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[GUILLAUME II BRIÇONNET ?], *Triumphus Matris Dei*  
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment  
[France, Champagne (Reims ?), c. 1495-1497]

26 folios, on parchment (collation: i<sup>u</sup> [42-1] [first folio of quire cancelled], ii<sup>s</sup>, iii<sup>r</sup> [8-1] [last folio of last quire blank]), ruled in light red, written in brown ink in a regular bâtarde script on up to 21 long lines (justification 90 x 145 mm.), catchwords, prickings still visible at outer edges, line endings in liquid gold on red ground (fol. 25), paragraph marks in liquid gold on alternating red or blue grounds, 2-line high initials in liquid gold on alternating red or blue grounds, LARGE 8-LINE HIGH OPENING INITIAL P (f. 4), in red highlighted in liquid gold on blue ground with white tracery with painted armorial infill (Brignonet family), opening initial and text surrounded by partial border on three sides with acanthus sprays and flowers, strawberry and bird on reserved and liquid gold grounds, 18 partial borders marking the beginning of each chapter with acanthus leaves and flowers on reserved or liquid gold grounds (blue, liquid gold, green, red, dark red). Bound in a modern binding, signed Crezevault beneath pastedown of the upper board, in full brown morocco, back sewn on 5 raised thongs, lozenge-shaped frame on both covers traced in single blind filet, gilt arms placed in the center of both covers (Comte Chandon de Briailles), simple gold filet board edges, inner boards lined with double gold filets, edges gilt, in good clean condition. Dimensions 230 x 160 mm.

Unique manuscript copy, previously entirely unknown, of a text on the triumphs of the Virgin Mary possibly written by Guillaume II Briçonnet, a humanist theologian with close connections to the royal court, for his uncle, Robert Briçonnet, Archbishop of Reims. Inspired by Renaissance humanism, the unknown text, written when Guillaume II Briçonnet was a young man, may shed new light on his relatively little known Latin literary output.

### PROVENANCE

1. The text was possibly written by Guillaume II Briçonnet (1472-1534), bishop of Lodève (1489) and then of Meaux (1516) for his uncle Robert Briçonnet (died 1497). The arms painted on f. 4 in the opening initial P are a variant of those of the Briçonnet family. Although the treatise is dedicated to Robert, they are not his arms as described in DHGE, X, col. 681-82. They are close to the arms of his famous nephew Guillaume II Briçonnet,

which contain two stars, appear in the opening initial P: *D'azur à la bande composée d'or et de gueules, le deuxième compton chargé d'une étoile d'or et accompagnée en chef d'une étoile d'or du même.* A better study of the literary production of the Briçonnet family should clarify the author and patronage of the manuscript. The title of the manuscript, indicated in a note copied on f. 1, bears a dedication to Robert Briçonnet: *Triumphus Matris Dei. Reverendissimo in Christo Patri et Domino. Domino Roberto Brissoneto archiepiscopo ducique Remensis primo pari et cancellario Francie dignissimo.* [signed] *G. de Dormans.* [The Triumph of the Mother of God dedicated to the most Reverend Father in Christ and the Lord, Lord Robert Briçonnet, Archbishop and Duke of Reims and most dignified Chancellor of France]. Robert Briçonnet was made archbishop of Reims in 1493 and died shortly after in 1497: the dedication placed on f. 1 refers to Robert as archbishop and chancellor, titles he held respectively in 1493 and 1495, suggesting for the *Triumphus Matris Dei* a date of composition around 1495-1497 (see DBF, vol. VII, col. 288). In 1497, Guillaume was named prebendary of the Cathedral of Reims, during the time his uncle Robert was the archbishop there. Robert was known as a patron of the arts and a man of letters. The Briçonnets were a prominent and influential family, close to royal circles in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. G. de Dormans who signs the note on f. 1 is probably identical with Guillaume de Dormans, seigneur de Nozay [Essonne] (counselor to the Grand Conseil and president of the Parliament of Burgundy; died 1507). The Dormans family was an important family from Champagne that produced a number of bishops and chancellors (see DBF, vol. XI, col. 594-598). From the phrasing of the inscription, it appears that Guillaume Dormans was in the service of Robert Briçonnet, perhaps acting as his secretary, or perhaps he was the patron of the book, commissioning it from Guillaume de Briçonnet.

2. Unidentified nineteenth owner's stamp on f. 4, with initials P.F.K [ ? ] and motto: *Là ou ailleurs.* This motto could be that of the De Kerariou family in Brittany (see Chassant and Tausin, *Dictionnaire des devises ...*, p. 175).

3. Comte Chandon de Briailles, Champagne, France. Owner's bookplate pasted on the verso of first flyleaf: "Au Comte Chandon de Briailles." Ownership confirmed by gilt arms on both covers of binding. This is probably Raoul Chandon de Briailles (1850-1908), historian and wine merchant (founder of the Chandon de Briailles mark of champagne), part of whose rich library was bequeathed to the Médiathèque at Épernay--20,000 items concerning the history of Epernay and wine, incunables, and books from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries--and part passed on through the family to his heirs Comtes Henri and François Chandon de Briailles.

## TEXT

ff. 1, inscription written in cursive in a contemporary hand, *Triumphus Matris Dei. Reverendis in Christo Patri et Domino Domino Roberto Brissoneto archiepiscopo ducique Remensis primo pari et cancellario Francie dignissimo.* [signed] *G. de Dormans.*

ff. 2-3, blank;

ff. 4-25, *Triumphus Matris Dei*, Prologue, incipit, " Postea quam profligato ad calvariam tenebrarum principe sese cum captivis [...] magnavi maximis opibus ceptum est bellum agi," incipit [chapter 1], "Interea vero Maria sese Iherosolimis continens stipendia commeatus supplementum... "; explicit: "[...] Et in anima et corpore super omnes celitum ordine et [?] sedit Regina Maria. Anno Christi imperatoris filii sui duodecimo mense augusto";

ff. 25v-26v, blank.

Divided in eighteen chapters, entitled "The Triumph of the Mother of God," the prose text consists of a series of laudatory passages on the Virgin Mary following the Ascension of Christ and culminating in her Assumption and Coronation. Inspired by Italian humanist literature, the theme of the secular triumph--triumphs of the gods of antiquity, the seasons, the virtues, the arts--was transformed into religious triumphs. The history of Christianity itself was viewed as a triumphal march. The present text on the triumph of the Virgin is in this vein; in it, we find echoes of classic antiquity, of the allegorical triumphs of Petrarch, and of the poetry of the Renaissance humanist Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473-1523).

In part on the basis of the heraldry (f. 4, see "Provenance"), we hypothesize that the present text survives as a previously unknown early work by Guillaume II Briçonnet, who wrote to offer to his uncle Robert Briçonnet. Guillaume was appointed bishop at Lodève (1489) and later at Meaux (1514), after the kings Louis XII and François I had charged him with a number of difficult missions to the pope. Returning to Meaux, he assembled a circle of scholars--humanist theologians--around him such as Guillaume Farel, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Clichtove, Gérard Roussel, and François Vatable. He was also enormously influenced by Lutheranism and was even accused himself of favoring heresy. As a man of letters, he augmented greatly the library of the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Près.

Guillaume II Briçonnet's *oeuvre* includes synodal decrees relative to Lutheranism, episcopal acts, correspondence with Margaret d'Angouleme, Duchess of Alençon (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 11495; see Ch. Martineau, et al), a translation of a fourteenth-century mystical text on the Virgin (*Contemplationes Idiotae*) printed in Paris by Simon de Colines under the title *Contemplations faictes à l'honneur de la tres sacrée Vierge Marie par quelque dévotte personne qui s'est voulu nommée l'idiote*. Many of his Latin works remain unedited, and, if our hypothesis concerning his authorship is correct, the present work emerges as the only extant copy of a previously unknown and unedited text by him (DLF, p. 192, and DHGE, col. 681).

## ILLUSTRATION

The opening border and illuminated initial, as well as the eighteen bracket borders that punctuate the chapter divisions, are entirely consistent with routine Parisian manuscript illumination at the end of the fifteenth century. Perhaps the manuscript was written and illuminated in Paris or, more likely, in Reims by an artist and scribe following Parisian models (Avril/ Reynaud, pp. 263-80)

## LITERATURE

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Briçonnet Family

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02779a.htm>