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Bible, with Prologues attributed to Saint Jerome and the Interpretation of Hebrew Names,
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
[northeastern Italy, Padua-Venice, c. 1250-1275]

391 folios, on parchment, (i¹⁰, ii-v¹², vi¹⁴ [lacking one folio between ff. 66v-67], vii-xxxii¹², xxxiii⁴), written in a double column, on 60 lines, written in brown ink in an extremely small gothic bookhand (approximately 14 lines to the inch), headings in red, capitals touched in red, versal initials in Psalms and Interpretations alternately red and blue, chapter numbers and running-titles in alternately red and blue letters, some 2 line chapter initials in red or blue with contrasting penwork extending far up and down the margins, WITH 88 LARGE DECORATED INITIALS, ONE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH BOOK, FIVE WITH DRAGONS, the body of the letter usually about 7 lines high and square, extenders of various lengths, the longer letters containing dragons, the smaller floral decoration in full colours, on a blue ground with white tracery. Foliation to 390 omits f.30a. Lacks one leaf between ff. 66 and 67, one and the latter part of the Interpretation of Hebrew Names from O to Z, after f 388, also outer column of f.353 and outer margins of ff. 30a, 304, 305, parts of outer margin of ff. 206, 207, 306, and lower margin of 388, also with medieval strengthening of some margins e.g. f.40, some other original tears in vellum sewn up, otherwise in good condition, all initials clean and bright. Modern binding in a medieval style, white pigskin over wooden boards, modern paper flyleaves, with clasp, in a fitted cloth box. Dimensions c. 170 x 120 mm..

Excellent example of an Italian pocket Bible most likely made for the use of mendicant friars in the mid-thirteenth century and closely following the "Paris standard." Softly painted gouache initials filled with flowers, birds, and dragons situate the manuscript within a discrete group of northeastern Italian products, made in the region of Venice or Padua, and of much greater rarity than their Parisian counterparts of the same period.

TEXT

ff. 1-3, General prologue;

ff. 3-18, Genesis (75 mm initial I with dragon or similar mythical beast);

ff. 18-30, Exodus;

ff. 30v-37v, Leviticus;

ff. 37v-49v, Numbers;

ff. 49v-60, Deuteronomy;

f. 60-66v, Joshua [lacking the end of Joshua];

ff. 67-74v, Judges [lacking the beginning of Judges];

ff. 74v-75v, Ruth (90 mm dragon initial I);

ff. 75v-76, Prologue to Kings;

ff. 76-83v, I Kings;

ff. 83v-95v, II Kings;

ff. 95v-106v, III Kings;

ff. 106v-115v, IV Kings;

ff. 115v-124v, Chronicles I;

ff. 124v-134v, Chronicles II;

f. 135, Prologue to Ezra;

ff. 135-138, Ezra (80 mm dragon initial I);

ff. 138-142v, Nehemiah (without initial);

ff. 142v-147, II Ezra;

f. 147, Prologue to Tobias;

ff. 147-150, Tobias;

f. 150, Prologue to Judith;

ff. 150-154v, Judith;

f. 154v, Prologue to Esther;

ff. 154v-158v, Esther;

ff. 158v-159, Prologues to Job (with 3 initials);

ff. 159-166v, Job;

f. 166v-184, Psalms (with 6 smaller painted initials in text);

f. 184v-191, Proverbs;

f. 191, Prologue to Ecclesiastes;

ff. 191-193, Ecclesiastes;

ff. 193-194v, Song of Songs;

ff. 194v-199, Wisdom;

ff. 199-199v, Prologue to Ecclesiasticus;

f. 199v-213, Ecclesiasticus;

f. 213, Prologue to Isaiah;

ff. 213-227, Isaiah;

ff. 227-245, Jeremiah;

ff. 245-246, Lamentations;

ff. 246-248v, Baruch;

ff. 248v-264, Ezekiel;

ff. 264-270v, Daniel;

ff. 271-273, Hosea;

f. 273, Prologue to Joel;

ff. 273-274, Joel;

f. 274, Prologue to Amos;

ff. 274-275v, Amos;

f. 276, Prologue to Obadiah;
f. 276, Obadiah;
f. 276, Prologue to Jonah;
ff. 276-276v, Jonah;
ff. 276v-277, Prologue to Micah;
ff. 277-278, Micah;
f. 278, Prologue to Nahum;
ff. 278v-279, Nahum;
f. 279, Prologue to Habakkuk;
ff. 279-279v, Habakkuk;
ff. 279v-280, Prologue to Zephaniah;
ff. 280-280v, Zephaniah;
f. 280v, Prologue to Haggai;
ff. 280v-281, Haggai(with 80 mm. dragon initial);
ff. 281-281v, Prologue to Zechariah;
f. 281v-284, Zechariah;
f. 284, Prologue to Malachi;
ff. 284-284v, Malachi;
ff. 285-295v, I Maccabees;
ff. 295v-302v, II Maccabees.

The transition from the Old to the New Testament is not marked by any special decoration or formatting.

f. 303, Prologue to Gospel according to Matthew;
ff. 303-312v, Gospel according to Matthew;

ff. 312v-313, Prologue to Gospel according to Mark;
ff. 313-318v, Gospel according to Mark (with 50 mm. dragon initial);
f. 318v, Prologue to Gospel according to Luke;
ff. 318v-328v, Gospel according to Luke;
f. 328v, Prologue to Gospel according to John;
ff. 328v-336, Gospel according to John;
ff. 336v-340, Romans;
ff. 340-343v, I Corinthians;
ff. 343v-346, II Corinthians;
ff. 346-347v, Galatians;
ff. 347v-348v, Ephesians;
ff. 348v-349v, Philippians;
ff. 349v-350v, Colossians;
ff. 350v-351, Laodiceans (apocryphal);
ff. 351-351v, I Thessalonians;
ff. 351v-352, II Thessalonians;
f. 352-353v, I Timothy (II Timothy began on the lacking outer column of f.353);
f. 354-354v, Titus;
f. 354v, Philemon;
ff. 354v-357, Hebrews;
ff. 357-367, Acts of the Apostles;
ff. 367-368, James;
ff. 368-369, I Peter;
ff. 369-369v, II Peter;

ff. 369v-370, I John;

f. 370v, II John;

f. 370v, III John;

f. 370v, Jude;

ff. 370v-374v, Revelations [Apocalypse];

ff. 375-388v, List of Hebrew Names from A to M.;

ff. 389-390, List of biblical readings for feasts and for the Temporal.

The present Bible follows the so-called Paris order (with the exception of the intrusion of *Laodicians*, an apocryphal book of the New Testament), a sequence of books of the Bible that came into existence in the early thirteenth century, at about the same time that the prologues were also standardized and included. The order persists, with some modification, to the present day. Other features that this Bible has in common with the "Paris standard" include the alphabetical list of proper nouns in the Bible, known as the Interpretation of Hebrew Names and commonly grafted on to the end of the Bible, and the introduction of chapter numbers. The presence of chapter numbers in the margins of our Bible, instead of inserted in the text itself, suggests an earlier date, just after mid-century.

Portable Bibles, as they are called because they include the entire Bible in a single volume that fits easily in the hand or in a pocket, were long associated with Paris and commonly thought to have been used in the schools as the University of Paris evolved as an institution devoted to teaching theology during the thirteenth century. Recently, however, Christopher De Hamel (p. 136) has suggested that, since not a single extant manuscript was indisputably owned by a student or a teaching master, such books were instead used by ecclesiastics—canons, bishops, cardinals, etc.—and especially preachers from the mendicant orders. As far as Italian Bibles are concerned, there was no school of theology in Bologna until 1364, so Bibles of northern Italian origin cannot be thought of as products of a university community.

There are no indications of original provenance in the present Bible. But, the discrete group to which it is most closely related from the area of Venice and Padua includes two Bibles made for and owned by friars, preachers of the mendicant orders (e.g., ex-Beck Collection, London, Sotheby's, 16 June 1967, no. 13; illustrated also in De Hamel, pl. 96; and ex-Chester Beatty Collection, London, Sotheby's, 24 June 1969, no. 51). De Hamel notes, "in the hands of the friars, portability, definitiveness, and searchability became universal features of the Bible" (p. 135). Indeed, the inclusion in our volume of a list of biblical readings for feasts of the liturgical year after the Interpretation of Hebrew Names confirms its composition and use within the mendicant realm.

ILLUSTRATION

The rich illumination of 88 large decorated initials, one at the beginning of each book, includes 5 with dragons, many with birds, and others with ornate floral and vegetal ornament. Ascenders

and descenders continue the ornament into the margins, terminating in volutes filled with floral and vegetal decor. The illumination is harmoniously executed in gouache predominantly in tones of salmon rose, brown, and green on blue grounds filled with tracery. White interior outlines define the initials, and trefoil white dots decorate the blue ground.

Similar decoration occurs in a coherent group of Bibles localized in northeastern Italy in the region of Venice and/ or Padua. These include three Bibles in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MSS lat. 232, 174, and 13146; see Avril et al., nos. 4, 7, and 8, ill.). To these should be added the considerably more elaborate manuscript now privately owned from the Beck Collection and the ex-Chester Beatty manuscript (see above).

LITERATURE

Avril, F., M.-T. Gousset, with C. Rabel. *Manuscrits enluminés d'origine italienne*. 2. XIIIe siècle, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1984.

De Hamel, Christopher. *The Book. A History of the Bible*, London, Phaidon, 2001.

Online Resources

BibleGateway

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Theology, Liturgy and the Bible on the WWW (Mediaevum.de)

<http://www.mediaevum.de/theol3.htm>