

JEAN BARTHÉLEMY, *Traité de la vanité des choses mondaines*

In French, illuminated manuscript on paper

France (Paris?), 1471

67 folios on paper, reinforced with parchment at the front of the manuscript and in the center of each quire, watermark, Briquet 1685, Paris 1471 (and similar marks, Neubourg 1471, Cléray 1480), modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto (collation i-iv¹² v¹⁰ vi¹⁰[-10, most likely with later text, see Provenance, below]), quires signed in the bottom outer margin with letters for the quire and Roman numerals for the leaf in the first half of each quire, followed by cross on the first leaf of the second half (some signatures lost to trimming); a second set of signatures slightly higher in the bottom outer margin, with Roman numerals for each bifolium, catchwords in bottom inner margin (always at least partly lost to trimming), no visible ruling or pricking, but full-length bounding lines on all sides in drypoint (justification 170-175 × 105 mm.), written above the top line in a cursive gothic bookhand, black rubrics, red two-line initials, one three-line gold initial infilled with white-patterned blue on a deeply lobed ground of blue and dull red with white tracery, with an illuminated panel border in the outer margin with berries and delicate blue and pink flowers with green leaves set in black ink scrolls with gold leaves, (82 × 30 mm.), overall in good condition, with no loss of text, illuminated initial and border on f. 1 show some signs of rubbing and wear, some damage in margins throughout due to insects. Disbound, with the removal of the boards and spine; still sewn on the original (?) five thongs. Dimensions 293 × 207 mm.

One of only five known manuscripts of this unpublished vernacular work of Franciscan spiritual direction, the text was written in 1460 and dedicated to a Franciscan nun of the Royal Abbey of Longchamp near Paris. Copied in an elegant script, and decorated with an illuminated initial and panel border, this is an early copy of the text, dated 1471. Barthélemy's works are understudied examples of the continuing importance of vernacular spirituality in the generation following Jean Gerson (d. 1429) and Robert Ciboule (d. 1458).

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in France in 1471, as indicated by the colophon on f. 67r: "parfait et acomply l'an deuant dit le iiiii^{me} jour de janiuer mil iiiii^{cccc} lxxi AMEN," (Finished and completed in the year previously mentioned, the fourth day of January, 1471. Amen). The watermark of the paper (Briquet 1685: Paris 1471), as well as the style of the border on f. 1 (compare, for example, the very similar borders used in the somewhat more deluxe London, British Library Harley MSS 3799-3809, from Paris, 1475) suggest that it was copied in or near Paris, an origin in keeping with the other known manuscripts of this text. Marks of early readership can be found in frequent manicules throughout the manuscript (e.g. ff. 15v, 16, 16v, etc.) and one marginal "nota" (f. 16v).
2. Owned by Frances Vaurelha (b. 1508) in Albi (a town northwest of Toulouse) in 1552. A note in Occitan on f. 67v, signed with this name and dated June 15, 1530, relates to the removal of some trees from the main square of Albi: incipit, "L'an v^c xxx et xv jorn del mes de Junet foret bayla la comysye as ysols ... tres peyre par mus urai toblar." Vaurelha was the author of a "journal" of civic events in Albi between 1489 and 1552, some 30 folios long, of which this note forms a part. In this manuscript's original binding (and at least as late as 1890; see Portal, 1890-1891, where these notes are described in some detail), the *Traité* was preceded and followed by a large number of

leaves (no longer included with the present, unbound manuscript), on which Vaurelha recorded his journal in the mid-sixteenth century. The journal now exists as a separate manuscript (29 folios, incipit, "Lo temps passat quy a pogut a passat lo temps em que em passrem..."). The sole entry extant in the current manuscript, on f. 67v, falls under the category of public works. The notes provide valuable information about sixteenth-century civic life in Albi, for which little other evidence is now extant (Portal, 1890-1891, p. 230).

3. Owned by M. de La Tour in 1890 (Portal, 1890-1891, p. 229).
4. Modern foliation in pencil in the top outer recto, probably not by the same modern hand that has added (also in pencil) a circled numeral "5" to the bottom inner margin of f. 1.

TEXT

ff. 1-67, incipit, "A la louange et honneur de dieu et contempnement des chouses terriennes, cy commence vng petit traictie de la vanite des choses mondaines...", *Le premier chapitre qui est le prologue du liure et introduccion de la parole pour thume [sic, for "theume"] donnee par la dame Alacteur du traictier [rubric in black], incipit [main text], "Semblance radieuse figure et clere ymaige de dieu en trinite ... Laquelle nous soit par luy octroye et donnee doucement AMEN," parfait et acomply l'an deuant dit le iii^{me} jour de janiuer mil iii^{cccc} lxxi AMEN [colophon in black].*

Jean Barthélemy (fl. 1446-1460), *Traité de la vanité des choses mondaines (Treatise on the Vanity of Worldly Things)*. The treatise begins with a short prologue that explains the circumstances of the text's composition: "A la louange et honneur de dieu et contempnement des chouses terriennes, cy commence vng petit traictie de la vanite des choses mondaines, fait lan mille iii^c lx a l'instance et honnorable et deuote religieuse seur Jehanne Girad du tres tresreligieux [sic] couuent de l'umilite de Notre Dame de Longchamp par le plus petit et indigne des mineurs frere Jehan Bertelemy," (For the praise and honor of God, and the disdain for earthly things, here begins a small treatise on the vanity of worldly things, made in the year 1460 at the request of the honorable and devout nun, sister Jeanne Girad [sometimes spelled Giraude] of the very pious convent of the Humility of Our Lady of Longchamp, by the smallest and most unworthy of Franciscans, brother Jean Barthélemy).

Nothing further is known about the identity of Jehanne Girad, but the abbey where she lived, dedicated to L'Umilité de Notre Dame, can be identified as Longchamp Abbey, a Franciscan (Order of St. Clare) convent in what is now the Bois de Boulogne on the western edge of Paris. The abbey was founded by St. Isabel of France (1225-1270), sister of the French king St. Louis IX, in 1259, but was closed during the French Revolution and the building (apart from one tower, which still stands) was demolished in 1794.

As for Barthélemy himself, he is the author not just of this treatise, but of at least two others, *Le livret de triple viduité* (The Little Book of Three-fold Widowhood), 1453 and *Le livret de crainte amoureuse* (The Little Book of Fearful Love), 1457, which was written for another Longchamp Poor Clare, Katherine de Seine (de Sains?: BnF, MS fr. 1880 and MS fr. 9611 disagree on the spelling of her name; see Omont, 1896, no. 9611). An additional anonymous corpus of three sermons and a short treatise on *Les défauts de la langue* appear in an anthology alongside his three known works (BnF, MS fr. 9611, ff. 140r-191v), and may also be his work, although he is not explicitly claimed as their author (Longpré, 1936, col. 1270).

Little is known about Barthélemy's life outside his works (see Longpré, 1936 for the following biography). He is known to have been in Soissons in 1446, and then at Rouen in 1450, where he preached a cycle of Lenten sermons and came to the negative attention of Raoul Roussel, the archbishop of Rouen. The archbishop denounced him at the University of Paris in 1451, where he was then a bachelor, but the faculty rejected the allegations, and Barthélemy was promoted by the university to the rank of master in 1452. His three known works were written over the course of the subsequent decade, all being directed at a female religious audience, and more specifically the sisters of Longchamp Abbey, whose spiritual direction seems to have been his particular concern.

No edition exists of the *Traité* or any of Barthélemy's other works, which have never been printed. The *Traité* has been identified in only four other manuscripts besides this one (see below, Online Resources, for the entry in the JONAS database), all dating to around the same time, in the 1460s and 1470s, shortly following the text's composition. This manuscript dates to the same period (1471). Three of the other four copies of this text are now in France: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 9611 (a copy of all three of Barthélemy's known works made in 1474 in Paris for the Celestines [Hermits of St. Damian]), BnF, MS fr. 13305 (a copy of the *Traité* alone, with a contemporary ex libris of St. Clare in Grenoble), and, perhaps most spectacularly, a deluxe 1466 copy of the *Traité* alone, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5102, which includes a total of nineteen miniatures illustrating the text. A fourth copy of the *Traité* is Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, MS 228.

The text itself is a representative example of late medieval Franciscan spirituality, tailored for a monastic female audience. Barthélemy is indebted to Franciscan authors such as Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, reveres the Franciscan founding saints Francis and Clare, and upholds Franciscan ideals of poverty and prayer (Longpré, 1935, col. 1271). As a work in the (French) vernacular, the text would have been appropriate for the female audience of Poor Clares, less likely than their male Franciscan counterparts to be literate in Latin. Clarissan nuns, indeed, were traditionally under the spiritual direction and guidance of Franciscan friars, particularly in the form of sermons and treatises like this one, advocating the religious virtues of discipline, obedience, and the practice of devotional exercises (Roest, 2013, pp. 285-286). In providing such spiritual direction, Barthélemy acts in a tradition dating back to St. Francis himself, but embracing texts also like Guibert of Tournai's *Epistula ad dominam Isabellam*, a treatise on virginity dedicated to the Longchamp founder St. Isabel (Roest, 2013, p. 302). The *Traité*, therefore, has particular value as a witness to the approved spiritual diet for female religious in the second half of the fifteenth century, as well as to the continued importance of women as an audience for Franciscan spiritual writing.

This particular manuscript is evidence also of the tradition's influence outside the convent walls, where a treatise written in the vernacular for a female religious audience finds itself likewise well adapted to a male lay audience, in the person of the civic-minded sixteenth-century owner Frances Vaurelha (see above, under Provenance).

LITERATURE

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Roest, Bert. *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform*, Leiden, Brill, 2013.

ONLINE RESOURCES

On Longchamp Abbey

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08179a.htm>

"Vanité des choses mondaines, Jean Barthelemy" in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS

<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/11347>

"Jean Barthelemy" in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS

<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/intervenant/3677>

Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1880 (*Le livret de crainte amoureuse*)

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059161h/f109.item>

Paris, BnF, MS fr. 13305 (*Traité de la vanité des choses mondaines*)

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90613432>

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