

LES ENLUMINURES, LTD

2970 North Lake Shore Drive 11B
Chicago, Illinois 60657

tel 1-773-979-5986
fax 1-773-528-3976

Les Enluminures

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2, Place du Palais-Royal
34, allée Riesener
75001 Paris

tél : 33 1 42 60 15 58
fax : 33 1 42 15 00 25

ANONYMOUS, *Mare Magno della Crucifissa*

In Italian and Latin, manuscript on paper illustrated with woodcuts, some hand-colored [Italy, perhaps Florence or Venice, c.1530]

250 leaves (last 2 blank), plus vellum fly leaves, complete (collation i-v¹⁰, vi¹², vii-viii¹⁰, ix¹⁰⁺¹, x¹¹ [of 12, iv canceled], xi-xxiv¹⁰, xxv¹² [of 14, iv and xii canceled]), paper with watermarks of an angel, similar to Briquet 613 (Florence, 1529), horizontal catchwords on each leaf, double column on ff. 2r-118r and 246r-49v, single column for some openings (ff. 9v, 23v, 44v, 65 and 86r-v) and on ff. 118r-250r, triple column on ff. 50r, 101v-109 and 244v-45r, 56 lines, ruled in ink (vertically) and in blind with the use of the ruling frame for a single column, double, and triple (justification 183 x 86 mm., single column, 183 x 113, double and triple column), written in black in a small rounded cursive humanistic hand, capitals touched in red, headings in red, large initials, up to five lines high, throughout in red outlined in black, MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SMALL AND TEN LARGE WOODCUTS PARTLY COLORED pasted onto the pages throughout, some missing, some glosses, a few scribal correction on paper strips pasted onto pages, some damp-staining and signs of use, acidic ink causing some discoloration and breaking of paper, some worming at inner edges, otherwise in sound condition. CONTEMPORARY BLIND-STAMPED BINDING of pasteboards sewn onto four raised double whittawed skin bands covered with brown goatskin stamped with floral and ropework patterns, endleaves from a fourteenth-century vellum manuscript, remains of clasps and catches, red edges, binding close to certain Venetian bindings recorded in Tammaro de Marinis, *La Legatura artistica ...*, II, 1727, and II, 1783-1787), binding worn and partly defective. Dimensions 211 x 142mm.

Unique copy, and therefore textually important, of a Franciscan devotional text, written in Italy (Tuscany? Veneto?) and perhaps for lay use in the milieu of the tertiaries and drawing heavily on Franciscan writers. This unusual hybrid book, dating from the first century after the invention of printing, is illustrated with literally hundreds of woodcuts extracted from several different printed book and pasted into place.

PROVENANCE

1. The first (?) owner of the manuscript was a layman, Baldassare, who noted the birth of his son Bartolomeo in 1557 on the final flyleaf. 1) "Hec est Regola ab omnibus observabilis. Et io, de auxiliante determino & delibero di observarla. Et oggi sera il primo giorno che io faccio la mia professione di osservarla...non me obligando pero a peccato al uno se no tanto quanto me obliga..."; 2) A di 4 maggio 1557, io Baldaserra ho notato quando naque Bartolomeo mio figliolo; naque a di detto del giorno de martedi tra terza e sesta. / 1557 a di due di Luglio, naque Elmanulo [?] di la [...] nel giorno di venere...". It seems likely that the original provenance of the manuscript was Franciscan, because the writers cited by the authors are Franciscan. For example, on f. 1v, the text acknowledges the importance of Ubertino da Casale as a major source. Ubertino da Casale (1259-1330) was a celebrated Franciscan and author of a "Arbor vitae" printed only once in Venice in 1485 (Ubertinus de Casali. *Arbor vitae crucifixe Iesu*, A. de Bonettis, Venetiis, 1485; in *Short-title Catalogue of Books printed in Italy. ...from 1465 to 1600, now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1958, p. 703). On f. 118, the Franciscan provenance is again confirmed, when the author cites Henrico Herp (d. 1478), a fifteenth-century Franciscan of the Strict Observance and a distinguished writer on mysticism, praised by Mabillon, Bona, etc.: "Perche l'altro resto di questa vita contemplativa seguita a littera secondo che e scripto al capitolo XXI per fratre He[n]rico Herp fratre minore chiamato *Spechio di perfettione humana* [published Venice: N. Zoppino, 1529, in *Short-title Catalogue of Books printed in Italy ... from 1465 to 1600, now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, 1958, p. 324] speranda a comune utilita farlo imprimere con l'autorita et licentia de quelli aliquali se appartiene. Pero non diro altro di essa ma seguitaremo a perficere et compire questo sanctissimo libro. Tu che voi inanimirti a la contemplatione non manchare di studiare il resto di questa vita contemplativa che sta nel prefato libro ne la terza parte a .xxi. ca. The reliance on Venetian imprints may favor a Venetian provenance, as does the binding which is close to Venetian examples.

TEXT

ff. 1-168, *Mare Magno della Crucifissa*; rubric and incipit to Book 1: *Nel nome de la santissima Trinita incomenza la prima parte di questo sacratissimo libro chiamato Mare Magno de la Crucifissa, vita del'humanato figliolo de Dio, Christo Iesu nostro Redentore, nela quale se deschrivono cose marvegliose & stupende de meriti & frutti grandi che consequiscono quegli che devotamente & perseveramente se essercitano nela sacrosanta meditatione de la vita di esso nostro Redentore*; Book 2 (f. 23v); Book 3 (44v); Book 4 (f. 65v); Book 5 (f. 86v); Book 6 (f.118v)

f. 1, rubric, *Veni sancte spiritus et emitte celitus lucis tue radium*; incipit, "Veni pater pauperum...";

f. 1v, rubric, *Et cosi frequentando facilmente potera venire a questo che mangiando, bevendo, sedendo, camminando, dormendo si vegliando et in ciascheduno loco che se trovara & in ogni tempo & in ogni suo*

essercitio sempre con sua grandissima consolatione & inestimabile cumulo de meriti gratie & doni spirituali tenera la mente elevata in Dio. Et questo e il modo & la via di potere consumma facilita pervenire presto a la mortificatione di se[?] & acquistare ogni humana perfettione. Così feceno & così in signorno con opere & con parole che dovessimo fare molti perfetti & devoti contemplativi. Et specialmente il devoto Ubertino da Cassale fratre minore, il quale brevemente (pro aliquali forma) annotando i principali passi & articoli de la vita & passione del benedetto Iesu in ciaschuno giorno [See Ubertinus de Casali. *Arbor vitae crucifixe Iesu*, A. de Bonettis, Venetiis, 1485, in *Short-title Catalogue of Books printed in Italy from 1465 to 1600, now in the British Museum*, London, Trustees of the British Museum, p. 703]; f. 168, *Mare Magno della Crucifissa* ; Explicit: "Qui finisce la [blank] parte del Mare Magno de la Crucifissa, vita del humanato figliolo de Dio Signor Iesu Christo Redemptor nostro dove con lo aiuto de Dio e de servito il semplice testo Evangelico con bellissimo et delette vole ordine de quatro evangelisti ridotto in uno ad litteram";

f. 168-248, *Life of Christ and the Virgin* [Book 7 of the *Mare Magnum della Crucifissa*], rubric: *Seguita l'ultima parte dove se describe la sacratissima et crucifissa vita del nostro signor Giesu Christo & della sua reverendissima madre con moltis devotissime & autenticissime contemplationi extratto & cavato da sacri dottori & da pii & contemplatori. Remosse le fitte & appocriphe quanto ex stato possibile. Se recitano cose mirabile & stupende*; incipit : "Al vide et honore de la beatissima Trinita qui finisce il sacratissimo libro chiamato Mare Magno" (f. 168v);

The text is divided in seven parts according to the number of days of the week and it is introduced by a long preface praising the good influence on human life of meditating on Christ's life. The text opens on f. 1, *Nel nome dela santissima Trinita incomenza la prima parte di questo sacratissimo libro chiamato Mare dela Crucifissa Vita del'humanato figliolo de Dio*. The first part begins on f. 9v, *Nota anima de vota cose mirabile et stupende de gli grandi frutti et meriti che acquista chi in questa sacro santa Meditatione se essercita*. This part also illustrates the rewards of a charitable life. The second part (f. 23v) teaches the rules of meditating on the Passion. The third part (f. 44v) explains how man can reach union with God. The fourth part (f. 65v) describes the suffering of Christ. The fifth part (f. 86) celebrates the union of man and God as in the perfect happiness of Heaven. The sixth part (f. 118v) follows the accounts of the Gospels with advice on meditating on the life of Christ. The seventh and final part (f. 168v) describes the life of Christ and the Virgin according to the church fathers, rejecting apocryphal legends. The text ends with a prayer commending the author's soul to Christ on f. 248: *Per questo dala tua infantia sempre te affatigasti. Hoc ergo nobis concedas. Qui cum Patre regnas. Amen, A Laudes et honores de la beatissima Trinita qui finisce il sacratissimo libro chiamato Mare Magno*.

This is an extensive text of devotion and meditation on the life and Passion of Christ, similar to the well-known *Vita Christi* by Ludolf of Saxony (d. 1378). The author was evidently a Franciscan novice. He says he has written the text for his own private devotion, but in reality he provides prayers and guidance to a daily practice of meditation for the laity.

Among the sources cited by our author, two are worthy of special mention. The first, Ubertino of Casale, leader of the Spiritual Franciscans, expressed extreme views

regarding evangelical poverty. He was born in 1259, and died about 1330. Owing to his warm advocacy of the strictest ideas he was severely condemned by the authorities, and his history is a matter of considerable difficulty. His chief work is generally considered to be "*Arbor uitae crucifixae Jesu Christi*," from which the present text borrows. The second, Henrico Herp was born either at Düren (Marcoduranus), at Erp near Düren, or at Erps-Querbs near Louvain. He appears as rector of the Brethren of the Common Life, first in 1445 at Delft in Holland, then at Gouda, "to the great good of his subjects." In 1450, on a pilgrimage to Rome, he took the habit of St. Francis at the Convent of Ara Cœli. Twenty years later he was we find in the Province of Cologne (1470-73), then guardian of the convent of Mechlin in Belgium, where he died in 1478. The Franciscan Martyrology of Arturus of Rouen gives him the title of Blessed. Of his works, only one was printed during his life-time, "*Speculum aureum decem præceptorum Dei*" (Mainz, 1474); it is a collection of 213 sermons on the Commandments for the use of preachers and confessors.

Although *Mare magnum* meaning "great ocean" is frequently used to refer to a body of works of vast content, it is intriguing, especially in the context of the original provenance of the work and its authorship, to speculate whether the title may allude to Pope Sixtus's papal bull "*Mare magnum*" of 1476. By the terms of this bull, Sixtus, himself a Franciscan, extended the privileges of the canonical institution of the Third Order (e.g., lay people affiliated with religious orders) to the Franciscans. Previously the Beguines, the Carmelites, the Hermits of St. Augustine and the Dominicans all had the right to establish communities of the Third Order. With this bull the same privileges were granted to the Franciscans, and houses of the Third Order grew rapidly especially in Italy. The present manuscript appears to be written by a Franciscan and owned by a lay person (perhaps a tertiary?), who must have used it for his prescribed devotions.

ILLUSTRATION

The manuscript is decorated with the insertion of hundreds of early printed woodcuts and engravings of episodes of the life of Christ and the Virgin, saints and fathers of the church, the largest of which follow:

f. 1r, Pentecost (59 x 49 mm.);

f. 9v, Washing of the Feet (51 x 33 mm.);

f. 23v, The Crucifixion (94 x 78 mm.), Mary Magdalene embracing the Cross, the Virgin held by the Holy Women, two soldiers playing dice, the Apostles standing on the left, other soldiers standing on the right, all set outside a walled town, a border with 2 birds, a dragon, an ermine, and elongated flowers and leaves;

f. 44v, The Crucifixion (102 x 71 mm.), Mary Magdalene kneeling at the foot of the Cross, the Virgin standing on the left, St. John on the right, the other crosses at the sides, all set outside a medieval village in a hilly landscape;

f. 65v, Man of Sorrows (115 x 80 mm.), Christ covered in red blood sitting on the edge of the sepulcher at the foot of the cross and held by two winged angels, all set in a hilly landscape with a turreted town on the right;

f. 86r, Resurrection (109 x 75 mm.), Christ with his sudarium holding the banner of the Resurrection standing on a hill, the empty sepulcher in the foreground surrounded by four soldiers sleeping, a medieval turreted town in the background, all framed by a renaissance carved archway;

f. 118v, printed borders with prophets and Church Fathers;

f. 168v, Assumption of the Virgin (105 x 76 mm.), the Virgin lifted by winged cherub heads;

f. 195r, Last Supper (66 x 82 mm.), a medieval wall with two round windows in the background;

f. 214, Scourging of Christ (roundel, diameter c. 82 mm.), Christ covered in blood and tied to the column at the center of a tiled-floor porch, two men in medieval costumes scourging him with whips, a third watching from the right, a rocky landscape with bushes opening on the left;

f. 220r, Christ Nailed to the Cross (roundel, diameter 80 mm.), Christ lying on the Cross diagonally, four men fastening and nailing his feet and hands to the Cross, two standing soldiers watching on the left.

Further research is required to identify the edition, or editions, from which these woodcuts were extracted. Perhaps the cuts come from a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth century Venetian edition of Ludolphus of Saxony (see Olschki, *Le Livre illustré au Xve siècle*).

LITERATURE

Online Resources

St. Francis and the Franciscans on the Web
<http://www.franciscan-archive.org/>