

OBJECT IN FOCUS



SCROLL WITH THE GENEALOGICAL HISTORY OF CHRIST

TEXT BY PETER OF POITIERS (c. 1130-1205)



Text and Function

The text is a copy of the Compendium Historiae in Genealogia Christi or Genealogical History of Christ written by Peter of Poitiers, Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1193 to 1205. The Genealogy is Poitiers’ most famous work and was intended to provide a short summary of Biblical history in the form of a genealogical tree tracing Christ’s ancestry. This is supplemented by historical information drawn from contemporary sources, such as the Historia Scholastica of Peter Comestor. The Genealogy was an educational tool and circulated widely until the end of the 15th century.¹ The roll format was practical for classroom study and would have been presented on a wall or table.

The text should initially be read vertically, beginning in the top left with a prologue describing the candelabrum “Tres calami i(d est) tria brachia ex uno latere p(ro)deu(n)t...” This is followed by Poitiers’ prologue in the top right: “Considerans hystorie sacre p(ro)lixitat(em), n(ec)no(n) et difficultat(em) solariu(m)...perduxi.”² Beneath Poitiers’ prologue is a note regarding how to use the roll: “Nota...” The genealogical diagram begins below this with “Adam in agro...” next to which Adam and Eve’s names are inscribed in a red and blue roundel. From this section onwards, the text should be read left to right in tandem with the genealogical diagram.

The genealogical diagram presents Christ’s ancestry along the central line. The main names along the central line are:

- Membrane 1: Adam and Eve; Noah;
- Membrane 2: Abraham;
- Membrane 4: David;
- Membrane 5: Sedecias;
- Membrane 7: Christ; Anne; the Virgin Mary.³

These figures are organised into six historical periods that correspond to the six ages of the world. The first five ages open with Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, and Sedecias followed by their descendants.⁴ The sixth age begins with the birth of Christ “(Christ)us natus”. Each age is demarcated by a large, ornate blue and red roundel with geometric designs. The last age has four large roundels denoting the different stages of Christ’s life : “(Christ)us natus”, “(Christ)us puer”, “(Christ)us passus”, and “(Christ)us resurgens”.

Running parallel to the central line are other lineages representing those who influenced Biblical history, such as Alexander the Great and his successors down to Cleopatra as well as Roman emperors. These additional lineages are synchronised chronologically with the central line. For example, next to the roundel “(Christ)us natus” is the list of Roman emperors “imp(er)atores...” beginning with “Julius Cesar”.

The scroll ends with Christ’s resurrection and a description of the martyred disciples. The left column finishes with five roundels naming “Paulus, Barnabus, Nic(h)odemus, Marcus, and Lucas” and a line about Stephanus being stoned to death on 3 August in the same year Christ was crucified “...Stephanus lapidator...” The right column ends with Mathias being crucified “Mathyas...crucificus fuit.” Two paragraphs above the notice on Mathias is the poem about Saint Anne “Anna solet dici tres concepisse Marias...” Beneath the note on Mathias is an indecipherable inscription. Lewis E 72 ends similarly, but has a colophon in the bottom right.

Rhineland or France
Mid 14th century

Physical Description:

Vellum roll, 8 membranes glued together 418 x 39.5 cm, complete except for possible missing title due to trimming, no discernible colophon, neat Gothic script written vertically from top to bottom in two columns that become further subdivided, brown ink with red and blue initial letters and paragraph signs, capitals touched in red, men’s names in brown ink and women’s in red, relationships are designated in red script, illustrated with initial letters ‘T’ and ‘C’ embellished with penwork at the beginning of the two main columns, a candelabrum commences the genealogical diagram extending through the centre of the chronicle, the diagram is made up of red, blue, yellow and green double circle roundels with names of Biblical and historical figures inscribed connected by yellow and sometimes red or green lines, supplementing the diagram are illustrations such as the Tower of Babel, the dorse or verso of the roll is blank.

BINDING: Membranes are glued together rather than sewn. Preserved in a modern fitted box.

CONDITION: Upper, lower, and right margins trimmed away – the top of the candelabrum is slightly truncated. Some natural undulations in the parchment and some darkening stains and smudging on the first and last membranes such as a circular blemish on the candelabrum and an indecipherable inscription bottom right of the eighth membrane. There is some separation along green ink lines and small portions of the vellum are missing in green-coloured areas. The middle sections of the roll (membranes 2 through 6) are in good condition.

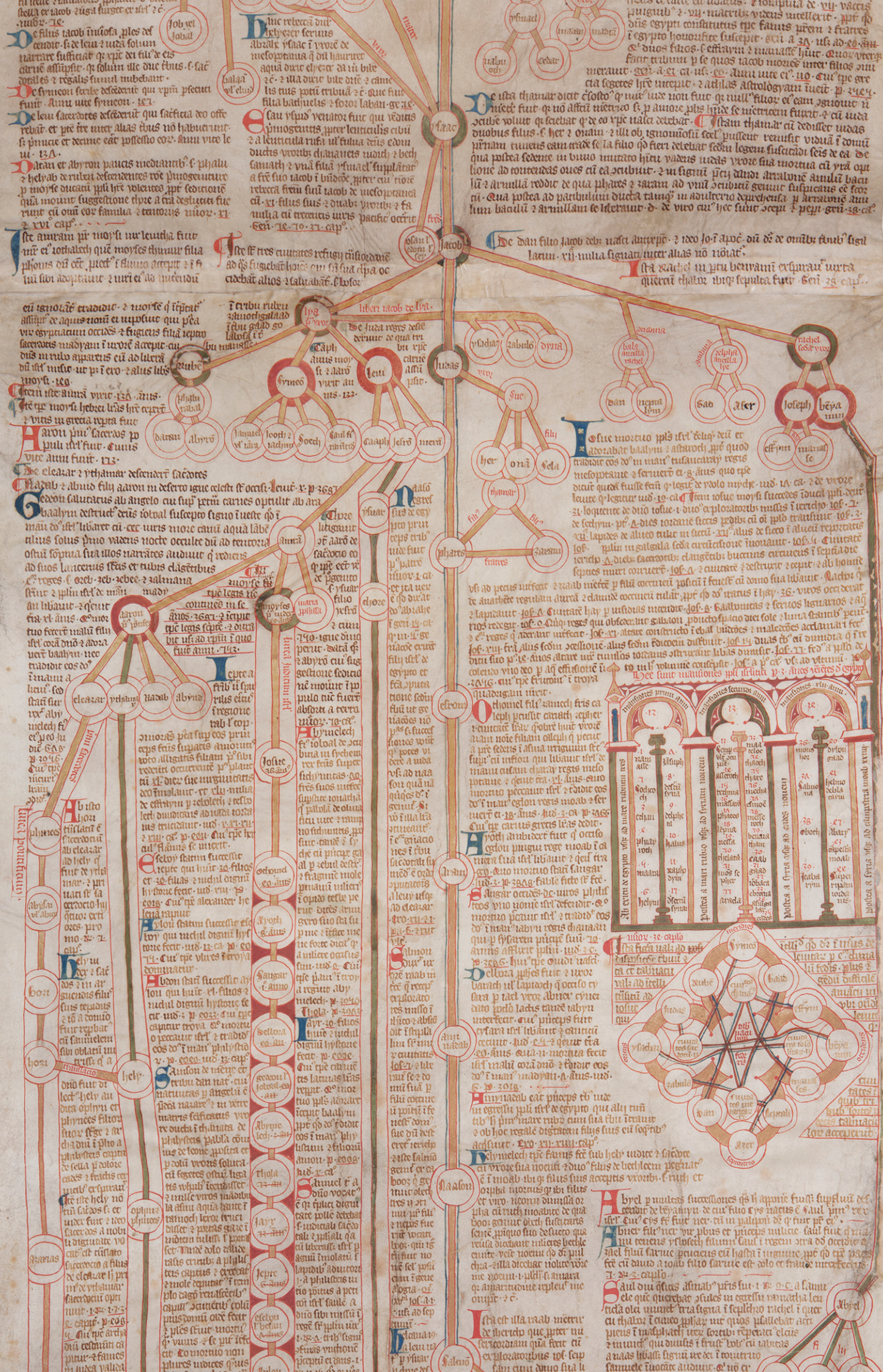
1. A list of Genealogy manuscripts (rolls and codices) can be found in Philip S. Moore, *The Works of Peter of Poitiers* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1936) pp. 101-106. J.B. Piggin has also compiled a working list: <https://piggin.net/stemmahist/petercatalog.htm#>

2. A transcription of Poitiers’ prologue can be found in Moore, *The Works of Peter of Poitiers*, p. 99. Attention should be paid to differences across scrolls, for instance Moore’s universalising transcription starts “Considerans scripture sacre...” while this scroll begins “Considerans hystorie sacre...”

3. Kidd, *The McCarthy Collection*, p. 300.

4. For a discussion on the organisation of Poitiers’ Genealogy see: W.H. Monroe, “A Roll-Manuscript of Peter of Poitiers’ Compendium” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 65 no. 3 (March 1978) p. 92.

This image shows a narrow, vertical strip of a manuscript page, likely a flyleaf or a page from a book. The strip is heavily damaged, showing significant tearing and discoloration. The text is written in a medieval script, with some letters in red ink (rubrication). The strip is oriented vertically, showing the right edge of the page.



points. The centre of the diagram reads “tabernaculum.” This diagram appears in most copies of the Genealogy either below or alongside the architectonic diagram of the “mansiones” of the Israelites, though it does not appear in 4 Cod. 989.

Membrane 5:
Circular diagram depicting the layout of the city of Jerusalem and plotting out where different members of society live in relation to its six gates. This diagram is perhaps most similar in shape to MS 1234, though MS 1234 is more elaborate and depicts the gates as little doorways.¹¹

Membrane 8:
Two concentric roundels separated from the central genealogical line show Christ’s resurrection. The central roundel is red and blue with geometric designs around the words “(Chris)us resurgens”, the outer roundel is composed of 12 smaller roundels alternating in colour (red, yellow, blue) with the 12 disciples’ names inscribed and connected by red and white bands. This depiction diverges from other copies of the Genealogy, such as Lewis E 72 or MS Typ 216, which depict a long rectangle with “Christus resurgens” in the centre and the 12 disciples on either side. 4 Cod. 989 similarly presents two concentric roundels, but includes a figural illustration of Christ speaking to his disciples.

The gap between “(Christ)us passus” and “(Christ)us resurgens” can also be seen in Lewis E 72. Such a pronounced division is unusual. MS Typ 216 has a small break. Others, such as MS 1234, have no break.



11. For a discussion of the Jerusalem diagram in Poitiers' Genealogy see: Andrea Worm, "Ista est Jerusalem: Intertextuality and Visual Exegesis in Peter of Poitiers' Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi and Werner Rolewinks' Fasciculus temporum" in Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt eds., *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West* (London, 2012).

in eode cyro regnauit. vt. i. danyele. h. metropi.

a duxit in
cti i char
i pre suo
tra chanaa
batuel ai
escendit bala
phreos i le.

s sibi illata
obi i filiu
laci pegri

cat q iste job dixit i vxore duna
genit ex ea vii. filios iiii. fili
n qua sibi dñs dedit v
tade p'z restitui

oia
b.
mo
m.

fi
li

s
bur
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laban
rebecca
moab
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balaa
el elud

a deo offe
buerunt.
u vito le

f phalu
geriture
ediciono
lucati fue
uioz. xi

u
lia
z s

Iothcu exisset de sodomus vniuersis
quinqz ciuitatibz i vxore i statuā sal
dusa q post tergum dñi pluerit igne
i sulphur et dñi pceptum asperit hos
duos filios. f. moab i amon de duabz fili
abus suis ebrius factis que ipm iebaur
rūt. i postea seipsas abmerferūt. i omis
ambas impregnauit. gen. 19. 10.

Iste job vel jobab de inf. scdm q rōit
quidā fuit scds rex p' bale in edom
qui i i gen. 10. ca. dñi pncps elau iohal
sed hebrei dicūt cū descendisse de
hūs pmo genito nadoz.

Iste job dixit i vxore duna
genit ex ea vii. filios iiii. fili
n qua sibi dñs dedit v
tade p'z restitui

Iste job dixit i vxore duna
genit ex ea vii. filios iiii. fili
n qua sibi dñs dedit v
tade p'z restitui

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est vxor qd sonat ei' mptatio. Cethura
uati ff plures filij per quos sarraceni des
finael filius abrahe viri anis. 120. d
Iacob cū pmo genitura cū i bñdcoe elau re
ca. cū p uisione uir' lizani. i. ihsin ty
expleset. laban fr' rebrce uiris sue. pacto
nalib' pcedit diuite fco cū vxorib' i filijs
ydolis p'ris sui fugiens in galaad a labā
ym vbi cast' angeloz uidit. gen. 37. p'fic
matutina lucta cū angelo lēso neruo p
cabis iacob f' ihsin eiv i
et. vris occurrente
oppressa. et sydhinit
altare crexit i domū
i iacob de mesopotam
sua familia i gregib'
tūsturni gregis tal
bus vendito i dñs
omibz suis descendit i
phoni p ordine i etate
vite iacob. 120. d
Item qū genuit iosep
leges dedit. gen. 2. 14. d

Hic i Natana
tate abrahe f'
minat' secūda
etas hūs scdm
hebreos annos
1107. qui simul
murti ab adam
vsq' ad abham
fuit. 6000.
clxxx. vii.

Dyna filia iacob tūu venisset a
a rege sychem fuit oppressa qui
cum oibz de terra sua ardicaret ei
die symeon i leui i omnes

Ioseph a fribus su
i u i c're
sus. po
neus d
pugnu
dñs eg
i egypt
d' dñs
facit tr

De ista thamar dicit c'sosto' q' m' uir
mētē fuit. q' nō affcū mētēro f' p ai
oculie voluit q' sciebat q' de eo xpc nāci d
duobus filijs. f. her i oriam. i illi ob ign
p'nam tuuens eam tradē se la filio qd fier
qua postea sedente in bñuo imitato hñu
lionē ad contendas oues cū ea p'cubuit. i
lū i armillā reddit de qua phares i zaran
cū. Qua postea ad paribulum ducta tam
lūm baculū i armillam se literauit. d.

De dan filio iacob debz nāci antep
latum. xij. milia signati mte

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