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The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin

Volume 1 **Art-Historical and Literary Introduction**

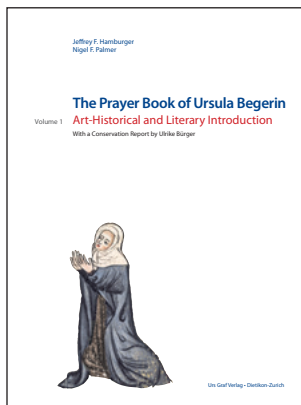
With a Conservation Report by Ulrike Bürger

Volume 2 **Reproductions and Critical Edition**



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The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin



Bibliographic data

Volume 1

The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin Art-Historical and Literary Introduction

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Volume 2

The Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin Reproductions and Critical Edition

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Illustrations: all in color

The prayer book of Ursula Begerin (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 801) is among the most extensively illustrated prayer books of the entire Middle Ages. First conceived for a laywoman of Strasbourg ca. 1380–1410 as a picture book with a cycle of at least 136 full-page tinted drawings on biblical subjects covering the entire span of salvation history, to which is added an extensive appendix of saints, it was remade as a prayer book ca. 1480 for a nun of the city through the addition of more than 156 specially composed German prayers. Together, the images and the texts composed to accompany them constitute one of the most complex and comprehensive Christological cycles from the Middle Ages. In this, the first comprehensive study of the manuscript, the art historian Jeffrey F. Hamburger (Harvard University) and the historian of medieval literature, Nigel Palmer (University of Oxford), present the first full study of this remarkable monument of late medieval art, literature, and piety. In addition to a wide-ranging discussion of the development of illustrated prayer books and picture cycles in the Middle Age, Jeffrey Hamburger's contribution provides a detailed discussion of each of the drawings, all of which are reproduced in colour in volume two. To Nigel Palmer's survey of the history of medieval Latin and German prayer and meditation literature, which permits the manuscript to be contextualized in great detail, is added in volume two a critical edition of the German text of the prayers. A

2. Iconographical Commentary



328. Arrest of Christ, Petrus Comestor: *Historia evangelica*, Basel, 1399. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Thennenbach 8, f. 80v. Photo: BLB

329. Christ before Annas, Petrus Comestor: *Historia evangelica*, Basel, 1399. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Thennenbach 8, f. 81r. Photo: BLB

330. Christ speaking to Peter of his Threefold Betrayal, Hussite Codex, Prague?, ca. 1440. Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 485, f. 56r. Photo: ÖNB/Wien

331. Peter with the Maidservant and Cock, Hussite Codex, Prague?, ca. 1440. Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 485, f. 58v. Photo: ÖNB/Wien

332. Peter warming his Feet by the Fire, Hussite Codex, Prague?, ca. 1440. Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 485, f. 59v. Photo: ÖNB/Wien

Liège, Bibliothèque générale, ms. Wittert 3, p. 42). Christ, his hands crossed, stands before the enthroned high priest, who wears a mitre as a sign of his office. The scene in the Alsatian picture bible (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS. M.268, f. 30v) is incorrectly labelled 'Plains'.

110r: The Denial of Jesus by Peter [Begerin Master]

In an unusual variant on the iconography for the scene of Peter's denial, Christ turns to look back as Peter remembers his words, as recounted in Luke 22:61: 'And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' At the centre stands the sole maidservant specified by Luke to whom Peter denies knowing Jesus. The crowing cock perches above. Two Jews, identified by their headgear, stand partly hidden in the background, while in the foreground burns the fire in the midst of the hall referred to by Luke 22:55. The added prayer's reference to this pair of figures as Jews indicates that its author took the picture as his point of reference, not just the biblical account in Luke. Whereas Luke 22:58–59 refers to two bystanders, it does not identify them specifically as Jews nor does it place them together, as does the picture, which conflates two moments in time that were, according to the Gospel, about an hour apart. The Hussite Codex (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 485) devotes three miniatures to the various elements of the story: the first (f. 56v), of Christ speaking to Peter while pointing to an allegorical image of the cock perched on the head of Satan, who carries a sieve; the second (f. 58v) of Peter with the maidservant and cock; the third (f. 59v), following a miniature of the Mocking of Christ, of Peter warming his feet by the fire. [Figs. 330–332] The miniature in the Picture Book combines elements of all these scenes. Only the *Hortus deliciarum* (Strasbourg, Bibliothèque de la ville [destroyed], scene 201) matches the Hussite



333. Denial of Peter, Petrus Comestor: *Historia evangelica* of Hildegard of Bingen, West Central Germany, last quarter of 12th century. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 935, f. 56v. Photo: BSB

334. Peter and the Maid, picture bible, Alsace (Strasbourg?), ca. 1400. Freiburg i. Br., Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 334, f. 29r. Photo: UB

Codex in supplying three scenes: Peter with the first maid; Peter, the maid, and others gathered around the fire in the hall; and Peter seeing the cock as he encounters the second maid and those with her at the gate.³³⁵ Other images tend to separate out one scene from the other. In the Prayer Book of Hildegard of Bingen (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 935, f. 56v), there are three bystanders, not two, probably representing the group described in John 18:17, 25–26. [Fig. 333] The confrontation of Peter and the maidservant more closely resembles the miniature in the Prayer Book of Ulrich Rösch, Abbot of St. Gall (Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 285, p. 190), dated 1472 and closely related to the Prayer Book of Hildegard of Bingen, suggesting the possibility of an intermediary model.³³⁶ In the picture bible in Freiburg (Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 334, f. 29r), the scene of Peter met by the maid at the gate as he goes out with another disciple, identified by his halo (Mt 26:71), follows that of Christ led to the house of Annas (f. 29v). [Fig. 334] In the Alsatian copy of Comestor's *Historia evangelica* in Karlsruhe (Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Thennenbach 8, f. 81v), the economical image, captioned *negatio petri*, presents Peter confronting the first maid, who holds a spoon, which serves both to identify her and mock the saint. [Fig. 335] The more expansive miniature in the Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, British Library, Add. MS. 47682, f. 29v) fills the hall with a cast of colourful characters warming themselves around the fire, including the maid, who turns in a complex posture of accusation. To the right, Peter exits the building, weeping bitterly (Mt 26:72). [Fig. 336] More garish, however, is the Alsatian picture bible in Freiburg (Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 334, ff. 30v–31r). Presaged by the presence of the cock perched in the building in which Annas receives Jesus (f. 29v), the story is elaborated in three separate episodes (ff. 30v–31r): Peter accused by the first maid as he warms himself by the fire, Peter accused by the second maid in the presence of the cock as he goes to the gate, represented in this instance by an open door to the left, and finally, Peter sitting outside, weeping, as Christ is beaten. [Figs. 337–338] In light of the expanded treatment found in the picture bibles, more closely related to the account in Matthew, Peter's Denial in the Prayer Book of Hildegard of Bingen offers the best

335. *Hortus deliciarum*, ed. Green et al. (1979), vol. 1, 169 and vol. 2, 249.
336. Ochsenbein (ed.), *Rein und Bild und Wort* (1996), vol. 2, 118–19.

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