

Albrecht Dürer  
'THE APOCALYPSE'  
1498 / 1511

SIMS REED

Albrecht Dürer

DIE HEIMLICHE OFFENBARU[N]G IOH[AN]NIS.

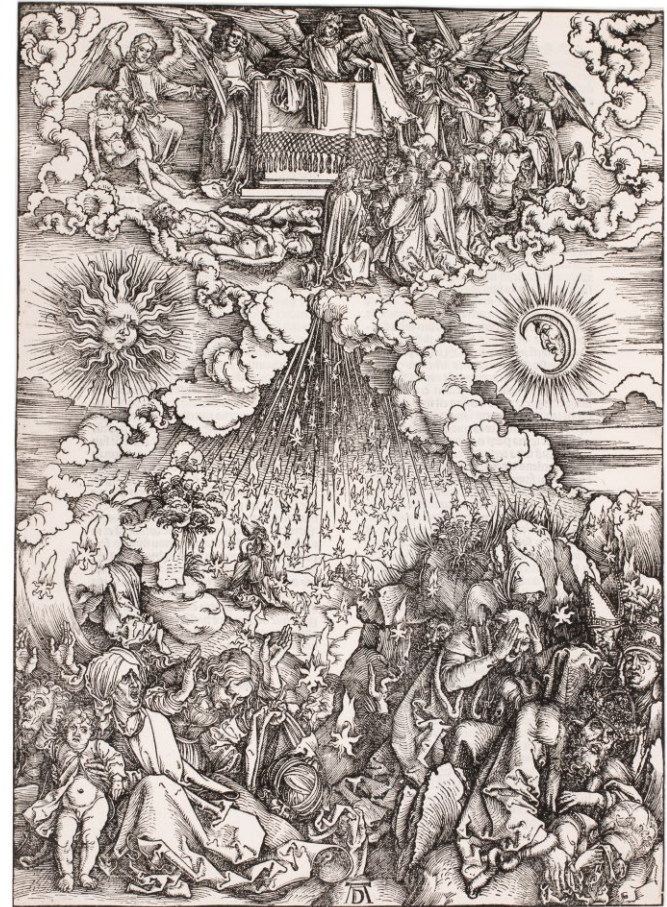
(THE SECRET REVELATION OF ST. JOHN).

/ APOCALIPSIS CUM FIGURIS. (THE APOCALYPSE WITH PICTURES)

*Nuremberg. (By the artist). 1498/1511*

Like Leonardo's 'Last Supper', Dürer's 'Apocalypse' belongs among what may be called the inescapable works of art. Summarizing, yet surpassing an age-old tradition, these works command an authority which no later artist could or can ignore, except perhaps by way of a deliberate opposition which in itself is another form of dependence. Dürer's compositions were copied, not only in Germany but also in Italy, in France and in Russia, and not only in woodcuts and engravings but also in paintings, reliefs, tapestries and enamels. Their indirect influence, transmitted by a master like Holbein, as well as by such modest craftsmen as the illustrators of the Luther Bibles, reached even the monasteries of Mount Athos.

– Erwin Panofsky



Dürer's 'The Apocalypse', the first book to be conceived, designed, printed and sold by a single artist.





*Folio. (c.380 × 280 mm). Original woodcut title with the Virgin with child appearing to St. John, printed text in Latin or German where applicable and 15 original woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer, various sheet sizes.*

The complete series of Albrecht Dürer's 'The Apocalypse': 16 original woodcuts, one proof before text, five from the 1498 German edition, ten from the 1511 Latin edition.

Conceived as a project by Dürer in the mid-1490s and the approach of the half millennium, his 'Apocalypse' cycle is a work of paramount importance in the development of his own oeuvre, of the woodcut and of the illustrated printed book.

The priority Dürer created of the illustration over the text was a reversal of the traditional modus and a precedent that has endured. The text, as indicated by the title of the German edition, is St. John's 'Book of Revelation', the apocalyptic visionary narrative of the end of this world and the coming of the next, a thesis that was of immediate appeal to a Europe in the grip of millenarian chaos and on the verge of a Turkish invasion.

Dürer's first edition of 1498 featured a printed title and fifteen original woodcuts with text to the verso of each print in Latin or German; for the second edition of 1511 Dürer added a vignette to the title of the Virgin with infant Christ appearing to St. John but used the Latin text exclusively. The presence here of a proof without text is also of significance (these are highly desirable and of considerable rarity) and demonstrates Dürer's innovative distributive techniques: the book could be bought as a whole, or in single sheets, as desired.

[Left: 'The Four Horsemen' (395 x 280 mm)]



'The Virgin Appearing to St. John' (370 x 246 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Martyrdom of St. John' (386 x 281 mm): c.1496 / 1497, proof before text on laid paper,  
from the collection of Freiherr von Lanna (Lugt 2773).



'The Vision of the Seven Candlesticks' (392 x 280 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'St. John Before God and the Elders' (394 x 283 mm):  
1498 German edition with text verso.



'The Four Horsemen' (395 x 280 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Opening of the Fifth and Sixth Seals' (392 x 281 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



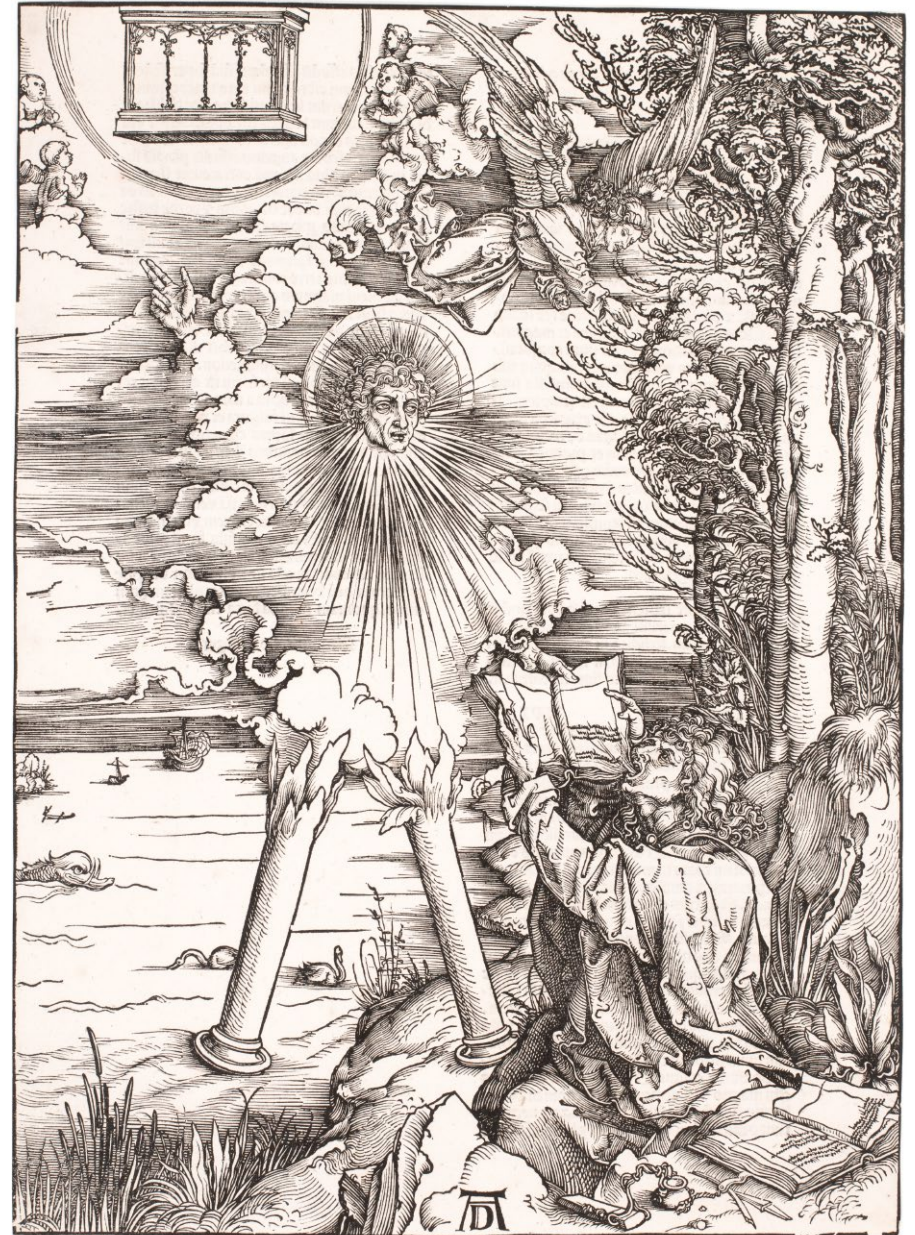
'The Four Angels Holding the Winds' (395 x 284 mm):  
1498 German edition with text verso.



'The Seven Angels with the Trumpets' (393 x 283 mm):  
1498 German edition with text verso.



'The Four Avenging Angels' (394 x 282 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'St. John Devouring the Book' (393 x 283 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Apocalyptic Woman' (394 x 283 mm):  
1498 German edition with text verso.



'St. Michael Fighting the Dragon' (394 x 282 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Beast with Two Horns Like a Lamb' (392 x 280 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Adoration of the Lamb' (396 x 285 mm):  
1498 German edition with text verso.



'The Babylonian Whore' (388 x 276 mm):  
1511 Latin edition with text verso.



'The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit' (393 x 283 mm):  
likely 1511 Latin edition.

## Complete list of woodcuts with condition

- I 'The Virgin Appearing to St. John' (370 x 246 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, the sheet trimmed and with two diagonal folds at lower left, some slight foxing.
- II 'The Martyrdom of St. John' (386 x 281 mm): c.1496 / 1497, proof before text on laid paper with Meder's 'Large Imperial Orb' watermark (M. 53), horizontal drying crease visible verso, some small thinner spots, from the collection of Freiherr von Lanna (Lugt 2773).
- III 'The Vision of the Seven Candlesticks' (392 x 280 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso.
- IV 'St. John Before God and the Elders' (394 x 283 mm): 1498 German edition with text verso, two small printer's creases at lower right.
- V 'The Four Horsemen' (395 x 280 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, some small spots at lower left and upper right, effaced collector's stamp in red (?) at left of monogram.
- VI 'The Opening of the Fifth and Sixth Seals' (392 x 281 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, Meder's 'Flower with a triangle' watermark (M. 123).
- VII 'The Four Angels Holding the Winds' (395 x 284 mm): 1498 German edition with text verso.
- VIII 'The Seven Angels with the Trumpets' (393 x 283 mm): 1498 German edition with text verso, small repaired tear at lower right, two or three small repaired nicks to left-hand sheet edge.
- IX 'The Four Avenging Angels' (394 x 282 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, Meder's 'Flower with a triangle' watermark (M. 127).
- X 'St. John Devouring the Book' (393 x 283 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso.
- XI 'The Apocalyptic Woman' (394 x 283 mm): 1498 German edition with text verso, mild softening to corners possibly from old mounting.
- XII 'St. Michael Fighting the Dragon' (394 x 282 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, small printing flaw within foliage at lower right.
- XIII 'The Beast with Two Horns Like a Lamb' (392 x 280 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, Meder's 'Flower with a triangle' watermark (M. 127), printer's crease at lower right in necks of the beast.
- XIV 'The Adoration of the Lamb' (396 x 285 mm): 1498 German edition with text verso, small thin area with pinhole.
- XV 'The Babylonian Whore' (388 x 276 mm): 1511 Latin edition with text verso, Meder's 'Tower with Crown and Flower' watermark (M. 259).
- XVI 'The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit' (393 x 283 mm): likely 1511 Latin edition.

[Meder 163 - 178; Bartsch 60 - 75; see Erwin Panofsky's 'The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer', pp. 51 - 59 (third edition), Princeton, 1955].



Incipit prologus in Apocalypsim beati Jo-  
hannis apostoli.

¶ Hinc qui pie voluit vivere in  
christo: sicut ait apostolus: pfe-  
cutionem patietur: iuxta illud  
¶ Sili accedes ad servitutē dei sta-  
in timore et ppara animā tuā  
ad tentatione. Tentatio nāq;  
est vita hominis super terram. Ne autem fide-  
les deficiant in his. cōsolatur eos dominus atq;  
q; confirmat dices. Ego sum vīq; ad con-  
summationem seculi. Et nolite timere pusillus  
grex. Propterea videns deus pater tribulati-  
ones q; passura erat ecclesia ab apostolis fun-  
data supra petram christum vt minus timea-  
tur disposuit vna cum filio et spū sancto eas re-  
uelare. Reuelavit autē tota trinitas christo sim-  
humanitatē. Christus vero iohanni per ange-  
lum Iohānes ecclesie: de qua reuelatiōe hunc  
librū cōposuit. Unde et liber iste apocalypsis  
dicit: id est reuelatio q; hic cōtinetur que deus  
reuelavit iohāni: et iohānes ecclesie: q; ta scz ec-  
clesia passa sit in tēpore primitiuo: et nūc patia-  
tur: et nouissime tēporib; annūctūsi passura  
sit: qm̄ tanta erit tribulatio vt si fieri potest enā  
mouētur electi. Et que p bis et nūc et in futu-  
ro p̄mita sit suscipitur: vt quos denunciata sup-  
plicia terrēt. p̄missa premia lenificent. Ideo  
iste liber inter reliquas scripturas noui testa-  
menti p̄phete nomine censetur que alijs est ex-  
cellentior: p̄phetijs. Sicut enī nouū testamen-  
tum p̄stat veteri: euangelium legita hec pro-  
pheta p̄phetijs veteris testamenti: quia de  
christo et ecclesia magna et gre iā adimpleta sa-  
cramenta denūciat. Et etiam ideo: quia cum  
alijs v̄m̄pharia isti tripharia data est: p̄rophe-  
tia simul. scz p̄terito et presenti et futuro. Ad  
cuius confirmandam auctoritatē occurrit iam  
auctoritas mittentis deferentis et accipientis.  
Mittentis scz trinitatis. et deferentis scz angelī  
et accipientis scz Iohānis. Cum autē iohanni  
hec in visione fuerunt reuelata. et sint tria gene-  
ra visionum sub quo genere cōtineatur viden-  
dum est. V̄sio enī alia corporalīs. quando scz  
corpore oculis aliquid videmus. Alia spi-  
ritualis seu imaginaria. cum videlicet dormi-  
entes vel vigilātes imagines rerum cernimus  
quibus aliquid significat. sicut vidit p̄pharo  
spicas. et moyses rubum ardere. ille dormiens  
iste vigilans. Alia intellectualis quando vide-  
licet spiritu sancto reuelante intellectui mentis  
veritatē mysteriozum. sicut est capimus. quo  
modo vidit iohannes que in hoc libro referun-  
tur. Non enī figuras tantū spiritu vidit. sed et  
earum significata mēte intellexit. Vidit autem  
iohānes et scripsit i pathmos insula relegatus  
a domitiano in exilio principe impijssimo hac  
eum ad scribēdum cōpellente causa. quia dum  
exul teneretur a domitiano in pathmos insula  
in ecclesijs quibus perat multa pullularūt atq;  
inoleuerunt vicia atq; diuerse hereses. Erant  
enī quidā heretici ibi dicētes christū non fuisse

se ante abarīam q̄a tēporaliter de ea natus era:  
quos iohānes in principio euangelij sui redar-  
guit dicens. In principio erat verbum. Et in  
hoc libro cū dicit. Alpha et o. id est p̄cipium  
et finis. Dicebat enī quidam ecclesiam ponde-  
re tribulationū ante finem seculi desitutam. et  
pro labore nō premium eternū suscipiturā. Ido-  
rum ergo errores volens destruere iohannes  
ostendit christū p̄cipiū esse et finē. vnde. Etsi.  
Ante me non est formatus deus et post me non  
erit. Et ecclesia per exercitium tribulationū nō  
desinere sed p̄ficere. et p bis b̄atū eternū re-  
cipere. Scribit autē iohānes septem ecclesijs  
asie. et earū septem episcopis de p̄dictis instru-  
ens. et in eis per eam totam generalem ecclesia  
docens. Est itaq; materia iohannis in hoc ope-  
re status specialiter asiane ecclesie. necnon tori-  
us videlicet que in p̄senti patiatur et in futuro  
receptura sit. Antētio vero eius est monere ad  
patientia que seruāda est: rum quia breuis la-  
borum quia premiū magnum. Modus tra-  
ctandi talis. primo p̄mittit prologum et saluta-  
tionem vbi reddit auditores benignos et atten-  
tos quo p̄missio accedit ad narrationem. An-  
te narrationem vero ostēdit xpm̄ esse ab eterno  
sine principio et fine. Inducēs ipsum loquen-  
tem. Ego sum alpha et o. id est p̄cipiū et finis  
Postea accedens ad narrationem distinguit se  
p̄tem visiones quibus terminatis iste liber cō-  
summatur. P̄mittit autem p̄logum dicens:  
Apocalypsis iesu xpi. subaudi hic est. sicut in  
alijs. V̄sio enī hec est. Et parabole salomo-  
nis he sunt.

Item alius prologus in Apocalypsim.

Iohannes apostolus et euāgelista a  
christo electus atq; dilectus: in tanto  
amore dilectionis vbertior habitus  
est. vt in cena supra pectus eius recū-  
beret. et ad crucē astanti soli matrem propriam  
cōmēdasset. vt quem nubere volentem ad am-  
plexum virginitatis astuerat. ipsi etiam custo-  
diendā virginem tradidisset. Hic itaq; cū pro-  
pter verbū dei et testimonij Iesu christi i path-  
mos insulam fortiter exiliū. ille ab eodē apo-  
calypsis p̄ostensa describit. vt sicut in princi-  
pio canonis. i. libri Beneseos: incorruptibile  
principiū p̄notatur ita etiam incorruptibilis  
finis p virginē in apocalypsi redderetur. dicen-  
tis. Ego sum alpha et o. initij et finis. Hic est  
Iohānes qui sciēs supuenisse sibi diem egres-  
sionis de corpore cōuocatis in epheso discipulis  
descendit in desofsum sepulture sue locum. ora-  
tionēq; completa reddidit spiritū tam a dolore  
mortis factus extraneus q; a corruptione car-  
nis nocitur alienus. Cuius tamen scripture di-  
spositio vel libri ordinatio ideo a nobis p sim-  
gula nō exponit. vt nescientibus inquirendi de  
fideriū colloceat. et querētib; laboris fructus  
a deo magisterij doctrina seruetur.  
Explicunt prologi.



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