



THE ROTHSCHILD PRAYER BOOK (Book of Hours, Use of Rome)

In Latin

Ghent and Bruges, c. 1505–1510

Parchment, 228 × 160 mm. i + 252 + ii folios

Script: Gothic rotunda in black ink. Text space 115 × 71 mm, 18 long lines ruled in brown ink, red rubrics. Two sets of foliation: one in Arabic numerals in pencil at top right corner of every recto with I, II added on the first and last folios; the other set also in Arabic numerals in ink at lower left corner underneath the majority of full-page miniatures

Binding: Crimson velvet binding with sixteenth-century silver-gilt coat-of-arms that shows lion rampant of the Palatinate and diaper of Bavaria, cornerpieces, clasps and catches

Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, LIB.2014.017

An acknowledged masterpiece of Renaissance manuscript illumination, the lavish and extensive illustration of the Rothschild Prayer Book includes miniatures of unsurpassed beauty and refined execution attributed to Gerard Horenbout, Simon Bening and his father Alexander (or Sanders) Bening (also known as the Master of the Older Prayer Book of Maximilian I). These illuminators were among the most renowned and sought-after of their day.

PROVENANCE

Like certain related manuscripts, despite its extraordinary splendour and its undoubtedly costly production, this book contains nothing that might positively identify its intended original owner: neither arms, emblems nor portrait. One component of the Rothschild Prayer Book that might reflect the wishes of a commissioning patron are the Suffrages to Saints Vincent, Benedict and Anthony of Padua and two prayers to the Virgin (fols 238v–246v). These appear to be

modifications to the manuscript as originally planned: they have been written by a different scribe from the preceding Suffrages and from the Athanasian Creed that follows them. While they are part of a layout that makes no allowance for integrated miniatures, those that are supplied on single leaves are by the finest artists who were at work on the earlier part of the manuscript. In one miniature (fol. 238v, page 14), the stained-glass windows behind the saint are decorated with coats-of-arms, which include a displayed eagle and a shield of gules with a chevron and three small charges.

Later aspects of the Prayer Book's provenance have been demonstrated or suggested as follows. The silver-gilt centrepieces of the binding of the Prayer Book show the lion rampant of the Palatinate and the diaper of Bavaria. Nothing, however, supports Ernst Trenkler's suggestions in the commentary to the 1979 facsimile edition (see Bibliography) that the arms are those of Herzog Ernst von Wittelsbach and that the manuscript had a later provenance in the Palatine Library. The clasps, cornerpieces and centrepieces have been attributed to the workshop or circle of the Nuremberg goldsmith Wenzel Jamnitzer (d. 1585). Several of the depicted half-length saints are shown holding books with page-edges gauffered to the same diapered pattern as survives on the present manuscript, indicating that it was not trimmed when rebound. The binding shown in two of the miniatures is red velvet with gilt cornerpieces and clasps (see, for example, fol. 238v, page 14). It may be that this was the original appearance of the book, replicated for a mid-sixteenth-century owner, or that it was in the nineteenth century that this metalwork joined the manuscript.

Baron Anselm von Rothschild (1803–1874) laid the foundation for the Austrian Rothschilds' collections. He showed a particular enthusiasm for Netherlandish painting, his purchases including works by Frans Hals, Jan Wynants, David Teniers II and Isack van Ostade. Patrick de Winter (see Bibliography) drew attention to J.H. Middleton's observation in *Illuminated Manuscripts in Classical and Medieval Times* (Cambridge, 1892) that 'There are several fine manuscripts with miniatures by [Gerard David's] hand ... Among these are two Books of Hours in the collection of the late Baron Anselm Rothschild of Vienna'. The two manuscripts cited by Middleton and attributed to Gerard David are likely to have been the Rothschild Prayer Book, which was number 597 in Schestag's 1872 catalogue of Anselm's art collection, and the London Hours (Add. Ms 35313), which was number 599. Number 595 in the catalogue was the Bening Prayer Book made for Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg (J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig IX 19). This was purchased in 1868 and it is likely that the Rothschild Prayer Book was acquired shortly after this date.



Baron Nathaniel von Rothschild (1836–1905) was the son of Anselm. The Prayer Book was listed as number 452 in the Galerie of the palace at Theresianumgasse, in the February 1906 inventory of Nathaniel's estate. It was valued at 150,000 kronen, while number 453, the Brandenburg Prayer Book, was valued at 80,000 kronen.

Baron Alphonse von Rothschild (1878–1942) inherited Nathaniel's palace and, presumably, the Prayer Book along with it, since it appeared in two subsequent inventories of the palace, and the same inventory numbers are recorded in the manuscript itself: on a label at the upper corner of the lower cover (927) and in pencil (AR3390) on the front flyleaf. The manuscript remained in the palace until 1938, when it was appropriated by the Nazis.

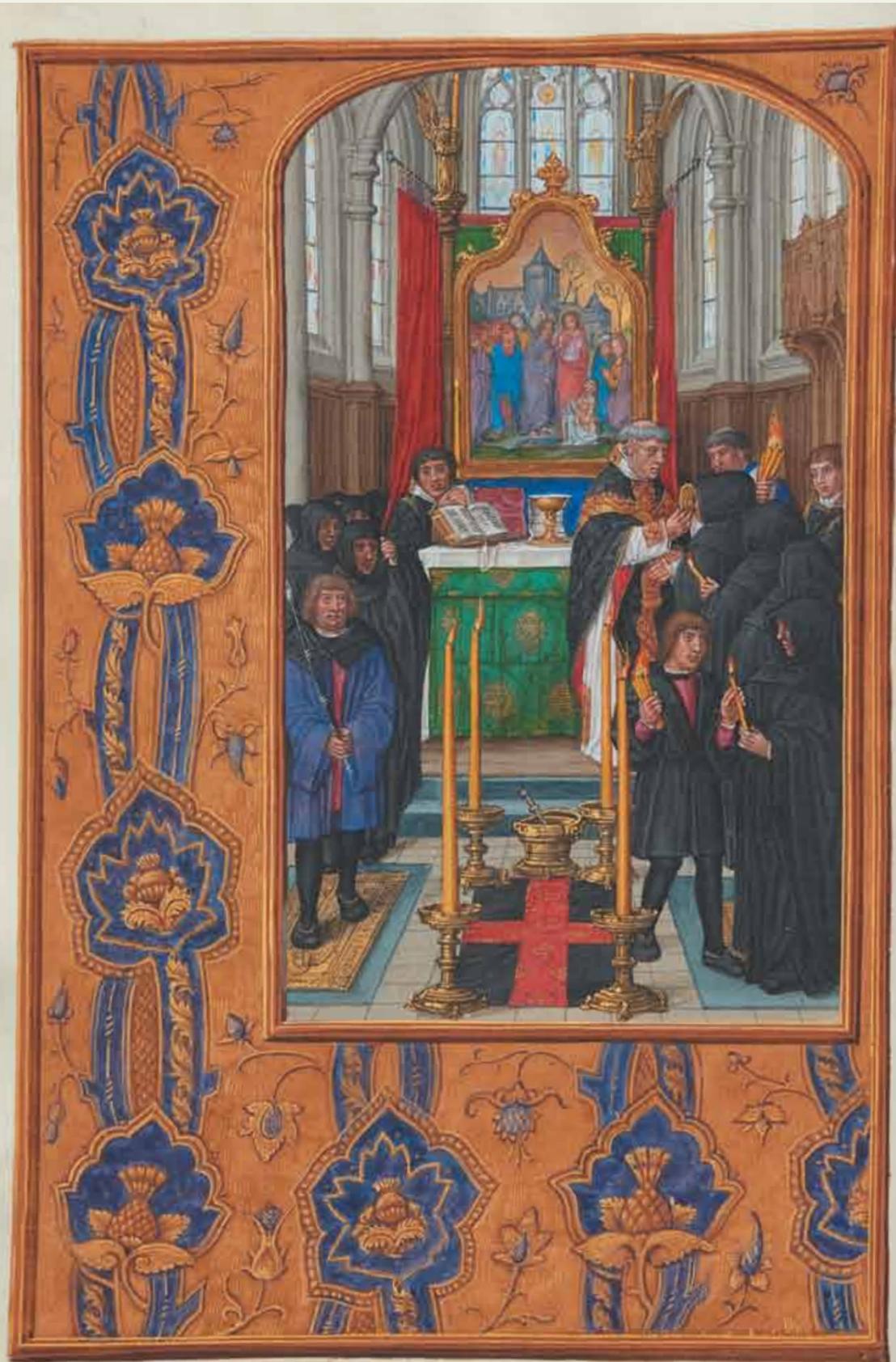
In 1941 the Prayer Book was deposited in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, and catalogued as Codex Vindobonensis Series Nova 2844. In 1999 it was restituted to the Rothschilds and subsequently purchased by an unknown bidder at the Auction of the Collection of the Barons Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild, at Christie's, London, on 8 July 1999, as lot 102.

The Rothschild Prayer Book was acquired for the Kerry Stokes Collection in Perth, Australia, at a subsequent Christie's auction in New York on 29 January 2014, as lot 157.

Above left Fol. 59v: The Crucifixion. Hours of the Holy Cross for Friday [*Ecce Homo*, Pilate Washing his Hands, Road to Calvary].

Above right Fol. 10v: Hours of the Holy Trinity for Sunday [Angels].

Following pages Fols 28v–29: Lighting of Candles at the Offertory. Mass for the Dead for Friday [Patterned Damask on both folios].



Incipit missa pro defunctis. V.

Requiem eternam dona eis domine
 Et lux perpetua luceat eis. V. R.

Et decet immensus
 deus in syon et
 tibi reddetur notum in iherusalem
 exaudi deus orationem meam ad te
 omnis caro ueniet Requiem eternam

Rpuclason xpcleson kpriel
 Domine exaudi orationem meam et
 clamor meus ad te ueniat oratio

R In clina domine aurem
 tuam ad preces nostras
 quibus misericordiam tuam sup
 plices deprecamur ut animas
 famulorum famularumque tu



TEXTUAL CONTENTS

A group of prayers and devotions—abbreviated Hours and Mass texts—which appear in the early part of this manuscript are derived from the liturgy or public worship of the Church, and are systematically presented for weekly recitation. The other prayers listed here more usually characterise the Book of Hours.

Fols 1v–7: Calendar; fols 8v–9v: Prayer to the Holy Face *Salve s[an]c[t]a facies*; fols 11–15: Hours of the Holy Trinity for Sunday; fols 17–21: Mass of the Holy Trinity for Sunday; fols 23–27v: Hours of the Dead for Monday; fols 29–31v: Mass for the Dead for Monday; fols 33–36v: Hours of the Holy Spirit for Tuesday; fols 38–40: Mass for the Holy Spirit for Tuesday; fols 42–45v: Hours of All Saints for Wednesday; fols 47–50: Mass for All Saints for Wednesday; fols 51–54: Hours of the Blessed Sacrament for Thursday (*The beginning of the Hours of the Blessed Sacrament is missing; they begin abruptly at the end of Prime*); fols 56–58: Mass of the Blessed Sacrament for Thursday; fols 60–64v: Hours of the Holy Cross for Friday; fols 66–68: Mass of the Holy Cross for Friday; fols 70–74v: Hours of the Virgin for Saturday; fols 76–79: Mass of the Virgin for Saturday; fols 79v–83v: Gospel Lessons; fols 85–133v: Hours of the Virgin; fols 135–140v: Advent Office of the Virgin; fols 142–144v: Prayer to the Virgin *Obsecro te*; fols 145–146v: Prayer to the Virgin *O intemerata*; fols 148–156: Penitential Psalms; fols 156–163v: Litany; fols 165–196v: Office of the Dead; fols 198–199: Seven Joys of the Virgin *Gaude flora uirginali*; fols 200–201: Prayer in Praise of the Holy Name *O bone ihesu O piissime ihesu*; fols 202–203: Prayers of St Gregory the Great; fols 204–243: Suffrages; fol. 244: Indulged Prayer to the Virgin *Ave sanctissima maria mater*; fols 246–246v: Hymn of St Bernard *Ave maris stella dei mater alma*; fols 247–249v: Athanasian Creed.

DECORATION AND ILLUSTRATION

Each devotion opens with a five- or six-line illuminated initial with staves of acanthus against a coloured ground. There are twelve full-page calendar borders with *camaïeu d'or* frames containing roundels illustrating major feasts. Appropriate zodiac signs and full-colour miniatures of the occupations of the month further illustrate the calendar. There are five small miniatures with accompanying full-page borders, sixty-seven full-page arch-topped miniatures with surrounding borders and complementary borders on the facing pages, and two further text pages with full borders. All the borders are of richly varied *trompe l'oeil* type, some with sprays of acanthus and strewn flowers and including insects and vignettes, some with *camaïeu d'or* architectural surrounds with sculptural figures or reliefs, others with jewels and enamels against coloured grounds. Individual borders replicate cloth of gold or peacock feathers, and on some pages the border space contains narratives to augment or complement the subject of the miniature.

Above left Fols 242v–243: St Benedict in the Desert, Romano Brings Bread to St Benedict. Suffrage.

Above Fols 211v–212: St Thomas. Suffrage [Wildmen and a Fight between Sea-monsters].

Following pages Fols 225v–226: St Francis Receives the Stigmata. Suffrage [Peacock Feathers on both folios].