

From the Divine to the Diabolical:  
The Peacock in Medieval and Renaissance Art

by

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## ABSTRACT

Peacocks are ubiquitous in art. Artists from societies across the globe, undoubtedly attracted to the male peafowl's colorful plumage and unique characteristics, used images of the bird to form visual semantics intended to aid in the understanding of a work of art. This was particularly the case in Europe, where depictions of peacocks appeared in Christian art from the onset of the continent's dominant religion. Beginning in Early Christianity, peacocks symbolized the opportunity for an eternal life in heaven enabled by Christ's sacrificial death. Illustrations of peacocks were so frequent and widespread that they became the standard symbol for eternal life in Christian art consistently centered on recounting the stories of Christ's birth and death.

Overtime, peacock iconography evolved to include thematic diversity, as artists used the peacock's recognizable physical attributes for the representation of new themes based on traditional ideas. Numerous paintings contain angels wings covered in the iridescent eyespots located on the male peafowl's tail feathers. Scientifically known as ocelli, eyespots painted on the wings of angels became a widespread motif during the Renaissance. Artists also recurrently depicted the peacock's crest on figures of Satan or Lucifer in both paintings and prints. Indicative of excessive pride, a believed characteristic of peacocks, the crest is used as an identifying characteristic of the fallen angel, who was cast from heaven because of his pride.

Although the peacock is a known iconographic motif in medieval and Renaissance art history, no specific monographic study on peacock iconography exists. Likewise, representations of separate and distinctive peacock characteristics in Christian

art have been considerably ignored. Yet, the numerous artworks depicting the peacock and its attributes speak to the need to gain a better understanding of the different strategies for peacock allegory in Christian art. This thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of peacock iconography, minimizing the mystery behind the artistic intentions for depicting peacocks, and allowing for more thorough readings of medieval and Renaissance works that utilize peafowl imagery.

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## CHAPTER 1

### A PROTOTYPE FOR DIVINITY

Peacocks are ubiquitous in art. Artists from societies across the globe, undoubtedly attracted to the male peafowl's colorful plumage and unique characteristics, used images of the bird to form visual semantics intended to aid in the understanding of a work of art. This was particularly the case in Europe, where depictions of peacocks appeared in Christian art from the onset of the continent's dominant religion. Beginning in Early Christianity, peacocks symbolized the opportunity for an eternal life in heaven enabled by Christ's sacrificial death. These conventions endured well into the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as images of peacocks indicated celestial rebirth and the possibility of an everlasting existence for devout souls in paradise. Illustrations of peacocks were so frequent and widespread that they became the standard symbol for eternal life in Christian art consistently centered on recounting the stories of Christ's birth and death.

The abundance of peacocks depicted in art from the Middle Ages indicates their important symbolic role in Christian art, but how did these emblematic associations develop? And why was the peacock chosen over other types of imagery to embody Christian notions of rebirth and eternal life? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to begin by examining the elements that make up the peacock's iconography, consisting of the signs and symbols used to interpret the peacock's presence in artwork. Iconography, a modern term for the process of recognizing and deciphering images placed within a work of art, materialized in practice long before Christianity was established and actually has a history as deep-rooted in art as the peacock's

representation. The elements which give an image what we now call iconographic meaning allowed both the learned and illiterate an opportunity to understand why a figure like the peacock is illustrated.

Yet, a simple exploration of the peacock's iconography is insufficient for this investigation. Although iconography is useful in detecting the components that make up the peacock's symbolism, it alone does not effectively answer the questions of how or why the peacock became interconnected with the concept everlasting life. This chapter addresses the many components that formed peacock iconography in Christian art, examining interpretations in both literary and visual sources that influenced the ways the peacock was represented and understood. Because the focus is on Christian art, a logical place to start this investigation is at the beginning of Christianity, where art was made not for aesthetic purposes but in epitaphic imagery used to commemorate the dead and connect them to the concept of the afterlife.

Peacocks began appearing in Christian art at the dawn of the religion. Evidence of this comes from the Catacombs in Rome, where the earliest extensive practice of Christianity is indicated by the burial customs of the religion's early followers.<sup>1</sup> These funerary complexes repeatedly depict peacocks in large frescoes framed by red and green lines that create geometric ornamentation.<sup>2</sup> Based on linear patterns, many of the wall

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1988), 19, Milburn states that the catacombs in Rome reveal the earliest evidence of any large-scale practice of Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Fabrizio Bisconti, "The Decoration of Roman Catacombs, in *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions* (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 1999), 89. the term "catacomb art," is noted to be characterized by geometric patterns formed by predominately red and green lines found in Rome's catacombs.

paintings allude to the cosmos, reflecting the concept of time while symbolizing eternity.<sup>3</sup> An example of this metaphorical display is painted on the vault of the cubiculum in the Catacomb of Priscilla where peacocks, symbolizing celestial birds, and quails, indicative of the earth, encircle an image of the Good Shepard (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> A similar image appears in the cubiculum in the Catacomb of Domitilla, where peacocks again connect Christ to heaven by framing his figure as cosmic representations (fig. 2). The location of these frescoes, painted on vaulted ceilings over the tombs of Christians, suggests that the peacocks served to symbolically unite the dead with the concept of an afterlife made possible by Christ's sacrificial death.

The repetitive allegory connected to the images appearing on catacomb ceilings indicates that peacocks were emblems for everlasting life from at least the beginning of Christianity. However, the numerous themes borrowed from antiquity, which are incorporated into catacomb imagery, suggest that the origins of the peacock's symbolism developed before Christianity's spread. Many of the frescoes indicate concepts were initially borrowed from Greek and Roman mythology and converted into Christian imagery over the course of the three centuries that the catacombs were in use. The image of the Good Shepard, for example, was an appropriation of Orpheus, who appears in a few early catacomb paintings as a mythical figure but gradually transforms into Christian

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 95, Bisconti suggests that the "catacomb art" depicted on the vaults of the cubicula refers to the cosmos, a metaphor in late antiquity that connected the element of time on earth with the notion of eternity.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

form by assuming Christ the Shepard's iconographic traits.<sup>5</sup> The myth of the Phoenix was also altered to represent the notion of the Resurrection by focusing on its rebirth from ashes instead of its violent death by burning.<sup>6</sup> Several catacomb frescoes reveal that the peacock had symbolic importance before the beginning of Christianity, as well. In the Hypogeum of Via Dino Campagni, two peacocks appear as cosmic personifications in the imagery above the cubiculum of Tellus that is based solely on the Hellenistic tradition and not associated with Christianity (fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> This illustration suggests that, like the examples of the Good Shepard and the Phoenix, the peacock's repeated characterization as a celestial symbol in catacomb painting also originated in Greco-Roman art.<sup>8</sup>

The association with the cosmos perhaps reveals why peacocks were chosen to surround the Good Shepard in the catacombs, but it fails to explain how the peacock became one of the most recognized symbols for eternal life and rebirth in Christian art. The peacock's emblematic tradition is so longstanding and widespread that it is impossible to credit the frescoes in the catacombs alone as solely responsible for creating the iconography of the peacock in Christianity. While the catacombs contain some of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 103, Christ's transformation from Orpheus is suggested to first occur in the cubiculum of Orpheus in the Catacomb of Saint Callisto in the third century. This theme is repeated in the Catacomb of Saints Marcelino and Pietro and the Catacomb of Domitilla, with each instance having increasingly more imagery related to Christ and less associated with Orpheus.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Bisconti states that amended representations of the Phoenix were based on imagery that originated in classical mythology.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 102, the imagery noted as associated with the Hellenistic tradition occurs throughout the Hypogeum of Via Dino Campagni, and depicts the myth of Admetus and Alcestes, as well as the Herculean Labours.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

the first examples of the peacock in Christian art, they are isolated to one geographic location that was not accessible by enough people to give them credit for creating peacock iconography. The prevalent examples of this type imagery in fact suggest that several sources created and added to the symbolic character of the peacock in Christian art.

As indicated by the catacombs, the peacock was a symbolic figure long before Christianity's onset. Peacocks have fascinated cultures across the globe for centuries, and appear in some of the oldest literary and artistic examples from ancient civilization. They are listed in the Old Testament with King Solomon's acquired treasures of gold and silver brought to Jerusalem from Tharsis, suggesting that these birds had a long history as coveted commodities.<sup>9</sup> Their unique physical characteristics made them a desirable item for trade between continents, and their ability to adapt to a variety of climates gave numerous cultures the opportunity to raise them. In medieval Europe, peacocks were kept for both admiration and eating; they appear on a listing of food items made later in Canterbury in 1267, and were regarded as a delicacy by aristocracy.<sup>10</sup> But the peacock's enduring appeal is based less on its potential as a food source, and more on the characteristics that make it unique. Farming subsequently created the occasion for the philosophical study of the peacock's distinctive physical qualities, and also allowed for

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings, 10:22.

<sup>10</sup> Martha Carlin, "Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval Europe," in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (London: The Hambleton Press, 1998), 35, peacocks are listed under the 1267 kitchen purchases of Sir Roger Leyburn, and were previously given to him as gifts.

artists to become inspired by the bird's beauty, so much so that it became a symbolic figure in many cultures.

Though the peacock occasionally appeared in paintings with the goddess Isis in Egypt, the majority of early references to the bird are found in Classical mythology.<sup>11</sup> As an attribute of the Greek goddess Hera and her Roman counterpart, Juno, the peacock is often depicted in art dedicated to the deity's cult.<sup>12</sup> In a Roman terra cotta figure dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, a peacock appears seated next to Juno and is clearly identified by his tail feather spread (fig. 4). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Juno removes the dead giant Argus' one hundred eyes and places them on the feathers of her peacock, painting "his tail with starry jewels."<sup>13</sup> The goddess then rides on a chariot drawn by "her peacock team" "painted with Argus' eyes."<sup>14</sup> In the myth, the peacock symbolically represents renewal by displaying Argus' eyes on his tail, appropriating body parts associated with his death by giving them a new purpose. Thus, the giant's eyes are reborn as part of the peacock, connecting the animal to the concept of rejuvenation.

1<sup>st</sup> century philosopher Pliny the Elder also discussed the peacock's association to renewal in *Natural History* by suggesting that the bird's feathers are "born again with the

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<sup>11</sup> Nile Green, "Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 18:1 (October 2010): 32, doi: 10.1080/09503110500222328.

<sup>12</sup> William Hansen, "Hera (Roman Juno)," *World Mythology: Handbook of Classical Mythology* (2004), [http://literati.credoreference.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/content/entry/abcwmycl/hera\\_roman\\_juno/0](http://literati.credoreference.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/content/entry/abcwmycl/hera_roman_juno/0).

<sup>13</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.722-723.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 2.531-.533.

spring flowers” following the fall molt.<sup>15</sup> Pliny’s work was well circulated from the time of its publication, and early Christian artists no doubt drew comparisons between his discussion on the peacock’s yearly regeneration and Christ’s Resurrection. But, although the concepts presented in antiquity laid the foundation for the peacock’s symbolism in Christian art, it was Augustine who cemented the peacock’s connection to the notion of holy rebirth. Propelled by a desire to be closer to God, Augustine sought to connect the natural world to scripture. In *City of God, Book 21*, a volume dedicated to proving the existence of an afterlife in either a heaven or hell, he uses perceptions of the peacock to support his ideas on immortality. He states that God provided human “flesh the requisite for existence in the world to come,” something that should come as no surprise because God gave peacock flesh the “quality which keeps it from decaying even when dead.”<sup>16</sup> Declaring that he was informed of this “peculiarity,” Augustine includes a passage to support his claim by describing an experiment he conducted with a piece of cooked peafowl breast, set aside to observe whether or not it decayed.<sup>17</sup> After several days it emitted no foul odor, and after one year he alleges it was simply drier and more shriveled.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pliny, *Natural History, Book 10*, ed. T.E. Page et. al, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 321.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *City of God, Book 21*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh S.J. and Daniel J. Honan, *Fathers of the Church 24* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1954), 345, <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/lib/asulib/detail.action?docID=10383929>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Augustine indicates that myths surrounding the qualities of peacock flesh existed prior to his research in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, therefore this idea likely developed in connection to the bird's symbolic association with renewal. Regardless, Augustine's text was extremely influential to the Church and consequently created the opportunity for the conceptions surrounding the peacock to spread throughout Christendom. By using peacock meat as a way to support his assertion that not all flesh decays after death, he provided a means for the widespread correlation between the peacock and eternal life. Theologians who followed Augustine, like Isidore of Seville, continued to discuss the peacock's "immortal" qualities in the subsequent centuries. In his *Etymologies*, St. Isidore describes the peacock as having "flesh so hard that it scarcely experiences decay, nor is it easily cooked."<sup>19</sup> Later in the Middle Ages, Hugh of Fouillooy echoed these notions nearly verbatim in a long and detailed passage on the peacock in his "Aviarium," written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup>

The theological dialogue on the peacock's characteristics no doubt contributed to establishing peacock iconography in Christian art. At the very least, the aforementioned texts can be attributed to helping spread notions that served to form the basis of the peacock's symbolism. While it is evident that some associations existed prior to these discussions, once they were disseminated across Christendom the peacock was not merely correlated to rejuvenation and spring, but synonymous with an everlasting life

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<sup>19</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 12.7.48.

<sup>20</sup> Hugh of Fouillooy, *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouillooy's Avairium*, ed. and trans. Willene B. Clark (Bringhamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), 245-251.

made possible by holy rebirth. These texts were prevalent enough within the Church to be recognized today as major contributors to the development of peacock iconography.

Yet, iconography is not usually created by one element but many different traditions; therefore, the combination of the Christian theological discussions and notions founded in antiquity, as well as artistic customs that developed during the Middle Ages, actually formed the iconography of the peacock. Early Christian artists developed a “sacred vocabulary” made of symbols that visually recounted scripture. These images were copied and reused so frequently that they eventually formed motifs.<sup>21</sup> Because of its association to rebirth, the peacock was used to illustrate eternal life in heaven. Overtime its repeated depiction evolved into imagery similar to a theme itself, characterized by its symbolic connections. These developments spread and influenced subsequent illustrations that in turn created new methods for portraying the peacock as a symbol for eternal life, and may have likewise helped to develop more nuanced meanings within specific concepts.

In addition to Rome’s catacombs, some of the best examples of early Christian art demonstrating the artistic traditions that developed for displaying the peacock’s symbolic relationship to immortality come from funerary imagery, for example, found on sarcophagi. Originating in Asia Minor, the tradition of carving reliefs on large stone coffins known as sarcophagi was first adopted by the Etruscans and later embraced by

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen N. Fliegel, *A Higher Contemplation: Sacred Meaning in the Christian Art of the Middle Ages* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2012), 3, Fliegel uses the term “sacred vocabulary” as a way of defining the images and symbols that formed Christian iconography during the Middle Ages.

artists in ancient Rome.<sup>22</sup> After Constantine ended Christian persecution in 312, sculptural works like sarcophagi were created to proclaim the security found through devotion to God, who gave to artists the ability to craft monumental works intended to reflect his almighty power.<sup>23</sup> Like catacomb art, sarcophagi reliefs borrowed themes from antiquity and incorporated biblical elements into the sculptures carved on the stone coffins. Developed motifs were repeated, which generated distinctive formulas that connected the deceased to Heaven and demonstrated the skill and craftsmanship allotted to artists through God.

Harmonizing with their role in Christian doctrine, peacocks thus gradually appear as part of the thematic conventions used for sarcophagi. At the base of the sarcophagus made in Rome for Constantina after her death in 345, two peacocks are situated underneath intricate vine-stems encircling a trio of cherubs gathering and trampling grapes (fig. 5). In this Dionysian scene, peacocks not only exemplify the possibility of holy immortality but also link classical ideals like rejuvenation with the Christian notion of eternal life; the peacock pair effectively connect the old world and the new.<sup>24</sup>

Depicting pairs of peacocks on sarcophagi was a customary composition in early Christian art. The sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore, produced in Ravenna in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrates this tradition. Flanking a large Chi-Rho monogram representing Christ, two peacocks stand facing one another: a male to the right, differentiated from the

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<sup>22</sup> Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, the term “Dionysian” is based on Milburn’s suggestion that the sarcophagus of Constantina demonstrates “Dionysiac exuberance.”

female on the left by elaborate tail markings and three distinctive eyespots (fig. 6). The Greek letters alpha and omega that hang from the monogram reference Revelation 21:6, where God tells John “I am Alpha and Omega: the Beginning and the End.”<sup>25</sup> The two peacocks symbolize God’s promise of immortality in the next line of the same verse that states: “To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely.” Surrounded by grapevines symbolic of Christ’s blood, the peacocks are used to narrate the notion that Christ’s death provided the opportunity for an everlasting life in heaven.

Peacocks appear in a similar relief on the sarcophagus of the Twelve Apostles, also from Ravenna (fig. 7). While not accompanied by ornate decoration or grapevines, the arrangement of the peacocks is comparable to Theodore’s sarcophagus; the female is placed on the left and the male, standing on the right, is once again identifiable by eye markings on his tail. The Chi-Rho monogram has been replaced by a cross, surrounded by a wreath that extends into the two vines the peacocks are perched on. Here, the cross itself characterizes the fountain that cultivates both life on earth, represented by the vines and life in heaven, symbolized by the peacocks.

Associations to the hope for heavenly immortality made peacocks ideal visual symbols for rebirth in Christian funerary art. But as the production of religious art evolved and progressed, peacocks were incorporated into the diverse mediums that decorated churches and cathedrals. Today, some of the best examples of sacred art that exhibit the peacock as a symbol for eternal paradise are found in Byzantine mosaics, which have survived over time because of their construction in cubes or tiles made of fired enamels or glass. The practice of decorating floors using mosaic tiles dates to the

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<sup>25</sup> Rev 21:6.

Hellenistic period, but mosaic art reached its height and flourished in parts of the Mediterranean occupied by the Byzantine Empire.<sup>26</sup> In many areas, nearly every church had a mosaic floor, and by the 8<sup>th</sup> century many monasteries, synagogues and secular buildings were also paved in mosaic tiles.<sup>27</sup> Because mosaics were commonly made for religious houses, it comes as no surprise that the peacock appears frequently in mosaic art, as it was part of a “visual language” made up of symbols early Christians used to narrate scripture.<sup>28</sup>

In Byzantium, peacocks were kept in gardens because it was believed that they expressed the idea of an earthly paradise.<sup>29</sup> Peacocks were also associated visually with the notion of a heavenly paradise.<sup>30</sup> Many examples of mosaic art reflect the Byzantium concept of the peacock as a paradisiac symbol. A peacock appears in a 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Schick, “Mosaics during the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods,” in *Byzantium and Islam*, ed. Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 98, Schick states that between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the production of mosaic floors was at its height in during the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods in central Jordan.

<sup>27</sup> Rachel Hachlili, introduction to *Ancient Mosaic Pavements: Themes, Issues, and Trends: Selected Studies* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2009), the Land of Israel is described by Hachlili as the site of an increasing number of churches, monasteries and synagogues built with mosaic flooring between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. This growth is noted to have been stimulated pilgrimages, which increased the Christian population in the area.

<sup>28</sup> Fliegel, *A Higher Contemplation*, 17, peacocks are named first on a list of recurring motifs described as a “visual language” developed by early Christian artists; the other symbols mentioned are: the dove, the palm, the fish, the grapevine, and the lamb.

<sup>29</sup> “Mosaic with a Peacock and Flowers (Roman or Byzantine; probably from North Africa) (accession number 26.68)” *Helibrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/26.68>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

mosaic, likely part of a large tile floor from North Africa (fig. 8). Set between two budding flowers, the peacock embodies the idea of paradise, and therefore symbolizes the rejuvenation brought by holy rebirth. In a 5<sup>th</sup> century mosaic panel, thought to be part of a Garden of Eden scene originally located on a church floor in Syria, a peacock is depicted with Adam, who is shown harvesting grapes (fig. 9). The grapes denote the Eucharistic wine that symbolizes Christ's blood, which provides the possibility of eternal life, represented by the peacock. An inscription on the panel reads "And they ate, were naked," referencing Adam and Eve's consumption of the forbidden fruit that led them to become aware of their nakedness in the Book of Genesis.<sup>31</sup>

While it is not mentioned in the Christian bible, Muslim tradition incorporates the peacock into the narrative of Adam and Eve's time in the Garden of Eden. In this interpretation, a peacock plays an instrumental role in the Fall of Man because it creates the occasion for Adam and Eve's expulsion. The serpent tricks the peacock into swallowing him so that he can be carried into the Garden in the peacock's belly.<sup>32</sup> The context of the story is noteworthy, because the central figure in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Syrian mosaic is not Adam but the peacock, a commanding figure engulfing nearly one third of the panel. Adam actually appears to follow the path made by the peacock's majestic tail.

The account of the varied events in the Garden was first recorded in an Islamic manuscript called *Qisas al-Anbya*, or *Stories of the Prophets* in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, roughly

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<sup>31</sup> Gen 3:6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Rachel Milstein, Karen Ruhrdanz, and Barbara Schmitz, *Stories of the Prophets: Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbya* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999), 108-109.

three centuries after the Syrian mosaic was created. However, the manuscript draws from several ancient sources, including the popular oral and literary traditions found in Christianity, Judaism, and Persian mythology.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the peacock appears in the creation myth of Zurvanism, a religion of the ancient Sassanian Empire that ruled in Persia before the rise of Islam.<sup>34</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> century Armenian bishop Eznik of Kolb discusses this myth in his treatise *On God*, describing the peacock as the product of the deity Ahrmn, a son of Zruan, the source of creation in Zurvanism.<sup>35</sup> Unlike his virtuous twin brother Ozmizd, Ahrmn was the creator of evil things; however, Eznik of Kolb states that his malevolence was not inherited but chosen by his free will.<sup>36</sup> This is proven by Ahrmn's creation of a beautiful creature like the peacock, something he would not have been able to make if he were evil by nature.<sup>37</sup> The peacock's inclusion in the Muslim version of the Fall conceivably developed from this ancient myth and became familiar to the Byzantine artists that created the Syrian mosaic.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Eznik of Kolb

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 8, while the *Qisas al-Anbyia* is described as a literary work that was copied many times between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the earliest versions expand upon ancient folklore, as well as biblical events like the Creation and the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Solomon.

<sup>34</sup> Monica J. Blanchard and Robin Darling Young, *A Treatise on God Written in Armenian by Eznik of Kolb* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 101n47, Zurvanism is described as a sect of the Sassanian religion of Zoroastrianism.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 101-122.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Albert de Jong, "The Peacock and the Evil One: Tawusi Melek and the Mandaean Peacock," in *From Daena to Din: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt*, ed. Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruscke und Antje Wendtland (Wiesbaden:

was well acquainted with this story around the time the mosaic was created. Certainly, the existence of Adam and Eve's narrative in multiple cultures alone reveals the cross-cultural exchange of customs and folklore, and the appropriation of concepts by various groups and civilizations has been previously discussed in this paper. Regardless of whether the peacock's representation in the Syrian mosaic was intended to allude to its participation in some variation of the Expulsion, it is clear that peacocks maintained an important symbolic role in many cultures.

An exquisite demonstration of the peacock's emblematic significance in Byzantine art occurs in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna. Peacocks take part in the church's mosaic program intended to connect visitors to God and heaven through the visual stimulation of color and light. In the presbytery, positioned east to allude to the location of Christ's second coming, four peacocks flank the Lamb of God, forming the ends of paradisiac vine-scrolls extending from the lamb's central position at the top of the vault (fig. 10).<sup>39</sup> Fanned open, their plumage demonstrates magnificence and reflects light in a fashion comparable to the iridescence in actual peacock feathers (fig. 11). Similar to their representations in funerary art, the peacocks are intended to signify the

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Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 304, de Jong suggests that the notion of the peacock as the "Evil One," or Satan in the Yezidi and Mandaen religions, which is typically believed to have developed in connection with the Muslim tradition of the Peacock in the *Stories of the Prophets*, may actually be tied to the Zurvanism myth described by Eznik of Kolb in *On God*.

<sup>39</sup> John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London: Phaidon, 1997), Lowden states that the Church of San Vitale was intended to be positioned so that the presbytery faced east, but it was incorrectly oriented and hence east indicates the liturgical direction *east*, noted to be the location of Christ's second coming in Matt 24:27, "For as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the cawling of the son of Man be."

possibility of an eternal life in heaven; however, here they are part of a direct passage to a paradise made possible by the Lamb of God's sacrificial death. Positioned at the end of scrolls that stretch directly from a symbol for Christ's ultimate sacrifice, the peacocks exemplify the divine paradise implied by the decoration in the vaulting. The peacocks visually orchestrate the path to heaven and connect earth with the celestial realm.

Numerous examples in fact indicate that the tradition of using peacocks to exemplify the notion of celestial paradise was prevalent in mosaics created throughout the Byzantine Empire. A mosaic pavement in the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha, Israel, illustrates two peacocks facing each other at the entrance of the north transept (figs. 12, 13). Dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the peacocks are part of a Nilotic scene containing birds, beasts, vegetation, architecture and elements associated with the Nile.<sup>40</sup> Though the practice of creating Nilotic landscapes dates to the Hellenistic period, Byzantine artists adopted various forms of classical imagery like this motif, incorporating established customs into their own repertoire.<sup>41</sup> Placed at the entrance of this Nilotic episode, the two peacocks spearhead a scene comparable to a paradise envisioned in Byzantium.

Peacocks also frequently appear in the "inhabited vine scroll" mosaic treatment popularized during the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup> Like Nilotic scenes, mosaics in the inhabited vine scroll design originated in Hellenistic art but were common in churches and synagogues

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<sup>40</sup> Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 97, Hachlili uses the term to Nilotic describe scenes characterized by particular elements associated with the Nile.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 111.

in the Levant.<sup>43</sup> In these mosaics, vine branches and trellises form geometric medallions occupied by birds, animals and figures, which create a sense of harmony and uniformity, akin to a carpet by design.<sup>44</sup> This type of composition is demonstrated in the nave of the Jerusalem “Armenian” church, where two identical peacocks flank an amphora, from which vine-trellises filled with flora and fauna emerge (fig. 14). Similarly, the pavement originally in the Shellal Church in the Negev Desert depicts a pair of peacocks on opposite sides of a vessel issuing vines that surround animals, birds and vegetation (figs. 15, 16). As bearers of the amphora feeding the flora and fauna set in the medallions, the peacocks appear to orchestrate the formation of life as symbols of birth in paradise.

Images of vessels illustrating the creation of life, which originated in Eastern Byzantine art, became the pictorial theme known as the Fountain of Life. This motif is often found in manuscripts made in Europe during the Middle Ages and, like the examples of Byzantine mosaics, frequently depict pairs of peacocks to visually signify eternal life in paradise. Initially produced in Byzantine manuscripts as the “font of eternal life” that visually expressed the Gospels, Fountain of Life illustrations first appear in Europe during the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Carolingian manuscript painting.<sup>45</sup> The peacock, already established as a symbol for rebirth and eternal life, perfectly embodied the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Hachlili states that inhabited scroll pavements are covered in a repetitive geometric pattern that looks similar to a carpet.

<sup>45</sup> Florentine Mutherich and Joachim E Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting* (New York: George Braziller, 1976), 34.

philosophies of Carolingian art that developed in connection to the concepts of cultural revival and renewal instituted by Charlemagne's court.<sup>46</sup>

Completed between 781 and 783, the *Godescalc Evangelistary*, recognized as the first illuminated manuscript produced in Charlemagne's scriptorium, depicts two peacocks standing on opposite sides of a large amphora on a colorful page showing the "Fountain of Life (fig. 17)."<sup>47</sup> Because of their symbolic associations with rebirth, the peacocks personify the perception of baptism expressed by the illustration, which also possibly alludes to the Lateran baptistery in Rome where Charlemagne's son was baptized.<sup>48</sup> Although they are shown with other birds representative of paradise, the peacock pair are the largest figures in the image, even larger than the stag that represents the human soul's desire for salvation in Psalms 41:2.<sup>49</sup> The size of the peacocks suggests their significance in the hierarchy of the symbols associated with the Fountain of Life, as does their placement near the top of the fountain, which further indicates their importance. Due to their connection with this motif, originally exemplifying the Gospels in manuscript painting, two peacocks also appear in the "Cannon Table" image from the *Gospels of Saint Medard of Soissons*, produced in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 18). Standing on the architectural structure that frames figures symbolizing the Four

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Psalms 41:2, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God."

Evangelists, the peacocks represent the Gospels' proclamations of Christ's sacrifice that created the opportunity for eternal life.<sup>50</sup>

Much of the art from the Middle Ages that exists today comes from manuscripts that have survived the centuries because they were protected either in monasteries or private collections. Because of its connotations in Christianity, the peacock was frequently included in works like the bestiaries, which examine the birds, beasts and fishes of the natural world through a moral lens to extract lessons for the human reader. However, in the bestiaries the peacock appears less as a symbol of rebirth and more as a tool for principled instruction intended to supplement scripture and advise the pious on Church doctrine. The peacock's depiction in the bestiaries marks a change in the way it was viewed in Christianity, for instead of only allying with notions of rebirth and eternal life it was now also associated with pride, one of the seven deadly sins defined in Proverbs 6:16-19 as a behavior God detests.<sup>51</sup> Similar to the concept of eternal life, the peacock was believed to be prideful because of a physical characteristic, only instead of the internal quality of flesh it was associated with excessive pride because of the external appearance of its tail feather spread, which boasts magnificence and suggests the peacock's vainglorious nature. The tail is indexical of the peacock's pride and used synecdochically for the entire bird.

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<sup>50</sup> George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 126-131, Matthew is shown as the winged man; Mark is the winged lion; Luke is the winged ox; John is the eagle.

<sup>51</sup> Proverbs 6:16-19, "Six things there are, which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked plots, feet that are swift to run into mischief, a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren."

Completed around 1200, the Aberdeen Bestiary contains an illumination of a peacock depicted with its body in profile and tail turned toward the reader in such a way as to display its characteristic eyespots (fig. 19). The image is accompanied by a substantial amount of text drawn from several sources. The discussion begins with the origins of the Latin name *pavo*, given to the peacock because of the “sound of its cry.” It is also described as having flesh so tough that “it hardly decays and it cannot be easily cooked;” this description is nearly identical to Isidore of Seville’s 7<sup>th</sup>-century narrative on the peacock in the *Etymologies*.<sup>52</sup> The biblical account of the peacocks collected from Tharsis by Solomon’s fleet in Kings I 10:22 follows, along with an interpretation of the verse’s moral lessons.<sup>53</sup> The next section, an instruction on ethical values and proper judgment, describes the peacock as having a “serpent’s head and sapphire breast” that signifies the preacher’s desire to connect to heaven.<sup>54</sup> This account, along with a description of the peacock’s tail- full of eyes which indicate the teacher’s ability to foresee danger, long to symbolize the length of life, and containing red feathers that denote the preacher’s love for contemplation- derive directly from Hugh of Fouilloy’s 12<sup>th</sup> century *Avarium*.<sup>55</sup> The peacock is lastly associated with the negative element of pride, which also comes from the *Avarium*. It is seen as proud because it raises its tail

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<sup>52</sup> “The Peacock, folio 59v” The Aberdeen Bestiary, last modified July 2010, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/comment/59vbirdf.hti>; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 12.7.48

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, folio 60r.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, folio 60v.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, folio 60v-61r; Hugh of Fouilloy, *The Medieval Book of Birds*, 245-251.

when praised and hence exposes “its rear,” making it look foolish for succumbing to the sin of vanity.<sup>56</sup> Recalling Hugh of Fouilloy’s work, the bestiary suggests that the peacock should carry its tail lowered down to underscore humility.<sup>57</sup>

The Bodleian Bestiary, written between 1220 and 1250, includes an entry on the peacock that, similar to the Aberdeen Bestiary, begins by describing the hard quality of the peacock’s flesh and the source of its name.<sup>58</sup> A quote from the *Epigrams* by the Roman poet Martial appearing in both the *Etymologies* and the Aberdeen Bestiary is also included, which questions how those who find beauty in the “jeweled wings” of the peacock can present it to be butchered.<sup>59</sup> Given the amount of copying that occurred in medieval literature, similarities in the text of the two bestiaries is expected. Yet, the entry in the Bodleian Bestiary, unlike the account in the Aberdeen work, is relatively short in length and includes nothing about the peacock’s prideful nature. However, the peacock’s association to vanity is suggested in the accompanying illustration (fig. 20). The image shows a peacock standing with its body and tail facing forward. Its fanned open tail not only occupies most of the illustration, but it overcrowds the space designated for the peacock’s representation so much that several feathers overcome the limits of the frame. This display visually indicates that the peacock’s pride is not contained by restrictions but driven by a vainglorious desire to show off its beauty.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764*, trans. Richard Barber (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), 170.

<sup>59</sup> *Etymologies* cites *Epigrams*, 13.2, “You marvel whenever it unfolds its jeweled wings; and can you, pitiless man, give this bird to the cruel cook?”

The research presented in this chapter reveals that the peacock was chosen as a symbol in Christian art for a variety of reasons. The peacock's celestial associations, which can be traced to antiquity, were adapted by artists and repurposed for Christian imagery. Tied to notions of rejuvenation because of its role in mythology and yearly molt, the peacock became a symbol for the afterlife. Augustine then reinforced these connections, affixing the peacock to rebirth by suggesting that God, who gave peacock flesh the quality that prevented it from decaying, also created life for Christians after death. These concepts influenced art production in the Middle Ages, which demonstrates the peacock's transformation from a figure typically found in funerary works to an emblem expressing eternal life in numerous artistic media. The peacock's unique plumage strengthened its symbolic connection to the Resurrection, as this particular characteristic could visually communicate the everlasting existence made possible by Christ's sacrifice with aesthetic appeal. But the peacock was also perceived as flawed because of its beauty. As the Middle Ages progressed, theologians additionally regarded the peacock's magnificent tail feather spread as indicative of its vainglorious and prideful nature, and used this identifying feature in the moral instruction against human sin. Nonetheless, these varying factors contributed to the development of the peacock's iconography in Christian art. The peacock's iconographic evolution consists of many layers, all of which eventually connected it to the opposing notions of eternal life and excessive pride. And the concepts that characterize its iconography made the peacock one of the most recognizable symbols in Christian art.



Fig. 1. *The Good Shepard*, vault of the cubiculum of the velatio, Catacomb of Priscilla, 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.



Fig. 2. *Vault of the cubiculum of the Good Shepard*, Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome, 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.



Fig. 3. A peacock illustrated as part of small zoomorphic scenes in the Hellenistic tradition, Hypogeum of Via Dino Campagni, Rome, 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.



Fig. 4. Terracotta figure of Juno with a Peacock, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., said to be from Tunis, British Museum.



Fig. 5. *Sarcophagus of Constantina*, 4<sup>th</sup> century, Santa Constanza, Rome.



Fig. 6. *Sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore*, 5<sup>th</sup> century, Sant' Apollinare in Chasse, Ravenna.



Fig. 7. *Sarcophagus of the Twelve Apostles*, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Sant' Apollinare in Chasse, Ravenna.

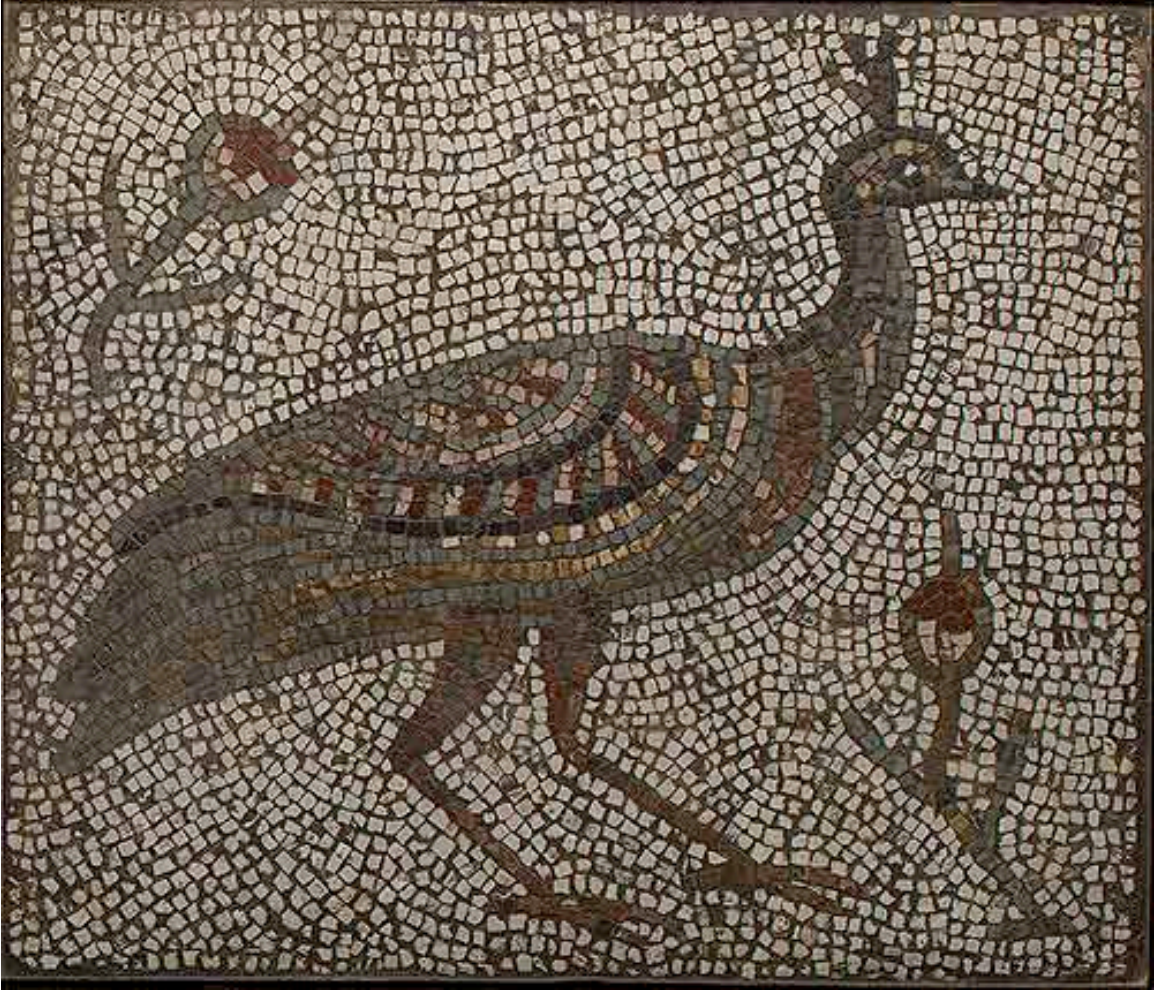


Fig. 8. *Mosaic with a Peacock and Flowers*, 3-4<sup>th</sup> century, Roman or Byzantine (probably from North Africa), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 9. *Floor Panel: Grape Harvester with Peacock*, 5<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, Northern Syria, The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 10. *Lamb of God Mosaic*, ceiling above presbytery, 546-48, Byzantine, San Vitale, Ravenna.



Fig. 11. Detail of a peacock in the *Lamb of God Mosaic*, ceiling above presbytery, 546-48, Byzantine, San Vitale, Ravenna.



Fig. 12. Mosaic floor in the north transept of the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, Tabgha, Israel, 5<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 13. Detail, Mosaic floor in the north transept of the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, Tabgha, Israel, 5<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 14. *Armenian Church Mosaic*, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem.



Fig. 15. *Shellal Church Mosaic*, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Australian War Memorial.

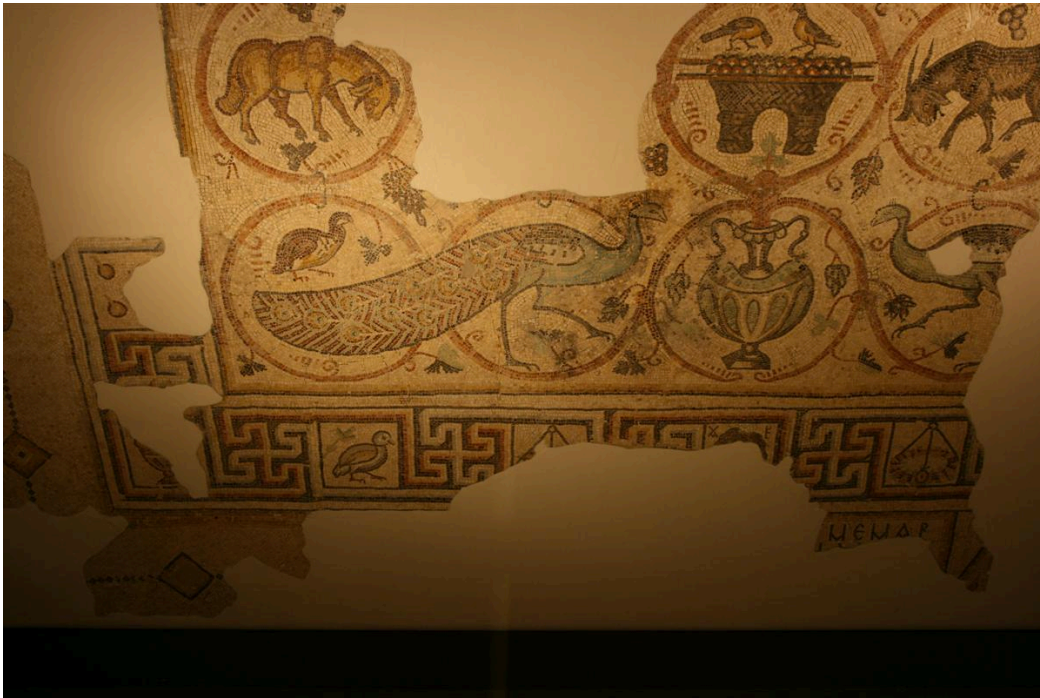


Fig. 16. Detail of a peacock in the *Shellal Church Mosaic*, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Australian War Memorial.



Fig. 17. *Fountain of Life*, folio 3v., Godesalc Evangelistary, 781-83, Court of Charlemagne.

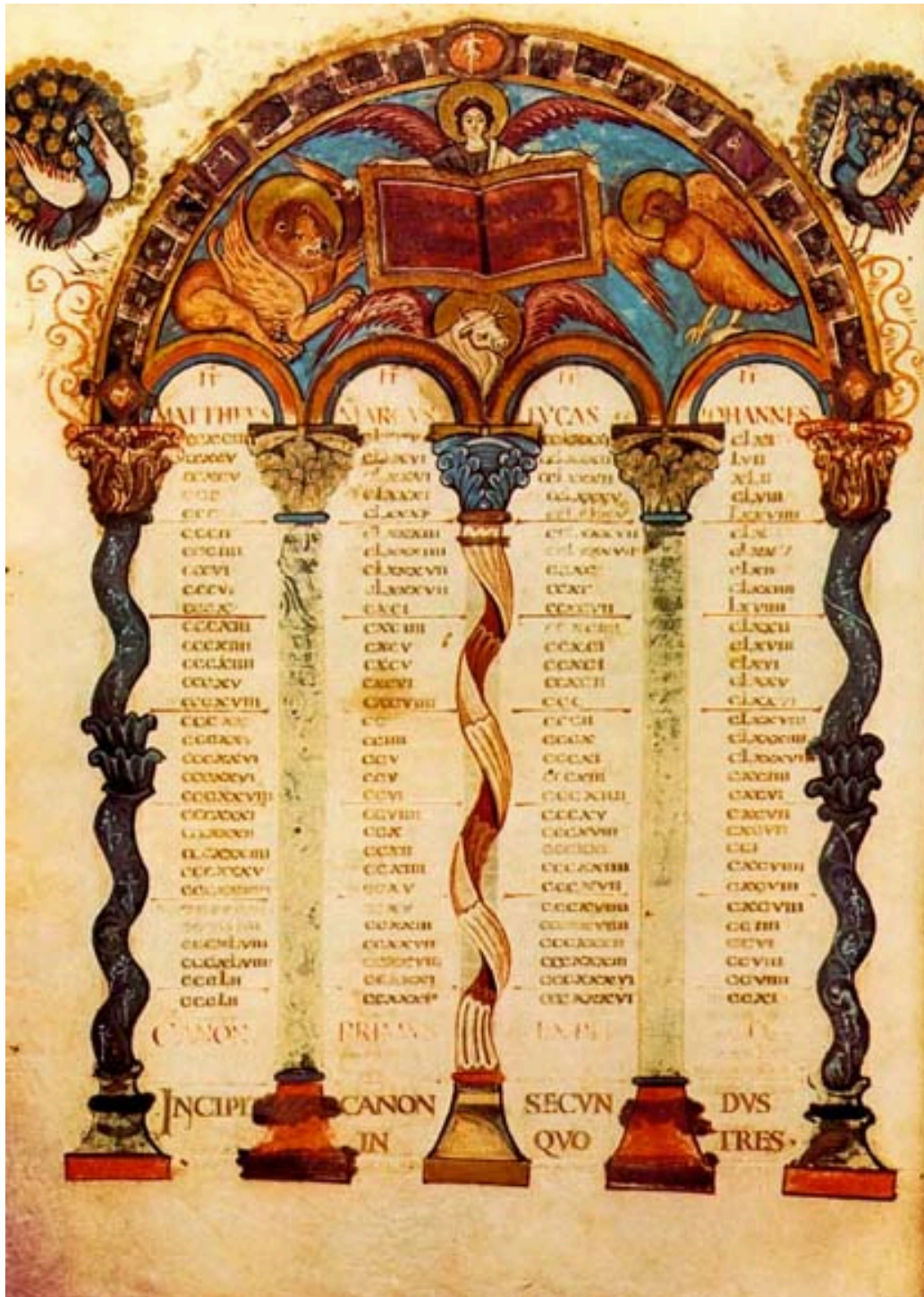


Fig. 18. *Cannon Table*, Gospels of Saint Medard of Soissons, early 9<sup>th</sup> century, Court of Charlemagne.



Fig. 19. Peacock, folio 59v., *Aberdeen Bestiary* (Aberdeen University Library MS 24), 1200 C.E., University of Aberdeen.



Fig. 20. *Peacock*, folio 84v., *Bodleian Library M.S. Bodley 764*, 1220-1250, Oxford.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ANTERIOR EYE

The 1434 *Annunciation* by Jan van Eyck depicts Archangel Gabriel announcing the Immaculate Conception in a scene filled with visual splendor (fig. 21). Erwin Panofsky found every painted object in the panel to hold “iconographic significance,” representing naturalism and composed through the application of “disguised symbolism.”<sup>60</sup> However, one element scholarship has largely overlooked is the pattern of eye-markings on Gabriel’s multi-colored wings. The display is comparable to ocelli, the iridescent eyespot structures found on the male peacock’s tail feathers.<sup>61</sup>

This type of painterly adornment is not exclusive to van Eyck’s 1438 work. Eyespotted wings are also present in other paintings by the artist, rendered on the wings of angels in the act of carrying out a holy duty, like the angel crowning the Virgin in *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* and Archangel Michael in the *Last Judgment* (figs. 22, 23). Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling borrowed this motif for portrayals of Michael’s wings in their Last Judgment panels, as well (figs. 24, 25). And, ocelli-covered angels’ wings did not only appear in Netherlandish painting- Italian artist Fra Angelico also illustrated them in several frescoed Annunciations and Last Judgment panels (figs. 26, 27). Archangel Raphael’s wings also receive this treatment in Francisco

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<sup>60</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 142, in his discussion on symbolism, Panofsky uses disguised symbolism as a blanket term, applicable to the all of the paintings by the early Flemish masters who desired to reproduce the natural world in their works while saturating illustrated objects connotations.

<sup>61</sup> Roslyn Dakin and Robert Montgomerie, “An Eye for An Eyespot: How Iridescent Plumage Ocelli Influence Peacock Mating Success,” *Behavioral Ecology* 24, vol. 5 (2013), 1048-1057.

Botticini's *Three Archangels and Tobias* (fig. 28). Eye-spotted wings were in fact considerably prevalent during the Renaissance, appearing in the paintings and frescoes of many artists throughout Europe.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the peacock's iconography was well established by the end of the Middle Ages, evolving from classical notions that were eventually adopted by Christian philosophy. Peacocks commonly appear in medieval art and symbolize eternal life or excessive pride. But in the Renaissance there was a stylistic shift in peacock representation; artists began depicting its eyespots- the peacock's most recognizable characteristic-on angels' wings. Although the eyespots appear alone, their illustration indicates the presence of the peacock itself, since they are its most defining physical feature.

What was the purpose of depicting the peacock's ocelli? Containing intricate dark centers and surrounded by concentric green or bronze regions, ocelli resemble actual eyes, seeming to glare at the viewer while commanding attention. Because they appear over and over again in religious works, the inclusion of ocelli-covered angels' wings surely has iconographic significance. In the previous chapter, discussion covered the concepts developed by philosophers and popular notions on scripture, which established artistic traditions and formed a "visual language" recognizable by anyone familiar with the stories found in the Bible.<sup>62</sup> This language permitted a general understanding of religious allegories and allowed for a sacred image to function as a type of "pictorial sermon"

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<sup>62</sup> Stephen N Fliegel, *A Higher Contemplation: Sacred Meaning in the Christian Art of the Middle Ages* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2012), 1-5, Fliegel discusses the relationship between the artist, the image, and the patron in medieval religious art. He states that artists were required to represent biblical figures using artistic conventions based on Christian iconography that was fully defined by the end of the sixteenth century.

based on medieval conceptions of the Bible and theology.<sup>63</sup> Given the amount of symbolic repetition so heavily ingrained and exemplified in medieval and Renaissance art, it is reasonable to conclude that the reoccurring depictions of eye spotted wings, like illustrations of the peacock itself, contained artistic importance.

The attempt to decipher the iconographic meaning of ocelli-covered angels' wings creates a challenge for the modern researcher. Eyespotted wings are likely associated with the peacock's traditional iconographic denotations in Christian art, but if this alone is the connection then why did artists not simply depict the entire body of a peacock somewhere in the composition, as had been done numerous times before? In other words, why were ocelli used alone? They are, of course, colorful additions to any work of art but their inclusion raises many questions. Ocelli, which look like eyes, are in fact part of the peacock, which has an iconographic history cemented in Christian art. These eyespots appear on the wings of angels' that also have a separate set of longstanding iconographic traditions.

Hence, identifying the meaning behind this motif requires multifaceted contextual research exploring the iconography associated with peacocks and angels in art, as well as the medieval philosophies on the eyes that carried into the Renaissance. Since the eyes were considerably discussed in the Bible and medieval theology, this chapter first examines the perception of eyes in influential texts to provide an understanding of the importance placed on sight and eyes in the Middle Ages. Exploration then moves to the development of symbolism, which, borrowing from Christian theories on eyes and established conventions in peacock iconography, pictorially represents the activities of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 8.

particular angels sent directly from God as holy liaisons. This investigation reveals that ocelli-covered angels' wings had significant meaning in Renaissance art, visually symbolizing divine knowledge and heavenly immortality in a painted scene.

In order to understand eye spotted wings from a contemporary standpoint we must begin by examining biblical passages, as medieval theology was based on the analysis of scripture. In the Bible, the human eye symbolically serves as an earthly connection to the spiritual realm of heaven and the interior spirit of man. Because man was created in God's image, the human body is understood as comprising parts similar to God's form, and human anatomy is therefore used to describe God's presence in scripture. Compared to all parts of the human body attributed to God in the Bible, the eye is the most esteemed.<sup>64</sup> God's eyes are described as "far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men," who are judged based on God's sight.<sup>65</sup> Accounts of God possessing an all-seeing ability affording Him the power to know every occurrence and human action appear throughout the Bible, underscoring the importance placed on sight and eyes in scripture that influenced the foundations of the Christian doctrine.

Human vision is explained in the Bible as working similarly to God's sight due to its multifunctional abilities and purposes. While not possessing God's all-encompassing

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Kay, "Dante's Empyrean and the Eye of God," *Speculum* 78, no. 1 (2003): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3301443>, Kay states that the Empyrean, described in at the end of Dante's *Paradiso* as the sphere where God resides, is comparable to an ocular diagram representative of the Eye of God. According to Kay, Scripture was Dante's main source for the *Divine Comedy*, and God's eye is the most frequently discussed part comparable to human anatomy in the Bible.

<sup>65</sup> Ecclesiastes. 15:3, "And he knoweth that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts."

power of sight, humans are capable of a two-pronged vision that allows for the recognition of the physical world and one's inner-self. In Genesis, human sight is described as punishment for original sin, when Adam and Eve's "eyes were opened" like "God's, knowing good and evil."<sup>66</sup> Augustine describes this passage as a "narrative with a figurative meaning" in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* because Adam and Eve already possessed the capacity for corporeal sight given to them during their creation, allowing them to see inside the Garden of Eden.<sup>67</sup> Consumption of the forbidden fruit opened their eyes allegorically and they "felt a movement of concupiscence which they had not known" before because of the realization of their nudity.<sup>68</sup> Knowledge of evil is comparable to the feeling of shame unfamiliar to Adam and Eve before the Fall. Original sin consequently facilitated internal sight capable of recognizing both positive and negative human emotions.

Hence, internal sight is the knowledge of feelings and emotions that lead to a self-awareness and personal understanding of one's soul. Similar to the recurrent theme of the Eye of God, passages linking the soul to eyesight appear throughout the Bible. In the Gospel of Matthew, the eye is described as "the light of thy body" that makes those who are pure "lightsome," and corrupt individuals "darksome."<sup>69</sup> The "body" symbolizes the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Gen. 3:5.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. 2 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 163-164.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Matt. 6:22, "The light of thy body is thy eye, if thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye is evil thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee, be darkness: the darkness itself how great shall it be."

human soul, defined by the purity of the eyes that determine the soul's qualities. Indicative here of internal morality, eyes represent the pathway to the human core by characterizing an individual's soul. Scripture therefore says that eyes not only facilitate the "seeing" of one's soul, but also suggests they represent the soul's virtues.

Clearly, the biblical traditions emphasizing the importance of eyes are longstanding. Though the Bible certainly impacted the foundations of Christianity, its doctrines were shaped, and perhaps most significantly influenced, by Augustine's theoretical analysis of the scriptures. In his *Confessions*, he argues the senses that provide "the eye to see by and the ear to hear by" are corporeal functions to aid his soul while it resides in the body.<sup>70</sup> The senses produce images the human mind stores as memories to assist in the knowledge and mental understanding of the natural world.<sup>71</sup> Housed images evoke previously experienced feelings affecting new occurrences that cultivate the mind. Eyes are emphasized as essential to the production of the mind's pictures "ready at hand for thought to recall," as they facilitate the vision which recognizes objects.<sup>72</sup> Hence, sight is the most important sense for humans because what is seen through the eyes creates the uniqueness that shapes individuals. And while sight is attributed to the eyes, Augustine notes that the word "see" is frequently used to acknowledge the other senses in statements like "see, what a noise," and "see, what a

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<sup>70</sup> Augustine, *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, trans. Mary T. Clark (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 127-128.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>72</sup> 129.

smell.”<sup>73</sup> Recognition of the present state of all of the senses is therefore understood as “seen” by the human mind.

Thomas Aquinas also considered the sense of sight and its connection to the soul. In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas determines that the senses were created by nature to identify certain features in the environment.<sup>74</sup> According to Aquinas, the external senses cannot be explained by the difference in organs, so the distinction lies in the different capacities of each sense. Sight, therefore, differs from the other senses due to the divergent mechanisms it operates; eyes are not the organ of sight but the medium through which an impressed image passes. Sight’s sensory capabilities are also described as affecting our intellect.<sup>75</sup> Aquinas designates two different modes of mental perception as affected by the senses: natural and spiritual activation.<sup>76</sup> Natural activation occurs when a sensation is received only after its impression alters the natural state of the organ; a hand that encounters something hot, for example, will effectively become hot through the sense of touch.<sup>77</sup> Sight is recognized as a spiritual activation because sensation transpires without changing the eye’s original constitution; the impression of color received into the pupil does not modify the primary form of the eye.<sup>78</sup> Described as “the most spiritual, the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Man*, trans. James F. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962), 123, Question 84, article 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 60-63, Question 78, article 3.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

most perfect, and the most universal of all the senses,” sight is regarded as pure because it does not experience change when received by the eyes.<sup>79</sup>

Medieval philosophies on the significance of the eyes, originating in part from the Bible, were ultimately established by the influential viewpoints of theologians like Augustine and Aquinas. Scientific developments also impacted theological ideas on sight and the eyes, and science with theology were used together to create an improved understanding of natural philosophy and the physical world. Sight and the functions of the human eye were central issues for those engaged in the emerging field of optics, made relevant by Roger Bacon in his texts *Opus manius* and *Perspectiva* in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Bacon’s philosophies were considerably influential to Peter of Limoges, an ecclesiastic who borrowed many of his predecessor’s concepts on optical science for theology when composing *The Moral Treatise on the Eye* sometime before 1289.<sup>80</sup> Like Bacon, Limoges believed that the field of optics contained “essential knowledge for the moral improvement of Christianity,” and intended for his work to be widely distributed throughout Paris for instructional use in sermons.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Newhauser, introduction to *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, by Peter of Limoges (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012), xxii, Newhauser states that the work was written surrounding the Condemnation of 1277 at the University of Paris, when the teaching of 219 philosophical works was forbidden by the bishop of Paris Stephen Tempier who believed the emphasis placed on natural philosophy was contradicting the teachings of the church. According to Newhauser, the atmosphere in Paris drove Peter of Limoges to focus on identifying the ways the science of optics benefited theology.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Peter’s work is noted as being transmitted through the *pecia* system in Paris, which distributed texts at a rapid rate.

*The Moral Treatise on the Eye* examines ethical and spiritual implications for vision, using allegory and science to explain the anatomical parts and functions of the eyes. The eye is described as containing seven parts that are related to the seven virtues. The uvea, cornea and sclerotic coat are the eye's three coverings; its fluids are labeled as vitreous, crystalline and albugineous; it is also covered in a textured membrane to contain the fluids.<sup>82</sup> Located in the center is the pupil, or the crystalline fluid, protected by all of the other parts of the eye and consequently deemed most important. Likened to the eye's crystalline fluid is the spiritual pupil, or the soul, safeguarded by God's seven principal virtues established to ensure its purity.<sup>83</sup> Vision of the eye is said to occur three ways; the most perfect vision sees straight lines and is ordered first, the second type recognizes refracted lines and is not as clear, and the third sees reflected lines and is the least perfect. Human spiritual vision is also described as working in three ways: perfect vision is first and will occur "in the state of glory after the final resurrection," while in the second state the soul will contemplate the divinity of heaven, therefore making it imperfect when compared to sight's highest level.<sup>84</sup> Since it is not a conduit of spiritual vision, physical sight is positioned third and lowest because the spiritual sight of humans while in the corporeal body can only transpire through internal reflection that functions similarly to a mirror as an "intermediary of reflected lines."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Peter of Limoges, *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, trans. Richard Newhauser (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2012), 5, 6.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

The treatise also contains a definition of God's eye. Limoges states "the divine eye is one that can observe all things" and inspire morality in individuals who, fearful of God's gaze, chose to "refrain from sinning."<sup>86</sup> Those who do sin are remorseful because of divine sight, which also promotes hard working and honest behavior.<sup>87</sup> God's eye provides inner strength to the "faint-hearted soul" and vitality to those who are strong-willed.<sup>88</sup> This holy gaze leads to heaven and, according to Limoges, functions like a pathway to everlasting life.<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, unlike humans who are inferred to have two eyes throughout the treatise, God is only described as having only one eye that projects the divine gaze. The singularity creates a sense of power by constructing the idea that God's vision is not seen through actual eyes, but conducted via an ultimate gaze capable of a vision much different than both physical and spiritual human sight.

As a widely circulated text designed for evangelization, *The Moral Treatise on the Eye* undoubtedly impacted medieval theology and influenced Christian philosophical conceptions on the functions and purposes of eyes.<sup>90</sup> However, it is Peter's understanding of God's all-seeing eye that is perhaps most beneficial to the examination of ocelli-covered angels' wings. Though God is described with a single eye in the text, reference is made to the sevenfold eye from the Book of Revelation, which recounts the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 189, 190.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., xxii.

Lamb of God as having “seven horns and seven eyes.”<sup>91</sup> The eyes symbolize “the seven properties of the divine gaze” looking over all things on earth.

Transmittance of God’s gaze through multiple eyes also occurs in the Book of Ezekiel on the cherubim, whose bodies and wings, described as “full of eyes,” symbolize their role as intercessors on God’s behalf.<sup>92</sup> The cherubim are part of the highest sphere in the three-tiered angelic order purposed by Pseudo-Dionysius in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and subsequently examined during the Middle Ages by later notable theologians like Pope Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas.<sup>93</sup> Although angelic hierarchies had been suggested in theology from at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Dionysius was the first to place the angels in three separate spheres descending in importance that is determined by their nearness to God. Inside the first tier and ranked just below the seraphim, cherubim are located in close proximity to God and are filled with His wisdom. Cherubim means “fullness of knowledge,” representing an ability see and know God. They serve as primary participants in the reception of divine knowledge and receive

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<sup>91</sup> Apoc., 5:6, “And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.”

<sup>92</sup> Ez 10:12, 1:18 also describes the cherubim as having bodies full of eyes, but their wings are not distinctly mentioned until chapter 10.

<sup>93</sup> Pseudo Dionysius describes an angelic hierarchy with three-spheres, each containing three orders of angels listed in ranking order; in the first level are the seraphim, cherubim and thrones; the second level comprises of the dominions, virtues and powers; principalities, archangels and angels make up the last sphere. *The Celestial Hierarchy* is dated to the fifth or sixth century. Thomas Aquinas agrees with Pseudo Dionysius’s ordering in *Summa Theologia*. In *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. Members of the English Church, vol. 3 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), 549, Gregory the Great designates the angelic hierarchy as being made of seraphim, cherubim, powers, principedoms, virtues, dominations, thrones, archangels and angels.

God's gifts directly.<sup>94</sup> Cherubim share God's virtues because, to an allowable extent, they have the special gift of being like Him.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, *The Celestial Hierarchy* states that both cherubim and seraphim have "many eyes and many wings."<sup>96</sup> The Bible makes no mention of seraphim wings with eyes, however, so this description appears to be a source of Dionysius's interpretation of their only biblical mention, occurring in the Book of Isaiah.<sup>97</sup>

Though his ideas were frequently abstract and not always based on scripture, Dionysius' work influenced religious writers during the Middle Ages.<sup>98</sup> The text was translated from Greek to Latin after Emperor Louis the Pious received the manuscript from Byzantine Emperor Michael the Stammerer in 827.<sup>99</sup> Canon Regular Hugh of Saint

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<sup>94</sup> Pseudo Dionysius, *Pseudo Dionysius: the Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 161, the three angels in the highest sphere are said to be permanently around God and connected to him above all other angels in the hierarchy.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>97</sup> Is 6:2, two seraphim are described as having six wings each; they cover their faces with two wings and their feet with two more, while the remaining two are used to fly.

<sup>98</sup> Jean Leclercq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," introduction to *Pseudo Dionysius: the Complete Works*, 31, Leclercq argues that Dionysius works were considered to be biblically insufficient by monks before the twelfth century, and therefore made them unappealing in religious scholarship. According to the author, the Canons Regular were the first religious order to revisit Dionysius and compose commentaries.

<sup>99</sup> Cecilia Sira, "Between God and Man: The Worlds of the Angels and Images of a Path Between Heaven and Earth," in *Between God and Man: Angels in Italian Art*, Francisco Buranelli (Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 2007), 23, Dionysius's work was translated by Johannes Scotus Erigena, and Sira states that it had significant influence later writings on angelic hierarchies.

Victor wrote two commentaries on *The Celestial Hierarchy* between 1125 and 1137, and a monk of Saint-Denis, John Sarrazin, also composed a text examining this same work in 1140; Abbot Suger borrowed concepts from Dionysius, as well.<sup>100</sup>

Thomas Aquinas also meticulously analyzed the concept of an angelic hierarchy in *Summa Theologica*. He largely agrees with Dionysius on the placement and abilities of the cherubim, accepting the notion that they possess God's perfect vision and know divine secrets, allowing them to share their knowledge with others.<sup>101</sup> While a physical description of cherubim wings is not included, Aquinas determines that superior angels "enjoy a certain excellence" because they are in "full reception of divine light."<sup>102</sup> Like Dionysius, Aquinas underscores the power of cherubim, who have God's knowledge and are therefore capable of acting as holy intercessors. This capacity to know is understood as the ability to see like God, through His eye, which gives cherubim the power to do God's work.

Similar to cherubim, Archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphael are directed from God, and named for their important roles within the scriptures. Gabriel literally means "power of God," and he appears in the Bible because he is full of divine knowledge and tasked to deliver God's word directly to the prophet Daniel in the Old Testament, and to

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<sup>100</sup> Dionysius, 27-28, Abbot Suger used some of Dionysius's concepts to explain the symbolism of associated with light in the basilica he built. Before the twelfth century, monks of the Benedictine, Cistercian, and Cathusian orders largely ignored Dionysius's writings, but Scholasticism turned toward his favor after this period.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Volume one*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1947) Question 108, article 5.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Zachary and the Virgin in the New Testament.<sup>103</sup> Michael, “who is like God,” leads the celestial army in the Book of Revelation and defeats Satan, indicating he received God’s power to emerge victorious in the war in heaven.<sup>104</sup> Michael is also associated with weighing souls in purgatory in Christianity because of his role in the Last Judgment described in the Book of Daniel.<sup>105</sup> Raphael, whose name translates to “God heals,” receives divine vision to preemptively protect Tobias from the Devil in the Book of Tobit.<sup>106</sup> Filled with knowledge like cherubim, these archangels possess the sight necessary to act as holy liaisons, and are therefore akin to God. Hence, the artistic traditions developed for depicting Gabriel, Michael and Raphael were aimed at showing God’s wisdom symbolically by covering their wings with eyes to signify a reception of knowledge comparable to cherubim. Because the eyes, and God’s in particular, were understood in the Middle Ages to correlate to intellect, including them in a work of art perfectly demonstrated divine knowledge. Illustrating an archangel’s wings with eyes visually expresses that their purpose in the scriptures is to spread God’s “outpouring of wisdom,” like the cherubim who appeared to Ezekiel.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Sira, 25; Dan 8:16; Luke 1:19, 1:26-38.

<sup>104</sup> Apoc, 12:7-9.

<sup>105</sup> Dan., 12:1.

<sup>106</sup> Throughout the Book of Tobit, Raphael is referred to as an angel and is not specifically described as an archangel; however, the angel himself states that he is “one of seven” in 12:15, which is understood to mean he is one of the seven archangels accepted in theology.

<sup>107</sup> Dionysius, 162.

Archangels, however, unlike cherubim, are frequently depicted in art. Although they are part of the lowest tier in the angelic hierarchy, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael are the only angels with “individual name and iconographic characteristics” that have lasted over time.<sup>108</sup> These three archangels are also the only angels to be described by name in the Bible, as even the seraphim and cherubim that appear in scripture are not individually named. Both Gabriel and Michael’s physical characteristics are widely recognizable; Gabriel usually has blond hair and is shown in a dalmatic, and Michael frequently appears with a sword in warrior armor. As important protagonists in significant biblical events, these archangels were repeatedly portrayed because much of the art made during the Renaissance in Europe was based either on biblical subject matter, particularly that of the New Testament, or various legends concerning saints. Raphael is often shown with a staff and travelers bag but his iconography is less familiar due to his appearance in an Old Testament story not commonly portrayed in art. Nonetheless, ocelli-covered wings visually demonstrate the significance of these archangels. While not in the hierarchy considered closest to God, they are important participants in holy activities. In their respective biblical stories, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael receive knowledge directly from God, like cherubim, and aid in the facilitation of His sight.

The motif of eye-spotted archangel wings likely developed through the reallocation of concepts that initially were associated with cherubim. Artistic customs established for depicting archangels originated from the description of cherubim wings, as the eyes offered a way to visualize God’s wisdom and presence in a composition. Archangel iconography appropriated the cherubim’s symbolism and allowed for Gabriel,

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<sup>108</sup> Sira, 25.

Michael and Raphael to essentially replace cherubim visually because they rarely appear in art. Since the scriptures designate the three archangels as sent directly from God to proclaim divine knowledge or perform holy duties, their low hierarchal placement is essentially irrelevant because the work of these archangels is identical to cherubim who are in the highest order. The duties and functions of angels are therefore not necessarily dictated by the angelic ordering, which suggests that those in lower tiers receive information passed down through angels positioned higher. Additionally, it is completely plausible that the angelic hierarchy was not considered relevant to the Renaissance artists who created the symbolism designated for angels because its ordering is confusing; indeed, humanists questioned the hierarchy during the fifteenth century due to its convoluted assignments and “theological complexity.”<sup>109</sup> Renaissance artists, influenced by Christian teachings, likely celebrated the borrowed notion of eye-covered wings because of the medieval associations linking the eyes to knowledge, the parallel roles of cherubim and archangels in the scriptures, and the convoluted nature of the hierarchy.<sup>110</sup>

Understanding the connections between eyes and knowledge, and the shift in perceptions surrounding angels, reveals why artists chose to depict intermediary angel’s wings with eyes. Yet, the eyes illustrated on archangel’s wings are not actual eyes but ocelli spots. The question that remains then is why artists selected eyespots to signify the Eye of God. While ocelli resemble eyes, they are in reality attractive markings from the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>110</sup> Fliegel, 4, the author states that artistic principles during the Middle Ages were supervised by the church, which did not give artists much room for individual interpretations.

tail feathers of male peafowl. As previously indicated, peacock iconography has a longstanding tradition in art and historically represents the prospect for eternal life created by Christ's death. Throughout the Middle Ages, peacocks were typically rendered as intact, so the allocation of just one of the bird's characteristics in a work of art is a significant innovation.

The male peacock's tail, magnificent when fully open, excites and creates wonderment for observers because light reflected from the iridescent eyespots appear to make the entire spread shine with luminescence. Each ocellus, emitting a striking shimmer, is also reminiscent of an eye due to its dark purple center encircled by concentric hues.<sup>111</sup> The distinctive radiance and geometric constitution of ocelli undoubtedly inspired artists who looked for ways to depict God's all-seeing eye, frequently described in the Bible as divine light. Bright and colorful, eyespots enhance the composition while conveying semblances of light, making them ideal embellishments in a painted scene. As components of peacock tail feathers, ocelli also signify the notion of an eternal existence in heaven. Traditional peacock iconography was so well known in Christian theology that inclusion of any part of the animal in a work of art suggested immortality. Peacocks are renowned for their feathers adorned in ocelli; therefore, depicting this single element artistically indicates the presence of the bird itself and its related symbolism. Because they are visually associated with the peacock, eyespots on an angel's wings imply holy everlasting life, as they represent God's knowledge and presence in a painted scene as an undying, perpetual entity.

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<sup>111</sup> Dakin and Montgomerie, ocellus is the term for a single eyespot located on one tail feather.

In choosing to depict ocelli on the wings of angels, artists not only showed God's wisdom but subsequently found a way to depict the almighty power of creation by suggesting divine manifestation occurs through these brilliant eye markings found in the natural world created by God. The rendering of ocelli provided artists a way to infuse nature into a composition, filling the painted scene with representations of the world as it appeared, and thus shifting away from medieval concepts and moving towards those developed during the Renaissance. Ocelli-covered wings allowed artists the opportunity to embrace the notions of naturalism envisioned by Italian Renaissance and Netherlandish painters, whose innovations and techniques changed the course of art.

In fact, while the tradition of eyes on archangel's wings dates to the Middle Ages the motif of ocelli-covered angel's wings, first used by van Eyck in his 1434 *Annunciation*, is a development of the ars nova of Early Netherlandish painting (fig 29).<sup>112</sup> Characterized by naturalistic details and disguised symbolism, the ars nova is renowned for imagery made luminous by the layers of pigments in the oil paint widely used during the period.<sup>113</sup> According to Otto Pacht, van Eyck's paintings in particular, are considered brilliant because of their ability to reflect light with a jewel-like quality that rivals illuminated manuscripts.<sup>114</sup> In his monograph on the artist, Pacht states that van Eyck's

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<sup>112</sup> See fig. 9, Bernardo Daddi's *Annunciation*, 1335, for an example of angel's wings painted with eyes that are not ocelli from the Middle Ages.

<sup>113</sup> Otto Pacht, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1994), See Pacht for in-depth discussion on the ars nova and van Eyck's contribution to the movement; 12, Pacht describes the ars nova as the first the period where oil paint was heavily used; however, he disputes the once-widely believed claim that van Eyck is the inventor of oil paint.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

painted pigments respond to the light by using the actual “light that shines on the painting as part of the impression of light that emerges from the painting.”<sup>115</sup> The paint does not simply mimic or simulate light- it *produces* its own light.<sup>116</sup> In van Eyck’s *Madonna in a Church*, for example, the light source originates from outside the painting but inside a play of light occurs off the Madonna’s gold crown, jewels, hair, and several other objects in the scene.<sup>117</sup> The artist’s 1434 *Annunciation*, too, demonstrates this phenomenon, as light reflects off Gabriel’s luxurious vestments and eye-spotted wings. Light is absorbed into and reflected off Gabriel’s ocelli-covered wings, and the viewer’s eye is attracted to this glowing luminescence. In the paintings in which they appear, ocelli essentially helped artists create light within the composition by both responding to light and creating illumination that, like the Eye of God, is bright and everlasting.

The intent may have additionally been for eye-spotted wings to denote the eternal existence of angels, which were considered celestial extensions of heaven. In Dante’s *Purgatorio*, the angel sent directly from God who appears to the author and Virgil is described as a “divine bird” with “eternal feathers that are not changed like mortal plumage.”<sup>118</sup> Scholars often cite Dante’s *Inferno* as significantly influential to artists,

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>118</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio: The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), canto 2, lines 34-37.

particularly Fra Angelico.<sup>119</sup> In his book on the painter, Stephan Beissel finds some connection between Dante's poem and Fra Angelico's works, particularly in the *Hell* panel from the artist's *Last Judgment Triptych*, painted between 1435-40 (fig. 30).<sup>120</sup> Fra Angelico, who repeatedly rendered ocelli on Gabriel's wings in the Convent of San Marco frescoes in Florence, imaginably was inspired by other parts of *The Divine Comedy*, basing the archangel's depiction on Dante's narrative in *Purgatorio* and connecting the description of a divine bird with eternal feathers to the peacock, traditionally symbolic of eternal life (figs. 27, 31). Beissel suggests medieval artists throughout Europe were impacted by Dante's texts, however, and many painters and poets, including Dante, "followed the widespread and popular traditions of the time."<sup>121</sup> Pseudo Dionysius' nine-tiered angelic hierarchy in fact shaped Dante's concept of nine circles of angels in *Paradiso*, which describes the cherubim and seraphim as "exalted in vision."<sup>122</sup> A host of factors therefore may have contributed to the prevalence of ocelli-spotted angels' wings.

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<sup>119</sup> Stephen Beissel, *Fra Angelico*, trans. Chris Murray (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2007) 144-165, Beissel devotes a chapter in his book to examining the popular belief that Fra Angelico's Last Judgment scenes were based solely on Dante's *Inferno*. He suggests the poem alone was not the painter's only inspiration; both Fra Angelico and Dante, along with other artists and poets of the period, are noted to have drawn influence from popular traditions based on scripture, as well as the *Last Judgment* fresco in Santa Maria Novella, painted by Andrea di Cione Orcagna between 1354-57.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Dante *Paradiso: The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) canto 28, lines 98-103.

Eyespots, most often portrayed on Gabriel's wings in Annunciation scenes, became a favored motif because of the religious significance of Christ's birth to the Church. Gabriel's attractive ocelli-covered wings not only indicate God's knowledge, but also allude to the possibility of a heavenly eternal life created by the Immaculate Conception. The vibrant and fascinating qualities of eye-spotted wings, which grab the viewer's attention and increase the visual presentation of a painted panel, made them both an attractive and naturalistic option for depictions of the Archangel. Netherlandish and Italian artists- notably van Eyck and Fra Angelico- illustrated ocelli on Gabriel in Annunciations, suggesting this treatment was a widespread and established artistic tradition from the beginning of the Renaissance.

Application of ocelli on Michael's wings appears to be exclusive to Netherlandish Last Judgments. One reason for this is immediately apparent after examining differences in Northern and Italian Last Judgment scenes. Compositionally, the notable Netherlandish Last Judgment panels follow van Eyck's model. In his 1430 *Last Judgment*, Michael is located centrally and is illustrated with the motif of ocelli-covered angels' wings (fig. 23). Van Eyck, an exceptionally prolific artist, influenced subsequent northern Last Judgments; similarities are evident in both van der Weyden and Memling's renditions in the compositional arrangement, and also in the depiction of Michael's eye-spotted wings (figs. 24, 25). Configured differently from the northern examples, Italian Last Judgment scenes do not frequently feature Michael as a warrior in the foreground. While ocelli do appear on some angels' wings, it is not immediately apparent if any of these are Michael. Fra Angelico included ocelli on the wings of at least one angel in his *Last Judgment* completed between 1431-35; however, excluding the distinctive eyespots,

the angel, who stands in the bottom left of the panel in a warm embrace with a saint, is not distinguishable from the other angels, making it impossible to conclusively determine his identity (fig. 28).

Nonetheless, illustrating ocelli-covered angels' wings was a standard practice for many Renaissance artists, customarily appearing in scenes portraying archangels. The angel with eye-spotted wings in van Eyck's *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, like the example in Fra Angelico's *Last Judgment*, is an exception because no specific features positively indicate his identity. Since iconographic customs do not exist for this scene, identifying this angel is difficult. His blonde hair, dalmatic, and ocelli decorated wings allude to Gabriel's traits, but these characteristics are not enough to unquestionably designate this angel as the Archangel. Though the *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* angel is ambiguous, the angel's tasks are similar to Gabriel and the other archangels because divine knowledge transmits through the eyespots, effectively allowing the angel to serve God by crowning the Virgin Queen of Heaven. I suggest that eyespots are not only indicative of archangel's roles, but signify God's communication with the earthly world through the wings of any angel given divine wisdom.

In his text on Netherlandish painting, Panofsky states that a theme's importance centers on whether "established representational" practices, adhering to a "historical position" supported by textual evidence, recurred enough to be symbolically meaningful to artists.<sup>123</sup> Based on Panofsky's formula, the motif of ocelli-covered angels' wings holds iconographic significance in art. Originating from the medieval notions on the eyes described in theological texts, eyespots signify knowledge synonymous with God's

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<sup>123</sup> Panofsky, 142-143.

everlasting sight. Artists appropriated previous narratives on both the eyes and the cherubim and, borrowing from established conventions in peacock iconography, subsequently formed a distinctively new and influential artistic tradition, which expresses the intercessory role of an angel sent to speak or work for God. Due to their scriptural accounts, archangel wings are frequently adorned with ocelli, but the motif was so widespread and familiar amongst artists that it additionally represents any depicted angel in possession of holy wisdom. Comprehensive research of the theological texts and artistic traditions influential during the Renaissance reveals that ocell-covered angels' wings conveyed the significance of venerable episodes by visually symbolizing God's eternal presence and ultimate power.



Fig. 21. Jan van Eyck, *Annunciation*, 1428, oil on wood, 43 x 37 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Fig. 22. Jan van Eyck, *Madonna of the Chancellor Rolin*, 1435, oil on panel, 66 x 62 cm, Musée de Louvre.



Fig. 23. Jan van Eyck and workshop assistant, *Last Judgment Panel*, 1430, oil on canvas, 56.5 x 19.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

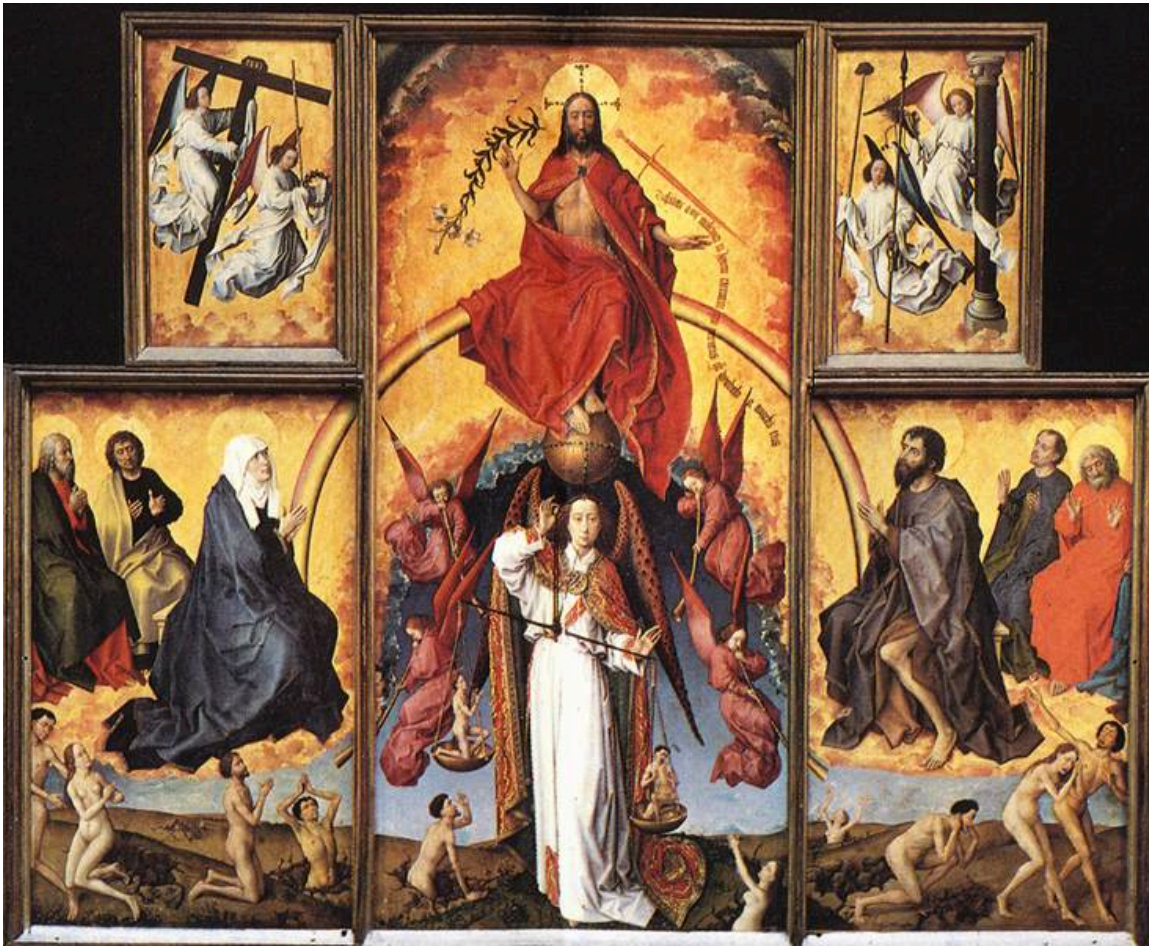


Fig. 24. Rogier van der Weyden, detail, *Altar of the Last Judgment*, 1434, oil on wood, Hotel-Dieu de Beaune.

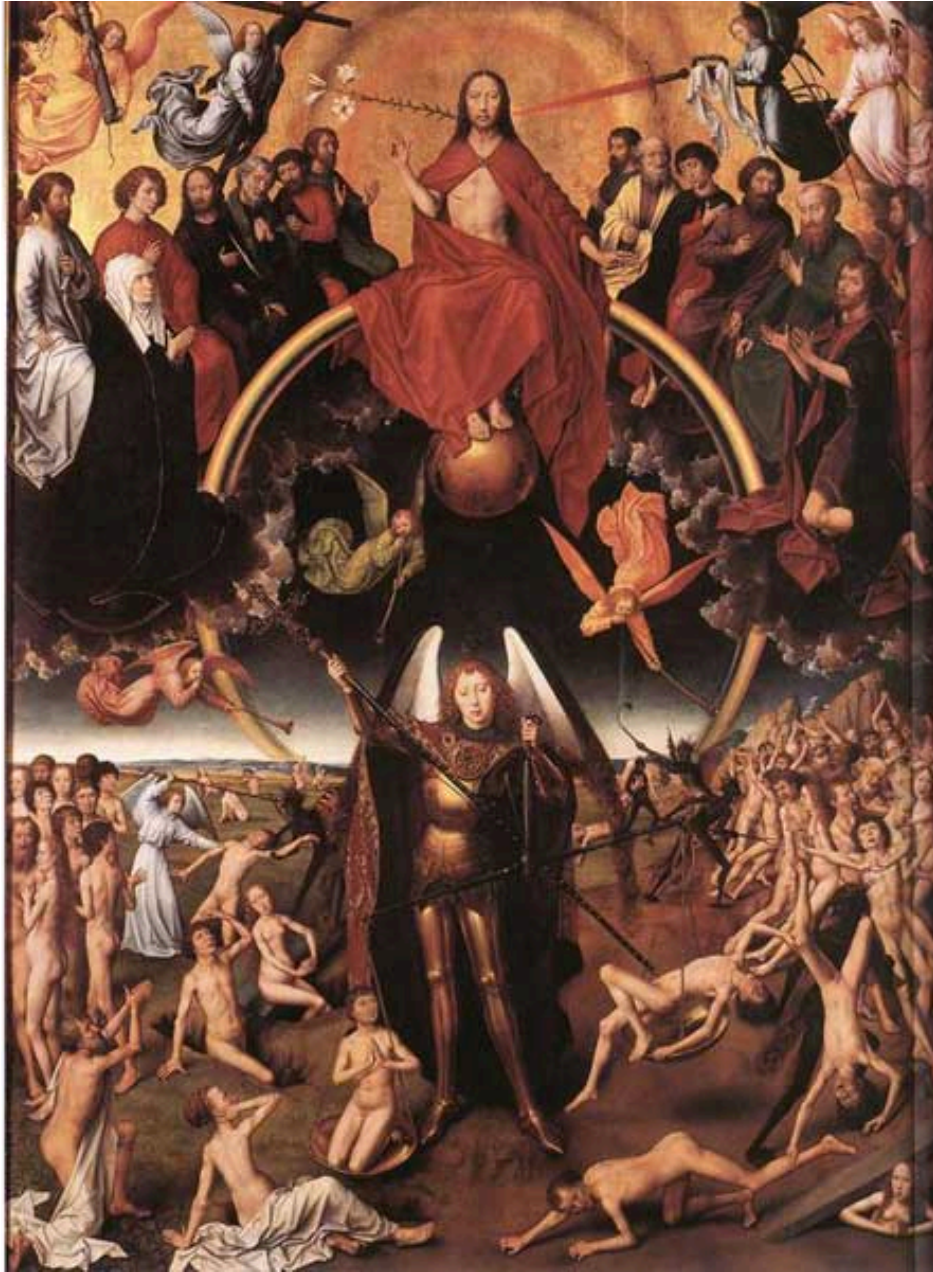


Fig. 25. Hans Memling, detail, *Last Judgment Triptych*, 1467-71, oil on wood, Muzeum Narodowe, Gdansk.



Fig. 26. Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1440-45, fresco, 230 x 297 cm, Museo di San Marco, Florence.



Fig. 27. Fra Angelico, detail, *Last Judgment*, 1431-35, tempera on panel, Museo di San Marco, Florence.



Fig. 28. Francisco Botticini, *Three Archangels and Tobias*, 1470, tempera on wood, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Fig. 29. Bernardo Daddi, *Annunciation*, 1335, tempera on panel, 43 x 70 cm, Musée de Louvre.

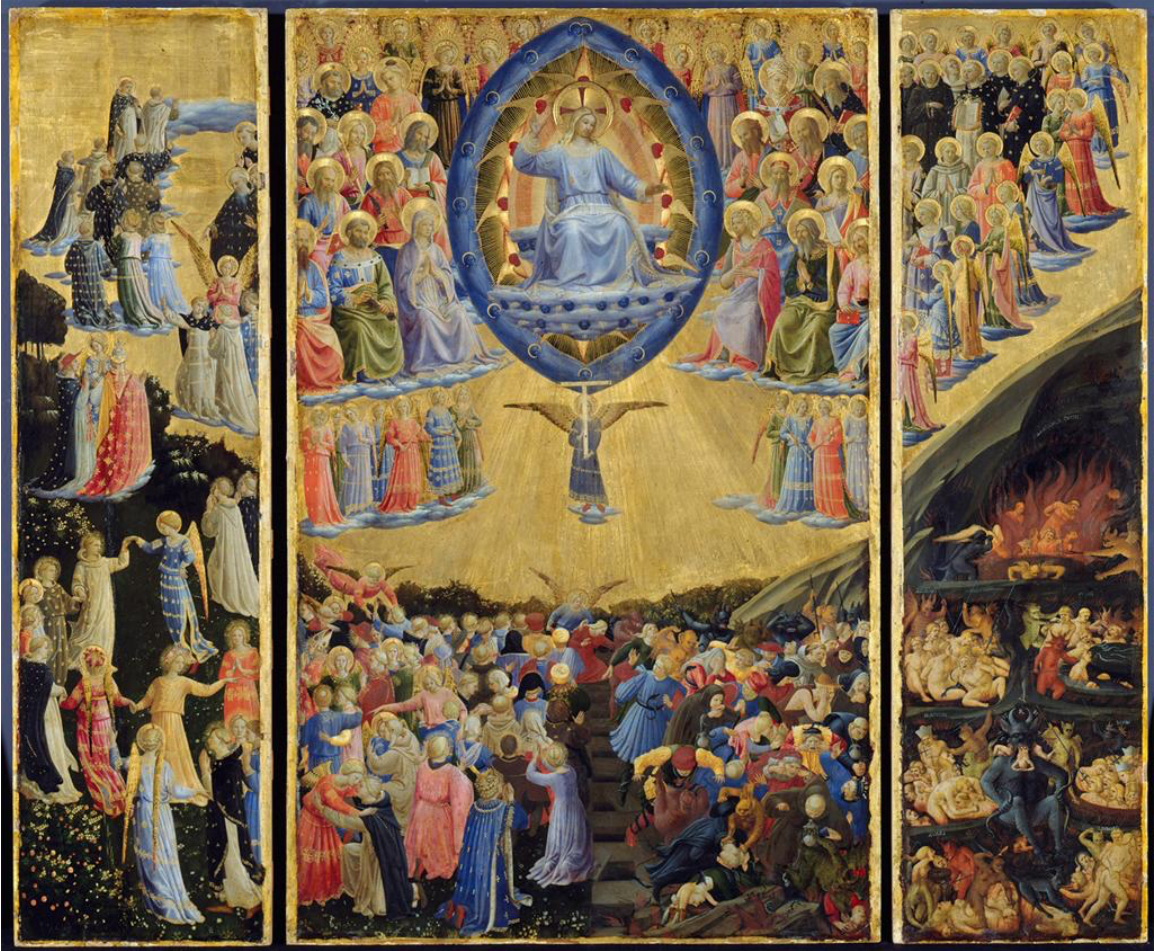


Fig. 30. Fra Angelico, *Last Judgment Triptych*, 1435-40, Berlin State Museum, Berlin.



Fig. 31. Fra Angelico, *Convent of San Marco: Annunciation Cell 3*, 1438-45, fresco, 176 x 148 cm, Museo di San Marco, Florence.

## CHAPTER 3

### NUANCES OF EVIL

What perhaps makes peacock iconography most interesting are the various forms of symbolism associated with depictions of its different physical characteristics. Unified with the notion of rebirth and eternal life after years of repeated illustration, the peacock was also connected to divine wisdom and any angel who communicated the word of God because of its eyespots. Not long after ocelli-covered angels' wings appeared, a new prototype emerged as the near-antithesis of its predecessor. Figures of Lucifer or Satan were illustrated with the crest found on the head of the peacock. On its own, the illustration of the peacock's crest as a separate entity distinguishes it from the earlier motifs, but the fact that this becomes a kind of insignia is used for the Devil makes it different from any others connected to the peacock.

And yet, like the other examples of peacock iconography, this new prototype developed in accordance with artistic innovations prompted by interpretations of medieval literature. Similar to the motif of ocelli-covered angels' wings, conceived by Jan van Eyck and copied by later artists, portrayals of the peacocks crest gained popularity after appearing in the work of another prolific Renaissance artist- Albrecht Dürer. In his 1504 engraving *Adam and Eve*, Dürer depicted the serpent orchestrating the temptation leading to the Fall of Man with a peacock's crest (fig. 32). Dürer's decision to portray the crest is quite fascinating, for it visually ties the peacock to the idea of damnation by alluding to theological notions on the Devil, while borrowing from medieval concepts surrounding the peacock. It also reinforces the suggestion made by

countless historians that Dürer was an artist driven by a desire to make imagery considered nothing short of revolutionary.

But why did Dürer and other artists choose to illustrate the peacock's crest on figures representative of the Devil? What prompted the exemplification of this distinctive feature? And how did the peacock's symbolism become so varied that its physical characteristics evolved to express such diverse connotations? In order to identify the motivations for the development of this motif, I will begin by briefly revisiting notions on the peacock in medieval literature. An examination of theological diabolology will follow to show why artists selected specific types of symbolism for depictions of the Devil. These findings will demonstrate how the peacock came to be associated with diabolical imagery, revealing the methodology behind portrayals of the crest by exploring the ways medieval perceptions were appropriated to create insignia unlike any seen before.

At first glance, connecting the peacock to anything demonic appears to contradict several other elements that contribute to its iconography in art. But, like the notions of eternal life, rebirth, angels, and God, this diabolical correlation developed in accordance with theological views on the peacock. Beautiful and majestic, the male peafowl was associated with the sin of pride because it appears to strut about while displaying its magnificent tail feathers. Medieval writers construed these mannerisms as vainglorious and the peacock was consequently connected to pride. As discussed in the first chapter of this paper, the entry on the peacock in the Aberdeen Bestiary considers this idea at length by borrowing from Hugh of Fouillois's *Avarium*, which indicates that the peacock shows

its proud nature when lifting its tail after receiving praise.<sup>124</sup> The example of the peacock's pride was used to instruct Christians against similar immoral behavior and serve as a reminder to remain humble.<sup>125</sup> Copied nearly verbatim from the *Avarium*, Fouilloy's commentary was clearly influential to the Aberdeen work. However, the concept of the peacock's pride was not the brainchild of Fouilloy; Pliny the Elder in fact first suggested this idea centuries earlier. In *Natural Histories*, he suggests that the peacock is distinguished from other birds because it is conscious of its beauty. Described as boastful and grandiose, the peacock is noted to be full of pride "when it spreads out its jeweled colors directly facing the sun," where they shine brightly.<sup>126</sup>

As the first of the seven sins loathed by God in the Book of Proverbs, the act of pride was widely condemned by the medieval Church.<sup>127</sup> Not only is it the sin most easily committed, it can also be viewed as the first sin committed. When Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden she was not simply acting defiant, she was in a sense prideful because she understood that consumption of the fruit would give her the ability to see like God and therefore act like Him, even if she didn't fully comprehend the consequences of her actions. Augustine suggested this notion in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* by questioning how the serpent could actually persuade her to view what had

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<sup>124</sup> Hugh of Fouilloy, *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloy's Avairium*, ed. and trans. Willene B. Clark (Bringhamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), 249.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>126</sup> Pliny, *Natural History, Book 10*, ed. T.E. Page et. al, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 321.

<sup>127</sup> Proverbs 6:16-19

been forbidden as useful and good if she did not already value her own independence and have a “proud presumption of self.”<sup>128</sup> So, while the act of defiance is seen as creating original sin, through pride the desire to disobey God’s orders manifested, leading to the fall of man.

But pride was in fact connected to a downfall that occurred before humans existed. Although the Bible begins with creation and follows closely with the events that took place in the Garden of Eden, during the Middle Ages it was widely believed that after the creation of heaven a battle took place between angels remaining loyal to God and those that chose to follow the angel Lucifer in an act of rebellion. Augustine proposed that the fall of Lucifer mentioned in the Book of Isaiah is actually an allegory for the King of Babylon, which refers to the defeated angel who became known as the Devil.<sup>129</sup> Lucifer, described as rising in the morning before falling from heaven to earth because of his pride, translates as morning star in Latin.<sup>130</sup> Augustine interpreted this passage as recounting Lucifer’s time as an angel and the consequences that occurred because of his transgressions.<sup>131</sup> Lucifer’s fall was also connected to Luke 10:18, where Christ states he “saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven,” and Revelation 12:7-9 which narrates the battle between Angel Michael and the dragon, “called the devil and

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<sup>128</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. 2 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 162.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 155-156, Augustine uses the term “the Devil” in his text and states that Isaiah 14:12 refers to the Devil who represents the King of Babylon.

<sup>130</sup> Isa 14:11, “Thy pride is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down.”

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 14:12, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? how art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?”

Satan;” this passage additionally describes the dragon as “that old serpent,” a notion I will return to later in this chapter.<sup>132</sup>

Satan and the Devil are terms that appear interchangeably in medieval literature, but Lucifer was generally used to describe the angel before his fall. Regardless of the chosen vocabulary, the disgraced angel was considerably discussed during the Middle Ages. Augustine debated over the Devil’s creation and existence in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, examining whether he was a superior or inferior angel and questioning how God could have even created a being that behaved so nefariously. He suggests that the Devil was evil from the beginning of creation and “never stood in truth.”<sup>133</sup> Described as living as an inferior angel for a short time, he deduces that the Devil “fell through pride and impiety” after exercising free will.<sup>134</sup> Augustine concludes his discussion by stating that although God knew the Devil was evil at the time of creation the malevolent angel was made anyway, a finding he admittedly cannot explain. However, what is made clear is that Augustine identified pride as the cause of the Devil’s descent from grace.

Discussion and deliberation over the Devil’s actions appear abundantly in the writings of Pope Gregory the Great, whose copious amount of influential literature shaped medieval tropology on the Devil.<sup>135</sup> He discusses the Devil at length in

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<sup>132</sup> Rev. 12:9 does not capitalize “the devil.”

<sup>133</sup> Augustine, 151-155.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>135</sup> Jeffery Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (London: Cornwall University Press, 1984), 92.

*Moralities on Job*, written as a patristic work for monks between 579-602.<sup>136</sup> The treatise functions as an instructional tool that examines the biblical book as a means to contemplate nearly every aspect of human life.<sup>137</sup> In the work, Pope Gregory states that pride is the foundation of all sin. He also points to vainglorious behavior as a caustic and destructive action, which rescinds an individual's opportunity to live eternally in heaven after corporal death.<sup>138</sup> This belief carries into his discussions on the Devil, whom he calls a behemoth blinded with so much pride that he fell from the "heavenly ranks of interior brightness."<sup>139</sup> Like Augustine, Pope Gregory considers the Devil to be a one-time-angel who "lost the power of his high estate" when he was cast from heaven because of his pride.<sup>140</sup> But the fallen angel is designated as hailing from esteem much higher than the low ranking suggested by Augustine. Pope Gregory suggests that the prophecy in Ezekiel 31:3-11, recounting the destruction of the Assyrian Empire, is an allegory for the Devil, which compares "the Assyrian" to a cedar created as the first, largest and most beautiful tree in paradise.<sup>141</sup> After becoming aware of his beauty and exalted position, the cedar's "heart was lifted up in his height" and God was forced to

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>138</sup> Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. Members of the English Church, vol. 2 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), 129.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 192.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, 524.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

cast him from paradise because of his actions.<sup>142</sup> According to Pope Gregory, this passage narrates the rise and fall of the Devil, the behemoth described as the former chief of all angels, made first during creation with knowledge of the “ways of God” but disgraced due to his pride.<sup>143</sup>

Pope Gregory uses Ezekiel 28 to further substantiate his belief that the Devil was at one time the highest-ranking angel. The biblical chapter narrates the downfall of the King of Tyre by comparing him to Lucifer, a former cherub who was God’s “seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.”<sup>144</sup> Pope Gregory finds that the significant and esteemed qualities Lucifer once had indicate his previous position of prominence. The key word in this verse is seal, for according to Pope Gregory it suggests that God’s essence was impressed on Lucifer during his creation, unlike man who was merely made in God’s likeness.<sup>145</sup> The fact that Lucifer enjoyed some of God’s best virtues indicates his former prestige. Pope Gregory goes on to contemplate the jewels bestowed upon Lucifer during his former reign.<sup>146</sup> Ezekiel 28:13 describes Lucifer as adorned in nine precious stones described as sardius, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, onyx,

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<sup>142</sup> Ezek., 31:10.

<sup>143</sup> Gregory, vol. 3, 548.

<sup>144</sup> Ezek. 28:12; and 28:14, which describes Lucifer as formerly beautiful and a cherub.

<sup>145</sup> Gregory, vol. 3, 549.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

beryl, sapphire, carbuncle and emerald.<sup>147</sup> According to Pope Gregory, these nine stones, listed in order of ascending value, correspond to his version of an angelic ordering categorized as the angels, archangels, thrones, dominations, virtues, principdoms, powers, cherubim and seraphim. Because Lucifer wore the distinctions of all nine angelic orders, he was “more brilliant” than all other angels and “transcended their brightness.”<sup>148</sup>

Given the comprehensive examination of the angelic hierarchy presented in the last chapter of this paper, it is necessary to pause and examine the comparison made between the cherub and Lucifer in the Ezekiel 28:11-19. In these passages, Lucifer is described as a former cherub, full of God’s wisdom and essentially perfect before his fall. Ezekiel 1:4-28 also recounts the appearance of the cherubim who explicitly perform the work of God.<sup>149</sup> Based on this information it would be reasonable to connect the cherubim to the highest placement in the angelic hierarchy, since the passages in Ezekiel infer that Lucifer was a cherub and at the uppermost echelon of entities.<sup>150</sup> The cherubim’s categorization below the seraphim leads us to question if Pope Gregory interpreted the plural reading of a cherub as the cherubim, or if he perhaps considered the two expressions to be unrelated.

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<sup>147</sup> Ezek. 28:13, “Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God: every precious stone was thy covering: the sarduis, the topaz, and the jasper, the chrysolite, and the onyx, and the beryl, the sapphire, and the carbuncle, and the emerald.”

<sup>148</sup> Gregory, vol. 3, 549.

<sup>149</sup> Ezek. 10:1-22.

<sup>150</sup> The summary of Ezek 28 at the beginning of the chapter in the Bible states that the King of Tyre is prophesized as receiving a sentence similar to Lucifer’s. The pericope of Ezek. 28:11-19 does not actually use the word Lucifer.

Alice Wood's book *Of Wings and Wheels* investigates semantic concerns pertaining to the cherubim and the syntax designating them as celestial beings that appears twenty-eight times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>151</sup> She considers several instances of contemporary debate over the exact translation of the Hebrew lexemes in Ezekiel 28:11-19, as well as the various myths attributed to its composition that have led some scholars to question if the King of Tyre is actually likened to a cherub in the form of a celestial entity.<sup>152</sup> Wood argues that the Hebrew syntax indeed compares the King of Tyre to a cherub, called a "heavenly being" and noted to be the singular form of the plural cherubim.<sup>153</sup> So, although her examination suggests that Pope Gregory indeed interpreted the cherub as Lucifer, it also adds a layer of complexity to the issue of his angelic arrangement.

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<sup>151</sup> Alice Wood, *Of Wings and Wheels: A Synthetic Study of the Biblical Cherubim* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 8, Wood suggests that while the lexeme for cherubim appears in the Hebrew Bible ninety-three times, these occurrences can be categorized into three types of uses after omitting two instances where cherubim indicates a location in Babylonia. In addition to the twenty-eight cases of the cherubim as celestial entities, there are seven instances in which cherubim is used as a term to describe liturgical texts and fifty-six examples that indicate the cherubim as images in furnishings of temples and tabernacles.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, see 61-83 regarding Wood's in-depth discussion on Ezek. 28:11-19. She debates against the suggestion made by several scholars that the passages derive from Mesopotamian myth centered on the first man as King of Tyre, who is placed with a cherub.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 84, Wood summarizes that the cherub is used as a form of comparison for the King of Tyre; and 86, Wood states that cherub, as a singular term, appears in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible twenty-eight times; however, in twenty-five of these instances two or more are described together. Other than the cherub appearing in Ezek 28:11-19, a single cherub appears in the poem the Song of David in 2 Sam 22:11 and Ps 18:11.

Yet, Pope Gregory did not set the precedent of the angelic ordering; he followed the example of Pseudo Dionysius, who was the first to place the cherubim after the seraphim.<sup>154</sup> Dionysius proposes the seraphim's ability to purify Isaiah's lips as justification for their top ranking, whereas the cherubim receive God's gift of knowledge.<sup>155</sup> Still, his rationalization does not address the problem that arises from connecting Lucifer to a cherub; are we to perceive this cherub as different from the cherubim in the hierarchy? Thomas Aquinas' conclusions on the matter also offer little clarity. Agreeing with both Dionysius and Pope Gregory, Aquinas suggests that Lucifer is identified as a cherub and not a seraph because the knowledge the cherubim receive is compatible to mortal sin, unlike the "heat of charity," with which sin incompatible.<sup>156</sup> Hence, we are essentially left with a problem that obscures our ability to identify why the angels were ordered in such a manner.<sup>157</sup>

Although the angelic ordering may never be fully understood, the influence of Pope Gregory's writings cannot be overstated. In his book *Lucifer, the Devil in the Middle Ages*, Jeffery Burton Russell identifies Pope Gregory's diabolology as the source

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<sup>154</sup> See Pseudo Dionysius, *Pseudo Dionysius: the Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 161-173; and *Lucifer*, 94n, Russell states that Dionysius did not conceive that the Devil was the highest angel; Pope Gregory is noted to have amended Dionysius' ideas.

<sup>155</sup> Is, 6:2-6:7.

<sup>156</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Volume one*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1947) Question 63, article 7.

<sup>157</sup> Dionysius, 162.

most pertinent to forming medieval perceptions of the Devil.<sup>158</sup> He states that after the circulation of Pope Gregory's writings, the Devil was commonly recognized as a cherub; the first being created and greatest of all angels, who would have retained his distinction had he not made the decision to sin.<sup>159</sup> The Devil descended from greatness because of his pride, which led him to covet a principle position of power.<sup>160</sup> Russell notes that Isidore of Seville, for example, adopted the belief that before Lucifer fell he was the leader of angels, but afterward he was the prince of evil.<sup>161</sup> Thomas Aquinas also embraced these notions, suggesting that Lucifer's sin of pride was motivated by a desire to be superior, which only could have originated in the highest of spirits.<sup>162</sup>

Indeed, theological tradition undoubtedly affected the ways the Devil was portrayed in medieval and Renaissance art. These ideas were incorporated into various forms of visual media, which helped the concepts of the Devil's pride and fall to spread. One source is particularly important to our discussion because it can be connected to the appearance of the peacock's crest in diabolical imagery. While the Devil's fall is not included in Genesis, it appeared as an event that transpired during creation in English

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<sup>158</sup> *Lucifer*, 94; see 92-128 for Russell's discussion on Pope Gregory's contribution to diabolology. Russell notes that although Pope Gregory was the leading source of influence for medieval interpretation of the Devil, Isidore of Seville, Cassian, Bebe, and Alcuin also made contributions.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 95; Russell's summary of Isidore of Seville's interpretations is offered because Isidore's *Sentences*, Russell's source, is only available in Latin. This information was included here to show Gregory's influence on medieval theology.

<sup>162</sup> *Summa*, *Ibid.*

mystery cycle plays.<sup>163</sup> Evolving from the Latin liturgical dramas performed throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, mystery cycles emerged in England around 1375.<sup>164</sup> Similar to liturgical dramas, the cycles were performed in religious houses across England. However, the English cycles were unique because they were not always performed in accordance with the church calendar and were consequently detached from liturgical context.<sup>165</sup> Cycle plays also differed from their counterparts compositionally, developing from both scriptural sources and the theological notions previously examined in this chapter.<sup>166</sup>

The Devil's fall was the main subject in the plays recounting the fall of the angels, which appear in the mystery cycles of York, Chester and the *Ludus Coventriae*.<sup>167</sup> In each of these plays, the narrative content varies, but all follow Genesis and theological tradition by presenting the angels as created by God on the first day.<sup>168</sup> In the *Ludus*

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<sup>163</sup> Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 105, Woolf describes Satan's fall as components of mystery cycles that begin and end in heaven.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>167</sup> Ronald W. Vince, *Ancient and Medieval Theater: A Historiographical Handbook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 143, Vince states that there are four well-known English cycles: York, Chester, Towneley, and *Ludus Coventriae*. The Chester cycle is preserved in eight manuscripts, three of which are partial and five that are complete cycles; three of the complete cycles are in the British Museum, one is at Oxford the last is in the Huntington Library in California. The York and *Ludus Coventriae* are in manuscripts in the British Museum and the Towneley is in the Huntington Library.

<sup>168</sup> *The English Mystery Plays*, 112.

*Coventriae*, the Devil is depicted as a prideful and brooding entity destined to fall as a consequence of his sinful pride. The play recounts the idea that the Devil sinned from the time of his creation by showing his decline as occurring the exact moment he speaks.<sup>169</sup> His first action is to ask the angels whether they will follow him or God.<sup>170</sup> Then, with increasing confidence, he visually contemplates his offense by sitting on God's holy throne while praising his own beauty.<sup>171</sup> He subsequently falls in a scene presented as the inevitable outcome of his actions.<sup>172</sup> Once fallen, the Devil and his angels masqueraded in animal or beastly masks that recalled Last Judgment iconography and provided the characters with an evil appearance.<sup>173</sup>

The three manuscripts, with the addition of a fourth titled the Towneley manuscript, all contain plays of the fall of man that begin with Adam and Eve's creation in a scene of paradise.<sup>174</sup> In the opening monologues of the York and Chester plays, the Devil is described as first appearing in angelic form but morphing into a snake after reciting the reasons for his fall.<sup>175</sup> Although Genesis does not specifically designate the Devil as the serpent in the Garden, the plays follow Augustine's belief that God limited

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 115.

the Devil's choice of form to the serpent, through which the Devil spoke during Eve's temptation.<sup>176</sup> Augustine's analysis also harmonizes with the Devil's description as "that old serpent" in Revelation 12:9; therefore, recounting the Devil's transformation into a snake in narrative of these plays was a logical visualization.

The mystery cycles are linked to the development of the peacock's crest motif through two elements. First, they indicate the establishment of a visual tradition in which the Devil was equated with a serpent after his fall, triggered by pride and rebellion. Second, in showing the Devil's attempt to occupy God's throne, as narrated in the *Ludus Coventriae*, the fallen angel was recognized for his envy and imagined "the prince of the power of this air," the ruler of the corporeal world.<sup>177</sup> These examples empowered a conceptualization of the Devil as a vainglorious angel who desired to be like a king. The practice of visually comparing the Devil to a prideful prince, which originated in cycle drama, would have been familiar to artists who were frequently commissioned to paint altarpieces in the very religious houses where the cycles were performed. Mystery cycles were significantly influential; while they began in England, the plays were widespread and prevalent enough to reach Germany by the fourteenth century.<sup>178</sup> The cycles of the fall of the angels inspired the narrative of the Vienna Passion play, a German drama that begins with the fall of Lucifer and is followed by the fall of Man.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Augustine, 159.

<sup>177</sup> Eph. 2:2.

<sup>178</sup> Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955), 101.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

The notion of symbolizing the Devil's desire to be like God by depicting him as the prince of sin, which occurred in mystery cycle dramas, conceivably influenced artists seeking ways to visualize the Devil's aspirations in paintings and prints. Depictions of the Devil in serpent form, crowned "the god of this world," appear in German art from the fifteenth century.<sup>180</sup> *The Fall of Man and the Expulsion from Paradise*, a woodblock print from the 1473 devotional work *Speculum humanae salvationis*, depicts a serpent wearing a crown in the Garden of Eden (fig. 33). As Adam and Eve prepare to consume the forbidden fruit, the serpent coils around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, persuasively gazing at Eve. His human face is a deceptive façade that hides his identity; however, the serpent's diadem reveals his true persona and signifies the act of sin, while exposing the Devil's stature as the leader of the depravity. The serpent's anthropomorphic characteristics underscore his attempt to act and be like God.

Several examples of crowns signifying the Devil's sinful actions appear in German art from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; and, similar to the illustration in the *Speculum humanae salvantionis*, they are commonly depicted on serpents in Garden of Eden scenes. Michael Wolgemut incorporated this theme into his 1491 *Fall of Man*, a print recounting the actions that led to the realization of original sin (fig. 34). The woodcut depicts Adam and Eve's creation, followed by the moment the pair consume the forbidden fruit. In the second scene, placed compositionally below the first in narrative sequence, Adam and Eve shamefully cover themselves with leaves, now aware of their nakedness. As Adam looks at the viewer, Eve shares a gaze with the

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<sup>180</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4.

serpent wearing a crown like a badge of merit. The diadem is the serpent's identifying feature, employed to suggest its embodiment of sin and immorality.

In a slightly later print by Wolgemut from 1493 also depicting the events in the Garden, a crown is utilized similarly (fig. 35). Once again, the arrangement is organized narratively; however, instead of appearing as the second of two scenes, Adam and Eve's temptation is now the first, shown chronologically before their expulsion occurring to the left of the composition. To the right, while standing on top of the gates to paradise, Adam gazes contently at Eve, who is captivated by the forbidden fruit. Although their facial expressions make them appear satisfied and content, the attempt to cover their nudity suggests they feel shame. The couple has already accepted the fruit from the serpent, crowned to symbolize its prideful achievement. The crown clearly marks the serpent as the menacing mastermind of original sin.

Wolgemut's pupil, Albrecht Dürer, embraced this prototype for the visual translation of scripture in his 1497-98 *Apocalypse* series, a collection of woodblock prints recognized for their innovative realism and expressive interpretation of the Last Judgment and New Jerusalem.<sup>181</sup> Crowns appear in *The Apocalyptic Woman and the Seven-Headed Dragon* (fig. 36), a faithful representation of Revelation chapter twelve. The text recounts the envisioned encounter of a woman bearing a child and the Devil, in

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<sup>181</sup> Anna Scherbaum, "The Early Cycles: Apocalypsis cum figuris and Life of the Virgin Mary," in *The Early Dürer*, ed. Daniel Hess and Thomas Eser (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 434, Scherbaum describes Dürer's *Apocalypse* series as a pictorial translation of Revelation that combines nature and objects of reality with the fanciful descriptions in the biblical chapter.

the form of a dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven diadems.<sup>182</sup> Encompassing all of the described elements, the print is a literal visualization of the narrative. But Dürer, whose innovation is exhibited by his capacity to create harmony in a single scene through the juxtaposition of earthly and ethereal realms, took this illustration one step further.<sup>183</sup> He amplified the intensity by adding details that demonstrate what Panofsky describes as the artist's ability to "transform mere situations or phenomena into dramatic action."<sup>184</sup>

Dürer used articles like diadems to signify the specific character traits of his figures, tailoring them to their designated disposition. The elaborate crown depicted on the Apocalyptic Women, for example, is indicative of her sanctity. Standing to the right side of God, on the crescent moon while clothed in the sun, she wears a crown of twelve stars that shine brightly in the face of darkness to symbolize her personification of divinity.<sup>185</sup> The crowns portrayed on the dragon function similarly; its distinctive features, different from one another but equal in ghastly proportion, serve as disturbing representations of hell, while the seven improperly fitting crowns that teeter around its horns add to the sense of trepidation. Like the dragon's facial characteristics, the

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<sup>182</sup> Rev. 12:3.

<sup>183</sup> See Charles Talbot, "Dürer and the High Art of Printmaking," in *The Essential Dürer*, ed. Larry Silver and Jeffery Chipps Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 56, for discussion on Dürer's ability to combine various elements into one composition.

<sup>184</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 52.

<sup>185</sup> Rev. 12:1, "And a great sign appeared in Heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

individually unique diadems serve to increase the sensational effect and make the composition a “more monstrous whole.”<sup>186</sup> Dürer also depicted ten crowns noted to be on the beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 13:1 in *The Beast with Two Horns like a Lamb* (fig. 37). Similar to the example of the dragon, the beast’s seven different faces and ten unique crowns create intensity and dramatic effect.

The practice of incorporating visual elements into art as a way to signify the functions and characteristics of biblical figures was of course nothing new. Symbols had been integrated into artworks since the beginning of Christian art, and the repeated representation of specific objects with religious figures formed the iconography that helped viewers to interpret art. However, Dürer’s decision to use articles like diadems as forms of expression demonstrates an artistic aptitude that made his compositions vivacious and dynamic. The crowns illustrated on the seven-headed beast are particularly imaginative, for they accentuate the erratic and volatile reality of an existence in hell. Indeed, Dürer was not the first artist to depict crowns on representations of the Devil; by the time he created the *Apocalypse*, prints depicting diadems were a common custom that allowed artists to underscore the pride that led to the Devil’s fall. But his innovative approach to the graphic medium goes beyond the traditional conventions previously used by artists and animates his prints, allowing them to appear as though they come alive.

Undoubtedly, the text in Revelation describing crowns on the apocalyptic woman, the dragon and the beast motivated Dürer to include diadems in his *Apocalypse* series. However, the practice of symbolizing the Devil’s pride with a crown in fall of man scenes that appears in the *Speculum humanae salvationis* and Wolgemut’s prints clearly

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<sup>186</sup> Panofsky, 57.

influenced the imagery in Dürer's 1504 *Adam and Eve*. Arranged compositionally to fit previously established conventions for the scene, Adam, Eve, and the serpent embody their traditional roles to initiate original sin. Eve stands to the left and accepts the fruit from the menacing serpent as Adam passively gazes on from the right. The serpent is once again marked with a sign of pride, only now instead of a crown its vainglory is symbolized by a peacock's crest. This adaptation, which hides an element of symbolic value "under the veil of realistic paraphernalia," is not merely a form of disguised symbolism; it demonstrates the careful study and observation of an artist dedicated to pioneering his craft.<sup>187</sup>

Already in the sixteenth century, Dürer's 1504 engraving was a celebrated model of technical dexterity. The print is filled with instances of imagery showcasing Dürer's innovative skill, which pushed past the boundaries formulated for graphic art and embraced the principles established for painting and sculpture. The depictions of Adam and Eve, for example, are frequently regarded as truly innovative. Posed in a display of contrapposto, Adam and Eve reflect the artist's knowledge of Italian ideals and ancient modeling, gained after years of study.<sup>188</sup> The anatomy studies Dürer produced during his first *Wanderjahre*, and after his return from Italy to Nuremburg around 1495-96, are accredited for helping him develop the ability to portray the realism and balance demonstrated by the pair.<sup>189</sup> With a nod to the graphic print tradition established north of

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>188</sup> Peggy Grosse, "The Nude," in *The Early Dürer*, ed. Daniel Hess and Thomas Eser (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 373-375.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 373.

the Alps, Dürer depicted a lush forest setting for his version of Eden instead of a mythological one, a decision that is also remarked upon as inventive by scholars.<sup>190</sup> The animals inhabiting the scene are praised as naturalistic representations of realism, as well, and similar to Dürer's body studies, these illustrations are also the result of systematic investigation. The artist's surviving animal studies document his aspirations to accurately portray the natural world and show his efforts toward perfection. Scholarship suggests that Dürer's studies of the ox muzzle depicted from two viewpoints served as preparatory drawings for the ox seated on the lower right side of the 1504 print (figs. 38, 39).<sup>191</sup> The realistic qualities presented in his study the *Young Hare*, too, are observable in the rabbit situated between Eve and the tree (fig. 40).

Although no animal study of the peacock has survived over time, Dürer clearly was familiar with the peacock's anatomy because the crest on his serpent is replicated with considerable realism. Peafowl crests consist of long feathered stems topped with larger feather tips that exhibit markings similar to ocelli (fig. 41). From afar, however, these tips appear less like feathers and more like small solid roundels. The crest on Dürer's serpent is illustrated to look as it would from the viewer's perspective, consisting of thin stems that end in basic circular structures. This naturalistic image contrasts the inaccuracy of a crest that appears on the serpent in an earlier work by Master ES. Dated to 1450-60, *The Expulsion from Paradise* features what appears to be a crest on the Devil hiding in disguise in the Garden of Eden (fig. 42). Yet, unlike Dürer's accurate

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>191</sup> Stephanie Porras, "Anatomy," in *The Early Dürer*, ed. Daniel Hess and Thomas Eser (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 528-529.

interpretation, this example is made of lavish feathers that look nothing like those found in actual peafowl crests (figs. 43, 44). Hence, while it is certainly possible that Dürer was influenced by in Master ES' print, the lifelike characteristics of his crest look less like a reinterpretation of the older work and more like a reinvention of an idea, which Dürer improved upon by rendering naturalistic elements with meticulous precision.

While the peacock's crest prototype can be traced to Master ES, I argue that the treatment actually evolved into a prevalent motif only after Dürer's realistic rendition in 1504. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the crest was stimulated by its reappearance in Dürer's 1510-11 *Fall of Man* (fig. 45). Similar to his 1504 version, Adam, Eve, and the serpent appear in the Garden; however, instead of adhering to the compositional conventions for the scene, Dürer modified several elements. The true character of the figures is made more apparent; now, placed to the right of the tree, Eve's seductiveness is underscored by her ability to conceal Adam's escort toward sin with a warm embrace. The serpent exposes his true intentions and identity, as well, appearing here as a more vile and threatening version of his portrayal in the 1504 print. Depicted with a heavy brow and menacing eyes, the serpent's malevolent nature is underscored by his mouth full of jagged teeth that clutch Eve's sinful offering. The serpent convincingly personifies the Devil by demonstrating his intrinsic evil through his outward appearance. But, while Dürer elected to change several compositional elements in his later print, the crest of the peacock remains as a symbol of the actions that facilitated the onset of evil.

After Dürer, many Northern artists adopted this motif for similar scenes involving the Devil. Hans Baldung Grien depicted a crown on the serpent in his 1514 *Fall of Man*, a somber retelling of original sin (fig. 46). Compositional adaptations appear throughout

the print; for example, the serpent faces Adam instead of Eve, who reaches for the fruit outside of the serpent's gaze as Adam attempts to distract him from detecting Eve's deed. However, while Baldung Grien altered many elements in his scene, he chose to keep the crown to signify the Devil's pride. This motif is not only found in prints; Jan Gossaert depicted a crest on the serpent in his 1507-08 painting *Adam and Eve*, as did Lucas Cranach in his 1549 *The Fall of Man* (figs. 47, 48). The crest also appears in scenes of a different variety altogether, as demonstrated by the green angel wearing a crest while seated in the choir of angels in Matthias Grunewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* (fig. 49). In her book *The Devil at Isenheim*, Ruth Mellinkoff argues that the peacock's crest actually functions in the painting to expose this angel as the Devil, who is portrayed in the very moment he comprehends the consequences of Christ's birth.<sup>192</sup>

The crest of the peacock offered Dürer and his followers a way to highlight the Devil's pride using an object found in the natural world. When compared to the actual crowns appearing in the *Speculum humanae salvantionis* and Wolgemut's works, the crest is perhaps a more appropriate method for suggesting the Devil's sin. On the head of the peacock, the crest appears like royal insignia. However, when the crest is placed on the serpent, it is not simply a crown; it becomes a purposeful symbol with a multifaceted meaning. As a characteristic found only on the peacock, the crest is indicative of its connotations in medieval literature. Like the peacock, the Devil was full of vanity;

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<sup>192</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 25, Mellinkoff's discussion centers on the *Isenheim Altarpiece* by Matthias Grunewald. She offers research on the symbolism associated with the peacock in art to support her finding that an angel in the painting is actually the Devil, who wears a peacock's crest.

hence, the crest signifies their shared relationship to pride. When depicted on the Devil in serpent form, the crest works as his crown to accentuate the egotism that led to his fall. The crest is also emblem of immortality, but unlike the heavenly notions associated with other forms of peacock imagery, the crest symbolizes the Devil's eternal damnation caused by sin.

And while the Devil was the first angel created, he is given a part of the peacock's anatomy that has significantly less visual appeal than the ocelli exhibited on archangels. Mellinkoff suggests that artists used the crest to contrast the convention of eyespotted angels' wings and emphasize the peacock's symbolic association with pride.<sup>193</sup> Although he was an angel, the Devil could not be associated with the same symbol as other angels due to his sin. Lacking the colorful effervescence of ocelli, the crest is the Devil's emblem because it does not contain the beauty of an eyespot. This absence of beauty makes the crest the perfect symbol for the Devil, who was stripped of his splendor when he was cast down from heaven. Similar to other angels, he lives eternally; but due to his transgressions the Devil is set apart from the rest and crowned with the peacock's crest, a blaring reminder of the consequences related to the sin of pride.

The peacock's crest developed into a popular motif for a variety of reasons. Because of its distinguishing physical characteristics, the peacock was associated with pride, similar to the Devil, who fell from his high rank in heaven because of his sinful actions. In order to underscore the sin of pride, Northern artists began to depict crowns on the Devil hiding as the serpent in the Garden of Eden to highlight the consequences of sinning against God. Dürer, like Master ES, recognized the theological connection

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<sup>193</sup> Mellinkoff, 25.

between the peacock and the Devil, and envisioned the peacock's crest as functioning like a crown on the Devil in serpent form. The crest was a more appropriate symbol for these scenes than an actual crown because, through its relationship to the peacock, the crest could be viewed as an emblem of pride. In representations of the Fall, the crest is an effective instrument for recounting the reasons the first of God creatures, categorically different but created before all others in their respective classifications, were driven to sin. It not only signifies the Devil's offense, but also Adam and Eve's, due to their prideful defiance. But the crest also offered artists like Dürer an opportunity to include an element of realism within the narrative of their compositions. Dürer, an innovative artist who paved the way for his followers, incorporated the peacock's crest into his prints because it is an object found in the natural world, which could only be rendered accurately through careful observation. Hence, the crest allowed Dürer to showcase his originality and technical skill. The crest subsequently developed into a motif because it is the perfect way to emphasize the penalties that accompany vainglory. These varied connotations make the peacock's crest an excellent symbol for the sin that led to the Devil's fall.

Consisting of diverse imagery formed by various theological and artistic traditions, peacock iconography is truly unique. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the peacock's iconography progressed in such a way that artists were able to create distinctive symbols using the peacock's characteristics. However, while peacock iconography evolved over time to incorporate new elements, the notion of eternal life continued to function as its nucleus. Ocelli-covered angel's wings and the peacock's crest are tied to the concept of immortality, like the peacock itself, and are

therefore also symbols of everlasting life. Hence, the peacock was able to represent so many ideas in art because its iconography is multidimensional. But physical features like the peacock's plumage and crest were also visually appealing and the inclusion of these characteristics not only communicated information to the viewer, they provided artists the opportunity to incorporate naturalism into a composition that was aesthetically pleasing. With a tradition so rich and effervescent, peacock iconography is, at its core, as truly vibrant and unique as the peacock itself.

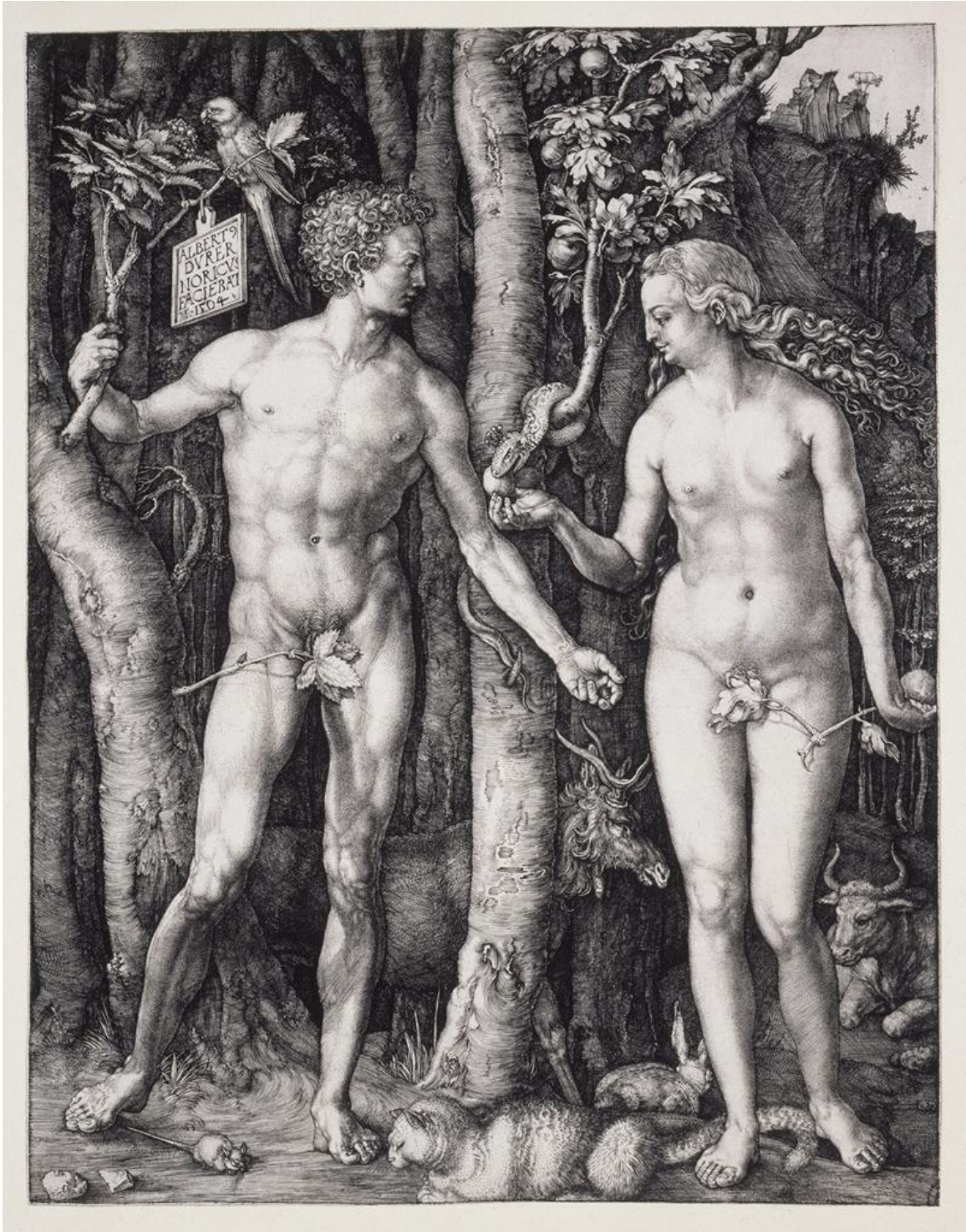


Fig. 32. Albrecht Dürer, *Fall of Man*, 1504, woodblock print, 9 5/8 x 7 5/8 in.

27  
 Eva seduxit viz vt secum ameceret. Genes. iij. ca.  
 Eva hat betrogen iten man das er mit ir asse.  
 Scdm caplm



**I**n p̄cedentibz audiuius quantū deus hominem  
 honorauit. Consequenter audiemz quō homo  
 sapiē vilificauit. Homo cū in honore esset nō  
 intellexit. Eiectus est q̄ contra deum creatorem suum  
 se erexit. Eiectus est de paradiso voluptatis. In hanc  
 vallem miserie ⁊ paupertatis. Paruipendit impensum  
 sibi honorem. Et inuenit tribulatōnem ⁊ dolorē. Exi-  
 uit paradysum locum gaudiosum ⁊ amenum. Et itra-  
 uit locum doloribz ⁊ aduersitatibz plenum. Intrauit  
 mundum fraudulosum ⁊ fallacem. Multa bona pro-  
 mittentem ⁊ in omibz mendacem. Promittit enim  
 mundus homini longam vitam dare. Sed veniente  
 morte non valet ad punctum prerogare. Promittit  
 corpi diutinam sanitatem. Et inducit anime ⁊ corpi  
 perpetuam infirmitatem. Promittit multas diuitias  
 ⁊ magnum honorem. Sed in fine dat homini putre-  
 dinem ⁊ fetorem. Et licet aliquando tribuat homini  
 bona mundana. Tamen omnia indurabilia sunt ⁊  
 vana. Nam hominis vitam non potest prolongare

Fig. 33. Anonymous, *The Fall of Man and the Expulsion from Paradise*, in *Speculum humanae salvationis*, fol. 15v, 1473, woodblock print, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library, New Zealand.

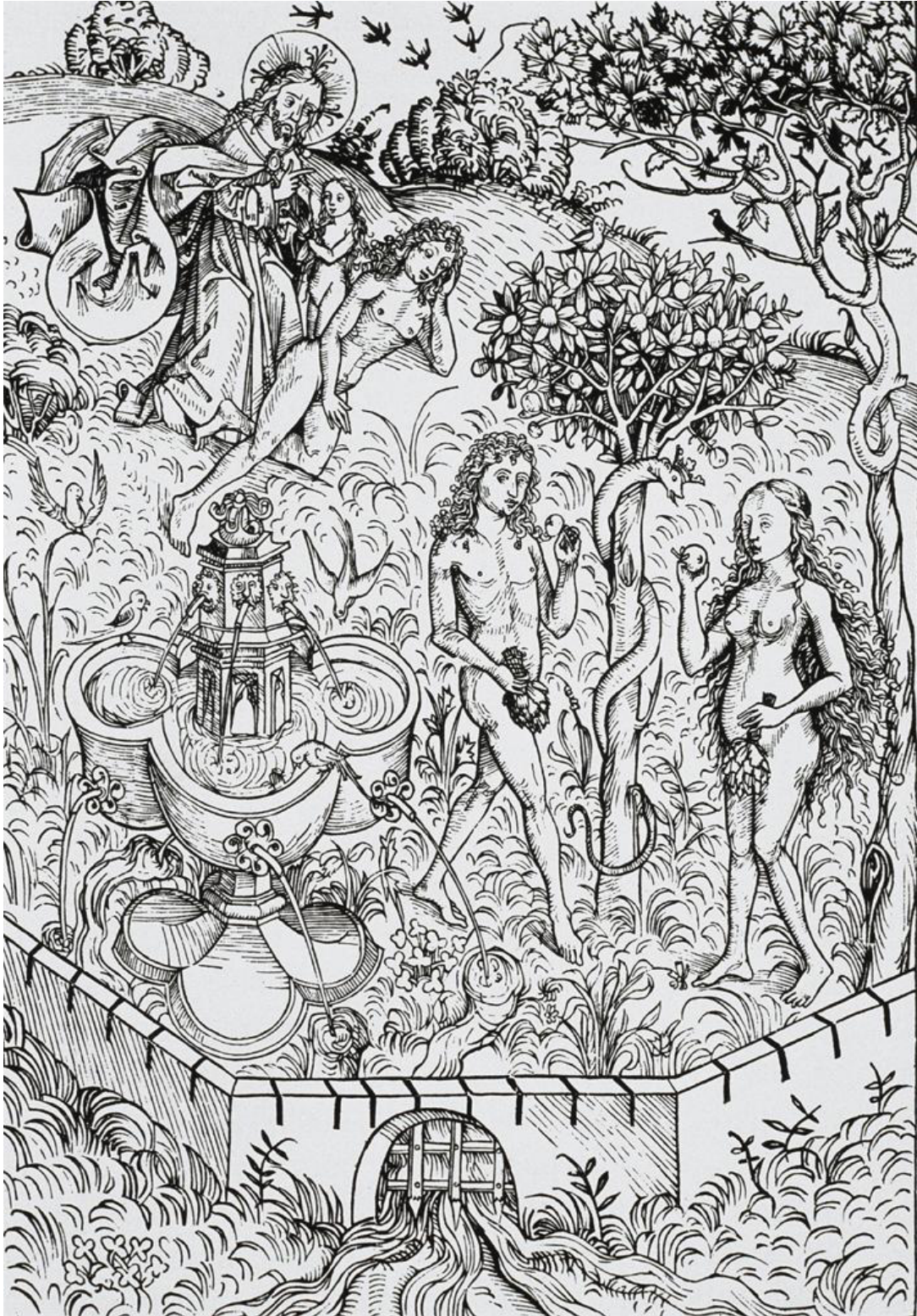


Fig. 34. Michael Wolemut, *Fall of Man*, in Schatzbehalter der wahren Reichtumer des Hells, woodcut print, 1491, 250 x 170 mm.



Fig. 35. Michael Wolgemut, *Fall of Man*, in *Die Schedelsche Weltchronic Nuremburg Chronicle*, 1493, woodcut print.



Fig. 36. Albrecht Dürer, *The Apocalyptic Woman and the Seven-Headed Dragon*, from the *Apocalypse Series*, 1497-98, woodcut.



Fig. 37. Albrecht Dürer, *Beast with Two Horns like a Lamb*, from the *Apocalypse Series*, 1497-98, woodcut.



Fig. 38. Albrecht Dürer, *Ox Muzzle, profile*, 1501-05, watercolor and bodycolor, 199 x 158 mm.

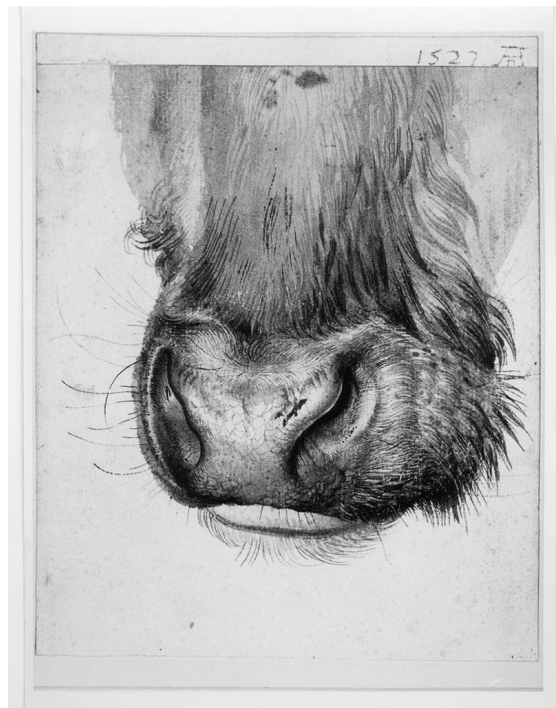


Fig. 39. Albrecht Dürer, *Ox Muzzle, frontal*, 1501-05, watercolor and bodycolor, 197 x 158 mm.



Fig. 40. Albrecht Dürer, *Young Hare*, 1502, watercolor, 251 x 226 mm.



Fig. 41. Peacock's crest consisting of small feathers.



Fig. 42. Master ES, *The Expulsion from Paradise*, 1450-60, engraving, 191 x 196 mm.



Fig. 43. Detail, *The Expulsion from Paradise*, Master ES.

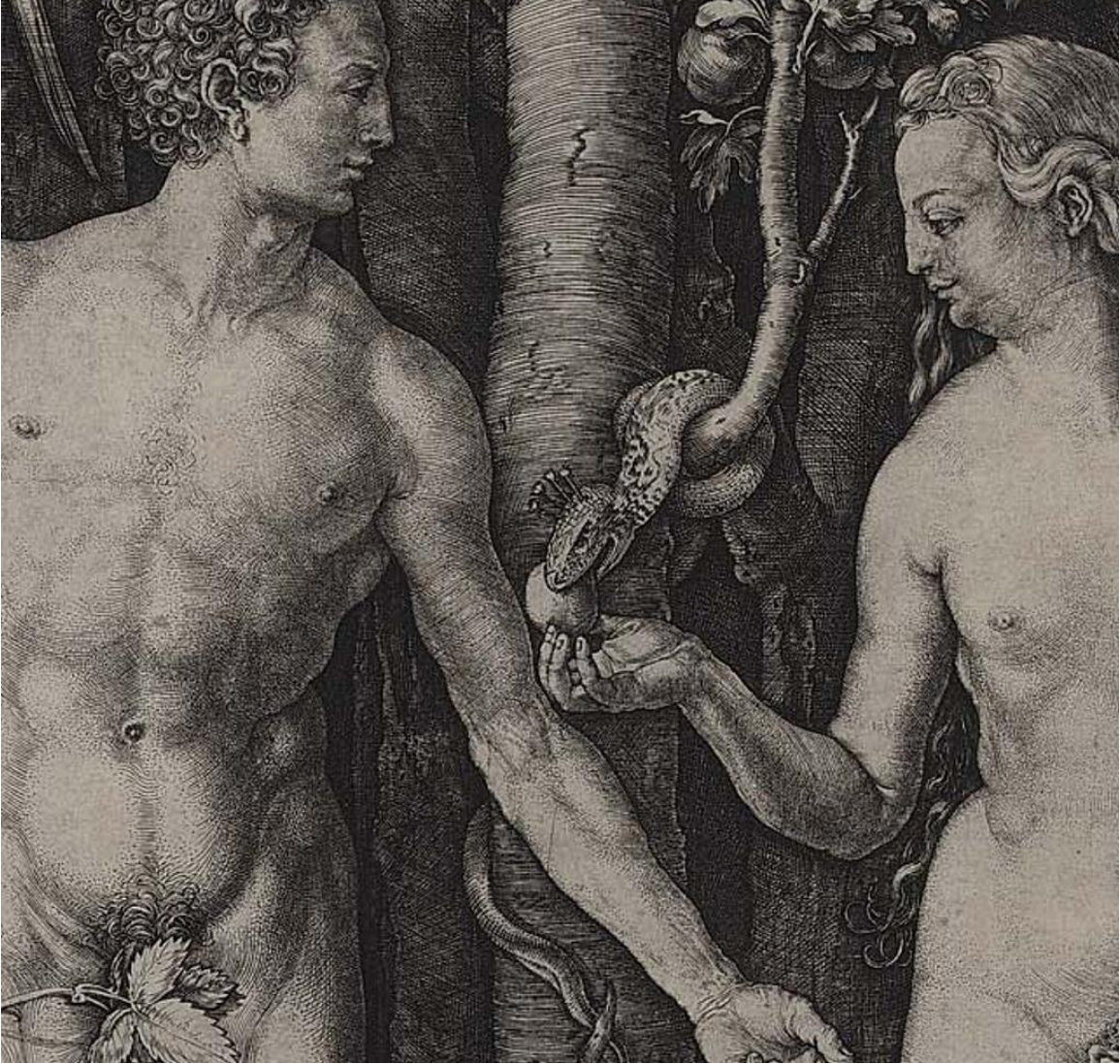


Fig. 44. Detail, *Fall of Man*, Albrecht Dürer, 1504.



Fig. 45. Albrecht Dürer, *Fall of Man (Small Passion)*, 1510-11, woodcut, 5 x 3 13/16 in.

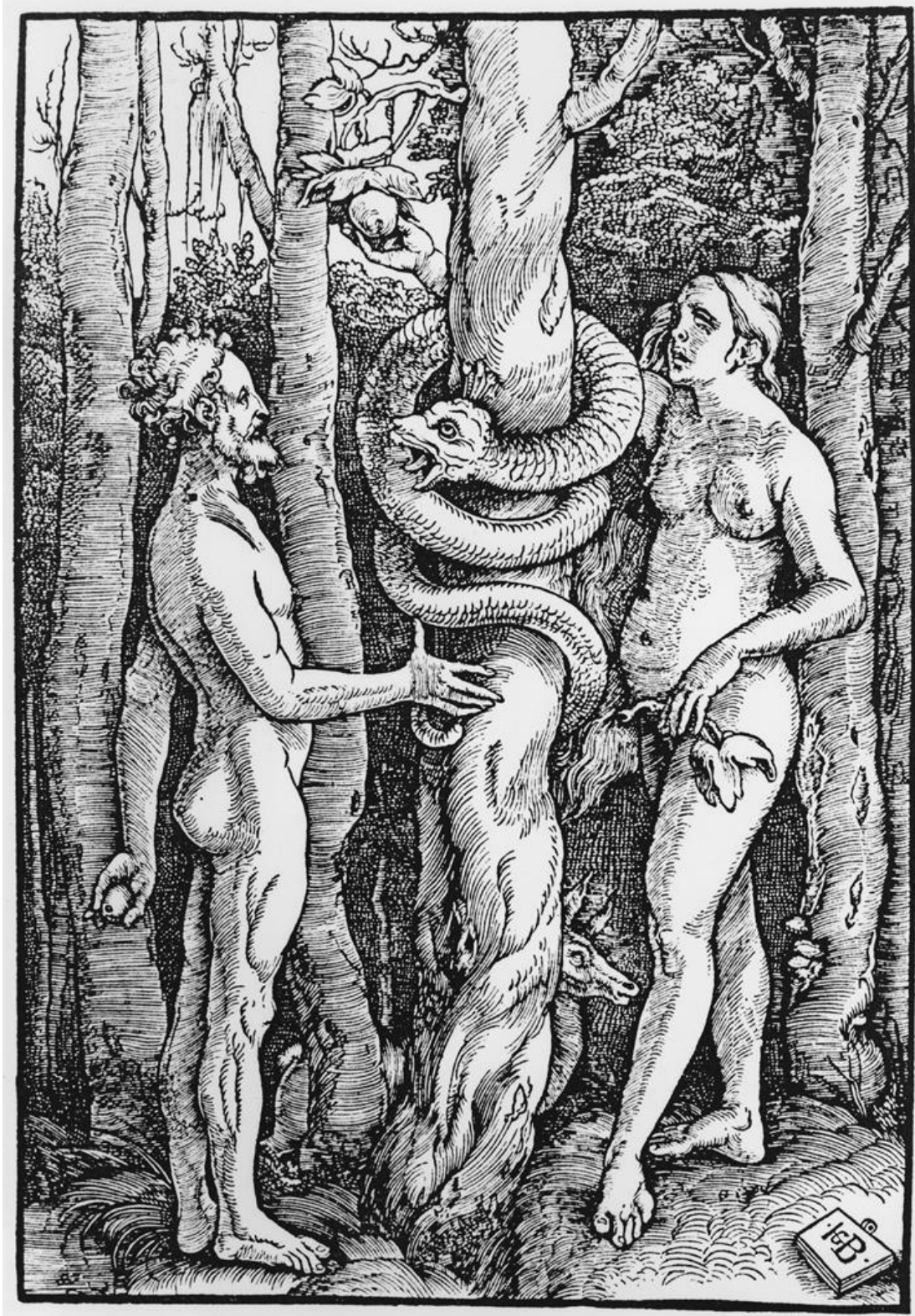


Fig. 46. Hans Baldung Grien, *The Fall of Man*, c. 1514, woodcut, 220 x 153 mm.



Fig. 47. Jan Gossaert, *Adam and Eve*, 1507-08, oil on panel, 56.5 x 37 cm, Museo Thyssen- Bornemisza, Madrid.

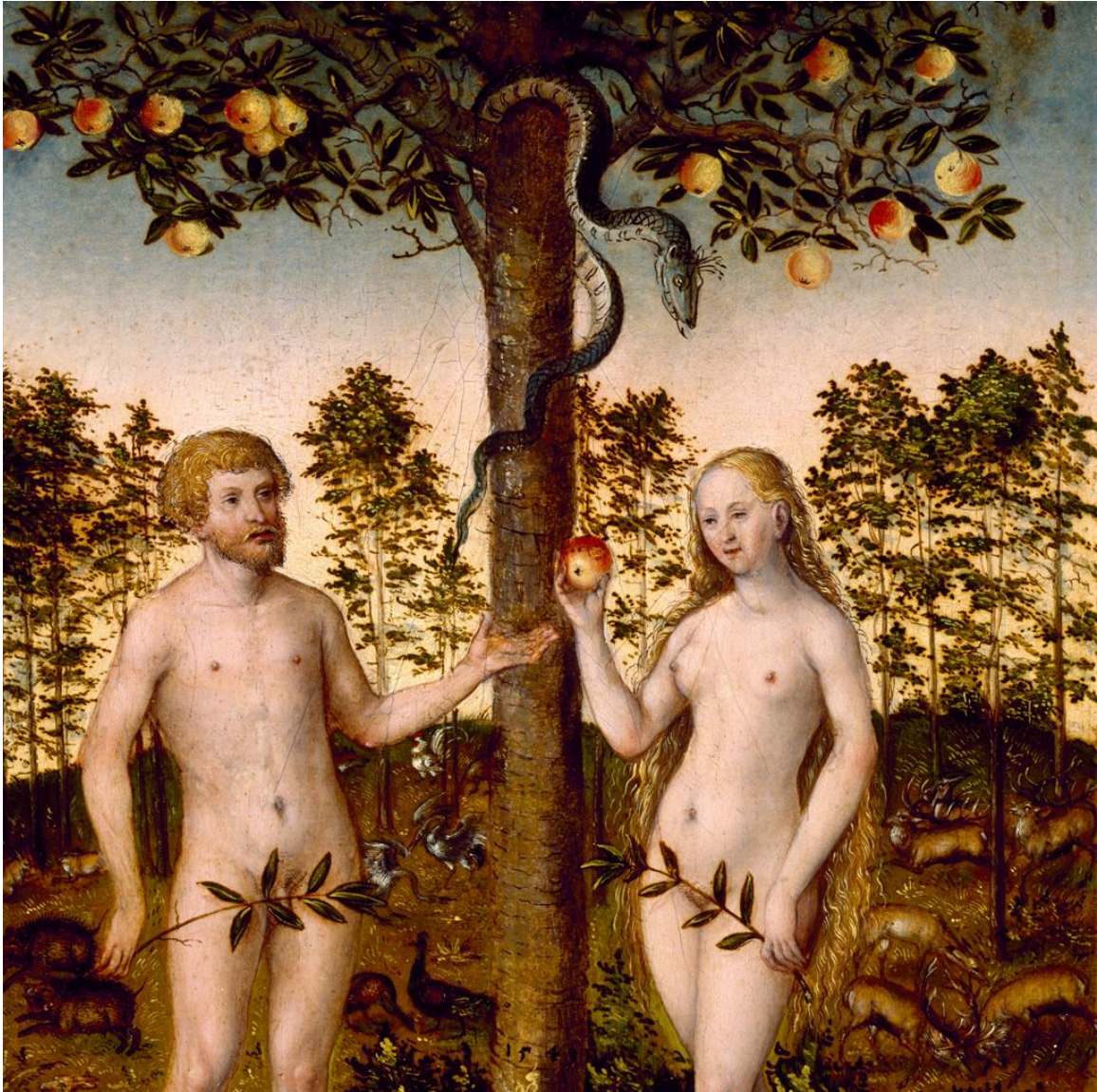


Fig. 48. Lucas Cranach, *The Fall of Man*, 1549, oil on wood, 8 9/16 x 6 3/4 in., the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Fig. 49. Matthias Grunewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, *Choir of Angels*, c. 1512-15, oil on wood, Musee d'Uterlinden, Colmar.

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