

Hymnal; Gospel Reading for Holy Thursday
In Latin with musical notation, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Germany (Freiburg?), c. 1470-80

i (parchment) + 34 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, complete, (collation *i*¹⁰ *ii*⁸ *iii*¹⁰ *iv*⁸ [-7 and 8, cancelled blanks]), leaves signed with roman numerals in the first half of quires one and two lower outer corner recto, no catchwords, ruled in lead with the top and bottom horizontal rule full across, single full-length vertical bounding lines (justification, folios with text and music 216-214 x 158 mm.; folios with text only 210 x 157 mm.), written below the top line in an expert formal gothic bookhand with seven- to eight-lines of text and music on ff. 1-24v, square notation on red four-line staves, and then with text interspersed with a few lines of music or text only in twenty long lines, multi-colored rubrics in purplish-red, blue, orange-red, green and blue, red and green line fillers, one-line blue, purplish red, green and orange-red initials, initials equivalent to one-line of text and music in blue, orange-red and green (outlined in red or green pen), eight colored initials equivalent to one-line of text and music (parted red and green, red, blue, or pink) with decorative pen flourishes and infilling in red, blue and green, on ff. 18v, 20, 21v, 23, 24v, 25v, 26, 28, two 2-line gold initials, heavily edged in black with white dots, infilled and on multi-colored grounds on ff. 28, 30v, four parted red and blue initials, with gold balls and floral motifs within the initials, equivalent to one-line text and music, with extensions, with red, blue and green pen work, five similar parted red and green or red and blue initials, infilled with contrasting colors with yellow highlights, edged in black with white dots, terminating in large extensions of flowers or leaves, ff. 1, 2v, 3v, 6 and 12, and SEVEN HISTORIATED INITIALS: f. 7v, the baby Jesus, ff. 10 and 13v, the face of Christ, f. 15v, the Virgin, crowned, and child, f. 18, Christ as Man of Sorrows, upper torso depicted peeking out from alongside a cadell initial, f. 18, Virgin crowned, f. 27v, 7-line "I" with extensions, showing the standing Christ teaching, all with thick burnished gold, halos, crowns and other ornaments, in very good condition with wide margins, occasional small stains in the margins. Bound in contemporary pasteboard, covered in paper, and with a linen liner, quires appear to be sewn directly into the cover, spine of stiff vellum that also wraps partially onto the front and back covers, green and brown tendril pattern painted on the central panel of both covers, SMMR inked in early hand on upper cover, both covers fragile and cracking with pronounced damage to the front, edges and at top of the spine (see also below); now housed in a plain brown fitted case. Dimensions 305 x 220 mm.

This is a beautiful and unusual Latin hymnal from the scriptorium of the Dominican convent of St. Mary Magdalene in Freiburg, created by the scribe and artist, Elsbeth Töpplin, whose work is known in only five other manuscripts. Every aspect of this manuscript is an excellent example of the style of manuscripts copied in female religious houses in the wake of the Observant Reform, from the calligraphic script and the multi-colored rubrics, to the beautifully-crafted initials. It survives in a remarkably rare contemporary binding of pasteboard and linen with painted decoration.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Freiburg c. 1470-80, the date can be established quite closely based on its relationship with other manuscripts by the scribe and artist, Elsbeth Töpplin. Liturgical evidence also helps establish the date of this manuscript since it includes hymns for the Transfiguration, observed generally from 1457, and in the Dominican Order in 1459, and Catharine of Siena, canonized in 1461.

The 1509 anniversary book of the Dominican convent of Mary Magdalene in Freiburg states that Sister Elsbeth Töpplin, a reformer from Schönensteinbach, made for the cloister a two-volume Antiphoner and a Missal. Christian von Heusinger identified these as Augustinermuseum Inv. Nr. 11730 and 11731 (now Freiburg, Adelhausen Stiftung MS A 1212) and Karlsruhe, BLB, St. Peter Perg. 45 (von Heusinger, 1959; Zinke and Karasch, 2002, pp. 116-117). Manuscripts attributed to Elsbeth include: Freiburg, Adelhausenstiftung, MS A 1212 (formerly Augustinermuseum Inv. Nr. 11730; in collaboration with Sibylla von Bondorf); Freiburg, Augustinermuseum, Inv. Nr. 11731 (in collaboration with Sibylla von Bondorf); Freiburg, Stadtarchiv, MS B1 (H) nr. 124; Freiburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1131 (in collaboration with Sibylla von Bondorf); and Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS St. Peter Perg. 45; we thank Professor Anne Winston-Allen for sharing her knowledge of this artist's work; see also Anne Winston-Allen, "Repertorium," Online Resources.

It is possible that although the manuscript was decorated by Elsbeth Töpplin, it may have been copied for use at a house for friars (or monks), since the rubric on f. 30v in the Gospel reading for Holy Thursday mentions "fratribus" (the brothers). An alternative and probably more likely explanation is that this was copied from an exemplar for Friars without updating the rubrics to reflect feminine use, even though it was used by the sisters at the convent of St. Mary Magdalene.

This community originated as a community of the Penitential Order of Mary Magdalene (also known as the Reuerinnen). This Order was placed under the supervision of the Dominicans in 1289 by a Papal directive. As we have noted above, the convent was reformed in the fifteenth century (and Elsbeth Töpplin was one of its reformers). Numerous manuscripts survive from their library (Krämer, 1989, 1:257-258, and the Monastic Matrix, listing twenty-four manuscripts).

2. Signs of later use include a few lines of music added to f. 18; and a few modern pencil notes alongside a few initials.

TEXT

ff. 1-17, nine settings of Psalm 94 (incipit, "Venite exultemus"), each ending with the Gloria patri; f. 1, f. 2v, 4, 6, 7v, 10, 12, 13v, 15v;

ff. 17v-18, incipit, "Tenebre facte sunt ...," V. Cum ergo accepisset ...; V. Adoramus te christe et benedicamus tibi";

ff. 18rv, *Sancte marie virginis*, incipit, "Recordare virgo mater ..." [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 17047];

ff. 18v-20, *Von vil martre[n] zu drien lecten, ymnus*, incipit, "Sanctorum meritis inclita ..." [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 18606/7];

ff. 20-21, *In festo beate Katherine senis ad vespervas ymnus*, incipit, "Hec tue virgo monumenta laudis ..." [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 7655];

ff. 21v-23, *Ad matutinis ymnus*, incipit, "Laudibus virgo nimis esse renda iure censi ..." [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 10461];

ff. 23-24, *Ad laudes ymnus*, incipit, "Iam ferox miles tibi sepe cessit et duces iras posuere ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 9252]";

ff. 24rv, *De sancta anna ad vespervas et ad matutinis ymnus*, incipit, "De stella sol oriturus stella matrem profert ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 4257]";

ff. 24v-25, *Ad laudes ymnus*, incipit, "Preclari patris abrahamae celso exorta ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 15249]";

f. 25rv, *In festo transfiguracionis domini, ad matutinis, ymnus*, incipit, "Osator rerum reparator evi christe rex regum ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 13715]";

ff. 25v-26, *Ad laudes. Ymnus*, incipit, "Festiva hec sollempnitas nobis recurrit anima ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, cf. no. 6179]";

f. 26rv, *Ad vespervas*, incipit, "O nata lux de lumine ihesu redemptor seculi ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 13295]";

f. 26v-27, *De Sancta elysabeth. Ad vespervas ymnus*, incipit, "Ympnum deo vox iocunda de cantet ecclesie ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 8263]";

f. 27rv, *Laudibus. Ymnus*, incipit, "Hec insignis hec beata pauperum nutricia ... [Chevalier, 1892-1921, no. 7624]";

ff. 27v-34, *Feria v in cena domini secundum iohanem*, incipit, "In illo tempore. Ante diem festum pasche ... ita et vos faciatis," *Finito ewangelium* [with red pitch indications, between the lines; John 13:1-15]; f. 28, *Dyaconus prosequitur sermone dominice[?] perlecionis versus ad crucifixum*, incipit, "Amen amen dico uobis. Non est seruus maior domino suo ... Surgite eamus hinc [John 13:16-14]"; f. 30v, *Cum autem dyaconus dixerit, Surgite eamus hinc, Vadat convuentus ad chorum et residentibus fratribus stans ad pulpitem sibi preparatum prosequitur ... restant similiter per modus lectionis*, incipit, "Ego sum uitis vera et pater meus agricola est ... Et ego in ipsis [John 15-16]"; [f. 34v, blank but ruled].

Gospel of John, chapters 13-16, marked for liturgical chanting on Holy Thursday, and divided into three sections (read by the deacon, read at the Cross, and sitting again). Note mentions of the brothers in the rubric on f. 30v.

The text includes nine settings of Psalm 94 ("Venite exultemus"), the invitatory Psalm sung at the beginning of the night Office of Matins, followed by "Tenebrae factae sunt," one of the responsories sung at Good Friday, hymns for a martyr with three lessons, Catharine of Siena, canonized in 1461, Anne, the Transfiguration, observed generally from 1457, and in the Dominican Order in 1459, and Elizabeth of Hungary (or of Thuringia).

ILLUSTRATION

f. 7v [Venite exultemus], equivalent to 1-line of text and music, with extensions into the margin of an additional three lines, historiated initial showing Christ, as a baby, with a golden halo, holding a cross and a gold ball; initial terminates in an exuberant floral motif, extending an additional three lines of text and music;

f. 10 and f. 13v [Venite exultemus], equivalent to 1-line of text and music, with extensions into the margin, portrait of Christ as a young man, bearded and with a gold halo, head and shoulders, initials terminate with three flowers and a green and pink leaf, respectively;

f. 15v [Venite exultemus], equivalent to 1-line of text and music, Virgin with a gold crown shown holding the baby Jesus, who has a gold halo, both are blond, and are shown with head and shoulders only; initial with leaf extension;

f. 18 [Versicle (Cum ergo) to the Tenebrae], equivalent to 1-line of text and music, Christ, as the Man of Sorrows, head and shoulders, with a gold halo, crown of thorns, with drops of blood, depicted peeking out from behind the initial "C";

f. 18 [Recordare virgo], equivalent to 1-line of text and music, Mary, head and shoulders, crowned; initial is decorated with pen flourishes in green and red;

f. 27v [Reading from John on Holy Thursday] 15-line, Christ, standing on a green ground with flowers, depicted full-length, gold halo, teaching; initial terminates in flowers and leaf.

BINDING

The beautiful binding is very unusual, and surely represents the type of ephemeral covering that other manuscripts may once have had, but which have now mostly disappeared. It almost certainly was made at the Convent of St. Mary Magdalene by one of the nuns. The quires appear at least at one time to have been linked together with a chain stitch; they are now sewn directly into the pasteboard covers, which are lined with linen, and then covered by paper, reinforced along the spine and outer border with stiff vellum, and painted in a green arabesque motif (which extends beyond the paper onto the vellum, suggesting that that whole cover – center panel of paper, with an outer border and spine of vellum, was done at once). The sewing looks original; if the vellum and paper were added subsequently, this was certainly very soon after the original production of the binding.

In the fifteenth century, the Observant Reform movement was accompanied by remarkable an increase in the production of books in female convents. (Observant Reform originated first in Italy, and spread throughout Europe in the fifteenth century; aiming at broad religious changes, it was especially concerned with the reform of religious Orders). The result for manuscript illustration was the development of regional, non-mainstream styles that reflect the influence of needlework, textiles, and local folk-art (Hamburger, 1997). In the Upper Rhine region, women's works seem to have been influenced early on by the style of Strasbourg schools of painters such as that of the Master of the Paradise Garden (c. 1410); but thereafter they developed a life and a style of their own (von Heusinger, 1959). The work of the artist who painted this manuscript, Elsbeth Töpplin, is an excellent example of a personal style, characterized by figures with minimal modelling, bright colors and a very decorative effect with an emphasis on line and pattern.

One of the interesting aspects of Elsbeth's work is her collaboration with the well-known and prolific Franciscan sister Sibylla von Bondorf (c. 1450-1524), who was active in Freiburg and Strasbourg, and whose work is known in over 180 full-page miniatures (Bodemann, 2007; Winston-Allen, 2007, pp. 190-95). At least four manuscripts made in Freiburg contain the work of both Sibylla von Bondorf and Elsbeth Töpplin.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Anne Winston-Allen, "Repertorium of Manuscripts Illuminated by Women in Religious Communities in the Middle Ages"

<http://www.agfem-art.com/>

Monastic Matrix: A Scholary Resources for the Study of Women’s Religious Communitis from 400-1600 C.E.

<http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/>

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