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PSEUDO-AUGUSTINUS, *Soliloques, Oroison a la sainte Trinité, Meditations saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu*

In French, decorated manuscript on parchment
France, Ile de France? or North? c. 1475

58 ff., preceded and followed by 15 modern paper flyleaves, missing first and last quires (collation i⁷ [8-1, missing first leaf of quire], ii-v⁸, vi⁷ [8-1], vii⁴, viii⁸ with last 18 ff. bound in disorder, text should run as follows: ff. 40-46v, ff. 51-58v, ff. 47-50v), written in a fine regular bâtarde script, in brown ink, on up to 24 long lines, ruled in red (justification 105 x 65 mm), rubrics in red, paragraph marks in burnished gold on pink and blue grounds highlighted with white tracery, numerous highly burnished gold initials on pink and/or blue grounds, with pink or blue infill highlighted with white tracery. Modern bright red morocco, double frame on boards composed of an outer black fillet and inner gilt fillet, back sewn on five raised bands, title gilt, silk lining inner boards and first flyleaf, double gilt frame on inner boards. Dimensions 150 x 105 mm.

An anthology of three Pseudo-Augustinian devotional treatises in their French translations, the present manuscript, even though it is incomplete, is important for its contribution to the textual transmission and circulation of Augustinian treatises amongst the laity in the later Middle Ages. The three texts are only superficially studied, and there is no modern critical edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Script and language all point to a French origin for this manuscript, likely Ile de France or Northern France. The very regular and fine quality of the script suggests the present copy was made for a nobleman as many of the translations of such devotional works and works of contemplative or meditative piety were designed for lay readers, who were no longer comfortable in Latin.

TEXT

ff. 1-39, Pseudo-Augustine, *Soliloques*, chapters 18 to 36, incipit [...] fragilité les a. Je les te offre car tu es tout seul mon dieu piteux et misericors qui aymes toutes choses..." (end of chapter 17, begins incomplete); rubric (f. 1v), *Que home est tenu de aymer dieu. ch. xviii.* [chapter 18]; incipit, "Sire je desire que je te ayme tu qui es ma leesse si grande que on ne l'a peut dire..."; rubric (f. 36v), *De la beneureté des sains qui est dieu. xxxvi.* [chapter 36]; incipit, "Quant nous venions a toy fontaine de sapience..."; explicit (f. 39), "[...] Ceste porte est la porte de nostreseigneur les justes entreront dedens elle. La nous doint entrer le pere filz et le saint esperit. Amen" [beginning of text published in Esnos, 1967,

pp. 358-363; Esnos provides a list of the titles for the 36 chapters and records some 27 manuscripts for this Translation "A";

ff. 39-40, Prayer attributed to saint Augustine, *Oroison a la sainte Trinite*, rubric, *Ce n'est pas de cestui livre mais est une oroison de saint augustin faicte a dieu. Chapitre .xxxvii.*; incipit, "O trois personnes egales pardurables l'un avecques l'autre..." [recorded in J. Sonet (1956), pp. 277-278, who gives a list of 8 manuscripts: Lyon, BM, 1234, fol. 81; Paris, Bibl. Arsenal, 2175, f. 47; Paris, BnF, fr. 916, f. 55; fr. 918, f. 61; fr. 19271, ff. 115; fr. 24434, f. 399; n.a.f. 10237, f. 32; Paris, Bibl. Sainte-Genevieve, 2737, f. 147; there are most certainly more manuscripts, as the *Oroison* is often incorporated in the *Soliloquia*; see Latin text "Oratio ad sanctam Trinitatem" in PL, 40, col. 897-898];

ff. 40-58v, Pseudo-Augustine, *Meditacions saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu*, chapters 1-18, rubric, *Cy fine le livre du glorieux docteur saint augustin. Cy après s'ensuivent les meditaciones d'icelluy en pensant a dieu. xxxviii.*; incipit, "Sire j'ay a dire une secrete parole a toy qui es roy des siecles ma misericorde mon refuge mon dieu. Sire oeuvre tes yeulx qui sont pleins de misericorde..." ; rubric (f. 43v), *De l'essence de dieu. chapitre .ii.*; rubric (f. 58), *De la refecton spirituele de l'ame. xiii.*; explicit, "[...] toutes langues et tous signes se taisent et mesmement [...]" (leaves of last quires bound in disorder, see collation above: ends with chapter 13 on ff. 58-58v, but chapters 14-18 are found on ff. 47-50v); last chapter 18, rubric (f. 50), *De ce que en paradis est tout bien sans mal. xviii.*; incipit, "O mon ame retournons en ceste belle cité du ciel..." ; explicit, "[...] et lumiere pardurable non pas de ce..." (chapter 18 interrupted).

This manuscript contains portions of the French vernacular translation of three devotional texts attributed to Saint Augustine, with more or less certitude and that have since been classified amongst the Augustinian apocrypha (for a list of Augustinian Apocrypha, see *Dict. de spiritualité ascétique...* [DSAM], vol. I, col. 1130-1135).

The first text is a vernacular translation of the *Soliloquia* or *Soliloquiorum animae ad deum*, datable to the thirteenth century, certainly the most popular of all the Augustinian apocrypha (Latin text in PL, XL, 863-897; see also Wilmart, 1932). A very complete study of the French and Italian vernacular traditions of the apocryphal *Soliloquia* attributed to Augustine was conducted by G. Esnos: there is a "Translation A" for which Esnos lists 27 extant manuscripts (Esnos, 1967, pp. 311-318). There is a second translation of the *Soliloques* from Eastern France known in only 2 manuscripts (Esnos, 1967, pp. 318-319). The French "Translation A" was ordered by Charles V before 1373 and is mentioned in the inventory of Gilles Malet: "Le seul parler saint Augustin, couvert de soie vermeille et fermouers d'argent" (quoted in Esnos, 1967, p. 310). Esnos discovered later that there are actually five different translations undertaken between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Hasenohr, 1988, p. 287: "Et non deux, comme nous le croyions en 1967" [And not two, like we thought in 1967]). To quote Esnos: "Les *Soliloques* laissent l'impression d'un travail fait non seulement avec soin, mais aussi avec amour. Le traducteur a fait siens les sentiments de l'auteur : la même ferveur anime l'original et la traduction..." (Esnos, 1967, p. 311). Although attributed to Augustine, the *Soliloquiorum animae ad deum* derive in fact from Jean of Fécamp's works and heavily inspired by Hugues of Saint-Victor's *De arrha animae* (eleventh century) (see Hasenohr, 1988, p. 286-287 and Leclercq and Bonnes, 1946). The five extant different French translations of the *Soliloquia* attest to its popularity and contribute to the complexity of its manuscript tradition, which still needs to be sorted out, as the translations themselves have yet to be edited.

The second text is a Prayer attributed to Augustine and recorded in Sonet (1956) [for a list of manuscripts see Text above; for Latin text, see PL, XL, 897-898]. The *Oroison* invariably figures after the *Soliloques* in most manuscripts and is often preceded by a rubric which announces the *Oroison* to be chapter 37 of the previous *Soliloques*, as in the present manuscript: "[...]une oraison de saint augustin faicte a dieu. Chapitre .xxxvii." (f. 39).

Finally, the third text is that of the *Meditacions saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu*. The tradition of apocryphal texts that bear the name *Meditationes* is quite complex. It has been studied by such authors as A. Wilmart (1932), who distinguishes a number of different works entitled *Meditationes* and traditionally misattributed to Augustine. In the present case we are not dealing with the common *Meditationes* of Saint Augustine, now largely attributed to Jean de Fécamp and found in numerous manuscripts whose Latin incipit begins: "Domine Deus meus, da cordi meo..." (PL, XL, 901-942; see Wilmart, 1932; DSAM, vol. I, col. 1133-1134). Instead, the present *Meditacions saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu*, imploring the mercy and benevolence of God, is unpublished and largely unrecorded, its Latin version (if it exists) not yet uncovered. Complete in 36 chapters, the small devotional treatise is found in a number of manuscripts, at least 20 (as noted by Esnos in her list of manuscripts containing also the *Soliloques* and the *Oroison*, but there are likely more) and is found complete in Paris, BnF, MS fr. 19271, ff. 115-117 (see Esnos, 1967, p. 309).

Although incomplete, the present manuscript is a good example of the spread of vernacular translations of Latin and often apocryphal contemplative treatises amongst lay persons. This phenomenon in the later Middle Ages paralleled the popularity of Books of Hours, which also facilitated lay devotion and individualistic piety. Neither the *Soliloques* (although studied by Esnos, 1967, with a very partial edition just of the beginning of the text) nor the interesting *Meditacions saint Augustin en pensant a Dieu* (whose Latin origin, if any, has yet to be discovered) have received a modern critical edition. An in-depth study of the complex manuscript tradition of both texts should also consider their influence on late medieval piety.

LITERATURE

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