

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 Edmund¹'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 + 122-241 + iv-vi.

Language: Latin.

Contents:

1.

122r-241v *The Bury Bible*

- 128v *Rubric:* Explicit liber Josue Bennun¹ habet versus I DCCC L
- 128v () Capitula of Judges (xviii)
- 129r has been double. Full-page picture stripped off
- 129v Large decorative initial on verso
- 143v *Rubric:* Explicit liber Sophim id est ludicum habet versus I septingentos quinquaginta
- 143v () Capitula of Ruth¹ (x). Ieronimus¹ in lib. ruth. Ruth moabitibus (2.5 lines)
- 143v Decorative initial
- 145v *Rubric:* Explicit liber Ruth¹ habet versus mille ducentos quinquaginta (!)
- 145v () Prologue to Kings
- 145v () *Incipit:* E (sic) viginti et duas litteras
- 146v () Capitula (not all numbered - first 33 numbered)
- 147r (146r) *Rubric:* Expliciunt capitula scripta a beati Ieronimi¹ in libro Regum i^o et ii^o
- 147r () *Incipit:* Samuhel¹ in heli¹ mortuo
- 147r () *Explicit:* imperii sacramenta testatur
- 147r () *Rubric:* Explicit prologus
- 147v (146r) A double leaf. On verso frontispiece to 1 Kings. Border and backgrounds as before. Above. Elkanah¹ on L. gives robes to Hannah¹ and Peninnah¹ (the former bowing). Below. On L. Eli¹ in low white mitre, red chasuble with gold pall, blue dalmatic or tunicle, stole, alb, with crosier, stands under a building and listens to Hannah¹ who stands (separated from him by a shaft) praying. On R. Hannah¹ in bed, flames or clouds in front; above, a seated nurse tends the child Samuel¹. Names have been scribbled on the background, e.g. "Colchestra¹".
- 148r (147r) Decorative initial
- 154r A little grotesque man is sketched in the margin
- 167r *Rubric:* Explicit Samuhel¹ liber regum primus, habens versus duo milia trecentos
- 167r () Capitula libri II (xviii)
- 167v Decorative initial, stuck on
- 182r *Rubric:* Explicit Samuhel¹ liber regum secundus habet versus II CC

- 182r () Capitula libri III (xviii)
182v () Prologue
182v () *Incipit*: Malachi idest tertius
183r Decorative initial, stuck on: dark green ground
200v *Rubric*: Explicit Malachim^l idest regum liber tertius habet versus II quingentos
200v () Capitula libri IV (110)
201v Decorative initial, not stuck on
218v *Rubric*: Explicit liber regum IIII
f.219r-219v now blank has had a full-page picture stuck upon the verso
220r Prologue to Isaiah^l
220r *Incipit*: Nemo cum prophetas
220r () Initial on green and blue ground. Above, a man with a mace holding a rope attached to muzzle of a (red) bear below on L. At bottom lie three round cakes (?) and a wooden trough with a long handle
220v Initial to Isaiah^l, stuck on. The prophet with white hair and beard seated on rocks, many coloured, holding out blank scroll. Divine Hand above. Green ground

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: