Psalter - Latin - XIII cent.

M. 101

Psalter, preceded by a Kalendar, and followed by the Cantica and Litanies.

Manuscript on vellum, written and illuminated in N.E. France, probably at Beauvais, in the XIIIth century, c. 1250.

Decoration: The decoration consists of (1) 24 rondels in the Kalendar, containing occupations of the month and signs of the Zodiac. (2) A series of full-page pictures, contained upon 10 leaves. Each page has 4 pictures, within elliptical medallions on gold grounds; at the angles are circles, with blue or pink grounds; in each is a seated figure under a trefoil arch, representing a prophet or Apostle, with blank scroll or book. In the centre of the page is a quatrefoil, and at top, bottom and sides a half quatrefoil; the grounds of these are gold, filled with leaf ornament or dragons, and (3), 8 historiated initials upon a gold ground, one for the first Psalm in each Nocturne. There are a large quantity of decorative initials, some of which extend laterally into the margin to form a partial border. There appear to be 2 scribes and 2 artists at work.

273 plus 2 leaves (8 1/8 x 5 5/8 inches) 15 lines. 89.

Binding: Olive mor. by C. Lewis with arms of Henry Gee Barnard outside both covers and inside front cover; lettered "Missale Romanum". In mar. mor. case lettered: "Psalterium Davidis - Ms. on vellum executed in Beauvais, c. 1250."

History: A note on the flyleaf states that in 1483 it was at Riez (Basses-Alpes); 1840 Henry Gee Barnard sale; bought Dec. 1895 by W. Morris (signature on fly-leaf); R. Bennett. sold.

For full description see Morgan Cat. Ms. 1906, no. 20.
20. PSALTER. Vellum, $8\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$, ff. 278+2; 16 lines to a page; cent. xiii (circ. 1250). Bound in olive morocco by C. Lewis. It has the arms of Henry Gee Barnard outside both covers and also inside the first cover. The date of acquisition by Mr. William Morris appears to have been December, 1895.

Collation: 1 flyleaf; 11², 21⁰, 3¹²-10¹², 11⁸ (8 canc.), 12⁸, 13? (three leaves), 14¹²-25¹²; 1 flyleaf. The leaves are wrongly numbered in an oldish hand. I use this numeration.

Ten leaves with full-page pictures on one side of the page.

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<td>Note of the seventeenth century on flyleaf (see later).</td>
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There is a distinct preponderance of Northern French (and Flemish) saints in these lists; and especially of saints peculiar to Beauvais. Specially distinctive of this diocese are the Martyrs, Lucian, Julian, Maxian, Donoald (or Dinauld), and Romana, and the Confessor Geremarus, or Germer. We also find Paron de Meaux, Walaric of St. Valery in Ponthieu, Judoc of Ponthieu, Firmin and Fuscian of Amiens, Osmanna, Leonorius (= Lunoire), and Petroc of Brittany, Gertrude, Vedastus, Amandus, Eleutherius, Benedicta, Gauburgis (= Walburgis) of north-east France and Flanders. Eugenius may be the Bishop of Toledo martyred at Deul, near Paris, and Ebrulius the Abbot of St. Fuscian at Beauvais. On the whole, the neighbourhood of Beauvais seems to be indicated.

The insertion of S. Maximin of Riez on 27th November, coupled with the note on the flyleaf presently to be transcribed, shows that the book was at Riez (Basses Alpes) in the fifteenth century.

The note in question runs as follows:

Anno Incarnationis Domini M° ccclxxxvi lxxxiii° et die sexta mense Novembre In cuitate Regii obtit Nobilia Dalfinia uxor egregis viri domini Guillelmi delessart Regii consiliarii fiscue Regii procuratoris ac Racionalis et (?) Archiarii Camere compositors et Regiorm archiuorum pro(uiden)ris (?) Et per eius ultimam et deliberatam voluntatem sepulta in ecclesia conuentus fratum minorum dicte cuitatis. Cui quidem conventui Reliquii flosrens vigintiquinquen quinem condicionibus in sua ordinacione descriptos soluentes per soluciones quineque florenorum per annum. Quorum prima solutio erit anno reuelato post eius obitum. Anima eius in pace requiescat.

As to the general artistic value of the book the following note by Mr. William Morris may be quoted:

"The calendar is exceedingly handsome from its wealth of gold; the roundels are very good. These ten leaves of designs, clearly done by a different hand from the other figure-work, are of the best French work, at once elegant and serious. The historiated letters are clear and bright in colour, which tends towards the English in character, the figures large in scale for their spaces, and quite firmly drawn; there is a particular charm about these letters, which take up a good space on the page. The ordinary illuminated letters are by his hands at least; the best of which is very happy; another is a little shaky in his outlines, but his colour very beautiful; these letters have suffered from the tarnishing of the white lead, which is not used in the historiated ones. The writing throughout the book is big, and bold, and as good as can be."

Taking the decorative work in detail we have:

In the Calendar, the usual large initial K L to each month; in the lower margin for each month two "roundels" (that on L, enclosed in a square frame), bounded by rings alternately gold and blue, and with gold grounds. The roundel on L represents the occupation of the month, that on R. the zodiacal signs.

1. Jan. Man drinking at table; servant brings in covered bowl.
2. Aquarius, seated, pours water out of vessel.
Oven (?) on R.
4. Pisces. Their mouths connected by an S-shaped red band.
8. Taurus. Two trees.
9. May. Rides to r., hawk on hand.
14. Leo. Faces l.
17. Sept. One on l. hands a basket of grapes to
one in vat on r., a flagon in r.
18. Libra. Scales held by woman, in red.
22. Sagittarius. Centaur shooting arrow backwards to r.

Next comes a series of full-page paintings. Each page has four subjects in elliptical medallions on gold grounds. At the angles are circles, with grounds alternately pink and blue; in each is a seated figure under trefoil arch, representing a prophet or apostle. Each has a short blank scroll or book. They are not differentiated further.

In the centre of each page is a quatrefoil, and in the centre of the top, bottom, and sides, a half-quatrefoil. The grounds of these are gold, and they are filled with leaf-ornament or dragons. The ground on which the medallions and quatrefoils are set is quarterly blue and pink, with white patterns. The extreme outer edge of the white is a band of gold. Within this is a band of colour. Half of each side is pink, and the other half blue; with white patterns on each.

The subjects are as follows:
26. The Visitation. Elizabeth on l.
27. The Nativity. The Virgin in bed, head to l. Over her head the manger with the Child; ox and ass seen over it. Joseph sits near her bed.
28. Shepherd seated on mound; another on r. Angel with blank scroll above.
II. 29. The Circumcision. The Child on an altar held by a man on l. Another on r.
30. Virgin and Child seated on r. Kneeling king offers a bowl of gold pieces. Two other kings stand holding white caskets.
31. The three kings riding to r.
32. Herod seated on l. with sword. The three kings on r.
III. 33. The Presentation. Virgin on l. Small altar in c. Symeon on r. holds up the boy Jesus on a cloth.
34. The Flight into Egypt. Christ stands on his mother's lap. Joseph with bundle on stick over his shoulder leads the ass to r.
35. Jesus in white seated on l. Three Jewish doctors in peaked hats seated on r.
36. Massacre of the Innocents. Two soldiers on l. and r. killing children. A mother in c.
37. Jesus seated on l. by table. A group of five men seated on r.
38. The Baptism. Jesus stands on l. in a heap of green water. One on l. (not an angel, as is usual) holds the blue tunic. John on r. pours water on His head from a red vessel.
39. Jesus with book; a woman behind Him. In front Jairus' daughter (?) lies on couch with joined hands. At her head is Jairus (?) with book pointing to her.
40. The Marriage at Cana (?). A table spread. Beyond it, on l., a man and woman facing r. Jesus facing l.
V. 41. Jesus stands on l. with tall cross patée (white, with red shaft), on r. The devil (slate-coloured) pointing to two white stones.
42. Jesus seated, behind Him a tower. The devil stands on r.
43. Jesus seated on rock. The devil, with small red wings, over a building on r.
44. Jesus rides to r. on ass. Tree in c., gate on r., with figures above and in it; the latter spreading garments, the former throwing down branches.
VI. 45. The Last Supper. Christ in c., John reclining on His knees. A group of Apostles on each side. On the near side of the table a small kneeling figure (apparently not Judas) touches a fish on a dish on the table.
46. The Washing of Feet. Christ kneels on l. Peter, foremost of a group of Apostles on r., raises his hand: Christ is washing one of his feet.
47. On l. a group of Jews in pointed hats. On r. Judas receives a vessel from them.
VII. 49. Christ between two men. Pilate on r., seated.
50. Christ seated blindfold. Two men strike Him.
51. Christ, full face, bound to a slender shaft. Two men scourge Him.
52. Christ bearing green cross to r. A woman follows. A man leads.
54. The Deposition. The Virgin on l., John on r. A man in red supports Christ's body. One detaches His feet. Sun and moon above.
55. The Entombment. The tomb of purplish marble with three gold cusped medallions. A group of figures at each end (all men) lay the body in the tomb. One stands in c. Near the head is a white vessel with a spout.
56. Christ with small cross steps out of the tomb. Two angels stand on l. and r.
IX. 57. Angel in white seated on blue tomb. The women on r. At the bottom the heads of the soldiers are seen.
58. Christ with cross-staff takes the hand of Adam, who with four others steps out of Hellmouth.
59. The Supper at Emmaus. Christ in c. blessing. The two disciples on l. and r. look at Him.
60. Mary Magdalene kneels on l. by tree. Christ stands on r.
X. 61. Thomas kneeling on l. touches the side of Christ, who raises His arm.
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62. Two groups of Apostles, that on l. headed by the Virgin. The feet of Christ ascending are seen in a cloud above.

63. Two groups of Apostles, seated. The dove descends vertically in c.

64. The Virgin seated on l. crowned. Christ seated on r. with orb.

We now come to the text of the Psalter, which is decorated with large and small initials. These are not the work of the artist who executed the full-page compositions. They are less fine in touch, but are very effective. Each Psalm has a decorative initial usually carried up and down into the margin to form a partial border. The first Psalm in each Nocturne has a historiated initial of the usual kind, on gold ground, as follows.

65. Ps. i. Beatus vir. Above, three arches. In c. David facing l. seated, plays harp. Two vessels (cup and flagon) on l. one above the other.

Below on l. David in blue, with sling, a stone in his skirts. Tree in c. On r. Goliath in broad steel hat, blue surcoat, mail, red shield slung on back, drawing his sword. The stone is in his forehead.

66. Ps. xxvi. Dominus illuminatio. David seated full face with joined hands, crowned. One on l. in blue chasuble over red anoints him with gold vessel. One on r. in light red over blue touches his crown.

67. Ps. xxxviii. Dixi custodiam. David, crowned, kneels on l. Tree on r. Above it Christ (beardless) speaks out of a cloud.

68. Ps. lli. Dixit insipiens. Three arches. The fool in blue cloak over dark red tunic, with short hair, flourishes a club and puts a white cake to his mouth.

69. Ps. lxviii. Saluum me fac. Above, Christ, half-length with globe, surrounded by clouds. Below, David, crowned, nude, standing (half-length) among trees.

[The scribe of quire 11 seems to be a new one.]

70. Ps. lxxx. Exultate. Three arches. Those on r. and l. partially filled in with patterned blue. David seated facing r. plays with two hammers on two bells hung on r.

71. Ps. xcvi. Cantate. Three clerks in blue, vermillion, and darker red copes over albs, facing r. The foremost holds an open book. A small draped altar (?) on r.

72. Ps. cxx. Dixit dominus. On l. the Son seated with globe. On r. the Father seated, blessing. Both are beardless. The dove descends between them. The line-fillings are in gold and colours; they rarely if ever contain any figured designs.
For printed text or notices of this MS. see:—

Hasekoff: Psalter-illustration, p. 54, 58 (ed. 1938)

C.F. Bühler: Book of Common Prayer Exhibition, 1949-50, p. 1/Note A

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R. Branner, Manuscript Painting in Paris During the Reign of St. Louis, Berkeley, 1977, 126, 129 (fig. 374), 223, 237; figs. 240, 374 (Johannes Grusch atelier; Ste.-Chapelle group).


no. 216, [fol. 24].
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Wilma Fitzgerald, "Oceli Nominum: Names and Shelf Marks of Famous/Familiar Manuscripts (I)," Mediaeval Studies, XLIV, 1983,

Beauvais Psalter, p. 223a

J.H. Oliver, Gothic Manuscript Illumination in the Diocese of Liége (c. 1250–c. 1330) (Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts from The Low Countries, 2–3), Louvain, 1988, 175, 177.