

Petrus Iohannes Olivi, Commentary on Matthew

1 (fols. 1r–159v) *Quatuor facies uni et quatuor penne uni et pedes eorum pedes recti et planta pedis eorum quasi planta pedis uituli et scintille quasi aspectus eris candentis. ezechielis primo* (Ez 1:6–7) Quemadmodum admirabilis est clausura secundum quam tota ramorum diffusio immo generandorum formacio omnium et distinctio uirtualiter continentur in semine. . . . (fol. 5va) intencio aspicit totum librorum et eum qui est materia tocius libri, scilicet Christum. [*H*]ic incipit primum capitulum super Euangelium Mathei. [H]iis igitur prelibatis accedendum ad matheum qui est in ordine primus. cuius librum diuidit in septem partes crisostomus super matheum. — Ipse est leo resurgens qui solus meruit et potuit soluere septem signacula libri. cui est honor et gloria in secula seculorum Amen. (In three other sequential, imitative hands:) Amen. Amen. Explicit opus Petri Iohannis super euangelium Mathei.

Petrus Iohannes Olivi, Commentary on Matthew: unpr. Stegmüller *Bibl.* 6709. Arranged in twenty-eight chapters.

Parchment. iv + 159 + iv (first and back leaves pastedown, medieval parchment, the other flyleaves now stubs). Modern foliation in pencil, that has accidentally repeated the number 121. *Dimensions*: 430 × 290 mm, written space 334 × 180–84 mm, with an intercolumnar space of 19 mm. *Collation*: 1–15⁸ (fols. 1–120) 16⁸ (fols. 121–127, foliation for 121 repeated in error) 17–20⁸ (fols. 128–159). Catchwords are given at normal text size to the left of the inner bounding line, at the edge of the foot, sometimes cropped away; each but for fols. 8v, 48v, 56v is given in a banderole stroked with red. There are also ordinarily signatures on the first four leaves of a quire, in the form ‘c.1.’, ‘c.2.’, etc. Parchment is ivory in colour with a slightly rough, stiff nap, arranged hair to hair, flesh to flesh, flesh-side outwards, with a modest difference in colour. There is some loss at the lower corner of fols. 47–51 where the parchment has been ripped away; there is also loss in the middle of fol. 48, where one of the marginal reference letters, an M, has been cut out. The blank lower margin of fol. 155 has been mined for the parchment. There are splashes of some liquid on several leaves, probably spills of ink that have been washed off; on fol. 152r the ink has been washed from the margins but not where the splashes touch the text. *Layout*: Two columns of 54 lines, ruled in pencil, the outer bounding lines in all cases going to the edges of the page, doubled in the horizontal range at top and bottom. A separate two-line band at the top provides the frame for chapter headings across each page. Prickings usually visible at the edges of the outer margins.

Script: A handsome, well made book, originally among those copied for Abbot John Whethamstede of St Albans during his first abbacy (see *Provenance*) mostly by the same scribe who copied large parts of Oxford, Worcester College, MS 233, and BL MS Royal 8 G. x, using a good, small Textura quadrata showing the influence of *littera fracta*. That scribe here copied fols. 14r–40v and 57v–159r. The second scribe wrote a squarer, squatter textura with less hairline finishing, although the effect is still pleasant. Punctuation is by medial point, occasional punctus versus, and double virgule for major pauses.

Decoration: The style of decoration is also shared by another Whethamstede book, Bodl. MS Auct. F. inf. I. 1. First initial of nine lines, blue with shell gold at edges, interior filled by a scrolling vine with void trefoiled leaves marked with a blue circle, on a red stippled field; border bars of red and blue on four sides with vine-and-spray work at regular intervals in the two relevant colours. At the four corners, a rosette formed of intertwined leafy sprays, void work picked out in red as before; in the centre of the rosettes, on a blue ground, either the lamb with banner or the eagle of St John, one of each, both with golden nimbus and left void with faint modelling in grey ink. The lamb and the eagle are common to John Whethamstede’s books, representing his namesakes of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist. Each chapter heading is treated with a similar initial done in blue and red penwork, with

flourished marginal cascades (except that for c. 1, which was not begun). Lemmata are underlined in red.

Annotations: There are occasional nota marks, but no significant annotations or signs of use in the book, apart from the addition to the inner and outer margins of recurring alphabets to indicate sections, written in ornate gothic majuscules of a sort that are difficult to date precisely but seem to be of the later fifteenth century. A later reader occasionally tried his hand at imitating the calligraphy. Three different fifteenth-century readers signed at the end of the text, as noted above: two added 'Amen' and a third an explicit. Beneath this, an Elizabethan reader wrote: 'Erat quidam Petrus Ioannis hereticus unus ex complicitibus Ioachimi abbatis heresiarche cum ergo non constat cuius Petri Ioannis hoc opus sit non alienum putauit ab officio meo imprudentem lectorem admonere, ne []'.

Binding: A contemporary, fifteenth-century binding of white-tawed skin over bevelled wooden boards, one of the very few original bindings at the College. Two skins, the inner cover with turn-ins down the fore-edges, the outer cover stitched to the under skin at the edges of the boards. Sewn on thirteen raised bands. Headbands are alternating blue and beige in colour. Fore-edge clasps were white-tawed leather straps attached to the upper board, protruding from underneath the outer skin, with metal fixtures at the ends attaching to bronze catch-plates on the back board that are still in situ, likewise covered by the skin. A bronze chain-staple remains in a position, projecting high from the back board, that would normally have ensured its removal in other college libraries. It is 128 mm long and 14 mm broad, placed horizontally across the centre of the book about 30 mm from the foot, held by four nails. A cushion of stout leather comes between the metal and the cover. The nails show through the pastedown on the inner side of the board, three of them still shod with their metal washers. The middle of the staple is arched to a height of 11 mm, to take the first link of the chain or the ring to which the first link was fastened, showing that the book was originally stored lying flat on a sloping desk, its back board uppermost. It is this arching element in the staple that would have been a danger to the book's neighbour after they came to be shelved upright on presses around 1600, and which makes it therefore a rare survival. There are signs of another chaining by a brass clip held by two nails, at the foot of the fore-edge of the upper board, which corresponds to this secondary shelving arrangement. MS 61, given by Archbishop William Warham in or after 1508, has a label on the back board with a note of its donation to the college, showing that chaining from the back board was kept up at the College at least into the early sixteenth century.

Labels and marks: The usual spine-label is lacking, although in its position are the remnants of a large numeral, probably 2, in vermillion paint. The fore-edge tag was attached in the usual position but has been ripped away. On the upper pastedown '49' in ink and the words 'Commentar. Petri Iohannis in Evang. secundum Matth.' (s. xvi). The library stamp is on fol. 1r and scattered throughout the book in the lower margin.

Provenance: Manufactured for John Whethamstede, the famous abbot of St Albans, during his first abbacy, 1420–40, according to a list of books paid for by the abbot: 'Item in factura Petri Iohannis super Mattheum, lx s.' (BL MS Arundel 34; ed. Sharpe, *Benedictines*, 566, B88. 13; as established by D. R. Howlett & R. W. Hunt, 'The provenance of MS New College 49', *Bodleian Library Record* 10 (1982) 225–8). The book was copied and illuminated by craftsmen found in other books commissioned by the abbot (see above). Whethamstede later gave the book to Gloucester College, Oxford, where—the fate of many books at the university towns—it doubtless entered the pledge market. It is not known when the book arrived at New College, but it was there by 1697 when reported in *CMA*. [The fact that it has kept its medieval binding intact suggests that it came after the wholesale campaign of rebinding.??]

Secundo folio: samarie anunciauerunt

Bibliography: *CMA* 1013; Coxe, p. 14, Alexander & Temple, no. 449.