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DENYS THE CARTHUSIAN, *De natura aeterni et veri Dei* (On the Nature of the Eternal and True God), and *De passionibus animae* (On the Passions of the Soul)

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Southeastern Netherlands, Lower Rhine, (perhaps Roermond?), c. 1452-1475

77 folios on paper, watermark: bull's head with eyes and nostrils surmounted by a single-contour star (see Provenance), modern foliation in pencil, 1-77, lacking 9 leaves in the beginning (collation i¹² [-1 through 9, lacking nine leaves before f. 1, with loss of text] ii-vi¹² vii¹⁴), horizontal catchwords, modern alphabetic quire signatures, frame ruled in brown ink (justification c. 220 x 143 mm.), written in brown ink in Gothic cursive script in single column on c. 40 lines, spaces left for initials, never painted, some small stains including water damage in the outer margins, otherwise in very good condition. Bound in the nineteenth century within pasteboards with marbled paper, a label pasted on the front cover with a description in German, binding and several leaves loose. Dimensions 280 x 210 mm.

The emergence of this manuscript of two works by Denys the Carthusian is a significant discovery given the rarity of manuscripts of these texts (one exists in only two other copies, and the other in only one). The fact that our manuscript was likely copied in the author's lifetime and perhaps even at the charterhouse of Roermond, where he spent most of his life, increases the importance of this discovery. Known for his ability to synthesize previous doctrines of spiritual life, Denys the Carthusian wrote prolifically – these two treatises discuss the invisible nature of God and the soul.

PROVENANCE

1. The watermark and the style of the script suggest dating this manuscript in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, during the lifetime of the author, Denys the Carthusian (1402-1471). His works were copied and circulated as soon he had finished composing them; the first text in the manuscript was composed c. 1452. The watermark evidence localizes the manuscript in the Rhineland. The bull's head was the most extensively used watermark in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and a great number of variants can be identified, dated, and localized. The variant in our manuscript, with eyes and nostrils, surmounted by a single-contour star (Piccard Ochsenkopf VII; Briquet tête de bœuf no. 4), can be localized in the Upper, Middle and Lower Rhine from c. 1446-56 onwards. The watermark is found also in western Switzerland, Alsace, Lorraine and Burgundy, and probably originally came from Caselle in Piedmont (cf. Tschudin, 2012, plate 1 after Hans Kälin, Online Resources).

Confirming the localization to the Lower Rhine, possibly even to the Carthusian monastery at Roermond where the author lived, or in that general proximity, is a contemporary inscription on f. 77v, "Mynen (?) gantz wyllig geuw (?) furerder (?) vorerden dienzt."

2. Bound in the nineteenth century by a German-speaking owner. Ownership label inside the front cover entirely scraped. Modern booksellers's markings below the label in

pencil, as well as on f. 77v. Nineteenth-century pen-trials on f. 77v.

TEXT

ff. 1-37v, incipit, "//agendi vel movendi seu transmutandi aliud in quantum aliud, sive in genere substantiae sive accidentis actus valeat nuncupari. Unde Deus qui et omnia condidit movet ac regit actus vocatur ... ipsique placeat a quo descendit omne bonum qui nil boni impremiatum relinquit. Porro quidquid inconvenienter et insufficienter allatum est id mee imperfectioni adtribuo a bonitate divina ignosci concupio et a doctoribus emendari ac perfici opto. Ad veneraconem [sic] atque preconium eius qui est super omnia Deus sublimis et benedictus. Amen";

Denys the Carthusian, *De natura aeterni et veri Dei*, beginning imperfectly in article 14 (lacking nine leaves at the beginning); edited in *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia*, vol. 34, pp. 7-97; the text in our manuscript corresponds to pages 28-97 (Online Resources). First printed, *D. Dionysii Carthusiani Operum minorum tomus primus*, Cologne, Johannes Soter, 1532; known in only two other manuscripts apart from this one, Trier, SB HS 1207/505 (Emery, 1999, vol. 121, p. 232, no. 63).

ff. 38-76, incipit, "Primus homo de terra terrenus secundus homo de celo celestis. Igitur sicut portamus imaginatem terrem, portemus et imaginatem celestis ... qui est super omnia Deus sublimis et benedictus. Amen"; [ff. 76v-77v, blank].

Denys the Carthusian, *De passionibus animae*; edited in *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia*, vol. 40, pp. 323-392; first printed, *D. Dionysii Carthusiani Summa vitiorum et virtutum libri duo. Eiusdem De passionibus animae liber unus ...*, Cologne, Johannes Soter 1533; known in only one manuscript apart from this one, Utrecht, UB HS 198 (IV.E.7) (Emery, 1999, vol. 121, pp. 246-247, no. 134).

Denys the Carthusian (Dionysius Cartusiensis), a monk of the Carthusian monastery, or charterhouse, of Roermond, was "probably the most prolific writer of the entire Middle Ages," whose writings embrace every aspect of medieval religious, theological, and philosophical culture (Emery, 1991, pp. 5, 25). He wrote commentaries on every book of the Bible, on every work by Pseudo-Dionysius, on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, over 900 sermons, and much more. His works are edited in 42 large volumes: *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani opera omnia*, Montreuil, 1896-1901, Tournai, 1902-1912, Parkminster, 1935.

The two works included in our manuscript were printed in 1532-1533 in the edition of Denys's works by the Carthusians of St. Barbara, Cologne. Only two manuscript of *De natura aeterni et veri Dei*, and only a single manuscript of *De passionibus animae*, were listed by Kent Emery in the 1991 publication on the life and work of Denys the Carthusian (see Text above), which included a study of the transmission of his work in manuscripts and a critical edition of selected works. No copies have since been recorded in *Mirabile* (Online Resources).

Denys composed *De natura aeterni et veri Dei* around 1452 (Nabert, 2001, p. 109). The work is inspired by writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and its intention is to increase knowledge of the invisible nature of God (*ibid.*). It is related to another work that Denys the Carthusian composed around the same time, *De venustate mundi et puchritudine Dei*, treating the same

subject. The second work included in our manuscript, *De passionibus animae*, is a philosophical treatise about the soul, written c. 1430 (Heidingsfelder, 1923).

Denys matriculated at the University of Cologne in 1421, before entering the charterhouse of Roermond in 1424 or 1425, where he spent the rest of his life. At the monastery he wrote tirelessly, beginning a new work immediately after finishing the last (it is said that he slept only three hours a night). He reports in a letter to Arnoldus Campion, a Doctor of Civil Law, that he lent his works out for copy. Consequently, even in his lifetime, many of them could not be found in his own library (Emery, 1991, p. 28). Denys himself made a list of his writings for monks in the charterhouse in Bruges. In it he specifies that nearly all of them conclude with the formula: "Qui est super omnia Deus sublimis et benedictus" and that they are divided into "articles" rather than chapters or other divisions (Emery, 1991, p. 29). This is the case for the two works contained in our manuscript.

The early circulation of Denys's works in the fifteenth century was confined mostly to the area from Utrecht to Cologne and throughout the Rhineland and Alsace extending to Mainz and Basel in the south (Emery, 1991, p. 35). Of the extant medieval manuscripts of his works, 90 were made in the Netherlands, 65 in Germany, 4 in Switzerland, 3 in Austria, 2 in Alsace and one in England (Emery, 1991, p. 35). His works were published as early as 1521-1538 in 57 volumes in different formats and by different printers through the extraordinary efforts of Dirk Loër and others at the charterhouse of St. Barbara in Cologne. Several works by Denys have not survived in manuscript and are only known in this early edition. Indeed, this edition probably contributed to the loss of manuscripts. Loër states in one of his letters that he did not care if the manuscripts were damaged by the printers, because he believed that they will benefit more by their printing than by their careful preservation (Emery, 1991, p. 32).

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<https://archive.org/details/doctorisecstati10unkngoog/page/n36/mode/2up>

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Denys the Carthusian, *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia*

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=denisworks>

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