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Liturgical Psalter

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

[Eastern Germany, likely area of the Rhine and Mosel, dated 1490]

246 leaves, complete (in 31 gatherings mostly of 8 leaves, except i8+1, xx8-1 [leaf canceled], xxviii8-1 [leaf canceled], and xxxi10-2 [last 2 leaves canceled]), medieval foliation in Roman in red ink in the upper center margin beginning with the Psalter (skips calendar), f. i to f. 208, end of the Psalter, traces of catchwords, signatures, and outer prickings, text written in dark brown ink in a textualis script in a single column, on 17 ruled lines (justification 90 x 60 mm.), with many calligraphic doodles in the ascenders and descenders (faces, scrolls, etc.), rubrics in red, alternating 1-line and 2-line initials in red and blue, ten 3- to 7-line initials in blue or blue and red, with penwork infill, surround, and marginal decoration of individualistic style and coloring, one LARGE DIAGRAMMATIC MINIATURE WITH MONOGRAMS OF JESUS AND MARY. Bound in modern brown calf on three endbands, with green silk head and foot bands, braided leather clasps, in excellent condition. Dimensions c. 140 x 100 mm.

Its early provenance well-defined, this richly decorated Psalter was probably made for and used in an Augustinian foundation for nuns in western Germany near the border of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. It is precisely dated by the scribe and includes a diagrammatic miniature of the monograms of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary as well as a large number of unusual ornamented pages.

PROVENANCE

1. Written and decorated in western Germany almost certainly for use in an Augustinian convent (cf. the Prayer to Augustine at the end, saints in the calendar and litanies), based on the inclusion of saints venerated on the border near Germany: Ursula, Odulph, Cunibert, Gereon, Heribert, etc., and on the style of the marginal decoration, in 1490; see f. 159v, "finitus anno 1490." Its ownership by a nun in the early sixteenth century suggests the possibility that it was made for a convent and passed down perhaps in the same convent (Stere?).

2. Ex-libris on f. 246v: "Suster Catharina vander steren heeft desen salter geteckent. Anno 1535."
3. Notation on f. 246v: "Int Jahr 1668 den 19 Augustus is Agnes Isselbulz..."
4. Leona E. Prasse (1896-1984), Curator of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, her stamped ex-libris and shelf-mark "PB B173"; by descent to Lynn Prasse-Bittel, donor of a portion of Leona E. Prasse's print collection to the Museum of Fine Arts of Florida State University, her shelf-mark and date "2000."

TEXT

ff. 1-2, Table of the Psalms for the liturgical year;

f. 2v, Table of the Golden Numbers;

f. 3, Prayer, incipit, "Media vita in morte ...";

ff. 4-9v, Calendar, with many saints from the eastern Netherlands and western Germany;

f. 10, Prayer, incipit, "Adoremus dominum ...";

ff. 10v-220v, beginning of the Psalter, organized according to the eight ferial divisions, as follow: *Beatus vir*, Ps. I; f. 39, *Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea*, Ps. XXVI; f. 58v, *Dixit custodiam vias meas*, Ps. XXXVIII; f. 76v, *Dixit insipiens in corde suo*, Ps. LII; f. 93, *Salvum me fac*, Ps. LXVIII; f. 116v, *Exultate Deo*, Ps. LXXX; f. 135, *Cantate Dominio*, Ps. XCVII; f. 187v, *Dixit dominus domino meo*, Ps. CIX;

ff. 221-223, Litanies, including Gereon, Odulphus, Walburgus, Gertrude;

f. 223-225, Miscellaneous prayers,

ff. 225-240, Vigil of the Dead, with musical passages, ff. 237v-238v;

f. 240v, Prayer on the Sacrament, incipit, *Pange lingua gloriosi corporis ...*;

f. 241v, Prayer to the Holy Trinity, incipit, *Veni creator spiritus mentes ...*;

f. 242, Hymn to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, incipit, *O quam glorifica luce ...*;

f. 243, Prayer to Saint Augustine, incipit, *Magne pater Augustine preces ...*;

f. 243v, Hymn on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary,

ILLUSTRATION

f. 3v, large schematic miniature formed by banderoles with the monogram I H S on a blue ground and the monogram M A on a red ground, the whole surrounded by a rope-like motif and floral and foliate ornament on a red ground, the circular band around M A reading *Sum quod eram, nec eram quod sum modo dicor utrumque* ("I became again what I was, nevertheless I was not what I am now). The monogram for Maria is accompanied with a tiny banderole reading "memento mei," and that of Jesus Christ with a similar banderole reading "I N R I."

Penwork initials and marginal decoration of two types occur in the manuscript. Most prevalent is type 1 employed to decorate the eight divisions of the Psalms on ff. 10v, 39, 59v, 76v, 93, 116v, 135, 187v, as well as other sections of the text, e.g., f. 160v. Type 2 is employed later in the manuscript, 176v, 180v, 184, 187v, 194v, 204v, 225v, 233. The pen flourishes, as well as the sharp-folded banderoles are typically German, as is the script. Compare Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lyell MS empt. 9, Germany, mid-fifteenth century

(<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/medieval/lyell/lyell.html>).

The palette and motifs are both unusual in Type 1, consisting of green and pale yellow to accompany the red and blue initials and using banderoles and occasionally a rope-like motif, as occurs in the schematic miniature, in addition to rosettes and other ornament.

LITERATURE

Leroquais, V. *Les psautiers, manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France*, 3 vols., Paris/ Mâcon, 1940-41.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Electronic Book of Prayer: Psalter text in English

<http://vidicon.dandello.net/bocp/bocp6.htm>