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**Vernacular Breviary (part), and Prayerbook (part)
In Low German, decorated manuscript on paper
Belgium/ Germany (diocese of Liège, Lower Rhine), c. 1451-1500, and c. 1500**

i (modern paper) + 316 + *i* folios on paper (parts of watermarks, too small for useful identification) modern foliation in pencil, top, outer corner recto, missing text before quires 1, 18, 21, 22, and 27 (collation *i*⁸ [-1, with loss of text] *ii-v*⁸ *vi*¹⁶ *vii*⁸ *viii*¹⁶ *ix*⁸ *x*¹⁶ *xi*⁸ *xii*¹⁶ *xiii*⁸ *xiv*¹⁶ *xv*⁸ *xvi*¹⁶ *xvii*⁸⁺² [two leaves, ff. 184-185, single leaves, probably from a quire, now missing, added at end] *xviii*¹² [-1, before f. 186] *xix-xxv*¹² *xxvi*¹² (-12, after f. 294, with loss of text) *xxvii*¹² *xxviii*¹²⁺² (-1, before f. 304; plus single leaves, ff. 315-316, added at end), no catchwords or leaf and quire signatures, section one, ff. 1-185v: ruling indiscernible (justification, 93-90 x 64-60 mm.), written in a quick hybrida script in nineteen to seventeen long lines, red rubrics, majuscules in text slashed in red, one-line alternately red and blue initials, two-line red and blue initials, imperfectly alternating, at the beginning of lines, three-line blue initials with red pen decoration, major initials, four- to three-line parted red and blue, or blue, with pale red pen decoration with touches of pale green forming a box around the initials and extending into the margin, section two, ff. 186-end, vertical rules in lead visible on a few folios (justification, 103-94 x 77-70 mm.), written in a well-formed hybrida script by at least two scribes, the second scribe copying ff. 245 to end, in nineteen to seventeen long lines, majuscules in text touched with red, red rubrics, two- to one-line red or blue initials, some two-line red initials infilled with violet pen work with touches of green and with violet pen work outlining the initial, or blue initials with red pen decoration, major divisions with four- to three-line parted red and blue initials infilled with violet pen motifs on green wash, and with violet pen decoration extending into the margins. Throughout, outer and bottom margins stained by damp with no loss of text, ff. 269-314, outer margins repaired with rice paper, f. 315, entire leaf reinforced with rice paper, ff. 269-304, leaves discolored and the script is offset on opposite leaf, ff. 281-299, outer margin trimmed, with some loss of written space, most of f. 288 now missing. Bound in a pristine modern brown morocco, housed in white cloth clamshell case, formerly bound in very dark brown blind-stamped leather over wooden boards, very worn but with a center ornament surrounded by a border of triple fillets, brass catches, sewn on three bands; these boards and spine housed with the manuscript. Dimensions 125 x 93 mm.

Of distinct interest for the increasing use of vernacular in the late-medieval Church, this manuscript comprises two sections. The first is a fifteenth-century vernacular Breviary from a House of Franciscan Nuns. It is very uncommon to find a Breviary from the fifteenth-century written in the vernacular rather than Latin. The second part of the manuscript, which is slightly later, includes a series of vernacular prayers; the opening prayers to be said while visiting Churches in the area are of particular interest.

PROVENANCE

The script, decoration, and paper used in the two sections of this manuscript argue for an independent origin of both sections.

1. The first part of the manuscript (ff. 1-185v) was copied in the fifteenth century for a House of Franciscan Nuns after 1450/1, probably in the diocese of Liège, Belgium, or in the Lower Rhine region of Germany; the Franciscan origin of the text is clear, since it includes full-offices, marked by major initials, for Francis, "our holy father" on f. 136, and Clare, OFM, and it must date after 1450/1451, since it includes Bernardinus, OFM, canonized in 1450 and observed by the Franciscans from 1451; the fact that the manuscript is in the vernacular makes it seem most likely that it was made for Franciscan Nuns; further research may make an identification of the Convent where this manuscript was written possible; for now, it is interesting that it includes both saints associated with Liège, including Hubert, the first bishop of Liège (full office and major initial) and Lambert, f. 122v, martyred at Liège, and saints associated with the diocese of Cologne, including the three Magi, f. 86, Helen, f. 108, Gereon, f. 143, and Severinus, f. 153; Mary Magdalene is also given special prominence in the text.
2. The script and decoration of the second section of the manuscript suggest a slightly later date, around the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth century; among the churches named are St. John, St. Paul, St. Lawrence, Mary (the main Church), Sebastian, and the Holy Cross; also made for a Convent of Nuns (our "Vrouwen," or Sisters are mentioned in the prayers); it is possible that both parts of the manuscript were made at the same Convent, albeit at different times.
3. f. 316v, octagonal stamp, stamped in green ink, "Bibliothecas Bartholomäei de nev<?>."
4. Modern cataloguing notes in German laid in.

TEXT

Part I, ff. 1-185v:

ff. 1-185v, Sanctoriale from a Breviary, beginning with Barbara (4 December) and concluding with Catherine (25 November); text begins imperfectly with a fragment of the Office preceding Barbara, incipit, "//eyn predicker en[d] eyn regiere ...", then continues, *Wan santa barbara der heiliger ionffere eyn antyffen*, incipit, "Suerlicken byscu geheiten Barbara die uutten lytteren ...; text concludes imperfectly, "... Ihesus wil eyn ave maria uoer my ar me sondersche des bid it u uryntlicken soer//";

Feasts with full offices (most with major initials) include Nicholas, John the Evangelist, Anthony Abbot, Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Margaret, Mary Magdalene, Lawrence, Clare, Bartholomew, Jerome, Remigius, Francis, Ursula, Hubert, Martin, Elizabeth, and Cecelia. Among the remaining feasts are Aldegundus, Bridget, Bernardinus, Erasmus, the Three Magi, Roche, Helen, Lambert, Gereon, Martha and Severinus.

Breviaries include the prayers, hymns, and other texts for the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayers said by Priests and members of the Monastic Orders. This manuscript, which is now missing text at the beginning and the end, includes only the Sanctoriale, comprising the "proper" or unique prayers recited to mark the feasts of important saints. The number of proper texts included

varies, depending on the importance of the feast, ranging from only a single prayer, to an antiphon, versicle and prayer (the most common case), to fuller offices, including hymns (not noted), sequences, and multiple prayers.

Breviaries throughout the Middle Ages were in Latin, the language of the Church's liturgy. Vernacular Breviaries are therefore very unusual. The Schoenberg Database lists eight German Breviaries, only three of which were sold in the last thirty years (Latin Breviaries with German rubrics are more common; some of these manuscripts may belong to that category). This manuscript is probably not evidence that the Office in this House of Franciscan Nuns was said in the vernacular. It is more likely that it was made so that Nuns who were not fluent in Latin could understand the liturgy more fully. As such it is best understood as part of the thriving devotional and spiritual life of many fifteenth-century Convents, which led to the translation of Latin spiritual works. For example, numerous translations of Latin texts, including Prayer Books and two Breviaries, were found in the library of the Dominican Convent of St. Catherine in Nuremberg (see Sigrid Krämer, *Handschriftenerbe des deutschen Mittelalters. Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge, Deutschlands und der Schweiz, Ergänzungsband 1*, Munich, 1989, 2:622). Another example of a Breviary in German is Baltimore, Maryland, John Hopkins University, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, MSB 9.

PART II, ff. 186-316:

ff. 186-201, Vernacular prayers: *Eyn gebet toe sante Johannes kercken*, incipit, "O alre moegentste alm echtige hemelschee ..."; f. 187v, *Gebet toe sante peters kercken hoe men duer bidden sal*, incipit, "Toe sante peters kercken die men beteickent myt der b suldii ymagyeren alle heilige confesso[r]en ...," *Gebetgen*, incipit, "O heilige gebenedide confessoeren ..."; f. 189, *Hoe men vur sante pauwels kercken sal* ..., incipit, "Toe sante pauwels kercken die beteickent <is?> mytter C soe suldii ouerdencken ..."; f. 191v, *Hoe me[n] toe sante lauwerens kercken bidden sal*, incipit, "Doe sante lauwerens kercken die me[n] vstaet bii der D suldii ymagyeren die vergaderynge van allen merteleren ..."; f. 193, *Hoe men toe onfer vrouwen maior kercken bidden sal* ..., incipit, "Toe unser vrouwen kercken maior dat ist die meyste kercken van der gloriosoer maget maria ..."; f. 198, *Hoe me[n] toe sante Sebastyaens kercken bidden sal* ..., incipit, "Toe sante Sebastyaens kercken die men beteickent by der F suldii die negen choeren der engelen ..."; f. 200, *Hoe men vur des heiligen crucee [sic] kercken bidden sal* ..., incipit, "Toe des heiligen cruces die men uerstaet by der g salmen ymagyeren die heilige vergaderynge ...";

ff. 201-211v, rubric, *Hier begynt ey[n] suuerlicke gebet gebeiten dat gulden crensen van den werde[n] heiligen sacrament* ..., incipit, "Die almechtige here got spyset alle creature[n] im hemel...";

ff. 211v-225v, rubric, *Dyt vurgeschreuen versken mach men lesen ap eyn yegelick verscken op eyn yegelicke tyen eyn pater noster ave. O onspreckelicke moe geutheit onders* ...";

ff. 225v-231v, rubric, *Dyt synt vyff ymnyge gebede toe der heiliger drienoldicht*, incipit, "West gegruet alre hoegeste ...";

ff. 231v-232v, rubric, *Hier beegynt eyn suuerlicke gebetgen van onsen lieuen heren ihesus christus*, incipit, "Svete Ihesus lieue here du wordes ...";

ff. 233- 237, beginning imperfectly with a fragment from another prayer (?), incipit, “//verstentemse van alre in bel dyngen, amen.” *Dyt gebet sprechke alstu wolt biddende uo[r] alle die heilige crystenheit ...*, incipit, “O lieue genedige Ihesus geloest gedanckt”;

ff. 237-244v, A series of shorter prayers, beginning: *Dyt syt vyf namen ons lieuen heren Ihesus Christus ...*, incipit, “O lieue here du byste myn lieuve schepper ...”;

ff. 245-280v, Prayers centering on Christ, beginning imperfectly with a fragment from another prayer (?), incipit, “//gebrucken en[d] toe te brenge[n]. Amen.”; rubric, *Dit synt schoen gebeden toe onsen lieuen Ihesus Christus*, incipit, “In dancke dy lieue here der mynen dattu my nae dy gebelt ...”; f. 247v, rubric, *Wie dit gebet leset myt ynnycheit die verdient groet aflaet want alle genade ...*, incipit, “Ick beuele my here Ihesus Christus in die cracht alle dyns lidens daer moet ...”; f. 253, rubric, *Dit is eyn manniere wie men dat liden ons lieuen heren ouer dyncke[n] of ouer sprecke[n] ... Die sal mitten herten en[d] mitten monde aldus spreken*, incipit, “Lieue gemynde here gelaeft gedanckt ...”;

ff. 281-303v, rubric, *Eyn drucklick crenken van de[r] leuen en[d] lyden ons lieuen here[n]*, West gegruet guedertiere[n] here Ihesus Christus”;

ff. 304-316, beginning imperfectly, “//creatuere[n] die laue[n] en[d] u[er]bilden dy boer my En[d] ic bidde dy lieu here ...”; rubric, *Leest vyf pater noster ave*, incipit, “O lieue here Ihesus Christus ic bidden dy doer ... dynre passion gedrucke [f. 316v, blank].

Although we cannot be certain that this section of the manuscript was copied at the same Convent as the first section, the type of prayers here belong to a similar context, i.e. a House of Nuns with a flourishing spiritual life, nourished by prayers and other texts in the vernacular. The opening series of prayers, which outline devotions to be followed while visiting a series of local churches are of special interest.

This section is now missing one leaf at the beginning, and is probably missing quires after quire 21 (f. 233 begins imperfectly), quire 22 (f. 245 begins imperfectly), and quire 27 (f. 304 begins imperfectly).

LITERATURE

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