

RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, *De Trinitate*

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northern France (Paris?), c. 1475-1500

i (paper) + 73 + iii (paper) on paper, two watermarks, one difficult to see, but possibly a Crown, similar to Briquet 4750, Paris 1485, and another mark, type not determined, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto (collation, i-iii¹² iv-vii⁸ ix⁸ [-6 through 8, cancelled with no loss of text]), no catchwords or signatures, frame ruled very lightly in lead or brown crayon (often indiscernible), all full-length, (justification 143-140 x 80 mm.), written on the top line in a beautiful, calligraphic cursive gothic script in thirty-three to thirty-one long lines, often with tall flourished ascenders in the top line of script, majuscules stroked with red, red paragraph marks and underlining, three- to two-line red initials, in excellent condition, ff 1-3, darkened and slightly soiled, and with a small stain top margin, ff. 1-14. Bound in half leather and marbled paper over pasteboard in the nineteenth century, spine with four raised bands, decorated with simple gilt rules and small stamps, red leather label, "Richardus de trinitate," date gold tooled at the bottom of the spine, "MSS/ XV/ Siecle," red speckled edges, in good condition, with some wear to the covers and spine, especially at the edges. Dimensions 196 x 137 mm.

This is a copy of a text of great importance in the history of theology, notable for the attractiveness of its script. Richard of St. Victor's *De trinitate* was popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but there are fewer manuscripts from the fifteenth century, making the origin of this manuscript with its careful contemporary notes of interest in the history of the reception of the text. There are no copies in the United States (a one-leaf fragment is at Columbia) and no recent sales are recorded in the Schoenberg Database (and in fact no sales since the nineteenth century).

PROVENANCE

1. Written in France in the second half of the fifteenth century as indicated by the script and watermark.
2. Marginal notes, ff. 10v-17v (book 2), 18v-23v (book 3), 30v-35v (book 4), usually summarizing contents (the wording usually differs from the subject headings in the chapter lists), but including a few additional comments as well, all by one annotator using a fifteenth-century noting cursive script. Chapter lists numbered in contemporary Arabic numerals added in the margin.
3. Bookplate, inside front cover: "Ex libris M. Mahe."

TEXT

ff. 1-73v, *Incipiunt capitula primi librum venerabilis Richardi de trinitate*, incipit, "Quod rerum notitiam triplici apprehendimus modo, experiendo ratiotinando credendo ... [added: 25] Quod non possit omnipotens ... et quod consequens est nec deus nisi unus deus." f. 1v, *Incipit primus liber venerabilis Richardi de trinitate*, incipit, "Si ad sublimium scientiam mentis sagacitate... conueniat unitas unitas [sic] substantie cum personarum pluralitate." *Explicit liber de trinitate Richardus de sancta victore.*

Richard of St. Victor, *De trinitate*, ed. by Jean Ribailier, 1958; Goy, 2005, pp. 174-188, 2.2.2.12, lists seventy-four complete manuscripts, not including this manuscript (four from the twelfth century, thirty-three from the thirteenth, twenty-five from the fourteenth, eleven from the fifteenth, and one from the sixteenth century); French translation by Salet, 1959; and several English translations, including Zinn, 1979 (book three only), Cooman, 2010, and Ruben, 2011.

The text is divided into six books, as is the edition, beginning on ff. 8v, 18, 28v, 41, and 55v; all books begin with a list of chapters, and each book includes twenty-five chapters. This manuscript lacks the prologue (ed. Ribailier, pp. 79-84), and the text appears to belong to the non-Victorine recension, which is not derived from the twelfth-century copy from St. Victor, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 769, as discussed by the editor, p. 56 (based on the readings found in book V, chapters 23 and 24). Within the text the chapters are numbered, but lack subject headings; there are no running titles, so aids to the reader are minimal.

Richard of St.-Victor (c. 1123-1173) was probably born in Scotland; he entered the monastery of St. Victory in Paris as a young man and became a student of Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096-1141), the noted biblical scholar and theologian. Richard became prior in 1162. He was the author of a number of exegetical and theological treatises, including the *Liber exceptionum* ("Book of Notes"), which includes an allegorical commentary on selected Old Testament texts, sermons and interpretations of Gospel passages. He is best known today for his mystical, contemplative works, the *Benjamin major* and the *Benjamin minor*, which outline the stages of contemplation and the human understanding of the Divine; these works later influenced St. Bonaventure and other Franciscan mystics.

De trinitate ("On The Trinity") presents the necessary reasons for faith, based on experience. Richard teaches that one can reach the essentials of Christian Trinitarian theology through speculative reason based on data from the senses.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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