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JOHANNES TRITHEMIUS, *Liber de triplici regione claustralium et de spirituali exercicio noviciorum* [and]  
THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Beatitudine*

In Latin, incunable and manuscript on paper

Germany, [Mainz, 6 August 1498] and Mainz or Wiesbaden, circa 1497-1498

135 folios (preceded and followed by a blank flyleaf), on paper, (collation: incunable A-C8, D-E6, F-M8, N6 [lacking first page of printed text [A1], the title page, with only the title in red, no date]; manuscript i12, ii12, iii12, iv4 [last folio blank]), watermarks for manuscript (ff. 96-135) close to Briquet, vol. 1, no. 1726 "Armoiries. Trois Fleurs de Lis, posées deux et une, à couronne" (Eppelsheim, 1494, Wiesbaden, 1497), manuscript text copied in brown ink on up to 27 long lines in a clear regular bâtarde script (justification 140 x 85 mm. [incunable] and 140 x 90 mm. [manuscript]), quire signatures, numerous contemporary marginal annotations, rubrics in red, paragraph marks in red, initials in red and other initials touched in red, passages on text underlined in red, some initials enhanced with green wash (ff. 1, 71), ONE LARGE INITIAL IN RED marking the beginning of the manuscript. Bound in a seventeenth-century vellum binding over pasteboards, smooth spine with shelfmark in ink "639," in very good condition, some minor marginal paper restorations. Dimensions 185 x 135 mm.

Interesting and important hybrid book produced on the threshold of manuscript and print cultures and combining an incunable copy of Trithemius's spiritual manual for the Bursfeld Congregation with a manuscript copy of Thomas Aquinas's *De Beatitudine*. Our exemplar, bearing an original monastic provenance from a noted cloister of the Bursfeld Congregation, thereby testifies to the lingering importance of manuscript copying simultaneous with the spread of printing, an activity recommended by none other than Trithemius himself in "On Praise of Scribes."

#### PROVENANCE

1. Both the incunable and the manuscript were produced in the region of Mainz and Wiesbaden region. The Mainz printer Peter Friedberg was a sort of house printer for the Congregation of Bursfeld and had already printed more than a dozen of Trithemius's own works (including the treatise *De laude scriptorum* or "In Praise of Scribes") when this manual was printed in August 1498. Ex-libris in upper margin of f. 1: "Monasterii Abdinghoff ord[in]e S. Benedicti Paderbornae" and shelfmark "644"; repeated again: "Monasterii Abdinghofcus (?)" and another shelfmark "639." The Benedictine monastery of Abdinghof (Paderborn) was founded in 1015. It joined the

important Bursfeld Congregation in 1476 under the abbot Heinrich von Peine (see *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de geographie ecclesiastique* [DHGE], I, cols. 64-65; Linneborn, J., "Heinrich von Peine, Reformator des Klosters A. in Paderborn, 1477-1491," in *Zeitschrift für westf. Gesch. und Altert.*, Münster, t. LIX, pp.169-213; on Bursfeld, see DHGE, X, col. 1389-1390).

2. Traces of early monastic readership: a monk, who signs his name twice "F. Panthaleon Monich" (f. 51).

## TEXT

1.

### Incunable

ff. 1-1v, Dedicatory Epistle; incipit, "Epistula Johannis Tritemii abbatis Spanhemens[is] in opusculum de triplici regione claustralium // Reverendis in Christo patribus Dominis presidentibus diffinitoribus et ceteris abbatibus capituli annalis ordinis sancti Benedicti unionis et observatie Bursfeldensis [...] Parvi preceptis vestris colendissimi patres et opusculum de triplici regione claustralium unacum exercicio spirituali monachorum per venerabilem patrem dominum Johannem abbate Bursfeldensem nuper editum sicut mihi precepistis assumpsi corrigendum..."; explicit, "...Opto paternitates vestras in Christo semper manere felices. Ex Spanhem .xiiii. kalendas septembris Anno Dominice incarnationis M. CCCC. XCVII [Sept. 14, 1497]";

ff. 2-20v, Johannes Trithemius [or Johannes Bursfeldensis], *Liber de triplici regione claustralium* ["On the three regions of the cloister"], Book I; incipit, "Incipit liber de triplici regione claustralium et de spirituali exercicio noviciorum // Cum vite monastice statum hujus temporis ad mentem revoco, ejus calamitati vehementer condoleo..."; explicit, "...ita in regione spiritus tranquillitas est mentis continua. Explicit regio prima";

ff. 21-51, Johannes Trithemius [or Johannes Bursfeldensis], *Liber de triplici regione claustralium*, Book II; incipit, "Incipit secunda regio anime que rationalis dicitur in qua sub multis laboribus homines versantur. // Secunda igitur anime regio rationalis dicitur..."; explicit, "Fortiter autem diligitur si omnis injuria ex animo beneficiendi eidem remittatur";

f. 51v, blank;

ff. 52-61, Johannes Trithemius [or Johannes Bursfeldensis], *Liber de triplici regione claustralium*, Book III, incipit, "Prefatio in tercium tractatum principatis qui describit supremam regionem spiritus claustralium. // Scripturus tandem adjuvante Domino supremam illam..."; explicit, "...qui ad illam per experientiam amoris purificatus non ascendit. Explicit tertia regio claustralium".

f. 61v, blank;

ff. 62-62v, Preface to *Liber de spirituali exercicio noviciorum* ["Compendium of spiritual exercise"], "Prefatio in secundam partem principalem exercitii spiritualis claustralium feliciter. Incipit. // Quoniam opusculum de triplici regione claustralium nobis per capitulum annale nuper inunctum

auxiliante Domino nostro Jesu Christo complevimus.”; explicit, “...docentes humiliter parati sumus”.

ff. 63-91v, *Liber de spirituali exercicio noviciorum*; incipit, “Incipit secunda pars principalis opusculum triplicis regionis claustralium que continet modum et formam exercicii monachorum. // Vero regi Domino nostre Iesu Christo secundam monasticam regulam militaturus...”; explicit, “...qui in amore radicatur”; colophon, “Finis adest exercicii spiritualis claustralium per Petrum Friedbergensem in nobili urbe Maguntina octavo idus Augustias anno salutis MCCCXCVIII [1498]”.

ff. 92-95v, Various added prayers completing the Compendium of spiritual exercise: incipit, “O mantissime ac dulcissime Domine Jesu qui hora prima coram Pilato falso accusatus...”; explicit, “...perseverantibus esse renovatum”; colophon, “explicit compendium quotidiani spiritualis exercicii per Johannem Trithemium abbatem”.

2.

## Manuscript

ff. 96-135, Thomas Aquinas, *De Beatitudine*; rubric, *Incipit tractatulus beati Thome de Aquino de Dei cognitione, amore, fruitione, unione, laudatione, gratiarum actione et congratulatione anime beate*; incipit, “Beati qui habitant in domo tua domine [Psalm LXXXIII]. Domus dei est eterna beatitudo quam naturaliter omnis homo desiderat ut dicit Augustinus. Illa beatitudo quam naturaliter omnis homo desiderat...”; explicit, “...ut manifestetur habundantia glorie tue per infinita seculorum secula Amen. Explicet.” (ed. Kaeppli, T. in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 1943; for another copy of this text, see Paris, BnF, lat. 3760, ff. 55v-75v, *De Beatitudine, texte apocryphe de s. Thomas d'Aquin*; see also Mandonnet, 1910, p. 131; and Glorieux, I, 100; first published in Utrecht, 1473.

Trithemius (1462–1516) was an important German Benedictine abbot, humanist and reformer. The present work, *De triplici regione claustralium* (“On the three regions of the cloister”) written in c. 1497-1498, was printed in Mainz during Trithemius’s tenure as abbot of Sponheim (1482–1506). It is a kind of handbook of monastic spiritual exercises devised for the use of the Bursfeld Congregation. Along with the brief “Compendium of spiritual exercise,” the work was printed during his lifetime in an edition of 1000 copies. Each member of the Congregation of Bursfeld, the reforming group to which Sponheim belonged, as well as Abdinghof (see Provenance), was to receive a copy. The Mainz printer Peter Friedberg was a sort of house printer for the Congregation and had already printed more than a dozen of Trithemius’s works (including the treatise “In Praise of Scribes”) when this manual was printed in August 1498. At the end of that same month, the general chapter of the Bursfeld Congregation, which had commissioned the work five years previously, made Trithemius’s manual the official book of spiritual practice for the Congregation. The three regions of the monastic life are Hell, Purgatory and good observance leading to living union with God.

One of the great responses to the challenge of reform in the fifteenth century came from the German Benedictine monastic community in the form of the Bursfeld Congregation. Officially recognized by Pius II in 1459, the Bursfeld union has enjoyed since 1445 the right to formulate new

discipline and to regulate ceremonies and customs. The Bursfeld union grew to become the most successful and vital monastic reform movement of the fifteenth century.

In the writings of Trithemius, religious reform is closely identified with reform of monastic education. Trithemius was concerned with leading his order, through study, to the very sources of Western monasticism and culture. Therefore it is interesting that the present printed copy should also include a manuscript version of *De Beatitudine*, attributed to Thomas Aquinas, as testimony to the lingering importance of manuscript copying, coexisting with the printing press. Trithemius *De laude scriptorum* (1492) is largely a defense of manuscript copying over printing (see Dom Berlière: "Le traité De laude scriptorum... avait pour but d'exciter les moines à l'étude de l'Écriture Sainte et à la transcription des manuscrits, travail qui convient bien aux solitaires dans l'intervalle des offices divins, même en ce moment où la presse pourrait dissuader de se livrer à des copies" (Berlière, 1927, p. 69).

In his treatise *De laude scriptorum*, Trithemius sets out a program for monastic renewal based on the restoration of manuscript copying as a useful, instructive, dignified and holy activity--a form of work wholly appropriate to the monastic condition and in keeping with the demands of Benedictine tradition. Among the various improvements he oversaw at Sponheim was the augmentation of bookshelf space in his abbey library to meet the physical needs of his program of learning. For of all the undertakings at Sponheim, none stands out with greater clarity than his considerable collection of manuscripts and printed books which he managed to assemble in his library in these same years.

#### LITERATURE

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Thomas Aquinas. *Tractatus beati Thome de Aquino de Divinis moribus. Tractatus beati Thome de Aquino de Beatitudine*, [Ultrajecti], [N. Ketelaer et G. de Leempt], [circa 1473] (see Hain-Copinger, 1364; Pellechet, 975);

Trithemius, Johannes. *Opera pia et spiritualia*. Ed. Johannes Busaeus, Mainz, J. Albini, 1604–1605 [*De triplici regione claustralium et spirituali exercitio monachorum* is published on p. 618]

Trithemius, Johannes, *De triplici regione claustralium et spirituali exercitio monachorum*, Mainz, Peter von Friedberg, octavo idus Augustias 1498, in-4° (ascribed to Johannes Bursfeldensis, with emendations by Trithemius; see Goff T-456; Hain-Copinger, 15618, Polain, 2248 and 2249; Paris, BnF, Rés. D-8232).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

On Trithemius

[http://www.hmml.org/20040210\\_Archive/resources/Trithemius/Introduction.html](http://www.hmml.org/20040210_Archive/resources/Trithemius/Introduction.html)

On Trithemius

<http://www.tertullian.org/witnesses/trithemius.htm>

On the *Liber de triplici regione claustralium*

[http://www.hmml.org/20040210\\_Archive/resources/Trithemius/Cloistered\\_Life.html](http://www.hmml.org/20040210_Archive/resources/Trithemius/Cloistered_Life.html)

*De Beatitudine* attributed to Thomas Aquinas

<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/xtb.html>