The Moral Treatise on the Eye was a medieval bestseller. Composed by Peter of Limoges at the university in Paris between 1274–75 and 1289, the work was transmitted throughout Europe and is still extant in 219 manuscripts. Paris was the crossroads of vibrant intellectual exchange in Peter’s time, and he played an important role in bringing together in his Treatise advances in both homiletics and science, adapting for use in the pulpit the new science of Perspectivist optics developed by Alhacen and adopted by Roger Bacon and John Pecham. Peter’s Treatise helped legitimate the cultural utility of natural science by making it part of a theological process of allegorizing the revealed world. It also supplemented the tasks of homiletics with the duty of educating the Christian senses, making the study of vision part of what can be called a “voluntarist optics,” one of the necessary steps in the formation of the will. Yet, in spite of its importance to homiletic discourse, the early development of science in the West, and the conceptualization of perspective in art, Peter’s text has long been available only in Latin.

This volume makes The Moral Treatise on the Eye available for the first time in English. In fifteen chapters, the text moves from what can be established about the eye and vision on scientific grounds to the moral or spiritual interpretation of optics. The first section lays the foundation for the rest of the treatise by detailing the parts of the eye, the types of physical vision, the importance of intention for the completion of sight in the common nerve, the explanation of optical illusions, and the moral interpretation of twelve natural properties of eyes. In the second part, Peter develops sets of moral instruction using cultural conceptions surrounding the eyes. The final section is devoted to spiritual sight.

The volume also contains an introduction to Peter of Limoges, his intellectual interests, the sources of the Treatise, and its place in the theological and scientific developments of the late thirteenth century; a detailed index of the sources and analogues; and a bibliography.
MEDIAEVAL SOURCES IN TRANSLATION

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MEDIAEVAL SOURCES IN TRANSLATION

PETER OF LIMOGES

The Moral Treatise on the Eye

Translated with an introduction by
RICHARD NEWHAUSER

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Contents

Acknowledgements vii
Abbreviations viii
Introduction xi

The Moral Treatise on the Eye

Prologue 3

CHAPTER ONE
On the Number of Parts Comprising the Eye 5

CHAPTER TWO
On the Order of the Parts in the Composition of the Eye 8

CHAPTER THREE
On the Number of Types of Vision 12

CHAPTER FOUR
On the Means of Vision 14

CHAPTER FIVE
On the Organ in Which Vision Is Completed 16

CHAPTER SIX
On 13 Extraordinary Phenomena That Are Related to Lessons Concerning Eyesight 18

CHAPTER SEVEN
On Moral Instruction According to Twelve Properties That Have Been Ascertained in the Corporeal Eye 45

CHAPTER EIGHT
On Seven Distinctions of the Eyes According to the Distinction of the Seven Capital Vices 75

CHAPTER NINE
On the Costliness of the Eyes in Respect to the Other Members of the Human Body 108
vi | Contents

CHAPTER TEN
On Suffering the Loss of the Corporeal Eyes with Equanimity 111

CHAPTER ELEVEN
On the Education of Students Based on the Seven Conditions That Are Required for Sight 114

CHAPTER TWELVE
On the Instruction of Prelates Based on Seven Properties of the Eyes 146

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
On the Four Things Spiritual Eyes Should Contemplate Continually 170

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
On Three Visible Things That Delight the Corporeal Eye 180

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
On the Sevenfold Eye of the Divine Gaze 189

Emended Readings and Significant Variations between Pr1 and P7P8 194

Bibliography 205

Index of Sources and Analogues 235
Index of Names 258
Index of Subjects 263
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Abbreviations

**CCCM** Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

**CCSL** Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

**CFS** Cistercian Fathers Series. Kalamazoo, MI.

**CSEL** Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna.

**FOTC** The Fathers of the Church. Washington, DC.

**LCL** Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA, and London.

**MGH** Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Hannover etc. Available at http://www.dmgh.de/ (accessed August 1, 2011).

**MST** Mediaeval Sources in Translation. Toronto.


**P7** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de Paris MS. lat. 16395.

**P8** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de Paris MS. lat. 16396.


**Pr1** Peter of Limoges. Tractatus moralis de oculo. In Johannis Pithsani archiepiscopi Canthuariensis ordinis fratrum minorum liber de oculo morali foeliciter incipit. Augsburg: A. Sorg, 1475 [?].


* An asterisk in the translation indicates an emendation of the Latin text or a significant variation between the text of P7/P8 and Pr1; see below, “Emended Readings and Significant Variations between Pr1 and P7/P8.”
Biblical books referred to in the footnotes are listed below. Abbreviations for other primary sources cited in the footnotes are found below in the “Index of Sources and Analogues.”

Gen  Genesis  Exod  Exodus  Lev  Leviticus  Num  Numbers  Deut  Deuteronomy  Judg  Judges  1Sam  1 Samuel  2Sam  2 Samuel  1Kgs  1 Kings  2Kgs  2 Kings  2Chr  2 Chronicles  Tob  Tobit  Jth  Judith  Esth  Esther  Job  Job  Ps  Psalms  Prov  Proverbs  Qoh  Qohelet [Ecclesiastes]  Cant  Canticles [Song of Songs]  Wis  Wisdom  Sir  Sirach [Ecclesiasticus]  Isa  Isaiah  Jer  Jeremiah  Lam  Lamentations  Bar  Baruch  Ezek  Ezekiel  Dan  Daniel  Hos  Hosea  Joel  Joel  Amos  Amos  Mic  Micah  Nah  Nahum  Zech  Zechariah  Mal  Malachi  1Mac  1 Maccabees  2Mac  2 Maccabees  Matt  Matthew  Mark  Mark
x | Abbreviations

John   John
Acts   Acts of the Apostles
Rom    Epistle to the Romans
1Cor   First Epistle to the Corinthians
2Cor   Second Epistle to the Corinthians
Gal    Epistle to the Galatians
Eph    Epistle to the Ephesians
Phil   Epistle to the Philippians
Col    Epistle to the Colossians
2Thess Second Epistle to the Thessalonians
1Tim   First Epistle to Timothy
2Tim   Second Epistle to Timothy
Tit    Epistle to Titus
Heb    Epistle to Hebrews
Jas    Epistle of James
1Pet   First Epistle of Peter
2Pet   Second Epistle of Peter
1John  First Epistle of John
Rev    Revelation