

Monk's Blood or Red Wine?

Peter of Capua and *Distinctiones theologicae*. *Defectus to Surditas* (Lampeter MS 2)

Every manuscript has a story, but few capture the imagination of our student body as dramatically as Lampeter MS 2, more popularly known as 'The Monk's Blood Manuscript'. This mysterious codex was one of those donated by Thomas Phillips to St David's College in 1841. It is a partial copy of Peter of Capua's *Distinctiones theologicae*, a collection of short entries on biblical and theological matters, arranged in alphabetical order. The volume only contains entries from *Defectus* to *Surditas* (Weakness to Deafness); a full copy housed in Hereford Cathedral Archive (MS Pvi. 6) shows us that it would have once spanned *Alpha* to *Xristus* (Christus).

A cutting pasted to the inside of the front cover relates the first of the tales surrounding the manuscript, stating that the volume 'discovered' near Bangor was:

supposed to have belonged to the Monks of that Monastery, who were murdered by the command of Ethelred the 2nd, and thought to be stained with their blood, having been discovered with a quantity of human bones.

But the legends abound: some say that following the Battle of Chester in c. 616, the victorious King Ethelfrid of Northumbria murdered the monks of Bangor-Is-Coed (Bangor-on-Dee) as punishment for them praying for God to intervene on the side of the Welsh army the king had just defeated. Indeed, the Venerable Bede records that 1,200 monks were massacred when their defender Brocmail abandoned them, and that only fifty escaped the slaughter; the manuscript was supposedly discovered among their bloody remains.¹ Yet another version of the story is that the monks were murdered during the Reformation when they resisted their property being seized. Unfortunately, none of these stories is likely to be true, and the blood-like splatters that stain the pages of the manuscript today are far more likely to be a spilled cup of claret.

Nonetheless, the manuscript is still an intriguing and significant one. The text's author Peter of Capua (d. 1214) was a man of some standing around the turn of the twelfth century. We know that he was born in Amalfi into a noble Italian family, and that he studied at the renowned University of Paris under the illustrious theologian Peter of Poitiers before becoming Master of Theology himself.² He must have distinguished himself as a teacher and thinker, as he was appointed by Pope Innocent III as a papal

[illegible]

peffimus. p. Vt impij a diuidiabunt dieffu-
os. Bonne fic iuriffe in eo penecebit eos q tan-
dem dicent. factm qd legi in fap. Nos in fclauu
tam illorum edimabam in damam. fi
nem illoru fine honore eo qd errauim a
uia iustitiz. z fol uirgine u illur nob. In fclio q
dam inuunt beate. p. Beati quibicant in domo
cia. in fclm fe. lau. re. p. Vnunt corda eoz in
fclm. fe. Bonne fic inuent in eo hu deqz de in
fap. fingebunt iuffi. z tamqz fclulle in ari
drucos difcurrunt. Nam dampnare. vñ. alci.
de fclm eorum in fclm fclio. vñ. ari eoz
u moiet. z ignis u fringit. p. vñ. a pafce
eos. Bonne fic in conuient illi qd inuunt mo-
tem z u inuement. defigabunt moiet. z ingit
moiet ab eis. p. qd dicit fclm moiet q
fup nos. z rufpiz opit nos. Temo fclio u
aliqui n male. pati. abftrunt nos a dmanez
defid u qm fclm addi fclm. fclm. vñ. vñ.
b dicit q beat hofoloneu uram Job. Dicit
in bonis dieff fuos. in p fclio ad inferna defcen-
dunt. Bonne fic inuunt in eo illi. in quozum
p fclm ari faloni. in ecc. Bonne nectit e o
moiet. z bibe. z o fclm anime fue bona de labo-
ribz fclm.

Sallaciad in aīnatiōis. p̄dicatiōis. z inq̄
 natōis. Sallaciad in aīnatiōis. ip̄e de
 secus filii dī. z in aīnatiōis. cur̄ q̄ leuit̄ z s̄ue
 sp̄itū sallant in aīnatiōis. ūgint. p̄. Descender
 hic p̄mua. in uel. z si. sal. sal. si. c. sallaciad
 p̄dicatiōis. sunt p̄dicatiōis. ut s̄ue doct̄e. p̄.
 In sallaciad. letabr̄. Job. Alius genuit. salas
 rōis. p̄cones. t̄m̄at. s̄e em̄ celi distillatiū
 sallaciad. in aīnatiōis. sunt p̄ca. q̄ aliunde
 p̄ueniunt. Sallaciad. in aīnatiōis. q̄ p̄p̄it hominē
 firiū. Sallaciad. in aīnatiōis. mala. p̄ca. s̄e. s̄e. ḡis. q̄
 la. fide. q̄. fide. t̄m̄at. in aīnatiōis. p̄mua
 sallaciad. sunt ad t̄e. z s̄ue. f̄uatiōis.
 p̄s. s̄e. q̄ ad modū. descendit. ūm̄ z t̄e. de. aīnatiōis.
 z illuc. t̄e. si. t̄e. s̄e. modū. t̄m̄at. z in aīnatiōis.
 dī. eam. z ḡm̄ate. f̄at. gam. sic. e. ūb̄.
 q̄ p̄ca. de. q̄e. in aīnatiōis. n̄. t̄e. ad. me. uac̄.
 ūm̄ z c. Sallaciad. sunt ad mundaōis. c̄m̄.
 he. doct̄e. oīs. ḡis. hap. eos. i. no. pa. z si. z
 Q̄. aīd̄. z baptisat̄. f̄u. sal. e. c̄m̄. f̄u. p̄mua
 ad submōis. p̄. Inq̄at̄. p̄e. s̄u. p̄mua
 f̄u. eam. ūm̄ z si. ho. ḡ. s̄e. f̄u. h̄m̄.
 me. s̄e. ūm̄ in altitudinē. maris. z ḡm̄.

legate, then cardinal; his missions included taking the cross and preaching the Fourth Crusade.³

It was during his time in Paris that it is thought he began work on the *Distinctiones theologiae*, which is essentially a handbook for preachers in the form of 'biblical distinctions', short explanations or interpretations of terms and concepts found in the Bible and other religious texts, designed to help with the composition of sermons. It was an increasingly important textual genre at the time, as the focus on preaching was increasing due to the threat of popular forms of heresy (such as the Cathars in southern France), though the information could be arranged in different ways depending on the organizational principle employed by the author. Peter of Capua's text, often found under the alternative title *Alphabetum in artem sermocinandi* in manuscript catalogues, was unusual for its time as the distinctions are arranged alphabetically. This rather prosaic – though practical – arrangement of the material was controversial, as it was deemed more appropriate for such information to be organized according to a higher, more spiritual or thematic schema.⁴

Aside from its supposed blood-stained pages, another intriguing feature of this particular codex is the odd format of the text. Measuring c. 300 × 285 mm, it is a highly unusual set of dimensions for a manuscript of any sort, which is usually determined by the size of the animal from which the skin was taken to make the parchment or vellum. Upon closer inspection, it would appear that the manuscript has been chopped off at the bottom, and that some four inches or so have been removed. The result is that entries found towards the bottom of a folio are cut off mid-sentence, or else are missing entirely. Who knows the reason for this mutilation? Presumably it was not hacked down at the same time as the unfortunate monks who were once its owners.

Harriett Webster

lucratus.
tor plus reci
um & recip
ur annuā. lū.
Sap. Volenti
ad usuram

Funel culpe. *funel. vi. modis in bono*
funel grē. funel gehenne. un ī ma.
& funel glē. funel culpe triplices sunt. i. cō
nexio peccatorū. ysa. Ue qui trahitis iniqui
tatem in funiculis uanitatis & qī uinculū
lum plaustrū peccatū. s. funel peccatorū

one xpi. qī euāgelicam tērent hystoniam in
nūc iudebatur euāgelica. qī pphauit dicens. lo
derunt manū meā & pē. mōs dīnumerāre
nūc omnia ossa meā.

Pecunia uno mō in bono. uno in malo.

Pecunia digna. & pecunia indigna. pecunia dig
na qua ex caritate pecunt spūalia ul' et
na. lūm. Quid pecunia pētin in nōie mō da
no. lūm. pecunia & accipiet. lūm. Omnis enim q
pecunia accipit. lūm. tū digna pecunione pecuntur
qdam alia. & qferunt. pēs nāq; amq; signa
pecebant. ut abrahā de pmissiōe s. fca. pan
lūm uidei signa pecunt & greci sapiām. pecunia loq
ut habitaret in segoz & qcessum ē ei. pecunia iacob
alaban ut fca nām essent mōt sua & laban u
gūm habo qd pēnt. fca ioseph ad mstruam em
pecuntur a pharaone. ut habitarent in tū uel
lent & qcessum ē ei. fca q iat' in dēto pecuntur
carnet & uenit cōmū. qm filia caleph suata ē a
uuo suo ut peceret a pte suo agrum & dedit ei ca
leph uingū supiū & uingū inferiū. David &
unam pecunia a domino. & hanc reqsiuit. s. ut in
habuer in domo dūi omib; dieb; in. lūc. Salomon
data s opone pecendi. pecunia sapiām & obmūt
eam. Rer. & salomon uingū saba omnia q uolu
it & pēnt ab eo qcessit. Summanus illaq; pecunia fctū

tunt in ordinate. ut filia zebeder. lūm. ac
cessit ad eum nūc filioz zebeder. adorant & pe
tent aliqd ab eo. S. qā in ordinate pecebant
n potant illd hīc anqū calicem bibent eo qd
nām ē hoīm aī lucem surge. lūm. q mēm
ad hī submiserant audiet. potest bibere cali
cem quē ego bibitur sum. & c. aliqū & pē
t mū bonū. obmūlo maiori qd mūnt tpe
dūt. lūm. salm carit & sensualitāt sensū
peccat' mīscat a me calic' iste. mōt hī in sum
ant sū mīscat. salm rāōnem. Verūptū n sicut
ego uolo s. sicut tu. lūm. in. lūm. in. lūm. in. lūm. in.

Pecunia duob; modis in bono. uno in malo.

Pecunia ē. pecunia hominū & pecunia serpen
tis. pūmū pecunia ē sapiē. lūm. lū. & recibu
it mēna sup pecunia iū. n de pūdo sapiē fūe
plēm hantit archana diuinitat. Salm pec
ē pte. lūm. publicanū aī alonge stant uolebat
odōs ad celum leuare. s. pūebat pecū suū
dicent. pūciū esto dūe in pēōn. Verūptū pec
unia ē neque & carnal pūdentie. bñ. Sūp pec
ē tūū gradient. pūmū pecū ē lūm lūm leuā
dum leuāt. pūciūm deuātōnū. qā. s. sapiā
leuat hominē ad supna. hūc in pēōne
aaron ponebat ornamentū illd qd applūm
uōnale. qā sapiā nra disciet debz ēē. ut fca

Ornamental capitals

1 Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England: A Revised Translation*, A. M. Sellar (ed.) (London: G. Bell, 1907), p. 88.

2 Spencer E. Young, 'Parisian Masters of Theology: a Biographical Register', in *Scholarly Community at the Early University of Paris: Theologians, Education and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 215.

3 A contemporary chronicler and participant in the Fourth Crusade Geoffrey de Villehardouin records that Peter was sent to preach the crusade and papal indulgence offered by the pope after taking the cross himself; *Memoirs or Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade and The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans. Frank T. Marzials (London, 1908), p. 1.

4 For more on Peter of Capua, his *Distinctiones* and their historical context, see Marcia L. Coulish, 'Scholastic Theology at Paris around 1200' in S. E. Young (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries at Medieval Universities* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 29–50.