

ALEXANDER OF VILLEDIEU, *Doctrinale puerorum* (*Teaching Manual for Children*)
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Italy, dated 1374

70 folios on parchment (palimpsest: ff. 1-26, 29-71), foliation in Arabic numbers in a near contemporary hand, upper outer rectos, [1-3] 4-54, 56-71, complete (collation i^s ii⁶ iii^s iv¹⁰ v-viii^s ix^s [-1 and 2; cancelled with no loss of text]), horizontal catchwords, lower center versos, ruled in hardpoint with up to four vertical bounding lines on the left and two on the right, pricking in upper, outer, and lower margins (justification 153-165 x 80-110 mm.), written in brown ink in two gothic bookhands: (1) ff. 1-38, in a widely spaced, somewhat conservative script, on eighteen to twenty long lines, (2) ff. 38v-71v, in a more compressed script on twenty long lines, capitals highlighted in red, guide marks and letters for paraps and initials, one-line paraps drawn in brown ink or painted in red, one- to three-line initials in red or blue, sometimes with added faces (see f. 43), one five-line blue initial with red pen decoration (f. 1, now damaged), corrections added in several different hands (see ff. 11v, 24v, 26v, and 30 for example), marginal and interlinear glosses added to first scribe's stint in a number of hands, including that of the first scribe (see f. 12), one glossator continued in the second scribe's stint (see ff. 43v-45), dark brown staining on ff. 1, the inner margin of 50v-51, 55v-56, and 70v from nineteenth-century treatment with a chemical reagent rendering ff. 1 and 70v nearly unreadable, large tears in the lower outer corners of ff. 1 and 70, with a few words lost on f. 1, tearing in the upper margins of ff. 2-3, 70 and outer margins of ff. 58-59, tear with visible stitch holes in lower margin of f. 27, fraying of the lower outer corners of ff. 1-14, parchment patch in the lower margin of f. 10v on account of defect in parchment, bite marks in upper margins of ff. 3-8 and outer margins of ff. 3-6, 35-39, 41-46, and 57, some localized illegibility on account of rubbing (ff. 16-17, 18v, 21, 22v) and staining (ff. 19, 60, 66v-68), otherwise in good condition. Bound in an early vellum wallet binding with flap extending from the lower cover around the fore-edge and fastening in the front with leather ties, long-stitching visible at the top and bottom of the spine, inscription "Conduitori" written in brown italic script on upper cover, a fragmentary leaf from a printed liturgical book serves as inner support or protection for the parchment leaves, some staining of the vellum but otherwise in very fine condition. Dimensions 234-243 x 175-180 mm.

Signed, dated, and complete, this is an important survival of a significant educational text. The *Doctrinale*, a grammar text in verse, served as a mnemonic guide to Latin for medieval schoolchildren. Very few complete copies have been on the market in the last fifty years. The text of this manuscript includes rare emendations by a thirteenth-century grammarian, as well as numerous glosses in a number of hands. It is a palimpsest, copied on reused parchment, and its many other traces of use, both before and after it was copied, make this a fascinating object.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied by two scribes, both probably working in Italy, judging from their script and the ruling of the parchment, to say nothing of the parchment's earlier use (see below).

The second scribe dated the manuscript 1374 (f. 71v) and signed his name, "Petrus Teotuma" from "Alemania superiori," that is, Southern Germany (f. 71v). "Teotuma" is almost certainly a Greek translation of his German surname. Given that 'theos' means 'god' and 'thuma' denotes 'victim,' 'sacrifice,' or 'offer' in Greek, "Teotuma" may be a calque of a name containing the German words 'Gott' and 'Bieten' or 'Opfer'. This manufactured Greek name may have been a way for the scribe to advertise his learning.

Nearly every leaf of this manuscript is a palimpsest, repurposed from two legal manuscripts and turned so that the under-text is perpendicular to the text of the *Doctrinale*. One of these earlier manuscripts was a copy of Justinian's *Institutions*, copied in two columns in a thirteenth-century hand and surrounded by marginal commentary. The other was a copy of the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, copied in a fourteenth-century hand. Judging from the rounded scripts employed in these manuscripts, it seems quite likely that they originated in Italy.

2. The sixteenth-century(?) Italian inscription on the front cover suggests that this manuscript either stayed in Italy or had returned there by this date.

TEXT

ff. 1-71v, beginning almost illegibly, "SCribere clericulis paro doctrinale [...?] / ... Doctrinale dei uirtute ["peregi" crossed out] iuuate [sic] peregi / Grates reddo tibi genitor deus et tibi christe / Nate dei deus atque tibi deus alitus alme / Quos tres personas in idem credo deitatis / Qua sator eternus serit et gerit omnia per quem / Fecit Alexander opus hoc quo lima iohannes / Supplet defectus operis dent huic operosi / Latores [sic] operam libri plantaria seruent / Neque [sic] corrigitur detractio subtrahit ulla / Exiguas plantas manus indiscreta reuellit. *Explicit liber doctinalis per manus petri teotuma de alemania superiori. Finis adest uere scriptor uult precium [habere?].* [at the bottom of the page:] *Anno domini millesimo CCClxxiiij [1374]*".

Alexander of Villedieu wrote his *Doctrinale puerorum* at the end of the twelfth century, c. 1199. A 2645-line verse treatise written in Latin hexameters, the *Doctrinale* sums up the rules of Latin grammar and versification for the instruction of school boys studying the complex language.

A teacher and a poet, Alexander of Villedieu (b. c. 1150-c. 1170, d. c. 1240-c. 1250) was born at Villedieu-les-Poêles, in Normandy, studied at the University of Paris, and later taught in the service of the Bishop of Dol, in Brittany. For his *Doctrinale*, he drew on grammatical authorities from antiquity like Donatus and Priscian, while taking into account the changes Latin had undergone in the intervening centuries. He innovated in setting his treatise in verse so that it would be easier for readers to memorize its contents. While he is best known for the *Doctrinale*, Alexander also produced several other teaching works. These include a rhymed glossary, now mostly lost, as well as a verse summary of the Bible and a short verse treatise on mathematics.

Alexander's *Doctrinale* achieved meteoric success, becoming the classic Latin grammar book in schools and, later, universities. It survives partially or in its entirety in over 400 manuscripts (Bursill-Hall, 1977, pp. 6-12). From the thirteenth century onward it was frequently transmitted with the emendations and additions of glossators. In fact, of the 115 known print editions of the *Doctrinale* produced before the end of the fifteenth-century (GW 933-967, 982-1029, 1031-1048, 1122-1130, 1135-1136, 1184-1186), 80 of contained added commentary. (Editions containing only parts of the *Doctrinale*, with or without commentary, bring the total number of incunable editions to a staggering 274.) Despite its popularity, complete copies of the *Doctrinale* are relatively rare on the market; the Schoenberg Database lists only one in the last thirty years and only three in the last fifty.

The *Doctrinale* was often divided into three or four parts, all of which circulated on their own as well as together. The first and most substantial part, Part I (chapters 1-7) addresses Latin

declensions and conjugations, while Part II (chapters 8-9) deals with agreement and syntax, part III (chapter 10) covers prosody, and part IV (chapters 11-12) concludes with stress placement, figures of speech, and faults of style. The present manuscript's complete copy of the *Doctrinale* does not consistently demarcate these subdivisions, but its glosses reveal that early users were particularly concerned with the intricacies of Latin inflections covered in Part I. The opening of Part III also received the particular attention of early glossators.

This manuscript represents a significant addition to the *Doctrinale* manuscript corpus. Not only does this volume preserve a complete, carefully corrected, and often heavily glossed copy of the text, but it exhibits some notable variations from the sole critical edition of the *Doctrinale* (Reichling, 1893). Some of these were adjusted by the book's readers. For instance, other hands filled a number of lacunae which seem to have resulted from defects in the original scribe's exemplar. More interesting, though, are the apparent additions to Alexander's text, some of which were canceled by readers (for example, a line has been crossed out on f. 7v), but many of which were left standing. These additions to the text, along with the rich glosses that fill the manuscript's margins, would be well worth studying alongside other manuscripts in the *Doctrinale* tradition.

These additions include at least one early emendation by the thirteenth-century grammarian, John of Garland (c. 1180-c. 1252). The text concludes with six lines of verse appended to Alexander's text that refer to ways in which that scholar, a vocal critic of Alexander's *Doctrinale*, revised the text (for more on John of Garland's revisions of the *Doctrinale*, see Reichling, 1893, pp. liii-lx; Colker, 1974; and Hunt, 1991). Colker (1974) has identified six other manuscripts containing this added conclusion (for the list, see Bursill-Hall, 1976, p. 161), as well as a seven-line added preface that does not appear to have been included in the present manuscript. Comparison with these manuscripts may reveal other commonalities identifying this as a heretofore unknown witness of John of Garland's revised *Doctrinale*.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Alexandre de Villedieu, *Arlima: archives de littérature du moyen âge*, 2014

http://www.arlima.net/ad/alexandre_de_villedieu.html

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