Chromatic Ascent: A Visual Exegesis of the Elevation of the Host in the Breviary of Margaret of Bavaria

THESIS

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Abstract

An aberrant, heretofore unanalyzed illumination of the *Elevation of the Host*, is buried within the British Library’s Harley 2897, a breviary usually titled the Breviary of John the Fearless, on folio 211 verso. I hope to demonstrate that this illumination does not merely emphasize Christ’s continual sacrificial offering, but also the intercessory powers of the priest and Virgin, all in a format constructed to parallel a meditational ascent, while illuminating the piety of the Duchess. I contend that this miniature especially highlights the intricate connection between the dogmas of the Incarnation and transubstantiation through the figures of the Virgin and the priest. It includes a monochrome Madonna and Child altarpiece which chromatically links the Virgin with the elevated Host in an unprecedented and unparalleled way. The visual chromatic relationship reflects a devotion to Mary’s physical humanity and to its spiritual implications. The image further reinforces the analogy between the dogmas since the priest, who stands at the liminal space of the altar, holds and presents the consecrated Host just as the Virgin holds and presents the Christ child.

Margaret could have used this image to contemplate theological concerns which were far beyond those of popular piety. In fact, the structure of the image supports the viewer’s engagement with such intricate theological themes in two ways. The figures are compositionally arranged in ascending order to reflect a metaphorical meditational
ladder, which like the exceptional monochrome Madonna, one does not see in any other elevation scene. The architecture also supports a similar progression. The blue arches welcome Margaret, signaling that she is about to enter the liminal altar space, while the windows demarcate a threshold between the earthly and the spiritual.

The image is not only about inclusions, however. Significantly, the image does not show Margaret, though other patrons figure in their elevation scenes. By including only the figures who were present at the altar during the liturgy of the Eucharist, the illumination provides a more contemplative opportunity to move from the human to the divine. The absence of a historical figure welcomed Margaret into this atemporal space, and invited her active participation in this atemporal liturgy, when she used this image contemplatively.

Margaret’s absence from the image reinforces a conceptual piety which sought to use the terrestrial to access the divine. This illumination may shed light on this piety, and contribute to the limited literature on this female sovereign. This image certainly indicates devotions different from those which studies recent scholarship ascribes to many contemporary privileged groups. By exegetically and iconologically examining *The Elevation of the Host*, I aim to present how much richer female devotional practices in the late Middle Ages were than previously thought. In particular, I aim to show how Margaret ultimately may have sought the fulfillment of what her image represents: Christ as the ultimate savior, Mary as a powerful priest and merciful intercessor, and the priest as an indispensable aid to salvation.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my parents, who gave me life and encourage me to continually fulfill it.
Acknowledgments

Many people helped make this idea a reality. I am largely indebted to Prof. Haeger and Prof. Whittington, without whose insight, patience, and generosity I could not have produced this work. A most sincere and profound thank you.

Thank you to Michael Jean, whose Latin translations supported my claims and encouraged my pursuit. Thank you kindly for your time and knowledge.

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Fields of Study

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Chapter 1: Introduction: An Aberrant Image

In *The Seven Sacraments* (Koninklijk voor Schone Kunsten Museum, Antwerp), an altarpiece from about 1440-1456, Roger van der Weyden placed only the sacrament of the Eucharist in the central panel of the triptych (figure 1).¹ Here, a priest elevates a Host before an altar adorned with an enthroned Madonna and Child (figure 2). In the foreground, a Calvary scene literally and exegetically prefaces the Eucharistic ritual. By juxtaposing the elevated Host with the crucified Christ, Van der Weyden ingeniously drew complex links between the historical and sacramental sacrifices and bodies of the god made flesh. Remaining true to the sacrament’s precepts, the liturgical presentation of the transcendent Christ remains the focus, not the beautiful and gilded Madonna statuary altarpiece facing the priest in the background.

Forty years before this famous painting, an artist from the circle of the Master of the HumilitieS painted an aberrant, heretofore unanalyzed illumination of the *Elevation of the Host*, on folio 211 verso of the British Library’s Harley 2897, a breviary usually titled the Breviary of John the Fearless (figure 3).² I hope to demonstrate that this illumination does not merely emphasize Christ’s continual sacrificial offering, but also the intercessory powers of the priest and Virgin, all in a format constructed to parallel a

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² However, based on recent scholarship on patronage studies on which I later elaborate, I will call the book the Breviary of Margaret of Bavaria to rectify its attribution.
meditational ascent, while illuminating the piety of the Duchess. I contend that this miniature especially highlights the intricate connection between the dogmas of the Incarnation and transubstantiation through the figures of the Virgin and the priest. It includes a monochrome Madonna and Child altarpiece which chromatically links the Virgin with the elevated Host in an unprecedented and unparalleled way. The visual chromatic relationship reflects a devotion to Mary’s physical humanity and to its spiritual implications, all of which lie at the root of these dogmas and of the political and religious debates about her sinless conception in the early fifteenth century. Interestingly, this devotion is reminiscent of the devotion of thirteenth century mystics to Mary’s milk and body as a source of nourishment for Christ and the devout.

The image further reinforces the analogy between the dogmas in the actions of the priest figure, who stands at the liminal space of the altar. The priest holds and presents the consecrated Host just as the Virgin holds and presents the Christ child. Unlike representations of priests in other elevation scenes, this priest points the Host toward the Virgin, underscoring the dogmas’ connection as well as the complicated human and divine union between Mary and Christ. Both the Virgin and the priest are earthly means that allow for Margaret’s engagement with these complex theological themes, and act as intermediary figures between Margaret and the beyond.

Margaret could have used this image to contemplate theological concerns which were far beyond those of popular piety. In fact, the structure of the image supports the viewer’s engagement with such intricate theological themes. The figures are compositionally arranged in ascending order to reflect a metaphorical meditational
ladder, which like the exceptional monochrome Madonna, one does not see in any other elevation scene. Though the acolyte kneels as in other elevation scenes, he does so here to set up a curving diagonal axis from his head to that of the priest, to the Host and finally to the Madonna and Child so that the viewer may progress from the more terrestrial to the more spiritual. The architectural and liturgical objects support a similar progression. The blue arches welcome Margaret, signaling that she is about to enter the liminal altar space. Similarly, the Virgin stands before two gray, opaque windows, which typically serve as thresholds. Here, they sit between Margaret’s uncontrollable, war-filled reality and the mysterious, indecipherable unknown. The windows, like the structure of the image, may have encouraged Margaret to meditate on the dogmas and on her place in the history of salvation.

The image is not only about inclusions, however, but about omissions as well. Significantly, the image does not show Margaret, though other patrons figure in their elevation scenes, as does the Duke de Berry in his Les Petites Heures. By having themselves included, such patrons shift the focus from the liturgy to their public persona, exemplary behavior, and sumptuous garb. By including only the figures who were present at the altar during the liturgy of the Eucharist, the illumination provides a more contemplative opportunity to move from the human to the divine. It allows its viewer to enter the scene, experience the re-incarnation of Christ in the consecrated Host, and meditate on one’s relationship with Christ through his mother and the priest and thereby miraculously transcend temporal and spatial bounds. The absence of a historical figure welcomed Margaret into this atemporal space, and invited her active participation in this
atemporal liturgy, when she used this image contemplatively. Margaret’s absence from the image reinforces a conceptual piety which sought to use the terrestrial to access the divine.

This illumination may shed light on this piety, and contribute to the limited literature on this female sovereign. This image indicates devotions different from those which studies recent scholarship ascribes to many contemporary privileged groups. Her illumination includes a priest at a time when meditational images made for women often eschewed human intercessory figures. Indeed, her miniature frames and centers the priest more than in other elevation scenes: the architectural arches meet at the central vertical axis, pointing to the priest’s upright body while the right curtain bar points to his head. His placement strengthens how he, like the Virgin, is a key vehicle by which to access God since he stands in a sacred, transitional space. Also, recent scholarship suggests that many contemporary women practiced devotions to the Christ child and are painted into devotional images; instead, Margaret’s devotion to the Incarnation echoes that of many women of the previous century and of several men of her own period, and would have distinguished her and her piety, just as much as her absence from this devotional image. Thus, the image may bear witness to Margaret’s exceptional grasp of religious doctrines, especially since it relies on contemporary understandings of vision which crucially informed devotional practices and reflected the ardent desire to see and know God.

By exegetically and iconologically examining *The Elevation of the Host*, I aim to present how much richer female devotional practices in the late Middle Ages were than previously thought. Taking Henk Van Os’ call to study artworks ignored because they
fall outside art historical frameworks, I consider the role of the *Elevation* illumination in its theological and historical contexts and in relation to the breviary’s other miniatures, as well as to contemporary prayer books and paintings. I also consider the role of vision and meditation, both at this time and in regard to the illumination, to better consider the multivalent levels of response that Margaret may have experienced when meditating with this illumination. These responses ultimately may have sought the fulfillment of what is represented: Christ as the ultimate savior, Mary as a powerful priest and merciful intercessor, and the priest as an indispensable aid to salvation. An explanation of the breviary’s format and description of the meditational *Elevation* in this prayer book will introduce this study.
Chapter 2: The Breviary of Margaret of Bavaria

As many medieval and Renaissance manuscript are unique and largely reflective of the patron’s interests, Margaret’s breviary is precious in a number of ways, and its details reveal elements of its political context and her religious sensibilities. The breviary’s luxurious velvet binding and rich illumination immediately strike the eye. At 250 millimeters high, it is larger than most books made for women. At over three and a half inches in width, it would have been too large to hold in one’s hands and was likely held on a prie-dieu or table. Indeed, Margaret’s original breviary became so large that it was divided into winter and summer portions, each holding prayers for half of the year. The breviary’s division was made probably soon before 1425, from which time scholars date additions in the winter portion. For this study, I mostly consider the summer portion, Harley 2897, serving from April 22 to November 25. It consists of a calendar,


[4] Wijsman, 96, 137. Of the 3,620 books Wijsman studied, only 4% were written in Latin and French. He also deduces an average size of a book made for a woman, across genres, to be 212 millimeters high.


ferial psalter, temporale, and sanctorale. Our image of the *Elevation* resides in the temporale, dedicated to Christ-centered feast days. The winter portion, also in the British Library, is coded as Additional 35311. The texts survive well, though Harley 2891 lacks one miniature from the opening ferial psalter. Its present condition indicates its owners considered it worthy of preservation and careful treatment.

A number of artists contributed to the beauty of this work.\(^7\) These include the Master of the Breviary of John the Fearless, who completed most of the miniatures; the Egerton Master and his assistants; the Master of Guillebert de Metz; and our artist(s), from the Circle of the Humilitie Master. Exhibiting the refined, courtly International Style popular in the first two decades of the fifteenth century, and widely decorated with sumptuous materials and pigments, the book was sure to stand out in its surroundings.\(^8\)

Though there is no clear record of the breviary’s creation, scholars concede it was produced sometime between 1411-1419. The book’s ownership may be bit clearer since a number of factors suggest its devotional function for a late medieval female sovereign, in this case, the Duke’s wife, Margaret of Bavaria.

Many of this book’s inclusions testify to her ownership. While clarifying past scholars’ assessments and research, Millard Meiss asserts that the book probably

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\(^7\) Richard Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200-1500*, Turnhout, H. Miller: 2000. Contrary to previous notions of workshops with masters and apprentices, “libraires” acted as agents for patrons and gathered the works from several specialists, including miniaturists, to create the finished works.

\(^8\) These artists made one full-page miniature including the Dukes’ coats of arms, and fifty-six column-wide miniatures with large, decorated initials and column-wide foliate borders in colors and gold, along three or all four borders of the page. Also decorating the pages are fourteen large historiated initials with three-sided column-wide foliate borders, in addition to large and small decorated initials with the size of two lines of text, with partial foliate borders or foliate extensions into the margins; both are in done in color and gold. There are also small initials, measuring one line, in gold with blue pen-flourishing and in blue with red pen-flourishing. Various scribes worked on the book, but all used Gothic script.
belonged to Margaret because the rubric is in French, not in Latin as was more customary for the learned male reader, and there are two litanies to St. Margaret, one of the Duchess’ “principal” saints, and the patron saint of childbirth and pregnancy. In addition, recent studies show that books with depictions of the coat-of-arms of both spouses were likely commissioned by the female spouse. Margaret’s breviary includes an exquisite marginal painting of a young woman with a jeweled pendant, gold necklace, and azure gown, holding the coats of arms of both the Duke of Burgundy and Margaret, while sitting on a circular patch of flourishing greenery (figure 4).

Documentary evidence similarly identifies Margaret as the patroness. Though not specified in the Duke or Duchess’ inventories from 1420 or 1424 respectively, there is documentation from 1412 stating that John gave Margaret 300 francs for a breviary and

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9 Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, New York: George Braziller, 1974, vols. 1, 2, 325, notes the litanies, and that there are also two litanies to another saint popular among women, St. Agatha, the patron saint against breast diseases. Fabrice Rey, “Princely Pursuits: The Devotions of the Duchesses, Margaret of Flanders and Margaret of Bavaria (1369-1423),” in *Art from the Court of the Duke of Burgundy: 1364-1419*, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004. 74 comments on Margaret’s favorite saints, and Wijsman, 135, 96 ascribes the saints their attributions and notes how works written in Latin and French are rare, generally. Some have argued it belonged to Duke John because he carried a breviary with him when ruling Paris. However, the note by Jehan Guiot dean at Notre-Dame de Montereau, in the inventory from after John’s death may indicate he died with a “very beautiful and rich breviary for Paris use,” as Clark states in “The Master of Guillebert,” 208. Delphine Jeannot, “Les Bibliothèques de princesses en France au temps de Charles VI: l’exemple de Marguerite de Bavière,” in *Livres et Lectures de Femmes en Europe entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, 198, wonderfully negates this thesis, noting the book was in Roman use.

10 Wijsman, 134, Alison Stones, “Some Portraits of Women in their Books, Late Thirteenth - Early Fourteenth Century,” in *Livres et Lectures de Femmes en Europe entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, 3. In addition, Anne-Marie Legare is currently preparing a survey of female book ownership in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France and Burgundy; thus far, her research shows that females were the principal users of books, and that coats-of-arms indicate female ownership in the majority of cases. The continuing studies by the Royal Belgian Library of their holdings of Burgundian books, and the work of Alison Stones and Hanno Wijsman work confirm these conclusions.
other books she had commissioned. Recently, Delphine Jeannot re-edited the 1419 inventory drawn after John the Fearless’ death in that year; she includes this summer breviary, as well as six liturgical books as Margaret’s property. This later dating suggests Margaret commissioned the book just after her husband died, which would explain its themes of urgent longing to communicate with the heavenly, and faith in the possibility of a peaceful, ordered, beauty-filled afterlife. Since he killed Louis, Duke of Orléans, Margaret feared for John’s salvation. Hence, her book aspires to reinforce and demonstrate her religious beliefs for their salvation, and thereby influence their fates.

Though the book bears the official title of the Breviary of John the Fearless, I henceforth will call the book the Breviary of Margaret of Bavaria to rectify its attribution.

Just as the character of her devotion to Christ and Mary differed from that of both males and females as we will see, Margaret’s libraries were distinctive among those of contemporary female patrons. A typical late medieval woman’s library consisted of books for private devotion, followed by liturgical and moral, or didactic works. In contrast, Margaret’s inventory from 1424, the year after her death, shows she owned an atypically large number of liturgical books, including breviaries, as opposed to books for

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12 Jeannot, 198-200, and Wijsman, 175. This inventory, like the 1424 inventory done the year of Margaret’s death, were drawn in Dijon, her primary place of residence, from 1409-1419, according to Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless: The Growth of Burgundian Power*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002, 173.


14 Wijsman, 136. They also had a smaller number of theological, hagiographic, and literary works, and few, if any, historiographic, legal, and scientific books. Interestingly, a typical male’s library from the same time consisted of the exact opposite.
private devotion, such as books of hours, suggesting her sophisticated religious understanding. Most of these liturgical books were transferred to the ducal chapel at Dijon and inventoried with the chapel’s items, not with books in her personal library, which partially explains why it has been difficult to correctly ascribe her patronage.\(^\text{15}\)

With her breviaries, such as this one, she joined monks and friars across Christendom as they chanted various prayers and psalms forming the different offices, daily and year-round.\(^\text{16}\) The more common prayer book of late medieval women was the book of hours, essentially a layperson’s simplified version of the breviary in the second half of the thirteenth century, and its production largely proliferated over all other types of prayer books in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\(^\text{17}\) Ownership and daily use do not only testify to Margaret’s sophisticated grappling with theological concerns, but also to her elite taste and power by association. While many noble elite females primarily owned books of hours, royal devout women also owned and used a breviary. Margaret shared company with possible role models: Blanche of Burgundy, Catherine of Valois, and Jeanne d’Evreux, the Queen of France and great-aunt of John the Fearless, all commissioned breviaries.

\(^{15}\) Wijsman, 152, 149, 92. Burgundian rulers often kept liturgical books in their ducal chapels, rather than in their libraries, where they housed their literary, historical, didactic, scientific, and legal works. Some of the books inventoried in the chapel, also included in her 1420 inventory, were made after John’s murder and her son, Philip the Good’s succession as Duke. Interestingly, these books were in the use of Paris, as is this breviary, demonstrating one way in which the Burgundian rulers celebrated local and Parisian feast days to assert their wide dominion.

\(^{16}\) Christopher de Hamel, A History of Illuminated Manuscripts, London: Phaidon, 1994, 213, states that breviaries included hymns, readings, Psalms, anthems, and other prayers for offices from the Matins to the Complines, with rubrics and offices used throughout the temporal and sanctoral sections; a full version includes a psalter.

\(^{17}\) Bennett, 21, Wijsman, 84, and Sixten Ringbom “Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 73 (1969), 164. Wijsman and Ringbom note that this rise peaked in the middle of the fifteenth century. The book of hours originated from the breviary’s Office of the Virgin.
Though it is tempting to label this breviary as Franciscan, especially as Franciscans supported the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, there is not sufficient proof to make this claim. Margaret may have had Franciscan chaplains as French royalty did, as her court imitated many French habits since John the Fearless sought to occupy the crown of France. Chaplains typically helped conceive the content and illuminations of prayer books, and later went through the mediations in the books step by step with their patroness. Also, the litany includes St. Clare of Assisi, and the rubrics on folios 276 verso, 277, and 310 indicate a Franciscan association. However, while the calendar includes the key Franciscan feast days of St. Louis of Toulouse, the Translation of St. Anthony, and the feast of the Stigmata, these feasts are not in the Sanctoral. Nonetheless, closer examination of the book reveals that Margaret may have desired a more Marian-centered book rather than a Christ-centered prayer book a Franciscan would have advised. Yet, she relies on Franciscan theology to emphasize her Mariological views, such as in her argument for Mary’s Immaculate Conception in the illumination of The Elevation, as we shall see.

Though her advisor may have helped choose the book’s iconographical program, the images’ theological complexity certainly attest to Margaret’s high level of learnedness, and thus it can be inferred she would have enjoyed the meditational

20 Meiss, 325: He expounds on presence and absence of Franciscan connections in the rubrics, calendar, and Sanctoral.
challenge of contemplating its images, a custom engrained in medieval prayer practices. Thus, I will explore the image from the perspective of a female patron with a decided acute attention to Virgin’s maternal and merciful attributes, particularly because of its unusual inclusion of a monochrome Madonna and Child in a scene of the elevation of the eucharistic Host.
Chapter 3: Margaret’s Elevation of the Host

The compositional format of the work prompts a reading from left to right as if it were a text. We begin in the lower left corner, where a tonsured acolyte dressed in a white alb holds a tall taper candle high in his right hand, while lifting the tonsured priest’s chasuble with his left hand, to ease the weight of the garment, as is conventional in elevation scenes and in liturgy.\textsuperscript{21} Interestingly, his robe is cropped by the frame in the bottom left of the image, as if the viewer is close enough to the figures and altar that her peripheral vision does not register the end of his garment. Here, the cropped folds of the acolyte’s alb begin a diagonal which ultimately guides one’s vision upward and toward the right.

More immediately, the acolyte’s right arm and upward gaze next direct one’s vision to priest to his right, and in the center of the image. The priest is also tonsured, and wears a pink chasuble, trimmed in golden circles and patterned with gold, curvy lines and orange dots. The chasuble’s folds are illusionistically depicted with magenta highlights particularly strong just under his upturned arms, by which he directs one to view the Host and Marian statue. He looks up to the Host which he holds in both hands,

\textsuperscript{21} Ann Eljenholms Nichols, \textit{Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments, 1350-1544}. Suffolk: Boydell, 1994, 251-252 notes the reason for the acolyte’s holding the chasuble, while Husband, 248 notes the convention.
arms outstretched; both his gaze and gesture are ritualistically linked. Clearly imprinted onto the Host is a Calvary group.

The Host is conventionally and honorifically surrounded by liturgical objects. The altar below is dressed with a white cloth. A chalice sits on the top, covered with a chalice cloth. To the sides of the altar, red curtains with a gold sun pattern are slightly pulled back. Neither the dossal nor the antependia contain a painting, or relief sculpture. Instead, the diagonal which began with the acolyte and continues through the priest’s arms leads to a sculptured Marian group.

With the fabric of her generous robe gathered at her waist, Mary stands and tenderly holds the babe with her left hand supporting his bottom and her right hand holding his back. Their cheeks meet as he reaches up toward her, and she tilts her head toward him. The Christ child gently rests his right hand near Mary’s left shoulder. This sculpture of the Madonna and Child is uniquely all white. It sits on a pedestal clearly designed for it. The pedestal ends in a rounded knob, repeated throughout the architectural decoration.

The architecture frames the scene in stages. At the top of the image is a pair of blue stone, quatrefoil trimmed twin arches, whose vegetal top peaks pierce the frame. In each, two decorative projections, ending in trefoil rounded shapes, frame our view underneath the vaults, where we peek at their golden interiors, their different ribs meeting in a rounded knob. In front of the viewer and to the left of the priest is a wall decorated in a diaper pattern; not only are the green, azure, light pink, and greenish-brown colored

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22 Karl Whittington, discussion on October 12, 2011.
tiles set up in diamond form, but they create monochrome diamond shapes. To the right, a gray wall is only half-shown. Occupying a significant portion of its space is a double set of dark windows, decorated with a trefoil atop a double arched frame, similar to the one framing the scene, are at Mary’s back; while the trefoil may refer to the Trinity, the opaque glass may reflect Christ’s dual nature. These windows and the golden vault frame Mary and Christ.

The scene evokes aspects of a Burgundian private chapel, in which the majority of altarpieces were statuary Madonna and Child groups.\textsuperscript{23} Seeing the image would conjure up the sound of the bells rung at the moment of consecration; the smell of incense and the constant visual play of the candles’ flickering flames; and the texture and taste of the Host on the tongue.\textsuperscript{24} With his back to the congregation, the priest would speak the words in an audible whisper or in silence, while the devout recitated prayers of their own choosing, and the choir remained silent.\textsuperscript{25} During the liturgy, the priest’s actions and the congregant’s own behavior, whether standing, sitting, or kneeling, contributed to the whole body experience of religious performance. The senses elicit delectable devotional experiences; though connected to repeated actions, the senses animate each experience.


anew. Dogmatic Catholic teachings about the hypostatic God empowered such sensual experiences.
Chapter 4: “Coming Sacramentally into Man”: The Theological Foundation of the Elevation Ritual

The elevation ritual marks the passage when once again, heaven and earth meet, as at the Incarnation. In the Middle Ages, the transubstantiation of the Eucharist was compared with the moment Logos took human flesh: both were miraculous acts of the Holy Spirit. Christ himself makes the parallel between transubstantiation and the Incarnation, as reported by John 6.51-52: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world.” In John’s gospel, Christ establishes his living presence in the Eucharist, a presence which will dwell in the believer, thereby making the believer part of Christ’s mystical body. Understanding how Christ’s sacrificial offering on the cross is re-presented in the sacrificial offering on the altar inspired theological discussion about the connections between these sacrifices and their link to the Incarnation.

Two fundamental concerns about the Eucharist puzzled theologians from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. These concerns innately run parallel to the Incarnation.

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and defy human logic; as such, their important conclusions influence later theology and devotions. Firstly, theologians questioned the nature of the transformation, that is, the mode of Christ’s presence in the bread and the wine, and secondly, the salvific purpose behind this presence.\(^{29}\) Since the Council of Nicea in 315 declared that since Christ’s divine nature existed alongside his human nature,\(^ {30}\) the Host encompassed all of Christ, his flesh and divinity. Yet, this flesh was questioned because it had a human source, Mary. Inspired by the Benedictine theologian, Paschasius Radbert,\(^{31}\) and by Ambrose’s idea that God does as he wills, the eleventh century Benedictine Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc of Bec, was the first to introduce the idea of transubstantiation, or the conversion of the substance of bread and wine, not their accidents, into the substance of Christ.\(^{32}\) The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 adopted the term “transubstantiation” since it most appropriately explained the change that occurs at the consecration of the species of bread and wine.\(^ {33}\) Differentiating between the accidents and the substance of the species, St. Thomas Aquinas underscored Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist, since it suited Christ’s charity to take a human body for the sake of humanity.\(^ {34}\)

\(^{29}\) Aidan Nichols, The Holy Eucharist, 58.


\(^{31}\) Aidan Nichols, The Holy Eucharist, 63, 59-61. Paschasius (c.790-865) said that the body of Christ present in the Eucharist was the same as that taken from Mary. The relationship between Christ’s Eucharistic and historical bodies is one of essential sameness. He argued against Ratramnus and the idea that the Host was an enacted metaphor of Christ’s heavenly body, feeding believer’s souls.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 63. Lanfranc, in his De Corpore et Sanguine Domini, says, “The material objects on the Lord’s Table which God sanctifies through the priest are-by the agency of God’s power—-in a way beyond our understanding, converted to the body of Christ in their being. Their outward appearances and certain other qualities remain unchanged, so that those who receive them are not shocked by the naked flesh and blood, and so that believers may receive the greater rewards of faith. What we receive is the very body which was born of the Virgin, and yet it is not. It is, in respect of its being (essentia) and the characteristics and power of its true nature; it is not if you look at the outward appearance (species) of the bread and wine.”

\(^{33}\) Ibid, 66.

\(^{34}\) Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica: Tertia Pars, “Question 78: The Form of this Sacrament,” 31
Thus, transubstantiation makes the Eucharist a re-incarnation. Thomas Aquinas connected grace, the Eucharist, and the Incarnation when saying, “just as by coming into the world, He visibly bestowed the life of grace upon the world… by coming sacramentally into man causes the life of grace.” Grace fueled life’s ultimate purpose for a late medieval person, union with Christ on earth, to see God one day. Mary was a significant channel to that grace. Interestingly, very little is written about the Incarnation in the gospels, in which Mary played a central role. Yet, if Mary is mother to both Christ’s sacramental and historical bodies, Mary is the origin of his Eucharistic and historical sacrifice. The fourteenth and fifteenth century French chancellor of theology at the University of Paris, Jean Gerson summarizes these complex concepts by titling Mary the Mother of the Eucharist. In the breviary’s illumination, the Virgin presents the child, just as the priest presents the Host, further underscoring the link between the mysteries of the Incarnation and transubstantiation.

In his study of Sienese altarpieces from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, Henk Van Os offers a comprehensive view of the city’s changing altar works, which demarcated the sacred space for the liturgical rituals. Appropriate to the emphasis on Incarnation in the eucharistic doctrine of the period, altarpieces began as statue groups of

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the Virgin and Child, such as the one in Margaret’s breviary, which represented Christ’s repeated rebirth in the Eucharist. The Virgin increasingly became the focus, as people were drawn to her affective motherhood and to the intimate reproductions of mother and child. Suiting this sensibility, the composition of altarpieces became less rigid and united the figures more tenderly. This emotive devotion became a problem in Siena, though, since it overshadowed the liturgy’s original significance. Consequently, from the middle of the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, the Sienese replaced statuary from altars with paintings in which Mary is only one figure among other saints; they also emphasized the connection between Christ’s Passion and eucharistic sacrifice. Thus, the old connections between the transubstantiation-reincarnation-Incarnation lost its strength in the South. 39 This movement came just after our manuscript, which represents the height of this synergy.

What the early Middle Ages determined about the nature of the Eucharist through reason and discussion, the later centuries developed into affective, personal devotion. By the early fifteenth century, the time of Margaret’s breviary, religious experiences emphasized interiority, especially through the intense viewing and mental absorption of devotional images. 40 Elevation scenes in particular would have offered a “quasi-sacramental value of gazing at the present Christ.” 41 The Host actively engaged the

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40 Ellington, 32.

senses, particularly vision. Animated senses initiated the complex fusion of spaces and times inherent to ritual and mystical experience.
Chapter 5: The Historical and Liturgical Foundations of the Elevation

The artist of the illumination represents the most sacred moment of the liturgy, which was more popular than the consecration. The priest has just whispered the consecrating words over the bread wafer, which now bears Christ’s body. Consequently, he lifts up the Host for all to see. Performing a ritualistic gesture pregnant with meaning, the priest unifies Christ’s crucifixion with the present sacrifice, and his terrestrial congregation and the divine Christ. A ritualistic act enables such a passage through time and space, engaging the whole person, body and mind.\textsuperscript{42}

The ritual of elevating the Host had a relatively recent origin but firmly established aesthetic precedent at the time of Margaret’s breviary. Prior to the thirteenth century, there is little evidence of this elevation ritual in art or text as the clergy stressed

\textsuperscript{42} Ellington, 123. Ellington emphasizes the engagement of the whole body. Transitional, performance rituals typically involve a three stage structure, well defined by Edmund Leach. \textit{Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols Are Connected}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976: 77-78, 82, 37. Initially, the participant detached herself from her norm, in the rite of separation, through movement or a physical change. In the next stage, the rites of marginality, the participant remains physically apart from non-participants through proscriptions regarding movement and food; the congregation at mass fulfill this rite, when kneeling, standing, and genuflecting throughout the different liturgies, just as when they ingest the Eucharist. Finally, the participant returns to her norm, while assimilating her new role, through rites similar as those at the beginning but done in reverse, in this rite of aggregation. Leach stresses that the role of the senses in this transformation and experience in which the past, present, and future coexist. Peter Burke, \textit{The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe: Essays on Perception and Communication}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005: 225, notes the ritual concretizes the abstract. Hence, rituals make possible the experience and conceptualization of what was once abstract, making the abstract part of the participants’ lived experience. Arnold van Gennep, \textit{The Rites of Passage}, Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960: 10-11, describes a similar process. In the initial stage, the rite of passage, participants separate from features of their quotidian life and adopt characteristics necessary for the next stage, the ritual proper. It is at this stage when the desired transformation occurs, investing the individual with a new qualities. Afterwards, participants re-integrate into their norm during the rite of assimilation..
more than the sacrament’s transformative power. Priests performed the key role, ensuring the proper sequence of events that would effect the sacrament’s grace-giving benefits. The congregation had little agency in the ceremony; the prayers were said in silence, or sung in Latin, a language not all the laity understood well.\footnote{James F. McCue, “Liturgy and Eucharist, II: West,” in \textit{Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation}, edited by Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, and John Meyendorff, New York: Crossroad, 1987, 429.} However, the sacrament’s power went beyond words, inspiring both great acts of devotion among laypeople. Since popular religious practices often resulted in liturgical and doctrinal changes, the prevalence of various unregulated and potentially heretical practices led to the formalization, elaboration, and control of the elevation ritual by theologians.\footnote{Zika, 28. Zika notes that it was the Host practices that stimulated doctrine clarification and articulation, while these in turn decide the form of practice.}

Before the Fourth Lateran Council more explicitly defined the doctrine of transubstantiation in 1215, priests were elevating the wafer at several times during the liturgy, even before the moment of consecration, thereby leading to sacrilegious worship of mere bread. However, the consecrated Host bears Christ’s dual human and divine natures. Thus, to avoid such erroneous and misguided behavior, church leaders created decrees about how to properly perform the ritual by the thirteenth century. Credited with leading the first synod on the elevation, Eudes de Sully, the Bishop of Paris, along with his group of bishops, wrote the decrees of 1210 which instituted the practice of elevating the Host after the priest says the consecratory words, by which time the Host has become
the Body of Christ. Similar synodal decrees followed. The elevation brought a new, established focal point for devotion.

Adding to the drama of the rite, acolytes would open curtains, placed at the sides of the altar, just before the moment of the elevation. These remained closed during the consecration to veil the mystery of the transubstantiation and heighten its allure. Theologians feared that without this theatrical action, the sacrament and ritual’s enticement would be lost, and people would create new foci of interest. In particular, they feared the creation of heretical ideas about the eucharist, such as stercoranism which taught that just as excretion and digestion had sullied Christ in life, the consecrated Host would become excrement. Veiling also protected against people seeing what may have become bleeding Hosts, which start to bleed or become pieces of flesh according to popular legends. Theologians discouraged popularizing these legends as much as they

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45 Burkhard Steinberg, “The Theology of the Elevation of the Eucharist,” *Theology*. 113.873 (2010), 186, 184 and Joseph Jungmann, *The mass of the Roman Rite: its Origins and Development*, trans. by Francis A. Brunner, Westminster: Christian Studies, 120. They elaborate on the origins of the rite and note that the chalice is also elevated after the priest’s says the words that turn it into Christ’s blood. Édouard Dumoutet, *Le Désir de Voir l’Hostie et les Origines de la Dévotion au Saint-Sacrement*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1926: 14, 49, does not credit Eudes de Sully, finding missals, miracle stories, and councils as early as 1120 which give evidence for some form of an elevation after the consecration; however, all of his evidence dates to or after 1197.

46 Rubin, *Corpus*, 95, 97. Though many were created by Parisian theologians in Paris, the Bordeaux synodal statutes make similar statements. This doctrine did not clarify how to treat the moment transubstantiation occurred, however, or dissuade what was seen as abusive behavior. Henry of Hesse complained that some priests elevated the Host several times, and accused others of possibly descrating the Host if they were to drop it due to wild gestures or by staring up at it for too long, and then becoming dizzy.

47 Jungmann, 120.


49 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, 88-89. Though some local priests believed in and encouraged bleeding hosts, Bynum describes theologians’ fears, and particularly expounds on miraculous hosts. Zika, 61, explains that theologians discouraged pilgrimages and shrines to bleeding hosts because the Host served only as a spiritual food to be consumed.
discouraged heresies, neither of which contained the mystery of the dualistic nature of the Eucharist in the sacrament, nor supported the priest’s role in the performative ritual.

An elevation is a gesture of presentation, a “staging” to present the Host.\textsuperscript{50} In prayer books, it is often placed before the Canon of the Mass, or at the Corpus Christi feast, such as in the Duke the Berry’s \textit{Les Petites Heures, Les Belles Heures}, and in a treatise, such as the “Traité de la messe” in the \textit{Doctrinale fidei} (figures 5-8). It serves didactic, illustrative, and devotional purposes. In Margaret’s breviary, the image is largely devotional; the Host serves as an intermediary, historical object, as well as a representation of God. Following the conventions of earlier elevation scenes, such as that in \textit{Les Petites Heures} and the \textit{Doctrinale Fidei}, the artist depicts the priest’s hands in a three-quarter view, though he depicts the priest in profile. In this way, he offers the viewer a frontal view of the Eucharist. Just as in \textit{Les Petites Heures} and \textit{Les Belles Heures}, the artist depicts a clear crucifix on the surface of the bread. The Host in Margaret’s image goes further by displaying a Calvary group, clear despite its diminutive size (figure 9).\textsuperscript{51} Hence, it merges Christ’s liturgical and historical sacrifices while making them more real for Margaret. Margaret may have re-enacted Christ’s re-incarnation with each Eucharistic liturgy just as with each viewing of her \textit{Elevation}. She ingested the Host with her mind’s eye into her heart and soul.

\textsuperscript{50} Hans Belting, \textit{The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion}, trans. by Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer, New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990: 83-84. He calls a gesture of invitation and presentation a form of communication to present a holy object, “so to speak, with exclamation marks.”

\textsuperscript{51} Karl Whittington, December 14, 2011, attested to its clarity in person.
Chapter 6: Making Present the Invisible: Vision and the Eucharist

Medieval scientists, philosophers and theologians hotly debated the nature of vision. Scientists studied the structure of the eyes and brains, while philosophers sought to understand how one received visual data, and how it, in turn, affected the mind’s functions. Theologians integrated the conclusions of scientists and philosophers into a larger spiritual framework, involving the macrocosm of the universe and microcosm of the individual. These frameworks were translated into more practical terms in the later Middle Ages. Indeed, St. Augustine’s complex theory of three types of vision from the fourth and fifth centuries, highly influential in later theology, may have influenced forms of acquiring knowledge used by laypeople in the late Middle Ages. Medieval processes of seeing and knowing involved a threefold categorization of the body, spirit, and soul. Stemming from physical and cognitive sources, vision led to insight. That is, one first received sensual data; next, one consulted the imagination and memory; and finally, one reached new understandings. The elevated Eucharist served as a highly desired piece of visual sensual data.

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By offering a sense of directness, vision establishes a form of communication between the viewer and the viewed. Thus, the Host allowed a “material … view of Christ’s presence.” When instituting the eucharistic sacrament, Jesus summoned vision, according to Luke 22:19-20: “And taking bread, he gave thanks, and brake; and gave to them, saying: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you.” Christ emphatically presents used the pronoun, “this,” to direct vision and attention to the objects which take his substance.

Yet, some theologians expressed concerns about vision, both corporeal and imaginative, at a time when the visibility of the Eucharist was growing in power and popularity. As sacramental communion was only required on Easter, and not always permitted, its sight became a powerful substitute to its ingestion. To be able to receive the Eucharist required recalling the Passion, imitation of Christ in charity, and purity of

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Late Medieval Private Piety,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 73 (1969), 162, well them explains. The first vision is corporeal, involving objects seen with the physical eye. Next, spiritual vision combines corporeally observed images with images conjured up by the mind’s eye, that is, memory and the imagination. The final vision, intellectual vision, is the seeing and understanding of the invisible; it is essentially imageless, having reached a divine height where images are no longer needed.

54 Ellington, 126.
55 Steinberg, 184.
57 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 87. A representation of the Host involves a precarious line of false worship since the representation itself is an object, not to be worshiped, referring to the object of the Host, which is to be worshipped. Similarly, the miniature could lead to a miraculous spiritual vision, just as the wafer miraculously takes Christ’s substance after the priest says the consecratory words. Jungmann, 120, Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 55-56. So great was the longing to gaze at the mystery of God, that people would shout at the priest to elevate the Host higher before the formalization of the elevation rite. Dumoutet, 67-68, mentions that there were lawsuits over seating in the church to get good views of the altar.
58 Jungmann, 120, and Rubin, *Corpus*, 148. Rubin says the Host was taken three times a year, at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, after due penance and sincere devotion.

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heart, for Lanfranc; Rupert of Deutz summarized the requirements by saying one needed “right dispositions.” The reception of the Eucharist also required contrition through the sacrament of penance. Receiving the Eucharist in a state of sin led to eternal damnation. Differentiation between venial and mortal sins in the eleventh and twelfth centuries meant that people only had to have their mortal sins formally forgiven before receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist; however, many people still abstained unless they had confessed even venial sins. Significantly, Thomas Aquinas encouraged regularly communion, as it always bring grace, as long as there are no mortal sins obstructing its reception.

Processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and certainly, centrally, the elevation staged Augenkommunion. Franciscan Observants even founded Confraternities of the Holy Sacrament. There was also a special feast day which grew out of popular devotion to seeing the Host, particularly due to female devotion to the body of Christ. Instituted in 1246, Corpus Christi was a feast day during which activities were designed to honor the sacrament of the Eucharist: there were processions before the mass, and afterwards, the host was exposed in a monstrance for the devout’s

59 Aidan Nichols, The Holy Eucharist, 77.
60 McCue, 436-437 and Bynum, Holy Feast, 55-56, both note that in the late Middle Ages, there was an intense fear of receiving the Eucharist without sufficient contrition for one’s sin, as the cost was too great.
62 Jungmann, 121, and Zika, 25. Jungmann notes that this practice developed in the fourteenth century in direct correlation to the feast of Corpus Christi, as opposed to the other practices, which were thriving in the twelfth century.
63 Van Os, Siene Altpieces, Vol. 2: 208.
64 Zika, 37. Jung, 622, claims the feast is established in 1264. Bynum, Jesus, 18, attributes the feast to the influential devotion of women mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.
gaze. Zika appropriately pinpoints the essence of gazing when saying it was “not an act of detachment but a means of releasing the powers which the [Host] had locked within itself.” Ironically, the sacrament of the Eucharist added to the difficulty of objectivizing vision because it is both a man-made object and Christ in both his natures, though Christ is invisible. Even when physically absent, spiritual vision could evoke the presence of the Host. Similarly, when physically present, the Host evokes the distant and distinct spiritual body of Christ. Augencommunion also could lead to imaginative visions. Indeed, the elevation could give rise to an apparition of Christ in the consecrated Host, leaving the beholder in a state analogous to the chosen in heaven, ever beholding God.

Thus, substitutes for a physical ingestion of the Eucharist became popular and even encouraged by some church leaders, who believed it was equivalent to the physical Host, if one was truly contrite and practiced charity. Yet, preachers and spiritual directors stressed spiritual communion, as opposed to merely an ocular communion. The latter was becoming strictly superstitious, whereas true communion consisted of a spiritual renewal, activated by the right attitude and proper actions. Christ’s eucharistic presence, at once, “unencompassable, untouchable, and unseeable,” was both present and absent; it could be summoned anytime, anywhere. Some preachers also opposed the pagan-like vulgarity of gazing at the Eucharist, a devotion which detracted from the mystery of transubstantiation. In fact, by the thirteenth century, the Eucharist was

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\begin{align*}
65 & \text{Jungmann, 122, Caspers, 92, and Rubin, Corpus, 185-189.} \\
66 & \text{Zika, 36.} \\
67 & \text{Dumoutet, 15.} \\
68 & \text{Ibid, 79.} \\
69 & \text{Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 87.} \\
70 & \text{Van Os, Sienese Altarpieces, Vol. 2: 208.}
\end{align*}
\]
treated as explicitly unseen by some theologians; Alger of Liège, Lanfranc, and Guitmond of Aversa all argued for its veiling in order to support faith. In this vein, Thomas Aquinas argued against ocular communion. He claimed that heaven’s inhabitants viewed Christ with an intellectual vision. Similarly, those on earth should do the same; after all, there is a change in the substance but not the accidents of the bread, just as God remains immutable.72

71 Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 87.
72 Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 88.
Chapter 7: “Per Christum hominem ad Christum Deum”: Vision and Devotion

Corporeal sight was only one definition of vision, which also included multivalent and disparate apparitions and prophecies. Sight was a metaphor of affective piety; it led to knowledge and redemption.\(^73\) As the ultimate goal of a medieval Christian was to gaze on the face of God in and for eternity, the layperson was tempted to catch a glimpse of him in their lifetime through any means possible, and especially images.\(^74\) Vision, thus, was the most important sense for devotion.

In fifteenth-century Burgundy, Flanders, and the Netherlands, the journey toward “individual piety” guided image-making and bolstered zealous meditation. Moreso even than attendance at mass or the practice of sacraments, meditational images and texts nourished one’s need for deep piety.\(^75\) Meditation empowered the individual to have a direct union with God, and could conveniently take place privately in the home and at any time. Multiple factors led to an increase of the use of books and principally images in private devotion. The courts of Burgundy and France, with their visually overwhelming pageants and marriages; the emergence of women at court and in convents


as audiences for literature and art; and the large import of Byzantine art after the fourth Crusade inspired more and innovative art in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{76} Increased literacy and disasters in the fourteenth century, including the Black Death, Hundred Years War, and the Great Western Schism, may have created an intense atmosphere of fear of the unknown, and a crippling sense of insecurity of one’s place before God.\textsuperscript{77} Popular pious practices provided relief from the lack of control over nature’s forces; one fundamental means of relief was through private, individualistic prayer and devotional texts.

In his multiple studies of high and late medieval images made by and for nuns, Jeffrey Hamburger justly credits monastic religious women with the flowering use of images in devotion as well as many aesthetic innovations. He argues the nuns were not only influenced by their larger German culture, but by their own spirituality. Many of these women wrote about and depicted corporeal imagery. He believes they emphasized the body as a vehicle of transcendence because of their influential interest in the humanity of Christ. The visionary texts made by some nuns not only validated sight; they provided models for devotional viewing, such as the ones with drawings of an ascending ladder.\textsuperscript{78} This interest in Christ’s humanity and the emphasis on meditational images later influenced monks and laypeople’s devotions.

\textsuperscript{76} Hamburger, \textit{The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany}, New York: Zone, 1998, 111-112. He also notes other traditional attributions, including the increase in Tuscan urbanism, growth of mendicant orders, and the pastoral revolution after the Fourth Lateran Council.\textsuperscript{77} Johnson, 393, Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 93, Caspers, 83, and Warner, 202. Rey particularly links Mary’s intercession and the fear, while the other writers discuss the great reality of this fear.\textsuperscript{78} Hamburger, \textit{Nuns as Artists}, 18, 130-131, \textit{The Visual and the Visionary}, 143, 121 and \textit{The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland Circa 1300}, New Haven: Yale, 1990, 4. In particular, he studies the art and texts of Benedictine, Dominican, and Cistercian nuns. He argues that most
Indeed, didactic books for women, such as the *Speculum dominarum*, translated into French as *Miroir des Dames* by Jeanne I of Navarre’s Franciscan confessor, Durand de Champagne, advocated a prayerful and contemplative life.\(^7^9\) Such intense piety led to the increased production of liturgical books, including breviaries, from the middle of the fifteenth century to the 1530’s.\(^8^0\) As this boom occurs after Margaret’s breviary was made, it is likely her manuscript was not only a product of its time, but a possible influence over future breviaries.

Some theologians argued images were indispensable for prayer and meditation.\(^8^1\) Images provided a physical vision, without which the spiritual is unimaginable. By using images, one “aim[ed] … to grasp that which is absent, whether historical or spiritual.”\(^8^2\)

As Christine Hasenmuller contends in her analysis of ritual and illusionism in Jan Van Eyck’s *Rolin Madonna*, illusionistic painting, like ritual, concretizes an abstract idea,
making it a vital part of one’s reality. The Platonic belief that people need material signs of God to ascend to the spiritual realm arouse in antiquity and reached its height in the twelfth century. Both Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure justify the use of images for three similar reasons: they instruct; remind the devotee of religious stories and “the benefits wrought for” them through Christ and the saints; and arouse an emotive state. The beholder ingests the image because of its seeming verity and accessibility, but only to use it as a passage toward a mental and spiritual vision. As literacy and accessibility to images grew, the intensity of desire to see, and thereby, know God heightened. Many devotional texts encouraged meditation through texts and images. Thus, the eye increasingly replaced the ear in religious piety.

The late medieval goal of meditation through images was to reach a state of empathy through which one could better understand Christ, and through him, have a supernatural relationship with the triune God. Working from multiple medieval texts, David Freedberg summarizes the steps of meditation well: one focuses on one scene, ignoring external factors; next, one breaks the scene down into parts; finally, one understands and empathizes with the figures. Such empathy led to an understanding of

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84 Freedberg, 161 dates this thinking back to antiquity and Hamburger, Nuns as Artists, 31, reports its peak.
85 Freedberg, 162-3. Hamburger, The Visual and the Visionary, 112, similarly and summarizes image theory’s three functions of images: didactic, affective, and mnemonic. However, he notes how the multifarious forms and use across audiences of images refutes claims they strictly served literacy functions. Wijsman, 125-129. Bynum, Holy Feast, 7. Bynum states that in the early medieval period, monks referred to reading and meditating on Scripture as the physical act of “chewing.” This new reading culture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries promoted praying silently and thoughtfully, “chewing” each word, in contrast to practices in the early and high Middle Ages when prayer was sung, and in community.
87 Freedberg, 161.
88 Freedberg, 175. He says one should first focus on the story to the “exclusion of externals… [followed by] a “careful episodic progression …[until one] finally … engage[s] and cultivat[es] … ensuing
God that went beyond the senses, and ultimately to an imitation of Christ. Some sources for these visualization techniques included guided meditations, *lectio divina* with *oratio* and *meditatio*, fasting, vigils, interrupted sleep, and reading visionary literature.

Texts, such as Ludolf of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*, Pseudo-Bonaventure’s *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, and another Pseudo-Bonaventure’s *Six Degrees of Charity* describe meditational practice and *imitatio Christi* as the soul’s ascent in steps, to ultimately see and understand God.\(^{89}\) Mystical writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St.-Thierry, described communication with God as an ascent with its conclusive goal as the contemplation of God’s being; one was to return to the Creator via a road of prayer and self-denial claimed Bernard of Nursia.\(^{90}\) Augustine summarized this idea when stating, “Per Christum hominem ad Christum Deum,” or “Through Christ the man to Christ the God.”\(^{91}\) To aid in concentration, the meditational ascent often was
described as a ladder, such as in Ludolf’s Vita.92 A ladder helped visualize “ascend[ing] to the pinnacle of *contemplatio*, the pure contemplation of God.”93 When one reached the highest rung, one ascended from contemplation of the material to the spiritual.94

The meditational ascent could lead to heavenly visions, particularly with images of the Host and divine figures. Bynum wonderfully summarizes how during the elevation, “one could meet Christ at the moment of his descent, a descent that paralleled and recapitulated the Incarnation.”95 The Eucharist, celebrated at daily mass, provides the salvific graces provided by Christ’s Crucifixion, for which he became man. The elevation act is a physical ascent during which the Holy Spirit spiritually descends into the Host; he later enters one’s soul upon physical or ocular ingestion. The soul, then, ascends into the heavenly realm in meditation. Margaret could have used her image as a springboard for meditation which not only focuses on Christ, but on Mary as well. In fact, theologians compared Mary to a ladder by which Christ descended and one could ascend.96 In contrast to a crucifix altarpiece, which emphasizes a vivid picture of Christ’s loving self-sacrifice, the Marian sculpture in the *Elevation* emphasizes her physical involvement in human history, and the mystery of the Incarnation, central to the Eucharist.

Through miracle tales and legends, popular religiosity spread conviction in the ability of images to produce a different kind of visions, apparitions. Calling these

92 Harbison, 90.
93 Van Os, *The Art of Devotion*, 166, 165.
94 ibid, 166.
95 Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 53. Lane, 91, studies how some altarpieces represented the Descent of the Cross, to parallel those receiving the Eucharist with those who received Christ’s body from the cross after his death.
96 Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 114.
imaginative visions, Sixten Ringbom explains how mysticism from the high Middle
Ages, explained through theological theories of vision, now applied to the private
devotion of the populace at large.\(^97\) Often, the descriptions of the figures in the
apparition resembles that of images familiar to the one who received the apparition, or
even on visions from visionary saints.\(^98\) Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish between what
Barbara Newman calls “authentic” and fictional accounts; that is, which were
experienced before they were written about, and those which were self-consciously
constructed fictions. Peter Dinzelbacher differentiates between these two types of visions
based on literary format and allusions; he claims authentic visions were written in prose,
shun allegory, and deal with ecstatic, or waking visions. While Newman believes this
definition too rigid and unrealistically assuming too much familiarity with and refusal to
use literary conventions and forms, she concludes that all visions have been constructed
in some way, by the time they appear in texts.\(^99\)

Thus, the image propelled the vision it reflects, due to the devotee’s strong desire
for such an occurrence. For example, St. Catherine of Siena described the figures in two
of her miraculous visions as just as she had seen them in paintings in churches. We see
similar occurences on folio 28 from a 1456 version of Jean Miélot’s *Miracles de Notre
Dame*, in which Mary appears and flies toward the kneeling, praying women of Toledo

\(^97\) Ringbom, 166. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 170-262, and *Holy Feast*, 113-149, 245-9, and Hamburger,
*Nuns as Artists*, elaborates on the mystical visions of saintly nuns. Bynum’s *Jesus as Mother* compares the
writings, visions, and experiences of thirteenth century mystic nuns from Helfta, while her *Holy Feast*
includes the visions and writings of females from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. In *Nuns as Artists*,
Hamburger particularly writes about late Medieval German nuns’ devotions and visions in connection with
images.

\(^98\) Hamburger, *Rothschild Canticles*, 2.

\(^99\) Newman, 26-33.
from behind the a low-relief altarpiece (figure 10). Because of their large size, Mary and the nursing Child Jesus seem to appear to a female devout before our eyes in a book of hours, in the miniature marking the beginning of the Matins in the Hours of the Virgin of Walters W.92, folio 17. Similarly, a monk would pray in front of a statue of the Virgin so ardently, he would sigh and cry; since he often asked to meet her son and as the Virgin is a faithful Mother, the Virgin appeared to him in a dream once, and even let him kiss her cheek.100 These images may be pictorial and sculptural; St. Catherine and the women’s paintings were just as effective as the monk’s statue, as a crucifix for St. Francis. The devout believed that these apparitions arise from following the prescription of using images to pray, doing so devotedly and sincerely. Thus, Margaret can meditate through her painted illumination of a sculptured Virgin and receive a miraculous vision.

100 Hamburger, The Rothschild Canticles, 2, and Ringbom, 161, 166, 163, 161, 160 both write about direct links between visions and artworks, the devout’s desire for visions. The legendary examples comes from Ringbom.
The scene is masterfully painted to reflect the stages of a meditational practice and ritual as compositional choices of placement, colors, and shapes guide Margaret along in the steps of her meditation from the material to the immaterial. Initially, the viewer stands at a forty-five degree angle from the altar. The diagonal moving toward the upper right invites one to move one’s position to better enter the scene and into a focused, meditational state. The acolyte has just kneeled on the altar’s carpet, moving beyond the green carpeted world. While this green floor is similar to that on which the priest stands in the Duke de Berry’s Belles Heures, both symbolic of a transitional space, the carpet is gray just like the windows, a common site of liminality (figure 7). The diamond diaper pattern behind the acolyte signals another world with its play of gold squares systematically arranged amidst colored ones. These squares simultaneously recede into the background and project into the viewer’s space. The acolyte adopts an attitude of focus and devotion as he lifts up the votive candle to alert the viewers to the sanctity of the event. Its flame fades into one of the suns, patterned on the left curtain. This is the first step before entering a more sacred space, that of the altar.

Margaret would have seen the color of re-birth and hope again in the underlining of the priest’s chasuble, particularly over the sleeves of his undergarment, appropriately just under the Host as the priest and Host are the key features in the move to the beyond.
Here, the priest raises the Host up towards the statue of the Virgin and Child, figuring a meditative, vision-inducing ascent. Margaret may partake visually and spiritually of the Host, to which the round shape of the enflamed sun on the curtain directs one’s gaze. According to the meditational steps, one could break down the scene to consider the intermediary functions of the priest and the Host. The Calvary group on the Host wonderfully vivifies Christ’s linked historical and liturgical oblations, both of which offered salvation to Margaret. The Host is an object that could put Margaret into a meditational contemplation of Christ’s complex sacrifices, in relation to her.

As the Host was believed to be God himself, it represents the ultimate figure with whom to align oneself. Both the eye and mind are elevated here. For Moshe Barasch, the elevation represents the spiritual apex one can reach in this life.101 Just as the space of the Last Supper merges with the altar space, so too, do different times. With each viewing, Margaret would have actively used this image for a spiritual communion of the kind that we know was experienced by other women. St. Colette de Corbie, the Franciscan religious reformer and friend of the Duchess and Duke, received the communion daily, and experienced visions of Christ involving gestural communication, during the elevation of the Host.102 Interestingly, in one representation of Colette, this image we see an enthroned Mary and Child serving as the altarpiece and placed in front of the chalice and only slightly above the priest (figure 11). Made soon after our illumination for another Burgundian female ruler, it demonstrates the powerful

connection between transubstantiation and the Incarnation. With her illumination, Margaret never has to wait for the unveiling; the moment of consecration is ever present.

Yet, the image and meditational ascent go further. Through its color and position, the Host directly connects to the monochrome image of the Virgin and Christ-Child. The compositional placement of its figures also directs such a reading: a diagonal axis line moves up from the acolyte, to the priest and Host, and culminates in the figures of the Virgin and Christ before a window. They stand directly before the final barrier to the beyond.

The framing also supports meditational and ritualistic progression. The blue arches above separate the image into two vertical halves. These signal to the viewer that one is about to enter a sacred space, which is separate from one’s reality. The space under the left arch shows the acolyte kneeling and looking up, beyond himself. His gaze and gesture lead us to the second half, where the priest stands at the liminal altar space. He, too, stands in for Margaret as the one about to cross into a spiritual space evoked by the divine figures of Christ in the Host and statue and Mary. Similar to the priest, Mary stands at an architectural juncture, this time before two windows that signal the beyond. This beyond may represent the ultimate meditational phase of imagelessness. The *Elevation* certainly evokes exegetical interpretation and meditative progression designed for a knowledgable and sophisticated mind. It also includes the contemplation of Mary’s intercessory function in leading one to the afterlife, a devotion not as emphasized in books of other female patrons, as we shall see.
Ann Nichols justly argues it was not only the Eucharistic actions of the priest that consummated the sacrament, but their union with the participation of all the men and women present at the mass, including by their spiritual communion. Yet, one sees that the priest’s intercessory powers are significantly highlighted in Margaret’s illumination. Significantly, the priest stands at the altar and in the center of the work, a liminal space between the terrestrial and the spiritual, highlighting his valuable role as one intermediary means between the viewer and the divine. The decorative tip in between the framing arches points down, visually aligned with the union between the front and right walls, creating a central vertical axis with the body of the priest. The visual line created by the bar holding the curtain to the priest’s left intersects this vertical line at the priest’s head. Underscoring his significance, a diagonal line of green tiles on the facing wall leads also leads down to his head. Through his role as a priest and his placement, he mediates between other humans, such as the acolyte and viewer, and the divine, embodied by Host and the statuary figures of Mary and Christ. Interestingly, in holding the Host, the priest’s right thumb lies at the base of the cross, and his left thumb is placed just before the figure to Christ’s right, conventionally Mary. Though the figures are impossible to

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103 Ann Nichols, 258-259. She claims that one feature in both English and Continental imagery not often discussed is the inclusion of men and women, whether patrons or not, in elevation scenes, which signals the significant consideration of the laity; this consideration is also present in texts.
discern, we can assume the artist followed the convention and thus the priest points
toward both figures, thereby literally connecting with both divine beings. He represents
Christ on Earth symbolically, here celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass which Christ
instituted at the Last Supper; he also acts like Mary by enfleshing the Savior through the
consecratory words. He holds the Host, as Mary holds the Christ Child.

Particularly relevant to the Margaret’s breviary, *Les Petites Heures*, both the
Brussels and Parisian versions, and *Les Belles Heures* were made for the Duke de Berry
who was John’s uncle. As the Duke de Berry was John’s uncle, the dukes would shared
court artists and drawings as models. Finished around 1408 or 1409, just before
Margaret’s breviary, the Duke de Berry’s *Belles Heures* served as a model for a few of
Margaret’s books, such as the *Murder of St. Mark*, just as the *Crucifixion* from his *Les
Petites Heures* served as a direct model for the *Crucifixion* in the winter portion of the
breviary by another artist of the breviary, the Master of the Breviary of John the Fearless
(figures 12-13).104 The differences between these illuminations and Margaret’s highlight
why Margaret’s is so spectacular.

In the elevation scenes in *Les Petites Heures*, made at the end of the fourteenth
century, there are no visible altarpieces (figures 5-6). As previously noted, Calvary

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104 Wijsman, 175. The Duke’s *Très Belles Heures* became part of Margaret’s library; it is in her 1424
inventory. I refer to *Les Petites Heures* in Brussels, called the “Brussels Hours,” in this direct comparison
and figure, as opposed to the Parisian *Petites Heures*. Rob Dückers, “A Close Encounter? The Limbourg
Brothers and Illumination in the Northern Netherlands in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century,” in *The
Limbourg Brothers: Reflections on the Origins and the Legacy of Three Illuminators from Nijmegen*,
Netherlands.” In *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Masters at the French Court 1400-1416*, edited by
Rob Dückers and Pieter Roelofs. Nijmegen: Ludion, 2005: 211, 214. This artist was the Master of the
Breviary of St. John the Fearless, whom Meiss claims worked under the Limbourg Brothers. More
recently, Dückers notes that connections between workshops is not clear, while Clark has noted that artists
could copy compositions and motifs without collaborating together, via drawings made of compositions by
border or initial specialists who then passed these on to miniaturist friends.
groups possibly are inscribed on the Hosts. Thus, the emphasis in these works is on Duke’s religious behavior, and his connection to the Eucharist. Folio 172 is placed at the beginning of the prayers for the feast of Corpus Christi. Praying devoutly before the priest is the Duke de Berry, in both elevation scenes. The focus becomes the duke’s sumptuous self, that is, his attire and pious attitude. The priest is not centralized, nor is there any kind of meditational ascent. In contrast, one doesn’t see a portrait of the Duchess in her image of the elevation, allowing it to become more metaphysically complicated.

The *Elevation* on folio 205v in the Duke de Berry’s *Belles Heures* is worthy of comparison to Margaret’s work because of its many similarities, as well as its differences (figure 7). Whereas the taper ends below the level of the Host in the latter because it leads to an ascending progression of vision, the flame of the Duke’s taper is parallel to the Eucharist. Indeed, the taper and priest’s arms form two vertical axes which divide the image into three parts. In the first, we have kneeling laymen, and in the second, the priest stands just below the canopy’s decorative column capital, similar to the decorative tip under which Margaret’s priest stands. The diagonals of the painted diaper pattern lead the eye directly to the officiating priest. While their play against the verticality of the taper and priest’s arms is dynamic, perhaps to signify the transcendental quality of the liturgical performance, the tessellation also visually rhymes with the rest of the work by decoratively picking up the colors of the figures’ clothes.

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105 Lane, 109.
The ciborium and the presence and absence of its contents largely comprise the third vertical section. Unlike that in Margaret’s work, the ciborium is not tilted to more fully welcome the viewer, and there is no sense of ascent to a climatic, liminal altarpiece and/or window. Interestingly, one can perceive the outline of a never-painted crucifix on the altar (figures 14-15). At some point, the decision was made to keep the focus on the Host. However, this decision also meant a more symmetrical, decorative direction. The image merely represents the ritual the viewer would have witnessed at daily mass. It neither asks the viewer to reflect on the inter-connectivity of dogmas, nor does it provide the meditational structure for contemplation. Instead, the inclusion of the laymen, possibly historical figures, makes the image a portrait of exemplary corporeal behavior before the Eucharist, more than a devotional vehicle to the transcendent.

The moment of the elevation was a popular subject in art by the twelfth century, and became a standard image in the missal by the fourteenth century. As the Eucharist links with the Incarnation through the mystery of the transubstantiation, most painted altarpieces show the Annunciation in the fifteenth century. Illuminations of this scene, however, focus on Christ’s Passion to parallel the continual sacrifice at the altar. Thus, the elevation is shown often with a Crucifix after the thirteenth century, emphasizing Christ’s sacrifice for the communicant’s salvation; we see such example on folio 47 of

Many include a more factual representation of the priest, that is, they depict him from the back and hiding the altarpiece as viewers would have seen him in reality; folio 145 in a book of hours coded as the British Museum Additional 16997, made by the Boucicaut Master around 1420, depicts the priests’ hands engulfing the Host so the latter is not visible, thereby emphasizing the priest. The majority of elevation scenes I discovered have no altarpiece, as in Les Petites Heures and a Speculum Sacerdotum from 1484 (figures 5-6). Some even deliberately blurred them, as that in the Docritnale Fidei (figure 8).

Other works include painted altarpieces showing triptych groups of the Calvary, as on folio 253 in the Hours of Philip the Bold made around 1390, now in Cambridge’s Fitzwilliam Museum as Ms.3-1954. We also see altarpieces with Christ in between two figures as on folio 103 in Holkham Hall’s Ms. 120.

Since Margaret’s illumination doesn’t include her or any other non-essential figure, her work innately focuses on the Host’s powers, and the intercession of the priest. Margaret’s devotion seems more in line with that of women mystics of the thirteenth century, such as Gertrude of Helfta, who focus on the priests’ incarnating ability.

Elaborating on these mystics, Caroline Walker Bynum identifies a devotion to the body of Christ as the central theme for nuns and other holy women from the thirteenth to the

109 Husband, 331. Bynum, Holy Feast, 56. Another example is in a book of hours in Florence’s Corsini Collection, made by the Boucicaut Workshop around 1390-1430.
110 Other representations following this convention include folio 130 in the Getty Museum’s Ms. 34 and Niccolò da Bologna’s creation on folio 1 recto in the Vatican’s Lat. 2534, both dating to the first years of the fifteenth century. We even see this type of representation on architecture, such as the representation of the Eucharist on the wall of Florence’s Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, made around 1340 by Andrea Pisano’s workshop.
111 Others include the British Library’s Carmelite Missal, Ms. 29704’s folio 38 from c. 1393; folio 80 of the Hours of Simon de Varie, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Ms. 74 G. 37; and folio 3 in a breviary from the Walters Museum, W. 300.
fifteenth centuries. She argues females had a mystical connection with Christ’s humanity, experiencing visions of an affective yet oftentimes grotesque, bleeding Christ. Medieval females particularly sought bodily, spiritual experiences, especially via food. They sought an ecstatic, mystical union with the physical and divine being of God, especially through the Host. In sacramental form, unity with Christ became a desired and savored sensual experience. The elevation, that is, the moment of mediation between the two realms, not only afforded such an opportunity. It also reminded the viewer that it was due to a woman’s mediating role that afforded what Bynum calls the ultimate mediation, the Incarnation.¹¹²

However, she also notes that some of these women challenged the supremacy of the priest through their visions and miracles, desiring to be vessels in which “God happened,” which was only authorized to priests.¹¹³ While they recognized the priest as a “powerful corporate symbol,” and were not anti-clerical, some of their visions implied priests were “unnecessary” because of the immediacy of representations of the supernatural, such as in prayer books.¹¹⁴ However, she cleverly notes that even these women essentially recognized the church’s hierarchy and try to work within it to achieve their ends. These visions often criticized the incompetence or immorality of some

¹¹³ Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 258.
¹¹⁴ Bynum, Holy Feast, 65, Fragmentation, 62. Some of the women who shared these visions were Gertrude of Helfta, Angela of Foligno, and Lukardis of Oberweimar. Similar ideas are also in Fragmentation, 45-46, and Jesus as Mother, 8, 249, 256-258

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priests. Hence, they desired priests to focus their intercessory powers for the good of their flocks, and to respect the powers of the Eucharist.

Reverting to this line of thought, the priest is an integral source of Margaret’s entrance into afterlife in heaven in the *Elevation*. Not only is the priest in the artwork constantly holding up the Host for Margaret’s spiritual communion and contemplation, but he also served as an example for her. Margaret could enflesh Christ in her mind and heart, thus developing priestly attributes.

Yet, it is not only the priest’s intercessory role that matters to Margaret. Her meditational ascent culminates in a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary, holding her infant son, somewhat reminiscent of ones in the Burgundian environment. The majority of altarpieces were statuary Madonna and Child groups in Burgundian private chapels, and most statuary altarpieces were painted. Neither of the illuminations by the Boucicaut Workshop, that include statues of the Virgin and Child, are of elevation scenes, so the priest looks down at his liturgical book while the Marian statue looks down at him (figures 16-17). The tender pose of the Marian statue groups in both is very similar to Margaret’s, but the group stands directly on the altar rather than on a pedestal. Yet, in neither of these images is there a meditational ascent or strong architectural or gestural direction toward Mary. The statue group seems merely to function as furnishings since no figure directly engages with it. The images’ underlying intent by including a Marian

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115 Bynum, *Fragmentation*, 45. In one vision, the Host flew out of the hands of the corrupt priest, towards the visionary woman.

sculpture may be a familiar depiction of church altars, and perhaps to make other theological arguments of Mary as an altar. Our illumination takes the idea of Mary as altar further by addressing how in the late Middle Ages, Mary took on the role of priesthood in the minds of the devout.

As increased interest in Christ’s humanity emerged, so too did interpretation of Mary’s role in human history. In the early Middle Ages, the Virgin had been considered a passive recipient of the graces of her son’s sacrifice. From the twelfth century on, however, a new sense of her active participation in humanity’s salvation emerged. Interestingly, the Parisian synod which dictated the theory and practice of the elevation of the host also recommended that all Christians learn the Ave Maria, in addition to the creed and Pater Noster, thereby giving equal attention to prayers to Mary as to those to the triune God.\footnote{Ellington, 29.} Some argued that her sacrifice and pain had been so great during Christ’s Crucifixion, that this gained the devout graces which contributed to humanity’s salvation. More indisputable, the Virgin’s incarnational role contributed to Christ’s salvific work and to creating the image of a merciful Mother to those for whom Christ entered the world.\footnote{Ellington, 88, and Rubin, Mother, discuss the changing perception of Mary’s role in salvation.} Since the consecration was seen as parallel to the Incarnation, Church Fathers, theologians, and preachers presented Mary in the role of a priest by the later Middle Ages.\footnote{Bynum, Holy Feast, 278 and Ellington, 73. Both discuss the changing perceptions of Mary’s salvific activity, and her role as a priest. Ellington also discusses how clergy praised Mary’s virginity, in which they shared which supported their authority and prestige.}

Representations of Mary as a priest most often occur in images of the presentation of Christ at the temple, as on folio 79 in the Bedford Hours (figure 18). We see the
Virgin holding Christ just over or laying him on the altar, with a white cloth between the babe and altartop; her gestures mimic those of a priest during the sacrificial rite, presenting the Host or laying it down on a paten, over a white cloth-covered altar. As Bernard of Clairvaux noted, the Virgin acts as a priest sacrificially offering the body of Christ when presenting Christ to be circumcised: “Offer your son, sacred Virgin, and present the blessed fruit of your womb to God. Offer the blessed host, pleasing to God, for the reconciliation of us all.”

A more explicit example of the Virgin as a priest dates to soon after our manuscript, 1438 (figure 19). Here, the Virgin is dressed in clerical robes as ordained by God to Moses for Aaron and his descendants, and performs an oblation as a priest does; most scholars of this work argue its focus is the Virgin passing on the Old Law and priestly traditions to the young Christ figure, robed as a contemporary Pope. More significantly, Christ touches her chasuble and hand to accept how she will “weave” his corporeal covering for his priestly sacrifice. Her size, monumental by comparison with the scale of the church and other figures, emphasizes her necessary role in the Incarnation.

While she is not monumental in Margaret’s illumination of the Elevation, the Virgin serves as the key mediatrix to heaven for Margaret, because of her multiple roles as priest, mother, intercessor, and protector. Precisely because of her multiple abilities,

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121 Carol J. Purtle, “Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge el l’Énigme d’un Parti Iconographique Exceptionnel.” La Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France. 5/6 (1996): 56 - 59, 62, and Lane, 71. In her article, Purtle presents a brief literary review of past iconographical decisions of the work before her more in-depth analysis, in which she identifies the style of the biblical robes and argues the popular devotional metaphor of Mary weaving Christ’s body explains the central figures’ seemingly odd gestures, and contextualizes the work. Lane discuss the
Mary is presented accessibly and desirably as a contemplative figure. The next section details her many roles in this illumination and manuscript.
Chapter 10: Mater Dei and Mater Omnia: The Multiple Roles of the Virgin in the Breviary of Margaret

Not even the glittering diaper pattern can distract from the diagonal ascent leading from the priest’s raised arms to the Host and statue, significant in their absence of color, a choice pregnant with theological meanings. The Virgin and Child are framed by the windows and golden vault above them, as well as by the quatrefoil trimmed, double trefoil architectural frame of the scene and miniature. The framing not only directs one’s gaze; it helps focus one’s attention on the sacred moment, a necessary basis for devotion.¹²²

Fundamental to its trigger of meditational thought and to the theological contention that the transubstantiation is a re-incarnation, the statue group is all in white. Wooden and even stone statues were generally painted, unless they were made from ivory, marble, alabaster, or gilded.¹²³ However, in her study of three hundred and ten sculptural groups from the fourteenth through the fifteenth centuries, Lucie Milani discovered that some marble statues were lightly painted, though only gold could elevate their importance.¹²⁴ This statue may be made of non-painted marble or alabaster, the finest materials chosen as a sign of taste, to assert social rank, and to underline the

¹²² Freedberg, 181.
¹²³ Steyaert, 15.
¹²⁴ Milani, 81.
magnitude of Burgundian devotion to the Virgin through their access to these materials.\textsuperscript{125}

Mary’s monochromy not only reflects her virginal purity; it may also refer to her conception’s purity, that is, her Immaculate Conception, a contested issue in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{126} To those asking how it was possible, St. Anselm of Canterbury declared that God willed it so.\textsuperscript{127} Her purity stemmed from the absence of the stain of original sin, believed to be transmitted through sexual relations. Indeed, without the purity of her body, the Incarnation would not have been possible. Yet, the Dominicans argued that if the Virgin could lactate, she was not free of original sin.\textsuperscript{128} Thomas Aquinas argued that the idea lessens Christ’s saving work.\textsuperscript{129} Mary must have been stained, if only briefly, after which she was purified in the womb by God’s grace, as a future merit of Christ’s death.\textsuperscript{130} Mary is even more indebted to Christ than everyone else because she was purified before birth.\textsuperscript{131}

The Franciscans supported the concept of Mary’s purity at birth as truth, contrary to the Dominicans. Some theologians argued that just as Christ as a divine being pre-existed his Incarnation, so, too, his humanity pre-existed the Incarnation in the sinless

\textsuperscript{125} Milani, 80, 90,85 and Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 108.
\textsuperscript{126} Pelikan, 150, and Ellington, 53-54. Ellington reports that the feast of Mary’s conception was introduced in the West in the twelfth century, but was not widely celebrated until the end of the fourteenth century, when even the Dominicans honored it. Pelikan notes that the issue was so contested, it did not become dogma until 1950, though it received Roman sanction several times in the fifteenth century, even becoming dogma in 1439 though later it’s declared illegitimate, as Ellington states.
\textsuperscript{127} Rubin, Mother, 161.
\textsuperscript{128} Warner, 204 and Bynum, “The Body of Christ,” 422.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., http://newadvent.org/summa/4027.htm
\textsuperscript{131} Ellington, 55.
humanity of the Virgin. In order to be worthy to be Mater Dei, Mary needed to receive God’s supernatural grace, argued the influential Franciscan theologian, Duns Scotus. Margaret and John the Fearless supported and were supported by Franciscans. Margaret persuaded John to give an old arsenal to St. Colette de Corbie to found a convent in Besançon in 1408 after the saints’ prayers were thought to have saved Margaret and their children from threats by the Armagnacs; also, the Franciscan priest, Jean Petit, legitimized John’s murder of Louis d’Orléans with a dramatic speech given to the people of Paris.

Thus, this white Mary may serve an intentional religious argument opposed to Aquinas’ view: it may underscore her essential purity, and unquestionable immaculate conception. As Mirella Levi-Ancona maintains, artists adapted iconography from established forms to represent this belief, usually discreetly and sometimes through special prayers about the purity of the Virgin; books may have a special December 8 feast-day marked in the calendar, or a rubric for the feast introducing the Office of the Virgin’s birth. Rosemary Muir Wright’s analysis of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves reveals a wonderful example of all three of these characteristics. The opening miniature to a Terce shows the rays of the Holy Spirit impregnating St. Anne, about whom the inscription states, “From you will be born the mother of the savior” (figure 20).

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133 Rubin, Mother, 303.
135 Mirella Levi D’Ancona, The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, New York: College Art Association of America, 1957: 15-17. She notes that often, there was a special prayer, inscription, or notation rubric to identify the patron as an Immaculist.
136 Rosemary Muir Wright, Sacred Distance: Representing the Virgin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006: 120.
Artists also would use the convention of Mary as the apocalyptic woman, in which sun rays beam from her head as she steps on the moon; we see this representation on folio 24 verso of a book of hours from Bruges made around 1420. Artists also adopted the Marian as mediatrix iconographic type, in which she frees souls from Hell or Purgatory, in order to represent her ability to save souls because of her inviolate conception (figure 21).

In Margaret’s breviary, the artist creates a new convention: not only is Mary white, she also placed before the liminal windows. The windows in the Elevation are key to this desired salvation. Windows serve multiple meanings in paintings at this time. It is no coincidence that Mary is placed in front of and at the same height as the windows. When conventionally near a window, Mary’s placement “suggest[s] God [coming] through” space, both to her and through her into the Host. Among many theologians using the metaphor of light to explain the mystery of the Incarnation, St. Bernard of Clairvaux beautifully expresses: “As a pure ray enters a glass window and emerges unspoiled, but has acquired the color of the glass… the Son of God, who entered the most chaste womb of the Virgin, emerged pure, but took on the color of the Virgin, that is, the nature of a man and a comeliness of human form, and he clothed himself in it.”

This passage wonderfully applies to Margaret’s illumination, as Christ taking Mary’s flesh

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137 Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 56. Rubin, *Mother*, 162, offers Anselm of Canterbury’s pronouncement that as “a ray of the sun passes through a glass without breaking it… in the same way Christ, the Sun of justice, passed through the Virgin by the power of his divinity; taking the flesh of the mother he passed though her while she remained intact.” Meiss, “Light as Form and Symbol in Some Fifteenth-Century Paintings.” *The Art Bulletin*. 27.3 (1945), 176, also offers St. Bernard’s comparison: “Just as the brilliance of the sun fills and penetrates a glass window without damaging it, and pierces its solid form with imperceptible subtlety, neither hurting it when entering nor destroying it when emerging: thus the word of God, the splendor of the Father, entered the virgin chamber and then came forth from the closed womb.”

138 Meiss, “Light as Form,” 177.
means remaining white. Mary is as white as the Host to reflect her role in its saving power, and the Host is white because Mary’s flesh is white, not vice versa. The window refers to the Virgin’s perpetual virginity, and the miraculous conception and birth of Christ.\textsuperscript{139} It emphasizes the power of God to transcend earthly limitations, and establish links between the natural and the supernatural.

However, Margaret’s windows are painted in a dark, opaque gray. As the artist and Margaret argue for Mary’s inviolate conception, the gray color cannot refer to Mary’s stain from original sin, as Margaret’s contemporary Dominicans may assert. Rather, the dark color reinforces the physicality of the Incarnation. By drawing attention to its materiality, the dark windows symbolize the flesh Christ inherits from his earthly mother. This connection would have been familiar to viewers in the late Middle Ages; exegetes interpreted Canticles 2.9, “Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices,” as referring to Christ.\textsuperscript{140} The light coming from the windows represented God’s spiritual nature, while the window’s latticework represented the human flesh Christ assumed.\textsuperscript{141} We see examples of windows with intricate latticework in Annunciations, such as on folio 33 verso of the Walters W. 272, an image introducing the Matins in the Hours of the Virgin. Margaret’s illumination and breviary may be similar in focus to that of other women’s incarnational-heavy prayer books. However, the illumination’s unique features, complex symbols and solemnity

\textsuperscript{139} Meiss, “Light as Form,” 178.
\textsuperscript{141} Gottlieb, 91-93.
mark its deep intellectual concerns about the ambiguous present and feverish desire to get to heaven.

The gray windows may have reminded a medieval viewer of a mirror, which were burnished metals that gave off hazy reflections. The metaphor of a mirror to represent the ideal sought was the most popular metaphor at this time. It also guided book ideas and led to many book titles; the most widely read books of all religious texts was the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis, or The Mirror of Human Salvation*. When applied to biblical typology, it indicated how Old Testament figures foreshadow those of the New Testament; on a larger scale, it represented discernment and God’s grand plan of salvation. Many of the metaphor’s religious meanings came from St. Paul’s writing in I Cor 13:11-12, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.” In this world of Neoplatonic beliefs, innately unclear reflections in a mirror symbolized humanity’s faulty perception consequent to the Fall; vision’s “temporal and spatial limitations” nonetheless recognized the presence of God in

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144 Labriola, 6.
nature, and aimed to one day see him “face to face” as St. Paul says. Ultimately, windows may represent a spiritual vision which sought the beyond.

Indeed, the windows may also symbolize the mysterious nature of the afterlife, in which a soul may live in heaven, hell, or temporarily in purgatory. The artist places the Virgin in front of them to emphasize her intermediary status between the known and unknown, the present and the future. Statues may aid the ritual, especially when they are placed at the entrance of a sacred space, and carved naturalistically or directly confront the participant with their gaze. When discussing crucifixes on choir screens, Jacqueline Jung states that such statutes undeniably “amplify[y] the immediacy of representational content, mark and heighten the moment of passage, calling attention to movement into a different space.” Mary is the gateway of heaven, a place unfamiliar but which Margaret trusts is an ideal resting place.

Margaret of Bavaria’s fear for her soul dwelling in the afterlife was so great that she was a big investor in this religious economy. Perhaps taking after St. Augustine’s counsel to hope in the prayers of the living and the power of the Eucharist, Margaret instituted a foundation for the celebration of three daily masses to be said for the dead over the course of one-hundred and eight days, in Our Lady of Dijon’s church, after her husband’s assassination. She also made six pilgrimages and nine visits to the local

146 Labriola, 1.
147 Hamburger, Rothschild Canticles, 1.
148 Jung, 631.
149 Levi-Ancona, 17 and Gottlieb, 93.
151 ibid, 95.
site, Our Lady of Mont-Roland, where she could venerate a twelfth century, oak, seated Marian statue. This statue evoked Mary’s presence in such a way that it was believed to transmit sacred power.\textsuperscript{152} As objects of transaction in the religious economy, statues were a means to request spiritual benefits greater than the large financial investment necessary for the works; patrons particularly requested Marian protection at the time of the last judgment.\textsuperscript{153} Mary was seen as the best intercessor for the prevalent fear of the loss of eternal salvation, which was greater than fearing the moment and location of death and judgment.\textsuperscript{154} Many of Margaret’s commissions celebrated the Virgin through special devotions. Among her luxurious tapestries, paintings, goldsmith work, architecture, and books, she owned twenty-three representations of the Virgin, more than of any other saint.\textsuperscript{155}

Margaret’s Virgin also was connected with the Madonna statue gracing the entrance to the monastery church, Chartreuse of Champmol, from 1391 (figures 22-23). Interestingly, the Virgin’s drapery in Margaret’s illumination is slightly reminiscent of this now classic Burgundian sculpture. Commissioned by John the Fearless’ father, Philip the Bold, from the renowned sculptor, Claus Sluter, the Virgin and Christ create a striking group, emitting love and a deep bond.\textsuperscript{156} In both works, the Virgin is enveloped in a robe, which gathers in a bundle of cascading folds just under the Child. The Virgin’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, 103, 98, 95-6. Rey explains Margaret’s religious investments. She had particular requests that the masses at Dijon’s church be officiated by Guillaume d’Autun, the abbot of the Cistercian abbey at Mortemer, and by two of his monks.
\textsuperscript{153} Milani, 85.
\textsuperscript{154} Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 93, Caspers, 83, and Warner, 202. Rey particularly links Mary’s intercession and the fear, while the other writers discuss the great reality of this fear. He specifies the cause of the fear on 103.
\textsuperscript{155} Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 103, 106, 105.
\textsuperscript{156} Philip created this monastery to house what he envisioned as the burial place of his dynasty. John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria hah a dedictory monument there, as we shall see.
\end{footnotesize}
body faces the viewer, though her head is turned toward Christ, while his body offers the approaching visitor a profile view. Interestingly, both statues stand in between portals to progressively more sacred spaces, both earthly and heavenly.

Contemporary with the illumination, Jan van Eyck painted a Madonna and Child statue group as an altarpiece in the middle space of his *The Virgin in the Church* from about 1430 (detail in figure 24). Though crowned, the Madonna probably represents the summarily sculpted statues made of wood, popular among the general populace. While similar in pose, the wooden statue’s static nature contrasts with the more engaging statue in the *Elevation* illumination, which complexly relates to the sacramental form of Christ. Interestingly, Van Eyck painted clear glass in the windows to underline the Virgin’s role in the Incarnation. Yet, the ideas behind the Marian group in the Elevation may have inspired such a painted masterpiece. Here, one sees the Virgin come to life. She is the Church, and the intercessor for one’s soul to her son, who is diminuitive in scale compared to his monumental mother. This may represent a revival of thirteenth century devotion to Mary as mediatrix, as we see in Margaret’s work.

Though the poses of the Virgin and Child in the illumination are similar in respect to the priest, the Virgin tilts her head, allowing the viewer to more easily face her. She remains enveloped in her cloak, which creating circular dynamism around the body of

157 Meiss, “Light,” 181, believes it is wooden, while Milani, 81, elaborates on the variety of statuary. Such statues were popular, copies of another, and cost significantly less those made of stone. Wooden statues tended to have many layers of paint to add plasticity. However, stone eventually replaced wood as the preferred medium, as people discovered centers of extraction in the Middle Ages and valued stone’s durability. They also valued its refinement, which fed into the culture’s religious economic practice of sculpture-making for heavenly favors. Consequently, wealthier patrons favored more luxurious materials to assert their role in society, though people recognized that cost did not necessarily guarantee heavenly rewards, and that all artworks, no matter the cost, were objects of devotion that required moral behavior for their efficacy.
Christ and her torso. She also holds the child on her left side, so the viewer can see her child as the elevation scene, as many others, is directed toward the right. This Virgin holds her child close, indicative of two Byzantine iconographic types: we see the Virgin in a tender, maternal depiction of the “Glykophilousa,” with the Christ Child caressing the Madonna, at whom he gazes. Here, Christ seems to kiss her right cheek, while caressing it with his left cheek and affectionately touching her above the breast, as if inching closer to her face. The Virgin supports the Child with her left hand, and brings him close to her with her right. This loving embrace is similar to that by the Master of the Breviary of John the Fearless in a painted initial “B” in the winter portion of the breviary, in which the Virgin tenderly looks at her babe (figure 25). Margaret’s Mary also incorporates this “Eleousa” type, in which her mercy and maternal tenderness are evoked as her gaze is ambiguously directed at the viewer instead of on Christ. The single but thick brushstrokes for Mary’s eyes leave Mary’s gaze open to interpretation, possibly directly linking her with Margaret while inviting close-looking.

Significantly, the group is a sculpture and not a painting. Christ intimately shares in the Virgin’s substance. Thus, Mary further symbolizes her physical incarnation of God when represented in the round. It is the Virgin’s figure who holds the Christ Child, and who first received Christ. She evocatively and monochromatically links with the Host to underscore the Madonna’s sacred role as the pure mother of God, and medium to the divine, as well as to her presence as a mother and protector. This statue group

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158 Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966, 297. This type is appropriate for a Song of Songs exegesis of the relationship between the pair, with Christ acting as a lover. It also implies the Virgin’s protective attributes.
159 Belting, *The Image*, 139. He speaks about the Eleousa type in general.
160 Rubin, *Mother*, 204.
elaborates the heart of the illumination’s message: that of the mysterious, parallel
doctrines of the Incarnation and transubstantiation, exegetically ponderable through the
figure of Mary.

By including an engaging artwork within his artwork, the artist also provides
another means for a vision. The artist of the *Elevation* comes from the circle of the
Master of the Humilities, who represented the Virgin and Child in a similar, tender
gesture, such as in the artist’s eponymous illumination in the French *Book of Hours*, c.
1400-1425, the British Library’s Harley 2952, and another French *Book of Hours*, c.
1410-1415, the British Library’s Yates Thompson 37 (figures 26-27). However, the
figures are not sculpture and are painted as if they represent living figures, not works of
art. If the artist were to have depicted an apparition of the Virgin and Child in the
breviary, it would have provided the priest, not Margaret, with the vision. By painting a
statue, the Master of the Humilities provides the means for repeated visions with each
viewing and devotional use of this illumination for Margaret.

In similar fashion to relics, statues share the presence of the divine, moreso than
paintings.161 Indeed, many Marian statues contained relics.162 Margaret greatly revered
relics’ power. She owned very special relics closely associated with two central
mediators, Christ and Mary. Not only did she possess dust from the feet of Christ and a
piece of the True Cross; she also had some of the Virgin’s milk in her château in Noyers,

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161 Rey, “Princely Piety,” 75. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, 112, notes how statues were
considered suspicious in the early Middle Ages because of their association with pagan statuary. Their
three-dimensionality also made them more potently vivifying and idolatrous. Yet, by the late medieval
period, statuary became the most prestigious art form of Northern Europe.

162 See Ilene H. Forsyth, *Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France*
and oil. To honor the objects, she kept the Virgin’s oil in a silk cushion, and the True Cross fragment attached to surrounding paintings of the Annunciation and the Crucifixion. A crystal reliquary with a golden top held the milk in a silver container over a gold-decorated plate. It likely came from the ground around a grotto in Bethlehem, where drops it spilt while Mary breast fed Christ. The source of the oil is more difficult to ascertain.

With her devotion to the Virgin’s spiritually nourishing breast milk, the whiteness of the statue altarpiece may have conjured up memories of her relic. Memory was a key step to learning and the function of images since it inevitably and actively relates texts, objects, and images, as “incessant vibration and fundamental instability.” As people in the late Middle Ages were trained in visual mnemonics, meditational practice exploited this ability. The heart was the seat of memory, through which the devotee could “recollect herself” and self-reflect in order to better unite her soul to Christ via images in the memory. As St. Augustine said, the heart was the organ of an affective interior vision.

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163 Ibid, 75, and Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 104. In the latter, Rey cites from the inventory, Arch. dép. de la Côte d’or, B 302, second cahier, fol. 1, describing the milk: “Item, un colon dargent sur une platine de cuivre doré dor ou quell a ung petit reliquaire de cristal et ung couvercle dargent ouquel ya du lait de la glorieuse virge marie selon quil est escript en un baneret qui y est ataiche.” Folio 1v describes the relic of the holy cross and the Virgin’s oil: “Item, deux petit tableau tenant lun alautre en manière de deux pais esquelles a de painture ladmucicacion et le crucifiement et y adeplusiers reliques qui sont escripts alentour desusdits tableaux et mesmement de la vraye croix et de luille de la benoite virge marie miz en un esteuf fait de soye.”

164 Rey, “Les réverbérations,” 104. Rey claims it was essentially diluted chalk.


167 Jeffrey Hamburger, Nuns as Artists: the Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 126. He notes that the Latin noun “heart,” or “cor” came from the verb
The Virgin’s whiteness may have triggered the thought of Mary’s milk for Margaret, and aided in her meditation on Mary’s multiple significances and her spiritual vision. People in the late Middle Ages were accustomed to images of the lactating Virgin. From the time of the early church, the Virgin’s milk was linked to the powers of Christ’s saving Incarnation. In the apocryphal *Odes of Solomon*, written before the third century, Mary describes Christ’s conception: “A cup of milk was offered to me: and I drank it in the sweetness of the delight of the Lord.” Milk was always recognized as life-giving. According to medieval physiological science, milk was a transmuted form of the mother’s blood, the essence of human life. A mother gave her blood, her life, to her child. Thus, Mary’s milk bore many material and spiritual meanings for medieval people: it symbolized her humanity, with which she enfleshed the Son of God. It also inspired *imitatio Mariae*, that is, for the devout to give birth to Christ spiritually. Indeed, her breast is shown round as a wafer in a miniature from the fourteenth century; in a gesture of offering, she presents the sacrificial Host to the viewer (figure 28). This special milk could spiritually nourish people, emphasizing a common brotherhood and familial connections between the devout and the divine. It delivered the grace that

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168 Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 114, 120.

169 Warner, 196-203, Rubin, *Mother*, 211, and Bynum, “The Body of Christ,” 424. While Warner describes several images, as well as the rise and fall of images of the lactating Virgin from the early to late Middle Ages, Bynum summarizes the topic’s popularity, stating it is one of the most iconic in all Christian art.

170 Warner, 195. Warner describes lactating mother images having an long, pre-Christian past. She suggests that images of the Isis nursing her young influenced those of Mary.


sustained the Incarnation. In parallel fashion, Mary’s milk and the Eucharist fed the soul.\textsuperscript{174} In fact, a belief in Mary’s powers of intercession and healing led to many extraordinary relics and miracles.\textsuperscript{175} Mary’s favor was so desirable that people sought to communicate with her via relics, so that she in turn could communicate to her son on their behalf.

Margaret’s breviary may be part of an early fifteenth century movement which stresses Mary’s connection with the Eucharist. \textit{The Virgin and Child before a Firescreen} and the \textit{Mérode Altarpiece} are replete with Eucharistic imagery. In \textit{The Virgin and Child before a Firescreen}, the Madonna presents Christ as the consecrated Host.\textsuperscript{176} She takes on priestly duties while simultaneously proffering her own mercy in the symbol of her open breast being directed toward the viewer. In the \textit{Mérode Altarpiece}, depicting the Annunciation, the artist creates a direct link between the Incarnation and the Eucharist by painting many liturgical objects at this event, including the piscina with which a priest washes his hands, and the Angel Gabriel wears a deacon’s stole, white alb, and amice.

\textsuperscript{174} Bynum, \textit{Holy Feast}, 271, and Warner, 190, 197-198. Warner particularly discusses the power of the Virgin’s Milk. The general anxiety of the late Middle Ages credited Mary’s milk with wisdom and the promise of paradise. The milk’s power was so great, it could lead to mystical visions. For example, the Blessed Paula of Florence, an anchorite, received the gift of a vision of the Virgin’s milk. More than merely seeing it, however, the influential Cistercian monk, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, received a taste of it while reciting the \textit{Ave Maris Stella} before a statue of the Virgin in the church of St. Vorles at Châtillon-sur-Seine. When he said the words, “\textit{Monstra esse matrem} (Show thyself a mother)”, Mary appeared to him, pressed her breast, and let three drops of milk fall into his lips. This mystical vision played on the characteristically Christian interplay between the heavenly and the terrestrial, the spiritual and the material. The Virgin’s milk allowed the common man a passage to the beyond.\textsuperscript{175} Warner, 200. Many shrines throughout Christendom possessed phials reputedly containing Mary’s milk. She also states that it miraculously appeared at times, liquefying on some feastdays.\textsuperscript{176} Lane, 4. The connections between food, the Eucharist, and Mary go deeper, giving Mary priestly duties. Lorne Campbell, in Baker, Christopher and Tom Henry, Ed. \textit{The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue}, London: National Gallery Publications, 1995, 244, says the chalice is a 19\textsuperscript{th} century restoration and probably not an accurate reflection of whatever was in the spot originally.
around his neck. The breviary’s illumination predates these works, demonstrating a possibly reflecting the beginning of the growing popularity of the connections between Mary and the eucharistic sacrifice. This illumination is distinct from these paintings, which transfer the setting from the church to the home. While it too invites a wide exegesis, some of its allusions are subtler, making for a more intricate contemplation of dogma, as well as more active ritualistic and liturgical participation by the viewer.

Similar to the change in emphasis from Marian to Christocentric altarpieces in Siena, there is a change in art of the North. The tradition of Marian altarpieces continues, especially in prayer book images. However, she will not long be depicted so blatantly in connection the context of the Eucharist. Considered too vulgar, the humble, lactating Virgin once again takes up her crown and throne by the late fifteenth century.\(^\text{178}\)

\(^{177}\) Lane, 42-43.
\(^{178}\) Warner, 203.
Chapter 11: Incarnational Piety, Margaret, and Contemporary Female Patrons

In her study of female patronage of manuscripts and stained-glass windows in the high Middle Ages, Madeline Caviness argues that men frequently chose the subjects of images to which courtly women were continuously exposed in the fourteenth century.¹⁷⁹ Not only were women subject to men’s decisions, their identity was connected that of their spouses, children, or family in general, as Wijsman notes.¹⁸⁰ Images of the Virgin could be used to control females by presenting often conflicting models of humility, virginity, and motherhood. Indeed, Margaret Miles dates this subjugation to the end of the first century, when itinerant preachers and laymen excluded women from leadership roles in the church; however, she claims women found means for self-definition within these boundaries, such as by adopting masculine characteristics and simultaneously rejecting feminine ones, as when female saints’ denied the seductive power of long hair, associated with feminine sexuality, by pinning it up or veiling it, or by re-writing the

¹⁷⁹ Caviness, 140. This trend begins in the thirteenth century and climaxes in the fourteenth, in which time many books of hours were wedding gifts from husbands to wives, such as that of Jeanne d’Evreux. This trend reflects a change in attitude and purpose in books made “for” and “against” women, as she says, since abbesses and queens exercised considerable power over the production of their books in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.
¹⁸⁰ Wijsman, 134. Wijsman states that a married woman was first and foremost seen as a spouse. Hence, studies by Susan Groag Bell, Anne-Marie Légaré, and Allison Stones correctly attribute women’s patronage and agency in book-making by studying coats of arms, ex libris, mottoes, badges, and monograms. See footnote 9.
creation myth as Hildegard of Bingen does.\textsuperscript{181} Reaching a similar conclusion when studying women’s role in production, Caviness concludes that in miniatures in which women are central to the narrative, whether allegorical figures or historical ones, women may have showed autonomy in the illustration’s decision-making. Such images include a prominent representation of Mary at Pentecost and in the Tree of Jesse, and a ruling woman appropriating the imperial convention of receiving books. One sees the Queen Mother Emma-Aelfgifu receiving a book from a kneeled male on folio 1 verso in the British Library’s Additional Manuscript 33241. Indeed, Margaret satisfies Caviness’ assertion that women did not use art to subvert the hierarchical gender system, which empowered them in a certain way.\textsuperscript{182} She uses the system for her own advantage.

Andrea Pearson argues that many of the books she studied, which were made for privileged women at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the time of Margaret’s breviary, depict a common devotion to the Eucharist; she also concludes that many books belonging to men depict a devotion to the Virgin and Child, a devotion men borrow from books made for women a century earlier. Men copied images, such as that of a historiated initial on folio 39 in the Hours of Jeanne de Navarre before the Virgin and Child, which Christ smiles and reaches out to the kneeling Jeanne, from his mother’s


\textsuperscript{182} Caviness, 113, 117, 127, 143, 140. For example, the Psalter of the anchoress Christina of Markyate was likely made for her. It directed her to value her chastity and life as a virgin; however, she and her nuns made corrections to the book, signaling the complexity of determining book ownership and production, 107-113.
enthroned and enthroning lap. Like Caviness, Pearson notes that patriarchy denied females positions of privilege in her studies of gender in the Burgundian court in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Consequently, women commissioned prayer books to emulate monastic prayer practices, knowing that these books and practices could lead to spiritual knowledge directly from heavenly figures, outside of a priest’s direct guidance. Through their production and inclusions, including portraits, books allowed women to create powerful identities and autonomy in and through religion. Thus, these books challenge and negotiate gender roles and boundaries. In particular, in fifteenth century illuminations which contain men and women, the women take the privileged role.

Using Bynum’s argument, Pearson argues that Incarnational piety lies at the heart of late medieval female devotion among the laity. She proposes that females used the Hours as a way to express their devotion to Christ, particularly to his humanity. These included images of the Host, and the Annunciation, in which Mary’s role was to beget Christ; devotion to Mary was explicitly secondary to that to Christ. In fact, Pearson notes that the images prefacing the Matins in the Little Office of the Virgin Mary often are populated with an image of the female book owner and an enthroned Madonna holding the Christ child, in order to focus on the relationship between the owner and Christ.

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183 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. n.a. lat. 3145. She again appears before the enthroned Madonna and Child on folio 122 verso, though here, the mother and child gaze intently at each other rather than at Jeanne.

184 Pearson, 65-89, 25, 56, 59, 388, 66, 58. Bonne of Luxembourg, Catherine of Valois, Jeanne de Navarre, and Jeanne d’Évreux, all women of the fourteenth century, demonstrate a Marian devotion. In contrast, she claims woman of the fifteenth century, such as Mary of Burgundy and Margaret of York, demonstrate a markedly Christocentric devotion. She refers to [Ms.] in which Mary of Burgundy looks down at her prayer book; integrated within, there is a small, framed scene in which a male devout is subordinate to Margaret of York, whose focus is on her interaction with Christ, sitting on his enthroned mother. The Virgin Mary underscores Christ’s importance by serving as an altar for him.

185 Pearson, 35-41, 66-88.
Underscoring her argument, the Christ Child does reach out or even speaks to the kneeling, painted women in many images from this time. For example, Christ extends his left hand to touch Isabelle of Cloncy’s right hand, while he blesses her with his right hand as she kneels at her prie-dieu, holding an open book, on folio 3 verso in her book of hours, Walters 89. Christ extending a banderole to the female with his loving words, such as on folio 19 verso in the Hours of Margaret of Cleves, now Ms. LA 148 in Lisbon’s Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; he’s written, “Pater adveniat regnum tuum fiat.”

Pearson also argues that female patrons followed the long-held convention of panel diptychs placed on the altar during mass when extending these images over two pages. Thus, by using an altarpiece convention, the patron desired to act like the priest and re-incarnate Christ in her mind and heart. For example, both Catherine of Valois in her breviary from before 1346, and an elegantly dressed circa 1415 woman, kneel with joined palms and eyes gazing at the Christ Child, who simultaneously holds on to his mother and extends his right hand toward the opposite page; the latter was painted by the Master of the Humilities (figure 29).

In contrast to the devotional images of other wealthy women, Margaret’s illumination does not include her, as noted previously. Ironically, without her, the image becomes timeless while the represented ritual becomes grounded in each experience of its

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186 We see similar semiotic device on folio 181 verso in a psalter Humphrey de Bohun had made for his daughter, Mary, now Bodleian Ms. Auct. D. 4.4, and with Marguerite of Orleans, in her book of hours, on folio 25, from about 1430: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. 115613. An indentified woman is similarly scintillated at Christ’s outstretched hand, on folio 153 verso, at the introduction of the Fifteen Joys of the Virgin, in the Walters W.94, a book of hours.

187 Pearson, 38.
meditation. Neither depicting a female devout nor downplaying ecclesiastical authority, Margaret’s illumination may appear to argue against the movement towards female empowerment which Pearson presents. More than challenging society’s negations regarding her gender, Margaret astutely uses both genders’ social norms to her advantage. We can clearly see this in the illumination of a key moment of engagement with Christ and the highlight of the Eucharistic liturgy. Though the elevation traditionally highlights men’s privileged status in the figure of the priest and male-gendered Host in both liturgical practice and its depictions, Margaret also elevates the singularly female characteristic of giving birth, through the prominent position of the Marian statue. No matter how many times a priest speaks the consecratory words, he will never truly incarnate the divine himself. The inclusion of a priest emphasizes the Virgin’s power; she contributed her flesh, whereas the priest is not. Yet, he does not merely follow conventions. If the objective were to glorify only Christ and delimit the priest’s power, the artist could have depicted only the Host, such as in the Blessed Sacrament. Instead, the priest is intentionally placed in the middle, under the corner’s vertical axis line. Yet, he, too, recognizes Mary’s ultimate sovereignty. He holds up the Host in a way that signals its ultimate origin. The viewer would consider her real challenge is not being in control of her soul’s dwelling place. Thus, she meditatively relied on the most powerful representatives of both genders as intercessors to secure her a place in heaven.

Instead, Margaret’s likeness may appear in a key moment of Christ’s life. She may be the woman reading and presumably praying from a book in the initial just under

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188 Haeger, October 12, 2012.
the Crucifixion on folio 333 verso in her winter portion of the breviary (figure 15). We may assume from her tomb, once housed in the Chartreuse de Champmol, that she was blond, and wore her hair in braids, upturned around her ears, as in the initial. Margaret may seem to satisfy Pearson’s claim that women’s devotion were largely Christocentric, and Bynum’s claim that women in particular were devoted to Christ’s humanity and corporeality, but her devotion was more intricately complex.
Chapter 12: Mary, Margaret, and Other Women in the Breviary

While Margaret’s theme in her illumination is incarnational piety as with the women Bynum and Pearson studied, Margaret’s devotion is not strictly Christocentric but equally Marian. Mary is a central, if not the key, figure in an image ostensibly dedicated to the Eucharist. The illumination following the *Elevation* again asserts Mary’s presence throughout the prayer book. The Virgin’s humble, undecorated appearance in the *Elevation* contrasts with the Virgin and Child sculpture in the very next illumination in the breviary, which Millard Meiss labels as “Anna and Eli” (figure 30). The architectural frame is covered in gold, not in white stone. Though this statue of the Virgin and Child is also mostly monochrome, there are significant distinguishing features. In this miniature, she is crowned in gold, alluding to her majestic role as Queen of Heaven and Earth. Christ’s hair is also golden, but he wears no crown. His gesture of holding onto his mother’s neck, though not caressing it, indicates his dependence on her. The artist has even added the extra touch and expense of painting the Virgin’s robe white, while their flesh remaining the color of the parchment perhaps to further indicate his

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189 Bynum studies the works of Gertrude of Helfta, Mechtilde of Hackeborn, and Julian of Norwich in close detail throughout her books, such as *Jesus as Mother*, 170-262, and Pearson, 35-60, studies the works of women from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Bonne of Luxembourg, Catherine of Valois, Jeanne de Navarre, and Jeanne d’Évreux, all women from the fourteenth century who demonstrate a Marian devotion (35-41). In contrast, she claims woman of the fifteenth century, such as Mary of Burgundy and Margaret of York, demonstrate a markedly Christocentric devotion (41-60, particularly 58).

190 Meiss, French Painting, 327. He likely attributes the figures based on the feast day service in which the artist placed the illumination.
Incarnation and their single substance. The Virgin also holds a rose, one of her
traditional attributes and symbol of her heavenly throne. The devotional *Elevation*
illumination focused on the Virgin’s role as a mother; here, we have the Queen.
Margaret easily could affiliate herself with the Virgin in both these capacities.

This illumination depicts Anna and Eli in garb contemporary to Margaret’s time.
The biblical Anna grieved that she could not bear a child to her husband, Elcanna.
Upon hearing the sincerity of Anna’s pleas to have a child whom she will dedicate to
God, Eli, the priest in the temple, tells her she would be granted her request. Samuel is
soon born, the first of many children. When Anna goes to the temple to dedicate
Samuel to God, her praise anticipates Mary’s Magnificat, using dichotomies to express
God’s magnificence: “My heart rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my
God…The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth and he exalteth.”

According to the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Anna prefigures the Virgin just as
Samuel prefigures Christ. The latter were both were begotten contrary to nature; both
were offered to God by their mothers; and both suffered at the hands of their peoples.
Anna paved the way for Mary, whose great sacrifice earns her the role of Queen of
heaven.

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191 Rey, “Princely Pieties,” 310. Rubin, *Mother*, 307, even notes that the “magnificence and potency of the
crowned Mary became an attractive adjunct to priestly power.”
192 “1st Book of Kings,” *Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible*, Accessed August 10, 2011,
http://www.drbo.org/chapter/09001.htm. Here, he is called “Heli.”
193 “1st Book of Kings,” *Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible*, Accessed August 10, 2011,
http://www.drbo.org/chapter/09016.htm 1 Kings 16:13 Samuel later anoints David king of Judah; David is
the Virgin and Christ’s ancestor.
194 “1st Book of Kings,” *Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible*, Accessed August 10, 2011,
http://www.drbo.org/chapter/09001.htm 1 Kings 2:1, 6.
The play between past and present here communicates divinity’s capacity to surpass nature’s limitations, while reflecting a typically medieval all-encompassing view of history. It links fifteenth century dress with the Old Testament, in an atemporal liturgical scene. Inserting Mary’s presence in an Old Testament scene expresses divine, ahistorical existence, on par with Christ’s divinity. It justifies belief in her predestined immaculate conception and role in the Incarnation. Interestingly, a similar figure listens to St. John preaching, on folio 184 (figure 31). She again appears when attentively hearing a bishop and St. James the Greater (figures 32-33). Dressed in the same dress and similar headdress, she is visually linked to the once barren Anna. Because of the visual repetition of this figure hearing John speak about Christ’s enfleshing and his eucharistic, eternal presence, there may be a subtle underlining Incarnational theme in the breviary. The woman in red has become a transitional figure between elements in the work and the viewer, as well as between the Old and New Law. As with Rogier van der Weyden’s altarpieces, time is supple, with “perpetually charged immimence of encounter[s]” between religious texts and the contemporary viewer. However, contrary to in Van der Weyden’s works, there is no spatial buffer between her and the other figures, despite their differing time periods. Underscoring the compression of time, all figures wear contemporary garb. This repeated female figure may serve as a model

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196 Acres, 429, 423. Acres particularly speaks about Rogier van der Weyden’s *The Columba Altarpiece*. As the last Magus may represent Charles the Bold of Burgundy, Van der Weyden characteristically creates spatial buffers between him and the narrative’s historical figures through his awkward placement apart from the other two Magi, and by his neither holding nor touching his gift. Thus, Charles, even if in the guise of a magus, would not appear to anachronistically or disrespectfully be near and serve a role in Christ’s first presentation.
for dedicated study for a female patron; Margaret can easily step into these didactic images via the timeless woman.

In the Duke de Berry’s *Belles Heures*, the *Elevation* comes just before images focusing on Christ and his passion, including *The Exaltation of the Cross*. In Margaret’s breviary, it is placed after *The Ascension*, an uplifting image of Christ’s power to surpass natural limitations, and make anything possible (figure 4). Below the miniature and in between the text is a young woman holding the coats of arms of both the Duke of Burgundy and Margaret, who sits on a circular patch of flourishing greenery. The choice of placement of a personification beneath the representation of the Ascension may have suggested to Margaret’s contemporary viewers that though Christ ascended, he left the Duke and Duchess in charge of the Earth. Coats of arms were a form of asserting presence, while alive or dead, as well as one’s social standing.\(^{197}\) Through this image, Margaret may assert her and her husband’s divine right to rule, as well as God’s favor. This breviary may have been made around the time that her husband killed the Louis, Duke of Orléans, when she reportedly feared for John’s salvation.\(^{198}\) Here, she has created a political image reinforcing his virtue. She also places her coat of arms just before the *Elevation of the Host*, which was viewed as “pregnant with salvation” by women.\(^{199}\) She does what she can for her and her family’s salvation, while in the familiar setting of the chapel, a liminal space, where she can experience the best both worlds can


\(^{198}\) Meiss, *French Painting*, 325 and Warren, 18, 20, and 31. Warren claims that patronage of the “material [provides spiritual] guarantees” and that the patronage of devotional and prayer books “ensured the salvation” of loved ones’ souls.

\(^{199}\) Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 236.
Certainly, “the religious is political, and the political is religious” when using devotional works to project one’s views. ²⁰⁰

Chapter 13: Conclusion

The *Elevation of the Host* clearly shows a devotion to Christ’s humanity. What makes this image so remarkable is how it aligns the Host with the Incarnation. Indeed, my visual research indicates she is one of the first to innovatively do so. Yet, Mary and the priest are characters just as significant as Christ. Margaret’s eucharistic devotion is simultaneously both more intellectual and more practical than that of many other women, to whom Christ reaches out. Margaret is not portrayed intimately proximate to either divine figure. She may not have been interested in challenging gender stereotypes by denying clerics their presence and role in her works. Rather, the image summons Christ’s presence before one’s eyes, in a standard liturgical setting to decrease distractions. Thereby, it invites the performative presence of the viewer and a response to its political claims, by arranging for a spiritual communion.

What especially marks the difference between her devotion and that of the many females whom Pearson describes, is her sophisticated understanding of Mary’s role in the transubstantiation of a Host. The image relies on the church’s power system and pairs the function of the priest with one of Mary’s significance, that of intercessor. At this time, people clearly graced their altars with images of the Virgin: Mary is included in scenes of the mass, and in personal altars. Yet, in no other image of the elevation do we see a Marian statue at the time of the elevation. It is Mary’s gaze that would have engaged
Margaret, while her eyes would naturally have viewed the priest, at whom the axis lines point. It is not that reaching a vision of Christ is not her ultimate desire; rather, she uses the illumination to focus on her immediate vehicles to him. Her Marian devotion is closer to that of mendicant monks in the high Middle Ages, who used breviaries and internally fostered a devotion to Mary as mother, young girl, and mediatrix.  

The image not only relies on conventions, but in turn, may produce them. Her innovatively monochrome linkage between the Virgin and Host may support the controversial doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which the Church eventually recognized as truth. Aesthetically powerful, this chromatic connection may also contribute to the movement associating Mary with incarnational and sacrificial food, which would soon after blossom. For someone ever-fearful of her ultimate destiny, it is only natural that Margaret would have wanted to meditate on an illumination which stresses the enfleshing of Christ to save humanity.  

This illumination, like the Incarnation, has transformative abilities. Belting argues that images of the Crucifixion or the Madonna enthroned could evoke their presence. An image can evoke emotional responses, and provoke a contemplative exegesis that create historical, biblical, and theological connections in the viewer’s mind and heart. The *Elevation* illumination in Margaret’s breviary allows for such an

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exegesis through its emphasis on physical and mystical vision, on accessing the divine via the material, and by its performative progression through the ritualistic rites. The merging of these realms naturally plays with presences and absences.

Ultimately, Margaret’s image is about the liminal space between heaven and earth accessible to her. She uses the figures who step between these two worlds, Christ, the priest, and the Virgin Mary, to aid her in passing through this space in the afterlife through their intercession and example. Though she experienced fear of her unknown fate, she must also have delighted in the process. Indeed, the form of her illumination of the *Elevation* provides a further means of experiencing the afterlife while yet on earth, through meditation. Not only does Margaret experience the sense of stepping through higher stages of contemplation to reach a more complete understanding and possible vision of God; she sees an actual passage before her eyes in the dual-natured Host; Marian statue; opaque window; and even the figure of the priest, validating the veracity and possibility of the passage. She hopes to experience heaven while on earth, but also for eternity.
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