

Fragmentology

A Journal for the Study of Medieval Manuscript Fragments

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Research Note

The Scribe and Provenance of Otto F. Ege's Choir Psalter
from the Abbey of St. Stephen, Würzburg, Dated 1499
(Gwara, HL 42)

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While some manuscripts broken by the American rare book dealer and 'biblioclast' Otto F. Ege (d. 1951) have received considerable attention, a vellum Choir Psalter from Würzburg designated HL 42 in Scott Gwara's corpus of Ege manuscripts has remained relatively invisible to scholarship.¹ Yet the emergence of three leaves

¹ S. Gwara, *Otto Ege's Manuscripts: A Study of Ege's Manuscript Collections, Portfolios, and Retail Trade, with a Comprehensive Handlist of Manuscripts Collected or Sold*, Cayce, SC, 2013, 133. Fragments receiving the most attention are: HL 4: Y. Liu and A. Brecht, "Leaf 4 in Otto Ege's *Fifty Original Leaves Portfolio*—A New Identification: Sermons by Philip the Chancellor (With a Partial Handlist of Sermons on Leaf 4 from Various Collections)", *Florilegium* 33 (2016), 167–91; HL 8: A. Altstadt, "Re-membering the Wilton Processional", *Notes* 72 (2016), 690–732; HL 15: L. Fagin Davis, "The Beauvais Missal: Otto Ege's Scattered Leaves and Digital Surrogacy", *Florilegium* 33 (2016), 143–66 [and other sources noted therein]; HL 32: G. Baroffio Dahnk, "Frammenti di Ricerca 2020–1: Frammenti liturgici italiani nei 'portfolio' di Otto Fr. Ege (I): l'innario F. 32", *Rivista internazionale di musica sacra* 41 (2020), 107–176; HL 39: A. C. de la Mare, "A Livy Copied by Giacomo Curlo Dismembered by Otto Ege", in L. L. Brownrigg and M. M. Smith, *Interpreting and Collecting Fragments of Medieval Books*, Los Altos, CA, 2000, 57–88; HL 41: M. Budny, "A New Leaf from 'Otto Ege Manuscript 41'", *Manuscript Evidence* (blog), July 7, 2015, <https://manuscriptevidence.org/wpme/a-new-leaf-from-otto-ege-manuscript-41/>; For published scholarship on these and other Ege fragments, see S. J. Gwara and C. M. Garriss, *A History of the Teaching Collection of Early Manuscripts at the University of South Carolina*, Cayce, SC, 2018, 22–35.

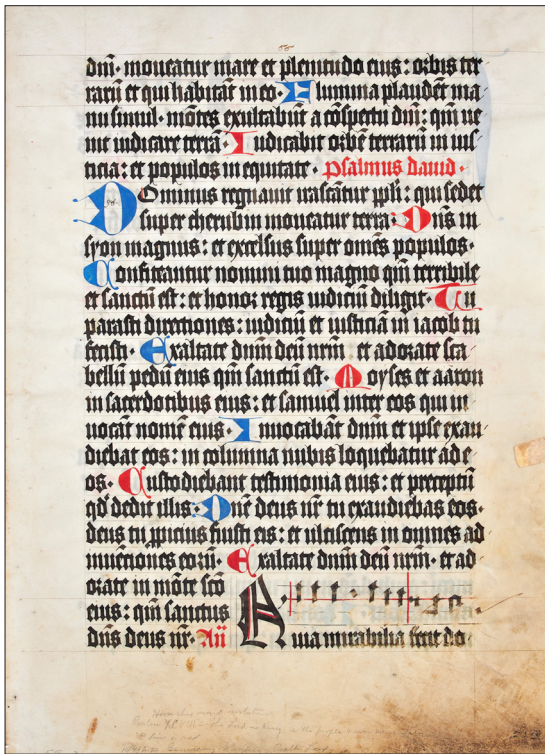


Figure 1: One of three folios offered at Bloomsbury Auctions on 7 December 2020. By kind permission of Bloomsbury Auctions, photographer Roger Wooldrige, and the consignor.

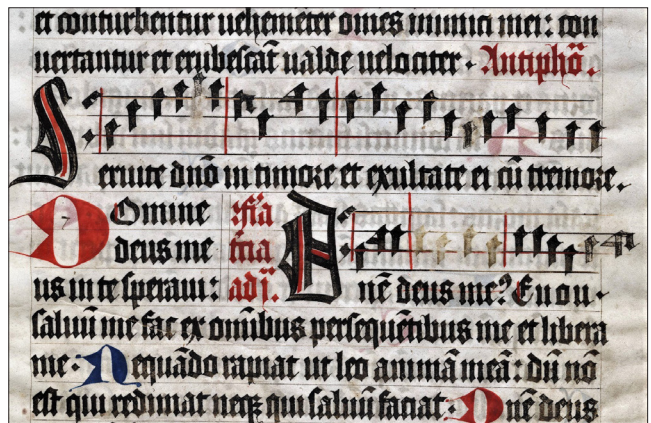


Figure 2: Strapwork and painted initials as well as Huf-nagel neumes are characteristic of the known leaves. Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina, Hollings Library, Early MS 42.

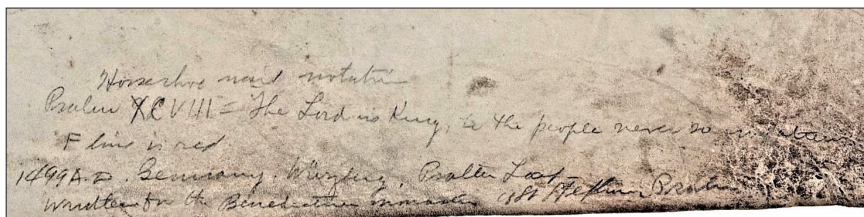


Figure 3: Mrs. Ege annotated the fragment depicted in Figure 1: “Horseshoe nail notation / Psalm XCVIII = The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient / F line is red / 1499 A.D. Germany, Würzburg, Psalter Leaf / Written for the Benedictine monastery of St. Stephen, Psalms”. By kind permission of Bloomsbury Auctions, photographer Roger Wooldridge, and the consignor.

of HL 42 in a recent Bloomsbury auction² [Figure 1] affords an opportunity not only to confirm its alleged 1499 date and provenance at the abbey of St. Stephen, Würzburg, but also to identify its scribe as Matthias Hartung and its modern owners as Sir Thomas Phillippis and the German bible translator, Leander van Ess.

Measuring approximately 495 mm x 350 mm,³ HL 42 was copied in Würzburg in 1499 at (and for) the Benedictine abbey of St. Stephen's there. The text is written in a liturgical *textus quadratus* in a single column of 23 lines, and music for the antiphons is provided in Hufnagel notation [Figure 2]. The decoration on all the known leaves consists merely of strapwork initials with red highlights, alternating red and blue one- and two-line initials, and smaller capitals stroked in red. Each recto is foliated in the middle of the upper margin in modern (eighteenth-century?) pen, and the Bloomsbury leaves bear the numbers '66', '95' and '103'.⁴ Mrs. (Louise) Ege annotated f. 66r with a description asserting its origin in the abbey of St. Stephen's,

2 Bloomsbury Auctions, *Western Manuscripts and Miniatures*, 2 December 2020, lot 21: “Three leaves from a large Choir Psalter, in Latin, manuscript on parchment.”

3 The dimensions vary. Based on the leaf at the University of South Carolina, Gwara recorded 465 mm x 360 mm in his census (*Otto Ege's Manuscripts*, 133), while a leaf at UMass Amherst is said to measure 475 mm x 335 mm. Its written space conforms to Gwara's measurements, approximately 380 mm x 250 mm. For an explanation of the variable dimensions, see below, p. 4.

4 The leaves preserve the Psalms as well as antiphons and, on occasion, responses: f. 66, Pss. 97–100; f. 95, Pss. 142–143; f. 103, Canticles of Isaiah, Ezechias, and Anna. The division (*selah*) at Ps. 143.9 is identified.

Würzburg, and dating it to 1499 [Figure 3].⁵ The folio was priced at twenty dollars.⁶

Until the emergence of these Bloomsbury leaves, others were found only in Ege's posthumous portfolios entitled, *Fifty Original Leaves from Medieval Manuscripts* (ca. 1954, hereafter *FOL*), alongside a single leaf at Missouri State University, Springfield.⁷ Ege's interest in HL 42 was ostensibly typographic. On a 'cartouche' accompanying the fragment in *FOL*, it was remarked that, "the scribe apparently tried to imitate printing type characters in many instances".⁸ Since the leaves of HL 42 are first documented in a price list from ca. 1952,⁹ and only four of them survive outside the *FOL* portfolios, Mrs. Ege probably broke the manuscript after her husband's death. In fact, the dimensions of the Bloomsbury leaves suggest they were independent of *FOL*, simply because they would not have fit into the mats prepared for the portfolio's clamshell housing. The mats had a height of 470 mm and width of 330 mm, and space was necessary for the leaves to be hinged. Leaves of HL 42 must have been trimmed to fit, making it the sole Ege manuscript known to have been both cut up and cut down.

The cartouche prepared for HL 42 in the *FOL* convolute states, "this leaf from the Book of Psalms was written in the Benedictine monastery of St. Stephan in Würzburg and dated 1499 A.D." This information conforms to that written on the Bloomsbury leaves, and new evidence supports these details. Among the codices once belonging to Ege that were acquired in 2015 by the Beinecke Library, a companion volume to HL 42 (Ege 549.1983) bears the following inscription [Figure 4]:

-
- 5 This folio has an additional dealer's mark 'L55-3' penciled on the left-hand side of the lower margin.
 - 6 The same price appears on f. 95, while f. 103 is marked ten dollars. These were very high prices, but many Americans appreciated the size of the sheet and paid more for larger but more widely available leaves.
 - 7 Gwara, *Otto Ege's Manuscripts*, 106–107 (Appendix VIII). Thirty-one of forty sets of fragments have been traced.
 - 8 Ege frequently made this assertion, which was more fully developed in H.J. Chaytor, *From Script to Print*, Cambridge 1945; see Gwara and Garriss, *History of the Teaching Collection*, 26.
 - 9 Gwara, *Otto Ege's Manuscripts*, 348.

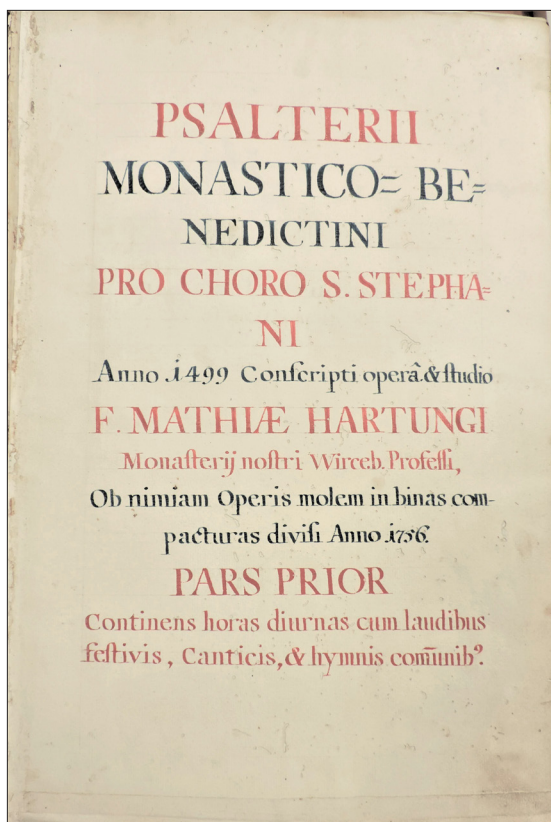


Figure 4: Dedication inscription in the companion volume of Ege HL 42 at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. This memorandum yields the date, provenance and name of the scribe, Matthias Hartung. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983.

PSALTERII MONASTICO-BENEDICTINI PRO CHORO S. STEPHANI Anno. 1499 Conscripti operâ et studio F. MATHIÆ HARTUNGI Monasterii nostri Wirceb. Professi, Ob nimiam Operis molem in binas compacturas divisi Anno 1756. PARS PRIOR Continens horas diurnas cum laudibus festivis, Canticis, & hymnis Communibus.

The FIRST PART of a Monastic Benedictine Psalter for the Choir of St. Stephen, written in the year 1499 through the care and labor of Brother Matthias Hartung, a monk professed of our monastery in Würzburg; divided in the year 1756—on account of the work's tremendous bulk—and bound into two halves, [this one] containing the diurnal Hours with festal Lauds, Canticles and hymns for the Common of Saints.

This inscription, whose details were most probably taken from a colophon in the undivided book, identifies the manuscript's commission by the Benedictine abbey of St. Stephen's in Würzburg. It was founded in 1057 by Archbishop Adalbero of Würzburg and,

after a period of decline at the close of the Middle Ages, joined the Bursfeld Congregation.¹⁰ It was closed under the secularization of 1803, and its moveable goods and library were either collected into local institutions or entered the open market.¹¹

The inscription in the Yale codex names Matthias Hartung as the scribe of HL 42. Brother Matthias copied liturgical books from at least 1460 until 1499, and perhaps later. In 1481 he copied a liturgical Psalter for the abbey of SS. Peter and Paul in nearby Erfurt. Its colophon stated, “Fr. Mathiae Hartungi OSB: Psalterium conscriptum sub venerabili Patre Domino Gunthero Abbate Monast. Sanctorum Apost. Petri et Pauli Erford. O. S. Bened. 1481.”¹² This manuscript was offered by the Erfurt authorities to the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Weimar, in 1807 and its inscription recorded among their records. It was not purchased, and its whereabouts remain unknown. Yet in addition to Ege’s book and fragments, one codex and two cuttings by Hartung survive. The earliest recorded manuscript dates to 1460 (Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.ch.f.246) [Figure 5], a copy of Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum*.¹³ The unkempt libraria script differs considerably from the elegant liturgical hand that Hartung came to practice. The other surviving witnesses to Hartung’s œuvre are represented solely by

10 L.H. Cottineau, *Répertoire Topo-Bibliographique des Abbayes et Prieurés*, Mâcon 1935–1938, v. 2, cols. 3468–3469; S. Krämer, *Handschriftenerbe des deutschen Mittelalters*, Munich 1989, v. 2, 850.

11 Krämer, *Handschriftenerbe*, v. 2, 850. Krämer lists some 36 manuscripts now in the university library of Würzburg. See also H. Thurn, *Die Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg. II.2: Handschriften aus benediktinischen Provenienzen II*, Wiesbaden 1986, for a fuller discussion. In addition to those in Würzburg, Krämer records only four manuscripts in Berlin, Mainz, Vienna and the Vatican, as well as a single fragment of a twelfth-century Bible, sold at Sotheby’s, 12–13 May 1975, lot 668.

12 B.C. Bushey and H. Broszinski, *Die lateinischen Handschriften bis 1600: Bibliographien und Kataloge der Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek zu Weimar*, Weimar 2004, p. 467, where most of the known references to the scribe’s name are gathered. In 1807 the abbreviation ‘Fr.’ of this inscription was thought by the cataloger to mean ‘Friderici’.

13 Described in detail by Thurn, *Die Handschriften II.2*, 98–99. It was copied for St. Stephen’s Abbey.

finita feda scloz Amer
 Explicit Dialogus Cesa
 ri nioch demmiraculis
 Scripta p me frem mutia
 hartung p fessum quu
 mosti Anno dñi m ccc
 lx Indie sē p mēdie infra
 hora xjai z xjai p q mēdie
 Iste liber ptinet ad stū p fessum
 mosti f on dñis Sancti
 Enducti in herbipoli Deo
 gracia Inductus deus

Figure 5: The earliest recorded commission by Matthias Hartung dates to 1460, as noted in his colophon to a copy of the *Dialogus miraculorum* by Caesarius of Heisterbach. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.ch.f.246, f. 137rb.

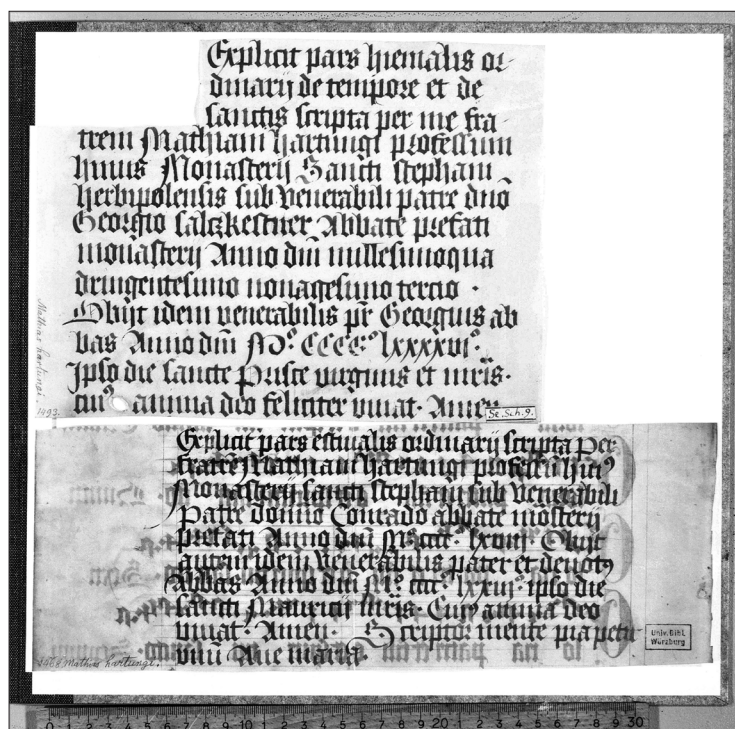


Figure 6: A second commission by Hartung comprising two volumes of an Ordinal is represented only by their colophons. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.f.m.27/2, f. 1r (above) and f. 2r (below).

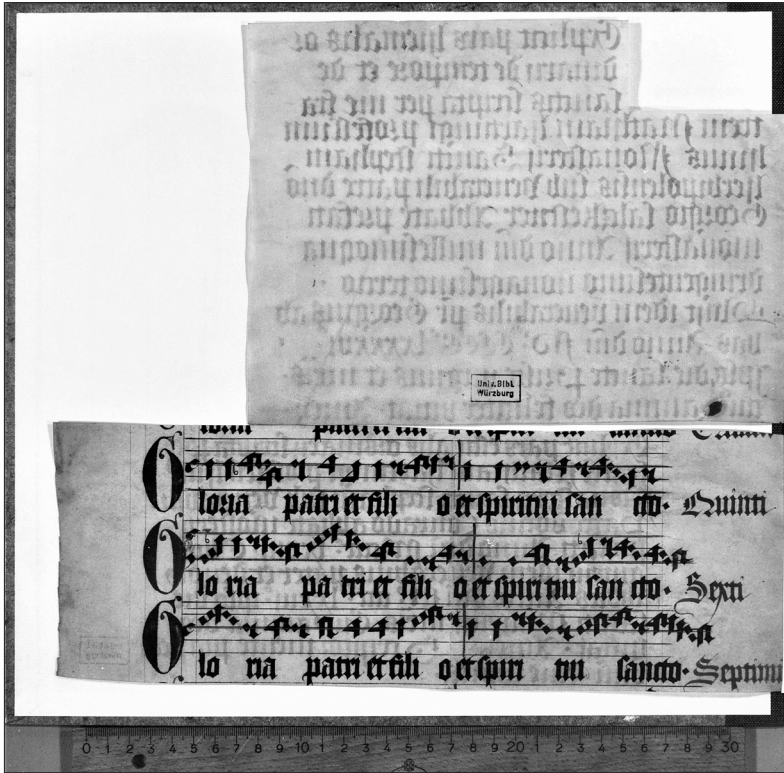


Figure 7: Verso of the Hartung Ordinal fragments. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.f.m.27/1, f. 1v (above) and f. 2v (below).

two colophon fragments at Würzburg (M. p. th. F.m. 27/2 and 27/1 resp.) datable to 1493 and 1468 [Figures 6-7]:

Winter volume of a Liber ordinarius: 'Explicit pars hiemalis ordinarii de tempore et de sanctis scripta per me Fratrem Mathiam Hartungi professum huius Monasterii Sancti Stephani herbipolensis sub venerabili patre domino Georgio Saltzkestner Abbate prefati monasterii. Anno domini millesimo quadringentesimo nonagesimo tertio. Obiit idem venerabilis pater Georgius abbas anno domini M^o. CCC^o. LXXXVI^o.¹⁴ Ipso die sancte Prisce virginis et martyris cuius anima deo feliciter vivat. Amen.'

¹⁴ A list of abbots up until the death of Abbot George in 1496 was extended through Petrus Faut (1519) in MS M.ch.f.151 at the Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg; see H. Thurn, *Die Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Wurzburg*.



Figure 8: The dispersed volume seems likely to have had initials similar to this one in the *Te deum*. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983

Summer volume of the Liber ordinarius: ‘Explicit pars estivalis ordinarii scripta per fratrem Mathiam Hartungi professum huius Monasterii sancti Stephani sub venerabili patre domino Conrado abate monasterii prefati Anno domini m°. cccc°. lxxviii. Obiit autem idem venerabilis pater et devotus abbas Anno domini m°. cccc°. lxxviii. ipso die sancti Mauricii martyris. Cuius anima deo vivat. Amen. Scriptor mente pia petit una Ave Maria.’¹⁵

The script of neither colophon matches Hartung’s, so that, even though the first inscription reads “per me,” it was probably penned by a precentor, librarian, or well-intentioned amanuensis. Each of these colophons was copied by a single scribe, but not obviously Hartung. They have two components. First, each colophon names

11.1: *Handschriften aus benediktinischen Provenienzen I*, Wiesbaden 1973, p. 150.

15 This metrical petition is found elsewhere in a fourteenth-century collection of sermons, now Munich, Clm 23374 (see K. Halm and W. Meyer, *Catalogus Codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Regiae Monacensis*, Munich 1881, v. 2, pt. 4, 66 and Bénédictins de Bouveret, *Colophons des Manuscrits Occidentaux des Origines au XVI^e Siècle*, Fribourg 1982, v. 6, 493). There are many close variants.



Figure 9: “Virgin and Christ Child in a Cloistered Garden”, with an imaginary castle in the background. The colophon above the miniature confirms the date of 1499. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983.

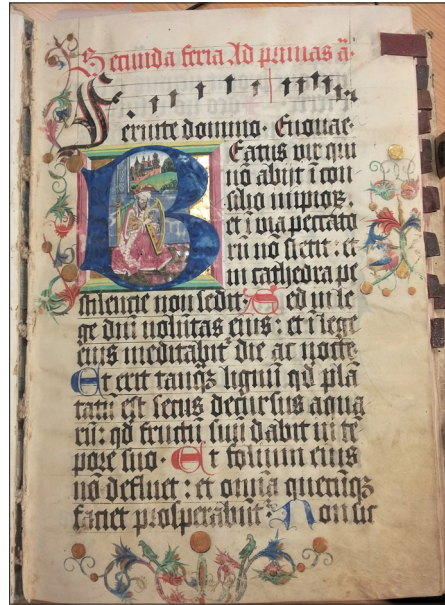


Figure 10: “David Playing the Harp” in an initial B of Psalm 1, “Beatus vir”, with an imaginary castle in the background. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983.

Matthias Hartung as scribe of the Ordinal and provide a date of completion: 1493 for the winter volume and 1468 for the summer volume. Each then also provides a date of death for a named abbot: Abbot George in 1496 and Abbot Conrad in 1473. Our conclusion is that, when the abbots died, the volumes were annotated to record the abbacies associated with the liturgy in each manuscript. Information from the original colophon was copied alongside the abbot's death-date. Although, as mentioned, in neither case does the script resemble that of Hartung, the verso of the second fragment (27/2) bears a liturgical script practically identical to Hartung's in HL 42 [Figure 7]. The formation of the upper element of *a*, the delicately split descender of *p*, and z-shaped *r* of the *or* ligature are characteristic. Nevertheless, the script of the Ege fragment is far more



Figure 11: “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” in initial D of Psalm 109, “Dixit dominus domino meo.” New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983.

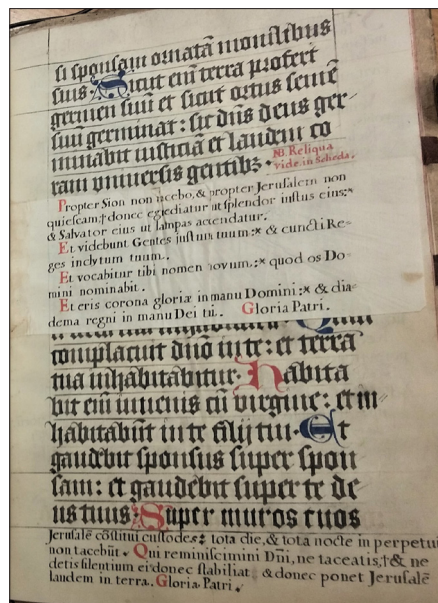


Figure 12: Pages of the Choir Psalter that had been updated over many years of use would most likely not have been saleable. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983.

controlled, and perhaps Ege’s premise that the writing competed with type explains its exceptional regularity.

Now that the sister codex at Yale has been identified, both it and Ege’s dismembered manuscript can be traced to a Sotheby’s sale of manuscripts once owned by Sir Thomas Phillipps.¹⁶ According to the catalogue, the two volumes totalling 265 folios held “30 large initial letters finely executed in gold and colours with well designed borders illuminated in the South German manner, with animals and birds, and grotesques” [Figure 8]. The catalogue also mentions a very

16 Sotheby’s, 1 December 1947, lot 109 (Phillipps MS 680). In the same auction, Ege also purchased lot 92, the ‘Warburg Missal,’ which was also from the diocese of Würzburg but used in the church of St. John in Warburg. Like HL 42, it also belonged to the German monk, bible translator and bibliophile, Leander van Ess. Leaves cut from it became Ege’s HL 22, sales of which are only documented after Ege’s death.

large miniature of the “Virgin and Child in a Garden” [Figure 9],¹⁷ and singles out three historiated initials: “David Playing the Harp” [Figure 10], “the young King holding the Orb”,¹⁸ and “the Holy Ghost” [Figure 11]. The miniature of the Virgin and initials of David and the Trinity survive in the first volume at Yale. While heavily altered, this book remained “remarkably clean”. By contrast, soiling and rubbing in the second volume perhaps explain why it was chosen for dismemberment. Maggs (London) acquired both components for £260,¹⁹ and Ege either enlisted Maggs as his agent for this purchase or bought the manuscript volumes from a Maggs catalogue.

HL 42 has an even earlier provenance, however. Phillipps obtained it with the collection of Leander van Ess (1772–1847), purchased *en bloc* in 1823. Van Ess professed a monk in Marienmünster in 1790, but after the Secularization served as the parish priest of Schwalenberg (Lippe).²⁰ In 1812 he was appointed (Catholic) professor at the Protestant University of Marburg, resigning in 1822 and moving to Darmstadt.²¹ Throughout these years, van Ess had been acquiring monastic books and manuscripts, either directly from defunct libraries or through intermediaries. Milton McC. Gatch has noted that van Ess acquired printed books from the Dominicans of Warburg and from Huysberg and Hadmersleben abbeys (diocese of Halberstadt), as well as duplicates from the university library at Freiburg im Breisgau.²² The manuscripts, however, seem to have been acquired chiefly between 1812 and 1822, during the Marburg professorship. A few came with van Ess from Marienmünster, but the collector himself wrote to Phillipps that they had been acquired

17 A colophon above the miniature records the date of 1499.

18 This miniature does not appear in the Yale volume, so it may have been removed from the second volume by Mrs. Ege and sold separately.

19 We are grateful to Alex Day at Bernard Quaritch, Ltd. (London), for consulting his firm’s marked catalogues and sharing these details with us.

20 J. Altenberend, “Leander van Ess (1772–1847)”, in *‘So Precious a Foundation’: The Library of Leander Van Ess at the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York*, ed. M. McC. Gatch, New York 1996, 21–45, at pp. 22, 24.

21 J. Altenberend, “Leander van Ess (1772–1847)”, 32.

22 M. McC. Gatch, “The Book Collections and the Library of Leander van Ess”, in *‘So Precious a Foundation’*, 47–84, at pp. 56–58.

from defunct abbeys. The largest group has been traced to St. Barbara's, Cologne, but others came from Jakobsberg (Mainz) and from small religious houses in the dioceses of Paderborn, Cologne, Mainz, and Trier.²³

In his privately printed catalogue, Phillipps described the St. Stephen's volumes laconically as a single book: "Psalterium Wirceburgense, 1499 conscriptum. Vell."²⁴ In 1823, however, van Ess had prepared a catalogue of his library that drew the attention of Sir Thomas, who bought the entire collection. The St. Stephen's manuscripts are more fully described therein:

296. *Psalterium monastico-Benedictinum pro Choro S. Stephani (in Würzburg) anno 1499 conscriptum, opera et studio F. Mathiae Hartungi, Wirceburgi professi. Partes duae, continentes horas diurnas cum laudibus festivis, cautis et hymnis communibus.* Ist auf 274 Pergamentblätter sehr schön geschrieben mit Text und Noten in Missalschrift. 31 Initialen sind auf Goldgrund gemalt, mit Randverzierung, Laubwerk, Thieren eingefasst, auch sind mehrere schöne Bilder, Landschaften—auf einem Bilde ist die Stadt Würzburg mit den Schlosse Stein und die Umgegend sehr malerisch schön angebracht—auf Goldgrund schön gemalt. Ausserdem enthält es unendlich viele colorierte Initialen. Wenige Blätter sind auf Papier ergänzt. Wiewohl stark gebraucht, doch im Ganzen sehr gut leserlich, und die Gold-Initialen meistens wie neu. In Schweinsleder-Holzband gebunden, in Fol. maximo.²⁵

296. [...] It is beautifully written on 274 sheets of parchment with text and notation in 'liturgical script'. 31 initials are painted on a gold background, framed with border ornamentation, foliage, animals, and there are also several beautiful pictures, landscapes—the city of Würzburg with Stein Castle and the surrounding area are beautifully painted in one picture—beautifully painted on a gold background. It also contains an infinite number of coloured initials. A few paper sheets have been added. Although heavily used, the whole thing is very legible, and the gold initials

23 M. McC. Gatch, "The Book Collections", 59–60.

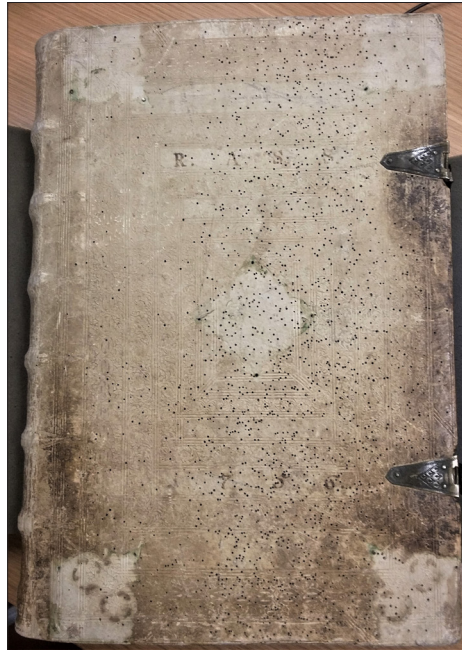
24 T. Phillipps, *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca D. Thomae Phillipps, Bart., A.D. 1837*, Middle Hill (Worcestershire) 1837, p. 8, no. 680. The catalogue was privately printed and issued by Phillipps in small numbers on multiple occasions across three decades. It is now available as a facsimile of the copy once in the library of book dealer Lew D. Feldman, with an introduction by A.N.L. Munby, as well as online in the [digitized copy](https://fragmentology.ms/issues/4-2021/ege-42) of the Royal Library in The Hague.

25 L. van Ess, *Sammlung und Verzeichniss handschriftlicher [sic] Bücher aus dem VIII. IX. X. XI. XII. XIII. XIV Jahrhundert*, etc., Darmstadt 1823, p. 48. Van Ess shipped the books to Phillipps, who failed to pay in a timely fashion or to remit the whole amount; see A.N.L. Munby, *The Formation of the Phillipps Library Up to the Year 1840*, v. 3, Cambridge 1954, pp. 29–32.

are for the most part like new. Bound in pigskin over wooden boards, in grand folio format.

This account disagrees with the 1947 Sotheby's description in certain details. Van Ess recorded thirty-one illuminated initials, while Sotheby's tallied thirty. Interestingly, van Ess documented a landscape miniature of Würzburg and "Stein Castle" (Festung Marienberg). This landscape is neither in the Yale volume nor in the Ege deposit. While it may well have been cut out and sold by Ege, it went unmentioned in the Sotheby's description. The loss may therefore have occurred before Ege's ownership. In fact, there is a slight difference in the total number of leaves, with van Ess reporting 274 plus a few added paper sheets, but Sotheby's noting only 265 leaves plus a "title[-page] and 6 leaves on paper". If this discrepancy does not reflect a counting error, two leaves appear to have been lost between 1823 and 1947, and one of these theoretically preserved the

Figure 13: The original alum-tawed pigskin binding is heavily wormed and bears a (later) date of 1756. The volume Ege dismembered may resemble this one. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ege 549.1983



Würzburg landscape. The precise number of leaves raises questions of the remains of Ege's volumes. Today the Yale manuscript, which seems complete, has 114 folios. If the volume mutilated by Mrs. Ege held the remaining 158–160 folios, a substantial portion of it may survive: only 36 leaves have ever been accounted for. The condition explains why. Folios updated with unsightly glued-on paper stubs, inked cross-hatchings and boldly written annotations would not have been suitable for sale [Figure 12].

The discovery of Mathias Hartung's identity as the scribe of HL 42, not to mention the Phillipps and van Ess provenance, suggests an encouraging trend in Ege scholarship. As more leaves emerge, so do bibliographical details that further research into the manuscripts the Eges dispersed. It is hoped that the substantial missing remnant of the present manuscript survives, and is brought to light soon [Figure 13].