

LES ENLUMINURES, LTD

Les Enluminures

2970 North Lake Shore Drive 11B
Chicago, Illinois 60657

tel. 1-773-929-5986
fax. 1-773-528-3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2 place du Palais-Royal
75001 Paris

tél : 33 1 42 60 15 58
fax : 33 1 40 15 00 25
info@lesenluminures.com

PETRUS COMESTOR, *Historia Scholastica*
In Latin, illustrated manuscript on paper
[Western Germany, Wezel or Münster ?, c. 1450]

274 leaves (collation i12 [1 detached], ii-xxiii12, xxiii10 [of 12, lacking 11 and 12, 11 with text, 12 likely a blank]), signature marks, mostly cut, on outer corners of first six rectos of gatherings, 27 lines written in brown ink in a hybrid bookhand between two verticals and on 37 horizontals ruled in brown ink (justification 183 x 121 mm.), rubrics, rubric line fillers and paragraphs in red, many guide rubrics still partially visible at the lower margins, text capitals touched in red, three-line initials of red or blue, five-line high blue flourished initials open each book, with red penwork the height of the margin and the infill with vegetal shapes against a green ground, ten-line puzzle initials of red and blue to open the prologue with flourishing and infill of the same type, world map in the margin of f. 15, slight worming and staining of margins, many marginal notations, possibly part of the text. Bound in contemporary German or Dutch paneled calf ruled and stamped in blind, a single tool with a nimbed hand holding a crossed k in the border and diapers of central panel, rebacked, wormed, restored, in nice condition. Dimensions 283 x 210 mm.

Handsome, clean copy of one of the greatest and most popular teaching texts of the Middle Ages, the *Historia Scholastica*, here bound with Peter of Poitiers's *Historia actuum apostolorum* in a fine original blind-stamped binding, with many marginal notes that highlight the sources used to expand the narrative, and made in the milieu of the *Devotio Moderna*, the very reform movement that promoted the use of translations of the Dutch Bible together with those of the *Historia Scholastica* for teaching the Bible to the laity.

PROVENANCE

1. The penwork initials are in a style associable with manuscripts produced in western Germany close to the Dutch border, perhaps Wezel or Münster. It is likely that this *Historia Scholastica* was made in a monastic community: the particular form of the winged leaves against a green background shows the influence of the Windesheim Congregation.

2. The title and shelfmark in brown ink on fore-edge reading "Scholastica ms 9" in a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century hand.

TEXT

1.

ff. 1-242, Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, rubric, *Incipit prologuus epistolaris*, incipit prologue, "Reverendo domino et patri suo guillelmo dei gratia senonensi archiepiscopo petrus seruus Christi ... benedictus deus. Amen"; incipit, "Imperatorie maiestatis est in palatio habere mansones. Auditorium uel consistorium in quo iura decernit ..."; explicit, ... "Translatus est enoch subuectus est helias ascendit ihesus propria. sui virtute." [Additio 1:] "Hanc ultimam processionem post ihesum representat ecclesia dominicis diebus egrediendo de ecclesia ... Sed multiplicatis solempnitatibus sanctorum sublata est solempnitas quinte ferie. Et procession translate est ad dominicam." [Stegmueller, 4, nos. 6543-64; PL 198: 1053-1644].

2.

ff. 242-274v, Petrus Pictaviensis, *Historia actuum apostolorum*; rubric, *Incipit actuum apostolorum*; incipit, "Anno quintodecimo imperii tiberii cesaris adhuc procuratore iudee pilato. qui si legatur..." [ends incompletely] "intelligatus eodum die anno renduto." [Stegmueller, v. 4, 6565 and 6785; PL 198: 1645-1722].

This manuscript contains the complete *Historia Scholastica* by Petrus Comestor, accompanied as it frequently is by the *Historia actuum apostolorum* of Peter of Poitiers (see Yale, Beinecke Library, Marston MS 220 and MS 214). Peter Comestor (died c. 1178) was known as "Peter the Eater" based on his voracious appetite for knowledge. He wrote many influential sermons and a gloss on the Gospels, but it was the *Historia Scholastica*, written between 1169 and 1173, that brought him lasting renown. Providing a continuous history from the Creation until the end of the Acts of the Apostles, it was based upon the narrative books of the Bible, where necessary correlating different accounts of an event and marrying disjointed sequences. Gaps in the narrative are filled in by drawing upon both patristic and classical authors, including among others Josephus. The *Historia Scholastica* gained immediate popularity and continued to serve as an essential school text well into the sixteenth century. As the formal model for numerous translations and adaptations in Latin and vernacular languages, it formed a link between Latin scholastic textual practices and vernacular narrative.

After studying at the University of Paris, Peter of Poitiers (c. 1130-1215) succeeded Peter Comestor in the Chair of scholastic theology in 1169. His lectures were considered brilliant, and he displayed special zeal for poor students. He wrote commentaries on the Bible, many of them still unedited (on Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers). He is best known for a chronicle that exists in roll form, and he is said to have formulated the text in this way so

that students who could not afford books could read the text hung and displayed on the wall.

The *Historia Scholastica* is not a rare text. The *Repertorium Chronicarum* lists nearly 450 manuscripts dating from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. The present copy antedates the earliest printed editions of Augsburg, Strasbourg, and Utrecht, all of 1473-74 (see Goff P-458, 459, and 460). What is interesting about the present copy is that it comes from the milieu of the *Devotio Moderna*. Founded by Geert Groote in the fourteenth century, the *Devotio Moderna* or "Modern Devotion" comprises the Houses of the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life and the monasteries of the Augustinian Canons Regular of the Windesheim Congregation. All shared common beliefs expounded by Groote and his associates. They urged a return to the sources (the Bible, the early writings of the Church) in the vernacular languages. It is no surprise that Groote wrote a translation of the Book of Hours and that most Netherlandish Books of Hours are written in Dutch, in contrast to those from most other countries written in Latin. This interest in bringing religion to the people, making it understandable to the common man, extended to the Bible, of which there is a Middle Dutch translation accompanied by an interpolated translation of the *Historia Scholastica*. As a school text the *Historia Scholastica* sought to explain gaps in the narrative often in a homey way, and for this reason it must have had great appeal with circles influenced by the the *Devotio Moderna*. A large number of illuminated and non-illuminated manuscripts of this text, called the *Eerste historiebijbel* (or the First History Bible), are extant made mostly for the pious laity. Here then is a Latin manuscript for use within a monastery of the Windesheim Congregation to be used alongside the Dutch version.

LITERATURE

Hindman, Sandra. *Text and Illustration in Fifteenth-Century Illustrated Dutch Bibles* (Corpus Sacrae Scripturae Medii Aevi, Series Miscellanea, I, ed. C. C. de Bruin), Leiden, 1977.

Hyma, Albert. *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the Devotio Moderna (1380-1520)*, Grand Rapids, the Reformed Press, 1924.

Karp, Sandra Rae, "Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*: A Study in the Development of Literal Scriptural Exegesis, PhD. Thesis, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1978.

Post, R. R.. *The Modern Devotion, Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Leiden, 1968.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Repertorium Chronicarum (list of extant manuscripts)

www.chronica.msstate.edu/chronica/search.asp?type=chronicle&id=48387

Kirchenlexikon: Petrus Comestor

www.bautz.de/bbkl/p/petrus_com.shtml

Kirchenlexikon: Petrus Pictaviensis

www.bautz.de/bbkl/p/petrus_v_poi.shtml