Cornelis Buys the Elder's *Seven Works of Mercy*: An Exemplar of Confraternal Art from Early Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe*

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Among the many Northern Renaissance paintings in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam is a series of seven panels (Fig. 1) which illustrate the corporal works of mercy. The paintings, executed with tempera on wooden panel, are unified by a simple, wooden frame which is original. The series is impressive in size, measuring 110 x 470 cm., that is approximately 3 x 15-1/2 feet.¹

No documents have survived regarding the commission of the paintings, but on the basis of style and other circumstantial evidence, the panels were attributed to the Master of Alkmaar, who has been tentatively identified as Cornelis Buys the Elder. Trained in the late fifteenth century in the city of Haarlem, Cornelis Buys was active as an artist in Alkmaar in the years 1490–1524; in this period he also served as the first teacher of Jan van Scorel, who came from a small town outside of Alkmaar.²

The *Seven Works of Mercy* is securely dated 1504 on the basis of internal evidence. Written on the framework above the central panel is the phrase, "Gheschildert Anno 1504" (painted in the year 1504). The same date, 1504, is inscribed in Roman numerals on the base of the column closest to the foreground in the second panel of the series illustrating the act of Giving Drink to the Thirsty.³ From 1504 until its entry into the collection of the Rijksmuseum in 1918, the panels presumably hung continuously in the church of St. Lawrence in the small town of Alkmaar, fifteen miles north of Amsterdam.⁴

During the night of 24 June 1582, the panels were covered with black paint by three Protestant sympathizers who had sneaked into the church

FIGURE 1: Cornelis Buys the Elder. *The Seven Works of Mercy*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum)

under the cover of darkness.⁵ The paint was removed the very next day upon the orders of the church elders, but the panels were left in a permanently damaged state. The paintings underwent a thorough restoration in 1971-75.⁶

Reading from left to right the charitable acts depicted are Feeding the Hungry, Giving Drink to the Thirsty, Clothing the Naked, Burying the Dead, Housing the Homeless, Visiting the Sick, and Visiting the Imprisoned. In four of the panels—Feeding the Hungry, Giving Drink to the Thirsty, Clothing the Naked, and Housing the Homeless—the charitable activity takes place in the streets of a prosperous looking, immaculately clean Dutch town; in the foreground the work of mercy is performed by a well-dressed burgher and his wife in front of their solid, brick house, and in the background by a single male citizen. The recipients of this largesse are a small group of indigents, including the old and young, men and women, and the physically infirm. Also in the crowd is Christ, who stands quietly among his fellow man.

The panels with the scenes of Visiting the Sick and Visiting the Imprisoned have equally concrete, plausible settings. In the latter panel, the scene takes place in the courtyard of an early sixteenth-century Netherlandish jail. Standing outside the enclosed prison yard in the immediate foreground are four figures. One man is searching in his purse for money with which to ransom the imprisoned, while two others (a man and a woman) hold their coins in readiness. Another female figure holds her hands out towards two of the philanthropists and turns her head in the direction of the third. Within the courtyard one prisoner is being whipped by a jailer and another has his hands and ankles locked to a single piece of wood on the ground. The woeful faces of two other prisoners, incarcerated in cells facing onto the courtyard, are visible in the background behind barred windows.

In contrast with Christ's appearance in the other panels, here he is depicted as a full-length figure standing alone beneath the porch in front of the prison cells. Despite the deep shadows of the porch, Christ's face and hands are clearly visible, aglow with supernatural light. In his left hand he carries the orb of the world surmounted with a cross, and with his right hand makes a gesture of blessing directed towards the prisoners in the courtyard.⁷

In the panel illustrating the Visiting of the Sick, a view through a brick archway into an interior space of considerable breadth and depth is presented. The setting is that of an early sixteenth-century Netherlandish

hospital probably somewhat idealized. In the background, a doctor assisted by a nurse is shown applying a salve to the back of a patient seated on the floor on a mat in front of a small fireplace. To the left of this group is a burgher who holds a cup for an invalid lying in one of several bedsteads lining the wall. In the middle ground, in another portion of the large hospital ward, is a second physician in the process of taking the pulse of a bed-ridden man. Finally, in the immediate foreground are four figures standing in the entrance hallway of the hospital. The single female figure is headed inside, with a cup in hand. The male figures, including a bust-length figure of Christ, are gathered in a group at the right; their bodies are turned outward towards the left. One of the three full-length figures has his arms open, seemingly in a gesture of welcome. Although these three men resemble other figures in the panels in regard to their dress and physical type, their heads (which sit rather uncomfortably on their necks) are much less generalized. Their more specific facial features combined with their outward glance, suggest that these figures were intended as donor portraits. (The identity of these donors will be discussed shortly.)

The central panel of the series, the scene towards which the donors' bodies are oriented, is that of the Burial of the Dead. The burial takes place in a barren cemetery outside of the city walls. Two monks are shown lowering a coffin into a newly-dug grave, as the priest accompanied by a deacon reads the funeral service. Two other monks are departing from the scene carrying away the apparatus which was used to carry the coffin to the site. A grave-digger stands at the edge of the grave with his hands flaccid on his shovel, as he rests from his recent labours. A small group of mourners swathed in black also stand by the grave-site. The upper half of the panel is occupied by a representation of the Apocalyptic Christ displaying the physical signs of his bodily sacrifice; he is seated on a rainbow with his feet resting on the orb of the world, flanked to left and right by the intercessors Mary and John.

Written on the simple, wooden frame surrounding the panels are a series of seven rhyming couplets in Dutch, inscribed beneath each of the scenes. They read from left to right as follows:

Deelt midelick den Armen / God zal
U weder ontfarmen.

(Share generously [with] the poor,
[and] God shall have pity on You.)

Van spijis ende drank in dit leven /
Dusent fout sal U weder werden
gegeven.

(For food and drink given in this life,
a thousand-fold shall be returned to
you.)

Uwen evenmensch zijn naektheyt
wilt decken / Opdat God uyt doe
Uwer zondern vlecken.

(If you will cover the nakedness of
your fellowmen, God will remove
the stain of Your sins.)

Van den dooden te begraven so wy
lesen / Wert Thobias van God
gepresen.

(For burying the dead, we read why
Tobias was praised by God.)

Die Heer spreeckt wilt my verstaen
/ Wat Ghy den minsten doet wert my
gedaen.

(As the Lord said to whomever will
hear, what You do to the least of my
brothers You do it also to me.)

Wilt ziecken ende crancken
vysenteeren / U loon zal ewelick
vermeren.

(If you will visit the sick and injured,
your reward shall eternally in-
crease.)

Die gevangenen verlost met car-
itaten / Het komt hierna Uwer
zielen ten bate.

(If you liberate prisoners out of char-
ity, your soul will benefit at the
Second Coming.)⁸

As noted above, no documentation has survived regarding the commission of the panels. However it has long been assumed in the literature on the painting that the series was commissioned by the *regenten* (governors) or *gasthuismeesters* (hospital masters) of the Holy Ghost Confraternity of Alkmaar who maintained the hospital of St. Elizabeth in the city.⁹ This assumption is based upon the identification of the three burghers wearing black hats who are shown at the entrance to the hospital in the foreground of the sixth panel, as portraits of prominent members of the Holy Ghost Confraternity. Two other members of the Confraternity, wearing similar black burgher-hats and whose faces have particularized features, are portrayed among the crowd of indigent persons receiving clothing in the second panel of the series. Their confraternal patronage is further confirmed by the cross which decorates the lid of the coffin in the central panel with the Burial of the Dead; this type of cross was employed with numerous variations, by the Holy Ghost Order and Confraternity on their coat-of-arms and seals.¹⁰ And finally, in support of this identification of the patrons of the work is the fact that the subject matter of the panels, the seven corporal works of mercy, was imagery frequently employed by the Order and Confraternity of the Holy Ghost.

The foundation of the Holy Ghost Order and Confraternity in the late twelfth century coincided with the foundation of a hospital dedicated to the care of the sick and poor by Guy de Montepellier (d. 1208), in his hometown

in France.¹¹ (Guy undoubtedly chose the Holy Ghost as the patron of his hospital, order and confraternity, because it was through the mysterious workings of the second person of the Trinity, the agency of grace, that man performs meritorious deeds.¹²) The activities of Guy and his charitable foundation soon came to the attention of Pope Innocent (1198–1216), who decided to found a similar hospital for the poor and sick in Rome, but on a much larger scale. In 1198, he called Guy to Rome to organize the new institution; in that year, Innocent sanctioned the creation of a new religious order, the *Ordine di Santo Spirito*, which was confirmed in a papal bull promulgated in 1213.¹³ The immediate responsibility of the Order was to staff the three-hundred bed hospital founded by the Pope in 1204; known as the *Ospedale di Santo Spirito* in Sassia, it was built on the banks of the Tiber on the former site of the *Ospedale di Santa Maria* in Sassia, which had been founded in 715.

What distinguished the Order of the Holy Spirit from already existing hospital orders was the fact that it cared for all of man's bodily needs and not just for the sick; they considered the performance of the seven corporal works of mercy as their duty.¹⁴ The Rule governing the Order in fact begins with an excerpt from Matthew 25:31–46, which provided the theological basis for the performance of the corporal works of mercy and its relation to salvation. The biblical text is as follows:

... when the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all the nations, he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." Then the just will answer him, saying "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee; or thirsty, and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger, and take thee in; or naked, and clothe thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison, and come to thee?" And answering the king will say to them, "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me."

Then he will say to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in; naked, and you did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer and say, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?" Then he will answer them, saying, "Amen I say to you, as long as you did not do it for one of these least ones, you did not do it for me." And these will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.¹⁵

Equally dedicated to charitable activities described in this text was the Confraternity of the Holy Ghost. Established by Guy as the lay counterpart to the Order, it was intended to attract those Christians who did not wish to take religious vows, but who wanted to perform charitable deeds within an institutional framework.¹⁶ Those who sought admittance were generally nobles and wealthy upper-class men and women.¹⁷ In addition to performing the seven works of mercy, the members of the confraternity raised money for the Order and the hospitals by demanding dues for membership; the solvency of the Order essentially rested on these revenues.¹⁸ Frequently these funds were also used to defray the costs of decorating the local church on feast days.¹⁹

In the course of the thirteenth century, the Order and Confraternity of the Holy Ghost spread throughout Western Europe. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, there were at least 400 Holy Ghost foundations in France, 280 in Italy, 128 in Spain and Portugal, 27 in Germany, and 40 in the Low Countries; these foundations included hospitals, orphanages, and old-age homes.²⁰ In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a number of branches of the Confraternity in Flanders and the Netherlands also maintained a bench with seats called a "Heilige Geest-Stoel" (a Holy Ghost bench), where members distributed bread and clothing to the sick and poor.²¹ In Haarlem for example, the Holy Ghost Confraternity had an oak bench with twelve seats, constructed c. 1470–83, near the portal on the southwest wall of St. Bavo's.²²

The history of the Holy Ghost Order and Confraternity in regard to their patronage of art has yet to be written, however in all known instances where they did commission works, the subject matter was always the illustration of the corporal works of mercy. This pictorial tradition began in the early thirteenth century with a manuscript of the Rule of the Order of the Holy

Ghost, which was probably executed for the first successor to Guy de Montepellier. Today preserved in the Archives of the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia, Rome, the manuscript is decorated with historiated initials and miniatures depicting the monks and sisters of the Order performing their charitable duties.²³ Two rulebooks of the Order originating in Northern Europe in the early fifteenth century, belonging to the Holy Ghost Hospital in Nuremberg, are similarly illuminated. They are decorated with a series of miniatures depicting the seven corporal works of mercy together with a scene of the Last Judgment; beneath each scene is an inscription from Matthew 25:35–36, 42–43.²⁴ Christ is depicted in the series as the sole and direct recipient of each act of mercy, which is performed alternately by a man and a woman.

Monumental works of art illustrating the mercies were also commissioned by the Holy Ghost Order and Confraternity. These include carved keystones with representations of six mercies—Giving Drink to the Thirsty was omitted—in a ward of the Holy Ghost Hospital in Biberach in the province of Württemberg, of 1472,²⁵ and a lost painting of the Seven Works with the Last Judgment, of c. 1490–1500, by the Dutch artist Geertgen tot Sint Jans for the Holy Ghost Orphanage in Haarlem.²⁶

In regard to iconography, the representation of the corporal works of mercy in works specifically commissioned by the Order or Confraternity of the Holy Ghost was identical with that employed in the far more numerous works produced for other patrons.²⁷ The earliest surviving example of this pictorial tradition is an Italian painting (Rome, Vatican Pinakothek) from the second half of the twelfth century, in which the three acts of Feeding the Hungry, Visiting the Imprisoned, and Clothing the Naked are represented on the register below a scene of the Last Judgment.²⁸ A similar arrangement is found on a contemporary work from Northern Europe, the Gallus Portal of Basel Cathedral, where the door jambs beneath a tympanum with the Last Judgment are decorated with relief sculptures of the corporal works of mercy.²⁹

The Basel reliefs depict six charitable activities in accord with those mentioned in text from Matthew. Absent from the illustrations is the burial of the dead, which was not officially recognized as a corporal act of mercy until the first half of the thirteenth century.³⁰ It was illustrated for the first time around 1250 on the now destroyed choir screen of Strasbourg Cathedral, in conjunction with other works of mercy and a scene of the Last Judgment.³¹

In keeping with this iconographic tradition of associating the mercies with the Second Coming are two altarpieces—the Cambrai Altarpiece (Madrid, Prado) and the Last Judgment Altarpiece (Valencia, Ayuntamiento)—which were produced in Brussels, c. 1460, by a close follower of Rogier van der Weyden, generally identified as Vranke van der Stockt.³² In both works, the mercies are illustrated as painted relief sculptures on the archway surrounding the scene of the Last Judgment.³³ In each of the scenes, the figure of Christ is included among the crowd of indigents receiving charity from male and female donors; his presence literally illustrates the line from Matthew 25: "... as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me."³⁴

In the case of the works cited above, the mercies were illustrated as ancillary scenes of the main subject of the Last Judgment. A second, related pictorial tradition regarding the representation of the corporal works of mercy also existed in Western art from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries. In a number of representations a saintly or royal personage is depicted doing charitable activities. For example, the ivory reliefs on the back cover of the twelfth-century *Melisenda Psalter* show King David performing six corporal acts of mercy; inscribed below each scene is the appropriate excerpt describing the act from Matthew 25:35–36.³⁵

This second pictorial tradition associated with the illustration of charitable acts is exemplified by two sets of illuminated miniatures from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, illuminated by Jean Pucelle in Paris c. 1325–28, are three miniatures of St. Louis feeding a leprous monk, administering to the sick, and burying the bones of the Crusaders.³⁶ In the book entitled *Benois seront les misericordieux*, illuminated in Brussels in 1468–77, are eight small scenes connected by a continuous city-scape depicting the patroness of the manuscript, Margaret of York (the wife of Philip the Good), performing the seven corporal acts of mercy and praying.³⁷

These two iconographic traditions may be seen as converging in a large polyptych with the Last Judgment (Antwerp, Musées Royaux), attributed to the Antwerp School, c. 1490–1500.³⁸ The altarpiece consists of fifteen panels; the largest and uppermost panel depicts the Apocalyptic Christ seated on a rainbow and displaying his wounds, flanked by Mary and John. The resurrection of the dead is depicted below, the Blessed gathering around St. Peter at the entrance to the Heavenly City at the left, and the Damned tortured in Hell at the right. Beneath the panel with the Last Judgment are

fourteen panels, disposed in two registers, representing the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Acts of Mercy. The corporal acts are performed by saints and prophets and witnessed by Christ who raises his hand in a gesture of blessing.

In regard to its imagery, the *Seven Works of Mercy* by Cornelis Buys the Elder basically follows the traditional iconography associated with the theme, briefly summarized above. Precedents for the representation of men and women performing charitable acts, the inclusion of Christ as one of the recipients of this charity, the appearance of the Apocalyptic Christ, and the urban setting employed in the panels, may be found in earlier illustrations. There are, however, two features of the work which are unusual.

The first of these concerns the portraits which appear on two of the panels. Donor portraits of royalty are found in earlier representations of the seven mercies, such as that of Margaret of York in the late fifteenth-century manuscript, *Benois seront les misericordieux*. However, the portraits of five members of the Holy Ghost Confraternity of Alkmaar represent the first surviving example of bourgeois portraiture in this context.

The second, more remarkable feature of the work is the series of inscriptions which are written on the framework beneath each scene. With one exception—the inscription on the fifth panel—the phrases are not excerpted from the biblical text of Matthew 25, as is the case in all previous instances where inscriptions are included in the representations of the mercies. Rather, the inscribed lines are exhortatory rhymed couplets which spell out the consequences of the charitable act in regard to man's salvation. The likelihood is that these inscriptions were not invented for this particular context, but were commonplace in devotional literature and sermons of the period.³⁹

The paintings originally were displayed somewhere in the south aisle in the choir of St. Lawrence. Presumably the work hung above an altar and served as an altarpiece, but in fact there is no documentary evidence to substantiate this assumption.⁴⁰ Moreover, although parallels for the long, narrow format of the work exist among the many painted and sculpted altarpieces of Northern Europe which have survived from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, its lack of moveable wings combined with its enormous breadth of some 15-1/2 feet suggests that the *Seven Works of Mercy* was not conceived as an altarpiece, but rather as a votive image independent of an altar.⁴¹

Wherever the *Seven Works of Mercy* hung within the church, and whatever its precise function—whether it served as an altarpiece, a votive image, or as an altarpiece and a votive image—the message of the imagery of the panels and of the inscriptions on the framework is readily comprehensible within the context of the period in which the work was created. These images of good Catholic men and women fulfilling their charitable duties by performing the seven works of mercy were clearly intended as exemplary models of how one should lead one's life and the positive consequences thereof. Not only do such activities lead to a better existence for the poor and sick, and ostensibly improve the well-being of one's city, but the individual benefits greatly as well; by performing meritorious acts, one is actively working to achieve the salvation of one's soul. If the implied import of the pictures was not adequately inspirational for the worshipper, the exhortatory couplets inscribed on the frame beneath each scene reiterated for the viewer the connection between good works and salvation. The fact that the church fathers of Alkmaar had the panels restored after their attack by iconoclasts, and that the paintings were allowed to remain in St. Lawrence when the majority of Dutch churches were stripped bare of earlier religious art, suggests that these images of *exemplum virtutis* were not considered offensive by succeeding generations of Protestant visitors to the church.⁴²

Secondly, these panels were surely intended to draw attention to those Christians who had already dedicated themselves to good works, to specifically congratulate the members of the Holy Ghost Confraternity of Alkmaar. It is certainly not without significance that the donor portraits of the officials of the Confraternity appear in the panel with the charitable act of visiting the sick; they were obviously proud of their hospital and the activities connected with it.

At the present time the *Seven Works of Mercy* provides the primary source of information available to us about the Holy Ghost Confraternity of Alkmaar. Drawing attention to this unique visual document will hopefully inspire much needed archival research into the specific history, membership, and activities of this confraternity in Alkmaar, and its operation elsewhere in the Netherlands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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Notes

- * This paper is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Albrecht Dohmann (1915–87), Professor of Netherlandish Art, Kunstgeschichtlichen Institut, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, and Director of the Zentralbibliothek, Staatlichen Museen, Berlin.

- 1 The first and seventh panels each measure 110 x 54 cm.; the other five each measure 110 x 55.5 cm.

For the work, see N.F. van Gelder-Schrijver, "De Meester van Alkmaar, Eene bijdrage tot de kennis van de Haarlemsche Schilderschool," *Oud Holland* 47 (1930): 97–121; G.J. Hoogewerff, *De Noord-Nederlandsche Schilderkunst* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1939), vol. 3, pp. 346–48; *Middeleeuwse Kunst der Noordelijke Nederlanden: 150 Jaar Rijksmuseum Jubileumtentoonstelling*, Exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1958), pp. 89–90; Max J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, trans. Heinz Norden (Leiden & Brussels: A.W. Sijthoff, 1973), pp. 24–27, 74; C.J. de Bruyn Kops, "De Zeven Werken van Barmhartigheid van de Meester van Alkmaar gerestaureerd," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 23 (1976): 203–26; James E. Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, The Graphic Arts From 1350 to 1575* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1985), pp. 445–46.

- 2 For a summary of previous scholarship regarding the identity of the Master of Alkmaar, see Friedländer, vol. 10, pp. 90–91. Regarding his identification as Cornelis Buys the Elder, see Snyder, p. 445.

In the background of *Feeding the Hungry*, there is a staircase decorated with a stone statue of a lion holding an escutcheon inscribed with a monogram. The letters have been variously identified by scholars as, two "A"s (Friedländer, pp. 29, 74), two "A"s crossed with a "V" (Snyder, p. 445), and as an "A" and a "P" (de Bruyn Kops, p. 203), but there is general agreement that the monogram is that of the painter responsible for the panels. C.J. de Bruyn Kops (pp. 203–204) suggested that the male face which appears just to the left of the lion with the escutcheon, may be a self-portrait of the artist.

- 3 The inscription reads "Anno mccc en iiiii."

- 4 The panels are described *in situ* in Jacob Dircksz. Wijkkoper's *Geschiedkundige aantekeningen betreffende Alkmaar, 1436–1599*, f. 214, a seventeenth-century city chronicle preserved in a single, eighteenth-century copy in the community archives of Alkmaar (cited in de Bruyn Kops, pp. 215, 222), and in Gijsbert Boonkamp's *Alkmaar en deszelfs geschiedenissen* (Rotterdam, 1747), p. 387. Piecing together the information contained in these two sources, it appears that the paintings were displayed somewhere in the south aisle of the choir, near the main altar and the organ. In neither account, however, is their precise location within this area of the church described, nor is it mentioned whether the panels hung above an altar.

- 5 This act of vandalism is described in the two sources mentioned in note 3. At the same time that the paintings were vandalized, the inscriptions and prophets on the *preekstoel* (pulpit) of the church were also blackened with paint. It is not clear from the account if the paintings of the *Seven Works of Mercy* were near, or in any way connected with this pulpit, but the possibility is an intriguing one.

- 6 For a description of the physical condition of the panels before and after the restoration, see de Bruyn Kops, pp. 213–15, 222–23.

During the course of restoration it was discovered that, in addition to the black paint, certain areas of the panels—in particular, the faces of the people performing the good deeds and those of Christ and the ecclesiastical personages in the *Burial of the Dead*—had been attacked with a sharp instrument which left deep grooves in the surface. Since black paint was found in some of these grooves, it was concluded that the damage to the panel was either inflicted during an earlier (unrecorded) act of vandalism, or at the same time as the blackening.

- 7 His presence and gestures in this scene were probably intended to be interpreted on a symbolic level as well. In contrast with the good folk who visit the imprisoned and liberate them from physical confinement by paying a ransom, Christ has paid for the salvation of mankind by his bodily sacrifice.
  - 8 My thanks to Dr. Margarita Russell for help with the Dutch translations.
  - 9 The identification of the donors was first made by C.H. Peters & Dr. H. Brugmans, *Oud-Nederlandsche steden in haar ontstaan, groei en ontwikkeling*, (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1909-11), vol. 2, pp. 155-56, and repeated by Hoogewerff, p. 346.
  - 10 Cf. Snyder, p. 446.
  - 11 The most comprehensive discussions of the Holy Ghost Order and Confraternity to date are those of Ch. De Smedt, "L'ordre hospitalier du Saint-Esprit," *Revue des Questions Historiques* (Paris, 1893): 216-26, and Paul Brune's *Histoire de l'Ordre hospitalier du Saint-Esprit* (Lons-le-Saunier: C. Martin, 1892).
  - 12 Ch. Moeller, "Holy Ghost, Order of the," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, Co., 1908), vol. 7, pp. 415-16.
  - 13 Brune, pp. 61-62. For the text of the Rule of the Order, see *Regula Sacri Ordinis Sancti Spiritus in Saxia* (Rome, 1564), in J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus... Series Latina* (Paris, 1855), vol. 217, cols. 1137-58.
  - 14 Brune, pp. 61, 63.
  - 15 *The New Testament*, The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Edition (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1943).
  - 16 Brune, p. 153. According to Brune, the Confraternity of the Holy Ghost was the first lay confraternity in Christendom.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 163.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 164.
  - 20 De Smedt, p. 222.
  - 21 Brune, p. 196.
  - 22 Francis Allan, *Geschiedenis en Beschrijving van Haarlem* (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1883), vol. 3, p. 374.
- In light of the imagery of the *Seven Works of Mercy*, it is worthy of note that the bench belonging to the Holy Ghost Confraternity of Haarlem was decorated with scenes of charitable acts. On the two outside faces of the sides of the bench were relief sculptures of the distribution of food to cripples beneath an image of the Christ holding the orb of the world, and of a scene of a poor family beneath a representation of the Apocalyptic Christ. On the back of each of the twelve seats, were scrolls with inscriptions from Matthew 25:31-46.
- 23 Brune, pp. 61-62. For reproductions of some of these illuminations, see the illustrations accompanying the article, "Ospedale," by Alessandro Canezza, in *Encyclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Altri* (Rome: Poligrafico dello Stato, 1949), vol. 15, cols. 673-81.
  - 24 For the works, see Otto Schmitt, "Barmherzigkeit, Werke der Barmherzigkeit," *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed., Otto Schmitt (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1937), vol. 1, cols. 1465-66, plate 9.
  - 25 *Ibid.*, cols. 1662-63.
  - 26 Van Gelder-Schrijver, p. 103, n. 1.
  - 27 Regarding the iconography of the *Seven Works of Mercy* in general, and for other representative examples of the subject not included in this discussion, see Schmitt, cols. 1457-67; Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 747-50.

- 28 Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1939), p. 60, n. 2.

For a reproduction of the work, see Deoclecio Redig de Campos, "Eine unbekannte Darstellung des jüngsten Gerichts aus dem elfen Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 5 (1936): 125, plate 1.

- 29 Schmitt, col. 1460, plates 2–7.

- 30 St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–74) listed it as one of seven corporal acts of mercy in the *Summa theologiae* (II.32.ii).

- 31 Schmitt, col. 1461. Eight works of mercy were illustrated on the screen, including scenes of Protecting Widows and Orphans and of Shoeing the Barefoot; the Act of Visiting the Sick was omitted for unknown reasons.

- 32 For the two works, see Karl M. Birkmeyer, "The Arch Motif in Netherlandish Painting of the Fifteenth Century," *Art Bulletin* 63 (1961): 101–103, figs. 19–21, 23.

- 33 The use of this compositional device was obviously derived from the work of Rogier van der Weyden, and may in fact have been based on a lost original by the master.

In the Cambrai Altarpiece, six works of mercy are illustrated on the voussours of the arch framing the right wing of the altarpiece; the seventh, the Burial of the Dead, is illustrated in the spandrels above the arch divided into two scenes. In the Valencia Last Judgment Altarpiece, eight acts of mercy are depicted on the jambs of the painted archway on the central panel; for compositional reasons, the act of Visiting the Sick was illustrated in two scenes.

- 34 This is not, however, the earliest instance in which Christ appears in this context; in the miniatures illustrating the rule book of the Holy Ghost Hospital of Nuremberg, of c. 1410, Christ is depicted as the sole and direct recipient of the act of charity.

- 35 Katzenellenbogen, p. 9, n. 2. For a reproduction of the work, see Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934), vol. 2, plate 73.

- 36 For reproductions of the miniatures, see *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1957), n.p.

The miniature of St. Louis visiting the sick appears to have been among the earliest instances in which this act of charity was depicted as taking place in an institutional setting rather than in a private home. The hospital scene which appears in the *Seven Works of Mercy* follows this iconographic tradition, but has special significance because of the identity of the donors.

- 37 Regarding this work, see L.M.J. Delaissé, *Miniatures médiévales de la Librairie de Bourgogne au Bourgogne au Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique* (Geneva: Editions des Deux-Mondes, 1959), p. 197.

- 38 For the work, see *La Peinture Ancienne au Musée royal des Beaux-Arts d'Anvers* (Brussels: G. van Oest & Co., 1914), p. 15.

- 39 It is possible that the *Seven Works of Mercy* may have hung somewhere near the pulpit in St. Lawrence, which would perhaps help to explain the unique nature of its inscriptions.

- 40 See note 3.

- 41 The author of the exhibition catalogue, *Middeleeuwse Kunst der Noordelijke Nederlanden*, reached a similar conclusion about the original purpose of the work, suggesting that the paintings may have been given to the church of St. Lawrence because of that saint's love for the poor and sick.

- 42 In fact the theme of the corporal mercies became quite popular as the subject matter of paintings, stained glass, and prints in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Holland. For works with this subject, see A. Pigler, *Barockthemen eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur*

Ikongraphie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts (Budapest: Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 527-29.

There is known to have been at least one votive panel in the church of St. Lawrence in the early-sixteenth century, painted for the local nobleman, Count Jan van Egmond van der Nyenborg (1438-1516): E. W. Moses, *Iconographia Batava* (Amsterdam, 1890-1905), no. 2293, cited by Friedländer, p. 25, n. 1. This same Count commissioned portraits of himself and his wife which have been attributed to the Master of Alkmaar, here identified as Cornelis Buys the Elder. (For the paintings, today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, see Friedländer, vol. 10, plates 38 & 39.) Although it is tempting to identify the presumably lost votive panel given by the Count to St. Lawrence with the *Seven Works of Mercy*, none of the men portrayed as donors are similar in appearance to the Count as depicted in his portrait.