

SIMONE FIDATI DA CASCIA, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*

In Italian, manuscript on paper

Italy, Tuscany (Florence?), c. 1450-1475

76 ff., preceded and followed by a single paper flyleaf, complete (collation: i-ii8, iii10, iv12, v10, vi8, vii12, viii6), contemporary foliation in the middle of the upper margin (references here are to modern pencil foliation), on thick paper with watermarks close to (1) Briquet, no. 3387, "Chapeau": Florence, 1465; Venice, 1464-1473; Siena, 1463-1469 etc; (2) Briquet, of the type "Trois monts," no. 11689, Florence, 1411-1421 and others, written in a semi-cursive humanistic bookhand (Italian *cursiva libraria*) in brown ink, on up to 23 lines, (justification: 125 x 70 mm.), paper ruled in brown ink, rubrics in pink, paragraph marks in pink, 2-line high initials in pale red. Bound in contemporary limp vellum, verso of a written parchment leaf with Latin text visible below the front pastedown (reused charter?), smooth spine, a strip of brown leather reinforcing spine (ledger-style), number "3" penned in ink on upper cover (Good general condition, large restoration to lower cover of binding; a few inner waterstains, but never hindering legibility; a few leaves glued together, to strengthen paper or to make up for a blank leaf left unwritten). Dimensions 173 x 120 mm.

Unrecorded copy of a very popular text on living in conformity with Christ by the Augustinian preacher and theologian active in fourteenth-century Umbria and Tuscany, Simone de Cascia. The author composed his *Ordine della vita cristiana* in 1333 in the vernacular for the laity, and as such the present work is considered one of the first redacted in the Italian tongue. Although there is a rich manuscript and printed tradition for this text, the linguistic features of the present codex should be further studied and compared with the other extant codices.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Italy as confirmed by linguistic particularities (to be studied for dialectal elements or graphic idiosyncrasies), confirmed by the paper which presents watermarks associated with Tuscan or Venetian paper stocks. The very particular script presents certain aspects of a Cancellerescha script: note the "d," the "g" and very peculiar "e" letter forms.
2. European Continental Collection.

## TEXT

ff. 1-1v, Simone Fidati da Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*, Prologue, rubric, *Qui incomincia i libro della vita christiana*; incipit, "Al nome di dio qui inchoincia l'ordine della vita christiana sechondo l'esentenzia de santi padri. E quello cha de fare l'anima el chorporo chonpilato dal venerabile frate simone da chascia dell'ordine de frati si santo aghostino negli anni del nostro signore 1333 quando in questo tempo predicho in firenze ..."; rubric, *Qui chomincia il prolagho*;

incipit, "Chomintia chachocio sia chosa che idio chreasse l'uomo...";

ff. 1v-2v, Simone Fidati da Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*, Table of chapters for Book I, rubric, *Chapitoli della prima parte dello esercizio dall'anima nostra*;

ff. 2v-46v, Simone Fidati da Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*, Book I, chapters 1-16, rubric, *Delli esercizi dell'anima e della sua chreazione...*; incipit, "Ripansa et chogita et rivolgi in prima l'anima dentro nella sua mente..."; explicit, "[...] non parlo per non volere mostrare cierte cose chiuse et cielate" (published in Eckermann, 2006, pp. 37-88);

ff. 46v-47v, Simone Fidati da Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*, Table of chapters for Book II, rubric, *Qui chomincia la sechonda parte della vita christiana quanto allo esercizio dal chorporo achominchia il prolagho*;

ff. 47v-74, Simone Fidati da Cascia, *L'ordine della vita cristiana*, Book II, chapters 1-6, rubric, *Della conformita che dobbiamo avere chon christo chorporalmente in poverta e in umilitate e in penalitate*; incipit, "Ogni christiano chessi vuole salvare li conviene essere povero..."; explicit, "[...] il quale vive et regna ne secholi de secholi. Amen. Deo gratiasse. Amen" (published in Eckermann, 2006, pp. 90-119);

ff. 74-76, Added theological considerations, related to casuistry, incipit, "Quando chesseghiuta none del testo dal libro ma perche nel setto chapitolo dosi tratta dell'angelicha natura...Se si domanda perche il diavolo alla obbidenza e appenitenzia non sono tornati..."; explicit, "[...] e percio che quando quelli peccharano inchontanente nella pena trapassarono e sono e staranno sempre. Amen."

Blessed Simone Fidati da Cascia (c. 1295-1348) was an Augustinian theologian and preacher from Cascia (Umbria). He entered the Order of Augustinian Hermits at a young age, where he was known as a model of monastic virtue and for his learning. His initial studies were in the natural sciences, which he later gave up for theology and scripture. He began his preaching ministry in 1318 and was renowned as a brilliant preacher in places such as Perugia, Bologna, Siena, and Florence. His model of austerity and strict penances brought him more followers. Simon of Cascia was sought after as a confessor and spiritual adviser. His desire for a spiritual life of study, prayer and solitude caused him to reject all episcopal appointments. His remains are preserved in the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia, where they are now venerated in a chapel in the crypt. Simon was beatified by Pope Gregory XVI in 1833 and the Augustinians celebrate the feast of Blessed Simon on 16 February.

The origin and influence of Simon of Cascia's writings have sparked some debate among scholars, both literary and theological. An excellent student of sacred scripture, his most significant writing *De Gestis Domini Salvatoris* [The Works of Our Savior] contains a life of Christ written almost entirely as a commentary on scriptural passages, and it is believed to have influenced Martin Luther (see A. V. Müller, *Una fonte ignota del sistema di Lutero. Il Beato Simone da Cascia e la sua teologia*, Rome, 1921; see also W. Eckermann, "Zur Christologie bei Simon Fidati von Cascia Oesa (t. 1348) und Martin Luther (1483-1546)," in *Augustiniana*, 52 (2002), no. 2-4, pp. 393-405). As author and preacher with a substantial legacy, Simone da Cascia has recently generated renewed interest and scholarship.

His other popular work is the present *Ordine della vita cristiana* [The Order of the Christian Life]. Addressed to the simple lay people, this work is an invitation to a more perfect conformity to Christ, and it is considered one of the first writings in the Italian language. Composed in the vernacular circa 1333 in Florence, the work is known in a number of codices (50 extant manuscripts according to Zumkeller, 1966, pp. 358-366; but only 27 codices are retained in Eckermann, 2006, pp. 6-28). The *Ordine della vita cristiana* was first published in Milan, 1521 (F. Ascarelli, *La tipografia cinquecentesca italiana...*, Florence, 1953, 82) and again in 1527, in Venice. In modern times, the work was published three times, respectively by N. Mattioli, 1898, pp.125-223; A. Levasti, 1960, pp. 607-680; and again by W. Eckermann, 2006, pp. 37-119. The most recent Eckermann edition provides a very good study of the manuscript tradition (with most of the extant codices held in Italian libraries, pp. 6-28) and the later printed tradition. Redacted in the vernacular, the *Ordine della vita cristiana* is considered to be one of the founding texts of the Italian language, composed before even Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In spite of the relatively large number of manuscripts, the text is surprisingly rare on the market; no copies for sale in the last century are found in the Schoenberg Database. His other manuscripts are also remarkably scarce.

The *Ordine della vita cristiana* is divided into two books, the first discusses the obligations of the soul, the second the obligations of the body. He posits Christ as the first Pope, a daring statement indeed: "[...] li altri christiani de essere uno chorpo principale cioe Christo il qual fu il primo papa..." (*Ordine della vita cristiana*, Book II, chapter 6, here fol. 69-69v). Simone de Cascia was especially devoted to the humanity of Jesus, which he saw as a key to the life of a Christian. This devotion was rooted in the context of the Augustinian traditions of "theology of the heart" and the centrality of God's love. Although the manuscript tradition is quite plentiful and the latest critical edition (Eckermann, 2006) is well-drafted, it should be noted that the text found in these critical editions has been modernized to standard Italian. The latest discussions concerning Simone de Cascia seem to relate to his theology and sermons rather than his linguistic importance celebrated by the Accademia della Crusca very early on in the sixteenth century. The present copy – as the other extant codices – should also be studied for the linguistic particularities they each offer, close or departing from the original fourteenth-century language. The present witness is entirely unrecorded.

## LITERATURE

Eckermann, W. (ed.) *Simonis Fidati de Cassia OESA. L'ordine della vita cristiana...*, Rome, 2006.

Mattioli, Nicola. *Il beato Simone Fidati da Cascia* [Antologia Agostiniana, II], Rome, 1898 [edition of the *Vita Cristiana*, pp. 125-223].

Oser-Grote, C. and W. Eckermann (ed.). *Simon Fidati von Cascia OESA: Augustinische Theologie und Philosophie im späten Mittelalter*, Würzburg, 2006.

Battista, G. "L'ordine della vita cristiana: il servizio reciproco per la costruzione della società," in

Oser-Grote, C. and W. Eckermann (ed.). *Simone Fidati da Cascia OESA. Un agostiniano spirituale tra medioevo e umanesimo. Atti del Congresso Internazionale in occasione dell'VIII Centenario della nascita (1295-1347)*, Rome, 2008, pp. 265-295.

Perini, D. *Bibliographia Augustiniana*, vol. II, Florence, 1931.

Zumkeller, A. *Manuscripte von Werken der Autoren des Augustiner-Eremitenordens in Mitteleuropäischen Bibliotheken*, Würzburg, 1966.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

On Simone de Cascia:

[http://www.midwestaugustinians.org/saints/s\\_simoncascia.html](http://www.midwestaugustinians.org/saints/s_simoncascia.html)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13798a.htm>

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