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JEAN GERSON, anthology, including *Miroir de l'âme* (Mirror of Simple Souls), the *Montagne de contemplation* (Mountain of Contemplation), and the *Science de bien mourir* (How to Make a Good Death), along with five other works

In Middle French, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northern France (Paris?), c. 1420-1440

i + 88 + i folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto, complete (collation: i-xi⁸), horizontal catchwords in lower right-hand margin, some decorated, ruled in black (justification 194 x 127 mm), in double columns of 35 lines, pricking along outer margins, a single French textualis script, red rubrics, 2-line initials and 1-line paraph marks in alternate gold and blue with contrasting blue and red ink flourishing, 4-5-line champ initials in gold on parted rose and blue grounds powdered in white designs (ff.1, 18v, 30), that on f.1 bears rinceaux including gold ivy leaves, some medieval parchment repairs (ff.33, 43, 49, 66, 73), some stains and cockling throughout, scuffs to opening leaf. Bound in nineteenth-century red leather over pasteboards, gilt-tooled with single and double fillet frames on each board with floral sprays at corners, the spine with rectangular gilt compartments of ornate fleur-de-lys with other smaller fleur-de-lys at each corner, one compartment with title "Medicine de l'ame," gilt fore-edge, various modern pencil notes added to front and rear pastedowns and first flyleaf, including "91 A4," "MSS Gerson 15 guineas," "r/p/s 564," "12/12/," and "2500- ryx/xb Prov," overall good condition. Dimensions 295 × 214mm.

A living part of Catholic doctrine to this day, Jean Gerson authored each of the texts in this select anthology, which dates close to his lifetime. Today, most of these works do not exist in manuscripts elsewhere in North America, and this is the first time this volume has come up for sale in well over fifty years. Indeed, single-author anthologies of Gerson's works in French have rarely appeared for sale in the last century anywhere in the world, and the present sale presents an unparalleled collecting opportunity.

PROVENANCE

1. Francoys Boyfiel: his 16th-century signature and the repeated motto "Mieulx que plus" before "Aunb mot L. ma desceu Plus que ne di je la plus" (f. 88v), obscuring an earlier ownership inscription which begins "ce livre appartient."
2. Didier Petit de Meurville (1793-1873), French diplomat, painter, and important art-collector (f.1, "Manus. No 365 du catal. de Mr D. Petit"). The present manuscript was listed in his sale as lot 365 in Paris in March, 1843. In France after the Haitian revolution, this expatriate amassed a major art collection, sold it, then became a painter in his own right, as well as serving as a minor diplomat in his later years.
3. Jean-Baptiste Joseph Barrois (1784-1855), a bibliophile, amateur scholar and a collector of medieval French literature who used his government position following the Napoleonic wars to collect from libraries across Europe.

4. England, Ashburnham Place: Bertram Ashburnham (1797-1878), 4th Earl of Ashburnham, acquired the substantial Barrois collection *en bloc* in 1849. The present volume sold by Ashburnham's heir as lot 390 in Sotheby's sale on 10-14 June 1901.
5. London: James and Mary Lee Tregaskis, bookdealers, catalogue no. 554 (1904), no. 574, (a clipping from their catalogue fixed to front pastedown).
6. San Francisco, CA: Templeton Crocker (1884-1948), art-patron and yachtsman. A modern typewritten, undated note filed in the back of the volume specifies that this was the "last to be sold from the Crocker Library, San Francisco." Neither the catalogue of Crocker's library published in 1918 nor the descriptions of his manuscripts in de Ricci, I, p. 30 list this item, and so it seems to have been acquired after 1935.
7. Private American collection from the 1950-1960s: Sir John Galvin, 1908-1994, Ireland, then by descent to his heirs in Europe.

TEXT

ff. 1-8, Gerson, *Miroir de l'âme*, incipit, "Gloire soit à Dieu en cui nom ...qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum Amen" [Glorieux 312];

ff. 8-9, Gerson, *Brève manière de confession pour jeunes gens*, *Ci ensuit une briefue maniere de confesser pour ieunes gens*, incipit, "Benedicte. Sire ie me confesse a dieu ... "A la fin dira son confiteor au long puis recevra penitence et absolucion" [Glorieux 333];

ff.9-18, Gerson, *Traité des tentations*, incipit, "Pour nous humilier dessoubz la main de Dieu et pour congnoistre en general nostre grant ignorance"... "par la merite et l'intercession de tous sains et saintes. Amen" [Glorieux 324];

ff.18-29, Gerson, *Différence du péché mortel et du péché véniel*, incipit, "Qui bien considere la bonté de Dieu envers nous...que dieu veult point puissance ou volente de les punir et qu'ilz feissent contre ses commandemens," [Glorieux 328], begins with a set of chapter rubrics;

ff. 29-51v, Gerson, *La montagne de contemplation*, *Les rubriques du livre de contemplacion*, incipit, "La cause descrire en francois et a gens simples de la matiere de contemplacion ...ie la laisse auz plus grans," [Glorieux 297], begins with a set of chapter rubrics;

ff. 51v-85, Gerson, *Le mendicite espirituelle*, also known as *Le secret parlement de l'omme complaintif à son ame, sur la povreté spirituelle*, *Ci sensuiuent les chapitres de mendicite espirituelle*, incipit, "Cy commence le secret de l'ome contempletif a son ame"... "Si n'est point merueille se tu deviens umbre et vanite quat a elles te donnes" [Glorieux 317], begins with a set of chapter rubrics;

ff.85-86v, Gerson, *Piteuse complainte et oraison devote*, incipit, "Jhesus, vray espeux de virginité"... "veoir je te puisse et pardurablement aouer et cherir," [Glorieux 315];

ff. 86v-88v, Gerson, *Science de bien mourir*, *Ci sensuit la medicine de lame pour son dernier trespas*, incipit, "Se les vrais amis dun malade font grant diligence ...Explicit la medicine de lame pour son dernier trespas / Deo gracias," [Glorieux 332].

One of the most prominent churchmen of the late Middle Ages, Jean Gerson's (1363-1429) thinking continues to influence Catholic theology to this day. Already a student leader early in his career, Gerson was elected Chancellor of the University of Paris when he was quite young, and this first phase of his career focused on reforming the university, marrying the warmth of everyday preaching to the theological detail of scholasticism. Next, he tackled the papal schism, which divided the church along political lines behind a French pope in Avignon and an Italian pope in Rome. He guided both the Council of Pisa (1409) and the more successful Council of Constance (1414-18), which brought unity to the Church once more, electing a single pope, Martin V. Later his writing turned largely to devotional works. Retiring to a monastery in Lyon, Gerson's final years were enormously productive, and many of his devotional and vernacular works date to this period. The texts in the present volume date to Gerson's university period, however, and most were written just after the year 1400.

This anthology of Gerson's French works stands alone in North America, and it contributes an critical resource for scholarship concerning this important thinker. Gerson's interest in translating his own Latin works into French lay rooted in his deep belief in the pastoral duties of the clergy. The French works collected here all convey cutting-edge spiritual instruction to lay audiences of all ages, from "jeunes gens" to the elderly, and they do so in an accessible, even introductory way.

The standard edition of Gerson remains Glorieux from the mid-twentieth century, when this volume was in private hands and could not be consulted. Therefore, the present instances of these eight texts can offer new insight into the textual history of Gerson's vernacular works. For example, Glorieux's edition of *Le mendicite spirituelle* lacks a final chapter found in the present volume and in several other copies of this text identified in JONAS (for example, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 990 and 2551) that is sometimes identified as a separate work, Gerson's "Piteuse complainte et oraison devote" (Glorieux 315). Moreover, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr.1003 includes almost all of the texts, in the same order, as the present manuscript, and further research may discover whether there is any connection between the two volumes.

While French was read widely across Europe in the fifteenth century, the *champ* initials and *rinçaux* sprays decorating this volume suggest that they were painted in northern France, probably before 1450, and perhaps even before 1430, in Gerson's own lifetime. Further research into the textual stemma of these works might refine that date.

LITERATURE

Bose, Mishtooni. "Jean Gerson, poet," *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France*, ed. Rebecca Dixon, Finn E. Sinclair, Adrian Armstrong, Sylvia Huot et Sarah Kay, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 56-68.

Catalogue de la collection formée par M. Didier Petit, à Lyon, consistant en émaux, faïences, verres de Venise, Paris, 1843.

Catalogue of the Library of Charles Templeton Crocker, Hillsborough, CA, 1918.

Glorieux, Palémon. *Jean Gerson Oeuvres complètes*. 11 vols. in 10. Paris, 1960-1973.

Hobbins, Daniel. *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning*, Philadelphia, 2009.

McGuire, Brian Patrick. *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 2005.

Ouy, Gilbert, ed. *Gerson bilingue: les deux rédactions, latine et française, de quelques oeuvres du chancelier parisien*, 2 vols., Paris, 1998.

Sotheby's, *The Ashburnham Library*, 10-14 June 1901, lot 390, p.142.

ONLINE RESOURCES

JONAS, *Répertoire des textes et livres français et occitans (850-1550)*, <https://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 990
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9058102b>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2551
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000572w/>

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