

PRUDENTIUS OF TROYES, *Flores psalorum* (Flowers of the Psalms); Prayers in Latin and Italian

In Italian and Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Northern Italy, c. 1400-1450

ii (parchment) + 63 + ii (parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, lower outer rectos, 1-33, 33 bis, 34, 34 bis, 35-61, complete (collation i-v^s vi^s [-8, leaf canceled with no loss of text following f. 45] vii-viii^s), quires i-v and vii contain horizontal catchwords, lower center versos, ruled in brown crayon with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding lines, prickings in lower margins (justification 120-133 x 70-80 mm.), written above top line in a rapid Gothico-Antiqua script on twenty to twenty-five long lines, display script of Roman capitals and Gothico-Antiqua on f. 17, guide letters, two-line spaces left for some initials, one- to three-line initials in red or blue, three- to four-line parted initials in red or blue (ff. 17, 56), words "icar" written into the center of initial on f. 56, some soiling and staining of parchment in margins, outer corners of f. 1 trimmed or torn away, but with no loss of text, otherwise in good condition. CONTEMPORARY BINDING of brown leather over heavy, unbeveled wooden boards, traces of fore-edge clasp on upper and lower board, spine missing but two split thongs on which quires are sewn are intact, some scratching and wear to leather, some wormholes in boards. Dimensions 176-178 x 122-123 mm.

The central text is a lengthy prayer based on the Psalms composed in the ninth-century to serve as consolation for a Carolingian Queen, known to scholars in only nine manuscripts. In fifteenth-century Italy, this text was re-done and provided with a prologue in Italian and other prayers; our manuscript is one of only two known copies of this new version, which is unpublished, and apparently unstudied by modern scholars. Noteworthy also is observation that this volume was copied by a lay woman for her own use and with an obstetrical charm.

PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script, letter forms, and decoration all indicates that this manuscript was produced in Northern Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century, 1400-1450. The use of "c caudata" for "z" and the characteristic Italian abbreviation for "qui" underscore the Italian character of the scribe's script; the display script and capitals on f. 17 show some Humanistic influence.
2. Seventeenth-century inscription on the second front flyleaf, verso: "Obit[?] 6 d[...?] [...?] 1654." Illegible scribbles on the last flyleaf, recto, also appear to have been a later addition.
3. Modern account, written upside down on f. 61v.

TEXT

ff. 1-4v, *IN cominca il prolago del saltero fu miracolosamente abreuviato per lo glorioso doctore Messer Sancto Girolamo ...*, incipit, "Concio sia cosa che nel tempo del Glorioso dotore Sancto Girolamo ... et sono ueduti grandissimj miracoli et pero i dio sia sempre lodato";

Italian prologue to the abbreviated Psalter, attributed to Saint Jerome. The same prologue circulated in at least one other fifteenth-century manuscript, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. 34 (see below), and in three early Italian-language editions of an abbreviated

Psalter (GW M08110, M08112-13). We have not been able to verify whether these print editions contain the same abbreviated Psalter found in this manuscript (see below).

ff. 4v-7, *Parole commendationj virtudi et lode facte et decte et per lo glorioso doctore Sancto Agostino sopra degli infrascritti sagrati uersetti fiori ...*, incipit, "Coloro che ogni in di diuotamente gli legieranno aquisteranno la gloria di dio et la gratia degli uomini ... il quale iddio uiue per infinita secula seculorum amen";

Italian recommendation, attributed to Saint Augustine, of the abbreviated Psalter, attributed to Saint Jerome.

ff. 7v-12, *In comincano loratione deuote et buone le quali si de bono dire Oleggiere inançi che tu cominci a leggiere la infrascritta Sancta operetta di sacrati uersetti et sustança di salmi Ordinati et composti per lo glorioso doctore Sancto Agostino ...*, incipit, "Dulcissime yhesu christe qui es uerus deus et de sinu patris omnipotentis missus es ..."; f. 10v, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "Obsecro mi domine deus omnipotens suscipere digneris hos uersiculos sacratos flores et uirtutes phalmorum [sic] ..."; f. 11, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "IN mensam clementiam tuam et pietatem tuam deprecor omnipotens deus ..."; f. 11v, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "Domine deus omnipotens qui cum substantialem tibi filium qui uera et eternal est sapientia genuisti ..."; f. 12, "[B]onifatio papa die indulgentia di tutti suoi peccati a chi di quore confexo et contrito ogni in di vna uolta dira la infrascritta oratione, incipit, "[D]eus qui uoluisti pro redemptione mundi a iudeis reprobari a iuda traditore obscuro tradi vinculis alligari ... Qui uiuis et regnas deus per infinita amen";

Five Latin prayers, the first attributed to Saint Augustine and the last one indulgenced.

f. 12v, incipit, "[D]e profundis clamaui ad te domine domine exaudi uocem meam ... Et ipse redimet ysrael ex omnibus iniquitatibus eius. Gloria patri et filio sicut erat. Pater noster. Aue maria";

Psalms 129, one of the seven Penitential Psalms, followed by prompts to prayer.

ff. 12v-13, incipit, "[F]idelium deus conditor [sic] et redentor [sic] animabus famulorum famularumque tuarum ..."; f. 13, incipit, "[A]peri domine hos meum ad benedicendum nomen tuum ... qui uiuis et regnas per infinita secula seculorum amen";

Two common Latin prayers.

ff. 13-15v, *Oratione dinançi la comunione si facci del corpo del nostro signore yhesu christo*, incipit, "[A]ue Sanctissimo corpo del mio Signore yhesu christo in questo sacramento uelato te con labri confexo et con tutto il quore mio te desidero ..."; f. 14v, incipit, "[S]ignore mio dolcissimo yhesu christo il quale di uolonta di tuo padre et operatione de lo spirito Sancto ..."; f. 15, incipit, "[S]ignore i dio Sancto padre omnipotente il quale per la tua gratia et benignita ... Qui uiuis et regnas amen";

Prayer in Italian to be said before the Eucharist, followed by two further Italian prayers.

f. 16rv, incipit, "[D]ignare domine dirigere et sanctificare regere et gubernare domine deus rex celi et terre ..."; f. 16, incipit, "[A]peri domine hos meum ad benedicendum nomen tuum ..."; f. 16v, *Alia oratio*, incipit, "Comitetur nos quesumus domine semper tua gratia ... et pro vniuersis viuis atque defunctis. Amen";

Three Latin prayers, the second also appearing on f. 13.

ff. 16v-45, *IN chominia il saltero miracolosamente abreuato per lo glorioso doctore Messer Sancto Girolamo ...*, incipit, "DOMINE YHESU CHRISTE altissimi filius fac me sociari inter uiros beatos qui in lege tua meditantur die ac nocte ... Et te laudo in terris quem omnis spiritus in excelsis laudat dominum de celis. Tibi laus. Tibi honor. Tibi gloria deo patri et filio et spiritus sancto. Qui sine fine uiuis et regnas in secula seculorum. Amen. *Explicit beatissimj Gerolimi phalterium [sic] abreuatum in quo sublimis et inclita laus dei mirabiliter explicatur atque exprimitur ac paritur humilis et efficax modus orandi iugitur continetur deo gratias Amen*"; [f. 45v, ruled but blank];

The *Flores psalmodum* (*Flowers of the Psalms*) of Prudentius of Troyes, likely composed around 830-833, is an abbreviated Psalter, here attributed instead to Saint Jerome. It has been edited by Salmon (1974, pp. 93-119) with reference to four eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscript copies at the Vatican. (An earlier edition in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, erroneously paired the work's prologue with a different abbreviated Psalter, and it is due to Salmon's work with the Vatican manuscripts that the text and authorship of *Flowers* is now known and that it is reunited with its prologue; Wielfaert, 2015, p. 55). Wielfaert identifies five (and possibly six) other manuscripts containing all or part of *Flowers* (2015, pp. 55-56), only one of which dates from the fifteenth century. To this list of nine manuscripts, we can add both the present manuscript and one other, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. 34. Like our manuscript, the fifteenth-century Florence manuscript presents *Flowers* with an Italian prologue attributing the work to Saint Jerome and alongside other prayers. This new version of Prudentius's text, almost certainly the work of an Italian author in the fifteenth century is unpublished, and has apparently not been discussed in the scholarly literature on Prudentius's text.

ff. 46-53, *Oratio [sic] mirabilis utilis et deuota*, incipit, "Quicumque orationem infrascriptam deuote semel in die dixerit sine penitentia et uera contritione de hac uita disciedere [sic] non poterit ... Benedicam patrem et filium cum Sancto spiritu laudemus et super exaltemus eum in secula. deo gratias. Amen";

Meditation on Psalm 50, "Miserere mei, deus," one of the seven Penitential Psalms, with a prayer following each of the Psalm's nineteen verses.

f. 53-55v, *Oratio utilis et deuota ad sapientum postulandam*, incipit, "O Alpha et o deus omnipotens principium et finis omnium rerum sine principio et sine fine ..."; f. 53v, *Oratio vtilis per custodia die[i]*, incipit, "Mecum esto o domine deus sabach mane cum surrexero intende in me et gubernata actus meos et uerba mea et cogitationes meas ..."; f. 54v, *Oratio mirabilis et deuota marie uirginis*, incipit, "O Ineffabilis et precelsa regina celorum materna dignissima regis eterni sacratissima uirgo maria illustris domina et uniuersis orbis imperatrix gloriosa ..."; f. 55v, *Oratio mirabilis et ualde deuota*, incipit, "O anima christi santifica [sic] me. O corpus christi Gloriosissimus salua me ... Et ponit me iuxta te ut cum angelis laudem te in secula amen";

Four prayers in Latin, with rubrics variously noting their purpose, addressee, or efficacy.

ff. 56-60, [I]ncipit oratio Sancti Augustini episcopi in quacumque die quis cantauerit ne diabolus ne malus homo ei nocere poterit . . . , incipit, "Domine yhesu christe qui in hunc mundum propter nos peccatores de sinu patris aduenisti . . . indulgeat michi omnia peccata hic et in futuro seculo amen. laus. deo. amen";

This prayer, attributed here to Saint Augustine, is from the Carolingian *Liber de usu psalmorum* of Pseudo-Alcuin of York. It is printed in Duchesne (1617, pp. 137-140) and the *Patrologia latina* 101: 476-479. An English translation of a shorter version appears in Fulton (2002, pp. 152-153). A brief examination of other manuscripts in which it appears suggests that it was often copied alongside full or abbreviated Psalters.

f. 60, *Oratio ad partum mulieris optima*, incipit, "Anna peperit Mariam. Elicabet peperit precursorem. Maria peperit Saluatorem. veni puer foras. quia christus te vocat. Mentem Sanctam spontaneam. honorem deo patri et liberationem famule dei nostri. amen. amen. amen. fiat. fiat. fiat. amen"; [ff. 60v-61v, blank].

An obstetrical charm, identified here as the "best prayer at a woman's childbirth."

The Psalms supply the central focus of this Prayer Book, which preserves a rare late copy, indeed a new version, of a Carolingian text. The selection and accessibility of its contents indicate a book copied for private, and probably lay, devotion, almost certainly for a woman given the inclusion of charm for childbirth. The informality of the script and layout suggest this is an example of an owner-produced codex; thus this may be a rare example of a manuscript copied by a lay woman for her own devotional use.

In the Carolingian world, the Psalms were an important part of private prayer, for lay people as well as for the clergy. Prudentius of Troyes was working in this tradition when he wrote his *Flowers of the Psalms*. In contrast with earlier abbreviated collections of Psalms that had simply drawn verses from the biblical text *verbatim*, Prudentius paraphrased the biblical text, extracting words, phrases, or even ideas from each of the 150 Psalms. Using this material, he created a lengthy prayer that preserves little trace of the historical or prophetic material in the Psalms, to say nothing of imprecations against the unjust and impious. Although inspired by the Psalms, his text is a new, more developed and personal prayer expressing thanks and trust in God.

Born in Aragon, Spain as Galindo, Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861) changed his name after leaving Spain and was educated at the palace school of Aachen. He was palace chaplain in the court of Louis the Pious, Holy Roman Emperor (reigned 813-840) and became bishop of Troyes in 843. He is known for his poetry and his continuation of the *Annales Bertiniani*, in which he wrote a history of the Western Frankish Empire from 835 to 861. According to his preface to the *Flowers of the Psalms* (not included in the present volume), he wrote this work as a source of consolation and courage for a certain noble woman suffering from "various mishaps," possibly Judith of Bavaria (d. 843), second wife of Louis the Pious, and to serve as an appropriate alternative for travelers and people in difficulty who were unable to recite the entire Psalter.

Our manuscript is one of only two known witnesses to a new version of this early medieval text, which includes an extensive Italian prologue and a number of other prayers, many quite brief and some in Italian. The rubrics accompanying other prayers in the volume express both concern for the owner's spiritual well-being, and also a more practical interest in when, or to what purpose, certain prayers ought to be said. Even more practical is the final text in the manuscript, which is not a prayer but an obstetrical charm recalling various New Testament mothers and invoking Jesus, allowing us to conclude that this must have been a treasured volume used by a woman in her devotions.

LITERATURE

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