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Thomas Ingmire, artist

Angela Swan, scribe

Fulfillment of Creation, 2011

From *The Saint John's Bible*

Romans 6:1–8:24 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf

Saint Paul is considered one of Christianity's greatest theologians, and his treatise appears in the Bible (Romans 8:1–39). He was the first to state that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ fit into the whole scheme of God's created cosmos. Christians believe Jesus Christ transformed human existence through the hope and promise of eternal life. Saint Paul worked with this tenet and concluded that Jesus changed not only human existence, but also the whole of creation. Paul believed everything has meaning and importance in a way only God knows, but nothing is lost in the physical universe; all is destined for fulfillment in Christ.

Artist Thomas Ingmire depicts this Christian understanding by weaving quantum physics and binary system representations with photos from The Hubble Space Telescope. The Hubble images form a visual cross-reference to the Prologue of Saint John's Gospel. An echo of the Creation illumination from Genesis in *The Saint John's Bible* appears along the bottom of this image.

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**Sally Mae Joseph, Angela Swan, Sue Hufton,
Brian Simpson, Susan Leiper, and Donald
Jackson, scribes**

Scribes' Page, 2011

From *The Saint John's Bible*

1 Corinthians 9:1–11:34 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, shell gold

The graceful script that fills the pages of text in *The Saint John's Bible* is the work of six scribes. These six artists, all from the United Kingdom, completed the writing of all but Revelation between the years 2000 and 2007; Donald Jackson wrote Revelation on his own in 2011. Using quill pens made from turkey, swan, or goose feathers, the scribes worked diligently to make their lettering look as consistent as possible, but slight differences exist. Typically, every two-page opening was written by one scribe so subtle variations in the script do not stand out. This two-page spread is unique in that it features six small sections, each written by one of the six calligraphers, allowing the reader a glimpse into their individual styles. The reader can differentiate among scribes by studying the hand pressures and the ascenders and descenders of letters such as h, f, and y.

At the bottom of the fourth column of text, each scribe placed a decorative square with his or her personal calligrapher's mark. Below each decorative square, there is a line of script that was accidentally left out of the text block. The missing line was added under the column with a decorative line trailing up to indicate where the line belongs in the text. This method of correcting omissions has been used in manuscripts for centuries.

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Suzanne Moore, artist

Susie Leiper, scribe

And Every Tongue Should Confess

Ephesians 6:1–Philippians 2:11 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf

The Committee on Illumination and Text selected several passages in the Bible for special treatment with decorative highlighting. The passage viewed here from Philippians is commonly known as the Kenosis Hymn, or the Hymn of Self-emptying. Expanding on the line, "...and every tongue should confess..." artist Suzanne Moore placed the well-known words of the hymn over a field of words for Jesus, Lord, and Christ in English, Greek, French, Armenian, Japanese, Vietnamese, German, Coptic, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Korean, and Ethiopian.

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Chris Tomlin, artist
Angela Swan, scribe

Hebrews Book Heading with Dragonflies on Yorkshire Fog Grass

Philemon 1:4–Hebrews 3:19 (NRSV translation)
Vellum, ink, paint, shell gold

Marginalia, any writing or decoration in the margins of a manuscript, was common in medieval manuscripts and is found throughout *The Saint John's Bible*. These decorative elements enhance the visual pleasure of each volume and often directly tie the book back to Minnesota by featuring native flora and fauna of the region. These pages feature two native Minnesotan dragonflies resting upon some Yorkshire fog grass commonly found in the U.K., where *The Saint John's Bible* was created.

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Donald Jackson, text treatments

Sue Hufton, scribe

James 2:23–5:20 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, shell gold

Special treatments are used throughout *The Saint John's Bible* to visually highlight particular passages and cause the reader to pay attention to the verses. The special treatment found on these pages from James 3 is one of the many Scripture passages influencing the Rule of Benedict, the sixth-century book of monastic wisdom which still guides Benedictine life. The verses highlighted in James 5 are considered one of the sources for the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Donald Jackson designed and wrote all of the special treatments in Letters.

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Suzanne Moore, artist

Sue Hufton, scribe

Harrowing of Hell

1 Peter 4:1–2 Peter 1:21 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf

1 Peter 3:18–4:11 is often referred to as the “Harrowing of Hell.” The risen Christ descends into the netherworld and proclaims to Satan that he and his minions have no more power over humankind, and in so doing, seizes those imprisoned by the devil and leads them to the heavenly Kingdom.

The imagery here moves from hopeless darkness to a bright garden paradise. Images of the destruction of the Spanish city Guernica, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and the disaster in Haiti filled artist Suzanne Moore’s mind as she painted the darkness of Hell.

Gothic arches and curves move the image forward into an expanse of light and space, inviting the viewer to enjoy the possibility of eternal life. The fine, gilded arcs relate to halos and visually expand the image to the entire page.

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Donald Jackson, artist and scribe

Revelation Incipit with the Son of Man

Revelation 1:1–2:29 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf

The book of Revelation has inspired artists and the Christian imagination in every age. This beautiful and enigmatic work describes the events leading up to the end of the world. While a literal reading of the passages presents an inseparable division between good and evil in a battle for survival, the highly visual and symbolic language makes Revelation one of the most hopeful and beautiful books in the Bible.

Revelation opens with a burst of color evoking the interior of a Byzantine church and providing a foretaste of the succeeding pages. The details superimposed on the background look back to imagery used in the Prophets, Wisdom, Books, Gospels and Acts volumes of *The Saint John's Bible*. Designs in multiples of seven, the number of perfection, are repeated throughout the page. The messianic figure of the Son of Man sits in the upper portion amid seven golden lamp stands.

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Donald Jackson, artist and scribe

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1–8:13 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf, holographic foil

In Revelation, the apocalyptic events to take place on Earth are written on a scroll secured with seven seals. A slain lamb opens each seal introducing a new stage of God's judgment on Earth. The first four seals release the horsemen of the Apocalypse, figures that have been portrayed in Christian art for centuries. The white horse represents war. The red horse, with its rider and a huge sword, stands for death, the result of war. The black horse, whose rider holds a scale to measure food rations, is famine, a byproduct of war. The green horse signifies death and disease, the result of famine.

In this illumination, Donald Jackson uses highly saturated colors and contemporary references to greed and exploitation. Predatory insects, modern tanks, and oil rigs contribute to the scene's dire atmosphere.

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Donald Jackson, artist and scribe

Vision of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:16–27 (NRSV translation)

Vellum, ink, paint, gold leaf

The last chapters of Revelation bring God's creation full circle with many allusions to the first chapters in Genesis. These final passages provide hope in the face of all the misery previously described in the book. Unlike much of the other apocalyptic literature of its day, Revelation does not dwell on destruction but focuses on the fulfillment and redemption of creation by describing the heavenly Jerusalem. The city represents the re-created universe in Christ, constructed in perfect measurements, adorned with precious stones, and paved in gold. All evil, pain, and death are banished by the eternal goodness of God. There is no sun or moon, for the divine light will shine eternally.

In *The Saint John's Bible*, the New Jerusalem is reminiscent of the temple described by the prophet Ezekiel. Golden ribbons double as rivers or canals, descending from the throne, the source of light, and nurturing the Tree of Life on the far right. The repetition of the number 12—12 pearls, 12 gates, 12 fruits on the tree—emphasizes perfection as it calls to mind the foundation of the Church in the 12 Apostles.

On June 18, 2011, Donald and Mabel Jackson presented this illumination to the community of Saint John's Abbey and University in the Abbey Church on the Collegeville, Minnesota, campus. Abbot John Klassen, OSB, and Fr. Robert Koopmann, OSB, president of Saint John's University, placed the folio on the Abbey Church altar and burnished two gold Benedictine crosses (seen on the lower right corner of the folio) marking this last folio with a symbol of its new home, thus bringing the 15-year creation phase of *The Saint John's Bible* to a celebratory close.

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The entire creation team celebrated the completion of *The Saint John's Bible* in May 2011, at the home of Mable and Donald Jackson in Wales. Pictured (front row, from left) are: Sarah Harris, Mabel Jackson, Jo White, and Donald Jackson; (second row) Jane Grayer, Sue Hufton, Susan Leiper, Thomas Ingmire, Sally Mae Joseph, and Brian Simpson; (third row) Izzy Pludwinski, Angela Swan, Suzanne Moore, Vin Godier, and Rebecca Cherry; (back row) Mark L'Argent, Sally Sargent, Olivia Edwards, Aidan Hart, Chris Tomlin, Hazel Dolby, and Diane von Arx. (Greg R. Anderson Photography, Minneapolis)