

[PSEUDO-MAXIMUS CONFESSOR], Collection of Excerpts (*Loci Communes*) on Moral Topics: "Useful Selections Produced by Various Ecclesiastical Authors, As Well as by Ancient Pagan Philosophers" / "Εκλογαὶ χρήσιμοι πονηθείσαι ὑπὸ διαφόρων ποιητῶν τῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ παλαιῶν φιλοσόφων καὶ ἐλλήνων [CPG 7718]

In Greek, manuscript on parchment  
Byzantine Empire, c. 1000-1100

173 leaves; quires (signed by the scribe in the lower left corner of each quire's first page and by another, later hand, in the upper right corner of each quire's first page): iii (of 3), 9 × viii (of 8), vi (of 8: ff. 75bis and 81bis missing, with text loss), 5 × viii (of 8), vi (of 6), vi (of 8: two leaves missing after f. 130, with text loss), 5 × viii (of 8); one text column of 23 lines per page, justification 155 x 100 mm, ruling type 34C1 [Sautel, p. 54], headings and initials in pale red throughout, decorated headpieces in pale red at the start of each chapter, Π-shaped illuminated headpiece at the beginning of Chapter 1 (f. 4r); narrow headbands in red ink at the beginning of each subsequent chapter. Binding possibly fourteenth-century (judging from the type of blind-tooled ornaments), of the "Greek" type (squared and grooved boards flush with book block, no ridges on the spine), chain stitches on four sewing stations, brown leather over wood, no pastedowns or flyleaves. Dimensions 220 x 170 mm.

This manuscript is among the oldest witnesses of the most important and influential sacro-profane Greek florilegia, erroneously attributed to the seventh-century author St. Maximus the Confessor. The earliest witnesses to the text only date from the tenth century. Previously unknown to scholars and not appearing in the critical edition, the manuscript presents a version of MaxII, or the long recension of the text. The volume is also remarkable for its fine calligraphy, its relatively well-preserved medieval Greek binding, and its attractive illuminated headpiece and headbands.

## PROVENANCE

1. Byzantine Empire, possibly Constantinople, but not localized with certainty. The whole volume is copied by a single hand, well-trained and very elegant. The type of writing is *Perlschrift*, a highly standardised calligraphic style that went out of use c. 1100 (Hunger, pp. 22-32) but is difficult otherwise to date or localize with precision. Likewise the headpieces, typical of the eleventh century, do not help at determining better the exact place and date.
2. The originally blank ff. 1r, 3v and 173v contain some partially faded handwritten entries, illegible to me. All are poorly penned, except for one on f. 173v, where an elegant fourteenth-century hand has repeated a saying by St Basil (found in the main text on f. 172v): ἐν ἀμίλλαις πονηραῖς ἀθλιώτερος ὁ νικήσας, καὶ γὰρ ἀπέρχεται τὸ πλεόν [ἔχων τῆς ἀμαρτίας], i.e. "In bitter conflicts the victor is more wretched (that the one defeated), and ultimately most of the sin is his" [ed. Ihm, p. 939]. The number "182" on the inside of the front cover must be an old library shelfmark.

3. German Private Collection, Germany/ Wiltshire (1920?-1988), sold London, Sothebys's, 6 December 1988, lot 26;
4. George A. Pervanas, Athens (?), sale London, Sotheby's, 2 December 1997, lot 94;
5. Martin Schøyen (b. 1940--), Spikkestad and London, Norwegian businessman and book collector, his no. 2455, deaccessioned in 2010.

## TEXT

(ff. 1r, 3v, 173v) originally blank;

(ff. 1v-3r) Table of Contents, entitled Πίναξ ἄριστος τῆς παρουσίας πικτίδος ("Most Excellent Contents of the Present Volume") (Copied by the same hand as the rest of the volume, these three leaves are not included in the quire numbering. This is not uncommon in Byzantine manuscripts);

ff. 4r-9r, § 1. On Virtuous and Immoral Living;

ff. 9r-12r, § 2. On Prudence;

ff. 12v-17v, § 3. On Purity and Chastity;

ff. 18r-21r, § 4. On Manliness and Strength;

ff. 21r-24r, § 5. On Righteousness;

ff. 24r-32r, § 6. On Friends and Brotherly Love;

ff. 32r-35r, § 7. On Piety;

ff. 35v-38v, § 8. On Good Deeds and Charity;

ff. 38v-43v, § 9. On Power and Authority;

ff. 43v-46v, § 10. On Accusations and Slander;

ff. 46v-50r, § 11. On Flattery;

ff. 50r-57v, § 12. On Wealth, Poverty and Avarice;

ff. 57v-60r, § 13. On Self-Sufficiency;

ff. 60r-63v, § 14. On Prayer;

ff. 63v-66r, § 15. On Teaching and Speaking;

ff. 66r-68r, § 16. On Admonishing;

ff. 68r-74r, § 17. On Education and Learning;

ff. 74r-77r, § 18. On Fortune and Misfortune;

ff. 77r-81r, § 19. On Wrath and Temper;  
ff. 81r-83r, § 20. On Silence and Secrets;  
ff. 83r-85r, § 21. On Over-Anxiety and Calmness;  
ff. 85r-87r, § 22. On Covetousness;  
ff. 87v-89v, § 23. On Filial Piety and Parental Love;  
ff. 89v-91v, § 24. On Fear;  
ff. 91v-93r, § 25. On Inconstancy and Repentance;  
ff. 93r-95v, § 26. On Sin and Confession;  
ff. 95v-97v, § 27. On Intemperance and Gluttony;  
ff. 97v-99v, § 28. On Sorrow and Despondency;  
ff. 99v-101v, § 29. On Sleep;  
ff. 101v-104r, § 30. On Drunkenness;  
ff. 104r-106r, § 31. On Frankness and Censuring;  
ff. 106r-107v, § 32. On Industriousness;  
ff. 107v-108v, § 33. On Oaths;  
ff. 108v-111r, § 34. On Vanity;  
ff. 111r-112v, § 35. On Truth and Falsity;  
ff. 112v-115v, § 36. On Death;  
ff. 115v-116v, § 37. On Peace and War;  
ff. 117r-118v, § 38. On Hope;  
ff. 118v-120v, § 39. On Women;  
ff. 120v-122v, § 40. On Disputes, Audacity and Strife;  
ff. 122v-124r, § 41. On Old Age and Youth;  
ff. 124r-125v, § 42. On Patience and Magnanimity;  
ff. 125v-126r, § 43. On Praise;  
ff. 126r-128r, § 44. On Beauty;  
ff. 128r-130r, § 45. On the Coming Judgement;

ff. 130r-v, § 46. On Glory [end lost];

ff. 131r-v, § 47. On Talkativeness [beginning lost];

ff. 131v-133v, § 48. On Foresight;

ff. 133v-134v, § 49. On Humility;

ff. 134v-136r, § 50. On Healing;

ff. 136r-v, § 51. On Faith;

ff. 136v-138r, § 52. On Remembrance;

ff. 138r-140r, § 53. On the Soul;

ff. 140r-143r, § 54. On Envy;

ff. 143r-145r, § 55. On Actions Voluntary and Involuntary;

ff. 145r-147v, § 56. On Self-Knowledge;

ff. 147v-149r, § 57. On Goodness;

ff. 149r-151r, § 58. On the Law;

ff. 151r-152v, § 59. On Reason and Thoughts;

ff. 152v-154r, § 60. On Folly;

ff. 154r-155v, § 61. On Profligacy;

ff. 155v-158r, § 62. On Habit and Custom;

ff. 158r-160v, § 63. On Nobility and Low Birth;

ff. 160v-162r, § 64. On Laughter;

ff. 162r-163r, § 65. On Dreams;

ff. 163r-164v), § 66. On Guilelessness and Vengefulness;

ff. 164v-167v, § 67. On the Instability of Life;

ff. 167v-168v, § 68. On the Need to Honour Virtue and Punish Badness;

ff. 168v-170r, § 69. On Badness Being Easy and Virtue Difficult to Accomplish;

ff. 170r-172r, § 70. On Self-Love;

ff. 172r-173r, § 71. On More Not Always Being Better.

The text of this manuscript presents the 71 chapters of the *Loci communes* or *Capita theologica*, which has been falsely attributed to St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662). Until recently there has been no critical edition of the text. Migne (PG, 91, 1865) used an edition of Franciscus Combefis of 1675, and two subsequent editions by Victor Semenov (1893) and Margaret Phillips (1977) were based on only one manuscript, Paris, BnF, MS gr. 1169 and Vat. Gr. 739 respectively. In 2001, two critical editions appeared by Sibylle Ihm and Étienne Sargologos. Taking into account the approximately one hundred handwritten copies of the text, the editions point out that the excerpts were most probably collected by an anonymous compiler in the tenth century (see Ihm, p. xxix); a few of the manuscripts (but not the present one) attribute its composition to St. Maximus the Confessor. The anthology contains quotes on moral and religious topics that circulated during the Middle Ages and that was much mined as a source for fragments and testimonies by other Greek authors. The text is considered the "most important and influential of what are called the sacro-profane [Greek] florilegia" (Searby, review of Ihm, 2003, p. 222).

Ihm identifies three recensions of the text: a) a shorter one (MaxI), b) a longer one (MaxII), and c) an abridged version of MaxII, with a different arrangement of chapters, namely 1-35, 43-71, 36-42

Presenting a version of MaxII, this manuscript is among the oldest witnesses of the text but has remained unknown to scholarship. Its closest relatives (in terms of their date and of the version of the text that they contain) are MSS Vatic. gr. 739, Vatic. Barber. gr. 158, and Florent. Laur. Plut. 58,31 [Ihm, pp. xliii-liii]. None of the manuscripts date before the tenth century, and only three copies recorded in Pinakes date before the year 1000 (see Online Resources). Nearly all known manuscripts are in European public collections. There are no copies of the text in North American collections. This is the only copy of the text that appears in the Schoenberg Database.

Each chapter consists of excerpts related to a common topic, the work is arranged hierarchically: Gospel passages come first, followed by ones from the Epistles, Old Testament, fathers of the Church and finally, Classical Greek authors. The latter include Aristotle (9r, 20v, 28r, 53r, etc.), Demosthenes (7r, 17r, 28r, 35r, etc.), Diogenes (67r), Euripides (7r, 11v, 29r, 54v, etc.), Epicurus (30r, 63r, 76r), Plato (22v, 40v, 69v), and Socrates (7r, 16r, 17v, 24r, etc.). Pagan wisdom and Christian virtue happily coexist in this collection, giving rise to the denomination of the work as a "sacro-profane florilegium."

## LITERATURE

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Hunger, H. "Die Perlschrift, eine Stilrichtung der griechischen Buchschrift des 11. Jahrhunderts," in *Studien zur griechischen Paläographie*, Vienna, 1954, pp. 22-32; repr. in *Byzantinische Grundlagenforschung: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, London, 1973, no. i

Ihm, S., ed. *Ps.-Maximus Confessor: Erste kritische Edition einer Redaktion des sacro-profanen Florilegiums Loci communes, nebst einer vollständigen Kollation einer zweiten Redaktion und weiterem Material*, Stuttgart, 2001.

Phillips, Margaret B., ed. *Loci Communes of Maximus the Confessor, Vaticanus Graecus 739*, St. Louis, MO, 1977.

Sargologos, Étienne, ed. *Florilège Sacro-Profane du Pseudo-Maxime. Introduction, texte critique, notes et tables*. Hermoupolis (Syros), 2001.

Sautel, J.-H., ed. *Répertoire de réglures dans les manuscrits grecs sur parchemin*, Turnhout, 1995; see also <http://www.palaeographia.org/muzerelle/grecs1.htm>

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

Pinakes: Textes et manuscrits grecs

[http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/rech\\_oeuvre/](http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/rech_oeuvre/)

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