

## HUGH OF SAINT-VICTOR, *In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae* [Homilies on Solomon's Ecclesiastes]

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment  
Spain, c. 1175-1200

*i* (modern parchment) + 86 + *i* (modern parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto, 1-86, last two leaves of text lost, else complete (collation, i-x<sup>8</sup> xi<sup>8</sup> [-7 and -8; excised with one stub visible and with loss of text]), horizontal catchwords, center lower margin, ruled in lead with single full-length vertical bounding lines and two or three horizontal bounding lines along top and bottom, prickings visible in upper, lower, and outer margins (justification 143-145 x 92 mm.), written above top line in black ink in a small, careful early twelfth-century bookhand approaching gothic in a single column of thirty-two long lines, capitals at the beginning of a line sometimes set off to the left of the text, biblical lemmata often copied in red, red line-fillers, plain one-line initials in red and purple, one two-line red initial with arabesque extensions (f. 1v), nine two- to three-line initials in light blue, purple, red, or light green with contrasting red or purple penwork infilling and arabesque extensions (ff. 1, 2v, 3, 13v, 16, 25, 48v, 55, 77), one light green initial 'T' spanning seven lines with red penwork infilling and arabesque extension (f. 61v), five four- to five-line initials in red or blue with contrasting light blue, purple, red, or light green penwork infilling (ff. 1, 12, 22, 37, 57v), all except f. 37 followed by colored display capitals of red or red and light blue, corrections in scribe's hand, scribal additions in margin with red or black tie-marks often boxed in red, marginal annotation in several later medieval hands (see f. 2 in particular), marginal doodle (f. 5v) offset on facing leaf, marginal pen trials in large, formal Iberian Gothic bookhand (ff. 20v, 31v), marginal Spanish inscription and pen trials in a flourished, calligraphic sixteenth-century(?) script (ff. 17v-18), neat patching where parchment has been cut or torn away (ff. 13, 18, 28, 66), slight gap in parchment stitched shut in the lower margin of f. 44, some flaking away of ink, though the text is still legible, small stains. Modern binding of quarter beige leather, blind-stamped, over beveled oak boards with four bands, fore-edge clasp, back to front, label on the spine inscribed "Hugh of / St-Victor / In Salomonis / Ecclesiasten" (previously bound with Bergendal MS 92 in modern pigskin over oak boards; the two texts were separated and rebound in modern red leather over pasteboards when owned by Joseph Pope; see Provenance below). Dimensions, 212 x 138 mm.

Twelfth-century manuscripts are increasingly rare on the market and those originating in Spain are exceedingly rare. This handsome volume contains an understudied, but significant work by one of the most influential theologians and philosophers of the twelfth century, Hugh of Saint-Victor. Widely accepted as his last major work, it furnishes a synthesis of his theological outlook late in life. Only three other copies have been on the market in the last century, and there is still no critical edition. This copy was once owned by the eminent art historian Comte Paul Durrieu.

### PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of decoration, script – particularly the characteristic Iberian "z," the use of the long "i" in varied contexts, typically between or following other letters formed with minims, and the tironian *nota* with the long horizontal stroke, and abbreviations, notably "oms" and "omis" for "omnes" and "omnis" Bartholomaeus de San Concordio – all suggest that this manuscript was very likely produced in Spain. Given the date and its contents it was quite probably produced for use in a monastic house. Though there are no definitive indications of its early ownership, its signs of early use (see below) add support to this possibility.

The transitional nature of the script – notably the scribe’s use of both ampersands and tironian *notae*, occasional e-cedillas, both straight and round “s” in word-final position, straight and sloping “d,” and touching between adjacent “p”s but not yet between other round letters – points to a date close to the end of the twelfth century, as do the decorated initials. Both script and decoration bear some resemblance to those found in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS 202 and 416 (both dated to the end of the twelfth century) and to the script and smaller initials in New Haven, Beinecke, MS 625 (also dated to the end of the twelfth century). The script, decoration, and contents of the Beinecke manuscript all point to its having been produced in Toledo (see Creasy and Shailor, 1984).

2. A somewhat later medieval annotator, writing in a rather cursive gothic hand, made a significant addition in the lower margin of f. 2, supplementing Hugh of Saint-Victor’s definitions of cogitation, meditation, and contemplation with those furnished by his disciple, Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173), in the first book of his *Benjamin Major* (PL vol. 196, col. 67). Another possibly contemporary hand has added just above this, “libro de interiorj homini,” perhaps misattributing this passage to Richard of Saint-Victor’s *De statu interiori hominis*.
3. Marginal pen trials in a large, formal Iberian gothic bookhand (ff. 20v, 31v), probably dating to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, suggest that this manuscript was in Spain at that time.
4. A later inscription in a sixteenth-century(?) Spanish hand may provide a more specific localization of the manuscript in Spain: “En la real casa de ona a veinte y quatro Dias del mes de agosto año del señor” (f. 18). The “real casa de ona” here is likely the Benedictine monastery of San Salvador, founded in 1011 in Oña, in the province of Burgos in northern Spain. Though there are no indications that this manuscript might have been at Oña earlier, an early thirteenth-century list of the monastery’s holdings in Escorial MS Lat. R II 7 (ff. 113 and 147) does include a “Liber iohan belet” (see Beer, 1894, pp. 369-70 and Guillermo Antolín, *Catalogo de los códices latinos de la Real biblioteca del Escorial*, Madrid, 1910-1923, vol. 3, pp. 465-68). This manuscript came to Joseph Pope (see below) bound with John Belet’s *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis* (his Bergendal MS 92), which preceded this text in the volume. The Belet manuscript was produced around the same time as this manuscript, possibly even by the same scribe, and the texts could have been bound together early.
5. Collection of Comte Paul Durrieu (1855-1983), esteemed medieval art historian and curator known for his work on fifteenth-century illuminated manuscripts, including the Turin Hours, the Très Belles Heures of Jean de Berry, and the Rohan Hours, some of the best known Books of Hours of the late Middle Ages. Durrieu was also an astute collector of illuminated manuscripts.
6. Librairie Paul Jammes of Paris, founded by Paul Jammes (1890-1983).
7. Collection of Joseph Pope (1921-2010) of Toronto, an investment banker and prominent collector of medieval manuscripts, who acquired it from Bruce Ferrini of Akron, Ohio in May 1989; Bergendal Collection MS 124 (described in Pope, 1999; brief description in Stoneman, 201, when

it was still bound with Bergendal MS 92; an overview of the collection is given in Pope, 1997).

8. Sold at Sotheby's in 2011; lot 65 in *Western Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, 5 July 2011.
9. Private Continental Collection.

## TEXT

ff. 1-86v, preface, incipit, "QVE DE LI/BRO SA/LOMONIS qui ecclesiastes dicitur nuper uobis coram disserui ..."; f. 1, homily 1, incipit, "VERBA ecclesiastes filij dauid regis iherusalem ..."; f. 82, homily 18, incipit, "Vidi sub sole in loco iudicij impietatem et in loco iusticie iniquitatem et dixi in corde meo. *Justum et impium iudicabit dominus et tunc omnis rei tempus erit. Quia uero mentis humanis de iudicijs dei ... et spiritus iumentorum ad mortem deorsum. Dicunt. Quis nouit hoc? Non enim//*"

Hugh of Saint-Victor, *In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae*, ending imperfectly in the middle of the eighteenth homily of nineteen. The text has been printed in the *Patrologia Latina*, 175, col. 113-256; there is no modern critical edition (the edition by Hugh Feiss, announced in 1992 in Barbara Shailor's description of Beinecke, Marston MS 248, has not yet appeared. A brief collation of this text with that printed by Migne reveals no major differences, though many of the homilies he designates – specifically homilies 3-4, 5-9, 10-11, 13-16, 17-18 – are not distinct here, but are copied as continuous texts.

Hugh of Saint-Victor's homilies on the Book of Ecclesiastes were composed shortly before his death, probably beginning between 1138-1140 (Van den Eynde, 1960). The text was widely copied, particularly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; Goy lists 60 surviving manuscripts, of which half date to the twelfth century and a quarter to the thirteenth (see Goy, 1976, pp. 329-340); this manuscript and one other – formerly in the collection of Joost R. Ritman (his MS 19; subsequently TM 689) – are not included in his list or that of Stegmüller (Fridericus Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*, vol. 3, no. 3812). Only three other copies of this text have been on the market in the last century.

Hugh of Saint-Victor (c. 1096-1141) was an immensely influential mystic and theologian in twelfth-century Paris; his biblical commentaries and pedagogical writings exerted an important influence on biblical scholarship in the later Middle Ages. Born in Saxony, Hugh became a Canon Regular of St. Augustine at the monastery of St. Pancras, near Halberstadt. By 1115 he had relocated to the abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris, where he completed his education and where would spend the rest of his life teaching and writing prolifically. He was teaching in the public school of Saint-Victor by around 1125, and in 1133 he was chosen as the new head of the school, which achieved great prominence during his tenure. The impact of his spiritual thought on that of his followers at Saint-Victor was such that he is considered the founder of the mystical Victorine school. Unlike many later Victorines, however, Hugh upheld the value of secular learning as a foundation for contemplative pursuits, laying out a system of ordered reading to this end in his encyclopedic *Didascalicon*. As both teacher and writer, one of Hugh's great accomplishments was his integration of a vast range of knowledge – encompassing theology as well as philosophy, history, geography, and the liberal arts – into an outlook both multifaceted and coherent. "Learn everything," he wrote, "you will see afterwards that nothing is superfluous" (*The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, trans. Jerome Taylor, New York, 1961).

Hugh held that the invisible and eternal might be apprehended through what was visible and temporal. To that end, many of his works ground the pursuit of wisdom – and the concomitant

restoration of the fallen human – in the movement from a systematic study of created things to the knowledge of God. This transcendent movement informs the project of Hugh's homilies on the Book of Ecclesiastes, a biblical book attributed to King Solomon during the Middle Ages. This was one of Hugh's last works and probably unfinished; the list of Hugh's works compiled by Abbot Gilduin of Saint-Victor describes this work as incomplete (Goy, 1976, p. 339) and Hugh's commentary only extends to Ecclesiastes 4:8. The work apparently derives from homilies Hugh preached to his fellow canons; he indicates in his preface that he has set down with pen a tightened version of that which he disseminated among them not long before. Like much of Hugh's work, including other commentaries on books of the Old Testament, it served a pedagogical purpose, providing a fundamental reading of the book of Ecclesiastes. Hugh's commentary on Ecclesiastes became the most cited medieval commentary on that book and shaped the ways in which later medieval commentators, including Bonaventure and Meister Eckhart, approached the text.

Hugh's reading of Ecclesiastes is largely and avowedly literal; in the preface he announces his intention to avoid laboring overmuch to advance tropological or allegorical interpretations of the text. Instead, he writes, he aims to communicate the author's purpose, which is to "provoke contempt for worldly things in the human heart by the manifest truth of reasons and by plain urging." Hugh confronts the book's meditations on the vanity and mutability of creation and identifies a "salvific paradox in the temporal processes of nature" (FitzGerald, 2012, p. 227): the mutable stuff of nature is, in Hugh's words, "defect without defect," corruptible in itself, but divinely ordered and thus a potential conduit to contemplation of the divine and the eternal. Such contemplation is essential, Hugh writes, to ordering the soul disordered by temporal, created things. The late medieval theologian and mystic Jean Gerson would later write of this work: "Il m'est tombé sous la main il y a peu, le travail de Hugues sur l'Écclésiaste, laissé inachevé. Mon Dieu! Comme il a su, en peu de mots, exposer toute la matière de la contemplation!" [Hugh's work on Ecclesiastes, left unfinished, recently came into my hands. My God! How well he was able, in so few words, to set forth all matter of contemplation!] (quoted in Sicard, 1991, p. 214).

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