36. Depicting the Devil

Depictions of the devil were extremely popular across all forms of medieval art, and stained glass was no exception! The way in which the devil is depicted varies greatly, as there is a great variety of symbolism and characteristics associated with it. Such images were often used as a warning to churchgoers about the consequences of doing wrong. This was almost certainly the case in an interesting depiction of the devil, hovering over the heads of wrong doers, in the Eighth Commandment panel from Boppard. It has an imp-like face and goat-like hooves and seems to be encouraging the condemnations in the scene beneath him. The man in the bottom right points accusingly at the rich and prosperous man on the left. Two men behind him join in the denouncement with accusatory body language and expressions. The facial expressions are beautifully painted, with different hairstyles and clothing.



DETAIL FROM 8TH COMMANDMENT PANEL





GLASS ROUNDEL – SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS

Alongside the devil in the Boppard panel a number of other depictions in stained glass on display in the Burrell Collection are significant. These include two small Swiss roundels, both of a slightly later date than the Boppard glass.

In the "Scenes from the Life of Saint Francis" roundel there is a complete depiction of hell, with the devil and several devilish assistants in a fiery underground scene. The roundel is only about 150mm across and has exquisitely detailed paint, stain and enamel work. It is dated 1671 and signed by the glazier Michael Muller IV of Zug, beside Lake Zug and about 25 miles south of Zurich. In this depiction the devil is shown with wings, horns and a tail against a fiery background.

Another little Swiss roundel dated to the 17th century and displayed next to the St.Francis roundel shows St. Notker Balbulus, (Notker the Stammerer), giving the devil, in the form of a green and blue dog with yellow horns, a good thrashing. So much so that he has broken his rod. Notker was a musician, author, poet, and Benedictine monk at the Abbey of Saint Gall in modern Switzerland, living around the period 840-912. His biographer, Ekkehard IV, also a monk from the same Abbey but living some 140 years later, described him as "delicate of body but not of mind, stuttering of tongue but not of intellect, pushing boldly forward in things Divine, a vessel of the Holy Spirit without equal in his time". According to legend, Notker Balbulua on entering the church one night, found the Devil there in the shape of a dog; he ordered him to stand still and, grasping a stout cudgel which had once belonged to Saint Columbanus, he broke it over the demon's back [from "The Story of the Devil" By Arturo Graf].



GLASS ROUNDEL OF NOTKER BALBULUS



The devil is also often depicted as a dragon, which is associated with many stories including that of Saint Margaret of Antioch. There are two sculptures of Margaret of Antioch on display in the Burrell Collection. The limestone sculpture on the left is French and dates to around 1500. The dragon is chained and Margaret has her foot in its belly. The detail shows a close-up of the devil/dragon's head.

The story goes that Margaret was the daughter of a pagan priest who, on the death of his wife, had her nursed by a pious Christian woman. Margaret became a Christian and vowed to remain a virgin for her faith, which caused her father to disown her. Working as a shepherdess, she continued to live with her nurse who adopted her. A wealthy and powerful man became obsessed by her beauty and asked her to renounce her faith and marry him. When she refused, he had her tortured which resulted in some miraculous incidents. One involved her being swallowed by the devil in the shape of a dragon, then being regurgitated when her crucifix irritated the dragon's insides. Apparently, she was put to death in 304 AD. She was declared apocryphal by Pope Gelasius I in 494, but was and still is

venerated in various parts of the world.





MARGARET OF ANTIOCH – FRENCH

1500 WITH DETAIL OF THE DRAGON'S

HEAD TURNED THROUGH 90°

The right hand version of Margaret is carved in oak and thought to be a South Netherlandish copy of an original, now in the Musee Gruuthuse, Bruges. Unchained, the devil again feels Margaret's boot! MARGARET OF ANTIOCH – SOUTH NETHERLANDISH WITH DETAIL OF DRAGON

