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The Barbeau Gradual (Cistercian Use)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment with musical notation

Northern France, c. 1240-1260 (c. 1255?)

Fifteen large foliate initials

iii (paper, with all but a small fragment of f. i now missing) + 165 folios on parchment, original foliation in red roman numerals upper outer margin on the verso of the opening (e.g., f. 3v is numbered f. iii, the first few folio numbers trimmed), i-xix, xxii-clxvii, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto [cited], missing two leaves from the third quire, and one or more quires at the end (collation i-ii^s iii^s [-4 and -5, two leaves, originally foliated ff. xx-xi, following f. 19, with loss of text] iv-xvi^s xvii^s [1 and 8, ff. 127 and 134, later replacement] xviii-xx^s xxi^s [-8, one leaf cancelled]), quires signed in roman numerals on the last leaf (some trimmed), ruled in lead, full-length vertical bounding lines, (justification 300 x 195 mm.), written in a good early gothic book hand with eleven lines of text with accompanying music on 4-line red staves, music in square notation, rubrics in red, 1-line initials in red and blue with contrasting penwork throughout, parted red and blue initials, equivalent to 1 line of text and music, with red and blue penwork at the beginning of feasts and some important texts, scrolling line-fillers in green or red on every page, on f. 152 a line-filler in the shape of a dragon-like creature in red, text in colored roundels in margin throughout, FIFTEEN LARGE PAINTED FOLIATE INITIALS, equivalent to 3 to 5 lines of text and music, in blue or pink with white highlights (described below), some initials rubbed or smudged (ff. 58v, 72v, 148), initial f. 1 partially obscured by a repair, stains and water damage (some within the text, which always remains easily legible), outer margins ff. 1-2 and 52 cut away, otherwise margins slightly trimmed, lower corner final leaf cut away, thumbing, showing numerous signs of use throughout but overall in sound condition. Seventeenth-century binding of dark leather over pasteboard, blindtooled with simple fillets, spine with six raised bands, with bookmarks laced into the top and bottom of the spine, slight cracking along joints, upper board, somewhat scuffed, with some leather missing, lower edge, front cover, once with two clasps, now missing, but overall good condition. Dimensions 390 x 270 mm.

Large and beautifully illustrated, this is an early example of a Choir Book that served the monks of the Cistercian Abbey of Barbeau for a remarkably long period of time. Barbeau was an important foundation and the burial place for King Louis VII. Layers of marginal notes and changes to the music allowed this to meet the needs of the Abbey for four centuries as the Cistercian liturgy evolved. Their large format has made volumes such as this one particularly vulnerable to being broken, and complete Graduals for use in the choir, especially of a date this early, are now very rare on the market.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of the script and decoration and the liturgical contents suggests a date in the middle of the thirteenth century in Northern France. There is an early ownership note on f. 58v from the Cistercian Abbey of Barbeau, "liber sancte marie de sancto portu" (Bondeville-Souchier, 1991, p. 11, listing this ex libris in two other manuscripts), and there is no reason to doubt that our manuscript was made for use at this Abbey, perhaps in nearby Sens (see discussion of the illustration, below).

The Cistercian origin for this Gradual, which includes both St. Bernard (August 20) and William of Bourges (January 10), is quite certain. Because the Cistercian liturgy was carefully regulated by the General Chapter, the feasts in the Sanctoral are valuable clues as to its date. This was certainly copied after 1239 (St. Denis, October 9, is included on f. 163), and perhaps c. 1255, since the text lacks a mass for St. Dominic (August 5), but a note about his feast was added above the line on f. 152 in an early hand; his feast was celebrated by the Cistercians from 1255.

Many of the Cistercian liturgical changes enacted in the 1240s and 1250s were not yet available to the compilers of this volume. Feasts noted in the margins, directing the users to follow the liturgy for another feast (i.e., without texts proper to their feast), include Robert of Molesme (celebrated with 2 masses on April 29 since 1259), in the margin in an original roundel on f. 138, Edmund of Pontigny (November 16) on f. 154v, celebrated from 1247 with 2 masses, and St. Lambert (September 17) on f. 160v, celebrated with 12 lessons and one mass from 1246, both recorded in marginal notes added in a thirteenth-century hand. Lacking are the Crown of Thorns, celebrated in France from 1241, St. Francis, observed with 12 lessons and a mass from 1259 (added by a seventeenth-century hand in the margin), and Peter martyr, 12 lessons and a mass from 1255 (also supplied in the margin in the seventeenth century).

The Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Barbeau was founded, a daughter of Cîteaux, by monks from the Abbey of Preuilley in 1147 in Seine-Port (Île-de-France). In 1156, with the sponsorship of King Louis VII of France (r. 1137-1180), the Abbey was moved to Fontaine-le-Port (Seine-et-Marne) about 10 kilometers northeast of Fontainebleau and 8 kilometers southeast of Melun, in the archdiocese of Sens. Louis VII would subsequently be buried at Barbeau. This Gradual was likely completed just in time to be used in their new church.

It was a prosperous foundation until the Hundred Years War when it was burnt by the English in 1420. It was subsequently rebuilt and continued to grow, only to be dissolved during the French Revolution in 1791. It was known as *Sacer portus*, *Sequanae portus* (that is, Seine-Port, on the banks of the Seine) and *Barbellus* (Barbeau). About ten other manuscripts are known from the abbey (*Bibliothèques Cisterciennes dans la France médiévale*, 1991, pp. 10-11). Nine manuscripts from Barbeau are listed by Bondeelle-Souchier, 1991, with an additional three listed as possible, but unverified: the *Biblissima* database lists nine manuscripts. Our manuscript is not listed in either of these sources.

- Continued in use into the seventeenth century; inside back cover, "Ex choro Prioris," in large red letters, with "1666," in black ink, suggesting the volume was restored and rebound in the seventeenth century for use by the prior. In a method analogous to cancel slips in printed editions, modifications and additions to the text and music were written on paper glued onto the parchment (e.g. ff. 30v, 36, 37, 44v, 77, 105v); three short texts were also copied on small sheets of paper and then bound into the manuscript between ff. 57v-58, and 100v-100, and 119v-120. Throughout there are discolorations within the text, many of which may have been passages that were covered by changes on paper slips in the seventeenth century, which came unglued and are no longer in the manuscript; on some folios, these are quite extensive, see for example ff.

101v-102, 103v-104, 111v. Detailed study of these passages will provide an interesting snapshot of the changes in the text and music of the Cistercian mass over time. (For another example of a manuscript with corrections on pasted slips of paper, see a Martyrology for use at the Cistercian Spermallie Abbey near Bruges copied in 1598, formerly TM 1003 on this site).

On f. 165, the paper glued onto the page appears to be a patch, rather than a textual modification. The hymn, "Sub tuum praesidium ...", copied on paper with musical notation, was glued inside the back cover in the seventeenth century, and a detailed index was added to the volume at the beginning (see Text, below).

A cross inscribed in a circle (crudely) was added in the lower margin f. 67v (facing the Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday on f. 68).

3. Sold at Sotheby's December 8, 2009, lot 50.
4. Private European collection.

TEXT

ff. ii-iii [f. i, almost completely missing], Detailed liturgical index added in ink in a seventeenth-century hand; arranged in the order of the calendar, with folio references to texts within this volume, now beginning imperfectly with April 23; [f. iii verso, blank].

ff. 1-111v, *Dominica prima in adventu domini*, Temporal from the first Sunday in Advent through the 25th Sunday following Pentecost, with two folios, originally foliated ff. xx-xxi, missing following f. 19v;

ff. 111v-165, Sanctoral from Andrew (November 30) to Katherine (November 25); ff. 127 and 134, is a bifolium added in the seventeenth century when the volume was rebound, perhaps replacing damaged leaves, continuing the text from the thirteenth-century leaves in each case with no loss of text.

f. 165v, *Pro defunctis*; the beginning of the mass for the dead.

The Gradual is now lacking the end of this text, as well as the Common of Saints which one would expect, suggesting that one or more quires are missing at the end. A marginal note in a sixteenth-century(?) hand on f. 151 notes that the feast of St. Anne is found at the end of the book; this added feast is no longer in the volume. (The feast of St. Anne on July 26 was observed optionally with 12 lessons and a mass in 1375, and in the whole order with 12 lessons in 1454).

ILLUSTRATION

The decoration in our Gradual is simply lovely; executed in quiet shades of blue and rose, the initials are infilled with highly decorative and intricate scroll work. Birds, animals, and mythical beasts perch on the tops of initials, or hide within the scrollwork. The expert quality of these initials suggests they are the work of a professional artist, perhaps an itinerant artist employed by the Abbey, but given the date of the volume, more likely a secular artist working in a city,

perhaps in nearby Sens. Troyes, Provins, and Sens, were important centers of manuscript production in the later decades of the twelfth century and early decades of the thirteenth century. The accomplished artist of the Gradual was a worthy successor to earlier artists working in the Manerius style and appears to draw on these earlier manuscripts for inspiration and specific decorative motifs. For examples of manuscripts localizable to Sens, see Sens, Bib. mun., MS 15, a Missal, Use of Sens, from the beginning of thirteenth century with a flattened animal in the *Te igitur* initial, similar to the one on f. 1 of our Gradual (making up the right side of the initial), Evangelary, Sens, Bib. Mun., MS f. 13 (cf. the winged dragon on f. 84v with the initial in our Gradual on f. 133); and a Sens Ritual, also from the middle of the thirteenth century, Sens, Bib. Mun., MS 20.

These examples from Sens are, however, not close parallels with our Gradual in style, and it is possible our artist had links with Northeastern France. General stylistic parallels exist between the Gradual's initials and manuscripts copied in the area in northern France and Southern Belgium in Arras, Cambrai, and Tournai (Beer, 1969 and 1972, Clark, 1975, Stones, 2014, part two, volume two, pp. 61-75). For example, the line filler in our Gradual on f. 156, echoes similar animals extending from illuminated initials in the mid-thirteenth century Bible from the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Eloi (Arras, Bib. mun. MS 1 (561), f. 137), and the scrollwork initials with inhabited spirals in these two manuscripts are also, but very generally, similar (cf. f. 102 in the Arras Bible and our Gradual, f. 94), but the palate is much more subdued in our Gradual, and its scrollwork is often more linear. The odd flattened quadruped on f. 1 of our Gradual (on the right-hand side of the initials) is also found in the Arras Bible (f. 16). The initials in a multi-volume Antiphony made for a Cistercian nunnery near Cambrai, c. 1260-1280, now surviving as leaves at the Getty Museum, Los Angeles, in the National Museum of Stockholm, and elsewhere (Nordenfalk, 1978; Teviotdale, 2000; Online resources), also feature complex scrollwork with a central focal point somewhat similar to those in our Gradual (although including very different motifs otherwise). Despite these general similarities, in many respects, including the penwork initials, the decoration in our Gradual differs from that found in the manuscripts in the Arras-Tournai-Cambrai group.

Fifteen large painted scrollwork initials:

f. 1, First Sunday in Advent, equivalent to 4 lines of text plus rubric and music, initial 'A' ("Ad te levavi ..."), 130 x 100 mm., extending the full-length of the column, and ending with scrollwork enclosing a green bird;

f. 11v, Christmas, equivalent to 5 lines of text and music, very large initial 'P' ("Puer natus est ..."), 130 x 115 mm., and extending the full-length of the column; within the scrollwork are two panther-like animals and two large birds, a blue bird depicted at the top of the initial;

f. 13, Epiphany, equivalent to 4 lines of text and music, initial 'E' ("Ecce ad venit ..."), 105 x 80 mm.;

f. 58v, Palm Sunday, equivalent to 4 lines of text and music, initial 'D' ("Domine ne longe ..."), 105 x 115 mm.;

f. 72v, Easter, equivalent to 5 lines of text and music, initial 'R' ("Resurrexi et adhuc ..."), 125 x 105 mm., with two birds perched on foliage;

f. 86, Ascension, equivalent to 5 lines of text and music, initial 'V' ("Viri galiliei quid ..."), 130 x 100 mm.;

f. 89, Pentecost, equivalent to 5 lines of text and music, initial 'S' ("Spiritus domini ..."), 130 x 100 mm.;

f. 94, Trinity Sunday, equivalent to 5 lines of text and music, initial 'B' ("Benedicta sit sancta ..."), 130 x 105 mm., a bird within the initial;

f. 111v, St. Andrew, equivalent to 3 lines of text and music, initial 'D' (opening 'Dominus secus ...'), 80 x 100 mm.;

f. 133, St. Benedict, equivalent to 3 lines of text and music, initial 'O' ("Os iusti, meditabitur ..."), 75 x 80 mm.;

f. 146, John the Baptist, equivalent to 3 lines of text and music, initial 'D' ("De ventre matris ..."), 79 x 80 mm.;

f. 148, Peter and Paul, equivalent to 3 lines of text and music, initial 'N' ("Nunc scio vere ..."), 85 x 65 mm., with two birds;

f. 156, Assumption, equivalent to 3 lines of text and music, initial 'G' ("Gaudeamus omnes ..."), 80 x 75 mm.;

f. 159, Nativity of Mary, equivalent to 4 lines of text and music, initial 'G' ("Gaudeamus omnes ..."), 105 x 80 mm., three large birds at the corners of the frame;

f. 162v, All Saints, equivalent to three lines of text and music, initial 'G' ("Gaudeamus omnes ..."), 80 x 70 mm.

Graduals include the sung portions of the Mass; these include texts that are proper to the Feast (the Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, which is replaced by the Tract during penitential seasons, Offertory and Communion). Our Gradual is organized according to the liturgical year, with the texts presented in two cycles, the Temporal, Sundays and the feasts celebrating the life of Christ beginning with Advent, including the movable feast of Easter and others, and the Sanctoral, feasts of saints and other celebrations on fixed dates. As was customary for the Cistercians, the saints following Christmas (Stephen on December 26-Silvester on December 31) are found in the Sanctoral (liturgical books for other orders, including the Franciscans and Roman use, place these saints in the Temporal). As noted above, the Common of Saints, which includes Masses for general categories of saints, is now lacking in our volume. An interesting, and perhaps unique feature of this Gradual, are the marginal roundels, enclosed in a red and green circle, listing the mass collect, and the Gospel and Epistle reading for each feast (by the biblical book and opening words only, without an indication of the chapter within the Bible).

Large Choir Books, designed so that they could be read by all the members of the choir, or *schola cantorum*, at once, are one of the most well-known types of manuscripts from the late Middle Ages, and indeed, well-beyond that, since they continued to be copied as late as the eighteenth century. This is an early example of this format, somewhat smaller and more compact than many later examples.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Calendrier Cistercien

<http://www.musmed.fr/CMN/calclistw.htm>

Biblissima, "Bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Barbeau" (listing nine manuscripts)

<https://portail.biblissima.fr/en/ark:/43093/coldata6bce141ba3322d37a91ba96dd8915592535f91ad>

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