

[Bible] New Testament Epistles; Masses of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Five Wounds of Christ

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Southern Netherlands (Bruges?), 1470s

*i* (paper) + *ii* (parchment, contemporary with book block) + 247 + *ii* (contemporary parchment) + *i* (paper) on parchment (excellent quality), foliated: 7 unnumbered leaves + 230 (original foliation with errors: 1-154, \*156-176, \*178-232, and with f. 145 and 154 unnumbered) + 10 (modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, 233-242), complete (collation i<sup>s</sup> [-8, cancelled blank] ii-xxxi<sup>s</sup>), horizontal catchwords in quires 1-8 (through f. 56v), vertical catchwords in the remaining quires, quire and leaf signature in the very bottom outer corner, mostly trimmed, red rubrics, ruled in pale red ink with the top and bottom rules full across and with an extra set of rules in the upper margin for the running titles, full-length vertical bounding lines and with rectangular panels ruled in the outer margins for panel borders that were never completed (justification 83-80 x 57-53 mm.), written in a careful humanistic book hand with some gothic features in nineteen long lines with the opening words of each text copied in capitals, first text copied in two columns of twenty-five lines, major divisions within the text are marked by parchment knots covered in beige, red, or blue textiles, which protrude beyond the fore edge, red rubrics, running titles, and original foliation, occasional majuscules within the text filled with pale yellow, alternately gold and blue paragraph marks, 1-line alternately blue and gold initials with red or black penwork, 2- to 3-line gold initials with delicate black penwork, two 5-line gold initials with black penwork: f. 194v and f. 230, EIGHTEEN ILLUMINATED INITIALS, 6- to 5-line white-patterned dark pink initials infilled with rinceaux with blue stems and blue or pink trilobed flowers on gold, on notched highly polished gold grounds edged in black, with gold and blue acanthus with gold rayed disks and/or short floral sprays and occasionally strawberries on black hairlines extending from the initials at the top and bottom (ff. 10, 44, 76, 96, 107, 118, 126, 134, 141, 145, 155, 161v, 165v, 167v, 203v, 212v, 218v, 228v), in very fine, almost pristine condition, stain in the upper margin f. 144, slight damp stain lower margin ff. 230-232. Bound in eighteenth-century mottled brown calf over pasteboard, smooth spine with leather label with title, "EPIS<repaired>L/ Per T<repair>N./ ET EPIST.D.SAN/ MSS.," tooled in gold bordering the label and four gilt fleurons, edges gilt and gauffered, green silk ribbon place marker, spine repaired, but overall in excellent condition, fitted green leather and marbled paper box with title in gilt on spine, "EPISTOLAS/ CANONICAS/ 1475." Dimensions 155 x 105 mm.

An exceptional and unusual manuscript in all ways. Biblical manuscripts in the Middle Ages very rarely include only the New Testament Epistles. Fifteenth-century Bibles overall are not common, and Bibles from this period copied in a humanist script (from Bruges no less) are rarer still. This is a legible and very beautiful book made to order for an individual of wealth and stature. It is one that will bring not only pleasure to a modern owner but will reward scholarly study and may challenge our ideas of how the Bible was used in the fifteenth century.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written and illuminated in the Southern Netherlands, very likely in Bruges in the second half of the fifteenth century, probably in the 1470s. No later contemporary or later marginal notes; a very few contemporary corrections to the text (e.g. f. 119v).
2. Contemporary (added) inscription, verso of the last flyleaf: "1477. Virgo maria brugis bis nona <intrat?> aprilis. Et cesar pro nato tunc hanc poscens bene <grato>," perhaps a reference to the proxy marriage between Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian in April 1477.

3. Belonged to Paul Houtmaert ("pauli houtmart"); his ownership inscription and motto, "Flecte voluntatem" in a fifteenth-century hand on the front parchment flyleaf, f. i. We have not identified this Paul Houtmaert, or his nephew Jan (see below), in other sources, but it was not an uncommon name. For example, a Willem Houtmaert was a bookseller in Brussels; in 1499 a copy of Verard's edition of Froissart's Chronicle was bought from him for Philip the Fair (Wijsman, 2010). In 1481 a Willem Houtmaert served as a witness in Bruges, Gilliodts-Van Severen, 1904).
  4. Note in Dutch and Latin in another hand follows, now almost completely erased, front flyleaf, f. i, recording the gift of this book to Paul Houtmaert's nephew Jan Houtmaert, and then to the Carthusian charterhouse of Genadedal (*Vallis gratie* in Latin, or Val-de-Grâce in French); according to another inscription in Dutch on f. 242v, this gift was made on January 9, 1507: "Anno 1507 9 In Jannario zo gaf Jan Houtmart saligher memorie dir <?> in testament dit bandi sartenesis butten Brugghe ..."
- Genadedal, located about a mile outside the city walls of Bruges in Sint-Kruis, was founded in 1318, prospering with generous support from the dukes of Burgundy and the patrician families of Bruges. The Carthusians retained their reputation for holiness in the later Middle Ages and were held in high regard by the laity. This Bruges Charterhouse is perhaps most well-known today as the home of the Virgin and Child commissioned from Jan van Eyck now in the Frick Collection in New York, and the "Exeter Madonna" by Petrus Christus now in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (Capron et al., 2018), both commissioned by the prior Jan Vos (elected prior in 1441). The monastery was destroyed in 1578, and later rebuilt within the city walls; it was secularized in 1783.
5. Partially-erased(?) painted pilgrim badge on f. 1, depicting the Holy Cross with the letters 'S' and 'A'.
  6. Private Spanish collection, "Torrelaguna C.947 D.22," modern pencil, f. 1.

## TEXT

[seven unnumbered leaves before f. 1], *Incipiunt cotationes [sic] epistolarum pauli per totum annum*, incipit, "Dominica prima aduentus domini, Scientes quia hora est. Finis. Dominum ihesum christum. Ad. Ro. 13. Feria quarta. Patientes estote usque ad. Finis. In nomine domini. Iacobi v. ...; [verso, fifth unnumbered folio], *Incipiunt quotationes epistolarum de sanctis*, incipit, In die sancti andree. Corde creditor ad iustitiam. Fi. Vrba eorum. Romanos x ...; [verso, seventh unnumbered leaf blank but ruled];

Epistle readings for the Mass listed by their opening and closing words, biblical book and chapter number, for the Temporale from the first Sunday in Advent through the twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost (with Trinity Sunday, but Sundays are counted following Pentecost), Sanctorale from Andrew to Theodore, including Francis, and the Common of Saints.

ff. 1-43, *Prologus generalis* ... , incipit, "Epistole ad romanos causa ... [Stegmüller 651]"; [f. 3], *Secundus prologus in epistolas pauli*, incipit, "Primum queritur ... [Stegmüller 670]"; [f. 6v], *Prologus in epistola ad romanos*, incipit, "Romani sunt qui ex iudeis ... [Stegmüller 674]"; [f. 10v], *Argumentum in epistola ad romanos*, incipit, Romani sunt in partibus ... [Stegmüller 677]"; [f. 11], Romans;

- ff. 43v-76, *Incipit Argumentum in prima epistola ad corinthios*, incipit, "Corinthii sunt achaici ... [Stegmüller 685]; [f. 44], 1 Corinthians;
- ff. 76-96, *Argumentum in secunda ad corinthios*, incipit, "Post actam penitentiam ... [Stegmüller 699]"; 2 Corinthians;
- ff. 96-107, *Argumentum in epistola ad galathas*, incipit, "Galathę sunt gręci ... [Stegmüller 707]"; [f. 96], Galatians;
- ff. 107-118, *Incipit argumentum in epistola pauli Ad ephesios feliciter*, incipit, "Ephesii sunt asiani ... [Stegmüller 715]"; [f. 107], Ephesians;
- ff. 118-125v, *Argumentum in epistola ad philippenses*, incipit, "Philippenses sunt macedones ... [Stegmüller 728]"; [f. 118], Philippians;
- ff. 126-133v, *Incipit argumentum in epistola pauli ad colocenses*, incipit, "Colocenses et hi ... [Stegmüller 736]"; [f. 126], 1 Colossians;
- ff. 133v-140v, *Argumentum in prima epistola ad thessalonicenses*, incipit, "Thessalonicenses sunt macedones ... [Stegmüller 747]"; [f. 134] 1 Thessalonians;
- ff. 140v-145v, *Argumentum in secunda epistola ad thessalonicenses* incipit, "Ad thessalonicenes secundam scribit ... [Stegmüller 752]"; [f. 141] 2 Thessalonians;
- ff. 145v-155v, *Incipit argumentum in prima epistola ad thimotheum*, incipit, "Timotheum instruit ... [Stegmüller 765]"; [f. 146], 1 Timothy;
- ff. 155v-161, *Argumentum in secunda epistola ad thimotheum*, incipit, "Item thimotheo ... [Stegmüller 772]"; [f. 156], 2 Timothy;
- ff. 161-165, *Argumentum in epistola ad tytum*, incipit, "Titum commonefacit ... [Stegmüller 780]"; [f. 161v], Titus;
- ff. 165-167, *Argumentum in epistola ad philemonem*, incipit, "Philemoni familiares ... [Stegmüller 783]"; [f. 165v], Philemon;
- ff. 167-193, *Argumentum in epistola ad hebreos*, incipit, "In primis dicendum ... [Stegmüller 793]"; [f. 167v], Hebrews;
- ff. 193v-203, *Argumentum hyeronimi in omnium epistolas canonicas* incipit, "Non ita est ordo ... [Stegmüller 809]"; [f. 194v], *Argumentum in epistola iacobi*, incipit, "Iacobus apostolus ... [Stegmüller 806]"; [f. 194v], James;
- ff. 203-212v, *Incipit argumentum in prima epistola petri apostoli*, incipit, "Discipulos saluatoris ... [Stegmüller 812]"; [f. 203v], 1 Peter;

ff. 212v-218, *Argumentum in secunda epistola petri*, incipit, "Simon petrus ... [Stegmüller 818]"; [f. 212v], 2 Peter;

ff. 218-227, *Argumentum in prima epistola iohannis*, incipit, "Nationem [sic] uerbi ... [Stegmüller 822]"; f. 218v, 1 John;

ff. 227-228v, *Argumentum in secunda epistola iohannis*, incipit, "Usque adeo ... [Stegmüller 823]"; f. 227, 2 John;

ff. 228v-229v, *Argumentum in tertia epistola Iohannis*, incipit, "Gaium pietatis ... [Stegmüller 824]"; f. 228v, 3 John;

ff. 229v-230, *Argumentum in epistola iude*, incipit, "Iudas apostolus ... [Stegmüller 825]"; f. 230, Jude; [f. 230v], blank;

ff. 233-242, *Incipit missa de nomine ihesu ...*; [f. 237v], *Officium quinque plagarum christi quod Iohannis pape xxii composuit concedens cuilibet dicenti confesso et contritio ducentos annos indulgentiarum ...*;

Proper texts for the Mass of the Name of Jesus, and the Mass of the Five Wounds of Christ.

This is, unquestionably, a luxury book, copied and illuminated with skill and expensive materials. It is also a carefully organized book. The care with which the biblical texts are presented is exceptional. For example, the first two prologues to the Pauline Epistles are labelled "prologus generalis" and "alius prologus generalis" in the running titles, and their text is laid out so that sections pertaining to each epistle is clearly delineated. The running title to Romans is "prologus particularis." The choice of script is equally noteworthy. There were certainly scribes outside of Italy who could write good humanist script (see Rundle, 2017, Trapp, 1975, for humanist scribes working in England, some of them from the Low Countries). The choice to use this script, so closely associated with the humanist revival of the classics for biblical texts, however, is striking and unusual. This must have been a special commission or presentation copy for someone of wealth and high stature, very likely someone who was well educated and perhaps an active scholar.

As a biblical manuscript this book is unusual. Fifteenth-century Bibles certainly exist, but they are not very common. Most fifteenth-century Bibles from the Low Countries, moreover, including those associated with Windesheim and the Brethren of the Common Life, were large, multi-volume codices. Our manuscript could not be more different than those books. Manuscripts including just the New Testament Epistles, moreover, are extremely rare in the Middle Ages as a whole. (One illuminated example from Italy has been described on our site, formerly Les Enluminures, TM 862; glossed Bibles including the Epistles and commentaries were copied, but they are a very different type of book than our manuscript). Small in size, including only the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, exquisitely written and illuminated, this was a book for personal use. The framing of the biblical texts with liturgical texts – the list of the Epistle readings for the Mass according to the liturgical year at the beginning, and at the end, two votive Masses (for the Name of Jesus and the Five Wounds of Christ) – suggests a private and devotional use of the Holy Scriptures, significantly still in a liturgical context, that stands at odds with many of our usual preconceptions as to how the Bible was read in the Middle Ages.

## LITERATURE

Capron, Emma, M. Ainsworth and T.-H. Borchert. *The Charterhouse of Bruges: Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus, and Jan Vos*, New York: 2018.

De Grauwe, Jan. "Chartreuse du Val-de-Grâce à Bruges," *Monasticon Belge*, dl. 3: *Province de Flandre Occidentale*, afl. 4, Liège, 1978, 1191-1230.

Gilliodts-Van Severen, L. *Cartulaire de l'ancienne estaple de Bruges: Recueil de documents concernant le commerce intérieur et maritime, les relations internationales et l'histoire économique de cette ville*. Bruges, 1904, p. 238.

Rundle, David. *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain: The English Quattrocento*, Cambridge studies in palaeography and codicology, Cambridge and New York, 2017.

Trapp, J. B. "Notes on Manuscripts Written by Peter Meghen," *Book Collector* 24 (1975), pp. 80-96.

Wijsman, Hanno. "Philippe le Beau et les livres: Rencontre entre une époque et une personnalité," in *Books in Transition at the Time of Philip the Fair*, Turnhout, 2010, pp. 17-91, at p. 59.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Chartreuse du Val-de-Grâce à Bruges, Cartusiana.org  
<http://www.cartusiana.org/node/2912>

Repertorium biblicum medii aevi (digital version of Stegmüller )  
<http://repbib.uni-trier.de/cgi-bin/rebihome.tcl>

Latin Vulgate online with English translation  
<http://www.drbo.org/lvb/>

David Rundle, "*Littera antiqua* as a cosmopolitan enterprise," *Bonae Litterae*. Occasional writing from David Rundle  
<https://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/2018/01/25/littera-antiqua-as-a-cosmopolitan-enterprise/>

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