

Le Louvre des Antiquaires  
2 Place du Palais-Royal  
75001 Paris (France)  
tel. +33 (0)1 42 60 15 58 • fax. +33 (0)1 40 15 00 25  
info@lesenluminures.com

2970 North Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, IL 60657 (USA)  
tel. +773 929 5986  
fax. +773 528 3976  
chicago@lesenluminures.com

**Prayer Book**  
**In Middle Dutch and Latin, illuminated manuscript on paper**  
**Belgium, Brabant, c. 1500-1550**

142 ff (collation: i-xii<sup>10</sup>, xiii<sup>12-3</sup>, xiv<sup>8</sup>, xv<sup>8-2</sup>), complete (missing one picture, f. 54, see below?) but bound out of order: quire iii belongs after quire xi [textually, f. 21r should follow f. 110v], and quire xii belongs after quire x [textually, f. 111r should follow f. 110v]; ff. 1r-69r, 71r-126v written in the first half of the sixteenth century in a littera hybrida, in brown ink on 23 lines, ruled with a metal point of undetermined material (justification 85 x 65 mm), ff. 69v, 70r, 128r-142v were inscribed later (in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century) in a bookhand by three different scribes, in French, Latin, and Dutch, with variable justification, rubrics in red, some capitals touched in red, alternating red and blue initials of one, two, three, or four lines in height; those of three or more lines have penwork decoration in a contrasting color, either red, blue, green or purple, major text divisions and special feasts marked by decorated initials 5-8 lines high, comprising at least two colors and decorated with sprightly geometric designs executed with a pen in purple, blue, red, yellow and/or green ink; those of 7 or 8 lines incorporate gold in the penwork designs and accompany penwork borders on 4 sides: f. 1, 8-line O; f. 23r, 5-line O; f. 31r, 7-line S; f. 56v, 5-line G; f. 60r, 5-line O; f. 61r, 5-line W; f. 63v, 5-line W; f. 66r, 5-line I (to mark incipit of prayer to St. Augustine); f. 67r, 5-line G (to mark incipit of prayer to St. Barbara); f. 71r, 5-line S touched with gold; f. 109, 4-line G touched with gold, illustrated with an image of the Measured Wound pasted to the inside front cover. Binding of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, consisting of brown leather over pasteboard. Dimensions 131 x 92 mm.

This Netherlandish Prayer Book presents several unusual features: it includes an uncommon cycle of prayers to Christ, distributed over an entire year, with many unusual and unedited texts; and it incorporates an image pasted to its inside cover that depicts the measured side wound of Christ surrounded by the hand and foot wounds. There are fewer than ten manuscripts from the Low Countries that contain such an image. An Augustinian nun or canoness in the Flemish province of Brabant probably owned and used the manuscript.

**PROVENANCE**

1. The manuscript was made for a woman, as revealed by the female pronouns (e.g., "sundersse"—a female sinner—on f. 16r). This woman was probably a member of a religious community, as the prayer book begins with the Hundred Articles of the Passion by Henry Suso, a text that was popular among religious, but for which we have no evidence that lay people had any truck. The Hundred Articles comprises a demanding, weeklong devotional exercise, for which the votary had to sit, stand, kneel, or lie prostrate on the ground while reading. A prayer on ff. 17r-17v that mentions "our holy father St. Augustine" and refers to "our convent" (onsen cloester) further suggests an origin within a religious

house and narrows the source to a member of one of the Augustinian orders. The prayer to the confessors on f. 58v, in which Augustine is named first, is consistent with this assignment, as is that fact that St. Augustine is the first confessor in the suffrages on f. 66r. In the "Saturday prayers to the virgins," St. Barbara is named first (f. 59r); Barbara is also the first virgin implored in the suffrages on f. 67r; she is likely the dedicatory saint of the owner's convent. There is no calendar that might have revealed clues for localization. However, a suffrage to St. Dymphna, patron of the church of Gheel (Geel), suggests that the monastery was in the neighborhood of this town. The dialect and decoration agree with localization in Brabant. There was a convent of Augustinians in Gheel (the Gasthuiszusters Augustinessen of Gheel) but their patron saints were Dymphna and Elizabeth, and it is unlikely that this manuscript was made for them. Possible convents where this manuscript might have originated, based on these clues, include: the Canonesses Regular in a house called Bethanië in Zoutleeuw (patron saint unknown); Canonesses Regular (Sint-Mariëndaal), Diest; and Canonesses Regular of Saints Mary & Barbara (Barberendal), Tienen.

## 2. Private Collection, Europe.

### TEXT

ff. 1r-14r [Hundred Articles of the Passion, by Henry Suso] *Hier beghinnen die hondert articulen vander werdigher passien ende lijden ons liefs heren, O, eewighe wijsheit gods ghenadighe here...* [ed. van Aelst, 2005]. The refrain of the prayer is inscribed in red on f. 1r. It is a contrafact of the Ave Maria, rewritten to fit the Passion of Christ. The text is organized around the seven days of the week, beginning on Sunday; for an edition (based on a different manuscript), see L. Indestege, *Een Diets gebedenboek uit het begin der zestiende eeuw. Herkomstig uit het voormalig klooster Sint-Hieronymusdal te Sint-Truiden*, Ghent, 1961, p. 54-68; for an interpretation, see van Aelst.

ff. 14r-17r [Prayers to the Passion and Wounds of Christ] *Hier beghinnen die cort .xv. pater noster ende sijn sunderlighen goet ghelesen, O, lieve here ihesu christi, Ic lese den iersten pater noster ende ghedincke ...; Men seet soe wie dat dese drie ghebeden alle daghe leest dat hij nummermeer verdoemt en mach werden, O, du lieve here ihesu christi, dat dat wrede spannen ...; Totter beymeliker wonden ons liefs heren ihesu christ een scoen ghebet, O, lieve here ihesu christi, saechtmoedich lam...; Van onsen lieven here een scoen ghebet...*

ff. 17r-18v [Blessings for "our house," "our city" and all Christians];

ff. 18v-19r [Prayer to the Trinity];

ff. 19r-20v [Prayers to Christ] [end imperfectly on 20v];

ff. 21r-23r [Prayers to the body parts of Christ, distributed over the days of the week; begins imperfectly on 21r, *in medias res*, with the end of the text for Tuesday] *Des goensdaechs totter borst, O, god, mijn heil, mijn suete minnaer..., Des donderdaechs totten banden* [sic: this is a scribal error and should read *herten*], *Weest ghegruet over h[eilige] herte mijns liefs heren..., Des vridaechs totten banden, Weest ghegruet goedertieren here..., Des saterdaechs, Weest ghegruet o eerbaer ihesu...*

ff. 23r-30r [Prayers for the Sacrament: prayers to be read before taking the host, while walking to the altar, while having the host in the mouth, after taking the host; the rubrics are in Middle Dutch and prayers in Latin];

ff. 31r-34v [Prayers to the Virgin in Latin with rubrics in Middle Dutch], *Hier beghinnen onser liever vrouwen benedixien*, *Suscipe genitrix dei eterni omnipotentis regis*; *Hier beghint onser liever vrouwen name*, *Magnificat anima mea dominum...*;

ff. 34v-43r [Rosaries of the Virgin], *Hier beghint enen devoten cranse van onser liever vrouwen soe wie dattem leest in sinen druc, die sal vertroest werden. Pater noster. Ave Maria. O, vrouwe hoe langhe sulstu mijns vergheten...*; *Den rosen crans van onser liever sueter vrouwen. Pater noster. Ave Maria. Ihesus Christe, die welcke ihesus in dinen alre heilichste lichaem...*;

ff. 43r-45r [Nine sorrows of the Virgin] *Dit sijn die ix wee van onser liever sueter vrouwen. Wiese leest sal vertroest werden. Oratio. O, gloriose moeder ons liefs heren...*;

ff. 45v-46v [Nine joys of the Virgin] *Dit sijn die ix bliscappen van onser liever vrouwen, soe wiese leest sal cortelijc verblijt werden, O, Maria om die blijscap...*;

ff. 46v-56v [Prayers to the Virgin] *Van onser liever vrouwen ende St. Iohannes ewangelisten een schoen ghebet, O, ombevelecte ende ewilike ghebenedijt...; Van onser liever vrouwen een ghebet, Weest ghegruet moeder des rouwen...; Een sunderlinghe scoen ghebet dat die heilighe leeraer St. Bernaert plach te spreken totter herten onser liever sueter vrouwen een scoen oratio, Ic spreke tot dijnre herten...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever vrouwen, O, graciose moeder gods ende onbevelecte maghet...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever sueter vrouwen, In dinen handen alre heilichste Maria maghet...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever vrouwen, God gruete u Maria gheweldighe keyseringhe...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever sueter vrouwen, O, gloriose coninghinne der blijscap...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever vrouwen, O, gloriose maghet Maria ghi droecht die suete vrucht...; Een scoen ghebet van onser liever vrouwen, O, werdighe moeder gods...; Van onser liever vrouwen, O, bloyende rose, o scoen moeder gods...; Men vint ghes[chreven] dat onse lieve vrouwe drie werf dese naevolghende woerde riep doen ons lief here sijn cruce droecht ende wie haer deser rouwen vermaent met dri Ave Maria al knyelende, dien wiltse verlosse van allen wee. Ave, O, wie, enighe gheboren soen...; Soe wat mensche die bedruet es met enigher zaken ende .xxx. daghe voer een beelde van onser vrouwen dit ghebet sprict wort vertroest van allen druc, O, gloriose ontfermertighe moeder gods...; Van onser liever sueter vrouwen, O, coninghinne der hemelen...; Doen die xij apostolen voer onser vrouwen quamen gruete u met desen ghebede ende hadde een mensche groet weder spoet ende laes ix werf op sijn knyen voer dat beelde onser liever vrouwen, hi sal vertroest werden tes waer ghevonden in vele saken, Salve mater salutaris...; Soe wie dit ghebet xxx daghe lanc leest voer dat beelde van onser liever vrouwen, die vercrijcht dat hi begheert eest hem salich. Ghebet. O, edele coninghinne der hemelen...*;

ff. 56v-60r [Prayers for the days of the week] *Des maendaechs van allen enghelen een ghebet, God gruete u, heilighe sinte michael...; Dijsdach vanden apostelen een oratio, God gruete u edel ende claere lichte der werelt...; Goensdaechs tot allen patriarken, God gruete u, minlike gloriose heilighe vaders Adam, Abraham, ...; Des donresdaechs totten merteleren een oratio, God gruete u heilighe merteleren ons liefs heren...; Des vridaechs vanden heilighen confessoren, God gruete u heilighe confessoren ons liefs heren heilighe vader sinte Augustijn...; Des saterdaechs van den meechden, God gruete u alder eedelse*

meechden ons liefs heren, heilighe sinte barbara, sinte katherina...; *Des sondaechs van allen heilighen oratio*, God gruet u inden ewighe leven alle heilighen...;

ff. 60r-69r [Suffrages to St. Michael, one's personal angel, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, St. Peter, St. Paul, the Twelve Apostles, St. Steven, St. Lawrence, St. George, St. Adrian, St. Cornelius, St. Erasmus, the Ten Thousand Martyrs, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Anthony, St. Barbara, St. Katherine, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Dymphna, St. Helen, St. Anne, and All Saints ]

ff. 69v-70r [Prayers added in French in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century];

f. 70v [Blank, ruled]

ff. 71r-72v [Prayers to the Passion of Christ] *Hier beghijnt dat leven ende die werdighe passie ons liefs heren Ihesu Christi hoe hem een mensche daer in oefenen sal ende dese drie oratio salmen voerlesen*, O, goedertieren alder ontfermertichste here...; *Een werdeghe danckaerheit*, O, suete ende aldus mijnlijcste here...; *Als ghi gherne saem medeliden hadt tot ons beren passien soe dinct*, O, almoeghende godheit...;

ff. 72v-100v [Devotions for Christological feast days and events throughout the liturgical year, beginning with advent, with most of the events occurring during Passion week, and including devotions to the INRI-titulus and the Seven Last Words of Christ where appropriate in the story; all interspersed with prayers to the Virgin Mary; ends imperfectly, but continues on f. 111r] *Kerst dach aendacht*, O, lieve here, als die tijt quam van .ix. maenden...;

ff. 101r-105v [Prayers to Christ, begin *in medias res*];

ff. 105v-106v [Prayer to Christ, purportedly read daily by St. Francis] *Dit ghebet maecte sinte Franciscus ende hi laest dagbelijcs met groter devocien. Pater*, O, here ihesu Christi, alre eeren werdich bist...;

ff. 106v-108r [Three Pater Nosters that saved a fallen nun, and other prayers to Christ];

ff. 108r [Verses of St. Gregory, unusual 3-verse version (most versions have at least 5 verses); see Meertens, II, p. 85-93];

f. 108v [Prayers to Christ];

f. 109r [Incantation invoking the cross];

ff. 109r-110v [Prayers to the body parts of Christ, to be read on the days of the week, beginning with Sunday; ends imperfectly, but continues on f. 21r] *Dit ghebet maecte sinte bernaert ende is zeer goet ghelesen. Des sondaechs. Oratio*, Ghegruet sijstu .m. werf mijn salicheit...; *Des maendaechs totten voeten...*; *Des dijesdaechs totter side wonden...* ;

f. 111r-111v [continuation from f. 100v];

ff. 111v-126v [Prayer in the form of a gloss of the Pater Noster];

ff. 127r-142v [Prayers added in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century];

So many texts in this manuscript are unusual. For example, it has Nine Sorrows and Joys of the Virgin, rather than the usual seven. The body part prayers are apparently otherwise unedited and, in any event, uncommon. Among the different versions known of the Fifteen Pater Nosters, this one presents a singular text. The Prayer Book also contains an unusual cycle of prayers to Christ beginning with his birth on Christmas and continuing throughout his adulthood and passion. The cycle is divided into segments and distributed over an entire year, so that it requires a yearlong commitment to complete.

One of the texts helps to localize the small manuscript: a suffrage to St. Dympha, a seventh-century Irish princess whose father pursued her sexually. To escape her father, she fled to the Low Countries, but her father's henchmen followed the trail of Irish gold coins she left as she paid for food and lodging during her exile. They finally caught up with her in the town of Geel and murdered her. Her father was thought to have been possessed by the devil, and Dympha therefore became the patron saint of those who, in the medieval sense, were "possessed." The martyred Dympha became not only the patron saint of Geel, but the patron of the mentally ill, and consequently the earliest psychiatric hospital in the Low Countries was built in Geel around 1300. The manuscript's inclusion of a prayer of this locally-venerated saint points to the area around Geel in Brabant as an origin for this book. The style of the decoration, specifically the penwork, is compatible with this localization.

## ILLUSTRATION

A page marker has been sewn with silk thread to f. 14, but was partially trimmed off, probably when the manuscript was rebound. A row of small holes at the top of f. 54 suggests that something was formerly sewn to the top of that folio, possibly a curtain, or more likely, an image of the Virgin to accompany the third prayer for 30 days, which, according to the rubric, was to be said in front of an image of the Virgin.

The manuscript's most extraordinary feature is a single-leaf painting glued to its front cover, which bears an exceedingly curious design, an image that depicts the measured side wound of Christ surrounded by the hand and foot wounds. The painting has been trimmed; the outside of the outermost frame measures 83/84 x 103 mm. The text around the frame indicates the subject. It reads "Dit is die lengde en(de) wijde d(er) sijdt wo(n)de(n) Christi [...]" (This is the length and width of the side wounds of Christ). The large lozenge-shape at the center of the design therefore represents the measured wound in Christ's side. Near the end of the fifteenth century, votaries increasingly wanted to collect "authentic" experience, including experience that could be measured, tallied, and considered objective, since the real experience they sought—participating in Christ's passion—was one-and-a-half millennia out of reach. One way they did this was by collecting "metric relics" such as this. Metric relics included the measurement of Jesus, the lengths of his body, his cross, and his wounds. Such details allowed votaries to envision the Passion with increased particularity, increased attention to detail, and a sense of objective reality that was measurable.

Furthermore, women in convents who received no formal training as artists could produce leaves such as the one in the present manuscript. Many of these nuns and canonesses could write and even spent part of their days copying manuscripts, but they often avoided representing the human figure. While some attempted simple drawings of saints, others specialized in making images based on shapes they could produce with a ruler and compass, which required more enthusiasm than finely honed skill.

There are fewer than ten manuscripts from the Low Countries that contain such an image. An Augustinian nun or canoness probably owned and used the manuscript, and she would have contemplated the Five Wounds of Christ as part of a devotion to Christ's Passion and suffering

## LITERATURE

van Aelst, José. *Passie voor het lijden: De "Hundert Betrachtungen und Begebrungen" van Henricus Suso en de oudste drie bewerkingen uit de Nederlanden*, Leuven, Peeters, 2005.

Areford, David S. "The Passion Measured: A Late-Medieval Diagram of the Body of Christ," in A.A. MacDonald, H.N.B. Ridderbos and R.M. Schlusemann, eds., *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 1998, 211-238.

Meertens, Maria. *De godsvrucht in de Nederlanden: naar handschriften van gebedenboeken der XV<sup>e</sup> eeuw*, 4 vols., Leuven, Boekhandel N.V. Standaard, 1930-34.

Barbier de Montault, X. "Les mesures, poids, fac-simile et empreintes de dévotion," *Œuvres complètes de M<sup>sr</sup> X. Barbier de Montault, Prélat de la Maison de sa Sainteté*, 16 vols., Paris, 1889-1902.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Project: Meditation practice: The passion meditations of Henry Suso  
<http://www.onderzoekinformatie.nl/en/oi/nod/onderzoek/OND1300395/>

TM 414