

12-1981

Adoration of the Magi

La Salle University Art Museum

Caroline Wistar
La Salle University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#), and the [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

La Salle University Art Museum and Wistar, Caroline, "Adoration of the Magi" (1981). *Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues*. 83.
http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/exhibition_catalogues/83

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the La Salle University Art Museum at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.

ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Selections from the Susan Dunleavy Collection
of Biblical Literature

La Salle College Art Gallery

December 11, 1981 - January 20, 1982

Cover: Star (Octaedron Elevatum Vacuum)
Woodcut from Divina proportione by
Fra Luca Pacioli, Venice, 1509
Metropolitan Museum of Art

The star is the traditional symbol of Epiphany.
As a source of enlightenment, the use of this
symbol dates back to classical times when the
rising of a star signified the birth of a ruler.

INTRODUCTION

Although Matthew 2:1-12 is the only direct Biblical account of the Magi or Wise Men, the episode was, down through the centuries, considered to have been prophesied in the Psalms and in Isaiah. Modern exegeses, however, are inclined to think that these Old Testament illusions have been combined as a theological reflection or midrash in Matthew's gospel to make the point that the Messiah was recognized by the gentiles, but not by His own people. Artists elaborated upon these Biblical accounts by drawing upon such noted medieval apocryphal writings as The Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine, The Evangelium of Pseudo-Matthew, and The Arabian Gospel of the Childhood of Christ.

The commemoration of this event is called 'Epiphany' the manifestation of God in Christ to the gentiles. The January 6th celebration, 'The Feast of the Epiphany' (its eve is Twelfth Night) dates back to the end of the 4th century in the west. In the east the feast dates back to the 3rd century and commemorates the manifestation of Christ's divinity, not only to the Magi, but also through His baptism and miracle at Cana.

According to legend, the Magi were Persian astrologers known for their ability to prophesy by reading the stars. To stress the universality of the Christian faith, medieval writers depicted the Magi as representing the three ages of man and the three then known continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. The gifts they offer are symbolic of the divine attributes of Christ. Caspar, the black Ethiopian, represents youth and offers myrrh (an herb used in embalming), symbolic of His death to come. Balthazar represents middle age, and offers frankincense, symbolizing divinity;

Melchior, usually seen kneeling before the Christ Child, represents old age, and offers gold, a symbol of royalty.

During early Christian and medieval times (5th-13th centuries), the concern in the visual arts was to stress the divine nature of Christ. Therefore, a hierarchical composition resulted around the central theme of the event, The Adoration of the Magi. The Magi pay homage usually in a rigid line at the side and below the Mother and Child who are enthroned above. The Child raises His hand in blessing the kneeling Magus. By the 10th century, the royal status of the Child was even more clearly defined when the Magi came to be regarded as Kings. It should be noted that the popularity and noted expansion in art and literature of the Magi theme in the 12th century is partially due to the discovery of their relics near Milan, Italy, and their transferral to the shrine in Cologne Cathedral, Germany, in 1164.

As with the theme of the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt, discussed in previous La Salle Gallery exhibitions, the Magi theme, until the 13th century, was often treated in a synoptic fashion. Here a number of major episodes associated with the Nativity (Annunciation, Adoration of the Shepherds, Presentation of Christ in the Temple, etc.) and/or subsidiary Magi events (the appearance of the star to the Magi, their appearance before Herod, the Journey, and the warning in a dream not to return to Herod) were depicted simultaneously in one work of art. (See examples in book reproductions on counter in Print Study Room).

From the end of the 13th century onwards, the central theme alone, The Adoration of the Magi, received the major emphasis, as evidenced in this exhibition. Subsidiary events were seldom illustrated except in

popular folk art such as creche scenes, Christmas cards, and the like.

During the Renaissance (14th-16th centuries) a radical transformation in the representation of the Adoration of the Magi took place. The emphasis was now on the expression of Christ's humanity, rather than on His mystical, divine nature. Natural renditions of the Mother, the Child, and the Kings were recorded in a simple, but realistic stable setting within a life-like context. The religious event now takes place in the realm of the observable world rather than in the religious imagination. The Magi or Kings become individualized with distinct expressions, varied postures, and clearly represent the different ages of man. (See especially prints by Dürer, No. 3, van Leyden, No. 4, and Goltzius, No. 5).

In the 17th century, Baroque artists, such as Rubens (see No. 9), often preferred a more dramatic setting, and thus expanded the retinue who witnessed the Adoration to include a greater variety of characters. The Magi themselves are now dressed in exotic oriental garb and are often in a state of theatrical gesture.

"And when they were come into the house,
they saw the young child with Mary his
mother, and fell down, and worshipped
him: and when they had opened their
treasures, they presented unto him gifts:
gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

As we read the sparse Biblical account and view this exhibition, we are reminded once again how indebted we are to the visual arts, as in the illustrations of the Susan Dunleavy Collection, for enriching our understanding of the Biblical heritage.

Reference:

Gertrud Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art,
Volume 1, Translated by Janet Seligman. (Greenwich,
Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, Ltd.



PRINT STUDY ROOM

1. Anonymous (Late 15th century)
Adoration of the Magi
Woodcut 66-G-74
Given by Lessing J. Rosenwald

2. Martin Schongauer (c. 1445/50-1491), German
Adoration of the Magi
Engraving
Lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Charles M. Lea Collection

3. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1511), German
Adoration of the Magi
Woodcut 75-G-514

4. Lucas van Leyden (1494-1538), Dutch
Adoration of the Magi
Engraving
Lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Charles M. Lea Collection

5. Hendrik Goltzius (1588-1617), Dutch

"Adoration of the Magi" 1594
from The Life of the Virgin Series

Engraving

Lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Charles M. Lea Collection

Goltzius was directly influenced by van Leyden's print of the Adoration (No. 4) when executing this composition, especially the figure of the Virgin and Child. Their somewhat awkward 'mannerist' pose bears relation to that of the Madonna and Child in the La Salle painting, The Flight into Egypt by van Scorel, in the Renaissance room.

6. Anonymous

After an engraving by Robert van Audenaerd
(1663-1743), Flemish
After a painting by Carlo Maratta (1625-1713),
Flemish

Adoration of the Magi

Red chalk drawing

73-D-53

7. Carlo Maratta (1625-1713), Italian

Adoration of the Magi

Etching

Lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Charles M. Lea Collection

8. School of Ludovico Carracci (1555-1619), Italian

Adoration of the Magi

Etching

Lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Charles M. Lea Collection

9. Attributed to Frans Francken, the Younger, (1581-1642), Flemish
Copy after Peter Paul Rubens' painting, now in the
Musée de Lyon, France

Adoration of the Magi

Oil on canvas 79-P-230

Given by Mansfield W. Williams

Francken was a pupil of Rubens. In the 17th century it was a common practice for pupils to copy or make versions of their master's works, as the demand for these paintings often was greater than the supply.

10. Caspar Luyken (1672-1718), Dutch

Adoration of the Magi

Engraving from Historiae Celebriores
Veteris et Novi... printed and published
by Christopher Weigel, Nuremburg, 1708

80-B-25

11. Unknown (17th century), German

Adoration of the Shepherds and Magi

Etching 76-B-1 (g)

12. Leonard Burnford (1681-1715), English

Etching and engraving 76-B-1 (1)

13. Attributed to Hans Brosamer (c. 1506-1554), German

Adoration of the Magi

Woodcut 78-B-1 (f)

14. Romeyn de Hooge (1645-1708), Dutch

Adoration of the Magi

Engraving from Histoire du Vieux
et du Nouveau Testament by M. Basnage,
Amsterdam, Chez Pierre Mortier,
Libraire, 1706

77-B-87

Display Cases in Hall

15. Evangelia und Epistolen
Strasbaurg, Greuninger, 1513
Anonymous woodcut illustration

80-B-322

The plenarium, in Germany, denotes a popular book, which gives the German translation of the Gospels and Epistles for the Sundays and festivals of the entire year, together with a short exposition.

16. Biblia Sacra
Lugduni, Gulielmus Rouilius, 1588
The Louvain edition of the Vulgate, edited by
Johannes Hentenius, Lovanij, 1547

77-B-240

Sanctioned by the Theological faculty of Louvain and protected by imperial privilege, the Louvain edition of the Bible (for the most part a re-print of R. Stephanus' Bible of 1538-40) became the authorized edition of the Vulgate until publication of the Sixtine Bible in 1590.

17. Biblia Sacra
Edited by Robert Estienne (Robert Stephanus)
Published by Jean de Tournes, Lyons, 1554
First Octavo edition

77-B-24

The first de Tournes Bible to contain 198 woodcut illustrations by Bernard Salomon, called "Le Petit Bernard", a popular painter at the court of Henry 11 of France. These woodcuts had first appeared for the Old Testament in Claude Paradin's Quadrins Historiques, 1553 and the rest in a French New Testament of the same year. The Biblical text of Robert Estienne, an outstanding French printer and scholar, greatly influenced later texts, and became the foundation of the official Roman Vulgate.

18. Nouvum Testamentum
 Edited by Johannes Steelsius
 Printed by Jean Latiji, Antwerp, 1555
 Pocket edition illustrated with 73 anonymous woodcuts.
 77-B-45
19. Adnotationes et Meditationes
In Evangelia Quae in Sacro Sancto Millae Sacrificio Toto
Anno Leguntur
 By Hieronymus Natali
 Published and printed in the office of Christopher Plantin,
 Antwerp, 1607
 77-B-48

Illustrated with engravings primarily by the Wierix brothers: Hieronymus (c. 1553-1619), Anthonie (c. 1552-1624), and Johan (1549- ?), Flemish. It has been said that Christopher Plantin is perhaps more widely regarded than any other early publisher-printer with the exception of Gutenberg.

20. The Holy Bible (Authorized King James version)
 Printed by John Bill and Christopher Barker, London, 1669
 Engraving by Frederick-Hendrick van den Hove
 (c. 1628-1695), Dutch
 77-B-11
21. Katolicka Biblia Ilustrowana
Polish Catholic Bible, c. 1913
 Starego i nowego testamentu
 pod wspotudziatem Wielebnych Panow
 80-B-315
22. The Doves Press Bible, 1903-1905
Volume II Containing the Old Testament and the New Translated
 out of the original tongues by special command of His
 Majesty King James the First and now reprinted with the
 text revised...and edited by...F. H. Scrivener.
 Hammersmith, England
 Limited edition: 500 copies
 77-B-74 (2)
23. The Holy Gospel According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
 Editiones Officinae Bodini, Verona, July 1962
 80-B-302

The woodcuts were recut by Bruno Bramanti after the original illustrations by Bartolomeo di Giovanni for "Epistole et Evangelii et Lection: Vulgari in lingua Toschona," 1495

24. The Doré Bible Gallery
Philadelphia, Henry Altemus
- Wood engraving illustrations by Gustave Dore,
(1833-1883), French 81-B-422
25. Index Picturarum Chalcographicarum Historiam vetis et Novi Testamenti
- Engraving by Philipp Andreas Kilian (1714-1759), after
a painting by Paul Veronese, (1528-1588), Italian
80-B-252
26. La Sainte Bible
Contenant, Le Vieil et Le Nouveau Testament
Published and printed in Paris, 1703
- Illustrated with engravings and etchings by
Gerard Jollian, (--d. 1683), French 78-B-95
27. "The Wisemen are Warned of God in a Dream"
A Complete History of the Holy Bible, Vol. III
by Lawrence Howel, London, 1718
- Engravings by J. Sturt, (1658-1730), English
77-B-88 (3)
28. "Journey of the Magi"
The Waste Land and other Poems
by T. S. Eliot
Faber and Faber, London
11th edition, 1968. (Original edition 1922)
80-B-421
29. For Lancelot Andrewes
Essays on Style and Order
by T. S. Eliot,
London, Faber and Gwyer
- Lent by Br. Daniel Burke

30.

XCVI

Sermons

By the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God,
Lancelot Andrews; Late Lord Bishop of Winchester
5th edition. London. Printed for George Sawbridge...1661
80-B-329

Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), a high church learned Anglican theologian, was Bishop of Chichester (1605), Ely (1609), Winchester (1619), and royal chaplain to English monarchs (Elizabeth I - Charles I). He worked on the King James version of the Bible, was a noted favourite of King James I, and was perhaps most widely remembered for his sermons. T. S. Eliot (1855-1965) was greatly influenced by these sermons and wrote a criticism and biography on Andrewes in 1928.

31.

The Devotions of Bishop Andrewes

Translated from the Greek

and Arranged Anew by John Henry Newman

New York, George H. Richmond & Co., 1897

Lent by Br. Daniel Burke

Caroline Wistar
Curator