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SAINT GREGORY, *Homiliae XL in Evangelia*, and FRANCESCO DEGLI ABBATI,
Sermones de Tempore

In Latin, manuscript on paper and vellum

[northern Netherlands (probably Delft), c. 1430-1450]

275 leaves (last blank), complete (i-iv¹⁶, v-xxi¹², xxii⁷ [of 12, blank viii-xii canceled]), the outer and inner bifolia of each gathering being vellum and all other leaves paper (ff. 1-62, Briquet 788 or 791; ff. 66-140, close to Briquet 4641; ff. 140-50 and 174 to end, Briquet 14177-8, Holland, after 1430, unidentified watermark, ff. 164-71),, written in a double column, approximately 39-49 lines (justification 202 x 143 mm.), with horizontal catchwords, in dark brown ink in a regular cursive bookhand, decorative cadels in top lines sometimes including faces, capitals touched in red throughout, scriptural quotations and names of authorities underlined in red, paragraph marks in red throughout, large painted initials throughout in red up to 6 lines high, some contemporary marginal notes and especially large pointing hands in brown and red, a few marginal stains and frayed edges (especially towards the end), generally sound. CONTEMPORARY BINDING, of beveled wooden boards sewn onto 5 double tawed leather thongs, restored with blind-tooled leather, brass clasps, spine renewed, spine repaired. Dimensions 290 x 210 mm

Attractive large manuscript compilation of the sermons of Gregory the Great and Francesco degli Abbati, the latter unrepresented in North American collections and evidently unedited. The present manuscript is also noteworthy for its original Dutch provenance.

PROVENANCE

1. Bequeathed to the medieval library of the New Church in Delft, with a partially erased ownership inscription on fol. 64v, “p[er]tinet ... et post mortem suam ... nove ecclesie in Delft, Et quicum invenerit reddat ei pro amore dei.” The fourteenth-century New Church (formerly the Church of St.-Ursula) in the marketplace of Delft is one of the most important surviving medieval buildings in The Netherlands. It is the burial place of the Princes of Orange. Another

book from the same library was sold at Sotheby's, 2 December 1986, lot 43 (present location unknown), the *Postilla* of Nicolas de Lyra, another Franciscan, and is almost identical to the present book in size and format, including the contemporary binding and the construction of the quires with both paper and vellum sheets. The watermarks of the present manuscript confirm the common origin of the two texts.

TEXT

ff. 1-64, Saint Gregory the Great, Homilies on the Gospel, with the dedicatory letter to the bishop Secundinus and a table; incipit, fol. 1r, prologue, "Reverendissimo atque santissimo ...," followed by a table of chapters, and the first homily on fol. 1v, "In illo tempore ... Dominus ac redemptor ...," ending on fol. 62v, "... per infinita secula seculorum amen," followed by an omitted homily. (Migne, PL, LXXVI, 1075-1312; and cf. Stegmüller, II, 1950, pp. 369-70, n. 2646).

ff. 65-275, Francesco degli Abbati, OSF, *Postillae super Evangelia dominicalia*, incipit, fol. 65r, "Erunt signa in sole ... [Luke 21: 25], Quamvis ihesus cristus in morte cuiuslibet singulare iudicium ..." (Schneyer, II, 1970, p. 55, no. 1; and Stegmüller, II, n. 2295), the complete cycle of 48 sermons all ending on fol. 274r, "... plangent peccatores culpan, Et sic est finis."

The manuscript is in two parts contemporary with each other. It opens with a major patristic text, the great Gospel commentaries of Saint Gregory (died 604), arranged in 40 homilies for monastic contemplation. These are followed by the unedited sermons by a fourteenth-century Franciscan, Francesco degli Abbati.

Manuscripts of Gregory the Great's Homilies on the Gospels are numerous. More than 20 are recorded in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. But, his homilies were less popular in the later Middle Ages than his better known *Moralia in Job*. The present sermons gather together the early sermons on the Gospel for the Sunday masses.

Francesco degli Abbati (cf. *DHGE*, I, 29) was a Franciscan theologian from Asti and a famous preacher during the first half of the fourteenth century. His only known writings include the *Postillae super evangelia dominica totius anni* preserved in the present manuscript, the Sermons on the Saints, and the *Sermones quadragesimales*. (See Sbaralea, p. 240). Schneyer records 25 manuscripts of his sermons, none outside European public libraries; to these should be added Reims, BM, MS 184 and Vitry-le-Francois, BM, MS 61.

This appears to be the only recorded manuscript that joins the sermons of Gregory the Great with those of Francesco degli Abbati.

LITERATURE

St. Gregory the Great. *Forty Gospel Homilies*, tr. Dom David Hurst, OSB. Kalamazoo (Cistercian Publications), 1990.

St. Gregory the Great. *Hom. XL in Evangelia*, ed. H. Hurter in *SS. Patrum Opuse. Select.*, series II, Vol. VI. Innsbruck, 1892 (Editio princeps).

Sbaralea, V. *Supplementum ad scriptores ord. Minorum*, Rome. 1806.

Schneyer, Johannes Baptist. *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters*. 11 volumes. *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, 43/1-11, Münster, 1969-1990.

Online Resources:

Gregory's life and writings

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06780a.htm>

Site with beautiful Gregorian music

<http://www.saint-gregory.org/>