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Breviary (Franciscan Use)

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northeastern Italy (Milan?), c. 1350

ii (paper) + 544 (parchment) + ii (paper), on parchment, modern foliation in pencil 1-544, incomplete, the Sanctoral ending imperfectly, (collation i-viii¹⁰ ix⁴ x-xi¹⁰ xii⁸ xiii-xiv¹⁰ xv¹⁶ xvi-xvii⁸ xviii-xix¹⁰ xx⁴ xxi-xxxv¹⁰ xxxvi⁸ xxxvii⁴ [leaves missing after f. 350v with loss of text] xxxviii-xxxxiii¹⁰ xxxxiv²⁰ xxxv-liii¹⁰ liv¹⁰ [a quire or more missing after f. 491v with loss of text] lv¹⁰ lvi⁴) catchwords often in decorated boxes, ruling in unidentifiable pattern as nearly all was erased, remaining fragments suggest brown crayon (justification 60-65 x 87-90 mm.), written by several scribes in very small (2 mm.), but extremely neat *textualis rotunda* and one scribe writing in northern *textualis* on ff. 351-446, 491-520, the Psalter in long lines of 27 lines per page, and the Breviary in two columns of 22-27 lines per page, generally red rubrics and 1-line red penwork initials, 2- to 3-line penwork initials in red or blue or occasionally violet or brown flourished in the alternate color, occasional larger flourished penwork initials, f. 1, 17-line puzzle initial in blue and red that extends into an (added) musical staff in the lower margin, featuring musical notation in blue, two Easter calculators (ff. 539v-540v, ff. 542-543) and selection of hymns added in the fifteenth century, alphabetical Easter table (ff. 539v-40v) ruled in grey, edge-to-edge, mostly erased in a 19 x 12-row grid of 5 mm. square cells, Easter computus (ff. 542v-543) ruled in red edge-to-edge, in a grid 14 x 10 oriented in landscape, some quires feature poorer parchment and rubbed ink with some stains of use, overall in very good condition. Blue leather binding by J. B. Brechin, 7 Castle Street, Dundee (1857-71), with metal corners and crucifix, and gauffered and painted gilt edges, good condition. Dimensions 130 x 90 mm.

This tiny (only 5.1 x 3.5 inches), but extremely lengthy volume, with a remarkable 544 folios, includes the Offices for the entire year, texts that were essential for the daily life of the friars. It is an excellent example of the collective copying and decoration used in an Italian Franciscan convent. Its cosmopolitan production team, which underlines the travelling mission of the Franciscans, is a special feature; several of the copyists employ fine and exquisitely small, southern, *textualis rotunda* hands, next to which another's perfectly professional northern *textualis* appears almost rough.

PROVENANCE

1. The volume is surely Franciscan in origin. The text identifies itself as Franciscan, and it follows Franciscan use as described by van Dijk (van Dijk, 1963). The calendar includes a range of Franciscan saints, such as Francis, Anthony of Padua, Clare of Assisi, and Louis of Toulouse (observed from 1317). A range of hands added to the calendar from the 1350s into the 1470s at least. Additions of feasts from St. Patrick to Bernardino of Siena and his translation provide further evidence that the manuscript dates to the mid- or late-fourteenth century, before these feasts were declared (1390, 1450, and 1472, respectively). The addition of the Feast of the Stigmata (celebrated from 1337) might suggest an even earlier date, but the pen-flourishing, which seems to date to mid-century or later, and the original inclusion of the Office of the Holy Trinity, prescribed in 1343 (ff. 524-528, van Dijk, 1956), argue for a later date of c.1350 for the volume.

Bernardino's Translation was added even to lists of duplex feasts that had themselves been added to the very end of the volume (f. 534v). This evidence, plus the occasional marginal note or correction throughout, suggests that the core, mid-fourteenth-century volume was employed and received updating through the later fifteenth century. Moreover, the added Easter tables include dates 1411, 1412 (ff. 539v-540v) and 1446 (ff. 542-543), the second of which includes instructions in Italian.

Likewise, and despite the lone northern scribe also playing a role in its production, the volume is surely Italian. The *textualis rotunda* in which most of the scribes wrote is southern European (bowed letterforms are rounded but not compressed, with extremely shortened and often nearly horizontal ascenders and descenders, and few visible hairlines; box-‘a’ is never employed as it is further north, and even sometimes in southern French *rotunda*). In contrast, the small, northern *textualis* employed by the northern scribe is more compact, even more highly abbreviated, far more angular, and regularly uses a box-‘a’. Importantly, scribes can be found working on quires and even pages begun by other scribes (for example ff. 162v-163, f. 350v, f. 446v), and therefore the original project appears to have been collaborative, but essentially simultaneous in date, rather than indicating a composite volume assembled over time.

The initial flourishing style employed is also characteristic of northeastern Italy in the second half of the fourteenth century, and may be an archaizing gesture modeled on Italian flourishing of the early thirteenth century, for the later, see for example Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 518, and for the former, see Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 41 (Verona or Padua, third quarter fourteenth century), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 5. 7 or Canon. Class. Lat. 52 (Bologna, late fourteenth century), Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Class. Lat. 221 (Lombardy, late fourteenth century).

2. Ownership seal of Alexander Penrose Forbes (1817-1875), the “Scottish Pusey,” and first Scottish Episcopalian bishop of the Oxford Movement stamped on the back binding, “THE SEAL OF ALEXANDER PENROSE FORBES. D. S. L. Bishop of Brechin, OCT 28TH 1847 [the date Forbes became bishop],” infilled with the bishop’s coat of arms. A friend and mentee of John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey, Forbes worked assiduously through his career balancing historical scholarship and theological activism with work among the industrial poor of Dundee. A medieval Franciscan volume might well have held special appeal to this antiquarian bishop (Strong, 2004). Moreover, Forbes knew Italian and traveled through the religious institutions of the Italian peninsula in 1868, from Florence to Naples, even staying at Monte Cassino (University of Dundee, Correspondence of Alexander Penrose Forbes). Therefore, it is not impossible that the bishop acquired this Breviary on his journey, and once he returned home, had the manuscript rebound and stamped with his seal at a fine bindery run by J. B. Brechin in Dundee, after Brechin began an independent business, but before he moved premises in 1871 (*Dundee Courier*, front pastedown binding stamp).
3. Sold London, Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge, July 28, 1902, lot 95.

TEXT

ff. 1-87, Ferial Psalter, including all 150 psalms in numerical order, followed by canticles, some with hymns, antiphons, responsories, and versicles. Psalm 118 is divided between verses 80 and 81, a secular (and mendicant), rather than monastic division;

ff. 87-96v, Selection of psalms and hymns, including *Benedicite omnia opera domini domino*, *Magnificat*, *Credo in unum deum patrem*, *Conditor alme syderum*, *Vox clara*, *Christe redemptor*, *Aeterne rex altissime*, *Aurora lucis*, *Urbs beate*;

ff. 96v-99, *Rubrice Generales*, incipit, "*Adventus domini celebratur ubicumque ... cum cantantur antiphone maiores, scilicet, O Sapiencia*" [Van Dijk, 1963, vol. 2, pp. 114-121];

ff. 99v-105v, Franciscan Calendar, with additions into the later fifteenth century. Original Franciscan inclusions: St. Francis—*dies natalis* (4 Oct), octave (11 Oct), translation (25 May); St. Anthony of Padua, *dies natalis* (13 June); St. Clare of Assisi—*dies natalis* (12 Aug); St. Louis of Toulouse (19 Aug, celebrated after 1317). Later Franciscan additions include: Patrick (17 March, celebrated from 1390); Feast of the Stigmata (17 Sept, celebrated from 1337, but rubbed and could be original), Translation of Anthony of Padua (15 Feb, celebrated from 1350); St. Bernardino of Siena (20 May, canonized in 1450) and translation (17 May, celebrated after 1472); Translation of St. Clare of Assisi (2 Oct). (These additions might suggest a date for the calendar, and volume as a whole 1317-1337, but calendars were not infallibly up to date, and the volume's flourishing suggests a mid-century or even later date, so a c.1350 date is proposed; see Provenance above);

ff. 106-109, [Benedictions and absolutions for the night Office], *Incipiunt benedictiones in primo nocturno absolutio*, incipit, "Exaudi domine ... in sequenti dominica. Responsorio";

f. 109v, [added, fifteenth century] incipit, "Ego dixi in dimidio..." [Isaiah 38:10-22];

f. 110, [added in another fifteenth-century hand; Hymn used in the feast of St. Francis], incipit, "In celesti collegio novus collega...paupertatis predio minorum," incomplete; [f. 110v, blank];

ff. 111-350v, Temporal, *In nomine domini amen. Incipit ordo brevarii fratrum minorum secundum consuetudinem romane curie*, ...;

Litany, ff. 210v-212v, includes Anthony of Padua, Clare, and Elizabeth, but surprisingly omits Francis. Nevertheless, following the specific wording following the litany on f. 212v, "Omnipotens sempiterne deus..ministro nostro," which, according to Victor Leroquais, is Franciscan (Leroquais, 1934, I, pp. cvi-vii).

ff. 351-490v, Sanctoral, *Incipiunt festivitates sanctorum per totum annum...*; beginning with the feast of St. Saturninus (November 29) and ending imperfectly in the 3rd lesson for St. Francis (4 October);

ff. 491-514, Common of Saints;

ff. 514-520, Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary;

ff. 520v-523v, Office of the Dead, use of Rome;

ff. 523v-524, [Selections from the *Ordo ad Benedicendum Mensam*, highly abbreviated], *Benedictio mensam cenam*, incipit, "In cena domini fratribus ... dicitur in cena omni tempore" [Van Dijk, 1963, vol. 2, pp. 199-203];

ff. 524-528, [Office of the Holy Trinity], *Incipit officium beatissime trinitatis*, incipit, "... Festi laudes hodierni";

ff. 528-530v, [Tables of ferial antiphons], incipit "In anno in quo natum domini ... in feria vi. Reliquis cum suis antiphonis" [Based on the text in van Dijk, 1963, vol. 2, pp. 401-408];

ff. 531-539, A selection of hymns drawn from saints' feasts, including *Quodcumque vinclis super terram strinxeris* (Cathedral of St. Peter), *Tibi Christe* (St. Michael), ending *Fulgida Stella Maris* (Feast of the Nativity of Mary);

ff. 539v-540v, [added, for 1411-1412; alphabetical table with instructions for figuring the date of Easter, with instructions in Latin], incipit, "Prima littera hic tabule subscripta M signifiut 1411 ... ad caput recipitur";

ff. 541-542, [added, part of the Feast for a Confessor (Pope)], *Evangelium legitur in doctoribus pontificibus*, incipit, "... dominus misit";

ff. 542-543, [added, includes the date 1446; an arabic numeral computus for finding the date of Easter with instructions in Italian], incipit, "Questa tavolo sequente...domincia auna ora di notte";

ff. 543v-544, [added], Lists of duplex and semi-duplex feasts, etc., and the Translation of Anthony of Padua, an even later addition; [f. 544v blank].

Breviaries contain the text of the Divine Office, the cycle of prayers containing psalms, hymns, and readings (lessons), that clergy of all kinds prayed multiple times a day at the canonical hours (Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline). This is a Franciscan Breviary, including the readings, with psalms, responsories, versicles, and capitula recorded with incipit (cues) only; the text generally follows Van Dijk, 1963, volume 2. These prayers and their accompanying lessons derived from a wide range of sources, including the Bible and commentaries by Augustine, Gregory, Anselm, and others. Yet, despite the compendiousness of this Breviary, its decorative *ordinatio* is both basic and idiosyncratic. This humble design reflected the mendicant commitment to poverty and remained accessible only to those already deeply familiarity with these complex textual assemblages. While larger initials begin some major textual divisions, such as the Psalter and the Temporal and Sanctoral, other important texts, such as the Office of the Dead, occur without any decorative initials at all. Other times larger initials appear to highlight Matins, sung at night (for example, ff. 370, 380, 520). Given the extremely small script and the otherwise plain volume, perhaps slightly larger initials assisted friars in finding those prayers in the lamplit dark of the night Offices.

This Franciscan Breviary stands as an excellent example of the persistence of monastic book production straight through the medieval period. Copied by several fine hands, usually in an extremely small, southern European *textualis rotunda*, but in one case employing a cramped northern *textualis*, the manuscript vividly demonstrates a profoundly collaborative process of book production. While generally individuals copied quires on their own, sometimes hands change mid-quire. Likewise, while generally the quire copyist added the catchword at the end of the quire (and often decorated it), sometimes one of the other hands was trusted with this important task, ensuring that the many quires were bound in the correct order. The same is true of the flourished initials. While most track along with the hands, at other times one of the other scribes stepped in to decorate sections another had copied. Here is the communal living within a medieval Franciscan convent demonstrated in an enduring material object.

It was precisely these daily religious practices that were of special interest to the nineteenth-century owner who had this volume bound in Dundee. Unlike some members of the Oxford Movement, Alexander Penrose Forbes never converted to Catholicism but remained a devoted Episcopalian bishop to the end of his career. Nevertheless, given his commitment to assisting the industrial, urban poor in Dundee, Forbes may well have thought deeply about similar Franciscan missions of the later Middle Ages. Like so many in the Oxford Movement, Forbes studied and published concerning medieval manuscripts and pre-Reformation British religious practice. Thus, the bishop's ownership of a medieval Franciscan breviary relates to many aspects of his life. The volume also traces a uniquely Scottish engagement with the Oxford Movement and its blend of antiquarianism with social and religious activism.

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