

The Bury Bible

Bibliorum Pars I

Codicology: Vellum, mm 522 x 360, (20.6 x 14 in.), ff. 357 (now bound in three parts), double columns of 42 lines. Cent. **xii**, in a magnificent round hand, and with splendid ornaments.

Collation: a² (1 canc.) I¹⁰ (wants 4 and 7: 8 is a double leaf), II⁸-XLIV⁸ XLV⁶ (wants 5, 6).

Provenance: The book comes from Bury St Edmunds Abbey¹. On the upper corner of f. 2r (first leaf of text) is a mark rather smaller than in most Bury books, but of the same kind: B. 1.

The press-mark shows that this was the first book in class B. The B here stands for *Biblia*.

Further, at f. 322r the edge of the leaf has been mended with a patch of vellum in **cent. xv** on which is sketched a crowned head (cut off at the neck) and a scroll inscribed *hic, hic, hic*. This represents St Edmund's head, which called out "Here, here," to those who were searching for it after the martyrdom. It fixes the provenance in a very satisfactory way.

In the old catalogue (**cent. xii, xiii**) of the Abbey books preserved in a MS. at Pembroke College^[CPC047] and printed in my *Essays on the Abbey of Bury*, 1895, p. 23^[James 1895], the second item is "Bibliotheca in duo uolumina (!)": and in the *Gesta Sacristarum*, Arnold, *Memorials of Bury St Edmunds Abbey* (Rolls Series II, p. 290)^[Arnold 1892] in the account of Hervey¹ (sacrist under Anselm¹ in **1121-1148**) this passage occurs:

"Iste Herveus¹ frater Taleboti prioris¹ omnes expensas inuenit fratri suo priori in scribenda magna bibliotheca et manu magistri Hugonis¹ incomparabiliter fecit depingi. Qui cum non inueniret in partibus nostris pelles uitulinas sibi accommodas, in Scotiae¹ partibus parchamenas comparauit."

This passage seems to refer specially to the illuminating of the Bible in question. I interpret it thus: that Hervey¹ found the money for his brother the prior to have a great Bible written, and had it painted after a matchless sort by the hand of Master Hugo¹. The latter not finding vellum to suit him in our district procured parchment from Ireland¹.

Clearly there cannot have been any difficulty in getting good vellum to write upon in England¹. But the special vellum required by the painter was a superior and rarer article. Now it will be found that in this Bible all or almost all of the paintings are done upon separate pieces of vellum which have been pasted down on the leaves of the book.

I have no hesitation therefore in identifying the volume before us with a portion of the Bible of Magister Hugo¹. It is most interesting to have a work of this artist preserved. Like many workers of his time, he exercised more than one craft. He is recorded to have made the bronze doors of St Edmund's Church¹, to have carved a fine rood for it, and to have cast a great bell.

Foliation: ff. i-iii + 1-121 + iv-vi.

Language: Latin with some later scribbles in Middle English.

Contents:

1.

1v-121v *The Bury Bible*

- 1r blank except for scribbles of **cent. xv** viz.
 1r To master Adam¹ this be deliuered (?) with spede
 1r Hec sunt nomina filiorum israel etc.
 1v Full page initial to Jerome¹'s Prologue
 1v At top in red
 1v () *Rubric:* Incipit epistola beati Ieronimi¹ presbiteri ad paulinum in omnibus diuine hystorie libris
 Text
 1v () *Incipit:* Frater Ambrosius
 1v () The letters after the initial being red, blue, crimson and green capitals.
 The page is framed in double bands of gold between which are acanthus and vine patterns of classical aspect
 In the stalk of the F are three medallions framed in gold, and with grounds of dark red representing:
 a. A centaur galloping, with long green shield, and lance with pennon.
 b. A man in cap and cloak, his R. foot gone, wearing a wooden leg attached to his knee, running after a hare which he is clipping with shears.
 c. A mermaid holding two fishes.
 Below this a man with basket gathering grapes.
 The main ground of the letter is blue, and it consists of conventional foliage in gold, red, green, pink, purple, blue, in which are introduced bearded human heads with gold horns, a man with a mace, white birds, and two splendid purple apes, drawn from the life.
 The whole work is magnificent.
 The leaf is a double one
 2r Col. 1 is in coloured capitals, red, blue, green, yellow, and contains 13 lines of 8-10 letters each
 5v *Rubric:* Explicit Epistola
 5v () *Rubric:* Incipit prologus beati Ieronimi presbiteri¹ in libro Bresith idest Genesis
 5v () *Incipit:* Desiderii mei

- 5v () Magnificent initial D on a piece of vellum pasted on to the leaf
6r *Rubric*: Explicit prologus. Incipiunt Capitula
Genesis has 79 capitula (wrongly numbered)
After this a leaf is unhappily gone, which must have contained the frontispiece to Genesis
7r (a double leaf) has seven lines of writing in red, blue, green and yellow capitals
7r () *Incipit*: Principio
7r () *Explicit* super aquas
Genesis ends
32r () *Rubric*: Explicit liber Bresith id est genesis. habet versus tria milia octingentos
32r () *Rubric*: Incipiunt capitula libri Hellesmoth id est Exodi (xxi)
32v Two-thirds of f. 32v are blank. A picture has been stripped off
33r The first column with the initial to Exodus and beginning of text in coloured capitals (as before) is a patch stuck on
53v *Rubric*: Explicit Ellesmoth id est Exodus habet versus quatuor milia
53v () Capitula of Leviticus (xvi)
54r A picture which filled almost all of f. 54r has been stripped off
54v Leviticus. Decorative initial, not stuck on
69r *Rubric*: Explicit liber Leviticus qui hebraice dicitur vaieera havet versus II CCC^{tos}
69r () Capitula of Numbers (xxxii)
70r (double leaf). Frontispiece to Numbers, full-page. Double gold frame with classical leaf-pattern on black ground
Two pictures. Above: Blue ground. On L. the Father nimbed, with white hair and beard, seated upon clouds (red, blue and green with jagged edges) holds a gold tablet with arched top. On R. the Son seated on similar clouds, nimbed and bearded, holds a gold staff. Each points downwards.
The Father is in purple over blue, the Son in red (purplish) over orange, over green. Their mantles are edged with gold.
Behind each is a green panel.
Below. Blue ground with green panel in C.
On L. a group of six men face R.; one leans on axe, one sits on the ground. They are the people or the spies. On R. Moses[□] (not nimbed or horned) addresses them: behind him is Aaron[□] and a group of six or seven elders. Aaron[□] is older (blue-haired)
70r () Names have been scribbled in **cent. xv** on the ground, e.g. “populus”, “Aaron”, and: “tome portur”
70v Decorative initial to Numbers, not stuck on
92r *Rubric*: Explicit liber Numeri qui hebraice dicitur vaiedaber habet versus III
92r () Capitula of Deuteronomy (152)
94r Full-page frontispiece to Deuteronomy, double leaf
94r () Border and backgrounds as for Numbers
94r () Above. On L. the Son (?) nimbed, with golden rod. Moses[□] nimbed, horned and white-haired, holds book inscribed (**xiv**) “hec dicit dominus deus” and addresses five men seated on R.
Below. Moses[□] in C. horned, nimbed, white-haired, holding gold tables, turns to four men on L. and points to a mount on R. on which is a tree with two white birds, a blue ram? a purple goat and two red pigs. Flames(?), like the “clouds” of the upper picture to Numbers, break out of the mount. This has to do with the law of unclean beasts, etc.
94v Decorative initial, not stuck on
113v *Rubric*: Explicit Addabarim quod Grece dicitur Deuteronium Latine secunda lex habet versus duo milia sescentos
113v () Prol. to Joshua[□] and Judges
113v () *Incipit*: Tandem finito pentatheuco
114r Argumentum
114r *Incipit*: Ihesus filius naue in tyfum
114r *Explicit* regna describit
114r Capitula of Joshua[□] (xxxii)
115r has been a double leaf with full-page picture, now stripped off
115v (115r) Decorative initial

CCC: space available for notes on the current status of the encoding

- text: copied from James.txt BA
- markup: BA
- markupCheck: checked by BA, CF
- msCheck: NJM 01/08/08
- remarks: the “old catalogue” mentioned by James is Pembroke College Cambridge 47 (per CBMLC, Benedictine's Volume, p. 50)