

MS 121

Petrus Comestor, 12th century. *Historia scholastica*.

MS 121

Germany (Latin)


Fourteenth century.

University of Chicago Library MS 121 is a fourteenth century manuscript of the *Historia scholastica* by the twelfth century French Biblical scholar, Petrus Comestor. The Scholastic History is a chronicle of the Biblical period from Genesis through the end of the New Testament book of Acts organized in accordance with the order of the Biblical books themselves, but omitting books of no obvious significance for the reconstruction of Biblical history (poetic and most of the prophetic books). See the description of MS 120, another manuscript of the Scholastic History.

MS 121 contains the complete text of the Histories, as they were usually called, including the epistolary prologue at the beginning and the segment of the Histories corresponding to the New Testament book of Acts attributed in some MSS to Peter of Poitiers (Smalley, p. 174; the Comestor's personal work ended with the Gospels; see Bibliographical Note).

The MS is written in double columns in a late Gothic

hand, probably of the fourteenth century (see DeRicci), in black ink. Columns are ruled in black ink. The parchment of the manuscript is heavy, very clean and light, but with frequent original holes. Chapter titles in the text and titles of the corresponding Biblical books in the headlines are in vermilion; versals at the beginnings of chapters are alternately vermilion and blue. Versals marking the beginnings of books are executed in vermilion with fine tracework in mauve or blue with tracework in vermilion, with occasional shading of spaces in green or yellow wash. The margins are nearly clean of notes, with only an occasional brief textual emendation or addition. There are no notes in the manuscript indicative of previous provenance.

The binding of the manuscript, which has been rebacked, bears an originally gold-stamped pair of oval-framed monograms within a blind-stamped rectangular border. The monogram, which is repeated in both ovals, is  (A. M. Pax). The upper oval contains also an eagle, the lower an inscription, EX PACE UBERTAS. ANNO D(OMI)NI MCCCC LVXX ("From peace, prosperity. The year of the Lord 1475"). These gold-stamped ovals overlap the blind-stamped border pattern, indicating that they may be a much later addition. Two brass clasps survive on the binding.

According to a clipping from a dealer's catalogue pasted on the inside of the front cover, the MS came "From the Conventual Library of Ochsenhausen" (Wurtemberg). The

MS was offered for sale by E. P. Goldschmidt (catalogue XV, item 11, pp. 6-7), from whom it was acquired, in 1929 by J. M. Manly of the University of Chicago English Department as the gift of Martin A. Ryerson.

33 quires, 8 folios each except the last (fols. 265-269 plus back parchment flyleaf, originally short).

269 folios plus unnumbered parchment back flyleaf plus one paper flyleaf at front and back, 30.0 x 21.5 cm.; 2 columns, 21.2 x 6.3 cm., with 1.4 cm. between columns; foliated 1-269 (formerly incorrectly 1-266, with unnumbered folios after 45, 122, and 212, corrected April, 1973).

Binding blind and gold-stamped leather over boards, probably original (see description above).

Bibliographical Note:

1. Seymour De Ricci & W. J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York, 1935), vol. I, p. 567.
2. E. P. Goldschmidt, "The Period before Printing," in *Talks on Book Collecting*, Percy H. Muir, ed. (London, 1952) p. 27 (discussion pertaining to MS 121).
3. E. P. Goldschmidt & Co., Ltd., *Rare and Valuable Books* (Sale Catalogue, London, 1929), pp. 6-7, item 11.
4. B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1941), p. 174.

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