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Plate 15 PIETER AERTSEN. The Mass of St. Gregory with the Mystic Winepress.
Utrecht, St. Catherine's Convent Museum. (134)

NOTES

Pieter Aertsen: *The Mass of St. Gregory with the Mystic Winepress*

H. L. M. Defoer

THE NUMBER of surviving drawings by Pieter Aertsen is rather small in comparison with that of his paintings. In 1965 J. Bruyn brought thirteen drawings together in *Master Drawings*, eleven of which he illustrated.¹ To these one more was added by E. Haverkamp-Begemann in 1966, *Christ among the Doctors*, a drawing in the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts.² On April 3, 1978, the St. Catherine's Convent Museum at Utrecht bought at a sale in Amsterdam a previously unknown drawing by Pieter Aertsen, which depicts the Mass of St. Gregory in combination with the Mystic Winepress (Pl. 15).³ It is a rapidly executed pen and wash drawing on paper measuring 535 x 375 mm. Under the ink a few lines in red chalk can be seen, indicating the position and structure of the winepress. The wash is in two colors, a grayish tone for the Mass of St. Gregory and the actual winepress, a brownish tone for the small scenes in the background, which together offer a representation of the Church's teaching on grace.

The drawing exhibits Pieter Aertsen's highly characteristic drawing style of the fifties of the sixteenth century, a nervous and apparently very spontaneous style, with sketchy, sinuous lines by which the figures and details are suggested rather than precisely defined. One looks in vain for simple straight lines, finding instead a multitude of ragged wavy lines, which sometimes even become fluted edges, when the hem of a garment falling in fine folds is indicated. For the details of musculature and facial features little strokes or dashes are used, occasionally with wash to

strengthen the effect. The wash further serves to indicate shadows and modeling, the brush strokes sometimes being set down separately alongside and parallel to each other.

The Utrecht sheet shows a particularly close relationship to two of the drawings published by Bruyn, namely the *St. Martin and the Beggar* at Munich, a study for the exterior of the left wing of the *Seven Sorrows Altarpiece* at Zoutleeuw (Fig. 1),⁴ and the drawing in the collection of P. and N. de Boer in Amsterdam, the subject of which is not entirely clear (Fig. 2).⁵ What the Utrecht drawing has in common with the *St. Martin* is the manner in which the musculature and the details of the faces are rendered, while the sketchy background figures are identical in appearance on both sheets. The painted altarpiece at Zoutleeuw itself also exhibits points of comparison: note the vestments of the priest on the outside of the right wing.⁶ The links with the drawing in the De Boer collection are even closer. The head of the deacon on the right there is virtually identical with that of the deacon holding St. Gregory's cope on the left of the Utrecht sheet and the other heads also exhibit a striking similarity. The same can be said for the hands and the way in which the musculature is rendered. The altar in the Amsterdam drawing is positioned in the picture area in the same way as the winepress in the Utrecht sheet, the bases of the pillars are the same, and on the altar, too, red chalk lines which indicate the structure are to be seen. The Zoutleeuw triptych is dated 1554, so the present drawing must date from the same period. In addition to its affinity with the drawings in Munich and Amsterdam, it also shows similarities to *Christ among the Doctors* in Philadelphia and the *Arrest of Christ* in Madrid.⁷ Both of these drawings are distinguished from the sheets in Utrecht, Munich, and Amsterdam by the fact that there is no wash on them, with the result that pen hatching plays a large part in the indication of light and shade. There is, however, a con-



Fig. 1 PIETER AERTSEN.
St. Martin and the Beggar.
Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung.



Fig. 2 PIETER AERTSEN.
A Bishop Displaying the Holy Eucharist.
Amsterdam, Collection of P. and N. de Boer.



Fig. 3 MASTER OF THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW
ALTARPIECE.

The Mass of St. Gregory.

Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum.

siderable likeness in the way in which hands, draperies, faces, joints, and musculature are rendered.

The Utrecht drawing was probably a *modello* for the center panel of an altarpiece, which was arched at the top.⁸ Thus the wash in two colors, which has already been referred to, would, of course be con-

nected with Aertsen's custom in some of his altarpieces of painting the large figures in the foreground in naturalistic colors and executing the scenes in the background as a sort of *grisaille*.

The Subject

The composition for the altarpiece shows an unusual combination of the subjects known as the Mass of St. Gregory and the Mystic Winepress. During a celebration of the Mass, Pope Gregory saw a vision of Christ as the Man of Sorrows. The subject was linked with a mosaic icon of the Man of Sorrows dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth century in S. Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome. The icon depicts Christ as a half-length figure standing in a sarcophagus with the cross behind him. In some representations of the Mass of St. Gregory, Christ is still shown in this way, but in others he is depicted as a three-quarter length or full-length standing figure showing his wounds. In doing so he often directs a stream of blood into the chalice to indicate that the wine consecrated during the Mass is the same as his blood (Fig. 3). Around him the Instruments of the Passion are generally depicted.⁹

This is the case in the Utrecht drawing too. St. Gregory is seen kneeling before the altar during the elevation, the raising of the chalice during the consecration.¹⁰ Two deacons hold his cope. One of them is at the same time turning a page of the Missal, the other swinging a censer. Also kneeling round the altar are a bishop, a cardinal with St. Gregory's tiara in his hands, and two other figures. On the altar stands the sarcophagus of Christ with the lid placed at right angles across it. On the lid can be seen the pots of ointment of the women who went to the tomb on Easter morning and also the winding-sheet in which the body of Christ was wrapped. Christ himself, standing with one foot in the tomb and the other on the altar, is directing a stream of blood into the chalice. Behind him in the clouds can be seen abbreviated references to scenes of the Passion, for example, on the left, a scourge, the head of a man spitting in his face and, above, soldiers with chains and lanterns. One of these, Malchus, has St. Peter's sword above his ear. St. Peter himself appears a little further to the right beside the head of the High Priest's servant girl.

The cock that crowed at St. Peter's denial of Christ stands on top of one of the pillars of the winepress on the left. To the left of it appears Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate and on the far right Judas who has hanged himself, the pieces of silver falling from the moneybag around his neck. In the middle of all these heads and half-length figures are such instruments of the Passion as the lance, the sponge, the pincers, and the nails. Christ himself is bent low under the cross, which serves at the same time as the press-beam of the winepress, while the sarcophagus does duty as the receptacle for the pressed wine (i.e., the blood).

Like the Mass of St. Gregory, the Mystic Winepress is also a theme that frequently crops up at the end of the Middle Ages. The earliest examples of it, however, are already found in the twelfth century. It is based not on a story, but on Early Christian exegetical ideas, whereby a number of passages from the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation are linked typologically with Christ's Passion and death. It is founded on a text in Isaiah (63:3): *Torcular calcavi solus*, "I have trodden the winepress alone." This is linked with a passage in the Revelation of St. John (19:13), which describes how the victor in the struggle came "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." In the Song of Solomon (1:14) the bridegroom is further compared to a Cyprian grape, while the medieval exegetes also saw in the bunch of grapes hanging from the staff carried by the Spies of Canaan (Numbers 13:23-4) a prefiguration of the dying Savior on the cross. Thus Christ in the Mystic Winepress becomes both the conqueror of evil, who himself trod the winepress alone, as well as the grape that is pressed for the sake of the sins of mankind: he is both actively and passively involved in the sufferings that he has freely taken upon himself.¹¹

While in the early representations the emphasis lies on the active participation, Christ is later increasingly shown as the pressed grape. He becomes a man of sorrows, who collapses bleeding under the weight of the cross, which comes to function as the press-beam of the winepress. The Eucharistic aspects of the Mystic Winepress become ever more clearly underlined, among other things by the pressed wine (blood) being caught in a chalice. In Aertsen's drawing the Eucharistic significance is further emphasized by the

combination of the winepress with the Mass of St. Gregory, apparently a unique concept, of which no other example is known. Only the *Mass of St. Gregory* by the Master of the *St. Bartholomew Altarpiece* in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum at Cologne appears to point towards the Mystic Winepress in the way in which Christ is bowed down under the cross (Fig. 3).

In the late Middle Ages, then, the idea of Christ having redeemed mankind by freely taking his bloody sufferings upon himself became explicitly linked with the Eucharist in the Mystic Winepress. The blood of Christ, which is identical with the consecrated wine, is the source of all grace, in which the faithful can obtain a share through the mediation of the Church that Christ himself founded. In some representations of the Mystic Winepress the role of the Church as the institution concerned with the stewardship of that grace, in this case the wine, is given an additional emphasis. Representations of this type appear at the end of the fifteenth century, but are found mainly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in Northern France in particular.¹² This must certainly be connected with the polemical significance of such a theme in the battle against the Reformation, which denied both the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the role of the Church of Rome in the dispensation of grace.

Our drawing is a good example of this type of Mystic Winepress. The scenes in brownish wash in the background, which were intended to be executed later in *grisaille* on the altarpiece itself, depict the role of the Church in the story of salvation. At the very top Adam and Eve can be seen on either side of the tree with the Serpent. Behind them stands Death and behind him Cain, the tiller of the soil, with his spade. In front of Adam and Eve kneels Abel clad in a sheepskin. In the zone below can be seen the vineyard already planted by God in the Old Testament, which, having been well tended by the Children of Israel under the leadership of a figure dressed as a Jewish priest, will bear fruit in the New Testament. To the right of the Jewish priest appear two devils blowing a fire with bellows. Their significance is not entirely clear. Are they trying in vain to set fire to the vineyard? On the far left of the drawing, St. Peter, the first pope, who took over Christ's place, can be seen



Fig. 4 FRANCE, 17TH CENTURY. The Mystic Winepress. Engraving.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

treading the grapes cast into the vat by the other Apostles. As his attribute here St. Peter is holding not the keys, but the upside-down cross on which he was crucified. The attributes of several of the other disciples can be made out as well. A little nearer the foreground saints and martyrs, including St. Lawrence and St. Agnes, are emptying pitchers of wine into a wine barrel, which is marked on the front with the veil of St. Veronica and the five wounds of Christ. The saints are assisted by two bishops, probably St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, while St. Jerome and St. Gregory are receiving in a pitcher the wine spurting

out of the left side of the Mystic Winepress. In the background on the right the barrel is being conveyed on a triumphal car, which is drawn and accompanied by the symbols of the Four Evangelists.¹² The Apostle Paul is delivering the car with the barrel to the pope and emperor, the embodiments of ecclesiastical and secular authority. A little nearer the foreground the barrel is being stored by a king and some high church dignitaries in the winecellar, that is to say the Church.

The meaning of Aertsen's composition can be summed up as follows: Christ, through the sacrificial death he freely took upon himself, has redeemed man-

kind. His death had been foreseen from the beginning by God, who had already planted and tended his vineyard in the Old Testament. Christ's work is continued by the Apostles and saints, while the fruits of his redeeming death are spread throughout the world by the Gospel. The stewardship of the wine is entrusted to the Church, which is supported in its task by the secular authorities. The fruits of Christ's sufferings are made available primarily via the Eucharist, in which Christ himself is corporeally present.

Apart from the combination with the Mass of St. Gregory, there is nothing unique about the working out of the Mystic Winepress theme in this way. The earliest example is the monument erected in 1479 to the Stör family in St. Lorenz in Nürnberg,¹⁴ but the role of the Church is not worked out to such an extent there as in the drawing. Closer parallels to the latter are to be found in a panel in the church at Aarschot, a window in St. Étienne du Mont in Paris, and an engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Fig. 4). The panel in Aarschot, which dates from around 1525, combines the Mystic Winepress and the Church's teaching on grace with the Seven Sacraments, which are painted in small scenes under the Mystic Winepress.¹⁵ The stained-glass window and the engraving are probably derived from the same iconographical source as the panel at Aarschot, for, although they lack the scenes of the Seven Sacraments, they otherwise exhibit many similarities. Both date from the seventeenth century, but in all probability they are based on sixteenth-century models.¹⁶ All three compositions show the tending of the vineyard, the treading of the grapes in a vat by St. Peter, the triumphal car with the symbols of the Four Evangelists, the Fathers of the Church pouring the wine into barrels, the storing of the wine by holders of high ecclesiastical and secular offices, the hearing of confessions, and the giving of Communion. The window and the engraving bear texts explaining the meaning of the composition.¹⁷

As has been said, detailed compositions of this variety concerning the Mystic Winepress appear to occur mainly in Northern France and the Southern Netherlands. No complete example is known from the Northern Netherlands, but that they must certainly have existed there can be deduced from a draw-



Fig. 5 JACOB CORNELISZ. VAN OOSTZANEN.

The Mystic Winepress.

Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz,
Kupferstichkabinett.

ing with the Mystic Winepress by Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostzanen in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Fig. 5).¹⁸ There in the background can be seen, in addition to the Mystic Winepress and the Apostles casting the grapes into the press, a pope and a cardinal pouring wine into barrels. On the analogy of the compositions described above it is clear that it is St. Gregory and St. Jerome who are shown in the Berlin sheet and that the other two Fathers of the Church must have been represented on the wings of the altarpiece, for which this drawing was a design or *modello*. The giving of Communion and the hearing of confessions have acquired a place in the foreground along with the portraits of the donors, so that the Eucharistic, sacramental significance of the Mystic Winepress acquires an additional emphasis.¹⁹

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Translated from the Dutch by Patricia Wardle.

1. J. Bruyn, "Some drawings by Pieter Aertsen," *Master Drawings*, III, no. 4, 1965, pp. 355-68, pls. 1-9.
2. E. Haverkamp-Begemann, "Pieter Aertsen, not Beccafumi," *Master Drawings*, IV, 4, no. 4, 1966, pp. 413-15, pl. 28.
3. Sale Sotheby-Mak van Waay, Amsterdam, April 3, 1978, cat. no. 22. The attribution was based on a conversation with E. Haverkamp-Begemann, who had already seen the drawing at Sotheby's in London in the autumn of 1977.
4. Bruyn, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 363. It shows a bishop standing in front of an altar and displaying the host to a group of people in classicizing costume. On the back of the drawing the remains of an inscription can be made out: [?] *sacra*] *ment den ongelovigen voorge* [?] *houden*] (the Sacrament displayed to the unbelievers). According to Bruyn, the person shown here is possibly St. Eleutherius, Bishop of Tournay. According to Detlev Kreidel ("Die religiöse Malerei Pieter Aertsens als Grundlage seiner künstlerischen Entwicklung," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 1972, pp. 43 ff.), the drawing depicts a scene from the life of St. Aubin. Neither interpretation is very convincing in my view. A singular feature here
- is the fact that the figure on the altar behind the bishop is not a saint, but *Caritas*.
6. Bruyn, *op. cit.*, fig. 6; M. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, XIII, 1975, pl. 145.
7. Haverkamp-Begemann, *op. cit.*, pl. 28, and Bruyn, *op. cit.*, pl. 1. The drawing in Madrid is dated by Bruyn around 1540. However, it is so close to the drawing in Philadelphia and those in Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Munich that it too ought to be placed between 1550 and 1555.
8. A suggestion made in conversation by Miss M. Faries.
9. For the Mass of St. Gregory, see especially J. de Bulletin *Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts*, VIII, 1959, Borchgrave d'Altena, "La messe de St. Grégoire," pp. 3-34, and *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, II, Rome-Fribourg-Basle-Vienna, 1970, pp. 199-202. See also E. M. Vetter, *Die Kupferstiche zur Psalmodia Eucaristica des Melchior Prieto von 1622*, Münster, 1972, pp. 215 ff.
10. In the Catholic liturgy it is not the custom for priests to kneel during the elevation. That St. Gregory is kneeling here is probably due to the fact that he is generally shown kneeling in representations of this episode.
11. For the Mystic Winepress, see, among other references, A. Thomas, *Die Darstellung Christi in der Kelter*, Düsseldorf, 1935; C. de Clerq, "Le pressoir mystique d'Aerschot dans la tradition iconographique," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art*, 1936, pp. 41-49; *Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, III, Stuttgart, 1954, pp. 637-87; *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, II, Rome-Fribourg-Basle-Vienna, 1970, pp. 497-504; Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 243 ff.
12. For this type of Mystic Winepress and its dissemination in Northern France, see Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 144 ff.; De Clerq, *op. cit.*; E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France*, Paris, 1949, pp. 118 ff.; Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 275 ff.
13. This car is linked with the Old Testament car or chariot of Abinadab/Amminadab (1 Samuel 7:1, 2 Samuel 6:3, Song of Solomon 6:11), which is compared in medieval exegesis with the Gospel that goes over the whole world. In addition Dionysius the Carthusian compares Abinadab himself with Christ, who sacrificed himself of his own free will. See Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 146, and *Reallexikon zur*

- Deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, I, Stuttgart, 1937, pp. 638-41.
14. See Thomas, *op. cit.*, fig. 31; *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, II, Rome-Fribourg-Basle-Vienna, 1970, p. 501, fig. 2, and Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 285 ff.
 15. See De Clerq, *op. cit.*; J. Leeuwenberg, "De Meester van Aarschot," *Oud Holland*, LVIII, 1941, pp. 35-38, and Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 277, 284, 288. The earliest example of a Mystic Winepress in combination with the Seven Sacraments is an Upper Rhineland pen drawing of around 1420 in the municipal library at Colmar, folio 1r. of Ms. 306, *Der Spiegel des Leidens Christi*. See K. Jänecke, *Der Spiegel des Leidens Christi*, Hanover, 1964, pp. 65 ff.; A. Weckwerth, "Christus in der Kelter, Ursprung und Wandlungen eines Bildmotives," *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte. Eine Festgabe für Heinz Rudolf Rosemann*, Munich, 1960, p. 100; Vetter, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
 16. The window was made in 1622 by Nicolas Pinagrier, who took as his model a panel painted by his grandfather. The engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale (fol. 110 v. of the composite volume Éd. 5.g), which was published in the second half of the seventeenth century by Jacques Lalouette, appears to be based on a sixteenth-century tapestry. For these and other related compositions, see Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 156 ff., De Clerq, *op. cit.*, Mâle, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 ff., and Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 275 ff.
 17. For the complete text of the window, see Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-58. The long text at the bottom in particular affords much clarification of the ideas behind compositions of this type: "Heureux, homme Chrestien, si fermement tu crois/ Que Dieu te sauver a souffert a la croix/ Et que les sacrements retenus a l'Eglise/ De Son Sang precieux ont eu commencement;/ Qu'en les bien recevant toute offence est remise./ Et qu'on ne peut sans eux avoir son sauvement." In the Chiesa dell'Incoronata in Milan are to be found the remains of a fresco of around 1510 by Bernardo Bergognone. Still visible are Christ standing in the winepress, the Fathers of the Church catching the blood, and angels giving the chalice to the faithful. On various banderoles appear the following inscriptions: "Torcular calcavi solus et de gentibus non est vir mecum"; "Ex hoc omnes me bibite est enim sanguinis meus novi testamenti"; "S. Ecclesia salvum fac populum tuum et benedic hereditati tue"; "Qui dilexit nos et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo." See A. Morassi, "Un affresco di Ambrogio e alcune opere di Bernardo Bergognone," *Bolletino d'arte*, X, 1930, pp. 448 ff.; Vetter, *op. cit.*, p. 286.
 18. Pen and brown ink, 367 x 205. See, among other things, F. Lippmann, *Zeichnungen alter Meister im Kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin*, 1918, II, no. 225; K. Steinbart, *Die Tafelgemälde des Jacob Cornelisz. van Amsterdam*, Strasbourg, 1922, p. 162; *idem*, "Nachlese im Werk des Jacob Cornelisz.," *Marburger Jahrbuch*, 1929, p. 214; E. Bock, *Zeichnungen alter Meister im Kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin*, 1930, no. 4404; *Middleleewese Kunst der Noordelijke Nederlanden*, Amsterdam, 1958, no. 195; Vetter, *op. cit.*, pp. 272 and 288.
 19. On the far right a man is putting something into a woman's mouth with the aid of a spoon. In his left hand he holds a dish. This is probably a representation of the manner in which the server at Mass gave the ablution wine. In the thirteenth century there arose the custom of giving the faithful who had participated in Communion, a draught of ordinary, unconsecrated wine to drink. With this wine, which was called ablution wine, they could rinse their mouths, so that no little particles of the consecrated host would remain between the teeth. This custom spread throughout Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, disappearing again at the end of the seventeenth century. In order that the faithful should realize that the ablution wine given them was not the same as the consecrated wine, the ablution wine was not allowed to be given by the priest, but this was done for preference by a deacon or subdeacon, and for the same reason use was not made of the chalice that had held the consecrated wine, but of another one. In the course of the sixteenth century preference was even given to a vessel that clearly differed in form from a chalice and it is also possible that at that time a server began to take over the task of giving the ablution wine. Nothing is known about the use of a spoon, as shown in this drawing. See J. Braun, *Das Christliche Altargerät* Munich, 1932, pp. 552 ff., and J. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, Fribourg, 1952, pp. 510 ff.