

HUGH OF SAINT VICTOR, *Dialogus de creatione mundi* (*Dialogus super Genesim*)  
[followed by] *Homiliae in Ecclesiasten*  
In Latin, decorated manuscript on vellum  
Eastern France (Lorraine?), c. 1150-1175

85 ff., last two leaves of text cut down to stubs, else complete (collation: i<sup>7</sup> [of 8, missing i, perhaps a flyleaf], ii-x<sup>8</sup>, xi<sup>6</sup> [of 8, missing most part of vi and vii]), contemporary quire signatures, text copied in a single column, on up to 33 lines (justification 173 x 110 mm.), written in a rounded early gothic bookhand in light brown ink, small initials in green, red or ocre, some capital stroked in pale blue, 2-line high variegated initials in blue, red, green or ocre with penwork and infill of ornate scrolling sprays, rubrics in red, 2 large initials (that on f. 1: 40 mm high and on f. 15: 60 mm high), both composed of scrolling white-vine rinceaux with floral blocks at their midpoints, their descenders terminating in winged dragons with foliate tongues, all on yellow, green and red grounds, the second with ten lines of ornate display colored capitals, blank top and bottom of f. 1 trimmed away (some small stains, else good condition). Bound in eighteenth-century brown calf over pasteboards, back sewn on 5 thongs, gilt-tooled on spine, edges in red, "HUGO DE S. VICTO" tooled on spine, marbled endleaves, morocco covered case (spine restored, binding a bit scuffed but overall in sound condition). Dimensions 220 x 148 mm.

This codex constitutes a precious near-contemporary twelfth-century witness to the manuscript tradition and reception of Hugh of St. Victor's works (the texts were composed c. 1126 and c. 1137-1140) designed to introduce students to Scripture. Containing one of only three known copies of the version of the first text, the codex clarifies the transmission of Victorine texts in the twelfth century. Its striking large initials and colored display lettering may help lead to a secure identification of the (Eastern French?) scriptorium responsible for the codex.

## PROVENANCE

1. This manuscript was quite possibly copied and decorated in Eastern France (Lorraine?), in a monastic environment. Preliminary comparisons indeed suggest a possible Lorraine origin for this codex. For instance, it sustains comparisons with such manuscripts as a *Vie de Saint Martin* (12<sup>th</sup> c.). See colored plate pl. IV, and cat. 120 in [Exhibition]. *Ecriture et Enluminures en Lorraine au Moyen Age. La plume et le parchemin*, Nancy, 1984, see entry p. 177; see also a Breviary for the use of the Abbey of Saint-Vanne (Verdun, BM, MS. 108) (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> c.). There is also a Homeliary, also related to Lorraine (see Epinal, BM, MS 3, Homeliary, 12<sup>th</sup> c.). The codex certainly deserves to be fully studied in order to tie it to known Lorraine manuscript production, where one finds very important scriptoria in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A mid-century (third quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> c.) date for this codex is suggested by the script: there are many ampersands, e-cedillas, no round letters touching, straight "s" and "d." The script presents certain comparisons with manuscripts thought to have been copied in the region of Metz and Lorraine. For instance, see Paris, BnF, MS fr. 24768 (Saint Bernard, Sermons), a bit later in date, but thought to be from the region of Metz.

2. Inscription in a late eighteenth-century hand on outer margin of f. 1: "Hugo de St.

Victore in genesim."

3. Princes Dietrichstein at Schloss Nikolsberg, Moravia, formed principally from the acquisition in 1669 of the library of Ferdinand Hoffman von Grünpübel und Strechau (1540-1607), marshal of Austria, by descent to Alexander, Prince Dietrichstein; his sale at Luzern, Gilhofer and Ranschsburg, 21-22 November 1933, lot 284, sold for 300 Swiss francs (Bibliothek Furst Dietrichstein Schloss Nikolsburg. *Wertvolle Manuskripte mit Miniaturen des 9-15 Jhdts*, Luzern, H. Gilhofer & H. Ranschbur, 21 Nov. 1933).
4. Dr. Helmut Tenner, Heidelberg, 6 May 1980, lot 1 (Sammlung Adam Teil I. Handschriften ... Auktion 126).
5. Joost Ritman (b. 1941--), Dutch businessman and book collector, founder of The Ritman Library, Stichting Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, their shelfmark BPH 19, bought from Laurence Witten in 1986, deaccessioned in 2011. Exhibited by the Association Internationale de Bibliophilie, Congress 1997, The Netherlands; this exhibition and the manuscripts exhibited are discussed in *Scriptorium* 52 (1998), p. 151.

## TEXT

ff. 1-14v, Hugh of Saint Victor, *Dialogus de creatione mundi* [a.k.a. *Dialogus de sacramentis legis naturalis et scriptae*], opening rubric, *Incipit dialogus magistri hugonis de sancto victore super Genesim*; incipit, "Quid factum est prius quam mundus fieret. Mag[ister] Solus deus..."; explicit, "[...] M[agister] hoc dei iudicio michi relinquendum videtur"; final rubric, *Explicit dialogus magistri hugonis. Incipit eiusdem expositio super ecclesiastem*;

Published in Migne, *Patrologie latin* (PL) 176, col.17-42, with the incipit differing slightly: "Quid fuit priusquam fieret ? M. Solus deus..."

This work, now accepted as *Dialogus de creatione mundi*, is named in manuscripts and scholarly studies alternatively *Dialogus super Genesim* or *Dialogus de sacramentis legis naturalis et scriptae* (see Poirel, 1998, p. 41). It was composed by Hugh of Saint Victor likely before 1125 according to Van des Eynde (1960). There are some 32 extant codices according to Goy, pp. 75-81 but it is now thought that there are around 50 extant witnesses. This will be confirmed in the upcoming edition prepared by C. Giraud (*Corpus Christianorum*).

The work is in dialogue form and opposes the questions and answers of the student (discipulus) and the master (magister). It is construed to provide a synthesis of Hugh's thoughts on Christian faith. The work begins by addressing issues pertaining to the Creation, Original Sin, the Fall and Redemption through Incarnation. Redemption is described using the metaphor of a trial and a battle, in which God provides the chance for Man to save himself. The work goes on to discuss Sacraments, which accounts for the second title often given to this work (for an overview of the work, see Poirel, 1998, pp. 85-87).

C. Giraud discusses the rise of a new genre of literature, tied to the "magistri moderni" of the Cathedral Schools (urban schools, no longer monastic) of the twelfth century, that of the "collections of theological sententiae" ["recueil de sentences théologiques"] (see C. Giraud, in Poirel, ed., 2010, pp. 112-116). These *sententiae* are not merely patristic compilations; rather they

are *sententiae* composed directly by contemporary masters of the twelfth century. The present *Dialogus de creatione mundi* [a.k.a. *Dialogus de sacramentis legis naturalis et scriptae*] is part of these collections of *sententiae*. These collections were used to introduce the *scolares* to the study of Sacred Scripture. In the present work, Hugh of Saint-Victor no longer refers to the *auctoritates* and adopts a dialogue form. C. Giraud: "Ces deux procédés, sans précédent ni postérité dans les écoles, font du *Dialogus* une oeuvre tout à fait originale, située entre le cloître et l'école urbaine" [These two characteristics, not documented or inherited in the schools, place the *Dialogus* amongst the highly original works, midway between the cloister and urban schools] (Giraud, in Poirel ed., 2010, p. 115)

This particular version of the text is found in at least two other codices, Charleville-Mézières, BM, MS 222 and Luxembourg, BN, 143. There is a critical edition in preparation of this text, by C. Giraud, Corpus Christianorum. Our manuscript is described as "Amsterdam, BPH 19" in his *stemma codicum*. We thank the IRHT for signaling to us this upcoming critical edition.

ff. 15-85, Hugh of Saint Victor, *Homeliae in Ecclesiasten*, incipit, "QUE DE LIBRO / SALOMONIS / QUI ECCLE/SIASTES / DICITUR NU/PER CORAM / VOBIS / DISSERVI / BREUITER / NUNC perstringens quia quedam ibi digna memoria iudebantur stilo signavi..."; explicit, "[...] hec ipsa aliis post se profutura sint ignorant" (ends well with the last lines, but gap in last Homelia XIX, between ff. 84v and 85 [text as found PL, col. 253-256]); final rubric, *Explicit expositio magistri hugonis super ecclesiastem*, ff. 85-85v, leaf largely excised and wanting, leaving only a tab : "[...] inueniat /// cens melior est /// afflictione animi [...] tum caro eius quantum in utili vacatione..."

Published in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (PL), 175, col. 113-256. The work is discussed in Poirel, 1998, pp. 77-79 and pp. 121-122, 128; see also Sicard, 1991, pp. 145-152; pp. 214-217 et alia.

This work of Homelies on the Book of Ecclesiastes was likely composed circa 1137-1140 according to Van den Eynde (1960). There are some 60 recorded extant codices (see Goy, 1976, pp. 329-340). These Homelies on the Book of Ecclesiastes champion the literal sense of the Sacred text. By choosing to explain first orally, then in writing, the Book of Ecclesiastes, Hugo of Saint Victor chose a biblical book particularly fitting for monks and clergymen in its exhortation to reject worldly goods (see Poirel, 1998, p. 79).

The *Homeliae in Ecclesiasten* (*In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homeliae*) was Hugh of Saint Victor's last work, left unfinished. He revises part of the teachings he consigned in his earlier *Didascalicon*. Gerson said of the work : "Il m'est tombé sous la main il y a peu, le travail de Hugues sur l'Ecclesiaste, laissé inachevé. Mon Dieu ! Comme il a su, en peu de mots, exposer toute la matière de la contemplation !" [I recently came upon Hugh's work on Ecclesiastes, left unfinished. Dear Lord! How well he managed, in so few words, to deliver all matter of contemplation!] (as quoted by P. Sicard, 1991, p. 214).

A Canon Regular at the Abbey of Saint-Victor and the founder of the Victorine School of theology or spirituality, Hugh of Saint Victor (c. 1096-1141) is one of the authors of the Middle Ages whose work is most diffused in manuscripts. For Hugh, the fallen human being begins to be restored to the image of God through a program of ordered reading in the Liberal Arts and Sacred Scripture. He thus sought to explain mysticism rationally and to organize Biblical and

patristic thought into a complete, systematic doctrinal body. This manuscript contains two of Hugh of St-Victor's biblical commentaries, the *Dialogus de creatione mundi* (*Dialogus de sacramentis*) and *Homiliae in Ecclesiasten* (the latter missing at the end). The author was one of the earliest and most important Biblical exegetes of the Parisian schools in the twelfth century, whose works paved the way for much of medieval scholarship on the Bible. His commentaries on the books of the Old Testament were produced in order to give students a solid intellectual foundation to build upon, and it is in the context of developing a deep understanding of scriptural history that he issued his famous quotation: "Learn everything; you will see afterwards that nothing is superfluous" (see D. Poirel, "L'école de St-Victor au Moyen Age: bilan d'un demi-siècle historiographique," in *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des chartes* 156 (1998), pp. 189-207).

The present codex associates one of the first and the last of the works by the famous mystic and theologian. It is of interest because it is a witness to the early manuscript tradition of the works of the great Victorine, since it was likely copied only a few decades after Hugh had completed his works and passed away (in 1141). It merits further study and is included in the upcoming edition of the *Dialogus* (Corpus Christianorum, C. Giraud ed.).

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

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<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07521c.htm>