

[Miscellany], including BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, Prayer; HENRICUS SUSO, *Centum meditationes*; THOMAS À KEMPIS, *De disciplina claustralium*; *De vera compunctione cordis*  
In Latin, manuscript on paper  
The Netherlands, c. 1450?

20 folios, on paper (two watermarks, both unidentifiable, not in Briquet), contemporary page numbering 225 to 245 (collation: i<sup>7</sup> [8-4]; ii<sup>4</sup> [8-4]; iii<sup>6</sup> [8-2]; iv<sup>4</sup> [8-4]), missing part of folio 227 and folio numbered 235, written in a tight and highly abridged *littera cursiva*, on up to 40 long lines (justification 190 x 120 mm.), catchwords, ruled in plummet, some capitals and paragraph marks touched in red, initials painted in bright red, Bound in a modern full rigid vellum binding, smooth spine, the following number on the upper cover: "40105." Dimensions 220 x 160 mm.

Unrecorded paper manuscript, a fragment, of two works by Thomas à Kempis from the milieu of the *Devotio Moderna* and including writings by other authors favored by the reform movement such as the Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux and the Dominican mystic Henricus Suso and dating close to the autograph manuscripts of the *Imitation of Christ*.

## PROVENANCE

1. Probably made in the milieu of the *Devotio Moderna*, based on the selection of texts, and possibly mid-century, close in date to the autograph manuscripts of Thomas à Kempis (Brussels, Bib. Roy, MSS 5855-61), dated 1441.
2. Old shelf mark written in brown ink on the upper cover "40105" yields no clues to later ownership, nor are there any other telling notations.

## TEXT

ff. 1-1v, Various Prayers; heading: *Sequens oratio dicitur aurea: eo quod nulla ea [dulcionis]...*; incipit, "Ave rosa sine spinis..." [Chevalier, U., *Repertorium Hymnologicum...*, I, Louvain, 1892, p. 123, no. 2084: Anonymous, Prayer to the Virgin Mary]; heading, *Oracio sancti Martini pape ante missam multum utilis*; incipit, "O domine Jhesu Christe fili dei vivi..."; heading, *Oracio ad proprium angelum...*; incipit, "Obsecro te angelice spiritus...";

ff. 1v-3, Bernard of Clairvaux, saint, Prayer; heading, *Oracio devotissima beati Bernardi abbati Clarevalensis...*; incipit, "Si lux mundi salutare: salve, salve Jhesu..."; explicit: "[...] salutifera. Amen";

ff. 3-9, Henricus Suso (1295?-1366), *Centum meditationes passionis domini nostri Jesu Christi*; incipit [upper righthand portion of fol. 3 cut out] "Anatomie et passione domini nostri Jhesu Christi memoria..."; explicit: "[...] per omnia secula seculorum. Amen. Expliciunt centum meditationes.";

f. 9v, Beginning of text: "Brevarium [?] actio prius missam";

ff. 10-10v, blank,

ff. 11-20v, Thomas à Kempis, *De disciplina claustralium*; [missing beginning chapter 1 (Kraus, pp. 196-197)]: incipit, "[...] quietem. Non murmurat, non detrahit sed deo omnem iudicium comittit... "; explicit [chapter 16: *De desiderio animae ad caeleste regnum*]: "[...] ubi Christus est in gloria patris per eterna secula regnans Amen. Explicit. Tractatus de disciplina claustralium fratris Thome Kempis "; [published in Kraus, F.X., *Venerabilis Thomae à Kempis. Opuscula*, Augustae Treverorum, Ed. Groppe, 1868, I, pp. 195-225. The present copy gives all chapters 2-16; missing only the 2 first articles of chapter 1, likely copied on missing folio 235-235v].

f. 20v, Thomas à Kempis, *De vera compunctione cordis*; heading: Incipit libellus de vera compunctione cordis de T[homas]. K[empis]; incipit, "Flete mecum omnes amici mei... "; ending: "...Si ascendero in celum tu..." [interrupted; lacks ending] [Published in Thomas à Kempis, *Thomae Hemerken à Kempis... Opera Omnia*, ed. Michael Josephus Pohl, Freiburg, Herder, 1910, vol. I: "De vera compunctione cordis," pp. 63-80].

The choice of texts reflects the spiritual interests of the *Devotio Moderna*, founded in the fourteenth century as a reform movement by Geert Groote and encompassing the Houses of the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life and the monasteries of the Windesheim Congregation. Groote stressed a return to the purity of the early Church, to the ideas of Jerome, Augustine, and others of the Church Fathers. Meditation on the life of Christ, often in the vernacular languages, was a central tenet of the movement. With texts by Bernard of Clairvaux, Henricus Suso (the *Devotio Moderna* was highly influenced by the first German Mystics such as Eckhart, Tauler and Suso), and of course Thomas à Kempis, this manuscript offers a sort of miscellany of the religious beliefs of the movement. Based on the script and its closeness to the Thomas à Kempis autograph manuscripts in Brussels (BR, MSS 5855-61), containing the four books of the *Imitatio Christi* and nine minor treatises and signed by Thomas à Kempis in 1441, our manuscript must date around the same time, perhaps mid-century. It is not recorded in Bodeman-Kornhaas, 2002, pp. 139-140.

Saint Bernard is considered one of the fathers of the *Devotio Moderna*, founded in the fourteenth century in The Netherlands as a reform movement by Geert Groote, who was significantly influenced by Cistercian ideals and practice. Groote and his fellow reformers based much of their spirituality on Saint Bernard, and they were especially attracted to his interests in monastic reform and practical mysticism. Here the inclusion of a prayer by Bernard is wholly in line with the collection of texts.

Meditation on the Passion of Christ was central to the spirituality of the movement, as a key tract, Gerard Zerbolt's *Spiritual Ascensions*, underscores: "You have already heard what materials are useful to meditation and will profit your ascent: recollection of your sins, of your death, the last judgment, the pains of hell, heavenly glory, the benefits of God, the passion of our Lord, and so on. These meditations can be varied in time, taking up what is most appropriate and will most serve your devotion at a given time. Thus, when the church recalls or performs the Lord's passion, you conform yourself and form meditations around the bitter passion of our Lord. Do the same for all the other major feasts of the Church, shaping your exercises around the matter of that feast, as

Bernard recommends." Among the numerous passion texts that circulated in the fifteenth century Netherlands, the Hundred Articles of the Passion by the German Dominican friar Henricus Suso (1295-1366) is one of the most popular (see "Project: Meditation Practice" below). Suso's meditations, which extend chronologically from the Agony in the Garden to the Entombment and the return of Mary to Jerusalem, were intended to be said throughout the day, or divided between the canonical hours, or over the days of the week (Lavaud, pp. 8-11).

Thomas à Kempis (c. 1379-1471) was a generation after Geert Groote, and he grew up in the circle of the *Devotio Moderna*, having studied in a school of the Brothers of the Common Life in Groote's native Deventer. His fame resides in his authorship (sometimes disputed) of the *Imitation of Christ*, first issued anonymously in 1418. It is one of the most popular devotional manuals of all time, the number of editions exceeding 2000. There are more than 500 manuscripts. Like Suso's Hundred Articles, the manual encourages the reader to attempt to understand through imitation the Passion of Christ. Included here are two of Thomas à Kempis's lesser known works, one on cloister discipline and the other on the true compunction of the heart, a treatise on meditation.

## LITERATURE

Bodeman-Kornhaas, "Die kleineren Werke des Thomas von Kempen. Eine liste der handschriftlichen Ueberlieferungen," *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 76 (2002), pp. 139-140.

Hyma, Albert. *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the Devotio Moderna (1380-1520)*, Grand Rapids, The Reformed Press, 1924.

Kraus, F.X. *Venerabilis Thomae à Kempis. Opuscula*, Augustae Treverorum, Ed. Groppe, 1868, I, pp. 195-225.

Post, R. R. *The Modern Devotion, Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Leiden, 1968.

Thomas à Kempis, *Thomae Hemerken à Kempis...Opera Omnia* [ed. Michael Josephus Pohl], Freiburg, Herder, 1910, vol. I; 1904, vol. III; 1905, vol. V.

Suso, Henricus. *Henri Suso... La Passion de l'éternelle sagesse: les Cent méditations, le Livret d'Amour*, tr. Benoit Lavaud, Neuchâtel, 1943.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

On Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471):

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14661a.htm>

CCEL: On Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*

<http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/hcc6/htm/ii.v.ix.htm>

Project: Meditation Practice: The passion meditations of Henry Suso

[www.niwi.knaw.nl/en/oj/nod/onderzoek/OND1300395/toon](http://www.niwi.knaw.nl/en/oj/nod/onderzoek/OND1300395/toon)