

Transcription Exercise

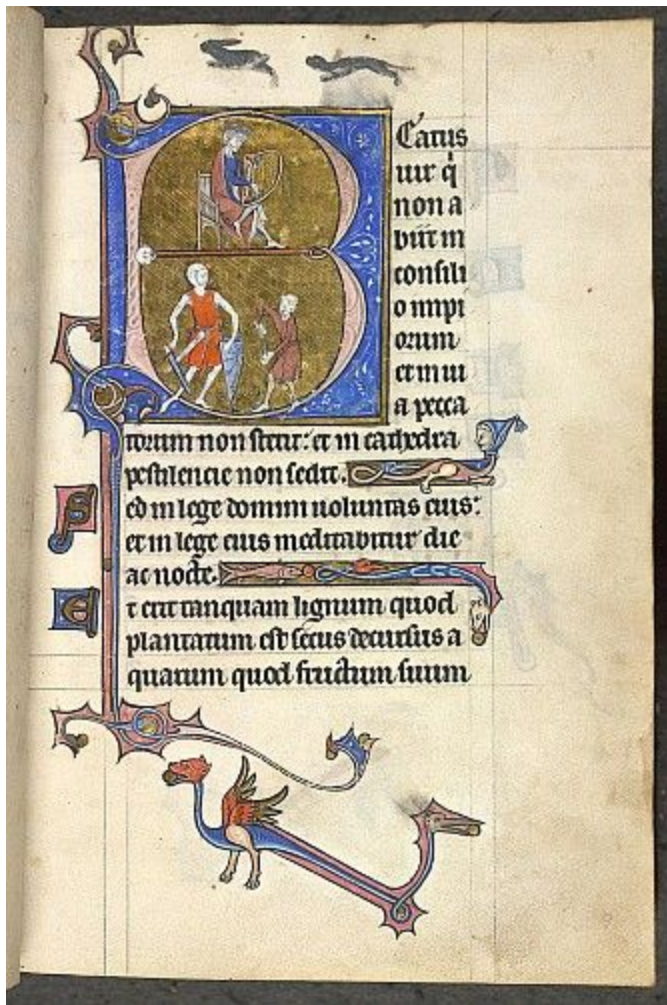
I have chosen 3 images from the book of psalms that appear in a French psalter listed as Yates-Thompson 18, ff.2-201 in the British Library catalogue.¹ These are psalm one, Beatus Vir; psalm 38, Dixi Custodiam and psalm 80, Exsultate Deo. Full size images with their texts have been inserted at the end of this essay.

The psalter includes a calendar and canticles. A calendar was often bound into psalters; it would identify the most important dates in the liturgical year, as well as saints' days. Canticles are songs of praise, using biblical or holy texts, but not the psalms, as their lyrics. The catalogue entry describes it as made in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, in France. Branner, who has attempted to identify manuscript workshops in mid thirteenth century France, suggests the artists are members of what he calls the Ste-Chapelle group; and the margins and line fillers as from the Guines atelier.² It is written in Latin and French, using Gothic script and is 215 x145mm in size. The psalter was probably made in Paris, but it is thought that it was intended to be used in Brittany because the Breton saints Melanius II, Corentinus and Maclovius are included. Its provenance is interesting. The British Library catalogue entry suggests it might have been owned by Henry VII, who lived in Brittany between 1471 – 1484. Henry VIII later owned the psalter)³

¹Detailed record for Yates Thompson 18, ff 2-20, British Library online catalogue, available at <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8139&CollID=58&NStart=18>

²Robert Branner, *Manuscript painting in Paris During the Reign of Saint. Louis: A Study of Styles* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977)

³British Library online catalogue



Psalm One – Beatus Vir

The psalm starts with the word 'Beatus', which is given an historiated letter B. Inside a square gilded frame, in the upper half of the 'B', King David sits, playing the harp. Below him, a younger David is seen confronting Goliath with his slingshot, while Goliath towers over him with a shield and a sword. This image of David confronting Goliath is probably the most famous story associated with the King.

There are two more small, decorated letters, an 'S' and an 'E', starting two lines of text. There is a partial border and in the top margin a dog chasing a rabbit. The base of the page shows an image of a hybrid, two-headed creature – a dragon – with round objects in each of its mouths. These are presumably berries from the berries shown in the curling decoration above it. There are two line fillers; one has a small hybrid with a

human head wearing a hat and a creature's head on the end of its tail. The other one has a fish with another hybrid, this time with an animal's head with a round object in it and a similar creature's head on the end of its tail. The colours used are blue, red and gold.

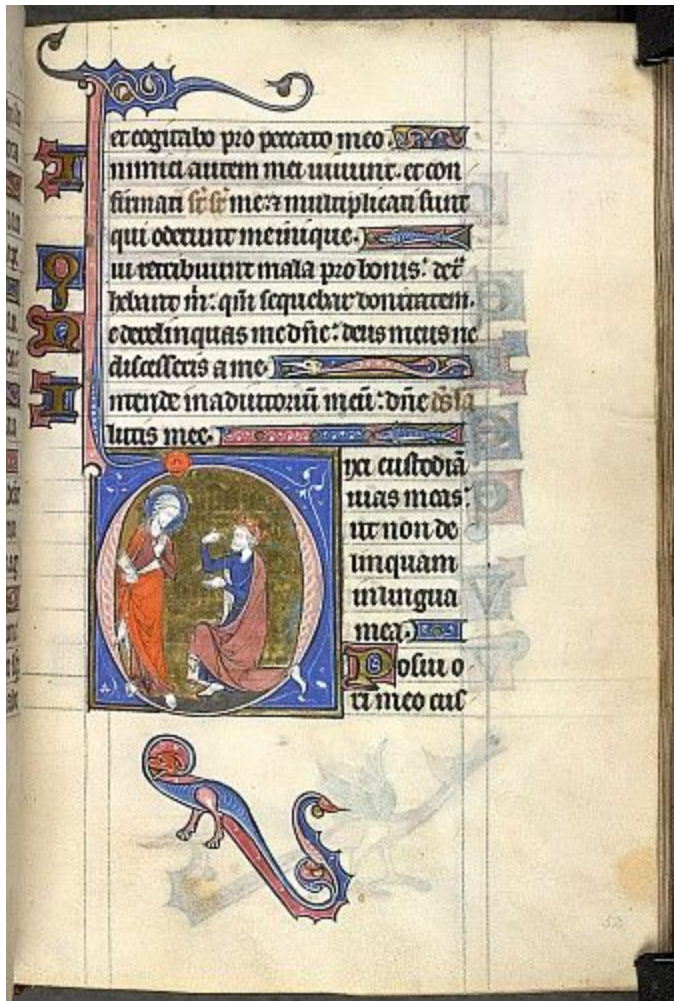
In the following transcriptions the following method has been employed: the layout of each psalm in the psalter has been followed, breaking lines where the original does and showing this with a red hyphen; abbreviations have been expanded, with the missing letters in round brackets. Where the manuscript form looks like 'u', it has been transcribed as such; if it looks like 'v', it has been transcribed as a 'v'. Capital letters have only been used where it is clear in the text that it should be a capital and any apparent punctuation has been included but no 'extra' punctuation has been put into the transcription. If the Latin appears wrong, the relevant letters have been highlighted in red.

Transcription of Psalm One

Beatus
uir q(u)i
non a-
biit in
consiili-
o impi-
orum
Et in ui-
a pecca-
torum non stetit: et in cathedra
pestilencie non sedit.
Sed in lege domini uoluntas eius:
et in lege eius in meditabitur die
ac nocte.
Et erit tanquam lignum quod
plantatum est secus decursus a-
quarum quod fructum suum

Translation of Psalm One

Blessed is the man who has ignored the advice of the impious and has left the way of sin and does not sit in the chair of pestilence but desires the law of the Lord and meditates on His law day and night. He is like a tree which hastens to water because his fruit ...



Psalm 52 - Dixi Custodiam

The page has an historiated initial D and there are 4 large initials on the left hand side, in gold, with red or blue backgrounds, in the margin - I, Q, N, I - outside of a decorative frame. At the base of the text is another large initial, P. The historiated initial shows a gilded framed miniature of King David, kneeling, pointing to his tongue as he looks up to Christ. Branner describes the figures in

the image as having 'thin figures, flowing draperies, willowy arms and long, scowling faces'.⁴ It is set on a square blue background, with the letter D outlined in what looks to be a pale pink and cream rope decoration; this has a red demon's head at the top of it. The blue background is outlined in gold. The page has a hybrid beast in the bottom margin, a cross between a dog's head and a dragon's tail.

Transcription of Psalm 52

et cogitato pro peccato meo.
Inimici autem mei uiuunt. Et con-
firmati (sun)t s(upe)r me: et multiplicati sunt
qui oderunt me unique.
Qui retribuunt mala pro bonis. det(ra)-
hebant m(ihi): q(uonia)m sequebar bonitatem.
Ne derelinquas me d(omi)ne; deus meus ne-
discesseris a me.
Intende in adiutorium(m) meu(m) d(omi)ne d(eu)s sa-
lutis mee.
Dixi custodia(m)
uias meas;
ut non de-
linquam
in lingua
mea. Possui o-
ro meo cus

Translation of Psalm 52

And I will reflect on my sins.
But my enemies live and are
stronger than me. They who hate me wrongfully have multiplied.
They that render evil for good have dragged me down, because I followed
goodness. Forsake me not, O Lord my God, do not depart from me. Attend unto

⁴ Branner, p.129

my help, O Lord, the God of my salvation. I have said that I will guard my ways and not be wanting in my tongue. I have set my mouth



Psalm 80 - Exsultate Deo

This page has an historiated letter E, which encloses a picture of King David playing the bells in a gold outlined frame. There are 5 illuminated letters throughout the text - S, B, Q, T and D. There is a fish line filler, another that shows two small monsters facing each other and a small one with a monster's head in it. The bas de page has a hybrid of a woman's head on a winged dragon, whose tail has another head at the end of it, eating something circular - possibly a fruit.

Transcription of Psalm 80

Adiutori nostro: iubila-
te deo jacob.
Sumite
psalmum et

date tympanum: psalterium iocundum cum cythara.
Buccinate in neomenia tuba: in insignia die solemnitatis vestrae
Quia praeceptum in Israel est; et iudiciu(m)
deo iacob.
Testimonium in Joseph posuit illud.
cum exirent de terra Egypti. linguam
quam non noverat audivit.
Divertit ab oneribus dorsum eius. Manus
eius in cophino servierunt.

Translation of Psalm 80

Sing unto the lord, our help. Praise the God of Jacob. Begin the psalm and take the drum and the pleasant cythera. Blow the trumpet in the new moon for the sign of our solemn feast day, which is a command in Israel and the law of Jacob. He ordained a law in Joseph when he came out of Egypt and heard a language he did not understand. He has taken away the burden from his shoulders and has delivered his hands from the basket.

Due to the twenty first century plague of Covid 19, it has not been possible to go and look at this psalter so I have been limited in the pages I can look at to those online. These three pages have a rather elegant simplicity to them. They all show King David - hardly surprising, as he was thought to have written them. He has a variety of different aspects to his character - he is depicted as a simple shepherd, a king, a musician and a brave victor in his fight against Goliath. He was also an ancestor of Jesus, which would give him great authority. He is often shown playing an instrument - the harp is his attribute and he soothed Saul when he was distressed by playing his harp to him.⁵ Bells always have some kind of message - perhaps here they remind the reader of the message of this particular psalm to praise the Lord. The image of David and Goliath would surely have

⁵ I Samuel 16.23, Holy Bible

carried the message that with trust and faith in God, the righteous can overcome anything.

The image of David in the historiated initial of psalm 52 is interesting. David is kneeling before Christ, and pointing to his (David's) mouth. Savage has pointed out that King David appears frequently in the Index of Medieval Art database, and draws attention to the number of images that feature him pointing to his mouth or sticking out his tongue and pointing to that. She suggests that these images, often appearing in psalm 38 'suggest the speaking and offending capabilities of the tongue'.⁶ This is entirely plausible given the words of the psalm here; 'I have said that I will guard my ways and not be wanting in my tongue'.

At the bottom of each of the three pages from the BL psalter is a hybrid creature, half dragon half something else. The most interesting one is that on the page with psalm 80 - half dragon, half woman. She wears a barrette - a chin band - which is attached to a coif and her hair is worn in a net. She does not look particularly happy!

The question of the meaning and purpose of these weird marginalia has been considered by many authors.⁷ Perhaps worth noting, however, is Binski's assertion that in fact these marginalia were really about fun and amusement. He argues that the medieval age did not operate with the nineteenth and twentieth century binary opposites of good/bad; serious/frivolous etc, but rather saw things as all part of a whole. He argues that marginalia must be seen in the context of the medieval viewer; that they were often about wit, puns and humour, all part of a nonsense world made to create delight, which often directed the reader of the

⁶ Jessica Savage, David's Emoji, Index of medieval art, (25 February, 2019), available at <https://ima.princeton.edu/2019/02/25/davids-emoji/>

⁷ See for example, Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge*, (1995) Reaktion Books, London; Lillian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966), to name but two.

text to ask questions.⁸ However, it is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the fascinating question of what marginalia were all about.

On the 3rd December, 2015, Christies sold six leaves from an illuminated Bible thought to have been made in Paris c.1280-90, three of which had historiated initials. Christies described them as being in the style of the Ste.-Chapelle group. Their catalogue details stated that 'In previous discussions the style has been taken to correspond more closely with the 'Henry VIII' sub-group, active slightly later in the grouping, making a date for the present leaves of c.1280-90 most plausible.'⁹ One initial shows David in the waters, asking God to save him. Another page has a scribe's scribbles in the margin - one says 'habet' - he has; the other reads:

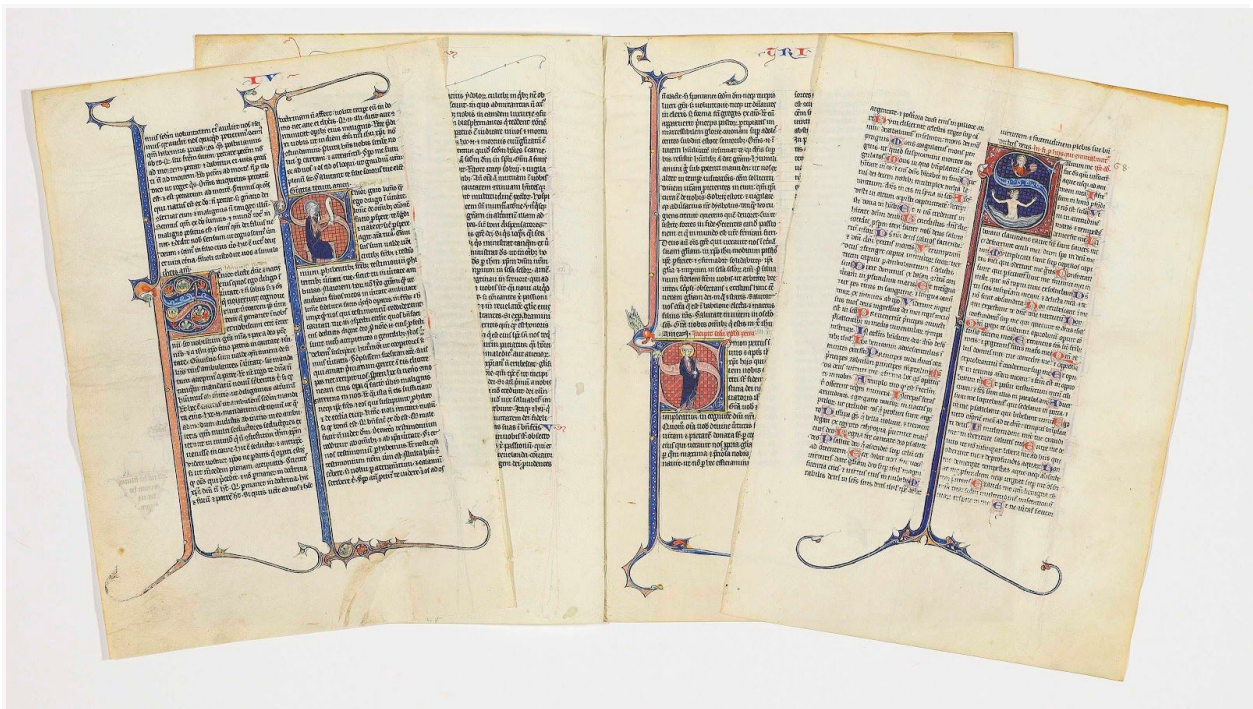
Q(u)i no(n) h(abe)t filium
dei non ha-
bet ui-
tam

He who does not have the son of God does not have life.

They appear to be corrections. (See p. 13 for the full size image.)

⁸ Paul Binski, *Images on the Edge*, Churches Conservation Trust talk, 11 June 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ChurchesConservationTrust/videos/1525458017636598> accessed 23 December 2020

⁹ <https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/script-illumination-leaves-medieval-renaissance-manuscripts/three-historiated-initials-one-illuminated-initial-six-leaves-bible-13/22920>

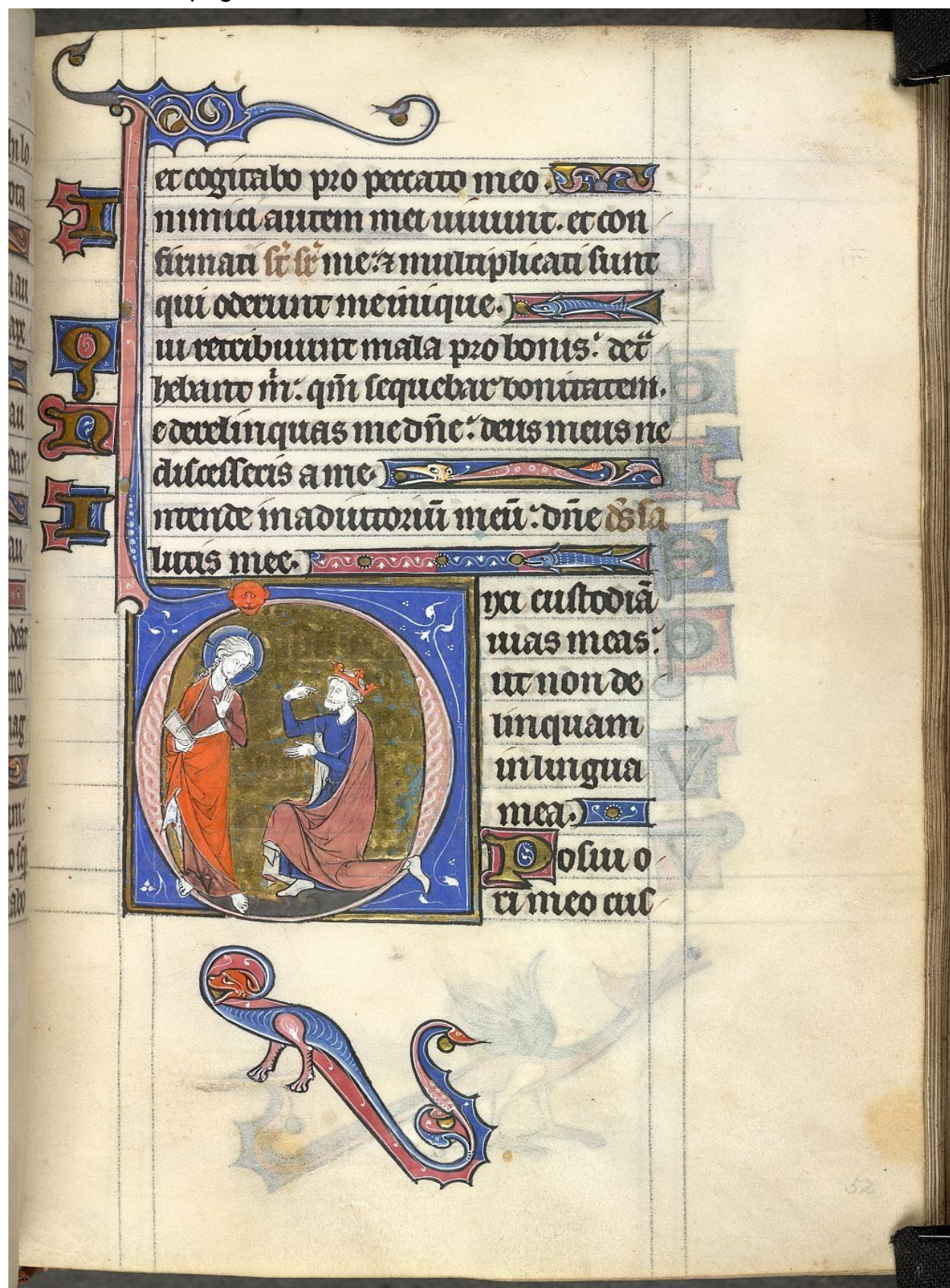


Three leaves with historiated initials from the six sold by Christies in 2015

These lovely pages are still appreciated and still being bought and sold. The reasons for their still being a valuable commodity may have changed from those of the middle ages, but they are still the preserve of the wealthy, unless bought by, or given to, a museum.

(See below for larger images of the pages transcribed and translated.)







Exultate deo
adiutori no
stro: iubil
ate deo iacob.
Sumite
psalmum i
date tympa
num: psalte

rium iocundum cum cythara.

Buccinate in neomenia tuba: in insig
ni die sollemnitatis nre.

Quia preceptum in isrl est: et iudiciu
deo iacob.

Testimonium in ioseph posuit illud:
cum exiret de terra egypti. linguam
quam non nouerat audiuit.

Iniecit ab onerib; dorsum eius: ma
nus eius in cophino seruierunt.



piemus ab eo qm mandata ei custodiunt
et ea q sunt placita coram eo faciunt
huc est mandatum eius ut credant in
mune ei filij ihu xpi et diligantur alie
utrum sic dedit mandatu nobis et qui
servat mandata ei in illo manet et ipse
eo et in hoc scimus qm manet in nobis
in spu quem dedit nobis. **III**
Rem noli omni spu crede et plene
scis si ex deo sint qm multi pseudo p
prie crederit in mundum. In hoc cognoscit
spu dei omnis sps qui creditur ihu xpm
in carne uenisse ex deo et ois sps q soluit
ihu ex deo non est hic est antixpc de quo
auertis qm ueniet et tunc iam in mundo
uos ex deo estis filioi et uertis eu qm
maior est qm in uobis est qm qui in mundo
est ipse de mundo est et id de mundo loqui
tur et mundus eos audit. Qui autem non est ex
deo non audit uos. In hoc cognoscimus spi
ritum ueritatis et spiritum erroris. Item diliga
mus nos in uice q caritas ex deo est et ois q
diligit fratrem suum ex deo natus est et cognos
cit deum. Qui non diligit non habet caritatem et non
nouit deum qm deus caritas est. In hoc appa
ret caritas dei in nobis qm filium suum
unigenitum misit deus in mundum ut
uiuamus per eum. In hoc est caritas si q
dileximus deum et qm ipse pro dilexit nos
et misit filium suum propter peccatis
nostros. Item si uos dilexerit nos et nos debemus
aliter dilige deum nemo uidit unquam
si diligamus in uicem deus in nobis manet
et caritas eius in nobis perfecta est. In hoc
cognoscimus qm in eo manent et ipse in
nobis qm de spu suo dedit nobis et uos
uidimus et testificamur qm pater mi
sit filium suum saluatorem mundi. Quis
quis testis fuit qm ipse est filius dei
deus in ipso manet et ipse in deo et cognos
cimus et nos credimus caritati qm habet

deus in nobis. De caritas est et q manet in
caritate in deo manet et deus in eo. In hoc per
fecta est caritas dei nobiscum ut fiduciam
habeamus in die iudicii qm si ille est et nos
sumus in hoc mundo. Timor non est in caritate
sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem q
nam timor pernam habet. Qui autem timet non est
perfectus in caritate. Propter q diligamus deum
qm ipse pro dilexit nos si quis dixit qm
diligio deum et fratrem suum odere inuideo. Qui
non diligit fratrem suum quem uidet deum quem
non uidet quomodo potest dilige et hoc mandatu
habemus a deo ut quis diligit deum diligit
et fratrem suum. Omnis q credit qm ipse est xpc
ex deo natus est et omnis qui diligit eu qui
genuit diligit et eu qui natus est ex eo. In
hoc cognoscimus et qm diligimus dei natos
cum deum diligamus et mandata ei obser
uamus. Hec est enim caritas dei et mandata
eius graua non sunt. Qui non est q natus est ex deo
uincit mundum et hoc est uictoria q uincit
mundum fides nostra. Quis est autem q uincit
mundum non qui credit qm ipse est filius dei
sed qui uenit per aquam et sanguinem ipse xpc
non in aqua solum sed in aqua et sanguine. Et
sps est q testificatur qm ipse est filius dei. Qui
tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo. Pa
ter et filius et sps scs. Et tres unum sunt. Et uos
qui testimonium dant in terra. Sps aqua et sangui
si testimonium hominum accipimus testimonium
dei maius est. Qui hoc est testimonium dei
q maius est qm testificatur de filio suo.
Qui credit in filium dei testimonium dei se
Qui non credit in filio inuicem facit eu q non
credit in testimonio q testificatus est de de
filio suo. Et hoc est testimonium qm uitam
eternam dedit nobis deus. Hec uita in fili
o eius. Qui habet filium dei non habet uitam. Hec testis
uobis ut scitis qm uitam habetis eterna
Qui creditur in nomine filij dei et hoc est fiducia
a qm habet ad deum quia quicumque petierit

Inter
Qui non habet filium
dei non ha
bet ui
tam

One of the Christie's pages, with corrections in the margin

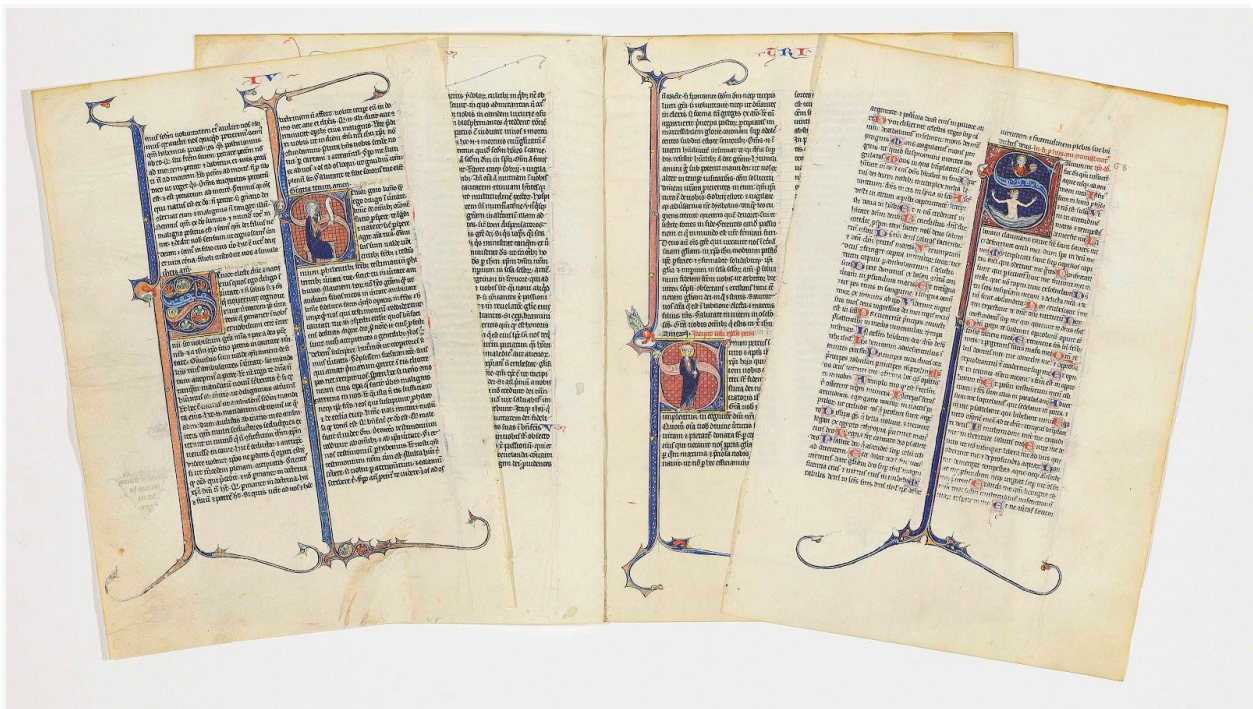
argentate: et postiora dorsi eius in pallore au-
 reo. **S**im dilexerunt celestis reges sup eā
 nubes dealbabit in selmon: mons dei mō
 pinguis. **M**ons argutus mont pin-
 guis: ut quid suspicamini montes co-
 gulari. **M**ons in quo bñplacitū ē deo
 habitare in eo: et enī dñs habitabit in fine. **C**ur-
 rus dei decem millib; multiplex milia le-
 vantium: dñs in eis in syna in scō. **H**oc
 dixit in altum: cepisti captiuitate: accipe
 dona in hōib; **E**t nō credentes in
 hitate dñm deum. **B**enedictus dñs die
 cordis: pspm iter faciet nob deus saluta-
 riū nro. **S**im deus saluos facienti-
 et dñi dñi exercitū mortis. **V**erumptam
 deus attingit capita inimicorū suorū: ut
 rictu capiti pambulantium i delictis
 suis. **Q**uare domus ex basen vira con-
 itam in pfundum maris. **E**t intigua-
 rit pes tuus in sanguine: et lingua canis
 tuor ex inimicis ab ipso. **V**iderunt ingres-
 sus tuos deus ingressus dei mei regis mei
 est in scō. **P**ertraherit pñces iuncti
 psallentib; in medio iuuentulaz sym-
 pñtraz. **I**n oculis bñdicite deo: dñs de fō-
 rib; israel. **I**bi beniamin adolescentulus i
 mentes exaltat. **P**rincipes iuda dñs eorū
 pñces sabulon pñces neptalim. **D**ea
 deus tuorum dñe a firma hoc qd opatus
 es in nobis. **T**emplo tuo qd est iherlm
 ē offerent reges munera. **I**ntepal feras
 arundinis: et gregatio raurorū in uacat po-
 pulorū: ut excludat eos qd proleat sunt auge-
 ro. **O**stia qd bella uolunt et uenient
 legā ex egypto ethiopia pueniet manū
 eius deo. **R**egna sic cantate deo psallite
 deo. **P**sallite deo et ascendite sup celi celi
 ad ouertem. **E**st dñs uox sue uocē
 uirtutis date glām deo sup israel magni-
 ficentia eius: et uirtus eius in rubib; **I**-
 rabilis deus in scis suis dñs israel ipse dñs

uirtutem et fortitudinem plebis sue bñ
 dictus deus. **In fi. p. hys qui amittabunt**



Aluum me ipi. **S**ac dñs qm intuet
 aque usq; ad ani-
 mam meā. **S**u-
 sum in limbo pfudi
 et nō est salus. **V**e-
 ni in altitudine
 maris et tempestas
 demerit me. **T**a-
 boram clauans raurorū sūt fauces me
 et defecerunt oculi mei: dum spo in dñi me
 um. **M**ultiplicati sunt sup capillos capi-
 tis mei qui oderunt me. **C**onfortati
 sunt qui psecutus sunt me inimici mei in
 uisite que nō rapui tunc exsoluelam. **C**ō-
 tu scis insipiam meam: et delicta mea a te
 nō sunt abscondita. **N**on erubescant i me
 qui expectant te dñe dñe iherlm. **N**on
 confundant sup me qui querunt te deus israel.
Cōm pñces te sustinuit opprobriū opuit os
 tuus faciem meā. **E**xtraneis sis in scib;
 meis: et pñces filius matris meae. **C**ōm et
 tus domus mee tunc comedit me: et opproba
 exprobranti ē ceciderunt sup me. **E**t opu-
 it in retinuo aiam meam: et scim est in oppo-
 bium mē. **E**t posui uestimentum meū ali-
 quum: et sis sum illis in parabolam. **A**duer-
 sum me loquebantur qui sedebant in porta: et
 in me psalliebant qui bñebant uinum. **E**go
 neco opñe meā ad te dñe: tempus bñplaci-
 ti deus. **I**n multitudine mīe tue exaudi
 me: in uirtute salutis tue. **E**xipe me de
 uero ut nō mīngat: libera me ab hīs qui
 oderunt me: et de profundis aquarū. **N**on
 me demergat tempestas aque neq; absorbe-
 at me pñs dum neq; urgeat sup me offe-
 nsa parent. **E**xaudi me qm benigna est
 misericordia tua: secundum multitudinē miserationū
 tuarū respice in me. **E**t ne autem faciem

Historiated initially showing David in the waters, from the set sold by Christies.



Pages with historiated initials from the Christie's catalogue

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