

WHAT WAS A BIBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES?

TEXTMANUSCRIPTS

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e-Catalogue Seventeen Exploring Text Manuscripts

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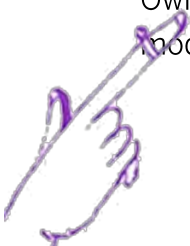
e-Catalogue Seventeen

Exploring Text Manuscripts

This series of e-catalogues highlights select themes suggested by the text manuscripts in our inventory, which are described on our text manuscripts site, www.textmanuscripts.com. This series follows our earlier printed catalogues, Textmanuscripts, nos. 1-7, and Primers, nos. 1-11. These remain available in digital form on our website and in print by order.

What was a Bible in the Middle Ages?

If you consult Webster's dictionary, you will learn that "The Bible" is the texts that are considered sacred by Jews and Christians, and also the physical object that includes these texts. This e-catalogue, which is based on our new printed catalogue, *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages: c.1150-1550* by Laura Light and Sandra Hindman, explores selective aspects of the Bible in the Middle Ages, seen through the lens of 14 manuscripts. Three are complete Bibles that fit easily into the above definition of "The Bible" (cat. nos. 1-3). The remaining manuscripts don't quite fit Webster's definition, but they are equally significant to the story of the Bible in this period. Throughout the Middle Ages, many readers (clerical and lay), encountered the biblical text in manuscripts that included only part of the Bible (cat. nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14). Biblical commentaries explained the Word in depth, exploring the multiple levels of meaning found in the text (cat. nos. 8, 9, 10, 11). Many people during the Middle Ages (and for centuries later) came to know the Bible through the words and songs they heard in places of worship (cat. nos. 12, 13). The Bible in the Middle Ages was not a text defined by its language; it circulated in Latin and in Hebrew (cat. no. 14), as well as in the vernacular, including in English. Physically, manuscripts of the Bible were equally various. This list includes an example of a "pocket" or portable Bible (cat. no. 3) measuring only 153 x 105 mm. (c. 6 x 4 inches). Thirteenth-century Bibles like these, containing the complete Bible in one small volume, survive in remarkable numbers. Owned and used by individuals, they stand at the beginning of the history of the modern Bible.



Sandra Hindman and Laura Light

1. The Bishop Carr Bible

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Northern France, c. 1230-1250
80 painted initials before each book of the Bible

OWNING THE BIBLE FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

DESCRIPTION: 469 folios on parchment, missing four leaves, 80 painted initials, overall good condition, trimmed, leaves at beginning and end darkened, a few small holes, some initials lightly scuffed, modern brown leather binding, front board slightly split at head of spine, some scuffs. Dimensions, 173×117 mm.

The roots of the modern Bible are found in the new portable Bibles containing the complete Old and New Testaments that are one of the thirteenth century's most striking inventions. This is a very attractive example, in good condition, with painted initials for each book of the Bible, including a playful Genesis initial where animals and monsters replace the expected scenes of creation. Physically it is slightly larger than a typical pocket Bible, making it easier to read and a pleasure to handle.

[TM 1327; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. 1]

\$180,000



[Full description and images available online](#)

2. Rugby-De Brailes Bible

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
England (Oxford), c. 1230-1250 (perhaps 1230s)
Painted initials for prologues, books of the Bible, and divisions of the Psalms attributed to William de Brailes

PAINTING THE BIBLE: "W. DE BRAIL ... WHO PAINTED ME"

DESCRIPTION: 275 folios on parchment, incomplete, missing at least one quire at the beginning and 14 other leaves, large and very attractive foliate initials throughout, 11 initials clumsily excised with some loss of text, some stains and other damage to some margins, in good overall condition, 19th-century brown calf binding. Dimensions 260 x 175 mm.

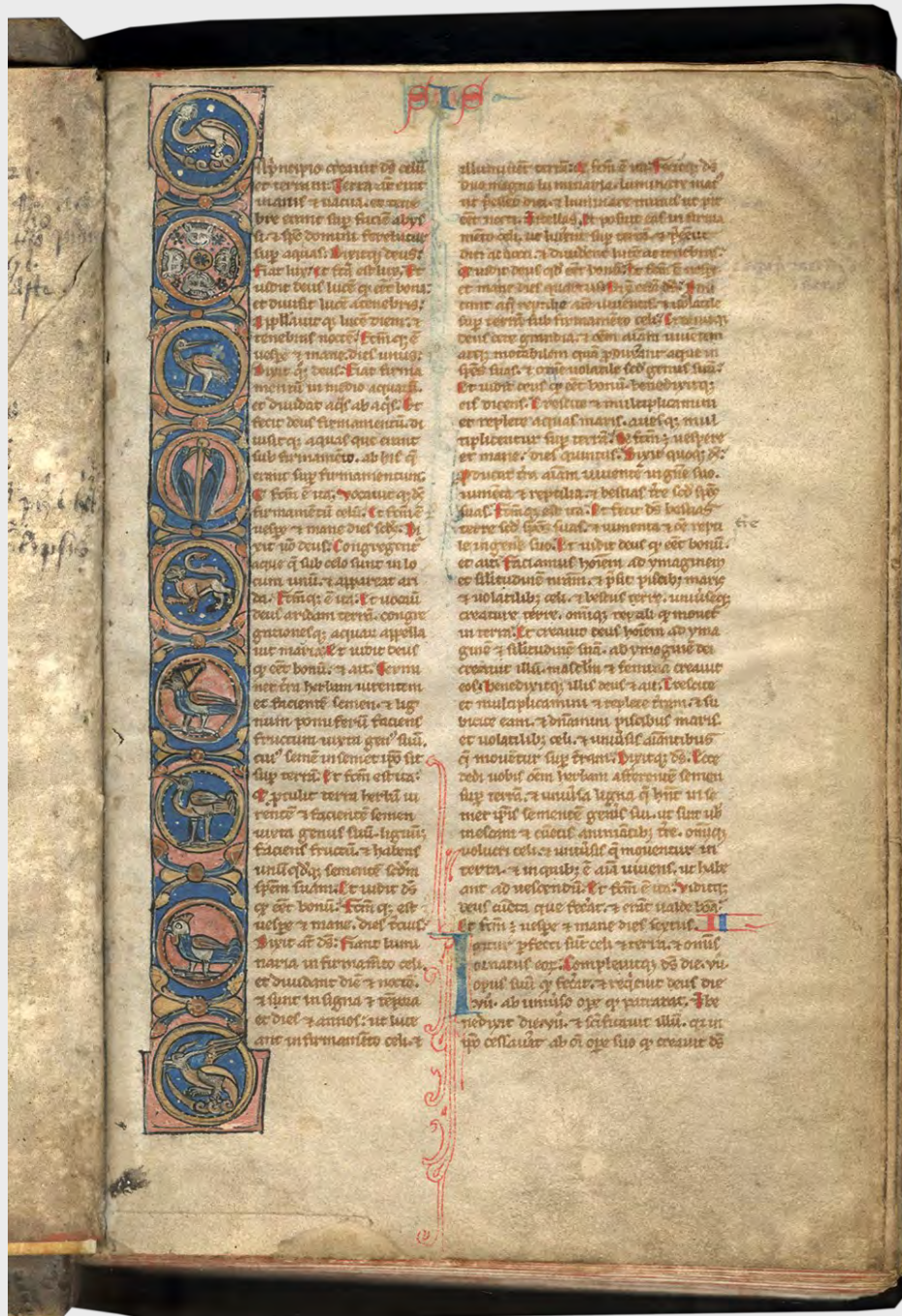
A very attractive illuminated Bible from Oxford; the style of the numerous foliate initials leaves no doubt that this can be added to the small group of manuscripts attributed to William de Brailes or his workshop, active in Oxford c. 1230-1260. De Brailes is one of only two English illuminators from the thirteenth century known by name. Larger than a pocket Bible, but still a handy, compact size, this is copied in a skillful early gothic script, tiny but very legible. The initials are crisply executed, with evocative dragons and other animals. Annotations and later notes add to its interest. [TM 1226; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. 2]

\$225,000



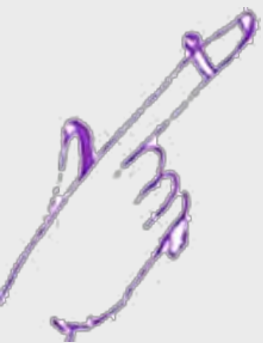
[Full description and images available online](#)

OWNING THE BIBLE FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

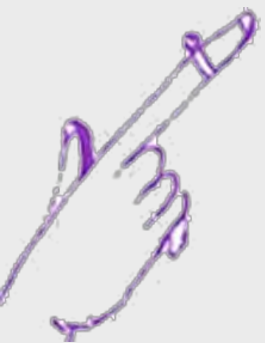
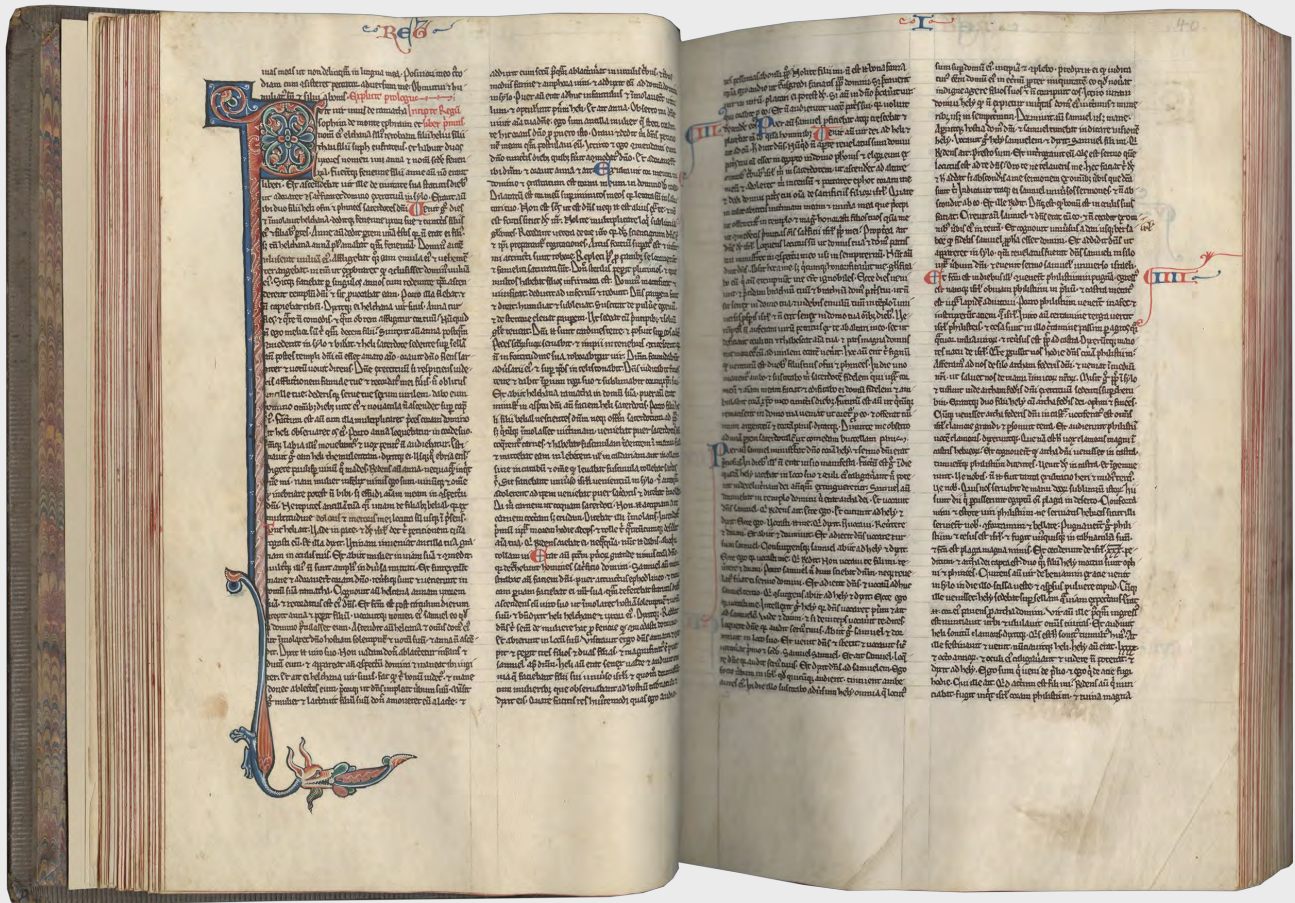


1. TM 1327

[Full description images and video available online](#)



PAINTING THE BIBLE: "W. DE BRAIL ... WHO PAINTED ME"



2. TM 1226

Full description and images available online

3.

Latin Vulgate

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
England, c. 1260-1275
10 illuminated foliate initials

USING THE BIBLE: READERS NOTES AND ADDED LITURGICAL TABLES

DESCRIPTION: 579 folios on parchment, complete, c.68 parted red and blue initial, 10 illuminated foliate initials, f. 1 darkened and repaired in the inner margin, slight damage from damp and some ink fading on a few folios, generous margins but evidently trimmed, very good condition, 18th-century red leather gold-tooled binding, restored. Dimensions 153 x 105 mm.

Small portable Bibles containing the complete Old and New Testaments were one of the greatest achievements of thirteenth-century book production. This English example was copied by numerous scribes and decorated in a number of styles. The ten handsome illuminated initials decorate the Minor Prophets, an unusual choice. Additions show how this was used by Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carthusians, including a contemporary table of introits and Mass lections, and numerous marginal notes from the 13th-15th centuries. [TM 892; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 3]

\$150,000



[Full description and images available online](#)

4.

Psalter

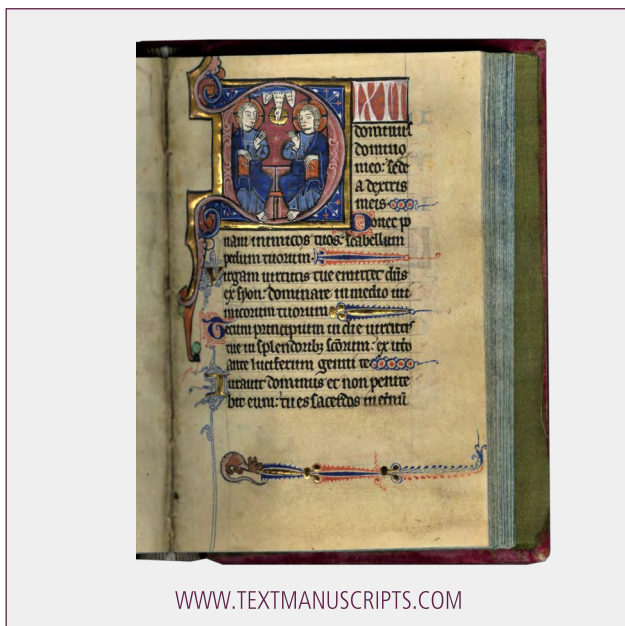
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
France (Paris), c. 1230-1250
Sixteen calendar roundels and eight historiated initials by the Soissons Atelier

ILLUMINATING THE BIBLE: PLAYFUL MARGINAL DECORATION AND MUCH GOLD LEAF

DESCRIPTION: 211 folios on parchment, lacking two leaves from the calendar, line fillers, pen decoration in the lower margin, sixteen calendar roundels and eight historiated initials, trimmed, stains and minor wear throughout, overall good condition, old red velvet binding, worn along the joints and edges, doublures creased and fraying, front and back hinges fragile. Dimensions 122 x 84 mm.

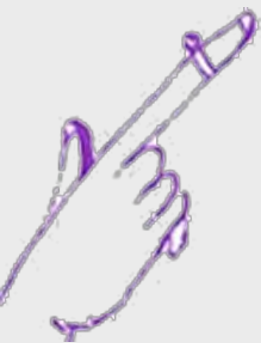
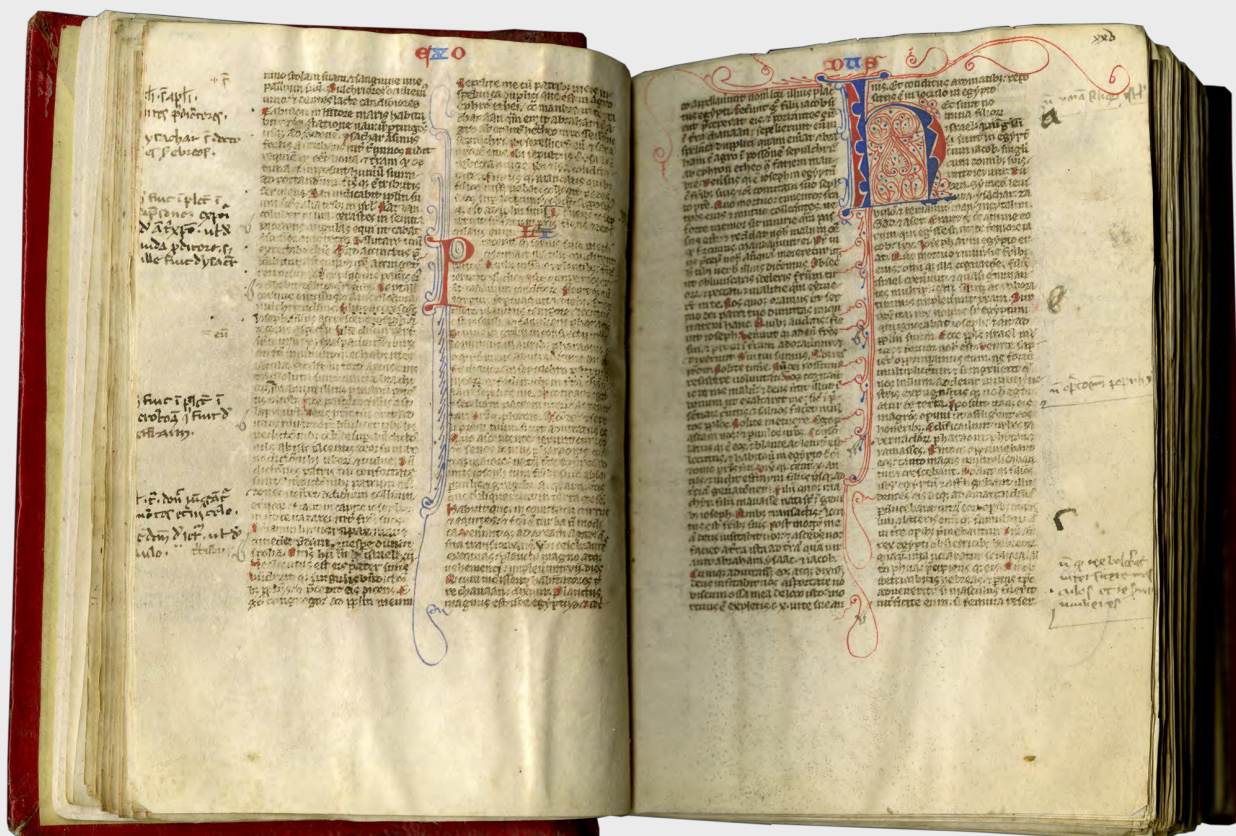
A delightful treasure, every page in this small volume sparkles with polished gold. This is in every way a classic example of an illuminated Gothic Psalter from Paris, from the calendar with vignettes of the Labors of the Month and Zodiac and the historiated initials illustrating the major liturgical divisions of the Psalms, to the exuberant penwork line fillers and playful marginal decoration, replete with fish, dogs, dragons, and birds. Once a treasured volume used for private devotion, this manuscript will surely delight any modern owner. [TM 1267; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. 4].

\$115,000



[Full description, images and video available online](#)

USING THE BIBLE: READERS NOTES AND ADDED LITURGICAL TABLES



3. TM 892

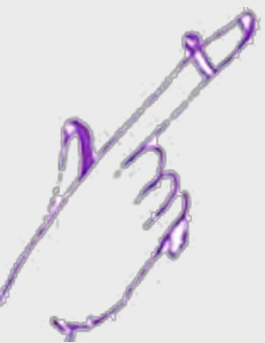
[Full description and images available online](#)

ILLUMINATING THE BIBLE: PLAYFUL MARGINAL DECORATION AND MUCH GOLD LEAF



4. TM 1267

[Full description, images and video available online](#)



5. Psalter

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Southern Germany (diocese of Constance or Augsburg),
c. 1240-1260

7 illuminated foliate initials; 3 historiated initials

TOUCHING THE BIBLE: UNUSUAL AND INTRIGUING HANDLING OF THE INITIALS

DESCRIPTION: 117 folios on parchment, missing at least one leaf at end, seven large illuminated foliate initials, three large historiated initials, signs of use, dirt and wear, initials damaged, early binding of alum-tawed skin over wooden boards in very good condition with modern repairs, manuscript fragments serving as pastedowns.
Dimensions 196 x 145 mm.

Almost certainly copied for lay use, this German illuminated Psalter includes historiated initials depicting both Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, canonized only decades before the manuscript was produced. Artistically, it is related to important illuminated south German Psalters now in Liverpool and Schaffhausen. It is still bound in an early binding (with some restoration), and there are numerous signs of use throughout, including evidence that it was used to teach children to read. Unusual and intriguing damage to the initials of Francis and Dominic warrants closer attention. [TM 789; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. 5]

\$150,000

[Full description and images available online](#)



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6. Psalter

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Italy (Padua), c. 1390-1410
Seven painted foliate initials

PRAYING THE BIBLE: THE PSALMS

DESCRIPTION: 96 folios on parchment, complete, seven handsome painted foliate initials, some browning, staining, and cockling, otherwise in very good condition, 15th-century blind-tooled leather binding over wooden boards, boards cracked and reinforced, rebacked. Dimensions 201 x 143 mm.

This refined devotional Psalter preserves a complete series of psalms in a fifteenth-century blind-stamped leather binding, adorned with knot tools typical of Italian bookbinding. One large and six smaller initials introduce the seven main divisions; their style compares with that in two manuscripts illuminated in Padua around 1410. Early additions witness the devotional use of this Psalter. Alcuin of York's preface to the *De psalmodium usu* (present here) would have guided the reader in finding the most appropriate psalms for penance, prayer, and praising God. [TM 1290]

\$35,000

[Full description and images available online](#)



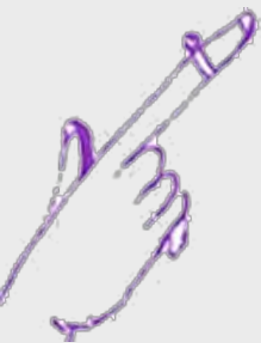
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TOUCHING THE BIBLE:
UNUSUAL AND INTRIGUING HANDLING OF THE INITIALS



5. TM 789

[Full description and images available online](#)

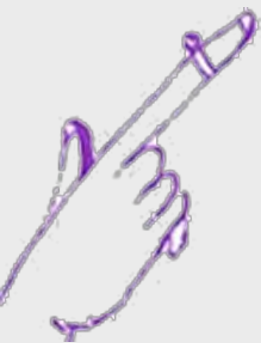


PRAYING THE BIBLE: THE PSALMS



6. TM 1290

[Full description and images available online](#)



7.

[Latin Vulgate] Gospels, with marginal commentary on Matthew chapters 1-9 from THOMAS AQUINAS, *Catena aurea in Matthaem* (The Golden Chain on Matthew)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Italy (Florence?), c. 1475-1500

APPRECIATING THE BIBLE: HUMANIST COPY ASSOCIATED WITH SAVONAROLA

DESCRIPTION: 258 + folios parchment, complete, four very fine illuminated initials, minor water damage and signs of use, in overall excellent condition, early 19th-century gold-tooled red morocco binding, minor signs of wear on the leather. Dimensions 113 x 77 mm.

This tiny manuscript (measuring only 4.4 x 3 inches) is as lovely as it is unusual. The four Gospels, copied throughout the Middle Ages in manuscripts made for liturgical use, are transformed in this manuscript into a humanist book for personal use and study. Its beautiful script, sometimes in goldleaf, and lovely illuminated initials are noteworthy. Intriguingly, this manuscript has traditionally been associated with one of the most influential men of the Renaissance Italy, Girolamo Savonarola, and its marginal commentary comes from Thomas Aquinas, whose writings Savonarola studied in detail. [TM 1323; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 6]

\$50,000



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[Full description, images and video available online](#)

8.

PSEUDO-ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Biblia Mariana* (the Bible of the Virgin Mary); eight Marian sermons by JACOBUS de VORAGINE

In Latin, manuscript on parchment
Germany, c.1340-1360

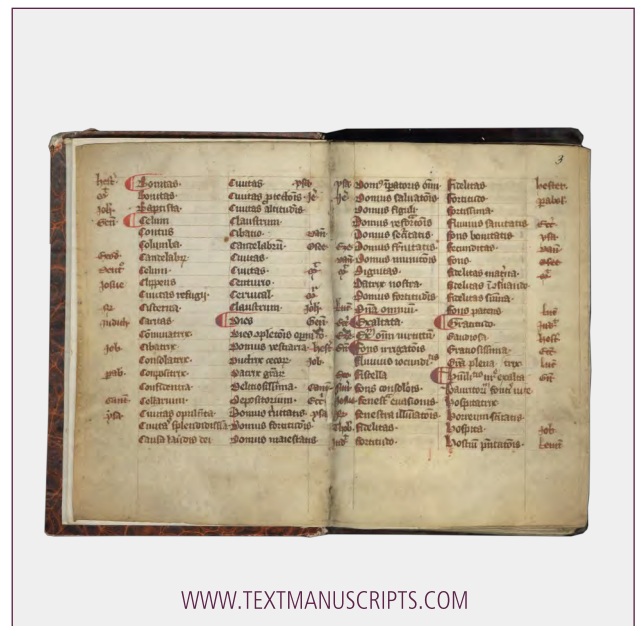
PREACHING THE BIBLE: HONORING THE VIRGIN MARY

DESCRIPTION: 161 folios on parchment, complete, two penwork initials, remnants of knotted-twine page markers, very good overall condition, modern binding of marbled paper over pasteboard, some peeling and scuffing to the covers. Dimensions 145 x 100-104 mm.

Medieval authors found many ways to engage with “the book” or the Bible – glosses, commentaries, concordances, sermons, and of course copies of the Bible itself. Probably created and used in a Dominican environment and well-suited to aid in the composition of sermons, this unusual compilation combines the Bible with the later medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary, pairing an alphabet of words from the Bible associated with the Virgin with allegorical references to her in biblical order, followed by sermons about her. Its appeal lies also in its materiality (or physical realization) and its signs of active reader engagement.

[TM 1318]

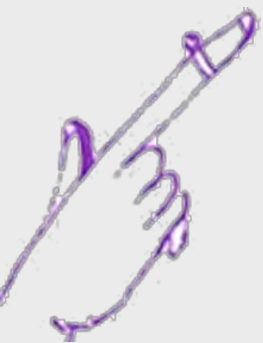
\$28,000



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[Full description and images available online](#)

APPRECIATING THE BIBLE:
HUMANIST COPY ASSOCIATED WITH SAVONAROLA



7. TM 1323

[Full description, images and video available online](#)

9.

JACOBUS FOLQUERIUS (JACQUES FOUQUIER), *Viridarium Gregorianum sive Biblia Gregoriana, New Testament* (A Garden or Bible of Gregory)

In Latin, decorated Latin manuscript on parchment
Southwest Flanders or Hainaut (Tournai?), c. 1350

PREACHING THE BIBLE: THE HERITAGE OF GREGORY THE GREAT (D. 604)

DESCRIPTION: 120 folios on parchment, complete but out of order, illustrated catchwords, cadels and penwork initials, stains, slight rodent damage, 19th-century half-parchment binding. Dimensions 240 x 170 mm.



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The text, a commentary on the New Testament compiled from the writings of Gregory the Great, is unedited and apart from the preface and dedication, has never appeared in print. Little is known about the author, Jacques Fouquier, who was an Augustine Hermit in Toulouse. This text survives in only three other manuscripts, all, like our manuscript, copied during the author's lifetime or close to it, suggesting that this is an example of a text that circulated only in the author's immediate circle. [TM 1054]

\$85,000

[Full description and images available online](#)

10.

Latin Vulgate, part (Pauline and Catholic Epistles, Acts, Apocalypse); Nicholas of Lyra, *Postillae* (Commentaries on the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, Acts, Apocalypse)

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
Northeastern Netherlands or Northwestern Germany, c. 1450-1475

COMMENTING ON THE BIBLE: "IF LYRA HAD NOT PLAYED, LUTHER COULD NOT HAVE DANCED"

DESCRIPTION: 383 folios on paper, watermark, numerous watermarks 1453-1476, complete, in two sections (section two begins f. 146), both with penwork initials, in very good overall condition, a few folios darkened and a few stains, 17th-century(?) binding of plain vellum over pasteboard with yap edges. Dimensions 275 x 198 mm.

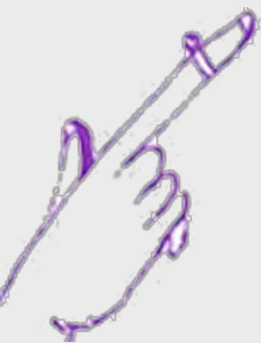


This sizeable volume combines a copy of the New Testament, lacking only the Gospels, with the commentaries by Nicholas of Lyra on the same books of the New Testament. Although possibly of independent origin, these two sections are contemporary and were united very soon after they were copied. 15th-century Bibles are uncommon, and copies of this 14th-century biblical commentary are always of interest. This is the only manuscript we know of that combines the two within one volume. [TM 1089; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 8].

\$70,000

[Full description , images and video available online](#)

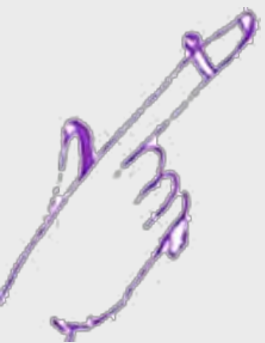
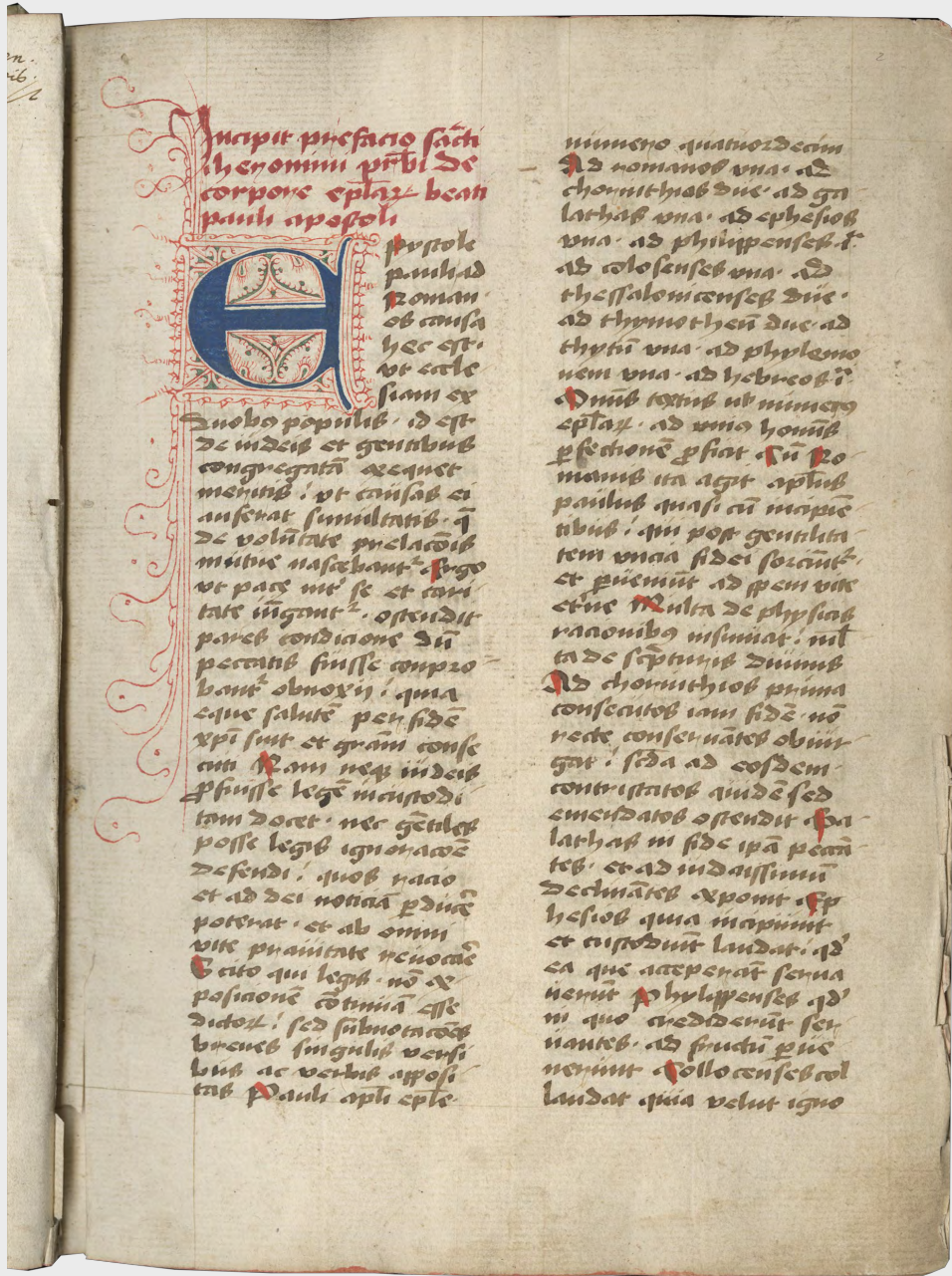
PREACHING THE BIBLE: THE HERITAGE OF GREGORY THE GREAT (D. 604)



9. TM 1054

[Full description and images available online](#)

COMMENTING ON THE BIBLE:
 "IF LYRA HAD NOT PLAYED, LUTHER COULD NOT HAVE DANCED"



10. TM 1089

[Full description and images available online](#)

11.

HAIMO OF AUXERRE, *Expositio in epistolas Pauli*

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
France, (Paris), c. 1460-1480 (before 1481) and (Troyes), c. 1500

COLLECTING THE BIBLE: A FAMOUS FRENCH 15TH-CENTURY BIBLIOPHILE

DESCRIPTION: 193 folios on parchment, complete, 21 painted initials on gold or colored grounds, large miniature with full border, 18th-century gold-tooled red morocco binding. Dimensions 278 x 193 mm.

Biblical commentaries in the Middle Ages had a long life, as we can see in this manuscript, which includes a text by key figure of the ninth-century Carolingian Renaissance, here decked out in Renaissance splendor for a fifteenth-century collector. Beautifully illuminated, the manuscript boasts an illustrious provenance having belonged to or even originally been commissioned by Jean II Budé, father to the famous humanist bibliophile Guillaume Budé. The miniature added at a slightly later date must have been painted in Troyes, where the Budé family had strong ties. [TM 908; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 9]

\$125,000



[Full description and images available online](#)

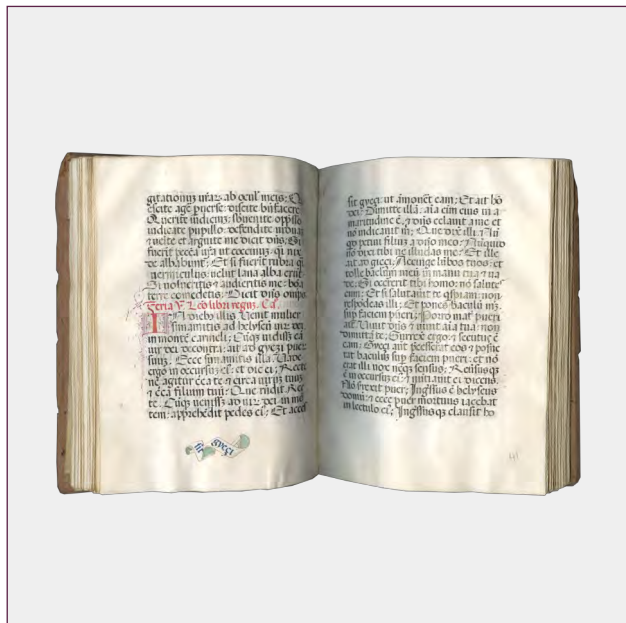
12.

Mass Lectionary with Readings from the Epistles (*Epistolarium*)

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Northern Italy (Brescia), c. 1461-1484

ENLIVENING THE BIBLE: PLAYFUL CATCHWORDS ANIMATE THE EPISTLES

DESCRIPTION: 124 folios on parchment, lacking the last leaf of text, penwork initials and decorated catchwords, some ink facing, f. 121 loose, minor stains, in overall excellent condition, original binding of wooden boards (leather covering removed), some wear. Dimensions 260 x 186 mm.



In its original binding, the volume boasts an attractive rounded Gothic script, an especially refined opening foliate initial, and lovely tinted swirling cartouches containing catchwords. Epistolaries are a rare type of liturgical manuscript, and this one represents a significant source for the history of a Dominican convent dedicated to Saint Florian, most likely St. Fiorano ai Ronchi in Brescia. The manuscript comes from the prestigious Italian collection of Count Ercole de Silva (1756-1840). [TM 1250; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 10]

\$28,000

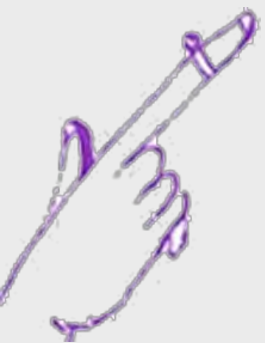
[Full description and images available online](#)

COLLECTING THE BIBLE: A FAMOUS FRENCH 15TH-CENTURY BIBLIOPHILE

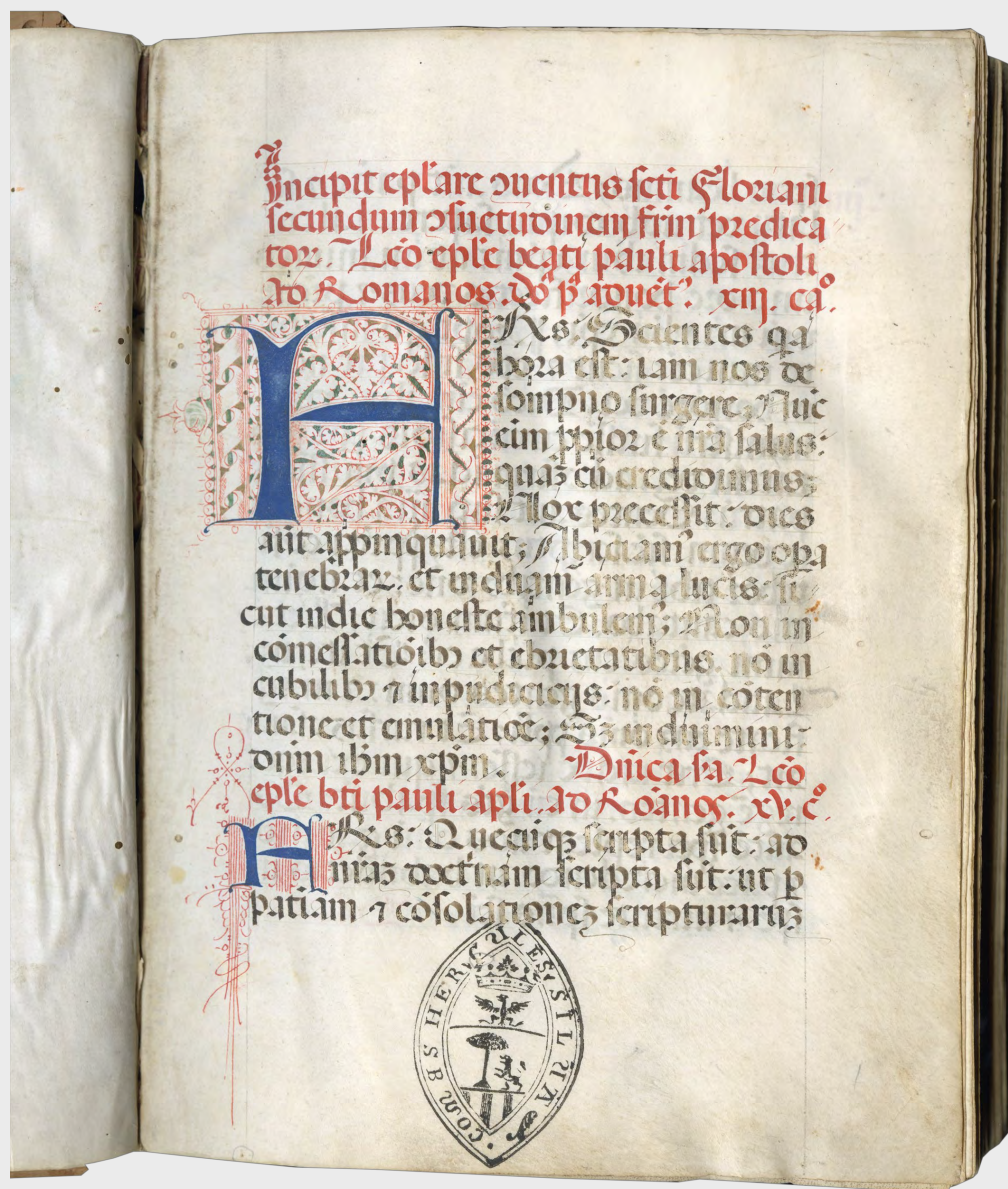


10. TM 908

[Full description and images available online](#)

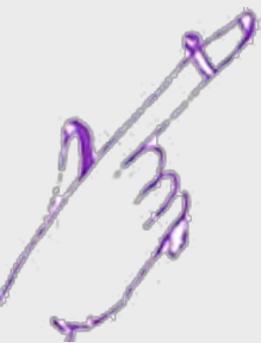


ENLIVENING THE BIBLE:
PLAYFUL CATCHWORDS ANIMATE THE EPISTLES



12. TM 1250

[Full description and images available online](#)



13.
Gradual (for Carthusian use)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Germany (Lower Rhine, perhaps Cologne or nearby?), 1526
(dated)
Eight large historiated initials with tinted penwork borders

SINGING THE BIBLE: “INTO GREAT SILENCE”

DESCRIPTION: 120 folios on parchment, complete but out of order, illustrated catchwords, cadels and penwork initials, stains, slight rodent damage, 19th-century half-parchment binding. Dimensions 240 x 170 mm.

Carthusian monks were renowned for the austerity of their lives, which they spent almost entirely in silence. Imagine then, what the joy of the music of the liturgy of the Mass, as embodied in this manuscript, must have meant to them. Adorned with tinted penwork borders and charming historiated initials and signed and dated by the scribe, our Gradual is still preserved in an early decorated binding including leaves from a large, illuminated 14th-century canon law manuscript. [TM 1319; *Manuscript Bibles through the Ages*, cat. no. 11].

\$95,000



[Full description and images available online](http://www.textmanuscripts.com)

14.
[Bible] Taj (Yemenite Pentateuch)

In Hebrew, decorated manuscript on paper in two volumes
Yemen, c. 1500-1600

READING – NOT STEALING – THE BIBLE: “HE WHO READS IT SHALL REJOICE, WHILE HE WHO STEALS IT SHALL BE OBLITERATED”

DESCRIPTION: 312 and 364 pages on paper, lacking ornamental section dividers for Genesis and Deuteronomy, as well as final two leaves of Deuteronomy, Masorah magna and Masorah parva written in micrography in margins, scattered staining and smudging, and thumbing, ink episodically deteriorating, some worming, outer edges, v. 1 frayed and torn in places, v. 2, cropped, re-margined and repaired. Bound in modern green buckram, slightly worn around edges. Dimensions (v. 1) 265 x 190 mm; (v. 2), 242 x 190 mm.

A Yemenite Pentateuch from the famous Sassoon collection with complete Tiberian vocalization and accentuation of the biblical text throughout, and with the Masorah magna and parva written in micrography, arranged in geometric patterns, in the margins. Written in a clear, bold hand, these are beautiful books, complete with elegant decoration, including ornamental section dividers. Hebrew Bibles copied in Yemen were the product of a unique scribal culture and are renowned for the quality of their texts. [TM 1166; *Manuscript Bible through the Ages*, cat. no. 15]

\$140,000



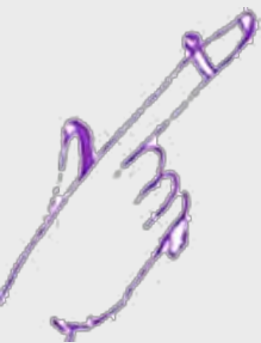
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SINGING THE BIBLE: "INTO GREAT SILENCE"



13. TM 1319

[Full description and images available online](#)



READING – NOT STEALING – THE BIBLE:

“HE WHO READS IT SHALL REJOICE, WHILE HE WHO STEALS IT SHALL BE OBLITERATED”



14. TM 1166

Full description and images available online

