In the second half of the eleventh century, Willeram, abbot of Ebersberg, composed a remarkable explanation of the Song of Songs. The Vulgate text was accompanied, in parallel columns to either side of the text, by a paraphrase and allegorical commentary in Latin verse, and by a similar exegesis in Old High German prose (incorporating, however, a great proportion of Latin words and phrases). Several manuscripts of this work have been preserved; one of the oldest (written c. 1100) is in Leiden University Library and bears the signature BPL 130.

This manuscript has long been known as one of the most important remains of the monastic library of Egmond (North Holland). According to a trustworthy tradition it entered this library under the abbacy of Stephanus (1057-1105).

Recent research has shown that it is of singular significance for the Netherlands in other respects as well. The language of the German parts is not, as was believed until now, the speech of (roughly) the region of Aix-la-Chapelle, but a hybrid. It is, in fact, a transposition (ranging from a downright translation to the slightest orthographical modification) from the original text towards an idiom more familiar to the adaptator. It transpires that this adaptator, to judge by his speech, came (a.) certainly from a region more north-westerly than was thought previously; (b.) very probably from the coastal region: Flanders, Holland, Frisia; (c.) quite probably from Holland, and in the cultural situation of the time this virtually means from Egmond itself.

This manuscript, then, is not only one of the oldest remains of a Dutch library, but also one of the oldest books actually written on Dutch

1 W. Sanders, Der Leidener Willeram, Untersuchungen zu Handschrift, Text und Sprachform (Munchen, 1974). (Quoted as Sanders.)

2 It must be admitted that the linguistic arguments adduced to exclude the alternative possibility, Flanders, fail to carry full conviction. (There were close relations between Egmond and Flanders; Abbot Stephen himself had been there for some time.) But I hope to be able, in a study of Egmond MSS. which I am preparing, to present palaeographical evidence confirming Sanders’ hypothesis.
soil, and (in its peculiar way) one of the oldest monuments of the Dutch language.3

The fact, however, which makes this manuscript interesting for the readers of Quaerendo and a fitting theme for an article honouring Leiden University is that it served as copy for the first edition of Willeram’s work, which was prepared by a professor and librarian of that University and published by its official printer: *Willerami Abbatis in Canticum Canticorum Paraphrasis gemina: Prior rhythmis Latinis, altera veteri lingua Francica (...)* Edente Paullo G. F. P. N. Merula. Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Plantiniana, Apud Christophorum Raphelengium, Academiae Typographum. M. D. 111C. About this edition much more could be said than we propose to do here; we only intend to comment on the physical traces which the editing process has left in the manuscript. But first some of the features of the manuscript itself must be described briefly.

BPL 130 is a vellum codex of 214 folia, measuring 22½ x 16½ cm. The second part of the volume does not concern us here. The first part contains, after some preliminary matter (fols.1-13v.), the work of Willeram (fols.13v.-100r.), written by one scribe in a fine, clear hand, 22 lines to the page. The arrangement of the text is (as in most MSS.) different from that intended by the author. The text has been divided into sections, according to the person speaking; these sections have headings such as *Vox Christi ad Ecclesiam, Vox adversus hereses, Synagoge de ecclesia dicit.* In each section, Vulgate, verse paraphrase and prose paraphrase are given in that order.

After the manuscript had been finished, several later hands left their traces in it. Nothing needs to be said here about a contemporaneous glossator and about some notes of the fourteenth century. More interesting is another, older hand. The original scribe left several open spaces, evidently because he4 did not understand one or more words of the original German text;5 many of these lacunae were filled in afterwards, but these supplements were freely invented to fit the sense and not based on the authentic text. Sanders6 believed that a monk of the fifteenth century had succeeded in imitating the older linguistic and orthographical forms as well as the older letter forms; but there can

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3 As such, it deserves its separate edition (of the vernacular parts only): *Expositio Willerammi Eberspergensis abbatis in Canticis Canticorum*, hrsg. v. W. Sanders (Munich, 1971).

4 Unless one wishes to distinguish between the ‘translator’ and the scribe.

5 The analysis of the words he failed to understand is of great importance for Sanders’ study of the ‘translator’s’ native dialect.

6 Sanders p. 71 et sq.