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JOHANNES MARCHESINUS DE REGIO LEPIDI, *Mammothrectus super Bibliam*  
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper and parchment  
[The Netherlands, c. 1460-80]

170 folios, the innermost and outermost bifolia of each quire usually parchment, the rest paper (watermark similar to Briquet no. 15545, "Tête de cerf": Rhynsbourg, 1466; Hollande, 1465-1467; Anvers, 1469-1470; Utrecht, 1475), preceded and followed by two modern paper flyleaves, lacking some leaves, but the main text substantially complete (collation: i<sup>8-1</sup> [2<sup>nd</sup> leaf missing], ii<sup>12-1</sup> [2<sup>nd</sup> leaf missing], iii<sup>6-2</sup> [4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> leaves are missing], iv<sup>12-5</sup> [first 3 leaves and center bifolium missing], v-xi<sup>12</sup>, xii<sup>12-2</sup> (centre bifolium missing), xiii-xiv<sup>12</sup>, xv<sup>12-1</sup> [last leaf missing], xvi<sup>14-2</sup> [last 2 leaves cancelled]), catchwords, the main text with original foliation in red ink roman numerals, from "iiij" on f. 23r to "clvi" on f. 170r, four verticals and two horizontals ruled in faint leadpoint to guide the writing in two columns, ff. 8r-22v ruled in three columns (justification 215 x 160 mm.), written in brown ink in a neat informal yet sometimes calligraphic gothic script with typically 46-48 long lines of text per page, headings, running-titles, and underlining in red, capitals touched in red, one and two-line initials in red, the numerous prologues and books of the Bible with large initials with reserved designs, alternately blue with red calligraphic penwork or red with purple calligraphic penwork, frequent finely drawn human heads in profile formed on the ascenders of letters on the top line of text, sometimes colored (e.g. f. 77r), generally in good condition throughout, though with natural flaws in the parchment, a few instances of damp-staining, and normal signs of wear and use. Bound in NEAR-CONTEMPORARY DARK BROWN LEATHER OVER WOOD BOARDS (likely monastic) with a brass boss at each corner and in the centre of each cover, two clasps at the fore-edge, edges gilt, generally in sound condition, placed in a fitted box (Some restorations to the spine). Dimensions 285 x 210 mm.

This impressively large volume contains one of the most important Franciscan school texts of the later Middle Ages, the *Mammothrectus*, which served as a biblical glossary at the same time that it instructed young friars on the Scriptures. Popular in the early printing era, the *Mammothrectus* urgently needs a modern scholarly edition, especially since printed copies differ so markedly from the early manuscripts. Manuscript copies are evidently quite rare with no more than 20 recorded, only one in a North American collection.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written probably in the southern Netherlands; the watermark suggests that the paper was made c. 1465-75 in the general region of Flanders; inscribed in a fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century hand "Jo(hann)es Petr[...] / est possessor hu[ius] / libri" (f. 143r, outer margin, somewhat cropped).

2. J. R. Ritman, Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Hermetica, with his initials on fitted box: "B.P.H" and his bookplate on upper pastedown and shelfmark 7792.

## TEXT

ff. 1r-7, A mnemonic list of the books and chapters of the Bible, followed by brief verses on the Ten Commandments and Exodus, referring to Peter Riga's *Aurora*;

ff. 8-21v, Johannes Marchesinus, *Mammotrectus*, Alphabetical list of words, from "Abba" to "Vapulabit," each with a book and chapter reference; a leaf containing from the end of the "A" to the beginning of "C" is missing, as is one with the end of "V";

f. 22, Table of contents, with folio references keyed to the medieval foliation, starting imperfect with a listing of the contents of f. cxlix; the last two items, on f. clvi, are "De declaratione regule sancti Francisci" (the double word "regule" deleted by sub-punctuation);

ff. 23-117v, Johannes Marchesinus, *Mammotrectus* [Part I]: Exposition of the books of the Bible and common biblical prologues, heading, *Prologus*; incipit, "Desiderii mei ..." [underlined in red]; rubric, *Incipit liber Genesis. Capitulum primum*; incipit, "In principio creavit deum celum et terram ..." [underlined in red];

ff. 117v-122, Johannes Marchesinus, *Mammotrectus* [Part II]: Short pieces intended to aid understanding of the Bible, with headings in red, *De usibus hebreorum*, *De festivitibus legalibus*, *De octo generibus vestium sacerdotalium*, *De interpretatoribus*, and *De divinatione*, and a longer piece *De accentibus* (ff. 119-122);

ff. 122v-170v, Johannes Marchesinus, *Mammotrectus* [Part III]: Liturgical pieces, each arranged in the order of the Church calendar: ff. 122v-125v, *De cantu*, including St. Francis among the major feasts (ff. 124-124v); ff. 125v-131v, *Expositiones super ymnorum*; ff. 131v-159, *De legende sanctorum*, homilies for the Sanctoral, including a long section for St. Francis (ff. 141-145); ff. 159-161v, *Commune sanctorum*, homilies for the Common of Saints; ff. 161v-170, homilies for the Temporal; ff. 170-170v, On the Franciscan Rule, rubric, *De declaratione regule sancti Francisci*; incipit, "Saturus .i. . . seminaturus. . ."; explicit, "O eterna diligenter pro scriptore (?) / Explicit mammetrectus: deo gracias."

Johannes Marchesinus or Giovanni Marchesini (fl. later 13<sup>th</sup> c.) is an Italian Franciscan friar from Marchesio in the Reggio Emilia, who was active in the regions of Bologna and Ferrara. He was a lector in Imola (1275), Faventia (1270s), and Bologna. Numerous writings survive by him, including homiletic and pedagogical works. The most famous is the *Mammotrectus super Bibliam*, a theological manual for the clergy, in the form of a biblical glossary, composed most likely around 1300 (not 1466 as is often stated). Meaning literally "nourishment" or the "nourisher of the Bible," the title comes either from a passage in Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* or a passage in *Papias Grammaticus*. One of the most important Franciscan school texts of the later Middle Ages, the *Mammotrectus* was intended to provide young friars with a semantic, liturgical, and theological aid to understand the Scriptures.

The *Mammotrectus* is divided into three parts as follows: 1) explanations for difficult biblical words and passages with etymological and grammatical explanations; 2) a series of digressions on orthography, the accents of Latin words, the seven feasts of the Old Law, the clothing of priests, the principles of exegesis and translation, divination, the names of God according to the Hebrews, the qualities and properties of Scripture, and a short treatise on the four main ecumenical councils; and 3) liturgical pieces and related materials. The work closes with an exposition on the Franciscan Rule. Its arrangement follows the order of the books of the Bible and the Church year, and there is also at the beginning an alphabetical index. It is considered to be central to the study of medieval thematic lexica or dictionaries and reading aids.

The primary source of the *Mammotrectus* seems to have been the *Expositiones vocabulorum biblie*, or *Summa*, composed by the Franciscan William of Brito between c. 1250 and c. 1270. This is a collection of about 2500 articles, almost all taken from the Bible, most of which contain derivations, etymologies, and quotations. Unlike the *Mammotrectus*, Brito's *Summa* is arranged in strictly alphabetical order, making it a sort of dictionary of difficult biblical terms, providing derivations, etymologies, and quotations.

A measure of the popularity and utility of the *Mammotrectus* through the fifteenth century is the fact that Fust and Schoeffer issued the first incunable edition in Mainz in 1470 (Goff, M-232), and it was printed in the same year by the printer Helias Heliae, [Beromünster], 1470 (Goff, M-233). We hypothesize that clients who purchased the Gutenberg Bible and other biblical books in observance of the Bursfeld Reform may have needed a *Mammotrectus* to go with them. It was reprinted many times in the incunable era and the early sixteenth century (For an account of the early editions, see Berger, 1879, p. 31-42; see also Goff, M-232-254, for editions between 1470 and 1498). There is, however, no modern critical edition or an accurate list of surviving manuscripts.

Manuscripts of the text are evidently rare on the market. See Online Resources below for a list of 15 recorded manuscripts, all in continental European libraries, which brings up to date the earlier list provided by Berger (1879, pp. 31-42). In addition, De Ricci and Wilson record one copy in North American collections, no. 1967 (Columbus [Ohio], Ohio State Library, Capital Building); none are in the Supplement by Faye and Bond. Apart from the present manuscript, only two copies have changed hands in the in the last hundred years. One copy appeared at London, Sotheby's, 21 June, 1988, lot 74, and was resold a decade later from the Schøyen Collection, 1 December 1998, lot 75. Another copy appears in multiple sales at Hartung and Christie's. In short, three copies have changed hands in the last hundred years. The importance of the text in the development of aids to biblical study, coupled with the fact that most of the early printed editions differ markedly from the earliest manuscripts, underscore the necessity of a modern critical edition.

## LITERATURE

Allen, P. S. *The Age of Erasmus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1914.

Berger, S. *La Bible au XVIe siècle*, Paris, 1879, pp. 15-28.

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Collison, Robert L. *A History of Foreign-Language Dictionaries*, London, A. Deutsch, 1982.

Kleinhans, A. "De studio Sacrae Scripturae in Ordine Fratrum Minorum saeculo XIII," *Antonianum* 7 (1932), pp. 438-439.

Sandys, J. E. *A History of Classical Scholarship, I: from the sixth century B. C. to the end of the Middle Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Cambridge, 1921.

Wadding, L. *Scriptores ordinis minorum...*, Rome, 1906, p. 166.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

On Johannes Marchesinus de Regio

[http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/franautm.htm#\\_Toc409561347](http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/franautm.htm#_Toc409561347)

Digital e-text of *Mammotrectus*, c. 1478

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k608937.notice>