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**Breviary for the Night Office for the Winter Season (Nocturnal, *pars hiemalis*, secular use)
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
Southern Netherlands (Belgium, Herent?), c. 1460-1490**

iii (parchment) + 174 + iii (parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil top outer recto, 1-172 with 30 bis and 120 bis, complete, bound too tightly for accurate collation, ruled in lead, horizontal ruling usually imperceptible, but with top and bottom rules full across and single full-length bounding lines (all visible), prickings often survive outer and bottom margins (justification 90 x 58-56 mm.), written by two main scribes, who copied ff. 1-149v and ff. 150-169v respectively, with a third scribe adding ff. 170-171v, on 24 long lines in good hybrida scripts, liturgical directions underlined in red, decorative cadels touched with red and yellow top line of text, 1- to 7-line initials alternately red and blue, eight 7- to 5-line initials in red and blue with red and purple pen flourishing (f. 1, Advent; f. 22, Christmas; f. 42v, Epiphany; f. 117v, Andrew; f. 122v, Conception of the Virgin; f. 134v, Purification; f. 143v, Matthias, f. 146v, Annunciation), minor worming to endleaves and pastedowns, top outer corners ff. 15-15 with minor damage/stains, f. 139, some stains, otherwise very good condition. EARLY BINDING (sixteenth century?) of brown leather binding over wooden boards, blind-tooled with two sets of three (top and bottom) and four fillets framing inner panels of three squares with a bear, a lion, and a hound and stag (upper board) and pelican, monkey, and a griffin (lower board), and narrower outer panels of scrolling vines with floral ornaments at each corner, two brass clasps, fastening back to front, now lacking one clasp, rebacked with spine laid down, extant clasp on new leather, in very good condition. Dimensions 126 x 88 mm.

The movement known as the Modern Devotion and its monastic wing, the Congregation of Windesheim, launched a new era of manuscript production in the fifteenth century. Copying manuscripts was an integral part of their vision of monastic life. The script and decoration of this small Breviary are typical of their manuscripts. Still preserved in a very handsome, near-contemporary blind-stamped binding, it belonged to St. Mary of Bethlehem at Herent, an important monastery of the Windesheim Congregation, known for its concern for reform and devotion to making manuscripts.

PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script, penwork initials, and early ownership suggests this was copied at the monastery of St. Mary of Bethlehem at Herent, Belgium, Brabant, near Louvain, c. 1460-1490.
2. Our manuscript was certainly at Bethlehem very early in its history, when an ownership inscription records its use by brother Johannes de Septem Montibus, front flyleaf, f. i (perhaps copied over an earlier inscription, now erased?): "Liber iste pertinet domui beate marie in bethleem prope lovanium deputatus <usum?> fratris Iohannis de Septem Montibus <suppriorum?> ibidem" (This book belongs to the house of Our lady of Bethlehem near Louvain entrusted to the use of Brother John of Seven Mountains, subprior[?] of said monastery). "Suppriorum" is a conjectural reading since the text is damaged at that point.

At some time after 1486, Johannes de Septem Montibus gave a Delft incunable to the monastery; see the inscription, title page, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. 1Q 5.48 (Online Resources; Derolez et al., 2009, p. 44, no. 322). Johannes also gave his monastery a collection of sermons, now Cambridge, University Library, Inc.2.E.4.1 (4269; Oates 3456), Johannes Herolt, *Sermones*, Deventer, about 1480-81: "Hunc habemus libru[m] in bethleem prope louaniu[m] ex p[ar]te ... d[omi]ni Iohannis de septe[m] mo[n]tib[us]" (Derolez et al., 2009, p. 43, no. 308).

One source records that a certain "Jacques van Zevenbergen" (ie. Jacques of Seven Mountains) a religious of Bethlehem was punished by the General Chapter in 1501 for disobedience and illegal absence (Persoons, 1970, *Monasticon belge*, vol. 4, p. 1018; and Bod-Inc Online, Online Resources).

St. Mary of Bethlehem in Herent near Louvain, Brabant, was founded as an Augustinian monastery in 1407; in 1412 it joined the congregation of Canons Regular of St. Augustine of Windesheim, the monastic wing of the Modern Devotion. It was abolished in 1784. Numerous manuscripts and incunables from their library survive; the census in *Corpus Catalogorum Belgii*, vol. 7 (Derolez et al., 2009, pp. 37-47) identified 378 manuscripts and incunables from their library now in institutional collections in Brussels, Vienna, Oxford, and Paris and elsewhere (see also Persoons, 1976, pp. 21-22, listing 130 manuscripts; Hamblenne, 2005, *passim*, and note 4, observing that the priory owned more than 1200 printed books and 337 sold at the time of its suppression in 1784, and note 5, discussing their manuscripts).

3. The manuscript was still at Bethlehem in the eighteenth century when "Bethleem" was written in top margin of f. 1 (added to all of the monastery's books; see Derolez, et al., 2009, p. 38).
4. Front flyleaf, f. i, erased inscription (read under ultraviolet), "Ancien Breviaire 14<10?>."
5. Sold by Artcurial, Paris, May 13, 2014, lot 44.

TEXT

ff. 1-116, *Incipit nocturnale de tempore*, ... [Temporal from the first Sunday in Advent to Holy Saturday (the day before Easter)]; [f. 116v, blank];

ff. 117-149, Sanctoral from the feast of St. Andrew to the Annunciation (March 25); [f. 149v, blank];

ff. 150-169v, Common of Saints;

ff. 170-171v, Matins Office of the Conception of the Virgin Mary (with the lessons for the third nocturn only); [f. 172rv, blank but ruled (frame only)].

The Divine Office (today known as the Liturgy of the Hours) was the daily prayer of the Church, recited (or chanted) by priests and other religious, including monks and nuns,

beginning with Matins, said during the night, and continuing through the day, with Lauds at dawn, followed by Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and concluding with Compline. These are the prayers modeled on the scriptural teaching to pray without ceasing (for example, I Thessalonians 5:17-18 "Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you").

Breviaries contain the complete text of the Divine Office. This volume, however, only includes the prayers and readings for Matins, and therefore could be called a Nocturnal or a Matutinal. Matins, the night Office, recited in the dark hours following midnight, is the longest of the Divine Hours, including Psalms with antiphons, responsories, and other chants, along with a varying number of readings, or lections, from the Bible and patristic authors. This volume contains the texts for the night Office during the winter season. The consistent use of three, rather than four, lections within each nocturn (three nocturns for Sundays and feast days and one for ferial offices) tells us that this volume was for secular use (the type of liturgy followed by the Augustinian canons regular of Windesheim). Its small size tells us it was made for personal use, aiding a canon in following along with the night Office.

The movement known as the *Devotio moderna* (the Modern Devotion) began in Deventer in the Low Countries, in the valley of the IJssel River, through the efforts of Geert Grote (1340-1384) and his followers. This religious reform movement stressed the importance of inner spiritual development and a return to the way of life of the early church. Alongside communities of lay men and women, known as the Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life, a monastic branch of the movement was created shortly after Grote's death, with the foundation of Windesheim (near Zwolle) in 1386. More foundations followed, and the Chapter of Windesheim was founded in 1395. Members of the houses in the Windesheim Chapter lived in common, following the Rule of St. Augustine. By the end of the fifteenth century, there were as many as 100 monasteries in the chapter.

Copying books was an important part of the reformed monastic life adopted by followers of the *Devotio moderna*, and our manuscript is an excellent example of their well-crafted, functional volumes. The clear and legible script of our manuscript, known to scholars as *hybrida script* (a cursive script, without loops, used as a formal bookhand), and simple decoration make it a good example of liturgical manuscripts made for and by the Windesheim Canons. Bethlehem was the first male Windesheim house to adopt strict enclosure in 1414, and it was known as an important advocate for reform; it was also known for its academic culture and close ties to the University of Louvain, emphasizing private devotional reading and the copying of books as important elements of religious vocation (see Champion, 2017, pp. 135-136; Persoons, 1972-1973). Their significant library (see above, Provenance) speaks to their academic culture, their love of learning and devotion, through books.

LITERATURE

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Persoons, E. "Domus beatae mariae in Bethlehem prope Lovanium," in W. Kohl, E. Persoons, A. G. Weiler, eds. *Monasticon Windesbemense, Vol. I, Belgien, Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique : Archief- en Bibliotheekwezen in België*, eds. numéro spécial 16, Brussels, 1976, pp. 18-30.

Salmon, Pierre, *The Breviary through the Centuries*, trans. Sister David Mary, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1962.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Bodleian Library Auct. 1Q 5.48

<http://incunables.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/record/D-094>

and

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/91b91bb2-dd09-4d8c-977f-9b201f779ac9/surfaces/b2fc4053-28aa-4125-a1a7-f99b213003ce/>

CERL, "Material Evidence in Incunabula," listing four incunables (including Bodleian Auct. 1Q 5.48, above) owned by Bethlehem

https://data.cerl.org/mei/_search?query=name%3A%22Bethlehem+Herent%2C+near+Louvain%2C++Augustinian+Canons%2C+BVM%22

CERL, "Material Evidence in Incunabula," listing two more (including the Cambridge incunable owned by Johannes de Septem montibus), under "Priorij Bethlehem (Herent, Belgium)"

<https://data.cerl.org/owners/00019410>

Bod-inc online, Provenance, "Johannes de Septem Montibus (Zevenbergen)
(fifteenth/sixteenth century)

<http://incunables.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/provenance/J?concise=yes>

(ISTC, <https://data.cerl.org/istc/if00297500>, listing IA.47357, but without copy-specific info)

Narrative Sources, Chronicon Bethlemiticum

[Narrative Sources \(narrative-sources.be\)](http://narrative-sources.be)

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