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HUGO DE PRATO FLORIDO DE VINACENSIBUS, *Sermones de tempore super Evangelia et Epistolas*

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Southern Germany, Bavaria, perhaps Ebern, signed and dated 1433

452 folios, complete, mostly in regular quires of 12 (collation i-xxxvii¹², xxxviii^{7 (8-1)} leaf cancelled between ff. 447-448), on paper (watermarks close to Briquet, *Tête de boeuf à yeux sommée d'une fleur*, no. 14784, Würzburg), written in a highly abridged Gothic bookhand in brown ink in two columns of up to 44 lines (justification 60 x 60 x 210 mm.), catchwords, rubrics in red, paragraph marks in red, some initials or capitals stroked in red, sermons numbered from 1 to 117 in contemporary red ink in upper margin, readers aids in the margins (letters in red in the margin), 2-3 line high initials in red, some contemporary corrections or annotations. Bound in a contemporary CHAINED BINDING of tinted calf over beveled wooden boards, preserving the original brass cornerpieces and 5 brass bosses on each board (one boss missing on back board), A METAL CHAIN ATTACHED TO A HASP fastened to back board composed of three long links and one round link, thick headbands, spine unrestored, sewn on three thongs, two grooves from clasps or catches to lower cover, 13th century vellum pastedowns [excerpts from the *Corpus Juris Civilis, Digesta Justiniani*, with legible rubric that reads: "*De verborum significatione*" (*Digesta, liber 50, tit. 16*)] (upper joint weak but binding in sound condition). Dimensions 210 x 310 mm.

Intact in its original chained binding, signed and dated by a previously unrecorded scribe, this manuscript also bears witness to its first owner, a German presbyter in Ebern, who compiled a library described in his will of more than 60 manuscripts; the present manuscript contains a still-unedited text of the thirteenth-century sermons of a little-known Dominican friar.

PROVENANCE

1. Signed and dated manuscript, with colophon on f. 433v: "Explicit liber sermocinalis de epistolis et evangeliiis dominicalibus tocius anni qui sermones satis copiose sunt editi fratrem Hugonem de Prato Florido, conscripti per manus Hermani Beyerbach finiti su bannis ab incarnatione domini christi millesimo quadringentesimo trecentesimo tertio feria quarta post festum Bartholomei. Orate pro scriptore Deum karissimi amici." The scribe is named Hermanus Beyerbach, and is not recorded in Bouveret. Probably contemporary ownership inscription at the top of front pastedown, written in a fifteenth-century hand: "Hugo de Prato Florido pertinet Johanne de Helb, presbiterus in Ebern." Interestingly, we know a great deal about Johannes von Helb, vicar of Ebern (Hassberge, Bavaria) (1429-1470), since his will has been recorded and studied. According to his will, Helb owned a library of "sixty large and four small books," which he had assembled and arranged to be copied "from many

towns and by my own scribes at great work and expense," in a newly erected library building near the parish church of St.-Laurentius in Ebern. Although the will of Johannes von Helb does not give any specific titles of the manuscripts, it is quite possible that the present manuscript was once in the library in Ebern. On Johannes von Helb, see Lehn, G. L. "Bischöfliche Bestätigung der von Johann von Helb, Bitar des Spitals zu Ebern, lektwillig errichteten Stiftung einer Liberei an der dortigen Pfarrkirche, 6 julii, 1463," in *Archiv des Historischen Vereins von Unterfranken und Aschaffenburg*, Würzburg, 1840, pp. 104-107.

2. Bjarne Saxhof (1953-2003), Civil Engineer, Technical University of Denmark, Lyngby. Saxhof assembled a fine collection of printed books and manuscripts, including some important private press books.

TEXT

f. 1, Hugo de Prato Florido (de Vinacensibus), *Sermones dominicales per annum*, Prologus: "Ecce dabit voci suae vocem virtutis..." (Ps. 67, 34); incipit, "Quamvis a multis multipliciter sint conflati sermones..." [Schneyer, II, Prologue, p. 741];

ff. 1-6v, Hugo de Prato Florido (de Vinacensibus), *Sermones dominicales per annum*, Sermo primus: rubric: *Sermo primus de adventu Domini*: "Dicite filiae Sion..." (Matth. 21, 5); incipit, "Istud tempus vocatur adventus Domini, quia secundum quattuor dominicas..." [Schneyer, II, T1, p. 741];

ff. 6v-433v, Hugo de Prato Florido (de Vinacensibus), *Sermones dominicales per annum*, Sermons 2-117; incipit sermo secundus, "Scientes quia hora est... Consuetudo est quando aliquis magnus dominus venit..." [Schneyer, 2, p. 742, T 1]; incipit sermo 117, "Ecce dies veniunt... Quia in sequenti dominica adventum filii Dei..." [Schneyer, 2, p. 752, T 65];

ff. 431-433v, Table of incipits for sermons;

f. 433v, Colophon: "Explicit liber sermocinalis de epistolis et evangeliiis dominicalibus tocius anni qui sermones satis copiose sunt editi per egregium fratrem Hugonem de Prato, conscripti per manus Hermanni Beyerbach, finiti sub annis ab incarnatione Domini Christi millesimo quadragesimo trecesimo tertio [1433] feria quarta post festum Bartholomei. Orate pro scriptore Deum karissimi amici."

This manuscript contains sermons for the Temporal by Hugo de Prato Florido, a Dominican friar (c. 1262-1322). Little else is known of the life of Hugo de Prato Florido, apart from the fact that he studied theology in Naples, c. 1288-1289. Schneyer records some 42 manuscripts of his *Sermones de Tempore* mostly in European collections. According to Rayez, a systematic examination of the manuscripts and a study of the problems of authentication of the works of Hugo de Prato remains to be completed (DSAM, VII, col. 894). The first incunable edition of the *Sermones dominicales super evangelia et epistolae* was published in Strasbourg, c. 1476 [Goff, H-503]. The sermons of Hugo de Prato Florido were very popular in the later Middle Ages.

BINDING

Of significant interest is the intact medieval chained binding of this manuscript. The custom of fastening books to their shelves was common at an early period. When a book was given to a medieval library, it was often necessary to install a chain and a pair of clasps. A great number of these medieval chained libraries have been dispersed, and often the chains have been removed from the books, so that now very few examples are extant. Chained bindings are of enduring interest as testimonies to the dichotomy of medieval libraries with their conflicting interests in value and accessibility of books.

The principal study on chained bindings remains B.H. Streeter, *The Chained Library*, 1931. Examples of fifteenth-century German chained bindings on the market in recent years include a Peter Lombard of 1491, sold at Christie's, New York, 22 October 1987, lot 53 (\$110,000), a manuscript of Aquinas sold at Sotheby's, 1 December 1998, lot 85 (€58,000), and finally Nicolas de Lyra's *Postillae super Prophetas* sold in London, Sotheby's, 6 December 2001, lot 58.

Interesting are the remarks on chained bindings by the antiquarian William Blades: "It is certainly distressing, as well as a suggestive sight, to see books in chains. Distressing because a good book is like a strong man, and when it is chained is as shorn Samson among the Philistines...so that the mere sight of a single survival of this rude practice is strongly suggestive not only of national advance in education and literary enlightenment, but also of the power of the printing press, through whose influence alone her offspring, as well as her parents, the manuscript books, have been redeemed from their chains" (*Books in chains and other bibliographical papers*, London, 1892, pp. 17-18).

LITERATURE

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