

Controversial Vatican Adviser Headed Bids at 'Gospel' Sale

London (NC) — A Vatican bank adviser was involved in the Dec. 6 purchase of a medieval German manuscript for 8.14 million pounds (\$11.8 million).

Hermann Abs, the Vatican adviser and a German banker, was spokesman for

the purchasers: the West German state of Lower Saxony; the West German Bavarian state government; the West German federal government in Bonn; the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin; and a bank consortium.

Abs said the 800-year-old Gospels of Henry the Lion, considered by art experts to be one of the world's finest and most perfectly preserved illuminated manuscripts, will be placed in a library in Wolfenbuttel, West Germany.

The manuscript became the most expensive work of art ever sold at an auction. The final bid was 7.4 million pounds (\$10.7 million), plus a traditional 10 percent commission to the London auction house, Sotheby's. The seller remained anonymous.

Abs became the center of controversy earlier this year

after the Simon Wiesenthal Center of Yeshiva University in Los Angeles called for his resignation as one of four advisers reviewing the activities of the Vatican bank in relation to the bankrupt Banco Ambrosiano. The center claimed Abs was a Nazi collaborator who helped supervise the Auschwitz slave labor project in World War II.

However, Abs remained a Vatican adviser.

The manuscript, commissioned around 1173 by German Prince Henry the Lion, has 41 perfectly preserved illustrations and more

than 1,500 illuminated initials. It contains the earliest surviving picture of St. Thomas a Becket and the only known contemporary portraits of King Henry II of England.

Art experts say the book has rarely been exposed to sunlight.

The manuscript remained in the cathedral in Brunswick, West Germany, where Henry the Lion was buried, until it was taken to Prague, Czechoslovakia, sometime in 14th century. An unknown private family purchased it sometime after World War II. The manu-

script had not been seen publicly since that sale.

Abs said the book will be available for study but will not be separated into pieces.

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Researcher Wins Science Grant

Gerard T. Schneider of Nazareth College has received an award of \$100 from the Rochester Academy of Science for his original research.

A student of Prof. William Lamella, Schneider is working on a high perfor-

mance liquid chromatography system for the separation of metals. The award will help defray costs of the study.

The RAS has been making such awards for 33 years to local students involved in research.

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