

# An Ethiopic Prayerbook in the Friedsam Memorial Library of St. Bonaventure University

by

J a m e s T . C l e m o n s

The brief description which follows is in response to a request from Father Irenaeus Herscher, O.F.M., Librarian of the Friedsam Memorial Library of St. Bonaventure University. Descriptions of other manuscripts held there appeared earlier in *Oriens Christianus*.<sup>1</sup>

The manuscript measures  $8 \times 6.5 \times 2.7$  cm. The original front cover of heavy vellum remains, but the back cover is of cardboard, added when the latter portions of the codex were rebound (in very shoddy fashion). The spine is missing, revealing the original and later cotton strings used in binding. There are now 80 vellum folios plus a flyleaf. The quires originally contained eight folios each, but the last four quires have been slightly rearranged.

Each page contains a single column of 12 lines of *Ge'ez* script, neatly written in brown and red inks. Although the folios are dark with stains, the writing is still clear. Pinpricks are on the outer edges of each page. There are no illuminations, and ornamentation consists only of a series of dotted lines to end a page. A few of the margins contain headings and corrections by a later hand.

The contents are a series of prayers for days of the week, and occasionally the hours of the day, which often end with the trinitarian formula.<sup>2</sup> Various rubrics are interspersed frequently, the prayers often being quite short. Prayers for Monday begin on folio 1r and those for the other days of the week on 4v, 12v, 20v, 26v, 40r and 42v. One collection of prayers ends with folio 48v. The remaining section also contains prayers, but the beginning and end are missing. On the flyleaf, written up side down, is the name

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Some Oriental manuscripts in The Friedsam Library of St. Bonaventure University,' 51 (1967) 101-105.

<sup>2</sup> Father Paul Bellet of the Department of Semitic Languages, The Catholic University of America, kindly examined the manuscript to confirm its contents and to offer some of the data given here. I am pleased to acknowledge also the assistance of Miss Marty Clemons, my daughter, in recording some of the details and otherwise bringing this small task to completion.



RETINA BERH, possibly that of a former owner. The manuscript probably dates from the eighteenth, possibly the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup>

According to Father Herscher, the manuscript was formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Paternati of Jamestown, New York, who gave it to Samuel J. Lasser, D.C.S., by whom it was presented to the Friedsam Library. The item has no special identification number, but is part of 'The Agnes J. Wise Collection' established by Dr. Lasser.

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<sup>3</sup> Compare facsimilies 12-16 in *Codices Aethiopici Vaticani et Borgiani Barberinianus Orientalis 2 Rossianus 865 recensuerunt Silvanus Grébaut... et Eugenius Tisserant pars posterior prolegomena, indices, tabulae. In Bibliotheca Vaticana MCMXXXVI.*