

# LES ENLUMINURES

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[Latin Vulgate; Gospel Harmony] *Passio Domini Ihesu* (The Passion of Our Lord Jesus)  
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
Southern Germany (Buxheim Charterhouse?), c.1470-1500

*i* (modern paper) + 20 folios on paper, three watermarks: 1) on f. 2 (added possibly later to the manuscript) "armoiries: trois fleurs de lis posées deux et une, divisés en diagonale vers la droite," similar to Briquet 1806-1820, from 1485-1546, 2) "lettre P gothique à fleuron à quatre feuille," similar to Briquet 8591 (Colmar, 1452; with identical variants 1456-1460 in the Low Countries and elsewhere) and 3) unidentified watermark, modern foliation in pencil, 1-20, complete (collation *i*<sup>13</sup> [ff. 1 and 2 blank singletons (different paper source) attached to singletons ff. 11 and 12; f. 13 is a singleton] *ii*<sup>7</sup> [quire of 6 + singleton]), no catchwords, some ruling visible in brown ink on f. 3, (justification c. 150 x 105 mm.), written by a single scribe in dark brown/black ink in Gothic cursive script in single column on c. 20-22 lines, capitals touched in red, paragraph marks and short marginal notes in red, the word "ihesu" and certain passages underlined in red, rubric in red, one 3-line initial in red, very minor signs of wear, in overall pristine condition. In modern half-binding of cream-colored vellum and marbled papers, flat spine, in excellent condition. Dimensions 206 x 142 mm.

A neatly written and very legible manuscript retelling the Passion of Christ with extracts from the four Gospels. The moving text begins with the Last Supper and concludes with entombment of Christ. We have not identified other copies of this text; further research is needed to place this text within the rich tradition of Latin Gospel Harmonies and retellings of the Passion. Our manuscript was likely once found in the famous library of the Carthusian monastery of Buxheim and may have been made there.

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of the script places this manuscript in Southern Germany in the last part of the fifteenth century, c.1470-1500. According to a manuscript index card of the booksellers Jacques and Ludwig Rosenthal, bound within the volume (see below), the manuscript belonged to the Buxheim Charterhouse (Kartause Maria-Saal of Buxheim). More research is needed to establish whether it was made at Buxheim. The script is very similar to that found in a manuscript of *Margarita Decreti* by Martin of Troppau, written in Germany in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, which also belonged to Buxheim (The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, MS 73098a; see Online Resources).

There are no ownership marks in our manuscript, probably because the leaves contained in our manuscript were originally part of a larger work, separated in the modern era, mounted on tabs, rebound and sold separately. Most of the Buxheim books had an eighteenth-century inscription "Cartusiae in Buxheim" or "Cartusiae Buxheim" with the armorial library stamp on the flyleaf, as for example an incunable now in Lyon (see Online Resources).

The Charterhouse of *Aula beatae mariae* of Buxheim, near the imperial town of

Memmingen in Swabia, fifty miles south-west of Augsburg, was founded in 1402, and became a Carthusian foundation in 1406. In the fifteenth century it was one of the largest and wealthiest Carthusian houses in Germany, with a substantial library of manuscripts and printed books that continued to grow (see further discussion below).

2. The manuscript belonged to the booksellers Jacques and Ludwig Rosenthal, whose index card is bound at the end of the volume. The card reads on the recto "Provenant de la Chartreuse de Buxheim" and on the verso "16/XI 1896 Jacques & Ludwig Rosenthal / 17/II (18)99 Schwick Innsbruck."

In 1803 all the monastic houses in Bavaria were dissolved, and Buxheim's library and archives were given to the Counts of Ostein; the Counts of Waldbott-Bassenheim inherited Buxheim from the Count of Ostein in 1810. In 1883, due to his financial situation, Count Hugo of Waldbott-Bassenheim was forced to sell the library at auction. According to an assessment made in 1850, the library consisted of around 50,000 volumes. The sale catalogue includes 452 manuscripts and 540 incunabula; the catalogue is available online (see Online Resources), but it should be noted that a considerable number of Buxheim manuscripts and incunabula had already been sold from 1803 onwards.

Rosenthal acquired several Buxheim books at the 1883 auction, as well as all those that were not sold. They featured in two of his sale catalogues published in 1884 (both are available online, one with shelf marks of books in their current locations; see Rosenthal in Literature). It is possible that the present manuscript comes from an anthology of about twenty other texts acquired at that time, and was later removed from it and rebound, as found in its present state. The two sheets of medieval paper in the beginning of the manuscript (ff. 1 and 2) are not necessarily originally part of the manuscript. The blank leaves at the end (ff. 17-20) are an integral part of the second quire.

3. Private collection.

## TEXT

[ff. 1-2v, blank]; ff. 3-16v, *Passio Domini Ihesu*, incipit, "Ante diem festum pasche sciens ihesus quia venit hora eius ut transeat ex hoc mundo ad patrem cum dilexisset suos qui erant in mundo in finem dilexit eos [John 13:1] ... Erat autem in loco ubi crucifixus est ortus et in orto monumentum novum in quo nondum quisquam positus fuerat. Ibi ergo propter parasceven iudeorum quia iuxta erat monumentum posuerunt ihesum [John 19:41-42]"; [ff. 17-20v, blank].

A retelling of the Passion of Christ, interweaving passages from the Four Gospels, beginning at the Last Supper and concluding with the Entombment of Christ. This text does not appear to be a paraphrase the biblical text. Instead, selections from the Gospels were carefully chosen to tell the story of the Passion without changing the wording. For example, on f. 1, we find the following passages: John 13:1; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:8-10; Matthew 26:18; and Luke 22:17; the final page, telling the story of the entombment of Christ (f. 16) includes passages from Mark 15:46 and John 40-42.

We have been unable to identify the author of this text, or to find other manuscripts. Further study, however, may make it possible to place it within the rich medieval tradition of Gospel Harmonies, in particular, retellings of the Passion. In the later Middle Ages, harmonies were intended for meditative and contemplative use. Both Gerson and Erasmus (1466-1536), for example, urged students of theology to conduct independent critical investigations of the life of Jesus in the Gospels (De Lang, 1991, p. 47-48); Erasmus identified the Gospels as the best source of piety.

A Gospel harmony compiles the canonical gospels into a single account, either into a merged consecutive narrative or a synopsis laying out the accounts in parallel columns for comparison and study. The earliest known gospel harmony is the Diatessaron by Tatian of Mesopotamia composed in the 2nd century, known through a sixth-century Latin translation, *Codex Fuldensis*. In the fifth century, Augustine aimed to show in his *De consensu evangelistarum* that there were no conflicts between the Gospel accounts; they vary depending on the focus of each author, Matthew on royalty, Mark on humanity, Luke on priesthood, and John on divinity.

The Buxheim Charterhouse was founded in 1402 by a wealthy canon of Augsburg Cathedral, Heinrich von Ellerbach. The Carthusians came to Buxheim from the Christgarten Charterhouse. The Grande Chartreuse, the mother monastery in Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, incorporated the Buxheim Charterhouse into the order in 1406 and gave it the name *Domus Aulae Mariae – Haus Maria Saal*. After the Carthusians took over, the new house experienced rapid growth. In 1424 the monks began the building of eight *cella*, in 1441 the fifteenth *cella*, and by 1512 the monastery had *cellae* for 22 monks and two *presbyteri donati* (cf. Honemann 1995, p. 167; Sexauer 1978, pp. 59-60, note 4). At the time Buxheim was among the largest and wealthiest Charterhouses in Germany, as was its library its library. The monastery was suppressed in 1803, and the library was acquired by the Count of Waldbott-Bassenheim.

An important source for studying the Buxheim library in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is the Buxheim *Liber benefactorum* produced in 1508 (published by Paul Ruf in 1932, see Literature), in which were recorded manuscripts and printed books donated by the intellectual and spiritual elite of Swabia and the surrounding areas of the Empire, as well as by other Charterhouses, in particular the Charterhouse of Güterstein (cf. Honemann, 1995, pp. 167-170). By 1450, the library already had hundreds of texts bound in over one hundred volumes, and around 1500, a new, larger building for the library was under construction (cf. Honemann, 1995, pp. 170-171). A seventeenth-century library catalogue compiled at Buxheim comprises 403 leaves (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS lat. Fol. 472). It lists only the printed books, apparently because the monks considered the manuscripts superfluous, which could explain why a number of Buxheim manuscripts appeared in Paris as early as the end of the seventeenth century (cf. Honemann, 1995, p. 173). Today the Buxheim collection is dispersed all over the world (see Online Resources, "Charterhouse Buxheim and Its Library").

Our manuscript is in pristine condition, which is the case for many of the Buxheim books, suggesting that they were personal books or little used. This observation has led Volker Honemann to suggest that the Buxheim collection was a repository of books, rather than a working library for learning (Honemann, 1995, pp. 175-176).

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

"Charterhouse Buxheim and Its Library"

[Charterhouse Buxheim and Its Library \(buxheimlibrary.org\)](https://buxheimlibrary.org)

Especially,

[Buxheim-cat.-mss-place-final.pdf \(buxheimlibrary.org\)](https://buxheimlibrary.org/buxheim-cat.-mss-place-final.pdf)

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215588.1791>

Munich, Sale Catalogue: *Bibliothek des Ehemaligen Carthäuser-klosters und gräflich Waldbott-Bassenheimischen Schlosses Buxheim*, Munich, C. Förster, 20 September 1883

<https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00107621?page=,1>

Manuscripts:

<https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00107621?page=142,143>

Stamp of the Buxheim Charterhouse in Bibale, IRHT-CNRS

<https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/98274>

The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, MS 73098a

<https://search.digital-scriptorium.org/catalog/DS9993>

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