in an unsurpassed visual formula.

The Genesis of Renaissance Sacrament Tabernacles and Their Relationship to the Niche

The most potent spiritual power in the Quattrocento was eucharistic and, as has been demonstrated, its power and meaning transcended clerical boundaries. Another

²⁵¹ The meaning of the funerary motifs is underscored by the previous niche by Ghiberti for his bronze St. John the Baptist. The same type of funerary sculpture informed the imagery in its gable.

important point that should be made in regard to the architectural setting of the Parte Guelfa niche concerns the eucharistic connotations of antique sepulchral imagery. As we have seen, the uses of the antique in the past had been emphatically eucharistic. In the Trecento the Ghibellines had been associated with Patarene and Cathar heretics who denied transubstantiation.²⁵² It is possible that the Parte Guelfa may have utilized the long-standing associations of classical funerary imagery, in part, to underscore their grace under God in the Christian community and assert their traditional alliance with papal eucharistic orthodoxy.²⁵³ The fact that Martin V had briefly placed the commune under interdict in 1419, the same year as the commission for the new tabernacle, would make the Christian dogmatic assertion all the more important.²⁵⁴

²⁵² See Borsook, "Cults and Imagery", 150. Lesnick ("Civic Preaching," 209-214) discusses the Dominican inquisition in Florence in the Dugento and Trecento which was "deeply colored by partisan politics." Peter Martyr (called "the hammer of the heretics") assisted the inquisitor in Florence, Ruggiero Calcagni, in the middle of the thirteenth century and, according to Lesnick, "confounded the terms 'heretic' and 'Ghibelline.'" In addition the anti-heretical Dominicans, the domini canes, were also called "guelforum canes."

²⁵³ For a discussion of the Ghibelline and Guelph parties in the Trecento see G. A. Brucker, Florentine Politics and Society 1343-1378, Princeton, 1962, pp. 87ff. and passim. The political use of eucharistic imagery bears further investigation.

²⁵⁴ The new Pope did so because Florence allowed envoys from Bologna, who had broken with the church, to enter the city. For a discussion of Florentine attitudes during this

This fusion of civic and religious interests had another important cultural precedent, not only in the general integration of religion into everyday life, but more specifically in the imaginative force of the Body of the Lord. As has been demonstrated, the power of the consecrated Host in Florentine political life was a significant factor in the Quattrocento. Richard Trexler's studies, depending on the archives of Florence, have been illuminating in this regard.²⁵⁵ To ally oneself with the interests of the Church and protect oneself by means of the Body of the Lord was prudent in both cynical and sincere thought.

The characteristics established in the Orsanmichele niche were momentous for the genesis of Renaissance Sacrament tabernacles. The iconography of the Christian triumph over death, Donatello's use of antique prototypes in the service of Christian meanings, and the formulation of an important new category of monument are interrelated. One fact cannot be overemphasized - the use of architectural all'antica forms in all of these monuments was a radical innovation, and one which links them closely. However, the classicism needs to be taken in

period see Brucker, Civic World, 424. See also Trexler, Public Life, 304.

²⁵⁵ See for example, Trexler, Public Life, 52-56, 93-96, 192-193 and passim. See also idem, Spiritual Power, esp. 126ff. and "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," Studies in the Renaissance, XIX, 1972, 7-41.

context. Classicism, as this study will explore in the following chapters, was adapted to the context of specific iconographies.

Scholars have been nearly unanimous in naming Florence as the birthplace of the Renaissance and Donatello, Masaccio, and Brunelleschi as its most original and influential innovators. Therefore, it is useful to review the monuments of the 1420s designed by these three extraordinary artists in Florence. His classical manner established, Brunelleschi created the first antique-style Sacrament tabernacle in 1426 for the church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini at the same time as the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo.²⁵⁶ The precedent for a classical-style tabernacle was thus established by the mid-1420s and was one among only a handful of monuments in the new style. Brunelleschi thus provided an important prototype for the notion of using a classical surround for a wall tabernacle.²⁵⁷ At least superficially, Brunelleschi's

²⁵⁶ Parronchi, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano," 240-241.

²⁵⁷ Despite the fact that several authors have suggested a connection to a tabernacle by Buggiano in the church of Sant'Ambrogio, even Ursula Schlegel ("Ein Sakramentstabernakel der Fruhrenaissance in S. Ambrogio in Florenz", Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte, XXIII, 1960, 170f.) finds no real evidence to support this contention. She states that it is not an exact copy of his adoptive father, but that the proportions and ornament are reminiscent of Brunelleschi. Everyone writing about tabernacles refers to Brunelleschi's tabernacle as the first classical one, but no one suggests that there may have been a difference between his and the most influential type of Eucharist receptacle created by Bernardo Rossellino. The tabernacles of Bernardo's shop closely resemble the

tabernacle, Donatello's niche, and Masaccio's fresco resembled each other; the similarities, rather than the differences, are particularly notable because these radical monuments were the first expressions of the classicism that would be embraced for centuries to come.²⁵⁸ However, it is not the mere fact of classicism that is significant, but rather its juxtaposition to funerary, commemorative and eucharistic symbolism. These factors provided an important visual connection for sculptors of Quattrocento Sacrament tabernacles.

All'antica Symbolism in Context

All western European art underwent important changes in the fifteenth century, both formal and iconographic. The most salient characteristic of religious art north of the Alps in the Quattrocento was the symbolism of everyday objects, aiming to underscore the teachings of the Church, particularly the growing emphasis on the

Orsanmichele niche; thus it is important to establish the precise relationship between early tabernacles and their architectural prototypes.

²⁵⁸ In contrast to Donatello's demonstrated sculptural aesthetic and his prototypes, small-scale funerary monuments, Brunelleschi's more architectural aesthetic may have created a tabernacle with some important distinctions from the niche. If the design for the Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele was the early expression of Donatello's idiosyncratic antique aesthetic, it is open to question how closely Brunelleschi's tabernacle, commissioned in the year following the completion of the niche, might resemble that monument. In fact, the resemblance might exist to the same degree as that between the Trinity fresco and the niche.

Eucharist. Religious art in Italy was no less disposed toward various levels of meaning, although it took a form unique to its historical, and in some senses, mythical past. I contend that the Italian version of this "hidden in plain sight" symbolism is contained in its predominant classicism. Rather than include objects of a domestic nature, Tuscan artists found that the funerary symbolism of antique monuments, so abundantly available in many church precincts, suited the aims of the prevailing focus on eucharistic symbolism. In addition, it could emphasize the ties to the earliest traditions of the Church, and assert a continuous ancestry back to the patriarchal days of early Christian Rome. Both the architectural features and the adjunct motifs could serve this purpose.

In Tuscany in general and Florence in particular, the symbolism of the ancient past was a powerful tool that could serve a number of related purposes; in the 1420s the visual traditions of antiquity were exploited to envision a new order under the grace of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

CLASSICAL TABERNACLES, BAPTISM, AND THE EUCHARIST

One of the most telling factors in the new all'antica style in the 1420s is the sudden emergence of a new category of monument in Italy - the large, sculpturally enriched eucharistic tabernacle. The idea of entombment is implicit in any receptacle for the consecrated Host, since the Host was habitually thought of as the true body of Christ. Further, eucharistic pyxes had been traditionally associated with the Holy Sepulchre.²⁵⁹ Placing the Body within the confines of a receptacle with antique funerary ornament was unmistakable in its symbolism. Not only was the tomb of Christ directly connected with eucharistic vessels, but throughout the Middle Ages antique sarcophagi had been reused as altar tables, combining the themes of sacrifice and burial.²⁶⁰ The Corpus Christi is unquestionably entombed in Sacrament tabernacles and the classicism of Quattrocento Host tabernacles, with reference to specific funerary motifs, enhanced and explicated the theme.

²⁵⁹ See this study, Ch. 1, esp. p.14 and passim. See King, Liturgies, 148-149 and Van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 27-31 regarding the Explanation of the Gallican Mass, where it is stated that the Host is reserved in pyxes shaped like a tower in reference to tomb cut out of rock - the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

²⁶⁰ See Braun, Christliche Altar, vol. 1.

The Siena Baptistery Font or a Tabernacle by Any Other Name

The elaborate font-tabernacle created for the Baptistery in Siena, another monument in the forefront of the new all'antica style, has been an object of speculation in terms of its status as a receptacle for holy oil²⁶¹ or, as has been explored at length by John Paoletti, as a tabernacle for the consecrated Host (Figure 83).²⁶² This study will contend that the monument was

²⁶¹ Its status as a holy oil receptacle was addressed by Lusini, Il San Giovanni di Siena e i suoi restauri, Florence, 1901, 31-33. Caspary (Sakramentstabernakel, 90-91) has stated without supporting evidence that all tabernacles associated with baptismal fonts were used only as holy oil containers. In the most recent monograph on the principal artist involved in the Baptistery commission, James Beck (Jacopo della Quercia, Oxford, 1991, vol. I, 121) is concerned primarily with Jacopo's artistic style and does not closely examine the issue of the original function of the tabernacle. He states "...Jacopo projected a portentous pier emanating from the center out of which opens an hexagonally shaped tabernacle, with five marble prophets in niches and the Madonna and Child, which formed a sportello (little door) where the holy oil was kept." In the same volume, Beck's catalogue entry (p. 182) describes the specific type of oil he believes must have been contained in the tabernacle - the Sanctum Chrisma - and states that its design was motivated by that function. He compares it to the small vessels that held the oil, but makes closer parallels to "reliquary architectonics."

²⁶² Paoletti, The Siena Baptistery Font. A Study of an Early Renaissance Collaborative Program, 1416-1434, New York, 1979, has addressed the issue of the vessel in the Siena Baptistery in terms of its eucharistic function. It is probable that the same Counter-Reformation edict that turned so many fifteenth-century wall tabernacles into holy oil receptacles was also applicable to the rare free-standing font-tabernacles. (See below for a discussion of the counter-Reformatory standards applied to the Siena Font in the sixteenth century, as cited by Paoletti.) In a recent article, Creighton Gilbert ("Saint Antonin de Florence et l'art. Théologie pastorale, administration e commande d'oeuvres," Revue de l'art, 1990, 16) supports Paoletti's analysis. Gilbert discusses eucharistic tabernacles in

indeed a eucharistic repository. Moreover, it was among the first classicizing tabernacles of the Sacrament. One of the most important issues to be emphasized is the fact that in the 1420s, as in the past, there was no single type of Host reservation.²⁶³ Nor was the Eucharist always kept separate from other sacred objects. In fact, there is positive evidence demonstrating that the Eucharist and holy oils were sometimes reserved in the same place, at least in the Trecento. For example, at the synod of Gubbio, held in 1303, it was decided that the two should be reserved together under lock and key "...in a seemly place especially made or intended for that purpose."²⁶⁴ Consequently, one of the most common reasons for rejecting the monument as a Host repository is invalid.

The font-tabernacle in Siena was created by a number of artists in the vanguard of the classical revival; Jacopo della Quercia, Donatello, and Ghiberti all created

light of St. Antoninus' attention to reservation in the 1440s and its repercussions for later free-standing Host receptacles that reflect the Siena Font tabernacle. Gilbert also notes an early eucharistic focus in a Sienese retable, executed by Sassetta c.1423-1426, that had an image of a large chalice in the central panel (for the retable see Pope-Hennessy, Sassetta, London, 1979, 8-16).

²⁶³ In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council had decreed that both the chrism and the Eucharist must be kept under lock and key. However, no single location in the church was specified. See B. Steuart, Lineamenti di storia della liturgia cristiana, Brescia, 1957, 295.

²⁶⁴ See van Dijk and Walker, (Myth of the Aumbry, 54) who cite P.T. Harduin, Collectio conciliorum regia maxima, vii, Paris, 1715, 861.

important images for the ensemble. Scholars have been intrigued by the resemblance between the small hexagonal terminus of the crozier held by Donatello's St. Louis (Figure 84) and the form of the tabernacle rising from the siena font, designed by Jacopo della Quercia. It has been suggested that the font tabernacle was derived from the classicizing crozier, with its shallow niches and temple-like pediments on each of its faces.²⁶⁵ However, the five "facades" of the Bishop's crozier also echo the larger architectural surround of the niche and, likewise, the font-tabernacle in Siena is extremely similar to the niche facade. The artist had used motifs from antique funerary monuments in the first decade of the century in his funerary monument for Ilaria del Cretto. By the 1420s, while he may have been inspired by the crozier of Donatello's St. Louis, Jacopo was already well-versed in the use of antique monuments for the purposes of Christian meaning. It seems likely that the two artists, who had both worked on the font, had sources in common; Jacopo must have known well the monuments used by Donatello for the St. Louis crozier and niche.²⁶⁶ Although scholars

²⁶⁵ As Beck, Jacopo della Quercia, 121 points out, many Florentine elements associated with the Donatello/Michelozzo shop have been isolated.

²⁶⁶ Beck, Jacopo della Quercia, 121, addresses the problem of the authorship of the tabernacle and states that "a serious role for Jacopo has been excluded" in the design of the tabernacle. It has been ascribed to Pagno di Lapo, "a Donatello garzone, known to have been active in Siena on the Fonte." Beck, however, agrees with Paoletti in the

have commented on Jacopo's retention of a medieval aesthetic, implying that it contrasts with his taste for the antique, I contend that his contemporaries probably saw no discrepancy.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the varying levels of eucharistic meaning achieved through the use of all'antica funerary sculpture are extraordinarily relevant to this monument.

Although this elaborately decorated liturgical furnishing has always been identified by the term "font," significantly, the main body of the ensemble, the "tabernacle," rather than the basin creates the most immediate visual impact. In addition to the six reliefs on the basin, the exterior of the marble repository displays five full-length prophets carved in high relief and a sportello with a bronze relief of the Virgin and Child. All of the figures reside in classicizing shell

attribution of the design to Jacopo.

²⁶⁷ Calling the era a "fluid cultural situation," Beck (Jacopo della Quercia, 43) believes that it is misleading to characterize some artists as "Gothic" and others as "Renaissance" in the first decades of the Quattrocento. I concur with Beck that the construction of rigid stylistic categorization cannot be applied to the early fifteenth century; the concept of "old fashioned (Gothic)" and "modern (Renaissance)" leads to "backward and progressive." Regarding the Siena font, he states (p.121) that Jacopo combined his knowledge of Donatello's classical style with "the experience of the medieval baptismal font in San Frediano (Lucca)....The design...lies somewhere between the new revival idiom and the traditional Tuscan usage." For the discussion of Jacopo's Gothic tendencies, see Pope-Hennessy, Italian Gothic Sculpture, 38f and Seymour, Jacopo della Quercia, 12ff.

niches.²⁶⁸ The receptacle is capped by a dome and an elaborately carved, lantern-like column on which stands a statue of John the Baptist atop a chalice-like pedestal. The dome that caps the central section emphasizes its likeness to two related structures: a centrally planned martyrrium all'antica and the Medieval example of a baldachin covering the holy of holies. Moreover, as a turris-like structure, it can be related to the Holy Sepulchre.

The free-standing ciborium stands on a pier, made up of clustered colonettes, rising from the baptismal basin. The repository is hexagonal, as is the basin, and each side has an architectural facade heavily influenced by antique funerary sculpture. The central portion is enclosed by an entablature and a base, both of which project slightly. The sophisticated use of graduated moldings in the base is underscored with dentillations corresponding to the section below, which is deeply carved with fluting, effecting a smooth transition to the relatively slender support. The entablature also utilizes classicizing moldings, providing an effective pause in the upward sweep of the eye of the beholder. Not only are the individual features of the tabernacle unusual, but the combination of these forms was unprecedented. The forms

²⁶⁸ See Paoletti, Siena Baptistry Font, 86ff. for a discussion of the derivation of these niches from Donatello's Coscia tomb and, ultimately, the Mocenigo tomb in Venice.

and iconography of basin and the free-standing ciborium are consistently related to eucharistic and funerary iconography and it is necessary to investigate the different parts separately in order to understand their underlying thematic unity.

Eucharistic Meaning and the Hexagon

First, it should be noted that the shape of the Siena Baptistery Font was rare; baptistery fonts were generally octagonal in format. Other liturgical forms, however, elucidate the choice of a six-sided vessel. The hexagonal shape had an important monumental precedent in the casket of Nicola Pisano's pulpit for the Pisa Baptistery (see Figure 43). Not only did the symbolism of medieval pulpits focus on Christ's Passion, but the Bishop mounting the pulpit had been likened in the Dugento to Christ who bore the cross and died.²⁶⁹ Moreover, there was a tradition of displaying relics on pulpits²⁷⁰ and, further, the pulpit can be seen as the casket for the Word of God which, in turn, could be interpreted as the Corpus Domini. Finally, symbolically, the number six commonly refers to

²⁶⁹ Irving Lavin, "The Sources of Donatello's Pulpits in San Lorenzo," Art Bulletin, XLI, 1959, 19-38. See also Moscovitz, "Nicola Pisano's Arca," 279 and note 27.

²⁷⁰ See Moscovitz, "Nicola Pisano's Arca," 279, note 27, who cites M. Seidel, "Dombau, Kreuzzugridie un Expansionspolitik. Zur Ikonographie der Pisaner Cathedral-bauten," Frühmittelalterliche Studien, 11, 1977, 340-369 (esp. 369).

Renaissance chalices. The eucharistic chalice was the most common liturgical use of the hexagon and, significantly, Siena was responsible for developing the most important new chalice type and had a thriving chalice industry.²⁷³ The elaborately decorated chalices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, invariably including a hexagonal base, provide yet another connection to eucharistic function in Jacopo's ensemble (Figures 87a-b). The combination of a Sacrament repository and a baptismal font is meaningful in this context also because of the essential role of Holy Water and its multiple symbolic associations with wine, the Holy Spirit, and the Sacrifice of the mass.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Polygonal bases on chalices developed in response to the liturgical change in which the cup was set on the paten to drain after the rite of the mass. The polygonal base prevented the chalice from rolling off the paten. The prototype was created for Pope Nicholas IV in 1290 by the Sienese goldsmith Guccio di Mannaia (in the treasury of San Francesco, Assisi). See C. Oman, "Some Sienese Chalices," Apollo, LXXXI, 1965, 279-281. Several differences from earlier types were introduced at that time: the flaring cup set in a calyx, the tall step, and the inclusion of basse-taille medallions. Siena had a flourishing industry and the Sienese type had spread through Italy and southern France by the fourteenth century. See Pamela Price Miller, "Chalices," in Eucharistic Vessels, 23-35 and 41-43 and I. Machetti, "Orafi senesi," La Diana, IV, 1929, 1-110.

²⁷⁴ Speaking of the role of Holy water in the consecration of altars, Durandus (Rationale, I, Ch. 7, sections 9-12) notes the union of the elements necessary for the ritual: "For in the Sacrament of Baptism, neither is the water without the [Holy] Spirit, nor the Spirit without the water. ...Wine mixed with water, is Christ, God and Man." The consecrated water signifies the Holy Spirit without whose grace there is no remission of sins. The central Sacrament of the Church and Holy water are connected also; water was mixed with the wine of the Eucharist in the mass

Antique Sources of the Siena Font Tabernacle

The concept of a chalice also figures in one of the antique sources of Jacopo's repository. A neo-Attic marble krater with a Bacchic narrative, now in the Camposanto in Pisa, provides a startling visual prototype for the fluting of the Siena receptacle (Figure 88), as do other antique vessels. Not only does the tabernacle imitate the fluting of the krater, but the overall appearance of the antique vessel in the Quattrocento also links it to the tabernacle. In the early fourteenth century an elaborate lid for the antique vessel was added that culminated in a slender shaft, widening toward the top. The whole ensemble was prominently placed on top of a column on the steps of the Cathedral of Pisa.²⁷⁵ It stood in front of the Porta San Ranieri until the early nineteenth century and thus was well-known in the Renaissance.²⁷⁶ Even before its new assembly in 1319

ritual. Further, the liturgical mixture was equated with the water that flowed from Christ along with the blood from his side after the thrust of the lance. Representations of the Crucifixion often emphasized both the water and the blood. John 19:34 describes the water that streamed from Christ's side and mixed with the blood that was shed at the Crucifixion. As Lane discusses in regard to the work of Rogier van der Weyden ("Rogier's Saint John and Miraflores Altarpieces Reconsidered, *Art Bulletin*, LX, 1978, 669), this water was understood as the source of Baptismal water.

²⁷⁵ The newly assembled vessel rested on a porphyry pedestal (supported on the back of a lion).

²⁷⁶ Giovanni Rossi created the new ensemble in 1319. The krater was reputed to have been sent by Caesar for Pisan tribute money to the Romans, as its inscription states. The krater was drawn by Francisco de Hollanda (who imagined it

artists had been interested in this krater; the figure of Bacchus on the relief has been shown to have provided the inspiration for Nicola Pisano's Patriarch on the Pisa Baptistery pulpit.²⁷⁷ Jacopo della Quercia adapted the fluted portions at the top and bottom of the Sienese receptacle, as well as the slender column at top. In addition, the Bacchic theme of the antique vase is particularly appropriate to a eucharistic vessel.²⁷⁸ The forms of the font-tabernacle, Sienese chalices, and an antique wine vessel are part of a whole program of meaningful symbolic connections to eucharistic imagery and classical monuments.

The other antique prototypes used by Jacopo in the design of the free-standing ciborium have important funerary connotations. The central portion of the free-standing ciborium is divided vertically by means of fluted pilasters with composite capitals, placed to either side

with the tribute money referred to in the inscription). The whole ensemble, as it appeared in the Cinquecento, was sketched by Dosia in 1560. See Bober and Rubinstein, Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, 124.

²⁷⁷ M. Seidel, "Studien zur Antikenrezeption Nicola Pisanos," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institutes in Florenz, XIX, 1975, 307-392, esp. pp. 379-384. For a discussion of the known artistic uses of the krater see Bober and Rubinstein, Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, 124. See also P.E. Arias, Camposanto monumentale di Pisa. Le Antichità, 1977, 155-156, figs. 207-11.

²⁷⁸ The nude figures who dance under a grape vine are turned in different positions, hold various ritual objects, and gesture with their arms; these figures can be compared to Donatello's nude dancers atop the ciborium in the Siena Baptistery.

of each of the six niches. Similar vertical divisions are found on antique sarcophagi surrounded with figures carved in high relief in shell niches (see Figure 67); these funerary monuments were closely observed by Jacopo and his contemporaries. In addition, the unusual hexagonal cinerary urn in the Capitoline Museum has essential similarities to the Baptistery tabernacle, as well as to the crozier of Donatello's St. Louis. The longitudinal form terminates in a conical lid with a pinecone knob. In addition, a winged eros dances on each of its six facades, like those on the top of the Baptistery tabernacle.²⁷⁹

The entablature of the Siena ciborium is surmounted by six triangular pediments; antique sarcophagi are commonly surmounted by a steeply pitched lid, the sides of which form triangular pediments like the font-tabernacle.²⁸⁰ Other antique funerary monuments have a similar format; for instance, grave altars and cinerary urns are vertically oriented and often have figural sculpture in the central portion, various decorative moldings, and are always surmounted by a pediment, either triangular or segmented (Figures 89-91). The concept is exceptionally like that of the Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele; the monuments that inspired it also provided

²⁷⁹ See Altmann, Römanischen Grabaltäre, 110-111, figs. 90-91.

²⁸⁰ The only truly gothic feature found on the central portion are small crockettes on the angles of the pediments.

an example for the Baptistery tabernacle. Furthermore, the classical Host receptacles that developed in the following decade have motifs that are also similar to the facades of the Siena font-tabernacle. Rather than using general all'antica forms, the artist expanded the use of antique funerary models to a enrich a specifically eucharistic message.

Baptism and the Eucharist

Jacopo della Quercia began his work on the tabernacle portion of the complex during 1427, and thus the conception of the classicizing, free-standing ciborium is contemporary with Brunelleschi's commission for San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini. Its forms, in fact, may echo those of Brunelleschi's Host tabernacle, certainly the composite pilasters are similar to those in the architect's repertoire. In addition, because it can be seen as a miniature central-plan church, the free-standing ciborium serves to remind the viewer of the underlying concept of the church-like facades of the tabernacles of the late Trecento and early Quattrocento.

It should be noted that the Sienese Baptistery is (like the baptistery in Florence) a separate church in which there was a long-standing tradition for eucharistic reservation. Early Christian baptism was largely focused on converted adults, after which the Sacrament was administered. Thus the tradition of baptism was, from the

earliest times, linked to the Eucharist and to its reservation.

Later in the fifteenth century, the free-standing type of ciborium explicitly intended for the reservation of the consecrated Host was obviously inspired by the siena font tabernacle. The most important examples are also in Siena; Benedetto da Maiano's ciborium for San Domenico finished in 1475 and Vecchietta's bronze Host repository in the Cathedral of 1467-1474,²⁸¹ echo that of the Baptistery in a number of ways (Figures 92 and 93).²⁸² A number of later extant Sacrament tabernacles and tabernacle-altars use its basic format.²⁸³ Conversely, only a few other baptismal fonts take the same form in the Quattrocento.²⁸⁴ Further, other monuments demonstrate

²⁸¹ See Gilbert, "Saint Antonin," 16, for a discussion of these later repositories in regard to the Siena Font. It should also be noted that Vecchietta's monument resembles monstrances in number of significant ways. Most important among these are its medium, its tall "stem," and the crucified Christ at its apex.

²⁸² Not only did Vecchietta derive its general type from the Baptistery font-tabernacle, but he also used the fluted motif of the antique krater in Pisa.

²⁸³ There are also a number of drawings of tabernacle-altars that use a free-standing ciborium. See Otto Kurz, "A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, XVIII, 1955, 35-53. See Chapter Seven of this study for a discussion of these drawings in relation to Desiderio's tabernacle for San Lorenzo and the development of the altar-tabernacle complex in Italy.

²⁸⁴ There are only rare extant examples of a tabernacle combined with a font in imitation of the Siena Baptistery, despite the fact that the ciborium form became an important type in church decoration. Paoletti, The Siena Baptistery

that, at least in the later fifteenth century, the two most essential monuments were physically connected in churches. First, in Montepulciano, the proximity of the Trecento font attributed to Tino da Camaino and the later tabernacle-altar by Andrea della Robbia, shows an intentional linking of the sacraments (Figure 94). Even more explicitly, the font and tabernacle of Giovanni della Robbia in the church of San Giovanni Battista, Galatrona (Figure 95), is an important indication of the function of the the font and tabernacle in Siena.

Although the issue has been side-stepped in much of the literature regarding Jacopo della Quercia, in his monograph on the Siena font, Paoletti pays close attention to the unusual iconography of the basin and tabernacle and firmly establishes its eucharistic character. He notes that the imagery on Trecento fonts in Tuscany relates specifically either to baptism or the life of the Baptist, but is often dependent on apocryphal writings or Medieval hagiographies.²⁸⁵ On the contrary, the six scenes in

Font, 143, note 5, cites the font-tabernacles in Massa Marittima, Grosseto, and Pienza. Other tabernacles of this type were clearly intended solely as eucharistic receptacles. Turning to the format of the Baptistery tabernacle, one finds that the sportello is composed of a bronze relief of the Virgin and Child. This motif, as well as the other sacramental imagery, supports the view that it was meant contain the Host. The imagery of the Madonna and Child seen in the context of a tabernacle format will be discussed in Chapter Four of this study.

²⁸⁵ Paoletti (Siena Font, 142) cites Trecento examples from Florence, San Gimignano, and Arezzo. He believes that they rely on the narrative cycle of the life of the Baptist

bronze on the basin of the Siena font were derived exclusively from the gospel accounts of the New Testament.²⁸⁶ The inscription on the font is likewise taken from the writings of the four Evangelists, although it does not refer explicitly to the scenes on the basin.²⁸⁷ Paoletti also notes that the Virtues around the basin of the font were probably intended as part of the original design of 1416-17, since they were standard decorative elements in baptismal settings by the Trecento. He finds that the Virtue figures are "less a part of a well-developed iconographical program and more heirs to a medieval iconographic tradition."²⁸⁸

on Andrea Pisano's doors (1330-1336) on the Florentine Baptistery, the first of the three famous sets of doors. It is interesting to note that both sets of doors designed by Ghiberti between 1401 and 1450, are based first on the life of Christ from the New Testament and second, on Old Testament typology.

²⁸⁶ The six scenes are the Annunciation to Zacharias (Quercia), Birth of the Baptist (Turini), Preaching of the Baptist (Turini), Baptism of Christ (Ghiberti), Arrest of the Baptist (Ghiberti), and Feast of Herod (Donatello). The Annunciation to Zacharias, representing the Baptist's father at the altar in the temple, faces the altar in the Baptistery. The six scenes on the basin are punctuated by figures of Faith, Hope, Fortitude, Justice, Charity, and Prudence.

²⁸⁷ The inscription in enamel runs around the cornice of the basin does not refer explicitly to the narrative of the bronze reliefs or to the Virtues. It invokes the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the remission of sin brought about by baptism. See Paoletti, Siena Font, 142, for the text of the inscription; he suggests that the roots of its iconography are strongly traditional.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 143.

Although I concur with Paoletti's excellent iconographic analysis, it seems more likely that the blend of traditional elements and innovative design were all part of a cohesive eucharistic focus. The Virtues, including the Faith holding a chalice (Figure 96), often appear in connection with Sacrament tabernacles in the early fifteenth century.²⁸⁹ Whereas the inclusion of many of the elements of the font are certainly traditional as Paoletti asserts, their precise appearance and their juxtaposition to the tabernacle creates a new, more complex meaning, particularly relevant to the most important theological issues of the era.

Although the documents contemporary with its creation do not specify the font-tabernacle as a eucharistic vessel, Paoletti has shown that a record of the sixteenth century confirms that it was being used as such in 1575, with the clear implication that it was designed for that purpose.²⁹⁰ Coupled with the sixteenth-century records,

²⁸⁹ This particularly eucharistic interpretation of Faith appears frequently during this time. For instance, the Faith holding a chalice also appears on the Coscia tomb by Donatello and Michelozzo. A study of the origins of this attribute for Faith would be useful.

²⁹⁰ Paoletti, *Siena Font*, 144, notes 6 and 7. Paoletti cites a payment in 1434 for "due bossoli e una chopà" which had been interpreted as containers for the baptismal oils and chrism. Paoletti questions the interpretation, since there is no reason to identify these objects with holy oils except in the context of the Baptistery. This presumes, however, that a eucharistic tabernacle and a holy oil receptacle could not share the same space. These functions may not have been mutually exclusive, instead, there is some evidence to suggest that late medieval reservation of the

much iconographic evidence is presented by Paoletti in support of the original eucharistic function. Among other features, the Baptist standing on top of the tabernacle and pointing to the carving of the Agnus Dei in the vault of the Baptistry, acts as important evidence for the dual sacramental nature of the receptacle (Figure 97). This figure refers to the moment during the Mass when the priest uses the Baptist's words, recorded in John I:29, upon presentation of the consecrated Host in anticipation of the corporate communion of the congregation.²⁹¹

Host may have shared space with relics and holy oils (see Durandus, Rationale, Book 1, Ch. VIII; see also this study, p.162). By 1575, standardization of eucharistic reservation was an important factor in Church reform. Monsignor Francesco Bossio, an apostolic inspector for the Council of Trent visited the Baptistry of Siena in that year and recorded that the Eucharist was reserved in the marble tabernacle, situated in the middle of the church before the high altar, and was "supra fontem Baptismatis; et mandavid aperire; et eo aperto, fuit per plebanum extracta capsula heburnea cooperta panno serico et clave obsignata; qua aperta adinvenit internam eius partem serico duplicatam eum corporali in fundo, et vidit adesse aliquas particulas, auas audivit esse confectas iam ferre sunt quindecim dies." As Paoletti believes, this suggests that the tabernacle had been used continually to house the Eucharist. Bossio, on completing his inspection, instructed that the Eucharist should be reserved in a locked wood tabernacle on the high altar and not in the font ciborium.

This document, written by the Monsignor, Ordinationes, quae ad Ecclesiam Sancti Johannis attineat (see Lusini, San Giovanni, 31-33, note 2) is particularly valuable because it is a rare record of the fate of fifteenth-century Sacrament tabernacles, which when left intact, were often converted to holy oil containers. Because the tabernacle is connected to the baptismal font in Siena, it has been preserved in its original location and form, unlike so many other eucharistic tabernacles.

²⁹¹ Paoletti, Siena Font, 145.

Further, the iconography of David, represented as both king and prophet on the font tabernacle in a niche next to the sportello with the Madonna and Child, is connected with the iconography of the Body of Christ (Figure 98). In a beautifully constructed argument regarding the David, Paoletti cites two Corpus Christi sermons of Bernardino da Siena preached in the Campo in Siena in June 1425.²⁹² The subject of these sermons was Holy Communion, and Bernardino, as was his custom, quoted extensively from scripture to confer greater authority to his preaching. In this case, his most important sources were David and the Psalms, which provided many opportunities for comparison with the Body of Christ in the form of the Host.²⁹³ Not only did Bernardino equate the rain of manna (Psalm 77:25) with the Eucharist, but also compared David standing in front of a sacrificial altar to the Christian communicant.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Paoletti, ibid. 146-147; Bernardino da Siena, Le Prediche Volgari: Predicazione del 1425 in Siena, ed. C. Cannarozzi, Vol. 2, Florence, 1958, 308-339.

²⁹³ See also the 1424 sermon in Santa Croce, Florence cited in Chapter One of this study (Bernardino da Siena, Le Prediche Volgari, esp. p. 221), which also quotes David in regard to the presence of God in the church and the Body of Christ.

²⁹⁴ Paoletti, Siena Font, 147; Bernardino, Prediche, 312. Paoletti states that "San Bernardino's interest in such a reform may well be behind the invention of a free-standing Eucharistic tabernacle in his home city." Paoletti also discusses Bernardino's effort to encourage frequent communion and compares him to Tauler, Gerson and Biel who were also desirous of the laity partaking of daily communion. See Bernardino, ibid., 314.

The sportello image of the Madonna and Child, is also an important factor in establishing the eucharistic character of the tabernacle (Figure 99). Paoletti discusses the Virgin in her multiple roles as Ecclesia, the new Eve, and as a member of the royal house of David.²⁹⁵ The key to the multi-layered sportello symbolism resides in the small orb held by the Virgin. It is meant as a reference to both the apple of Eve and as a royal orb, as Paoletti demonstrates. The images of David and the Virgin function as "thematic visual links between the tabernacle and the basin of the font."²⁹⁶ Paoletti creates a compelling argument for the eucharistic function of the Siena font tabernacle.

In addition to Paoletti's observations regarding the sportello, it should be noted that the Virgin was commonly equated with a Sacrament tabernacle and thus was a logical

Moreover, it should be noted that when Bernardino discusses David's position in front of the sacrificial altar, it can be connected to the image of Zacharias in front of the altar, in the relief of the Annunciation to Zacharias on the basin of the font, providing further evidence of the iconographic unity of the program.

²⁹⁵ Paoletti, Siena Font, 147-150.

²⁹⁶ Paoletti (Siena Font, 148-149) cites St. Ambrose (also quoted by Bernardino da Siena), who refers to the connections to the apple and the Eucharist in a sermon on the Psalms of David. In addition, the interchangeable fruit and royal orb connect the Virgin to the House of David. Another essential connection is the reference to Mary as the new Eve. The Virgin, is without the stain of original sin, which baptism serves to cleanse the rest of humanity. Paoletti (p.150-151) quotes Bernardino who contrasts Eve's apple, which when eaten caused damnation, to the salvific effects of partaking of the Eucharist.

choice for inclusion on a eucharistic vessel. The association is integral to the iconography of the tabernacle as a Host receptacle. Durandus, for instance, is unequivocal in declaring the connection between a Host container and the Virgin. He urges that the faithful "...notice, that the portfolio in which the consecrated host is kept, signifieth the frame of the blessed Virgin...." Continuing in his equation of Virgin and Host receptacle, Durandus underscores its prophetic authority by citing David: "...concerning which it is said in the Psalms, 'Arise O Lord into Thy resting place.'"²⁹⁷

Another issue, however, needs to be addressed in regard to liturgical function. Paoletti has stated that the use of a eucharistic tabernacle with the font cannot be justified on the grounds of liturgical usage; he believes that the trend to infant baptism in the later Middle Ages "would have precluded the possibility of the newly baptized person also receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist immediately after baptism as was the case in the

²⁹⁷ Durandus, Rationale divinarum officiorum (as trans. J.M. Neale and B. Webb, 52-53) section 25. Durandus continues his discussion stating that the receptacle:

...sometimes is of wood: sometimes of white ivory: sometimes of silver: sometimes of gold: sometimes of crystal: and according to the different substances of which it is made, designateth the various dignities of the body of Christ. Again the pyx which containeth the host, whether consecrated or not consecrated, typifieth the human memory. For a man ought to hold in remembrance continually the benefits of God, as well as temporary which are represented by the unconsecrated, as spiritual, which set forth by the consecrated host.

early Christian Church."²⁹⁸ While it is true that infants could not receive the Sacrament, the specific type of Baptism practiced in contemporary Siena would not have altered the liturgical use of a Sacrament tabernacle in a baptistery church. Mass was the concluding rite of the sacrament of Baptism and the ritual of communion a natural component of the ceremony. Participation in the Sacrament after a Baptism was not eliminated by the newer custom of infant baptism. Although baptized infants were not allowed to be recipients of the Host in the fifteenth century, that fact did not preclude the baptized adults present from taking the body of the Lord. The Eucharist had to be reserved somewhere in the baptistery, and it was appropriate to connect it to the font, especially since the Church increasingly emphasized the central redemptive sacrament of Christianity.

The special proximity of the altar to the font and tabernacle unites the sacraments. In addition, the basin reliefs of the life of the Baptist are clearly intended as typological references to the life of Christ. There can be no coincidence in the positioning of the Annunciation to Zacharias to face the altar (Figure 100). Zacharias himself stands before an altar, and the Old Covenant is clearly meant to be seen juxtaposed to the New Covenant. The equation of the sacraments of Baptism and the

²⁹⁸ Paoletti, Siena Font, 143, note 5.

Eucharist is asserted throughout, starting with the equation of the annunciation of the coming of John the Baptist, the precursor, to the Annunciation of Christ's Incarnation.

Further, the iconography of Baptism was theologically and popularly connected with that of the Eucharist;²⁹⁹ the reservation of the Body of Christ in a tabernacle rising out of the holy water should be seen as intentionally achieving many levels of meaning. In fact, the program of the tabernacle depends on Old and New Testament typology. John is the forerunner of Christ, baptizing the Savior as well as the catechumens. The efficacious effect of baptism for humankind is clear - ritual purification is an indispensable precursor to salvation. John the Baptist's pivotal role as an oracle of the coming of Christ is equally vital; he is the last prophet of the old order and the first prophet of the new order. Significantly, the bronze figure on top of the tabernacle not only points upward toward the Agnes Dei but also holds a scroll with the ultimate prophecy of the coming of the Savior. An emphasis on John at the top of the tabernacle and David in his niche on the side, display both as types for Christ. At the same time, as noted above, both function as prophets for the coming of the Messiah. Because of the dual roles played by David and

²⁹⁹ Paoletti (Siena Font, 151) quotes San Bernardino in regard to his equation of the Eucharist and baptism.

John, it is important to turn to a brief discussion of the four other single figures in the niches on the tabernacle. All of these figures hold a scroll and have been acknowledged as prophets, albeit unidentified.

Paoletti believes that these prophets were included, with the exception of the figure of David, not for any precise programmatic purpose but mainly because Jacopo was visually enthralled with the Florence Cathedral prophets.³⁰⁰ However, despite the fact that the font-tabernacle was not completed until more than fifteen years after it was first conceived and must have undergone many alterations to its program during that time,³⁰¹ it appears

³⁰⁰ Paoletti, Siena Font, 151. See also Seymour, Jacopo della Quercia, 65, who states that the relief figures of the prophets in niches owe much to antique precedent, but actually derive directly from the Virtues of Donatello and Michelozzo's Coscia tomb in the Florence Baptistery. Beck, Jacopo della Quercia, 122-123, believes that the prophets must be understood stylistically within the chronological context of contemporary work in Bologna. Neither Seymour nor Beck discuss the iconographic context of the prophets.

³⁰¹ See Paoletti's discussion (Siena Font, 154-157) of the changes in meaning wrought by the visit of the Holy Roman Emperor to Siena. He believes that the direct contact between Ghibelline Siena and the Emperor Sigismund became a significant factor in the iconography of David. The Emperor had been asked to patronize the construction of the Ospedale della Scala, which is clear from an exchange of letters in 1414; he visited Siena for nine months in 1432-1433. Sigismund was an important factor in the numerous councils of the early fifteenth century. Moreover, Paoletti says that the only other Quattrocento example of the Medieval imperial iconography of David and his court musicians, the intarsia pavement panel in front of the high altar of Siena Cathedral completed in July, 1424, relates to the Council of Siena. It demonstrates that the Medieval tradition of David as king and prophet was still viable in the visual arts in the fifteenth century. The David on the font functions iconographically to underscore the similarities to

to be more iconographically cohesive than is generally acknowledged. Although Jacopo was surely inspired in part by the Cathedral figures, the prophets may also relate to the eucharistic purpose of the font, and underscore the role of John the Baptist and Baptism in the Christian scheme.

Eucharistic Monuments and the Siena Font-Tabernacle

The font-tabernacle in Siena may be related to the extraordinary sculpted tabernacles, executed by Sienese artists, in the Cathedral of Orvieto.³⁰² The larger tabernacle, which Fumi related to the exterior of the church, calling it the "tabernacle within the tabernacle," was designed to contain the miraculous Corporal, the blood relic of the Mass of Bolsena (Figure 101).³⁰³ Both the form, a combination of a marble, silver, and enamel, and the iconography are important for the Siena font-tabernacle. Although it is similar in format to the Gothic church facade, with a tripartite vertical division,

Sigismund, particularly in terms of the factionalism which had not been resolved at the Council of Constance, despite the election of a single pope, Martin V, in 1418. In Paoletti's view, David as a ruler of the schismatic Judea and Israel, parallels the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor's possible role at the Council of Basel. Sigismund's stated intention in 1427 was to combat heresy. (See Ch. 1 of this study for the eucharistic issues relevant to the councils.)

³⁰² See Fumi, SS. Corporale, 24ff. and Carli, Duomo di Orvieto, 125f.

³⁰³ Fumi, SS. Corporale, 23ff.

it is a freestanding monument. In addition to narrative reliefs, it has a number of small sculptures in the round on top of pinnacles. Moreover, the program relates to the Siena Baptistery font-tabernacle in the use of Old Testament prophets in the upper tier. Among others on the front facade, the figure of David stands holding the Psalms. On the back, in the large central gable, a roundel is inscribed with two intersecting triangles, forming a six-pointed star in which a half-length figure of the Lord resides (Figure 102).

In this context it is also useful to turn to contemporary Host reservation in northern Europe, where eucharistic concerns were as strong as in Italy.³⁰⁴ In the north, elaborate reservation of the Sacrament developed quite early. Large, ornate "Sacrament houses" were common by the fifteenth century, and have a notable resemblance to the free-standing type of tabernacle inaugurated in Italy by the Siena font-tabernacle.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, passim, for the many different types of altars in the Middle Ages and the variety of eucharistic reservation. There are a number of important studies that discuss the predominant use of eucharistic iconography in altarpieces by Northern artists. See Shirley Nielsen Blum, Early Netherlandish Triptychs, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969; Marilyn Aaronberg Lavin, "The Altar of the Corpus Domini in Urbino: Paolo Uccello, Joos van Ghent, Piero della Francesca," Art Bulletin, XLIX, 1967, 1-24; Lane, Altar and Altarpiece, passim; and O'Meara, "In the Hearth of the Virginal Womb, 75-88.

³⁰⁵ While Braun, ibid., does not mention the Siena font, he compares the northern Sakramentshausen to Vecchietta's tabernacle in the Siena Duomo. Caspary says, "Während das steinerne Sakramentsziborium sich nur im nördlichen,

Both Northern and Italian versions have a vertical orientation and both imitate the crossing area of a church; northern European Sacrament houses have a tower complete with finials, while the Siena tabernacle and its successors are capped by a dome, all'antica.³⁰⁶

Northern reservation of the Eucharist in a large, altarpiece complex also developed earlier than in Italy.³⁰⁷ The iconography of these monumental altarpieces may help to clarify the imagery of the Sienese tabernacle-font. For example, in St. Martin's Church in Landshut, an enormous sculpted wood tabernacle-altar of 1424 prominently displays a Sacrament receptacle in the lower central portion of the retable (Figures 103 and 104).³⁰⁸ The door to the eucharistic chamber is surrounded above and below with figures holding scrolls with appropriate inscriptions.³⁰⁹ It is surmounted on the front of the

florentinischen Teil der Toskana findet, überschreitet da Taufbrunnenziborium nicht die Grenzen des südlichen, sienesischen Teils" (Sakramentstabernakel, 90).

³⁰⁶ Seymour, Jacopo della Quercia, 65, states that the Siena Font ciborium is crowned with an architectural echo of the cupola of the Florentine Duomo, and also relates it to the dome of the tabernacle by Orcagna in Orsanmichele.

³⁰⁷ See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, 626ff.

³⁰⁸ Braun, ibid., also cites several examples of this type of reservation that predate the altar-tabernacle in Landshut.

³⁰⁹ There are numerous Prophets, evangelists, apostles, and the Church Fathers as well as angels. The half-length figures on the front predella are Jeremiah, Luke, Zachariah, Mark, Ezekiel, Augustine, Hosea, Ambrose, Malachi, and Gregory. The inscriptions on their scrolls all relate to

altar by a relief of the Coronation of the Virgin.³¹⁰

The back of the tabernacle is topped by a baldachin structure in which a full-length figure of the Redeemer stands, blessing with one hand and holding a slender cross in the other (see Figure 104). In the predella, (along with numerous other inscriptions relating to the Eucharist) John the Evangelist's text concerning the "Word made Flesh," is coupled with David's statement in regard to the offering of wine and bread by the priest.³¹¹

the eucharistic contents of the tabernacle. Zachariah's inscription reads: "Was ist so gut was is so schon, wie dy speis der auserwelten als da schonest das suesseest und das edlist brod des leichnams christi. Mark's reads, "Wer nit isset da fleisch du suns des menschen un sein pluet trinkht der wird nit habn das ewig leben. Ambrose's scroll connects the prophecy of the Old Testament with the New Testament: "Dy speis, dy du nimpst, ist das lebendig brod das vom himmel ckommen ist wer daz ist, der lebt ewigleich." See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, 628-629.

³¹⁰ Braun, ibid. The whole is surmounted by Marian iconography and the story of St. Martin.

³¹¹ The half-length figures on the back predella also have scrolls. The inscriptions encompass the words of an interesting combination of Old and New Testament figures. Matthew, Joel, Malachiah, Ezechiel, Isaiah, Paul, Daniel, Jeremiah, Jesus Sirach, Bernard, David, John the Evangelist, and Solomon. Braun (ibid., 629) records the inscriptions which, significantly, include the following:

Bernardus: Der sun gots wird geschoft zu sterben, dass er unser wunden hail mit dem balsamen seines rosenfarben pluetes. David spricht von der gerechten priesterschaft: Es spricht der her su meinem hern: du bist ein priester ewiglich nach ordnung melchisedek der das opfer mit wein und prot aufsetzt zum ersten. Johannes spricht: Das wort ist fleisch wordn er wahrt uns vor dem ewign zorne und wer das fleisch nit isst und das pluet nit trinkt, nit hat mit mir tail.

The predella scrolls conclude with the words of Solomon: "Die weisheit has erbaut ein haus sie has gemischt den wein

Another early fifteenth-century altar tabernacle, at Ebsdorf, held the Eucharist in a chamber in the predella, accessible from the rear (see diagrams from Braun in figure 105a-c). This retable more specifically links John the Baptist's "Behold the Lamb of God" with the eucharistic prophecies of David and Solomon, as well as with John the Evangelist's "Hic est panis verus...".³¹² It is apparent that the conjunction of prophets, particularly David and Solomon, with a eucharistic tabernacle had an unequivocal purpose and was well-known in the north by the 1420s. Thus the connection between the Eucharist and David is not unique to Siena, and should be seen in the larger context of eucharistic iconography.

und bereit den chelich und has gesandt seinen Knecht und sin wenig die kamen und die wenig essen mein brot und trinkn mein wein getempert mit wasser." In addition, six angels surround the tabernacle with inscriptions that conclude with the words, " Der du aufhebst di sund der menschen, erparm dich unser - Ecce panis angelorum; nemt meinen Leichnam - der gewesn ist ein Brod für di engel, ist wordn ein speis der menschen - der du aufhebst di sund der menschen empfang unser gepet."

³¹² Braun, *ibid.*, 131, cites a number of examples of late fourteenth and early fifteenth century altar tabernacles. Significantly, the predella tabernacle in Ebsdorf has a monstrance pictured on the door of the chamber for the Sacrament reservation. The figures of John the Evangelist, John the Baptist, David, and Soloman are included to either side of the door. On the scroll of John the Evangelist one reads: Hic est panis verus, qui de celo descendit (John 6:50); and on that of the Baptist: Ecce agnus Dei (John 1:29). On David's scroll is found: Panis cor hominis confirmet (Psalms 103:16), and on Solomon's: Panem de celo praestitisti eis (Weish. 16:20).

Some important elements stand out in the decorative scheme of the Siena font-tabernacle in the Siena Baptistery in relation to the narrative scenes on the basin and help to establish its programmatic unity. The Baptist, specifically represented as the Forerunner, figures largely in the iconography. Not only does David have eucharistic associations, but the Baptist as well can be seen in the typological context of the Passion, Sacrifice, and Resurrection of Christ. Baptism and the Eucharist are both agents of Redemption and therefore are linked by their salvific qualities.

The altarpiece in San Bavo, Ghent, finished in 1432 and executed by Jan and Hubert van Eyck, provides yet more evidence of the eucharistic nature of the Siena Font-Tabernacle (Figure 106). In the fifteenth century, the altar was not dedicated to San Bavo as it is today, but to St. John the Baptist, allowing for an essential parallel to the symbolism in the Sienese Baptistery. Lotte Brand Philip has demonstrated that the Ghent polyptych, in its parts and as a whole, is largely a eucharistic exposition.³¹³ Of particular significance for the monument in Siena, it's fons vitae in the foreground of the Adoration of the Lamb panel, is represented in the form of a baptismal font and, above it the Lamb raised on the altar is bleeding into a chalice with a hexagonal

³¹³ Philip, Ghent Altarpiece, passim, esp. 13-15, 25, 61-78.

base. Philip's reconstruction of the huge altarpiece also includes the Host in a cupboard in the predella (Figure 107), as did many contemporary Northern altars.³¹⁴

The close association between baptism and Eucharist can be seen even more clearly in the Fountain of Life in the Prado, painted c. 1440 by a Spanish follower of Jan van Eyck (Figure 108). The Prado painting confirms the eucharistic connection of the font; Host wafers float in the water of the baptismal font in the foreground of the painting and emanate from the throne above.³¹⁵ Moreover, according to the paintings that reflect the Ghent Altarpiece, a sculpted tower-shaped canopy tops the sacred representation. The turris was particularly related to eucharistic vessels in northern Europe, as can be seen in numerous Sacrament houses (Figure 109). Discussing the iconography of the golden backdrop for the Deësis, Philip

³¹⁴ Philip (Ghent Altarpiece, 75) states that, "The Eucharistic transformation made the Host, which was kept in the predella appear to be the result of the painted miracle. Indeed, without the vessel of the Holy Wafer's being actually visible in a recess above the mensa, the arrangement of the symbolic motifs in the Lamb panel would not make any sense. The altar in the Vijd chapel was unquestionably that altar in the Ghent church which served as the reserve of the Host and can be called the altar of the Sacrament." Philip cites a number of extant contemporary altarpieces, including the one in Landshut, in addition to a representation of the Fountain of Life, a painted reflection of the altarpiece and frame, now found in the Allen Memorial Museum at Oberlin, which includes the predella with a Host vessel in a niche.

³¹⁵ See J. Bruyn, Van Eyck Problemen, Utrecht, 1957, 18ff and Philip, Ghent Altarpiece, 11ff.

conclusively demonstrates its significance as a reliquary casket and, further, that:

"...the reliquary shrine was unquestionably meant as the Ark of the New Covenant. Because this sacred object was conceived as the receptacle for the Eucharist, it was completely appropriate for Van Eyck to crown his golden reliquary shrine with a huge tower.... In the Van Eyck retable, the golden reliquary shrine, the object immediately below the towered canopy, was itself the paramount expression of the Eucharistic theme."³¹⁶

The Baptistry Tabernacle and Font

The Siena Tabernacle and Font must be viewed in the context of two primary and overlapping meanings. First, the Baptist is represented in the larger context of precursors of Christ and second, the sacrament of Baptism is intensified by its function as a precursor to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In light of these meanings, it is especially significant that the narrative ends with Donatello's 1425 relief of the Feast of Herod (Figure 110). The way Donatello represented this scene makes the typology explicit: the "server" in the background carries the head of the Baptist on a platter and presents it to Herod in the foreground.³¹⁷ This precursory event can be seen as the presentation of the Host on the paten in the

³¹⁶ Philip, Ghent Altarpiece, 14.

³¹⁷ Significantly, a predella scene of the beheading of the Baptist was part of Masaccio's explicitly eucharistic Pisa Polyptych. It appears next to the central predella panel, the Adoration of the Magi, which itself underscores the recognition of the Incarnate Christ, the Word made Flesh.

context of a eucharistic tabernacle.³¹⁸ The scene corresponds specifically to the contents of the tabernacle which rises from the baptismal waters of the basin. Eucharistic receptacles were not only perceived in relation to the Virgin but also as a tomb for the Body of Christ; the Host in turn would be served on a paten for the Redemption of humanity. The Feast of Herod makes the meaning of the transubstantiated Host and the Baptist's role in redemption more readily apparent.

The meaning of the free-standing ciborium form of the tabernacle is made manifest by Ghiberti's scene of the Baptism (Figure 111): Christ stands in the water of the river Jordan, rising above its depths as a prefiguration of his own Resurrection, just as the tabernacle holding the Corpus Christi, the perpetually resurrected body, also rises from the Baptismal waters.³¹⁹ Significantly,

³¹⁸ Unlike previous representations of this scene, Donatello's perspective construction particularly focuses on the servant carrying the head on the platter. In addition, the presentation of the head in the foreground appears before a table as a parallel to the altar. The horror of the scene directly contrasts with the loving reception of the Eucharist at the Mass.

³¹⁹ The resurrected Christ is visualized as the standing Redeemer in the Landshut altar-tabernacle, a formula for the depiction of the transubstantiated Host that gained popularity in Italy as early as the 1430s. The image can be found in Italy in several early examples of Sacrament reservation. The sportello of Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacle for the Badia in Florence is engraved with the image, as is a door attributed to Filarete. In the later fifteenth century the Redeemer bleeding into a chalice became one of the predominate eucharistic images in Italy, depicted by a wide variety of artists in diverse locations (see Eisler, "Man of Sorrows," *passim*). The figure of the

according to the prophet Ezekial (47:12): "...by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."³²⁰

John the Baptist, as prophet and precursor, forges the link between the Old and New Covenants. Standing on top of the tabernacle in Siena, he represents the culmination of Old Testament prophecy. In this single figure, the many prophets of the coming of the Savior are consolidated, with the fulfillment of that prophecy in the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. The role of the Baptist is made even more explicit by the placement of the font complex to visually correspond to the frescoes in the

Baptist on top of the Siena tabernacle corresponds visually (and iconographically as Forerunner) to the later use of the standing Redeemer, as exemplified by the bronze figure at the top of Vecchietta's free-standing tabernacle for Siena Cathedral. In addition, both figures correspond to the placement of crucifixes that were so often at the apex of monstrances.

³²⁰ For a discussion of this passage in relation to eucharistic meaning see Rab Hatfield, "The Tree of Life and the Holy Cross," Christianity and the Renaissance, 158, n.35. It is credible that one of the prophet figures may represent Ezekial, but it is not possible to be certain without inscriptions. Other feasible identifications for the figures, in addition to David, include Jeremiah, Isaiah, Solomon, Jonah, and others whose prophecies and acts specifically prefigure sacrifice and communion.

Baptistery dome. The Forerunner is carefully positioned before the resounding figure of the Crucified Christ, whose true body is offered to the faithful in the form of the Host entombed in the tabernacle below (Figure 112).³²¹

The free-standing ciborium in the Baptistery of Siena resembles the large Sacrament houses of the North as discussed above, with the crucial exception of its architectural formula.³²² The reciprocal relation between the tabernacle and the font was the result of

³²¹ The parallel between baptism and the Crucifixion continued to be of interest to artists, not only in Italy, but also in the north in the fifteenth century. For example, one monstrance (German or Flemish - now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York) of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, exhibits an iconographic combination similar to that of the Siena font-tabernacle. Above the circular glass display for the Host is the scene of the Baptism, and both are crowned by a ciborium roof; the Virgin and Child reside on the next tier and the Crucifixion tops the whole ensemble.

³²² Both the standing Redeemer and the free-standing Sacrament house were important artistic statements in the North by the 1420s. It should not be surprising that Tuscan artists and patrons of art would have been influenced by these substantial and easily comprehended manifestations of the widespread interest in the Host. Monumental housing for the Eucharist in Northern churches was commonplace and anticipated Italian usage, as did the visualization of the Man of Sorrows of eucharistic miracle stories. Moreover, not only did merchants and bankers all have their representatives in the North, but the many ecumenical councils of the fifteenth century ensured intellectual and artistic exchange. As noted, John Paoletti (Siena Font, 148-149) discusses the iconography of David on the Siena Font in relation to the presence of the Holy Roman Emperor in Siena for the occasion of the Pavia-Siena Council, as well as its eucharistic significance. This is an important point because it not only demonstrates the opportunity for artistic exchange, but also that the contemporary ecumenical event and the migration of important personages to Tuscany influenced the content of a significant work of art.

complex and innovative ideas and should be seen as interdependent parts of a single iconographic program relating to salvation. The inclusion of the prophets and the Virgin recalls the Northern altar-tabernacles and underscores the meaning of the connections among the font, tabernacle, and altar of the Baptistery of Siena.

It should be remembered that up to this point in Tuscany, monumental reservation for the Host in wall tabernacles was not standard. The architecture of Host reservation was emphatically Gothic, but the Siena Font tabernacle was among the monuments instrumental in altering that convention in Italy. Despite the fact that sienese painters continued to produce works along Trecento lines well into the Quattrocento, Host reservation changed after the completion of the Siena font.³²³

Sculptors and patrons understood its eucharistic function and imitated it repeatedly. The monument in the Siena Baptistery was meant as a Sacrament tabernacle as well as a font, which explains its elaborate decorative scheme, its size and the specific influence of antique vessels. Its costly decoration and innovative forms parallel the rise and increasing importance of the eucharistic tabernacles that were developed in the following decades.

³²³ Paoletti (*ibid.*) states that the Siena Font helped to spread the new Florentine classicism, but this is applicable only in the category of church furnishings and does not refer to figural style.

The monuments of antiquity had been reused repeatedly for Christian commemoration and burial.³²⁴ It is obvious that Jacopo understood the classical aedicula and surrounding motifs to be appropriate for not only for the entombment of a Christian, as in the monument to Ilaria del Caretto, but also for the ultimate entombment in Christianity, the Host. Moreover, the Siena ensemble

³²⁴ Michael Greenhalgh, The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages, 183-201 discusses the role of the cemeteries of the antique world in Medieval culture. He demonstrates that the funerary monuments were reused repeatedly, despite early legislation forbidding the disturbing of the dead. He also shows that all kinds of antiquities were uncovered in the Middle Ages, but that sarcophagi were particularly sought. In addition, the veneration of the relics of saints and martyrs has a long tradition and the cult of relics was particularly important to the survival of antiquities. Greenhalgh discusses the reasons for the preservation of so many funerary monuments. First, Early Christian burial practices were frequently similar to pagan and therefore made use of similar or the same monuments. The second reason he gives for their survival concerns the fact that Christian burials were often to be found in pagan cemeteries, resulting in the sometimes inadvertent preservation of the antique. Finally, the third reason for survival, and the most important in his estimation, concerns the relics of saints. He states (p. 186) that "when cemeteries extra muros become disused, the translation of relics intra muros occasions a search for fine vessels (often antique) in which to house them: bones or their containers had to be visible - hence their housing in the most beautiful containers available, which were often antique urns, altars and cippi or sarcophagi." The graves of Early Christian martyrs had been scattered in pagan necropoleis, and thus became the focus of martyr cults. "The abandonment of the necropoleis extra muros and the translation of the relics of saints and martyrs inside the cities was an important step in the survival of sarcophagi." (p.187) Not only physical events forced the move of funerary monuments inside the walls of cities, but also a change in religious ideas. Greenhalgh says that clerics like Vigilantius who ranted against people who appeared to worship dead bodies and relics, calling them "gatherers of ashes", were fighting a losing battle.

represents one of the most complete eucharistic statements of the first half of the Quattrocento, since it incorporates the most essential contemporary sacramental meanings. The importance of the sacraments of baptism and communion were explicated not only through the narratives and figures, but through the predominant classicism of its forms.

CHAPTER FIVE

CLASSICAL WALL TABERNACLES OF THE SACRAMENT

The concept of classicism in the early Renaissance had important connections to the imagery of death and rebirth inherent in eucharistic theology. Using the examples of Brunelleschi's tabernacle, the Orsanmichele niche, and the Siena Baptistery ensemble as points of departure, light can be shed on the formal and iconographic development of wall tabernacles. These monuments had enormous impact on the artists of Tuscany and the rest of Italy in the following decades. Host repositories were created by influential artists, including Donatello, Bernardo Rossellino, Buggiano, and Luca della Robbia. Although there is evidently much shop participation in Donatello's work,³²⁵ Bernardo's Badia

³²⁵ Harriet Caplow (Michelozzo, I, 371-78) discusses this work in the context of Michelozzo's oeuvre. She believes that it is probable that Michelozzo joined Donatello in Rome in 1432 (Donatello's presence in Rome between 1430 and 1433 has been accepted by nearly all scholars). A letter of April 1433 urged the return to Florence of Donatello and "compagno", and Caplow assumes the latter to be Michelozzo, since the two were partners at the time. Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that both partners had reappeared in Florence by May 31, 1433. There are, however, no extant documents regarding the tabernacle's construction. Caplow (p. 373) notes the contrast between the conception of the tabernacle and the execution. Most scholars have agreed that the Entombment relief is largely by Donatello. It is stylistically close to the relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum of the Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter and the Brancacci Assumption. Because the tabernacle has been moved and altered so often, it has been surmised that some sections were lost or replaced (e.g. the scrolls and shells above the Entombment). V. Martinelli ("Donatello and

tabernacles are in one case dismantled and in the other case lost,³²⁶ the date of the Buggiano tabernacle is uncertain,³²⁷ and Luca's tabernacle was moved to a provincial church, these are mainly works of the early to late 1430s containing a number of similarities despite their disparate artists and locations. Studying the features of the extant monuments, one finds architectural and iconographic motifs common to all, many of which do not have precedents in earlier Gothic wall tabernacles.

Donatello's Sacrament Tabernacle

In order to understand the development of Sacrament tabernacles in the fifteenth century, it is essential to investigate the one designed by Donatello for a papal chapel in the early 1430s (Figure 113).³²⁸ Currently

Michelozzo a Roma," Commentari, VIII, 1957, 374) suggests that the Lamentation in the Victoria and Albert Museum was originally part of the tabernacle. Caplow concurs and attributes the execution to Michelozzo, probably from a Donatello design. While this supposition is possible formally, it seems unlikely that a scene so visually redundant would have formed part of the monument. Donatello's Entombment clearly expresses the lamentation over Christ's body, and the artist characteristically avoids superfluous images.

³²⁶ See Anne Markham Schulz, The Sculpture of Bernardo Rossellino and His Workshop, Princeton, 1977, 160. See also Caspary, "Un Tabernacolo meno noti," 39-47.

³²⁷ See Ursula Schlegel, "Ein Sakramentstabernakel der Frührenaissance in S. Ambrogio in Florenz, Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, XXIII, 1960, 167-173.

³²⁸ See Janson, Donatello, I, 95ff., for a concise discussion of the documentary evidence regarding this tabernacle.

located in the Sagrestia dei Beneficiati underneath the basilica of St. Peter's, Martinelli has demonstrated that the tabernacle was originally located in the Pontifical palace in a small chapel dedicated to the Sacrament, reconstructed in 1433 by Bernardo Rossellino for Eugenius IV (demolished in 1538).³²⁹

With the exception of the Host repository in the Baptistry of Siena, Donatello's monument represents the first extant classicizing Sacrament tabernacle and is unique as the first extant wall tabernacle all'antica. It is also by far the most elaborate tabernacle of the first half of the fifteenth century. Although it differs decidedly from Donatello's own conception for the housing of the St. Louis of Toulouse on Orsanmichele, the specific motifs of the monuments are also derived from antique funerary forms. Donatello's receptacle was probably the focus around which the chapel was created.³³⁰ This is

³²⁹ Martinelli ("Donatello e Michelozzo a Roma," 167-194) believes that the extant elements of the tabernacle formed part of a complex for the presbytery of the Pope's rebuilt private chapel.

³³⁰ For an analysis of the tabernacle as a combination altar-tabernacle, see Martinelli, ibid. Although there was no uniform place for reserving the Host in Italian churches, many had eucharistic repositories on or near the high altar. See Nussbaum, Die Aufbewahrung der Eucharistie, 410ff. In addition, two-story Gothic altar reliquaries can be seen as a model for Host reservation on the altar. For example, a reliquary tabernacle with an altar, dedicated by Pope John VII, was constructed to hold St. Veronica's veil. See R. Niggel, Giacomo Grimaldi: Descrizione della Basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano, Vatican City, 1972, Fig. 40. cited by Borsook who discusses these two-story altar ciboria in the fourteenth century ("Cult and Imagery," 153-154). In

extremely logical in light of later developments in altar-tabernacle ensembles. Both formal and iconographic unity are established by combining classical architectural with sculptural decoration.

Cosmatesque tabernacles, such as the one in the choir of San Clemente, Rome (Figures 114a-b) demonstrate a link with "antique" Romanesque style that may have been a source of inspiration to Donatello, or at least lent his new tabernacle the authority of local Roman tradition.³³¹ However, it should also be noted that the tabernacles of the Cosmati School are typical of earlier reservation in terms of their relatively small scale (Figure 115a). (Although there is at least one example of inclusion a cosmatesque tabernacle in an altar retable, as in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Figure 115b.) On the contrary, Donatello's tabernacle is monumental in scale and, even if

addition, many altar reliquaries can had an iconographic focus on the Eucharist because of their Host miracle relics (such as the bloody corporal of the Mass of Bolsena discussed below and in Ch. 4).

³³¹ Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 36-37, discusses the Cosmatesque tabernacle of 1299 in the church of San Clemente in Rome (see Figure 114). This tabernacle has a projecting arcade with pointed arches and twisted columns, a medallion with the Lamb of God, and a number of other decorative and figurative features, including an Annunciate Virgin; two bronze panels serve as a sportello. For other Cosmatesque tabernacles see Raible, Das Tabernakel Einst und Jetzt, 175; Koster, De custodia Sanctissimae Eucharistiae disquisitio historico-iuridica, 72; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, vol. 37, Leipzig 1907-48, 132.

some pieces have been lost, the extant portion must have formed the major part of the altarpiece.

The Orvieto altars dedicated to the miraculous corporal may have a particular relevance to Donatello's monument.³³² The correspondences can be seen most clearly in the marble retable in the Trecento chapel dedicated to the miracle of the blood-stained corporal (see Figures 101 and 102). The inspiration for this kind of reservation, so rarely found in Trecento Italy, lies in its relationship to the earlier reliquary preserving the eucharistic miracle. The blood-stained cloth, as a Host miracle, was one of the most important relics of the fourteenth century. The most expansive reliquary to date had been designed for its display and preservation. So much status was attached to Orvieto's ownership that, in addition to the reliquary, a chapel was built and decorated to explicate the miracle and the origins of the Feast of the Corpus Domini (Figure 116). However, the relic was retained in the massive reliquary altar; the Chapel of the Miracle was designed to hold the consecrated Host. Thus this special focal point on the reserved Host was directly linked to the concept of a visible Host miracle.

³³² See Fumi, SS. Corporale, 23ff and Carli, Duomo di Orvieto, 123ff; see also the discussions in Ch. 2 and 4 of this study.

The design of the chapel tabernacle in Orvieto is simpler than the reliquary, with a single steeply pitched Gothic gable enriched by floral crockettes, the architectural structure frames a round-headed arch with egg and dart moldings (Figure 117).³³³ Resting on a high base, the tabernacle forms an impressive, monolithic altarpiece. The metal door is divided into six parts with figures in low relief including, in the upper tier, a half-length Redeemer opposite a half-length figure of the Virgin. Finished in the 1360s, the tabernacle is part of the decorative program of the chapel in which frescoes reiterate, on a new monumental scale, the story told in silver and enamel relief on the earlier reliquary. These narratives include the story of the miraculous Mass of Bolsena and the subsequent events surrounding its transport to Orvieto,³³⁴ the writing of the office of the

³³³ It is possible that the lunette (containing an image of the Agnus Dei) in polychrome enamel, was influential for Luca della Robbia's Sacrament tabernacle in Peretola.

³³⁴ For a discussion of the altar, chapel, and frescoes, see Fumi, SS. Corporale, 105ff, who calls it "un gran tabernacolo del Sacramento" and cites documents that must refer to this monument. A record dated May 12, 1358 states: "M. Nicolao de Senis... ad designandum modum tabernaculi in palatio pape pro XIII sol. pro die." Another record of the same year refers to "in arco volte tabernaculi." In 1363 records refer to 3500 libbre "pro coperrtorio tabernaculi...pro legna tabernaculi." The last reference is in 1366. For a discussion of the reliquary tabernacle see Carli, Il Duomo di Orvieto, 123ff.

corpus Domini by Thomas Aquinas, and papal endorsement of the relic of the Corporal.³³⁵

Donatello would have had ample opportunity to view both the reliquary and the altar tabernacle in the early 1420s, since he had been commissioned during that decade to sculpt a gilded bronze John the Baptist for the Baptismal font of the Duomo of Orvieto.³³⁶ The tabernacle in the Chapel of the Miracle provides an important precedent for later Italian Quattrocento sculpted tabernacles for altar reservation, as well as lending support to Martinelli's conviction that Donatello's Sacrament tabernacle was a monolithic ensemble for altar reservation.³³⁷

The motivation for the focus on Host reservation and the innovative formal characteristics of the tabernacle are interconnected. It is significant that Donatello's

³³⁵ It should be noted that the proprietary and reverential attitude of the papacy to the Mass of Bolsena and its relic in Orvieto continued well into the Renaissance. Even in the Cinquecento Julius II was particularly devoted to the relic and believed in its power, as is explicitly recorded in the magnificent fresco by Raphael in the Stanza d'Elidoro of 1512.

³³⁶ The documents for the 1423 commission are extant, but the bronze Baptist was either lost or never completed (see Bennett and Wilkins, *Donatello*, 30). Donatello's commission in Orvieto should also be viewed in the context of his possible participation in the design for the Siena Font tabernacle.

³³⁷ See Martinelli ("Donatello e Michelozzo a Roma," 178-186) for a discussion of the tabernacle as an altarpiece. See Ch. 7 of this study for examples of later fifteenth-century sculpted ensembles for altar reservation.

tabernacle was among the first commissions in the artistic renewal of Rome, after the long "Babylonian Captivity," which eventually culminated in the rebuilding of St. Peter's itself. The commission for a tabernacle with an elaborate visual formula and explicit iconography was extremely logical in terms of its location and era. St. Peter's, adjacent to the Pontifical palace, was still an Early Christian basilica in unfortunate condition, but the building and the decorative features were valued for their connection to Early Christian worship and proximity to antiquity. It should be remembered that Donatello was creating a monument for a Vatican chapel, during a momentous period of history - it could not have been seen as anything less than consequential at the time.³³⁸ As a structure, it must be viewed in light of its reference to the origins of the Church, the eternal Christian Rome.

Donatello's tabernacle is complex in design; a central area that originally held a sportello, which opened to reveal the consecrated Host, is capped by a triangular pediment and framed by fluted double pilasters

³³⁸ See Herbert L. Kessler, "Caput et Speculum Omnium Ecclesiarum": Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium," Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions Forms and Regional Traditions, ed. William Tronzo, Vol. I, Bologna, 1989, 119-146. From the time of its completion in the fourth century until its demolition in 1506, St. Peter's basilica was a model for church decoration in and near Rome; a version of its program was used in the Sistine Chapel. See also Ch. 3 of this study for a discussion of the meaning of antique forms in terms of Christian ideals.

with composite capitals. Tomb altars, in particular, may have provided Donatello with a model for this structure (Figures 118a-b). The area between the sportello and the pilasters is carved in very low relief with all'antica vases filled with long-stemmed blooms, distinctively different on each side. The vases are in the form of the two-handled wine cups found frequently in antique sacrificial and Bacchic scenes (Figure 119).

Standing on the extended socles to either side, about a third of the way up the pilasters, are engaging infant angels in varying degrees of relief, three to each side, who lean inward toward the reserved Host, creating a transition between the space of the chapel and the tabernacle (Figures 120a-b). Donatello thus included the viewer within the illusion, much as Masaccio calculated a comparable sensation with his use of the donors and the holy figures of John and Mary in the Trinity fresco, who seem to have entered from the sides (see Figure 63). In the fresco, Masaccio uses this fictive architecture to imply a lateral extension of the space, while Donatello extends the active little angels, whispering and gesturing, into the church proper, thereby allowing the viewer to participate with them in the adoration of the Host. As in the sarcophagus scene of King Minos preparing to make sacrifice to Neptune, in the Villa Borghese (Figure 121), these figures stand in front of columns attached to a pedimented temple.

Donatello's putti can be compared as well to a Roman sarcophagus of the third century, which presents Amor and psyche as children embracing (Figure 122). The flying amorette, so often found on these reliefs, carry a clipeus with a bust of St. Agnes that had been added in the Early Christian era.³³⁹ This sarcophagus was displayed in exceptionally pertinent circumstances in the Renaissance, since not only had the pagan monument been converted to Christian use in the fourth century, but it was later used as the antependium for the high altar of the Church of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome.

Carved on the socle front of Donatello's tabernacle are four winged amorette; all of whom crouch to fit the space (Figure 123). Two of these classical figures frame a bronze roundel in the center and the others each support large wheel-like rosettes, which are truncated by the extension of the socle. Donatello may have been influenced by the captives, posed in counterpoint with shields, found on some sarcophagus lids, such as those on the sarcophagus formerly in the Cathedral of Cortona and made famous by Vasari's story of Donatello and Brunelleschi's admiration (Figure 124), or the one seen during the Renaissance in

³³⁹ Bober and Rubinstein, Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, 128. In addition, Donatello's figures can be compared to the lively amorette playing with Bacchic cult objects in front of a Herm holding a two-handled wine cup on a fragment of an antique sarcophagus (known by the fourteenth century in Florence). For the history of this fragment as a model for artists in the fourteenth century see ibid., 91 and Figure 53.

the church of SS. Cosma e Damiano in the Roman Forum, (Figure 125).³⁴⁰ A simple cornice sets off the architecture of the upper portion of the structure and balances the tabernacle. It is composed of formalized rosettes, smaller, but similar to those on the socle (Figure 126).

Above the doorway leading to the consecrated Host, the eucharistic iconography of the tabernacle is underscored by the narrow entablature consisting of a thinly carved representation of tightly bound shafts of wheat. Egg and dart moldings surround the classical temple pediment. A small bust of a Man of Sorrows is displayed in a wreath, a motif that recalls earlier Sienese tabernacles (see Figure 30), Medieval funerary sculpture, as well as the clipeus of classical monuments. The pediment itself is a classicizing version of a Gothic gable. Reclining on the angles of the pediment are two small figures, whose wings extend to meet at the apex. This area of the tabernacle resembles figured spandrels between arches (seen for example in his Parte Guelfa niche as well as numerous antique monuments); however, the reclining figures clearly use the pediment as a support. Donatello, instead, derived the image from the lids of the type of antique sarcophagi in which a small eros,

³⁴⁰ Ibid., for a history of the sarcophagus.

accompanying the deceased, symbolizes eternal rest (Figure 127).³⁴¹

The tabernacle is further enriched by the inclusion of the Entombment relief above the pediment, which is "revealed" with a fictive curtain furled and held aside by two winged acroteries standing on pedestals surmounting the pilasters (Figure 128). This motif recalls tomb monuments of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, as well as antique funerary imagery (see Figure 131). Moreover, the composition and style of the entombment relief is based on sarcophagi illustrating the death of Meleager. Although it has been noted that a second-century relief, now in Wiltshire (Figure 139), may have been the source for the composition of the Entombment, a relief of the same period now in Milan (formerly in the Palazzo Montalvo, Florence), provides a closer comparison (Figure 130).³⁴² The figures serving as apostrophes for the recumbent Christ correspond to those flanking the couch in the scene of Meleager's death. In addition, the frenzied grief and the position of the mourner behind the bier are related to Donatello's relief. Although a number of

³⁴¹ Cumont, Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains, 339-340.

³⁴² See C. Robert, Die Antiken Sarkophagreliefs, Vol. III Einzelmythen, 3, 574f., who cites the relief in Wiltshire in connection with the tabernacle in St. Peter's. Janson (Donatello, 98) however, notes that only the figure of the mourning Atalanta at the far right is used by Donatello as a model for the figure of St. John.

scholars have noted Donatello's affinity for these scenes in his later bronze reliefs,³⁴³ the artist assimilated the forms and content in his Sacrament tabernacle of the early 1430s.

Donatello's inclusion of an explicit entombment narrative was not particularly influential for the future development of tabernacles. In regard to the lack of entombment scenes on later tabernacles, it has been noted that Italians preferred the symbolic image, the eucharistic Pietà, to more explicit narrative scenes.³⁴⁴ However, this is only partially correct. The numerous images of the symbolic type were present in northern Europe as well as in Italy and served as an explicit presentation of the miraculous Body of Christ, in order to imply the tomb itself, not solely to replace the narrative.³⁴⁵ Instead, the eucharistic Christ was coupled with a symbolic, rather than actual, narrative in the form

³⁴³ I. Lavin ("The Sources of Donatello's Pulpit in S. Lorenzo," Art Bulletin, XLI, 1959, 30) has suggested the Milan relief as a source for the Resurrection on Donatello's south Pulpit in San Lorenzo, Florence. Professor Lavin has been very kind in discussing the pulpit program with me.

³⁴⁴ Cope, The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century, 54-55 and 73-78. Cope says that the only tabernacle with an entombment scene in the fifteenth century was Donatello's for St. Peter's, and goes on to discuss the various types of symbolic images of Christ.

³⁴⁵ Cope (*ibid.*, 82) in a somewhat contradictory statement, discusses the idea of the resurrected Christ on the door of a tabernacle with the Pietà above "which is the common position because the Body of Christ reserved in the tabernacle is in a sense in a tomb, and when it is taken out it is resurrected."

of classical architectural enframement and surrounding motifs. Donatello's selection of antique funerary sculpture as models for the structure and motifs, was itself an explicit reference to entombment.

While it is unlikely that Donatello stayed long enough in Rome to complete the carving of this tabernacle, the very inventiveness of the conception is proof of his design. It cannot be emphasized enough that this was the first of its kind to use such a wide variety of motifs from antique funerary monuments. Although some of the execution is obviously by lesser artists, for a number of other reasons there can be no doubt of Donatello's participation. First, the complexity of the ensemble is not only unprecedented, but its forms were reiterated and simplified in diverse ways in later tabernacles. Second, the imaginative use of classicism equals that of Donatello's other works of the early 1430s, such as the cantoria for the Cathedral of Florence and the Annunciation in Santa Croce. The third point is perhaps less tangible, but no less important to the invention of this new class of receptacle for the Host: excitement and energy is communicated in the monument, especially through the grouping of the angels in front of the pilasters. Donatello transformed the concept of wall tabernacles for the reservation of the Sacrament into a stimulating explication of the current ideas regarding transubstantiation.

In a perceptive article Martha Dunkelman discusses Donatello's tabernacle.³⁴⁶ She believes, quite rightly, that Donatello's monument had more influence on the history of the Renaissance wall tabernacle than has been previously acknowledged.³⁴⁷ Having come to the same conclusion, this chapter will address the question of the iconography as well as visual characteristics of Donatello's monument.

The tabernacle in St. Peter's is, in fact, an extremely important example of the use of antique funerary imagery seen in the context of the revival of Early Christian Rome - it is this aspect, visual and iconographic, that links it most closely with the tabernacles being created contemporaneously in Florence by

³⁴⁶ Martha Levine Dunkelman, "A New Look at Donatello's Saint Peter's Tabernacle," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, CXVIII, 1991, 1-16.

³⁴⁷ Dunkelman briefly relates the development of wall tabernacles, and says that Italian wall tabernacle became even more elaborate in the fifteenth century, reflecting a growing popular interest in venerating the Host, an interest which was no doubt fanned when indulgences for its celebration were granted by Martin V in 1429 and Eugenius IV in 1433. She suggests that Donatello's conception was a crucial link in the development of tabernacles, both in form and in new meanings, and provided a "necessary step in the development of the housing and worship of the sacrament." Dunkelman does not review that development in depth and skips over a number of influential monuments; However, her intention seems to be to refocus attention on this extraordinary monument, as well as the importance of Sacrament tabernacles in the Quattrocento. In addition, she goes on to say (*ibid.*, 4) that while Donatello's tabernacle appeared before the perspectival type emerged in the second half of the fifteenth century, it can be seen "to have paved the way for the final resolution of the widely accepted perspectival format."

other sculptors. As is to be expected, Donatello was far more complex, daring, and imaginative in his approach to his antique sources than any other artist of the time, probably including Brunelleschi. Donatello, as a sculptor, was prepared to see the conjunction of relief sculpture and architecture in a new way, creating a profound and lasting iconographic model for the eucharistic focus of the liturgy.

Like the Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele and the Siena Font, the tabernacle in St. Peter's exploits antique images of rebirth and everlasting life for Christian purposes. Further, Donatello fully incorporated the antique architectural style into the tabernacle, rather than selecting isolated motifs to merely enhance the meaning. He synthesized a number of funerary monuments to create a newly explicit eucharistic symbolism; the pediment and moldings are adapted from cinerary urns and tomb altars in addition to the sculptural derivations from sarcophagi, underscoring the thematic references to immortality. The vases with their blooms to either side of the doorway, perform a multi-layered iconographic task. The familiar symbol of the lily makes reference to the purity of the Virgin's womb and the other flowers deepen the symbolism of the Sacrifice. In the cycle of Christ's death and rebirth the flowers rise out of antique wine cups, which are inherently appropriate to the eucharistic vessel. To this structure, so emphatically funerary in

nature, Donatello added a Christian narrative relief of the Entombment, similar in style and composition to the death of Meleager on well-known sarcophagi. In the context of a papal chapel, in Rome, the seat of early Christianity and the Empire, the use of late Antique-Early Christian funerary symbolism adds potent meaning and patriarchal authority to the container for the consecrated Host.

In light of his other works throughout a long career, it is obvious that Donatello was adept at creating new visual language to explicate complicated iconographic programs. His ability to provide depth and meaning to a familiar image is apparent, for example, in the figure of St. Mark of c.1411-1415 (Figure 132), where the artist used every conceivable means to convey, not only the biblical character of the apostle, but more specifically, the historicism of its early Christian context.³⁴⁸ The means he used are almost too well known - one tends to overlook them for the very reason of familiarity. The figure has always been categorized in scholarly literature as the first full-length, free-standing sculpture conceived in a classical stance in the Renaissance. The saint stands with the weight on one leg, and a moderate contrapposto extends throughout his body as well. St.

³⁴⁸ At this early date, however, a classical vocabulary for the is not used in the niche designed and executed by Giovanni and Albizzi di Pietro.

Mark's characterization as a philosopher-saint is equally evident and, significantly, a large number of antique funerary monuments display the image of a philosopher in a niche (Figure 133a-b). Antique funerary sculpture facilitated Donatello's intellectual juxtaposition of the antique ideal of the learned philosopher to the early Christian ideal of the ascetic theologian, the Christian philosophical ideal. The rendering of St. Mark in an antique mode demonstrates Donatello's concept of the saint as an historical figure, and underscores the authority of early Christian scripture. The formal derivation is adjunct to the spiritual meaning Donatello's sculpture.

The sepulchral source is essential because Donatello has conceived of a fundamentally contemporary ideal in terms that specifically evoke the early period of the Church - in a way that also strongly emphasizes Greco-Roman visual principles. By these means he created a bond between the visual and the intellectual spheres of late Roman antiquity, encompassing the theology of Augustine and the artistic heritage of the Greco-Roman world. Donatello made an articulate visual statement concerning the new Florentine intellectual aesthetic - only under the dominion of Christ could the rational exemplar of the pagan past exist as a true ideal. This point is at the crux of the early Renaissance.

Looking at Donatello's predilection toward a subtly expressed ideal in which classicism becomes synonymous

with and dependent on early Christianity for its meaning, it is not surprising that the artist chose to saturate the tabernacle in St. Peter's with the imagery of what he perceived as that of early Christian Rome. Presented with a project to create a monument with the Eucharist, the central mystery of Christianity, as its focus in the spiritual center of the early Church, his conclusion was logical. Thus in this context, the familiar antique-style ash urns, sarcophagi, and tomb altars were used to create a symbolic statement regarding the nature of the Host contained within the tabernacle. Donatello's tabernacle stands out both in the symbolic evocation of the Corpus verum and in its all'antica decoration. The conjunction of image and idea was an essential part of the monuments success. It must have had an extraordinary conceptual impact on artists, clergy, and patrons trying to promote a portentous contemporary theological issue.

Bernardo Rossellino and Luca della Robbia

In the early Quattrocento, Donatello, Brunelleschi, and Jacopo della Quercia played fundamental roles in the revival of classical forms as well as in the Christian reformulation of the significance of those forms; Host receptacles gained a new distinction under their artistic aegis. However another artist, Bernardo Rossellino, also played a pivotal role in the early formulation of Host tabernacles. Indeed, his workshop appears to have created

the standard form of classical Host receptacle in Florence for many years.

Because of the lack of extant tabernacles in the 1430s, the impact of Donatello's St. Peter's tabernacle has been underrated. However, there are a number of indications of Bernardo's interest in the iconographic foundations that determined Donatello's program.³⁴⁹ It is difficult to evaluate with precision Bernardo's role in the 1430s, because his earliest tabernacles are for the most part lost. Tabernacles for the Badia of Florence and the Badia of Arezzo were important commissions in 1436-37.³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the dismantled tabernacle in the Badia in Florence commissioned in 1436 provides an important clue to the iconography and visual character of these early receptacles.³⁵¹ The remains of the Florence

³⁴⁹ Dunkelman, "Donatello's Saint Peter's Tabernacle," 4f, does not discuss the tabernacles of the 1430s or 1440s, but states that Bernardo Rossellino's 1450 Sant'Egidio tabernacle was influenced by the idea of a three-dimensional enclosure for the Host introduced in Donatello's tabernacle.

³⁵⁰ Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 17 and *idem.*, "Ancora sui tabernacoli eucaristici del quattrocento," Antichità viva, III, 1964, 27. The Arezzo tabernacle is now lost, although Caspary believes it to be the tabernacle inserted in the altar wall of the church in Remole. However, the quality of this tabernacle is uneven. In addition, the motif of the lunette, a half-circle of cherubim, is not seen in tabernacles until the second half of the century.

³⁵¹ See Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 17 and Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 160, Doc. 16, which records the payments to Bernardo for the tabernacle from September 1436 to January 1437 (1438 modern dating). It is interesting to note that the sculpture is referred to only as a "tabernacholo" in the documents. Only when payments for the door commence in 1439 is the eucharistic function referred

Badia tabernacle, the frieze (Figure 134) and the console (Figure 135) exhibit similarities to many later tabernacles.³⁵² The architrave is delicately carved with garlands, and the console is formed by the eagle of St. John with its claws clutching the gospel. Both the eagle and the frieze decoration have precedents in antique funerary monuments (Figures 136 and 137a-b). It is important, however, to also take the location of these monuments into consideration; the iconographies probably differed according to location, patron, and the specific circumstances of the commission.

In Northern altar-tabernacles, the doorway to the Host was often adorned with a eucharistic image; it could take the more corporeal form such as the Man of Sorrows, or the more symbolic image of Host and chalice.³⁵³ The iconographic example of Donatello's monument in the Vatican must have had an enormous impact on the artists and patrons of Florence. This influence was also combined

to ("per dorare lo sportello del sacramento..."). The commission for the tabernacle has been lost.

³⁵² Today the architrave/entablature (18 cm. X 77.5 cm.) is immured in the fifth bay of the ground floor of the east loggia of the Chiostro degli Aranci, the console (32 cm. X 64.1 cm.) is immured in the fourth bay of the ground floor of the south loggia of the Chiostro degli Aranci (see Schulz, Bernardo, 93-95). Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 17, believes that the fragments of the Florentine tabernacle are products of Bernardo's shop; Schulz concurs with this assessment.

³⁵³ See Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows in Italy," Art Bulletin, LI, 1969, 107ff.

with the closest extant architectural precedent for the Rossellino shop type - Donatello's niche for St. Louis on Orsanmichele.

The Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele is very close in form to the type of tabernacle established by Bernardo Rossellino and his workshop and exemplified by the extant tabernacles of San Giovanni Battista, Remole (Figure 138) and the later tabernacle attributed to Antonio Rossellino from Santa Chiara.³⁵⁴ The idiosyncratic usage of the funerary motifs particularly captured the imagination of that workshop; these motifs were part of the artistic vocabulary of Donatello's niche. Donatello understood the meaning of his antique funerary sources, as did the sculptors associated with him. To use the niche as a precedent was not an iconographic stretch. It provided an important commemorative setting for his St. Louis; it is literally a tabernacle, meant to protect and to enshrine the image of a holy figure (Figure 139).

³⁵⁴ Caspary ("Ancora sui tabernacoli Eucharistici del Quattrocento," 26-35) discusses the two early tabernacles that Bernardo sculpted, the first for the Badia of Arezzo in 1433 and the second for the Badia of Florence in 1435. The Arezzo tabernacle has been considered lost, but Caspary (p.27) tentatively identifies the tabernacle of the Pieve di San Giovanni Battista a Remole as the one intended for the Arezzo Badia. He cites it as a prototype for later tabernacles. While I do not find this a convincing identification, the tabernacle in the parish church at Remole (near Pontassieve) is an excellent example of Bernardo's standard workshop type. In addition, it is still in use as a Sacrament repository and is displayed with its original fittings (with the possible exception of the sportello). See the Epilogue of this study for a discussion of the tabernacle from Santa Chiara.

As we have seen, the classicizing funerary motifs stand out among the Gothic niches and consistently underscore the ideas of everlasting life. In addition, the relief sculpture in the pediment is enormously significant; the image of the Trinity is particularly associated with the Corpus Domini. While an iconographic association has never been suggested, it is possible that the classical features and the image of the Trinity that appear on these monuments are not coincidental.³⁵⁵ The close visual association of the niche and Masaccio's Trinity fresco (see Figure 63) makes explicit the connection to the Body of Christ. Moreover, there are visual references to the niche and to the fresco throughout the fifteenth century in eucharistic monuments by various artists.³⁵⁶ Because of these factors, as well as the funerary implications and Donatello's initiation of their use in a Christian context, the Parte Guelfa niche provided the ideal format in which to introduce an expanded eucharistic iconography. It was for these

³⁵⁵ After a presentation of ongoing research to Fellows at the Institute for Advanced Study in February 1992, Professor Irving Lavin encouraged me in the exploration of this possibility, and while further study is necessary, I owe him a debt of gratitude for his persistent questions regarding the "coincidence" of the resemblance of the niche to Sacrament tabernacles.

³⁵⁶ Several of these monuments will be discussed throughout this study. They include the tabernacle meant to house the miraculous Madonna of Impruneta, Fra Angelico's Linaiuoli tabernacle, the Santa Chiara tabernacle, and ultimately, the Christ and St. Thomas by Verrocchio.

reasons that sculptors turned to the example provided by the niche.³⁵⁷

While sculptors had another model by the early 1430s provided by Donatello's Host tabernacle for St. Peter's in Rome, they probably found the Orsanmichele niche more formally accessible than Donatello's more complex and idiosyncratic use of antique motifs in the 1430s.³⁵⁸

Bernardo's contemporaneous work in Arezzo on the facade of the Palazzo della Fraternità in 1433-36 (Figure 140), demonstrates his fascination with Donatello's niche.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a possibility that Brunelleschi's tabernacle for Campo Corbellini looked like the Orsanmichele niche and, if so, would have provided the most direct prototype for Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacles. If Brunelleschi indeed provided the design for the Orsanmichele niche, then his 1426-27 tabernacle may have repeated its format. However, Donatello as an artist was never satisfied with repeating another artist's motifs, and Bernardo's Sacrament tabernacles, as well as the wall tabernacle in Impruneta (see Chapter Six), both closely resemble the niche. It must be kept in mind also that these tabernacles are the first extant of their kind, and their similarities, therefore, far outweigh their differences.

³⁵⁸ Donatello provided another prototype for Sacrament tabernacles in the decorative motifs of the Cavalcanti Altar (see Chapter Six). Its curved pediment later became an alternative to the triangular pediment of the Orsanmichele niche. Again, this motif was derived from antique funerary monuments and was iconographically appropriate to Eucharist receptacles.

³⁵⁹ See Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 18-24, for a discussion of the facade. Schulz briefly mentions (p.19) that the lateral niches reflect Donatello's niche for Orsanmichele. She states, however, that the architecture of the second story of the facade juxtaposes a late Gothic mixtilineal arch with "the otherwise classically orthodox architectural members". Schulz reflects the standard belief that the International Style was no longer current in Tuscan cities and that classicizing architecture was "orthodox". In the early 1430s when this facade was commissioned,

The format of the tabernacles of the mid-1430s must have had both a close visual alliance with the Orsanmichele niche in addition to a conceptual parallel with the tabernacle in St. Peter's. Although scholars have generally bypassed the latter example, Bernardo must have been familiar with Donatello's tabernacle since he was involved in the reconstruction of the chapel dedicated to the Sacrament in the Pontifical Palace, in which Donatello's work was originally located.

An unusual feature of Donatello's Sacrament tabernacle is reflected in Bernardo's extant Host repository of c.1449-50 (Figure 141). Significantly, Bernardo included the bound shafts of wheat in the entablature. The dual influence of Donatello's niche and tabernacle is underscored by examining the structure of the tabernacle, which repeats the basic architectural formula of the niche and includes the symbolic concepts of Donatello's Host tabernacle.

This tabernacle, now in the main church of the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, Sant'Egidio, was originally intended for the chapel of the women's ward (also called Santa Maria Nuova), opposite the church. Documents for payment begin on February 11, 1449 and the marble portions

classicism, far from being a set standard, was still an avant garde style. Very few monuments had been completed in the new Renaissance style, and thus Bernardo's use of Brunelleschi's composite pilasters, and the pedimented niche inspired by Donatello, was a bold departure for Aretine architecture.

were completed by April 22, 1450.³⁶⁰ The triangular pediment edged by egg and dart and dentillated moldings, includes a representation of God the Father, holding an orb and blessing with his right hand (Figure 142). The dove of the Holy Spirit descends from the coffers of the canopy-arch, hovering over a representation of the Host wafer in a chalice in the lunette above the doorway (Figure 143). The console, which has been replaced by one from the seventeenth century, probably repeated the image of the eagle of St. John found in the fragment from the Badia tabernacle.³⁶¹

Donatello's two innovative monuments are, in a sense, combined in Bernardo's Sacrament tabernacle. The Trinitarian symbolism of the niche, and the emphasis on the entombment of the Body of Christ of the St. Peter's

³⁶⁰ See G. Poggi, "Il ciborio di Bernardo Rossellino nella chiesa di S. Egidio," Miscellanea d'arte, I, 1903, 107f. See also Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 52-58. Schulz clarifies the commission and original location of the tabernacle, but lightly passes over the immediate precedents - Brunelleschi's tabernacle in Campo Corbellini, Donatello's tabernacle in Rome, and Luca della Robbia's 1441 tabernacle originally placed in Sant'Egidio (now in Santa Maria, Peretola) - stating that the architectural forms of Buggiano's and Rossellino's tabernacles can be traced to Cosmatesque tabernacles. She adds that these Romanesque Cosmati influences speak in favor of Brunelleschi's influence on the design, "for it corresponds to Brunelleschi's own dependence on that architecture which he often mistook for Roman." (p.53) Schulz shows that Rossellino incorporated motifs evolved by Gothic predecessors. In particular, she states that the adoring angels were borrowed from an International Style tabernacle in the crypt of the Duomo at Fiesole.

³⁶¹ According to Schulz, (Bernardo Rossellino, 52) the Baroque console probably dates from about the time the tabernacle was moved to Sant'Egidio.

tabernacle, are displayed in Sant'Egidio, as are the architectural features derived from classical funerary monuments. Moreover, in 1441-1442, only a few years earlier than Bernardo's commission, Luca della Robbia had created a marble tabernacle, with enamelled terracotta ornament, for the church of Sant'Egidio, in the chapel dedicated to St. Luke, the Cappella Maggiore of the church (Figure 144).³⁶² This tabernacle is now found in the collegiata of Peretola, a small parish in the outskirts of Florence.³⁶³ Pope-Hennessy discusses this marble wall

³⁶² The documents for payment (107 florins total, including money for an assistant and for the marble) to Luca della Robbia were published by Marquand (Luca della Robbia, 65) and show that the tabernacle was placed in the chapel of St. Luke, the choir of the church of Sant'Egidio. The documents state that the payments are for "Parte d'un tabernacolo di marmo per tenere il chorpo di Christo nella cappella di Santolucha." (Archivio del R. Arcispedale di S. Maria Nuova in Firenze) For further discussion see Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 33-35, 134. Bernardo's and Luca's tabernacles were frequently confused by scholars, especially since both were made for the hospital complex of Santa Maria Nuova and Bernardo's monument was eventually moved to Sant'Egidio.

³⁶³ In a coincidence of dates leading to much confusion, the parish church of Peretola was incorporated into the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in 1449 (the year of Bernardo's tabernacle commission) and was a dependency until the late eighteenth century. See Guido Carocci, I dintorni di Firenze, Florence, 1906, I, 346 and Schultz, Bernardo Rossellino, 105 and note 5. There are no documents regarding the transfer of Luca's tabernacle to Peretola, but some scholars believe it was moved there in the eighteenth century (see Schulz, as above, who cites Carroci). Nevertheless, some confusion still remains, as evidenced in the Detroit Institute of the Arts exhibition catalogue (Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello, ed. Alan Phipps Darr, 1985, 88-89) in which it is stated that Bernardo's tabernacle was commissioned "to replace the tabernacle made only seven years earlier by Luca della Robbia (now at Santa Maria, Peretola)."

tabernacle in Peretola as the first monument to introduce the type of enamelling that was to become the trademark of the Della Robbia workshop.³⁶⁴ Perhaps the most beautiful and harmonious Sacrament tabernacle of the early Renaissance, it displays similar structural and iconographic features as Donatello's and Bernardo Rossellino's monuments. Luca della Robbia provides an excellent example of an artist who used and transmuted the

Logically, however, the biggest change may have come at the end of the sixteenth century, during the renovation of the Capella Maggiore of Sant'Egidio, when Domenico Veneziano's frescoes were probably whitewashed (see Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 234). The Counter Reformation councils were adamant in their demand for exclusive reservation on the high altar. It was during this period when many of the fifteenth-century Sacrament tabernacles were dismantled or converted to holy oil receptacles. (For this converted use of old Sacrament tabernacles, particularly as directed by the 1596 Council of Aquileia, see Charles Rohault de Fleury, La Messe, études archéologiques sur ses monuments, Paris, II, 1893, 72.) Luca's tabernacle surely ceased its eucharistic function in the Capella Maggiore at this time.

³⁶⁴ Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 234-235) discusses the tabernacle in relation to Domenico Veneziano's 1439 fresco commission of scenes from the life of the Virgin in the Capella Maggiore of Sant'Egidio. Although there is no record of the precise location of the tabernacle in the chapel, Pope-Hennessy believes it may have been in the right wall, as part of the program with the frescoes. The frescoes were probably whitewashed in 1594, but some parts have been preserved, including a fictive enframing with foliage with a pierced circular design. Pope-Hennessy makes the connection because the design corresponds to the colorful enamelled terracotta design on the base of the tabernacle, and states (p.35), "Whether the tabernacle was installed on the right or the left wall, it would from the first have been seen in conjunction with Domenico Veneziano's frescoes, and it is the frescoes that account for its vivid polychromy." In addition to Pope-Hennessy's theory, the Peretola tabernacle may bear some relationship to the enamels of the Orvieto Reliquary for the Holy Corporal.

forms and symbols of the niche, Donatello's Host tabernacle iconography and, to a limited extent, Masaccio's fresco for Santa Maria Novella. The overall structure of the tabernacle also has close ties with antique funerary altars, such as the one currently in the villa Albani in Rome (Figure 145).³⁶⁵

The symbolism of Luca's tabernacle is dependent on both the Trinitarian meaning and the entombment of the Body. The central portion of the tabernacle is divided into three iconographic sections; at the apex, in the pediment, a monumental bust-length God the Father begins the cycle of redemption by presiding over the sacrificed Christ, the Holy Spirit and, their spiritual convergence, the Host (Figure 147). The artist used the central space under the architrave to imply a tomb and an altar, as well as a niche in the lower region. The triumphal arch becomes a stage balcony, within which figures of the Virgin and John the Evangelist offer and mourn the Body of the crucified Christ, held up by an angel (Figure 148). Luca chose to display the pietistic Christ more emphatically than did Bernardo in his 1449 tabernacle. Carved in high relief, with his hands dropping over the edge of the architectural molding which also serves as a symbolic tomb and altar, Christ's body penetrates the

³⁶⁵ See Bober and Rubinstein, Renaissance Artists and Antique Artists, 88. The reliefs represent the Somnus and Fate.

viewer's space. In this vertical exposition, the hands of Christ indicated the gilt bronze roundel, in which the dove is clearly flying downward and leading the viewer's eye toward the door to the Sacrament.³⁶⁶ Further focusing the viewer's attention on the symbolic content are the large, full length angels supporting the carved laurel wreath containing the bronze roundel. These figures are conceptually related to the winged victories on sarcophagi bearing a clipeus (see Figure 124) and also display similarities in their attire and hair.³⁶⁷ Luca set apart the area below the lunette by carving a fictive curtain with a brocaded, foliate design; the border of this "cloth" resembles the blue flowers on the base which are enclosed by a circular interstice pattern, similar to

³⁶⁶ The roundel currently occupying this position is a copy, the original is now in the Bargello. The later addition of the present bronze door will be discussed in relation to the development and symbolic significance of sportelli in this chapter.

³⁶⁷ Pope-Hennessy, (Luca della Robbia, 34) relates the large "Victory angels" supporting the wreath to either a gold medallion of Constantine the Great, "in which the wreath is held in place by the raised arms of the two figures and is not supported from beneath, or from a solidus of Constans, where it is also supported with the forward arms." In both of these examples the victories are shown in profile. Luca's angels appear to be a composite of the type cited by Pope-Hennessy, and the sarcophagus reliefs available to the artist. Although the figures of Christ, John, and Mary have been previously compared with sarcophagus figures (see Carlo Del Bravo, "L'Umanesimo di Luca della Robbia," Paragone, 285, 1973, 16) from the Camposanto in Pisa, Pope-Hennessy (p.234) finds this specific source unconvincing.

those on Roman cosmatesque tombs (see Figure 146).³⁶⁸ In this Sacrament tabernacle, the classical style and funerary motifs are fully integrated into the context of a eucharistic tabernacle.

The Sportello

Among the early Renaissance Host tabernacles, a piece of the puzzle is consistently missing, the sportello, the door behind which the Host was reserved. The original doorway to the Eucharist on Sacrament tabernacles is one of the most problematic of all issues regarding these receptacles. Significantly, however, we have a sportello that was part of Bernardo's 1436 Badia tabernacle (Figure 149).³⁶⁹ The unusual metal door is now inserted into a later tabernacle in the same church.

The tabernacle in the chapel of S. Mauro in the Badia has been dated to the end of the Cinquecento, but the copper door, incised with the Christ of the Passion holding a cross, has been accepted as a work of the preceding century.³⁷⁰ Paatz attributed it to the first half of the latter Quattrocento.³⁷¹ However, he hinted at

³⁶⁸ See Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 34, who states that the brocade pattern appears to have been pigmented.

³⁶⁹ Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 52.

³⁷⁰ Middeldorf, Ulrich, "Un rame inciso del Quattrocento," Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Mario Salmi, vol. 2, Rome, 1962, 275-289.

³⁷¹ Paatz, Die Kirchen von Florenz, vol. I, 284, 309.

the possibility that the sportello was made even earlier for the tabernacle Bernardo Rossellino sculpted for the sacristy of the Badia in the 1430s³⁷² - a hypothesis supported by Middeldorf. Middeldorf posed the possibility that the sportello, instead of being a subsequent addition as assumed by Paatz, was an "ab initio" part of it, and reasoned that it was a work that must be associated with the best masters of its time because of its avant garde nature. He concluded, as have subsequent scholars, that the incised copper relief was the original door to the Host in Bernardo Rossellino's early classical tabernacle.³⁷³

The design of the Christ on the Badia sportello is simple and powerful, in a mode heavily influenced by Donatello. The incised relief is determined by its contours, and has only very light shading.³⁷⁴ Middeldorf

³⁷² Ibid., I, 290, 113ff. According to Middeldorf, he and Paatz divided the labor of exploring the most obscure recesses of the Badia.

³⁷³ There are apparently no immediate precedents for the copper relief of the Badia, although Middeldorf (ibid.) explores its origins in classicizing incised reliefs. Its archaic technique is revealed by a comparison with a similar sportello of a more advanced style, at Vicchio Rimaggio. Middeldorf believes that Castelfranco (Dedalo, XI, 1930-31, 953ff.), who published it, rightfully connects it to mello-work and incised work of the first classical period of the art of incised stamping at Florence. The saint of the Vicchio relief, instead, is modelled internally. It has a well-defined volume and is placed in a very readable space.

³⁷⁴ The figure of the full-length standing Christ, despite, as Middeldorf ("Un Rame inciso," 275ff.) says, "certain very successful foreshortening", remains nearly flat or of the lowest relief, outlined on a hard background,

is correct in saying that the motif is found quite frequently in Tuscany on doors of tabernacles. However, at this time it was quite rare in Italy; only later did the image become predominate on tabernacles.³⁷⁵

The image as it relates specifically to early Renaissance Host receptacles bears a closer look. First, the use of a standing Man of Sorrows on the door to the Host receptacle immediately suggests an iconographic parallel with the focal point of the Trinity fresco perspective. When we turn again to the tabernacle by Bernardo Rossellino, commissioned for the women's ward of

which doesn't allow for even a simple atmospheric illusion. In the background behind the Christ figure, a "color", in the sense of the word as it was used by goldsmiths and by other metal-workers, has been furnished with tiny strokes of the burin. This technique is essentially medieval and Middeldorf compares it to "works like the beautiful dugentesque reliquary, certainly of French origin in the treasury of the Basilica of Assisi; the background of the scene on the back is treated in the identical mode." In addition, Middeldorf believes that originally the a-illusionistic character of the Badia sportello must have been even more distinct, specifically because the chalice with the Host, probably gilded and perhaps the drops of the blood tinted with a red varnish. These details have vanished and the precise form cannot be read with clarity. Middeldorf lists "briefly those which are known". The common characteristic of those he lists is their late date. Only three fall within the Quattrocento: the sportello in gilded and enamelled bronzed by Filarete in Vienna, the sportello painting by Neri di Bicci, Tavarnelle, S. Maria di Morocco, and the sportello painting from a tabernacle of S. Martino a Mensola, c.1450.

³⁷⁵ There have been several excellent studies that relate to this image. See for example Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows in Italy," 107-118 and 233-46; Erwin Panofsky, "Imago Pietatis", Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des 'Schmerzensmanns' und der 'Maria Mediatrix,' in Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag, Leipzig, 1927, 261-308.

the hospital church of Santa Maria Nuova and now in sant'Egidio (see Figure 141), completed well over a decade later, we find that there is a marked suggestion of perspective recession.

The first extant tabernacle to use a coffered ceiling to enhance the spatial illusion, the angels entering from the side of Bernardo's monument in Sant'Egidio are contained within the space provided by the coffered canopy. It appears at first to be the rather deeply splayed arch of a portal and the reference to a central door is an essential feature. However, its spatial ambiguity may be significant. In addition to the literal doorway, it may also be an allusion to an apse-canopy protecting the Holy of holies (Figure 150); this would explain the space with a doorway to either side with angels adoring the Host.³⁷⁶ This tabernacle may represent the standard format for Bernardo's workshop in the 1430s and 1440s. Masaccio's deep perspective does not appear in Sacrament tabernacles until Desiderios' use of it in 1461; it seems to have made such an immediate impact on

³⁷⁶ Schulz (Bernardo Rossellino, 53-54) believes that this coffered ceiling is not meant to convey an interior vault like the Trinity fresco, but a splayed portal. She does not mention, however, an example that accounts for the coffers of the ceiling, nor does she address the problem of the illusory depth of the doorways from which the numerous angels emerge, and which implies a more extensive space than a splayed portal. Although I concur with Schulz that it does not represent the type of space depicted by Masaccio in the Trinity fresco, I do not think this is meant to represent a portal in so literal a way.

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contemporary artists that it was used consistently, in a variety of ways, in productions that post-date the San Lorenzo tabernacle.³⁷⁷ If Bernardo's earlier Badia tabernacle used this limited perspective recession, the standing Man of Sorrows would be appropriately emphasized when centered on the sportello. Moreover, the coffered region may allude to an apse sanctuary and the most hallowed place of a church, the altar. If so, the standing eucharistic Christ would relate specifically to representations of Host miracles in which the wafer is miraculously transformed into the body of Christ standing on the altar (Figure 151).³⁷⁸ The practice of suspending a representation of the crucified Christ on the back on an altar also supports this reading of the sportello. An image of a century earlier in the upper church in Assisi, showing St. Francis praying before the Cross of San Damiano (Figure 152), clarifies the impression produced by the coffered space of the Sant'Egidio tabernacle.

There are only a few extant examples of sportelli from the fifteenth century, and these, like the Badia

³⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that the coffered barrel vault is included in Donatello's pulpits, perhaps created as part of an ensemble that included Desiderio's tabernacle. (See Irving Lavin, "Donatello's Bronze Pulpits in San Lorenzo and the Early Christian Revival," Past/Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso, Berkeley, 1993, 1-27, who discusses the pulpits and the tabernacle as components of a complex program.)

³⁷⁸ See for example Vloberg's discussion (L'eucharistie dans l'art, 183-200) of the representations of the Man of Sorrows.

version, are generally datable only through stylistic means. However, one of the few extant doors remaining in its original position was created for the Santa Maria Nuova tabernacle, cast in gilded bronze by the Ghiberti workshop.³⁷⁹ It depicts what is generally cited as a seated God the Father in benediction (Figure 153).³⁸⁰ However, the figure is not identified correctly, for God the Father appears in His usual place in the triangular pediment (see Figure 142). Two images of God the Father would seem redundant, and their inclusion on a Host receptacle pointless.

An explanation can be found in a number of images that display a deity that incorporates Trinitarian notions. The sportello image must represent a type of enthroned Christ which, seen in conjunction with the remainder of the iconography, underscores the Trinitarian symbolism found in tabernacles of this time. One of the most common representations of the eucharistic Christ on Host tabernacles was the half-length pietistic image.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ Richard Krautheimer, (Lorenzo Ghiberti, Princeton, 1970, I, 9, 204-207; II, 361) reproduces records of 1452 which show that payment was made out to Lorenzo in that year and received by his son Vittorio. Krautheimer attributes the sportello to Vittorio and/or the Ghiberti workshop. See also Leo Planiscig (Bernardo und Antonio Rossellino, Vienna, 1942, 17-18) who considered the bronze door of the tabernacle the last work of the master.

³⁸⁰ See Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 104, who identifies the figure as a seated God the Father, as does Krautheimer, Ghiberti, 361.

³⁸¹ See Panofsky, "Imago Pietatis," passim.

it appears on most of the early extant classicizing tabernacles and on a number of late Gothic receptacles as well, as a reference to the entombment. However, on Bernardo's tabernacle in Sant'Egidio, the only obvious reference to the Body of Christ is the symbolic image of the Host and chalice (see Figure 143), unlike most tabernacles which display the crucified Christ in some form. A careful examination of the image on the sportello is revealing. Ghiberti's seated figure is crowned and robed in clerical vestments, holds an open book inscribed with an alpha and omega, and floats in an ambiguous space defined only by sparse clouds. The angels enter from the wings, adoring. The seated figure is unusual, but bears a remarkable resemblance to a number of previous images found both in Italy and northern Europe that present a Christ that more closely resembles the commanding, older presence of God the Father.

The shallow perspective recession of the tabernacle elucidates the sportello image. It can be associated with the tradition of apse frescoes in Medieval Italy in which the Enthroned Christ presides over the church, as in both Sant'Angelo in Formis and Santa Pudenziana, Rome (Figures 154 and 155). Christ blesses with his right hand and holds the book in his left, iconic and timeless, like Ghiberti's figure on Bernardo Rossellino's Sacrament tabernacle. In addition, the Stefaneschi Altar (attributed to Giotto), is closer in time to the

tabernacle (Figure 156). A central enthroned Christ again blesses with his right hand and holds the book in his left hand and the majestic Christ resembles, like the earlier images, the figure on the Ghiberti sportello.

This symbolic image of Christ conforms to the tradition of depicting the Son as Logos, timeless and uncreated outside the material world.³⁸² Rather than the Word Incarnate, he is Christ the Word.³⁸³ Like the apse mosaics and frescoes of early Christian churches, Ghiberti's Christ is shown as King, triumphant and eternal.

Not only does it recall images closer to home, but the Ghiberti sportello also resembles the crowned, enthroned trinitarian image of Christ in the upper tier of the Ghent altarpiece of 1432 (Figure 157).³⁸⁴ In the

³⁸² André Grabar, Christian Iconography. A Study of Its Origins, Princeton, 1968, 118-120, discusses the images of the Logos in the early development of the representation of dogma. He states that: "It is difficult to distinguish in some of these Divine visions what properly represents God the Father, the God of the Old Testament, and what represents God the Son as Logos, who, like the Father is eternal and uncreated, except when represented as Jesus Christ during the period of the Incarnation. The uncertainty may be intentional, referring to the passages of John where Christ declares, 'He that seeth me seeth him that sent me.'"

³⁸³ Grabar, ibid.

³⁸⁴ It is interesting to note that there has been no consensus regarding the enthroned figure of the Ghent altarpiece. James Snyder (Northern Renaissance Art, 91), refers to the figure as "God the Father with Mary and John the Baptist", but goes on to discuss its resemblance to the Byzantine Deësis, "where Mary and John intercede for mankind before Christ." In addition, he compares (p. 94) the so-

Ghent altarpiece, this Christ-type has been interpreted as priest and Sacrifice, as it has in a number of related images.³⁸⁵ In the Jan and Hubert van Eyck masterpiece, as we have seen, the program is specifically eucharistic in content. As in the Ghiberti sportello, the Ghent Christ is elaborately robed, crowned, and blesses.

Earlier small-scale Host containers provide a functional example in regard to an enthroned, crowned Christ. Pyxes can be found that fall within this tradition (Figure 158) and the image also can be seen on a larger French box-type tabernacle of the Sacrament (Figure

called Fountain of Life altarpiece in the Prado of c.1440 (discussed in Chapter Four of this study in the context of the Siena Baptistery font-tabernacle) to the Ghent altarpiece, saying that in the upper portions of the panel, "in what is equivalent to the upper tier of the Ghent altarpiece, Christ appears enthroned within an elegant Gothic tabernacle." The enthroned figure in the Prado painting is nearly a copy of that of the Ghent altarpiece and the painting is even more emphatically eucharistic. The figure also incorporates the notion of Christ in Paradise. Among the many discussions of the Christ figure of the Ghent Altarpiece see Phillip, The Ghent Altarpiece, 60ff; Elizabeth Dhanens, Van Eyck: The Ghent Altarpiece (Art in Context), New York, 1973, 76; Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting, I, 205-30.

³⁸⁵ See Philip, Ghent Altarpiece, 61f.; Dhanens, Van Eyck, 76; M. B. McNamee, "Origin of the Vested Angel as a eucharistic Symbol in Flemish Painting," Art Bulletin, LIV, 1972, note 35. McNamee ("The Good Friday Liturgy and Hans Memling's Antwerp Triptych," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, XXXVII, 1974, 353-356) identifies an inscription on Christ's alb in a later painting of the Salvator Mundi by Hans Memling (c.1490), derived from the Ghent Altarpiece Christ, as the Lamentations recited by the priest during the Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday. See also Lane, Altar and Altarpiece, 111. In addition, the three-tiered crown of the figure in the Ghent altarpiece, is closely related to an unusual image showing the Eucharist with a crown (see Vloberg, L'Eucharistie).

159). Prominently displayed on this champlévé enamel repository of c. 1225 are copper gilt reliefs on the exterior doors.³⁸⁶ An enthroned Virgin and Child are on the left door and, significantly, on the right the figure of Christ is enthroned surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists. He is crowned, holding a book in one hand and blessing with the other, again, very much like the Ghiberti figure on the bronze gilt door of Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacle.

And, like the figure in the Ghent altarpiece, Ghiberti's image may also make reference to Christ as Judge, which corresponds to the intercessory image of the Deësis.³⁸⁷ The relationship between the Host and the Last

³⁸⁶ The tabernacle is now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (cat. no. 17.190.735) and stands about 2 1/2 feet high at its apex. Its iconography emphasizes the Sacrifice and Resurrection of Christ. The interior background consists of foliated decoration with the Deposition of Christ in high relief on the back wall. It also has incised relief decoration on the inside walls with an Entombment and Resurrection. The Ascension also appears in the inside gable of the back wall. The interior doors are divided into registers and display resurrectional narratives of Christ. The left registers contain the *Noli me Tangere*, Three Marys at the Tomb, and a more difficult to identify scene with Christ on the water. The right side shows the Incredulity of Thomas, the Last Supper (with a table that is identical to the tomb opposite the three Marys), and Christ on the road to Emmaus. Christ is consistently crowned, not only in the scenes of resurrection, but also in the Deposition.

³⁸⁷ Numerous images, particularly seen on metal antependia, show Christ enthroned, or seated on an arch (rainbow) as Judge. For examples see Braun, Christliche Altar, vol. 2. In Florentine art, Orcagna's Strozzi Chapel altarpiece in Santa Maria Novella, displays Christ, Mary, and John as a Deësis; in the same chapel, Nardo di Cione presents a related Christ enthroned in Paradise, part of the frescoes that create a setting for Orcagna's altarpiece.

Judgement was of long standing: the most common images embossed on Hosts in the fifteenth century were either the Lamb of the Sacrifice or a Last Judgement on one side with the Crucifixion on the other (Figure 160). The association of the Last Judgement with the Host is based on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (11:26): "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes."³⁸⁸ Thus the image was visually linked to the Sacrament and, consequently, became part of the symbolic vocabulary of the contents of the receptacle. The enthroned Christ had multiple associations, many of which were specifically eucharistic for the fifteenth-century viewer. The cast bronze image by Ghiberti's shop probably remained in its original position simply because of the relative ambiguity of its imagery. Not inherently or solely eucharistic in meaning, it survived the conversion of the tabernacle to a holy oil container.³⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the iconography of the whole tabernacle works

³⁸⁸ Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei", note 96, discusses this issue of the Last Judgement in connection with the Man of Sorrows imagery.

³⁸⁹ Schulz (Bernardo Rossellino, 106 and note 9) believes that the inscription on the tabernacle, "oleum sanctum" was probably incised in the sixteenth century after the provincial Council of Milan (1565) and Aquileia (1596) made declarations concerning reservation in altar-retables and the use of the old tabernacles as holy oil receptacles. See Rohault de Fleury, La Messe, II, 72; Caspary, Sakramentstabernakel, 118ff.; and Braun, Christliche Altar, 591.

together to form a strong statement of the corpus verum. Even so, the image was not linked exclusively to Host tabernacles and there are no extant sportelli that reflect this image. More easily read eucharistic imagery came to dominate the doors of eucharistic receptacles.

It is difficult to state with any certainty that Host tabernacles had a standard or usual image on the sportello. Because they were often either disassembled or reused as holy oil receptacles, as in the case of Bernardo's tabernacles, sportello imagery remains indefinite. Therefore an essential visual and iconographic feature of eucharistic tabernacles will continue to be hypothetical. Having said that, however, certain patterns emerge in the imagery of Sacrament receptacles, and it is possible to make some logical proposals concerning their doors.

Most fifteenth-century Host tabernacles have either an obviously modern sportello or a slightly later replacement. Those representing slightly later replacements are perhaps the most puzzling. For example, Luca della Robbia's tabernacle in Peretola contains a bronze doorway to the Host which represents a full-length, standing figure of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, bleeding into a chalice (Figure 161). The sportello has been repeatedly spoken of by scholars as an example from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, although Luca's

tabernacle was sculpted earlier, in c.1441.³⁹⁰ The door may have been replaced when the tabernacle was removed from its place in the choir of Sant'Egidio. On the other hand, since there is no record of its removal and replacement, it could have been removed anytime and the present sportello added as appropriate in size and iconography.³⁹¹ However, this does not answer the question of its original imagery. Was the doorway of Luca's tabernacle, like the shutter of Bernardo's later receptacle now in Sant'Egidio, a representation of a composite image of Christ? More likely, it was more simple in design, either a chalice with Host or a

³⁹⁰ That the sportello was replaced at some point is apparent because the marks of the original hinges are clearly evident on the marble of the tabernacle.

³⁹¹ This hypothesis, however, does not reflect what normally occurred when churches replaced parts of a monument. Contemporary taste usually determined the style of the replacement. This is evident judging by the large number of sportelli depicting a solitary shaft of wheat - not a Renaissance device. Moreover, other sections of tabernacles were also replaced with contemporary styles. (For example, see the Baroque console on Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacle in Sant'Egidio.) Historicism in the replacement of damaged or missing portions of monuments is a relatively modern phenomenon. And it is most unlikely that a small parish such as Peretola would have gone to the trouble of finding a rare bronze Redeemer of the correct size to replace the original. Instead, it is more realistic to assume that the original doorway was no longer considered appropriate or was broken, and was replaced in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century when the Redeemer image appeared on so many tabernacles. It is also possible that the original sportello was removed in the later sixteenth century, when most wall tabernacles were converted to holy oil containers. The appropriate size bronze door may have been added when the tabernacle was transferred to the parish of Santa Maria in Peretola.

continuation of the foliate pattern of the cloth of honor carved into the marble of the aedicula. Some tabernacles may have been provided with an openwork grille as a door, in the older tradition of reliquary tabernacles.³⁹²

Perhaps its iconography was not sufficiently explicit by the later fifteenth century and the door was replaced by the eucharistic Christ bleeding into the chalice. Or perhaps its original iconography was uniquely suited to the hospital chapel for which it was originally intended. It is possible that Luca's tabernacle too, became a holy oil receptacle after the renovation of the Capella Maggiore in 1594 and was not moved to Peretola until much later, and the sportello added at that time.

The Sportello and Eucharistic Meaning

Increasingly, the image of the full-length, standing Man of Sorrows, the Redeemer, seems to have been favored in late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century tabernacles (Figure 162). However, this must be stated with caution, as noted above, since there are so few extant sportelli. As we have seen in the incised door for Bernardo Rossellino's dismantled Badia tabernacle, the standing Redeemer seen bleeding into a chalice was an obviously eucharistic statement; the popularity of this triumphant Redeemer was due to the increasing desire to

³⁹² Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 34) suggests a grille as the original door of Luca's tabernacle.

show the transubstantiated Christ more clearly.

Displaying Christ as Eucharist as explicitly triumphant, rather than as a pietistic image, came to be a standard feature on tabernacles. However, both the location of the image on the tabernacle and the type of image varies. It could be used on other parts of the tabernacle, rather than solely on the door. The standing Redeemer holding a cross can sometimes be found in a perspective apse, as in San Giovanni Genovesi, Rome (Figure 163).

Moreover, the older image of the adult eucharistic Christ, the half-length Man of Sorrows, can be found in perspective tabernacles such as that attributed to the school of Francesco di Simone in the Cathedral in Cortona (Figure 164). However, a more explicit eucharistic figure was added in these cases. The image of the triumphant, transubstantiated Christ, represented as the Child, is framed against the pediment, standing in a chalice, like its prototype in San Lorenzo, Florence (see Figure 212). The perspective in this tabernacle, as well, focuses on the door to the Sacrament.

One of the most compelling comparisons with Sacrament tabernacles, the Trinity fresco, helps elucidate the iconography of the sportello, both those displaying the standing Redeemer and those that do not. In Masaccio's fresco, the image of the Crucified is also found in a

perspective setting is explicitly eucharistic and was understood as such by later fifteenth-century artists.³⁹³ The door to the Host was an important visual and iconographic focal point in tabernacles and the image of the Crucified can be paralleled to the idea of a door. In the Trinity fresco, behind the image of Christ, God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit, is the type of panelled wall read as a doorway in antique monuments. Durandus, in discussing the parts of the church, cites John 10:9 and declares that, "The door of the church is Christ: according to that saying in the Gospel, 'I am the Door.'"³⁹⁴ Indeed, Christ himself was referred to as the "doorway" to Truth and Redemption in fifteenth-century theology.³⁹⁵

³⁹³ See Chapter Seven of this study for an examination of the relationship between the Trinity fresco and later Sacrament tabernacles, including Desiderio da Settignano's for San Lorenzo. The best analysis of the perspective tabernacle and Masaccio's fresco remains that by Jack Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," passim.

³⁹⁴ Durandus, Rationale, Book I, sect. 26.

³⁹⁵ See for example a late fifteenth-century treatise from Frankfort which states that, "When a man has climbed so high that he imagines and is persuaded that he has attained his goal, then is the time for him to beware...and thus he fall into that foolish, lawless freedom...at war with, a truly godly life. And this will happen to that man who has not entered in, or refuses to enter in, by the right Way and the right Door (which is Christ, as we have said), and imagines that he could come by another door and another way to the highest truth. ...And our witness is Christ, who declares, 'He that will enter otherwise than through me, comes not in, nor comes to the highest truth....'" See Ray C. Petry, ed., "German Theology", Late Medieval Mysticism. Library of Christian Classics, XIII, 31-32.

In addition, Nicholas of Cusa, in his tract The Vision of God (completed in 1452) states,

"I see thee, good Jesu, within the wall of paradise, since thine intelligence is alike truth and image, and thou art alike God and creature, alike infinite and finite. And 'tis not possible that thou shouldst be seen this side of the wall, for thou art the bond between the divine nature that createth and the human nature that is created."³⁹⁶

Thus the image that the human eye can see, created by the artist, is a mere reflection of the true nature of Christ. The "wall" Cusa speaks of screens as much as it reveals and keeps humankind in ignorance of true comprehension of the divine. Moreover, it can also be taken in more than a purely metaphorical sense; this "wall" appears repeatedly in the iconography of the Body of Christ.

We can see the wall as any object before which an image of Christ or a symbol of Christ appears; it partially reveals His dual nature in the Host as well as in spiritual revelation.³⁹⁷ Only through Christian death

³⁹⁶ Nicholas of Cusa: The Vision of God, London, 1928, Chapter XX, "How Jesus is Understood to Be the Union of the Divine Nature and the Human Nature", trans. and ed. E.G. Salter.

³⁹⁷ Masaccio's gnadenstuhl appears as a vision before a panelled wall and one wonders if Nicholas of Cusa did not have something like this in mind when he made the statement concerning the wall of paradise, where the image of the Crucified appears, but "'tis not possible that thou shouldst be seen this side of the wall for thou art the bond between the divine nature that creatheth and the human nature that is created." (Vision of God, Ch. XX) Masaccio creates a vision of the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, beyond the wall of paradise, as the Host tabernacles create a walled sanctuary where the Body also resides and is partially revealed by the multiple physical images.

and rebirth is the whole Truth revealed. Therefore, the doorway to the Host functions in this role; the tabernacle both attempts to reveal the mystery for imperfect humanity, incapable of comprehending the full scope of Christ's dual nature, and it also veils and protects the incomprehensible. Fifteenth-century Host tabernacles attempt to reveal the mysterious nature of God found in the Eucharist, as much as imperfect human understanding is capable of assimilating. Thus the integration of architectural and figurative elements, centering on the sportello, focuses the attention of the faithful on the True Presence, entombed, yet miraculously living.

Eucharistic Reservation and the Miracle in Sant'Ambrogio

The first center for eucharistic worship in Florence, was the Benedictine convent of Sant'Ambrogio. Thus it is not surprising to find that the church commissioned one of the new Sacrament tabernacles in the classical mode before mid-century (Figure 165). Created by Buggiano, this tabernacle has been generally dated to no later than c.1440.³⁹⁸ However, Sant'Ambrogio has a special history

³⁹⁸ See Schlegel, "Ein Sakramentstabernakel der Frührenaissance," 167-173, who dates the tabernacle as late as 1440 (previously ascribed to c.1420-1430). Schlegel points out that the precedents for a classicizing tabernacle of this type are not found until the 1430s, but the possibility exists that Buggiano based the style of his Host tabernacle on the lost tabernacle for Campo Corbellini of the mid-1420s by Brunelleschi. Schlegel makes a convincing argument for dating the tabernacle c.1440 and, as will be discussed below, there are compelling reasons for that date

that affected its focus on the Eucharist and helps to elucidate the origins and meaning of the tabernacle. Owing to a fine study by Eve Borsook, we know a considerable amount about the cult of the Corpus Christi in the church of Sant'Ambrogio as well as that churches' close relationship with San Lorenzo.³⁹⁹

The cult of the Corpus Christi (as well as that of the Virgin) was established quite early in the church dedicated to St. Ambrose. As one of the Fathers of the Church and as Bishop of Milan, Ambrose had enormous impact on early Christian and later religious thinking. Saint Ambrose was assumed to have visited Florence in 393-394 A.D. In addition, St. Zenobius was believed to have founded the church of Sant'Ambrogio in Florence, while Ambrose himself was associated with the consecration of the old basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence.⁴⁰⁰

Particularly important to the present study, Ambrose emphasized the corpus verum in the Eucharist and promoted

in terms of the construction of a new high altar for the church.

³⁹⁹ Borsook, "Cults and Imagery at Sant'Ambrogio in Florence," Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, XXV, 1981, 147-193. Although Borsook includes a reproduction of the Buggiano tabernacle, she discusses it only briefly, focusing mainly on the miracle relic and its peregrinations. The complete lack of documents regarding its commission has hampered study of the tabernacle.

⁴⁰⁰ Borsook, ibid. This connection of the Florentine churches of Sant'Ambrogio and San Lorenzo is the earliest but, as Borsook has pointed out, there were persistent bonds between them dating into the Quattrocento and beyond.

the Trinity as well. In the Dugento, an account of a eucharistic miracle concerning the spontaneous appearance of the flesh and blood of Christ in a chalice at Sant'Ambrogio helps to explain the early establishment of the cult of the Corpus Christi in that church. The nuns of Sant'Ambrogio ardently desired the return of the evidence of their miracle, which had been turned over to the bishop for his examination and was retained by him for an uncomfortable length of time. When the relic was finally restored, a procession was formed from the bishop's palace and the church on the feast day of Sant'Ambrogio.⁴⁰¹ The Franciscans of Santa Croce had been involved in the return of the relic and they are also given credit for establishing the procession as an annual event in Florence in the octave of Corpus Domini. This is an important point for the tradition of eucharistic worship in Florence, since the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella are more generally associated with this devotion, with a procession dating from the early Trecento.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ A late fifteenth-century fresco by Baldovinetti, in a chapel constructed for the display of the relic, depicts the final destination of the procession at the steps of Sant'Ambrogio. Mino da Fiesole constructed a tabernacle for its reservation in the 1480s. See Borsook, "Cults and Imagery," figure 17.

⁴⁰² More general Corpus Domini processions began in Florence around 1300; at this time the Dominicans came to be the most powerful factor in its promotion, with Santa Maria Novella as the other important center of eucharistic worship (Borsook, *ibid.*, 150). Eventually the cathedral of Florence took part in the feast of the Corpus Domini as well. Dominican devotion is perhaps most evident because of Thomas

The relic became the most important focal point in the church and the high altar came to be dedicated to the Corpus Christi, rather than to St. Ambrose per se. The titular of the main chapel was that of the cult by 1342; a stone tabernacle or ciborium to enclose the relic was funded by the Signoria in 1340; it was to be set over the high altar and the arms of the city were to be carved on it. The tabernacle does not survive, but a document of 1364 confirms that it was carried out.⁴⁰³ It is unclear, however, what type of tabernacle was intended; may have been an architectural canopy with a suspended pyx-reliquary as Borsook believes, or a carved tabernacle, the half-canopy attached to an altar found occasionally in Rome.⁴⁰⁴

Aquinas' eucharistic theology and their special status among mendicants as an order of priests. However, Franciscan devotion to the Corpus verum can be traced to the inception of the Order. (See Chapter One of this study for a discussion of this tradition.) In the Quattrocento, Franciscan preachers were zealous in focussing attention on the Eucharist and were an important part of the pattern of the increasing liturgical spotlight on it.

⁴⁰³ Borsook, "Cults and Imagery," 152. It should be noted that this record of a stone tabernacle to be set over the high altar of Sant'Ambrogio may be significant for the church of San Lorenzo. The close association between the two Florentine churches has already been noted and there was a continuing connection in the fifteenth century. It should be noted that the Trecento record in Sant'Ambrogio provides an important precedent for a eucharistic focus on the high altar. See Chapter Seven of this study for a discussion of the altar tabernacle in the fifteenth century.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

Despite the uncertainty regarding its form, one of the most important points about this high altar is the dedication to the body of Christ. The relic itself was the result of the Eucharist turning tangible in a very public way. In the Trecento, a number of eucharistic miracles were enshrined in altar-reliquaries with elaborate decoration. Perhaps the first and certainly the most important, both visually and conceptually, are the two related tabernacles in Orvieto. As we have seen, the relic of the mass of Bolsena had been incorporated into an elaborate reliquary-altar that had similarities to fifteenth-century Host tabernacles.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, the round-headed arch and egg and dart molding of the altar tabernacle for the chapel dedicated to the Corporal, is closely related to the arch of Buggiano's tabernacle (see Figure 117).

In the fifteenth century, theologians were so intent on emphasizing the Host as the real presence of Christ in the Church that it must have seemed a shameful neglect of the fundamental, renewable Christian miracle to so enshrine the results of a visible eucharistic miracle without an equal focus on a receptacle for the Host. Ignoring the body of the Lord in the form of reserved

⁴⁰⁵ See the discussion of the Siena Font Tabernacle (Ch. 4) and Donatello's tabernacle for the Vatican (above) in this study.

consecrated Hosts was not an acceptable situation.⁴⁰⁶ Theologians consistently referred to the Host as one of the "visible signs" that encouraged comprehension, at least as far as humanly possible, in the faithful. Thus the need to enshrine this perpetual and renewable sign granted by God was essential.

A number of scholars have been mistaken in thinking that a chapel which reserved the Sacrament invariably had that title attached to it exclusively.⁴⁰⁷ Official consecration to a saint with a relic as the focus, coupled with an informal or implied devotion to the Corpus Christi was more typical than not, even in the fifteenth century. For instance, the Cappella Maggiore of Sant'Egidio for which Luca della Robbia created the tabernacle now in Peretola was dedicated to St. Luke (since it was patronized by the confraternity of St. Luke). In

⁴⁰⁶ Borsook (ibid., 153) notes that "since every mass renewed the miraculous transubstantiation of the eucharistic bread and wine, the claim could be made that in a Corpus Christi chapel the consecrated sacrament deserved as worthy a place of storage as any relic. In fact, from the 15th century onwards it became common practice to store the host in a tabernacle - either free standing upon an altar or in a wall cupboard. When kept upon an altar it became a chapel of the Holy Sacrament." (Borsook cites Cope, The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament, 4).

⁴⁰⁷ See for example Borsook's comments regarding the dedication of altars ("Cults and Imagery, 153 and note 48), in which she cites Cope's occasionally inaccurate discussion of the development of Sacrament Chapels. Borsook, without fully seeing the implications, notes the contradiction in Cope's terminology saying that, "This does not, however, seem to have been the case at Santa Maria Novella where during the 14th century the sacrament was kept in the Bardi Chapel in the transept which was dedicated to St. Gregory."

addition, the chapel which held the Sacrament in the collegiate church of Impruneta was dedicated to the Cross, because it was the location of a precious relic.⁴⁰⁸

The classicizing wall tabernacle for the Host, attributed to Buggiano, was installed in the south wall of the main chapel of Sant'Ambrogio no later than c.1440 and thus must have been commissioned by the late 1430s. The most important Quattrocento comparison to the Sant'Ambrogio tabernacle (since Brunelleschi's and Bernardo's are lost and dismantled) is Donatello's tabernacle in St. Peter's of c.1433. Although it is clearly more elaborately classicizing and imaginative than Buggiano's, when we examine the fundamental structure of each, their common roots are readily apparent. It should be emphasized that the tabernacles of the mid to late 1430s are part of the first wave of liturgical furnishings that were influenced by the innovative classicism of artists such as Brunelleschi and Donatello. Both Donatello's and Buggiano's tabernacles include a central sportello area framed by Corinthian capitals, a triangular

⁴⁰⁸ See Chapter Seven for a discussion of the Impruneta Chapel. Creighton Gilbert ("Saint Antonin de Florence et l'art. Théologie pastorale, administration et commande d'oeuvres," Revue de l'art, 1990, 15) also points out that chapels used to reserve the Sacrament had titular saints to which they were dedicated. However, Gilbert perhaps goes too far when he says that chapels dedicated solely to the Sacrament did not exist as a separate entity until the sixteenth century; there is no evidence that they did not. In addition, chapels dedicated to eucharistic miracles provide an important precedent for chapels dedicated to the Sacrament.

pediment, and a predella-like socle decorated in very low relief. Each pediment is decorated with the same double-lozenge motif. These tabernacles both expand on the limited figural decoration of Gothic types to enhance the iconography of the corpus verum.

Donatello's and Buggiano's tabernacles both imply spatial recession in very different ways. However, each must have relied on the device of sportelli, now lost, to complete the effect. Donatello's more elaborate design suggests a whole spatial enclosure by the use of the infant angels, carved in high relief in front of the fluted pilasters, who lean intently inward toward the sportello area. On the contrary, Buggiano's central area does not contain any comparable figures and, unlike Donatello's, cannot be seen as influential in terms of its figural decoration.⁴⁰⁹

Borsook makes the point that by this date that the relic of the Host miracle and the consecrated Eucharist were kept separately, "although within the confines of the same area - and possibly within the same chapel."⁴¹⁰ In

⁴⁰⁹ It is possible that Buggiano's tabernacle may be a reflection of Brunelleschi's tabernacle for Campo Corbellini. If so, the logical conclusion to draw, which is tempting in any case, is that Brunelleschi's 1427 receptacle was heavily based on a simple architectural scheme, unlike Donatello's complex amalgam of figural sculpture and architecture.

⁴¹⁰ Borsook, "Cults and Imagery," 154. The fact that they were previously stored together is important evidence for the earlier custom regarding the Eucharist. Joint reservation of relics and Host was perfectly acceptable, as

the fascinating era of the mid-1430s, the high altar in Sant'Ambrogio was consecrated in honor of San Giovanni Decollato,⁴¹¹ and an altarpiece with the Coronation of the Virgin was painted by Fra Filippo Lippi. The year of this event is significant in dating the new tabernacle for the consecrated Host. It does not seem as surprising to me as it does to Borsook that the relic of the miracle at Sant'Ambrogio was removed to its own chapel at this time. It is entirely logical in terms of the development of Renaissance Host tabernacles as well as the history of the relic.

Maintaining separate visual and iconographic foci for two precious, but highly related objects - the Host relic and the reserved Sacrament - must have become highly problematic for the church of Sant'Ambrogio. The

was the common reservation of holy oil and the Eucharist.

⁴¹¹ Borsook (*ibid.*, 158-163) says that "reverence for Corpus Domini took a novel turn during these years" and "Although further indulgences for the celebration of the feast of Corpus Domini were granted by Eugenius IV in May 1433, in the middle of the decade the nuns at Sant'Ambrogio permitted a new high altar to be built in the main chapel of their church honouring San Giovanni Decollato.... No license of patronage to the main chapel or its altar is to be found in any of the surviving account books. Nor is there any mention of how the title of the main chapel was changed from Corpus Christi to that of San Giovanni Decollato.... Yet to change the title of an already consecrated altar required permission of the Holy See." However, Borsook provides no real evidence that the high altar had been previously dedicated to the Corpus Christi as such, despite the eucharistic relic and its status. Instead, it is more likely to have been dedicated to the Miracle rather than the reserved Sacrament; the removal of the relic to a separate chapel necessitated the change at the high altar.

importance of the Host miracle to the prestige and historical focus of Sant'Ambrogio probably dictated that it should be explicated apart from the reserved Eucharist. Because of their intrinsic similarity, if the tabernacle for the miracle were to share a chapel with the consecrated Host, by the mid-1430s their competition for attention would result in a diminished significance in both. Moreover, it would have resulted in confusion for the faithful when Buggiano's tabernacle was installed in the main chapel. Within a decade, immurement of the Eucharist near the high altar became the most common placement in Florentine churches.⁴¹² Increasing liturgical focus on the consecrated Host forced churches

⁴¹² The first well-documented Quattrocento example in Florence is Brunelleschi's tabernacle for San Jacopo in Campo Corbellini. The documents clearly state that it was to be immured in a pilaster close to the high altar. (See Ch. 3 of this study for a discussion and bibliography of Brunelleschi's tabernacle.) Perhaps even more illuminating are the documents that relate to the tabernacle created for the Cathedral of Florence. Archbishop Antoninus was adamant in his directives concerning the eventual placement of the consecrated Sacrament in the Duomo. He made it clear that the high altar was its intended destination. In fact, it is my belief that Antoninus' directive regarding Host reservation was a standardization of a desirable liturgical practice of ten or more years. His appalled reaction to reservation in the Cathedral, reflects the fact that some churches had lately done an admirable job of focussing attention on the Eucharist, the true presence of Christ within the church edifice. To have the See of the Bishop of Florence lagging behind churches like San Jacopo, must have been a matter of grave concern to him. As a Dominican, Antoninus also reflects the traditional concerns of his order. When Archbishop Antoninus required all churches within his jurisdiction to reserve the consecrated Host appropriately, he was reflecting a liturgical focus that had been long in the making. (See Ch. 7, below, for St. Antoninus.)

to commission Sacrament receptacles. As we have seen, this is clear in Florentine legislation, as well as preaching and theological tracts.

The Correlation Between Relics and Host

Borsook notes the unusual transfer of the precious relic of Sant'Ambrogio and its eventual enshrinement in an elaborate tabernacle of its own. There are no records that explain this move and it has been somewhat of a puzzle, though it was not Borsook's intention to solve it. However, in light of the development of eucharistic worship in the Quattrocento it is likely that the Sacrament tabernacle attributed to Buggiano in Sant'Ambrogio was responsible for the displacement of the miraculous relic from the main altar. The relic did not become less essential to or valued by the nuns of Sant'Ambrogio; the subsequent sumptuous chapels of the miracle make that clear. But it was equally necessary by the late 1430s to give the place of highest honor to the reserved Host. Therefore, the most logical solution was to create a chapel for the display of the relic - a new Cappella del Miracolo, and to dedicate the high altar to a saint as was customary. In this case, it was the Beheaded John the Baptist and, as Borsook has shown, the dedication was sensible in terms of the iconography of the transubstantiated Host.

If, as Borsook believes, the original titular of the high altar was the Corpus Christi, this dedication most likely came about, not as a specific reference to Host reservation, but because the church was connected with a major Host miracle and was in possession of its notable eucharistic relic. The miraculous occurrence had set Sant'Ambrogio apart from other churches in Florence. Although that distinction remained important for Sant'Ambrogio, other churches assimilated much of the imagery related to special miracles. Sacrament chapels in the later fifteenth century, specially dedicated to the reserved Host, were influenced by their predecessors dedicated to the relics of special eucharistic events. The liturgical focus on the Body of Christ was influenced, in a cyclical way, by the reliquaries of eucharistic miracles of popular devotion.

There was a lengthy process leading up to the extraordinary visualization of the reserved Host, distinct from any special miracle aside from the ever renewable one of Transubstantiation. In earlier centuries, reliquaries and reliquary chapels had inspired some of the most elaborate sculpted decorations. As the focus on transubstantiation became more important, ardently promoted by the mendicant orders of the Dugento, Host miracles began to account for a significant number of elaborate reliquaries and altars.

The tangible results of the Host miracles were kept in reliquaries that were essentially indistinguishable from those of other kinds of relics. Over time, the iconographic development of the reliquaries of Host miracles affected the visual exposition of the Host, a culmination of the long-standing theological emphasis on the consecrated Host. Conversely, in the fifteenth century and earlier, relics were seen in terms that were reminiscent of the Host, in order to increase their value by affiliation with the central mystery of Christianity. For example, theologians emphasized the wood of the Cross in terms of its relation to the Sacrifice of Christ and as the Tree of Life from which eternal salvation springs.⁴¹³ Another example of the assimilation of Host imagery is the decollation of the Baptist; when presented with John's head on a platter, the connection to the Host on the paten was emphasized. Relics associated with the Baptist thus absorb status by iconographic association with the Body of Christ.⁴¹⁴ The increasing call for glorification of the reserved Host in the Quattrocento, and the corollary of the elaboration of its receptacles, was effective in

⁴¹³ Crucifixes had been used as reliquaries and as monstrances to hold the Host. See Braun, Altargerät, 369ff. See also Ch. 1 of this study for a discussion of Crosses.

⁴¹⁴ John's martyrdom becomes a prefiguration for the mass ritual. Conversely, the martyrdom of saints was a form of imitatio Christi, particularly in regard to the mortification of the flesh. See Borsook, "Cults and Imagery," for the beheaded John the Baptist at S. Ambrogio.

shifting attention from the relics of special Host miracles and onto the Sacrament itself. Annexing meaning and borrowing iconographically from the eucharistic miracles, the creation of altars dedicated to the reserved Host can be traced in part to the practice of displaying these relics. Emphasis on Host relics reached its logical conclusion in the containers of the universally available consecrated Host. All churches could thus ennoble their church with the Body of Christ. A more standardized meaning and emphasis was accomplished, while allowing for the individual devotions of specific churches.

CHAPTER SIX

MARIAN ICONOGRAPHY AND HOST TABERNACLES

In the Quattrocento, there were a number of images of the Virgin that possessed eucharistic implications and depended on a specific context to express this theme. Among these images, the most uniformly eucharistic is the iconography of the Incarnation. The notion of the Word made Flesh is essential in elucidating the correlation between the liturgical Eucharist and the incarnate Body of the Lord in tabernacles in the popular imagination.

Sanctuaries and the Virgin's Womb

Tabernacles of the Host can be associated with the church edifice by equating them with the Old Testament sanctuaries of the Tent of Moses and the Temple of Solomon. Consequently they can signify the city of Jerusalem, both celestial and terrestrial.⁴¹⁵ To enlarge on this idea, in the Christian Church a Sacrament tabernacle mimics the relationship between the physical structure of the church and the body of Christ contained in it, both symbolically and literally. Moreover, the dual role of Host tabernacles as containers of the spiritual body of Christ and the physical body of Christ

⁴¹⁵ Durandus, Rationale, Book 4. (See also this study, Chapter One.) Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei", 2ff, explores the concept of the Old Testament sanctuaries in regard to perspective tabernacles.

underscores two major issues: the symbolic role of the receptacle as the Holy Sepulchre and, in a complex interrelationship, as the Virgin's womb. The increasing demand in the fifteenth century for the conjunction of tabernacle and altar accentuates this point.

The concept of the Virgin as receptacle for the body of Christ had been expressed (and sanctioned) in verbal form in St. Thomas Aquinas' Office for the Feast of the Corpus Domini in which the Host is addressed, "Ave, verum corpus natum de Maria Vergine." Northern European artists visualized this concept verbatim; hinged wooden figures were fashioned in the shape of the Virgin, and open to reveal the body of the crucified Christ (Figure 166a-b).⁴¹⁶ While Italian sculpture did not take such an explicit form, the concept of the Virgin as receptacle for the Body of Christ forms a vital element in Host iconography. Italian Host receptacles in the fourteenth and fifteenth century tended to combine this eucharistic iconography, even though emphases might vary from one vessel to another.

⁴¹⁶ The image of the Madonna as tabernacle for Christ, as discussed in Chapter Two of this study, is related to Masaccio's Trinity fresco in its Throne of Grace, or "Gnadenstuhl" iconography. Small repositories for the Host also took the shape of the Virgin. For a discussion of this and related images in the North see Philip, Ghent Altarpiece, 93, 95 notes 133 and 191. See also Lane, Altar and the Altarpiece, 27, plates 17 & 18. Hirn (Sacred Shrine, 321-322) also cites instances of a small window inserted into a sculpture of the Virgin "through which one could look into the sacred room where the Son slept like a human embryo", as well as other variations on this theme.

Donatello's Cavalcanti Altar and Tabernacle Iconography

The iconography of the body of Mary as a receptacle for the Body of Christ was a powerful concept, especially because her mortal flesh and blood became the vessel by which the Savior received his humanity. There are many scenes of the Incarnation of Christ in the fifteenth century, but one of the most remarkable and puzzling monuments is Donatello's Cavalcanti Annunciation of c.1433, in the Franciscan church of Santa Croce in Florence (Figure 167).⁴¹⁷ Its function has been questioned and its conceptual origins have been

⁴¹⁷ The Cavalcanti Annunciation is presently located on the south wall in the sixth bay of the church of Santa Croce. Although there is a long literary tradition pertaining to the sculpture (dating from 1510), there are no documents recording its commission or naming a specific member of the Cavalcanti family as the patron; it is generally dated by scholars between 1428 to 1433. For a discussion of the varying scholarly opinions regarding this monument see esp. Janson, Donatello, 103-108. Janson's own theory regarding this sculpture contradicts previous authors. Documents from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century suggest that it had been part of a chapel of the Cavalcanti family attached to the Monk's choir in Santa Croce. However, two factors mitigate against this interpretation: first, a consistent failure in these documents to actually mention Donatello's monument and second, the physical size and weight of the pietra serena. Instead, Janson suggests that the sculptural group had always been in the sixth bay where it is seen today. The Cavalcanti Chapel would have been formed by the whole bay, bordered by the piers opposite it, as well as by a screen. Unless other documents come to light it seems unlikely that the problem can be solved. Michael Greenhalgh (Donatello and His Sources, 84ff) discusses specific antique sources for some of the motifs of the altar, but does not discuss their iconographic connotations. See also Artur Rosenauer ("Studien zum fruhen Donatello; Skulptur im projectiven Raum der Neuzeit," Wiener Kunsteschichtliche Forschungen, III, 1975, 107-110) who suggests that the altar had funerary significance.

problematic. However, it can be demonstrated that an important precedent for Donatello's sculpted Annunciation can be found in tabernacles for Host reservation and, further, that the iconographic focus of the Santa Croce monument is eucharistic.

In the late Trecento and into the early Quattrocento, wall tabernacles were created that directly related to the iconography of the Incarnation. Like other contemporary wall tabernacles, these resemble miniature Gothic church facades. The symbolism of the sanctuary is inherent in any eucharistic receptacle of this type. The crucial distinction is the addition of an Annunciate Virgin and archangel in relief, giving visual expression to an already implicit symbolism.⁴¹⁸ This iconography can be seen in northern Europe in two forms: large altar-tabernacles such as the one in Landshut and smaller wooden aumbries. As noted in Chapter Three, Annunciation tabernacles can also be found in Siena as well as north of the Alps (Figures 168-170; see also Figure 30). In addition, a visually complicated Sacrament tabernacle in San Francesca Romana illustrates that, even in the late Quattrocento, the direct connection of the Host to an Annunciation was still viable (see Figure 178). The dove of the Holy Spirit appears in the center of the gable

⁴¹⁸ See Chapter Three of this study for a discussion of the early Sienese tabernacles. In addition, see Beck (Jacopo della Quercia, 199) for a discussion of the tabernacle at Sant'Eugenio a Monastero.

above the complex reliefs in the main body of the tabernacle.

As we have seen in other contexts, Durandus' Rationale Divinorum Officiorum was widely read in the fifteenth century. Among other writers, he made the relationship between Host container and the Virgin explicit, saying, "...the box in which the consecrated Hosts are preserved signifies the body of the glorious Virgin."⁴¹⁹ Thus the Virgin herself appears frequently in connection with Host receptacles, most often in Italy holding the body of the Lord in the form of the Child, but also as the Annunciate Virgin at the moment of Incarnation. Eucharistic receptacles which included an Annunciation are not only important to the subsequent development of figurative relief on Host tabernacles, but help to explicate the unusual structure, style, and iconography of Donatello's Santa Croce Annunciation, which

⁴¹⁹ Durandus, Book I, Chapter 3, 25. In addition, Lane (The Altar and the Altarpiece, 27 and notes 44-48) cites a number of other examples of this relationship in early tracts and hymns. She also compares (pp. 13-35) the Flemish aumbries to a painting of the Madonna and Child by Rogier van der Weyden in Lugano (Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection). Contending that the meaning of the limited space of the niche in which the Virgin and Child reside relates to the equation of the Virgin with Host tabernacles, Lane (p.35) states that "In place of the locked doors, however, Rogier has depicted the nursing Virgin. The niche in Rogier's painting echoes the appearance of the aumbries that displayed the container of the Host, because it frames the woman who was the sacred vessel of Christ's body." She also shows that the fifteenth-century Northern Host receptacle, the Sacrament house, relates to Mary's epithet as tower and discusses Mary as altar, an iconography widely used in Italy as well.

would have functioned as a monolithic focal point for an altar.

Donatello's sculpture emphasizes the Incarnation of Christ as part of the cycle ending in eucharistic entombment by a number of different means. First, the all'antica decoration has parallels to Host receptacles and altars, both before and after the 1430s. The motifs on the frame were derived largely from eschatological monuments and their meaning is essentially funerary when seen in the context of containers for the Eucharist. However, traditionally, the pediments of Host containers were gabled; Gothic and early Renaissance tabernacles shared this feature. The Santa Croce Annunciation changes the convention used in previous classicizing structures - for the first time in the Renaissance Donatello included a rounded pediment. In classical monuments, this type of pediment is found most frequently in funerary altars.

It is possible, moreover, that an early Christian sarcophagus in Ravenna provided Donatello with an important prototype for the Cavalcanti altar (Figure 171).⁴²⁰ Not only is one end of this sarcophagus carved with an Annunciation in relief but, seen from the short end, the lid above the relief appears as a rounded pediment terminating on each side in curving rosettes, closely resembling the pediment of Donatello's monument.

⁴²⁰ See Trudzinski, Antikenrezeption, fig. 29.

The classical decoration of Donatello's Annunciation is assertive; it exceeds that of any previous monument in Florence, including the contemporary cantoria for the Cathedral. While scholars have occasionally noted that Donatello inflated the normal proportions of antique architectural decoration (such as the egg and dart molding),⁴²¹ on the contrary, the artist had numerous examples, readily available, of this type of decoration on antique monuments. The proportions of the decorative motifs on the Cavalcanti Annunciation are directly linked to antique commemorative monuments, as is the large scale of the narrative relief. These similarities are found in both prominent and more modest monuments. For example, the Arch of the Argentarii, similar in size to triumphal arches, provides one model for the Cavalcanti Altar (Figures 172a-b).⁴²² This commemorative monument was also an important prototype for Donatello in a number of ways.

⁴²¹ See for example, Janson, Donatello, 104 and Greenhalgh, Donatello and His Sources, 84ff.

⁴²² The Arch of the Argentarii of 204 A.D. is in the Forum Boarium (Piazza della Bocca della Verità). Its form and function are distinctly different from triumphal arches. In fact, its structure has no actual arch. According to Bober and Rubenstein (p. 213), it was dedicated to the Imperial family by two groups of businessmen, the money changers (Argentarii) and the cattle dealers (Negotiantes Boarii). The relief illustrated in Figure 171b represents Septimius Severus, his wife Julia Domna and a third figure (effaced), preparing for the sacrifice of a bull shown in the relief panel below. This monumental commemorative monument was well-known in the Renaissance, although the medieval church of San Giorgio in Velabro masked the east pier.

Large reliefs within rectangular frames, emphatic decorative moldings, a sacrificial theme, and especially, under the best-preserved relief, antique symbols of sacrifice, were all meaningful to the artist. This type of decoration could be utilized to augment the meaning of the cyclical theme of the Incarnation to encompass the Christian sacrifice. For instance, the shield on the rounded pediment of the Santa Croce Annunciation is a translation of one of the instruments of sacrifice found on, among other monuments, the Arch of the Argentarii. In an enlarged and isolated form, the shield can also be found on antique altars, such as that of the Augustan Altar of the Lares, above the scene of sacrifice.⁴²³ Donatello must have recognized and exploited the typological connection between the pagan sacrifice and the ritual of the Christian Mass.

Donatello also transformed and revolutionized the function of the architectural frame of the Cavalcanti

⁴²³ The Altar of the Lares was erected at a crossroads in the late 1st century B.C. and is now in the Gabinetto dell'Apoxyomenos in the Vatican. The relief on the short side of the altar represents Augustus' Sacrifice to the Lares, the cult of the "Lares Augusti." All four sides of the altar are carved with Augustan and Virgilian (Aeneid VIII, lines 42ff) imagery. The inscription is dedicated to the Emperor Augustus as Pontifex Maximus and as son of the deified Caesar. Bober and Rubenstein (p. 226-227) discuss the apotheosis of Julius Caesar represented on one of the long sides of the altar in relation to the inscriptions' designation of Augustus as a Divi filius, the son of a god. First recorded by the epigraphers Fra Giocondo and Pietrus Sabinus, the altar was well-known in the Renaissance, and was recorded in several private collections in Rome in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

Annunciation, as noted above, by relating it to antique funerary monuments, with their elaborate curving pediments, treatment of the pilasters with feathered or leafy texture, bacchic masks, and rich moldings (Figure 173-176.⁴²⁴ The acanthus rincaux, appearing as flowering vines on the back wall of the Cavalcanti altar, surround the reliefs on the Arch of the Argentarii and appear frequently on antique and medieval funerary monuments as well.

Moreover, like Host tabernacles which featured a sportello divided into four panels of two-dimensional design, the back wall of the Cavalcanti altar is divided into four sections. As we have seen, one of the most common funerary motifs of antique sculpture are the doors symbolizing rebirth. Handles are not an essential feature on antique funerary monuments, nor do they appear in the Cavalcanti altar.⁴²⁵ The doors on Donatello's monument

⁴²⁴ Bennett and Wilkins (Donatello, 175) consistently note that the Cavalcanti Annunciation is revealing in Donatello's use of antique-inspired details. They note that his "creative process involved not only a taste for unusual motifs - ones not often used by his contemporaries - but their use in a distinctly unorthodox fashion." They cite Janson, who also noted that the "unusual pediment, segmented with terminal scrolls and rosettes, and the framed, leaf-decorated pilasters come not from Greek or Roman architecture, but from Roman funerary urns and tombstones."

⁴²⁵ Bennett and Wilkins (Donatello, 106), discussing the carving of the Santa Croce Annunciation, say that "The relief itself is made of two large blocks of macigno, or sandstone, and their joining, which could have posed a problem, is masked by the architectural background and even suggests a closed door." Greenhalgh, (Donatello and His Sources, 89-90) also believes that we can connect the back

thus can be seen as those of the tomb of Christ, from which he is resurrected, and the means through which the faithful enter into their covenant with God.

Moreover, the corresponding Marian iconography, the porta clausa, utilizes the concurrence of the antique and Christian to reiterate the Virgin's role as a container of the utmost purity. Therefore, just as the Virgin can symbolize the Church, the structure and motifs of the wall tabernacle provide a metaphor for her protection of the body of the Incarnate God.⁴²⁶

These parallels also help to explain the iconography of Host tabernacles that elaborated on the idea of the Word made Flesh.⁴²⁷ The tabernacular entombment of the Body of Christ within the Virgin's womb is emphasized by

wall with the similar division of flat areas into rectangular, decorated panels seen on early Christian sarcophagi. These panels represent doors and Greenhalgh compares them to the type of frame Donatello employed for the San Lorenzo doors.

⁴²⁶ Georg Kauffmann (Donatello, 80) read the rear wall, as the symbolic porta conclusa of Virginité, although Janson (Donatello, 106)) argues against this interpretation, saying that there is no clear center seam, door-frame, lock or bolt. Greenhalgh, (Donatello and His Sources, 89-90), contradicts that (see note 417 above) and suggests that the implications of death and rebirth for the Cavalcanti altar "are appropriate to the new Christian age which is to flower with the fruit of Mary's womb." It should also be noted that doors are appropriate, in the same antique funerary context, to the resurrectional theme of the eucharistic ritual.

⁴²⁷For example see Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 33) who discusses the eagle console of Bernardo Rossellino's Badia tabernacle of the early 1430s to a sentence in the Gospel of St. John: "Et verbum caro factum est."

the antique funerary imagery. The Virgin is more specifically denoted as a tabernacle for Christ than in most annunciations; she gestures to her womb and presses the book of prophecy against her body (Figure 177a-b). The additional mariological-eucharistic dimension must have been easily inferred by the fifteenth-century viewer.

It can also be demonstrated that the visual and symbolic connections between Sacrament tabernacles and the Cavalcanti altar were well understood by artists in the fifteenth century. Desiderio da Settignano's later wall tabernacle ensemble, for instance, uses a pediment type which is undoubtedly derived from the same category of antique monument that Donatello used (or perhaps derived from the Cavalcanti altar itself), and is combined with an expanded Host iconography (Figure 179). While Donatello encapsulated the whole cycle of Redemption by presenting the moment it is set in motion (surrounded by precognitive symbols), Desiderio visualized this cycle by using the Child in a chalice to represent the Incarnation and the Eucharist.⁴²⁸ In addition, the scale of the Cavalcanti Altar provided a precedent for Desiderio's creation of a sculpted monolithic altar ensemble for San Lorenzo. The altar and altarpiece for the Cavalcanti Chapel afforded a distinctively eucharistic focal point for the Mass,

⁴²⁸ See the analysis of Desiderio's work in Chapter Seven of this study.

emphasizing the moment of Incarnation, just as the Host itself emphasized the Word made Flesh.

Additional evidence of the contemporary correlation amongst these monuments - Donatello's Cavalcanti Annunciation, altars, and Host tabernacles - is forcefully provided by Benedetto da Maiano's late Quattrocento altar in the Chiesa di Monteoliveto, Naples (Figure 180).⁴²⁹ The perspectivized center of Desiderio's tabernacle for San Lorenzo is fused with an Annunciation relief heavily influenced by Donatello's Cavalcanti Altar. Benedetto, who received important commissions for ciboria for the Sacrament in San Gimignano and Siena,⁴³⁰ created an altarpiece that emphasized the Virgin's womb as the tabernacle of Christ. The artist clearly understood the connection between Donatello's Annunciation and the iconography of Host reservation.

But if the standard type of Host receptacle was a wall tabernacle, as has been commonly believed, why was the Cavalcanti Annunciation so explicitly connected to

⁴²⁹ Scholars have not discussed the iconographic relationship between the Cavalcanti Altar and Benedetto's work in Naples. Pope-Hennessy (Italian Renaissance Sculpture, 36), for example, deals with this work in relation to the Cavalcanti only as a disintegration, albeit beautifully executed, of Donatello's achievement.

⁴³⁰ For a discussion of Benedetto's free-standing ciboria see Doris Carl, "Il Ciborio di Benedetto da Maiano nella Capella Maggiore di S. Domenico a Siena: un contributo al problema dei cibori Quattrocenteschi con un excursus per la storia architettonica della chiesa," Rivista d'Arte, VI, 1990, 2-73. For the San Gimignano high altar ciborium see also Koch, The Santa Fina Chapel in San Gimignano, 103.

eucharistic iconography? To answer this question it is necessary to turn again to the history of Host reservation in Italy. Raible has stated briefly that in Italy reservation was usually in the wall tabernacle, but he offers no proof for his generalization.⁴³¹ In the fifteenth century, while the Host tabernacle immured in a wall or pier was growing in popularity, in the 1430s it was far from a universally used form. In fact, an answer to this question of Host reservation and the Cavalcanti Altar can be found in the diversity and lack of standardization that was to become such an important issue of the Counter Reformation.

Eucharistic Reservation and Liturgical Books

It will be helpful, at this point, to briefly digress and discuss some historical considerations concerning liturgical ceremonial directives in Italian churches in order to elucidate the issue of the placement of eucharistic reservation in the case of the Cavalcanti Altar. In addition to wall tabernacles, public reservation on or above the altar was also common practice. Much confusion in the understanding of the reservation of the Host has been caused by a failure to appreciate the dual tradition of medieval and early

⁴³¹ Raible, Tabernakel, 170 and 175. For an excellent, though brief, evaluation of the situation in Italy see Van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 46-57.

Renaissance liturgical books - the difference between ordines dicendorum or textbooks and ordines agendorum or ceremonials. Evidence for the place of reservation can be found in the latter; only ceremonials contain detailed instructions for behavior at Mass and Office. Portions of the ceremonial of the papal court have survived in the official books of the Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans and the Benedictines of Subiaco and Sacro Speco.⁴³²

In 1223 St. Francis legislated in his Rule that the Order of Friars Minor should follow the liturgy of the papal court officially residing at the Lateran palace.⁴³³ In fact, according to Walker, all the subsequent ceremonial books of the Franciscans are based on those of the papal court and reflect not only the customs of the court but also the wording of the original documents.⁴³⁴ From the extant ceremonials, the Franciscans and other followers of the custom of the papal court either practiced or at least knew reservation on or above the

⁴³² See Van Dijk, "The Liturgical Legislation of the Franciscan Rules," Franciscan Studies, XII, 1952, 176ff. and 241ff.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ See J. Hazelden Walker, "Early Franciscan Influence on Thirteenth-Century Roman Liturgy," Sobornost, XIX, 1956, 344ff.

altar.⁴³⁵ Some ceremonials had precise specifications for reservation; included among these is the directive to reserve in a ciborium on the altar. There is evidence that the Friars Minor often followed this custom.⁴³⁶ Nor was suspension uncommon in Italian churches, as we have seen in Chapter One of this study. In other words, Italian churches, and in particular Franciscan churches, were aware of several customs of reservation. In addition, the Sacrament could be reserved not only at the high altar, but near secondary altars as well. However, it is essential to underscore that all of the variations included a close connection between the altar and reservation of the Host.

The Original Function and Appearance of the Altar

The various types of reservation in Franciscan churches are significant in terms of the original

⁴³⁵ In describing the censuring of the altar during vespers and lauds on solemn days the Ordinationes state clearly:

...the priest should kneel upon the highest step before the altar. Then going up to the altar, he begins [to cense]...towards the Body of Christ or the crucifix....

See Van Dijk and Walker (Myth of the Aumbry, 50). This lack of differentiation in censuring toward the Body or the crucifix brings up some interesting issues in the depiction of Christ on Host receptacles. See the discussion of the crucifixes in late medieval Italian churches in Chapter One of this study.

⁴³⁶ See Van Dijk, "Some manuscripts of the early Franciscan Liturgy," Franciscan Studies, XII, 1954, 225ff; XVI, 1956, 60ff.

appearance and function of the Cavalcanti Annunciation, as well as for the future development of Florentine eucharistic vessels and reservation. Donatello's monument must have been closely allied with the reservation of the Host in the Cavalcanti family chapel. However, because of the diversity of prevailing practices of reservation through the first half of the fifteenth century and the lack of documentation, it is not possible to verify its precise placement in the Cavalcanti Chapel. As a eucharistic ensemble independent of the high altar in Santa Croce, Donatello's monument could not survive the Counter Reformation. The place of reservation connected to the Annunciation would have been effaced in the sixteenth century, even if the altarpiece and location of the chapel remained intact. It is logical that the Annunciation survived the destruction mandated by sixteenth-century edicts concerning Host reservation,⁴³⁷ since the subject could serve more than one iconography. Sacrament tabernacles that were independent of altarpieces could be converted to holy oil containers, but vessels connected to secondary altars are more difficult to trace.

Taken as a whole, the iconography of Donatello's Annunciation and its frame create a significant focal

⁴³⁷ See Caspary (Sakramentstabernakel, 118ff) for his discussion regarding the Counter Reformation edicts. See also Chapter Four of this dissertation for a specific instance of Counter Reformatory alteration of a eucharistic vessel.

point for the Sacrament. No matter where the Host was reserved - on, above, or in a cupboard in the altar - the Annunciation relief was part of a carefully constructed eucharistic program. One of the possibility for Host reservation in the Cavalcanti chapel, is the simplest. If the Host was reserved in a cupboard in the altar stem, the interconnection between incarnational and eucharistic iconography would have been mediated by the altar table. Recent literature points to evidence of the existence of eucharistic cupboards placed either in the sacristy or in the church, where they could be set under the altar, in the wall nearby, or in the apse.⁴³⁸ There is definite evidence of altars that included eucharistic cupboards quite early in Italy.⁴³⁹ It is this last category of tabernacle that could apply to the Cavalcanti Altar, and which may indicate the kind of altar-ensemble that was created for the original chapel. A painted predella mentioned in sixteenth century records may have been part of the altar frontal rather than attached to the

⁴³⁸ See Creighton Gilbert's theory regarding the wall cupboards found in the Cathedral of Florence when the choir stalls were removed briefly during the restoration necessitated by the 1966 flood ("Antoninus," 15ff). He believes that these were meant to hold the consecrated Host, and not simply for the storage of liturgical vessels as Middeldorf and Cole stated. Although Gilbert postulates cupboard doors, none would be necessary because, as discussed in the first chapters of this study, Hosts were kept in a variety of smaller locked vessels which were sometimes placed in an open cupboard.

⁴³⁹ See Van Dijk and Walker, Myth of the Aumbry, 46.

sculpture, but also could have accommodated a Host container or monstrance like Northern altar-tabernacles.⁴⁴⁰

There is, however, another possible explanation in the reservation of the Host connected to the Cavalcanti Altar. Scholars rarely note the almost unprecedented exclusion of the dove of the Holy Spirit that generally appears as an invariable part of images of the Annunciation to Mary. The eucharistic dove, the Columba, as it was known in Italy, may be the solution to the dual problem of iconographic suitability and Host reservation. The dove could have been suspended above the altar (see Figure 22a-b), and thus would have been viewed as part of the imagery of Donatello's sculpture. This type of suspensorium was typically raised and lowered by means of a pulley, appearing on occasion to ceremonially descend and ascend. The dove of the Annunciation would normally hover high above the altar, completing the iconographic program concerning the cycle of Incarnation and Sacrifice.

No matter where the Host was reserved, the pietra serena relief by Donatello would have served as a potent backdrop to the eucharistic ritual of the Mass. The priest, raising the Host, would have done so standing before the Virgin's womb and the doors to the tomb.

⁴⁴⁰ See, for example, Lotte Brand Phillip's reconstruction of the Ghent Altarpiece (Figure 89), which was created at the same time as the Cavalcanti Altar.

Antique funerary and resurrectional motifs combine with the emphasis on the Virgin, who indicates her womb in relation to the scripture she holds, to make the concept of the Word made Flesh apparent to all. The qualities of high relief, the sense of movement, and the great beauty of the figures intensify the spiritual perception of the Annunciation.

This complex monument can serve as an illustration of the desire to emphasize the iconography of the Corpus verum in the 1430s. The Cavalcanti Annunciation is iconographically and stylistically contemporary with Donatello's tabernacle in the Vatican. Both monuments should be seen in the context of Franciscan practice, a new emphasis on the place and iconography of reservation, the conciliar movements of the time, as well as in the general context of sacramental meaning. The increasing need for a standardization of eucharistic iconography in the 1430s and 1440s in Italy is understandable in light of the growing complexity of the eucharistic message.

The Virgin and Classical Eucharistic Iconography

The image of the Virgin had come to be intimately associated with eucharistic iconography, as one can see in a number of images of the first three decades of the fifteenth century. The many images of the Annunciation can be seen in this context, but a more timeless image of the Virgin and the body of Christ came to prevail.

Quattrocento images of the Madonna and Child were expanded to include a variety of saints as well as new eucharistic implications. The affinity of this expanded imagery to eucharistic reservation is apparent in the many images that utilize the same antique funerary monuments as Sacrament tabernacles.

In the early fifteenth century, artists had explicated the theological relationship among Mother and Child, tomb and womb, priest and Eucharist. In the extraordinary Madonnas by Masaccio, one finds evidence of the rapid incorporation of antique funerary imagery. The artist first incorporated an all'antica sepulchral throne for the Madonna and Child of the Pisa polyptych, at a time precisely contemporary with the first classical Host tabernacles. The polyptych for the Carmelites not only provides corroborating evidence of the eucharistic meaning of the new all'antica style, but also provides the first funerary framework for a painted eucharistic image of the Virgin and the Infant Christ (Figure 181).

As we have seen, in Florence eucharistic tabernacles were established as a classicizing furnishing in the 1420s by Brunelleschi and expanded on by Donatello in Rome. In the 1430s Bernardo Rossellino, like Brunelleschi and Donatello, utilized funerary imagery from antique monuments and established what was to be the standard form for repositories of the consecrated Host. In particular,

he found in the classical surround of the Parte Guelfa niche an especially felicitous model.

Significantly, the standard type of Host tabernacle architecture that Bernardo developed was also utilized in the production of tabernacles to enshrine paintings of the Virgin and Child. I contend that these images were seen in the fifteenth century as specifically eucharistic.⁴⁴¹ It is far from coincidental that the architectural surround for the Quattrocento images, both that of the half-length and more elaborate enthroned Madonna and Child is closely related to that of Sacrament tabernacles. This correlation can be demonstrated in an example that links the niche on Orsanmichele, Host tabernacles, and tabernacle-shrines for the Madonna and Child.

The Madonna Tabernacle in Impruneta

The collegiata in Impruneta had an old, miracle working painting of the Madonna and Child for which a

⁴⁴¹ The most thorough discussion of the imagery of the Virgin and Child, see Goffen, "Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas," 487-514. In addition to the particularly Venetian traditions of the half-length Marian imagery, Goffen (p. 493) demonstrates a complex link to ancient portraiture, including that of royalty, in the commemoration of an individual combined with the hope for eternal life, "...the attribute of the half-length subsumed the conception of immortality, as funerary usage of the motif imbued it with this symbolic significance." A number of different funerary types are related to Bellini's imagery, including the imagines clipeatae from ancient sarcophagi and the rows of bust portraits of tomb monuments.

classicizing tabernacle frame was created no later than c.1440 (Figure 182).⁴⁴² Despite the fact that it was not intended for the reservation of the Sacrament, the tabernacle for the Madonna should be examined as part of the early development of fifteenth-century Host tabernacles for a number of reasons that will be examined in this chapter.

No documents exist regarding its commission, although the tabernacle was later incorporated as the altarpiece for one of two pendant chapels in the collegiata.⁴⁴³ The decoration of the church continued over a number of years and probably predates the participation of Luca della Robbia and Michelozzo, who have been attributed with the development of the chapels at mid-century.⁴⁴⁴ The earliest work initiated in the fifteenth-century decorative program seems to have been this tabernacle to house the miracle-working Madonna, variously dated between the 1430s to c.1440, along with the marble socle with a narrative relief, functioning as a predella.

⁴⁴² The subject of miracle-working Madonnas and the images reputedly painted by St. Luke has been discussed by Goffen, "Icon and Vision," 498ff.

⁴⁴³ These chapels will be examined in Chapter Seven in regard to the development of altars with Host tabernacles.

⁴⁴⁴ For a history of Santa Maria, Impruneta and its decorative program see Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 50-54 and 245-246; Allan Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 136-152; and Maud Cruttwell Luca and Andrea della Robbia, 108-118. See Chapter Seven of this study for a discussion of the decorative program.

According to legend, a lost image of the Virgin and Child, reputed to have been painted by St. Luke, was discovered by farmers plowing a field when their oxen knelt on the place the painting was buried and refused to continue until the image was recovered.⁴⁴⁵ The relief of the tabernacle socle recounts the story of the discovery of the miraculous Madonna and of the building of the church.⁴⁴⁶

The painting of the Virgin was extremely important to Impruneta, naturally, but so great was its reputation as a miracle-working relic that it was also exploited by the commune of Florence for special civic occasions.⁴⁴⁷ In October 1406, for example, the conquest of Pisa prompted extravagant jubilation in Florence; victory processions played an important part in the elaborate civic

⁴⁴⁵ Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 137.

⁴⁴⁶ Pope-Hennessy considers this schacciato relief to be the work of a Donatello imitator (Luca della Robbia, 51). Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 137 says that the story was also figured in 1323 on the old bell of the church.

⁴⁴⁷ Pope-Hennessy, (Luca della Robbia, 50) comments on the importance of the cult of the Virgin in Impruneta. So strong was belief in its miraculous nature that in times of crisis it was brought to Florence to cure drought as well as on victorious or political occasions. Pope-Hennessy (cat.no.15, 245) cites Giovanbatista Casotti, Relazione della venuta in Firenze della miracolosa immagine di Maria Vergine dell'Impruneta l'anno MDCCXI, Florence, 1713 and Memorie istoriche della miracolosa immagine di Maria Vergine dell'Impruneta, Florence, 1714; Ugo Ceccherini, Santa Maria all'Impruneta, notizie storiche, Florence, 1890; Raffaello Bianchini, L'Impruneta, paese e santuario, Florence 1932; and Marcello Cagnacci, Impruneta e la sua Basilica, Florence, 1969, for the history of the painting and the church.

celebration which extended over several days. The diarist Bartolomeo del Corazza, in his description of this event, particularly mentions the Madonna of Impruneta. He writes of the initial rejoicing in the streets and the gathering of the populace at the Florentine Baptistery for mass on Sunday:

The Signori and Colleges and Captains of the Guelf Party went there. And the same evening it was ordered that Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday no one should have his shop open and that everyone should go to the solemn and devout processions that had been ordered. And the third morning all the religious, parading with relics, brought along the panel of Our Lady Santa Maria of Impruneta. ...It was the richest and most beautiful procession that I ever saw. Mass was said in Santa Reparata with great solemnity, and Friar Giovanni Dominici preached.⁴⁴⁸

It is no wonder that the Pievano of Impruneta wished to prominently display the painting and pay it suitable homage by providing a distinctive setting.

The classical tabernacle created for the miraculous image of the Virgin has been attributed to different artists and has been dated variously from the early 1430s to 1440s. Although Pope-Hennessy calls this tabernacle, "rigidly conventional" and, as do other scholars, points out the similarity to the Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele,⁴⁴⁹ it should be noted that these classical

⁴⁴⁸ Diario fiorentino di Bartolomeo di Michele, 241-42, as cited by Daniel R. Lesnick, "Preaching in the Early Renaissance," 216.

⁴⁴⁹ Carl von Stegmann and Heinrich von Geymüller, Die Architektur der Renaissance in Toscana, Munich, 1885-1907, p. xiii, and ibid., 51. See also Marquand (Luca della Robbia, 139) who mentions the resemblance to the Porta del Noviziato

forms were relatively new when the project was initiated. Even if Pope-Hennessy is correct in his hypothesis that it was done under the aegis of Antonio degli Agli around 1439-1440, the forms of classical Sacrament tabernacles, if no longer strictly a novelty, certainly had no single set convention. The assumption that the direct borrowing from the Orsanmichele niche was standard is a fallacy; the transference to Impruneta must have created some excitement; the tabernacle was retained and the elaborate chapels were determined in part by the decoration of this first tabernacle. Moreover, if Middeldorf's attribution to Filarete can be credited, it was executed considerably earlier (before 1433) and thus its forms would have represented a style of tabernacle that only a few city churches had commissioned and, in addition, would have predated Donatello's tabernacle in St. Peter's.⁴⁵⁰ Pope-Hennessy acknowledges that the dimensions of the second classicizing tabernacle created as a framework for Luca della Robbia's relief of the Crucifixion were dictated by the earlier tabernacle. In fact, even if the later date

at Santa Croce (c.1445) as well as to the Orsanmichele niche. Marquand states that the Impruneta tabernacle must be by some pupil of Donatello, possibly Michelozzo or Pagno di Lapo Portigiani.

⁴⁵⁰ Ulrich Middeldorf, "Filarete?", Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, XVII, 1973, 75-86. Pope-Hennessy disagrees with this attribution and ascribes the tabernacle to "a secondary Michelozzan sculptor" and dates it about 1440. The painting of the Virgin seems to have been enclosed in an earlier wall tabernacle prior to the setting under discussion here (Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 246).

is correct, the tabernacle appears to antedate Luca della Robbia's receptacle for Sant'Egidio, and would have been part of the early movement of classicizing Sacrament receptacles. The tabernacle housing the miraculous painting was executed before Antoninus' directive regarding Host reservation (after his ascendancy to the office of Archbishop), when commissions for new tabernacles became even more urgent.

The Impruneta wall tabernacle in the Chapel of the Madonna does indeed resemble Donatello's classical niche on Orsanmichele, in fact, it's forms are more explicitly related to it than any other extant Host tabernacle of the time. It repeats motifs from Donatello's niche, as do Sacrament receptacles of the 1430s and 1440s (primarily those of Bernardo Rossellino and Luca della Robbia), but also includes some of the more unusual features. The format of triangular pediment, entablature with putti and garlands, and fluted pilasters framing colonettes supporting an arch are characteristics that are restated in a number of contemporary examples. However, the figured spandrels and spiral colonettes with ionic capitals are motifs that have few extant parallels in other early tabernacles.⁴⁵¹ Rather unexpectedly, the

⁴⁵¹ The architectural organization and motifs of the Orsanmichele niche are reflected on the facade of the palace of the Fraternità di Santa Maria della Misericordia of Arezzo. Bernardo Rossellino and three others were commissioned in 1433 to complete the second story of the facade of the palazzo; the two lateral niches enshrining standing figures of Saints

sculptor also repeats Donatello's bearded faces at the lower corners, although these Impruneta heads do not flank flying putti with a wreath as in the Orsanmichele niche. Instead, they are attached to a base with strigillated ornamentation.⁴⁵² This incised motif can be found in numerous funerary monuments, such as in Figures 183a-b (both found in the Camposanto in Pisa), indicating that the artist understood the antique funerary derivation of Donatello's niche (Figure 184). In addition, this antique motif connects it to the Masaccio's Pisa Madonna and Child with its strigillated base. In fact, the effect of the

Donatus and Gregory, (commissioned in 1434) and flanking the central relief of the Madonna of Mercy, are clearly inspired by Donatello's niche for the Parte Guelfa. However, the proportions of the architectural members of the Arezzo niches are quite different from those of the Orsanmichele niche. For a discussion of the commission and the figural sculpture see Schulz, Bernardo Rossellino, 18-24 and 89-92.

It is suggestive, however, that Bernardo Rossellino was commissioned during the same period to create two sacrament tabernacles, the first in 1433 for the Badia of Arezzo, and the second in 1435 for the Badia of Florence. There is no way of knowing exactly what these tabernacles looked like. That of Arezzo is lost (although Caspary, Antichità viva, III, 164, p. 26-27, suggests the tabernacle of pietra serena in the pieve of Remole as the one done for the Arezzo Badia). There are only fragments of the Florentine version extant, and those tell us nothing about the central portions of the tabernacle. It is perfectly possible that Bernardo used the Parte Guelfa niche as a model for these sacrament receptacles (as Antonio Rossellino did later in the Santa Chiara tabernacle of the 1460s, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum). His contemporary use of Donatello's architectural surround for the Palazzo della Fraternità in Arezzo certainly increases the likelihood.

⁴⁵² It is possible that the artist made this choice so that the wide marble schiacciato relief of the finding of the miraculous painting would not have to compete visually with a figured base.

whole Impruneta tabernacle, with the miraculous Madonna and Child displayed in the center, connects it closely with the Pisa polyptych. Also meaningful is the variation on the archway, which in the Impruneta altar is fashioned of a furled fictive curtain rather than the abstract geometric ornament that appears on the Orsanmichele niche. The treatment of the archway is reminiscent of Donatello's tabernacle for St. Peter's. While still bearing a remarkable resemblance to the niche, the tabernacle at Impruneta is altered significantly to underscore the eucharistic theme.

The issue of the inclusion of the miracle-working Madonna is important to the discussion of Sacrament tabernacles in the fifteenth century. Many classicizing tabernacles were also designed to house images of the Madonna and Child, without direct association with the reservation of the Host or with an altar. One of the most extraordinary examples of a Madonna and Child seen in conjunction with a tabernacle (attributed to Ghiberti) is Fra Angelico's Linaiuoli Altarpiece (Figure 185).⁴⁵³ The setting, like the Impruneta tabernacle, is derived from the Orsanmichele niche, but has a highly developed iconography relating to the Virgin as tabernacle and the display of the eucharistic Child. Fra Angelico's use of

⁴⁵³ For discussions of this altarpiece see S. Orlandi, Beato Angelico, Florence, 1964 and Pope-Hennessy, Fra Angelico, 2nd ed., Ithaca, New York, 1974.

classicism underscores the motivation for its revival: the architecture provided more potent eucharistic content to liturgical furnishings.

The Madonna and Child displayed in a classicizing tabernacle became one of the most popular forms in the Quattrocento, particularly in relief sculpture.⁴⁵⁴ Perhaps the overly-familiar image of a half-length Madonna and Child image in this setting has obscured its connection with Sacrament tabernacles. However, I contend that the related setting demonstrates the contemporary understanding of the Mother as tabernacle and the Child as Host.⁴⁵⁵ The Madonna emerges from the frame in truncated

⁴⁵⁴ The image of the Madonna and Child as a sportello was perhaps used more frequently than the extant examples suggest. One tabernacle, with Gothic architectural surround from Fiesole dated at the beginning of the fifteenth century, displays an eleventh-century Madonna, also reputed to have been painted by St. Luke. See Herbert Dellwing, "Un tabernacolo degno di nota a Fiesole," Antichità viva, VIII, 1969, 52-64. Donatello's Sacrament tabernacle for St. Peter's has employed a miraculous Madonna in its central area since the seventeenth century. Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 51) cites the altar in the Brancacci Chapel which housed the Madonna del Carmine, as a precedent for the Impruneta tabernacle Madonna. He believes that the Brancacci altar included a predella in low relief - none other than the Ascension in London, attributed to Donatello.

⁴⁵⁵ See Goffen's discussion ("Icon and Vision," 500-501) of the connotations of Venetian mezza figura Madonnas behind a parapet. She demonstrates that the parapet in Bellini's paintings leads to the association of the Madonna image with portraiture and thus with images painted by St. Luke, as well as with complex spatial concepts regarding the viewer's relation to the Madonna and Child. The fictive ledge functions visually not only as a transition between viewer and sacred space, but also as altar and tomb. In these paintings, the Child is placed often on the illusionistic parapet and, as Goffen states, "At this meeting of sacred and worldly realms she offers the infant as an object of

form; the Child is manifested whole, and is often displayed standing (Figures 186-188). The image of the Infant, held by, but also standing on his mother is essentially eucharistic; it has been noted by various scholars that the Virgin acts as an altar for the Body of Christ.⁴⁵⁶ The symbolism of the Madonna as altar, tabernacle, and portal can be elucidated by an example from a French manuscript, created by Jean Fouquet for his patron, Étienne Chevalier, at mid-century. Included in this manuscript is the traditional double page showing the donor and the Madonna and Child enthroned (Figure 189). Fouquet's fascination with Italian forms provides a remarkable demonstration of the Madonna as altar and portal. On both pages the room in which the figures are placed is classical, with colossal pilasters leading the viewer's eye to the Madonna; on the cornice of this classical wall are putti holding garlands. However, the combination apse-throne in which the Madonna and Child reside is modelled on both the portal of a Gothic church as well as a classical niche based on antique funerary

devotion....Two related images are evoked, that of the offering on an altar and that of the adult Christ dead in his tomb." As Goffen shows, the imagery relates to the sacrifice of Christ re-enacted in the Eucharist as well as the holiest of relics housed in the consecrated altar. Although the images discussed by Goffen are considerably later than the Impruneta tabernacle, the principle remains the same. Florentine productions of these half-length Madonnas use the classical Host tabernacle frame to express similar ideas.

⁴⁵⁶ See for example, Hirn, Sacred Shrine, 162-163.

iconography. The classical shell alcove behind the Virgin and Child, with its round-headed arch and variegated marble panels, like the Parte Guelfa niche, denotes the doors of antique funerary iconography. Fouquet has made the portal explicit for the contemporary Northern viewer, but also included the contemporary Italian classical version of the symbolic portal. Significantly, the artist did not utilize the traditional Northern dichotomy between architectural styles. When we look again at the images of the Madonna and Child in classical tabernacles in Quattrocento Italy, the reference to the portal to Salvation is explicit.⁴⁵⁷

In this context the Madonna has other roles as well. Not only is she a vessel for the Body, but she can also be associated with the priest holding the chalice. This is especially clear when the Child stands rigidly and the Virgin holds his ankle as if it is the stem of the cup or monstrance, as in Masaccio's early altarpiece of San Giovanale (see Figure 60). The image of the Virgin could also be equated with the priest handling the Host wafer, as was occasionally made explicit in northern Europe (Figure 190).⁴⁵⁸ It is no less so in these seemingly

⁴⁵⁷ This can be seen as well in the Madonna and Child sportello of the Siena font-tabernacle discussed in Chapter Four of this study.

⁴⁵⁸ See Dupont, "Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge: Le Puy d'Amiens en 1437," Gazette des beaux-arts, VIII, 1932, 265-274 who discusses this painting which shows Mary in the church, clothed in clerical vestments, distributing the

simple images of mother and child contained within a classical tabernacle.⁴⁵⁹ Classical frames for Madonnas in the Quattrocento, so familiar and repeated so often in painting and sculpture, were used purposefully to connect them to Sacrament repositories. The form of these tabernacles had taken on a meaning that connected the image of Madonna and Child more explicitly to the Eucharist.

Eucharist. See also Lane, Altar and Altarpiece, 71-72.

⁴⁵⁹ In Desiderio's San Lorenzo tabernacle the image of the Madonna per se is eliminated, but she remains symbolically present in the form of the vessel which contains the Body of the infant Christ.