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Vulgate Bible
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
England, ca. 1230-50

i (paper pastedown) + 623 + ii (parchment) + i (paper pastedown), early fourteenth-century (?) foliation in roman numerals, top, outer corner, now very faint, and modern foliation in pencil, top, outer corner 1-285, leaving the first leaf unnumbered, and then every ten folios, bottom, outer corner, on very thin, translucent parchment, (collation, i⁴ [unnumbered leaf and ff. 1-3] ii²⁰ [-1, before f. 4, and -5, before f. 7, with loss of text] iii-vi²⁰ vii¹⁸ viii²⁰ ix²² x-xiv²⁰ xv¹² xvi-xix²⁰ xx¹⁶ xxi-xxii²⁰ xxiii¹² xxiv²⁰ xxv³ [structure uncertain, ff. 422-424] xxvi-xxviii²⁰ xxix¹⁸ xxx¹⁴ xxxi-xxxiii²⁰ xxxiv⁸ xxxv¹⁸ xxxvi²⁰), missing two leaves, with the beginning of the General Prologue and Genesis (presumably both included an illuminated initial), no signatures or catchwords, written below the top line in a very small, precise gothic bookhand by at least two scribes in two columns of thirty-eight lines, ruled in lead with single full-length vertical bounding lines, the top ruled line sometimes full-across, and with an extra set of rules in the top margin for the running titles (justification 84-83 x 57-55 mm.), some guide letters and numbers for rubricator, very bottom margin, majuscules within the text usually daubed in red, red and blue running titles and roman numerals numbering the chapters, chapters begin with two-line blue initials with very fine red pen decoration extending at least half the column, and often longer, biblical books begin with three- to five-line red and blue puzzle initials, or blue initials with decorative white motifs, with red and blue pen decoration extending half- to full-column in length. Bound in a fine sixteenth-century gold tooled and stamped binding, in dark brown leather over pasteboard, gold-tooled and stamped on the front and back covers with gilt cornerpiece blocks of eastern-styled arabesque ornament with vines and aldine leaves, forming a central diamond-shaped field, gold-stamped with rows of small rosettes, spine with four raised bands, decorated with simple gold fillets and small rosettes, once fastened with red silk ties, two holes remain front and back cover, with a fragment of the bottom tie, the style of the binding suggests an English origin, but the pastedowns are partial leaves from an early printed book (sixteenth-century?) in Dutch, corners and top edges worn, exposing the pasteboard, spine with a crack running down the center (f. 3, small rectangle cut-away, with no loss of text, beginning leaves are darkened, with no loss of legibility, occasional stains and marks from water in the margins, and small slits in the outer margins, but overall, in excellent condition, with the text on every folio beautifully preserved and legible). Dimensions 120 x 83 mm.

This is a very fine example of a thirteenth-century pocket Bible from England. Small "portable" Bibles containing the complete Old and New Testaments were one of the greatest achievements of thirteenth-century book production. Although Parisian examples have been more thoroughly studied, England was also an important center for the production of thirteenth-century Bibles, including very small Bibles, beginning in the 1230s (approximately 10-15% of the extant Bibles are

of English origin). This Bible is one of the smallest examples surviving, measuring just 4 ¾ inches in height (120 x 83 mm.).

PROVENANCE

Copied in England, and datable between 1230-50, based on the script and style of the initials. Note the exclusive use of blue initials with red pen decoration throughout the volume (instead of the usual alternating red and blue initials), which is a characteristic only found in some thirteenth-century English manuscripts (see François Avril and Patricia Stirnemann, *Manuscrits enluminés d'origine insulaire VII^e – XX^e siècle* [Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1987], p. 49). There is little about the Bible that reveals where in England it was copied, or for whom, but the texts added before Genesis suggests it was owned by someone who was studying the Bible.

Bound in the sixteenth-century in a very fine gold stamped and tooled binding, possibly English, but with fragments of a sixteenth-century (?) Dutch book used as pastedowns, suggesting it may have been in the Netherlands.

TEXT

ff. [Unnumbered leaf before f. 1, verso] -3, *Liber genesis*. i. De creatione empirei celi et quatuor elementi. De prima mundi ... l. De morte iacob. ; Gen, Ex, Le. Numeri ... Apocalipsi [List of the books of the Bibles (names abbreviated) in the order of the Paris Bible: f. 3v, blank].

Summary of selected Old Testament books, arranged by modern chapters, using headings from the chapters of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*; included are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1-4 kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Tobit, Judith and Daniel. These texts were added to the Bible very early, perhaps by its original owner.

ff. 4-491v, Old Testament: f. 4, [General prologue, beginning imperfectly] //dum prudentem interrogant [Stegmüller 284]; f. 6, [Prologue to Genesis] Desiderii mei [Stegmüller 285]; f. 7, Genesis, beginning imperfectly in 3:1: "//deus ut non comederetis ...; f. 32, Exodus; f. 53v, Leviticus; f. 67v, Numbers; f. 88, Deuteronomy; f. 105, Joshua; f. 118, Judges; f. 131, Ruth; f. 132v, 1 Kings; f. 150, 2 Kings; f. 163, 3 Kings; f. 176, 4 Kings; f. 192, 1 Chronicles; f. 206, 2 Chronicles; f. 223, Ezra; f. 228, Nehemiah; f. 235v, Esther; f. 240, Tobit; f. 245v, Judith; f. 254, Job, f. 266, Psalms; f. 294, Proverbs; f. 305v, Ecclesiastes; f. 310, Canticles; f. 312, Wisdom; f. 320v, Ecclesiasticus; f. 343v, Isaiah; f. 369, Jeremiah; f. 400v, Baruch; f. 404, Ezekiel, ending imperfectly on f. 421v at 36:27; f. 422, Daniel, beginning imperfectly at Daniel 11:21, and ending f. 424v, mid col. A, remainder blank; f. 425, [Prologue to Minor Prophets] Non idem ordo est [Stegmüller 500]; f. 425, Hosea; f. 429, Joel; f. 430v, Amos; f. 433v, Obadiah; f. 434, Jonah; f. 435, Micah; f. 437v, Nahum; f. 438v, Habakkuk; f. 439v, Zephaniah; f. 441, Haggai; f. 442, Zechariah; f. 447v, Malachi; f. 449, Ezekiel, completing text from f. 421v; f. 456v, Daniel, 1-11:21 (completed above, beginning on f. 422); f. 465, 1 Maccabees; f. 480, 2 Maccabees.

ff. 491v-619v, New Testament: f. 491v, Matthew; f. 508v, Luke; f. 526, Mark; f. 536, John; f. 549, Romans; f. 555v, 1 Corinthians; f. 562, 2 Corinthians; f. 566, Galatians; f. 568v, Ephesians; f. 570v, Philippians; f. 573, 1 Thessalonians; f. 573v, 2 Thessalonians; f. 574, Colossians; f. 575v, 1 Timothy; f. 577v, 2 Timothy; f. 578v, Titus; f. 579v, Philemon; f. 579v, Hebrews; f. 585, Acts; f. 604

[Prologue to Catholic Epistles] Non ordo est [Stegmüller 809]; f. 604, James; f. 606, 1 Peter; f. 607v, 2 Peter; f. 608, 1 John; f. 610v, 2 John; f. 611, 3 John; f. 611, Jude; f. 611v, Apocalypse.

ff. 620-622v, Lamentations.

Small, portable Bibles, including the complete text of the Old and New Testaments, are one of the great innovations of the thirteenth-century and transformed the use and ownership of the Bible. The first portable Bibles may have been copied in Paris at the end of the 1220s or early 1230s, but English examples appear at almost the same time. The Bible described here is exceptionally small, and only a handful of examples of comparable size can be cited, including Paris, BnF, MS lat 219 (discussed below), and another English Bible now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Auct D.5.8., 127 x 85 (87 x 56 mm.).

The text of English thirteenth-century Bibles is often quite distinct from contemporary Bibles from Paris. This is an “up to date” example of a thirteenth-century Bible; its format and the chapters used to divide the biblical text, which differ only slightly from those used today, are hallmarks of the new thirteenth-century Bible. As is common in thirteenth-century Bibles copied in England, its text shows a reliance on local exemplars; it is not a copy of the more well-known Paris Bible.

The text of this Bible presents a number of interesting features; note that it does not include the Prayer of Manasses (Stegmüller 93,2) following 2 Chronicles (included in many thirteenth-century Bibles including the Paris Bible); it also includes only Ezra and Nehemiah, and lacks the book usually known as 2 Ezra in thirteenth-century Bibles, and 3 Ezra by modern scholars (Stegmüller 94,1). Ecclesiasticus does not include the Prayer of Solomon, “Et declinavit Solomon genua sua ...,” printed in the modern Vulgate as chapter 52 of Ecclesiasticus. (see *Biblia sacra*, p., 1095). Lamentations was omitted after Jeremiah, but Jeremiah concludes with the opening paragraph found in some later biblical recensions; the text of Lamentations was included after the Apocalypse. Also omitted here is the *Interpretation of Hebrew Names*, an extremely common text in thirteenth-century Bibles.

The order of the books differs slightly from the Paris Bible: following Nehemiah in this book are Esther, Tobit and Judith; the Gospels are arranged Matthew, Luke, Mark and then John, and in the Pauline Epistles, Philippians is followed immediately by 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and then Colossians (in the Paris Bible Colossians precedes 1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Bibles throughout the Middle Ages included non-biblical prologues before many of the biblical books. These prologues were of diverse origins; some were by Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate, some predated Jerome, and others were more modern. The particular prologues included varied widely in manuscripts of the medieval Vulgate. The omission of almost all of the prologues is intriguing; included here are only the General prologue to the Old Testament, “Frater Ambrosius” (Stegmüller 284), the prologue to Genesis, “Desiderii mei” (Stegmüller 285), the prologue to the minor prophets, “Non idem ordo est” (Stegmüller 500), and the prologue to the Catholic Epistles, “Non ita ordo” (Stegmüller 809). Even the beginning of Ecclesiasticus, often copied as a prologue in medieval Bibles, is omitted here, although Luke’s Gospel does begin with Luke 1:1-4, here copied as the beginning of the Gospel, but elsewhere, often treated as a prologue.

Why were most of the prologues omitted? And why were the few prologues that were included chosen? It is possible that the aim was simply to reduce the amount of text and thus make the volume smaller. One might also conjecture that only these prologues were included because they were considered to be Jerome's (although many of the prologues circulating at this time as Jerome's were omitted). Although the reason why so few prologues were included here is unclear, it is interesting that this is a feature found in a number of English thirteenth-century Bibles, which omit all prologues or include only a few (although none the exact prologues found in this Bible), including one of special interest, Paris, BnF, MS lat. 219. MS lat. 219, which is also English and has been dated to the second quarter or middle of the thirteenth century (see François Avril and Patricia Stirnemann, *Manuscrits enluminés d'origine insulaire VII^e – XX^e siècle* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1987), has many striking similarities with the Bible described here. It includes only Stegmüller 284, 285 and a prologue to Job, Stegmüller 677. Like our Bible, all the initials preceding chapters are blue, and it is almost identical in dimensions, measuring 114 x 78 (84-83 x 54) mm., with two columns of 38 lines. MS lat 219, unlike our Bible, includes painted initials throughout; the similarities may be accidental, but are intriguing.

Despite its small size, this Bible was clearly designed to be read, and its text has been carefully corrected in a contemporary hand. The corrections vary from single words to phrases that were omitted by the scribe, and are entered in a formal script in the margins, sometimes boxed in red, and clearly tied to the proper place in the text. One major error resulted in a mistake in the order of the Prophets; Ezekiel ends imperfectly, followed by the end of Daniel, the Minor Prophets, the remainder of Ezekiel and the beginning of Daniel. The Bible was copied by at least two scribes, and changes of hands often occur at the beginning of new quires; a line or two are left blank in a number of instances before these changes of scribe, suggesting the scribes may have been working simultaneously. Nonetheless, neither the quire structure nor changes in hand explain how this curious mistake in the order occurred. Notes in a later hand instruct readers how to find the sections of Ezekiel and Daniel in the correct order.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Latin Bible:

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/index.html>