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‘Christus und die minnende Seele’

An Analysis of Circulation, Text, and Iconography

von
Amy Gebauer

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I. The Manuscripts and Prints

List of Manuscripts and Prints

Broadsheets

- Bn** Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr. 208-1903 (Swabian, ca. 1460)
M Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Einblatt III, 52^f (Augsburg, Matthäus Franck, 1559–1568)
W Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Inv. Nr. 1930/197 (1–5) and 1930/198 (6–9) (Swabian, ca. 1460)
Z Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, in Cod. Donaueschingen 106 (Alemannic, late 18th c.)

Broadsheet Text Version

- A** Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. III.1.8° 32 (Kirchheim am Ries, 16th c.)
B Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A X 123 (Basel, Jacob Rieser/Dominicans, 1441)
Kr Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Berlin Ms.germ.quart 1303/2 (Nuremberg, St. Catherine's, ca. 1430?)
Mz Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. I 221 (Mainz, Friedrich Eselweck/Carthusians, lay library, 3rd quarter of the 14th c.)

'Minnende Seele' Version (MS)

- E** Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 710 (322) (Constance, Margaretha Ehinger/St. Peter, after 1455)
D Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Donaueschingen 106 and Mainz, Martinus-Bibliothek – Wissenschaftliche Diözesanbibliothek, Hs. 46 (Constance, Anna Muntprat/Inzigkofen, prior to 1497)
K Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, St. Georgen pap. germ. 89 (Villingen, Bickenkloster?, 2nd quarter of the 15th c.)
Ü Überlingen, Leopold-Sophien-Bibliothek, Ms. 22 (Constance, Zoffingen, 1500–1510)

Printed Book

- I** Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Von der ynnigen selen XV Q 329
Schweinfurt, Museum Otto Schäfer, OS 231
(Erfurt, Wolfgang Schenck, ca. 1500)

The Broadsheets

Bn

Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr. 208-1903.

Technique: Woodcut, colored; xylographic text.

Condition: Uneven print.¹ Fragment (two rows of pictures and one row of text) of a larger single-leaf broadsheet.

Dimensions: 13.4 x 27.7 cm.²

Number of Lines: 16 lines, four lines of text corresponding to each picture in the bottom row.

Dialect: Swabian.³

Date: Ca. 1460.⁴

Origin: Southwestern Germany, Swabia.⁵

Provenance: Acquired 1903 by Obach in London.⁶

Contents: Two rows of four scenes each. The fragment consists of the pictures from the second and third rows from the top of the complete broadsheet M (see below), as well as the texts from the third row (here placed above the corresponding illustrations). The episodes included are, bottom row left to right, with text: 'asleep at the altar,' 'love potion,' 'flight and chase,' 'concealment and seeking' and top row, left to right, without text: 'wounding,' 'binding,' 'temptation with gold,' 'secret word.'

Literature: KRISTELLER pp. 35f. No. 179; SCHREIBER, W. p. 25 No. 1837a; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 pp. 113–114; SCHMIDT (2005) pp. 277–280.

M

Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Einblatt III, 52^f

Technique: Woodcuts with text in Schwabacher type. This type does not appear at all in the fifteenth century but very frequently in the sixteenth century.⁷ Uncolored.

Condition: Complete single-leaf broadsheet.

Dimensions: 35.9 x 26.8 cm.⁸

Number of Lines: 80 lines of text, four lines corresponding to each illustration.

1 SCHMIDT (2005) p. 277.

2 "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 114.

3 HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351.

4 SCHMIDT (2005) p. 277.

5 "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 113, SCHMIDT (2005) p. 277. SCHMIDT (2005a) cites parallels to book illustration from Constance around 1460 as a reason for an origin in the Lake Constance area (p. 279).

6 KRISTELLER p. 35.

7 SCHANZE p. 71.

8 "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 115.

Dialect: Eastern Swabian.

Date: Between 1559 and 1568.⁹

Origin: Augsburg, Matthäus Franck.¹⁰ Franck copied the illustrations and texts from Bn; both vary only minimally with respect to the older broadsheet.¹¹

Provenance: The broadsheet came to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek from the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin in 1884.¹²

Contents: Five rows of four pictures each. M is the only surviving complete broadsheet of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' It was intended to be read from bottom to top, in a boustrophedon pattern (alternating from left to right and right to left). Read this way, the broadsheet includes (bottom row, left to right): 'awakening,' 'fasting,' 'blinding and laming,' 'discipline,' (next row up, right to left): 'instruction,' 'spinning,' 'undressing,' 'hanging,' (next row up, left to right): 'asleep at the altar,' 'love potion,' 'flight and chase,' 'concealment and seeking,' (next row up, right to left): 'secret word,' 'temptation with gold,' 'binding,' 'wounding,' (top row, left to right): 'embrace,' 'fiddle,' 'drum,' 'crown of heaven.'

Literature: DOZEN p. 414; BANZ pp. 44 and 246; KRISTELLER p. 35; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; HAMBURGER (1997) pp. 166–168; "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 pp. 115–116; TEBBE pp. 204–205 No. 38; SCHANZE pp. 71–72; SCHMIDT (2005) pp. 277–280.

W

Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Inv. Nr. 1930/197 (1–5) and 1930/198 (6–9)

Technique: Woodcut; xylographic text. Colored.

Condition: Five fragments of a larger single-leaf broadsheet: four fragments include two scenes each, one fragment includes one scene. Some text loss on two pieces.

Dimensions: Each individual scene measures 8.4 x 6.8 cm.¹³

Layout: The illustrations are separated from each other by vertical columns, the texts (above the corresponding illustrations) by thick lines.

Number of Lines: Originally 36 lines of text, four lines corresponding to each illustration. In one segment (concealment and seeking) two lines have been damaged to such a degree as to be illegible.

Dialect: Swabian.¹⁴

Date: Ca. 1460.¹⁵

9 SCHANZE p. 71.

10 SCHANZE p. 71.

11 KRISTELLER p. 35, WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351 n. 6, "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 115–116, TEBBE p. 204. TEBBE mistakenly says the source broadsheet is missing.

12 "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 115.

13 "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 116.

14 HABERDITZL p. 30; SCHREIBER, W. p. 25; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 117.

15 SCHREIBER, W. p. 25; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 117.

Origin: Swabia.¹⁶

Provenance: The fragments have been removed from their original context, where they were pasted into a manuscript from the male Benedictine monastery in Mondsee,¹⁷ possibly Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3650.¹⁸ This manuscript used to have woodcuts pasted onto I^v, II^v, 1^r, and 52^r, which have been removed and added to the copper engraving collection. The manuscript, copied by numerous hands, dates from 1475–76, with additions until 1486.¹⁹ It is a miscellany of Latin and German devotional texts; from the manuscript descriptions available it is not clear which texts are on the leaves that bore the pasted-in woodcuts.²⁰ In 1923 the copper engraving collection of the Vienna Hofbibliothek became part of the graphic collection Albertina.²¹

Contents: One fragment consists of a single scene: 'awakening.' The others each consist of two scenes (read left to right): 'hanging' and 'undressing,' 'temptation with gold' and 'secret word,' 'love potion' and 'concealment and seeking,' and finally 'embrace' and 'fiddle.'

Literature: HABERDITZL p. 30 No. 163; SCHREIBER, W. pp. 25–26 No. 1837; KÜNZLE pp. 21–23 and 433–434; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236. WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; SCHMIDT (2005) pp. 277–280.

Z

Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, in Cod. Donaueschingen 106

Technique: Tracings of woodcuts on tracing paper.

Condition: Text and illustrations of four individual scenes cut from a larger broadsheet. Some text loss on the edges.

Layout: The text is above each illustration, separated from it by a single line.

Number of Lines: 16 lines of text, four corresponding to each illustration.

Dialect: Alemannic.²²

Date: The tracings date from the late eighteenth century.²³

Provenance: The tracings are in an envelope in D (see Iconographic Catalogue p. 109) along with a note, according to which the tracings were taken from a now missing Zurich manuscript: *Facsimile alteutscher Zeichnungen. von H. Usteri. Die Hdschrift aus der diese Bilder gekommen sind, war auf der Chorherren Bibliothek z Zürich: hat sich aber seit einigen Jahren nicht wieder vorfinden wollen. Dn 10n Sept.tag 1822 Laßberg.* Heinrich Usteri (1754–1802) was an artist who lived in Zurich.²⁴

Contents: The four scenes comprise the top row of the broadsheet: 'embrace,' 'fiddle,' 'drum,' 'crown of heaven.'

¹⁶ "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 116.

¹⁷ HABERDITZL p. 30, SCHMIDT (2005) p. 280 n. 13.

¹⁸ "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 116.

¹⁹ MENHARDT 2 p. 938.

²⁰ ACADEMIA p. 45, MENHARDT 2 pp. 937–938.

²¹ "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 116.

²² WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351, "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 115.

²³ "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 p. 114.

²⁴ VOLLMER p. 8

Literature: BANZ pp. 44–45 n. 1; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1236; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 351; "Christus und die minnende Seele" KDiH 3 pp. 114–115.

The Broadsheet Text Version

A

Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. III.1.8° 32²⁵

Binding: Limp parchment binding. Three cords sewn to the front and tied together serve to fasten the manuscript shut. A label on the spine reads *Geistliche Betrachtungen und Andachten XV v. XVI Jahrhundert*. Fragments of Latin parchment manuscripts from the second half of the fifteenth century serve as spine reinforcements.²⁶

Writing Support Material: Paper.

Foliation: 156 leaves. Modern pencil foliation 1–156.

Collation: The manuscript consists of six fascicles: I: 1–36; II: 37–118; III: 119–122; IV: 123–140; V: 141–148; VI: 149–156. Fascicle IV consists of two quires: V¹³² + IV¹⁴⁰. The two quires are probably of separate origin. The edges of the pages have been trimmed differently for each quire, and the first leaf of the second quire, 133^r, is dirty and shows signs of wear.

Watermarks: 137, 140: Crown, PICCARD 12:35 (Southern Germany, 1st half of the 16th c.); P (unidentified).²⁷ The paper 123–132 is thicker and of a rougher texture than that of 133–140.

Leaf Dimensions: 15.3 x 10.5 cm.²⁸

Written Space Dimensions: 11–13.5 x 7.5–9.5 cm.²⁹ 124–132 there is almost no margin and trimming has resulted in some text loss, especially in the upper corners of the pages.

Number of Lines: 124–132: 19–26; 133–140: 17–21.

Scribes: Cursive. Two hands. 1: 124^r–132^r, 2: 133^r–139^v, Johannes Vogel. He signs his name 139^v: *Bitent got fur mich Amen Johannes Vogel*. The two hands correspond to the two different quires.

Ornamentation: None.

Illustrations: None.

Dialect: East Swabian.³⁰

Date: Sixteenth century.³¹

Provenance: The call number *K 58* penciled into the inside front cover indicates that the manuscript came from the female Cistercian monastery Kirchheim am Ries. The call numbers were entered when the monastery's books were catalogued in 1830–31, at which

²⁵ I include information here primarily on fascicle IV, which contains 'Christus und die minnende Seele.'

For a complete description of the entire manuscript see SCHNEIDER (1988) pp. 540–548.

²⁶ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 540.

²⁷ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 541.

²⁸ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 540.

²⁹ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 541.

³⁰ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 540.

³¹ SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 540.

time the Kirchheim library entered the Oettingen-Wallerstein library.³² The Kirchheim call number has been crossed out and the current call number has been entered in pencil. On the inside back cover is stamped *F. Öttingen Wallerstein'sche Bibliothek*. In 1980 the Oettingen-Wallerstein library was acquired by the Augsburg Universitätsbibliothek.³³

The Kirchheim convent was founded in 1267 by Count Ludwig III of Oettingen.³⁴ It became the Oettingen family monastery, serving as burial place for family members, and the Oettingen family exercised considerable influence over the convent.³⁵ Almost half of the nuns came from families related to, married to, or dependent on the Oettinger,³⁶ and four Kirchheim abbesses were members of the Oettinger family.³⁷

The monastery was reformed in the fifteenth century at the initiative of the abbess Magdalena of Oettingen (1446–1496), born 1424 and nun in Kirchheim since 1438.³⁸ The only concrete record of the reform is the chronicle of the nearby Brigittine monastery Maihingen, according to which sermons held by the Brigittine monk Peter Karoli in Kirchheim served to initiate the Kirchheim reform. Magdalena's own convictions and her pious upbringing were also important factors.³⁹ The exact date of the reform is difficult to determine. It probably involved a process lasting several years, taking place sometime between 1465 and 1473 according to dates in the Maihingen chronicle.⁴⁰ The reform was well-enough established by 1479 that a nun from Kirchheim could be sent to reform the female Cistercian convent St. Agnes Lauingen.⁴¹

Certain aspects of monastic discipline appear to have become less strictly adhered to over the years, in particular the ban on ownership of private property, but also dietary restrictions, although there do not seem to have been other serious problems.⁴² Although the Cistercian order placed a high value on personal poverty, the ownership of private property (often seen as a 'loan' from the convent, thus getting around the ban) is documented in Kirchheim from early on (ca. 1360) in the form of property rights and lifelong pensions.⁴³ In addition, documents from 1433 indicate that the nuns had so many personal items, that they must have had private cells and probably dined privately as well, alone or in small groups.⁴⁴ The goal of the reform was to re-establish strict observance, in particular with respect to private property.⁴⁵ The reform met with

32 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 13; SCHROMM p. 152; EDWIN MICHLER, "Zisterzienserinnenabtei Kirchheim im Ries – Geschichte" KiBW.

33 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 13, SCHROMM p. 15.

34 HOLZINGER pp. 8, 10, and 16; EDWIN MICHLER, "Zisterzienserinnenabtei Kirchheim im Ries – Geschichte" KiBW.

35 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 13; SCHROMM p. 75; EDWIN MICHLER, "Zisterzienserinnenabtei Kirchheim im Ries – Geschichte" KiBW.

36 HOLZINGER p. 56.

37 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 13; SCHROMM p. 75; EDWIN MICHLER, "Zisterzienserinnenabtei Kirchheim im Ries – Geschichte" KiBW.

38 SCHROMM p. 86.

39 HOLZINGER pp. 23–24, SCHROMM p. 86.

40 SCHROMM p. 88.

41 SCHROMM pp. 88–89.

42 HOLZINGER p. 21, SCHROMM pp. 85–86.

43 HOLZINGER pp. 69–70.

44 HOLZINGER p. 24.

45 SCHROMM p. 87.

strong resistance; only with the support of the Oettingen family and after several nuns had left the convent could it be carried out.⁴⁶

Of the surviving Kirchheim manuscripts, all date from the fifteenth century or later, and only a small number originated prior to 1450.⁴⁷ Manuscripts were not produced in Kirchheim until late in the fifteenth century.⁴⁸ The bulk of the manuscripts (42 of the 55 described in SCHNEIDER [1988]) came from outside sources: they were donated by private individuals or other monasteries or were brought with nuns when they entered the convent.⁴⁹ In addition, most of the manuscripts appear to have been privately owned; private ex libris inscriptions are common,⁵⁰ while library inscriptions are rare.⁵¹

The history of the Kirchheim library has been thoroughly documented by ARNOLD SCHROMM; I will briefly summarize his findings here to give an idea of the literary development of the convent. For the time period prior to the reform (the first half of the fifteenth century) there appears to have been modest literary activity. The wall decorations in the *Allerheiligenkapelle* (formerly the nuns' choir), which include a series of female saints whose legends all focus on the preservation of true virginity and glorify the saints' role as brides of Christ, indicate a familiarity with the *vitae* of these saints from legends, of which the convent had two.⁵² The two still-existing manuscripts dating from the first half of the fifteenth century contain typical reform literature, which could indicate early reform activity in Kirchheim, although the manuscripts could also have been acquired at a later date.⁵³ A library inventory from 1436–37 includes liturgical manuscripts, and reveals a concentration on patristic literature and hagiography. The texts were all in Latin and intended more for a learned theologian than for nuns. Maybe the books were meant for the chaplains from Kaisheim, the male Cistercian monastery in charge of pastoral care in Kirchheim.⁵⁴

The otherwise little-documented reform of Kirchheim is clearly reflected in the Kirchheim library, which contains a broad selection of German writings typical of the observance movement.⁵⁵ The abbess Magdalena of Oettingen must have been planning a convent reform well in advance of actually carrying it out. Her first efforts can be seen in several manuscripts acquired more than a decade prior to the earliest possible date for the reform.⁵⁶ The manuscript cod. III.1.4° 42, dated to 1453–54, contains several reform-oriented texts, including tracts against the ownership of private property and the sale of monastic offices as well as a German translation of Humbert of Romans' 'De tribus votis essentialibus religiosorum,' which focuses on the monastic vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, and Nikolaus of Dinkelsbühl's 'Speculum artis bene moriendi.'⁵⁷

46 HOLZINGER pp. 24 and 63, SCHROMM p. 87.

47 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 15.

48 SCHROMM p. 106.

49 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 15, HOLZINGER pp. 105–106.

50 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 14.

51 SCHNEIDER (1988) p. 13.

52 SCHROMM pp. 77–78.

53 SCHROMM pp. 78–80.

54 SCHROMM pp. 80–84.

55 SCHROMM p. 109.

56 HOLZINGER p. 24, SCHROMM p. 90.

57 SCHROMM pp. 90–93.

A second manuscript, cod. III.1.4° 28, dated to 1458, contains Thomas Peuntner's 'Büchlein von der Liebhabung Gottes' as well as texts by Marquard of Lindau and Johannes of Indersdorf. The Peuntner text was circulated with the spread of the Melk reform; its circulation in the Augsburg diocese (to which Kirchheim belongs) coincides with the successful introduction of the Melk reform there from the year 1457.⁵⁸ Augsburg served as a hub for the circulation of texts in general: virtually all of the Kirchheim manuscripts from this period are Swabian or East Swabian, that is they were copied within the Augsburg diocese.⁵⁹

Augsburg was also the source of a third Kirchheim manuscript, cod. III.1.4° 33, dated by the scribe Albertus Sartorius, a student in Augsburg, to 1450.⁶⁰ The contents of the manuscript (a collection of sermons by Meister Eckhart, Johannes Franke's 'Traktat von zwei Wegen,' Martin of Amberg's 'Gewissenspiegel,' and an anonymous 'Eine gute Klosterlehre' among others)⁶¹ correspond to the contents of Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Ms 2795, a manuscript dated to 1440 from the library of the convent of the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine at Inzigkofen. This library also contained a copy of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.'⁶² Although cod. III.1.4° 33 cannot be a copy of the Strasbourg manuscript (it contains text the Strasbourg manuscript does not), FECHTER speculates that they may have had a common source.⁶³ In addition, the Kirchheim manuscript cod. III.1.8° 21, copied 1482–1484 by Leonardus Weinlin, a monk in the Augsburg Benedictine monastery St. Ulrich and Afra, was later owned by the Kirchheim nun Ursula of Gromberg. The exact circumstances of the manuscript's origin and how it came to Ursula are unknown, but the manuscript indicates a (possibly direct) connection between Kirchheim and Augsburg.⁶⁴ This manuscript contains a sermon that is also present in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgq 1581, another manuscript formerly in the Inzigkofen library.⁶⁵ Thus Augsburg as a hub of text circulation seems to have served a wider region and at least indirectly connected Kirchheim and Inzigkofen by providing them with similar texts. A direct literary exchange between Inzigkofen and Kirchheim has not been documented, but direct correspondence did take place. The Inzigkofen archive contains a copy of a letter from the Kirchheim abbess Magdalena of Oettingen to the Inzigkofen prioress Hilaria of Gumpfenberg.⁶⁶

Not only the abbess Magdalena but also her mother took an interest in providing the convent with literature suitable for a reformed house. A group of four, possibly six, manuscripts previously owned by Magdalena's mother Agnes of Werdenberg probably came to Kirchheim during the 1460's, at the latest upon Agnes's death in 1471, coinciding with the time of the Kirchheim reform. The manuscripts all contain typical reform literature and lead to the speculation that perhaps Agnes of Werdenberg was the true

58 SCHROMM pp. 93–94.

59 SCHROMM p. 104.

60 SCHNEIDER (1988) pp. 324 and 330, SCHROMM p. 95.

61 SCHNEIDER (1988) pp. 324–331, SCHROMM p. 95.

62 See the description of D below.

63 FECHTER (1997) pp. 64–66.

64 SCHROMM p. 105.

65 FECHTER (1997) pp. 93–94.

66 FECHTER (1997) p. 185.

planner and initiator of the reform.⁶⁷ The Oettingen family certainly would have had an interest in the reform of their family monastery.

Further sources of Kirchheim literature were the Brigittine convent Maihingen, with whom an especially close relationship existed,⁶⁸ Kaisheim (in charge of pastoral care in Kirchheim and itself reformed around the same time),⁶⁹ and numerous books commissioned by or brought with individual nuns or donated by their family members. Cod. III.1.8° 32 falls into this category.⁷⁰ Manuscripts, primarily German and Latin prayer books, also began to be copied in Kirchheim at the end of the fifteenth century.⁷¹

Active religious life continued in Kirchheim into the 1540's, scribal activity into the 1530's. Numerous privately owned Kirchheim manuscripts date from this period, in part copied by the nuns themselves. The sixteenth-century Kirchheim manuscripts are primarily prayer books; the number of works by ascetic authors declines.⁷² A library catalogue from 1545 includes 143 volumes, 120 of which were in Latin. Although this shows only a slight increase over the previous catalogue from over a century earlier,⁷³ there were certainly a large number of privately owned books circulating in the convent which were not included in the catalogue. Among the preserved Kirchheim volumes are numerous books with private ownership inscriptions which the catalogue does not mention.⁷⁴

After Count Ludwig XV of Oettingen-Oettingen converted to Protestantism in 1539, he and his son Ludwig XVI converted the village of Kirchheim and attempted to convert the convent, taking control of its economic affairs, installing Protestant preachers, and forbidding the celebration of Catholic mass; the nuns resisted, and a long period of struggle followed. Eventually Emperor Maximilian II interfered, allowing the nuns to remain Catholic.⁷⁵ Upon secularization in 1802–03 the convent and all its possessions became the property of the house of Oettingen-Wallerstein. In 1831, after the death of the last abbess, Violantia Hierl (1783–1829), the convent library was removed and became part of the Oettingen-Wallerstein library.⁷⁶

The origins of the six fascicles of A are unknown, but they probably came to Kirchheim as private property of individual nuns. Fascicle VI, the oldest, dating to the last quarter of the fourteenth century, cannot have originated in Kirchheim due to its age (there are no surviving Kirchheim manuscripts from before the fifteenth century). Three fascicles date to the fifteenth century. Of these, fascicles I and III were probably intended for a monastic audience based on the texts they contain.⁷⁷ Fascicle V was

67 SCHROMM p. 97. See SCHROMM pp. 95–97 for the call numbers of the manuscripts and a detailed analysis of the contents.

68 SCHROMM pp. 98–103.

69 SCHROMM p. 103.

70 SCHROMM p. 104.

71 SCHROMM pp. 106–107.

72 SCHROMM pp. 126–129.

73 SCHROMM pp. 123–124.

74 SCHNEIDER (1988) pp. 13 and 14, SCHROMM p. 125.

75 SCHROMM pp. 110–122; EDWIN MICHLER, "Zisterzienserinnenabtei Kirchheim im Ries – Geschichte" KIBW.

76 SCHROMM pp. 151–152.

77 See SCHNEIDER (1988) pp. 541–543 and 544.

V. 'Christus und die minnende Seele': The Broadsheet¹

This chapter will deal primarily with those components of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' that are common to virtually all versions of the work: the illustrations and the four initial lines of dialogue verse accompanying each illustration. These elements, so closely related that neither can be fully appreciated without the other, constitute what was likely the earliest form of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' the illustrated broadsheet, which has survived in the form of the single-leaf woodcuts Bn, Z, W, and M.²

Also common to all versions of the work are the established literary traditions from which this rather unusual work borrows and to which it alludes: Song of Songs commentary; various types of *vitae* including Saints' Lives, mystical *vitae* and revelations, and sister-books; and other narratives or dialogues involving Christ and the loving soul. Visual and textual references to images from the Song of Songs, while bearing the weight of meaning of centuries of commentary, create a narrative in which the images are not explained in the form of exegesis, but rather re-combined to create a 'new Song' in which the readers themselves can participate by placing themselves into the role of the prototypical soul or Sponsa, becoming with her a bride of Christ. The imagery and structure of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' are also borrowed from accounts of the lives of holy persons, especially from mystical *vitae* or revelations. But unlike the various types of *vitae*, 'Christus und die minnende Seele' does not recount the past life of one particular historical figure but rather, by replacing the protagonist with an anonymous 'soul,' provides a framework or guide for shaping the reader's own future life.

Visual imagery plays a pivotal role in this process of identification; indeed 'Christus und die minnende Seele' can be seen as an argument for the use of images in spiritual life. Visual images provide the very vehicle for the advancement of the soul, who is drawn upward to ever-increasing spiritual perfection by a carefully structured progression of imagery. The images function as unlike likenesses: they gradually reveal more and more of the unknown divinity in terms of the known and familiar. Progressing from images taken from the readers' daily lives to images from the Song of Songs, from images that can at least in part be understood literally to images that must be understood allegorically, 'Christus und die minnende Seele' creates a ladder of images that gradually draws the soul away from the earthly toward the divine. Furthermore, by placing a prototypical soul in the role of protagonist, 'Christus und die minnende Seele' also allows its readers to shape their own lives into an image of divine grace. By participating in the scenes portrayed in dialogue and illustration, the readers themselves become images,

1 In the following, "the broadsheet" refers to M (plate 1), the only complete surviving copy. Although it is the latest representative of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' it is a close copy of broadsheets that were circulating in the fifteenth century, the high point of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' circulation. Variations in other versions with respect to the illustrations, text, or order of scenes are taken into consideration where relevant.

2 ROSENFELD (1954) pp. 72–73; HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1235; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 350; SCHMIDT (2005) pp. 277–278.

the Word made flesh. In this way 'Christus und die minnende Seele' both imbues the readers' present with a higher meaning and provides a pattern for shaping their future experience.

Thus the illustrations in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' are not to be understood primarily as representations of or as a means of inducing actual visions.³ Instead, as a series of signs to be interpreted and model actions to imitate, they serve as the vehicle that transports the reader, by shaping her experience in the process of interpretation and identification, to ever greater spiritual perfection and an ever closer relationship to Christ. That the scenes from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' were indeed incorporated into the experience of those who read and viewed them is apparent in Katharina Tucher's 'Offenbarungen,' discussed at the end of this chapter, where Katharina re-enacts scenes from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in writings based on her own spiritual experience.

In its use of imagery and in the way it seeks to shape the experience of its readers, 'Christus und die minnende Seele' is very similar to another, earlier work, the 'Rothschild Canticles,' a small devotional book from around the turn of the fourteenth century that contains an extensive series of illustrations, part of which is based on images from the Song of Songs. JEFFREY HAMBURGER has noted that 'Christus und die minnende Seele' provides "the most closely related set of illustrations" to this work.⁴ The similarity goes beyond the content of the illustrations, however. Of the 'Rothschild Canticles' HAMBURGER states:

Rather than giving expression to experience, the manuscript provides an instrument for the initiation of its reader into transcendent mysteries. Unlike a treatise or a handbook, however, the manuscript does not expound dogma or instruct in devotional method. Neither a record of vatic experience (comparable, for example, to the visions of Hildegard of Bingen) nor a set of meditations intended to serve as a model for the reader (comparable to the *Exercises* of Gertrude of Helfta), the *Rothschild Canticles* comprises images—both verbal and visual—that serve as vehicles of mystical devotion; they 'transport' the reader, structuring experience rather than instructing through the provision of an exemplary model.⁵

'Christus und die minnende Seele,' like the 'Rothschild Canticles,' uses imagery from the Song of Songs (and other sources) to create a narrative into which the soul can insert herself.⁶ And, also like the 'Rothschild Canticles,' it has a mystagogical function, where images and text serve as the means of instruction by providing models for the reader's own experience. "Rather than imitating reality in the usual sense of mimesis, the miniature presents a reality for the viewer to imitate. It invites a mimetic rather than conceptual response."⁷ This could just as easily be said of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.'

3 There is evidence to suggest that the illustrations may, nevertheless, have had this effect. JEFFREY HAMBURGER cites the revelations of Margareta Ebner, who recounts visions inspired by paintings of the loving soul (HAMBURGER [1990] p. 87, HAMBURGER [1998] pp. 124–125 and 410). Margareta's source is, however, unknown.

4 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 84.

5 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 1–2.

6 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 84.

7 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 108.

As 'Christus und die minnende Seele' was transformed from illustrated broadsheet to manuscript book the significance of the images as aids in the mystical process was diminished. The observer of the broadsheet is free to interpret the images relatively independently; their numerous abbreviated references call to mind complex theological concepts, as will be demonstrated below, while the limited amount of text merely recapitulates the action portrayed in the illustrations. This gives the work a depth of meaning not immediately apparent to the uninitiated, but also entails the danger of the at times erotic imagery being misunderstood by a less sophisticated audience. In subsequent versions of the work, more text in the form of picture headings and expanded dialogue was added, limiting and directing reader response to the still rather ambiguous images. This not only has the effect of prescribing a certain interpretation of the images, but also of detracting from the images themselves as tools that draw the soul toward the divine through their ever-increasing difficulty. The text takes the burden of interpretation from the viewer, and thus diminishes the importance of the illustrations, robbing them of part of their mystagogical function.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the structure of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' borrowed from other types of *vita* literature, as a series of loosely connected episodes. Although these episodes may not always make sense as a consecutive narrative, the broadsheet reveals vertical relationships between the scenes of lower and upper rows. There follows a detailed analysis of the texts, illustrations and the horizontal and vertical relationships between the individual scenes of the broadsheet. This analysis of the broadsheet provides a basis for understanding and interpreting other versions of the work in manuscript and printed books, which generally represent adaptations of the original broadsheet. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the broadsheet may have been put to use by its late medieval readership based on findings for other, similar single-leaf manuscripts and prints, as well as a closer look at how 'Christus und die minnende Seele' was used to shape the experience of one late medieval woman, Katharina Tucher.

The Structure and Imagery of 'Christus und die minnende Seele'

The structure of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' especially that of the broadsheet, has been a source of confusion among modern scholars, some of whom have made attempts to re-organize the individual segments into a more satisfying coherent sequence. BANZ comments that the author of the longest manuscript version, MS, "oft den Faden verliert."⁸ KUNZLE, believing the order of the segments of the broadsheet M to be a corruption of a more original form, reconstructed a prototype based on manuscript K and an entirely different work, 'Das Büchlein von der geistlichen Gemahelschaft.' Needless to say, his reconstruction bears no apparent similarity to any of the surviving manuscripts and prints.⁹ WILLIAMS-KRAPP sees an "unlogische Anordnung" of the scenes in M and a "stark gestörte Reihenfolge" in the scenes in MS. Assuming that none

8 BANZ pp. 36–37. See also BANZ pp. 178–179.

9 KUNZLE 1 p. 22 fig. 1–15 and p. 433; see above p. 150 n. 21. KUNZLE's reconstruction was nevertheless subsequently adopted and reproduced by REITINGER (p. 112 fig. 16 and p. 114 n. 114).

of the surviving versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' represent the original order, he likewise attempts a reconstruction of an original broadsheet.¹⁰ TEBBE sees in the surviving broadsheet M "kein chronologischer Erzählverlauf," and cites KUNZLE's reconstruction as providing "eine kohärente Erzählstruktur,"¹¹ and SCHMIDT also sees in the broadsheet the "Fehlen einer klaren narrativen Struktur," while his and TEBBE's summary of the content indicates that they were reading the broadsheet from top to bottom, not from the bottom upwards as was intended.¹²

This confusion is to a certain extent understandable. The broadsheet does not come with instructions, so that it was already read in different ways by its medieval audience, causing the order of the episodes to vary from one version to another.¹³ Also, there does indeed seem to be little narrative consistency from one segment of the work to the next. The soul, blinded and lamed by Christ in the first (bottom) row, appears in later scenes reading a book and running after Christ. And although Christ strips the soul of her clothing relatively early on, she nevertheless appears fully clothed in all other episodes of the broadsheet. These apparent inconsistencies, however, neither stem from nor constitute a lack of structure; rather they merely testify to the tenuousness with which the structure of the work is held together. 'Christus und die minnende Seele' consists of a series of only very loosely connected episodes. Although some sequences are more tightly knit than others, generally no one episode is directly dependent on those immediately preceding or following it.¹⁴

In this respect 'Christus und die minnende Seele' is reminiscent of the structural composition of Saints' Lives, which also generally consist of a series of relatively independent episodes which 'horizontally,' that is within the narrative itself, are only loosely connected to one another, but which 'vertically' all refer to some higher truth beyond the narrative, namely the divine source that manifests itself in the events of the saint's life.¹⁵ As in 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' these episodes were added, deleted and re-grouped in each new version of a legend, and their combined effect is not that of a narrative in which the saint's character develops, but rather a collection of diverse images all reflecting the saint's consistent holiness.¹⁶ Certain female saints, such as St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Agnes and St. Catherine of Siena, were also portrayed in their Lives as brides of Christ,¹⁷ a role filled in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' by the anonymous soul.

This idea of the individual scenes in hagiographic literature as images revealing a higher truth (RINGLER terms them *Sinnbild-Szenen*¹⁸) is also a very important character-

10 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) pp. 363–364.

11 TEBBE p. 204.

12 SCHMIDT (2005) p. 278 and TEBBE p. 204.

13 See pp. 150–152 for a discussion of the order of the individual segments.

14 KELLER has also pointed out modern scholars' confusion regarding the structure of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' (KELLER [1998] p. 465). In her articles she provides a detailed discussion of one structuring element in MS, the opposition of secular and spiritual marriage. See KELLER (1996/1997), (1997) and (1998).

15 RINGLER (1975) p. 264.

16 RINGLER (1975) p. 264.

17 OTTO GILLEN, "Brautmystik" RDK 2 cols. 1131–1132.

18 RINGLER (1975) p. 264.

istic of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' where each scene is not only literally a visual image but also employs imagery (to a great extent but not exclusively from the Song of Songs) to convey a higher spiritual meaning. But this similarity is also the point where the two traditions depart. For while the *Sinnbild-Szenen* of a saint's legend show that God is manifest in the saint's 'goodness' to the same degree from the very beginning of his or her life – thus making any sort of character development on the part of the saint impossible and unnecessary¹⁹ – the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' sets out upon a journey the whole point of which is development and progression: of the soul herself, of her relationship to Christ, and of the way images themselves are employed in the soul's progress. The reader advances along with the soul not only through identification, but also through increasingly sophisticated ways of interpreting the illustrations.

A structure based on loosely connected episodes is characteristic not only of hagiography, but also, as RINGLER has demonstrated based on the example of Friedrich Sunder's 'Gnaden-Leben,' of mystical *vitae*. Sunder's *vita* also consists of a series of independent episodes only loosely connected to one another, but each providing a view of one facet of the central theme of encounters with divine grace. As in Saints' Lives these individual events are images or *Sinnbilder* of a higher truth as this truth manifests itself in one central figure.²⁰ The key difference is that though the individual episodes may not be arranged according to real-time chronology as in a Saints' Life, they do follow a chronology of different qualities of the experience of divine grace.²¹ This is also the type of development that takes place in the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' That the stages of this spiritual development would not necessarily have taken place in neat chronological order was recognized by BANZ, who explains the narrative inconsistencies by pointing out the necessity of presenting chronologically what in actual experience would have occurred simultaneously.²²

Thus 'Christus und die minnende Seele' borrows its structure of loosely connected episodes from two literary models, the Saint's Life and the mystical *vita*. Despite the loose 'horizontal' connections between the individual episodes, 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' especially as it appears on the broadsheet, is not lacking in structure and development. On the contrary, closer examination reveals a carefully crafted and well-thought out 'vertical' construction.

The most obvious indication of a vertical structure in the broadsheet version of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' is that it was intended to be read from bottom to top, as the order of the episodes in the manuscript versions testify. This makes the progress of the soul not only figuratively but also visually an ascent, one in which the viewer of the broadsheet partakes as the eye is drawn along the path of the soul's movement from the bottom to the top of the page. The individual episodes comprising the soul's upward journey are divided into three distinct sections layered on top of each other that correspond to the three stages of the mystical way: the *via purgativa*, which involves overcoming worldly desires by means of passive suffering; the *via illuminativa*, where

19 Excepting, of course, those saints who undergo conversion, after which point their holiness remains constant.

20 RINGLER (1980) pp. 336–337.

21 RINGLER (1980) p. 350.

22 BANZ p. 37.

the soul takes a more active role and which is characterized by increased longing and striving for Christ; and the *via unitiva*, a series of more static images often used to depict the state of mystical union or eternal salvation.

The episodes belonging to the *via purgativa* in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' are: 'awakening,' 'fasting,' 'discipline,' 'blinding and laming,' 'instruction,' 'spinning,' 'undressing,' and 'hanging.' The manuscripts EÜDK have added the 'evening prayer' segment to the beginning of this sequence (plates 4, 25, and 44), Mz includes 'concealment and seeking' in this sequence and I has added a scene unique to the printed book: *Wie er yn dem regen steht vnd klopfet an die thur*. The episodes belonging to the *via illuminativa* include: 'asleep at the altar,' 'love potion,' 'flight,' 'concealment and seeking' (except Mz), 'wounding,' 'binding,' 'temptation with gold,' and 'secret word.' The manuscripts EÜDK include 'secret word' with the unitive scenes, and I has again included two unique scenes: *Wie sy mit eynander vnter einem apffelbaum siczen*, and *Wie er sy mit eynem börrnende wisch enczundet*. Finally, the episodes belonging to the *via unitiva* include: 'kiss,' 'drum,' 'fiddle,' 'crown of heaven,' and 'embrace,' 'secret word' is also included here in EÜDK. Kr has extended this sequence by four additional scenes: *hie erscheint er in wolcken*, *hie pint er zv im*, *sie ligt sich*, and *hie kront er in ewig leben*. Not all the episodes appear in all versions.

This three-fold structure is a commonplace in mystical literature. The 'Rothschild Canticles' also originally contained a sequence of three miniatures in the Song of Songs sequence (the third miniature is missing) that correspond to these three stages of mystical life. In the first stage Christ calls on the soul, darkened by sin and turning away from him, to return, in the second the soul accepts Christ's overtures and joins him in the hortus conclusus, and the accompanying text indicates that the third miniature probably depicted the lovers' union.²³ Interestingly, Suso, drawing on his teacher Meister Eckhart, uses terminology of imagery to describe this three-fold mystical journey as a progression away from images: *Ein gelassener mensch müß entbildet werden von der creatur, gebildet werden mit Cristo und überbildet in der gottheit*.²⁴ And indeed, in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' the vertical progress of the soul is marked primarily by a changing approach to visual images. Each phase of the journey entails not only different types of images, but also changing ways in which the reader is expected to respond to and understand those images.

Various themes extend throughout the work, dealt with in new ways at each stage of the journey. These themes, to be discussed in detail below, are organized in vertical columns, so that, for example, the column on the far left presents a series of episodes based on the Passion of Christ that invite the soul's participation in *imitatio Christi*. Another column, on the far right, consists of scenes referring to the doctrine of the *integumentum*. References in this column to the Incarnation and the Coronation of Mary (along with other Marian references elsewhere in the work) also serve to identify the soul with the Virgin Mary and thus encourage *imitatio Mariae*.

Mary was the ultimate exemplar for the individual soul in general and for medieval nuns in particular. In the course of the Middle Ages she was increasingly identified with Ecclesia, an association that was firmly established by the twelfth century and

23 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 80.

24 BIHLMAYER p. 168:9–10. Qtd. in LÜERS p. 25.

which resulted in her entire life being understood in terms of a bridal relationship with Christ.²⁵ Paralleling developments in Song of Songs exegesis, imagery from the Marian liturgy (taken from the Wisdom books of the Old Testament, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs²⁶) was reapplied to the individual soul, making Mary the exemplary *Sponsa* for the individual nun, the epitome of virtue, and the ideal of spiritual perfection.²⁷ She became the prototypical speculatrix as well. Her ascent of the temple stairs at the Presentation in the Temple was compared to the contemplative's step by step ascent up the spiritual ladder,²⁸ a climb that corresponds to the tiered progress of the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' Furthermore, Mary's life in the temple was a model for the life of nuns in a convent, Mary being both the first and most perfect nun.²⁹ The *Sponsa* of the Song of Songs is the typological prefiguration of Mary, who in turn provides the model for religious women. A chain of imitation is created, reaching from the Old Testament to the New Testament to the present reality of the person following the progress of the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' The first hurdle for the soul to overcome, and the foundation upon which the later episodes of the broadsheet build, is a period of discipline and self-denial characterized by the rejection of all earthly pleasures.

The *via purgativa*

It is often pointed out that the images in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' are taken from the Song of Songs.³⁰ This is indeed true for some, but by no means all, of the images. The illustrations belonging to the *via purgativa* are not taken from the Song of Songs, but rather are based on aspects of daily monastic life, most of which were provided for in the statutes or Rule of a particular order. The first four episodes, which make up the bottom row of the broadsheet, deal with human needs at a very basic level: sleep, food, and physical health. The second row concentrates on common actions and activities in monastic life. The focus, however, is not only on the suffering of the physical body, but also on its implications for the soul. These objects and actions taken from everyday life are given a spiritual meaning, a common practice in late medieval devotional literature for nuns: "By linking objects and activities that were an indispensable part of the nuns' daily routine to scriptural images – or, more precisely, by deriving such imagery from scriptural example – devotional tracts made the resulting exercises an integral, even inescapable, part of their readers' lives. In effect, the texts sanctified the commonplace."³¹ The nun's life itself became a sort of image with a higher meaning.

These ascetic episodes focus on suffering as a means of personal and spiritual discipline. In the Christian tradition, personal suffering in *imitatio Christi* was seen as a sign

25 OTTO GILLEN, "Braut – Bräutigam (*Sponsa – Sponsus*)" RDK 2 col. 1112–1115.

26 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 88.

27 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 89.

28 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 92.

29 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 93.

30 D. v. BURGSDORFF, "Hoheslied" LCI 2 col. 308 and 310; SCHMIDT (2005) p. 278.

31 HAMBURGER (1998) p. 392.

of closeness to a suffering God.³² The concepts of love and suffering, the two meanings of the term 'passion,' were closely connected; love of God by definition involved suffering,³³ and suffering imposed by God was in turn a token of his exceptional love.³⁴ In addition, sorrow over the suffering that comes from the world enables the believer to see the insignificance of the world, to break with earthly things and turn to the divine. This is the result of suffering "in a godly manner" (*secundum Deum*) as described in 2 Cor. 7.11: *ecce enim hoc ipsum secundum Deum contristari vos quantum in vobis operatur sollicitudinem sed defensionem sed indignationem sed timorem sed desiderium sed aemulationem sed vindictam in omnibus exhibuistis vos incontaminatos esse negotio.* Thus the self-denial required of the soul in this first ascetic sequence (and in mystical and mystagogical literature in general) constitutes the first basic requirement for attaining more intimate knowledge of God.³⁵ Proper suffering produces zeal and desire for higher things.

The sister-books focus on suffering and asceticism as a means of acquiring certain virtues such as *enthebede* (abstinence or moderation), *abgescheidenheit* (detachment), and *gehorsam* (obedience), all of which involve giving up one's own will and submitting completely to the will of God.³⁶ This submission is the prerequisite for experiencing divine grace.³⁷ Especially important in this context is not self-imposed suffering, but suffering imposed by God, very often taking the form of 'inner' suffering not visible to others, which distances the soul from the world and brings it closer to God.³⁸ The *vita* of Elsbeth of Beggenhofen in the Oetenbach sister-book exemplifies this. She imposes harsh discipline upon herself until God informs her that he does not want such external physical suffering and instead imposes an inner suffering, about which she must remain silent. He also forbids her to perform the supposedly good deed of giving away all she owns, thereby requiring her to give up her own will.³⁹

For the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' the suffering in this first series of episodes not only serves to cultivate certain monastic virtues, it also facilitates her separation from the world, which is a necessary first step on the way to a more intimate relationship with Christ.

Waking

In the first episode on the broadsheet, Christ wakes the reluctant soul and urges her to get out of bed: *Dein schlaff will ich versumen / Wol auff du müst das bett raumen.* Adhering to the canonical hours meant rising for matins in the middle of the night; the time in the Cistercian convent Kirchheim am Ries (a convent that possessed a copy of 'Christus und die minnende Seele') varied from 1:20 to 1:45 a.m. depending on the

32 HAAS pp. 36–37 and 44–45.

33 LANGER p. 22.

34 LANGER pp. 29–30.

35 GEHRING p. 150, RINGLER (1980) p. 159.

36 GEHRING pp. 156 and 158, RINGLER (1980) pp. 216–217.

37 RINGLER (1980) p. 217, LANGER p. 30.

38 HAAS p. 53.

39 ZELLER-WERDMÜLLER pp. 262–263, LANGER pp. 30–31.

season.⁴⁰ The picture heading in MS (see plates 5, 26, and 45) makes this connection especially clear: *Hie haist er sy uff ston, / Hin zü der metti gon.*⁴¹

On the broadsheet and in the broadsheet text versions, this episode serves as the *kêr*, the beginning of the three-fold mystical journey and a more intense religious life. This turning point is often met with resistance to the rigors of such a life. In Adelheid Langmann's *vita* Christ, in the form of a communion wafer in her mouth, extorts from her a vow to join the convent at Engelthal by stubbornly refusing to let himself be swallowed while Adelheid protests: *ich pin ze krank, ich mag niht ubel geleben.*⁴² Similarly the soul in 'Kreuztragende Minne,' the text that serves as the *kêr* in the manuscripts E and Ü, laments: *Ich bin iung, zart, edel und krank: / Wie möcht ich dulden sölchen gang?*⁴³ On the broadsheet the soul responds to Christ's attempt to rouse her from slumber with similar reluctance: *Mich soll noch niemandt mühen / Es ist noch gar vil zü frühen.*

Whereas on the broadsheet Christ's text is nothing more than an exhortation to get out of bed, all other versions follow the oldest surviving instance of the work, Mz, where Christ says: *Din slaf wil dich virsümen* (6^r). In other words, the soul's sleep is not merely a neutral, if comfortable, alternative to wakefulness, it is a hindrance or impediment to the soul. On a literal level sleep prevents her from fulfilling her duty of rising for matins, but it also represents on a spiritual level an obstacle to a God-pleasing life. Unlike most other episodes in the *via purgativa*, this episode also illustrates a verse from the Song of Solomon: *surge amica mea speciosa mea et veni* (Cant. 2.13). The 'St. Trudperter Hohelied,' a twelfth-century German vernacular commentary on the Song of Songs addressing a community of religious women, interprets this verse as follows: *Stant uf daz quît: sundere alle dîne sache von den übelen. Mîn vriundinne bist dû. Mîn vriundinne, daz enzeigest dû niemer newan mit dem hazze der âküste an dir unde an anderen, unde swaz wider mir ist, des enwirst dû niemer geselle.*⁴⁴ Waking from sleep is equated with turning away from sin and all that separates the soul from God. Waking from the sleep of sin to a life of virtue is also a common theme of the religious *Tagelied*.

This episode also establishes the theme of Christ's Passion that runs throughout the entire column above it. While the readers of the broadsheet are left to make these associations themselves, other versions of the work indicate that the scene was indeed viewed in this vertical context. In Kr Christ responds to the soul's protest with the following: *nein wenn in weschavng der minen smertzen / wirstu schlaffen mit mir vnd wachen in hertzzen* (1^r). This passage succinctly foreshadows the episodes directly above the 'waking' scene on the broadsheet. It refers to the "pains of love" (*der minen smertzen*) in the 'hanging' and 'wounding' episodes and the soul's slumber (of a very different nature) in the 'asleep at the altar' episode. In MS, Christ urges the soul to contemplate the events of his Passion during matins, describing his sufferings in detail. The soul responds by commenting on the Passion from the perspective of Christ, Mary and finally St. John the Evangelist, of whom she says:

40 HOLZINGER p. 73.

41 BANZ p. 269:221–222.

42 STRAUCH (1878) pp. 2:30–3:1.

43 BANZ p. 254:13–14.

44 OHLY (1998) p. 90:33,32–34,4.

*Kain iunger dir och nie gelicher getet.
Das ward ob dem nachtmal wol erzaigt,
Do er sich uf din götlich brust naigt.
Do sog er uss dem rechten grund,
Den er her nach wol tet kund
Mit siner ler, die er úns het geben,
Mit der wir besitzen mugent ewig leben.*⁴⁵

This final statement foreshadows the uppermost episode in the left-hand column of the broadsheet, where the soul leans with her head on Christ's heart, much as in the depictions of the Group of Christ and St. John (*Johannesminne*), where John drinks from the fountain of wisdom, the heart of Christ.⁴⁶

Fasting

In the next scene Christ denies the soul food and drink: *Wilt du lauters gaistes pflegen / Wirtschaft wirst du dich verwegen* (M). Regular fasting was common in monastic life, especially during Lent, which in Kirchheim am Ries meant only one meal of bread and water per day.⁴⁷ The Pillenreuth statutes (also adopted by Inzigkofen) called for fasting on Fridays, abstinence from meat on Mondays and Wednesdays, and abstinence from milk and eggs during Advent,⁴⁸ a strict regimen which prompted a request for a loosening of the restrictions to allow the consumption of eggs, cheese, butter, and milk on fast days.⁴⁹

Here again an aspect of daily monastic life is given spiritual meaning: physical fasting is the means to achieve a pure spirit (*lauters gaistes*). In contrast to M, all other versions refer to *hohes gaistes*, a word that emphasizes the idea of ascending above earthly things. In addition, Christ uses the verb *sich verwegen*, which was used in the Töss sister-book (which accompanies 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in Ü) to refer to the external form of self-denial associated with the virtue *abgescheidenheit*. For, in addition to spiritual poverty, *abgescheidenheit* included a voluntary renunciation of and detachment from all temporal things.⁵⁰ This detachment from physical things was also referred to in the sister-books as *enthebede*, and included abstinence from food, drink, sleep, and other bodily comforts.⁵¹ Mz also associates this episode with the virtue *abstinenciam* (6^r). Of a nun who achieved this virtue in her lifetime, Ita of Hohenfels, it is written:

[...] und das ist einer hand reinikeit, wer si hat, daß der von leiplicher noch von fleischlicher bewegung nimmer bewegt wird an herz noch an leib [...] daß er an arbeit meßig ist ze nießen alle irdische ding. Dis het si vollklichen an ir, daß si an speis, an trank, an gewand ir selber niemer die notturft ließ. [...] Auch het si sich an die gewonheit procht, daß si vil lützel schlief,

45 BANZ p. 274:318–324.

46 On the *Johannesminne* see HAMBURGER (1990) p. 78.

47 HOLZINGER p. 76.

48 WEISSENBERGER pp. 144–145.

49 FECHTER (1997) p. 13.

50 GEHRING pp. 180–181 and 182.

51 GEHRING pp. 168–170.

denn daß si der nacht vil vertrib mit andacht und mit werken. Und so si also krank was, daß si nit mocht ab dem pet kommen, so leit si die kunkeln zu ir und span also ligend.⁵²

This reads like a catalogue of those things the soul must give up in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.'

Discipline

Although the next episode on the broadsheet is 'blinding and laming,' all other versions except I precede it with the 'discipline' scene, so it is extremely likely that this was the original order. Flagellation or *disciplin* also had a fixed place in monastic life. The *vita* of St. Dominic establishes it as an ascetic practice suitable for all members of the order,⁵³ and the sister-books often mention it as a common part of the monastic regimen.⁵⁴ It is also provided for by the Pillenreuth statutes, either as a part of the Good Friday proceedings or as a disciplinary measure requiring the nun to strip to the waist, prostrate herself with outstretched arms, and receive a beating.⁵⁵ Stripped to the waist and kneeling or standing before Christ is how the soul is portrayed in the manuscripts E and K and in the printed book I (see plates 7, 47, and 70; the illustration for this episode is missing in D).

As in the other segments of the *via purgativa*, corporeal discipline is also to be understood as an allegory for the soul's renunciation of the world, which the soul's text in MS makes clear: *Du schlechst mich doch von er und von güt / Und läst mir weder weltlich sinn noch müt.*⁵⁶ This takes place within the framework of a spiritual marriage in which Christ demands that the soul relinquish her own will:

*Ich han mit dir ain gaistlich ê,
Du müst liden wol und we;
Es sol nach dinem willen nit gan,
Du müst volgen dinem man.*⁵⁷

Despite the references to the spiritual significance of the beating, it is, as HILDEGARD KELLER points out, not very different from the horror scenario of the beatings earthly marriage entails with which MS opens.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the spiritual marriage brings rewards the earthly marriage lacks: Christ's *süßikait*, the forgiveness of the soul's sins, and even the crown of martyrdom.⁵⁹ The fact that *disciplin* was part of the Good Friday ritual also indicates that it was practiced both in imitation of Christ's suffering and as a way of atoning for one's own and others' sins, a purpose already outlined in St. Dominic's *vita*: *et recipere omnibus profestis diebus post Completorum de virgulis ligneis super dorso nudo disciplinam, sive pro suis culpis propriis, sive pro alienis, quorum de*

52 ZELLER-WERDMÜLLER pp. 244–245, qtd. in GEHRING p. 169.

53 RINGLER (1980) p. 171.

54 RINGLER (1980) p. 170.

55 WEISSENBERGER pp. 145 and 147.

56 BANZ p. 282:475–476.

57 BANZ pp. 283:504–284:507.

58 KELLER (1996/1997) p. 355, KELLER (1998) p. 477.

59 BANZ pp. 282:484–283:493.

*elemosynis vivunt.*⁶⁰ The nuns of the sister-books also often saw their sufferings and physical illnesses in this way, as a divinely-imposed means of identifying with the suffering Christ and thus as a sign of great virtue.⁶¹

Blinding and Laming

Physical illness, represented by the 'blinding and laming' episode, was also a common aspect of convent life. Suffering in the form of bodily sickness is mentioned frequently in the sister-books, which often make no distinction between the two terms. Sickness was the point of departure for what GEHRING has termed a "philosophy of suffering."⁶² Unlike the self-imposed discipline of the previous segment, externally-imposed illness was seen as an expression of God's will and therefore as a higher form of suffering. Patient acceptance of illness thus was an important step in the giving up of one's own will to submit completely to the will of God,⁶³ one of the primary goals of the *via purgativa*.

Like discipline, illness was also seen as a means of atoning for one's sins in order to avoid eternal suffering after death.⁶⁴ The idea that God leaves no sin unpunished and that if sins are not completely paid for in this life they must be atoned for after death originated with Augustine.⁶⁵ The picture heading in MS makes clear that the episode is to be interpreted in this manner: *Hie wil er sy lemnen und blenden, / Das si die hell nit mug geschenden*⁶⁶ (see plates 8, 28, and 48). To the soul's question as to the purpose of her suffering, Christ replies: *Wäger ist dir blind kumen gen himelrich, / Denn mit zwain ogen in die hell pinlich.*⁶⁷ This is a reference to Matt. 18.8–9, the scriptural passage that probably inspired this scene to begin with: *Si autem manus tua vel pes tuus scandalizat te abscide eum et proice abs te / bonum tibi est ad vitam ingredi debilem vel clodum / quam duas manus vel duos pedes habentem mitti in ignem aeternum / et si oculus tuus scandalizat te erue eum et proice abs te / bonum tibi est unoculum in vitam intrare quam duos oculos habentem mitti in gehennam ignis.* The soul's suffering in this episode is not only to be understood literally as a form of physical debilitation, however. The soul's blindness is a metaphor used often in mystical literature for a lack of spiritual understanding due to a fixation on worldly things. Mechthild of Magdeburg expresses this idea in terms of blindfolded eyes and darkness: *ir ögen werdent ir verbunden mit irs lichamen unedelkeit, wan si so sere in siner vinsternisse gevangen lit.*⁶⁸ At the beginning of the soul's spiritual journey, she too – along with the rest of humanity – has eyes only for the world:

*Sy spricht: O herr, die welt ist blind,
Sy kuste noch ain rotzig kind.*

60 Qtd. in RINGLER (1980) p. 171.

61 GEHRING pp. 194–196.

62 GEHRING pp. 193–194, RINGLER (1980) p. 169.

63 RINGLER (1980) p. 169.

64 RINGLER (1980) p. 169.

65 LENTES (1995) p. 112.

66 BANZ p. 287:569–570.

67 BANZ p. 288:591–592.

68 NEUMANN p. 90:24–26. Qtd. in LÜERS p. 235.

*Cristus sprach: das ist wol offenbar:
Sy nimet das gelogen für das ist war.*⁶⁹

Blindness is a form of illusion. He who has eyes only for the world is not only blind to spiritual things but also fails to see the deceptive nature of worldly things.

At the same time, Christ also blinds the soul to the world. Where he appears to be robbing her of her sight, he actually is paving the way for her spiritual vision. Blinded to the world, she is now better able to set her sights on Christ. A passage from Bonaventure's 'Itinerarium mentis in deum' equates spiritual vision and blindness:

*Deßhalben warlich vnd sicherlich erschint, daz wie das oug der fledermus sich hat gegen dem liecht, also hat sich das oug vnsers gemüts gegen den aller offembaristen dingen der natur. Denn so das gemüt gewon vnnnd gewent ist zü den fynsternüßen der wesenden dingen vnd zü den fantasmaten der empftlichen dingen, so es das liecht des obersten wesens ansicht, so bedunckt es, wie daz es nützit sehe, vnd mercket nit, daz die fynsternüß ist die höchste erluchtung vnsers gemüts, züglichenüß als so das oug das luter bloß liecht sicht, so bedunckt es, daz es nützit sehe.*⁷⁰

What appears to be sight when viewing earthly things is actually blindness, and perceived blindness is actually divine sight. With this paradox of blinding vision, this episode also sets the theme for the left-hand column of the broadsheet, another reason for placing it at the end of the first row, after the 'discipline' scene. The episodes in this column provide a series of variations on the pseudo-Dionysian paradoxes of blindness and vision, concealment and revelation that are also expressed in the doctrine of the *integumentum*, according to which visible images conceal the imageless divinity like a veil, and the concept of *oculata caecitas*, seeing blindness, where true vision only comes from transcending visible images to the darkness of inner enlightenment.⁷¹

Instruction

The next row of episodes continues the motif of detachment from the world, but the focus moves from basic physical needs to the spiritual meaning of daily actions and activities typical of monastic life. The segments from this row include 'instruction,' 'spinning,' 'undressing,' and 'hanging.'

Directly above the 'blinding and laming' episode, the soul, holding a book, is being instructed by Christ. While on the broadsheet Christ extends an index finger in a gesture of either speech or command,⁷² he holds a switch in the manuscripts E, D, and K (plates 9, 29, and 49). As novices nuns would have attended the convent school and,

⁶⁹ BANZ p. 290:632–635.

⁷⁰ RUH (1956) pp. 308:21–309:3. HAMBURGER (1990) p. 122 provides an English translation of the passage and notes that it has been added by a later hand to the end of the 'Rothschild Canticles': "Wherefore it appears most true that 'as the eye of the bat is disposed towards the light, so the eye of our mind is disposed towards the most evident things of nature.' Thus our mind, accustomed as it is to the opaqueness in beings and the phantasms of visible things, appears to be seeing nothing when it gazes upon the light of the highest being. It does not understand that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to be seeing nothing."

⁷¹ KRÜGER pp. 22–23.

⁷² O. HOLL, "Handgebärden" LCI 2 col. 215; MARZIK pp. 510 and 515–516.

according to the Pillenreuth statutes, would have been instructed in *die Ceremonien der Regel und des Ordens und das göttlich Ampt nach Gewohnheit des Closters*.⁷³ An entry by a pupil in the Ebstorf convent school makes clear that liberal use was made of the rod: *Tam morose declinas si informemeris* (instead of *informemis*) *in alphabeto, diris virgarum plagis ad omni incitaris studium*.⁷⁴ The motif of Christ as schoolmaster occurs frequently in mystical literature and has its roots in Scripture.⁷⁵

That the blinded soul appears reading a book is not so much an inconsistency as a continuation of the paradox of blind vision. Now that she has been blinded to the world, her eyes are receptive to the teachings of the Christian faith. But at this early point in her journey, she is not afforded an unmediated *visio Dei*. At this relatively early stage divine knowledge is to be attained not directly but through books and the texts (and images) they contain. Like the novices in the convent, she is subjected to a schoolmaster, Christ. In MS this instruction is reduced to the basic tenets of the Christian faith:

*So nim das büch in din schöß
Und lern tugent clain und größ.
Du solt din vigent minnen,
Wiltu großen lon vor got gewinnen.
Der dir übel tü, dem tü du wol,
So wirt din lon vor got vol.*⁷⁶

The soul is instructed in:

*Die zehen gebott [...],
Die acht sälikeit und die XII rät, [...]
Und die sechs werk der erbarmhertzikeit
Und die siben gaben deß hailgen gaist
Und die siben hailikeit.*⁷⁷

In manuscript K the soul is depicted with a cloth veil draped around her head (plate 49). This is an iconographic reference to clouded vision, or to the fact that the object of vision is only partially revealed.⁷⁸ Such a veil around the soul's head indicates both that at this early stage she has not yet attained complete knowledge and also that true insight is not to be found in books, which themselves provide only a sort of veiled truth. To the paradox of blind sight this image adds that of *docta ignorantia*, learned ignorance, referring to the idea that, because God is not comparable to anything in heaven or on earth, it is impossible to know him in these terms.⁷⁹ A book can provide only partial knowledge of the divine.

Nevertheless book learning provides an important stepping stone in the soul's upward climb, as it does in other mystagogical works. The prefatory miniatures of the 'Rothschild Canticles' connect the imagery of spiritual ascent in the form of a tree dia-

⁷³ WEISSENBERGER p. 135. See also MEYER pp. 233–234.

⁷⁴ Qtd. in SCHLOTHEUBER p. 221.

⁷⁵ See BANZ p. 71.

⁷⁶ BANZ pp. 294:711–295:716.

⁷⁷ BANZ p. 295:720–728.

⁷⁸ See HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 126–127.

⁷⁹ HAMBURGER (1990) p. 122.

gram representing the 'Palma contemplationis' with learning, represented by a depiction of the seven Liberal Arts, which were commonly included in diagrams and descriptions of spiritual ascent as a preliminary step to spiritual perfection.⁸⁰ The incomplete knowledge acquired through 'book learning,' and by extension through the unlike likenesses of images, provides the rungs on the ladder by which the soul pulls herself upward.

Scenes of the Annunciation often depict the Virgin Mary holding a book,⁸¹ and the Tree of Jesse miniature in the 'Rothschild Canticles' also depicts her clasping a book which has been substituted for the infant Jesus of traditional Madonna and Child representations. In the book Christ is present in the form of the Logos.⁸² The soul clasping a book in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' thus not only creates a reference to Mary as an exemplary reader⁸³ but also to the Incarnation. In the Incarnation the divine nature of Christ is hidden beneath his human form; the Word becomes flesh.⁸⁴ Just as humanity conceals Christ's divinity like a veil, the literal sense of Scripture, the Word, conceals its true meaning and thus must be interpreted. Thus both the Incarnation and Scripture, as well as all of creation and by extension visual images, are *integumenta*, veils or mere unlike likenesses of a higher truth.⁸⁵ Bonaventure states in his 'Itinerarium mentis in deum,' *omnes creaturae istius sensibilis mundi [...] sunt exemplaria vel potius exemplata, proposita mentibus adhuc rudibus et sensibilibus, ut per sensibilia, quae vident, transferantur ad intelligibilia, quae non vident, tamquam per signa ad signata.*⁸⁶ Through visual references to two established integumenta, Christ himself and Scripture, this episode begins to make a case for the importance of visual images as a means of spiritual ascent. Only by means of that which she already knows, i.e. that which she can perceive through her senses, can the soul be transported to knowledge of unknown mysteries. Now, with Paul in 1 Cor. 13.12 she sees "in a mirror, dimly" (*per speculum in enigmate*), but as she advances she eventually finds herself seated level with Christ, viewing him "face to face" (*facie ad faciem*).

Spinning

In the next episode Christ demands that the soul give up her livelihood, spinning, in order to be active in spirit rather than in body: *Die rocken solt du legen hin / Vnd mit dem gaist vnmüssig sin* (M). On the broadsheet, the soul responds with a protest that she cannot support herself if she is not allowed to spin: *Wie soll ich mich nun began / Müß ich von meinen spinnen lan* (M). The soul's response in Kr, A, and I uses different words to express the same idea of earning a living. In the other versions (Mz and MS) the soul merely states that Christ demands to be the sole object of her desire: *Er wil mich nit lon spinnen, / Ich müß in allain minnen.*⁸⁷

80 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 42–43.

81 See HAMBURGER (1997) p. 172 fig. 97.

82 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 91–92 and fig. 30.

83 See HAMBURGER (1990) p. 274 n. 49.

84 KRÜGER pp. 14–16.

85 KRÜGER pp. 12–14.

86 Qtd. in KRÜGER p. 14 n. 9.

87 BANZ p. 298:777–778.

In calling the soul to be 'active in spirit' (*mit dem gaist vnmüssig sin*) rather than occupy herself with spinning, Christ is referring to the conflict between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, between a life of active service and a life of contemplation, that pervades mystical literature and also the sister-books.⁸⁸ These two sides of monastic life are represented by the Biblical figures Mary (*vita contemplativa*) and Martha (*vita activa*) (Luke 10.38–42). The *vita* of Berchte of Oberriet in the Adelhausen sister-book illustrates how one exemplary nun managed to combine these seemingly contradictory ways of life:

*Es was ein ander swester, die hies swester Berchte von Oberriet. Die wz als durnechtig vnd ouch als witzig, daz si alwegen bekümeret wz mit ampten vnd damit vbete si alwegenne contemplativam vitam. Vnd si wart gefraget von einre sumelichen swester, wie si miteinander die zwei leben möhte geüben. Do antwort si ir vnd sprach: 'Wenne ich die wercke der gehorsami volfüre, so gan ich denne zü minem Herren Jesum Christum also zü minem schülmeister, vnd losen vnd lügen, wz mich der lere, vnd volfüre dz mit allem flisse.'*⁸⁹

Berchte uses the very performance of the many duties obedience requires of her as a means of contemplation, of meditating on the words of Christ, combining the virtues of both Mary and Martha in her person. She provides an example of what the ascetic scenes in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' demand of the soul and by extension the reader: actions and activities of daily life are to be used as a means of contemplating higher things. Strikingly, she refers to Christ as her *schülmeister*, the role he takes in the 'instruction' episode immediately preceding this scene in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' In medieval manuscript illumination spinning is often used as a symbol of the active life, and numerous manuscript illustrations depict virtuous women spinning.⁹⁰ In female monastic houses of various orders, spinning and other handiwork was encouraged, like the copying of manuscripts, as a means to foster discipline and prevent idleness, and it provided a substitute for the hard physical labor performed by the nuns' male counterparts and for which nuns were deemed unfit.⁹¹

The ultimate model for nuns, the Virgin Mary, is also often depicted engaged in spinning or some other handiwork. Cod. Lichtenthal 70 of the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe contains an illustration of Michael de Massa's 'Vita Christi' depicting the entire Holy Family involved in handiwork; Mary is spinning with a distaff and spindle while Joseph and the young Jesus assist (40'). Depictions of Mary weaving also frequently occur in cycles of illustrations of Mary in the Temple which are based on the account in Pseudo-Matthew where she is said to have been the most eager weaver, weaving as well at age three as her older companions, and to have been the best-instructed in the commandments.⁹² These cycles consist of illustrations of Mary's various activities, which correspond to certain images from the *via purgativa* in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' For example, a stained glass window dated 1320–1325 from the Frauenkirche in Esslingen depicts Mary ascending the temple stairs, reading a book, praying,

88 GEHRING pp. 128–148.

89 KÖNIG pp. 158–159.

90 HODGES p. 31.

91 HAMBURGER (1997) pp. 181–182.

92 SCHILLER p. 72.

and weaving.⁹³ The images of the soul with a book and with a spindle and distaff in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' (for the latter see also plates 10, 30, 50, and 73) as well as the overall scheme of ascent that parallels Mary's ascent of the temple stairs make a clear connection between the *via purgativa* of the soul and Mary's time of service in the temple. The soul's, and thus the viewer's spiritual development occurs in *imitatio Mariae*, the exemplary nun and speculatrix.

Mary's time in the temple was seen as a time of preparation for her calling as the mother of God; her entrance into the temple as the moment of her union with God and therefore as a reference to the Incarnation.⁹⁴ Her spinning was also often interpreted in this light. The account of Mary's life in Pseudo-Matthew describes how Mary, after having gone to live with Joseph, was called back to the temple to weave a new temple curtain (another symbol of the Incarnation). In preparation for this task, Mary was at home spinning purple wool at the time of the angel Gabriel's Annunciation.⁹⁵ Thus Mary's role in the Incarnation is often depicted in terms of spinning. The St. Katharinental sister-book (which appears together with 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in Ü) contains an account of a vision of Diemut of Lindau, where she is given a cord consisting of two threads, one red, one green, woven together. She is instructed to unbraid and rebraid the two threads, representing the divine and human natures of Christ, as part of her Advent devotions.⁹⁶ In this process Diemut imitates not only Mary's spinning, but her role as Christ's mother in the Incarnation. Likewise, the soul of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in her spinning, like in her reading, follows in Mary's footsteps in giving birth to Christ. The *via purgativa* is preparation for the birth of Christ in the soul.

But in spite of the virtues associated with spinning, Christ in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' expressly demands that the soul desist. Indeed, spinning could have both a positive and negative connotation in the Middle Ages.⁹⁷ Constance, the likely place of origin of MS, was a center for the textile trade and production, which involved women: the Constance 'Weberfresken' show women at work spinning and weaving. In this context JEFFREY HAMBURGER sees in the spinning soul "a woman so busy working or so fascinated by rich fabrics that she had no time for prayer," and who is thus being asked to put away worldly trappings.⁹⁸ While this preoccupation with rich fabrics may have been a stumbling block for wealthy secular recipients of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' like Anna Muntprat or Margaretha Ehinger, giving up spinning as a source of income for a convent would also foster monastic virtues such as *armuot*, the voluntary poverty often required by rules of monastic orders and striven for in the sister-books.⁹⁹ The soul is asked to cease spinning in the interest of renouncing worldly goods as part of the *via purgativa*.

The textile industry was also important in the English town of Wakefield, the place of origin of the Wakefield Noah play, in which Noah's wife refuses to board the Ark

93 SCHILLER p. 70 and fig. 542.

94 SCHILLER pp. 70–72.

95 SCHILLER p. 72.

96 MEYER p. 117:234–235.

97 HODGES p. 31.

98 HAMBURGER (1997) p. 183.

99 GEHRING pp. 170–171; MEYER p. 78

until she has finished her spinning. Her continuous spinning represents both an attempt to assert her own will (rather than submitting to both her husband's and God's will) and an unwillingness to leave her old life and familiar activities.¹⁰⁰ Making the soul relinquish both her own will and her former, worldly life are two main purposes of the *via purgativa*. Forcing the soul to give up spinning is an important step in this process.

In 'Christus und die minnende Seele' Christ seems to come down on the side of the contemplative life. The soul is urged to seek Christ, not worldly gain, to look upward in spirit (the distaff in the illustration even points in that direction) rather than downward at her earthly tasks and activities, much in the sense of Matt. 6.28–29: *et de vestimento quid solliciti estis considerate lilia agri quomodo crescunt / non laborant nec nent / dico autem vobis / quoniam nec Salomon in omni gloria sua coopertus est sicut unum ex istis*. That this connection was also made by readers of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' can be seen in Katharina Tucher's 'Offenbarungen.' In a passage that incorporates numerous images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' Christ tells Katharina: *Ich wil dich klaiden schonner wen Sallamon in aller seiner wirtschaft geklaidt wabs*.¹⁰¹ Katharina turns around the imagery of renunciation and denial in the 'undressing' and 'spinning' episodes and has Christ outfit her instead with divine clothing signifying a bridal relationship (a ring, shoes, and a wreath). She has understood that the abandonment of earthly things results in spiritual gifts.

This episode is an excellent example of how text and image work together to create levels of meaning not present in each isolated element. While the text gives spinning a negative connotation as a means of earthly gain and a hindrance to spiritual development, the illustration, especially in the context of other illustrations of the *via purgativa*, places spinning in the context of Marian virtue to be imitated, and also continues the series of associations to the Incarnation and the doctrine of the *integumentum* begun in the preceding segment. Viewing this episode in light of the passage from Matthew 6 also establishes a vertical connection on the broadsheet, for while verses 28–29 quoted above deal with clothing, the verses immediately preceding it (25–26) deal with food, just like the 'fasting' episode in the row beneath this scene.

Undressing

In this segment the soul is robbed of her clothes, the last thing tying her to the world and separating her from Christ: *Wilt du dich genieten mein / So mußt du gar enblösset sein* (M). It is less obvious than in the other segments of the *via purgativa* how this image relates to the lives of the readership of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' The Pillenreuth statutes make it clear that the nuns were as a rule to be fully clothed.¹⁰² There were, however, two significant occasions in the life of a nun when she would have removed her secular clothing: when entering the convent as a novice and upon her profession. In

100 HODGES pp. 32–33.

101 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 34:13–14.

102 At night they were to sleep in belted shifts: *in den Hemden oder in den Rockben gegurt* (WEISSENBERGER p. 155), and it was deemed necessary to make an extra note of the fact that clothes were not necessary when bathing: *Darzue ist es dann zuemal nit not, daß ir den Habit antraget, wen ir badet* (WEISSENBERGER p. 148).

both cases her secular clothes were taken off as part of the ceremony and exchanged for a novice's or nun's habit,¹⁰³ signifying her transition to a new life in the convent and as a bride of Christ. This transition from secular clothing to a nun's habit is reflected in the illustrations of E, although at a later point where the soul, at first in extravagant secular clothing, suddenly appears in the habit of a Cistercian nun in the 'concealment' episode (plate 15).

Just like the nun's habit in E may not have been meant to indicate the actual status of the manuscript's reader but rather as a reflection of her spiritual state (the manuscript was made for Margaretha Ehinger, a wealthy laywoman, not a nun), this episode is also to be interpreted more spiritually than literally. The terms *blöz* (Latin *nudus*, bare) and *blözheit*, common in mystical literature, were used to refer to the absolute nature of the Godhead, free of any empirical determination. In order to advance on her journey to spiritual perfection, the soul must also achieve this kind of *blözheit* or nakedness, striving to become similar to God by leaving behind any non-essential properties or qualities, an idea that was adopted in the Middle Ages from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: *nudas vero calceorumque privatio, virtutem illam abstractam et expeditam, et puram ab omni externo additamento, quae divinae simplicitati, quantum fas est, assumilatur.*¹⁰⁴ This abstract concept of *blözheit* is often described concretely in mystical literature in terms of the removal of clothing.¹⁰⁵ The soul's clothing represents anything that ties her to the world and thus separates her from God.¹⁰⁶ Such things are impediments that hold the soul back on its journey. A homily of Gregory the Great's puts it in terms of a wrestling match: *Si vestitus quisquam cum nudo luctatur citius ad terram deiicitur, quia habet unde teneatur. Quid enim sunt terrena omnia nisi quaedam corporis indumenta? Qui ergo contra diabolum ad certamen properat, vestimenta abbiiciat, ne succumbat.*¹⁰⁷

Thus the nakedness of the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' is a means of removing all impediments and allowing God to take full possession of the soul. This manifests itself in the virtues *enthebede* and *abgescheidenheit*, to the latter of which the picture heading to the 'undressing' scene in MS refers specifically: *Hie wist er sy uff geschaidenheit, / Won si ist iren fründen ain großes laid.*¹⁰⁸ Here, however, Christ asks the soul not only to do without physical comforts such as sleep, food, health, and material wealth, but also to give up her ties to other people. Her nakedness keeps her indoors, preventing her from seeing other people and binding her to Christ: *Ich kan mit eren nit für die tür gon, / Ich müß hie in ellend und verschmächt ston.*¹⁰⁹ Adelheid Langmann makes a similar sacrifice at the beginning of her 'Offenbarungen':

'herre, ich gib dir heut alle mein freunt also gar uf, daz ich nimmer gesorgen wil weder üm ir leib noch üm ir guet.' do sprach unser herre: 'so wil ich dich deiner freunde ergetzen. habe dir mein mueter und alle mein heiligen, daz die dein versprecher schuln sein vor mir.' dar nach

103 WEISSENBERGER pp. 135–137.

104 Qtd. in LÜERS p. 144. See also LÜERS pp. 27, 42–43, and 143–145.

105 LÜERS pp. 42, 144, and 206.

106 BANZ p. 74, LÜERS pp. 145 and 207.

107 Qtd. in BANZ p. 74.

108 BANZ p. 302:858–859

109 BANZ p. 302:868–869.

*gelaistet ir kein ir freunt nimmer mer kein triwe, wan sie heten gern gesehen daz si in der werlt bliben wer. [...] do nomen si ir das guet allez samt.*¹¹⁰

Nakedness in this sense means the complete severance of all worldly ties.

GRETE LÜERS has also tied this episode of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' to the concept of *blözheit*, but only in the sense that the concept has been "mit grotesken Anschauungen vergrößert."¹¹¹ Rather than a literal simplification of a more complex idea, the illustrations of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' showing the naked or partially naked soul represent an attempt to illustrate a spiritual concept in corporeal terms – to access the unknown spiritual realm by using images of the known. The idea of physical nakedness as an unlike likeness of spiritual *blözheit* is especially poignantly portrayed in the illustration of this scene in K, where the soul's dress is unfurled like a curtain to reveal her completely naked body (plate 51). The soul's shame and distress at this situation are clearly reflected in her facial expression. Like the dress, the image of nakedness is here a veil, an *integumentum*, that both reveals and conceals a higher truth.

This type of nakedness, which subjects the soul to the mockery of others, is reminiscent of Christ's subjection to mockery and nakedness at the Crucifixion. In 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' the soul does not voluntarily relinquish her clothing. It has to be removed by force, and in the broadsheet text versions and I the soul even accuses Christ of robbery:

*du muost gar den plosset sein
vmb daz wildu wegern mein
dein ravber wil ich gern sein
dar vmb daz du begerst mein
nun sehst bunder vnd vngelew
diesser morder wil mich weravben (Kr, 2^v).*

This idea of robbery in connection with nakedness also appears in the Adelhausen sister-book. Christ tells Metze Tüschelin, as she meditates on his sufferings before a cross, that his nakedness on the cross requires the reciprocal sacrifice that she rob herself of her own will:

*Die selbe swester stünd ouch zü einem mole vor eime crütze vnd gieng ir vnsers Herren marter zü herten, vnd begerte ze wissende, da mitte si aller nechste Gott sinre marter möhte gedenken. Da sprach ein styme zü ir: 'Das ich nacket vnd blos stünd an dem crutz durch dinen willen, des machtü mir niema mit als wol gedancken als da mit, dz du dich beroubest dines eighen willen.'*¹¹²

Relinquishing her will is here equated with the way Christ was robbed of his clothes while on the cross. For Tauler, Christ's suffering as the thieves cast lots for his clothing is precisely the type of suffering the human soul must also undergo: *Das weis ich also das got lebet, soltuo iemer zuo dinem besten komen, duo must also blos werden alles das das got nüt enist, das duo einem vadem nüt behaltest und dazselbe müs verspilt werden und vernichtet und anderen lüten ein gespötte und für affenheit und raserie geachtet*

110 STRAUCH (1878) pp. 3:26–4:6.

111 LÜERS p. 146.

112 KÖNIG p. 161.

werden.¹¹³ Rare depictions of the fully naked Christ in Crucifixion scenes refer to the depths of his degradation and serve to emphasize his true humanity.¹¹⁴ In this way the 'undressing' scene in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' shifts the focus from *imitatio Mariae* to *imitatio Christi*. Through the soul's ultimate severance from all earthly things the episode serves not only as a transition to the subsequent 'hanging' segment where the soul herself is suspended on a cross, but also as the beginning of the transition from the *via purgativa* to the *via illuminativa*.

Hanging

In the final episode of the *via purgativa* the soul is suspended on a cross, an image that characterizes the whole ascetic sequence as a type of *imitatio Christi*. This segment at the far left of the second row from the bottom also marks the transition to the Song of Songs episodes in all versions except for Kr and A, which appear to have read the broadsheet consistently left to right, and I, which has in general a very different order of scenes from the other versions. Christ suspends the soul above the earth and thus above physical things in a sort of limbo as a final break with all ties to the world:

*Ich henck dich auff in diser frist
Vber alles das da jrdisch ist.
Was soll herauß werden
Ich rür weder Himmel noch erden. (M)*

The soul finds herself in an intermediary state between heaven and earth, between *via purgativa* and *via illuminativa*, and between two different kinds of images. Just as the soul has lost her connection to the world, this scene has less literal basis than the previous ascetic scenes, but may, nonetheless, be a reflection of the common prayer posture with arms outstretched as if on a cross.¹¹⁵

In her 'Offenbarungen' Adelheid Langmann describes a similar experience of being pulled out of her physical self: *do sprach unser herre: 'ich wil dir sagen, daz ich dein sel gezogen hon uz allen dein glidern und uz allen deinen kreften und hon si gezukt und gezogen in die wilden gotheit und in die wüest meiner gotheit.'*¹¹⁶ This experience occurs on a Good Friday and results in an overwhelming sense of *minne* which lasts until Easter. But while Adelheid's experience of 'hanging' takes the form of mystical ecstasy, the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' suffers Christ's sense of abandonment on the cross.¹¹⁷ Suspended in midair, she is separated not only from the world, but also from Christ. She has left one frame of existence behind, but has not yet reached the next.

113 HAAS p. 45.

114 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 73.

115 This was one of St. Dominic's prayer positions used for instructing Dominican novices. See HOOD p. 199 fig. 5, an illustration of 'De modo orandi' which shows Dominic praying with outstretched arms, mirroring the posture of Christ on the cross in front of him. 'De modo orandi' is based on the idea that certain body postures can be used to stimulate states of mystical consciousness (HOOD p. 198).

116 STRAUCH (1878) pp. 41:31–42:3.

117 BANZ p. 76.

The suffering of the soul in *imitatio Christi* is not the end of the journey, but rather a point of transition. Just as Christ's suffering on the cross made the Resurrection and eternal salvation possible, so also must the soul suffer with Christ in order to be raised up with him. According to LANGER, "Für den Glaubenden ist das Leiden der sinnvolle Prozeß des Mitgekreuzigtwerdens, in dem sich die Ablösung von der Welt und die Auferbauung des Leibes Christi vollzieht." This idea has its roots in the epistles of Paul, who sees his own afflictions in this light: *ad agnoscendum illum / et virtutem resurrectionis eius / et societatem passionum illius / configuratus morti eius* (Phil. 3.10).¹¹⁸

The cross, often referred to as the Tree of Life, is also connected to images of the *arbor amoris* or Minnebaum and the Tree of Virtue.¹¹⁹ The cross is also sometimes conflated with the image of climbing, and thus with mystical ascent. The verb *ûsklimmen* was often used as a verbal metaphor for the *via purgativa* and *via illuminativa* and was connected with imagery of climbing trees.¹²⁰ One such tree is the palm tree from Cant. 7.8: *dixi ascendam in palmam adprehendam fructus eius*. A miniature in the 'Rothschild Canticles' shows a virgin climbing this palm tree, the uppermost branch of which is the crucified Christ, the 'fruit' to which she aspires.¹²¹ Adelheid Langmann's Good Friday vision also involves the imagery of fruit. Christ says, *'ich hon dich gespeiset mit meiner ewigen früht.'* *do sprach si: 'herre, waz ist dein ewige früht?' do sprach er: 'daz ist mein eingeporner, ewiger sun.'*¹²² The cross that suspends the soul above the earth in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' plays a pivotal role as the means by which she ascends on her spiritual journey, climbing ever upward. The manuscript Mz, which titles 'Christus und die minnende Seele' *Dit ist der mynen baum In nomine domini dit ist der baum der dügende* (6^r) also shows that the work was indeed seen as an ascent in terms of the tradition of the *arbor amoris*.¹²³ The idea of being raised with Christ is reflected in the ascending structure of the broadsheet. After passing through the ascetic scenes culminating in her own crucifixion, the soul is literally raised up to a higher level on the broadsheet. She does not just advance to a more elevated row, however, but also to a new type of image and a new relationship with Christ.

The manuscripts E, D, and K containing the MS version of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' illustrate this scene not with the soul suspended on a cross but with the soul hanging by the neck from a wooden gallows (plates 12, 32, and 52).¹²⁴ The illustrator may have been working with a broadsheet text version of the work, where Christ merely says *ich heng dich* (Kr, 2^r) or even *ich henck dich* (M), a phrase that does not specifically indicate a crucifixion as the mode of execution. The text in MS nevertheless indicates that this scene was understood in terms of Christ's Passion. Christ contrasts the soul's suffering on the gallows to his on the cross, saying she has not yet fully understood the full extent and significance of his torment:

118 LANGER pp. 24–25.

119 LÜERS pp. 94–97.

120 LÜERS pp. 275–276.

121 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 47–48 and fig. 12.

122 STRAUCH (1878) p. 42:3–6.

123 For more on the *arbor amoris* tradition see KAMBER. For other works connecting the *arbor amoris* with dialogues involving the soul see WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 353.

124 MCGINN notes that Angela of Foligno also describes the feeling of being hanged in ch. 8 of her *Memoriale* (p. 310 and p. 609 n. 54).

Dir sind doch hend und füß nit wund,
 Und bist noch an dem lib gesund.
 Dir sind din arm noch nit zerspannen,
 Und bist noch an dem crütz nit recht erhangen.
 Die kron und die nagel dry
 Wonent dir nit recht by,
 Und das blüt, das von minen wunden ran,
 Gerüftest noch nie recht an.
 Deß wil ich dich hie hangen lon,
 Untz dir min marter ain clain werd kunt geton.¹²⁵

Although the illustration contains no obvious allusion to Christ's Passion, the text still interprets it in this way. The purpose of the soul's suffering is to enable her to contemplate the Passion with at least a partial understanding of Christ's torment.

The soul's hands in the illustrations in E, D, and K are crossed at the wrist. This gesture, grasping one's own wrist, indicates voluntary inactivity, in a Christian context the subordination of one's will to Christ.¹²⁶ That the soul give up her own will is one of the main goals of the *via purgativa*; here in the final scene it has finally been achieved. The iconographic gesture is repeated in the text when the soul states: *O herr, was du wilt, das wil ich och.*¹²⁷

The scene in MS ends with Christ putting a stop to the soul's suffering and allowing her to sleep: *Schläf fast und laß dir wol sin: / Ich lon dich nit vergessen min, / Wann ich wil selber din weker sin.*¹²⁸ The passage refers back to Christ's role in waking the soul, specifically for matins but here in the more general sense that he will keep her mindful of him. It also refers ahead to the 'asleep at the altar' scene, directly above the 'crucifixion' scene on the broadsheet, where Christ allows the soul unimpeded slumber, even though this scene is no longer present in MS. It is clear that the author of the MS text was aware of both the broadsheet's vertical structure and the content of its illustrations.

The *via illuminativa*

From this point on the scenes are based primarily on images from the Song of Songs. Medieval illustrations of the Song of Songs were generally based on commentaries, but cycles based on its literal imagery, such as the images in 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' also existed.¹²⁹ JEFFREY HAMBURGER describes two surviving fresco cycles based on the Song of Songs, one in a Benedictine convent at Göss in Austria and the other in a Cistercian convent in Chełmno, now in Poland, both dated to the fourteenth century and intended to be viewed by nuns. These frescoes along with manuscripts like the 'Rothschild Canticles,' which also contains a series of literal illustrations of the Song of Songs, indicate that such cycles of illustrations were used as devotional material in con-

125 BANZ pp. 308:984–309:993.

126 MARZIK pp. 523–524.

127 BANZ p. 309:1000.

128 BANZ p. 311:1034–1036.

129 D. v. BURGSDORFF, "Hoheslied" LCI 2 col. 308; HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 70–71.

vents.¹³⁰ Thus it is probable that the intended readership of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' – a work that also originated in the fourteenth century – would have been familiar with the images as well as with the liturgical and exegetical references they contain, references that also permeate mystical and devotional literature of the late Middle Ages.

The shift from images taken from everyday life to Song of Songs imagery entails a new approach to the way in which the individual episodes are to be understood and applied to the reader's own experience. Because the actions and events portrayed can no longer be connected directly to daily life, they can no longer in any way be interpreted as literally taking place; they must be understood completely on a spiritual level and thus demand a higher level of interpretation. This is in accordance with the tradition of exegesis of the Song of Songs, which reserved this book only for the spiritually advanced. The idea that the three books of Wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs) provided a series of stepping stones to spiritual perfection surfaced as early as Origen and was taken up by numerous medieval writers, including Bernard of Clairvaux.¹³¹ In the opening to his sermons on the Song of Songs, Bernard explains that while Proverbs and Ecclesiastes serve to eliminate bad habits and to reveal the deceptive nature of earthly things, the Song of Songs expresses the desire of the soul for mystical union.¹³² The *via purgativa* in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' incorporates the functions of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The soul plays a passive role as the object of suffering imposed by Christ to detach her from the world. The *via illuminativa*, on the other hand, is devoted to the soul's awakening desire for Christ and her striving for spiritual perfection. Having overcome her physical body's desires, her spirit is free to move ever upward in its quest for more intimate knowledge of God. The soul becomes the initiator, not the object, taking an ever more active role in pursuing Christ that even extends to acts of aggression.

In the *via illuminativa* the vertical structure of the 'Christus und die minnende Seele' broadsheet becomes even more apparent. The episodes in this series develop themes introduced in the ascetic scenes directly below them. What was denied the soul on a physical level below, she now attains on a spiritual level. This system of vertically pairing illuminative scenes with ascetic scenes sets up the images of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' as a series of unlike likenesses, gradually leading the observer to the unknown in terms of the known. This reflects the Victorine concept of *manuductio*, the idea that similitudes from the physical world 'lend a hand' in leading the mind from the physical to the immaterial world.¹³³ Common actions of everyday life are given an initial spiritual meaning in the *via purgativa* and then provided with an entirely spiritual counterpart in the upper tiers of the broadsheet.

Not only the soul on the broadsheet but also the readers observing her progress advance in this manner. For the observers cannot advance with the soul unless they themselves also develop a new way of understanding the subject matter of the images. They must be capable of seeing the spiritual significance of the Song of Songs episodes. And they must have learned the lessons of the *via purgativa* for themselves in order to be

130 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 85–87; HAMBURGER (1998) pp. 124 and 407–410.

131 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 26–27.

132 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 27.

133 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 124.

able to continue to participate (on a spiritual level) in the events of the *via illuminativa* and thus in the soul's progress toward spiritual perfection.

Elements of the known are used as a means to access the unknown, but must eventually be discarded. Just as the soul must renounce worldly things, she also must move beyond images based on her worldly life to images of a higher order. These images, in turn, must ideally be rejected in the end, allowing complete imageless devotion. 'Christus und die minnende Seele' does not (and cannot) go so far as to abandon images, the very essence of the work being the visual and verbal likenesses of which it is composed. This also underscores the powerful argument it makes for the necessity of visual images in devotional practice. By setting up a series of scenes as unlike likenesses, the broadsheet establishes these very scenes as *integumenta*, as veils revealing a divine truth and a necessary means in progressing toward ever more intimate knowledge of the divine. The progression of images not only pulls the observer's eye upward, it also elevates her spirit to higher levels of understanding.

Asleep at the Altar

The *via illuminativa* is introduced at the far left of the third row by an image of the soul asleep at the base of an altar in front of a cross.¹³⁴ Whereas the *via purgativa* began with Christ rousing the soul from slumber two rows vertically below this scene, now he demands that no one wake her: *Niemandt mir die Tochter weck / Das man sie mir nit erschreck* (M). The segment is based on Cant. 2.7: *ne suscitatis neque evigilare faciatis dilectam quoadusque ipsa velit*.¹³⁵ Not only the content, but also the composition of the image echoes the earlier illustration. The sleeping body of the soul lies on a diagonal parallel to the bed of the soul in the first scene.

The reason for Christ's complete turnabout in response to the sleeping soul is that the nature of the soul's sleep has changed. Below the soul had to be wakened from bodily slumber and the torpor of sin and death that prevented her from following a spiritual path. Now, however, the soul has overcome her physical, bodily nature, which sleeps so that her spirit may awaken. She responds to Christ with the lines: *Ich schlöff zû dir in eysserkeit / Vnd wach zû dir in jnnigkeit* (M), a reference to a second Song of Songs verse: *ego dormio et cor meum vigilat* (Cant. 5.2). This verse is quoted directly in I and A: *ich schlaff vnd me[...] herz das wachet* (A, 126'). This reference to the heart in turn foreshadows the theme of the 'wounding' segment directly above, where the soul pierces Christ's heart with an arrow. The cross behind the altar, echoing the cross upon which the soul is suspended in the scene below, emphasizes the connection between the soul's sleep and her detachment from the world in the previous 'hanging' episode.

The image of outward sleep and inward wakefulness is often used to describe the separation of body and soul in a state of mystic rapture or ecstasy.¹³⁶ The *vita* of Mech-

134 This image is missing from MS. It is present in all other complete versions of the text, although in Kr it exists only in the caption describing the illustration, which has been conflated with the 'love potion' episode.

135 This text is repeated in Cant. 3.5 and 8.4.

136 GEHRING pp. 295–300 and 305–306; RINGLER (1980) pp. 221–223.

thild of Stans in the Töss sister-book describes such a sleep-like state: *zoch sy ünser her in als hoche über-natürliche gnad [...] das sy als gar verzukt was das man kum das leben an ir mocht gemerken*.¹³⁷ This state involved a complete shutting down of the outer senses and was often accompanied by visionary experience.¹³⁸ In 'Christus und die minnende Seele' it does not necessarily entail the seeing of visions, but does refer to a new level of consciousness for the soul, a new way of seeing and understanding images. With her detachment from earthly things comes an ability to think and act on a spiritual level in terms of images from the Song of Songs.

Such a reading of this scene is further supported by the soul's posture. No longer simply lying flat in bed, she props her head up with one hand. In the late Middle Ages this was a widely-used gesture for representing inner processes, often deep, contemplative thought. When the figure in question is portrayed propping up his or her head in a relaxed or reclining position, this was an indication of sleep as well as conditions of contemplation or divine revelation in which the body is free of every other activity and only the spirit is active. For example, John of Patmos is depicted in this position when receiving his revelations.¹³⁹

A common motif in mystical *vitae* was the dilemma of whether or not to rouse someone from such a state of rapture. James of Vitry, for example, describes his reluctance to wake Marie d'Oignies precisely in terms of Cant. 2.7, 3.5, and 8.4.¹⁴⁰ But whereas in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries female mystics were taken seriously by their spiritual advisers, the situation had changed dramatically by the fifteenth century. The 'Sendbrief vom Betrug teuflischer Erscheinungen,' an open letter from 1450, takes a far less subtle approach to visionary and ecstatic forms of mysticism, giving specific instructions for arousing people from a state of rapture:

*vnd wenn sie denn also nyder vallen vnd ligen in sölchen betriglichen gesichten, so sol man sie alz pald mit gewalt auf rychten vnd wyder auf zucken vnd sprechen zu yn oder zu eyner: "Ez ist dir genung zu deiner selikait, daz du stest in dem glauben. Wann wilt du bye Jhesum sehen in deinem fleysch vnd tötlichen leychnam, so wirstu seins frölichen anplicks vnd klarheit vnd gegenwürtickait mangeln ewiklich in dem ewigen leben."*¹⁴¹

That visionary and ecstatic forms of spirituality had come to be seen with such great suspicion by the reform clergy may well be the reason why this segment is missing from MS, which survives only in manuscripts from the mid-to-late fifteenth century.

That the scene is also omitted in Kr was probably an oversight; the preceding 'love potion' scene is paired with a caption describing more closely the 'asleep at the altar' scene as it appears on the broadsheet: *hie knit sie vor krutzzigung*. On the broadsheet the soul is not kneeling but lying down, but she may very well have been portrayed kneeling in prayer in other sources now lost. Some confusion as to which heading is to be assigned to which episode is also evident in Mz, in this case probably the result of the scribe's (or his source's scribe's) inadequate Latin. The first depiction of the sleeping soul in the 'waking' scene is accompanied by the heading *primo cum crinibus ecitatur*, a

137 VETTER p. 66:23–25. Qtd. in GEHRING p. 297.

138 GEHRING p. 295.

139 MARZIK pp. 529–531.

140 See HAMBURGER (1990) p. 111 and HAMBURGER (1998) p. 406.

141 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (2003) pp. 188:35–189:2.

rather rude awakening that appears in none of the other versions except I: *Wie Cristus die Sele mit den haren auß dem bet zeuhet* (Aⁱⁱⁱr, plate 69).¹⁴² The later 'asleep at the altar' scene is headed by an inscription more appropriate for the 'waking' episode: *hic tangit amorem somnij*.¹⁴³ The 'love of sleep' would seem to apply more to the unwilling soul of the first episode than to the soul enjoying the 'sleep of love' here. In turn, a heading more appropriate for the 'asleep at the altar' scene has been assigned to the later 'fiddle' segment: *hic vigellat anime, que dormit*.¹⁴⁴ WILLIAMS-KRAPP has pointed out the inappropriate reference to sleep here,¹⁴⁵ but the inscription would make sense in connection with the 'asleep at the altar' episode. The word *vigellat* was probably originally *vigilat*, 'to remain awake.'

Love Potion

The next scene illustrates Cant. 2.4: *introduxit me in cellam vinariam / ordinavit in me caritatem*. The connection to the Song of Songs is most apparent in I, which titles the episode: *wie er yr trincken gibet in der weyn kammern*. The soul is once again granted what she was denied below. Where Christ previously denied her food and drink, he now offers her a sort of love potion: *Nim lieb von mir ein tranck der meine / Es entbrint dir hertz müß vnd sinne* (M). The idea of a love potion or *Minnetrank* combines both sacred and secular elements, reminiscent of both the story of Tristan and Isolde and of the wine of the Eucharist.¹⁴⁶ Mz, Kr, A, and MS refer to the potion as *der gnadin drank* (Mz, 6^v), which also indicates a connection to the Eucharist.

The imagery of drinking also frequently signals the end of a period of asceticism in mystical *vitae*. In the sister-books physical thirst as a result of the ascetic practice of refusing drink is often miraculously quenched by the intervention of the Virgin Mary or Jesus. In some cases Mary allows the nun in question to suckle at her breast, in others the nun's thirst is quenched by the blood from the wounds or the heart of the crucified Christ, again giving drinking Eucharistic connotations.¹⁴⁷ In a similar manner in Suso's 'Vita' the Servant's thirst is quenched after a long period of refusing drink first when Mary and the Christ Child offer him a pitcher of water, then by milk from Mary's breast, after which he is told to cease his harsh ascetic practices.¹⁴⁸ Thus it is significant that the 'love potion' episode is placed at the beginning of the *via illuminativa*. It signals the end of the ascetic sequence and the beginning of a burning desire for Christ.

Whereas in most manuscripts and prints Christ offers the soul the love potion in a *Doppelkopf*, a two-tiered drinking vessel commonly used in the practice of *Minnetrinken*¹⁴⁹ (plates 13, 33, and 53), on the broadsheet W and in I (plate 81) he offers her a chalice instead, a significant change also reflected in the replacement of the soul's two

142 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) pp. 355 and 358.

143 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 356.

144 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 357.

145 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 361.

146 LÜERS p. 79

147 GEHRING pp. 89–92.

148 See above, p. 166.

149 KOHLHAUSSEN p. 24.

lines of text with the single line: *Dine mynne tranck trinck ich auß dem kelch* (W). Both the *Doppelkopf* and the chalice or goblet as symbols of drinking were commonly used to represent the deadly sin of gluttony. A single-leaf print of the 'Siebenlasterweib' shows her clutching a goblet which in the accompanying text is identified as representing as *frasheit* or *gula*.¹⁵⁰ And a Nuremberg tapestry from around 1400 depicting a battle of the virtues and the vices shows gluttony as a woman with a *Doppelkopf* on her helmet.¹⁵¹ Gluttony is the vice the soul had to overcome in the 'fasting' episode, which also includes a pitcher or drinking cup in most illustrations.

In the *via illuminativa* the drinking vessel still indicates strong desire, but now it is spiritual desire directed at its proper object, Christ. This desire and its fulfillment is expressed in terms of fire, illness, and drunkenness. On the broadsheet the soul *entbrint*, and in Mz, Kr, A, and MS she suffers from *der mynnen fure* (Mz, 6^v). In MS this fire also makes the soul both drunk and ill: *Din minnefür mich krenket, / Wan mich din gnadentrank trenket*¹⁵² (*trenken* in the sense of 'to make drunk'). I follows this episode with an additional scene unique to the printed book in which Christ sets the soul on fire: *Wie er sy mit eynem börrnende wisch enczundet* (Bⁱⁱⁱv, plate 82). All three images are extremely common in mystical literature and describe the state of the soul longing for or united with God.¹⁵³

This episode in I does not have to do with desire (that is reserved for the following episode where the soul is set on fire), but rather contains an adapted version of Bernard's interpretation of Cant. 2.4 as it appears in both his 'Brevis commentatio' and his sermons on the Song of Songs. In Bernard's text the wine cellar is part of a series of images taken from locations described in the Song of Songs – the garden, the wine cellar, and the mystical house – reflecting the different levels of meaning in Scripture – historical, tropological, and anagogical.¹⁵⁴ In I the three locations have been replaced with three different kinds of wine:

Bernhardus spricht dreyerley getrenck hat Cristus in seynem weyngartenn ader in seynem weyn keller Der erst ist der knechte weinn ein guter schlechter wein den list mann auß den fassen der heyligen schrifft do man vorstebet die geschichte die got vnnd seine heyligen auff erdreich haben begangenn darauß das gemeyne volck mit getrencket wirdt das sy von gottes wunder werckenn zu saghenn wyssenn Der ander weyn ist eyynn außgeslesen naturlych weynn ein beer weynn der leynt yn den fasszenn der heyllighenn schrifte dye do lerneth guttette vnnd weg auff dye tugent vnd seligkeyt des menschen der noch lebet vnnd also vernymmet inn denn geschichtenn dye tugenthafftige helige vnnd frumme leudt begangen habenn Der drit weynn ist der edele gewürzte weynn als der klarer vnnd malmasier vnd der gleichen denn list man auß den fassen der heyligen schrifft do sy bezeytlich bedeut wir auff dye gotliche almechtigkeyt gewaldt vnd weyßheit vnd der gleichen (Bⁱⁱⁱr-v)

150 HENKEL p. 231.

151 KOHLHAUSSEN pp. 51–52.

152 BANZ p. 312:1063–1064.

153 For fire imagery see LÜERS pp. 148–151 and GEHRING pp. 98–106; for the image of drunkenness see LÜERS pp. 268–270 and 296–298 and HAMBURGER (1990) p. 111; on illness see BANZ p. 78 and GEHRING p. 197.

154 See HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 110–111 and p. 280 notes 42 and 43.

Different types of wine are equated with different levels of meaning in Scripture and the Lives of the saints and the fruits these different readings bring. This episode in I sets up a hierarchy of images whose interpretations lead to ever higher levels of meaning. The different types of wine are interpreted as different ways of reading Scripture, which in turn bears different types of spiritual fruit. The text moves step by step from the concrete image of wine to ever higher knowledge of the divine, a sort of miniature version of the process that takes place in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' as a whole.

Flight and Chase

Inflamed with love, the soul now chases after Christ, who tries in vain to flee:

*Ich fliehe mit allen meine sinnen
Vnd kan dir nit entrinnen.
Du fleüchst ferr ich lauff dir nach
Zü dir lieb ist mir gach (M).*

Where in the scene two rows vertically below this one Christ was the aggressor, beating the soul, the tables have turned and now he must flee from her. The scene illustrates Cant. 1.3: *trabe me post te curremus*. The manuscripts Kr and A contain an expanded version of this scene that connects the soul's chasing after Christ with the virtue of *staete*, or constancy. The soul continues:

*ich wil minne stetikaît
mir ist dick wol geseit
der stet sei vntz an den dot
dem helf got avsz aller not (Kr, 4^r)*

The idea of constancy is also taken up in MS, although here it is Christ who pursues the soul (plates 14, 34, and 54). This reversal may have resulted from confusion over which lines of dialogue should be attributed to Christ and which to the soul, for without the illustration it is impossible to tell who is chasing whom.¹⁵⁵ In MS Christ chases after the soul because those who have chosen a religious life very often succumb to temptation and return to the world:

*Wann sy würdent nie vollkommen gottes knecht.
Sy habent gottes wort vornen in dem mund
Und die welt hinnan in dem schlund;
Wer got recht hat in dem müet,
Der enrücht sich, was die welt tüt.¹⁵⁶*

Despite the soul's assurances that she would never allow this to happen, Christ remains stubbornly on her heels, for her flight is a sign of lack of constancy:

*Ich lof dir nit umb suß nâch:
Ich fürcht, das dich die welt gefâch.*

¹⁵⁵ Despite this misunderstanding, there are also instances of Christ chasing after the soul in mystical literature. See Banz p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ Banz p. 319:1189–1193.

*Darumb ker dich gegen mir,
Wann es nimet schier ain end an dir,
Und laß din fliehen sin.
Du macht nit enberen min.¹⁵⁷*

In the sister-books the imagery of flight (in the sense of *vliehen*) is used sometimes to indicate the beginning of a period of abandonment in which Christ's presence is no longer felt. Sometimes the nun chases after him: *ettwenne so flühet er, dz kan er ouch gar wol, so jage ich ime nach mit mime gemüte.*¹⁵⁸ At other times he disappears completely: *do was si als gar trurig vnd sprach: 'Min Herre, der ist geflohen,' vnd zeigt an das hertze, das ir also we von jamer were nach im. Do hette si die swester gerne getröstet, da möcht kein troste in si.*¹⁵⁹

Concealment

It is this lack of Christ's presence that the soul experiences in the next episode, which illustrates Cant. 3.1: *quaesivi quem diligit anima mea / quaesivi illum et non inveni*. Christ tells the soul: *Laß ab gar dein zuuersich / Ich verbirg mich du findest mich nit*. She responds with a plea for help in searching for him: *Kinder helffent alle rechen / Ob ich mein lieb müge schechen (M)*. This time, rather than passively submit to being blinded, as she did two rows below, the soul actively seeks the one she has lost.

This experience of abandonment is also a commonplace of mystical literature often called 'the dark night of the soul.'¹⁶⁰ Words for darkness such as *dunsternis* or *dunsterheit* in connection with the soul indicate both attachment to the world and the perception of the absence of God.¹⁶¹ The soul overcame the former in the *via purgativa* below; now she must deal with the latter. These terms can also refer to the inability of human reason to comprehend the completely foreign nature of God.¹⁶² By hiding himself from the soul, plunging her into spiritual darkness, Christ demonstrates that the soul must seek him on a new level. As below the soul was blinded to the world to be able to see heavenly things, now her sight is clouded once again so that she can elevate her sights even higher. The text in the manuscripts Kr and A includes an extension describing how the soul finds Christ once again: *ich vand in meiner haimlichkait [A: in stiller innigkait] / da werot mich niemer mer lait (Kr, 4^v)*. She discovers him not in things of the world but with the spiritual vision of contemplation. In this way this episode continues the themes of sight and blindness already established in by the episodes from the *via purgativa* in the same vertical column.

MS, composed in the fifteenth century at a time when attitudes toward mystical spirituality had changed considerably from those in the fourteenth century when 'Christus und die minnende Seele' first began circulating, interprets the episode in a completely

¹⁵⁷ Banz p. 320:1204–1209.

¹⁵⁸ König p. 180; qtd. in Gehring p. 330.

¹⁵⁹ König p. 179; qtd. in Gehring pp. 329–330.

¹⁶⁰ See Banz p. 82.

¹⁶¹ Lüers p. 173.

¹⁶² Lüers p. 170.

different light. Christ has left her in order to punish her for fleeing from him in the previous episode:

*Nu ist mir beschehen vast recht.
Ich handlet in als ainen husknecht,
Deß man dik wol enbär. [...]
Dar umb, lieb, an mir nit rich,
Das ich och vor dich geflohen hon.*¹⁶³

At the end of the episode Christ does reappear to the soul, but not in the stillness and intimacy of introspective contemplation. Instead she calls upon the basic doctrines that she learned earlier (and directly below this segment on the broadsheet) in the 'instruction' scene:

*'Ich ermanen dich, almächtiger got,
Dürch din hailgen zehen gebott
Und dürch die zwölff rätt
Und dürch alle Cristus ler und tät
Und dürch alles güt der núwen und der alten e,
Das du mich löst hie von disem we,
Und dürch das güt, das du selber bist.'
Do antwürt ir Ihesus Crist:
Ich bin doch by dir sunder frist.*¹⁶⁴

Not introspective vision, but blind faith in the teachings of the Church brings Christ back.

All versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' visually depict Christ's absence by having him hide behind a curtain, a symbol for the *integumentum* that gives rise to a number of Scriptural associations (plates 15, 35, 55, and 78). The primary association is with the veil of the tabernacle in the Old Testament that was torn in two at Christ's Crucifixion, establishing Christ himself in his human form as an *integumentum* or veil concealing his divine nature. The interior of the tabernacle represents heaven, with Christ's flesh being the curtain that covers the entrance. The soul enters heaven through faith in Christ.¹⁶⁵ The broadsheet illustrations all depict Christ hanging on to and peering out from behind the curtain, as if to emphasize that he and the curtain are one and the same.

The interior of the tabernacle was also understood as a metaphor for mystical and visionary activity, for example by Richard of St. Victor, who divided mystical life into three stages corresponding to three increasingly hidden chambers of the tabernacle.¹⁶⁶ In the story of the woman with the issue of blood healed by her faith upon touching Christ's garment (Matt. 9.21 and Luke 8.44), the 'veil' of Christ's clothing also represents outer appearances, which the woman was able to see beyond, making her like the mystic who can see beyond or through the illusion of external things.¹⁶⁷

163 BANZ pp. 322:1246–1248 and 323:1273–1274.

164 BANZ p. 324:1292–1300.

165 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 138.

166 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 139–140.

167 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 136–137.

In the 'Rothschild Canticles' veils and light are used together in the miniatures to both reveal and conceal divine mysteries, connecting blindness and vision.¹⁶⁸ That manuscript extends the doctrine of the *integumentum* to visual images¹⁶⁹ as does 'Christus und die minnende Seele' both by alluding to various *integumenta* in the content of the illustrations and by using visual images as a means of spiritual ascent.

Wounding

So far this discussion has been following the broadsheet from the bottom upwards, reading each row in alternating directions from left to right and then right to left. The next row, however, (the second row from the top) will be discussed like the previous one from left to right, beginning with the 'wounding' episode at the far left. This enables the *via illuminativa* to culminate in the 'secret word' episode at the right end of the row, as it does in Kr, A, and Mz. This reading is also reflected in MS, which includes that episode as part of the *via unitiva*.

In the 'wounding' scene the soul shoots an arrow into Christ's heart in order to 'enjoy' him: *Ich will mein lieb durch schiessen / Ob ich sein mag geniessen* (M). Christ's reply identifies the soul's target as his heart and the injury as a wound of love: *Mich hat der meine schmercz / Geschossen durch mein hercz* (M). The heading to this episode in Mz, *hic tangit vulnerasti cor meum* (6^v), indicates the Scriptural passage this segment illustrates, Cant. 4.9: *vulnerasti cor meum soror mea sponsa vulnerasti cor meum*. With the imagery of wounding this segment continues the theme of Christ's Passion established in the column of scenes directly below it. But where previously Christ caused the soul to experience Passion-like suffering, now the soul has become the aggressor and shoots Christ in the heart. The text in Mz and A, however, intimates that the wounding is mutual, for the soul continues on to say:

*ich wolt das ich etwas geniess
das ich dich hin wider schüss
wan mein hertz ist wündt verporgenlich
von der lieben stral sicherlich* (A, 126^v)

The motif of wounding or piercing of Christ's heart, also common in religious and mystical literature,¹⁷⁰ is derived from the secular imagery of Venus's bow and arrows in combination with the Scriptural images from Cant. 4.9¹⁷¹ and that of Christ's side-wound. In depictions of Christ crucified by the virtues, it is Caritas who thrusts the lance into Christ's side.¹⁷² The wound in Christ's side is an emblem of his love for humankind; likewise the wounding of the soul expresses her reciprocal love for Christ, fusing the two meanings of the word 'passion': suffering and love.¹⁷³ The left-hand column of the

168 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 133–135.

169 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 138.

170 See BANZ pp. 84–86, LÜERS pp. 77–78 and 218–224, RINGLER (1980) pp. 251–252, HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 72–77, REITINGER *passim*, and KELLER (2000) pp. 231–262.

171 LÜERS p. 77.

172 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 76.

173 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 75.

broadsheet emphasizes the close relationship of these two concepts as well; the reciprocal wounding of Christ and the soul culminates in an embrace in the uppermost row.

Christ's side-wound is also commonly interpreted as the source of the sacraments. In scenes of the Crucifixion Ecclesia is depicted collecting the water and blood flowing from the wound in a chalice.¹⁷⁴ This idea was propagated by Augustine¹⁷⁵ and developed further in mystical terms by John of Fécamp in his pseudo-Augustinian florilegia, where in a reciprocal act of wounding Christ becomes the spear that pierces the heart of the soul.¹⁷⁶ Both Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux were considered exemplary lovers of Christ and were often portrayed with their own side-wounds or holding a wounded heart,¹⁷⁷ making them objects of imitation for others.¹⁷⁸

Just as the wounding Christ penetrates the heart of the wounded Augustine or Bernard, so also is Christ's wound the "the gateway to the *cor salvatoris*, the seat of love and mystical fulfillment."¹⁷⁹ The heart was often used *pars pro toto* for God or the soul.¹⁸⁰ Passing through the wound to the heart represents moving from the physical to the spiritual.¹⁸¹ The act of wounding thus parallels the soul's progress. She has moved from the passive suffering of physical trials to spiritual longing and action, from images taken from her physical existence to the spiritual images of the Song of Songs. By penetrating to Christ's heart she comes into direct contact with the divinity. This idea, here cloaked in imagery of the Passion of Christ, is repeated at the opposite end of the row where the soul becomes party to the 'secret word' uttered by Christ.

Such a highly mystical understanding of this episode is carefully excluded in the MS manuscript version (plates 16, 36, and 56). The soul begins with just such a mystical desire, which Christ abruptly rejects:

*O herr, so tû uff das hertze min
Und flûß mit ain andra dar in,
Ob mier din mug werden gnüg.
Cristus sprach: Das wär gar ain unfüg;
Was wöltint denn die andren hân?
Sy spricht: Da welt ich in den magel län.*¹⁸²

The soul's desire to possess Christ completely and to her complete satisfaction demands an exclusivity that is both selfish and impossible; Christ wishes to give himself to all of God's servants.¹⁸³ The soul's gain from shooting Christ is not the full satisfaction she expects, but rather that Christ is bound to her will: *Das ich müß tün den willen din. / Das mag wol werden din gewin.*¹⁸⁴ The soul's complete subjection to Christ's will (a process completed in the earlier 'hanging' scene) has resulted in a reciprocal submission on his

174 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 77.

175 SCHMIDT (2000a) p. 249.

176 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 74.

177 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 74, REITINGER pp. 116–117.

178 REITINGER p. 117.

179 Hamburger (1990) p. 72.

180 LÜERS pp. 196–197.

181 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 72–73.

182 BANZ p. 326:1324–1329.

183 BANZ p. 326:1330–1341.

184 BANZ p. 325:1322–1323.

part. By the end of the episode the soul has learned her lesson; her love for Christ is so strong that she is willing to be turned into a beggar for his sake.¹⁸⁵ Her reward is eternal life¹⁸⁶ and the fact that Christ is forced to leave heaven.¹⁸⁷ Nobody is able to attain mystical union, but should wait for the blessings of heaven.¹⁸⁸ This repeated reference to Christ being forced to do the soul's will prefigures the next episode, the *amor ligans*, a motif often paired with the *amor vulnerans* of this segment.¹⁸⁹

Binding

Now that the soul has found and wounded Christ, she binds him to her so that he cannot escape again. The word *gefunden* appears in most versions (*Ich han mein lieb funden / Gefangen und gebunden* [M]), but MS makes the connection between seeking, wounding and binding most clear:

*Ich han in mit sinen wunden
Gefangen und gebunden
Und wil sin hütten mit allen minen sinnen,
Das er mir nit mug endrinnen;
Wann ich in dik verloren hon.
Deß wil ich in hie engelten lon.*¹⁹⁰

This episode provides the counterpart to the 'undressing' episode below. In the illustrations, the soul's pulling on the rope tied around Christ's waist parallels Christ's pulling off the soul's clothes in the earlier scene. Furthermore, Christ's crossed and bound wrists in the manuscript illustrations of this in E, D, K, and I (plates 17, 37, 57, and 85) recall the soul's passively crossed hands in the 'hanging' illustration. Whereas the soul was bound to Christ earlier by renouncing all earthly things and submitting her will to his, resulting in her 'crucifixion,' now the wounding arrows of the soul's love bind Christ, forcing him to submit to her will. The image of the soul pulling Christ by a rope is also a reversal of the initial miniature in E illustrating 'Kreuztragende Minne' (1', plate 3), where the soul follows Christ bearing her cross in *imitatio Christi* with a rope tied around her waist.¹⁹¹

The image of pulling is taken from Cant. 1.3 (*trabe me post te curremus*) and is often used in mystical literature to express a process of Christ pulling the soul that results in *unio mystica*,¹⁹² similar to Adelheid Langmann's Good Friday experience of being pulled out of her physical self. Bernard interprets the passage as it is portrayed in the 'Kreuztragende Minne' miniature in E, in terms of *imitatio Christi*, Christ drawing the soul after himself.¹⁹³

185 BANZ p. 329:1390–1410.

186 BANZ p. 329: 1404–1405.

187 BANZ p. 330:1412–1413.

188 BANZ p. 330:1417–1423. See also KELLER (2000) pp. 258–260 on this scene.

189 BANZ p. 84; LÜERS pp. 35–36, 44, 77–78, and 156; RINGLER (1980) p. 251.

190 BANZ p. 331:1428–1433.

191 See above pp. 159–160 for a discussion of this miniature.

192 LÜERS pp. 308–309.

193 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 48–49.

The image in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' has been reversed, with the soul pulling Christ, but the text in the manuscripts Kr and A nevertheless contains the idea that the soul's binding of Christ results in mystical union in the sense of exclusive possession that the author of the MS version took such pains to declare unobtainable in the 'wounding' episode:

*den ich da minne der minnet mich
ein den dot durch mich gab er sich
er ist mein vnd niemantz mer
dez dvncket mich und pin sein herr (Kr, 5^v)*

The idea of the soul being able to impose her will on Christ and thus also obtain mystical union probably stems from Bible verses such as Matt. 7.7: *Petite et dabitur vobis / quaerite et inuenietis / pulsate et aperietur vobis*.¹⁹⁴ The soul's ability to bind Christ is also based on the paradox that although God has absolute free will, he nevertheless must remain true to his merciful nature, which required him to sacrifice himself on the cross for the salvation of humankind.¹⁹⁵ Adelheid Langmann's 'Offenbarungen' contains a reciprocal giving up of wills similar to that in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' Because Adelheid submitted herself to God's will, Christ in turn promises to do whatever she asks. But rather than take advantage of this power, she waives her right, allowing God's will to prevail.¹⁹⁶ The soul in MS also declares herself willing to give up her power over Christ: *Wir sond haben frid und sün / Und sond fry und frölich sin; / Ich wird och villicht der gevangen din*.¹⁹⁷ Christ ends the episode in MS by praising the poor in spirit as those that are best able to bind him.¹⁹⁸ He thus sets the stage for the next episode, where the soul will once again reject the riches he offers.

Gold

The 'gold' episode is a reversal of the 'spinning' episode two rows below it. Instead of taking away the soul's means of making a living, requiring her to renounce earthly goods, Christ here tries to buy himself free by offering the soul riches: *Nym hin lieb als vil dein begerd sey / Vnd laß mich vngefangen frey (M)*. This temptation enables the soul to show that she has progressed. Where she previously complained at the prospect of poverty, now she chooses Christ over earthly treasure: *Alle schâcz wige ich klein / Wenn dich hercze lieb allein (M)*. The soul has shifted her understanding of true treasure from earthly to heavenly things. She has taken the verses from Matthew alluded to in the 'spinning' episode to heart and seeks the kingdom of God, following Matt. 6.33 (*quaerite autem primum regnum et iustitiam eius / et omnia haec adicientur vobis*). The soul in MS refers directly to the earlier episode:

*So ich ettwen ain weltlich ding für gesetzt hon,
Das liest du mir nit zehanden gon,*

194 BANZ p. 89.

195 RINGLER (1980) p. 269.

196 THALI p. 183.

197 BANZ p. 332:1447–1449.

198 BANZ pp. 332:1453–334:1487.

*Wann es was nach dinem willen nit geton.
Und dar an ich denn nümer gedücht,
Das ward mir denn zehanden brücht.
Das was villicht nach dinem willen geton.*¹⁹⁹

Christ's attempt to buy himself free does not reflect an earnest desire to be rid of the soul, but is instead a test to see if she has truly rejected worldly goods and moved on to value spiritual understanding. If the soul were to choose the sack of gold this would be a rejection of Christ's love and thus 'free' him from the bonds of love, but would also result in the soul being abandoned once again as in the 'concealment' episode. The whole purpose of the soul's wounding and binding of Christ, however, was to avoid just such abandonment. She rejects the gold and is rewarded not with the absence of Christ but with his direct and intimate presence in the 'secret word' episode.

Here again the different versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' interpret this scene in different ways, demonstrating the changing attitudes toward its mystical subject matter over the period of its circulation. The broadsheet text version as it appears in A (one of the latest manuscripts of the work, dating from the sixteenth century, but representing an early stage in circulation) emphasizes the soul's desire to possess Christ exclusively, and not necessarily in the afterlife but rather in the here and now:

*mein lieb silber gold vnd edels gestain
ist gegen dir als zü klain
ich wil dich lieb haben alain
o herr von deiner süssegeit
zerflessest mir alles mein laid
dü hast dich geben mir
vnd ich hab mich geben dir
dar von bistü mein
ich wil auch nemens sein den dein (A, 127^v)*

The author of MS, however, has taken great pains to emphasize that the soul's reward for living a pious life is eternal salvation, expressed primarily in terms of avoiding damnation:

*Dar umb wil ich flißig sin,
Das ich in dire zit werbe also,
Das ich ewelich belibe fro
Und das mir nit beschech als ainem man,
Der got nit recht wolt rüffen an
Und bicht und büß über sin sünd nit wolt bestan.
Er wond, er hett es wol geschaffet:
So hett in der tiefel geaffet.
Sin sel fert an ain frömde vart;
Was im züllicher hab ie ward,
Das mag im nit gehelfen gen got.*²⁰⁰

199 BANZ pp. 335:1521–336:1526.

200 BANZ p. 337:1555–1565.

The soul does not want the gates of heaven to be closed to her as they were to the foolish virgins.²⁰¹ A mystical relationship with Christ in this life has been replaced with the hope of salvation in the next.

Secret Word

In the 'secret word' episode, the culmination of the *via illuminativa* on the broadsheet, the soul experiences the direct, unmediated presence of Christ. The soul perceives this presence by means of both sight and hearing, with the visual and verbal modes of experience represented by image and text respectively. Although several Song of Songs verses refer to the beloved speaking to the Sponsa, (for instance Cant. 2.10, 5.6, and 8.13), the text and illustration of this episode are based primarily on passages from Paul's letters to the Corinthians. The illustration is a visual depiction of 1 Cor. 13.12: *videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate / tunc autem facie ad faciem / nunc cognosco ex parte / tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum*. The soul has progressed from the indirect vision of the lower echelons of the broadsheet and now sits directly opposite Christ, eye to eye, face to face. The incomplete knowledge gained from books and the concealing forms of *integumenta* have been replaced by a direct *visio Dei*. The reciprocity of the Bible verse ("I shall know just as I also am known") is reflected in the symmetrical posture of both figures: Christ and the soul mirror each other exactly. The soul must no longer passively submit to Christ's blinding, teaching, or concealing himself from her, but instead participates as an equal partner in the conversation, indicated by the hands of both figures extended palm upwards in a gesture indicating speech.²⁰²

The text, on the other hand, is based on 2 Cor. 12.3–4: *et scio huiusmodi hominem / sive in corpore sive extra corpus nescio Deus scit / quoniam raptus est in paradysum / et audivit arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui*.²⁰³ In 'Christus und die minnende Seele' the soul is also unable to communicate the *wort* she hears from Christ: *Nyemandt ich wol sagen kan / Was ich lieb von dir vernommen han* (M). Having overcome all obstacles, the soul has advanced to the direct, intimate, and ineffable presence of Christ. The inability to communicate this experience is a commonplace in mystical literature.²⁰⁴ The verb *volsagen* (or *wolsagen*) is often used in the sister-books to denote that which cannot be told because there is so much to tell.²⁰⁵

On the broadsheet this scene is immediately preceded by the 'gold' scene, where the soul has rejected earthly riches. Now she reaps her true reward, which is worth more than even heavenly treasure: *Ich rünne dir zû ein wort / Das vber greyfft des Himmels hort* (M). The reference to *des Himmels hort* may also prefigure the 'crown' scene directly above this one, where the soul rejects even the crown of salvation, wishing only to possess Christ himself. The broadsheet text version as it appears in Kr and A accentuates this idea of the experience of heavenly bliss through Christ's presence even more strongly by a four-line addition to the soul's text:

201 BANZ p. 338:1577–1588.

202 O. HOLL, "Handgebärden" LCI 2 col. 215; MARZIK p. 516.

203 BANZ p. 97.

204 See LÜERS pp. 1–8 and GEHRING pp. 25–51.

205 GEHRING p. 38.

*yetzünd entpfind jch sicherlich
das das oberst gottes reich
in meinem hertzen schwebt
mein sel in got lebt* (A, 127^v)

Like the visionary in 2 Cor. 12.3–4, the soul experiences the joys of paradise through the *arcana verba* of Christ.

The *wort* spoken by Christ to the soul receives different attributive adjectives from one version of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' to the next. While the broadsheet mentions only *ein wort*, the broadsheet text versions and I refer to *eyn susze wort* (Mz, 7[;]; see plate 84). The most direct reference to the *arcana verba* of 2 Cor. 12.4 appears in MS: *Ich runen dir ain toges wort, / Das übertriffet allen hord* (plates 21 and 61).²⁰⁶ In MS the 'secret word' episode is also placed within the sequence of unitive miniatures directly following the 'kiss' segment (not included on the broadsheet), which bears the heading: *Hie wil er sich läßen küssen / Und sy sin haimlichait lon wissen*.²⁰⁷ The word *haimlichait* connotes both intimacy and mystery, themes that are taken up again in the word *runen* in both Christ's initial line and in the picture heading of the 'secret word' episode: *Hie wil er ir zü runen ain wort, / Das ist ir nützer denn aller zitlicher hord*.²⁰⁸ The terms *runen* and *kosen* were often used to express the intimate relationship between Christ and the soul, especially in *unio mystica*.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the text of MS has been altered to remove any indication that the soul is able to experience in this life the bliss of union in her exchange with Christ. The *wort* is now valued more highly than earthly, not heavenly treasure, and while the soul continues to use mystical terminology (*O herr, din ewig wort düurchflüßet die sele min, / Wann du dich selber senkest dar in*²¹⁰), the result of this 'union' is not a foretaste of paradise, but rather the acquisition of virtue: *Ich merk din zükunfft wol, / Wan si tüt mich aller tugenden vol*.²¹¹ The text emphasizes primarily that the soul has succeeded in rejecting the world; filled with love for Christ, earthly things no longer have any importance.

This episode combines the senses of sight and hearing, thus legitimizing both visual and verbal images. The two Scriptural passages the scene is based on focus on seeing images and hearing words respectively. In the illustration the soul sees Christ face to face, in the text she hears him speak; both word and image become ways of perceiving the divine. This parallels a development in late medieval vernacular literature in general, where both words and images became equally legitimate means of communicating meaning to memory:

Vor allem für die volkssprachliche Literatur gilt, daß sich Literatursprache und Bildsprache besonders eng zusammenschließen als gleichberechtigte Möglichkeiten, Informationen zum menschlichen Gedächtnis zu transportieren: entsprechend Richards de Fournival Gleichnis im Prolog seines 'Bestiaire d'amour', wonach zwei Wege und zwei Türen zum Gedächtnis

206 BANZ p. 346:1756–1757.

207 BANZ p. 343:1682–1683.

208 BANZ p. 346:1754–1755.

209 LÜERS pp. 208 and 243.

210 BANZ p. 347:1760–1761.

211 BANZ p. 347:1762–1763.

führen: *peinture* (Bild) durch das Auge, *parole* (Wort) durch das Ohr. [...] Bilder müssen – wie Texte – 'gelesen' werden.²¹²

This episode thus continues to develop the themes introduced in the scenes below it on the broadsheet. The soul's blindness to earthly things has opened her eyes to spiritual vision of Christ. Where previously she had to rely on the mediated form of the written word in a book, now she hears the unmediated spoken word of Christ. The book representing Christ as Logos has been replaced by Christ himself. In this episode, the divine act of speaking the Word is tantamount to the birth of Christ in the soul, a concept most commonly associated with Meister Eckhart but which appears throughout mystical literature.²¹³ Thus the Annunciation intimated by visual cues in the 'instruction' episode here comes to fruition. The sequence of images in this right-hand column of the broadsheet combines imagery of seeing and hearing, of the visual and the verbal, to group visual images with both Scripture and Christ as the Word made flesh as *integumenta* that simultaneously reveal and conceal divine truth. In this episode, placed at the end of the *via illuminativa* and in some cases included in the *via unitiva*, the soul has passed all tests and, in all versions except MS, receives as a reward intimate knowledge of God. But she is faced with the dilemma of not being able to communicate this knowledge to others. At this highest level of illumination, verbal and visual images as mediators must be left behind. Indeed 2 Cor. 12.4 is cited by mystics such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard and Hugh of St. Victor to demonstrate the vast difference between the divine Word and human speech and the impossibility of human speech to express it.²¹⁴

The two outer vertical columns of the broadsheet depict two separate pathways to intimate knowledge of the divine. Both pathways lead through the incarnate Christ, but each uses a different approach. On the left Christ's humanity as manifest in his physical suffering in the Passion and the soul's willingness to participate in that suffering provide the gateway to Christ's heart, the source of Wisdom. On the right Christ's human form he took on in the Incarnation, and by extension both verbal and visual images, function as veils that at the same time conceal and reveal his divine nature. In both the Passion and the Incarnation physical, corporeal forms serve as the vehicle for approaching the divine.

Similarly, the images from the Song of Songs sequence draw the soul further upward on her way to spiritual perfection. The images of the ascetic sequence depicted actions and bodily experiences from daily life. By prescribing and proscribing certain behaviors, they imbue the outer life of the soul with spiritual significance. The scenes of the *via illuminativa*, on the other hand, depict the drama unfolding in the inner life of the soul. They demand a higher degree of understanding from the observer. The actions and items portrayed – sleep, drink, chasing the beloved, the bow and arrow, rope and sack of gold, and finally the face to face conversation with Christ – no longer bear any relationship to the physical life of the body. In order to interpret them correctly, the reader must understand that they no longer have a literal sense. An outer image is transferred to the inner eye, where it receives a meaning not literally present in the image. The Adel-

212 OTT (1997) p. 38.

213 LÜERS p. 9.

214 LÜERS p. 3.

hausen sister-book contrasts outer with inner vision: *Do sprach si: 'Die vswendig gesicht ist nützit wider die inwendig, wann die inwendig gesicht ist ein völle vnd gar ein stoltz ding.' Vnd sprach aber: 'Da es ist ein göttliche gesichte von der nieman gesagen kan, wann der es sichtet, vnd noch denne die es sechent, die können nüt wol davon gesagen.'*²¹⁵ Like the soul in 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' this nun is unable to communicate the higher knowledge acquired by inner vision. Having left the world behind, the soul now moves into the realm of the intellect or imagination.

The ascetic scenes nevertheless continue to provide the foundation upon which the Song of Songs scenes are based. The full significance of the episodes of the *via illuminativa* cannot be understood without the underpinnings of the scenes from the *via purgativa*. That the *Minnetrank* represents the replacement of physical desire for food and drink with spiritual desire for Christ only becomes clear when the episode is seen as a development of the 'fasting' scene directly beneath it. The soul's act of wounding Christ with an arrow only becomes more than an isolated act of aggression when seen in the context of references to the Passion set up in the previous ascetic scenes of 'waking' and 'hanging.' And the extent of the soul's spiritual sight can only be fully understood when seen in contrast to the images of physical blindness and vision in the 'blinding and laming' and 'instruction' episodes. Furthermore, the episodes of the *via illuminativa* often reverse the action of their corresponding ascetic scenes, thus adding a new dimension to the relationship between Christ and the soul. The soul becomes active, even aggressive, counterbalancing her earlier passivity. The soul gradually acquires equal status with Christ, culminating in their mutual 'eye-to-eye' exchange in the 'secret word' segment. The soul's activity is a new element, one that is only achieved as a reaction to earlier passivity. Thus in numerous ways, the ascetic scenes provide the base upon which the illuminative scenes build. The soul advances to the spiritual and unknown dimensions of a relationship with Christ only by moving through the physical and the known. All of the images that constitute 'Christus und die minnende Seele' need first to be seen and then understood, but the advanced understanding required by the illuminative scenes depends on first understanding the ascetic scenes. The soul must move from the physical to the spiritual in stages.

The *via unitiva*

The remaining episodes of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' constitute the *via unitiva*. On the broadsheet, this consists of the four episodes from the uppermost row: 'crown of heaven,' 'fiddle,' 'drum,' and 'embrace.' The manuscript versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' and I also include the 'kiss' episode, which is missing from the broadsheet. I have proposed that the broadsheet originally included the four episodes 'kiss,' 'drum,' 'fiddle,' and 'crown' in one row, topped by the 'embrace' episode on its own as the ultimate expression of union.²¹⁶ This is supported by the text as it appears in both B and Kr. B, which includes only the unitive episodes, contains the entire four lines of text from the 'kiss,' 'drum,' 'fiddle,' and 'crown' episodes, followed by only two lines from

215 KÖNIG p. 178.

216 See pp. 150–152.

the 'embrace' episode. Kr follows the 'kiss,' 'drum,' 'fiddle,' and 'crown' episodes with an extended series of five episodes centering around the 'embrace' scene.²¹⁷

In this final unitive sequence the ardent seeking and striving of the soul have come to an end. The images, deriving in part from the Song of Songs but also commonplaces in the literature of bridal mysticism, are more static and represent the fulfillment of the soul's desire. This fulfillment can be understood as 'mystical union,' the experience of God's presence or dwelling within the soul which varies in mystical literature in both intensity and duration.²¹⁸ Mystical union is also often expressed in terms of the soul's will being unified with God's will.²¹⁹ While *unio mystica* in both these senses often occurs in this life in accounts of mystical experience, the culmination of the soul's journey can also be seen as the joys of eternal salvation. For although the images in this sequence are commonly interpreted as expressions of mystical union, they are also often associated with death and the arrival of the soul in heaven. The extended unitive sequence in Kr combines all of these meanings. It begins with the union of wills. Christ, appearing among the clouds (*hie erscheint er in wolcken* [8^r]), grants the soul the fulfillment of her desire for him alone: *dar vmb daz du deinen wiln kerst zu mir / so schol gesvnddert werden in mir dein wegird* (7^v). He binds her to him, which is followed by the 'embrace' episode, where present joy blends with heavenly bliss:

*ich du du ich wir zwei sein ein
also mir ein von vns zwein
in dem himelreich zu vnterlas
ist freud an alle maß
dez frew ich mich herre mein
daz ich an ende da sol sein
den ich soche den hab ich funden
ein prevtigam han ich gewonen* (8^v)

After repeated references to eternal life the final segment begins with a heading that indicates that the soul enjoys her reward not only in this life but also in the next: *hie als in der ewigen freud kront got die gemaheln sein die da genvmen ist von dem perg libion auß dieser pein vnd spricht kom du liebew pravr mein vnd enpfoh den lon die ewigen dein* (9^v). In this version the soul moves seamlessly from union in this life to salvation in the next.

Although the broadsheets and the broadsheet text versions offer few clues as to the exact manner in which these final episodes are to be understood, the author of MS has taken pains to direct reader response. In this version joyful union can only be expected after death as a reward for a virtuous life in this world.

The static nature of the images of the unitive sequence would seem to make the order of the individual episodes of little consequence, but the various versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' show an unusual degree of agreement in their arrangement. With the exception of MS and the broadsheet (which eliminates the 'kiss' scene), all

217 ROSENFELD (1954) pp. 73–74 postulates that this extended *unio* sequence is based on an originally independent illustrated broadsheet.

218 GEHRING p. 313.

219 GEHRING p. 319.

manuscript versions place the segments in the following order: 'kiss,' 'drum,' 'fiddle,' 'crown,' 'embrace.'²²⁰

Kiss

It is possible that the 'kiss' episode was excluded from the broadsheet for reasons of spatial economy; one less episode allows for an even number of 20 scenes. The illustrations of the 'kiss' scene (plates 20, 40, 60, and 91) are also very similar to those of the 'embrace' episode: both portray Christ and the soul with their arms around each other. This could have made these two episodes seem to be duplicates of one another. Indeed, the 'embrace' and 'kiss' segments seem to have been confused with one another in several instances. On the broadsheet the 'kiss' episode has been replaced by the 'embrace.' In addition, the picture heading of the 'kiss' scene in I, *Wie er sy zu ym nymmet in die arm* (D_{iii}^r), also refers more to the act of embracing, and the illustration depicts Christ as he appears in the 'embrace' illustrations in D and E, with his hand on the soul's chest.

On both textual and visual levels the 'kiss' episode in the manuscripts contains several references to earlier scenes. Christ's text establishes the act of kissing as a direct result of the *amor ligans*: *din mynne hat gezwungen mich / das ich mich losse küssen dich* (B). In mystical and mystagogical literature the kiss is also often connected to the side-wound of Christ. The 'Rothschild Canticles' do this visually by juxtaposing an image of Christ and the soul embracing with one of the soul wounding Christ with a spear (18^v-19^r); Mechthild of Hackeborn describes the cross as the couch of love, where the soul must join herself to Christ's side, wounded by love.²²¹ The side-wound is the gateway to divine wisdom. In this sense, the 'kiss' episode would make logical sense placed directly above the 'wounding' episode at the top of the left-hand column of the broadsheet as the culmination of the series of scenes based on Passion imagery.

Based on Cant. 1.1 (*osculetur me osculo oris sui*), the 'kiss' episode follows directly after the 'secret word' in all versions except MS and I. For Gregory the Great, the kiss represented unmediated discourse with God.²²² For Bernard the kiss of the mouth was the ultimate gift of spiritual grace, which came only after the preceding kiss of the feet (representing penitential devotion) and kiss of the hand (the ascent by means of God's helping hand),²²³ which can be seen as corresponding to the *via purgativa* and the *via illuminativa*. The kiss as the source of divine wisdom makes it the logical consequence of the 'secret word' episode. The soul's text from the 'kiss' episode in Kr even mentions Christ's words as the source of her ardor: *iesvs aller liebster travr / ein spigel ewiger her vnd got / deinev wart pringen mich also serre / daz ich naht noch tag / nimer mer dein vergessen mack* (6^v). In MS, however, the 'kiss' episode precedes the 'secret word.' The kiss, granted only to those who have a clear conscience and a pure heart, keep the commandments, desire only Christ and have completely broken with the world, is the

220 I reverses the order of the 'drum' and 'fiddle' episodes. MS, in addition to including the 'secret word' episode, also places the 'fiddle' episode at the beginning of the sequence before the 'kiss.'

221 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 76 and fig. 15.

222 OHLY (1958) pp. 60–61.

223 MATTER p. 126.

prerequisite for understanding the incommunicable word of God.²²⁴ The heading in MS also refers to *haimlichait* (see p. 229), a reference to the *arcana verba* of the biblical passage upon which the 'secret word' segment is based.

Rupert of Deutz, known as the first Christian exegete to consistently base his interpretation of the Song of Songs on the bride as Mary,²²⁵ also interpreted the kiss of the Song of Songs as the unification of divine and human nature in the Incarnation.²²⁶ Understood in this light, the scene together with the 'secret word' episode represents the culmination of the birth of Christ in the soul in the process of *imitatio Mariae* begun with the visual references to the Annunciation in the 'instruction' episode. Indeed, the text of the 'kiss' episode in MS makes direct reference to this occurrence:

*Mag ieman bas uff erd gesin,
Denn dem, den im got selber hat erkorn zü ainem schrin,
Da er sin aingebornen sun sendet in
Und in gebirt in der sele sin –
An ander groß haimlichait,
Da von der mensch nieman sait,
Das im es nieman geloben kan.²²⁷*

Those who receive the kiss are also those worthy to bear Christ in their souls.

The illustrations of this episode in E, D, and K also continue the Marian theme. In both D and K the soul touches Christ's chin in a gesture that has been termed the 'chin-chuck'.²²⁸ The gesture, taken from Cant. 2.6 and 8.3 (*leva eius sub capite meo et dextera illius amplexabitur me*), was used as a metaphor for spiritual love. It appears in the 'Rothschild Canticles' miniature of the Coronation of the Sponsa – which echoes depictions of the Coronation of the Virgin – where Christ and the soul mutually 'chuck' each other's chins.²²⁹ Marian illustrations of the Song of Songs in French, English, Dutch and Italian Bibles often depict the Virgin with the Christ Child either kissing her or touching her chin.²³⁰ The soul's gesture in the 'kiss' episode is reciprocated in the illustrations of the 'secret word' scene in E and K, where Christ chucks the soul's chin (plates 21 and 61; this illustration is missing from D), thus connecting the scenes with one another on a visual level as well as placing the soul in the role of Mary as both bride and mother of God.

Fiddle and Drum

The imagery of music and dance present in the 'fiddle' and 'drum' segments is commonly used in mystical texts to express both the state of mystical union and the dance of the soul in heaven.²³¹ In Friedrich Sunder's 'Gnadenleben' the dance in heaven, also

224 BANZ pp. 343:1692–344:1719.

225 OHLY (1958) p. 125.

226 OHLY (1958) p. 125 n. 1.

227 BANZ p. 344:1700–1706.

228 E depicts Christ embracing the soul in an enclosed garden.

229 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 113–115 and fig. 46.

230 D. v. BURGSDORFF, "Hoheslied" LCI 2 col. 309.

231 LÜERS pp. 44–45 and 267, HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 58–59.

accompanied by the music of stringed instruments, is a wedding dance confirming the *conubium* of Christ and the soul.²³² Music is also used as an expression of jubilation that is beyond words.²³³ The church fathers often used the image of the soul as an instrument of God, and Suso and Mechthild of Magdeburg both see music and its movement as the most essential characteristic of the soul.²³⁴ The motif of Christ or the Holy Spirit playing an instrument (usually a stringed instrument) for the soul also occurs in both Suso and Mechthild, and in an anonymous late-thirteenth-century poem.²³⁵

The idea of a dance in heaven as a reward for virtue occurs in 'Des Teufels Netz,' a text used as a source for the MS version of 'Christus und die minnende Seele'.²³⁶ The work consists of a satirical dialogue in which the devil reveals to a hermit the means he employs to draw people from every conceivable group of medieval society into his net, from popes to robbers and murderers. In the section entitled von den *junckfrawen* the devil remarks that those who do not allow themselves to be seduced by the world and earthly *springen, tanzen und kallen* will dance with their bridegroom in heaven:

*Si wurd dort iren gemahel schowen [...]
Und für an der megde schar,
Da nieman mer an getar;
An der junkfrowen tanz.²³⁷*

Music also appears as a form of revelation in the sister-books, especially that of Engelthal, often at the moment of death or as a forewarning of death, and described by the terms *singen, gesanc, and seitenspiel*.²³⁸

The text of the 'fiddle' episode continues the vertical structure of the broadsheet. Christ addresses the soul as follows: *Warte lieb wie dich mein saytenspyl / So lieblich zü mir ziehen wil* (M). Immediately below this scene on the broadsheet is the 'binding' episode, where the soul draws Christ to herself with a rope; now it is Christ's music that draws the soul to him. The 'fasting' episode in MS, the scene at the very bottom of this same vertical column on the broadsheet, also contains a reference to this episode, an indication that the author had the broadsheet in mind. To explain the significance of fasting, Christ says:

*Ich wil mit nieman han gemain,
Denn mit minem geminten allain.
Der mach ich kürtzwil vil:
Sy begert nit anders saiten spil.²³⁹*

The soul is to give up physical desires for spiritual ones.

232 RINGLER (1980) p. 263, THALI pp. 142–143.

233 LÜERS pp. 202–203.

234 LÜERS pp. 67, 229, and 249.

235 LÜERS pp. 68–69; for the text of the poem see HAMBURGER (1990) p. 58 and p. 262 n. 115.

236 See BANZ pp. 124–141 and KELLER (1997) for more thorough treatments of the relationship between these two texts.

237 BARACK (1863) p. 216:6847 and 6852–6856.

238 GEHRING pp. 260–261.

239 BANZ p. 280:442–445.

Although each broadsheet text version manuscript contains a slightly different text in this episode, they have all replaced *ziehen* with *neigen*, as in Kr: *mein svses geigen nvn daz tvt / daz mein lieb mir neigen mvsz in irem mv̄t* (7^r). The soul's additional text in Kr and A indicates that her ability to hear Christ's music represents a state of mystical rapture:

*dein svses geigen hat mich fur trah̄t
daz ich seig avf dich in ammah̄t
mir ist der geist enzuck̄t [A: enttruck̄t]
zv got ist er geruck̄t [A: gezuck̄t]
mir ist auch dez leibes kraft
von svser minne worden sighaft
hie geigt er (Kr, 7^r).*

The terminology used here, especially the words *enzuck̄t* and *gezuck̄t*, is frequently employed in the sister-books to describe states of mystic rapture, *unio*, and visionary experience. The verb *ziehen*, especially with words like *sele*, *geist*, or *vernunft* as is the case in A and Kr, is also used in the sister-books to intensify this imagery.²⁴⁰ The word *ammaht* and the loss of physical strength also reflect the experience of having no perception of the world or control of external senses that also goes with the state of mystic rapture in the sister-books.²⁴¹

The author of MS has interpreted this scene very differently. The soul accuses Christ of so beguiling her with his sweet music that she has given him all she has, in the manner of a rich lord who is persuaded to part with goods and property by the skill of a traveling minstrel.²⁴² The result for the soul is the virtue of poverty:

*Ich han dich mir als das uß ergiget lon,
Das ich ienant mocht gehon,
Und müß nu selb den mangel beston
Und in die stat nach brot gon
Und darzü versmäch̄t und mangel hon.²⁴³*

That the soul heeds Christ's music is an indication that she no longer values earthly things: *Ich achten denn alle ding clain, / So ich spring nach der gigen rain.*²⁴⁴ Whoever wants to join the dance must leave behind both family and property, but Christ's music enables one to suffer gladly:

*O herr, mit diner süßen gigen
Machest du gǖt lüt gern liden
Alle arbeit und widerwärtikait,
Die in von der welt ist bereit.
Nu möcht ain mensch wunder hon,
Wie es umb die gigen si geton.
Die gig ist götliche süßekait,*

240 GEHRING pp. 296–301.

241 GEHRING pp. 304–306.

242 BANZ pp. 339:1611–340:1620.

243 BANZ p. 340:1624–1628.

244 BANZ p. 342:1656–1657.

*Da mit got sin fründ beclait,
Das si der welt achten klain
Noch uff silber, gold und edel gestain.
Si wend willig armüt hon:
Darumb ist in der gaist underton.²⁴⁵*

Christ's heavenly music no longer represents mystic rapture, but rather the willingness to endure poverty and suffering.

Similarly, the 'drum' episode also receives different interpretations in the broadsheet text version and in MS. In the broadsheet dialogue text, Christ tells the soul she should cease weeping and praying and begin to dance: *Wirff hin wainen vnd betten / Wol auff du müst den rayen tretten* (M). To this the soul replies that if Christ plays the music, she will cease to mourn: *Lieb wilt du mir baucken vnd gygen / So laß ich alles trawren ligen* (M). Most of the other manuscripts and prints follow this in sense if not in exact wording. The one difference is that in B, Kr, and MS the word *wainen* has been replaced with *venien*, which refers to prayer while kneeling or more generally to acts of penance. In this episode A contains only these first four lines of dialogue, but Kr once again has expanded the soul's text, giving the drum and dance a mystical meaning:

*mich bvndert ser wie mir sei
ein bvnder bant mir ser pei
ich kan ez niht bedeuten
mit werhait wol den levten
wol avf ich wil von hinen
ich pin sein worden inen
er ruffet mir vil liebes travt
kom her mein erweltew pravit
hie pavcket er ir (6^v)*

The soul refers here to an experience that is beyond words or human understanding; she is capable of neither understanding nor communicating it. She *wil von hinen* to follow Christ's call to his bride, indicating either a desire to enter a state of mystical rapture in which she no longer perceives the physical world or a longing for death in order to join Christ in heaven.

In MS, the soul begins not by describing a state of mystical ecstasy, but by commenting that she finds it strange that Christ forbids her to pray (here the term *venien* is used) whenever she wants to. Christ replies that she must do what he wants of her, whether that be prayer or dancing:

*Du müst dich läßen, wie ich wil,
Ich geb dir fröd ald andacht vil.
Du solt mir wesen underton,
So machtu wol mit mir beston.²⁴⁶*

This episode is thus not about the experience of mystical union in the sense of rapture, but rather about submitting one's own will to Christ's, even if it means refraining from apparently devout acts. This is perhaps an attempt to curb demonstrative acts of ex-

245 BANZ p. 342:1666–1677.

246 BANZ p. 350:1810–1813.

treme piety regarded with suspicion by fifteenth-century spiritual advisers as egotistical attempts to prove spiritual greatness. The soul declares herself prepared to follow Christ's will, even if it means being joyful: *Sid du es also von mir wilt haben, / So wirff ich von mir venien und clagen / Und spring diner trummen nach.*²⁴⁷ She then continues on in the vein of the soul in Kr. The joy she experiences at having Christ in her heart is something that cannot be seen or understood by others, and she expresses the desire to possess Christ completely:

*So wölt ich mich an dich smuken
Und dich an min hertz früntlich truken
Und fügen in die sele min.
Da müstist eweclich inne sin.*²⁴⁸

Christ abruptly corrects the soul:

*Cristus sprach: das ist uff erd unmöglich,
Du nemist hie uff erd din himelrich.
Zway himelrich mugent nit wol beston:
Wer es uff erd nimet, der müß es dört lon,
Das ewig fröd hät und git.*²⁴⁹

The author of MS has taken pains to ensure that readers would not interpret these 'unitive' episodes in the traditional sense of mystical union or rapture here on earth. The ultimate goal of the soul's journey is spiritual perfection, which will be rewarded in heaven. Accepting this also requires giving up one's own will or desire to experience heavenly joy in this life.

Crown

On the broadsheet the soul is crowned at the top of the far right-hand column, in which iconographic references to Marian themes have established the soul's role as one of *imitatio Mariae*. The 'crown' episode continues in this vein with an image strongly reminiscent of depictions of the Coronation of the Virgin. The crown became an attribute of the Virgin Mary through the use of Cant. 4.8 (*veni de Libano sponsa veni de Libano veni coronaberis / de capite Amana de vertice Sanir et Hermon*) along with Ps. 20.4 (*pones in capite eius coronam de lapide pretioso*) and Ps. 44.10 (*filiae regum in honore tuo / stetit coniux in dextera tua in diademate aureo*) in the Marian liturgy and homiletic literature, where Mary is placed in the role of the crowned Sponsa.²⁵⁰ The iconography of the Coronation of the Virgin developed out of depictions of Christ enthroned with Mary as his bride. Depictions of Christ crowning Mary originated around 1250.²⁵¹ The image was often conflated with other images of the glorification of Mary, including the Assumption, making depictions of the Coronation of Mary also representations of heavenly glory.²⁵²

247 Banz p. 350:1816–1818.

248 Banz p. 351:1840–1843.

249 Banz p. 351:1844–1848.

250 H. W. van Os, "Krönung Mariens" LCI 2 col. 671.

251 H. W. van Os, "Krönung Mariens" LCI 2 col. 672.

252 H. W. van Os, "Krönung Mariens" LCI 2 col. 674.

In the Ordo for Consecration of Virgins the individual soul takes on the role of the crowned Sponsa. To seal their marriage to Christ, the virgins are presented with a veil, a ring, and a crown.²⁵³ While this imagery in the Ordo is used as a rite of entrance into monastic life, it also anticipates the soul's entrance into heaven.²⁵⁴ Mary's Assumption and Coronation thus not only signify the future glorification of the church, but prefigure the salvation of the individual soul as well.²⁵⁵

The crown also has this dual significance in 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' where the soul replaces the Virgin Mary being crowned by Christ. This was not an uncommon substitution. Numerous late medieval Rhenish depictions of the Coronation either include a nun imitating Mary's posture or exchange a female saint or anonymous soul for the figure of Mary altogether, thus encouraging the viewer's identification and imitation as well.²⁵⁶ One such depiction is a portrayal of the Coronation of the Sponsa the 'Rothschild Canticles' (73^v). Rather than kneel as the soul does in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' (or, as in E, D, K, and I stand; plates 23, 42, 63, and 88), the soul in the 'Rothschild Canticles' is seated next to Christ, who crowns her with his right hand and touches her chin with his left.²⁵⁷ The accompanying text uses images from the Song of Songs taken from the Marian liturgy. The depiction of the Sponsa instead of Mary allows even the text of the Marian liturgy to be re-interpreted as applying to the individual soul, making Mary a model to be imitated.²⁵⁸ Just as she imitates the Sponsa of the Song of Songs, so also is the individual soul to imitate Mary. Mary does not only provide a model in her function as the bride of Christ, but also in her entrance into heaven. As the first to have been taken bodily into heaven, Mary has already been privileged to experience what has been promised to all believers. Her Assumption prefigures the bodily entrance into heaven of all believers at the end of time.²⁵⁹ Thus the image of the Coronation of the Virgin applied to the soul has meaning both for this life as a nun and therefore bride of Christ, and for the next.

This scene once again receives different interpretations in the different versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' The broadsheet text version Kr includes two coronation scenes. In the first, the soul rejects the crown in favor of Christ himself, as she does in all versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele': *herre ich wil niht dein kron / ich wil dich liep selber zv lon (7^v)*. Christ thereupon asks what he is to the soul that she should demand such a great reward. What follows is a short prose dialogue reminiscent of the type of exchange in the 'Disput zwischen der minnenden Seele und unserem Herrn' that follows 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in E and Ü. It consists of a series of three declarations, interrupted by Christ after the first one: *herre du pist ein avsganck meiner avgen pin ich den ein avszganck deiner avgen so scholtv deiner avgen hvten daz sie immer mer iht gesehen daz wieder mich sei vnd pist ein ganck meines hertzen vnd pist ein vmbffanck meiner sel hie kronv ers (7^v)*. This intimate exchange seems to indicate

253 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 50 and 113.

254 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 51 and 114.

255 THALI p. 6.

256 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 56 and 114.

257 HAMBURGER (1990) fig. 46.

258 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 113.

259 THALI pp. 135 and 156–157.

that the soul is granted an intimate bridal relationship with Christ in this life. This scene is followed by the expanded series of *unio* scenes discussed earlier, culminating in the second coronation scene where the soul receives the crown of eternal life. This scene is assigned a longer heading, cited above (see p. 232), that refers directly to the Lebanon of Cant. 4.8. Thus the two coronation scenes frame the entire *unio* sequence in Kr and represent the double significance of the Coronation of the Virgin as both the calling to be the bride of Christ and the prefiguration of eternal salvation.

In MS the soul also rejects the crown, but here because it is a far from unproblematic honor. First of all, accepting the crown would mean receiving her reward in this life, which would, as other segments have already made clear, entail giving up her reward in the next:

*Nach diner kron ist mir nit gäch,
Das ich den lon nit hie empfäch.
Du solt mir sin dōrt hin sparen,
Da ich on sorg mug varen.²⁶⁰*

As if to prevent any misunderstanding as to what the crown represents, the scribe in K has altered the heading of this episode from *hie wil er ir uff setzen ain kron / Mit der sy besitzen mag den ewigen lon* (E, 18^{vb}) to *mit der si besiczen mag das ewig leben* (K, 71^v). Secondly, the crown, or more precisely the admiration of others that would come with it, would put the soul in danger of the sin of pride. In depictions of the 'Siebenlasterweib,' the crown (in one case accompanied by peacock feathers) represents *superbia*.²⁶¹ Worse still, the crown would make her appear especially holy in the eyes of others, and thus any failing on her part would not only expose her to their mockery but also would result in a greater lack of faith on their part:

*Ob mir beschäh ain unhail,
So würd die kron ainem andern zetail.
Siech, das wär ain großer spott
Vor der welt und och vor got, [...]
Und sprächint: 'lüg, wel ain gottes knecht!
Den het man für ainen hailgen man;
Wie het er so gar ab gelan! [...]
An wen sol man noch globen hon,
Sid der so gar het ab gelon?²⁶²*

The crown is truly deserved only by those who can patiently and steadfastly endure suffering, but the devil tempts even those far advanced on the path to spiritual perfection with the false assumption that this very spiritual perfection makes them immune to temptation and worldly desires:

*Dich mag doch nieman verfallen,
Wan du bist wol als ain volkomen man,
Als in das ertrich mag gehen. [...]
Send nu nach güttem win*

260 BANZ p. 353:1874–1877.

261 HENKEL p. 230 fig. 8 and p. 234 fig. 9.

262 BANZ pp. 353:1879–1882 and 1886–1888, p. 354:1892–1893.

*Und laß dir wol sin,
Wann des bist du wol wert:
Du tötest iarlat nieman mit dem schwert,
Du begerest och iarlat niemans man noch wib.²⁶³*

Ever aware of the ease of succumbing to such temptations, even or precisely at this advanced stage of her journey, the soul denies the crown. She maintains her humility, for the danger of falling from such an elevated status is too great. Both the male references in the text, despite the soul's obvious female gender, and the discussion of the devil's strategies of temptation probably are a result of the heavy use of 'Des Teufels Netz' as a source for the text of MS.

Embrace

The culmination of the soul's journey, the final episode in all the manuscript versions and very likely the uppermost scene on the original form of the broadsheet, is the 'embrace.' The image of an embrace or *conubium spirituale* was a commonplace in mystical literature derived from Cant. 2.6 (*et dextera illius amplexabitur me*) and used to express the state of mystical union.²⁶⁴ The metaphor appears in the Song of Songs commentaries of Origen, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of St. Victor, as well as in mystical Lives and Revelations such as those of Mechthild of Magdeburg and Friedrich Sunder.²⁶⁵ The *conubium spirituale* is also often expressed in reciprocal formulations based on Cant. 2.16 (*dilectus meus mihi et ego illi*).²⁶⁶ The miniature representing *conubium spirituale* in the 'Rothschild Canticles,' which shows the Sponsa reclining on a bed, her arms raised toward Christ descending from the clouds along with a giant sun (66^v), is a visual portrayal of the reciprocal nature of the love relationship between Christ and the soul and is accompanied by text that emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the soul's devotion.²⁶⁷ Translated into German, *du bist min, ich bin din* may have been used as a legal phrase for betrothal.²⁶⁸ Variations of this phrase appear in all versions of the text of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' except for the broadsheets, for example: *ich dv dv ich wir zwei sein ein / also mir ein von vns zwein* (Kr, 8^v).

In addition to representing relatively short-lived ecstatic experience of *unio mystica*, the image of *conubium spirituale* was also used for a more permanent, continuing relationship with God, not subject to the highs and lows associated with the alternation between bliss of ecstatic union and the despair felt at its ending, but rather the spiritual equivalent of the long-lasting state of earthly marriage.²⁶⁹ This idea of an enduring covenant is often expressed with terminology such as *niemer verlassen* or *niemer geschaiden*, and is often framed in reciprocal formulations as in Friedrich Sunder's 'Gnadenleben': *daz du von mir noch ich von dir nimmer geschaiden werdin*. This reciprocal commit-

263 BANZ p. 356:1947–1949 and 1960–1964.

264 LÜERS p. 276.

265 See LÜERS pp. 160–167 and RINGLER (1980) p. 274 for detailed references to the literature.

266 BANZ p. 104, LÜERS p. 309, RINGLER (1980) p. 230, HAMBURGER (1990) p. 80.

267 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 106 and fig. 42.

268 BANZ pp. 104–105.

269 GEHRING pp. 337–338.

ment can take the form of either a *minne*-relationship or the promise of eternal salvation.²⁷⁰

Text shared by Kr and A contains this idea of permanence:

*den ich süchet den hab ich gefunden
ein süessen preütigam hab ich jüber kúmen
ich wil im nimer abgan
vnd in nimer von mir lon
ich bin in got verflossen
des hab ich mein selbs vergessen
seines antlütz süssigkeit
benimet mir alles mein laid (A, 128^v)*

This episode appears to be describing a *minne*-relationship couched in mystical terminology (*verflossen*, *mein selbs vergessen*) rather than eternal salvation. In Kr this is even more apparent from the larger context of the extended *unio*-sequence. This episode follows a scene in which Christ formally binds the soul to himself in a sort of mystical marriage:

*hie nach deinez hertzen begerung
pinde ich dich zu mir an wider ab kerung
liep die ere und daz lop ist dein
ich wil auch niendert anders sein
den dich sochen vnd mine allein
ob allen creaturen vnd ir gemain
hie pint er zu im (Kr, 8^v)*

In the scene following the 'embrace' episode the soul is lying in bed, sick with love: *hie ist sie sich nach gotez mine / daz sie niht mag an in beginnen* (Kr, 9^v).

As the terms *verflossen* and *min selbs vergessen* in A and Kr reflect, mystical union was often accompanied by a sense of losing oneself in God by becoming one with him in the sense of 'like him.'²⁷¹ While in Kr and A this seems to happen in a moment of rapture, the picture heading in MS (*Hie sind sy kommen úber ain / Und wend nu alle ding han gemain*²⁷²) is to be understood as a reference to heavenly bliss.²⁷³ Here as in the broadsheet text versions the soul combines the reciprocal formulation based on Cant. 2.16 with the idea of a permanent relationship: *O herr, du bist min, so bin ich din; / Die trúw sol iemer stät sin*.²⁷⁴ This is the reward for the soul's sufferings and devotion, but the reward is not in this life, but in heaven:

*Tugent, andacht alder gebett,
Des hást du mir alles gelonet;
In dem höchsten trone
Da bin ich vor dir schone.*²⁷⁵

270 RINGLER (1980) pp. 228–229.

271 BANZ p. 104.

272 BANZ p. 360:2043–2044.

273 BANZ p. 104.

274 BANZ p. 360:2049–2050.

275 BANZ p. 361:2068–2070.

Should she have to continue to live on earth, she will continue with her devotion to Christ, contenting herself with the reward of eternal salvation rather than any kind of recompense in this life.²⁷⁶ Union with Christ takes the form of the certainty of eternal salvation rather than the ecstatic experience of *unio mystica*.

The use of the physical image of an embrace to represent a spiritual state is taken to the extreme in I. The heading, part of the dialogue text and even the illustration most appropriate for the 'embrace' episode have been assigned to the 'kiss' segment in I, making it possible for the 'embrace' scene to go one step further. The heading, *Wie sie ligen in dem bethe*, is accompanied by a very literal depiction of Christ and the soul lying in bed together under the covers (D_{iii}^v, plate 92). It was not unusual for spiritual union to be described in physical terms; Mechthild of Magdeburg is an often-cited example:²⁷⁷ *Ie sin lust me wahset, ie ir brutloft grösser wirt. Ie das minnebet enger wirt, ie die umbehalsunge naher gat. Ie das muntkússen sússer smekket, ie si sich minnedlicher ansehent. Ie si sich nóter scheident, ie er ir mer gíbet*.²⁷⁸ Such language was not always unproblematic for medieval recipients. LÜERS has pointed out that the Latin translation of this passage was toned down by omissions and re-phrasing: *Quanto delectatio sponsi crescit, tanto solemniore nuptiae celebrantur; et quo osculum oris sapit dulcius, tanto se mutuo amicitius specularunt; et quo difficiliter separantur eo sponsi donis cumulatur*.²⁷⁹ A similarly erotic image, that of Friedrich Sunder suckling at the breast of the Virgin Mary, also merited an explanatory interpolation that physical imagery was necessary to convey spiritual things.²⁸⁰ JEFFREY HAMBURGER has demonstrated that the approach to such erotic imagery became more literal during the course of the Middle Ages, enabling such images as the *conubium spirituale* illustration from the 'Rothschild Canticles' discussed above (p. 241).²⁸¹ The bed in this image, like the bed in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' and those in numerous other texts referring to spiritual union, are derived from the *lectulus noster floridus* of Cant. 1.15.²⁸² But despite the literal visual depiction of union in I, the text moves quickly to its spiritual sense. This happens already in the verse dialogue:

*Cristus Ich bin dein vnnd du bist mein
Wir wollen nun ewig bey einander sein
Die Sele Es hat erworben mein groß muhe
Das ich bin kommen zu ewiger ruhe (D_{iii}^v)*

The physical union of Christ and the soul is rapidly transformed into eternal salvation as a reward for the soul's trials. The prose text continues in this vein with a long description of the joys of heavenly peace: *Anshelmus spricht vonn derr ewigenn rue yn dem ewigenn lebenn als dye seligen schlaffenn in gotte O des susszes schlafes mit der rwe O du selige rw mit der sicherheyth mit derr ewigkeitt [...]* (D_{iii}^v).

276 BANZ pp. 361:2072–362:2076.

277 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 108.

278 NEUMANN p. 17:26–29. Qtd. in LÜERS p. 163.

279 SOLESMES p. 474; qtd. in LÜERS p. 163.

280 RINGLER (1980) p. 257.

281 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 109–110.

282 RINGLER (1980) pp. 259–260, HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 107–109 and p. 279 n. 15.

The broadsheet, although considerably less drastic in its illustration of this scene, also departs significantly from all other versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' This occurs primarily on a textual level; the broadsheets M, W, and Z share a unique version of the initial four lines of dialogue:²⁸³

*Ich fache dich lieb in frewden zû mir
Als nach meines herczen begir.
Als du mich hast gemaint
So bin ich mit dir veraint. (M)*

The broadsheets M and Z also share a unique illustration of this scene: Christ embraces the soul, who leans her head on his chest and places her hand on his heart.²⁸⁴ The posture of Christ and the soul in this illustration is similar to that of Christ and John the Evangelist in depictions of the *Johannesminne*, where John inclines his head on the breast of Christ. In these depictions John, the disciple closest to Christ, draws upon the source of wisdom, Christ's heart. This image is based on a tradition of identifying Christ's heart as the fountain of Wisdom and the side-wound as the means of entrance. And in the Middle Ages John was seen as a prototypical *sponsa Christi*, a model of contemplative life and an exemplary mystic.²⁸⁵ In this way the illustration on the broadsheet, which is placed at the top of the far left column, represents the culmination of the series of Passion-based images below it that bring the soul ever-closer to the source of wisdom. Her act of wounding Christ in the scene directly below the embrace has gained her entrance to Christ's heart where she now rests. The reciprocal nature of the embrace reflects and is a result of the reciprocal acts of wounding and being wounded below.

This scene receives yet another illustration in the manuscripts containing MS. In E and D Christ and the soul stand at arm's length with Christ's hand placed on the soul's chest (plates 24 and 43). This is also the way they are portrayed in the illustration to the 'kiss' episode in I and in W.²⁸⁶ This gesture, like that of the soul resting her head on Christ's chest, could also be a reference to the heart, in this case to the soul's heart, where Christ now dwells. The New Testament establishes the heart as the true and innermost part of the self; depictions of the Annunciation often show Mary placing her hand on her own chest as a sign of her true and unshakeable faith.²⁸⁷ K has yet another variation on this scene: Christ and the soul stand apart with an angel between them holding each of their right hands (plate 64). The presence of the angel may be an attempt to tone down the erotic overtones of the scene, but also probably reflects the

283 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 361. Aside from A, which contains the last two lines of this text, the other versions contain variations of the dialogue text as it appears in MS: *Cristus sprach: Lieb, ich und du sind all ain, / Alsus wirt ains us uns zwain / Sy spricht: Ich han begriffen alles das, Deß min hertz ie begeren was* (BANZ p. 360:2044–2048).

284 The soul also has a cloak draped over her shoulders which is not present in any of the other illustrations. This detail may be a reference to the Biblical sense of covering with a cloak as a sign of marriage (BANZ p. 105). This is also reflected in the text of MS, where the soul refers to Christ's cloak as a repayment for the loss of her own clothes earlier: *Du hast mich under dinen mantel genomen: / Hie mit ist mir wider komen, / Was ich ie han durch dich bin gelait. / Du hast mich nu selber beklait / Bas, denn ieman gesagen kan* (BANZ p. 361:2056–2060).

285 HAMBURGER (1990) p. 78.

286 On the broadsheet W Christ grasps both of the soul's arms rather than placing a hand on her chest.

287 MARZIK pp. 538–539.

idea emphasized repeatedly in MS that the soul's reward takes place when she is united with Christ in heaven.

This episode represents the culmination of the soul's journey, whether that be, as in earlier forms of the work, the experience of mystical union with Christ in the form of a minne-relationship or through access to his heart as the fountain of wisdom or the reward of eternal salvation. All versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' emphasize the reciprocal nature of this union. Her passive sufferings have given way to a relationship with Christ on equal footing.

Even the broadsheets and the broadsheet text versions, the forms of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' representing the earliest stages of its circulation in the fourteenth century, never take the representation of the *via unitiva* beyond depictions of the relationship between Christ and the soul as that between a man and a woman. Other fourteenth-century mystagogical works that use a combination of text and visual images to portray the mystical journey go one step further, abandoning bodily imagery for abstract representations of the Trinity. The 'Rothschild Canticles' concludes part one, a carefully constructed combination of text and image designed to structure the reader's devotional response,²⁸⁸ with a series of increasingly abstract depictions of the Trinity.²⁸⁹ Suso's 'Exemplar,' in addition to closing with a speculative dialogue on the nature of mystical spirituality,²⁹⁰ also includes an illustration in which the mystical journey ends with the Trinity, represented by a series of three concentric circles to indicate its ultimately imageless nature.²⁹¹

On the one hand, this omission on the part of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' can be seen as an even stronger argument for the importance of corporeal images as a vehicle for spiritual knowledge and perfection. We have seen that the manuscripts E, D, and K all place 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in contexts that argue in different ways for images as essential aids to devotion. Within the work itself, the very presence of images equal to or even dominating the text as they do on the broadsheet makes a powerful case for their importance as vehicles of mystical elevation. This is underscored by the fact that as the soul progresses, so also must her understanding of the illustrations develop, moving towards an ever more spiritual understanding of their content. Finally the connection between vision and understanding, between sight and faith, is made in the series of episodes making up the right-hand column of the broadsheet, where the soul's ability (or inability) to see Christ is equated with the Incarnation and ultimately with the birth of Christ in the soul in *imitatio Mariae*.

At the same time, the exclusive use of bodily imagery would seem to suggest that the unmediated *visio Dei* in all its imageless glory is not to be achieved in this life, but is reserved for life after death, a standpoint that is particularly evident in the text of MS. Even the early versions of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' thus represent the beginning of a change in the attitude toward mysticism, moving away from the sophisticated speculative treatment of mystical experience at its highest level. The soul has progressed

288 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 24–26.

289 HAMBURGER (1990) pp. 118–142, figs. 27–29 and 47–64.

290 LOUIS M. HAAS and KURT RUH, "Seuse, Heinrich OP" ²VL 8 cols. 1118–1119; WILLIAMS-KRAPP (2004b) pp. 38–39.

291 For a discussion of this illustration in E see above p. 168.

from the more straightforward images taken from everyday life to the less literal images based on the Song of Songs, but the work does not allow her to make the final leap of leaving images behind.

The Broadsheet: Reception and Use

Not only the content of the broadsheet itself, but also the circumstances of its circulation and reception as well as a comparison with the circumstances of reception of other contemporary single-leaf prints can provide an indication of how the broadsheet was employed to shape the lives of its late medieval readership.

Early scholarship looked not to historical evidence of circulation for an indication of how the 'Christus und die minnende Seele' broadsheet was received, but rather to the format of the work. HELLMUT ROSENFELD cites 'Christus und die minnende Seele' in the form of a single-leaf illustrated broadsheet as an early example of the medieval *Bilderbogen*, or illustrated broadsheet.²⁹² He uses form to define function. For instance, the predominance of illustration over text on illustrated broadsheets presents, for ROSENFELD, little challenge to the reader and thus indicates a wide circulation among the masses:

Während das Buch, auch wenn es illustriert ist, höhere Ansprüche an den Leser stellt, war der Bilderbogen mit seinen wenigen Schriftzeilen jedem entzifferbar und verständlich, der nur die primitivsten Lesekenntnisse hatte. Deshalb ist die Bilderbogenliteratur die Literatur weitester Volkskreise, eine Massenkunst, die in die kleinste Stube oder Klosterzelle hineinfinden konnte.²⁹³

We have seen that the illustrations in 'Christus und die minnende Seele' were by no means less demanding than the text, requiring a well-founded understanding of biblical, liturgical and mystical imagery. Far from being a work for the masses, 'Christus und die minnende Seele' was probably intended for members of monastic communities or well-read laypersons with strong religious interests. Prints of religious imagery from the late Middle Ages for which ownership can be historically documented show that such images were primarily owned by the religious; laypersons appear only seldom as owners of religious images and then only members of the upper classes. Fifteenth-century prints with German texts would have been intended for a 'lay' audience consisting of nuns, lay brothers and laypeople who could read, but there is no indication that this lay reception of prints represents *Volkskunst* or *Volkspoesie*.²⁹⁴ These findings concur with the circumstances of the manuscript reception of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' and thus very likely apply to the broadsheets as well. The extensive text in the manuscript version MS, on the other hand, provides such detailed interpretation of the images that this version ends up requiring less interpretative ability from its readers.

292 ROSENFELD (1954) pp. 71–74.

293 ROSENFELD (1954) p. 67. Speaking specifically of the 'Christus und die minnende Seele' literature, he speaks of a "Volkskunst und Volkspoesie [...], die selten den ästhetischen Maßstäben standhält, die aber als seelisches Rüstzeug weiter Kreise uns viel tiefere Aufschlüsse über den spätmittelalterlichen Menschen geben kann als manche berühmte Dichtung" (p. 74).

294 SCHMIDT (2000b) p. 77.

ROSENFELD also sees the relatively small format of the broadsheet as an indication that it was meant to be hung on the wall of a monastic cell:

Im Bereich der Mystik wird der Bilderbogen kleiner und intimer: er wandert aus dem Klosterrefektorium oder den Klosterkreuzgängen in die einzelne Zelle hinein. Er muß sich kleiner und billiger geben, um Besitztum der vielen von der Mystik Berührten werden zu können: der Bilderbogen der Minnenden Seele mißt trotz seiner 20 Szenen nur noch 35,6 x 26,5 cm!²⁹⁵

Although this may indeed have been the case, the fact that all but one of the surviving 'Christus und die minnende Seele' broadsheets have been cut up into smaller segments, even individual scenes, indicates that they were probably not, or not exclusively, used as wall-decoration.

PETER SCHMIDT has pointed out that this use of the term *Bilderbogen*, allowing form to determine function, is problematic, for it ignores or even preempts an investigation of historical circumstances and actual traces of use of late medieval single-leaf prints.²⁹⁶ The generalized term *Bilderbogen* refers only broadly to form, and does not differentiate between the wide variety of both printed and hand-reproduced broadsheets containing text and image that were circulating in the late Middle Ages.²⁹⁷

That 'Christus und die minnende Seele' was originally conceived as a combination of text and image is clear from the close relationship between the two elements, and from the fact that virtually all manuscript and print versions of the work contain some form of both.²⁹⁸ Although only one complete broadsheet, M, has survived, the manuscript versions containing for the most part the same scenes as the broadsheet testify to the fact that the broadsheet was understood as a whole.

Unlike the manuscripts, the surviving 'Christus und die minnende Seele' broadsheets and fragments of broadsheets provide few direct clues as to their provenance and actual circumstances of use. Other than that M was produced in the sixteenth century in Augsburg by the printer Matthäus Franck, there is no indication of for whom it was produced or how it was used. The remaining three broadsheets have all been cut up into fragments. Although the original context can no longer be reconstructed, the individual scenes or pairs of scenes of two broadsheets, W and Z, were originally pasted into manuscripts.²⁹⁹ Pasting printed illustrations into manuscript books was commonly practiced in the late Middle Ages; from the 1440's on the production of woodcuts and copperplate engravings increased dramatically, with small format cycles often intended from the beginning for manuscript illustration.³⁰⁰ Although neither the fragments Bn, W, and Z nor the complete broadsheet M provide indications of ownership, it is clear that the broadsheet was available to both male and female recipients. Not only were the manuscripts Mz and B containing the broadsheet text version produced by and for a male readership, the broadsheet fragment W was pasted into a manuscript from the male Benedictine convent Mondsee. It is also conceivable that the broadsheets or por-

295 ROSENFELD (1954) p. 71; see also HELLMUT ROSENFELD, "Christus und die minnende Seele" ²VL 1 col. 1235.

296 SCHMIDT (2000b) p. 70.

297 SCHMIDT (2000b) p. 279 n. 2.

298 WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1989) p. 350, SCHMIDT (2005) pp. 277–278.

299 See p. 18.

300 SCHMIDT (2000b) pp. 74–75.

tions thereof were sent between spiritual advisers and their charges; in the context of the *cura monialium* pastoral caregivers not only provided nuns with literature, but also with pictures or illustrated texts.³⁰¹

Research on the ways late medieval single-leaf illustrated prints were intended to function also provides useful insights into the way the 'Christus und die minnende Seele' broadsheet may have been used by its readers. After examining a number of such illustrated prints, NIKOLAUS HENKEL lists several characteristics all have in common. In all instances, complex religious concepts are contained in abbreviated visual form. Thus the observer must have had the necessary background knowledge in order for these concepts to be called to mind by the illustrations. The images were intended to be interpreted by the viewer in a process of devotion or meditation, and when interpreted, the illustrations demand action from the viewer and thus become a means of ordering or shaping one's life. From these observations, HENKEL develops two conclusions:

[...] zum einen, daß die je vorfindliche Verbindung von Bild und Text zwar jeweils für sich verstanden und interpretiert werden kann, daß sie jedoch nur Teil eines wesentlich umfassenderen geistig-geistlichen Konstrukts ist, das in seiner Komplexität im Bewußtsein des mittelalterlichen Betrachters bereits vorhanden ist. Die beobachtete Bild-Text-Einheit verkürzt dieses komplexe Konstrukt zur Abbrueviatur, die es ermöglicht, den komplexen Sachverhalt memorierend wiederherzustellen. Das Bild wird also als Memorierhilfe gesehen, es steht zeichenhaft-exemplarisch für etwas darüber Hinausweisendes, Umfassenderes, das es erschließen hilft. Zum andern gehe ich von der Annahme aus, daß die je vorfindliche Bild-Text-Verbindung, ist sie in ihrer Zeichenhaftigkeit erst erkannt und erschlossen, über sich selbst hinausführt, an den Betrachter appelliert, ja, ihn zu einem bestimmten Handeln aufruft.³⁰²

This describes virtually the same process that takes place in 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' The illustrations function as abbreviations, not simplifications, iconographic references to complex theological and mystical concepts which the reader must understand and interpret. They function as signs, veils, *integumenta*, that reveal a meaning beyond themselves. Furthermore, while each segment refers to an independent concept, it only attains its true significance in relation to the other scenes on the broadsheet, arranged in horizontal and vertical sequences. And finally, the combined segments of the work, progressing as they do from the *via purgativa* through the *via illuminativa* to the *via unitiva*, both enable and require its readers to shape their own lives according to the model they provide. The readers can step into the role of the generic 'soul' and ascend with her along the upward journey to spiritual perfection, as the images demand ever more sophisticated understanding the further they proceed.

Katharina Tucher

For 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' this process of calling up the memory of complex concepts by means of visual abbreviation, in which the observer becomes involved through the need to interpret increasingly complex images, and which ultimately demands that she shape her life according to the model provided, does not remain a hy-

301 SCHMIDT (2000b) pp. 74–75.

302 HENKEL pp. 209–210.

pothetical construct. The 'Offenbarungen' of Katharina Tucher provide us with a rare concrete example of how one late medieval woman approached its texts and images, appropriating them by incorporating them into her own experience.

Katharina's 'Offenbarungen' contain several references to images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' As the scribe of Kr, she certainly had access to the text, which must have been circulating in and around Nuremberg, where Katharina moved from Neumarkt in 1419–1420 after the death of her husband and where she later entered St. Catherine's.³⁰³ There is no indication that Katharina owned a copy of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' herself, but her extensive library can only be incompletely reconstructed.³⁰⁴ In Katharina's 'Offenbarungen,' the images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' are combined with elements from other religious texts and her own experience and incorporated into a series of diary-like entries recorded in Katharina's own hand that consist primarily of dialogues with Biblical figures such as Christ and the Virgin Mary, but also John the Baptist, the devil and her confessor. The entries also take the form of short aphorisms or visions in which Katharina participates in Biblical events. Some of the entries have a dream-like quality, and often the entries are preceded by the formulation: *mir ward gegenburtig*, indicating perhaps some sort of vision or audition.³⁰⁵

Nevertheless, Katharina's 'Offenbarungen' should not be understood purely as records of her actual experience. Katharina Tucher had access to a wide variety of devotional and other religious literature, and her diary of spiritual experience appears to emulate in both form and content such literary models as the revelations of Adelheid Langmann or Mechthild of Magdeburg.³⁰⁶ Despite literary stylization, her 'Offenbarungen' nevertheless appear to have been a means of coming to terms with problematic experiences in her own life.³⁰⁷ She appropriates literary forms and motifs, including those from 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' as a means for expressing and even shaping her own spiritual experience.

The longest passage containing images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' occurs in revelation eight, a scene in which Katharina speaks and interacts with Christ:

Die red mit der sell: 'Mein tauv, mein gemahel, mein vnfermailligtew, kvm, ich wil mich mit dir verainen. Kvm, mein avzerweldew, mit der ich mein wannvng haben wil. Ich wil mit dir in daz maien tauv gen der himelischen frovt. Ich wil dich pegoben. Ich wil dir ain fingerlein der rechten frevntschafft geben. Ich wil dich klaiden schonner wen Sallamon in aller seiner wirtschafft geklaid wahs. Ich wil dir zben schvch an dein fovz geben. Ich wil dir ein krentzlein mit perlein avf setzten. Kvm, mein gemintew, mein liebew tauv, ich wil avf dir rven. Ich wil dir fideln, ich wil dir geigen, ich wil dir herpfen, ich wil der pussavmen herlichen, ich wil dir feial prechen.

So verpirgt er sich vnd ich svch in. Daz siht er wol, vnd ich sih in niht. Wen ich in wieder fint, so wirt ich fro vnd sprich: 'O mein schons liep, peleitb pei mir! Schaid dich niht wan mir!' So heht

303 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) pp. 1–5.

304 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 11.

305 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) pp. 8–9.

306 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) pp. 11–12.

307 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 12.

*er mich den avf vnd lest mich hangen. Dez spils, dez kossen, dez lieplichen redens in frevntlicher gegenbortigkeit, das vber trift alle irdische lieb, frevd diesser werlt!*³⁰⁸

The series of images this passage contains are commonplaces in mystical literature, but the combination, and especially the inclusion of the 'hanging' image indicates that at least one source for these images was 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' In the first part the imagery of the 'spinning' and 'undressing' scenes is reversed as Christ bestows the soul with a ring, clothing, shoes and a wreath, as we have seen items also given to nuns in the Order of Consecration of Virgins. Katharina's reference to Solomon shows that she has also understood the reference to the passage from Matt. 6.28–29 (her replacement of 'glory' with *wirtschaft* may be due to interference of the 'fasting' episode directly below 'undressing' on the broadsheet). She transforms Christ's demand to put away earthly things into the donning of spiritual clothing signifying a marriage with Christ. Katharina has made a vertical connection between the higher and lower levels of the broadsheet, as most of the other 'Christus und die minnende Seele' images in this episode are from the *via unitiva*. Apart from the 'undressing' and 'spinning' episodes, Katharina reads the images from the top to the bottom of the broadsheet. Music is followed by 'seeking' and 'hanging,' two consecutive episodes if the broadsheet is read top to bottom and left to right.

The 'hanging' episode recurs again in revelation 23 in combination with Christ as musician: '*Kint meins, dv hast mir dein hertz geben, daz lasz mir, so wil ich ein fideln ausz dir machen vnd wil dich an den hals hohben vnd wil fideln vnd wil mein frevd mit dir haben.*'³⁰⁹ Here Katharina has combined the image of Christ playing for the soul with that of the soul itself as an instrument, probably picked up from her extensive reading. She also unmistakably refers to hanging by the neck, an unusual image unique to the 'Christus und die minnende Seele' illustrations in the manuscripts E, D, and K (plates 12, 32, and 52). The reference to the fact that Christ can see her while she cannot see him also reflects the illustration on the broadsheet, where Christ peeks out from behind the curtain. From the 'hanging' episode she jumps back up to the 'secret word,' where even her choice of words (*das vber trift alle irdische lieb*) seems to be lifted from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' (*das vber triffet des himels hort [A]*). Revelation ten includes the image of Christ as schoolmaster: '*Ich wil dir ain ler geben. Die trag mit dir haim, als man den schvllern latein gibt. Daz erst: Halt dich zv ain peschavem leben.*'³¹⁰

In revelation twenty she returns to the image of seeking, this time continuing upward in the right-hand vertical column of the broadsheet to the 'secret word' and 'crown' segments:

Die sel svcht in in allen kammern vnd in aln gemechen. Daz wert ein gvtev weil, so fint sie in. Sie spricht: 'Mein lieb, ich hab dich vmb vnd dvm gesvcht, ich sah dein niht.'

Er spricht: 'Mein gespvnitz, sitz her zv mir. Wir wollen mit ein ander kossen. Dv pist mein, ich wil dir geben ewig gloria vnd wil dir geben vber flvzsige frevd. Ich wil dich ergetzzen, wahs dv hie gelieden hast. Flig wir mit ein ander in daz ewig leben vnd sieh mein frevd.'

308 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 34:9–24.

309 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 42:6–8.

310 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 35:13–14.

Die sel sprach: 'Her, ich hab niht flvgel.'

*Er sprach: 'Die engel schvln dein flvgel sein. Ich wil dich kronen mit meiner dvrnein kron, mit der wil ich dich drocken, vnd gib dir ein sper in dein hant zv eim waffen, daz dv, sel, nimer frolich scholt werden hie in der zeit, pies dir die frevd wirt, die ich dir geben wil. Ich wil dir geben avz meim hertzen ein tronck meins kospem schatz, daz dich nimer mer gedvurst nach kaim vergencklichem ding, daz ein avfspronck nimt in daz ewig leben.'*³¹¹

Here the upper three segments in the right hand vertical column of the broadsheet, 'seeking,' 'secret word,' and 'crown,' appear one after the other in a sequence leading to the joys of eternal life, an indication that the broadsheet was indeed read in this vertical manner, and that the unio images were understood as representing eternal life. The images of 'wounding' and 'love potion' are also integrated into this sequence with the image of Christ's heart as the source of the drink he gives the soul, indicating that Katharina Tucher understood it in a Eucharistic sense as the blood flowing from Christ's side wound. She transforms the arrow into a *wafen*, a spear, which indicates that she connects this episode with Longinus wounding Christ on the cross with a spear, but could also be a misreading of the soul's cry of *waffen waffen!* from the 'hanging' and 'asleep at the altar' episodes below.

In these excerpts in particular and in her 'Offenbarungen' in general, Katharina combines images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' with a myriad of other motifs from a wide variety of sources. By incorporating these images, she is not just imitating the actions of the Sponsa but also appropriating them as expressions of her own experience in an effort to make sense of and shape her own life. DEBORAH ROSE-LEFMANN has demonstrated how in many instances Katharina's meditation on images is reflected in the content of her revelations; her 'Offenbarungen' "show that the writer is consciously moving in a world in which religious images matter a great deal, and in which meditation on devotional images can give rise to visions in which the familiar images become part of the visionary's subjective experience."³¹²

Thus Katharina's 'Offenbarungen,' while maybe not among the "literarischen Spitzenleistungen des frauenmystischen Schrifttums,"³¹³ nevertheless provide a rare view of the late medieval interaction of literary convention and personal experience in general and of the way 'Christus und die minnende Seele' was read and received by its medieval readers in particular. Katharina makes full use of the freedom the broadsheet affords. She reads it both vertically and horizontally, from bottom to top and top to bottom, and even makes wide leaps between scenes distant from each other. She creates her own narrative sequences by re-combining the scenes of 'Christus und die minnende Seele.' The associations she makes between different episodes are evidence that the scenes were not read only horizontally, but also vertically and even selected and re-combined at will. Whether the images from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' (or any of the other devotional works she used as sources) actually inspired visions in Katharina Tucher, we can never know for certain. What does seem to be the case, however, was that religious images and texts, newly combined and written down as 'revelations,' offered help in

311 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) pp. 39:25–40:8.

312 ROSE-LEFMANN p. 202.

313 WILLIAMS/WILLIAMS-KRAPP (1998) p. 5.

making sense of her own life and spiritual journey. She has not merely intellectually understood the texts and images of 'Christus und die minnende Seele,' she has used them to shape her own experience.

Conclusion

'Christus und die minnende Seele' presents its readers with a narrative in which they can participate by inserting themselves into the role of the anonymous soul. The texts and illustrations make abbreviated reference to a wide variety of complex theological concepts, demanding both *imitatio Christi* and *imitatio Mariae*. It is the images themselves that pull the observer upward along with the soul. Although the scenes are only loosely connected on a horizontal level, the broadsheet arranges them thematically in vertical columns in which each row adds a new level of meaning to the ones beneath it. The scenes' progressive difficulty and changing subject matter, moving from the known to the unknown, require increasingly higher levels of spiritual development. Through numerous allusions to various types of *integumenta* they provide arguments for visual images as unlike likenesses, both concealing and revealing that which cannot be portrayed.

Thus, although at first glance a simplification of mystical spirituality, upon closer examination 'Christus und die minnende Seele' turns out to be a complex construct requiring a relatively sophisticated audience well-acquainted with the religious literature of the day. One such woman was Katharina Tucher, whose interpretations (and mis-interpretations) of the scenes from 'Christus und die minnende Seele' demonstrate just how much the broadsheet left up to the reader. The increasing amounts of text in the manuscript versions attempt to counteract this ambiguity. The earlier broadsheet text versions represented by Kr and A still reflect a mystical approach, with the journey culminating in rapturous *unio mystica* in this life and salvation in the next. But MS, dating from the late fifteenth century, reflects a change in the attitudes of spiritual advisers toward mystical forms of spirituality. No longer ecstatic union, but rather spiritual perfection in the form of the attainment of certain virtues such as obedience and detachment from the world are the final goal, to be rewarded not in this life, but in heaven.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the manuscripts containing 'Christus und die minnende Seele' vary from 'mystical miscellanies' containing a wide range of devotional, mystical, and mystagogical literature to manuscripts with very specifically-defined programs. In E and Ū the emphasis is didactic. The texts and images chosen for these manuscripts demonstrate how to lead a godly life for the laywoman Margaretha Ehinger on the one hand and for the nuns of the reformed Dominican convent of Zoffingen on the other. The texts and images in D provide objects of meditation and devotion that appeal to the reader's emotions. In K the pairing with only one additional text, 'Christus und die sieben Laden,' points to an Alsatian tradition of imbuing objects of everyday life with a spiritual meaning.

The manuscripts containing MS are all (with the exception of Ū) richly illustrated. The extravagant programs of illustration serve multiple functions. On a superficial level, they act as symbols not only of the manuscript owner's material wealth but also of her religious status. A closer examination of their content in conjunction with the overall

program of each manuscript shows that the illustrations serve primarily devotional or didactic purposes. They function as objects of devotion, as *exempla* encouraging imitation, or as *integumenta* that point beyond themselves to a higher significance. In this way the MS manuscripts argue in subtle visual language for the essential role of images in spiritual life, although the MS version of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' itself reduces the impact of the illustrations through extensive textual additions. The text and no longer the illustrations dominate the page, the vertical connections between the individual scenes are lost in the manuscript format, and the text offers clear interpretations of each image that conform to the ideals of the reform, limiting and guiding the individual response of the observer. This would seem to point to diverging interests of the author of MS, who propagates the ideals of the reform movement, and its lay female recipients.

The circulation history of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' indicates that it very likely originated as an illustrated broadsheet in the context of female Dominican mysticism of the German-speaking southwest. It can be placed within the tradition of works in which visual images play an important mystagogical role, such as the 'Rothschild Canticles' and Suso's 'Exemplar.' Not only the variations represented by the four different versions of the work, but also the unique evidence of actual reception of 'Christus und die minnende Seele' by Katharina Tucher, who uses it to shape her own mystical experience, offer a vibrant picture of bridal mysticism as it was received over the two centuries during which 'Christus und die minnende Seele' circulated.