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The Importance of Biblical Images and their Meaning

The St. Albans psalter is a beautifully illuminated manuscript made up of five distinct sections: the liturgical calendar, 40-page miniatures showing the life of Christ, manuscripts, the psalms, and a diptych showing the martyrdom of St. Alban and David the musician. I chose to focus my research paper on the importance of the beautifully illuminated and detailed biblical images within the psalter. I called in to question what is it about art that invokes meaning and allows a viewer to react. I decided to look into two specific questions; why were the biblical images given such an emphasis and what is the rationale of why certain biblical images are in the psalter versus others that are not? I grew curious as I looked through the images within the psalter and noticed that particular events, such as the crucifixion of Christ, were not included. One may argue that the crucifixion of Christ is seemingly just as important as the expulsion from paradise, as shown on page 18. From my research, I learned that there was a shift from the “written word” to an emphasis on images being included in the psalter. Some may argue that the written word is a better way of learning and interpreting religion because of a texts’ power to be concrete and direct. Text mostly allows people to not misinterpret religion or biblical messages, which could be helpful if someone were to be looking for concrete answers. However, people can go to the bible for a straightforward story while the psalter, on the other hand, provides more of an interpretive way of looking at religion. I argue that artistic images are even more powerful than text in that they not only allow the illiterate to understand but are also interpretable. The

images are what give a literal form to the complex and beautiful text within the psalter. The illuminated images give a less structuralized and formal way of religion than what people were used to in the 12th century and therefore, the reasoning behind the artistic contents of the psalter is something I will dive into deeper throughout this paper.

i. – First, I took a look at the history revolving the psalter and behind biblical images in the Medieval Ages. The psalter was published around 1120-1150, during the abbacy of Geoffrey de Gorham. People have come to terms with the fact that the psalter was created in St. Albans Abbey, also known as the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St. Alban. In the *Contents and Codicology of the St. Albans Psalter* by Peter Kidd, it is written that the Psalter holds a, “...unique position in terms of its immensely rich historical, artistic, and scribal context. The historical context includes a copy of a contemporary ‘biography’ of the probable recipient of the Psalter, Christina of Markyate, some of whose facts are corroborated by chronicles of St Albans Abbey and other documents relating to St Albans Abbey, to Christina’s priory at Markyate. These same sources also tell us a great deal about the Psalter’s probable patron, Geoffrey, Abbot of St Albans. The surviving artistic context includes at least two other manuscripts painted by the main artist of the Psalter, and several others that are closely related to it in style and iconography.” (Kidd 41).

It is also crucial to look at what was going on at the time and what kind of world the psalter came about in. England had become bilingual already and then grew to be a trilingual culture: with the languages of French, Latin, and English. Everyone would come to write in Latin despite the various other languages. Recognizing this helps with understanding the newfound way of incorporating biblical images within the psalter.

With over forty full set miniatures, the psalter is sure to draw many people's attention. Kidd provides background on the art and how it is still impactful in the present world today. He writes, "For art historians it is of yet further interest because the work of the main artist has been recognised in a number of other manuscripts, and has been seen as the founder of an important 'school' of manuscript illumination, which lasted for well over a century." (Kidd 41).

The full set page miniatures are full of beautiful colors painted by unknown artists that depict scenes from the Bible. A title was given to the main artist, also known as, Alexis master. His colorful, full page narrative illustrations are the earliest to survive in English Romanesque manuscripts. He had illustrated the *Chanson de Alexis* and was a highly experienced artist in his time. His art, showed artistic influences from the Holy Roman Empire on the European continent. The range of the color scheme is impressive and the complexity behind the biblical images are a main reason that people still look and admire these images today.

The images did not have a text to them but rather told a story through a more informalized way rather than the prior formalized way of the written text. This transition from a more formalized to a less formalized understanding of the biblical images within the text was meant to provide a flexibility for people within the religion and a devotion that people could visualize. I chose to do further research on biblical images during the Medieval period that the psalter was published and even looking back on the time period before. In the text, *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England*, written by C.M. Kauffmann, it is said that, "Medieval writers freely admitted, the image often has a much more memorable impact than the text. To the viewer, therefore, an image could be, and often was, part of an extensive narrative cycle as well as being endowed with symbolic significance and charged with emotional power as an aid to devotions." (Kauffmann 204). Many argue that the images in the St. Albans psalter served as a

code between Geoffrey and Christina of Markyate due to how people interpret the images within the psalter. Christina of Markyate was a prioress to later become the head of a community of nuns. She visited St. Albans abbey when she was younger and the visit instilled a faith in her that later caused her to make a vow of chastity. The argument of the psalter being for her specifically are only speculations but because of the wide amount of female representations in the biblical images, the argument is proved relatively well. This emphasis placed on females within the psalter and certain images could have been specifically made for Christina herself or could have been coincidental but whether the psalter was specifically for Christina of Markyate or written to the general public, I believe that the scribes and artists created the images and placed them within the psalter due to a certain mindset. This mindset of images having more of an effect on people than text ever will. Each viewer of the images interprets them in their own ways and it is therefore, a simplistic more appealing way of understanding the biblical sequences of history. It is also mentioned in the book by Kauffman that, “Illuminated manuscripts are the main survivors and their readership was, until the late Middle Ages, essentially clerical or aristocratic.” (Kauffmann 206). This statement further proves my argument that the images derived in the psalter were going against the prior “agenda” of biblical images in history and were able to be viewed by anyone, whereas before, they were designed only for the elite. Images and the interpretive methods that follow are therefore, a way to progress readers and have the images be applied to all.

With the knowledge that we have about the history of the St. Albans Psalter and the history of biblical images, we can see that despite it being so far back in time, we still look at these biblical images today to provide us with our own interpretations of what the images entail. It is impossible to ignore the twelfth century debate over the use of images when the St. Albans

is a prime representation of one side of the debate that was for the use of biblical images and the belief that they had a positive influence. Due to the incredible detail that was given and the amount of work put into images and defending them, the St. Albans psalter in my opinion is slightly controversial and progressive. I don't think that the scribes and artists were looking so far into the future in hopes that people many years later can interpret these images, but rather, they wanted it to be accessible and understandable for a huge audience.

ii. – In my next point, I will look at the biblical images themselves as a whole and analyze the biblical sequences that are there and those that aren't. Starting with the images and the way they were created- Anglo-Saxon illuminations typically included colors that tended to be applied as color washes or with pigments in a dilute state. In an essay by Dodwell on the St. Albans psalter itself, it is said that, “They represent a departure from the light, sketchy effervescent Anglo-Saxon style, usually tinted with watercolour washes.” The Anglo-Saxons are also credited with inventing certain types of images, one of them being “the disappearing christ” “(a type of Ascension in which only Christ's legs remain visible within the picture frame)” (Karkov).

As beautiful as the images in the psalter are, we can't help but realize that some important aspects of biblical history are missing. “The First Temptation” on page 33 is shown and is an important biblical event to recognize. However, “The Fall” miniature on page 17, and its place in the psalter's storytelling with these particular images is a bit confusing. Jill Bradley, author of *'You Shall Surely not Die': The Concepts of Sin and Death as Expressed in the Manuscript Art of Northwestern Europe*, states that the earlier works have shown:

“...God as primary Creator to whom man owns his existence, or, as in the Moissac manuscript the judge of the unrighteous, the St. Albans psalter ignores the creation aspect entirely. Our first view is of man transgressing, then receiving punishment. However, this is followed by the extensive cycle of the life of Christ: the emphasis here is on Christ the Redeemer. It is notable that despite the large number of miniatures there is none of his ministry or his miracles. The cycle concentrates on the circumstances round his birth, passion and events after his death. Not Christ’s preaching is important here, but his incarnation and sacrifice.” (331). This concept of incarnation is something I will go into depth on towards the end of my paper by reason of that it was highly believed that through biblical images viewers were incarnated and able to find their spiritual self. The journeys within the psalter all involved themes of good and evil along with travel and represented the spiritual path of faith that viewers can reach with their own path of religion. This concept of incarnation is another reason as to why images were so important, despite the fact that certain aspects of biblical history are left out.

As one looks through the psalter and researches it, all roads seem to tie back to Christina. Perhaps if the psalter was written for Christina of Markyate than the biblical images put forth by the creators of the psalter made an effort to include events that were purposefully meant to be emphasized and had some relevance to Christina. The scholar, Thomas Tipton argues that the Psalter can be used to prove either that Christina was literate *or* illiterate: “the Psalter [St. Albans] and Christina’s Life give only ambiguous evidence of her ability to read. One could claim that Christina spoke English and Anglo-Norman and read Latin and Old French. On the other hand, the inclusion of full page miniatures in the Psalter and the letter of Gregory justifying pictures in general suggest that Christina was illiterate.” (Moore 104). The emphasis on creating certain images for Christina is one possibility behind the rationale on why certain images are in

the psalter and others are not. However, there is also the theory that refers back to my argument that certain biblical events are not illustrated as images to create this less formalized structure and understanding of the bible to those who see the psalter as a teaching tool- especially for the illiterate. The key way of comprehending images is being able to recognize things and with images, it is done so in a simpler way. Through recognition viewers take what they see and interpret it in their own way with what they know, that can be a reason as to why certain images are left out- because the viewers are able to understand the narrative that the images are telling without every single aspect of a story.

Looking at the images thematically, they mostly provided the theme of going against evil, in the psalter's case, Christ against the demon known as Satan. Once again, as Bradley mentions in her book, the images can, "...serve to reinforce the message of steadfast adherence to the ways of God." (Bradley 338). Although these biblical images can serve as visual aids to allow people to interpret them in their own way, there are common themes within the images that are clearly prevalent and able to be seen by most. The theme of good versus evil is not something to misinterpret as it is one in most of the biblical images in the psalter. The viewer can also achieve salvation or incarnation through the images- something that I believe the scribes and the artists of the psalter knew would happen due to the history of the veneration of images and how biblical images became commonly used and appreciated. Without understanding the concept of incarnation, I would not have been able to come to the conclusion that images were able to be seen as transportation devices.

iii. - The image of God is an important one within the biblical images in the psalter. The Life of Christ is filled with incredible images. The theme of this image of God appears in the Old

Testament, Genesis 1:26, 27, 5:1, 2, and 9:6. In order to accompany this part of the paper, I did research on the image of God within the psalms. The Life of Christ is colored beautifully and shows that there was a great interest in creating an image of God to showcase to the public. In Kristen M. Collin's book, *The St. Albans Psalter: Painting and Prayer in Medieval England*, it is written that, "In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, an increased emphasis on Christ's suffering provided individuals with an emotional connection to their spirituality." (Collins 55). On page 46, the image of Christ carrying the Cross accurately depicts the suffering before Christ actually walks on his way to his crucifixion. He is stripped down and carrying the cross on his back, his eyes as if full of despair.

These images of Christ serve as teaching tools to those unfamiliar with the bible and the Life of Christ- the reader/viewer can look onto the beautifully illustrated pages and conduct their own analysis and self-teach themselves about biblical history. The Baptism of Christ on page 32 in the psalter shows a soft representation of what is described in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The image illustrates God's arms extending and a halo on top of John the Baptist. The two angels stand next to Jesus and hold his clothes. This image was given importance because the baptism is seen as one of the holiest moments in biblical history. Through the image alone, the viewer is able to grasp a full understanding of the image in front of them and the image of Jesus being baptized.

Interpretations are huge part of decoding and interpreting images. The biblical images in the psalter allow for viewers to see what they believe. On page 57 in the Alexis quire, there is a beautifully illuminated image and text that serves as a narrative between Alexis and his bride. In the *Contents and Codicology of the St. Albans Psalter*, Peter Kidd writes how it is important to note that, "Unlike every other manuscript, the *Chanson de Alexis*, also known as the Life of Saint

Alexis, is prefaced in the Albani Psalter by a half-page miniature depicting three consecutive moments from near the beginning of the story. Above the figures of Alexis and his wife are four inscriptions in Latin (even though the *Chanson* itself is in French), each line is written in alternating lines of red, green, or blue ink, and below the miniature is a prologue in alternating lines of blue or red, introducing the main text, which begins overleaf.” (Kidd 79).

The Alexis quire is something I will go into later on in my paper, but I wanted to touch on the interpretation and identification viewers are able to make when seeing Saint Alexis and his resemblance to the image of Christ in the psalter. This similarity between the image of Christ and Saint Alexis could be interpreted as the saint being a representation of Christ, which is something that many people believed during the time. Christ’s presence is clear in biblical text but it is only through biblical images where a viewer can clearly see the similarities in personas and beings between the two. Often times, seeing an image can provide more of an imaginative aspect to understanding history rather than just reading text. An example of this would be images in a history book provided along with text for students. I argue that through the written text, it would be hard to come up with certain conjectures such as the resemblance between Saint Alexis and Christ, whereas with a biblical image it is easier due to the layout and the artistic essence of biblical sequences. Pictures are intended to be understood and provide narration just as much as biblical text does, the illuminated images and biblical sequences can serve as teaching tools for those learning more about the religion or to accompany those who already know what they are able to do and reach into their memory to bring forth a further deeper understanding. The images guide viewers in interpreting the biblical sequences in front of them as well.

iv. – Next, I will look at the Alexis quire and talk about “La vie de Saint Alexis”, also known as the Life of Saint Alexis. The Alexis quire is one of the most talked about aspects of the psalter. The contents of the quire are as follows: a miniature depicting St. Alexis taking leave of his bride, a unique prologue to the *Chanson de St. Alexis* in Anglo-Norman French, a version of the *Chanson de St. Alexis* in Old French, a paraphrase of St. Gregory the Great’s letter concerning the use of images in Latin and in a unique French translation, three miniatures depicting the New Testament Emmaus story; the first with a related text inside the frame, a drawing of two battling knights on horseback and a related marginal text, starting in the margins of the previous page, and a historiated Beatus initial enclosing an image of King David.

This particular text and images tie in with my argument about images seeing that it is an image alongside a certain part of a text. This spurred a thought in me and led me to question why certain images are given full pages to themselves and others are alongside text. Otto Pächt, a researcher and writer, interpreted the images to have some sort of parallel connection to that of Christina of Markyate. It is said based from evidence that the Alexis quire was made as a separate project after the psalter and given as a gift from Geoffrey to Christina. Due to Pächt’s own interpretation of the image, there has been theories constructed and new evidence found. This is the beauty of interpreting images. Through interpretation, images provide us with new details and historical questions that arise. This is why I strongly argue that images play more of a part than text does in discovering new matters about the psalter and about religion. Interpretation from images is something that is different for everyone. If people stuck solely to focusing on the text, there would be a very constricted thought process and no opening for a discussion of what the images could possibly mean. The ability to open discussion and constantly look into history further is important in connecting concepts and bridging ideas together. I do believe this claim by

Pächt is true because of Geoffrey's strong belief on the importance of images and his desire to have them speak to the reader and/or viewer of the psalter.

The Letter of Pope Gregory and the Alexis quire all have something in common: the importance of images and aesthetic value is shown. This would further prove my reasoning that the people composing the psalter put an emphasis on images over text because of the ethos images are able to create, the interpretation that arises, and the ability for viewers to draw a stronger connection to the pictures. There was an importance on aestheticism and that we cannot deny because of the detail and intricate design of the psalter. There are several pages where text is combined with images, but this particular one on page 57 led me to believe that there is something about the specific images and the text that prompted them to need to be together. It must have been important if it was worth sacrificing the aesthetic to have the two coincide together to invoke a particular feeling in the viewer and get a message across.

In the image on page 72 of the Alexis quire, the writer is desperately hoping to explain the pictures and the meaning they have. It is stated on the commentary page of the psalter for the Alexis quire illustrations of discourse page, that, "The writer is at pains to explain that the pictures have a specific meaning." This shows that the image definitely has significance hence, the intensity behind him justifying adding it. To summarize the text on this page, the writer is hoping to show the viewer that there is an allegorical meaning behind the images, further proving my point that all images have an interpretable allegorical meaning to them which is why the artists put such an importance to them. The text doesn't seem to be given as precise of detail as the texts and it is even visibly noticeable that the image takes up most of the space on the page. There is a very distinct relationship between imagery and the text in the psalter and you can see this by reason of most cases where the images will take up a whole page, showing that the

composer believes that they are more powerful and convey as much or more information than a page of text. Yet, there are also other cases where the images and the text are used together. For those particular cases the image has to be with the text instead of on its own since the image has no significance unless you realize the description of it- therefore leading it to be more difficult to interpret. I strongly believe that the people who composed the psalters wanted to make sure many could understand it and due to this desire to reach for a wider audience certain images were compromised and placed together with text rather than on their own to ensure there was not to be a misunderstanding of the images. The Alexis quire would be understandable in this case because of it being an essential story that was similar to that of Christina of Markyate's in which the grieving woman in the middle of the image on page 57 could be seen as Christina's grieving. In the Oxford World Classics book, *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, Christina's complex and worrying thoughts are really shown in a raw way. "For she remembered the forcefulness of the thoughts and the stings of the flesh with which she had been troubled, and even though she was not aware that she had fallen either in deed or desire, she did not dare assert that she had escaped unscathed from such great storms." (Talbot 53).

In the commentary of the psalter it states that captions are necessary for this image to explain what the importance of the characters are in the scenes and how they are acting. However, I argue that without the captions, we could still gain an importance and understanding behind the images. Despite a viewer not knowing the context of the photos, they are able to see how the images play out. I do believe it is necessary for people to know the full story but instilling this story that makes the whole message seem a little forced.

v. – An important aspect of my research paper is the Letter of Pope Gregory and the veneration of images. Therefore, next, I'll be looking at this letter written by Pope Gregory the Great and his defense of biblical images to those who still firmly believed in the written text. Early biblical text served as a restricted body of material while biblical images provided a newfound way to open up conversation and understand historical sequences. He was an advocate for artwork and had a strong belief in pictorial matter within books. This along with the text of the Life of St. Alexis are two strange texts that were needed to be included in the psalter. In a thesis written by Erin Dee Moore, she writes that the letter was most likely included either at the request of Geoffrey or executed by him directly. She writes:

“If one accepts the theory, discussed in chapter two, that Geoffrey was Scribe 3 in the St. Albans Psalter. Geoffrey might have worked as the scribe for the Alexis Quire, the quire in which the letter appears. As the preconception of the Psalter,⁴²⁶ the Alexis Quire was an ideal place to locate Gregory's letter. The letter offers a pre-emptive defense of illustration before either the historiated initials in the psalter or the forty-page miniature cycle were executed.” (Moore 93). Following that, Moore also touched on manuscript imagery and how it could be very multi-dimensional, further proving my point that the images within the psalter took on various forms and served many purposes. Moore writes that , “Manuscript imagery could take various forms, forms which affected meaning and interpretation: miniatures, frontispieces, miniature cycles, integrated imagery, interspersed imagery, and narrative imagery. Miniatures could stand apart from the text in an illustrative cycle or as a preface to the text. They also could be integrated with the text in the case of miniatures that are not full-page. Integrated imagery involves illustration, such as historiated initials, that are positioned in close alignment with the text, especially a pertinent section of text.” (Moore 94).

The letter of Pope Gregory is crucial for my report because it shows the significance of images in the St. Albans psalter. It is so important that on page 68 of the psalter in the Alexis Quire, there is a summarized version of Pope Gregory's letter followed by an image immediately on page 69. This provides further proof that images were so important and the psalter was composed in such a way so that the defense of them was followed by an important image on page 69. The image on page 69 began to show the three scenes of the Supper at Emmaus. To summarize the Supper of Emmaus, it is when two of Jesus' disciples were walking to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Christ when the resurrected Jesus went with them despite them not recognizing him.

Referring back to the Letter of Pope Gregory, it was included in the psalter to defend a wider audience that relied on pictures and had a small amount of literary knowledge. In the *Letter of Pope Gregory*, Gregory the Great wrote to Bishop Serenus of Marseille. Serenus of Marseille disliked the use of images in the churches of his pastoral district within the Christian church. He believed they were of pagan worship and wanted them eradicated. In the letter from Pope Gregory, Gregory defended the use of images and went into detail to explain what religious pictures are meant for. In the translation it is said that he wrote, "It is one thing to worship a picture; another to learn, through the story of a picture, what it is to be worshipped." (p.68). This was a mark against the understanding of the Christian cult, which strongly believed in the importance of the written word.

Since Geoffrey believed that images served as a bible for the illiterate, it is safe to assume that images played more than just the role of aestheticism. In his letter, the translation shows that he writes, "For the thing that writing conveys to those who read, that is what a picture shows to the illiterate; in the picture itself those who are ignorant see what they ought to follow. In [the

picture] itself those who are unacquainted with letters [are able to] read. Whence, and particularly among common folk, a picture serves in place of reading.” (68). As I argued before, the images in the psalter were given more importance because of their ability to do multiple things: such as create interpretations, invoke meaning and understanding, and also add to the value of the psalter. There is less of a structure, little to no stress behind the biblical images and no particular forced message. Instead, as mentioned in the book, *The St. Albans Psalter: Painting and Prayer in Medieval England* by Kristen M. Collins, “...pictures served as mnemonic devices and devotional aids. They could help the reader-viewer recall religious texts that had been committed to memory. They could also provide a focus for those who might otherwise lack a discipline of prayer.” (Collins 54). These images therefore prove to be physical ways of achieving spirituality other than the way of the written text. Pope Gregory also writes in his letter in regards to image and the illiterate, “..It is agreed to keep in place what is purely and simply for instructing the minds of the ignorant.” (68 psalter). Therefore, proving my argument that the images served as a story and narrative to those who are religious but unable to interpret and read the text.

Moore touches on the research of Jonathan J. G. Alexander and how he writes that, “What is often seen as a lack of creativity becomes explicable in terms of the need for familiarity of imagery on the part of varying audiences in the Middle Ages. The visual messages were hammered home by their iconographical similarity until they were taken for granted and thus became an unquestioned part of everyday experience.” These visual signs transmitted meaning. Because iconography was an important component in medieval art, it should be regarded that the appearance of traditional motifs and themes as significant, as cooperating in a larger, societal statement about the subject depicted.” (Moore 95). I wanted to include this quote because of my

reiteration of how biblical images evoked meaning and served the viewer in many ways rather than just for aesthetic purposes. Not only do biblical images serve many purposes but for some they are the only way to grasp certain things within the bible. This could further prove that with the incorporation of these images, the scribes and the artists had the idea in mind that many would be able to read and interpret the messages of the psalter.

Paying homage to images was something that Gregory wanted to make sure was known, but he was not the only one. Anastasius, Bishop of Theopolis (d. 609) was a friend of Gregory the Great and translated his “*Regula pastoralis*” into Greek to share the same opinions and thoughts about images. I believe that the scribes making the psalter had a similar, more positive viewpoint in regards to images. If you look at the history of the veneration of images, not everyone strongly believed in images and their biblical power. Holy images serving as books were not widely accepted before and ordinary images “made with hands” were not as holy or miraculous as the holy written text. Therefore, it was not only brave but admirable for Pope Gregory to defend images and showcase them as teaching tools as well as being just as equally holy if not more, than the prior structuralized way of the written text. Erin D. Moore writes in her thesis, “Considering his sixth-century audience, Gregory probably intended images to serve as reminders of what the illiterate had learned through oral instruction; these images could then entice the illiterate to lead more virtuous lives by reviewing what they had previously learned and meditating upon those lessons.” (Moore 85). As one can see, there is a tension between the importance of written text and the importance of images. Images represent meaning and I believe that is what the composers of the psalter were striving for rather than relying on meaning through existing words.

vi. - I briefly touched on the veneration of images but I wanted to go into a bit more detail about the history behind it all and the expansion of religious art along with what the bible says in regards to images and Christ. Luke Wayne wrote an article titled, *The Veneration of Images and Biblical Gospel*, which states that, “Both Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox regard the proclamations of the 2nd Council of Nicaea (787 AD) as sacred and authoritative tradition.” (Wayne). The proclamations state,

"We salute the venerable images. We place under anathema those who do not do this," (Decree of the Second Council of Nicaea)

And again:

"Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images," (Decree of the Second Council of Nicaea)." (Wayne).

I looked into what the word “anathema” meant and found that it means to have a literal separation from Christ. This statement on the veneration of images ties back to the image of Christ and the part he plays in biblical images. If everyone truly did believe in these proclamations, it would show the importance that biblical images ended up holding. Biblical images were so important that those who would not follow and admire them, were technically separated from Christ. The separation from the church was frowned upon therefore the images here are shown as just as important if not even more than biblical text. In the article, Wayne makes it known that in no way is the council saying that images save people from sin but rather, “....if one does not venerate images of saints with full certainty of heart and teach others to do the same, one is not only cast out from the church but is cut off from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One cannot plausibly argue that to be "accursed from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" was not intended to communicate damnation on the person if they did not repent of the deed for

which they were anathematized.” (Wayne). If images hold such a strong importance, who’s to say that the written text is any better than viewing biblical images. I don’t think that the scribes of the psalter forced the images onto the viewer, but firmly believed enough in having the viewer honor and interpret the biblical paintings on their own. Since during the time people thought that if images weren’t honored the way they were supposed to be, they were essentially cut off from Christ. Therefore those people who didn’t believe in biblical images versus the written text were seen as, “...lost in sin and eternally condemned”. The images were given such importance because it was the Life of Christ, his eternal damnation and suffering, all that he went through and more.

There is also a notion in Genesis that I came across when researching my topic that shows a link between God and humans created “in his image and likeness” (Gen 1:26). The full text in the Douay Rheims bible says, “And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth.” Now this particular text talks about the image of Christ specifically and not all images as a whole but in Genesis 1:26, there is an idea that we are created in the image of God. The scholar, Jérôme Baschet wrote an authoritative analysis on medieval iconography that further talked about the “image relation”. In the *Journal of Generative Anthropology*, Andrew McKenna wrote about art and incarnation and dissected Barschet’s case. McKenna wrote, “Baschet engages the expression “image relation” (*rapport d’image*) to distinguish how the Incarnation links humans to their creator in a way that is not reducible to the Platonic relation between an original being and a degraded, ultimately disreputable copy, between full presence and untrustworthy representation, or between actuality and image.” (McKenna). Since iconography and images play such an important role in having

people reach a spiritual journey and connection, the psalter was almost certainly able to allow viewers to reach this spiritual journey with the images alone. All of this research further proves that images were crucial in religion and biblical sequences in the psalter not only told a story but allowed people to have a deeper connection with God, just as the case with many other psalters. People have been arguing for a while that the St. Albans Psalter was solely for Christina and designed with her in mind. People believe that, “The St. Albans Psalter presents a visual and textual agenda and offers a message for Christina and her fellow women religious at Markyate. The Psalter functions to tell Christina how to behave and thus acts as a manual or code of conduct.” (Moore 154). Other believe that the psalter was for the public and the greater audience that was illiterate. However, in the end, the images prove that it could have been for both and that it in fact doesn’t matter who the psalter was composed for but rather why the contents within the psalter, particularly the biblical images, are given importance and recognized.

I argue that not only were the images there to help teach Christina but they were also there for the illiterate and any viewer to gain a form of incarnation through them. The purpose of the images is very multifaceted and somewhat abstract because unlike the written text, the biblical images in the psalter were able to do numerous amounts of things and evoke an enormous amount of feelings and spiritual journeys- whereas the text really only served one sole purpose. Images have the power to represent things and activate cognitive functions within the brain, through this research on incarnation and images we can see the intensity behind what the viewers feel when looking at an image of Christ or saints or angels per say. Therefore, medieval art and the medieval time period didn’t just give reason to images as things for the illiterate but something to invoke imagination and access a viewer’s cognitive brain and spiritual self. So as one can see, the Letter of Pope Gregory, the concept of the veneration of images, and the relation

between image and incarnation all come together to urge the reader to see biblical images and have them serve as guides to the message of God and the Life of Christ.

vii.- The Shaftesbury Psalter is a psalter similar to the St. Albans one and drew my attention because of the images within it. I dove in deeper and went through the psalter along with the history and details of how it was composed. The Shaftesbury psalter was created during the 2nd quarter of the 12th century and had paintings that were highly influenced by the St. Albans psalter. They are similarly rich in color and filled with roundels and illustrative initials like the St. Albans one. The manuscript was also reportedly speculated to have been made for a woman, Queen Adeliza of Leuven, widow of Henry the 1st. The full paged images have a female emphasis to them just as the St. Albans does, one example of this is the image on f.165 of the Shaftesbury psalter that shows the image of “Virgin and Child” with a female suppliant in the corner. There is also the image on f.13, which feature the “Holy Women and the Tomb”. Much like the St. Albans psalter, the images serve as a narrative to the viewers (or one viewer), similar to the method of the St. Albans psalter. Therefore, it is confirmed that medieval manuscripts during the time period around the St. Albans psalter provided a biblical narrative for viewers, were extremely appreciated, and are still looked at today.

viii.- With the carefully drawn gestures and subtly eloquent facial expressions, it is not surprising that these biblical images within the psalter give a literal form to the complexity of the text. Why was the layout of the biblical images done so with full page miniatures in the first place? The artists and scribes of the manuscript clearly took multiple questions into consideration when composing the psalter. Focusing on where the images would be placed, how the layout would be, how they would serve as a structure, and the importance of the images all

were ones that were looked into. There is the common question of whether or not you can tell a narrative if we don't know the biblical history behind images- to that I say, yes you can because viewers can recognize it. There is no blood in the images of the St. Albans psalter even though certain biblical moments are pretty gruesome. This particular choice could potentially be because of a lack of wanting to scar the viewer and instead focus on having images be a segue into a positive way of looking at the bible and what it serves. The pictures in the St. Albans psalter would have prompted the book's reader to recall memorized texts, such as the gospels, or to recite prayers. The images serve as recollections for viewers and had limited distractions to said images in a sequence so each one could be read separately before the next text that is to come. The separation of a public psalter and a private meditation is understood because of people's reactions to the biblical images and the journey's that the sequences provided readers, and still provide us even many years later. The part of the image that people meditate on is ultimately up to them and therefore creates for a more interpretable and carefree way of understanding the psalter and biblical history. Having readers choose their own image or part of an image to meditate on gives viewers a freedom otherwise constricted by text. There are open ended interpretations able to be made when observing the images and the "illiterati", also known as, outsiders who couldn't access the word of God, would have an easier way of interpreting the bible and learning about Christianity on their own. Since the pictures served as devotional aids, the religious texts that certain people committed to memory allowed for an effortless understanding of the images as well. The images were also helpful for those who lacked the discipline of prayer, yet still wanted to be knowledgeable about the word of God.

The St. Albans psalter is one that has an immense amount of work, complexity and uniqueness about it. It was composed with such careful detail and care by the scribes and artists.

Erin Lanagan, a student, wrote a paper called *The Auchinleck Manuscript and the St Albans Psalter: A Study in Materiality*, that I believe accurately explains what this psalter means to people. Lanagan writes,

“This psalter is suffused with an intimacy and personal aura that is still tangible to modern day readers. Created out of a tradition of illustration and writing that existed in England at the time Christina was alive, the psalter displays the wide range of artistic styles and motifs that were being exchanged within the monastic bookmaking community of the time. Unlike many other manuscripts of similar orientation, the St Albans Psalter was produced by bringing together the work of multiple copyists, who left their individual stamp on the quires making up the collection. The psalter was meant to be used every day, and it contained the essential guidelines marking not only the days, but the prayers and reflections that were obviously so important to the community from which it sprang.” (Lanagan).

ix. There also happens to be a visual unity between the images in the psalter that would serve as a narrative to the illiterate and to viewers who are unlikely to read the text. Just as the story in the Alexis quire of him leaving his bride to be, the psalter also illustrated Christ and his travels. The psalter connects the biblical images together to form a larger picture for the viewer. Christ maybe depicted in different ways throughout the images but the biblical narration remains the same- this is the power of biblical images and their ability to be less restricted than biblical text.

x. – In conclusion, the biblical images within the St. Albans psalter were not only there for aesthetic purposes or to serve as diversions for viewers, but also as a form of spiritual contemplation and incarnation. The images allowed viewers the freedom of having a lack of

structure and looking at religion through a less formalized way. The scribes and artists who composed the psalter wanted to stray away from the prior formal written text of the century and instead include alternative ways for viewers to understand biblical events and for the illiterate to comprehend moments. Through biblical image sequences, viewers can gain an understanding and have a less specific and less strict way of viewing religion, which has helped it stay relevant over long periods of time and gain influence over a wider variety of people. Overall, images added an additional dimension that was deeper to the sacred word. By being vaguer and more open-ended, people back then could relate and comprehend religion easier just like people today researching the psalter or biblical images during the medieval period. Not everyone has to agree with what the images were showing and teaching but it's amazing how each reader can find their own meaning of an image. Through this creative and independent process, I believe that the religion grew and gained more power. The images within the St. Albans psalter are therefore necessary and crucial because of the many dimensions they have and their ability to reach a wider audience of viewers.

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