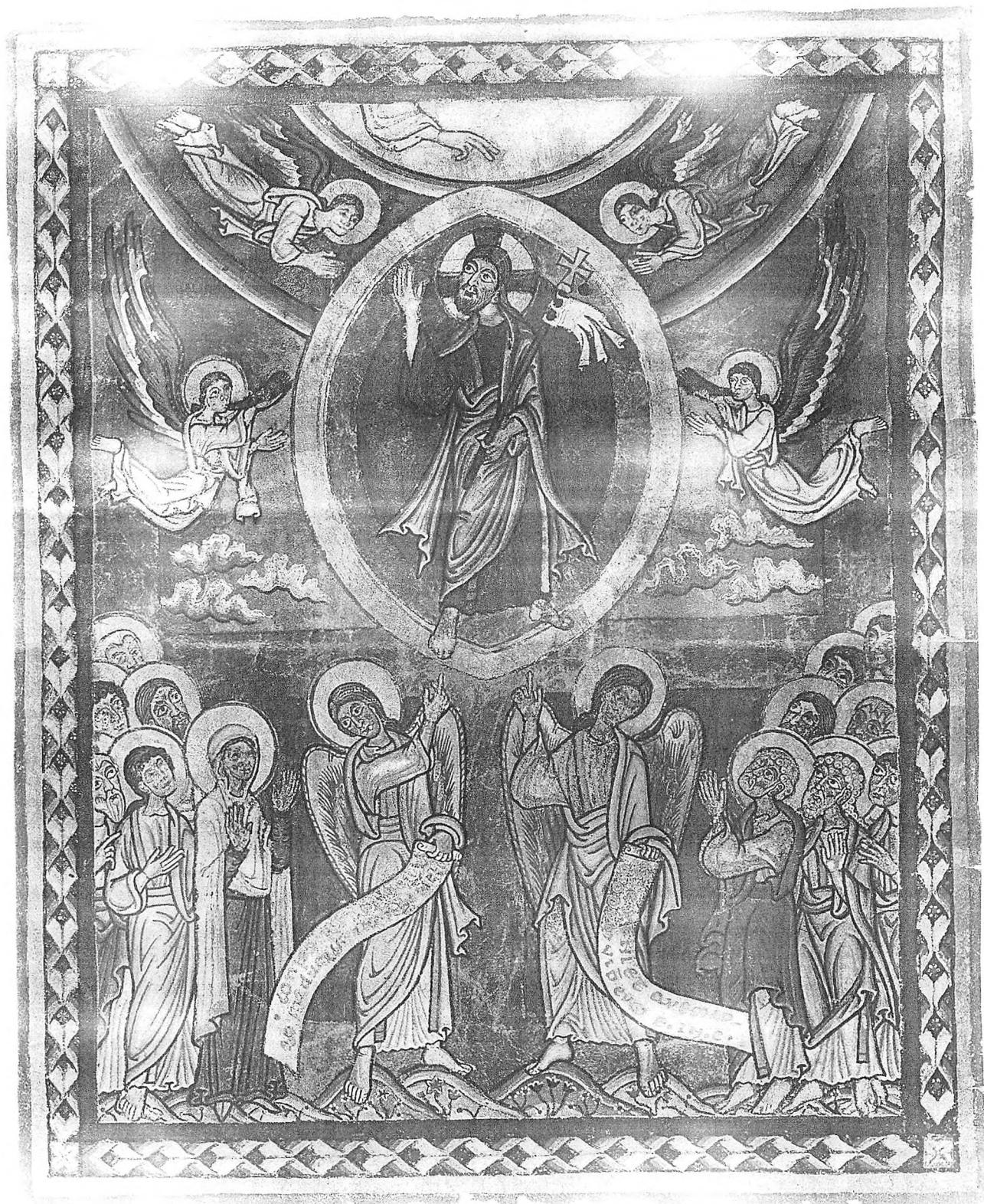
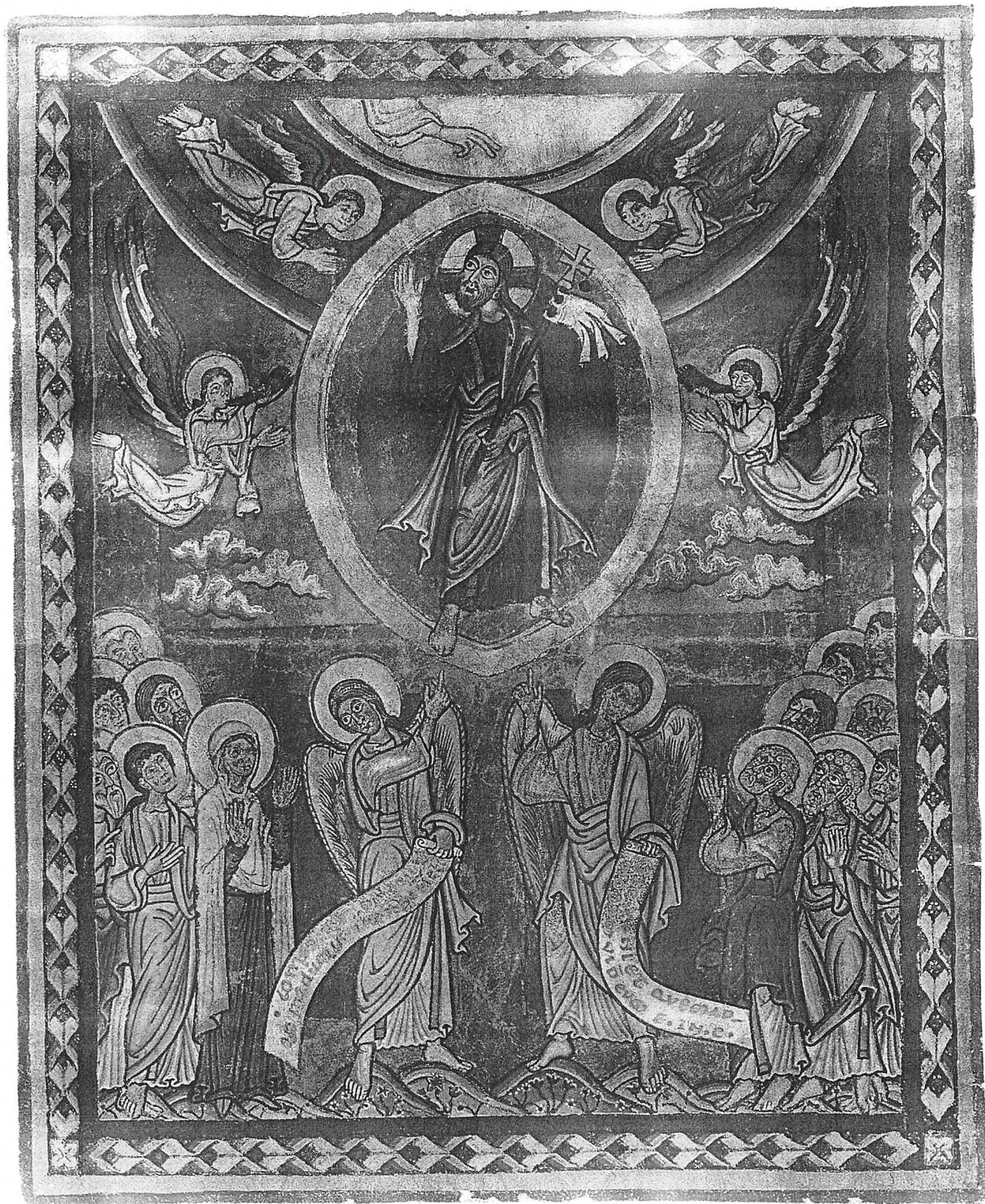






"The Art of the Book from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance: A Journey through a Thousand Years". John J. Burns Library Boston. Dr. Jörn Günther - Antiquariat, Hamburg (2000)

11 The Ascension of Christ.

Illuminated single leaf from a liturgical manuscript, Germany, Helmarshausen, c. 1170.

Private collection, Europe

Vellum - 168 x 206 mm - verso blank.

PROVENANCE:

The codex, from which this single leaf was taken, seems to be lost. At least one more leaf from the manuscript was in existence in the late nineteenth century. Apart from the leaf presented here another leaf with the depiction of St Lucas is described briefly in the VI. volume of the sales catalogue of the collection of Ambroise Firmin-Didot (see *Catalogue illustré des livres précieux, manuscrits et imprimés faisant partie de la Bibliothèque M. Ambroise Firmin-Didot*. Paris 1884, no. 47). - Dr. Jörn Günther · Antiquariat, Hamburg.

ILLUMINATION:

In all likelihood the leaf was illuminated at the scriptorium of the Helmarshausen Abbey at the Diemel. As the comparison with codices written and illustrated there demonstrates - the Evangelary of Henry the Lion will probably be the most famous manuscript of the scriptorium - the leaf presented here does not derive from one of the well-known codices from Helmarshausen. The stylistic roots of the miniature are even older. The positioning of the figures in general is conspicuously related to the monumental fresco of the grave chapel of bishop Sigebert of Minden in Idensen of c. 1130.

Christ is depicted as he ascends into heaven within a mandorla. He holds the banner of the cross in his left arm and stretches the right arm out towards heaven in a gesture of blessing, from where the blessing hand of God the Father comes down. To the left and the right of the mandorla, angels, playing tuba or pronouncing their blessing, assist the event. Below the figure of Christ are rendered the twelve apostles and Mary, who raise their eyes towards heaven in prayer and astonishment and look at two angels, who point to the ascending Christ. Each angel holds a scroll, on which - read one after the other - a verse from the Acts of the Apostles is written: *Hic Jesus, qui assumptus est a vobis in caelum / sic veniet quemadmodum vidistis eum euntem in caelum* - This Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1,11).

Long quotations of that kind are characteristic of the intention of the Helmarshausen Scriptorium, to document the theological content of the scene rendered in the picture itself through citations from the Holy Scriptures or the Church Fathers. Thus the message is obtained by the reciprocal penetration of visual

and textual representation (see Ursula Nilgen, "Theologisches Konzept und Bildorganisation im Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen", in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* vol. 53, 1989, 301-333).

The leaf presents a balanced composition. The faces are expressive, the depiction of the robes and their drapery folds as well as the colouring find their parallel in the works of the scriptorium of Helmarshausen. As cited above - and fortunately - the leaf nevertheless does not come from one of the well-known works of Helmarshausen, even not from the so-called "Hardehäuser Evangeliar", that was once kept in Kassel and is lost since the end of the War. With its balanced composition and the calm overall design but still rich colouring the Ascension takes a mediatory position between the early works of the scriptorium like the evangelary executed for the Cathedral of Lund around 1140 (Uppsala UB, Ms. C 83; see cat. Copenhagen 1999: *Living Words & Luminous Pictures. Medieval book culture in Denmark*. Vol. 1: *Catalogue*, no. 8. Vol. 2: *Essays*, passim. Ed. by Eric Petersen. Copenhagen 1999) and the widely discussed top quality works, like the Evangelary of Henry the Lion completed in the late period around 1170 (Wolfenbüttel, HAB Cod. Guelf 105 Noviss. 2°; see *Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen. Kommentar zum Faksimile*. Ed. by Dietrich Kötzsche. Frankfurt 1989) or the contemporaneous Evangelary of Trier (Trier, Domschatz, Cod. 142/124; see Franz Ronig, *Ein romanisches Evangeliar aus Helmarshausen im Trierer Domschatz* [Ms. Nr. 142/124/67]. Trier 1999). The miniators involved there - we know only one, Hermanus, by name - did not illuminate our leaf; the depiction of the faces differs too much. Composition and colouring, as well as the design of the border and iconographic details like the red seams of the golden stoles, that appear in exactly the same way in the Evangelary of Aschaffenburg (Hofbibliothek Cod. 21), unequivocally demonstrate that the impressive single leaf has its origin in a Helmarshausen codex, that has not yet taken a tangible form.

The rendering of the evangelist Luke cited above suggests the conclusion, that both leaves formerly belonged to an evangelary: the leaf with Luke would have been placed at the beginning of the third Gospel, and the Ascension scene in texts from the Acts of the Apostles.

A thorough monographical description of this miniature will be included in the forthcoming edition of the essay series of Dr. Jörn Günther · Antiquariat.

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