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Augustinian Breviary

In Latin and Dutch, manuscript on parchment and paper

South Netherlands, Flanders, 18 June 1475

iii + 196 folios in parchment and paper, final quire is paper, no visible watermarks, foliated in modern pencil on lower right corners, collation uncertain due to lack of catchwords, early binding, and lost leaves, 22 long lines ruled in light brown ink, mostly erased (justification 80 x 53 mm), copied in several hands writing in hybrida and semihybrida scripts, one-line ink initials alternating in red or blue, two-line ink initials alternating in red or blue, three-line initials in blue ink, flourished in red, one five-line blue ink initial flourished in red and gold with a full border in red ink with gold motifs (f. 165), one three-line initial in blue ink, flourished in red and gold, with red ink partial border and illuminated acanthus and gold motifs (f. 104v), one four-line illuminated initial with full acanthus and gold motif spray border in red, blue, and green (f. 151), many leaves show offset from illuminated borders that have been removed, parchment includes occasional medieval offcuts but otherwise in excellent condition, front pastedown has ex-libris bookplate of T. Froissart, inscription under it No 4 | R677, flyleaves inscribed in modern era 8/, R75, and 7480/314, compass designs in drypoint on rear pastedown and MS 12 in pencil. Brown blind-stamped and gilt leather binding with remains of 2 clasps and gilded Christ child holding the cross on front and rear board, spine repaired. Dimensions 112 x 75 mm.

This small volume containing the daily prayers of the Divine Office makes it possible to tuck that annual cycle into a pocket or in a bag suspended from a monk's belt-cord, giving a physical weight to prayer. Worn thus, like a plumb-bob, these prayers anchored a monk between earth and heaven. Though most of the volume is in Latin, as was all official liturgy in the Middle Ages, the saints, decoration, and added prayer in Dutch contained in the volume highlight the multiculturalism of late medieval Belgium.

PROVENANCE

1. Written for use in a Belgian Augustinian community, probably of the Congregation of Windesheim, by J. F. de Dynter and completed on 18 June, 1475 (f. 181v, "Anno xiiij^c lxxv. xvij die Junij/ Per me/ J F de dynter"). Extant Breviaries demonstrate that devotion to saints in the present volume's calendar and litany ranges from northern France into the Netherlands (for example, Willibrord, Lebuin, Gudila, Gaugericus, Gertrude, ff. 73-74v; translation of St. Martin, f. 6; Odulph, f. 5v). Nevertheless, outliers as far afield as Westfalia also appear (Meinolf, f. 9). However, the responsories of the Office of the Dead point to the diocese of Utrecht, including the Augustinian Windesheim congregations which extended into the dioceses of Liège and Cologne but employed Utrecht's liturgical use. Nine lessons rather than twelve indicate the secular uses held by the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. Neither the calendar nor litany suggest that the volume was made for friars, however. In contrast, Augustine is listed in the litany, and his feast (in red) and translation and his mother, Monica's feast are included in the calendar (ff. 73v, 4v, 7v, 9). Thus, use by an order following the Augustinian rule seems likely. The decoration may be related to the very floral designs from Maaseyk, Belgium, as seen in University of Utrecht, MSS 1030, 1033, and 1043, all

from the Augustinian (and sympathetic to, but not formally part of, Windesheim) Agneitenklooster, Maaseyk (van der Horst, 1989, Goudriaan, 2019). In addition, the 'kermis' (feast) added on 12 October (f. 9) may indicate the feast of the saints Herlindis and Relindis, who were both founding abbesses near Maaseyk. The only solution that marries all these characteristics would be one of the Augustinian Windesheim communities in what is now Belgium, probably in the region surrounding Brussels, and perhaps as far east as Maaseyk.

2. T. Froissart, book plate on inner pastedown.
3. De Baecque, "Autographes et Manuscrits—Livres Anciens et Modernes," 27 June, 2023, Lot 79.
4. De Baecque, "Livres Anciens et Modernes- Partie I. Trésors littéraires de la Renaissance," May 29, 2024, Lot 3.

TEXT

ff. 1-11v, Calendar. Includes Gudila, Gertrude, and Gaugericus celebrated with nine lessons, pointing to a secular use; Odulph, Arnulph, and Lebruin have three lessons. Augustine's feast is in red and his translation is a duplex. Augustine's mother, Monica receives a memorial. Rumbold, Maternus, and Hubert added by a later hand;

ff. 12-69, Temporale, ferial offices from midway through second Sunday after Epiphany to Advent, begins imperfectly;

ff. 69-77, Penitential Psalms, Litany, and versicles (preces);

ff. 77-91, Office of the Dead, f. 91v blank, according to Ottosen follows both use of Utrecht and Windesheim;

ff. 92-147v, Temporale from Advent-Easter, begins imperfectly, 148r-v blank;

ff. 149-164v, Sanctorale for the winter season, begins imperfectly;

ff. 165-178v, Common of the Saints;

ff. 178v-181v, Office of the BVM from octave of Pentecost to Advent, 181-182v originally left blank, later additions include vespers and matins for the feast of the Translation of St. Augustine;

ff. 183-188, Abbreviated Ordinary of the Divine Office, f. 188v blank;

ff. 189-193v, (added) incipit, "Hier byghinnen devote letanie ter eren der moeder ons lieffs heren," similar to a prayer known from London, British Library, Egerton MS 677.

Medieval monks prayed a daily round of prayers on an annual cycle, and Breviaries contained the text for this task. The present volume does so in a compact format that could easily have

hung from a belt. At the same time, the complex mix of text, liturgical use, decoration, and language that the present Breviary displays highlights the cultural mixture characteristic of the medieval Low Countries. The saints mentioned in this Breviary indicate a region stretching from northern France into the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the text of the Office of the Dead places the volume's origin in the diocese of Utrecht and possibly among the Windesheim communities known best from the Netherlands. Indeed, a Dutch prayer was added to the end of the volume. At a glance, all seems Dutch.

Yet, the decoration remaining in this volume does not easily map onto the well studied regional styles painted and inked in the northern Netherlands. Moreover, Windesheim influenced monastic communities outside the Netherlands as well, including in what is today Belgium and Germany. However, Belgian ink decoration remains comparatively mysterious, less studied by researchers than more northern designs. Further research into manuscripts from the immediate vicinity of Maaseyk may well uncover additional clues as to the precise origins of this present Breviary.

Although all signs might seem to point to the Netherlands, and there is much Dutch about this book, this evidence obscures the book's Belgian origins. Belgian Windesheim communities existed. Dutch is spoken in parts of Belgium, including Brussels, to the present day. Books such as this lovely little Breviary remind us that eastern Belgium deserves research and recognition no less so than the Netherlands or France.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Cantus Planus Regensburg <https://www.cantusplanus.de/databases/Ottosen/search.html>

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