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***Consolatorium infirmorum* (Consolation of the Sick)
In Latin and German, decorated manuscript on paper
Western Germany(?), c. 1440-1460**

iv (modern paper) + 78 + *iii* (modern paper) folios on paper, watermark: bull's head surmounted by a cross, widely diffused, but this variant with large eyes and nostrils is not identified by Briquet, modern foliation in pencil, 1-78, complete, quires are irregular and difficult to collate, (collation probably *i*² *ii*⁸ *iii*¹⁶ *iv*⁸ *v*¹⁴ *vi*¹⁰ *vii*⁴ *viii*⁴ *ix*¹⁰ *x*²), no catchwords or signatures, guides for rubrics in lower margins, mostly cropped, frame ruled in gray ink (justification c. 103 x 68 mm.), written in brown ink in gothic hybrida script in a single column on 17-23 lines, capitals touched in red, rubrics in red, line-endings in red or blue, certain passages underlined in red, 1- to 2-line initials in red, three larger (3- to 7-lines) initials in red decorated with blue penwork (ff. 1, 48), a small hole on f. 13 with loss of some letters, small tears on ff. 19 and 59 with no loss of text, a few worm holes, some stains and signs of use, but overall in good condition. Bound in the nineteenth century in black leather over pasteboards, both covers blind-tooled with a single frame using a foliage roll, title in gilt on the front board "*Consolatorium Infirmorum. Mss. Sac. XV.*", spine flat, blind-tooled with foliage filets and stamps, leather scuffed and worn, but overall in good condition. Dimensions 147 x 104 mm.

Works on the art of dying, *Ars moriendi*, from the late Middle Ages offer special insights into religious belief and practice. The texts assembled in this small volume under the title of "On the Consolation of the Sick" form a comprehensive treatise for churchmen offering pastoral care to the seriously ill as they faced death. Investigating the origin of this bilingual text, which is still unstudied and very likely has never appeared in print, as well as its relationship to other *Ars moriendi* manuals, are exciting prospects for further research.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of the script and the texts in German indicate that the manuscript was written in Germany in the middle of the fifteenth century, c. 1440-1460; additional study of the watermark evidence and language may help localize this more securely, but the script and initials suggest an origin in Western Germany is likely.
2. There is a later personal ownership stamp with initials forming a ligature "EC" or "EG" or "FG" on the first and last leaves, ff. 1 and 78v.
3. A modern bookplate, which was never filled in, of a library in Aachen, "Bibl. Domus Aquisgranensis" inside the front board.
4. The number "70" inscribed in brown ink on a small label pasted above the Aachen bookplate.
5. A nineteenth- or twentieth-century bookseller's inscription inside the back board: "No. 1144 / f3- ÖW / A."
6. Belonged to the seminary of the Lower German Province of the Redemptorist

Congregation in the twentieth century. 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. 1-78, *Incipit opusculum quod proprie dici potest Consolatorium Infirmorum. In quo continetur primo de infirmitate carnis atque de tolerancia diuine correptionis. Inde quia sicut dicit beatissimus papa Gregorius per pondus egritudinis pervenitur Post hec habentur interrogaciones que fieri dicunt morituris dum abduc vsum rationis habent atque loquendi facultatem sic patebit, incipit, "Quia ut dicit apostolus Paulus quecumque scripta sunt ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt ut per patientiam et consolatorum scripturarum spem habeamus Sequitur oratio Domine Deus meus misericordia mea Iesus exoppositus [sic, expositus]";*

Consolatorium infirmorum (The Consolation of the Sick), including:

ff. 1-3v, Text concerning corporal sickness, referring to St. Augustine and St. Anselm;

ff. 3v-14, Text on the seven deadly sins (septem peccata mortalia), referring to Jean Gerson (1363-1429), and dealing with each sin individually, "superbia" (pride, ff. 5-6), "invidia" (envy, ff. 6-7), "ira" (wrath, ff. 7-8), "avaricia" (avaritia, greed, ff. 8-9), "accidia" (acedia, sloth, ff. 9-10v), "luxuria" (lust, ff. 10v-12v), "gula" (gluttony, ff. 12v-14);

ff. 14-15, *Nota*, incipit, "Hec exerpta ad plenam confessionem faciendam utilia. Sumpta sunt de tripartita Gerson et confessionali dykelspuchel . . .; [f. 14v], "Confessus itaque generalitas . . .";

As explained in the preliminary note, these excerpts from Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* and Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl (c. 1360-1433) *Confessionale* were "useful for making a full confession."

ff. 15-17, [Prayer of St. Ambrose to be said before the Mass], incipit, "Ad mensam dulcissimi convivii tui . . .";

Attributed to St. Ambrose of Milan, this widely disseminated prayer was actually by a later anonymous medieval author; said before the Mass, it emphasizes the unworthiness of the petitioner: "Lord Jesus Christ, I approach Thy banquet table in fear and trembling, for I am a sinner, and dare not rely on my own worth, but only on Thy goodness and mercy. I am defiled by my many sins in body and soul, and by my unguarded thoughts and words"; see Online Resources for the text in Latin and English.

ff. 17v-18, [Prayer], incipit, "Tibi Domine laus . . .";

ff. 18v-19, [Eucharistic hymn of Thomas Aquinas], incipit, "Adoro te devote latens deitas ...";

ff. 19-23, [Prayer of St. Anselm of Canterbury], incipit, "Suscipiat pietas tua ...";

ff. 23-24v, *Alias oratiunculas breues et deuotas. Require supra de arte moriendi in fine, etc.*; Augustinus, incipit, "Cum senseris te morti appropinquare non turberis [turbetis] neque timeas a facie mortis ..."; [f. 23v], incipit, "Diliges Dominum Deum tuum etcetera, numque mens sancta vacare poterit a dilectione..." [Augustine]; f. 24, incipit, "Denique quis numerare potest presentis vite molestias, cupere, amare, odire, fornicari, adulterari, occidere vel occidi, rapere, jurare nonne inimice nobis passiones sunt..." [Augustine], f. 24v, incipit, "Domine Ihesu Christe fili Dei vivi propter illam amaritudinem passionis tue quem sustinuisti propter nos maxime in illa hora quando sanctissima anima tua agreassa est de corpore tuo sanctissimo misere anime mee in egressu suo"; f. 24v, incipit, "O benignissime Domine Ihesu Christe, respice me miserimum peccatorem...";

Five short prayers and devotions on the art of dying, including three of St. Augustine.

ff. 25-28, [On the usefulness of sickness], *De utilitate egritudinum et cetera*, incipit, "Dei correctio est egritudo corporis ...";

ff. 28-33v, Six texts in German concerning sickness, beginning with one about a man who had been ill for a long time and was approached by an angel, *Von liden in siechtagen*, incipit, "Ein moensch der wass gar lang siech gesin do kam ein engel ...";

ff. 33v-46v, [Short texts in Latin and German related to sickness and death, on patience, not fearing death, offering consolation, and the final words before death], ff. 33v-36v, *de paciencia etcetera*, ff. 36v-38, *conclusio de paciencia*, ff. 38-40v, "de morte non timenda" (a part of this text on f. 40 was crossed out with heavy lines in black and red), ff. 40v-45, *Item consolatio*, ff. 45v-46, *eyn hubsch lere*, f. 46r-v, *am letsten end sprich*;

ff. 46v-47, [The Apostles' Creed in German], incipit, "Ich gloub in Gott, vatter almechtigen, schöpffer himmels und ertrichs... urstend des phleisches, und der ewig leben. Amen."; [f. 47v, blank];

ff. 48-65v, [Sermon in German for the sick, followed by two prayers], f. 62v, incipit, "O schöpffer..."; f. 64, incipit, "O herr, hymelscher vatter, ich loben und dank dir ...";

The opening salutation is in Latin; the sermon repeatedly invokes Church fathers and other authorities, especially Augustine and Anselm, whose names are underlined in red ink.

ff. 66-68v, "Incipiunt interrogationes quae fieri dicunt...";

Questions about the art of dying attributed to St. Anselm (c. 1033-1109), often known as *Admonitio morienti et de peccatis suis nimium formidanti* (The Admonition to Someone Dying and Fearing Excessively for his Sins); printed in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 158, col. 685–868; circulated widely in Latin and in vernacular translations.

ff. 68v-75v, Prayers, concluding with a prayer to Virgin Mary (f. 75) and St. Michael (f. 75v); the prayers have "N[omine]" for inserting the name of the dying person;

ff. 75v-77, *Sequitur commendation*, incipit, "Commendo te omnipotenti Deo ...";

Prayer commending a departing soul to God.

f. 77r-v, Liturgy for the absolution at the moment of death, "in articulo mortis";

f. 78, [Prayer], *Oratio agonisa vita*, incipit, "In manus tuas domine commendo spiritum meum. O piissime Ihesum, omnis salus mea in manu tua est ... et hoc firmissime credo, et sic teneo. Sequitur oratio Domine Deus meus misericordia mea Iesus exoppositus [*sic*, expositus]"; [f. 78v, blank].

The title *Consolatorium Infirmorum* (On the Consolation of the Sick) for this collection of prayers, sermons and Offices comes from the opening rubric, but the title, *Ars moriendi*, would have been equally suitable. Guides for death and dying known as an *Ars moriendi* (On the Art of Dying) such as this one were an established genre in the fifteenth century. These texts would have been used by a priest or bishop to pray, preach, and administer the sacraments of penance, communion and anointing at the bedside of a person who was facing imminent death.

The doctrine of Salvation changed over the course of the centuries. Our manuscript begins by referring to the Apostle Paul, who preached that Christ's Incarnation, Passion, and Crucifixion redeems members of the Church from sin, and that the dead members of the Church will be resurrected on judgment day to join the living members in collective salvation. Very early in the Middle Ages, St. Augustine (354-430) taught that those who had received the grace (mercy) of God formed a spiritual City of God (*civitas Dei*), who will go to heaven after the Last Judgment. In the thirteenth century the church's teaching emphasized the importance of confession: to attain salvation, the penitent was required to confess all his or her mortal sins (McCue, 1980). The difficulty of remembering all one's sins contributed to the growing anxiety for one's salvation that characterized late medieval piety; *ars moriendi* manuals show us how the church answered this anxiety.

De arte moriendi (On the art of death), the third part of the *Opus tripartitum* of the French theologian and philosopher Jean Gerson (1363-1429), which also circulated in Gerson's French version, *Science de bien mourir ou médecine de l'âme*, composed c. 1400-1408, was divided according to the four ways in which the dying person was to be assisted: 1) admonitions, 2) questions, 3) prayers to be said for the person to repeat, and 4) directions on practices to perform and to avoid in the presence of a dying person (Wicks, 1998, p. 347). Gerson's work was followed by the *Ars moriendi* ("The Art of Dying"), which circulated in numerous manuscripts and later in print, in two versions, the long version composed c. 1415 by an anonymous Dominican friar in Southern Germany, and a short version, composed c. 1450 (the version found in the famous illustrated block book editions). Important fifteenth-century *ars moriendi* manuals in German include *Kunst des heilsamen Sterbens* (1434) by the Austrian theologian, Thomas Peuntner, and two treatises by Johann Geiler of Kaisersberg: *Wie man sich halten sol bei einem sterbenden menchen* (1482) and *Ein ABC, wie man sich schicken soll, zu einem köstlichen seligen Tod* (1497).

The text in our manuscript includes Anselm's questions about the art of dying, which are a central part of the Latin *Ars moriendi*; the section in our manuscript on the seven deadly sins can be compared generally with the temptations presented in the *Ars moriendi*. But our bilingual text (Latin and German) appears to be an unstudied and unprinted example of this genre. It shows how a medieval priest assisted the dying person in attaining salvation and eternal life and opens up a wider perspective on the study of death in the later Middle Ages and the rise of the literary tradition of the *ars moriendi*.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Prayer of St. Ambrose Before Mass

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/AnteMissam/Ambrose.html>

"The Redemptorist seminary library in Hennef-Geistingen," *Monumenta germaniae historica*
<http://webserver1.mgh.de/bibliothek/provenance/geistingen/>

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