

[ANONYMOUS], *Brevis concordantia passionis* (Brief Concordance of the Passion of Christ)

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
Western Germany(?), dated 1497

v (nineteenth-century paper) + 24 + v (nineteenth-century paper) folios on paper, watermark: unicorn similar to Briquet 9998, 10008, 10013-17, Rhineland, north-eastern France, Belgium and Netherlands, c. 1442-1492, modern foliation in pencil, 1-24, complete (collation i-ii<sup>12</sup>), alphanumerical signatures, ruled in lead point (justification 204 x 130 mm.), written in dark brown ink in a gothic cursive bookhand on 19 lines, capitals touched in red, one 2-line initial in red, a few small stains, otherwise in excellent condition. Half-bound in the nineteenth century in black morocco over pasteboard, a label pasted on the upper cover with the handwritten title "Brevis Concordantia Passionis," leather and boards worn, but in overall good condition. Dimensions 300 x 208 mm.

A Gospel harmony narrating the Passion of Christ, as derived from the four Gospels in the text of the Vulgate. We have not identified another copy in manuscript or print, and this may be the unique copy of a text compiled by an unknown author for his own edification and spiritual development. Written in very clear script and preserved in excellent condition, this witness to the emerging biblical humanism at the end of the fifteenth century is ideally suited for teaching and research.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Western German, as suggested by the evidence of the script and watermark, in the late fifteenth century, almost certainly in 1497, since the number, "1497," written at the end of the text on f. 20v, must be the date the manuscript was copied.
2. Belonged to the Lower German Province of the Redemptorist Congregation; their nineteenth-century bookplate, "Bibl. Prov. Germ. Inferioris," on the front pastedown and a stamp on the recto of the first front flyleaf: "Bibl. Prov. Germ. Inf. C. SS. R."

The Redemptorist Congregation (CSSR) was founded by Alfons of Liguori (1696-1787) in 1732. The Lower German Province was established in 1859, and the order opened a seminary and college in 1861 in Maria Hamicolt near Dülmen, Westphalia, which was relocated to Trier in 1898. In 1902, the college moved again to Geistingen in Siegtal (incorporated into the town of Hennef later, and then known as Hennef-Geistingen). In 1996, it ceased use as an active seminary; in January 2006, it was sold by the Order, and the library was dispersed (Online Resources). Some of the manuscripts, including this one, were transferred the Redemptorist monastery at Heiligenstadt; when this monastery was in turn closed in 2018, the manuscripts were sold.

## TEXT

ff. 1-20v, incipit, "Collegerunt pontifices et phariseae consilium et dicebant, quid facimus quia hic homo multa signa facit. Si dimittimus eum sic omnes credent in eum. Et veniet Romani et

tollent locum nostrum et gentem. Unus autem ex ipsis Cayphas nomine cum esset pontifex anni illius dixit eis: vos nescitis quidquam nec cogitatis, quia expedit vobis ut unus moriatur homo pro populo, et non tota gens pereat... et ibi morabatur cum discipulis suis [John 11:47-54] ... Et factum est dum mente consternate essent de isto: ecce duo viri steterunt secus illas in veste fulgenti ... Et recorde sunt verborum eius. [Luke 24:4-8] + Tunc exeuntes fugierunt cito de monumento cum timore et gaudio magno currentes nuntiare discipul eius [Matt. 28:8] + et nemini quidquam dixerunt: Invaserat enim eas tremor et pavor [Mark 16:8] + Cucurrit ergo maria et venit ad Simonem Petrum et ad alium discipulum quem amabat Jesus et dicit eis: Tulerunt Dominum de monumento [John 20:2] i 1497"; [ff. 21-24v, blank].

*Brevis Concordantia Passionis*, anonymous Gospel harmony of the Passion of Christ; we have not identified other copies of this text, and this may be the unique copy. Verses within the text that are derived from different Gospels are usually (but not always) separated with a small cross; there are no rubrics within the text identifying the Gospel sources.

The text in our manuscript narrates the Passion of Christ merging the four Gospels. The events are gathered from the four sources in chronological order. The text begins with the Meeting of the Sanhedrin (John 11:47-54), the counsel that took the decision to put Jesus to death, an event described only in the Gospel of John. The narrative then moves to the story of Fire from Heaven (Luke 9:51-56; "Factum est autem tum (dum) complerentur dies assumptionis eius et ipse faciem suam firmavit ut iret in Hierusalem... Et ebierunt in aliud castellum." f. 1r-v), when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritan village that did not welcome Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. The event is only included in the Gospel of Luke. The author then moves to the Gospel of Mark to include a passage foretelling the Death of Christ (Mark 10:32-34; "Erant autem in via astedentes Hierosolmam et precedebat illos Ihesus et stupebant et sequentes timebant... et tertia die resurget." f. 1v), a passage found also in Matthew and Luke. Thereafter the narrative continues with the anointing of Jesus, found in all four Gospels, but chosen from John 12:1-11. The text continues in this manner, concluding with an account of the Resurrection, with verses derived from the four Gospels, then, from Luke, the sequence of the women finding Jesus's tomb empty, and from Matthew and Mark, the verses describing how the women fled in fear. The manuscript ends with the verse John 20:2, recounting how Mary Magdalen tells the disciples the news that Jesus has been taken from the tomb.

The Gospel harmony in our manuscript does not appear to derive from any well-known existing harmony. It does not, for instance, derive from the *Monotessaron* by Jean Gerson (1363-1429), where the Meeting of the Sanhedrin (*Monotessaron*, chapter 107; see Online Resources), with which our manuscript begins, is narrated more completely (John 11:47-56), and the text then continues with three accounts of the death of Christ foretold, derived from the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, leaving out the episode of the Fire from Heaven found in our manuscript. Instead, the text in our manuscript is very likely an example of an independent exercise or "pious act" by a theologian, testifying to the focus on the Gospels that was so important in the emerging biblical humanism of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the later Middle Ages, harmonies were intended for meditative and contemplative use. Both Gerson and Erasmus (1466-1536) urged students of theology to conduct independent critical investigations of the life of Jesus in the Gospels (De Lang, 1991, p. 47-48); Erasmus identified the Gospels as the best source of piety.

A Gospel harmony compiles the canonical gospels into a single account, either into a merged consecutive narrative or a synopsis laying out the accounts in parallel columns for comparison and study. The earliest known gospel harmony is the *Diatessaron* by Tatian of Mesopotamia composed in the 2nd century (see Online Resources), known through a sixth-century Latin translation, Codex Fuldensis. In the fifth century, Augustine aimed to show in his *De consensu evangelistarum* that there were no conflicts between the Gospel accounts; they vary depending on the focus of each author, Matthew on royalty, Mark on humanity, Luke on priesthood, and John on divinity. Jean Gerson's fifteenth-century Gospel harmony the *Monotessaron* of 1420 gave priority to the Gospel of John, which he took as a starting point, and to which he inserted material from the other evangelists.

## LITERATURE

Briquet, C. *Les filigranes: dictionnaire historique...*, vol. 3: L-O, Paris, 1907, pp. 520-523.

De Lang, M. "Jean Gerson's Harmony of the Gospels (1420)," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History*, 71:1 (1991), pp. 37-49.

Hazard, M. *The Literal Sense and The Gospel of John in Late-Medieval Commentary and Literature*, New York, 2002.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

The library of the Redemptorist Seminary in Hennef-Geistingen (Monumenta Germaniae Historica)

<https://www.mgh.de/en/mgh-library/about-the-mgh-library/redemptorist-seminary-library>

Tatian, Gospel Harmony

<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/ahd/tatian/tatia.htm?tatia136.htm>

Jean Gerson, *Monotessaron* (Köln, Arnold Ther Hoernen, c. 1474)

<http://www.ub.uni-koeln.de/cdm/compoundobject/collection/inkunabeln/id/15443/rec/2>

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