

Devotional Miscellany, including [ANONYMOUS], *Tractatus de virtutibus* [Tract on virtues]; JOHANNES VAN SCHOONHOVEN, *Epistola prima in Eemsteyn*; THOMAS A KEMPIS, *Imitatio Christi*; [ANONYMOUS], *Nota de turpitudinibus coniugalium*
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
Germany, likely southern (Bavaria?), c. 1450-1460

161 folios, preceded by a single paper flyleaf, incomplete, likely missing a quire after fol. 60 and some leaves after f. 157 (collation: i-xi¹², xii¹³⁻⁴ [folio after f. 133 absent, without loss of text], xiv-xv¹², xvi⁴), on paper (a number of watermarks all pointing to a Southern German origin for the paper, including (1) Briquet, "Tête de boeuf", no. 14822, Bavaria, 1447; Ratisbonne, 1457, for this watermark see also Piccard, *Die Ochsenkopf-Wasserzeichen* (1966), of the type 583-594, all of German or Austrian origin; (2) Briquet, "Balance", no. 2404, Nuremberg, 1459; (3) Briquet, "Tour", no. 15877, Bavaria, 1458), written in littera cursiva with display incipits in littera hybrida (e.g. ff. 1r, 41v, 42r, 60v, 61r, 121r, 134r), written by 6 different hands in dark brown ink (first hand, ff. 1r-60v; second hand, ff. 61r-85r; third hand, 85r-157v; fourth hand, f. 158r; fifth hand, ff. 159r-160v; sixth hand, f. 161r/v), with all hands close to the same date (except modern completion of Johannes van Schoonhoven's letter supplied in modern manuscript on unbound sheets), text in single column copied on 26-32 lines (justification 105-120 x 67-75 mm., with the first hand blocking only horizontal and vertical bounding lines, the second hand blocking only vertical bounding lines, the third hand usually blocking only the vertical and upper horizontal bounding lines, but with variations in quires xi, xii, and xiii), some catchwords (e.g. f. 36v), some flourishes in the margin, marginal drawings on ff. 10, 24v, 27, 30, 60v, the words Christogram and name of Mary written in display scripts and inscribed as a decorative motif (ff. 119v, 120r, 121r); ff. 2-123 foliated in red Roman numerals by one of the scribes, probably the third hand, 1-line initials stroked in red, many on every page, 2- and 3- line initials in red often with elaborate flourishing or decorative scrolling, 2-line initials painted in blue with red penwork (ff. 125v, 126), four decorated initials (ff. 1, 124, 134 and 135) in red and brown ink. Bound in contemporary or near-contemporary half-binding of blind-stamped calf over wooden boards with engraved brass and leather clasp and catch, back sewn on 2 thongs, watermark found in flyleaf very close to Briquet, "Couronne": no. 4906, Memmingen 1506; Innsbruck, 1502 (Very good overall condition, first page loose, upper joint split, spine damaged). Dimensions 141 x 106 mm.

In its original binding, this interesting miscellany contains a few rare and unpublished works. It attests to the dissemination of works dear to the Devotio Moderna in southern Germany, likely in a period still contemporary with Thomas a Kempis (died in 1471), and including the famous Letter to his nephew Symon by Johannes van Schoonhoven that is most commonly found in manuscripts of Dutch or Flemish origin. The work was likely copied and used by male clerics of the Regular Canons who delivered sermons.

PROVENANCE

1. Most likely written in the southern Germany, on the basis of the various watermarks found in the paper, and because of the script, decoration, and binding.
2. Belonged to a Jesuit, according to the note of ownership of "Dom. Scriptor Prov. Germ. S.

J." written in pen in the 18th (?) century on first flyleaf.

3. Ex-libris inscription (16th or 17th c.), hardly legible but visible in part using ultraviolet light: "[...] Aspach" (f. 160v). Although there is no certainty, one should signal that Alspach is the name of a priory of Poor Clares (Clarisses) from Khientzheim, in Alsace (near Kayersberg). The convent took the name of the river that ran nearby, "Alspach" or "Aspach", also called "Weiss." This could relate to the inscription described below. But there is also a town in Austria (Tyrol) named Alpbach.
4. Modern inscription in pencil, "Weiss," on back pastedown, and the numbers "5858/1," in pencil.

TEXT

ff. 1-60v, Tract on Virtues (title *Tractatus de virtutibus* added in later hand), heading, *De timore domini*; incipit, "Prima virtus per quam venit ad alias virtutes est timor domini..."; explicit, "[...] *Nunc dicendum est de perseverentia...laudandus est in vita...*" [ends imperfectly];

Unrecorded in Bloomfield (1979), the present text has been recently listed in Newhauser (2008), p. 111, no. 1483c, which records only one other manuscript: Munich, BSB, lat. 21106 (fifteenth century), ff. 108-114. In this *Tractatus de virtutibus*, the virtues are divided into chapters that might correspond to sermons, as suggested by the Table of Contents written near the end of the manuscript. The virtues begin with the "fear of God" and include patience, humility, silence, and obedience, and finish with a discussion of the Cardinal Virtues (f. 50r), including temperance, fortitude and justice.

ff. 61r-132v, Thomas a Kempis, *De imitatione Christi* [Imitation of Christ], rubric, *Incipit libellus de imitatione Ihesu Christi*; Book I (ff. 61r-79v), incipit, "Qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris dicit dominus..."; Book II (ff. 80-93), incipit, "Incipit liber secundus. De interna conversacione..."; Book III (ff. 93-132), incipit, "Incipit liber tertius. De interna christi locucione ad animam fidelem..."; explicit, "[...] perpetue claritatis. Amen. Benedicamus Domino Deo gratias. Ihesus Maria" [published by Pohl, 1904];

De imitatio Christi, written by Thomas a Kempis, comprises four books, although very few copies contain all four. The present volume has Books I-III. *De imitatio Christi* was one of the most influential texts in the reform movement known as the Devotio Moderna. Latin copies of this text circulated, especially among monastic circles. Of the more than 50 copies of this text in Latin, more than half belonged to Augustinian Canons Regular, the Order of the Windesheim Congregation, which composed the monasteries of the Devotio Moderna. One, for example, was owned by the Regular Canons of St. Paul in the Rooklooster in Oudergem near Brussels, copied in 1416 (and now in the Abby of St. Maurice in Valais). The present volume, too, might have originated in a men's convent of Augustinian canons, especially given the manuscript's other contents.

ff. 132v-133v, St. Jerome on the imitation of Christ, rubric, *Jeronimus presbiter de imitatione cristi*; incipit, "[R]ristianus (sic) es imitare christum...";

ff. 134r-158r, Jan van Schoonhoven, *Epistola prima in Eemsteyn* [Letter from Jan van Schoonhoven to his nephew Simon], rubric, *Incipit epistola fratris Johannis de Schonovia canonicus viridis vallis ad fratrem Symonem canonicum in Eymsteyn cognatum suum*, incipit, "Dilectissimo in Christo Symoni nepoti meo frater Iohannes servus inutilis"; explicit, "[...] et modeste te in omnibus habeas..." [ends imperfectly but missing text supplied in modern manuscript];

Letter composed circa 1383-1386 by Jan van Schoonhoven (1356-1432) and addressed to his nephew Symon van Schoonhoven, who was a professed canon at Eemstein (Eemsteyn) as of 1383. The monastery of Eemstein played an important role in the formation of the six first disciples sent out to the monastery by Grote before the founding of Windesheim. This Letter was quoted by the author of the *Imitatio Christi*. There are some 53 Latin manuscripts and 12 Middle-Dutch manuscripts identified. Published by W. Becker, in *De Katholiek*, 86 (1884), p. 204-210, pp. 352-361; 87 (1885), pp. 126-141.

Johannes van Schoonhoven was a Flemish theologian and writer. Around 1377, after a philosophical education at the University of Paris, he entered the convent of the Regular Canons of Groenendaal near Brussels. There he met Jan van Ruysbroek (1293-1381), with whom Schoonhoven also exchanged letters. In 1386 Schoonhoven became prior and master to the novices at Groenendaal. After the accession of Groenendaal to the Windesheim Congregation, Schoonhoven wrote sermons, spiritual tracts, and letters, all in Latin. His writings reflect sympathy with Ruysbroek's ideas and were influential within the spiritual reform movement of the early fifteenth century. He was one of those responsible for defending Ruysbroek against his critics, including Jean Gerson of Paris. His sermons often lasted two or three hours. His letters to his nephew Simon in Eemsteyn are preserved in several copies, including one dated 1419 (Brussels, BR, MS 20931) which was copied at the convent of Regular Canons at Korsendonk near Turnhout, and a copy made by the Regular Canons of Sint-Maartensdal in Leuven in the fifteenth century (Brussels, BR, MS 2923). Johannes van Schoonhoven represents an important link between the spirituality of Geert Grote and Ruysbroek and Erasmus.

For a complete list of the works (both published and manuscripts) of Jan van Schoonhoven see A. Gruijs and E. Persoons, "Index des manuscrits contenant des œuvres de Jean de Schoonhoven," in *Scriptorium*, 20 (1966), pp. 75-82. See also A. Gruijs, *Jean de Schoonhoven*, Nimègue, 1967, II, pp. 33-34: "Epistola prima in Eemsteyn"; and also A. Gruijs, "Jean de Schoonhoven," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, tome 8, col. 724-735.

f. 158r, Table of Contents, heading, *Tabula alphabetica sermoni huius libelli*;

f. 158v, blank;

ff. 159r-160v, *Nota de turpitudinibus coniugalium* [Note on the turpitudes of marriage], incipit, "[...] De hoc ecl. ait S. Amb[rosius]..."; explicit, "[...] Expliciu[n]t octo turpitudines coniugalium [...] viri et mulieres inter [existentie] (?) solent etc." [begins imperfectly];

Although incomplete, but most certainly not by very much, this short work is also quite rare and

there are only two manuscripts recorded in *In Principio* database: Rostock, UB, MSS theol. 3, fol. 107vb; and Schlägl, Prämonstratenser-Stiftsbibl. 94, ff. 167-168.

ff. 161r-161v, Saint Jerome, *De persecutione Christianorum* [Sermon by St. Jerome on persecution], rubric, *Sermo sancti Jeronomi presbiteri de persecucionis*; incipit, "Frequenter fratres diximus semper christiani persecutionem patiuntur...".

This sermon is found frequently and its text is reproduced twice in the *Patrologia Latina* (PL 40, 1342-1344; PL 67, 1083-1085; see also *Corpus Christianorum Latinum* (CCL) 78).

Although this manuscript contains several different texts copied by different hands, the selection was nevertheless conceptualized as a unity, as they are closely related thematically. All of these texts either record sermons or provide the material for future sermons. It is likely that this manuscript was used by a Regular Canon or other male cleric who composed and delivered sermons. The manuscript has several features that would have aided in this task: the foliation, numbering of points in the margins, the underlining of the main points, the marginal notes (such as on ff. 31v-32r), and the sometimes abstract pen-and-ink designs. Such features would have helped jog the preacher's memory and structure the ideas he was to deliver orally. The present manuscript might have been used as an aid in developing sermons. One of the manuscript's early users has added a Table of Contents to make the subjects of the sermons easier to find.

The manuscript is typical of the type of devotional miscellany much used by the *Devotio Moderna*, and groups together key texts appreciated by the movement. Scholars have pointed out that the very term "Modern Devotion" is something of a misnomer, resulting from the translation of the Latin "moderna" as "modern" instead of "renewed" (see van Engen, 1988, p. 10). This religious movement, which was widespread in the northern Netherlands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, owes its origins to Geert Grote (died 1384). Following the example of Grote, whose life was centered in Deventer, churchmen lived in common, without necessarily taking religious vows. Eventually, the "Modern Devotion" consisted of two primary groups of adherents: the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, who lived together in communal houses, and the Congregation of Windesheim, a group of affiliated monasteries of the order of the Canon's Regular. Many individuals who were important to northern Humanism and the Reformation were influenced by the "Modern Devotion," Erasmus and Luther to name only a few.

It seems possible, given the watermarks which signal three different batches of paper all close in date and origin, that the manuscript was actually produced in Bavaria. But, if this is the case, it would make this codex rather unusual, for although the *Devotio Moderna* spread from the northern Netherlands rather widely to Flanders and to northern Germany, there was not a great deal of activity in southern Germany.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Priory of Alspach:

http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prieur%C3%A9_d'Alspach

On the Devotio Moderna

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devotio_Moderna

On Jan van Schoonhoven:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Schoonhoven

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