

Carthusian Chapterhouse Sermons
In Latin, illuminated manuscript on paper
Italy (Naples or perhaps Florence?), c. 1460-1480

ii (modern paper) + 289 + ii (modern paper) folios on paper, early foliation (18th - or 19th-century) in ink upper margin with one error: 1-263, 263bis-291, watermark, unidentified one-headed eagle without a crown, lacking three leaves, ff. 255, 272, 283, and most of f. 250 (collation i⁸ ii-ix¹⁰ ix-x¹² xi-xxv¹⁰ xxvi¹⁰ [-3, f. 255, with loss of text] xxvii¹⁰ xxviii¹⁰ [-4, f. 272, with loss of text] 29¹⁰ [-2, f. 283, with loss of text], horizontal catchwords, no signatures, ruled very lightly with horizontal rules in ink and full-length vertical bounding lines in lead (justification 110 x 80 mm.), written in a rounded gothic book hand in 14-15 long lines perhaps by as many as four scribes, each using a different catchword format, majuscules touched in red, red rubrics and paragraph marks, forty 1- to 2-line polished gold initials infilled and on colored grounds of purple, green, blue, or dark red (some initials on two-color grounds) with white and gold tracery and sprays of gold bezants in the margins, one 4-line polished gold WHITE-VINESTEM INITIAL WITH A THREE-SIDED WHITE-VINESTEM BORDER (see discussion below), most of f. 250 now missing, hole f. 1, ff. 88-106 with repaired wormholes and -tracks, ff. 93-103 with slight ink-browning, occasional small wormholes and minor staining, rounded corners, overall in good condition with wide margins. Bound in modern brown calf, edges gilt and gaufered, title on spine in gold, "St. Augustin/ Sermone / De Omnibus/ Festivitatibus [sic]/ c. 1460-70," in excellent condition; fitted quarter-morocco box. Dimensions 190 x 132 mm.

A handsome illuminated manuscript with a finely executed white-vine frontispiece, containing an unpublished collection of Carthusian sermons (with three dedicated to the Carthusian saint, Hugh of Lincoln). Sermon manuscripts are often very utilitarian. This manuscript, in contrast, is copied in a notably large, very legible script in long lines, leaving generous space between the lines and quite wide margins. It is carefully illuminated throughout, but on paper rather than parchment. Carthusians did not preach outside their Charterhouses, and Carthusian sermon manuscripts are comparatively uncommon. Only five of the 42 sermons in this collection of sermons to be preached on major feast days in the chapterhouse have been identified in the standard repertories of medieval sermons.

PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script, illumination, and contents of these sermons tells us that this was written and illuminated for use in a Carthusian monastery c. 1460-1480, most likely in Italy; the style of the decoration seems closest to manuscripts from Naples (see discussion below), but Florence is also a possibility. There is a monogram of the letters C.A.R. with a cross in the left border of f. 1 which we have not identified in other sources but may be a reference to the Carthusians. There were several Carthusian monasteries, or Charterhouses, in Southern Italy and Naples including the Certosa di San Martino in Naples.

The script, however, does not seem typically Italian, and we would like to raise the possibility that this was copied by Spanish scribes, judging from the abbreviations (cf.

for example, f. 108, ostenderat = onderat; f. 111, omnipotentis = oipotentis; f. 170, bba [=baptista]; and on f. 35, bottom line, and f. 217 (and elsewhere), the scribe abbreviates "qui" in the northern fashion with a vertical stroke above the 'q'. The relationship between Naples and Spain was a close one during this period. Alfonso the Magnanimous (1396-1458) was King of Aragon, Sicily, and Naples (from 1442); his successor, Ferdinand I (1424-1494), was king of Naples from 1458 until his death.

2. Traces of an oval ink stamp(?), f. 1v.
3. Maggs Bros, cat. 669 (1938), p. 2, no. 11; there attributed to St. Augustine.
4. Modern annotation in pencil, back flyleaf, f. ii verso: "AEE 15640/ 483/5."
5. Agustin Roberto Edwards (1899-1956), Peru, Chile; his 1942 armorial bookplate, front flyleaf, f. i verso; bequeathed to his son, Agustín Edwards Eastman (1927-2017), who was a media mogul, publisher of *El Mercurio* in Chile, and a bibliophile who assembled a magnificent library, largely dispersed on his death.

TEXT

ff. 1-291v, [f. 1], *Incipiunt sermones de omnibus festivit[ti]bus in quibus de debito fit sermo in capitulo f. c. De Nativitate Domini sermo primus*, incipit, "Omnes qui audierunt mirati ... Luc. ii. Benedicti patres et fratres dilectissimi ex defecta fragilitatis humane ..., Ave maria. Omnes ..., Natiuitas gloriosa saluatoris nostri ... "; ... [f. 278], *Item de eodem sermo secundus. Prologum re. supra in aliquo sermone*, incipit, "[Q]uam terribilis est locus iste, gen. 28:[17]. Locus iste deo consecratus terribilis est propter multa terribilia per omnis secula seculorum, Amen."

42 Carthusian sermons for the chapterhouse (Christmas, Stephen, John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents, Epiphany, Purification, Annunciation, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene, Assumption, Nativity of Mary, Exaltation of the Cross, Michael Archangel, and Hugh of Lincoln; the sermon between Michael and Hugh of Lincoln, beginning on f. 250, missing most of its first leaf is likely a sermon for All Saints. The complex transmission of sermons makes them difficult texts to identify with certainty. Nonetheless, we can observe here that a comparison of the sermons in our manuscript with those listed in Schneyer, 1969-1990, resulted in only a handful of probable identifications (none were identified in Hödl and Knoch, 2001), underlining the interest of these unpublished texts:

Summary of contents, including references to Schneyer when relevant (complete description available on request): [1], f. 1, Christmas; [2], f. 7, *sermo secundus*, incipit, "Transeamus usque bethleem ... luc. ii:[15]. Consuetudo est apud fideles et est laudabilis ... [Schneyer, v. 4, p. 784 (T6), Petrus de S. Benedicto OM]; [3], f. 11v, *sermo tertius de eodem*; [4], f. 16, *Item sermo quartus*, incipit, "Natus est nobis hodie saluator ... luc. ii:[11]. Terra que diu iacuit sub crudeli domino ... "; [Schneyer, v. 7, p. 90 (T6), Kues, S. Nikolas Hospital MS 130]; [5], f. 19, *In festo beati stephani protomartiris sermo*; [6], f. 26, *De sancto Iohanne euangelista*; [7], f. 33, *In festo sanctorum innocentium*. [expunged: *Iohanne euangelista sermo*; [8], f. 46, *In epyphania domini sermo primus*; [9], f. 53v, *Item de eadem solemnitate sermo secundus*; [10], f. 60v, *In purificatione beate marie sermo primus*; [11], f. 68, *sermo*

secundus; [12], f. 79v, *In Annunciatione beate marie virginis sermo primus*; [13], f. 87v, *Item sermo secundus de eodem*; [14], f. 95, *In die dominice resurrectionis sermo primus*; [15], f. 105, *In resurrectione domini sermo secundus*; [16], f. 111, *In ascensione domini nostri ihesu Christi sermo primus*; [17], f. 118, *Item de eodem sermo ii*; [18], f. 120v, *Item de eodem sermo tertius*; [19], f. 123v, *In festo pentecosten sermo primus*; [20], f. 132v, *Item in pentecosten sermo secundus*; [21], f. 137, *Item de eodem sermo tertius*; [22], f. 140, *In festo sancte trinitatis sermo primus*; [23], f. 145, *Item de eodem sermo secundus*, incipit, "Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo, prima jo. iiii [1 John 5:7]. Glo. Per hoc apparet quia ihesus est veritatis verus deus et verus homo ..." [Schneyer, v. 1, p. 781; Conradus Holtzner (T40), *sermones variants*]; [24], f. 149v, *In festo corporis chrsti sermo i*"; [25], f. 159v, *Item sermo secundus*; [26], f. 163v, *In festo sancti Iohannis baptiste sermo primus*; [27], f. 169v, *Item sermo secundus*; [28], f. 176, *In festo apostolorum petri et pauli sermo primus*; [29], f. 182v, *Item de eodem sermo secundus*"; [30], f. 187, *In festo beate marie magdalene sermonus primus*; [31], f. 194v, *Item sermo secundus*, incipit, "Ionam [sic, for "ponam"] desertum eius quasi delicias, Ys. xli [Is. 51:3]. Reuerendi patres et fratres in christo dilectissimi. Conuenit presens auctoritatis festiuitati beate marie Magdalene ..." [Schneyer, v. 7, p. 123, Assisi, MS 432]; [32], f. 201, *In assumptione beate marie virginis sermo primus*; [33], f. 209, *Item de eodem sermo secundus*; [34], f. 214, *In natiuitate beate marie virginis sermo primus*, incipit, "Aufer rubiginem de argento ..., prov. xxv:[4]. Reuerendi patres et fratres in christo dilectissimi. Vas purissimum fuit beata virgo maria que originali rubigine ablata per sanctificationem in utero sancta ..." [Some similarities with Schneyer, v. 1, p. 769, Conradus Holtzner, O.F.M., *Sermones de sanctis*, but likely not the same sermon]; [35], f. 219v, *In natiuitate uel sanctificatione beate marie virgines*; [36], f. 224, *In festo exaltationis sancta crucis sermo primus*; [37], f. 238, *In festo sancti Michaelis archangeli sermo*; [38], f. 244v, *Item de eodem sermo secundus*, incipit, "Angeli eorum semper vident faciem patris, Mt. xviii:[10]. Venerabiles ac preamantissimi patres et fratres in nostre breuissimi sermonis exordio ut domine ..., Ave maria etc. Angeli ... In hiis uerbis tria notatur. Primus est angelorum benignitas ..." [Schneyer, vol. 5, p. 597, Thomas Aquinas(?) (*sermones dubii*)]; [39], f. 250, [mostly cropped, with only small stub with very partial initial remaining; likely for All Saints]; [40], f. 262v, *In festo beati hugonis lynconiensis episcopi ordinis cartusiensis. Sermo primus*; [41], f. 267v, *Item de eodem sermo secundus*, incipit, "Letare zabulon in exitu tuo etc. Deut. 33:[18]. Carissimi in christo patres et fratres. ut posset seruetur ... atque pertineat ad laudem beatissimi hugonis lynconiensis episcopi ordinis cartusiensis cuius hodie festum ..., Ave maria etc. Letare zabulon Reuerendi patres et fratres in triplici statu rexit se gloriose beatus hugo ... [A sermon for the feast of St. Martin recorded in Schneyer, 1969-1990, v. 5, p. 424; and vol. 7, pp. 114 and 230, with the same biblical theme, shows some verbal similarities with this sermon for St. Hugh of Lincoln; perhaps the sermon for Martin was used as a model?]; [42], f. 278, *Item de eodem sermo secundus. Prologum re. supra in aliquo sermone*, incipit, "[Q]uam terribilis est locus iste, gen. 28:[17]. Locus iste deo consecratus terribilis est propter multa terribilia ... [Cf. Schneyer, v. 1, p. 776, nr. 378, Conradus Holtzner (C11, in dedicatione ecclesie); and v. 6, p. 500].

ILLUSTRATION

The text begins on f. 1 with a beautiful white-vinestem initial and three-quarter border; the initial is polished gold, infilled with white-vine filled with dull red, green, and dark blue interspersed with silver dots. The border includes roundels of a recumbent deer at the top, and a seated dog with collar at the bottom; alongside the initial is a smaller roundel with a monogram "CAR" and a cross on a dark red ground. The initial and border are framed on all sides with a wide polished gold border, ending at the top and bottom in points, and gold besants, with additional besants and careful pen decoration in the outer margin.

The closest parallels for the white vine-stem decoration with straight gold borders, filled with blue, green, and dark red (or maroon), accompanied by gold-rayed disks found in our manuscript are manuscripts illuminated in Naples in the second half of the fifteenth century. We have not identified the artist of our manuscript, but some comparable elements can be found in the following manuscripts: Morgan MS M.425, Naples, c. 1485, which has not been attributed to a particular artist; note the roundel of the deer in the border of f. 1 (Online Resources); and Cologny, Switzerland, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 7, attributed to Antonio di Mario (Online Resources). More generally, cf. San Marino, California, the Huntington Library, HM 50, Naples, c.1485-1499 (Online Resources), apparently by the same person who painted the border in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 83, Italy, Naples or Florence, c. 1450-1500 (see De la Mare, 1971, pp. 251-53 and Pächt and Alexander, 1970, vol. 2, n. 367, pl. 35).

Carthusian monks lived a unique version of the monastic life that combined life as hermits (living, working, and praying alone in their cells for most of the day and night) with the communal life of monks living in a community. Preaching to people living outside the monastery was not part of the vocation of this austere order. Instead, in the famous words of their earliest legislation, they spread the word of God by the books that they copied: "We wish books to be compiled and kept with the greatest care as eternal nourishment for our souls, so that we may preach the word of God with our hands, since we may not do so with our mouths." (Chapter 28, c. 1127, cited by Hogg, 1998, p. 53). Carthusians did preach sermons internally, but even this was limited to special feast days when a sermon was delivered by the prior to the monks in the chapterhouse following Prime (Dupont, 1978, p. 5, specifies Sundays and certain feasts; Hogg, 1998, pp. 55-57, discusses only sermons preached in chapter on specially ranked feasts). Sermons were also preached within the charterhouse on the occasion of visitations (cf. TM 333 and TM 1072 on this site). Overall, however, Carthusian sermons are relatively uncommon.

Hogg, 1998, Appendix III, lists approximately 62 manuscripts dating before the sixteenth century that contain sermons from Carthusian charterhouses, ten of which are described as sermons for the chapterhouse. Only a few examples of this genre have been studied carefully; Hogg and Dupont examined Mainz, SB, MS I.193 copied in 1418, which includes sermons for fewer feasts than our manuscripts (14 feasts only). Schneyer, 1969-1990, pp. 501-513, analyzed three Carthusian sermon manuscripts, all chapterhouse collections: the Mainz manuscript just mentioned; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hamilton MS 47 which includes 116 chapterhouse sermons (the elevated number of sermons due to the fact that each feast is represented by many sermons); and a shorter collection in Charleville, BM, MS 110. Compared with these three examples, two points should be made about the contents of our manuscript. First, none of the sermons in this manuscript has been identified in any of these other three collections. And secondly, our manuscript includes sermons for more feasts. Sermons for the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, Saints Peter and Paul, and the Exaltation of the Cross are represented only in our manuscript. The feasts celebrated with a sermon in the chapterhouse by the Carthusians did change over time, but the contents of our manuscript suggests the topic needs further study (see comments by Hogg, 1998, p. 55, and p. 57; and Dupont, 1978, pp. 5-6).

The tone of the sermons is homiletic, and almost all of them include a prologue or exordium addressing the "reverend fathers and beloved brothers in Christ" following the biblical theme. The preacher mentions his own unworthiness, and notably often underlines the joy that the celebration of these feasts brings. The exordium concludes with the Ave Maria, and then the biblical theme is repeated, and the sermon proper begins. The sermon for the feast of the Ascension (f. 111) uses part of the Creed for its theme. One interesting error occurs on f. 220, when the biblical theme, "Fluvius egrediebatur de loco voluptatis" is identified as "Apoc. ultimo." The text is actually from Genesis 2:10 but the last chapter of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 22:1) does include the word river ("Et ostendit mihi fluvium aquae vitae." Is this evidence that the author was using a concordance when composing his text?

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Cologne, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 7
[e-codices – Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland](#)

Lyell, MS 83

[MS. Lyell 83 - Medieval Manuscripts \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

New York, Morgan Museum and Library, MS M.425

[Epithoma delle romane historie, MS M.425 fol. 1r - Images from Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts - The Morgan Library & Museum](#)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hamilton 47 (Summary Catalogue no. 24477)

Carthusian chapterhouse sermons; Germany, late 14th or early 15th century

[MS. Hamilton 47 - Medieval Manuscripts \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

Alan Ryder, "Ferdinando I d'Aragona, re di Napoli," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 46 (1996)

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TM 1300