

Miscellany of Marian Devotions (Gebetbuch), including *Hore dulcissime beati Bernardi de imperatrice celi et terre* [Hours of Saint Bernard of the Empress of Heaven and Earth]; Marian Psalter; Seven Joys of the Virgin *et alia*

In Latin, with some German, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Southern Germany, likely Bavaria (Kirchheim am Ries?), c. 1300-1325

133 ff., preceded by a parchment pastedown and first flyleaf (reused parchments with later 17-18<sup>th</sup> c. (?) script in Latin and German), on parchment, apparently complete but perhaps missing a first gathering at the beginning (collation i-v<sup>8</sup>, vi<sup>2</sup>, vii-viii<sup>10</sup>, ix<sup>6</sup>, x<sup>10</sup>, xi<sup>6</sup>, xii-xvi<sup>8</sup>, xvii<sup>7</sup> (of 8, missing viii, cancelled blank), xviii<sup>2</sup>), written above the top line in a gothic bookhand perhaps by different hands (or simply a varying degree of application), copied in 11-12 long lines, ruled in brown ink (justification 52 x 42 mm.), some prickings still visible, a few quire signatures visible (Roman numerals in red on verso of quire, most are cut short, first quire signature found in the lower margin of f. 8v is Roman numeral "ii" indicating that there could have been a first quire), rubrics in red (first rubric to be read across two facing leaves e.g. ff. 1v-2), numerous small initials and capitals painted in red, some with blue or red filigree penwork, also alternating initials painted in blue with red filigree penwork, some larger 2-to 3-line high initials in blue or red with red and/or blue filigree penwork, 3 decorated initials traced in red ink and painted in liquid gold on blue grounds (ff. 42, 52, 61), 1 historiated initial D in pink on a liquid gold ground with Virgin Mary blessing (f. 1v), red thread stitching or traces of stitching with small holes apparent in the parchment found on ff. 1v, 42, 52, 61, due to small silk veils that initially protected the illuminated initials (silk veils now wanting), a few contemporary marginal corrections or addenda (e.g. f. 2). Bound in a German 15<sup>th</sup>-century blind-stamped binding of light brown calf over wooden boards, back sewn on 4 raised bands (likely rebacked), covers divided into two concentric frames traced in blind filets, the outer frame filled with a foliate roll (vertical foliate motif resembling candelabra), the central panel filled with two rolls of a winged (angel?) head above architectural and ornate motifs, traces of clasps (now wanting with small nails still in place), reused later (17-18<sup>th</sup> c.?) parchment as upper pastedown and flyleaf, edges stained yellow (Good general condition, upper hinge a bit fragile, discharge of last leaf on the lower board, some thumbing). Dimensions 80 x 60 mm.

Near-miniature devotional compilation of largely Marian devotions, copied by a female scribe and illuminated in a Cistercian environment, perhaps Kirchheim am Ries (Bavaria). The volume contains rare texts, including "Hours of Saint Bernard of the Empress of Heaven and Earth," apparently unique to this manuscript. Its Marian Psalter is a form of proto-rosary and confirms the origins of the rosary in Cistercian monastic circles. Witness to women's affective piety, this codex is a fine example of the spirituality of Marian devotions typical of Cistercian foundations.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied by a woman scribe as per the colophon found on f. 131 that reads: "Scriptricem libri benedicant agmina celi. Non videat christum qui librum subtrahit istum" [Let the heavenly flocks (troops?) bless the scribe of this book. He who steals (or removes) this book shall not apprehend Christ] (with "scriptricem" being the accusative form of "scriptrix," which designates a "female scribe"). The name of the woman scribe is not provided, nor is the abbey in which she lives. She is thus one of the numerous unnamed scribes to leave a trace.

The script and stylistic elements (historiated initial and ornamental filigree decoration) suggest an early 14<sup>th</sup> century date for this small codex. It has been suggested that the abbey could be that of the Cistercian convent at Kirchheim am Ries, located near Nördlingen, Bavaria, in Swabia. If this is

verifiable, the present manuscript would be one of the earliest extant codices from this abbey of Cistercian nuns, founded in 1270. Although the name of the abbey is not cited in the codex, nor can one detect one of the shelfmarks found in other Kirchheim am Ries codices (as recognized and listed by A. Schromm in his study on the Library of the Former Cistercian Convent in Kirchheim am Ries, 1998)), the liturgical contents of the present miscellany of Marian devotions clearly points towards a Cistercian origin and spirit. The small format of the book, compares well with other such devotional miscellanies and Prayerbooks (*Gebetbücher*) securely attributed to the Convent in Kirchheim am Ries (see Schromm, 1998, who has reconstituted 69% of the monastic library of Kirchheim am Ries; see also on this site [www.textmanuscripts.com](http://www.textmanuscripts.com) TM 607, of similar format, although copied much later, and once owned by the Abbess of Kirchheim am Ries, Barbara Schwerdtführer, 1570-1584).

## 2. European Private Collection.

### TEXT

f. 1, blank;

ff. 1v-40, Hours of Saint Bernard of the Empress of Heaven and Earth, rubric (carried across two leaves, ff. 1v-2), *Hore dulcissime beati Bernardi de imperatrice celi et terre*; incipit, "Domina labia mea refera et os meum omni hora proferet dulcem laudem tuam..."; rubric (f. 5), *Laus*; incipit, "Gaude regina nobilis virgo incomparabilis cuius corpus est puritas..." (Chevalier, RH 37568); rubric (f. 12v), *Collecta*; incipit, "Concede Pater sancte ut qui serenissime..."; f. 13, Prime, rubric, *Prima*; incipit, "Ave Maria. Da nobis piissima..."; rubric, (f. 13v), *Laus*; incipit, "Gaude aurora seculi domus novi..." (Mone, Hymni latini, II, p. 182), with Capitulum (f. 16), "Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat..."; f. 16v, Terce, rubric *Tertia*, with Capitulum (f. 19v), "Dilectus meus descendit in ortum suum ad areolam aromatum..."; f. 20v, Sexte, rubric, *Sexta*; incipit, "Ave Maria...Gaude plena veritatis, plenitudo bonitatis, de cuius habundantia bonis habundant omnia..." (Chevalier, RH 27086), with Capitulum (f. 23v), "Sub umbra dilecti mei qui pascitur inter lilia quam desiderabam..."; f. 24v, None, rubric, *Nona*; incipit, "Ave Maria...Gaude colupna gemmea..." (Chevalier, RH 26910), with Capitulum (f. 28), "Ego flos campi et lilium convallium veniat..."; f. 28v, Vespers, rubric, *Vespere*; incipit, "Ave Maria...Gaude matrona celica exultando magna domini tuum..." with Capitulum (f. 34), "Ecce tu pulcher es dilecte..."; f. 34v, Compline; rubric, *Comple.*; incipit, "Ave Maria...Gaude virgo perpetua, nostre quietis ianua, te angeli glorificetur..." (Chevalier, RH 27217) with Capitulum (f. 38v), "Fasciculus mirre dilectus..."; explicit, "[...] turba et collocet in pace eterna. Amen";

Completely unrecorded, perhaps unique to this manuscript, these Hours of Saint Bernard of the Empress of Heaven and Earth, constitute a proper Office, but with only six of the eight canonical hours from Prime to Compline (apparently no Matins nor Lauds). The capitula have nothing to do with those of the Hours of the Virgin for the use of the Cistercians. We have found no other trace of these "Hours" attributed to Saint Bernard, founder of the Cistercians. This text clearly merits further study.

ff. 40v-41v, Prayers in honor of the Virgin Mary, incipit, "Gaude virgo gloriosa, verbum verbo concepisti..." (Chevalier, RH 7006; Giermann & Härtel, Ebstorf, p. 87); "Gloria tibi Domini qui natus es virgine..."; "Mater misericordie per amorem filii tui et dulcedinem...";

ff. 42-69v, Marian Psalter [*Psalterium beate Marie virginis*], divided in three sections ["three fifties"], rubric, *Incipit ecce pie laus psalteriumque Marie*; incipit, "Suscipe regina celi, quae mente benigna (Chevalier, RH 19948 ; Mone,

*Hymni latini*, II, 245); "Ave porta paradisi..." (Leroquais II, p. 94; Chevalier, RH 2037); "Ave mori disciplina..." etc.; f. 52, decorated initial and rubric, .ii. *q[ui]nquage[n]i quod gloria*, followed by "Ave virgo puerpera, ut olivaria fructifera vasis misericordia, rorem profundens gracia..." (Mone, *Hymni latini* II, p. 236; Chevalier, RH 35822); "Ave per quam bonus unus pietatis..." ; f. 61, decorated initial and rubric, *Domine ex[audi]* .iii. *q[ui]nquagen]i*, followed by "Ave mater fidelium..." ; "Ave per quam felicius..." (see Leroquais, II, p. 93-95 in *Hours and Prayerbook for the use of Salisbury* [Paris, BnF, MS lat. 13285]: "Hic incipit psalterium beate Marie virginis," with 161 quatrains; see also Giermann and Härtel, Ebstorf, 1994, p. 107 [Ebstorf, IV 19, *Gebetbuch* (16<sup>th</sup> c.), ff. 305-348], *Psalterium BMV*, equally divided in "three fifties" (drei "Quinquagenen"; trois "cinquantaines"));

Associating a Hail Mary (Ave) to each psalm, Marian Psalters, such as the present one, appear in the twelfth-century in Cistercian communities with the addition of a Marian antiphon to each psalm, paving the way to the modern Rosary. From this, derives the practice of editing the antiphons to compose Marian Psalters with 150 rhythmic antiphons derived from a verse of each of the psalms. Heinz discusses the importance of the Ave Maria (Hail Mary) in Cistercian circles (Heinz, 1990, p. 34). Caesarius of Heisterbach quotes a Cistercian monk who every day before his meal said fifty Hail Mary. Three times fifty Hail Mary were called "Psalter of Our Lady" in a Rule for the Beguines of Ghent dated 1242 (see Meersseman, "Les frères prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot...", *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 18 (1948), pp. 83-87).

Christians often used to recite the Psalter, but the growing number of people who could not read caused the Psalter to be replaced by 150 formulas, or a set number of Our Father's and Hail Marys. The repetitive nature of these prayers easily led to the contemplation of the "mysteries" of Christ. In his studies on the rosary, A. Heinz discusses the monastic antecedents of the rosary, underscoring how the devotions in the cloisters where the monks and nuns recalled again and again the mysteries of Christ lived by Mary with the continuous recitation of Hail Mary and "Gaude Maria" prayers, presented a sort of first picture of what would finally become the rosary in the fifteenth century. The very first beginnings of the rosary are to be found in the twelfth century among the Cistercians and Carthusians, above all in the Germanic countries (see Wilmart, *Auteurs*, p. 583). Rather than offering flowers or crowns, a Cistercian lay brother is advised to recite fifty Hail Mary, thus offering the Virgin a crown of salutations in lieu of actual flowers (*exemplum* quoted by Hainz, 1990, pp. 22-23). In 1977, A. Heinz, studying the origin of the rosary, published another sequence of Gaude or Ave, which counted 98 clauses (*clausulae*). The text, as found in Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 1149/451, ff. 214v-217, comes from the monastery of Sankt Thomas im Kylltall (region of Trier), interestingly also a convent of Cistercian nuns (see A. Heinz, "Die Zisterzienser und die Anfänge des Rosenkranzes," *Analecta Cisterciensis*, 1977, pp. 262-300; on the Cistercian background and antecedents of the Rosary, see A. Fracheboud, "Les antécédents cisterciens du Rosaire," *Collectanea Cisterciensis*, 56 (1994), no.2, pp.153-170). Heinz notes: "C'est ainsi que, premières en date vers 1300, des cisterciennes de la région de Trèves, priaient le rosaire. Elles écrivirent pour l'Ave Maria une suite de cent clausules et firent ainsi de la salutation angélique une véritable méditation de la vie de Jésus" [Thus, it appears that Cistercian Nuns from the region of Trier were the first to pray the rosary circa 1300. They composed for the Ave Maria a sequence of one hundred clauses and turned the Angelic Salutation into a true meditation on the life of Christ] (Heinz, 1990, p. 8).

The present example of a Marian Psalter should be studied and compared with other extant examples. It appears that this Marian Psalter is once again produced in a Cistercian environment and should be edited as an example of proto-rosary in the fourteenth century.

ff. 70-71v, Prayers, rubric, *Collecta*, incipit, "Praesta quesumus omnipotens Deus ut qui gloriosa virgine. *Oratio*. Rogo te piissimam dominam sanctam maria per leticiam...";

ff. 71v-83v, Prayers for the Dedication of a Church, rubric, *In dedicatione ecclesie*, incipit, "Domine quis habi..."; "Omnipotens sempiternus deus qui celorum virtutes..."; final rubric, *Spalterium [sic] de gloriosa resurrectione domini*;

ff. 83v-113, Prayers for Resurrection, incipit, "Te sanctum dominum quoniam celi celorum ac milia angelorum..."; rubric placed after, *Resurrectionis*;

ff. 113v-124, Prayers for Nativity, rubric, *In sancte nocte nativitatis domini*, incipit, "Adoro te fili dei in utero virginali...";

ff. 124-129, Seven Joys of the Virgin, followed by other prayers to the Virgin, rubric, *Incipit soliloquium devoti cordis de septem gaudiis quem habet beata virgo in regno filii sui, que ipsa revelavit cuidam sancto viro in claustro viller [Villers-en-Brabant (Belgium), the "sancto viro" (saintly man) is here Arnoul or Arnulph de Cornebout]*, incipit, "Gaude dei genitrix virgo maria domina mea dilectissima per omnibus angelis..."; rubric (f. 125v), *De gaudiis eius in celo*, incipit, "Nunc autem in regno filii tui gaudes..."; rubric (f. 128v), *Quicumque hoc soliloquium devote frequentaverit consolatione matris dei dignus erit in extremis. Ave Maria*, incipit, "Gaude dei genitrix virgo immaculate. Gaude que gaudium ab angelo suscepisti..." (see Leroquais, II, p. 90: "Les sept joies celestes de la Vierge," with a similar rubric in Hours and Prayerbook for the use of Salisbury [Paris, BnF, MS lat. 13285]: "Quicumque devote istis gaudiis venerabitur me, videbit me in extremis diebus suis..."; Chevalier, RH 6757);

The devotion to the Seven Celestial Joys of the Virgin is said to be of Cistercian origin. Blessed Arnoul de Villers or Arnoul de Cornebout (1180-1228) was a Cistercian lay brother who entered the Abbey of Villers-en-Brabant (Belgium) as a novice. He had a number of visions, including the Seven Joys of the Virgin, a devotion which the Cistercian order subsequently favored (see *Vita Arnulfi*, AASS, June, t. VII, pp. 556-579; see also M. Cawley, ed., *Send me God*, Turnhout, 2003: "These seven joys Arnulf daily brought back to memory, both to venerate the glorious Virgin and to delight himself in so congenial a recollection" (Cawley, 2003, p. 163)). The Joys of Mary remembered in the devotion are these: The Annunciation of the Angel to Mary; The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth; The Nativity of Our Lord; The Adoration of the Magi; The Finding of Jesus in the Temple; The Resurrection of Our Lord; The Crowning of Our Lady, Mary, in Heaven as Queen. The presence of these devotions dedicated to the Joys of the Virgin, is fitting in a manuscript of Cistercian origin and testifies to the important contribution of Cistercian spirituality to the development of Marian devotion in the thirteenth century.

ff. 129-130, Prayers for the Elevation of the Host, rubric, *Ad elevationem corporis christi*, incipit, "O redemptor hominum ihesu christe...";

ff. 130-131, Prayers to the Virgin, rubric, *De nomine beate virginis Marie*, incipit, "Salve regina, Magnificat..."; incipit, "O regina virginum virgo maria..."; explicit, "[...] qui es benedicta in secula s[eculorum]. Amen"; final rubric with scribal colophon and curse (f. 131<sup>o</sup>, *Scriptricem libri benedicant agmina celi. Non videat christum qui librum subtrahit istum* [Let the heavenly flocks (or troops) bless the scribe of this book. He who steals (or removes) this book shall not apprehend Christ] (with "scriptricem" being the accusative form of "scriptrix," which designates a "female scribe").

To be noted, the Cistercian day generally ends with the solemn singing of the *Salve Regina* in a darkened church.

f. 131v, blank;

ff. 132-133v, Added Prayers in German (15<sup>th</sup> c.) [fragmentary, beginning incomplete], incipit, "[...] unde der hilgen iuncfrowen bidden...," *Versikel*, "Alle dodes hilligen biddet...," *Collecte*, "Wy bidden almechtige god dat de hillige moder godes maria..."; rubrics, *Eyn benediginge*, *Ymnus van unser vrouwen*; explicit [missing ending], "[...] Lof sy gode dem vadere...Werdige mek...[...]."

Of small format, this interesting manuscript contains a devotional miscellany, with mostly Marian devotions, clearly copied in a Cistercian environment. The Cistercians fostered a particular veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Empress of heaven and earth," and the Virgin was declared the Lady and Protector of each of its monasteries. Custom conferred upon every monk and nun of the Order at the time of his or her clothing in the habit, the sweet name of *Maria*.

This Marian Prayerbook (or devotional miscellany) offers the particularity of having been copied by at least one female scribe (if not two if one accepts a change of hand in the script), as per the colophon at the end of the manuscript (f. 131) that reads: *Scriptricem libri benedicant agmina celi. Non videat christum qui librum subtrahit istum* [Let the heavenly flocks (or troops) bless the scribe of this book. He who steals (or removes) this book shall not apprehend Christ]. The Latin term "scriptricem" being the accusative form of "scriptrix," designates a "female scribe": the male form would have been "scriptor." Unfortunately, as often, the female scribe is here unnamed and the scribal colophon offers only the gender of the scribe, one of the monastic "Schreiberinnen." In her book dedicated to German monastic scribes, C. Cyrus discusses the many scribes both female and male who served in monastic convents in medieval Germany: for the late medieval period (until 1500), Cyrus advances the number of 416 women scribes from all women monasteries, of which 361 are named and 55 are unnamed (Cyrus, 2009, p. 35). Again, according to Cyrus, these 416 scribes have contributed 561 manuscripts that have survived to this day. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed a blossoming of copying activity in several women houses. Women scribal activities are recorded in Bavaria early in the twelfth century (see A. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria*, Cambridge, 2004). Cyrus has recorded 79 German women monastic scribes during the period 1300-1425 (see Cyrus, 2009, pp. 128-129).

Medieval nuns did not confine their reading to liturgical books; other volumes, small private devotional books, dominate in the output of the female scriptoria of late medieval Germany. Fully half of the surviving manuscripts copied by monastic women were intended for private reading, study and contemplation. These

include Books of Hours and contemplative books, but by far the most numerous of the books of this type are Prayerbooks, *Gebetbücher*, which form the largest single category of books copied by women scribes. The Gebetbuch, such as the present example, is a private collection of prayers. They are widely disparate in content and layout. The Gebetbuch is, to quote C. Cyrus, “the icon of the private devotion” (Cyrus, 2009, p. 109). Gebetbücher can be in Latin, in the vernacular, or in a mix of languages, most often a compilation and assembly of materials reflecting the interest and focus of spiritual life of a given convent. Cyrus suggests that the scribes were often also the compiler: “By choosing the texts on which she focused her prayer, the woman scribe also chose what to emphasize in her own inner life” (Cyrus, 2009, p. 110). In the present example of Cistercian origin, the emphasis is clearly placed on the Virgin Mary (numerous studies have underscored the affective spirituality and the maternal imagery tied to the figure of the Virgin that characterizes Cistercian spirituality; see Walker Bynum, 1982). As private books, Gebetbücher were often excluded from the general monastery’s books, and hence are often not listed in the inventories (this could account for its absence in the inventory of the monastic library of Kirchheim am Ries of 1436 if one accepts this Cistercian Bavarian origin for the manuscript). We know that there were women scribes active at Kirchheim am Ries: Cyrus (2009) has recorded that of the 88 surviving manuscripts from Kirchheim am Ries (until 1500), there are 5 that are attributable to women scribes.

## ILLUSTRATION

f. 1v, Historiated initial D, with Virgin Mary (apparently blessing, in a Christic posture) in a blue robe with a red mantle (dimensions 30 x 30 mm.).

The Virgin Mary’s mantle is red, in contrast to the more common and traditional Marian blue. However German and Flemish artists such Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memling, Lucas Cranach, Geertgen tot sin Jans, Jan van Eyck but also sometimes Eastern iconography show Mary cloaked in a red mantle. The red color in iconography points to nobility and elevated state, and conveys sometimes in northern Renaissance, in particular, an anticipation of suffering and passion.

It is not common to find in a Cistercian manuscript – especially a Prayerbook or devotional miscellany of this type – iconographical or historiated elements. Generally, especially at their beginnings, Cistercians were not partisans of representational art. The aesthetic conceptions of Bernard de Clairvaux, symbolic of the Cistercian ideal, were decisive in the definition of the artistic identity of the order. He was the author of the rules concerning the ornamentation of manuscripts. Bernard of Clairvaux and his followers championed the use of “monochrome style” and strict decorative rules. The Cistercians initially rejected representational art in favor of creating an abstract visual language. Elaborate patterns, emblems and abstract forms found in all art forms, including manuscripts, were used to aid meditation. It was St Bernard’s belief that imageless patterns freed the mind from obstacles to the perceptions of light, which represented God himself. Here, the very simple and humble face of the Virgin is represented (apparently the Virgin is blessing, which is interesting because she is assimilated to Christ often portrayed blessing), placing the entire manuscript under the protection of Mary, “Empress of heaven and earth.” It seems fair to think that the historiated initial could very well be painted by a nun in a monastic context.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Cistercians:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercians>

<http://www.osb.org/cist/>

Rev. R. Barile, *The Rosary in History* (2003): <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=4728>

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