

Prayers and Instructions

In Dutch, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Southern Netherlands (Brabant?), c. 1470

[i] + ii + 43 + i + [i] leaves, vellum; modern foliation in pencil on rectos in the lower right corner on the first text leaf, each fifth text leaf and the last text leaf (1, 5, 10, 15, ... 30, 35, 40, 43); mostly in quires of eight leaves, collation: i² (ff. i–ii), ii⁸ + 1 leaf (f. 3, tipped in) after 2 (ff. 1–9), iii–vi⁸ (ff. 10–41), vii⁴ lacking 3 and 4 (ff. 42–43), viii² lacking 2? (f. 44), no loss of text; horizontal catchwords on ff. 9v, 17v, 25v and 33v, no signatures; written in a littera textualis by two hands and in a littera hybrida by a third hand: Hand A ff. 1r–2v and 4r–41r, Hand B f. 3r–v, Hand C ff. 41v–43r; ruled in pale reddish brown ink, prickings for all horizontal and vertical lines still present in most of the leaves, 1 column, justification: 109 x 68 mm. (f. 3r–v: 113 x 74 mm.); 17 lines (f. 3r–v: 20 lines); one seven-line lombard in gold with red pen-flourishes (f. 1r), one four-line lombard in gold with red pen-flourishes (f. 5r), several three-, two- and one-line lombards in gold or blue with red pen-flourishes (f. 3r: two two-line lombards in red with brown pen-flourishes), rubrics in red; the script by Hand A adorned with arabesques at the elongated shafts of letters in the upper and lower margin; two colored drawings on f. 32r; in very good condition, some minor soiling in the lower margins of ff. 2–4. Simple, 17th-century binding, vellum over pasteboard, paper flyleaves and pastedowns, text on the spine: "Devotio/nalis / 1470." Dimensions 194 x 133 mm.

Well-written on finely prepared parchment and with wide margins, the present devotional manuscript in Dutch (once part of a larger codex) was made for a woman and originated in the Southern Netherlands. It includes a rhymed prayer to the Virgin Mary and several prayers with indulgences. Its most remarkable feature is its illustration, real-size depictions of the nail used to crucify Christ and of the measure of His chest wound. Relatively rare in manuscripts (more common in prints), these images reinforced the veracity of the event and prompted meditation.

PROVENANCE

1. There is little doubt that the 46 vellum leaves making up the present manuscript have been part of a larger manuscript, which must have been a Book of Hours or Prayerbook. For unknown reasons, the 46 leaves were rebound separately in the 17th century.

The original manuscript may have contained a colophon stating that the manuscript was finished in 1470, which would explain the mention of 1470 on the spine of the present binding. Dating the manuscript in 1470 on the basis of such an assumed colophon would be in accordance with the palaeographical and stylistic features of the manuscript. In any case, the manuscript must have been made after 1458, since reference is made to Pope Pius II (f. 41v), whose pontificate lasted from 1458 to 1464.

The lay-out, the script, the style of the pen-flourishes, and some features of the dialect make clear that the manuscript was made in the Southern Netherlands, possibly in Brabant. Apparently it was made for a woman, given the feminine forms "sondersse" (ff.

3r and 36v) and "sundersse" (f. 4r) in three prayers. The high quality of the manuscript, with its well-prepared vellum, elegant script, and broad margins, suggests that the first owner must have been a well-to-do lady. However, nothing is known about the first or later owners.

2. Private European Collection

TEXT

ff. 1r–3v, Seven prayers to Christ before the Instruments of the Passion, attributed to St. Gregory the Great, with indulgence, rubric, "Soe wie staet inder staet der graciën ende dese seven ghebeden mit seven pater noster ende seven ave Maria leest over sijn knien voor den wapenen ons heeren die verdient XLVIII^M [= 48.000] jaer aflaets ende XLVIII daghen", incipit, "O heere Ihesu Christe. Ic aenbede dij in de cruce hanghende ende een doorne croone up hu hoofd draghende", explicit, "die rechte rouwe hebben van haren sonden ende eeren die wapene dijns heiligen lidens. Die leeft ende regneert met god den vader ende den heiligen geest, inder ewicheit. Amen".

ff. 4r–v, Prayer to Christ, attributed to St. Augustine, with indulgence, rubric, "Pater noster. Ave Maria. Sinte Augustijn seght soe wye dit ghebet alle daghe leist met eenen pater noster die en mach niet sterven in doot sonden ende hij verdient XL daghen aflaets", incipit, "Onghemeten godheyt aensiet my onsaligen mensche siet in my die seere wreet ben met uwer ontfermherticheyt. Ic openbare sundersse come toten almachtighen heere", explicit, "doet af die grootheyt mijns sonden metter menichfuldicheyt uwer grooter ontfermherticheyt. Amen".

ff. 5r–6r (rubric starting on f. 4v), Prayer to Christ, with indulgence, rubric, "Die dit ghebet leset die wort verleent van gode es hij in den staet van verdommenissen god die verwandelt dat in ghenadegen vaghevier. Ende es hij inden staet des vagheviers god verwandelt die pijnende wort ghevoert hier boven inden hemel", incipit, "O lieve heere Ihesu Christe ic dancke dij dattu dine martelie begonste crachtelike", explicit, "Nemt mijn siele in dijnre hoeden want duse ghecocht hebt met dinen bloede".

ff. 6v–8r (rubric starting on f. 6r), Prayer to Christ, rubric, "Dit ghebet sal een mensche lesen also dicken als hem sijn sonden leet sijn ende ghenade van gode begheert hi sal ghenade vinden", incipit, "O alre goedertierenste heere Ihesu Christe ic sondighe mensche valle mit gronden mijns herten voor die voeten dijnre barmherticheyt", explicit, "op dat ic di mach ontsien di lief hebben ende di volghen eeuwelic. Amen. Amen".

ff. 8r–9v, Prayer to Christ, rubric, "Een ghebet van Ihesum", incipit, "Heere gheloeft ende ghedant soe moeti sijn dat ic ben int kersten ghelove daer ic of god wil in sterven sal", explicit, "ten sij overmids deser redene dan commick er gheerne met begherten. Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum redimisti me domine deus veritatis. Amen. Amen".

ff. 9v–10r, Prayer to Christ, rubric, "Die dit leist met ganser betrouwen inde helle no int vaghevier en comti nimmermeer", incipit, "Willecomme lieve heere Ihesus Christus verclaert mijn doncker verstannissen met uwer graciën", explicit, "Ontfermt suete Ihesus mijn lauwe

herte met uwer berrender minnen. Enicheyt ende stedicheyt mijnen wille in uwen wille altijt. Amen amen Amen".

f. 10v (rubric starting on f. 10r), Prayer to the Holy Trinity, taught to a monk by the Virgin, rubric, "O lieve heere ontfermt u mijns doer u bitter doot. Deze bedijnghe heift ghemaect die gloriose moeder gods Maria teghen den viant ende sijn becorijnghe ende leerdese een monic die in grooten lijden plach te wesen dat hem des avonts daer mede soude benedyen eer hi slapen ghijnghe", incipit, "Mi ghebenedie god die vader die alle dijnc ghemact heift van niete", explicit, "Mi ghebenedie god die heilighe gheest wies instortinghen my ghesont maect. Amen".

ff. 12r–15v (rubric starting on f. 10v), Prayer, attributed to a pope called Innocence, who is said to have written it as part of a letter of indulgence for Charlemagne during his campaign against the Saracenes (although no pope with the name of Innocence was a contemporary of Charlemagne), rubric, "So wie desen brief over hem draghet hem en mach niet messchien in water noch in vier noch gheen duvele en mach hem niet bedrieghen noch in ghevanghenisse en sal hem niet moghen misschien noch van tempest noch van dondere niet en verslegghen en mach worden. Ende leghdi desen brief op eenre vrouwen die in pinen gaet mit kinde die vrucht en mach niet sterven noch die vrouwe en mach niet bederven also langhe als hij daer upleyt Ende als ghij inden wegghen gaet ghij en sult niet bederven noch gescoffiert worden ende ghij sult altoos segghen pater noster. Die paus Innocencius makede desen brief ende als hi en geconfirmeert hadde so sende hi en den conijn [sic] Karel als hij voovechtere [sic] was teghen den sarasijnen om te doden die karsten doen hadde karstenheit so vele verloren en hadde ghedaen die mach van gode die nacht verclaerde dien dach verlichtede. Ende sint Joris quam te hulpen als dat sij wonnen den strijt doen togghen sij achterwaert. Doen bleef Karel desen brief alleene. Ende hij en mach niet bederven diese eens daghes overleset ende diese niet ghelesen en can dien dragghen over hem hij en mach niet qualike varen. Ave Maria om gods wille ende pater noster alle stille", incipit, "Ic bevele mij huden god almachtich die hij sijnen gheest beval sijnen vader doen hij sterven soude anden cruce", explicit, "Metter selver benedixie moet ic sijn ghebenedijt daer Christus die drie kinderen mede benedide Sijdrac Nusac ende Abdenago. Amen". The same letter of indulgence in a manuscript in Heiloo, collection of D.W. Hueting, unnumbered, ff. 63v–64r (formerly Amsterdam, collection of L.F. Boekenoogen, Ms. 2), and in Leiden, University Library, Ms. Ltk. 325, f. 282r. On the text of the rubric, see Oosterman 1997, pp. 153–154.

ff. 15v–23r, Instructions for attending Mass, rubric, "Hier na volghet een gheestelic bediet vander heiligher messen ende hoemen sal devotelic misse hooren", incipit, "Als die priester sijne handen dwaet so ghedijnt hoe dat Christus sijne jongheren voeten dwouch", explicit, "ende om ons gracie te gheven ende alle sondaren om voort te ghaen in duechden want sonder sijne gracie en moghen wij niet goets doen noch peijsen. A.M.E.N."

ff. 23r–30v, Instructions for recognizing mental sins, rubric, "Dit sijn die sonden die inden ghedachten ghescien", incipit, "Quade ghedachten ghenouch te consent quade begheerten quade wille quat vermoeden nicheit toorn hat vrolicheit in ons even kersten", explicit, "ende mijn consciencien vergheten heb ende die niet waer ghenomen en heb ende mijn becorijnghe niet wederstaen en heb dat ic niet bedroeft en heb om mijn sonden als ic sculdich ben te doen".

f. 31r–v (rubric starting on f. 30v), Instructions for how to gain the Seven Graces by venerating an image of one of the nails used to crucify Christ, rubric, “Dit es die lencte der naghelen ons lieves heeren Ihesu Christe die doer sijn helighe handen ende voeten gheslaghen waren welck die paeus Ynnocencius sende den conijnc van Cecilien tot een teyken der sonderlijnghe minnen. Ende so wie datse an hem draghet die moghen volghen seven ghenaden des hij staet inder gracien gods ende in godliker minnen”, incipit, “Die eerste ghenade is hij en sel niet sterven quader doot noch onversienre doot”, explicit, “Voirt so wie datse aensicht mit aendacht ende berou sijn sonden ende spreket V pater noster u wort of genomen die VII doot sonden”.

ff. 32v–34r, Instructions for how to read three Pater Nosters, attributed to a pope called Calixtus, with indulgence, rubric, “Die paus sinte Calixtus heift ghemaect dese pater noster ende gaf so groote ghenade ende oflaet toot desen drie pater noster die hier naer ghescreven staen ende is ghegeven ende gheconfirmeert uten stoel van Romen so wie dattet een ander leert die verdient dat selve oflaet vanden selven paeus”, incipit, “Ende du selste spreken een pater noster der verstervijnghe dat die edel menscheit gods anden cruse starf”, explicit, “Tot desen pater noster so hevet die paeus ghegheven LXXXIII^M [= 83.000] carinen ende also dickent als hijt eenen anderen leert so heift hij dat selve aflaat. Deo gratias”.

f. 34r–v, Prayer to the Virgin, rubric, “Een goet ghebet van onser liever vrouwen Marien”, text: “O Maria moeder ons heeren Ihesu Christi ic bevele u mijn siele ende mijn lichame mijn lippen ende mijn oghen ende mijn voeten ende mijn handen. Ende alle mijn lichame heden in dij heere god. Amen”.

ff. 34v–36r, Prayer to the Virgin, rubric, “Dit es een ghebet van onser vrouwen so wie dartich daghen leset op sijn knien voor der suver maghet ende moeder gods hij sal verblijt worden vander eerster beden die hij an haer bidt”, incipit, “O vrouwe heilighe moeder gods ontfaet mijn ghebet om die eere ende om die minne dijnre dracht ende weerdicheyt des gheloofst”, explicit, “also lieve moder gods behoet mij dat ic nummermeer tot sonden en come daer ic inne gheweest hebbe. Amen”.

f. 36r–v, The Five Sorrows of the Virgin, rubric, “Dit sijn die vijf lijden van onser liever vrouwen”, incipit, “Doe onse vrouwe onsen heere offerde inden tempel daer Symeoen seyde dat zweert des rouwen sal u harte doer scnijden”, explicit, “Doen onse heere vanden cruce ghedaen wert ende op haren scoot gheleyt wert”.

ff. 36v–38v, Prayer to the Virgin, rhymed, rubric, “Een ghebet van onser liever vrouwe der maghet Marie”, incipit, “Maria vrouwe ic roepe tot u als een sonderse hoort mij nu. Van mijnen sonden tot alder stont. Weerde Maria ic make u cont. Dat ic mij kinne seere mesdadich. Moedere ende maghet sijt mijns ghenadich”, explicit, “Ende so wie met deser bedinghen. Anebedet sonderlijn. Die mensche moet ghij altijt beraden. Ende van allen quaden ontladen. Amen.” The same prayer in at least fifteen other manuscripts. For manuscripts and editions, see Oosterman 1995, pp. 290–291 (No. 247).

ff. 38v–39r, Prayer to God the Father, no rubric, incipit, “Ic dancke der godheit dat hij mij ghescapen heift doen iv niet en was”, explicit, “Ic dancke den heilighen vader dat ic dat eeuwic leven besitten sal. Pater [noster]. Ave [Maria]”.

ff. 39r–40r, Prayer to St. Mary Magdalene, rubric, “Van Maria Magdaleene”, incipit, O heilighe Maria Magdalene die verdient heift te siene alre eerst Ihesum verrisen vander doot”, explicit, “verleen ons dat ghenadelike bidden moet bij dijne ontfermherticheit voor onse sonden die dinen sone alder ierst verdiende te siene verresen vander doot overmids Ihesum Christum. Amen”.

ff. 40r–41r, Prayer to St. Catherine of Alexandria, rubric, “Een ghebet van sinte Katherinen”, incipit, “O edele ende hoghe gheboren conijncs dochter van Alexandrien. Ende een gloriose martellersse Christi. Dochter des eeweghen vaders. Bruyt des heilighen gheest”, explicit, “Dat ic weerdich mach sijn door dijne verdiente maghet katerine te wesene gherekent onder allen die kinderen gods in dat eewich rike. Dat ionne mij god den vadere den sone ende den heilighen gheest. Amen”.

ff. 41v–43r, Prayer to the Virgin, with indulgence granted by Pope Pius II (pontificate: 1458–1464), rubric (in brown): “Dit gebet leerde een ingel eender jonffrouwen ende hij seyde haer also dicwijle alsijt lase dat zij hebben soude LX^M [= 40.000] jair aflaets. Dwelc god toe geset heeft. Ende doen de paus Pyus dat vernam gaf hij dair toe soe vele aflaets als druppel waters op eenen dach soude moegen vallen”, incipit, “O alre suverste minlijcste zuetelijcste ende suverste maget Maria. O scone rosende bloeme Maria”, explicit, “dat ghij geweerdigen wilt tsegenweerdich te sijne wanneer mijn ziele sal sceyden uut mijnen lichame om die te bringen ende te leyenne in die eeweghe blijscap. Amen”.

ILLUSTRATION

f. 32, two drawings, Nail of Christ and the Measurements of Christ's Wound.

In addition to the fine script and lay-out, the two colored drawings on f. 32r form a remarkable element in this manuscript. One is meant to be highly realistic and shows a real-size nail of 17 cm. length, which was used to nail Christ to the cross. The other drawing is a schematic, lozenge-shaped representation of the measurements of Christ's chest wound. The drawing is filled up with an explanation written in red, reading: “Dit is die lencte die broete ende die grootheyt der wonden den soon Christi die van gode ghe-toont was een gheestelic persoon ende wie datse daghelix met ynnigher herte aensiet die sel binnen dien daghe seker bliven van dootsonden ende versient oflaet van daghelicse sonden. Amen” (This is the length, the width and the size of the wound of Christ the son, which God showed to a cleric. Whoever venerates it daily with a devout heart, will be free of deadly sins that day and will earn indulgence of daily sins. Amen).

Well-known examples of depictions showing the actual size of Christ's chest wound are New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, MS 69.86, fol. 331r (Psalter and Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg, Paris, 1345), and New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms. M.90, f. 130r (Book of Hours, Paris or Verdun, c. 1375). These two examples can

be augmented with several others, many of them originating from the Low Countries. The same goes for drawings of real-size nails; one similar to the one in the manuscript described here, is in Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek, Ms. 96 E 12, f. 31v (Prayer Book, Northern Netherlands, c. 1515). The nail is less well known as a type of image. Manuscript images appear to be less common than prints of this subject, perhaps because the technique of printing promised accuracy in a way that drawing did not.

Areford discusses the prints, similarly representing of Christ's side wound, in the final chapter of his recent book. These popular images depict the wound in isolation, inviting beholders to contemplate the depths of his suffering. Reproduced apparently to actual scale, the precise measure of the wound reinforced the veracity of the sacred event. As Areford suggests, the disembodied opening may have readily been compared to a vagina or vulva as the site of desired rebirth. In addition, its appearance may have elicited connotations of a mouth, a place to be kissed, reinforcing its link with relics. Imaginatively mapping the dimensions of Christ's side wound not only offered indulgence, it was believed to protect the devout from sudden death and misfortune. For pregnant women, it also promised the uncomplicated birth of healthy children. Visual representations of the side wound not only fostered prayerful meditation, it may have fostered greater Eucharistic devotion (quoted from Henry Luttikhuisen, review, *Historians of Netherlandish Art*, Online Resources).

One tipped-in leaf (f. 3), adding text to the first prayer, has been taken from a slightly older manuscript (Hand B). The prayer on ff. 41v–43r is an addition on ruled but originally blank leaves by a contemporary or slightly later hand (Hand C).

The manuscript is unpublished and is not listed in the online database of the *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta*.

LITERATURE

Areford, David S. *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe*, *Visual Culture in Early Modernity*, Ashgate Press, 2010 (ch. On the Side Wound of Christ).

Oosterman, J.B. *De gratie van het gebed. Middelnederlandse gebeden: overlevering en functie. Met bijzondere aandacht voor produktie en receptie in Brugge (1380–1450)*, *Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen*, 12, 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1995.

Oosterman, Johan, "Heiligen, gebeden en heiligengebeden," in Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Marijke Carasso-Kok, eds., *Gouden legenden. Heiligenlevens en heiligenverering in de Nederlanden*, Hilversum, 1997, pp. 151–163.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Database of Middle Dutch manuscripts, the *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta*:

<http://www.library.leiden.edu/special-collections/manuscripts/subcollections-whs-bnm.html>

Psalter and Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/69.86>

Henry Luttikhuizen, review of Areford, 2010, Historians of Netherlandish Art,
<http://www.hnanews.org/archive/2012/04/15areford0412.html>

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