

PETER OF HERENTHAL, *Collectarius Super Librum Psalmorum* (Commentary on the Psalms)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
England, possibly Norwich, c. 1400

350 folios, plus two flyleaves (i-ii, a bifolium shorter than other folios, ruled over erased text, otherwise blank, now unattached and laid in), lacking one folio at beginning, otherwise complete, in 44 gatherings of eight (collation i⁸ [-1, with loss of text] ii-xliii⁸ xliiv⁷ [verso of last folio ruled but blank]), alpha-numerical quire signatures (a-z in black, then a-u in red, some trimmed), catchwords, written in dark brown ink in a gothic bookhand in two columns of 42 lines, ruled in reddish brown ink, pricking still visible in many gatherings (justification 185 x 110 mm., each column, c. 49 mm.), rubrics in red, capitals and paragraph markers in blue, numerous 2- and 3-line initials in blue with very fine red penwork decoration, nine 7-line initials in gold on rose and blue geometric panels in-filled with white penwork, one historiated initial with David playing the harp (f. 4v), overall in excellent condition (small repair to f. 206). Modern binding of brown calf with blind stamping, two brass catches and clasps. Dimensions c. 275 x 185 mm.

In very fresh condition, this is an unusually richly decorated and early copy of Peter of Herenthal's collection of commentaries on the Psalms. Bearing a resemblance to the work of Herman Scheere, the historiated initial of King David stands out as a significant example of the International Style in England.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of the historiated and decorated initials suggests that the manuscript was made in England, possibly in Norwich, at the very end of the fourteenth century and not much later than 1400.
2. Augustinian convent of San Salvatore, Venice, by the sixteenth century. Their *ex-libris* on the verso of the second to last folio (f. 349v): *Iste liber est monasterio Sancti Salvatoris de Venetis*. The number "65," which is written on the upper edge of the manuscript, was possibly added at this time as a shelf mark. In addition, there are notes in the same large and loose Italian hand of the *ex-libris* throughout the margins; the two flyleaves appear to have been re-used from the calendar of an Italian manuscript; and the paste-downs, which contained musical notation, also appear to have been re-used from an Italian manuscript.
3. Stewart Family of Londonderry: belonged to Robert Henry Stewart, second Marquis of Londonderry and Viscount Castlereagh (1769-1822), or Charles-William Stewart, Marquis of Londonderry (1778-1854), both important statesmen. The Stewart *ex-libris* is described in earlier sales catalogues as having been on the front paste-down but is now missing.
4. Sir Thomas Brooke (1830-1908), of Armitage Bridge House, Huddersfield, his library dispersed after his death. His *ex-libris*, also described in earlier sales catalogues, is also missing.
5. Reverend W. Ingham Brooke, of Barford Rectory, Warwick. Sold Sotheby's, London, 19 December 1921, lot 360.

6. James and Elizabeth Ferrell Collection, USA, on long-term deposit at the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, UK.

TEXT

ff. 1-350, [beginning imperfectly in the preface], incipit, "[ho]//norem dei cum archai de sylo reduceret operis expetit tractatum; [text], f. 4v, Beatus vir ... [Psalm 1:1]. Hieronymus. Psalterium est quasi magna domus ...; [f. 350v blank but ruled].

In his *Collectarius super libro Psalmorum* Peter of Herenthal compiled and attempted to reconcile a diverse range of opinions on each of the 150 Psalms both from the Church Fathers, such as Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great and Cassiodorus, and from more recent medieval writers, such as Rémi of Auxerre, Hugh of Saint-Victor and Nicolas of Lyra. The work was undertaken in 1374 at the request of Jean d'Arkel, the Bishop of Liège (1364-1378). The text follows the usual order of the psalms, and in the present manuscript the 10-part division, typical of English psalters, is reflected in the inclusion of large decorated initials (see below).

The monastic author, Peter of Herenthal (1322-1391), was born in the Belgian village of the same name. He entered the Premonstratensian Abbey of Floreffe in 1342 after twelve years of study and a failed attempt to receive a benefice from Pope Clement VI at Avignon. He was the chaplain and then prior at Floreffe under the abbacy of Thierry de Warmant (1342-61). His written works include a history of the emperors and popes of Rome, an account of the abbots of Floreffe, and a collection of commentaries on the Gospels.

Peter is most famous, however, for the text of the present manuscript. The *Collectarius super librum Psalmorum* survives in nine printed editions of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and at least 40 other manuscript copies, the earliest printed edition evidently being that in Cologne by Johann Guldenschaff in 1483 (see Stegmüller 1954, p. 316, no. 6616). The majority of the manuscripts date to the fifteenth century and most were made in France or Flanders. They are only modestly, if at all, decorated. The present copy thus stands out for its English origin, its early date, and its rich decoration, especially for the historiated initial of David playing the harp (f. 4v).

ILLUSTRATION

One finely painted historiated initial:

f. 4v, A large "B" (*Beatus vir*) with David playing the harp; the background with a design as in the decorated letters described below.

Nine seven-line gold initials, set against panels divided into quarters of blue and rose, in-filled with fine white penwork of geometric or foliate patterns, decoration extended into the margins in sprays of flower buds, spiky gold ivy leaves, and gold ball and squiggle motifs; at the following divisions within the text:

f. 57, *Dominus illuminatio mea* (Ps. 26);

- f. 87, *Dixi custodiam vias meas* (Ps. 38);
- f. 122v, *Quid gloriaris in malicia* (Ps. 51);
- f. 124, *Dixit insipiens in corde suo* (Ps. 52);
- f. 166, *Saluum me fac* (Ps. 68);
- f. 201, *Exultate deo audiutori* (Ps. 80);
- f. 239v, *Cantate domino canticum* (Ps. 97);
- f. 245, *Domine exaudi orationem* (Ps. 101);
- f. 271v, *Dixit dominus domino meo* (Ps. 109).

In addition, there are numerous 2- and 3-line blue initials, with red flourishing, in foliate patterns in the interiors, and in very fine saw-tooth patterns on the exterior, extending vertically, sometimes to the whole height of the text block (see esp., ff. 31v, 107, 239v and 308).

The workmanship of this introductory initial ties the *Collectarius* to the International Gothic Style that dominated the art of painting in England from around 1390 until well into the fifteenth century. It is a style that is most closely identified in panel painting with the great icon of Richard II's reign, the Wilton Diptych (London, National Gallery), and in manuscript illumination with the Sherborne Missal (London, British Library) and the miniatures of Herman Scheere. The tiny figure of David is painted in a technique typical of the International Style that sheds the dark outlines of earlier Gothic illumination. The face, hair and hands are modeled in soft white brushstrokes over a base of light gray, with small flecks of black and a splash of red giving definition to the eyes, nose and mouth. The folds of the brilliant blue robe are delineated by shadows of a slightly darker hue.

In the modeling of David and in the abstract background, there is, in fact, an aesthetic affinity with the work of Herman Scheere in the Psalter and Hours of John, Duke of Bedford, which dates to around 1420 (London, British Library, MS Add. 42131; see Marks and Morgan, 1981, pls. 33-34). The figure is even of the type used by Scheere for the Old Testament kings in the border of his elaborate Beatus page (f. 73). The *Collectarius* "B" is stylistically closer, however, to the historiated initials of a Missal made for the diocese of Norwich in the late fourteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 1; see Scott 1996, no. 5). As its secondary decoration also finds close comparisons in the Oxford Missal, especially in the great saw-tooth flourishing of the smaller blue initials, the *Collectarius* probably originated within the same circle of illuminators and scribes active in East Anglia around 1300. For another early illuminated manuscript of the text, roughly contemporary with the present copy, see The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 C 7).

LITERATURE

Marks, R. and N. Morgan, *The Golden Age of English Manuscript Painting 1200-1500*, New York, 1981, pls. 33-34.

Scott, Kathleen. *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390-1490*, 2 vols., Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 6, ed. Jonathan J. G. Alexander, London, 1996.

Stegmüller, F. *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4, Madrid, 1954, pp. 314-316, no. 6616.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Repertorium biblicum medii aevi (digital version of Stegmüller)

<http://repbib.uni-trier.de/cgi-bin/rebihome.tcl>

Petrus de Herentahls, Repertorium "Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters"

http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/repPers_100957862.html

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