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Monastic Breviary for the Summer Season (*pars aestivalis*)

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Germany (Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Amorbach Abbey), 1493

iv (original paper) + 387 + ii (original paper) folios on paper, watermark obscured by script, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, complete (collation impracticable, quires of 8), catchword on f. 176v, partial signatures quires 2-4, frame ruled in ink, (justification 105-102 x 68-66 mm.), written in a cursive gothic bookhand (beginning on top of the frame) in 26-28 long lines, red rubrics, 1- to 2-line red initials, major feasts begin with 4- to 5- line red initials (more elaborate, but without penwork), on f. 9 there is a 6-line red initial with detailed penwork in black, ff. 5 and 10, paper patches in margins, f. 336, small tear outer margin, back endleaf, f. i, with two outer corners torn away, slightly thumbed, overall in very good condition. EARLY BINDING, late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century, of brown leather over wooden boards that are slightly larger than the bookblock, boards are chamfered, with rounded corners, spine with four raised bands and head and tail bands, traces of title in red on spine, brass catch and clasp fastening (back to front, modern repair), leather fore-edge tabs, some modern restoration, covers scuffed, spine worn, front board detached and back joint fragile. Dimensions 145 x 98 mm.

The Divine Office or the "Opus dei" (the Work of God) lay at the heart of the monastic vocation in a Benedictine Abbey. The rich complexity of these daily prayers, said by the monks together in choir, is evident in the text of this small but quite lengthy volume. From the famous German Benedictine Abbey of St. Amorbach, signed and dated by a named scribe who chose to copy this on paper in a cursive script (two important innovations that made late medieval manuscripts more affordable) and preserved in an early binding, this is an excellent example of the monastic book in the fifteenth century.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Germany in 1493 by Peter Bücher (or Beucher?), subdeacon, at the time of his profession at the Benedictine monastery of St. Amorbach; he added a detailed colophon at the end of the manuscript on f. 385, "Anno domini Millesimo quadringentesimo nonagesimo tercio. Completus est iste liber per in profesto perpetue et felicitatis hora quarta post meridiem Per me fratrem Petrum büche[re]m Sub dyaconum tunc temporis professum in s. amorbach" (In the year of our Lord 1493. This book was finished on the feast of Saints Perpetua and Felicity [March 7] at 4:00 (the fourth hour after noon) by me, brother Peter Bücher (or Beucher?) a sub-deacon, at the time of my profession at St. Amorbach). In 1995 another Breviary from Amorbach, dated (or datable?) to 1597-1598 was sold at Sotheby's, June 20, 1955, lot 103; the Schoenberg Database records it was made for (and probably by) Johann Beucher, active 1597 (see Schoenberg Database 30358), who may have been related to our scribe.

The calendar agrees closely with the calendars from Amorbach studied by Irtenkauf, 1968, (see especially pp. 94-100), and includes numerous Benedictine feasts (including January 15, in red, Maurus; February 10, in red, Scholastica; March 12, in red, Gregory;

March 21, in red, Benedict; June 5, in red, Boniface; June 21, in red, Albanus; July 11, in red, with octave, "Memoria Benedicti abbatis"), as well as feasts observed in the diocese of Würzburg and Amorbach Abbey (including July 4, bishop Uldaricus of Augsburg; July 8, in red, Kilian; July 25, Glodesind of Metz; Carolus imp. (Amorbach was an imperial abbey); September 6, Magnus; October 8, in red, Amoris (relics at Amorbach); October 14, in red, bishop Burchard of Worms; October 16, in red, Gallus; October 24, in red, "Dedicatio herpipolensis" (dedication of Würzburg); and November 19, in red, Elizabeth of Thuringia).

Amorbach Abbey in Lower Franconia, Bavaria, not far from Würzburg, was an important Benedictine monastery. Founded in 734, it was an imperial Abbey under the Carolingians. The abbey's famous and very lavish baroque buildings, including the church and the library, date from the eighteenth century. Amorbach's early modern ex libris is written vertically in the margin of f. 1 "Ex Bib[liotheca] Monasterii Amorb[acensis] Ordinis S[ancti] Benedicti."

2. Additions to the calendar, one dated 1523, and occasional marginal additions suggest this was still in use at least into the sixteenth century (date in calendar, plus occasional marginal notes (e.g. ff. 71v and 74v).
3. Front flyleaf, f. ii, "1493" (in ink, at the top); another hand, in ink "proprius angelus[?]/ Symon et ludas apostoli"; another hand, "Pro <fratrum?> dominus [followed by two lines that were chemically treated and are now illegible]"; another (later hand), "Amour de seigneur nest point dur"; another hand, also later: "Anno domini 1498 <...>/ torio descendit ad infirma<...>/ <...> et Naboris propter <...>/ et anno 1499 iterum ascendit 4to nos <...>."
4. When the monastery was dissolved in 1803 it was given to the Princely Leiningen family. The Abbey is still owned by this family today, with the abbey church serving as the (Protestant) parish church of the town of Amorbach. In 1851, most of the manuscripts from Amorbach were sold (Huller, 1851; Kaiser, 1984, p. 430), presumably because these manuscripts from a Catholic Abbey were not useful to the now Protestant owners and congregation, although some manuscripts from Amorbach were alienated earlier.

It is estimated that the Abbey library once included more than 150 manuscripts (cf. Kaiser, 1984, pp. 434-435, suggesting 175, including manuscripts now represented only by fragments). Thirty-two manuscripts from Amorbach are now in the Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg (described in Thurn, 1973, pp. 1-42), but others were widely dispersed are now found in numerous collections in Germany, England, Scotland, Moscow, and the United States (Krämer, 1969, pp. 19-21, lists 63 manuscripts; and Lehmann, 1960, v. 3, 76-109, describing 58 manuscripts).

5. In modern pencil, front flyleaf, f. ii, "Breuiarium," "68," "S+1-"; on verso, also in pencil, a modern note in English about the colophon and date; inside front cover, in pencil, "Monastic Breviary/ dated 1493/ Pars aestivatis"; "M.S. lat. Würzburg."

6. A previous owner stated that it was purchased in Oxford at Blackwell's on February 13, 1929.

TEXT

Front flyleaf, f. iii-iv verso, added prayers for the Office (for a Marian feast);

ff. 1-6v, Calendar in red and black, including: January 15, in red, Maurus; January 17, in red, Anthony; January 25, bishop Praejectus of Clermont; February 10, in red, Scholastica; March 6, added, "1523"; March 12, in red, Gregory; March 21, in red, Benedict; May 13, in red, Gengulph; June 5, in red, Boniface; June 21, in red, Albanus; July 2, in red, with octave, Visitation; July 4, bishop Uldaricus of Augsburg; July 8, in red, Kilian; July 11, in red, with octave, "Memoria Benedicti abbatis"; July 25, Glodesind of Metz; July 26, Anne (added); July 26, Carolus imp.; September 6, Magnus; September 13, in red, "tricesimus assumptionis"; October 8, in red, Amoris; October 14, in red, bishop Burchard of Worms; October 16, in red, Gallus; October 24, in red, "Dedicatio herpipolensis" (dedication of Wurzburg); November 3, Pirminus, bishop (added); November 12, Paternus (added); and November 19, in red, Elizabeth of Thuringia;

f. 7rv, Benedictiones, "*super lectiones*" and "*de beata virgines*"; (followed by later additions, f. 7v); [f. 8rv, blank];

ff. 9-163v, Temporal from Easter to the 24th Sunday after the octave of Pentecost; including f. 69v, *De vulneribus christi*; [Ending top f. 163v; remainder an f. 164-165, blank];

ff. 165v-346v, Sanctoral from Tiburtius and Valerian (April 14, f. 169) to Saturninus (November 29); beginning with texts related to feasts within the Octave of Easter(?); [ending with a few blank lines];

ff. 347-352v, Dedication of a Church;

ff. 352v-379v, Common of Saints;

ff. 379v-381v, Lessons for a Marian Office;

ff. 381v-385, *Incipiunt versiculi pertinentes ad hunc librum. Primo in die sancto pascho,*; [ff. 384v-385, in two columns; concluding with scribal colophon, see Provenance above];

ff. 385v-386v, Added texts on leaves originally left blank; [f. 387rv, blank].

i-ii (endleaves), Fragment of later text on f. i verso, otherwise blank.

This is a Breviary, the volume with the text for the Divine Office. 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. The regular observance of the Office was particularly important to Benedictine monastic life, and this is a monastic Breviary, with twelve

lessons at Matins for major feasts. The Office was lengthy, and complex, and monastic Breviaries were often copied in two (or more) volumes. Our Breviary is for the summer season (*pars aestivalis* in Latin) from Easter to the 24th Sunday following the Octave of Pentecost (the conclusion of the liturgical year).

In contrast to so many medieval manuscripts, we know a lot about the origin of this volume, since the scribe tells us his name, and when and where he was copying it. This knowledge makes the text a valuable witness to the Divine Office as it was practiced at the end of the fifteenth century in the important Franconian monastery of St. Amorbach. Peter Bücher (or Beucher?) copied this when he was just professed, and the denseness and length of the text gives us a peek into the complexity of the Office. Learning its ins and outs was a formidable task for the young monk (young certainly as a monk, but often young in years too). Although this is a condensed volume, it is legible, and the Offices are given in detail; the Sanctoral, with its many readings from the passions of saints is particularly interesting.

This is also impressive as a physical object. It is quite thick and is still in an early binding (now somewhat fragile). There is at least one catchword (f. 176v), and a few quire signatures remaining in quires two-four. There are infrequent corrections (on f. 174v, a passage was crossed out; omitted text was added between ff. 377v and 378 on a small, inserted slip). A note at the bottom of f. 227v states that even though the scribe left five or six lines blank at the bottom of the page, there is nothing missing in the text ("Hic non est defectus," underlined in red). And there is one mystery: a small red symbol appears in the lower margins of ff. 297, 303v, 304, 312v (two, in black and red), 320v, and 321; its meaning remains to be discovered.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Klöster in Bayern, "Amorbach"

[Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte - Klöster in Bayern \(hdbg.eu\)](http://hausderbayerischengeschichte.de/kloester-in-bayern)

[Handschriften Portal \(Amorbach\)](http://handschriftenportal.de)

<https://handschriftenportal.de/search?q=Amorbach&hl=true&start=10>

Fürstenhaus zu Leiningen

[Fürstliche Abtei - Fürstenhaus zu Leiningen \(fuerst-leiningen.de\)](http://fuerst-leiningen.de)

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