

Ferial Psalter

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Germany (diocese of Hildesheim), c. 1260-1300

ii (paper) + 240 + ii (paper) folios on parchment (with occasional original holes, some with sewing holes from old patches, e.g. f. 225), modern foliation in pencil, 1-240, lacking four leaves (collation i⁶ ii⁴ iii-xi¹⁰ xii-xiv⁸ xv¹⁰ xvi-xviii⁸ xix¹⁰ [-3, -9, two leaves lacking after ff. 167 and 172, with loss of text] xx-xxii⁸ xxiii¹⁰ [-2, -8, two leaves lacking after ff. 198 and 203] xxiv-xxv⁸ xxvi⁷xxvii¹²), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 75 x 51 mm.), written in brown ink in gothic textualis bookhand on 16 lines, 1-line initials in red throughout, Psalms and other texts begin by penwork initials in red or blue of 2-3 lines high, one 4-line initial in silver, six initials in burnished gold of 5-7 lines high, opening words "[B]EA.TVS.VIR.QVI.NON.A.BIIT" in large white capitals on a ground of red, blue and silver, a full-page Beatus initial in red and beige on burnished gold ground (f. 7v), signs of use throughout, but text and decoration well preserved. Bound in the seventeenth century in brown calf, both clasps missing, catches survive on front board, spine very worn and partially detached. Dimensions 107 x 78 mm.

This small devotional Psalter, a predecessor to the Book of Hours, was almost certainly copied for a lay patron, perhaps a woman in the diocese of Hildesheim. The manuscript was still in Germany in the fifteenth century when it belonged to a woman called Mechthilde, a namesake of the famous and local thirteenth-century mystic, Mechthild of Magdeburg. Its illumination in gold suggests of costly commission or gift, and its added texts demonstrate continued use in the seventeenth century.

PROVENANCE

1. The Office of the Dead is for the liturgical use shared by the dioceses of Hildesheim and Magdeburg. The calendar and litanies include St. Gotthard of Hildesheim, but not Adalbert of Magdeburg (20 June), suggesting the manuscript was made for someone residing in the diocese of Hildesheim. Evidence of the script and decoration suggest a date in the last third of the thirteenth century, c. 1260-1300, although the script is strikingly conservative and by itself might suggest an earlier date.
2. A fifteenth-century inscription of a female owner, whose first name was Mechthilde (the German version of Matilda), is found in the lower margin of f. 1: "Iste liber pertinet Mechthilde <von blostee?>."
3. A fifteenth-century inscription of a female owner on f. 7v: "Maria zara a ... <fort?>."
4. Ownership inscription in nineteenth-century (?) hand on the front pastedown: "A: O: Tilly," surrounded by several booksellers' markings.
5. Armorial bookplate of Ernest Edward Baker (1854-1931), F.S.A., on the back pastedown, with motto "Consilio et prudentia." Baker resided at Aldwick Court, Somerset, and was nephew and legatee of James Halliwell-Phillips (1820-1889), Shakespearean scholar and book collector (and son-in-law of Sir Thomas Phillips). Baker was Halliwell's executor and inherited a third of the Halliwell-Phillips library in 1889. The majority of this was sold by auction (July 1889, November 1891, July, 1895), but the manuscript described here was apparently passed by descent to his grand-daughter,

who dispersed the estate library.

TEXT

ff. i-ii verso (front flyleaves), added in the seventeenth century, alleluia verses, chants and prayers for Easter night, "In Sancta Nocte Paschale post matutina... Christus resurgens ex mortuis iam non moritur, mors illi ultra non dominabitur...";

ff. 1-6v, Calendar, including St. Erhard of Regensburg (8 Jan), St. Romanus, founder of Condat Abbey in Jura (28 Feb; found also in fifteenth-century Cologne calendars), St. Adrian of Nicomedia (4 Mar; revered in Flanders, Germany and northern France), St. Gertrude of Cambrai, founder of the Benedictine Abbey of Hamage (17 Mar), St. Ludger, the first bishop of Münster and founder of the Benedictine Abbey of Werden (26 Mar), St. Regulus, the first bishop of Senlis (31 Mar; normally 30 Mar), St. Quintian, Armenian martyr (1 Apr; found also in other German manuscripts), the feast of the Holy Crown, celebrated on 4 May in parts of Germany, Spain and Scandinavia, St. Gotthard of Hildesheim (5 May), St. Peregrine, first bishop of Auxerre, Burgundy (16 May), translation of St. Dominic in red (24 May), St. Maximin, bishop of Trier (29 May), St. Medardus of Noyon (8 Jun), joint feast of the Roman martyrs Basilides, Cyrinus, Nabor and Nazarius (12 Jun; the relics of St. Nazarius are in the Lorsch Abbey in Germany), Seven Sleepers (27 Jun), St. Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg (4 July), St. Kanzian of Austria (?) (8 Jul), St. Felicius, bishop of Trier (28 Jul), St. Justus and St. Clementis (31 Aug), St. Magnus, apostle of the Algäu, in Swabia, southern Germany (6 Sep), the two Ewalds, martyrs in Old Saxony (northwestern Germany) (3 Oct), Edward the Confessor (13 October), and St. Othmar, the first abbot of the Abbey of St. Gall (16 Nov);

Some major saints are celebrated on dates specific to Germany. The feast of St. Mark on 14 February (instead of 25 April) is very rare, as is the feast of St. Pantaleon on 18 February (instead of 27 July), St. Isidore of Seville on 7 January, St. Chrysanthianus and St. Romulus on 17 February, St. Hilary on 21 February, St. Thecla on 23 February, St. Fortunatus on 26 February, St. Vitus on 10 March, St. Leo the Great on 14 March, St. Justin Martyr on 23 March, St. Celestine on 6 April, St. Eusebius of Rome on 30 October, St. Valentine on 3 November, St. Felix of Nola on 5 November, St. Longinus, martyr, on 2 December, the translation of the relics of St. Ignatius of Antioch on 17 December, and the virgin martyr St. Theodosia of Tyre on 22 December.

On September 5 in the calendar is marked an anniversary obit for a benefactor: "anniveversarius [sic] famulum et benefactorum."

ff. 7v-208, Psalms; text is complete with the 150 psalms, except for four missing leaves at psalms 109, 115, 139 and 144;

ff. 208-225, Liturgical canticles, hymns and Athanasian Creed: *Confitebor* (Isaiah 12), *Ego dixi* (Isaiah 38:10-21), *Exultavit* (1 Kings 2:1-11), *Cantemus* (Exodus 15:1-20), *Domine audivi* (Habakkuk 3), *Audite celi* (Deut. 32:1-44), *Benedicte omnia*, *Te Deum*, *Benedictus dominus*, *Magnificat*, *Nunc dimittis*, *Quicumque Vult*;

The stub that appears after f. 222 is not the remains of a missing leaf, but the stub of a singleton; there is no text missing from the Creed, *Quicumque Vult*.

ff. 225v-228, Litanies, including St. Gotthard of Hildesheim among the confessors, and St. Gertrude the Great and St. Ursula of Cologne at the end of the virgins;

ff. 228v-240, Office of the Dead, use of Hildesheim and of Magdeburg.

ILLUSTRATION

A full-page Beatus initial, on a burnished gold ground, begins the psalms on f. 7v. On the facing page, the opening words "[B]EA.TVS.VIR.QVI.NON.A.BIIT" are copied on four lines, in large capitals in white on a ground painted alternately in blue or red, framed with silver between the lines.

Six initials in burnished gold: 4 lines high with blue penwork (f. 126), 5 lines high on a blue ground and with red penwork (f. 167v), 6 lines high, with blue and red penwork (ff. 44v, 65), and 7 lines high on beige or blue ground with white highlights (ff. 84, 85):

f. 44v, Ps. 26, "Dominus illuminacio mea...";

f. 65, Ps. 38, "Dixi custodiam...";

f. 84, Ps. 51, "Quid gloriaris...";

f. 85, Ps. 52, "Dixit insipiens...";

f. 126, Ps. 80, "Exultate deo...";

f. 167v, Ps. 109, "Dixit dominus..."

One initial in silver, 4 lines high, with blue and red penwork:

f. 148v, Ps. 101, "Domine exaudi..."

The decorated initials mark major divisions of the psalms, singling out the first psalm at Matins for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday according to secular use (1, 26, 38, 52 and 80; for some reason omitting large initials for Thursday and Saturday Matins), the first psalm at Sunday Vespers (109), and psalms 51 and 101 from the tripartite division of the psalter (psalms 1, 51, 101). The fact that the Psalter text is continuous and each verse does not start at a new line is a Flemish and German characteristic.

Psalters, the predecessor to the Book of Hours, were the most important book for private devotion for the laity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As Judith Oliver phrased it, "the medieval Psalter achieved its peak popularity as the devotional book of the laity par excellence" (Oliver 2005, p. 259). It is often stated that Books of Hours largely replaced Psalters as books for private devotion for the laity in the later Middle Ages. While this was certainly true in parts of Europe, Psalters continued to be copied, and were especially popular in German-speaking countries and in Italy well into the sixteenth-century. The psalms were the texts devout Christians prayed throughout their life. Psalters were commissioned to mark important occasions, such as marriages, and they were the texts used to teach children how to read.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Calendoscope, IRHT-CNRS, Paris:

<http://calendoscope.irht.cnrs.fr/>

Online version of K. Ottosen's *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*:

<http://www-app.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/PKGG/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Ottosen/search.html>

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