

[ANONYMOUS], *Le livre nommé la discipline d'amour divine*  
In French, decorated manuscript on parchment and paper  
Northern France or Southern Low Countries, c. 1480-1500

iii (paper) + 128 + iii folios on parchment (outer and innermost bifolia of each quire) and paper, watermark, unicorn, Briquet 10030, Nancy, 1484-7, Lille?, 1487, La Haye-du-puits, 1489, Briquet 10032, Châtenois, 1494, Montebourg, 1493, Amsterdam, 1494, Lessay, 1494-7, Tbury, 1497; Briquet 10034, Troyes 1505, Cologne, 1509, original foliation in ink, I-VI<sup>xx</sup> [that is, 120] in Roman numerals top outer corner recto not including the table of contents, modern foliation in pencil, top outer margin and then very bottom inside margin beginning on f. 9 [cited in this description], complete (collation, i<sup>s</sup> ii-xi<sup>12</sup>), vertical catchwords copied along the inner bounding line, no leaf and quire signatures, ruled in red ink with the top one or two horizontal rules full across and with full-length single vertical bounding lines (justification 144-143 x 95-90 mm.), copied in a skilled cursive gothic bookhand (lettre batârde), by more than one scribe for example, ff. 12v-13v, were copied in a less formal script, and then f. 14 resumes in the hand of the main scribe, in thirty-three to twenty-nine long lines, a few guide notes for folio numbers remain, e.g. f. 118, very bottom edge, majuscules within text filled with pale yellow, red underlining and rubrics, red or blue paragraph marks, three- to one-line red or blue initials, three-line parted red and blue initial, f. 1, in excellent condition, slight cockling, a few worm holes in the first quire, erased inscription, f. 123v, but overall in remarkable, pristine condition. Bound in 18<sup>th</sup>-century gold-tooled red morocco by Richard Wier (see Provenance, below) over pasteboard, front and back covers with wide gold-tooled floral borders, gold-tooled spine with five raised bands, floral stamps within each panel, set in lozenges of very small stamps, and lettered in italic capitals "La discipline/ d'amoure/ MSS sur /papier/ et velin," marbled endpapers and flyleaves, gilt edges, silk bookmark, in excellent condition. Dimensions 203 x 129 mm.

This exceedingly rare manuscript (one of two known copies) of a devotional treatise written in 1470 by an anonymous Celestine monk certainly dates from the author's lifetime or very soon after. Recent scholarship has underscored the importance of this text for its links to the fascinating *Mirror of Simple Souls* by Marguerite Porete, who was executed for heresy in 1310. The excellent provenance adds to its interest: it was owned by Count Justin MacCarthy-Reagh (d. 1811), who had it rebound in its current handsome red morocco, later to Sir Thomas Phillipps, then to Joost Ritman.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in the last decades of the fifteenth century in Northern France or possibly the Southern Low Countries as indicated by the script and watermark. The text was written in 1470 by an anonymous monk at the convent of Notre-Dame d'Ambert on the outskirts of Orleans, and this manuscript dates from his lifetime, or if not, within a few years of his death. The manuscript may have been copied under his supervision as a presentation copy. Although this is a possibility, details of the script, especially the non-functional decorative hairlines and cadel initials suggest that an origin in Northern France or the Southern Low Countries is also possible, and this origin is supported by the watermark evidence (although

as Briquet notes, the vertical unicorn with striped horn and mane was extremely common in France, and Briquet's repertory does not record all the possible examples).

The text was copied by more than one scribe, and especially in the opening folios it appears that two scribes were possibly working together; on f. 11v, note the varying size of the script, and the space left blank in line 12; on f. 12, the shade of ink varies, although arguably this may be due to a poor batch of ink, it may also be the work of more than one scribe. Perhaps the main scribe of this section left blanks where he could not read his exemplar, which were subsequently filled in by another scribe, but is it also possible that these folios suggest authorial intervention? Certainly, careful study of the text of this manuscript is called for.

2. Erased four-line inscription, f. 123v, following the text (very thoroughly expunged).
3. Belonged to Count Justin MacCarthy-Reagh (1744-1811), and bound for him by Richard Wier (d. 1792; also sometimes spelled Weir, and known as David or Davy), the binder MacCarthy-Reagh brought with him to Toulouse in the 1770s (Ramsden, 1953; Greenfield, 1990). Justin MacCarthy was born at Springhouse, Co. Tipperary of an extremely wealthy family. He immigrated to Toulouse when his father died to escape the anti-Catholic laws in Ireland, and became Count MacCarthy Reagh of Toulouse in 1766. His vast collection of books was sold at Sotheby's 18 May 1789, by the Parisian Bookseller De Bure in 1817, and by Evans, 22 January 1817, including this manuscript (lot 229).
4. Belonged to Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872); his manuscript, 6742 (small rectangular label, bottom spine); acquired for him by Payne and Foss; London, Sotheby's, Phillipps Sale, 30 November 1971, lot 512. Phillipps has been described as the greatest private manuscript collector of all time, and certainly, his collection of approximately 60,000 manuscripts was the world's largest.
5. Kraus, Catalogue 153, *Bibliotheca Phillipica*, 1979, no. 62.
6. Belonged to Joost R. Ritman (b. 1941--), Amsterdam, his bookplate, inside front cover, the Dutch businessman and distinguished collector of art and books, who acquired it from Kraus in 1979 (see above); *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* MS 7; described in *Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections* (see Online Resources).
7. Owners' and dealers' annotations include, front flyleaf, f. i verso, in pencil "6/5"; "MSS Ph 6742," 1-11-6; price code; front flyleaf, f. ii, in pen "Sale at Evans, Jan 7, 1817"; and back flyleaf, f. iii recto, "Kraus '84/ LLRET"; "85069- BPH MS. 7"; "BPH 7"; "P 1087."

## TEXT

ff. 1v-7v, [f. 1, blank.]; *Sensuit la table du liure intitule la discipline damour*, incipit, "Le prologue. Des sept operations de lame viuifier sensiffier discerner aymer ouurer mediter et contempler, i ... Et si est ceste dilection seraphique intente intime et inflexible, cxviii." [ends mid f. 7v; remainder and f. 8rv, blank];

ff. 9-123v, *Cy commence le liure nomme la discipline damour diuine. Et premierement le prologue, incipit, "Caritatem habete quod est vinculum perfectionis et per christi exultet in cordibus vestris ad collocensis 3. Aiez charite amour et dilection qui est le neu et le lien de perfection vestre cuer et uestre esperit ait joie et exultation ... , Ce sont les paroles du glorieux s. pol apostre ... qui perseuerera en sa discipline damour diuine. Cest a ssavoir fruition glorieuse de la diuine et incree trinite, le pere le filz et le saint esperit troys personnes diuines en vne simple deite de diuine mageste a aymer et honorer par durablement," Amen, Fiat, Explicit" [ff. 124-128v, blank but ruled].*

*La discipline d'amour diuine* ("The Discipline of Divine Love") is a text composed by an anonymous Celestine monk in 1470 at Notre Dame D'Ambert near Orleans (Hasenohr 1999); it has been identified in only two manuscripts, the present copy, and another still in a private collection in France. The text was written for a nun, in two parts, "La discipline d'amour divine," and "La leçon de la disciple d'amour divine" ("The Meaning of the Discipline of Divine Love"). There is no critical edition of the text, which has been studied by Geneviève Hasenohr (1999, pp. 1349-1351, and printing part of the prologue from the 1519 edition, pp. 1365-1366, see ff. 15v-16v in this manuscript for the text printed by Hasenohr). Despite the limited manuscript transmission, its popularity in the sixteenth century is witnessed by four printed editions in Paris (Simon Vostre [no date]; Regnault Chaudière, 1519; Symon de Colines, 1537; and Vincent Sortenas, 1538), and a comparison of the manuscript described here and the text in the printed edition is certainly of scholarly interest.

The text begins with a prologue, followed by ten chapters presenting the "degrees of love" (Comment amour est doulx devot ...; Comment amour et pacient ...; Comment amour est seruent ardant et eleuant; Comment amour est fort vaillant et triumphant; Comment amour est purifiant clarifiant et contemplant; Comment amour est rauissant penetrant et transformant; Comment amour est languissant mortifiant et viuifiant; Comment amour est excedant jubilant et alienant, Commenta amour est simplifiant ...; Comment amour est aneantissant glorifiant et deifiant); followed by the second part of the work, "La leçon de la disciple damour diuine," which presents themes for meditation suitable for each of these degrees.

Modern scholars have shown renewed interest in this text, since its sources include not only Pseudo-Dionysius, Richard of Saint-Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry – all orthodox theologians who wrote mystical treatises on the love of God, but also the much more controversial mystical text, the *Mirror of Simple Souls* (*Miroir des simples âmes*) by Marguerite Porete (or Margaret Porette, d. 1310) from Hainault, possibly Valenciennes, who was burnt at the stake for heresy in Paris in 1310. The original French version of this work survives in only one manuscript, now in Chantilly, from La Madeleine-lès-Orléans, and in extracts in a manuscript now in the Bibliothèque municipale, Valenciennes, discovered by Hasenohr. It is a description of the seven stages required to achieve union with God, presented as a dialogue between Love (representing God), Reason, and the Soul. It expresses Marguerite's conviction that true religion is not found in good works or a virtuous life or even in the sacraments, but instead in a striving towards the annihilation of the self and union with Divine Love. Despite its condemnation as heretical, it continued to circulate (without the author's name) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, often in Benedictine and Carthusian circles, and it was translated into English, Italian, and Latin.

Marguerite's ideas certainly have much in common with those of the mystic Meister Eckhart, and historians once linked her closely (and probably unfairly) with followers of the Free Spirit, a group condemned by the Church for their antinomian views.

Hasenohr's study outlines the dependence of *La discipline d'amour divine* – a completely orthodox work, on Marguerite's controversial text; the author retained her terminology and basic framework, presented in a more systematic fashion, but deliberately changed its contents to eliminate potentially dangerous themes and to emphasize the ascetic rather than the mystical. Hasenohr argues that its existence is proof of the continued circulation of Marguerite's text in France among the laity – and in particular, in the Loire valley, in the fifteenth century.

## LITERATURE

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Ramsden, C. "Richard Wier and Count MacCarthy-Reagh," *The Book-Collector* 2 (1953), pp. 247-257.

Van Engen, John. *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (Amsterdam, BPH MS 7)

<http://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/>

IRHT, Section Romane: JONAS, Répertoire des textes et des manuscrits médiévaux d'oc et d'oïl  
(describing this text and manuscript)

<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/oeuvre.php?oeuvre=5750>

ARLIMA: Archives de littérature du Moyen Age, *La discipline d'amour divine*

<http://www.arlima.net/no/1024>

ARLIMA: Maguerite Porete (citing extensive bibliography)

<http://www.arlima.net/no/349>

Hasenohr, 1999 (see above), Online edition

[http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/crai\\_0065-0536\\_1999\\_num\\_143\\_4\\_16088](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/crai_0065-0536_1999_num_143_4_16088)

Colloque international Marguerite Porete

<http://gas.ehess.fr/document.php?id=240>

International Marguerite Porete Society, with extensive Bibliography

[http://margueriteporete.net/?page\\_id=113](http://margueriteporete.net/?page_id=113)

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