

Leaves of Gold

Manuscript Illumination from Philadelphia Collections

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Audeamus
omnes in do-
mino diem
festum cele-
brantes sub
honore ma-
rie virginis: de cuius conceptione
gaudent angeli, et collaudant fili-
um dei. **ps.** **A** ructavit cor me-
um verbum bonum: dico ego ope-
ra mea regi. **Antz.** **A** udeamus
p. **A** udent angeli et exultant
archangeli: et collaudant filium
dei. **G**loria patri et filio et spi-
ritui sancto. **S**icut erat in pri-

Missal for Rome Use

Historiated Initial G with the Virgin and Her Symbols

Southern Netherlands, possibly Hainault, c. 1530–50

The Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis E 157, fol. 149

THE MISSAL is opened to the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin, with the initial carrying an image of the Immaculate Conception. At the turn of the fifteenth century, depictions of the Immaculate Mary, flanked by the symbols of her virginity, became popular in France and Flanders. The symbols, such as the well of living water, the city of God, and the locked garden, are identified here by texts on banderoles. These *Arma Virginis* are metaphors extracted from biblical sources, especially the Cantic of Canticles (or Song of Songs), where Mary is likened to the Immaculate Beloved. She is recognized as such by God the Father, who from heaven addresses her as *tota pulchra*: “Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee” (Cantic of Canticles 4:7). ❧

Until the fifteenth century, theologians fiercely debated the idea of whether Mary, as Mother of God, could have been in any way stained by original sin. The concept that she was immaculately conceived was fostered by the Franciscans, among others. This idea received semi-official recognition by Pope Sixtus IV in 1476. A Mass of the Conception was created four years later by the Milanese monk Bernardino de’ Busti. From then on a specific iconography developed. Although widely accepted as a truth revealed by God, the Immaculate Conception was not officially confirmed as a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church until December 8, 1854.

The iconography of the Immaculate Mary and her symbols became popular in different artistic mediums.¹ Among these, engravings were instrumental in the success and the diffusion of the motif. An early example of the subject can be found in a Book of Hours first printed by Thielman Kerver in 1503 (fig. 48-1). Such engravings directly inspired the representation in the missal; the composition and the sequence of the symbols depicted are rigorously similar. God the Father looks over the scene from heaven, while the Virgin, her hands folded in prayer, is crowded with her symbols into the restricted space of the initial. Although it carefully imitates its printed counterpart, the miniature is not an exact copy. Not only does it differ in minor details, but it also is painted in a later style. Eschewing the hieratic and strictly axial composition of the engraving, the illuminator skillfully creates tension and movement by opposing the figures of God the Father and Mary, depicted in light contrapposto and looking in opposite directions. The rigid and angular folds of the garments in the engraving, so typical of the late Middle Ages, here give way to a supple and rounded presentation, clearly influenced by the new spirit of the Renaissance. The limits of the initial forced the illuminator to squeeze the engraved model into a dense composition, characterized by a pronounced *horror vacui*.



Fig. 48-1. Book of Hours for Rome Use, The Virgin and Her Symbols, engraving, printed by Thielman Kerver, Paris, 1511. Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York, Z232 .K477 1511 C28, fol. N6v.

Many of the illustrated initials in the missal display the typical feathery decoration of manuscripts produced in the county of Hainault (a region now spread over France and Belgium) by the followers of Simon Marmion, the famous painter and illuminator active in the third quarter of the fifteenth century in Valenciennes.² From a stylistic and chronological point of view, the missal shown here, in which the hands of two artists may be distinguished, can be situated between the Master of Antoine Rolin (flourished c. 1480–1510) and Hubert Cailleau (c. 1523–1590), both active in Valenciennes. A dating of the manuscript around 1530–50 is confirmed by a study of the costumes. The contemporary clothing of the two elegant men who stone Saint Stephen on folio 14v, wearing chausses with baggy, barrellike breeches and flat berets, accords with this late dating.

The text of the book yields little information that points to its original provenance. Nevertheless, the depictions of Saint Benedict and, more interestingly, of Saint Martin in two different places (fols. 193, 242) might point to a Benedictine abbey dedicated to the patron of Tours. One possibility is Saint Martin of Tournai, located twenty

miles north of Valenciennes. It is worth noting that the Mass of the dedication of the church in this missal is placed between the Nativity of the Virgin (September 8) and All Saints Day (November 1). As it happens, the dedication of the abbey church of Saint Martin of Tournai was celebrated on October 6.

—D V W

Vellum, i (paper) + 270 fols. + i (paper)

Folio: 14½ x 9¾ inches (360 x 245 mm)

Text: 8¾ x 5¼ inches (224 x 145 mm)

Latin, spiky Gothic bookhand

DECORATION: 5 historiated initials with full borders, 17 large historiated initials, 2 small historiated initials, many illuminated and decorated letters.

BINDING: French, blind-stamped dark-green morocco by Belz-Niedrée with *superelexlibris* of the Bibliothèque de Mello on both covers, vellum doublures in gold-tooled frame, early twentieth century.

PROVENANCE: Baron François Florentin Achille Seillière, Paris (1813–1873); sale, Sotheby's, London, February 28, 1887; catalogue description of Tregaskis (London bookseller) pasted onto back flyleaf; John Frederick Lewis, Philadelphia; given by his widow, Anne Baker Lewis, to the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1936.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: De Ricci, vol. 2, p. 2030, no. 34; Lewis, p. 169, no. 157.

- 1 On the Immaculate Conception, see Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, Monographs on Archaeology and Fine Arts Sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America and the College Art Association of America, vol. 7 (New York: College Art Association with the Art Bulletin, 1957).
- 2 On Hainault illumination, see *Valenciennes aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles: Art et histoire*, ed. Ludovic Nys and Alain Salamagne with the Association "Valentiana" (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 1996), pp. 168–224.

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Cutting from an Antiphony

Historiated Initial Q with Saints Peter and Paul

By a follower of Johannes von Valkenburg

Germany, Cologne, c. 1325

The Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, Lewis E M 4.3

THIS CUTTING from a large choir book was made for one of the cloisters of Cologne, the seat of an archbishop and a papal outpost during the Middle Ages. The cathedral of Cologne is dedicated to Saint Peter, who according to tradition was martyred at Rome on June 29, the same day as Saint Paul. The initial with the two apostles was painted to mark the place in the manuscript where one finds the prayers to sing for the celebration of the saints' common feast day. Peter and Paul were considered to be the founding fathers of the apostolic church. Paul holds the sword of his martyrdom, and Peter holds the keys to the church, alluding to his role as the first Pope. The hand gestures of the figures indicate the act of conversation, and Paul's glance heavenward suggests that the matter under discussion is of a spiritual nature. The sacred presence of the figures is signified by a framing niche of ecclesiastical architecture, embellished with gold and colorful patterned backgrounds in the manner of contemporary French manuscript painting. ∞

This initial of Saints Peter and Paul represents not only the stylistic relationship between the art of Cologne and Paris in the Gothic period but also the political significance of that relationship. Cologne's enthusiastic reception of French Gothic art was advanced by the construction of the new cathedral, begun in 1248.¹ This same year marked the completion of Sainte Chapelle in Paris, a jewel box of *rayonnant* architecture built for Saint Louis (Louis IX) to enshrine the Crown of Thorns. The elegant forms of this building, decorated with sculpture, stained glass, and painted and gilded walls to suggest a reliquary of fine metalwork, became associated with the court of Europe's "most Christian King," a secular sovereign devoted to Christ and loyal to the Church. Saint Louis's principles of government were justified by the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who obliged kings to uphold the moral authority of the state. The archbishop and ecclesiastics of Cologne, however, saw no such moral leadership in the "Holy Roman" emperors of Germany, who refused to conform to Aquinas's standards of ideal kingship and continually challenged the decrees of the Church.²

This historical background contextualizes the work of Johannes von Valkenburg, a Franciscan scribe and illuminator who signed and dated two graduals for his Cologne monastery in 1299.³ These elegantly decorated works are indebted to the French court style and have been associated with Parisian manuscripts made for Saint Louis's Sainte Chapelle. The work of Johannes and his followers appears stylistically closer, however, to local work in other mediums,