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HENRICUS SUSO, *Horologium Sapientiae*

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper

Germany (Southwestern?) or Switzerland?, 1426

252 + i (paper) folios on paper, watermark, oxhead, with a rod of one line and unidentified motif, obscured by script, quires reinforced with parchment strips from an earlier thirteenth-century (?) manuscript, which was likely also used for the pastedowns, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, 1-253 including the endleaf, complete (collation, i-xiv¹²), horizontal catchword lower inner margin in quire one only, quires two-thirteen signed with letters in the top outer corner on the first leaf, frame ruled with all bounding lines full across, ff. 1-13 in ink, and thereafter very lightly in lead, prickings in three outer margins on some folios (justification, 105-100 x 66-62 mm.), written below the top line in a cursive gothic bookhand in nineteen to twenty-two long lines, majuscules within text stroked in red, red paragraph marks, red underlining for rubrics, four- to one-line red initials, some with simple red pen decoration, some stains in the lower margins and other signs of use, but generally in very good condition. Bound in its ORIGINAL BINDING of leather stained red over wooden boards with square edges, cut flush with the book block and blind tooled with an outer border of triple fillets forming a larger central panel with triple fillets saltire (a St. Andrew's cross), sewn on double alum-tawed thongs, spine with three raised bands and head and tail bands, title added in ink, "Horologium sapientiae, 1426," holes for bosses at each corner and the center of both boards, once fastened back to front (remains of strap, back board), pastedowns made from leaves from an earlier manuscript, now obscured by paper and glue, binding unobtrusively restored, both covers worn leaving part of the wood and thongs exposed, and two bands are broken at the front hinge, but in serviceable condition. Dimensions 156 x 105 mm.

The *Horologium sapientiae* by the Dominican mystic Henricus Suso was one of the most popular devotional texts of the later Middle Ages. Its emphasis on the Passion of Christ and its critique of the failings of the contemporary Church explains its appeal with both clerics and lay men and women associated with the *Devotio moderna*. Despite the numerous surviving copies, this text has only rarely been available on the market recently (since 1958, the Schoenberg Database records only this manuscript and another in French; see also Sotheby's, 25 November 1969, lot 470).

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Germany in 1426 (dated by the scribe on f. 252v), possibly in southwestern Germany or Switzerland, based on the script and the style of the initials, the watermark, an extremely common type, cannot confidently be identified because it is obscured by the script, but the binding may be compared with a book from Indersdorf, Bavaria (British Library IA24529-33, see British Library Database of Bookbindings, online resources). The distinctive style of the initials, and the unusual quire signatures (letters copied in the upper margin of the first leaf of each quire) suggest that further research might be able to identify the scriptorium that produced this manuscript.

The manuscript was carefully corrected throughout, usually involving a single word; longer passages were also occasionally omitted by the scribe and supplied in the margins by the corrector (for example, ff. 22, 29, and 40v); a long passage copied in error twice on ff. 214v-215 has been crudely crossed out on f. 214v. The scribe notes

that he finished the manuscript on the Friday after Easter in 1426, underlining his text in red (the practice used for rubrics throughout the manuscript). Following this is a second note, this time in red, which states that the work was completed on the following day on the feast of St. Ambrose, perhaps indicating that the corrector was finished with his part of the task. (The Friday after Easter in 1426 was April 5, and the feast of St. Ambrose was commonly observed in the Middle Ages on April 4, so it is possible that the scribe recorded the date he finished the manuscript incorrectly).

Pointing hands, in red, f. 34, and in brown, f. 34.

2. "15069," in pencil, on f. 1 and inside front cover; sales of this manuscript are recorded in the Schoenberg Database no. 4545, and 3590, but both are unverified, and the second seems doubtful (Sotheby's, 29 January 1951, lot 5; and a Phillipps sale, February 16, 1984, lot 437).
3. Sold at Sotheby's, London, 7 December 1992, lot 39 (Schoenberg database no. 562).
4. Belonged to Joseph Pope (1921-2010) of Toronto, investor banker and prominent collector of medieval manuscripts; Bergendal Collection MS 101 (described in Pope, 1999, and listed online, "Bergendal Collection"; brief description in Stoneman, 1997, p. 204; an account of the collection is given in Pope, 1997).

TEXT

ff. 1-252v, *Incipit prologus liber qui intitulatur horologium sapientie*, incipit, "Sentite de domino in bonitate et in simplicitate cordis querite ... omnibus deum diligentibus communicari precepit"; f. 6v, *Capitulum primum libri*, incipit, "Materia primi huius libri est christi passio pretiosissima ..."; f. 7v, *Incipit horologium sapientie qualiter quidam electi et divina gratia preventi ad deum mirabiliter trabuntur et specialiter quomodo quidam iuuenis fuerit tractus*, incipit, "Hanc amaui et exquisiui a iuuentute mea ... cum gaudio perducantur. Amen." *Explicit liber primus*; f. 151, *Incipit secundus*, incipit, "De diuersitate admiranda doctrinarum ..."; f. 151v, incipit, "Sapientiam omnium antiquorum quidam ... virtutem detore suo conspicientes. Ihesum Christum dominum nostrum qui cum patre et spiritu sancto vivit et regnat per omnia secula seculorum. Amen." *Explicit horologium sapientie. Sub anno dominum 1426 sexta feria proxima post festum pasche laudetur deus ex hoc nunc et usque in eternum et ultra. Amen. [continuing in red] Et completum sequenti die sancti ambrosii eximii doctoris. [f. 253 blank];*

f. 253v [added text, very slightly obscured by strip added to reinforce the binding], incipit, "Nota triplex est ungentis tristicie deu<?> et pietatis. Primum ungentium colligite <?> in cordis"

Added text on the different types of "ungentium" (anointing), probably notes for a sermon.

Henricus Suso, *Horologium sapientiae*; critical edition by Künzle, 1977, who lists 233 extant manuscripts, not including this manuscript, as well as a further eighty-eight, now lost, and 150 including extracts of various lengths (pp. 105-214, 229-49); the text was first printed in Cologne in 1480, and in nine additional editions before 1540; see also Bloomfield, 1979, no. 5416, and Kaeppli, 1970-, no. 1852. Modern English translation by Colledge, 1994, as *Wisdom's Watch Upon the Hours*.

The *Horologium sapientiae* is dedicated to Hugo de Vaucemain, allowing us to date the prologue between 1331 and 1341, probably c. 1334, while Hugo served as master general of the Dominicans; the work was probably completed a few years earlier, c. 1330. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was a tremendously popular text, surviving in hundreds of manuscripts in Latin and in translations in French, Dutch, and English, as well as in other languages. The largest numbers of copies with a known provenance are from Benedictine abbeys – it was especially popular at reformed abbeys of the Bursfeld Congregation; similarly we find copies at Augustinian houses, including houses associated with the Windesheim Congregation, as well as among the Carthusians, and Dominicans (Künzle, pp. 215-219). Numerous copies of course survive with no known provenance. It is interesting to compare this unassuming, carefully corrected, Latin copy of the text with elegant French copies or the richly illuminated Brussels *L'Horloge de Sapience*, suggesting this was a copy from a monastery or a house of Canons, or even one owned by a cleric associated with the *Devotio moderna*.

Daily devotional reading was an important part of the spirituality of the *Devotio moderna* from their earliest days. Their founder, Geert Groote's (1340-84) proposed list of personal reading for the converted follower included the Gospels, Cassian's account of the lives of the Desert Fathers, the Epistles of St. Paul, "devout" works by Bernard and Augustine (including the Ps.-Augustinian, *Soliloquia*), and Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*, as well as other spiritual and biblical books, and finally, the Book of Kings. The *Horologium* was the only contemporary work in this list, and it is clear that it was very important to Groote (Kock, 2002, p. 127; Van Engen, 2008, p. 277).

Henricus Suso (c.1295-1366), or Heinrich Seuse, was a German mystic and Dominican friar, honored with the titles "Prince of mystic theologians" and "Angelic mystic." Following his early studies at the Dominican Convent in Constance, he studied at the Dominican *studium generale* in Cologne, where he came under the influence of Meister Eckhart, whose writings he was later to defend against charges of heresy. Suso experienced visions of God from a young age, and his writings which explore the mystical experience remain his most important legacy; during his lifetime, he was also known as a popular preacher. At first harshly ascetic, he gradually emphasized detachment rather than mortification as central in the Christian discipline. His mysticism was expressed in terms of the contemporary literary romantic cult of the minnesingers (explaining his epithet, "Sweet Suso"). He was beatified in 1831. In addition to sermons and letters, his most important works are those that are known as the *Exemplar Seuses* – an autobiography, *Das Büchlein der Wahrheit* ("Little Book of the Truth"), and *Das Büchlein der ewigen Weisheit* ("The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom") -- , and the *Horologium sapientiae* ("The Clock of Wisdom").

The *Horologium sapientiae* is written as a dialogue between Wisdom (*Sapientia*) and her disciple, the author, and is thus in part a semi-autobiographical account for laymen and novices of Suso's own mystical experiences. The text tells of his devotion to Wisdom (Christ, the Bride in the Song of Songs, and other manifestations of the Divine) in a manner that echoes a knight's devotion to his lady, with love guiding all of his actions, and with their betrothal his aim. The clock of the title reflects the guidance exercised by Wisdom on her disciple (Ford, 1990, volume 2, p. 367), and is also an emblem of the soul and body, which require supervision and regulation to function properly. In the course of the work, Suso also incorporated criticisms of

the faults and weaknesses of the Church and the Universities in his day. The text is divided into twenty-four chapters, and focus on guiding the reader towards marriage to Wisdom and thus union with God. Wisdom begins the book with chapters encouraging the disciple to study and imitate the Passion, and in the word of one scholar, the Passion narrative "overshadows the entire text" (Monks, 1990, p. 31). This emphasis on the Passion helps to explain its popularity in circles associated with the *Devotio moderna*.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Bergendal Collection of Medieval Manuscripts

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bergendalcoll/>

British Library, Database of Bookbindings

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/bookbindings/>

Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Suso (short biography and selected works)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/suso>

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