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Mass Lectionary with Readings from the Epistles (Epistolarium) In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment Southwestern France (Bordeaux), c. 1375-1400

iii (modern parchment) + 157 + iii (modern parchment), complete, full collation impossible due to the tightness of the binding, but ff. 1-104v are in thirteen quires of 8 leaves, one quire signature remains, f. 108, ruled in ink with the top horizontal rule full across and with single full-length vertical bounding lines (justification 168 x 100-97 mm.), copied below the top line in a formal gothic book hand in nineteen long lines, majuscules filled with pale yellow, notes to the rubricator occasionally remain in outer margins, red rubrics, blue paraphs, one- to two-line alternately red and blue initials with pen work in the opposite color, four three-line parted red and blue initials with pen decoration in red and blue on ff. 115 (beginning of Sanctorale), 133 (Assumption), 134v (Nativity of Mary), and 138v (Andrew), f. 1 five-line blue initial infilled with scrolling oak leaves on a green ground, with elaborate pen work in red and blue, in very good condition, a few original holes in the parchment, some with original repairs, f. 2 three missing letters due to tiny holes in parchment, f. 1 darkened and dirty, many leaves pristine, but some with lower outer corners darkened through use, occasional leaves with off-set red, ff. 105-end with minor damp staining in top outer corner or along the very top margin. Bound in red velvet over rather thin wooden boards, possibly as early as the sixteenth century(?), and perhaps reusing earlier boards, smooth spine, gilt edges, wear along the joints (split at the top joint, front cover), nap of the velvet almost completely worn away on the spine and both covers, boards somewhat bowed, front hinge damaged with remains of earlier flyleaves visible, modern parchment flyleaves, head and tail bands, and two red ribbon place markers. Dimensions 253 x 180 mm.

Newly identified, this is the missing volume of a two-volume Mass Lectionary made in Bordeaux in the later fourteenth century (Bordeaux, Bib. mun., MS 998). The attractive Gothic script – each majuscule embellished and filled with pale yellow – pen initials of great refinement and delicacy, and relatively early velvet binding, all point to a commission of some importance. Liturgical manuscripts copied for use in Bordeaux are not common, and this represents a new and significant historical source for the history of Southwestern France in the late Middle Ages.

PROVENANCE

1. Written for use in Bordeaux in Southwestern France, and almost certainly also made there, c. 1375-1400. Our manuscript is a Mass Lectionary that includes the texts for the second reading during Mass, the Epistles; its matching Evangeliary (or Evangeliarium), the Mass Lectionary with readings from the Gospels, is Bordeaux, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 998 (Online Resources, below). The same scribe and artists worked on both these manuscripts. The Evangeliary includes oaths for the king, the governor of the Guyenne, and the archbishop of Bordeaux when they enter the city of Bordeaux, proving without a doubt that these two manuscripts were copied for use in Bordeaux (the oaths are relatively early additions to this manuscript, presumably added after the city was retaken by the French in 1453).

The text in our manuscript as well amply demonstrates that it was made for use in Bordeaux; note the important initial before St. Andrew (the cathedral in Bordeaux is

dedicated to Andrew), and the numerous saints associated with Bordeaux including Gerald of Sauve-Majeure, founder of a monastery there near Bordeaux (April 5), Macarius of Comminges, relics at Bordeaux (May 1), translation of Andrew (May 9), Quiteria, venerated in Gascony and Spain (May 22), Clarus, bishop and martyr, relics at St. Eulalia, Bordeaux (June 1), Amandus, bishop of Bordeaux (June 18), Martialis, first bishop of Limoges and the apostle of Limousin and Gascony (June 30), Radegundis (August 13), translation of Amandus, bishop of Bordeaux (October 26 in one source, but here between All Saints on November 1 and Martin, November 11), Aemilianus, a monk and hermit at Les-Combes, diocese of Bordeaux (November 16), and Eulalia of Merida (December 10), for whom a church dedicated in Bordeaux.

The style of the script and the pen initials are evidence that this was copied in the later fourteenth century, perhaps c. 1375-1400. Although dating from negative evidence is difficult, we note that both the Visitation (July 2), 1389, and the Transfiguration (August 6), observed universally from 1457, are lacking, but Trinity Sunday, universally observed from 1334, is present.

For three centuries, beginning with the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1154 to King Henry II of England, Bordeaux was the capital of the English territories in Gascony. It was a prosperous city, the center of the wine trade, with a beautiful cathedral, and in the fifteenth century, a university. In 1453 it was definitively annexed by the French crown.

2. Evidence of active liturgical use through the seventeenth century when someone very carefully added rubrics in the margins, made corrections, and accented the text; obvious thumbing on selected folios attest moreover to years and years of use; for example, ff. 9, 9v, 10 (rubrics added), ff. 9-11, dirt and accents (Christmas season); f. 64v, rubric added, with accents and dirt present through f. 67; for similar signs of use see ff. 71v-78; ff. 83-89, and ff. 95v-96. There are a few added rubrics and the same varying pattern of wear in the Sanctorale, and in this manuscript's companion volume, Bordeaux, Bib. mun., MS 998.
3. Belonged to George Dunn (1864-1912) of Woolley Hall near Maidenhead (his bookplate, designed by William Morris, inside front cover); Dunn Sale, London, Sotheby's, 1913, lot 554.
4. Belonged to R. Villarreal (bookplate, inside front cover).
5. Printed description in English glued front flyleaf, f. i, with "BM-27," written at bottom;
6. Inside front cover, in pencil, "S. N[?] H./ 14.2.13"; front flyleaf, f. i, in pencil, price code, and initials, dated February 1909; inside back cover, price code in pencil, and "1573," in pencil.
7. London, Marc Antoine du Ry, Medieval Art, Catalogue one, 2001, no. 1.

TEXT

ff. 1-114, Temporale from the first Sunday in Advent through the twenty-fifth Sunday after the Octave of Pentecost; [f. 114v, blank but ruled];

ff. 115-139v, Sanctorale from the feast of Stephen (December 26) to Thomas Apostle (December 21), followed by the Dedication of a Church, including St. John the Evangelist (December 27), Holy Innocents (December 28), Thomas of Canterbury (December 29), Benedict (March 21), Annunciation (March 24), Gerald Confessor (April 5), Macarius of Comminges (May 1), translation of St. Andrew (May 9), Quiteria virgin (May 22), Clarus, bishop and martyr (June 1), Amandus bishop (June 18), Martialis, bishop (June 30), Lawrence with vigil and octave (August 10), Radegundis (August 13), translation of Amandus (October 26 in one source, but here between All saints on November 1 and Martin, November 11), Aemilianus monachus (November 16), Andrew (November 30) with vigil and octave, and Eulalia virgin (10 December).

ff. 140-157, Common of Saints from the vigil of one Apostle to many Virgins, concluding with votive Masses, of the Trinity, Angels, for the Health of the People, Holy Spirit, the Cross, and concluding with Masses for the Dead; [f. 157v, blank, but ruled].

Epistolaries are among the rarest of liturgical manuscripts. They take their name from the type of liturgical readings they contain, which are most commonly from the Epistles of Saint Paul. Biblical readings are a central part of every Mass; by the late Middle Ages, almost every Mass included two readings, an epistle (so called because it was most often from the Pauline Epistles, although readings from the Catholic Epistles, the Apocalypse, or from the Old Testament were also used), and a Gospel reading. Although these Mass readings or pericopes were taken from the Bible, they were not read in the order of the Bible, and Bibles were probably used for the readings during Mass only very early in the history of the Church. Mass Lectionaries, including Epistolaries, such as the manuscript described here, were a more practical solution, and included only the text of the pericopes arranged in the order of the liturgical year rather than in the order of the Bible. Lectionaries could include both Epistle and Gospel readings, but sometimes these were copied in separate books. Our manuscript, an Epistolarium, includes the Epistle readings; its sister manuscript, now in Bordeaux, is an Evangeliarium, with the readings from the Gospels.

Used in the performance of the Mass, the Mass Lectionary lies at the very heart of medieval religious belief and practice and, thus, provides a close-up view of worship in the medieval Church. Because Lectionaries were usually copied from other Lectionaries rather than as a series of extracts from a complete Bible, they can preserve superseded textual readings and therefore be of considerable textual interest. In our manuscript, the rather elaborate system of accents added in the early modern period, which may be related to musical neumes, are of particular interest; readings at the Mass were chanted.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Evangeliarum, Bordeaux, Bib. mun. MS 998

http://bibliotheque.bordeaux.fr/in/faces/details.xhtml?id=BordeauxBNSA_1507

http://bibliotheque.bordeaux.fr/in/faces/details.xhtml?id=BordeauxS_330636101_MS0998

Jean-Baptiste Lebigue. "Les livres de la messe Les livres des lectures de la messe", in *Initiation aux manuscrits liturgiques*, Paris-Orléans, IRHT, 2007 (Ædilis, Publications pédagogiques, 6)

<https://cel.archives-ouvertes.fr/cel-00194063/document>

Introduction to liturgical manuscripts: "Celebrating the Liturgy's Books"

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/manuscripts>

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