

Prayerbook devoted to Saint Barbara

In Dutch, manuscript on paper

Netherlands, Brabant or Limburg (Barbara's Weerd, Lomm?), c. 1475–1500

[i] + 176 + [i] leaves, paper (ff. 4 and 84: vellum), parts of watermarks discernable (crown with arch consisting in one line, a.o. ff. 134, 135, 141 and 142) but not identifiable, modern foliation in pencil on rectos in the lower right corner on each leaf (4–39, 39bis, 40–84, 84bis, 85–174); manuscript too tightly bound to collate, loss of text before f. 110r, after f. 127v and before 149r; (remnants of) signatures still present in the lower outer corners of ff. 113r ("n iij"), 149r ("q xv"), 151r ["q [...]"], 157r ("r [...]") and 165r ("s [...]"); written in a littera hybrida by four hands: Hand A ff. 1r–102r, Hand B ff. 103r–127v and 149r–167r, Hand C ff. 126v–127v, Hand D ff. 128r–133v, Hand E ff. 142v–143r; blind ruling for horizontal lines only, 1 column, justification: 110–100 x 75–70 mm, 16–23 lines: Hand A 19 lines, Hand B 21–19 lines, Hand C 21 lines, Hand D 18–15 lines, Hand E 20 lines; one ten-line decorated initial S in blue, crimson and burnished gold with border decoration consisting of pen-flourishes and small gilt petals (f. 4r), one eight-line initial H in blue on a field of pen-flourishes and gilt dots and with similar border decoration (f. 84r), one seven-line decorated initial D in blue, crimson and burnished gold (f. 173r), one six-line green lombard A in green with red pen-flourishes (f. 173r), twenty-one six-line lombards in blue with pen-flourishes and gilt dots (ff. 1r, 13r, 15v, 20v, 22r, 22v, 24r, 34r, 40r, 49v, 52v, 53v, 54r, 59v, 62r, 66r, 69r, 71v, 75r, 78r, 87r); two similar five-line lombards (ff. 1v, 2r), many two- and one-line red lombards, two two- and one-line blue lombards (ff. 61v, 62v); in fine condition. Neo-Gothic binding from 1915 in late 15th-century style by the Belgian bookbinder Charles de Samblanx (1855–1943), brown calf over wooden boards, blind, two panel stamps, representing the Annunciation (upper cover) and the Nativity (lower cover), legends reading "Oracie salmen der / glorioser / werdigher maghet / Sinte Barbara" (upper cover) and "Gebonden door Karel Desamblanx / in het jaar O.H. J.-C. / 1915 voor Franciscus Houtart / Kamerheer van Z.H. Pius" (lower cover), bevelled edges, spine on three raised bands, in a black cloth box. Dimensions 135 x 95 mm.

Made for use in a convent devoted to St. Barbara (Barbara's Weerd in Lomm?), this manuscript illustrates the veneration of the patron saint by its inhabitants in private worship, using unusual prayers in the vernacular, such as the Psalter of Barbara, the Hours of Barbara, the Seven Penitential Psalms of Barbara, Prayers on the Five Senses of Barbara et al. It is written by several hands to compose one collective Prayerbook, and rebound in a remarkable neo-gothic binding with panel-stamped representations copied after late medieval examples.

PROVENANCE

1. The focus on St. Barbara and the fact that she is called "onse suete patronersse" (f. 115r) indicate that the manuscript was made for use in a convent dedicated to St. Barbara. The decoration of the manuscript points to the southern part of the Northern Netherlands, more precisely to Brabant or Limburg (see Korteweg, 1992, "Oost-Nederland" and "Noord-Brabant," p. 130ff, 154ff, but without an exact match). The convent of St. Barbara in Lomm, near Venlo in the north of Limburg, could be the convent for which the manuscript was intended, and it may also have been produced there. This convent, known as "Insula Sanctae Barbarae" or "Barbara's Weerd," was

founded around 1450 and belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis. In 1586, during the Eighty Year War, the convent was destroyed.

2. In 1915 the manuscript was in the possession of François ("Francis") Jean Marie baron Houtart (Brussels 1882 – Brussels 1965), who then had it bound by the bookbinder Charles de Samblanx (1855–1943). Houtart, chamberlain of Pope Pius X, left his books to his son-in-law count Philippe Lippens (Ghent 1910 – Elsenne 1989), but it is unknown if Lippens also became the owner of the present manuscript.

TEXT

f. 1r–v, Prayer to Christ, to be read before reading the Psalter of St. Barbara, rubric, "Dese oracie salmen lesen tot onsen I[ieven] here. Eermen beghint den souter der glorioser werdigher maghet Sinte Barbara," incipit, "Beghin ende fonteyn als Aensiede mij mismaectheyt met alle recht soe schame ick mij voer u," explicit, "Die heyleghe Joffrouwe Sinte Barbara moet u voer mij betalen die ick set in een sonderlinghe borchtocht voer u ende u lieve moeder om dat mij ermoede in alle ontbreckt ende te cleyn is."

ff. 1v–2r, Prayer to the Virgin, rubric, "Tot onser liever vrouwen ghebet," incipit, "O paradijs des levens en warachteghe versueninghe gods. Ic hebbe mij misdraghen mer u u ontfermhertich medelijden verhoecht alle heyleghe," explicit, "die edele maghet Sinte Barbara van uwen gheslechte u eeneghe alder gheminste dochter die sal mij voer u ghenadicheyt verdinghen want haer uutghestorte bloet om uus kints gheloeve sal u goedertieren tot mij maken. Amen."

f. 2r–v, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Een ghebet totter glorioser weerdeghe maghet ende bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara," incipit, "O exempel ende forme van allen meeghden lichtende inder heylegher kerken Als die blinkende sonne O Barbara maecht der meeghden perle van allen doechden," explicit, "Ende ick sende u verskens van L [= 50] psalmkens ghetytelt van III verskens. Als dierste L om dat ghij om die belijdinghe der heylegher drivuldicheyt sijt ghestorven versuent mij biddick met haer ende sij moet mij versuenen aen haren ghebenedijden lieven sone. Amen."

ff. 4r–82v (rubric on f. 2v, f. 3r–v blank), Psalter of St. Barbara, rubric, "Hier beghint den souter der glorioser werdeghe edelre hoegheborenre coninghinnen ende voerbareghe mertelersse ende der suyverlijcker bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara. Die eerste noctuer des sondaechs. I. Psalmus beatis vir," incipit, "Salich is die man o salighe Joffrouwe Sinte Barbara die doer dijn bede verdient bijstant der gracien gods dat hij en tredet inden quaden raet," explicit, "hier boven inden hemelschen throen daer die Inghelkens singhen schoen dat moet mij gunnen die vader die soen ende die heylege geest dri persoenen. Ende een onverscheyden ewyghe God. Amen" (f. 83r–v blank).

ff. 84r–102r, Seven Penitential Psalms of St. Barbara, rubric, "Hier beghint den seven psalm der glorioser edelre Coninghinne ende der suyverlijcker bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara," incipit, "Here in dijnre verbolghentheit moet dijn thoren teghen mij ghesaecht worden doer die gloriose Joffrouwe Sinte Barbara hoeghe verdienste die ick voer mij seynde," explicit, "Op dat mijn

cleyn wercken van hem selven niet sijnde met alle desen verenicht u ewelijck moet ontfanckelijc sijn. Amen" (f. 102v blank).

ff. 103r–108v, Short Hours of St. Barbara, rubric, "Hier volghen seer corte ghetijden vander h[eyligher] maech Sinte Barbara," incipit, "Here doet op mijn lippen ende mijnen mont om u voert te conighendijnen lof," explicit, "Dese VII ghetijden offer ic u o werdeghe coninghe suver maghet Barbara biddende uwer hoecheyt oetmoedelijck dat u mij in liefden ontfaet. Ende in wederloene mij verwerff van uwen bruygom graciën in deser tijt ende hier nae die eewighe blijscap. Amen."

f. 108v, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Een scoen ghebet vander heiliger maghet Sinte Barbara," text, "O alder minlycste ziele heylighe mertelese ende edele bruyt Christi gloriose maget Barbara. Ic valle u te voete met begherten mijns herten. Ende ick bidde u oetmoedelicke dat ghij mij wilt nemen in uwer hueden alle die daghen."

f. 109r, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Een scoenen lof van Sinte Barbara," incipit, "Weest gegruet Barbara coninghinne der meechden naest Maria ghewarichlijck alder weerdichste alle lofs," explicit, "O suet mertelersse weest voer ons sorchvuldich bij Christum uwen bruydegom. Amen'.

f. 109r–v, Prayer to St. Barbara, rhymed, rubric, "Oracio," text, "Barbara roede rose ghewassen onder den doren. Acaleye blau ghestadich sonder dolen. Riekende fiolette comt mij te staden. Blinkende lelye vercrijghende ghenade. Altijt van sonden ende mijnen quade. Roert Ihesus uwen brudegom tot ontfermicheyte. Als ic ben in mijnder lester bannicheyte. Amen."

ff. 110r–111r, Prayer, lacking text at the beginning, text starting with "mijns levens. Ende wilt mij beschermen voer alle dat mij deren mach," explicit, "Ende en wilt dan van mij niet scheidē voer dat ghij mijn ziele hebt ghebract totter vrouwen des ewighen levens. Amen."

ff. 111r–112r, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Noch totter minlicker bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara. Oracio," incipit, "God gevet u vrij edele coninghe alder schoenste ende wijste maghet gloriose bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara sterre des lichts alle der werelt," explicit, "Op dat wij onse zielen suyveren moechen van sonden eer wij sterven ende dat ghij met uwer vriendelijcker teghenwordicheyte ons bij staet inder uren ons verscheydens. Amen."

ff. 112r–113r, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Vanden selven," incipit, "Weest gehruet drij dobbeel morghensterre naest Maria bloeme alre mechden. O Barbara warachtighe middelersse tusschen god ende die menschen," explicit, "verleent ons goedertierlick dat wij die haer ghedinckenisse houdende sijn bij haers ghebedts hulpe van onsen sonden moeghen weder opstaen bij Christum Ihesum onsen here. Amen."

ff. 113r–114r, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Noch vijf gruetkens vander heyligher bruyt Christi Sinte Barbara," incipit, "O salighe ende blinckende maget Sinte Barbarahoe ghelorios bestu worden voerden tron der h[eyligher] drijvuldicheyte om welcker ghetuyghenisse du ghestorven

best met dijn vaders swerde," explicit, "O heylighe maghet Barbara die moete die aermoede onser verdienen metter godlijcker graciën. Amen."

f. 114r–v, Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Noch vanden selven totter maghet Barbara," incipit, "God g[hedencke] u gloriose maghet Sinte Barbara een radye ende licht des hemelschen paradys. Ende rose der minne ende leye der reynicheyt, explicit, "God g[hedencke] u dierbaer lichtende steen die inder croenen Ihesu ghesedt sijt . Weest ons een beschermesse in die ure onser doot. Ende in onsen leven een verbidderesse. O suete o goedertieren o salighe maghet Sinte Barbara. Amen."

ff. 115r–118v, Prayers to the Five Senses of St. Barbara, rubric, "Dit sijn vijf ghebeden totten vijf sinnen onser sueter patronerssen Sinte Barbara. Ten ersten tot haren sien. Oracio," incipit, "Ic valle u te voete. En ic biede u ende presentere nae mijn vermoeghen inighe loven u suete bruyt mijns heren sancta Brabara inden ghebruycken uwer heyligher V sinnen," explicit, "O ghetrouwe middelersse dijnre dieners. Ick bevele mij dij inden sin des ghevoelens op dat ick doer dij mijn V sinnen alsoe behueden moet dat ick inder eewicheyt niet van dij verscheyden en worden. Maer doer dijn ghebet vercrijghen mach dat beschouwen der hoegher h[eyligher] drijvuldicheyt. Amen."

ff. 119r–126v (rubric starting on f. 118v), Prayer to St. Barbara, rubric, "Hier beghinnen een devoet cransken vander liever bruyt der werdigher machet ende mertellersse sinte Barbara," incipit, "Weest gegruet gulden syborie des h[eylighen] geestes] Barbara maghet vol graciën die here es met dij," explicit, "Ende en wilt u scoen aenschin nommermeer van ons keeren noch uwer armer dienaers ende dienerssen niet vergheten mer ghedinct onser nu ende inder ewicheyt. Amen."

ff. 126v–127v, Hours of St. Catherine, lacking text at the end, rubric, "Hier beghinen der heyligher maghet sinte Katerinen ghetiden," incipit, "Here du sult op doen mijn lippen ende mijnen mont sal voert condeghen dijn lof welck suet is," explicit, "Hier om sijt ghij ghecront inden scoet Iherusalem in des bruydegoms aensichte dien sij" (text breaks off).

ff. 128r–131v, Confession of St. Augustine, to be read during Communion, rubric, "Hier beghinent Ons heijlighen vaders Sinte Augustienus belijnghe oft bichte on [sic] te leesen als men dat heijlighe sacrament ontfanghen wilt," incipit, "Ick onwerdighe sonderesse belijde u mijn heer mijn godt vader des hemels ende der erden ende u goedertieren Ihesu te samen metten heijlighen gheest," explicit, "met desen wapent teghen alle des outs vijans cracht strijden mach ende alle sijn const alle sijn listicheijt mach ontgaen overmidts die cracht uus heijlighen cruijcen ende misterre onser verloessinghen. Amen."

ff. 132r–133v (rubric starting on f. 131v), Prayer for attending Mass, rubric, "Dit is die alder beste offerande om onse schout mede te quijten ende onse ermoede te beteren ende onse siele te verciëren als wij ten heijlighen sacrament gaen," incipit, "Och lieve heere mijnder sonden sijn soe vele dat icse nijet ghebeteren en can daerom begeer ick dijn alderliefsten sone heden te ontfanghen," explicit, "dit begheer ick oeck alder liefste vader voer alle die ghene daer ick in

besonder voer ghehouden ben te bidden ende voer alle menschen levende ende doode. Amen.
Pater' (ff. 134r–142r blank).

ff. 142v–143r, Prayer to God the Father and Christ, rubric and initial lacking, incipit, "[O] vader lof ende danckbaerheyt soe doen ic u alles goeds dat ghij ons ghedaen hebt ende boven al soe moettij hebben lof ende danck des gebenedijden goets dat ghij ons deedt doen ghij ons sendet uwen eenighen gheboren sone," explicit, "ende u herte brack ende u ziele uutten lichaem schiet soe bidde ic u doer u liefde verloest dese ziele nu van alle tormenten ende nemptse uutten vaghevier. Amen'.

ff. 143r, Prayer to Christ, rubric and initial lacking, incipit, [I]hesus Christus die maectes hemel ende erde lof ende danck soe moettij hebben alle des goets wercks dat ghij om ons ye ghedeedt uut minnen," explicit, "ende dat ghij quaemt in eertrijcke ende dat ghij gheboren waert besneden ghevanghen ende ghecruijst ende dat u aderen schoerden" (ff. 143v–148v blank).

f. 149r–v, Prayer to Christ, lacking text at the beginning, no rubric, incipit, "veghevier. Amen. Pater noster. Ave Maria. O Christe ghij maecttet hemel ende erde lof ende danck soe moet ghij hebben," explicit, "ende dat ghij quamt in ertrijck dat ghij gheboren waert ende besneden dat u aderen schoerden ende dat u herte brack ende dat u oeghen braken ende dat u ziele uut uwen lichaem sciet als als in goeden vridaghe aenden cruyce soe verloest dese ziele uutten veghevier. Amen. Pater noster. Ave Maria."

ff. 149v–167r, Prayer to God the Father, rubric, "Hier b[e]gint den salm Deus deus meus respice ende es een alten schoenen ghebet metten oracien vander werdigher passien ons heren Ihesu Christe ende is zeer goet ghelesen voer die zielen. Versus," incipit, "God mijn god aensiet in mij waer om hebstu mij ghelaten verre van mijnder salicheyt sijn die woerden mij[n]re versumenisse," explicit, "daer salstu mij soe droncken maken ende alsoe verwent metter sueticheyt ende metter clærheyt dijns liefelijcken aenschijns dat ic hongher ende dorst al vergheeten sal . Daer hulpe ons die ghene toe die sonder beghin ende ijnde ewelijck blijven sal Ihusus [sic] Christus. Amen" (ff. 167v–172v blank).

f. 173r–v, one leaf from a different manuscript with part of some prayers, rubrics, "Vander ontfenckenissen onser liever vrouwen Marien," and "Dit es die legende van deser hoechtij."

ff. 174r–175v, two leaves from a different manuscript with an Antiphon to the Seven Penitential Psalms and with dialogue texts from Mass, rubrics in Dutch, other text in Latin.

Saint Barbara of Nicodemia was an early Christian martyr. There is no reference to her in the authentic early Christian writings, and her historicity is doubtful. According to hagiographies, Barbara was the daughter of a rich pagan named Dioscorus. When she told her father that she had secretly become a Christian, he tried to kill her, but she was miraculously rescued. Having fled, Barbara was captured by the prefect of the province, Martinianus, who had her cruelly tortured, but she held true to her faith, and every morning her wounds were healed. Finally she was condemned to death by beheading. Her father himself executed her. St. Barbara became very popular in the later Middle Ages all over Europe.

The manuscript merits further study for its unusual prayers: its longest section is the Psalter of St. Barbara, which is accompanied by the Short Hours of St. Barbara, the Seven Penitential Psalms of St. Barbara, prayers to the Five Senses of St. Barbara, as well as single prayers to Barbara, including one in verse (f. 109). There are also miscellaneous prayers to the Virgin and Christ, as well as a short Hours of St. Catherine and the Confession of St. Augustine. The Psalter of St. Barbara comprises the body of the manuscript and occupies nearly half the text. The manuscript is not listed in the online database of the Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta.

LITERATURE

On the veneration of St. Barbara by religious women in the Low Countries:

Dijk, Mathilde van. *Een rij van spiegels. De heilige Barbara van Nicomedia als voorbeeld voor vrouwelijke religieuzen*, Hilversum, 2000.

Korteweg, Anne S., ed. *Kriezels, aubergines en takkensbossen. Randversiering in Noornederlandse handschriften uit de vijftiende eeuw*, (exh. cat.), The Hague, Rijksmuseum Meermannoo-Weestreenianum/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1992.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Database of Middle Dutch manuscripts, the Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta:

<http://www.library.leiden.edu/special-collections/manuscripts/subcollections-whs-bnm.html>

On the convent Insula Sanctae Barbarae or Barbara's Weerd:

http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara's_Weerd

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